

Rowan Conway Podcast (FINAL)

1:10:26

SPEAKERS

Rowan Conway, Justin Beirold, Nickolas Laport

Justin 00:02

Hello and welcome to valuable conversations a student produced podcast from UCL Institute for Innovation and Public Purpose. I'm Justin Beirold.

Nicko 00:28

And I'm Níckolas Laport.

Justin 00:29

Níckolas Laport. We are really excited today to invite you to listen to our conversation with Rowan Conwan, our professor from the module Transformation by Design, formerly head of the Mission Oriented Innovation Network until very recently. So before we get started, I just want to ask, Nicko, you took the lead on this and I just want to ask, why did you want to interview Rowan?

Nicko 00:29

Yeah, I think Rowan is one of a kind. In a way she has done a lot of different things that actually brings us to a new understanding of innovation. I mean, she worked in in the private sector in the public sector as well. She worked as a journalist, as a designer. She had a lot of experience that I think are quite interesting to be interview with, to have an interview with. Yeah, and also to be understood, and that is why I took the lead on this one, because I do think that Rawan is extremely interesting and that story should be told.

Justin 01:16

She is! Yeah, man. And I think like, she is also somewhat humble in the sense that like, she never talked about her life at all in our class. But I was always so interested. So it was just really great to learn a bit more about her journey and how she got to where she is.

Nicko 01:33

And that is why I'm interested to, to have a different scope in this interview. I mean, obviously, we need to talk about the professional things right. Yet also, I do think and I truly believe that the personal journey of Rowan also is going to be super interesting to understand how innovation and design also works in a different level. It changed you, so in a way we want to open that and in a conversation we discussed about this before. And I do think that is quite interesting to understand that that perspective. And also, I do think that also that is a reflection of the IIPP culture in a way, right, having these weird and unique people together in one place.

Justin 02:13

Yeah, definitely. I think she didn't have a standard path to becoming an academic, you know, and actually, she's still technically finishing up her PhD, although I kind of gave her a hard time in the conversation we had where I said, you became a professor, before you got your PhD, officially, how did that happen?

Nicko 02:31

And how unique is that?

Justin 02:33

When you're at that level that Rowan's at, it kind of makes sense, I guess. But, you know, she she took a circuitous path to get to where she is. And yeah, I think it'll be interesting to a lot of people to hear that, especially if you've only heard her do a lecture, you know, in the moments where she speaks very authoritatively. And she, you know, she is so confident, but it's nice to hear her just talk a little bit about herself. And you know, how she came to IIPP. Oh, as I said, we recorded this conversation in October 2021. So she's, she's no longer the head of MOIN, the Mission Oriented Innovation Network at IIPP, but we talked to her a bit about what that job entails, and how she, how she approaches it. And then we also talked about participatory design, which is something that we talked about so much in our class, but, you know, what does it actually mean to have all the stakeholders of a project engaged in a design project, it's actually a lot more messy in practice than it

Nicko 03:36

Messy and more meaningful as well. I mean, the stories that actually she's going to tell on this podcast are quite unique in a way and puts Rowan in a position in which you understand why she, actually is trying to develop this kind of unique perspective on innovation. Which I think is going to be the way in which public policies should be pushed forward. You're seeing that discussion right now within industrial policy, and how in which way, we need to push that agenda. However, there's several different ways to push that perspective. And I think participatory innovation and participatory design is one of them, which is, I think, is the correct one.

Justin 04:15

Absolutely. Well, Rowan is a legend. And it was a real pleasure to talk to her. So we hope you enjoy this conversation as much as we did.

Nicko 04:23

Thank you very much for inviting me Justin.

Justin 04:25

Of course. I think we're ready to go. So, Rowan, thank you so much for being with us. I know you're very very busy. With the new studio and many other things. So really appreciate you taking the time to come on the podcast.

Rowan 04:48

No worries. Thank you for having me.

Justin 04:50

Yeah. So you know, there's a million topics that I think we could ask you about. But we want to try to sample a little bit of everything and ask you a bit about your life. If your journey and your work, that sounds good,

Rowan 05:02

Sounds good to me, I hope.

Justin 05:04

All right.

Nicko 05:06

Well, thank you very much for having me as well. You didn't say anything.

Justin 05:09

We're gonna record an intro separately.

Nicko 05:11

I was expecting a proper introduction. And I wanted to say something about me. I mean, like, I'm Nicko. I'm Nicolás Laport, I'm a former student from IIPP. And I wanted to be here, in a way, because you never have the chance to interview someone who is like a friend in a way and a super important person in the innovation ecosystem as well. So I'm super, thankful for being here as

Rowan 05:39

Hey, it's fabulous to be called a super important person in an innovation ecosystem.

Nicko 05:43

I only tell you the truth, right. What do you think?

Justin 05:47

No, absolutely. Yeah. And really exciting to be here in real life. And

Rowan 05:52

Absolutely. That's really exciting.

Nicko 05:54

Yeah, face to face changes everything.

Rowan 05:57

Doesn't it?

Nicko 05:57

I mean, we are expecting to have a space in which we can know a little bit more about you the way. I don't know yesterday. Let's start right.

Justin 06:07

Yeah, absolutely. So I guess the first thing I want to ask, Rowan, because I have no idea is where does your story begin? Where did you grow up? Where are you from?

Rowan 06:16

Well, I'm from London.

Justin 06:17

You're from London?

Rowan 06:17

So I've been I've lived here all my life

Nicko 06:19

Born and raised in London?

Rowan 06:20

Well I grew up in Hammersmith. So in West London. I've never lived more than three miles away from my mum and dad. No. So I am a proper Londoner, which is why I get quite crossed with all of the developmental pathways that London has been involved in. But I've I've definitely always been part of...urban design has always been looked at for me through a London lens. Born and raised in London.

Justin 06:21

What part?

Rowan 06:36

Why design? You lived here. You were born and raised here. But you studied design and at some point you decided that was your path?

06:57

Well, I think I almost, I mean, without going into the the trials and tribulations of schools, I didn't have the best time at school. I'm I'm quite profoundly dyslexic. And so I never thought I would have an academic career. So I always knew I would go to art college. And so I went to art college, I went to Chelsea and then I went to what's now called the University of Creative Arts in in Farnham and Epsom. And I studied fashion design. So my beginning my first degree was in fashion, which people often find amusing. And I wasn't particularly well suited to the fashion world, in that I find it relatively ridiculous. But I enjoyed the creative, I did a lot of fashion illustration and a lot of very sort of interdisciplinary course and found myself being a ghost writer for my lecturer in fashion journalism, and so quite quickly ended up getting gigs, if you like from uni doing ghostwriting for fashion, both fashion journalism, and then actually ended up working in Reuters, which is now Thomson Reuters. So I sort of fell into a

journalism career, which I had no plans to do, and found myself quite good at what was needed in the time, which was sort of a lot of organizing. The kind of thing that I actually think is part of a general skill set now, but then was quite unique, being able to do lots of different things. So being able to have my generalist design background meant that I could do things like typesetting and as well as editorial as well as writing as well as photo editing. And so those kind of broad skills were

Nicko 08:54

So mindset worked perfectly there.

Rowan 08:56

Yeah, exactly. It's sort of, it was a time when, I don't think you could get jobs like this in the same way anymore, or at least people expect you to be able to do a portfolio of skills. Whereas when I was going into it, people were particularly disciplinary. So I kind of started my career in journalism and ended up working in some quite specific, well I worked in a startup, was my first real job after what gigging for you know, ghostwriting. My real my first real job was working in a trade publication startup and I worked in sort of corporate communications and knowledge management, which was actually a way into understanding what was going on in academia but also in corporate practice. So we were working with kind of fortune 500 company. So I learned my trade, if you like, in an extremely corporate environment, that still was this sort of cross disciplinary, both being able to do editorial but also design and then bring these these things together. And then from there, I got into product development, business development and launched a publication, which was called Corporate Responsibility Review, it was quite early days before corporate responsibility was really a thing. And as a result of that didn't do particularly well. But it opened me into the world of sustainability. And I think that I found my feet a lot more as like, I wasn't just gigging for other people, but I was actually very interested in that. And so then this, the career has gone in many different ways

Nicko 10:31

You're finding paths in order to follow. I mean, in a way, it sounds like you're not looking for a career itself. It's more like looking for experience or opportunities. Right?

Rowan 10:41

Yeah, I'm definitely a magpie and I find it very, you know, I'm genuinely interested in many things, which is can be very painful for people to spend time with me, because I can go off on tangents over there, and then think, oh, no, that's interesting. So it was very, it's been very eclectic. But I have very much had a sort of steering towards sustainability. And, you know, thinking about green issues early on. My mother is an environmental activist, you know, there's a, there's a sort of lineage in my family that's very kind of, you know, raging against the machine. And that sort of came through and wherever is areas of interest, you know,

Nicko 11:26

because you always had a groove up position about, I mean, how things worked in a way. You can see that not only in the work you do in MOIN, but also the work that you're developing in RSA, right.

Rowan 11:39

Yeah, I mean, I think the concepts of social innovation, of the ability for communities to have agency and participate in design were things that that came about. As I moved from, moving on from that career, where I was a sort of generalist, journalist, I got a job in a another startup, which was called Beyond Green, which was a consultancy focused on early, early stage. And this is like 2005, right? So it's 100 million years ago. And we were looking at sustainable development and what that might mean for urban design. And I had a sort of generalist comms and design role there, I wasn't doing anything particularly interesting. But there was a new policy. So part of what I got quite into was policy appraisal and trying to understand, well, how does the intersection between policy and practice really happen. And at that time, this was at the time of the launch of the sustainable development. It was called the Sustainable Communities Plan, which was a key piece of legislation that was launched in 2005, by by the Tony Blair government that actually replaced Local Planning Act, Local Planning Law. And I think the, it's really interesting actually, if you are into at all nerdy about planning policy, how localism and planning guidance actually informs so much of how we behave. So I was a bit nerdy about that, I got quite interested in understanding well, what could this mean, for our practice as a consultancy, so I brought together some ideas around inquiry by design, which is a kind of participatory design workshop practice with through Beyond Green, and this piece of planning policy. The planning policy stipulated that every local authority needed to have a local area plan. And with that, they needed to have a statement of community participation. And I could observe broadly that no one was doing that, well, there was consultation structures that existed, which have not, have remained pretty much unchanged forever statutory Consultation requirements, but that there was no way to get genuine participation in the design of places. So I put this forward as something that we could do, we could build inquiry by design and we worked on a range of different small scale urban design programs, one working in Essex, one in Watford. And so I created a effectively a product which was, I'll be your product that is your community participation and design product. And so we had these things. And the interesting kind of twist of fate was the moment when we the UK or London got the Olympic Games. There was a need to have a community engagement specialist on the design team for the master plan for the Olympic Games and kind of no one was doing it. So there's, I'd done this in a variety of different places working with a hospital in Watford and working with an urban extension in in Harlow. So it became a, I suddenly was on the design team for the Olympic Games, which was

Nicko 15:19

huge. I mean, yeah.

15:24

I was like, okay, that's fine. I'm sure there's lots of people who know what they're doing. And there weren't. So I had to just do it, which was fine, which is running kind of 19 community engagement events through a massive roadshow across the whole of East London. But then, as they were setting up the new institution, which was the Olympic Delivery Authority, became the Olympic Delivery Authority. And they said, well, can you come in and write the code of consultation, because we need to write new policy because a new law had come through, which was the Olympic Act of 2006, which effectively enabled you to have this new institution, and they needed to fill out a series of supplementary policy guidance. And there was no one to write it. So I was like, well, I can do that. I mean, there's a bit of a theme coming. It's like, "okay, I can do that." And go in and go, "I'm not sure I

really can do that. But I'll give it a go." And then so I wrote the code of consultation for all of the host boroughs, because we had to bring a consortium of hosts boroughs, the five host boroughs for the Olympic games together, they had to agree that they were going to do this. They weren't particularly keen. They had to have a consistent Planning Unit. So the the ODA had the planning decisions team, which meant that it effectively had a completely different approach to planning policy. So at this stage, I'd become quite a planning nerd was like, "yeah, no, I can do this, I can write the strategy." And then I became the coordinator of what was called the Engaging People strand of the legacy Master Plan framework, which was a 40 year plan for the east of London, basically, for all of the buildout, which we're still in the middle of right. So we're about 20 years in, or not 20. Started in 2006, how long is that? Quite a long time. So and within that I had to go and do all of this kind of coordination with the nine key stakeholders. And I think that's that really informed, you know, what is it the space between the agencies who all have their particular worldviews, their particular planning frameworks, their particular expectations, and then also the boroughs who have sat as neighbors for years, but never had to actually agree on anything. So they quite like that their rivalry is almost sometimes what defines them. You know, I come from Newam, I'm not from Hackney. So therefore, you know, that, that kind of you only know yourself by virtue of who your next door neighbor is, you know, and who you're not. And so I had to kind of resolve that through generally cracking a lot of jokes with the people being kind of like, "Yeah, we're gonna, we're all here, the games is gonna happen." And that meant that I then ended up being put into the comms team at what became the Olympic Delivery Authority. And that my role, again, was kind of like, I didn't have the fun jobs, I had the jobs, which were deliver against the reserve matters. So make sure that the community has been engaged in all of the venue designs, make sure that, and then they got harder and harder, and make sure that you talk about the Olympic route network to the taxi drivers, and you tell people that are going to have to pay 200 pounds if they're going to a bus lane. You know, no one wants to hear that. So it's how you're going to talk to people about really hard stuff. Then I had to work with the police and the security measures. So I had to go and talk to people about guns on their buildings and security plazas outside their homes and why terrorism was a challenge for the games, and what was it gonna look like? Then I had to do the really shit work of, there's going to be a four story, McDonald's outside your house is going to be open 24 hours a day, it's going to be open for four months, and there's nothing you can do about it. How do we talk about what it feels like to be you?

Nicko 19:02

I mean, and how do you solve that? It sounds horrible. It sounds horrible, because you've been speaking with people about awful things. Right? How do you solve that?

19:11

Well, I mean, so this is where I base a lot of my theories of empathy around this. And I'm very interested in what what does empathy mean in practice? I mean, physically, I was there at a huge number of the I had to deliver most of the community outreach work so much of this, I would be putting together community panels. So we would have like the Leabank Square panel, who were the people who would overlook what was going to be in, what was Arena Fields, which is now Here East, and we would talk to them. Just in a constant, they could call me anytime they liked, you know, so it was like how you have access

Nicko 19:49

So you were 24/7?

Rowan 19:50

Not 24/7 because I go to bed quite early, but generally speaking, I was I was available and we did have a 24 hour community hotline. So we had infrastructure that was in the team that was enabling us to be connected with. Sometimes it was just about sitting with people, as they said things that they needed to say, recognizing I could do nothing about it. You know, there was one evening where I was sitting in a actually near Brick Lane sitting a library near Brick Lane and a man came in. And he was absolutely outraged an older man, and he had this big file of things. And I said, "come and have a sit down. Come and have a sit down." This is why I drink somuch tea. "Come and have a tea,." "Well, let's have a cup of tea." And he came up to me, he took me through this, you know, pages and pages of photographs of chop down trees. So of the of the, of the dead tree that had been, and these were all the trees that have been cut down for the car park at the north of the site. And he said, you know, he was talking about the destruction that he was witnessing and how he lived in the area for many years and how this was breaking his heart, how he couldn't. And I just listened to him. And in the end, he told me some really fascinating stories about you know, grisly murders in the in the River Lea and to a certain degree, sometimes people just need to be heard, they don't necessarily need that what is heard, to be translated into something that is material for the site. Sometimes they do, but they also need, you need to give them the grace to sit with them. And not ignore that this is true, but also saying we now are going to move to a new world and it's it's changing, and it's painful. And I witnessed your pain, but I am ultimately, we are ultimately going to have a games. So it's, you know, taking people through that process of sometimes feels that loss.

Justin 20:29

The file of grievances. I think it means a lot more to have Rowan talking to you rather than you know, some kind of like faceless government agency or some like committee that you're like, this committee is chopping down all the trees in my neighborhood, like why. So at least to have someone there who seems to like care about the community humanity and is trying to at least Yeah, hear them out. Although was that frustrating at times? Were there certain things where you were like, I really wish I could help this person, but it's just not possible.

Nicko 22:08

And that's the basic thing and innovation as well. I mean, empathy and curiosity, to things that you actually show us in every single moment. And when you narrate the history of of your work, basically, you can see that you will you are truly a curious person. And as well, you're super empathic about things. Right? That's a big thing in design and innovation as well.

22:31

It is. But I think part of, so this is probably when we start moving into the what is it to be a strategic designer? And as my practice a little bit more? Yeah, good segue.

Justin 22:41

Yeah, you're answering our questions.

Nicko 22:44

I was not prepared, but thank you very much.

22:48

So the shift. So one of the things that I described recently is that almost everything that I did up until that point of being at London 2012, was largely intuitive. So there was literally no scholarship. So as I say, I didn't go to university, I went to art college. I winged it entirely. I pretty much failed my, my exams, and I was expelled from school. So there's all this kind of like background stuff, which is largely, you know, it's not a tragic story. It's just a complex story. So I didn't have the kind of history you might expect someone to have gone through, who was who was going to be doing this kind of work. So there was no scholarship, it was almost all intuition, and capability. You know, if someone says, "Will you go and talk to people about security clauses outside their flats?" Not going, "No!" I would say yes. Whereas, I think most people will go, "Oh, you're mad? No, no way, get it get a proper professional to do that." So, you know, by leaning into that, and I don't mean that in the kind of Sheryl Sandberg leaning in way, but kind of moving into spaces that were hard. It was a it was a development of a kind of concept of inquiry. But it was incredibly intuitive at the beforehand. So I then went to do a Master's at the University of Bath guided by some friends who had done this masters, which wasn't action research based master. They said, This is just, this is your practice, this is what you do already. You need to maybe, No, no one said you need to put some kind of, academic credentials behind your work. But maybe I was beginning to feel that that that actually I was slightly winging it. And and it plays to this question that you just asked them about, like how do you know when to use those empathic skills, when to use your design skills? Is that you know, for me, and I'm apologies for the swearing what came to me intuitively in some of those interactions I had during working with London 2012, I don't want to make shit shine, right? So I'm not here just to gloss over something that's crap. So that's why I want to have authentic conversations. I also am always been very clear about the boundaries that we have this conversation. So you can talk to me about this, but I can't, I can't turn the tide on these Olympics. These Olympics are happening. So let's talk about what it is to have the Olympics.

Nicko 22:51

So you were super clear about your power position as well,

Rowan 25:11

Exactly, I'm unable to do this, but I'm able to do this. And in many instances, all that allowed me to do was just to give us some give the people working with me breathing space, to actually just say, God, I feel a bit scared about this, or, you know, what's that going to look like outside? and I will be reminded like that. I also, you know, I mean, I think they'd forgive me for for, for describing them in this way. But I also was the interface to the executive team at London 2012, who were on the 23rd floor of the Barclays building in Canary Wharf, and I would drag them downstairs onto the street. And they, they welcomed that, and they were scared, but that meant that there was a sort of, in between, if you like, between them, and the people, and I, and actually, David Higgins, who was the Chief Exec of London, 2012, eventually was an absolutely brilliant leader. He, he always traveled on the tube with me, you know, so we would have conversations that Jimmy didn't have that fear of actually interacting and didn't get, you know, taxis everywhere, I was always very much kind of grounded. And I think that that was

really important for me. But then I, I developed that into my, my masters, which was in responsibility in business practice, focusing it on kind of participatory action research, what is it to do this work? And then ultimately, what is this to do this work around transformative, transformative change?

Nicko 26:36

Yeah.

Rowan 26:37

So trying to see myself as part of the agent of change, which I don't think I'd always been this kind of like, actor of change, you know, like, different things interesting. I'm interested in corporate responsibility, I'm interested, green, I'll go and I'll do stuff. But I didn't really have a direction behind me. And it gave me this moment to reflect, and then go into the next slightly more. What's the word? I mean, I still I still was going for gigs, right. But I, in a slightly more kind of discerning way, was able to enter into that next phase, which involves working in a range of government agencies for a few years, and then working at the RSA.

Nicko 27:13

So you had a political peel back, I mean, when you start studying participatory action research a lot of people have, right, and I can imagine as well just started developing something that is what that is, that it was related in a way that with your experience, on the one side, and on the other, the idea of being and having a reflection about that, I mean, you you didn't pass through those experiences, you got something from them from the people as well. And now you're expressing that in your studies, and now you are changing dramatically the way in which you think about your own work. I think that's that's a way to, you know, in a way you can see?

Rowan 27:51

Definitely, I mean, I think the key thing with action research is that gives you, I would say pre doing the the Masters, I was all action.

Nicko 28:00

Yeah.

Rowan 28:00

And I gave me that

Justin 28:02

No research, just action?

Rowan 28:03

Well, no reflection, because what action research is it's cycles of action and reflection, and using critical thinking to really start understanding and locating the efficacy of your different actions so that you are able to be your own kind of critical judge. And then and then it gives you a framework for how you work in multiple domains. So you start with first person inquiry, which is, you know, who am I and what am I doing, and then you're able to do that critical micro experiments or micro inquiries about your own

practice. But then you build into participatory or third person inquiry where you're working with people, so I was able to then look back on my work and go, Well, that would be third person inquiry. And that wouldn't be that's where actually that was broadcast. It was it it was me communicating a message and being friendly, but not really receiving anything back do you see what I mean, so I was able to start to disaggregate where where's my practice? And where's not my practice?

Nicko 29:01

You had that reflection and what happened that I mean, what happened, but I mean, you went back, you have that experience, reflect by yourself about your own practices as well. What happened next?

Rowan 29:17

Well had a baby.

Justin 29:19

Okay. That's important.

Rowan 29:23

And I think the important thing is during my master's, I was working at London 2012. I had intended to write my dissertation on participatory action research working with young communities in in Waltham Forest. So I had sort of, it was sort of stacked up with people I'd been working with before, and it was like, Would you be happy to for me to participate with you afterwards, as part of my dissertation, and then I just got so enormous that I couldn't do the journey. I was just like, I actually kind of had terrible edema and I just, I mean, if you see pictures of me when I was pregnant, I was as big as this table. I was just It was not it was not a good look. But not only was it not a good look, it was a moment to actually go. Hang on a minute stop. Yeah. What are you doing this for? So I actually did that in my dissertation. I said, I just wrote that. And then I did it. Like about having a baby. And then I did it about not just about having a baby,

Nicko 30:18

That's part of the reflection as well?

Rowan 30:20

Entirely entirely but you could look at having a baby and go, it's just a thing you're doing and I can, I can reflect on the action of having a baby. But actually, what it offered me was a moment to reflect back on the work that I've been doing, which had been saying things like, we have 10 years to make sure that we don't go above two degrees of warming. We have, you know, these kind of these languages, this sort of shock and awe, climate language that even in 2006, we were using ubiquitously, you know, this will die, mass extinction, all of these different things are just going, Oh, my God, look at this baby, you know, he's a baby, and thinking, and we were using the date 2050, quite ubiquitously about this kind of all out collapse will happen in 2050. And the reality of that and going well, he'll be 42 in 2050, you know, and I was thinking, I'm not far off that. What what does that mean? Like, actually, he will just be at the beginning of his life, he won't be at the end. So we're talking about so I was having my own little mini extinction rebellion moment. And, for me, that really crystallized I mean, hey, we all have to earn a living. And so there was it wasn't like I could go, I'm only going to work on these perfect Earthshot type

things that would absolutely not how it happened, who has the ability to do that, you know, only extremely wealthy people. I just started being more critically aware of the work I was doing. I did, because I had kind of, I guess, been recognized a little bit within, you know, the London 2012 community, and therefore the Mayor of London, I did get a few projects that that I did while having small children. One was working on post riot regeneration in Tottenham. So after the 2011 riots, there was a kind of whole regeneration process. So I worked with young people in Tottenham, I also got a really random job working with the nuclear decommissioning authority on geological disposal of nuclear waste. As I say, people come to me and go, you wouldn't do this extremely hard job. And I go, That sounds interesting. And it was quite unusual and extraordinary. I also did a couple of jobs, which I won't refer to, but were with, you know, the mayor of I refer to them, I think in when, if you remember from when I was teaching, if there were jobs that I fired myself from, because I was not proud to be in them. So on the in that time of being a kind of gig worker for the government. I didn't do you know, I stopped working on a couple of regeneration projects, which I thought were, were just, you know, showboating. And I thought, you know, you've got to, you've got to put your money a bit where your mouth is here. And then, at that same time, so, you know, there's an awful lot of serendipity in my career, I don't, you know, I've got so much more lucky than, than most people do. And an example being that, as I was doing this variety of community work, the RSA came up with a job, which was called the director of connected communities. And so it was another one of these things where actually not very many people have, it would be skilled to do that. So while I wasn't necessarily qualified, you know, hadn't gone through a Russell Group University, I hadn't done the pathway that most people do to get into a think tank, I had enough technical experience to be able to come in at a director level of the RSA. So again, some things happened. And suddenly, within nine months, I was put in charge of the think tank, because there was a change in leadership. And so I was kind of parachuted into the executive team. And that in its own right was really interesting, because, you know, the RSA is a two hundred, it'll now be 267 year old institution. It was founded at the beginning of the Industrial Revolution, fundamentally founded by people who would now call themselves social entrepreneurs, you know, so it is a fellowship of people who want to change the world. And so the level of scholarship, I guess, that I got from just being part of the fabric of that organization, was enormous. And I work closely with Matthew Taylor, who was the CEO for, you know, six years in this very, very diverse and rich array of different kinds of policy programs policy, Think Tank projects, working on applied research projects. Everything from kind of drug and alcohol rehabilitation through to, you know, how do you think about arts in schools through to how do you think about impacts entrepreneurship for economic insecurity? How do you think about the future of work? I mean, if there's a project, you know, area that you can study in terms of policy, Think Tank world, the RSA has done it. So it just gave me you know, satisfied my enormous curiosity. But also, I then took on the design team there. And, you know, there's a pedigree of design at the RSA, which is the royal designers for industry, which is a is a kind of career gong end of career gong. So people, like, you know, James Dyson, or Johnny Ive would be a royal designer for industry. But then you also have the student Design Awards, which is a major global award that goes into universities, for third year students in BA level to solve a social challenge. So very much brought me into the realm of the challenge price and to round off and how did I get here? I did a project working with Mariana Mazzucato in 2015, which is when she was starting to look at and maybe she'd already you know, she published the Entrepreneurial State in 2013. But But this concept of Mission Oriented Innovation was something that we started to look into two together what she she wrote a paper and we hosted a series of events, we went to the Outback European political forum, in Austria 2015, 2016. And we maintain

that partnership with the RSA until the IPP was formed. And then over time, a job came up IIPP, I applied for it. And here I am today working as the head of the Mission Oriented Innovation Network and bringing the design skills that I had kind of honed through the RSA Lab, which I lead at the RSA to the Transformation by Design part of the MPA about 30 years, I reckon of my career. No, not quite, but nearly you know.

Justin 37:04

Yeah, I mean, yeah. I feel like there's a lot of threads, we can tug on, but in the interest of not making a five hour podcast. Could you, I guess, could you tell us a little bit about MOIN, like, what is the Mission Oriented Innovation Network? What is it? And what do you, what's your role? And how is it kind of changed? Because you were there when when it was first launched, right? And now it's obviously grown a lot. So can you tell us a little bit about that?

Rowan 37:35

Yeah, sure. I mean, it was it was sort of seed funded by the Rockefeller Foundation, as part of the kind of launch suite of things that IIPP was doing. So alongside the Mission Oriented Innovation and Industrial Strategy Commission, MOIIS Commission, the MOIN network was at its start, it was a kind of collection of various public agencies, there are about 40 of them from around the world who were interested in this kind of emerging concept of mission oriented innovation. At the same time, Mariana was working on with the EU on the kind of infrastructure for mission oriented innovation policy for Horizon 2020, which I wouldn't underestimate actually how pivotal, those reports. So I think that students will have read them or see them as part of the literature, but I think it was a 2017 report and a 2018 report.

Justin 38:32

So this is the UK industrial strategy, and then the European Horizon.

Rowan 38:36

Yeah, sort of MOIIS Commission lead in, fed into the industrial strategy, but the, the European, there were two governance frameworks. And ultimately, they then led into this, this sort of infrastructure for missions, which has set aside or kind of structured finance of, to the tune of about 52 billion euros over the next seven years or six years now. In two EU member states, to focus on mission oriented innovation. So effectively, there was a sort of huge well finance back that started moving into this space. So what was not conceptual but as sort of inquiry area very quickly became incredibly tangible for members of the of the Mission Oriented Innovation Network. The Mission Oriented Innovation Network is not a kind of singular thing. It's a range of different public agencies who are at a range of different stages in their trajectory towards adopting missions, and they are all from around the world. So it could be government departments, it could be cities or mayoral units, it can be design agencies or innovation agencies or indeed it can be banks like you know, government or central bank. So we have for example the Asian Development Bank. And then we'll have advanced research and project agencies such as ARPA-E, from the US. So it's an eclectic bunch, they don't necessarily gather and then know how to talk to each other. So our role, if you like, for the last two years has been to work out how to curate knowledge that we've learned through what Mariana calls practice based theorizing, which is working largely in bilateral ways, in deep dives, with agencies within the MOIN network where

we are helping to support the development of their policy frameworks for and then and then from that drawing in the various learning that can then feed back into what's becoming a quite dynamic community of practice. So it's emerging to become a dynamic community practice, it didn't start that way. It started very much as a sort of a group of high level people coming together to share their interest. And now it's becoming much more specific. And what does this look like for green missions? What does it look like for health missions? What does it look like? If we're talking about digital missions? So that's where we are now? I'd say,

Justin 41:12

right, and has your idea about mission oriented innovation, your concept of this theory? Has it changed at all since actually getting all these diverse, different people together? And, you know, trying to look at a lot of different problems across the world? Like, what have you kind of learned about this? You know, because, like you were saying, it's really taking this, although it was never a strictly theoretical framework, right. But taking the concept of mission oriented innovation, and then putting into practice in all these different ways, what have you learned? And I guess, relatedly? Like what have been some of the most, some of the challenges that you've seen come up again, and again, that that you're kind of thinking about lately?

Rowan 42:01

So I think there's there's one universal response now, I think, to mission oriented innovation, which is we understand the concept, how do we do it. And I think I perceive my job as making the space between the idea and the solution so that you don't fall into technology determinism, or any of the easy wins in terms of how to do innovation. Because effectively, what I observe, and this is an observation as opposed to any kind of empirical study is that by adopting the framework, you can adopt the framework, but then seek to use the same tools that you have in place already in terms of your policy toolkit, or your and so while you can agree, in principle, the concepts of market shaping, actually, to do that, in practice requires quite a dynamic experimental cadence, which I don't observe many organizations being able to do. So what you do see is people are forming around task and finish groups, you do see people starting to really, really get to a point where they really know the problem. But they aren't necessarily working out, "well, how do I make that leap into the problem resolution?" So I think, you know, the thing that I'm trying to work out how to use an analogy, that's not a crude one. But there is there are interesting challenges about the the fact that this becomes a bit of a heterodox policy framework. So if I am, you know, in charge of, you know, I'm director of climate change in a in a member state in the EU, and I see that there's a lot of money that's coming my way towards net zero, for example, I can seek to put that money through my current operating system, and possibly not solve the problem at all through the tools that I already have. And I think that there is a realization now and we've observed this actually, through the OECD Observatory is that a gentleman called Philippe LaRue, wrote of sort of reasons why mission oriented innovation policy, he didn't call it, is hard. But effectively, that's what, it's a better title than that. Is that ultimately, the tools we have, which he you know, and others have demonstrated, there is a bit of a gap, a transformative change gap. And this is where it lies with with transformation by design, where, you know, if we only have very simple pathways, but actually we're talking about complexity, simple pathways will say, Well, you can plug the innovation chain up here at the upstream end and basic r&d, or you can plug the innovation chain at the downstream end at the commercialization or you can try and do some stuff in the messy middle, but it

doesn't understand things that are outside of that, you know, sort of technocratic paradigm. So when you're talking about issues of social innovation, or when you're talking about complex societal issues, you know, putting things through that innovation machine won't necessarily have an outflow, which is the resolution of the problem.

Nicko 45:16

And how would you solve that? I mean, it sounds quite complicated, right?

Justin 45:18

It's so funny. Everything you're saying is really resonating with my placement, which was about the UK space industry. Our experience there, and you know, one of them was kind of just the timing of it, like, you know, we went in, and they were like, can you guys draw up a plan to, you know, do missions for the space sector, like during your placement? And we were, like, all excited or like, yeah, and then it took us about, you know, a day to realize, oh, like, actually, that process is gonna take you like a year, if you really want to involve all the people you need to involve. And, you know, there's probably some reasons why this isn't happening as easily as as you wished it was. And so basically, like, a lot of our analysis actually went the direction you're saying of like, what are the kind of bottlenecks within your organization that's trying to even think about missions? But yeah, that's, I definitely relate to that. It's kind of an interesting thing, where even the people that are completely on board with this stuff and like want to do it, it's really hard. I think that's one of the things that's like, it's,

Nicko 46:30

if you want to do it, right, because you can, you can choose another path you can solve the problem, but not in the correct way?

Justin 46:38

You can just use mission as missions as like a branding exercise, right, without actually accomplishing the thing that you are trying to do. Right?

Rowan 46:46

Yeah, which I would call mission washing, or there is an actually, this is something that I've looked at a little bit in my own research is around the kind of isomorphic mimicry challenge, which is that effectively, you know, the concept of isomorphic mimicry is that you can create all of the things that look like you're doing something, so you have the government policies, you have the but actually, you aren't doing anything, you know, so it's quite shallow. So it's effectively like all of the icing on the cake, and there's no cake in the middle, you know. So you have to, the transformative change bit will hurt. And I think, I think there's possibly a sort of Hippocratic oath that we all need to take working in this space, which is to be able to say, this will hurt. And I think especially in the concept of climate. There's an interesting point that Carlota makes about societal legitimacy, you know, change only happens when you get this kind of concept of societal legitimacy. Unfortunately, we've, we've run a little bit out of road on our inaction on climate, to the extent that the things that we will need to do will be challenging. And they will be, they will be not necessarily driven by societal legitimacy, hence, why we get into these populism challenges where people don't want to accept a reality around, you know, climate mitigation or something. So therefore, they vote in a different way. Because actually, the idea of, you know,

restrictions just aren't palatable to people's lives. Well, we're going to into a bumpy ride, there's a bumpy ride ahead. And so, you know, for me, I always see the only route forward for this, and I worked quite a bit on concepts of systems change, when I was at the RSA, the only route forward is to create an adaptive system that enables you to continue to experiment, but to also pivot when it's not working. And to work through how does that work in the public sphere, because that works relatively well in the private sphere. But it doesn't work well at all in the public domain. And I think that's because for a variety of different reasons. And so how we're able to move to a space where we can co create genuinely not just performatively is really the space that we'll have to move into really quite quickly. And, you know, various things will push that in some places-- in Denmark, there's actually, you know, climate change legislation, you know, and that doesn't, you can get performative as well, so you can get performative answers that say, we can deliver this in a very frictionless way. And then you talk about things like working in places we're working with British Columbia as well, where actually the reality of co-governance with indigenous peoples is absolutely critical to the success of this. And actually, it's still that's something you can still think of as kicking the can down the road. But actually, the can is no longer kickable. You know, we've got to some, it was we had a conversation yesterday with an academic in in, in Vancouver who was talking about a moment of rupture, there's been a moment of rupture and you know, there are certain things like UNDRIP you know, the UN declaration for the rights of indigenous peoples, which is not just UNDRIP that's that's happened, a variety of other things, you know, the schools that you know, and all of the things that make it sort of politically untenable to keep working in this linear, don't worry, we're doing it, we're doing it one day, we'll do it and kick the can down the road, they're shifting to a transformative mode, that shift to a transformative mode requires that we start understanding how to be adaptive in our practice, and then also how we work as partnerships that are able to see us see ourselves as a whole, not just as a an array of different people sitting around a table. So when you get to the point, which is not just, you know, like the United Nations or like, COP, where it's, I'm from here, I'm from here, I'm from here, and we're all saying our piece, and then we look at the middle of the go, and there's a big hot mess in the middle, who's gonna make that make any sense? Into the point where we're actually working together? And that those moments are will and do happen through emergence. One hopes, they don't always happen through emergence that is driven by collapse. You know, COVID shifted things, you know, as I say, and the variety of things that are shifting things with indigenous peoples reconciliation, climate change, is shifting things. But you don't want it always to be a cleanup act, you want some people to have been working on things that are lying around, as they say, in that great Galbraith phase. You know, most policy is stuff that someone's working on lying around. We need to be working on that stuff that's lying around so that when it's ready, and the moment hits, we can go, here's what I made earlier.

Justin 51:47

And that kind of somewhat explains why IIPP has gotten a lot of attention during COVID. Because it was a little bit of an I told you so moment, right? Like, I feel like you and Mariana and others have been working on this stuff for years. And then during COVID, I think a lot of governments, especially around the world, sort of were like, Oh, we're kind of being forced to do this, but we didn't, you know, do our homework on how to do it. So it kind of makes sense to me. So you were our instructor for the module Transformation by Design. And you somehow beat the system and became a professor before finishing your PhD?

Rowan 52:32

Yeah, yeah well I haven't quite beaten the system as a visiting or honorary, as it's Dan Hill by the way, he also doesn't have a PhD. So

Justin 52:41

both of you guys beat the system. And I don't know much about the the technical terms, but you're pretty much professor in my eyes. And one of the concepts that you just brought up and I wanted to dig into a little bit more is, well, I'm a political economist, and this was the first design class I ever took. So I was really trying to pull out some concepts from you know, strategic design and see how to apply them to economic policy. And one of the ones that really resonated me was this concept of participatory design, which is kind of what you've been talking about, although, I guess the lingo and the missions context is co-creation, right? But it's a similar type of thing. And I just, I was wondering if you could just talk about why is that important? Like, why is stakeholder participation important? And mission oriented innovation? And I guess, just like design in general. You know, what are the what are the kind of benefits of it? And and are there any ways you think we need to like push this concept a bit further than where we how we currently think about it?

Rowan 53:46

So in terms of why we need design and where co design is at an entry point into the NCRC?

Justin 53:51

Yeah, like, what, what is participatory design or co-creation? And why is it important, I guess?

Rowan 53:58

So I've always just been driven very much by, I mean, as the sort of Paulo Freire the kind of Pedagogy of the Oppressed. When you're, when you are of activist stock, right? It's very hard to shake it off. You know, when your mum's tied to a tree and the police have taken her away. You know, you kind of

Nicko 54:18

you have picture of that? I mean..

Rowan 54:19

Oh I have many pictures of my mother in trouble. And I think there's a really, there's a there's a sort of deep rooted. And it's not it's not a desire to actually sell a concept. It's about an understanding of where does...where is the plurality here? Do we see the whole picture when we are writing this policy, and trying to make it visceral, if you like, so not just visceral for me, but you know, there's all the concepts of inclusion are for nothing if they are written by four 26 year old men in a room in Westminster, you know, that doesn't mean that 26 year old men are redundant and shouldn't be writing policy, I'm really saying that ultimately they need to be able to have the capacity to understand with depth, what actually is it to do to do work together. So, you know, my entry point on this, as I say, was through urban design. So the reason why I saw materiality and in the urban design, community participation thing is that you actually make change, right. So working, for example, in the detailed design of the aquatic center, recognizing that we were investing in a very large scale, you know, Zaha Hadid building that was going to be there in perpetuity as a free swimming pool, we needed to understand the fabric of that

community. So breaking that down into saying, what is it to go and sit with 12 different communities here? So what is it to sit with Somali women? What is it to sit with, you know, mums, so general mums, so sometimes you're just going up like this, and then you're going and we made a number, I can't remember exactly how but something like 14 material changes to the detailed design of the venue based on what is it to have a buggy in this in the room? What is it to make sure it's truly accessible? What is it to ensure that there can be women swimming and feel secure that other people aren't watching them? So the kinds of things like making sure that the glass wasn't overlooking the pool, you know, those kinds of things are about listening to the needs of a place. So if you can listen to the needs of a place, listen to the needs of an environment, that was my kind of early understanding about this idea of user centricity. And now user centricity, though, can then also get quite stuck in a UX mode or get stuck into this concepts of digital users.

Nicko 56:57

And just one more technical perspective, right?

Rowan 56:59

It's an easier perspective. It's not an easier perspective, but it's a more

Nicko 57:03

it seems apolitical.

Rowan 57:05

I would say that actually, there's a lot we can we can talk about feminist perspectives on whether or not that's apolitical, but we won't, because we haven't got time to do

Justin 57:11

I think we should do another podcast, with maybe maybe not me and Nicko as the hosts.

Rowan 57:16

The kind of it seems easy, it seems more mainstream, we're looking at picture of the lovely Mike Bracken.

Nicko 57:20

It's more technical, as well, I mean, if you can see a double diamond, or you can address that in a super technical way, and everyone is going to understanding which way they need to go, in order to solve a problem. It sounds like a recipe in a way. Right?

Rowan 57:35

It is a recipe. But I also think that, you know, part of the opportunity of something like the double diamond is actually what is inherently beautiful about the concept of zooming in and zooming out. Yeah, you know, and if you can zoom out, that's all about the artistry of how you zoom, right? You know, what, are you actually zooming out to see, what, what is what is the pause that you're putting into your design, so that it's got something visceral in it? Yeah. And so, you know, having done this working in communities, and design for places, that was extremely, you know, tangible for me. So when it then

came to thinking about it in terms of policy, I could understand that same thing. So I came to policy, you know, social policy after I was through urban design policy. So I was in planning policy first and then into social policy. So when I then started working, for example, I worked on the laser program for drug and alcohol rehabilitation, which was about thinking about whole person recovery. And what that meant as a strategy for drug and alcohol rehabilitation. Now you're working there with the Department of Health, you know, they might be used to working with one at randomized controlled trials in terms of number of people who go through this. And we were able to bring in kind of community engagement methods, which meant that you could have both data and stories. And I think, for me, that's been an eduring piece is to be able to say, how do you work with data and stories because they tell different parts of the Political Economy story? You can't be entirely story driven. When you're entirely story driven. It's very much it, you know, colored by the people in the room. But if you're entirely data driven, you're also lost into this sort of macro or population level thinking.

Nicko 59:17

And I love the idea of the visceral that you said before, in a way that design has that good design, has that include visceral perspective, and validates as well. I mean, it's super important to have that into the table. But my question is, how do you convince people who actually don't work from that perspective? Politicians? I mean, I'm thinking about,

Justin 59:36

I was gonna, I was gonna say, I'm curious, because earlier you were kind of talking about empathy. And I thought it was kind of interesting how you seem to be you seem to care about empathizing with both the people who are being affected by the policy, and then also the kinds of executives on either side of you, and I'm just curious, you know, it might be easier or harder to talk to, you know, Somali women in East London, than like a banker? I don't know. And I'm just curious, like, do you? Do you think? Is it kind of the same muscle for you? Or do you have to like shift your approach depending on who it is?

Rowan 1:00:15

Well, I think I've probably got some unusual character traits, which are that. And I've discussed this with you before, I think that I'm personable, and I enjoy conversation and I'm very curious.

Justin 1:00:29

This is why you should have your own podcast.

Rowan 1:00:30

Oh, bless you. So I like I like the chat, right. And I would genuinely have lots of chats with lots of people just because I enjoy the chat. But I'm actually ... I'm going to try to say this in the nicest possible way. I'm not that empathic, right. So I don't care that much about, I mean, I do care, but I don't, I'm able to have what my second supervisor would call flexible social cognition, which is the ability to be in a room. And hold really, really, really, really difficult tensions. Yeah, and say, this is okay, this space is for this. And if you guys can't hack, what's going on here, dvon't worry, I'll absorb it. And it's sort of that shock absorber space. And that in between a role is a really vital thing for the kinds of reconciliation talks we're needing to go through. For the kind of, you know, to sit, I have sat with so many various people,

sometimes senior policymakers, sometimes chief executive, sometimes, where they've had a kind of moment of their own self revelation through having a conversation, where they've kind of gone. Wow, so I should be working with the IPCC targets, not with the targets that are set by my boss, and you're like, yeah. And then, and then they go, well, that changes everything. And you go, I know. So how are we going to do that? And that's the kind of being able to be there without actually being there. So sometimes, I think there's a sort of faux empathy, which I really rail against in design, which is how to have an empathy map, as you knew I got a bit like bleh with empathy maps, because like, if you're just trying to like write down why someone is feeling the way they're feeling, but you don't actually care. Really, yeah, then to be fair, I don't think you should be doing anything that is expressing a real care. And that's why I say when I say I don't really care, I'm always very kind of clear. I'm interested in personal, but I'm not your friend. I'm here to try and move this conversation along the most important, and that's why I've been so interested in missions, because I'm always interested in, let's talk about what's in the middle here. I'm here to talk to you. But when you start going too much into your personal pain, I'll probably cut you off. And I'll probably say we need to move back to the problem. So that hosting is a vital role. I think for design going back to your question, you know, the convening, the hosting, not going too far on empathy, because I think you're a faker if you do, because you become their fake friend. And that's not good design. That's bad design, and then being able to help everyone zoom out. Because if you help people and we've talked about this before about it being a competency development thing, if you're trying to develop capability is to help others go, You know what, you don't just have to constantly deliver against your job. Sometimes you need to look at that problem in the middle. And then you need to feel it viscerally. So when you feel it viscerally, not my task list, but what is it and that goes back to my dissertation, I did my masters, and I looked at my baby, I'm like, everyone's talking about Apocalypse tomorrow. And I'm like, Ah, this baby, you know, he's entered into this business this big, you know, how that was a really visceral moment for me? What does it for this boy to live his life? Until he's 90? What is it going to look like? You know, that's not okay for me to say, we are going to eradicate his future. So let's, let's step back from that. And that's very much guided me in this not to be this activist, you know, I don't tie myself to trees, like my mum does. I love her very much. And I, you know, I go and unlock her and we talk to the policeman and go, please don't arrest her. But, you know, how do we actually collectively work together towards doing this because sometimes it's just about attending to the smallest possible kind of kindnesses between people. And if I can help people see that between themselves not taking it from me, I'm not necessarily the kindest person in the room, but help them see each other, then you start building the fabric of the kind of change that we all need to be able to navigate,

Justin 1:04:27

Absolutely. And, you know, my observation from getting to know you a little bit over the past few months is that you have a certain type of, of charisma or mojo but you have a certain like conviction when you explain things. And I think it's genuine. I don't think it comes from like you said, it's not a it doesn't feel like a sales pitch like you have a certain way of, of explaining things in a very convincing way.

Nicko 1:04:53

Convincing about your idea.

Justin 1:04:55

Yeah. And I think that's, I think you wield it well, and I've definitely tried had to learn from you in that. And you know, the way you just described it kind of shed some light on how you do this. But I'm curious, have you ever had moments where you were struggling to be heard? And you know, I know that this is particularly something that I hear a lot from from women or my female, you know, classmates and stuff is like, you know, I have all these ideas, and then it's once you're in the room, it can be hard to, you know, to really take that seat at the table in the way you want. And I'm curious, have you run up against that? Or do you kind of navigated it through the way you were just describing?

Rowan 1:05:35

Um, I mean, I would never try and claim any similarities with Mariana. But I think the one thing that I share with Mariana is that I believe in respect, but not deference. And so fundamentally, I often walk into a room like, I own it.

Justin 1:05:35

That's great.

Rowan 1:05:39

And I just kind of don't care if, like, I don't care about the things that most people care about, which makes me really weird. And I know that. But risk for me, it's never been, like, you know, kind of status. That sounds like I'm like, I don't care. You know, we all need to live. But I, you know, I've often thought, you know, I don't want to do something that is, as I said earlier, I don't ever want to make it shine. And as I got more and more, kind of experienced, I just thought I don't have to make it shine. I don't have to be in this room. I can be at home. So that doesn't mean that there's ample cash. But you know, a friend of mine used to say thing about you is that, you know, you've got no shame. And it's because I had said to her, you know, if worse came to worst, I you know, I'd be a traffic warden. They always need traffic wardens. So so it sounds completely mad. But ultimately, if you've, if you remove yourself of shame, which we all are riddled with, right. It doesn't mean, I don't feel it. But especially it's you know, shame is something that is inbuilt in all of us. And that doesn't mean that I don't feel hot shame constantly when I'm standing into things that are bold.

Justin 1:07:23

You are British, after all.

Rowan 1:07:24

When I'm half American.

Justin 1:07:26

Oh,

Rowan 1:07:26

half from the USA, not half from the Americas.

Nicko 1:07:29

Thank you very much, Look at me. I mean, thank you,

Rowan 1:07:33

Exactly. Exactly. So yeah, I am half half New York, and half Salford, Northern.

Justin 1:07:43

That might actually explain it

Nicko 1:07:47

That explains a lot. And I mean, I'm curious to know, how do you train that? Because obviously, it sounds like you own a room in a way when you when you speak about yourself. But I mean, there's a lot of people who actually is on the opposite part. I mean, feeling terrible, trying to engage with several people being timid as well. And I'm curious to know, is that trainable? In a way?

Justin 1:08:09

Yeah. What advice would you give to, you know, an MPA student? Asking for a friend?

Rowan 1:08:14

Yeah, asking for a friend. I mean, I think so. A friend of mine has this this logic, which, which I've said to some people before, which is he wants was at an event where someone who was on some kind of accelerator program came up to him and said, Yeah, I've just, I'm on this accelerator program, I've been told that this is ABC, you know, to get to see you have to go to B. And I'm a, and I'm just saying, you know, you're B and you know, this guy from Channel Four and like, and my friend was like, okay, just so you know, you're not supposed to have said any of those things.

Nicko 1:08:51

The worst case ever

Rowan 1:08:52

Exactly. So the naked kind of desire to make someone do something for you. Yeah. Is, I think takes us in all sorts of avenues. So yeah, genuine need to be, you know, to be genuinely interested in what someone is doing, gets you a really long way. And I'm not doing it in a kind of naked manipulative way. But if you can be true to actually, you know, what is it that you're doing, if I'm not supposed to be in the room, I won't be in the room, I have no interest in being in rooms that don't want me in there. So I've just don't go in them. You know, that doesn't mean that that's easy for everyone. But if you're genuinely interested in something, and you're hungry to that, everyone wants to be listened to, you know, so making space to listen to people who you're interested in, and finding ways to do that, I think is an entry point. And I've just been incredibly lucky that I've been into those rooms and really loads of interesting people.

Justin 1:09:52

Well, Rowan, I think we're out of time. But thank you so much for sitting down with us.

Nicko 1:09:56

It's been one of the most interesting hours that I've had.

Justin 1:10:00

It really has and it really helped me understand you a it better and yeah, thank you for, for sitting down with us and thank you for Transformation by Design. That was a really great class.

Rowan 1:10:12

Oh bless you. You've both been great fun to hang out with and this has been really fun. I hope it makes interesting content.

Justin 1:10:23

All right.

Nicko 1:10:25

Wow.