

# Finland Re-drawing the Economy Workshop

Jenny Cameron

## Introduction

This document provides an overview of the “Re-drawing the Economy” workshop conducted in Finland in April 2017, as part of the larger Re-drawing the Economy project supported by a Scholar-Activist Project Award from the Antipode Foundation.

The document gives an overview of the activities and the discussion, and includes images of activities.

The workshop was held in Tampere and there were ten participants associated with eight initiatives from different locations in Finland (see Map below). There were also four organisers/facilitators. The participants and initiatives are introduced in more detail below (pages 3 to 8).

The document has been prepared by Jenny Cameron with input from Eeva Talvikallio and Jaana Merenmies.



## Day One, Friday 21 April

Participants were invited to arrive from 3pm in preparation for the first session at 4pm, and “right on the dot” people began to arrive. The first were Jehki Potkonen and Jussi Sinkkonen who had come the furthest, from Joensuu in Eastern Finland (with Jussi having a 5am start so he could catch the 6am bus with Jehki). Most of the participants from “out-of-town” were organised enough to come via an afternoon tea of the [renowned donuts from Pyykin Observation Tower Café](#), located between the downtown area and the area of Pispala, where the workshop was being held.

Pispala is an important cultural and historical area with its old wooden houses and strong labour background. It was a deliberate decision by the organisers to hold the workshop in Pispala, and to be based in [Hirvitalo](#), a non-profit cultural space, while also using the adjacent [Pispala Library](#) (a people’s library) and the nearby Space of Possibility. Indeed, the workshop theme was TILA (which translates into English as “space” or “room”, but also as “state” (as in physical or mental state) or “condition”, as well as “premises”, “estate”. The term was used as it suggested an open space of possibilities.



Hirvitalo



## Afternoon Session 1

For the first session, we walked up the hill a little to Space of Possibility (Mahdollisuuksien Tila, see <http://elavatuuli.blogspot.fi>), and we started by seating ourselves on the chairs and sofas in the foyer area. There was a brief introduction from Pieta after which everyone introduced themselves (just name and preferred pronoun). Jenny then introduced the workshop explaining the overall Antipode funded program, giving a brief overview of the workshops in Colombia and South Korea and introducing *Take Back the Economy* (TBTE). This was followed by Eeva's introduction to the translation project (translating TBTE into Finnish).

We then moved to sitting on the floor and mats in the bigger and more open space for the main focus of this session—the introduction to each initiative from the participants. Below is a description of the initiatives in the order they were presented, with the description based on the overviews written by the Eeva, Pieta and Tuomo and supplemented by Jenny's notes. Six of the initiatives had been directly invited and each participant was also invited to “bring a friend” so this brought three more people into the mix. This was a great strategy as it brought an element of surprise. People were also invited to bring along an object that represented their initiative.



**Lapinlahden Lähde** (“The Spring of Lapinlahti”) was introduced by Jaana Merenmies (the “Cherishing Director”). Lapinlahden Lähde is a multifaceted collaboration between various mental health organisations, artists and individual actors. It's a so-called “Green Wellbeing” centre located in the historical Lapinlahti hospital, one of Europe's oldest psychiatric hospitals and once the flagship of mental health care in Finland. The hospital (designed by C.L Engel, the distinguished architect behind much of Helsinki's neoclassical buildings)



was built in 1841 on a beautiful park area on the western coast of Helsinki. The building ceased to be used for public mental health care in 2008, and was left largely abandoned. As Jaana described “no-one on behalf of the City of Helsinki was interested to use the building”. After several years of debates and battles over what should be done with the building, a variety of cultural and mental health organizations, schools, individual contributors and other actors managed to get the building for their use (many of them united in the cooperative Osuuskunta Lapinlahti that today rents a major part of the building). The activities of the variety of actors united in the Lapinlahden Lähde project are coordinated by the Finnish Association for Mental Health and the co-operative Lapinlahti Tilajakamo who both rent the building. In June 2015, Lapinlahden Lähde gained permission from Helsinki City Council to start using the premise on a small-scale basis. Today the building provides



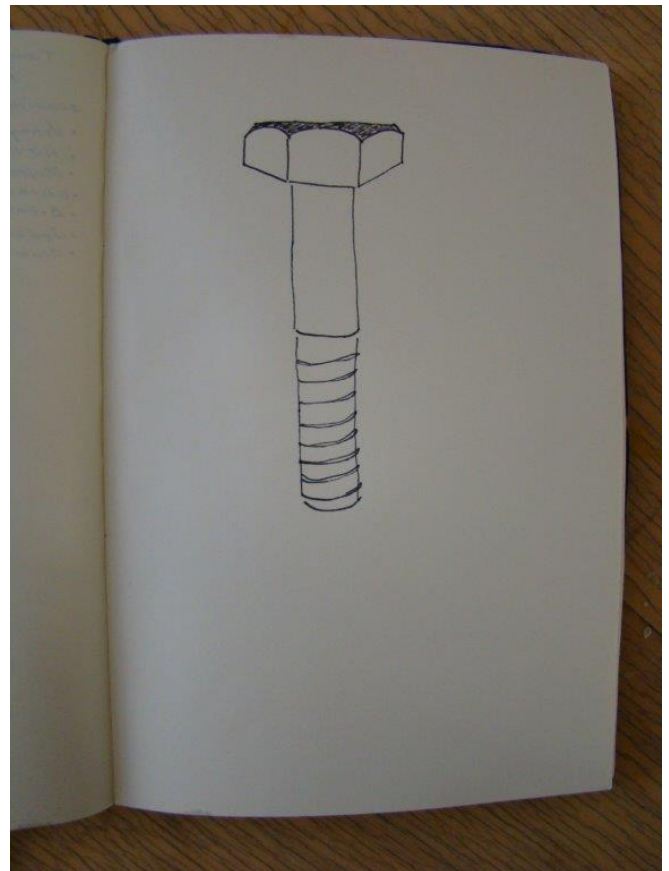
psychological wellbeing for both locals as well as visitors in the form of a crisis centre; a café-restaurant; small spaces for rent for artists, small businesses and the like; a gallery and a plethora of cultural attractions and activities open for all. It's a place of mutual respect and non-discrimination, aiming to value the hospital's historical past. Currently there are 80 rental agreements for the various spaces in the building, and there are 30 participants in work programs and around 100 volunteers. In 2016 there were 60,000 visitors to the centre. The council is currently paying for maintenance and renovation of the outside of the building and there is the risk that the building might be sold in the future (potentially for an up-market housing development or a hotel).

The website (in Finnish): <http://lapinlahdenlahde.fi/>

Info elsewhere in English: <http://www.mielenterveysseura.fi/en/home/come-along/helsinki%E2%80%99s-lapinlahti-home-arts-culture-and-psychological-wellbeing>  
<http://kansalaisareena.fi/verkkoareena/lapinlahden-lahde-can-revitalize-the-hospital/>

**Turun Kirjakahvila** (Turku Book Café) was introduced by Minna Hög (who has been on the Board for several years). Turun Kirjakahvila was started in 1981 by a group of punks. Over the years, it has moved location but in the last few years it has settled into the one location in the centre of Turku. It is a vegan café and it hosts a variety of cultural and societal events ranging from reading circles to concerts. It is a co-operative run mainly on a volunteer-basis, but there are three paid positions: a baker; cleaner and secretary. There is no entrance fee for events (so the selling of alcohol at events is an important source of revenue). The Café provides a “variety of alternatives” to mainstream culture, for instance by distributing zines and books from small publishers, organizing debates on interesting and marginal topics, importing goods directly from co-operatives in Chiapas and Palestine - and simply by being the first vegan café in Finland. Info in English: <http://www.kirjakahvila.org/in-english/>

Minna drew a screw to represent Turun Kirjakahvila (not because of an Anarchist “screw you” attitude, but because of the screw that holds things together).



Roosa Lehtinen came with Minna, and while not representing any initiative Roosa described herself as “an enabler” and a questioner as well as someone who is committed to “breaking down capitalism in everyday ways”.

**Hirvitalo** was introduced by Valpuri Talvitie (who has been involved with Hirvitalo for almost 10 years, and even though she no longer lives in the area she continues to be involved). Hirvitalo is an open-for-all, non-profit cultural space in the Pispala neighbourhood, Tampere. Its main aim is to stimulate local cultural life and enrich all kinds of artistic/cultural happenings in the community. It's a cosy place to just hang around or organize and attend various kinds of activities. Hirvitalo was started in 2005. At the time it was an empty building and a group got permission from council to use

it. There is also the risk that council might want the building back. Hirvitalo is also the place where the workshop was based. Info in English: [http://www.hirvikatu10.net/wordpress.1/?page\\_id=8](http://www.hirvikatu10.net/wordpress.1/?page_id=8)

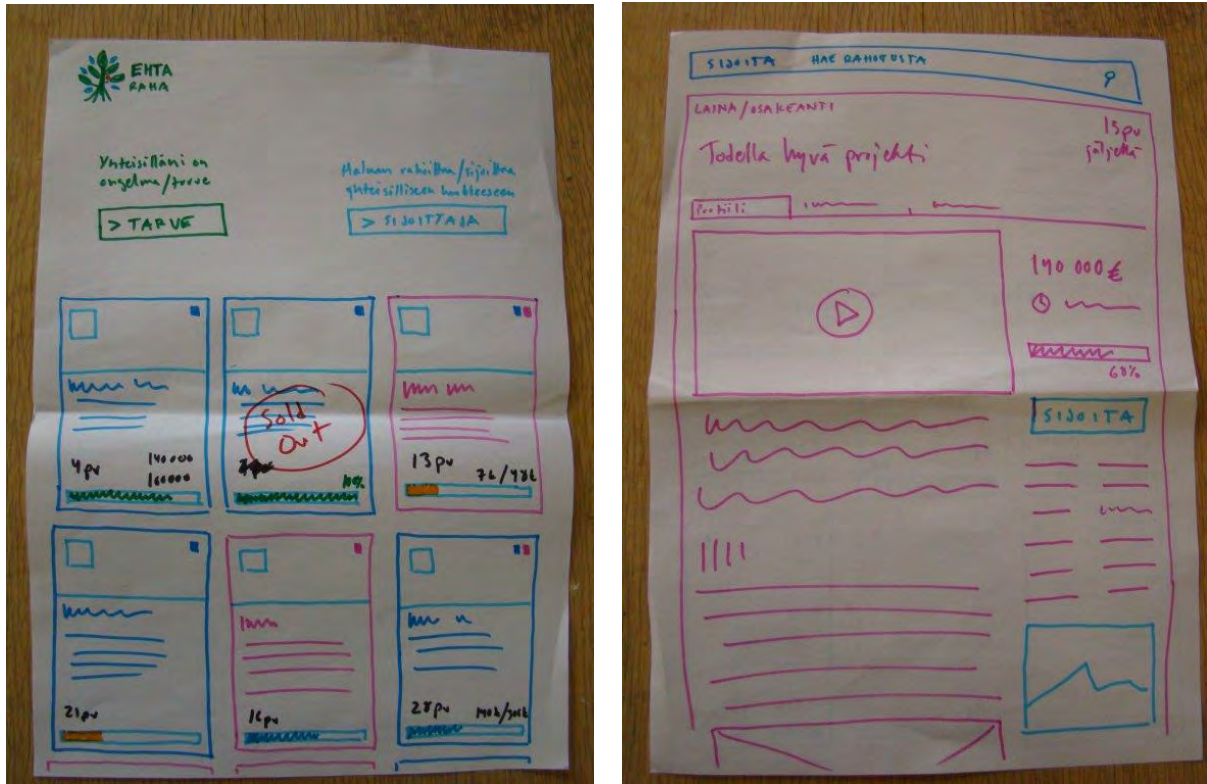


**Mustarinda** was introduced by Pauliina Leikas. Mustarinda is a cultural, non-profit association founded in 2010, that publishes a magazine and runs an artist residency with the same name. Its main aim is to foster sustainable values and lifestyles, ecological and cultural diversity, and the status of different disciplines of art and science. They're especially focused on advancing the transition to a post-fossil society through a variety of concrete experiments (e.g. alternative forms of energy production) as well as artistic and cultural contributions. The core activities of the association consist of independent and critical art, research, and education. The activity is centered around the remotely-located residency, the Mustarinda House, situated next to the Paljakka Nature Reserve (and old growth nature reserve) in the North-Eastern Kainuu region. The house provides facilities for artists/researchers-in-residence and space for art exhibitions and other types of events. There are around 30 to 40 artists/researchers who have residencies each year. At the moment there is work going on at Mustarinda around solar and geothermal energy, an electric car and a wood gas car. The association participates actively in its surrounding community, developing nature protection, nature tourism, and local culture. Info in English: <http://mustarinda.fi/en>



Pauliina brought some birch from Paljakka Nature Reserve

Kimmo Hokkanen came with Valpuri (from Hirvitalo). Kimmo is currently involved in ethical financing through **Ehta Raha Co-operative** (website in Finnish, <http://www.ehtaraha.fi/>). This is a community financing initiative that helps communities to “polish their ideas” and to fund their projects. It uses a virtual platform, and has training in financing processes and tools, and budgeting. Slow money is one of the ideas underpinning the co-operative. There are 7 people working at the co-operative. An example of a project that has been funded is an organic farmers’ group that is based on the circular economy ethos and needed a bakery. It has also helped to fund a new grocery store.

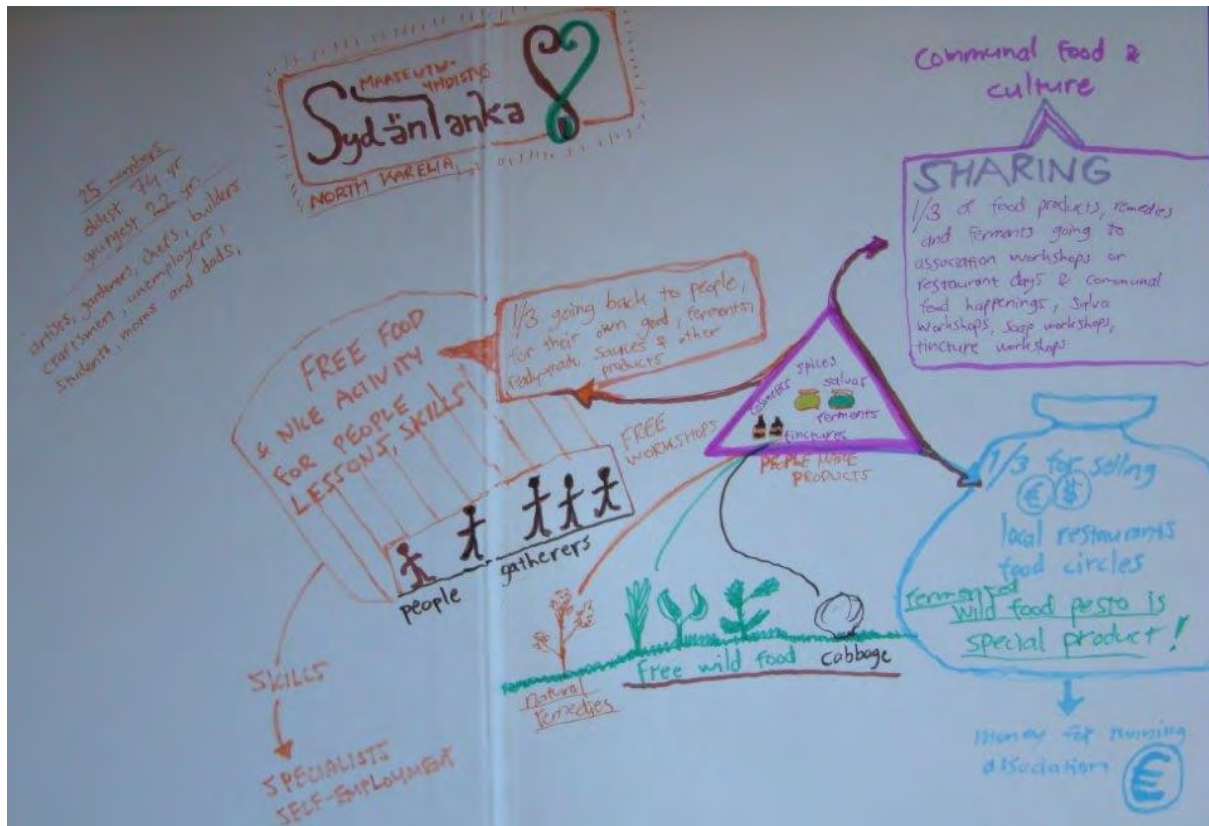


Kimmo's image of Ehta Raha Co-operative

**Botania** was introduced by Jehki Potkonen. Botania is a botanical garden and the world's northernmost tropical butterfly garden, located in the city of Joensuu, Eastern Finland. The project used to be run by the University of Eastern Finland, which however wanted to get rid of it in order to save money. A non-profit association was founded to save the garden from being discontinued. For a couple of years now, the place has been run by this group of volunteers aided by a few members of paid staff. There are around 20,000 visitors each year; visitors pay an entry fee to see inside the tropical greenhouses but can use the grounds for free. The big issue is finance for heating the greenhouses, e.g. in mid-winter the when outside temperatures can be minus 30 the greenhouses have to be heated 50 degrees to reach the minimum indoor temperature for the butterflies of 20 degrees. There's also a very cheeky parrot that swears – and is for some people as big an attraction as the butterflies. Besides providing an exemplary place for environmental education, Botania also hosts cultural events and other activities (e.g. The Festival of Hidden Music and The World Championship of Yelling like Tarzan!). It is an important social centre in the small city of Joensuu. Info (mostly in Finnish, but some also in English): <http://www.botania.fi/>



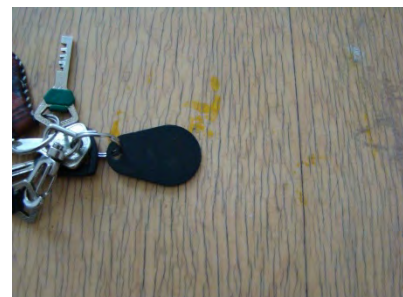
Jussi Sinkkonen came with Jehki (from Botania). Jussi is involved with **Sydänlanka ry**, a wild food initiative that was founded in Winter 2016. The initiative involves about 20 people and they do things such as collecting wild mushrooms and pickling various foods. The intention is for this to become a commercial initiative, while still valuing a peaceful way of life.



Jussi's depiction of Sydänlanka ry

**Oma Maa** ("Own Earth/Soil/Ground") introduced by Maija Suomela (who has been working with Oma Maa for several years, and before this was working for Greenpeace). Oma Maa is an organic food cooperative that runs a farm in Tuusula, close to Helsinki, and a cafe/meeting place in the centre of Helsinki. Oma Maa is one of the few CSA projects in Finland, providing its members with a weekly bag full of season-specific vegetables and other produce. It's also a pioneer in thinking how the ruptures between producers and consumers could be fixed by opening the cooperative decision-making and future-planning processes to all of its members. The cafe in Helsinki serves modestly priced organic vegan lunch and provides a great space for meeting people and organizing events. Info in English: <http://www.omamaa.fi/in-english/>

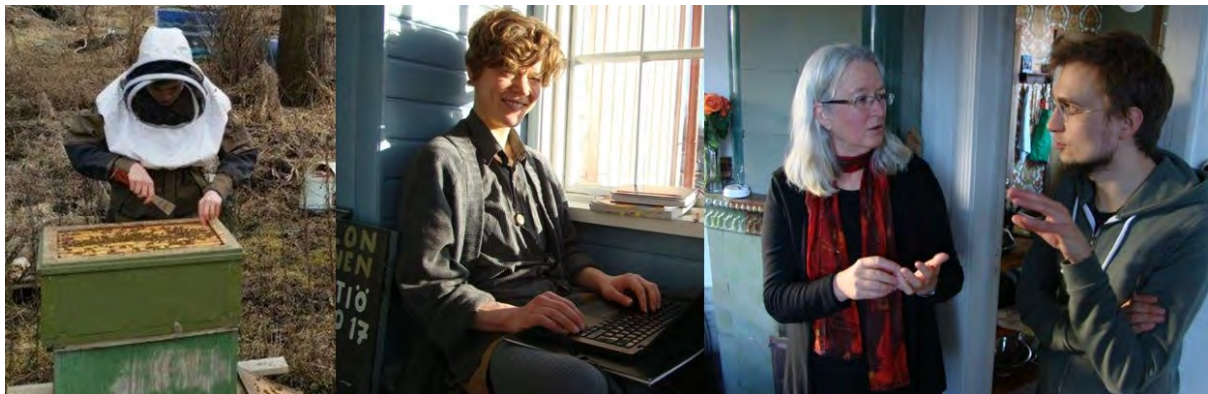
Maija's keys represented the flexibility and multi-tasking needed in Oma Maa.



Dimitri Ollikainen came with Valpuri (from Hirvitalo). Dimitri is interested in the way that people can meet their basic needs through collective action, and he is interested in the issues that can arise in collective relationships.

The four organisers/facilitators of the workshop were:

- Pieta Hyvärinen
- Eeva Talvikallio
- Jenny Cameron
- Tuomo Alhojärvi



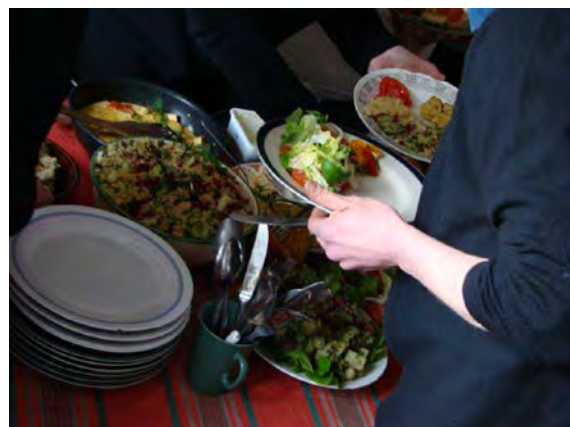
Pieta (who was behind the camera some of the time, and here hidden in her beekeeper's gear); Eeva (working on TBTE translation); Jenny and Tuomo (deep in conversation).

## Afternoon Session 2



After the introductory session we walked down the hill to Hirvitalo for a late afternoon tea and the second session.

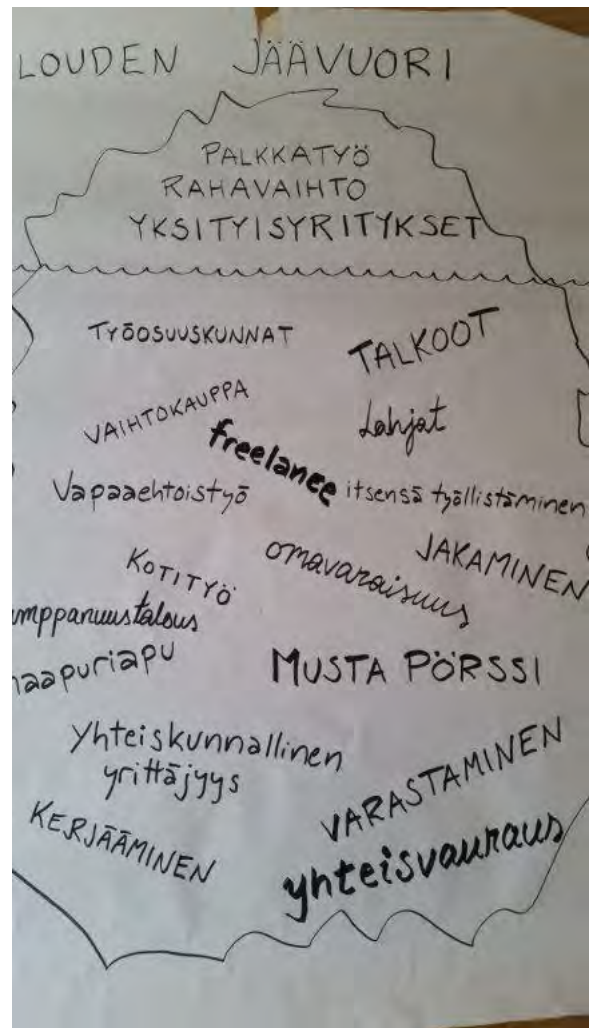
The late afternoon tea was just the first of the wonderful vegan meals prepared by our marvellous Chef, Elli-Maija Katila.





In the second session we introduced the Diverse Economy (using one that Eeva had prepared earlier).

People then worked in pairs to draw diverse economy icebergs, but they were encouraged to be inventive. As the photos on the next pages show, there were images of “Stumps of Stagnation” and legumes with wonderful networks of roots. One of the things that came to the fore was the invisible work of volunteers in running initiatives and organising events (e.g. people on committees with responsibilities who often ended up doing a lot of the invisible day-to-day work as well as special work such as running events). There was a slight variation in the translation of the instructions, so the icebergs also focused in a more general way on the things that initiatives are doing that are visible to others and the things that are not so visible (so not necessarily the economic practices and activities). The terrific thing was that this meant that some pairs identified the initiative’s ethic as part of the things that were not visible (e.g. an ethic of compassion or a commitment to tradition).





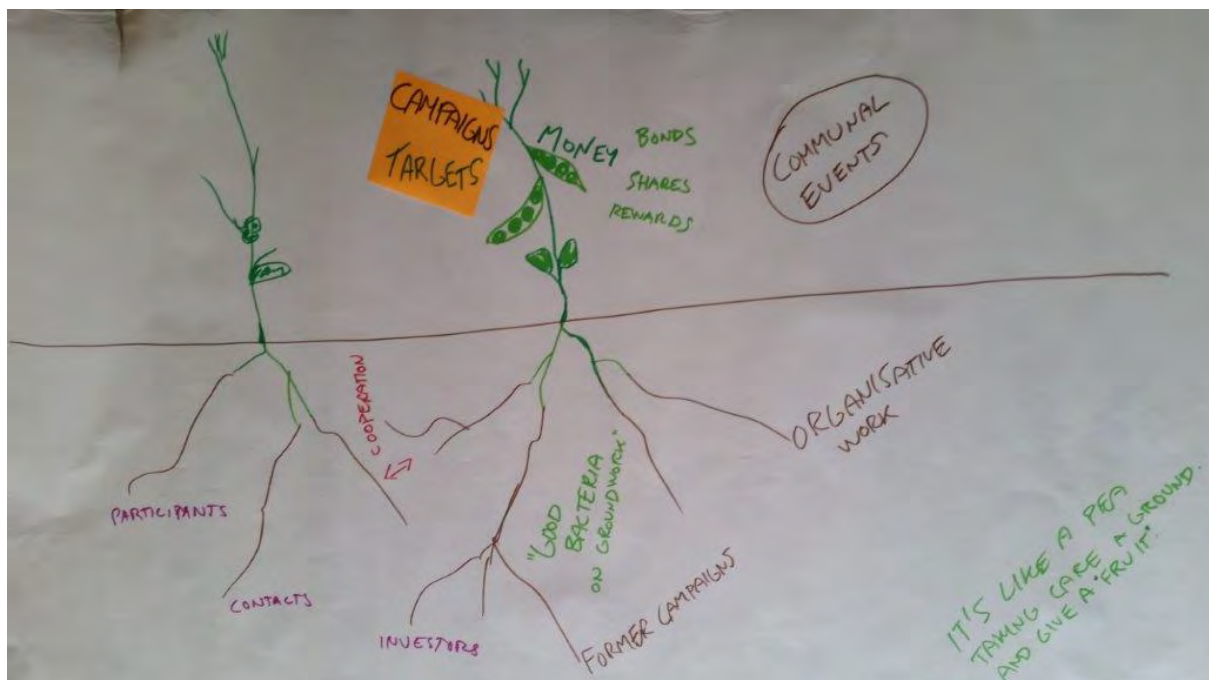
Pairs at work





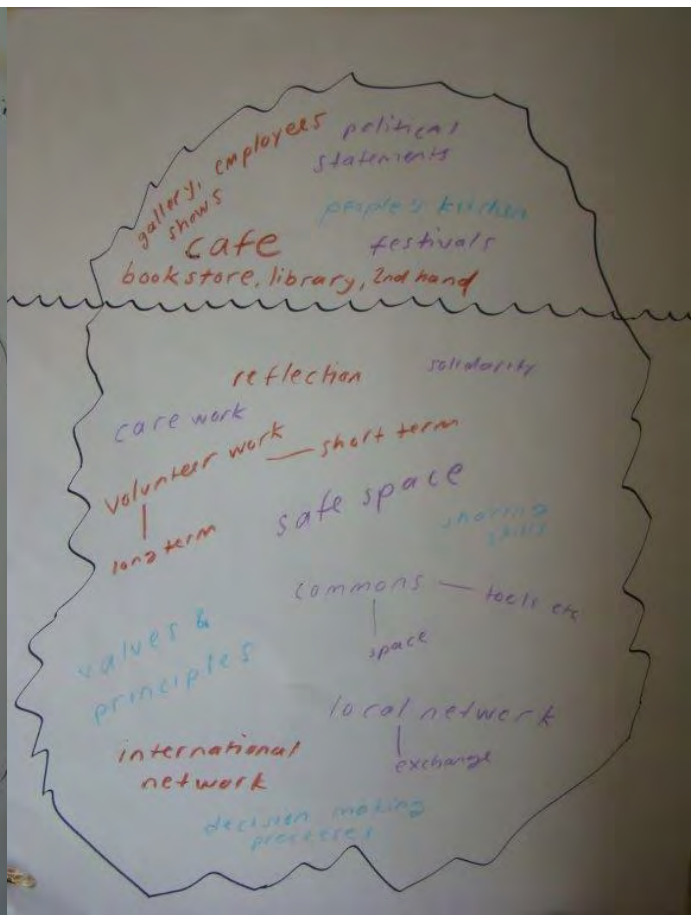


Sydänlanka ry



Ehta Raha Co-operative





Lapinlahden Lähde &amp; Botania

Turun Kirjakahvila

The day finished with a discussion of the “icebergs”, giving everyone their own copy of TBTE (and some extra copies as resources for libraries etc), and a delicious dinner handcrafted by our Chef, Elli-Maija Katila.



## Day Two, Saturday 22 April

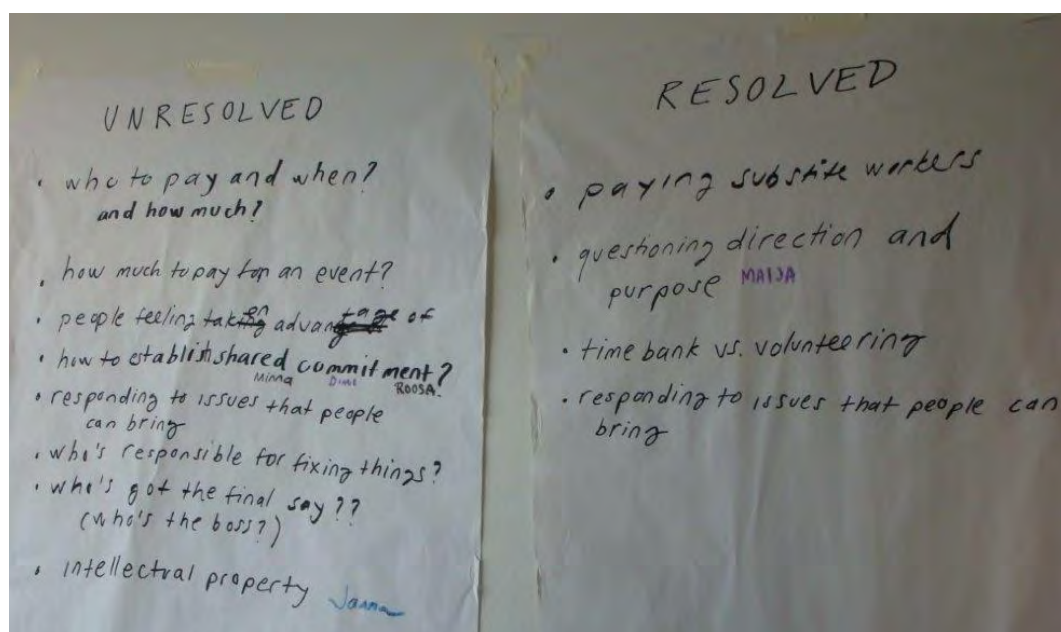
### Morning Session

Today we started in the Pispala Library, a people's library that is across the road from Hirvitalo. The focus was critical incidents, and Jenny gave the example of the critical incidents faced by the Beanstalk Organic Food Cooperative and the Hong Kong Women's Workers Coop, see [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g\\_DeDTKkCDk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g_DeDTKkCDk).

Based on these two examples we brainstormed the sorts of issues that the various initiatives face.



We grouped the issues into those that are resolved and those that are not-yet-resolved—guess which list was bigger! People then put their names to the issues they were most interested in exploring and discussing further. This meant we had three groups who went away to create a sculpture/object/diorama about the issue. The favoured medium was modelling clay/plasticine. After lunch we did a walking tour of each of the creations and had some great discussion of the various issues.





## Group 1, Questioning Direction and Purpose

This group decided to work outside, and they experienced gorgeous sun, then sleet, then snow. The issue was one that had been resolved by one of the initiatives, but others were interested in finding out more about the process and outcome of questioning the direction and purpose of an initiative.

The sculpture represented how one group spilt into two, each part going in its own different direction. The initial concern was that this would weaken the two initiatives. However, the experience was that this difficult discussion and decision led to a better outcome with each initiative developing its own identity and going on to produce better outcomes.





## Group 2, Establishing a Shared Commitment

The second group explored the challenge of establishing a shared commitment to an initiative, and the range of personalities that can become involved and pull an initiative in various directions.



### Group 3, Intellectual Property

The third group explored the issues that can arise when one initiative does not respect the ideas developed and shared by other initiatives. The group used a performance art approach to capture an ongoing critical incident involving one of the initiatives. The plasticine structure represented a single initiating idea and the various groups that had come together to work on developing and advancing the idea. However, the structure could not stand up by itself so the group incorporated an infrastructure into the design (pieces of cardboard), realising that this infrastructure/cardboard represented the relationships that had developed to help bring and keep the groups working together. When they came to “perform” the piece for the whole group, one of the groups was withdrawn from the structure, representing the group that had claimed and taken the original idea. There was great celebration that the structure “stood up” and did not collapse when one element was taken out. There was discussion of how important the infrastructure of the relationships was for holding things together in the face of adversity, and it gave the initiative that is facing this current critical incident confidence that the situation would progress.



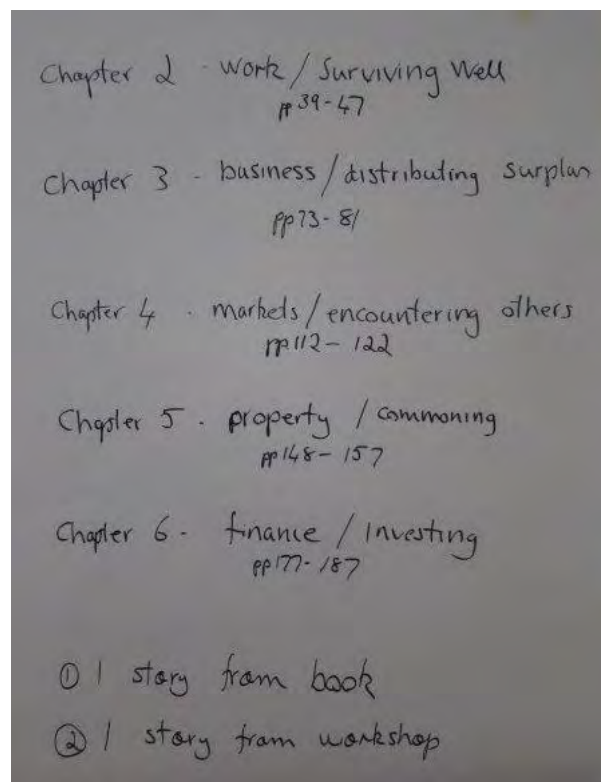


## Afternoon Session

In the afternoon, we focused on TBTE with small groups of two to three people allocated to each chapter. The small groups were directed to the final section of each chapter and the tools and collective actions. They were asked to identify one collective action/story from the chapter that “stood out” for them, and one story from the workshop discussion that fitted with the chapter they had been allocated.

The groups all met in the Space of Possibility to present what they had taken from their allocated chapter. (NOTE: This is not complete as Jenny’s notes are not that great from this session).

- For Turun Kirjakahvila negotiating the **survival/surplus nexus** is an ongoing issue. The three paid staff (the cleaner/secretary and chef/baker) are paid according to the rate determined by the union. There is an issue when volunteers substitute for these paid workers (e.g. when a paid worker is on leave, but the volunteers don’t have the same level of skill but are paid the same union-determined rate. When it comes to distributing surplus, Turun Kirjakahvila also faces issues, and there was the example of a stage being built by volunteers that has now become a permanent stage that is used by the bands. (NOTE: this doesn’t capture the full story/issue).
- For a number of the groups **commoning** is an issue, as they are using commoned space but their access to this commoned space is not guaranteed. Lapinlahden Lähde has an agreement with the Council to use the old hospital site, and the Council is currently paying for maintenance and renovation of the outside of the building; but there is a risk that the council may sell the building in the future (potentially for an up-market housing development or a hotel). Hirvitalo has also commoned an empty building, and there is an agreement with council, but there is a risk that council might want the building back. Botania commoned the botanical gardens (including the tropical greenhouses) that the University of Eastern Finland used to run, but the association that runs the initiative is finding it difficult to meet the cost of running the gardens (especially heating the greenhouses). Pispala People’s Library (across the road from Hirvitalo and one of the spaces we were using for the workshop) was once a council-run library but when the council did not want to run it was commoned as a people’s library. Funding is an issue, and at the same time that we were discussing these issues, the library was fund-raising by selling books.





## Evening: Public Session

After dinner, there was a public session in the Pispala People's Library that had an audience of 15 to 20 people and went for 2 hours. Everyone gave an overview of their initiative and then there was a very lively discussion that was brilliantly managed by Pieta especially as the discussion got into territory such as "money is bad"; "capitalism can't be overthrown"; even "what about 'the patriarchy'". (Once the discussion closed there was still further discussion on the steps of the library about capitalism and patriarchy).



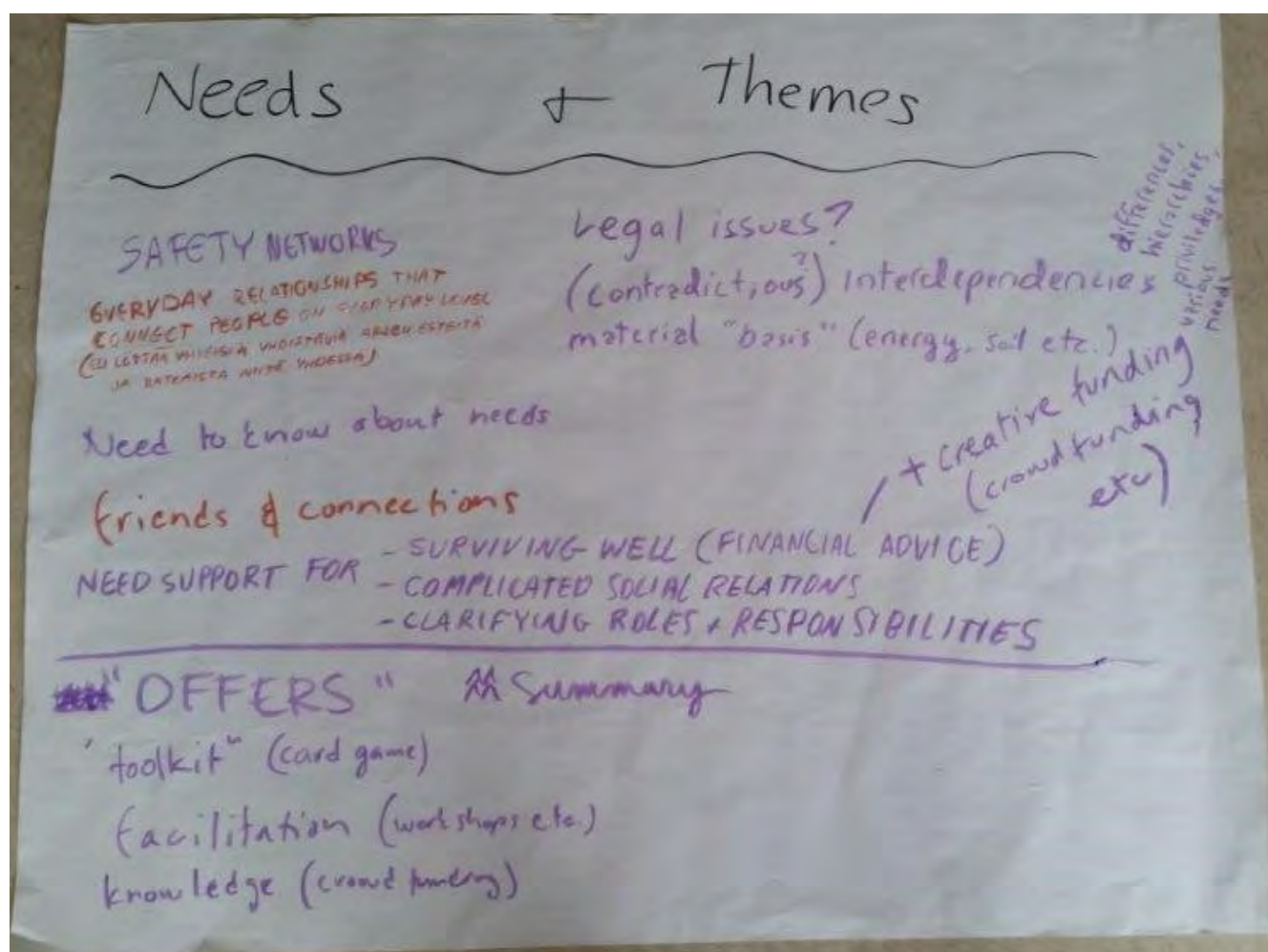
We then made our way up the very steep slope of Pispala to the anarchist/punk co-operatively owned pub for some further camaraderie.

## Day Three, Sunday 23 April

Today we our numbers were down by 4 as the people from the East and West of Finland had to leave to return home. The upside of being a smaller group was that we worked together as a whole group all day, and the mood was pretty "loose" and "low key" which was good after such a big day on Saturday.

We started in the morning by identifying the things we "might" focus on today (see image below). This flowed into talking about what might be done in terms of a "reunion" of all the initiatives involved in the workshop (and with each initiative "bringing a friend"). The plan that we formulated is for another workshop in Autumn/harvest time in Eastern Finland. This met multiple objectives – people's desire to deepen the discussion we had started over the few days (see issues in image below), plus a desire to reach out to and include others (satisfied by "bringing a friend"). Having the reunion in Eastern Finland was also seen as a way of destabilising the core/periphery and acknowledging the great things that are going on in Eastern Finland. This meant there was a pretty seamless decision that most of the money that is left over from the workshop will be use to support transport costs for the reunion, plus some money for the Pispala People's Library. We also discussed how there are things that can happen in-situ with other funding. Pieta and Dimitri talked about the possibilities for getting funding to run some activities about "everyday economies" in Tampere. Also there's a People's Assembly happening in Helsinki that Helsinki-based initiatives can tap into.

As part of this discussion we kept a record of some of the issues that had arisen over the two days.

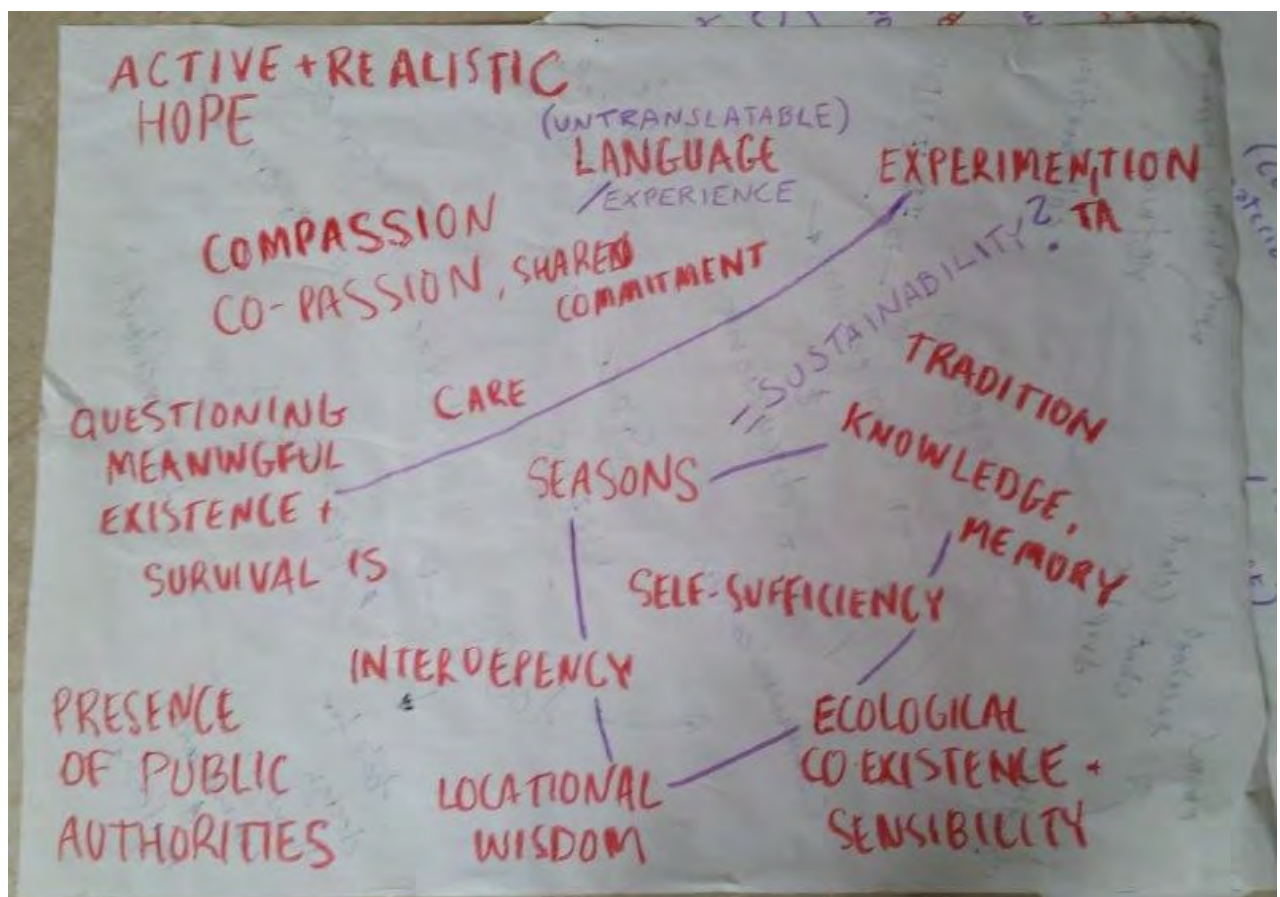




Then there was an amazing vegan lunch with a pomegranate theme, and a fantastic presentation and discussion with our Chef , Elli-Maija Katila, about her work and the approach she uses when she is catering for events such as ours.



After lunch we talked about the Antipode Foundation project and thoughts about what might be distinctive to the Finnish context, see below.





We concluded by agreeing that this is all work-in-progress. And there is more to come:

- Email to those involved – including an email list for future contact
- Dropbox for photos (Pieta will set up and put all her photos in there – and invite everyone to join. The images in the dropbox folder will be a commons that people from the workshop can use).
- Pauliina is writing a piece for Mustarinda (that will be circulated)
- Initial “what next for Antipode Foundation Grant” discussion in the morning with Katherine (as part of translation project discussion)
- Some of us there will write up our notes (and possibly circulate to the group as a draft for comment/input)
- Reunion of initiatives (plus friends) in harvest season
- Event in 12 months around TBTE translation.

---

### Finally, here are Jenny’s handwritten notes from the discussion on Day Three

Debrief from Saturday evening’s public session:

- Someone made the observation that what we need to take back and claim is the word “the economy”.
- Another observation was that we are all like an iceberg with the above the waterline being our head and our thoughts, and the submerged section being our body, our feelings and our wellbeing, and that we need to pay more attention to this part of ourselves.
- Kimmo talked about the distinction between tools and goals, and how money is simply a tool not a goal. We also talked about how marketing can also be a tool (for example, marketing could be used to help promote and raise funds for Botania, such as getting people from across the world with butterfly tattoos to sponsor a butterfly in the tropical greenhouse). (Right: Jaana and Jenny get excited about marketing).
- We talked about the scale issue, and how things don’t necessarily need to grow bigger but how smaller initiatives can multiply via “supported mutation”.



Other things that were discussed:

- How the role of the state is critical (e.g. overall in providing things such as educational and health services, but also in providing smaller things such as the buildings used by some of the initiatives from the workshop ), but how the important role that the state plays can become taken-for-granted so that there is a loss of understanding how important it is to defend the things provided by the state (when these things start to be eroded).
- There was discussion of the richness and nuances of the Finnish language and how translation into English can be not just challenging but sometimes impossible. For example, the word talous means household and economy; the word toimeentulo roughly translates as livelihood but means so much more than this fairly instrumental word (it providing for a living, something that is done with others; and it also means getting on well, not just in terms of oneself but also in terms of getting on well with others); the word metsä roughly translates as forest but it also embodies much much more than just forest.