**distributedFuture-32**

**Tim:** [00:00:00]

so I'm Tim Panton

**Vim:** [00:00:01] and I'm Vimla Appadoo

**Tim:** [00:00:02]

and this is the. Distrbuted future podcast where we interview people who you might not have heard from but who are doing really interesting stuff that might affect what the future looks like.

So our goal is to kind of, you know, gently ask them questions about what they're doing and see see you may be weither that tells us what we will all be doing in the future outside their their speciality as it spreads out into the rest of the world and the the name is a quote from alleged quote from William Gibson, who said "the future is out there.

its just not evenly distributed yet." Although he denies actually having said that which is kind of weird.

Anyway, there you go. So yeah, this episode is an interview with Imran Ali about the idea of social Enterprise. So we got discussing. I mean, we're both kind of been in tech for quite a while and we were sort of wondering about whether the intrinsic structure of the way that Tech is funded and done and to some extent kinda run for the benefit of the of the of the investors typically or at any rate the founders and not necessarily orientated around the community, consumers where that intrinsically means that it's like going to be a less good outcome for everybody else. And you know, we were sort of beating a chest a little bit about how Dreadful it is that we've let ended up with tech in the state. It's in at the moment with like a whole lot of kind of unwanted outcomes and whether doing something with social Enterprise where you know the target is to meet your users needs would be better and it's like it's really interesting space. I mean, I don't have never done a certain kind of know people who've done social Enterprises, but I've never actually done one.

So kind of interesting to see how that might play out. Have you come across them is it something you've done?

**Vim:** [00:01:54] Yeah. Well I. I was part of the organizing company for dotforge impact which was helping for profit and purpose companies. So really embedding that social good in into the structure. so with dotforge we were trying to bridge the gap between for-profit organizations and purpose organizations to say that technology can be built to be for profit and purpose but what we found was traditional Tech investors, as soon as you kind of mentioned anything with purpose they switched off because all they wanted was the return on investment and similarly with social enterprise funders or investors as soon as you said technology or profit they switched off because all they wanted was the purpose and those two things were definitely at loggerheads. But this was kind of what three three years ago that we were trying to do this and I think the landscape has changed significantly since then.

**Tim:** [00:02:45] Yeah. I mean, I think the that doesn't so it's the investment model that you're tripping over there because you like the blockers were the investors who although if I understood you right like it was the investors kind of mindset that. Messing you up rather than

**Vim:** [00:03:00] oh, yeah. Yeah.

**Tim:** [00:03:01] I mean, I think what's interesting and talk to somebody about this a while back a long time ago actually and he was saying that it's only works if it genuinely serves a community and it at least breaks even then he put in some seed money into actually quite an interesting venture in terms of like its success.

But yeah, he he said that like beyond the seed money. He's not putting more money in and each of those things has to be. A self-funded he will put effort in but you said that it keeps it kind of keeps it honest almost in the sense that because it's serving the community and getting income from the community, but it has to be responsive to that Community.

Yeah, I think that's interesting and well, I haven't really understood and I'm not sure that there's a good answer for is whether you can do that in a distributed Community. Like

**Vim:** [00:03:52] what do you mean by Distributed

one

**Tim:** [00:03:54] that isn't localized so there isn't like, you know, the. The Hull cycle repair shop or the Broadband for East lancs or whatever.

So some like localized physical Community whether you can do it for, you know, the collective of people who want fluorescent tattoos all over the world.

**Vim:** [00:04:14] I'm not sure you

can I

really hope that there is soon an answer to that that means it is possible. But at the moment I think the the way I kind of see need is based on that locality.

And as soon as you start to try and scale without understanding the low the locality or the Community start to lose the ability to meet that need.

**Tim:** [00:04:36] Yeah, I mean it's funny this almost reminds me what you just said almost reminds me of the conversation we had with Melissa about the Cannabis Information Network where she was blending that thing of having a local like it was all centered around local physical meet up, but then there was a like a network tier that sort of joined up those groups and allowed allowed the scale and allowed them to like interact between cities, but the fundamentals of.

Or always like locality based.

**Vim:** [00:05:09] Yeah, exactly

**Tim:** [00:05:10] interesting thing that we like comming around again almost

**Vim:** [00:05:13] and I think it

doesyeah, and it's also really similar to what to the conversation we had with Willow. It's that thing if you have to meet the needs of the people there you can't just swoop in and assume that what worked in Manchester is going to work in Liverpool because it just won't it there's there a new alliances and differences in those two communities that mean something needs to be tweaked or tailored.

to the the community that they're serving. Otherwise the structures fail and there needs to be that kind of recognition and understanding that that's what's happening as well.

**Tim:** [00:05:46] Yeah. Yeah, I'm not going but again, I think that's very very localized I think. It's an interesting challenge to see whether we can come up with a model that allows you to do this but in a non-local way because all the historical precedents are things like coops and you know, the other historical social Enterprise type businesses have been very much around a geography and I wonder whether we can like come up with a way of doing that and a non-geographical way or that around the topic, but I haven't seen it done.

Well yet so let's listen to 2 the chat that I had with within Imran.

**Imran:** [00:06:24] so, my name is Imran Ali, I'm the co-founder of digital R&D lab called carbon imagineering and all.

Well co-founder of a company called 40 Chapel Street that's building a hub for social Enterprise Arts and Technology and Bradford and a couple of side gigs include being a trustee for the IOU theater in Halifax and the media center.

**Tim:** [00:06:45] So I kind of hear that you're from that that you're like on the intersection of Art and Technology just that fair or and very much local-based.

**Imran:** [00:06:54] Yeah. I'm kind of

**Tim:** [00:06:55] fair summary

**Imran:** [00:06:56] of moved to that intersection. I think it came from a purely sort of Technology design background and I think as things have unfolded in my career my own interests have changed and I've seen something dictations of things that I've built all been involved in creating. I'll become more interested in the impact socially politically whatever but also the Arts world seems like a more interesting source of innovation in technology than the startup world.

So just kind of dovetailing postal interests with what I think I kind of interested in a sections in the tech sector. I wouldn't. So he said I was local but I'm I think I've tried to understand where you can sort of create Innovation ecosphere local and I just led me to doing more stuff around the North.

**Tim:** [00:07:40] Yeah, I mean, I think you know, I sort of think I first came across you as a starting a community probably in Leeds to sort of tech Meetup in Leeds and I like every time I bumped into you you've been kind of doing something that is around building a community around the topic in an area and that seems to be the sort of the common themes you get a buzz out of that.

Is that does it work? How does that play out?

**Imran:** [00:08:05] Yeah for

sure.

And actually I'm just a reminder, but I know exactly where we met. It was in the lobby of a hotel in San Francisco we were both at a conference.

**Tim:** [00:08:13] I true it's true.

**Imran:** [00:08:15] You introduced me as the only other person from the north of England. Yeah. It was it was that we're sorry, so you can you repeat.

**Tim:** [00:08:25] I was actually thinking of old broadcasting house and yeah, well the tech meetups which you were doing there.

**Imran:** [00:08:32] That's

right. I mean that was that was a happy accident. The University of Leeds Beckett University of the time had taken over the old BBC building old Broadcasting House. Kitted out with various things and didn't quite know what to do with it.

So we myself and a couple of friends heard about this thing called co- working in San Francisco. And for we could do that but do that here and I guess the sort of impose their was let's just be as generous as we can with this amazing facility. We've been given it led to meeting people at yourself.

What can when you sort of weaponize generosity what congealed thing I was motivation. Is

**Tim:** [00:09:04] it possible to kind of guess where things will go because it when you said in the intro that you were. Interested in in whether you'd seen where things had gone that you'd built earlier and like what direction they'd gone in is it possible to guess now kind of where your the stuff you're doing now where that will end up you steering in the

direction

for that

**Imran:** [00:09:26] when I tend to think more in terms of what are the interesting provocation questions.

But you can form rather than what's a possible future or build a future that's a fiction and try and understand what the implications of that Vic. I think just looking back a little bit. I've become really conscious of my kind of early part of my career was working and freeserve a big National ISP the company sort of hooked up a lots of people to the internet for the first time and I think our everybody involved in that was very much.

Of a kind of libertarian or left-leaning bent. I saw a natural impulse towards up and less in collaboration and yet we just didn't have the ethical Frameworks to understand whether what we're doing and how we're doing it was correct if there is such a thing as correct and I guess now sort of 15 or 20 years later.

We're seeing the backlash and the real implications of the things for example that we thought were very open become the sort of building blocks of early tyranny whether you look at some surveillance state or the rise of the far, right? Take some you know, the manipulation data for advertised political gain.

I feels like if we had a better education on a grounding in another professional ethic about understanding the implications of the things that you do. Maybe we'd build back tech. Maybe you make better design decisions. Maybe you more inclusive about how you craft things. So I think that's it's raised those kinds of questions and I think maybe the future that I'm hoping for is that those kind of humanity Humanities practices make it into tech as a kind of instinct.

So, you know, there's. It's a fetish about learning to code things are not necessarily learning how to listen or they need to understand. What

**Tim:** [00:11:00] what well, oh, yeah. I mean a lot of us who were kind of in on that early internet boom carrying a lot around a lot of guilt the things that we didn't do. I mean, although some of us tried and like didn't necessarily manage to get buy-in from everybody else.

It's like no making things more secure or making things more private or you know, be more open about what was happening

**Imran:** [00:11:20] is fighting for the things that we did do well like, you know, Think about something really trivial a technology like RSS, which really rapidly became the glue for lots of interesting orchestration between different Technologies and services and all of those pieces of up missing components of openness of been shut down and walled off I guess some of this is like a pokeing at capitalism as well and how that's shit.

The choices that we've all made mother that's fit for purpose.

**Tim:** [00:11:48] It's certainly been kind of podcasting is the last set of redoubt of RSS and

**Imran:** [00:11:53] after yeah and father

**Tim:** [00:11:55] and and it's been a quite enlightening building this podcast just like how hard you have to struggle to stay off platforms like the obvious thing to do is oh.

Would just whack it on Soundcloud or whatever and or will only do it on iTunes and actually trying to stay neutral and trying to stay with an RSS feed that actually makes sense is surprisingly hard actually, so yeah, I mean fighting for for even those small things are quite difficult to fight for these days because you're swimming against the tide very much.

**Imran:** [00:12:32] Yeah, that's the quite disheartening to hear because you just assume that it's something that RSS has been neglected. Rather than kind of activity killed. Yeah, it seems just kind of keeping that impulsive openness and this alive is difficult and I don't even when you want to do it,

but

**Tim:** [00:12:46] it's been monetized rather than killed.

**Imran:** [00:12:50] Yeah, that's about way of putting it but I mean it was seen as Superfluous and know even things like news aggregation services and whatever what. You know helps people curette very personalized and crafted handcrafted you that are what the world is now just a packaged app from Apple. For example.

**Tim:** [00:13:09] Yeah,

**Imran:** [00:13:09] very little agency the over what happened so don't know it feels like a few one possible future out of all of that addressed. The question is returning to some of those things and understanding what was valuable other evolutions of those cultures and Technologies or is there something new and also, Be you know, how do you put a I have thought a lot about eco-spheres for Innovation in recent years and a lot of that's been you know podcast rating between big institutions, like universities financiers and whatever the maybe it's something else now.

It's like how do you really bake in? You know Democratic Values into things that you construct is the others you sources of innovation like institutions useful anymore when there's lots of other ways this kind of stuff done. I had a really profound experience working on a university research project a couple of years back.

Were we were tasked with building a community storytelling platform and rather than just go off and make something and then train people to use it. We spent a year half just listening to various communities around the country, you know, there's a community of Potters in Stoke-on-Trent amateur archaeologist in on the island of Bute people that didn't really have any relationship with technology maybe age groups that were quite literate with them.

And that sort of really deep anthropological hanging out with people really inform something beautiful. So we ended up creating something that they felt like they had made and I think that's sort of slower and deeper more meaningful collaborate collaborative way of building things may be missing so always about failing fast and growth curves rather than you know, what's really meaningful and impactful.

**Tim:** [00:14:45] I think the only place we see that slow. Development at the moment is is in the open source communities where you know, okay, there's quite often a kind of rush to get at least a bedrock in place that people can then build on but then from then on you can see these things iterating and and like people take them in surprising ways or and it is also necessary to build a sort of consensus around what what the thing does and is for and who it's for otherwise, well if there isn't then it bifurcates and you know, forks and you get two different versions of it one for this community one for the other but I think that's that's probably the only place I can think of in kind of pure Tech where you're starting where you still see that collaborative approach

**Imran:** [00:15:30] kind of interested in the governance structures around not so much creating and bifurcating of things but.

You know how company like WordPress for example continues to be really open and collaborative and distributed but also have a very tight cohesive thing that it make and maybe some lessons that to be learned and I think there's actually outside of corporate life. Lots of interesting stuff that is happening a bunch of my old colleagues now work for NHS digital in Leeds and there, you know sort of tearing up how the NHS is Digital Services work by involving people.

Involving and patients users and customers in the design of

thing. Well really hard

**Tim:** [00:16:08] well and and an unusual thing and I mean, I haven't done any work in the NHS we decades but when I did like the last person you asked was the users it was all about specifications and and contracts and very few users and then you drop it on their desks and they'd say but I'll be wearing surgical gloves.

I can't possibly do

that.

**Imran:** [00:16:32] Yeah. Very first word that ever did was in the NHS is a placement student and we working on a neonatal Ward with perinatal kids that will come is really long and and not one stage was I asked to talk to parents or obviously cuttlefish. Yeah, we're always struck me even then back in the 90s and like, you know, maybe we can learn something by listening to the parents anxieties or the clinicians rather than dragging and dropping buttons together to make something cool.

**Tim:** [00:16:59] Yeah, and so you're saying. You finding that the artistic world is is more Innovative. I think you said and it better be a better space for Innovation. I think you said

**Imran:** [00:17:12] maybe Innovations are wrong term, but I'm thinking for me the startup World in Tech 15 years ago or ten years ago seemed like the most momentous Agent of Change.

I'd ever witnessed my short life

**Tim:** [00:17:26] and it was

**Imran:** [00:17:27] yeah and that's the last that is true. I mean, I'm still astonished at how quickly the. Option of something's happening on my parents in their 70s carry smartphones and used a bunch of different digital service out of so, yeah. I mean, that's the really great indication but I think what I was starting to find frustrate the ideas, we've not necessarily that interesting and maybe there's a sort of plateau these things anywhere that continues time, but all seen the kind of provocations and disruptions or really interesting me coming from kind of arts and culture sector which isn't really that literate

digitally in this country, but they were still trying to understand where they fit into this world and how they could specifically some organizations were approaching me to think about how they could be more porous and more open to their audiences and funders and backers and organization level, but then in terms of artistic practice, you know people just doing interesting stuff with things like data with performance. Performance is something I think that's really overlooked sort of the performing arts dance.

These kind of things and not necessarily seen as the natural fits for digital collaboration. So I wanted to understand what what opportunities are there. Not necessarily emotionally, they just creatively and it was a I think a lot of these organizations open because they're funded by bodies like the Arts Council they will be leaned on to become more digital whatever so there was an appetite for sure, but it was really telling you know some organizations that would tell you I wanted to be more porous when you'd help them establish programs.

To explore being open and collaborative would quickly realize it's just not for them. We don't want to know what an audience is thinking more. We don't want to upset that power relationship between audiences and artists and others really wanted it to disrupt the wind them up some I mean, I'm continuing to see that's interesting.

I did some work with the future everything Festival in Manchester over a couple of years. That was a real eye-opener for me. That was a really tight relationship between the Arts world and technology and actually even though you can separate them two different worlds. There's a natural back and forth.

I think

**Tim:** [00:19:26] yeah, I mean I do. I don't think she kind of come across it but we I do an occasional collaboration with a friend of mine. Who's a I suppose sculptor is probably right. I don't know she makes big things anyway and quite often they have an electron not always quite often. They have an electronic component and you know their Blinky lights or whatever, but but the fun thing is is actually seeing how people interact with them because of the.

Typically, if she builds in technology, then it's interactive technology. It interacts with the audience. And for me is like the the guy who's normally behind the desk and and hiding from this actually seeing how the audience how the users of a sculpture behave with it and how they treat. It is actually really really interesting kind of very good for me to kind of go out there and see how how drunks behave with with the sculpture is actually always to moving.

**Imran:** [00:20:22] We did a program with Hep West Gallery in Wakefield few years back and that's really well-regarded collection of sculptural work connecting the battery up with but the museum is not very kind of the sorry galleries not very well regarded in Wakefield itself. So they wanted to understand how we could change that Dynamic one of the artists that we work with recorded.

What was it kind of alternate audio tracks for the museum tours. The audio tracks are made up of. opinions of the people of the city rather than the artists and Cuba is really sort of undermined the narrative all the works that are in there. But I kind of thought that was bold. Yeah, that was Brave to allow you to sort of tune in and out of different opinions.

And at least it made the residents of the Town feel a bit more connected to this weird alien structure in the middle of their city. And then that kind of things kind of interesting me and I think there's a more deliberate impulse in arts and culture communities and organizations. To work with very different diverse communities which you know tech Parts itself on the back for being meritocracy motorbike and you know super diverse and there's light is just isn't just isn't fun and I say that as I've never suffered any issues and in the industry being the person of color, but it's definitely there.

These you witness all the time and in you know, it's no accident that Google has image databases and image recognition that recognizes black people as gorillas. I mean

our last week and

**Tim:** [00:21:53] we had we had a whole interview with somebody who's looking at the ethics of AI in fact to and and that whole area is is fascinating and surprisingly like easy to fall into those kinds of Errors, you know, particularly because.

Maybe that's like that's kind of off topic. But but data provenance is the big issue there. It's like where

do you get

that data from? How do you get permission for it and all that stuff? It's like huge the under neglect under under valued. I think as a problem space, but

the

**Imran:** [00:22:27] best thing most succinctly.

Analysis available Ai and ethics is like. You want better AI be better people. Yeah, it sounds glib but also like yeah, nobody teaches. Where do you learn that? Where do you learn to be, you know, inclusive and respectful and balance. I think there's a broader problem there that we just got the things.

Across all cultures and civilizations that used to bind us together and create some sort of solidarity amongst disconnected communities are not there anymore. Whether it's religion or unions or political parties. Everyone's kind of digging down into their own issues rather than trying to understand.

What was the commonality here and crafting things around that commonality whether it's institutions or Tech or alright work Game of Thrones. Maybe that was the last thing the band has all together.

**Tim:** [00:23:12] I mean, we I've been as part of what I'm working on at the moment I've got. Hung out with in the infosec hacker space a bit more I'm going to used to used to be in it years ago and now sort of circle back to to rejoin it and that's super interesting because typically they there are there very often.

There's only one or two infosec people in a company. And nobody else in the company understands what they're doing and in general people don't want to hear from them because it's always bad news. And so they have like a metacommunity of themselves. Like they all talk to each other. They were ton of backchannels amongst each other and they all go to to these little Regional conferences.

Mostly I think so it can kind of feel like it's not just them against the world. So that's a community, but it's. Physically, well it was going to say it's physically spread out but it kind of isn't because a lot of these the conference's that the are actually very Regional there's like, you know, there's one in Liverpool the other day.

There's one in Manchester coming up like that sort of and Sheffield and it's this one in Leeds or not. But that sort of granularity of a relatively small geographical area. It has to be just about enough to get you know, a couple of hundred infosec people into a room. To make a working Community, but they really really value Community because they're excluded within their workplace has typically

**Imran:** [00:24:41] been to the chaos Computer Club as it chaos computer Congress,

**Tim:** [00:24:46] so I haven't been I've been to the been to the chaos Computer Club in Berlin, but I haven't been to the Congress Congress is a bit big.

I'm not I don't really like really big events. I'm mildly claustrophobic. And I find huge events hard work. So I'm

**Imran:** [00:25:06] just curious because I've read about I'm not I'm never been myself, but I always there was a kind of countercultural thing about that and add maybe a bit of a crossover with people like infosec Community.

**Tim:** [00:25:17] Yeah.

**Imran:** [00:25:17] Well, I think that's maybe what's lacking in the broader Tech thing. I was always felt like something countercultural to me. Even if you drive it far as far back as what was The Homebrew computer club or whatever it was in California and Well and all those sorts of. There was also something that was subversive in counterculture and I think as it's become more gentrified if you like that's why it's lost some this bite and maybe humanity and maybe things like the communities that you just talking about carry some of that still

**Tim:** [00:25:46] I think of building it a fresh actually it's different.

I mean, it's recognizably different from from the Well type ethic. I mean, there's still some old school ones around but it's a it's more. More inclusive I think than than that generation were and and more interested in inequality. And yeah, I mean, I'm still kind of feeling my way into the into these these that space again.

So I'm sort of still slightly hesitant to kind of speak. Like I know what I'm talking about on on them because I kind of don't I don't think but it's interesting spase. Anyway,

**Imran:** [00:26:22] we are of the same mindset the moment where I'm feeling like I'm a student again. Just trying to. And the bad habits and one of the other areas that I've been become more interested in recently just things like social Enterprise which is a phrase.

I've never come across until maybe three or four years back and whether that has some implications for how you craft Tech organizations. If everything if every tech that was a social Enterprise with some defined purpose, would you get better outcomes? Perhaps I don't

know.

**Tim:** [00:26:51] So give me a definition of social Enterprise.

I think I got one, but I think it's probably different from yours, right?

**Imran:** [00:26:58] Probably probably get upset all social Enterprise become because I don't have a working definition my head but I guess it's any company. It doesn't have to be nonprofit necessarily but not the private profit but has a mission or a social issue or Community or problem is that they're trying to tackle that think of an interest tech people.

Actually, I don't know if there are any and all the right here in Bradford where I live there's a company called solidariTech which recycles old. Computer and phone they'll computer and phones for newly arrived refugees and Asylum Seekers so they can participate in digital like that. And it's I think that constitute is a social Enterprise.

**Tim:** [00:27:38] So is it is it is it a legal construct? I mean, is there a separate legal?

**Imran:** [00:27:43] Not

necessarily? I think I mean the advice I've had is let's say your private limited company. You can be a social Enterprise but generally the limited by guarantee you can buy shares but then. Things like a community interest company.

Or a charity. There's a more obvious structures I guess but maybe the overhead there is a little much for an entrepreneur to go but I think especially for your charity the governance and oversight you need to have in place maybe puts people off and I've been working with somebody that used to be part of Unlimited big social Enterprise foundation, and I'm kind of learning a few things from him just about what kinds of people what kinds of organizational that and my cousin.

set up cycling business. That's a social Enterprise where she's teaching women from disadvantaged backgrounds how to ride a bike cool, but she's making a profit and she's you know reinvest those back into the company and there's a mission. There's a really defined mission for what it is. So I'm wondering there if you know, if you're let me think of something if you were somebody like Wikipedia or WordPress, you know, there's a clear Mission there the the trying to make this is not about maximizing profits, but it's about maximizing the use of something perhaps.

Maybe making something making something Wealthy on the side. If you have that sort of mission. Does it inoculate you against bad choices and bad decisions mind you you know, Google's that they don't want to be evil. But yeah did not necessarily had evil avoidance mechanisms built into the company's structure.

**Tim:** [00:29:11] It's a

bit of a bland goal. It's not I mean their original thing. That's what was it organize the world's information or something, which at least Is a is it goal that at least coherent and I was gonna say achievable but you know, you can work towards it at least but I think yeah and I'm going to think that's the it's interesting to see how those things that it's so basically what you're saying is it's about targeting a specific like a goal and the goal isn't.

The primary goal isn't to make money it's to do something else and if like making money is a necessary part of it then then go do that as well.

**Imran:** [00:29:46] Although I think they're all from what I understand. It's all about being sustainable as well. So financially sustainable. It is still an Enterprise. It's not a voluntary organization

so there are real costs real Investments to be made. I think it's a sort of it's a question worth exploring. What are the implications are. If you are a incubator of startups, for example by providing them all with a sort of social Enterprise 101 education change the outcomes there. Does it equip them with the knowledge to go and find people that can provide really deep Humanity skills for what they are doing.

I don't know. It's interesting and I think. That's kind of where I'm at at the moment. We work is just what's the intersection between Arts Tech and social Enterprise. What what's the mix there? What can it yield get it yield a more kind of human way of and responsible way of Building Technology can give you more interesting intersection between technology art for example.

**Tim:** [00:30:41] Well, I think most people who go into a start-up do it because there's something they want done now. It might be that might be a like a kind of piece of mathematical satisfaction or something. Generally, it's a you know, there's a thing they want to build because they want people to use it. And so my inclination is to say that like most startups could be social Enterprises from that point of view, but then I think there's a problem of like a lot of startups.

These days are a particularly in Tech are aimed at growing big and being fast and like dominating and I think that's where we're running anathema to to the more community-based social

sensitivities.

Just that

**Imran:** [00:31:23] language that you've used as really revealing about how we think about our industry that it's very male-dominated thrust in conquering.

It's a conflict almost rather than something that's being created and there's a consensus or an agreement amongst lots of people and maybe that even things like that just challenging that language but then you know, you get a kind of washing of that as well wear fuzzy friendly colorful companies like Google can appear to be.

humane when I see them, you know monstrous capella stretches and I see a lot of it this a lot of what you've said that is rooted in our sort of Reliance on Capital

**Tim:** [00:32:01] right

one of the more interesting side things that I've been doing is working in the standard space specifically on the IETF and I'm dying to get somebody from the IETF to come and come and talk failed so far, but we'll see how we get to but they have this thing about consensus.

They like this they don't vote on standards. There is no voting. There's the feeling of the room there's consensus. There's a few other kind of guidelines, but essentially like if you don't have a consensus, it doesn't move forward which makes for a wholly different like way of a room behaving of a group behaving which is really interesting.

I mean, it's not necessarily. It's going to come down with a vicious but like it's still fairly the still not necessarily even adversarial but people still have things they want to try and Achieve and people who they disagree with and all of that that's still all happening for

do

there

**Imran:** [00:32:57] are still agendas.

Right,

**Tim:** [00:32:58] right exactly.

But but you have to form a consensus if you want the thing to happen which is

**Imran:** [00:33:05] and to lead to better decisions in the end?

**Tim:** [00:33:08] Yes

or no. I think it's quite. It only really works because they combine it with a couple of other fairly pragmatic things the thing about so rough consensus is always paired with running code.

So like, you know, if you can do both then great if you get a rough consensus, but nobody can make this work and nobody can be bothered to make this work. Then it's not worth the anybody's time which is like that's that that they're sort of almost the two legs of the thing there that if you don't have both then like one can run away with the other.

Have a consensus on something that's completely on buildable because nobody has to do it.

**Imran:** [00:33:46] That's true.

**Tim:** [00:33:48] Yeah, I'm

real sure we both seen that happen. I'm

**Imran:** [00:33:51] just thinking that if you could have a standards body that was creating standards for completely fictitious Technologies.

**Tim:** [00:33:57] Oh, I'm sure that's I mean, you know, there are standards the ietf's well.

Yes, there are some i mean there's one about carrier pigeons, but that's yeah, it's explicitly a joke, but

**Imran:** [00:34:07] right right,

okay,

**Tim:** [00:34:08] but you know, there are some other ones that are equally Arcane that nobody's actually. Build everybody thought well, I'm going to use that true don't

**Imran:** [00:34:17] know something in that.

I mean, I've I'm a big fan of design fictions and using them to explore how lots of different parties might respond to some scenarios. There's a was an indie. This is a thing. UCI was one of the California universities have the World building course where they all the participants in the course get to create a fictional Nation Oh, yes with some laws currencies laws of physics, even religions, whatever and then and the people are participating in a very broad.

It's not kind of aspiring George RR Martin's and George Lucas's but politicians civic leaders is artist, whatever. It may be sort of separating in the same way that science fiction allows us to lift ourselves out of reality and explore a real problem with fictional Solutions. Maybe there's something in that in allowing.

People are safer space to be bolder with I think ideas that might be in palatable elsewhere, but actually could yield some really interesting insights or even just bind people together around purpose a particular purpose. Yeah. Sorry. I went off on one.

**Tim:** [00:35:20] No, no, no. No, I mean, I think that's I think that's right.

I mean the the design fictions are really kind of interesting thing that I hadn't really, you know, it's one of those things that you do intuitively or partly do intuitively but haven't got a name for it and and. The name and somewhat of the practices crystallized for you. It becomes a much more effective tool like, you know, just because you were kind of half doing it before the idea that you've sort of labeled it and now sort of have a kind of officially do it.

It's somehow makes it more effective for me. Anyway, maybe that's just the way I think but

**Imran:** [00:35:56] nothing you're right actually because then it's not a behavior then it's a practice and a practice can be taught to what? Son shared and refined an optimized well, and yeah, there is I think there's value huge value in just labeling things like that.

I always thought science fiction sort of played that role culturally allowing us to think about future possibilities and it seems in the same way that. In appreciation of science isn't quite Central to our cultural as designers. Now the design fiction as appropriately become the term well done it in our various practices building and create things but actually giving a label and some practices and it just allowing people to cohere around that is a movement is really valuable.

**Tim:** [00:36:37] So one of the things we always ask people to do is if they've got kind of Link's URLs references to things that we've talked about places for you know further study or just like kind of reading up on things those links we put in the laughably we call them show notes, but but they are on the website as well.

So people can kind of follow the links and get a sense. If you want to drop anything that you think is interesting in that in that context to me. I'll make sure they get into the into the

notes

**Imran:** [00:37:08] the work that we're doing in Bradford with this 30 Chapel Street is yeah. We're not quite there with a website but will be a probably adding up when you're playing to put the podcast.

We should be up and running with something. I'm thinking about you know, Tim berners-lee's new organization the web Foundation worldwide webfaction. Forget what it's called all about the ethics and the up guaranteeing the openness and the ethical production and sustainability the web. Oh if you come across dot everyone, it's chaired by Martha Lane Fox but has the CEO Rachel Caldicot is really interesting brain on responsible and ethical technology.

**Tim:** [00:37:45] Okay? No, I mean that sounds sounds. Just thing to go off and do some digging on a minute. I know a little bit about what Tim Berners-lee's doing. And I think and I think that getting back to a multiplicity of web servers rather than just the like the four that we're we're settling on now. It's thing is you is a huge ambition and very desirable from my point of

view.

**Imran:** [00:38:10] I do wonder if it's just trying to wind back to a Rosie a Time rather than. To accept happen and build around it. Like how do you change the behavior of the seven stacks that rule the web or do you go back to a rodeo time where you know those Green Meadow full of thousands of flowers blooming and somebody came and put them all in a green house?

**Tim:** [00:38:33] Yeah. I mean, I I know you're saying there but I think that I think a lot of the. I mean, we're straying somewhere off topic, but maybe not it. I think a lot of the kind of problems that we have become a lot easier if you decentralize stuff so like a lot of the Privacy stuff gets a lot simpler if it's your server and it's got your data on it and you can manage access to it like that.

It becomes a much more comprehensible problem for users to understand like you know, who's got this who've I given access to those sorts of things, I think. Direction kind of provenance privacy identity management all of those things I think are much clearer cut if they're distributed than if they're centralized but maybe I'm being optimistic though.

**Imran:** [00:39:21] Well, I

think we have to be idealistic with these things to begin with. Let's worry about all the pain later. But you know, what are the ideals that the beginning was? I had an old colleague who has DRM was starting to become more prevalent. He coined the term PRM personal rights managment.

What's the stuff till we get as. To protect ourselves against Corporal governmental dressed as well as the DRM rights that corporate. He's used to Shield themselves from people

**Tim:** [00:39:48] Right.

**Imran:** [00:39:49] What's a more Humane tech our old friend you remember Rich Gibson, he would talk about an internet beings rather than internet of things.

I really love that raise that like the web's people fundamentally. It's not servers and machines and anything else. It's a human construct like the web of Neo Soul. Connecting to each other. So how do you return to a more soulful medium?

**Tim:** [00:40:12] Yeah. I think we're also kind of getting going to get back into a more magical more storytelling environment.

I keep running across people who are doing interesting stuff in that space. More playful and

**Imran:** [00:40:26] digitally

or

**Tim:** [00:40:27] yeah often but not exclusively. I'm going to keep at Emma who we interviewed a while back, you know, she was talking about how what she she had a wonderful phrase for iot: enchanted objects, right, you know basically we are magically imbuing Hardware with behaviors and characteristics and you know, this is like like the Merlin in his kitchen, you know giving the pepper pot the ability to wash itself up and it's like it's that stuff and I thought was a really nice way to look at it much less. Reductivist and much more joyous.

I thought it

**Imran:** [00:41:06] also is there danger in that when in abstracting things out so much when you don't understand how they work then you're more likely to be manipulated by that all the agent dangling. It is a feel where we've got onto I own this organism that coats everything the web to have gone from something that we own to something that owns us.

**Tim:** [00:41:25] Right? Right. I think ownership is the central issue there like who owns. And again, that's much easier to do in the distributed system

or

**Imran:** [00:41:35] back to the ietf. That's what they've done very well actually probably four decades is almost ensure that it can't be dominated by

**Tim:** [00:41:43] right

right. So the extent they've achieved anything that's that's probably it.

**Imran:** [00:41:48] Yeah, that's it. That's pretty good.

**Tim:** [00:41:49] That'll

do. Ya

cool.

I wonder if

**Imran:** [00:41:52] people even know that.

**Tim:** [00:41:53] Oh, yeah no there are some fairly deep thinkers in there. Who and you know, you have to be kinda fairly motivated. Otherwise it's a lot of time a lot of a lot of effort for not much. Otherwise, if you unless you kind of feel the drive to do it for one reason or

other the

**Imran:** [00:42:10] On a practical note in November, I'm going to be hosting an event in Bradford with Rachel Caldicot from dot everyone.

Okay, and maybe Rachel Turner from MadLab the solidarity that guy was talking about earlier the refugee recycling for. And somebody from and Somebody from NHS digital on the redesign just as an 80s all evening panel or Symposium responsible Tech. So where's

Riley to be

it's going to be in Bradford, you know less 30 Chapel Street.

So I mean if you want to interview any of the people there or grab some thoughts from Rachel's leaving office, I think in the end of this year, so it's a really good time to get her as she sort of coming to the end of the tenure understand the implications of what she's done and maybe. Being a bit more Frank

**Tim:** [00:42:57] yes.

Well,

**Imran:** [00:42:58] I'll send you the details for that when we know so but be great to have you.

that would be that would be fun to to come along and

I'm hoping it sort of it helps me surface the kinds of people that might be doing things in this area. What was social Enterprise and Tech so it's a bit speculative.

I'm just helping putting those speakers together yeilds some sort of Community somewhere. I don't know who they are...

**Tim:** [00:43:23] that's sort of the joy of communities is that if you knew who they were you it would already exist. I mean, I like I said at the beginning this is the thing. I've sort of seen you do more than once is build a community that didn't exist and then year or two later.

There is one so, you know, no it certainly achievable. So go for it

**Imran:** [00:43:42] they were all accidents

**Tim:** [00:43:44] even better even better. Like, you know, allthough, yeah. You have to like there's a problem if you are a social Enterprise do you have to stick with your original goal, or can you morph it

**Imran:** [00:43:55] Not necessarily. I mean one of the things I have learned is good governance and having a good independent board of directors. They'll hold you to account for you against your mission. So even if you do want a vary that mission there. You know, there's a group of people at tasked with ensuring that the mission is good. But yeah, you know, I mean, I'm not sure there's other pieces that can happen.

If you are a social Enterprise that is trying to prevent the teach and over and out alternate gender and sexual roles in schools. Then that's the legit social Mission. Not necessarily a nice one. Mmm. But yo you can equally use this mechanisms and governance is and structures to do things that aren't good. So it still comes back to how do we just be better people?

You know, where does that start? What do we what can bind us together? You know, what is go here? And I keep thinking about the only useful thing Gordon Brown said while he was in office was he wanted to explore this notion of Britishness and what it means. Well actually yeah, that's this timely and then he didn't get to do it and

**Tim:** [00:44:55] we get to find that out in Spades and next few years I imagine but

**Imran:** [00:44:59] oh, yeah. Well now we're not even British. We are just Remainers or Leavers - Brits, Scots. English are all obsolete

**Tim:** [00:45:06] Yeah. Well, yeah I'm in Berlin half the time. I don't know where that labels me. But anyway, whatever

**Imran:** [00:45:14] lucky I think

**Tim:** [00:45:16] that's cool. I think that's a brilliant place to leave it with me being lucky. Thanks so much