

# Simon Mair

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Figuring out what the role of work should be in the Great Transition is a hugely important issue and one that has not been given the attention that it deserves. For most of us—wherever we are in the world—work is a central component of our lives. On average, employed people in the UK (where I'm writing) spend around a quarter of their waking hours in any given week doing paid work. [1] Add in unpaid work, and that figure rises to two-fifths. [2] Therefore, any Great Transition narrative wanting to connect with people has to address issues of work.

Broadly accepting Kent Klitgaard's conception of "craft" work, I would like to explore one aspect of the essay in a little more detail: the extent to which work can be decoupled from "the treadmill of consumption." As I read his essay, Klitgaard doubts the ability of work to be truly decoupled from consumption of physical goods, and this leads him to hope for further productivity gains directed toward an increase in leisure time. In this way, his thesis is as much about leisure as it is about work. Here, I want to challenge the idea that work is inextricable from the quantity of consumption and instead argue that the idea of craft and care-based work advanced by Klitgaard (and others) lays the groundwork for a post-materialist work-based prosperity.

Klitgaard's position is representative of how most ecological economists feel about the relationship between work and consumption – a feeling principally governed by their post-Keynesian leanings. [3] Most ecological economists assume that maintaining employment in low or no-growth economies requires individuals to work fewer hours (in order to "share" the available work). We see this in Klitgaard's argument that providing meaningful work while also reducing consumption will require a reorienting of the capitalist drive for efficiency: away from profit and toward a shorter working week. These arguments follow logically from the combination of post-Keynesian theory (which sees demand as the key driver of employment levels) and ecological economic theory (which requires reduced levels of demand). If employment depends on demand, then lower demand means less employment—a problem easily solved if everyone works less.

However, as Tim Jackson argues in the latest edition of *Prosperity Without Growth*, expansion of craft and care sectors could provide an alternative to working less. [4] Klitgaard's own description of this type of work provides insight into why this might be: "Craft workers are guided by an ethos of doing a good job for its own sake and strive to understand the entirety of a process." Put another way, craft is about doing things well, and doing things well often means doing them slowly. Similarly, Klitgaard describes how care work is diminished in the current economy because workers are under pressure to do an adequate job in a short amount of time, rather than a good job over a much longer period of time. In effect, craft and care increase the labor intensity of meeting demand. Therefore, a job that once took one person now requires two, and physical consumption can halve without reducing employment.

Similar ideas are found in the writings of William Morris, who argues that craft based economies can produce enough decent work for anyone who wants it. In Morris's view "craft" means striving to make your work excellent. This requires evermore deliberation and time as work blurs into art. Moreover, he argues that as more work is allowed to take on the dimensions of craft, we will rediscover older forms of work. In his utopian novel *News from Nowhere*, Morris describes a world in which things that used to be done by machine are now done by hand—if there is pleasure or art to be gained in doing it this way. [5] Similarly, in *The Aims of Art*, Morris argues that using a machine in production means gaining time, but losing art. [6] Because craft-based work prioritizes art, excellence, and pleasure, it necessitates doing some things by hand even if this takes more time. In this way, craft work requires us to "decouple" work from consumption.

Here I think we have a useful link between employment in craft and care and Herman Daly's concept of qualitative growth. Like qualitative growth, craft and care ask us to focus on the quality of service and product, rather than the quantity. Just as qualitative growth decouples well-being from material throughput, craft weakens the link between consumption and employment.

Unfortunately, this leads to big questions about how we facilitate such good work. What are the economic dynamics that would allow us to support an expanded care and craft sector? The nature of craft and care suggests that we can weaken the link between consumption and production. Consequently, we should aim to provide as much meaningful work as "meaningful leisure." (Indeed, it is worth noting that the link between leisure and consumption is arguably as strong as the link between work and consumption. [7]) The real difficulty I see is in how we go about providing more meaningful work. As both Klitgaard and Morris make clear, prioritizing craft and care means reversing the values that currently dominate the economy. Without transformation of the economy so that it values care rather than profit, I struggle to see how we generate meaningful work—regardless of whether we decouple it from consumption or not. So, how do we reorient the economy so that its values reflect our values?

[1] UK Office for National Statistics, "Actual Hours of Weekly Work: People (Seasonally Adjusted)," December 14, 2016, [www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/earningsandworkinghours/datasets/actualweeklyhoursworkedseasonallyadjustedhour01sa](http://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/earningsandworkinghours/datasets/actualweeklyhoursworkedseasonallyadjustedhour01sa).

[2] Assuming 5 ½ hours of sleep every night, based on data from: Lisa Jones, "Women Shoulder the Responsibility of 'Unpaid Work,'" UK Office for National Statistics, November 10, 2016, [visual.ons.gov.uk/the-value-of-your-unpaid-work/](http://visual.ons.gov.uk/the-value-of-your-unpaid-work/) and Sleep Council, *The Great British Sleep Report* (Skipton, UK: Sleep Council, 2013), [www.sleepcouncil.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/The-Great-British-Bedtime-Report.pdf](http://www.sleepcouncil.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/The-Great-British-Bedtime-Report.pdf).

[3] See, for example, Philip Lawn, *Environment and Employment: A Reconciliation* (London: Routledge, 2009).

[4] Tim Jackson, *Prosperity Without Growth: Foundations for the Economy of Tomorrow*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: Routledge, 2016).

[5] William Morris, *News from Nowhere*, (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1890), available at [www.marxists.org/archive/morris/works/1890/nowhere/nowhere.htm](http://www.marxists.org/archive/morris/works/1890/nowhere/nowhere.htm).

[6] William Morris, "Chapter 5: The Aims of Art," in *Signs of Change* (London: Reeves & Turner, 1888), available at [www.marxists.org/archive/morris/works/1888/signs/chapters/chapter5.htm](http://www.marxists.org/archive/morris/works/1888/signs/chapters/chapter5.htm).

[7] And with the environmental impacts to match: Angela Druckman, Ian Buck, Bronwyn Hayward, and Tim Jackson, "Time, Gender and Carbon: A Study of the Carbon Implications of British Adults' Use of Time," *Ecological Economics* 84 (December 2012): 153–163.