


Margareta Ivarsson 

## Happiness in Consumer Society

### - Can we be Happy within Ecological Limits?

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Margareta Ivarsson 



- 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](http://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](http://www.illvet.se)

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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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## Green prescriptions



- Physical activity, preferably in the nature, in the prevention and treatment of disease.
- Structured counseling.
- Norway: "Grønn resept" - in form of trekking.

• [www.helsedirektoratet.no](http://www.helsedirektoratet.no), [www.fysss.se](http://www.fysss.se)

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## Man + ecology = complicated

### Saving Mount Everest expedition 2011



- Waste management or water resource management?
- 30 000 tourists/year
- water supply; glacier ice
- Bottled water: plastic, glass
- Boiled water: deforestation, gas bottles
- UV-pen: expensive, batteries

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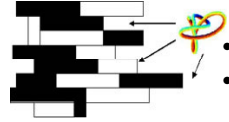
## Back to turf huts?



- Back to non-material values, and it will all work out?
- Of course not.
- Use our knowledge in our lifestyles.
- Develop the way we plan, use and build urban areas.

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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?
- Where does the new thought fit in?

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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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## Ecosystems within the urban area



- Humanity is increasingly urban, but continues to depend on nature for its survival. Urban ecosystems: street trees, lawns/ parks, urban forests, cultivated land, wetlands, lakes/sea, and streams.

- Bolund & Hunhammar, Choumert & Salanié

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## Energy Conscious Households



- Educational project: 2000 households in 7 EU countries. 111 families in Karlstad: 1000 environmental improvement measures: reduced CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by >1.5 tons, unsorted household waste by 60%, car fuel consumption by 10% per family.

- [www.echoaction.net](http://www.echoaction.net), [www.karlstad.se](http://www.karlstad.se)

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## Energy efficiency and buildings



- Variable Air Systems
- Light Emitting Diodes (LED)
- Green roofs, recharging generators for elevators
- Energy efficient windows
- Geothermal energy
- Passive houses

- [www.ideongateway.se](http://www.ideongateway.se)
- [www.energieffektivbyggnader.se](http://www.energieffektivbyggnader.se)

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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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## Ecuador and Costa Rica



- Ecuador conserves 20 % of its land surface in reserves and national parks. Ecotourism. On environmental and fair trade rose fields pests are fought with lemon water and chili spray.
- Costa Rica: 25% in reserves, 78% renewable energy, climate neutral by 2030.

- Norby Lopez Granda, Bosse Angelöw

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## Bhutan

- "There are limits to the satisfaction economic growth by itself provides".
- 60% of the forest is protected.
- Gross national happiness since 1972. Looks at the quality of life, how much leisure time you have, what's happening in your community, and how integrated you feel with your culture.

- King Wangchuck, Bhutan's former King

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## Organically produced food – in balance with the ecosystems



- Sustainable agriculture
- More minerals and nutrients.
- Increased biodiversity, less eutrophication & increase of the soil's resistance against the effects of climate change.
- 20000 persons/year will not die from pesticide poisoning
- UN: WHO, UNCTAD

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## Sustainable business & Green Consumerism



United Nations  
Framework Convention on  
Climate Change



- Will the world's political leaders come to agreements in Durban?
- The pioneering Climate Neutral companies in Sweden have reduced their CO<sub>2</sub> emissions with more than 30% in their first year.
- My company reduced with 90%.

- [www.klimatneutral.se](http://www.klimatneutral.se)

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## Yes we can!



- Yes, we can be happy within ecological limits.
- Start thinking new thoughts today.
- It is possible.
- Good luck!

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