

Invited Speaker Abstract

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Title of Presentation

Towards a salutogenic approach to enabling healthful and sustainable eating

1. Abstract

The creation of an enabling environment, allowing for healthful eating as the preferred and easiest choice is a priority in research, practice and policy. Yet, do we actually know how healthful eating is learned and perpetuated in everyday life? In the words of Aaron Antonovsky, founder of the Salutogenic Model of Health (SMH), "We know all about what deteriorates health. Yet so little about what creates health."

The SMH complements the pathogenic, risk-oriented paradigm by examining psychosocial and contextual factors that support health and wellbeing. Research questions concern not why people choose unhealthy foods, but how people deal with challenges towards eating in a healthful manner.

Two projects outline how the SMH is applied. The first project, a PhD study, concluded that healthful eating results from three composite factors: balance and stability, sense of agency, and sensitivity to the dynamics of everyday life. These insights bring forth building blocks for salutogenesis-oriented nutrition promotion such as socially-embedded learning experiences and encouraging positive parent-child interactions at the dinner table.

The second project is the SU-EATABLE LIFE project, which aims to reduce the environmental impact (CO₂ equivalent emissions and water consumption) related to the food choices of EU citizens. A series of engagement activities at university and company canteens located in Italy and UK form a core part of the project. SU-EATABLE LIFE seeks to show that it is possible to engage EU citizens to adopt a sustainable and healthy diet, with benefits for their personal health and for the environment as well, leading to a saving of about 5,300 tons of CO₂ eq. and about 2 million cubic meters of water within the three years of the project.

2. key references

Swan, E. C. (2016). *Understanding healthful eating from a salutogenic perspective*. Wageningen: Wageningen University.

van Woerkum, C., & Bouwman, L. (2014). 'Getting things done': an everyday-life perspective towards bridging the gap between intentions and practices in health-related behavior. *Health Promotion International*, 29(2), 278-286. doi: 10.1093/heapro/das059

<https://www.sueatablelife.eu/en/>

3. key messages

- We know so much about what deteriorates health and so little about what creates health.
- The set of risk factors for unhealthful eating differs from the set of factors supporting healthful eating.
- First studies show that balance and stability, sense of agency and sensitivity to the dynamics of everyday life are crucial to develop healthful eating patterns.

