

IC - (21180) - CONTACT WITH NATURE AND WELL-BEING: A STUDY WITH VIRTUAL REALITY

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Background and objectives

Contact with nature has proved to impact positively on health and well-being in different contexts and in several ways (e.g. Hartig et al, 2014 for a review). Different studies show effects on physiological (e.g. cortisol, blood pressure, etc), and psychological processes (e.g. positive mood, attention, vitality, stress reduction, less anxiety or depression, etc). But more research is needed to better identify and clarify this process and to understand what type of nature (naturalness/degree of nature/human intervention) better produce these effects, as well the differences between the “real” nature or “virtual/simulated” nature. Previous research found differences for positive and negative mood, happiness, preference and connectedness to nature between the exposure to urban environment and both quasi natural and totally natural settings. The present study, extending the procedure and measures, uses virtual reality (VR) scenarios exposure.

Process and methods (for empirical research)

The three VR scenarios differ on the level of naturalness (forest, urban park and city), to test the effects on self-reported mood and well-being, as well psychophysiological indicators (skin conductance, heart rate, eye-tracking). The study is a between subjects design, where participants are being randomly assigned to one of the three experimental conditions (virtual scenario).

Main results (or main arguments in the case of critical reviews)

Results are being analysed to confirm previous results and to understand the effects of virtual reality exposure.

Implications for research and practice/policy | Importance and originality of the contribution

The research results will be discussed on the implications for several context applications (urban development, clinical, social intervention, work contexts, ...).

Palavras-chave : nature, well-being