

From Data to Care: Rethinking the City Nature Challenge as a Social-Digital Innovation Mix in Support of Biodiversity and Nature-Relatedness

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The City Nature Challenge (CNC) is a global citizen-science movement, activating citizens across 754 cities to notice, photograph and engage with urban nature. Working co-creatively with the UK Coventry-Warwickshire-Solihull CNC this research explores how such initiatives can move beyond data collection to transformative change for biodiversity and equity.



Challenge

- Risk that disconnects between data-centric and technology mediated, and place-based and embodied aspects of participation may constrain CNC's transformative potential.
- Underdeveloped relational theorisation and practices.
- Equity gaps and techno-fix tendencies.

Method

Mixed-methods Participatory Action Research: Interviews; Learning History and Three Horizons workshops; literature review; participant/event observation; intervention mix trialling.

Aims

- Examine how the CNC's current innovation mix shapes participation, subjectivity and relationality.
- Assess tensions between inclusivity and rigour, and short-term engagement and transformation.
- Identify enabling and limiting conditions for caring, equitable and sustained participation.
- Evaluate how intervention mixes impact transformation across practical, political and personal spheres (IPBES, 2024).

Early Results

ENABLING FACTORS

Fleixble global CNC governance enables local autonomy and context-specific design.

Emotional and social resonance (enjoyment, connection, competition and discovery) sustain commitment.

Cross-sectoral partnerships mitigate resource constraints.

LIMITING FACTORS

Engagement-data quality trade-offs, over-gamification risks, and expert-casual participant tensions.

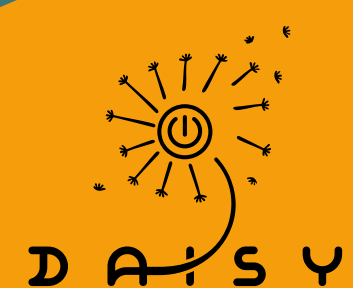
Limited diversity in demographics, and weak long-term engagement.

Structural, seasonal and volunteer-dependent constraints.



Next Steps

- Develop and trial intervention mixes for embodied, relational and place-based enhancement.
- Create multi-pathway engagement to broaden participation.
- Build amplifying pathways through existing organisational, partnership and policy strengths.



DAISY is an EC Horizon project which aims to advance IPBES Transformative Change Assessment (2024) pathways through seed innovations and social-technological intervention mixes for biodiversity and equity.

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