The “Happy Climate” Approach

Global concerns about …

Source: Pew Research Centre, Climate Change and Financial Instability Seen as Top Global Threats, June 24, 2013
So climate change enlightenment was fun while it lasted, as George Monbiot noted. But it is now limp and dead. So dead, in fact, that it is moving backward. Surprisingly, the level of concern among both laypeople and politicians has actually been decreasing—especially in many wealthy countries—over the last two decades. This is the opposite of what you'd expect from scientific reasoning. As figure 1.1 shows, in the United States concern about climate change has weakened overall since 1989, despite that the objective data have been strengthened with thousands of studies and reports. The same holds true for other rich nations. Norway, a rich oil country, shows an even stronger decline in concern (see figure 1.2). Some psychological studies even point to a strange relationship between global warming denial and speaking English in particular, since the United States, UK, and Australia are countries with waning levels of average public concern.
The Problem:

Climate gets too low political priority in western democracies and in capitalism
Per Espen Stoknes, BI

Background: the 20th Century Mindset

Economic Growth ≈ Happiness

Well-being ≈ Happiness

21st Century Politics & Mindset

Happiness
Economic Growth
Ecological footprint

Per Espen Stoknes, BI
A Solution:

Re-story and align climate with high-priority policy issues:
- human health,
- economy & jobs
- happiness

Psychology’s “Keynes”

Science Based
Subjective Well-being
Measurements

Daniel Kahneman
Example: Before and After Marriage

(by year of marriage $t = 0$)

Source: Clark, Diener, Georgellis and Lucas (2003), using data from the German Socioeconomic Panel.
Note: An asterisk indicates that life satisfaction is significantly different from the baseline level.

How to implement happiness politics?

- New purpose and metrics
- More vacation
- Happiness policies
- Investing in social & natural capitals
How?

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![Graph showing Happy Planet index](image)

Happy Planet index

- Continents:
  - Latin America
  - Western world
  - Middle East
  - Sub-Saharan Africa
  - South Asia
  - East Asia
  - Transition States

- Colour code:
  - Two components poor or "deep red" footprint
  - Any with one component poor
  - Two components middling
  - One component good, and two middling
  - Two components good, one middling

Source: Marks, 2012, New Economic Foundation
How?

- New purpose and metrics
- More vacation: reduce work-week
- Happiness policies
- Investing in social & natural capitals

Compulsory vacation: share jobs, more happiness, less consumption

How?

- New purpose and metrics
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Policies that encourage to:
1. Connect
2. Be Active
3. Take Notice
4. Keep Learning
5. Give
How?

• New purpose and metrics
• More vacation: reduce work-week
• Happiness policies
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21st Century:
An Era of Happiness Politics?

1. Can’t win public priority by appeals to “planet, climate”, etc
2. Lots of criticisms, but …
3. Human well-being and stable climate are two sides of same coin
4. It’s time to go for the vision: more happiness and benign climate!