Hannah Gibbs and her colleague Artmeis Skarlatidou are members of the Extreme Citizen Science (ExCiteS https://www.geog.ucl.ac.uk/research/research-centres/excites) research group at University College London (UCL). The Extreme Citizen Science group is the largest group conducting citizen science research in Europe, developing technologies and methods to enable people — of any literacy level and cultural background — to collect data that solves local needs and issues they are interested in.

She writes about a possible collaboration in one of the latest Extreme Citizen science projects; they are developing a new application (called Sapelli Viewer https://github.com/ExCiteS/Sapelli-Viewer) which would allow people to view citizen science data they collect and they seek to recruit participants (providing participation incentives in the form of payments or Amazon vouchers upon agreement with participants) in a usability experiment for Sapelli Viewer.

How you can help

The aim of the collaboration will be to develop a data collection project with the group and participants who might be interested in getting involved, to understand their interests and build the data collection platform accordingly. Participants will then collect data using Sapelli Collector and will be able to view the data using Sapelli Viewer. They will run a usability experiment with participants to understand if they have any difficulties using our products and what would be their recommendations for improving design.

Who can participate?

They are particularly interested in working with people with limited or no digital skills (e.g. older people who might not own a smartphone), limited literacy skills or non-native speakers (e.g. immigrants). Their applications do not use text, so they are interested in recruiting people who will appreciate the no-text feature for its usability potential (i.e. most Western applications are heavily text-based and for that reason they are not accessible to everyone) and are looking to recruit 5-7 people in total to take part in this study.

Below is more information about the ExCiteS group and links to our website. If this sounds like a project that you might be interested in participating in, and you require further information please do not hesitate to send any questions (hannah.gibbs@ucl.ac.uk), or a call to discuss this collaboration further can be arranged.

More about ExCiteS

The Extreme Citizen Science (ExCiteS) research group is based in the Department of Geography at UCL. ExCiteS works with broad networks of people to design and build new devices and knowledge creation processes that can transform the world. The research has a participatory design, and the group draws knowledge from a wide array of disciplines, including geography, anthropology, computer science, Human-Computer Interaction studies, electronic engineers, and ecologists, and works in case studies around the world with local citizens to deliver practical solutions.

The aim is to develop technologies which enable everyone (specialists and non-specialists) to use established scientific methods to understand, record, manage, and visualise their environment and find solutions to local issues they want to tackle. A group of three applications has been created to address the challenges around collecting, sharing, and visualising geographic information. These applications form the Sapelli tools. Most are icon based, and information is organised to be accessible for low-literate users. These applications are for devices which run on the Android platform.

They have recently published a book describing in detail the use of Extreme Citizen Science

methods and tools mainly in the Global South, which you can find here
https://www.uclpress.co.uk/products/125702.

In summary, ExCiteS works with communities to help them address local issues they want to tackle (e.g. illegal cattle invasion in Namibia, illegal logging in the Congo Basin, odour and noise data collection with various community groups in London etc). Communities participate and lead decision making, and decide what measurements are taken and how they are analysed. Members of these communities are often digitally challenged or digitally illiterate groups interested in environmental issues.