

Sky in Window View-Content; Investigating the micro-restorative effects of viewing the sky from indoor¹

Sepideh Masoudinejad

*PhD student of architecture
Shahid Beheshti University, Tehran, Iran*

Abstract

In metropolises like Tehran, people spend most of their lifetime indoors; they live in high-density and high-rise buildings; they have been encircled by built masses and their views are limited to the artificial elements; without access and view to the nature.

It has been accepted that limitation of view to the built environment is not preferable from inhabitants and has negative effects on their health. There are increasing studies showing that the physical and psychological problems of urban living arouse restoration needs (van den Berg, A., Hartig, T., & Staats, H., 2007, p. 92). Regarding to the modern life style which keeps people indoors, a restorative resource should be continuously accessible during everyday life. Windows can satisfy this demand and provide a micro-restorative experience (Kaplan, R., 2001). But it should be considered that the restorative qualities of the window depend not only on the presence of a view but its content as well (e.g., Kaplan, R., 2001; Tennessen, C. M. & Cimprich, B., 1995). View-content has a vital role in the effectiveness of windows in the quality of life of apartment dwellers (Kaplan, R., 2001), which its effect can be increased by natural elements (e.g., Ulrich, R. S., et al., 1991; Kaplan, R., 1983, 1993a, 1993 b, 2001; Talbot, J. F. & Kaplan, R., 1991). Studies done in this issue focused on greenery as a mean of natural elements. But this research focused on the sky, as a part of the nature that is endless and available everywhere. The research assumed that viewing the sky from indoor could provide continuous restorative breaks and its

deprivation in built environments has negative psychological effects on inhabitants.

This research was done in two steps; studying Iranian literary and religious texts to find out the place and meaning of the sky in Iranians' beliefs and culture, and a fieldwork to examine the psychological effects of viewing the sky in residential apartments, Tehran, Iran. The fieldwork was done through deep interview. Participants included two groups of housewives who lived in apartments with and without view to the sky through the windows. t were in two age groups, 20-45 and 45-60.

The fieldwork showed that the participants preferred seeing the nature in general and the sky in particular from inside. In visual part, viewing the sky in 51 cases out of 60 received highest grade in comparison to viewing the built elements and windowless cases.

The research stressed the sacred place and affective meaning of the sky in Persians' beliefs, which could be seen in Iranian traditional architecture. Continuing the studies about restorative effects of nature and windows, this research proved the hypothesis and found out that viewing the sky from indoors can act as a micro-restorative resource. Future steps of the research will be determining a pattern for window design which includes some modifications in current window design methods (e.g. Sky Dome Factor, shading mask design) and urban design codes.

Kaplan, R. (1983). The Role of Nature in the Urban Context. in I. Altman & J. F. Wohlwill (Eds.), *Behavior and the natural environment* (pp. 127-162). New York: Plenum.

Kaplan, R. (1993). The Role of Nature in the Context of the Workplace. *Landscape and Urban Planning*, 26, 193-201.

¹ This article is a report of author's PhD thesis which is in progress.

- Kaplan, R. (2001). The Nature of the View from Home: Psychological Benefits - Environment & Behavior, vol. 33, 507-542
- Staats, H., Kieviet, A., Terry H. (2003). Where to Recover from Attentional Fatigue: An expectancy-value analysis of environmental preferences. Journal of environmental psychology 23, 147-157
- Talbot, J. F., & Kaplan, R. (1991). The Benefits of nearby Nature for Elderly Apartment Residents. International Journal of Aging and Human Development, 33, 119-130.
- Tennessen, C. M., & Cimprich, B. (1995). Views to Nature: Effects on attention. Journal of Environmental Psychology, 15, 77-85.
- Ulrich, R.S., Simons, R.F., Losito, B.D., Fiorito, E., Miles, M.A., & Zelson, M. (1991). Stress Recovery during Exposure to Natural and Urban Environments. Journal of Environmental Psychology, 11, 201-230.
- Ulrich, R.S., Zimring, C., Joseph, A., & Choudhary, R. (2004). The Role of the Physical Environment in the Hospital of the 21th Century: A one-in-a-lifetime opportunity.
- Van den Berg, A., Hartig, T., & Staats, H. (2007). Preferences for Nature in Urbanized Societies: stress, restoration, and the pursuit of sustainability- Journal of social issues, 63, pp. 79-96.