

Exploring the Role of Adaptive Capacity on Democratic Performance

Participant Information Sheet

Invitation

This is an invitation for you and your organisation to take part in the Trans-Atlantic Platform international research project, ***Exploring the Role of Adaptive Capacity on Democratic Performance***, which comprises four participating institutions from both sides of the Atlantic: The University of Central Florida in the United States; Edge Hill University, United Kingdom; Concordia University, Quebec, Canada; and the University of Warsaw, Poland. The UK strand of the project is funded through the Economic and Social Research Council.

Before you decide whether to take part, it is important that you understand why the research is being carried out and what it will involve. Please read the information that follows carefully. Do inform the Principal Investigator, Dr Victoria Foster, fosterv@edgehill.ac.uk, if you would like more information or if anything is unclear.

What is the purpose of the project?

The research explores the social and economic inequalities that have been exposed by the COVID-19 pandemic and the challenges posed to the organisations that serve the most vulnerable. It focuses in two areas: reducing inequalities and vulnerabilities and fostering democratic governance and political participation. Using organisational theories, organisational behaviour theories, sociological theories, and democratic theories, it addresses a series of questions about real and perceived inequalities that emerged during the pandemic and how organisations were able to adapt to meet the needs of vulnerable populations. More information about the research questions can be found at <https://www.adaptivedemocracy.net/>.

There are two stages to your involvement in the project. In the first stage, we would like to speak to you about your organisation, the work it does, and the ways it had to adapt through the COVID-19 pandemic. This informal interview will ideally take place in-person at your organisation or a location of your choice. It is also possible to conduct it online if necessary.

In the next stage of the project, we would like to survey a sample of people accessing your organisation to hear about their experiences of the pandemic and of accessing services. We will issue separate documentation for this second stage of the project.

Why have I been invited?

We have identified your organisation as one that is working in one of the areas we have identified as being highly relevant to the research. These areas include:

Food security

Substance misuse

Domestic violence

Mental health

In the UK, we are focusing on organisations in Greater Manchester and we are aiming to recruit up to 10. We are also looking to recruit organisations who have enough service users to take part in a survey which will ask about their experiences of the pandemic and their trust in government.

Consent

If you decide to take part in the project you will be asked to provide written consent. The informal interviews that take place will be audio-recorded and the recordings will be sent for transcription by a professional organisation. Online interviews will be video recorded and audio recorded. Both audio and video recordings will be deleted after transcription. The research team will have access to the transcripts which will be securely stored.

Data from the audio recordings – including direct quotes – may be used in publications and presentations arising from the project. However, neither your name nor the organisation's will be associated with these.

At Edge Hill, we are committed to respecting and protecting your personal information. To find ways in which we use your data, please see edgehill.ac.uk/about/legal/privacy.

Data protection legislation & the lawful basis for processing personal data

The University is committed to ensuring compliance with current data protection legislation and confirms that all data collected is used fairly, stored safely, and not disclosed to any other person unlawfully. The University is a data controller and, in some instances, may be a data processor of this data.

Can I withdraw consent?

You can withdraw from the interview at any time. Should you decide to withdraw all or some of your data after the interview, you have 28 days from the date of the interview to do so. You will just need to let the researcher know and they will give you a withdrawal form to sign. If you decide to end the organisation's involvement, you will have the choice of whether to allow access to some, all or none of the data you have provided.

Will my participation be confidential?

All your data – personal data (ie name, name of organisation, and email address), the recordings from the conversations and the subsequent transcripts will be held securely to comply with data protection legislation. Your personal details will be held separately from the transcript of your conversations with the researcher. Documents and audio recordings will be held on password protected devices. They will be encrypted/password protected if they are being transferred electronically. Only the UK research team will have access to them. There are limits to confidentiality and we have an obligation to act if a disclosure is made that suggests, either directly or indirectly, harm to the participant or to others, or criminal activity.

What will happen to the results of the research?

Data will be analysed by the project team. We are keen to share elements of the findings with you and other participating organisations and we will invite you to attend a roundtable event (likely to be in 2024) to do so.

The research team will publish academic journal articles and give conference presentations about the project but these will not include participants' names or any identifying information.

The university will keep anonymised data for up to 10 years. De-identified data will also be held by the UK Data Service after the end of the project.

Who has reviewed the study?

The UK study has been reviewed by the Edge Hill University's Social Science Research Ethics Committee. Each participating institution has gone through its own ethical review process.

What will I be asked to do?

You will be asked to take part in one semi-structured informal interview with one of the researchers on the team. This will take place at your convenience. It will take around 90 minutes of your time. We will keep in touch with you about the progress of the project and invite you to a roundtable event when we have findings to share and discuss. This is likely to take an afternoon and will include refreshments.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

The research interview will take some of your time (approx. 90 minutes). We understand that you are busy and will endeavour to make it as brief and efficient an experience as possible. The conversation will be supportive but given that much of the focus is on the COVID-19 pandemic, it may raise some upsetting memories. Should you experience any distress we will pause the interview and give you the choice of whether to continue or not.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

The interview itself will provide you with the opportunity to share your thoughts, experiences and knowledge with an interested and supportive listener. The research project as a whole is intended to make recommendations for practice that improve the capacity of third sector organisations to adapt to change and to secure more equitable outcomes for diverse publics. It aims to establish a framework for a sustained community of practice for government and nonprofit organisations within and across countries to enhance adaptive capacity for future public health and other crises.

Is there someone independent I can talk to about the research?

Should you wish to speak to someone independent of the regarding any feedback or queries that you do not wish to share with the research team, please contact the Chair of the Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee:

Professor Mark McGovern

Department of History, Geography and Social Sciences

Edge Hill University

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