Transcript

Buen Vivir. Interview with Penny Travlou on collaborative practices in emerging networks.

Cornelia Sollfrank, 31 March 2021

Introduction (00:00): Creating Commons Jingle.

Cornelia (00:12):
I'm speaking to Penny Travlou this morning, Sunday morning. Penny is located currently in Athens. She is an ethnographer working at the Edinburgh School of Art, but at the moment she is in Athens. Do you want to share quickly how it comes that you're in Athens at the moment?

Penny (00:35):
Thanks a lot, Cornelia for the invitation. I've been here for quite a while due to COVID-19 and the various lockdowns, both in the UK and in Greece. I'm from Greece, but as you said, I live and work in Edinburgh, working at the Edinburgh College of Art for a number of years or even decades. I am in the Edinburgh School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture, but my focus is in cultural geography and theory, and I work as an ethnographer, as you say, as well. I have been for quite a long time now in Athens, and I'm doing research here as well, which is related to my work on collaborative practices in emerging networks and I am looking into solidarity networks here in Greece in the last six years and studied how they merged and flourished, but also conflicts and differences that happened within et cetera, et cetera, online, offline presences. So, that's what I've been doing during the lockdown as well.

Cornelia (01:52):
Okay, thanks a lot. We are having this conversation in the context of our research project Creating Commons. And before we are going to have a look at some of the projects you have been working with in the last years, I would like to ask you to explain how you're using the concept of the commons. What does it mean to you?

Penny (02:14):
As I said, I'm a geographer. So, for me, spatiality is very important, how you contain space, what space means within this concept of the commons and the idea of shared spaces, how people come and communally work together in order to create space. By space, obviously, I don't mean just a physical location, but it can be something more abstract, more cognitive, how knowledge creates a certain space, for example, certain learning practices, for instance. So, for me, commons is not how Elinor Ostrom and this tradition described the concept as a pool of resources. But rather, I'm more interested in relationalities, in the idea of relationships, how through relationships we create this certain space, either that would be in common struggles and resistances, as we've seen in examples in the last years through, let's say the movement of the squares here in Greece, or in Spain the movement of Indignados. But it can be also commons in the reference of knowledges instead. In my own work, I've been looking, as I said earlier, into collaborative practices in emerging networks.

Penny (03:49):

And when I started this, let's say ethnographic fieldwork, I entirely looked at online communities or those that use the digital – to put it this way. And there, I encountered ways of those communities of art practitioners, particularly through new media artists, digital artists, et cetera, using the digital domain and sharing knowledge, you know, like open source, free knowledge, et cetera, et cetera. So yes, for me, commons are about this idea of relationality and space.

Cornelia (04:41):

Okay, great. So I think we should now have a look more specifically at some of the projects you've been working with. And one of them is located in Columbia. That's the collective Platohedro in Medellín. And I would like you to describe a little bit the work of this collective.

Penny (05:02):

If you look at the website, there's different ways how they describe themselves, and again, it's in relation to how you translate and communicate who you are to the right audience, in a sense. So, it is a non-profit organization, but it is also a platform and a social community, and it's a space as well. So, it's multiple ways to explain what it is. It started in the early two thousand and was founded by two people, Lina Mejia and Alexander Correa Velez, who are a couple. So as I say, Platohedro started as a love project or a project that reflected their love. So very much is about care. And it's very important to talk about care just from the very beginning of Platohedro. Obviously, it grew, and now it has around thirty people who are in the very core of the organization.

Penny (06:21):

We talk from this aspect of the organization, but as well, it includes various programs within, that means different communities of users, makers, producers and again, users. So there are children and youth from the nearby neighborhoods. There are young artists and designers. There are local people, and there are people from their dispersed network of collaborators across Latin America beyond Latin America. So, myself I'm considered to be a close collaborator from the wider network in the sense that I'm outside Colombia and Latin America. So yes, as I said, it started in the early two thousand. There is a space, so Platohedro has its own building, which is a very, very vibrant space is a locus for creation and co-creation. And what attracted me from the very beginning is that, when I looked through their website, they had two key concepts that they described and explained how those two concepts relate to the work they do. It is <buen vivir> and <buen conocer>, which translates in English as <good life> and <good knowledge>, and in the wider translation or free translation is the closest to the commons as common knowledge and commons as a communal wellbeing.

Cornelia (08:09):

Where does this concept come from? I assume, it has a history, right.

Penny (08:18):

<Buen vivir> comes from indigenous people in Ecuador first, and then has been used in nearby countries like Colombia and Bolivia, but has specifically been used in Ecuador. And it comes from sumak kawsay which means, how to think for a good life. In Ecuador, it's now being used in the constitution. It has been recognized since the early 2010s, and likewise in Bolivia. So it is recognized in the constitution as well, this idea of good life and it has principles. So in a sense, we can say it's something between a Cosmovision and an ethical code, or a code of practice, or even a code of conduct, we can say. Sumak kawsay has 13 principles, which is e.g. how to

know to eat, how to know to dance, how to know to dream, how to know to work, et cetera, et cetera.

Penny (09:43):

But what is important with this, and I would say this is somehow the difference to the way how we describe the commons from a Western perspective, which is very anthropocentric. And if we see specifically the commons as described by Elinor Ostrom that it's actually a pool of resources, that a physical space like nature is a set of resources that could be shared together between us as a group let's say, the commoners. It is that people, human beings, act upon these resources, which is in this case is nature. Whereas in the case of <buen vivir> and <kumak wasay> it is that there is an equilibrium, and not differentiation between human beings, non-humans and nature that all have the same rights and all they are in a constant dialogue. So there is not somebody who acts upon, but basically, we act together.

Penny (10:52):

So this is very interesting, because when we see the way how this is realized, let's say, in the case of Plathedro, how can we translate something that includes human beings, non-humans and nature? In their case, for example, they say that technology and the code, the code in the sense of programming, as being in constant dialogue with those who use it. So the code has exactly the same rights and the same presence in that sort of assemblage – we're talking about a sort of assemblage here. And nature is very much a part of what they do, either by using, let's say, principles from permaculture, for example, or beyond that, going back into indigenous understandings of what nature may mean in something like a organization like Platohedro. So this is very interesting and obviously behind my interest in doing my field work with them.

Cornelia (12:03):

What I'm particularly interested in is that these principles stem from indigenous people, and of course, I see a lot of attraction in that, but there's also, one could say, some sort of maybe romanticism about that. How can this really be applied to our modern technologized and urban societies in a meaningful way?

Penny (12:37):

This is a very good question. Thank you so much for raising that, because the other thing that can happen with concepts like <buen vivir> that has, in the last 10 years, become very, very popular across Latin America and outside of Latin America. It's to be related with an equivalent to extractive capitalism, which is extractivist knowledge. And within that includes the romanticization of those concepts, when we take those concepts for granted, and we try to apply them in completely different environments and outside of where they really originated and for which reason. So, thinking about indigenous communities in Ecuador, Colombia, but also across the Amazon, in Latin America including Brazil, is that these people live within nature. And not only that are currently responsible for safeguarding say biodiversity, and basically where we are with our nature system, particularly through the climate change situation we're living in, and it's impact.

Penny (14:07):

Getting these principles out of this context could have a negative impact. So when we asked for instance, Platohedro, okay, how do you consider yourselves, taking these principles and what do you do with them in a completely different environment, literally and metaphorically? What they said is that it is clear to them that they cannot claim legacy of these principles, they really

are where they are, where they came from, from sumak kawsay, but they brought them to this urban context, trying to translate the principles into the everyday-ness of an urban context, and this is what they brought to them. And thinking also in reference to open source that if we say open source is a knowledge as well that you add upon it. And indeed, what's so interesting with sumak kawasay is that it also comes from a specific environment. The indigenous population themselves, the people expect adaptation and expect that this could change, but adapted, without losing its original entity and meaning, but, at the same time, is an open source code of practice. If we can call it as such with our own terms. So, yes, going back to your question, what Platohedro offered to that was to reread these principles and to adapt them to the everyday lives of our urban environment.

Cornelia (16:09):

I think, it would be now interesting to hear about one specific example of how it is applied in their context or in their work. What they are actually doing. It's not clear yet.

Penny (16:27):

If you don't mind you get to see the principles; just give a second and I'll read them, and I'll explain how they have been translated. One thing maybe that I need to say here is that during the lockdown, or during the COVID19 time, because I couldn't visit the space of Platohedro, the building and do work from there, and also not to lose momentum, but also to be together as a group, they decided to work as a team online and read for 13 weeks the 13 principles. So each week, they picked one of the principles individually, then came together in a meeting and present to each other an individual interpretation of the principle, and then merge together these separate ideas and approaches into their own group interpretation of each principle.

Penny (17:45):

So they did a process of what I call <Think with others>, or otherwise <TWO>, which goes beyond the <Do it with others>, the <DIWO>, which is something that you do. Here it is something that you think collectively, and this is very apparent in the original sumak kawsay, or <buen vivir> principles that the indigenous groups when they came up with this code, that it was about thinking collectively. So this is one thing that you can say as a methodology is an interpretation of Platohedro's was of how they work; they work collectively, but also they think collectively. So before, let's say, deciding on a project is a process of thinking and reflecting on the project, of how they will deliver the deliverables.

Penny (18:48):

So I will take an example here, just give me a second. And I think it will be <no hard work at Platohedro>, and this is the way they interpret the principle of how to work, how to know how to work. <<So the professional work at Platohedro teaches us more often than not to live with others, to listen, to understand the collective, to think from the collective, to leave individual egos, and to understand that trust in others also resides in trusting oneself.>> So if I want to see how they translate into practice their reinterpretation of the principle <know how to work>, it is that by <listening> they mean <active listening>. The use of this methodology that comes as well from the non-violent communication, which is, before you speak you need to train yourself to be an active listener, to let the other person have the space to express and reflect, and then you speak upon and share what do you have understood and what you have heard.

Penny (20:08):

So it's a process and a methodology that needs quite a lot of time; it's very much about time, but also about space. Space in this case is an abstract, in the abstract sense of letting space to the other to feel trusted to speak from the heart, if we can say so. And the other thing that is interesting, is to think from the collective, what it means to think from the collective. It is again through trust that you first let the other speak and you listen, but also you collectively think through. So even the principles, as I said, it was a work of collective listening and collective work. Collective work here goes back into another indigenous work, <minga>, that's very much used in this part of Latin America, in Columbia, Ecuador and Bolivia.

Penny (21:19):

Minga means communal work. Imagine a village where on one day every month they come together to collectively work on, for example, constructing the house of one of the members. In the case of Platohedro that translates into collectively working in the project. In the case of the work I've been doing with them, the ethnography I do, I'm one member of this ecosystem. So we decided to work around the idea of cultural commons, and we run a series of workshops in the past four years. And these workshops are a collective work of the 30 people. Somebody is responsible for the administration and for the financing of the, you know the secretarial work, somebody else is responsible for the podcast. Somebody else is responsible for the editing and the curatorial work. And we do a series of meetings in order to decide how to develop each project. So it is quite a lot of collective work; this is what it means to think from the collective, it's quite a lot of collective thinking. And this is one way to describe a couple of things that happened within Platohedro.

Cornelia (22:51):

Okay. Thank you. And I also see in the text, you have published on them, there have been some radio sessions or radio seems to be like one of their favorite media. Can you tell a little bit about this radio sessions? Are they available online? Could we listen to them?

Penny (23:13):

Yes. First of all, they are available. You can listen to them. They are in Spanish, however, and haven't been transcribed. I cannot say with certainty, but I think there is the idea of having a transcript at some point. Okay, why a podcast? Because it's a very easy way to disseminate information to a wider audience and also to have directly the discussion of those involved in the process, instead of an interpretation of writing a paper or writing a documentation of what has been said here and there. The podcasts share exactly what has been discussed in the moment and podcasts have been used in various, projects, for example, as I said, in the workshops in which I participated, or I co-designed, and co-run with others from Platohedro, we had a series of podcasts as well, in the form of interviewing each other.

Penny (24:35):

So it is interesting as well. And I'm sorry, I'm just putting a parenthesis here to your question. And I'll go back to your question the methodology I use as an ethnographer when I work with them. Originally, when I first met them, I had indeed used ethnographic tools. Then, step by step, we moved to more collaborative models using sort of collaborative ethnography, what I called peer-to-peer ethnography. And this is a term that originated from <art is open source>, Salvatore Iaconesi and Oriana Persico. Anyway, I'm not going deeper into that. And later in Platohedro, we translated this term to <person-to-person> rather than peer-to-peer. It is a person-to-person ethnography, and lately we call it <alliances.> And this is basically to refer specifically to decolonizing knowledge, that ethnography itself comes from a very colonizing

background and history. So we need to reconsider that and think in relation to an ecosystem of relationality, specifically, we talk about the commons, so what could be an equal kind of methodology, and this is the <methodology of alliances>.

Penny (26:08):

So going back to the question you asked about the podcast, the podcast has been used as a method of directly involving those that are related to the project. So for the principles of <buen vivir>, the way it worked was that the Platohedro team dedicated a few weeks to go, one by one, to each of the 13 principles of <buen vivir> and they created this document called <Platohedro's principles of buen vivir>, and then they decided to go to the wider network of collaborators, friends, and supporters, and ask in this series of podcast radio sessions, each of their chosen partners to be in these sessions to define in their own words and experience each of those principles, and they created these sessions. For example, we have a digital artist and a very long collaborator with Platohedro, Pedro Soler, a Spanish new media artist with a very long history of new media art in Barcelona, and then later in Ecuador and Colombia.

Cornelia (27:45):

So one last project I've read about is this <homemade anomaly antenna>. You described it with the term <radical imagination> as a working method. And I see now a little bit how this relates to this thinking together. And I quote also from the text <<if we want to go further, we need to think with others.>> Do you want to elaborate a little bit more on this antenna? Because if I understood, right, it's like a metaphorical antenna, right? It's not a real antenna.

Penny (28:25):

Yes and no. This to say, obviously, because I'm not at present at Platohedro to see what exactly they've done, but again, it's thinking through together. It is a project that came out of the collaboration of three members of Platohedro, and it was an interpretation in practice of the principles of <buen vivir>. Radical imagination is another interesting term that aligns together with <unlearning>. <Unlearning> is shifting the paradigm so you can let things to be open to changes, you need not to position yourself in certainty in the knowledge you have, but in order to communally and think through, without others selectively, you need to unlearn. So this is to shift your paradigm and to do that, you need processes, methodology and a vision.

Penny (29:36):

So basically, radical imagination is the vision, how to shift the paradigm, how to imagine this paradigm shift. So, the <homemade anomaly antenna>, directly and indirectly, speaks about where we're living now through the pandemic; it's a biopolitical and social experiment as they say at the very beginning of the text. The text is very interesting as it is written, more like between a manifesto and a poetic form, a prosaic, but still in a very poetic way, because obviously poetry allows imagination and creativity within the words. So it's a game as well with words, but also it's a real experiment in the sense that they're trying to put together this idea of the equilibrium of a constant and continuous dialogue between humans, non-humans and nature, and nature here in the form of fungi.

Penny (30:49):

Parasites here play a very important role, because fungi in this project are in dialogue with plastic. And if you think that plastic is one of those chemicals that are not easy to dissolve in nature, and basically it is what creates major issues right now. The impact plastic has on our world, on the environment [is massive]. It's very interesting that in this work, the <homemade

anomaly antenna> they work through the problem. One thing that they say in the very beginning is a question, they ask: what do we want to hold on to? What are we willing to give up in our world? And the other thing that is interesting is that Platohedro tries to see as well, how can we consider and think through different possibilities of an economic model. Obviously the closest they come to their approach here is <degrowth>, the idea that what we have experienced through this capitalist extractivist system of economy is that progress and growth is not going to be forever; that there is going to be a collapse, and most likely, we are living now the beginning of this collapse. So <degrowth>, the idea that you work with the existing resources and not going with the idea of a model of growth and progress of the capitalist model, we need to consider of how we can live within the existing resources. So the <homemade anomaly antenna> makes, in an indirect way, a kind of reflection on these new possibilities of living.

Cornelia (33:01):

So I think we've got a quite good impression. One last question about Platohedro is really, I mean, me looking from Germany, from an urban society, I still wonder, how or what we can from our position, from our perspective, what we can really learn or how we can learn from them, how this way of working and living can be translated into our lives. Because I see there is a historical trajectory within Latin and South America, from indigenous people and culture to the contemporary worlds of Latin and South America. And we here in Europe, we are fascinated by it. In your research, you're looking into these practices, and I wonder, how would you describe, what we here within our rather different lives and worlds can get out of this, or what we can learn from this?

Penny (34:09):

It depends from which perspective, because looking through, there are some commonalities of things that obviously, I've encountered in my work with Platohedro with things I see the same here in Europe. I can not speak from and for other parts of the Global North, but definitely in Europe, it is that the idea of alliances, of care and the politics of care, and I see that more and more there is a discussion across different circles, around the concept of care and what it means to care, or what, for example, I've seen, being looked at by Berlant, the idea of affective infrastructures, and also, for example my dear collaborator and friend Daphne Dragona talked about affective infrastructures. It is about the idea of creating a sort of a toolkit.

Penny (35:22):

So what can we take, for example, from the work of Platohedro? To me, there are the following things: the idea of TWO, Think-with-others that can be aligned with DIWO, Do-it-with-others, which was very nicely, beautifully described by Mark Garrett and Ruth Catlow from Furtherfield. So how can we merge these two, the Think-with-others, and the Do-it-with-others for creating these possibilities of care and care practices? Even the pirate syllabus talks very much about care. We can consider this is about alliances. And, the other thing is the idea of unlearning, to let ourselves learn by first unlearning. And trust, obviously! So it's not very far, it's maybe from things we are working around, but definitely it's about communal and collective thinking to me, which is very important.

Penny (36:29):

And, imagine that we're talking about Colombia, and one thing that we need to consider – and that goes back to your critical point in one of your first questions about the romanticization of <buen vivir> et cetera – that Colombia, and Latin America in general, geographically and historically speaking, is a continent that has gone through a very traumatic, recent history. It is a

history of colonization, of extractivism of all different ways and even currently living in a situation of being exploited. So, Columbia as well is interesting, because it is a country that has gone through a very violent past, recent past, with decades of civil war and unrest, obviously related to a drug war – as far as we know from outside Columbia. And trust is not something that is taken for granted, even myself, to position myself and consider, now I'm in a very happy moment because I've been working with Platohedro on much more equal terms.

Penny (37:52):

It has taken years for that to be achieved because trust is not for granted. It happened exactly the opposite. I wasn't trusted. I was somebody coming with a funding from United Kingdom, this suggested there was very a very hierarchical relationship. And secondly, the different concepts of knowledge is interesting. I was coming from hierarchical knowledge factories, meaning the university. Whereas what happens in Platohedro is that there is not a definition of hierarchies of knowledge. We are sharing knowledges in a horizontal manner. I give something, I take something, and it's a process of sharing. So, this is what I could say that is good to see as a model of how we can learn through this process of unlearning and active listening, obviously, that is very much part of it.

Cornelia (38:56):

It's time now to come to a project, which is at least geographically very close to you also located in Athens; it is the feminist autonomous center for research or <FAC>. What is FAC?

Penny (39:14):

Well, it is the feminist autonomous center for research, as you said. It is located, indeed, in Athens and we call it <What the FAC?>. And I'm sorry, if this is a derogative word, but it's actually the acronym, and obviously, we play with it, we play with the word. So it's a space for reflection, collaboration, exchange, knowledge production, political interventions, and troublemaking. As I said, it is an autonomous center. Originally, we were about eight people coming from various walks of life. Four of us, however, no five of us are academics, but we have a filmmaker, there were students, people who were coming from outside academia in general. Our own journey is a short journey in comparison to, let's say Platohedro, which is now two decades old, more or less, we are infants in that sense.

Penny (40:20):

Now we are five people, five but four active co-directors, and three of us are academics and one is a film maker. And all of us came in a moment in our lives, in our personal lives, but also in our work and political lives in a state of crisis; crisis because of the way our work was going, in relation to living and working within a very neoliberal system that can crush you if you don't allow yourself to progress. And that goes back into what I said earlier on Platohedro. So we said, what about if we consider a center that can take the form of doing research, but also where activism has a presence in what was happening in Greece, in Athens, but even internationally to put it this way, that it doesn't really fit in, in the model or even economic model of expectations of a research center. So that's how we started this idea. And it's a community-based research center. So its community makes it, living through the projects, but also how we trying to maintain our building because there's a building. So it's membership driven. So the members basically are economically financing at the moment the building and the various activities, obviously I have to make clear that we're not being paid through this, so there's no paid labor.

Cornelia ([42:12](#)):

Is there any other financing that goes into the research center?

Penny ([42:18](#)):

Indirectly, there are two projects, one an Erasmus+, which is about creating a toolkit for an anti-racist pedagogy in in higher education. Part of the project have been three members of FAC. There is some money that goes into, let's say, indirectly cured costs or something like that. But no, at the moment, basically, what gets financed is through memberships.

Cornelia ([42:58](#)):

I saw on your website that you are doing different projects. Can you describe a little bit what these projects are?

Penny ([43:06](#)):

Obviously you have to consider that for a year now due to COVID-19 and the lockdowns, we are not really doing projects in the physical space. And this is important to say because the location of the space of the building is in the very center of Athens, in a very central neighborhood called Agios Panteleimonas, which until very recently was known, at least for the Greeks, as a neighborhood aligned with the far-right party. It was where the Golden Dawn has their headquarters. And it was intentionally that we decided to have the center in that space to make a statement, to mark an anti-racist, an anti-fascist and feminist position in this neighborhood, which is slowly, slowly develops into a multicultural, multi-ethnic neighborhood due to the influx of newly arrived refugees. So that the neighborhood is changing rapidly at the moment its character. So it's very important that we arrived now there.

Penny ([44:27](#)):

So we use as a space for activist, feminist groups to gather, and to have their assemblies. We have community courses, which is one of key projects that we ran so far. And we had two courses, the one was on intersectionality, and the other one was called <let's talk about sex, baby. Histories and theories of gender and sexuality>. When we say community courses, the first one on intersectionality was originally designed by some of us, but then the members, the people who were, let's say taking part in the course, they co-created the outcome, the output, which was a book. And the second community course was co-created/ co-designed by people from the first community course. And this is the way we see that everything needs to work in a horizontal manner.

Penny ([45:37](#)):

The other one is the residencies program, but unfortunately, due to COVID, we cannot have residences, but we have past residents, not only artists, but researchers as well. We had exhibitions. So the space was used as a part of exhibitions, like for example, the most recent one was <Coven> although that was a the digital exhibition, then we have publications, which is, as I said, coming from the community courses, but also from the Erasmus+ project <Bridges> and which is a toolkit. And I suggest for whomever wants to dip in and have a look at anti-racist pedagogies in higher education, it is an excellent toolkit. And, one of the projects we are working on at the moment, and we are imagining to accomplish in the near future, is the feminist library.

Penny ([46:41](#)):

So the feminist library is exactly what the term says. It will be located in one of the rooms of the feminist research center. There will be tangible books, real physical books, but we will also create an online, digital library, the feminist library. We are hoping that this will be ready in the near future. It is our big project during the COVID time to ensure that we continue our presence, but also strengthen our community. And this is very similar probably to what Platohedro did with having those 13 weeks of discussing the principles of <buen vivir>. In our case, we set up a series of reading groups. We started with a reading group on xenofeminism, and then the community of readers, the core readers decided to expand further and to look at other possible manifestos across.

Penny ([47:58](#)):

So we looked at the SCUM manifesto by Valerie Solanas, different ones. And we had, in alliance with the exhibition <Coven> a reading group of Federici's book <Witches, Witch-Hunting, and Women>. So that was very popular. And although we started with the idea that we have only one reading group, we ended up repeating the same reading material three times. So this is what we've been doing during the lockdowns. And not to forget, that's the last thing, that we have summer schools. So we've run, so far, three summer schools, and the last one was during the first lockdown, so it was a digital one, and we will have another one, most likely, this summer.

Cornelia ([48:53](#)):

How would you describe the overall, I mean, you call yourself a research center; what are the central or core research issues you're interested in?

Cornelia ([49:06](#)):

At the moment, as I said, we have four people, and we come from different research areas, as academics, but also, as I said, there is a filmmaker within FAC. So a couple of us, we worked with intersectionality, intersectional feminism or feminists and research around migration, borders, and mobility. There is quite a lot of material coming out from that. Recently three members have received a grant that is linked with one of the universities in Athens, Panteion University. It's about <TransCity>, that's the name of the research project, which is about visibility of trans people in the urban landscape in this case, Athens. My case, my research is about, as I said, collaborative practices; I'm looking at imagined networks and space. The space and spatiality is one area of interest within the center, but in general, we're looking into feminisms, and how that can be translated from theory to practice, and from practice to theory. So activism is very much ingrained in what we do within the center.

Cornelia ([50:41](#)):

One last question, very last question. As we know, you are a researcher, a professional researcher, at the same time, you are involving yourself very much into activist contexts. I would like to ask you to talk a little bit about your methodology, that is, how you're doing research and how you see your role as an academic researcher within this context.

Penny ([51:10](#)):

It is not as easy, and I, in the sense that, okay, I'm using, I would say, something between militant anthropology, although I am not an anthropologist, I'm a geographer, but I use ethnography, so, militant ethnography coming for example, from Graeber's work on militant anthropology, that he himself talked about. So I'm using, first of all, my ethnography is not, let's say, static; in a sense, it is always in a change and in its making, in relationship to, with whom

I'm involved and with whom I'm interacting within my ethnographic field work. I would say that the model I'm using is closer to something related to collaborative ethnography, although this as well has its own niches, but something that is closer to <Do-it- with-others> and <Thinking-with-others>, which is very much what happens in the case of Platohedro.

Penny ([52:22](#)):

So in the case of Platohedro, the models I have been using are very much related to that. Obviously, I need to say that I'm a researcher and somewhere there is my voice. It is my interpretation of quite a lot of the things I'm discussing. It is very much my presence as who I am and what is my positionality within this ecosystem that it is with me and that my ethnography falls within. So who I am, this female, and let's say academic, who is based in a UK university, but at the same time, I'm doing research here and there. There's lots of things to consider. Going back into activism, for example, the work I do here in Athens is more aligned with what you've asked, because I'm an activist. I belong to a couple of activist groups with certain political alliances and thus, my role is very specific there, that of an activist, but, at the same time, I write about this.

Penny ([53:35](#)):

So it is about transparency and about making it sound that this is a collective endeavor and a collective effort. A number of things I wrote are in alliance again with these people. I would also say, it is a matter of another term, which is used: <refusal>. Research means that I don't always say everything in the academic texts because of respect of whom I'm involved with and the groups I'm within. And it's in decision with them, what will be delivered outside – either the academic world or whatever. This always needs to be taken into consideration, this idea of refusal, meaning that you cannot say everything at all times. And I will finish here with something I think is interesting because one thing that happens lately, and I think it's very important to what you just asked about activism and research, and probably feminist research, is that in the last weeks or so, we have encountered an attack, a direct attack on feminist academics in Greece by right wing members of the parliament and the government, in the sense that basically they were attacked through social media.

Penny ([55:10](#)):

It is very interesting how you talk through and what is your role as an activist, and particularly feminist activist in this moment, and, at the same time, an academic; how you're being targeted, because both your roles or positions are very visible and very easy for specific types of people. Fortunately, so far, only verbal attacks or not verbal but social media related attacks happened, but it needs to be taken into consideration. And to me, it's the idea of acting collectively, and this is also the idea of care, care for each other, and to be there present for each other, be that in the academic environment or, obviously, in the activist world.

Cornelia ([55:57](#)):

And do you also formulated a letter of solidarity that you sent around and ask people to sign. We'll add the URL where people can find it. So, thanks a lot, Penny for your work and for these really interesting insights. Thank you.