

Let's Collaborate with Yarden on students' use of green spaces, connectedness and environmental orientation

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

green spaces, students, research, find, phd, international students, meaning, connectedness, sense, inform, universities, behave, climate crisis, natural habitats, creative solutions, influence, ucl, design, coming, create

SPEAKERS

Yarden Woolf, Catherine McDonald

Catherine McDonald 00:01

Hello, and welcome to Let's Collaborate a podcast from the South West Doctoral Training Partnership. I'm your host, Catherine McDonald. And joining me for this episode is Yarden Woolf from the University of the West of England, who's researching students use of green space. Yarden tell me more about that.

Yarden Woolf 00:19

Thank you, I'm happy to be here. So what I'm actually looking at is exploring the relationship between how students use green spaces nature, connectedness, and environmental orientation. And what I mean by nature, connectedness, is kind of your sense of self and where you position yourself between self and nature, do you feel part of nature do you feel related to nature, and environmental orientation is kind of a good predictor to how environmentally behaving you might be. And the point of this is to hopefully, in the future, inform both universities and city councils, which are homes to students on how to better design green spaces to elicit these sorts of behaviours, we want to create more sustainable adults. And I believe that university students are the right target population for this, they're kind of young, we can still influence the way they think and behave. So that's my PhD in a nutshell.

Catherine McDonald 01:17

And what motivated you to do it, it sounds like this is coming from quite a personal place this research,

Yarden Woolf 01:22

Definitely, so my background is in landscape architecture and urban planning. So obviously, I love green spaces and and the environment or I wouldn't be in this field. I worked for nearly eight years in practice. But from the time I did my masters at UCL, I knew I wanted to pursue a PhD. And my topic is not the same as what I researched before, but kind of builds on it. And I think particularly today, with the

ongoing climate crisis, we have to find more creative solutions to how we influence people's behaviours.

Catherine McDonald 01:54

Absolutely. And so what's your methodology? How are you actually conducting the research? What's it involving?

Yarden Woolf 02:00

Yes, so I'm a second year PhD student, and I'm just about to start deploying my methods. And I'm going full qualitative, meaning I'm going into very in depth methods. So one of the first things I'm going to do is just observe students in their natural habitats, quote, meaning I'm going to see what they do in green spaces, and where they do these things, because I'm trying to tie their behaviours to physical aspects. So like, outdoor furniture, vegetation, things like that. And then I'm going to do a two part interview, the first part is a photo elicitation. For those of our listeners who might not be sure what that is, is when asked him to take pictures of green spaces, that means something special to them, whether positive, maybe negative, and kind of discuss and understand where these emotions are coming from. And then I'm gonna go with the same students into the actual green spaces and interview them while we're walking in this. And again, this is to tie all what they're saying to me to the physicality of those green spaces.

Catherine McDonald 03:04

And you touched earlier on what you hope it will inform or change. If it could have one legacy, you know, if you could sort of pick one, what would it be?

Yarden Woolf 03:13

So I think my dream legacy would be kind of creating a manual for universities and how to design the green spaces. I think particularly in the UK, the amount of students grows every year, international students like me, especially, obviously, come here for better education. And I think there's there has to be some sort of manual that tells universities, this is how you should probably design your green spaces to help impact these sorts of behaviours and create more sustainable students who then become more sustainable adults.

Catherine McDonald 03:49

And what about international comparisons? So you mentioned there, obviously students, international students coming over to our campuses, traffic obviously goes the other way, as well. Have do you have a sense yet of how we fare when you compare us internationally?

Yarden Woolf 04:02

So that's a great question. I don't have a sense yet by thing maybe that's a postdoc idea.

Catherine McDonald 04:09

You are welcome. So one, one final question. What advice would you give someone who's thinking of embarking a PhD, which was obviously you not quite so long ago? Was it if you're just about to embark on your second year? So yeah, what would your advice be?

Yarden Woolf 04:24

I think just follow your passion. Find the field you're really passionate about PhD is it can be a hard process, but I feel a very rewarding one. And you if you're not driven by your passion, you have to be driven by something you really want to research and passionate about. So I guess just find that niche that corner. I guess it's similar to podcasting, find where you fit in, and then just go for it. It took me a couple of years to get funding for my PhD but I did not give up and I got it in the end. So if I can do it, anyone can do it.

Catherine McDonald 04:58

Fantastic, and I wish you all the best with it. Yarden, thank you so much for joining us for this episode and thanks to you for listening to Let's Collaborate from the South West Doctoral Training Partnership. This was produced in collaboration with Research Podcasts and was recorded at the SWDTP conference in 2023. Don't forget to subscribe wherever you receive your podcasts.