**Archive Reference:**

*Interviewer: Polly*

Interviewee: Alison Butler

*So to start with can I just get you to say your full name for me?*

Alison Butler

*And your date of birth?*

8th August 1972

*Brilliant. And todays date is the 8th of February 2016. Erm ok, to start with will you just tell me a little bit about your grandparents?*

Erm, so on my dad’s side there were English and I never knew them, but they were from the south of England and erm I think they were- My dad’s mum was a primary school teacher and his dad was a travelling Sales man or something and erm on my mums side they were German and I knew my grandparents and my grandma was Jewish and my grandfather was not Jewish and they came from Germany in er the 1930s and then had to stay, obviously [laughs] cos of the Nazis, and erm. Erm yes, so my mum was born in England to German speaking parents, but then they stopped speaking German to each other because obviously that was hostility to Germans in England so they were kind of refugees from Germany and had to sort of pretend not to be German here, although it didn’t work because they had German accents.

*Did your mum, I think your mum grew up very aware of that?*

She was, she was aware that they were German, but not the Jewish bit because another impact of Nazism was some Jewish people tried to keep their Jewishness sort of hidden because it didn’t feel safe. And my grandfather was in an internment camp for a while as a sort of enemy alien kind of thing, and then got let out.

*In England?*

In England yeah.

*Do you know where?*

Er yeah, near Liverpool somewhere. Oh actually no, it wasn’t near Liverpool, they lived in Liverpool at the time, but he er, oh my mum would know, I can’t remember, got sent somewhere, so my Grandma had to bring up 4 kids for a couple of years while he was in prison camp for being German in a country where she had to be because she was Jewish. It’s funny.

*But she was also German and she wasn’t interned?*

No she wasn’t interned because she was a woman. I think it was just during the war, it was just during the actual war anybody German in England no matter why they were in England had to get interned in case they were on the wrong side. So even though he came here married to a Jewish woman fleeing Hitler, and he had on his passport, my mums got there, both of their passports and my Grandma had the star of David in hers and Grandpa who wasn’t Jewish himself, my mums got letters from the sort of immigration officials in Germany saying you’re not to come back to Germany basically. Both of them used to go to and fro in the early 30s between England and Germany and eventually xxx which is better than getting sent to a concentration camp which is what happened to a lot of my Grandmas relatives.

*And he, he was also banned?*

Yeah, for being married to a Jew.

*For being married to- Wow. And so, so, so, your mum growing up was aware of being German but not-*

Not really Jewish. Er when she was a late teenager one of her friends said “you’re Jewish” and she was like “no I don’t think I am” and her mate was like “no you are, you’re Jewish, ask your mum” and er cos her friend was Jewish and they were a bit more open about it in their family. SO yeah, my mum knew certain things like my Grandma didn’t eat pork but she wasn’t, she wasn’t a practising Jew, and in fact my Grandmas family when they were in Germany were more, sort of, humanists than anything else. It was only when my Great Grandfather my Grandfathers dad was er, I think he was a lawyer, and when he was losing, he just was losing customers more and more as Nazism took hold, and then wasn’t allowed to practice, or you know more and more constraints were put on them then he started taking them to xxx so he became more sort of defiantly Jewish the more they were oppressed by the Nazi regime, but eventually they had to escape as well.

*And they did successfully?*

Yeah, later than Grandma. Basically they came over here. But there were Aunts and Uncles who- I think my Grandma’s favourite Aunt committed- committed suicide with a cyanide capsule rather than get taken to the concentration camps, and yeah some of them were taken. [Coughs] So, but my mum found this all out kind of quite a lot later. I think Grandma’s approach, when they first came, was just to kind of fit in in England and not really mention it.

*And presumably they had a non-Jewish name because-*

They had my Grandpa’s name yeah

*Had your Grandpa’s name. Erm ok, and so where was your, where was your mum born?*

Erm, Liverpool I think.

*Liverpool. Xxx grew up there. And how about your dad?*

Buckinghamshire

*Buckinghamshire.* [laughs] *And do you know how your parents met?*

Erm in North London at a party. Oh that was it, my, my Aunt on my dad’s side, so my dad’s sister and my Mums And, so my Grandma’s sister were next-door neighbours in North London and they had a er house party and they invited respectively their niece and their brother and that’s how they met. So I always thought it was convenient when I was a kid that my Uncle and Aunt from both sides lived next-door to each other, but in fact that’s how my mum and dad met.

*[Laughs] That is convenient though. So did your parents, were your parents then, were they living in, did they then move to London?*

Er, yeah, they were both living in London at that time, yeah

*And where were you born?*

Erm, University Collage Hospital central London. And then I grew up in Tufnell Park until I was 7. My mum and dad lived there and then when I was 7 they moved to West Dorset and erm I lived there until I was 18 and then when I was 18 I came to university in London.

*And erm, just briefly if you like, what are your, can you give me any early childhood memories of being in either, well both London and Dorset*

In Tufnell Park I remember, remember a very diverse sort of cultural environment. It wasn’t as gentrified then in the 70s as it is now and erm yeah, and I had friends from all different kinds of ethnicities and backgrounds and I had a really nice time, I really enjoyed primary school when I was in London. You know, like I had a Chinese friend and an Indian friend and you know there were black people white people brown people, pink people, and then when I was 7 we moved to West Dorset where everybody was white and everybody had kind of lived there for ages and ages. There weren’t very many, we lived in a small village and there weren’t very many people from out of the area, so I was kind of a novelty being from London and I didn’t fit in very well. I didn’t have a very good time xxx and I got bullied at school. So yeah, 0-7 I enjoyed and then 7 to sort of 16 I pretty much had a horrible time at school so then my aim was to get my A Levels so that I could go to university in London and get away and go back to the place where I had felt happy. So that’s what I did.

*So that’s what you did*

Yeah

*So did you stay on at school for you’re A Levels or did you go off to-*

Yeah, no, there wasn’t collage. I mean you know there was a sort of combined sixth form between two local very small comprehensive schools. So yeah it was a rural comprehensive school.

*Yep. [Both laugh] I know the type of place. Erm and did you, where did you go to when you came to London?*

Er, University College London.

*And what did you study?*

Well, er, I applied to do German and linguistics and er, got in to do that, then I changed to just linguistics, then I dropped out and came back the next year to do Psychology and I only lasted about 5 or 6 weeks and then I left. [Both laugh] Which kind of leads me to the whole M11 thing really.

*Ok.*

Er basically I had some mental health issues to be honest, I was quite sort of depressed and I was having panic attacks a lot. So I actually wasn’t able to stay in the lectures by the time I left the psychology degree I would have been 19? Yeah, cos I was 18 when I did the first, you know, German and linguistics, and I did like the best part of a year of that and then wanted to change you know, came back the next year to do psychology. But I was struggling so much with panic attacks that I literally couldn’t stay in the lecture theatre for more than 5 or 10 minutes, and I was drinking to sort of manage the panic attacks, so if I drank alcohol I could calm down from the panic attacks, but then it’s not very conducive to studying, so er, yeah, I didn’t last long. So I kind of half left, half got asked to leave kind of thing,

*Uhum*

And, I was in University halls of residence, so I obviously had to leave there and a friend from college from you know university had a Greek boyfriend who was living in a squat in East London and he was going to go back to Greece for the summer holiday, yeah for the summer, and he want- he was looking for somebody to squat-sit, to kind of occupy his house while he was a way, so she said why don’t you go and stay there so I was like “alright” cos I didn’t really have many options. So I went, and it was on a road that’s called Claremont Road in Leyton and er so I lived there for, I think it was a couple of years before erm the sort of, of just squatting there yeah

*Were you xxx at that time?*

Erm not really no. I was with the anti-apartheid movement xxx and I had the dangly earrings you know [both laugh] you know there was these anti-apartheid logos with the AA and the back and white. And CND, I think I was a member of CND and the anti-apartheid movement in a fairly just you know pay your subscription fee way.

*From a, from a, from teens?*

Yeah, from when I was a teenager. Er, yeah, but I wasn’t overtly political, no.

*Did you grow up in a political household?*

Erm, my parents voted labour and they sort of gave to charity and things like that but they, they weren’t activists that’s for sure.

*So the point at which you moved to Claremont Road you were, you were sort of-*

Quite a low point to be honest. I was actually very, not really very well and erm, first of all, I can’t really remember exactly what I was- I had- Basically I realised that a lot of the xxx to where I was squatting and erm all up the road were all squatted and it was something to do with they had been planning to build a road but it hadn’t quite happened so there was these compulsory purchase orders on all the houses and erm, I think I gradually, just gradually got to know other squatters along the road and then they became a kind of family like a sort of yeah, big ramshackle extended family and there was a lot of you know going round each other’s houses and helping each other sort of, helping each other out. And back in, I have to say, in the, you know, like early 90s, the benefit system and the student loan, student grant system meant that a lot more people could live without working in paid employment, sort of more easily than they can now, so there was quite a lot of that going on, and there was a lot of free parties and a lot a lot of drinking and a lot of smoking weed. That’s basically what was going on [both laugh]

*And what were you doing in terms- how were you surviving financially?*

So, it’s a complicated story which I could go on a big tangent about, but erm, I, so my Grandfather in Germany his Father was part of a family firm that made er tanning, leather products, and this family company he went to work for them after the war in Eng-, and in England I think. No, he didn’t, I can’t exactly remember but basically this family company that started out as a leather product company became quite a big company and er, once everything settled down after the war my Grandfather had sort of shares in this family company which he then handed on to his grandchildren, myself included. SO I was living of that. The, the tangent is that much later me and my sister, [interrupted by external noise, laughs] me and my sister erm sort of became the first people in this sort of family company, it’s a bit like Clarks shoes, you know Clarks shoes is also one of these family big companies. Erm we became, me and my sister became the first people to try and sell our shares back to other family members because it’s not on the stock market, the shares aren’t on the stock market, and er we eventually after a bit of a struggle with the company were allowed to do that and one of the things that I did was set up a group of people, quite a few of whom had been involved in the M11 campaign to try and work out how to spend the proceeds of the sale of the shares on sort of direct action politics and campaigning.

*So when, when was, when did that happen?*

So that would have happened around 2000.

*Ok, ok, so-*

So at the time of the M11 I was just surviving on the proceeds of this family company shares, so I was in a very privileged position basically being able to do that.

*And what did you, what did you, how did you occupy your time?*

So when I was first living there- God it’s just hard to remember really. I was erm, we were just, I was just drifting. I mean in honest I wasn’t very well mentally and I wasn’t very- just drinking a lot and smoking a lot if I’m honest, and erm, I mean this is why I think you know the M11 campaign basically saved my life because they showed up these erm- It was when the sort of activist types showed up from Twyford Down, the environmental activists came and they organised kind of protest march and er with the local residents and the squatters and… So there was this kind of big community of people squatting along the route of the link road where all of the houses had compulsory purchase orders on. And er, we were only vaguely aware that the reason why we were able to squat there was because of this road and I think then there started being eviction notices and it was at that point when we were like, we had been thinking “oh, shit, we’re going to have to look for somewhere else to stay we’re getting evicted” and these environmental activists turned up and were like “we’re having a protest march against the road” and you know “join in”. And I was like “what?” [Laughs] sort of “what’s this? Oh these people seem kind of like energetic and xxx”. And I went on a, yeah with my boyfriend at the time who was another squatter and we went on the really early protest march and er it was just really energising and like hadn’t occurred to me. It was kind of joining up the dots really, kind of going all of these houses are squatted for a reason which is they want to build a motorway and that’s not a very good idea for these environmental reasons and these social reasons and you don’t have to just passively be evicted-

[to someone else] Alright John?

And you can, you know, you can disagree with it, you can say no, you don’t just have to accept it so we kind of- Yeah just went on this protest march and then one of the things that happened really, I remember Rodger actually singing really [laughs] load and going if its that nutter *[laughs]* bless him.

And erm so, I think construction work had just started, they just started clearing a site towards Wanstead, no, in Leytonstone that had a load of young trees and they’d sort of uprooted a lot of young trees. Saplings really. And erm, and first of all they like climbed into the construction site, over the fence, and I was like “what!” again, just I remember loads of “what!” moments [both laugh] like “can you do that? You can’t do that. Surely you can’t do that? They’re doing that.” And er then going “oh alright then, everyone else is like climbing over the fence, climbing over the fence”. And then they got all these young trees that had been uprooted and they were like “right were gonna take them to the link road office and show them what they’re doing you know, show everybody what they’re doing”. So we carried all these like saplings, trees, up to Wanstead er, er and sort of lent them out, lent them against the windows of the link road office and everyone was chanting “homes not roads”, which became the you know, slogan of the whole thing really. [Coughs] Yeah and I just found it amazingly empowering, and I think they actually sat in front of a digger, in front of a bulldozer on the construction site and again I was like “you can’t do that, it’s dangerous! You’re gonna get hurt!” and they di-, you know, they did it and they didn’t get hurt and it stopped work, and yeah all of that seemed like incredibly empowering and I think for me it symbolised, I think one of the things that had happened, why I had the sort of mental health crash when I was 18/19 was that I’d been sort of you know bullied from when I was 7 to when I was 16 or something and you know it’s interesting that you asked about my Grandparents, quite a lot, you know, this stuff sometimes does go further back. I think the feeling of my Grandma having to sort of move out of German and having to not even speak German at home and being pushed around basically, just a feeling of you having to accept what happens to you even if its shit. You know you get bullied at school, tough; you have to keep going every day even though its shit. You know Hitler comes to power and it exterminates the Jews, tough, you just have to hide or- And what the wort of M11 campaign represented for me was the ability to stand up and say no, to say you don’t have to just take it, you don’t have to just to just get evicted, or you don’t have to just be moved on or put up with things that don’t seem fair. You can, you can stand up and, and doing it collectively, like being part of a group of people cos I think my Grandma was quite isolated when she came, you know especially when my Grandpa was in the internment camp. I felt isolated when I was at school. You know being part of a big messy group of people, full of nutcases and weirdos, but exactly that, like you know, nobody is a weirdo because everybody is part of the whole mess and everybody was like singing and standing up for what they believed in an yeah, it was, it was incredible. And the other thing that was really important about it for me, being a bit sort of mental at the time [laughs] was not having to do it. I couldn’t have held down a job at the time. I couldn’t hold down sort of being in a you know, being on a collage course, and I would- I couldn’t have done holding down a job, but I could get involved in the campaign against the M11 link road as much or as little as I wanted to and I remember once Paul Marotzo erm coming round to my house with a bunch of leaflets and saying you know “here’s a chunk of leaflets I wondered if you wanted to go an sort of put them through peoples doors?” and he said, “you know, you don’t have to, if you want and you know, just do as many as you feel like” an I remember thinking wow, I can do something, you know, I can join in and do something useful, but I don’t have to do it, and I don’t have to do it at any particular time an’ it was just you know lots of moments like that of [coughs] being allowed to take part in something, but not being forced to take part in it and something bigger than yourself that takes you out of your own kind of individual, individualised misery or selfishness. You know like sometimes, some of the squatters we’re having a good time partying but it was kind of quite aimless you know, a bit druggy, dinky, you know, it was good, there was the good feeling of family, but it wasn’t kind of focused on any positive action really, and what that M11 campaign brought was a sense of meaning and purpose and resistance to the shit that life throws at you kind of thing. And erm [coughs] yeah I just got, I found myself getting more drawn to getting involved with that and er yeah, just getting more and more involved really.

*So initially when you first started to become aware of the campaign against the M11 it sounds like it was, er, phh, abstracts not the right word, but it was, it was about being involved in something bigger and something positive, rather than having a political, a particular political- I mean I’m just trying to understand-*

I think, I think, yeah, for the first thing, I think it was the evictions, I think it was that it was seen as a way by the squatters, so I would put myself in that group of people who were just squatting fairly apolitically at the beginning of it and you know, I don’t know if I’ve said it on the recording but like, that I felt like the, the campaign against the M11 link road, once it really got going was just sort of really a synthesis of three social groups. One which was the local residents who were kind of older on the whole and had been living there a long time in respectable houses locally, and were maybe involved in local politics, and then the second group yeah, was maybe these squatters who’d just maybe over the years since the compulsory purchase orders had been made on those houses, it’s like 450 houses, something like that?

*I’m not entirely sure, but people say, some people say 350 and some people say 450 and I know its somewhere in that, I’m not exactly sure how many*

So it was Claremont Road, Grove Green Road, and then some other little roads of, of there, I can’t remember the names of them

*There were bits of Fillebrook Road*

Yeah, Fillebrook Road, definitely Fillebrook

*And Colville*

And Colville, yeah, yeah, yeah. But so there, along that route there’d grown up a network of squatters some of whom were sort of knew each other and not everybody knew everybody else, but there was a kind of a community of squatters that had evolved I would say over a period of years and yeah, and weren’t always operating together as a community, but there was some community, some sense of community amongst the squatters, so that’s the second group. And the third group which I really see as a catalyst to this really taking off was the sort of environmental activists from like Twyford Down and so on, you know the anti-rods, Earth First environmental activists who kind of came and joined everybody up together and energised everybody and, an yeah, an then brought these kind of more powerful synthesis of groups into action.

*Do you remember your first erm, kind of encounters with individuals from that group?*

Erm, yeah, I think, I suppose we must have got a leaflet through our door, or it was word of mouth, or some other squatter had spoken to them and, so I think, one of my first real memories just of going on that protest march, which I must have heard about by word of mouth or a leaflet and yeah, Rodg stood out as a kind of like, he was funny we were good at laughing at him, he had a megaphone, and er he was a kind of geeky but really unselfconscious kind of, yeah he was like doing chanting and singing really loudly and kind of unselfconsciously and it was just kind of-

*Can you remember what he was singing?*

Ahh, no, I, I, I mean chanting “homes not roads” and he might have recited some facts, some statistics or something, or I don’t know I can’t remember, I remember him being geeky and really enthusiastic in a slightly contagious way, but also like being a bit embarrassing (*laughs).* And then er no I remember things like Paul coming and saying you know “you can hand out some leaflets if you want” built I must have, maybe I went to some meetings, I mean the other thing that I really remember is meetings, everybody sitting in a circle. So that was my first experience of consensus decision making as well, like going to those first meetings. Everyone would sit in a circle, and what I later discovered was that that model of making decision s and organising had kind of come from a kind of cultural history of things like the Greenham Common Women, and there was some really influential women involved in the M11 campaign like- Can I say their names? Of people?

*Absolutely, yeah you can, erm people do say names on the tape, and erm*

Well I’m not saying they’ve done anything

*Yeah, no,. Exactly you’re not saying they’ve done anything, and I won’t use them in anything that’s going to be public, so they’ll just be in the archive*

So Emma Must and er Rebecca Lush, those two, I really remember them from early meetings, and I know that they were influenced by the politics of the Greenham Common women and that model of- Emma Must in particular, she was really conscientious about making decisions by consensus and you know making sure everybody’s voice was heard and erm. And I say everybody sat in a circle, It wasn’t, it was messy, you know, there were like kids and dogs and people having an argument at the side, or like joking around and you know cans of bear an erm, and again that was one of the things that made it accessible to me at the time was that it wasn’t too official or officious, and it wasn’t- You know the very messiness of it made it ok to be there and to take part, so the- people I remember from early on is Rodger Geffen, Paul Marotzo, Emma Must, Rebecca Lust, and then Phil Mcleash, Del Baily

*And, and Del Baily was the person you were talking about earlier who was-*

With the music

*With the music*

Yeah

*What was, remind me what you said about him, he was, did you say he was,*

He was always with his guitar round the campfire and he was very, very good at talking to people you know, he was, you know where Rodger Geffen, bless his heart, was massively enthusiastic he could sometimes alienate people by being a bit kind of bossy or posh or, not exactly posh, I mean I’m probably posher that him but I don’t know

*But geeky*

(Laughs) Something. And Dell was a real, is still, a real peoples person, he could get on with everybody so sometimes there were these factions, as the campaign evolved and there were different geographical sites thee were sometimes tensions between different groups or subgroup. So there was the three original sort of cultural groups as I see it, and then there was also different little cliques around different areas and social groupings, and one thing that Del was really good at was communicating with all of the groups and between, with and between, and fitting in everywhere and kind of doing good diplomacy kind of, yeah.

*So did you feel like there was- Are you freezing cold?*

I’m not-

*It’s cold! I mean it is cold, we are sitting outside in the middle of February, it is cold*

A little bit but I’m alright-

*Shall we er, do you want to try and find somewhere warmer?*

Errrr… We could… I don’t know, are you cold?

*I mean I’m quite cold (laughs) I’m alright, but if, if there’s somewhere warmer-* *then it, we could-*

Ok, we could try it. I was thinking to try the top caff cos those, that big room is usually quite empty

*Ok let’s try the top caff, I’m pausing the tape now*

*[pause]*

*So erm, ok its recording again now, so we can just carry on from there. Dell and his diplomacy, Rodger and his geekiness*

Yeah

*Paul and his non-pressurising inclusiveness*

Yeah, and his sort of strategic, I mean Pauls, he was good at strategy really, and erm and erm Emma and Rebecca on their kind of conscientiousness, I’d say and so-

*Yeah, and consensus decision making*

Yeah, and they were sort of inclusive and stuff as well.

*So had they come from, were they involved in Greenham Common?*

Erm I don’t think so. I think they were both too young, but I definitely remember Emma talking about, in fact I didn’t know for ages that that consensus decision making model had any kind of history. I just thought that was how they did things at the M11 campaign. But I think I remember Emma talking about it having come from there.

*Do you know what would be really useful actually, cos I’m just realising that we talk a lot, I’ve talked, people have talked a lot about consensus decision making, and because I know what it is I’ve particularly asked, but I wonder, for the sake of the tape, whether you could just-*

Describe-

*describe it a little bit?*

So erm, the sitting in a circle is already important cos that’s equalising, so there isn’t, there isn’t a chair, there isn’t a panel of experts or, you know, or an audience, everybody’s participating. Erm and everybody can see each other and then you do have one or two people who are facilitating the meeting, and their called facilitators rather than char, whatever. And erm people put their hands up to join in and you often have like, go round where everybody in the circle participates in some way, says how they feel about an issue, an I think, I mean the biggest thing about it is there isn’t, there’s no voting, there’s talking about an issue until everybody agrees and there's kind of getting a feeling for what are the problems if, if there's disagreement and kind of evolving new ways of tackling, I mean what they often mean in practice is torturously long meetings and the domination of the strongest personality types, you know, retrospectively I can see that. But at the time actually it did feel very inclusive and fair and lots of people could be involved you know, turn up and be part of it.

*So what are some of the tools that are used in a consensus decision making process to make sure everybody’s involved?*

Erm, do you know what it’s been a while since I’ve been in (laughs)- but erm, er well the go round, the, there are these hand signals but the hand signals seem to have become more popular recently, we didn’t actually use them a lot at the M11, like one of them was , yeah, I mean people used to put their hands up, and shout or kind of, I mean I know that nowadays there's one where if you sort of shake your hands out in front of you tilting them side to side quickly then that means I agree, so that you can, without making a lot of noise, or interrupting the person whose speaking, you can get a visual indication of how many people are in agreement about something. And then there's the over- there's the much abused hand signal of time out, no, no, it’s not time out its technical, it’s the T, so if people make a T with their hands that means I’ve got a technical point, but actually people do it when they want to interrupt and say something that they think is important rather than is actually a technical point

*(laughs)*

Erm, But I mean the main, the main thing that’s important about consensus decision making and that is behind almost all of the consensus meetings that I’ve been in is a general feeling of we’re all in it together and we have to, we have to agree together what is the best way forward and hammering things out until you get that kind of agreement, rather than overruling the minority, you listen to the minority and try and incorporate their concerns.

*And in practice, well in practice you were saying it lead to very long meetings but-*

Really long meetings

*Did you on the whole find that you reached consensus eventually? Or-*

Yeah. I mean I think it was, we mentioned this slightly when we were walking up here but, (eating) we had a kind of clear goal which afterwards, I’ve spoken to various people who’ve been involved and they’ve said oh, I never really thought we were gonna- Phil’s particularly bad on this, you know, “I never really thought we were gonna stop the M11 but it was really, it was all symbolic”. I thought we were, I mean I actually, yeah, the goal was to prevent the M11 link road from being built and to be able to keep this fantastic vibrant community. Erm you know the name of the group was the No M11 Link Road Campaign, that’s the goal, no M11 link road, so we were pretty much in agreement about that and er, and that we were the people that were gonna stop it. So you know, the meetings were about the details of how and what and when, but we were pretty, it was a nice sort of simple tangible easy to get hold of concept, stop the road. There was a bloke who had alcohol related dementia, I can’t remember what its called, but when your, you’ve messed up your brain so much, and erm, he had an American accent, I think he’d spent some time in America and he said “stop the road, I’m gonna stop the road, I’m gonna stop the road mate, I’m gonna stop the road” and er I think he summed up the campaign more astutely than lots of people really.

*(laughs)*

You know, that was it, he believed we were gonna stop the road. I was at the, you know, I was on a similar thing, level, so yeah.

*So were you surprised when the road was actually, you know?*

I don’t know about surprised-

*Were you surprised that you didn’t stop the road?*

I don’t know about surprised. Disappointed, yeah. Massively. I mean but there was a lot in between then, when I started and that point. You know, a lot happened.

*Do you want to erm say a little bit, I think it would be useful, cos we talked before we started, put the tape on, about these erm, your concerns about the, erm, your responsibility to sort of say everything for people, I wonder if it would be useful for the sake of the interview to have some of that recorded, and it seems to tie in now because you’re talking about these different experiences and perspectives from different people. I wonder if you can just say a little bit about that?*

So… Yeah, so one of my concerns or anxieties about taking part was you saying that you know you only had a remit and funding to do 20, to interview 20 people and that erm, you know, and I appreciate that but, I, you know, the worry is your never gonna get a kind of full idea of what it was, or how many people, and er, you know, like hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of people were involved and really it meant a lot I think. Well it meant a lot to me and it meant a lot to a lot of people, and everybody’s experience will have been so different, and I don’t want to be saying this is how it was, you know, anything I say in this interview or recording is just sort of my partial remembering of what it was like for me as one individual and there were so many people for whom it would have been so different. And also, one of the things that you mentioned was 16 of the people you’ve interviewed already were men and er there were lot of, lots of us were women involved who, you know, who were particularly strong in the campaign and important and there were women’s only actions and we had a women’s house at one point, like our own squat, and erm there were- One of the things that’s important for me, you know like I’ve talked about how I was a bit (short laugh) bonkers at the beginning of the campaign and how it was really important to me, you know, I wasn’t the only one, one of the things that made it stand out for me was how many marginalised people got involved and because of the sqa- the squatting nature of it lots of, you know, I… was relatively privileged financially. For lots and lots of people, they didn’t have anything, they didn’t, you know, they were dependent on benefits or less, you know, like there were quite a lot of homeless people like genuinely street homeless people that ended up getting involved, and I’ve never been involved in a sort of political campaign since where there was such a broad mixture of people, where it had such a sort of empowering effect on so many sort of disempowered people. You know there were kids, kids from the local schools who came and there were street homeless people and there were people who were using drugs and who were alcohol dependent who were really marginalised and in a really bad place in their lives who got involved. Old Mick was particularly good at getting people to do, do things like sweeping the street when it was, when Claremont Road was occupied from both ends. You know it was this crescent shaped road and it was blocked at both ends and the whole street was occupied including the streets space not just the houses and Mick would just give people a broom and say “get on with it and sweep the street”, and everybody, you know people who didn’t think of themselves as having any particular skills or who weren’t motivated or able to work were able to take part and feel useful and to do useful things and well, you know, run a café. Here was at least two squat caffs at one point at different ends of Claremont Road and… yeah.

*And did, did Mick, I mean, Mick have a kind of history of…*

*(Whisper) You ok?*

(Whisper) I don’t think I am, I feel uncomfortable

*You feel uncomfortable*

Yeah

*Urmm. Ok. Well let’s stop then if you feel uncomfortable. Let’s stop now. I’ll stop the tape.*

(tape paused)

The reason why I went funny, its cos it really, it matters to talk about the people who are usually excluded from so called politics and political campaigns and er, and people kind of like watching and listening and judging in the background, or you know, my perception of them doing that, doesn’t make it easy to talk about it. That’s all. Anyway try not to think about that.

*I’m keeping an eye out*

Ok thanks

*If anybody’s staring at us, I’ll, I don’t know, I’ll take them*

Poor blokes probably just trying to get into the-

*(laughs)*

Urm, but you were talking

**Interview Details**

**Name of interviewee:**

**Project:**

**Date of interview:**

**Language:**

**Venue:**

**Name of interviewer:**

**Length of interview:**

**Transcribed by: Holly Gilson**

**Archive Ref:**