

In plain sight: green views and urbanites' neighborhood satisfaction

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The past decades have generated both theoretical and empirical support for a positive relationship between exposure to nature and mental well-being. However, exposure to nature is diverse: it could stem from actually spending time in green spaces, but also from simply being able to observe greenery from inside one's residence. The extent to which green views as a specific type of nature exposure contribute to satisfaction and well-being in urban areas has received scarce attention in the literature. The objective of this paper is therefore to shed light on whether having satisfactory green views from an urban residence is positively associated with the residents' overall neighborhood satisfaction.

We used a large probability sample (n=32,552) of Flemish city dwellers and ran four binary logistic regression models estimating different levels of neighborhood satisfaction. Each model statistically controls for the general perceived amount of greenery in the neighborhood, 47 other self-reported neighborhood attributes, and respondent characteristics.

The results show that being less satisfied with the green views from one's residence is associated with lower probabilities of being (very) satisfied with the neighborhood, independent of the general perceived amount of greenery in the neighborhood. While other aesthetic (beautiful buildings, clean streets) and social (feeling at home, pleasant talking to neighbors, safety) neighborhood attributes were found to be most strongly associated with neighborhood satisfaction, satisfaction with green views still ranks seventh among 35 variables with statistically significant associations, whereas general perceived amount of greenery in the neighborhood ranks nineteenth.

In conclusion, our findings support the hypothesis that simply viewing greenery improves neighborhood satisfaction. In densely built-up urban landscapes it might be difficult to introduce new green spaces such as parks, but small-scale green infrastructure such as green roofs and walls could offer a flexible solution to increase the amount of natural views.