

Interview: Hanna

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Attendance:

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Hanna

Emotions have been added into the transcript as i.e. [*sadness*] and interviewers have been placed in bold and italicised. Any sections that need to be checked for accuracy such as phrases in other languages or names of places I couldn't confirm the spelling of have been highlighted in red.

CH: Ok hang on.

LR: OK I think we'll start with I'll share my screen with your artwork and we can take it from there. I've got it here on my desktop, so there we go. You should be seeing it but I think I have to kind of...

CH: Yeah that's fine. That's so pretty!

H: Oh thank you!

CH: That's the prettiest one we've seen definitely!

H: Yeah it's good to hear it.

CH: It's really nice it's beautiful.

LR: Yes it could be like a wall decoration or something like that.

CH: Yeah no it's really really nice. It's a really beautiful collage of stuff.

H: Oh thank you.

CH: Oh it's really nice, it's brilliant. What do you mean you're not creative that's amazing.

H: Maybe. It's never too late to start a second degree. [*laughing*]

CH: Yeah exactly.

LR: So yeah maybe we'll start from there. Maybe you can talk us through this artwork and tell us a little bit about how that came about.

H: Ok so nature was a big part of the lockdown so as you see on the pictures you have ants and flowers and bees and the little shells but you can also see some stones from the beach I've collected from the beach during the lockdown and in this picture they represent all the challenges so like anxiety, stresses erm, fear. That's what people experienced, that's what I've experienced during lockdown. The little things like bees and flowers represent the happy side of the lockdown. The little daisy chain represent how people got together and support each other.

LR: Yes, ok.

H: Yeh so that's basically it. You can see a couple of cat faces as well, my cat ... she was a big part of the lockdown and so I've got her here. Sadly she's no longer with us but she was really supported.

CH: Well I'm really sorry about that. That's terrible. That's a shame.

H: She was old like I said. She was... It was hard to make this decision. It was the time to go for her.

CH: That's rubbish.

H: In some sense she supported us. So we felt it was the right thing to do at the time.

CH: Did you do those drawings of the cat?

H: Yes I did yes.

CH: They're amazing.

H: *[laughing]* Thankyou very much.

CH: I love the bow-tie on that.

H: *[laughing]* So you can see the stone with anxiety, stress that was the heaviest part of the project. Yeah, it was really heavy to represent how we felt. How we all felt, how I felt and my friends felt during the lockdown and all the stresses we kept inside but then there was a happy side as well. This is Daisies representing like I mentioned before and supporting each other and supporting our friends, our neighbours. Caring for each other.

LR: And what are these? These in the middle here?

H: Oh kay so sorry you can't see. So they are two laptops ok. So the first one on the right, so it's just a laptop with a little, imagine a zoom call, the little icons, you couldn't see students. I had to deliver a workshop. I couldn't see my students, but they all have the story so they're all little daisies you can see on the second part of the screen. You can see a laptop with the little daisies. So behind the screen there is a person with feelings. So that's how I would represent it. Right side, just an empty laptop with the icons. You couldn't see students, they were just initials.

LR: Yes, I know. I had the same with my students.

H: You probably felt the same!

LR: Yes, it was more of a concern.

H: Exactly, behind they were all inside but supporting each other so even supporting online. The power of internet.

LR: So I notice it here the stones in the foreground, so this one talks about anxiety, stress, panic, fear. This one, what is this?

H: Stress, it's stress.

LR: Stress and fear. And then the ones up here have got positives.

H: So those are the positive ones so they have family, home, love, hope and again family.

LR: Family, ok.

H: So the happy stones at the top but the heaviest at the bottom.

LR: I see, yes. Ok, and also there's a few? This is a stone too?

H: So yeah, it's the face of my cat. She was part of the lockdown and she supported us so that's why.

CH: What's your cat's name?

H: Channel was part of the lockdown. She was part of the chain, the daisy chain. [laughing] She loved her time in the garden with the nature.

LR: So this happy parts of the lockdown, so family, home, love. Is it in Britain or is it back in Poland?

H: I think it's both because obviously I couldn't see my family then but we still stay in touch and talk to each other even more because we were able to, we had time. We were all walking from home so we were able to communicate often. So that was the benefit of the lockdown in some sense.

LR: So can you tell us a little bit, how you experienced the lockdown?

H: I think that [sigh] at the beginning it was all very scary and [sigh] yeah. So all the emotions I put on the big stones so I felt really anxious and stressed, panicked even. We never predicted something like this could happen and he just, it was a fear of not knowing what might happen. Will I be able to see my family again, will they be affected, will I be affected. When will I be able to fly and see them? So that was the main worry and I live with my partner so his mum is elderly so we were caring for her and for his step-mum as well. So there was that part, what happen if something happen to them. In some sense it was good to be caring for other people and supporting them so we didn't really have time to be anxious but yeah it was, it was a nice experience. In some sense it was nice to be able to support others in the same time.

CH: So did you say you were supporting your partners?

H: Mum and Step-Mum with shopping and any other tasks yeah.

CH: So was that stressful because they were older or?

H: Yes because she lives with her new partner and he was like, he didn't believe in Covid it was really stressful. So we were trying to protect her but he was still going, he wanted to go to the shop on his own and he was... Yeah [sigh] he just wanted to continue, he didn't want to believe that you know if he could be affected so that was pretty stressful. Just to make sure she was safe.

LR: Was he affected in the end?

H: No actually no.

LR: Ok. Everyone was safe in the end.

H: Everyone was safe yeah. I've actually experienced Covid. I've had Covid a couple of weeks ago and now my other half, so he's upstairs not feeling too great but um... Hopefully he will be ok but you know, at the time we were all very nervous.

LR: You were more afraid. Now I suppose your feeling anxious?

H: Less yes, with the vaccines and we're all vaccinated and yeah. So we feel hopefully safer now.

LR: OK so this feeling or sentiment, they are in the past?

H: Yes I would say yes. I mean it's still there but it's not as heavy as the first stone at the beginning of the lockdown how we all felt. You know we could... I think because the protection is there and we have more knowledge about the Covid as well.

LR: Yeah. So was it the fear, especially the fear of getting ill or other fears as well?

H: Yeah, getting ill, not seeing family, my family getting ill, my partner's family getting ill and obviously what will happen after. Yeah. Never be able to see them...

LR: Were you ever able to go back to Poland during?

H: Yes, I was able to see them and actually... So the lockdown happened in March 2020 and I was able to see them in July. It was nice to see them again. Very emotional.

CH: Were they affected by Covid in Poland?

H: Yes but this Christmas, so we travelled to Poland this year and last December but luckily they're fine. I know other people that were affected that were not as lucky as my family which is very sad.

LR: Absolutely. You've got a lot of nature in this picture. Do you want to tell us a little bit about why it's such a big presence?

H: Well... It helped during the Covid and it helps now in my daily life with mental health and during Covid I've got a garden and managed to spend loads of time in the Garden which is really nice. Just to be with nature and de-stress and just forget about everything. So that was a way of coping because we were limited to the number of people we could see during the lockdown. Like even chatting to a neighbour next door it was nice.

LR: Yeah.

H: I think, seeing the nature.

CH: Were you teaching as well at that time or online?

H: Yes so at the same time I had to, yes so I was working from home so we had to change the delivery to online delivery which was challenging sometimes but we all had to learn new technology at the same time. How to use Zoom, how to use Teams and any other platform and just change our project from face-to-face delivery to online delivery. Which was challenging because our target schools, so I work with eight target schools and they didn't receive their funding for the computers for students or the laptops so students would be able to engage with us so it was definitely a challenge. It was easier later on in the year but at the beginning it was just a big chaos. So we were trying to record some resources for students, just so they could still engage with us and support teachers with lessons plans and support about higher education. So the support was still there but online and I think the first workshop face to face was seventh of June 2021 and it was so lovely to see year nine students again in a real classroom and they felt the same. They just wanted to be back at school which is really nice.

LR: And then the lockdown struck again.

H: I know again yeah but then it was easy in terms of technology and it was easy because people knew how to use different platforms so I was able to support schools with the higher education sessions.

CH: Can we ask you a wee bit about Brexit? Did you have to apply for the EU settlement scheme.

H: Yes I had to apply yes and I supported a couple of students with that. Students and colleagues and friends with their application as well. So yeah that was one of the worries as well what would happen... [sigh]

LR: Yes. You don't have British Citizenship now?

H: Not yet yeah. I'm hoping to... yeah... I think I will apply for the citizenship.

LR: OK. Can I ask why?

H: It's just to be... why I'm going to apply or why I haven't applied?

LR: No no, why do you want to get British citizenship?

H: Err... it's just again for peace of mind. My other colleague who also works at university, he's also Italian. He just actually passed his test and so he was very happy. So was waiting for him to complete his and give me his feedback and when I have more time, because during Covid I had to, there was different, I had to complete different CPD's so I didn't really have time.

LR: Yeah. So it was a pretty busy time during Covid?

H: It was yes.

LR: Did you have a lot of care responsibility as well as working?

H: Yes. Supporting my partner's mum and his step-mum who's yes... It was quite challenging yes.

CH: Yeah go on sorry.

H: I think Lucia wants to say something...

LR: No I was just asking is the caring still going on?

H: Not... we still support them but not every day like we used to. So just gave them I think they needed that freedom.

LR: I see. So is it because during Covid they could not go out and things like that?

H: Yes and it's that emotional support. Especially with my partner's step-mum so that was quite challenging because she was living on her own so she needed that emotional support, she needed someone to talk to. So I was always on the end of the phone and she could speak to us whenever she needed. Even to sit in the garden for a couple of minutes. She was in our bubble. So yeah.

LR: Yeah course, bubbles.

H: Yes. So yeah very challenging and she felt frustrated as she couldn't do things she would normally do and the same with my partners mum, she couldn't do what she wanted to do. She wanted to be independent but she couldn't because it was risky. Going shopping was risky.

LR: Yeah. I understand. How did your family cope in Poland?

H: Yes I think that they always say positive things. I think yeah. They supported each other I think the family is a big part but probably they had the same stresses, the same fears.

LR: Did you know about it? Did they tell you?

H: Yeah we shared but like for example my mum. She wouldn't share sometimes, she is that kind of person she would keep everything inside because people didn't know about the virus, people were urm... they're worried what will happen. How is this going to affect them or?

CH: I'm interested the way you've put the computers centre stage in your picture. Like they're really important.

H: They were at that time because obviously my work was based on the computer and I could see my niece on the computer, I could see my mum, I could see friends in Germany or France on a computer. So computers and mobile phones were in like the centre, always in the middle of the dining room. Like I said the one computer on the right represent all the icons with initials but sorry you can't really see them. So each icon had a student initial but on the other side all the daisies so each person had a story to tell.

CH: That's so interesting. I'm interested also in your cat, because your cat was like, Channel? Was it Channel?

H: It is Channel yes.

CH: What was your feeling in relation to your cat?

H: I think she was very supportive. I think she could sense, cats are very clever creatures so I'm sure she could sense my anxiety. So I remember the first week of the lockdown she slept on my chest. So she somehow yeah, she was very good, very good therapist I'll say as well and you can see her eyes in the picture so she was looking at me like why are you so stressed, what's going on? Why are you home?

CH: When you were with the cat what was your mood?

H: Oh! Seeing her and being with her was yeah, a hundred percent better. Happier.

CH: Happier, ok.

H: Mmhmm, definitely.

LR: So how did you spend your days during lockdown? I mean I know you were working so part of it...

H: Yes, so I would probably wake up before seven o'clock. Go for a walk to the beach and see some shells to add to it.

LR: I was going to ask you that, so you live by the sea.

H: Yes, it's about ten minutes so I collected a few things here from the beach. So there was just, morning walks are nice to give you that energy because then between nine and four o'clock I have to be online and attend for meetings and after four o'clock we would deal with all the caring jobs. Whether it be shopping or carrying out phone calls just to support others. Just even to neighbours as well.

LR: Yeah, you took this supporting task very seriously. You took it...

H: Very yes. Yeah.

LR: Mmhmm.

CH: Actually I'm interested as well ... sorry go on pardon me.

H: There's on the top right corner, I don't know if you can see, there's friends and homes stones and between it there are like little shiny glass pebbles on the left. So they represent tears, there were some tears as well.

LR: Tears ok. Why were there tears?

H: Because obviously missing friends and family and... yeah.

LR: OK so did this happen mostly during the lockdown or how did you feel after Brexit? After the results of the referendum because you have been in this country for a long time already.

H: Yeah. I felt sad, but it didn't really affect me because I have lots of international friends here so it didn't really affect me. It was sad to know the people I supported even voted for Brexit. I think that was the saddest thing, the people who I cared for who vote for Brexit. So that was the bit that was challenging.

LR: Really! Do you know that for a fact?

H: Yes. We've had a couple of conversations yep. So that was a bit, it's their way of thinking so and I respect their decision.

CH: Why do they think that do you know or did that come up in conversation?

H: So we try not talk about politics too much when we see them because I think they just... its hard to change their mindset and life in the UK was different maybe when they were younger and now it is different now so... It would be very hard to try to explain you know the benefits of countries working together and yeah...

LR: So can I ask I mean these people that you cared for during the lockdown, were also the same ones who voted for Brexit?

H: Yes they were.

LR: How did that make you feel?

H: Yeah... it was sad. Obviously I respect their decision, we all have bad, we often make our choices. [sigh] Yeah. It was disappointing.

LR: Did they ever say or did they tell you why they voted for Brexit?

H: They couldn't really justify it and that was really frustrating because we were trying to explain. Me and my partner trying to explain you know, the effect and what could happen if this happens but you know. No... very difficult. Maybe that age group as well, they're all 80 plus so. They think they know better.

LR: Can I ask if your partner is British?

H: Yes he is but he didn't vote for Brexit. [laughing]

LR: No I can imagine. [laughing] I like that!

H: [laughing] He would be in trouble.

LR: Yes, yeah. I have a friend who has a partner who was going. She knew he was going to vote for Brexit and she basically didn't let him to go the polls, to the ballot.

H: Exactly.

LR: She stopped him from going.

H: [laughing] Exactly, so yeah.

LR: Yeah, well... It's very nice of you. It's a very generous thing because I mean I'm just trying to put myself in your shoes and I would have had a grudge about it. I would have had some misgivings about supporting them. Ok, you must be a very generous person.

CH: Yeah totally.

H: Yeah, maybe I should.

LR: No it's like as you say personal choices but..

H: Yeah I just got not choice and it's hard to change someone's mind so you know.

LR: Did they ever try to kind of justify their vote with you? And they know you are...

H: No and that's the problem! They couldn't justify it. I know it's a bit frustrating, they think it's right. Yes it will be right if this... Yeah... They couldn't really justify, or maybe they didn't want to justify in front of me. I don't know.

LR: OK. Did they change at all their behaviour?

H: I don't think so. I don't think they've changed at all but now I think experiencing the negative impact of Brexit maybe they will think about it, when they complain about prices of petrol. Lack of careworkers, NHS workers as well.

CH: Yeah, definitely.

LR: Absolutely.

H: Like I said we all have a choice and it was their choice and I have to respect that.

CH: Can you tell us what... Because you've been the UK a long time.

H: A very long time yeah.

CH: Can you tell us what is it like, the mood in Devon during the Brexit referendum? Could you pick up on a feeling?

H: Yeah... not really. We tried to, I think I kind of avoid it. So all my friends, we didn't really talk about it a lot so it didn't really... The final result I think it affected how I felt probably but during the...

CH: What did you feel the next morning when you woke up and heard the results or whatever?

H: Yeah it was disappointing and a little bit sad. Yes.

LR: You said you've got a lot of international friends so during the time before the referendum were you not talking at all about it?

H: [sigh] Maybe a little bit, with my Italian friend. So we talk about it. I talk about it with my Spanish friend and my Polish friends as well but we knew we couldn't make any changes so we've had conversations and loads of my friends from university they were all very supportive. They were very nice, making positive comments like oh it's not about you don't worry and whatever happened is not for you. Yes they were very supportive.

LR: Did you believe them that it was not about you?

H: Yes. Yeah. I have to say people at my work came and people from my university and people from my project. Yeah.

LR: Okay, so you don't think Brexit is about you? Who is it about then?

H: Well it is kind of about all of us but... yeah... it's hard to... because I completely now like forgot about the whole Brexit.

LR: Right that's good.

H: You've just reminded me like how I felt before but life goes on you know.

CH: Yeah you're right, life goes on.

H: Life goes on so it was nice to hear my British friends they didn't agree with the final result.

CH: Do you have any friends since Covid, Polish friends or International friends who returned to Europe or anything like that.

H: Yes actually definitely a few decided to go because they felt, and maybe because [sigh] I work in higher education so I work with different types of people. Well educated people and the friends I knew, jobs their lower paid jobs so maybe they're level of English wasn't as high. They couldn't communicate, they didn't feel like they could fit in and one of our friends, he actually left just before Christmas. He was a lorry driver since 2004, so the job was very depressing and he was lonely and especially during lockdown. So we tried to support him as well from time to time, baking a cake and dropping him the cake on the doorstep just to say thankyou. Oh when we were allowed to have in the garden we'd invite him and offer him something nice to eat but yeah, because when we talk about lockdown he said what lockdown I didn't have! For him, nothing changed, he had to work even harder so he was very tired. I think some days he had to work more than six days.

CH: Oh my goodness.

H: Yeah because they were so short staffed and especially after Brexit as well they had to give him extra hours to support the rest of the team because they were really struggling because some people left and went back to Italy, to Slovakia or went back to Poland. He was ready to go. Sadly, last year he lost his mum and dad in one week due to Covid. It was heart breaking. During one week. So Monday his mum passed away and then Friday his dad. So again we had to support him through...

CH: Did he go back for the funeral or?

H: So he went back. He didn't go back to the funeral no. I don't think he was mentally ready to go to funeral. He just went back just before Christmas. I think his brother is still there and his family, his other family who support him.

LR: And he's going to live there now, he's not coming back?

H: Yes. So it was very sad and stories you hear about people but yeah... I forgot about that to be honest. During one week so it's a shocked.

CH: That's shocking.

H: So he went back but it's sad going back you know your mum and dad are no longer there so I don't know how he felt. He's a very quiet person so he would probably never share his feelings with... it's so hard to get anything out of him so very close person. So me and my partner, we were

really worried about him and his mental health but he kept working! He kept working, he went to work the next day!

CH: Oh my god ok.

H: Yes because he felt bad for letting his employer down and...

LR: Very reliable.

H: Yeah very. Yeah. So...

CH: I'm interesting in your drawing. Your beautiful piece of artwork as well. It feels like a kind of memorial?

H: Yes it is yeah. It's a memorial to Chanel as well.

CH: Yeah but I mean the computer screens are kind of stones in the centre, I don't know they're kind of like... I don't know if this is done subconsciously or whatever but it's kind of like a memorial in some way definitely.

H: Yeah it could be. I didn't think about that. You're right. It could be a memorial.

LR: So I just want to go back to something you said. Obviously the lockdown period affected you and you coped with it very well and you've been finding the energy to support others. So can I ask if you think that Brexit affected you in any way? Affected you in your daily life or in your I don't know, in the way in which you feel about the place where you live or? Did the result affect you in any way?

H: It's that kind of insecurity, not knowing what might happen. This is step one, but what will be the next step. So at the moment I'm allowed to stay in the country and I have the settled status and like I mentioned before I supported other colleagues and friends with their applications but will I have to apply for my British citizenship, what will be the next step. So there is that fear of not knowing what might be the next step.

LR: Yes and you expect there will be a next step?

H: Yeah it could be. It could be.

LR: Ok so you're not a very trusting person?

H: No because anything can happen but if you compare... I'm just trying to think back to 2004 when people were allowed to come to the UK and people are happy to travel and network and make friends with international friends. I don't think people in Poland and people in Europe feel similar again. I know a couple Polish friends who would rather travel now to Germany or France instead of coming here to work if they are looking for work. I could stay in Poland at the time but the reason I'm here is my other half so I could possibly go back one day. So money was the main factor but for some was yeah.

LR: Did you ever think about going back to Poland that you could go back to Poland?

H: Yeah sometimes I do think about it but the thing is the life is different now. Sometimes I feel like I wouldn't fit in there. It's not the same. I don't know if you feel the same Lucia when you go back, people have their families.

LR: I have family in Italy and yes I know what you're saying although I haven't been here as long as you because I came in 2014 so it's only about four years and before then I lived very long years in Milan so to be honest with you when I go back to Italy or to Milan especially I feel that I still feel like I'm going back home. I still feel like I know the place and I know how things work and one thing for me is I tend to forget the bad things and then when I go back there for a while and I stay for a while, I you know I'm refreshed in the memory of why I decided to leave Italy.

H: Yeah I agree with you.

LR: There are reasons why I decided to go back to Italy and when I'm here and sometimes pissed off with this country for various reasons I always think about Italy like a heaven but when I go back there for a while I realise that it's not like that at all. Especially in the work scenario you know, in the work scenario I know that it's so much better here but on the other hand for me when I go back to Milan I feel at home.

H: Yeah, do you feel like you're at home here? How do you feel?

LR: I feel at home I suppose in Scotland. To be honest with you, like you might have you know noticed. I am really angry still about Brexit. I am more than disappointed. I am a bit outraged to be completely honest with you. So since Brexit for me, the way I look at this country has changed. So that's why I was asking you if it affected you in any way.

H: Yeah I was angry but I think it was a short time when I was angry but then life like I mentioned before, life goes on and we are busy to think about other things and concentrate on our jobs and lives and...

LR: Yeah so you see your life very much here in Britain?

H: Yeah but again you never know what will happen so it's just that unknown in between. I have an Irish friend and he always feels like when he goes home he doesn't feel like he belongs there and when he comes back from Ireland he doesn't feel like he belongs here so he's like between. I don't know Charlie do you?

CH: Yeah no actually this is interesting because when I'm here I've got children here and things like that bla bla bla but when I got out to Ireland I really like it, I love it and I think why did I not go back to Ireland when I was younger do you know what I mean? When I come back I kind of slip back into... kind of being like a... weirdly being a migrant you can slip in and out quite easily and adapt quite easily. I don't know but yeah... I used to live in England and then I moved to Scotland. That was kind of a big change for me as well. It's really interesting.

H: It is yeah. It's good to hear your views as well so.

LR: Yeah yeah of course. So how do you feel when you go back to Poland?

H: It's always nice to see family but then it's mainly about family. Some friends you know they don't have time to meet or they have their busy lives so when I travel to Poland it's mainly to see family. So my mum, my dad and my sister and her husband. So it's all about them and I don't care where we stay so we normally stay in a little village in the middle of nowhere and I'm happy to just stay there for a couple weeks and avoid people, other people. *[laughing]*

LR: Do you feel like you still fit in there?

H: Yes and no. Yes with the family part but no probably with the systems that are complicated and not as easy as here. Maybe what's frustrating as well, the people in the UK are so friendly. Maybe

two faced at the same time as well but the people in Poland are always very miserable and unhappy, that's what my partner always says. *[laughing]* So I think UK definitely more positive, so I hope that they are honest. Some are two faced like everywhere.

CH: What about the culture? Like polish culture?

H: Yeah! What frustrates me here is like I'm very close with my family but with my partner he's will support his mum and his step mum but... It's sad because he's not as close with his sisters like he could be. So he's closer to them *[laughing]* only a couple miles away but they see each other probably less often than I see my family because I see my family every day, even on my computer or on my phone and I talk to them every day. Sometimes we have this conversation oh you talk to them every day! Like yes we do. The thing is the stronger family bond definitely. It's probably similar to Italian families.

LR: Are you Catholic?

H: Yes.

LR: I think it's got to do with being Catholic. This emphasis on the family is very catholic isn't it.

H: Yeah.

LR: So yeah no it's the same. I don't speak to my mum every day but a couple of times a week I speak to my mum. She can't use technology so we have to communicate just over the normal phone, the landline so it's quite expensive so that's why we only talk a couple of times a week but yeah I was saying before even during the lockdown I've been back two or three times from Italy so yeah.

H: How did she feel during the lockdown? Because Italy was bad.

LR: Oh I was really worried about her because my mum is eighty seven years old and she is on her own. Well my dad died during the lockdown.

H: Oh I'm sorry.

LR: I just managed to get to his funeral just in time so I arrived one night and his funeral was the next day so yeah it was a hard time for me as well and this is partly why we put together this project because it's some experiences that we went through ourselves I suppose.

H: Yeah exactly and it will stay with us forever. It's not like a fear. Stays with us forever I think.

LR: So I think the bond with the family is similar in Poland and in Italy and I think it's got to do a little bit with the dominant religion in the country. Not that I am a practicing Catholic but you know when you grow up in a culture I think.

H: Of course yeah.

LR: It stays with you so...

H: It does, yeah definitely.

LR: So you asked me before where is home for me so I'll ask you the same, where is home for you?

H: Oh gosh *[laughing]* *[sigh]* This is like... it still is here but it's like between isn't it. It's so hard because like when I talk to my friends. So it's like being torn apart.

LR: Was this feeling emphasised after Brexit or not? Was it always there ever before?

H: Yeah it was. It was always there I think.

LR: Ok it didn't change because of Brexit or because of...

H: *[deep sigh]* I don't think no. See my initial plan was just to visit my friend in UK after completing my Masters and I just ended up staying a bit longer longer because summer was nice and the weather was nice and then the rest is history. Yeah I don't think I could see myself *[sigh]* being there but you never know what will happen. *[laughing]* Might have to go back. Get a letter from Mr Johnson. *[laughing]* You just never know and you have to be prepared. That's why I think living with this anxiety not knowing what might happen. It is kind of there. I know we don't talk about it every day but it's there in some sense.

CH: Do you think home is you?

H: Yeah. I think so yeah. I'm trying to implement different things here.

CH: Because I think home is me. I think where is my home and quite often I can't think where my home is to be honest with you but I think my home is...

H: It's where your energy is isn't it. It's all about that positive energy where you feel you can achieve something. You can make a difference maybe yeah?

LR: I think it's interesting what you said Charlie about migrants slipping in and out. Being kind of adaptable and adjustable. I certainly feel a bit like that although I never tried to go anywhere else apart from Italy and the UK so I don't know if I...

H: Yeah I'm the same, that's why we have this argument. Where we will go on holiday. Where can I go? You can go to Italy because you have family in Italy.

LR: Exactly.

H: Like why don't we go somewhere else but yeah if you're limited to twenty five days a year to see someone from your family, who you choose?

LR: Yeah. So did you choose the UK, when you decided to leave Poland. Did you decide to leave and choose the UK or did it just happen?

H: It just happened. I went to Germany for a couple of weeks after my graduation to visit my family in Germany and then I came here to visit a couple of friends and then... I wanted to improve my English a bit so I thought it would be good to stay for a couple months during the summer. Get a part time job so I can have contact with my English every day and that was the one reason probably and then things change. *[laughing]*

LR: Can I ask what made you decide to stay?

H: I think it must be my other half that's why I'm still here. Yeah blame him.

LR: Alright fair enough. A good enough reason.

H: Yeah. I don't think my mum agrees with it but och, I wish you didn't go, I wish you didn't go and just stay here. Yeah thank you.

LR: I bet she was very sorry about it.

H: Yeah she was you know. She likes it here and she loves coming to Devon but she hasn't been since 2019 now and ...

LR: *She may come in the future.*

H: Maybe this summer yes. I hope so.

CH: *I've been to Cornwall and Devon a few times on holiday and it's amazing.*

H: Oh it's lovely Cornwall yes.

CH: *It's quite close to you I think isn't it?*

H: Maybe we should collaborate with our universities and you come to Devon.

LR: *I have been to Devon once or twice but never went as far as Cornwall.*

H: Ok, yeah. It is lovely. St Ives is beautiful and a few places.

LR: *Yes, I know...*

H: I think I was very lucky to be where I am during Covid. Beach is only five, seven minutes from my home. I was able to walk to the beach in the morning and the evening and it was nice. Just nobody there, just like a private beach to yourself. Amazing, especially in the morning and the evening. Very peaceful.

LR: *Yes, it was very peaceful everywhere at the beginning of lockdown.*

H: It was nice, seeing people together clapping.

LR: *Did you do that?*

H: Yes. It was kind of emotional I don't know if you felt the same. The first time I felt really... yeah. They're moving definitely.

LR: *I suppose so. Oh well, Charlie have you got anything?*

CH: *No, I think your artwork's amazing.*

H: Thankyou. That's good to know from art teacher especially.

CH: *I love the colour of it. You know it looks like you've really considered how it's been put together and it's really interesting. I've never seen computers take the centre stage of any piece of artwork ever in my life I don't think.*

H: It was kind of in the centre.

CH: *What sorry?*

H: It's kind of in the centre of our lives you know computers.

CH: *Yeah and then you've got the clouds as well. It's interesting.*

H: And the gentle flowers. Very gentle white flowers and bees.

LR: *Well you know what I think your picture, your artwork exudes serenity. I don't know that's the impression it gives to me although I can see the words written there anxiety and that but the*

feeling that I get when I look at this picture is something quite positive and serene. Quite... I don't know yeah positive and looking up and I don't know.

H: Yeah I agree with you, looking up because the heavier part of the project. The heavy part of the artwork are the stones so the heaviest are at the bottom. The very light ones are at the top I don't know if you can see the one. Hope is like a white stone on the very top right cloud. It was very...

LR: Yeah and it looks like the negative, I don't know if you want to call it negativity I don't want to use that exact word but does the negative things are kind of circumstances. They are there and they are limited, they are boxed in. Whereas all the rest and the flowers, the beautiful sky and the feather and the nature element are in the open air and are not boxed in so it's almost like your saying look I have this negative feelings but I managed to box them in. So it means like, the rest of me is looking at the positive and trying to make the best of it.

H: Yeah exactly. I like how you yeah. Boxed them in because that's how we felt, we had to boxed everything inside but then do as much as we can to support others and cope. So boxing all the negative feelings at the bottom of the page.

LR: You know boxing them in is almost like a way of mastering them and keeping control of them. You didn't let them invade your own life.

H: I didn't no, I didn't let them take over.

LR: Exactly.

H: That's so interesting.

LR: Can you say that was the case with Brexit as well? For your feelings?

H: Yeah exactly, try to box them in so they don't dominate my life. All the feelings, very similar feelings yeah with anxiety, panic what will happen and that fear will I be able to stay. All the feelings about Brexit are boxed in because the light goes on around that. So friends and family and hope and love is still here. Definitely. So definitely there is some correlation.

LR: Good! Well that's the way I saw it but overall this picture, this artwork gives me a sense of positively of lightness you know all this flowers and the nature and you it really contrast with... I shouldn't be saying this but it really contrasts with some other artwork that we got.

H: Oh really. I can't wait to see the project. I'm sure you'll be happy to share your findings.

LR: Oh of course and also we are putting up a blog and in this blog we are, every week we add a theme. We haven't started the analysis yet but we've already got an idea of themes emerging. So every week we have a theme and we add to this blog and we show some of the artworks on the blog without saying who's artwork it was but it was going to be kept very confidential and your identity will never be revealed in any shape or form but there will be emerging themes. If you want... well we are going to sell the link to the blog to all of our participants and then the blog will be open for your comments as well. Of course always protecting your identity. So you will have a sense of what we're doing and what results are coming out of this project.

H: Can other people join the blog? I was thinking about my friend.

CH: Yeah totally.

LR: They can all get the link.

CH: They don't need to be European they can be anyone.

LR: They can be British!

H: *[laughing]* Okay no it will be very interesting to see other people's artwork yeah. Can't wait.

LR: Well it'll give you a sense of you know what we have done and some of the themes that emerged from the study.

H: Well we're all different and we all have different needs and different perceptions and things so it'll be interesting how other people cope with it and what kind of strategy they used to sort them.

LR: Different ways in which people experience events you know.

H: It affected more students as well. When I talk to students about higher education, I ask them the question how they felt during lockdown but yeah... similar themes so try and support their friends and be online with their best friends.

LR: It's been very hard for the students yeah. We also...

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