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Biophilia and Acoustics: Implications for Office Worker Health and Wellbeing

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ABSTRACT

Identifying what benefits an acoustic-based biophilic perspective may hold for creating better office acoustic conditions are the aims of this paper and presentation. Extensive cross-disciplinary literature is discussed encompassing evolutionary biology to positive natural sounds for interior workplace environments.

Reconnecting building occupants with nature is a growing trend in architecture and design and amongst other professions associated with the built environment. Plants, natural day light, biomorphic shapes, water and good air quality are elements often cited as ways to “bring nature in” and referred to as Biophilic Design. Surprisingly, human sound perception and biophilic constructs are not often readily linked despite such an obvious connection. Human beings evolved within and were shaped by the presence (and absence of) sounds from nature for hundreds of thousands of years. If biophilia is generally defined as “nature loving”, then surely identifying what kinds of sound environments reflect this is a worthy of inclusion. This paper explores the evolution of the human hearing organ and by comparison, proposes what kind of sounds could be introduced (or eliminated) to create indoor environments more in-tune with the beneficial elements of nature, possibly aiding more productive, healthier environments particularly in our workplaces.