

The Last Challenge of Sustainable Development: Sustainable Happiness

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Abstract

Purpose: Focusing on what does “happiness” means in managerial studies, this paper aims at offering a holistic approach to the individual and collective well-being at the core of sustainable development. Even though the growing interest of psychology, economic and marketing, research on happiness is still in its infancy. To contribute to the advancement of knowledge on the topic, the paper points to better define and separate happiness from the common concept of well-being.

Methodology: A qualitative analysis, based on an explorative case study, investigates the main elements that boost the pursuit of individual and collective happiness in a peculiar social context: an Italian prison community.

Findings: The analysis highlights that the social context, in which individuals are embedded, affects their and the community they belong present and future sense of happiness. Thus, changings in the happiness of a specific community reflects back on the happiness status of the society which it belongs.

Research limitations/implications: The main limitation of this paper lies in the analysis of a single case study, which do not let to generalise findings. However, the analysis offers some implications that might stimulate policy-makers in carrying out policies as people-oriented, open to public participation and pointing to a long-lasting individual and social happiness as possible; that is building a sustainable community.

Originality/Value: The paper represents one of the first attempts to offer a holistic approach to well-being that goes beyond it and, embracing a circular logic, considers happiness at the same time the core of sustainable development and its ultimate goal.

Keywords

happiness, well-being, sustainable development, prison communities

1. Introduction

Happiness, intended as both an individual and collective characteristics (Quercia et al., 2012), attracted over the time the attention of several scholars, who investigated the different factors which affected it. However, even though several research stream, among others psychological, sociological and economic research (Andrews, 1974; Schneider, 1975; Easterlin et al., 2010; Ryan and Huta, 2009; Badhwar, 2014; Michalos, 2017), offered a number of contribution on the topic, a clear understanding of its definition still lacks. Thus, little attention has been paid on if and how individual happiness affects over the time collective happiness. This seems to be mainly due to the fact that happiness is often considered as a “satellite” concept (Cromby, 2011) or even as synonymous of well-being, life quality or life satisfaction (Veenhoven, 2018), intended as a positive change in individual life status that happens at specific point of time.

Drawing on the previous considerations, this study is aimed at investigating happiness and its ability in offering both to present and future generation the same chance to take a step forwards the present individual and social well-being. To this end, moving from some recent conceptualizations (O’Brien, 2005), the present analysis aims at offering a sustainable reading of happiness, built upon the intention of offering a holistic assessment of happiness, intended no more as a mere individual characteristic, but rather as social feature (Thin, 2012). Thus, it is highly influenced by social ties and social cohesion existing between individuals, the system they belongs and the other interrelated systems as well as by resources belonging to the environment (supra system) in which they are enclosed (Diener and Seligman, 2002; Cloutier et al., 2018). To this end, the study has been also based on the implementation of Cloutier and Pfeiffer (2015) Sustainability Through Happiness Framework (STHF) into a specific community or system, an Italian prison community in order to point out the links existing between happiness level and the peculiar context or community in which individuals are embedded and between individual and community happiness (Zidansek, 2007; O’Brien, 2008; Pfeiffer and Cloutier, 2016; Paralkar et al., 2016) and, therefore, the overall society.

The theoretical analysis at the core of this analysis led to a more specific and punctual definition of sustainable happiness, which shift from being a mere alternative objective of sustainable development to be its main aim, when built upon a shared visioning, individuals engagement, a clear recognition of common goals and future-oriented programs. This implies to go beyond the mere conceptualization of well-being and take a step forward a collective happiness, which if read according to a holistic perspective bonds material, emotional, psychological and even spiritual well-being or, in other words, all the component at the core of happiness conceptualization.

Two are the questions which inspired this paper and which will be addressed through the theoretical as well as through the case study analysis; *how individuals (subsystems) contribute to make happiness sustainable? Do changings in individuals (subsystems) happiness influence the sustainability of system’s happiness?*

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. Section 2 briefly defines the evolutionary path of happiness definition which has led to the recent conceptualization of sustainable happiness, with a focus on the STHF. The following section delves on the applied research methodology, while in the sections 4 and 5 findings are presented and discussed. Finally, implication and final remarks are presented in section 6.

2. Theoretical background

2.1 Happiness: an evolutionary journey

During the time, the pursuing of happiness attracted much interest in different disciplines (Buijs 2007), which goes from philosophy, positive psychology, sociology, anthropology, economics and marketing. However, literature still calls for a comprehensive and consensual definition of happiness, which generally used as synonymous of different notions, such as quality of life or well-being (Veenhoven, 2016, 2018). One of the first discussion around this notion is found in Aristoteles' Nicomachean Ethic, in which the author pointed out the differences existing between *hedonism*, a life lived searching for pleasure, and *eudaimonia*, the happiness rising from good works. The so-called "objectivist" theories of happiness lied their foundation on Aristoteles speculation, approaching happiness as rising from "objective social values rather than subjective psychological feelings" (Kashdan et al., 2008, p.222). These theories shifted the focus from individual pleasure to the objective value, putting at the core of happiness those values that contribute to make individual life valuable (Brulde, 2007). Considering values, virtue and moral efforts as the pillars of happiness (McMahon, 2004), this approach goes beyond the intrinsic moral ambiguity of hedonism, focusing on the positive actions at the core of Aristotelian eudemonia. However, the so-called "subjectivists" or "mentalists" (Ryan and Huta, 2009; Badhwar, 2014) counteracted the objectivists maintaining that individuals mostly wish for pleasure and strive for avoiding or reduce pain. This approach to happiness inspired Epicurus as well as Hobbes (1651) and Bentham (1789), who considered pleasure as a central motivator for pursuing happiness. In particular, Bentham (1789) distinguished the morally good life from a pleasant life, maintaining that moral actions offer "the greatest happiness for the greatest number of people" (Moore and Shepherd, 2006, p.293); thus, happiness should inspire not only individuals, but also governments and their policies.

Moving from the motivation ability of pleasure, Locke (1689) – following Aristotle speculation – put pleasure at the core of the exercise of virtue, which paves the way for happiness. Even if subjectivists and objectivists are traditionally separated, these two philosophical approaches do not grasp the inner dimension of happiness on which psychology typically delves (Diener and Oishi, 2005; Argyle, 2013). In fact, objectivism – focusing on the reason why people feel happy, rather than whether they are happy – contributed to open up the debate on the topic into the psychological arena. However, psychological research failed in pointing out the differences between the hedonic and eudaimonic approach to happiness (Michalos, 2017), being the two approaches based on self-report measures aimed at inferring happiness levels. This led to fade away the traditional division between happiness intended as rising from "objective" virtues and from "subjective" judgments (Alexandrova, 2005). Psychological literature (Ryan and Deci, 2001; Steger et al., 2008; Galambos, et al., 2015) separated the construct of happiness into: 1) subjective well-being, related to short-lived pleasant emotions or to feeling good (e.g. hedonic well-being, affective well-being, or happiness for short), and 2) a meaningful and fulfilling life or living well (e.g. eudaimonic well-being or life satisfaction' for short).

Happiness catch also the attention of the early sociology; thus, its godfather Comte (1880) approached the construct as something "used in the more limited sense of subjective enjoyment of life, in other words as 'life satisfaction'" (Veenhoven 2018, p.1005). However, it was in 1970s that empirical sociological research on the topic flourished with the definition of the so-called Social Indicators (Andrews, 1974; Schneider, 1975). Thus, in these years happiness was added to the political agenda of many western countries, encouraged by the development of

empirical social science and by survey research on life-satisfaction (Veenhoven, 2018). This stream of research was aimed at better understanding the way people choose how to live their life and which way of life they consider most satisfying. Drawing on these issues, sociology focused on measuring life-satisfaction through self-reports (Diener and Diener, 2009); thus, the happiness of population started to be assessed through large-scale surveys (e.g. the American General Social Survey). The first of them date back to the late 1940s, while it was in the 1950s (Kutner et al. 1956) that research started to be focused just on happiness, for example in family life (Rose 1955) or on work (Brayfield et al. 1957). At the end of the twentieth century, research on happiness also delved on life-satisfaction, defined as the overall appreciation of one's own life as a whole. This implied the rising of a new definition of happiness, considered as "something we have in mind and consequently we can measure it using questions" (Veenhoven, 2016, p.6) also through simple questions – posed in different contexts and in different ways (e.g. clinical interviews, life-review questionnaires and survey interviews) – about how much people enjoy their whole life. More recently, questions about happiness have been listed in "Measures of Happiness" of the World Database of Happiness (Veenhoven 2016). However, several are the doubts about the self-report surveys on happiness, being the responses not comparable and somewhat unpredictable across people and cultures (Diener and Dinier, 2009).

Since the early '70s, economics research demonstrated a wide consensus on the importance of economic growth for happiness (Easterlin 1974). However, more recently scholars have critically approached this topic (Bruni and Porta, 2005); thus a flourishing number of studies delved on the investigation of the reasons why an increasing in incomes do not always not correspond to the growth of both social and individual well-being (Di Tella et al., 2001; Helliwell et a., 2010;). In particular, most of the economics literature addressed the determinants of life satisfaction considering all its potential influences on well-being in terms of income, personal characteristics, socially developed characteristics, attitudes and beliefs towards personal as well as others people life, relationships and, more in general, on the wider economic, social and political environment. This led to re-think the mainstream economic approach to happiness, according to which it is based on some utility functions, considered as the extent to which individuals' preferences are satisfied, a social progress is achieved (Bartolini, 2010) and its assessment is really enabled (Giovannini, 2009).

2.2 *Why happiness matters to sustainability*

While sustainability and sustainable development intrigued researchers of different disciplines – among others politics, political economy, economics and management (Krueger and Gibbs, 2007; von Hauff, 2016; Carley and Christie, 2017) – few are the scholars that coupled this concept with happiness research, shedding lights on the inner interdependence existing between these two constructs (O'Brien, 2008). Therefore, the literature (Starke, 2004; Thin et al., 2017) still calls for further investigation of happiness contributions to sustainability and sustainable development. However, during the last decades, growing research (Dempsey et al., 2011; Cloutier et al., 2014) have been directed to the way happiness can affect sustainable development, with an emphasis on communities' sustainable development.

Focusing on happiness and its meaning, Veenhoven (2008) defined it as "*the overall appreciation of one's life-as-a-whole*, in short, how much one likes the life one lives" (p.2). Looking more closely at the previous definition, a positive circular relationship emerges, which bonds the actions pointing to individual and social well-being to the global happiness that a community and its members can achieve. If one of the first attempts to merge happiness and sustainability was due to Zidanšek (2007), who maintained that "happiness and sustainability

go hand-in-hand” (p.896) and that ensuring a long-lasting sustainable development does not imply a happiness sacrifice of current generation, the first organic definitions of sustainable happiness is due to O’Brien (2005). The author approached it as the pursuit of a long-lasting happiness, which does not exploit, now and in the future, other people and the environment/society. This definition shed lights not only on the inter-relationships existing between three different concepts – often considered as synonymous – happiness, well-being and sustainability, but also on the possible consequences (positive and negative) of the way individuals, communities as well as nations pursue happiness (O’Brien, 2012). In fact, O’Brien (2005), focusing on its long-run orientation, defined sustainable happiness as able to contribute “to individual, community, and/or global well-being without exploiting other people, the environment, or future generations” (p. 293). This conceptualization opens up to a renewed approach to happiness, which – if coupled with the principles at the core of sustainable development – makes the interconnections and the interdependences between human beings able to trigger the viability of the group they belong, the society or even the whole planet. To this end, sustainable behaviours have to be promoted and should no more be considered – as a common misconception maintains – something that reduces our quality of life or that implies a self-sacrifice in terms of personal choices and actions (Brown and Kasser, 2005). Rather, a sustainable behaviour let people understand that personal well-being is necessarily and closely linked to others, to social and environmental well-being (O’Brien, 2008); thus, it should imply a behavioural change through which personal and collective enhancements can be achieved.

The literature is paying growing attention to “the optimal conditions under which positive activities increase happiness and the mechanisms by which these effects work” (Lyubomirsky and Layous, 2013, p.57). It worth noting that a positive attitude, activities (e.g. their amount and variety) and personal features (e.g. motivation and effort) in the short-term can positively affect well-being, while in the long-term – if shared, adjusted and maintained – can boost a collective sustainable happiness. This implies that every day individuals, organizations and governments can make countless choices that might contribute or not to sustainable happiness (e.g. individual’s commute to work, an organization procurement policies, a nation foreign trade policy, etc.). Thus, when these choices are detrimental to other present or future individuals, communities or to the environment, behavioural changes and specific policies should to be implemented (Sheldon and Lucas, 2014).

At individual level, an example of the enactment of a sustainable behaviour is the change of some consume habits (e.g. the use of paper plates, leather clothes and apparels, etc.) that bring a pleasant experience even if they are unfair or detrimental to others or environment well-being. However, opportunistic or unfair behaviours can be influenced by the context (e.g. poverty, corruption, hospitalization, detention, etc.) in which an individual or a group is settled (Brülde, 2015). For example, a low status (e.g. being unemployed) as well as a temporary or not deprivation of liberty (e.g. imprisonment) can have detrimental effects on personal and collective happiness. Focusing on the imprisonment, it represents a detrimental situation *per se*; thus, if the prison community does not match the expected levels of re-education, it can cause further inequalities or social issues that often led to frustration or hostile behaviours, highly detrimental to individual and collective happiness.

2.3 The Sustainability Through Happiness Framework (STHF)

The ability in going beyond well-being for pursuing a long-lasting individual and collective happiness has been assessed through the Cloutier and Pfeiffer (2015) iterative and circular framework, the Sustainability Through Happiness Framework (STHF). This framework

consists in five recursive stages: 1) *happiness visioning*, 2) *participant engagement*, 3) *profit inventory*, 4) *system planning*, and 5) *sustainability interventions*.

The first stage (*happiness visioning*) pointing to improve different domains of happiness, such as family relationships, financial situation, work, community and friends, health, personal freedom and personal values (Layard and Layard, 2011). This improvement lies upon the definition of a shared vision aimed at finding possible, effective and sustainable actions for improving individual and collective happiness. The second stage (*participant engagement*) lies upon the engagement of individuals in the development of a non-hierarchical sustainable process. Individuals are now considered real members of the project team, capable at sharing information and at developing new knowledge. In other words, individual's participation to project teams led to develop better and more sustainable solutions able to improve their and their community quality of life (Hofstede and McCrae, 2004). Moving to the next stage (*profit inventory*), it focuses on the collection of happiness profits, which are those individuals' characteristics able to foster a long-lasting happiness or a sustainable happy future for themselves, other community members and the whole society (Pfeiffer and Cloutier, 2016). The fourth stage (*system planning*) calls for a systematic planning, pointing to involve specific subsystems (or other related systems) and to meet desires and visions of the individuals belonging to them. This implies to break the project into manageable subsystems, in which specific sustainability interventions – defined in the last stage (*sustainability interventions*) – have to be implemented. Finally, the last stage of STHF is driven by the results achieved at each previous stages; thus, it points to merge them into a global and shared action to be implemented. However, after having passed through each of the five stages, the process tends to start again, rethinking the happiness vision defined previously.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Approach

The present paper is explorative in nature; thus, it aims at investigating the challenging construct of happiness and its relationship with (community) sustainable development, which still calls for further research. To this end, the study has been based on a qualitative analysis and, in particular, on the implementation of a case study analysis, because – following Gummesson – these methodologies are coconsidered “[...] superior to quantitative methodology emanating from traditional natural science” (Gummesson, 2006). Therefore, dealing with the inner complexity of managerial studies, qualitative methodologies support the investigation of new and emerging phenomena. Following the previous considerations, the case study method was implemented (Simons, 2009), as it contributes to increase finding robustness (Eisenhardt, 1989) and to respond to “why” and “how” research questions (Yin, 2009). In particular, this method has been defined as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (Yin, 2009, p. 13). Moreover, the case study methodology let also to gather data from different sources in order to answer the questions that inspired this study (Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007). Therefore, this methodology has been implemented to achieve a deep understanding of a complex social phenomenon [88], such as the role that a sustainable happiness – both individual and social – plays in *communities and social* sustainable development.

3.2 Case Study Selection

The analysis has been focused on a single and extreme case study (Gerring, 2007) settled in Italian prison context, which has been selected through a non-probabilistic technique (Newman, 2000), because of its long-standing approach to community well-being. More in details, the county prison of Latina was analysed in order to understand if and how this community has more comprehensive approach to wellness, which can be considered as the first step towards happiness and its sustainability. The case study analysis kept on five different steps: 1) subject of study definition; 2) case study selection; 3) initial theory building from literature review; 4) data collection and coding; and 5) data analysis.

The starting point of the case study analysis was the investigation of the way a specific prison community approaches individual (physical and psychological) and social well-being of its members (internal and external staff and prisoners) as well as its long lasting or sustainability. Thus, the case study offered interesting insights into the way different members of a community (an Italian county prison) approach both individual and social well-being and into their possible idea of happiness.

3.3 Data collection and analysis

Before starting data collection, a research protocol was defined to arrange the gathered data into digital worksheets in order to make the authors capable at analysing them individually and, then, critically reviewed them. Data was collected in May 2018 through, 20 semi structured interviews and on-site observations, and classified according to some different categories/items, detailed in the following. At the first, the face-to-face interviews involved key people of prison community: the prison director, three prison wardens (defined Alpha, Beta and Gamma), three corrective counsellors (defined Alpha, Beta and Gamma), two volunteers of the city hospital (defined Alpha and Beta), an internal physician, six male representatives of prison population and four female representatives. They were asked about their feelings, their idea of psychological and physical well-being as well as their opinion about some projects delving on community well-being improvement.

The interviews – based on open-ended question to encourage the dialogue with the interviewees – took place at the community (county prison) where respondents' work or live; they lasted from 20 to 30 min, were recorded and, then, verbatim transcribed. For confidentiality purposes, we agreed with the respondents not to reveal the county prison name, the respondents' identity nor the interview's context (Towers and Xu, 2016).

The collected data were classified in homogeneous categories adapted from the selected "sustainability through happiness framework" (Cloutier and Pfeiffer, 2015), in order to improve their comparability. More in details, the above-mentioned categories are: 1) happiness visioning; 2) participant engagement; 3) profit inventory; 4) systems planning; and 5) sustainability interventions (see tab.1). Then, following the literature suggestions on the topic, gathered data have been further triangulated with secondary data (e.g. reports, projects documents, observation of some current activities, etc.) as the literature suggests (Tellis, 1997). All collected data and information were critically examined and a research report was written. The recognition of relevant issues is at the core of the narrative presented in the following sections.

Table 1: A brief description of STHF.

Stage	Description	Actors
#1 Happiness visioning	Visioning a sustainable community or group, focused on the idea of happiness (first step) that the neighbourhood subsystems have and able to redefine visions for reaching happiness (on subsequent iterations).	Staff (e.g. warden, jailer, medical staff, etc.), planners/organizers (e.g. prison counsellors), local institutions (e.g. hospitals, schools, etc.), community leaders (e.g. prison director, officers' chief, prison population representative).
#2 Participant engagement	Individuals' involvement to gain information, input and feedbacks on the goals defined during the visioning stage.	Individuals (e.g. prison population), staff (e.g. e.g. warden, jailer, medical staff, etc.), planners/organizer (e.g. prison counsellors), local institutions (e.g. hospitals, schools, etc.).
#3 Profit inventory	Assessing and collecting profits for supporting the happiness visions defining specific actions or projects.	Staff (e.g. warden, jailer, medical staff, etc.), planners/organizers (e.g. prison counsellors), community leaders (e.g. prison director, officers' chief, prison population representative).
#4 Systems planning	Identifying internal subsystems and their contribution to happiness.	Staff (e.g. warden, jailer, medical staff, etc.), planners/organizers (e.g. prison counsellors), community leaders (e.g. prison director, officers' chief, prison population representative).
#5 Sustainability intervention	Enactment of sustainability actions pointing to meet happiness visions of subsystems.	Individuals (e.g. prison population), staff (e.g. warden, jailer, medical staff, etc.), planners/organizers (e.g. prison counsellors), local institutions (e.g. hospitals, schools, etc.).

Source: adapted from Cloutier and Pfeiffer, 2015.

4. Findings

4.1 Five steps towards sustainable happiness

Happiness visioning

The case organization usually discusses potential enhancement interventions during specific meetings, organized to make individuals belonging to prison community (e.g. prison population, counsellors, correction officers, etc.) able to report their feelings, ideas and plans in order to shape an in-progress visioning of a sustainable and happy community. In this sense, the prison director maintained:

It is during our meetings that civil and military staff share their problems, ideas and future projects. Sometimes, we also involve a representative of prison population, in order to catch their opinions, feelings, problems and, if possible, their ideas about how to improve the climate of the structure and their life inside it. What I'd like to gain is an open communication and a constant attention to the ongoing enhancement of our community.

Happiness visioning is built upon projects pointing to not only involve all individuals belonging to prison community but also to offer them a common orientation and shared goals to achieve, which are at the core of a long-lasting happiness. A male representative of prison population stated:

Having something useful to do is fundamental for us. In this way, we can face better our staying here. During a meeting, I told to the staff that doing something *socially useful* could help us to rethink about the past, the errors done and re-plan our future lives. I also

suggested to a counsellor that for regularity in things, projects, works we do is very important.

Arts (e.g. theatre, pottery, painting, etc.) are considered a medium able to boost live conditions as well as the well-being of prison population, being able to restore individuals' ability, disposition and involvement in social interaction and activities. This argument is often discussed during the meetings, as the director declared:

We have built a close collaboration with some national and local no-profit organizations to gain support in managing our daily activities and in offering to inmates something useful to do. In particular, the *Caritas* supports us offering funds and professionals that support us in running the structure. We have long-lasting collaboration with other two no-profit organizations, *King Kong* and *Solidarte*. However, we also cooperate with several other organizations for the development of short-term projects, not replicable for the lack of funds.

Echoed the Alpha counsellor declaring:

It's a long time I work with female prisoners on pottery techniques supported by *Solidarte*, a no-profit organization that organizes pottery courses both for female and male inmates. It's a positive and productive cooperation, because volunteers and I teach to several inmates how to create artistic pottery, making them less unwilling to collaborate and more open to reorganize their lives outside this structure.

In line with the previous statements, the Beta counsellor reported:

Several are the leisure, artistic and even job activities that involve prison population. However, not all these activities are successful; thus, when people do not feel an activity respondent to his/her desires, interests, abilities or even to his/her psychological or physical state, they prefer to not perform it. To be honest, some projects' failure was due to our attitude and disposition in involving inmates. I remember that a simple cinema club supported female prisoners to focus on their past criminal conduct. We organized the vision and the subsequent debate on topic such as rebel and criminal women. It was a successfully initiative that I hope we will be able to replicate in a very near future.

The common and ongoing efforts in shaping a possible and sustainable path towards a better quality of personal and social life inside and outside the prison are summarized by director's statement:

To conclude, I have to say that it is just when a team works in harmony, that is when it communicate and share opinions, suggestions, ideas that things works and people get better results.

Participant engagement

The engagement of individuals belonging to the main system, the prison community, (e.g. correction officers, no-profit organizations, prison population, etc.) is boosted letting them express their ideas and feeling about projects during formal and informal meetings. Thus, the Gamma counsellor stated:

Inmates' participation to initiatives, projects or even to meetings is fundamental. In fact, I always try to encourage this involvement, also through my manners and behaviours. I'm always respectful and an eyes-person. This personal trait helps me to involve people in the work we do and in making their lives, especially out of here, better. In fact, I have learned a lot from my colleagues and in particular from psychologists.

Echoes the Alpha volunteer of the city hospital, who stated:

It's not a long time that I work as voluntary physician in this structure. Anyway, the support

of others volunteers and of the internal staff is helping me in learning how to handle people and situations, but, most importantly, I'm learning to be part of a group and to not rush to judgment. I'm now capable at proposing new approaches to medical and physical well-being of prisoners.

Finally, a female inmate reported:

I'm used to participate to prison initiatives. However, to be honest, solicitations are necessary to gain my participation to projects, professional courses and similar, but our counsellors are good at encouraging us, because they often ask for our opinion about things to do. They make us feeling that our opinion counts. I can affirm this because I have been also in other structures, so I have a touchstone.

The correction officers expressed concern, caution and even unwillingness to take part into prison actions and projects. They were discontent for work conditions and mistrustful into actions and projects ability to improve community well-being. The three interviewed prison wardens were self-focused on their professional problems (e.g. long shifts, lack of economic incentives, high retirement age, etc.), which highly constrained their emotional and physical involvement in any initiative. In fact, the Alpha prison warden stated:

I don't know much about projects or courses, it's not my duty. I'm near to finish my service, I'm waiting for the retirement. I'm tired. We have long shift on our feet and we are also short-staffed, it's a difficult situation to handle. I must confess, sometimes I've thought about the participation to some organization meetings, but I think it's not worth it.

The Beta volunteer of the city hospital confirmed what the Alpha warden reported, maintaining:

I think that civil personnel as well as inmates active and sometimes proactive involvement is not supported by a similar behaviour of correction officers. Prison wardens are often unwilling to collaborate. They are inured to this situation and its problems, so they don't believe that this structure and the life of people who live in can be raised. Maybe, a support is needed to help them to be more aware about the importance of their work and the duty they do.

Profit inventory

A general assessment of implemented measures (actions and projects) effect on system well-being and the way it can affect personal and collective happiness in the long-term arose from the interviews of some actors, who reported information and personal judgments about the sense of belonging, available facilities, leisure, educational and professional activities and similar. In particular, the prison director stated:

I have always feel the support of the staff, volunteers and even of inmates, while institutions, I mean local and national government are currently deaf to our needs. This is hard to handle, because, some years ago, we had a fruitful relationship with local government, which led us to gain positive results in terms of facilities and climate makeover.

The Gamma counsellor gave a different reading of implemented measures' influence on personal and collective well-being. Thus, he maintained:

Prison direction has always tried to improve the quality of the place in which we work and spend part of our lives, even overcoming the lack of institutional support. This was mainly due to director personal initiative, which has led to gain both working and financial support of private citizens and organizations. This let us to offer more than a bed, more than ball for playing football, but the hope to make life better, gaining job skills, working for the community, for example cooking and serving the food, or working outside the community,

participating to specific rehabilitation projects.

The interviewed physician judged the implemented measures to improve personal and collective well-being as follows:

Public founding is fundamental for our structure and for the service that we offer. However, actually this founding is very poor and does not allow us to improve neither the quality of physical spaces, rooms, medical offices, common spaces and facilities, nor that of actions and projects pointing to improve residents abilities and quality of life. To overcome the problems due to this situation, prison direction enacted several projects pointing to gain the support of no-profit organizations and volunteers.

Systems planning

This step points to assess the contribution of specific subsystems to the enhancement of each of them and, consequently, of the whole system, which they belong. In terms of subsystems identification, the prison director stated:

Especially some years ago, I had to struggle to promote some projects and to gain the support of my staff. In fact, here we have two different and somewhat separate professional figures, the counsellors and correction officers. These two are not so open to cooperate, even if the willingness to collaborate often vary from person to person. In fact, even though officers are usually not so open to collaboration, acting as separate group, I have found in the detective Favese a good partner. He is a nice guy and I work with him since so many years.

Drawing on another important subsystem, prison population, the Alpha counsellor maintained:

We have had successful projects, which gained the involvement of a number of prisoners. I remember a theatre project, which final show was a real success. We had seven or eight repeats. The theatre room was full. It was amazing. However, one of the main constrain to prisoner involvement is due to their permanence in jail. In fact, female inmates' permanence is longer than male permanence, staying here for medium-long sentences and, consequently, being easily involved in long-run projects. Male population highly vary; thus a day you can find twenty people in a lab and the day after just five, because the other fifteen are out of jail.

In terms of subsystems participation, volunteers' opinion was the most critical. In fact, the Alpha volunteer stated:

Some of us have good ideas, which enactment is often constrained by the limits of this structure (e.g. lack of rooms, common spaces, labs, etc.) and by personnel unwillingness to participate. This reluctance is very common among military staff, so is not so simple to overcome this barrier and improve life inside this structure. However, I have we can count on the daily support that the Caritas offers in a number of daily activities. Its staff is always ready to support us and to sustain prisoners' life.

Correction officers gave a different reading of subsystems involvement and support to the enhancement of the community; thus, the Beta warden stated:

It's so difficult find out the energy to take part into additional projects, because our work is so hard and we are not enough to ensure security and to participate to other activities. You know, here there is a lack of money, space and personnel, so doing what we have to do every day is just a tough job.

Sustainability interventions

In terms of sustainability interventions, which collaboratively involves the system and its

subsystems, the Beta counsellor reported:

One of my dream is organizing organic and long-run projects. Something that goes beyond those activities pointing to push inmates outside their rooms for spending time in leisure activities, such as playing football, ping pong and similar. I'd like to stimulate a personal growth, in order to make inmates capable at understanding past crimes and at achieving a better life outside here. I'm trying to plan an organic and participative project that, involving staff and prisoners, led to make life inside here better and to gain citizens and institutions support.

In a similar vein, the volunteer physician stated:

What really lacks in this structure is the possibility to offer a long-run perspective to the staff and the inmates. I mean some projects that can enhance work and well-being. In so doing we enacted a simple initiative, pointing to support family relationships. We involved some clowns to facilitate children visit to their parents and improve inmates' parenthood.

Finally, a male inmate reported:

We are asking direction for a medical project pointing to change our daily behaviour, promoting health habits. We need a food re-education and something pointing to reduce and even stop smoking. Here we smoke really too much.

5. Discussion

The literature maintains (Sen, 2015; Shiota et al., 2017; Trivett et al., 2017) that inmates, due to their freedom deprivation, are often unable to care and deliberate about their own present and future lives as well as to social activities and to feel positive emotions (Coyle, 2010), in short to be happy. Even though the above-mentioned characteristics led to consider prison population unable or even not interested into any rehabilitative or improving activities, the case study findings pointed out a quite different situation. In fact, the individuals involved in the research were particularly aware about the importance of participating in actions and projects aimed at improving and maintaining those conditions that boost individual and collective happiness. In this sense, apart from correction officers, all other individuals who work and live in the case organization (e.g. correctional counsellors, medical staff, volunteers, inmates, etc.) were aware of and interested in initiatives – especially when intended to gain professional abilities – able to improve their long-term well-being in prison community and outside there. This was confirmed by their active participation in shaping a shared vision of their and their community future. In fact, even if the pursuing of individual happiness can be an easier goal to achieve, than collective happiness (Cloutier and Pfeiffer, 2017); the involvement of people and, in our case of prison population and staff, in regular meetings boosted the definition of a common visioning and its possible outcomes. In doing so, the staff and prison population tried together to find possible and sustainable solutions to the several institutional and financial constrains that negatively affect the current well-being and their path towards a collective long-lasting happiness (Schifferet al., 2018). Therefore, the involvement of different individuals (e.g. prison staff and population, local institution, etc.) in projects that let to enact the vision previously developed paves the way for that positive long-lasting personal and collective evolution – based, for example, on positive changes in self-identity, self-expression and interests – at the core of sustainable happiness (Hodgson and Horne, 2015). This should be the aims of rehabilitation in prisons, summarized in the efforts pointing to make inmates capable at achieving a new and better life. In the case organization, this evolution was triggered by the

participation in several activities pointing to improve inmate' well-being and their chances for a successful rehabilitation, such as professional training courses, artistic activities or internal and external job activities (e.g. pottery courses, drama courses, employment in the canteen and library, etc.). Even though correction officers' scepticism and their lack of engagement in any kind of activity and project, medical and civil staff as well as prison population were highly involved in the afore-mentioned activities. In particular, prison director, counsellors, physicians and volunteers are ready to face a number of limits in daily activities, trying, for example, to gain the free support of private citizens or ONGs to specific rehabilitative projects (e.g. leisure, cultural or learning projects, etc.) or to their everyday activities (e.g. basic medical care, psychological support, etc.).

The case organization demonstrated to pay great attention to actions and projects pointing to create a sense of community based on a common culture, intended as a set of shared characteristics (e.g. beliefs, norms and rules, customs, values, etc.) which can led to go beyond the differences due, for example, to nativity, language, ethnicity or profession (Montero and Vasquez, 2015). In fact, supported by civil and religious volunteers, the case organization promoted several interventions pointing to trigger inmates' sense of belonging, their disposition toward shared norms, and the respect for others and for institutions. To this end, prison direction also supported the development of inmates' psychological, spiritual and material abilities, fundamental to boost the enactment of a shared happiness visioning (Cloutier et al., 2014), based on the sifting from an individual focus on well-being towards a collective one which is needed to remove the structural constrains at the core of each inequalities.

Drawing on the development of a common a happiness visioning, the case findings pointed out an ambivalent situation, due to the different involvement and the subsequent different contribution that the internal subsystems offered to actions and projects pointing to improve community well-being and, in the long-run, community happiness. In particular, five subsystems internal to the main system of prison community have been defined: 1) prison population, 2) civil staff, 3) medical staff, 4) volunteers and 5) correction officers.

Drawing on case study findings, the first four subsystems showed a synergic behaviour, inspired by a shared visioning and their involvement in the actions pointing to increase the well-being of all the individuals internal to the prison community. However, the last subsystem, correction officers, acted differently, as a separate system, often assuming divergent or even opposite behaviours to other subsystems. In fact, correction officers demonstrated a clear unwillingness and, in some cases, hostility towards the collaboration with other subsystems (prison population, civil staff and medical staff) and the development of any improvement action or project. This seems to be mainly due to their high level of stress and general mistrust in institutions, which led them to be not involved, discouraged and self-oriented, that is highly demanding for the improvement of job conditions, in terms of shift work, wage, retirement conditions and available personnel.

The literature has paid great attention to psycho-physical condition of prison population, while little research has been focused on the influence that correction officers' psycho-physical concerns and hostile behaviours can play on the well-being of a prison community (Leip et al., 2017). As stated in the theoretical section, a behavioural change should not be perceived as a self-sacrifice (Brown and Kasser, 2005), because positive and sustainable behavioural changes can trigger a personal and a collective enhancement of quality of life, well-being and long-lasting happiness (O'Brien, 2008). The case findings underlined correction officers' general inability in understanding the importance of assuming sustainable behaviours for their and the community they belong general enhancement. In fact, all the respondents showed a detrimental

attitude towards any kind of enhancement project, being sure that inmates cannot be rehabilitated and prison quality of life cannot be improved, that is the lack of any happiness visioning. It follows that correction officers' subsystem represents a real flashpoint for the well-being as well as for present and future happiness of the main system, the prison community. In this sense, it worth noting that all individuals belonging to the other subsystems (prison population, medical staff, civil staff, volunteers) reported the detrimental effect of this subsystem negative behaviour. This divergence plays a negative influence also on the enactment of those sustainability actions that let each subsystem meet a commonly shaped happiness visioning. What really lacks between correction officers' subsystem and the other four is a common ground (Cloutier and Pfeiffer, 2018) to join together to improve the community (system), their group (subsystem) and themselves (individuals) well-being. In fact, on one hand prison director, medical staff, counsellors and volunteers share a common vision of present and future happiness, being ready to be involved in any related actions. On the other, correction officers showed a disruptive attitude, being unwilling to be involved or even to participate to discussions, assessment and actions pointing to build a better present and future life (Thin, 2012) for themselves and other members of the community they belong.

6. Implications and final remarks

Drawing on the concept of sustainable happiness, this paper outlined and assessed its application to the peculiar domain of prison communities. The findings underlined the need for some fundamental and sustainable changes in behaviours of individuals (subsystems) belonging to prison community. These changes should be based not only on the mainstream happiness and sustainability approaches, but also on individuals – in our case civil staff, medical staff, prison population, volunteers and corrective officers – needs and wants (Kyttä et al., 2016).

In terms of theoretical implications, the findings pointed out that the path towards a sustainable individual and collective happiness lies upon a system orientation (Barile and Saviano, 2011). Thus, this orientation led a system (e.g. prison community) and its internal subsystems to find out some possible actions that, according to a circular logic and ongoing adjustments, try to meet personal and collective happiness, not constraining future generation chance to be happy. In other words, happiness rises from personal, collective as well as environmental well-being (O'Brien, 2012). The findings also suggested that if the benefit of a single sustainable intervention may fade away, a higher and long lasting happiness rises from structured and organic projects in which individuals (or internal subsystems), belonging to a community or a system, are engaged. Therefore, subsystems mutual and ongoing participation to sustainable actions nourishes a positive “feedback loop” able to increase individual and collective well-being, essential to take a step forwards a sustainable happiness. However, it worth noting that happiness remains an ambiguous concept, which many scholars and practitioners still met with scepticism.

Findings also suggested some interesting policy implications. Even if discussion about public happiness among politicians and planners is still in its infancy, a lively debate on sustainability (Nitor, 2011) and institutions ability in meeting public demands is progressively delving on the importance of individual happiness for achieving a long-lasting collective happiness or a sustainable happiness (O'Brien, 2016). In particular, policy makers should approach sustainable happiness as a further step of both individual and collective well-being. Thus, it should address the solution of possible conflicts – due to the fact that personal happiness

often do not match with or even constrain others' happiness (Oishi et al., 2013) – promoting among citizens the importance that a simple behavioural change can have for the achievement of a long-lasting and collective well-being. To this end, community development practitioners should also build their interventions upon the STHF.

Case study findings offered interesting insights to address the two questions at the core of this study. In particular, individuals or subsystem engagement in happiness visioning and in the related projects and action inspired to sustainable development principles contribute to ensure a collective long-lasting well-being. The unwilling behaviour of some individuals or of a subsystem (such in the case of corrective officers) and their reluctance to change hinder the achievement of a collective and long-lasting happiness, constraining the development and the implementation of projects and actions through their unfair and opportunistic behaviour. However, how much the behaviour of a specific sub-system affects that of other sub-systems as well as of the main system and, then, of the whole supra system is still unclear.

In sum, this analysis contributed to the better understanding of sustainable happiness, analysing the projects and actions that a specific prison community (system) enacts to ensure to all individuals (subsystems) belonging to it the enhancement of their current and future life, promoting, among a number of difficulties, a step forward a long-lasting happiness. However, the study is somewhat limited by the analysis of a single case (an Italian prison community), which peculiarities limit its generalisability.

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