

The Sociology of Happiness in Buenos Aires

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Abstract:- For some time in Argentina, and especially in Buenos Aires City, we have been conducting research on the structure of sensibilities. One of these experiences is based on the question of this paper: What does it mean to be happy for someone who lives in Buenos Aires? Are porteños, those who live in Buenos Aires, happy? This paper seeks to describe one of the most important components of contemporary politics of emotions: the state of happiness in Buenos Aires. To achieve this goal, we propose the following argumentative strategy: a) explaining briefly the importance that happiness studies have achieved; b) outlining some conceptual axes to understand the politics of emotions; c) presenting some results from two surveys of sensitivities conducted in 2010 and 2012 (selecting only the questions that relate to happiness); d) discussing and synthesizing these findings; and e) proposing some clues for an interpretation and an open closure. We argue that in order to understand the state of happiness, we should relate it to the consolidation of a normalized society based upon the immediate enjoyment, and/or as an interstitial practice. This proposed interpretation allows us to outline some questions to further research around the connections between happiness and emotions politics.

Key words - Buenos Aires, Enjoyment, Happiness, Normalized, Sensibilities.

I. INTRODUCTION

At work, study, or club, when greeting someone we already know, we often say ‘How are you?’ And they respond ‘Fine, and you?’ Considering this custom, there is a well-known joke that to the common question ‘How are you?’ the answer is ‘Fine, or you really want me to tell you?’. In everyday life, we either feel well or ill, tired or rested, anxious or relaxed. And from these feelings determining our daily tasks, perhaps one that concerns us the most is being happy or unhappy. At least since the end of last Century, happiness is a central concern to large corporations and governments. The ‘state of happiness’ of people, groups, and societies has become one of the axes of economic and political systems. Moreover, the question on the chances of experiencing happiness is one of the key issues for millions of people in the world. *What does it mean to be happy? Can I be happy? What should I do to be happy? Which are the means to achieve happiness?* These are just some of the questions that thousands of subjects confront on a daily basis. Moreover, the many attempts to measure happiness points to the important place happiness bares today. In different contexts, several studies seek to know to what extent people and societies are happy. From economics to psychology, to studies of consumption and studies of values, societies’ happiness has become an object of study. The objective and subjective wellbeing for individuals and societies has become a synonym for the state of happiness of human beings. For some time in Argentina, and especially in Buenos Aires City, we have been conducting research on the structure of sensibilities. One of these experiences is based on the question of this paper: What does it mean to be happy for someone who lives in Buenos Aires? Are *porteños*, those who live in Buenos Aires, happy? This paper seeks to describe one of the most important components of contemporary politics of emotions: *the state of happiness in Buenos Aires*. To achieve this goal, we propose the following argumentative strategy: a) explaining briefly the importance that happiness studies have achieved; b) outlining some conceptual axes to understand the politics of emotions; c) presenting some results from two surveys of sensitivities conducted in 2010 and 2012 (selecting only the questions that relate to happiness); d) discussing and synthesizing these findings; and e) proposing some clues for an interpretation and an open closure. We argue that in order to understand the state of happiness, we should relate it to the consolidation of a normalized society based upon the immediate enjoyment and/or as an interstitial practice. This proposed interpretation allows us to outline some questions to further research around the connections between happiness and emotions politics.

II. BACKGROUND AND AVAILABLE INFORMATION

In Philosophy and Social Sciences happiness is a recurrent issue that has been object of reflection for different traditions, theoretical perspectives, and disciplines. Only to mention one possible line of reconstruction

of the referred discussions, from Epicurus and La Mettrie to Bhaskar have found in happiness an object of knowledge, the “motivation” for life or the goal of an emancipated society.

Becoming a social issue for the last 40 years, happiness has been object of theories, measurements, and multiple and diverse analytical perspectives. Associated to *la buena vida* (the good life), to well-being, or as a post-material value, happiness has been thought on and searched by academics, research centers, and governments. A clear example is the *Report by the Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress*, requested in 2008 by French President Nicholas Sarkozy to a number of renowned thinkers, and usually referred to as the ‘Stiglitz, Sen and Fitoussi report’. This report starts by displaying three possible perspectives on the subject: one parting from the notion of subjective well-being, other that takes into consideration the analysis of capabilities, and the third centered on the concept of fair allocations.

Other example of the increasing political interest of happiness is the *World Happiness Report* conducted by the Sustainable Development Solutions Network and commissioned by the United Nations. It consists on the worldwide measurement of happiness on the idea of subjective well-being and seeks to reflect the state of happiness that may guide the implementation of public policies directed to improve it. On that report Jeffrey Sachs defines the following notions of happiness in use. Such is the idea of the emerging scientific study of happiness, whether of individuals and the choices they make, or of entire societies and the reports of the citizenry regarding life satisfaction... [These studies] report on the two broad measurements of happiness: the ups and downs of daily emotions, and an individual’s overall evaluation of life. The former is sometimes called “affective happiness,” and the latter “evaluative happiness.” (Sachs 2013, p. 6).

What is important to know is that both kinds of happiness have predictable causes that reflect various facets of our human nature and our social life. Affective happiness captures the day-to-day joys of friendship, time with family, and sex, or the downsides of long work commutes and sessions with one’s boss. Evaluative happiness measures very different dimensions of life, those that lead to overall satisfaction or frustration with one’s place in society. Higher income, better health of mind and body, and a high degree of trust in one’s community (‘social capital’) all contribute to high life satisfaction; poverty, ill health, and deep divisions in the community all contribute to low life satisfaction. (Sachs 2013, p. 7). On another chapter of the same report, Helliwell and Wang more precisely refer to the connections, proximities/distances among cognitive and affective evaluations of the well-being situations associated with happiness: Among various measures of subjective well-being, the primary distinction to be made is between cognitive life evaluations (represented by questions asking how happy or satisfied people are with their lives as a whole), and emotional reports. Early modern attempts to classify different types of subjective well-being in psychology have also made a distinction between two types of emotional reports: positive affect (a range of positive emotions) and negative affect (a range of negative emotions). The primary distinction between life evaluations and emotional reports continues to be accepted today. It is also accepted, although less generally, that positive and negative affect carry different information, and need to be separately measured and analyzed. In this report we shall present all three types of measure. (Helliwell and Wang 2013, p. 11).

In a different direction but with similar aims, Richard Layard, the author of *Happiness: Lessons from a New Science* (2005), has probably been the one who contributed the most to the discussions among different disciplinary fields (Psychology, Economy, and Anthropology) showing the growing scientific interest on happiness. Layard proposes a direct connection between states of happiness, public policies and organization of the State: I was always a Benthamite, in the sense that I believed the good society was the one where people were as happy as possible and the best policy is the one that made the most happiness. This is actually why I became an economist at a rather older age than standard, because it seemed to be then that social science was offering anything like that framework for thinking about public policy. (Layard 2005, p. 5). In this context, as the synthesis of one of his many conferences shows: ‘Prof. Layard defined happiness simply as “feeling good and wanting to go on feeling that way” whilst unhappiness was described as “feeling bad and wanting to feel different”’ (GCPH 2005, p. 1). From this perspective, emotional states, subjective changes and temporality are intimately related. Another of the most cited Studies on the subject is Inglehart, who has coordinated the Worldwide Survey on Values under his post-material proposal: The theory of post-materialist value change was initially developed by Inglehart in the 1970s. The key idea was that among the Western populations a slow but powerful change of priorities was taking place through generational replacement, away from materialist towards post-materialist values. The reason why the cohorts differ in priorities is the level of economic well-being and existential security they enjoyed in their formative years (Inglehart 1997: 31). (Delhey 2009, p. 33). This brief summary allows us to visualize that happiness is no longer a theme referred to private life; rather, it has become an important component of the public sphere and state policies. In Argentina, articles on happiness are not so common. However, there are at least two referents worth mentioning: first, works by Graciela Tonon and Alejandro Castro Solano (2012, 2013) that take the level of well-being as an indicator of a happy society; second, the survey done jointly by University of Palermo (UP) and TNS GALLUP. On their search of quality of life, Tonon and Castro Solano claim that:

The study we present reveals on a national level (in Argentina) that quality of life does not show a direct link to the quality of life at a personal level, thus affirming a tendency already registered in previous studies (Tonon 2003: 2004: 2006), in which the well-being index was applied (WBI) (Tonon and Castro Solano 2012, p. 167). Then they complete these considerations stating that: In general terms, nationally it can be said that quality of life is not related to the satisfaction people obtain in each of their vital shores; nevertheless, there is an impact of the satisfaction with public policies in relation to familiar satisfaction and to social matters that should be taken into account. (Tonon & Castro Solano 2012, p. 169). Similarly to global studies, the connections between well-being, quality of life, and public policy are searched into, resulting on 'high standards' of satisfactions on the public sphere of 'happiness'. This diagnosis is strengthened (and amplified) with the results of the UP/ TNS GALLUP survey: the analysis conducted by UP and TNS GALLUP study the Argentineans' perception of happiness. When asked to what extent they consider themselves happy, 8 out of 10 respondents declared to be 'somewhat happy'. That is, 32% said 'very happy' and 52% 'pretty happy'. Only 13% manifested 'not being so happy' and just 1% being 'not happy at all' (UP-TNS GALLUP 2011, p. 2). In a globalized world, with more than acceptable levels of happiness, and considering that Argentina continues such pattern, one should not abandon the search for alternative explanations to this situation. The survey results presented here are an attempt to question the perspectives and the summarized information from the Sociology of bodies/emotions.

III. SOCIOLOGY OF BODIES / EMOTIONS: A BRIEF INTRODUCTION

What we know about the world, we know it through our bodies, what we do is what we see, what we see is how we divide the world. In this 'here-now' the devices to regulate sensations are installed. By such devices the social world is both apprehended and narrated, that is to say, from the expropriation that gave rise to the situation of domination in the first place. Sensations are distributed according to the specific forms of corporal capital. Corporal capital consists on the living conditions of individuals located in the *individual body*, *subjective body* and *social body*. The tension between individual, subjective, and social bodies is one of the keys that will allow a deeper understanding of the connections between geometries of the bodies and grammars of action, which are part of the neo-colonial domination in Latin America and the Global South. The aforementioned tension makes more sense intersecting the perspective from the bodies with the view from sensations. Perceptions, sensations, and emotions form a tripod that allows us to understand where the sensitivities are based. Social agents know the world through their bodies. In this way a set of impressions impact on the ways of 'sharing' with the socio-environmental context. These impressions of objects, phenomena, processes, and other agents structure the perceptions that individuals accumulate and reproduce. Then, a perception from this perspective is a way of organizing the naturalized set of impressions that occur in an agent. A privileged way of connection between collective action and social fantasies and phantoms is constituted by the acceptance of the fact that the *body is the locus of conflict and order*. It is the place and '*topos*' of conflict where (much of) the logic of contemporary antagonisms goes through. From this point of view we can observe the formation of a *political economy of morality*, i.e., ways of sensibilities, practices and representations that put domination into words.¹ In this context, we understand² that *social bearability mechanisms* are structured around a set of practices made body orientated to a systematic avoidance of social conflict. The processes of displacement of the consequences of antagonism are presented as specular scenarios unpinned (dis-embedded) in space and time. These allow the acceptance that social life 'is-done' *as-always-so* by the individual and society as a whole. Associated with this, the *devices for the regulation of sensations* consist in processes of selection, classification and elaboration of socially determined and distributed perceptions. The regulation involves the tension between senses, perceptions, and feelings that organize special ways of 'seeing oneself-in-the-world' that social classes and subjects possess. Chains and cognitive-affective schemas that connect (and disconnect) social practices as narratives and worldviews made flesh, are the processes that we characterize as ideological. The referred mechanisms and devices are a practical and procedural hinge where practical crossings between emotions, bodies and stories instantiate. Systems' Social bearability mechanisms do not operate either directly or explicitly as 'attempted control' nor 'deeply' as processes of focal points of persuasion. These mechanisms operate "almost unnoticed" in the porosity of custom, in the frames of common sense, through the construction of sensations that seem the most 'intimate' and 'unique' that every individual possesses as social agent. In this context, and given the aims of this study in the line of sociology of happiness, three concepts become relevant: 'practices of wanting', 'practices of feeling' and 'interstitial practices'. *Practices of feeling* are those practices that involve heterogeneous sets of relationships between sensations and emotions. *Interstitial practices* are those social bondages that proceed as to

¹ On the performances of some of the mechanisms of social bearability and the devices for the regulation of sensations, see Scribano et al. (2015) and Scribano (2012, 2007a, 2007b).

² Interpretive schemes (*sensu* Giddens) and habitus (*sensu* Bourdieu) are two of the conceptual constructs that approximate what is here meant by social bearability mechanisms and devices of sensations regulation.

break the political economy of moral - which structures sensitivities. *Practices of wanting* involve the possible connections between hope, love, and enjoyment, and are social relations that link us to 'doing with' the other. Associations between the aforementioned practices, social bearability mechanisms, and devices to regulate sensations might allow us to better understand the state of social sensitivities.

IV. HAPPINESS IN BUENOS AIRES

The information displayed here is part of two surveys conducted in 2010 and 2012 which constitute a major study aiming to describe the current state of the main components of social sensibilities in the City of Buenos Aires. The methodological strategy may be summarized as follows: considering the objectives, a research on the standardized quantitative instrument to capture information was designed. This survey was elaborated in three consecutive phases: a) The design, done by members of the research team in a reflexive creation of the questions to be incorporated in the instrument; b) A testing moment of the instrument, with the participation of those who elaborated the alluded questions; and c) Another moment when those who had not participated applied it in order to generate some critical distance from the design. Once it was designed, the survey application worked as a basis for an *intentional sample* with three selection criteria: *gender, age* - minding the census distribution of those characteristics in general population of the City (in this case Buenos Aires), and also, *place of residence*, classified according to income distribution in the City, conforming 'areas of gathering'. The selection of the sites responded to the qualitative information at disposal and the actual possibilities for fieldwork in the different areas. The number of questionnaires was an arbitrary 150, considering the antecedent use of 'similar' N in similar studies internationally.³ The operability of the sample recruitment's process was conducted as follows: each researcher identified an individual, according to the referred characteristics, and asked them to refer to another potential respondent following those quota criteria that each researcher had to complete. In connection to the theoretical frame, there were no comparative intentions between sites in the sense of comparative studies give to such strategy. The survey had a series of open-ended questions that aimed at 'deconstructing' some of the main 'typical' categories to study emotions, in order to evaluate the possibilities for including the voice of the agents in the quantitative determination of such categories. The processing and analysis of the information was done according to the stipulated moments in the use of SPSS in its newest version and in relation to an analysis plan that was developed once the instrument was elaborated. In the process of interpretation of the information some crossings with the qualitative information available were done. The study was done in two stages. *First Stage*: N 150. Number of validated cases: 142. Conducted on the first fifteen days of October 2010 in the city of Buenos Aires. *Second Stage*: N 149. Number of validated cases: 149. Conducted on the first fifteen days of October 2012 in the city of Buenos Aires.

V. OPTIMISM AND HAPPINESS

The respondents pointed out emphatically that they are happy and optimistic regarding their future.

When asked *Which of the following phrases better describe how you feel?* referring to their current situation, they answered the following:

In 2010:

- Almost half of the respondents (45,1%) find themselves better now than before;
- A 28% consider they will be better in the future;
- A tenth feels 'always the same';
- Only 13, 4% consider they were better before.

In 2012:

- More than half of the respondents (67%) find themselves better now than before;
- A 40% considers they will be better in the future;
- Nineteen percent feel 'always the same';
- A 23% considers they were better before.

On the other side, when consulted: *Imagine yourself in five years, which of the following phrases you consider will better describe your situation?*

In 2010 optimistic answers seem to increase when the number of years is specified, as in 'how you will be in 5 years': in this case, three out of four (75,4%) answered they will be better, and only 5% answered they will be worse; 16% affirms there will be no changes in their lives. Thus, when a time range is specified—in this case a future of 5 years- the scenery seems to be auspicious for the majority of the respondents.

In 2012, facing the same question, 75,2% expressed 'better'; the options 'I will be the same' and 'I will be worse' registered a 11,4% each. Consequently, optimism remains in 2012, with the difference of a greater percentage for 'I will be worse' category in relation to 2010. The same attitude may be observed considering the

³ Only to give two examples from different research fields see: Oddone and Lynch (2008); O'Brien (2015).

satisfaction with their lives, when asked as follows: *Generally speaking, to what extent are you satisfied or unsatisfied with your life lately? Consider a scale from 1 to 10.* In 2010, 31% answered 8; 24,6% said 7; 15,5%, 6; 10,6% answered 5. Similarly, in 2012 25,5% answered 8; 20,8%, 7; 16,1% answered 6 and 12,1% answered 5. In this direction, they were asked: *Please, picture a flight of stairs with the scales numbered from 0 to 10, where 0 is the lowest scale and 10 the highest. Suppose I tell you that the highest scale represents the best possible life for you, and that the lowest scale the worst possible life for you. On which scale do you feel yourself in this moment?* The answers were: in 2010 the 28,2 % said 7; the 21,8% answered 8, the 20,4% said 6; the 14,1% answered 5. In 2012, the 26,2% answered 7; the 22,1% answered 8; the 21,5% answered 6; the 12,8% answered 5. *Considering everything, in general would you say you are: Very Happy, Pretty Happy, Not very Happy or Not happy at all?* In 2010, 21,1% of the respondents is 'Very Happy', and 73,9% 'Pretty Happy', resulting on a total of 95% of the answers when adding both categories. Whereas only the 3,5% answered 'Not very Happy' and the 0,7% 'Not happy at all'. In 2012, the 23,5% of the respondents is 'Very Happy', the 67,1% 'Pretty Happy', resulting on a 90,6% of the answers when adding both categories. The 8,7% answered 'Not very Happy' and the 0,7% 'Do not know'. In this context our respondents feel they are better than before, satisfied with their lives, optimistic about the future, and claim to be very or pretty happy.

VI. WHAT IS IT IMPLIED ON HAPPINESS?

In order to complete the research on the estate of happiness and optimism some questions were asked regarding situations and social relations linked to happiness and sensibilities; they sought to deepen the notions on the state of affection of 'feeling good'. In this framework, the following was asked: *Many people usually say "some things are good and many others go bad", that "in life things do not change", and that "you just have to live life". Which of the following phrases better describe what you feel today?*

The most selected phrases in 2010 were: 'you better enjoy all you can in life', 47,2%; 'people should organize themselves to solve their own problems', 16,9% and 'the most important thing is to be with the ones you love', 14,8%. And in 2012, the answers refer to: 'you better enjoy all you can in life' (47%), 'people should organize themselves to solve their own problems' (18,1%) and 'the most important thing is to be with the ones you love' (12,1%). In the context of the social practices that these phrases relate to, the content of happiness was studied by asking the following question: *Please, tell me three words that describe what is to feel happy.*

In 2010, words with highest frequency on the first option were 'joy' and 'tranquility'. As a second option, the most repeated words were family/loved ones. And in third place, 'health' appears with the highest frequency. In 2012, when asked to describe what is 'to feel happy' the respondents suggested love (14,1%) and joy (13,4%) as first options. In second place, the highest frequency is accumulated by the option family/loved ones (14,1%). As third option, the previous result repeats with family/loved ones (12,1%).

Continuing with the search for situations of happiness which may give information on how respondents live such state of affection, it was asked: *When you say to a friend "I am happy" or "I am great!", which of the following situations may have happened to you in order to make that comment? Please select up to three answers.* Then regarding the results the moments or personal life situations that led to the respondents to affirm 'I am happy', a series of new options was proposed, with the possibility to include others, and a selection of other three answers, making no specifications on the order or importance.

In 2010, taking as reference the first option, 30,3% of the respondents manifested such expression when they 'were with someone special', followed by a 19,7% that verbalized it 'when earned more money than expected'; a 19% expressed it when 'they were well with the person they love', and a 15,5% when 'realized other person was happy'. Analyzing the frequency distribution corresponding to the mentioned secondly, it is observed that 33,8% expressed the phrase 'I am happy' or 'I am great' when 'were OK with the person you love', this category prevailing, as in the first case. However, the category 'Some serious health problem was solved' gained significance with the 21,1% is the second more mentioned option in this group of answers. The two referred categories are followed by 'got a professional/work achievement' (11,3%), 'realized other person was happy' (10,6%), and 'could do something that wanted to do for a long time' (7,7%). Finally, from the reading of the answers mentioned in third place, the category 'could do something that wanted to do for a long time' prevails with the 31%, going over by far the values reached by that same category in the first and second selections. That category is followed by 'some serious health problem was solved' (23,2%) and 'got a professional/work achievement' (21,8%), both already present among the more frequent selections in the second place. In the previous readings, if we pay attention to the most selected categories in each of the three mentions (all above the 30% of the partial distribution), it can be inferred that for these individuals, manifesting 'I am happy' or 'I am great' is associated to interactions with loved ones and to the concretion of personal projects/expectations: 'were with someone special' (30,3%), 'were OK with the person you love' (33,8%) and 'could do something that wanted to do for a long time' (31%). In 2012, when asking about personal life situations that lead to verbalize 'I am happy' or 'I am great', the same series of options was proposed, with the possibility of including others, and it was required to select up to three answers with no explicit order. In the first

selection, 36,9% of respondents manifested that expression when 'were with someone special', followed by a 19,5% who manifested it 'realized other person was happy'; a 14,1% verbalize it 'when earned more money than expected', and an equal 14,1% expressed it when 'were OK with the person you love'. Analyzing the frequencies of the second mention, it is observed that 25,5% of the respondents said they expressed the phrase 'I am happy' or 'I am great' when 'things were OK with the person you love', thus making this category prevail as the first mention. Nevertheless, it gets a significant place the category 'some serious health problem was solved' which with 22,1% is the second more mentioned category in this group of answers. The two referred categories are followed by 'got a professional/work achievement' (16,8%), 'realized other person was happy' (14,1%) and 'could buy something you wanted for a long time' (7,4%). Finally, reading the third mention, it can be observed that the category 'could do something that wanted to do for a long time' prevails with the 32,9%. This category is followed by 'got a professional/work achievement' (20,8%) and 'some serious health problem was solved' (15,4%), both already present within the stronger selection in the second mention. Considering the previous interpretations, and looking only at the first categories selected by the sample in each of the three mentions (all around the 30% of the partial distribution), it can be inferred that for the respondents, manifesting to other 'I am happy' or 'I am great' is associated to situations related to the interactions with others close/loved and to the concretion of personal projects/expectations: 'was with someone special' (36,9%), 'things were OK with the person you love' (25,5%) and 'could do something you wanted to do for a long time' (32,9%). The important thing is to be with the ones we love, you'd better enjoy what you can in life, in life you should just do what makes you happy, these are the phrases more frequently selected by the respondents. Joy, peacefulness, love, family/loved ones are the words that better describe happiness, while 'you were with someone special' and 'things were OK with the one you love' are the phrases chosen to represent such happiness.

VII. DISCUSSION: IMMEDIATE ENJOYMENT, CONSUMPTION, AND HAPPINESS

Looking at the data presented above, at least three interpretative hypotheses could be presented: The material conditions of existence and the structure of sensibilities in Buenos Aires allow, pave the way and/or give context to experiences of a happy and optimistic life. There are certain conditions of 'familiarity' and/or a 'contagion effect' in the structures of social sensibilities of the 'groups of respondents' that produce states of happiness and collective optimism. We are facing a normalized society with self-centered subjects whose happiness and optimism are measured by their disposition to consumption, individual enjoyment and 'de-realization' effects.

I will affirm that the third is the one more likely to be adequate, based on the following arguments:

The first hypothesis is not right considering the following: In 2010 the majority of respondents (the 55,6%) earn between 360 and 1201 North American dollars (4,01 Argentinean pesos per dollar); they do not own a house; 64% spend their day working, 45,8% auto-defines as medium class or working class, a 52,8% has children, the 64,8% has complete or incomplete university educational level, the 52,8% is chief of household, if they could change something in their work, what they earn is the more recurrent answer; they spend their money in food, rent, and taxes. Money occupies a 'very important' or 'pretty important' place for 69 % of them. In 2012, 47% of respondents earn between 304 and 1219 North American dollars (4,92 Argentinean pesos per dollar), the majority do not own house; the 53,7% is chief of household, the 46,3% self-defines as high medium class, medium class or working class, the 55,7% has children, the 59,7% has complete or incomplete university educational level, the 60,4% spends the day working, when asked if they could change something in their work in the first place they answered 'the activity they do' (26,2%); they spend their money mostly in food, rent and taxes. Money occupies a 'very important' or 'pretty important' place for 59,1% of them. Although there is not much information on the subject in this survey, the second hypothesis does not seem to help understanding the state of happiness and optimism, given the following facts: In 2010, when asked if they consider mass media a privileged vehicle in transmitting emotions, 66,2% of respondents put themselves between 1 and 3 (in a 1 to 5 scale) on the major or minor influence of media on emotions. When asked how they feel when they hear the phrase 'on the radio they broadcast only bad news and I feel breathless', the answers go from 'something similar happens to me' to 'nothing like that happens to me'. It is important to notice that the survey was conducted in four areas of the city, divided by income levels. In the same line, in 2012 facing the cited question, 65,1% put themselves between 1 and 3 (in a 1 to 5 scale), regarding the major or minor influence of media on emotions. In this direction, when asked how they feel when they hear the phrase 'on the radio they broadcast only bad news and I feel breathless', the answers go from 'something similar happens to me' to 'nothing like that happens to me'. As in the previous survey, this time the survey was also conducted in four areas of the city divided by income levels. Different from this, the third hypothesis is the one that better seems to interpret the state of happiness and optimism based on the following: Whether there is some difference between the 2010 and 2012

results, when asked about the situation⁴ where they clearly had to select differential practices, the presence of self-centered enjoyment prevails. When consulted on what would they do after an exhausting day, having bought something to eat or drink, in 2010, 45,1% manifested a preference to 'eating/drinking it alone, enjoying every moment'. Whereas 52,9% opted to consume it in company (either calling someone or leaving something left for someone), resulting in half of the respondents choosing an individual option, alone, and the other half would rather eat it or drink it with other people. But if we add the situations when the subject is alone we have a 71,2%. In 2012, 99,3% of the answers are distributed among: 'call someone to share it' (38,9%), 'eat/drink it alone, enjoying every moment' (34,2%) and 'eat/drink it alone but leaves some for other' (26,2%). Summing the situations when the subject is alone it appears to be only a 60,4%. On the other hand, in search for 'feeling practices' to better comprehend the social sensibilities of *porteños*, the following was consulted: *Many times when we tell someone close how life is for us, we use these phrases. Please, indicate a value for each of the following assertions, considering from 1 to 5, where 1 "describes a little", and 5 "describes totally" what you would say.* The phrase 'The most important thing is to do what you really enjoy', throws these results: for 62% of respondents, the phrase 'totally' describes what they would say. The value adds up to 85% when considering those who believe the phrase describes "much" what they would say. In 2012, the phrase 'The most important thing in life is doing what you really enjoy' describes totally the 59,1% of the respondents. In general terms, the 81,2% considers the phrase describes them very well. Looking at both surveys, even if eight out of ten of the respondents declare the opinion that life is made to be shared, when analyzing crossed data we find that when thinking on what they like doing, they choose individual, personal options. Moreover, half of the respondents would choose to eat or drink something alone (activity the 60% valued as an activity they enjoy much). This could be compared with the fact that the 80% of respondents think that what they enjoy the most is a hug with a loved one; but, looking at the data, it could be thought that there is a 'should be' in those answers because, contrasted to the rest of the questions, it is mostly observed a self-centered individualistic subject. This situation validates the dialectic that operates as moral politics of the emotions when the first answer is *what should be* and the later *what could be*. Seven out of ten of the respondents understand that life is an opportunity to be better, which may show an interesting contradiction with the way they use their time - mostly to work, a work which salary they spend in needs (paying rent and taxes). This is a good reflection of why half of the respondents feel 'stressed, tired, or exhausted' in their daily life. It is clear the high value of money, main reason that distinguishes someone rich from someone poor. Even if one could think that money is what distinguishes and determines the class conditions, it is observed how personal success, health and family/friends are also important. It is interesting to notice that subjects respond that the hug of a loved one is what they enjoy most, but they also feel tiredness and exhaustion daily. In other words, respondents express they live to become better and to live in company, but they use their time spending money, they use their monetary resources in *needed* expenditures more than in options of enjoyment and, when choosing on what to spend it, they generally prefer activities on their own more than in company. That is to say, people postpone their desires and look to fulfilling them in the future rather than immediately (they would rather buy a house than having more free time).

VIII. CONCLUSIONS: BETWEEN NORMALIZATION AND ENJOYMENT

Searching happiness as a practice of feeling shows the structure of social sensibilities as a complex, contradictory, and even paradoxical issue. As a 'theoretical' conclusion and as schematic guides to keep reflecting on the problem of happiness, we now display two interpretations. One of them linked to what we call 'living in a society normalized in immediate enjoyment', and the other connected to happiness as an interstitial practice.

IX. NORMALIZATION, IMMEDIATE ENJOYMENT AND CONSUMPTION

There have been different approaches in sociology for portraying societies emerged during the planetary expansion of capitalism. One classic example is Weber's point of view about the connection between disenchantment, rationalization, and bureaucratization as an interpretive knot of social structuration. Another is the analysis of the importance of instrumental rationality as the key interpretation in the development of mass societies - done by Horkheimer and Adorno. Thirdly it is worth mentioning, the interpretation of the processes of the system in the colonization of the 'world of life' sustained by Habermas. Beyond their different contexts of production these approaches -and many others- all share the attempt at explaining how and why the process of structuration of societies tends towards what we call 'normalization'. *Normalization* refers to stabilization,

⁴ The situation is as follows: *'I am going to propose the following situation to you and I would like to know which option is closer to what you would do: At the end of a tiring day you buy something to drink or eat, you would:...'*

compulsive repetition, nomological adequacy, and contextual disconnection of social relations of the practices of individuals in a particular space/time:a) *Stabilization* implies a set of processes of obstruction of modifications, the avoidance of conflict, and the balance of flows meant to pass through life with no startles. Everyday life in sociability time/spaces occurs in the middle of the multiple ways in which societies organize their reproduction in the dialectics of production/consumption. It is 'between' those time/spaces that colonial societies elaborate strategies of living which block/annul/reabsorb the modifications that the work of reproduction demands. One of the central points of the elaboration of such processes named above is associated with the creation of *states of conflict avoidance* that lessen the agonistic power of the successive and generalized expropriations.b) *Compulsive repetition* is structured around unattached iterative forms of self-reflexive processes, the decrease of self-government, and loss of individual and collective autonomy. The expansion of capitalism at a global scale generates different forms of absences/dependencies/addictions that have the common logic of needing to suture/fill/satisfy those forms in and through consumption. Social bearability mechanisms and sensation regulation devices are aimed at generating repeated and serial forms of satisfactors through processes that are located in the pre-reflexive moments of action. The ways and objects of satisfaction become inadvertently desired and viewed as external solutions, with which subjects can actually do 'little or nothing'. In this direction, a compulsive character of these 'solutions' takes away the capacity of commanding processes and 'objects' from the subject and shifts it towards the very same 'things'. In their autonomy, these things un-attach the subjects' agency-capacity and puts it on that object.c) *Nomological adequacy* involves cognitive-affective processes of adaptation to guidelines that are performed in the pre-reflexive frame of action. Given the context of 'autonomy loss', both stabilization and compulsive repetition develop in the setting of a permanent enlargement/adaptation of the rules of interaction - which turn normalization in an accepted and acceptable state- whose contents and modifications are not object of public dispute, but instead are made effective in social histories made body. d) The *disconnection of the context of social relationships* is a mechanism by which the possible frictions in the processes of action coordination are eliminated, thus enhancing the flux of interactions. Since the so-called individuation processes, passing by the diagnostics about the loss/rupture of social bonds, up to the interpretations around fragmented societies, Social Sciences in the Twentieth Century have described and interpreted the growing accentuation of un-linked present social practices. Normalization of the Twenty-first Century produces/reproduces a 'separation' between the actions of individuals achieving modification of the notion of inter-action itself, but it also separates the weavings between the actions of the same individual, among practices performed by the same individual. In this direction we can understand how social normalization is a consequence but at the same time a generator of repetition, in the times of social bearability mechanisms and sensation regulation devices. Now, to accurately characterize the 'state' of such societies, it becomes necessary to enlighten the experience of immediate enjoyment as a privileged axis where the elaboration of possible normalizations crosses. In direct connection with what we have pointed out as normalization related to compulsive repetition, immediate enjoyment is the device through which the diverse and multiple ways of generating substitutes, replacements, and satisfactors are updated through consumption, understood as the mechanism to reduce anxiety. The connections between consumption, enjoyment, and objects acquire the procedural structure of addictions: there is an object that liberates moments of containment/adequacy to a specific sensibility state, with such a power/capacity that its absence demands an immediate replacement/reproduction. Without those objects there is a fracture in the (always undetermined) emotional network, in such a way that the experience of lack induces/produces the need once again, in the immediate consumption of the referred object. In this sense, enjoyment could be understood as the complex and contingent result lived as a parenthesis in the 'here-now', as a continuity in time that also produces a state of subjective dis-embedding. Enjoyment is resolved in the instant as time/space of realization that updates without any mediation with the perception of continuity/discontinuity. So it is immediate, a 'now' that makes sense in its indefinite repetition, a feature by which we can understand why it is experienced 'in itself' as a continuous flux of time. Enjoyment is the micro/macro marker of hours, days, and years; therefore, it becomes the parameter for the 'age's loss of sense'.⁵ Immediate enjoyment is coupled to the structure of dis-embedding time/space of societies thus producing a subjective un-anchoring. This means that neither the co-presence, nor 'face to face work', nor strategies for sheltering subjectivity are (and cannot be) included in the act of enjoyment. That is why enjoyment becomes circumstantial, contingent, brief but 'absolute', and radically 'here-now'.

Immediate enjoyment is an act with pretensions of totality that suspends the flux of everyday life. Therefore it is 'made': it is produced, performed, dramatized.

Immediate enjoyment refers to a form of 'intense' and 'superficial' appropriation, restorative of objects for anxiety decrease through salvation technologies. *Immediate enjoyment* happens in the moment of consumption, as these are practices with a totality pretension by and through which the individual subjectivising the object, re-constructing it in its structuring potency of vicarious experiences. Being enjoyment an act and

⁵ Many studies about processes of redefinition of notation of adulthood and adolescence have called it '*adolentization*'.

consumption an action, the dialectics of their mutual interactions define life as a set of practices oriented towards them, with the promise of operating as 'erasers' of remembrance of effort.

X. HAPPINESS AS AN INTERSTICIAL PRACTICE

A number of recent studies define 'happiness' in these dimensions: health, family, love, and money, in which we recognize the building blocks for a life based on the relative autonomy. If it is perceived that happiness relates to complex affective-cognitive states which are specified for liberating humans for individual development and giving the ability to experience sensory gratification, some of their connections to the festive spending, may be understood. Being autonomous, meeting with others, and enjoying are the traits of subjectivity in festive spending practices. Happiness is the experience of feeling autonomous and with power to act. It is boosted as an event by the removal and deregulation that characterize festive spending. Happiness is the order marked by being for the future, which is rebred in its same donation; it becomes effective in the register of giving (giving oneself) in reciprocity and hope of loving (each other), where the whole lives in the part, and where the part shows the whole. Happiness that results from the destructibility of festive spending has a bad smell for the city that expels it. Existing for the fruit and the causality of the product are logics of a set of practices which re-structure the divisions between individual, subjective, and social body that capitalist predation installs and plays. Sensitivities transform into fetish as social fantasies are cracked before happiness implied in the dismissal and de-regulative acts of festive spending. The entire indefinite feeling of happiness is a spiral surface for the registration of the experience of pleasure where pain has been left behind. At the time of spending, it is needed the pleasure of forgetting sacrifices. As the future does not depend on the calculation of the rationalization of time, now becomes a hiatus with the logic of social pain involved in the neo-colonial resignation. Happiness opposes to *solidarims*, in the sense that the latter works as a reproductive act of enjoyment for the donor of his own power of giving. Sociologically analysed through festive spending, happiness is the result of the dialectic between enjoyment, "savour", and pleasure, which solidarity focuses and institutes on the compulsive repetition of the act of giving temporary pleasure to the donor. Reciprocity as a more proximate level of festive spending de-configures solidarity as a pornographic solipsism of self-gratification. Objects acquire citizenship as identity givers to the recipient and stitches to the giver.

The de-regulative acts of the festive practice involve some other ways-seen and 'go' with the flow of life lived, forming plural motions that burst in a monochrome society resignation and mimetic consumption. Happiness can only be a fragile, contingent, and fragmented practice, as it is anchored in the dis-location it implies for the dizzying cliff of the ascetic preparation of the future. When the 'practices of wanting' and 'practices of gift-reciprocity' are updated in the dancing at the carnival, in the street musicians and in collective meals, etc., the lever of festive spending gives life to happiness in the ephemeral and instantaneous yet iterative and ritualistic pleasures of the radical intersubjectivity of being-with-others as a pleasant subject. The children, wives, friends of our respondents are the support point of happiness as an emotional state involving wanting practice. The hugs, the closeness with loved ones, and the importance of family indicates how happiness of the respondents becomes an opportunity to continuing the quest for autonomy.

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