

Sustainability Through Happiness: A Framework for Sustainable Development

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ABSTRACT

Happiness is commonly thought of as an individual characteristic for which each person is solely responsible. However, happiness is also a community characteristic influenced by factors external to the individual. This article offers an alternative sustainable community development framework that focuses on improved opportunities for happiness. Key components of the framework include happiness visioning, public participation, a happiness profit inventory, and systems planning and sustainability interventions. Lessons learned from applying this framework to a neighborhood in a fast-growing region in the southwestern United States are drawn. Ultimately, happiness offers a universal measure focused on the quality of human life and a community development framework that may translate to a sustainable future. Copyright © 2015 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd and ERP Environment

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Introduction

HAPPINESS, OR HOW POSITIVELY A PERSON FEELS ABOUT HIS OR HER LIFE, OFFERS A COMMON GROUND FOR PEOPLE OF diverse cultures, creeds, sexes and geographies. Happiness is not only an individual characteristic but also a community characteristic (Adams, 1992; Hagerty, 2000; Quercia *et al.*, 2012) highly dependent on social connections and cohesion and local amenities. There is growing awareness that social bonds may be shaped by characteristics of the built and social environment (Duany *et al.*, 2001; Putnam, 1995; Talen, 1999; Wilson, 2012). These social bonds, in turn, may help to overcome community threats that could diminish residents' happiness and weaken their social cohesion (Sampson *et al.*, 1997). More, community amenities and environmental conditions have been found to contribute to the domains of happiness of residents (Akers *et al.*, 2012; Brereton *et al.*, 2008; Campbell and Wiesen, 2011; Choi, 2013; Kaplan, 2001; Leyden *et al.*, 2011; Morris, 2011; Wells and Laquatra, 2009).

Even though awareness of the role that community social cohesion and amenities play in happiness is increasing, bolstering resident happiness is not currently a goal of mainstream sustainable community development frameworks. The purpose of this article is to articulate and test the performance of an alternative framework – the Sustainability Through Happiness Framework. This approach is centered on happiness visioning, public participation, a happiness profits inventory, and systems planning and sustainability interventions.

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The article proceeds as follows. First, we make the case for a happiness-centric approach to sustainable community development. Next, we detail the Sustainability Through Happiness Framework and apply this framework to a case study neighborhood in the southwestern United States. We conclude by reflecting on lessons learned from this process.

The Rationale for a Happiness-Centric Approach to Sustainable Community Development

Working toward happiness on the neighborhood level entails understanding the role of place in happiness. Our communities shape happiness in two key ways: (1) indirectly through their cultivation of social relationships and (2) directly through their inclusion of amenities that affect wellbeing. Both of these factors are affected by a community's urban form. Despite emerging knowledge of relationships between the planning and functioning of a community and happiness, mainstream sustainable community development frameworks neglect to make happiness a goal.

Social Connectedness and Happiness

There is growing awareness of the role that social relationships play in happiness (Diener and Seligman, 2002; Fowler and Christakis, 2008; Holder and Coleman, 2009; Layard and Layard, 2011; Leyden *et al.*, 2011; Lucas and Dyrenforth, 2006). Connecting with others prevents us from becoming isolated, which may be key to long-term wellbeing, including health (Hawton *et al.*, 2011). Social relationships may also lead to social capital, which is when we can rely on our relationships to obtain knowledge and resources and get things done (Coleman, 1988; De Souza Briggs, 1997; Putnam, 1995). Social capital accrues when we trust and reciprocate with one another and share information and common social norms (Coleman, 1988).

Social relationships and capital are shaped by community characteristics. These include conditions of the built environment, such as housing design and density, street connectivity, land use mix and the availability of public spaces. Emerging research has demonstrated relationships among urban form, density and social cohesion, but the direction of these relationships is debatable (Brueckner and Largey, 2008; Duany *et al.*, 2001; Freeman, 2001; Glaeser and Gottlieb, 2006; Leyden, 2003; Lund, 2003; Mason, 2010; Putnam, 1995; Talen, 1999; Williamson, 2002). Studies that address the role of urban form in fostering social relationships find on some level that a more compact and diverse neighborhood urban form may lead to more social connectedness (Leyden, 2003; Lund, 2003; Mason, 2010). Those that address the role of geographic location or density in fostering social relationships tend to find no, mixed or contradicting effects (Brueckner and Largey, 2008; Freeman, 2001; Glaeser and Gottlieb, 2006; Williamson, 2002).

Socioeconomic characteristics of a community also may influence social cohesion. Older, wealthier and more educated people tend to be more socially connected than younger, poorer and less educated people. In turn, less transient homeowners may be more socially connected than more transient renters (Putnam, 1995; Rohe and Lindblad, 2013). Communities of concentrated poverty or affluence may have less social cohesion than middle class or socioeconomically diverse communities (Oliver, 1999; Wilson, 2012). Social connectedness and capital among residents may enable places to combat threats such as crime and recover from disasters (Sampson *et al.*, 1997; Seidman, 2013). Overcoming threats and crises in turn may further strengthen residents' social ties and sense of agency and bolster their happiness.

Neighborhood Amenities and Happiness

Neighborhood amenities such as the availability of green space and access to transit and cultural resources may influence residents' subjective wellbeing directly. Emerging research suggests links between access to green and natural environments and wellbeing (Akers *et al.*, 2012; Brereton *et al.*, 2008; Campbell and Wiesen, 2011; Kaplan, 2001; Wells and Laquatra, 2009). Being able to view nature from a home window and living near green spaces that offer a chance to exercise or vast open spaces may bolster happiness (Akers *et al.*, 2012; Brereton *et al.*, 2008;

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Kaplan, 2001). Windows are 'micro-restorative', meaning they offer a brief respite from other activities with little effort (Kaplan, 2001). Campbell and Wiesen (2011) characterize open spaces that make people happier as the 'restorative commons'. These range from parks to community gardens to botanical gardens to building exteriors to rights of way. Access to these environments may be especially important to seniors' wellbeing (Wells and Laquatra, 2009).

Simply perceiving the color green may drive some of these effects. Seeing green makes people feel at peace (Akers *et al.*, 2012). Green environments also may indicate fertility and food availability, which may be deeply engrained in us to seek out for survival (Akers *et al.*, 2012). Finally, the complexity and malleability of these spaces may cultivate wonder and prompt exploration, which may bolster wellbeing (Campbell and Wiesen, 2011).

A neighborhood is not only a place but also a point of access to a broader city and region. The extent to which its transportation system enables its residents to access opportunities, services and amenities may shape residents' happiness (Choi, 2013; Leyden *et al.*, 2011; Morris, 2011). Studies find that living near rail (Morris, 2011) or transit (Leyden *et al.*, 2011) and in cities with greater walkability and bikeability (Choi, 2013) may bolster happiness. However, Brereton *et al.* (2008) found no relationship between living near a rail station and happiness, and a negative relationship between living near major roads and happiness. Higher transportation accessibility may entail proximity to noise and pollution, which may detract from happiness (Brereton *et al.*, 2008; Choi, 2013; Diener, 2000).

The Missing Link

Despite the potential link between community characteristics and happiness, happiness generally is not sought after as a goal in community development. Rather, achieving social justice and economic growth traditionally have been its key aims, especially for institutions such as community development corporations that take a leadership role in the process (Vidal, 1996). The sustainability sciences have infused new principles into the practice of community development. Most important have been the 'three pillars' of sustainability—environment, economy, and social equity. Community development practitioners now have a growing appreciation for how their pursuit of these goals entails negotiating among competing desires and outcomes (Campbell and Wiesen, 2011). They also are increasingly sensitive to the importance of being culturally competent and engaging residents in their practice (Sue, 2006). An alternative framework, however, is needed because we have not been moving toward sustainability quickly enough.

Happiness is an alternative objective for sustainable community development. The key contribution of a happiness-centric approach is that all of its components focus on moving toward a sustainable future while meeting one goal – improving community-level happiness. This goal may be easier to achieve than social equity, environmental protection, economic development or cultural competency, as it may be easier for a wider segment of the population to understand and engage with the goal. People commonly talk about their personal happiness and those of others. Working toward community happiness may mean that residents are able to more quickly become involved in sustainable community development projects, because they already understand the language and the outcome.

The Sustainability Through Happiness Framework

The Sustainability Through Happiness Framework (STHF) (Figure 1) provides an iterative approach to sustainable community development. The STHF includes happiness as a consideration to foster more sustainable development outcomes through five distinct stages (Table 1), as detailed next.

Happiness Visioning

Happiness visioning, or consideration of what a local happy future might look like, is the first stage of the STHF. Happiness visioning focuses on improving seven specific domains of happiness: family relationships, financial situation, work, community and friends, health, personal freedom and personal values (Layard and Layard, 2011). A visioning session is held with project partners, including project staff, local organizations and government officials, to identify potential sustainability solutions that might improve opportunities for happiness within a local



Figure 1. Sustainability through happiness framework

Framework stage	Description	Actors
Happiness visioning	Visioning a sustainable community focused on what happiness might look like (first step) within neighborhood subsystems and refining visions for happiness (on subsequent iterations).	project staff, city planners, local institutions (e.g. churches), community leaders
Participant engagement	Involving residents for feedback and input on targeted objectives from visioning stage.	residents, project staff, city planners, local institutions
Profit inventory	Assessing and collecting profits contributing to happiness visions for a project.	project staff, city planners, community leaders
Systems planning	Identifying subsystems within a sustainability project system and potential interventions contributing to happiness.	project staff, city planners, community leaders
Sustainability interventions	Sustainability actions with the intent of meeting happiness visions within the subsystems of interest.	residents, project staff, city planners, local institutions

Table 1. Sustainability through happiness framework stage description

Stage 1: Visioning on what a sustainable community focused on happiness might look like (first step) and refining visions (on subsequent iterations).

community. Project staff contribute prior experience and scholarly knowledge, while organizations and government officials contribute local knowledge on project feasibility and the likelihood of acceptance. Solutions are documented for review during and after the next stage of the STHF.

Participant Engagement

The second stage of the STHF engages locals in a sustainable development project. The process is not hierarchical; rather, residents are treated as part of the project team. Project partners hold at least one community meeting (most often several) to obtain local knowledge. Specifically, residents are asked to share perceptions of neighborhood strengths, issues and potential solutions relative to local quality of life. The objective is to ensure that sustainability

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solutions developed during the happiness visioning stage align well with local perceptions and priorities. Factors that lead to happiness can vary based on the unique mix of personalities within a community, which may be influenced by cultural context (Hofstede, 1984; Hofstede and McCrae, 2004; House *et al.*, 2002; Triandis, 2006). The information collected from the participant engagement stage is documented to inform the next stages.

Profit Inventory

Happiness profits are collected during stage three of the STHF. Profits are defined as any neighborhood characteristic that contributes to the happiness of residents, while also promoting a sustainable future. For example, vacant land provides opportunities for happiness if developed as a community garden or local park, while a bank of solar panels provides clean energy and shade from the sun. The effort results in a holistic assessment of all profits that contribute to sustainability so that a systematic plan may be developed in the fourth stage of the STHF.

Systems Planning

The systems planning stage considers which community subsystems will be the focus of solutions to meet resident desires and visions. For instance, a community development project might include waste, water, energy, transportation and economic development. The objective of this stage is to break the project into manageable subsystems. Once this is achieved, sustainability interventions can be planned in the fifth stage of the STHF.

Sustainability Interventions

The final stage of the STHF, sustainability interventions, plans for on-the-ground efforts to improve community happiness. The sustainability interventions stage is guided by happiness visioning, participant engagement and feedback, a happiness inventory and a systems planning framework. For example, in response to resident concern with littering and waste disposal costs, interventions might include neighborhood composting and a reuse center. The sustainability benefit is a reduced waste stream, while residents become happier through health benefits, cost savings and new social connections. Once interventions are complete, the STHF shifts back to happiness visioning to begin again. Project partners guide residents through several iterations, while training residents to take ownership of the process – eventually the STHF is community led.

The Valley: An Applied Case Study

We assessed the performance of the STHF by applying it to a neighborhood in a fast-growing region of the southwestern United States, henceforth called 'the Valley'. The Valley is a predominately Hispanic neighborhood known locally as a 'barrio'. The first people to call the Valley home were farm workers who were given the land in 1945. Originally a cow pasture, the land had no homes, streets or sewers; families lived in shacks and tents. The 1970s brought the first city investment in the neighborhood, providing residents with income to build new homes. Soon came streets, sewers and other city services. The Valley now consists of about 330 single-family detached households – nearly half of which live below the poverty line. The community is landlocked by a canal and three major roads.

The Study Approach

Three neighborhoods were proposed for the study, based on aspects of socioeconomic status. Community meetings were held within each proposed neighborhood to discuss the project and resident participation, coupled with sustainability challenges, led to the selection of the Valley neighborhood. The Valley is an ideal place to test the performance of the STHF, because of its historical context within the region. It is a community that has been isolated by current practices and construction of highways. More, the residents are an extremely proud people who are open

and receptive to community-based development. The Valley faces sustainability challenges that are unique to the southwestern United States and the local culture.

Project partners for the Valley project include a university (students, staff and faculty), city officials and staff, and two non-profit organizations. The project team was developed on a needs basis – organizations were targeted based on the skills they could bring to the project. City staff and officials, local planners and residents were recruited to generate community buy-in and to offer services, while non-profit organizations were asked to provide skills and trades. Studio classes offered technical services and community meetings, while planning masters students were recruited to conduct original research. Finally, university faculty and staff offered expertise and support in numerous areas.

The application of the STHF is currently in the first iteration of the sustainability interventions stage. In this section and the following, we detail how each step of the STHF was applied and draw lessons from this process.

Happiness Visioning

During the first stage of the STHF, project partners held meetings to establish potential interventions in several community development subsystems (Table 2) that may influence the happiness domains of Valley residents. For example, community gardens were discussed as a potential strategy to improve the neighborhood food subsystem. Gardens may enhance health through connections with nature and healthy food and build social cohesion by providing a community meeting and greeting spot (Litman, 1999). Transportation improvements were also discussed, including ways to reduce congestion and improve public transit. Less traffic through a neighborhood may increase walkability and health, while access to public transit may increase work opportunities and improve a household's financial situation (Litman, 2003). The use of art as a medium to improve neighborhood conditions was also a topic of discussion. Neighborhood art fosters revitalization by cultivating capacity and social interactions (Aquino *et al.*, 2012). The visioning stage continued like this until all subsystems and potential interventions within each had been discussed (Table 2). The process resulted in community led visions for sustainable development and improved quality of life. Unsurprisingly, project team perceptions of what might work best in the community were not what the residents found to be most important.

Participant Engagement

As part of the second stage of the STHF, the project team held several monthly meetings within the Valley. Residents were notified of the community meetings via mailed postcards and word of mouth. A typical meeting agenda included a project update and a period for resident feedback, questions and concerns. The first meeting opened with project leaders introducing themselves and sharing an interest in improving resident quality of life, as influenced by the neighborhood. Residents were then arranged into smaller groups with project leaders and asked to share their neighborhood's strengths, issues and potential solutions to these issues (Table 3). The Valley participants expressed

Subsystem	Potential happiness interventions
Water	efficiency; catchment; reuse (graywater); education
Waste	recycling; reuse center; community compost; education
Energy	renewable sources; local sources; off-peak programs; education
Buildings and infrastructure	refurbishing; new buildings; common structures; sidewalk/street improvement; education
Food	community gardens; neighborhood farmers' market; community supported agriculture (CSA); education
Transportation	traffic calming; improved walkability, accessibility, affordability; alternative modes; education
Business and economic development	bartering; local job creation; neighborhood business startups; education
Neighborhood design	beautification; gathering spaces; park improvement; art; education
Community governance	associations; neighborhood policies; city policies; education

Table 2. STHF community development subsystem interventions

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Strengths: pride of ownership (third generation); self-built; history; stability of homeowners; schools; parks; part of bigger city; local churches; local stores/restaurants; canal; community parties; proximity to public transit; irrigation; unique identity; grid-pattern; central location

Issues: safety; speeding; crime and theft; drugs; police lack follow-through; transitory neighbors and high turnover; trash; empty lots; street lights; overhead utilities; vacant bar; no park restrooms; lack of knowledge of city resources; ugly parts of neighborhood; homeless population nearby; confusion of neighborhood for another city; inconsistent code-enforcement and trash pickup

Solutions: porta-potties; education on city resources; homeless services and education; beautification; increased lighting; bulk trash can service and regular neighborhood cleanups; compost program; community garden; monthly community report/crime update; neighborhood association; connection with neighbors; speed humps

Table 3. Community meeting strengths, issues and solutions

great pride in their neighborhood and discussed several key issues. More, participants expressed concern and caution about the project outcomes, as trust in larger institutions had waned over the years. Subsequent meetings led to organization of the neighborhood into smaller affiliations of 20–25 houses. The hope is that, through the smaller affiliations, social connections can grow within the neighborhood and leaders can emerge within the residents. Project leaders also shared some of the potential interventions from the happiness visioning stage (Table 2) and received useful feedback. Of the many interventions discussed, Valley residents identified building connections with neighbors, traffic calming and gardening as priorities. More, residents expressed concern with homeless people sleeping on the neighborhood church porch. Strategies are currently underway to assist the homeless in a transition toward shelters, community programs and upward mobility. Plans also are being derived to build a wall/gate around the church that eliminates unwanted homeless traffic, maintains cultural identity, uses sustainable materials and serves as a source of pride for the local community.

A lesson learned through this process was to engage first with a neighborhood organization, such as a local church. Working with the church helped to establish trust and organization faster than engaging residents directly. Essentially, the team served as 'cultural brokers' between residents and the city. Through the participant engagement process, residents feel engaged and heard, while building trust in the project leaders. More, it helps project leaders to understand what problems are of greatest importance to residents. The strengths and issues discussed are seen as community-level drivers of happiness that can be shaped through strategic interventions across the neighborhood.

Profit Inventory

For the profit inventory stage, members of the studio class developed primary and secondary measures of happiness profits, as guided by prior research (Cloutier *et al.*, 2014) and project staff. Primary measures included neighborhood happiness and satisfaction coupled with demographic data, while secondary measures included performance variables within each subsystem (i.e. water and energy consumption per capita). Primary and secondary measures are currently being tracked in the Valley to determine the effects of the project, as well as the net gains in happiness after later stages. Primary data has been collected through a baseline survey of happiness. Specifically, residents were surveyed on current and long-term happiness, neighborhood satisfaction, life satisfaction and demographic data. Secondary data is currently being collected within the community development subsystems (Table 2). For example, data collected include average household energy and water use, accessibility to public transportation, walkability, and food and housing affordability. The process has refined data collection methods that can be applied to future neighborhoods.

Systems Planning

The systems planning phase of the STHF for the Valley is being accomplished through a service learning/studio course. The class is workshop based and includes students in several majors, including community development and tourism, urban planning, sustainability, engineering and communication. The course offers students an opportunity to solve real world problems, while simultaneously offering the Valley project experience in many fields. More, student involvement is resulting in an in-depth systems-based approach that a small project staff could not

provide in a similar time frame. Initially, project staff guided student teams in ten separate subsystems of community development: water, waste, energy, buildings and infrastructure, food, transportation, business and economic development, neighborhood design, community governance and communication. Additional subsystems might be included as the project draws on. Students were required to determine how their specific subsystem contributes to resident happiness levels and what sustainability interventions might result in increased happiness. The effort required a review of existing literature and interviews with project staff, community leaders, city planners, residents and local institutions. By engaging stakeholders in the project, the students ensured that public desires were heard and met. Appropriate interventions were (a) supported by literature, (b) cost effective and (c) capable of resulting in improved opportunities for community happiness and sustainability.

Student groups currently are recommending and applying interventions, and project staff, city planners and community leaders are determining their feasibility based on their budget, time required, resident preferences and impacts. For instance, the food group expected public support for a community garden. However, upon engaging stakeholders, they found that residents preferred small gardens at home to a large community garden. Sustainability and happiness tradeoffs between the health benefits of home gardens and the social networks created by community gardens are currently being discussed. Once interventions are deemed feasible, they will be applied within the Valley neighborhood in the sustainability interventions stage.

Sustainability Interventions

As part of the final stage of the STHF, sustainability interventions, project staff, students, residents, community leaders and institutions are working together to establish feasible interventions. To date, these include building energy assessments, installation of gardens and artwork, traffic calming measures, grading of a vacant lot used for community parking and a neighborhood cleanup (i.e. painting, waste removal, tree planting). In the near future, a non-profit will begin home revitalization projects. These projects will be implemented through a combination of volunteer labor, charitable donations and fundraising events. Happiness data is continuously being collected to gauge changes in neighborhood happiness and to inform the next iteration of the STHF.

Reflections on Applying the Sustainability Through Happiness Framework

This article makes the case for integrating happiness as a goal in sustainable community development and proposes the Sustainability Through Happiness Framework (STHF) as an approach. The STHF adopts key strengths of existing sustainable community development frameworks, including a commitment to participation and cultural sensitivity, use of service learning and studios, and adoption of a systems- and interventions-based approach (Altman, 1995; Arce, 2003; Ferguson and Dickens, 2011; Hjorth and Bagheri, 2006). Yet, applying the STHF to community planning efforts in one neighborhood in the Southwest reveals several ways in which it improves upon mainstream approaches.

First, happiness as a goal is widely understood and accepted, leading potentially to quicker community buy-in. Residents within the Valley have been receptive and open to aspects of improving their quality of life and happiness. Second, planning for happiness can be a more politically acceptable and accessible way of addressing deeply embedded social inequalities within a community. With respect to the Valley, there is a deep mistrust of outside organizations coming into the community, conducting research and leaving the community behind. Discussing quality of life and happiness has eased much of this tension and made it easier to work together. However, the STHF faces several key challenges, which warrant further understanding and resolution. Care needs to be taken to ensure that this process does not further social inequalities within a community, as interventions may differentially affect happiness. We address these issues in depth below.

Improvements

The happiness visioning stage provides a unique foundation for sustainable community development by setting the tone for the process and linking participants around happiness, a shared and easily comprehensible goal. Issues

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related to income and wealth, access to services and resources, social justice, culture and environmental protection are not ignored; rather, they are integrated into the process as strategies to improve resident happiness. The process is different from traditional sustainable community development projects, as it does not focus alone on superficial improvements but serves to eliminate embedded issues. For instance, the community garden currently under consideration in the Valley neighborhood would not only increase resident health through access to healthy foods but also result in improved environmental quality, opportunities for income (by selling product at farmers' markets) and increased social connections. More, through happiness visioning, the community garden is only part of a larger system focused on improving happiness. The happiness visioning stage results in an organized and systematic approach to improving happiness, and the STHF returns to this stage, informed by subsequent stages, and can be adjusted as needed.

The stages prior to the interventions stage also set the STHF process apart from mainstream sustainable community development approaches. The interventions are based not only on happiness and sustainability literatures but also on projects and resident desires that show clear connections with improved happiness. Although they often result in environmental, economic, cultural and social sustainability, they also address less obvious problems (i.e. trust, safety, social connections and capital, sense of purpose and place, educational aspects) that are not explicitly addressed by mainstream approaches and may affect wellbeing. A perfect example in the Valley was student desire to establish a community garden – a fairly mainstream sustainability approach. However, this was prior to engagement with residents and, surprisingly, there was little desire for community gardens. Conversely, residents wanted home gardens and have expressed satisfaction with assistance installing and operating them. The result offers greater opportunity for happiness (i.e. health, place based satisfaction), while also addressing sustainability issues (i.e. food deserts, local food).

Interventions derived from the STHF may more directly affect residents' lives and wellbeing, as opposed to those focused on more community-level socioeconomic goals, such as economic development or social justice. Individual-level indicators of happiness can be used to assess the influence of the interventions on a micro-scale, as done during the profits inventory stage. This may lead to greater social equity, if imbalances in happiness can be measured and dealt with. In turn, focusing on improving individual happiness may be a more achievable goal, in that it may not entail structural changes that require heavy financial outlays or powering brokering across diverse stakeholders. Finally, happiness is commonly viewed as a worthwhile goal to work toward across political, religious and other social divides. This may mean that happiness-focused initiatives have more social and political capital to draw on to meet their goals. The Valley is a good example, as residents have developed networks focused on improving community happiness and levels of governance (i.e., residents are discussing organized meetings, neighborhood policies).

Challenges

Practitioners applying the STHF may face several key challenges. First, conflicts may arise when working toward one person's happiness in a community may make another unhappy. For instance, a transient homeless population takes refuge in the Valley, leaving behind used hypodermic needles. Residents want the homeless removed from the community but the local park offers a safe place to sleep. These conflicts may be more prevalent in more culturally diverse communities, which may have greater divergence among residents' personalities and values (Hofstede, 1984; Hofstede and McCrae, 2004; House *et al.*, 2002; Triandis, 2006). Second, the STHF focuses on the current state and needs of existing residents at the expense of those of future residents. This orientation may lead to greater social equality within the community, but greater social inequality within a broader geography, such as the city or region. In turn, it could further intergenerational inequality, which would counteract a key tenet of sustainability (Brundtland, 1987). For instance, sustainability interventions in the Valley are being driven by current resident culture and perspective – the result may prevent other cultural perspectives from being welcomed in the community. Exploring if and how these conflicts emerge in applying the STHF and constructing procedures for dealing with them are important directions for further research. Ultimately, a sustainable community development project focused on improved opportunities for happiness has eased tension and allowed for creative resident feedback and visioning. As the process evolves from the Valley to other neighborhoods in the future, we may just find that a happy neighborhood is a sustainable neighborhood.

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