

Evidence-based models for health-promoting outdoor environments

In this lecture, I will first present my overall research focus, which lies at the intersection of landscape architecture and environmental psychology, with particular emphasis on health-promoting outdoor environments and evidence-based models. Central to this work is the development and empirical testing of theoretically grounded models, particularly those informed by research on restorative and supportive environments, for use in landscape architecture and planning. These models are explored and applied in a range of contexts, including environments for specific patient groups (e.g., in hospitals, rehabilitation, and healthcare settings) as well as in the planning and design of outdoor environments aimed at promoting health and well-being in the general population (e.g., workplace settings and urban green infrastructure).

Most of the lecture will focus on recent and upcoming research projects in which we use, or plan to use, the model of four zones of contact with the outdoors (Figure 1) as a central conceptual framework. The zone model was originally developed in my doctoral thesis and has so far been used both for synthesizing evidence in the field and for translating that evidence into practice. The model is designed to capture the environmental conditions of a site in relation to human health and well-being and supports the analysis of both user needs and outdoor environmental qualities by organizing them into four distinct zones: (1) the indoor perspective, such as views through windows; (2) transitional spaces, including conservatories, greenhouses, or balconies; (3) the immediate outdoor environment, such as a garden; and (4) the surrounding context, referring to the broader landscape or neighborhood setting.

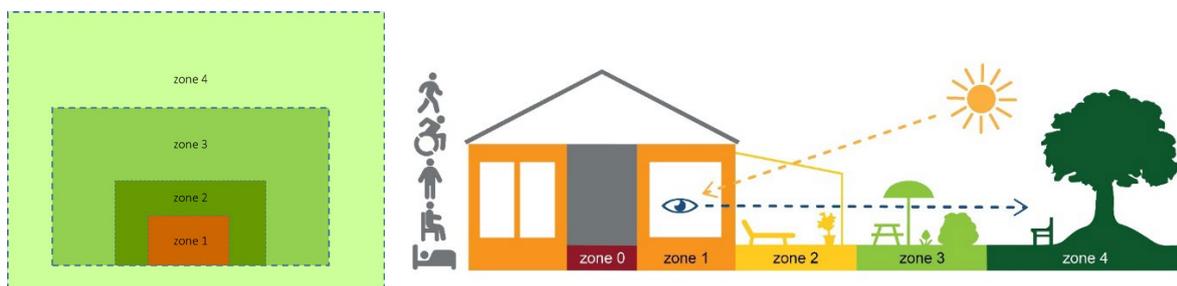


Figure 1. The original model of the four zones of contact with the outdoors, presented in plan view—a format commonly used in landscape architecture (left). The revised section-view illustration, designed to be more intuitive and accessible across professional fields (right). Illustrations by Anna Bengtsson.

In this lecture, I will present research projects in which the zone model is applied as a framework for data collection—for example, to explore the needs and preferences of different target groups in relation to contact with the outdoors, and to map access to the different zones across various settings. Additionally, I will present research projects in which the model is applied in design, planning, and strategic development. The projects are for the most part qualitative in nature and include various forms of interviews, as well as participatory action research and collaborative, transdisciplinary approaches that bridge the gap between research and practice. Much of this research is conducted in close collaboration with practitioners, with the aim of integrating academic knowledge and practical expertise to generate outcomes that are both scientifically robust and contextually relevant.

Finally, the presentation aims to outline ideas for the continued development of knowledge regarding the content and design of the zones in new and previously unexplored contexts—across diverse physical environments, settings, target groups, and through transdisciplinary collaborations.