



Psychological resources for sustainable lifestyles

A BOOK REVIEW BY CRISTINA P. RODRIGUEZ TORRES

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There is an increasingly growing concern about climate change and environmental damage caused by unsustainable practices. This has led to the mobilisation of forces to look for alternatives as to how these problems can be offset.

Therefore a cultural transformation towards sustainable lifestyles is being promoted to raise consciousness. But this goes beyond reaching people and bringing a real change. It is not easy to shape human perceptions and alter attitudes and behaviours at the grassroots. It shall be required the support of psychological resources to assist people with this ecological living concept independently of material wealth.

A recent essay presented in 2013 by Denkwerk Zukunft, focuses on several important aspects to access and make use of these psychological resources. The author identified six psychological resources to increase the subjective wellbeing in terms of non material wealth. These refer to the capacity for

pleasure, self-acceptance, self-efficacy, mindfulness, the construction of meaning, and solidarity. It is explained that these resources carry out different psychological functions and they can be balanced from each other. As a result, they can play a role on influencing positively the transition towards sustainability (Hunecke 2013, p.15ff).

The capacity for pleasure consists of the skills to positively correlate perceptions of sense stimuli or experiences with feelings of subjective wellbeing. These are obtained along life and are specific to each individual. Meanwhile, the self-acceptance resource combines the positive and negatives aspects that people judge and allocate to themselves. On the other hand, the self-efficacy or self -confidence resource includes the personal belief that one can achieve the projected objectives as a result of effort and perseverance (Hunecke 2013, p.18ff). These three psychological resources work as the main basis to develop a strong personality. Another principle is mindfulness, which represents the

process and response to have a complete, conscious and non-judgmental attitude at the present moment. In contrast, the construction of meaning seeks for the appraisal and connection of a positive feeling such as security in individuals' life. The last psychological resource is solidarity. It involves a behaviour that seeks, from a collective point of view, the common good and the social responsibility (Hunecke 2013, p.27ff).

Finally, they were mentioned different strategies for the promotion of these psychological resources, which can lead to a non materialistic culture. For example, educational and health

programmes, coaching, counseling or training can support the reinforcement of the mental and emotional approach in people. They can be performed at different individual and organisational levels such as, schools, public and private institutions and society (Hunecke 2013, p.38ff).

However there are some criticisms of the positive psychology and its extreme focus on individuals' feeling of happiness (Hunecke 2013, p.59). Therefore an important aspect to meet the sustainability goals is to think and act not only for the welfare and happiness of oneself but also for the community and ecology.

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Cristina is from Ecuador and obtained her bachelor degree in Nutrition Science in Argentina. At the present, she is pursuing her master studies in International Food Business and Consumer Studies at the University of Kassel in Germany. She has experiences in the field of clinic nutrition and food management, especially in catering services and hospitals in South America. Her aspiration for the moment is to complement her knowledge abroad in the food business sector, with focus on food technology, quality management and organic food system.