**So I I see from the answers that you provided in the form that you live in a flat. Yeah, yeah, we sure wish your renting everything so like so how long have you been been there?**

OK, so we've been living here in this flat for. Guess about three years and it's a basement flat in Dalston. Just uhm. Uh, just uh one behind Kingsland Road and but it's quite a nice. Uhm, so secluded area really once you get out into the back. Garden we've got a really nice. A nice kind of tree canopy. You can basically see out over into about the the next kind of five or six gardens behind our house, and there's lots of mature trees, sycamores and ash trees, and there's other ones. And so it doesn't really feel like you're as close as you are to the come to the hustle and bustle of of Dalston, yeah? Yeah, I’ve probably answered a few questions at once. If you in one there.

**Yeah, so uhm. So like before you were living here. Where whereabouts were you living?**

I was living in a very small 3 bed flat in. Millfields Rd in claps and sharing with three other people, one of which is my partner. Uhm, and yeah, the outdoor space we have there basically consisted of a patio and a very small sort of foot wide flower bed around the edge, which although we only had that amount of space I did manage to plan a few flowers to brighten up the place and it was good. Having that bit of outdoor space 'cause the flat itself is quite small. So in summer you know and in the nice weather we sort of have plenty of space outside to. To go go gallivanting in.

**So like so with your garden, their back garden now like what is that? Is that a similar vibe now or like do you use it for something different? Or how does that work?**

Well, it's technically a shared garden. UM, although very rarely, do we ever see anybody else from the rest of the flat in it. So we're we're lucky being on the basement level that we've got very easy access to the garden and. And. Yeah, it's more, although it's is a so technically communal garden. It's it's basically our own. We've still got free reign to to do what we want with it, and also the the landlord has said in the past that he, you know he doesn't mind people kind of pruning the bushes and tending to it a little bit, so I'll try and get out there every now and again too. Get a couple of fingers green.

**What I mean, why is that is that? For you, or just for his benefit, or…?**

What is probably because I find myself looking at it a lot, and especially in certain times of the year, like at the moment in the summer when it gets a bit overgrown, it sort of plays in my mind and I I feel like it should tend to it a little bit more. It kind of. Maybe it makes me feel slightly stressed looking out there and seeing everything a little bit. Raggleg Bagley. Really.

**Yeah no yeah yeah.**

Now, looking up and seeing everything a little bit overgrown. So, like I suppose it's a way of having control over something and bring your own. And just calming you down a little bit. I guess having a bit of control over something right?

**That's interesting, so, so like as you know this, this research is broadly about about two things really like how people in Hackney conceptualize what nature is, what nature means to them, and then how they experience that kind of in their terms. So if what if I asked you, like? What is what does the that word nature mean? What would you say?**

OK, well, OK. So nature I would say I would deem it to be. Uhm, everything that isn't part of the man-made built environment. But then at the same time it's interesting 'cause you know, I read a lot about nature and I'm really, really interesting book at the moment called ‘the history of the countryside’ and the way that a lot of people certainly in this country experienced nature. You know, even the most what kind of wild parts of Scotland being managed by humans you know. So I mean, it's I guess if you get into the brass tacks of it, it's sort of difficult. Really, to discern what is part of the built environment and what isn't. Yeah, it's quite a fraught question.

**Yeah, hence why that's that's the. Sort of a basis of this research, basically, yeah. So what I mean? What's your like experience of that? Like if you're thinking about. You know what, what, what nature do you experience on a day to day basis? Like say you like around your house?**

Well, I mean, the garden obviously would be the initial point of contact with nature and it is nice that it's as a wild, slightly overgrown garden. Then you can sort of. Sit out there and there's. There's a lot of, UM, scope for. Kind of looking into the distance and getting a bit lost in it, which I like because of, you know, a lot of people, certainly around this area. I would imagine haven't got much if any out outdoor space whatsoever, so that would be the initial thing, and then as soon as I go out my door right opposite, we've got a big church with a a sort of garden area, which is usually locked, but from time to time they leave the gate open and certainly during the lockdown I would now and again. Go in there just for for another place to go to sort of get away from the house and. Kind of, you know, be alone with my thoughts, you know, I find it conducive to being able to think straight to to be in and amongst nature.

**What what's so like when you're saying amongst nature, like in the garden or in the churchyard? 'cause obviously those are man made spaces**

well that's is that so happens to be the areas that are near to me. But I mean my ideal. It kind of. Ideal place that I would like to go. You know, I? I mean, I like to I I do tend to go walking out in the countryside a fair bit. You know I'll get trains up to Hertfordshire or Essex and just kind of go on country rambles along footpaths. You know I like anywhere that's got a degree of wildness to it

**and how do you measure wildness 'cause you're saying the garden is kind of wild but then well and I suppose places that.No, UM not as tended by the hand of man as other places you know**

so so overgrown footpaths you know with kind of brambles and fields that aren't regularly grazed or regularly used and you know bits of the canal, that kind of have large overhanging. Trees and willows and things like that you know, definitely prefer to be in those places where people don't often go, you know. And quite often when you're out on these country walks, you don't bump into that many other people. How about kind of closer to home?

**If you think about, I mean is that sort of thing devoid in Hackney?**

Well, no, it's not. We still have the marshes. It's very lucky to have and there are areas of the marshes that is pretty wild. I enjoy walking around in like. Uhm? Uh, just by the river Lee on Hackney Marsh and spent quite a lot of time down there over the past few years, including swimming in the river, which isn't that advisable, but. I've done it nonetheless, uhm?

Yeah, and there are certain areas like Walthamstow marshes. Well, the the bit, which I think is kind of, I think they call it a lamas Meadow where it's they leave the grass to grow high and they sort of harvest it once a year. You know we are very lucky to have that on our doorstep. Not sure there's many other boroughs. Parts from maybe Waltham Forests. Which had that amount of green space in in this part of London? Yeah

**Yeah, like if you're walking to the marshes or the Lea or whatever. What about in between? Yeah, you got your garden you've got the marshes but what about on the streets of Hackney? What what sort of nature do you encounter or what's natural about? Those environments. Uhm?**

Well, I mean, you could argue that. I mean, obviously there's a lot of trees around on the street, but then again, they've been planted, so they're not entirely natural. Uhm? I guess sort of on the probably the weeds that come out of grass verges, and there's slightly rougher. Unkempt bits of sort of the edge of the street. I suppose you would deem or I would deem them to be slightly more natural, like for example there's a bit of. Grasslands just up the road on the way to Shacklewell Lane.

Yeah, its’s interesting 'cause it appears on really old maps and it's still there even though it's been sort of bisected by road and UM. Let's go to sort of a a kind of. A path that's been worn through it by people just walking through it. I don't think it's been sort of deliberately put there. Uhm? So I mean that I guess you'd sort of call that a little bit more natural maybe than Shacklewell Green, which is quite sort of. Uhm, a controlled natural environment, and needs regular mowing. The grass is regularly mown, the Rose Bushes are cut regularly and so I mean, that's yeah, that's one place I experience quite a lot.

There's also a kind of sloping verge on. Is it Cecilia Rd? I think so on the way from Shacklewell Lane too. Uh, those name? And I often walk down there just to get a bit of kind of green scenery, and that's another bit that the Council obviously sort of leave to go wild. And it's got lots of tall grasses and things like mugwort and various other kind of creepers going up the railings. So that's all very nice, so it's that like kind of stuff where it's just kind of happening and nobody is intervening. That makes it more natural to me. It is.

**Yeah yeah.**

But then, like a tree, a Cherry Tree that the council put in is still natural, but just not to the same extent. Yeah, because it isn't a naturally occurring thing. I mean, there are trees that have been put in. There aren't even native. Yeah, I mean, the majority of them, in fact, that we planted. If you think about it. Are native to this country even? I don't think plane trees were originally. No of our native flora, and they're pretty ubiquitous in London.

**It's not even a, it's a hybrid between different.**

Yeah anyway, yeah, so yeah. I mean, we're I mean obviously like. You know, were it not for. Man, I mean obviously this whole landscape would be completely different. We'd probably be in a forest right now. That's getting a little bit off the. Off the question,

**no, not at all. Like so like. It's. No, 'cause it's still that kind of counterfactual thing is still interesting. Yeah, so yeah so. And then like I don't know, do you get the same criteria you were saying, like sort of tending to the garden and kind of like cutting cutting things back, making it less wild? Had some kind of like benefit for you, but then also like you get benefits from seeing stuff that like you're deliberately go to places that that are unmanaged?**

Yeah yeah, that is strange. Actually thinking about that and. Yeah, I thought you so stumped me there a little bit. Although yeah, it's nice to have it under some some modicum of control. I don't really like a garden. That's that's really, really sort of Twee. And you know where the grass is sort of only half an inch thick or whatever. You know, I guess it's. A bit like when you go to sort of like a big country estate where it's been landscaped but left to go a bit wild. You know, sometimes maybe.

So the optimum amount of wildness that is kind of. You know, looks nice to the human eye. Maybe requires a bit of human intervention. I don't know, right? Right on personal preference, yeah, so it's like whatever it is, it should have some benefit to people if it's like. Waldorf it's like manicured. Yeah, well, I mean not necessarily. I mean, it's not as though nature is just there for us to observe it and enjoy it. You know, I think that's quite sort of. That's a very. Can a human centric viewpoint, 'cause I mean where I sensually part of nature as well and that this is where I expose it here. This is what your research is delving into. The fact that you could call everything that we see nature because it's been put there by. Humans which who are basically, you know, we're all part of part and parcel of the same thing.

**So where is the delineation? Delineation life yeah exactly right. I mean like it's difficult. It's a difficult thing to say really, but where do you think that is? I mean, is it even possible to kind of draw that point and say like no, that's an entirely human thing that has no nothing of nature in it, and it's entirely unnatural. Or is that just a fallacy?**

Uhm? Oh I think I yeah I would say it probably is because every single thing made by humans has at some point used raw materials that have come out of the Earth, you know, even manufactured materials and plastics and whatever have been, you know, you have been somehow synthesized from oils or whatever. I'm not sure how they make plastic become an. Yeah, so I mean and eventually everything you know as you see in places like come a place in Russia where they had the big leak –

**Chernobyl.**

Yeah, So what places like that where things have slowly returned to nature? Eventually nature will take over and reclaim. Everything inside of everything that we've built. Will return to the earth, 'cause that's kind of what it's trying to do. Let's take this. You know it's like metal. As soon as you take kind of raw metal out of the ground, it starts rusting. Uhm? So it's kind of. What was the forgotten where where I was so, so? It's like it's not like the nature and the human things are like totally like opposed and like sort of two forces fighting against each other. It's just that there everything is natural and it's all of the human stuff is always going to degrade and just go. Part is part of that cycle.

Us being humans we probably see because we know about how things were put there. We've seen more of a. Divide between the natural and unnatural, whereas you know if you sort of. I mean, I would imagine if like a cat is out walking out and about, it's not really gonna sort of think. OK, well that shed was put there by human, but that tree was just kind of, you know, a naturally occurring item, not a naturally occurring figment of the landscape or whatever. You know, and likewise. I mean, we probably my brains going off on one here, but uhm. Yeah, it's interesting to sort of think about like I don't know anthills or. Molehills, or like? You know, and I think what are those sort of like big sort of.

**Well like termites or termite mounds.**

Things like that have been built by creatures just in the same way that our skyscrapers have been. Really so. Yeah I I would. I would say to sum up that it's very difficult thing. Account that's not true, and what isn't?

**Yeah, yeah, that's good.**

You might struggle to make any sense out of this.

**I think no, no, that like ambiguity is really good. It's it's really. It's different to a lot of other people have said which is, like, you know. Humans are parasite on the face of Mother Nature or whatever.**

Yeah, well, I mean that is it. Yeah, this is an interesting thing to think about because he had a lot of people do see that as being the case. You know they see humans as being kind of like a cancer on the planet, and you know, we're the ones that are obviously exploiting all the natural resources, not really putting anything back. Uhm? But then at the same time, it's we're just. It's kind of not our fault that we've evolved in this way. We're just kind of all following what we think is right as a kind of collective. Uhm, entity. And whether that's right or wrong, who's to say, really?

It's this is a funny one to think about. Yeah. You know, maybe it's maybe the whole idea of global warming. You know, maybe all of that is predetermined was sort of supposed to happen, and maybe in the long run it will be the best thing for the earth because it will will kind of we will die out and the earth will be given a chance to regenerate.

**What about UM? The pandemic you know in terms of yeah. That I mean, firstly, what do you think into in this kind of abstract way about its relationship to nature and then also, you know, has it changed your thoughts on nature or your life experiences of nature in Hackney**

yeah. Well, I think first of all thinking back to the first lockdown. And you know, I mean, it was amazing. Being able to sort of walk around and there be barely any cars on the road. I definitely notice the difference in the cleanliness of the air. I definitely notice that there weren't as many airplanes around, which was obviously a nice thing, yeah? And then to the second part of that question, I mean, obviously having so much free time I was. I was very lucky because I was 'cause I working in a bar. I was furloughed for most of the time and so I had a great deal of free time to sort of go out walking and. So I was experiencing the nature around me and the landscape around me. You know, in a way that I hadn't really thought about before. You know I was delving into it and looking at old maps and getting quite obsessed with features of the landscape. And, you know, kind of understanding it in a new way, like the Hackney Brook for example.

I sort of got really interested in that, which is a a river that was once an Overground which is now culverted, which ran across. Stoke Newington to the downs and and I would go out and sort of trace the the line of that river. On my walks you know were it not for the pandemic, I wouldn't have. Probably wouldn't have had the time or the inclination to to go and do such things, and it's just, and so now when I'm out and about it kind of adds a new. Layer in a new dimension to my. The experience of sort of. Traversing the streets because I can sort of understand the history of of where I am a bit more and I feel a little bit more connected than I was before, possibly yeah.