

Environmental Psychology Open: Opening new doors for environmental psychology

Environmental Psychology Open: Wir öffnen neue Wege für die Umweltpsychologie

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Author statement

FL: Conceptualization, Writing – original draft, Writing - review & editing. DH: Conceptualization, Writing - review & editing. MH: Conceptualization, Writing - review & editing. KR: Conceptualization, Writing – original draft, Writing - review & editing. Conflicts of interests: none.

1 Environmental Psychology Open: open in several respects

Environmental psychologists study how natural and built environments affect human behavior and psychological processes as well as what people think, feel, and do about those environments (Gifford, 2014). In view of the ongoing rapid and detrimental anthropogenic changes to the natural environment, such as climate change and biodiversity loss, robust, visible, and applicable psychological knowledge is needed to inform societal transformations of human-environment transactions. With Environmental Psychology Open (EPO), we present a new and freely accessible platform for the communication and discussion of such knowledge.

As editors of EPO, we believe that open and transparent communication about methods, findings, ideas, and developments in the field is key to the cumulative success of environmental psychology and its fields of application. In line with this belief, we developed EPO so that it is open in several respects.

First, EPO is a *diamond open access* journal, meaning it does not involve any costs for authors or readers. This is possible, in part, because we are supported by the Saxon State and University Library Dresden (SLUB) free of charge. Moreover, neither the journal nor its editorial members work for profit, and we developed a low-cost way of producing open access publications with limited type-setting and copy-editing. We designed a fully pre-formatted article template and rely on authors to use it consistently for their submissions. We have optimized the template to require as little extra effort as possible and hope to demonstrate that authors and editors can collaboratively produce high-quality publications without charging fees for outsourced processing services.

Second, EPO encourages *open science practices*. As a rule, empirical contributions should include openly available data and materials – unless there are plausible constraints – as well as an open-science statement. Preregistration is encouraged, replication studies are welcome, and we also publish Registered Reports to mitigate selective reporting and publication bias. In order to make open science practices more visible, EPO awards Open Science Badges to publications that feature open data, open materials, and preregistration.

Third, EPO has implemented an *open peer review* process. Reviews as well as the authors' responses to the reviews are published with each accepted article to make these valuable contributions visible and our process transparent. Per default, reviewer names will not be published, but we encourage reviewers to consider disclosing their identity.

2 Who can publish in Environmental Psychology Open?

EPO has evolved from the more than 25-year-long history of *Umweltpsychologie*, a formerly German-speaking, later bilingual journal dedicated to the integration of environmental psychology research and practice. We believe that *Umweltpsychologie* served an important function in bringing together researchers (also from psychology-adjacent fields) and practitioners, mainly from the German-speaking area. With EPO, we aim to build on this tradition while being more accessible and open to international authors and readers. While we encourage submitting contributions in English language to facilitate accessibility internationally, we still enable contributions in German language. Either way, the title and abstract will be made available in German and English to allow speakers of both languages to identify relevant papers, while being able to access the main text using automatic translation technology.

We are aware that psychology is merely one of many scientific disciplines relevant to understanding human-environment relationships and the ways in which humankind copes with environmental crises. Hence, we continue to welcome contributions from neighboring scientific fields, from practitioners, and from fundamental psychological research (e.g., pertaining to the human understanding of non-linear dynamic systems) as long as they are relevant to and make explicit their connection to environmental psychology. EPO also welcomes contributions by student researchers. Due to the time constraints of thesis projects, student contributions may often be limited in scope and difficult to publish in other outlets, but we are convinced that they often contain important data for a cumulative environmental psychology (Hofmann et al., 2020).

3 What can be published in Environmental Psychology Open?

EPO publishes *research reports*, i.e., empirical reports, review papers, and theoretical contributions to environmental psychology. While we are aware that most contemporary environmental psychology studies involve quantitative hypothesis tests (Brick et al., 2024), EPO explicitly welcomes strong descriptive work as well as qualitative and mixed-method submissions. We also welcome *practice reports* and *case studies* that describe activities or projects of practitioners as well as interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary contributions. Articles can be submitted as *regular articles* or *short reports*. Short reports may be of particular interest for empirical contributions of smaller scope (e.g., work by student researchers). In addition, and in line with our goal to facilitate an open and transparent scientific discourse, we publish *commentaries* that discuss recent publications or developments in environmental psychology or relevant neighboring disciplines. Compelling examples of this article type were already included in the final issue of *Umweltpsychologie* (Homburg & Dütschke, 2023) and we look forward to expanding this article category.

4 Focus on impact

In the face of the looming environmental crises, we deem it most important to facilitate the practical application of past, current and future scientific results in practice. Therefore, a special focus of EPO is promoting the practical impact of environmental psychology knowledge. Practical impact can be viewed from various perspectives: It may relate to implications for supporting nature preservation (e.g., offering insights on ways to promote adoption of low carbon lifestyles) or sustainable development-targeted societal transformations in a broader sense (e.g., contributing knowledge on how to alleviate conflict between societal interest groups or to facilitate cultural change in and collaboration between organizations). It may also relate to implications for designing environments that are resilient to environmental change and that promote health and wellbeing in various domains, such as workplaces, residential areas, and learning and health care facilities. Other impact domains are of interest, as long as they relate to EPO's topical scope.

In many cases, generating impact may require interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary collaboration. Reports of such collaborative projects may often be difficult to publish in disciplinary journals. With EPO, we aim to give them a stage and to make their insights accessible to an international audience of scientists and practitioners.

To facilitate the exchange between science and practice, we require all our authors to include an impact statement, highlighting the implications of their work for the application of environmental psychology, practitioners, and the general public. With this statement, we do not intend to encourage authors to oversimplify complexities or fudge unwarranted implications. Instead, we hope to spur serious reflection about impact and the highlighting of potential limitations of applicability. Writing an impact statement may entail making explicit that one does not see any implications that would require changes in current practices. A lack of direct practical applicability per se is not a reason for rejection.

5 Conclusion

With the launch of EPO, we embark on a collaborative publishing adventure. The success of our journey depends on our authors, reviewers, and readers, and we invite everyone to join us in opening new doors for environmental psychology and scientific publishing. EPO is intended as a service to the environmental psychology community, so if you have any feedback on how the journal and its processes can be further improved, please let us know. Also, if you as a community member would like to join our editorial team, please feel invited to get in touch. We are convinced that, together, we can strengthen an open, transparent, and constructive research communication culture and help environmental psychology realize its potential for shaping a more sustainable future.

6 References

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