Happiness: Between What We Want and What We Need

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Abstract
The paper presents a very simple toy model that is simulated to experience some aspects related to what is it people want and need when related to the social happiness. By outlining some short discussions related to the distinguishing of what we call “want” and “need”, we see how both micro-social aspects may emerge the happiness as well as the urge to innovate and affinity to the collective creativity and social progress.

Keywords:
happiness, want, need, social simulation.

"You can't always get what you want!
…but if you try sometimes,
you might find, you get what you need"
The Rolling Stones

1. Introduction

Our desire on things can come from what we want and what we need. While a want is a wish, a need is a necessity [2]. Qualitatively speaking we can say that a want is further to reach, relative to the desire on needing things. For needs can be described leveled, to stay alive, people should provide their basic needs, *i.e.:* food, dress, and shelter. Some other secondary needs are necessary to keep the urge of staying alive. The basic needs gives life to a human being, and some other needs are necessarily to make the living. In the other hand, a want is an urge within individuals for the satisfaction, pleasure, and pleasant feeling in their lives. Thus, the need and the want are both shaping the way we keep on living in the most pleasant way.

Happiness is complex and never be a simple terminology [3]. Some works on behavioral economics are brought recently to surge what makes people happy, for collective welfare are simply emerged from happy individuals. In our case within the paper, happiness is related to the balance between two important constraints: what and how we desire things as we want and need them.

When people cannot afford what they need, the want them. But it is a commonsense that not all want is sourced from the need. Some wants, even further, are not at all related to what we need. The tendency of a want can be directly related to the people acquisition of knowledge on things. It is obvious we will never want a thing that is unknown to us.

The way people fulfill their needs is related to the local customs, values, and cultures in a community. There is a high heterogeneity when we talk about the specific things, how people provide themselves with their necessity. Culture teaches people to manage themselves on things they need for the sake of their sustainability and survivability in the society. In [4], we have discussed how social neighborhood may perplex the concavity of the demand curve, which is related to the way people feel happy or unhappy about things economically.

On the other hand, the way people fulfill their wants is related to the knowledge of larger domain in society. The larger the social network in which one is involved, there is some possibility of enlargement of their wish list based on what they want. This is related to higher possibility of tendency that might drive the urgency for achieving what they want. A thing that is good for the collective progress in the community with the risk that may reduce the "peace in mind" as to the happiness related to the way individuals weighing the needs and the wants.

These issues are discussed in the paper by proposing a very simple computational toy model and simulation that shows how the wants and the needs in society, collectively speaking, may arise to some global aspects like the average and local happiness among social agents, the clustering in social life relative to the happiness and the tendency for innovation and creativity.

2. Overview of the Simulation

If one make a list of things of her needs (ω_i) and wants (η_i), we can map them into the real number, $\omega, \eta \in \ell \in \mathbb{R}$ and set their relations as inequality of,

$$\omega_i > \eta_i \qquad [1]$$

where ℓ denotes the wishlist comprised by the needs and the wants, as what one wants would always related to her wishes out of pleasure, as the things she needs are the things that would be related to necessity out of survival. Needs are things that are necessary in life, such as food, shelter, and basic necessities that we need for make a living. Common wants are represented by latest models of cell phones, plasma TV, IPod, designer jeans, luxury cars, and the like. These are our desires, but we can continue living and making it out without these in our lives. However, for people with ability covering what they need, a long list of things they desire and want might be the source of unhappiness.

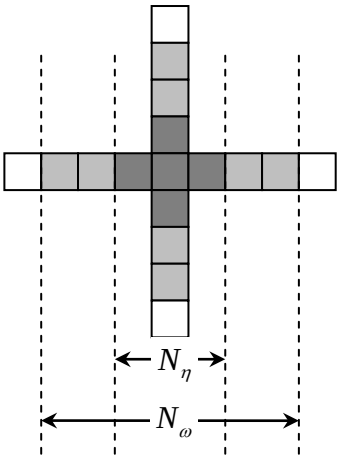

Figure 1
The different neighborhood sizes of the social reference for wishes and needs.

To know a thing that is wanted but can reach it can bring agony, and we know such things from people surrounding us, friends, relatives, as well as the sources of information, e.g.: mass media, books, magazines, television as well as educational program we follow. The sizes of our sight and horizon in the jungle of social networks play an important role shaping what we desire. Yet, what become our needs are also adjusted beneath the social networks in which we interact within actively. It is a common sense to have in hand that the sizes of social network we refer for what we want (N_ω) are greater than the one shapes what we need (N_η),

$$N_\omega > N_\eta \qquad [2]$$

We set up a simulation to see the interaction of what people need and what they want in a landscape reflecting the desire of the people with different kinds of neighborhoods representing ones corresponding the social reference of both.

We use the von Neumann neighborhood to see how the two are shaping the landscape of the desire as we saw. We note that the fulfillment of what one needs and wants would hypothetically follow the exponential decreasing, of

$$f \sim \exp(-\ell) \qquad [3]$$

as shown in figure 2. The more the fulfillment of what one wants would be directly related to the states of well-being, and vice versa.

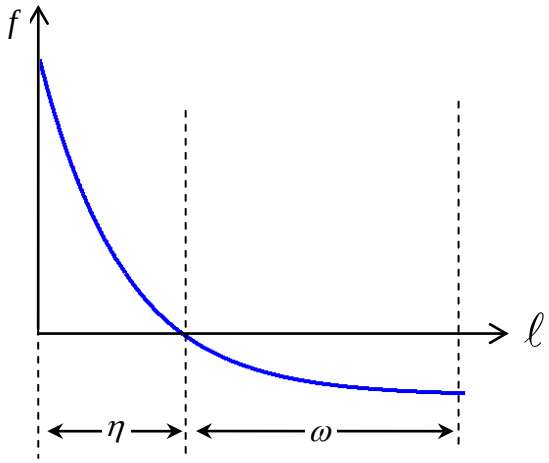

Figure 2
The fulfillment of one's needs and wants

$$\delta = \omega - \eta \qquad [4]$$

as among the people of which the fulfillment of what they need is good, the greater the they want but not necessarily need, the less happy they are (δ). People are happy, for the less distance between what they wish for and what they need.

The simulation is brought by letting the economic agents adjusted what they want with those what the respective neighbors want in average,

$$\eta_i(t+1) = \frac{1}{N_\eta}\sum_{j=1}^{N_\eta}\left(\eta_i(t) + \eta_j(t)\right) \qquad [5]$$

and what they want,

$$\omega_i(t+1) = \frac{1}{N_\omega}\sum_{j=1}^{N_\omega}\left(\omega_i(t) + \omega_j(t)\right) \qquad [6]$$

By using the updating rules of eq. [5] and [6], we see the dynamics of the pleasantness of the artificial agents throughout iterations by incorporating the eq. [4].

3. Discussions

The computational simulation is conducted in the 3-dimensional world of lattice grid where the agents are represented by lattices, of which globally is the torus: the lowest two-dimensional grids are pasted together with the highest, and the right grids with the left one [*cf.* 1]. After the initialization by giving uniformly distributed random index of things wanted and needed by agents, the updating rules are applied on every rounds. After sometime, the global view would reveal the spatial clusters of agents that are happy and not happy for weighing things they need and want regarding to the evaluation of their respective neighbors.

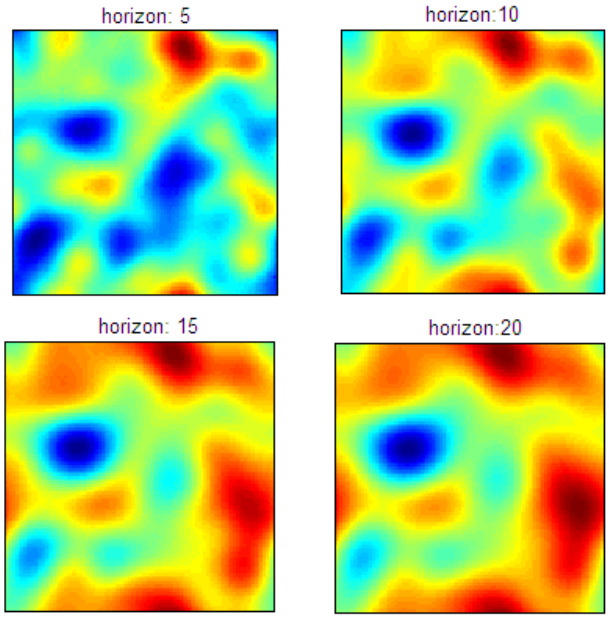

Figure 3
The happy (*blue clusters*) and the unhappy ones (*red clusters*)

The experiments are brought with some different sizes of horizons N_ω that could be seen as a representation of the size of knowledge of which they used as a media to be referred on things they desire. The resulting landscape of the simulation is shown in figure 3. Here, the bluest lattices showed the most happy agents and the red ones represent the unhappy agents for the large distance on things they needed and wanted. Obviously, the larger the horizon for the reference of things they wanted, the more clusters of the unhappy ones arise. Knowledge gives more things to be referred and chosen to be desired, yet, as figure 4 shows, the need meets the equilibrium fast.

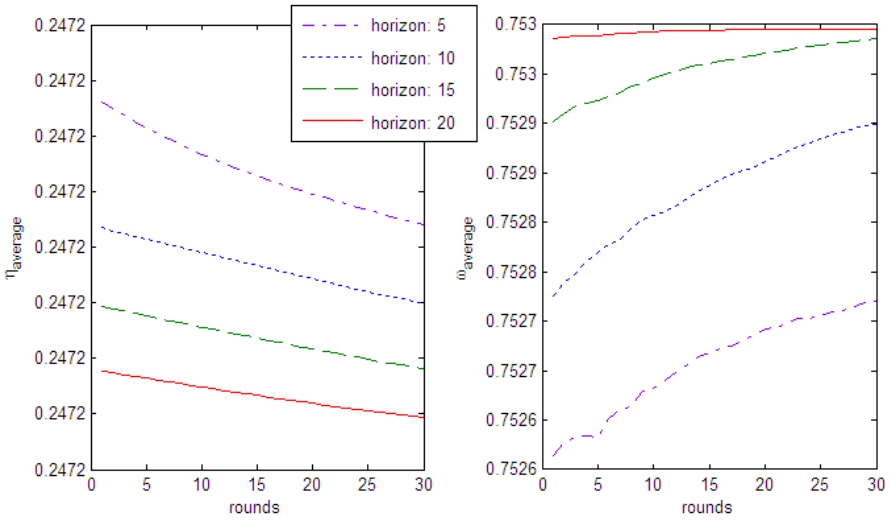

Figure 4
The average needs and wishes for different N_ω

The average index of wanted things of the whole population is apparently higher as the perspective of the bounded-horizon agents is greater. Larger information exchange has made the agents thinks more and more globally and however, let agents become less happy on their weighing with the ones they can get locally, *i.e.:* things they just need. In some cases, this reflects the reality of unhappy yet smart persons with access to large sources of information, as shown in figure 5.

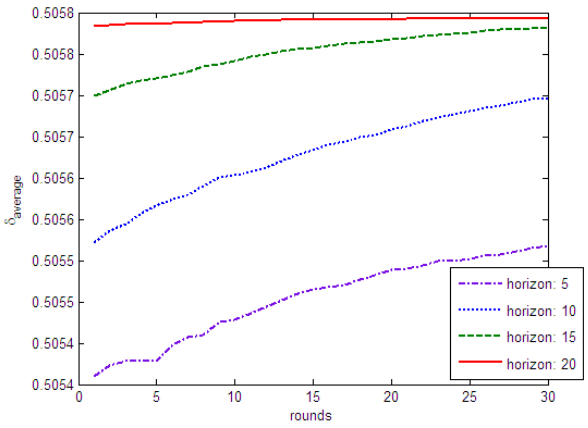

Figure 5

The dynamics of the distance between what agents want and need for different N_ω

However, if we think that the larger horizon of N_ω as the access to information, we can see that the red dots in figure 3 may also represent the clusters of people with greater tendency for competition of social progress. It is logical that when people less happy with the local conditions, the vitality for pursuing better things are also greater. This gives us to the thought that extreme happy ones are those with less eagerness and curiosity for progressivity of the local surroundings.

What can we learn from here? The acquisition of knowledge may just make people less happy but in socially big picture gives opportunity of the local surroundings for progress and innovation in their pursuit of happiness. When people don't know lots of alternatives for things that may makes them happy, the happiness persists. The constraints between the value of N_ω and N_η can bring us to the interesting realizations between what we call happy and what the things that may drive us to social and collective progress, for collectively we are not going anywhere when we have no idea what larger stakes that we want individually.

4. Concluding Remarks

We presented the very simple models in which we can do some experiment on what we may want and what we need. By relating this issue with things that can bring happiness and unhappiness, we could see dynamically how social clustering can be related to things that made us happy or in a more advance perspective what drives the social progress. In our experiment, we can see that happiness is a individual decision.

One cannot be truly happy if she keeps on wanting more than she needs and could have. It is interesting to see in the global picture and dynamical sense that contentedness is the gateway to happiness. In our simulation we can see that "irrational wants" limit the happiness individually yet, it can socially emerged collective progress for more and more innovation of life is perpetually driven. It

does not matter if individuals have little in terms of material possessions. It is finding contentment with things that we possess.

However, the unhappy and restless micro-social condition could also bring positive impact regarding to the weighing of the wants and the needs among agents. The large number of wants may bring a drive for further struggle in order to globally social progress, which in turn, is good for the collective aspects on creativity and innovation.

Last but not least, the theoretical exploration of the paper is also brought as a proposal in the inquiries of social psychological approach on social happiness related to interdisciplinary works in the utilization of computational simulation that potentially give us more comprehensive views on the nature of social analysis.

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