

Transcript of 'The Blue Economy'

Season 1, Episode 20, Transforming Tomorrow

[Theme music]

Paul: Hello and welcome to Transforming Tomorrow, the podcast from the Pentland Centre for Sustainability in Business, here at Lancaster University Management School.

I'm Paul Turner.

Jan: And I'm Professor Jan Bebbington

Paul: Jan, today it's with great pleasure that we welcome Dr Celine Germond-Duret to the podcast. She's a Lecturer in environmental politics and policy from the Department of Politics Philosophy and Religion here at Lancaster University.

Celine's a member of the Pentland Centre and she has a specific interest in international climate politics and indigenous peoples and, a topic that we're going to be starting out with here, marine policy and the blue economy.

Jan: And this is really delightful, 'cause we've got a follow on from JB's earlier podcast on the oceans and sand. Who can forget the sand bonus issue?

Paul: Will, will we be talking about sand again? More sand?

Jan: You never know.

Paul: Sand, sand, sand.

Jan: You never know, you never know.

Um, but also this is a, a start of a wee run of podcasts from people who are members of the Pentland Centre, but who aren't in the Management School. So are coming at sustainability in business from their own distinctive disciplines and their own distinctive perspectives.

[Theme music]

Paul: Yes, because we've had the accountants in, and in the next couple of weeks we're going to be having the lawyers in. You know, I don't think we've

done anything wrong on this podcast, [Jan laughs] but the lawyers will be sure to tell us if we have.

But, Celine, you're not a lawyer, can you tell us what you are, so to speak?
[laughs] Tell us a little bit about yourself and your background.

Celine: Yeah, sure. First, thank you ,thank you very much, uh, Jan and Paul for having me today. It's a great, great pleasure for me to take part this podcast. And I took great pleasure listening to the other podcasts as well.

If I was to tell you that my background is in politics and that I'm a lecturer in politics, it would seem that my past, my, uh, journey has been very straightforward and very linear. It has not been that straightforward. So my background is in international relations, but um my first degree was very much interdisciplinary, and, uh, I was studying not just international relations and politics, but economy as well. And, uh, international law and current history.

So it was very much an interdisciplinary degree in international relations that really gave me this, um, this analytical frame to, to look at different issues from a wide range of perspective. So although I specialise in politics, I very much, uh, I'm still using nowadays this approach, looking at a problem from different angles.

Now, if we're looking at the subject area I've been working on I would say that, uh, my research has very much very much focused on development issues and environmental issues. So these have been the two topics I've been working on since my first degree, up until today. And I really believe that there are the two, uh, side of the same coin.

For example, when I teach students about development issues I do talk about the environment, because we cannot ignore the environment. When I do teach them about environmental issues, I do tell them as well about development processes because we cannot dissociate, uh, the two.

The commonality is this interdisciplinary approach. I've spent many years working with colleagues in human geography, for example. And I have borrowed concept from them, for example concept of place when I'm looking at how people do relate to the coastal and marine environment. How they think that their identity strongly connect, uh, with the, with the blue space.

So I would say, when I have to define who I am, what I am, it's bit difficult, because I have the feeling that there are different aspect to my work. So

different disciplines, um different angles. But what is very common is this attempt at understanding topics from different angles, its interdisciplinary. I know that in the previous podcast JB was talking about interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary.

There are challenges, uh I think that's something we're not too bad at doing uh at the academic uh level. A bit more difficult in a, in an applied environment but it's something that is really important especially when we're working on environmental issues, sustainability. We just cannot um single out other disciplines, we really need to look at these issues from a wide range of, of angles.

Jan: And what I liked about that, Celine, is that you talked about the development and environment together. And we haven't mentioned the SDGs for a few weeks, but we did start off with them and indeed tucked within it.

And one of the reasons some of our prior listeners, um, find the SDGs helpful but also difficult, is because if you can get environment and development to work together then obviously that's great for the environment, and people's lives um are better for it. But actually environment and development sometimes stands a little bit in tension as well.

And in that area, I guess, that's where the study of politics and policy becomes really important as well. So our, our listeners will be super interested to understand what, what kind of things do people in environment politics and policy look into?

Celine: Right so, um, yes, you very rightly mentioned the SDGs and the concept of sustainable development in itself results from the debate over the relationship between development and the environment.

So uh if we look at the origin of sustainable development, so looking at the early '70s, for example ,the Stockholm conference, which is one of the marker in the history of sustainable development. Since that time the debate, although the term sustainable development didn't emerge before the end of the '80s, the debate was very much about this tension between development processes and environmental degradation.

One of the key debate and question at that time, and source of tension as well, was to identify what is the cause, what is the source of environmental degradation. Is it development processes? Is it poverty?

And this is an issue that has been debated for, for decade, and that has led to tension between, between countries with different opinion on, uh, on the question, as we can imagine.

But the concept of sustainable development very much tried to address this tension and tried to find a balance between economic needs and environmental protection.

And I've just mentioned the term tensions, and to answer your question about what environmental politics is about. For me, politics is very much about power. Each discipline has its key, core concept like geography would have place, for example.

For politics, power is very much as a central, uh, as a centre of considerations. So for me environmental politics is about understanding who has the power to, to define problems and solutions? Who has the power to define what, what environmental problem deserve to be looked at? It's about governance, who decide what type of governance for what type of natural resources? So who is making decision? Who has the power to define problems, define solutions?

So looking at the question of sustainable development, that would mean looking at, how do we define sustainable development. And we could we could probably take hours and hours today to talk about what sustainable development is, and the different interpretation ,and is it a buzzword, an oxymoron, what is it exactly?

But there are different interpretation, and it's something that decision makers need. They all have their own interpretation of what sustainable development is about and how to best implement, uh, sustainability.

Paul: And, of course, here in this country, in the UK, over the last week or so there's been a lot of attention paid to things such as environmental policies, because of the Labour Party and their original commitment if they were to be elected at the next general election to spend, I think is it 24 or 28 billion pounds on green projects?

And then them suddenly saying that's not actually going to be fiscally possible, so we're going to have to chop that down. It might end up being 14 million, 18 million. And that shows the balance there between economics and politics and reality and what, what you might like to be the case.

Celine: Yeah, this is a very good point, and what is interesting, when looking at, um, different narratives or different, uh, programmes from different parties, it's as if environmental issues were, or, yeah, environmental considerations were always ad hoc. Something that we can look after, that we can start to consider, once we have, we have resolved other issues. So, in other terms, it will always come after economic considerations.

And I think we really need to move away from this mode of thinking. But it's something that is very prevalent in a lot of political discourse, and practice, to consider that, in a sense it's as if environmental policy were more of a threat than environmental issues. And that in the case of, um, economic crisis for example, what we would cut is budget, uh, linked to environmental consideration, for example.

So I think we, we really need to move from this mindset that consider environmental issues as something that we can *only* start looking at once we have solved other more pressing, or what is considered as being more pressing, issues.

Paul: Because it almost seems that environmental issues can be weaponised by the other side, to say that anyone who's caring about the environment, about sustainability, about green policies is some kind of war, chaos creator who just wants to, you know, cause problems and isn't looking at the reality at all.

So yeah, there's so much there, that you say, that we do need to consider, that everyone needs to, to think about. But yeah, getting the fact that it's not just about the money and you need to get the policies in place and then work out the money later sometimes.

Jan: That's kind of why I like the, what we're going to move on to it's just thinking about the blue economy, is that that's already sort of and the very use of that term and, and come on to its contestation I'm sure, if you like the economy and the environment have already been bound together.

So, so the blue economy is maybe a new buzzword. It certainly is something that's used a lot and, um, I hang around watery worlds, so you hear about it a lot.

A lot of our listeners may not have heard the blue economy before. So what is it, and what is a non-blue economy? Could you open up that package of, of ideas for us?

Celine: Sure, so first I have some very bad news. Uh, if listeners are hoping to [laughs] get a precise and clear-cut answer [Jan laughs] of this question I, I don't think it's going to happen. Um, simply because the blue economy is one of these concepts that is very ambiguous and confusing and bit confused as well.

So, if I go back to the origin of the term. We started to talk about the blue economy, uh, in around 2012, uh Rio plus, Rio plus 10. Um, so it's a concept that coming from the United Nations, from the global level. It's not coming from exactly the conference, as with many conferences, a lot of preliminary work being conducted before, but that's when the idea started to, to be developed.

And what is interesting, uh, with this concept is that it was very much promoted and endorsed by small island developing states. In other terms the green economy another, another of these concept, um, small island developing states thought that a green economy didn't really reflect necessarily their own situation, that a blue economy reflecting their use of coastal and marine resources would fit much better to their, uh, own economic situation.

Now what does it mean blue economy? Why are we talking about a blue economy? What is the difference with a maritime economy? What is the difference with blue growth?

The blue economy is supposed to contain a sustainability dimension. So that's how it, it differentiates from maritime economy, that would just be looking at economic activities in the maritime environment. The blue economy contains a sustainable dimension.

So it is, it's supposed to take into consideration, uh, environmental, the need for environmental protections, but also social and cultural aspects. Which is an element we always forget when it comes to sustainable development. We, we were just talking about this tension between the economy and the environment, sustainable development contains a third dimension which is social and cultural well-being.

So if I go back to the blue economy it is supposed to be sustainable, so that's a different from maritime economy. It's different from blue growth because not it's not just about economic growth, it's something bigger. It's about, uh, really sustainability dimension.

Now in reality, as with many of these concepts, there are different interpretation of what exactly it is and how it can be implemented. So it is now the consensus around the different sectors, uh, that compose the blue economy. So from coastal tourism to blue biotechnology to, uh, port to, uh, shipping industry and some fishing of course, aquaculture.

So wide genre of sectors which mean that when it comes to different authorities, uh, wanting to develop a blue economy strategy, or agenda, it can take many different forms depending on the situation of the country. Several countries have adopted a blue economy vision, a blue economy strategy, but they still remain quite a minority, uh, of country.

And, uh, but we also need to, to think about the blue economy in terms of more of a local or regional level. With my background, uh, something that I've not mentioned before when I was talking about, about my background, that in terms of the approaches I'm using in my research, I very interested in discourses, and doing discourse analysis.

So I'm interested in big discourses, big narratives, uh, how some big concepts become dominant, what does it mean. And the blue economy is a very interesting concept to look at from that perspective, to try to understand why has the blue economy been so successful in the sense of how has it been endorsed by so many different actors from national governments to private actors to NGOs as well.

So what can explain the success, in a sense, of the blue economy? And my argument is that because it does not really change anything, in a sense, it's not really challenging the system or anything. It just about, um, extending narrative and practices in another environment.

So which means that some, the practices that have been developed on land so far they are being pushed towards the marine environment. Uh, oceans have been, um, defined as development space, they are a new development space.

So it's really about extending narratives and practice developed on land onto the marine environment. What does it mean? That we are likely to reproduce

the same mistakes we've done on land. And this is a concern I have,, personally with the blue economy.

So, of course, when you look at, at oceans, um, it's not recently that we've just discovered that oceans have an economic value. Oceans have always played a crucial instrumental role when it comes to the economy. Thinking about trade for example, think, thinking about uh fishing.

With narratives around the blue economy there is a possibility that it's going to, uh, to lead the further exploitation of marine resources. So there's a real concern here that through the blue economy it's an invitation to further exploitation of the marine environment, but not necessarily in a sustainable way.

Paul: 20 years ago, we've just had the anniversary of the Chinese cockle picker disaster, where there were several, I think about 20 or so, Chinese cockle pickers who sadly died when the tide came in at night, they were out there um collecting cockles.

There's been regulation that's been put in place since then, um, nationally with regards to gangmasters, but locally with regards to picking cockles and, um, various similar things from the area. And I think at the moment there's a ban that will be in place, that you're not allowed to collect cockles from Morecambe Bay.

Is that the kind of local issue there might be with regards to the blue economy that can be replicated the world over?

Celine: Yeah, I strongly believe in the local level, in the community level. I think we, we often fail with one size fits all solution. If there should be a commonality between different blue economy initiatives, that should really be around the recognition that we need to take into account the social and cultural, uh, level.

As I was mentioning before, when we look at sustainable development we very much forget about the about the people who are, should be at the centre. If you're looking at the Brundtland definition of sustainable development for example, that's one of the most widely cited definition of sustainable development. It has people at the centre of the definition.

Uh sustainable development has three pillars the economy, the environment, society, people, communities but we always forget about them. And so I think

if there need to be a commonalities, uh, between different approaches it should be really highlighting the need to take into consideration coastal communities, local users, people, uh, that's really, that's really crucial.

Jan: I think the other thing that's coming through really strongly in, in the conversation you've just, had but also the conversation right from the start of this podcast, is justice.

And that is clearly, you know ,at the heart of a lot of sustainable development scholars' and practitioners', uh, interest. But can you tell us more about the justice dimension that infuses through your work?

Celine: Yes, sure. So my interest around justice, so from an academic point of view, uh, I would say it's coming from two things. The first thing is what I've just mentioned this recognition that we, we tend to forget about people, communities, justice, equalities, inclusivity. We tend to forget about these elements when we're talking about sustainable development.

Um, if I'm using a, an example, for example, the creation of protected areas for example, we know why they're being created we know it's for, um, you know further environmental protection or restoration. But we also know that looking at, um, protected areas on land and the case of some MPAs as well, communities, local communities, coastal communities are not always being consulted. So, um this is something that that really needs to be to be addressed.

Looking specifically at the case of the marine environment, for quite a long time social sciences were not that interested in oceans. It's relatively recent there's been an increase, almost an exponential, uh, increase in the interest in publication, uh, from social sciences about the marine environment.

But traditionally it was not the case, there was no interest in the marine environment, it was mostly natural sciences, um, a marine biologist looking at oceans. And uh there've been what uh we can call a phenomenon of a sea blindness, a form of sea blindness, not really seeing oceans for what they were.

Uh seeing the ocean, just considering oceans as a source of profit, of economy, full of natural resources, but not so much full of people and identity and culture. So, uh, that's a traditional very much Western vision of ocean seeing ocean just a kind of this big blue space, cold, very different from us. We're not going there, it's wet, it's cold, there's no people there.

But this is very much a vision that does not reflect vision of millions of people around the world. Traditionally we have forgotten completely about people that strongly connect with this blue space and we need to, to redress this, this question.

So going back to the question of justice, there's a lot of concern at the moment given all the, this renewed interest, or further interest in oceans. And JB, for example, is talking about the blue acceleration to, to highlight, to characterise this, this rush, uh, toward the ocean, this increase in activities.

We know that many of these activities are likely to have a detrimental effect on coastal communities. So there are two things here, either detrimental effect, it could be through blue grabbing for example disposition or not consulting them, which is wrong as well.

So questions of justice are really, really crucial to address and I've got a project starting in March that is funded by the Leverhulme that is going to look precisely at this question, at how different committees around the world, how do they define justice.

Because it's not down to me here to define what is justice for someone living the other side of the world. They need, it needs to come from them, what is marine ocean justice, what is blue justice for them? And how can we best ensure that practices being implemented, respect this notion of justice?

Jan: I think that perspective taking is really important, because when people talk about small island states they're also often talking about large ocean countries. And so the idea that that a country can only be the bits of land, when in fact, and particularly in, in Pacific and in Polynesia which is part of the world I know quite well, the wealth is in the in the ocean, but also the cultural and spiritual value is in the ocean as well. It's not purely based on, on land.

Should we stay in the Pacific?

Paul: Well, if you want to take me to the Pacific, Jan, [Jan laughs] I'm more than happy to go. I dare say a little bit warmer than it is in Lancaster today.

Jan: I think it probably is. So, so I was interested in, um, in your work, um, and looking at how, island disappearance which, you know, is obviously a big issue in the Pacific, is normalised in political debates around climate change.

Can you say more about that?

Celine: Yeah, sure.

So when we look at climate change, and when we look at, uh, international climate politics, it's really important to recognise that climate change, climate politics is dominated by inequalities.

Um, inequalities first in responsibility, who is responsible for climate change? Inequalities in vulnerability, who is the most vulnerable to climate change? And it's not the same people as the one who are responsible for climate change, which raises a lot of ethical issues. And also inequalities in who has a power of decision, and who can benefit from support to help mitigating or adapting to climate change?

Having that in mind I was very interested in the case of small island states, um, and how they position themselves in the debate. And also the, the question of the symbol, how in a sense, um, a lot of small island developing states have become a symbol of climate impact through sea level rise and their potential disappearance.

So it is a symbol, it is something if we ask people, um, in the street how do you, what do you associate climate change with they're likely to, to talk about sea level rise. They're likely to talk about, uh, islands, the disappearing islands.

So this notion of disappearing island, it's really becoming part of what people are have almost accepted as a climate impact. But um, so I was really interesting into looking at how this, this notion of disappearing island was being used in the political discourse. And how being it's been almost normalised something we accept, yes they going to disappear almost as a fact. And, but without leading to any further action or reaction anymore, because it's just a symbol, it's a fact they going to disappear.

So, this is a project that is still ongoing, I've not finished, but I, I've done a pilot study last year. And I was looking in the case of British newspapers, how British newspapers talk about these issues.

And what was interesting, that we can really see the distinction between two broad narratives on this question. First a form of eco-optimism, we're going to find solutions, technologies. Could be sea defence, potentially rising the island themselves, um, so, so it will be fine. In a sense it's a, it's an opportunity for further uh innovation, trying to protect some areas from sea level rise. So a form of eco-optimism, it's going to happen but it will be fine, they will be fine.

And at the opposite a form of eco-defeatism. Yes, they're going to disappear. It's like that, it's a fact, and they will disappear or they are disappearing, already happening. What is interesting with both, uh, opposite narratives here is that none of them is leading to any further action, because either they will be fine, so we don't need to do anything, or oh, they're doomed anyway and it's, so there's no, no need to do anything because it's too late.

So in terms of political actions, you know, this is the type of narrative is not going to foster any, any further, uh, mitigation action.

Paul: It makes you think, you hear stories about entire populations having to be moved and where will they be moved to? And if you move an entire population but disperse it, are you removing that culture from, um, from the planet? That, that that national identity is gone because everyone is just dispersed here, there and everywhere.

And does this tie in with the conversations that you have between national governments at the likes of COP28 which, we discussed, uh, just before Christmas in an episode, where you've got island nations trying to make themselves heard? Is that the kind of platform where they are able to make sure that their voice is heard, and not just the voice of those louder, bigger Western nations maybe?

Celine: It's a platform where they can very clearly voice their concerns. So, um, now, are they being listened to and heard? That's a different question. But, uh, very much all these COPs, Conference Of Parties, so that's taking place every year to discuss UNFCCC and other, uh, climate [inaudible] agreement and climate change.

So it is a, a platform, indeed, for countries to voice their concerns. And usually what happened is that you have block of countries getting together to, to speak with one voice. And, and small island developing states have been very vocal indeed. And if you're looking at the Paris Agreement, so uh the objective of Paris Agreement is to limit the increase of temperature to no more than two degrees Celsius.

But there is also an aspirational goal to *try* to limit to no more than 1.5. And the reason why this objective is there is precisely because this is something that, uh, that has been, uh, that, that small island developing states have been asking for.

It doesn't seem that it makes such a big difference 1.5, 2 degrees for us is not something we would even perceive, but it really does make a difference in terms of climate impact, and in terms of sea level rise.

So they have been very vocal, they really try to, to put the agenda and to, to highlight uh the serious of the situation. But now we know that decisions are being made, uh, by consensus and, uh, and we know that you can have power imbalance, and we also know that, although you have this two degrees and 1.5 objective in the Paris Agreement, we also know that in reality looking at the current climate pledges done by countries who are very far away from reaches, even reaching, even the two degrees Celsius objective.

Paul: We'll talk about your role, um, with the People and Ocean Knowledge and Action Hub within the Pentland Centre, but before that, Jan, I suppose we should really explain to the listeners what the Knowledge and Action Hubs are.

This is a new part of the Pentland Centre of the last year or so. So if you can explain a bit about what, what they are and why they've been set up.

Jan: They've kind of been a, a glint of my eye for a little bit. But they've come to realisation partly because of the number of members we have is now sufficiently large that there are groups, uh, of colleagues that can gather to gather around common interest.

And so the Hubs are focused on those areas where there's some critical mass and some common interest. And in, particularly in the, um, People and Ocean Hub there's a really diverse group of interests which is, is really encouraging.

The other reason for bringing them together are, there are areas where there are funded projects, and so looking at those funded projects together rather than singular projects is also part of the Knowledge and Action Hub ambition as well. And, of course, um obtaining future funding is, is part of that.

And then the third reason why we've put them together is that these Hubs are around areas where we have quite clear engagement partners as well. So the idea of commonality of interest, um, funded projects and potential for future funded projects, and engagement partners. And hence they are not just knowledge hubs, they're Knowledge and Action Hubs, and coming together.

And, um, Celine is the leader of our, our Ocean Knowledge and Action Hub which I'm very, very delighted by. And it might be a good time to say

something about your plans. We will follow you anywhere Celine. [Celine and Paul laugh]

And I, I'm a member of that Hub with my ocean interests, and wherever she says she shall go, I shall go!

Celine: It's risky. [laughs]

Yes, so the Hub gathers a, a group of very, uh, very interesting and motivated colleagues, uh, all from a different background and disciplines, and that is something quite interesting to mention that colleagues who are part of the Hub they come from different discipline as well.

And, um, one of the project we're going to do, and that's something I'm really excited about, is looking at um blue businesses, uh, here in the region. And maybe before I say, before I tell you more about, that just a few words.

My research has very much been influenced by a critical angle, so looking at border structures, um, knowledge structures, wrong things being, that are happening, and more at the systemic, uh, level. So with a very much of a critical angle.

And it is a very important, uh, type of research to do, really need to, to be able to do that type of, uh, that type of research, and to, to discuss about changing mindset it's really, really crucial.

At the same times, um, it's also important to, to look at what is happening at the local level, what is happening in the applied world. And if we want to, the system to change, if we think it's unfair, unjust, where do we start?

And we need to start with, with the people who are really part of the system, who are playing a role who can, uh, make things happen. So I think it really important, really interesting to, to do a combination of project both looking at more discursive narrative level, but also looking very much at, uh, at the practical level, the field level as well.

So why, uh, what I'm really excited, uh, with the project we're doing at the Hub, so we're going to do a mapping of blue businesses here in Lancashire. So trying to identify what businesses, um, have their activities, conducting activities that relate to coastal and marine environment.

And, um, not just to, for us to have an idea of what is happening but really to have this dialogue with them around this notion of blue economy. Um, have

they heard about the blue economy? You know, it's a concept that academics love working on, um, decision makers as well, I'm not so sure about, about economic and social actors, what do they understand of the blue economy? Do they think that this is what they are doing?

So we really would like to do this mapping to identify who is there, what are they doing, and also to have this dialogue around the blue economy, around sustainability, and to create a network as well because it's really important to share practices.

So creating a network for them to discuss, but also to have this dialogue between academics and, let's say, practitioners and as we can learn from each other so they can also help *us* determining what type of research would be valuable, what type of research would be useful to them, any questions they would like us to answer too.

So to create this network and say to engage in this dialogue between academics and, and practitioners.

Paul: You say that maybe the people who are actually involved in the blue economy don't necessarily even know they're involved in the blue economy, because maybe the term has passed them by, or is just not something they've become familiar with yet. What kind of businesses might you expect in this kind of region to be involved in the blue economy?

Celine: Ask me the same question in two weeks! [Everyone laughs]

Um we are, well, we've had some discussions around do we need a strict definition, how we're going to, to do our mapping? And we decided to be very open and to open the question to them. So instead of us asking we're contacting you because we think that you are doing this and this activity, to contacting them and to say well, how do you identify themselves? What do you think you are doing? What type of activities you are doing? And how do you think that fit within this uh framework of a blue economy?

So, uh, but it's likely to include a wide range of, of sectors from, from fishing, of course, small fishing to tourism as well, so it's quite, quite wide range. We also effect, in terms of mapping, um, that a lot of activities may have impact much further inland. So there's also a question of where do we stop because, uh, in terms of transport, transportation route for example, um, you know, where,

where's it going to stop. And we expect to see a map that is not going to stay very much limited to the coast, but much, going much, much further inland.

Paul: Would that be, for instance, say, if you talk about fishing, trawling, stuff like that, they sell to fish and chip shops and the fish and chip shops are everywhere, so that would be the span of their networks.

Celine: Yeah, exactly yes.

Paul: I can always think about fish and chips. [Jan and Celine laugh]

Jan: Well, I was going to say we could survey that, Paul, if you want.

Paul: Next time, field trip, we'll just go to lots of fish and chip shops and ask them what they know about the blue economy.

Jan: Well, I was at a fish and chip shop the other day, strangely enough, and what I quite liked is on the counter there was a, a wee chalkboard, and it told me which boat that the, the fish had come from. And because I'm a geek I then looked up who owned the boat, through various databases that we have about the ownership of vessels. And so that really felt like I, I found out a lot more about my fish and chips at that stage.

Paul: I, I've seen somewhere with potatoes as well. They'll tell you what type of potatoes they are, who farmed them, where they came from. Yeah, people are starting to realise the importance of showing the origin of your produce.

Jan: I feel like we're off on a tangent, this could go and go. [Celine laughs] So I'm going to try to bring us back on course again.

So Celine recently, um, you've become a member of the College of Experts for the Office of Environmental Protection, which sounds it's going to be an opportunity, uh, for change. It also sounds like it might be an opportunity for frustration as well. [everyone laughs] Just saying.

Um, and I was wondering if you could tell us something about that body and what kind of things that you might anticipate doing, but in particular what are you looking forward to in that work?

Celine: Yes, sure. So, yeah, I'm very, very grateful for this opportunity. So the Office for Environmental Protection was created after the Environmental Act in 2021. And, uh, it aims at, yeah, taking government and public authorities to account when it comes to environmental legislations and commitments.

So this is, um, I'm really excited about the opportunity because, uh, it's really gives a chance to have a positive impact, uh, really on what is what is happening and to have a bit of an influence as well.

What I'm really pleased with is that, um, there have been over 50 experts being nominated, and we all come from very different background. I'm not the only social scientist, there are other social scientist colleagues, uh, also lawyers as well as some economist, uh natural scientists. So really reflecting this, this need for interdisciplinarity.

And, um, so this is a new appointment, and this is a new body as well. So our work has not started as of yet in terms of mission. But we're likely to receive missions on different topics of interest. And really our role is to provide support and advice on a, on a wide range of issues.

[Theme music fades in]

Uh, recently there was a survey asking us about what priority we think we should be looking at. So that was an opportunity to, to discuss, to, to highlight what, and to mention this need to not forget about the social and cultural dimension of sustainability.

[Theme music volume increases]

Jan: Well I think, before we close, that makes me feel like I'm going to put a note in my diary, and have you back in in the future, to actually hear a lot more about that because I think they would be really interesting.

Paul: I was just thinking exactly the same thing, both about the work there with the College of Experts, but also the project where you'll be speaking to people locally about the blue economy. I think there's several things there that are going to be of interest. So, definitely, I think a repeat visit will be in order, Celine, whether you want to come back or not.

Jan: Yeah, I was going to say, does she look like she wants to come back and talk to us?

[Everyone laughs]

Celine: Still smiling.

Jan: She's still smiling.

Paul: It's hard to tell when we strap people down and refuse to let them leave until we finished.

Jan: That's true, that's true.

Paul: Thank you very much, Celine, that's been a really fascinating, really interesting conversation.

So next time, as I mentioned at the top of the show, we will be on our best behaviour because we will have one the lawyers, uh, in, in that seat, and we better not do anything naughty, Jan.

Uh, we're going to be joined by Rafael Savva from Lancaster University Law School. He'll be talking to us about corporate governance, how it ties in with sustainability.

Until then my name is Paul Turner.

Jan: And I'm Professor Jan Bebbington.

[Theme music]