

The Hidden Wealth of Nations

By David Halpern

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The Hidden Wealth of Nations By David Halpern

Richer nations are happier, yet economic growth doesn't increase happiness. This paradox is explained by the Hidden Wealth of Nations - the extent to which citizens get along with other independently drives both economic growth and well-being.

Much of this hidden wealth is expressed in everyday ways, such as our common values, the way we look after our children and elderly, or whether we trust and help strangers. It is a hidden dimension of inequality, and helps to explain why governments have found it so hard to reduce gaps in society. There are also deep cracks in this hidden wealth, in the form of our rising fears of crime, immigration and terror.

Using a rich variety of international comparisons and new analysis, the book explores what is happening in contemporary societies from value change to the changing role of governments, and offers suggestions about what policymakers and citizens can do about it.

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Editorial Review

Review
"*The Hidden Wealth of Nations* has a fresh idea that could catch on and transform the welfare state, while bypassing boring government machinery. The idea is that people could earn credits for caring for others. They could then use these to obtain help for themselves. The scheme could make possible a level and breadth of care that the real economy could not begin to afford. It is an idea that must be worth exploring further."
Financial Times

"In his excellent recent book on social capital, *The Hidden Wealth of Nations*, David Halpern argues that (for instance) smaller class sizes for the youngest pupils and extra tuition for those that struggle are far more important than 'the building of shiny new buildings or computer rooms to impress parents'. As a former chief analyst in Tony Blair's Strategy Unit, Halpern knows of what he speaks."
Daily Telegraph

"Scintillating and immensely well-informed and covers almost all aspects of public policy. Halpern is particularly interested in wellbeing and - as his remarks about heroin indicate - he seems to be using the book to flesh out all the policy ideas that he could not get past the prime minister."
Andrew Sparrow, *Guardian* political blog

"A collection of very interesting essays on an ambitiously broad set of topics, packed with fascinating facts and examples."
Journal of Social Policy

"The author introduces libertarian paternalism, defaults setting, the power of declarative norms, and the choice architecture promoted by Thaler and Sunstein. That sounds heavy, but Halpern has a way to make it read like the latest Ben Elton."
Neighbourhoods

"Compelling."
New York Times

"Chief analyst in the prime minister's Strategy Unit between 2001 and 2007, he has written many of the most influential papers in shaping the politics of happiness. Now outside government, he expresses his confidence that within 10-15 years, 'policymakers will routinely be using sophisticated well-being measures in judgements about policy'."
Mark Easton, *BBC News*

"Halpern has kept a wide audience in mind with this stimulating and detailed book. Kicking off with that question that everyone has an answer to - does money make you (or your nation) happy? - and romping through a range of dinner party topics from immigration to whether democracy is going down the pan, he draws out a range of evidence that is useful and often surprising."
New Start

"Halpern's discussion of the policy complexity of promoting social mobility or the issues relating to overcoming social exclusion is impressively nuanced and thought provoking."
Socialist Unity

"This important book... summarises the literature on life satisfaction, social capital, morality and values, and inequality, together with discussion of implications for public policy design."
British Religion in Numbers

"An excellent book - a thoughtful and informed analysis of a wide range of policy issues by someone who's 'been there'."
Richard Easterlin, University of Southern California

"An important book by someone who has been at the centre of public policy to improve our community. This book will do much to rebalance our priorities towards aspects of life which really matter."
Richard Layard, London School of Economics and Political Science

Review

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