

Season 3.6 Nisha Mary Poulose

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SPEAKERS

Narrator, Eric Benson, Nisha



Narrator 00:00

This podcast is a project of the climate designers network.



Eric Benson 00:03

Hey, this is Eric. Thanks for tuning into Climify. If you're a first time listener, welcome, if you're back for more, thank you. I truly appreciate it. In fact, going forward, I've decided to personally thank folks who send me nice messages or review the show over on Apple podcast. So this week, I'd like to give a big thank you to Candy for her inspirational message she left as a review over on Apple podcasts. So keep listening and doing good work in the world. That's my mantra. There's no point and given up, there's too much to live for, and all your battles, no matter how small no matter when it comes to social progress in climate action. This week, we're focusing on the Drawdown climate solution sectors of Food, Agriculture and Land Use, in addition to Buildings.



Eric Benson 00:57

On the program, we have Nisha Mary Poulose, an architect, urban planner, regenerative design, advocate, and I'd like to add philosopher. For three years, I've been thinking about regenerative farming, and how the lessons of nature could help us design regeneratively as well. And I've read books, articles and doodled out ideas. But no one has explained it. as clearly as Nisha, I feel like I have so many ideas now. And I hope you are energized by knishes work in words today, as much as I was.



Nisha 01:37

Hi, I'm Nisha Mary Poulose. I'm an architect and regional planner from India. I work in regenerative design and need based infrastructure by regionalism and related fields from a design research, advocacy and awareness perspectives in India. I have, I founded a small

design practice called woven design collaborative, which is mainly focused on design, research and research. And in the US, I am the Executive Director of regenerative rising, which is a nonprofit that focuses on elevating and following principles of regeneration from both business leaders as well as innovation in the field of regeneration. And everything related, the best way to reach me is on LinkedIn, you can type back my name, I'm there regenerative rising dot O R G is our website, you can find me there as well. Or you can find me at woven design collaborative.com.



Eric Benson 02:40

Nisha, welcome to clarify, I'm happy to have you here. You're 12 hours ahead of me in India. So thank you for staying up a little later. And joining me today.



Nisha 02:52

Thank you for having me, Eric. I'm really excited for our conversation. Me



Eric Benson 02:56

too. Yeah, I was it was kind of luck that I found you on on LinkedIn where you want us to go to look for you. I think I just searched for the word regeneration on LinkedIn. And you were one of like the top three people that showed up, and just kind of looked into you. And I said, Wait a second, you have exactly what I want to talk about today. So you know, I guess it was good karma or something that I found you.



Nisha 03:26

I'm glad to hear that I think I'm doing something right.



Eric Benson 03:31

You are. And you've had a really impressive career and the work that you're doing, which is regenerative, rising, woven design collaborative and everything you've done before. And so I'm interested in, you know, where you started, and how did you end up working in this area of regeneration?



Nisha 03:52

spin out, it's been a long journey, I think my I would say what has influenced me the most is the place I grew up in I grew up in the southwestern coast of India, in a place called Kerala, which is really green. And it's it's actually one of the top 10 biodiversity hotspots in the world. And it was this is abundance of nature, which was always surrounding me and I at a very young age, I was very deeply connected to nature, which then after my high school, I decided to do architecture and architecture is really about building and that was why it was very interesting from a from

an innovation and creativity point of view. I constantly found myself questioning the methodology because the idea behind architecture is that you build and to build you got to destroy. And so that's, you know that that's many architects actually many architects who are interested in sustainability will you often hear them making the statement that I'm an architect, but I don't like to build because it's really there's a lot of dissonance there. because everything, there is no sustainable material if you're using using water. And then you have to build on the land. Well, it's interesting to



Eric Benson 05:09

me just to interrupt you just for a second that you came from such a green place. And then you went into architecture. How did how did that? What inspired you to go into architecture? If your I thought maybe biology or ecology, you know what, what excited you about it?



Nisha 05:27

Oh, that's an interesting question. Well, I think I was, I was good at it. So in the sense like, I, you know, you It depends on how old your grades are at the end of high school. Oh, I see what you said a little bit. It was directed by that. And the subjects that I was good at, gave me an advantage in my architecture application. Plus, I'm from a building centric family like my father, grandfather, were there all



Eric Benson 05:53

your family was very inspirational for you? Yeah. So I grew up



Nisha 05:56

in construction sites, like I used to go with my dad when he went for site visits for his projects. So I had that, like, I used to talk to masons and painters and like, do as a little child, we, me and my brother, we will do little experiments and build our own tiny houses. Yeah. So that also had a little bit to do with



Eric Benson 06:16

it. Yeah. So you started working in architecture, after graduation?



Nisha 06:22

Yeah. So it was in said, I really was seeking out green architecture and sustainable architecture and eco friendly architecture and sustainability. So this was I started working in 2008. And at this time, sustainability was really just like gaining a lot of momentum. And very quickly, I realized that everybody was greenwashing, it was really hard to find someone who was really doing it on using green architecture. It's not just having water bodies everywhere, you know,

lawn. And there was this intuitive dissonance that I was working with. And then so it was, it wasn't in so I was seeking this thing that I wanted to do. So I ended up working in architecture firms in landscape firms and ecological design firms. So I went into something which is more in like environmental planning. So that's like, you're you're planning for at an environmental scale, and basically with land, so there's no not necessarily a built component, or even if there is still with a land or a terrain and nature oriented way of looking at land first, and then what are you building on? Because sometimes you're like, for example, if you want to build a wildlife sanctuary, build, it's it's



Eric Benson 07:41

just to destroy right? That's, that's a that's an awesome term. I never heard that before.



Nisha 07:47

Yeah. Yeah. So you know, I went from that. So then I started working. And I started realizing I preferred regional scale, because your influence is more. And then I went, I did a master's in international cooperation in urban development. And I, the other aspect to all of this, which you know, as we speak, more, will start like the the lack of equity, lack of justice, and like social problems, and I'm coming from India, where this is quite, we have really serious problems here. And these two are really interconnected. So for a while, I even shifted from a social point of view from a social ecological point of view. It was quite a journey. And then I suddenly as my research sort of matured, I started getting more and more vocabulary for the world was that I'm doing and that's where I started realizing that there could be a way for us to live and utilize what we need. And because we are part of nature, and then how do we do that? And one of the big realizations was that cities or any kind of human habitat, which I like to use that term now, instead of urban or city or house, like this is our habitat, because we're also part of nature. Yeah,



Eric Benson 09:06

I like that.



Nisha 09:06

So one of the biggest realizations was that human habitats are mostly designed by engineers across the world. If you go to a town planning office, it's mostly run by architect architecture is a subset of engineering in a sense. So I where engineers are doing it, and solely doing it, it becomes very infrastructure heavy. I mean, you're from Illinois, the whole the Chicago River is in the flow, and it's just a spring engineering seat. But it's and for engineers, that's such that's a big focus. So when engineers are running the city, tough infrastructure, so that's when I decided to start working from this angle where let's bring other people into the conversation. Yeah, right. Let's bring ecologists, let's bring artists Let's bring economists let's bring just somebody who's interested in learning about it, or participating or interested in just being a part of the conversation into this work of designing human habitat at a city or a regional scale. And that was how I entered this, this current realm of my, my carrier, I was really then started

talking to people from various fields. And, you know, we need everybody to work together. Yeah. And so now what we, you know, with regenerative, rising, we're really like, trying to get people to talk to each other, you know, like, everything is an industry today, like there's the agriculture industry, and then there's the fashion industry, but none of these are, if the term industry itself kind of needs to be questioned, like, yeah, it's really an industry, should it be an industry? Is it not related to fashion, because a lot of almost everything of fashion is coming from the land, almost everything from the beauty industry is coming from the land. So for the regenerative rising, it's now we're really expanding this conversation to get people to talk together. And then, you know, become become one unit as, as like a human family rather than, like, you know, these silos that we've backed, yeah,



Eric Benson 11:24

like oppositional forces working against each other. And the term industry to me when you say that, it reminds me of your past phrase where you say, to build as to destroy, when I think about industry, I just think about destruction. It's like a very negative term for me to hear that word industry. I don't know if that's the same for you. But



Nisha 11:47

no, absolutely. And it is really, partly because of the history of what industry is like the Industrial Revolution, which itself has really no happy stories. Right. And so maybe there could be a positive way to have an industry. But as of today, the connotation is really rooted in the way it functions. And it's for most part negative. And it really, it has brought us to this point where only a few are benefiting. And, you know, though it's not, though, though, it seems like it's not as bad as it was during the industrial civilization era. But it is just that it's that bad in other parts of the world, maybe not in Europe, but in other parts of the world. It's still those same conditions of



Eric Benson 12:39

leaders. Yeah, I really resonate with your story, in that. I also was doing similar things. Like you were I was searching for in my corporate America days, geez, what am I what can I do? That's, we'll call it greener. I didn't know the word sustainable at the time, like, how can I be greener, and there really, I couldn't find something that was and I went to graduate school, like you did. And what I learned was, I'm gonna have to do this on my own. That's what I took away from it that there wasn't an answer, I had to start creating solutions. And it involves working with other people just like you. And so I really liked your story, because it's similar to mine, and may probably many others that have gone along the same path.



Nisha 13:27

Yeah, that's, that's really heartening, because I really believe that's the only way that there has to be the self discovery as many do it. Because if you're just following some somebody else's path, which is what, you know, like the corporate world tells you, it's following. So it's only

when you question it. So yeah, I think that's, that's really great that you also had a similar sort of foray into this space. Yeah.



Eric Benson 13:53

And I mean, as an educator, I think a lot of the students that I teach around sustainability, they want to be told what the path is, you know, it's just easier. But I think the, the way that, well, they don't like this, but I tell them, hey, you're going to have to blaze your own trail sometimes. And having them hear your story. Right, and others will give them hope. Right, because you did it. They can do it. Yeah.



Nisha 14:24

I would say it's, it's more more exciting this way. I mean, it's feels like following the handbook is easier, but it's really not



Eric Benson 14:32

boring, right? Yeah. Yeah, well,



Nisha 14:37

it's so much more exciting when you're when you're because you make mistakes. And I think the best. I think what you need to get friendly with is museum mistakes. And that that's weird, because when you're following somebody else's regulations, you're just like doing something and then at some point, sooner or later, it's just gonna get disillusioning.



Eric Benson 14:58

Yeah. Well, I want to talk to About regenerative rising first your organization. It's also the name of your podcast. Correct. You're also a podcaster. So welcome to the other side of the microphone. Hope you're enjoying it. It's best work hopefully.



Nisha 15:13

Hey, yeah. It certainly is more fun to do this.



Eric Benson 15:19

Yeah. Well, can you tell us a little bit about about regenerative rising and what you do there?



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Nisha 15:26

Yeah, certainly regenerative rising is a nonprofit. And the mission is to elevate and forward principles of regeneration. And we work with leaders in in both business and nonprofit worlds, too, because it's not easy to be regenerative, especially in today's No.



Eric Benson 15:46

I want to know how to do it myself.

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Nisha 15:51

Yeah, so we we talk to people, we bring people together to share these experiences of what it means to be regenerative. And our podcast is also that we work and we have a focus on business leaders, because they can make, and they do make a big difference. And it's not an easy part, there has to be so much of pot breaking and trailblazing. And working against the system in many ways. Exactly. Overcoming a lot of challenges. So that's why we have a focus on the business community. Because you know, that's, we want to be able to foster a world where it's fine to do business, it's fine to make money, but there's a there's a way to be regenerative about it. And the idea behind regenerative rising is to bring people together. So we also do summits, and the summits are attended by people from various domains, people who are just curious people who are experts, we have a lot of focus on diversity, because there is no one truth. There's there's many brave wisdom from different parts of the world. So true. Yeah, so that's the other focus. So and we're also a women centric organization, for most part, or let me say, we embrace the feminine of it. I mean, not all genders are part of it. But the idea is to say, challenge the patriarchal system as well. Yeah. Because that's also a part of the problem. And so yeah, so that's, that's basically what regenerative rising does, and the when, when we so a lot of the information on the website or on our, in our summits, and in our podcasts, it's it's not just about us saying what is right, it's it's bringing together information from different sources, from elevating voices from different communities, from different backgrounds, and having this platform, which is an amalgamation of information and ideas and innovation and building a community that breaks up barriers and breaks down silos to work together. Because yeah, we have to embrace a living systems worldview, and dismantle ways of linear thinking, then we have to work together. So that's basically regenerative racing. And our, our outputs are mainly the podcast and the summits at this point. But through that, by experiencing these, these these elements, there's a big journey that people that we want to bring people together and like, create momentum in the movement,



Eric Benson 18:41

right, when you're definitely working within this system to change the system. And yes, that that that can be really effective. And how do you how are you finding that going for you? Do you in your venues that you have or your events that you have in your podcast? How? What's been like the the response so far?

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Nisha 19:06

Our events have a well attended, and it's we have people reaching back to us saying how

Our events have a well attended, and it's, we have people reaching back to us saying how much they enjoyed it and asking for more. And I think it's because of the fact that there's so many people are coming together with with open hearts to embrace a regenerative lifestyle, a regenerative mindset, and that is the biggest swim, as far as we're concerned when when the people who we're trying to bring together are embracing the journey of coming together. So it's it's been the organization is doing really well. Of course, over the last three years, we've had to go into an online mode because it's part of the global situation. But that too, like so we have a women leading regeneration summit every alternate Do and then we have a regenerative Earth Summit every year. And this year, we want to have another summit as well, just to just to bring it back into the physical space and bringing people in because that energy is really irreplaceable. It



Eric Benson 20:19

is. Yeah. I mean, just from a teaching perspective, the energy online versus teaching in a classroom is night and day. I mean, it's, it's so much better in person,



Nisha 20:32

I imagine. Yeah. I think even as students, I would imagine, though, so much. Yeah,



Eric Benson 20:40

I can see leaves here when it's on online, because they can just roll on a bed, turn on, turn on their computer. But well, I discovered the term regenerative and regenerative farming three years ago, and I've been really fascinated by it ever since. And in particular, I've been trying to figure out how I can apply that to the work I do in design, and I'm really struggling with it. And I'm wondering if you can help me and help everyone that's listening. And first of all, how do you define regenerative at your organization? And how do you think a designer can become more involved in that?



Nisha 21:24

The regeneration is I mean, regeneration isn't a natural process, right? Like, the cells in your body regenerate. Like the first time I've heard the term regenerate in my life is that I knew that the liver is an organ that can regenerate. Right? So yes, right. So we, we know this word, and it's a part of nature regeneration, like, like I was saying, every cell, every living cell is capable of regeneration at some in some way. ecosystems, regenerate rivers, regenerate, communities can regenerate. So when we are saying regeneration, basically, that involves allowing something to come back to its full and complete potential and functionality, because it is not to reverse something and make it what it used to be, because that's not how nature works. Nature adapts to changes. But it comes back to a state of being able to function in the way it can function. So it may not, may not be. So the conservation and restoration are the words that you're using when you're trying to bring it back to an original. It's just, in many ways part of regeneration, because as humans, these are the ways in which we are interacting with it. But regeneration itself is a natural process. So



Eric Benson 22:49

when we don't have to be involved and for it to work.



Nisha 22:53

Well, I think, if we if we look at what happened in the world, across the globe, during the pandemic, when all the human beings locked themselves up, right, it's all started returning, I



Eric Benson 23:05

was gonna say the dolphins of Venice, right? Yeah,



Nisha 23:08

I was everywhere, right? The edges instantly cleaned up. There were butterflies out there, the newer Theosis. Like, I didn't even know that these these birds were even living in this area,



Eric Benson 23:20

we should just stay in bed and let the let the world heal itself.



Nisha 23:25

Yeah, but unfortunately, we can't because we're part of this planet. And that's really true. For me, regeneration, what can we do as human beings? Well, one is to understand that we're part of the system, we're also a natural being, which has a role and a purpose on this planet from a natural point of view. And I think, in the regeneration movement, what we have to do is to go back to let to a few years behind when we eat when we want as human beings, we weren't always like this either. This is the last 200 years to 20 years, that this accelerated way of extraction took place, right. So it's an interesting way of looking at the world. So when we're talking about the sustainability movement, right, like the word sustain talks off, what do we have to do, so that the way life is today can be sustained. That's what the sustainability movement was about? Correct. But at some point, we started realizing that's not enough like no, because it is today is not enough. It's not enough for the next generation or the generation after that. So that's why regeneration because now we need to do more. It's not just enough to stop destroying. We also need to do our part in changing systems and that change begins with human systems. So the first thing we need to do is not to go and try and revive the ecology of a river. Of course it's necessary and not saying that that's not part of a, it's not the first thing to do. The first thing starts in your mind like, is to question how can you live? How can you do things in a way that is more attuned to nature, or to the natural system? And it's very contextual, right? So what being part of a natural habitat in Illinois is different from being like that, where I'm here in India? Because the ecosystem is different. The terrain is history, the climate is different. So it's a contextual, what it means but regeneration at its core, it means

that you have to, in many ways, let things be you to understand that nature is a collaborator, we're not really over it, which is, which is a problem with colonial systems that the idea was like, all of this is for us to reign over and use as we please. Right. But regeneration talks about, we are one species in this ecosystem, and how do we play our part, we have a part to play. And as far as design comes a good starting point, is to look at indigenous systems of that land. And it's, it's really enlightening to see that there was a way that people lived. And it's not that indigenous communities were just, you know, sequestered away, and not interacting with nature. In fact, they were interacting very much more than us every day, every day, right? And there was so much back and forth. So if nature is your collaborator in life itself, like, oh, okay, today is this kind of day. So maybe we behave differently today. So, you know, we have to connect back to we were talking about living with the handbook, it's not possible, because it's not possible to write out these are the 10 things that you have to do to be regenerative, we have to really start with observing and understanding how every action has impact, and how that impact can affect the whole world. Because living systems, living systems are interconnected. Living systems don't act in isolation. So there's a system within a system within a system and they're all interconnected. So a duck, which is living in Canada has a big role to play in the whole world because they migrate. Right? Yeah.



Eric Benson 27:29

So to butterfly effect, correct? Yeah.



Nisha 27:33

Exactly, exactly. So we do have to realize our actions have impact and have a butterfly effect. And in, in fact, it's not a butterfly effect. It's multiple butterfly effects, right? So that's, again, you need to deviate from linear thinking by thinking like, Okay, I need to do we need to reduce carbon. So that's, and then everybody's doing everything to reduce carbon, but what else are you doing in the process of reducing carbon? Right? Because your solution should not be needing two other problems? Yes, one solution should be solving multiple problems. And each of those, you know, there should be some solutions, which are solving other problems. So it's like a nexus of solutioning, rather than one solution, creating 100 other problems, and then somebody trying to solve each of those problems, which is the linear way, which is very pervasive in the current system.



Eric Benson 28:29

You know, it's how we teach design to and that's a problem.



Nisha 28:32

Yeah, so that's a good question to start asking is like, Alright, do you saw this problem, but in the 10 steps that you took, in each of the steps, what happens to the living systems, directly and indirectly connected to so she's thinking about these things? Well, and it's almost like, those neurons need to start connecting, and once it starts lighting up, then that's the only way you can think after that, you know, and that's what has happened to us as a population we as a

species, we have lost that connect, that we have forgotten that there was a way to think like that and we historically did all of us. So regeneration really starts in your mind with observing what is going on how does how does like nature solve problems? And how are we solving problems and when we are doing something with the greatest intentions? Does every step what are the problems itself and and it's not to say that we will have a footprint I don't agree with the fact that there can be a zero footprint



Eric Benson 29:41

right? Possibly two isn't totally Yeah, yeah. And it's also like a well, it's an impossibility and then it then it's like, you're always defeating yourself and you don't celebrate the successes that you have, because oh, shoot, I had a footprint there, you know.



Nisha 29:57

Yeah, absolutely. That's that's a lovely way of thinking. because he lived here, we lived on this planet for, I don't know, 60 to 80 years, for per individual most part,



Eric Benson 30:08

yeah, well, you bring up an important point there and that I talked to a paleo ecologist last season about thinking and longer timescales. And we have done this before I get an argument with a friend of mine, he's a business guy. And we have this argument seriously, seriously, like every year, and it's like, I talk about these things, like we're talking about on today's episode. And he's like, Well, how are you going to do it? It's capitalism, right? How are you going to solve it? And the answer is, like you're thinking, not in a long enough timescale? Because we've done it before, right? And other cultures, indigenous cultures have done it before. It's a mindset that you have to change. And I think my neurons were blowing up while you were talking, because it gave me some more answers that I've been searching for. So thank you for that. And oh, mindset is the first thing right, observing nature. I was at a lecture once with an Indigenous artists and he says, my artistic practice is I collaborate with plants. And now it's just like, boom, I, I do too. I make handmade paper, and it's out of agricultural byproducts. And I said, Wait a second. These are my friends, these are helping me get to, you know, what I'm doing in my creative practice. So I that was a mindset shift. That I think was really helpful for me. So thank you for that. Because I think that's the first step really, it is.



Nisha 31:40

Yeah, I'm glad to hear that. Yeah. Yeah. Nature is like there to provide. And it's, it also comes down to, to an abundance mindset, right. So when we're thinking, Oh, my God, we have this, whatever, 30 years work, and I have to do the maximum for my own benefit. It's also coming from a lack mindset. Yeah, cuz you're feeling like if today I don't make the maximum money I can make today which, which comes at all costs, like, Forget nature, forget other people forget exactly. But when you looked at it, like doesn't, if you flip it into thinking, there's enough for me, there's enough for the 7 billion people on the planet, I only need to take enough for me for today. And while that sounds very spiritual and whatnot, it's also really about, you know,

slowing down and enjoying life. Because you know, these are these are cliches that we speak about that how money is not bringing happiness and whatnot. But really, what are you make the cap, because the capitalism argument is the most common argument.



Eric Benson 32:49

It is all the time. Yeah.



Nisha 32:51

And to me at this point, it's it's such a redundant argument, because the other day, I was talking to someone and the, and I was talking to them about cars, right? Like, how now there's this big revolution to switch to electric vehicles. But electric vehicles only solve one problem, it solves the problem of pollution, it does not even solve the problem of fossil fuels. For the most part, the electricity that is generated is generated using plus low core.



Eric Benson 33:20

Cool, yeah, yeah. You got to change that part of the system to exactly



Nisha 33:25

and so then the next answer to that is, well, hydrogen or whatever, right? So but that's not the answer, either. Because the problem with cars is more than all that the problem with cars is the amount of space that it occupies, which means you need to build infrastructure. And when you start building infrastructure, you're destroying any huge infrastructure for one human being exact traverse the path, it takes up so much space. And then the bigger problems are things like your, your, it's a great way to insulate yourself from reality around you, right? So you can drive through like toxic waste. You can drive through garbage drum, you can, you can drive through forests, if you are whatever, those huge jeeps, but nothing is affecting you. Nothing. You roll up your windows, you switch on your economy, you don't have to smell what's outside, you know, and it's a great way to insulate yourself, but if you had to walk, you would think differently. If you had to walk through a place that is toxic, that would matter to you. Right, so that's how it relates back to iniquity as well. So I'm bringing this example up because it's it's really a great example of how we need to break away from linear thinking. And, you know, end with cars, there's this this famous argument that like cars are fueling the economy because like if the car industry dies, all these people will lose jobs. Well, they will. We need people to have regenerative jobs, we need to have people. We need people. We need ourselves to work in industries that are full Feeling that are that are serving our purpose on the planet as, as a species, and not just another cog in the, in the machinery of what I was a byproduct of the Industrial Revolution?



Eric Benson 35:13

Yeah, exactly. And I'm thinking now about the messaging, right? Because in the US, and I'm sure in other countries and India, for example, like the term sustainability, we're hearing it. But

sure in other countries and India, for example, like the term sustainability, we're hearing it, I've been hearing it, you know, 20 years, right. But mainstream, right. In the past five or six years, probably, it's become a lot more of a common phrase, businesses are talking about their sustainability initiatives, right? It's not good enough, like you said, we need to do more. And now, you know, the term regenerative is becoming a little bit more well known, hopefully more. How do we make it more mainstream? Especially when we have to tell people, you know, that term sustainability? Well, guess what? Not anymore, we need to do more. And I just know, a lot of people will be like, oh, gosh, you know, just another thing, right? And other phase and other trend, how do we move past that? Because, I mean, obviously, we can point to the climate. But I'm a practical person. And I am wondering how we can move past some of our failures and messaging in the past here.

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Nisha 36:31

I think the answer that comes to me, I think it's the focus on the word. Right? So just, I think when a word is just the word is mainstreamed, but not the thoughts and the actions that make up that word. Right. Yeah. So when, in fact, it's the sustainability term itself. It actually talks up social, ecological and economic. So that's the definition of, but for most part, is reduced to like, oh, let's use paper cups, you know, right. Right.



Eric Benson 37:11

No more plastic straws, please.

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Nisha 37:12

Yeah. So that's, it's, it's great, fine, let's do that. But the idea I would think, for regeneration is not to, not to look at changing the world, you know, as an entity, it's looking at your immediate environment, I think that that focus needs to be let's, which I think also solves some of the climate anxiety that people are facing today. Because it's this, we can't do as individuals, we cannot change the fact that the Arctic is melting, right? The ice is melting, like we can sit and worry about it. But we can't solve that problem. As individuals, we can't even solve it as communities we need, it's a global problem. And we even then don't know if we can solve it. But what we can do is, like I was saying before, like start with your mind and expand to your sphere of influence, like, what can you do that is? And just keep questioning? keep answering the question, each step, what is my impact, you know, and not to say that that needs to paralyze you into not being able to do anything because whatever you buy, it has some packaging. Well, you don't want to do physical summits, but then you're doing virtual summits, but that has a huge carbon footprint to eat and consumes energy and like forests are being destroyed. So balance is the other word, right? So even when it's not one answer for the whole world, did not switch to solar, we need to do solar in pockets, we need to do other forms of energy as well. And we need to have a balance and we don't need to like completely switch in this drastic way. So I think balance is the second word to understand that when the whole world decides to go vegan, or when the whole world decides to switch to wind farms or no wind generated electricity, then the impact problem is not so instead of forests being destroyed to rare cattle or forest being destroyed, to build roads, for us having destroyed to put solar panels, right so I think that balance is important. And you look around Okay, where can I what works here like if it is a place where there's a lot of sun, okay, maybe solar energy works but if there's

if it's another place and and then you're also balanced also includes consumption. And we I really, I truly believe we don't need to go into like denying ourselves of all the comforts of life. Are you saying



Eric Benson 39:55

Take a hot shower anymore? Sorry, no.



Nisha 39:59

We don't need to go into that, that no



Eric Benson 40:00

one would buy into that. Exactly. And that's



Nisha 40:03

why it's a lot of the environmental movement has failed, because it was so extreme but balances needed in our actions in how much we do for ourselves. Just have to think things through. And the third, third, very important thing that I want to bring up is local. And especially in what we eat, and what we consume. The idea of local is really important. And that goes to knowledge. Like what is local knowledge? Right? So it really matters. Like everybody talks about like, okay, let's almond milk. Now, if almonds are growing in your region, almond milk is a great source. But if coconuts are growing in your region, then that's a better source for you. But if the whole world wants to have coconut milk, then we're still again going to be having the same problem



Eric Benson 40:56

and the same problems. Yeah, yeah. And



Nisha 40:59

like where I come from, like here in India, we have medical, ancient medical science, cold weather, and what are the things that our weather talks about is your diet, your diet is really important. And a lot of what they prescribe is very local. And that's important food is medicine, right? Yeah, food is medicine and what you're eating, if it comes from the local region, from the local climate, it benefits your body, but because the food that's produced in a particular climate and ecology is good to be consumed by the people and the animals who live in that ecology, right. And it's better for your own health. So the third word is, is is local. And sometimes it's not possible. Of course, we may have to do and it's fine. It's just that how much of it can we do locally and finding again, that balance in that?



Eric Benson 41:49

Well, this makes me think about that idea of healing. And that changing your mindset, most of us are thinking are in our in our own head all the time. And we're thinking about our ourselves and what we're going to do, and changing your mindset for a regenerative approach to life is healing yourself to write and I think people could buy into that. I mean, I found meditation probably five years ago or more, can't remember, but I feel like that has helped heal a lot of my anxiety about everything. I do get anxious. Not sure how this all started for me, but it is the case. And that sort of healing has led to like more focus and more awareness. And, and I think people can buy into that. Because that's like, like you said, the first step to this to this word regenerative.



Nisha 42:47

Absolutely healing and well being if we actually we just truly, if we only focus on one thing, well being of the cells, I would think it will take you along with because then if you really care about your own healing and well being, then you have to eat what's good for you, you have to do things. That's good, because and you have to have, as, as you were saying, You need to have the longer timeline in place, like it's not enough to be well, today, you need to be wealthy in the fall open. And all of us I know, in our lifetime, we have seen the degeneration happening we have seen. I mean, I remember a time that I could drink milk that was produced by the cow next still. And we just boil it on our stool, and we drink it and now milk is coming in cartons from Germany. I'm like, someone who sounds



Eric Benson 43:44

like local economy.



Nisha 43:46

Yeah, but what when it is the guy, the cow next door, I could see with my own eyes what that call was eating how the cow was living the cow have a disease. It was



Eric Benson 43:59

poor. So am I drinking that milk? That guy? Yeah, yeah, no, I feel that too. That's, I appreciate the local. And yeah, it's only because I think I paid attention, right. And paid attention was through me feeling more aware. And that was again, part of that healing process that I was going through. So thank you, that makes a whole lot. It's connecting a whole lot of thoughts that I had before.



Nisha 44:28

Fantastic. Yeah, really, I agree with you, the healing is and the beauty of meditation is that you take 20 minutes at least, and then you focus on yourself and and it solves a lot of these other

take 20 minutes at least, and then you focus on yourself and and it solves a lot of these other problems, maybe pursuing wrong things and then you slow down and that that that helps the planet if you slow down or slow.



Eric Benson 44:49

Hold on and honestly,



Nisha 44:51

yeah. And it also gives you this understanding of priority and the connection to self because as natural beings So we already know, intuitively, that we are connected, but, you know, we've just like suppressed that connection completely. So that's why even something like meditation is really important part of, of the entire movement actually to focus on your mind and your body. And, and, and, and look to self for healing?



Eric Benson 45:23

Well, I'm wondering, because I know I've been on this kind of quest to learn more about this topic about what you feel as some success stories, maybe there maybe for their from your work, or from other work, or maybe some some of the favorite outcomes that you've been involved with and from the lens of regenerative.



Nisha 45:47

So I think the fact that there are more and more people who are asking these questions, who are interested in in, in having these conversations and and this is even in a reg in regular life, right, when I remember a time in my own life, my own journey, my adult life, where you speak about this, anything to do with the environment. And you're just shunned because you're the enemy? I think there's a big change there. Of course, there are still a lot of people who, who, oh, yeah, well, don't believe in it, or pretend to not believe in it. I don't know how you can not believe in it when it's in our faces like this. So I think at this point, there's a lot of ego like, that was my stance while you continue that I think there's



Eric Benson 46:40

like I call it the cult of being right. Like you just have carry, right. You know, yeah. And if you're totally wrong,



Nisha 46:48

what all that is going on, but the, but you could still, you can still have that conversation I feel, and that there are two wins, and that one is the fact that the other has changed a little bit. And maybe it has become more open. But I think it's also for me, I feel like it's me, I have the way I

deliver my message, or my point in, in a discussion has changed. And I think that makes a difference. And, and I think that's the biggest difference between the the environmental movement of the 70s and 80s. Because people were talking about this back then. Right, but it was so the it was so separated from mainstream life, that it it felt like, you know, because the DOM eco terrorist was so common, like, people or anybody who's protesting anyone knows, but today, it's not the case that our children protesting across the world. And yeah, it's, it's, it's kind of become accepted at least much more. So that, to me is a is a big win, though, in whichever small way in small parts of it, I was involved in the movement, and to see that evolution is has been really sort of wonderful. And the other. Well, for me, the other I've done quite a bit of research and work in, in bio regionalism, and bio regionalism is a new way of looking at geography. Because we have, as of now, I mean, we have physical, ecological terrain. And then we have political boundaries, right? This is the two types of Rafi that we're looking at, by regionalism goes beyond that. And it looks at human beings as a historical cultural part of nature. And then looking at what are the natural boundaries that a community farms, and it includes ecology, but it includes culture as well. And I'm seeing those conversations, the discovery of that for myself, not the discovery of the of the term itself, but for my foray into that topic has been life changing in a way because it helps explain some things better. And it also gives a tool for governance systems, it gives a tool for how we look at influence, right and impact. So when we were talking about footprint and we were talking about what what the butterfly effect and how we can't control the whole world, what we can control our sphere of influence. And to me that bio region is kind of relating to that sphere and that's also Iran mentioning that because it's also an interesting thing for everyone to do like to just see what is your bio region like what are the and then it's not very hard and fast boundary and It's a it's a bit fluid. And depending on the research, it's it's subjective to that person's research. So that that journey was, to me a big win because it changed the way I look at things, it changes the way I speak about things. It changes the way I understand my influence and impact as a being on in this environment.



Eric Benson 50:27

I think I mean, people need to have more of an open mind. Right? And then and look. And listen and not just talk hear themselves talk. Absolutely. Sorry. That's like a, that's a hole. for what's next for your work, like, at what point will you say your work is successful? We're regenerative culture now.



Nisha 50:56

Well, that's a tough one. Yeah, just no question.



Eric Benson 51:00

Little philosophy here.



Nisha 51:02

I think, I don't know whether we can achieve that. In I don't, I don't know whether we can achieve that are not I mean because some sometimes these things are like it really might just

remove that are not I mean, because some, sometimes these things are like, it really might just happen. And you know, we could be at that limiting point of friction, and then it changes. So I don't know whether it will happen or not. But Success to me is, if I could work in small areas. And if city governments decided to take a more regenerative approach, and open themselves up to disciplinary collaboration with, unlike Honest, honest conversation with the people of that region that have been marginalized for various reasons, I think that that would make a difference. And to me, if there's one city, or not even a city, let's say a bio region, somewhere in this was where the change is. And of course, there are regions in the world where thankfully, there hasn't been as much disruptive experience. So that's not an achievement to us. Or maybe it is that we've not gone there and disrupted it. But that's what what is already there, but to take a degenerated place and see how we can bring it back. And and that's to me the scale that would that I can look to and even measure or understand that it is a success or a failure, and the indicator would be both. Biodiversity would be one indicator, like native biodiversity, and the other is really the quality of life as human beings and justice as social justice. These are the two indicators.



Eric Benson 53:08

Well, I wish that for you. I hope that that happens.



Nisha 53:11

Thank you.



Eric Benson 53:13

Well, we're running out of time. And we're headed to my last and favorite question. But I asked everyone, and you're an architect. So you've been in the design curriculum before? And this question is about stepping into the educators shoes. And if you were asked to teach a design class, or a design project, what would you do? How would you design that class or project around the work that you do?



Nisha 53:44

Oh, well, I like that question. My favorite one. I think I think I would design it about understanding what whole systems means at a global scale, but also at an individual scale like, whoa, and interacting with whole systems. Is, is a learned skill. Well, it's a forgotten, we've forgotten it, it was in it, but it seems to be not there anymore, for most part, but it can be a learned skill. So I would certainly design the session or the program around how do we look at whole systems to solve a problem now, whether it's a product or a system or you know, something intangible that the design is the deliverable of the design program is everything can have a whole system's world worldview, and that is to say that every action has a lot of impact and influence. How do we how do we make it circular? Like we're not just like, leaving our impact and going away, but then each of our there would be something that Get of impact or negative output of every step. But how do we solve that? But link it back to the main system,

right? So I would design a course around, or maybe a workshop around, how would you look at any problem and come up with a whole system solution with human beings as part of the system as an integral part of the system?



Eric Benson 55:25

We're on the same wavelength. Totally. Because that's, that's what I'm exploring and working on. I have been working on for the past two, two or three years. And I love it. I love it. Fantastic. We definitely need to connect on that. Because yeah,



Nisha 55:41

I would love to be part of that class.



Eric Benson 55:45

Well, hey, maybe you will. Thank you so much, Nisha, this has been really wonderful. I've been really struggling with this term regenerative, and you've given me a lot of good things to act upon. So that's really important to me. So thank you for that.



Nisha 56:04

Thank you, Eric. It was a very enjoyable conversation. And thanks for organizing it and for patiently listening through.



Eric Benson 56:12

No, no, it's been long gone. I couldn't find where can we find you online? Again,



Nisha 56:18

you can look me up on LinkedIn, that's the best place to reach me. And it's just so I mean, so yeah, I'm very active on LinkedIn and regenerative rising is can be found at the website regenerative rising dot o RG. And, yeah, we're always happy to have conversations with anybody who wants to engage or interact with us. And because that's a big part of the process.



Eric Benson 56:46

That's your mission to connect. Yeah. Have conversation.



Nisha 56:50

Yeah, yes, we welcome any kind of conversation.



Eric Benson 56:53

Well, thank you for today, and I really enjoyed speaking with you.



Nisha 56:59

Thank you, Eric. Thank you for having me, sir.



Eric Benson 57:03

Climify is produced, edited and engineered by me. A huge Special thanks to Season Two Ellen Keith Shaw and Christine Piolte for their gorgeous work on the new branding, Batul Rashik, and Marc O'Brien for their continued design health. yaka San Diego as our new podcast manager, and Brandee Nichols and Michelle Ngyuen for their strategic guidance, and always supporting me on helping to improve the offerings of this podcast. If you enjoy the work, we all do here and you have a spare minute or two. We would truly appreciate it if you left a rating and review over at Apple podcasts. The more folks that review our program, the higher the algorithm pushes up classify in the search results. And in turn, the more likely we all can learn how to become climate designers.