

Think local, act global? Predicting neighbourhood attachment and its impact on global environmental concern

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Neighbourhood attachment as part of the more general place attachment concept is defined as positive bond to the residential environment of individuals and supports identity and various psychological benefits (Brown, Perkins & Brown, 2003).

In opposition to the paradigm of United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) Agenda 21 programme (“Think global, act local”), this study investigates the relationship between neighbourhood attachment (“Think local”) and global environmental concern (“Act global”).

Place attachment and associated concepts such as sense of place, place affect, place dependence or place identity are elements of various theoretical and/or empirical research in environmental psychology and other disciplines. A conceptual framework which integrates the different types and terms of place attachment theories is still missing (Devine-Wright & Clayton, 2010). Empirical studies identified possible predictors for place attachment (with partly inconsistent results) and investigated if place attachment is a possible criterion for other attitudes and/or behaviours.

The present study focuses on neighbourhood attachment and contains two samples: In a web-based survey 789 students aged between 15 and 68 completed questionnaires to collect perceived environmental quality, neighbourhood attachment and global environmental concern (study 1). Additionally, 75 residents of a car-free urban residential district in Cologne filled in similar questionnaires in a classic paper & pencil-version (study 2).

The survey strives for three goals:

- (1) to explore if the two samples differ in essential concepts of the survey (residential quality, place attachment and environmental concern)
- (2) to examine which factors influence neighbourhood attachment
- (3) to analyse if neighbourhood attachment act itself as a predictor for global environmental concern.

The respondents of study 2 showed higher sumscores with respect to all essential concepts of the survey, but only the difference respect place attachment is significant ($p < .001$). As expected, the perceived residential quality contributed to the explanation of neighbourhood attachment. Concerning socio-demographic indicators neighbourhood attachment was only influenced by city size and car availability. A correlation between neighbourhood attachment and environmental concern could only be found concerning civic engagement in environmental ambit, not for the more general environmental concern concept. The discussion reports detailed results of the two samples and the essential concepts of the survey and argues about methods and limitations of this study.

References

- Brown, B., Perkins, D.D. & Brown, G. (2003). Place attachment in a revitalizing neighborhood: Individual and block levels of analysis. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 23, 259-271.
- Devine-Wright, P. & Clayton, S. (2010). Introduction to the special issue: Place, identity and environmental behaviour. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 30, 267-270.