**distributedFuture-29-raw**

**Vim:** [00:00:00] Hi this Vimla Appadoo

**Tim:** [00:00:01] and I'm Tim Panton

**Vim:** [00:00:02] and you are listening to the distributed future podcast.

Today. We are talking about something that's really important to me.

And I'm sure is relevant to a lot of people out there at the moment which is kind of just disaster relief and how we how government organizations interact and the charity sector work together to respond to crisis. What's really Interesting is the role that technology plays in facilitating and enabling that particularly as we grow into the everyday a world where crisis seems to feel more common if it was like there's always something to respond to regularly at the moment.

**Tim:** [00:00:41] Right? I mean, I think Communications is sort of little bit of a when I was considered double-edged sword, but that's not right. But but in the sense that we hear about crises whilst It's not too late to do something about them and you know in the past you get a sailing ship that showed up and said they'd been an earthquake in Peru four months ago and really, you know, you could send a ship to rebuild something or whatever.

But like, you know the time for instant action was gone. Whereas now I think you know you re you hear about an earthquake seconds after it happens and yeah, you feel like you could do something but I don't know what I mean. What's your sense of what you can do?

**Vim:** [00:01:20] Um, I think so. I think there were different levels to it.

I think there's the kind of community empowerment which she see through lots of different things. . So you can see it with things like the Manchester attack where communities would responded immediately by offering places to stay, donating beds responding in a way that meant there was like community enablement that could help people. But what you really need in this time of Crisis is that alongside a government organization or recognized body to hold people accountable to have some sort of accountability and I think what's really interesting is the way to build that relationship, so it's coordinated and feels to those inside that it gives the most effective supports people possible. And that's where I can technology sits.

**Tim:** [00:02:05] Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. No, I agree. I mean I had a very interesting conversation with somebody relatively high up in FEMA the Federal Emergency Response agency and they were just shooting the breeze and we were taught he was I said something like First Responders and meaning like the police and.

ambulance service. And and he said yeah, the thing is they're not we're not the First Responders and I said what do you mean? He said, well thing is the First Responder is always the neighbor. It's the passerby it's the neighbor. It's the family member. It's the person who's on the scene because they don't get there like the the police and whatever don't get there for minutes afterwards.

It's yeah, the nurse is passing by or is you say the taxi driver who happens to be there or whatever so it's like that immediate Community response. The First Responders and then after that you layer in some organizational structure and and then of course you do need communication, but that was like an eye-opener for me because I always thought of it like as police thing

**Vim:** [00:03:10] that kind of structured way of looking at it.

If these are that this is the formal channel that we've been told to rely on when actually a time of Crisis your hat your life is in whoever it's random it's whoever's around at that time.

**Tim:** [00:03:25] Yeah, and you hope they know how to do CPR or. The Heimlich maneuver, whatever it is that is necessary. Yeah, so who we got us an interviewee then?

So our guest

**Vim:** [00:03:37] is Willow who is a freelancer.

I know she works for trust at the moment developing infrastructure willow used to work on the other side of the coin where she supported more Community led initiatives to work alongside government organizations.

And now does the opposite she works with the government organizations and it just was a really interesting conversation around what's happening at the moment and what's going to be what the changes are in the future and how to really Empower communities to make the best use of the skills sets they have already and I think what really spoke to me is the kind of the method the thinking of you know, so many great people doing great things already.

We need to help support that not replicate it and that's just so important to understand as part of all of this.

**Tim:** [00:04:25] You mean people doing great things locally on the ground or in the big room, you know, sort of globally. I haven't had I'm not quite sure. I understand who those people are that you're talking about.

**Vim:** [00:04:37] Yeah . I think locally on the ground. So local community is responding to whatever is happening

**Tim:** [00:04:42] and then providing support for that rather than yeah. Yeah, great.

So

**Vim:** [00:04:47] you know the kind of classic example would be the local communities able to cook for themselves and a time of Crisis, but they need blankets, but you don't have a government organization turning up with food and no blankets and it's that kind of thing if we just need to recognize what the skill set

Is that exists rather than doing what you think is best so what's needed

**Tim:** [00:05:08] okay. I'm so there's a huge element of listening to feedback and input rather than just going out there with your sort of pre-made kit of this is what a disaster should look like.

**Vim:** [00:05:20] Yeah, but I think it's even working with communities before it happens before the crisis happens because you never know when a crisis is going to take place, but no doing what resources exist and what informal infrastructures that were there already can save all of that time when something does happen,

**Tim:** [00:05:41] right? So in the sense that you you then find the people who could help or you know who they are and you built up trust I suppose I mean trust us be huge part of this as well.

**Vim:** [00:05:53] Yeah. Exactly. Yeah, definitely definitely.

It's such a fragile part of it as well because if you take what happens in Hurricane Katrina as an example that caused massive distrust in government organizations to respond

**Tim:** [00:06:05] or not respond. So yeah, I think that's and I think we've sort of we maybe start to assume that governments can step in and like the old days you didn't the locals would do it.

And

**Vim:** [00:06:20] yeah,

**Tim:** [00:06:20] I think that's some in some sense. That's a more resilient model perhaps.

**Vim:** [00:06:27] I think it is and it isn't I think it took that that's when it then pulls down to this accountability point of if it's all informal. How do you hold people accountable because it's you know, if it's your neighbor.

They give you the wrong advice or tell you the wrong thing at the wrong time. You can't really hold them accountable to anything.

**Tim:** [00:06:46] Yeah, although I think that there's a there's a there's a risk that you assume that all let me see what I'm trying to say that you seeming that all authority is relatively centralized which is think is a British confusion, you know, this could be handled by by local government.

We just don't like Britain we tend to assume that these things are. centralized partly I think because it's a relatively small island, but you know with with a big thing with with slow in a big area with slower infrastructure, then actually you want these things done by local government or local leadership and they might be accountably countable politically or some other way, but they might not be the national government.

**Vim:** [00:07:30] Yeah. Yeah, you're right and I mean, it's all well and good someone being accountable. That doesn't mean you. Are able to do anything about it. Anyway,

**Tim:** [00:07:38] um, well I think accountability is sort of implies that you could do something but whether you realistically can or not is that I guess is another question.

**Vim:** [00:07:48] Yeah, and I think that's where I'm getting at.

**Tim:** [00:07:50] so how does communication get into this and Tech?

**Vim:** [00:07:54] I'm probably not the best person to explain this because it went a bit over my head. So I will leave it to Willows description. Because she does a really good job of breaking it down into simple terms

**Tim:** [00:08:05] cool.

I'm looking forward to it. Let's let people listen then

**Willow:** [00:08:10] My name is Willow and I have historically been at the how do I put this I care about how Frontline populations organized themselves in response to crises and how they do and don't interface with formal response groups. So if they do want to interface with FEMA or the Red Cross or whatever else than what does that look like in a way that has mutual respect in it and if they don't.

How do we make sure that people are angry at the right people rather than this nebulous face of government or response agent they

**Vim:** [00:08:42] and when people are angry he think a bit deeper into

**Willow:** [00:08:45] that. Yeah sure thing so often when people are angry on the informal side, they're angry at the formal side for not filling perceived responsibilities, and it's not always clear who is responsible for doing what or why it's difficult to those things.

And when the formal side is angry with the informal side it is often because it is seen as people getting in the way or not having enough enough context to take appropriate action. Yeah,

**Vim:** [00:09:13] and how did you get into this? It's such a like for me not being a specialist in this area. It seemed to really Niche.

So what was your kind of journey into it?

**Willow:** [00:09:21] Yeah. So a lot of people who are involved with the. Either get involved because of humanitarian work that they were already doing or they get involved because they've been through something or their family has been through something. And neither of those was true for me.

I had of co-founded a hacker maker space in Seattle, which is since shut down and saw those spaces as indicators of local resilient. And so when I co-founded Geeks without bound. That was the perspective we took is that people of my interest areas of like technology and of my generation don't have the club's that our parents had we don't have the Elks and we don't have Odd Fellows or whatever else and so where would we go if there was a crisis and I just kind of assumed that we would go to our local hacker maker space.

And so what do we need to start doing in those places to increase our resilience more and as

**Vim:** [00:10:15] a whole bunch of stuff in that I'm being so could you tell us more about. Geeks without bounds and what that is how it started what it is is a movement as well.

**Willow:** [00:10:22] Sure. So Geeks withut Bounds is now under the let's see.

So Alicia Sterling is now the executive director and has been for four or five years. Now. It's great being able to be a part of the founding of something and then handing it off to someone that you trust and respect is amazing. But so it was founded as in seeing a lot of the response agencies not.

necessarily know what they were doing with technology and not benefiting from it. And so wanting to say look there are people all over the world with technical skills who want a way to help and don't know how so for the first few years. We were the host of many hackathons. So here's how to get involved and here's how to prototype things like that and then as we really dialed and how we were doing hackathons.

We started noticing that the projects coming out of them were really going anywhere like they're good ideas, but then what do you do and. GwoB transferred into being an accelerator for humanitarian projects where we provided six months of mentorship for 3 teams at a time to say look. How do you bring your prototype into actually being able to be pitched to one of these response agencies so they can adopt it or use it or buy it or whatever

**Vim:** [00:11:37] and how did that go?

**Willow:** [00:11:38] And now I think it's mostly about ad hoc response. So if people need a network set up somewhere. They help with that. There's still some team support. I'm not fully sure. I just trust it's going well. It's pretty rad

**Vim:** [00:11:54] that's

really is. What makes become is I like Response Unit and that way it's like it's responding to the needs of communities to set up these spaces for people to to grow and form ideas is the accelerator program still apart of that or is that something that's kind of

**Willow:** [00:12:09] I don't know.

Yeah, and it's one of those things where it's like my time with it was complete and. Now I trust it's doing what is appropriate to be done.

**Vim:** [00:12:20] Very very that's

really that's a lesson of like how to let go of things and let them become their own and yeah,

**Willow:** [00:12:25] it wasn't it wasn't easy and I wasn't very good at it for a while, but now it's better.

**Vim:** [00:12:31] Well, congratulations. So, where's that led to now? What were you working on at the

moment?

**Willow:** [00:12:36] So after Geeks without bounds, I did a Disaster Response like a digital response program with a group called aspiration Tech which does. Technology capacity building for nonprofits because the need that I saw was we were creating all these interesting tools and processes and a lot of the response agencies didn't know what to do with them.

And so that it was like well, let's help you figure out how to do that like it how to benefit from the inside. So I did that for two years and now I work with a group called Truss Works . Which does technical infrastructure primarily for government? And the reason I'm invested in that now is twofold one is I was tired of only looking at things when they broke.

I wanted to see what it was like to build infrastructure that was more resilient from the get-go and also because the thing I'm focused on is how groups scale so I was number I think 14 at this organization and we are now 72. Over the course of a year and a half and so looking at how organizations change and that like the questions of scale.

So what works at five doesn't work at 15 doesn't work at 50 doesn't work at 150 doesn't work at 500. We're living through that and I love it and that to me is a big question in the formal informal bridging for reasons that I can wax poetic to you about. It's actually interesting

to say

**Vim:** [00:14:00]

it's something I am well versed in in like that scaling of processes and how a particularly when you feel like a start-up how you keep hold of the positive stuff of that but also recognize that you're not you're not in that space anymore.

And as you grow people have a certain expectation about processes systems. HR, All of these different things and the impact that has on culture in the work you do and you know how you keep delivering stuff that that creates conversation and changes things. But yeah, really really interesting.

**Willow:** [00:14:30] Yeah. Yeah, it all breaks and fascinating ways and being in a high trust environment helps but

**Vim:** [00:14:38] working

in the in the response been going for kind of giving people the tools to rethinking the infrastructure. What would you say has been your biggest learning during that you seen it from? It from both sides of the coin.

**Willow:** [00:14:51] Yeah, the working method behind doing response and building is radically different in ways that I did not expect. It reminds me a bit of going from hosting hackathons to teaching a class and that you see the same people. Over and over again and the best analogy. I've come up with it so far as the difference between UDP and TCP.

**Vim:** [00:15:13] I don't know what they stand for.

**Willow:** [00:15:14] Okay, so it is a part of the the internet the the stack the internet stack of like how we transmit things and so it's the protocol so TCP is how we send email and it's basically 1 server saying I'm going to send you a thing and the other one saying okay, you're going to send me a thing, you know, say are you ready?

Yes. I'm ready. I sent thing I got the thing did. The thing I got is like it's this whole back and forth to it because it's vital that the thing lands versus UDP, which is streaming video like this right where you just blast all the packets and you assume that enough of them will get there that it works.

And so to me hackathons and Disaster Response, And also like the informal methods often match with UDP of just like a put it all out there. So hopefully enough of it lands that people can make the sense out of it that sort of thing versus teaching a class or building infrastructure or or just like having a regular exchange with the same humans on a regular basis is much more of the like check-in.

Did you get it? Yes, I got it that sort of thing. Does that mean?

**Vim:** [00:16:21] Yeah, that makes it that makes people will yeah, definitely and. In terms of the kind of the formal structures and infrastructure that's being built is that predominantly in the US or is it internationally that you're

looking at that

**Willow:** [00:16:36] right now

I'm looking at the US and I'm not focused on Disaster Response. And this it and I still help with help with it sometimes but it's mostly from a theoretical Viewpoint which I think is bullshit and the people doing the actual work should be like the smartest ones about it, but I still get to nerd out with people sometimes about how to involve to do stuff like that.

Yeah. Yeah, it's near and dear to my heart, but it's not a particularly well-supported space. You know being an adult at some point, so

**Vim:** [00:17:06] no, I get that and it's that it's that kind of passion about and purpose versus impact as well is you know is is working in the space the best use of what my skill set has to offer versus if I work this other space.

Can I still have the impact that I want to have in my inner

**Willow:** [00:17:22] exactly exactly and trusting that by creating an ecosystem of people who are looking out for each other and doing good work which then lays foundations for other sectors. That we do better overall. Even if it's not always shiniest

**Vim:** [00:17:40] some of the shiny but not necessarily what you imagined it to be.

**Willow:** [00:17:43] Yeah,

**Vim:** [00:17:43] this looks great, but there's actually doing look at what ended likes months ago.

**Willow:** [00:17:47] Yeah

**Vim:** [00:17:48] and kind of thinking now to the Future and like all of the learnings that you've had over the final last five years or so. What do you think the future looks like not just in Disaster Response but in the kind of infrastructure and the.

Ecosystems that you are building what change do you think that will have?

**Willow:** [00:18:06] Yeah, so I'm going to riff off of begin here who is from the New England complex systems Institute here in that as the world becomes more complex things that are centralized and hierarchical in a way that is not simple are going to fail by Simple by simply being too simple in a complex world.

And and so I think that we are going to be forced into being more. intentional all about when we apply informal or distributed structures versus formal and centralized structures simply because they're going to fail when they're not appropriately shaped. And so I see a future where FEMA is there to give money and doesn't really try to do other things and they're already on that path.

I see a future where office of emergency management is plugged into local communities and listens to them. And the local communities are leading because they understand the complexity of their environment and they are appropriately complex for it and I see this happening with other things as well for like we centralize our specialized Medical Care and our we centralize our libraries, but we are still Distributing every day treatment.

And preventive care and we're Distributing smaller lending libraries that aren't so so like does that make sense? That's that's the future that I see and I think that we can do it intentionally and have a smoother transition into it or we can wait for it to happen to us and have have more suffering.

**Vim:** [00:19:43] So you

mentioned FEMA that just for anyone who doesn't stand for that organization is you better just give a bit of a background.

Sure. So my main overlap was feet with FEMA was during Sandy. So the superstorm Sandy. I deployed with the FEMA field Innovation team as a part of Geeks without bounds and was there to bridge formal and informal that was our specific specific role and it was basically like there are all of these groups that could benefit from working together, but there's so much history and distrust

that they're unwilling to and so it was basically saying look you trust me and so I would like you to extend your trust of me to this other organization and and I'll kind of mediate that exchange and I did that with FEMA with an excellent crew. So Rich Serino who is the deputy director then was a fantastic Ally and Lee.

Sorokin was there and John Crowley and Gerald Scott and a stack of other people and it was really interesting FEMA wrote an after-action report on how powerful occupy Sandy was that I thought was really going to shift how we approach Disaster Response and you still see some flavors coming through during for instance.

Last year's hurricane season the year before is of instead of saying look the Cajun Navy isn't allowed to do anything and shut them down and said it was like well, we're going to kind of Turn The Blind Eye to some of this and so there's a little bit more tolerance occurring which is helping save lives.

And you think that tension between formal and informal will change over the future. So it's become more intentional with the structures and kind of hierarchies that we're building. Do you think that that will change

**Willow:** [00:21:26] I

think that there's always going to be so here. Here's some alliteration the distributed informal are always going to be adaptive like they can adapt to whatever is happening and the formal Side is always going to be accountable.

Yeah, and those two things are really difficult to do at the same time. And right now the trend is to try to make the one more like the other so you see groups like FEMA saying like we're going to be more adaptable and like more ad hoc and like no that's not that's not what you should be doing.

Please stop like your role is to promise that you can deliver very specific simple things and then do that. Don't say that you can get. The dietary restrictions that the 400 people in this neighborhood need to them because that's not something you can do. You can deliver them blankets like you know how to do that.

But the people who do know the neighborhood can get them those 400 different meals, but they might only get like 380 because 20 of them it didn't happen and there can't be an accountability mechanism there and so like there's a balance there to be had that makes.

**Vim:** [00:22:36] Yes, yes. Oh its perhaps whether you could really learn working together becomes even more important.

So one you're not over delivering on the same thing. So you're not ending up with 800 meals for 400 people and no blanket that kind of communication

**Willow:** [00:22:49] exactly.

**Vim:** [00:22:50] And in terms of like the the co.design aspect and and building trust with the people on the ground to do the informal work. What does that kind of relationship look like and how did it feel trying to bridge that gap and be that communicator

**Willow:** [00:23:06] people are

always already doing the work. What is there's some lovely quote of the decolonized mind starts with assume. Someone else is already here find them and amplify their voices, right? And so to me it was never about getting people to do the work. It was always about finding the people who are already doing the work and showing up and saying here are the resources I have.

How can I help you? Or do you want me to go away? Because I would like if you want me to leave I will does that answer your question

**Vim:** [00:23:35] does I'm also I've never had the frame the phrase decolonized mind before I'm

going

to

start

using it. That's amazing. Is it referencing a book or just kind of a new way of thinking?

**Willow:** [00:23:47] I am not sure that's an excellent question and one that I would like to know the answer to us. It's a quote. I saw on Twitter that really resonated with me.

**Vim:** [00:23:55] Yeah, it is amazing because I think so I speak about my parents are both immigrants and I speak about what it's like to have lots of different cultures and identities and approaching it from something.

See that feels more neutral and accepting of all of that is that it's the decolonize mind just sums up really nicely. That's

great. This

is

really good.

**Willow:** [00:24:17] But that does get into so one of the other reasons that I started working more closely on American things rather than like American Technical infrastructure rather than traveling all over the world.

Like I used to is it got to the there's this really difficult thing where because I have. Specialized skill set and I had the institutional credibility of a couple of universities. I could go into a place and be listened to when I would say radical things that other people wouldn't necessarily be listened to for and of the same time.

That means that the impetus for change was coming from the outside and the older I get the more of the opinion. I am that. It's okay. If we move slower so long as we are moving more justly and so it started to feel not good for me to be going other places and recommending to people how to how to live and how to respond to their own crises.

And at the same time to continue taking up verbal space. To me. The definition of a crisis is something that is beyond the capacity of the local Unity to respond to it which requires outside intervention. And so I would rather someone who understands that the community needs to lead. Even if they don't have the capacity to fill all the resource needs it get that's where the sweet spot is.

Does that make sense?

**Vim:** [00:25:43] Yeah,

I guess there's also a local need recognition as well be able to zoom out and think we can't handle this on our own we need that additional support. Whereas at the moment. It's it's almost as from my perspective. Anyway, it's all or nothing you either. Get help or you're not going to get help like internationally.

**Willow:** [00:26:02] Yeah,

**Vim:** [00:26:02] I think that's a really interesting spacious that space as well of the particularly with like colonization in mind of what do you think the responsibility is of external influence or help other for international aid in disaster relief?

**Willow:** [00:26:17] Yeah.

I think the court should always be leaving things better than you came and that includes paying attention to historical power dynamics and in.

This is and so there's this group. It's the Roddenberry Disaster Response Team that sets up water filtration systems and in disaster zones, but one are the things that they have figured out to do most of the time well all of the time they leave behind the water filtration equipment. That's huge.

So they don't take it with them when they go and it's like it maintains. Well Etc. The other thing is that they find places that often have not had access to clean drinking water even before the crisis, right and so and and how to set up businesses for the local groups around that and like pay attention power Dynamic so that it's people who are being uplifted in the long run who have been historically marginalized and so things like that are just so smart and build the future that I want to be in.

**Vim:** [00:27:15] Yeah,

and how do you think so we're in a time of drastic change at the moment so Harold, I mean, it's really depressing so much. And happening internationally from from natural disasters to man-made disasters to the political climate impacting like International Aid response. What do you think's going to happen over the next few years in terms of how we as humans help one another?

**Willow:** [00:27:43] Yeah.

I think that there are a couple of different things here. I think that Doctors Without Borders is a really good example of how to not exhaust the outrage cycle. So hospitals in Syria are still getting attacked but msf knows that they can't just say like hospitals are still getting bombed otherwise people will stop caring and so they have paid a lot of attention to the attention economy.

Really what is an idea from that I got from Center for civic media. So there's that part the other part is I anticipate a lot more direct Aid happening. So Tarifa was this project. Came through Geeks without bounds and then I spent a fair amount of time in Tanzania around where when water infrastructure breaks, right?

This is changed. But at the time you would file a report so you'd have to like take a day off of farming to walk to an office to submit a report that would then take like three months to get to the main office and then they would process it and maybe dispatch someone within the year to come and fix your water and so what and so people just call their friend to come fix it right there not.

And so the government's database of where all these water points are and their status is out of date. So they also can't allocate resources intelligent. And so a lot of people wanted to speed up the submission of the paperwork which removes three months out of a year and three months cycle. But the thing that Tarifa did was say look, you're getting you're all getting already going to call your friend will just make it free to call a group of people who could have access to fixing this they'll fix it.

They reported as fixed. Third party comes in verifies it and then someone pays and so I could definitely and so and then that updated the government database.

**Vim:** [00:29:33] Yeah,

**Willow:** [00:29:33] and so people get to fix it immediately, but then the government stays up-to-date and it's something where I could throw in 50 bucks to something like that and then like whoever is fixing water points gets paid.

That's great and I see that sort of. That sort of mutual Aid both at the local level of being able to just fix the thing and I is a person with a tech job in San Francisco can be like I have some extra money. Like I'll throw it at it's something that is people helping each other directly rather than all of these layers of bureaucracy and like bureaucracy is great.

Don't get me wrong. It can be really good. But if there is a way to directly support the people doing the work, so that's what I would like. So I would like to see that future does that mean? Yeah.

**Vim:** [00:30:14] Yeah,

and I think so this goes back to, Accelerates well of how you can Empower people that have these ideas like drive to go out and do this stuff without it being a fully-fledged commercial product to do the work as well as kind of it's a really interesting space because you've got the kind of full profit and purpose businesses that are you know, doing using capitalist to do good stuff.

Then you have the charity sector of which is just trying to like continually survive the in between there you've got. It's like there's an opportunity here. There are people that want to help but great can't physically gets the country or whatever that might be and it's how can we spark more conversation around that like middle bit

**Willow:** [00:30:59] Yeah, and how do you do it in a way that encourages the eventual death of capitalism rather than reinforcing?

**Vim:** [00:31:06] I mean that is a bold statement in and of itself

and what do you think

like do you see there being a movement towards that way of thinking in your field of work at the moment as an insider now

**Willow:** [00:31:20] I want there to be as far as technical infrastructure. There are a surprising number of people with radical View points

who still work for the u.s. Government and building infrastructure because structure like I don't know about the rest of that crew, but I consider myself a an anarchist institutionalist. I believe in institutions and also I don't believe in power structures or rather. I find them hugely problematic and so one of the reasons that I am not as involved in Disaster Response as I once was is because it was impossible for me to survive in the.

World in a world of capitalism while also speaking that truth to power like no one's going to pay me to disrupt their their structure and so I'll do it more discreetly from over here.

**Vim:** [00:32:13] I've

tried that line for a while. What do you think? The biggest shift is going to be? So other than that kind of personal like personalization to good causes or to companies that make a difference.

What do you think a big another big shift will

be.

**Willow:** [00:32:28] If we go back to Rebecca Solnit's a Paradise built in Hell, which is one of my all time favorite books, especially about Disaster Response. The people taking care of each other in a time of Crisis is based in part upon their level of distrust of the ability of the current Administration to care for them.

So if people expect the government to show up and fix things for them, they don't fix it for themselves. And one of the biggest shifts that I would like to see is people taking care of each other and themselves as a part of the government mechanism. They I still believe that America is also of the people like our government is not it's not about voting at least in my in my heart right?

It's about how we create governance structures ourselves and how that what that looks like in a national scale. And so that. The biggest change that I would like to see is is this collaboration this intentional collaboration between groups like FEMA and groups, like occupy Sandy of we recognize that the people is the people are the government and so and we are a branch of the government.

And so we are going to show up and try to do this into that makes any sense. I don't know

**Vim:** [00:33:42] it's

a one bit

the people that government and one idea that I've been thinking about really recently is what new democracy looks like. And how there needs to be a shift in the role that government and local and centrally plays in recognizing that there's a new demo.

There is a new democracy that's taking place whether we like it or not and the the role of media has grown and more stronger in that and. More and more people recognize that they have a voice and then willing to use in lots of different ways. So what does that mean for new structures new new forms of democracy new, new powers that people have and that in that filtering through to not just ourselves is delivers, but how we respond to crisis and how we offer disaster relief is really really interesting.

I've not thought about that before.

**Willow:** [00:34:35] Have you already talked to someone from God 0 in Taiwan?

**Vim:** [00:34:38] No,

**Willow:** [00:34:38] I would highly recommend it. They are re-examining what democracy looks like from a technical Viewpoint and not just the like how you do campaigning and how you vote. But also how you create legislation and interact with your peers through as augmented by technology.

I have a huge organizational crush on them.

**Vim:** [00:35:01] Yeah.

Yeah I can imagine why that's

for you. Really interesting and in terms of like the way you've done internationally what surprised you the most in how different countries response to disaster.

**Willow:** [00:35:14] What

an interesting question. I haven't really thought about it before most of the work that I did overseas was humanitarian work as opposed to disaster work.

I think that we have a lot of space to do humanitarian work within the borders of America, but people get their hackles up about that concept.

**Vim:** [00:35:33] Or even how how different countries respond to humanitarian aid, but what's been surprising?

**Willow:** [00:35:40] Yeah, I think so much of the difference has to do with ego and like National level ego of some countries expect it and some countries are reliant upon it and some countries absolutely don't want it.

Even if they probably need it and it has so much to do with pride and I think that we could so much more easily just say like everybody needs help sometimes and we will accept help from anyone because often there are very poor countries who are able to provide expertise and people and even some money because they want to and if we were to set aside our our egos a bit more we could have I think better international relations based solely on how we help each other in times of Crisis and

**Vim:** [00:36:32] in I don't want.

One

of my frustration

is inequality. So we value our lives differently depending on what gets covered in the news or proximity to our own country or a whole band of stuff goes into that. But how do you think that will change if at all?

**Willow:** [00:36:48] Yeah, that is hard. I reminded of another Civic Center for civic media project about where the news pays attention to and so looking at the locations of what was covered by.

Al Jaziera and by New York Times And by the Guardian and buy a bunch of different groups and its distinct a lot of people pay attention to America and a lot of people pay attention to the English-speaking world. And then we pay less attention to people who aren't white and. Stupid but I do see groups trying to lead people into caring more about places that contain people that don't look like them and I say that as a white person and so one of the things for instance is the missing maps from do you already know about this?

**Vim:** [00:37:40] No, I don't I was just

**Willow:** [00:37:42] like, okay. No, it's good. So humanitarian openstreetmap and Doctors Without Borders teamed up to say look, we don't have maps of big parts of the world. And we need to know where villages and roads are like we ran into this during Ebola response. We didn't know where the villages and roads were.

So it was really difficult to deploy resources there. And and so there's this whole thing of like you can help us map these things out which is great and then that plugs into sometimes if there's a crisis and we want people to go through it's called map Mill you like go through a bunch of map tiles really quickly and.

A damage assessment of it's really damaged. It's less damaged. It's fine so we can create a heat map through statistical significance to figure out where to show up with a piece of paper that says we would like to provide you resources. Please sign here, right? But once we've hit statistical significance on some of those squares we can also say look we're covered on this area, but there was actually a flood over here that you probably haven't heard about before are you okay to look there too and help us do that and so kind of taking that moment of good.

intention and energy that people offer where they want to help and they have that empathy and saying we're actually pretty covered with this group also needs your empathy and small nudges in that way are gives me some hope. Yeah, and

**Vim:** [00:39:02] I think that's really to dumb it down even further. It just reminds me of when things go viral on Twitter and you then see the person who sent the viral tweet say and hey, I've got this book for sale or something.

Is that same thing of like. While actually I've got your attention check out this person do this other thing which you know, it's great.

**Willow:** [00:39:23] Yeah. So one thing that I worked on with some some friends after the Trump election was something called together list, which is a repository. So a lot of lists were being sent around like here are organizations that you can donate to or volunteer at and.

Lists are great and I'm glad people curated them but they're awful to look at and search through and so we put it into this interface that is much easier to say like I care about the following causes. This is state. I'm in I want to volunteer and it shows you the following five options right that sort of thing.

And as more of these organizations end up in that database that as we end up with cycles of outrage about terrible things that are happening in the world, but we want to find the people who are already doing the work. We now have a database. Base of people already doing the work so you can go and join your effort with theirs which

**Vim:** [00:40:14] glue which goes nicely full circle

the color line. Someone's already doing it. Let's help them do it rather than

starting

our own thing.

**Willow:** [00:40:21] Yeah. Exactly.

**Vim:** [00:40:22] Really cool.

I think that's a perfect point to kind of wrap up the conversation and you've mentioned loads of great things that if you could send those over that be really helpful, but just as a closing note, is there anything you'd like to leave behind for our listeners?

**Willow:** [00:40:34] I think the thing that I would recommend is that. Anyone can do good work and by taking care of yourself and by taking care of your neighbors, you create a system in which these other things are like a system of resilience. And so if you have the extra energy to help other people who are even further away.

Yes also do that, but don't feel badly. If you can't take care of take care of your own stuff first and then and and don't be a dick to the people who are doing it. Okay, that's what I've got.

**Vim:** [00:41:08] That's really great.

Well, thank you so much. Thanks for your time.

**Willow:** [00:41:11] Thank you so much

**Vim:** [00:41:12] Thank You!

**Willow:** [00:41:13] Nice

meeting you.