

Season 3, episode 11 – WEAll

Lily Spencer 00:15

Hey reMAKERS, welcome to the podcast. I'm your host Lily Spencer. I'm Co-Director of Australia reMADE and I am super excited to introduce today's guests - two amazing women from one of the most inspiring, incredible organisations really on the planet right now. And that is WEAll, which is the Wellbeing Economy Alliance. WEAll was co-founded by Dr. Katherine Trebeck, who we had on the podcast earlier this season, she is absolutely one of our favourite people. And I've been learning so much from these guys that I really wanted to bring you more of their voices. And these are two people really senior in their leadership team that you're gonna fall in love with. So they are Lisa Hough-Stewart and Amanda Janoo.

Lily Spencer 00:58

Now, Lisa is the Implementation Lead. So it's really her role to help people implement Wellbeing Economy ideas into practice, particularly policymakers in and around the European region. She's based in Scotland and is very active with their Scottish hub. And she's been with WEAll since the beginning, so she tells a great story there about how that all came to be. And then Amanda, Amanda Janoo is their economic policy expert. She has more than a decade of experience working with governments and international development institutions all around the world - the United Nations, the African Development Bank - she has been a Fulbright researcher, and she lives in one of my favourite places on earth, in Vermont.

Lily Spencer 01:40

So this whole conversation is really about how do we produce and provide for each other? What does that look like now? What is that system designed to deliver? And what would it look like? What does it look like to be in the midst of a paradigm shift, changing our goals from kind of mere growth and profits for a few to actually supporting and driving wellbeing for people and planet? And I think, like any paradigm shift, when you're still in it, when you're still in the midst of it, particularly somewhat early on, it can all feel like change is, you know, never really going to happen, that there are these foundational assumptions that we can't question and that people trying to are dreamers. But history has a way of proving the dreamers right, or as the historian Rutger, Rutger Bregman says, you know, utopias have a way of coming true, and we don't have to look very far back into our history to see ideas that were once taken as gospel be completely transformed. I really hope that our children look at the way that we produce and provide for each other and scratch their heads a little bit, you know, and "how did it take you so long to figure out some better ways of doing things?" And if they do, it will be because of people like Lisa and Amanda. So without further ado, I give you the wonderful Lisa Hough-Stewart and Amanda Janoo.

Lily Spencer 03:32

Okay, Amanda and Lisa, welcome to the reMAKERS podcast, it is an utter delight to be having this conversation. And there's a giant grin on my face, I don't think I'm going to be able to wipe off the course of the next 45 minutes. I was wondering, now we've given people a little bit of an introduction to

you both and to WEAll, which is such a cool thing, but I would like to hear it from you. Can you please give us just a little bit of a high level introduction to how you came to be doing this work? And what WEAll is Amanda, let's start with you.

Lisa Hough-Stewart 04:06

Oh, well. Lisa, do you want to start? Because you've been there pretty much since the beginning. So I think you know, around the origin stories, and then I can -

Lily Spencer 04:13

- that's true actually -

Lisa Hough-Stewart 04:14

- chip in as well.

Amanda Janoo 04:16

We can go chronologically. Sure. Yes, so WEAll was set up in summer 2018 as an organisation and I was part of that team that helped to set it up. And so I have been there since the beginning. But there was lots of work going on before that. The sort of pre-origin story of WEAll, and I was adjacent to that because I was working with Australia's greatest export, Katherine Trebek when she was here at Oxfam. So my, quickly, ah my sort of career trajectory was that I worked in private sector sustainability, like focused on, on human rights and really trying to change the system from the inside and within a couple of private sector companies here in Scotland, but still always kind of felt I was on the wrong side of the table being in corporate land. And so I left to go work for Oxfam Scotland, where I was working on campaigns on climate change, women's rights and inequality, refugee rights. But that's where I was working closely with Katherine, cause she was also at Oxfam. And she was at Oxfam working on human economy, on Wellbeing Economy ideas. And it was just this light bulb moment hearing her speak about this, and it connected all of those other issues that I was working on, everything I care about, that actually pointing at the economic system and making those connections between all of these things and not treating them as separate problems to be solved. It gave me so much hope and energy. And I worked with her on that while she was with, in Oxfam as much as possible. And one day, she came over to my desk and said, "there's funding for an organisation for this Wellbeing Economy thing if you want to do it with me?" So that was how I found my way to WEAll, it's all Katherine's fault.

Lily Spencer 06:00

It is all Katherine's...we've had we've had her on the podcast, and she's just amazing, brilliant, and, and lovely. Amanda, how about you?

Amanda Janoo 06:09

Oh, well, since you've all heard from Katherine, I must say, similarly, Katherine is the reason that I joined WEAll as well. But I came into WEAll in 2020 and for me, it's really been like a dream job. And it's just the kind of perfect pinnacle of, of my meandering kind of career trying to transform economic thinking and policy and work. So I developed pretty early on kind of a love-hate relationship with economics, where I felt like the economy was really core to so many of our issues. But also if you could change it, could really be a huge source of the solution as well. But didn't find in economics, a lot of

avenues for that transformation, because it's really presented a lot of the time as if it's, you know, this self-regulating, autonomous force out there. And that's super disempowering. And so, for me, a lot of my work was in industrial policy and structural transformation sort of policy, because it was in the anti-neoliberal kind of space, I worked for the UN for quite a long time, and ended up connecting with Kate Raeworth and Katherine at a Club of Rome event in Austria, and staying in contact, and eventually there was this Knowledge and Policy Lead position, and Katherine reached out and it's just been, yeah, it's been wonderful to be a part of the space.

Lily Spencer 07:30

That's so cool. I love it that Katherine is the kind of thread that binds us together as well. So the Wellbeing Economy Alliance describes itself as a leading collaboration of organisations, alliances, movements, and individuals working towards a Wellbeing economy delivering human and ecological wellbeing, what does a Wellbeing Economy mean to each of you? Because I think it's a term that kind of sounds lovely, but people don't necessarily know how to pin it down or say what it is and what it isn't. Whoever wants to come first on that one, Lisa? She's waiting. She's like, no, Amanda can take that, yeah.

Amanda Janoo 08:11

Yeah, I mean, so first of all, I think for me, a Wellbeing Economy starts with recognising that the economy is just the way we produce and provide for one another. It's like a process, a means, a method by which we interact with one another and our natural environment. And it always should be evaluated by how much it contributes to our collective wellbeing. Right? But the issue is that it hasn't been, it's been evaluated by how much, how quickly it grows, how many things we make, how much profit is generated, right? And so those are, those are maybe in some realms viewed as drivers, right, of wellbeing are like, you know, potential conditions for, but they're not goals in their own right. And so I think, wellbeing economy, it's about really being clear on what we're genuinely trying to achieve as a humanity on this planet, and then designing and evaluating our economies accordingly.

Lisa Hough-Stewart 09:09

I wanted Amanda to go first, because I always love how she speaks through this, and copy her language on it sometimes. And I think for me, a really key word is the word design, that we designed this economic system, and we can design it differently. And a Wellbeing Economy means an economic system designed to deliver wellbeing. And then that looks like being biased towards activities and behaviours that are good for the planet, good for health, good for collective wellbeing, because at the moment, we don't have a benign neutral economic system. We've got one that's biased towards activities that generate the most growth and and the most wealth for particular groups. So we've got these tools and instruments within the economy that we can play with, because we designed it. So I think that makes me feel quite hopeful that the economy doesn't exist. separate from us, it's ours to change.

Lily Spencer 10:02

Yeah, you guys have already touched on, like so many core ideas - of like the economy is not some autonomous thing that exists out there in the ether, separate to our other things that we care about, it is a human created construct. And if we, humans made it, humans can change it. And it's been designed

to buy certain things and ignore others. And actually, we get to tweak this, like we get to evolve this thing to work for us. Um, Lisa, you said to me in an earlier conversation that you're in Scotland, where things are a lot more advanced, right, than what we're we've got here in Australia in terms of a Wellbeing Economy, general discourse or political debate. And you told me that in some places wellbeing is kind of like the new sustainability. And so there's a lot of like, wellbeing washing going on. So, just off the top for the sceptics out there who are like, "it's just another buzz term is just another trend." How do you separate the wellbeing washing from the the genuine stuff? How do we know if we're on the right track versus just using lots of pretty words?

Lisa Hough-Stewart 11:07

Yes, so I mean, it's usually quite easy to spot wellbeing washing because it comes in the next breath after talking about the need for economic growth. And, actually, we need to change our whole relationship with growth, we need to be talking about growth in service of wellbeing. At the Wellbeing Economy Alliance we're not anti-growth, but we want to be questioning the purpose of growth and what is growing and who's benefiting from that. So that's, that's my sort of easy test to spot a lot of what I would call wellbeing washing. But actually, the proof of the pudding of whether it's meaningful or not work on the Wellbeing Economy is in the how. It's in the way that people are approaching this work and showing up and what are the actions, and what are the behaviours? Because a Wellbeing Economy is about collaboration. It's about being humble and not being driven by egos and competition. It's about being agnostic about growth as I said, and not being driven by self interest. So if you look at the how, at the process, at the conversations, at the way that things are happening, not just the what of what's been said, it's usually quite easy to tell if it's what we would determine to be like genuine Wellbeing Economy, activity, or ambition, or progress.

Lily Spencer 12:31

Yeah, that's something that I'm learning, even in my like, newish kind of entree into this space is you guys are very much about the process and the how matters just as much as the what or the outcome. And even for campaigners who are used to like, "just tell me the goal, and I'll go and I'll do it, and I'll win and like," and it's, and you're saying like, "well, I don't want to skip to the like, here are the top three answers for everyone. I want you to actually go through this process that is bringing people together and discovering together 'what does wellbeing actually like? What drives our well being what is important to us?'" I'm curious how it's going, like, in the in the countries that you're working in, but also where you live? Like what is going really well. What are people finding hard? Where are you seeing bright spots? Amanda, as like somebody who has the head around kind of the policy lead and progress that's happening in different countries around the world, what sticks out to you in terms of how how the Wellbeing Economies journey is sort of evolving?

Amanda Janoo 13:33

Hmm, well, so a disclaimer, I am definitely an optimist and live in a particular world now. Because I'm in WEAll, so I might be sort of biased, but I think it's been phenomenal, actually, I couldn't have even imagined the kind of transformations and entrance and economic systems change. Like when I was graduating from college, all I wanted was a job that was about the economy, that wasn't doing econometrics for a specific company. Yeah, like, I wanted to talk about the actual economy, there was no jobs that looked at that, let alone trying to transform it for like progressive aims. There might be

some consumer rights advocacy, maybe a fair trade initiative, but there wasn't really anything looking systemically at the economic system as a whole. And so seeing not only like how many different organisations and initiatives are entering into this space, but also just last week, I was on an event with the UN SDG Lab all on economic systems change. And like the new UN Special Rapporteur for poverty and human rights is really centering like a post-growth paradigm for the next iteration of SDGs. And like that's, yeah, the notion of development has been so tied from it's pretty much inceptions to notions of economic growth, and so to see this disentangling happening and a lot of, honestly cognitive dissonance that it also creates for folks, when we really questioned some of the fundamental assumptions of what determines progress, or what determines our success is beautiful and inspiring, but also painful. It makes people really uncomfortable as well, because it's destabilising. It's part of this bigger, I think paradigm shift we're kind of seeing.

Amanda Janoo 15:19

And so for me, to your point around that sort of process, like why the process matters so much is one, because I think one of the biggest issues with economics is the one size fits all philosophy, right? Like there's no other social science that is like, across all space and time. Yeah, like, everybody is this way, and the system works like that. But we've keep trying to just find another unifying economic theory as opposed to allowing for space and context in that journey. And that's a part of the self empowerment that I think people are yearning for as well. I mean, I'm in the US, so I will say, I think we're a little bit further behind than some, but yeah, I think that there's really exciting glimmers here as well, of civil society activity, of policymakers, I think, really starting to recognise that they can't afford to keep going about the sort of standard approach. And so that's leading to some interest as well. Like, those are some light, bright spots.

Lily Spencer 16:26

And I mean, you just also had, Sophie Howe there in Vermont, who we've also had on the podcast as the outgoing Future Generations Commissioner of Wales, and that whole story - for people who haven't listened to that episode, go back and listen to it - because what Wales has done is really like quite inspiring. I'm curious what lawmakers at least, and I do want to come to Scotland in just a sec., but just while we're in the US, which is often held up as it's like, "oh my God, it's such a dumpster fire, everything's terrible." And, you know, and even when we get people in Oxford who are trying to do good things, it seems like this system is just so broken that how do they make headway. I'm curious what US lawmakers, whether it's locally or state based or more nationally, like, where are their glimmers? What are they interested in?

Amanda Janoo 17:09

Yeah, so the visit of Sophie Howe, brought her and had her speak to some of our legislators. So yeah, that's what you would call them also. Yeah. Yeah, exactly. And it was actually really incredible to sort of see and Sophie Howe also said, from all of her visits here, she felt, yeah, just the most openness and sort of excitement as part of this. Again, because it's a process - and I think big thing, for me that's important is that Vermont goes through a participatory process of defining wellbeing, that that needs to be the starting point. And then on that basis, my hope is that we can pass a similar kind of legislation, but also innovate and build upon it as well, because, you know, speaking with Sophie, but also looking at a lot of the countries, I think one of the big issues is that they still tend to throw the economic, social

and environmental all together in one soup of goals or of indicators or whatnot. And it creates a lot of conceptual confusion. And so I think that, like one of the things in my dream is for Vermont is we spend time really clarifying our longer term social and environmental goals. And then on that basis, build systems to identify the areas of the economy that are positively or negatively contributing to those goals so that they can be more, yeah, strategically targeted accordingly.

Lily Spencer 18:32

I mean, it sounds so logical, like that just makes like, what do you mean, we don't do that already?

Amanda Janoo 18:36

Yeah, I know, I But that's so much of the issues, because, you know, the economy has been treated with an aggregate index. So everybody gets caught in the growth debate, because it's like they're thinking of the economy as one thing. But it's not, right? Like it's made up of so many different activities, and so many things that aren't included in that number as well. And so, you know, yeah, that's, I could go all nerd on that.

Lily Spencer 18:58

That's great. And now Lisa, by contrast, Scotland is held up as this type that is, like, way further ahead. And I know, the last time I spoke to you, I was like, what is in the water in Scotland? Like how is Scotland nailing this? While like the UK in terms of, you know, Britain, has had its own issues with conservatism and all of the austerity and it just seems like. I mean, I hear horrible stories from friends there about crumbling infrastructure, libraries being closed because there's no funding for libraries and in fricking London and you're like, London has money. Come on. It just...and you were talking to me about what has set Scotland apart, so I'm curious from your perspective, how are things going there?

Lisa Hough-Stewart 19:47

Yeah, what's in the water? I mean, we do have very nice water, which is why we have very nice whiskey in Scotland, apart from else, that's not, that's definitely not the only reason but it helps

Lily Spencer 19:56

It's good for your wellbeing, it's good.

Lisa Hough-Stewart 19:59

Yeah, I would argue that controversial statement. And so yeah, right, in many ways, the movement internationally does sort of look to Scotland as as a leader in Wellbeing Economy, which is great in and of itself that there is this level of ambition that our government, the Scottish Government - which is devolved, we are still part of the UK - but the Scottish Government has set out a level of ambition and rhetoric that is worth being proud of, and has been part of the Wellbeing Economy government's partnership and played a real leadership role in that from the beginning. And our former First Minister Nicola Sturgeon was a really persuasive champion of Wellbeing Economy thinking, and she has done a TED Talk that maybe you can provide a link to, that is a really inspiring articulation of why governments need to prioritise wellbeing. So that's, that's one thing is that we have this sort of high level ambition, and that's been happening now for a number of years for like, even longer than WEAll has existed, for about six or seven years. And within that, we have a National Performance Framework that has

wellbeing at its heart, we now have a minister for a Wellbeing Economy, as of the last sort of Cabinet reshuffle. And we also have a minister for community wealth building, I think he might still be the only minister for that anywhere. And, and there's a community wealth building bill going through a parliament as well. So that there are these legislative shifts, and there's a wellbeing monitor, there's a whole world with economy team within the civil service in the Scottish Government. So there are real building blocks in place. And with around all of that, I think there's a real discourse and narrative shift as well.

Lisa Hough-Stewart 21:42

So we've already talked about the risk of wellbeing washing. And I think that happens when it hits a point where the term is so widely used, particularly in government, that people want to align with it. I think that's kind of why I see sometimes that it risks becoming the new "sustainability", like there is a risk of it becoming a buzzword and a sound bite. So I suppose the flip side is that that risk is very real, and that the government might risk using it to mean all things to all people. Because the political reality is not that dissimilar to the rest of the UK. In all honesty, we are devolved, and we have some powers, we're still part of the UK, so on on many things, including a lot of the levers of power that you need to control the economy. Scotland does not have power over those things at Scottish level, so there's that. But that can also be used as an excuse by the Scottish Government. At least it's genuine, but sometimes it can be used as a bit of a get out clause, to like point upwards and blame the UK for everything.

Lisa Hough-Stewart 22:43

And but we also have a Keynesian political landscape, we have party lines that are defined along constitutional lines, really, that that's a more defining landscape for us, whether you're pro or anti Scottish independence is a bit more defining than, than left versus right in Scotland, which makes us quite different from other places. But there is also a risk and Wellbeing Economy being too associated with the SNP, which is the pro-independence party. WEAll, in our Scottish hub, has worked hard to work with policymakers right across the spectrum. And we have a cross party group on Wellbeing Economy that has members from all the different parties, and there certainly are cases to be made for the well being economy, from lots of different lenses. But there are still these risks around it.

Lisa Hough-Stewart 23:35

And the final thing I'd say is that most people in Scotland that are part of our network and that are working towards Wellbeing Economy, are pretty frustrated with the government for what we would call the implementation gap. There's rhetoric and everything is great, but that we want to see more substantive progress and we want to see more bold steps towards transformation, away from the status quo. So we've taken, we've certainly taken a lot of the really important steps towards it, but you can't, I'm not living in the Wellbeing Economy utopia here in Glasgow today. It's, we still have a lot of inequality, there's high levels of poverty here, there's... We haven't we haven't solved all these things, and I do have some worries that some of those risks that I just talked about mean that we might back slide on that progress any minute - I really hope not. And the movement, both within government and in civil society and with businesses and stuff is really going around the Wellbeing Economy all the time in Scotland. So there's more reasons to be hopeful than fearful. But we're not there yet.

Lily Spencer 24:38

I mean, yeah, at least I guess you've got, when you say you have a Minister for Wellbeing Economy and for community wealth building, I think wow, there's been at least a level of buy-in and acknowledgement that like these are things to aim at and maybe that is still more aspirational than, you know, manifesting in the transformations that, you know, nothing is ever a final destination. It's always that process and that journey. I'm curious about the politics and from your perspective does this? How do we avoid this being a left versus right issue? Like how, how are you seeing people come together? Or how do you avoid those kind of political pitfalls, that it doesn't just become another kind of... You know, because I think that there's so much power in economics. And I always think back to Bill Clinton had this economic adviser James Carville, who, you know, his quote was, "it's the economy, stupid." And this idea, you know, Maslow's hierarchy - like if we have our basic needs, if we feel secure, if we feel optimistic that we can provide for ourselves and our family and have the basics of a good life, like we feel more optimistic, and in control in, in our lives, and more optimistic about the world in the future. And I think it is this really powerful core thing, and like, has all this potential at a time when the world feels like democracy is under pressure. And people are, you know, in the UK, you had Brexit in the US, we had Trump, like, you know, we had all the people buying into all the conspiracy theories, especially during COVID. And so it's like, to me, the Wellbeing Economy seems like it could be this really powerful kind of galvanising, like we can turn this ship around, and we can create an economy that like delivers for us and the things that we actually care about. But I'm worried that it just gets sidelined as like a lefty utopian fantasy, rather than something that like conservative people can buy into as well. Has that been your experience? Or do you feel like, actually, there are people coming at this from all different kinds of politics?

Amanda Janoo 26:25

Um so, the thing that comes to mind first of all, which I think it's important to say around that quote - "it's the economy, stupid", is that I think there's something really insightful about what you were saying around the power that that term holds within our public discourse. So like how central it seems to be, and I think your point is around voting behaviour and people's sense of security, etc. And of course, there's a reality there because, you know, ensuring our material needs, right, like our basic comforts, that has huge implications for our anxiety and our level of social connection, or since purpose, etc., right. But the term economy itself actually didn't enter into the public discourse until the Great Depression, and after the Great Depression, right. So if you would talk to people even 100 years ago, and said the term economy, they wouldn't have any idea what we're talking about, yeah? And so it was, it was a reaction to a really devastating situation that people couldn't make, like, they saw that there was huge amounts of unemployment, and poverty, and you know, hunger and these sorts of things. But at that time, they also then develop this number - GDP - and having that - well GNP at the time right - but having that as like an indicator to be able to assess if they were, if things were getting better. And then at the same time, sort of this merged with that sort of Keynesian focus on employment, obviously, because there was so much unemployment, and then stock market values, because obviously, the stock market was a big, was the major reason for the Great Depression. And what's interesting is now looking at 100 years later, we're still using those three indicators whenever we talk about the economy, right? And because that was the context of that moment in time, but the crises we face now are different. And so then, and anxiety we're feeling is around different things. So the eco-anxiety is very real. And you know, and people's sense of loneliness and isolation, the mental health crisis, there's a

lot of other things that I think are really destabilising. And so, for us, I think our role is to help to re-shape the economic sort of discourse in a way that actually aligns with the things that are genuinely most concerning and pressing, and some of that is material, but I think that there's a lot of other aspects that people care about now.

Amanda Janoo 26:29

Yeah, that was all so well put. And to just add to that, I think what we've found in the last few years is that if you do look at the left/right spectrum - which isn't helpful, I'd love for us to be able to bust out of that and get beyond it. But if you are looking at those sort of traditional values that are small c conservative, there's a lot of that, and what we mean when we talk about our Wellbeing Economy, about local economies, about people sort of living where they are, and getting back to basics about what matters to people. And we have had right wing politicians in different countries who are really interested and curious, usually come in from that angle. And that's, that's happening in a few places.

Lisa Hough-Stewart 29:32

The other thing worth mentioning is that we put out a paper done by fantastic researchers a few months ago - again, I'll give the link to you Lily so you can send it - about the wellbeing reflex, that looks at how the countries that have wellbeing frameworks in place actually had better outcomes across a whole bunch of different policy areas in COVID. Because, and we had researchers looking at New Zealand, Finland and Bhutan, and even academics in those places making a really clear case that New Zealand, Finland and Bhutan ended up with better economic outcomes in the sort of traditional growth terms with because they made wellbeing-led decisions quickly when, when the pandemic happened. So having wellbeing frameworks in place actually set those places up to be able to cope with the pandemic in ways that were less harmful for the population as a whole. And I think that's really, that's a really powerful example. And the pandemic has been really significant, even though lots of things are going back to what was the norm before. I think it really has people in general and policymakers questioning what matters in life and what success looks like and what our relationship with work is, which is really, really central to any conversation about the economy. So I think just the fact that there are a lot more people are asking questions like that now opens the door to, to these conversations about wellbeing and the purpose of the economy and what the economy is actually for.

Lisa Hough-Stewart 31:08

But the last thing to say on this question of like, left versus right is the reason why we called the organisation WEAll. And we actually came up for the WEAll acronym, and then like found the word alliance to make that work. Even though the Wellbeing Economy was always there, is because it's like standing in opposition to us versus them. It's like, it can't be us versus them. It's got to be all of us, it's got to be about the collective. So we talk, we call ourselves WEAll a lot more than we say the Wellbeing Economy Alliance because there's that, those words matter. And there's no denying that vested interests built the current economic system, and they want to see it survive. But that doesn't mean that we should focus on them or make our work be about being against them. And actually, we need to be talking about a just transition to a new economic system. There's a lot of talk about just transition in the energy sector, for example, and other specific sectors. But what we really need is conversations about a just transition to a new economic system that also looks at people who would make, stand to lose

things in that transition, and how do you take them with you? How do you build bridges, it's not about destroying anybody, or being against anybody.

Lily Spencer 32:21

I love that so much. And 100% COVID changed - we had a conservative government in Australia at the time, and the discourse changed on a dime. It went from debt and deficits to lives and livelihoods. We doubled the rate of unemployment overnight, and introduced other social safety nets to help keep people in work. And yeah, it was like, oh, turns out we can like just end poverty, like, oh, okay.

Amanda Janoo 32:48

Amazing magic.

Lily Spencer 32:49

Yeah. And of course, there's that long tail of people being like, well, you know, did that, did that lead to inflation? Or how are we going to pay back that debt? Like you still have the, you know, the wider debate once the crisis passed, but there was this faith in government in Australia went back up after having been kind of slowly on the decline, because there was a sense of like, oh, okay, this is a moment of feeling like, government's really delivering and looking out for us and we are in this together. And yes there are people who were mad about things. And, you know, not everyone wanted to mask or isolate or do that. But it was, it was a really powerful paradigm shift, I think that. And then for people who have been able to change their lives and their work, and their, you know, throughout this experience of questioning, like what matters, but look, I am so loving this conversation and inspired by everything that you're saying, what are the things inspiring you? What are the big successes around the world? Is there a particular...I mean, we've talked about Scotland, we've talked about, you know, the US a little bit, and Vermont in particular, we've mentioned Wales, but like - whether it's big picture successes, like things happening in the EU, or whether it's particular communities, you know, cities or even companies, like what are the stories that just make you think, my gosh, like we actually can do this there anything that kind of jumps out at?

Amanda Janoo 34:10

Yeah, I mean, one of the things that maybe I just wanted to share back to the point that was being made earlier, too, and you're talking about sort of the the left/right is, at least in the United States, some of the left/right is really centred in bigger government or smaller government. Yeah, like, that's sort of the spectrum. And it's been interesting working more in the US, because people really don't have any faith in government, and that's on both the left and right, yeah. So and so at least national government. And I think one of the things that is helpful about the Wellbeing Economy is that it's, it's a third option. It's not just about like, traditional, like big state socialism that grows the economy and the redistributes it back or, you know, small state capitalism. That's just like "go ahead, and let's just see what happens." Yeah. It's like, it's a more strategic, it's about having, there is an important role of government or the role of policy, right, and setting those rules and boundaries and, and directing the economy, but also preventing the need for so much expenditure after the fact as well. And so, I've found, at least in the US, but like, there are more conservative think tanks that actually I think think more in line with what we would articulate as a Wellbeing Economy sort of strategy in Europe and stuff like that, because it is, yeah, it's looking at more of the, like, how do we actually yeah, get the, as Katherine said, get the

economy to do more of the heavy lifting itself. So it's delivering on the goals that we want, as opposed to waiting for the government to fix it after the fact kind of. And so that, that, for me, I think, is practically a way to sort of bridge this idea, that is just a leftist thing. I think, you know, if you're a fiscal conservative, you can see the logic for taking this kind of approach. If you're a social justice oriented person, or environmental activist, you could see the logic for it equally as well.

Amanda Janoo 36:03

And then when it comes to sort of successes, I mean, I don't know, we did a mapping yesterday as a team, and it was a lot about, you know, who are we seeking to reach and it always comes back down to people. Like, it's just like, ultimately, we can talk about organisations and governments and whatever, but it's always just the people who are within those particular institutions at the end of the day, and, and seeing the ways in which, I don't know, for me, like the feedback that we get about people being like, I feel like I've found home. Yeah, like, I feel like I found my people, and I'm not crazy. And this is really happening and, and wanting to bring that into all of these different spheres. So like seeing shifts in academia, for sure, in terms of the way that, you know, we're thinking about economics and business, seeing shifts in government and policy making, for sure, around these things and development logic within organisations, businesses, like I think, I think it is starting. It's, yeah, it's, systems change takes a long time. And I think that's part of it, too. You know, it's not something that happens overnight, and you don't want it to honestly happen overnight. Yeah, because that's, that's really disruptive. So it's always about just remembering also that it's like a marathon, not a sprint. Yeah, we're in it.

Lily Spencer 37:22

Yeah. What about you Lisa?

Lisa Hough-Stewart 37:24

Yeah, it's definitely also about people. Because as Amanda says, yes, there are these examples of governments that are going a bit further and that are trying but for me personally, where I get the energy to keep doing this quite challenging long term work is from people that we meet that come to us to be members. And the big standout moment for me this year has been being part of the Beyond Growth Conference that happened in the EU Parliament in May, not because the EU is like 100% committed to a Wellbeing Economy and it's going to happen, because it's not, a lot of the policymakers that spoke at that conference actually felt very out of sync with the mood in the room, because they were seeing a lot more of the sort of defence of the current system or green growth sort of ideas. But the sheer energy and momentum of the 2000 diverse people who took up space in the Parliament that day, that's what inspired me that look, I can actually look around our room and see our movement. Usually we're online all the time. And we know that there are all these people out there but we spend a lot of time on Zoom boxes, but to be to take over a Parliament, the European Parliament with with 2000 people who really passionately believe in building a Wellbeing Economy and think it's possible and all have different ideas and knowledge to contribute to that, it has definitely been the most inspiring thing for me this year. I do a lot of work at EU level and with like other groups that are working with the EU. And there are reasons to be optimistic policy wise with the EU, but that's not the thing that gets me really excited, keeps me motivated. It's actually the belief in the people that are putting that pressure on and, and contributing the ideas and contributing solutions.

Lisa Hough-Stewart 39:08

And you asked about businesses as well - I think there are lots and lots of businesses out there that are proving that we can do business differently, but they exist in spite of the current system instead of because of it. And here in Scotland we've got quite a few of them. So I want to give a shout out to a couple of good ones because they deserve it. The Auchrannie Resort, which is my favourite place on the Isle of Arran that is quite close to where I live on the west coast of Scotland, is an employee-owned business that we profile in our business and wellbeing guide. That is an award winning hotel, a fantastic experience. It's, it's a really successful business that has totally embraced employee ownership as its model and is therefore a fantastic place to work and is not purely about profit generation and about being as big as possible. It's also very much about serving the island community that it's part of and providing to facilities and employment and everything to the rest of the island. So that's a great one. And another one we have here in Scotland is called Locavore, which is a shop and food delivery service and everything that Katherine always raves about to that they have the explicit purpose of disrupting and changing the food system. And, and they want to grow because they want to disrupt the system, but they have like, profit caps, and caps and everything so that it's not about growing for the sake of having more money. It's about growing for the sake of having more shops in more communities that are doing food, retail, definitely. So I think anywhere in the world, you could find tonnes of examples of these, but I just can't wait until we have a system that incentivises them and makes it easier for them to exist, and actively promotes them instead of them having to sort of fight in the margins, basically.

Lily Spencer 40:53

I mean, that is just a brilliant segway to my next question, which was like, where do you think we're headed? Because you guys have set a pretty bold and beautiful vision for a timeframe of 2040. And that in, you know, by 2040 economics around the world, delivers shared wellbeing for people and planet. And that doesn't seem as far away as it once did, you know like, the 2020s are advancing. How, how optimistic are you feeling? And what would that vision...how does...when you imagine that vision being realised, like, is there a feeling you get? Is there a sense of like, I would know we - not had arrived, like it's a ding on the microwave, and you're done and getting you live in the wellbeing economic utopia that you were talking about before Lisa - but where you could, yeah, you're not going against the grain, you're not pushing uphill or going against the flow of the current to try to value these things. The system is working and supporting you to do that much in the way that right now we just go about our lives and a whole bunch of decisions are being made that support a whole bunch of things that we're not really thinking about, we're just existing. Do you reckon we can get there by 2040? And how would we know if we are kind of on track?

Amanda Janoo 42:02

So one of my favourite things about WEAll is the fact that there is that sort of time mountain vision, which, because I've worked in international development before feels really important, because so often, if you don't have that it becomes about making yourself essential, as opposed to...somebody articulated once that you know, WEAll is here to catalyse, not micromanage the transformation, and I really appreciate that a lot. And I think it helps me to think about, you know, the economy itself as a process. So similarly, a Wellbeing Economy is not really an end goal, it's a, it's a system, right, like it's a process. And so I see WEAll's role as being here to help to catalyse the type of like paradigm shift and

the kind of collaborations and the, the advocacy and, and logic that is needed for that type of transformation, at whatever level and space makes the most sense. And so my hope is that, we will sort of know when we're, our work is done by being able to feel like, if we weren't here, this is going to continue on, just in the same way. Like I again, I don't, I would love to say we would know, because all of the WEAll needs would to be achieved, right? Like everybody would have enough dignity and fairness and like, you know, the environment would totally be healed and regenerated and all of these things, but even 20 years, I think realistically, it will take longer than that. But I think we can have the systems in place that are oriented towards that logic. And, yeah, the hearts and minds pushing for it.

Lily Spencer 43:45

Lisa, did you want to add anything to that?

Lisa Hough-Stewart 43:47

Yeah, I think for me, it's about trying to picture what's normal and what's common sense having shifted. Like those, those cultural norms have shifted, like I've just talked about those two businesses that are like amazing and thriving, but they're sort of in spite of the system. And that's one way that businesses like that, that have social environmental purpose that are not profit driven, being the norm. Whatever format the news text by then - I doubt we'll be watching it on TV - but when policymakers are being held to account by by the media, it's not then being hammered by questions about GDP and economic growth, they'll be getting hammered with questions about wellbeing and planetary health. Like, those will be the things that we work. And as a parent, it's hard for me not to go "ah my daughter will be 20 in 2040" and I want her to be in disbelief that we ever worked as much as we did. And that was ever, there was the level of inequality that there was in that that was just okay, like I want, I want the things that she thinks are normal when she's 20 to feel so foreign from this that she's like, "seriously, you lived like that?" Yeah, that would be really good.

Lily Spencer 45:01

The way we look back at the 1950s we're like "what, women had to quit their jobs when they got married and they couldn't open bank accounts?!" Yeah, totally.

Lisa Hough-Stewart 45:08

Yeah. I always, like, I always, always use this example because it feels like it's changed really quickly. Like, I'll say to my Mum, like, "did you really smoke in the office? Did you really smoke on planes?" Like that's something culturally was totally normal and that has completely shifted. So that's like a good fairweather for me as well.

Lily Spencer 45:27

Gosh, I just want to cry as another mother of a child that will be in their 20s in 20 years. Yeah, definitely. So for people who are listening to this conversation, and are just like feeling fired up and inspired and want to get involved want to find out more, where do they need to go? How can they learn more? What is like, is WEAll something that just anyone can join? Or do you have to be a member of like an institution or a government, Lisa?

Lisa Hough-Stewart 45:53

You can go to WEAll.org, there's loads of stuff to read on there. And anyone can join as a member, as an individual or as an organisation. If you're part of an organisation it's free to join, but there's a bit of a process and like meeting you, and letting you know the different ways to get engaged on a deeper level. It depends on where you are in the world, there might be a local hub that you can get involved with, with people in your country or your community. So you can find the map on our website at WEAll.org/hubs that shows you that. But I guess, the next step for a lot of people, if this is like a new idea to you, is like reading and listening and watching and just sort of absorbing, because there's so much out there in terms of Wellbeing Economy thought and ideas. So yeah, we've talked about Katherine's Trebeck a lot, she has an amazing book called The Economics of Arrival, that she kind of hates to plug herself, so I'll plug it for her. And there's loads of amazing thinkers. And if you look at the ambassadors on our website, and lots of them have written amazing books and, too many to less, but Tim Jackson, Professor Tim Jackson, is one of my personal favourites and reading his work. He inspired me. And the book I always say that everyone should read that isn't so obviously like, an economic book is in Braiding Sweetgrass by Robin Wall Kimmerera, who's an Indigenous scientist in North America. But the way that she writes about the, how we live well together, and a relationship with the planet, and our relationship with each other is just the best possible articulation of what I think a Wellbeing Economy is, and it's a beautiful read. So that's my recommendation.

Lily Spencer 47:32

Thank you. Those are gorgeous. Thank you so much. Amanda, do you want to add anything to that? Any personal recommendations or suggestions for people?

Amanda Janoo 47:38

Oh, yeah. I think that if folks are interested in some of the, like, global dimensions, I really, like Divide by Jason Hickel, I think it does a really good job sort of looking at the relations between, like global, like the minority and the majority world, and these sort of things in terms of the economic system. I'm reading actually, right now, this is unrelated in some ways, but I think also related, and it's really good. It's called The War of Art. And it's funny, and it's short, and it's for anybody who is having some creative blocks. And it like sort of takes you through a process of just exploring those and unlocking them. So I can recommend it to anybody.

Lily Spencer 48:22

And I'm gonna put in a plug, because I know the Australian WEAll hub is getting started. And so if you are listening to this in Australia, and you're wondering, the Australian government has applied to join the WEGo, which is the government group, but they have to be observers, right. Which I love. I love that you guys are like, "no, you have to like watch and learn for a while, and then when you can prove to us you're doing stuff, we'll let you in the club, like the club, fully". But yes, the Australian have is getting going, there's going to be a landing page up pretty soon that people can get involved in they want to find out more. And then another podcast that we wanted to plug on this one because it sounds pretty great related to art and related to WEAll that you guys are telling me about before we started recording is going to be launching soon called Express Change and that's all about art, making change and artists talking about this vision of a Wellbeing Economy. So we will link to that when it is up or keep looking for it if we publish before this goes live, because I think that sounds fantastic. I just want to thank both of you so much today, you have both been so wonderful to speak to, wise and inspiring and

encouraging and human and real. And I just, it gives me like hope and courage. And I feel like I'm that person you say that, "I've found my favourite people and I'm not crazy, thank you." Thank you for being 10 million steps further along in this journey than I am and helping to kind of like the way with a lot of other people and a lot of other lanterns because I think it's what we need right now. And I just look forward to finding and supporting and learning more for me, so thank you.

Amanda Janoo 49:48

Oh, thank you so much Lily. It's been an absolute pleasure.

Lisa Hough-Stewart 49:52

Yeah, thank you. I've loved this and keep doing your amazing work, and with this brilliant hub too because I can't wait to see that going from strength to strength.

Lily Spencer 50:19

I took so much from that conversation that I wanted to try to distil down some key takeaway thoughts for all of us. The first is that I had never heard that the term "economy" didn't actually enter the public discourse until the Great Depression. And isn't it interesting that 100 years later we are using literally the same metrics for our success, even though the challenges and the crises we face now are different. It's time to pay attention to some different things. That the economy is actually just how we produce and provide for each other, so shouldn't that always be evaluated through what it does for our wellbeing rather than growth for its own sake?

Lily Spencer 51:04

I love that the economy is not an autonomous self regulating force that exists out there somewhere. It is a system that we humans have designed to be biased in favour of certain goals, certain activities and behaviours. So we can change those biases to be biased in favour of others. And that the pandemic was a real circuit breaker for some of that. And certainly, that's what Australia reMADE found in our own research that we did during that time and people telling us that what they most want is to care and be cared for, connect and contribute. So I'll link to that research for anyone who's curious.

Lily Spencer 51:45

I love their focus on process and the lesson that the process always matters as much as the outcome. So for them, that's looking at - is it collaborative? Is it humble? Is it focused on the "we"? Because yes, there are vested interests who benefit from the current system, that doesn't mean we have to make our focus them or being anti-them. I found it deeply reassuring that systems change takes a long time. And actually, that's okay. We don't want it to happen overnight. But we do want to build a world where, say those great businesses Lisa mentioned, can operate because of the system we have instead, of in spite of it.

Lily Spencer 52:27

And finally, if you are working to catalyse transformation, you'll know you've succeeded not because every wrong has been righted or every goal delivered on, but because you have changed the context, you've created a new normal that has enough grip and enough traction that the work will carry on beyond you. I love the idea that our children will look at some of the things we take as normal right now

about our economy - how hard and how long we work, or how much inequality there is, or how we treat nature - and it will seem as absurd or surreal to them as smoking on aeroplanes. That is all for this episode. We will be back again soon. I look forward to hearing and sharing more conversations with you, thank you for your support of this podcast and all of the ideas and networks and good work that we try to showcase. We will see you next time on reMAKERS.

Lily Spencer 53:51

Thanks for listening to the reMAKERS. I'm the host, Lily Spencer, and I record my part of these conversations from the beautiful Gubbi Gubbi country, on the Sunshine Coast of Queensland. Just want to honour the incredible elders of these lands and waters - an Aboriginal culture 60,000 years is the oldest continuing civilisation on earth. I also want to pay shout out to our producer Anna Wilson, to my colleague and sometimes co host Dr. Millie Rooney. You can learn more about Australia reMADE and everything we're about over on AustraliareMADE.org. And in the meantime, thank you for sharing, thank you for listening and subscribing, sending us your thoughts. We really appreciate all the support that you give the podcast. We'll see you next time, over on the reMAKERS.