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Melania Calestani

An Anthropological Journey into Well-Being Insights from Bolivia



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An Anthropological Journey into Well-Being

Insights from Bolivia

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Preface

This book explores a new perspective in the study of well-being, which tries to overcome the quantification bias by creating an account of ‘the good life’ in a specific place. Rather than numbers, this research focuses on local narratives, emphasising the urgent need to include a wider range of methodological approaches when engaging with well-being. Although development economists such as Sen (1999) have also emphasised a need to incorporate a larger set of qualities into their recommendations, still today this has not become one of the priorities in well-being studies. Quantitative research still has a bigger impact and influence in comparison to qualitative findings.

The book focuses on the above argument and demonstrates through the Bolivian case study the value of qualitative research for well-being studies. It aspires to show the potential to integrate predominant quantitative data with qualitative outcomes, such as those emerging through ethnography. It is aimed at academic and non-academic (non-profit, governmental and policy sectors) audiences, as well as experts, researchers and students in well-being/quality of life studies.

An anthropological approach to well-being seems a relevant project at this historical moment when globalisation, migration and displacement are changing our comprehension and representation of the world. Notions of ‘the good life’ affect each one of us, in a constant re-elaboration of what it means to be a person, or a group and how we engage in relations with the state, the natural environment and other nations. As an anthropologist, I explore the relationships between different aspirations, orientations and models among urban migrants of the city of El Alto.

This book focuses on individual and collective definitions of ‘the good life’ in the Bolivian plateau and explores potential contradictions between different orientations and models of well-being. The increasing interest amongst Aymara intellectuals and the Bolivian government in an indigenous perspective on this topic provides the point of departure for an exploration of the complexity of ideas relating to this issue and an account of different definitions of ‘the good life’ among

Aymara people. The book makes a contribution to debates regarding poverty and well-being and the problems attached to universal definitions, which tend to be based on simplified and economic criteria.

Reference

Sen, A. (1999). *Development as Freedom*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

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