

Presentation
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Happiness

Possibilities and Pitfalls

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TWO PROPOSITIONS

I

National Income

➔ **Happiness (Life Satisfaction)**

Human Development Index

II

**Government Policy :
(including EU)**

Enable people to reach happiness

- **education**
- **political participation rights**

(NOT: government / EU seeking to maximize happiness)

Proposition I

Move to Happiness Indicators (Life Satisfaction)

A. Most people in most countries are happy

not: misery
illness
pathology

Proposition I

Move to Happiness Indicators (continued)

B. Happiness/Life Satisfaction Indicators are a good proxy for individual welfare

1. High validity

- smiling frequency (and genuine smile with eyes)
- friends' ratings of one's happiness
- sociability
- sleep quality
- self-reported health

Proposition I

Move to Happiness Indicators (continued)

B. ...are a good proxy for individual welfare

2. Happiness can be measured

- surveys

World Value Survey

Eurobarometer

- experience sampling

- day reconstruction method

- brain scanning

Proposition I

Move to Happiness Indicators (continued)

C. "Objective" Measures are of doubtful quality

- National Income

GNP, BIP

- no welfare indicator

- Human Development Index (and other Social Indicators)

- income per head

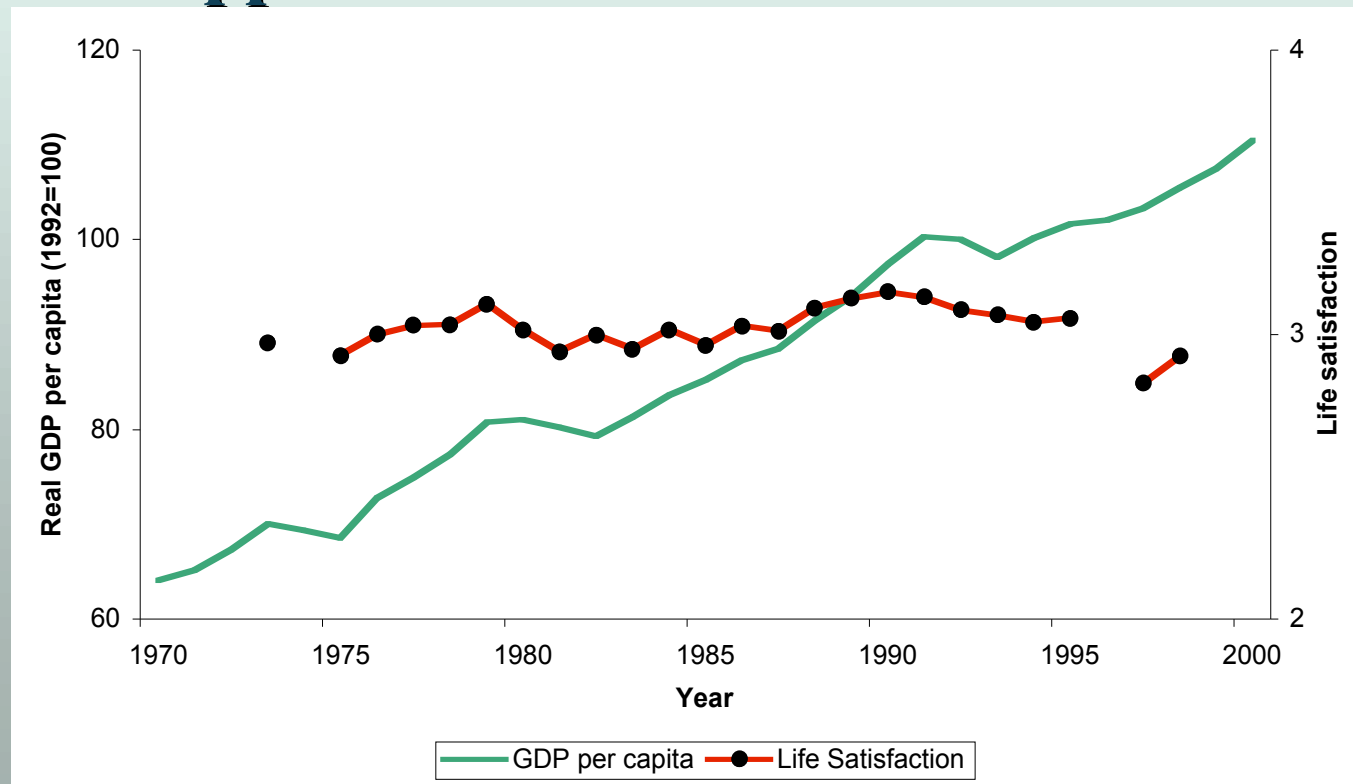
- life expectancy

- school enrolment

Proposition I

Move to Happiness Indicators (continued)

D. Happiness differs from income



Income and Life Satisfaction in Germany, 1973 - 1999

Source: Stutzer and Frey (2004) based on a survey of Eurobarometer.

Proposition II

Government / EU policy
Enable people to reach happiness
(do not seek to maximize happiness)

A. Governments / EU should **NOT** maximize happiness

- **Induces manipulation by**
 - individual respondents
 - governments
- **Possible other human goals**
 - justice
 - responsibility
 - solidarity

Proposition II

Government / EU policy
Enable people to reach happiness

B. Governments / EU should **ENABLE people to reach the happiness desired**

- **education**
- **general economic conditions**
 - income
 - employment
 - price stability
- **political conditions**
 - citizens' participation rights
 - decentralization

CONCLUSION

- 1. Give much weight to happiness indicators
(life satisfaction)**
- 2. Enable people to reach their desired happiness**