



BRANCHING OUT

New Routes to Valuing Urban Treescapes

BRANCHING OUT PROJECT: CITIZEN PANELS RESEARCH STUDY PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

The Branching Out project seeks to communicate past, present and future social and cultural values of trees with a diverse range of audiences; while developing new ways of mapping, predicting, and communicating values of trees towards more robust, evidence-based decision making and management of UK urban treescapes.

This is the Branching Out Project **Citizen Panels Participant Information Sheet**, please take the time to read the following information carefully.

CONTACT DETAILS

Project research contact:

Name: Janice Ansine Position: Senior Project Manager – Citizen Science
Contact details: Faculty of STEM, The Open University, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes, MK7 6AA
T: 01908659471 E: janice.ansine@open.ac.uk

Independent contact:

Name: Dr. Yoseph Araya Position: Senior Lecturer, Ecology & Environmental Science
School of Environment, Earth and Ecosystem Sciences, Faculty of STEM, The Open University, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes, MK7 6AA
T: 01908655582 E: yoseph.araya@open.ac.uk

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE

You are being invited to take part in a research study which is part of the Branching Out project. Before you decide whether or not to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what your involvement will involve.

ABOUT THE BRANCHING OUT PROJECT

A climate emergency has been declared by 74% of UK local authorities. As they respond to this via increased tree planting targets for carbon sequestration, it is imperative that they also realise the multiple public benefits that treescapes can provide – such as health and wellbeing, green infrastructure, and social amenity. Most studies on urban treescapes neglect wider social and cultural values that cannot easily be quantified. Consequently, the symbolic, heritage, spiritual, social, and cultural values of treescapes are not meaningfully accounted for. Local authorities need a vision of future societal needs and the forms of future treescapes that might meet them.

As local authorities take actions to increase tree planting targets for carbon sequestration, in response to the climate crisis, it is imperative that the multiple public benefits that treescapes can provide are also recognised i.e. health and wellbeing, green infrastructure, social amenity, the green economy. Treescapes are landscapes in which trees play a significant role. They can be found in different settings i.e. forests, agricultural, rural and urban environments, etc.

A vision of future societal needs and the forms of future treescapes that might meet them is needed. However, most studies on urban treescapes neglect wider social and cultural values that cannot easily be quantified. Consequently, the symbolic, heritage, spiritual, and social and cultural (S&C) values of treescapes are not meaningfully accounted for. The Branching Out project aims to deliver the evidence and decision-making processes to realise this vision. [Branching Out](#) is evaluating the social and cultural values of urban trees and developing new ways of mapping, predicting, and communicating those values to support robust, evidence-based decision making and management.

Branching Out focuses on three selected cities: Milton Keynes, York and Cardiff which have different planning histories, and each has particular challenges relating to their treescapes. Branching Out includes the following broad approaches:

- Co-production & co-creation: involving engaging and working with citizens and stakeholders to develop a holistic value framework
- Storytelling: to capture narrative accounts of meaning and value of the past, present, and future
- Mapping: to link biological and physical ('biophysical') features of trees with social and cultural values. The approach will map both values that are generalisable and those that are specific to a location.
- Citizen science: including using the OU's citizen science platform www.treezilla.org.

Branching Out is one of the projects funded by UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) under the [Future of UK Treescapes programme](#). The project involves a consortium led by Loughborough University, The Open University, University of York, and Forest Research and brings together expertise from a wide range of disciplines – from environmental and social sciences the arts and humanities, to urban planning and design.

This research project has been reviewed by, and received a favourable opinion from, The Open University Human Research Ethics Committee – HREC reference number: XXXX
OR where the project does not need formal HREC review: This research project conforms to and complies with the OU Human Research Ethics Committee's conditions for exemption from formal review.

WHAT WILL I BE ASKED TO DO IF I AGREE TO TAKE PART?

Thank you for your interest in participating. We are inviting residents from each of the three focus cities: Milton Keynes, York and Cardiff to take part in co-production and co-creation aspects of this research project contributing to the development of a holistic values framework. Participation is entirely voluntary. It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to participate you will be given this information sheet and asked to complete a consent form. Participation involves:

- a series of participatory Citizen Panel Workshops: three in-person workshops in each focus city - Milton Keynes, York and Cardiff. Some participants will further be invited to participate on one virtual Assembly of Panels (AP) involving representatives from all three cities.
- targeted survey questionnaires throughout the life of the project (one before each workshop) focused on perceptions of values about treescapes from each individual participant perspective.

- an incentive payment offered to each participant after attending and contributing to each workshop as well as completing the survey questionnaire.
- Other / optional contributions

Citizen Panel Workshops

You will be invited to attend and participate in one or more (up to three) in-person Citizen Panel (CP) Workshops, in one of the three focus cities: Milton Keynes, York and Cardiff. You may also be invited to participate in a virtual Assembly of Panels (AP).

Survey Questionnaire

Your participation involves co-producing and co-creating aspects of this research project contributing to the development of a holistic values framework. This involves completing a targeted survey questionnaire, before each workshop, focused on sharing your perceptions of values about treescapes from your own individual perspective. By values we mean our overarching principles and life goals, e.g., health, security, harmony with nature, prosperity, tradition, fairness. These are important in terms of how we manage treescapes. The values of trees: the different ways in which trees are important (e.g. the importance of trees for flood protection or place identity).

Incentive Payments

An incentive payment will be offered for workshop participation which will be paid after attending and contributing to each citizen panel workshop and completing a survey questionnaire. Incentive payments will be made as follows:

- Series 1: in-person workshops in each city: £100 each person, per workshop.
- Series 2: in-person workshops in each city: £110 each person, per workshop
- Series 3: in-person workshops in each city: £110 each person, per workshop
- Assembly of Panels: one online / virtual workshop: \$60 each person

Other / optional contributions

- **Mapping and recording trees – using Treezilla**

The Branching Out project is also using citizen science to get people involved recording trees while understanding their ecosystem service value using The Open University's citizen science platform Treezilla (www.treezilla.org). As part of the project also, detailed maps of the focal cities' urban treescapes will be created by combining hyperspectral remote sensing, historic mapping, and amenity modelling of treescapes. These will create high-resolution mapping of tree characteristics, combined with Treezilla, resulting in Europe's largest, most robust urban tree dataset, accompanied by descriptors of social and cultural values which your involvement will contribute to.

- **Storytelling – collating stories of the past, present and future**

Storytelling will also be used to better understand how people value trees and you may be invited to take part in storytelling activities which may involve sharing your stories about trees and treescapes. These may be recorded as part of the study contributing to a collection of stories from the past, present and future on the study's website.

- **Optional Participant Interviews**

Aligned with the project activities, to get a better understanding of individual perspectives, an independent observer will investigate rational as well as emotional components of stakeholders' perspectives and how they may be relevant during the workshop discussions. This will involve the option to volunteer to take part in a 30 – 60 minute post-workshop interview. Participation in this interview is entirely voluntary.

HOW WILL THE DATA I PROVIDE BE USED?

Your participation, through these deliberative methods, will contribute to the development of a collaborative and holistic values framework of treescapes in each city. Our approach will also map both values that can be generalised and insights gathered from participant workshop discussions and questionnaire responses will contribute to narrative accounts of meaning and value of the past, present and future and link this to the social and cultural values.

By participating you will contribute to the project research outputs which include co-creating useable evidence for decision making to predict the impacts of developments or changes on social and cultural values, supporting more accurate calculation of the impacts of changes on ecosystem services. This will be used to provide local authorities with useable evidence for decision making to predict the impacts of developments or changes on social and cultural values and enable them to calculate more accurately the impacts of changes on ecosystem services.

As part of the Citizen Panel workshops, participants will contribute their perspectives towards a values framework developed by the project. Participants will be encouraged to speculate on possible futures for urban treescapes in their own city, built around an appreciation and understanding of these values. Through this participation individual contributions will help to enable the project to embed social and cultural values in planning and decision-making for urban trees at local and national scales, thereby meeting society's and planning needs now and in the future.

The plan is to develop an ongoing relationship with participants through the series of workshops focused on building connections between the values discerned from these diverse publics. The outputs from these Citizen Panel workshops will be collated along with those from other project stakeholders i.e. urban tree managers, planners and policy makers.

Citizens from each city will be offered an incentive payment after participating in each Citizen Panel workshop facilitated by Qa Research Ltd, the company contracted by the OU to facilitate participant recruitment. This will require banking details for the administration of these payments.

YOUR RIGHT TO WITHDRAW FROM THE STUDY

You also have the right to ask for your data to be removed after your participation in the study within a month of your involvement by emailing janice.ansine@open.ac.uk. However, please note that this will not be possible after data has been aggregated for analysis. All data will be anonymised and stored on secure Open University SharePoint site accessible only to the project team.

HOW DO I AGREE TO TAKE PART?

The project aims to reach and engage with a range of stakeholders across three focus cities – Milton Keynes, York and Cardiff. Citizens from each of these cities will be targeted to participate in a series of workshops. The workshops will be focused on engaging participants to get a better understanding about the impact and perceptions of urban treescapes from residents of these cities.

- To participate you will be approached and invited to be involved by a Qa Research Ltd. representative. Once agreed, Qa will add your name and email address to the participant list for each workshop provided to the OU and you will be asked to fill out an online questionnaire before each workshop.
- Qa Research will follow-up with participants, after the workshops, and process incentive payments for all participants who attend
- Each in-person Citizen Panel workshop (and the online Assembly of Panels) will be facilitated by the project team involving all partners. Workshops will last for no more than 4 hours and involve up to 30 citizen participants as well as representatives from the project team (including a consultant for each city).

You can opt out of the study by declining to participate when contacted by Qa Research or by emailing janice.ansine@open.ac.uk after confirmed to participate in workshops.

Participant recruitment will be carried out by Qa Research (<https://www.qaresearch.co.uk>) who are contracted by the OU to carry out this process. This company was selected based on expertise in providing bespoke research, evaluation and insight consultancy; particularly associated with the natural environment i.e. trees; and working with a diverse range of audiences. Three other consultants will support the organisation and facilitation of workshops, in collaboration with the OU and project partners in each city. They each have a relevant background integral to this role building on existing institutional and / or community-based relationships as much as possible, the consultant will help create diverse, collaborative, synergies contribute to the “Branching Out” project.

THANK YOU

Thank you for taking time to read the information sheet.

DATA PROTECTION

The Open University is the Data Controller for the personal data that you provide. The lawful reason for processing your data involves carrying out academic research is part of The Open University's public task. We also request your consent as part of the ethical considerations surrounding this). Facilitation involves contracted consultant Qa Research Ltd., this requires the processing of some personal data (names and email addresses and telephone numbers) to conduct the selection, recruitment and follow up contact with participation. Qa will also require banking details for the administration of incentive payments to participants from across the cities. Participant names and email addresses (only) will be used by the OU for conference registration purposes.

Contributions will be facilitated through the recruitment of individuals for workshops which involves processing personal information (i.e. names, emails and telephone numbers) collected as part of the recruitment process to make contact and workshop registration facilitated by Qa Research Ltd. Processing individuals contact details is necessary facilitate participation in citizen panel workshops and this will contribute to the project research outputs which include co-creating useable evidence for decision making.

The participant questionnaires will be facilitated using OU approved and licenced survey software i.e. Jisc Online Surveys (<https://www.onlinesurveys.ac.uk/>) which meets and complies with data protection regulations <https://www.onlinesurveys.ac.uk/gdpr-and-online-surveys/>. The information you provide as part of the workshops and questionnaires will be collated and used to inform the next stages of our research as well as be written up for

publication. No personal information will be used, and we will not identify you. You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time during your participation by emailing janice.ansine@open.ac.uk.

Any personal information collected will be held on STEM servers or / Cloud storage at the OU and be subject to the standard security measures in place (including encrypted servers, lack of external access to the database server and password protection etc).

The lawful reason for these transfers is that it is part of our public task to conduct academic research. Consultants are contracted to provide a service, within our legitimate interest to manage our operations effectively. They will use personal data in order to carry out a specific activity, and we have contractual arrangements to safeguard their use of your personal data. With regards to subcontractors i.e. Qa Research Ltd., data storage and processing procedures have been agreed and included in the Contract schedule and appendices, this includes protection agreement on how this data is collected, stored, transferred or processed.

Participant data will be anonymised where possible (i.e. names) and deleted where not required after the workshop phase towards the end of the project in July 2024 (i.e. email addresses). Procedures for deletion of other personal data has also been agreed with Qa Research Ltd.

In addition to this, participants will also be engaged about using a range of communications tools and techniques integrated to support this (i.e. storytelling and citizen science). They will be invited to participate through storytelling facilitated by lead partner Loughborough University (i.e. contributing to a collection of stories which will be incorporated into the project website <https://www.valueoftrees.co.uk/>) and citizen science (registering to contribute trees on the OU's www.treezilla.org).

Any personal information (emails and names) contributed by the individuals themselves as part of the Treezilla registration process, as well as all the data about trees submitted to the site (biodiversity observations) will be on the website operated by the OU who are the data controller. This research is part of a project partnership which involves collaboration and information you have given to us may be shared with these organisations in order to facilitate research and project delivery.

Contributions collected during participatory workshops and other activities will be anonymised and collated and deposited at the UK Data Service ReShare.