

URSP 3050
Special Topics in
Urban Studies 1

Weeks 3 & 4: Surviving Well

Chapter 2

Take Back Work: Surviving Well

What to does it mean to
survive (live) well?

What's work for?

Two Provocations

1. Mano J Singh, Calcutta
<http://www.thehappymovie.com/film/>
2. Heidemarie Schwermer, Germany
<http://vimeo.com/channels/528106/page:2>
(Watch 20:42 – 25:50)

AIM

To get us to think about the relationship between different forms of work and how they contribute to helping us survive well.

BUT

Not forgetting planetary survival (e.g. using ecological footprint calculators).

THIS WEEK

How other people think about different forms of work (using Williams 2014)

How other people think about well-being (using various indicators)

Williams & Different Forms of Work

Commodification – “goods and services ... produced for monetized exchange for the purpose of financial gain” (p. 105).

Commodification associated with capitalism

Non-commodified labour practices – “do not involve monetized exchange and/or are not driven by the profit-motive” (p. 105).

Prevailing (capitalocentric) view is that non-commodified labour practices are disappearing as commodification (capitalism) has become “extensive, totalizing and hegemonic” (p. 105).

Williams’ argument:

Non-commodified labour practices persist and are perhaps even expanding.

“It would not be an exaggeration to say that an anthropologist from another planet parachuting himself/herself into the advanced economies might quickly come to the conclusion that the current mode of organization has subsistence practices at its very core, and that if any mode of delivery is on the margins or receding, then it is the commodity economy (2005, p. 47).”

Williams, Colin, 2005. *A commodified world? mapping the limits of capitalism*. London: Zed Books.

He demonstrates his argument by giving examples of “the diverse repertoire of labour practices in contemporary societies” (p 108).

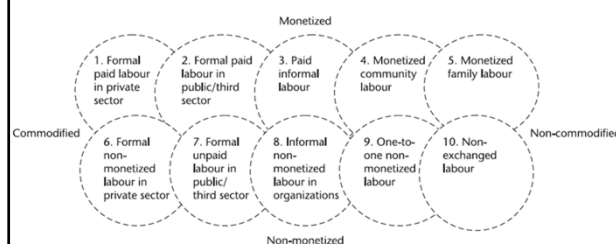


Figure 7.1 A typology of the diverse repertoire of labour practices in contemporary societies

Case Study 1: The task of cooking

Case Study 2: A day in the life of ...

Case Study 3: Labour practices in an organization

Case Study 4: Labour practices in a locality

Williams tells us about diverse labour practices, but not necessarily community economies in which we use these practices to “negotiate our interdependence with other humans and the environment” (Week 2/3 lecture)

Indicators & Well-being

Until recently the most widely used indicator of well-being has been GDP/GNP

Assumption ...

Economic development/advancement = well-being

From a community economy perspective?

What about our interdependence with other people and the environment?

From the viewpoint of the fourth King of Bhutan?

It's not sufficient to focus "on happiness that begins and ends with oneself and is concerned for and with oneself" (in Gibson-Graham et al 2015, 118).

"The pursuit of happiness is collective" (*ibid*)

Gross National Happiness (Bhutan)

World Happiness Report (UN)

Happy Planet Index (New Economics Foundation)

One more ...

What collective elements do they contain (or perhaps only hint at)?

(From King of Bhutan perspective)

What aspects of our interdependence with other people and the environment do they highlight (or perhaps only hint at)?

From TBTE/Community Economy perspective)

What role does work play in these collective or interdependent elements?

Collective Actions for Surviving Well

In a community economy we take ethical action by acknowledging how our survival is connected with others.

Fair Work and Wages: Making sure people work in safety and have enough to meet their needs.

Government Inputs for Everyone's Survival: Making sure governments provide the basic supports that everyone benefits from.

Redefining Work: Minimizing our use of resources and directly providing for ourselves and others.

Sharing What We Need to Survive Well: Minimizing our use of resources by sharing with others

Directly Contributing to the Wellbeing of Others: Volunteering to help meet the needs of others

HOMEWORK

CASE STUDY

HOMEWORK

REVISIT REFLECTIONS FROM WKS 1 TO 3

- Add in any new thoughts
- Refer to lecture readings – especially TBTE