

Ritualistic Reconnection through Urban Human-Nature Resonance

Spirituality as Relational Approach towards Sustainability

By leaving a solid footprint, the Anthropocene has already caused a major impact on the global earth system. Species extinction, desertification and the attempt to make ecosystem services *available* for humans are expressions of the social-ecological crisis that continues to raise attention among sustainability science and politics. Despite urgent calls by scientists, conservationists, and young generations a deep sustainability *transformation* of growth-oriented societies is missing. At this, progressing urbanization and technologization further increase the distance between human beings and nature. Excessive consumption patterns and a soaring instrumentalization of the human body can be seen as a disturbed relationship between humanity and the world as stated by the sociologist Hartmut Rosa. Thereby, Rosa refers to a mute relationship with the world, nature, and other humans where the social-ecological crisis does not *affect* us anymore and we lose the ability to *answer*.

Therefore, many scholars target human beings' relational reconnection to nature as an important leverage point for the needed sustainability transformation. Especially a feeling of interconnectedness with a transcendental nature as access to the heart of sustainability transformation has been failed so far. Thus, further research – notably in the urban context – is needed, leading to the research gap I want to address in my PhD-project. By incorporating Hartmut Rosa's theory of *resonance*, I will focus on individual human-nature relationships in urban areas to further conceptualize and test the theory within sustainability science. Following the research calls by sustainability scientists to focus on the internal dimensions being a deep leverage point for collective transformative change, I plan to specify individual human-nature resonance through 1) indigenous ontologies and 2) mindfulness. A third theoretical segment will be dedicated to the execution of spiritual rituals as Rosa claims their contribution for the creation of *resonance axes*.

As first step of the cumulative 3-years-dissertation, the conceptualization of urban individual human-nature-resonance on the basis of a ritual is planned by executing expert interviews with representatives of the three segments – namely indigenous ontologies, spiritual rituals, and mindfulness. Practical tools of the outdoor education and mindfulness research will function as methodological basis. With Dresden as case study, the ritual will be tested quantitatively during the second year among school graduates in order to evaluate it in respect of its impact on a sustainable human-nature partnership. Based on the results of the first two years, I aim to develop recommendations how to upscale rituals for resonating urban human-nature relations by executing focus groups and storytelling.

At this, the overarching goal of this PhD-project is to contribute to a better understanding of individual urban human-nature resonance and its impact on a sustainable human-nature partnership.

Keywords: human-nature-relationship; sustainability transformation; indigenous ontologies; spirituality; interdisciplinary; mindfulness; internal transformation; experience-based methods