

Colombia—Unlivable but Happy—Fool's Paradise?

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This mostly theoretical and review article attempts to resolve the apparent contradiction between happy Colombians living in unlivable conditions. Colombia is the happiest country in the world or one of several very happiest, depending on measurement. At the same time Colombia is apparently unlivable—by Western standards—Colombia's poor, corrupt, dangerous, and roads and ports are bad, too. But objective livability of a society usually expressed mostly in terms of money/consumption/physical stuff misses 2 points: 1) only very basic physical stuff is good enough to satisfy human needs and produce wellbeing; 2) non-physical attributes such as personal freedom and social connection not only matter, but also are hampered by excessive pursuit of physical stuff. For instance, impeccable organization and physical infrastructure such as that in Singapore not only is not needed for neither livability nor happiness, but it may actually decrease them by having to focus on what's unimportant and overwork, and by making environment unhuman, sanitized, hospital/airport-like. Arguably the solution of the apparent paradox of unlivability but happiness is that the good outweighs the bad—Colombia is very happy because it is actually quite livable. This paper argues that Colombia is one of the very best countries to visit, and it may even be one of best places to live. Yet another possibility is that ignorance is the bliss—Colombia is a fool's paradise. More research is needed.

LIFE SATISFACTION, HAPPINESS, SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING, QUALITY OF LIFE, LIVABILITY, BEST PLACES TO LIVE, COLOMBIA, SINGAPORE, DEGROWTH

Happy Colombia

Colombia is the very happiest country in the World (e.g., Roos 2019) ADD A BUNCH OF PUPULAR MEDIA HERE, or at least one of a handful of the happiest countries—both World Values Surveys and World DataBase of Happiness ranks it top 3 in table 1.¹

Colombia shines. The happiest countries are either very most developed, rich and equal or rather poor and very unequal Latin countries. Still, Colombia is happier than all other Latin countries and about as happy as Mexico, but Colombia is significantly poorer than Mexico, at least 25% poorer either in nominal or PPP terms²

happiness of above 8, even like 8.5! this is huge! a trully outstanding score

top 10 countries just costa rica and colombia from latin america, and colombia poorer than costa rica; Colombia is a trully outstanding case of achieving world's highest happiness at low development level

¹Gallup happiness surveys can be ignored by research—the Gallup data is not meant for research but for commerce—Gallup charges \$30,000 (per year) for data access (authors' inquiry). Clearly happiness industry (Davies 2015), not happiness research. —private corporations are making fortune from tax dollars and students tuition—scholars should resist corporatization of academia (Mills 2012a, Cox 2013, Mills 2012b, Catropa and Andrews 2020, Schmidlin 2015), and corporatization of happiness research (Davies 2015).

²[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_GDP_\(nominal\)_per_capita](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_GDP_(nominal)_per_capita)[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_GDP_\(PPP\)_per_capita](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_GDP_(PPP)_per_capita)

Table 1: 10 happiest countries in the world. Data from World Database of Happiness (WDH) at <https://worlddatabaseofhappiness.eur.nl/rank-reports/satisfaction-with-life/> and WVS https://worlddatabaseofhappiness-archive.eur.nl/hap_nat/desc_nagenpublic.php?cntry=122; and worldvaluessurvey.org: out of 88 countries waves 5-7: 2005-2022.

WDH			WVS		
WDH rank	country	WDH happiness (1-10)	WVS rank	country	WVS happiness (1-10)
1	Denmark	8.2	1	Puerto Rico	8.4
2	Mexico	8.1	2	Mexico	8.3
3	Colombia	8.1	3	Colombia	8.3
4	Switzerland	8	4	Qatar	8.0
5	Finland	8	5	Norway	7.9
6	Iceland	8	6	Nicaragua	7.9
7	Costa Rica	7.9	7	Tajikistan	7.9
8	Norway	7.9	8	Switzerland	7.9
9	Canada	7.9	9	Uzbekistan	7.9
10	Qatar	7.8	10	Ecuador	7.8

have first across space v other countries–paradox and then over time–another paradox–it improved a ton, but swb flat or decreased; LATER: similarly to table enumerating qol show over time great progress; ya so 2 main sections static now and dynamic 2000-2020; like GDP per cap and PPP; kzk; etc etc

1 Unlivable Colombia

Table 2: Objective indicators of quality of life or livability v subjective wellbeing or life satisfaction.

Value	Indicator	Source
2019 poverty (national benchmark)	42%	https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SI.POV.NAHC?locations=CO
2011 median daily income/cap PPP USD	\$7	https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/09/23/seven-in-ten-people-globally-live-on-10-or-less-per-day/
2019 percent on <\$5.5/day	30%	https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SI.POV.UMIC?locations=CO
2017 R/P 10%	40	https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SI.DST.10TH.10
2020 unemployment rate	15%	https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.TOTL.ZS?locations=CO
2020 freedom rank	96/210	https://freedomhouse.org/countries/freedom-world/scores
2021 corruption rank	87/180	https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2021/index/col
2020 political stability, no violence/terrorism pctl	20th	https://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/Home/Reports
2020 rule of law pctl	34th	https://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/Home/Reports
2021 working conditions decile	bottom decile	https://www.globalrightsindex.org/en/2021/countries/col
2018 quality of roads rank	110/137	https://reports.weforum.org/pdf/gci-2017-2018-scorecard/WEF_GCI_2017_2018_Scorecard_E08Q057.pdf

In sharp contrast to awesome (subjective) Colombian happiness, Colombia is not livable or has low (objective) quality of life in terms of objective indicators listed in table 2, Colombia scores mediocre or low on all of them.³ In a remarkable contrast to Colombia's happiness, some of the objective indicators of quality of life are grim: about a third of Colombians live on less than \$5.50 a day (2019).⁴ The ratio of the average income of the richest 10% to the poorest 10% (R/P 10%)–Colombia ranks 3rd out of 70 at a whopping 40–top decile of Colombians makes on average 40x the average for the poorest decile; even greater disparity than in the unequal US at 30. Unemployment rate is at 15%, with informal labor at about 50% of the workforce (cited in ?).⁵ All of that, notably precarious labor, poverty, and inequality should lead to unhappiness. Notably inequality is associated with a multitude of negative outcomes (Wilkinson and Pickett 2010).⁶ Specifically in Latin America, inequality was found to have negative effects on happiness as it seems

³And may see for additional indicators appendix: World Economic Forum report.

⁴Poverty (national benchmark) is at 42%–the whole nation has a higher poverty rate than one of the poorest cities in the US, Camden NJ, at 36%. Camden also rated using a national poverty benchmark <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/camdennewjersey>. Median daily per capita income in PPP in 2011 was at \$7 (US was at \$56).

⁵Colombia has a high prevalence of informal work above 50% and workers in informal sector are less happy (Hurtado et al. 2017).

⁶But see criticism Snowden (2010).

to be a signal of persistent unfairness (Graham and Felton 2006).

Colombia is still being haunted by violence in conflict, much of which is rural (linea cite??), and so in that respect it is notable that rural is happier than urban.

Colombia is only partly free ranked at 96/210 Colombia is a corrupt country ranking 87/180 on Corruption Perceptions Index.

Political stability and absence of violence and terrorism—is only 20th percentile —Colombia is less stable and more violent than 80 percent of the countries. Voice and accountability and government effectiveness and control of corruption are at around median, Colombia scores best at Regulatory Quality better than about 2/3 of countries, and Rule of Law is problematic—below about 2/3 of countries.

Colombia is one of the 10 worst countries in the world for working people: Murders and impunity, union-busting and dismissals. This is one of the most troubling statistics as it involves clear violations of human rights.

In terms of quality of roads Colombia ranks 110/137—part of the problem is mountains, yet roads are precarious as one of the authors of the study found out when his bus crashed—roads are not only a basis for commerce and trade but also for everyday getting around, especially in absence of rail. (Singapore scores 2nd).

QOL v SWB: unlivable but happy—“Fool’s Paradise”—explaining the contradictions

MV SOMEWHERE: A first glance conclusion from table 2 SWB doesn’t have to do much with money, or other indicators of objective quality of life—Colombia scores mediocre or poor on all of them and yet is one of the very happiest countries in the world; so against apparently livability theory.

Colombia is an (objective) Quality of Life v (subjective) Life Satisfaction and Happiness puzzle. It scores mediocre or low on most quality of life indicators, but tops rankings of both global overall cognitive life satisfaction and momentary affective happiness. In other words, it appears to be unlivable but happy, hence so called “Fool’s Paradise,” a place where people are subjectively happy, despite objective misery (Michalos 2014)—for other examples of fool’s paradise and fool’s hell see Okulicz-Kozaryn and Valente (2019).

So is Colombia “Unlivable” but “Happy,” a so called Fool’s Paradise Okulicz-Kozaryn and Valente (2019)? Arguably not. Colombia is a genuinely wonderful place to be as many locals, travelers and tourists would attest (e.g., Roos 2019, ?), and so is Cali THAT WASHINGTON POST OR NYT BETH REFRERD AND GUESS MANBY AOTHERS

Colombia is one of the happiest countries in the world, or indeed the happiest (Roos 2019). Colombia scores in top decile in terms of life satisfaction (Scandinavia often tops the rankings). Yet in terms of emotions and daily life experience: smiling and laughter, respect, enjoyment, worry, sadness and anger: positive daily experiences and emotions, the top countries are: Colombia, El Salvador, and Guatemala. Of the 10 countries that rank highest on positive experiences, 7 are Latin American (Roos 2019). Colombians seem to have warm, welcoming, and unshakable spirit; and they appear resilient—grateful, satisfied, optimistic, lucky, and even innocent (?).

elaborate on affect, momentary happiness as per that huffpost; and add Washington Post I think—that Col is the very happiest!!!

This is not to say that the objective problems, notably abject poverty and violations of human rights, are not important and don’t need to be addressed. Indeed, one of the happiness metric shortcomings is that humans adapt to just about anything (Brickman et al. 1978)

It may be resilience, positive outlook, ability to make out most of little, deeply social society’s fabric.

The chasm between objective quality of life or livability and subjective wellbeing may point to limitations of livability theory CITE. Or perhaps alternatively, there are aspects of objective quality of life and livability that are not captured by usual rankings such as those cited above. Notably, nature is extraordinary in Colombia. Colombia has 2nd largest biodiversity (after Brazil), despite being 7x smaller than Brazil. Colombia has just about any type of natural amenities. And we know that nature (as opposed to cities) is the key ingredient for happiness PRETTY earth only endures, Tesson, Walden

Another key to happiness is social capital PUTNAM BOWLING ALONE LANE mwerket democracies MCMAHON history TOENIES, and thgere is plenty of social Capital in colombia—Colombians are extraordinarily social, firendly, outgoing and sponatenous, there are festivals and social events vbery frequently.

freedom from (negative)[objective]: be no slave, live in a free country, have no coercion, free from restrictions/impediments; lack of obstacles FH freedom to (positive)[subjective]: be able to choose, control and direct one's own life; presence of control WVS eg US more objectively free in than MEX but MEX actually feeling more free than US (give numbers for both)!! (Okulicz-Kozaryn 2014, 2015)

world avg from wvs 1981-2020: 6.9 .25

COL 8.0 0.1

Another explanation for the colomian paradox of high subjective wellbeing despite objective poverty is adaptation BRICKMAN—humans are able to adapt to just about anything—then perhaps colombians have adapted, at least to some degree, to poverty, inequality, and even violence having syuffered through recent civil war and breakdown of the state, now that things are better than they used to be just few decades ago, colombians are making best out of the conditions.

So while presumably many Colombians would like to move to USA and not many Americans woul like to move to Colombia, it should be noted that indeed many westerners from better objective conditions do move to Colombia FIND SOME CITES

thsi is background information and further elaboration is beyond the scope of this paper focusing in Happiness within Colombia across space

1

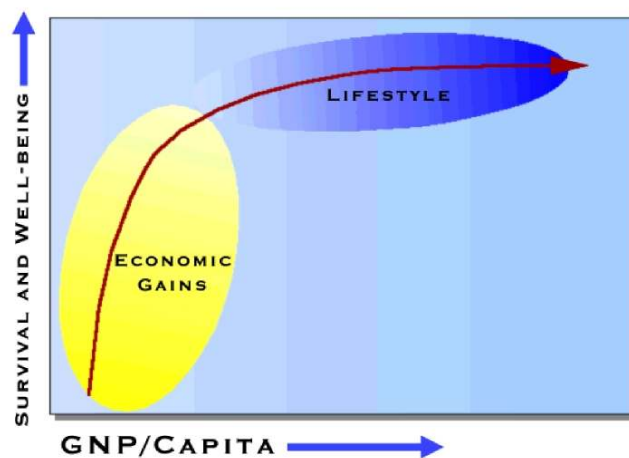


Figure 1: Well-being and income, (Inglehart 1997).

THEORY:

the folklore theory defines happiness in terms of the reflection of broadly held perceptions about life which are rooted in traditions and the culture of a country. For example, if a society has a pessimistic outlook on life, generations to come might hold the same beliefs even if the situation in their country has improved. Nevertheless, if a culture has an optimistic outlook in life regardless of their circumstances, future generations will remain positive. This Thus, through the folklore theory one can predict that Paraguayans will be happier, regardless of the socioeconomic situations the country has gone through, because of cultural influences (Veenhoven and Ehrhardt 1995).

to swb/qol/fools paradise: more consumption/physical stuff—less time and energy for non-physical stuff; opportunity cost civ and its discontents—more civilization, less freedom

Singapore, a Fool's Hell?

An useful counterexample for Colombia could be “fool’s hell”—a place that has high objective quality of life or livability, but low subjective wellbeing or life satisfaction.

A first guess could be the US, as the world-renown best country in the world, home to the American dream, notably the very richest country in the world (excluding tiny oil producing countries such as Norway), and yet ranks only 46/160 in WDH, the best country in the world doesn't even make it to the top happiness quartile, and more on the US and American dream later.

Yet, it is not the US, but Singapore that scores even better on objective quality of life indicators.

Singapore, Switzerland of Asia, is impeccably/squeaky clean, extremely stable/predictable/disciplined and safe (??). Singapore, by many standards, one of the best, if not the best place in the World. It has World’s third highest (after Qatar and Luxembourg) Gross Domestic Product per Capita Purchasing Power Parity adjusted (IMF 2017). It has also third highest (after Monaco and Japan) life expectancy in the World (Central Intelligence Agency 2017), second highest economic freedom (Heritage 2017). Singaporean children score highest on educational tests (Coughlan 2017), it is making greatest progress in health (Fullman et al. 2017), has the World’s fastest internet (McSpadden 2015). It even has world’s strongest passport (Chandran 2017). In short, one could say that Singapore is one of most livable places in the World, if not the very most livable in the World. Singapore’s life satisfaction rank is 68/160, again, Colombia is 3/160. This is one of the most striking paradoxes in the social indicators field—given poor or average objective quality of life indicators, Colombia is an extremely happy country. How?

But being impeccably clean, extremely disciplined and safe can hamper freedom and ultimately happiness. For instance, no smoking in Singapore—but cigars help great deal (Freud). No marijuana, no gum chewing, and a list of prohibitions continues (??)⁷

really Colombia better than Singapore? discuss more!!

US a Fool’s Paradise

Figure 2: Getting out of the train station and bus terminal. (Note: no trains in Colombia.)



miles corak etc

⁷ “Smoking is one of the greatest and cheapest enjoyments in life, and if you decide in advance not to smoke, I can only feel sorry for you,” “[Cigars have] served me for precisely fifty years as protection and a weapon in the combat of life ... I owe to the cigar a great intensification of my capacity to work and a facilitation of my self-control” . Per Freud see <https://www.freud.org.uk/2020/04/22/freud-and-his-cigars/> and ?. Of course, as with everything, moderation should be exercised, for instance, smoking more than 2 cigars a day increases probability of health problems much more than smoking less than 2 cigars per day, and while some studies find no health effects of smoking less than 2 cigars per day, some studies do find negative effects (e.g., ?).

2 Discussion and Conclusion

CONCLUSION: only apparently great happiness is possible in unlivable conditions! BUT what matters for livability is not only gdp, kzk, roads, etc; social capital—Rt so col is livable!! argue that don't need much to satisfy human needs, so ya livability theory holds!!and Stuff like gdp governance roads not most important, social stuff is the key and stressless spontaneous attitude like from Marcuse

conclusion: why awesome wealth impeccable discipline and physical infrastructure if it is not related to human wellbeing?

conclusion/limitations: much further research needed, especially in terms of systematic and deeper approaches; here the goal was to paint a broad picture

Despite all the problems with poverty, roads, corruption, etc as enumerated at the beginning in 2, Colombia actually seems to be quite a livable place.

But 2 points to problems in terms of metrics that are mostly economic, some legal/institutions, and physical infrastructure. But these things are not the only things that matter ⁸ there are other things that matter for human flourishing or happiness.

and in fact the more focus on economy, the less human friendly the place is—marx sec on alienation

It has wonderful nature, extremely good energy, cheerful welcoming people, and so forth. *lll*these washington post huffington post etc here

Colombia is a wonderful place, it has everything: Pacific, Caribbean, jungle, desert, mountains, you name it, like Lat Am in one country, 2nd greatest biodiversity in the world so it is striking that according to WEF in terms of Prioritization of Travel & Tourism colombia ranks 97th out of 136 countries (World Economic Forum 2017). Given that its air transport infrastructure is good 60th, but Ground and Port Infrastructure bad 116th. And Safety and Security 136th/136—surely Colombia should work to improve safety, but much progress has already been done, and it is important to point out that much of the country is safe, and dangerous colombia is more of a stigma of the past than present reality.

lll

!!as per fool paradise question in the title: no, wonderful place, yes, poor, but not only material things matter for livability

The concept of fool's paradise is related to the concept of 'ignorance is a bliss,' and there may be a grain of truth there. if anything ignorance is a bliss—colombians may not know about good life, especially those in poor and isolated areas

ya a grain of truth in fool's paradise, it is similar to saying ignorance is the bliss or people simply do not know better; like that ecuador airbnb quito old hotel owner said!

inhabitants of poor municipalities in the Choco are happy to know only that environment in which they were born and raised, but when they know and live in other municipalities with greater socio-economic development their demands and expectations increase (Muñoz-Cardona 2018).

many poor may be relatively segregated and isolated into their neighborhoods, not knowing better, and thus being satisfied with little what they have. Similarly, to women in rural China, who only became unhappy once they became exposed to higher standard of living (Rosenthal 1999).

Curiously, Martínez and Short (2020) reports that in Cali residents in the poorest districts were more satisfied with their lives, and speculates that it may be so due to the high resilience of this population being affected by crime, poor health, and insufficient provision of public goods. Here it may be similar, country was ravaged by largest civil conflict in Latin America and drug-trafficking related violence in 80s and 90s (Martínez and Short 2020), and now while still poor and unsafe as compare to West, much better than 230 or 0 years ago; and what it went through might have made it resilient

There is obviously large migration from latin america to the US, and surely more people want to come to the US than leave it,

⁸As long as the problems are not extreme, and in Colombia they sometimes are. For instance, mediocre or relatively poor road condition does not hamper human flourishing much, but extremely bad condition such as falling bridge does create great unhappiness. Same with poverty—one can live happily on very little, indeed be poor by western standards, without hot water, without car, etc, but abject poverty such as malnutrition does create great unhappiness. There is considerable abject poverty in Colombia, and no amount of nature, festivals, or cheerfulness can help with it.

but this doesn't mean that the US is the best place to live—people mostly come to the US for the money, not necessarily for quality of life.

Indeed recent media reports argue the opposite—people are leaving the US for latin america for better quality of life there, eg californians and others moving to mexico; and anecdotal evidence—many westerners fall in love with colombia

future research can perhaps use MLM to include country level variables, now with only 3 or 4 waves, there is not enough time variability to test these variables statistically

Future Research and Questions that Remain

improve on anecdotal evidence who would move where col→us or us→col

big elephant in the room may be the bias of authors: it may be just money: having Western salary in a poor country buys a lot of happiness arguably authors would be less excited about colombia if they lived on a colombian salary

yes, survey data shows that colombians living in colombia and making colombian salary are happy, but would they still be happy if they knew life, salary, and opportunities in the US, would they stay in Colombia, so again ignorance is a bliss? it's a paradise but only because people don't know any better?

And sure money helps. But it's locals making pesos being more happy than American

cannot really test or properly exclude fools paradise hypothesis, but anecdotal evidence, contrary to popular opinion that colombians could most would go to united states; indeed this rather seems exception that the rule and many colombians who can live in the US chose to live in Colombia, likewise many westerners go and stay in col

THESE HERE I GUESS SUBSECTIONS IN DISCUSSION/CONCLUSION OR SOM

Extremely Good Energy (popular media observations) MV this somewhere

washington post etc etc

Extremely Good Energy (authors observations) MV this somewhere

difficult to measure and operationalize and capture more scientifically hence we allow these speculations here that could be a start to form the hypotheses to be tested in the future

In col there is human factor, good ene, we lost in the west. Eg pull over from hwy and right there friendly personal cup of coffee. In us Starbucks that feels like hospital or airport, robotic inhuman

ya colombians have this spontaneous unbridled joy; so yah its about environment ecology like people festive and nature, but maybe even more so about attitude and approach to life—kind of like marcus and fromm ideal CITE; and don't seem to be weighted down by civilization and its discontents FREUD CITE or ghosts of the past STEVE PILE CITE

ADD HERE FROM LINA ORG where i have lina in org that colombians dont pay attention to politics; here in pasto french guy says they dont pay attention to news and bad stuff, more about family

Present time orientation! Not worrying about future, happy go lucky—in sharp contrast to ⁹

Opposite to anxiety! Free spirit shame guilt free fun living a life. Not being a slave

Not just rapido and trabajo and dinero

There is a big time anxiety in henwral unrelayed to trabajo dinero

⁹but that could be also culture of poverty cite that italian guy unevenly city i guess

And fakeness!

totally! not just quantity but quality of social relationships—in the US as Marx said they are about business, not about actual meaningful social contact

Col more innocent!! Closer to human nature. More real. As compared to calculating fake corrupt American

And also Caribbean ene. Ecuador ain't same

And in US in addition to business and constant work also this perfection and excellence like Plano city of excellence and then arguably more shame and guilt again need to give fewer fucks, like in Col!

TODO: have separate som-r.tex as opposed to having it below; and in paper say see supplementary material as opposed to see appendix!

ONLINE APPENDIX

Happiness v Life Satisfaction

Overall SWB can be broken down into many components. One is affective happiness (feel happy) v cognitive life satisfaction (perceive/evaluate life as satisfying).¹⁰ The two would overlap/correlate moderately but they are conceptually different—e.g., I am happy at the moment because I see blue sky and eat a tasty burger, but I am dissatisfied with my life because I have no friends, no money, and bad health. Or I can be satisfied with my life as a whole because I have many friends, excellent health, and great job, but I am unhappy now because the weather is bad and my lunch is not tasting good.

Likewise, a typical Scandinavian, say from Iceland, looks grumpy, cold, unfriendly, and rather sad, doesn't talk much, doesn't smile, yet Scandinavians consistently report very high life satisfaction. Latinos report quite high life satisfaction, and are extremely happy: warm, cheerful, friendly.

For discussion see Diener for public policy and boilerplate from earlier like Meyers etc

Livability Theory MV this somewhere rather early like after intro or maybe here or maybe in appendix and ref to it from early on

Needs/livability theory (Veenhoven and Ehrhardt 1995) is a key happiness theory, next to the other 4 theories, genes/set point (eg Schnittker 2008), adaptation/adjustment; hedonic treadmill (Brickman et al. 1978), comparison/discrepancies (Michalos 1985) happiness just a motivator (Carver and Scheier 1990)

DO SEE ORG FOR CIV AND ITS DISCONTENTS AND CP society as tool to satisfy needs; exact opposite in Freud civ and it's discontents;;rt! ideally society is to serve human needs! But in capitalism it serves interests of capitalists; as it earlier did to serve feudal lords; kings, etc etc

Societies are systems for meeting human needs, but not all societies do that job equally well. Consequently, people are not equally happy in all societies.

Improvement of the fit between social institutions and human needs will result in greater happiness.

(p. 3645 Veenhoven 2014)

¹⁰Another notable one is hedonia: more joy and fun than pain and misery (Bentham) v eudamonia: good life, realizing one's potential, becoming who you are (Aristotle, Nietzsche).

3 QOL v SWB

add from my livability paper

Marxist Perspective MV this somewhere

Totally foundation of all this happiness premium in col is Marx: ppl live here to have fun to have life; in us ppl live to make money and spend, consumerism; and it fails! They are less happy. Works only for capitalists

It's real here. Not fake Not anxious.

From I wish I hadn't work so hard on money and Marx!

Capitalism alienates. In col much less of it! Much less alienation

En col much less dinero, eg most work in informal economy, help each other, real community etc

Can fuck it all up anywhere with greed. Need moderation everywhere.

4 A look over time

Colombia was ravaged by largest civil conflict in Latin America and drug-trafficking related violence in 80s and 90s (Martínez and Short 2020).

armed conflict between government forces, leftist guerrilla groups and right wing paramilitaries. The conflict escalated in the 1990s mainly in remote rural areas.

so we focus on the aftermath—how's colombia doing in the last 20 years 2000-2020

Here we focus on 20 year span.

about a third of Colombians live on less than \$5.50 a day in 2019, but strikingly, that's a progress, it is down from about 2/3 of Colombians in 2000!

We use www.worldvaluessurvey.org

SWB question reads "All things considered, how satisfied are you with your life as a whole these days? Using this card on which 1 means you are "completely dissatisfied" and 10 means you are "completely satisfied" where would you put your satisfaction with your life as a whole?"

Freedom q and some elab from free from and to

GDP per capita, PPP (constant 2017 international \$) in thousands <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.PP.KD?locations=CO>

Colombian GDP went up by 50% over 1997-2018. Colombians happiness and feeling of freedom are among the highest in the world, but they did not change over 1997-2018. In Colombia, GDP has no relationship with SWB, i.e., the Easterlin Paradox holds.

like 1st caption on swb, wave 5-7: 3 most free cties, plus usa, germany uk cp some explanation from free from and free to Puerto Rico 8.4 Mexico 8.3 Colombia 8.1 Germany 6.9 UK 7.2 USA 7.7

swb flat—but given enormous improvement in QOL these should be increasing—so again, arguably GDP has little to do with QOL, just as in a cross section

The US v Colombia in Pictures

note these are screenshots on full screen of res at 1200 860

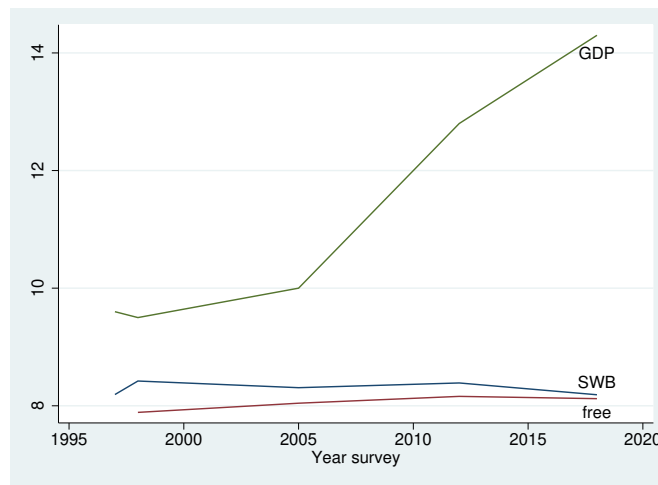


Figure 3: XXX

The point is that the apparent economic or even livability superiority of the US over Colombia actually is only economic—more expensive physical infrastructure doesn't make it more livable and actually can make it less livable.

It is often overlooked point that something less developed economically and cheaper is actually better (happier).

The US infrastructure is great for business or making money, but it is bad for living there. It could be a difficult tradeoff to solve: economic growth v wellbeing, except that a very convincing argument has already been made that we do not need any more economic growth KALLIS

Some inspiration comes from Quercia (2014)—the idea is that what matters when travelling is not only speed and distance.

US has this strange obsession with excellence/perfection and productivity, also in terms of built environment apparently thinking that the more ordered, organized, and man-made, the better. But the thinking was not always this way. Thoreau, for instance, was an American (Thoreau 1995 [1854], 1993).

The following are one of the author's own subjective/anecdotal opinions. Note when picking images I dropped the Google's yellow man more or less randomly only given rural, urban, suburb, toll, etc and took first useful image. I tried to avoid to cherry pick positive and negative imagery. Comments welcomed! Contact the corresponding author.

For best results zoom as much as screen allows.

In fig 4 obvious difference is width or 6 v 2 lanes, and economically 6 beats 2—can move more stuff faster, but assuming the same traffic, it is more interesting and fun or joy to ride on smaller roads.¹¹ The other less obvious difference is vegetation—around I-95 it is pedigree nicely trimmed man made fake nature; around 25 it is real wild nature—more happiness there too.

I-95 misery v bad colombian road fun!

Keep in mind that 25 is not some small rural road—it's one of the most major ones, the Pan Americana.

¹².

have captions and or in text: like robotic/alien-like v human

¹³

fig 5 here we are passing through towns—on 295 through cherry hill, but who would have noticed looks the same as I-95 in previous picture, whether rural or urban, there's the same fake nature on the side.

¹¹And adding more lanes does not automatically mean less traffic, often on the contrary, people decide to drive more—adding more lanes for traffic is like loosening your belt for obesity (e.g., Duany et al. 2001).

¹²And why not more fun highway, say from rural mountainous TN? Because the contrast is for the flat, dense, developed and wealthy North East—that's where economic productivity thrives

¹³295 not NJ Turnpike, to be conservative, NJ Turnpike is even more fake

Figure 4: A major road/highway in the middle of nowhere.

(a) US I-95 rural MD, couple miles N of Susquehanna River

(b) Colombian 25 (PanAmericana), between Cali and Popayan



Figure 5: Passing through a town.

(a) El Bordo on 25

(b) Cherry Hill on 295



fig 6 Approaching Del Mem Br toll—looks unwelcoming, like an entrance to minimum security prison. Peaje on 25 looks better, again natural wild vegetation, can pull over and rest a bit, buy an organic orange.

in fig 7 even toll booth looks more human in Colombia, a friendlier more welcoming place, the one in the US looks like entrance to a minimum security prison

Last but not least let's hang out in a city, in fig 8 Say you are a weary traveller arriving at 30th st station in Philly. You get out of the station, and it's a desert—nowhere to hangout, have to keep walking. You arrive to terminal de transporte in Cali, get out of the building and plenty of places to buy food, drinks, and sit down.

fig 4:

https://www.google.com/maps/@39.6003437,-76.0444379,3a,75y,249.22h,83.1t/data=!3m7!1e1!3m5!1s0wpmM0Yc9KK6YD6ZhdgiJQ%26cb_2e0!6shttps:%2F%2Fstreetviewpixels-pa.googleapis.com%2Fv1%2Fthumbnail%3Fpanoid%3D0wpmM0Yc9KK6YD6ZhdgiJQ%26cb_client%3Dmaps_sv.tactile.gps%26w%3D203%26h%3D100%26yaw%3D150.322%26pitch%3D0%26thumbfov%3D100!7i16384!8i8192
<https://www.google.com/maps/@2.7886904,-76.5521276,3a,75y,177.41h,100.48t/data=!3m7!1e1!3m5!1sDBBN1UaixNJLt9>

Figure 6: Approaching toll.



Figure 7: Paying toll.



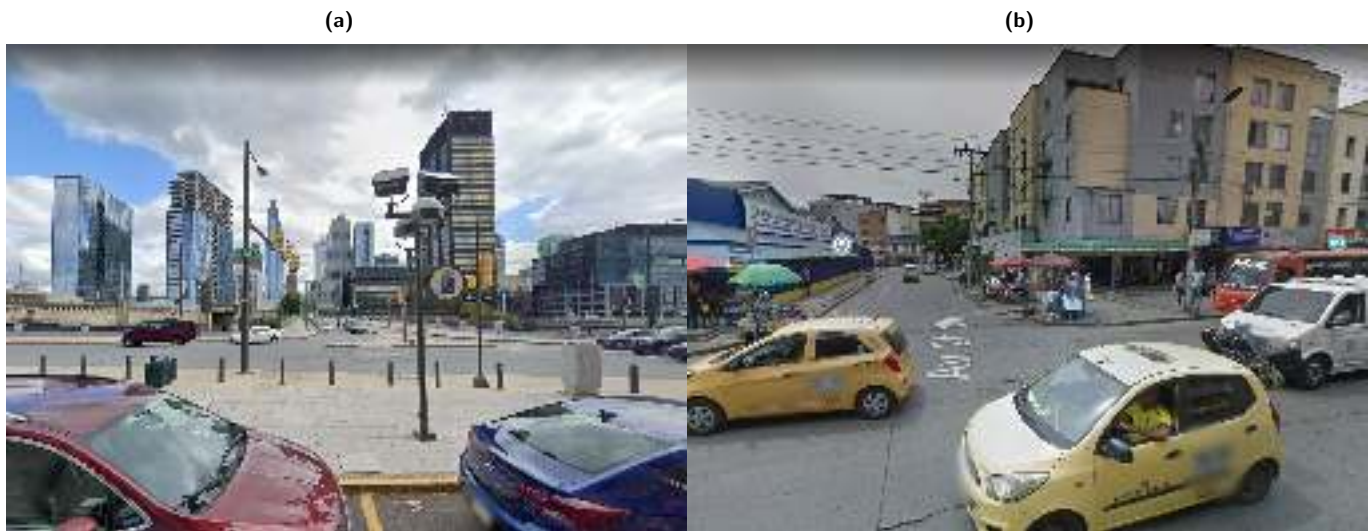
2e0!6shttps:%2F%2Fstreetviewpixels-pa.googleapis.com%2Fv1%2Fthumbnail%3Fpanoid%3DDBBN1UaixNJLt9uUrult5g%26cb_client%3Dmaps_sv.tactile.gps%26w%3D203%26h%3D100%26yaw%3D259.4146%26pitch%3D0%26thumbfov%3D100!7i13312!8i6656
fig 5

https://www.google.com/maps/@39.9151715,-74.9812986,3a,75y,355.06h,94.72t/data=!3m7!1e1!3m5!1svjTItcXHUaahWEkdG9iXbg%26cb_client%3Dmaps_sv.tactile.gps%26w%3D203%26h%3D100%26yaw%3D108.39489%26pitch%3D0%26thumbfov%3D100!7i16384!8i8192
2e0!6shttps:%2F%2Fstreetviewpixels-pa.googleapis.com%2Fv1%2Fthumbnail%3Fpanoid%3DvjtTItcXHUaahWEkdG9iXbg%26cb_client%3Dmaps_sv.tactile.gps%26w%3D203%26h%3D100%26yaw%3D108.39489%26pitch%3D0%26thumbfov%3D100!7i16384!8i8192

https://www.google.com/maps/@2.1191142,-76.9827811,3a,75y,29.76h,78.92t/data=!3m7!1e1!3m5!1sLImUajMcEKyf6eLxRirjGw%26cb_client%3Dmaps_sv.tactile.gps%26w%3D203%26h%3D100%26yaw%3D155.053%26pitch%3D0%26thumbfov%3D100!7i13312!8i6656
fig 6

https://www.google.com/maps/@3.1520675,-76.460229,3a,75y,181.56h,83.61t/data=!3m6!1e1!3m4!1s27q_DTIQZ3Tc67jR.2e0!7i13312!8i6656

Figure 8: Getting out of the train station and bus terminal. (Note: no trains in Colombia.)



<https://www.google.com/maps/@39.6962957,-75.5445256,3a,75y,284.53h,94.14t/data=!3m6!1e1!3m4!1s6XzK4mx61AETyW2e0!7i16384!8i8192>

fig 7

same as above just move ahead

fig 8

<https://www.google.com/maps/@39.9556825,-75.1809809,3a,75y,98.3h,91.96t/data=!3m6!1e1!3m4!1sxOT6m0Tfk7frupGV2e0!7i16384!8i8192>

<https://www.google.com/maps/@3.4656412,-76.5213045,3a,75y,89.77h,81.78t/data=!3m6!1e1!3m4!1sWYckArtZNxDNuhKT2e0!7i13312!8i6656>

World Economic Forum report 2017



Figure 9: World Economic Forum report 2017. https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_TTCR_2017_web_0401.pdf

Variables' definitions, coding, and distributions

Additional Descriptive Statistics

TO n org later can redo with latinobarometer, goes back every year to like 95, but at least since 05 has 8 step urbanicity, but top one is 100k and then there is capital ad

and then can do size with province :)



Figure 10: Long term GDP from Colombian government.

	a1	a2	a3	a4	a5	a5A	a5b
-10	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
10-50k	-0.04	-0.02	-0.04	-0.07	-0.08	-0.18	-0.18
50-500k	-0.03	-0.01	-0.10	-0.15	-0.14	-0.11	-0.17
500k+	-0.05	-0.02	-0.18	-0.25+	-0.23+	-0.20	-0.31*
1998	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00		
2012	-0.03	-0.02	0.01	-0.06	-0.02	0.00	0.00
2018	-0.24***	-0.21**	-0.19**	-0.20**	-0.18*	-0.19*	-0.13+
age		0.00	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.03+	0.03
age2		-0.00	-0.00	-0.00	-0.00	-0.00	-0.00
male		0.01	-0.10*	-0.11*	-0.05	-0.13	-0.12
married or living together as married		0.21***	0.22***	0.22***	0.19**	0.16+	0.17+
divorced/separated/widowed		-0.02	-0.00	-0.01	-0.03	-0.11	-0.12
health			0.61***	0.59***	0.58***	0.59***	0.62***
class			0.12***	0.07*	0.06*	0.05	0.06
education			-0.03**	-0.06***	-0.06***	-0.06**	-0.06**
income				0.08***	0.07***	0.09***	0.10***
Full time					0.00	0.00	0.00
Part time					0.08	-0.10	-0.10
Self employed					-0.04	-0.14	-0.16
Retired					0.13	0.19	0.20
Housewife					0.08	0.03	0.05
Students					0.02	0.12	0.12
Unemployed					-0.25**	-0.26+	-0.27+
Other					-0.13	-0.18	-0.15
religious services					0.02	0.01	0.01
No religious denomination					0.00	0.00	0.00
Buddhist					-0.18	0.04	-0.09
Christian					0.05	0.10	0.08
Evangelical					0.01	-0.14	-0.13
Jehovah witnesses					0.40+	0.61	0.52
Jew					0.38		
Muslim					0.94***	1.44***	1.19***
Other					0.07	-1.02+	-1.03*
Pentecostal					1.11**	1.16**	1.20**
Protestant					0.38	0.14	0.08
Roman Catholic					0.06	0.13	0.13
Seven Day Adventist					0.76+	0.76	0.82+
Wicca					1.15***	1.37***	1.36***
AU: Uniting Church					-0.26*	-0.42**	-0.27+
victim of a crime last year						-0.21*	
freg felt unsafe from crime at home						-0.17***	
constant	8.46***	8.25***	5.49***	5.53***	5.46***	5.40***	4.97***
N	6025	6024	5895	5874	5853	2885	2885

+ 0.10 * 0.05 ** 0.01 *** 0.001; robust
std err

Table 3: OLS regressions of satisfaccionvida. See coef on 2018—they're becoming less happy!!

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