Do we protect Nature because we ‘should’ or because we really care? (Nouns must have Capital Letter)

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The dominant view in environmental psychology is that the strongest motivators for individual pro-environmental behaviour are to either reward people financially or by reputation (gain goal), to make them feel good (hedonistic goal), or to reinforce their feelings of moral obligation (normative goal). While this approach is well-suited for a capitalist society ran by hedonistic principles, it also has disappointed with limited short-term success. The 2-pathway model of pro-environmental behaviours expands on this view by integrating the marginalized but growing scientific evidence that strong relationships with others and nature (relational goal) play a deciding role about the depth of people’s motivation to protect the environment.

This theoretical model emerged under the umbrella of the self-determination theory and emphasizes the multifaceted nature of pro-environmental behaviours and their connection to human well-being. The 2-pathway model also underlies the assumption that experiential strategies, such as mindfulness and nature exposure, could help create long-lasting behaviour change by physically, cognitively, and affectively stimulating meaningful experiences in relation to oneself, others, and nature. Findings from a qualitative research project based on semi-structured interviews with 13 mindfulness practitioners and 5 non-practitioners support the nuanced view on pro-environmental behaviours of the 2-pathway model. Moreover, the reflexive thematic analysis of the interview data allows for a better understanding of the various interconnected mechanisms through which formal and informal mindfulness practices can support the development of pro-environmental motivations and behaviour, while also highlighting the challenge and context-dependency of researching at the interface of mindfulness and sustainability.

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