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**MIKE** Welcome to the Free Range podcast. I'm your host, Mike Livermore. This episode is sponsored by the Program in Law, Communities and the Environment at the University of Virginia School of Law. With me today is Laura Candiotto, a professor of philosophy at the University of Pardubice in the Czech Republic. She has a relatively recent paper, *Loving the Earth by Loving a Place*, that is fascinating. A set of arguments in there, I thought, that it would be a fun starting place for a conversation for the podcast. So thanks so much for joining me today, Laura.

**LAURA CANDIOTTO:** Hi, Mike. Thank you very much for having me here. I'm very happy to have this conversation with you today.

**MIKE** I'm looking forward to it. So as a way into the paper, sometimes we talk casually, at least in the US. We use the term love in a pretty casual way especially, maybe when talking about nature. So I might say that I love nature. I love the outdoors or that kind of thing. But in this paper, that's not really what you're talking about. So how do we distinguish the love that you're describing, *Loving a Place* in this paper, from that more casual usage?

**LAURA CANDIOTTO:** Oh. Yes. This is a crucial question because when we say, I love nature, or I love going into the woods and stuff like that, can just mean that I enjoy doing these activities, liking being outside. But I try to provide a philosophical conceptualization of love also because I think that if we take a love of nature just in this casual way, we cannot really appreciate the moral and political value that love, love of nature in particular can have now. And how much a love of nature can help us in tackling some of the more pressing issues that we are facing nowadays with the climate crisis or climate disaster, we can say.

So in providing this philosophical conceptualization of love of nature, I start from the philosophical debate on the philosophy of love, and so that we have different accounts. So I start from the idea that love as care. So that it is not just, not a feeling of enjoyment, of doing, or being with someone, but caring about this someone, meaning that really working for her well-being.

And also this goes well with the account that is called the deep value account that means that in caring for the intentional object of your love, you value this object. So you appreciate some qualities or some specific feature of this object. Or we can also say that this object of love as intrinsic value.

And then there is also another account that is the fusion account of love. And this account spells out the idea that when we love we really want to be one with our beloved, so that we are looking for a fusion. And this fusion has been understood in different ways. But many times, it has led to the idea that love is something universal. And so it is this idea of oneness with the other.

So I started providing this map of this philosophical account of love. And from there I say that while I take a lot from the care and value account of love, but I challenge the fusion or the universal account of love, and in doing so I develop my inactive account of love. So maybe this word is a bit technical. So maybe it could be useful to define it a bit.

So with inaction is a specific model of mind and cognition that assumes that there is a continuity between life and mind. And this continuity is understood in terms of processes of sense-making. So when an organism, a living organism develops a perspective on something.

This is still a bit too theoretical. What has to do with love? Well, in a paper I wrote with Hanne De Jaegher, we developed our inactive account of love where we say that it is a process of participatory sense-making when two or more living beings are in processes of existential encounters, and through these encounters, they build their perspective together.

But still, I think that it is important that I say something more concrete for defining this kind of love especially, when we speak about love of nature. What does it mean to have this kind of existential engagement with nature? Is it possible to actively love nature? Or could we just love other specific and unique human beings? So I don't know, Mike, if you wanted that I proceed in this way.

**MIKE  
LIVERMORE:** Yeah. Let's maybe pause for a second. There's a lot on the table already. But maybe just, again, we're just getting our feet wet here. And an initial question that one might have with this project that you're engaged in is, what is the business of philosophy here?

So I could imagine studying love or studying people's relationship with the environment. The emotional relationship with the environment, say, from a psychological perspective as a psychological phenomenon. Or we might think about this love or the relationships with the environment as a sociological phenomenon that we could study using the tools from that field. Or we could think historically how the idea of love has changed over time, or how this concept, or these ideas play out in different cultural contexts, kind of a historical perspective.

So before we dive more in depth into your arguments, which I do want to do of course, is just maybe to set the stage by getting your thoughts on, what is the role for philosophy here? Just as an initial question, why are we turning to the tools of philosophy in order to engage with this phenomenon?

**LAURA  
CANDIOTTO:** So in this paper, I do at least three things, I would say. The first one is that really, I'm working with language. So I'm trying to-- refining the way we speak about our engagement with nature. And so also when we speak about our love of nature, and try to see really what we mean with this, and also try to work with new words, and new concepts that can try to change our ways of interacting with nature.

So if we can use a kind of language that has to do more with engagement, instead of taking nature as, for example, the object, just an object. And I'm a spectator of this beautiful landscape, but nature is more like my interactive partner. And I can find new words to express this.

We can say that working with language, we can also transform our perception, and our practice in nature. So the first level is language. The second one, that has to do with more practice-oriented kind of philosophy. So a kind of philosophy that is very much situated, contextualized, that has a bottom-up approach, and that wants to tackle some pressing issues of our days.

And the third point is a conceptual work. So the idea that in order to work with language and also tackling these practical issues, philosophy can offer a consistent, conceptual framework for thinking about them. And so when you do this conceptual work, you of course also engage with some objections.

So you discuss other perspectives, and you show why your perspective is better than others, and you offer examples, and so on. But I would say that in this paper, I have this understanding of philosophy as a practice, as something that we do, and how we write also our paper, and what we aim for, what we want to try to tackle, and change through our discourse, our transformation of our discourse about love of nature in this case.

**MIKE**  
**LIVERMORE:** Good. So that's a very interesting bit of background. I think it's very helpful for framing. So the idea is both, it sounds like to understand how we're using these ideas or these words, or if there are concepts that are floating around that are linked up to these words and in some sense, help to provide clarity about what we're talking about, or to just kind of-- it's housekeeping in some sense. It's to clarify how we're approaching the world.

But also it's not mere-- it's not only a descriptive project, it sounds like. Embedded here is an ethical project where you have some commitments. Or at least for purposes of this project, you're adopting some commitments, say that our relationships to nature are out of whack, or we have a climate crisis. And there are complex social, political, economic, and moral reasons behind that. And so part of the goal of the project is not simply to state a more cleaned up version of our current relationships to nature, but also to articulate a vision of what our relationship to nature could be that you at least arguably think would put us in a better position to realize our own moral and ethical goals vis a vis our relationship to the environment.

**LAURA**  
**CANDIOTTO:** Indeed. Yes. There is this idea that philosophy has this ethical aim or can have this ethical aim. But again, this ethical purpose is not framed within a universalistic account like providing some principles or rules of action. But more, it is an engage with ethics that is grounded in a process of transformation of the moral agent.

And this has to do also with an ancient conceptualization of philosophy because if we take, for example, the work by Pierre Haddow, a French scholar who said that philosophy in the Greek time was an [SPEAKING FRENCH], a spiritual exercise of transformation of our perception and action in the world. Actually he said, more the perception of the world. But then if we read this also along with some pragmatist tools, we can say also that to change how we live our daily life. So of course, we can take philosophy in this way as a transformative experience. And this transformation has to do with an ethical transformation of self-betterment.

**MIKE**  
**LIVERMORE:** Good. And so I think that's also placing your methodology a little bit within the world of philosophy as well is this kind of situational list or as you said, bottom-up approach, which is different from other approaches that are going to start with principles and then reason about situations from principles. And you want to-- how hardcore are you by the way, within the situation? Because there are different versions of this.

Are you someone that thinks that there are no principles, that it's not just a matter of figuring out what the principles are? Because one concern that I've seen articulated if you take a very hard core version of the situation or perspective is that it almost makes it impossible to do the work of philosophizing, of thinking about-- because if it's just the situation and there are no general principles that we can abstract, it just seems almost to do away with the whole project of reasoning.

**LAURA**  
**CANDIOTTO:** Yeah, I agree. And I think that the title of my paper says a lot about this because I say, loving the Earth by loving a place. So my aim is starting from specific context to get to the universal. So I'm not denying the universal dimension, but I start from the bottom to get there.

**MIKE**  
**LIVERMORE:** Great.

**LAURA**  
**CANDIOTTO:** So we can say that it is a relational account and not a relativist account in this regard.

**MIKE**  
**LIVERMORE:** Great. That's all super helpful. Again, I think it helps to situate as it were, how you're thinking within these broader debates about how we go about the process of doing moral reasoning. So just to return to the arguments that you're introducing right at the top of the conversation-- and we can maybe just start to unpack them a little bit.

So one of the basic, foundational bits of perspective that you offer in the paper are these three different accounts of love, which maybe we can think of as interacting with each other. Maybe they're not totally distinct. But they, again, illuminate what's going on. There's the care perspective, the value perspective, and then the fusion model. And the fusion model, this notion of oneness is again, as you know, you're rejecting or you're raising concerns with the fusion model vis a vis love of nature.

I guess, just one question quickly is, do you also reject the fusion model in terms of love vis a vis human relations as inadequate? Or do you put that to the side? Or how do you feel about that?

**LAURA**  
**CANDIOTTO:** Yes. I refuse it also--

**MIKE**  
**LIVERMORE:** I see.

**LAURA**  
**CANDIOTTO:** --regarding the relationship. Actually, I started from that. In this paper that I already mentioned, the *Love In-Between*, we were challenging the fusion account about a romantic relationship. And by writing this paper I started to say, oh, well. But could we also think in terms of romantic relationships with non-human beings? Could we think about this, about love in relation with a dog, or a tree, or a place? And what does it mean?

And when you go to love of nature especially, if you read something that is not immediately philosophical like novels or poems, this fusion account is quite omnipresent and also in a fascinating way. And also there are something romantic paintings that are so beautiful, really expressing this immersion into nature as this feeling of being one with nature. So I don't want to deny that we might feel in this way. But my point is that for my ethical concerns, this is not the best way because there are many problems related to it. So we can train ourselves in different forms of love that focus on difference instead of oneness.

**MIKE**  
**LIVERMORE:** It's really, really interesting. So again, just to maybe recapitulate what you just said, it's not to say that such experiences can't be had. Who knows? Maybe they can. And people attest to them in some ways. And then there's an interesting question. Like, should we call that love? Is that love properly understood or something like that? So that's interesting. That goes to the conceptual clarity point.

But I think part of what the argument here is-- and maybe we can just delve into this because I think it's really interesting. Sorry. We're not moving through the whole paper. We're taking each step really slow. What you just said is that it doesn't provide a good ethical basis for our relationships with nature.

So let's unpack that a little bit because I can imagine a counterargument. Some might come back and say, what are you talking about? That feeling of oneness with nature and the dissolution of the boundary between self and other is the most profound experience that you could have vis a vis the natural world. And it's a wonderful foundation for an environmental ethic. It immediately leads us to be less selfish, to engage in politics, to be committed to the preservation and integrity of the system.

And that is a really good-- because you do need emotions. Laura, you are a philosopher of emotions. And I don't think it would be too much to speculate that you would say that emotions are an important part of politics and political engagement. And I would say, that is a really excellent, in fact, the best foundation for-- and most powerful and motivating foundation for environmental politics. So that's just to offer the counterargument. So I'm curious what your response is to that.

**LAURA  
CANDIOTTO:**

Yeah, that we miss a lot if we start from oneness. And what we miss is the rich biodiversity, and the otherness, and the mystery that is implied by difference, but not only the mystery, really recognizing and acknowledging the uniqueness of the other. And this uniqueness is also in terms of radical difference. So the problem is that, OK, we can evaluate someone only if he, or she, or it is like me. Not at all, we need to value he, she, or it exactly because it is, or she, or he's totally different from me.

And so this really had to do with making space for the value of difference, the ethical value of difference. And this has to do with nature, when we think of nature not just like this environment, this surrounding, this landscape, but as this biodiversity full of different living beings. And so also if we have this perspective that is grounded on difference, we can also acknowledge many tensions and problems. So again, I do not just care about beautiful landscape. And also this was one of the motifs that we can find in many poems. So the value of a landscape is very often described in terms of the beauty of this place.

The point is also, and especially now, carrying and valuing a place, especially because it is a mess. And there are a lot of problems. It is a polluted river, and it is also our fault. Mostly, it is our fault if it is a polluted river. So an ethics of difference, I strongly believe, that provide better tools for really engaging for the well-being of a place better than just focusing on sameness or oneness.

**MIKE  
LIVERMORE:**

Great. Well, that's a really interesting perspective. And I really love that notion that on the one hand, you can love a place, or you can have a certain-- let's put aside the word love for now. But you can have a certain kind of feeling that you get when you see a wondrous landscape, and you're on a mountaintop, and there's a beautiful vista or something like that. You can have that emotional experience. And then there's another emotional experience that you can have when you see a polluted river. And that can create different kinds of feelings, but maybe thinking of that as love as one of them.

There's a Pete Seeger song. So Pete Seeger is an American folk singer who is an important figure in the history of US. Folk music-- he was actually doing his thing back in-- with The Depression and the aftermath of that. And then through the '60s and the '70s, he was very active in the Civil Rights movement. And he was also an important figure in that early environmental movement in the US.

And he has a song about the Hudson River, which of course is the river that waters New York City. It's called sailing up my dirty river. But I still I love her. And I keep the dream that someday, she'll run clean. That's the idea. I've always found that quite poignant. And I think it relates exactly to that point is that you can-- that feeling of tenderness that you can have for what we might call a degraded resource.

**LAURA  
CANDIOTTO:**

Yes, totally. I totally agree.

**MIKE**  
**LIVERMORE:** So for moving away from this fusion model towards care, or value, or something else, you've put-- there are some other ideas that you have in the paper and that you've put on the table in our conversation too. So one idea that's in the paper is to say that nature or-- not nature in general, I think, but a situated-- a place, that's where place comes into the picture where we're talking about where you live, and your immediate environment as a partner in a participatory process of making meaning.

So there's a bunch of different ideas that are simultaneously in there. So there's meaning-making. There's what it means for a place to be a partner. And then I guess, that's related to the notion of participation, joint participation, and meaning-making. So I wonder if you're using-- so there's sense-making. There's meaning-making. Those are both ideas that are in the paper. Is there a difference between those things? Or are we talking about the same thing? And maybe also, just what do we mean, or what do you mean when you're talking about the process of sense-making, or meaning-making, and if those two things are different from each other?

**LAURA**  
**CANDIOTTO:** So basically, I mean that there is not an I and a you that are already constituted so that they are just two objects, two substances that are already made, are there and at some point, they meet. What I am and what you are emerges from our interaction. And this is the case also with a place. So we can speak in terms of niche creation. So the process in which an environment starts to become my place in replying to my needs. And I can also reply to the needs of this place, so that there are interactions in between. And these interactions are conceptualized as a process of making sense or creating a meaning so a field of significance. And why meaning? Because in this process of niche creation, I'm trying to reply to my existential needs. We can think about them in terms of survival. So a place can reply to my needs of having food if I make a garden but also relational needs. So if I go in a place because there is a nice community there. So I start to share some practices with the other people that are living there and so on. So the point here is not really understanding a place as something that is already there but something that in a process, through an interactive process, something that can become my place. But also in this process, I'm going to change. And that's why I use this concept of becoming native at the ground of my conceptualization.

So I can say that in my work, there are two prominent inspirational figures on the background. One is the French philosopher, Lucie Giguère who developed this view of love as something that is free from this idea of possession of an object. So it is not an object already constituted that I can get because I desire it. So this is one. And the second one is Freya Mathews who is a philosopher from Australia, who developed our view on being in nature as a dialogical encounter. So I understand this dialogue from within a place as a process of participatory sense-making.

**MIKE**  
**LIVERMORE:** Great. So there's, again, a bunch of interesting things happening here simultaneously. So one is, again, this notion of sense-making, a participatory sense-making. So I think some folks might think of sense-making or meaning-making as having a semantic element to it. It's like just a conceptual kind of element to it. It sounds like what you're talking about is maybe something different. Again, you can-- I welcome your correction. So then the idea being that what's happening is this kind of recursive process where a person, a human being is-- their sense of self-identity, and how they understand the world in both perhaps a semantic sense, but also in an emotional sense, or just how sense is embedded in their daily practices.

**LAURA**  
**CANDIOTTO:** Right. I would say more fundamentally, as an [INAUDIBLE] process. And we could use this word, right?

**MIKE** Yes. So that's the word, which I'll admit I'm not-- it's not one that I use very often in my day-to-day life. So what  
**LIVERMORE:** are we talking about there?

**LAURA** Self-creation. So if we start from this idea that the world is not made of already made substances, or objects, or  
**CANDIOTTO:** building blocks, we can see how what we call object, or things, or living beings emerge out of process of interaction. And the process of interaction and focusing here is interaction between at least one living being and other beings that are inhabiting a place. And so it is at the beginning, an embodied process.

Then in the inactive literature, there is a very interesting and important book on how also language, I mean, also verbal communication can emerge from the body. So I'm not just speaking about a sensorimotor relationship. But the point here is really taking sense-making as an embodied practice of living beings that inhabit a place. So it is not just conceptual. Or we can say that the conceptual dimension emerge out of embodied interaction. So this is the starting point of the inactive approach of cognition.

**MIKE** Understood. OK. I think I'm getting at it. So the distinction that you're drawing is that we build our ways of  
**LIVERMORE:** understanding the world through, as you say, an embodied process, an interactive process with our environment. And that's pretty foundational to how you think about a lot of things, I take. And so as opposed to say-- I'm not sure anybody else holds this view but something like, all that humans are doing when we make meaning is being disembodied agents that-- I mean, not even an agent, so disembodied-- you're just entities that read meaning, that kind of pre-exists in the world of concepts that are out there. And that we're just a process of extracting them through a refining process or something like that.

Rather what's going on, again, it's this engaged process of sense making. So now that we have that, if that's built into our structure of how we understand the way that we come to understand the world, is this embodied, engaged process. It seems natural in some way for there to be a role for your physical place because it sounds as though it doesn't even make sense for us to come to an understanding of anything outside of this active, engaged, recursive process through which we come to understand the world.

So if that's true, I guess what I'm trying to distinguish is everybody in the world who's just in it adheres to the nature of sense-making basically as we're defining it, is automatically a lover of nature just because they have to be-- in some sense, because they're-- in order to come to any sense-making, they're engaged with the place. And because that's where they're embedded, and that's how they come to understand anything, or build a notion of the world. And so is it just automatic that someone has this participatory meaning-making process? Or what distinguishes the love of nature from just how we come to understand the world?

**LAURA** I would say that it is not automatic, unfortunately maybe. But also this is good that it is not automatic because it  
**CANDIOTTO:** has to do with the development of certain virtues, attitudes. And it is a strenuous practice, or at least, I wanted to stress this dimension. So there are other colleagues that are really working on this continuity between life and mind, and also continuity between life and emotion-- can say that a living being is just by being a living being is a lover. I don't see that. I think that love is something that should be nourished.

So we can say that maybe we have a basic attachment to our place, but this could be also very narcissistic or egotistical. Also when I was defining this relationship when I said, this is my place. But this, my place, can be very much self-centered. And this is not love because love also needs the perspective that is other oriented. So I would say that while love is not against of course, this embodied perspective on sense-making, we can say that it can come from there, in certain cases more naturally than others. But a practice is needed; a practice of cultivation, of certain virtues, of care towards the place.

In my paper, I try to start listing these virtues, but my main goal in this paper is providing the framework for understanding them. So I speak in terms of inactive listening, so when you start to listen to a place in a certain way, or in a certain manner.

**MIKE  
LIVERMORE:** Great. OK, good. And so just one final thing and then we can move on to that point about listening, and the virtue stuff, which is super interesting. But again, just on this connection between almost like an epistemic set of views about how we come to build a sense of the world and this relationship to loving nature. And the idea is that it's not automatic. It's a practice that you need to cultivate, has ethical dimensions to it.

Tell me if this sounds right to you on your view that a love of nature in the way that you describe, which is really a love of place and that you have a particular relationship with is arises naturally from a correct understanding of how we do sense-making. But that people often are mistaken about that, and they can be-- and that can lead to egotism, or this notion of separateness, or whatever. But if you really understand how you make sense of the world, that would then naturally lead you to this kind of relationship and attitudes that would be part of a practice of-- that you would cultivate, that involves loving nature.

**LAURA  
CANDIOTTO:** Yes. This is a good way for understanding it. I didn't phrase it in this way in my paper, but I think that it could be a good way for getting there. Also because it can really point to my work on language, so how we can revise or transform our language in order to start to perceive our relationship with the place in a different way, in a better way. And in order to do it, we need to have the correct understanding. And so if we keep going with this dualistic assumption that nature is in a way, just a resource that we can use. And it is just out there forever just for us. Or nature is just a weak object that we need to protect.

So here, I'm just using the two extremes that are both sharing the idea that nature is just an object out there. We are keep-- working with this dualistic account that does not-- that underestimate the value of this fundamental relationship of inhabiting a place as what constitutes ourselves and the place. So what I said in the beginning, this fundamental process of sense-making that-- or we can also call it this fundamental process of interdependent autonomy of selves that creates themselves in relationship.

So understanding, yes, and I will take this epistemic dimension that you rightly stress also in an affective way. Because they say that, well, there is this discontinuity between life and cognition, and life and emotions. So I'm not going to talk a lot about emotions here today with you. But we can also try to get an account of understanding that is more affective, a way of really appreciating the things for what it is.



And in there, there is our account of love, the one that I developed with Hanne De Jaegher in the *Love In-Between* paper where we say that love is this desire to know more about the other, ourselves, and the world together. So here you see, we are taking the affective dimension here spelled out in terms of desire, this motivation or this affective motivation towards what, to knowing better the other. And what does it mean, knowing better the other? Understanding it properly. And in this paper I say that listening is a fundamental practice that we need to undertake in order to have this correct understanding.

**MIKE LIVERMORE:** So one of the things-- and this is another interesting, really interesting move in the paper that there's a relationship between loving, listening, and I think, learning. Those are the things that I came away with. And listening, I took to be understood metaphorically you mean like attending to, not necessarily using your ears. Right?

**LAURA CANDIOTTO:** Yeah.

**MIKE LIVERMORE:** So this is really interesting. To me, that struck me as arising very naturally from the thread of your argument. So we're thinking about being situated, respecting difference as kind of difference is an important foundation for love rather than this notion of unity or oneness. And then if you really do love something, then you want to learn about it, and that involves a practice of attention.

And then one of the things that I think is another very closely related move in the paper that I think may be more controversial, and again, one I'd be very curious to hear your thoughts on, and explore is this notion that not only does it make sense for us to listen to or attend to our place, but our place listens to us too. There's this mutual relationship. My father used to say when we were kids, don't love anything that can't love you back. And he meant that with respect to stuff like don't become overly materialistic. He was actually-- I'm not sure he followed that advice. But that was the idea, don't care too much about objects in your world.

So the question that is related to this is, can nature love us back? And you work with some of these. You don't say it exactly that way, but you talk about-- you raise this question like, the notion of having community with a tree. And you ask, is that just a solipsistic fantasy? And your answer is no. But when I saw that I was like, well, it's a worthwhile question. Are we just imagining this stuff, or we're just preaching? Again, rather than listening and really coming to understand the thing for what it is, we're projecting, or anthropomorphizing, or whatever. And so again, yeah, this is quite interesting.

So one of the things you say in the paper is if I treat a river with love, it will listen to me by being healthy. And so that struck me as a pretty concrete notion of what it means to-- how you're using that term, listen, in this mutualistic way vis a vis non-human systems. So what is that? And what sense is that listening? That's, I guess, what I mean. So like the river is going to respond to my behavior, and to not just my behavior, but the behavior of people around me.

So if to take the Hudson River, for example, the Hudson River listened to New York City and New York City policies by being very polluted for a long time. And then once we started to-- and not just New York City but the State of New York. And there's a long history of different pollutants going into the Hudson River from various sources, from sewage, from industrial pollutants, and the like. And then we started to clean up the environment and have a different attitude. And we acted differently. We started to treat our sewage before dumping it into the river. We started to reduce and ban some of the industrial compounds that had been causing a lot of pollution in the Hudson River. And we even started to clean it up. We started to do all these things, and build parks along the river side, and whatnot.

And then the river had made an amazing recovery. It's much less polluted. And it's much a safer place. But that strikes me as a little bit different than listening at least, as I normally think of the term listening. It's kind of responding for sure. It's changing. There's a mutualistic-- there's a relationship between what I do. There's feedbacks between what humans do and what is going on with the river. So I guess the question is, what's the value, or what's the meaning of using the term listening in that context? And is that-- what do we get out of using that word to describe what's going on in that situation?

**LAURA**

**CANDIOTTO:**

Well, this is an amazing question. And I think that I need to write another paper to reply to it and think a lot for properly provide an answer. But yes, you really got to my point when you stress the ethical value of really acknowledging our behaviors as not just an impact on the object of our behavior, but the object replies to us. But you say, oh, well, maybe we can understand this in terms of feedbacks or consequences of our actions. Is the place really listening to me? So of course, here the point is really try to understand listening, not just listening through the ears but-- not only metaphorical.

And this has been also-- this objection has been addressed also by some of my commentators because this paper has been published along some time peer commentaries from colleagues. And some really asked this question. So I don't want neither to say, oh, well, but listening here is just metaphorical. For me, it's important keeping listening for stress in the embodied dimension. And the embodied dimension really means that by being there, and living within the place in a certain way, treating it badly, or in the best possible way, the place can reply to me in a different way.

And so here when I say, listening in an embodied perspective, I want also to say not just through the ears but also through touch, through smelling. Of course, here I'm enlarging the spectrum of listening also to the other senses. But this is important because it means more like really being open to the place from our embodied living experience. And so this can bring us to perceive this dimension of shared aliveness that in my paper is the way through which this dialogical encounter can take place.

I will say that if I would write another paper about this, I can consider the option of not necessarily needing a conceptual framework that uses words that have to do with language and communication. Because I started to think about listening, because my research question was, how can I communicate with another being that is radically different from me and we do not share a common language? So this was my research question. And that's why I have all these words that has to do with language and communication. And also because one of my main interlocutors in this paper is Freya Mathews who speaks in terms of dialogue.

But it will be very interesting to enlarge maybe, I have to consider this, to enlarge this a bit. The risk is missing something that is unique of us, humans, as the living beings, that we are linguistic bodies. And this is the title of that book that I was referring to before about this conceptualization of meaning, verbal communication, and language from an inactive point of view by Di Paolo Cuffari and De Jaegher. So I don't want neither to reduce human beings, just to-- simply bodies without language perspective and concept. So the point of keeping this linguistic framework could be important. But, well, I agree that more work maybe is necessary here.

But, well, I say more about this in my answer to the objections that has been addressed to the paper where I try to explain why listening as a concept can be useful beyond the ethical implication. That I think that these are evident because focusing on listening and focusing on a mutual relationship, we can really see how much we can do in embracing inactive ethics towards loving a place.

**MIKE  
LIVERMORE:** Yes. So I would-- maybe we can, if we have time, we can return to this. I think there's still lots of interesting stuff to explore in this domain of the mutuality, or dialogic, or communication with nature, or with the place. But I wanted to touch on a couple of other questions. And then again, if we have a few minutes, we can maybe return to some of these because they're all really interesting stuff.

But the other big question I had, a bigger picture question maybe is, do you see this kind of relationship to a specific place as essential for living a good life? Is it really like a core part of a complete human existence? And one of the reasons I was just thinking about this is some people move around a lot. They don't necessarily build a really close, deep connection to any particular place. In fact, you've moved around quite a bit over the years.

And so what do we think of academics, or others, and people in different kinds of jobs, or people who have been forced from their homelands because of political circumstances, or war, or economic concerns, or whatever? So that it disrupts their various economic, political, social, or personal, or psychological factors that just make it difficult for someone to build this deep connection to a place that you're describing. I guess, yeah, so the question is, is that really like making it difficult for them to lead complete, ethical lives? And I guess a related question is, is it essential for engagement with environmental politics in a deep and sustained way to have the type of love of nature, and love of place, and to be able to build that over time that you describe?

**LAURA  
CANDIOTTO:** Oh. Yes. So I wanted to say two things of this regard. First, that loving a place should not be a privilege. And as we know unfortunately, many people have been banished by their place for different reasons, political reasons, wars, migrations, economical crisis, et cetera. And so we could say that there is a kind of structural violence. And that if we say that, well, loving a place is a crucial activity in order to have a better life, in order to develop in your listening skills, learning to love, et cetera. So this is terrible. And so we could also say that in certain situation, we, academics that are forced-- not if we choose to, that are forced to moving around for having a job, we are under the oppression of a very poisonous violence in a way we can reply in this way.

But I want also to say that focusing on loving a place, so this situated account of love of nature, does not mean that you don't travel anymore so that you just live in your place. Because this also would be extremely problematic. Because you could start to develop a very narrow mind, not appreciating different places, et cetera, et cetera. So the point would be to allow yourself enough time to start loving also new places. And maybe you can do it if you had the chance at least for a while of spending a good amount of time in a place, and also building certain relationships also with other environmental activists, et cetera. And then when you start to travel around, you can try to do the same in these different places even if you are going to live there just for a year or two.

So I would reply with these two answers. And also I would like to add these things that now we are going also to inhabit virtual places. And also these are important in terms of building relationships for doing something good for the environment. So we can also think about a network of people who have this kind of relationship with their places that although they had to leave, they can keep, nurture the relationship to that place, to these grassroots movements, for example, and also create connections with people who are working in the same, or similar, or even different manner, in a different country, et cetera.

So I think that in a way, I wanted to stress that there is a dimension of structural violence in this constant need of moving, or when in the academic jobs, or also for other reasons that they say at the beginning. But also that it is possible to love a place also if you do not commit to this specific place for all your entire life. And this is also important because it allows the person to not just be bounded to that specific place. That this could be also very problematic because it can become a form of too strong attachment but starting to love different places. So how this love of a place can extend and expand towards other places that are recognized in their uniqueness. So you start to care for them as well.

And this also can help in this process of moving towards the love of the Earth and not just the love of my tiny, little garden. So thinking in this way, we can also see the bright side of moving around that you have the opportunity of loving new places and so loving more places. The point is that from this plurality, you don't miss the individual and the specificity of the places. But you can keep the differences, just extending the numbers.

**MIKE** So we should love a place, but we don't have to be monogamous.

**LIVERMORE:**

**LAURA** Yes. We can speak in this way, yeah, indeed.

**CANDIOTTO:**

**MIKE** And be a little bit promiscuous in how we love places. So you mentioned this. But I think I wanted to highlight it because I thought it was a really interesting argument in the paper or a consequence of the argument in the paper is how you build up these, it's fair to say, emotional connections that people have to places or these particular relations they have with specific places into something that looks like an environmental movement that is actually able to accomplish broad political change.

Because of course as you just noted, if we're all just focused on protecting our own little gardens, that's not really-- it doesn't at first blush seem like a good foundation for political action. But as you argue in the paper and as you noted, if your love of your specific place also creates the opportunity to understand the bonds that others have with their places and to build in a kind of a networked fashion, everyone starting with their situated kind of experience in relationship with a place or places, that creates a sense of common understanding and that then can serve as, again, a foundation for a broader, collective movement.

So that definitely strikes me as really interesting. I mean, one of the-- I wonder, I'm getting to the end of our time. But there's an old, kind of oldish expression, think globally, act locally. And it sounds like you would just-- would you reverse that and say think locally, act globally, or love locally, engage in politics globally? What are your culminating thoughts on how, given that so many of the challenges, environmental challenges that we face now are truly global in scope; climate change, plastics pollution, problems with the oceans. But there's just a really vast number that they're really-- these generations and the subsequent generations' environmental tasks are really global. What is the relationship between the global and the local in your framework?

**LAURA  
CANDIOTTO:**

Well, I really like how you phrase it. I can also maybe rephrase it again and say, by loving locally, you can act globally. So I really like this. That the final point is not just love your place. So you start from there. But it is not just as a means, if you want, for a better and bigger-- and it is just-- because it is what you can do actually. Because you can work from where you are.

And I say this because I noticed that some of the environmental despair, or anxiety, or grief arise exactly from the idea that the problems are too big, and too far, and too global. And so I cannot do anything to change it. And so what I wanted also to show with this paper is that we can do something, and it is in our power. And what we can do is loving our place but not stopping there. But by correctly understanding our place, listening to it, and so loving it, we can act for the Earth in a participatory manner.

So here really for this movement that starts from the local and goes to the global. The concept and practice of participation is really crucial because it really speaks in terms of community building, or network, or relationship. And so we can also say that you can start to build your relationships in the place you inhabit, and you start to extend this a bit more, and start to create knots with other people who are doing the same in their place.

But this is not something that happened automatically. Again, I don't believe in automorphism very much. I am a response fabulist. So I think that we need to do things because we care, and so we put effort. So they're strenuous practices. And if you want also little actions that would require time. So criticism to my view could be, Oh, well. But this is very interesting, and nice, blah, blah, blah. But we need an answer right now. We don't have time anymore. So maybe it's better to just go for some universal regulation or real rules because we don't have time for this moment. Well, I don't reply to this objection in this paper. On the opposite, I try to show the benefits that can arise from my proposal.

**MIKE  
LIVERMORE:**

Great. Well, it's a really fascinating set of ideas. And I think this link between this notion of our connections to our place, and where we live, and these emotional connections that we have. And the scale of global problems that we face on many environmental issues is a fascinating one. You really have offered a super, interesting perspective on this set of questions. And so I appreciate the work you've put into thinking about all this stuff and the chance to chat with you today about it, Laura.

**LAURA** Thank you, Mike, really. Thank you very much because you, as always, made me think a lot. So I have already  
**CANDIOTTO:** some new ideas that I want to develop and also some objections to reply. And, well, there is work to be done.

**MIKE** Great. Well, that's always a good end for a conversation is the future work.  
**LIVERMORE:**

**LAURA** Yes. Thank you, Mike.

**CANDIOTTO:**

[MUSIC PLAYING]