Hi and welcome to our podcast episode. We are a group of 5 Hanken students with a strong interest in sustainability and organising for sustainable change. In today's episode we have a very special guest with us, Simon Gripenberg.

Yeah, we are super happy to have you here today, Seaman. Welcome. And before that, we also want to present us also. My name is Jasmine.

My name is Nicole.

I am Hanna.

And I'm Felix.

Yes. So can you tell us a little bit about yourself, Simon? What are you doing?

Yeah, ok. Firstly, I want to thank you all for being invited. This is an exciting subject, and I'm an artist working with sculpture, mainly using a lot of recycled materials, and the focuses quite a lot on environment and energy, such topics.

Back in the days I studied engineering for a couple of years. So I guess that's why that's visible in my art. Also. So in my projects I quite often make comments about climate change and issues about the environment, but also make ideas about thinking in alternative ways, like focusing on solutions not only to the problems.

Okay. That sounds familiar. We had a question based on that. We saw that you were very active on YouTube and where you share knowledge and invites people to rethink the ways they are doing things, and we watched some of your videos and you are really innovative in that, and those we were wondering, could you tell us about where you get inspiration for these videos and what the goal of these are?

Yeah, a lot of the inspiration comes from nature itself. I'm quite excited about this biomimicry, this word that means that you get inspired by nature. But nature has invented a lot of things for us already, so that's great source of inspiration.

Could I ask, when did this start? This interest in the nature, has it always been a part of you or has it been like something you suddenly got inspired by.

Yeah. I think it has always been an interest. I like spending, spending a lot of times outdoors, in the forest and at the sea, so it has been like, you know, not a natural way of getting inspiration, and then what I want to achieve this, You asked, I think my goal is to somehow inspire and encourage, we're speaking a lot about the climate crisis and biodiversity, loss and quite heavy topics. So I want to partly turned the discussion around back in a playful way, showing possible ways of thinking or, carrying out things. Therefore using a lot of recycled materials showing that we don't always need to use virgin materials.

Yeah. Except for you are publishing a lot of material on YouTube. You have your own platform SimonShares. Can you tell us a little bit about that?

Yeah, yeah. That's a really simple website. I'm not I guess it's necessary nowadays to be online in some way. But I don't like spending so much time on social media and I think it's interrupts a lot, and at least for me it's like kind of disturbing the concentration and those creativity in some ways.

Okay, okay.

But therefore I just have the Simonshares.org website like really simple just based pictures my one then from projects that.

Okay. Thank you. We were also super interested about kind of the connection between your Finnish Swedish identity and the Sami identity and how it has kind of inspired your travels and, and thus also inspired you to write the book Sapmi-Svenskfinland. So yeah, we were also super interested in here hearing more about this.

Yeah, since I'm Swedish speaking, I belong to the Swedish speaking minority in Finland. I feel there's some kind of connection. We think about the Sami people, but they are also a minority. But then we also must remember that the indigenous people. But like for when we speak Swedish in Finland and we're minority, then the language I think connects us. The language is really important for us and for the Sami people, and then I have been to a couple of residencies and one of the residencies was in Sapmi in Norway, part of Sapmi.

And, I got interested in the Sami culture, got to learn more and started reading, watching films and listening to some Sami music, and the more I got to know, the more engaged. I got noticing that the Sámis, are the only indigenous people in the whole of Europe and how they have been treated throughout history. So that kind of got me engaged in that question.

When you said that kind of language is what connects the Finnish Swedish people with the Sami people? Is it so that the Sami language doesn't have the same status as a Swedish as in Finland, or what's the kind of that situation there?

I don't know every detail, but I think, of course, they can speak nowadays their own language. But if you go back in history, they were forced to speak Finnish and it was like a whole generation lost kind of their identity, connected to the language due to that, so but I do not know every detail of the situation nowadays. But at least they can speak their language and are trying to take it back. I think there are a lot of courses arranged in Sami people for example.

Yeah, I was thinking because during this course we have talked about indigenous people and how they kind of care for the lands and that's how they're or how it relates to kind of the climate crisis and loss of biodiversity and sustainability. So what's like is there a connection also between the Sami people and sustainability and kind of organising for sustainable change?

Yeah, yeah. I think that's a good point you got there that, I've gotten the picture that they are more closely connected to nature than we are. If we speak about the rest of the Finnish society, for example, living close to nature and traditions and so on. So it's I think when it comes to solutions also we should step up and listen a bit more to what the indigenous people have to say.

What is your opinion about the proposal for the Sámi people we have last week on the news here in Finland that this law will not be renewed during this mandatory in Finland. Do you have an opinion about this or some parts?

Okay. My personal opinion, it's really sad that it didn't pass as this time as it hasn't before since. Since they don't get their rights like should have the right to define, who gets to vote in the Sami election. I decide those things themselves.

Have you been following this proposal or these like not with the law and anything like more? Or is it just like what's talking about in the news papers and things like that?

Yeah, I have read some about it, yeah, for a discussion, so it feels like it's gotten so political to the discussion and it don't actually, they know about the rights of the Samies, It's more about probabilistic battle between other political opponents. That's my, yeah, but I think I was stunned.

And I would also like to know, I mean you have like travelled to Sapmi and met a lot of so many people and, and I was wondering if you or if you could tell us about like some kind of meaningful encounter maybe that you've had with that's Sami people or something else that maybe you have written about in the book.

Yeah. I made a kind of rocky road trip in the beginning of the summer. I visited many museums met some Sami people also made some of the interviews on site and others with Zoom, Internet. But for example, in Kautokeino, I had a meeting with an artist, that's really interesting. We discussed for several hours and got to learn a lot about the kind of more modern culture, modern art. It's up to me, and that was, for example, a discussion that opened my eyes.

And I realized, I'd gotten myself earlier kind of a stereotype picture of what's happening on the Samies, or something that was really healthy for myself, and also the word minority that I've used in my project during the process discussions, I realised that even though some people are mathematically minority, I nowadays only want to talk about them as an indigenous people not using the word minority, for example.

And, you know, come back to the language. Another word I think about this wild wildness. That's the world word I have use in my self earlier in a positive kind of way, like I'm touched, like, beautiful nature. But through these meetings and introduced, I've realised that it's a bit problematic word the wildness, because people have been living it for thousands of years. It's up me, for them it's not some wilderness, but using wildness, gives the opportunities for corporations to colonise and extract minerals.

Is there something we can do as kind of students to kind of better the situation for the indigenous people in Finland? Or are there some like more I guess simple things we can do? Yeah. You know. Yeah. Kind of better their situation.

Yeah. I think one good thing to do is, like, listening to them or listening to their stories and reading about their culture, and there are some really great movies, made by Sami film producers that for example *Eatnameamet*, it is a movie, but I think it's our silent struggle, I think it's called in English. You can see on Yle Areena, for example, that gets you into the situation. So I think it's that's a good way to start to educate oneself and learn more about it. And if one wants to get active, it's of course, possible to write about it in newspaper, talk to people. But then I think it's you have to be careful, of course, when you're not, as I am not a Sami myself like that a bit dangerous going, telling someone else's story. So the best is, of

course, involving, if possible, involving Sami people themselves so they can tell their own story.

Yeah. Thank you for this. I was also thinking when we're talking about what we can do as students, because during the course, the topic of the present and very much increasing climate crisis has been kind of frequently discussed. And all of the guest lectures that we have have given their their tips of somewhat simple actions that students can take in their daily lives in order to kind of combat or try to minimise the crisis. So when we think about like sustainability related issues, so what do you think we can? What are some actions we can as students take to improve the situation and kind of organise ourselves for sustainable change?

Yeah, that's a good question. Students, I realise that you know a lot about these topics. Climate change and it's been an active topic as you study, it wasn't when I back in the days when I started. So I think I get the picture, you are really well educated. You know a lot about these topics already.

So what you can do, I think, is asking questions and lifting up the topic., and of course, it's like this classical advice, eating a little bit less meat, and like travelling by train instead of flying, but if you see the whole picture, I think we have these really big multinational corporations.

And I think there has to be like a major shift in our ways of thinking and doing things. How we arrange the system of economy, the market, and you know more about those things than I do. But I think we have to look to transition in the system on a larger scale.

It's good if we as individuals and students, we keep asking these questions to our politicians and to the adults and showing that this times and questions are really important. Yeah. So kind of more like, instead of aiming for profits and kind of seeing things from this human superiority perspective, it kind of more, I guess, connect with nature and try to become one with nature, the world and living in the world where we have all of us have the same kind of position in the world. And that's maybe also why the Sami topic is super relevant in this as they are kind of more I guess familiar with nature, but I guess they have a respect for it that maybe as an individual don't have or haven't had during the last decades I guess.

Yeah, I think it's something that we have lost like in the western society is belonging to. not realising that we were just one of the species and how much we depend on all species. Every part is important, but I think it's encouraging to see that there are a lot of things happening also with circular design.

I read yesterday in the newspaper about the repair cafe. It was actually talking about students. It was a school in Ostrobothnia, who arrange every now and then repair cafes, so people can bring their, they have something that's broken into the can try to fix it, learn how to fix it, and just as an example, because I feel students and young people shouldn't have to think about these things all the time, but also enjoy.

There's so much beauty in the planet and their life. You know, having to worry about the climate all the time. So it should be, I think we should put more pressure on politicians and adults, we should take responsibility.

Yeah, I think it's pretty nice to see that we see a pretty big change in values from the older generations to the new generations and millennials that you see that, for example, in the workplace as well, that younger people, a younger generation so value more of the sustainable and loyalty and there's a pretty big shift from the I like a term that was used in the course of mainstream planning. I have never heard it before, but I think it's pretty much describes it pretty well the capitalist way of thinking on everything and just measuring without taking everything into consideration in this context.

So it's, I think, and I try to be so positive myself at least that to think that younger generations are willing to take the steps in order to achieve a sustainable future and some are more inclined to do it, some are less, and probably some just needs the first steps to do that. Some smaller like first baby steps, so to call it. So, do you have any like smaller things that are surprisingly effective that you can do in everyday life?

A small. So for example, what should I say? Lately, like owning things, I think my generation, we're not used to buying up everything, and as soon as we think we need something, we buy it. So I think in the communal life like the library is a brilliant place. I think instead of course, if you have favourite books you can buy them. But like using public services and consuming less because I think that doesn't necessarily give you for a life what opposite you get.

Because if you take the connection between money and time, if you're buying something expensive, you have to earn it to work a lot, but if you're like in everyday life you see in the library going by bike instead of, maybe you don't have to buy a car that saves you a lot. Also time that you can spend in nature for, and think about your generation and the younger ones Interesting this about I read this term quiet quitting, part of it probably, like want it to have a a more simple life and play like people appreciate what you do. I think, that's kind of voting by using your feet also.

Yeah, I've to take it back to the studies and the school system and education in that sense. Do you see any kind of, I don't mean this, but how to say, anything that could be implemented in, for example, already in elementary school or in like earlier stages of life that could improve the mindset and embrace a sustainable ways of thinking and this like, not minimalistic, but sufficient consumer behaviour or a sustainable consumer behaviour. Are there like any things that could be implemented in early life educational system?

Yeah, I think there are quite many things to think about early childhood education. I think it's great, that there are many projects doing things outdoor. There are also communities that have helped arrange some sort of chance are entirely outdoors during the days just taking a nap inside and then playing the whole day, and I think that gives like a totally different relation to the rest of the biosphere. You don't have to sit on the chair inside the hole days.

We actually have a teacher here today, Hanna. So maybe you can also I mean, tell us the things that maybe are already doing and maybe as we have Simon here, who's into creative sustainability and arts and stuff. So do you think also that this is something that you could I mean, have, for instance, in your your class and or with the children that you educate? Or is it something that you're already doing?

Well, my class is the first graders, so they are very young. But we are using quite much like material that is recycled, and that is very much something that every week we are doing

crafts, for example, with recycled materials, and as a teacher we discussed this planet and climate change with the students quite often. Because it's a topic that is something we can reasonably see in the nature happening, and it's something also that the children are quite curious about.

So I, from my experience, I think the school is from primary age, it's so important to mould and give information to the young minds. And also to teach them like problem solving, that we should not be content with the problems, but we should like take small steps and do stuff that we can try to like find solutions for the problems that we see. So therefore, when I saw the videos you had on YouTube, that was something that I acknowledge and it was something that I think we could do in the classroom, like having a solution and finding many ways of using that one solution.

Ok, But that's something that's really interesting.

And I think I can give one example, so toilet paper, like the rolls. We are using them so often in every project.

Okay. Yeah.

So stuff like that, I think it's quite much about the mindset. You're like learning to think in ways in like, ok, how can I use this? How can I use this? How can I implement this? So it's I think like sustainability and climate change is quite much about like mindset and teaching that kind of mindset of problem solving. But I rambled quite much. Did you have a question?

No, I think it was really interesting what you said and about using recycled materials, because I think it has so many advantages. You come up with new ideas, new ways of doing things and more being in a producer instead of a consumer sentiment and then save money, cheaper to save nature, recycled materials, so there are so many perspectives to it I think.

Yeah. And also it's like teaching the kind of circular economy that they find new ways of using things. So I would say in primary school we are doing quite much already, and its in the, also in the 'läroplanen'

Education curriculum

Yeah, but if you have, like, ideas on how we could be maybe more mindful and maybe in using, like some right terms or something. Do you have any ideas? I would gladly take them on if you have.

Yeah. Good question. I don't know if I have any answers, but one thing about in common about doing projects, I think it's important with the playfulness.

Yeah.

And there are not any wrong or right answers, but through mistakes, we learn a lot, I think.

Exactly.

Because when I was myself in school, back in the days I remember, it was quite a lot about making the right thing and being correct, and but I think, like through playfulness and doing

mistakes every now and then, we kind of learned a lot from it, and we can also, sometimes you get solutions, exciting new ideas from mistakes.

Yeah, and that's something that has been like implemented also in corporate life nowadays. Like learning about mistakes and not like shaming mistakes or like trying to hide them. We are trying to learn and learn as organisations too.

Okay.

And I really like the way you said like playfulness because like by playing and by creating and by problem solving, we really do fine solutions. We should incorporate that more, both in the school and maybe also in the workplace. I don't know. Yeah, that's great.

I think playing is is such a like it's a word used all too often, and I think because all ages need to play and I think playing is actually when you play you actually one of the few times expressed you like creativity, you know, in another way you usually don't. So I think it's really fascinating. I should think about and nice to see that this becoming a larger part of the educational system and organisational life as well. That we are like supposed to try and play with things and just try out to be innovators in a sense.

Yeah, Simon, I have a question. Like when we talked about the businesses and how they adapt to the sustainability thing. But I mean, I come from the Asian, not European, but so I know that we crave a lot for not we in the sense, like all the business usually try to be practical and hence maximise the profits engender. So my question is like how can such businesses be encouraged to adapt to more sustainable practices? Or let's say, and what role does consumers play in promoting sustainability in such kind of a corporate world?

Yeah, that's a good question. I mean, just small scale is. Of course, got to play a lot. But if you have to. The big picture on the market you need, of course, to be realistic also about. So should I say, I think there are interesting examples of companies already that when people are getting aware. I think the awareness is really, I'm optimistic about that now. People know about climate change, for example, and they start demanding companies take the responsibility and questioning products that fulfil these things I think. I'm kind of optimistic that we already are seeing companies through competition.

If we use the word competition like. You have to show that you care and I think, hopefully with transparency if this continues. If you have a big company, you have to be transparent about the energy use, the material use and such and then, as consumers are being more aware. I think there's a loop. That wasn't a good answer.

Ok, It's fine, so on the similar lines of that, like in order for a company to be transparent, like it depends from company to company again, right? So for example, a car manufacturing unit will have a different kind of utilisation of energy, when you see a textile or garment industry, it's different, ok. So are they any kind of like a generalised new technology or innovation that could help us achieve a more sustainable future?

Like the technology?

Yeah, it can be like for example, we have UN SDG that's more like a policy kind of goals, but is there any kind of developed technology which we can apply across all the frames of domains, like not just limiting to one particular domain in general?

Yeah, like a common level. This is my personal opinion, but, I think as we have built the system, we relies on high tech and non transparency. So in my art projects, I play with low tech and I think there's a question about democracy also that if people can, as we talked about earlier, can learn to fix things.

And you have where it's possible to make products simpler so they should be repairable and think about. Lots of high tech projects you have this planned obsolescence. Is it so in English? Products are made the last, and you can't fix them yourself.

So you have to buy a new. That's I think if the technology would be like more democratic, so you wouldn't always have to rely on buying into your project. But that's, of course, the idea of the consumer society. So, in my opinion, there's still a big problem in the core of how we are manufacturing and consuming things.

I mean, kind of rethinking the whole structure and the way that people are are kind of perceiving, I guess, their everyday lives then, and I think that, I mean, we're still talking about quite justice changes, and I feel like it's usually that like humans as that, I mean, as a society react often when it's too late or when the consequences are already getting super bad.

And we're thinking, as I said, about like or this is about changing kind of the fundamentals of like, I mean, businesses and in society. So do you think that we will see this type of change and these measures kind of when it's, I guess, too late? Or do you think it will happen soon?

Who I'm hopeful. What kind of way? I think we're seeing many changes, like we talked about circular economy or design something in new ways. But then this is, of course, my own opinion, I think, like the whole economic mindset is thinking about growth that we have to rethink totally. I'm not, you are better into that topic.

Actually, we have in this course or as a business student, you talk a lot about regrowth and things like that, and with this course we have like have to like think different about like the grow them and things like that. So actually we are pretty new at that thing. But if you have anything to talk about.

Yeah, and it's a really it's a really hard question because of course, well, we have to have, of course, a market than the economy, but a little bit pessimistic about this. We are so stuck with the growth paradigm was like decades ago, If you take someone like Schumacher had this economist who wrote the book "Small is Beautiful", and then Tim Jackson's "Prosperity without Growth", and was it Serge Latouche, French economist that writes about degrowth that there have been many great economists and writers arguing for these questions for long.

But I think it's it's not only humans, but it's like the system. It's so, so stuck in this all paradigm, I don't have any answer to that, but yeah.

that's actually true of what you said, because if I may talk like specifically in Latin American context or the Asian context, most of the countries are not switching to sustainable production because like if they tried to do that or if they want to do that, they need to have initial some cost. I mean, a lot of investment initially for that to happen, and again, if you're not providing a that means like it's like the cost of a product which is eco friendly. For example, I wanted to start a textile firm which is based on eco friendly

material, but the initial costs are very high and the consumers would definitely prefer like, how is it in Europe?

So what happens with that is like as the initial costs are high, the market goes low and then the market goes low. All the countries which are trying to put money in the country, it's like not willing to do so, and as a whole, like the countries, let's take India. It will be losing a lot of chunk of FDI investors and they don't want to switch to the sustainability because of that. Now multiplying with Africa, Asia and Latin America, and that's the point we are stuck in, in my opinion.

Yeah, and I think if you think the whole picture go back in history with colonialism and this injustice like globally that there were so many like old issues, of course.

So is there any way that we can measure the progress on sustainability and what kind of metrics would be good? Like even if it's a smaller version, we have to check all this whether we are going in the right path or not, and especially with the the policies that we are taking or the policy changes that are coming, we never know that it could be the outcome is a better consequence than the previous one or not. So are there any measures in progress which can actually track and give the right indicators of the progress?

I don't know that much about that topic, but I like measuring it. Of course, this old way of if we talk about economics, GDP in English, so of course if you think about alternative ways of measuring prosperity and taking into account other factors.

So, there has, of course, been efforts to try to measure things in better ways, taking into account prosperity and nature environment. But I don't know that much about those things and probably can't answer your question.

Yeah, but do you have I will go back to maybe more and talk about the minorities because that's maybe your main interest. Do you have something you want to like, add something to say about it more, something you want to like, highlight for our listeners or something like that.

About minorities?

Yes, but the Sami people are they finish speaking minorities?

Yeah. I think it's a minority, it's of course listen to minorities and to keep up the, If we talk about the diversity, the diversity of people and not only thinking about the biosphere. But giving room for different perspectives and cultures, ways of seeing things. And more when it comes to that, I'm hopeful for younger students.

I think there has, I don't know if I'm wrong, but it feels like it has been like a mind shift over the generations that's been to grow up in a more diverse society where this more room to be oneself and hopefully also giving more space, listening to minorities and indigenous people.

Yeah, I think it's very important that we have a broad mindset and have a big like awareness about what's happening in different cultures and things like that.

Is there kind of something that I mean, we have talked or we have a lot of questions, but is there something that you still would like to kind of discuss? We don't have to we can cut

this part out. But thinking about this, like, is there something that you should that, you think we should still discuss?

I mean, we haven't really touched upon decolonisation, but I guess, I mean, this has been more focussed on kind of, I mean, we focused on creative innovations and how to implement them in your daily life and then more about maybe kind of the business mindset and how is maybe changing or how it should change. And then we have discussed and, I get about the indigenous community, and I mean the Sami people in Finland, but is there something that you still think that we should kind of cover here that we haven't?

Yeah, I think, as you mentioned, the word colonization decolonization, I think that's quite an interesting word in itself. Thinking about colonization, but can or have been done in many ways, many directions, of course, and that could be talk for an hour about that maybe like thinking about food and clothes and energy and probably also colonization, colonization of childhood. Some people talk about. That's we are young people have to grow up really fast, colonization of language, and such, how to decolonization by thinking analyzing oneself.

What I buy, what I use, like materials and consumer goods and such a thinking about from Finnish perspective, of course, having colonized in different ways. But it's also interesting now with this, for example, this huge wind power projects that they have that companies from abroad plan to build really big windmill farms. So some maybe the perspective gets turned around, and would mining and such. This is like an open question. It might be that we will get colonized in the hunt for minerals and renewable energy. So I think that the colonisation and decolonisation world has so much in it.

Thank you for your time and effort. It has been really good to talk to you. We have got a lot more like information and things like that. So thank you Simon from my part and do you guys want to say something?

Yeah, it was. Yeah, now you get with Alex.

So, Simon, I was just thank you for answering the questions and for the knowledge you shared with us. It was really amazing, and coming from an outside was like that I never knew about Sami people. Yeah, but yeah, now I'm aware, and I think maybe that's the gap that we should overcome, just not about some people being about different kind of indigenous people learning about them and spreading awareness about them.

Yeah, thanks to you all and I apologise for my English being a bit worst. I still speak English like here in Jakobstad also, so I hope you got some things.

It went well.

Ok, great!

Oh, yeah. Yes. Thank you. It was really nice to hear your thoughts. Yeah.

Yeah, thank you for your interesting questions, and I have to point out that when you talk about knowledge, that part of what I said is, of course, also my personal point of view, so.

I think it's ok to have some personal opinions, too. Yeah, there's a room for that, too, in this.

Yeah, that's great.

Thank you, It's been super insightful.