

Pathways to Dignity and Regeneration: In conversation with Indira Kartallozi

By Wayne Visser

This is a summary of a conversation from my podcast Thriving: The Breakthrough Movement. You can listen to the full episode [here](#).

My conversation with Indira Kartallozi was deeply personal and powerfully resonant. Indira's life journey—from refugee to advocate, from migrant to sustainability leader—is a story of resilience, but also a powerful lesson in the systems we need to redesign for a thriving future.

She began by reflecting on her experience fleeing Kosovo as a young student and arriving in the UK as an asylum seeker. "I was young, well educated... and I wanted to contribute to the society where I was living," she told me. Yet she found herself steered into a social security benefits system that disempowered rather than enabled. "It makes me less as a person; it doesn't give me the opportunity to contribute."

That moment was pivotal. She began a career supporting migrants and refugees—not as needy dependents, but as citizens with agency. "The biggest issue that I struggled with is this issue of dignity," she said.

"I rather want to focus on the capacities, the agency that these people bring."

She spoke movingly about her work with survivors of torture and the importance of supporting not only recovery, but growth. "Mostly I have seen cases where there was trauma, but a lot of growth from that as well... once given the opportunity and once recognised – they flourish, and they thrive."

One of her most touching stories involved an Ecuadorian family. "The father always had his head down... and now, he's a business owner. The mother became a dental nurse, and the children are doing really well." Another resulted in an unexpected phone call years after helping a family get back on their feet: "A young lady... said, I just wanted to let you know that I'm becoming a lawyer, and that you have inspired me and my mother to stand strong and pursue our dreams."

For Indira, thriving is not just a personal journey—it's systemic. "You come across institutional systems that are designed to support someone who may have complex needs, yet it completely works against them." And that's what drives her work today.

She founded Sustainability Leadership Kosova as a way of giving back. "I always felt like I left the country and haven't contributed much to its growth," she said.

"Now I have this opportunity... we are becoming a hub of inspiration for young people."

Her Social Enterprise Kosovo activation program has helped youth see not just the problems but also the possibilities. “Now there are quite a lot of individuals who run their own businesses... that promote other forms of change, like economic opportunities, environmental impact, but also social empowerment.”

She shared several inspiring examples—a participant partnering with banks on financial literacy; a social enterprise selling second-hand clothes to fund maternal support; even projects around botanical teas and insect protein.

And then she described the project that’s taken centre stage in recent years: the #MoseMerrMalin campaign, a movement to protect and restore Kosovo’s forests. With limited data on biodiversity, working with international partners her team used satellite imagery and GIS analysis to track deforestation. “Kosovo is losing over a hectare of forest per day, which is quite alarming.”

The campaign name carries cultural weight. “Kosovars and Albanians have the saying, *Po marr malin* – I’m taking the mountain. It means, do not go crazy... and also, do not cut the forest.” What started as a fringe campaign has gained traction. “Now there are other institutions and organisations that are engaging in this movement.”

They’re not just raising awareness—they’re replanting using drones in a project called Green Wings. And their pledge, launched in Mitrovica, now serves as Kosovo’s equivalent to the COP26 deforestation commitment.

Throughout the conversation, I was struck by Indira’s unwavering hope, rooted in action.

“What gives me hope is that I see change happening”

“And also individuals that I work directly with... and the younger generation, the kids... them as well.”

Indira’s story is proof that transformation is possible—not just for individuals, but for systems. Whether helping families overcome trauma, guiding youth into impact-led enterprise, or restoring forests one tree at a time, she is a quiet force for regeneration. She is one of the leaders in the movement to regenerate nature, society and the economy—and I’m proud to be walking beside her.

Listen to the full conversation on my podcast Thriving: The Breakthrough Movement

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