

## **Restoration in place: the impact of social context and type of setting on restorative effects**

Y.A.W. de Kort & R.M. Gal, Eindhoven (NL), H. Staats, Leiden (NL)

Restoration is becoming an important concept for environmental psychologists. There is a growing evidence that (natural) settings have restorative potential for people who need to unwind after stressful or fatiguing situations and tasks. The common finding in earlier research is that natural environments perform better than urban settings (e.g. Hartig & Staats, 2003; Parson & Hartig, 2002). However, both theory and everyday experience indicate that perhaps attractive urban environments could also have beneficial effects. Looking at those earlier studies, two important observations were made. The first is that most studies did not make use of very attractive urban environments. The second is that in most studies, other people were removed from the setting. However, part of the attractiveness of urban environments may be in the presence of others and the positive social buzz this creates. Except for one recent study (Staats & Hartig, unpublished), not much is known about the impact of others on restoration, either in natural or urban environments.

In the present study we wanted to study the impact other people have on the potential of attractive natural and urban environments. We hypothesized that this impact could depend on the type of setting. In general there will be more people in urban settings than in natural settings. Furthermore people will probably behave differently in both settings. The presence of other people can influence the feelings of safety en privacy, which may influence whether a person can restore from attentional fatigue. Also the expectation about the presence of people in an environment can probably influence how a person can restore. This study tried to give some insight in the relation between physical and social factors and their influence on the extent the environment is evaluated as restorative. We conducted an experiment to test the hypothesis about the presence and kind of presence of people in different environments. The experiment followed a 3 (presence of others: no people, people who are not approaching, people who are approaching) \* 3 (type of environment: natural environment vs. park vs. urban environment) design. After a cognitive task that induced attentional fatigue, respondents viewed a slide show of one of the environments. They then started an attention-related performance test and filled out a questionnaire measuring perceived restorativeness (translated PRS) and additional questions tapping into possibly mediating concepts and control variables. Results are pending since the experiment is now running.

This project will be presented at IAPS 2k4 in Vienna.