

What Are the Next Big Ideas of Urban Forestry: Views from Young Researchers

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[00:00:00] [visual: Conference Rewind logo]

Kathy Brennan: [visual: Conference Rewind logo and video of speaker] Hi, and welcome to the conference. Rewind video series. I'm Kathy Brennan, the director of educational products and services with the international society of arboriculture. Today. We're really happy to bring you a wonderful forward looking piece. The future of global urban forestry perspectives from young researchers, featuring, Cecil Konijnendijk, Sophie Nitoslawski, Cindy Cheng, and Corey Bassett from the university of British Columbia. This presentation was originally done for the ISA 2020 conference. So the viewpoints are, of course, those are the presenters. So if you're interested in a great forward looking piece with international perspectives from the United States, Canada, and China, then I'm sure you will enjoy this presentation. Now, sit back, relax and listen.

Cecil Konijnendijk: [00:00:49] [visual: video changes to full screen showing video call layout] Hello, everybody. Welcome to a, yet another, I think exciting session at this ISA annual conference and we're virtual, but it doesn't mean that it's going to be boring. I can promise you. [00:01:00] So this session is going to look at the future of our field, the future of urban forestry.

And of course it could be. Middle-aged white guys like myself talking about it, but let's not do that. So we're going to actually hear from three very promising young professionals in our fields. And we're lucky, I think as forced to beat, we have so many promising young people coming in. And of course, I mean, there's a lot happening these days, a little challenges. We have the pandemic. We have climate change, but also opportunities for our fields. And I think in general, there's a lot of focus now on how trees and green spaces can make our cities better wherever we are in the world. So, not only are we looking at the future of it before, see we're actually going to have a global perspective and we have, Sophie Nitoslawski representing Canada.

We have Cindy Cheng, SALWAN, Chang both China and Canada. And then we have Cory Bassett, U S and Canada. And these three ladies will introduce themselves briefly. And as you do that the three of you, and I think we'll start with you Corey, and maybe you can also say a little bit about who you are, [00:02:00] what you're doing and our before seeing, how would you characterize yourself as an urban Forester?

Corey Bassett: [00:02:05] Sure. Thank you, Cecil. And hello to all our attendees watching no matter it's the morning here right now, but you could be watching it at any time zone around the world right now. My name is Corey Bassett. I'm from the U S I grew up moving all around, but most of my formative career experiences were in Philadelphia, California, and Hawaii.

And that's where I work, where I learned my skills in the agricultural field, as well as in urban forestry. And I've been really lucky, I think, to land in this field almost by accident, by applying to an urban forestry internship, because it sounded cool to me. And I'm really fortunate to be here after six, seven years later.

I've. Worked both as a consulting arborist [00:03:00] also in the more community sphere, working on community tree plantings and and all of my experiences there really led me to where I am now as a PhD student at UBC researching urban forest management and ecosystem services. So I think if I were to categorize myself as an urban Forester, I definitely my entry to the field was strongly in arboriculture.

And I think that that's pretty common amongst others. But I feel that I try to bring a broader perspective from, you know, my degree in environmental studies, as well as general, you know, holding strong feelings about conservation. So. I'm grounded in agriculture, but trying to bring others into the field.

[00:04:00] **Cecil Konijnendijk:** [00:04:00] Thanks. And I think some of us may be a that's maybe to some extent and more common track or paths, right. From arboriculture to urban forestry. But as you say also, I mean, you come from a, a little bit different backgrounds and that sense, and I know Cindy and your case that that's definitely the case. You're you may be another typical urban forest Forester. So maybe you can describe how your path has been.

Cindy Cheng: [00:04:20] Sure. Hello everyone. My name is Cindy Cheng. I was born and raised in South Eastern China province called Fujian. It's actually the greenest province in China right now with over 60% of forest coverage.

That also means that we don't have a lot of huge cities. That's why we get to retain a lot of forest there. And then my passing to above forestry was I consider it. Very interesting because I never really, before my PhD, I never really directly studied urban forestry or worked in the field of, of a forestry other than my position with the bachelor [00:05:00] of forestry program at UVC.

So yeah, I think I have a broader and, broader and more international background, just because I, I come from a totally different country. And my previous experience is more about natural resources, conservation and climate change engagement. So I do a lot of engagement work, which is connected to a bow forestry. So yeah, that, how I like to characterize myself.

Cecil Konijnendijk: [00:05:34] Interesting. So you're really as said also a little bit of a different trajectory and then very much into the kind of public engagement, citizen science side of things. You already mentioned CB UBC will, I'll say a little bit more about that later, but universities, firstly, British Columbia as we're actually the four of us met.

And which is now becoming, I think one of the driving forces in urban forestry, at least in Canada, maybe in North America. So Sophie you're Canadian. Yeah. So you must be proud of that. Right? [00:06:00] How would you introduce yourself as an urban forest? What's your trajectory?

Sophie Nitoslawski: [00:06:02] It's funny. I actually, I identified somewhat with Cory's trajectory as well, and I think that that's probably something that quite a few urban forestry and our border culture professionals can, relate to, is this idea of kind of stumbling into the field or following, falling into it by luck.

So I did my. Born and raised in Montreal. So yes, I am Canadian and I did my bachelor's degree at McGill university, in a very interdisciplinary program. So it was an intro faculty program in environmental sciences. And so I have quite a kind of breadth of and perhaps. Shallower, but quite broad, experience during my bachelor's degree where I took philosophy classes, biology classes, ecology classes, and I fell into urban forestry because I happened to get a really positive response

from, a future mentor and masters supervisor while sending out cold calling emails to check in on who might be interested in taking me on as a student.

And thankfully [00:07:00] he did. And I got funding for my master's because that was really my first foray into urban forestry, per se. I did my thesis work on urban forest biodiversity and I, you know, moved around Southern Ontario, Southern Quebec and Halifax, Nova Scotia, where I did my master's degree and kind of looked at different, Development patterns and urban forest composition patterns.

And that was really, I didn't even know this field existed. I'll be honest here. So this was five years ago now or six years ago now. And I think I was also lucky because my mentor had also stumbled into the field actually quite late in his career. He was kind of a more traditional forestry type. And so I think that lent itself really well and really interestingly to the work that I did.

And I think it kind of, emphasize the fact that we can have very. Disparate or different career paths and all end up in this field and have something meaningful to contribute. From there. I then actually became an arboriculture inspector for the city of Montreal back in my hometown. So I kind of had this [00:08:00] trajectory where I started more broadly and urban forestry and research, and then kind of moved into our board culture.

And from there moved back into urban forestry research. When I started my PhD. At UBC. So again, similar to Cory, but also kind of different, right? And I think that we each have our own kind of expertise and experiences to lend well to the work that we do today in terms of characterizing myself.

That's a tough question. Thanks, decile. I will say that you know, being really entrenched in research right now, I've become increasingly interested in. The future of urban forestry and also how research could kind of advance the field in some way and make sure to kind of bridge gaps between research and practice.

I'm particularly interested in the role of technology in advancing the field of urban forestry, nauseous and practice, but also in research. And. You know, with the increasing ubiquity of technology and urban environments, you know, this rise of smart cities, I think that there are some really interesting intersections to be had between, you know, smart tech and [00:09:00] urban forest management, high tech, and low tech. And so I think that that's really where I'm situated right now. And, you know, I'm interested to see where the field might go given these two kind of interacting trends.

Cecil Konijnendijk: [00:09:12] Thank you. Excellent. That's that's great to hear. And as already mentioned, so the four of us met at, we met before in many cases, but we are all at university of British Columbia where the three of you are doing a doctoral studies right now.

And between us, I think I counted, we represent like 10 or 11 countries where we've been working and researching and doing our practical work. So yeah, I think a little bit of a global perspective is definitely true. So this panel debate is going to look at the future, obviously. And I think, I hope a lot of young people are watching and thinking, okay, never before CXD is a future path, the future career that I would like to keep, keep working in.

But of course, to understand the future, we need to understand the past as well and depressants. So we'll talk a bit about the past, a bit about the present, and then we'll go into the future perspective

from your views as, as young professionals in these fields. [00:10:00] But you already mentioned your career paths.

Is there any specific moments you would say really made you realize that urban forestry was for you? I think maybe just start with you, Sophie, you already mentioned you had this mentor, for example, that really helps you on the way, but, but is there like a defining moment for you to make you into an urban Forester?

Sophie Nitoslawski: [00:10:19] No, that's a great question. And I think it comes back to this interdisciplinary degree that I did for my bachelor's full disclosure. I thought when one university I was going to become an astrophysicist, I was super interested. Right.

I was so fascinated by this idea of kind of combining these two. You know, different fields like physics and like space. And I was really into like the humanities and the idea of kind of challenging who we are as humans through like space exploration. It was, it was this whole thing and I was 18 years old.

So what did I know? That I think that there's always been this need in me to find a field or find a [00:11:00] path or a discipline that combines so many different backgrounds by necessity and, you know you promotes a lot of collaboration and. I think that it was when I eventually didn't go into astrophysics, I went into environmental sciences.

And when I stumbled into, during my masters, this field of, of urban forestry, and I realized like, during my master's degree, I talked to so many different people. I talked to city managers, I talked to, you know, CAOs administrative chief officers in cities. I talked to landscape architects. I was talking to biologists, ecologists humanists, and that was like, When will I ever get the chance in other, in any kind of other career path potentially that I could foresee myself in where I am, you know, negotiating and dialoguing and discussing one project, like my thesis project with so many different people.

And that I think really struck a chord with me. It was something that I think I was looking for for a really long time that I don't think I had quite [00:12:00] found until I was really put in that position. So I think that was a huge turning point for me, was really realizing that. You know, it's not just talk. We are truly in an interdisciplinary field by necessity,

Cecil Konijnendijk: [00:12:11] right? Yeah. So it kind of fitted your interests, your personality in a way, and they'd brought it all together. I kind of recognize that Cindy already mentioned as well, that you kind of stumbled into this as well also because you came to UBC and there was an urban forestry movement. Do you want to say a little bit more about how you defining moment for you when you felt okay. Now I really becoming an urban Forester.

Cindy Cheng: [00:12:31] Yeah. I was thinking about when is the defining moment? It's actually hard to say because I feel it more and one, it's just hard to pick one defining moments. I think there are many but I remember, the first conference that I attended as a master's students, but that.

Thai. I was uh, part-time students as SIM for the abortion program that was still under development. So before the official lunch and I went to [00:13:00] the Chinese have a forestry forum. Organized by the Chinese, forestry Academy. And there, I met a bunch of urban foresters in China and other places, although countries like United States.

So and I went to as man, speech as possible and I learned this is just fascinating. It incorporates all the topics that I'm passionate about. Climate change. Engagement sustainability, greening trees. So, yeah, that's probably one of the defining moments that I feel this is a feel I want to work in, so, yeah.

Cecil Konijnendijk: [00:13:46] Perfect. Thank you. And Corey, you were back East studying coast. Yeah. And how did, how did he ever force you over so numerous for you?

Corey Bassett: [00:13:54] Well, it was My first entry was [00:14:00] applying for this job at the Morris Arboretum that the urban forestry internship, which I I'm not ashamed to say is because it was full time paid and gave me tuition credit, but those are real things that affect how students make decisions about which careers they go after. Are there jobs that can. Support them or not. And, but while I was in that internship, just was showered with professional development opportunities. And I think that my defining moments all happened at conferences during that internship where, you know, when you're an entry level worker, you're doing lots of data entry, you're doing lots of.

Well, I mean the field work was amazing, but it's still hard to see what the greater field looks like to see what it means to be a professional in that field beyond just [00:15:00] the mentor that you have, which I had great mentors too. But once I got to those chances to go to conferences like ISA and local regional conferences in Philadelphia, I got to see, wow, this is a huge community of practice that I could see myself.

You know, finding a place in, and that, that was that was what made, made the transition for me from, Oh, just an internship to, Oh, this is a field that I can see myself in.

Cecil Konijnendijk: [00:15:34] Brilliant. Thank you. I'll stay with you because as we are recording this, the world is watching the US as we often do because it's election time.

But we, in Urban forestry have always been watching us as well, because I mean, for many people, that's the country where urban forestry to really come to bloom. So would you agree with that? Is there anything you're particularly proud of in terms of urban forestry in the United States?

Corey Bassett: [00:15:55] Yes, so much from the, I think. [00:16:00] Well, you know, there's lots of technological advances advanced sense. We can point to lots of amazing research being done by, for example, the forest service and other entities. I think that right now, though I've been thinking about how much the field of urban forestry in the U S gives me hope and that we are able to.

Have such a thriving and growing community of people across the political spectrum and that, um, you know, we welcome people and we all come together with this goal of improving cities and making cities greener and better and healthier. And I think that, that we have a, both a community that we can welcome.

You know, new professionals too, and we should, I'm working so hard to create pathways for careers in our industry. But I [00:17:00] think that we also have a message to the, you know, the rest of the world and our neighbor professions about bringing people together around an issue like trees that I think we can all find, find some common ground on.

So for me, that, that's what I And most proud of is all of the people .

Cecil Konijnendijk: [00:17:22] Well spoken. I think that's, that's really important as you say, as, as an, on a bipartisan nonpartisan issue, right. Everybody should have an interesting trees ingredient

because he's good for all of us. So Sophie let's move North then to Canada. And then sometimes people tend to forget that X, the urban forestry was Koreans in Canada, in Toronto, in 1965 by professor Jurgenson. So you must be proud of that, but there may be other things in Canadian, urban Forester. You're proud of.

Sophie Nitoslawski: [00:17:46] Yeah. You know, Canada is such an interesting case in sessile. You might agree with this, but it almost seems like urban forestry was kind of sleepy in Canada for a really long time after it was nonetheless coined there.

You [00:18:00] know, in Canada we deal with such interesting and often complex issues around the geography of the country, right? We are so huge, so vast. And unlike the United States, we're not kind of evenly distributed or at least as, even as distributed. Kind of throughout the country as they are in the United States.

So we have this kind of like Southern border where most of our large cities are actually no, all of our large cities are. And so, you know, these enclaves of urban forestry tend to occur in quite these like disparate. Regions, and it can be very difficult to kind of find connections across. And I, and I wonder whether, I don't know, I would really have to look into this, but I wonder whether that somewhat plays a role in the fact that urban forestry hasn't found quite as much of a stronghold, let's say that it hasn't been that in the United States.

And of course there are different governance structures around kind of the federal and provincial and municipal involvement, but we can't deny that there is a certain physical and geographical. Challenge in Canada that we constantly deal with, not just in urban forestry, but [00:19:00] generally as well. And so I think that that's worth kind of considering and you know, I've, I've heard from quite a few researchers and professionals that said, you know, when I started in my career, it was unfathomable to think about doing urban ecology in Canada, you would go to the United States and then you'd come back to Canada, but that's changing.

And I think that that's something that I'm really proud of is that there are some amazing early career researchers who are setting up shop in Canada, doing great urban ecological work, and also, you know, Forging great partnerships South of the border as well, but also within Canada. Which is, you know, really exciting to see.

And of course, the university of British Columbia and the urban forestry bachelor's program. And now the new masters of urban forestry leadership, I think is such a great example of this like forward thinking mentality. I think this incredible kind of collaborative potential that we have, and also the collaborations that we've already forged with China, you know, Europe, the U S I think that there, I think we've kind of entered a Renaissance.

In Canada of urban [00:20:00] forestry, and I'm really excited to see where that will go, because I think it's, it's going to mean a lot of change and it's going to be different. And I think that we're, well-poised to kind of explore that more transformative change.

Cecil Konijnendijk: [00:20:11] Wonderful. Thank you. And I mean, a country where change is happening extremely rapidly. Of course, Cindy is China, wherever been forestry recently has really been starting to take off. So is there anything in particular you're, you're proud of? I mean, I know in China, of course there's a lot of government support government involvement as well. Anything you would like to highlight there?

Cindy Cheng: [00:20:31] Yeah, definitely. So, yeah as you mentioned this, being happening very quickly. So just to give you a quick example, basing the past, I think, so you to five years have, forested, over 120 hectares of, green space. So basically planting trees on those places. In and surrounding cities and is incredible.

The [00:21:00] dens in cities like Beijing. So it was really hard to find a space, in CDs like basing. So, and they managed to do that, which is amazing. I think, well, I really, I'm really proud of, before she, developments in China is how fast and how broad the reach is. So now the, in China we have the national. For a city, a program happening, nationwide, and almost have, over 200 cities certified, as far as cities, they have to go through a rigorous process of, planning about forest management and then implement it.

And there is a monitoring process involved and they have to meet a bunch of criteria's in species selection, forest cover in different. Land type, in the city and surrounding the city. [00:22:00] And they have to meet criteria is, for example, for the access of people to green space. So, yeah, so it's really amazing to see such great progress happening in my home country and the government and people are really, recognizing the importance of, a forest.

Cecil Konijnendijk: [00:22:19] Pretty rigorous and seems to be a lot of science-based approaches as well, a lot of knowledge driven development. So that's really interesting, but of course we know that we are, and now we're moving to the presence that we have some challenges ahead of us as well. Or the field that we have is really facing with some challenges.

And maybe also you are listening right now. You have some questions to the panel about that, or maybe about some of the things you heard so far, so feel free to put them into chats. Because we'll have a live session after this, but in terms of some of the challenges you see our field dealing with maybe I'll start with you actually. Cindy, do you see anything particular from the Chinese perspective or in general in our before suit, you will see as, as one of our key challenges.

Cindy Cheng: [00:22:58] Yeah. I would [00:23:00] say the problem that I see in China is that it's happening too fast sometimes. The politicians of course, want to see that you facts taking place immediately.

So sometimes, it requires it to be happened too fast and doesn't give. A lot of people enough time to do proper planning, proper management. So again, taking Beijing as an example, even though they have planted millions of trees in the past few years, I definitely see some, I definitely have some questions for the site selection and species selection.

Sometimes you see trees are planted in rows, like what they would do in, the traditional forestry industry, outside of city. 14 book production. So, and, and it's just interesting to see that. And there's a lot of, potential issues that coming was, the, fast process of tree planting CD, [00:24:00] for example, what are the maintenance process and, how are they going to keep trees alive? Because Beijing is usually very cold and dry in the winter. So, my be difficult for some species that they choose to plant on site to survive.

Cecil Konijnendijk: [00:24:19] Yeah. So, so to kind of deal tension in a way between three life and human life, or at least human expectations and political processes is obviously playing out pretty strongly there. Do you see any particular challenge as well in U S or just in life?

Corey Bassett: [00:24:34] Yeah, I mean, since we're sticking with the global global perspective too, I mean, I got my. Start in urban forestry in a place with a much more, I guess, traditional, urban

forestry mindset, you know, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, naturally forested and Philadelphia is definitely urban.

So it makes sense for, in terms of communications with the [00:25:00] public that yes, Philadelphia would have an urban forest. And I think that's a lot of the, the bulk of the research around urban forestry and practices and tools are oriented around cities in that kind of more temperate forest zone. But then when I moved to San Diego, which is, you know, not, not a typically forested place, but yet with our definition, the field's definition of urban forest, which is all the trees and associate vegetation and urban area, you know, San Diego definitely has trees that need to be managed by professionals.

But we, we struggled with communicating w what it means to be managing an urban forest in a place that's not. Necessarily forested. And then again, when I moved to Hawaii and was working there unless you're talking about downtown Honolulu, most [00:26:00] people don't identify themselves as living in an urban area.

And I think that that was a big PR problem that PR practitioners in the non kind of temperate forested, urban city have to constantly be. You know, bringing knowledge from the so-called experts in urban forestry and then translating it to their local context. And so there's this constant like re translating process.

So I think that is a real challenge because we know that cities around the world can benefit from urban greening and urban forest, and they have trees that need to be managed and they have potential for. Big impacts from you know, trees in the right places. But I think that we need to develop a better better communication tool, kit, and better [00:27:00] methods and tools for all of these different contexts.

Cecil Konijnendijk: [00:27:03] Right. Maybe as a follow up. I mean, do you see, I know you're, you're quite big on finding new ways of collaborating right. And bringing in different stakeholders. And so did you see any specific examples of, of collaborative approaches that you think are promising and maybe it could be replicated?

Corey Bassett: [00:27:16] Yeah, absolutely. I mean, I think that, especially in terms of, careers and getting professionals into the industry, both, you know, like California, Hawaii, just as examples have really thriving conservation. Fields. And there are just lots and lots of professionals who are, you know, couldn't be more excited about conservation.

And it was a kind of a struggle to also, you know, work with them on these urban ecology, urban forestry issues and get them excited about, you know, trees in people's yards. But I think that. That is an area that we need [00:28:00] to, you know, not think of these conservation people is separate from us and it's doing something separate because people dealing with urban conservation are also dealing with urban nature.

And I think that that's we need to. You know, bring them into our fold and we need to be brought into their fault, basically.

Cecil Konijnendijk: [00:28:21] Very true. Right. Because we say we're an interdisciplinary or collaborative profession, of course. But sometimes there are still these silos, even, even for people dealing with trees and green spaces or, or nature in the city.

So thanks for bringing it up. Sophie, do you see a, what kind of challenges do you see as, as, as really something we have to deal with in urban forestry?

Sophie Nitoslawski: [00:28:38] Yeah, something that I struggle with, and this is perhaps less of a tangible, concrete challenge, but it's this idea of change. And Cindy, you kind of mentioned a little bit of this, but this idea of kind of like speed or how we're kind of trying to go too fast.

We're trying to do things maybe too fast without thinking. And I think that that's a really good point because at the end of the day, you know, as urban forestry professionals, we're dealing with these [00:29:00] systems that can be quite like slow growing, slow going, and it can take a while to kind of get at, you know Changes that are perhaps occurring or responses to change.

And that can be quite challenging, both in practice, but also in research because research processes on urban forest and urban trees can also be kind of slow, right? Not to mention all the kind of admin that goes with research, but something that worries me is that it does seem like. More than ever we're living in times of accelerating change.

So, you know, not to mention climate change and the impacts that cities are going to face you know, not to mention technologies, like that's always something that I'm super interested in, you know, digital technologies, there's evidence to show that we are living in times of accelerating change. Right?

Think about what the smartphone has done in the last barely 15 years. I mean, it's unfathomable. You know, think about political climates and tensions. We have seen incredible change in the last few years, not just in North America, you know, where I kind of situate myself, but around the world and. You know, [00:30:00] this may seem kind of broad and tangential and not necessarily relevant, but I think that if we are going to consider ourselves kind of this global discipline, this global field with global practitioners and communities of practice around the world, I think we need to start kind of finding this balance or reconciling how to manage living in worlds or world and environments that are changing very, very rapidly.

So that could be kind of at the city level to the global level, but then also having to manage these systems that don't. Change is fast often. So what does that mean for our field and that's, and I, I don't know the answer to that, and I would love to chat about it more, maybe with some folks who are listening to this, but there there's like a reckoning I think, to be had here. And I'm not entirely sure what that means for us and what that might look like, but I don't see that changing anytime soon.

Cecil Konijnendijk: [00:30:46] Yeah, that that's a great perspective. And yeah, as you already mentioned, right. If anybody has a comment or question on that, please feel free to add it to the chat, because I think this is one of the key dilemmas and Cindy also brought it up in terms of balancing these different timescales and, and paces of change.

[00:31:00] Corey, I wanted to pick up on something you mentioned in terms of the communication challenge. Actually, the next part of the discussion is really about things that may be, have gone wrong in our profession. And I feel that you're, you're a young professionals, but I think you have a really good understanding of what's happening.

So do you see areas where before us has gone wrong and do you think communication is maybe part of that?

Corey Bassett: [00:31:19] You know, I think urban forestry is still so young and still figuring as self-defining itself. So I do think that. I think I see a bigger future for, urban forestry as a broadened inclusive profession.

And I think that, efforts to define it in really narrow ways are, maybe, [00:32:00] I don't know, challenge areas or maybe areas where it's gone wrong. And I think that.yeah, that's a, that's a hard question, but I, I do think so.

Cecil Konijnendijk: [00:32:13] Do you think it's a fight right? On the one hand of being taken seriously by surrounding disciplines professions on the other end, as you say, to need to be inclusive and to be Brault, is there a tension to it? Maybe?

Corey Bassett: [00:32:26] Yeah. I mean, I think I see in, in cities you can see sort of, you know, Turf battles over who manages, which trees is it planning?

Is it, do we want it our own separate urban forestry department? Do we want, you know, Oh, you know, maybe the landscape architect needs to be doing or something crazy. And so I think that we can get like really bogged down by all these Kind of which, which [00:33:00] discipline is doing, what things, when really, I think that kind of everybody has the potential to be contributing to the management of trees. That's not that that country concrete.

Cecil Konijnendijk: [00:33:12] Right. That's a great segue actually into something. I was going to ask Cindy because it is really, I mean, I studied forestry back in the days and coming into cities, I was still sometimes looked at as somebody who is, I'll be there because foresters are outside. I know in China. Now, Cindy, and this, this rapid development, there's still a little bit of tension sometimes, and it's not only in China and other countries as well. Between the different fields. So I have foresters landscape architects maybe, or to culture lists. Have you perceived in China as well? That there's still some tension about who is claiming that whole field of urban trees and urban forest.

Cindy Cheng: [00:33:43] Yeah, definitely. And that has been an issue, going on for awhile. I think the reason for this is because, before she, it's still a relatively new field in China. I was introduced in the late eighties. So back [00:34:00] then not many people studied urban forestry or doing work in urban forestry field and not many people really understand what means.

And when you talk about green space and trees and forest in the city, some people, a more well established, professions like landscape architecture or, or urban planning, they may be already doing work, dealing with trees and plans and forest in the city. So they, sometimes some of them see that as a intrusion of their territory.

Right. So in, in China. So we definitely see sound complex between, professions, in China in some cases. But I think with, better communication, more opportunities to collaborate, this issue can be resolved.

Cecil Konijnendijk: [00:34:55] Right. And as you say, it's maybe counter counterproductive, right. To it to start patching up our [00:35:00] territories.

Given the fact that we actually have to work across disciplinary boundaries and sexual boundaries. I know Sophie, that's also a big thing for you. So I mean, how do you see that happen? The fact that we, and I we're actually moving almost in, towards the future discussion, how are we coming across those boundaries and making sure we are truly inclusive and collaborative.

Sophie Nitoslawski: [00:35:19] Yeah. I mean, that's a good question and I'm not, I don't, I'm not entirely sure if we're there yet, but I think that. Some of what this takes is an open mind on behalf of kind of the urban forestry world, but also on behalf of other people who might be tangentially or more kind of concretely involved.

One really interesting collaboration that's taking place right now, actually on the university of British Columbia campus, which I think is pretty novel and exciting is between a Canadian telecommunications company. Called Rogers, Inc. And the university of British Columbia, faculty of forestry, department of electrical and computer engineering and the Sauder school of [00:36:00] business, which is the business school at UBC.

And this is, an official partnership that revolves around this idea of, installing 5g on UBC campus. And as you may know, this is the fifth generation broadband networks promise to be incredibly fast, something like a hundred times faster than 4g networks, credibly low data latency. So you can transfer information between systems very, very quickly.

And this partnership was forged. Kind of both with Rogers and the faculty of forestry concurrently, because there was this recognition by Rogers. So a private sector company that, Hey, people are interested in natural assets. They're interested in urban forestry and we potentially see an Avenue for the commercialization of products and municipalities that can help.

You know, municipal bodies better manage these assets, green infrastructure. So that's really interesting. This recognition from a telecommunications company of all people that, okay, this is something that's happening here. How can we get into the space? And so then, you know, as representatives of the faculty forestry, we're now a [00:37:00] big research team and we've brought kind of engineering involved here.

We're like, well, you know, this is what we know thus far about natural asset management, which is actually, you know, really gaining a strong hold in Canada. It started in BC. There's kind of a big movement here towards managing our municipal natural assets more effectively. This is what we know. This is what we think municipalities need.

Right? This is, this is the kind of research that we're going to do. And to spare you kind of a lot of technical details, essentially, we're going to be setting up an internet of things, network to monitor trees and natural assets in near real time. Coupled with some remote sensing imagery and also data on human movement across campus to really get at some interesting interactions between.

Natural assets and people which can hopefully then be scalable at the city level. And we can really, you know, create some change here through this collaboration, through this partnership, which kind of took champions on either side to happen. But I think that this is such a great case of kind of non-traditional stakeholders or partners coming together and creating something pretty novel and [00:38:00] unique.

Cecil Konijnendijk: [00:38:00] That's pretty cool. Do you think the days of dead, the old paper and pencil recording tree of tree houses are gone or are we still seeing a bit of that?

Sophie Nitoslawski: [00:38:08] You know, that's such a good question because I was on pen and paper when I was abroad. Yeah.

Corey Bassett: [00:38:15] Like only four years.

Sophie Nitoslawski: [00:38:17] But, you know, I did see people using tablets too, so maybe it was just me.

We didn't have the resources in our department. So I think that there is a shift towards digitization. I think that we are moving towards, you know, moving more into the digital world and it's it's at the end of the day, often more efficient to do so I can't even count the number of times I've lost my notes or paper, or it's gotten wet in the rain, even stuff like that.

It's just really annoying when you're working outside. But. A little bit more seriously. Yes. I think that, especially with kind of this rise of the smart cities movement, this recognition that data and connected technology could potentially enable, you know, more effective delivery of services to citizens. I think that is starting to permeate the urban [00:39:00] forestry and more generally like the environmental management world.

Right. Interesting. I know Cindy you're, you're fairly passionate about citizen science, citizen involvement as well. And you work a lot with climate change issues, right? So the climate crisis and what that means for, for example, for our green spaces in a horrible forest, can maybe help adapt cities to climate change. Do you see this as a, an area of growth and opportunity for our field? And if so, in what way could we maybe capitalize on the challenge?

Cindy Cheng: [00:39:27] Yeah, definitely. So this is actually my PUC, research projects. I am really, I'm always fascinated, fascinated by the, the, the new facts that I learned about climate change. Climate change impacts on above floors and how we are going to deal with that, using before is, as a nature based solution. I think climate change is, already you have seen the impacts of climate change, on urban forests. And, this is the new reality. We need to not [00:40:00] think about what we need right now for the city, for the residents.

Also the future, whether the species that we select to plant right now can survive the future climate. This is. Playing, increasing important role in, I think, before us, urban foresters decision making process. And I think this is extremely important because thinking about all the benefits that we are getting from it before us it's, , it's gonna be very important for, making our cities, climate proof, resilient and livable.

Sophie Nitoslawski: [00:40:35] Yeah, that's the key message. There was a really interesting article that came out in the Atlantic. I think it was last month and it was called like trees are time machines and like arborists and urban foresters need to recognize that we're like dealing with things that are going to be here for quite a long time.

We have to be futurists. Like we have to be forecasters, which I think is such an interesting kind of way of looking at our field in a way. And I think it's also a way of reconciling, like how to [00:41:00] deal with these slow. Moving kind of dynamic systems and how fast the world around them is changing. Like we can be the bridge.

I think I just don't know how that can happen, but we can be that bridge. .

I think

Corey Bassett: [00:41:12] that actually, at least the urban foresters and arborists who are really involved in the profession, our industry are really poised to do this because my. My experience has been that professionals in our field are highly reflective and seeking solutions and actually, you know, see problems all around them that they're very motivated to fix.

And I think that, you know, sessile asked you, you just ask us, you know, something that we think the field has been wrong about. I think like two things that even just six years in the field I've seen changed dramatically. One is. You know, food and urban forests. When I kind of first started in the field, I [00:42:00] was told by professionals, you know, you can't have fruit trees and urban forestry, it's too complicated.

Like it's a mess. People will complain about it. You know, just, just, you know, it's not efficient, you know, don't do it. But I think that even in just five, six years, cities are finding that, you know, Residents want fruit, they want food in their forests and that we're finding ways to do that. And where does that make sense?

And I think that that's that kind of flexibility and thinking is already changing. And that another way I think is in the field's approach to young people and bringing new people, new people, more diverse especially, professionals into the field. And you know, I definitely used to here. All the professionals saying we can't reach the young people.

You guys don't exist. Like where are you? How do we find you? But I think that I see professionals more and more reaching out [00:43:00] to other partners as ways to you know, welcome new people into the fields too. So that's something that I see is really.

Cecil Konijnendijk: [00:43:09] Well, that's excellent. I'll pick, we'll pick up on that a bit later as well, but as you, as you started talking about Sophie, you started talking about being us being a little bit of a futurist of futurologists.

Yeah. So Corey, yeah, lets you put you in that chair, then of predicting, how do you ever been forest of the future will look like what do you think? How are we still looking at similar kind of structures or are we expecting changes?

Corey Bassett: [00:43:31] Well I think that we'll be seeing a lot. More natural illness in our design and growth and management of urban forests. And think we're seeing that already and in pockets and in people's preferences. But I think that we'll be moving away from kind of the highly manicured uh, you know, Single species [00:44:00] street tree look towards wanting more wildness and more natural forests in our urban areas. And you know, embracing the wildlife benefits, mental health benefits of that too.

Cecil Konijnendijk: [00:44:13] That's interesting. That's actually also links a little bit to what you said earlier, Cindy, about urban forestry in China being very enthusiastic, but maybe sometimes still looking at rows of trees and the same species you think that's still happening? 20, 30 years down the line in China.

Cindy Cheng: [00:44:29] I hope that, I think there's a movement towards, as Cory said, the more natural looking or feeling of, of a forest in the city in China too, I'm not sure if you have, for me, there was a traditional. Architecture style or design style, Chinese historical gardens. They are very manic and that's what we are used to. So we will, plan specific species at [00:45:00] specific locations for various reasons. Well, we should as for good luck. We will like the plants or trees to look like a certain way.

So we would, twist that, to the certain angles. So we think as. Go looking to us as static to us. But I think, we are, we are not moving away from that. We are still preserving that kind of, culture in the historical gardens sites that we preserved in the city, but we are, the oven foresters in China are trying to.

Bring the more diverse and native species into the city. So people can have this connection with them that natural environments that they didn't really have before because Chinese cities, especially the large one are quite dense and they usually do clear cutting together. Land first four buildings.

So a lot of, my generation [00:46:00] if we want to say go hiking, we would need to drive at least one hour, out of city to get the nature feeling, to, to get surrounded by the natural environment. So I definitely see that happening in China, bringing the nature back to the forest. And I also see The integration of spark technology into Ogun Forshey as well.

So some of the parks that we visit CESO before in China there, they already start setting up some sensors to to monitor the house of own forests, but also use it as Communication tool for the public. They will show how much, for example, air pollutant has removed by this park. They would also tell like the temperature in this park and people can compare it with the temperature in the city. I think this is a fantastic way to tell the residents [00:47:00] that the forest is important and remind them that all the various intangible benefits of a forest providing us.

Cecil Konijnendijk: [00:47:08] Yeah, it's really interesting in China. It's, it's so much more high tech in a way. And I remember you and I, when we visited some of the parks and forests that we, we all of a sudden heard some really nice bird song in the middle of the day and they'll go fantastic.

There's wildlife. And it turns out there were little speakers next through the cough, but they actually helped to get the experience going. Right. And also, I mean, many Chinese. Yeah. Kevin, for example, take music with them on the walks. And so sort of course, some cultural differences in what people prefer to see on.

Cindy Cheng: [00:47:35] Yeah. Yeah. I can imagine my parents definitely would enjoy the soothing music background in the park, which is not very common in Costa Rica.

Cecil Konijnendijk: [00:47:46] Yeah. It's almost like he played a kind of a film scene. Yeah. But I mean, that must be something for you. So for you, you are based on this technology thing. So do you think urban foresters of the future will be. And full of QR codes and manipulated sounds and all kinds [00:48:00] of technology around us, or is this too futuristic?

Sophie Nitoslawski: [00:48:04] So I think that we'll probably find some way to strike a balance where there will likely be a little bit more kind of digital infrastructure integration into kind of green infrastructure into the future.

I don't know if that'll necessarily mean that we'll see, you know, tree climbing, robots everywhere, pruning stuff, and like, you know, drone bees pollinating. Stuff. I don't, I don't know, to what extent it couldn't be maybe in 200 years, who knows. And I think that we will likely be having more and more conversations about this, about kind of reconciling the high tech stuff versus the low tech stuff.

Right. And what that balance might look like. I think that what's really interesting about the naturalness point that Corey brought up is that you know, these systems like Wilder systems and bringing wellness back into the city is absolutely, I think a trend that we're seeing and these systems can also be highly managed.

And there's actually some research looking at, you know, using smart tech and actually machine learning algorithms to create [00:49:00] more wild systems. Without human intervention that could

actually kind of learn from itself and figure out kind of the appropriate amount of wildness. So that's kind of a perfect example right.

Of this combining high and low tech to create a system that actually we do want to see, but we just haven't actually had. As much involvement beyond obviously creating the algorithm, but once it's left to its own devices, it could potentially be left to its own devices. So I find that Kylie interesting too, where I think that these kind of high tech and low tech systems are going to merge to become maybe more and more kind of interconnected.

And it's going to be less obvious, you know, What's artificial and what's not, and that's potentially beneficial, right? Because we're still dealing with a lot of countries flex between gray and green infrastructure and how do we resolve these conflicts and all that kind of stuff. And I really hope that like the advent of smart tech and kind of having these types of conversations will mean that these systems can become increasingly integrated and we'll no longer have to deal with, like, thinking about the very clear kind of like categories of green versus gray and like what [00:50:00] these conflicts are and how do we resolve them.

Hopefully there'll be a little bit more kind of. In meshed in a way that's kind of my hope so we'll see. So I will though be a little bit controversial. Sorry, sessile. I want to go back. I want to go back to a point about communication and urban forestry, something that worries me a little bit.

And this ties a little bit into this kind of low versus high tech conversation is this idea that low tech. Green infrastructure trees are like always good. And I see this a lot in like, you know, media communications, and this might not be the fault of urban forestry practitioners necessarily, but there does seem to be this kind of like value judgment.

That's automatically there where it's like, if we're talking about trees and cities, Great. They are the solution. They will like to save the world. If only we can plant more trees. And I got kind of frustrated because I saw an article in the guardian at some point where it was like, let's forget the smart city stuff.

All we need is green infrastructure. All we need is trees in [00:51:00] cities and I can't help, but disagree. I think that that's shortsighted. And I also think that it's a bit naive. And that's a little bit of a frustration that I have currently right now, especially with the COVID pandemic. Obviously we talked about the importance of green spaces and I'm not denying that it's true, but I think that we are on a bit of a trend where it's like, there is article after article about how important trees are and how we need to protect them no matter what, and plant as many as possible, no matter what.

And I'm not sure that in the long run, that's a beneficial discourse. Right. I don't know.

Cecil Konijnendijk: [00:51:31] I think it's important to be nuanced. Right. So, and I think, I mean, I was going to ask you as representatives of the young generation in urban forestry, as young academics, et cetera, what will be the things you would like to put forward?

So do you think this will be one thing, kind of a more nuanced perspective on greening and integral forestry and that actually green is not always good. Would that be something you would like to be known for when you, you get to my stage? The grumpy old man,

hmm grumpy old

Sophie Nitoslawski: [00:51:59] men. [00:52:00] I look like as a grumpy old man,

Cecil Konijnendijk: [00:52:03] old lady, maybe. Sorry, [laughing]

when you

Sophie Nitoslawski: [00:52:08] say it like that, like green is not always good. It just sounds so much less sexy. Right? It sounds so much more kind of grumpy negative, negative. So I wonder whether there's. A more positive way of spinning this. And at least for me, you know, per our previous conversation we were having about these green and gray infrastructure systems that could potentially be combined a little bit better.

I think that's the direction I would want to take it in. I'm like still fascinated by this idea of creating like very novel, like cyborg ecosystems, where like, we can't see where the green begins or ends. Like, you know, when I think about Bosco verti Cali, that's like the first iteration of that.

Cecil Konijnendijk: [00:52:45] Yeah, exactly.

Sophie Nitoslawski: [00:52:46] Yeah. We're seeing designs like that all over the place. Now. I like to think that that's kind of. The first stage of where we might go with this. So I would hope to put a bit more of a positive spin on that that may be where it might land, but I'm not entirely sure yet.

[00:53:00] **Cecil Konijnendijk:** [00:53:00] Thank you. How about, how about you Corey? 20, 30 years down the line, what would you like to be known for? What difference would you like to make?

Corey Bassett: [00:53:08] That's a great question. I think just, you know, my personality and where I see my Own skills as, as a connector you know, socially. And so I think that I w you know, would love to be someone connecting research and practice leading organizations that, that do that.

And as well as connecting disparate fields together Maybe following in your footsteps, sessile, is it more of a broad ...but I think that on this kind of positive negative dichotomy, I think that I want our field to have a way to [00:54:00] Negotiate and express the positives and the negatives and the services and the disservices through our management. We can't ignore, the risks from trees and while promoting their benefits, we have to.

Be able to manage both because we're, you know, we, we see, even in our field, the conversations about the benefits and the, about the risks are so separate and yet we're managing the same resource. These are the same trees that are providing the benefits that are also providing. You know, putting people at risk.

So we can't ignore things like re recently there was a huge settlement for this really tragic case. And what are your California, where a tree fell on a wedding party. And there were, you know, deaths and injuries in the city recently settled for something like 20 or 30 million us dollars. So just huge, obviously a huge tragedy to the family.

[00:55:00] So we just can't Put the important work that arborists and urban foresters do to reduce risks and make trees safe in these really dense environments. Th that has to be integrated with our discussion of the benefits that we're trying to manage for as well, because when it comes down to it, it's still the same people.

It's our audience here, urban foresters and arborists who are managing that same resource. So these You know, separate discourses only exist in our heads in reality. It's it's still the same, the same resource.

Cecil Konijnendijk: [00:55:40] Thank you. That's great. That's very thoughtful. How about you, Cindy, in terms of your contributions, when would you be happy with your career? A few, few years down the line.

Cindy Cheng: [00:55:51] It's really hard to tell. While Sophie and Cory were talking about their plans and what they, where they would like to be [00:56:00] were country infusion. They would like to make our thinking in my head. I was, I, I don't really have one clear answer, but there are certain things that maybe a little bit broad because I'm still figuring out that there are a few things that I. Definitely would like to do I fully agree with what Sophia and Corey mentioned about communication surrounding before she, issues, the services and benefits. I think, um, what I really want to do is to provide opportunity or support the communication approaches of was residents in the city to help them understand the full picture.

Open trees and forest is not just about positive things or negative things because sometimes people, if they have a negative experience was say a street tree, then a lot of their impression about urban forest is negative. [00:57:00] I've encountered as some people like that. And I think. Yeah. And there are certain groups that really, really like trees and they're the tree hugger and they kids were tree-planting in every possible places in the city which I also don't fully support.

So I think there needs to be a balanced as Sophie and Corey mentioned. And I think there's, there's a need for communication about the full picture, a comprehensive understanding of all the beds and goods coming was. Managing urban trees and planting more urban trees in the city. And I want to be part of that.

Cecil Konijnendijk: [00:57:40] Perfect. Thank you. So I'm going to give you a last question soon, but just to reiterate some of the highlights and I think first of all, I mean, you Horace listening into the spindle debate must also feel like me that we're in good hands. I think this new generation of verbal forest is they really know their stuff.

And I think that's really nice to see that in urban forestry, as a field, there's a maturity [00:58:00] in terms of. Getting some really good intelligent people in who can move our field forward. So that's great. And I think some of the reflections we heard today about the need for communication, they need to be truly collaborative and really try to, to extend our, our invitation to other fields to really engage with us because it's not only about.

Or before his tweets about other professions as well. Of course the role of technology is creeping in coming into our field and should probably be embraced. But on the other hand, also combined with things like wilding, rewilding, our cities, which is a fascinating development. I think we also heard that before these days really global and our tree panelists have definitely shown that it's not, at least also we did a Chinese perspective.

And we could have another panel debate here with people from, from Africa, Latin America, Australia, wherever before these days is also starting to really take off just as an example, Kampala Uganda is now developing his first urban forest strategy. I think these are really the things that make me happy, even though I'm a little bit past my early career stage.

So [00:59:00] before we, end up and maybe have a bit more discussion with the audience, a final question for the three of you. There's people coming out of high school and maybe in the last years of high school right now, maybe people into career, what I don't really feel happy. And they, they may consider coming into urban forestry.

What we do, one thing you would give them, give them along and say, well, this is really something you should keep in mind to become a, a urban forester who is able to make a difference. And maybe I start actually, would you send the, on that? What would you, what would you say to them, to these new people coming into the field?

Cindy Cheng: [00:59:31] Network. That's how I get into the field of, of forestry, the field. The people in the field are very friendly and welcoming. Even though I don't really have a background in urban forestry I feel welcomed. And that is, that also encouraged me to. To, you know, initiate the next step to help me get into the the field, start my PhD in forestry.

[01:00:00] And um, don't be afraid to ask people, I think yeah, that's the one way to get your questions answered also to get to know more about urban forestry was w what are the works being done right now in the field and what other professions are there?

Cecil Konijnendijk: [01:00:20] All right. Thank you. So networking, don't be afraid to ask and keep yourself abreast of what's happening, Corey, anything you would recommend.

Corey Bassett: [01:00:29] Yes, absolutely. All those things. I'm going to turn it around a little bit because you know, we we're speaking at the ISA conference and I know that. Yeah, ISA is a very, had a generous student discount to attend this, but still mostly our audiences are probably the more experienced professionals. And so I would, I would hope that to our experienced professionals, watching this, you are inspired to [01:01:00] seek out and mentor younger people in the fields. And that I think that all of us are examples of people who did not imagine themselves being an urban forestry or being an arboriculture and that, you know, there are certain moments that connected us to the fields, but there were also honestly, years of development of That kind of solidified our trajectory in this field.

So if you meet somebody who is really fascinated by something tangential to this field, but there's still a lot that they can contribute if you develop that relationship.

Cecil Konijnendijk: [01:01:39] Perfect. Thank you. That's a really nice, so call to action to our many members of our audience, I think, including myself. So Sophie, how about you?

Sophie Nitoslawski: [01:01:47] Yeah, thanks for that, Corey. I appreciate that because I got my first job at a conference actually speaking to people there. So I think that that's really valuable. I would say as a young person think about [01:02:00] what you may like your expertise to be in. I don't think that it's necessarily ever too early to do that.

Think about what you're really interested in thinking about what you're good at and, you know, interestingly enough, I think that you may be able to find your niche by like combining two things that may not seem like they're combinable. So even this example, which is very, very broad, let's say like tech and trees, like there's something interesting here at the intersection.

That's a little bit untapped you know, find, find, you know, potentially disparate hobbies or ideas, or like things that really interest you. And go with that, because I think that you may find yourself as an expert sooner than you think by looking at these intersections between things or ideas or disciplines that haven't always connected before. And I think that there's also a lot of novelty and uniqueness there to be had as well.

Cecil Konijnendijk: [01:02:49] Perfect. Thank you. Thanks to the three of you for so generously sharing your views and opinions and not holding back. And I hope that we will also raise some

interesting discussions. So. Now it's [01:03:00] up to the audience to come with some hopefully interesting points to be further discussed and don't hold back because I think that's the only way how we can move forward.

This is a fantastic field. I'll, don't be here, this virtual seminar, but especially also globally in the future. Thank you very much so far. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.