

Placino, P. and Gibson, K. (In press). Accommodating diverse livelihoods. In S. Cairns & D. Tunas (Eds.), *Future Cities Laboratory: Indicia 03*. Lars Müller Publishers. <https://www.lars-mueller-publishers.com/future-cities-laboratory-indicia-03>

Abstract

This short essay is part of the last volume in the Future Cities Laboratory Indicia Series and opens an opportunity to bring diverse economies and community economies research to a wider audience. It contributes to the principle of “Stimulating Diverse Economies” for sustainable future cities. The paper is an invitation for various social and institutional actors to accommodate diverse livelihoods. It suggests that for cities to become genuinely resilient, their design and development need to pay attention to the plural and entangled forms of work that are crucial in creating a sustainable condition for both human and earth others to flourish.

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ACCOMMODATING DIVERSE LIVELIHOODS

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WHY

A resilient city is one where diverse livelihoods are available to urban dwellers so that the necessities and joys of life are secured from a range of transactions, including formal and informal monetized exchange, caring, gifting, reciprocation and allocation via the state or other institutions (McKinnon, 2020). The greater the diversity of means of both human and nonhuman survival, the more robust are urban economies and ecologies (Miller, 2020). But city structure can work against diversity—making the work of care, commoning, and informal exchange more difficult, or even illegal. There is, thus, a need to pay attention to the multiple and interdependent forms of work that are crucial in creating a sustainable condition for both human and earth others to thrive.

WHAT

Surviving well and flourishing in cities does not solely rest on a steady income flow from paid work. Certainly salaried work can pay for a family's grocery and utility bills, but unpaid domestic work and caring responsibilities are crucial in maintaining households and sustaining the life of family members (Dombroski, 2020; Williams and White, 2020). Given limited opportunities for formal employment, many people seek jobs in informal economies which allow flexible schedules but offer a precarious work-life balance (Placino, 2020). Meanwhile, the work of nonhumans in cities contributes unacknowledged gifts of fresh water, oxygenation, environmental remediation, pollination and species diversity (Barron and Hess, 2020). Robust and lively cities of the future will support caring work and make it easier to perform. They will accommodate informal activities for the livelihoods they directly provide. They will ensure that nonhuman co-inhabitants are recognized and able to thrive.

HOW

Accommodating diverse livelihoods does not only require an expanded view of what counts as labour, but also entails collective examination of which kind of work enhances or undermines well-being for people and earth others. Diverse livelihoods should lead to a balancing of material, occupational, social, community, physical and environmental well-being (Gibson-Graham et al., 2013). In *Take Back the Economy* (2013) Gibson-Graham, Cameron and Healy propose a suite of tools that can be used to help understand how different types of wellbeing are negotiated and achieved. One is a *24-hour clock* which shows the total numbers of hours a person devotes to various activities (paid, unpaid, reciprocated, gifted) in a day. Another is a *well-being scorecard*

by which different types of human well-being can be rated from 1 (poor) to 2 (sufficient) to 3 (excellent). A third is a *balance scale* used to illustrate whether the amount of time spent in generating income exceeds the number of hours allocated for sustaining the non-materials forms of well-being. Expanding the field of concern to include not only human wellbeing but also the survival of planetary others that co-labour (Barron & Hess, 2020), an *ecological footprint* calculator can be used to assess which kinds of work and consumption habits contribute to low or high impacts on the world's resources. These inventories can provide input into planning future cities.

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