OPPORTUNITY #16

WHAT IF WE MADE PERFECT LIFE DECISIONS?

CODE FOR HAPPINESS

The ability to make informed life choices using the power of predictive modelling to play out scenarios

WHY IT MATTERS TODAY

Happiness has been described in contrast to life choices such as: behaviour, for example getting more exercise; cognitive disciplines, for example showing gratitude or using cognitive behaviour therapy; and volition, for example setting and achieving realistic goals.[157] People who describe themselves as happy tend to flourish, with good relationships, high productivity and strong coping mechanisms. But there are indications that global happiness has gone down.[158]

Amongst others, the World Happiness Report ranks nations on happiness using metrics such as gross domestic product per capita, levels of social support, healthy life expectancy, generosity of others, perceptions of corruption levels and the freedom to make one's own life choices to rate countries by happiness.[159] Finland was ranked as the happiest country in the world in 2021.

The top seven happiest countries in the world for 2021 were all countries in northern Europe. The Middle East includes, on the one hand, some prosperous and quite happy nations, but, on the other, some that are at the foot of the global rankings, such as Yemen, or entirely excluded, such as Syria, for which no evaluation is provided.[160]

Even happy people occasionally experience sadness[161] and, as opposed to emotions alone, rely on evaluating their own life for a more complete assessment of one's own level of happiness.[162] What emerging research has found is that the freedom to make one's own life choices is in part related to the ability to make the best decision out of two or more possible alternatives.[163]

SECTORS

CONSUMER GOODS · EDUCATION · FINANCIAL SERVICES & INVESTORS · HEALTH & HEALTHCARE

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THE OPPORTUNITY TOMORROW

People can be helped to make life choices leading to happiness through the use of quantum computing, and advanced intelligence more generally, along with vast data sets. The data sets can be used to populate bespoke predictive models either based on choice theories (the understanding of how people make choices)[164] or machine-learning models.

These models can then optimise each individual's decisions based on the environmental context and situations they find themselves in. By including people's genetic and metabolic profiles and information about their finances, personality and health, predictive models can minimise the emotional and financial fall-out of bad choices and optimise the path to the future for themselves, their families and communities.

Legal and ethical frameworks can enable the use of these models and help policy-makers better understand predictability in social policies across social contexts and improve, if not necessarily accurately predicting outcomes in social policy-making.[165]

UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES

Unintended harm may occur by removing the potential for serendipity as people no longer realise they are missing out on 'happy surprises'.

BENEFITS

The normalisation of such tools makes societies more stable and resilient, optimising individuals' time and potential and improving their happiness. The best possible outcomes from life decisions are no longer merely hoped for but expected.

RISKS

Risks include accidental or deliberate corruption of data affecting predictions and scope for models to be used to limit people's free will. Conversely, the nature of predictive decision-making and the widespread use of these tools will continuously generate new and more complex futures, but giving less clarity on who will bear responsibility for a decision that does not lead to anticipated outcomes and does not guarantee accurate predictions in social policies.