

Management and Ecological Well-being: Energy, Food Systems, and Health

CHAPTER 4

Contrasting approaches to ecological well-being:

FBL: unawareness, obstruction, legal conformity

TBL: customer demand, efficiency, stricter legislation

SET: proaction, stakeholder-centrism, placed-based organizing

SET Management and energy

[Compared to FBL and TBL approaches] SET managers take a more radical approach to ecological well-being. First, SET management promotes a proactive change, illustrated by the provision of bike lanes and car-sharing services in cities like Copenhagen, Denmark, where 56% of population commutes to their work or place of study by bike, and young adults exert peer pressure on others to not purchase a car. In contrast, consider the fact that about half of all Americans live within 8 kilometers of their work, yet only 10% walk or use a bike or public transit (versus 50% in Europe).

Second, SET managers listen to and empower a wider variety of stakeholders, in some cases ensuring that the natural environment itself is given a symbolic seat at the decision-making table. The merits of this approach may be more observable in organizations that operate in countries like Norway, where environmental rights are entrenched in its constitution. For example, Norway has reduced its air pollution ten times more quickly than countries like Canada.

Finally, SET management promotes a more place-based and less consumeristic lifestyle. Instead of assuming that more stuff is better, a SET approach assumes that having enough stuff is better, and it promotes businesses and industries aligned with a simpler lifestyle. For example, consider the emerging Slow Fashion movement. Recall that Americans purchase nearly 20 billion garments each year (about 68 garments and 7 pairs of shoes per person), of which 98% are imported (vs. 50% in 1990). What if Americans purchased only 7 billion garments per year, with each costing three times as much, but 98% were locally-made? Think of the reductions in negative externalities associated with

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Key SET approaches to ecological well-being

Proaction. A proactive approach is evident when, without being prompted by a stakeholder or a business case to do so, managers take the initiative to seek opportunities to enhance the natural environment.

Stakeholder-centrism. A stakeholder-centric approach takes into account customer demand, but in addition also listens to other stakeholders, such as neighbors, business partners, and special interest groups, even if doing so does not maximize the organization's financial well-being.

Place-based organizing. SET management promotes place-based organizing (PBO) which is evident when an organization's ownership, productive activities, and resources are located in a specific geographic location. PBO also has locally-beneficial social and economic outcomes.

transportation and poor overseas working conditions, and think of the benefits to the local economy via the local multiplier effect. (But also think of the jobs that overseas workers would lose, and the reduced choice of products that would face domestic consumers.)

SET management and food systems

SET management encourages the proactive adoption of practices that enhance ecological well-being because this is the right thing to do, even if there is not yet a demand for it. A SET approach is evident in the fast-growing Slow Food movement that presents a clear alternative to conventional FBL and TBL industrial agriculture approaches to processed and fast food. Slow Food supports local organically grown food where producers earn a fair price for the fruits of their labor. Again, food is more than merely a commodity; its production and consumption are intrinsically related to ecological and social well-being. Slow Food promotes food that is grown using ecologically-sound agronomic practices that promote biodiversity and is consumed in healthier (less processed) forms in fellowship with others.

A vegan diet could reduce agriculture-based GHG emissions by 50%, and land use by 45%.

SET management and physical health

A SET approach supports three key ways of improving physical health while simultaneously enhancing ecological well-being. First, our physical well-being can be improved by becoming more active and, in particular, by using our own energy instead of carbon-based fuels to get around. This means walking or cycling to places where we might normally drive, which would reduce GHG emissions and air pollution. SET organizations facilitate active lifestyles by installing places for employees to park their bikes and take a shower, by developing and promoting products that encourage physical activity (e.g., pedal-powered velomobiles and local courier services that use bikes), and by redesigning neighborhoods and cities to include local grocery stores and trails that promote walking and cycling.

Second, our physical well-being can be improved by improving our diet. This is consistent with the Slow Food movement and includes eating less processed food (especially refined sugars and fats), eating more fruits and vegetables, and eating organically-grown food in order to reduce our intake of chemicals like chlorpyrifos.

Third, people can improve their health by avoiding illness-causing activities and stimuli. In this regard SET management promotes the **precautionary principle** *that states that before anyone undertakes on action that has a reasonable risk of harming others or the environment, that person must demonstrate that the action is not harmful.* It is insufficient to engage in potentially harmful actions on the basis that there is no evidence that proves them to be harmful. While adoption of the precautionary principle may slow the pace of some innovation, it may also encourage people to become more innovative with proven technologies.