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**Author(s):** Hirvilammi, Tuuli; Joutsenvirta, Maria

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# 3

## Diverse work practices and the role of welfare institutions

*Tuuli Hirvilammi & Maria Joutsenvirta*

Cultivating community economies is an enormous endeavour requiring active efforts and the competent employment of committed members. Even though these efforts are not always monetarily rewarded or officially recognised as ‘work’, they are indispensable for building sustainable economies. This typical situation is the starting point of this chapter that focuses on the tension between work, as understood within community economies, and the currently hegemonic ideas and norms of employment. How can people devote their agency and time to constructing community economies, when they should also be able to survive in a capitalist economy, perhaps being pushed to full-time wage labour by disciplining authorities?

Research on community economies emphasises the importance of seeing the variety of conceptualisations of ‘labour’ and ‘work’ and ways to perform it. Besides waged labour, alternative paid and unpaid labour as well as work for welfare (subsidised work or conditional work that is done in order to receive social benefits) play essential roles (Gibson-Graham and Roelvink 2011). However, this variety of work forms is undermined in contemporary

capitalist welfare states as they rely on the idea and norm of full-time waged labour and productivism (e.g. Fitzpatrick and Cahill 2002). Welfare institutions continue to make a clear distinction between unpaid reproductive work and paid productive work and give recognition mainly to the latter, thus failing to adequately value socially and economically essential work done in communities and households. This shortcoming is visible in the strictly conditional social allowances and activation policies in Nordic welfare states (e.g. Johansson 2001). Activation policies and welfare institutions in general largely ignore and discourage unpaid work done in community economies as this form of work does not create monetary economic value. This policy derives from the conventional models of economics and a narrow conception of economically valuable relations and exchanges (Eisler 2007; Gibson-Graham 2008; Halpern 2010; Raworth 2018). We can therefore assume that community economies and the associated diverse work practices that question the premises of welfare institutions can face challenges in current Nordic welfare states.

In this chapter,<sup>10</sup> we will look at the practical ramifications of norms and policies by welfare institutions regarding the work practices within the community economies. As Gritzas and Kavoulakos (2016, 924) have acknowledged, community economic spaces are always constrained by the existing power relations that manifest in concrete places and times. The given constraints and contradictions imply different degrees of alterity and possibility of their achieving post-capitalist futures. To examine the potential of community economies in welfare states and to identify possible institutional challenges, we studied two Finnish community

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economies: an organic food cooperative and an autonomous social centre with an art exhibition space. The first author visited these sites, observed their everyday practices, collected documentary material and conducted interviews in 2017. During the interviews, the participants were asked to describe the background of their initiative, typical activities and resources, organisation structures and networks, and personal motivations. Specific questions focused on the relationships with public authorities and possible institutional challenges.

The aim of this chapter is to provide insight on the present tensions between welfare institutions and the diverse work practices of community economies. Moreover, it helps to recognise measures through which welfare institutions might support a broader conception of work. We explore, how people can be active in unpaid alternatives when they should also be able to sustain themselves. We identify a large variety of work forms in these two organisations drawing on the diverse economy framing by Gibson-Graham (2008; see also Introduction) and see how welfare institutions influence organising the work.

We argue that a broader conception of work and enabling welfare institutions could have important roles in supporting and giving value to the full range of economic practices, which include not only monetarily rewarded labour but also alternative paid and unpaid work. The different aims and practices between community economies and activation policies in Nordic welfare states provide a fruitful context for analysing the tension between diverse work within community economies, and the currently hegemonic ideas of ‘work’ and ‘labour’.

### **From a narrow conception of labour to diverse work practices**

Our proposition is that a broad conceptualisation and implementation of work creates possibilities for community economies and less exploitative conditions of employment in both a social and ecological sense. It does so by making visible

and giving value not only to such human agency and occupation that can be more meaningful and fulfilling than conventional salaried labour but also to a wide range of economic relations and exchanges.

One way to expand the understanding of work is the analytical distinction between the concepts of 'labour' and 'work'. In describing the general human conditions, Hannah Arendt (2013, original 1958) distinguishes three forms of practical activities: labour, work and action. For her, labour arises from the necessity of biological survival whereas work is related to our need to construct human settlements, to create culture and to produce artefacts. Action, in turn, takes place in relation to other human beings, in communal and political spheres. All these elements are necessary for a human life and therefore they are the basis for approaching work in community economy building.

In a similar vein and applied in the context of modern welfare states, British economist Guy Standing (2009) has argued that work and labour are not synonymous: 'not all work is labour, while not all labour is productive activity.' (Ibid., 5.) For him, work captures all positive aspects of productive, reproductive and creative activity, which gives room and respect to inaction and contemplation. Labour and salaried employment, in turn, do not leave such space.<sup>11</sup> In performing work, a person has agency and a sense of self-determination. Work raises the idea of occupation, a sense of calling and a lifetime of creative and dignifying work

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<sup>11</sup> The word 'labour' is derived from the Latin *laborem*, implying toil, distress and trouble. *Laborare* meant to do heavy onerous work. The ancient Greek word for labour, *ponos*, signified pain and effort, and has a similar etymological root as the Greek word for poverty, *penia*. So labour meant painful, onerous activity done in conditions of poverty. Labour's function is to produce marketable output or services. Those who control labour usually want to take advantage of others, and often will oppress and exploit those performing labour. Labour is also associated with 'jobs' and the 'jobholder society' as described by Hannah Arendt. In a job, a person performs 'labour'; sometimes identified as alienated activity because it is instrumental and requires the person to carry out a predetermined set of tasks. (Standing 2009, 6.)

around a self-chosen set of activities. For Standing, ‘occupational citizenship’ and ‘occupational community’ contain innate psychic value in the work and the social relations in which it takes place. They also provide a mechanism for social solidarity. An integral part of occupation is the reproductive work not only in terms of nurturing and caring, but also as involving acts of civic friendship that reproduce the community – containing thus the role of action in Arendt’s categorisation. By contrast, a worker required to perform labour often lacks agency, and there is no room for these types of activities and identities. This is especially so when people do labour as alienated employees and primarily for instrumental reasons, under somebody’s control. (Standing 2009, 4–14.)

Since industrialisation, western welfare systems have been influenced heavily by what can be called ‘industrial citizenship’, the essence of which has been the extension of social rights – entitlements and norms associated with industrial wage labour (Standing 2009, 3–5). According to Standing (2009), twentieth-century progressives made a mistake in making labour and employment the focus of social protection, regulation and redistribution. ‘If you laboured for wages, you built up entitlements to sick leave, unemployment benefits, maternity leave, disability benefits and a pension.’ (Standing 2009, 7.) Consequently, unpaid reproductive work had become unproductive and had disappeared altogether from public view, censuses and labour statistics (Standing 2009, 5). The ‘invisible’ work does not then contribute to GDP growth that the welfare institutions depend on (see Chapter 1).

The criticism of capitalist welfare models for their incapacity to recognise necessary reproductive and unpaid work is one of the starting points in the community economy literature. A key premise of this discussion is the need to extend the narrow types of economic relations in which surplus value is produced, appropriated and distributed on the basis of waged labour and production for the market and mainstream market finance modes

(Gibson-Graham 2010; see also Mazzucato 2018). The framing of diverse economies broadens the conception of work and other key aspects of economy. It emphasises the role of different modes of economic organisation and different ways of performing and remunerating labour – not only waged and salaried labour, but also alternatively paid labour and unpaid labour (Gibson-Graham and Roelvink 2011, 29). In any case, non-market transactions and unpaid household work (both by definition non-capitalist) have been estimated to constitute close to or as much as half of economic activity in both rich and poor countries – if approached from the perspective of their potential market value (Ironmonger 1996; Gibson-Graham 2008).

Theorising on diverse forms of work in community economy literature (including and mixing both concepts of ‘labour’ and ‘work’) allows consideration of diverse production spaces and processes that extend our understanding of how and where value is produced (see also Chapter 2). Since J.K. Gibson-Graham view the economy as referring to all practices that allow us to survive and care for each other and the earth, they also endorse diverse forms of work. Diverse economic framing identifies alternative paid labour and unpaid work practices that might be pursued by households, communities and civic institutions to generate well-being for people and the planet. Diverse types of work provide not just necessary material well-being but also social, community, spiritual, physical, and environmental well-being (Gibson-Graham et al. 2017; see also Hirvilammi and Helne 2014). Acknowledging all the positive aspects of work done within community economies requires a broad conceptualisation of work, which is why below we will use the concept of work to cover a whole spectrum of necessary practices to organize, govern and sustain community economies.

### **Activation policies in Nordic welfare states**

Welfare states are characterised by state-funded and state-organised

welfare systems that aim to guarantee social protection for all their citizens. When looking at the concrete forms and legislation of welfare states, full employment and self-support through wage labour have always been seen as the priorities for welfare and as preconditions for maintaining the welfare systems and thereby as important political goals – despite the idealistic prominence on decommodification (e.g. Esping-Andersen 1990.) Consequently, work incentives and work obligations have played significant roles in Nordic welfare states (Johansson 2001). Social benefits are mostly directed at people who are outside the labour market due to illness, unemployment or disability, for example. A high employment rate is seen as necessary, not only for tax revenues, but also for high wellbeing outcomes. The guiding belief in social policy is that it should always be more beneficial to work than to live on benefits.

The incentives and obligations for citizens to be employed have become even stricter since the emergence of the ‘activation paradigm’ in the 1990s. For example, Finland during this era introduced new work incentives in the unemployment insurance and social assistance systems in order to stimulate high labour-market participation (Johansson 2001). Unemployed people became objects of activation measures: they had to report more often to the Public Employment Office, actively seek jobs and accept work offers. Since 2001, the long-term recipients of unemployment benefits have been obliged to have an ‘activation plan’ in which the officers from the ‘Public employment and business service’ and social workers together with the job seeker agree to the most efficient pathways towards employment (Minas et al. 2018).

Due to the activation paradigm, the focus of social policies in Nordic welfare states has shifted from welfare to workfare (e.g. Johansson 2001) – or ‘labourfare’, if the above distinction between work and labour is followed. In practice, welfare systems aim to encourage welfare recipients to seek routes to employment



with the help of various activation programs, such as supported employment, work trials and wage allowances. On other occasions, job seekers must meet the requirements of activation policies by taking part in work trials provided by public, private or third sector actors, for example. When taking part in these programs, the unemployed person is entitled to unemployment benefit and a small daily allowance.

Sanctions and conditionality have become central parts of social security. When unemployed people have to participate in some activation programme to be entitled to unemployment benefit, they are obliged to work in exchange for the social benefit, not in exchange for better income or a decent salary. The possibilities of refusing to participate in a directed programme have been curtailed, and authorities have been granted more sanctioning possibilities. Even though the Finnish constitution guarantees social protection for all, the minimum level, last-resort social assistance has been made more conditional. Since 1996, the Finnish authorities have had the right to reduce the level of social assistance by 20 percent if a recipient refuses to participate in an offered activation measure, and 40 percent on the second refusal. (See Minas et al. 2018; Johansson 2001.)

For the purposes of our study, it is important to note how these activation policies are built on the narrow conception of full-time paid labour. The work done in various types of community economies is not always acknowledged as an activity that should be accounted for by the welfare system. For instance, if unemployment benefits claimants are actively involved in local communities or occupied with taking care of ill family members, both of which are important forms of occupational citizenship (Standing 2009) or caring for each other and the earth (Gibson-Graham et al. 2017), they are not entitled to unemployment benefits. Active volunteering can violate the norm that all registered job seekers have to be available for full-time jobs.

### **Two case studies: Oma Maa and Hirvitalo**

Below, we will describe the analysis of work practices in two established community economies in Finland: the food cooperative Oma Maa and the Pispala Contemporary Art Center informally called Hirvitalo. They are valuable subjects of study active in different fields, food and art, but they share similar ethical guidelines and missions of a more participatively democratic and sustainable society. Thus, they enable an investigation of a variety of practices that grow in the ‘hidden neverland’ (Gritzias and Kavoulakos 2016) of the Finnish welfare state.

The first case, Oma Maa (‘Our soil’/‘Our land’), is an organic food cooperative founded during 2009 in an old farm with a tradition of organic farming, located 30 km outside of Helsinki. Oma Maa assumes a community-supported agriculture approach<sup>12</sup> characterised by short distances between producers and consumers and a focus on community building, thus acting as a counterforce to commercial organic food production. The mission of Oma Maa is to develop food production in which the means of production are commonly owned by its members. The future vision is a completely self-reliant and fossil-free farm. The producer-members of the co-operative produce the food at the farm and deliver it to the consumer-members. At the time of data collection, there were less than 10 producer-members, who were actively taking responsibility for farming, preparation of food products, food delivery and a lunch café. Around 60 consumer-members of the cooperative paid a monthly fee which allows them to collect their weekly food bags directly from the farm, or from the café that the cooperative also runs in Helsinki. The lunch café offers a vegan lunch every weekday in a commercially rented

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12 See e.g. <https://www.ifoam.bio/en/community-supported-agriculture-csa>

space from the private market<sup>13</sup>. The funding of the cooperative is mainly based on membership fees and food bag sales in addition to some occasional agricultural subsidies.

Hirvitalo – Pispala Contemporary Art Center, is located in a lively and artistic neighbourhood Pispala, in Tampere, Finland. Hirvitalo (‘Moose house’, named after the street it is on Hirvikatu – meaning Moose Street in Finnish) was founded in 2006 by a small group of artists who were looking for a space for art exhibitions and social gatherings. After the small group of culture activists initially discovered the empty old wooden house, they were able to rent the house from the city of Tampere at a very reduced rent (or at peppercorn rent). Nowadays, Hirvitalo is run by the Pispala Culture Association that was founded to stimulate the cultural activities of Hirvitalo and to enrich various kinds of artistic and cultural events in the local community. Hirvitalo is an alternative non-capitalist cultural space that is against a monocultural society. It is open to all and for all. It has space for exhibitions, installations and it hosts many meetings and various cultural projects. The house is open a minimum five days a week, five hours a day. A ‘community kitchen’ serves vegan food almost every Saturday, a sauna is heated once a week and outdoor events are organised during the summertime. Everybody is welcome to come in and use the carpentry workshop or the band rehearsal space, or to have a cup of coffee and chat with others. Only occasional grants and member fees of the association have been used to fund the costs of Hirvitalo and the events that occurred there<sup>14</sup>.

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13 At the time of the interview, the cooperative ran a lunch café in Helsinki but since then it has finished serving lunch every day. The space is still used for sharing food bags and for organizing events.

14 After the data gathering, the Pispala Culture Association received a 27 000 euro grant for art exhibitions and gallery support from the Kone Foundation (<https://koneensaatio.fi/en/grants/tuetut/2017-2/annual-funding-round-arts-8-dec-2017/>).

### **Diversity in work practices**

In Oma Maa, work tasks derive from the necessities of cultivation and food distribution. It is necessary that land is cultivated, and someone needs to take care of plowing, fertilising, sowing, weeding, harvesting, animal husbandry etc. A large number of working hours are also needed for baking bread for the weekly food bags and for producing other food products like falafel balls and bags of spelt flour. At the time of the interviews, the lunch for the café was produced daily, and someone also had to bake cakes, make coffee and wash the dishes. In addition, some members are responsible for building a new greenhouse and transporting the food bags from the farm to Helsinki. Web pages and social media updates need to be done, as well as the administration of the cooperative, such as invoices, billing, membership fees and the registration of new members. Also, the tasks and division of responsibilities need to be managed and discussed to keep all things running. Since the number of active members is less than ten, the most active producer-members work long days. In addition, some consumer-members take voluntarily part in distributing the food bags and helping in the farm during the high season.

Various efforts in Hirvitalo relate to maintenance and organisational chores of different kinds. First of all, at least one person, a gallerist, is needed to keep the doors open five days a week, to work with visiting artists and look after the art exhibition. Their tasks also include cleaning the house and heating it with wood during the winter months. The community kitchen is organised on Saturdays, only if there is someone to cook the food, and the sauna is heated whenever there is a common sauna evening. Upcoming art exhibitions need to be curated and web pages updated. Someone always has to take care of book keeping and fund raising, as well as other formal and legal responsibilities. In practice, the board members of the association and other active and regular visitors share the tasks. Many of the original members are still involved and visit Hirvitalo on a regular basis. Active

participants are the most important resource of Hirvitalo: it is a space where anything can happen, but nothing happens if people are not inspired to organise the events and be involved.

This all sounds similar to many other small companies or organisations. However, there is one significant feature that makes these diverse work practices different from more mainstream entrepreneurship: all this necessary work is mainly non-salaried and non-monetized. Due to low financial resources of these organisations, members do a large part of the work without monetary rewards. For example, the Oma Maa producer-members work without monetary compensation, except for three farmers who have been paid during the summer months. Since the cooperative is not able to pay more salaries, some active members are officially unemployed and live with the help of unemployment benefits. Because many active members have to do paid work elsewhere to make their ends meet, they cannot devote their working time to the development of the co-op. This is a big challenge for the further development of this alternative form of economy, and one which can lead to a vicious cycle: as long as the members are not able to invest enough time and effort for the organizational development, the organisations cannot grow big enough to survive financially. Only if all the necessary work was done, could they gain a sufficiently stable position. Similar challenges in providing a sufficient living wage, and the demand to navigate diverse economies in order to survive have been experienced by small-scale social enterprises in Finland too (Houtbeckers 2018).

All of the aforementioned activities in Hirvitalo are based on voluntary work or on work done by trainees whose income is covered by the welfare state and its activation policies. Due to its limited financial resources, the Pispala Culture Association has not been able to employ any fulltime workers without state subsidies. Contrary to many more mainstream art initiatives, Hirvitalo has been developed with a very tight budget. The active

members emphasise the roots of Hirvitalo being from a collective inspiration to make art and to have an alternative gallery that should be free from monetary rewards and competition. The lack of financial resources has been partly a deliberate choice. Moreover, the members prefer to be active outside the capitalist monetary economy, and they intentionally seek to oppose existing unequal power structures. The interviewees argued that the combination of large grants and a small number of paid positions could be problematic because it would threaten the equal power structure within the small community in Hirvitalo. For the sake of equality, the board of the association has decided that all activities organised by Hirvitalo will be free (only small fees can be gathered in order to cover the costs). This is important in allowing the space to be really open to everyone regardless of one's ability to pay.

Both Oma Maa and Hirvitalo enact a large variety of work practices. Active members are involved in paid work and work for welfare but also in non-monetised and non-capitalist exchanges. Reciprocal work has been utilised in the form of exchanging services. For example, some farming work at Oma Maa has been done by people from other associations who have, in exchange, been allowed to use the café space. Oma Maa is also a member of the Helsinki Timebank called Stadin Aikapankki (see Joutsenvirta 2016). Over the years of Oma Maa's activity, some members of the time bank have been working in the fields, being compensated through the time currency system. Oma Maa has then 'earned time' by renting the space and through Helsinki Timebank's own internal taxation system (see also Chapter 2). Hirvitalo activists have mutually exchanged services with other local groups without using any currency. For example, they have got help with advertising and could use a van in exchange for some other favours. Also, the practices of in-kind work are seen in exchanging the work with food. For example, the members who work at the lunch café or prepare the meal for the community kitchen can have a lunch for free. Table 1. illustrates these diverse ways of organising work

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in Oma Maa and Hirvitalo inspired by the examples of diverse work practices in the community economy literature (e.g. Gibson-Graham and Roelvink 2011).

	<b>OMA MAA</b>	<b>HIRVITALO</b>
<i>Paid work</i>	Three farmers are paid on summertime	No paid workers
<i>Self-employed</i>	Self-employed positions enable the participants to be engaged in Oma Maa	Self-employed positions and freelance work as an artist enable the participants to be engaged in Hirvitalo
<i>Reciprocal work</i>	Help from the members of other associations as an exchange for the use of the café space, experiments of using community currencies	Exchange of services with other associations (car use, advertising, coproducing events)
<i>In-kind</i>	People get sometimes food products when they work	People can eat for free when they prepare meal for social kitchen
<i>Work for welfare, subsidized work</i>	Some experiences of people sent by unemployment office, unemployed people in work trial	Always one person who is officially unemployed is doing her/his work trial in Hirvitalo, or some other forms of subsidized work is in use
<i>Housework</i>	Cooking, cleaning etc.	Heating the house, cooking, cleaning etc.
<i>Unpaid work</i>	Most of the activities and production are based on unpaid work	Unpaid work is necessary for organizing events
<i>Self-provisioning</i>	Food production	Gardening, growing vegetables

*Table 1. The diverse ways of organizing the work tasks in Oma Maa and Hirvitalo.*

The diversity of work is a creative way to combine the necessary work of community economies with their members' aspirations and lifestyles. Many interviewees are critical towards conventional paid labour and prefer more autonomous and meaningful ways to be occupied. This is in line with the notion that the work in community economies is not a less desirable second choice (White and Williams 2016). Our interviewees see work in their community economy as an important element to moderate the societal focus on full-time paid labour done only for instrumental reasons and under somebody's control. The work in community economy is a transformative, but at the same time very down-to-earth, path towards reduced working time and sustainable lifestyles:

'I do have a very idealistic wish that it might be great if we had less paid jobs and we would have more... Like starting from the farmers that the food comes closer and it would be cheaper and people would work less. Then they would have more time to be involved in these kinds of projects and it would be more ecological. That somehow this society requires us, it forces us to have an eight-hour workday and the salary so that you can survive. But if these kinds of projects grew and people joined, it would be my dream.' (Oma Maa 1)

The reproductive and creative work done in community economies is different from conventional and often monotonous salaried labour. For many interviewees, there seems to be a joy for creating alternative food networks or autonomous spaces outside the monocultural structures of society. Some interviewees who are self-employed in the ICT or marketing sector, for example, do unpaid work in Oma Maa or Hirvitalo to get a better balance between their professional life and transformative values. It seems that the work in Oma Maa and Hirvitalo is closely related to 'a sense of calling' (Standing 2009, 12; see also Domene 2012),



identity and ideological commitments of the active members. They do not always count hours or ask for monetary rewards, but the sense of being part of the community is a key driver for being involved. Especially people who spent days at Hirvitalo or worked in the Oma Maa lunch café saw it as an important common space that can prevent isolation and loneliness of people who are lacking a full-time paid job or a work community:

‘It was maybe some kind of social need, when I moved. I know many people here in Pispala and some of them come here occasionally. So I kind of missed – when I don’t have any job or anything – this kind of social space where you can come so that you don’t have to buy anything, that you can just come. It’s so good that these kind of places do exist.’  
(Hirvitalo 3)

### **The relationship between community economies and the welfare institutions**

Knowing that community economies are constrained by the existing power relations and state structures (Gritzias and Kavoulakos 2016), we will next take a closer look at the role of the state and examine whether welfare institutions are supporting or rather preventing the building of community economies and concomitant meaningful citizen occupation.

The impact of the welfare state, through its social security systems and activation policies, is Janus-faced. Our findings show that various norms, rules and practices have both enabling and limiting impacts on individuals and community economies. The relationship is conflicted, also for the interviewees: they emphasized freedom and autonomy from the official economy, but they were also aware of how dependent they still were on the social security systems and the norms of a labour society.

Unemployment benefits, housing benefits and social assistance can provide a necessary minimum income for those who are

actively involved in communities and occupied in unpaid work. More than half of our interviewees received unemployment benefit as their main source of income. The official target of the Finnish welfare state is that all job seekers participate in formal activation programmes rather than do informal volunteering. However, because officials cannot control all jobseekers, the social security system allows unemployed people to be active in various associations. As our interviews show, unemployment benefit can be used for quite a long time without any disturbance, for developing various skills, for making art or for farming. Due to the very low level of unemployment benefits or minimum social assistance in relation to living costs in present Finnish society, unemployed people must live on a very low monetary income. Many interviewees describe their difficulties in getting by when trying to work hard to cultivate community economies. This sheds light on the paradoxical situation: the activists are fully occupied in meaningful value creating activities, but in the eyes of the welfare institutions, they are categorized as unemployed or marginalized poor people.

In addition to providing social benefits for the cultivators of community economies, some activation programmes can be beneficial for community economy building when enabling various ways for compensating the work. For example, at Hirvitalo, there is always one person in a work trial or with a wage allowance who can keep the gallery open. To be able to work at Hirvitalo, this person needs to be officially unemployed so that they have the right to participate in the activation programme organised by the employment office. During the activation programme period, the worker receives an amount of 9 euro per day over the minimum unemployment benefit. If the Pispala Culture Association meets the official requirements and employment officials have sufficient financial resources, Hirvitalo can be also entitled to a wage allowance measure, in which the state supports the association to employ a worker. The Public Employment Office has to agree

with any work trial and the length of the wage allowance period. With this system, many active members of the association have been able to be employed by Hirvitalo.

However, the increasingly limiting approach of welfare institutions is also experienced by Oma Maa and Hirvitalo. For example, the possibilities for using wage allowance have been recently curtailed. According to the interviewees, the authorities have also restricted the length of work trials:

Interviewee: 'If you try to get here for six months, for example, they would send you a refusal for the other half of the period. At least nowadays.'

Researcher: 'Why, on the basis of what?'

Interviewee: 'They might think that this is somehow a suspicious place for work trials because this is not a proper company that would focus on financial profit. Maybe they are skeptical of the value of this place as something that can give work experience.' (Hirvitalo 5)

This quotation hints at the narrow concept of work and productivity. The authorities do not see work done at Hirvitalo as *real* work because it does not provide a pathway to wage-labour. Even though many activation programmes are currently more related to rehabilitation and meaningful activities especially for long-term unemployed people than to a direct access to real wage-labour, the case of limiting the period of a work trial indicates that the activation policies tend to see wage-labour as a primary goal (see also Johansson 2001, 74). This again gives reason to support the argument that welfare institutions are geared towards 'industrial citizenship', whereby the normative foundation of social protection, regulation and redistribution is wage labour and full-time employment (Standing 2009). With this emphasis, the system

fails to take full advantage of supporting unemployed people to be active in community economies or to encourage them in building sustainable economies and livelihoods. Moreover, if welfare institutions give a preference to accepting work trials in for-profit companies rather than in community economies or other not-for-profit sectors, the system can be (ab)used to provide free labour for maximising private, narrowly understood economic gain, rather than fostering wider societal goals and values, such as building new sustainable economic structures and strengthening social ties.

Another example of the narrow concept of work and difficulties of welfare institutions in dealing with the small-scale community economies is the case of those unemployed people who have to be *passive* in the eyes of authorities in order to get their unemployment benefits. The following quotation from one active member in Oma Maa illustrates this situation well:

Interviewee: ‘No way I would never go and tell in the unemployment office that I do something. If they asked, I would just say that I lay on the couch all day long, it would be a big mistake to tell that you do something.’

Researcher: ‘Why?’

Interviewee: ‘Well, I don’t know. They have not really asked me. It must be something like five or six years ago since I have talked face-to-face with unemployment officers and they have not been interested in my situation. But it is obvious that it would be quite easy for them to see me as an entrepreneur because I am a member of the cooperative and I am sitting on the board etc.’ (Oma Maa 3)

The main fear of this particular interviewee was to be categorised as an entrepreneur by employment authorities because a person who owns a company is not entitled to unemployment benefit

(or at least the authorities will ask for exhaustive reports on the financial situation of the company). This can significantly reduce the incentives to be active in community economies.

Besides describing the challenges, we elaborated what an enabling partner state could look like and how to develop the system so that it would be better in line with the needs of alternative economy building. Firstly, the most reformist suggestion is to simplify the social security system. For example, it should be easier to have a half-time paid job and combine the salary with social benefits. Due to the complexity of the social benefits system, Oma Maa has for example paid full-time salaries to the farmers only for three months so that the people can then apply for unemployment benefit for the rest of the year. Since the cooperative would rather pay part-time salaries during the whole year, this is one example how the social security system influences the decisions made in these cases.

Secondly, many interviewees advocate a universal basic income that would provide necessary financial security:

‘I think that the basic income would be a good idea, because it gives the possibility, that if you wish to live with less money and you have many ideas, you would still have that security.’  
(Oma Maa 4)

Basic income could also encourage people to be involved in small cooperatives and take financial risks. The implementation of basic income could allow many people who are seeking for more sustainable alternatives to reduce the amount of time spent in paid labour and substitute paid labour with other types of meaningful work (e.g. Alexander 2015).

Thirdly, the interviewees want less policies and regulation; *inaction* from the state and municipalities (see Introduction). Oma Maa and Hirvitalo are geared to build autonomous alternatives, spaces free from the capitalocentric economy and outside of state

structures. Active members try to arrange the economy based on commons and commoning. They develop the practices of horizontal decision-making with weekly house meetings to govern the resources and to share power. Oma Maa tries to get rid of external funding systems such as agricultural subsidies. Hirvitalo wishes to have a long-term and cheap rental agreement with the city of Tampere so that they will be allowed to stay and create the space for a do-it-yourself (DIY) culture. Instead of regulation and formal project funding, they only wish to have basic enabling structures, a space for collective actions and the time of active members, and to be able to carry on the cultivation of community economies.

### **Conclusions: making the sustainability transition through diverse work and new time allocation**

The diversity of work practices in the two cases of community economies relate both to the financial limits and to the personal aspirations of the active members. Work in community economies is meaningful and fulfilling to their members in many ways. It also seems to support the transition to sustainability on both the individual and societal levels (see EEA 2018).

Our findings show how employment policies and the social security system can have both enabling and hindering impacts on the possibilities to enact community economies. On the one hand, the welfare system enables by providing social benefits for those actors who are officially unemployed so that they can be active outside paid work. The community economy cases have also found creative ways to benefit from activation programmes. On the other hand, the employment policy regulations and activation policies hinder the development of community economies. This happens through limiting citizens' possibilities to voluntarily reduce one's dependence on full-time paid labour in order to become active in other forms of value creating activities and occupational identities. Because not all activities of unemployed people are acknowledged

as belonging to activation programmes, the welfare system is bound up in a narrow ‘labourfare’ rather than a broader ‘workfare’ that would allow diverse practices of work.

In consumerist and Protestant work ethic-oriented Nordic welfare states peoples’ self-worth is often connected to outdated, industrial-age understandings of a secure livelihood and material elements of good life. Yet at the same time, many full-time paid jobs are experienced as having no meaning and giving no fulfilment to their holders – especially in administrative, managerial and clerical roles (Graeber 2018). Despite the ongoing transition of work-life to more insecure labour positions (e.g. Standing 2009), welfare institutions are still designed on the basis of full-participation in full-time labour. The focus on labour rather than on a broader concept of work contradicts with community economies’ non-monetised and alternatively paid work practices. Fixing this shortcoming is one of the key missions on our way towards institutional learning (see Chapter 1) in which the state authorities would question the overruling position of full-time salaried work and apply a wider understanding of how value is created and distributed in our changing societies.

We can conclude that the present welfare institutions are not fitted to support individually and socially important work done in community economies. Due to activation policies following ‘the dictate of competitiveness’, welfare states lack effective agency to guide towards occupational citizenship and diversified work practices (Standing 2009, 282–285). Current social benefits and employment policies do not sufficiently value the necessary work outside ‘official employment’; the work which would not only enable citizens and households to survive but also benefit other people and the environment (Gibson-Graham et al. 2017).

However, the unpaid and alternatively paid work practices could make important day-to-day progress in supporting lifestyles that depart from the unsustainable consumption and work patterns (Gibson-Graham et al. 2017; Schor 2010; Coote and Franklin

2013). Moreover, they could have a significant role in building bottom-up solutions for meeting the governmental commitments to achieve global sustainable development goals (SDGs) by 2030 (see e.g. Folke et al. 2016). The diverse work practices could also influence the future of work in general by making it more humane, flexible and connected to real human needs rather than a motor that supports unsustainable production and consumption patterns. When ignoring the diversity of work, welfare states are at risk of missing out this transformative potential.

There is an urgent need for both economists and policy makers to seriously address climate change and other sustainability issues and transform the welfare states in an ecological direction through integrative ecosocial policies (e.g. Hirvilammi and Helne 2014; Koch and Mont 2016; Gough 2017). The present emphasis on technology, efficiency and markets keeps the conventional mechanisms for job creation in place, thereby preventing major transformations in how people gain access to work and income. To overcome this problem, the rich North should confront its commitment to economic growth by averting continued increases in the scale of consumption through trading income for time (e.g. Schor 2005; 2013; see Chapter 1) This can be done, for example, by relinquishing our ‘fetish for labour productivity’, i.e. the desire continually to increase the output delivered by each hour of working time (Jackson 2013). However, there are no simple formulas to re-organise work and re-write welfare policies according to what has been discussed. It is complicated by the complex ways in which different policies and habits, roles and responsibilities, and interests and institutions interact (Coote 2013). To address the need for reorganising employment and welfare policies, we propose two concrete policy proposals that might enable the welfare state to better support the broad understanding of work.

First, as an alternative for activation policies and conditional social benefits based on the notion of full-time labour, the universal basic income could provide a more fruitful basis for building



sustainable forms of economies and lifestyles. With a basic income, people could have more time for meaningful work and sustainable value creation in informal economies (e.g. Fitzpatrick 2011). If a universal and unconditional basic income is too utopian a reform, we could imagine a basic income scheme that would allow some form of social contribution in the field of community economies (see Alexander 2015; Gough 2017).

Second, a decrease in overconsumption through reductions in hours in paid employment is a worthy sustainability solution that has not yet been addressed seriously in the global North (Schor 2005; 2010). Juliet Schor has acknowledged that in the present ‘struggling’ economies, the idea of reductions in working hours may be a hard sell since the conventional wisdom is that hard times should lead us to work longer and harder. However, the measures that result in higher hours in labour can be counter-productive by, for example, creating more demand only for a limited number of jobs. (Schor 2013, 6.) We believe that a radical redistribution of paid, alternatively paid and unpaid work can help tackle many welfare state problems simultaneously: overwork, unemployment, overconsumption and lack of meaning in work and everyday life. A recent study (Schiller et al. 2018), for example, found that a worktime reduction of 25% for full-time workers increased the time spent in recovery activities. This gave support to the conclusion that ‘worktime reduction may be beneficial for long-term health and stress’ – (ibid) and for cultivating community economies.

Finally, we see a broader conceptualisation of work as an important route to support community economies, sustainable lifestyles and welfare institutions in the midst of the sustainability transition.