

## HUMAN RIGHTS

### The Right To Happiness Of Citizens And The Improvement Of The Quality Of Urban Life

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#### Abstract

*In recent years, we have seen a growing interest in the happiness and well-being of people from international organizations (especially the United Nations, which this year celebrates its 75th anniversary), regional organizations, but also each individual state, starting from the premise of creating a new right, the right to happiness of people and, implicitly, of citizens, although we are aware that happiness does not have the same content everywhere and that its perception depends on many objective and subjective factors. In this article we have tried to identify a series of measures and projects adopted to ensure and respect the right to happiness, in order to improve the standard of living in cities, standard of living that directly influences the happiness of citizens, following the emergence and evolution of the concept of smart cities. These projects help to shape public policies that must promote the well-being of citizens, their happiness, greater transparency in the provision of people services and, last but not least, adequate security. The conclusions drawn at the end of this article show that the relationship between smart cities and happy cities, although a directly proportional relationship that provides concrete evidence of citizens 'happiness and a more sustainable and, why not more humane, future does not permanently result in citizens' happiness.*

**Keywords:** *International Law, human rights, happy cities, well-being, good governance.*

#### 1. Introduction

We live in a world dominated by the phenomenon of globalization, by the hegemony of human rights, by permanent relation to human dignity, which is why the increased interest given to the happiness and well-being of citizens, by creating a right to happiness, occupies the attention of those interested in the

study of human rights, but also of those concerned with the study of sustainable development, environmental protection, smart cities and beyond.

Thomas Jefferson, one of the authors of the United States Declaration of Independence ratified on July the 4<sup>th</sup>, 1776, has taken into account the human right to seek happiness and stated that: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. That to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed. That whenever any form of government becomes destructive to these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness".

At present, there is a manifest policy of global happiness, which we believe draws its origins from human rights, from human morality, which entails, from a sociological point of view and not only, an analysis of happiness in relation to its opposite - unhappiness. Unhappiness is due to one's own perceptions, perceptions caused by moral shortcomings, selfishness, but also by the materialism of the individual. At the same time, when we think of happiness, we correlate this state with health, financial comfort, the existence of a family, realizing that this content can change from day to day, sometimes even faster, depending on the context, context that can be shaped by different causes/situations, starting from the most insignificant to confidence in the government, state authorities etc.

Eric Weiner in the paper entitled "*The Geography of Happiness - In Search of the Happiest Places in the World*", considers that although this subject has been the topic of antiquity (Aristotle, Platon, Epicurus) and modern philosophy (Kant, Schopenhauer, Mill, Nietzsche), as long as there is no scientific backup this new approach cannot be taken seriously. Thus, various approaches have emerged that endeavour to identify a way of evaluating happiness, whether it can be measured or not, the most used method is asking the same question as before, "How happy would you say you are right now?" The fact that the definition given to happiness is expressed diversely and that there is a desire to demonstrate the existence of happiness emphasizes that all cultures value happiness, but not to the same extent.

## 2. The Global Happiness Policy Report

Starting from the initiative of the Bhutanese State, which promulgated in its Constitution since 2008, an index for the measurement of happiness, continuing with UN Resolution 65/309/2011, which is the basis for the legalization of the right to happiness, as one of the human rights and, at the same time, the efforts of other international organizations [1] to measure the well-being of citizens, studies

have been conducted on the politics of happiness worldwide. In recent years, the UN started carrying out such studies and reports which are trying to demonstrate that a "more inclusive, fair and balanced approach to economic growth is needed, promoting sustainable development, eradication of poverty, happiness and the well-being of all people." [2]

In 2018, it was released for the first time the Global Happiness Policy Report [3], which attempts to identify the best practices at national and local level concerning the search and achievement of happiness and well-being. It contains the first attempts on the subject of happiness of the Global Council in order to evaluate the ranking and quality of evidence regarding possible best practices for the policy of happiness, as well as how happiness data is collected and used in politics.

The report contains several chapters, and we plan to concentrate on those dedicated to good governance, the policy of global happiness in 2018, welfare and, last but not least, the chapter entitled "Happy cities in a smart world ". (The structure of the report is as follows:

1. Good Governance in the 21st Century by Jeffrey Sachs;
2. Global Happiness Policy Synthesis 2018 of John Helliwell;
3. Mental Illness Destroys Happiness And Is Costless to Treat by Richard Layard;
4. Positive Education by Martin Seligman and Alejandro Alder;
5. Work and well-being: a Global perspective by Jan-Emmanuel De Neve;
6. Social Well-being: Research and policies recommendation by Ed Diener and Robert Biswas-Diener;
7. Happy cities in a Smart World by Aisha Bin Bishr;
8. Country's experiences with well-being and Happiness Metrics by Martine Durand)

It is considered that this initiative to promote a dialogue between governments in order to explore and share best practices for happiness is worthy of universal applause, as global dialogue and happiness beyond the provisions of the UN Charter and the Declaration of Universal human rights will also play an important role in fulfilling the 2030 Agenda and the goals of the Paris Climate Agreement.

In chapter I, entitled Good Governance in the 21st Century by Jeffrey Sachs, it is mentioned that "the global movement to put happiness at the center of governance reflects a mixture of idealism and realism. The skeptics of the happiness movement believe that power, not happiness, is (inevitably) the government's business. However, the pursuit of happiness is not only idealistic; it is perhaps the best and only hope of averting a global catastrophe." [4]

Therefore, good governance represents neither more nor less than political leaders acting for the common good of the citizen. As the 21st century is the century of good administration, good governance, these concepts acquire

multidimensional values, with wide applicability and represent a step forward in recognizing the need for good administration activities, respecting the rights of citizens. The contribution of the UN to enriching the concept of good governance, started as early as the 1990s, should be appreciated, although it may be argued that "the analysis of promoting good governance and providing global public goods (peace and security) necessarily leads to questions about how the UN can promote democratic governance." [5] Therefore "the notion of good governance has been developed so as to reflect the manner in which power is exercised, as well as its external limits" and the perspective offered later by another Secretary General: "Good governance is/means ensuring respect for human rights and the rule of law" shows that, with regard to the work carried out at UN level, regarding this matter, although "the UN was not the initiator of the term good governance", "this organisation introduced it, gradually developed it, gave it content that was constantly enriched and made it accepted as an official notion by more and more states." [6] At the same time, sustainable development is considered essential and necessary for global well-being (e.g. the adoption of the 2030 Agenda and of the 17 sustainable development goals - a framework that was agreed upon for development in the long term: 2016-2030; The Paris Climate Agreement - a framework guide for solving emergency situations regarding global warming etc).

Regarding global happiness, it is mentioned that "The Global Happiness Policy Report 2018 marks a new stage in the reorientation of the goals and content of government policies with the explicit aim of increasing human well-being in a fair and sustainable way.[...] Life assessments have been given a central role in World Happiness Reports". Thus, it starts from the subjective well-being - in particular, but not exclusively, evaluated by the way people assess the quality of their own life and society as a whole, being a useful point of interest for public policies, considered to be most effective for enabling a better life. It is obvious that public policies have made progress over the past few years, and happiness as the primary purpose of these policies, is beginning to gain ground and allow people a happier life, and well-being "is combined with increasing political interest at all levels of government. to give people the opportunity to live happier lives" [7].

*Social welfare* is approached starting from the premise that "all happiness is personal happiness. Individuals and families are affected by happiness policies as they themselves are actors in creating happiness in their communities." Connectivity and trust creates happier communities, without isolation and loneliness. The chapter explores best practices on efficient combinations of economy, mobility, environment and social connections to understand happiness in cities and urban environments. Emphasis is placed on social welfare, the importance of good social relations as a support for happiness and the creation and promotion of policies for positive social growth in neighborhoods and cities,

ways to build personal trust in people and in public institutions and strategies for improving the quality of family relationships. The chapter recommends a variety of local activities in communities and schools (equivalent to positive education interventions) that come to demonstrate the power and value of social norms and show how they can be strengthened. At the same time, in the final part, the need for public policies for the well-being and happiness of families is promoted, by instituting the concept of more flexible leave, for the idea of family leave/vacation, as well as measures aimed at reducing domestic violence.

In the seventh chapter, *Happy Cities in a Smart World* by Aisha Bin Bishr, the aim is to advise local governments that are working to increase the levels of happiness and well-being of their citizens. The chapter discusses several case studies around the world, which are intended to reflect one or more aspects of good practice (e.g. Smart Dubai strategy, Boston CityScore) in areas such as: economy (new uses of technology in Dubai and the US Local Initiative Support Plan), people and society, government (online links to the Dubai government, Mi Ciudad platform in Quito, Ecuador), mobility (demand management in Arlington, Virginia and autonomous transport service in Civaux, France), environment (water quality in Slovenia and waste sorting and reduction in Seoul, Korea).

Also, complementing this report, we find that there are largely the same indicators that measure happiness and characterize a city as intelligent, such as income, life expectancy, clean environment, mobility, infrastructure, environmental transparency and governance.

Following this, in 2019, the next edition of *The Global Happiness Policy Report* worldwide was published, which broadly respects the same structure as the previous one concerning "happy cities" (chapter 7) in which "city managers should focus on getting people together, and catalysing their interaction", on promoting "the smart social city", "using data and innovative methods to attend to the social needs of the city, and ultimately people's happiness".

All of the above represent the identification of the premises for this article and we want to make a correlation between these ideas and the perspective of developing the idea of "smart cities" with "happy cities", also to enumerate projects that, once implemented, can ensure the happiness of citizens and the protection of their fundamental rights, while also promoting transparency, security and well-being of citizens.

### **3. Citizen's Happiness and the improvement of the quality of urban life**

Improving the governance and quality of life of cities is one of the priorities of the 21st century, taking into account that according to the statistics of the UN, about 68% of the world's population will live in urban areas by 2050. When it comes to ensuring the well-being and quality of life, it has been proved that information and communication technology plays an important role, greatly

improving some indicators regarding quality of life and leading to a more organized and efficient city.

A good example to emphasize the happiness of citizens living in a smart city is that of the United Arab Emirates, which declares that the happiness of its citizens is the end goal of its efforts. We remind the initiative of the UAE government that seeks to reduce bureaucracy, by integrating emerging technologies, offering services 24 hours/7 days/365 days, on devices and platforms suitable for its citizens; thus, "in the smart cities that have achieved true intelligent governance, the frustrations and time wasted by bureaucracy will become a thing of the past. Through a combination of emerging technologies, including automation, artificial intelligence, blockchain and biometrics, it will soon be possible to envisage a system in which every interaction of a citizen with his government is as smooth, seamless and satisfying as possible"[9].

Also, at the heart of the Smart Dubai initiative, started in 2014, which aims to become the happiest city in the world, information and communication technology ensures the use and provision of public services through intelligent systems: perfect connectivity (e.g. creating 5.000 hotspots to offer free wi-fi in 100 locations in Dubai and Abu Dhabi, free and unlimited access, quick access to government applications, etc.), efficient transport networks (e.g. the transition of transport services to smart applications, offering citizens and tourists services accessible via mobile phone, such as: smart drive, smart parking, smart taxi, public transport, corporate services, etc.), the provision, effectiveness and efficiency of healthcare services in cities (launching a smart healthcare project with three main initiatives - smart applications, smart surgeries and smart hospitals, implementation of electronic medical records and a hospital information system, exploring the possibilities of implementing telemedicine initiatives, etc.), education, tourism, through the joint effort of the public and private sectors, so that, later, to pursue the final goal, happiness.

We support the train of thought maintaining that by smart city we must understand not only sensors, gadgets, software, several routers and technological equipment, but on the contrary, building a smart city must entail the construction of a happy city. A happy city is built by using technology to create an environment where people are better at handling pollution, traffic, education, health, jobs, living conditions and cultural spaces. The idea is to build better communities[10]. The happy city involves a smart city that develops better communities, emotionally linked, with a state of well-being that is generalized and becomes a permanent characteristic of its citizens.

As mentioned above, emerging technologies, such as smart information systems (AI and Big Data), have the potential to create more sustainable cities, but AI has "the potential to help human beings maximize their time, freedom and happiness. At the same time, it can lead us to a dystopian society. Finding the right balance between technological development and human rights

protection is therefore an urgent matter - one on which the future of the society we want to live in depends. To get it right, we need stronger cooperation between state actors - governments, parliaments, the judiciary, law enforcement agencies - private companies, academia, NGOs, international organizations and also the public at large. The task is daunting, but not impossible" [11].

In this context, the implementation of artificial intelligence to monitor the happiness of citizens must be very carefully considered, and the objective of this analysis should be beneficial to the citizens, with a minimization of the negative effects regarding the collection and use of AI data.

For the purposes mentioned above, within the Smart Dubai initiative, which seeks to use technology to maximize human benefits and happiness, organizations providing Artificial Intelligence (AI) services are encouraged to prioritize fairness, transparency and accountability, as all of these will serve to increase the city's position as a thought leader in the adoption of AI in government services and beyond [12]. When asked whether artificial intelligence can give happiness to citizens and tourists, Dubai meets all the premises to answer positively, its goal being to make people happy, which means more than being satisfied. As this objective, by using AI, involves the collection of data from citizens, the difficult task of maintaining a balance between government and citizens is left to the local authorities. It remains to be seen whether by implementing all of its policies, by creating and applying a tool called the happiness meter to citizens and tourists, by 2021, Dubai will become the happiest city on Earth.

#### 4. Conclusions

Although information and communication technology is the specific part of the permanent smart city that is at the center of our attention, we believe that the human being and also a citizen, as an individual, in all its complexity, must be the core of the smart city. Technology can play a role in making cities more liveable, but it is a means to that end, not an end in itself" [13].

However, we ask ourselves whether improving the quality of life of citizens by developing smart cities really determines happy cities and the happiness of citizens. We consider that happiness, the right to happiness, the right to seek happiness, all these concepts, are unique to each individual, they stem from the perception that each of us has on this state of things. Indeed, it is possible to identify a link between smart cities and happy cities and, at the same time, one can assume that this connection is based on the citizens' right to happiness, but also on the achievement of a future that is more sustainable, efficient, inclusive, and last but not least, more human. Future projects of smart cities and the results of their implementation will demonstrate in the years to come how interconnected is the happiness of citizens with the concept of smart city and that of happy city.

We would like to advance the idea that smart cities could become, gradually, happy cities, and could represent in the not too distant future bona fide "human rights cities". To talk about smart cities, happy cities, happiness of citizens is undoubtedly a closely associated topic to the protection and promotion of human rights, but also to the permanent development of administration, governance, welfare, standard of living, economic growth, etc.

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