

## EFFECT OF MANICURED AND “WILD” URBAN FORESTS ON WELLBEING AND THE IMPLICATIONS FOR FOREST MANAGEMENT

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### Abstract

There is growing evidence concerning the influence of nature on human health, and several studies show the effects of nature stays on psychological as well as physical wellbeing (e.g. Health Council of the Netherlands and Dutch Advisory Council for Research on Spatial Planning). However so far, most studies focus on a comparison between natural and urban environment, showing a more positive effect of natural environments on human health (e.g. Hartig, T., Evans, G. W., Jamner, L. D., Davis, D. S. and Garling, T., 2003).

In our study we were interested in the effects of different nature conditions. Based on the results of the qualitative interviews of the first phase of the project, we generated hypotheses about the influence of different nature conditions on well-being and perceived restorativeness and tested them in an experiment, consisting of two nature conditions: wild and tended urban wood in the area of Zurich, Switzerland.

The participants (N=201) were randomly assigned to these two research conditions. We measured wellbeing and perceived restorativeness by standardised scales before and after a standardized 30-minute walk through the woods.

The results of the study indicate an improvement of wellbeing in both conditions. Nevertheless there are significant differences between the groups concerning wellbeing and perceived restorativeness, indicating a stronger improvement in the “manicured” forest condition compared to the “wild” forest condition.

From these results we can conclude that – when analyzing the effects of nature on human wellbeing – it is crucial to pay attention to the different nature conditions.

Furthermore we conclude that – although there is a trend towards “rewilding” forests in Switzerland – it is crucial to keep some of the urban forests manicured.

### Key Words

Restorativeness, nature experience, health effect.

### Key References

Hartig, T., Evans, G. W., Jamner, L. D., Davis, D. S. and Garling, T., (2003) Tracking restoration in natural and urban field settings. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 23, 109-123.

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