

Spirituality: The Missing Link of Sustainability and Happiness

A Framework for Holistic Development

Erica Berejnoi, Rohana Ulluwishewa, Scott Cloutier,

Leah Gibbons, Susana Puga, and Anura Uthumange

Abstract

There is a growing consensus that sustainability and happiness are interrelated—while happiness promotes sustainable behaviours, sustainable behaviours enhance happiness. However, there are other factors linking sustainability and happiness. The present study identifies the missing link as spirituality. The chapter differentiates spirituality from religion and presents it in rational and scientific terms and points out how individuals become intrinsically happier and behave in sustainable ways as they grow spiritually. Spirituality can be the source of both happiness and sustainability and, ultimately, enhanced community wellbeing. Drawing on this understanding, this study develops a theoretical framework for sustainable personal and community development that is holistic and can deliver happiness to all.

Introduction

There is a growing consensus that happiness and sustainability are interconnected (Brown & Kasser, 2005; Kjell & Candland, 2011; Nisbet, Zelenski, & Murphy, 2011; O'Brian, 2013). Herein, we refer to happiness as subjective wellbeing or eudaimonia (i.e., cultivation of selflessness and virtue; Joshanloo, 2014), and sustainability as sustainable behaviour which includes measures and practices for a sustainable society. While some studies have provided evidence to show that happy people are more likely to embrace sustainable practices (Brown & Kasser, 2005), other studies have provided evidence to show that those who embrace sustainable practices are likely to be happier (Kellert & Wilson, 1993; O'Brian, 2001; Kasser & Sheldon, 2002). However, the link between sustainability and happiness, and how it contributes to community wellbeing development, has received little attention from the scientific world.

This study, based on scientific evidence from quantum physics, neuroscience, transpersonal psychology and studies on consciousness, identifies spirituality as the missing link between happiness and sustainability and points out that as we grow spiritually we become happier and embrace sustainable practices.

- Spirituality is the awareness and experience of belonging to the larger, interconnected community of life, of the purpose and meaning of life within this context, and the development of personal and community values and actions out of these. In other words, spirituality is a process of inner transformation, a transformation from self-centeredness to selflessness, from greed to generosity, from fear to courage, from disharmony to harmony within the self, from fear to love, and from “I” to “we” (Ulluwishewa, 2016). It is a personal transformation within individuals.
- Studies on consciousness describe the experience of spirituality as mindfulness of the present moment. This experience can emerge as a process of self-awareness and self-reflection. The right side of the brain, in charge of creativity, spontaneous communication,

and receiving sensory information, plays a big role in staying present (Buck, 1980). The experience of mindfulness can be enhanced by learning to quiet the left side of the brain, which is in charge of logic and thinking. (For particular case studies on consciousness see Taylor, 2006; Alexander, 2012; Alexander & Newell, 2017).

- As we grow spiritually we become happier, peaceful, more loving, more compassionate, wiser and more creative (Zohar, Marshall, & Marshall, 2000). And eventually we become less selfish and more altruistic and act for the wellbeing of all fellow human beings and their communities, and the natural environment (Horlings, 2015).
- So, as we grow spiritually, we become happier and our intrinsic behaviour becomes more sustainable. However, as discussed later in this study, there are external forces which may also make our behaviour sustainable.

We suggest spirituality to be the ultimate source of both happiness and sustainability. Happiness is a state of mind we experience when we grow spiritually, and sustainability is the behaviour resulting from our spiritual growth.

We suggest that individuals are born spiritual beings who, in the process of socialization and acculturation, lose their spiritual experience. Zohar, Marshall, and Marshall (2000) state:

“The self also, we assume, has a source, an origin in the history and development of the universe and a starting point in its own history. Physically, we begin as stardust that has itself evolved out of the quantum vacuum. Spiritually, too, we may begin as proto-consciousness associated with that stardust. As infants, we begin as innocent, undifferentiated consciousness” (p. 125).

The active process of becoming spiritual brings us back closer to our natural spiritual experience. As a personal emergence within individuals, spirituality is affected by both outer and inner circumstances. While the outer circumstances include social, economic and environmental characteristics of the place where the person lives and works, the collective inner existence includes the person’s state of mind and culture, and whether the mind is at peace and free from negativities such as greed, anger, hatred, envy and/or anxiety. Therefore, one’s spiritual emergence can be accelerated by creating conducive outer circumstances via infrastructural, institutional and technological changes, and by supporting individuals to increase their capacity to extend love to individuals, keep the mind at peace and free from negativities (Krempf, 2014).

This understanding led us to develop a holistic development model that can be used as a guide by those who seek a form of development that is sustainable and can deliver higher levels of community wellbeing and happiness for all.

Happiness and Sustainability

This section provides a review of empirical evidence to show the association and interconnectedness between happiness and sustainability.

Happiness leads to sustainability

In a study by Brown and Kasser (2005) on happiness and ecological wellbeing, results reported that participants whose subjective wellbeing was ruled by intrinsic values (that is, values that come from within) were more inclined toward ecologically responsible behaviour. Mindfulness practices and voluntary simplicity included as part of a eudaimonic lifestyle also related to ecologically responsible behaviour. Individuals whose actions are motivated by intrinsic values tend to be less consumerist because they see that excessive material goods do not always add value to their lives, thus, their actions promote sustainable behaviour by having a smaller ecological footprint. In a study on

environmental performance in former Soviet countries from 1990 to 2000, Zidanšek (2007) points out that happier nations emit less CO₂ emissions than less happy nations. In fact, happier nations in this study are more energy efficient and produce less CO₂ per unit of GDP. In addition, O'Brien (2012) argues that we are more likely to lead more sustainable lives when we become aware that our pursuit of happiness is interdependent with the happiness of others and that of the environment, this includes our sustainable behaviour. Finally, Cloutier and Pfeiffer (2015) suggest that a sustainable future can be achieved by placing a higher emphasis on measures to enhance community happiness.

Sustainability leads to happiness

Activities that promote sustainable behaviour have been proven to lead to happiness. One such activity is the walk to school movement that encourages school children to walk or bike to school (O'Brian, 2001). There is an increase of Safe Routes to School (SRTS) movements worldwide to promote walking to school, which not only promotes sustainable behaviour, but the action of being physically active promotes well-being and satisfaction among participants (O'Brian, 2001). Another study conducted by Kasser and Sheldon (2002), predicted that individuals who engage in environmentally friendly consumption during the holidays tend to experience more happiness. Pursuing a materialistic lifestyle (which does not exemplify sustainable behaviour) results in unhappiness (Richins & Dawson, 1992). This behaviour tends to exist because the individual is motivated by extrinsic goals which do not contribute to finding meaning in life. Sustainable behaviour starts when individuals follow intrinsic goals, which then leads to happiness. Finally, humans are born with an innate need for nature (Kellert & Wilson, 1993), which promotes sustainable behaviour (Conn, 1998), and in turn, increases wellbeing and happiness (Nisbet, Zelenski, & Murphy, 2011). The evidence suggesting that sustainability measures lead to happiness has led Cloutier, Jambeck, and Scott (2014) to develop an index for measuring sustainability and happiness for community development. Furthermore, Cloutier, Larson, and Jambeck (2014) suggest that sustainable development "may function as a driver of residential happiness" (p. 643). In their study on happiness and sustainable development index rankings, they found that two out of the four indexes – Green Cities and Popular Science rankings – were strongly associated with self-reported happiness (Cloutier, Larson, & Jambeck, 2014). Other studies supporting that sustainability leads to happiness both at the individual and community level include Zidanšek (2007), White et al. (2013), Larson et al. (2016), and Zhang et al. (2017).

Policy opportunities

The trajectory the world is taking in terms of happiness and sustainability points out that we have come to a point where they both need to walk hand in hand. As O'Brien (2013), states "The union of sustainability, happiness, and well-being is inevitable, and sustainable happiness has the potential to create game-changing shifts in attitudes, policies, practices, and behaviours." (p. 250). Worldwide organizations are now promoting sustainable initiatives that also promote happiness. The United Nations (UN) is one of the global organizations looking at happiness with a critical eye. Since 2012, the UN has been releasing an annual World Happiness Report that looks at common variables that promote happiness at the cross-nation level. The 2018 report points out to five key variables, other than per capita income, to promote well-being: "population health (measured by health-adjusted life expectancy, HALE); the strength of social support networks; personal freedom (measured by the perceived freedom of individuals to make key life decisions); social trust (measured by the public's perception of corruption in government and business); and generosity" (Helliwell, Layard, & Sachs, 2018, p. 150). What is this information telling us? We need policies that promote happiness and well-being to achieve more sustainable societies starting at the small scale. Happiness should not

come at the expense of others or the planet because it would not sustain itself for long. O'Brien (2010) defines sustainable happiness as "happiness that contributes to individual, community and/or global well-being without exploiting other people, the environment or future generations" (n.p.). Thus, to experience sustainable happiness, sustainable behaviour must also enter the game. Examples of policy opportunities include: investing in public libraries in low income neighbourhoods, starting family wellness programs in the community, promoting talks on belonging and mindfulness, encouraging the incorporation of sustainable behaviours (e.g., food gardens, composting, clean energy) at the household and community level and providing incentives (e.g., economic, social, environmental) that will benefit all members of a community.

Understanding Spirituality, Happiness and Sustainability

Spirit and Spirituality

Spirit is the prime energy which gives life to all living and non-living beings. It is conscious, aware and "can think" (Ulluwishewa, 2016, p. 157). This prime energy fills the whole universe. In spite of its vastness, this mass field of energy functions as an indivisible and inseparable single field. From this perspective, the universe is a living being (Capra, 2010). It is known by various names: Universal Consciousness, Ultimate Truth, Infinite Being, and Higher Self. In most religions, it is personified as God, Allah, Jehovah and Brahman, among others.

The Universal Consciousness, while remaining as an indivisible and inseparable single entity at the quantum level, manifests itself as many material forms (e.g., rocks, soils, plants, animals and human beings). From its perspective, we all are its inseparable parts. Therefore, it feels our pains and pleasures, and we can feel the pains and pleasure of the universe as well (Cozolino, 2014). Hence, we all benefit when everyone is happy, healthy, peaceful, and prosperous. Feeling a state of unity with the universe can be described as unconditional love. This sense of connectedness may be experienced through peace, happiness, wisdom, intelligence and creativity (Cozolino, 2014).

However, we perceive ourselves as separate individuals, as beings separated from others and the natural environment – even ourselves! This perceived separateness is soft-wired in our brain, meaning that our "brain has been programmed by our wrong perceptions to see ourselves, not as integral parts of the whole, but as individuals separate from others and from the environment, and to perceive our fellow human beings as 'others' – competitors and enemies (Ulluwishewa, 2016, p. 162). Therefore, we behave as self-centred individuals. This behavior is culturally learned, driven by mechanisms that have ensured our fitness in the past (Davis, 2017). However, our brain is hard-wired for ethical behaviour and altruism (Cozolino, 2014). Pfaff (2007) suggests four mechanisms that can be mapped in our brain for this intrinsic behaviour: 1) we consider how our actions will affect other people (e.g., throw a rock at somebody), represented in the nervous system; 2) then, mirror neurons are activated when we envision ourselves doing the action; 3) we blur identities of the individuals involved, leading to activation of various brain systems, such as the one related to empathy; and 4) we decide whether to perform the action. A sense of separateness occurs when step 3 is omitted (Pfaff, 2007). When acting under our soft-wired brain, we are inclined to achieve our well-being even at the expense of the well-being of others and the natural environment; yet, we are more likely to behave altruistically toward our social groups (Mathur et al., 2010). When individuals act under a soft-wired brain of separateness, they do not mind meeting their needs even at the expense of the ability of others and future generations to meet their needs (Dalai Lama XIV, 2014).

There is hope. We, human beings, are endowed with the capacity to overcome the perceived separateness through love (Cacioppo et al., 2012; Dalai Lama XIV, 2014). To understand what we mean by love, we refer to Fredrickson's (2013) definition: "...love is the momentary upwelling of three tightly interwoven events: first, a sharing of one or more positive emotions between you or another; second, a synchrony between your and the other person's biochemistry and behaviours; and third, a reflected motive to invest in each other's well-being that brings mutual care" (p. 17). In other words, she refers to the experience of love as *positivity resonance*. We expand the described feelings of love to animals, plants, and elements of nature. Love is hardwired in our brain as a tendency to connect with others and serve others selflessly, as altruism and as the golden rule—treat others as you would like others to treat you (Pfaff, 2007). But, the soft-wired separateness and self-centeredness – the culturally conditioned self – prevent us from being guided by the hardwired love. Spirituality is about re-wiring our brain to empower the hardwired love to guide our behaviour and thereby to overcome the separateness (Ulluwishewa, 2018).

Reasoning with our hard-wired brain, it makes sense to suggest that our life mission as human beings is to experience and recognize our oneness with the universe by means of altruism, unconditional love, and spiritual growth.

Happiness

Happiness or subjective well-being is the ultimate goal we all want to achieve in most of our day-to-day activities (Diener, Oishi, Lucas, 2003; Lyubomirsky et al., 2005; Johnston et al., 2012; Dalai Lama XIV, 2014; Ford & Mauss, 2014). It is usually measured by simply asking people how satisfied they feel with their lives (Diener et al., 1985; Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999). Subjective well-being is a combined effect of both pleasure and meaning (what we have been referring to as happiness or eudaimonia throughout the paper). Pleasure is a form of short-lived excitement caused by neurochemical reinforcement of an achieved state we enjoy (Huta & Waterman, 2014). We acknowledge pleasure as a component of happiness within academic literature (Kováč, 2012; Huta & Waterman, 2014) but, henceforth, refer to happiness as something more. The happiness we speak of is the feeling of goodness, well-being, fulfilment and contentment that we experience when we are in full connection with our inner selves—spirit. This is what Aristotle called *Eudaimonia*, which is broadly defined as human flourishing. The proportion of pleasure and happiness in one's level of subjective well-being, therefore, depends on our level of spiritual growth: those who are at lower levels of their spiritual growth mostly seek pleasure, those who are at higher levels mostly seek happiness. Unsustainability arises when we find ourselves locked in the pleasure-seeking arena.

Experiencing happiness requires us to be in connection with the spirit within ourselves, spirit within fellow human beings, and spirit within nature. Hence, those who pursue happiness more than pleasure tend to stay connected to their inner selves, their fellow human beings and nature. They live in alignment with the principle of oneness and follow the golden rule (Block-Lerner et al., 2007; Horlings, 2015). On the other hand, those who seek pleasure more than eudaimonic happiness are engaged in a continuous struggle of seeking pleasure and avoiding pain. They may find their life somewhat satisfactory in the short-run if they have enough material wealth to continuously experience pleasurable activities. But they struggle to find life satisfaction in the long run. Their unending struggle to earn material wealth leads to disappointments, sorrow, stress, depression and conflictive relationships. They value material wealth, physical pleasure, position, power, social status, and respect more than love, compassion, generosity, tolerance and forgiveness. Evidence suggest that they are highly unlikely to act for the well-being of others and the natural environment (Zylstra et al., 2014).

Sustainability

Sustainability is popularly defined as meeting the needs of the present generation without compromising the needs of future generations (Brundtland et al, 1987). Implicit in this definition are concepts of intragenerational justice and externalities, among others; yet, under this definition, these issues are primarily focused on one dimension of sustainability – the temporal dimension, which looks at “sustainability over time and bringing justice to future generations” (p. 66).

This definition does not explicitly recognize the possibility of meeting the needs of one community or one country at the expense of the ability of another community or another country to meet their needs. It is important to raise awareness of the interconnected and interdependent world we live in today, and, to place higher emphasis on working toward sustainability in every region in the world. Many countries and regions in the world meet their needs at the expense of communities and countries under their domination. Yet, this is neither sustainable in the long term nor ethical.

We propose Uluwishewa’s (2018) definition which accommodates both temporal and spatial dimensions of sustainability: “Sustainability is the ability of any individual, community or country to meet their needs and live happily without compromising the ability of other individuals, communities, countries and future generations to meet their needs and live happily” (p. 66).

The human society consists of many communities and many countries. If any community/country meets its needs at the expense of the ability of another community/country to meet their needs, the human society cannot be sustainable. If we think of the tragedy of the commons, when everybody takes resources without mindfully leaving some for the future, at some point, we will run out of resources. In this case, acting with a mindful and altruistic heart, also means being smart about managing our resources across space and time.

Spirituality: The Missing Link

Perhaps the best way to discover the third factor which links happiness and sustainability is to discover the root causes of unhappiness and unsustainability we are witnessing across the world. If we find that unsustainability and unhappiness are caused by the same factor, that factor could be the one linking sustainability and happiness. This section takes a deep look into unsustainability and unhappiness we are witnessing in our societies today in order to discover their root causes.

Why Unsustainability?

One’s behaviour in sustainable lifestyle demands pursuit of the well-being for oneself, others, and the natural environment equally. Why can’t we treat equally ourselves, others, and nature?

- We are soft-wired with a false perception of separateness. Joshanloo (2014) states: “perceiving the self as separate from the non-self leads to unnecessary personal desires, and these desired are blamed for causing suffering. In order to stop the suffering, one needs to achieve a state of inner peace by realizing that the separation of the self and the non-self is but an illusion” (p. 479).
- We experience cravings and aversions. Each and every one of us has a unique set of cravings and aversions which make us pleasure-seekers and pain-avoiders, leading the way to greed, discomfort, and suffering (Chen, 2006). In fact, the Dalai Lama XIV (2014) states:

“Whatever material comforts we have, we are still afflicted by greed, jealousy, and competitiveness. As long as these disturbing emotions remain intact, we continue to experience suffering. Besides which, when the focus is solely on material

development, there does not seem to be much need for love and compassion. For example, we do not need love and compassion to develop new machinery. Therefore, if human beings think only about their physical problems and try to counter them in exclusively material ways, they will naturally ignore such inner values as loving-kindness and compassion. Indeed, two centuries of scientific and technological development have inclined people in many parts of the world to consider material prosperity to be of greater worth than inner qualities.” (p. 6).

- When we are indulged in a pleasurable experience, depending on our attachment to the experience, we will want to prolong the period of the pleasure-experience at any cost, even at the expense of our own long-term well-being, the well-being of others and the natural environment (Dalai Lama XIV, 2014; Zylstra et al., 2014). Research has shown, however, that we aren't very good at understanding when an activity is no longer providing us happiness (Nesse, 2004; Lyubomirsky et al., 2005). We stay invested in similar activities for long periods of time.
- Individuals, corporations, and governments (political leaders) oftentimes seek the pleasure of getting power, higher profits, higher social status, and respect. Hence, they fail to see the long-term consequences of their short-sighted decisions for themselves, others and nature. This failure to foretell how our actions will affect the future may be caused by a naïve lack of understanding of the interrelationship between their actions and future trade-offs, or by an egotistical position to not consider the affected populations.
- Consequently, we all become more self-centred and more unsustainable in our behaviour.
- Conversely, there is also the case of unsustainability caused by lack of access to education and resources. Much global unsustainable behaviour is done to survive. Other individuals, for example, may have access to resources, yet lack a critical understanding of the environmental impacts they may cause with their action and behaviours.

Why Unhappiness?

Happiness is, as demonstrated above, an attribute of Spirit. We can experience it only when we strive to become one with spirit or become spiritual. How does a person become one with the spirit and become happy?

- Spirit lies within us, in others and in nature.
- Becoming one with spirit means connecting to the spirit within us, within others and within nature.
- Connecting means not only physical nearness, touch and likeness, but also unselfish interaction. For example:
 - Spirit within us: What keeps us separated from the spirit within us is our sense of 'I'/Ego which acts for 'my' pleasure at the expense of my own long-term well-being, the well-being of others and the well-being of nature. The notion of I/ego is a product of the soft-wired brain, and the neuroplasticity of the brain allows us to change the soft-wired brain permanently. However, this is far from reality in our ordinary life. In our ordinary life, our notion of I/ego becomes weak and is temporarily dissolved when we are in deep meditation/prayer or when we are in a state of peace or when we are deeply engaged in any action, (e.g., reading, singing or teaching). On the other hand, it becomes strong when we are agitated, when we are challenged or threatened. We become one with the spirit within when the notion of 'I'/Ego is transcended by the individual's higher consciousness. Then, we connect with the spirit within and experience happiness.

- Spirit within others: When we interact with others without the sense of 'I'/Ego, we see them without prejudices and judgements, and we collaborate with them without expecting anything in return. We also see our understanding of others as only a reflection of ourselves. Then we connect with their inner selves, the spirit within and experience happiness.
 - Spirit within nature: Seeing the beauty of nature without becoming attached to its commercial value; seeing nature with the attitude of gratitude for giving us life (e.g., oxygen and food); caring for nature and nurturing it; seeing nature without wanting to possess it or without wanting to gain some selfish benefits from it. If we interact with nature like this, we will directly connect with the spirit and experience peace and happiness.
- Yet, most of us, especially in the West, are not in contact with the spirit within us, or interact with others and nature with self-centred interests in mind. Zohar, Marshall, and Marshall (2000) add "Western culture is ego-dominated. Its emphasis is on public personas and formal relationships, and its extreme emphasis is on the isolated individual who must constantly make rational decisions. This is why most of us in the West live from the periphery of ourselves, wrongly believing ego to be the whole story of the self" (p. 128). Hence, we fail to experience happiness. Thus, we suggest our spiritual underdevelopment to be the root cause of our unhappiness.

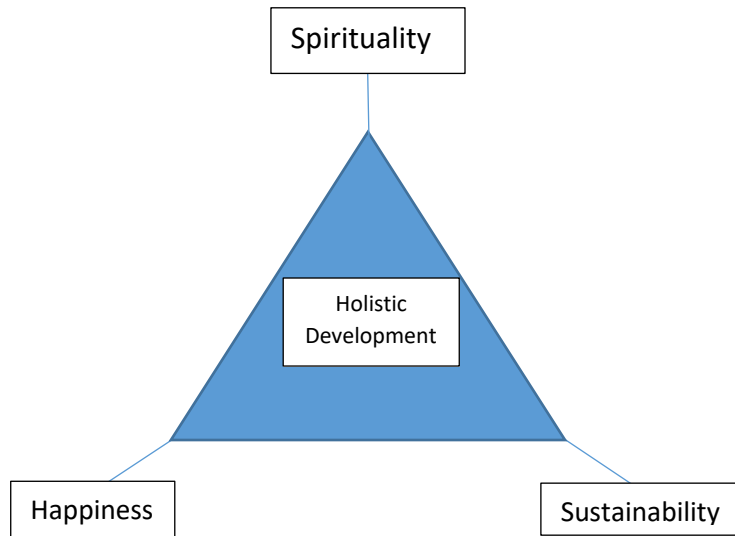
The Missing Link

We have provided evidence that the same factor may cause both unsustainability and unhappiness: it is our spiritual underdevelopment. Therefore, spirituality must be the missing link between sustainability and happiness. As we grow spiritually, we stay in touch with the spirit within us, with the spirit within our fellow human beings, and with the spirit within the natural environment during most of our waking life, and therefore we lead the way to more intrinsic happiness and sustainable behaviour.

When intrinsically connected within and outside us, sustainable behaviour is our default behaviour and happiness is our default feeling. Spirituality is the key to unlock happiness and sustainable behaviours hidden within us.

Towards a Framework for Holistic Development

As already seen, the purpose of our life as human beings is to grow spiritually—transcending our illusionary perception of separateness and realizing our oneness with fellow human beings and nature—which provides access to peace, happiness, wisdom, creativity and intelligence hidden within us. If any form of development is to be holistic, it must be aligned with the purpose. Such a form of development contributes not only to the physical quality of life but also to spiritual growth, which eventually makes people happy and their behaviour sustainable.



As individuals grow spiritually, they become happier and behave in a sustainable way. While spirituality is the cause, happiness and sustainability are its effects. However, studies on happiness and sustainability show many other ways to make people happy and promote sustainability. For instance, while providing better amenities and more recreation facilities, raising income, providing access to open spaces and greeneries, and providing more opportunities to connect with others are recommended to enhance happiness, providing technological, infrastructural and institutional infrastructures conducive to sustainability are also recommended to work toward a more sustainable future. The extrinsic measures described above are necessary in the fast-changing world we live in, but they by themselves are not enough to permanently remove the root cause of growing unhappiness and unsustainability: the sense of separateness soft-wired in our brain and resulting self-centeredness, greed, and fears. Only spiritual growth in individuals can do it.

- What we call sustainable development today is not holistic and hence fails to be sustainable and deliver happiness. As previously discussed in the paper, a more holistic view of sustainable development would include both a special and temporal scale to this definition.
- We cannot expect governments, international agencies, and corporations to lead holistic development. In fact, holistic development can arise only from an intrinsic motivation from ordinary people at the grassroots level.
- The proportion of the world's population living in cities is on the rise. The World Health Organization (WHO) (2015) reports that in 2015, 54% of the global population lived in urban areas, an increase of 30% from 1950. Estimates show that this rate will continue increasing approximately 1.84% per year between 2015 and 2020, reaching 60% of the world population living in urban areas by 2030 (WHO, 2015). Hence, holistic development should arise as urban neighbourhoods-based community development projects.
- This study is an attempt to develop a framework for holistic development that can be used as a guide for such urban neighbourhood-based holistic development.

Unsustainability and Unhappiness in Urban Neighbourhoods

- The root cause of continuing unhappiness is our perceived separateness between 'I'/self, others, and nature.

- The separateness is a more serious issue in cities than in country sides and rural areas (Tonkiss, 2005; Young, Diep, & Drabble, 2006; Knight & Gunatilaka, 2010). Tonkiss (2005) discusses the human disconnection created by the modern city, caused by separation of physical space and by a place filled with strangers. He states that disconnect from others is a social norm in the city, and that following the status quo ensures peace and order. We also add that the sense of separateness creates feelings of exclusion and othering.
- The separateness reflects outwardly as breaking down of families and communities. That is why social disconnectedness, alienation, and loneliness have become serious social issues.
- Consumerism rampant in urban society strengthens separateness. How?
 - Separateness is strengthened by the differences in likes and dislikes of individuals. Attachment to *likes* leads to craving, and attachment to *dislikes* leads to aversion; each and every person has a unique set of cravings and aversions which strengthens separateness from others and the natural environment. In a simplistic example, when a person is attached to a craving, they may behave in ways to have more of that particular object/service which in turn, would strengthen the craving. This can lead the person to focus on their personal cravings rather than to the needs of others (which includes the environment). Thus, strong attachments make us less receptive to altruism and to an inner connection with ourselves.
 - Consumerism feeds cravings — the more we have, the more attached we are to material possessions, and the stronger the craving for consumption.
 - Consumerism creates unique sets of cravings (and aversions) in each age/gender group such as children, adolescents, teenagers, youths, middle-agers, and elderly people. Each group has its own unique set of cravings and aversions.
 - The uniqueness of their cravings and aversions makes it difficult for each group to share their resources with other groups within family as well as within community. This encourages separateness. For instance, in the same family, children, adolescents, and parents cannot share the same TV, same food, same family phone; young children tend to leave parents and live separately, parents send grandparents to elderly homes.
 - Growing separateness causes unhappiness and unsustainability in Western cities and neighbourhoods where consumerism is dominant (Berry & Okulicz-Kozaryn, 2011). According to research conducted by Berry and Okulicz-Kozaryn (2011), this situation is more prevalent in Western countries, or in countries that use a Western European foundation, where happiness decreases as we move from rural communities to urbanized and large cities.
 - Growing separateness increases competition between individuals, leading to feelings of “us better than them,” leading way to conflict.
 - However, the growing separateness and resulting unhappiness and unsustainability generates market for more goods and services which promote business, increase profit and GDP.

How to Achieve Holistic Development in Urban Neighbourhoods?

Human beings are endowed with the capacity to overcome the separateness by *love* and thereby to achieve *oneness* and make the world a happy, peaceful and prosperous place. By *oneness*, we refer to an intrinsic connection humans feel with the rest of humanity by the experience of love. When *I* feel unconditional love toward others, *I* will no longer be *I*, but *we*. The feeling of oneness emerges as love is cultivated. The outcome from love and oneness is a prosperous society, one where mindfulness and cooperation are what drive people, rather than competition and greed. What can people in neighbourhoods do to achieve such a state?

In the first place, it is important to be aware of two types of separateness: (1) **Inner Separateness**: it refers to a mind-body disconnect, which is invisible to the eye, but visible to the intuition and can be measured through rigorous scientific procedures (Frewen & Lanius, 2006; Saunders et al., 2007; Daubenmier et al., 2013). Inner separateness may arise due to an overemphasis on the external environment, a drive for competition, and hardship to make ends meet, among many other causes. (2) **Outer Separateness**: it refers to social disconnectedness and alienation, oftentimes experienced in urban societies.

To overcome inner separatedness:

- Engage in activities that create a mind-body connection. An example of such an activity is brain-heart coherence researched by the HeartMath Institute (McCraty et al., 2009; McCraty, 2015). The activity takes three steps: 1) shift focus from the brain to the heart. 2) breath in and out as slow as possible. Breathing slowly is a sign of safety. We can trigger the mind and heart to feel safer by breathing at a slow pace. 3) feel gratitude, appreciation, kindness, and forgiveness from the heart. Doing this activity for three minutes has proven to have an effect in the individual for as long as six hours after the activity was performed (Braden, 2017).
- Engage in meditation and mindfulness practices (see Wallace & Shapiro, 2006; Nidich et al., 2009; Salzberg, 2010; Zeidan, Diamond, & Goolkasian, 2010; Dalai Lama XIV, 2014; Wamsler et al., 2018).
- Engage in a gratitude practice (e.g., via journaling, poetry, group talk). Experiments demonstrate that a gratitude practice increases positive affect, mood and well-being (Watkins et al., 2003), improves quality of sleep (Emmons, McCullough, & Diener, 2003), decreases depressive symptoms (Krause, 2009), and enhances pro-social behaviour (Bartlett & Desteno, 2006).
- Provide facilities to develop spiritual knowledge and understanding. For instance, a community spiritual center that provides spiritual talks, seminars, discussions, yoga, spiritual therapy and spiritual-based music, sports, games, meditation and a community library with spiritual literature.
- Provide facilities to use the spiritual knowledge and understanding to overcome inner separateness. For instance, organizing spiritual-based service activities (e.g., helping others without expecting anything in return). Taking part in such activities reduces self-centeredness, which eventually overcomes inner separateness. The human brain is soft wired (in a self-centred way) to make others expect benefits to the self. Helping others without expecting any self-benefit will re-wire our brain to reduce our self-centeredness. Then we begin to enjoy the happiness of giving more than the happiness of receiving and accumulating.

To overcome outer separatedness:

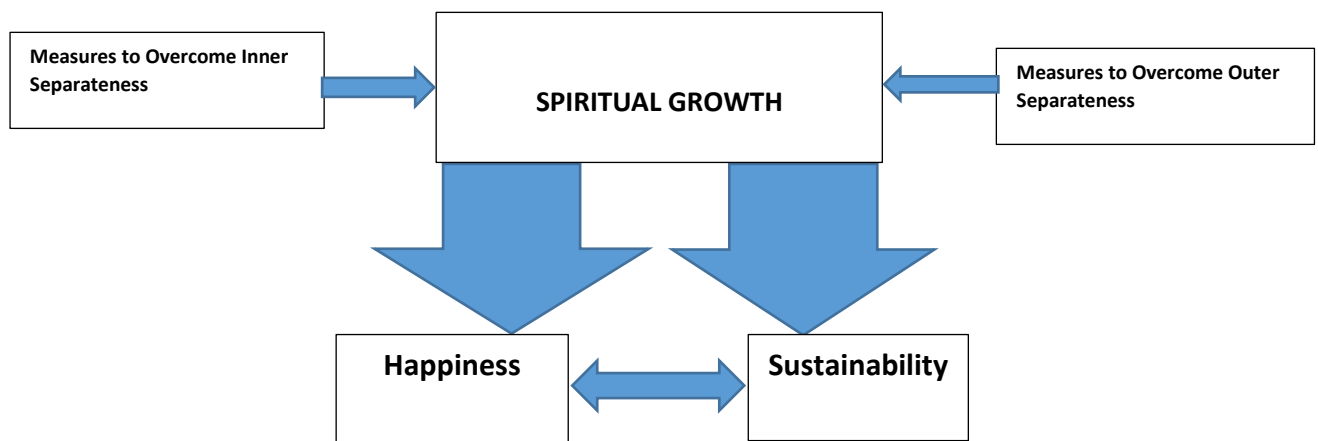
- Form community/neighbourhood organizations.
- Hold dialogs/discussions in organizations to identify the root cause of unhappiness and unsustainability as the separateness, and measures to overcome the separateness.
- Provide more opportunities for individuals to meet and interact with each other, and to enhance the level of happiness and sustainability of the neighbourhood. In identifying measures/projects, the goal should aim at overcoming separateness rather than enhancing happiness and sustainability. The reason for this is that some individuals may come up with measures and/or projects which enhance happiness and/or sustainability but further

strengthen separateness. Some sample measures/projects for overcoming outer separateness (from others and from nature) while promoting happiness and sustainability are: improving walkability, encouraging cycling and the use of public transport, establishing public parks and open spaces, providing more public recreation facilities and amenities, organizing community festivals and activities such as sports, music, dancing, etc.

- Provide more opportunities to connect and interact with nature. This can be done by incorporating natural processes in the community and making them more visible, such as restoring urban streams, developing urban gardens and CSA's, and incorporating composting programs.
- Identify income-generating opportunities which promote/do not conflict with outer and inner connectedness

As the activities help to overcome both inner and outer separateness, people grow spiritually and eventually become happier and behave in sustainable ways. While the inner connectedness contributes to the outer connectedness, the outer connectedness contributes to the inner connectedness. Inner and outer measures should take place simultaneously for more effective and lasting change in the community. The graph below indicates how the process of holistic development emerges:

Outline of the Framework for Holistic Development



The measures adopted to overcome inner and outer connectedness have the potential to create lasting results in a community when applied simultaneously. Spiritual growth takes place when there is a process for both inner and outer connectedness. As the individual grows spiritually, they become more mindful toward their actions as well as more reflective on how their thoughts, behaviors, and actions have an effect on the wider ecosystem. With more mindfulness in our actions, there is an intrinsic desire to behave sustainably, and by behaving in such a way, we feel genuine happiness because we feel connected at a deeper level with existence and our actions speak love.

Therefore, holistic development considers spirituality as its core. The model provides a guide for community members, grassroots organizations, policy makers, and planners to set goals and to identify projects and strategies for holistic development. The model suggests two sets of projects:

- (1) projects which provide physical infrastructural facilities, institutional strategies and technologies that are necessary for individuals to overcome their existing separateness from others and from natural environment.
- (2) projects which provide facilities for individuals to gain spiritual understanding.

The model emphasizes the significance of having projects and activities aimed at all three goals: growing spiritually, enhancing happiness, and working toward sustainability. It also emphasizes the significance of ensuring the harmony among the activities performed. For instance, the activities undertaken for enhancing happiness should not conflict with those undertaken for achieving sustainability and promoting spiritual growth. Likewise, the activities undertaken for spiritual growth should not conflict with happiness and sustainability.

Conclusion

The present chapter explored the missing link between happiness and sustainability. Through an extensive evaluation of the connection between happiness and sustainability and the causes of unhappiness and unsustainability, we suggest that the missing link is spirituality. We presented spirituality in rational and scientific terms and defined it as the experience to belonging to the larger living and non-living ecosystem. The process of spiritual growth allows individuals to become mindful of their thoughts, actions, and behaviour, leading to happier and more sustainable communities. Gutenschwager (2013) points out that the development of altruistic societies starts at the local level, creating a rippling effect to the larger scale. It is through the process of spiritual emergence that we become more altruistic and consider the well-being of everyone in the temporal and spacial scales.

We have provided a framework for individuals and neighbourhoods to achieve lasting happiness and sustainability by mindfully working on the following processes:

1. Inner connectedness: Engage in spiritual practices to reconnect within and facilitate this process to other individuals.
2. Outer connectedness: Incorporate educational, infrastructural, institutional, and technological measures at the community level to reconnect as a community and as part of the ecosystem.

Using this framework, we suggest that while the inner connectedness contributes to the outer connectedness, the outer connectedness contributes to inner connectedness.

The measures adopted for outer connectedness can generate a superficial connectedness with others and with nature, but there is no intrinsic inner connectedness (e.g., selfless relationships, connection with the spirit within others and within nature). The outer connectedness is self-centred. Such a superficial connectedness can overcome the pain/suffering caused by existing disconnectedness/loneliness and make people feel pleasure (or hedonic happiness). But without the inner connectedness with the spirit within others and within nature which generates happiness, people cannot experience true happiness. Most community-based projects aimed at happiness and sustainability (without spirituality) fail to deliver “true” happiness and achieve “true” sustainability. In such projects, only those who are in the process of spiritual growth would experience “true” happiness and effortlessly behave in sustainable ways (voluntarily embrace sustainable practices).

However, such an outer connectedness facilitates inner connectedness. Positive interactions with others and with nature re-wires our brains and prepares us for inner connectedness. Those who interact negatively will not experience this. Most people find it hard to achieve spiritual growth first.

Hence, it is wise to adopt measures necessary for the second endeavour. Community development programmes can create an environment conducive to outer connectedness which will eventually help people achieve inner connectedness. The resulting inner and outer connectedness will lead to a lasting experience of happiness and sustainability.

References

- Alexander, E. (2012). *Proof of Heaven: A Neurosurgeon's Journey into the Afterlife*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Alexander, E. and Newell, K. (2017). *Living in a mindful universe: a neurosurgeon's journey into the heart of consciousness* [Kindle Version]. Retrieved from amazon.com.
- Bartlett, M. and Desteno, D. (2006). Gratitude and Prosocial Behavior: Helping When It Costs You. *Psychological Science*, 17(4), 319-325.
- Berry, B. and Okulicz-Kozaryn, A. (2011). An Urban-Rural Happiness Gradient. *Urban Geography*, 32(6), 871-883.
- Block - Lerner, J., Adair, C., Plumb, J., Rhatigan, D., and Orsillo, S. (2007). The case for mindfulness - based approaches in the cultivation of empathy: Does nonjudgmental, present - moment awareness increase capacity for perspective - taking and empathic concern? *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 33(4), 501-516.
- Braden, G. (2017). *Awakening the Heart-Brain Union*. In *Missing Links*. Gaia TV.
- Brown, K., and Kasser, T. (2005). Are psychological and ecological wellbeing compatible? The role of values, mindfulness and lifestyle. *Social Indicators Research*, 74, 349–368.
- Brundtland, G., Khalid, M., Agnelli, S., Al-Athel, S., Chidzero, B., Fadika, L., ... and Singh, M. (1987). Our common future ('brundtland report').
- Buck, R. (1980). *Left and Right Hemisphere Brain Functions and Symbolic vs. Spontaneous Communication Processes*. S.I.]: Distributed by ERIC Clearinghouse.
- Cacioppo, S., Bianchi-Demicheli, F., Hatfield, E., and Rapson, R. L. (2012). Social neuroscience of love. *Clinical Neuropsychiatry*, 9(1).
- Capra, F. (2010). *The Tao of physics: An exploration of the parallels between modern physics and eastern mysticism*. Shambhala Publications.
- Chen, Y. H. (2006). Coping with suffering: The Buddhist perspective. In P. T. P. Wong & L. C. J. Wong (Eds.), *Handbook of multicultural perspectives on stress and coping* (pp. 73–89). Dallas, TX: Spring Publications.
- Cloutier, Jambeck, and Scott. (2014). The Sustainable Neighborhoods for Happiness Index (SNHI): A metric for assessing a community's sustainability and potential influence on happiness. *Ecological Indicators*, 40(C), 147-152.
- Cloutier, S., Larson, L., and Jambeck, J. (2014). Are sustainable cities “happy” cities? Associations between sustainable development and human well-being in urban areas of the United States. *Environment, development and sustainability*, 16(3), 633-647.
- Cloutier, S. and Pfeiffer, D. (2015). Sustainability Through Happiness: A Framework for Sustainable Development. *Sustainable Development*, 23(5), 317-327.
- Conn, S. (1998). Living in the earth: Ecopsychology, health and psychotherapy. *The Humanistic Psychologist*, 26, 179–198.
- Cozolino, L. (2014). *The neuroscience of human relationships: Attachment and the developing social brain*. WW Norton & Company.

- Dalai Lama XIV. (2014). Happiness from a Buddhist perspective. *The Journal of Law and Religion*, 29(1), 5-13.
- Daubenmier, J., Sze, J., Kerr, C., Kemeny, M., and Mehling, W. (2013). Follow your breath: Respiratory interoceptive accuracy in experienced meditators. *Psychophysiology*, 50(8), 777-789.
- Davis, N. (2017). *The selfish gene*. Macat Library.
- Diener, E., Emmons, R., Larsen, R., and Griffin, S. (1985). The Satisfaction with Life Scale. *Journal of Personality Assessment*, 49(1), 71-75.
- Diener, E., Oishi, S., and Lucas, R. (2003). Personality, Culture, and Subjective Well-Being: Emotional and Cognitive Evaluations of Life. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 54(1), 403-425.
- Emmons, R., McCullough, M., and Diener, Ed. (2003). Counting Blessings Versus Burdens: An Experimental Investigation of Gratitude and Subjective Well-Being in Daily Life. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 84(2), 377-389.
- Ford, B. and Mauss, I. (2014). The Paradoxical Effects of Pursuing Positive Emotion: When and Why Wanting to Feel Happy Backfires. In *Positive Emotion* (p. Positive Emotion, Chapter 20). Oxford University Press.
- Fredrickson, B. (2013). *Love 2.0*. New York; New York: Penguin Group.
- Frewen, P. A. and Lanius, R. A. (2006). Neurobiology of dissociation: Unity and disunity in mind–body–brain. *Psychiatric Clinics*, 29(1), 113-128.
- Gutenschwager, G. (2013). From Epicurus to Maslow: Happiness Then and Now and the Place of the Human Being in Social Theory. *Cadmus*, 1(6), 66-90.
- Helliwell, J., Layard, R., and Sachs, J.D. (2018). *World Happiness Report*.
- Horlings, L. (2015). The inner dimension of sustainability: Personal and cultural values. *Current Opinion in Environmental Sustainability*, 14, 163-169.
- Huta, V. and Waterman, A. (2014). Eudaimonia and Its Distinction from Hedonia: Developing a Classification and Terminology for Understanding Conceptual and Operational Definitions. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 15(6), 1425-1456.
- Johnston, B., Colson, E., Falk, D., St John, G., Bodley, J., McCay, B., . . . Slyomovics, S. (2012). On Happiness. *American Anthropologist*, 114(1), 6-18.
- Joshanloo, M. (2014). Eastern conceptualizations of happiness: Fundamental differences with western views. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 15(2), 475-493.
- Kasser, T. and Sheldon, K. (2002). What makes for a merry Christmas? *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 313–329.
- Keith. (2005). Pursuing Happiness: The Architecture of Sustainable Change. *Review of General Psychology*, 9(2), 111-131.
- Kellert, S. R. and Wilson, E. O. (Eds.). (1993). *The biophilia hypothesis*. Washington, DC: Island Press.

- Kiefer, A., Cloutier, S., and Prosser. (2017). *Community and Composting in Victory Acres*. Arizona State University.
- Kjell, O. and Candland, Douglas K. (2011). Sustainable Well-Being: A Potential Synergy Between Sustainability and Well-Being Research. *Review of General Psychology*, 15(3), 255-266.
- Knight and Gunatilaka. (2010). Great Expectations? The Subjective Well-being of Rural–Urban Migrants in China. *World Development*, 38(1), 113-124.
- Kováč, L. (2012). The biology of happiness. *EMBO Reports*, 13(4), 297-302.
- Krause, N. (2009). Religious Involvement, Gratitude, and Change in Depressive Symptoms Over Time. *International Journal for the Psychology of Religion*, 19(3), 155-172.
- Krempl, S. (2014). Is spirituality the essence of sustainability?. In *The truth is out there* (pp. 169-181). Black Swan Press.
- Larson, Keith, Fernandez, Hallo, Shafer, and Jennings. (2016). Ecosystem services and urban greenways: What's the public's perspective? *Ecosystem Services*, 22, 111-116.
- Lyubomirsky, S. and Lepper, H. S. (1999). A measure of subjective happiness: Preliminary reliability and construct validation. *Social Indicators Research*, 46, 137-155.
- Lyubomirsky, S., Sheldon, K., Schkade, D., Candland, Douglas K., Baumeister, Roy F., and Simonton, Dean
- Mathur, Harada, Lipke, and Chiao. (2010). Neural basis of extraordinary empathy and altruistic motivation. *NeuroImage*, 51(4), 1468-1475.
- McCraty, R. (2015). *Heart-Brain Neurodynamics: The Making of Emotions*. HeartMath Institute. Retrieved from: <https://www.heartmath.org/assets/uploads/2015/03/heart-brain-neurodynamics.pdf>
- McCraty, R., Atkinson, M., Tomasino, D., and Bradley, R. T. (2009). The Coherent Heart Heart-Brain Interactions, Psychophysiological Coherence, and the Emergence of System-Wide Order. *Integral Review: A Transdisciplinary & Transcultural Journal for New Thought, Research, & Praxis*, 5(2).
- Moody, R. (1987). *Life after life: The investigation of a phenomenon, survival of bodily death* (1st large print ed.). New York, NY: Phoenix Press.
- Nesse, R. M. (2004). Natural selection and the elusiveness of happiness. *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London. Series B: Biological Sciences*, 359(1449), 1333-1347. doi: 10.1098/rstb.2004.1511
- Nidich, S., Rainforth, M., Haaga, D., Hagelin, J., Salerno, J., Travis, F., . . . Schneider, R. (2009). A Randomized Controlled Trial on Effects of the Transcendental Meditation Program on Blood Pressure, Psychological Distress, and Coping in Young Adults. *American Journal of Hypertension*, 22(12), 1326-1331.

- Nisbet, E., Zelenski, J., and Murphy, S. (2011). Happiness is in our nature: Exploring nature relatedness as a contributor to subjective well-being. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 12, 303–322.
- O'Brien, C. (2010). Sustainability, happiness and education. *Journal of Sustainability Education*, 1. Retrieved from www.jsedimensions.org/wordpress/content/2010/04/
- O'Brien, C. (2001). Ontario walkability study, trip to school: Children's experiences and aspirations. York University, Canada, York Centre for Applied Sustainability. Retrieved June 28, 2018, from http://ontarioactiveschooltravel.ca/?p__relatedresearch
- O'Brien, C. (2012). Sustainable happiness and well-being: Future directions for positive psychology. *Psychology*, 3(12), 1196.
- O'Brien, C. (2013). Happiness and Sustainability Together at Last! Sustainable Happiness. *Canadian Journal of Education*, 36(4), 228-256.
- Pfaff, D. (2007). *The neuroscience of fair play: Why we (usually) follow the Golden rule*. New York: Dana Press.
- Pfeiffer, D. and Cloutier, S. (2016). Planning for Happy Neighbourhoods. *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 82(3), 267-279.
- Richins, M. and Dawson, S. (1992). A consumer values orientation for materialism and its measurement: Scale development and validation. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 19, 303–316.
- Salzberg, S. (2010). *Real happiness: The power of meditation: A 28-day program*. Workman Publishing.
- Saunders, P., Tractenberg, R., Chaterji, R., Amri, H., Harazduk, N., Gordon, J., . . . Haramati, A. (2007). Promoting self-awareness and reflection through an experiential Mind-Body Skills course for first year medical students. *Medical Teacher*, 2007, Vol.29(8), P.778-784, 29(8), 778-784.
- Taylor, J.B. (2006). *My stroke of insight: a brain scientist's personal journey*. New York: Plume.
- Tonkiss, F. (2005). *Space, the city and social theory: Social relations and urban forms*. Polity.
- Ulluwishewa R. (2016) Spirituality, Sustainability and Happiness: A Quantum-Neuroscientific Perspective. In: Dhiman S., Marques J. (eds) *Spirituality and Sustainability*. Springer, Cham. doi: 10.1007/978-3-319-34235-1_10
- Ulluwishewa, R. (2018). Spirituality, Universal Love and Sustainable Behaviour. *Annals of Behavioral Neuroscience*, 1(1), 66-76. ISSN: 2638-9231.
- Wallace, B. A. and Shapiro, S. L. (2006). Mental balance and well-being: Building bridges between buddhism and western psychology. *American Psychologist*, 61(7), 690-701. doi:10.1037/0003-066X.61.7.690
- Wamsler, C., Brossmann, J., Hendersson, H., Kristjansdottir, R., Mcdonald, C., and Scarampi, P. (2018). Mindfulness in sustainability science, practice, and teaching. *Sustainability Science*, 13(1), 143.
- Watkins, P., Woodward, K., Stone, T., and Kolts, R. (2003). Gratitude and happiness: Development of a measure of gratitude, and relationships with subjective well-being. *Social Behavior and Personality*, 31(5), 431-451.

- World Health Organization (WHO). (2015). Urban population growth. Retrieved on October 18, 2018, from http://www.who.int/gho/urban_health/situation_trends/urban_population_growth/en/index1.html
- Young, C., Diep, M., and Drabble, S. (2006). Living with Difference? The 'Cosmopolitan City' and Urban Reimaging in Manchester, UK. *Urban Studies*, 43(10), 1687-1714.
- Zhang, Yang, Berg, van den, A. E., Van Dijk, Theodorus, Weitkamp, Gerd, Towards Well-being, Innovation Spatial Transformation, and Urban Regional Studies Institute. (2017). Quality over Quantity: Contribution of Urban Green Space to Neighborhood Satisfaction. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 14(5), 1661-7827.
- Zeidan, J., Diamond, D., and Goolkasian. (2010). Mindfulness meditation improves cognition: Evidence of brief mental training. *Consciousness and Cognition*, 19(2), 597-605.
- Zohar, D., Marshall, I., and Marshall, I. N. (2000). *SQ: Connecting with our spiritual intelligence*. Bloomsbury Publishing USA.
- Zidanšek, A. (2007). Sustainable development and happiness in nations. *Energy*, 32(6), 891-897.
- Zylstra, M. J., Knight, A. T., Esler, K. J., and Le Grange, L. L. (2014). Connectedness as a core conservation concern: An interdisciplinary review of theory and a call for practice. *Springer Science Reviews*, 2(1-2), 119-143. doi: 10.1007/s40362-014-0021-3