

BIG-5: Fostering Internet-based Values of the Environment

Description

Nature-experiences are on the decline, but does that mean environmental values are as well? Where the decrease of experiences of nature is often cited as a cause for dwindling appreciation of nature and consequently less commitment to environmental stewardship, I argue that the internet is an overlooked factor in multiplying nature experiences, creating nature values, and fostering environmental stewardship, thus counteracting the extinction of experiences of nature.

With more than half of the global population already using social media, the BIG-5 project utilizes five of the world's largest social media platforms to better understand the fostering of physical-virtual nature interactions that support sustainable global transitions in a rapidly changing world. The BIG-5 project introduces Digital Relational Values (DRVs) as fundamental and eudemonic values that are developed within virtual communities, triggered by indirect experiences of nature. It will trace these values across five landscape types, five large social media networks, and in five European languages through qualitative and quantitative (big data) approaches in an inductive-deductive manner.

Furthermore, the BIG-5 project will develop and apply innovative empirical approaches that allow to (a) identify DRVs across different social media platforms, (b) understand how they spread across virtual communities, and (c) examine the relationship between virtually produced DRVs and physical environmental stewardship.

BIG-5 will thereby challenge the assumption of an extinction of experiences and the consecutive decline of nature values and care for the environmental. It will further strengthen the importance of relational values as a foundation for environmental stewardship and contribute to a novel understanding of a physical virtual continuum in the generation of nature values.

Finally, BIG-5 will also advance on ethical consideration regarding the use of social media socio-environmental research.

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