

You're listening to the EXARC Show run by EXARC, the International Society for Experimental Archaeology, Open-Air Museums, Ancient and Traditional Technology and Heritage Interpretation. Listen in to hear 'Encounters' with experts within the field, 'Showcases' of the work and projects of our members, and 'Extracts' from our quarterly EXARC Journal.

**Matilda:** Welcome to the EXARC Show. My name is Matilda Siebrecht and in this episode we report on two very different but equally interesting projects that two of our EXARC members are involved in. The first is NFDI4Objects, Task area 3, which is a project focussing on the standardisation and documentation of experiments. The second project, very, very different, is about how living in the wild impacts the human biome.

So let's have a look at the first one first. NFDI4Objects is a multidisciplinary consortium within the German National Research Data Infrastructure, NFDI. The consortium is aimed at researchers, practitioners, students, whose interests focus on the material heritage of around three million years of human and environmental history and addresses the challenges of modern research data infrastructures. It includes seven different task areas, one of which, Task Area 3, focusses on analytics and experiments and includes a community cluster looking specifically at experimental archaeology.

During the 13th Experimental Archaeology Conference in May 2023, Ivan Calandra from the Leibniz Zentrum für Archäologie in Germany introduced the project to the EXARC community. He is head of the imaging platform at the Leibniz-Zentrum für Archäologie (LEIZA) and co-chair of NFDI4Objects' community cluster Experimental Archaeology, or Experimentale Archäologie. Although not an experimental archaeologist himself, he has been involved in many experiments mostly related to the use-wear analysis of Paleolithic stone tools as part of the Laboratory for Traceology and Controlled Experiments, also known as TRACER. So let's hear what Ivan said about NFDI4Objects at the time of the conference.

**Ivan:** Experiments are meant to test hypotheses, but as you all know, there are lots of different types of archaeological experiments. Replication, reproduction, reconstruction, reenactment, field and lab experiments, actualistic and controlled experiments. Due to this very large variety of experiments, it is difficult to report, document, compare and share the designs and the results of experiments. What we now need is a common framework to do that.

With this pilot project, we aim to provide an easy template which helps experimenters to structure their experiments and to ensure comparability between different experiments and different working groups. Our workflow tool has the following objectives. It should help experimenters to plan their experiments to avoid misran experiments. It should allow experimenters to reflect on their experimental design. That is, why was the experiment run that way? It should also accommodate unforeseen issues because experiments rarely run according to plan. Again, it should allow reporting and sharing experimental designs and data. And of course it should be user friendly so that everybody can use it.

The workflow tool that we are planning should allow experimenters to build a visual representation of their experimental design. And this is why we are planning to use visual programming languages, where different building blocks like hypotheses, different steps, but also connections between them can be dragged into a workflow that represents your plan for the experiment. Eventually, this could look similar to this design for a use-wear experiment made by my colleagues and myself. There will be more features, the commenting option is very important in order to reflect on the experimental design. For example, we did this because... archaeological experiments are rarely linear, so you would

sometimes need to branch between two different parts of the workflow and to merge again, or to loop through some steps. Sometimes, also, you realize that your plan leads to a dead end. So in that case, you need to branch off earlier and create new steps, a new direction that will lead to the results of your experiment. You could also add potential directions for future experiments. The final feature is versioning and version control. This is because you have a plan on how you think you will run the experiment, but it often turns out that you run the experiment a bit differently. What is important here is that you have a record of what has changed between the original plan and the actual run of the experiment. Finally, you could even extend this to new or planned experiments, so that your experimental program will be continuously expanded.

This way, you will have a complete record of the original plan, of what has been run, and of what you are planning for the future. In order to develop and test our workflow tool, we will use it on the design and results of two sets of experiments that my colleagues and I have run already. One set of actualistic field experiments on pottery shaft kilns, and another set of mechanical lab based controlled experiments on past hominid stone tool use.

**Matilda:** This activity is of course very relevant to our EXARC community and also links directly with the tools that are developed as part of the RETOLD project. So fast forward almost two years and we are very curious to see what progress has been made in the pilot project. Ivan explains further.

**Ivan:** The project is still running and we have made some progress already. We now have a prototype of the workflow tool, which was presented during the last community meeting of the NFDI4Objects Consortium in September 2024 in Mainz, and we are currently working on improving that prototype based on the user feedback that we got since then. We're a bit delayed due to a change in programmers, but we plan to have a first truly usable version by the end of the year. So, watch this space!

**Matilda:** Now you may wonder, how does all of this link in exactly to what EXARC is doing in the RETOLD project? As many of our listeners probably know already, RETOLD aims to develop a standardised workflow for open-air museums to document and digitise data on buildings, crafts and traditions. The project's emphasis is on sharing to ensure that collective data will be freely available in open access format so that museum professionals, researchers, and the public can access and use them very easily. Dr. Roeland Paardekooper, EXARC founding member, is one of the key figures in the RETOLD project and currently managing the largest digitalisation project in the German museum world. We asked Roeland to tell us a bit more about how RETOLD and NFDI4Objects are related.

**Roeland:** NFDI made a great impression on us, back in Poland in '23 at the EXARC Conference. We did not know until then that NFDI actually links all research in Germany under one umbrella, under one network. It is much larger than we thought.

We - I mean RETOLD/EXARC - we focus on transfer of knowledge and experience, in person and online. In our open-air museums, we have hundreds of small activities: houses are designed, built and used, objects are used, repaired, discarded, we present ancient crafts, we do experiments 'in the wild' so to say, open-air laboratory. All these traditions, these experiences and abilities, they can only survive by actually performing them. Our museums are based on activities, otherwise the context is gone, and the meaning gets lost. But we cannot make sure that everybody can look over each other's shoulder all the time. So here enter the workflows we designed with RETOLD. From these, museums can create documentation in words, photos, videos and 3D models. That structuring enables already a better dialogue. However, collecting documentation alone is just an aid. You cannot learn from simple online videos or books alone.

Back in '23, when we saw Ivan's workflow tool we thought 'ah, that's a great start', and we could compare it with what we were doing back then. Ivan and friends are working towards the same aim as we do: a meaningful dialogue between experimental archaeologists (in the widest definition). The thought is that, if as an experimenter you know that someone did something similar, you can learn from them, also about their mistakes. Even if you cannot talk with them directly because they are too far away, or it happened 20 years ago, you should be able to quickly find details, or nerdy solutions for issues you encountered. Not reinventing the wheel again, but learn from others, and take that next step.

What NFDI does, you can call it networking, that's the main reason why we actually founded EXARC itself back in 2001. So, in short, yes, we are pleased with NFDI. RETOLD cannot get much further all by ourselves, and looking at how NFDI is on top of the latest digital trends and innovations in Europe. Our four year experience with RETOLD is a great contribution to that, and for that reason we are already chatting with Ivan and company, about how to put one and one together. Having said that, RETOLD is not sticking to NFDI and Germany alone. We are happy to discuss with museums everywhere to try out what we got, give us feedback, and together see how we can start a Phase Two of the RETOLD Project, to push RETOLD further once again.

**Matilda:** I should say as well, the Experimental Community Cluster based at NFDI4Objects, are looking for more people to join some of the temporary working groups there, which are basically involved in trying to indeed improve the standardized data collection of experimental archaeology and try and make it a little bit more approachable to collect data for experimental archaeologists. To try and create a kind of database or a workflow tool, that is then internationally recognized and applicable to everyone. Just to clarify, these working groups are not the EXARC working groups. They're temporary working groups associated with NFDI4Objects. You can find all information on the NFDI4Objects website. Everyone is welcome to join, whether you're a professional archaeologist, whether you're a prehistoric technology expert, whether you're an experimental archaeologist, whether you're a museum worker, anyone interested at all in any form of experimental archaeology is very much welcome to join. NFDI4Objects need as wide a range of people as possible from as wide a range of backgrounds, so it also doesn't have to just be in Germany even though it is a German-based organisation. It's an international group.

So, as I mentioned before, if you're interested in getting more involved with NFDI4Objects or with RETOLD, please do get in contact. We're always looking for more people to help us and collaborate with. We will also hopefully be sharing some more information on both of these projects in future episodes once they're a little bit further along in their development.

Moving on, another EXARC member who is taking part in a completely different undertaking, the Wildbiome Project, is Ilse Donker. She works as a skill sharing instructor, artist, forage guide, forest school leader, and also at the Hunebed Centrum as a Stone Age living history person with her seven year old daughter. EXARC Showcase host Jess Shaw talks to Ilse about what the project entails and what she's going to be doing exactly.

**Jess:** Hello, thank you so much for joining me. Really exciting to have you on the podcast. So you have a whole range of amazing skills and you're about to start, or, you've already started the Wildbiome Project. Could you tell us more about that?

**Ilse:** The Wildbiome project is a project organized by Mo Wilde and her crew. This project is all about foraging and wild foods and our bodies. So for me, it was awesome because I thought like, oh, this is

how the hunter gatherers did it. I'm a hunter gatherer now! I'm foraging for a very long time already, but not so intensely. So it was a deep dive into foraging. For the Wildbiome project, it's one month or three months only wild food, only wild foraged foods. And before the start we need to do some tests, like gut tests, blood tests and that kind of stuff, to see what happens when we end this project of this three months wild food, or one month. Because then we also have to do a test and then we can look up the differences. So that's really exciting.

**Jess:** Fantastic. Have you done anything like that before?

**Ilse:** Well, I'm a forager and I host forage strolls or walks. And I eat wild food a lot, as much as I can, but the funny thing is, I tried to gather a lot of food for this project, so these couple of months I didn't eat anything because I wanted to save it. It's also about living in scarcity, and of course I had the supermarket, but the mindset of gathering food and preserving it, it's pretty interesting, and also it gave me the feeling of, if you don't have a supermarket, how would life be then? Then you really need to live with all the seasons at the moment and find places where you can eat. So, especially when you're a hunter gatherer, you don't have constantly your place where you stay. So you will never take a lot of food with you because that's heavy and unhandy. You gather what you have at the moment. So I did this before, I did it all my life or as I can remember, making teas from nettles and that kind of stuff. But later on when I got a little bit older I had the feeling okay, now it's going to be more serious and now I'm going to implement it in my daily diet. So yeah, let's see, I made a start. I did not need to survive on wild food. But that is, of course, what's going to happen these couple of months.

**Jess:** It's such a good point talking about the mindset of gathering and having the scarcity mindset. It's more than just what you're physically eating, isn't it? There's that whole process of gathering and it takes time as well. Are you having to find time in your day to go out and gather?

**Ilse:** Yeah, and everywhere where I am, I can gather. We don't see much nature as modern species anymore. But if I go somewhere, I always see opportunities and that really gives me the feeling that I see more nature and appreciate nature more because I'm in a relationship with it, because I can eat it and I love it so I can also, in a sort of reciprocity, keep nature protected in a way. I'm always looking at: oh wow here we have this native species, oh, there are a lot of it. So maybe if I take some out and plant it elsewhere, I can hopefully create more biodiversity over at this place. So I'm trying to be a sort of hunter gatherer, horticulturist or something like that.

**Jess:** I really understand what you mean. I think, when you start to learn plants, especially when you can eat them or use them to create salves and things, you get far more excited. I've definitely noticed that walking around cities, going, oh, there's a bit of yarrow or a bit of plantain. It's an exciting thing. And they grow even in quite suburban areas sometimes.

**Ilse:** For me, it's interesting as a sort of Mesolithic reenactor -ish, I try to gather also wild plants for making baskets. So it's not only foraging for food, but also I'm trying to gather more plants and also try to get like a relationship with it. So for example, nettle is really nice to eat and the seeds are awesome and the roots and everything. But if you also take the fibers, you have even a broader relationship with this plant. A lot of people think that nettles are very annoying and I understand why. I was a kid, I played in the forest and got stung. But now that I know nettles on all these different layers, I really, really love the plant. So I would never just take it out and get rid of it. It's always part of the gardens that I try to make.

**Jess:** Do you think you'll face with kind of eating just foraged foods though?

**Ilse:** Well, before I drank coffee and ate sugar. And I thought maybe I'm going to quit it way before. And that is very helpful because I'm three months off coffee now and I feel great. And also sugar. I quit sugars and, oh, I could not believe how good it already feels! I eat a lot more vegetables. So the sugars that I get in at the moment are still like fruit sugars. And it's also interesting to talk about the whole sugar thing because if you quit sugars you start loving the other flavors more. Of course, if you only eat wild food, you're always looking for sugars, because that is like fast carbohydrates. But the necessity for eating and finding and hunting for sugars is gone, because it's just in the supermarket.

**Jess:** I'm really interested in your project for the fact that you're eating seasonally. When I worked as a cavewoman with Memma the Cavewoman, we were camping outside for most of the year, and I found in winter, I lost weight, and normally in winter when I live in a nice heated home, I gain weight because I'm eating more and exercising less, but when I was camping outside all year round and still kind of existing outside for most of my time, I was cold all the time. So I used all my energy to stay warm and I found I was craving kind of big, heavy stews that could warm me up with meat that you could preserve from the earlier hunting season. And then as we came into spring, I really wanted salads and that's when all the fresh greens are coming up, the young nettles, the hawthorn leaves. I really was surprised by how much my body knew what it wanted, depending on the season, and knew kind of what would be around almost.

**Ilse:** Yeah, and that is beautiful, I really love that because if you live in luxury the whole time, you get blind for all this luxury. And when you stop having this luxury in the beginning, it's probably annoying, but in the end you feel way more gratefulness through the whole day for everything that you get. So I think it's also sort of a mindfulness practice in a way, and of course saying that I'm one of the privileged people that don't have their life depending from it, you know? Because that's also important to say, for people in war areas it is a matter of life and death, but I still feel the gratefulness. And it's really sort of an honorable practice for me, and I think that is great, because then I understand why foraging is a nice form of activism, because you start appreciating nature way more, and you start being very careful in how to preserve the landscapes and honor it in a way. I gathered a lot of hogweed every day. I walked a path and there was a lot of hogweed and I could eat it and it was really nice. I took every day a little leaf and every day I had an egg from our chickens and I mixed it with this hogweed and had a really nice breakfast and I felt so content and felt so happy. And then one of the days I came there and it was all gone. Because the municipality just had a person there mowing it all away. A lot of times people say, well, if everybody starts to forage, there will be no green left. I think this is not true because if you start foraging, you're so carefully and you're so grateful for everything that nature offers. So you try to preserve nature more and you try to help the biosphere. This is why foraging is very activist.

**Jess:** I really like that. I've not thought of it in those terms before, but I absolutely can see how it's a form of activism. You really have to know your environment and as you were saying before, looking with more care and knowing the areas that are good for certain plants. You're invested in it in many ways. I don't know if you've read Braiding Sweetgrass, it talks about the...

**Ilse:** Yeah, of course!

**Jess:** Yes, a gorgeous book and that wonderful exchange, Mother Nature taking care of you and it's a two way street of giving and receiving. By foraging, sometimes you're helping plants grow back stronger.

**Ilse:** We people tend to put ourselves above the situation and with foraging you step into the situation, so you will become more part of nature instead of standing above it. I hope, I'm a romantic and if I

think about hunter gatherers, I really loved hunter gatherers because I had the romantic vision, well, there wasn't capitalism then, so this is going to be my favorite period. Of course, it is more layered than I say it now but I really hoped that hunter gatherers also lived like this. So it was my doorway to stepping into sort of experimental archaeology. And it was really from a hippie mindset of yeah, let's make the world better. Let's be hunter gatherers.

**Jess:** It's a wonderful motivation. I've definitely found the Stone Age quite an appealing time in many ways. I recognize it must have been so hard. You're vulnerable to the surroundings. If the plants are suddenly gone the next day, or if the weather has turned, you really have to plan ahead. You would have had to have worked together far more. For this project, there's a whole group of foragers doing this, but you're all individual, right? You're not physically working together and that's definitely a challenge. It's all pressure on a single individual, yourself, to have to go out and get enough food for you. While you're feeding less people, there's also just less eyes and hands to look for and collect things.

**Ilse:** We try to get more community around it, with some other Dutch working in the Wildbiome project. It's very helpful. If somebody has a question, everybody responds. I really love the tribal thing, that's also why I'm very much inspired by native people, but also by older tribes and animals, because they are also living in tribes, some. We are sharing so much information about this, and it feels like, okay, I'm struggling with this, oh, you're struggling with that too, oh, that is shit for you, but nice for the community, so that is cool. And I think we are with five or six people in the Netherlands and in the UK there are a lot.

**Jess:** You said you go in the woods a lot, is that nearby? Is it vast, or...?

**Ilse:** It depends because it's not only about going to the woods because all the woods or a lot of woods in the Netherlands are just sort of a monoculture. When I was younger, I didn't see it. I thought like, oh, this is a fairytale, big trees and everything. But now I understand, oh, well, there's an American oak. Oh, well, there's a Douglas fir. So you start to see that there is not a lot of biodiversity in these woods but at the same time, living near cities and villages there is like a place of disturbance, and in this place of disturbance, there are a lot of flowers and plants that are very well edible. So going into the forest is nice because you can definitely find types of plants that you can eat or mushrooms or whatever - or animals - but close to cities or villages you can also forage a lot.

**Jess:** So this project, when does it start for you?

**Ilse:** On the first of April.

**Jess:** Do you choose if you're doing it for one month or three months or are you assigned to that?

**Ilse:** I'm trying to do for the three months, but I'm also a mother, and I also have a couple of jobs. I really love the challenge, but I also need to see what is healthy for me. So I will try to do the three months that is like the basic setup and if it doesn't work I'm just doing it for one month.

**Jess:** Are there particular plants that you're excited to eat or you eat often?

**Ilse:** Yeah, nettle, of course... at this moment birch sap, but I'm also very excited for the spring to come because I really love to eat all leaves from the trees and I already ate some hawthorn leaves and, ah, it is so awesome! And of course the fun things like you can slow-juice normal grass and then you have a sort of very healthy green substance that you can put through apple juice, for example. And I really

love those funny things, you know? And I really love to eat more hogweed and wild garlic, of course, because that is also here at the moment. I'm gathering a lot of wild garlic, to eat a lot of it.

**Jess:** You mentioned you were going to have your gut biome tested. Are you also recording results in any other way? Are you going to be writing your experiences of how it tastes or how you find the experience of gathering and things like that?

**Ilse:** Normally I would do that via Instagram because it's really nice to make pictures and have a sort of a diary in it. But I really want to try to put my things I get to know on maybe something as Substack so I can enjoy it myself. And learn, but also give the knowledge through to other people if they want to, because I think that's very important in this individualistic society where we're living in.

**Jess:** Fantastic, we'll share it in the links as well. Yeah, it's great knowledge to share.

**Ilse:** They also have this EatWild app. The EatWild app is an app we need to fill in the food that we take in, so we can show what we ate and what the results will be on your gut biome. It's also very interesting because I already do this EatWild app to see, what am I eating, what kind of stuff is in it, how many calories, and how many fats? I think that people that are not doing the Wildbiome project can also join the EatWild app. There are recipes in it, all wild foods. You can learn a lot about the foods. You can get inspired. Somebody said there's a lot of food porn on it. And yes, all these beautiful pictures and it's so cool. So I would very much recommend people if they're interested in eating wild foods to download this app and I think it will launch for not-Wildbiomers the first of April.

**Jess:** Brilliant. How did you actually come across this project? How did you get involved in it in the first place?

**Ilse:** I saw it on Instagram. Then I found Mo Wilde, Monica Wilde, and then I found her book, it's called The Wilderness Cure. It is so nice because this book reads more like a diary than as a foraging book. Normally you have a foraging book and then there are recipes and then you need this and need that, but this book... it felt very personal, the struggles, the inspirations and the gratefulness and everything. I was so inspired and I tried to eat more wild food then, after reading this book, or while reading this book. Then I saw this call: Oh, do you want to join next year? And I was like, yeah, yeah, yeah. So I put my name in and registered and everything.

I'm doing this Stone Age reenactment, Mesolithic, Neolithic. And there's a lot of emphasis on fabric, plant fibers, pottery and working with bone and making leather. But I see that food is most of the time not so interesting in these groups, but food is so essential because if you don't eat, you will die! So I thought okay, I'm a forager, maybe I can implement more foods in this community - and then I'm talking about the Netherlands, of course. And there are some people that are trying to cook this way but it's always about, like, getting a big salmon or finding a roe deer. But all these plants, nobody's really watching what is growing there. You cannot live like a hunter gatherer, but you can try to get the hunter gatherer mindset about seeking opportunities for plants to eat. That is very interesting about the project where I'm in at the moment. It is very much a soft skill and it's more about philosophical research, of course, but I think that is very important next to all the things that are found and are replicated or are made. I think this eating with a Stone Age mindset or eating like a human-still-more-animal mindset is very interesting and also very important for all the other things that we do.

**Jess:** That's one of the beauties of experimental and experiential archaeology is the highlighting that unseen aspect. Archaeology is so focused on objects, because it's often the objects we find. But food

is something we still eat, funnily enough. And everyone's interested in food. It's such a transportive carrier of culture and multi-sensory. It's got the taste and the smell and the texture. People maybe avoid it because... the strength and the weakness of the Stone Age is that we know a lot about it, but there's so much which we don't know. Some people are kind of scared to venture into the unknown. How did you become a forager? How did you get into that?

**Ilse:** We had a green behind my house, I cannot even remember what kind of bush it was, but I always made perfumes with the flowers. But also rose hips, if you open it you have all the seeds and those seeds are itching like hell. And I was a kid, and I was annoying, so everybody was itching, of course. It started as a child, just playing around with foods and with plants, and it was really fun. At a certain point I grew older, and then I developed my skills in it, and later on I tried to give it through, also with the skill-sharings that I organize to get a group of people together and everybody has a skill, like working with fish leather or making nettle fibers, for example. What I see is that in the beginning if people come together, they are so afraid, they are so afraid of being not good enough, of being a beginner... but I'm always trying to say, if you're a beginner, I can be an expert, and then later on, you will be an expert too, and probably about something that I'm a beginner in. So we will have like a relational way of teaching each other and learning together. And that is also what I try to do with the plants, regulating nervous systems, making space for people to wander, to taste, to feel, and to amaze themselves in the end.

**Jess:** That sounds absolutely incredible. So many different problems that you're tackling..., creating a sense of community, giving people a purpose, allowing them space to be outside. That wilderness gathering, so much of it's kind of wrapped up all together. Did you find you became a Stone Age reenactor through foraging? Was that what led you to that as well?

**Ilse:** Well, I became a Stone Age reenactor because I thought, oh, look at the world. People are so unhappy. When were they happy? And of course, I would never know because there's no find of happiness, probably. But I was trying to go back and back and back in time. And then I thought, okay, if you're a hunter gatherer and you are nomadic most of the time then you don't like carrying a lot of stuff, because that is heavy and that is, when you're walking, annoying. So I thought, okay, if you don't want to carry a lot of stuff you should be very crafty. It really inspired me to try to become crafty from what nature brings. At a certain point, I thought like, wow, I made this... made from my own leather, oh, I really going to dress up in it. So it was also through craft, through my political visions, through my philosophical ideas, through the love of plants, all together, it was like, okay, I'm going to feel how it is to be a Stone Age person in a museum. I really wanted to talk with people about it because our ancestors have so many interesting skills and are not addicted to technology, for example. So I started at the Dolmen Museum, and it was really fun. I could really try out my visions about, like, if we look at the world from this perspective or from a contemporary perspective, how would it feel? And everybody I talked with was like, oh, wow, yeah, oh, that's pretty interesting. Okay, I'm going to put my phone down now for a week and blah, blah. It was fun. We can very much get inspired by our ancestors that wanted to be mobile instead of having a mobile.

**Jess:** That's brilliant, a great tagline! That's what I love about archaeology as well and open-air museums in particular. It is such a good mirror to ourselves, holding up the past and comparing. I'm really looking forward to seeing the results of the study that you're taking part in, seeing the side benefits of it, not just about the gut health and your energy levels, but the kind of more holistic side as well.

**Ilse:** I was also thinking, there's a book, *The Gift* from Lewis Hyde, really interesting about sort of the gift economy of native people in Turtle Island, or we call it America. And when the colonizers came

in..., and it's pretty interesting because they talk about giving gifts as an economy and how trading and sharing... yeah, I highly recommend it.

**Jess:** That's so interesting. There's such a good culture of gift giving in ancient Greece as well. Yeah, it's something we might have lost in more recent times. I know in Arabia, they have a culture of gift giving as well, because it's such a hostile environment that if you don't help and offer water, then traditionally those people would have done well in the wilds of the desert. It's been amazing to talk to you. I'll throw in a last question: do you have a favorite plant to forage?

**Ilse:** No, every plant is awesome! When you start looking at nature you see, like, this green wall, and every time you learn more about nature, and know about the plants, you start debunking the green wall, and that's something that John Young wrote about or talked about, very interesting. All these plants they are their own persona, they have their own qualities and they're important equally in this biosphere. Even like Japanese knotweed, it's a very invasive species, but it is such a punk plant because it's growing, breaking through bricks, breaking through asphalt! So it's such an inspiration to break away this civilization and make more soil, you know? So, no, I love them all, but at this moment, I'm working with the birch. Of course, the taste of Douglas fir is very nice, even it's not a tree that really belongs here, but it's still such a treat. I can talk about this very long and that would be pretty boring, probably, but I'm very in love with all the plants in their own way.

**Jess:** Fantastic. It's been an absolute joy to talk to you and hear about your experiences. Thank you very much for joining and best of luck for your project. I look forward to hearing the results and seeing what you discover. One final question: is there anything that EXARC members can do to help with the project, that they can follow along? You mentioned that there was an app that they could join, but is there anything extra they could do to engage?

**Ilse:** Well, they can support Mo Wilde because she's doing a lot of stuff for it and her team, of course. You can donate to her. If you want to help me, you can also donate some for my GoFundMe. That is also nice. But I think like follow it via Instagram, mine or Mo or the Wildbiome Project. There are so many enthusiastic participants who are really trying to get the money for the tests. So there are probably people you can help with it. So yeah, it's really nice.

**Jess:** Thank you very much.

**Matilda:** Well, I certainly look forward to hearing the results of Ilse's project. I'm not sure exactly how we're going to be sharing those, but watch our socials and our newsletter to see where you can hear more about the results from Ilse's project once it's done and good luck Ilse!

And thank you very much for listening to this slightly different format of the EXARC show. Generally, you might have been expecting to hear an EXARC Extracts episode at this time, where I summarise the latest edition of the EXARC Journal. However, you may also have noticed that we didn't release an issue of the EXARC Journal this quarter. That is because our wonderful volunteer team over at the Journal are currently revamping the website [exarc.net](http://exarc.net) to become fully dedicated to the Journal. So the Journal will have its very own website. It will be all updated and spic and span and shiny, so make sure to keep an eye on that space and hopefully it will be ready to view soon, which is all very exciting.

Because of that, you may also have noticed that we have a new EXARC website, which is now [exarc.org](http://exarc.org). It is also still under construction. We're still ironing out a few of the little technical glitches and hiccups that of course come with any big developmental project of this type. So, bear with us as we work out those glitches. If anyone has any questions or can't find any relevant information, you can

always email us at [info@exarc.net](mailto:info@exarc.net). Also some very exciting events coming up, most specifically, of course, our EXARC conference, which will be happening in May in the town of Curitiba in Brazil. The conference will be completely hybrid. If you would like to register to participate either in person or online for the conference, please do send us an email [info@exarc.net](mailto:info@exarc.net). You can also find all information on prices, et cetera, on the website.

So, thank you for bearing with us this month while we try something a little bit different. As always, if you have any feedback on the podcast, please do send us an email, message us on social media, comment, review, rate. It always helps us to see how we can improve the podcast and make things better. Until next time, thank you very much.

You've been listening to the EXARC Show run by EXARC, the International Society for Experimental Archaeology, Open-Air Museums, Ancient and Traditional Technologies and Heritage Interpretation. For more encounters with the world of experimental archaeology and open-air museums, check out our free open access EXARC Journal. To find out more about the different research projects of our EXARC members, you can check out our EXARC blog, or join our Discord server, completely free of charge. If you're interested in becoming more involved with EXARC, you can also become a member. For full details and to find out more about what we do as a society, check out our website at [exarc.org](http://exarc.org).

## **References**

Project website: <https://monicawilde.com/the-wildbiome-project/>

### Books:

The Wilderness Cure, by Mo Wilde

Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants, by Robin Wall Kimmerer

The Gift: How the Creative Spirit Transforms the World, by Lewis Hyde

### Info on Ilse's activities:

Website: [www.ilsedonker.nl](http://www.ilsedonker.nl)

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/ilse.aarde.donker>

Substack: <https://ilsedonker.substack.com/>

Instagram: Ilse donker (she/her) (@ilse.aarde.donker) • Instagram profile