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# A THOUSAND WAYS TO UNDERSTAND HAPPINESS IN THE ECONOMY OF THE EUROPEAN UNION'S "NEXT GENERATION" FUNDS

A COMPREHENSIVE VISION  
UNDER THE LENS OF SOCIAL  
MARKETING, HISTORY AND  
HAPPINESS MANAGEMENT

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*(eds.)*

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## PREFACE

Now that we are beginning to leave the pandemic, or at least its most tragic consequences, behind us, this book seems to shed some light on the sad situation we have been living in since March 2020. It speaks of happiness in the economy and well-being. With the current situation (war in Ukraine, sky-high inflation, skyrocketing public debt, ...), it may seem naïve to speak in these terms, but perhaps it is not so naïve. Especially if we bear in mind that article 13 of the Cadiz Constitution of 1812 stated that “the object of the Government is the happiness of the Nation, since the end of all political society is none other than the welfare of the individuals who compose it”. It was not something new, since a few decades earlier, on 4 July 1776, in the United States Declaration of Independence, the postulates of liberty, property and security had been accompanied by the postulates of happiness. Thus, the American Constitution recognises the right to happiness. In this way, it linked to the ideology of the Enlightenment, which had insisted so much on progress, reason and the end of absolute power as something irrational. Since then, the conquest of happiness has always been more or less present, albeit with varying degrees of success. Some have spoken from individualistic approaches, and those who have done so from broader postulates, with equally differentiated efforts. It seems no coincidence, in any case, that the Economics of Happiness began to be formulated in the context of the crisis of the 1970s, the one that put a drastic end to the tremendous economic growth that had taken place in the 1950s and 1960s. Precisely when the Welfare State had already begun to question a model that was too expensive for the neoliberals, who were in favour of reducing public spending and leaving the provision of goods and services in the hands of the market its self-regulation.

Of course, the ways out of crises have differed according to the historical moment. If we look at the last few decades, we need only look at the policies that were imposed in the wake of the financial crisis of 2007-2008 and compare them with the measures that have been taken in the current crisis caused by the Covid-19 pandemic—nothing to see. The austerity measures imposed by Brussels at the time, due to the strong influence of Germany, brought several EU states and hundreds of thousands of people to the brink

of the abyss. By contrast, the current way out of the crisis is very different. The activation of the Next Generation Fund by the EU-27 makes it possible to approach the exit with new perspectives and more optimism. Thanks to this massive injection of capital, the recovery is expected to be less painful. However, there is still unexpected uncertainty about the consequences that the war in Ukraine is having and will have. Of course, it is still too early to know what definitive effects this unexpected event will have on the EU economy in particular and on the world economy in general, but it is sure to have them. In any case, the fact that solutions have been found that differ from those established in the previous crisis means that the different states are more optimistic about the recovery.

Moreover, this book is precisely about optimism, happiness and well-being. Moreover, unsurprisingly, it is also about people, citizens, and their needs for their integral development. By talking about broad, multifaceted concepts, more than twenty professors and researchers from various national and international universities in a variety of disciplines present us with a series of studies and reflections on the current pandemic situation, taking economic recovery as a guide while keeping in mind the historical and environmental perspectives, as well as the productive capacities of today's economy. Therefore, we are talking about a multidisciplinary approach or looking at a situation that is not new in history. However, it has had novel aspects, such as mass confinement. In this sense, the book proposes a dialogue between the present and the past and reflects on what should not have been done and where we should move forward in the future. Therefore, there is a vindication of the citizen as an individual who has the right to be happy and a call to political leaders to make this desire possible. Hence the demand for management models based on happiness management. The Next Generation funds would go in this direction. As discussed in the book, it is certainly not the first time that measures of this nature have been implemented to overcome the various crises. Therefore, the aim is to call for policies that have been successful in the past. It is why the book is full of hope. Perhaps we are not talking about re-founding or reinventing capitalism, as French President Nicolas Sarkozy claimed at the time, but rather about preventing the deterioration of our economies and societies. In the early stages of the pandemic, industrial relocation, for example, highlighted the weaknesses of many European economies, which had offshored a large part of their production in order to reduce costs. To correct this as far as possible and as a tool to overcome the crisis, the European Union has set up the Next Generation funds. In conclusion, this book is a plea in favour of the Economics of Happiness, which seeks to analyse those aspects that influence happiness in order to be able to act on them and, in this way, tackle poverty levels. It is a declaration of intent for our leaders to take note of.

Carlos Larrinaga  
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## INTRODUCTION

“People ask, frightened, anxious, what is to be done to avoid the prevailing epidemic [...] epidemic disease is due to the transmission of the microbial agent from one being to another. But this transmission does not necessarily imply disease, much less death...”

These reflections, which could well place in any of the many statements issued at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, were written just over a hundred years earlier. The famous psychiatrist and psychopedagogic hygienist, the Madrid-born César Juarros, in an opinion column in the newspaper *El Día* on 3 October 1918, held out an optimistic outlook when the “Spanish flu” had already wreaked significant havoc on the world’s population. This discourse, a mixture of pragmatism and health revisionism, was an attempt to shrug off the consequences of a crisis similar to those that had occurred during the Ancien Régime in pre-industrial Europe. Despite the millions of deaths that had already been caused, Juarros sought to send a constructive message in a world that was being torn apart in a terrible war that was about to end and whose after-effects - those of the conflagration and those of the pandemic - would last for decades to come. Despite the distances, this scenario had some similarities to the present day, in addition to the health situation, required - as is the case today - a readjustment of socio-economic, political and environmental structures.

Among the many fronts in this desire to overcome the post-Covid-19 era through mainstreaming, apart from the health achievements with the implementation of vaccines and the specific policies carried out by the various administrations in their countries, the economic instruments managed the European Union stand out with particular prominence. Like the New Deal (1933-1938), the funds *Next Generation* created to consolidate the Welfare State in the aforementioned spatial-temporal framework. However, as has always been the case throughout recent history, this economic programme premise becomes transversal when considering all the doors

and peripheries that open up around the dynamisation of public resources. We are dealing with this even more so when we consider the scope. We understand, then, a framework of comprehensive spending policies underpinned, it is to be imagined, by Keynes' anti-utilitarian ideals. It apriorism is rooted in Aristotle's idea of eudaemonic happiness, i.e., the collective welfare of citizens achieved through the formulation of active policies that promote the integral development of people through education, employment, culture, and innovation. It puts on the academic table that individuals' happiness or subjective well-being should be one of the main intangible drivers of prosperity, technological progress, intra-entrepreneurship and social development of the territories. It requires, among other things, proactive, dynamic, empathetic and professional behaviour from public administrations, NGOs and companies.

Under the title *A Thousand Ways to Understand happiness in the Economy of the European Union's "Next Generation" funds. A comprehensive vision under the lens of social marketing, history and happiness management*, more than twenty professors and researchers from more than ten national and international universities construct a multipolar and interpretative view of the epidemic situation, paying particular attention to the events surrounding socio-economic recovery, the historical and environmental perspective and the capacities that the production environment can play a leading role as an asset in the achievement of future bonanzas. Likewise, the management of happiness from the perspective of business economics, the comparison of historical periods, ecological perspectives, critical economic vision from the perspective of finance, entrepreneurship and marketing, communication and advertising, tourism, internationalisation and sustainable development, all become disciplines and research areas at the service of a common objective, which is none other than to unravel some of the unique keys to this critical but exciting present period.

This book aims to make readers aware of the following aspects. The first is to understand that there are thousands of theoretical and practical inputs to generate public policies that promote the holistic happiness of citizens. Second, politicians must ensure the collective well-being of people under the guiding principles of sustainability, respect for the environment, social cohesion and inclusive capitalism. Third, the *uberisation* of economies leads to a melting pot of *low-cost* societies that lower quality of life standards and job satisfaction; fourthly, the heads of organisations cannot wait any longer to undertake management models based on *happiness management*, where the happiness of their human capital is synonymous with corporate well-being, economic profitability, digital prosperity or productive efficiency. Moreover, last but not least, to empirically demonstrate that there is a historical and not twilight hope behind the Next Generation slogan to achieve significant advances in citizens' quality of life. It can achieve with solid investments



in digital technologies and green economy infrastructures and in devising attractive public policies that generate many more winners than losers.

The book begins with a study by Rafael Ravina, Esthela Galván and Araceli Galiano. They deal with the strategic management of business organisation and marketing in pursuit of optimal results based on the happiness of companies, both of the productive issuers and the consumers themselves. This issue has not been considered in past economic situations, which were perhaps more concerned with capitalist profits, thus causing job destruction and public unrest. From this perspective, the Next Generation funds present the challenge of structural regeneration and overcome the austerity policies implemented since the 2008 crisis. A second part is addressed by José Marchena, who offers a transversal view of the Covid-19 scenario, not only from a historical perspective, especially compared to the “Spanish flu” of 1918. Also, from this contrast, he arranges some aspects about the environmental replacement of a humanity that has largely forgotten the balance of nature and the attempt to put the social and human dimension in dialogue with the aftermath of the pandemic, in pursuit of healing positions in social thought and philosophy, education, the world of culture and its dissemination.

From an original national counterpoint between the Plan for Recovery, Transformation and Resilience of the Spanish government -October 2020-, and the so-called Expediente Sobre el Informe de la Ley Agraria de Jovellanos -1795-, José Antonio Negrín puts, from his chapter and in economic relation, two periods, distant in time, but with curious coincidences. In this way, both the eighteenth-century Enlightenment and the current Spanish government sought to modernise Spain and bring about a structural change that would advocate national progress. However, both initiatives encountered structural problems and the need to carry out changes, adjustments and reforms that did not have the necessary consensus of the sectors affected. Mario del Rosal also makes a comparative and figurative comparison with the post-war Marshall Plan in the United States. This fourth chapter takes a critical look at the Next Generation funds. The author expresses considerable reservations about their actual effectiveness. The author diagnoses problems and contradictions, such as the scant benefit to the working class and the greater risk of capital recovery for large companies. In his opinion, a measure will produce austerity with significant consequences, such as the return of these funds by EU countries and the consequent scrutiny of their policies. It also raises doubts about the clarity of its procedures, the participation of the citizenry, as well as its real support for the so-called “green and digital transition”.

The study by the Fernández Paradas brothers and Nuria Rodríguez frames us in a pioneering period, where energy sources were made available to the concept of comfort and welfare and, in a way, defined some of the main profiles of what would later become the Welfare State. However, it also deals with the business side, from

the two gas companies, with an indisputable leading role for the Pereire firm, one of the great capitalist clans that played a leading role in the economic and industrial modernisation of Europe, and which also played a leading role in the corresponding economic situations, including the depression of the 1920s.

However, the monograph has the capacity and space to investigate other perspectives without leaving happiness and the world of work, such as the generational coordinate. María José Foncubierta raises the indicator of the pandemic with the greater or lesser incidence of solidarity. It has declined in society in general, but not so much in the context of labour solidarity. In this way, the individual surpasses the collective in terms of values. She enunciates personal altruism in the face of a more egomaniacal society. The author paraphrases the statement of the funds and puts forward the hypothesis of a possible “new generation” of workers willing to help in an individual and direct way and, therefore, in pursuit of happiness in the world of work. In a more metaphysical dimension, Pedro Cuesta, Pablo Contreras and Pablo Gutiérrez approach us to the psychic aspects derived from the pandemic, emphasising those related to habits, behavioural alterations and the expectations of the next moment. Among their results, the three researchers have managed to identify and define up to four typological profiles directly related to the primary waves and stages of the evolution of Covid-19.

The last part of the monograph also deals with other aspects that close the circle around the multidisciplinary nature of studies. Gloria Jiménez, Rodrigo Elías and Nuria Sánchez-Gey introduce us to the constitutive bases of the education-media binomial, something which is palpably in the spotlight in the Covid-19 situation where economic devastation requires an effort to adapt the educational media. The importance of the three educational levels about the media poses social happiness in the knowledge society era. Estela Núñez, Azucena Penelas, José María López and Celia López construct a novel proposal, analysing the consumer’s vision in the scenario of pandemic confinement. In this scenario, the relationship between two variables, savings and confidence, fluctuates according to expectations of economic stability, negative news or the lengthening of the Covid-19 measures. They perceive that specific policies should implement to make citizens happy, along with savings and entrepreneurship. In the tenth chapter, Teresa Lafita, María Victoria Sanagustín and Eduardo Ahumada describe the importance of cultural tourism by promoting the film industry as a heritage and economic value of places. These industries identify as vital for the recovery of economic indicators and the happiness of the affected communities.

At the end of 1918, when the consequences of the “Spanish flu” were still fluctuating, and the first remedies were being applied, such as the intravenous injection of convalescent plasma by the doctors of the Academy of Sciences of Paris, A. Grigaut and F. Montiel, with encouraging results, we apply the correlate again to

## INTRODUCTION

the present. We are raising expectations of the “light at the end of the tunnel” in the health framework and the conviction of the recovery of social, eco-business, socio-environmental and environmental indicators. Part of these aims is the driving force behind this choral work. We insist on analysing, theorising, comparing, and evaluating society in the face of the current situation and situating it to desire a better and happier future.

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