

Margareta Ivarsson



Happiness in Consumer Society - Can we be Happy within Ecological Limits?

The Global Economy Block 3
Perspectives on Alternative Economics
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- We know that we live in an unsustainable way. We know it probably will change, due to climate change, peak oil and a disintegrated world economy.
- Can we still be happy? Are we even particularly happy now?

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What is happiness?



- Positive Psychology:
- Positive Emotion
- Engagement
- Relationships
- Meaning
- Accomplishment
- Martin Seligman and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi

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Happiness



- "Meaningful life": belonging to and serving something that you believe is bigger than you are.
- The important things in life are therefore anything but money and consumption: friends and family, health, working conditions and a sense of achieving.
- Mats Alvesson, Tim Kasser

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More money = More happy? NOT!



- When GDP gets above the limit of basic needs, positive correlation between income and happiness levels out.
- Lottery winners get happier for a year then they end up at the same happiness level as before.
- World Values Survey

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- *One of my patients was admitted for several months when her wealthy father lost his fortune. She could simply not stand not being able to buy everything she pointed to.*
- David Eberhard, Swedish psychiatrist

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The other side of welfare society



- We have more anxiety, we are more depressed and burnt out.
- More people are suffering from personality disorders. Without antidepressants Sweden would have the highest suicide rates in the world.
- But we live longer.

• www.socialstyrelsen.se (The National Board of Health and Welfare)

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Consumer society



- Materialistic people tend to be those who feel unhappy. 6 % in USA are shopaholics.
- Want to be happy? Don't compare yourself with your neighbor.

• University of British Columbia, www.illvet.se

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Man + ecology = complicated



- Consumerism: also tourism and adventures
- Trek to Mount Everest base camp: 30 000 tourists/year
- Waste management/water resource management?
- Save Mount Everest – Clean Up Expedition 2011

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Back to turf huts?



- Of course not
- Instead: use our knowledge in our lifestyles!
- Some examples from science and different countries:

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Ecophilosophy



- "The future of earth and the dignity of humanity".
- Perspectives on the human-nature relationship.
- Environmental- or cultural crisis?
- Norwegian philosophers: Sigmund Kvaløy Setereng, Johan Galtung and Arne Naess.

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Environmental psychology

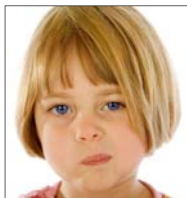


- Spending time in natural environments is of great value for the human brain; for concentration and mental control.
- People with good access to green areas are healthier than others, leading to significant economic gains.

• Ulrich, Kaplan, Grahn, Norling. Alnarp at SLU

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Neuroscience



- Your thoughts today are mainly a repetition of what you were thinking yesterday.
- What *do* you actually think?
- Can we be Happy within Ecological Limits?
- Do you have a positive vision?

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Neuroscience



- Those who practice meditation focusing on compassion exhibit permanent changes in the brain's neural network.
- Mindfulness
- Richard Davidson

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Costa Rica and Ecuador



- Costa Rica: high welfare – low impact, renewable energy, soon climate neutral.
- Ecuador: in environmental and fair trade rose fields, pests are fought with lemon water and chili spray.
- 20 % of land surface in reserves and National Parks. Ecotourism.

• N Lopez Granda, Bosse Angelöw, Nic Marks

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Havana - world leader in urban agriculture



- > 50 % of Havana's fresh produce is grown within the city limits, using organic compost and simple irrigation systems.

• <http://sustainablecities.dk>

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Bhutan – "happiness is a place"



- Gross National Happiness (GNH) since 1972.
- Sophisticated survey instrument to measure the population's general level of well-being
- Used for Bhutan's five-year planning process

• Michael Penncock, Karma Ura, Centre for Bhutan Studies

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Gross National Happiness



- GNP is the guiding philosophy behind every development initiative.
- Proposed policies must pass a review, based on a GNH impact statement.

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The four pillars of GNP



1. promotion of sustainable development
2. preservation and promotion of cultural values
3. conservation of the natural environment
4. establishment of good governance

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Contributors to happiness



1. physical, mental and spiritual health
2. time-balance
3. social and community vitality
4. cultural vitality
5. education
6. living standards
7. good governance
8. ecological vitality

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Yes we can!



- Yes, we can be happy within ecological limits.
- Start thinking new thoughts today.
- Help your politicians with a new vision.
- It is possible!

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