

Some determinants of Estonians' orientation to nature protection

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Controversy:

- ❑ 53% of respondents consider themselves nature lovers.
- ❑ Environmental problems are seen as a serious problem by 65% of people (SEI 2007).

HOWEVER

- ❑ 53 % of people only occasionally behave environmentally friendly (SEI 2007).
- ❑ Low rate of membership in environmental NGOs (Agarin 2009).
- ❑ Participation in nature conservation planning only upon personal invitation and persuasion (Kalle 2006).
- ❑ Occasional very active protest against the launching of new natural resources extraction sites, windmill parks.



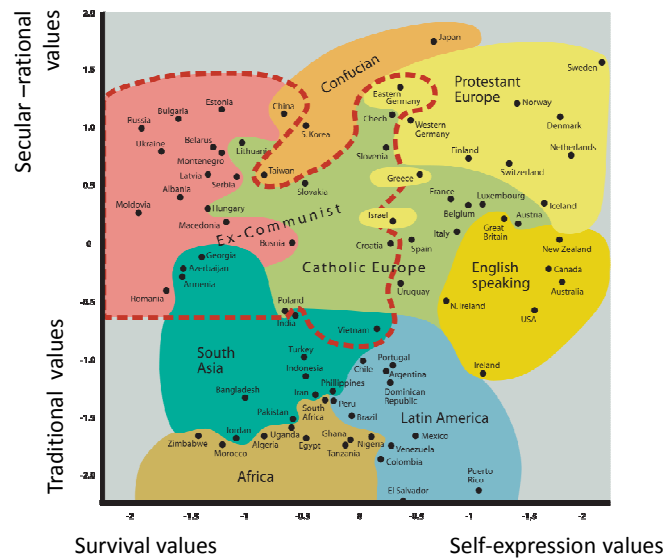
**How can we explain
mostly passive love for natural
environment?**

**Two broad explanations for mostly
passive nature admiration:**

- 1) Estonians' orientation to nature from a broader perspective
- 2) Sense of personal responsibility for nature protection

1.1. Social value orientations

The Inglehart-Welzel Cultural Map of the World



1.1. Social value orientations

- ▣ Subjective feeling of economical well-being predicts higher rates of nature-friendliness (TLU 2006);
- ▣ 30% of Estonians consider themselves deeply interested in nature, yet when compared to other concerns it is a rather trivial issue (TLU 2006).

1.2 Info available on nature

- News coverage is dominated by flash-news about the conditions of different vulnerable species. Reader finds it hard to establish personal connection.

e.g. "A Latvian eagle owl was found dead in Soomaa",
"A wolf killing 40 sheep was shot".

- Media is used by powerful local interest groups to turn public up against developments e.g. cases of Rannu Kestla, Esssoo extraction sites etc.



1.3. Cognitive processing of the problems with nature

Optimistic biases: Instinctive dissociation from problems and responsibility. 74% of respondents consider the environmental status good in their home vicinity. 53% think environmental status is very bad on the world arena (SEI 2007).

Not In My BackYard syndrome. Nature conservation is not a problem until it concerns my "home" territory.

Group-think. Public can be manipulated into following the social consensus about core values, e.g. nature protection, without considering the scientific evidence e.g. Nabala quarry site.



2. Sense of personal responsibility for nature protection

2.1. Attitudes of political passivity

79% of Estonians set the responsibility for environmental protection on the government, sense of personal responsibility is increasing, however.

2.2. Low trust in environmental NGOs

Only 5% consider environmental NGOs active and wise (SEI 2007).

2.3. Low rates of involvement in integrated management planning and municipal general planning (Kangur 2006).

Public involvement in decision-making is happening too late (KÖK 2010).

Detailed planning prior general municipal planning (State Audit 2008).

Conclusions

Estonians' relatively passive nature admiration and occasional activeness can be explained through prevailing understandings of nature and ideas about personal responsibility for nature protection.

This stems from:

- ❑ Cultural-historical reasons: slow transition from materialist value system and passiveness regarding environmental regulation.
- ❑ Structural reasons: biases in available info on environmental issues, slowly accumulating experiences with public inclusion in environmental planning.
- ❑ Individual reasons: publics are environmentally friendly by nature, yet they can be easily manipulated due to simplified thinking.