Letting Them Get Close: Entrepreneurial Work and the New Normal

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In the context of contemporary capitalism, entrepreneurs are viewed as people who show initiative and innovativeness (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002; Miller & Rose, 2008; Thrift, 2005). This chapter takes a closer look at such individuals' lives through the study of a group of entrepreneurs who engage in entrepreneurial practices relevant to the contemporary work context, in which the self is heavily invested and all risk is individualised. The case studies are of lifestyle based and hosting businesses targeted at dog owners located in Finland and Sweden. The entrepreneurs are people who have left their previous paid work either partially or entirely, moved to rural locations, and started firms either offering accommodation and training premises for people travelling with dogs or coaching people in various dog-related sports. Hosts and guests of these organisations become close to each other, both emotionally and spatially. The business model also means that production, reproduction, and consumption blur together, either with or without prior agreement.

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The blurring is reinforced by the use of digital technologies—the firms are constantly available online for customers' potential and actual evaluations. This commercially oriented way of living is desirable in many respects, but may also result in stressors for the business owners. In this chapter, I analyse how these entrepreneurs manage—both emotionally and through practical, material solutions—a life in which work is ongoing. I also trace the reasons for their prevailing happiness and sense of optimism.

Today's labour markets and working life can be described, with good reason, as insecure, unstable, and risky. Taking and managing these risks individually has become an institutionalised requirement (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002). Lauren Berlant (2011) calls this constant insecure state of work (and, consequently, life) the 'new normal'. She argues that we maintain unachievable fantasies of a moral–intimate–economic state of being, often called 'the good life'. We base our actions and plans on promises of upward mobility, job security, equality, and long-lasting intimacy, despite evidence that liberal–capitalist societies can no longer be counted upon to provide opportunities for individuals to make their lives 'add up to something'. Adkins (2016) approaches post-Fordist capitalism as a context in which the worker or would-be worker is guaranteed nothing but hope. The actual means to realise these hopes, however, are possible only through externalisation, sub-contracting, and entrepreneurialism. She, among others (Ekinsmyth, 2014; Ikonen, 2014; Taylor, 2015), sees that the archetype of the entrepreneur has emerged as the ideal form of working. Women, too, are seen increasingly as potential or existing entrepreneurial subjects (Luckman, 2016). As far back as 1991, McDowell wrote about the emerging post-Fordist economy and the interconnected, gendered spheres of production and social reproduction it needed. She pointed out 'the manner in which the flexibilization of labour was impacting both sexes as irregular employment conditions were becoming much more widespread' (MacLeavy, Roberts, & Strauss, 2016, p. 2067).

Increasingly, for both genders in the new economy, a hostessing attitude is becoming a requirement—providing individualised service and giving every business move a personal touch. For women, hosting is like a continuation of their other behaviours and duties in life, and because host(ess)ing is seen as a 'natural' feminine virtue, it is not generally

appreciated as work that should be rewarded (Veijola & Jokinen, 2008). In home-based hosting businesses, particularly businesses that offer a traditional rural lifestyle as their commodity, traditional gender roles tend to be at play (Brandth & Haugen, 2012, 2014). This is because the farm tourism business often aims to offer the experience of a 'genuine' rural lifestyle (Bell, 2006; Bunce, 2003; Short, 2006). Therefore, for business purposes, it is men more than women who are required to alter their somewhat 'natural' roles to incorporate aspects of caring into their traditional farming and wilderness activities (Brandth & Haugen, 2014). However, gendered divisions of work do not appear as often in less traditional lifestyle businesses, such as the rural businesses studied here.

Self-organised employment is increasingly taken for granted in the new normal of modern-day work, where people who have created their own work and are self-employed are frequently to be found. The rising prevalence of different kinds of contracted and outsourced workers, forced freelancers, and entrepreneurs, has recalibrated class relations in society (Adkins, 2016, p. 2). Even so, the capacity for and norms of self-management differ based on the privileges available to different kinds of people, provided by their social location (Berlant, 2011). Capital received by birth or acquired through education, work experience, and one's environment and culture may be vital in enabling individuals to adapt to and utilise the changing economic environment with optimism.

Optimism is a kind of negotiated sustenance that makes life bearable, even as it presents itself in an ambivalent, uneven and incoherent manner (Berlant, 2011). From the cases studied, it seems that optimism is linked with passion—if the entrepreneur has a passion for something and can also make a living from it, it results in a sense of optimism. Nowadays, both optimism and passion are affects that are preferably expressed in life as well as in the sphere of work. Being seriously committed helps in being flexible and innovative and leads an individual to express excessive attachment to work (Irving, 2016). Berlant's (2011) method was to examine how singular things become general and resonate across many spheres. Although in a very different context, I also attempt to show how my single cases are illustrations of a more general trend—that of a working life in which people seek alternative routes to make a living and live a decent life. While a feeling of insecurity is widespread among post-Fordist

workers, the would-be entrepreneurs studied here have had the lust and enough resources to change their lives—not towards greater security, but towards a more optimistic and happy sense of uncertainty.

Home-based hosting and coaching as a lifestyle: Materials and settings

This article presents interviews and participatory observations of six case study businesses engaged in lifestyle entrepreneurship, motivated by personal desire. Together, the case studies include 12 people, as some work alone whereas others have one or more business partners. Half of the firms provide coaching for dog sports, and the other half provide premises for dog sports, including accommodation and training areas. The firms are located in rural areas in southwest Finland (four cases), eastern Finland (one case) and southern Sweden (one case). The entrepreneurs work either at home or in another emotionally significant place. The cases include couples with small or school-aged children, couples without children, and singles. Self-employment is the only way they can live their desired lifestyle, which also represents a shared attribute among this group, which is otherwise heterogeneous, differing greatly in terms of previous work experience, skills, and resources. More information about the case businesses is presented in Table 1.

In some cases, the entrepreneurs had previous enthusiasm for dog sports, which was the main motivator behind their change in lifestyle and employment, as they built this enthusiasm into their business idea. In other cases, switching to entrepreneurship was prompted primarily by wanting to 'do their own thing' and 'have it all'—work, family, hobby, and a life close to nature. Even in these cases, it was their love for their pet dogs and their associated activities that led to the idea for their niche business. Businesses that provide services such as coaching for dog sports on their own premises and providing one-of-a-kind experiences are typical manifestations of the new economy, in which specialised knowledge, ideally drawn from personal commitment, is transformed into a profit-making activity and communicated to potential customers largely via

Table 1 Basic information about the case businesses

Business	Entrepreneur(s) and family situation	Location	Previous work	Age of business	Other sources of income
Coaching 1	Woman, 30, married, one small child	Southwest Finland	Banking sector	A couple of years	Wage work, which will likely continue in the future
Coaching 2	Woman, 30+, in a relationship, collaborating with another firm run by a couple, 60+	Southern Sweden	Student of natural sciences & farmers	Approximately ten years	None
Coaching 3	Couple, 40+	Southwest Finland	Trade sector	A few years	Another firm
Accommodation 1	Couple, 30+, small children	Southwest Finland	Education & economics	A few years	None
Accommodation 2	Couple, 50+, teenage children	Eastern Finland	Medicine & engineering	A few years	Wage work, which will likely continue in the future
Accommodation 3	Woman, 30+, divorced, a school-aged child & Woman, 30+, in a relationship	Southwest Finland	Several, mainly the trade sector	A couple of years	Wage work, which they would prefer to discontinue in the future

digital technologies, particularly social media. The motivation of 'having it all' is typically seen in case of mothers who work from home (Ekinsmyth, 2011, 2013; Luckman, 2015), but is also characteristic of businesses started from hobbies and for lifestyle-related motives (Andersson Cederholm & Åkerström, 2016; Ateljevic & Doorne, 2000). The firms studied operate in the field of human–non-human interactions, which is increasingly drawing the interest and attention of academics (for a review, see Schuurman, 2014). Although firms involved in dog-related services are rather new entrepreneurial actors, their numbers are growing, as are the numbers of services in that specialty. A growing subculture includes people who are interested in dogs that are used for active dog sports (Gillespie, Leffler, & Lerner, 2002; Haraway, 2008; Ikonen & Pehkonen, 2017; Lund, 2014); the case study entrepreneurs examined in this chapter fill the rising demand for proper coaching and training premises for such activities.

Coaches train owners and their dogs in agility or sheep herding. These coaches usually operate from premises where they can dedicate themselves to their own dogs' training while paying for it by offering their customers superb training facilities. Some coaches also travel to other places to coach, including abroad—a growing trend among professional coaches. Entrepreneurs who operate as accommodation hosts may invite coaches and attract customers to participate in training seminars on dog sports conducted on their premises. Additionally, they also serve as places where people can meet other dog enthusiasts, who may, for example, have a dog of the same breed or who are travelling with their dogs and in need of a dog-friendly place to stay. Accommodation hosts also offer food and lodging to lone guests or visiting groups. For this study, I wished to analyse hosts who explicitly target people who travel with their dogs and have advertised this choice, rather than those who merely allow dogs on their premises. All the case studies were found through various dog-related Internet forums, Facebook groups and interpersonal conversations—platforms through which dog enthusiasts regularly communicate and seek appropriate meeting places.

As part of my study, I conducted interviews with the entrepreneurs that lasted from one to three hours; observed their practices before, during and after customer encounters; informally asked the guests about

their experience; and scrutinised the premises. I also participated in the offered activities, for example, I had lunch with some of the other guests and interacted with them while they were training or relaxing, and I also spent time training my own dog while enjoying the bed and breakfast services.

Towards generating income through lifestyle

It is remarkable with how much emotion the interviewees spoke about their past working lives. They mentioned the problems of working life in general and of work places in particular. It was clear that apart from 'pull' motivations around lifestyle and hobbies, many 'push' reasons led them to change their lifestyles. The interviewees criticised modern work culture, specifically for its accelerated pace, insecurity, conflicting requirements and heavy workload. These themes recurred throughout the data, whether in the form of direct personal experience, observations of others' predicaments, or predictions of their own futures. In the interview excerpt below, some inn owners describe their journey from an unhappy work life to potentially sustainable happiness:

Interviewee 1 (I-1): You know, these days paid work, it's somehow so uncertain […][1]

Interviewee 2 (I-2): Yes, it's just like that, and profit seeking. It's also hard in that I was responsible for achieving results. We had this pressure and hypercritical feeling that we had such few sales, that we should have more, more, more, all the time. It was quite tough mentally. Even though I had a good steady salary, it did not compensate for the fact that I spent all my working hours and my commute in the morning and evening just thinking about work, and so on.

I-2: Yes, and even though you might be praised by the clients, it always felt that the only comment you got from the management was that you should do your work better, you should do even more, and this and that, endlessly. And then our clients tell us that we are the nicest, friendliest and most business-like [company in the field] in the whole Uusimaa region, but we never hear from our employer that we are actually doing our jobs well.

I-1: And the employer gives us tools, but they are not necessarily the best tools there are, so you have to juggle to get the best possible end result. So we decided that now that we have an enterprise, we get to use all the proper tools that it is possible to get. And they are exactly like we want them to be.

I-2: And we get to hear all the feedback, whether it is critical or good, and we can just react to it directly. (Accommodation 3)[2]

Regular wage work was another frequently mentioned issue, implying that they still consider it a societal norm from which they deviate. This is illustrated in the following interview excerpt of a male sheep herding coach in his 40s:

> Both of my parents are medical doctors […], so we [he and his wife] haven't really followed in their footsteps. Particularly me, I'm the real black sheep in the flock. All the others are well educated and have regular jobs—I'm a rascal who just works on something odd. […] They know that it's better not to intrude; everybody makes their own choices. (Coaching 3)

Although the interviewees recognise that regular wage work is the general norm, they also see how today's wage work often leads to insecurity and inconveniences, large and small, which they do not wish to face in the future. Therefore, in line with the institutionalised individual responsibility for life management and happiness (cf. Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002), they have made the choice to achieve self-fulfilment by doing meaningful work as lifestyle entrepreneurs.

Lifestyle entrepreneurship is an economic activity that is not conducted solely for making profits, but to a great degree also for altering the personal lifestyle of the would-be entrepreneur (Ateljevic & Doorne, 2000; Peters, Frehse, & Buhalis, 2009; Stone & Stubbs, 2007). For some politicians and economists, the term has a slightly bad reputation, because self-employment in such cases is seen only as a practical means to fund the new lifestyle, while ambitions to grow the business are often low (Peters et al., 2009). The desired lifestyle

stems from the entrepreneur's own enjoyments, meaning that there is a fair degree of clarity about the desired direction in which they want their lives to change (Andersson Cederholm & Åkerström, 2016). This was corroborated by my interviewees, who stated that their motivation for entering self-employment was to enable their desired lifestyle. Almost everybody considered their business a source of fulfilment and a part of their new lifestyle itself (Stone & Stubbs, 2007). 'Because this is also my hobby, this is not horrid in any sense' (Coaching 1). A couple that manages an inn and did not plan to give up their wage work also said, 'This is more like a hobby, like recreation for us!' (Accommodation 2). The woman even referred to her part-time job as a medical practitioner as a 'hobby' and mentioned that rearing dogs and inn-keeping was a 'family hobby'. Class-based resources for self-accomplishment were evident (e.g., Berlant, 2011). However, some interviewees emphasised that they 'do not aim to practise charity' but work for an increase in turnover to be able to take time off (Accommodation 1). The same goes for the innkeepers who, despite not aiming to grow their business in order to employ anybody else, wish to succeed enough to be able to enjoy their lives, 'because we are both basically very hedonistic' (Accommodation 3).

Being enthusiastic about what one is doing is a good thing for business success. However, all the risks are left to the entrepreneur alone, including the risk of enthusiasm waning over time, for whatever reason. Because these entrepreneurs have changed not only their way of earning a living but also their overall lifestyles, the possible negative consequences can be considerable, impacting upon all aspects of their and their family's lives. My interviewees did not believe, however, that their lust might suddenly disappear and were generally optimistic about their future. They also had tentative alternative plans: 'I believe I can change my work duties a bit so that I don't need to give up working with dogs' (Coaching 2). In the case of some entrepreneurs, a sense of trust in destiny and an undefined sense of optimism could be detected: 'We live day by day […] time will tell […] our activities go in different directions as required' (Coaching 3).

Customer closeness in everyday work and life

By serving niche markets, these entrepreneurs represent ideal post-Fordist workers who use their skills in a creative way and utilise digital technologies such as social media, along with their own desires and values, personal, material, multisensory, and mindfulness approaches in their day-to-day interactions. Because the entrepreneurs I studied often share a passion for dogs with their customers, the boundary between work and hobby or between public and private is porous. It is exactly their high degree of involvement in their work with dogs and their mission to do 'their own thing' that draws them into a close relationship with their customers. Thus, like other home-based hosting firms, the work of these self-employed people is often equated with their own lives and their very selves. Therefore, it is clear that their work prompts them to forge personal relationships with their customers. To counter this, the entrepreneurs have developed several strategies to prevent their workload from becoming too heavy and the customers becoming too close to their private lives. One successful strategy they employ is taking short breaks from work, which allows their lifestyle-based work to remain rewarding.

In cases where the entrepreneurs have dependent children, this affects the way in which they perform their hosting work. Both entrepreneurship and parenthood involve and engender passion, love, and frequent unpredictable situations. In this way, production and reproduction essentially intertwine, unavoidably but also purposefully (also, Ekinsmyth, 2011, 2013; Luckman, 2015; Wilson & Yochim, 2015). Allowing the various spheres of their lives to blend together is voluntary but also necessary for their goal of living 'the good life'. Ideally, their customers understand and accept this in totality. A female interviewee who, with her husband, has started an inn that caters to both dog hobbyists as well as anyone wanting a countryside holiday, speaks about being a home-based hosting entrepreneur while being the mother of a toddler and a baby:

> Everything has to be kept in some kind of order; we can't have total chaos here. Never. So it means continuously cleaning something, and it's a bit stressful. But after the birth of our second child, I have started to think that if somebody suddenly struts in and we have cockhorses in the middle of the

> hall that day, then the person just gets to see that, okay, people are living here. Of course, the cockhorses are not there if I know that we'll have customers that day. Then I tell the kids that they can't build a hut here now! (Accommodation 1)

In their lives, where work/family and public/private have totally intermingled both in time and in space, there are constant efforts to establish boundaries. In time, this becomes almost autonomous and requires less conscious consideration. These efforts are two-way—keeping work away from family meals on the one hand, and, as above, keeping children and obvious traces of their presence away from customer interactions on the other. The work is restricted from entering every sphere of their lives primarily because of the children, without whom the entrepreneurs would be more than willing to let the work dominate their lives around the clock. It is no wonder one entrepreneur said, 'The kids help balance all this well, [as otherwise] we would kill ourselves in only a few years by working too hard'. The threat of working too much and the need to find a balance is seen in their speech about the future as well:

> When the kids grow up, they have expectations for the summer […] and they have free time from school […] Also, to develop this place, we need somebody else besides ourselves to be able to work here and manage it someday. Because if we keep this as a family firm, it means that we will never be able to be away from here. (Accommodation 1)

The situation does change with time. A couple who hosts a part-time training centre said that their teenage children hardly come out of their rooms some days, and therefore they are not disturbed by having visitors spending time in their home environments: 'They do have their peace here. They are like teens everywhere. In the evenings, I go in and ask whether they have been outside today. The answer is usually, "Umm"' (Accommodation 2).

In all, entrepreneurs who were parents clearly had many more aspects to balance than childless entrepreneurs, and all four interviewees who had children had different ways to balance customer closeness with their family lives. The strategies were situational, both in terms of day-to-day

things like finding time to put their children to bed while serving customers at night, as well as from a long-term perspective, considering how things will be different when the kids start attending or finish school or move away from home. Although the entrepreneurs have had to work towards striking a balance between work and life because of their children, it is also wise to do so for their own well-being.

Managing interactions

In most cases the work is seasonal in nature, meaning that there are more visitors during summers and more private time and space in winter. Seasonality is an advantage, because quiet times of year provide time to recuperate and allow the entrepreneurs to maintain a balance between showcasing their domestic environments to visitors and enjoying the benefits of rural privacy (Goulding, 2009, p. 109). But it also means that high season is extra busy, which is also necessary, as that is when the entire year's revenue is earned.

Even though the firms are always open, at least on the Internet, they do thus have quiet times and days off, even on a daily and weekly basis. Often, the entrepreneurs are most busy during evenings and weekends, when many other more conventionally employed people are free, whereas weekdays allow for more private time. This makes the situation a bit complicated—the entrepreneurs get only very little time to spend with their friends and family to compensate for the large amount of their time spent interacting with and serving their customers. As one entrepreneur said, 'Our working hours are totally different from those who work so-called normal hours. I mean, we are always working on weekends, and we have some free time on weekdays' (Accommodation 1). However, this same couple also optimistically noted that as most of their friends are also busy, working parents of small children, they all appreciate the need to plan meetings and activities well in advance.

A potentially challenging part of customer interaction for these entrepreneurs is that they know many of their customers very well, owing to regular visits or their shared interests as dog hobbyists, which makes their relationship rather informal and may also set expectations of uninterrupted availability. However, the relationship is still commercial, and

while personal friendships have room for occasional disagreements, this is not necessarily the case when the friend is also a customer. The literature suggests that although all visitors have to be treated kindly, real feelings of friendship should be avoided (Andersson Cederholm & Hultman, 2010; Cohen, 2010). This means that emotional displays need to be regulated for commercial purposes. The issue of regulating emotions to produce the right state of mind in customers is a core aspect of service work in general (Hochschild, 1983). In her first book on emotion management in service work, Hochschild (1983) aspired to separate personal emotions from the emotional labour practised in waged work. Such a separation was not so simple then, and is even less so nowadays. Particularly in the case of lifestyle entrepreneurship, it is not possible to separate the private self from the professional self, given that the rules of feelings and emotions (Hochschild, 1983, pp. 118–119) are much more complicated. It is clear from my observations and interviews that, in practice, maintaining a friendship with one's customers is not simple, because sharing one's personal lifestyle while providing coaching and training premises is in fact the part of their work that entrepreneurs and their customers love the most. Being personally close to customers is thus both a motivation for and a requirement of lifestyle entrepreneurship (Andersson Cederholm & Hultman, 2010).

Interestingly, I found very few instances mentioned in the interviews or occurring in my field observations of customers crossing any lines or claiming any favours based on their relationship (cf. Cohen, 2010). Thus, although the entrepreneurs and their customers blend the role of consumer and producer by doing favours for each other, this is a mutually beneficial arrangement (Andersson Cederholm & Åkerström, 2016). As one interviewee said, 'I have a friend who helps in taking care of the sheep and I give her training in exchange' (Coaching 1). With regular and familiar customers, value is co-created, which is increasingly common—'the new normal'—in the new economy. However, the question of money sometimes results in untoward situations. Occasionally, customers must be reminded about their invoice, and if a reminder does not help, many self-employed entrepreneurs tend to let it slide and simply try to learn from it for the next time. In the case of familiar visitors, it is easier to think along the lines of, 'It's only money, we'll let it be for now and be much clearer right from the beginning next time' (Coaching 2), instead

of engaging in battles with customer-friends. Generally, learning how to act with different people is extremely important. It leads to material solutions such as installing automatic door closers if the customers do not remember to close the doors, pasting written rules on the walls, and sending instructions via e-mail in advance. These preparations lead to smooth and polite customer situations and thus help in sustaining the lifestyle that brings the entrepreneurs happiness.

Unlike the pessimistic view that people in the neoliberal economy are forced to capitalise on their individual capacities and mould their enterprising selves according to customer needs, my data shows that many entrepreneurs have the power to choose how they wish to sell themselves. That is partly due to their class position—they are educated and have prior work experience, or even hold a job on the side, which brings them a sense of optimism and trust in the future. Many of the entrepreneurs believe that they cannot change their personality to something that does not come to them 'naturally'. The entrepreneurs' 'evermore privatized paths to happiness' (Binkley, 2014, p. 23) do not include feigning enthusiasm. In sporadic day-to-day situations of course, preventing and producing emotions cannot be avoided, but the core idea of the enterprise cannot be based on false feelings. The innkeeper couple I referred to previously constantly brainstorm ways to develop their activities to acquire more customers beyond dog enthusiasts. They define what they are ready to sell in the following way:

> You can sell and develop only the kinds of things that you can convincingly be enthusiastic about. I mean, it is not convincing enthusiasm if you have to force yourself and you can't just say, 'Now I'm going to be enthusiastic!' If you aren't excited, you just aren't excited. (Accommodation 1)

Happiness can be a work ethic that paves the way towards individualised freedom (Wilson & Yochim, 2015) or an enterprise (Binkley, 2014), but only if one's deepest emotions are genuine. When the self is deeply and willingly invested in this way, feedback is taken very personally. 'But it is precisely because we work with our personalities. I don't believe that somebody working in a chain restaurant would give a damn' (Accommodation 1). It is a complicated business putting one's personality to work.

Conclusions: Working for happiness

Lifestyle-based entrepreneurship requires very different practices from those learnt from paid employment from the Fordist era. Today, living a dream life and creating value by blending the spheres of production, reproduction, and consumption is an all-encompassing work. Engaging in emotional labour has generally become common in the new service economy, and people are increasingly required to commoditise themselves when participating in this variegated labour market (for an evaluation, see Hochschild, 2013; Wolkowitz, 2006, pp. 76–81). It is not as straightforward as an employer requiring employees to present certain feelings at work, as these employees are free to have their own genuine feelings in their leisure time. In the late-capitalist economy, commercial and non-commercial emotions truly blend, and it is normal to market and utilise one's individual personality in both paid employment and entrepreneurship. This personal figure also has to be constantly maintained and reformulated, which is unquestionably hard work.

However, using one's personality as an asset also makes it possible to design one's work according to one's own values, needs, and aspirations. The 'do-it-yourself' approach (Luckman, 2015) is experienced optimistically as free choice to achieve 'the good life' (Berlant, 2011). Moreover, personalising the home environment can be satisfying. The possibility of choosing one's place of residence and working there is indeed in opposition to current global capitalist trends, according to which people move around freely and do not settle down in any single place (Boltanski & Chiapello, 2007). This kind of individualised work may provide feelings of self-fulfilment and freedom from restrictive, unsatisfactory wage work. Pursuing lifestyle-based entrepreneurship leads to some abandonment of the middle-class chasing of success and an upwards career trajectory, and instead committing to choices such as participatory parenthood.

Even so, seeing how hard both male and female entrepreneurs work, it is clear that they also develop the 'can do and must do better' ethos (McRobbie, 2015), not really questioning either masculine ideals or productive entrepreneurialism, which governments around the world encourage in order to make citizens less dependent on government support. Lifestyle entrepreneurs work to acquire happiness, which for

them means leaving behind variously precarious or more secure paid employment. However, self-employment is definitely another precarious situation. In post-Fordist economies in general, self-employment may be becoming 'institutionalised as an individualised carrot to wave in front of the noses of exhausted, over-committed parents, and specifically mothers' (Luckman, 2015, p. 155). Seeking happiness by producing commercialised happiness for others enables entrepreneurs—whether they are parents or not—to actively construct and maintain the logic of neoliberal economic and affective structures and, therefore, accept a state of precariousness as the new normal of work life.

Notes

1. Transcription style: […] indicates words have been omitted in a sentence, often just the repetition or a word or two.
2. All the interviews, barring one that was conducted in English with a person whose mother tongue was Swedish, were conducted in Finnish. I have translated these interviews into English, attempting to maintain the tone and cadence of the original speech.

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