**Forgets to that, yeah. So yeah, so you're saying you live in in? Thinking power cord that's is that for months. That's kind of like around chatsWorth roads between there in the most,**

that's right. So I live on X Rd, which is, yeah, it's one of the roads that like you say, it's between Chatsworth Rd on one side and we're right by Daubney Fields. And then on the other side of the river the Marshes and then up to Walthamstow Marshes and Wick woodland. And yes, we are right on the edge right at all the big Green space basically.

**Yeah, yeah, I was there, literally this afternoon.**

So if you saw a woman training on the field, that was me

**OK this right now. So, and so you've you've got your own, your own place there. And yes, yeah, yeah, yeah. But if I were to become standing- this sounds weird- but if I was still standing outside your your house, what would I be looking at?**

We have we live in one of the classic Victorian terraces of Lower Clapton. We don't have a front garden, it's. A big big hedge that's right. Basically, our front garden is a hedge and then the bins are left behind the hand. Is quite big. We need to make that a bit smaller, I think. Yeah, sort of London brick house. Yeah one little bay window downstairs. No Bay window upstairs. Big hedge. Middle of St, Bicycle hanger outside.

**Yeah I'm getting getting a strong picture here. And you have a garden at the back?**

We have a small little rear garden, smaller than some of the ones along the terrace. 'cause of the way that looking at it now? So I'm looking this way smaller than some of them down the road because of a bomb that fell on this road I believe and knocked out some of the houses further down. They got rebuilt at a budget, now I guess it would have been post War 1960s. Probably used to be several massive gardens 'cause the houses are a lot smaller so we've got a little space at the back.

**Yes, a little patch that's interesting. Yeah. So what? What kind of what does that look like? What? What do you do with that space to use it for?**

We we hang out in it mostly, we are going to redo it at some point. Actually. At the moment we've got some metal hoardings up halfway down the garden because behind X Rd is a Hackney council building project. There building 11 units, they really rebuilding our party wall between our house and what what is now a Council sort of, you know Council, and so they rebuilding that for us for free, which is nice. So they've taken over the back of the garden until the end of May, but normally. We have a patio straight out the back doors from the kitchen. We don't have an extension yet, but like you know, galley kitchen door back about to kind of patio area where we have like a barbecue tucked in one corner. We still got the old outhouse at the back which is our like garden shed. Yeah we have a kind of little sitting area of bench and chairs and stuff in the corner of the garden that gets the last of the sunlight in the evening. Then there's a lovely kind of Cherry Tree. Sort of one of those red leaved lovely. I know, yeah, thick trees, so that's like a mature tree that's just right in the garden overhangs it. Center in our God, but overhangs are gone and the neighbors garden, which is lovely. And then there's a lawn, and at the very back of the garden, as was raised beds and various different plants and bushes, and that kind of thing which got a little overgrown by the end of last summer. But we knew that because we need the Council, we're going to be ripping it up, basically to rebuild this wall. Yeah, we're going to take the opportunity to re landscape the garden. When we're going to get, we're getting some compensation for any Council which makes it affordable and we're really going to think about how to use that space to make the most of the lights and north facing garden. So we get sun all day, but it moves around the garden. It's quite yet but a lucky north facing garden, actually. So we're going to think about putting a sitting area at the back to catch the sun in the mornings and where the planting will go. I'm going to get to the surgeon to come and look at the tree to check this. How much longer it's got. Those trees don't actually last forever. Yeah, and think about. Yeah, think about making it a really usable space all day. 'cause at the moment is a bit the part where the planting was exactly where the light was, which is why the planting did really, really well, but meant that we were using it less. So we're going to try and get that balance. And yeah, probably will take a bit of inspiration from the Olympic Park and the planting along in the Olympic Park. Which yeah, I think gorgeous and brilliant and works all year.

**And you know, I think it's by guy called Nigel Dunnett,**

that's right, yeah. So I want a bit of that kind of vibe in my garden, right? That kind of Prairie, yeah, yeah yeah. Wild flowers and grass is, and yeah. So yeah, that's what my little backyard looks like.

**Cool, well, that's that's amazing that's. As yet again, I'm kind of looking out my back window now on something pretty similar. To see for your blood background your your house is possibly or your you know where you are is possibly looks quite similar to where I am. Yeah I thought so yeah. So I'm just gonna come out with this massive question which is pretty much my main research question. So what does what does the word nature mean for you?**

So lots of different things I I grew up in the Peak District in a little village in which across the back wall was endless fields. Big garden in my parents. Kind of, you know, reasonably modern house, but we had a very large garden. My parents adored their garden. I was far less interested in the garden. I was far more interested in what was beyond the garden wall. And the kind of acres and acres and acres and acres and miles and miles and miles of hills and trees and fields and dry stone walls and farmers who might get annoyed frustrating their crops. Bluebell woods and whatever. So it was that, I suppose that was nature. My garden, my parents garden was the garden. Everything else was nature and that was what I wanted. As I grew up, I went to university in Scotland and Saint Andrews by the sea, and so it was a totally new and different landscape that I loved. I love being by the sea. I like that that kind of definition, broadened. I think for me, and it continues to broaden because moving to London, I've lived in London for the last 10 years, and I've lived in Hackney for the last seven, and I've lived in this House for the last three. Every place we've moved has got closer and closer and closer to urban green space. I we chose where we lived, we bought this House because of its proximity to the marshes. Right? 'cause of the river? I love water growing up in the middle of the country where you're as far away from the city as possible, but in a river village I really loved and then going to university by the sea. I love being by water and that's really important to me. So now nature also means the urban environment that I live in. My really value, the nature that exists in this. I think if you'd have asked me like 10 years ago when I moved here, I have said other isn't really nature in London because I saw nature as being. And literally a National Park that I lived in right, something more idyllic. And exactly I was like, well, if it's not completely wild, but it's not nature is it? Cut it, you know, country kids that I was, but now only you know that definition is massively broadened for me and I I see and value nature everywhere here in this city. And comparatively as well, we're so lucky in London we actually do have a very, very, very green City where nature is. Given space in ways that it just isn't in other in other compareable global cities, but particularly this part of London, you know, I feel so sorry for me.

**I was just going to say so just I just want to unpack, that so you're talking about about the marshes and Lea and those kinds of those kinds of green spaces. Specifically here or or is it more granular than that? And are you also talking about? I don't know, just tell me. What you mean in terms of the green spaces here in London? Yeah, just what what? Yeah, what? What exactly would be some examples of those?**

So yeah, there's the kind of big wide open, I suppose of places like. The marshes. I also love things like Wick Woodland when I'm in Wick woodland, I feel like I could be back in a woodland in Derbyshire age 7 and I think that you know nature for me was freedom and it was adventure and it was, you know, change and joy and like connection and I get all of that. That's, you know, I wouldn't have been able to find that as a child, but they were all the things that I would have felt being connected to something much bigger than myself. Yeah, you know that the the changing beauty, the transient nature of that things that you had to season experience in that moment, which is very liberating and very freeing. I wouldn't be able to say that as a kid, but I know that's what I was feeling. What is constantly just gazing out of my bedroom window at the horizon or disappearing off into a field. So I wanted that feeling now is adelae recognize that that's what I'm getting and I go and find it in these little pockets, but I can find in Wick woodland. Complete tune out the A-12. Feel like I might be in an ancient woodland in in the in the Midlands, maybe just for a minute and you can you really do feel like you are. Yeah connecting to something far bigger than yourself in other ways and I find that up in Walthamstow Marshes as well as the kind of you know the north and bits of Hackney marshes that turn into walls and stone marshes. Yeah, I find that, and I do like the Wilder spaces, but I also like, you know I. I really like in this part of London in Hackney that you know, I love the Lee for the canal boats and it's managed river. You know it's a canal is man made but around it are, you know, is so much that is truly natural. So I think I've come to appreciate how the the urban landscapes in the way in which. A city needs to work, has infused the natural part of this. You know this model and I think having marshes was created from rubble from the Blitz or something. I think that was how that green space was formed and solidified and stuff. I think I read that somewhere and the way in which the journey of this city has influenced and shaped some of the nature. That's it. And then you look at someone like the Olympic Park, which is a very, very curated knew green space for East London. You know that's the new Victoria Park of its day, right? Doesn't have the Olympics and taking urban environments and choosing to put natural spaces tailored around the urban experience, that's exactly the same as Hyde Park or Victoria Park. Yeah, it's just a new way so I've come to hugely appreciate that and and see the way in which natural environments can appear in any even like in tiny spaces, in the East like we're very green around here. We've got like. Into gardening and stuff, and I really value the fact that my street have pulled up paving slabs to create wildflower gardens around the base of all the trees. Like stuff like that. Now my brain goes, that's nature that's important. I feel connected. Where is my? You know my teenage brain would be like what that's nothing? Yeah yeah, give me a Blue Bell.

**That's interesting. Like with the paving example, despite it being, you know, an entirely man-made.**

It can still be nature, and I think I've that's my definition has broadened nature. Can exist anywhere, right? And I think I was once very purist about it because of my my childhood. But yeah, and that's why we live here because I love being that close. And in among some, you know, one of the most interesting, beautiful, diverse, natural and urban environments in this city. I think.

**Wonderful, wonderful. It's very inspiring. The joy of doing this kind of research. And well, 'cause I have my own, you know thoughts and feelings, and getting to test those out with all kinds of different people and it's really, really, really interesting.**

I I get my my professional background for a long, long time work for the big environmental charity, right? That's, you know, a big passion of mine, the sustainable use of natural resource is. And you know that. Obviously colors and shapes. You are colored and shaped by your experiences in the natural world, and I'm confident that that interest came from being so rooted in a very wild and natural and untouched landscape as a kid. But being able to see that you know urban environments can work as natural environments to you. Just have to shift your definition slightly.

**You know when you were talking bout widlund earlier and you said you've got a sense of you know freedom of connection with something outside yourself. Yes, just that do you still get that from? Those things on a smaller scale is that those those plants on the streets and things like that. Or is it more immersive?**

So I think yes, but to a lesser extent. OK, I was interested. You know, when your research you're going to ask us to like share the pictures that we take. If you were to look on my camera roll you would see endless pictures of the Stratford skyline from the top of the marshes you would see endless pictures of the runs that I do down on the you know, the wild. The banks of the Lee on the other side of Hackney Marshes you see endless like treescapes of like, constant at my God, it's so beautiful and I love living here and I'll play games on my stories being like London or Derbyshire because it's like hey you know but and I'm constantly kind of amazed by those larger, more immersive experiences but. You'd also see like there's a tree on the corner of my road and the next Rd. That's just amazing. The silhouette of this tree in the way that it changes across the seasons is gorgeous. Absolutely beautiful and that it's a different kind of feeling. It's not quite that same. Whoa, you know, I'm in this and this is magic. And this is this is this is, you know, something. Really quite amazing when you're in spaces, like Woodlands or it can be. You can suspend your disbelief that you're in a city and that gives it a different quality. But even on these little scales, I think there's also pride. I think with that too, with like little of the smaller things I go. Gosh, that's lovely that we've done that. This community values this an I value this so I feel part of this community so it's it is there is a dot that sense of connection is definitely there, but it's a different kind of thing. Yeah, it's like a conduit. This is something else, yeah, yeah, I think so. Rather than that kind of like Oh my God this is beautiful or yeah I could I can imagine myself, you know. Somewhere else, somewhere, anywhere. When you're in those kind of like bigger immersive environments. But yeah, the flower on the street makes me go. Gotta know how lucky I am to be in a community that values this. And gosh, isn't it amazing that that tree can still be that impressive on this little St or whatever, so it's a different kind of thing.

I think one thing I wanted to ask actually a lot of the things we've been talking about a really based around vegetation. Yes, trees and plants things. I mean, this might be something to do with. With you know your childhood expectations being set up in that way, but but are there other experiences or is it is that is it that the predominant focus?

And Water definitely

**sorry.**

Yeah, it's a big thing and that I see that as a very big part of my engagement with the natural. I like being by water. I like seeking out water. I would choose water over like mountain ranges probably will be.

**I like this kind of idea of like a top Trump's. Yeah,**

yeah. Trance. I think I think I'm very conscious of things like air quality too, and that's partly because of the professional background I had working with. Charity was working for. We did a lot of air pollution legislation and litigation and that kind of thing and I'm very conscious of that. When I'm outside of London I notice the quality and I'm very conscious. Therefore that here and in this part of London we have excellent air quality in this little pocket of happening because traffic is low because we have these big open green spaces and I understand how Urban Air pollution kind of work. So I'm conscious of that only I think I have woven that into my perceptions around lately because I'm very, you know, it's the thing I'll notice when I go to other places or into central London I Will absolutely notice dropped onto exactly, so I think that that wouldn't instinctively have been when I was a kid. I would never have thought of like the quality of the air as being part of my perception of nature, but it has become that because of living in London. So I'd say that. And I would say. Birds and animals, flora and fauna. I suppose the fauna bit I'm conscious of that too here, particularly Bird Life. In happy. Yeah Millfields I enjoy. And is it you know, the heron and the Swans and cygnets and stuff? I think that I I find that kind of interesting, but I don't get the same kind of reaction. I'd far rather stand in the middle of woodland. Then I would go up and see the Swans and her cygnets. I enjoy both, but I would pick with Woodland if I had. If someone said to me today, you can do that or that. I'd pick The Woodlands weather mean absolutely. Yeah, think that part of my consideration, experience of nature. I think I take them slightly more for granted. Possibly. That kind of thing, maybe, except it is really amazing, right?

**Yeah, yeah, yeah, but there's not the kind kind of immediate benefits, and there's not necessarily the room for those social benefits. Yes, I think that's probably a good point. Yeah, OK, well, the cygnets are really cute. Yeah, I was looking at those. Yeah. Once had nice ones. Yeah, we got some really great like really far away. Really blurry photos.**

The place to the edge of the river up in there you know there anyway? Yeah horses and cows. I like the shaggy cows that so yeah, you enjoy the shaggy cows when they are down this way and not up somewhere they Waltham Abbey wherever they get taken. I also do really like it. This is another interesting thing I do love to the Lea riding school, or I believe Valley kind of stables. That's really close to here and I love running up past the horses and that's because firing something in me that childhood and farmland and you know, but I don't think that I would put that in the same box as like my perceptions and responses to nature. Somehow it's because they were domesticated animal. Yes yes exactly so whilst I value them. In some of the same boxes as all these other things, my brain doesn't associated with nature in quite the same way, right? Yeah, yeah, yeah, they just step then. There's something that interacts with the with nature, but they're not necessarily part of it. Yes, and make this part of London and this environment that I value so much they add to that. And so you know, if I was going to be selling this part of London based on its green spaces people, I would absolutely mention on as the horses in the shaggy cows. But I wouldn't be. I know that I don't put them in the same box. Is the rest of nature? Yeah, that totally makes sense.

**Thank you. I see I've I've kept you for like around about those 20 minutes, doesn't right if you wanna keep going.**

I talk a lot so you know.

**I have a lot of questions so. I mean, the one thing that I wanted to bring up really is because it's it's kind of an elephant in the room, but this is the pandemic. You know, have you notice yourself as you have you as the pandemic influence your conception of nature and what is and what isn't?**

I don't think it's necessarily impacted my perception of what is and what isn't. I think I've been a lot more conscious of its importance and value to me because I've always valued nature and always been, you know, because of my, you know, particular background and where I grew up and that kind of thing. It's never been something I've completely taken for granted, because you don't. If you. If you've got that kind of relationship with it, but it is something that is always, that you, you know you sort of take your relationship with it. Granted, because you think about it all the time, do you see what I mean? I certainly I certainly last spring the slowdown of the rest of my life meant that for one of the first times, probably since I was a teenager, I was so conscious of watching the trees day by day. You know, the kind of thing that I would have noticed as a child because, you know, you're spending long endless days just looking at a bedroom window kind of thing that I notice it again. And I loved that. From that period of time we were only allowed outside for half an hour a day. I was so grateful that I could pick any number of different natural landscape environments to go to with that half an hour. I think it that yes, it made me very, very conscious of the natural environments around me and highly value them and that has, you know, obviously the situation has continued to change and evolve since last March.

Yeah, an interesting thing that I probably didn't send any the emails to you is my husband and I moved to Norway from September until April early. OK, my husband works for a Norwegian company and he was posted to head office. Which was always in the plan that was meant to be for a year and we spent the majority of that time living in Oslo in lockdown, and the Norwegian equivalent of lock down with slightly less lead, slightly less harsh than here, but not that much right. And on one hand living in Oslo, you're like, Whoa, Norway is amazing. The natural world in Norway. I could walk for an hour and a half from my house, in the Hackney of Norway, and I'm in a pine forest and there's just endless mountainous landscape and it's amazing. The acocella for which is the river that runs through Oslo, is so dramatic. It's waterfalls and whitewater also man-made. But it's on a fjord side, so it's hurtling down towards the city. It's like, whoa, so there was some stuff that I was late amazing, but actually I realize how urban is. So when we got back to Hackney I was just like, Oh my God. Thank God for the marshes, I'm I can be in in this in five minutes, hour and a half. So whilst it was incredibly impressive. In Norway, to be able to walk throughout. How often did I actually walked for an hour and a half? Not that often. Weekends mostly, or when I was feeling really depressed or something, but it didn't. I really, really realize that all you know, Norway might be the most amazing country if you think about relationships with nature. But actually Oslo wasn't that kind of city. It was very concrete and not that green and I came back here and went bloody hell was so lucky so that that's a very old pandemic experience to kind of be. Sharing is very atypical pandemic experience. But a combination of last March, April, May, June, July, whatever really reasserting to myself why I live here and why I love living here and that much slower, deeper connection with the natural environments around me was so reinforced, coming home. And it was that when I came home that I was like. This is where I live. This is why I live here and I was in or I was just in or of like all these different, you know, walking down the canals, being like Oh my fucking God I get to live here this is amazing. And that that was a really interesting reaction. I thought yeah, specially. And yeah, sorry, just because it's. It's like he's saying, you know the marshes, they're all. They will. They will, essentially man-made environments. The Lee has been straightened and whatever else and. And yes there is something wild about that. Then there is about. The equivalent in Oslo, and that is such an interesting thing and it's immediate, and it's here, you know, so that appreciating those. The wildness that those man-made environments, as it has allowed to thrive, those you know, 'cause you know, it's it's that really isn't it. That's so wonderful about this part of London. And I am so the pandemic has made me so acutely aware of. Firstly, you know, our proximity to that. And secondly, it's it's immediate day-to-day value to me.

**Yeah, yeah, that's really interesting. That gives me a lot to think about, so thank you.**