# WALKIE-TALKIE TO THE WAVES

**Niamh Schmidtke**

[You can listen to this work on Youtube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dYK3MaQ7qc8)

**​**

## Introduction

Niamh Schmidtke  0:11

Hello, you're listening to Future Artefacts FM radio show hosted by Niamh Schmidtke. And Nina Davies.

Nina Davies  0:19

Earlier this year, several radio frequencies were discovered airing a collection of broadcasts. At first they sounded like regular news stories and interviews. They felt familiar, but also not quite belonging to our present. Slowly, the listeners came to believe that what they were listening to, did indeed belong to their world, just not their time. They were looking into the future through the mundane edges of radio recordings and public service announcements. While this material is still being meticulously studied by researchers in various universities and museums, your hosts have managed to gain access to this collection to air a selection of these broadcasts for you, our listeners.

Niamh Schmidtke  1:00

For full disclosure, we will not be sharing this collection with you, as this introduction is based on a fictional event. In this monthly broadcast, Future Artefacts FM, we will present speculative fiction pieces by artists and writers, followed by conversation with hosts Niamh Schmidtke and Nina Davies. The programme will focus on fictional works intended for broadcast, such as radio plays or fictional interviews, to carve out a better understanding of the now by exploring various interpretations of the future.

## Artist Introduction

Nina Davies  1:44

So welcome back to our second episode of future artefacts. Today, we'll be speaking to our, to my co host, Niamh Schmidte, about her work, Walkie-Talkie to the Waves, which is a radio play consisting of two acts, the first being the Irish Sea Committee, and the second act, I used to be so much more than space. The work is approximately 15 minutes. And before we go into it Niamh, do you have anything you want to say about it?

Niamh Schmidtke  2:12

Maybe a little bit of an introduction to my research. So when I was writing this radio play, I was thinking about climate breakdown and ecological futures. And I wanted to use this play to kind of play through some of the, I guess, the politics behind climate policy. And this idea of being green, what does it mean and kind of what's the relationship of like, government and nationalism to that, sort of the background of what made this work come into existence.

Nina Davies  2:44

So now we're going to listen to Niamh's radio play, we'll see you back in 15 minutes.

​

## Walkie-Talkie to the Waves work

**Act 1**

IRISH SEA (NARRATOR)

I curl in the way an inviting finger might summon you –

I push away.

My translucency plays with the sky-

I carry the salt wind water-

I carry the tide.

I carry the people from one coast to another.

History has made me political – and politicians make me current –

Towards their respective representations.

I am the less Wild baby of my western sibling,

Neighbouring smaller/ great spaces – the tool for their gains

Unwillingly held, as a child’s five fingers grips a single adult one,

Their unknown strength, me stooped to one side.

Yet when I pull up, they dangle and cry.

DÁIL

Thank you everyone for coming to this inaugural meeting of the Irish Sea Committee, I’m going to do a quick roll call, Dáil – yes I’m here, Holyrood

(call and response for all actors)

HOLYROOD

Yes

​

DÁIL

Senedd

​

SENEDD

Yes

​

DÁIL

Stormont

​

STORMONT

Here

DÁIL

Westminster

WESTMINSTER

Here

DÁIL

Irish Sea

IRISH SEA

Yes, I’m listening

HOLYROOD

Great, straight to business, why are we here?

STORMONT

Dáil and I are concerned about rising sea levels in the Irish sea, our environmental projections are very troubling for the future of coastal regions.

SENEDD

Yes, they have been rising for years, since the Gulf stream started collapsing.

WESTMINSTER

Exactly, why are we talking about it now?

DÁIL

If we don’t act now Cardiff could be underwater in 5 years, Dublin too, Liverpool and Glasgow to follow and soon after London.

IRISH SEA

Why is my rising bad, you started the process, this is my redistribution amongst you. Why are you only speaking to me now, whose worlds do you want to preserve?

WESTMINSTER

Whose world? Our world, people will die, industry lost, this isn’t a disaster movie, it’s our lives. My question is why have you invited myself, Holyrood and Senedd here? Surely this is an EU issue along the coast of the island of Ireland?

STORMONT

We called this meeting because we are all facing consequences along the Irish sea’s coastline that can be collectively addressed.

DÁIL

Also the EU is funding the Daoine wind farm, which won’t be finished for another decade. There’s nothing left in the budget for ecological engineering until after then. We’ve used all our carbon credits and offsetting allowances on this project.

HOLYROOD

And because we don’t organise our environmental spending trans-nationally you are coming to us? Repeating Westminster’s question, why call this meeting, what did you expect would happen?

SENEDD

They’re looking for money…

DÁIL

No, we’re looking for a partnership-

HOLYROOD

The formation of the Irish Sea Committee?

DÁIL

Exactly.

WESTMINSTER

What is your proposal then? Why bring us together?

STORMONT

Land reclamation

IRISH SEA

Shhh

HOLYROOD

Reclamation of the Irish sea?

WESTMINSTER

Is that even possible? The Dutch have been having immense problems in the last decade trying to keep their technologies open. Is there enough gas left for this to even be feasible? I’m not sure how this can fit into our Green New Deal strategy if what you want is a multi-lateral agreement. The different carbon counting scales between our nationalised systems alone would be a nightmare.

DÁIL

We worked together before, on the EU trade border between ourselves and Stormont. And a project of this scale requires similar levels of commitment for a common goal.

HOLYROOD

Weren’t those talks largely a failure, there were riots across Belfast and Derry in 2021

STORMONT

Yes, but those talks began the communication between Dáil and myself

IRISH SEA

Yes, you connected each other through me

WESTMINSTER

And pushed you into independent policy making – until now

SENEDD

I don’t see how a proposal like this would be possible – reclaiming the Irish sea? It seems mad.

HOLYROOD

We tried a project like this near Edinburgh, it failed because of the North sea storm surges. What makes you think the Irish sea would be a better fit?

IRISH SEA

Mmm the North Sea tried hard to regain themselves from you

DÁIL

It’s a more sheltered body of water, only 240 KM wide and 210 km long, and it is only those of here who are involved in how we treat the sea.

HOLYROOD

But what you are talking about is a major multi-national approach, we haven’t spoken with one another in years. And many more than those of us in this room are involved in the treatment of the Irish sea

IRISH SEA

Yet you haven’t listened to me in centuries

SENEDD

It would be great to reopen the ferry routes, there are still people with mixed nationalities, across the water. Have you heard about the pirate collectives moving to the economic border zones we drew in the sea?

DÁIL

I don’t think we would reopen the travel routes – closing the cargo ships has been incredibly successful in lowering our CO2 rates and maintaining national support for our respective green new deals

WESTMINSTER

For once I agree with Dáil

SENEDD

If that is the case than I withdraw from this committee as it is not genuinely collective, we do not have the funds or the desire to invest in this partnership

HOLYROOD

I must also leave, your proposal is unrealistic, and I do not want to be in future conversations which abuse our relationship to the sea in the way you suggest. Reclaiming the sea? To who? For what purpose? Our coastlines are changing, move inland, rebuild your cities. We already know that this form of engineering won’t solve the issues at hand.

DÁIL

But we need to reclaim it for ourselves!

HOLYROOD

You mean for your EU funding packages – I’ve seen the plans, this is a coy scheme

WESTMINSTER

Is this true, are you scamming us?

STORMONT

No, we want to protect our coastal regions

HOLYROOD

In the same way you ‘protected’ your fisheries by mutating fish and polluting the sea?

DÁIL

That was only what your news coverage said!

HOLYROOD

No I’ve heard enough, this won’t work out

WESTMINSTER

I find it hard to imagine this working without Holyrood or Senedd’s support, so I also withdraw.

​

STORMONT

Wait – this is our last chance!

**Act 2**

Irish Sea

A voice becomes distorted over this sea,

Under water

Through all canals; Do you think the shore crash is enough to drown them out?

To outshout an image- blow over text

Pinched from larger bodies, I become a napoleon

Overcompensating for my stature

Not so different from the occupants of glass and steel buildings – plugged away from their oceans

Missing the fullness of their currents

Feeling every arm stroke and plunge deep, sharp push back, displaced car weight, tidal pull

I used to be so much more than space

Value calculated in wind farm locations

Ferry ports

Flight traffic

Pirate

I used to hate water, couldn’t stand the beach. My friends never convinced me to dip in. I didn’t like the salt on my skin, and I lived in London. Used to, before the Green New Deal policies took affect.

Irish Sea

Yes, our relationship began much later, strange now that your groups take the name pirate

Pirate

For sure, although it was out of necessity. I don’t have an English passport, and the carbon taxation collections were organised around passport checks, and the localisation shareholder scheme required nationalised participation.

Irish Sea

Carbon taxation, local-what, my currents are unable to follow your language…

Pirate

localisation shareholder schemes - They started off as community gardens, extended into communal workshops and were quite successful. Epsecially in London, where space was a high commodity at the time. Over time, as certain projects became more successful, Westminster scaled up the work, assuring us that this was not ‘green growth’ but rather ‘green innovation’ and that we were creating a newer and better future.

Irish sea

Why is growth green? I grow blue, and pale and dark.. It is important to grow and shrink, rise and fall

Pirate

Exactly, we were concerned because it was incredibly exclusionary. You could work at any workshop that was attached to your address, however the waiting lists to join these spaces were incredibly long. After the nationalism check act, you could no longer receive any benefits from the work done at the workshop unless you registered as only being an English citizen.

Irish Sea

Why Englishness, over britishness, or Europeanness or humanness?

Pirate

Well, Englishness is important for Westminster, its how they register you to any nationalised scheme, which in recent years has been every resource required to live; education, medicine, workshops, energy, the list goes on. My family is made up of immigrants, and we have all always carried multiple nationalities, ethnicities and passports. My mother held five passports, trading them depending on which continent she wanted to travel to, but after the legislation against air travel, she slowly stopped renewing them. That and the multiple citizenship tax going up.

Irish sea

I see why you left, there is strength in ambiguity from state, in touching many coasts, each claiming different Irishness, Welshness, scotishness, Englishness, northern Irishness

Pirate

This is why we came to you, in your waters we found space to live inbetween their borders.

Irish Sea

Yes, after they carved me up, invisible lines I live addressless

Pirate

After the Irish Sea Committee disaster, we knew that living on the border between the economic zones was the safest option. The most dangerous part was getting there. Making sure the cargo ships were sea worthy, getting our communities together for safety, building the pods, designing their infrastructure. We were future building through care and open-endedness

Irish Sea

I felt you, it was strange to have your group’s belly hitting my surface. I tried to help your first groups. The sea borders placed in the 2020s hurt me, for the EU? and the Daoine wind farm, as though being stabbed, but the knife stayed, and the bleed was fish death.

Pirate

Thank you, we felt much more at peace after leaving the coast, finally having a space that was outside a parliament’s jurisdiction. It felt like home, being rocked by the waves. Many of my pod weren’t so at ease and life on the irish sea was a big adjustment. It’s strange for home to be a horizon with no geographic markers. Even now it’s only on a clear day that we can make out the Daoine wind farm in the distance.

Irish Sea

It is only hard if you have never lived it before. I can’t imagine learning to be still, the patience of geology shocks me. My rocking kisses up to the moon compared to their slow pull down towards the earth.

## Conversation

Nina Davies  18:57

Welcome back. I hope you all enjoyed the past 15 minutes. So before I begin with most of my questions, Niamh, I was wondering whether you could introduce some of your research, I know you sort of have given a brief overview. But for our listeners, I think it would be great to have a bit more in depth knowledge of some of the stuff you were looking into. I know some of your previous work is in response to the financialization of nature, within like financial industries. And now this work is in response to the Green New Deal from conversations that we've had previously, which is sort of more situated in political industries. And so it's kind of see that you're, you seem to be navigating your research through the relationship with almost kind of like bureaucracy and nature.

Niamh Schmidtke  19:51

Yeah, I think I'm quite interested in how even using the term nature is kind of this almost politicised version of it. So it, in my view, kind of, in saying something is nature, you're saying that it's not cultural, which, for me, the two are completely intertwined. There's no kind of separation between the two. And I guess that like centres, how I think about bureaucracy in terms of ecology and environment is that it's always trying to translate it into something that it's not or something to kind of serve a purpose. So in terms of financialising, nature, translating nature into a monetary cost, so kind of breaking down the cost of a forest, in order to turn it into timber, or turn it into something that can harvest co2 emissions. And then what I was quite interested in coming from that, I guess, relationship between finance and ecology and environment and habitat, was how is politics responding to this? Because on the one hand, it's really influenced by financial structures. I mean, like, look at the class of people that generally become politicians, or look at kind of the financial backgrounds of politicians, and who their friends are, they're usually within the same kind of social circles. But from that, I guess I started doing doing research and kind of digging around with,  how is politics and how are parties sort of navigating people's responses to climate breakdown? If you have a public that saying, we need to do something about this, what is their response? And where is that response come from? Which led me to looking into this thing called the Green New Deal, which is a climate policy, but the most significant thing that it does is it tries to funnel money out of fossil fuel industries, into renewable energy, or into kind of recycling plants. So it says kind of social political climate thing

Nina Davies  21:57

Economical. Yeah.

Niamh Schmidtke  21:58

Yeah, it's kind of combining all these things. Because sort of before they were always separated, and the green New Deal tries to pull it together. So it's like, how can we reorganise our politics and our economy to better serve the planet. But one of the issues with that is it uses all of these systems, this kind of economic system that has caused climate breakdown, kind of you look at the way the Industrial Revolution sort of plays out, and how it started this industry of fossil fuel burning. And then you think that that same kind of format of economics that's existed for this amount of time, is also going to be able to then kind of undo all of that, which I guess is where I started with my thing of looking at the green new deal with me like, this seems a bit weird. Yeah. And from that, I read this book by Anne Pettifor for who's quite a prominent kind of UK economist. And she wrote this book called The Case for the green New Deal. And in it she talks a lot about localization. So we all eat local organic vegetables, we have our own allotments we make our own clothing, we serve local industry only. And on the one hand, it sounds really cosy and really great. But on the other hand, it started sounding like this fascist regime, because it became at least from the way she was describing it in the UK, of, you know, everything in the UK for the UK. It's like, is this not how Nazism started out? It's a bit freaky. But when you just when you describe it in this, like, offhanded way or the separated way, by reading through this book, which is like a popular hardback, it sounds really great. Yeah, like, Okay, I need to interrogate this, because this is not,

Nina Davies  23:49

It's, it's seductive, isn't it?

Niamh Schmidtke  23:51

It's really seductive. And people want really love the idea of a solution to climate breakdown. And this kind of gives it, it's like, oh, look, we're doing stuff. We're doing great things. And I was like, I don't know how great that actually is.

Nina Davies  24:03

Yeah, I mean, it's, I was gonna say questionable, but I guess that's probably not specific enough. But it's actually it's almost like it's too simple. Like, it's kind of trying to oversimplify something that's completely complex, which I think a lot of your work does really well, in talking about how complicated nature is. I know, it's a really like, weird way of putting it but nature doesn't fit into national borders or international borders. It doesn't fit into all of these things to try and simply like, simplify, it is sometimes not effective.

Niamh Schmidtke  24:38

Yeah, well, I think, at least, one of the things that was going around in my head a lot with that kind of quite nationalistic approach to this, to the green New Deal in Pettifor's language, at least, was when I was reading it. It came out in 2019. And I was reading it in 2020. So I was thinking a lot about Brexit and as someone who grew up in Ireland, I was thinking a lot about the Northern Irish border between Northern Ireland and the Republic, and kind of thinking as well about this contentiousness of nationality. And how, if you live in Belfast, its content- can be contentious to say if you're Irish, or if you're British, and it's all of a sudden you wrap up this climate breakdown solution into your nationality, you're going to cause more issues than solve, I think, yeah, or let's say you're somewhere like London, where most people who live here are not from the UK, let alone from London. So then you're nationalism becomes more complicated again, and then like in the UK, as well, because it's built up of four different nations. Or five, if you count the Isle of Man as a separate nation, it's, it kind of becomes this quite strange thing of like, is this really something that will work here and then sort of investigating it on like a very localised level? For me because I was quite interested in like the region of the Irish Sea as this like space that connects and pulls apart two islands that are kind of historically so interlinked, and then politically so charged, especially right now and like present politics, but I think always, in a way, like countries that neighbour each other always there's always going to be conflict, or a little bit of tension.

Nina Davies  26:26

Yeah, so I mean, I was gonna say, I mean, that kind of like brings me into my second question, loosely, but I was going to ask you why you have chosen to anthropomorphize the Irish Sea. I've come across, like various dialogues, that criticise human tendencies to anthropomorphize, the world. And I was wondering if you could speak a bit to that.

Niamh Schmidtke  26:54

Yeah. The starting point of a lot of the scripts and the radio plays came from around I guess, this time last year, I had been spending some time in Ireland and by the Irish Sea on the Republic of Ireland coastline. And I had then come back to London for the first time in a few months. And I started romanticising the sea in this really, really intense way, which is probably the worst way to start talking about anthropomorphisation. It started to become this thing where I wanted to try and figure out like, what would the sea say to me? Or how could the sea speak to me? Or how does it feel about the present moment? This was also like in a period of like, really intense negotiations about an EU border through the sea. And I was thinking, what would the sea say to having this border put through it. And part of that kind of became poetry and became bits of text, which each act of the radio plays starts with a bit of text. So the beginning of the first act, you know, it talks about being played by people and kind of politicians thinking that it's their current, that they can control yet as soon as the sea decides to rise, and then the act is literally about sea levels rising, they dangle and cry about that kind of element of like control or lack of control.

Piece  28:22

Their unknown strength, me stooped to one side. Yet, when I pulled up, they dangle and cry.

Niamh Schmidtke  28:37

Part of what I'm interested in, in giving voice or writing voice for ecological elements, I did another series where I gave voice to the wind, is kind of playing out the conversation between I guess bureaucracy, and the kind of nature or the ecologies its trying to control. So maybe, in this radio play, part of giving voice or anthropomorphizing the sea is to give it a chance to be in this meeting with these politicians or with these like political houses, these parliament's. Kind of reintroducing it into that space because it's been left out for so long.

Piece  29:22

\*wave sounds lapping against a shore\*

Niamh Schmidtke  29:28

And then, in the second act, part of it becomes a way to situate the conversation. It's kind of like if you're living on the sea, what happens if you can talk to the thing you're living on and they can talk back to you. It also becomes this quite playful thing as well, because like, obviously, I can't give voice to the sea. It allows a bit of humour to come into there because there's kind of things that are just a bit weird. But then it also takes this, for me, I feel like the whole thing takes us up a little bit less seriously because there's, I think, this thing of like this definitely can't be true.

Nina Davies  30:02

Yeah, I mean, it definitely like it's it's the first thing, or not the first thing, but I'd say it's the most obvious signifier that it's it's a fictional work basically, isn't it? But also, I think there's something interesting that you're doing by kind of trying to put nature into these sort of bureaucratic, very human systems, that's already kind of almost, anthropomorphizing nature in itself. And so you're kind of like meeting that, that system and trying to make it a whole.

Niamh Schmidtke  30:33

Yeah, I guess, thinking about like, reintegrating things together. Like I did a work last year, which was a fictional email series, between, where the, the wind was a representative for this country, I made up. And it was speaking to this financial institution that was trying to build wind farms in this fictional country. The idea behind it being what would the wind say about a wind turbine? You know, how does it feel about wind turbines going through it? And I mean, that's kind of picked up again. And in this radio play, where there's a section of, you know, the sea being stabbed by wind turbines going into the going into the water, or going into the bedrock.

Piece  31:18

As though being stopped, but the knife stayed in the bleed was fish death.

Niamh Schmidtke  31:31

It's trying to start a bit of a conversation around, why are we trying to come up with these climate solutions that are related to how humans should live? Or how humans feel they can live on the planet, rather than thinking in this kind of, broader scope? Yeah, I guess that's part of where the anthropomorphisation comes, ends up or like tries to deal deal with a little bit.

Nina Davies  31:57

So I was wondering if you could speak about your choice to divide this play into two parts, which are written in very different styles and take place in different settings? I think it's like a, it's quite an interesting and good choice to have these two different acts. And also, that one is, they sort of relate to each other, but they're taking place in completely different times.

Niamh Schmidtke  32:26

Yeah, I mean, the, to the first act the Irish Sea committee is set slightly closer in the future, maybe it's a good way to describe,  I mean, the both set and kind of indeterminant timescales. But kind of going back to what I was talking about the beginning with the green New Deal, and thinking about politics, and kind of how that works in a space, like a geographic region, like the UK. I wanted to sort of play out politics as they exist now, through Parliament houses. So there's six characters in that first act. So there's Westminster, kind of for playing, like representative of England in a way. Hollyrood, which is the Scottish Parliament, Senade, which is the Welsh, Stormont, which is the Northern Irish, Dail, which is the Republic of Ireland parliament. And the Irish Sea as well also comes in and out of that conversation. What I wanted to do in a play was to write conflict. So kind of setting up a little bit of the backstory, so kind of they're trying to, they're trying to deal with rising sea levels, and there's been a wind farm that's in construction, and they haven't had a great conversation with one another, they've implemented their green new deals, kind of, okay, that's like the setting. But all of that background has led them to this moment where they're, they can't talk to each other anymore. And that's kind of what I wanted to do is to, like bring back that like, really social element of politics, where it's like, what happens if there's just a thing of, oh, you want more money to build this thing? And you want more money because we use money in different ways. It becomes much more human rather than abstract politics. Yeah. Which is kind of what a radio play allowed and also like having multiple people speak together. I also just wanted to explore scriptwriting a bit more was quite... Yeah, cuz

Nina Davies  34:40

Yeah, because I said to you, and we had a previous conversation about the work and I was saying how the first act really reminds me of the play 12 Angry Men where there's like, a for those that might not have heard of the play, I'm sure most of you have. It's a play that takes place in one room and it's a jury who are trying to decide the verdict of, I don't actually remember what the crime was, or even if you find it out, I, it's been so long ago since I've read it. And the Congress starts with I think, like one jury member thinking that the person is not, the defendant notice, is it the defendant they are the defendant isn't guilty, and everyone else agrees that the person is guilty. And then throughout the play, basically, they kind of move, the kind of slowly see them move from one verdict to the other through the conversation. And yeah, I felt really reminiscent of the because, I think the play is really successful for that reason. It's sort of just one. It's one conversation. And that's it.

Niamh Schmidtke  35:50

Yeah, I mean, it's quite, it's quite short, in terms of, like, an actual block of time. But I think that, for me, it sort of makes it funny that it's a committee meeting that ends in five minutes. Yeah, it shows you how terribly it's gone, it ends with all of them saying, like, nah, we can't, I don't want to be involved in this, I can't do this. And then it also allows certain, I guess, the most interesting, interesting thing for me about writing kind of a dialogue between six characters is then I get to write six different opinions, as well. So like Hollyrood, becomes, I guess, the most ecologically aware character, like there's a line that they talk about where they say, it's more than just those of us in this room that can decide the fate of the Irish Sea, whether as the Dail character is saying, look, they did this, they did this before, like, it worked really well, like look at the North Sea. I mean, part of the inspiration that is like the North Sea, has been carved up into these different economic zones. Quite, I mean, it's kind of being carved up in this way that like colonisation used to work. It's quite horrific. And it's these really straight lines and kind of it means that certain parts of Scotland can, you know, build wind turbines somewhere. But once they cross a certain line, that's Norway's water. So I was kind of thinking about how different countries or how different nations kind of relate to their environment. And this isn't like written directly on that. I guess I find it quite funny. And like the rewrites had, the characters would sort of shift in like, if they became more pleasant, or less pleasant, or if that was something that mattered. And then even kind of like Senead becomes this character that sort of they're like, why don't we reopen ferry routes? You know, why don't we do this. So there's kind of one character is more socially aware, one that's more ecologically aware. And other that maybe a little more power hungry.

Piece  37:40

It would be great to reopen the ferry routes. There are still people with mixed nationalities across the water.

Niamh Schmidtke  37:45

Yeah, there's kind of that dynamic in it, in the first act, and then maybe moving to the second part of the question, like, act two, then was written really differently. So act two, I used to be so much more than space, is an interview between someone who's a representative of a pirate collective, and the Irish Sea, sort of set a bit in the future. So this committee meeting for the first act becomes a historical marker, I guess, in the world that these plays are written in, or these dialogues are written? And, I mean, I think we were talking before, like, it's more intimate. It's between like two, voices. But also part of it was having a way to reveal the world a bit more

Nina Davies  38:38

Act one is really familiar. Like, I very much know what that conversation is. Whereas the, whereas act Two, I can recognise that it's intimate, but I'm not so sure what the I think maybe it's because it's with the sea, it's a intimacy and a conversation that is unfamiliar, or, I feel like it's very much placed in your imagin-, not your imagination, but one's imagination. In act one, I'm imagining a room that they're sitting in and I'm kind of there with them, or I'm a fly on the wall. And then act two is sort of something more poetic, and I think the conversation is, I guess, maybe because it's with the ocean or the the Irish Sea. I'm not placed at the committee meeting. And I'm viewing everything. Basically, I'm viewing conversation and more of a dreamlike state as opposed to an actual environment or a situation, I'm imagining what these kind of pirate towns look like on the sea and I'm thinking about this person looking out into the ocean or what they're..., I'm kind of a almost like a montage basically. I think it's kind of like, the visuals to it are more montage. Like and maybe, in that way, becomes more poetic.

Niamh Schmidtke  40:05

Yeah, I think the second act is much looser. Partially because this is a non human voice that has much more, it's given much more space in the piece. But also in a way, because it's farther into the future, there's less, that closeness to the present means that it's harder to know wat it's going to be like. I think I was also interested in not putting too many visuals to it, because I wanted to use it as a conversation to, I guess, play out some of my concerns with the Green New Deal. So the first act sort of, casually mentions it in quite a bureaucratic or almost scientific way. You know, this won't work, this won't work with our green new deals, or it won't work with our nationalised schemes, whether as the second act talks a bit more about what those might be. So you know, shared workshop spaces that require a certain citizenship or, you know, taxes on having multiple passports, or, you know, cargo and ferry routes shutting down. So then all of a sudden, there's all of these cargo ships that just kind of sit there, and then these people who can't then have this nationalised scheme, it doesn't, they don't fit within it. But okay, well, we'll use what they've discarded. So it's sort of it starts to play out some of the possibilities, to guess what I was kind of interested in, like writing speculative fiction, or these kinds of science fiction stories, was to play out some ideas like what might happen, how might it look? And then that kind of poetic-ness as well, I guess I didn't want to, I didn't want to write the sea, or the Irish Sea in this very scientific way,

Nina Davies  41:57

With the committee meeting taking place. And then the, and the second part, which could be however many years after you're not so, you're not so sure, but definitely like things have things have come a long way, since yeah definitely do feel like obviously, there's these whole communities of people living in the sea or not in the sea, but on the sea. A podcast that I was listening to the other day, introduced the idea of seventh generation thinking, which is from the Iroquois people an indigenous group of people in Canada. And part of the way that they govern themselves is thinking about are not governed, governed, probably not the right word. But they this thing called Seventh Generation thinking, which is thinking about what the world will be like. Not in you know, 100 years, but seven generations away, which is I don't even know how many years that is. That's a long time.

Niamh Schmidtke  43:00

Yeah, I'm imagining like seven by 50. Yeah, that's like a rough guesstimate.

Nina Davies  43:04

Yeah, so yeah, around like 350 years. And now certain governments studying to implicate Seventh Generation thinking into Japanese government. And so they invite people to come in and actually dress up. As if they're are however many years in the future, I can't remember who was like maybe it's 300 years in the future. And they come and respond to the, to the policies of what they're what is being discussed. And usually, people thinking seven generations away, come up with the most practical solutions to any problems that are raised or discussed. And I feel like there's something with what you're doing. I feel like you're sort of using fiction, obviously not in the exact same way, because it's not a the committee meeting is also fictional. But there is something that you're responding in that sort of same way, you start with a committee talk, and then you are kind of almost assuming that role of someone who is doing the seventh generation and thinking,

Niamh Schmidtke  44:15

I think, when we started talking and introducing kind of the research of this green New Deal, and we're saying, well, it doesn't seem like it's very fleshed out. That's part of it is like fleshing it out, is going farther into the future or speculating what that future might appear to be. I think as well, in terms of the seven, the seventh generational thinking there's a sense of being removed from the politics or the bureaucracy of the present. I mean, a little bit of that sort of happens in the second act as well, you know, describing these, these tools or these ways that the green new deal is implemented, and saying, you know, we have these different kinds of guidelines and then insurance schemes and the sea speaking to this person going, what like, What are you talking about? What is green growth? What does that mean? I grow blue, really tearing apart, there'll bureaucracy and the politics behind it and saying this is propaganda.

Unknown Speaker  45:17

The ILO projects that have countries embrace green growth 24 million new jobs could be created globally by the year 2030. But the report also predicts that the transition to a green economy will lead to the loss of 6 million jobs in industries related to carbon based production.

Niamh Schmidtke  45:32

I think part of the interest in like, writing fiction or speculative, speculative fiction about politics in particular is this sense of political parties using speculation in order to get elected or using different types of narratives or fiction to maintain power, in a way that became quite interesting for me. And then kind of generationally, you can sort of see the advantages or disadvantages of that. So, for instance, looking at, like, in, in England, and the UK, in particular, kind of what's the narrative that the Conservative Party tells, you know, how do they talk about how well they're doing and the power that they're maintaining? But if you look at how, for instance, let's say how healthcare looked in the in the UK, two generations ago, it doesn't look so good.

Nina Davies  46:26

Yeah, we had a, we had a conversation in our previous podcasts of our previous broadcast about, like,  utopias and dystopias, and as you're talking about this, it is making me think about a sort of political speculative fiction, that sort of in its everyday practice, is actually quite utopic. And to just stay on that side of the binaries. Say it's dangerous is like, maybe too harsh of a word, but like, it's, yeah, it's one sided, I guess.

Niamh Schmidtke  46:59

Yeah, completely. And, you know, if you're trying to do something where you're winning a popularity contest, of course, you want to sound like you're the best you want to, you want people to believe they can have the utopia. Yeah, you know, and then you're going to spend that any, any which way. Part of I guess what I'm finishing is in like this in seventh generation thinking is that like removal from kind of present political speculation? One of the things that I'm more interested in, though, and part of why the sea is given such a large voice, and both of these acts of the radio play is moving outside of human span or human scale of time. So thinking about the sea being almost the same age, in both of those acts, kind of what does that mean? You know, like, how can you know someone who, or being that is human, have a conversation with a being that is millennia older than it? Or even something that's unfixed? You know, like the the supposed that border between, you know, the Irish Sea, and it's kind of bordered by the Celtic Sea on one side, and then the North Sea. Kind of where does that that border doesn't really exist. That's something we've we've placed on it. So it's even like, when you're saying, you're speaking to the Irish Sea, like who you're speaking to? Are you speaking to the eastern coast of Ireland? Are you speaking to the west coast of the UK? Are you speaking to somewhere in Wales?

Nina Davies  48:28

You know, it makes me think of that classic thing where they say, like, if you if you pour a whole jug, or if you put a drop of orange juice or something in one sea, like there's traces of it on the other side of the world, or something like that, yeah.

Niamh Schmidtke  48:40

There's kind of this complete mass. I guess I was quite interested in the second act and sort of giving a bit of space to that.

Nina Davies  48:52

Then I'll move on to my next question, which is, how does this work relate to the present for you? Or does it relate to the past

Niamh Schmidtke  49:03

Does it relate to the present? In terms of relating to the present? I guess it's something we've kind of touched on it a bit, is taking this political idea and playing it through. So showing or trying to show a version of the future where I kind of take the worst case scenario of what this are not even the worst case scenario, but one one scenario of what this type of thinking might do in order to, I guess, reveal, or like, make another way to make a decision about what kind of climate policy would be good right now. Because I guess, or one of the things I've been thinking a lot about is the urgency of all of this, you know, there is a timeline in terms of of how our environment is changing, and how the climate is changing, or heating up rather. And on the one hand, it's speculative, what kind of plus three degrees will do. But on the other hand, there will be a lot of turmoil because of it and a lot of death because of it. And political leverage as well. So there's a lot of responsibility to think, quite quickly, about what will happen. And so by playing out a longer version of the future, I hope to sort of create a space to kind of make decision making in the present or sort of lead my own decision making in the present in a more kind of thoughtful way, perhaps.

Nina Davies  49:17

I should have maybe, continued that question. Because I was gonna, I was gonna say, obviously, your work is not based in the past, it's looking forward, almost in its entirety. But we have had some chats, and there is a lot about piracy in there. And I was wondering how those past stories or facts or knowledge about pirates, in whether it'd be like 18th century pirates or Somali pirates? How that sort of research or that thinking, thinking through those pasts have informed the work?

Niamh Schmidtke  51:24

Yeah, good question. So I think in terms of political drama, like that's quite historical genre, just look at 1984, or anything written by George Orwell, really? And then piracy? Well, that came out of thinking through I guess, I was thinking about Somali pirates. I didn't. I didn't go into a lot of research, but I was more so trying to think about what would someone's life be like to become a pirate? So particularly thinking about Somalia and the war there. You know, I think most people would think being a pirate was a much better option. Yeah, yeah, there was a bit of, there was a bit of that thinking. And then, using that, in the play, or thinking about that, while writing this about these pirate collectives in the play, the interview was largely to show, you know, there wasn't other options, or thinking about pirates, as people that live outside of perhaps mainstream culture, or who aren't given political space to exist. You know, thinking about pirate radio stations that live kind of outside or like, they're like, between two places. And that sort of becomes how they make their thing work, because they're not under any kind of state jurisdiction. I think about piracy as being this quite important act to be able to have space to like, question things or disagree with things. And then also, what happens when you leave that old system that you didn't have place for? What system do you build to replace that? So like, the other kind of background to this pirate story is, I was researching areas of the commons. So the commons being any shared resource that is kept and maintained by those who use it. So a commons can be anything from something like Wikipedia, to, I don't know, a shared fridge in a household. Like, really like it can be, you can like broaden and shrink your definition of it, however, however you want. But one of the things I find quite exciting about thinking about the commons is, it's a very different way to structure things, then democracy, because everyone shares responsibility in a very different way. In democracy, it's like, oh, you lost too bad, whether as the commons. It's like, no, no, we don't have the sense of losing. Or at least that's how I'm interpreting it. And I wanted to use the story of the pirates where the kind of they've left behind this democratic system and then they've tried to fit into this commons or this, these collective systems. I mean, maybe that's a little bit too much density for this podcast. But

Nina Davies  54:24

No, I'm just I'm just thinking it through. The idea of the commons is an interesting one, I'm gonna just sat here thinking about pirates. That's my problem. But it's made me think. So I've, as we've spoken about before, I was watching a documentary about, about 18th century pirates and how they were quite radical at the time they kind of put democracy into practice on their ships and they were these privateers who were kind of left and they had no work and I was doing a bit of research about Somali pirates as well before we had a chat, because I knew that the 18th century pirates, that was not what you, not what interests you. There was wide. But it was funny, I did notice that what these two groups of pirates have in common is the Navy sort of withdrew from Somalia, Somalian seas, and because of that, there was no regulation of the of the waters, which is what kind of drove these fishermen to kind of become pirates. And there were people that were hired by the Navy, who were kind of left jobless. And they kind of all came together and created the sort of pirate forces, which was similar in the 18th century pirates, where there were privateers who were brought up to the Caribbean, and then the British government had no more use for them. So they kind of banded together and started creating these, sort of their own democratic systems. And I guess I'm sort of thinking through that, while you're talking about the Commons, and I'm thinking about how these groups of people kind of have to create their own Commons for themselves.

Niamh Schmidtke  56:09

Yeah, it's like you've been left behind. So you're trying to, and also, usually in that case, as well, or at least in the case of this radio play, you've been harmed by that system, that system hasn't done anything for you, which I think is a feeling that a lot of, at least speaking kind of, we're recording here in London, and there's kind of a feeling around, kind of being left behind or not being well served by politics and by government. And even a sense of kind of being sort of disenchanted with it. It's like, well, we can't change it now. And part of writing the story on these pirates, or this pirate collect-, these pirate collectives, however they want to exist, which I also wanted to leave kind of open, because I wanted to leave it to imagination is showing they've done it. And okay, it's a bit ludicrous because they live on ships in the Irish Sea, odds are, it's going to rust, and the whole thing's gonna collapse in like 10 years. But for a brief moment, they kind of they make this space and they show that it's, that it's possible, there is kind of pocket of that. But you know, like, maybe in those 10 years, something happens on the mainland, and they can go back. Yeah, you know, I mean, that's the kind of whole thing about the speculation aspect of it. But, you know, making, making the commens or like making this, this like shared resource space, was to kind of in the same thing of like, playing out the possible futures of the green New Deal, which becomes quite dystopic, because it's like, politics run astray, and ultra nationalism, sounds very right ring sounds very fascist. All this type of stuff, like okay, but you can find your pocket. And yeah, it's not a utopia, but you're just kind of living in the world. It's not. It's not as black and white.

Nina Davies  58:00

Great. So I think we're unfortunately, we're actually going to have to wrap it up there. But I obviously had loads more questions to ask you, but this is where we, this is where we got to. Yeah, is there anything anything last that you'd like to say? Bearing that there's no more time left?

Niamh Schmidtke  58:20

No, that's everything. Of course, any more questions or queries, you can always get in touch with us. Or you can get in touch with me. We'll have kind of social media handles and all the rest in the description. Always happy to hear more questions, answer more questions, hear thoughts and queries.

Nina Davies  58:39

Great. And our next episode, Niamg and I are actually inviting someone new into our studio. Not so not so studio. So when next month we will be joined by artist Rebeca Romero. So hope to have you guys tune back in next month.

Niamh Schmidtke  58:58

See you soon. Bye.