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Well-Being Through Work?

Experiences of Finnish Working Life From a Perspective of
Ecologically Sustainable Well-Being

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Abstract: Due to the ecological sustainability crisis threatening human and nonhuman life, a radical and rapid transformation of ecologically unsustainable societies, including the Finnish society, is needed. Under present circumstances, continuous growth of the Finnish economy is unlikely to be compatible with safe planetary boundaries. Despite this, Finnish governmental institutions still maintain a growth policy, postulating that economic growth is fundamental for Finnish well-being. Growth-centric conceptualisations of well-being are particularly prominent in work-related contexts which impacts how well-being is defined and operationalised in working life. In particular, Finnish working life institutions tend to overemphasise economic aspects of well-being while overlooking vital ecological dimensions of well-being. Consequently, it is important to promote alternative, ecologically sustainable visions of well-being and situate them in Finnish working life. Hence, it may be possible to support an ecological transformation of institutions and ideologies governing work in the Finnish society.

This thesis draws on research on sustainable well-being and needs to advance an understanding of well-being as ecologically embedded, exploring underacknowledged intersections of work, well-being and nature. The empirical results illustrate ways in which ecological dimensions of well-being are experienced by workers as they navigate Finnish working life conditions in a time of ecological sustainability crisis. A variety of obstacles as well as possibilities for ecologically sustainable well-being are identified, spanning work practices, work purposes and the search for work. The findings are analysed with reference to conflicting paradigms: the human exemptionalism paradigm, which sees humans as separate from nature, and the relational paradigm, which sees humans as interconnected with nature and well-being as relational. In particular, relational well-being is conceptualised as consisting of needs in the dimensions of *Having, Doing, Loving* and *Being*.

The findings show how ecological (un)sustainability affects the fulfillment of needs in working life and beyond, thereby challenging predominant ideas of “well-being through work”. Importantly, the findings indicate clear shifts in emphasis from material dimensions of well-being (*Having*) to well-being in the dimensions of *Doing*, *Loving* and *Being*. The thesis concludes that ecologically sustainable well-being, conceptualised in terms of ecologically embedded needs, ought to replace the purpose of economic growth in Finnish working life and society at large.

Abstract in Swedish: På grund av den ekologiska hållbarhetskris som hotar mänskligt och icke-mänskligt liv behövs en radikal och snabb transformering av ekologiskt ohållbara samhällen, inklusive det finländska samhället. Under nuvarande omständigheter är det osannolikt att en fortsatt tillväxt av den finländska ekonomin kan kombineras med säkra planetära gränser. Trots det håller de finländska statliga institutionerna fortfarande fast vid en tillväxtpolitik och hävdar att ekonomisk tillväxt är nödvändig för det finländska välbefinnandet. Tillväxtcentrerade konceptualiseringar av välbefinnande är särskilt vanliga i arbetsrelaterade sammanhang, vilket har en inverkan på hur välbefinnande definieras och tillämpas i arbetslivet. I synnerhet tenderar de finländska arbetslivsinstitutionerna att överbetona ekonomiska aspekter av välbefinnande och förbise grundläggande ekologiska dimensioner av välbefinnande. Därför är det viktigt att främja alternativa, ekologiskt hållbara visioner av välbefinnande och anknyta dem till det finländska arbetslivet. På så sätt kan det vara möjligt att stödja en ekologisk transformering av de institutioner och ideologier som styr arbete i det finländska samhället.

Den här magisteravhandlingen utgår från forskning om hållbart välbefinnande och behov för att bidra till en förståelse av välbefinnande som ekologiskt förankrat, samt belysa ouppmärksammade kopplingar mellan arbete, välbefinnande och natur. De empiriska resultaten illustrerar hur ekologiska dimensioner av välbefinnande upplevs av personer som navigerar det finska arbetslivet under en pågående ekologisk hållbarhetskris. Olika hinder och möjligheter för ekologiskt hållbart välbefinnande rörande arbetsmetoder, arbetssyften och jobsökning identifieras. Resultaten analyseras med hänvisning till motstridiga paradigmer: paradigmet om mänsklig exemptionalism, som ser människan och naturen som skilda, och det relationella paradigmet, som ser människan som sammankopplad med naturen och välbefinnande som relationellt. Vidare konceptualiseras relationellt välbefinnande genom behov i dimensionerna *Having*, *Doing*, *Loving* och *Being*.

Resultaten visar hur ekologisk (o)hållbarhet påverkar uppfyllandet av behov i och utanför arbetslivet, och utmanar därmed rådande idéer om arbetsrelaterat välbefinnande. Resultaten visar på tydliga förskjutningar i tyngdpunkter från materiella dimensioner av välbefinnande (*Having*) till välbefinnande i dimensionerna *Doing*, *Loving* och *Being*. I avhandlingen dras slutsatsen att ekologiskt hållbart välbefinnande, bestående av ekologiskt förankrade behov, bör prioriteras istället för ekonomisk tillväxt av finländska arbetslivsinstitutioner och samhället i stort.

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1. Introduction

Humanity faces an ecological sustainability crisis caused by human activities that continue to destabilise the Earth's life support system. The changes are so immense that Earth system scientists have proposed the beginning of a new geological era ending the previous era of the Holocene which provided humanity and other species with hospitable living conditions for thousands of years (Steffen et al., 2007; Crutzen, 2002). The present geological era has been named the Anthropocene signalling humanity's transformation into a geological force (Steffen et al., 2007; Crutzen, 2002). An alternative term, the Capitalocene, has also been proposed to highlight the unequal culpability of different humans and the central role of capitalism in ushering in the new geological era (Moore, 2017). Among the urgent anthropogenic dangers is climate change; if the temperature of the Earth system rises 2°C above the preindustrial baseline level, self-reinforcing feedback processes may trigger domino-like tipping cascades which could render the planet inhabitable (Steffen et al., 2018). Although climate change has received comparatively much attention, it is not the only process which threatens the Earth system. Rockström et al. (2009) have identified nine planetary boundaries within which humanity can expect to operate safely, but outside of which non-linear, abrupt and catastrophic changes to the Earth system risk being triggered. To date, five of these planetary boundaries – climate change, biosphere integrity, biogeochemical flows, land-system change and pollutants – have been transgressed (Persson et al., 2022; Steffen et al., 2015). A study by O'Neill et al. (2018) which downscales the planetary boundaries framework to the country level shows that Finland performs poorly in terms of ecological metrics, having overstepped six of the seven quantified ecological boundaries.

In the face of intensifying ecological challenges, the continued pursuit of economic growth has been called into question. There is increasing evidence that a sufficiently rapid and extensive “decoupling” of harmful ecological impacts from economic growth will not be possible (Haberl et al., 2020; Hickel & Kallis, 2020; Vadén et al., 2019). Furthermore, growth-critical scholars have pointed to intricate links between economic growth and paid labour in modern industrialised societies illustrating their twin roles in driving the ecological sustainability crisis (Kreinin & Aigner, 2021; Hoffmann & Paulsen, 2020; Gough, 2017; Jackson et al., 2009). The current organisation of work in the Finnish “work society”, where paid work is considered the norm and essential for economic growth, has also been challenged from a perspective of ecological sustainability (Hirvilammi et al., 2016; Rääkkönen, 2016; Kasvio, 2014; Järvensivu et al., 2012). However, broadly speaking, the academic literature on Finnish work and working life shows a relative lack of ecological perspectives, especially in

comparison to topics like digitalization, leadership and automation (Taipale & Houtbeckers, 2021). Similarly, the organisation of work has not usually taken center stage in the Finnish public discussion on climate and environmental action, which has tended to focus on international agreements and consumer choices (Järvensivu & Toivanen, 2018).

Finnish governmental and employment institutions continue to equate economic growth with well-being, seeing a high employment rate, i.e., a high rate of people in paid work, as fundamental for both growth and well-being (Finnish Government, 2021; Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, 2018). However, sustainability researchers have questioned this view, arguing that a transition to ecologically sustainable work requires rethinking and reevaluating the concept of well-being (Joutsenvirta et al., 2016; Kasvio, 2014). Building on the work of these and other researchers, the present thesis aims to further reevaluate and empirically explore ecologically sustainable well-being in the context of work.

Thus far, empirical research on the relationship between ecologically sustainable well-being and work centering experiences of workers themselves is rare, although some examples exist. For instance, Aho (2021) empirically researches possibilities for sustainable well-being in cooperative work. Kasvio (2014), in turn, explores sustainable work and quality of life in two different work organisations, a technology company and a municipal social work organisation. However, overall, the Finnish empirical literature on ecologically sustainable well-being in the context of work centering experiences of workers themselves is scarce.

In light of the above discussion, the purpose of this thesis is to contribute to filling some of the gaps in the research on sustainable well-being and sustainable work, hence advancing the knowledge and thinking on this urgently important topic. In particular, this thesis aims to answer the following research question: what obstacles and possibilities for ecologically sustainable well-being are experienced by participants in Finnish working life?

This thesis proceeds in the following steps. The first section of Chapter 2 explores the contested concept of well-being by tracing the rise of GDP-centric views of well-being as well as the evolution of alternative, ecologically grounded understandings of well-being. The following section (2.2) turns to Finnish governmental and working life institutions, analysing how well-being is defined in the context of Finnish working life. The third section (2.3) reviews academic research on ecologically sustainable work and well-being in relation to Finnish working life. A recurring theme in Chapter 2 (specifically, Sections 2.1 and 2.3) is that of needs, a topic which is discussed in more detail in Chapter

3, which focuses on need-based theories of well-being. The first section of the chapter (3.1) outlines need-based theories of well-being and their importance for understanding well-being in a time of ecological sustainability crisis. The following section (3.2) introduces the ecologically grounded, need-based *Having-Doing-Loving-Being* framework, which forms the theoretical basis of the empirical study. Chapter 4 proceeds with the methodology of this thesis, including the study design and ethical considerations behind the online survey. Chapter 5 presents empirical findings on obstacles and possibilities for ecologically sustainable well-being experienced by participants in Finnish working life. The findings are further analysed and evaluated in Chapter 6, which also links the findings to previous research and considers societal and policy implications. The chapter closes by arguing for a reassessment of work and employment policy from a perspective of ecologically sustainable well-being.

2. Economic, social and ecological perspectives on well-being

Sustainability researchers have in recent years highlighted the ecological embeddedness of human well-being, expanding traditional conceptions of well-being to acknowledge this often overlooked dimension. In this chapter, some important milestones and contributions to the understanding of ecologically sustainable well-being will be discussed.

2.1 From economic to ecological understandings of well-being

Well-being is a complex and contested concept that has been studied in many disciplines, including public policy, philosophy, economics, psychology, and sustainability science. The term is often used interchangeably with terms like “happiness”, “development”, “living standards”, “quality of life” and “welfare” (Lamb & Steinberger, 2017).

Conceptualisations of well-being have been significantly influenced by national accounting, in particular, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) metric, which is an estimate of the total market value of goods and services produced in a country over a time period such as a year. Regular GDP estimations began in the 1940s and quickly turned GDP into a proxy for well-being and GDP growth into a policy priority in its own right (Victor, 2010). Since then, there have been several attempts to critique, replace or reform GDP-led approaches to well-being. For example, GDP-centric approaches have been criticized for omitting and hiding crucial well-being dimensions related to ecosystem health and distributional and socioeconomic inequalities, especially beyond the country’s own borders

(Giannetti et al., 2015; Stiglitz et al., 2009). Moreover, it has been noted that GDP excludes almost all non-monetary production, including unpaid activities like household work, childcare and volunteer work (Stiglitz et al., 2009; Giannetti et al., 2015). Despite these and other criticisms against using GDP as a well-being metric, it has maintained a leading role in policy making.

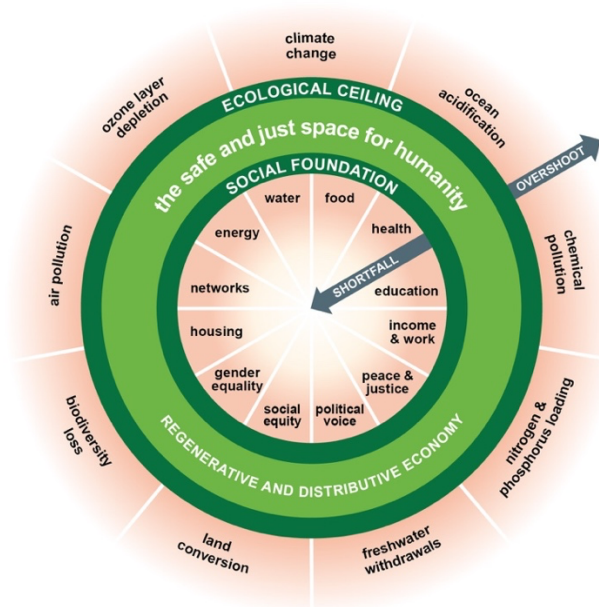
In the 1960s, the concept of “development” challenged solely GDP-led approaches to well-being and introduced a more diverse set of new well-being indicators (Giovannini & Rondinella, 2018). Initially, the concept of development spanned only social dimensions of well-being, but from the 1970s onwards, environmental dimensions of well-being gained increased attention. In 1972, shortly after the groundbreaking report *Limits to Growth* by Meadows et al. (1972) had been released, the term “sustainable development” was formally adopted by the UN Conference on Human Environment, the first global conference on humans and the environment (Bolis et al., 2014). In 1987, the famous definition of “sustainable development” as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” was established in the Brundtland Report (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987, p. 43) – a report which did not actually define or explicate what human needs are. In 2000, the United Nations established the Millennium Development Goals, which focused on meeting needs of developing countries and ensuring environmental sustainability by 2015. In 2015, the United Nations continued the development project in the form of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of Agenda 2030, which was agreed upon by 193 member states and applied to all countries regardless of their “development” status.

However, as the climate and environment have deteriorated further, prevailing models of “sustainable development” have come under criticism. For example, it has been argued that the concept of “sustainable development” itself is polysemic and ill-defined undermining its impact and credibility (Bolis et al., 2014). Visions of well-being entailed in leading agendas of nominally “sustainable” development have also been sharply criticised for centering economic growth as one of the main goals of development (see, e.g., Menton et al., 2020; Bonnedahl & Heikkurinen, 2018). Due to the issues surrounding the concept of “sustainable” development, many have emphasised the need to distinguish between “strong” and “weak” sustainability (Bonnedahl and Heikkurinen, 2018). A “strong sustainability” approach emphasises precaution due to the unsubstitutability of natural capital with physical or human capital, whereas “weak sustainability” approaches are prone to make trade-offs between ecological, social and economic sustainability at the expense of ecology. Guided by considerations of “strong sustainability”, Bonnedahl and Heikkurinen (2018) argue for a shift in

societal goals from GDP-centric “development” to “well-being in coexistence”, i.e., achieving human life quality with respect for all life of other actors, species and systems over time (Bonnedahl & Heikkurinen, 2018, p. 5).

The goal of economic growth as a central feature of development has also been questioned by Raworth (2017) whose vision of well-being is depicted in the influential doughnut model (Figure 1). Although the doughnut model is focused on human well-being goals, it crucially integrates ecological dimensions in the model and operationalises them through the planetary boundaries framework by Rockström et al. (2009). The human well-being goals are based on social targets included in the Sustainable Development Goals, though Raworth excludes the goal of economic growth. The model illustrates the fact that human well-being has both a social foundation and an ecological ceiling, and that a balance is required to achieve the “sweet spot” in between, i.e., the “safe and just space for humanity” (Raworth, 2017, p. 38). Raworth presents the doughnut as a new compass for 21st century economists which ought to replace dreams of exponentially rising growth curves and guide humanity into a “future that can provide for every person’s *needs* [emphasis added] while safeguarding the living world on which we all depend” (Raworth, 2017, p. 39).

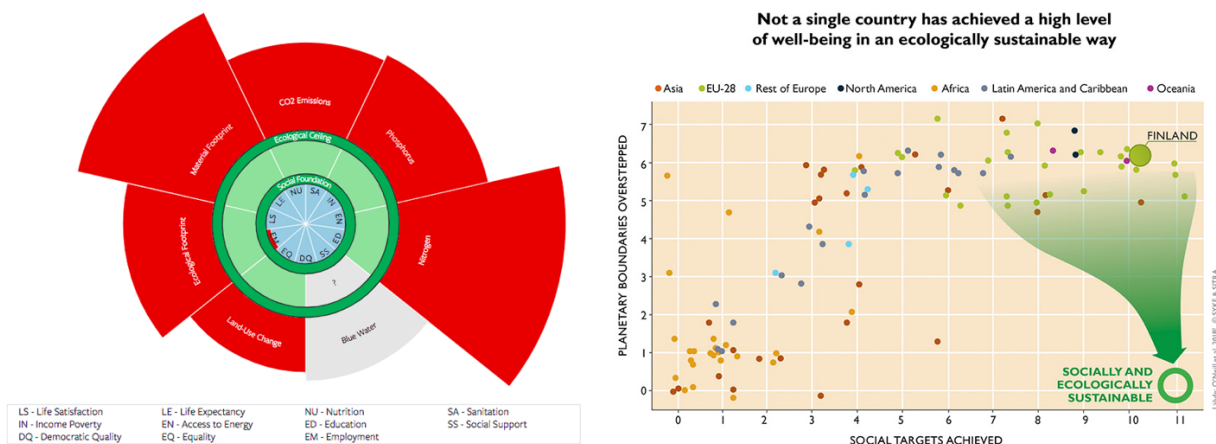
Figure 1. *Doughnut model of a safe and just space for humanity*



Note. From *Doughnut economics: seven ways to think like a 21st-century economist* (p. 38), by K. Raworth, K., 2017, Chelsea Green Publishing.

Taking as their starting point the doughnut model of well-being and downscaling the planetary boundaries framework to the country level, O'Neill et al. (2018) show that no country has met human needs without transgressing critical biophysical boundaries (O'Neill et al., 2018). This is true for Finland too. Although Finland performs well in terms of social targets, it has overstepped six of the seven quantified ecological boundaries and is thereby among the ecologically poorly performing countries together with many other wealthy, predominantly Western countries like the United States, Canada and the Scandinavian countries (see Figures 2 and 3). Hence, to achieve well-being that is both socially and ecologically sustainable, Finland ought to radically reduce its pressures on the Earth system while continuing to meet human needs. The authors recommend that wealthy countries should focus on sufficiency, equity and tackling overconsumption as strategies for reaching the safe and just space, since their results show that returns to social well-being diminish with increased resource consumption, particularly once crucial thresholds have been reached. The model by O'Neill et al. (2018) is based on the doughnut model by Raworth (2017), though the authors elaborate on their theorisation of the social foundation of well-being by drawing on need-based theories of well-being by Max-Neef (1991) and Doyal and Gough (1991). These theories will be further discussed in Section 3.1.

Figure 2 and 3. Diagrams showing six planetary boundaries that have been crossed by Finland: CO2 Emissions, Phosphorus, Nitrogen, Land-Use Change, Ecological Footprint, Material Footprint



Note. Left diagram from “A good life for all within planetary boundaries” [Supplementary material] by D. W. O'Neill, A. L. Fanning, W. F. & J. K. Steinberger, 2018, *Nature sustainability*, 1(2), pp. 88-95. (<https://goodlife.leeds.ac.uk/national-trends/country-trends/#FIN>) Right diagram based on the same article, published in *Finland and Sustainable Well-being* by Finnish Environment Institute SYKE, 2018. (https://www.syke.fi/en-US/Finland_and_sustainable_wellbeing/Materials) Copyright SYKE and SITRA.

Although the term well-being often refers to human well-being, it has also been used non-anthropocentrically, for example, to promote animal well-being (Capozzelli et al., 2020). In addition, a non-anthropocentric understanding of well-being as a broader, system-level concept has been conceptualised through terms like “well-being of nature” and “planetary well-being”. For example, the Finnish Environment Institute (2014, para. 1) uses the phrase “well-being of nature and people” when discussing climate change impacts on “people’s health, land and marine ecosystems, water supplies, and people’s livelihoods”. Similarly, the Finnish Innovation Fund Sitra (2021a, p. 6) discusses the “well-being of nature” as “the foundation of all life”. Kortetmäki et al. (2021a) introduce the more rigorously defined concept “planetary well-being” which focuses on the Earth system and ecosystem processes that comprise both human and nonhuman well-being. Notably, the authors explicitly distinguish “planetary well-being” from “sustainable development”, explaining that the latter typically is used as an anthropocentric concept with a primary focus on human well-being (Kortetmäki et al., 2021b). In contrast, Kortetmäki et al. (2021a, p. 1) define planetary well-being nonanthropocentrically as “a state where the integrity of Earth system and ecosystem processes remains unimpaired to a degree that species and populations can persist to the future and organisms have the opportunity to achieve well-being”. The authors also highlight the intrinsic value and moral rights of both humans and nonhumans as well as the interconnectedness of their *needs* [emphasis added]. Thus, the concept of planetary well-being transcends the level of individual human needs to focus on the health of the larger Earth system – of which human well-being is one component. This understanding of well-being bears many similarities with Bonnedahl and Heikkurinen’s (2018) concept “well-being in coexistence” introduced above. Both understandings of well-being can be enriched by the relational theory of well-being which will be discussed in Section 3.2. The relational theory of well-being also conceptualises human well-being as fundamentally interconnected with and dependent on the health of ecosystems. Furthermore, it provides a comprehensive analysis of human needs as ecologically embedded dimensions of well-being.

2.2 Growth-centric perspectives on Finnish work and well-being

Despite increasing research regarding the importance of ecosystems and nature for well-being, Finnish governmental institutions still often prioritise economic aspects of well-being while paying less attention to critical ecological dimensions. Thus, economic growth, operationalised as GDP growth, is still seen as a primary driver of well-being. Consequently, the purpose and value of work are also predominantly framed in relation to economic growth. In particular, work is conceptualised as an engine of economic growth, with employment level and productivity highlighted as key metrics,

both of which are meticulously measured and observed. Ecological dimensions of well-being and work, on the other hand, are given a peripheral role, if they are included at all.

An example of such a growth-centric perspective on well-being and work can be found in the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment's report *Agenda for sustainable growth*, the opening chapter of which is called "sustainable growth is a requirement for well-being in Finland" (Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, 2018, p. 4). Repeatedly throughout the report, continued labour input and, especially, productivity growth are championed as the key factors driving growth. However, the report is remarkably silent on ecological dimensions. Just once, the report states that "[s]ustainable growth is based on socially, ethically and *ecologically* [emphasis added] justified solutions" (Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, 2018, p. 13). However, there are no further acknowledgements or elaborations of ecological dimensions or boundaries; in fact, the previous excerpt represents the only mention of the term "ecological" (or any variations thereof) in the whole report.

A similar phenomenon can be found in the Finnish government's *Sustainable Growth Programme*, launched in May 2021 with the aim of accelerating Finland's green transition in support of the welfare society (Finnish: *hyvinvointiyhteiskunta*, literal translation: "well-being society") (Finnish Government, 2021). In line with the previous example, the path to well-being, according to the programme, consists of productivity growth and a high employment rate. Although the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions is explicated as one of the main goals, the programme falls short regarding ecological dimensions overall, failing to give a systematic account of ecological boundaries or concrete goals for the reduction of natural resource use (see BIOS Research Unit, 2021 for a more detailed critique). Hence, although the government uses the term "sustainable" growth, the programme can be regarded as exhibiting merely "weak sustainability", since the economic frame dominates and ecological dimensions are underprioritized or missing.

Macro-level accounts of growth-centric well-being share striking similarities with individual-level accounts of "well-being through work" and "well-being at work" (both translated to *työhyvinvointi* in Finnish) as defined and operationalised by Finnish governmental working life institutions. These institutions use these terms in broadly similar ways, defining well-being through/at work as a concept consisting of a variety of personal, social and, crucially, economic aspects of well-being, the latter of which echo priorities and values embedded in macro-level accounts of growth-centric well-being. For example, the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health (2021, para. 1–4) which operates under the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, describes well-being through work as:

safe, healthy and *productive* [emphasis added] work done by professional workers and work communities in well-managed organizations. The workers and work communities experience their work as meaningful and rewarding, and they feel that the work supports them in their life management. [...] [W]ell-being through work has a significant beneficial impact on *productivity* [emphasis added], profits, customer satisfaction, turnover, sick days and accidents.

As the excerpt shows, there is a strong emphasis on productivity in this description of well-being through work. The inclusion of productivity (as well as profits, customer satisfaction and turnover) can be seen as a choice motivated by the economic domain in which productivity is hailed as a central driver of economic growth. Another noteworthy aspect of the above description of well-being through work is that ecological dimensions of well-being or the ecological sustainability of work are not included in the description (nor in the longer text from which the excerpt is extracted).

A similar phenomenon can be discerned in the description of well-being at work by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health (2021, para. 1–3):

Wellbeing at work means that work is safe, healthy, and pleasant. It stimulates good and motivated management and the workplace atmosphere and professionalism of employees. It also impacts on coping at work. Wellbeing at work increases *productivity* [emphasis added] and commitment to the job, and it reduces incidents of sick leave. [...] wellbeing at work is directly connected with *work productivity* [emphasis added] and with the competitiveness and reputation of the employer organisation.

As in the previous case, productivity is included as an essential element of well-being at work and something that is to be increased. Well-being at work is also explicitly “directly connected” with productivity. On the other hand, ecological dimensions of well-being or ecological sustainability are not mentioned in this description of well-being at work. The omission of ecological considerations in the above well-being formulations can be seen as symptomatic of the prevailing growth paradigm, which can ultimately be conceptualised as a feature of the human exemptionalism paradigm discussed in Section 3.2.

2.3 Ecological perspectives on Finnish work and well-being

Ecological perspectives are still relatively underrepresented in Finnish working life research, but the topic has gained more interest particularly from the turn of the 2010s onwards when ideas about “sustainable development” spread to the working life arena (see, e.g., Kasvio & Rääkkönen, 2010; for discussion see Rääkkönen, 2016).

Existing Finnish research on sustainable work has emphasized the need to pay more attention to ecological dimensions of sustainability. Järvensivu et al. (2012) study the role of work in the Finnish “work society”, arguing for a change in perspectives from one of weak sustainability to strong sustainability, entailing a shift in the evaluation of work. In particular, they identify a predominant, weakly sustainable lens on work and connect it to an overprioritisation of the salary, tax revenue and economic growth it creates even in cases where the work’s social and environmental impacts are negative. Hence, they propose a shift in perspective to one centering social and environmental well-being impacts of work. Similarly, and also in line with the strongly sustainable perspective, Kasvio (2014) outlines four dimensions of sustainable work: ecological, economic, social and individual. He argues that the ecological dimension is fundamental and should be prioritised, despite having received the least attention in Finnish working life strategies so far. Like Järvensivu et al. (2012), Kasvio (2014) is skeptical of the continued prioritisation of economic growth seeing this goal as incompatible with strong sustainability.

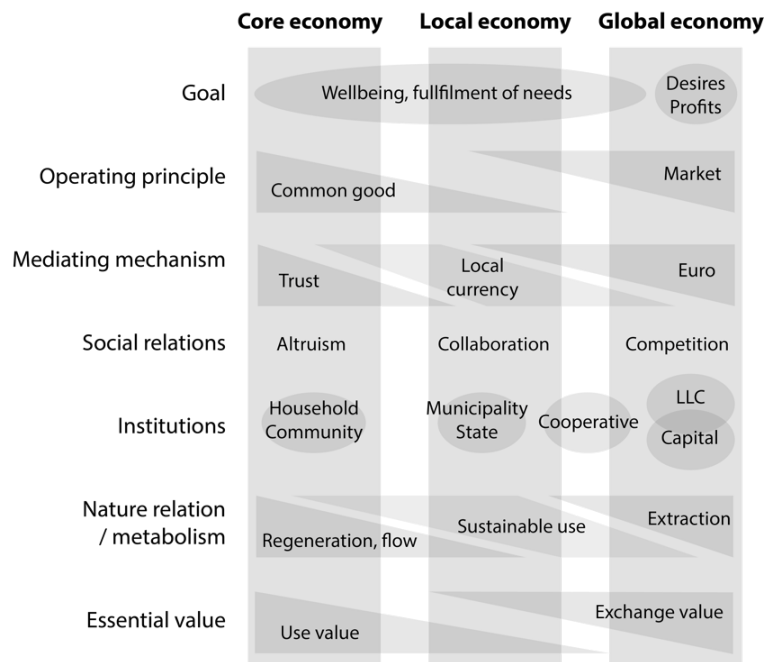
Rääkkönen (2014) argues that the “weak sustainability” and “strong sustainability” approaches broadly correspond to categories of “reformist” and “transformational” approaches in Finnish employment policy. Rääkkönen characterizes reformism as a strong belief in technological fixes that operate within the framework of the status quo, whereas a transformational approach necessitates a more thorough change of the dominant social paradigm and the purposes which guide society. The latter approach, which Rääkkönen himself promotes, entails profound changes in attitudes towards nature as well as a reevaluation of “progress” and “development”. He criticizes the overemphasis on the goals of productivity and innovation, arguing that employment policy should add a new priority: “resilience” in the face of ecological challenges. In an empirical analysis of key employment-policy actors, including trade unions and governmental bodies, Rääkkönen finds that reformist approaches dominate, meaning that sustainable work was not at the time of the interviews (taking place in 2011) a key policy objective in Finland. A recent pro gradu by Salminen (2021) confirms the dominance of reformism (applying Rääkkönen’s definition) among climate experts in Finnish central labour market

organisations, although Salminen also identifies more transformational perspectives promoting, e.g., degrowth thinking and alternative economic indicators to GDP.

BIOS Research Unit's (2019) plan for an "ecological reconstruction" of the Finnish society can also be described as transformational in character. They criticise the prevailing pursuit of GDP growth on account of ecological challenges, arguing for a shift from growth strategy to transition politics. More specifically, this would entail ecological reconstruction which they describe as a transformation of material structures and social practices of production comparable to post-war reconstruction, with a similarly central role for the government. In terms of work, they call for a prioritization of the substance and sustainability of work above a high employment rate (BIOS Research Unit, 2020). Like Rääkkönen (2014), BIOS Research Unit (2019) emphasises the importance of resilience, which they see as stemming from adequate levels of communal, local and national self-sufficiency as well as capacities for satisfying *basic needs* [emphasis added] with moderate resource use.

Needs fulfillment and self-sufficiency are given an even more prominent role in the book on a post-growth economy by Joutsenvirta et al. (2016), which could also be characterised as transformational, using Rääkkönen's (2014) definition. They argue that a shift towards an ecologically sustainable Finnish economy means strengthening core and local economies and centering well-being and needs fulfillment as the goal of economic activity. Joutsenvirta et al. (2016) argue that the growth economy is upheld by a number of assumptions and myths built around narrow, neoclassical and ecologically detached understandings of the "economy" and "labour". Instead, they introduce a conceptualization of the economy as consisting of three pillars: the core economy, the local economy and the global economy (see Figure 4). This conceptualisation helps bring out the fact that considerable shares of activities that generate sustainable well-being take place outside the global, wealth-accumulating economy and outside of the prevailing definition of "gainful work" (i.e., paid work). For example, a wide range of activities generating well-being and needs fulfillment take place in the household and the community, even though such forms of non-monetary production and reproduction are valueless in terms of GDP.

Figure 4. Three pillars of the economy



Note. Translated from Finnish to English, from *Talous kasvun jälkeen* [The economy after growth] (p. 48), by M. Joutsenvirta, T. Hirvilammi, M. Ulvila, and K. B. Wilén, 2016, Gaudeamus.

In defining sustainable well-being, Joutsenvirta et al. (2016, p. 39) refer to the HDLB framework of needs, which will be central to the analysis in this thesis, too. In the next chapter, need-based theories of well-being will be discussed.

3. Ecologically sustainable well-being and needs

From the Brundtland Report (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987) to contemporary sustainability science, needs play a central role in understandings of sustainability and well-being. In this chapter, need-based theories of well-being will be explored and defined in more detail.

3.1 Need-based theories of well-being

Need-based theories of well-being have been advanced by many sustainability researchers as suitable frameworks for grasping well-being and justice in the context of the ecological sustainability crisis (see, e.g., O'Neill et al. 2018; Lamb & Steinberger, 2017; Brand-Correa et al., 2020).

Some of the most prominent need theorists figuring in sustainability science are Max-Neef et al. (1989) and Doyal and Gough (1991). Max-Neef et al. (1989) hold that human needs can be divided into nine categories: subsistence, protection, affection, understanding, participation, leisure, creation, identity and freedom. In contrast to Maslow's (1943) famous hierarchy of needs, Max-Neef et al. characterise needs as interrelated and interactive rather than hierarchical, with the exception of the need for subsistence which is seen as fundamental for remaining alive. Importantly, Max-Neef et al. make a distinction between "needs" and "need satisfiers", claiming that needs are objective and universal, but that need satisfiers can vary greatly across cultures, circumstances and time. For example, subsistence needs related to nutrition can be satisfied through many different varieties of food. The need theory by Doyal and Gough (1991) also categorises needs into a limited number of objective and universal needs, although these are grouped in a different way, namely into "health" and "autonomy" needs, with health needs being the most fundamental. Doyal and Gough argue that both health needs and autonomy needs are critical for minimally impaired social participation, which they see as the ultimate goal of human activity. Similarly to Max-Neef et al., Doyal and Gough argue that the ways in which needs are satisfied can vary enormously over time and space, even though the needs themselves are objective and universal.

Crucially, need-based theories like those discussed above contain the idea that material needs are satiable, which means that consumption beyond certain satisfaction thresholds can be seen as unnecessary and even counterproductive (O'Neill et al. 2018; Lamb & Steinberger, 2017). Hence, need-based approaches protect minimum consumption levels as well as taking a critical stance towards excessive consumption. Moreover, need-based theories provide analytical tools for grasping issues of intra- and intergenerational justice and equity, since they conceptualise needs as universal and objective, meaning that the needs of present and future humans can be known (O'Neill et al. 2018; Lamb & Steinberger, 2017). Thus, need-based theories are particularly useful in the context of the ecological sustainability crisis, which raises novel, critical and urgent challenges concerning intra- and intergenerational justice.

As Lamb and Steinberger (2017) have argued, need-based theories, such as those by Max-Neef et al. (1989) and Doyal and Gough (1991), are closely connected to "eudaimonic" well-being theories, which can be contrasted with "hedonic" well-being theories. Eudaimonic well-being theories stem from Aristotelian ideas of flourishing and include considerations of the *activities* and *processes* that constitute a well-lived life. Hedonic well-being approaches, on the other hand, focus more narrowly on happiness and subjective assessments of life satisfaction, traditionally measured on a numeric

scale, e.g., from 1 to 10. Lamb and Steinberger (2017) hold that hedonic approaches are ill-suited for the context of climate mitigation, since they imply that well-being is achieved through the maximization of individual happiness or utility – an idea which tends to go hand-in-hand with aim of maximizing consumption and GDP. Relatedly, hedonic approaches are more prone to seeing well-being as a feature of isolated individuals, meaning that they favour individualistic solutions to climate change while overlooking crucial participatory and social dimensions of well-being and provisioning systems (Lamb and Steinberger, 2017).

While remaining sympathetic to the need-based theories by Max-Neef et al. and Doyal and Gough discussed by Lamb and Steinberger (2017) and other sustainability scientists, this paper also finds promising potential in a need-based well-being theory by Helne and Hirvilammi (2015). Importantly, the theory by Helne and Hirvilammi explicitly roots all dimensions of human needs in ecosystems, thereby providing a particularly suitable framework for conceptualising well-being in relation to ecological sustainability. In the next section, the need-based well-being theory by Helne and Hirvilammi will be discussed in more detail.

3.2 Relational well-being theory and the *Having-Doing-Loving-Being* framework

The need-based theory of well-being by Helne and Hirvilammi (2015) is motivated by the insight that “sustainable development”, while being a political catchphrase for decades, has still not begun. In line with other sustainability scholars (see, e.g., Menton et al., 2020; Bonnedahl & Heikkurinen, 2018), the authors point to the weakly sustainable view of development as an underlying hinder. Furthermore, Helne and Hirvilammi (2015) elaborate, the weak understanding of sustainability is caused by underlying mental models and assumptions connected to a paradigm of “human exemptionalism”. By “paradigm”, Hirvilammi and Helne (2014) refer to the concept that gained wide recognition through Thomas Kuhn’s seminal 1962 work *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* and has since come to refer to any predominant mental model in society. Hirvilammi and Helne (2014) describe the human exemptionalism paradigm as a human-centric mental model that is ignorant towards the interconnectedness of human well-being and the well-being of ecosystems. More specifically, they define it as consisting of the following tenets:

Table 1. Human exemptionalism paradigm

(1) Humans are separate from nature. Unilateral domination of the natural environment is feasible and desirable.

- (2) Nature is a stock of resources to be converted to human purposes. Environmental sink and source capacities are infinite.
- (3) Humans are superior to other species, which gives mankind the right to exploit them.
- (4) High value is placed on the single individual or the single nation; it is me or us against others.
- (5) Mainly the benefits gained in the short term are taken into account in our action.
- (6) Progress is equated with endless economic growth, and wellbeing is largely associated with the material standard of living.
- (7) Risks are accepted and actively embraced.
- (8) The problems we face can be solved through technological development.
- (9) Economic considerations are paramount in decision-making.
- (10) Rational faculties are seen as superior to intuitive and affective faculties.

Note. From " Changing Paradigms: A Sketch for Sustainable Wellbeing and Ecosocial Policy" by T. Hirvilammi and T. Helne, 2014, *Sustainability*, 6, p. 2162.

The authors contend that the human exemptionalism paradigm must be challenged to achieve socially sustainable policies, which is in line with Rääkkönen's (2014) transformational approach discussed in Section 2.2, which calls for a profound change of the dominant social paradigm to tackle the challenges of the ecological sustainability crisis. To replace the human exemptionalism paradigm, Hirvilammi and Helne (2014) formulate a new relational paradigm comprising the following tenets:

Table 2. *Relational paradigm*

- (1) Humans are a part of nature; we are fundamentally interconnected with ecosystems.
- (2) Nature is an ally that provides us with all we need for living. The boundaries and regenerative capacities of ecosystems are respected.
- (3) All species are interdependent, and all living creatures are intrinsically valuable.
- (4) High value is placed on the web of relations, and our horizons for caring are wide.
- (5) Human activities have both immediate effects and effects that radiate for centuries to come.
- (6) Progress means sustaining healthy living conditions for all species on Earth. Wellbeing is understood relationally, and nonmaterial aspects of life are appreciated.
- (7) Precaution and risk avoidance are important guidelines for our action.
- (8) Technology offers useful innovations for sustainable needs satisfaction.
- (9) Decision-making is based on holistic deliberation. Environmental protection and social sustainability outweigh economic aspects.

(10) Humans rely not only on their intelligence, but on their intuition, emotions and inner wisdom.

Note. From " Changing Paradigms: A Sketch for Sustainable Wellbeing and Ecosocial Policy" by T. Hirvilammi and T. Helne, 2014, *Sustainability*, 6, p. 2164.

Founded on the relational paradigm, Helne and Hirvilammi (2015; see also Hirvilammi and Helne 2014; Helne, 2021) develop a need-based theory of well-being that emphasises the oneness and interconnectedness of human well-being and nature, noting that their approach is closely connected with the strong sustainability approach. Their conceptualisation of human well-being as intertwined with and dependent on the health of ecosystems also shares similarities with the discussion of “planetary well-being” by Kortetmäki et al. (2021a) introduced in Section 2.1, which promotes a system-level approach to well-being. For Helne and Hirvilammi, too, well-being is not individual but relational, depending on the quality of relationships to humans as well as nonhumans. They support the conviction of Max-Neef (1991; cited in Hirvilammi & Helne, 2015) that needs form a system of interrelated and interactive needs rather than a hierarchy, with the exception of the fundamental need to remain alive. Also in line with other need theorists (see discussion in the previous Section 3.1), Helne and Hirvilammi see needs as universal and objective spanning across cultures and generations, while diverse in the sense that they can be satisfied in endless different ways. In addition, Helne and Hirvilammi emphasise the role of nature in fulfilling every category of human needs.

Helne and Hirvilammi identify four categories of needs, *Having*, *Doing*, *Loving* and *Being*, which together form the HDLB framework. The theory has its starting point in a well-being theory by Allardt (1976, 1993). He classifies needs into three categories, *Having*, *Loving* and *Being*, based on how needs are satisfied: material resources; relations between people; or what an individual is and what they do in relation to society. However, Helne and Hirvilammi (2015) add a fourth category of needs: *Doing*. By characterizing *Doing* needs as a separate category, they underline the significant impact that the quality of human activities have on both well-being and sustainability (Helne and Hirvilammi, 2015).

The dimension of *Having* in the HDLB framework by Helne and Hirvilammi (2015) refers to needs fulfilled through material resources, all of which are ultimately provided by ecosystems. Helne and Hirvilammi stress the need to respect planetary limits and use resources sustainably; hence, the fulfillment of *Having* needs should be guided by sufficiency considerations in order to avoid excess use.

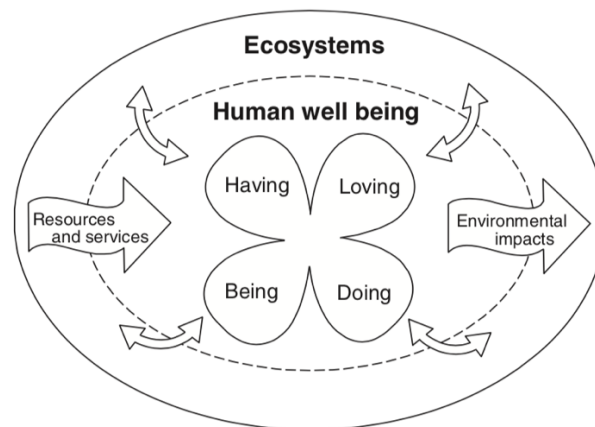
Doing denotes meaningful and responsible activities that allow individuals to abide by their values. The focus of this category is on the quality of activities and their impact on both individual and (eco)systemic well-being. *Doing* needs can be fulfilled through meaningful paid work, but paid work is only one possibility. Other ways of fulfilling *Doing* needs include, e.g., social and political action, leisure-time activities and housekeeping. A balance between different kinds of *Doing* (e.g., work and leisure activities) is also important for well-being.

The category of *Loving* includes connective and compassionate relations fulfilling needs of caring and belonging. These relationships include human relationships to family and friends, local communities and society, the global community and future generations. In Helne and Hirvilammi's nature-inclusive view, *Loving* also includes relationships to other species and nature.

Finally, *Being* refers to a healthy and harmonious physical, mental and spiritual existence which is ultimately connected to the well-being of society and nature. The dimension of *Being* is closely related to self-actualisation and becoming, for example, through the fulfillment of potentials and through a sense of autonomy. *Being* is also connected to a strive for serenity, goodness and unselfishness. Through the *Being* dimension, Helne and Hirvilammi highlight that extrinsic goals, such as wealth and material possessions, are less important than consumerist cultures suggest, and that intrinsic goals, e.g., personal growth and relatedness, often have a greater impact on well-being.

Through the HDLB framework, Hirvilammi and Helne draw attention to the multidimensionality of well-being; well-being can only be achieved when all four needs are sufficiently satisfied (Hirvilammi and Helne, 2014). Thus, income and material resources (*Having*) cannot compensate for lacks in one of the other dimensions of needs. In practice, Helne (2021) stresses, needs often overlap. As an example, Helne raises meaningful work that puts food on the table and is beneficial to the well-being of other beings, which can simultaneously satisfy needs of *Having*, *Doing*, *Loving*, and *Being*. The HDLB framework is depicted in Figure 5.

Figure 5. *The relational view of well-being*



Note. From “Wellbeing and Sustainability: A Relational Approach” by T. Helne and T. Hirvilammi, 2015, *Sustainable Development*, 23(3), p. 171.

In this paper, the HDLB framework developed by Helne and Hirvilammi will be used as a starting point for reimagining and exploring well-being in the context of the Finnish working life.

4. Methodology

The need-based well-being theory by Helne and Hirvilammi (2015) discussed in the previous chapter forms the analytical starting point for the empirical part of this study: an online survey on the theme of ecologically sustainable well-being in connection to gainful work situated in the context of Finnish working life. In this methodological chapter, the study design, data collection and processing, research ethics and analysis will be presented and explained.

4.1 Study design

The study was motivated by a relative lack of research on ecologically sustainable well-being in relation to work, for example, compared to research on ecologically sustainable well-being in relation to consumption (see, e.g., O’Neill et al., 2018). Furthermore, as noted in the introduction, Finnish working life research shows a relative lack of ecological perspectives (Taipale & Houtbeckers, 2021). In particular, Finnish empirical research on the relationship between ecologically sustainable well-being and work which centers experiences of workers themselves is rare; relevant contributions have focused on small-scale empirical research in specific sectors, namely cooperatives (Aho, 2021) and the technology and social work sectors (Kasvio, 2014). Due to the scarcity of research and limited number of sectors investigated, it seemed fruitful to opt for a more inclusive and explorative method

spanning participants from a wide range of work sectors. Hence, the study was opened to participants in all forms of gainful work.

The decision to include all forms of gainful work also allowed for a more profound problematisation of institutions and ideologies governing gainful work, opening up for a broader horizon of potential policy solutions. In this sense, the aim is similar to the transformational approach of Rääkkönen (2016, p. 34-35), who examines the topic of ecologically sustainable work on the systemic level, allowing for an analysis beyond the traditional ideal of full employment. Hence, the approach also enables a reevaluation of the relationship between gainful work and other forms of work, or other forms of *Doing*.

The study and methodology were also inspired by Graeber's (2018) qualitative and explorative research on the connection between a worker's evaluation of the social value of their work and their well-being (see also Soffia et al., 2021; Dur & Lent, 2019). Graeber (2018, p. 10) argues that a person's own evaluation of the social value of their work is in fact likely to constitute the most accurate assessment of its social value, since alternative ways of measuring the social usefulness of work have been found inadequate. Based on qualitative analysis of empirical data (including written email testimonies), Graeber coins the term "bullshit jobs" defined as work that is deemed "pointless, unnecessary or pernicious" even by the worker themselves (Graeber, 2018, pp. 9-10). Furthermore, Graeber finds that this type of socially useless work has harmful impacts on the worker's well-being analogous to "spiritual violence" (Graeber, 2018, p. 67-144). Graeber's approach has been influential for the analysis of work in this thesis. However, while Graeber focuses on the social value of work, this thesis adds an explicit emphasis on ecological value(s).

Two recent reports by the Finnish Innovation Fund Sitra were also of interest in designing the study. In Sitra's report (2019) on the topic of climate feelings in Finland, participants (n=2070) were asked if they estimated that their work produced emissions that accelerate climate change. A sizeable proportion, between 19–39 percent depending on professional group, said yes (Sitra, 2019, p. 51). However, in another report (2021b) on Finns' relationship with nature, only 16 percent of participants (n=2245) said they felt responsible for their work and work organisation's impacts on the well-being of nature, which is especially low compared to how many felt responsible for the impact of their consumption choices on the well-being of nature: 56 percent (Sitra, 2021b, p. 80). Neither number comes close to the share of participants who said they were concerned about the state of nature and the loss of biodiversity: 74 percent of participants (Sitra, 2021b, p. 15). In other words, people's care for the well-being of nature did not seem to be met with an equal sense of responsibility for their

impacts on the well-being of nature – especially in the context of work. However, the reports did not elaborate on why this was the case, since the data was presented as a statistical overview of responses to closed Likert scale questions. To be able to build on and enrich Sitra’s findings, a largely qualitative approach was chosen for this study, allowing for a more detailed analysis of reasons and circumstances behind, for example, the disparities indicated by the Sitra reports.

An online survey was chosen as a method for data collection. This method had several benefits. Importantly, it allowed for anonymity. Considering the topic, this was important, since previous research suggests that although it is easy to discuss ecologically *sustainable* work openly, it may not be as easy to talk openly about ecologically *unsustainable* work; instead, there may be reasons to hide problematic unsustainable features of work (Kasvio, 2014, p. 139). Guaranteeing anonymity was important also since a person’s job is often tied to both their livelihood and their identity, which may contribute to the sensitivity of the topic. Indeed, online surveys have been identified as ideal for sensitive research due to the high level of experienced anonymity they provide, which may facilitate even more intimate disclosures than face-to-face interviews (Braun et al., 2021). Furthermore, online surveys can give voice to people who, for some reason or another (e.g., social anxiety), find it easier to participate in online surveys than face-to-face interviews (Braun et al., 2021).

The online survey format also allowed for reach, scale, convenience and flexibility, both for the researcher and the participants. Hence, it was possible to recruit participants from a wide range of sectors within the limited time frame. Furthermore, the online survey constituted a pandemic-safe way of communing with the participants. In addition, by sharing the survey online and opening up the survey to gainfully employed people in any sector, no specific employees or sectors were made to feel singled out or even accused. Thus, I hoped to reach collaborative participants and provide anyone with a desire to share experiences on the topic a chance to participate.

Additionally, by sharing the online survey to a wider audience, I hoped to contribute to the public discussion on sustainable work and encourage people, both in working life and outside, to reevaluate work from a perspective of ecologically sustainable well-being.

4.2 Data collection and processing

The survey was open to everyone of the age 18 and above in gainful work in Finland. The definition of “gainful work” (Finnish: *ansiotyö*) was taken from Statistics Finland (n.d., para. 1) and a link to their website was provided for further information. According to this definition, gainful work (also

called “gainful employment”) is paid work carried out as an employee working for an organisation. Entrepreneurs and freelancers are also included in this definition of gainful work.

The online survey was open for 26 days from the 2nd to the 28th of February 2022. The questionnaire consisted of 14 questions (see Appendix 1): 9 open questions and 5 closed questions, the latter of which respondents could reply to using a 5-point Likert scale (ranging from “strongly disagree”, “disagree”, “neutral”, “agree” to “strongly agree”). The main focus of the survey was on the open questions and the potentially rich qualitative data they could engender. However, some questions were expressed as Likert scale questions, mainly to make participation easier and quicker, thus lowering the threshold for participation.

In the questionnaire, matters of ecologically sustainable well-being were explored using a variety of key terms, including “well-being of nature” (*luonnon hyvinvointi*) and “ecological sustainability” (*ekologinen kestävyys*). These related terms were used to open up different avenues for the imagination. The term “well-being of nature” was chosen for the questionnaire to convey a non-anthropocentric understanding of well-being as a broader, system-level concept. In addition, the term “well-being of nature” reflects the language used in the survey by Sitra (2021b, p. 80), which played a role in inspiring this study, as noted in the previous section. The term “ecological sustainability”, in turn, was used to emphasise the ecological quality of human activities. For similar reasons, and to convey severity and urgency, the term “sustainability crisis” (*kestävyyskriisi*) was used. The term is more common in Finnish than similar terms like “ecological crisis” (for example, based on number of Google results). In hindsight, it may have been preferable and clearer to use the term “ecological sustainability crisis” or “ecological crisis” rather than “sustainability crisis” to avoid potential confusion caused by the many different, sometimes conflicting uses of the term “sustainability”. However, the clear majority of participants did interpret the term “sustainability crisis” from an ecological perspective (although one participant commented on the sustainability crisis of the care sector instead).

A blog with the title “Work, well-being and nature: Experiences of Finnish gainful work and its connections to ecologically sustainable well-being” was created in support of the survey to provide participants with information about the terms used and the research project more broadly. The blog also included a link to the website of the Finnish Environment Institute (2018b) where the concept of ecologically sustainable well-being was explained in detail with reference to research on planetary boundaries (Rockström, 2009) and research on the planetary boundaries framework downscaled to the country level (O’Neill et al. 2018) (see Introduction and Section 2.1 for a discussion). Based on

the answers and feedback by the participants, the information provided was largely sufficient, but there were a couple of requests for more information regarding terminology. Hence, a suggestion for improvement would be to include more information about the terms used, for example, in the form of a glossary.

Two language versions, English and Finnish, were created of the blog and the survey. Additionally, participants were informed that responding in Swedish was also a welcome option. In addition to Finnish, Swedish is an official language of Finland. However, due to limited resources, the blog and questionnaire were not translated into Swedish. Still, many people who speak Swedish understand English or Finnish, but are more comfortable writing in Swedish. Therefore, the possibility of responding in Swedish was thought to encourage Swedish-speaking participants.

Links to the online survey were shared through social media channels (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram and Jodel). Some people and/or groups were found and contacted based on themes surrounding work, well-being and/or nature, others were approached at random or through contacts. The survey was also voluntarily shared by some people in their own social media channels.

Since the survey was only shared online, the sample is biased towards people with an online profile or presence. Furthermore, by approaching participants partly through themes of work, well-being and nature, there was a possible selection bias increasing the share of workers with an interest in these topics. A similar kind of selection bias may exist due to the topic itself, which is likely to attract participants with an interest in ecological sustainability.

In total, 96 survey entries were registered. Two entries were duplicates and thus removed; hence, 94 entries remained. These appeared to be entered by different people, so the results are interpreted as though they represent 94 unique participants. A sample size of 94 is sufficient for this particular explorative qualitative study, although it is not representative of any total population of workers or sectors.

Table 3. Demographic data

Gender	n	Percent
male	29	30.9%
female	59	62.8%
other	4	4.3%
prefer not to say	2	2.1%
Age	n	Percent
18–30	17	18.1%
31–45	47	50.0%
46–55	16	17.0%
56–65	14	14.9%
Over 65	0	0.0%
Professional group	n	Percent
Upper-level employees	24	25.5%
Lower-level employees	29	30.9%
Workers	37	39.4%
Self-employed persons	1	1.1%
Other	3	3.2%
Size of organisation	n	Percent
Micro (less than 10 employees)	13	13.8%
Small (less than 50 employees)	17	18.1%
Medium (50-249 employees)	21	22.3%
Large (more than 250 employees)	43	45.7%

Table 3 displays the demographic characteristics of the participants. It is noteworthy that the largest response categories both in terms of gender (“female”) and age (“31–45”) correspond to the author’s own gender and age, which calls for additional care and reflexivity in analysing the results and, especially, making broader inferences based on the data. Caution is also warranted due to the anonymity of the online survey; although the anonymity allowed for clear benefits, it also meant that the data, such as the demographic data of participants, could not be confirmed.

The open questions yielded 58 pages of qualitative data, which were analysed through qualitative content analysis (Drisko & Maschi, 2015). The process began with immersion in the data whereby the data was read independently of coding or theory to achieve familiarity with it. During the following multiple readings, codes were created through an inductive coding process, i.e., a data-driven approach, where patterns and categories were searched for independently of theory. To enhance the possibilities of seeing novel connections and patterns, the data was read in different directions and groupings, alternating between focusing on one participant as the unit of analysis and focusing on one answer category as the unit of analysis. The data generated by the closed Likert scale questions were also considered in those stages of the coding process which focused on a participant as the unit of the analysis; hence, they also informed the qualitative analysis. Throughout the process,

codes were created, edited, split and merged. To elaborate on observations that were not covered by codes, notes were continuously taken. In later stages, codes were collated into thematic categories and analysed per category by paying specific attention to key extracts characterizing each topic. Especially in these later stages, the research question formed a more prominent guiding tool in the process of analysing the data and deciding which parts were relevant, surprising, helpful or interesting. This phase of the analysis had a theory-based, deductive quality, with the theoretical framework forming a guiding tool in the interpretive and analytical process. At times, this analytical stage resembled theory testing.

Furthermore, the qualitative content analysis was supplemented with summative analysis connecting findings to amounts of participants (e.g. “18 respondents expressed...”). The purpose of this was to achieve internal statistical generalisations of the data, which was considered helpful since the participants were both numerous and diverse. However, these numbers should not be interpreted as external statistical generalisations.

In addition, descriptive statistics were used to analyse responses to the closed Likert scale questions. Hence, an internal statistical overview of the responses could be generated. Again, however, these are not suitable for external statistical generalisations.

4.3 Ethical considerations

During the research process, the guidelines by the Finnish National Board on Research Integrity (2019) were consulted and adhered to. The guidelines comprise ethical principles for research involving human participants.

Participants were informed that participation in the survey was completely voluntary and that they could decline or suspend participation at any time, in which case their answers would not be registered. Participation in the survey necessitated that participants gave their consent to the use of their answers as research material. Consent was communicated by clicking a designated and mandatory box on the questionnaire. To increase transparency and available information about the research process and purpose, an online blog was created in support of the survey. The blog also included a data protection notice which explained how the research participants' data would be processed, stored and deleted.

The participants' data and answers were treated with great care and confidentiality in accordance with data protection regulation. In the data processing stage, the data was further anonymised, so that information could not be used to identify participants. Ultimately, the goal was to eliminate any risks of harm to the research participants.

4.4 Analysis

Conceptually, the analysis was facilitated using the *Having-Doing-Loving-Being* (HDLB) framework of well-being by Helne and Hirvilammi (2015; see also Hirvilammi and Helne 2014; Helne, 2021) allowing for a multidimensional, need-based and nature-inclusive view of well-being.

Generally, research on work-related well-being has focused on hedonic conceptualisations of well-being, such as measures of happiness and work satisfaction. In contrast, eudaimonic perspectives connected with purpose, value and meaning are underrepresented (Bartels et al., 2019; Czerw, 2019). Need-based theories of well-being, which can be seen to belong to the eudaimonic school of well-being, are similarly underrepresented in research on work-related well-being, although some examples exist (see, e.g., Aho, 2021; Helne & Hirvilammi, 2022).

Thus, the HDLB framework and its relational conceptualization of well-being provide a relatively novel analytical framework for studying well-being in the context of work, with the potential to expand traditional understandings of work-related well-being. In particular, the framework emphasises the role of *Doing* needs as an integral part of ecologically sustainable well-being. It is important to notice that *Doing* needs can also be satisfied outside of traditionally defined “gainful work”. Hence, the HDLB framework spans reevaluations of work-related well-being beyond norms of full-time or full employment.

Furthermore, the relational paradigm on which the HDLB framework is based opens up for analyses of relational and contextual dimensions of work. For example, a person's decision to accept work may be affected by a multitude of relationships, such as those to family, friends, colleagues, society, governmental agencies, labour institutions etc. The relational perspective also draws attention to the impacts that a person's activities undertaken in (and outside of) gainful work have on other humans, society, nonhuman beings and ecosystems.

In addition, the relational, nature-inclusive perspective allows for seeing research participants as more than just representatives of companies, work sectors or the labour force. Instead, participants are

viewed as belonging to a range of different groups, families, networks and systems, including the human species, nature and ecosystems, entailing a wide range of important relationships inside and outside of work. Hence, the chosen approach resists neoliberal and neoclassical narratives which tend to portray workers as mere “employees”, “human resources” or “labour” (or “L” as denoted in growth models), designated with the sole purpose of increasing profitability and productivity.

Epistemologically, the analysis is grounded in social constructionism (Burr, 2015). Social constructionism encourages a critical stance toward taken-for-granted knowledge, ideas, concepts and language, which tend to be more-or-less shaped by their historical and cultural context, and sensitive to underlying assumptions and biases. For example, this means that what is considered natural, normal or good can change across time and space. A social constructionist approach is thus fruitful for a reexamination of concepts and ideas related to work, well-being, nature and economic growth – particularly in light of the ecological sustainability crisis, which calls for an interrogation of assumptions, biases and values hindering or fostering ecological sustainability.

5. Findings

This chapter presents the empirical findings of the online survey, beginning with an overview of the data generated by the closed questions (Section 5.1) analysed with the help of descriptive statistics. The following sections (5.2–5.6) proceed through qualitative content analysis facilitated by the *Having-Doing-Loving-Being* (HDLB) framework of well-being, focusing on findings related to the open questions. Section 5.2 explores participants’ views on ecological sustainability in relation to needs. Sections 5.3 and 5.4 present findings on (un)sustainable work *practices* and *purposes*, respectively. The following section (5.5) is focused on the search for ecologically sustainable work. Finally, the last section presents findings related to changing views on work and well-being.

5.1 Descriptive statistics: the importance of ecological sustainability

The survey included five closed questions to which participants could reply to using a 5-point Likert scale from 1 to 5 (ranging from “strongly disagree”, “disagree”, “neutral”, “agree” to “strongly agree”). The questions and results are presented in Table 4. The questions are formulated based on the relational HDLB framework of well-being which emphasizes the ecological embeddedness and impacts of human activities as well as the important role of *Doing* needs for well-being.

Table 4. Descriptive statistics of responses to the closed questions

No. participants n=94	Ecological sustainability is important for me. (n=94)		My work is aligned with my ecological values. (n=93)		Issues related to ecological sustainability and the well- being of nature are sufficiently addressed in my work organisation. (n=91)		I am aware of the impacts my work and work organisation have on the well-being of nature. (n=92)		I feel responsible for the impacts my work and work organisation have on the well-being of nature. (n=93)	
5: strongly agree	62	66.0%	15	16.1%	13	14.3%	16	17.4%	26	28.0%
4: agree	24	25.5%	43	46.2%	22	24.2%	39	42.4%	33	35.5%
3: neutral	6	6.4%	27	29.0%	23	25.3%	25	27.2%	21	22.6%
2: disagree	1	1.1%	6	6.5%	23	25.3%	8	8.7%	7	7.5%
1: strongly disagree	1	1.1%	2	2.2%	10	11.0%	4	4.3%	6	6.5%
Agreement rate	91.5%		62.4%		38.5%		59.8%		63.4%	
Disagreement rate	2.1%		8.6%		36.3%		13.0%		14.0%	
Mean	4.5		3.7		3.1		3.6		3.7	
SD	0.8		0.9		1.2		1.0		1.1	

To facilitate an analysis of the results, agreement rates were calculated by adding the percentage of respondents who either "strongly agreed" or "agreed" with a statement. Disagreement rates were calculated in the same fashion.

The majority of the respondents agreed, strongly or otherwise, with the statement "ecological sustainability is important for me". No other statement yielded a higher agreement rate. Notably, there was a sizeable difference in agreement rate between this question and the questions with the second and third highest agreement rate. The second highest agreement rate was yielded for the statement "I feel responsible for the impacts my work and work organisation have on the well-being of nature". A marginally lower share of participants agreed, strongly or otherwise, with the statement "my work is aligned with my ecological values". The second lowest agreement rate was yielded for the statement "I am aware of the impacts my work and work organisation have on the well-being of nature" and the lowest for "issues related to ecological sustainability and the well-being of nature are sufficiently addressed in my work organisation". For the latter statement, the disagreement rate was almost as high as the agreement rate.

The lower scores for the work-related questions (2–4) indicate a discrepancy between participants' experiences of ecological sustainability in the context of work compared to the participants' relationship to ecological sustainability (question 1).

The topics introduced through the closed questions were further explored through open questions depending on how much participants wanted to share about the topics. The results from the open questions will be discussed in the following sections of this chapter.

5.2 Ecological sustainability and its relation to needs

The open questions unwrap the thinking and feelings behind the descriptive statistics discussed in Section 5.1 enabling a deeper understanding of the participants' experiences of ecological sustainability in relation to their work. Of the 94 participants, 88 participants responded to some or all of the open questions in addition to the closed questions. Although some answered with shorter perfunctory answers, many participants wrote vivid elaborate answers yielding rich qualitative data.

In the first open question, participants were asked to elaborate on why ecological sustainability is important for them and how they would describe their ecological values. An overwhelming majority demonstrated at least some concern for ecological issues. For many (42) participants, the sphere of care and concern explicitly extended beyond considerations of the respondent's own well-being, beyond national borders, or beyond the human species, thus clearly aligning more closely with the relational paradigm than the human exemptionalism paradigm (see Table 2, p. 15; Table 1, p. 14). For example, these participants emphasised the importance of ecological sustainability for the well-being and life prospects of "the planet", "our only home, planet Earth", "life on Earth", "species, habitats or populations" and "humans and other species". Similarly in line with the relational paradigm, several participants referred to the "intrinsic value" of nature and nonhuman life. The human exemptionalism paradigm was also breached through demonstrations of concern extending on a temporal axis beyond the short term, for example, through concern for the "future", "future generations" and "future generations (of both animals and humans)" or worry about one's own children's future. The wide and far-reaching care and compassion demonstrated through responses like these are aligned with the relational view of well-being, which draws attention to the global and ecological embeddedness of *Loving* needs. Hence, for these respondents, ecological sustainability was clearly connected to needs in the *Loving* dimension.

The interdependency, interconnectedness and oneness of humans and ecosystems were particularly clearly highlighted by the following participants who used words which shared clear similarities with the relational paradigm.

Extract 1

[Ecological sustainability is important b]ecause we live in interdependency with all ecological systems. I don't think there's a clear boundary between me and all other living beings – including the earth itself. (R72, Editor-in-chief of magazine)

Extract 2

[Ecological sustainability] is important because it's literally of vital importance, we're all part of our great ecosystem. (R74, Sales and marketing Assistant)

Extract 3

my connection to nature and the environment is the basis of my well-being. despite the contemporary society's technological buzz and growing virtual world, we are always bound to the earth and cannot live without it (R58, Researcher)

In Extract 1, the respondent rejects prevailing ideas of human-nature dualism characteristic of the human exemptionalism paradigm by saying that they do not believe in “a clear boundary” between them and other living beings. This oneness with nature is also reflected in Extract 2 (“we're all part of”) and Extract 3 (“we are always bound to”). In both Extract 2 and Extract 3, ecological sustainability and nature are portrayed as fundamental for human well-being by being “of vital importance” and “the basis of my well-being”.

The data frequently reflected the severity of the ecological situation. For example, nine participants demonstrated crisis awareness through the terminology they used to describe the current state of the planet, which included the terms “ecological crisis”, “ecological catastrophe”, “eco-crisis”, “climate crisis”, “climate catastrophe”, “mass extinction” and “emergency”. (Many also referred to a “sustainability crisis”, but this usage was less spontaneous, since the term was included in a question and repeated by the participants.) Six respondents described current impacts on their own mental health (i.e., *Being* needs), for example, though “climate anxiety”, “anxiety about what kind of world is left for our children”, “worry”, “grief” and “sadness over the destruction of nature and habitats”. The following extract exemplifies how the ecological crisis is perceived and experienced by one of the participants.

Extract 4

I love the biodiversity of nature. I am deeply shocked by the ongoing mass extinction. Worried about the life prospects of all living beings as our own species destroys and exploits nature with the gleam of the quarterly economy and continued economic growth in its eyes. (R5, Nurse, eldercare)

In Extract 4, the participant describes feelings triggered by the mass extinction juxtaposed with a depiction of the economy, more specifically, the economy centered around growth and quarterly

targets. For the respondent, the short-sighted growth economy is intricately connected with the brutal relationship humans have with nature; their interpretation resembles that captured by the tenets of the human exemptionalism paradigm.

About a fifth (17) of participants spontaneously described their ecological values in terms of *activities* undertaken to increase ecological sustainability. In light of the theory of relational well-being, these participants clearly connected their ecological values to *Doing* needs. The activities mentioned by participants most often included consumer choices and individual-level practices aimed at minimizing one's individual impact on the environment, in particular, recycling, plant-based diets, sustainable transport, renewable electricity and sustainable or minimised consumption. Civic activities were also mentioned, though less frequently; these included voting, participating in demonstrations, advancing pleas and petitions, promoting and discussing ecological issues, and doing voluntary work. A couple of participants mentioned reproductive work practices, specifically, teaching ecological values to their children.

The participants also connected their ecological values to activities undertaken in paid work. These connections were usually expressed in response to the direct open questions related to their work. Respondents were asked, for example, whether their work is aligned with their ecological values, whether they feel responsible for the impacts their work and work organisation have on the well-being of nature, and whether the ecological sustainability or unsustainability of their work affects their own well-being. The respondents regularly expressed a strong need to abide by their ecological values at work, which is in line with the HDLB framework highlighting needs of *Doing*.

Many (29) of those who considered their ecological values to be aligned with their work experienced positive feelings and/or positive impacts on their well-being. In terms of the HDLB framework, this can be seen as a clear interrelation between *Doing* needs and *Being* needs. The positive well-being impacts were commonly experienced as or mediated by feelings of "meaningfulness". Other positive feelings connected to ecologically sustainable work included "gratefulness", "pride and growth of my self-esteem", "peace of mind", "no value conflict" and "reduced stress when the work feels meaningful". Sustainable work was also experienced as "motivating" and "rewarding". One respondent thought the sustainability of their work contributed to them "sleeping well". The following extracts exemplify descriptions of positive, even direct, well-being impacts.

Extract 5

[The ecological sustainability of my job] has a direct impact [on my well-being] – I feel good when I'm able to live life in accordance with my values. (R85, Key account manager, digital learning)

Extract 6

To feel good about my own decisions I want to make as small negative impact on nature as possible. [...] To feel good is to do good. (R30, Small business owner)

Extract 7

[The ecological sustainability of my work] is essentially linked to it feeling meaningful, through which it enhances my well-being. (R43, Teacher of language and literature)

In the above extracts, there is a clear connection between ecologically responsible work (*Doing*) and mental well-being (*Being*). The ecological sustainability of the respondents' work positively impacts their well-being directly or through feelings of value alignment or meaningfulness.

A fifth (19) of respondents stated that the ecological sustainability of their work had no impact on their well-being or did not contribute to it in any way. A few did not elaborate, and a few felt that their work matched their values closely enough. Some expressed that for them, work was primarily a way of making a living.

Extract 8

I work to get money, not to save the world. (R41, Driver, logistics)

Extract 9

I need my work to live. (R12, Chief shop steward)

In these extracts, work is reduced to a mere vehicle for money and living standards (*Having* needs) rather than, for example, an activity with the purpose of contributing to the well-being of the worker themselves and other beings. In Extract 8, the participant's description echoes the hegemonic view of work as a necessity for economic growth and an activity judged and justified primarily through an economic lens. In Extract 9, work is portrayed as a necessity for living and hence, a need in itself.

10 participants experienced negative well-being impacts in their current work due to its ecological unsustainability. In addition, eight participants spontaneously shared experiences of negative well-being impacts experienced in previous jobs. In light of the HDLB framework, this can be interpreted as an interconnection between unfulfilled *Doing* needs and unfulfilled *Being* needs. The negative well-being impacts included feelings of "anxiety", "constant value conflict", "annoyance", "frustration", "guilt", "bad conscience" and "stupefying powerlessness". Others felt "very bad",

“miserable”, experienced “sleepless nights” or “hated” their job. The following extracts illustrate some of the negative well-being impacts experienced by participants.

Extract 10

I experience a bad conscience, Weltschmerz, and feel like a fraud because I would like to live sustainably, but my work does not reflect my personal values. (R74, Sales and marketing Assistant)

Extract 11

It causes me anxiety that my work, employer and customers partly have a negative impact on ecological sustainability. I’m now considering a new job or retraining. (R8, Profession not disclosed)

Extract 12

I experience inadequacy, frustration, and anxiety. Annoyance at the lack of respect for the environment. (R44, Social and healthcare services)

The respondents’ descriptions indicate that ecologically unsustainable work can have a variety of damaging impacts on workers’ mental well-being, i.e., prevent the satisfaction of *Being* needs as well as the satisfaction of *Doing* needs.

A couple of participants described how negative well-being impacts stemming from value-dissonant work are closely connected with the amount of time spent at work, as illustrated in the next extracts.

Extract 13

I strive to live in a way that burdens the environment as little possible. With this in mind, it would feel contradictory to spend 8 hours every day on work that only fuels the problems. [...] the thought of having to act against one's values at work is anxiety-inducing. Ecological unsustainability also prevents the work from feeling meaningful. (R18, Editor, cultural sector)

Extract 14

I want my workplace to have similar values as myself. To feel that the work one does is meaningless is incredibly eroding of one’s psyche and mental health, especially since the job takes up so much of one's time. (R37, Junior developer, consultancy)

In both Extract 13 and 14, the detrimental well-being impacts of unsustainable work are closely connected to feelings of meaninglessness. Furthermore, both participants highlight how negative well-being impacts are exacerbated by long hours spent at work.

A couple of respondents described ways of coping with unsustainable work which included ignoring and avoiding problems.

Extract 15

I haven't been able to find another job. During corona, I've mainly been working remotely, which means I can ignore the troubling problems. [...] I experience some value misalignment, which burdens me. But I feel like I do what I can, and that's not much. (R73, Personnel and finances, technology industry)

Extract 16

I feel like I'm just a tiny pawn in a big organisation, and I don't have the competence/energy/ability to feel responsible for the whole work organisation. [...] The more you think about [the ecological sustainability or unsustainability of your work], to more it affects you[r well-being], of course. If you don't see how you could change things or have an impact, then you think about it less, because you just have to accept things the way they are. (R93, Marketing and communication)

Common for both respondents is that they feel little power to change their situation. One describes powerlessness stemming from an inability find other work (Extract 15); the other feels powerless in the organisation (Extract 16). Hence, their coping responses to unsustainable work are to “ignore”, “think about it less” or “just [...] accept things the way they are”. In light of the HDLB framework, the respondents' experiences of powerlessness and reduced autonomy can be interpreted as unfulfilled *Being* needs that are interconnected with their unfulfilled *Doing* needs.

18 participants expressed feeling a low sense of responsibility for the ecological impacts of their work, with most connecting these feelings to some experience of powerlessness. For example, reduced responsibility stemmed from experiences of not being in a position to make decisions, not being involved in decision-making and not being (formally) responsible for matters related to sustainability. Others described a general lack of power or inability to impact ecological sustainability through their work. A couple of respondents said taking full responsibility was difficult because they lacked knowledge of the ecological impacts of their work and work organisation or did not know whom to contact to advance ecological sustainability in their organisation. A general lack of time and energy was also raised as having an inhibiting impact on one's sense of ecological responsibility. Overall, actual or perceived powerlessness constituted a clear obstacle in the way of ecologically responsible *Doing* in the context of work.

Relatively more participants (36) experienced high levels of responsibility for the ecological impacts of their work. Some connected feelings of responsibility to the view that all actions have consequences, e.g., “all of my choices (personal and professional) have an impact”. Similarly, some shared a conviction that everyone is responsible, for example, “we all have a moral responsibility to think about these things”. One participant expressed frustration at those who do not take ecological

responsibility in their work: “It annoys me to no end how many of my friends work banal corporate jobs or even unnecessary jobs”. Critical thoughts on the limits of individualism or “individual action” were also raised. In this vein, one participant stressed that the extent to which ecologically sustainable work is possible is a “societal question” and another argued that they themselves had to bear relatively more responsibility because they were “not financially forced to work in an unecological field”. Relatedly, some participants felt a high level of responsibility because they thought they possessed relatively more knowledge and could act as an example. Several participants who felt a high sense of responsibility identified ecological sustainability as an explicit part of their job description or work purpose. A high level of responsibility was also felt by one participant who described responsibility in their work organisation as being “shared collectively” and another whose workplace’s goals were set democratically. Finally, one participant who experienced a high sense of responsibility described their work as a “calling”.

Risks related to burnout or exhaustion stemming from ecological responsibilities were also raised in a few cases. One respondent experienced “burnout and anxiety” from following the worsening ecological crisis for years. Another participant identified a high risk of burnout for workers in the environmental sector due to heavy workloads and people working passionately for the cause. The following participant experienced fatigue in their work for ecological sustainability, although they also explained that strong connections to others (*Loving*) helped balance the negative well-being impacts (*Being*).

Extract 17

I often feel a sense of inadequacy and fatigue. At the same time, however, small advances improve my everyday life and well-being. I try to find a balance between my activities and my mental health. Often, working together and strengthening connections between people increase endurance and strength. (R17, Specialist, organization)

In sum, ecological sustainability and ecological values were of high importance for participants and connected to needs in many different ways. Ecological values were often connected to *Loving* needs through caring and compassionate relations with current and future generations of human and nonhuman beings. In addition, ecological values were clearly connected to *Doing* needs, translating to ecologically responsible activities both inside and outside of work. Work activities aligned with one’s ecological values often gave rise to positive well-being impacts (satisfied *Being* needs), whereas ecologically unsustainable work frequently had an opposite, negative effect on well-being.

5.3 Ecologically (un)sustainable work practices

The open questions prompted spontaneous and detailed descriptions of organizational activities and practices affecting participants' experiences of the ecological (un)sustainability of their work. The collected descriptions point to obstacles and possibilities for evaluating ecological impacts of work activities (responsible *Doing*). An overview of practices included in respondents' writings, increasing or decreasing their experiences of how ecologically sustainable their work is, are displayed in Table 5. The numbers signify the number of participants who discussed the practice in question. The categories were not constructed until the analysis phase; thus, they did not guide the participants' replies.

Participants' experiences of the ecological sustainability of their work did not only depend on their own individual work activities, but were frequently connected to the organizational level. Thus, participants' experiences were often clearly relationally and contextually formed by their connection to their colleagues and their work organisation.

Table 5. Practices impacting respondents' experiences of the ecological sustainability of their work

WASTE MANAGEMENT, RECYCLING AND RESOURCE USE		
<p>Positive impact</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Proper recycling facilities and practices (7) ▪ Using no or less paper (4) ▪ Sustainable products (design, materials and/or ingredients) (4) ▪ Plant-based catering (2) ▪ Using recycled electronic devices ▪ Recycling electronic devices after use ▪ Developing new ways to utilise waste and recycled materials ▪ Food waste minimised ▪ Fairtrade coffee ▪ No waste 	<p>Negative impact</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lacking recycling facilities and practices (6) ▪ Food waste (3) ▪ Plastic waste (2) ▪ Disposable waste (2) ▪ Buying new machinery and equipment instead of repairing old ▪ Industrial waste and pollution ▪ Pharmaceutical waste ▪ Unnecessary picnic waste ▪ Paper used to make product (magazine) ▪ Meat-eating colleagues ▪ Lacking vegetarian options in cafeteria ▪ Still using advertising merch 	<p>Questions and uncertainties</p>
TRAVEL AND LOGISTICS		
<p>Positive impact</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Remote work (4) ▪ Promotion of cycling including bike storage facilities 	<p>Negative impact</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Car use (3) ▪ Flying (3) ▪ Use of fossil-fuels ▪ A lot of travelling ▪ Emissions from travelling not paid attention to ▪ Lacking support for bicycling ▪ Unnecessary transportation 	<p>Questions and uncertainties</p>
PROPERTY MANAGEMENT, HEATING, ENERGY AND ICT		
<p>Positive impact</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sustainable energy (2) ▪ Energy-saving property maintenance ▪ Turning off unnecessary lights ▪ Saving heat and energy due to small work spaces ▪ Geothermal heating ▪ Ecological cleaning chemicals ▪ Reduced use of cleaning chemicals 	<p>Negative impact</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Energy use (2) ▪ Impact of knowledge work including computers and offices ▪ Using a lot of electronic devices ▪ Using and maintaining servers 	<p>Questions and uncertainties</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Is the organisation's energy contract ecological? ▪ Are the organisation's ICT purchases ecological? ▪ Impact of knowledge work is not concretely visible ▪ Ecological impact of Internet use is not discussed ▪ Insufficient attention paid to carbon footprint of digital use

SUSTAINABILITY PERSONNEL, STRATEGY AND COMMUNICATION

Positive impact

- Dedicated personnel working with sustainability issues (6)
- Internal sustainability communication (5)
- Sustainability strategy or program (5)
- Inclusion of employees in sustainability-related matters
- Training for employees on ecological matters
- Sustainability campaigns
- Supporting charities

Negative impact

- Greenwashing (3)
- Insufficient internal sustainability communication (3)
- No internal sustainability communication (2)
- No sustainability plan

Questions and uncertainties

- Does the organisation have a sustainability strategy?
- Does the organization have sustainability incentives for employees?

CRITERIA FOR PARTNERS, CLIENTS, PROCUREMENTS AND INVESTMENTS

Positive impact

- Sustainability criteria for procurements (2)
- Sustainability criteria for partners
- Sustainability criteria for clients

Negative impact

- No sustainability criteria for clients
- Procurements not always ecological
- Product imports from abroad that do not feel like an ecological option

Questions and uncertainties

- Does the organization have responsibility criteria for clients?
- Does the organization accept funding from sources connected to fossil fuels?
- Does the organisation's bank accelerate climate change?
- Are the organisation's investments sustainable?
- What is the ecological footprint of the organisation's investment portfolio?

MEASURING, REPORTING AND CERTIFICATES

Positive impact

- Calculating carbon footprint (3)
- Ecological impacts known (2)
- Compensating (2)
- Carbon neutrality
- Certified environment program
- OKKA certificate
- EcoCompass
- Ecological certificate

Negative impact

- Insufficient measurement and reporting of ecological impacts (2)
- No attention paid to carbon emissions
- Insufficient calculation of biodiversity impacts

Questions and uncertainties

- Ecological impacts of the organization unknown (4)
- Climate impacts of the organisation unknown
- How effective are the organisation's sustainability-related activities?
- Does the organisation compensate?

In some cases, even individual organisational practices were directly tied to positive or negative well-being impacts (*Being*). For example, a respondent expressed “not feeling good” and feeling “annoyance” about lacking recycling practices, and another felt “annoyed” about colleagues eating meat. For the following respondent, proper recycling facilities were an important contributor to peace of mind.

Extract 18

Now I can recycle everything during the lunch break. I know this alone will not save the world, but it does bring me peace of mind and means I don't have to act against my own values and principles, at least. (R36, Specialist, HR service sector)

Practices in the category of “waste management, recycling and resource use” were most frequently brought up. Practices in this category included recycling and waste generation, with the former mentioned in a positive light and the latter negatively. The category of “waste management, recycling and resource use” was experienced as relatively clear and straightforward in the sense that the category did not raise many direct questions or uncertainties among the respondents.

Another category which was also perceived as relatively straightforward was “travel and logistics”. The relative clarity could also be discerned through the participants' spontaneous discussions of sustainable alternatives. For example, in the case of car use, participants frequently raised and preferred more sustainable alternatives, in particular, cycling and public transport, but were prevented from using these primarily due time constraints in the short term.

Extract 19

My job [...] requires me to use my own car, I have to drive to customers' homes on a daily basis [...] My car is probably the biggest contributor to my carbon footprint. It is mandatory in my work [...] By bike I wouldn't have time to do everything, although I wish I could bike, especially in the summer. (R5, Nurse, eldercare)

Practices in the category of “sustainability personnel, strategy and communication” were mostly mentioned in a positive tone, with dedicated personnel and communication efforts seen as conducive to ecological sustainability. However, the category also raised criticism, particularly due to practices of greenwashing and lacking internal communication about sustainability issues.

Importantly, the remaining categories engendered considerably more questions and uncertainties among the respondents. In particular, many uncertainties existed regarding the ecological impacts of knowledge work, ICT, digital tools and the Internet. Even lesser known were impacts pertaining to financial arrangements, including banking, investments and funding; these were exclusively raised in the form of uncertainties and questions concerning their climate and ecological impacts.

In the category of “measuring, reporting and certificates”, carbon footprint calculations and compensation were raised in a positive light as practices conducive to ecological sustainability. However, the category also raised uncertainties regarding climate impacts. The issue of ecological

impacts raised even more questions; in all except two cases ecological impacts were experienced as insufficiently measured or reported, or altogether unknown.

The work *practices* discussed in this section can be distinguished from work *purposes*, a distinction which is analogous to the distinction between *means* and *ends*. Broadly speaking, a discussion of practices can be seen to align with a reformist approach, which seeks technical solutions within the status quo. A discussion of *purposes*, on the other hand, shares parallels with a transformational approach, which involves questioning the purposes which guide society. Ecologically sustainable work *purposes* will be discussed in the next section.

5.4 Ecologically (un)sustainable work purposes

In addition to the work practices listed in Table 5, respondents' experiences of their work's ecological sustainability depended to a large extent on the *purpose* of their work. Respondents working for purposes experienced as ecologically sustainable often expressed value harmony and positive well-being impacts, which is in line with the HDLB framework. Purposes which were experienced as ecologically sustainable included: promoting ecological knowledge and attitudes through education, advancing ecological sustainability through politics, promoting organisational sustainability, researching ecological sustainability, advancing circular economy, and promoting sustainable technology. The following extracts illustrate ways in which respondents' core work purposes align with their personal ecological values and goals.

Extract 20

I have changed careers to make sure my whole career from here on out will make the biggest impact on sustainability [...] It was not easy to find a job that so perfectly matches my climate ambitions, BUT nowadays I urge my friends to do so as well [...] the purpose of saving the planet is just beyond any other purpose to live for. (R90, Business developer, renewable energy)

Extract 21

It is important for me to live so that I can look at myself and my past and be satisfied knowing I have done more good than evil. I strive to live by a "do no harm" principle and maximise my positive ecological handprint in the world. [...] I get to impact ecological policy-making on many levels. [...] I could not even imagine working for a company where I would not get to actively promote ecological sustainability. To work somewhere that is "not-evil" is not enough for my own mind, I want the approach to be one of active betterment. (R17, Specialist, organisation)

Extract 22

In my work, I get to research and promote sustainable travelling which feels very meaningful. [...] At this stage, a job description of merely not exacerbating the sustainability crisis is not enough for me, I specifically want to be able to slow down the problems. (R57, Researcher)

For the respondents, the purpose of their work is strongly connected to a sense of meaningfulness and purposefulness on a personal level, i.e., *Doing* needs. In Extract 20, the respondent describes an intense feeling of purpose (“beyond any other purpose to live for”) connected to work activities aligned with the purpose of “saving the planet”. In Extracts 21 and 22, the active promotion of ecological sustainability is seen as a prerequisite for the work to feel meaningful and ethical.

On the contrary, work purposes which were viewed as contradictory to ecological sustainability gave rise to notably different experiences. These types of purposes were related to mining, the technology industry, and, most frequently and clearly, consumption. The purpose described in the next excerpts is the increase of consumption.

Extract 23

I work with payment methods and our biggest goal is to maximize the number of transactions, which in turn leads to higher consumption (so it does not correspond to my values) (R77, Banking and finance)

Extract 24

I work in communication and marketing, and at least the purpose of marketing is often to get people to consume more. I am also not quite sure how much we in our organisation and work genuinely think about ecological values. On the one hand, a lot, after all they are the megatrend guiding everything, but sometimes it feels like we should be doing something more meaningful, something more sustainable. (R93, Marketing and communication)

In Extract 23, the respondent discusses the goal of maximizing transactions. Although this purpose is perfectly aligned with the macroeconomic goal of increasing GDP, it gives rise to value dissonance in the respondent. Similarly, the respondent in Extract 24 doubts the true ecological values of their work organisation; they describe ecological values, perhaps even ironically, as merely a “megatrend”. The respondent themselves longs for more meaningful “doing”, signalling that they are not able to sufficiently actualise their ecological values and *Doing* needs through their work.

Notably, the topic of consumption was recurrently raised in relation to needs and necessity, reflecting a recognition of the satiability of *Having* needs. Generally, respondents who raised this topic were opposed to working for the purpose of increasing “unnecessary” production and consumption, including “unnecessary seasonal clothes”, “more junk in the world” and “unnecessary stuff”. The

purpose of selling products “if the need is not 100% well-founded, but is based on, for example, comfort” was also questioned. Respondents who worked with consumption that they perceived to be unnecessary exhibited a reluctance for their roles.

Extract 25

The purpose of my work is to sell products to people, often unnecessary, and the whole commercial sector encourages overconsumption and an unsustainable lifestyle. On the other hand, some of the products I sell offer slightly more sustainable choices, but generally not. [...] my work does not reflect my personal values. [...] [Ecological sustainability] is [a] very important [criterion] in the search for a new job. (R74, Sales and marketing assistant)

Extract 26

Among our customers are companies whose core business is to sell goods/services that no one really needs. I would not like to serve such companies. (R8, Profession not disclosed)

Extract 27

[I work for] a Finnish telephone operator. Of course, we also sell all kinds of useless shit, even though the company [...] advertises itself as ecological and carbon neutral which is just rubbish. [...] when you as a seller try to push everything possible from tablets and phones that last a maximum of 3-4 years, to mobile broadband and entertainment packages, it's not very sustainable. These are pushed on the customer even if they do not need a tablet, for example. Unnecessary junk instead of making tablets and phones that would last 20 to 30 years, instead of being changed every two years. (R88, Sales, ICT industry)

The respondents in Extracts 25–27 describe selling or marketing products that are “often unnecessary”, “useless shit”, “unnecessary junk” or that “no one really needs”. In other words, they describe ways in which their work contributes to excess *Having*. For the respondents, this does not constitute a meaningful and ethical activity, meaning that their *Doing* needs are not satisfied. Two of the respondents also underline the active role they, as sales and marketing professionals, have in “pushing” products and working in a sector that “encourages overconsumption and an unsustainable lifestyle”. Despite their active roles, their autonomy and self-actualisation, which are connected to the needs dimension of *Being*, are diminished, since they experience reluctance and unwillingness in performing their roles.

Other respondents remembered past work in unsustainable sectors and were able to compare it to their present-day, more meaningful work purposes. For these respondents, there was a marked difference in how they experienced these purposes.

Extract 28

When I was young, I hated selling made-in-China stuff in a department store, but I had to get money to get by. Unloading the deliveries was shocking – sometimes the goods were broken

already before they reached the shelf. I don't want to produce more junk into the world. In my current job, I work on things that I personally feel and are generally perceived by society to be meaningful – this increases my own well-being. (R58, Researcher)

Extract 29

As a student, I had a summer job in a clothing store and it was awful, because it was a chain store and not some lovely artisan shop. I needed money, so I sold clothes made in Bangladesh [...] Now, I appreciate that the value base of my work is in order and that our core work strives to improve society and the well-being of people. However, through the [...] previous example of the clothing store, I know that working against one's understanding of sustainability feels miserable and unnecessary. (R59, Coordinator, organizational sector)

The respondents describe how their previous jobs were closely tied to the satisfaction of their own *Having* needs: they “needed” and “had to get” money. However, the jobs violated the respondents’ understanding of sustainability, meaning that the work itself was experienced as meaningless and unnecessary. Thus, the previous jobs did not satisfy the respondents’ *Doing* needs, whereas the new jobs do, thereby enhancing rather than reducing their well-being (*Being*).

However, the discussion of consumption and needs was not completely uniform. The respondent in the following extract also spontaneously raised the topic of needs and necessity in reference to sold products, but they had a view that more closely corresponded to materialistic-hedonistic views of well-being rather than the relational theory of well-being.

Extract 30

People need the products that my company sells. On the other hand, they are not fully necessary. A certain kind of hedonism belongs to life – otherwise one would just have to kill oneself to stop consuming natural resources. [...] Life must also be enjoyed, so several services or products are needed. I also need money to give my children food and a chance at a good life. Furthermore, I pay taxes that create well-being. (R50, Manager, commerce)

Here the respondent’s conceptualisation of “needs” is in some way contradictory which is why they can describe the products that their company sells as both “needed” and “not fully necessary”. The respondent also contends that “several services or products are *needed* [emphasis added]” for an enjoyable life. From these materialistic definitions of needs, the respondent draws a drastic conclusion – the only alternative to a “certain kind of hedonism” is to kill oneself. Just like the respondent equates a good life with material standards, they equate the taxes they pay with well-being. Thus, well-being is construed in primarily economic and materialistic terms, which is in line with the tenets of human exemptionalism.

In contrast, the next two extracts illustrate how an aversion to unsustainable consumption was a shaping factor in the respondents' career choices.

Extract 31

Already while young, I came to the conclusion that I could not work with something consumption-related. Partly for this reason I have ended up in the social sector, where it's not just material things that are developed. [...] I have chosen a job with a focus on talking and practical helping. I couldn't be in a job where the purpose was to sell as much as possible to people. (R69, Social worker)

Extract 32

My work as a teacher of language and literature is meaningful because it aims at reflection and growth of individuals and the community through self-expression, communication, literature and other forms of art. I think this implicitly includes the possibility of realizing that there are other ways to become oneself and part of the community than unsustainable consumption of natural resources. (R43, Teacher of language and literature)

In Extracts 31 and 32, development and growth are seen as features of humans and communities rather than features of material standards and consumption (*Having*). In Extract 31, the participant describes seeking out work that aims at non-material development through helping others (*Doing*). In Extract 32, "growth" refers to the growth and becoming of individuals (*Being*) which is achieved through the relationship between a supportive teacher and their students (*Loving*).

5.5 In search of ecologically sustainable work

Participants were also asked about ecological sustainability in relation to the search for employment through the following open questions: "Is ecological sustainability an important criterion for you when searching for a job? How easy or difficult do you think it has been to find a job that matches your ecological values?". In addition, the participants were asked: "If your work is not fully aligned with your ecological values, for what reasons have you undertaken the work?" The latter question also engendered responses related to the search for employment. Hence, a clearer picture can be construed of the obstacles and possibilities for ecologically sustainable well-being arising "between" jobs or work organisations in Finnish working life.

A third (31) of participants directly expressed that ecological sustainability was an important criterion in their search for work. Most of these respondents described the criterion of ecological sustainability as "very important", "important" or similar, with eight expressing that it was a necessary requirement, i.e., they would not accept work that was ecologically unsustainable. This is in line with the HDLB

theory highlighting *Doing*, i.e. the quality of human activities, as one of the four fundamental dimensions of ecologically sustainable wellbeing. A recurring experience was that of ecological sustainability becoming an increasingly important criterion.

Extract 33

Back when I applied for this job, [ecological sustainability] was not the main criterion. My view has changed over the years. (R15, Teacher and artist)

Extract 34

The next time I apply for a job, I will value ecological sustainability more highly. If and when I have my current permanent employment contract to fall back on, I am practically ready to reject all organisations and workplaces that do not meet my criteria. (R36, Specialist, HR service sector)

In contrast, only 11 participants responded that ecological sustainability was not an important criterion in their job search. In most cases, the responses were short (“no”, “not important” or similar), although some elaborated that “finding work is hard enough as it is”, “one has to work to get paid” or similar, e.g.:

Extract 35

I've never thought about it. And if I were to change jobs, [ecological sustainability] would still not be a criterion. At the end of the day, I work to support my family, and I've never been in a position where I could choose between dozens of different jobs. (R56, Construction planner)

The participant's description echoes the hegemonic, weakly sustainable view of work according to which economic considerations of work override ecological considerations.

Only seven participants expressed that finding work that aligned with their ecological values was “easy”, “quite easy” or similar. Of these, three associated the ease with their own particular sector of work, e.g., “easy in my sector” or “relatively easy”. These respondents worked in the educational, social work and healthcare sectors, i.e., sectors centering well-being and needs fulfillment.

In contrast, 18 respondents expressed that finding work that aligned with their ecological values was “very difficult”, “hard”, “challenging”, “not easy” or similar; these respondents worked in a wide range of different sectors. A common experience among these respondents was that of having to “compromise” or “accept” work despite value misalignment.

Extract 36

It's hard to find work that is aligned with my values, you have to accept the work you get (R16, Instructor, cleaning industry)

Extract 37

Even though my job is not fully aligned with my ecological values, I feel like it aligns with them enough. The most important thing is to have a job in the first place. (R36, Specialist, HR service sector)

Extract 38

It has been hard to find a job that matches my values. Job postings for “sustainability experts” abound, but I couldn't imagine working in the private sector, not even with the theme of sustainability. [...] Due to a lack of alternatives, I've had to make compromises regarding jobs. (R58, Researcher)

Extract 39

Unfortunately, I don't feel like I've had the luxury of getting to choose a workplace based on their values [...] My experience is that the workplace's values (such as ecological sustainability) affect my choice of workplace to a certain extent, but that I may be forced to compromise sometimes, e.g., because of where I am in life. (R37, Junior developer, consultancy)

The extracts illustrate lacking autonomy (*Being*), with participants having to compromise the *Doing* dimension of their well-being.

Eight respondents spontaneously brought up work they deemed to be beyond acceptance and compromise from a standpoint of ecological sustainability, e.g., work that they considered “too awful” or sectors where they “would never want to work” or “could never imagine themselves working”. These included the fossil fuel industry, the fashion/textile industry, mining, and forestry (more specifically, clear-cutting companies). Additional unthinkable forms of work included “unnecessary production”, work that “increases consumption” or work that “is misaligned with my values”. Although the focus was on ecological values, some respondents, like the one below, added that other values also had to be considered, further increasing the challenge.

Extract 40

Ecological sustainability is not my primary criterion when looking for a job. However, other values that I prioritize when searching for a job often intertwine with ecological values, such as feminism, equality, anti-racism, the rights of sexual and gender minorities, etc. Finding such work feels difficult. [...] Life circumstances and privileges impact how high I can raise demands for different values in my job search. (R83, Project planner, education and health)

The respondent describes how “privileges” affect the search for ethically fulfilling work (*Doing*). The sentiment is similar to Extract 40 above, where ecologically sustainable work is described as a “luxury”. In these respondents’ writings, ecologically sustainable work appears as a rarity that only a privileged few have access to.

Related and even more drastic was the view presented by eight participants that ecologically sustainable work does not exist at all or is impossible to find, either in their particular field or in general.

Extract 41

There are only a few organisations where ecological matters would be fully in order. (R91, Communication specialist, trade union)

Extract 42

few jobs are 100% sustainable (R87, Consultant, HR)

Extract 43

In reality these sustainable jobs don’t really exist. Small firms don’t have the possibility of examining their value chains, so their sustainability is often so-and-so. Big firms have to answer to volume and make compromises. (R50, Manager, commerce)

Extract 44

I’m sure [an ecologically sustainable] job can’t be found in my sector. But of course, the values are not so misaligned that I cannot live with them! [...] I used to work in finance and there the values were so misaligned with my own values that I changed to another field of work. (R75, Consultant, research/consulting)

For the participants, the perceived lack of ecologically sustainable work explained why they had ended up in their respective work roles, despite feeling that the work did not fully align with their ecological values.

An additional obstacle to finding ecologically sustainable work discussed by seven participants was that of greenwashing and unreliable marketing which created uncertainty regarding a job’s true ecological impacts and made it harder to trust job ads and work organisations.

Extract 45

An ecologically sustainable workplace would be the best, of course, but it is difficult to know in advance about the actual ways in which companies operate, because nowadays everyone says that their values include ecological sustainability and other platitudes. (R23, Automation installer, manufacturing industry)

Extract 46

[Ecological sustainability] is a big value for me but it is often not revealed until the everyday work begins. What a company does on a daily basis is in a bigger role than hollow words. (R66, Producer, marketing)

Extract 47

I think it can be difficult to find trustworthy information. Today, most organisations write nicely about how sustainable they are, but later you may hear via acquaintances that they fly domestically for meetings that could be conducted remotely. (R35, Social and healthcare recruiter)

In addition to obstacles pertaining to the search for ecologically sustainable work, respondents also brought up obstacles which complicated the job search more generally. These included low or high age, lacking the required education or skills, or lacking time, money or luck. Hence, a complex picture of the circumstances affecting the search for ecologically sustainable work emerged. The complexity is illustrated in the next excerpt wherein a respondent explains why they had accepted work that was not aligned with their ecological values.

Extract 48

Need to subsist/labor market subsidy is not enough for a decent life/subsidies are cut off if I do not accept a job/societal pressures and norms of work for people with a higher education do not leave many options/fear of causing shame for my family/fear of losing friendships if I cannot participate in joint activities due to a lack of money/the hope that unsustainable work will lead to more sustainable work aligned with my values. (R58, Researcher)

In the extract, the circumstances pushing the participant to accept unsustainable work are manifold. One contributing factor is the policy landscape which creates a situation where the respondent feels forced to accept unsustainable work in order to satisfy *Having* needs of subsistence. The social-cultural context also has a considerable impact; for the respondent, the need to maintain relationships with friends and family (fulfilling *Loving* needs) acts as another important driver in their acceptance of unsustainable work. The respondent's experience illustrates ways in which the "decision" to accept work cannot be understood as a simple expression of individual choice, but is intricately tied to institutional, societal and social relations, i.e., is relationally formed.

5.6 Changing views on work and well-being

The participants' responses to the open questions also indicated significant shifts in their views on work and well-being, i.e., their conceptualisations of work and well-being showed signs of being non-static, changing and evolving. This was particularly evident in the responses to the question: "Has the

sustainability crisis affected how you view the role of gainful work in your life and in society? How?”. More than half (49) of participants gave an affirmative answer, i.e., expressed that the sustainability crisis had impacted their view in this matter. These participants frequently elaborated on their thoughts and reasoning. In contrast, only 17 participants responded that the sustainability crisis had not impacted their views. These respondents usually did not elaborate, or did so only shortly. Hence, the data mainly represents participants whose thinking had been impacted by the sustainability crisis.

12 respondents spontaneously questioned the capacity of existing economic and social structures to achieve ecological sustainability, often in words that shared similarities with the transformational perspective (see p. 10) and/or the relational paradigm (see p. 15). For example, some respondents questioned the compatibility of ecological sustainability and “capitalism”, “the strong market forces and capitalist system”, “the logic of capitalism, including eternal growth” or similar. One respondent questioned “our work-oriented culture”, which they saw as a “vicious cycle, where economic growth is an absolute ideal at the expense of the planet”. Another respondent communicated the view that the “consumption society” is not sustainable. One expressed exhaustion and anxiety in relation to the “overadherence to path dependencies” and “lacking ability to see needed changes” in working life. Relatedly, one respondent conveyed doubt in the “resilience of the current system”, and another predicted an eventual breakdown of the system on account of people in positions of power with “too much to lose” hindering needed changes.

By eight participants, the question of the sustainability crisis was met with critical thoughts regarding purposes of work on a societal level. For example, one respondent pondered for what purpose products are produced and sold in Finland, “luxury” or “necessity”. A couple of respondents criticized unnecessary and harmful work using the term “bullshit jobs” coined by Graeber (2018). One respondent promoted the idea that “[a]ll organizations and work should support a sustainability transition”. The following extracts exemplify a recurring critique against a prevailing prioritisation of economic purposes, including productivity, above ecological or social purposes.

Extract 49

Productivity is the ultimate priority, not what is produced and whether it makes sense. I consider that very worrying. Climate impacts should be central to decision-making. (R55, Performing arts, executive director)

Extract 50

I strongly question the current situation in which any kind of work is considered valuable as long as it generates money and taxes. Often the work that is valuable for the environment and society, such as repair services, the sharing economy, and care, is not seen as work or is poorly

paid, even though caring for children and the elderly, for example, is among society's most important tasks. (R18, Editor, cultural sector)

Extract 51

The admiration of hard work and success for their own sake is dangerous. We should think about what is done, why, and what the consequences are. (R76, Designer)

A couple of respondents emphasized that a reevaluation of work also involves rethinking what it means to have “value as a person” or be a “good person”, which, the respondents stressed, is not equal to “ability to pay taxes” or “spending as much of your day as possible in gainful employment”. Relatedly, one respondent questioned the equation of “success with growth” and “our value” with “achievements”, associating this kind of thinking with capitalism. One participant explained that the sustainability crisis had made them “more understanding of the reluctance of an unemployed person to accept ecologically unsustainable work”.

Eight participants discussed sustainable work in terms of a reduction in the quantity of work or working time. A working time reduction was also associated with work sharing (“more equally”, “there would be work for everyone”). In some cases, e.g. Extract 52 below, respondents emphasised *material* connections between quantity of work, quantity of production and/or quantity of consumption, predicting that a reduction in the quantity of work would advance ecological sustainability through reduced production and/or consumption (*Having*). In other cases, e.g. Extract 53, the focus was on *temporal* dimensions of work and the free time and energy a working time reduction would liberate for other more fulfilling and/or more sustainable activities (*Doing*). In Extract 54, material and temporal considerations are combined.

Extract 52

In my view the amount of gainful employment should be reduced and I (and others) should be able to cope with less money and material, we could live more densely and affordably (R19, Planner, organisation)

Extract 53

I believe that if people had more time to be, think, discuss and learn new things, they would realise that there is no point in toiling for one's life in miserable paid work all while destroying our only planet. At the same time, there would be time over to research things and make better, more sustainable choices. (R23, Automation Installer, manufacturing industry)

Extract 54

It feels meaningless to work full time just to produce a lot of unnecessary products when we're already surpassing the sustainability boundary for how much our planet can take. I think we

need to shift to work in services, not products, and that all of us could or even should work less. (R37, Junior developer, consultancy)

Six respondents promoted part-time work or downshifting as a contributor to quality of life, for example, as a way to achieve “a better work-life balance” and “more time for genuinely important things” (*Doing*). Moreover, one respondent dreamt of reduced hours in paid work to be able to “cultivate food as sustainably as possible”, and one wanted more time for “hobbies”. A few exhibited a desire for relational growth in wanting to spend more time on “volunteering”, “activism in promotion of ecological values”, and doing “more for society”. Some respondents endorsed part-time work because it left more time for “relationships” and “family and friends” (*Loving*). Part-time work was also seen as a way to get more time for activities in support of “mental health” (*Being*).

The interest in reduced working hours was by some clearly connected to a disenchantment with consumption and/or money (excess *Having*) and a new appreciation of more meaningful activities (*Doing*). In the following excerpts, respondents describe how, for them, the increased value of time is almost inversely proportional to the decreased value of consumption.

Extract 55

I have [...] started to appreciate free time more and the importance of money has decreased. This is directly related to the sustainability crisis, I do not want to consume and burden nature. Having realised that I can make do with less, I’ve started to think that I don’t want to work as much as before. (R19, Planner, organization)

Extract 56

I no longer consider a higher salary worth pursuing, but would rather spend less time and resources on work so that I have time and energy left, for example, for activism in promotion of ecological values. (R65, School curator)

Similarly, the following respondent connected the increased importance of meaningful work (*Doing*) relative to a high salary (*Having*) to a disenchantment with consumption.

Extract 57

The importance of a high salary has clearly decreased now that consumption has lost its charm. The meaningfulness of work is a must, something I do not want to bargain on anymore (R7, Specialist, environmental consulting)

Faced with the sustainability crisis, a few participants also pondered its impact on (quality of) life more generally. One participant expressed that “a good life” now includes ecological sustainability, whereas excess income and consumption appear as a negative. Another participant predicted the

return of “a more communal lifestyle where being present and connection are emphasised instead of the current individualism”. Similarly, the following respondent imagined an ecologically sustainable life as a life of presence, connections and freedom.

Extract 58

An ecological and sustainable life should not be seen as miserable and grey, but liberating. When you don't have to put efforts into maintaining the income level required for several cars, a large wardrobe or annual trips abroad, you can focus on the essentials – relationships, nature and being present. (R85, Key account manager, digital learning)

The participant's view challenges the growth-centric paradigm of well-being by conceptualising liberation as freedom *from* consumption rather than freedom *to* consume. The participant's view shares many similarities with the HDLB model of well-being. In the extract, the participant envisions freedom from excess *Having* as paving the way towards richness in the well-being dimensions of *Doing, Loving* and *Being*.

6. Discussion and conclusions

This aim of this thesis has been to explore obstacles and possibilities for ecologically sustainable well-being through participants' experiences of Finnish working life. The empirical data was collected through an online survey that was open to participants of the age 18 and above who were in gainful employment in Finland. The analysis is facilitated and structured using a novel theoretical approach for the context, more precisely, the *Having-Doing-Loving-Being* (HDLB) framework (Helne and Hirvilammi, 2015; Hirvilammi and Helne 2014; Helne, 2021), which allows for a relational, multidimensional and nature-inclusive view of well-being. The framework highlights the role of ecologically embedded needs for the achievement of sustainable well-being. Thus, the approach challenges hegemonic conceptualisations of well-being and “wellbeing through work” (Finnish: *työhyvinvointi*), which see well-being as dependent on GDP growth and productivity, and independent of nature and ecosystems. As the theoretical discussion of this thesis proposes, such growth-centric well-being conceptualisations can be seen as symptomatic of the “human exemptionalism paradigm” (Hirvilammi & Helne, 2014, p. 2162). In contrast, the HDLB framework is based on the “relational paradigm” which highlights the interrelatedness of humans and ecosystems (Hirvilammi & Helne, 2014, p. 2164). The empirical results illustrate ways in which individual and (eco)systemic well-being are interconnected, and how ecological dimensions of well-being are subjectively experienced in the context of Finnish working life. Thus, the thesis paves the way for a more ecologically grounded understanding of well-being in relation to work.

6.1 Principal findings and connections to previous literature

Overall, participants' views and experiences frequently aligned with the relational paradigm of well-being (see especially Sections 5.2 and 5.6). In particular, participants placed a high importance on ecological values and recognised the importance of ecological sustainability for the well-being of present and future generations of humans and nonhumans. For many participants, Finnish working life provided welcome possibilities for the advancement of ecological sustainability in alignment with their ecological values. Frequently, work which was experienced as ecologically sustainable also engendered subjectively experienced positive well-being impacts, including experiences of well-being, meaningfulness, purpose and value harmony. These insights correspond to the HDLB framework which emphasizes the importance of ecologically responsible activities in accordance with one's values in satisfying fundamental needs in the *Doing* dimension. The results also indicate that ecological values and ecological sustainability are becoming increasingly important aspects, even prerequisites, of meaningful work.

A notable share of participants experienced obstacles to the actualisation of their ecological values in their work, work organisation or Finnish working life at large. In terms of the HDLB framework, these participants' fundamental *Doing* needs were not satisfied in Finnish working life. Whereas ecologically sustainable work generally enhanced experiences of well-being, ecologically unsustainable work largely had opposite effects, causing experiences of anxiety, despair, value conflict and guilt. In particular, working to increase unsustainable and/or unnecessary consumption through sales or marketing was by many considered meaningless, and frequently had negative impacts on the worker's well-being. These experiences can be understood through the relational HDLB framework which highlights the ecological limits to material consumption and the important role of sufficiency in satisfying needs in the *Having* dimension.

The findings contribute to research on meaningful work, where meaning has often been defined in anthropocentric or individual terms, focusing on social or personal impacts of work (Martela & Pessi, 2018). In addition, the findings contribute to the empirical literature on sustainable work centering experiences of workers, a topic which is understudied in Finland. In particular, the findings complement research by Kasvio (2014) by expanding the understanding of intersections between ecologically sustainable work and individual well-being, and by covering a wide range of work sectors. Furthermore, the findings support research by Aho (2021) regarding possibilities for relationally formed well-being in the context of work, going beyond cooperative work.

The findings concerning negative well-being impacts of ecologically unsustainable and/or unnecessary work complement research by Graeber (2018), who finds that work that is deemed unnecessary, pointless or damaging by the worker themselves may have detrimental well-being impacts on the worker which are akin to “spiritual violence” (Graeber, 2018, p. 67-144). Applying the HDLB framework, a “spiritually violent” job can be understood as work that satisfies only the worker’s own *Having* needs through the income and subsistence it provides, but violates needs in the dimensions of *Doing, Loving* or *Being*. Furthermore, the findings can be analysed against Graeber’s assertion that a person’s own evaluation of the social value of their work constitutes the most accurate assessment of its actual social value. However, whereas Graeber focused on the social value of work, this thesis is explicitly focused on ecological value(s) of work (which, of course, overlap and intertwine with social value). Indeed, participants in this study appeared to be acutely aware of a variety of ecological impacts of their work (Section 5.3 and 5.4). Nevertheless, the results also show that evaluations of ecological impacts of work may come with significant challenges. In particular, the findings related to work practices (Section 5.3) suggested that uncertainties regarding ecological and (to a lesser extent) climate impacts of work practices were prevalent. For example, many questions were raised about the impacts of knowledge work, ICT, internet use and digital tools. Even lesser known were climate and ecological impacts pertaining to financial arrangements, including banking services, investments and sources of funding. These findings can hopefully contribute to improving the awareness of ecological impacts of work practices in general, and uncertain practices in particular, thereby increasing transparency and fostering responsibility for the ecological impacts of work.

In addition to the discussion of (un)sustainable work *practices* outlined in Section 5.3, a discussion of (un)sustainable work *purposes* was also identified and explored in Section 5.4. A discussion of work purposes is important since it may hold relatively more potential for “transformational” change associated with a more profound reevaluation of societal “progress” and “development” (Räikkönen, 2014, p. 45). Among the participants in this study, the purpose of contributing to excess consumption, e.g., through sales or marketing, recurrently arose as a work purpose lacking meaning and/or impacting the worker’s well-being negatively. These negative well-being impacts are important to consider alongside the broader ecological impacts of excess consumption, particularly when evaluating the suitability of GDP as a continued measure of well-being.

Participants experienced obstacles to ecologically sustainable well-being also in the search for work. A notable obstacle experienced in this context was that ecologically sustainable work was considered difficult or impossible to find. Tellingly, ecologically sustainable work was even characterised as a

luxury or privilege. Hence, many participants had been forced to compromise and accept work that did not align with their understanding of ecological sustainability or their ecological values, i.e., their *Doing* needs. Another commonly experienced obstacle was a lack of accurate and reliable information, for example, due to greenwashing, causing uncertainties regarding true ecological impacts of prospective work. The findings shed light on the search for ecologically sustainable work in Finland, a topic which, to the author's knowledge, has not yet been examined in the literature.

Several participants expressed shifting views on work and well-being (see especially Section 5.6), showing a clear change in emphasis from the *Having* dimension of well-being to the dimensions of *Doing*, *Loving* and *Being*. For example, leisure time was becoming increasingly important and consumption increasingly less important, even negative, for many participants. This emerging view of well-being corresponds closely to the relational HDLB framework of well-being and poses challenges for growth-centric views of well-being, not least since GDP overemphasises the value of consumption while ignoring the value of leisure, discretionary time or "time wealth" (Geiger et al., 2021). The findings implicate that a reorganisation of work has potential to increase the social and ecological value of time – a limited resource especially in the race against ecological breakdown. Thus, a reorganisation of work has the potential to liberate both time and nature (including humans) towards the purpose of ecologically sustainable well-being.

6.2 Limitations and implications for future research

The methodology and results of this thesis are not without limitations. Firstly, the sample is not representative of any total population of workers, nor is it demographically balanced (see p. 23). Partially this imbalance may reflect the largely online recruitment process which was biased towards workers with online profiles. In addition, there is a likely selection bias increasing the share of workers with an ecological interest, which would be a concern if the aim was perfect representation. However, in this case, such a bias may even come with benefits, since these participants may possess more knowledge about obstacles and possibilities for ecologically sustainable work; indeed, several participants held expert professional roles related to ecological sustainability. In any case, future research on the topic could add representativeness and nuance by focusing on specific sectors and industries in more detail, for example, sectors that were not included in this study.

A further limitation was that the online survey format introduced some rigidity and inflexibility, since the questions and accompanying texts had to be published in advance. This was not ideal for the purpose of exploration and may have steered answers in certain directions, although the problem was

countered with many open questions and one particularly open question asking the participants to add any additional thoughts they had. A related issue was that some of the concepts involved were complex, e.g., a couple of participants expressed a wish for further explanations of terms used. However, the online format did not allow for elaborations beyond the explanations on the blog. Due to these factors, the results to the open questions may be more reliable than the results to the closed questions, since the former open up the participants' interpretations and reasoning whereas the closed questions hide the thought process behind the answers. Such issues could in future research on the topic be circumvented by conducting interviews, a method that would allow for freer discussions, added transparency and explanations whenever needed.

A further suggestion for future research is to study experiences of ecologically sustainable well-being in Finnish working life from the perspective of unemployed persons. Unemployed persons may have different experiences regarding, for example, the search for ecologically sustainable work (discussed in Section 5.5), and the obstacles identified in this thesis may affect unemployed people in different and more severe ways. One relevant contribution has already been made by Helne and Hirvilammi (2022), who focus on unemployed young adults and how their well-being conceptualisations relate to a sustainability transformation.

6.3 Societal and policy implications

The societal and policy implications of this study are manifold. Firstly, although “well-being through work” (*työhyvinvointi*) has traditionally been conceptualized independently of ecological dimensions, it is crucial to note that well-being is ecologically embedded also in the context of work. The findings presented here demonstrate just some ways in which interconnections between subjective well-being and ecosystemic well-being are experienced in Finnish working life. The important role of ecological values and ecological sustainability should be recognised also in definitions and operationalisations of well-being through work by Finnish working life institutions. The ecological sustainability of work can no longer be seen as a luxury for a privileged few, but should be seen as a prerequisite for both subjective and ecosystemic well-being. Reevaluating the role of work may involve transformational changes such as the adaptation of alternative economic indicators and the abandonment of the goal of GDP growth. For example, as Kreinin and Aigner (2021) argue, Sustainable Development Goal number 8, i.e., “decent work and economic growth” should be replaced with the goal of “[strongly] sustainable work and economic degrowth”. They propose new indicators for the measurement of this goal, including subjective measures of workers' own evaluation of the environmental value or harm of their work.

Moreover, a societal shift to ecological sustainability should be met with complementary changes in employment policy and social security in order to decrease dependency on ecologically harmful work and promote ecologically sustainable activities outside the strict frame of “gainful employment” (as currently defined, e.g., by Statistics Finland (n.d., para. 1)). Employment and social policy should be designed so that people are not forced to accept ecologically harmful work to satisfy fundamental needs. The right to refrain from socially or ecologically unsustainable work could also be enhanced by promoting the right to basic services and/or basic income for unemployed or partially employed persons (Büchs, 2021). In addition, work-time reductions hold much potential for increasing well-being while simultaneously reducing ecological pressures (King & Bergh, 2017). In general, need-based theories of well-being, such as the relational HDLB framework, form a promising guide in restructuring unsustainable production and consumption systems in order to achieve provisioning systems that promote well-being with respect for planetary boundaries (O’Neill et al., 2018).

The findings of this thesis suggest that a focus on the organisation of work as an avenue for climate and ecological action holds certain advantages in comparison to the prevailing public focus on consumer choices, particularly in relation to sufficiency. Specifically, when sufficiency is considered in the context of consumer choices, there is a tendency for the discourse to center around “sacrificing” and “giving up” consumption, which is often viewed negatively, at least within materialistic and growth-centric models of well-being. Turning the focus to the organisation of work emphasises the role of activities and processes, which are central to need-based and eudaimonic conceptualisations of well-being, supporting a broader, multidimensional understanding of well-being. From this point of view, ecologically sustainable well-being is not primarily about sacrificing material “living standards” (*Having*), but about gaining arguably more important things like meaning and purpose (*Doing*), care and connection (*Loving*), and self-actualisation and autonomy (*Being*).

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APPENDIX 1: QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Ecological sustainability is important for me.

- 1: strongly disagree
- 2: disagree
- 3: neutral
- 4: agree
- 5: strongly agree

2. Why is or isn't ecological sustainability important for you? How would you describe your ecological values?

3. My work is aligned with my ecological values.

- 1: strongly disagree
- 2: disagree
- 3: neutral
- 4: agree
- 5: strongly agree

4. In what ways is or isn't your work aligned with your ecological values?

5. Issues related to ecological sustainability and the well-being of nature are sufficiently addressed in my work organisation.

- 1: strongly disagree
- 2: disagree
- 3: neutral
- 4: agree
- 5: strongly agree

6. I am aware of the impacts my work and work organisation have on the well-being of nature.

- 1: strongly disagree
- 2: disagree
- 3: neutral
- 4: agree
- 5: strongly agree

7. Does your work and work organisation contribute to the well-being of nature? How aware or informed are you of the ecological impacts of your work and work organisation?

8. I feel responsible for the impacts my work and work organisation have on the well-being of nature.

1: strongly disagree

2: disagree

3: neutral

4: agree

5: strongly agree

9. Why do you (not) feel responsible for the impacts your work and work organisation have on the well-being of nature?

10. If your work is not fully aligned with your ecological values, for what reasons have you undertaken the work?

11. Does the ecological sustainability or unsustainability of your work and work organisation affect your own well-being? How?

12. Is ecological sustainability an important criterion for you when searching for a job? How easy or difficult do you think it has been to find a job that matches your ecological values?

13. Has the sustainability crisis affected how you view the role of gainful work in your life and in society? How?

14. Feel free to share your experiences, feelings and thoughts regarding the ecological sustainability of your work or Finnish working life.

APPENDIX 2: DATA PROTECTION NOTICE

DATA PROTECTION NOTICE FOR SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

General Data Protection Regulation of the EU

Articles 12–14

Date: 27.1.2022

Information on the processing of personal data in the research project entitled *Work, well-being and nature*

The research project entitled *Work, well-being and nature* involves processing of personal data. No directly identifiable information is collected, but in some cases participants may be indirectly identifiable based on the information they provide. The purpose of this data protection notice is to provide information on the personal data to be processed, from where they are obtained and how they are used. Detailed information on the rights of data subjects will be provided at the end of this notice.

Your participation in the research project and provision of personal data are voluntary. If you do not wish to participate in the project or you wish to withdraw from it, you can do so without negative consequences.

1. Data Controller

University of Helsinki

Address: P.O. Box 3 (Fabianinkatu 33), 00014 University of Helsinki, Finland

2. Contact person and principal investigator

Contact person in matters concerning the research project:

Name: Jessica Finnilä

Faculty/department/unit: Faculty of Social Sciences/Social and Public Policy

Address: Unioninkatu 37 (P.O. Box 54), 000140 University of Helsinki

Phone: 044-9926665

Email: jessica.finnila@helsinki.fi

3. Contact details of the data protection officer

You can contact the University of Helsinki data protection officer via email at tietosuoja@helsinki.fi.

4. Description of the research project and the purpose of processing personal data

The project examines Finnish gainful employment from the perspective of ecologically sustainable well-being. The aim of the research project is to gather and analyse information on experiences, thoughts and feelings related to ecological sustainability in the workplace and the working life.

The plan is to publish the results in the summer or fall of 2022 in the form of a master's thesis in English as part of the University of Helsinki's master's program in Contemporary Societies.

An online survey is used to gather answers and information from people in gainful employment. The participants' information is treated confidentially and used for research purposes only. The results of the research are reported on so as to safeguard the anonymity of the participants.

5. Personal data included in the research data

An online survey is used to collect information and writings about the participants' work. The following background information is also collected from participants: gender, age range, sector of work, work role, professional group and size of organisation. Data related to gender identity or minority status will only be collected if participants voluntarily share this. This information is not combined with background information that can be used to identify participants.

6. Sources of personal data

Only information shared by the participants themselves via the online survey is collected as research material.

7. Sensitive personal data

No special categories of personal data (i.e., sensitive data), as defined in Article 9 of the GDPR, will be processed in this research.

8. Lawful basis for processing personal data

Personal data are processed on the following basis (Article 6(1) of the GDPR):

Task carried out in the public interest:

Scientific or historical research purposes or statistical purposes

If the processing of personal data is based on the research subject's consent, they can withdraw their consent at any time. The withdrawal of consent does not affect the lawfulness of processing based on consent before its withdrawal.

9. Recipients of data

Personal data will not be shared with or transferred to third parties outside the University of Helsinki.

10. Transfer of data to countries outside the European Economic Area

Data will not be transferred to countries outside the European Economic Area.

11. Automated decision-making

The research project involves no automated decision-making that has a significant effect on data subjects.

12. Protection of personal data

Personal data included in the research dataset will be processed and kept protected so that only those who need the data can access them. The data will be stored on the university's server and protected with username and password.

Processing direct identifiers:

The controller collects the personal data without direct identifiers.

13. Duration of the processing of personal data in this research project:

The duration of the research project is approximately four months starting 3.2.2022.

14. Processing of personal data when the research project ends

After the completion of the research projects the research data will be deleted.

15. Rights of data subjects and derogations from those rights

The contact person in matters related to research subjects' rights is the person stated in section 1 of this notice.

Rights of data subjects

Under the General Data Protection Regulation, data subjects have the following rights:

- Right of access to their data
- Right to rectification of their data
- Right to the erasure of their data and to be forgotten
- Right to the restriction of processing of their data
- Right to data portability
- Right to object to the processing of their data
- Right not to be subject to automated decision-making

However, data subjects cannot exercise all their rights in all circumstances. The circumstances are affected by, for example, the legal basis for processing personal data.

Further information on the rights of data subjects in various circumstances can be found on the website of the Data Protection Ombudsman: <https://tietosuoja.fi/en/what-rights-do-data-subjects-have-in-different-situations>.

If data subjects cannot be identified

If the processing of personal data for research purposes does not require the identification of the data subject and if the controller is unable to identify the data subject, the right to access, rectify, erase and restrict the use of personal data, as well as any notification obligations and the right to data portability do not apply unless the data subject provides additional data enabling their identification (Article 11 of the GDPR).

Derogations from rights

The General Data Protection Regulation and the Finnish Data Protection Act enable derogations from certain rights of data subjects if personal data are processed for the purposes of scientific research and the rights are likely to render impossible or seriously impair the achievement of the research purposes.

The need for derogations from the rights of data subjects will always be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

Right to appeal

If you consider that the processing of your personal data has been carried out in breach of data protection laws, you have the right to appeal to the Office of the Data Protection Ombudsman.

Contact details:

Office of the Data Protection Ombudsman

Street address: Ratapihantie 9, 6th floor, 00520 Helsinki

Postal address: PO Box 800, 00521 Helsinki

Phone (switchboard): 029 56 66700

Fax: 029 56 66735

Email: tietosuoja(at)om.fi

APPENDIX 3: DATA EXTRACTS IN ORIGINAL LANGUAGE

Extract 1

[Ecological sustainability is important b]ecause we live in interdependency with all ecological systems. I don't think there's a clear boundary between me and all other living beings – including the earth itself. (R72)

Extract 2

[Ekologinen kestävyys] on tärkeää, koska se on kirjaimellisesti elintärkeää, olemme kaikki osa suurta ekosysteemiämme. (R74)

Extract 3

yhteys luontoon ja ympäristöön on mun hyvinvoinnin pohja. huomioimatta nyky-yhteiskunnan teknolgoista [sic] pöhinää ja kasvavaa virtuaalimaailmaa, me ollaan aina sidottuja maahan eikä voida elää ilman sitä (R58)

Extract 4

Rakastan luonnon monimuotoisuutta. Olen syvästi järkyttynyt meneillään olevasta sukupuuttoaallostasta. Huolestunut kaiken elävän elinmahdollisuuksista kun oma lajimme tuhoaa ja riistää luontoa kvartaalitalouden ja jatkuvan kasvun kiilto silmissä. (R5)

Extract 5

[Työni ekologinen kestävyys v]aikuttaa suoraan [hyvinvointiini] - voin hyvin kun voin elää arvojeni mukaista elämää. (R85)

Extract 6

To feel good about my own decisions I want to make as small negative impact on nature as possible. [...] To feel good is to do good. (R30)

Extract 7

[Työni ekologinen kestävyys] liittyy olennaisesti siihen, että tyl [sic] tuntuu mielekkäältä, ja lisää sitä kautta hyvinvointiani. (R43)

Extract 8

Käyn töissä rahan takia, en maailman pelastamisen vuoksi. (R41)

Extract 9

Tarvitsen työtäni eläkseni [sic]. (R12)

Extract 10

koen huonoa omaatuntoa, maailmantuskaa ja tunnen itseni huijariksi kun haluaisin elää kestävästi, mutta työni ei kuvasta henkilökohtaisia arvojani. (R74)

Extract 11

Olen ahdistunut siitä, että osittain työni, työnantajani ja asiakkaani heikentävät ekologista kestävyyttä. Olen nyt miettimässä uutta työpaikkaa tai uudelleen kouluttautumista. (R8)

Extract 12

Koen riittämättömyyttä, turhautumista ja ahdistuneisuutta. Ärtymystä sitä kohtaan, että ympäristöä ei kunnioiteta. (R44)

Extract 13

Pyrin elämään tavalla, joka kuormittaa ympäristöä mahdollisimman vähän. Siihen nähden tuntuisi ristiriitaiselta käyttää joka päivä 8 tuntia työhön, joka vain ruokkisi ongelmia. [...] tunne siitä, että työssä joutuisi toimimaan omien arvojen vastaisesti, ahdistaa. Lisäksi ekologinen kestävämyys estää työn kokemisen mielekkääksi. (R18)

Extract 14

Jag vill att min arbetsplats ska ha liknande värderingar som jag själv. Att känna att jobbet en gör är meningslöst tar något otroligt på psyket och den mentala hälsan, speciellt eftersom jobbet tar så mycket av ens tid. (R37)

Extract 15

En ole saanut muita töitä. Koronan aikana olen pääasiassa etätöissä, joten mieltä vaivaavat epäkohdat voi sivuuttaa mielestään. [...] Koen j]onkin verran arvoriititää mikä omalta osaltaan kuormittaa. Mutta koen, että teen minkä pystyn ja se on vähän. (R73)

Extract 16

Tunnen olevani vain pieni pelinappula isossa organisaatiossa, enkä osaa/jaksa/pysty tuntemaan vastuuta koko työorganisaation puolesta. [...] Mitä enemmän [työnsä ekologista kestävyyttä tai kestävämyyttä] ajattelee, sitä enemmän se tietysti vaikuttaa [hyvinvointiin]. Jos et hahmota miten voisit asioita muuttaa tai mitä kautta vaikuttaa, silloin ajattelinenkin [sic] vähenee, koska joutuu vain hyväksyvään asiat niin kuin ne ovat. (R93)

Extract 17

Tunnen usein riittämättömyyden tunnetta ja väsymystä. Samalla kuitenkin pienet etenemiset parantavat arkea ja omaa oloa. Pyrin löytämään tasapainon oman toiminnan ja jaksamisen välillä. Usein yhdessä toimiminen ja ihmisten välisten yhteyksien voimistaminen tuovat jaksamista ja voimaa. (R17)

Extract 18

Nyt voin lounastauolla kierrättää kaiken. Tiedän, että tämä ei yksin pelasta maailmaa, mutta nimenomaan tuo itselle mielenrauhaa eikä tarvitse toimia omien arvojen ja periaatteiden vastaisesti ainakaan. (R36)

Extract 19

Työni kaupungin kotihoitajana vaatii oman auton käyttöä ja joudun ajamaan päivittäin asiakkaiden kotien väliä [...] Suurin hiilijalanjälki minulla lienee oma auto. Se on työssäni pakollinen [...] Pyöräillen en päivän aikana ehtisi tehdä töitäni, vaikka etenkin kesäisin sitä toivoisin. (R5)

Extract 20

I have changed careers to make sure my whole career from here on out will make the biggest impact on sustainability [...] It was not easy to find a job that so perfectly matches my climate ambitions, BUT nowadays I urge my friends to do so as well [...] the purpose of saving the planet is just beyond any other purpose to live for. (R90)

Extract 21

Minulle on tärkeää elää niin, että voin katsoa itseäni ja historiani [sic] tyytyväisenä siihen, että olen tehnyt enemmän hyvää kuin pahaa. Pysin elämään "do no harm" periaatteella ja maksimoimaan positiivisen ekologisen kädenjäljen maailmassa. [...] Pääsen suoraan vaikuttamaan ekologisen politiikan tekemiseen monella tasolla. [...] En pystyisi kuvittelemaan toimivani yrityksessä, jossa en pääsisi edistämään aktiivisesti ekologista kestävyyttä. Pelkkä "ei-pahis" ei riittäisi omalle mielelleni, vaan otteen täytyy olla aktiivista parantamista. (R17)

Extract 22

Saan työssäni tutkia ja edistää matkailun kestävyyttä, mikä tuntuu hyvin merkitykselliseltä. [...] Tässä vaiheessa ei kelpaisi ede [sic] työnkuva, joka ei ainakaan pahenna kestävyyskriisiä vaan nimenomaan pitäisi päästä hidastamaan ongelmia. (R57)

Extract 23

Teen työtä maksutapojen kanssa, jossa suurin tavoitteemme on maksimoida transaktioiden määrää, joka taas vaikuttaa suurempaan kulutukseen (eli ei vastaa omia arvojani) (R77)

Extract 24

Työskentelen viestinnän ja markkinoinnin parissa, ja ainakin markkinoinnin on usein tarkoitus saada ihmiset kuluttamaan enemmän. En ole myöskään aivan varma paljonko meillä ja meidän työssämme aidosti ajatellaan ekologisia arvoja. Toisaalta todella paljon, nehän ovat kaikkea ohjaava megatrendi, mutta välillä tuntuu, että pitäisi olla tekemässä jotain merkityksellisempää, jotain kestävämpää. (R93)

Extract 25

Työni tarkoitus on myydä tuotteita ihmisille, monesti turhiakin ja koko kaupan ala kannustaa ylikulutukseen ja kestävämpään elintapaan. Toisaalta osa myymistäni tuotteista tarjoavat hiukan kestävämpiä [sic] valintoja, mutta pääsääntöisesti ei. [...] työni ei kuvasta henkilökohtaisia arvojani. [...] Ekologinen kestävyys on erittäin tärkeä [kriteeri] uuden työn etsinnässä. (R74)

Extract 26

Asiakkainamme on yrityksiä, joiden ydintoimintaa on myydä tavaroita/palveluita, joita oikeasti kukaan ei tarvitse. En haluaisi palvella tällaisia yrityksiä. (R8)

Extract 27

[töissä] suomalaisella puhelinoperaattorilla. Toki myymme kaikkea turhaakin paskaa, vaikka yritys [...] mainostaakin olevansa ekologinen ja hiilineutraali mikä on aivan roskaa. [...] eihän se, että asiakkaalle myyjänä pyritään tunkemaan kaikki mahdollinen tableteista, max. 3-4v kestävästä puhelimesta, mobiililaajakaistoista viihdepaketteihin, ole kestäväntä. Näitä tungetaan, vaikka asiakas ei tarvitsisi esim. tablettia. Turhaa roinaa sen sijaan, että tabletit ja puhelimet esimerkiksi tehtäisiin kestävämmän 20-30 vuotta eikä niin, että niitä vaihdetaan parin vuoden välein. (R88)

Extract 28

Nuorena inhosin myydä made in china-kamaa tavaratalossa, mutta oli pakko saada rahaa että tulee toimeen. Kuormien purkaminen oli järkyttävää kun välillä tavara oli rikki jo ennen hyllyyn pääsyä. En halua tuottaa lisää krääsää maailmaan. Nykyisessä työssä [sic] työskentelen asioiden parissa jotka itse koen ja yleisesti koetaan merkittäväksi tosi laajasti yhteiskunnassa [sic] - se lisää omaa hyvinvointia. (R58)

Extract 29

Opiskeluaikana olin kesätöissä vaatekaupassa ja se oli hirveää, koska kyseessä oli ketjukauppa, eikä mikään ihana käsityöläispuoti. Tarvitsin rahaa, joten myin Bangladeshissa valmistettuja vaatteita. [...] Tällä hetkellä arvostan sitä, että työni arvopohja on kunnossa ja ydintyömme pyrkii tekemään yhteiskunnasta ja ihmisten hyvinvoinnista siinä parempaa. Edellisen [...] vaatekauppaesimerkin kautta kuitenkin tiedän, että omaa kestävyyskäsitystä vastaan oleva työ tuntuu kurjalta ja turhalta. (R59)

Extract 30

Sinällään ihmiset tarvitsevat tuotteita, joita yritykseni myy. Toisaalta taas ne eivät ole täysin välttämättömiä. Elämään kuuluu tietynlainen hedonismi - muutenhan pitäisi vain tappaa itsensä täältä luonnonvaroja kuluttamasta. [...] Elämästä pitää myös nauttia, joten useita palveluita tai tuotteita tarvitaan. Tarvitsen myös rahaa, jotta lapseni saavat ruokaa ja mahdollisuuden hyvään elämään. Lisäksi maksan veroja, jotka luovat hyvinvointia. (R50)

Extract 31

Olen jo nuorena päätenyt siihen, etten pysty tekemään työtä, joka liittyy kuluttamiseen. Olen päätenyt osin tästä syystä sosiaalialalle, jossa edistettävät asiat eivät ole pelkästään aineellisia. [...] Olen valinnut työn, joka keskittyy puhumiseen ja käytännön auttamiseen. En voisi olla työssä jossa esimerkiksi myytäisiin ihmisille jotain mahdollisimman paljon. (R69)

Extract 32

Työni äidinkielen ja kirjallisuuden opettajana on merkityksellistä, koska se tähtää itseilmaisun, kommunikation, viestinnän, kirjallisuuden ja muun taiteen kautta yksilän [sic] ja yhteisön

reflektioon ja kasvuun. Näihin ajattelen implisiittisesti kuuluvan mahdollisuus ymmärtää se, että on muita tapoja tulla itsekseen ja osaksi yhteisöä kuin luonnonvarojen kestävästi kuluttaminen. (R43)

Extract 33

Silloin kun aikoinaan hain tähän työpaikkaan, [ekologinen kestävyys] ei ollut päällimmäisenä kriteerinä. Näkemykseni on vuosien varrella muuttunut. (R15)

Extract 34

Kun seuraavan kerran haen töitä, ekologinen kestävyys on aiempaa suuremmassa arvossa. Jos ja kun taustalla on nykyinen vakituinen työsuhteeni, olen käytännössä valmis hylkäämään kaikki organisaatiot ja työpaikat, jotka eivät riittävästi vastaa kriteereitani. (R36)

Extract 35

En ole koskaan ajatellut asiaa. Ja jos vaihtaisin työpaikkaa niin se ei jatkossakaan olisi kriteeri. Loppujen lopuksi käyn töissä elättääkseni perheeni, enkä ole koskaan ollut siinä asemassa, että olisin voinut valita työpaikan kymmenistä eri mahdollisuuksista. (R56)

Extract 36

On vaikea löytää sellaista työtä joka vastaisi arvojeni, se työ on otettava vastaan mitä saa (R16)

Extract 37

Vaikka oma työpaikkani ei täysin vastaa ekologia arvojeni, koen sen vastaavan niitä riittävässä määrin. Tärkeintä on, että ylipäänsä on työ. (R36)

Extract 38

on ollut vaikeaa löytää työpaikka joka vastaa arvojeni. sustainability experttejä työpaikkailmoituksissa vilkkuu, mutta en voisi kuvitella tekeväni työtä yksityis sektorilla, en edes kestävyuden teeman parissa. [...] Vaihtoehtojen puutteesta olen joutunut tekemään kompromisseja [sic] työpaikkojen suhteen. (R58)

Extract 39

Tyvärri har jag inte upplevt att jag haft lyxen att direkt kunna välja arbetsplats efter deras värderingar [...] Jag upplever alltså att arbetsplatsens värderingar (såsom ekologisk hållbarhet) påverkar mitt val av arbetsplats i viss mån, men att jag kan vara tvungen att kompromissa ibland t.ex. pga var jag befinner mig i livet. (R37)

Extract 40

Ekologinen kestävyys ei ole ensisijainen kriteerini työnhaussa. Muut arvot, jotka priorisoin työnhaussa yhdistyvät kuitenkin usein ekologisten arvojen kanssa, esimerkiksi feminismi, yhdenvertaisuus, antirasismi, seksuaali- ja sukupuolivähemmistöjen oikeudet ym. Sellaisen työpaikan löytäminen tuntuu vaikealta. [...] Elämäntilanne ja etuoikeudet vaikuttavat siihen, miten korkealle voin nostaa vaatimuksia eri arvoista työnhaussa. (R83)

Extract 41

Organisaatioita, joissa ekologisuus olisi täysin kunnossa, on aika vähän. (R91)

Extract 42

harva työ on 100% kestävä (R87)

Extract 43

Todellisuudessa näitä vastuullisia työpaikkoja ei juurikaan ole. Pienellä firmalla ei ole mahdollisuuksia tarkastaa arvoketjujaan, joten vastuullisuus on usein vähän niin ja näin. Isot firmat joutuvat vastaamaan volyyymiin ja tekemään kompromissejä. (R50)

Extract 44

ei [ekologisesti kestävä] työpaikkaa varmasti löydy ainakaan sillä alalla missä olen. Mutta toki ei ne arvot niin vastakkain ole että en pysty elämään niillä! [...] olin ennen finanssialalla töissä ja arvot siellä oli niin vastakkain omien arvojen kanssa että vaihdoin alaa. (R75)

Extract 45

Mahdollisimmna [sic] ekologisesti kestävä työpaikka olisi tietysti paras, mutta on vaikea esim. tietää yritysten todellisista toimintatavoista ennakkoon, sillä jokainen kertoo nykyään arvokseen tuon ekologisen kestävyuden ja muuta lässynläätä. (R23)

Extract 46

[Ekologinen kestävyys] on minulle iso arvo mutta paljastuu usein vasta arjessa. Yrityksen arkinen tekeminen on isommassa roolissa kuin sanahelinä. (R66)

Extract 47

Jag tycker det kan vara svårt att hitta information att lita på. Idag skriver de flesta organisationer fint om hur hållbara de är men senare kan man via bekanta få höra att organisationen gör [sic] flyger inrikes för möten som kunde vara på distans. (R35)

Extract 48

Pakko tulla toimeen/työmarkkinatuki ei riitä kunnolliseen elämään/tuet katkeaa jos en ota vastaan työtä/yhteiskunnan paineet ja normatiivinen ohjaus työn tekoon korkeakoulutettuna ei jätä hirveesti vaihtoehtoja/pelko häpeän aiheuttamisesta perheelle/pelko ystävyysuhteiden menetyksestä jos en voi osallistua yhteisiin toimiin rahan puutteen takia/toive siitä että kestävämpään työhön johtaa kestävämpään ja arvoja paremmin vastaavaan työhön. (R58)

Extract 49

Tuottavuus on kaiken kärjessä eikä esim se että mitä se tuottaa ja onko siinä järkeä. Se on mielestäni tosi huolestuttavaa. Ilmastovaikutukset pitäisi olla päätöksenteon keskiössä. (R55)

Extract 50

Kyseenalaistan vahvasti nykyistä tilannetta, jossa mikä tahansa työ on arvokasta, kunhan se tuottaa rahaa ja veroja. Usein ympäristölle ja yhteiskunnalle arvokasta työtä kuten

korjauspalveluita, jakamistaloutta ja hoivaa ei nähdä varsinaisena työnä tai siitä maksetaan huonosti, vaikka esimerkiksi lapsista ja vanhuksista huolehtiminen on yhteiskunnan tärkeimpiä tehtäviä. (R18)

Extract 51

Pelkka [sic] ahkeruuden ja menestyksen ihalu [sic] on vaarallista. Pitää miettiä mitä tehdään, miksi ja millä seurauksilla. (R76)

Extract 52

Näen ansiotyön siten, että sen määrää tulisi vähentää ja minun (ja muiden) tulisi tulla toimeen vähemmällä rahalla ja vähemmällä materiaalilla ja voisimme asua tiiviimmin ja edullisemmin. (R19)

Extract 53

Uskon, että kun ihmisillä olisi enemmän aikaa olla, ajatella, keskustella ja oppia uutta, he tajuaisivat, ettei ole mitään järkeä raataa henkiahieveriin asti kurjassa palkkatyössä, tuhoten samalla ainokaista maapalloamme. Samalla jäisi aikaa myös tutkia asioita ja tehdä parempia, kaikin tavoin kestävämpiä valintoja. (R23)

Extract 54

det känns meningslöst att jobba heltid för att producera en massa onödiga produkter när vi ändå går över hållbarhetsgränsen för hur mycket vår planet klarar av. Jag tror att vi i allt högre grad måste övergå till att producera tjänster, inte varor, och att vi alla kunde eller rentav borde jobba mindre. (R37)

Extract 55

Olen alkanut arvostaa [...] enemmän vapaa-aikaa ja rahan merkitys on pienentynyt. Tämä liittyy suoraan kestävyyskriisiin, en halua kuluttaa ja kuormittaa luontoa. Sitä myötä, että olen ymmärtänyt pärjääväni vähemmällä, olen alkanut miettiä että en halua tehdä niin paljoa työtä kuin ennen. (R19)

Extract 56

en pidä suurempaa palkkaa enää tavoittelemisen arvoisena vaan ennemmin käytän vähemmän aikaa ja voimavaroja työhön jotta aikaa ja energiaa jää esim. aktivismille ekologisten arvojen puolesta. (R65)

Extract 57

Korkean palkan merkitys on pienentynyt selvästi, kun turha kuluttaminen on menettänyt hohtonsa. työn merkityksellisyys on must, josta en enää halua tinkiä. (R7)

Extract 58

Ekologisuuden ja kestävä elämän ei pitäisi näyttäytyä kurjana ja harmaana, vaan vapauttavana. Kun ei tarvitse panostaa usean auton, laajan vaatekaapin tai vuosittaisten

ulkomaanmatkojen vaatiman tulotason ylläpitoon, voi keskittyä olennaiseen - ihmissuhteisiin, luontoon ja läsnäoloon. (R85)

APPENDIX 4: PARTICIPANTS

R1	Practical nurse	R48	Communication, trade union
R2	Hotels, restaurants and catering industry	R49	Worker
R3	Project manager, education and research	R50	Manager, commerce
R4	Specialist, organisation	R51	Product manager, commerce
R5	Nurse, eldercare	R52	Manager of organisation
R6	Laundry worker	R53	Physiotherapist
R7	Specialist, environmental consulting	R54	Project manager, product development
R8	Profession not disclosed	R55	Performing arts, executive director
R9	Nurse, social and healthcare sector	R56	Construction planner
R10	Manager, public sector	R57	Researcher
R11	Worker, education sector	R58	Researcher
R12	Chief shop steward	R59	Coordinator, organisational sector
R13	Salesperson, commerce	R60	Content marketing, clothing industry
R14	Sales, board and containerboard	R61	Marketing
R15	Teacher and artist	R62	Worker, construction
R16	Instructor, cleaning industry	R63	Nurse, social and healthcare sector
R17	Specialist, organisation	R64	Specialist, construction
R18	Editor, cultural sector	R65	School curator
R19	Planner, organisation	R66	Producer, marketing
R20	Specialist, organisational sector	R67	Marketing consultant
R21	Worker, public sector	R68	Consultant, finance sector
R22	Worker, municipality	R69	Social worker
R23	Automation installer, manufacturing industry	R70	Robotic process automation, finance industry
R24	Vocational teacher, education sector	R71	Social worker
R25	Laboratory engineer, government sector	R72	Editor-in-chief of magazine
R26	Chairperson, cosmetics industry	R73	Personnel and finances, technology industry
R27	Consultant, IT	R74	Sales and marketing assistant
R28	Environmental specialist, education sector	R75	Consultant, research/consulting
R29	Caretaker of green areas, real estate sector	R76	Designer
R30	Small business owner	R77	Banking and finance
R31	Doctoral researcher	R78	Manager, consultancy
R32	Project manager, social and healthcare sector	R79	Equipment maintenance, industry
R33	Laboratory engineer, research	R80	Early childhood education
R34	Instructional engineer, energy industry	R81	Construction industry
R35	Social and healthcare recruiter	R82	Project planner, municipal sector
R36	Specialist, HR service sector	R83	Project planner, education and health
R37	Junior developer, consultancy	R84	Lower-level employee, mining
R38	Coordinator/specialist, public sector	R85	Key account manager, digital learning
R39	Specialist, communication	R86	Advisor, social sector
R40	Inspector, municipality	R87	Consultant, HR
R41	Driver, logistics	R88	Sales, ICT industry
R42	Specialist, organisational sector	R89	IT worker
R43	Teacher of language and literature	R90	Business developer, renewable energy
R44	Social and healthcare services	R91	Communication specialist, trade union
R45	Leadership, finance	R92	Advisor, social sector
R46	Project planner, employment	R93	Marketing and communication
R47	Educator, environmental sector	R94	Financial expert, industry