

Steve Nilmini Hindenburg 1

📅 Wed, 10/21 6:07PM ⌚ 50:33

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

people, village, design, idea, land, terms, project, share, house, council, bit, housing, model, travels, produce, sydney, community, food, energy, cost

SPEAKERS

Jeremy Melder, Advertising Bee Folk, Steven Liaros, Nilmini De Silva



Jeremy Melder 00:00

Hello, my name is Jeremy Melder, and on the presenter from beaming green. Before we start, I would like to acknowledge that this podcast is being held on the traditional lands of the bundjalung people and paying our respects to elders both past present 10 emerging. The beaming green podcast is a weekly pod, which will help you to take out some of the stress and confusion about how to live your life more sustainably. And we do this by introducing you to people that have first hand experience and expertise in all aspects of sustainability. So you can get some amazing insights on how you can implement simple and practical solutions to enhance your life and the lives of your family. Welcome to episode eight, of beaming green. Today, I'm going to be speaking with nil mini de Silva and Steven Lee Iris. And they've been working on an idea to set up circular economy villages. And I met Stephen and no mini approximately four years ago when they were up in their region of northern New South Wales. And I'm really excited to be speaking with them today. Nilmini and Steven, welcome to beaming green.



Nilmini De Silva 01:33

Thank you, Jeremy. And thanks for having us.



Jeremy Melder 01:35

We met a couple of years ago, when you guys were traveling in the region of northern

New South Wales. And I believe you were living out of an RV and doing a bit of research on the circular economy village. Is that right?

S Steven Liaros 01:51
That's right. Absolutely right. Yes.

J Jeremy Melder 01:53
How long ago was that?

S Steven Liaros 01:56
Oh, well, we were. We first came to the tweet in about late 2017. And we were in the area coming and going for about a year while we were looking at opportunities and presenting to counsel and talking to people like yourself in the community.

J Jeremy Melder 02:16
Yeah, look, I remember that time quite well. And you guys were very engaged, but be able to share what started you on this journey of this project? What was the sort of catalyst for for you to go down this road?

N Nilmini De Silva 02:31
Yes. So Stephen, and I met when we were working for local government in Western Sydney. And, you know, over time, our friendship led to a relationship. And in 2013, we both left our mainstream jobs and set up police plan, which is a town planning consultancy. At the same time, Steven was working on his PhD. And we have this audacious idea to try and actually implement his PhD research.

S Steven Liaros 03:05
Yes, yes, I come from a town planning background professionally, that is and working on, you know, Greenfield developments and, and high density developments, but particularly in the relationship between infrastructure, and housing, and who pays for the infrastructure and what kind of infrastructure we build. So always interested in alternative ways of, of developing land that weren't so much about just rows of suburban housing or high density apartment blocks, but more kind of integrated village developments with energy systems, renewable energy systems, Integrated Water Management, food

production, all as part of the living work, if you like, the way we're now calling a circular economy village.



Jeremy Melder 03:58

Yeah. And so that that, did you see this anywhere else? In your travels? Or in the world that you guys, I know that you guys have traveled extensively? Did you see this? You know, and that sparked off your idea? and think, oh, we'd love to say this in Australia. Oh,



Nilmini De Silva 04:13

yes. So in 2013, when Steve was talking about these ideas, I told him, you know, we should we should go on a bit of a journey and experience them ourselves. And, and so we spent six months in Europe, volunteering in different eco villages, to kind of get an understanding for how they functioned, look at the pros and cons and then you know, take the bits of them that we thought would work in a model in Australia. So that was the beginning of the physical journey, if you like and that was 2013 and 2015. We actually moved into our motorhome and did a lot more travel in Australia where we were looking for communities and local governments. To whom this idea of a circular economy village would resonate.



Steven Liaros 05:04

Yeah, and I think it started. It's, it's, we haven't seen it in its current form anywhere, because it's really a synthesis of kind of eco village ideas about people, you know, being connected to the land and forming community and working together collaboratively to build a village. So there's that idea, but but in visiting all the Eco villages, we tried to pick the best elements, bringing to it sort of our professional Town Planning and, and water management expertise, to bring those elements to it. And as we were on this journey, of course, the energy transition really started to take off. And we began to realize that when you have an energy micro grid, with renewable energy, and you can generate much more energy on site, and it's much easier to manage a water system, and when you have more water, you can irrigate your food and so, so those basic needs of food, water energy, become much more efficient with a renewable energy system. So so it's really been a synthesis of, you know, all of those ideas, professional expertise, the energy transition, and, and the ecovillage story that's been going on for many decades.



Jeremy Melder 06:29

Yeah. So these eco villages, I think I've read that you looking at housing up to 200 people

in these eco villages? How does that break down? So if you would, is it some people have that this is obviously shared houses or families that will be sharing these houses? Have you developed a model about how that works?

N

Nilmini De Silva 06:54

Yeah, so first of all, we sort of say hundred and 50 to 200. The number is the Dunbar number, which is a sort of has come from anthropological research, which says that's roughly the number where humans can have good relationships with each other without too many hierarchies developing, and you see it everywhere from the army to how ancient tribes, you know, work together. And so that's a key factor of our model, in that we want to replicate the village once it gets to that optimum number. And that number is also constrained by the catchment conditions. Now, we don't expect that people will be actually living together in the way that you described, we want to make sure that people have their own private space. So it's not a commune, or it's really going to be designed for people in the mainstream with a bit of a twist. So your private space will be a lot smaller, but you still have access to lots of public spaces, whether it be a work hub, a commercial kitchen, laundry, entertainment, swimming pools, so you can have a lot more when you have when you shower, these spaces that they used to sharing anyway, because you know, we go to gyms, we go to libraries, it's about incorporating all that in the village, but still designing it so your footprint is a bit smaller.

J

Jeremy Melder 08:23

Yeah. And also, I would imagine, you'd also be saving individually, you'd be saving on costs for all that space that you are saving in your own building. And you're also sharing these, you know, for example, if you look at a house, or look at a street, everyone has to have a lawnmower everyone has to have whippersnappers, and so on. These are sort of things that could be shared, I imagine in this type of model,

S

Steven Liaros 08:48

yeah, that's precisely the model that you you share what you can share, and that doesn't sort of intrude on your individual privacy. So those things you know, in Sydney, in particular, so many houses have swimming pools, but you know, they get used, how often same with cars, I mean, cars, they say they get used about 5% of the time and the rest of the time they're parked. So the the ability to share things, and shared electric vehicles is something we haven't talked about, but because you've got energy micro grid, you can much more easily share vehicles. And you know if it's a compact environment, and it's a short walking distance or a golf cart ride to to where the cars are. So you know, all of

these are sort of fairly generic ideas that are designed to make the living environment more efficient from an energy perspective and from a cost perspective and, you know, they would be tailored in Project two, to work for that particular site.



Jeremy Melder 10:06

Absolutely. Now, I would imagine that it, you know, COVID, currently has really changed the way we're looking at working. And this model that you're looking at developing and implementing, kinda makes it like, we can do this currently, because it's like, we can now work from home. We can work from, you know, the circular economy village, I walked to my office, which is a shared space, and then I just walk back when I finished my work, I can work from home as well. But it's like giving people that option to choose how they want to work, which is really important now, and I think people have got used to it now from a COVID perspective that, you know, yeah, I can stay at home, I don't have to drive, you know, from where I live to Brisbane, which is a two and a half hour drive, and then other two and a half hour drive back. And you know, that cuts down on carbon emissions substantially. And it gives you a much better work life balance as well, I would think so yeah.



Nilmini De Silva 11:08

Covid, it has only accelerate accelerated the changes that we were planning for anyway. Because we were expecting a lot of this transition to happen due to automation, climate change, you know, geopolitical, different changes, transitions. And, and so overnight, people have got used to working from home. But we think that that's a big issue that a lot of people have mentioned to us, and that is the social isolation they feel when they work from home and don't have that social interaction. Absolutely, yeah. And so if you could actually isolate a village, because you had everything you needed pretty much within the village, then it would make that a lot more feasible and doable from a, you know, social perspective as well. And the other thing that we are planning for is not just to have a work of everyone sort of working on the internet, but also to enable other jobs. Because we have to keep the food, water and energy systems going as well as maintain the housing and maintain the whole village. And so what we foresee is that there will be experts who are managing, say, the food system, but there'll be lots of jobs that people can help with, like the harvest and the weeding. So, so yes, we think that this model will be a lot more appealing to people now. But also you see this change in both Sydney and Melbourne where people are looking to leave the cities. And we hear the signal from a lot of places from Wellington to tazy, that people are making inquiries about leaving the cities.

J

Jeremy Melder 12:45

Well, I think I mentioned this to you last, when we last spoke that, you know, there are people that are now moving to the Tweed, Shire, and buying properties because it's obviously a way of living, they've realized that, you know, I can't afford a house in Sydney or in Melbourne. And I like a rural lifestyle. And now I've got internet access, and I can work from home. And they're making those choices. And I think that's interesting to say. Now, one of the things I wanted to find out from you about these villages or the housing in particular, what is the entry cost for someone that wants to? You know, we were talking about affordable housing or affordable top types of living? What would it what do you estimate a cost would be for someone to get into something like this?

S

Steven Liaros 13:36

It's a very difficult question to answer because, as I said, each, each project should be tailored to not just the Geography and climate of the location, but also the economic circumstances of that location. So we've done some preliminary numbers on the basis of people leaving Sydney. Yeah, so the comparison to Sydney house prices, is about three quarters of the cost per person. So one aspect of the model is that it's a per person model, rather than a per household cost structure. And that's for a number of reasons that Firstly, there's a huge proportion of one and two person households that really have no option but to buy a house. And in Australia, something like 80% of the stock in Sydney, it's about 65% of the stock is single detached houses, but that over 50% of households have only one or two people in them. Yeah, so they're really needs to be a more we're looking for a more flexible housing design. This can potentially provide housing for a number of singles, but like, more like suites, where each has their own, and space, but again able to, to share spaces within that household. So the cost ends up at about three quarters of the cost of housing per person for Sydney housing, but remember that this, this cost also includes you all your energy, your food, your transport, or at least a significant portion of your food. Not necessarily all of it. And, and your transport costs, which are a significant cost as well. So it's a because it's also a life cycle costing structure. It's, it's a little bit difficult to compare, because there's all those other elements, you're offering an ecosystem, you're not offering just housing.

J

Jeremy Melder 16:12

Yeah, I guess I think I mentioned to you that, you know, we just had a meeting with a town that had last week, and one of the priorities that people were wanting was affordable housing, and also to be more self sustainable in our local region. So having access to good around food and water, because I think, you know, coverts shown that this could be, you know, detrimental, if it got worse, in terms of having access to food. So these were one of

the, you know, I think, an overwhelming priority that people were talking about. So in terms of a cost you saying it's three quarters, about three quarters of the cost in in of what it would cost in Sydney? What is that cost in Sydney? Oh, forgive my ignorance.

S

Steven Liaros 17:05

The way we calculated it was, the average house price in Sydney is now over a million dollars. Yeah, and the average number of people per household is in the order of 2.6, or 2.7. So that works out right, roughly to about \$420,000 per person. And our estimate, at this stage, and and remember, it's a first cut preliminary estimate is around 300,000 per person, okay.

N

Nilmini De Silva 17:37

But for that amount, you're getting your food, water energy, as well as transport because we, you know, we foresee a fleet of vehicles. So it's about if we provided all of this additional infrastructure and spread that cost amongst, say, 150 people, then that's roughly what we think it would cost. Yeah. But we have a site and we've got to design and done the proper number crunching, it's difficult to say,

J

Jeremy Melder 18:06

yeah. So do you count these as adults? Only in terms of the number of people? Or what about if people have two children and two adults and two children? Yes.

S

Steven Liaros 18:20

Just remember, you know, going into this, we're just setting some principles and not being dogmatic about, like, who's in and who's out sort of thing. Yeah, the idea. The broad idea is to have a broad demographic, all age groups. Yes. as gender generally, we're working with, well, what's the age demographic profile of New South Wales? How many people in the you know, zero to five, age group, how many in the next age group and so on, and sort of playing around those numbers, because it's all about lifecycle planning, as well. So, so the broad idea is also see the other thing that we need to tackle is the population problem. And so if, if, if we can be conscious about the number of people that we're bringing into the world. And again, you know, this is all about being conscious and not being prescriptive, and dogmatic and, and dictatorial, you know, yes, understood. We're trying to enable more freedom of the individual rather than to dictate, but this is setting principles based on the various issues that we're facing, and how do we design differently.



Nilmini De Silva 19:45

So you might say, for example, that initially, you don't have to pay for your child, but at some age, that's got to kick in. So what that age is in order Those things we're gonna have to discuss amongst the community and come up, come up with some principle. We haven't done the detail of that yet.



Steven Liaros 20:08

Well, we try we work



Jeremy Melder 20:10

with a community that wants to. Yeah, and that's an important thing. So Thanks for clarifying that. And and look, I don't want to focus on too much of that detail. I just wanted to get an idea whether you've actually, you know, got to that stage. And that's good. So you're still working through that. So in terms of, you know, food production, you said that you would have someone that's on site that would be sort of managing that side of things. But I would imagine you want some community involvement as well. And what level of involvement Do you foresee that happening? Or is that something that the community would need to decide as well?



Nilmini De Silva 20:45

Yeah, and and, you know, there could be people who have permaculture skills in traffic, agriculture skills, who move into the community. And so people will be at different levels. I mean, Steven and I, now we, we are planting a lot of our own vegetables and having good success. And through doing that we are learning, we are learning a lot more than we knew even six months ago. Yes. So the more you learn, the more you grow, and the more you can take on those leadership roles. So and if you have



Steven Liaros 21:15

those experts on site that you that can mentor you, you're building up expertise and skills within the community, to the extent that people want to be involved, but you want it to be given by experts in each of the different fields. That's, that's Yeah.



Nilmini De Silva 21:33

And the other important thing is, eventually we want to have a network of villagers. So

each village may not be fully self sustainable. But in a, in a network of villages, you will be able to grow and maintain pretty much close to 100% of what you need. And you know, so especially when it comes to those luxury, or what should we call it, chocolate and coffee, and you know, all the nice things that we like to have, we may not necessarily have to grow and produce it in every in every village. But if there's one for five villages, specializing in one of those products, then it can be shared. So it's about breaking those complex supply chains and trying to share on a more about regional basis.

J Jeremy Melder 22:21

Yeah. So yeah, I agree with that, you know, chocolate sounds good to me. It's bad.

S Steven Liaros 22:29

It's got a, you know, a bit of rainforest area where you could probably produce it for a few years, surely.

J Jeremy Melder 22:36

Yeah, chocolate and coffee would be good for me anyway. Um, so in this model, is there an opportunity, you know, for people to look at renting this as well?

S Steven Liaros 22:49

Okay, so, so the ownership structure, once again, the idea is to be the land and assets would be owned by a community land trust. So some sort of a trust or entity that owns the land in perpetuity, and the people who are living there can buy shares in that trust, and so be shareholders or tenants in common? There's various structures and possibilities in that sense, but then everybody would be renting. So the, the, if you own shares, you can offset some of your rent, of course. So yeah, there's and the rent is broken up into two parts, the capital cost, which you can buy shares into, and the operating costs, which are just the running costs of the village. And they can be offset by produce surplus produce that the village sells outside the village. So if you earn some feed in tariff, because you've got you've generated more energy than you've used, that income for the community, if you produce more food or some categories of food than you need, then that's income. If you value add and offer restaurant quality food, then again, that's income. So so that's broadly the model.



Jeremy Melder 24:21

We'll be back in a moment.



Advertising Bee Folk 24:25

Hello, everyone. My name is Mariana from beef erg. And it is great to be joining Jeremy here on the beaming green podcast, helping us all to live more sustainably. Be folk produces beeswax wrap kits to make your own beeswax wraps at home. Our beef blend bar is made from natural beeswax tree resin, organic coconut and her hobo oil. Make your own great looking, reusable, eco friendly wraps to cover your food and keep it fresh. A natural alternative to plastic wrap And to support the good message of beaming green, and help reduce single use plastic waste, we are giving away a free B folk wax rep kit. Just go to the website, beaming green.com and subscribe to be in the drawer in the second week of November. Welcome back.



Jeremy Melder 25:19

And it sounds exciting. Did you? Did you see any of this? You know, work? Well overseas, when you looked at, you know, certain, you know, certain elements like energy or any food production that you've seen that was working well that we can bring into this model.



Nilmini De Silva 25:37

every village had elements that were working well, yeah, um, for example, you know, we we've been to a place called Steven Linden, in Germany, where all of the produce that was was harvested that was, you know, they also made things like cheeses, it was left in a in a common pantry or entry. Yeah. And you could go and take what you need it for your family, so, or you could go into, like, if you wanted the food to be cooked for you. You could go and have your meals in a common dining area that had different structures of how you could access your food as well, because some people just wanted the privacy of making having their food in their house and making their own food and other people wanted the social aspect of it. Yeah, so we saw this, you know, working in lots of different places in Italy, in a place called tourists superiore, that they always share the evening meal together that ecovillage functioned. On that social aspect. They had tried lots of different things in terms of what shall we do in common? And that was that suited the sort of Italian lifestyle really well. And you could just, you know, Wendy, when we shared those meals, even though he didn't understand what they were saying, it just felt like such a happy place. Yeah, so yeah, there are different aspects of it. And we also saw other models where, for example, the entire solar farm was built in before the houses were built.

And then the GFC hit, and then, you know, some of some of that construction stalled. So deciding how to stage the project is going to be important.

J

Jeremy Melder 27:23

Yeah. And that's kind of what your expertise is, isn't it? Really, because you guys have been planners and engineers and work and engineers. So that's your bread and butter, isn't it?

S

Steven Liaros 27:35

Yeah. Well, Neil's got the expertise in project management. Yeah. On the ground projects. And yeah, my background is more in the planning, phase planning and design phase. Yeah. So yeah, yeah, that's,

N

Nilmini De Silva 27:48

yeah. And, you know, we will work with architects and other professionals, to fine tune this, because this is sort of quite a different project to what I was doing. I was I was really looking at just water infrastructure. So this is going to be quite different. And, and obviously, we're going to work with people who have development expertise, when when we stopped putting it on the ground.

J

Jeremy Melder 28:10

Well, millimeter, you know, water is very important to our lives. So I think that's an asset that you've learned a little bit about. So, um, I'm just curious as to you know, we talked about a circular economy, and we're really wanting to reduce waste in in an end, I think you talk about this. How do you see this eco village being different? Like, do you envision waste being totally looked after in this eco village?

S

Steven Liaros 28:41

Yeah. Look, I the circular economy is not about recycling. Ultimately, in the sense that we talk about waste recycling. Now, the circular economy is about designing out waste. So then everything has a natural place to go at the end of its usefulness. So you can broadly divide waste streams into organics and inorganics. And obviously, all the organics can become compost and soil again, sure. And you can see that if you have a compost bin, how much waste you're actually reducing from going to landfill. Then if you think about all the food packaging that we have at the moment, if your food is produced on site, you're actually walking from the farm to the dinner table. There's no packaging involved. So

there's a lot of elimination of waste. And at the final end, we're also considering and exploring the idea of waste to resource micro factories. So there's a lot of wonderful, a lot of new technologies that look at shredding plastics. And glass and aluminium in particular, and, and creating resources. So either making them into a ribbon that can feed into a 3d printer to make another product or, or looking at in as a building material to make, you know, pathways or outdoor furniture or things like that. So there's lots of ideas that are out there. And really, the circular economy village is about how do we demonstrate all of the great things that different people are doing in different spaces? demonstrate them all on the one side. Yeah,



Jeremy Melder 30:42

yeah. So I've got a an interesting question to ask you. In all of your travels, what have you found in terms of councils and their view of this type of project? I would imagine there's varying views. But I think this is where you need more collaboration with local government, I would imagine or even state governments to try and get this sort of projects that are looking at things more sustainably, to, you know, outside be good for the economy as well, if we just economy. Yeah.



Nilmini De Silva 31:21

And, and because we've come from a local government background, we understand the importance of getting local government onboard, a lot of people start by purchasing the land or setting up that community. We wanted to start by approaching Council and making sure that strategies and policies aligned with the vision that we had. And that was the end with which we made presentations. And we made submissions. Our best success has come at Belgian Council, where they recently adopted a housing strategy with an action to build a pilot eco village project. Right? Yes. So now that has the strategy was the housing strategy was adopted by Council unanimously and more recently, has now been also ratified by the New South Wales state government. So that's probably one of our bigger wins. We've also worked



Steven Liaros 32:21

Can I just say that one, the the idea of the action was to work with a proponent, and it came as a result of our submission. And planner told us there to work with a proponent to look at the planning framework that will enable it, and then to learn from the implementation to allow it to be replicated for housing in the future. So that's really important for us to to be able to, there's this information or requirements in the strategy in development controls in infrastructure plans, you know, how do you do the rates for a site

like this? There's lots of questions for Council and we don't want them, we see them as challenges to be overcome and not you know, hurdles that will stop the development happening. So we want that council to be proactive and work with us in the process of addressing all of those, those issues, and the

N

Nilmini De Silva 33:30

different stages in a number of other places. We've presented to the council at Tweed, we've worked with a community group in East Gippsland, who are very interested and we also met a landowner that with whom we are exchanging ideas, we presented to the council here in Hornsby, I believe, we're talking to a group in Western Australia, so I traveled was all about identifying those places where the ideas resonated, once you finally get a council and a land owner in community on board to design and build it, then I think there'll be a lot of other places that will be clamoring for the idea, but to do the first pilot is always going to be challenging finding the funding and the investors because it's a new idea.

J

Jeremy Melder 34:21

Absolutely, I think I think you've hit the nail on the head, it's like you've got it, if you build it, they will butt heads in terms of you know, building structures and so on is counsel that you've been dealing with have they got any sort of pre determined ideas as to what sort of structural what you know how you can build a house you know, is there is any changes you know, if we wanted to build hemp houses or mud brick houses or different designs, you know, I want to move to your you know, circular economy village and I want to build a house Partially hemp partially mud brick house and, you know different type of design, how amenable is that to your kind of?

S

Steven Liaros 35:09

Well, the first point to make about that is that it's it's a single project single construction project that might be staged, but it won't be people building individual houses. Okay. So the idea, again, is about the efficient construction of a master planned project that can be co designed or will be co designed, but the actual construction will happen, sort of in one go or in a set of stages. So the different construction materials, there's obviously the building code of Australia that needs to be satisfied. And that's one of the reasons why some of these alternative materials struggle, but the building code does have performance criteria. So as long as you satisfy certain performance criteria in terms of things like fire rating, and soundproofing, and so on. Sure, then, you know, you can use alternative materials, you just have to understand how the building code works in

order to enable that pathway. But the overarching idea of working with a council is to say, we're testing new ideas. And this doesn't create a precedent for other things to happen in the area. This is a test site. And so we're hoping that through that mechanism, that councils would be more open to testing new ideas to see if actually satisfied,

N

Nilmini De Silva 36:48

yeah, but they will also be constrained by the geography of the place. So if a place is flood prone, or there's bushfire risk, or whatever that will be constraints in terms of what materials you can use, because obviously, we have to design for those geographic changes, and especially given climate change, and everything is changing, we're going to have to design for cyclones and bush fires and floods. That's just a given.

J

Jeremy Melder 37:16

Absolutely, yeah. So in terms of just to clarify this, Steven, because you were just saying that. So do do people get to participate in the design of their home? Or is this just kind of is it going to be like a overall sort of design plan? A master plan? Do you know what I mean? I'm just sort of trying to, you know, how people are very individualistic, and I got, I want this, I want that there. You know, look,

S

Steven Liaros 37:48

I'm so hesitant to think about, yeah, I'm hesitant to give you a, you know, a black and white answer, because, again, the overarching principle of designing with people co designing with people. But overarching even that is the idea that the design has to be tailored to the climate and geography of the place. So the design in North Queensland is going to be very different to Tasmania. Yeah. And so designing for place has to supersede any kind of individual desires. Yeah, the second principle is about durability. The idea that we we build housing now. And you know, we have a perfectly good house, but it's not the style that I want. So I'm not a down and build it again, in my style, is a very kind of, sort of, it's Well, certainly not sustainable anyway, to continue to keep knocking down and rebuilding. And the third idea to take in terms of that approach is to say that we are all sort of temporary, where we're stewards of a place for a short period of time, and the place and the land has to last beyond their lifestyle, our life. cycle or lifetime. Yeah, yeah. So it's not just about me or you. It's about what is the best outcome for the long term for future generations as well.

J

Jeremy Melder 39:40

Absolutely. I totally agree with that, you know, like the I believe that the marry, people think about it for seven generations ahead. In terms of the planning, this is what someone told me. And, you know, I think that's a great approach to look at that. I'm glad you clarified that because it's It's a great idea, because then you're just building it for the future. And, you know, as you said, a roof over our head is something that we all value. And some of us have better roofs and others, you know, and I grew up in Sri Lanka. And, you know, and you know, some of those roofs are made out of, you know, palm leaves, and some of them were made out of, you know, I was just gonna say, Tucker on, which is a senior lady's name, was it, but it's made of tin, tin ologies listeners. But, yes, so something might have a team, you know, so, you know, I resonate with what you're saying this to him, because we are adaptable to the way we can live. If we are committed to one thing, and that is sustainability, if we if we're looking at this as from a long term view, rather than a selfish view, yeah, I think that's the why, you know, I'd like to approach my life I had myself and done that as well as I'd like to have, but that we can all start now in doing that, and looking at sustainability, from a holistic perspective and looking at it long term. It's a

N

Nilmini De Silva 41:09

journey for all of us. Yeah, absolutely. Yeah.

J

Jeremy Melder 41:13

Yeah. So is there any particular demographic that you think you would think this would be appealing to? Or is it very broad still,

N

Nilmini De Silva 41:23

it is very broad, but there are certain demographics for whom it would already appeal. And that is, for example, you know, the digital nomads, for example, are used to moving around. But yeah, top of that, we have a demographic now called age changes. So we've had the tree changes and the sea changes. But now we've got the age changes, people who can live within a two hour commute of a main city, because they don't have to come into work every day, they can, you know, pop into the office once in two weeks, something for a meeting, but they can live a bit more regionally a bit more remotely.

S

Steven Liaros 41:58

That's out of the city. Yeah, because it is an example of a club

N

Nilmini De Silva 42:03

happening for COVID as well. And it's also appealing to someone who's in the latter stages of their life who pretty much looking at retirement, they want a kind of a different lifestyle, they don't want to go into a retirement village, the whole concept of retirement village, again, is a very isolating experience, because you're you're just with people who are getting older people want to have young people in their lives, and they want to continue contributing to society. But there's also an a very particular demographic that we don't care to for currently. And those are the nomads, when cool, yes, we did more than 75,000 bands that they knew of on the road, and all of us and there are some people who live in their motor homes on a full time basis, because they have sold their house bought the band, and they're quite happy, kind of moving around slowly seeing the country experiencing the natural environment. But sometimes, because we did this for five years, we know that sometimes you just want to stay put for a while, do some writing, do some reading. And so having these villages where nomads could also come and stay in it for three months and contribute to society, you know, be part of the community and then move on would be ideal. And when people on the road, we actually presented to a van lifers gathering, which is more than 2030 somethings who are living in vans, sometimes out of necessity, but mostly because it suits them. They're musers they're all that, you know, it suits their lifestyle, because they want to take that trade on the road. And, and also kind of have some freedom. Yes, so there's lots of people, but also for families, you know, it takes a village to raise a child to have the support they are bringing up a young family with I think so personally, I think it would appeal to every demographic, but not to everybody in that demographic. So it's the same kind of person who would say, Look, I'm up for the challenge him up for a bit of adventure. It's purely

S

Steven Liaros 44:14

a topic that we're looking for.

J

Jeremy Melder 44:16

Yeah, absolutely. And, and I think I really agree with you this, it takes a village to raise a child, because I don't think we value. You know, in a previous podcast, I was talking about, you know, the elders system, you know, where we don't really value the elders as, as people that can guide us. And I think there's got to be more of that in our communities and the, you know, they've got a lot, they've lived a long life and that a lot to contribute. And, you know, they can share and impart lots of knowledge that, you know, we can learn from, and that's really quite important in terms of doing that. So in terms of your next steps, where are you up to in this site? of where we were heading.

S

Steven Liaros 45:03

Well, part of the reason for coming back to Hornsby was so that I can just finish my PhD, which I'm writing on these ideas. So I'm hoping to, we'll finish the first draft by the end of the year. So there's a bit of a pause in terms of actual, on the ground projects, although we're still talking to people in all those areas we mentioned as well as Tasmania, we didn't mention before is another person down there that we're talking about a possible project. You know, we're also applying for various grants and, and, and similar sort of applications where we could get with we'd like to get a large sort of not for profit, or NGO on board who can sort of CO sponsor a architectural design competition to design the village because there's, there's so many elements to it, that we we do want to sort of get some momentum with the architects and landscape architects and so on who can do a master plan concept plan for us. Yeah.

J

Jeremy Melder 46:21

If people are interested in in getting to know more, I'll be putting up a lot of your information that you've provided me like email links, and so on. And if people want to get in touch with you is the best way via email? Yes.

N

Nilmini De Silva 46:37

Yep. Yep. Okay. In the first instance, yes.

J

Jeremy Melder 46:41

Yep. Have you heard anything back from the council, since you made your submission is to add all your shared your ID?

S

Steven Liaros 46:54

Look, we presented to the council, and they support that unanimously. We we really need to we haven't heard back since then. Yep. We haven't spoken directly about the possibility of the project. I think we need to just get a few more ducks in a row before trying to advance it again, in the tweet. And yeah, getting that NGO on board, or, you know, there's a couple of elements, I just want to finish the PhD before sort of, yeah, trying to actually do a major development project, I think, I think that might be struggling to connect, and at the same time, and by the end of the year,



Nilmini De Silva 47:45

that's the target. That's the target for the PhD. Yeah, it's going well, actually. So



Jeremy Melder 47:52

good on you for taking it on and doing it too. That's fantastic. So hopefully, you know, at some stage, we can, you know, talk about what what the future brick future holds in this project. As you say, there's a lot more, you know, things to knot out in terms of how this all looks in terms of the construct, and, and the costs and so on. But I like the the overall view and plan of this sustainability project. Because we actually use less as a common group. And that's what we're trying to reduce now is how much we're utilizing. And if we can all do that, I think it would be a better planet for us. And definitely, you know,



Steven Liaros 48:34

it's using less to create abundance. It's not a yes, frugal lifestyle, it's about regenerating the land to create an abundance of energy food. And,



Nilmini De Silva 48:46

and we didn't we didn't talk about that. But you know, the whole idea is to get 100 acres, so we can set aside a lot of the land for wildlife and conservation. And and yes, the land, you know, then have a good section for agriculture, and only a very small portion that, you know, may need to be reserved for the live and work areas. So yeah, very much about leaving the place a bit better than we found it.



Jeremy Melder 49:11

And that's an important fact. I'm sorry, I missed that actually, about, you know, your allocation of land for for wildlife and regeneration. It's really yeah, that's another well thought out idea as well, though, thank you, once again, really appreciate your time. And I'd like to hear another update. Once you finish your thesis and your PhD. Maybe in the next sort of one year, hopefully, you know, you've made some more inroads, and you know, we can catch up to see how you guys are going but I'd like to stay thank Nil mini De Silva and Steven Liaros, for being on Beaming green. Thank you, Jeremy. Thank you for being part of the beaming great podcast. The music for this podcast is produced by Dave Weir. We need more people to get on board and raise awareness about sustainability and climate change, the more of us that are shining the light on these issues, the more governments and business leaders will listen. We would love you to subscribe to our podcast and share and engage in social media so that we get some traction. Let's support

one another and envision a brighter future. Thanks for listening and see you next week.