

Consumption | Individual communication

IC - (21149) - LIFE IN COMMUNITY: THE SENSE OF COMMUNITY'S ROLE IN THE HOUSEHOLDS' CARBON FOOTPRINT.

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Background and objectives

Current consumption patterns and habits begin to have a great impact on the planet's environmental degradation. Material possessions have always played an important role in satisfying the psychological needs of individuals. However, with the decline of cohesive communities and the rise of individualism, many people have found a substitute of social participation in material things. Therefore, as some authors affirm, the solution to the environmental problem may be more related to recovering cohesive communities than to appealing to individual conscience or technological improvement. In this sense, the present study focuses on investigating, through the analysis of intentional communities (cohousing and ecovillages), whether a high sense of community can produce consumption patterns that are less harmful to the environment.

Process and methods (for empirical research)

To do this, the consumption of households in intentional communities (cohousing and ecovillages) has been analyzed and compared with that of households that a priori have the same values, attitudes and similar socioeconomic statuses, but live in a traditional dwelling. A survey has been designed and applied collecting both the level of household consumption and their sense of community.

Main results (or main arguments in the case of critical reviews)

The results show an inverse correlation ($R^2 = 0.54$) between the sense of community (measured through "Brief Sense of Community Scale" -BSCS by Peterson et al., 2008) and the level of consumption (measured through carbon footprint). That is, the greater sense of community the surveyed individuals had, the lower their consumption.

Implications for research and practice/policy | Importance and originality of the contribution

This study shows the advantages of promoting, from public administrations, intentional communities to face the problem of high resource consumption and its impact on the planet, while addressing the housing problem in large cities, and depopulation in rural areas.

Palavras-chave : sense of community, carbon footprint, intentional communities, cohousing, ecovillage