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"If Oceans Could Speak"

Episode #6

Federico Morisio: Connecting professional sports with ocean literacy

[00:00:00] **Federico:** In sports, it's still just about almost always winning. You know, we celebrate as a society, we celebrate the winner, which is amazing. Don't get me wrong. All the hard work, all the vision all the mental, physical it's. It's good. But I feel like right here, we also. We are also working, fighting for a higher, higher purpose.

[00:00:23] **Jen:** Hello, and welcome to another episode of If Oceans Could Speak, the podcast that listens to the oceans, through the personal stories of those who share their life with the sea around them. Stefan and I are going to be chatting to the people behind these unique stories in the hope that our conversations, not only intrigue, but inspire you to reflect upon your own individual connection to the ocean.

[00:00:44] **Stefan:** In this second series, we are focusing on perspectives from the Mediterranean sea. And today we are delighted to have with us Federico Morisio. Federico is a professional wind surfer from Italy. He's internationally recognized having won the international IWT Pacasmayo Wave Classic 2017 and then the same year he was nominated as most improved rider. He's also a champion of ocean environmental issues. Amongst as many ambassador roles. Federico is a young ocean advocate with the youth4ocean forum. Welcome Federico.

[00:01:21] **Federico:** Hi, Stefan Hi Jen. Thank you very much for having me. It's a pleasure and, and an honor to be here and be able to be part of this podcast and, and yeah, hopefully, you know, do some good for this shared mission that we have.

[00:01:35] **Jen:** Yeah, it's great to have you here. I guess we can start at the very beginning. And I wanted to ask you how your professional journey in windsurfing started and what came first, a love of sport or a love of

[00:01:48] **Federico:** Well, my, my story is pretty original or crazy if I could say because I was born and raised in Turin, in Italy, you know, so a city like closer to the mountains actually than to the sea.



But I was really, really, really lucky that my parents were passionate about sports and, and traveling also. So what happened is that at 8 years old, my dad, which is a windsurfer too taught me windsurfing, you know, it, that happened in Corsica. So middle of the Mediterranean sea. And, and so that happened when I was eight years old, I started learning windsurfing.

It was it was a sport that I could do only during the summer. Obviously during the summer holidays, which luckily were, were dedicated to windsurfing for my, for my whole, whole, whole family. And so, yeah, I was windsurfing during the summer. I loved it. But then during the year I was living in Turin, so I couldn't really windsurf.

So I, I did all kind of sports tennis, football, rugby all kind, all kind of sports. And I loved them all, but windsurfing was always the one, you know, like that I wish I could do more. So what happened is that I kept doing it every summer, always a little more, always a little longer, always a little more seriously.

And then at 19 years old, when I finished high school, I had this huge gift from my parents. And I came to Maui Hawaii, which is where I'm at right now, which is wind surfing's Mecca. And this trip here, you know, alone in 19, it just changed my life. You know, it just changed my life because so many things happened.

Like it was such a mind opening, you know, like new culture, new plays, meeting my idols and, and really having such a powerful connection with nature coming from a city, you know, and getting to Hawaii with these waves, with this energy that you feel in this island was really strong. And so I feel like this energy, this whole thing woke up in me that that hidden dream that I always had of becoming an athlete.

And it just changed my whole mindset, you know, my whole vision of life. And so that's, that's basically how it started. And I would say that it's a mix of love for sports and love for nature and traveling, which come from both my parents and in a way mix themselves in and me .

[00:04:06] **Jen:** That's really nice. That's a really nice harmony actually.



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And so I'm curious, do you, I guess, yeah, you travel all over the world now, and I'm wondering if there's a particular place that inspires you the most, but actually I'm wondering more specifically, is it still the beaches in Corsica where you, where you learned when you were a young boy or is it now Hawaii where you've become, what sort of gave you this inspiration to become an athlete?

[00:04:33] **Federico:** Oh, Yeah. Yeah, I think so. I gotta say that each place it's special at its own way. You know what I mean? Like obviously, you know, Hawaii is really majestic, you know, is a really a special place to stay and Hawaii really has it's special things. And it's always powerful to be here just as I told you, because of the energy you feel the connection that you have of the ocean that it's so close and it's so powerful.

But then at the same time, Chile, for example, in the last years has been a great place where to stay for me, because again, the landscapes, the nature is so powerful. And at the same time I have world world class conditions where it can train and, and enjoy the ocean. But then also during the pandemic, I spent three months in Sardinia. So again, full Mediterranean sea. And also there I had, I had a fantastic time and I had a way an opportunity to connect with nature and with the Mediterranean in, in a different way, you know what happens, they usually in the Mediterranean, we get wind and waves with strong winds can be rain. It can be like, it's not like not really normal, consistent winds, like happens in oceanic spots, but it's more, how can I say...

[00:05:45] **Jen:** like dynamic kind of?...

[00:05:47] **Federico:** yeah, it's like storm storm, you know, like it's more stormy, it's like more storm conditions, so it's a different way of connecting with it. You know, you you're following the storm, you you're like chasing it. So yeah, each place it's is special.

[00:06:00] **Jen:** Great.

[00:06:01] **Stefan:** And would you say that having learned windsurfing in the Mediterranean made you a better surfer to give you a particular outlook at windsurfing?





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[00:06:10] **Federico:** So let's say that at the Mediterranean maybe because a lot of the times conditions come with storms. It, it is actually super challenging. It, it is actually super challenging. And, and that's what happened to me in in Sardinia, you know, a few years ago when I was chasing storms and sometimes this was cold, sometimes wind was really strong, sometimes waves were really big. So I feel like Mediterranean conditions can make you an all round rider, you know?

Well, for example, In places such as Hawaii, Chile, maybe the, the, the waves are more powerful, but winds are steadier and conditions are always similar. So that's, that's why it's perfect for training. That's why I go a lot abroad just because it's, it's more consistent so I can practice every day, you know, and it helps, helps me step up my level, but the Mediterranean has this kind of mix of of variables that makes it even more challenging at times.

[00:07:06] **Stefan:** It's really interesting to hear, because I think we all have an idea in our head about places like the Mediterranean, especially if somebody comes from, let's say, central Europe or Northern Europe the idea that the Mediterranean is a stormy place or challenging in many ways, I think this is something that a lot of people don't have in their mindset, so to say, and I think it's really important.

And that's really a big part of why we do If Oceans Could Speak it's important to share these really personal connections to the different sea that we have in Europe. And that bring me already to my next question. From personal level, what made you want to champion ocean advocacy and especially environmental issues? Cause this is a challenging task.

[00:07:49] **Federico:** Yeah. Yeah, absolutely. It is. And. Sincerely, especially doing what I do, you know but maybe we can get into this later, the thing is, I was really lucky. I'm really grateful for this, for the dedication that my, my parents gave me, you know, because they were travelers, they are sports people, they just love nature too. And so they educated me since a young age, like little action, but strong values. You know what I mean? Just respecting the environment, like recycling little things, saving water, turning off lights, which are little things, but during the years, and, instilled these values in me, you know. So what happened is that I grew like that and I thought it was normal, I thought it was normal, and so then when I changed my life and I started traveling and windsurfing and being on the beach all year long at the beginning,





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I was just really focused on the, on the athletic part, you know, on the athletic goals, you know, so winning, competing, improving, but then throughout the years, also with the climate change, you know issue and theme getting always wider and more recognized, and, and by traveling so much, I realized that's not normal. You know, it's not, not that I'm special, nothing. It. It's not normal, like respecting the environment, knowing what it means, knowing how important it is for us. It's not normal. It's not clear for everybody. And so at that point I was like, okay, so maybe I should share some of the things that I do, or some of the things that my parents taught me and that could help other people could simply make them aware and, and hopefully inspire and educate, you know, step by step.

At the same time, I, it's hard for me to talk about it because my life in general overall, it's, it's hard to make it sustainable. You know what I mean? I'm traveling a lot. I'm traveling a lot. My gear, you know, has carbon like. It's not easy. So my first, my first goal was to lead by example, and that's why I'm sharing all I can. But at the same time first, I'm just trying to myself improve my, my, my lifestyle, make it more sustainable, educating myself, being more aware, learning, studying, and then just applying it to my life. And that way, that way I can then share, you know, tips and maybe help other people understand what can be good and what be bad, what can be bad.

And so just little examples. That's why I started a plant-based diet two years ago, you know, almost out of the blue. I, I saw some documentaries. I, I talked with people and I was like this is the right thing to do, you know, both for the planet and for myself as an athlete, you know, so that's, that was one thing.

And then also it, it started motivating me to create projects with my windsurfing sponsors, to try to make our gear more sustainable. So I'm lucky enough now to have a sponsor it's called Starboard Windsurfing that is really active on this theme, and it's a pleasure to work together with them. Now we are trying to organize a collaboration with the Polytechnic of Turin, and, and Starboard to create a custom board, a special board that can hopefully be built with more sustainable materials. And at the same time, Starboard helps me compensate all my, all my emissions. So I take note of all my kilometers by car and all my flights, train, whatever type of transportation I use, energy, which is the hardest one, because I gotta get the bills, the bills from the places where I stay and, and nobody understands why I'm asking them. And then they calculate and, and finally they, they plant mangroves with with an organization that they





collaborate with. They're based in Thailand and have this collaboration in Myanmar that plants man grows for them.

And just a little, I know compensation is not the final goal. It's not at all. I'm aware of that, but I feel like it's a first step right now. It's something that I can do to at least, at least try to, you know, become carbon neutral, but obviously the end goal is not having those emissions. So I'm aware of that.

I'm I'm also aware though, that it's, that it's It's a process. And you know, if right now I would just want to be, have, would, would want to have no emissions at all. My life would stop and wouldn't be able to do anything, you know? So these were, these were just few examples of what I'm trying to do.

[00:12:11] **Jen:** It's, it's really inspiring that you, you don't have an easy lifestyle to maintain. That's a sustainable one, but you're really conscious of it. And you're really trying to integrate small actions into every part of your day to day routine, whether it's your diet or your travel or your equipment. And I think, I think that's something a really strong message to, to get out there actually.

[00:12:31] **Federico:** Yeah. You know, that, that inspires me because in a way, if I can make my life still more sustainable with such a hard lifestyle with such a, you know, like demanding then it's like, it can be inspiring and it can be like of no excuse for other people. You know what I mean? In a way, in a nice way, you know what I mean? It's a challenge for, for me too, you know, like I travel a lot. I use this gear, if I can make it then also, almost anybody else can make it and maybe a formula one driver is harder, but , you know what I mean?

[00:13:02] **Jen:** No, but we all have these things in our life that can be made more sustainable. And I think that's making me think, oh, well maybe I should be trying a bit harder or what can I do to, to offset this?

And I, I guess it helps as well because there's a guilt as well, maybe, that comes with all of these lifestyle choices. And if you can offset that guilt by doing something good, and, and I guess with you spreading a message more widely through you youth for ocean forum, then, then this is a really positive thing.

[00:13:29] **Federico:** Yeah. And, and as I said, it's just, it's a, it's a process like I'm every day I'm learning something new. Like every day, I'm like, oh, I listen





to something. I read something. And I'm like, whoa, I didn't realize about that. You know? So like for, for example, until like few months ago, I was like, okay, clothing food, energy and transportation are the four macro areas where I can, you know, make an impact on my lifestyle.

And so, you know, buying less and buying from responsible companies clothing, meaning buying local food and plant based. Tried to use renewable energy somehow and Chile was staying in a place that had solar panels on, on top of the house. So I was using clean energy, that was nice. Transportation: for now I'm compensating, but the goal would be to one day, maybe be able to have an electric car that I can fuel with renewable energy and, you know, planes who knows, but hopefully soon.

And then few weeks ago I was, I, I was listening. I was following this really educated woman that talks about these topics. And she was like having a bank that doesn't support fossil fuels. And I was like, wow, that's huge. That's huge. Imagine all our money, we just leave in the bank. It just, you know, it's in the bank, have no idea what they do with it.

And they support all the weapons, all the fossil fuel industry they get. And I was like, wow, I never thought about that. So that's not a big thing, you know, that I just, it's just a process. And now I'm like, okay, gotta look for a new bank. which is awesome. You know, like it's step by.

[00:15:02] **Jen:** Step by step. Yeah.

[00:15:03] **Stefan:** And an important step is of course also talking about it, sharing this information, because I think that's a really important aspect of what you're doing, that you share this with other people and as an athlete, you're role model, if fans or people are listening to you and think it's really valuable. Also beyond the message itself, but also just to share this information that okay, the bank is something that's connected to how we deal with the environment or not just the relatively obvious things, like say how much do we fly? How do we deal with waste or energy and so on? And when it comes to ocean literacy, how do you see the role of young people there? Is this something where we can really see a role for the next generation, because very often this has been my own experience, a lot of young people know so much more about climate issues and environmental issues than the generation before.



[00:16:01] **Federico:** Yeah. Yeah, I absolutely agree on what you said and it connects to what you said like, that I like sharing these things. I like talking about it, first of all, because I feel like I have to second because I feel like I want to, and it's the right thing to do, you know, especially with my sport that it's so connected to nature it's so it's like I'm enjoying all this, and I'm doing nothing to protect it.

That's really selfish, you know, so regarding the communication thing, why feelings connected with the young people, because, you know, you can see this whole technology development and in different ways, but from my point of view, it's so good because there's a lot of information out there and there's a lot of opportunity to inspire and educate people in a way that was impossible before, especially on such an important topic that is still not discussed enough on normal media and that it's so urgent. So like we are late and who should really talk about it, doesn't do it enough. So it's our responsibility and that's where I feel the young people gets in of all these new, you know, platforms that again, can be good and can be bad on certain things, but they're an amazing tool to share knowledge, to share education, to share, yeah, to share all this knowledge that we need. We need to know, you know, we need to, to be aware of. So what happens now, sometimes they open, I open TikTok and I see young, young people talking about, you know, environmental issues, climate change, and that's like, wow. You know, that's good. That's good because we need to talk more about it.

And I feel like for once, at least since I was born or since I can remember, I feel like something that it's good for the planet and for, and for people is, is, is trending. You know what I mean? Like there's still the danger of greenwashing, which obviously it's something that we still face, you know, because a lot of companies or people just gets you know, on top of the whole thing, but it's good. And we need to take advantage of this whole momentum of this whole, you know, attention that goes with climate change and, and hopefully bringing more and more out there and just keep educating, you know, there's so much need for education. There's so much need for education, like I meet so many people around the world. And essentially a lot of them is educated, not wealthy, but like, you know what I mean? Like people that live well and, and, and good people that you can see with good heart, but maybe just a little example, maybe they, they don't even recycle because they, they don't even know how it works. They don't even know why we need to recycle. So when I see those situations like, wow, we lack education. We lack awareness. We lack, you know, like



reach. And so. You know, that motivates me, inspires me to, to, to keep creating content and make me, how do you say rely and make me aware that this new young generation that is so much into it can, can bring a big, a big and positive change.

[00:19:07] **Stefan:** And would you say that we are moving towards really a cultural shift through the generations? Because I think a lot of what is normal today was unusual a generation or two ago. Would you say we have the same situation also when it comes to environmental awareness, especially with regard to the ocean that so often it's been seen as basically infinite so you don't see the trash that goes in, you have this idea that there's an infinite amount of fish that can be taken out. Do you see this also changing attitude among young people with regard to the marine environment?

[00:19:43] **Federico:** I feel like again, I see a lot of good at the same time obviously there is a lot of work to be done, you know also, because I feel like sometimes what we are trying to do here kind of goes against the system that it's in place right now, you know, like I'm, I'm not too experienced to say that, you know, like a hundred percent, but it just feels that way, you know, like we're not talking about this in schools or, or like, you know, just so little. And so, and that's also the thing about social media, actually, that, because I, I, I look for these things, I chase these things then all these platforms show me that. So I see the young influencer, sorry, I see the young content creator who talks about it, but it's maybe 1, 2, 3, 10. How many millions of kids or teenagers there are out there that maybe don't reach don't don't get reached by that kind of content you know that from that awareness, that education. So I feel like there is, there is a beginning of switch, you know, but. There is a lot of work to be done still.

[00:20:49] **Jen:** That's a really interesting point. It's made me think that on social media and, and platforms like this, you have to kind of grab for people's attention, don't you, and you wanna spread positive messages and all of these environmental issues and make them someone's priority, but you're sort of fighting against more consumeristic ideas or this fast world that we live in and so easy to buy stuff. Buy buy buy. And yeah, I think that's a really interesting dynamic. How do we push for positive messages to come to the front of people's scrolling feeds and yeah, I think that's, that's a really interesting point and maybe, you in, in, in a privileged role of being a professional sportsman and, and sports women, yeah, maybe that's, that's something that you can take on.





And do you think that more and more sports people are, are, are doing the same as you and, and trying to make a difference that way?

[00:21:41] **Federico:** Oh, well, for sure there there's, there's a lot of them, I feel like it's still too little, you know, because just as you said, I feel like it's a duty of mine. You know what I mean?

Because here we are not talking about something that it's yeah, I can talk about it or not. Like we are talking about the planet. We're talk, not even the planet. Wait, we're talking about our, our condition. You know, we, we're talking about our survival, you know, in a way, you know, like humans, like planet the planet, correct me if I'm wrong, it's gonna, it's gonna face this. It's gonna face climate change. It's gonna keep going. It's just gonna adapt. Who knows how many more years, but the problem is for us that a lot of areas on Earth won't be livable anymore, will be too hot. We'll have problems with water. And so it is a really serious problem.

And I feel like I need to talk about it. And even more given my connection, the connection of my sport with nature, you know, but just as we were saying before, communication nowadays, it's so important. And we have these tools that are so strong. That's why it would be awesome to have more famous or like simply recognized people, start to talk about these, these, these topics, you know, and I see it from certain athletes, but it's, you know, right now talking about it, it's, it's just like, I see it like myself, I talk about, because I was lucky enough to be educated that way. And because my sport is so close to the ocean and because it got passionate of it throughout the years, you know, but if you're in. If you're an athlete in another sport, it doesn't really bring you any advantage. Does it really? You know what I mean? Like it's it's still just up to talk about it...

[00:23:19] **Jen:** there's maybe not that immediate connection...

[00:23:20] **Federico:** Yeah. You know what I mean? Like in, in sports, it's still just about almost always winning, you know, we celebrate as a society, we celebrate the winner, which is amazing. Don't get me wrong. All the hard work, all the vision or the mental, physical it's, it's good. But I feel like right here, we, we are also working, fighting for a higher, higher purpose. You know what I mean? It's it's super important to win. Actually you can win and then have even have even more reach and, you know, have focus that attention to this topic. So





that's awesome. But in general for athletes, I mean, I, I just feel like we could take this climate change, these environmental issues as a higher purpose, you know, that can go hand in hand with our sport activity. That's the least how I see it. You.

[00:24:12] **Jen:** Mm, great idea. We should have medals for championing. Yeah. Championing these sorts of things as well.

[00:24:19] **Federico:** Well, imagine, imagine that, you know, imagine yeah. If it's that's a nice idea, actually, you know, winning depends on your performance and on your impact on the on the planet.

[00:24:35] **Stefan:** Well, your sport is very much connected to nature. Are there any particular aspects of environmental protection issues that are the most relevant for the sporting community or for the the windsurfing community? Is that even something that's being discussed among athletes?

[00:24:54] **Federico:** So let's say that in the last years, windsurfing companies have been a little more active. For example, one thing that they did was taking off removing plastic from most of their packaging, you know? So we get boards for example, that obviously have to travel and are fragile. And so they used to have a lot of plastic around it, you know, and now it's all paper. So that's one thing. I'm lucky enough to be working with Starboard, which is a 10 times carbon positive company. But because of that project that it has of planting mangroves, they also have a plastic offset program. So they have teams of people that recollect plastics plastic from beaches through daily cleanups in Thailand. At the same time, why they do this to compensate, they're also working to, to reduce, you know, which is the most important part as we, as we said before.

And so that's nice because working with a company that has, you know, shared mission and shared values makes everything easier. And we are like, I feel like right now it's important to step into the real product. How these boards, how these sails are made and how can we make them better and more sustainably, you know, which is really, really hard because you're still selling a product you're still a business. You still need to be to survive at the end of the year. You know, you still need to be the best product out there because people looks at performance probably looks at 90% performance, 10% sustainability, you know,





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like, or like 80:20, 70:30, But seriously, it's hard for a person for a windsurfer out there today to buy a board. If they tell you, yeah, it's more sustainable, but it goes 50% slower than the other one, you know?

[00:26:39] **Jen:** Yeah. That's a no brainer.

[00:26:41] **Federico:** It's obvious. It's people's, you know, like pleasure time. So, I mean, You wanna have you wanna be out there and gear is expensive. So, you know what I mean? I feel like this, this transition can be really made little, little step, but it has to be a big change, you know, because if not, it's like.

And so I feel that's, that's that what, that's what we have to work on right now. But yeah, there's a, there's a long way to go, but the awareness is there, especially with Starboard and, and also I feel like I have the power with my initiatives, you know, to influence at least the brands that I work with and, and, and move in that direction.

[00:27:23] **Stefan:** And...

[00:27:24] **Federico:** Oh, so sorry,

[00:27:25] **Stefan:** please...

[00:27:25] **Federico:** just one thing are getting. Are at least trying to get carbon neutral or carbon positive, which again is not the final it's not the end goal, but it's a step in the process. I believe

[00:27:38] **Jen:** mm-hmm .

[00:27:40] **Stefan:** And then part of this process is of course the other side of the sport - the fans, the events. How does it look like in windsurfing? Is it something that's been discussed? How events can be more sustainable, cleaner, and more environmentally friendl?. Cause everywhere where you have a lot of people coming together it's inevitable that you have waste and so on.

[00:28:01] **Federico:** Yeah. Yeah. So it just started now with the most of all with the carbon footprint, which it's one of the most important thing, but we also know that it's one of the easiest things to do, right.



I mean, it's not easy, but you know what I mean? Like you, you plant trees, you plant mangroves, which is, which can be really good because mangroves besides being one of the best plants or you probably know way better than me, but besides being one of the most powerful plants in, in, in terms of CO2 absorption, they're also good for territorial protection. You know what I mean? Like for tide changes, tsunamis, you know, because they're strong plants. And so that's why they're planting mangroves over there. You know in Myanmar, but to get to your point of what happens in physical events or waste recycling, I actually don't know about it, because it has been two years without competitions, at least for me and between COVID and now I had an injury, so it has been two, two years without competing. And so I haven't been to a physical competition right now in a while. I, I don't know also because it depends where, where you're at, you know, like, let's say just an example, last event was in Cape Verde right, so just close to the Canary islands and I didn't know how things worked there. It, it can be hard, you know what I mean? To, to have a certain organization in certain places, because maybe they're not ready for it, or they didn't have the setup, but this is just, you know, just, I'm just saying, you know, but yeah, for sure the organization can do something about it and for sure it has to do something about it.

[00:29:38] **Jen:** mm-hmm . I was just thinking the, you know, so much about the environment. It's great that you mentioned these two great things about the, the mangroves. And I was gonna say another one that maybe is just gonna help inspire people more is that the mangroves are also really important nursery grounds for so many species of fish and sharks, so that's another, another good thing about mangroves. So when we, we are gonna maybe go back a bit to the Mediterranean Sea now, cause we know that it's become one of the global hotspots for Marine litter and Marine pollution. But and I was wondering if you had any personal experiences with that. Have you seen any negative changes, but have you also seen any positive changes in any community examples of, of sporting communities or other communities doing, doing positive things to change that?

[00:30:27] **Federico:** So, again, I don't spend that much time in the Mediterranean sea, you know, because of, because of my trainings and competitions, but I have during the pandemic in 2020 end of 2020, I spent three months in Sardinia because I couldn't travel and I just wanted to go there finally, once a good excuse, a good opportunity.

And I had an experience that I will remember forever, I think because I was in this amazing beach on the north coast, north shore of of Sardinia and it just had a really nice session, you know, like with one friend out really nice day, sunny blue water, beach, amazing, Sardinia is really wonderful. Like it impressed me, you know, with its conditions for wind surfing, but just over landscapes, which is something that I always enjoy.

And I was in the beach de-raking my gear, and I see this shoreline, you know, and I'm like, it's multicolor. Like it's not beige anymore. You know what I mean? Like it's not beige like sand colour and, and maybe white, you know, with some shells and stuff, it just multicolor it. So I got closer and there were all kinds of plastics. Like microplastics are way smaller, but you know what I mean, in between plastics and microplastics. So like pieces like this, you know, once centimeter diameter, and it was full and it was like, wow, like, we're almost, we are almost, or we got used to this, like we got used to seeing multi-color sand on the beach, you know, and, and that's, that's how bad it is. Pollution, plastic pollution in the Mediterranean. And you, you probably know when, just for the people listening to us, they just had a study saying that they found microplastics in our blood. I mean, of course it's in the environment. You know, we are part of it. We are one thing we're all together. What do we eat? What do we, what do we breathe? What do we drink? So it's a, it's an enormous issue. And we not only have to find ways to solve it right now in our daily lives, but then we also have to figure out how to fight back all the pollution we did in these previous decades. Because all that microplastics comes from, I think also from decades of doing things without even knowing what the consequences were, so it's bad with plastic and I'm I'm collaborating or I'm, I'm expanding my, my network, because my idea is to be able to connect with organizations that have shared values and mission, and hopefully be able to make them work together or simply make them work with the communities that I, I spend time with, you know, so for example, when I go in Sardinia, organize something with an entire organization in Sardinia and maybe an international organization that can give even more can give even more visibility. And then when I'm in Chile with a local one. So for example, in Europe, I got in touch with Surfrider foundation, you know, which they have a lot of programs and initiatives on the marine pollution, plastic pollution, also on the water quality, you know, they check all this chemicals in the water, how clean it is, how safe it is for us to get in the water. And for example, in Chile, I, I collaborated with Parley TV, which is a global Network of creators that, you know, are, are concerned about Marine pollution and are trying, trying to find ways to, to fight it. And I love, I love



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collaborating with these organizations because I feel there's a lot of potential. There's a lot of positive impact that can be done. And this is just so, not really part of the question, but I just would like to share it, you know, like I was in Italy during the first month, during the last months of 2021, I got injured. So I spent more time in Italy. And I'm a, I'm a, I'm an ambassador for the Mare Viva Onlus, which is the only onlus (NGO) that works in Italy for the protection of the sea and its ecosystem since 35 years.

And through them, I was able to connect and meet a lot of people. And I met this company that builds a machine, which is that is big as a container, and it was designed for like remote locations, remote coastal, or mountain communities, and it's able to transform litter and so trash into clean energy. And it's, it becomes auto sustainable.

Don't. I can go into the exact detail explanation because they explain it to me a hundred times, but still I didn't have enough knowledge to repeat it or at least do it well, but we can share the, the page with it. And and so since I saw that machine. I was like, wow. You know, a lot of the times when I travel, when I windsurf I'm in little I'm in little communities, in Chile I was staying in Matanza, which is a place what, with 2000, 3000 people, or here, Hawaii Maui, it's a small island, you know?

So I mean, there's a lot of people, but you, you know what I mean? It's community the end. And I imagine that machine in these places, how it could help deal with with trash and, you know, plastics. Something that kills me is like here and same in chili in the place where I was staying. For example, for recycling only plastics, number one and two are recyclable.

Mm-hmm 4, 5, 6. It's a normal trash. Imagine how much waste and here in Hawaii. They had to bring containers from here, from the recycling, from here all the way to China. And then China stopped buying recycling from, from all these islands in the Pacific, because they just had enough their own. And so what can Hawaii do? You know, so when I saw this machine, I was like, wow.

Now my knowledge is still pretty limited. So there are probably a lot of problems to deal with or like, you know, limitations. Like it, it could be a, a solution. It could be an idea, you know, it could be a way of facing it. So now





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I'm starting to dream big. And my goal is to bring some positive impact in these communities that now I start engaging so much with.

So for example, how I came so many times here, Chile, I went so many times there and now I'm creating networks and connections that hopefully can permit me to bring strong changes. You know, like for example, I envision having this machine in these places, either it's that machine or something else, but you know, like putting in contact those Italian guys that created that, that, that machine with Maui county, hopefully, you know, like stuff like that, which hopefully can go beyond my only actions and make a bigger change for a whole community.

[00:37:09] **Stefan:** That's also a good example how also these problems, these challenges really unite us all because that kind of problem, that's something we see in remote communities and coastal communities all over the world. We see it in the Arctic. We see it in other remote areas where local communities must be overwhelmed by the amount of waste, especially in places where you have a lot of tourism, for example, not necessarily the infrastructure in place to deal with especially plastic waste and at the same time, yeah, it comes back to us.

As you said, we have plastic waste in our blood streams. We have basically all over the planet and there it's important to have people who are really talking about this or sharing this information. And from a Mediterranean perspective, do you think that there's something really specific that local communities can do?

Also when we think of young people who are interested in protecting the ocean, protecting the Marine environment, is there something specific that young people can do way to get more active?

[00:38:17] **Federico:** I feel like it's spreading awareness. So first of all, educate themselves because as I said, this is a continuous process for everybody, you know, like I keep learning every day or maybe tomorrow I read something.

I there's a study that, that, you know, goes against something that is said today. Hopefully not, you know, cause usually before talking about things, I try to be almost sure, sure about them, but you know what I mean? So hopefully bringing awareness and then, working trying to work with local organizations to bring, to bring a change there.





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You know, so how I start seeing things that it's important to do both action from the lower point and the upper points, for example, you know, think about your own, educate yourself, how can I be more sustainable? Because also it's always the same leading by example, you know, the only one of the strongest way to inspire the people around you is just doing it yourself. It might take a long time. And I see that a lot. It might take a long time, but people start seeing it and people starts realizing. And with the more and more awareness that is coming, then they start understanding that what they're doing it's bad and then they feel guilty. And then maybe they start doing things.

I'm not saying it in a bad way, but it's just what I said before. You know, you didn't know how to recycle. You've never done it before you start living with a guy that does it every day. And after a while you start understanding the value of that action and you start doing it, you know, it's mostly seeing the other, the other person doing it.

So starting from the, the bottom. So doing, do it yourself, educate yourself, talk about your friends and then, from the top. So work with organizations, vote for people, politicians, or whatever that have that, that share your values and have your same vision. And that can bring a bigger change from, from the top, you know?

So that's something again that I learned lately. It's, it's okay to do your part, but then to have a bigger impact, you need to rely on someone that hopefully is able to bring your same will, and values on a, on a higher level. So for example, that's what I said, all these organizations, you know, and then, yeah, that that's mostly, you know, how I see it and push for push for a circular economy, which is hard. It's still like tough to get there, but it's probably our only way. To get out of this mess that we created, maybe. Yeah.

[00:40:46] **Jen:** Mm-hmm I have a really quick question. I know we have to wrap up soon, but it's just brought to mind this issue that maybe young people have of once you become aware of so many things going on, you can almost become overwhelmed by it and it becomes a sort of anxiety and it's almost like it's too much and you can't, you just can't physically change everything about your lifestyle in one go and you have to do it slowly step by step, but did you ever face that and how do you deal with it if you have these moments of sort of climate anxiety?





[00:41:17] **Federico:** So, you know, I, I read and I heard a lot about it and I know, I don't know, essentially if it's good or bad, but I never really felt it. I feel like because I'm too focused on taking action, you know? So in a way, and that happens to me also with other areas of my life, when maybe let's say that it's not climate, it's personal.

Maybe I get stressed. I get an anxious. And I, I learned, I think I learned that the only way it's action, you know, action. Just puts, put, puts an, an anxiety apart and just makes you go for it and that's what I said, something that I do is also, I see it as a challenge, which is something that personally I like, because, you know, I know myself and so I know how to put it for each person can be different.

But yeah. And, and, you know, just in general, this is also, I feel like maturity process, but I feel like. One of my goals in life is also also to become always a better person, you know? And I feel like respecting the environment and taking care of it. It's part of this process. So to me, being able to have more sustainable actions makes me proud of myself. Cause I feel like I'm improving, I'm becoming a better person. And, and a lot of these things are also interconnected with more selfish themes. Like for example, the plant-based diet is not only good for the. It's so much good for you. It's so good for you. And so, you know, that was the big change for me was okay, on sustainability on on a sustainability part plant-based diet is super good. And then I read that also for my own health was good. And then I'm like, wow, if I can eat well for myself, for the planet and avoid killing animals, that's a win, win, win. And so, you know, at that point, when I made that, that maybe works for me, but maybe doesn't work for, for another person.

But when I made that that, that reason I meant, like, I was like, this has to I have to do this, you know? And yeah, I, I, I tried to see it that way, you know, so obviously, like now I'm 26, you know? So I'm, I went through a lot of things still a lot to learn, but you know what I mean? If I, if I was 16 now, It would be way harder to deal with all these things.

So I, I understand that, but hopefully you are just trying to see it as a challenge and, and, and see it as a, as an improvement, you know, as a person, you know, like I did this and I changed this and I'm improving in this and this helps me and helps the planet. So I feel like that could be a nice way to look at it.





[00:43:58] **Jen:** Yeah. Yeah. Thanks for sharing.that

[00:44:01] **Stefan:** Thanks for sharing this very personal approach also, which probably is really part of this culture shift that we are seeing today. One question that we often ask our guests on If Oceans Could Speak is, if you could share one thought, one story, something important about your sea, about the Mediterranean Sea that you would like other people to know, maybe something that's not widely known. What would that be?

[00:44:28] **Federico:** Hmm. Well, I first thing, I just not a positive thing, but it reminds me of that story that I told you before, you know, about the microplastics that, that I found on the, on the shore and in a way oceans are bigger than the Mediterranean sea. And so for example, the Pacific plastic patch, you know, we, we, we cant, we see it, we know it's there, but as we cant see it, it has, it has a smaller impact because we are just made like that, you know, but in the European, that is kind of a closed sea. That's what we get, you know, like, and that's why, if I'm not wrong is one of the most polluted seas in the world.

Right. Because it stays all there. And so, you know, we have all our amazing beaches. We, we have, for example, in Italy, all that amazing coastal landscape. But then if you go inside and you see what's happening in, in the Mediterranean, it's, it's really bad. And it's really sad. And that's something that I feel like people are starting to know, but as we said, it's, there's, there's a need for more, more way more awareness.

You know, and awareness on what that brings. Not only the Mediterranean is full of plastic and people are like, oh, okay. It's like, and this plastic goes here and then, then goes there and then gets into your body and then, and gets into your, you know, son or daughter, like, you know what I mean? Like, like link it all together so that people have a clear point on what this brings, because just saying, oh, the oceans are full of plastic. Okay. So now I gotta, I gotta go do my thing. You know, it's just like, we need to show them the whole circle, how the whole thing works and why it's so bad. Why, how it impacts us, you know, because if you live in Turin and they tell you the Mediterraneans full of plastic, you like, Hmm. I have two weeks holidays an year.

I go to the ocean. I don't really care. Just wanna get in the water, relax. You know what I mean? But if they explain to you that even if you live in Turin, that





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plastic from the Mediterranean, somehow gets to you, then you're, then you're more concerned then you're like, Hmm, that's not nice. Well, that's at least what I, what I think, you know, so yeah, the Mediterranean is facing tough battle and we gotta, we gotta help.

You gotta help.

[00:46:51] **Jen:** Yeah. Thanks. And I think that's exactly what we're trying to do is show that personal connection that everyone can have to the ocean. And, and I really think what everything you've said has been so inspiring and I think it will hopefully. Help people to just take stock and, and see what more they can do and, and, and take yeah, your lead on that.

So thank you so much. That's all we've got time for today. So thank you for adding this perspective to our season, and we wish you all the best for your career for your training and for all the great work that you're doing for the, for the ocean. So, thanks.

[00:47:26] **Federico:** Thank you so much. Thank you so much for having me. It was a real. Pleasure and honor, to be able to talk about these topics with you. And and hopefully, you know, we, we left some little inspiration to, to take action and some little knowledge. To, to keep moving forward in this in this mission.

[00:47:44] **Stefan:** There's a lot, Federico. Thanks to all the listeners of If Oceans Could Speak and until the next time...

[00:47:50] **Jen:** this podcast was brought to you by members of the EU4Ocean Coalition and was made by the, If Oceans Could Speak production team led by Anna Saito, co-organized by Penny Clarke and Arne Riedel, and presented and edited by Stefan Kirchner, Vera Noon, Agnes Nohraa, Anna Maria Marino, Pierre Strosser, Francis Lopez Castejon, and me Jen Freer.

Thank you for listening. We will be back next week with another story from the Mediterranean, and this one will be recorded in Arabic. There will be a transcript and a translation into English if you want to follow along. And I really recommend that. So if the oceans had a voice, what would they say to you?

