

Research project information sheet

Title of research: Incorporating economic, social, and cultural values in landscape-scale conservation modelling and planning.

You are being invited to take part in a research project. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Please ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether you wish to take part.

What is the purpose of the project?

The primary aim of this study is to understand how conservation management in rural landscapes affects the social, economic, and cultural aspects of a landscape and those who benefit from it. Particularly, this research project aims to understand how people value rural landscapes, how they benefit from different features of them, and how that might be affected by landscape-scale conservation. Beyond identifying the value of rural landscapes as sources of income, food and biodiversity, the focus of the study will be to identify aspects of rural landscapes that are sometimes not accounted for in conservation and land use management. While economic and ecological implications tend to be the main considerations, aspects commonly referred to as the cultural values of landscapes are more difficult to measure and left outside modelling and planning of conservation. Such values include social cohesion, individual and collective identity, recreation, cultural realisation, traditions, among others.

The study will focus on inland areas of the Breckland, West and North Norfolk districts of Norfolk, UK as a case study, and it will use a mixed methodology called Q method (described below) to investigate the research questions. The gathered data will serve to identify different perspectives around the value of landscapes held by different groups of people to understand how people holding such perspectives might be affected by the potential changes brought by landscape-scale conservation.

Why have I been chosen?

You are being invited to participate to share your experience and perspectives over the value you attribute and derive from the case study landscape. The study aims to gather the perspectives of stakeholder with a wide variety of backgrounds, occupations, and relationships to the landscape including, for example, farmers, visitors, community members, conservationists, and government officials. This invitation has been extended to you because you have been identified as a key stakeholder in one of these groups.

What do I have to do?

Your participation will involve an individual face to face session lasting between 1 and 2 hours, in which you will be shown several images that represent aspects of the landscape and will be asked to sort those images according to preference of what you value in the landscape. Additionally, you will be encouraged to talk through the process, explaining the reasoning for your choices and your views.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

Whilst there are no immediate benefits for those people participating in the project, it is hoped that this work will contribute to conservation research and practice by developing ways of accounting for social and cultural implications of conservation projects and policy.

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Do I have to take part?

No, participation is completely voluntary. It is up to you to decide whether to take part. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep (and be asked to sign a consent form). You can still withdraw at any time, and until one week after the session without it affecting any benefits that you are entitled to in any way. You do not have to give a reason. After 30 September, 2026, all personal records kept solely for the purposes of data analysis will be erased and only anonymised data will be retained.

How will my data be managed and what will happen to the results of the study?

The audio of the session will be recorded using a recording device and transcribed into text files. The resulting image sort will be recorded with a photographic camera. All files will be stored in secure University of Leeds servers during the analysis stage of the study. After 30 September, 2026, anonymised data will be kept, making every attempt to remove personal identification. Personal data will be held only when strictly required (such as name and contact information to attend sessions). The storage and use of the research data (including participants' personal data when applicable) will comply with the Data Protection Act 2018, the General Data Protection Regulation and the Human Rights Act and the University's Code of Practice on Data Protection (<https://dataprotection.leeds.ac.uk/data-protection-and-personal-data>). Only anonymised data will be shown in submitted or published materials (such as academic papers or research reports). In any published outputs, participants will be referred to as, for example, "Resident 1", "Farmer 2", etc., and descriptive information of participants will only be mentioned when it cannot be linked to their identity. Here, references to anonymised data mean that all attempts will be made to remove personal identifiers. However, full anonymisation might be impossible in some cases. For example, full anonymisation of data is unlikely for the research team members who interacted with you during the session.

The results of the research will be used for the development and submission of the PhD thesis of Luis Gerardo Sanchez Soto, which is expected to lead to the publication of research articles in academic journals. All attempts will be made to remove identifiable personal information in any submitted or published work.

Who is organising/ funding the research?

This study is conducted as part of research project to complete the PhD programme of the lead researcher, Luis Gerardo Sanchez Soto from the School of Earth and Environment at the University of Leeds, UK. It is funded by the Economic and Social Research Council through the White Rose Social Science Doctoral Training Partnership.

Contact information

Should you have additional questions or concerns about the contents of this document, your consent to participating, or this study in general, please reach out to:

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Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet.

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