

**EPISODE 12**

[INTRODUCTION]

**[00:00:05] ANNOUNCER:** You're listening to 10,000 Swamp Leaders, leadership conversations that explore adapting and thriving in a complex world, with Rick Torseth and guests.

**[00:00:20] RT:** Hi, everybody. Rick Torseth, and welcome back to 10,000 Swamp Leaders, a podcast about what it means and what it takes to lead in complex worlds, messy worlds are what we refer to here as swamp worlds. And one of the big swampy issues that we in the world have been wrestling with for quite some time is issues around global climate change, renewable energy versus fossil fuels, and that ongoing debate.

And so today, for the first time on my podcast, we actually have somebody who knows something about this debate. And I'm very pleased to bring in Rana Adib, who is the Executive Director, the Chair, the President, I don't know. Rana, you can tell people what your official title is here in a second, of REN21, which is a really remarkable organization that I've had small opportunities to work with. And we'll talk a little bit about the construction of REN21 and what its purpose is here as well. But they are right in the middle of helping the world address the issues of renewable energy. So, Rana, welcome to the podcast.

**[00:01:24] RA:** Yeah. Thank you very much, Rick. Very happy to be here.

**[00:01:26] RT:** First of all, let's let's start with a little quick narrative version of your CV, because it's quite extensive, and it points to your expertise and your knowledge about this issue. So share a little bit with people about the journey you've made and maybe how you got on this path to bring you where you are today.

**[00:01:44] RA:** Maybe I start with how I started the path. I'm half Belgian, half Lebanese, and grew up in Germany, and clearly defined myself as a cultural hybrid. And so I really grew up in this environment that perspectives are different and that it's really important to make basically the connections. And this is to some extent also what has brought me to the studies of industrial

engineering, which in Germany is very much at the interface between business development, marketing finance, and the technology.

And this also brought me very quickly to the topic of energy, because energy is everywhere. And energy was also a big topic between Occident and Orient so to say. I grew up around the Gulf War I, later Gulf War II. So it was very present in this political environment.

And so I did industrial engineering studies, and worked very soon actually on renewable energy for energy access. And here, directly also in a socio-technical team on bringing the business development side in. So very quickly, also on multi-disciplinary approaches. And the fact that we are speaking about deep systems, which we need to change and where it's important to basically connect the dots.

And so I worked in this for a while in the applied research institute. And then I worked in the private sector on water and on waste management again, then also at the interface of energy. For some time in the consulting sector. And since a couple of years now, with REN21, which is a multi-stakeholder community. It's a policy network that brings together basically industry governments, NGOs and research and academia to collectively advance the development and the uptake of renewable energy worldwide.

**[00:03:48] RT:** And you've been with REN for 13, 14 years? Is that correct?

**[00:03:54] RA:** Yeah. Quite a while actual, yes. I started at REN21 in 2009 as a policy analyst and project manager, later the research coordinator. And now, since 4 years, at the Executive Director.

**[00:04:12] RT:** Okay. So let's help people understand what REN's about, because it's a very unusual condition. Meaning that – And this is part of the reason why I was attracted to it, to this conversation with you, because I've always – In the work that I do, I always see this distinction between authority and leading, and that they're not the same. And if you are at the top of an organization, you have a lot of authority that comes with the position description that you inhabit. But you also have opportunities to choose to lead, which is different in terms of how you bring people along and etc.

REN21, on the other hand, is a network of organizations that, A, if I understand correctly each of them has carved out a bit of a niche in this renewable conversation. They have different missions, different ideas in terms of their own organizations. And you and your team are really trying to corral these cats into the wheelbarrow in a coordinated fashion to make greater impact. Is that a fair assessment?

**[00:05:12] RA:** I think that's a very fair assessment. And here, yes, when you said in the beginning about complex and messy worlds, this is exactly the way we also described to some extent our ecosystem in which we are operating in REN21. But which I also think is the opportunity that are underlying here, because the reality is energy is a very complex topic. And when you're looking into what players are involved in energy decisions, in shaping, basically, the choices on energy, it's a huge variety. It's anchored in the energy system obviously. It's anchored in the economic health system. It's anchored in society.

And this already showed that when we're speaking about a transition to renewable energy, we basically need to find solutions with a huge variety of players. And I think this is really the beauty of REN21. We have within REN21. And you're exactly right, we're a network. We operate really the network of networks. And even more broadly, as a community of change makers, a variety of those types of players included. And these are renewable energy players. But they're also non-renewable energy players that are part of this community as I mentioned before. So there's the government. There is industry NGOS, project developers, etc., all over the world. And the complexity we have here is probably the different perspectives, the different roles they have. But also, the fact that it's a global community but also connects to local issues. And so this is really this ecosystem in which we are.

Now, this sounds very messy. But I'll just use this example of the octopus, I guess, which shows the strength of this. The octopus has a central brain, but decentralized brains, too, and intelligence. And this is connected. and I think this is exactly what we are trying to do with REN21, is creating the spaces where we can basically have the dialogue and debates where we have a shared information, crowdsource information, crowdsource intelligence to identify common grounds of understanding to be able to make the way we think about energy and

renewable energy in particular evolve. To also connect with ecosystems and players who are not part of the discussions.

And I think this is basically where, I guess, to a certain extent REN21 does have a leading role, because we are kind of a catalyst of change and an incubator of ideas where we are really building on those players to create the discussions, to identify the topic that need to basically grow and become mainstream and be picked up by big international organizations, by project developers, by governments to create the right enabling framework to drive the change.

**[00:08:17] RT:** So for a little bit here, let's get into the details of how you're managing this network. Meaning that you don't have the authority to just demand that they all show up for a conference. You have to figure out ways to engage and seduce them into attending. But I know that you use at least a couple of approaches. First of all, you have the capacity in the network to convene the conversation. You can call them together. You can organize the space, so to speak, now virtually. I know it's been virtual for a long time. You can sort of design the conversations all with the intent of getting these people stuck together more and sharing information. You produce a lot of data and reports that come.

So, for people out there who are in some kind of similar situation trying to organize different stakeholders into a coherent conversation, talk for a little bit here about the structures and processes REN uses to get these people together and do good work.

**[00:09:16] RA:** Okay. Sounds good. I guess, here, it makes sense to step back a bit historically. So REN21 was created in 2005. And this was a moment where renewable energy was basically not visible in overall data, which was there. And so what we clearly did in the beginning was having the space for the stakeholders that were supporting renewable energy to come together, but also working together to make basically renewable energy visible. And this is where, historically, we started very much with data and knowledge and big reports that we're building on crowdsourced information.

This is really something we have done, and which has – I think because you spoke about what is the authority. I think, for REN21 side, and this will certainly **[inaudible 00:10:08]** the

legitimacy of the data and the knowledge we put out has really also allowed us to reinforce to have this convening space and create this convening space.

Now, admittedly in parallel to this, we also are co-hosting together with the changing host government the International Renewable Energy Conference, where we clearly had like a high-level and multi-stakeholder dialogue on renewable energy that was happening in a more institutional setting.

And what we realized over the time was that there was this community. There is, today, community of plus three thousand players worldwide that there were other ways of interacting. And I think this is where we started the REN21 Academy, which was in-person at that time, which we did for the first time during COVID, virtually, which is more like a workshop character where we have like, I guess, methods and approaches of startups a bit. You see like where we're more exploring things than speaking about what we already know.

We really had this space, and we had a community that was also trusting us in the space. And I think this is, again, linked to the fact that we are an important player, that our knowledge is trusted. That we are credible. That they were really engaging and open to engage. And if you ask about how have we been able to – These were first experiences that have allowed us to really understand the wealth we have in this messiness. That basically the diversity of perspective is really interesting and important, because this will allow us to come up with creativity. It will allow us to come up with new ways of looking at things, other solutions.

The fact that you have players around the table who normally don't sit around the table, and that they can identify that they can trust each other. That by working together, they will basically be able to build on each other even in a strategic way.

And so I think this is really where we started identifying that there was something really strong we could build up on, this very hybrid and diverse community. And now, during COVID, we have really explored this more in a series of rendezvous, we call this. So we had the first virtual REN21 Academy. That's also where we actually met. And where we brought like the whole question of leadership. How do you lead? How do you drive change? Social science, more

marketing and leadership views also to a quite technical community. And building basically on this academy, we started having a regular series of those rendezvous.

And I guess there is really an interesting learning here, that if you bring a diverse community together, if you create a space where people feel comfortable in speaking up and having their opinion, just the fact to create a space where you can exchange, which is not about what we know and showing our institutional positioning. But really coming as change maker. Coming as human being and focusing on the format where we can listen to each other.

Here – So, agree, disagree. But also connect that this is creating something which is basically empowering when it comes to accompanying this community on becoming even more effective leaders, I guess, to drive the renewable energy transition.

And I think this is what we are exploring, and which works actually quite well. It's a learning curve. But that is quite special. And we also have the feedback from the community members and participants of this event that this is something which is quite rare in our more institutional setting, which is more common where you rather speak to people than really exchanging and connecting.

**[00:14:33] RT:** All right. So we can't let this pass with this sort of level of descriptions, because people out there are going, "I've attended lots of conferences." And what it is is one person with their technical expertise speaking, and then another, and another, and another. And what you're talking about is something different happens in these gatherings. They actually listen. And I'm guessing they're building on each other's ideas and something new gets created because of the way in which you create the space and have.

So what is it that you're doing when they gather that creates a degree of safety and trust? A willingness to be open? A willingness to listen more? How's that happening? Because right now, it sounds magical. And we know it's not. But can you add some specificity to what goes on to produce that?

**[00:15:20] RA:** That's a real question, because, also, there have been also rendezvous where we really thought, "Okay, we didn't deliver here on what we're aiming for." I think it's what is

happening? It's happening that we understand that it's processes that need time, I think. That it's about a community that shares – Deeply connects around some values around emission that is really accelerating the uptake of renewable energy, for instance. Or players that understand that it is important to have renewable energy discussions.

I think what we manage indeed is there is a strong community, which is already there, and which is engaging. And that's something which is very strong and is creating this space. The other part is what works is, I guess, like bringing interesting perspectives to the table, but setting, when we're having the discussions, a tone that really allows for – I don't know. Asking questions.

Very often, I'm very astonished. When I'm participating in panels and I ask questions, lots of people will then refer back to this. And I realized that, for me, these questions are often quite naive questions. It's not an expert statement. But it will be like, "Okay, but why are you doing it like this?" Or, "Couldn't you –" And this triggers something.

So there is – Certainly, one of the parameters is to ask questions and to ask questions in a quite open way, I guess, and an open tone. And another part certainly is that we are bridging also this part of the speakers and the audience. So we're working here with impact basis on facilitation, where there are also some tools on having, for instance, an open seat. So you have a panel discussion, but you really invite basically participants to join this discussion.

And I think, online, it's really interesting. We were quite hesitant in the beginning. But online is interesting because it also means inclusion. So we have many players from developing country that could, for instance, not travel to some of our conferences, but can now participate online. And they are getting – I mean, the chat is sometimes getting really hot. And I think, ultimately, it's really about setting the tone. Having interesting topics in the discussions. But also creating this possibility of breaking down – I don't know. I would say like breaking down silos. So we're there as a representative of certain organizations. But we are also there as a human being, and a decision maker, and a change maker who will drive for different motivations. And I think there is a space to look beyond the role we play in our institutions. So I would say like lots of human energy in the end.

**[00:18:17] RT:** And I think it's really an important distinction you're making, because I think there's been a lot of – Well, it's way different now than it was at the outset of the pandemic. But the idea that people are actually able to attend a conference with their peers that they couldn't attend in-person because of cost, or travel, or time away. That inclusion part to get other voices into the conversation is really an important additive. That's a weird odd, but grateful gift inside the pandemic force.

So I want to give you – Because you're right. I know you all, because I did some work with you. One of the things I've been really impressed by, and I think there's a piece in here that's probably worth mentioning, is the quality and engagement of the REN21 team in producing the events and the way in which you collectively sort of tend to people in the conference. Can you speak a little bit about your team and how they're oriented these days to this work given how they've had to work online?

**[00:19:10] RA:** So to be honest, in the team, I think for us it has been quite disruptive actually to have COVID and, I mean, for everybody. But a community that is very much centered around, I guess, like, to some extent also the human energy. If you find ourselves in the virtual space, it's rather disruptive.

For the team and the secretariat, I must say we were already using all the digital tools, etc. So on the production side, it was less disruptive, I think. When it comes, however, to the culture of REN and the secretariat, since we are not a typical industry association, or a typical NGO, etc., we have clearly seen that there's connecting. And everything which is about culture, it's easier to handle in an office space than in a virtual space.

So here, I would say like there has been lots of learning. For instance, how do we more strategically onboard new team members to make sure that they can capture this culture more quickly? But then also working with players who accompany us here who sensitizes about the fact that, for instance, social mattresses will allow for all of us to better link and operate as a team.

So I guess like it's up and downs. What is very clear, the reason why I think the team works really well is the commitment of the team to REN21 to the mission. It's passionate professionals.

And also, in the team, I think there is a diversity of perspectives. But clearly, a culture of dialogue and exchange. So I think – And that is something which has also been bumpy. How do you maintain such a space in the virtual space? How do you clearly also – Because let's be honest, we are driving change, which also means like we're in a very dynamic environment. We are driving change ourselves. And we are in a situation of COVID. We're in a situation. So we are based in Europe. So having war in Europe is something which clearly has an impact and brings insecurity to the team.

It is an international team that has been very much affected by COVID. And the fact that traveling was not possible, being far away of family and trends, this brings certainly a level of insecurity. And I guess like sometimes a tension between understanding that there are things that are external to what is happening within the organization. What is happening within the team structure? And, yeah, trying to balance and find our way through this.

Now, again, as I said, I think it's really passionate and engaged players. And we have a really important cause to push forward. So I think this is what is driving us. I want to come back to the renewable bit here a little bit later. But let's shift the focus to the conversation of leadership at this point, because you, as the leader of the organization, have both that authority and the responsibilities of guiding not just the internal team, but the larger network in some particular ways. And you've been at it for a while now. So you've learned some things.

And you've done most of, or at least roughly, half of your time as the leader inside a pandemic. So it's a whole another – It's a master class in some ways of learning in the school of hard knocks. So let's talk about that. So from a leadership standpoint, what are the opportunities and the challenges that you experience in leading and mobilizing a network of people around the world and organizations from a leadership standpoint?

**[00:23:09] RA:** So, interestingly, I think – And I'll speak here as like guiding the network. But also when we're looking at the REN21 secretariat, it is as a multi-cycle network. We're not only on renewable energy. We're not only pushing for renewable energy. But we're also exploring a new type of governance.

And interestingly, I think a new type of government is actually more agile, that is more project and thematic-focused. That allows for – It is very different and not specifically focusing on the different hierarchical roles we have. You see, like, something from top-down and bottom-up, which is much more organic. I guess this is the space in which we are operating.

As a leader, I think what the learning is, and it's continuous learning, is there is this idea. But then there also needs to be the acknowledgement that what we are trying to do is not the norm. And that sometimes when you're basically thinking about this all the time as a leader, I guess, or a leading organization, things might become obvious to yourself. But it does not mean that the system has already anchored these principles as much. Because the reality is that we have been formatted much more in a top-down approach, I guess, like from the parent, to the teacher, to university, to the normal organizational environment.

I guess like there's always this tension of, "Okay, do we go back to something people know because it is easier?" And the reality is it is easier. We have formatted like this. Or are we able to keep the tension for a bit longer so that we can basically make a whole system evolve step-by-step?

And I think this is one tension which is there. And I guess like how to handle this tension is really, yeah, continuously being aware of it and connecting again to, okay, checking whether the direction in which we are going, whether this is the right direction. Whether people can follow having a discussion. And creating the space where we can question this. But also creating a space to trust that discomfort will turn into something positive.

**[00:25:45] RT:** Let's stay here for a second, if you don't mind. I appreciate the – And I know there's justification for you using the term we in this dynamic of managing the tension. But I also know that when you are the de facto leader and head authority, most of the management of that tension falls to that position.

So what I hear you saying is that in order to make progress, you have to have enough tension in the system to keep people engaged and moving. But if it gets too hot, they shut down. And if it's not hot enough, they revert to the old model. So this is a fluid dynamic. So what have you learned about how to do that? And what did you learn about what didn't work? Or those kind of

lessons there? Because you couldn't have been perfect, but you've also are further down the road in knowing how to do this than you were before. So share with people.

Because I think – Rana, I think this is really where the action is for these dynamic things for leaders right now, is do they recognize this? And how do they manage it day-to-day, week-to-week? So what counsel can you give both on the good stuff and the stuff that didn't work?

**[00:26:55] RA:** What counsel? I'm not a very patient person. So very clearly, what needs to happen here is working on patience. Being more patient. And I also think this is okay, because I feel there is – Maybe one thing, which is a good recommendation, is starting from the fact that even if failures are not supportive, in general, it is not against oneself, but it is because they are acting from a space where they cannot yet act in a different way. And I think this understanding allows to manage the tension in a better way.

The other part, and I think is also again where to put the cursor, is to be empathetic. Because I think it's super important to be empathetic, whether it is a team or whether it is a community. It's like being empathetic from where people are and from where they are acting, speaking, etc.

But also sometimes learning not to listen too much into this, because it is also important, I guess, to preserve ourselves as a leader, as a manager, and be anchored, I guess, in what the business and the convictions in who we are to some extent.

And then, really, this part that creating, I guess, like – So, for me, it's really important as a manager to have something which is failure is not a problem, because failure is a part of learning to do things better and really change the culture here. I didn't recall the exact number. But, for me, this was really something which was interesting. A kid, I think, falls 2000 times until it can walk.

And this is something I find really interesting, because nobody is going to yell at the kid because the kid falls. And I think this is something which is really. Life learning life is done from learning. And driving change means we need to learn, and learn again, and learn to do things differently. And this is one part.

And the other part that we have a variety of strengths. So since we have a variety of perspectives and we are quite different, we also have different strengths. And that it is interesting. And it doesn't work all the time, to be honest. You see, there is the learning, and the impatience comes in, and frustration that things are not the way you would want them to be, etc. I think, as a leader, we're also human beings. But the fact that we all have strengths we can bring to a system is something which I think is interesting, too.

So the approach – And to be honest, I mean, that's a continuous learning. As Executive Director, I'm also a human being. I was not born as an Executive Director with all the features and all the understanding, etc. But it is also to acknowledge the fact that in this role also, we bring strength. But we also bring weaknesses. And this means to learn on them, but also learn to build on others to complement basically where our strengths are. So I think these are some of the learnings.

And just maybe to come back to the tension you mentioned. I really think that there is – And you observe this very often in NGOs, for instance, or in the climate, in the development communities. We tend to say like, "Hey, we're working for a big cause. And that's also contributing to the fact that we appreciate each other."

But this understanding that we can appreciate each other and share values and visions, but we can still be in disagreement. And this is something which is actually not bad. Because with that tension, things are not going to move. And this is certainly something which is a cultural learning also especially in such environments.

**[00:31:00] RT:** Yeah. I just readily imagine with the diversity of players that you have in the network and their niches that they're focused on and being in conversations, to get some collective coordination means that people have to – And entities have to give up some part of what they're doing in order to gain something from being part of this and that, that that loss against the gain is a dynamic. And so I'm imagining that you and your organization really need that skill of managing the tension, and he individually and collectively amongst the team.

So you raised another question for me, though, which is for you, Rana. So through this pandemic and doing all this work, how do you take care of yourself? Because like you say,

between being remote, and then doing conferences, and the base mission of the work, it's all been hard for everybody. So as a leader, how do you take care of yourself so you still have enough fuel, so to speak, to stay engaged and do the work? Because it's hard to see where it gets better for a while, or has been. That's been the way it's been until most recently. So how do you take care of yourself?

**[00:32:12] RA:** That's a big question. I think there is – In good days, I manage to take care of myself by acknowledging that I will not be able to take – Like, to reach everything that I'm a human being and by being kind to myself. I think this is probably the first thing, is to – But I'll be very honest. I think during the two years, it has been quite challenging, because there is a lot of pressure, basically on managers, to adapt to the environment, to accompany the team. And this is also the rule. Make the organization operate. Ensuring that it continues growing. So there was really, I guess, like through the two years, I've learned also.

In the beginning, I didn't have the same capacities. But to really just say, "Look. Hey." Stepping back and distributing also the responsibility to some extent. This is one part. This is more an organizational part.

Another one was very clearly to – And again, this works or does not work. But to create basically connections and networks with peers who are in similar situations so that we can really support ourselves. And I think that is something which is really important. We do not always need to look within the system we are operating for having the support we need. And this is especially true in a small organization like REN21, where you don't have the HR department and many other managers and similar situations, etc. It's like connecting with other CEOs in similar situations, for instance.

I think connecting with coaches, bringing these voices to yourself as a manager, to the team. But in our case, also, to the brighter community. So for instance, we had like training some ethical leadership. And I think, right, two or three months after the first lockdown, started already to really accompany the team in building up the resilience. But also learning as a manager here and having reference points.

I clearly worked with coaches in this period also. And then I guess the other part is – Yeah, also acknowledging that this has a major impact on ourselves as a leader and as a human being. So after one year of COVID, I realized that I was traveling normally all the time. I wasn't traveling anymore. I was all the time with my family, which was not the case. I really like them. But this was not our norm. I like human beings very much. And I like their connection with real human beings. And this has a major impact on myself. Managing team online, offline is a big difference.

And really stepping back and taking a break to just see like, "Wow! This does have an impact." And it's massive what we are asked to do, what our role is to do. And it's okay not to always manage everything. And today, I think after two years, there is another resilience also. So, for instance, I start my week with one-hour piano class and improvisation. You see, like, this sounds very small. But for me it's a huge achievement. I tried to take regular piano classes so many times. And so putting it at the beginning of the week means like I'm centering just – I'm just positioning myself.

Coming back to who we are to also be able to better listen in the company. I think this is probably – But I guess there are moments where it was better than others. That's also the reality.

**[00:36:10] RT:** Yeah. It's the speed of the response when you get knocked down, right? Because you know you're going to get knocked down.

**[00:36:17] RA:** Yeah, exactly. And you hope that it will not be all the time, right?

**[00:36:21] RT:** Okay. So we're not able to have this conversation completely without tending to the conditions of the world right now. And as was getting myself oriented for our conversation and watching all of the stuff that was going on around the sanctions and the issue of oil and all of those things, I thought your work is hard enough in the renewables. But I'm just curious now. As you sit here right now based on what you know now, and what the network knows now, and what you've been discussing, what's your view on the impact that this condition could have on the mission of society embracing renewables? Because I could make a case that there's consequences and there's opportunities because of this deal. But I don't know enough like you do. So what's your read on it right now?

**[00:37:05] RA:** But I would agree. There is consequences, negative consequences, and there are opportunities. And I think, to be honest, there is something – And maybe just for for the audiences, to reposition things. Why moving to renewable energy? There are many reasons for moving to renewable energy. And now we look at the situation in Russia, Ukraine and our dependence of fuels, that there is a climate change happening.

In many parts of the world, we have a real development issue. People even do not have access to basic energy. Energy is not sufficiently there to allow for a social and economic development of many economies in the world. So these big crises have already been there for many, many years. And it turns out that much comes down to – So when we're looking at the climate crisis, this is linked to our consumption of fossil fuel. 75% of the CO2 emissions that are responsible for climate change are linked to the fact that we are consuming fossil fuel. So all gas and co.

So, very clearly, renewable energy has here a key role to play. And what we have unfortunately seen, I think, over the last – So REN21 existed since 2005. But what we have seen over the last years is that there is a rising ambition in engaging in the deployment of renewable energy. So, from political. But that it's not going quick enough. And that targets are not enough. That it's really important today not to move to renewable energy only, but to move out of fossil fuel after fossil fuel dependence. And this was already the case for climate reasons and for development reasons.

Now, COVID has had created this whole opportunity of building back better, where there was a lot of hope, I guess, from renewable energy players side that this would be an opportunity to redirect basically government's investments. The reality is that, unfortunately, I think in some countries, this has really accelerated. It has created another ambition today, which is also shared by a variety of players and decision makers. But it's not going quick enough.

And why is it not going quite quick enough? It's not going quick enough because we have built a system since 150 years an economy power dynamic that is very much dependent on fossil fuel incomes, and fossil fuel decision makers, and the lobby which is there, etc.

And I guess this is now questioned very much by the situation we have, which is accentuated by the situation we have in Ukraine and the dependence we have on fossil fuel, especially from one country.

And so why opportunities? Because we can now clearly push for renewable energy not only for climate development reasons, which seem less tangible. Even though they are fully tangible for somebody who is flooded and somebody who cannot ensure his or her food supply or whatever. But it's still quite global and abstract and in the future from any plane.

Today, the energy price is basically going up everywhere in the world. The supply chains are interrupted everywhere in the world. We see how – We have energy security reasons. So a security on supply. But where there are also questions of energy sovereignty. And I think this creates an opportunity, because we can all see that renewable energy exists basically everywhere. So there is really an opportunity of creating a local energy supply and basically another – Reduce the dependence of a few players and have more players benefit basically from the energy system we are building up.

So I think this is a real opportunity. And since there is a cost issue today, we're even more in a situation that renewable energy is today at least cost option. Obviously, it raises real questions. And I think this goes beyond the energy part, which is how do we create basically the market reforms? How do we ensure that the technologies we are using on renewable energy are also being produced locally, regionally and not depend only from few suppliers? But also, how do we really build up a government that is a more fair and a more equitable governance? How do we ensure that whatever we build up today is not dominated by few powerful players who have the money? But it's really addressing also the views, the needs, the opportunities renewable energy creates, for instance, for many developing countries, for local communities, for cities to engage here?

So I think there is – We're speaking about massive opportunities here to address quite complex issues. And there is clearly a threat, which is an economic threat. The reality is moving away from fossil fuel to renewable energy clearly mean that we need to remove the subsidies on the fossil fuel side and redirect it. But it also means massive investment.

And in a situation of war in security, economic pressure, inflation, etc., obviously, it is something which is quite challenging to mobilize the funding to make basically these changes also happen. And I think that's a major threat we see.

And then there is another one that there is also a pushback from, basically, fossil fuel players and lobbyists who indeed have also things to lose when we are moving away from the system to a new system. And I think there is a – That's a task also for players like REN21. How do we basically shape those transformations and also make sure that we are addressing the drivers, but also the draggers, and the players who are on both sides to also build something where we can have a joint basis? Not always an agreement. But I think there are real questions.

**[00:43:46] RT:** And it's complicated work, too. Because if you look at the players, their losses are not the same for each player. Meaning, that there's a challenge of actually understanding my loss, versus your loss, versus this entity's loss, and tailoring a way forward that meets and addresses not only that. But the opportunities that that individual player may gain might be different for another one. So it's time-consuming. It's complicated. It's messy.

**[00:44:15] RA:** Yes. But I think this is – Maybe just a compliment on it. That's also where we need real leadership, because there is not the easy answer to it. And I think this is where we also need on the government side, and when we're looking at the CEOs from companies, city mayors, etc., to really take a step forward to say, "Okay. This change needs to happen." And it will not be easy. And there are people who will lose. But all together, we will win. And I think this is really what we need today, and we probably need more. And I think in those times of insecurity, people are also looking for it more. They need it more.

**[00:45:03] RT:** Last question, or it's really not so much a question. It's your opportunity to advise. So we were talking before we started recording a little bit about my basis for this podcast. But my metaphor is there's people, younger people, behind us who are on the road and wanting to lead. They're not really sure the means in which to build their ability and capacity to lead. So I'd say this, but this is just how it is, as elders on the road.

**[00:45:35] RA:** Yes, I have gray hair.

**[00:45:38] RT:** Yes. What kind of advice do you have, wisdom? Let's put it this way, wisdom, about you could share with people back there that they could say, "I could use that. And that may save me some trial and tribulation because I paid attention to Rana." What do you have for them? And I know you've got a son in the house. So in a way, it's the same conversation, right? So what do you have for people that you think would be useful?

**[00:46:03] RA:** Breathe would be the first one.

**[00:46:06] RT:** Say more about breathing. We all breathe.

**[00:46:09] RA:** No, no. I'm going to say more about this. It's like keep the – You see, I spoke about my impatience. I think I have high expectations. I'm rather visionary. I feel like I like to move forward. But breathe to take out – To sometimes step back and take out the pace and reconnect to the speed of the environment, other players, the ecosystems. This means like creating another awareness on the fact that what is normal?

So I really had to learn this. What was normal for myself was not normal for others. And I have very much grown in this – I spoke about me being cultural hybrid, and the fact that this is the case. But it is a bit different when we need to learn it about ourselves.

So this self-awareness, I guess, is something which I would always say like is something interesting to at least take some time to give the space for self-awareness growing. And here, I really always think what helps very much is trying to force ourselves to not stay in our own comfort zone. And this is contributing to the self-awareness, that by pushing yourself out of your comfort zone, you also realize basically that what is normal for yourself is not normal for somebody else. And that, from this point of view, there's not only a bad intention, for instance. But there's just another way of looking at things. So I would really look into this.

And then the other part is, yeah, this tension I spoke about. I think is exploring the tension and learning to keep the tension and survive the tension as leaders I think is something really important. For doing this, I think it's fine just have good sounding boards, I would always say, because we are not able to carry everything in ourselves.

And here, you spoke about my son, who is sitting on the sofa. I'll be very honest. I think that I have two kids, and my kids have clearly taught me to become a better human being, I must say, and probably also a better manager today than I would have been 10 years ago without kids. Because they are just a mirror to what we are. And they also force us to acknowledge our limitations.

I'll be honest. I was five, and I thought I could change the world. And I would still love to be able to change the world. But this is actually not very realistic. And I think that is something which is sometimes really tough to learn because – So we mentioned this before. When I look at the geopolitical crisis, this is exactly the reasons why I started working on renewable energy. And I feel like 30 years later, we are in this situation. It feels like very weird and sometimes depressing.

But the reality is that, yeah, keeping the spirit up that we are able to contribute to change. But also, being kind to ourselves, I guess, and facing our limitations. Because this allows us to be more humble with ourselves and others.

**[00:49:33] RT:** Okay. So we're at the end. I really, in some ways, thinking we could go on for a while here. But maybe there's a part two lurking out there after some time passes. So I want to thank you for making time to have this conversation. It's been great. Thank you for being on.

**[00:49:49] RA:** Yeah, thanks a lot, Rick.

**[00:49:50] RT:** Okay.

**[00:49:50] RA:** Thanks for the invitation. I really enjoyed it.

**[00:49:52] RT:** You're welcome. Bye-bye.

[OUTRO]

**[00:49:56] RT:** Thank you for listening to 10,000 Swamp Leaders with Rick Torseth. Please take this moment and hit subscribe to follow more leadership swamp conversations.

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