

Interview: Andrea

Date Transcribed: 22/02/2022

Interview Duration: 74 minutes

Transcriber: Myla Corvidae

Attendance:

Lucia Ruggerone – LR

Charlie Hackett – CH

Anke Maas-Lowit: AML

Andrea

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.

*Recording starts mid-sentence*

A: ... Have left a particular mark on the way I feel and how I define myself and how I define my present and my future I'll say and so in some ways I'm quite intrigued of course what motivated you to do the research in the first place. You've overlaid that with the caption of caring responsibility. When I offered myself I'm obviously out of the age range because I'm older than you wanted people to be so um. If you can live with that that's ok but I've also have defined caring in a broader sense rather than a narrow sense you say actually who are the people I feel responsible for or particularly connected to and who would I normally and almost automatically want to make a connection and hook up with. Rather caring in the clinical sense of having a role of the carer I assume that is alright yeah?

***LR/CH: Yeah.***

***CH: Totally, yes.***

***LR: That's perfect.***

A: Yeah and so, well how do you want to do this? I've obviously sent you my magnificent piece of art. [*laughing*]

***LR: I will share it in a second. Just to answer you said you were curious why we got engaged with this.***

A: Yeah.

***LR: Well yes your understanding of what we mean by care in our project is perfect. We don't mean care in the clinical sense we mean just that you have, how would you say kind of bonds, relational bonds with people here and back in Europe and so you know this is what we were really interested in and to answer your first question is I think the reason why we engaged in these studies pretty much the same reason that you have to become engage with it. Wanting to become engage in it is very as far as I'm concerned and then Charlie can speak for himself of course but as far as I'm***

*concerned it was very really autobiographical because yes like you said Brexit exhausted by Covid I think leaves a mark of some sort on people and of course it left a mark on me. So I thought well I have this experience I would like to hear about other European people have felt or feel about it you know, not only Brexit but Brexit and Covid you know. A sort of double whammy of things that affected us for a certain period of time and I mean to a certain extent I mean Brexit is still affecting us and Covid is fading away hopefully but we'll see because I don't know what's going to happen with that. So yes the reason we decided to get engaged, to write down this proposal is because of what we saw in our own lives or at least lives, my own life and then Charlie will say what he felt and we were really interested to know how the Europeans...*

A: What are you going to do with it? What are you expecting to do?

*LR: Well we have two parts lets say from the academic point of view as you might imagine we want to write a couple of articles for journals and stuff like that but maybe more interesting we are planning to do a webinar with the three million at the end, so just after the end. This study is supposed to end in June and then we have you know a few more weeks to write a report but just after the end I think we are planning to have a webinar with the three million and then possibly also another seminar, possibly face to face but maybe a bit more academic here at RGU. Then of course I mean if the results are interesting, like I think they will be, we might try to write a bigger proposal for some other funder and carry on in this line of study but we haven't really talked about it yet.*

A: Ok, quite interesting.

*LR: Charlie do you want to add anything or Anke?*

*CH: No no, that's fine.*

*AML: I suppose what I would say what interested me in it particularly, it's the idea of exploring what everybody feels about it.*

*LR: Yes.*

*AML: Rather than thinking about it cognitively because we do that all the time but we don't...*

*LR: Yes all the time.*

*AML:... take opportunity to explore how we feel about something.*

*LR: Yeah. Which brings us to the picture, to the artwork rather than that you made that I got here. So Charlie shall I start sharing?*

*CH: Yeah, you can share.*

*LR: I don't, I think I've got to make it a little bit smaller otherwise it's not, ok. OK? So maybe Andrea you can start if you talking us through this artwork.*

A: *[laughing]*

*LR: No, I'm not saying that ironically.*

A: No no, *[laughing]* It's my feelings on a page that's why it's got. I think what... erm. The way I started was to say that really sort of I concentrated on the sea. So the blue bit in the middle is the sea, the north sea for me of course for you as well and before, I mean before Brexit the sea was a geographical feature of my life but neutrally so yeah and it was also, yeah it was a conduit, it was a

passage, it was a link between bits of landmass. I have completely changed my perspective on the sea now, it has become a source of conflict. Of course other parts of the sea around the UK have become a burial grounds, they have become a place of unmiserable and unspeakable hardship and difficulty which we will leave to one side for just now but in principle and stuff the sea as you can see is ripped even, it hasn't even been cut properly, it has actually been violently ripped. That's the big in the middle, so obviously the pieces there and before Brexit I would probably say that people often used to ask me where I felt I belonged or was I more at home here or there [laughing] or wherever and I never really had a proper answer for it because in some ways the whole idea of nation states doesn't rest easy with me and sort of I think stuff on balance and probably also clearly shaped by my own family background. My mother was an Eastern European refugee and when I was born I think we were all stateless and I became a German at some point or other. I don't remember though and in some ways I think sort of I always had a feel or a sense of living in Europe. Not as a kind of political entity but as a kind of if I was at home somewhere in the world I was probably more at home in Europe than in Africa or in Asia because I don't know those continents particularly well so Europe was definitely my home and I have lots of kinds of allegiance, in ways of sort of yes the north of England has been my home that's where I've given birth, that's where I've buried my partner, it's stuff like this, where I've worked, the way I have sort of... So in a sense it's a particularly important part of my life, the north of England but it isn't the only part of my life. Then in some ways of course I've got Germany I've got family living in Germany, I've got friends, I've got a home in Italy, I've got friends living in France, I've got... So in some ways my life used to be in Europe. I would be in one place or the other and I wouldn't particularly think about which part it would be. Just in the same way probably that people in Britain or the UK don't think much whether they're going to see their mates in Wales or in Scotland or wherever they... It's all part of the same, you just travel there don't you. So in some ways I had some real real sense of just being there and the sea was something that I had to negotiate [chuckles] so I had to go by ferry or I had to do something other and you took long ferry crossing or short ferry crossing [chuckles] or whatever but in principle it was just there and it was a kind of a passageway was a conduit and how it feels to me that it is ripped, it has my bits of my life have been separated and they are separated quite neatly in the British bit and the rest because the rest are still intact somehow whenever I got to Continental Europe now as we all know not always completely straightforward these days. I've done a trip in the Autumn and it felt a bit like [laughing] planning an expedition by the time I'd read all the entry and exit requirements and vaccination and testing requirements [laughing] for you know the Netherlands, Germany, Switzerland, Italy. So I felt in a sense suddenly my trip you Europe became an expedition you know it felt like that sort of. At the same it was an expedition but I also had once the ferry landed in (*Larvick?*) which is my nearest crossing from north sea here I also had a sense of [*big sigh*] relief, of having left all that British, can I, not swearing I am actually recording. All the British urm stuff behind and I felt sort of a bit freer again of actually being able and of that sort of feeling of yes I was in the Netherlands and now I was in Germany and now I was in Switzerland and now I was in Italy yeah. It sort of felt like that those bits were still connected but I was not longer from there, so that kind of real [*emphasis on real*] strong sense of that there was kind of a big rift there. That kind of, I wanted to demonstrate was that kind of big tear in the middle yeah? You can see the blobby bits, my sort of allegiance or whatever they stare at each other from one side to the other and some are fallen in the middle and whatever and the image when I constructed it, it was the sort of the other way around so the no bit, the NO I was just sort of intrigued by the letters that I got in the art pack. [laughing] I assumed they were....

**LR: Random.**

A: They were random but I thought I'll see what the random bits tell me *[laughing]* sort of.

LR: Yeah that was the idea.

A: So the N and the O struck me as being no of course and I put the N and the O at the opposite sides of the divide thinking that neither side really had a say in it and that really there wasn't any.... I don't know I felt that my views and my I mean me and the three million and the respective counterparts whatever weren't particularly considered. They're still not of course. That in some ways all the allegiances and the connections and links that we have with each other didn't really play a role in the decisions that were being made. That of course affected us in such a huge and enormous way. Then I found BP, that was helpful. *[laughing]* I thought let's put BP in the middle and just because in a sense I used that of course the interest of multi-nationals and all of the various economic interest indeed have shaped the big rift and in some ways in they are as a shaper but not necessarily being acknowledged as being one of the major factors that actually indeed lead us to this position that we are in just now I would say. Right, ok then I have got the bits, the green bits. So the little bits of green tissue paper spoke to me. I had a kind of sense when whichever side I'm on *[chuckling]* the grass is always green on the other, yep. So the big green bits there and by that I mean, and I never had that sense of having the other side because it was the same side and now I'm sitting there as I said, I'm sitting in Europe, or I'm sitting here and I look across the divide and I want to be there. I want to be there and not just physically there I want to play my rightful role there as a friend, as a sister, as a auntie, as a kind of close friend. I sort of, all the bits that sort of I would just naturally engage in and I can because getting there, doing it has become much more complicated and certain decisions have to be taken to get there, not get there and how my role will be there and similarly when I'm there, well I can't imagine not living here now. It's my home. It's like you know when we were waiting for Anke to sort out her laptops we were saying how much I absolutely adore the physical environment that I'm in here in the north east. It makes a huge contribution to my emotional well being. Whenever I get fed up which I do more frequently these days *[laughing]* I just go for a walk in the hills or along the cliffs and you know I don't think any small (child?) in Germany would provide me with that. *[laughing]* So in some ways I'm anchored here. This is where you know a lot of me is and then of course, I said the grass is always greener, the bottom half there is not in British bit because between the green bits is a bit of black bin liner as well which is the dark clouds that is, or the dark bit that emerges between the green grassy bits of saying. I really, really *[heavy emphasis]* hate what Britain has become. I used to love living here. I came in 1978 in my early 20's I'm and from Germany at the time which felt, during the time felt unbelievably bureaucratic and Britain was almost the opposite. I fell in love with the, how should I put it, the inefficiency of the bureaucracy here. *[laughing]* I just thought there was something there that was actually, um, it had a certain humanity which I really liked at the time. I feel it has, now, through Brexit in particular now, it has in a sense turned on it's head. It has become a really nasty place in many ways and the nastiness might have actually been there under the surface and hiding behind the bushes there whatever but it has... Brexit I feel has given the nastiness permission, licence to come out in its full force and they've sort of taken it back and I think I don't really want to be associated with all of that really and of course I've now become British! Would you believe it. Which as you know that's a particularly um... how should I put it, um, *[sigh]* yeah... It's a particular process that I think dignity doesn't really insert very much or cost for that matter. The irony was, actually not until a few years ago I would have probably just become British if that was necessary I would have been quite happy to be British and all that, yeah but it wasn't necessary so in some ways... I have a really strong memory of my daughter being born and, it was about twenty eight years ago now, my mother partner, British partner and I was saying do you think we should get her a German passport and he was saying well, how many passport does a person need. She would have got it automatically because we were married but do

you think we should get her a British passport and I was saying well you know, how many passports does a person need? I mean she's got one, that'll do yeah and suddenly *[laughing]* it's not the case so we are now both British thankfully, that's my daughter and me. I was thinking that kind of imposition of in some ways I became British. If I become British ten years or fifteen, twenty years ago or so, thirty years ago I would have become British because I felt like a kind of reasonable thing to do, so you live here. I've now become British because I feel so utterly unsafe and so is my status here is so utterly not safe enough for me to relax into. I suddenly my old age, access to the NHS and how they ruled my change again and so and what I... Actually I've forgotten to ask you how much time I've got. I don't want to sort of ramble too much.

**LR: Don't worry.**

**CH: It's fine.**

A: Yeah. Well you can stop me as well, you can say you're off on a tangent woman come back. *[laughing]*

**LR: No, we love tangents here really. I've got a few things that I want to ask you but when you finish talking.**

A: Ok, right. So where was I... I've forgotten where I was now of course because I'm old.

**CH: You were talking about your happiness.**

**LR: Feeling kind of unsafe.**

A: Oh yeah. So I think since Brexit or since the referendum I should say. I had a lot of conversations that say surely. They start the sentence with surely and say surely you would be alright, somebody like you and by that they really mean, somebody who's lived here forty odd years or has to lead the middle class lifestyle as white and has paid national insurance contributions for all this time or so yeah. Surely for me implies a certain element of fairness, logic *[sigh]*, kind of common sense whatever and none of that seems to be in evidence around me yeah. Surely you can't have flammable cladding and then expect the people in all the flat to pay for it, surely you can't give all this NHS contracts to your mates and get away with it. Sure you can't and my list of surely's is really really long now. All of the things that I didn't think would ever happen, or couldn't happen in a kind of civilised *[laughing]*, fair kind of environment. They are happening, yeah? And I sometimes feel, I will jokingly say this, living in a banana republic, it's not even banana republic it's a banana monarchy and I...

**LR: It's not warm enough.**

A: *[laughing]* That's true! *[laughing]* It's not warm enough. Even that, that's right. *[laughing]* not even warm enough. So anyway I'm coming back to, I'm just saying that suddenly there's all of those rifts opening up around me and that's really what I wanted to do with that bit in the middle. Coming back to the caring bits, it's just the likes of there are so many surely's there as well. I mean suddenly all my assumptions of what would happen in terms of, I don't know how I lead my life in retirement or old age or whatever, they're all in question now because of that and that includes my caring bits of sort yeah? My brother is eighty, I love him dearly, he is ill. He lives in somewhere in Germany, cared for by my niece who's completely buckling under the strain. I would have thought that retirement would give me a bit of chance to give them a bit of hand. That is not really possible because, partially as for the pandemic of course but because in a sense that relationship is complicated now. It isn't something I can sort of in a sense, like in the olden days where I would just

say ok well I'll just go now then yeah, I come next week. That's not going to happen in the same way, but more importantly also as an example I've got a really really close friend who I would regard as my sister although she isn't and she's lived with me or a long time in the UK. She went travelling, whatever, she's now in Germany. She's also one of my poorest friends and she's got not children and she's also older than me and I have assumed for decades that when she needs a bit of support she's going to come live with me. That is actually pretty neigh impossible now because she's not a relative of mine, she would find it very difficult to come and live in the UK in her own right as an older EU citizen or so. So the complete utter assumption that she will come and live with me and I will take, it sounds too, power relationship is the same. To say actually I would always have the resources for her to share with and she would always be able to live with me and that was what would happen and that is not likely to happen now yeah? I find the prospect of organising that and making that possible and I'm absolutely, I'm actually really angry about that because in a sense it has taken away a bit of choice from me that actually is quite a defining bit of choice for me. To say that's what I do, I do have caring relationships for people and the way that I can conduct them now is actually quite complicated. So theoretically I could go live, continental Europe. I have children, grandchildren in Scotland and umm... and the idea of not having them nearby or not having sort of that kind of totally normal relationship of I just go there for a bit and they come here for a bit and I...and it almost feels that I have to have sort of, I have now two lives where there was only one yeah? I have to make choices all the time or the kind of relationship I can have is now pre-determined and externally determined in a way that I haven't chosen and I now no longer have any control over. It's the no bit comes in there, I've got no agency in shaping that and I find that actually an unbelievable imposition. For what? BP? If you give me some different letters I might have come up with some *[laughing]* something different to BP but I'm so conscious of what lies behind and the things that you know. The dishonestly that has led to that big big rift there and the unbelieve impact it has on the lives of so many people. You know I can sit here now and lament and I remember when I was actually doing that piece and when I was ripping the sea apart whatever, I actually burst into tears because I almost felt I had seen enough. *[starts to cry/voice breaking close to tears]*

**LR: Yeah, I can see that. You really have strong feelings about it and I mean I totally...**

A: I'm just so angry! *[frustrated laugh]*

**LR: Totally. I know where your coming from, I totally relate to them. I was going to ask you if it's ok with you, can you tell us a little bit more about this feeling of being unsafe? Unsafe since Brexit, kind of practical reasons but there's almost something more?**

A: Yeah I thin it kind of, it has got something to do with the surely bit and sort of for me a sense of safety comes from having I don't know. A sense that there's a certain shared morality, I don't know a shared understanding of what can and can't happen in a fair and just society or whatever. It is that bit like that *[laughing]* I mean if I take the cladding which just came to my mind as I was talking. I mean if you told the story to somebody yeah, and then ask the people who bought the flats if they can sign on to pay for? They would say you're kidding aren't you? You can't possibly do that or so, or to think that who in their right mind would think that having settled status that you can only access online that you've got no physical proof of, isn't going to lead to an unbelievable number unspeakable complications. What did the Brexiter think was going to happen in the Irish sea. Surely that must have crossed their minds before. Surely these issues are predictable, aren't they. I mean I'm not an economist in any shape or form but I could predict some of those issues that come now as a result of Brexit. Even I could have predicted them just in the way they manifest themselves now *[laughing]* and yes ok fishing what they're going to do with all these people. I mean it's like... I'm so... What the feeling of being unsafe is so say actually really none of that common sense bit plays a role

here because there completely different forces at play here and here comes the BP bit in the rift or so and they are of course a particular kind of interest of the backgrounds of the politicians. I don't need to tell you all of that you know that yourself but where I'm thinking actually really there is, I can't rely, I can't have a... I don't know how to put it. I have no sense that actually what's happening around me, the way decisions are being made has got anything to do with a fair and just society. So all my list of surely I think well you know surely they wouldn't deprive me of the NHS in my old age but I wouldn't put it past them. Or I wouldn't put it past them, whoever they are but I have now lost faith in things would pan out in a reasonable, logical, fair and just way. I have a sense that anything could happen. That anything could happen and I would probably be then at the negatively receiving end of those things because, and it's the bit about the hostile environment and stuff you're not in a soft... what is it? These lovely little statements but you know they are treating this country as their own and I'm thinking well yeah? [*chuckling*] What exactly do you want me to do or the other way what exactly would you like me to stop doing? Yeah I mean, what not to look after my next door neighbour anymore or not to do this? So what has been moved from me, like a rug from under my feet is that sense that I can rely on fairness, justice kind of common sense. I have no sense of that at the moment.

**LR: Has this feeling been curbed a little bit by the fact that you took British citizenship?**

A: Yeah I mean in a sense I did it for that reason, mainly because I wanted... I have a tendency to swear, I'm trying not to do that because you're recording. [*laughing*]

**LR: Don't worry.**

**CH: It's fine don't worry!**

**LR: We all do, we do here.**

A: [*laughing*] Yeah because when I became British I just came out and I told this to my friends that I can't tell the Brits to piss off now. [*laughing*] Which is something I had and in a sense that was you know, that wasn't worse but yeah I suppose it was you know. I think there's something there about... I don't know. I've always had soft little lines in response to peoples questions. How long have you been here? I can probably to many people say probably much longer than you have. It's that bit of actually having a sense of not... I have been, since Brexit I feel othered in a way that I wasn't before and that being in that other category is an unsafe space. So by becoming British I felt I have bought my ticket into not being other and not that in a sense Brits don't always get a good deal but at least I feel less other. I feel that, yeah, I bought myself a place in the non-other category and that's what I did it for really.

**LR: Do you have feelings about having British citizenship? Or is it just something like you tick the box and that's it so you feel...**

A: No... It's interesting because of course I've got dual nationality now which is what I, if I hadn't had dual I would have not done it. So there is something there that makes me, I don't know, I wouldn't say smile I would say smirk [*laughing*] at the idea of having two passports and coming into using it for the first time and sort of came in and gave them that and thought right mate yeah, no questions asked. Not the normal bits that I so often thinking yeah and that kind of no people of caught here that don't come from here and I mean I'm a bit tired after forty odd years of those conversations sometimes and so to stay away from gated. Are you British? Yeah. [*laughing*] Yeah, it's sort of, it gives me a little bit of kind of I don't know, devious satisfaction to just [*laughing*] being able to claim that. I think in a sense, on a more serious note it is that bit about buying myself a place in the non-

other category. That's what I've done it for and for whatever reason I feel slightly safer or more protected because being other in Britain is a perilous place I think.

**CH: Do you feel more European because you got a British passport and a German passport now?**

A: Say that again?

**CH: Do you feel more European?**

A: Yeah, yeah I'm better off now than many of my British pals and sort of yeah, I'm very conscious about that but both my daughter and I have our two passports now and of course as a young person I mean I'm conscious of the fact that my daughter is now in this significantly better position than many of her British pals because she can work anywhere now. But of course that's the other thing in a sense I have been talking mainly of course about my own sense of dunno displacement that I feel but of course I am surrounded by open minded European Brits who suddenly have their opportunities and their chances to I don't know inhabit Europe severely curtailed. Of course I feel for them that's equally unfair you know as I've said at the beginning I've continued youth work all my life, well most of my adult life and the amount of international work I've done in that time and the kind of, having seen the impact and the effect that international work can have on young people is just phenomenal and I think we all know that don't we. We are clearly in the categories ourselves but to think all that now is particularly complicated for them. So for me, my bereftness, the sense of the tear, the kind of being ripped extends to all of the British people. The indigenous British people who now also no longer have a chance to inhabit more than this island and the island mentally now has become particularly against the sea again. Of course I know I live on an island but it was a geographical island rather than a social and political island for me and that's what has happened now and so I sit on my little island here and look across the big divide and look at my friends, my family and somehow try and reach across and then I go across and then I need to reach back again and I think... Maybe I want to bring it back to the caring topic as well. I think that bit about my role as a significant person in other people's lives, lets call that caring if we want, my role as a significant person in other people's lives and their significant role in my life is now being dictated and shaped by forces that we haven't chose and that actually aren't conducive to us playing those roles particularly well. They are shaped, they are defined in ways that I would have never defined them in and I depend on the how the wind blows I'm often very angry about that. I'm often bereft about that and you know sometimes I talk, or people talk and say well it's not going to stay that way it's a bad position to be in and at some point we're probably going to re-join Europe or whatever and that may well happen and we can hypothesis and we can have a political analysis of how and when and which circumstances and what happened also but being the age that I am I'm thinking now it's probably not going to happen in my lifetime now. So my relationships and my caring roles or whatever will now remain in that way and I feel really, yeah I don't know, gobsmacked by that prospect.

**LR: Yeah. What are your caring responsibilities in Europe? Like you said you have friends and you also mentioned maybe in an email with me that your mum is still in?**

A: No no she died a long time ago but my brother is eighty and he's got Parkinsons and is very unwell. I have a very close relationship to my niece and to my great niece and they need support with the care of my brother and they can't rely on me in the way I would like them to rely on me. I have particular kind of relationships in the UK, again with people who well I might be a blood relative of them but I've in their lives for forty odd years and I play a particular role in their lives and the idea

of not being here to play that role or take that role as seriously as I would like to take it is also not an option.

**LR: I think that, I mean I don't want to do all the talking Charlie and Anke but I want to ask this, you described very well your feelings about Brexit and what happened after the results of the referendum and up to now. How did the Covid lockdown relate or kind of dovetailed or impact on this background?**

A: In a sense you know Brexit brought out the insularity of us and the island feeling but after Covid and the restrictions that came from that and the difficulty from that I used to say that I am now trapped on this hostile island. *[note of surprise/shock in voice]* So the island has become hostile. I'm more aware of it being an island because it's metaphorically an island as well in a way that is physically but I'm also trapped now because I can't even leave and it's like stuff probably over the years I have become more aware of you know climate considerations I might not want to fly as readily and easily as I used to do maybe 30 years ago where I would just go to a birthday party for the weekend or something. I was somehow thinking ok now you're retired or you're sort of, you can afford to take longer to travel so you can go on trains or whatever and it's alright and you can find more climate friendly ways of travelling. We have that piece of water between us and the rest of the world but that of course is now a major expedition and of course ....*[sigh]* It's actually an unpredictable expedition as well because of course I hadn't expected in 2020 that I would be sitting here in 2022 working out whether I could actually go there or there or come back or what would happen if I got *[laughing]*. So in a sense it has in a sense that sense of insularity and being trapped really acute. It has got now the trappedness is on a number of different layers. In a way that stuff now has a physical dimension to it that I didn't actually experience before. Before it was probably much more a kind of intellectual, critical kind of metaphorical kind of trappedness. It has now gotten a real and practical dimension to it as well.

**CH: You spoke about burial grounds?**

A: Yeah.

**CH: At the beginning.**

A: Yeah.

**CH: Can you tell us a bit more about that?**

IB: Well I mean I'm conscious of this hostile Britain and this hostile environment and it's attitude towards people other than whatever they define as being desirable. I'm conscious of the sinking boats in the channel yeah? That in the sense that, that kind of bits of the water is being used to other people, to keep people out. Britain is in a particular position to use its insularity and its waterways to keep away *[sigh]* those kinds of elements that they don't want to have particularly near and it's something so brutal about the way the water is being used to keep refugees out and the way it's being talked about and kind of the way the battle manifests itself on how you treat that piece of water. Who's got the right to be there and what you can do or try to do to enforce the otherness at all costs, really at all costs. I find that distressing.

**AML: Andrea can I ask you something about that because I'm actually you know, I have a similar background and you know I've been here since the mid-80's really so not too far behind but do you know what I'm wondering as well because you were talking about you know what's currently happening with refugees and that feeling of you know, feeling unsafe. Do you think that that is**

***possibly enhanced by being German and having that past where you know things can change overnight really?***

A: Yeah I think that is part of it because in a sense I think what Brexit also did to me is that no we have of course lived through quite a prolonged period of stability politically you know. Ok so there have been periods that I didn't particularly like. Margaret Thatcher wasn't exactly my pal you know and I was horrified about some of the things that were happening at the time or so but we had a particular kind of stability didn't we. Even in those years we even had politicians who would resign when they cocked something up and we don't even have that anymore now but you're absolutely right and I remember as I said before my mother was an Eastern European refugee and so she was particularly anxious about things changing. She didn't trust anything and I used to sort of as a young woman say oh for heavens sake just calm down, what do you think they're going to do to you now? Of course it must have left something in me in a way that I am now thinking you can't... Yeah... I remember distinctly when my daughter and I applied for our respective British passports that, or even when she as born I used to say to her dad that I didn't care what nationality we were but I was always wanting her and me to have the same nationality because I couldn't bear the idea of us having different rights in different places and that the possibility would be there that we couldn't be in the same space and that completely freaked me out at the time so we were both German until recently and we now will be both British and German. You're absolutely right Anke, there's something there about yes I... [sigh] The Germaness isn't quite so much my issue it's more the kind of I come from a background of people who were persistently displaced. [laughing]

***AML: You know I was also thinking we've got such a you know, thinking about the Jewish community, where things really changed over you know, from one day to the next.***

A: Yeah, yeah... and I can see in a sense I've been thinking about that now. I have been thinking the sense that there have been so... I mean... [sigh] I've been so horrified at kind of the way after Brexit how that brought out sort of, all sorts of racist sentiments like as I said before they must have been there. Of course they're there but the way Brexit gave those feelings licence to emerge and I was suddenly thinking exactly that Anke. I was thinking I wouldn't be surprised, I could almost see the kind of developments where hostilities were being stoked and become more acceptable and I was thinking, this is exactly what will have happened won't it. Observing that within our current society, how fears and tribal some of those sentiments are developing and being expressed and thinking god this is a really dangerous path. It's a really really dangerous path and I don't like it. I don't like the way this is going and this is clearly also something I sort of, bit of a very dark cloud at the bottom of the picture there. I was thinking it's sort of all the stuff hanging there and again you know I'm not even suggesting that there are of course sort of, there's a general kind of far right movement within Europe and I'm not saying that Britain is the only place there. I don't know... of course I'm conscious of that in as a movement overall in Europe and I'm not sure that I want to say Britain doesn't have it's knobs on but it is where I experience it first-hand. I know more about the right wing tendencies in the rest of Europe intermittently rather than, or because I've read about it or then whatever but just having that kind of sense around me... I do actually feel that there is something quite sinister brewing and I don't like it and I'm unsettled by it.

***AML: Interesting, yeah.***

***LR: When you got in, I don't know, I'm not saying got in touch but when you heard or you experienced similar far right wing movements in Europe because like you said it is a very phenomenon across many countries in Europe but did you have a feeling that they were somehow kind of different from this manifestations that we are having here in Britain? I know you probably***

***don't have the same knowledge but... I'm asking because it's something I ask myself as well because I mean I lived in Italy for a long time and there too there are these kind of emergence of the right wing but to be honest with you I did not have the same feeling about their emergence when I was in Italy as I have here now. I think yes they are both kind of populist, yeah they both have a populist contactisation, they are far right, they're kind of nationalist but I don't know. The feeling that they gave me is different.***

A: Yeah I don't feel competent enough to make that judgement, I'm so conscious of the fact that I spent my days here and my Italian isn't good enough to read the papers enough. I try to when I'm in Italy but it's not reliable enough to form an informed opinion I would say but of course I do read the papers in Germany and of course I experience things sort of kind of work contacts as well and so I am very conscious of the (???) in Germany and stuff and you know well at some point their rise in popularity in particular areas of Germany as well. I found that a bit strange. So I'm not sure what I think, I do have a sense, I don't know, and again it might be that insularity bit of Britain or so. What I find of course particularly noticeable in Britain opposed to anywhere else is that kind of the empire thinking that's so prevalent in Britain still and the greatness of it all. You're thinking whaaatt!?

[*laughing*] Come off it mate! What you talking about? You know again I don't have to tell you about the Empire but those kind of sentiments that indeed Brits are quite different and special and therefore need to be separate from everything else and I'm thinking whoa! Hey hey hey [*laughing*]. It's you know... in a good moment I laugh about it but I haven't got those good moments consistently and I think what are you talking about you know that kind of, this kind of delusions of grandeur and stuff and ... I'm a bit sort of yeah, it takes my breath away sometimes and you think god what are you talking about and that kind of sense of entitlement that so often in it.

***LR: If I give you an example this movement in Italy the Northern League, it has something in common it is a populist kind of party and also at the beginning Salvini who is the leader was very anti-European like most of his party. Well before it was a movement and then it became part of an actual party but deep down nobody in Italy takes him seriously I mean the fact that Italy could, maybe get out of Europe is a matter of joke. So it was taken so unseriously that even the Northern League after a while stopped making that argument in their campaigns or in their manifesto because they realise that it was a completely lost battle so it wasn't something they could propose as a serious kind of programme. Whereas here, that's exactly what happened which is...***

A: Lucia if I'm totally honest I feel actually guilty about the fact that I didn't take the referendum seriously.

***LR: Me neither!***

A: And I did do very little to campaign to stay in Europe, I didn't engage in too many conversations about it, I didn't feel I needed to mobilise to force us to make a good case for Europe. I thought it was such a ridiculous idea that I probably didn't even spend too much time thinking about it and I must say I have a sense of guilt that comes from that time of thinking I wasn't out there. I wasn't out there you know highlighting the clear advantage of being part of the European union and having a sense of European identity I was just yeah... I clearly didn't think that was necessary but I regret that now. I need to own some of that for myself to say I wasn't taking it seriously or something.

***LR: I thought we underestimated it, totally. I thought ok, they'll never win you know. I totally underestimated it. That's why I was so gobsmacked when I saw the results.***

***CH: What did you feel the morning after Andrea? The morning after the referendum?***

A: I almost felt physically sick. I stayed up all night, I was at a conference in Belfast and I had my radio on my phone and headphones all night and I just... and when it became clear that umm... and I remember going to breakfast with my conference. In some ways I was quite grateful to be at a conference with likeminded people, we would just appear at breakfast and went... (*gesture/facial expression*) I think there was something there that all through the night and I suddenly had this list of things that would become really difficult and really mad and really pointless and of course that list wasn't at all an exhaustive list, it just, it kept being added to as it went along and I remember thinking coming back and thinking dear me. I used to get them, suddenly I got all these texts from people expressing their deep concern for me and saying are you alright, are you alright and you think god. You know it was just this kind of, it had a sense of um... yeah like a bereavement. Something had just happened and we wouldn't be seeing the end of it for a long time as indeed we haven't you know and there was probably also initially a little bit of hope still, ridiculously so that they would see the error of their ways. [*laughing*] I mean in some ways of course, again that's for another conversation about what I think about the rightness or wrongness of making a decision like a bi-referendum and whether a referendum is indeed binding in that way or indicative of a particular... all those kinds of things and the way the speed with which the process was implemented. I mean all of those are different kind of stories and they borrow analysis of different kinds but as a, in terms of being affected by it as an individual human being or a human being of a group of human beings it just became so monumental. We are thinking what are we going to do with the EU citizens. [*laughing*] Of course we see this now and there's a bit in me that actually on a, admittedly vindictive sometimes and sort of when the fruit is rotting in the fields and...

**LR: Yeah I felt quite happy.**

A: Haha! That'll be fine yeah! Again I just bought a bag of brussels sprouts yesterday and it says British brussels sprouts [*laughing*] and I find that really funny. British brussels sprouts, you just think what! [*laughing*] So yeah, that's what you will be eating pals. It's just sort of trying to disentangle... it just makes me I don't know... despair and yeah it has had quite an impact on my mental wellbeing over the past few years I would say and probably around all the poor people... [*laughing*] When I was preparing for my citizens application, you know the rectification and licence UK test and I downloaded them all and every rectification I have to pass on before they could come in and of course [*laughing*] no one ever passed the licencing UK test so I used to say to them if you come for dinner if you want dinner you pass all of those tests first. [*laughing*] I'm not, I don't want to over egg this now, I'm just saying it had this kind of, I was furious about the othering. To think that one day we were equals. It never occurred to me to think through whether my pals were Welsh, Scottish, British, European. We were I don't know, we were citizens, had a share of this country I thought. It never occurred to me until Brexit I was different from them, also then that I had friends probably somewhere else that I had a partner of a different colour or whatever or that my daughter speaks another language. All of those things were of course part of me but no different from any other people around me and I found that a really I don't know... I remember, of course it's different now, I remember going to the local elections before and I was saying to the person I was walking with that you realise this is the last time I'm voting the local elections. You realise that there's even that bit of me were no longer be my right. You will be voting and I won't be. How do you feel about that? I think it was almost a constant in all relationships over all of those years and the despair was quite striking.

**CH: Can I ask you, sorry, different subject slightly. These ball things you've put on your drawing. They're very prominent and they look very placed as well like in specific places. Like the red ones and the green ones.**

A: What I wanted to do with that, sorry you were going to sorry, yeah.

**CH: Yeah, just more about why?**

A: Well in a sense I sort of, first of all I sort of almost scattered them randomly of thinking they land where they land, there's no choice there but then I re-arranged them slightly by actually saying the red one I've got an equivalent across the divide and the pale green one has so in a sense they're my allegiances they have counter allegiances on the other side and they stare. So like the two red ones there so they are opposite each other on the, across the divide and so are... There's one I've dropped in didn't it. Sort of just fell into the middle and I was thinking and some of them are perilously close to the edge and some of them are a bit further away *[laughing]* and in some ways that also for me depicted a little bit sort of that yeah some relationships have become more distant because of that. Some of them are perilously close to the edge, and might not survive and some of them there's a constant tussle almost going on in my head of how are we going to keep this going. So there was a bit of a deliberate placing of the sort of the blobs are kind of my allegiances and my, I wouldn't say responsibilities, my chosen attachments that somehow are also defined by the rift now rather than just being comfortably and confidently in my life.

**CH: They're interesting and it's so interesting the way you've done that. Thank you.**

A: I mean if you want to look at the colours I deliberately thought that the yellow one is deliberately only in Britain and not across yeah and then there's some that have on either side and so there's a little bit of planning there. Not planning, thinking that's how it is. Some bits are only there and only there, some bits are in both places. Some bits are quite close to the edge, some bits are quite far apart.

**CH: So the yellow bit is the UK yeah? The yellow ones in the UK yeah?**

A: Yeah, the UK is the one with the black cloud behind the green and stuff.

**CH: Ok. The other thing is, you spoke a lot about Brexit. How did you feel when Covid came along? What was your kind of mood and feeling and experience about that?**

A: Well in a sense it goes back a little bit to what Anke was saying before about things changing. I haven't experienced a big change in my life. Unlike our parents and grandparents and whatever, so in some ways when the pandemic came along I probably wasn't taking it very seriously at the beginning. I was expecting things to get back to normal quite quickly. I remember in March when the first lockdown started, some friends in Germany had booked flights to come and see me in May and they were ringing well we better cancel those and I was saying don't be ridiculous it's in May! *[laughing]* So I was thinking this is March! We can't possibly be dealing with that in May. I was still working at that point and yes we didn't really go back onto campus after the easter holidays and I was thinking urgh that's a bit of a palaver and then there was kind of rumour that we might not be going back before the summer, I said that's ridiculous, you can't possibly not come back before the summer. In a sense it only gradually started to dawn on me that we're dealing with something a bit bigger than I thought and I think initially I was probably not expecting it to have such a huge impact on pretty much every aspect of our lives because in an sense it has. I mean I don't need to tell you what it feels like because *[laughing]* you know it so well but it's like sort of just the exhaustion that comes with every bit that you're doing needs some really careful thinking through. There's very little automatic isn't it. I don't know how you're coping with still working and I think I was really, maybe if I had been younger I would not have retired... Well if I had been younger I would have taken a deep breath and said ok we have get through this, it'll be ok at some point but I found it a really unsettling

experience that sort of in some ways there seem to be no fixed points anymore. Everything that we were doing needed to be negotiated, worked out and it was changing almost daily and I remember saying to somebody that working at the beginning of the pandemic and within lockdown felt a bit like, when you woke up in the morning you wouldn't know where your clothes were and you had to find them first and then the car might have been parked there and you thought it might have not and then once you've found the car you would drive to work only to find the road you took yesterday was now blocked and you would get to work and the building might have burnt down or not and the students you have to find the students first so in a sense it felt like everything needed energy and attention to make it work. I still feel like that now in some ways that I feel often despite I am now retired and demands on my life and time have of course reduced quite dramatically but I feel there's so much energy being spent on trying to make this work and I find that really quite exhausting and at the same time very very conscious how that has brought out the divides in our society and around me in such sharp focus. When I was through and I don't know what your students are like but you know people who don't have gardens, who don't have regular incomes, who don't whatever and all of... in a sense we know that the pandemic affects people so so differently and it's so often so neatly cut along particular kind of dividing lines and the idea that we're all in the same boat is actually not necessarily true is it. I have really quite, in the sense I'm sitting in a really quite nice house, very spacious and various places where I can work, everything is calm and quiet and the central heating is on. When I was still supporting students on a daily basis that's not how they were living. They had covid in their house, they were separating their vulnerable children from their infected husbands and I remember doing a presentation, we were very desperately trying to at least enable students who want to finish their academic year to finish it somehow because they needed a professional qualification and apply for jobs or so. I remember doing a silent presentation with a student and I was just sitting and saying what is that over your head there and it was a showerhead because she was sitting on the edge of the bath. There's a laptop on the toilet trying to do an assessed presentation and that was the only place in the flat that she would have enough quiet to do it and my heart just... I just... I found those... I'm conscious of inequalities in our societies, I don't need I mean... It brought those realities and the acuteness to my table almost every day, all day and I found that really quite a sobering experience.

***LR: Since you mentioned before, when you were talking about Brexit the way in which to a certain extent this government has dealt with it. Something that I didn't particularly appreciate but is the same government dealing with Covid. The fact that you were here instead of Europe did it mean anything to do you, how did you feel about being here after Brexit, during Covid? Did you feel like you were you know safer or less safe or the same as if you were in Europe?***

A: In a sense I do not... *[laughing]* Don't say what I say to you or they might revoke my citizenship *[laughing]*.

LR: Don't worry, and mine, and Ankes.

AML: No I don't have Andrea.

LR: They can't revoke my British citizenship because I haven't got one so that's fine.

A: They've got a new bill that will allow you to withdraw your citizenship without warning. I'm wondering if that's going to happen to me at some point but what I mean, sorry what was the question about feeling, yep. No I am actually quite horrified, what happened in Britain and again it's really, it's just something I do not trust this government one tiny little bit. Not one bit and it's another one of these lists of surelys. Surely you can't give all these government contracts worth

millions and billions to your mate from down the road who hasn't got the foggiest and get away with it. Surely you can't and in a sense the non-accountability of this government has really freaked me out a bit, to say really the lack of scrutiny, the lack of accountability and the lack of consequences that comes from messing everything up and cocking everything up and what I was saying before about there used to be some level of decency or so you know if you cock something up you lost your job or you resigned or whatever. No no, now you get promoted. How Priti Patel is walking the political climate is beyond me. I mean all of those kind of really, I don't need to give you any more examples because you know them yourselves but I mean you know... what comes out of these peoples mouths just completely finishes me off sometimes or the fact the level of corruption and cronyism and whatever else you want to call it just takes my breath away and nothing happens! Surely somebody needs to find that out and surely, but it doesn't happening and I felt very unsafe because of that and I don't trust any of the pronouncements in any... and again I wonder sometimes sort of what shapes our perspective on that because you know although the CDU in Germany would have never been my party but I had respect for Angela Merkel yeah in a way that you know we probably would not be best mates and differed on a lot of things but I have respect for her and her integrity in a way that I haven't got for pretty much anybody in the UK. I would find it quite hard to name a politician, I do know well... It is the kind of the, and I think I can only use the term corruption but this you know, it is such a dominant element in the way decisions are being made at the moment and how they protect a particular interest, economic interest of particular groups, both in government and in society. That of course underlies Brexit and it also underlies the way the pandemic has been handled. So I don't feel safe round that, I feel it's a pretty grim place to be. Of course in some ways we have a better vaccination record than some other European countries all that kinda' stuff and I'm quite glad to be triple jabbed by now or whatever. Of course, I am but it almost feels that [*sigh*]. Yeah I feel that... I don't know. I feel things are grimmer here than anywhere else and I wish I wasn't here for that very reason. I wish I wasn't at the mercy of the decision making processes here the same way.

**CH: Can I ask one other question sorry?**

A: [*laughing*] Ask away.

**CH: We've asked a few people this actually as well. When your daughter growing up did you speak German to her or?**

IB: Yeah, I mean she's not bilingual. She's a northern English child who speaks very good German. So in a sense I did keep that language going but I would have despite having been bilingual in the past I didn't do all the right things about bringing up a child bilingually so she ended up a Geordie with very good German.

**CH: Was that important to you that she learnt German then?**

A: Yeah yeah of course I did because I wanted to read stories and I wanted to sing with her. I wanted to watch (**German TV show**) on TV. It is, I love literature, poetry, whatever and so in a sense there were lots and lots of bits of me that I wanted to share with her so it was important to me that we had a opportunity to do that.

**CH: Ok yeah.**

A: I'm often vindicated because she's now got a job. She works for a company where she does customer support for the German market so she speaks German in there as well. [*laughing*] I feel widely vindicated that my efforts to make her speak German have paid off somehow.

**LR: It worked. Ok. So Anke do you want to ask anything else?**

**AML: No not really.**

A: Hahah. I have bored you two.

**AML: Just really thankyou for sharing.**

**LR: Yes, really.**

**CH: Yes it was really interesting thankyou so much.**

**AML: And a lot of what you say resonates.**

**LR: Yes absolutely resonates for me as well.**

A: Yeah it will do yeah. Well thank you for giving me the opportunity to do that, I hope I haven't rambled on too much.

**CH: Yeah I think your artwork's amazing by the way.**

LR: Yeah, he's the artist. Charlie's the artist in our group.

**CH: Yeah, no it's so interesting how you put things together. It looks like you spent ages like ripping it and cutting it to get it right. You didn't no? Ok.**

A: No I went (imitates ripping sound) *[laughing]* and yeah I did sort of.

**LR: It's very cool paper actually that one. I remember buying it when I went to get the stuff for the art packs.**

**AML: Well, not a lot of it is left.**

**LR: I can imagine, yes we should make another...**

*End of recording*

*End of transcript*