

RECREATING SACRED SPACES

Gardens, Public Parks and Spiritual Connections in Contemporary Cities

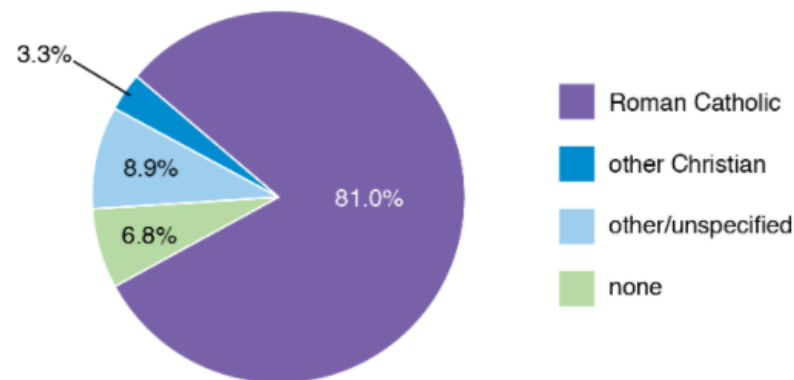
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Background

- In a context of increasing secularization and pluralization, Portugal is one of the European countries with a solid Christian majority (more than 80% of the population declares itself to be Catholic).

Religious affiliation (2011)*



Background

Like other European historical churches, the Catholic one has, throughout history, celebrated religious rituals within temples and buildings that sacralise the territory and cities (Resende, 2014; Resende, 2011).

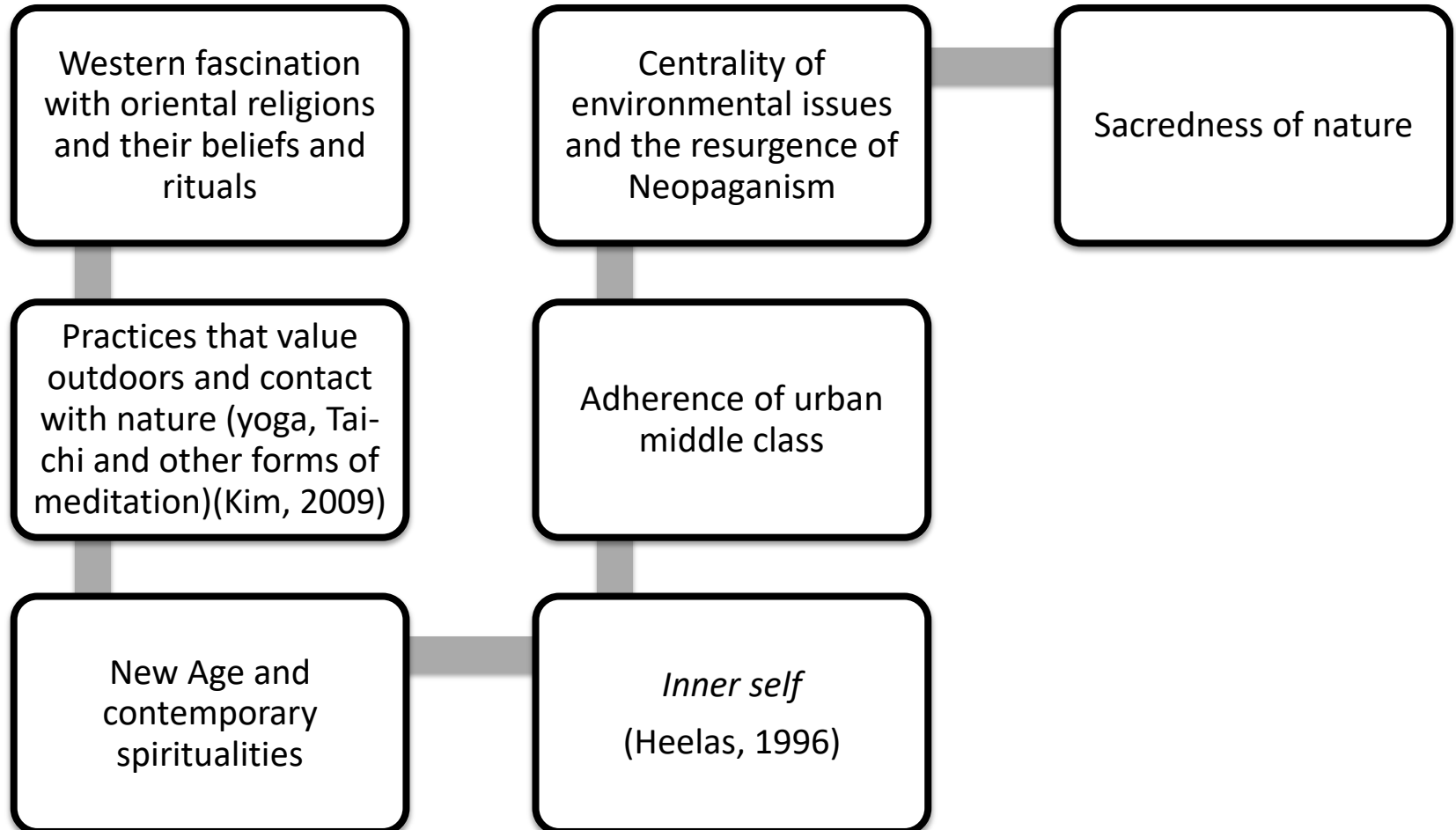


Background

However, traditional religions are being challenged by non-Christian spiritual rituals and meditation practices outside the walls of official religious buildings (Kim, 2009).



Framework



Framework

Six-in-ten Christians, 'nones' hold at least one New Age belief

	Believe spiritual energy can be located in physical things	Believe in psychics	Believe in reincarnation	Believe in astrology	NET Believe in at least one
All U.S. adults	42%	41%	33%	29%	62%
Christian	37	40	29	26	61
Protestant	32	38	26	24	57
Evangelical	24	33	19	18	47
Mainline	43	44	33	30	67
Historically black	41	43	38	34	72
Catholic	47	46	36	33	70
Unaffiliated	47	40	38	32	62
Atheist	13	10	7	3	22
Agnostic	40	31	28	18	56
Nothing in particular	61	52	51	47	78

Source: Survey conducted Dec. 4-18, 2017, among U.S. adults.

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Women more likely than men to affirm New Age beliefs

	Believe spiritual energy can be located in physical things	Believe in psychics	Believe in reincarnation	Believe in astrology	NET Believe in at least one
Men	37 %	34%	27%	20%	55%
Women	46	47	39	37	69
Ages 18-29	45	42	39	32	65
30-49	45	41	35	34	64
50-64	42	42	34	27	66
65+	33	36	22	21	54
High school or less	42	42	39	33	65
Some college	45	45	34	31	67
College graduate	38	34	24	22	55
White	38	40	29	26	57
Black	45	45	43	39	76
Hispanic	55	43	37	30	73
Republican/lean Rep.	34	39	26	24	56
Democrat/lean Dem.	47	41	38	32	67

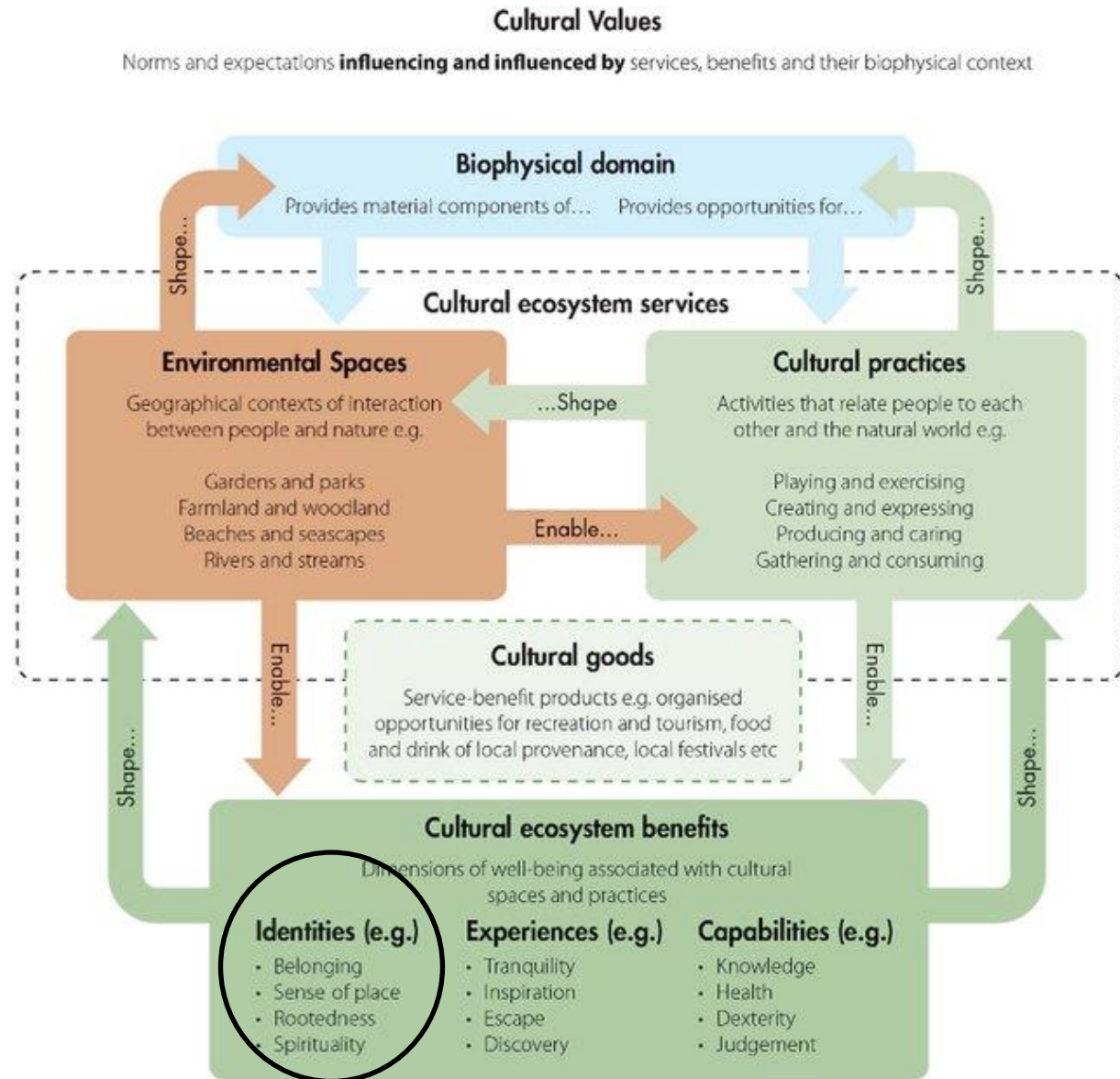
Note: Whites and blacks include only non-Hispanics. Hispanics can be of any race.

Source: Survey conducted Dec. 4-18, 2017, among U.S. adults.

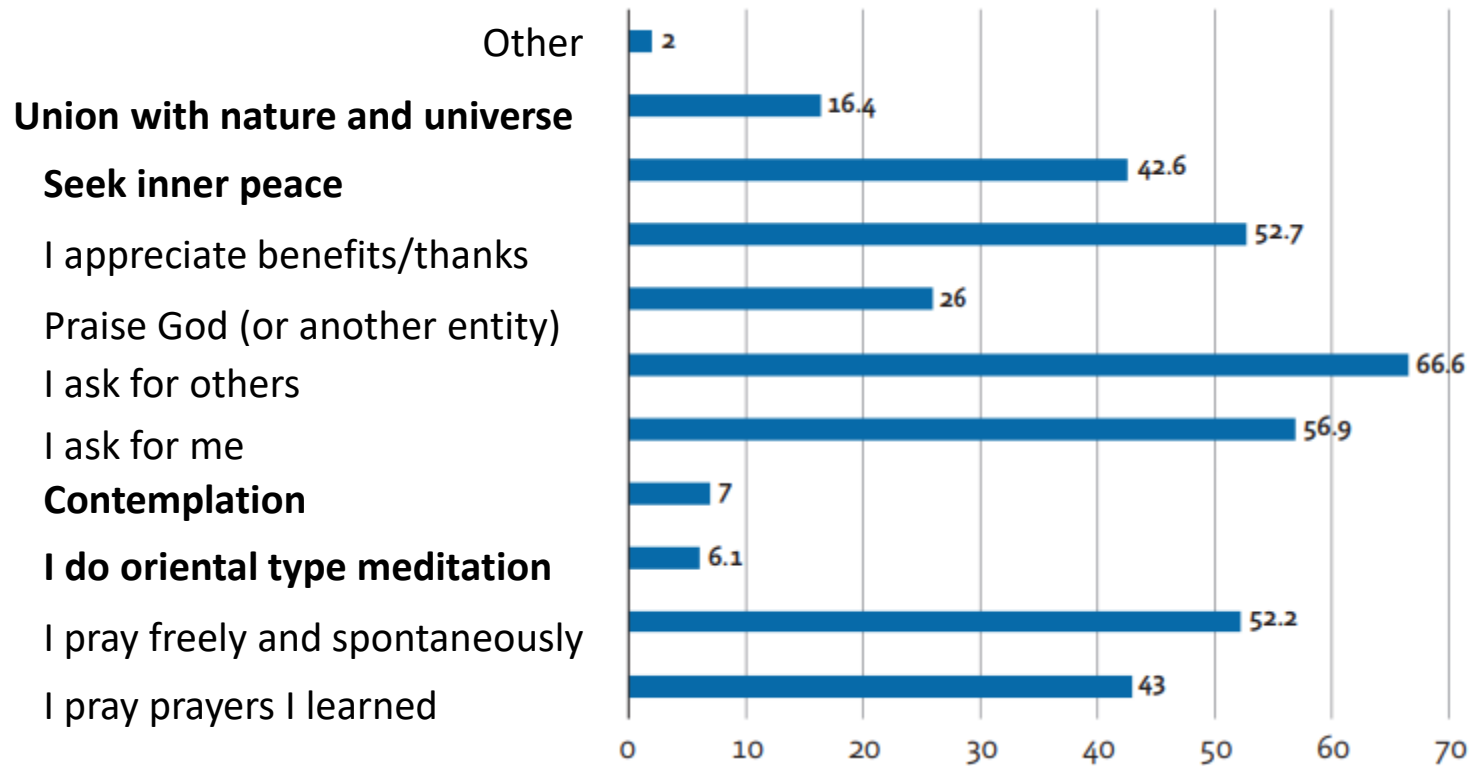
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Source: Gecewicz (2018)

Cultural Ecosystem
 Services of gardens
 and public parks
 (Fish et al. 2016)



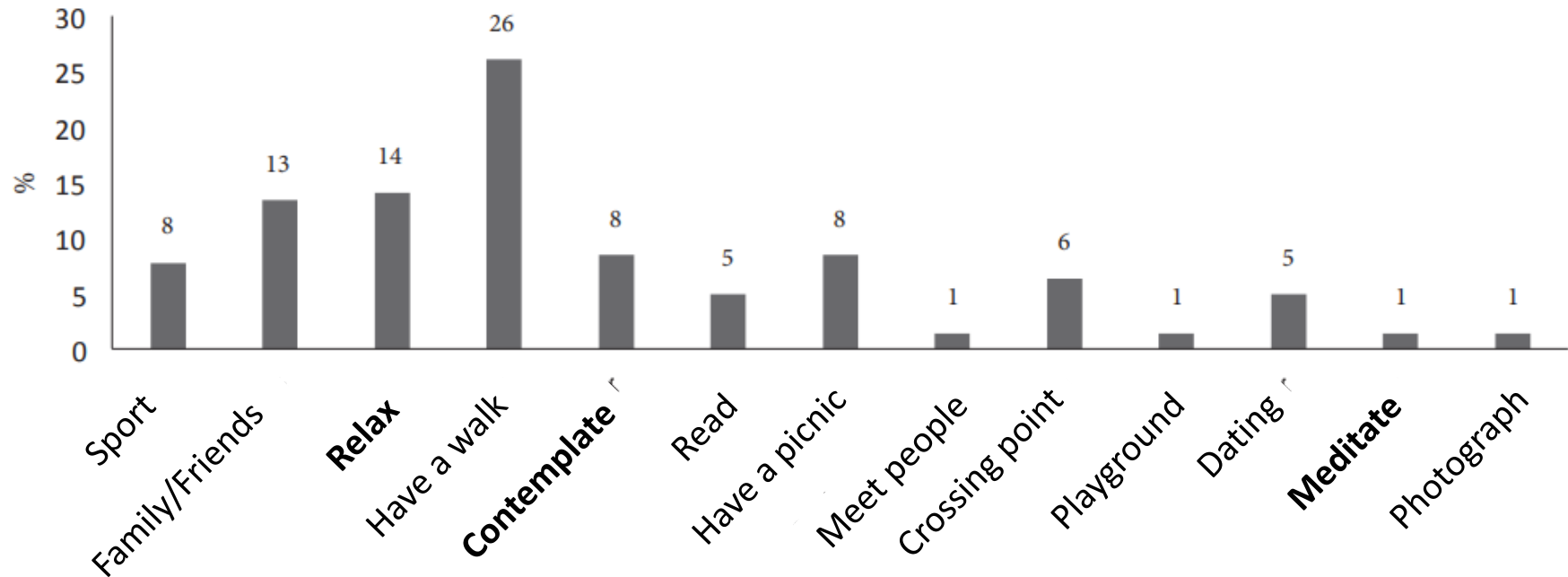
Evidence



What do you usually do in these times of prayer or meditation? (n=1180), Lisbon Metropolitan Area, Portugal.

Source: Teixeira et al. (2019)

Evidence



Activities most performed by respondents in green spaces (n=131), Porto, Portugal.

Source: Vidal et al. (2021)

Evidence

Questions	Yes (%)	
Do you believe that green spaces can play a role in improving the quality of the environment?	99.2	Mdn (P²⁵-P⁷⁵)
Do you believe that public green spaces can mitigate the impacts of climate change?	90.8	
Air quality regulation?	97.7	5 (4.00-5.00)
Allow closeness to nature?	96.9	5 (4.00-5.00)
Make the area surrounding the green space more pleasant?	95.4	4 (4.00-5.00)
Provide the development of environmental education activities?	93.9	4 (3.00-5.00)
Increased plant biodiversity?	93.1	4 (3.00-5.00)
Increased shadow zones?	90.8	4 (4.00-5.00)
Provide moments of contact between people (socialization)?	90.8	4 (3.00-5.00)
Noise Reduction?	88.5	4 (3.00-5.00)
Increased animal biodiversity?	78.6	4 (3.00-4.25)
Provide the realization of meditation and spirituality activities?	77.1	3 (2.00-4.00)
Regulation of extreme events (floods and heat waves)?	74.8	4 (3.00-5.00)
Increased existence of fruit trees?	72.5	4 (3.00-4.00)

Perceptions of urban green spaces users about ecosystem services (n=131), Porto, Portugal.

Source: Vidal et al. (2021)

Final remarks

- Current evidence pointed out some reasons that can explain it, for example, the need to designate specific and quiet areas in GPP for spiritual and religious purposes.
- However, we believe that further research must be conducted to provide more accurate explanations regarding this issue.



On the Isle of Rügen at the Baltic Sea, the Goor nature reserve offers a 4,2 km trail of leisure and insight which allows visitors to follow a trail that is marked by various stations. **Each station is an invitation to experience nature, such as here were visitors meditate leaning** with their backs against the majestic beech trees *Fagus sylvatica* (Verschuuren et al. 2021).

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Thank you!

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