

Risk society, sustainable development and religion

The Risk Society thesis warns us not only about the rise and change of type of risks that the whole world is facing, but also about everyday life people's knowledge of it and its consequent rise in anxiety. Looking at the arguments about sustainable development and change within the field of religion, in the light of this Risk Society thesis, this paper argues that sustainable development must take into account the warnings from this thesis and that development, when creating 'goods' (e.g. wealth), must avoid the emergence of 'bads' (e.g. risks); that is development must move towards a 'reflexive developmental' approach. Contrary to the mainstream opinion that religions are not involved in this kind of dialogue, this paper underlines the fact that there are religious groups who are active in sustainable and reflexive development (e.g. Ecotheology and neo-pagan groups), and some (e.g. fundamentalist groups) offer some island of security to people's rise of anxiety. This paper then raises the assumption that if, among other factors, sustainable and reflexive development fail to stop the rise of risks and of people's anxiety about them, religious fundamentalist groups might grow.

Adam Possamai
Email: A.Possamai@uws.edu.au

Alphia Possamai-Inesedy
Alphia.Possamai@uws.edu.au
University of Western Sydney, Australia