Fostering Internet-based Values of the Environment



Are nature experiences truly in decline, and does that mean environmental values are disappearing too?

While the decrease in direct experiences of nature is often blamed for a decline in environmental values and stewardship, the **BIG-5 project** suggests that the internet and social media play a crucial role in creating new ways to engage with nature. With over half the global population using social media, these platforms offer opportunities for people to indirectly experience nature, build appreciation for it, and foster environmental care.

The **BIG-5 project** explores how nature interactions occur through five of the world's largest social media platforms, introducing the concept of *Digital Relational Values* (DRVs). These are values developed within online communities through indirect experiences of nature. The project aims to trace these values across different landscapes, social media networks, and languages to understand how they influence both virtual and real-world environmental stewardship.

BIG-5 Project
Overview

Duration: 60 months

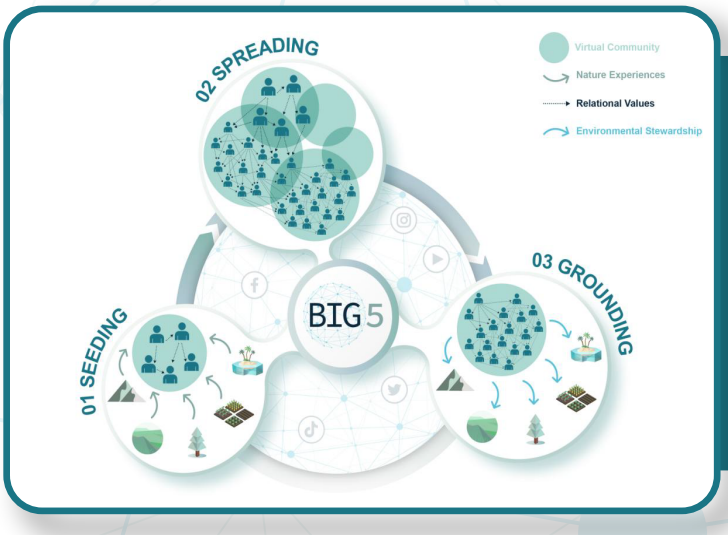
Objective: Investigate the role of social media in fostering *Digital Relational Values* (DRVs) related to nature and environmental stewardship.

Key Research Questions:
(1) Do virtual communities shape societal relational nature values and thereby counteract the 'extinction of experiences'?
(2) Do virtually produced nature values foster environmental stewardship?

Project aim and objectives

The project aims to analyze how DRVs develop across major social media platforms and languages, considering different landscapes and user characteristics and it will investigate whether these virtual nature experiences can foster environmental stewardship and counteract the decline in nature engagement.

The BIG-5 project sets its basis on a novel theoretical framework addressing the production and manifestation of DRVs in three stages:



Seeding Exploring how nature experiences are shared in virtual communities.

Spreading Understanding how these values spread within and across online platforms.

Grounding Investigating how DRVs lead to real-world environmental care, knowledge, and action.

The BIG-5 project will last five years and is structured into five work packages

WP1 - Seeding will examine and classify DRVs on social media and automate their assessment.
WP2 - Spreading, will explore the multiplication of nature values within virtual communities.
WP3 – Grounding, will investigate the environmental stewardship incentivized by DRVs.
WP4 – Impact Insurance, which will manage public relations and the Supporter and Partner Programs.
WP5 – Management, responsible for overseeing external research collaborations, internal organization, communication, and ethics.



Fig. 2: Overview of Work packages and tasks

BIG5
https://big-5.eu/
thalia.dancuart@uab.cat
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