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**Good living as a model of wellbeing in ecovillages.
The case of the ecovillage of El Calabacino
(Alájar, Huelva, Spain)**

Antonio Luis Hidalgo-Capitán

Facultad de Ciencias Empresariales y Turismo. Universidad de Huelva

alhc@uhu.es

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9935-1529>

Ana Patricia Cubillo-Guevara

Grados de Relaciones Internacionales y Trabajo Social. Univ. Internacional de Valencia

anapatricia.cubillo@campusviu.es

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5505-3685>

María Jara Rodríguez-Fariñas

Grado de Trabajo Social. Univ. Internacional de Valencia

mariajara.rodriguez@campusviu.es

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9412-1406>



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ARTICLE SECTION

Good living as a model of wellbeing in ecovillages. The case of the ecovillage of El Calabacino (Alájar, Huelva, Spain)

Abstract: Ecovillages do not follow the welfare model of the rest of western societies but have developed an alternative welfare model. Therefore, to verify that good living is the alternative model of welfare for ecovillages, following the case study method, we carried out a qualitative study of the way of life of El Calabacino ecovillage, under the hypothesis of that in its life develops trying to achieve harmony with nature, the community and oneself. From this study it is obtained that this way of life generates high levels of ecological sustainability, social equity and life satisfaction, and that good living is its model of welfare. And after an analytical generalization, we conclude that good living is the welfare model of ecovillages.

Key words: harmony; ecological sustainability; social equity; life satisfaction.

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IDEAS CLAVE / HIGHLIGHTS / IDEES CLAU

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|---|---|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. El Calabacino es una ecoaldea típica, representativa de la Red Global de Ecoaldeas (GEN).2. Las praxis sociales de l@s calabaciner@s favorecen la sostenibilidad ecológica glocal.3. Las praxis sociales de l@s calabaciner@s favorecen la equidad social comunitaria.4. Las praxis sociales de l@s calabaciner@s favorecen la satisfacción vital personal.5. El buen vivir es el modelo de bienestar de la ecoaldea de El Calabacino y, por generalización analítica, de las ecoaldeas de la GEN. | <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. El Calabacino is a typical ecovillage, representative of the Global Ecovillage Network (GEN).2. The social praxis of the calabacinans favour glocal ecological sustainability.3. The social praxis of the calabacinians favour communitarian social equity.4. The social praxis of the calabacinians favour personal life satisfaction.5. Good living is the welfare model of El Calabacino ecovillage, and the ecovillages of GEN by analytic generalization. | <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. El Calabacino és una ecoaldea típica, representativa de la Xarxa Global de Ecoaldeas (GEN).2. Les praxis socials de l@s calabaciner@s afavoreixen la sostenibilitat ecològica glocal.3. Les praxis socials de l@s calabaciner@s afavoreixen l'equitat social comunitària.4. Les praxis socials de l@s calabaciner@s afavoreixen la satisfacció vital personal.5. El bon viure és el model de benestar de la ecoaldea del Calabacino i, per generalització analítica, de les ecoaldeas de la GEN. |
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT¹

1. Introduction and justification

The societies of the 21st century are experiencing a global socio-ecological crisis which makes more and more people question development as a model of welfare in these societies. Faced with this situation, some social groups try to find glocal welfare alternatives to this model. And one of those alternatives would be living in ecovillages. An ecovillage is an integral human settlement, conceived on a human scale, which takes the form of an intentional, traditional or urban community, consciously designed through local participatory processes in the four dimensions of sustainability (ecological, social, economic, and cultural) to regenerate their social and natural environments.

Despite the more than 10,000 ecovillages that exist in the world, their 25-year history, and their character of glocal social innovation in the face of the global socio-ecological crisis, there is not much research on the social praxis of ecovillages and their welfare model. For this reason, we ask ourselves, as a research question, what is the welfare model implemented in ecovillages? And we propose, as a general hypothesis of the research, that good living is the welfare model implemented in ecovillages; being good living, is the model of welfare that pursues the praxis of ways of life in harmony with all beings of nature (ecological sustainability), with all human beings (social equity) and with oneself (life satisfaction).

2. Objectives, methodology and sources, areas of study

This research aims to determine the welfare model implemented in ecovillages through a case study applied to local communities, with a qualitative approach of collaborative ethnography, which assumes that the self-definition of ecovillages implies the adoption of a common welfare model and that each ecovillage is a specific ethnic group.

For this, we have selected the ecovillage of El Calabacino (Alájar, Huelva, Spain) as a typical case study, assuming that it has a series of characteristics (community; intentionality; participation; sustainability; and regeneration) that it shares with other ecovillages, so we can subsequently perform an analytical generalization of their results.

The question that guides this case study is how life develops in the ecovillage of El Calabacino? And we propose, as a specific hypothesis of it, that life in this ecovillage is developed trying to achieve harmony with nature (glocal ecological sustainability), with the community (community social equity), and with oneself (personal life satisfaction); that is, trying to achieve good living. Therefore, the specific objective of the case study is to describe the way of life in the ecovillage of El Calabacino.

3. Results

The results obtained from the case study, referring to the social praxis of calabacinians can be grouped into the three dimensions of good living, depending on whether they contribute to living in harmony with nature, with the community, or with oneself.

Thus, in the ecovillage of El Calabacino, numerous social practices achieve high levels of glocal ecological sustainability. For example the implementation of ecological

¹ Traducción exclusiva de los autores / Authors' exclusive translation.

agriculture, livestock, and forestry; the management of the natural environment to preserve the genetic biodiversity of wild species and the rural ecosystem of the modified landscape of the El Calabacino valley; the majority use of renewable energies; the priority realization of sustainable mobilities; the practice of reconstruction and bioconstruction; the application of the circular economy; and the search for balance between population and resources.

Numerous social practices seek to achieve high levels of community social equity. For example the practice of family and community self-consumption; the use of the market with a complementary character; the realization of abundant non-profit exchanges; the predominance of reproductive work over productive work; and the (re)construction and management of commons.

And there is also numerous social praxis that seeks to achieve high levels of personal life satisfaction. Example: the use of sociocracy as a form of social organization; participation in numerous own and external social initiatives as a form of social activism; the practice of voluntary simplicity; the development of a New Age spirituality; the formation of free unions as a basis for families; and the implementation of the slow culture.

4. Discussion

Some results indicate that in the ecovillage of El Calabacino there are high levels of glocal ecological sustainability in the logic of biocentrism; that is to say, that it contributes to stopping the loss of endemic genetic biodiversity, the biodiversity of native wild species, and the balance of the ecosystem of the El Calabacino valley while accommodating its ecological footprint (based on energy, transport, water, and waste) to the biocapacity of this ecosystem.

Other results indicate that high levels of community social equity in the logic of post-capitalism and coherence with the construction of an alternative, local, social and solidary economy exist in this ecovillage; that is to say, that it contributes to reducing the levels of inequality of capacities and opportunities of calabacinians and to reducing the levels of inequality of social welfare achieved by them.

While the other results indicate that in this ecovillage there are high levels of personal life satisfaction in the logic of decoloniality/depatriarchalization/deheteronormativization of power, knowledge, and being and in coherence with the construction of an alternative culture; that is to say, that it contributes to increasing the levels of satisfaction of calabacinians with their own lives (happiness) and to reduce the distance between the levels of satisfaction of the most and least satisfied people.

And given that in the ecovillage of El Calabacino high levels of glocal ecological sustainability, community social equity, and personal life satisfaction are simultaneously achieved, we can say then that life in it is developed trying to achieve good living, as a variant more of transmodern transdevelopment.

5. Conclusions

Confirmed that life in the ecovillage of El Calabacino was developed trying to achieve glocal ecological sustainability, community social equity, and personal life satisfaction, or what is the same, trying to achieve good living, and given that El Calabacino is a typical ecovillage, we can make an analytical generalization about the set of ecovillages.

Thus, we can confirm our general hypothesis that living well is the welfare model that is implemented in ecovillages; or what is the same, that the different ways of life in ecovillages would be characterized by trying to reach high levels of glocal ecological sustainability, community social equity, and personal life satisfaction.

However, in other ecovillages there are ways of seeking harmony with nature, with the community, and with oneself that differ from the calabacinian praxis; that is, there are different paths (the different social praxis) to reach the same destinations (glocal ecological sustainability, community social equity, and personal life satisfaction), which determine the idiosyncrasy of each experience (each ecovillage), but not impede their common horizon of existence (good living).

6. Next steps

This research opens the possibility of carrying out, in the future, a comparative analysis of the welfare model in different ecovillages, which allows us to identify whether the heterogeneity of experiences (ecovillages) and the homogeneity of the horizon of existence (good living) there are some clusters of families (common strategies for seeking harmony) that allow us to make a typology of ecovillages.

Likewise, it would be interesting to explore how ecovillages contribute to avoiding rural depopulation by attracting new settlers and how they favor good rural living. A study of the case of the ecovillage of El Calabacino concerning emptied Spain could be useful in this regard.