

How do you relate to Nature?

1. What: Background

In order to reduce unsustainable lifestyle, scholars advocate for overcoming the disconnection between humans and nature.

Theory of Resonance provides a theoretical tool to describe and explain how individuals are related to the world. It positions the climate crisis in the context of a general crisis of relatedness.

Complementing the theoretical approach with the *Cultural Consensus Model* yields a powerful analytical framework for conceptualizing nature experiences in different cultures: Relating to nature is not just a direct consequence of the physical environment surrounding you, but contingent upon its interplay with biographical experiences, as well as socio-cultural and institutional conditions.

2. The Current Study

How do socio-cultural contexts effect cognitive landscapes of nature?

How is the knowledge of resonating and alienating experiences produced and deployed in the course of direct action in and with nature?

How do mental representations of nature, as well as experiences of resonance with and alienation from nature, differ across cultures and how does this influence their members' experience and relation with nature?

3. How: Operationalisation

A trans-regional, comparative analysis allows us to assess whether the critique of late-modern unrelatedness actually holds and characterises the dominant way of engaging in (human-nature) relations.

- Most-Similar-System-Design (MSSD): Keeping as many extraneous variables as constant as possible enables us to ask how differently two cultures relate to nature and what drives their relationship.
- In-depth interviews in combination with a variety of techniques for the systematic elicitation of beliefs and knowledge structures

4. Analysis

Cultural Consensus Analysis
Thematic Analysis

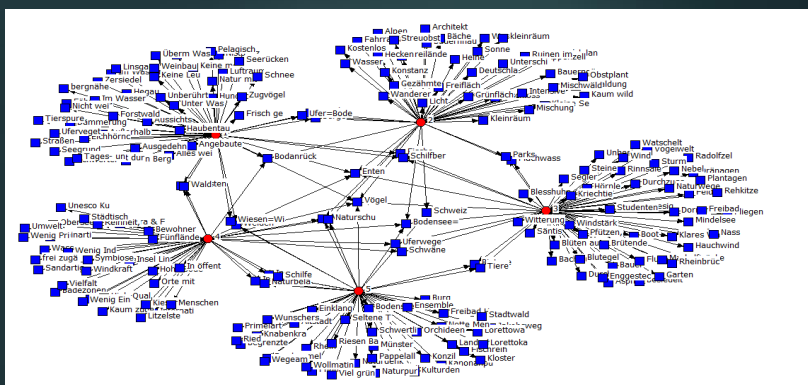
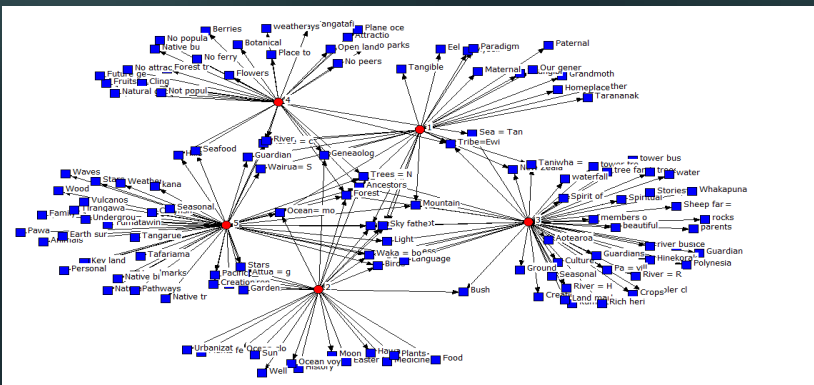
- How is Nature Understood?
- What are Drivers and Effects of Resonating and Alienating Experiences?
- Which perceived causal chains organise the informant's cognitive cultural knowledge about nature?
- What are the similarities and differences between cultures with regard to the Experience of and Relation to Nature?

People with indigenous Maori heritage living in New Zealand (N=5)

Locals from the Bodensee region in the south of Germany (N=5)

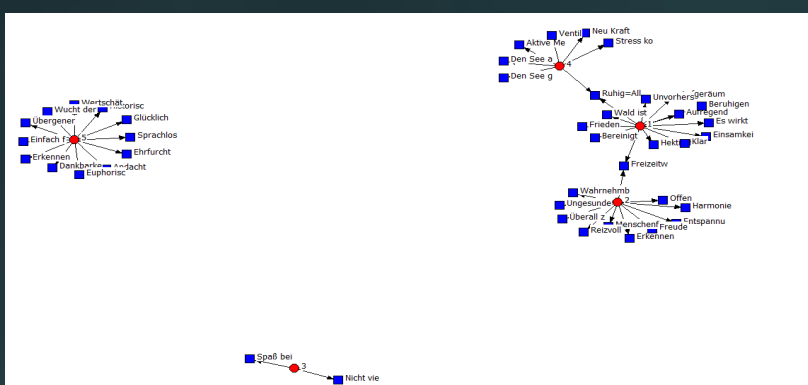
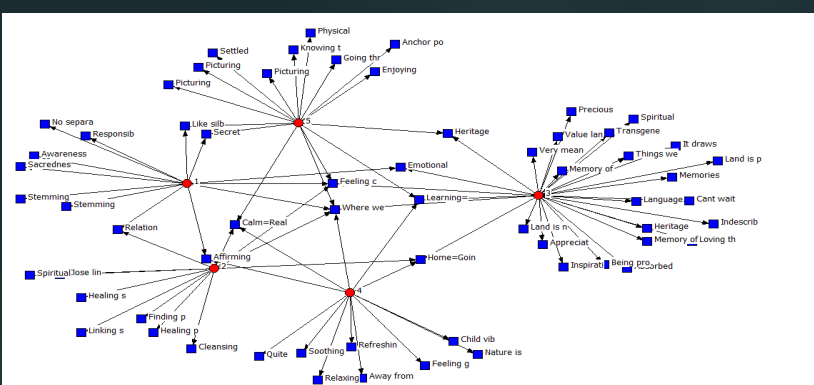
5. Results – Cultural Consensus Analysis

Maori Nature: coherent cultural domain



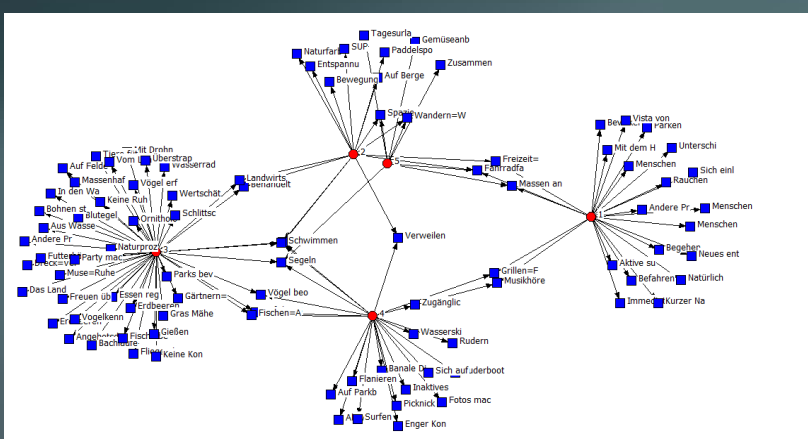
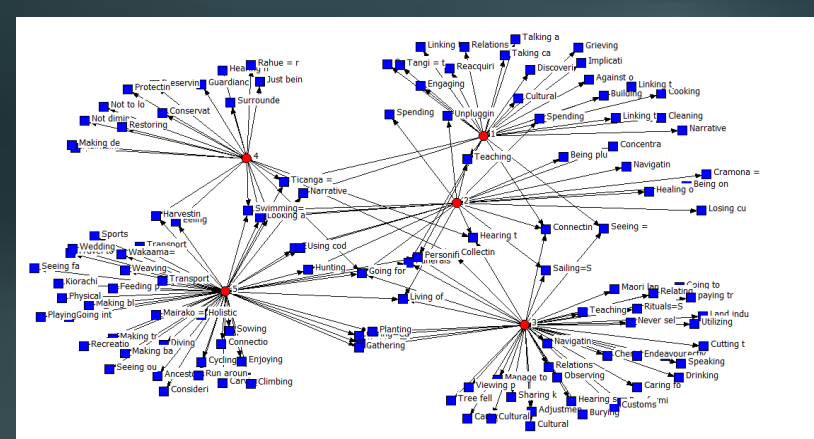
Bodensee Nature: non-coherent cultural domain

Maori World => Self Relation: coherent cultural domain



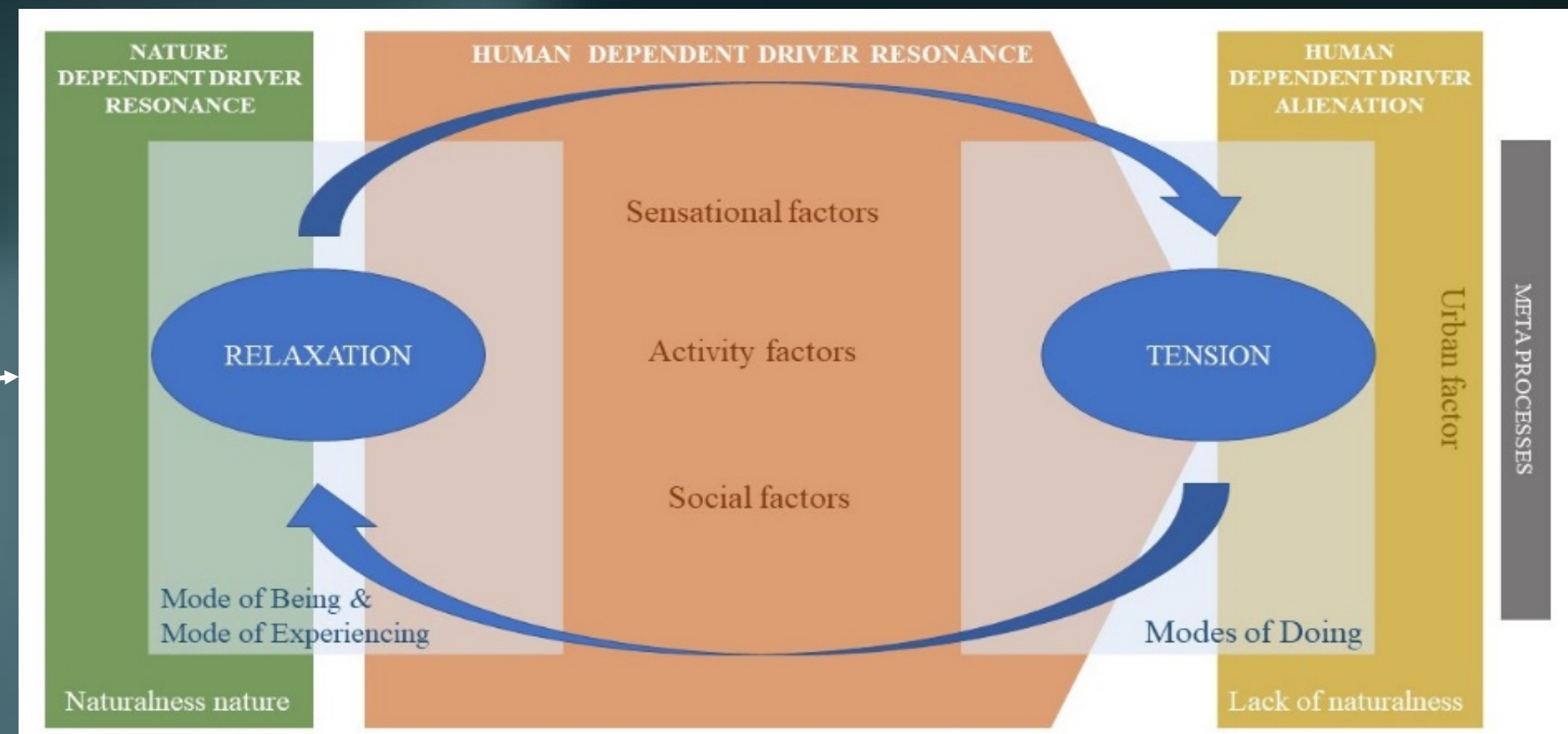
Bodensee World => Self Relation: non-coherent cultural domain

Bodensee Self => World Relation: non-coherent cultural domain

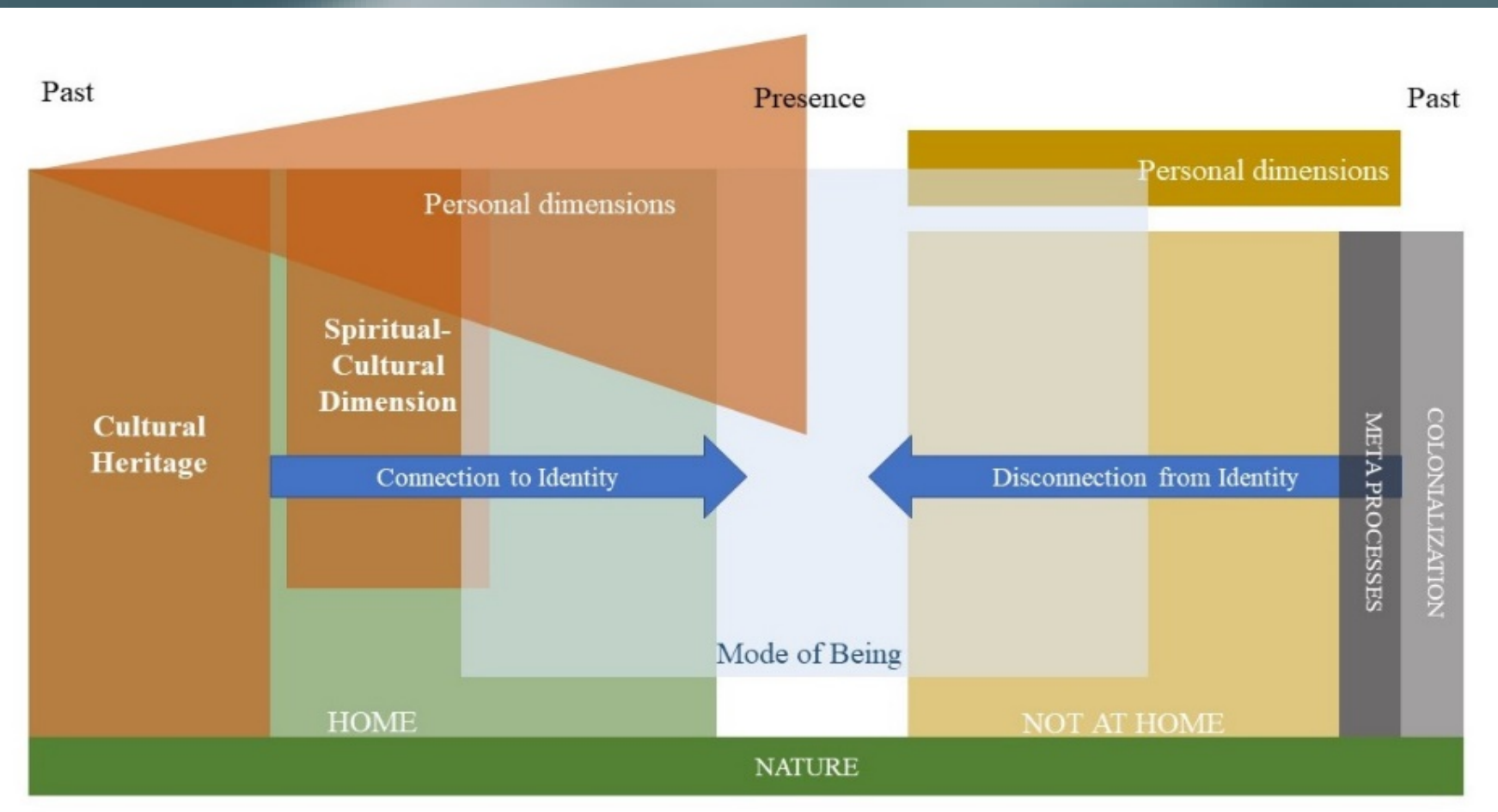


Bodensee Self => World Relation: coherent cultural domain

Bodensee Culture – Dialectic between Resonance (Relaxation) and Alienation (Tension).



Maori Culture: Dualistic Relation between Resonance (Connection to Identity) and Alienation (Disconnection from Identity).



6. Results – Thematic Analysis

Key Difference	Bodensee Culture	Maori Culture
Key driver of Resonance	Naturalness & Expectations	Cultural meaning attached to nature
Key driver of alienation	Lack of Naturalness & Urban Life	No cultural associations & Urban Life
Where is nature located?	Outside of oneself and the social system	Part of oneself and the cultures
How is the relation approached?	Through individually divers means	Through culturally shared means
Dynamic between Alienation and Resonance	Dynamic, dialectic loop	Static, nested conditions
Motivation behind the dynamic	Resonance seeking and alienation avoidance	Staying in resonance, withdrawing from alienation

7. Conclusion

- Associations with nature differ not only between cultures but also within cultures
- People from Bodensee employ a rather individual approach to nature, driven by leisure activities and seeking relaxation and pleasure.
- People with Maori heritage rely on shared cultural models when relating to nature. How they feel in nature and what they experience is based on collective mental representations.
- Societal developments (i.e.. urbanisation, industrialisation, technologisation) are driving forces in how humans relate to nature across cultures.

8. Implications... for sustainable relation with nature

- for Maori (indigenous) culture: transmission of cultural knowledge to withdraw from cultural disconnection
- for Bodensee (western) culture: opportunities for being in naturalness nature and to escape human impacted nature have to be provided