Exploring Trees outside of Woodland in Peri-Urban and Rural settings (**ToWPUR**)

Forest Research

From planted avenues to lone trees to hedgerows, ToWPUR make up a significant percentage of our tree canopy. In this visualisation, we invite you to explore the social and cultural values related to these trees and hedgerows. We illustrate what these values are, why they matter and how we might identify, prioritise and measure them in a range of real-world contexts. Please **click on the information buttons** on this page to start your exploration and then move on to the other sections.

The links in this PDF may not work with all readers. For best results, download the free Acrobat Reader from Adobe.com and view on a larger screen.

Some suggestions for how and why to use this guide

To help you prepare for points of sensitivity and tension when making decisions about ToWPUR

To help identify values held by a diversity of communities

To help you commission related social science research

In communicating about ToWPUR

It's interesting!

As a gateway to further exploration of the topic

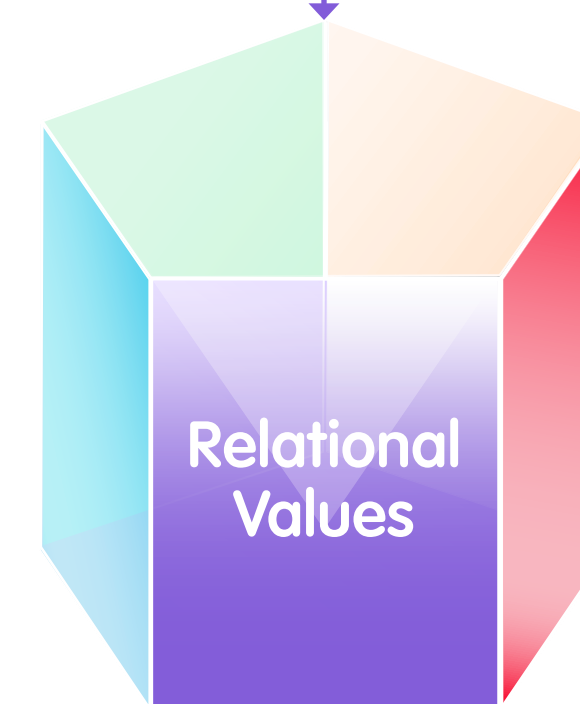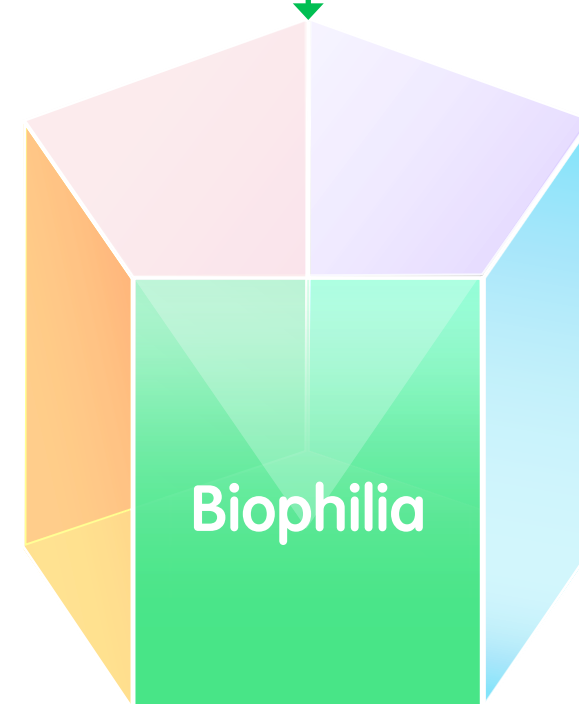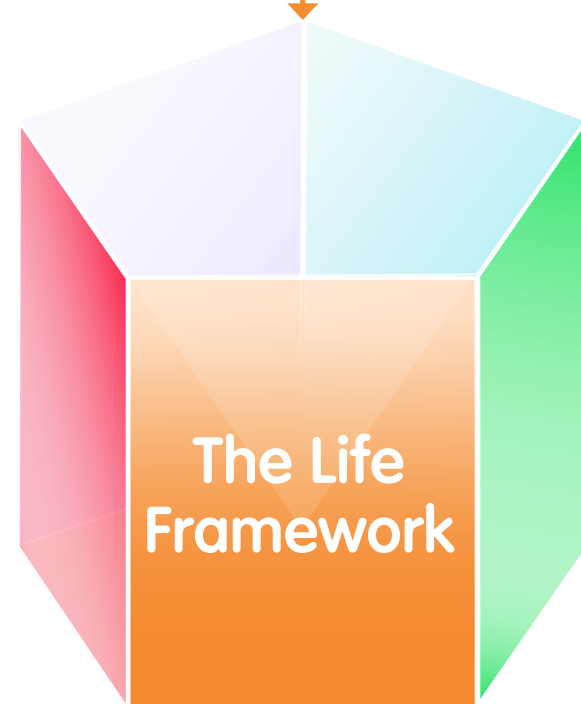To help identify key questions to ask about ToWPUR

To clarify foundational concepts relating to social and cultural values

To think through your own ToWPUR decisions

Thinking about social and cultural values

Different concepts, or approaches, help us explore the social and cultural values of Trees outside of Woodland in Peri-Urban and Rural settings (ToWPUR).

There is no single, all-encompassing approach with which to capture the social and cultural values that people attach to ToWPUR. Different approaches can help us explore the social and cultural values of ToWPUR for specific purposes. Here we present five key approaches as prisms. Light passing through a prism is refracted into a rainbow, similarly, each approach shines a different light on values that people associate with ToWPUR.

The following pages explore insights, questions, strengths and limitations for each of the five approaches below.

The Life Framework

Biophilia

Cultural Ecosystem Services

Relational Values

Sense of Place

The Life Framework

The Life Framework describes four types of human relationships with nature: Living *from*, living *in*, living *with*, and living *as*. This includes values linked to nature alone, as well as human benefit from nature.

Insights relevant to understanding social and cultural values

Living in is about the importance of ToWPUR as places for social and cultural expression.

Living with expresses that we share this planet with the non-human world and desire to protect and preserve it. That ToWPUR co-exist with human communities.

Living from concerns the material and non-material benefits derived from ToWPUR.

Living as recognises ToWPUR as part of us.

Strengths

Explores social and cultural values from multiple perspectives, including those of trees themselves

Good for explaining social and cultural values to research participants.

Explicitly includes stakeholders other approaches don't.

Has been adopted into the conceptual framework of Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (**IPBES**).

Types of questions the Life Framework can help answer

How do we consider non-humans in relation to ToWPUR decisions?

Does thinking like the trees themselves broaden our understanding?

How do ToWPUR shape people's lives?

Limitations

As a recent approach to thinking about values, the Life Framework has not been widely tested.

It has proven difficult to use in practice - repeating the complexity of the world without helping us to navigate it.

The four categories can be difficult to separate from each other.

The Life Framework

Mini explainer video

Biophilia

Biophilia is a theory of our innate strong response to nature, which can be expressed as a love of living things.

Insights relevant to understanding social and cultural values

Strong relationships to ToWPUR may act as powerful motivators for action on behalf of ToWPUR.

ToWPUR can symbolise the love and appreciation people feel for nature.

Spending time around ToWPUR is beneficial to people's wellbeing.

Strengths

Well-established body of evidence that can contribute to our understanding of what motivates pro-environmental behaviours.

Can explore both positive and negative responses to ToWPUR.

A number of people-nature connection metrics have been developed to measure this relationship, including quantitative measurement.

Types of questions Biophilia can help answer

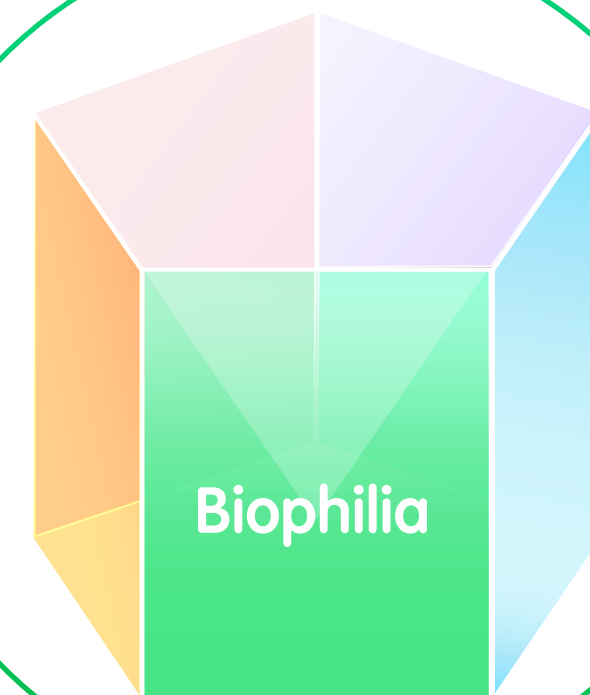How does the loss or addition of ToWPUR affect a community's wellbeing?

Are there types of ToWPUR or certain features which elicit negative responses (Biophobic)?

Why do ToWPUR motivate people to act?

Limitations

Primarily used to measure individual emotional and cognitive responses, rather than social and cultural relationships.

Assumes people are pre-disposed towards pro-environmental behaviours.

Biophilia

Mini explainer video

Cultural Ecosystem Services

Cultural Ecosystem Services describe how natural systems acquire cultural value and significance for people in ways that benefit their wellbeing.

Insights relevant to understanding social and cultural values

As providers of Cultural Ecosystem Services ToWPUR may:

Function as settings for a range of valued cultural activities, such as recreation, play and heritage.

Possess aesthetic qualities from which people derive visual pleasure.

Contribute to wellbeing derived from a place.

Strengths

Connects social and cultural values of ToWPUR to human wellbeing.

Established concept within environmental assessment and valuation.

Can be widely applied and compared across a range of contexts.

Types of questions Cultural Ecosystem Services can help answer

What types of cultural activities and associations are enabled by ToWPUR?

How do individuals derive physical, cognitive and emotional wellbeing from these activities and associations? And what would be the consequence if ToWPUR were removed?

How do Cultural Ecosystem Services impact the delivery of other valued benefits from ToWPUR - for example, the provision of habitat, food, fibre and shelter?

Limitations

Tends to focus on the most obvious, measurable attributes of cultural activity, such as recreation, potentially missing some important types of values, such as spirituality.

Fosters an overly scientific and economic view of the relationship between culture and nature.

Applications tend to focus solely on positive cultural interactions with nature.

Cultural Ecosystem Services

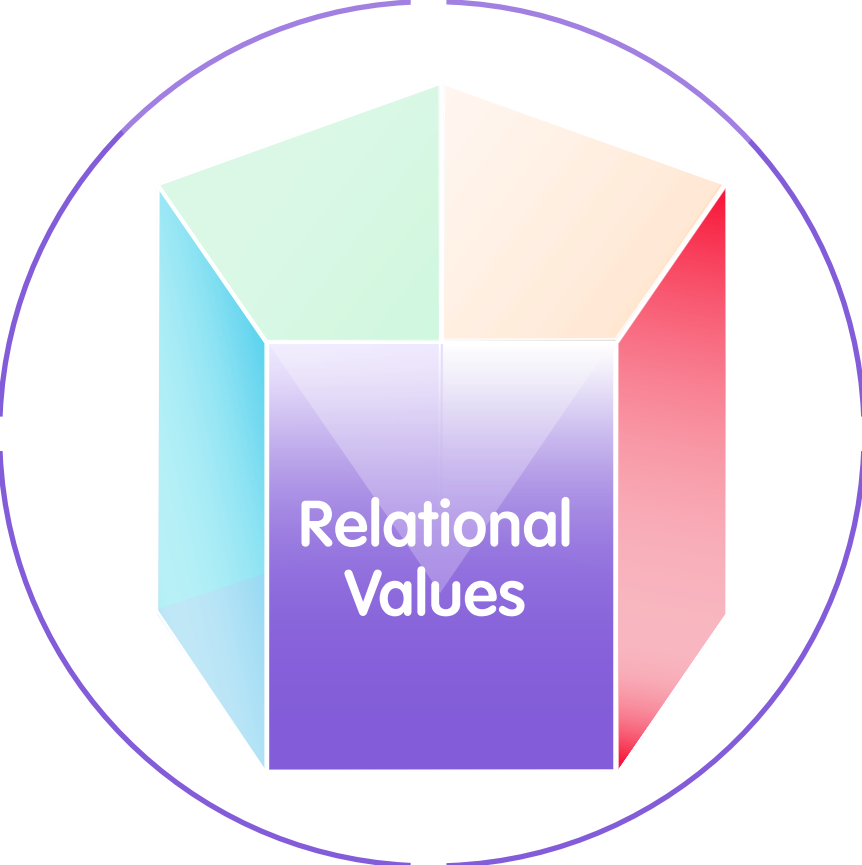Mini explainer video

Relational Values

Relational Values describe the meaningful relationships people cultivate with the natural world. Relational Values can be included as a component of other approaches such as The Life Framework and Sense of Place.

Insights relevant to understanding social and cultural values

People develop relationships of care and attachment with particular ToWPUR.

Unlike many approaches, Relational Values can consider ToWPUR as irreplaceable.

Relational Values provide an alternative perspective to approaches which treat ToWPUR as replaceable.

Strengths

Is consistent with major developments in environmental assessment and valuation through inclusion in e.g. The Life Framework.

Focusing on the particularity of people's relationships with ToWPUR, gives precise expression to the social and cultural values they attach to them.

Relational Values tap into what people directly care about ToWPUR and are, therefore, powerful gateways for community engagement.

Relational Values

Types of questions Relational Values can help answer

What makes this particular ToWPUR so special?

How can we recognise the relationships between people and ToWPUR in decision making processes?

Limitations

The focus on particularity tends to privilege the perspectives of local communities over others who may also place value on ToWPUR, such as visitors to a place or those who value ToWPUR more generally.

Usually applied within other approaches such as The Life Framework or Sense of Place.

Mini explainer video

Sense of Place

Sense of Place refers to the emotional bonds and attachments people have to particular places and environments.

Insights relevant to understanding social and cultural values

ToWPUR create and have their own unique Sense of Place.

The distinctiveness and character of place can be expressed by ToWPUR.

ToWPUR are meaningful to people because of the Sense of Place associated with them.

Strengths

It captures how people might express social and cultural values of ToWPUR as a single concept – it is intuitive to people and so can be easily applied.

Highlights that ToWPUR can have both positive and negative effects on people's experience of a place.

Relevant to questions of spatial planning and design, demonstrating how ToWPUR can be used to create or change a place.

Types of questions Sense of Place can help answer

What feelings about place do ToWPUR inspire in people?

How might ToWPUR be used to contribute to the design of distinctive places?

How could the loss of ToWPUR affect people's experience of a place?

Limitations

It is difficult to measure systematically.

It can encourage a conservative approach to change, where ToWPUR are strongly linked to a Sense of Place.

Assumes people have equal access to places and associated experiences.

Sense of Place

Mini explainer video

Examples

Examples of real-life issues regarding Trees outside of Woodland in Peri-Urban and Rural environments (ToWPUR), which could be addressed through the consideration of social and cultural values.

Example 1: ToWPUR for the future

Question: Where to plant new ToWPUR to account for the social and cultural values local people hold in relation to a place? **Sub question:** What type of ToWPUR and in what configuration?

Scenario: A council officer identifies a Local Nature Reserve on the edge of a city as a site for planting new trees. The site is managed and maintained by a voluntary residents' group who ensure it is protected for wildlife and public access.

Option 1

Uses **Sense of Place** to think through the scenario and guide the officer's collection of information to inform their planting decisions.

Research question:
How might ToWPUR contribute to places valued by local people, such as this site?

What this approach helps reveal:
It takes account of the values that local people attach to a particular place and how the trees and hedges within it (current and future) contribute to those values.

Methods:
1. The officer works with social scientists to run stakeholder workshops in association with the volunteer group, inviting local residents and other identified key stakeholders (identification guidance **here**) to discuss the new planting – e.g. what species, configurations and why. They use a participatory mapping approach, for an example see **here**.
2. They then run a survey of site users and those living adjacent to the site to capture their views of the proposed changes. The survey reaches a wider group of people. Maps created in step 1 are included within the survey to elicit responses.

Sample questions: How do you feel about the existing trees on the site? Can you identify any 'special places' here? How would the addition of trees in this location affect your experience of this place, or how you value it? Where would you plant more trees? Any particular species or arrangement?

Considerations: Such an approach may be more likely to encourage conservative attitudes to change e.g. people often resist change in a familiar place.

Option 2

In this second example, we use **Relational Values** to think through how we might address the same issue.

Research question:
How can we manage change in a way that protects the special qualities of ToWPUR at the site?

What this approach helps reveal:
Anticipate how changes to the site may affect people's relationship with specific ToWPUR.

Methods:
The officer works with social scientists to lead group discussions during walks around the site with key stakeholders. This is to gain better understanding of people's relationships with particular ToWPUR and other natural features of the site, discussing their attachments to those trees and understanding how care is demonstrated.
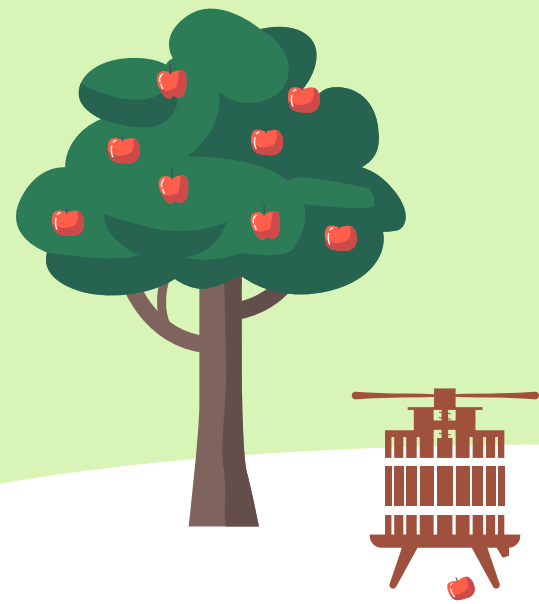
Sample questions: What is it that makes this particular tree/hedgerow/group of trees so special to you? Can you explain why you care about this tree/trees in particular? Are there any ways that you demonstrate care towards these trees/hedges? For example, through spending time with them, managing them or the area around them, photographing them? How would the introduction of new trees affect your attachment to this area/place? Are there areas that feel neglected to you?

Considerations: The focus on gathering data from particular local communities may privilege the perspectives of these communities over other stakeholders, for example, over the council's obligations to plant particular types of trees and more trees to contribute to national net zero objectives.

Examples

Examples of real-life issues regarding Trees outside of Woodland in Peri-Urban and Rural environments (ToWPUR), which could be addressed through the consideration of social and cultural values.

Example 2: Tensions and trade-offs in ToWPUR

Question: What might the public's response be to removal of ToWPUR to make way for a transport system in a peri-urban situation?

Scenario: A sustainable transport network has been proposed which would include cycle, foot and horse-rider paths, to connect rural and peri-urban communities to a rapidly developing city centre. This requires the removal of an orchard of historic significance. Local planning authorities are tasked with understanding the public's response to the orchard's removal.

Option 1

Uses **Biophilia** to think through the scenario and guide the local planning officer in collecting information to inform the planning process.

Research question:
How will the proposed removal of the orchard trees affect communities' wellbeing and how can the development plan be designed to enhance nature connection?

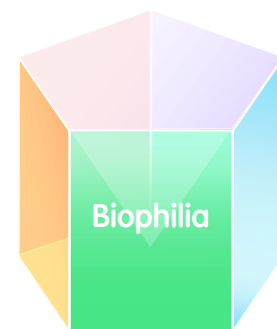**What this approach helps reveal:**
Can explore both positive and negative values associated with the removal of orchard trees to make space for a sustainable transport network.

Methods:
Incorporate the following questions into a public consultation process prior to applying for planning permission:
In what ways do people think their wellbeing is impacted by the orchard? In what ways do people think their wellbeing will be impacted by the sustainable transport network? How does the orchard symbolise people's appreciation of nature? Would people object to the removal of the orchard on wellbeing grounds?

Sample questions: How do you feel about the existing trees on the site? Can you identify any 'special places' here? How would the addition of trees in this location affect your experience of this place, or how you value it? Where would you plant more trees? Any particular species or arrangement?

Considerations: The sampling for this consultation should aim to gather views from communities living in close proximity to the orchard as well as more widely from commuters who would benefit from the proposed transport network, so that the trade-offs and tensions can be robustly evaluated from a variety of community perspectives.

Option 2

In this second example, we use the **Life Framework** to think through how we might address the same issue.

Research question:
How will people be affected by the proposed removal of the orchard to make way for a sustainable transport network?
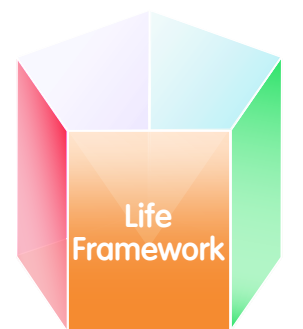
What this approach helps reveal:
It can help reveal the tensions and trade-offs in relation to the removal of orchard trees through capture of multiple perspectives.

Methods:
Working with social scientists, local planning authorities present the scenario to local stakeholders during **focus groups**. Guidance on identification of stakeholders can be found **here**. The deliberative discussion aims to capture the activities, experiences, capacities and values associated with the orchard and proposed changes to the landscape, using the Life Framework four value categories (Living In/With/From/As) as a prompt. A video of the discussions can be created to be played back to the communities and used in dissemination to the decision makers, see an example **here**. Alternatively, the findings could be thematically presented in report form.

Considerations: The Life Framework's emphasis on democratic deliberation has not been widely tested, meaning there is less certainty in how this process leads to concrete outcomes. Engaging a range of communities and sectors with different interests and levels of influence can be hard to navigate. The scope of the research and what is 'on the table' should, therefore, be clearly articulated prior to stakeholder engagement and a plan for how to navigate different interests and influence should be considered up front.

Examples

Examples of real-life issues regarding Trees outside of Woodland in Peri-Urban and Rural environments (ToWPUR), which could be addressed through the consideration of social and cultural values.

Example 3: Making ToWPUR visible

Question: How to raise the profile of ToWPUR so they are more explicitly considered in policy and practice?

Scenario: Policy makers are commissioning research to better understand the benefits obtained from planting ToWPUR.

Option 1

One option is to use the **Cultural Ecosystem Services (CES)** approach to identify the benefits of ToWPUR to communities.

Research question:
What CES are associated with ToWPUR and which peri-urban and rural communities would benefit from additional planting of ToWPUR?

What this approach helps reveal:
It can identify the CES provided by ToWPUR. Used in conjunction with public health research it can help to improve wellbeing outcomes associated with ToWPUR, especially in areas of low tree cover and in areas with poor health and wellbeing outcomes.

Methods:
In association with social scientists, a participatory spatial mapping exercise (example **here**) or a survey is undertaken to understand what CES a range of people derive from ToWPUR. The findings can be linked to demographic data to identify areas for priority tree planting (i.e. 'cold spots' where areas with poor health and wellbeing outcomes would benefit from additional ToW cover). CES can also be mapped to other ecosystem services to produce a comprehensive view on the diverse benefits and services ToWPUR provides.

Considerations: There are a number of different methodologies you can use to assess CES and examples to draw on, especially with a focus on urban greenspace design. Often research tends to focus on the existing delivery of CES, rather than identifying where CES could be enhanced.

Option 2

In this second example, we use the **Life Framework** to think through how we might address the same issue of how to more explicitly consider ToWPUR in policy and practice.

Research question:
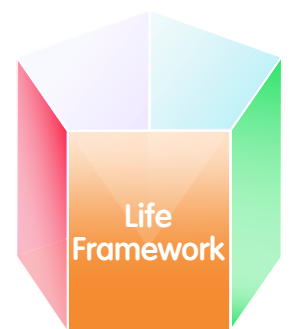How can we represent the interests of ToWPUR in management decisions?

What this approach helps reveal:
By considering values across the four value categories (*Living In/With/From/As*), including thinking 'like trees themselves', we can provide novel insights into the social and cultural values of ToWPUR.

Methods:
Working with social scientists, policy makers/practitioners deliver deliberative workshops with a range of stakeholders. Different scenarios of change are presented, e.g. change of ToWPUR coverage in different landscapes, threats to particular ToWPUR from pests and diseases. Participants are asked to respond to a series of value statements (mapped to the four value categories) to identify the range of values associated with ToWPUR in these specific scenarios. Questions to encourage consideration of the perspectives of trees themselves could include: How could we best represent the interests of ToWPUR in this scenario? What management decisions would most benefit ToWPUR in this scenario? The analysed responses can be used to present both novel and established insights into the social and cultural values of ToWPUR under different change scenarios.

Considerations: As a less established method, this is more open to experimentation, but has fewer examples to draw from. The requirement to imagine values from the perspective of trees themselves is a novel approach with limited evidence of how easy or effective it is to explore with research participants and then utilise the findings within policy and practice settings.

Acknowledgements

Key references for further reading

- Chan KM, Balvanera P, Benessaiah K. et al., 2016. Opinion: Why protect nature? Rethinking values and the environment. Proc Natl Acad Sci USA, 113(6):1462-5. https://www.pnas.org/doi/full/10.1073/pnas.1525002113

- Erfani, G., 2022. Reconceptualising Sense of Place: Towards a Conceptual Framework for Investigating Individual-Community-Place Interrelationships. Journal of Planning Literature, 37(3): 452-466. https://doi.org/10.1177/08854122221081109

- Fish, R., Church, A. and Winter, M. (2016) Conceptualising cultural ecosystem services: A novel framework for research and critical engagement. Ecosystem Services, 208-217. https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2212041616303138

- González-Jiménez, D., Berghöfer, U., Berghöfer, A., et al., 2018. Beyond Measurements: Multiple Values of Nature and their Diverse Conceptualization: An introduction for practitioners, based on the IPBES Preliminary Guide on Multiple Values. https://files.ipbes.net/ipbes-web-prod-public-files/ipbes_values_of_nature_en_0_0.pdf

- IPBES, Pascual, U. et al. eds., 2022. Summary for Policymakers of the Methodological Assessment of the Diverse Values and Valuation of Nature of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services. Zenodo https://zenodo.org/record/6522392

- Kenter, J.O. and O'Connor, S., 2022. The Life Framework of Values and living as nature; towards a full recognition of holistic and relational ontologies. Sustainability Science, 17(6):2529-2542. https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11625-022-01159-2

- Pascual, U., Balvanera, P., Anderson, C.B. et al. Diverse values of nature for sustainability. Nature 620, 813–823 (2023). https://doi.org/10.1038/s41586-023-06406-9

- Tuan, Y., 2001. Space And Place: The Perspective of Experience. University Of Minnesota Press.

- Valuing Nature Network https://valuing-nature.net various useful guides.

- Wilson, E.O., 1986. Biophilia. Harvard University Press.