

## **July 6, 2023**

### **Interview with Xanthe Hall**

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#### **Summary:**

Xanthe Hall recounts her journey in nuclear disarmament, beginning in the 1980s with the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament in the UK, driven by a strong opposition to nuclear weapons and an emphasis on nonviolent action. She emphasizes the importance of shifting global narratives, including the focus on the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons, which played a pivotal role in the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). Hall discusses the challenges posed by current geopolitical dynamics, such as the war in Ukraine, and the difficulties in maintaining momentum for disarmament in a world still shaped by nuclear deterrence beliefs. Despite these obstacles, she remains committed to fostering collaboration across civil society and advancing a normative process for disarmament, believing that a nuclear-free world remains essential and achievable. This document summary was generated by an artificial intelligence language model and was reviewed by a Wilson Center staff member.

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Transcript - English

**Michal Onderco:** Thank you very much for being a part of this project. I really appreciate it. I always started interviews by asking people, how did they become interested in nuclear weapons? So how did you become interested in nuclear weapons?

**Xanthe Hall:** Okay, we have to go back more than 40 years because I started when I was at university. And I had, yeah, it was the year that ... I can't remember what it's called in English...The two-track decisions made in NATO. And it was clear that cruise missiles were coming to Great Britain where I lived at the time. I was in Birmingham, studying and yeah, I went to an exhibition of photos from Hiroshima. And I was very moved by this. So I have to say that I had already been as a teenager, very concerned about the nuclear question more just fearful, without any real knowledge, and going to this exhibition, made it clear to me that it was time to do something about it. And at that time, the movement was really growing in the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. And I met somebody at that exhibition. She was handing out leaflets for the local group of Edgbaston of CND. And I took some of the leaflets and said, I'll help you pass them out. And that was it. I was hooked as it were.

**Michal Onderco:** CND was also doing these protests at the base where the cruise missiles were supposed to be stationed. So were you also involved in that?

**Xanthe Hall:** Yes, yes, very much. So. I was at Greenham Common several times. And then I took on the idea of nonviolent direct action. I spent a lot of time looking at the independence movement in India led by Ghandi, and the whole principles behind it and started working on what we call NVDA, nonviolent direct action, and went to other bases Molesworth and Cottesmore and I started setting up actions for CND. I was working by that time for the West Midlands CND. And yeah, and I was working as a sort of liaison between CND and this NVDA network in Britain.

**Michal Onderco:** And you currently represent the IPPNW in Germany. So when did you become a medical doctor? And how did you combine your medical professional with the work for nuclear disarmament?

**Xanthe Hall:** No, I'm not a medical doctor. And I, basically, I came to Berlin in 1985, and was working at a printers. So I was basically printing the stuff from IPPNW. They were our main customer. And, and they discovered me and found out that I did nuclear weapons work, or anti-nuclear weapons work. And I also was, by that time, bilingual, and they said, "We need an international campaigner. So would you come and work for us?" And then I said, Yes.

**Michal Onderco:** And then the rest of history?

**Xanthe Hall:** Yes. And I have to say also, I'm now on the board of the ICAN in Germany, so I guess I represent them too. But I work for IPPNW Germany as their co-director.

**Michal Onderco:** And what do you find interesting about IPPNW? Why IPPNW? Why not other anti-nuclear organizations?

**Xanthe Hall:** Well, you know, to be honest, I thought I'd finished with the subject when I moved to Berlin, although it was clear, because it was still in the middle of the Cold War, and the wall still was standing, I wasn't away from the subject at all. It was a bit of a coincidence that it happened to be IPPNW that I was printing their stuff in the printers that I worked in, but it also was very attractive to me because they were working on the medical aspects. And I also worked in cooperation with their what's now Medact in the UK. It was the Medical Association for the prevention of nuclear weapons I

think in those days. Is that right? Anyway? Possibly not! In any case, it was clear to me that was the best way to talk about this subject was to talk about the impact of nuclear weapons in particular, what's now called the humanitarian consequences in those days, we call the medical consequences, or the medical effects. And this was very recognized organization that had a lot of respect in the community, also from politicians. So it seemed like a good place to go.

**Michal Onderco:** And in those years, since you started working for IPPNW, you never felt that you wanted to switch organization. Because maybe very often, especially in the nuclear field, there are people who sort of either switch organization or they switch foci. So, they work on cluster munition, and then they move to other things.

**Xanthe Hall:** I didn't think of moving organizations, but I have done other subjects. And I worked on the land mines campaign for many years, and I've worked on uranium weapons. That's been a big subject. And just generally peace questions. The war on Iraq was a major concern. When I first started the war in former Yugoslavia, I joined IPPNW in the middle of the Bosnian war. And, the whole Kosovo War. I did a lot of work in that area. But I also have done a lot of work on nuclear energy. And I moved from becoming just an international campaigner to becoming anti-nuclear campaigner, I had both subjects and also the connection between nuclear energy and nuclear weapons. And then eventually, we took on somebody else to do all the nuclear energy work. And that stayed a focus for me with the nuclear chain, uranium mining. So, there's a lot of stuff. And now as the co-director, I have to be a bit sort of all-bracing, but I still have my two main foci are the nuclear weapons and what we call international projects, which are basically joint projects with other affiliates, as well.

**Michal Onderco:** I ask every interviewee a question: How do you view the role of nuclear weapons in the world today? And some people see them as irrelevant. Some people see them as destabilizing. Some people see them as stabilizing. Would you put yourself into any of those groups? Or do you have completely different views?

**Xanthe Hall:** Yeah, I tend not to define nuclear weapons by the question of stability, because I think this is a sort of red herring that we talk about strategic stability, and there is none anymore. And as you know, after the Cold War, it's become so multipolar, that the question of stability is irrelevant. Talk about it in terms of belief in a nuclear deterrence, which I don't believe in. And I believe that nuclear deterrence as a concept is actually the major stumbling block to disarmament. So, if we could get people to understand that nuclear deterrence in itself prevents us from reaching the goal that we all subscribe to getting rid of nuclear weapons, because people still hang on to them in the belief that by hanging on to them, they somehow make themselves safe. I see nuclear weapons as, in that sense, unhelpful to achieve our goals, but also, I see them as an enormous risk factor through accident or deliberate use that we've been living with all our lives. And we were only lucky that we survived. You asked me at the beginning what started me off on this, and it was fear. It was a time in the 70s and the 80s where people were... it was in your face all the time. And as a young woman, I really didn't think I would survive. The next years or sometimes days, I was really, really terrified. And I think we've lost that. It's coming back a bit now. But it is really a weapon of terror. And I think we're experiencing that more.

**Michal Onderco:** Why do you think that people still cling to believing nuclear deterrence? Why do you think that the nuclear disarmament movement has not been more successful in turning the views of both policymakers and the general public more strongly against nuclear weapons?

**Xanthe Hall:** I think it's a lot to do with helplessness and resignation. The status quo is always stronger than change. But if you go back into history, and look, why did we develop nuclear weapons, then it's a lot also about fear, that was a trauma; a massive trauma of the Second World War, where people thought it's a possibility (of a) World War or war between the great powers is ended through nuclear weapons. And so that fear was, you know, replaced by, in my view, a bit of a sort of shimmer, you know, this idea that you can somehow become safe by having a bigger threat than the thing you had before without understanding what that threat does to you. And I think a lot of people took on the trauma of their parents or their grandparents, who always insisted, my father was the same. He said, "You know, you don't understand what real conflict is like. And before nuclear weapons, we had to live through it." So there's a bit of that, that sort of just taking on what went before. And now I feel it's like, people just say, "Well, it worked for so long", in their view. I don't think it did, but they think it worked. And it will continue working. And that's where it all falls down. If you forget the history and say, Okay, maybe it did, I'll have to give that one up. Right. So it did work. The question is, whether it will always work? It's the major question we have to ask because of the impact, if it doesn't.

**Michal Onderco:** Okay. And where do you think that the focus of the work of civil society should be? And I'm asking this, because there is a big part of civil society that works towards banning and eliminating nuclear weapons. And there is a big part of civil society that says banning nuclear weapons is a great goal in the long term, but in the short term, it's unachievable. So, we need to focus on smaller practical short-term steps. And there are others who say, we need to forget about all of these sorts of big questions. We need to work with the public and change the public views and create normative pressure. Do you think that there is one of them that has a bigger priority than other? Or am I understanding this completely wrong?

**Xanthe Hall:** No, no, but I mean, things have changed. That's the problem. That's when I was working on the process to get the nuclear weapons ban, it was clear that that was the best focus, because it also seemed achievable in comparison to what we worked on before we were concentrating on the idea of a nuclear weapons convention, which involves all of the nuclear weapon states as well. And we didn't get anywhere with that. We worked on it for about 20 years, and we didn't get anywhere, except we got people to start talking in countries that don't have nuclear weapons or are not in a nuclear alliance, that they would start saying, "Yeah, we like that. We want that." And, and so this idea of the nuclear ban was attractive then to non-nuclear weapon states. And then came the strategy. We can talk a bit more about that. But your question was about what should civil society focus on? That was why we focused on that. Or that we saw it was also achievable. Also, having achieved the landmine and cluster munition bans. We thought we could do that through like-minded states.

But now, IPPNW is very much more back to the roots, prevention of nuclear war. And I think that it's safe to say that our focus is, during this war, really on preventing nuclear war. And the way to do that is unclear. It's very difficult to talk about ways of preventing nuclear war between opposing sides that don't want to talk to each other. And in particular, because during a war, everybody seems to think that you can't talk to the other side, it's impossible to make any agreements at all. So that's where we seem to be focusing at the moment is the idea of the duty of governments to do this, even if they think it doesn't work, because they have to save us.

**Michal Onderco:** So, I wanted to get to this question a little later, but you started to talk about the war. And when I talked to advocacy activists, I always ask them, whether this war makes their work easier or more difficult. And they get conflicting answers. So what's your view on this?

**Xanthe Hall:** It makes it more difficult, because there's been a fantastically big rollback. We won a lot of ground towards banning nuclear weapons and getting rid of them, before this started. Maybe we were suffering under an illusion, I don't know. But we felt like we had got everybody on board with the idea [that] "We should get rid of nuclear weapons". And the question was, how do we get there, but basically, we were talking about the past. So this was, this was really a lot of I mean, you know, over the 40 years that I did, when I think back to what it was like, at the beginning to now, before this was started, we really had gone a long way. And practically overnight, it changed, not only in a political way. So, the politicians no longer wanted to talk about getting rid of nuclear weapons. But also the public turned around. So we had, before the war, over 90% were for a nuclear weapons ban in Germany. And we've only had one poll since the war started. But it already was 52% in favor of keeping nuclear weapons. And that is just such a tidal wave in the public opinion that it makes it extremely difficult to talk to people. But if you start talking about getting rid of them, they just say, "it can't be done. We see now what happens." People deliberately conflate unilateral disarmament with the Nuclear Ban Treaty, this is not what it's about. And you're more likely to be attacked quite viciously, sometimes when you try to talk about it, as though you are somehow supporting Russia. So, there's a general atmosphere of antagonism towards any part of the peace movement. So, I think it's more difficult. The only thing that became more easy was to get new members, because all the people who wanted to see something done suddenly started to flock to our organizations. And so, we got a lot of new members at the beginning. [off record]

**Michal Onderco:** So, you started to talk about the period of the last 40 years. So I want to ask you to look back at the especially the period since the end of the Cold War, and to tell me what do you see as the biggest failure in the field. You said that the movement had a lot of successes, but what do you see as the biggest failure?

**Xanthe Hall:** It is such a difficult question. [I am] not good on regret. But what I would say is we missed a chance, not just civil society, but generally the public, missed the chance in the 90s to do something to build on all of the good feeling that we had at the time, and we also missed the fact that there were things going on, like the Two Plus Four Treaty where we could, there could have been a different outcome. I mean, it was great that there was really a unification. But it should have been clarified what was in that treaty, what did they really mean, when they said to Russia we want to expand eastward, you know, stuff like that, or that they only got rid of the nuclear weapons in the East Germany and not in the West. Those were things that I thought we missed. I mean, a lot of it was secret, of course. But I spent a lot of time in the 90s, also working on NATO expansion and trying to get a nuclear weapon free zone, in Central and Eastern Europe. I was in the Hungarian parliament and spoke there about the idea. It was very popular in civil society in Hungary at the time, '97. And there was also a representative from NATO, who spoke and I will never forget it. But he had a narrative, which was just entirely, in my opinion, untrue, that he said that "NATO had liberated Eastern Europe." And as far as I can see, when I look at the history of what happened there, they liberated themselves. Yes, it had nothing to do with NATO. And then later on, they decided strategically, it would be better to be part of NATO. it just seemed to be like this lie was going on. And we were unable to break through this narrative with another one.

**Michal Onderco:** Do I understand correctly, that you think that, for example, the NATO enlargement or NATO expansion, was one of the failures after the Cold War? Or was it the narrative around it?

**Xanthe Hall:** No, I mean, as I have to be quite careful about this, I wasn't keen on NATO expansion. I would have liked to see more neutrality, obviously. But on the other hand, I'm also in favor of sovereign right to decide. But the failure was not to establish in binding way, that there would be no nuclear weapons in those countries. And there was only then this declaration of the three No's where there's no intention or plan or whatever. And that's not enough. I mean, obviously, it could happen anytime that NATO would just decide to move the tactical nuclear weapons. I can see that as a real possibility in this war, that in order to, you know, use deterrence, they would push the nuclear weapons to the front line. And that would be an enormous escalation if it was to happen. There's nothing there stopping that.

**Michal Onderco:** There was a Polish president suggested? I think, two weeks ago or three weeks ago...

**Xanthe Hall:** Yeah, they have been suggesting it for the last, I don't know, 15 years or something. But it's now become something...

**Michal Onderco:** Because of the Russians decision to move things to Belarus...

**Xanthe Hall:** Exactly.

**Michal Onderco:** So is there someone who is to blame for this?

**Xanthe Hall:** Not to blame. But I mean, it's a consequence of the fact that the peace movement or the civil society in the 90s was terribly weak. And because most people had run off to other subjects. The landmine campaign, for instance, was so achievable. We didn't think at the beginning it would be, but it was. It was one of those things where you can open people's hearts [off record]. It really made them think and then we got rid of them, but we didn't actually get rid of them. They're still being used today. But people had had enough of the nuclear question. I think a lot of people thought it's like with the INF Treaty. It was kind of done and dusted. I think we misunderstood what happened in 1986 in Reykjavik that that chance was completely missed. There, I would blame Reagan. First wanting Star Wars, but yeah, and then this, and I would blame Condoleezza Rice for the, you know, basically trying to pull the wool over the Russia's eyes when it came to the Two Plus Four treaty and having read transcripts of what went on, there is a there are particular people that you can blame. But I would say that civil society wasn't able to do their job because there weren't enough people, there wasn't any mass movement behind them anymore. That just dissipated.

**Michal Onderco:** And this is one of the things that sort of fascinates me as well. I was born in 1986 so I don't remember these things myself. But in, in the sort of late 70s, early 80s, there was this mass movement where hundreds of thousands of people went to streets I, I live in. I live in The Hague, where, you know, in '85, half a million people went to the park in the city center in protest against nuclear weapons. And that sort of civil society movement is no longer there. And do you think it's because nuclear war after INF we fought our nuclear weapons don't matter? Or is it because we all got drunk on the sweet wine after the of the peace dividend after the end of the Cold War? Or is it because there is some sort of other thing that is playing?

**Xanthe Hall:** Well, there, there are different reasons. You know, I think everybody had the reasons. I know that a lot of people immediately following the stationing of the weapons, even at that time gave

up, because they felt we'd lost. And later on, we understood that we hadn't lost because we got the INF Treaty. And Gorbachev has written in his memoirs that it was because of the movement that he had started to talk. But for a lot of people, they there was a resignation at that point. Yeah, we can't do anything much about it. And, yeah, you know, it wasn't just a peace dividend at that time, because the Gulf War started in 91. So, in the Cold War, we turned it into actual treaties, and there was some good stuff went on there. And we managed to get by '96, we've passed the Nuclear Test Ban. These were all really positive things.

I mean, there were people still working on these subjects. You know, the World Court project was very big. To get this, you know, we thought it was the right time for the International Court of Justice to make a ruling on the legality or the illegality of nuclear weapons. So there was stuff going on. But the mass movement, the public, they moved on, they really did. And they felt, if you talked to people, later on, you know, tried to say, look, this is this is not gone away, this is still a subject that the nuclear weapons, we still have overkill and stuff, they were always surprised. They thought that it was the INF treaty had got rid of nuclear weapons. I mean, lots of people really did believe that that it was over.

**Michal Onderco:** So you started talking about the Ban Treaty and how it came into being? And I want to get to that. But before we get to that, so I talked about the biggest failures. Could you maybe tell me about the biggest wins that you think in this period happened? So things that you think when things went really well, in the really good direction?

**Xanthe Hall:** Well, there was in 95, what went on at the NPT Review and Extension Conference. Although we felt it was a failure. Yeah, that was a failure and a win at the same time, because the failure was that they took away the leverage of the non nuclear weapon states to get anything really done, which is what basically led to the nuclear Ban Treaty, because that's new kind of leverage as well. You could see it that way. But at the same time, within civil society, we established a new movement. Before that the arms control community was much stronger in terms of the diplomats and the politicians would listen to the arms control community very strongly. And they were always talking about just reductions. And at that meeting, all of the organizations that wanted to get rid of nuclear weapons entirely came together and established this movement called Abolition 2000. That was in those days. And I was a founder of that. And we started then talking about what became the term Global Zero, and also the idea of a nuclear weapons convention. And that was a big win for getting the civil society to work globally on the subject. I said before, we then found out after 20 years of work that nobody was really taking it seriously, especially the nuclear weapons states not. And then came the next win was the new strategy, which came for the next generation, as it were, that have worked mostly on what they call humanitarian disarmament. And that was the point where we started to talk about the ban was difficult. Because a lot of people who had worked on the convention before, were not willing to give it up for a ban that didn't include the nuclear weapon states. Or might not, that was quite clear that at the beginning, it would be like minded states, like with the Ottawa convention, and there was a lot of skepticism that that would work. But still there was a momentum there that we hadn't felt before.

**Michal Onderco:** So what persuaded you personally, to shift?

**Xanthe Hall:** People that I worked with were younger than me that hadn't been through the Cold War. They said that we will be more successful with this route. And the biggest argument was that we already had a majority in the UN of states that wanted to get rid of nuclear weapons, but they weren't

working together. And our strategy would be to get these non-nuclear weapon states to speak with one voice, and then they would become the majority, instead of splitting themselves into middle powers and non aligned movement. And various different groupings, so that they would just identify themselves with this. With this idea, and the way to get everybody together, was to start by reframing the whole debate on humanitarian consequences, and for them to understand that it's not just a side topic for them, that they would be the ones that would be suffering, if nuclear weapons would be used. And so it meant the strategy was to provide the scientific evidence and explain that it is really a global issue that that is life and death for them. And it's not just a question of security issues between a handful of states.

**Michal Onderco:** This might be a cheeky question. Because you said that you were persuaded because the young people thought that the root of a ban was, like more likely to be successful? Now sitting here in July 2023. Would you say that TPNW has been successful?

**Xanthe Hall:** Yes. Very much. So. And, I mean, from the point of view of...

**Michal Onderco:** What is the yardstick to measure whether it's successful or not.

**Xanthe Hall:** How much it's a being taken into the normative process. So, for instance, it's now in colleges where they talk about international law and, you know, the whole body of international law has or is now [affected]. I mean, the fact that I'm being interviewed by you or the fact that I have a second interview today from someone from the Bundeswehr on just this subject. Okay. I didn't have that before. The fact that all the politicians that we talked to know what the TPNW is, and the fact that NATO is so scared of it.

**Michal Onderco:** Is it partially because the awareness of the TPNW is really high in Europe, rather than, and maybe even more in Germany because of the strength of civil society and of people like you and of your ability to do outreach. In my research, I have gone through the transcripts of the parliamentary debate, leading up to the ratification of TPNW in South Africa. And South African parliamentarians didn't know the difference between NPT and TPNW.

**Xanthe Hall:** : Yes, that's often the case.

**Michal Onderco:** And, as I mentioned before, I have done similar interviews in the US. And I hear often that if you go to the Hill, and you talk to people on the Hill...

**Xanthe Hall:** : They won't know what it is.

**Michal Onderco:** They want to know what it is. So, the question is, is it something that's very peculiar to Germany? Or do you think that this TPNW really spread it globally?

**Xanthe Hall:** if you look at the core group of states that took part, Germany, well, you know, anyway, wasn't one, but that's clear enough why. [off record] Austria was very important. But Mexico was really big. Brazil was really big. Nigeria was really big. South Africa, these were countries that were important. But when I look in on, say, the ICAN campaign, this group, who are the people talking on that. And they really are from all over the world. So that it's, it's really strong, particularly strong in Latin America, particularly strong, not just on the state level, but also civil society level. Africa dropped off a little bit because our main person died. But it's picking up again now there's suddenly, you know, being a lot more movement going on there. Japan is massive. Also, in India, we have the big civil society movement there. Australia is the biggest actually, they're the founders...

**Michal Onderco:** Yeah, because that's where ICAN is coming from.

**Xanthe Hall:** Yes, that's right. And they're still fantastically strong. [off record]

**Michal Onderco:** The TPNW supporters often like to talk about the support in the General Assembly, about the signatures. But if you look at for example, the base of ratifications it's not been so great especially in the last few months, in the years...

**Xanthe Hall:** It slowed down mostly because of Corona. That's before Corona it was very, very good indeed. And we're there in those Parliaments or talking to the people who bring these resolutions to get ratification. It has to go through in every parliament has to go through a long process of committees and blah, blah, and eventually then it gets ratified. Now everything stopped during Corona nobody talks about anything but Corona.

**Michal Onderco:** So do you expect that it will pick up again in the future?

**Xanthe Hall:** Right now, we're, of course, then back into this problem of, you know, the world situation. At a moment, we've lost the momentum, because of the war in Europe, but also because of climate change for lots and lots of countries, that's top of the list. You know, it's kind of like especially in the south, but I have to say, not just going back to where the strength is in this movement. It is in the nuclear weapon free zones. They're much more invested. And New Zealand is really big, as well as Australia, Japan.

**Michal Onderco:** So I wanted to also touch a little bit on the experience in Germany because I, especially in the run up to the last election, there was a real debate in Germany, for example, about the Tornado renewal and whether it should be sort of renewed with a dual capable aircraft. From your viewpoint, how did you view that debate? And how did you participate in that debate?

**Xanthe Hall:** We were very involved. We had a campaign called "Atombomber, nein danke". And we got a lot of people involved in writing, before it was even known that they were going to talk about it. We got people through a website that was organized, that they could write to their MP. I don't want to use the word bombarding. But yeah, we basically sent masses of mails to MPs saying "you should be against the acquisition of a new nuclear bomber." And they mostly hadn't heard about it. So, they were concerned. And so the debate began within the parties, because they all were saying, what is that about what's going on here? Then we found a couple of people who were willing to sort of champion the opposition, like Rolf Mutzenich, who went then on record publicly declaring that he was against it, and that was a bad idea.

**Michal Onderco:** And how did you choose him?

**Xanthe Hall:** Well, we didn't choose him, he chose us.

**Michal Onderco:** so, he came to you and said, I want to...

**Xanthe Hall:** No, no... he just did it by himself.

**Michal Onderco:** Okay

**Xanthe Hall:** But I mean, I know Rolf. When you've worked for so many years, you get to know certain people, and you get to know whose heart is ticking for the for abolition of nuclear weapons. And he's one of them. [off record] He's well respected. And he is a real, authentic person. I mean, it's not like a

lot of politicians who really are only looking for more recognition, more votes. He's actually believes in the subject.

**Michal Onderco:** When the debate was an ongoing, I mean, there were contributions from different people, there were people also within the Green party that had different views. Sometimes these politicians draw on civil society, for example, for expert views, or opinions on facts, and so forth. Was this sort of cooperation happening in Germany?

**Xanthe Hall:** Yes. Yes, we supplied them with publications for their party conferences. So that was part of the campaign as well, to look at when will they make what decisions so that would come up in the election? We started very early on the Green Party, talking to people that would bring motions at the party conference on just that, and other things. But that was a big focus was trying to stop that acquisition.

**Michal Onderco:** At that time, did you think that you had a reasonable chance of succeeding in preventing that?

**Xanthe Hall:** Yes, we did. We did.

**Michal Onderco:** And why do you think you did not succeed?

**Xanthe Hall:** Because they had to make a coalition with the Liberal Party, FDP.

**Michal Onderco:** So do you think if the FDP was not part of the government, they would have gone without it?

**Xanthe Hall:** I don't know, it's hard to say... we would have got a bigger backlash from the military, I think. But on the other hand, there was, in the military, also, people who said, you know, the DCA for nuclear weapons is not the main thing we need. We need other things. And the time, you know, the Bundeswehr was lacking a lot of very basic equipment. So, there were people in the military who felt also the same way as we did about, you know, a nuclear bomber. But the game changer, of course, was the F 35. Because before they were talking about other planes that were not necessary. I mean, there was just a massive argument going on, even publicly on Twitter, between people who were in the military or people who were in think tanks and the security side, talking about which plane was better and then dissing the other one. I mean, the F 35 has also taken a lot of flack, more recently, because it's expensive, and also has been failing a lot of the time. But basically, the Bundeswehr got to the point where they said, "we want that plane" I think, I can supply you with an actual source for this. But there was someone who was .... I think it was the Inspector of the Bundeswehr that was came out publicly for the F 35. And I think that made a massive difference to the decision as to whether to go for it or not.

**Michal Onderco:** And one of the things that I understand is that ... there was also this, I don't want to call it spat, but it was within the SPD, there was this discussion between the parliamentary faction and then of course, SPD held the Foreign Ministry and the foreign minister at that time Heiko Maas came out pretty strongly in favor of continuation of German participation in the nuclear *teilhabe*. And so, was this something that you were also expecting? Or were you expecting that the SPD would sort of more come together?

**Xanthe Hall:** Our feeling was when the greens got in, then they would cave then. So that was why we concentrated so much on the Greens was because we thought a red-green government was more

likely then to say, "Okay, we won't continue this". We're phasing it out, or we'll extend Tornado or something that would make it possible basically, in the end, or I think, like in the Netherlands parliament, the idea of taking the DCA, but then not using it for the nuclear mission. So because Bundeswehr really wanted that plane. And so. But I think if SPD had been in any other coalition, they wouldn't have changed. I think it was, the influence of the FDP basically strengthened the parts of the SPD that said, we should keep it. And then, of course, later on the war.

**Michal Onderco:** You mentioned the Netherlands. And one of the things is that I find interesting is that in all of the countries that take part in NATO nuclear sharing, maybe with the exception of Turkey, there is quite a strong anti-nuclear civil society. So, I was wondering if you could tell me a little more about how you work together or if you work together at all, or whether this is only within the framework of the ICAN Board or, you know, there is no specific framework for your cooperation?

**Xanthe Hall:** No, there's no specific framework, it's really within ICAN, but also within the work that is done at the bases. So there's generally communication between the organizations that organize actions that the bases and we visited each other I mean, right now we've moved the camp this year from Buchel to Norvenich, because ...

**Michal Onderco:** there is a reconstruction happening.

**Xanthe Hall:** Right! And they've moved the whole squadron. And there's like, for instance, someone from IPPNW Netherlands is speaking there. And there's usually several people from the Netherlands but also from Belgium come. Sometimes from Italy, never from Turkey, that's never been managed to get, you know. There's more cooperation also with Britain, because they're now talking about placing US nuclear weapons back there. And Greece. There's also the fear that they will, you know, Araxos will then host nuclear weapons again, I don't know if that's real or not.

**Michal Onderco:** Maybe I'm seeing it wrong, so tell me if I'm seeing this wrong. But if I go to speak to your event, and I see there's moral support. But is there also sort of, for example, exchange of know how or exchange of strategy?

**Xanthe Hall:** Yeah. Now we have had that as well. Over the years, many, I mean, this has gone back a long way. But we had a meeting at the Clingendael Institute. It was maybe even 15 years ago. Well, we started to try to work on a strategy. And there were people from all the nuclear sharing countries, again, not Turkey. And then we've had various conferences also online, which talked about nuclear sharing, and how to how to address it. The only problem I mean, we're very, we're very connected with information. Particularly we get fed a lot by Hans Kristensen. But also, there are various people that are always watching their own base. And then they feed in the information into social media and say, "Look, this, this is going on." Yeah, the question is whether the nuclear weapons have arrived and which bases? And it's a bit unclear at the moment of how good this information is. But I'm pretty sure they're not in Germany, the new ones? Because we haven't seen any real movement there. And so that happens, this exchange of information. But also information, passing on information what people have managed politically, to achieve. So we get reports from each other. And there's also an ICAN Europe. They have a call every month and they talk about what's going on. But they also talk about ideas of concerted action. And what can we do together? It's actually not so easy to do stuff together.

**Michal Onderco:** Why?

**Xanthe Hall:** Because every situation is different. And it's easier to talk about strategy in Germany, because we know each political party, what their position is, and who said what and which way you can get in and split them, or, you know, what motions you can bring in, at a party conference, but I trust the civil society in the Netherlands to do the same job. And when they get a success to tell us about it. The only thing is, we did talk about, like, for instance, trying to get social democrats in these different countries to talk to each other. And I don't know if that succeeded, I don't think it did.

**Michal Onderco:** And so I know that a year or two or three ago, all the COVID years sort of melt in there for me. But at some point, I know that the German and the Dutch Foreign Affairs Committee of the parliament met together to talk about nuclear weapons, but they will sort of as a part of the interparliamentary coordination, rather than anything else.

So, you mentioned twice already by now that Turkey has been sort of the odd one out that hasn't sort of been and the sort of coordination. So, what do you think makes Turkey different? Why do you think that it hasn't been sort of successful to mobilize civil society there?

**Xanthe Hall:** Yeah, the civil society is not strong, and they are working on human rights issues. So we, IPPNW, do a lot. We do lots of work in Turkey. But it's really mostly on the Kurdish question. And, yeah, in general human rights, sometimes on the nuclear power issue, but we've tried many times to get them interested in nuclear weapons and it wasn't possible.

**Michal Onderco:** Another question, which I sometimes ask, especially activists in Western Europe, is about why have these anti-nuclear arguments not found traction in Central and Eastern Europe? If you look, for example, ICAN has this Cities Pledge. If you look at the map, there is not a single city, east of German-Polish border that have signed the city pledge. I find that quite extraordinary. Why do you think that this success has been sort of limited to this part of...?

**Xanthe Hall:** Well, partly because, ICAN concentrate very strongly on the global south. And the civil society in the Western Europe kind of just joined ICAN, but we weren't the focus. It's become more of the focus now. Especially NATO members as than before, as a when we're trying to get build the movement. It was about like-minded states, so we weren't really looking at most of the states that wanted to join NATO. And I've spoken to ambassadors from Eastern European countries, and they say, yeah, actually, you know, we're quite in favor, but we wouldn't want to spoil our chances of getting into NATO. And opposite Poland, this case of Hungary, you know, very right wing. So, again, the civil society, they're concentrating on that. Also, human rights issues, you know, gay issues and so on.

[off record]

**Michal Onderco:** So you mentioned already that you are on the board of ICAN in Germany. Now moving on to another part of the interview, how do you view your organization's role within the bigger ecosystem of nuclear disarmament advocacy?

**Xanthe Hall:** ICAN Germany or?

**Michal Onderco:** No, IPPNW in Germany, and how do you view your role within the broader ecosystem? Or maybe even globally? How do you view the role of your organization?

**Xanthe Hall:**

Well, in terms of Germany, IPPNW Germany and ICAN Germany work extremely closely. [off record] But they were talking about more independence for the last couple of years, actually. And I think it's good. You know, if it's like having children, you have to let go of them at some point and let them do their own thing, which is why I can't see me staying on the board for that much longer, because I'm the only person that's over 40. And they've kind of hold on to me, a bit as the stability thing. [off record]

I do as little as possible now for ICAN just because I think they have they should be doing it because they do it so well themselves. Of course, the less I do for ICAN the more I do for IPPNW and we have a quite strong coordinating role in the ICAN network in Germany, which has now become I mean, that's something that was very dear to my heart, was to get all of the partner organizations in Germany to work together on certain things.

So we will, for instance, in September, we're planning on a big push for the parliamentary pledge. So we're getting people to arrange meetings with their parliamentarians, not just in the Bundestag, but also in all of the Landtage. And because two new people joined since the war started. People are just not signing up, the Cities Appeal has run aground as well. This is the effect that the war is happening on our movement. But now people are starting to think that the war has gone on and on and now it's like they're coming back a bit. You know, they're thinking about okay, we still believe in disarmament. We still want that. And we're not saying we're saying to them, it doesn't mean you have to get rid of nuclear weapons today. It means you want to have a normative process to get rid of them.

**Michal Onderco:** ICAN's main speaking point in many Western European countries is that they need to sign and ratify the treaty today.

**Xanthe Hall:** I know, I know, they say that. Because they that's, you know, as a part of running a campaign, as opposed to policy.

**Michal Onderco:** Should actually see as a as a talking point, rather than an actual honest, policy belief?

**Xanthe Hall:** The TPNW requires only that you have a plan, it doesn't require that you've already got rid of them when you join. So you can join today.

But of course, it's unlikely that any country, you know, will join that is in the nuclear alliance, until they have an idea how they can get rid of them. And that's right, they shouldn't join until they know how that's going to happen.

But of course, the campaigning spin, if you like, is to say, there's actually nothing stopping you. You know, NATO does not require you to have nuclear weapons. You know, obviously, they're saying there's a political requirement. If we do this, then we'll be ostracized within NATO, or will make NATO look weak.

So, but the very fact that there's this tension of us saying on the one hand, you know, if you're a sovereign state, you have a right, you can do this, you can do it today. And then saying, "No, we can't. But okay, we'll think about it." And then some numbers. So what are you doing to think about? Where's the plan? How are you? How's the process? It's a way of putting pressure... to keep saying "you can do it, you can do it."

**Michal Onderco:** And so we talked about the ecosystem. And sometimes when I talk to campaigners, they often talk about sort of the ICAN, especially the office in Geneva, as a very useful source of information, knowledge, background information that can be then fed into the local public policy

systems, ideas for campaigning and so on, so forth. Do you have the view of the ICAN's global structure in a similar way? Or do you see them in different way, because you live in a country where there is already so much knowledge existing?

**Xanthe Hall:** We do actually take quite often publications that they have written, and then we change them. So, to fit with Germany, Germany's you know, not just our policies, but also the way of thinking in Germany. So, ICAN International is very much more effusive and a fantastic-cheerleader-fronting your organization, that's always saying we can do it, we can do with it, you know, "we're the best, we're the strongest, we're the biggest". And that's what we want. Beatrice was the best front woman you could have had now because she looked good, she spoke well, she was just like, everybody wanted to interview her. And, we write a lot of our own background papers. But we often take the impetus from international, you know, they say for I mean, it's more to do with strategy, they say, "Okay, now we're going to concentrate on to the G7 summit." So we said, "Okay, we're gonna concentrate on the G7 summit", we might produce different materials, we might use them or make a mix. But it's the main thing is that we do it concertedly.

And they give us these ideas, we might not take all of them on board. And then the big thing is also having this platform, you know, this campaign has platform where we know what's going on all over the world. And then you get new ideas. So it's not always from the center as it were, it's also from the other partner organizations that so they coordinate that.

**Michal Onderco:** One of the things that really interests me is that, for example, in the Netherlands, IPPNW was led by Peter Buijs. And Peter, for example, did not have almost any cooperation with Pax that is part of ICAN. And part of the reason was because there was sort of, well, there was personal differences, but also the views that IPPNW was more committed to these older ways of thinking about and they were not fully on board with all the new, wonderful ideas. And in Germany, it seems to be completely different. And so, my question is whether it all comes down to sort of really personalities on the ground, or if there is something else that I'm missing.

**Xanthe Hall:** [Long pause] There is a generational conflict going on. And at the beginning, it was very apparent that the leaders of the convention, Abolition 2000, were at loggerheads with ICAN, and then people started to move over. So there was a lot of emotion involved. There was a feeling that we were being kicked out. And people, especially who were not that old, older, but not that old, but then still wanting to work for many years to come as it were this feeling of now "everybody's gotta go to ICAN and we're not important anymore". And to some extent, that happened to me too. But the very fact that I managed to, I knew I could see that this was going to happen, because it's a more attractive movement. And it actually was getting young people, which is what we've been talking about in the older movement for so many years, but nobody wanted to work with us. There are also different ways of working. The older movement is much more left-wing than the new.

**Michal Onderco:** It was not my impression, but...

**Xanthe Hall:** Certainly, in Germany. They would describe themselves as left wing.

**Michal Onderco:** I don't think I've ever met a CDU-voting activist for nuclear abolition and ...

**Xanthe Hall:** No, obviously. But the green movement is also not really... I mean, some people would define it as left wing, but it isn't. It just isn't anymore. It's changed during the Yugoslavian war, to one

that was no longer ideological, and political and whatever. So anyway, the younger generation is much more pragmatic. And, and much more strategic and, they take more of more professional line, and that attracted me, because that's where I'm in that group, as it were, much more, you know, that I am in an ideological group. So I don't define myself as left wing or, or anything particularly, it's not about my politics, it's about this subject in itself. And nuclear weapons will not be abolished, unless everybody believes that it's a good thing, and that includes the CDU.

**Michal Onderco:** So who would you call as the closest organizations that you work with? And this can be within Germany or elsewhere, and can be organizations that you find inspiring the organizations that you find as a good source of information or knowledge? I mean, you mentioned Federation of American Scientists, are there other organizations that you find particularly useful for your cooperation.

**Xanthe Hall:** Cooperation, not so much as information. For the cooperation, we cooperate, again, with all the ICAN partner organizations, but the main one is, apart from obviously ICAN Germany, *Atomwaffenfrei jetzt*. That's the short name, which I helped found. So it's kind of like I moved away from them to go to ICAN Germany because of the tensions that we talked about before, that they didn't want to completely go into the ICAN camp, but they were an ICAN partner before ICAN Germany even existed. So, we were already cooperating on that and we have sort of like division of tasks and they concentrate more on, for instance, working on the bases and working in the cities, the Cities appeal or they're much more regionally diverse. Although that's not true. IPPNW are very regionally diverse, but in the towns and cities they tend to work with the members of *Atomwaffenfrei Jetzt*, which is a coalition of over 100 peace groups. So it's actually more of a grassroots campaign. And they're our strongest partners, I would say next to ICAN Germany. But on a international level, I look to a lot of Think Tank people. We worked really closely with the IFSH. I don't know if you know...

**Michal Onderco:** Yeah, in Hamburg

**Xanthe Hall:** Yeah. Really closely. In fact, there's a sort of like, they wander backwards and forth, these people between think tanks and NGOs a lot of the time. And certain individuals and whatever, but also, yeah, Hans Kristensen. I already mentioned. Really, it's more him, than the Federation..

**Michal Onderco:** And when you look in recent years, there has been an expansion of interest in nuclear weapons and think tanks in Berlin. So SWP has now a nuclear team. IFSH used to have until Oliver left. There is now ELN in Berlin.

**Xanthe Hall:** There's still people in IFSH...

**Michal Onderco:** Yes. But, I mean, their Berlin office. Yes. So, I misspoke. Okay. So IFSH... ELN is now in Berlin, that Oliver is there. IISS established presence in Berlin. RUSI has an office in Berlin, DGAP has people working on nuclear weapons, and there might be others that are missing. Do you work with any of them?

**Xanthe Hall:** Yeah. I mean, obviously, there are some that don't want to work so much with us because they think I mean, you know, there are it's difficult, you know, I mean, DGAP is a good example. What's his name? Christian Mölling. He rubbishes us a lot of the time on Twitter. So we just look at it like a sparring match, as it were. So, there's a bit of back and forth there, whatever. But there is a deep-seated difference. In the beginning, it goes back to the belief in nuclear deterrence and whether

or not and as people feel very emotionally about retaining nuclear deterrence, so they can become quite rude.

**Michal Onderco:** When I think I think both sides can be quite rude at the extremes.

**Xanthe Hall:** I try not to. I try to be civil, because it is civil society as it were, but, you know, whenever I'm speaking, say, in the parliament, committee thing or whatever, usually, these people are there. So, we know each other, you know. Who was I spoke to recently? I had a conversation with somebody who was in one of the think tanks that where we haven't had much contact before. And he was surprised at how, how so amenable I am or, you know, it's kind of I think that's also a group thinks in some of these organizations that seem to think we're kind of like, really wild and wacky, and impossible to talk to [off record]

**Michal Onderco:** That was a feeling among multiple groups. I mean, Norway, sort of dropped out at that time.

**Xanthe Hall:** It changed the government.

**Michal Onderco:** Yeah, but also when it sorts of switched towards the focus on I mean, I normally know this from the literature on the Treaty, that there was sort of this feeling that they didn't like the idea of Ban Treaty.

**Xanthe Hall:** Okay, so there's been ...Yeah, so maybe people felt it's been a bit hijacked by a certain group of countries. That's possible. It's also possible that's true. Yeah. Because I know from the other side, the discussions on strategy, which of course, predated the actual process, about how to get a process. And Mexico was very strong on that point, because they'd already been through the process many times before Arms Control Treaty, cluster munitions, and they knew what they were doing. So diplomatically, then you had to get that process to work.

**Michal Onderco:** So we talked about the think tanks in Berlin and the cooperation. The sort of slightly different beast are the academics. And, of course, in Germany for a very long time, Harald Muller was this very important academic figure working on these issues. Now there is in Berlin at the Hertie School, there is a group of people who work on nuclear issues. Is there any cooperation between you either as a person or as IPPNW and the academics in Germany on sort of getting any sort of policy impact?

**Xanthe Hall:** Well, there's been a lot of work with Carl Weizsäcker Center in Hamburg, and also with Carmen Wunderlich, who was at HSKF well, but she moved to University of Duisburg.

**Michal Onderco:** And now at Münster, she has a *vertretungsprofessur*.

**Xanthe Hall:** Oh, my goodness, I didn't even get that. Because she was in Duisburg. So we have various, various academics, Jurgen Schaffran, whether it's sort of a handful of people that we see as friendly as it were, you know, they don't have to actually believe in the Ban Treaty, necessarily, but they have to be open to it. And specifically, they have to be open to the idea that there's normative processing, and Hertie, for instance, I met a woman who works there, and we talked about the NPT and the TPNW and all this stuff. And she was she was talking about it to her students purely on the normative process question, and he was extremely well-versed and interested in this topic with. I could tell that she wasn't like denigrating it in some way. So good. Like, "that's never gonna work" thing. It's, it seems.

What I'm hearing is that it seems in the universities to be growing in favor as a serious subject. Yeah, it depends on the university, though. I mean, there are some that are more open than others.

**Michal Onderco:** We talked quite a bit about sort of successes and failures and different steps. And I want to ask a really big question, which is, how do you define impact? And when do you know that your work has impact?

**Xanthe Hall:** Well, you know, when I do project management, and then you have to actually identify what are the benchmarks of having success. And obviously, you know, they're a very banal, kind of like things like, how many people click on that page?

**Michal Onderco:** Can I interrupt. So, I once interviewed someone who is who works for a major foundation. And he said, so my goal is to change the world. But the KPI that my grantees gave me is how many publications they give out, and how many people show up to their events.

**Xanthe Hall:** [Laughs] Yes

**Michal Onderco:** And there's a disconnect between the sort of the goal that you really change the world. And the KPI which is about how many people click on your links?

**Xanthe Hall:** Well, yeah, obviously, it's impossible to do real proper benchmarks with the big changes. And usually you can only see them in hindsight, and say, okay, that worked. And so obviously, the evaluation of things that we've tried to do is the main thing, but the impact thing is how much we're being talked about. And, and actually how much the nuclear weapons states and their allies are reacting is really a sign of the impact.

So, for instance, you know, during the negotiations that Nikki Haley came and did her press conference, right in front of the door of the negotiations, that was really good. It's like, you know, okay, so you're really worried about this. And, or the letter that was sent around during the UNGA in 2016, where they were supposed to be voting on whether to start the process. There was a letter that went to all of the NATO countries from the US saying, don't vote for this. And all of the arguments were showed that the impact was definitely there. Yeah. So at least the fear of the impact was there. So whenever the nuclear weapon states say "it's irrelevant, it's uninteresting, we don't care". We know that's not true. Otherwise, they wouldn't be always putting pressure. I mean, the pressure on countries like Kazakhstan and the Marshall Islands is ridiculous.

**Michal Onderco:** But Kazakhstan has signed and ratified the Treaty.

**Xanthe Hall:** I know, but then, you know, the pressure from Russia to keep their testing range open, is very big. And I don't know how they're going to resolve that, because..

**Michal Onderco:** They have allowed Russians to test some of the missiles.

**Xanthe Hall:** Yes.

**Michal Onderco:** Which is in violation of the Treaty...

**Xanthe Hall:** It is in violation of the Treaty and of course, that's the thing is that could make or break a Treaty. If they just tolerate that site. The interesting thing will be what, what will happen with things like that, but the same thing is happening with the Marshall Islands haven't even signed because of the

testing, missile testing there. So those are the the proof of the pudding things, which will decide in the end on the impacts, whether or not it's going to actually be serious, taken seriously.

**Michal Onderco:** So, do you think that...

**Xanthe Hall:** Sorry, the one other thing I forgot to mention, of course, is the banks and how much they did disinvest. That's a major source of impact, as it were you see them running away from nuclear weapons investment.

**Michal Onderco:** So, when the war in Ukraine started, there was this piece somewhere, which basically said, well, for a long time, the societal responsibility guidelines were basically about divesting from military in general, right. So, banks were sort of trying to divest from security sector. And when the war started, there were some who basically said, "Well, we actually need to rethink that" and so on, so forth. And it wasn't necessarily only related to nuclear weapons, but to the broader idea of investing in military. Do you see that as another casualty of the war we discussed about the public?

**Xanthe Hall:** Not yet, because the controversial weapons things still seem to be holding. So, the first thing to go would be maybe landmines or cluster munitions because they're being used.

**Michal Onderco:** So, there is now, ICAN is for example, on social media pushing for divesting from Boeing.

**Xanthe Hall:** Yes.

**Michal Onderco:** So, which is a company that has fairly small part of its profit coming from nuclear enterprise. So, is that, again, sort of this moral pressure talking point? Or do you really think that Boeing is really the problem?

**Xanthe Hall:** No, one of the ideas is that the companies, through the pressure from the banks to say, we don't really want to invest in you, because of the sectors that those companies will change. So, I mean, it doesn't always work the way you wanted to. There was a long time ago, I think back in the 90s, we had to campaign against General Electric, a boycott. Because they were providing all the components, electrical components in the US for nuclear weapons. And they sold off that whole part of it, so it was kind of like we won. But of course, they sold it off then to a daughter company, Marietta. And in that case it changed the image, but it didn't change the facts. Yeah, at the end of the day, which is one of the problems with boycotting.

So the divestment campaign is part of putting pressure on the banks and the companies themselves. Because the image question is we don't want to be related to nuclear weapons. But like you say, it could be, and at the moment, we haven't seen it yet, but it could be a problem going down this line of the war and whether or not nuclear weapons are seen as keeping the secure or threatening us. This is that's what's now on the line this question, you know, we're how do we perceive nuclear weapons.

**Michal Onderco:** And are there any organizations in the field that you would say, impact to you as either an organization or you as a person?

**Xanthe Hall:** Negatively?

**Michal Onderco:** Or positively? Since you said that you don't like to think about negatives?

**Xanthe Hall:** No, I said, I don't like to regret.

**Michal Onderco:** Sorry. Okay.

**Xanthe Hall:** That's a big difference.

**Michal Onderco:** I'm sorry.

**Xanthe Hall:** Yeah, because it was about failure, but I'm negative. I see this, you know, I'm quite happy to talk about negative stuff. [Long pause] Something that actually negatively impacts us? I mean...

**Michal Onderco:** Or maybe you can think about positive impact, or maybe inspiration that you found somewhere?

**Xanthe Hall:** [Pause] Well, I mean, the main inspiration for ICAN was the landmines campaign. Yeah, both positively and negatively, in terms of when we won the Nobel Peace Prize, because it was a lot of trouble when we, like the landmines campaign, won, the Nobel Peace Prize, basically around the money.

**Michal Onderco:** What about money? Sorry.

**Xanthe Hall:** Well, you get money from? You know, we got wasn't that much was like 800,000. I don't know if it's euros or dollars.

**Michal Onderco:** I think it's million Dollar.

**Xanthe Hall:** Yeah. So, 800,000 euros at the time. ARather than spending the money on running an office in Switzerland which would mean the money would run out in about a year, they invested that money, which was the best thing to do. And now they give grants. And those grants go to, you know, they call it small grants, and they go to campaigners, and well, basically partner organizations. So, they're sharing out this money the whole time. That's what they learned, basically from the big argument that happened in the landmines campaign. But otherwise, the whole original strategy for ICAN came from the international campaign to ban landmines. Big and also cluster ammunitions and the Arms Trade Treaty. All of that fed into ICAN.

**Michal Onderco:** So when you look to the future, where do you expect the field of nuclear disarmament advocacy, to go in the next five to 50 years? And some people find this question easier to answer when I asked them: Do you think there will be nuclear weapons around in 50 years?

**Xanthe Hall:** [Laughs] Do you think that's easier?

**Michal Onderco:** Some people find it easier.

**Xanthe Hall:** Right now, I'm really clueless about where we're gonna go. Because we're struggling with today so much, you know, it's kind of like this, you know? How do you deal with, it's, I mean, Russia has become a rogue state, it really has, that's the real definition of a rogue state for me, in comparison with the others, the that were named by Bush, is by going rogue they are they're conducting psychological warfare with us all of the time using nuclear weapons. And so the question that is being asked all of the time is Putin going to use them or not? And how seriously does one have to take all of this? And interesting is, they had this meeting in Loccum this week. I just started reading a report from someone I had there. You know, looking at this, and she said, how frightening it is that everybody just is sort of complacently saying, "nothing's gonna happen". It's okay. We don't need to worry. nuclear deterrence will hold out.

And we're worried that if we start screaming at the top of our voices: you should not be complacent about this, this is absolutely a dangerous situation, we have to do everything to stop it. That will just be called alarmist or that we will be being alarmist, then we don't really want to scare people either. You know, it's traumatic enough for the society at the moment to live through this. I have people coming to me in tears and saying, is it going to happen? Is it going to happen? I'm like, "It's okay. You know, don't worry, it will be fine". Because I just don't want to see them so upset. And other people like, you know, Benoit Pelopidas, I talked to him in Munich recently. And he absolutely sure that nuclear weapons are going to be used

**Michal Onderco:** In this war?

**Xanthe Hall:** I don't know in this war, or whether he means you know, within the next future, but he means he means they will be used. Yeah.

So this is where we are at the moment is not, not the question of what is nuclear disarmament going to look like in five years' time? So are we going to get through this? Are we going to survive it? How are we going to deal with this situation?

And then I'm in the back of my mind is okay, we continue all the time with the normative process. Because if we come out of it, we still want a process to exist. But otherwise, I have no clue. I really don't know, I really don't know how we're going to continue. And how what will happen to people's way of thinking? It depends on how this war ends. As to whether or not we can still continue as before, I don't think we will be able to.

**Michal Onderco:** But will that mean that we are going to double down on nuclear deterrence? Or does it mean that we're going to realize that living with nuclear weapons is way too dangerous.

**Xanthe Hall:** That's the crossroads we're standing at right now. That's exactly where we are. And right from the first day of this war, I've been saying, we need to understand the lesson of this situation is "we cannot be put back into this situation again", it's like, you know, we didn't learn it with the Cuban missile crisis or 1983 with Able Archer. We didn't learn it. And now we're here again, and it's just a question of, will we survive? And if we do, then, afterwards, we have to say, "Okay, we won't do that again". That's the main thing. But I just I know that people aren't thinking like that right now. I mean...

**Michal Onderco:** Yeah, there is. There is a Polish scholar whose name I forgot who says that people draw the lessons from this war, which fits their prior beliefs.

**Xanthe Hall:** Yeah, that's right.

**Michal Onderco:** So, if you think that nuclear weapons are really dangerous, then you basically think this is the ultimate confirmation that they are really dangerous. If you think that nuclear deterrence is the absolutely best thing since sliced bread, then you think that we need to double down on nuclear deterrence. And I'm afraid this is where we are headed.

**Xanthe Hall:** That's right. I agree. And the problem is that nuclear deterrence relies on credibility. And to be good to use it credibly, you have to threaten, and our main message from ICAN is, we want everybody to stop threatening, we want the nuclear rhetoric to end. And to de-escalate, right? We should be categorically refusing on both sides to use nuclear weapons. And as far as I understand, on the western side, there is generally a feeling that even if Putin used a nuclear weapon, they would not respond immediately with nuclear weapons, which is really good thing. So, obviously, there is a slight

moving away from the original principles, which would show the other side how strong you are. But I mean, there, I suppose it's also this feeling that conventionally we are strong enough not to need to do that. And then therefore, I read this today, Florian Ebenkamp wrote, "so actually, we don't need nuclear?". Anyways, why we need them? And that's a good point. And it's, it's possible that we could go that way as well. And not sure that I want that either. But anyway,

**Michal Onderco:** I once interviewed someone who recounted that he was once at a dinner party with a very well-connected American defense expert who said, the world free of nuclear weapons is the world where America has won. Because America is conventionally the most powerful country in the world. And so it's America who should want the world without nuclear weapons, because it's the world where it can dominate everyone. And my interlocutor said, "Yes. The others know that as well." And so if we, if NATO is so conventionally powerful that it doesn't need nuclear weapons that exactly strengthens the idea on the other side that they do need them. I think it's a double sword.

**Xanthe Hall:** Absolutely, couldn't agree with you more. And it's kind of not the vision that I have. And that's why the normative process is so important that because the negotiation process to get there requires that one thinks about the whole security situation and moves down generally, and not just saying ... I was never in favor of, you know, we just get rid of nuclear weapons, but we have all the others.

**Michal Onderco:** So this is, this is a great segue to my final question, which is, imagine we have a world without nuclear weapons. How does that work look like? And how does security in such a world look like? In your mind?

**Xanthe Hall:** That's been a long time since I thought about that, because that's sort of one of those questions. So, in the old days, we used to do a lot. Yeah, the world without nuclear weapons that I would hope for, would be one in which the agreements that were needed to get rid of them would mean that we had, you know, move towards cooperative security. That there's more. Yeah. More treaties than just nuclear treaties that their actual, you know, similar... Yeah. I think ASEAN is a good example with that, that the treaty there that there's a lot about economic cooperation as well.

So, as it's something we talked about a lot when we talked about nuclear weapon free zone in the Middle East, that in order to get that you have to deal with the whole issue of the conflicts there. So you, you know, it's of course, it's a long process. And there's many people say, you have to create the conditions to for a Nuclear Weapon Free World before you can have it. And that's true. But I see this as a parallel process that, because just what you were saying before, if you just say, "Okay, we'll get rid of nuclear weapons alone", then you will already create imbalance. So it's really important to be able to think, in a more networked fashion than just, you know, these parallel. I mean, parallel is right, but what's the word? It's more lateral thinking than vertical thinking, you know, just, you know, we'd reduce and then just go to zero. I think this was a very simplistic approach we had with the nuclear weapons convention. And interestingly enough, even then, all sorts of things popped up as well. What do you do about that? And what do you do about that?

**Michal Onderco:** And so sometimes when I talk to disarmament activists, some of them think that in order to get to the world of free of nuclear weapons, we actually require a really radical transformation of society. Some people talk about the fact that we need to get rid of capitalism, some people say we need to get rid of prisons...

**Xanthe Hall:** To get rid of nuclear weapons?

**Michal Onderco:** Yes. Do you think that this type of really radical transformation of society is needed?

**Xanthe Hall:** Well, I think that will come up in the process. I don't think I can say now, what I think the subjects will all be... Well, I mean, nuclear power is a big discussion that has to come up. All of the security issues. Quite a lot of human rights issues will come up in that process, where the question of whether what the process is and how to deal with it, we will see as we move along, An interesting is that the TPNW is beginning that process. I mean, particularly in the beginning these discussions about what is it? What do we need to abolish nuclear weapons? And, of course, this is, without the nuclear weapons states still relatively theoretical, but it's I think it's the right way to go is to get the non-nuclear weapon states to lead in this process, because they're the ones that are not invested in terms of wanting them. So, they will actually come up with, I think, more creative ideas.

It's not a satisfactory answer. I know, I haven't got this great vision of what the world will look like. Because I think it's not a process that you can ... so complex. I don't think you can imagine it from here. But it's necessary. That's the main thing.

**Michal Onderco:** So this is the last question that I'm going to ask based on this. Do you think there will be still space for thinking about some form of deterrence in a post nuclear world?

**Xanthe Hall:** A conventional deterrence?

**Michal Onderco:** Yes.

**Xanthe Hall:** I equate this to bringing up a child, because you come up against this thing the whole time, how much do you threaten your child to try to get it to behave itself, as it were? And all of the good literature says, it's more about explaining the consequences. So obviously, if you overstate the consequences, that becomes a kind of form of deterrence. But you should also, you know, question is whether you're punishing by using deterrence ... you're threatening punishment, or whether you're threatening consequences. And when they become conflated, it's a difficult question. But I always tried to think, okay, these will be the natural consequences of my son's actions including my own behavior, so I'll be angry is one of kind of thing and whether that's a threat or just a reality is so difficult to say what's deterrence what's not.

But the main thing is you shouldn't threaten something you can't do. Or you shouldn't do, let's say ethically you shouldn't do it. So I wouldn't say: "if you do that, I'll whack you over the head." That's as simple as that for me. And, and when you're talking about states, I don't think that states should be threatening each other. And I think that we should be using the law of war. I think we should be the consequence of the war crime is the International Criminal Court? I think we should all be going along that line.

**Michal Onderco:** Well, thank you very much for your time. Yeah. I have run through all my questions. Is there anything that you would like to add at the end? Or is there something that I didn't ask and I should have asked?

**Xanthe Hall:** I can't think of anything at the moment, I'm sure. But if I think of something I might write to you. But I'm a bit aware at the end there that it's like that that's very vague what I'm talking about, and from my point of view, as somebody who's very kind of into realistic paths, or whatever, that it's still very, maybe flowery, this idea. And that is also but I have to say, I think that's basic.

And so, I don't believe in this idea you have to get rid of capitalism to get rid of nuclear weapons. But I do think that you have to believe that there can be a different way of settling our conflicts. And I had to start working on that which think we were in the 90s and started working a lot more on conflict resolution. The OSCE did some really good work on that. You know, nobody talks about them anymore. So I think it's also a question of where you put your emphasis politically, where you put your money. That's missing with that's why we're not getting there at the moment.