Noor IJpma (#s1162505)
Supervisor: Arnoud Lagendijk
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When your life is no longer in the hands of the manager

– An exploratory inquiry into how workers in Dutch worker cooperatives experience job (in)security

This thesis explores how the diversity of workers in Dutch worker cooperatives experience job (in)security, on an individual, collective, and classwide scale. Worker cooperatives are often part of the conversation on socialist theory and democratisation of the economy, but the different experiences of the actual workers are less discussed. Since work is a collective activity, this research expands the concept of job security to include collective job security and the classwide job security of workers in a capitalist system.

With in-depth interviews, a qualitative survey, and document analysis, this thesis shows how worker cooperatives can enhance job security through different mechanisms, like workers controlling the pay and trusting their colleagues. While the worker cooperatives can bring more job security, they also need more time and attention from their members, for example, because people have to read documents or solve internal conflicts. When worker cooperatives are not well embedded in their context and structural inequalities between the members are neglected, this can limit the accessibility and benefits of worker cooperatives. This thesis helps to expand socialist theory on how to realise a democratic economy given the specific circumstances of local contexts, like racial discrimination or a strong individualistic mindset.

Preface

How does a world feel where equality, sustainability, solidarity, and freedom are the bases on which our society is built? This question led me to writing this thesis. While libraries have been filled with books about this question, people who are already living like this are rarely asked to talk about their experiences. Therefore, I tried to centre this thesis around these people and their experiences in worker cooperatives.

Through this thesis, I was able to dive into the world of worker cooperatives. The stories I heard confirmed the importance of human relations when building different societal structures. Because whilst on a large scale material conditions determine societal structures, on a smaller scale human relations influence how communities are formed and behave. Consequently, when one only focuses on the large scale, one neglects that the changing of material conditions has to be done by humans and is thus dependent on their relationships. By making this last thing the subject of my research, I hope to help people imagine how changes in material conditions could affect them personally.

I want to thank all the members of Helpgewoon, ReNieuw West, and De Loods profoundly for telling me their story of working in a worker cooperative. I have immense respect for how they have taken matters into their own hands and reorganised their work in order to give more room for their passion, work, and ideals. Likewise, I hope that they can recognise themselves in the story told in this thesis and that their stories can be used to enable more people to take their work in their own hands. I also want to thank the whole cooperative ecosystem, de Coöperatie expert, CECOP, NCR, Komovo, and de Collectieve Beweging, and the FNV for sharing their insights with me.

Of course, I sincerely thank all my supervisors, Harry Pettit, Edwin van de Wiel and Arnoud Lagendijk, who enabled me to give shape to this thesis with their unique insights. Especially, I want to thank Arnoud Lagendijk who supervised me for the longest part. His experience with research and the alternative economy helped me to overcome the obstacles in this thesis and include my radical ideas in my research.

Finally, I want to thank my girlfriend, friends, and family, who listened to all my struggles, kept me motivated, helped me brainstorm, and spent long hours with me at the library.

I hope you enjoy reading this thesis.

Noor IJpma

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Introduction

Through work we can transform our environment to make it more liveable and enjoyable. Through work we build houses, make food, develop (digital) infrastructure, and care for those in need (Keulen, 2025). In the capitalist system, on which the Dutch society is based, work is organised in 'jobs.' These jobs are organised in a hierarchical manner, with CEOs, boards of directors, and managers that decide what work is to be done, when, how, and by whom. The workers who take on the job get paid a salary for their invested time and effort (CBS, n.d.). The tools needed to do the work – the means of production – such as machines, resources, and data, are owned and guarded by a small group of people (capitalists). People who want to work, in order to transform their environment and/or to make money, are denied access to these tools unless they accept a job from the capitalists and their conditions. Work is thus trapped in the hands of capitalists, whose intention is not to optimise the usage of these tools for the benefit of the workers, but to make profit. This has led to poor working conditions, little democracy in the workplace, alienation from the work, and the tendency to put profit over people and the planet. Care personnel, for example, are often discouraged from taking the needed time to care for their patients. Instead, their time with patients is clocked and limited, they get only ten minutes to perform certain predetermined tasks (De Bruin, 2022).

As long as this system has been in place, people have tried to free their work from it by organising their work themselves, creating democratic workplaces, and taking collective ownership of the means of production. Collective ownership structures have been in place in different contexts, such as the workers councils in early Yugoslavia, the sumak kawsay or buen vivir from Latin America, or the African ubu-ntu philosophy (Molefe, 2024). Freeing and democratising work is central to socialist thinking because it enables workers to fully develop themselves and their capabilities without being alienated from what they are producing (Broekmeyer, 1970). Work is thus not only seen as an individual concern but also as something that needs collective and classwide action in order to enable people to make their environment liveable. These different scales – the individual, collective, and classwide experience of work – will be central to this thesis. The numerous layers of the experience of work cannot all be researched in this limited thesis. Therefore, I will focus on the individual, collective, and classwide experience of job (in)security.

According to socialist theory, the democratisation of the workplace and worker cooperatives can emancipate workers. But what does this emancipation actually feel like? Do these workers

experience the promised self-actualisation, or does it become self-exploitation? What can the practice of democratic workplaces contribute to the socialist theory?

How to organise work democratically?

Worker cooperatives are the main form to organise democratic workplaces in the European context (Mirabel, 2021). In worker cooperatives, the ownership over the means of production is in the hands of the workers that employ these means of production (Amon, 2025). Through 'one member-one vote,' they decide together what they will do with their pay, their work, and their profit. Seven principles that should lead cooperatives according to the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA) are 1) Voluntary and Open Membership, 2) Democratic Member Control, 3) Member Economic Participation, 4) Autonomy and Independence, 5) Education, Training, and Information, 6) Cooperation among Cooperatives, and 7) Concern for Community (International Cooperative Alliance, n.d.). These principles go further than the collective ownership over the means of production, making worker cooperatives actors that are related to their community and environment. How such a relationship may look like has been conceptualised in public-common partnerships, which rely on the existence of worker cooperatives and then add other stakeholders to the decision-making, such as citizens or consumers (Heron et al., 2025). This research will focus on worker cooperatives, but the outcomes may also be interesting to these public-common partnerships.

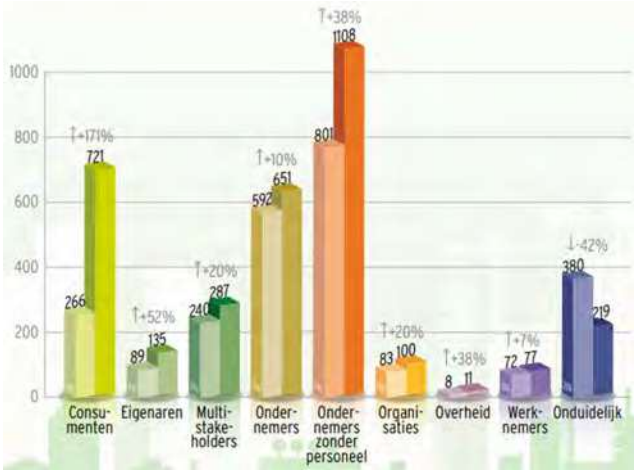
The most well-known worker cooperative is Mondragon in the Basque region of Spain that employs 70.000 people (Mondragon, n.d.). In Spain there are in total around 2.600 worker cooperatives, in Italy 17.000 and in France around 550 (Pérotin, 2016). In the Netherlands and its neighbouring countries, worker cooperatives are less prevalent, only some dozens of Dutch worker cooperatives seem to exist (Luijendijk, 2020). Overall, in the European context, democratic workplaces that include worker ownership exist mainly in the form of worker cooperatives.

The Dutch worker cooperative ecosystem

Worker cooperatives are not very present in the Netherlands, even in the sector of the social economy and enterprises (Bockma, 2024). Figure 1 shows the presence of different forms of cooperatives in the Netherlands in 2016 and 2020.

Figure 1

Number of cooperatives in the Netherlands in 2016 and 2020 per member



Translation. Consumers, company owners, multi-stakeholders, entrepreneurs, entrepreneurs without staff, organisations, governments, workers, unclear.

Note. Adapted from Luijendijk, S. (2020). Het Nederlandse coöperatieve Landschap [report]. Retrieved on February 24, 2026, from Facts_en_figures_het_Nederlandse_cooperatieve_landschap.pdf

In the Netherlands, a distinction is made between worker cooperatives ('werknemercoöperaties'), where the members are on the payroll of the cooperative, and entrepreneurs cooperatives ('ondernemerscoöperaties'), where entrepreneurs (mostly entrepreneurs without staff - 'zzp'ers') come together and do work for the cooperative. Jij&Co is an example of care professionals that have come together as entrepreneurs to increase their network (Jij&Co, n.d.). Different from, for example, Italy, where worker cooperatives are mainly created through worker buyouts, which means that workers take over ownership of the enterprise they previously worked for, worker cooperatives in the Netherlands are more often built from the ground up. A significant number of worker cooperatives are founded by scientifically educated people, such as lawyers, doctors, or consultants. When looking at how these worker cooperatives promote themselves on their websites, they don't seem to prioritize the cooperative principles named by the ICA.

Whilst the literature does not give clear reasons for the lack of worker cooperatives in the Netherlands, it names certain factors that can support the creation and the existence of worker cooperatives, such as legislation, financial support systems, and a cooperative network. The International Cooperative Alliance (ICA) found that the legislation in the Netherlands is limited in its 'cooperative friendliness' (Coops4Dev, n.d.). The Dutch legislation gives cooperatives a lot of freedom regarding their internal structure and

governance system, there are, however, no separate regimes for different types of cooperatives (van der Sangen, 2021). This gives cooperatives the room to experiment, but the cooperative identity, as formulated in the cooperative principles by ICA, is unprotected against other business forms. In the definition of cooperatives in the Netherlands, it is imposed that 'its statutory objective must be to provide for certain *economic* needs of its members' [own highlight], this legislation excludes cooperatives that pursue social, general, and/or community interests (van der Sangen, 2021). This is different from the definition of the ICA: 'A cooperative is an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly-owned and democratically-controlled enterprise' (International Cooperative Alliance, n.d.). The Dutch definition enables the exploitation of the cooperative concept because there are less stringent rules about paying members of cooperatives, and there is no tax on the profits that are distributed to the members of a cooperative (DoeHetZelfNotaris, n.d.). Cooperatives with a social goal are neglected by the Dutch legislation. Furthermore, the promotion of cooperatives is not a public function in the Netherlands, in contrast to Some social enterprises that can, for example, benefit from certain procurement rules (van der Sangen, 2021). For cooperatives, there are no procurement benefits and only limited tax benefits. Consequently, the ICA recommends that the Netherlands adopt an "adequate legal framework for financing and raising equity in the law" (Coops4Dev, n.d.). Moreover, specific rules for worker cooperatives should be introduced, since "the cooperative law in the Netherlands is underdeveloped in this respect due to weak incentives in labour and social securities law, as well as in tax law" (van der Sangen, 2021). In the official definition of a cooperative, as published by the Chamber of Commerce (KVK), members of cooperatives are not workers, and only people who work for the cooperative but are not members are insured by employee insurance (KVK, n.d.). This makes the position of worker cooperatives difficult. In France and Italy, targeted financing tools and state support can create an inviting environment for cooperatives (Mirabel & Lomuscio, 2025). In the Netherlands, these seem to be lacking.

It is not only important that the legislation and financing tools are in place once a cooperative is established, but legislation around worker buyouts also plays a major role. During worker buyouts employees take over an enterprise, this is most common when a company goes bankrupt and workers want to save their jobs, but it can equally be used to overcome a succession challenge (Fi-compass, 2025). Worker buyouts often lead to the creation of worker cooperatives. To take over their firm and create a worker cooperative, financial legislation and support are needed. In Italy redundant workers can use their accumulated unemployment benefit in order to capitalise a worker

buyout cooperative. In Spain, there are national and subnational funds and tax advantages for worker buyouts. The Dutch government does not provide financial support to worker buyouts. However, there are some European funds, such as InvestEU SISW, the European Social Fund (ESF), and ESF+, from which worker cooperatives and buyouts may benefit. The aims of ESF and ESF+ are to improve job opportunities, improve employment, and enhance social inclusion. Whilst they may not be able to help finance the actual worker buyout, they can fund upskilling and training for workers engaged in the buyout, provide resources for business development initiatives, and support the implementation of social enterprises and cooperatives (Fi-compass, 2025). Both in the Dutch legislation and financial system, worker cooperatives are neglected and made to compete in a market that advantages profit over well-being.

Besides governmental support, organisations such as trade unions and umbrella organisations can help worker cooperatives (Cousin et al., 2024; Gunderson, 2019). There seems to be no umbrella organisation for worker cooperatives in the Netherlands. Some worker cooperatives are part of the national cooperative umbrella organisation, Nationale Coöperatie Raad, but they are not a member of the European umbrella organisation of service and industrial cooperatives, the CECOP. And while the biggest trade union in the Netherlands, the FNV, is not opposed to worker cooperatives and increasing democracy at the workplace, it seems not to be their priority. Whilst one of their goals is 'control over your work, income, and development,' this is only aimed at letting people know their rights (FNV, n.d.). In the Netherlands, the responsibility for political strategies regarding social enterprises lies primarily in the hands of municipal authorities (Gazaley et al., 2025). Some municipalities, such as Amsterdam, have policies to support social enterprises and worker cooperatives (Open research.amsterdam, 2025), but in general, social enterprises report limited political support (Gazeley et al., 2025). Therefore, worker cooperatives in the Netherlands seem quite isolated.

Societal relevance

In current 'democratic countries,' only the political side of society is democratic. The economy remains hierarchical. Economic democracy can balance economic power and give people the right to actively participate in the economy regardless of their class, race, gender, social status, etc. (Johanisova & Wolf, 2012).

Economic democracy results in a more equitable society and in a more sustainable society. The

growth- and profit-oriented economies of capitalist Global North countries have strongly violated and grown out of the planetary boundaries (Johanisova & Wolf, 2012). By centring the planet and humans instead of profit and growth, a democratic economy can contribute to letting these economies return to the planetary boundaries. In this light, worker cooperatives with their democratic profile are seen as a part of a macroeconomic strategy for more sustainability, equality, and democracy.

The capitalist system relies on precarious work. By making people dependent on wages and threatening to fire them if they do not work enough, the system makes people desperate for work and can thereby maintain low wages (Krasovec, 2014). Precarious workers face chronic job and income insecurity, weak welfare entitlements, and constant switching between employment and unemployment statuses (Greer, 2016). Because of the neoliberalisation of work, precarious work is increasing (Mumby, 2019). The national trade union in the Netherlands, FNV, is worried about job security, the lack of increasing wages, and permanent contracts (FNV, 2025). Kim and her colleagues (2025) studied worker cooperatives in the US and found that they can give support to precarious workers since they give them stable and protected employment outside the system that exploits them. By giving people an alternative to precarious work, capitalists cannot threaten people with precarious work any longer. All this also leads to higher job satisfaction in worker cooperatives (Malleson, 2025). Worker cooperatives can embody such an alternative business structure because they counter the capitalist business structure and its inherent characteristics of inequality, domination, job insecurity, and disrespect by being based on mutual respect and equality (Amon, 2025; Malleson, 2025). By presenting worker cooperatives as a part of an alternative future, worker cooperatives themselves get a utopian meaning, with no inequality, total job security, and no dominance. Workers in worker cooperatives describe these places differently. When worker cooperatives are formed, they do not automatically function well (Bretos et al., 2025; Kaswan, 2019). Workers need to learn how to run a business, overcome tensions, and work democratically (Kaswan, 2019).

In order for worker cooperatives to be valuable for people, they have to align with the plurality of the lived experiences of people. Therefore, it seems important to research the experiences of people in worker cooperatives and to see how the Dutch context influences these experiences.

Enhancing knowledge about worker cooperatives is valuable for policymakers but may also empower workers to escape the capitalist labour-market and give worker cooperatives and economic democracy a bigger role in Dutch society.

Scientific relevance

Worker cooperatives are the least known form of cooperatives, both in- and outside research (Michie et al., 2017). The existing literature on worker cooperatives focuses mainly on contexts with a large amount of worker cooperatives, such as Spain, Italy, or France (Amon, 2025; Mirabel, 2021; Corcoran & Wilson, 2010). Furthermore, the existing literature gives more attention to the institutions surrounding the worker cooperative than the people inside the worker cooperatives; actor- or person-centred approaches are less used (Bretos et al., 2025; Kossek et al., 2023). Additionally, the people in worker cooperatives are mainly seen as a homogenous group, which denies the diverse group of people that work in cooperatives the possibility to share their pluralistic experiences (Endo, 2025).

Research on job (in)security similarly lacks attention to how people in different societal positions experience job (in)security (Kim et al., 2025; Misra, 2021). According to Kim and her colleagues (2025), there is a strong focus on WEIRD (Western, Educated, Industrial, Rich, and Democratic) contexts. Since this research will take place in the Netherlands, it will also remain in the WEIRD context. By highlighting the role that intersectional social positions play in the experiencing of job (in)security, this thesis aims to move to the margins within the WEIRD context.

Moreover, most of the research on job (in)security gives quantitative data that looks at its individual effects on the workers (Graham et al., 2024). The embodied and person-centred approaches that centre the pluralistic experiences of workers are neglected. Furthermore, this data follows a neoliberal individualistic view that presents the workers as independent individuals, which promotes the idea that only individual benefits should be pursued (Crowley & Hodson, 2014). The collective interests of workers, such as collective decision-making about employment, are neglected. On the other end of the spectrum, theoretical, mainly Marxist, literature explores the interest of the united working class. Although this can significantly add to understanding the workings of the capitalist system and theory-building, this theory alone may not be enough to emancipate workers if they cannot relate to it.

Seemingly this research falls into multiple gaps. The aim of this research is therefore not to fill these knowledge gaps about worker cooperatives in the Netherlands, the intersectionality of job (in)security and collective job (in)security, but to explore these gaps and their connections and to highlight certain blind spots of the literature.

Research objective and question

This thesis will try to expand socialist thinking on the democratisation of the workplace by learning from empirical examples of democratic workplaces and how intersecting tools of power, such as racism and sexism, come together in these places. More concretely, I aim to contribute to an understanding of job (in)security that does not follow the neoliberal narrative and is useful for the emancipation of workers. In order to understand how workers experience democratic alternatives to capitalist firms, worker cooperatives will be researched. In the Netherlands, there are several dozen worker cooperatives, but a significant number of these employ people that, because of their status and education level, can hardly be named as 'workers,' this includes, for example, highly skilled doctors or lawyers (Krasovec, 2014). In order to be able to move slightly to the margins of the WEIRD-context, this thesis will focus on workers. These workers will be seen as a pluralistic group, embodying different societal positions, based on, for example, their gender, race, and class. Consequently, the research question that will guide this thesis is: How do the plurality of workers in Dutch worker cooperatives experience job (in)security, and how can this inform socialist theory on the democratisation of the workplace regarding the plurality of workers? In order to answer these questions, some sub-questions have been formulated, namely

- How do the workers experience the individual, collective, and classwide job (in)security in the worker cooperative?
- How do the mechanisms of the worker cooperatives influence the experience of job (in)security in the worker cooperatives?
- What role does the societal position of the workers play in their experience?
- How do these experiences differ from the expectations of socialist theory?

Literature review

As stated in the scientific relevance, the literature holds multiple gaps, namely when it comes to the plurality of experiences in worker cooperatives and socialist economies, both in the sense of the intersectionality of the workers and in the sense of the different forms of job (in)security. The goal of this literature review is to build a theoretical framework through which these gaps can be explored. I will start by laying out theory on work, socialist theory, and intersectionality, since this will be the basis of how I look at work, workers, and the organisation of work. Thereafter I will dive

deeper into worker cooperatives and conceptualise job (in)security beyond the neoliberal framework and relate it to worker cooperatives. At last, examples of foreign worker cooperatives will be used to link intersectionality to the frame of worker cooperatives.

Theoretical framework

Theory on work

In capitalist economies, for many, the selling of labour power is the only way to survive. Consequently, labour becomes largely commodified and a resource for capitalists to use for their own benefit (Leigh et al., 2021; Ba', 2020). In this thesis I will move away from this limited and capitalist view on labour, in favour of an ecosocialist feminist view that centres people and by extension the planet, instead of profit.

Whilst Hannah Arendt is generally not seen as a primary ecosocialist or feminist scholar, her definitions of labour and work give a strong base to move beyond the commodification of labour. In her work on the triad of labour, work, and action, Arendt sees labour as an activity that is related to the 'circular production of life' (Popp-Madsen, 2021, p. 139), whereas work is the 'production of a stable milieu to inhabit' (Popp-Madsen, 2021, p. 139). By defining labour as the circular production of life, the reproductive labour done both by humans (mostly women) and nature is included. Work is defined by Arendt not as a personal activity aimed at generating money, neither in the form of salary or profit, but as a broader activity done by an undefined amount of actors that is aimed at the production of a stable, liveable environment. For people in the current capitalist system, part of the production of a stable personal environment may include the generating of salary in order to use it to survive, but Arendt is clear that the definition of work should not be limited to its monetary value.

Both labour and work are seen as collective activities and not as endeavours undertaken by individuals (Popp-Madsen, 2021). Such a definition helps this thesis to move beyond seeing a job and job (in)security as an individual matter and towards seeing them as spaces for solidarity, collective decision-making, and interdependence. These definitions could be interpreted as collectivist, ignoring the individual, but as Arendt shows in the rest of her work, individual creativity and activity have a central role in work and labour. This false binary of collective and individual is also renounced by socialist thinkers, who define work not only as a place for collective production of use-value but also as a place for self-actualisation, saying that work should be rewarding,

significant, give autonomy, and be chosen by or matched to the worker (Elster, 1993).

This perspective on labour and work influences how 'the worker' is seen. Whereas the neoclassical hegemony produced workers as rational economic actors who seek their own benefit (Molefe, 2024), this thesis sees the worker as part of society. Individual aspirations and experiences make them unique but not isolated from society. They depend on society to provide for their needs, both material and non-material, and are affected by the power structures in society. Simultaneously, they can make their own free choices in their environment and consequently contribute to the (re)production of society. Molefe (2024) argues that such a focus on social relations in order to define people, which is central to the ubu-ntu philosophy, better fits the functioning of worker cooperatives. Furthermore, it makes it possible for this thesis to not only explore how workers in worker cooperatives experience individual job (in)security but also a collective and even classwide job (in)security, since it legitimises the workers to reflect on the society that they are part of.
When we free work and the worker from the structures of capitalism, we can organise work more fairly and productively. This is different way of organising work, is what socialist theory explores.

Socialist theory

Socialist theory is a normative field, based on values such as democracy, equality, solidarity, and life support (Leigh et al., 2021). It tries to develop an economic alternative to the capitalist system based on these values and the limits that derive from environmental and social surroundings (Leigh et al., 2021). Socialist theory centres the emancipation of the working classes and the redefinition of the relation between labour, ownership of the means of production, and the products. To this end, socialists have developed models for democratic economies. Economic democracy has different elements, such as 1) regulating market mechanisms and corporate activities, 2) democratic money creation processes, 3) reclaiming the commons, 4) redistributing income and capital assets, 5) supporting social enterprises, such as cooperatives, and 6) diversifying production scales and modes (Johanisova & Wolf, 2012). This thesis will engage with the last two elements.
There are different models for democratic economies since there is not one solution that fits everyone. Moreover, socialist theory is closely tied to socialist practice and the experiences from the ground. Because of the complexities of socialist practices, for example, in relation to the specific temporal, spatial, and relational ties of human lives, the theoretical models have to be continually rethought, contextualised and developed.

Nevertheless, two models have shaped the history of socialist practice. The better known is Soviet Socialism of the post-revolutionary Russia under Lenin, which centres the state. In this model the economy becomes nationalised and governed by the state and the communist party, eroding competition and the market. In practice this means that a hierarchical order in the economy and large monopolistic firms is maintained (Bockman, 2019). This model was followed in other 'communist' countries like Cuba, China, and some Eastern European countries.

The second model is the Yugoslav Socialism, also known as worker self-management socialism, which was developed in Yugoslavia to counter the authoritarian elements of the Soviet Socialism. Other socialist countries, such as Chile, Peru, and Algeria, implemented and developed important parts of the self-management socialism. Eugenio Gonzalez, the leader of the Socialist Party (Partido Socialista Popular) in Chile, described this model of socialism as follows:

"We must not nationalize [estatizar] the economy but socialize it, that is, humanize it.... Socialism does not aspire to reinforce the political power of the state with the management of economic power. Socialism does not try to be a state which plans, regulates, and manages complex process of production and distribution of goods and services.... On the contrary, socialism wants that workers and technicians themselves, through their organizations, plan, regulate, and manage, directly and democratically, economic processes in the interests of themselves, their security, and real and living society" (Bockman, 2019).

According to Lefebvre, this self-management, in Latin America it was known as *autogestion*, meant "knowledge of and control (at the limit) by a group—a company, a locality, an area, or a region—over the conditions governing its existence and its survival through change, through self-management" (Eric, 2009). This form of organisation thus functions at the interlinkage between social relations and spatial embeddedness (Eric, 2009). In practice this form of organisation meant that workers in production were organised in small 'basic organisations of associated labour' (BOAL), which made it possible for workers to decide over the production processes in which they were engaged (Eric, 2009). These BOALs would then come together in bigger workers councils that could decide over the bigger processes of the company in which they worked (Broekmeyer, 1970). These companies would then compete in a market. The goal of this form of organisation was to fulfil the communist ideal of putting the producers as close as possible to the product and eliminate the state and its bureaucracy in the long term (Eric, 2009). As long as the state still existed, it should be

occupied with income redistribution (Bockman, 2019). In practice, we see that the state and mainly the leaders of the communist or socialist parties accumulated more power, and while the lower levels of society were organised democratically (Eric, 2009). From an ecological standpoint, closing the gap between producers and the product is seen as a way to refocus the economy on 'work,' referring to the definition by Arendt of creating a stable environment to inhabit (Popp-Madsen, 2021). Ecological economists have calculated that we only need 30% of the current production capacity to provide a decent living standard to 12 billion people, while current production scales deplete the resources of the earth and pollute the environment, which makes the earth unliveable (Hickel & Sullivan, 2024). The hope is that if we focus more on work, in its meaning of creating a liveable environment, instead of seeing it as a resource to profit from, the production can be scaled down while ensuring both a decent living standard and a liveable planet.

Without wanting to dive much deeper into the history of socialism, it is important to acknowledge these experiences of worker self-management when researching worker cooperatives, since these experiences show how a larger scale of worker self-management can unfold and can thus teach us a lot about the opportunities and challenges of worker self-management. In Algeria, for example, this form of self-management developed spontaneously when the French colonist left the country after the Independence War and workers took over the production in order to sustain their jobs (Hagel, 1976). But this focus on preserving jobs and income also meant that the workers excluded all others that could become competitors, both the capitalists and the ex-combatants and peasants who were looking for jobs (Hagel, 1976). Furthermore, in practice, these companies were less democratic than the socialist ideal. Often, previous foremen and senior workers took over the managerial positions, which reinforced the traditional labour hierarchy (Hagel, 1976). In general, whenever there was a conflict of hierarchical and democratic structures, it was the first that won (Omar, 1988). Social and cultural hierarchies and structures kept dominating these self-managed companies (Hagel, 1976). In Yugoslavia and Chile, old hierarchies stayed dominant in the new structure too. Whilst the assumption was that new forms of organisation would create different thinking of the workers, there seemed to be a lack of attention to how such new thinking would be attained. Furthermore, instead of the intended de-bureaucratization of society, the numerous working councils, associations, and other social units lead to larger and more complex bureaucratic systems (Eric, 2009). In order to think of ways to prevent these outcomes on the large scale, this thesis will look at the mechanisms and dynamics in the worker cooperatives.

Another critique, which is mainly voiced by ecosocialists and ecofeminists, is that if work stays in the form of labour employment – where work is carried out as a commercial activity in exchange for a wage – this can lead to "the loss of autonomy, the commodification and erosion of the institutions of social reproduction and of life, the invisibilisation and subordination of women's work, the continuous expansion of the scale of production and consumption, and, ultimately, environmental deterioration." (Leigh et al., 2021, p. 216). This critique touches on the basis of capitalism that I shortly presented in the introduction, namely that by limiting access to the means of production, people are forced to work for a wage instead of working for the sustaining of the community. The tension between working for a wage and working for sustaining the community will probably also be part of the worker cooperatives in the Netherlands. Because, while they may be able to control their production to a certain extent and steer it towards sustainable production, they still need a wage to consume in the Dutch society. This means they would have to balance the need for a certain wage with the goal of sustaining the community.

Whilst the worker self-management in the Netherlands is far from attaining the scale of Yugoslavia or Chile, these examples can inform us of the pitfalls of self-management, namely the difficulty of breaking old hierarchical structures, bureaucratisation, exclusionary tendencies of the workers and developing democratic thinking. These can then be used to analyse the Dutch context in order to identify possible pitfalls here and to think of ways to do it differently. It is therefore important to inquire about the implications of workplace democracy on personal labour experiences in the Netherlands.

Intersectionality

Social positions can have a significant effect on the personal labour experience of workers (Kim et al., 2025). Women, for example, generally get paid less for the same work (CBS, 2025). There is a plurality of social positions, like gender, age, form of education, migratory background, or class, which can affect work experiences. These social positions or identities are dynamic and can overlap to create distinct and amplified vulnerabilities in relation to institutional structures (Kim et al., 2025). This is what Crenshaw called 'intersectionality.' In my theory on work, I spoke of 'the worker,' which could seem like a singular entity enveloping all workers and reducing them to a single archetype. Crucial to this thesis, however, is seeing workers as a diverse group with a

plurality of identities and experiences in order to overcome the false binary of collective and individuals. Since the facets of this plurality can be endless, the framework of intersectionality is used to operationalize it. In my methods, I will elaborate on this.

The framework of worker cooperatives

Worker cooperatives can be formed through workers coming together and deciding to start a cooperative or through a workers buy-out, where workers buy out the owner of a company in order to govern it themselves. In her extensive study of worker cooperatives Meyers (2022) describes the following mechanisms that characterise worker cooperatives. The most important are that the workers own the means of production and that these means of production are governed democratically. This means that workers make up the collective entity that owns and runs a company, and they share the profits among themselves. There are thus no private, external investor owners, and the collective entity has ultimate authority over any elected board, officers, or managers. The workers are therefore also called members or member-owners of the cooperative, and ownership is available to all workers, although sometimes there is a one-year trial period. The power in cooperatives is distributed equally through the one-person-one vote principle. Furthermore, the workers get paid regular wages by the cooperative. The specifics of how the profits are shared and how the cooperative is governed differ, the workers can generally decide themselves what method of democratic control is used (representative, participatory, consensus, majority rule, or two-thirds rule). Most cooperatives use hybrid models, with some elected or appointed committees that get the mandate to make certain decisions but are still accountable to the whole membership. Moreover, the workers can, for example, decide that the general assembly of the membership can veto the decisions made by the board or certain committees. The general rules, practices, and goals of the cooperative are often laid down in bylaws and policy manuals, but the workers still have significant autonomy in governing the cooperative. In most cases, individual autonomy of the workers is well protected too, for example, by workers being able to decide about their own work times. Meyers summarises these different aspects by saying, "I had been highly impressed by what I saw as the grocery's ability to combine individual autonomy, organizational democracy, and good, regular paychecks." (2022, p. 3). Membership in a worker cooperative does not only come with freedom but also with certain responsibilities. Although not everyone has to be equally engaged, some people have to take up tasks like taking minutes or doing committee work. There are different factors that can motivate workers to take on these tasks, they can, for example, be paid, it can add variety to their work, it can give status or enhancement, it can give more direct control over working conditions, and there can be a sense of collective obligation (Meyers, 2022). Historically, there are some problems that many worker cooperatives run into, namely: inefficient and ineffective communication,

subordination of financial stability and profitability to social justice values, lack of accountability, and/or monopolisation by members of socially privileged groups. In this thesis I will mainly look into the last problem. Next to these problems, Meyers names three inherent tensions that worker cooperatives face in capitalist economies. First, the double role of being both an owner and a worker can lead to opposing interests (preserving working capital versus rewarding and empowering workers). Second, having to compete against non-democratic businesses can mean that the workers have to make hard choices when it comes to their social empowerment, for example, putting coordination of authority and delegation before the democratic idea of self-government. Last, the different market values of the knowledge and skill of the members can conflict with the equity principle of the cooperative. These tensions can bring nuance to the mechanisms described here that characterise worker cooperatives, since they help to explain why they do not always function as intended.

Worker cooperatives do not have a monopoly on these characteristics of democratic governance and collective ownership. There are many other worker groups, mainly in the Global South, which work in a cooperative way but are not recognised as worker cooperatives by either their country's legislation or the International Cooperative Alliance (Molefe, 2024). This is mostly due to a Eurocentric frame on worker cooperatives (Molefe, 2024). Furthermore, whilst European law makes a clear distinction between what is and what is not recognised as a worker cooperative, characteristics such as a democratic governance of the means of production or financial participation in business capital are not exclusive to worker cooperatives (Halbertsma et al., 2024). Important distinctions between different forms of democratic and financial governance in the Dutch context will be presented in Table 1. Only worker cooperatives will be the subject of this thesis.

Table 1

Democratic and financial governance of organisations in the Dutch context

Employee participation (*Medewerkerparticipatie*) [a]	– Employees can get or purchase shares or certificates for shares – Often gives right to vote at General Meeting of Shareholders – Often accessible for all employees, not just managers – Often includes other policies, such as regular updates or trainings about the

	shares
Sharing of profit (*Winstdeling*) [a]	– Some part of the profit is shared with the employees
Teamwork (*Zelfsturende teams*) [b]	– Individual teams can discuss new solutions, propose changes in the organisation, make (limited) decisions on the method of work
B-certified corporations [d]	– 'For-profit corporations beneficial to society' – Companies reach for a B Corp certificate to differentiate themselves, to protect their mission and to measure and improve their social and environmental performance/impact – B Corp certification provides a formal framework that can help management make decisions that address environmental and social concerns in a systematic way
Stewardowned firms [c]	– Control over firm is hold by stewards – Stewards have no entitlement to the business's profit – Profit is seen as a means to achieve the organisation's purpose – Often pursue a social or environmental purpose
Foundation (Stichting) [e]	– 'Belongs' to nobody but itself – Has a certain mission, which is decided upon at its founding
Non-profit company [c]	– Barred from distributing their net earnings, to individuals who exercise

	control over it, such as members, directors or trustees
State enterprise [f]	– Owned by a state – Can employ labour and appropriate surplus – Surplus often funds public benefit
Collective of volunteers	– Means of production in the hand of the collective – The collective is governed by the volunteers – Work is (mostly) unpaid and on voluntary bases
Worker cooperative [a]	– Workers own the means of production, either through individual shares or through collective ownership – The cooperative is governed by the workers, for example through elected representatives, committees and general meetings – One person-one vote principle – Workers decide what to do with the profit – Generally, the is a lot of individual autonomy

[a]Halbertsma et al., 2024; [b]Krasovec; [c]Sanders & Neitzel, 2025; [d]Lacmanovic & Milec (2018); [e]Reijnen, 2021; [f]Gibson-Graham, 2006

Worker cooperatives allow us to study democratic and socialist alternatives to capitalist firms and how these act in the face of different societal positions of workers. This thesis explores how these intersecting social positions interact with the democratic structure of the worker cooperatives through the case of job (in)security.

Conceptualisation of job (in)security

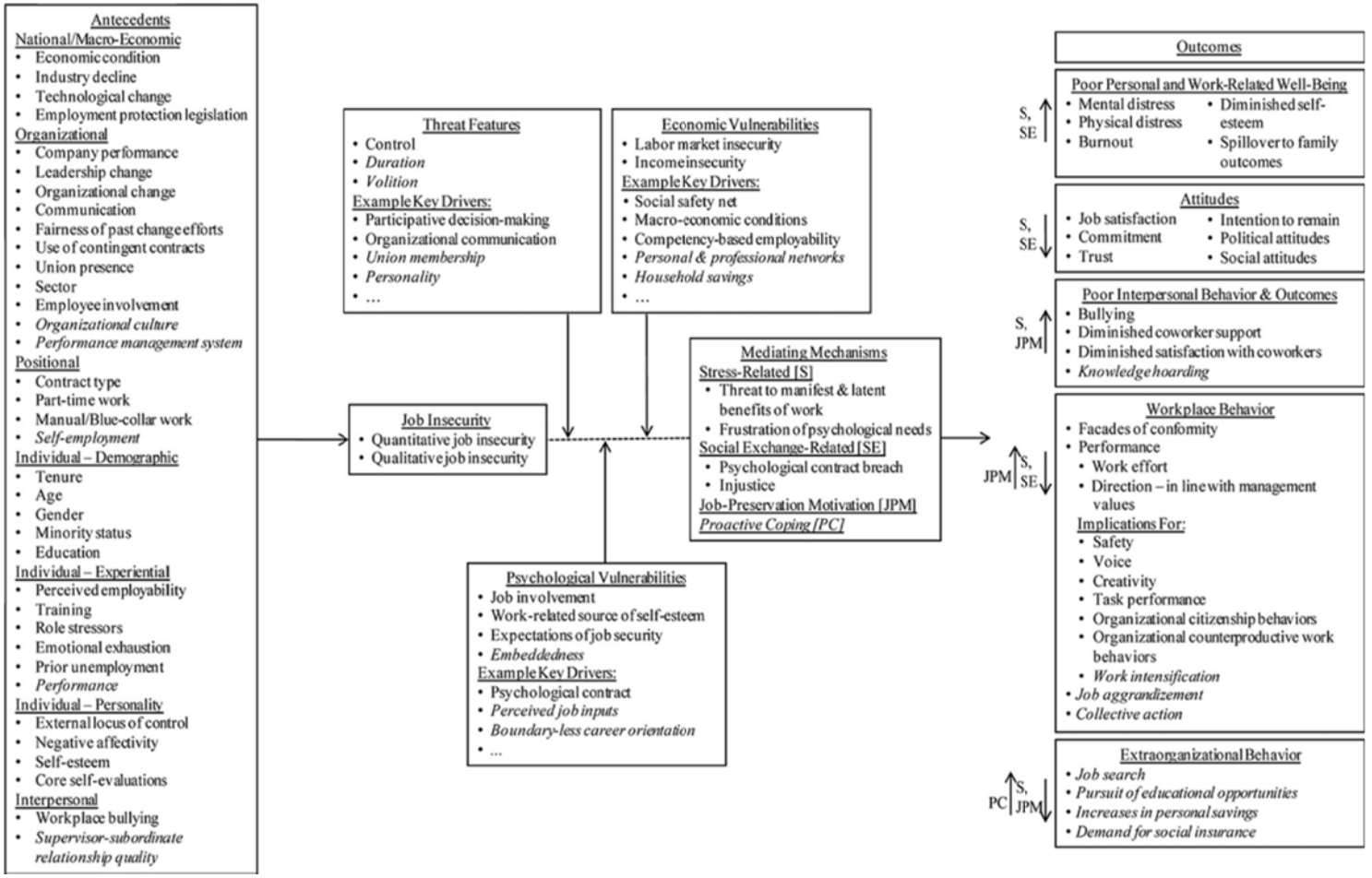
Although there is no single conceptualisation of job (in)security, Shoss (2017) has summarised the most important conceptualisations in her review. Job security is experienced by people who perceive

the stability and continuity of their job as unthreatened. Since it relies on the perception of employees, it is a subjective experience (Shoss, 2017). Although environmental conditions, such as the economic situation, may create threats, individual characteristics influence vigilance to the threats (Shoss, 2017). This makes an actor-centred approach important when studying job (in)security. Shoss has made a framework that lays out the mechanisms that can lead to job insecurity (antecedents), moderating effects on job insecurity (threat features, economic vulnerabilities & psychological vulnerabilities), mediating mechanisms, and outcomes of job insecurity (see figure 2). The framework shows the complex nature of job (in)security, the words in italics are suggestions for future research made by Shoss.

Although this framework includes antecedents on different scales, job (in)security is seen as an individual experience that only relates to the threat of the individual job of a person. Following my theoretical framework, I will expand the job (in)security framework with a collective and classwide experience of job (in)security. Job (in)security will be seen as a scale from *classwide job (in)security*, which is based on the role of job insecurity in capitalism, to *collective job (in)security*, which includes job security in a limited environment such as a business or cooperative, to *individual job (in)security*, which is about the effects of job insecurity on individuals (see figure 3). The concept of intersectionality is tied to all these levels.

Figure 2

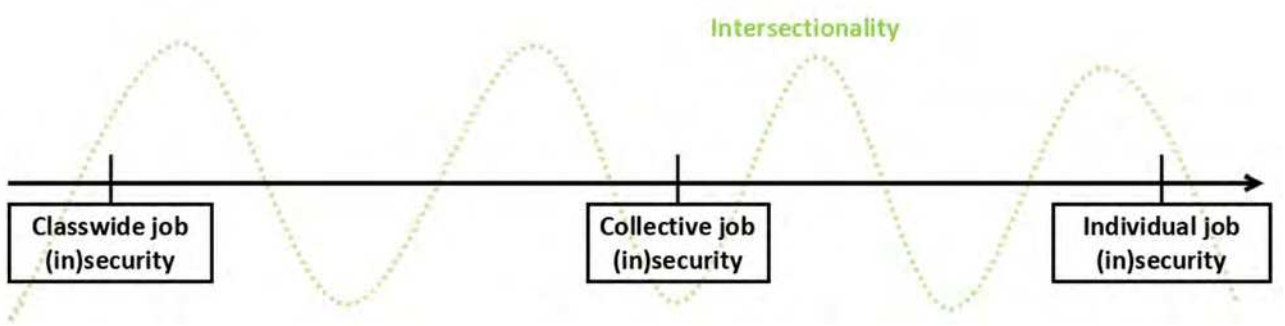
Conceptual Model of Antecedents and Outcomes of Job Insecurity by Shoss (2017)


Antecedents
National/Macro-Economic
• Economic condition
• Industry decline
• Technological change
• Employment protection legislation
Organizational
• Company performance
• Leadership change
• Organizational change
• Communication
• Fairness of past change efforts
• Use of contingent contracts
• Union presence
• Sector
• Employee involvement
• Organizational culture
• Performance management system
Positional
• Contract type
• Part-time work
• Manual/Blue-collar work
• Self-employment
Individual – Demographic
• Tenure
• Age
• Gender
• Minority status
• Education
Individual – Experiential
• Perceived employability
• Training
• Role stressors
• Emotional exhaustion
• Prior unemployment
• Performance
Individual – Personality
• External locus of control
• Negative affectivity
• Self-esteem
• Core self-evaluations
Interpersonal
• Workplace bullying
• Supervisor-subordinate relationship quality
Threat Features
• Control
• Duration
• Volition
Example Key Drivers:
• Participative decision-making
• Organizational communication
• Union membership
• Personality
• …
Economic Vulnerabilities
• Labor market insecurity
• Income insecurity
Example Key Drivers:
• Social safety net
• Macro-economic conditions
• Competency-based employability
• Personal & professional networks
• Household savings
• …
Job Insecurity
• Quantitative job insecurity
• Qualitative job insecurity
Psychological Vulnerabilities
• Job involvement
• Work-related source of self-esteem
• Expectations of job security
• Embeddedness
Example Key Drivers:
• Psychological contract
• Perceived job inputs
• Boundary-less career orientation
• ...
Mediating Mechanisms
Stress-Related [S]
• Threat to manifest & latent benefits of work
• Frustration of psychological needs
Social Exchange-Related [SE]
• Psychological contract breach
• Injustice
Job-Preservation Motivation [JPM]
Proactive Coping [PC]
Outcomes
S, SE
Poor Personal and Work-Related Well-Being
• Mental distress
• Physical distress
• Burnout
• Diminished self-esteem
• Spillover to family outcomes
S, SE
Attitudes
• Job satisfaction
• Commitment
• Trust
• Intention to remain
• Political attitudes
• Social attitudes
S, JPM
Poor Interpersonal Behavior & Outcomes
• Bullying
• Diminished coworker support
• Diminished satisfaction with coworkers
• Knowledge hoarding
JPM
S, SE
Workplace Behavior
• Facades of conformity
• Performance
• Work effort
• Direction – in line with management values
Implications For:
• Safety
• Voice
• Creativity
• Task performance
• Organizational citizenship behaviors
• Organizational counterproductive work behaviors
• Work intensification
• Job aggrandizement
• Collective action
PC
S, JPM
Extraorganizational Behavior
• Job search
• Pursuit of educational opportunities
• Increases in personal savings
• Demand for social insurance

Note. *Adapted from "Job Insecurity: An Integrative Review and Agenda for Future Research", by M.* K. Shoss, 2017, *Journal of Management, 43*(6), p. 1913. https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206317691574

Figure 3

The scale of job (in)security



Note. Own figure.

Individual level

Most research about job (in)security focuses on individual job (in)security (Shoss, 2017). As can be seen in figure 2, many factors play into individual job (in)security. National and macroeconomic factors such as technological change, employment protection legislation, and globalisation can have a direct impact on the security of individual jobs (De Beer, 2011). Having a job and a contract gives increasingly little security under these circumstances (De Beer, 2011). Furthermore, Shoss points out organisational factors, such as the performance of the company and employee involvement, and positional factors, like the contract type, that impact job insecurity. Moreover, traits of the individual worker can play a role. As described earlier, the Dutch 'labour-market' is discriminatory, which means that gender, education, age, and migratory background influence who gets hired and who gets fired (Thijssen et al., 2019).

Both the causes and outcomes of experiencing job insecurity are numerous. Job insecurity can, for example, lead to poor personal and work-related well-being, poor interpersonal and workplace behaviour and alienation from the work, whereas job security can lead to more work engagement (Archibald, 2009; Barkhordian, 2025). Job insecurity does not only have negative consequences in itself but also worsens the effects of other working conditions (Crowley & Hodson, 2014). High workload and constant assessment in combination with job insecurity can impact the individual well-being of workers and the coworker relations and support (Crowley & Hodson, 2014). Consequently,

the feeling of job insecurity does not only impact an individual but is in many ways connected to the surrounding collective.

Collective level

The collective level of job insecurity describes whether a collective feels that their jobs are secure. This is important because having collective job security can improve the bargaining power of the workers. Thereby, collective job insecurity can worsen other working conditions because the workers don't have the bargaining power to fight for better working conditions (Emmenegger, 2015). In conventional firms, hiring and firing decisions lie in the hands of a small group of managers and employers, who often lay off workers when it is profitable (Malleson, 2025). The organisational structure, which influences individual job (in)security, does thus impact the collective job (in)security.

Furthermore, even though there may be little research on collective job (in)security, research does show in other situations that people can amplify each other's behaviours and attitudes if they have the same grievances (Tara & Brian, 2024). If an individual in a company may experience job insecurity and consequently show more risky behaviour, this behaviour may be amplified and encouraged by others if they all feel insecure. Shoss shows in her review that stress, job-preservation motivation, and social exchange-related mechanisms, like the feeling of being a victim of injustice, mediate individual job (in)security. Given the influence of peers on people's attitudes, I find it plausible that collective job (in)security also plays a mediating role. Moreover, Shoss already names that control over the job moderates job insecurity, and thus collective job security does so too. Furthermore, previous research has shown that collective efficacy, the belief that a collective can attain an objective through its capabilities, resources, and constraints, moderates the effect of perceived job insecurity on someone's well-being (Sora et al., 2019). I would add to this that collective job security and bargaining power do not only moderate individual job insecurity but also change the factors that influence individual job insecurity, such as contract types and employee involvement. Collective job (in)security is not only the sum of individual job (in)security but also deeply ingrained in the organisational structure of a company and can influence much more than individual outcomes.

Classwide level

Classwide job (in)security connects the individual and collective with the broader society. Employment protections can protect major parts of society. Dutch employees are relatively well protected, compared to other countries, but through the dominance of neoliberalism, there is a global trend to diminish worker and employment

protection in favour of growth and profit (Crowley & Hodson, 2014; Utrecht Nieuws, 2022). National unemployment numbers often have an important influence on political decision-making, seemingly, people are sensitive to a broad sense of insecurity (Shoss et al., 2023). This shows that the classwide feeling does not always have to move through the individual to have an effect, otherwise said, it is not only because the uncertainty touches many individuals that it has an effect. Even when some individuals are not impacted, they can still act differently. What seems to be the biggest factor in classwide insecurity is the existence of a so-called 'reserve army of workers' who are desperate for jobs and will accept worse working conditions, this is known as the threat of more desperate workers. The existence of these workers can be used as a threat against workers. This reserve army mainly consists of marginalised groups, such as migrants, women, or less educated people, who live a precarious life (Guérin, 2014). By marginalising certain groups because of certain identities, this reserve army can be maintained. The marginalisation of groups thus is a threat to all workers. Furthermore, the intersection of the worker identity with other identities, like migratory background or gender, plays a role in this threat. Therefore, it is important to discuss intersectionality when debating job (in)security. Whilst Shoss classifies demographic traits as individual, they are part of a bigger pattern and should thus not be seen in isolation.

Job (in)security exists in a web of factors and outcomes. Whilst job insecurity can directly impact the individual, it also has a collective and a classwide dimension, which are not only the sum of individual experiences but also act in unique patters.

Worker cooperatives and job security

Job security plays an important role in the forming and objectives of worker cooperatives. Job security and the sustaining of jobs is one of the main reasons for the creation of worker cooperatives and worker buy-outs (Bretos et al., 2025; Endo, 2025; Malleson, 2013).

In the daily decision-making of worker cooperatives, it also plays a role. Labour costs are often treated as constant costs, and flexibility is searched in other areas, which means that in times of downturn, firing workers is not an option that is put on the table (Malleson, 2013). Furthermore, stable employment is an objective for some worker cooperatives, instead of high profits or salaries (Michie et al., 2017). In times of economic hardship, worker cooperatives are therefore more likely to lower the salaries rather than to lay off people (Michie et al., 2017). This way, collective job security can be maintained.

That the goals of worker cooperatives go further than individual job security for the members can be seen in the Italian Cooperativa Ceramiche d'Imola, where workers speak of creating job security for future generations through their worker cooperative (Corcoran & Wilson, 2010). The ambitions in worker cooperatives generally do not follow the neoclassical model of increasing individual benefits (Molefe, 2024). In contrast, Molefe sees that the ubu-ntu philosophy of personhood, which proposes that someone becomes a person through their relations with others (both human and non-human, in the past, present, and future), comes closer to understanding and developing worker cooperatives, since worker cooperatives are very relational. The solidarity in worker cooperatives does not only seem to be based on reciprocity: "Maybe, conversely, I'm going to be helped as well, [w]hen I become weak" (Endo, 2025, p. 17), but equally on collective empowerment. These worker cooperatives embody resistance against the commodification and alienation of labour and the protection against the moral hazard of managers (Endo, 2025; Michie et al., 2017; Oseen, 2016). Workers can decide to refuse certain tasks and decide with whom to work together (Michie et al., 2017). In current times when (large) corporations are working together with genocidal forces, the power to boycott certain tasks or groups can be very empowering (Márquez & de Leeuw, 2025). Control over your job is an important buffer for perceived job (in)security (Shoss, 2017).

Although job security seems to be very prevalent in worker cooperatives, it may not be inherent to all worker cooperatives. Crucial for job security in the context of worker cooperatives is that the workers can decide about related themes such as pay and the hiring and firing of people (Michie et al., 2017; Oseen, 2016). Nevertheless, the workers need to learn how to successfully govern the cooperative. Pressures from the capitalist system and hegemonic rulings of how to best operate a company may prevent workers from taking the most sustainable decisions (Bretos, 2025; Endo, 2025; Oseen, 2016). Because people have been educated and socialised in a capitalist system, Oseen and Bretos highlight the importance of teaching the workers to think differently. One of the workers that Oseen interviewed said: "It's easier to recover the business than the person." (p. 227).

From this brief overview, it seems that worker cooperatives are very beneficial for the job security of the workers. But these accounts generally seem to gloss over what exactly job security means for the workers, how they experience it, and how different identities can influence this experience.

Intersectionality and job (in)security

Intersectionality refers to the dynamic and overlapping identities that people can have, which, in

relation to each other and institutional structures, produce distinct and amplified vulnerabilities (Kim et al., 2025). Intersectionality can thereby give an insight into intersecting structural inequalities (Kim et al., 2025). Furthermore, people with intersecting marginalised identities often are bound to live in survival mode, facing stigma, lost opportunities, and being labelled as difficult (Phan et al., 2025). This leads to poorer mental and physical well-being, which can be intensified by behaviours to conform to dominant expectations (Phan et al., 2025). When talking about job (in)security, we can see that it is experienced differently by different groups. For certain groups – for example migrants, women, disabled people, and at the intersection of these positions – job insecurity is intensified (Kim et al., 2025). Different identities and their intersection also influence what is needed for well-being and what work-life looks like (Kossek et al., 2023; Misra, 2021). For some, salary is a priority since it is needed to survive. For others, who, for example, have a lot of care tasks outside of work, working hours are more important (Kim et al., 2025). Gendered caregiving and parenting roles, which are still prevalent in the Netherlands, can structure work possibilities and vulnerabilities (Kim et al., 2025; CBS, 2024). Immigration status can lead to legal precarity because most residence permits have requirements about employments, for example (Kim et al., 2025; Immigratie- en Naturalisatiedinst, n.d.). Since worker cooperatives are very relational and some may prefer stability in the people who work there, uncertainty about whether someone stays in the country may be a reason to exclude them. Furthermore, the Dutch labour market is discriminatory, people with a migrant background – in the Netherlands, there is little data about race, instead migrant background is measured – are more often unemployed, work more often in the lower parts of the labour market, and have a lower income (Thijssen et al., 2019). Furthermore, education plays a key role in the labour market. Getting fewer chances during your education can lead to having more difficulty finding (secure) work (SER, 2021). A migration background or parents with a lower income can decrease chances in education and thereby influence someone's chances to find (secure) work (SER, 2021; Inspectie van Onderwijs, 2021). Precarity can thus be about national membership, identity, family, and gender (Ferguson & Li, 2018). Although worker cooperatives generally have a positive impact on job security, this effect is limited when structural inequalities are replicated (Kaswan, 2019; Oseen, 2016). In order to understand what worker cooperatives can offer workers in terms of job security, it is crucial to include the different positions of these workers.

Worker cooperatives and intersectionality

As said above, when structural inequalities are replicated in worker cooperatives, their positive impacts on job security get limited. There does thus not seem to be inherent mechanisms in worker cooperatives that guarantee the structural inequalities are resolved. Worker cooperatives around the world have consequently developed their own ways to counter structural inequalities. Known examples of worker cooperatives that consider the social positions of their workers are Genc Isi (n.d.) in Turkey, Ausolan (CECOP, 2020) and Abarka (n.d.) in Spain, SOLEA (CECOP, 2019a) in the Czech Republic, Chernomorka Cooperative (CECOP, 2019b) in Bulgaria, Tricido Bergamo (n.d.) in Italy, SEWA (2022) in India, No Barriers Malta (n.d.) in Malta, Soglasnik (CECOP, 2021) in Slovenia, Blue Tin (n.d.), Opportunity Threads (n.d.) and One World Natural (Meyer, 2022) in the US. Embracing intersectionality touches upon the working conditions, the internal processes, and the engagement with the community in which the cooperative is embedded.

Efforts to improve working conditions include providing training and education to improve the position of the workers on the 'labour market' (Abarka, Blue Tin, One World Natural); providing access to health care and social services (Blue Tin) and providing childcare (Blue Tin, Ausolan, SEWA). By hiring disadvantaged groups or people, the worker cooperatives can give these people working conditions they otherwise would not have. Abarka is solely run by migrants and refugees and aims to give refugees and migrants access to regularised jobs and help them out of the informal economy. Other worker cooperatives focus on women (Genc Isi, Blue Tin & Ausolan), people with disabilities (SOLEA & Chernomorka Cooperative), trans- and queer-people (Blue Tin), and refugees and immigrants (Tricido Bergamo & Blue Tin).

Internal processes are an important factor in creating a supportive and friendly environment for all the workers. Communication is crucial in creating such an environment. Tricilo Bergamo and No Barriers Malta organise trainings on dialogue and intercultural encounters in order to enhance a supportive work environment. Moreover, openness to different levels of engagement and the equal valuing of different skills and interests are important to create equality in complex situations, as One World Natural showed (Meyer, 2022). Formalized policies and processes to counteract implicit biases can be very beneficial (Meyer, 2022). These biases often colour who is seen as good leaders or board members and thereby stop marginalised people from being elected or presenting themselves as candidates. Next to counteracting these biases, the One World Natural cooperative implemented a decentralised structure, which decreased the threshold for marginalised people to engage and gain power. Whilst this might not have been a very conscious choice, it is very effective.

Lastly, the vulnerabilities of workers do not stop at the exit of the worker cooperative but are present

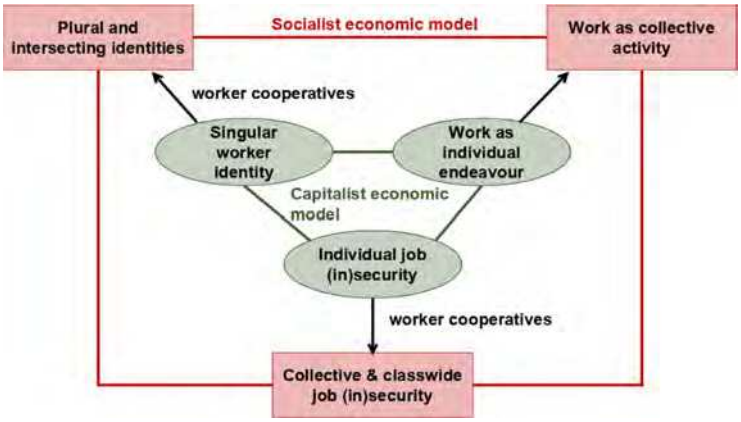
in their day-to-day life. The Chernomorka Cooperative lobbied in their municipality to remove obstacles in public spaces because these hindered their disabled workers from going to work independently. An important aspect of the lived experience of migrants is their home country, consequently Abarka and Opportunity Threads send part of their profit to their home countries. Part of the cooperative values is to incorporate the social and natural environment in their work, for example, by funding community projects (No Barriers Malta & Soglasnik) or by minimising waste and the use of environmentally harmful products (Blue Tin). The efforts of the worker cooperatives are also discursive. By having ownership over their work, the migrants of the worker cooperative Abarka take ownership over their own narrative. In summary, embracing diversity in worker cooperatives can include many factors, such as ensuring a sensitive hiring policy, providing services, creating a supportive and friendly environment internally, and engaging with the social and natural environment of the worker cooperative.

Analytical framework

In this literature review, I build a framework of work, workers identities, and job security that moves beyond a capitalist and individualised view to include the socialists' values of democracy, equality, solidarity, and life support (see figure 4).

Figure 4

The analytical framework



Note. Own figure.

Work is no longer seen as an individual endeavour and need, but as a collective activity to create a liveable environment. Workers are not regarded as individuals who, in their role of workers only carry the identity of 'worker,' but as complex humans that carry multiple identities. And lastly, job security is not seen as an individual experience or situation but as a collective and classwide

phenomenon. The democratization of the workspace is a way for socialist theorists to go beyond the individualised view. This can take the form of worker cooperatives. As was shown here, the mechanisms and philosophy of the worker cooperatives can enable them to achieve the socialist ideals. It can thus be expected that the Dutch worker cooperatives produce high levels of individual, collective, and classwide job security, for example, by making labour a constant cost and being able to decide together about hiring and firing people. One of the major challenges for worker cooperatives is the pressure of the capitalist economy around them, which not only disfavours their business form but is also ingrained in the thinking of people, which makes their transition to being a cooperator more difficult. The ability of Dutch worker cooperatives to ensure job security might therefore be dependent on how much pressure they face, whether their workers already had jobs that were more aimed towards sustaining life instead of making profits and whether they can protect themselves, for example, by working together with more social actors, like the government. Nevertheless, for worker cooperatives to be able to also benefit people who are discriminated against by society, the cooperatives have to be aware of the structural inequalities in our societies and act against them. The Dutch labour market is discriminatory in many different ways. It remains to be seen if the cooperatives have found ways to counter this discrimination in their processes.

To conclude, this literature review aimed to give an overview of socialist theory on work, workers, and the organisation of work. This enabled me to move beyond an individualised and capitalist view on work. The worker cooperatives and the experience of job security inside these cooperatives were used as cases to explore the claims of socialist theory as a democratic, equal, and life-supporting economic model. The expectations are that the worker cooperatives produce individual, collective, and classwide job security, but by empirically studying the worker cooperatives, I explore what tensions arise and what might be blind spots of the theory, which then enables us to improve the socialist theory.

Methods

Since the objective of this research is to study the experience of people, I used an interpretative qualitative approach (Bretos et al., 2025). This approach centres a constructivist perspective on the social reality and consequently focuses on the meanings and understanding of social actors of events. Furthermore, it gives room for different meanings held by different people, which fit the focus on intersectionality of this thesis (Bretos et al., 2025).

This approach was combined with grounded theory methods, as developed by Kathy Charmaz. This method places experiences in the social context (Charmaz, 2017). In this way, the experiences of the workers do not stand alone but are embedded in the intersectional social reality. Charmaz (2024) emphasises that grounded theory consists of an inductive and iterative inquiry that goes back and forth between retrieving the data and the analysis. Matching the grounded theory methods, I used an exploratory research design (Stebbins, 2001). Worker cooperatives in the Netherlands and the intersectional experience of job (in)security have not yet been extensively studied, which makes an exploratory approach appropriate. The goal is not to find outcomes that can be used to predict certain behaviour, but to understand a group through direct empirical observation (Stebbins, 2001).

Case selection

There are several dozen worker cooperatives in the Netherlands. The worker cooperatives that only employ consultants, doctors, and lawyers were excluded from this research. The studying of these professions does not align with the aim of this thesis, namely, to contribute to the emancipation of the working class. This leaves us with around two dozen worker cooperatives that were approached for this thesis. Because this research population is small, all worker cooperatives were contacted about whether they are willing to participate in this research. During the thesis, I tried to expand the research population through snowball sampling, but the interviewees didn't know about additional worker cooperatives (Clark et al., 2021). Instead, I expanded my research population through supplementary desk research and by speaking to actors that work with cooperatives, such as the Commons Network. Because few people were willing to talk to me, I expanded my population to include De Loods, which is an architect cooperative. It does not only employ architects, who could maybe not be seen as workers because of their status and pay, but also 'drawers' and secretaries. Therefore, I decided to include them while still excluding some cooperatives that solely employ lawyers, for example. Since only very few workers were willing or able to speak to me, I was not able to invite specific workers according to a profile to enhance the diversity in my sample. I listed the cooperatives that did participate in Table 2. Although there was some diversity on the basis of gender, education level, and income, I was not able to focus on people at the margins of the WEIRD-context. All the interviewees were white Dutch citizens, for example.

Table 2

The worker cooperatives that participated in this research

Name of worker cooperative	Participation in this thesis
Helpgewoon	Yes
De Loods	Yes
ReNieuw West	Yes
Kringloop Kampen	No
Centroide	No
Thuiszorg Aalten	No
Café de Plak	No
De Schone Coöperatie	No
Schoon & Sociaal	No

Note. Own table.

Data retrieval and analysis

In-depth semi-structured interviews were held with workers from worker cooperatives in the Netherlands. The interviews were held in Dutch, since this is the mother tongue of the participants. All the quotes I use in my results are my own translation of the words of participants. The interviews were guided by an interview guide that was prepared in advance (see Appendix 1). This interview guide featured main questions, which were broader questions that invited the participants to begin telling their stories. These open questions were followed with more concrete questions that either dived into something the participant mentioned or were prepared beforehand and followed from the theory. Following the iterative nature of grounded theory, this guide was continuously updated according to the outcomes of the data analysis and the learnings about my positionality. Whilst in the first interviews I followed the guide more strictly, in the later interviews I focused more on diving into things the participants said and having a more natural conversation in order to make the participants feel at ease. After transcribing the first two interviews, the interview guide was revised to include, for example, more questions that ask for specific examples. In my logbook, I recorded the changes I made to my interview guide, my reflections after the interviews, the transcribing, and the coding. These notes helped to improve the interview guide. The goal of these changes is to be able to further develop the concepts and theories that I distilled from earlier interviews.

One of the difficulties of this research was to find enough participants. Most workers in the cooperatives said that they were too busy to speak to me. In order to still get some more general

data, I decided to make a survey. This survey was less in-depth than the interviews and focused specifically on questions around job (in)security. The survey consisted of 16 (see Appendix 3). The choices I presented in the multiple-choice questions came out of the interviews or the literature. The goal of the survey was not to get representative or statistical data, but to give a more accessible option for workers to share their experience with me. The survey was completed by more respondents (22) than the interviews (8), which allowed me to put the interview answers into their context a little. Mainly because I was able to compare the answers or larger trends in the interviews with the trends in the responses of the survey.

Triangulation

Whilst the interviews focused on the personal experiences of the workers, they also showed that the worker cooperatives function in a wider net of actors. In order to explore and verify the claims that the workers made about these actors, I contacted the municipality of Zutphen and the umbrella organisation Helpgewoon Nederland. The questions that I prepared for them are listed in Appendix 2. I asked them whether they had some public documents that they could share. These documents, which I have listed in table 4, then became part of my analysis. Furthermore, I searched for other documents by the municipality of Zutphen that discussed worker cooperatives and Helpgewoon (see table 4).

For my conversation with Helpgewoon Nederland, I focused on clarifying some things I heard in the interviews and some more general questions about the functioning of Helpgewoon Nederland. Furthermore, I used a podcast in which Joke van de Schoor, who is the founder of Helpgewoon, thoroughly talks about worker cooperatives in the Netherlands (see table 4). This helped me to further understand how the umbrella organisation of Helpgewoon functions. One of the participants sent me a PowerPoint presentation that they got at their first training and gives an overview of Helpgewoon. I added this to my analysis (see table 4). Similarly, participants of De Loods send me the introduction manual they give to their new members and a presentation they held to present their cooperative (see table 4). The last one became part of my supplementary research material. These documents can be found in Archive.

These supplementary sources of data helped to create a sharper picture of the field in which worker cooperatives operate and thereby offered a source for triangulation, which helps to verify the data from multiple angles and thereby make it stronger. They also offered a way to saturate the research

theoretically. Whilst interviewing the workers, knowledge gaps remained, for example, about the exact financing of the cooperative. Although they could say that they earned more than others and how this made them feel, they could not explain in detail how the pay was organised, either because it wasn't their task to oversee the finances or because it was organised more centrally. This was the case for Helpgewoon Nederland. By interviewing a cooperative coach from Helpgewoon Nederland, these questions could be cleared up. During my analysis, I also used some scientific literature that seemed relevant to put the findings into context. The goal of the triangulation was to verify some claims with multiple sources and to lay out the context in which the cooperatives operate.

Transcribing and coding

In order to familiarise myself immediately with the data and thereby be able to quickly reflect on it, I transcribed most of the interviews by hand shortly after conducting the interview. This allowed me to continuously update the interview guide between the interviews and to consciously choose which personal information to exclude from the transcript in order to anonymise the data. For later interviews updating the guide was less important and happened more naturally. Furthermore, I had less time around these interviews, which led to the decision to transcribe the last three interviews through the transcribing tool in Word. This tool makes many mistakes, which made it important to quickly code the data, since this enabled me to rely on my memory if such a mistake made the written data harder to decipher.

The data analysis followed the grounded theory method of coding, which entails that in order to go from the experiences to building theory, the data was analysed using indicators, concepts, and categories (Clark et al., 2021). In order to do so, I coded the data multiple times, moving from codes that were very close to the text to concepts and broader theory.

Since my sample size is small, I have not combined the categories into substantive theory. Instead, I send a summary of my results to my social partners, de Coöperatie expert and CECOP, and some people I encountered during my research and who have experience with cooperatives in the Netherlands, namely Frances from Helpgewoon, Brandon from ReNieuw West, and Jesse Geurtsen from Komovo, who is experienced in designing democratic community processes. I asked them to reflect on this summary, which allowed me to test my categories and to get inspiration for how my outcomes could be useful for others.

The goal of the retrieval and analysis of the data was to develop concepts and theories step by step.

By going back and forth between retrieving and analysing the data, I built codes and concepts on top of earlier findings, which gave a clear overview at the end.

Positionality & Ethics

Grounded theory emphasises the bond between the researcher and the researched, a short reflection on my positionality as a researcher, therefore, seems appropriate (Charmaz, 2017). In the first place, I am an activist, which means that my choices are often value-driven and aimed at improving human and non-human lives and challenging power structures. Delmestri (2023) argues that scientists are activists 'by design' because the choices they make during the research process are inherently value driven. Although the intertwining of politics and science may be omnipresent in research, it seems necessary to specify how I dealt with the overlap between being a student and an activist.

First, this double position influences the act of knowledge extraction that is part of most research. Whilst knowledge extraction may not be prevented completely, since I did not co-create this research with the participants, my position as an activist may help me to transform the academic knowledge that comes out of this research into knowledge that can be used politically to change certain power structures that the participants struggle with. Of course, before I used the stories of the interviewees, I asked for informed consent. By using the outcomes partly for the goals named by the participants, I tried to limit the extractive nature of the process. The participants said that they would like more people and institutions to know about worker cooperatives. Institutions like banks form now form an obstacle for worker cooperatives because they are structured differently and do not have a director, for example. Furthermore, they asked me to contact FNV about this topic. Being an activist who admires worker cooperatives in their work and how they could contribute to a fairer world, I had to stay aware of my biases and not only focus on the positive sides of the cooperatives. In the interviews, this could be a challenge. When I asked more critical questions, the interviewees would sometimes want to defend the cooperative. Overall, I had the experience that people would come up with the frustrations themselves if I simply asked more concrete questions about the cooperative. In my analysis I then had to try to balance the overwhelming positive experiences with the specific critiques. Using the frame of 'how can this research improve the theory' helped me in finding this balance and being more critical than I was initially.

Furthermore, discussions on work in the Netherlands are and have been male-dominated (Gielen & Malkaoui, 2023). In the interviews, I wanted to prevent the participants from feeling that they and

their experiences had to fit into this pattern and instead give them the room to elaborate on their own views. To be able to do the interview on the terms of the interviewee, I did the interviews at a location and time of their choosing, either physically or online. My privileged position as a white master-student might have constrained the interviewees in their openness because I cannot directly relate to their stories. Through active listening and self-reflection, I hoped to create space in the interview for an open conversation and deeper insights. This research was not only an iterative process but also a learning process in which I explored how my positionality shaped the interactions with the participants. In the discussion at the end of the thesis, I reflect on this process.

Operationalisation

This research was guided by the analytical framework that is presented in table 3. Individual, collective, and class-wide job (in)security were explored through the experience of and the outcomes for the workers and in relation to the mechanisms of worker cooperatives. Although intersectionality is presented as a separate concept, it flows through and informs all parts of job (in)security.

The operationalisation of the experience of job security mainly flowed out of Shoss' description of job (in)security. Shoss presents multiple definitions of job (in)security, highlighting different aspects like stability, continuity, threats, vigilance to threats, and control over the job. In order to give room to all these different aspects, they were included in the operationalisation of individual job (in)security and in an adapted form in the operationalisation of collective job (in)security. Since classwide job (in)security comes out of the theory, its operationalisation is based on theoretical thinking instead of an empirical operationalisation. This includes, for example, the threat of more desperate workers (Guérin, 2014) and the role of labour in society (Ba', 2020).

The factors of the mechanisms were inspired by the antecedents that Shoss names. The specific indicators of the mechanisms were based on the specificities of how worker cooperatives function (Halbertsma et al., 2024; van der Sangen, 2020). Moreover, in this operationalisation intersectionality is included in how hierarchies are formed in the worker cooperative.

In order to operationalise the outcomes of individual and collective job (in)security, Shoss' review was used. For the outcomes of classwide job (in)security, I took guidance from the research of Kim and colleagues (2025) about the experiences of workers in other worker cooperatives. Since intersectionality is about the effect of a large array of intersecting identities, intersectionality cannot be exhaustively operationalised. In different situations, different identities play a role. Since this research is occupied with the work field, for example, job

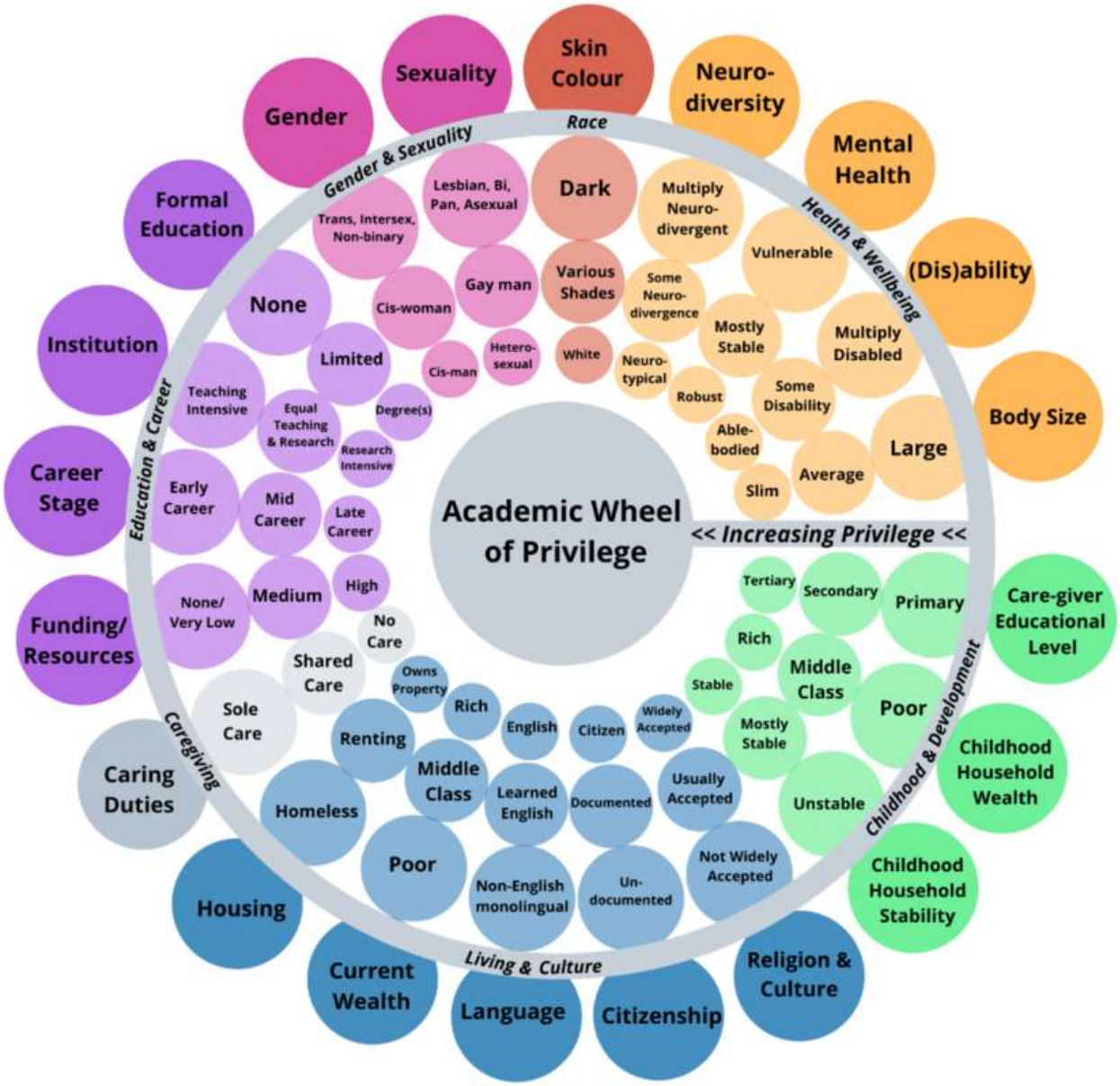
experience plays a role. As a guide to the operationalisation of the privileges or barriers that come from different identities in the work field, the 'Academic Wheel of Privilege' by Elsherif and colleagues was used (Holliman et al., 2024).

Because of the iterative nature of this research, the operationalisation of the concepts evolved throughout the research, I added, for example, the indicator of 'tasks,' since this played an important role in Helpgewoon.

Whilst this model incorporates identities that are often included in studies on intersectionality, such as gender, skin colour and wealth, it also includes aspects that play a role in working environments, such as career stage and caring duties (see figure 5). Some other aspects that it names are less important for this research, such as 'Institution' and 'Funding/Resources.' Furthermore, the model is quite simplistic, differentiating, for example, only between 'poor,' 'middle class,' and 'rich' when it comes to current wealth. Therefore, this model was used mainly as a guide to operationalise intersectionality, but the categories were specified with indicators such as specific income.

Figure 5

Academic Wheel of Privilege



Note. Adapted from Holliman R., Ludhra G., Warren C.J., Khatwa A., Araya Y., Smith K., Ansine J., & Badger M.P.S. (2024). Co Constructing "Third Spaces" for Engagement with and for Minoritized Community Groups and Environmental Scientists. *Earth Sci. Syst. Soc., 4*(10119), 1-17. doi: 10.3389/esss.2024.10119

Table 3

The analytical framework

Concepts	Dimensions	Factors	Indicators
Individual job (in)security	Experience	Stability [a]	Concern for significant deterioration of employment conditions [a]; contract type[a]
		Continuity [a]	Concern for future permanence of job[a]
		Threats [a]	Perception of risks to the job a
		Vigilance to threats [a]	Discrepancy between experienced and preferred security[a] ; perception of potential threats[a] ; experience with job loss[a] ; competition
		Control over your job[a]	Powerlessness to maintain desired continuity of job[a]
	Mechanisms in worker cooperative	Goal[a]	Why was the worker cooperative started; what is seen as constant costs[b]; role of worker cooperative in life of worker
		Hiring & firing policy[a]	How is decided when and who gets hired; Quotas; Criteria for employment; text on vacancy notice; role of (moral) hazards[d]
		Hierarchies[a]	Role of gender, language, migration background, salary, experience, capital in worker cooperative; who talks to clients; how are decisions made[c]; tasks; who talks in meetings; who doesn't talk/participate
		Communication[a]	What is communicated to workers; how does communication flow through organisation; transparency; who talks in meetings
		Leadership change[a]	Is there a board; role of the board[c]; who decides who is in the board[c]; who is in the board[c]; role of (moral) hazards[d]
		Organisational change[a]	Degeneration of worker cooperative[e]; changes over time; experiments
		Performance/financial health of worker cooperative[a]	What happens when there are problems; what happens when the performance is surprisingly good;
		Contracts[a]	Duration; involvement in worker cooperative; producing hours-governing hours
		Involvement[a]	How much time can workers spend on governing worker cooperative
	Outcomes	Alienation	Feeling valuable; feeling connected to product; commodification of labour
		Attitudes[a]	Intention to remain[a]; Jobs satisfaction[a]; Social attitudes[a]
		Interpersonal behaviour[a]	Coworker support[a];
		Workplace behaviour[a]	Performance[a]; risky behaviour[a]

		Well-being[a]	Distress[a]
		Other working conditions	Relation job security to pay, working hours, involvement
Collective job (in)security	Experience	Stability[a]	Concern for significant deterioration of worker cooperative[a]
		Continuity[a]	Concern for future permanence of all the jobs in worker cooperative[a]
		Threats[a]	Perception of risks to the jobs[a]
		Vigilance to threats[a]	Discrepancy between experienced and preferred security[a]; perception of potential threats[a]; experience with job loss[a]
		Control over jobs/Collective efficacy[a]	Powerlessness to maintain desired continuity of jobs[a]
		Solidarity[a]	Concern for others in worker cooperative[a]
	Mechanisms	Goal[a]	Why was the worker cooperative started; what is seen as constant costs;
		Hiring & firing policy[a]	Role of hiring and firing; who decides who is hired or fired
		Hierarchies[a]	Group-forming; Awareness of structural inequalities
		Communication[a]	Transparency
		Leadership change[a]	Relation board - workers
		Organisational change[a]	Degeneration[e]
		Performance/financial health of worker cooperative[a]	What happens when there are problems; what happens when the performance is surprisingly good
		Contracts[a]	Who decides about the types of contracts
		Involvement[a]	Is there a certain time that the workers get to spend on governing
	Outcomes	Bargaining power[f]	Priority of workers, profit, planet in worker cooperative
Classwide job(in)security	Experience	Solidarity	Concern for other workers
		Role of work/labour[g]	Commodification of labour; work as a collective activity
		Control over labour[h]	Threat of 'more desperate' workers
	Mechanisms	Goal[a]	Profit, use-value, duration, planet
		Organisational change[a]	Degeneration[e]
		National policies[i]	Threat of 'moral' hazard of politics

		Structural inequalities[j]	Awareness of structural inequalities
	Outcomes	Empowerment of workers[k]	Being less vulnerable to exploiting system[k]; bargaining power; control
Intersectionality	Class	Educational opportunities[l]	Advice after primary school; years of education; extra-curricular activities; accomplished degrees; form of education of caregiver/parents
		Social safety net	Parental help; ability to apply for governmental help; income of partner
		Wealth[l]	Savings, house-ownership, debt; income; number of jobs
		Caretaking roles[l]	Child-care; care for elderly
	Migration background	Educational opportunities	Advice after primary school; years of education; extra-curricular activities
		Language[l]	Dutch speaking level
		Discrimination	Comments, being taken seriously
		Culture (religion)[l]	Acceptance of culture by dominant culture
	Immigration status	Resident permit requirements[l]	Work requirements, uncertainty
		Language[l]	Dutch level
		Network	Social safety net; ability to apply for governmental help
		Citizenship[l]	Citizenship
	Race	Discrimination[l]	Comments, being taken seriously
		Educational opportunities	Advice after primary school; years of education; extra-curricular activities
	Gender	Caretaking roles[l]	Child-care; care for elderly; having a partner
		Discrimination[l]	Comments, being taken seriously; talking at meetings
		Pay	Lower pay for women
		Socialisation	Feeling free to express oneself, paying attention to others, division of roles
	Disabilities	Educational opportunities	Advice after primary school; years of education; extra-curricular activities
		Discrimination[l]	Comments, being taken seriously

[a]Shoss, 2017; [b]Malleson, 2013; [c]van der Sangen, 2020; [d]Michie et al., 2017; [e]Amon, 2025; [f]Malleson, 2025; [g]Ba', 2020; [h]Guérin, 2014; [i]Shoss et al., 2023; [j]Kaswan, 2019; Oseen, 2016; [k]Kim et al., 2025; [l]Holliman et al., 2024

Note. Own table.

Findings

Before I dive into my findings, I will present the different people and their cooperatives that participated in this research. Once again, I would like to thank them for their cooperation and their insights.

I interviewed workers from five different worker cooperatives, of which three cooperatives work under the umbrella of Helpgewoon. Elisa, Kim, Madelief, and Ronja work for Helpgewoon. Helpgewoon is organised in different independent worker cooperatives that operate in a specific region. The national Helpgewoon worker cooperative employs 4 people who support these independent worker cooperatives by taking over some administrative work, facilitating trainings, and coaching the worker cooperatives (Conversation Helpgewoon, p. 4). Elisa, Kim, Madelief, and Ronja have different roles in their worker cooperative. Madelief is a board member in her cooperative, the other three work in a coop that doesn't have a board, but all three have an active role in their worker cooperative and have multiple tasks. All of them have worked in their coop for more than a year. Helpgewoon was established around 10 years ago, their newest cooperative was started in 2025.

Til currently works for ReNieuw West, which is a new construction worker cooperative that was started through the project of Community Wealth Building in Amsterdam Nieuw-West. Til was previously active in other construction worker cooperatives, which he left to build ReNieuw West. He started his first worker cooperative in 2011.

Finn and Siep both work for the architecture worker cooperative De Loods, which was founded in the 1980s. I also spoke to Daan, who was one of its founders and worked there till 2009, when he retired. He is still active in promoting worker cooperatives. Finn and Siep both have a coordinating role either in the daily functioning of the cooperative or in the board of the cooperative. Whilst De Loods has more conventional positions inside their office, like a management team, and is formally a 'private limited company' (what is known as a BV in the Netherlands), this company is managed by a foundation of which all the workers are members and can therefore decide with equal authority about De Loods.

Below I have provided an overview of all the data I have used for my results and how and where to find them.

Table 4

Overview of data

Name in Archive	**Short description**	**Abbreviation for in the text**
Transcript Daan.docx	Transcript of interview with Daan	Daan
Transcript Elisa.pdf	Transcript of interview with Elisa	Elisa
Transcript Finn.pdf	Transcript of interview with Finn	Finn
Transcript Kim (2).pdf	Transcript of interview with Kim	Kim
Transcript Ronja.pdf	Transcript of interview with Ronja	Ronja
Transcript Madelief.pdf	Transcript of interview with Madelief	Madelief
Transcript Siep.pdf	Transcript of interview with Siep	Siep
Transcript Til.pdf	Transcript of interview with Til	Til
Notes conversations (1).docx	Notes of the conversation with a civil servant of the municipality of Zutphen	Conversation Zutphen
	Notes of the conversation with a cooperative coach at Helpgewoon	Conversation Helpgewoon
2024-11-04_Presentatie Amsterdam (1).pdf	A PowerPoint presentation that De Loods held in Amsterdam, where they present their cooperative	PP De Loods
2016 02 Rapport werknemerscoöperatie Zutphen.pdf	Feasibility research about a home-care worker cooperative in Zutphen	Feasibility research Zutphen
Handboek De Loods DEF	A handbook of De Loods that is given to new	Handboek

20251202.pdf	members, where the different parts of De Loods are explained, provided by Siep	De Loods
Hoe werkt Helpgewoon maart 2026(1).pptx	A PowerPoint presentation that is used in the trainings of Helpgewoon to explain the mechanisms of Helpgewoon to new members, provided by Kim	PP Helpgewoon
Transcript_2_De_coo_peratie_is_terug_in_een_nieuw_jasje711mq (1).pdf	A transcript of a podcast by Wiebes Bakker in which he interviews Joke van der Schoor about worker cooperatives	Joke
Uitslagen enquete.xlsx	Results of my survey	Survey
Vacancies Helpgewoon.docx	Vacancies that advertise for jobs in Helpgewoon	Vacancies Helpgewoon
803151 - bijlage 1 - Evaluatie overeenkomst huishoudelijke zorg.pdf	Evaluation of the care work in Zutphen in 2024 by the municipality of Zutphen	Evaluation Helpgewoon
Werken zonder baasjes - Volkskrant.jpg	Article in the Volkskrant about Helpgewoon in Zeist	Heagens, 2019
Handelingen Raad 29 en 30 maart 2021.pdf	Minutes of the Council of Zutphen of March 29 and 30, 2021	HR2021

Note. Own table.

I will first describe my empirical findings regarding the experiences of workers regarding individual, collective, and classwide job security and intersectionality before analysing them more structurally in the result section.

Individual job security

In my theoretical framework, I described that job insecurity can be experienced as a concern for significant deterioration of employment conditions, concern for the future permanence of the job, and the powerlessness to maintain the desired continuity of the job. Furthermore, the literature named many factors that impact the experience of job (in)security either as causes, mediators, or moderators. In the interviews, multiple factors came up, I will start going from a more macro level to the more individual level.

Macroeconomic factors & the sector

For the interviewees, a fundamental factor in their experience of job (in)security was whether there is enough work in their sector. A third of the respondents of the survey and most of the workers of Helpgewoon said that the shortage of staff in their sector increased their feeling of job security (Ronja, pp. 9-10; Elisa, p. 6; Kim, p. 10). Furthermore, they were sure that their line of work will become more needed in the future because there will be more elderly, and these elderly will live in their own home longer (Ronja, p. 10; Kim, p. 10). Fewer people move to care homes, and the Dutch government has policies that aim to let people live longer in their own homes (Ministerie van Volksgezondheid, Welzijn en Sport, 2018). Job security was thus mostly indicated by the continuity of the job (see table 3).

For Til, the shortage of work in the aftermath of the 2009 financial crisis was the reason he started a first worker cooperative in the construction sector (p. 1). A significant amount of the construction workers in the Netherlands are self-employed (Til, p. 1; Stichting Economisch Instituut voor de Bouw, 2025). Til explains that if there is enough work, this doesn't pose a threat to the job security of the workers, but in times of crisis, these self-employed workers are put against each other by contractors, which immensely increases the feeling of competition and job insecurity (p. 1). This competition is then used by contractors to get richer (Til, p. 3). To counter this process and to avoid having to compete with workers who were his colleagues and friends, he initiated the creation of a construction worker cooperative (Til, p. 1). Til was seemingly very vigilant to threats and control over the job was important for him to feel secure. Siep similarly describes that they are dependent on the construction market (p. 11). If the economy is shrinking and consequently fewer people can lend money to build, they feel the effects. I will further describe their handling of the 2009 financial crisis in the part about collective job security.

In the literature about job security, the macroeconomic factors and the sector in which someone works are already named as important factors for job security (Shoss, 2017). For worker cooperatives, this is not different. Nevertheless, there are some mechanisms that they can use to protect their workers, which I will further go into in the results.

The well-being of the worker cooperative

Another factor that is named in the literature (Shoss, 2017) and by the participants is the performance of the worker cooperatives. Since worker cooperatives are not very usual in the Netherlands, they can encounter different difficulties than other companies. Til (pp. 7-8) described how their style of working, in which workers from different construction disciplines work together throughout the whole process and therefore can help each other, for example, by correcting mistakes

of others or doing preparatory work, does not align with the dominant way of working in construction, where everybody only does their own 'trick,' without considering what others are doing. Interpersonal behaviour and especially coworker support seems thus not only an outcome of worker cooperatives (see table 3) but also a working method or mechanism of the cooperatives. These different ways of working can cause friction, not only between the contractor and the cooperative, but also between the cooperative and other self-employed construction workers, who then have to adapt to the schedule of the cooperative to do their task (Til, pp. 7-8). According to Til (p. 8), this has led to some conflicts, which are not beneficial to the cooperative, but didn't seem to yet have had a big impact on the cooperative. Their way of working seems to have mostly positive effects, since it increases their productivity.

Overall, the workers seemed satisfied with the job security in their cooperative, nobody in the survey said that they felt little job security. The ones that said that they felt only 'quite' secure either could already retire (3 respondents) or say that one can never be completely sure (1 respondent). These respondents didn't find job security very important. 80% of the respondents feel completely or very secure about their job. While performance may play a role in the experience of job security, the workers seem not dissatisfied with the current performance.

Doing your job

In order to be allowed to stay in the cooperative, the workers still need to do their job (Madelief, p. 12; Kim, p. 11; Til, 6-7; Finn, 10-11). Nevertheless, the worker cooperative is more personal and flexible when it comes to the needs of the workers.

They decide collectively what it means to 'do your job.' The cooperative offers a lot of flexibility, for example, when it comes to how many hours the workers work. As described by Finn (p. 12): 'If someone decides today that they want to work 32 hours, then we will make that possible today. And if in two weeks you decide to work 40 hours again, that is also possible. Moreover, we can do it fast because we are all equal'. The workers of Helpgewoon talk about a similar form of flexibility and adaptability (Elisa, p. 1; Ronja, p. 10; Kim, p. 12; Madelief, p. 1). For them this was different from their previous employments in the care sector, where they had to negotiate with a manager if they wanted to have a day off or work fewer hours and where they could sometimes decide how many hours they would work but not how many clients they had to care for in that time (Kim, p. 3; Ronja, p. 11). For 11 respondents of the survey, this flexibility increased their feeling of job security. This flexibility seems mostly impacted by how the (lack of) hierarchy in the cooperatives (see table 3).

Nonetheless, Kim (p. 11), Madelief (p. 12), Finn (p. 10-11), and two respondents of the survey clearly

state that the workers still need to function in order to keep the job. As someone in the survey says, 'Job security is good, but always with the right competencies and output, if something does not work, you should not want to retain it only because someone is a member of the cooperative.' Therefore, according to Finn (pp. 10-11), the individual job (in)security does not differ greatly from the job security in conventional companies. Whilst Madelief (p. 12) and Kim (p. 11) highlight that people need to do their job, because otherwise their contract won't be made permanent or they can get fired by the cooperative, they explain that this process is much more personal and deliberated than in the conventional firms in which they have worked. The decision about firing someone is made within the cooperative or by a working group that is given this mandate (Til, p. 8; Madelief, p. 12), because 'the others don't know us,' Kim says (p. 11). Knowing the people in the cooperation increased the feeling of job security for 10 people in the survey. Here again interpersonal behaviour seems not only an outcome, but also a mechanism (see table 3).

Functioning in the job does not only mean that one does their own tasks, but also that one can work together with the others in the cooperative. Til (p. 2), who has ADHD, talks about a colleague with autism who had a very different working style. At the beginning this has led to a lot of friction in their work, and it took some ups and downs before they found a way to productively work together. Another possible pitfall in the cooperation between workers can be that someone becomes a team leader and starts to manage the cooperative (Joke, p. 6). Whilst having strong personalities in the cooperative can be very helpful, especially in the starting phase, the workers have to remain equal and committed to the well-being of the cooperative in order for the democratic processes to work (Joke, p. 6). If someone is not able to adapt to this equality, they don't fit into the cooperative, according to Joke (p. 6). This need for equality and working together was equally named by Madelief (p. 1), Ronja (p. 6), and in the Presentation of Helpgewoon (PP Helpgewoon, p. 12). The avoiding of hierarchies was not a passive mechanism of the cooperatives but needed to be actively maintained (Daan, p. 6).

There are thus some factors that are comparable to conventional firms, but often still with differences when it comes to the details of how the worker cooperative operates.

Transparency

In the literature on job security, communication is named as one of the factors that can have an impact, with poor communication leading to unclear expectations and rumours (Shoss, 2017). In worker cooperatives, the level of communication is indicated by the goal and practice of transparency (see table 3). In construction work, Til explains, leaving the workers in the dark about

their future is part of how the contractors make money, because it can be used to ask people to work for less money.

Transparency over the processes in the cooperation was one of the most named factors, chosen by 13 people, when I asked the people in my survey what increased their job security in the worker cooperative. Transparency is not only important when it comes to the work processes but also when it comes to colleagues. Elisa (p. 10) explains that she is very happy that because they can decide together to hire someone, there is not suddenly a new colleague. Whilst there is more transparency about processes in the cooperative, the workers are still people, and people are not or cannot always be completely open about their intentions and thoughts. Overall, the communication between the cooperators is more open and friendly, instead of commanding each other, they ask each other to do something, sometimes ending the messages with a kiss or a heart emoji (Ronja, p. 7). But Madelief (p. 11) and Kim (p. 7) remark that other things that are often part of personal relationships, like reciprocity, are not always respected. When people ask for a replacement, for example, it is always the same few people that answer, instead of people who 'owe' you something because you helped them last time.

The benefits of transparency are not effortless. On the one hand, it demands involvement and time from the workers who have to read and comment on all the documents that are shared with them in order to form an opinion on the functioning of the cooperative (Siep, p. 8; Finn, p. 16). On the other hand, it needs patience and the 'letting go' of those who have an overview of the cooperative. As Til (p. 5) explains, cooperators have the right to know what happens in the cooperative, so if they question why they are paid a certain amount, the one with the overview has to take the time to inform them thoroughly. As a former manager in a big company, Finn (pp. 2 & 4) had to adapt to his new role in the cooperative, which was much more facilitative. When former managers or other privileged people take on a job in a worker cooperative, they thus have to reinvent themselves to fit into their new position as an equal and facilitator (Joke, p. 7).

Whilst some highlight the benefits of having more overview, Madelief (p. 6) and Til (p. 5) remark that this can lead to more stress, because if things go wrong, everyone is aware, and it is then also part of everyone's responsibility to improve the situation. But overall, this doesn't seem to stress people, the costs of transparency, which are mainly linked to the time people have to invest to keep up to date, can limit its benefits.

Organising your own work and time

According to the literature job security is also about the stability of working conditions and control over the job (Shoss, 2017; see table 3). Ronja (p. 10) and Elisa (p. 10) remark that a fundamental

difference between working in a conventional company and their worker cooperative is that they can decide about their own workload. Not only can they decide as a cooperative about what direction they want to go, but in the case of Helpgewoon, the workers can also decide about the number of clients they take on (Elisa, p. 1 & 10; Ronja, p. 10; Madelief, p. 11). Ronja says that this is different from conventional companies, where you can sometimes decide how many hours you work but not your workload, which then can lead to stress. Madelief (p. 8) describes that this sometimes can lead to tensions, for example, when there is a long waiting list of clients, but nobody takes on new clients. Because even when the waiting list is long, Madelief (p. 11) explains, they cannot force people to take on more clients. Ronja notes that even when the municipality asks if they can take more clients, they cannot comply if there is not a worker that wants to take additional work.

While the workers may be able to decide about their workload, the cooperative also leads to an increase in workload since people have to read documents, attend meetings, and take on tasks, which are not always paid (Siep, p. 8; Kim, p. 6; Madelief, p. 3 & 14; Ronja, p. 6). The workers I spoke to, who all had supplementary tasks, say that they enjoy their tasks because they are able to develop themselves and because they have a passion for what they do (Madelief, pp. 4-5; Kim, p. 10; Til, p. 5). Kim (p. 5) adds that if one does not have this passion and does not want to spend some extra time, one should not work for a cooperative. Madelief (p. 11) and Kim (p. 7 & 9) see, for example, that it is always the same people who offer to help others or take notes at meetings. Similarly, when De Loods had their board elections, they had to remind some members to vote (Finn, p. 16). Whilst the worker cooperatives enable people to participate in the business management and to voice their opinions, this does not mean that it can be expected that everyone participates equally. How to mitigate this will be part of the reflections in the part about making the cooperatives accessible.

Not only can the workers in the worker cooperative decide how much they work, but also what they want to work on. Ronja (p. 2), for example, only wants to work with elderly clients because she is more experienced in this work. When she started working for Helpgewoon, she could choose her own clients, which gave her the freedom to choose clients that fit her. Similarly, when different people are on their waiting list, they decide together who seems to need their help the most and help them first (Ronja, p. 7). Furthermore, workers can switch their clients, for example, when they are not comfortable with their client. The people at Helpgewoon experience that some clients are uncomfortable and rude with male care workers (Ronja, p. 1; Kim, p. 4). If one of the men brings this

up to his colleagues, they try their best to deal with this together, for example, by switching their clients (Ronja, p. 11). At De Loods, they decide collectively about the year-plan ('ondernemersplan') and about which projects they take on (Siep, 1-3). This decision is not aimed at the profit that they can make with the project but is mainly led by their values, which are to build social and ecological housing for net-zero or a small profit (Finn, p. 6). Being able to take part in this planning and look beyond your own skills and job also leads to more intellectual satisfaction and personal development, according to Til (p. 5) and Joke (p. 3).

Furthermore, what seems important to the workers when it comes to how work is organised in the cooperative is that they can – to a certain extent – decide what role work takes in their lives. Although some, like Kim (p. 12), are forced to work more hours than they would like because otherwise they cannot provide for their family, there is a lot of freedom in planning the work. In Helpgewoon, for example, the workers can decide together with their clients when to work, without having to ask a boss for permission. Consequently, they can plan their days off and vacation independently (Elisa, pp. 10-11; Kim, p. 1). Although if their client remarks that they need help while the worker is on holiday, the worker has to look for a replacement themselves. Kim (p. 3) and Elisa (p. 2) explain that in their cooperative, when the worker is ill, the same applies. They cannot simply phone a manager to say they are sick, but they have to phone their clients themselves and look for a replacement if needed. On the one hand this means extra work, but it also shows that there is no hierarchy in who is trusted to talk to (vulnerable) clients (see table 3). Madelief (p. 1), who is part of a larger cooperative, notes that they have recently installed an office manager as a position in the cooperative who could possibly take over this task. Kim (p. 12) summarises this freedom to plan her own work as being able to 'work to live' instead of 'live to work.' As mentioned in the part of 'doing your job,' a similar freedom to adapt the role of work to your life is existing at De Loods.

One of the missions of Helpgewoon is to give people back control over their lives, both the workers and the clients (PP Helpgewoon, p. 8). In the part of 'use-value,' I will go into how they try to give back control to their clients. What seems to be important when it comes to giving control to the workers is 1) having control over your workload, 2) having control over what your work is used for, and 3) control over how to fit your work into your life. Control over your job can be an important

part of job security (see table 3).

Making the work more adaptable to the lives of the workers may allow them to function better in their jobs and thus feel less vulnerable. 12 people in the survey stated that being able to decide about your own work increased their feeling of job security. Most of the interviewees I spoke to, expressed the intention to remain in the worker cooperative (Elisa, p. 12; Kim, p. 2; Ronja, p. 9; Madelief, p. 3 & 13; Siep, p. 12). Siep said he had received some other job offers, which would pay more, but he decided to stay since it allowed him to stay in control over his work.

The individual job security of the workers in the cooperatives seems to be influenced positively by beneficial macroeconomic factors, a good performance of the cooperative, constructive teamwork, transparency, and being able to organise your own work and time.

Collective job security

Since in a worker cooperative the workers decide not only about their own work but also impact the work of their co-cooperators, I have asked the participants about how they experience the job (in)security of others in their cooperative. As shown in my framework, collective job security has not yet been extensively researched and conceptualised, the analysis is thus more exploratory.

Social partners

On the macro level, the threats to the collective job security were the same as to the individual job security, as it depended largely on whether there was enough work and money in the sector. What differentiates the cooperatives in the competition for this money and work are their goals and how they align with their partners (see table 3). Since cooperatives often have strong social values, they tend to work together with social partners, like municipalities or housing corporations (Madelief, p. 2; Conversation Zutphen, p. 1; Finn, p. 7; Kim, p. 1). Because the values of the cooperatives and these social partners often align better than between the social partners and commercial companies, this can benefit the cooperatives with finding work (Finn, p. 6). The municipality of Zutphen, for example, did not want the care in their municipality to be done by a for-profit company (conversation Zutphen, p. 1; Feasibility research Zutphen, p. 6). Similarly, Finn (p. 6) is confident that 'housing corporations cannot say no to a partner [De Loods] that puts their tenants first and builds sustainable buildings.' By differentiating itself from other commercial actors, the cooperative can take a certain position in the market. Nearly all respondents of the survey say that the job security of their colleagues is not very threatened.

Bargaining power

Another major benefit of working in worker cooperatives is the bargaining power of the workers. Thirteen people, which is a majority of the respondents in the survey, said that being able to decide together about what happens in the cooperative increases their job security. Moreover, eight people think that the job security of the members plays a role in the decision-making of the cooperative. The well-being of the workers is, for example, part of the mission of worker cooperatives (PP De Loods, p. 4; PP Helpgewoon, p. 9), which my interviewees and 16 people in the survey confirmed. The well-being of workers, and thus their job security, is not only passively part of the mission of the cooperatives but an active part of the decision-making since the workers can decide about key parts of their cooperative. This happened, for example, when, due to the financial crisis of 2009, De Loods had less revenue to pay their staff (Siep, p. 1). Instead of firing some people, which would have probably happened at a conventional firm according to Siep, they decided to all work only 80% and ask for governmental help for the remaining 20%. Because these decisions can be made collectively, the collective job security is higher in worker cooperatives, says Finn (p. 11) and seven respondents of the survey (see table 3). He adds that in a case where, due to external factors, they collectively decide to work 10%, but someone argues that they cannot work and earn less, the structure of the cooperative would allow for everyone to work 11% less so this person can keep their work and pay (Finn, p. 12). This shows that collective decisions and measures don't prevent individual exceptions and that because of the personal ties and flexibility cooperatives can use 'tricks,' as a person in the survey says, in order to keep jobs. Finn (p. 2), who has worked in the management teams of conventional companies, admits that often big groups of workers would be generalized and distinctions are ignored.

Financial stability of the cooperative

This collective decision-making does not always lead to decisions in which the workers benefit. Ronja (pp. 7-8) describes how at the end of last year they decided together not to pay a Christmas bonus to the workers since they didn't have the resources to do so. Because this decision was not made by a boss but through collective deliberation, the workers agreed with it, putting the interest of the cooperative – and thus of the collective of workers – above their own immediate interest. 14 people in the survey confirmed that financial stability is part of the decision-making in the cooperative (see table 3). An additional benefit of being able to take these decisions together in times of crisis, instead of having managers take them, is that the cooperative doesn't have to pay the managers and thus

can save their revenue to pay the workers for their work. In conventional care companies, the overhead is often between 25-30%, whereas at Helpgewoon it is 10-15% (Joke, p. 12). At De Loods, they decided to share the profits equally between the workers (Siep, p. 10). The workers in Tils (p. 5) cooperative have more flexibility in deciding their pay since they can propose their price when they take on a job. Nonetheless, they still have to align with what other companies can offer, because if their price is too high, they won't get the contract. So while the bargaining power of workers might be high inside the cooperative, this does not always translate to higher bargaining power of the collective in the economic market (see table 3).

Collective knowledge

The respondents of the survey mentioned additionally that it is important for the functioning of the cooperative that people can keep their jobs, since the cooperative flourishes based on the knowledge of its members. Different from most conventional companies, where the knowledge is often concentrated in a small circle of managers, the cooperatives make use of the collective knowledge of their members. Whilst in conventional companies the loss of specific people can be problematic, in cooperatives everyone's knowledge is seen as valuable. This means that losing members, regardless of their 'position,' can harm the cooperative and its efficiency. In principle, no one is seen as more replaceable than others. Of course, there are more experienced workers who have more knowledge. But this knowledge is willingly shared and transmitted to new members (see table 3). Ideally the knowledge is thus not concentrated, but everyone contributes.

The collective job security is influenced by external factors, like its position in the market, and internal factors that relate to the participation of the workers in the decision-making of the cooperative.

<u>Classwide job security</u>

As described in the theoretical framework, the classwide job insecurity is mostly marked by the threat of more desperate workers, who accept lower wages because of their precarity (see table 3). More generally, classwide job security is influenced by the valuing of labour, and the role labour plays in the lives of workers.

The threat of more desperate workers

Til (p. 1) describes how worker cooperatives can diminish the threat of more desperate workers, since it decreases the competition between people by letting them work together instead of being put

against each other. Five people in the survey say that the job security of their colleagues is (very) important to them, simply because their colleagues also have a family to feed, for example. Whilst there may be less competition in the model of worker cooperatives, the cooperatives and their workers still need to operate in an economic system that is based on competition and exploitation. Kim (p. 12), for example, would like to work fewer hours, but she is not able to because she has to provide for her family. Furthermore, De Loods had to step back from their value of paying everyone equally because in the current job 'market,' very few people who come from higher-paid jobs would accept such a pay, and the collective labour agreement (CAO) demands a higher pay for certain architects (Finn, p. 13; Siep, p. 9-10; Daan, p. 13). Consequently, while worker cooperatives do their best to diminish the threat of more desperate workers, they still have to operate in a very competitive market.

Revaluing labour

The strength of the worker cooperatives seems to be their ability to revalue labour, meaning that it is not seen as an individual necessity in order to pay for your life, but as a collective and productive activity (see table 3). The use-value of the work is a priority for the worker cooperatives. 16 people in the survey affirmed that the use-value of the cooperative is important in their collective decision-making. The mission of Helpgewoon is not only to give their workers back control over their lives, but also their clients (PP Helpgewoon, p. 8; Vacancies Helpgewoon, p. 2 & 4; Kim, p. 15; Elisa, p. 2; Ronja, p. 3). When asked what their goals are as a cooperative, Madelief (p. 6) answered 'that clients feel like they are being heard, that they are not a number, and to keep the waiting list short.' A good relationship with the clients is consequently a priority for the workers of Helpgewoon (Kim, p. 15; Eisa, p. 8; Ronja, p. 11; Madelief, p. 6). Nevertheless, research about the experiences of clients in the municipality of Zutphen showed that there is no significant difference between Helpgewoon Zutphen and other organisations, when it comes to the overall satisfaction of the clients (Evaluation Helpgewoon, p. 11). De Loods has similar priorities as they aim to build sustainable homes for acceptable prices and use a people-centred approach (Finn, p. 6). Since the use-value of the work is important to the cooperative, its productivity is crucial. Efficiency is one of the key benefits of the worker cooperatives Til (p. 2) has worked in, because the workers look at the whole process and not only their little part in it and try to help each other, as described earlier, either by correcting each other's mistakes or preparing the workplace for the next person.

Collective knowledge

Furthermore, the worker cooperative can make better use of the collective knowledge in the

cooperative. Finn (p. 8) gives the example of financial directors in a conventional company who wouldn't go sit in the canteen with the construction workers if they are unsure what to do, since there is a difference in 'rank.' This difference does not exist in the cooperatives. The people who are part of the board, have multiple tasks, or have a coordinating role at the umbrella organisation of Helpgewoon see themselves as equal to everyone else (Madelief, p. 12; Joke, p. 7; Finn, p. 5). In a cooperative, everyone can share their expertise and do what they are good at, which not only leads to more collective knowledge but also to more involvement of the workers (Til, pp. 2-3; Joke, pp. 5 & 9; Finn, p. 8). Joke (p. 8) uses the example of people who are cleaners at work, but outside their work they are the chair of the football club and do a lot with their talents. In a cooperative, all the knowledge and skills get more room and can therefore be used more efficiently.
Of course, there are skills and knowledge needed to run a cooperative that the workers do not bring beforehand. Joke (p. 5) admits that letting every cooperative figure out themselves how to deal with certain new laws and do all of their own administration can be very inefficient, and it could therefore be better to have managers and other experts handle this, which is why these jobs are still needed. In order to find a middle way between not letting every cooperative reinvent the wheel and still letting them be autonomous, the umbrella organisation Helpgewoon can take over administrative tasks from the cooperatives and coach them if needed, but the cooperatives decide themselves when such coaching is needed and which administrative tasks they want to do themselves. The umbrella organisation has a facilitating role, and the workers have more responsibilities (Joke, p. 5). Consequently, when there is a conflict, the workers have to figure it out themselves instead of waiting for a manager or looking up to a manager like kids look at their parents, as Joke (p. 9) says. In a cooperative, everyone is empowered to be an adult (Joke, p. 9; see table 3). Because the communication in cooperatives is more open, personal, and low-key, problems and grievances get discussed more easily 'because you don't have to go to a boss but can simply go to a colleague' (Madelief, p. 11; Kim, p. 14; Ronja, p. 7). The evaluation of the home care in Zutphen found that the workers of Helpgewoon Zutphen have significantly more moments of collective discussion ('overlegmomenten') than the other organisations in Zutphen (Evaluation Helpgewoon, p. 9).

Seeing work not as an individual necessity makes job security not an individual responsibility but a part of a collective production process. This production is not only used to fill the pockets of the

bosses, as Til (p. 4) says, but partly to give back to society. De Loods, for example, donates some of its revenues to charities, and the workers do some charity work together (Siep, p. 7; Finn, p. 9). Part of seeing labour as a collective production process is that the labour is valued differently. The first worker cooperative in which Joke (p. 2) was involved started because the cleaners were frustrated that they were paid too little and not appreciated. The care workers of Helpgewoon talk about a similar frustration when thinking of how their work is seen in conventional companies. Ronja (p. 7) describes how people often look down on care workers, and Madelief (p. 1) recalls how she felt like a number and not a human when she was working for a care company. In contrast, the goal of Helpgewoon is to let people work from an intrinsic motivation, from a feeling of care and trust, and to go back to the basics of work in order to empower craftsmanship (PP Helpgewoon, p. 8). In summary, giving labour a collective value makes the preservation of a job a collective responsibility.

Intersectionality

An important part of my research is how the diversity of the workers influences their experience. To grasp the diversity, the goal was to not only look at specific social positions, like gender, class, or minority status, but also include an analysis of the intersection of these social positions. The diversity of my respondents was mainly found in gender, age, income, and form of education. I interviewed four women and four men, who were between their thirties and sixties. In the survey, I asked people for their approximate income: 17 people get their income from work, 6 with a personal yearly income below 20.000 euros, 8 people had a personal yearly income between 20.000 and 50.000 euros, 3 people had a personal yearly work above 50.000 euros, and for 4 people their main income was social benefits, such as pensions. The people with the lowest income had the fewest years of education, with two people having a high school education (mavo/vmbo/lbo) and 4 having some vocational education (mbo/MTS). In the middle-income group, all forms of education were represented. The higher income group consisted of people with different vocational educations (mbo/MTS and hbo/HTS). Of the people with social benefits, one had a high school education (mavo/vmbo/lbo), one had some vocational education (mbo/MTS) and two had a scientific education (WO). Furthermore, 15 respondents of the survey expressed that they never experienced discrimination. Those who did face discrimination encountered it rarely or sometimes based on different characteristics, such as gender, skin-colour and cultural background, chronic illness, hair colour and body size. The interviewees did not speak of discrimination.

My goal is not to compare the experiences of different groups, since my sample size is too small. Instead, I looked for examples that allowed me to understand how worker cooperatives deal with the social and cultural hierarchies of our society. Furthermore, I looked specifically at the role of the education level in the cooperatives, not only because it is part of the cultural hierarchy of Dutch society, but also because, for example, racism is embedded in the Dutch educational system (Van Putten, 2024; Andriessen et al., 2020). Whilst equality in the worker cooperatives based on their form of education may not end racism in the educational system, it may at least limit its negative outcomes and thereby have an intersectional effect.

Form of education and work experience

As said earlier, the respondents of the survey had different levels of education: 5 had a high school education, 8 had a mbo/MTS education, 4 had a hbo/hts education, and 5 had a scientific education (WO). This mix already indicates that the organisational form of worker cooperatives is not exclusively accessible to certain forms of education. This is affirmed by Joke (p. 8), who explains that whilst the Dutch labour market is discriminatory when it comes to forms of education and gives people with a high school education or vocational education little control in the work field, these same people are, for example, the chair of their football club in their free time. For Joke, this proves that the form of education of people does not determine their ability to take part in governing an organisation. Madelief (p. 1), who has a high school education and some vocational training, is now part of the board of her cooperative, for example. Joke (p. 13) adds that in the Dutch educational system, students are taught to be independent thinkers and actors but subsequently are subjected to a boss in the work field, which seems paradoxical. In her role as a cooperative coach, she therefore welcomes everybody and gives everybody the same training, with only changing some words (Joke, p. 4). While the form of education played a lesser role, in certain decisions the work experience of the workers did make a difference. In the cooperative of Madelief (p. 3), the experience of a worker plays a role when they are looking for a new board member, and Ronja (p. 2) says that sometimes her opinion is valued more because she is older and has more experience. Furthermore, in Helpgewoon, people will be paid more if they have more experience with the job (Kim, pp. 10-11). Although experience may play a role when choosing board members, in the meetings everyone's opinion is valued (Elisa, p. 4; Finn, p. 4; Madelief, p. 5). Finn was surprised, for example, that in their meetings, young and maybe less experienced people felt confident enough to speak up and share

their ideas, while in the conventional companies he knew, people first had to build up credibility before they were taken seriously. Whilst everyone's opinion might be heard in the meetings, there are some people who are not able to come to these meetings, which might create a hierarchy (see table 3). Multiple workers of Helpgewoon notice that there are always some people missing in the meetings, and while they do not know everyone's reasons, they see that especially parents and mainly mothers without partners attend their meetings less often because they have to care for the children (Ronja, p. 5; Madelief, p. 4; Kim, p. 13). Furthermore, the workers of Helpgewoon often do not live in the same city and have to travel in order to attend the meetings, high oil prices, long travel time, and the lack of public transport can become obstacles (Ronja, pp. 8-9; Madelief, p. 4; Kim, p. 9).

Time and patience

In general, the workers were happy with having different sorts of people in their cooperative, for example, when it comes to age or gender, since this can enable them to learn from different perspectives (Madelief, p. 10; Ronja, p. 2). But Madelief (p. 8) and Til (p. 2) point out that this needs time and patience. The municipality in which Madelief (p. 9) works has a policy that forces the cooperative to employ people who have been unemployed for some time and refugees. According to Madelief, they need more assistance than others and take longer before they take on more work, which in difficult times can be harder to facilitate. Til (p. 2) agrees that it needs some time before people overcome their differences. Joke (p. 7) sees that there are three stages that workers go through in their self-management. In the first year, people learn to work together, the following year, people can learn to manage together. Subsequently, there is always an issue somewhere, which means that people have to learn to carry and support the cooperative together. Worker cooperatives do thus not automatically lead to great teamwork, but this has to be cultivated.

Personality

Overall, the interviewees did not really speak of how social or cultural hierarchies impacted them. Identities like gender, form of education, or class did not seem to affect their experience of the worker cooperative and their job security. When asked whether such identities might play a role for other cooperators and their participation, Joke (p. 3) and all the interviewees, except Daan and Elisa, pointed out that someone's personality was the most important to predict their participation (Ronja, p. 12; Madelief, p. 5; Siep, p. 5; Til, p. 7; Finn, p. 3; Kim, p. 5). In order to fit into a cooperative, one has to be someone who is social and interested in the well-being of others (Finn, p. 3), who takes initiative and takes on tasks (Kim, p. 5; Finn, p. 3;

Til, p. 5), who is a bit of an entrepreneur (Siep, p. 5; PP Helpgewoon, p. 12), who has a passion for the job (Madelief, p. 5; Kim, p. 10), who wants to develop themselves (Conversation Zutphen, p. 2), and who is comfortable in being equal to others (Joke, p. 6; Finn, p. 5; PP Helpgewoon, p. 12). In a news article, members of Helpgewoon explained that 'someone who wants to work from 9 to 5 and then switch off their phone better fits with a boss' (Haegens, 2019). Similarly, when the municipality of Zutphen was discussing whether they should create their own worker cooperative, one person came to the council meeting to express that she wouldn't want to work in a cooperative because she didn't want to have supplementary tasks or think of the planning but only care for her clients (HR2021, p. 204). On the one hand, Joke (p. 14) and Kim (p. 1) admit that people have to get used to working in a cooperative, and Ronja (p. 4) said she was surprised by some people, of whom she first thought that they wouldn't fit in. Siep (p. 1) and Daan (p. 10) equally describe how at first Siep was not really interested in participating in the cooperative and only slowly discovered the benefits of the internal democracy. In her reflections on why Helpgewoon was mainly active in the home care sector, Joke said this was 'logical,' since home-carers always have worked independently (Haegens, 2019). On the other hand, the focus on having the right type of personality seems to indicate that there already has to be something inside you that fits the cooperative (Finn, p. 3).

In all these conversations, the role of structural inequalities and their intersectionality did not really come up (see table 3). When people encountered difficulties, for example, a refugee who doesn't speak Dutch, a client who did not want a male care worker, or tensions regarding equal cooperation, these were tried to be solved on a case-by-case basis (Madelief, p. 8; Ronja, p. 11; Elisa, p. 12; Daan, p. 6; Joke, p. 6). On the one hand, this case-to-case approach may help with respecting the complexities of intersecting identities and the subsequent needs of someone. On the other hand, there seems not to be a proactive attitude when decreasing structural inequalities since they wait for difficulties and tensions before dealing with them. While I might not give a conclusive answer to how social positions influence workers experiences of job security in the worker cooperatives, it seems like the cooperatives deal with these social positions on an individual level and don't reflect on the broader issues that concern their workers. Therefore, this is not included in the mechanisms of the worker cooperatives that support the workers.

Results

The analysis of my findings has led me to crystallise some key elements when it comes to the individual, collective, and classwide job (in)security. These elements are a product of different job-preserving mechanisms in the worker cooperatives, which will therefore be part of my analysis. Whilst the workers spoke mostly positively about working together with social partners, the cooperation with trade unions seemed more difficult and will therefore be analysed separately. Lastly, I analysed the accessibility of the worker cooperatives in order to understand how the cooperatives anticipate the intersectionality of the workers.

Individual, collective, and classwide job (in)security

In order to keep an overview of the key elements, they will be presented through bullet points. These bullet points are not ranked in any manner.

The findings suggest that the experience of individual job security in worker cooperatives is mainly influenced by

a. the sector; a worker cooperative is an economic organisation and thus dependent on macroeconomic influences, like the amount of work in a sector
b. the well-functioning of the worker cooperative; for example, that it is financially stable and gets enough jobs and money
c. your own functioning inside the worker cooperative; people still need to do their job. Although some nuances should be added since worker cooperatives seem more flexible when it comes to defining what it means to 'do your job', for example, because there is more trust between the members (there is no boss that looks over your shoulder) and more flexibility (there is more room to adapt your work to your life)
d. the amount of transparency inside the worker cooperative; this enables people to anticipate on the future of their work
e. being able to decide about your work by deciding, for example, about 1) your workload and the amount of jobs you and your cooperative take on, 2) the use of the work by choosing which jobs to take on, and 3) how much and sometimes when you work so that you can adapt your work to your life instead of having to adapt your life to your work.

The transparency and being able to decide about one's work differentiate worker cooperatives from most conventional companies. The differences between conventional companies and worker cooperatives regarding the other factors are more subtle, but I will elaborate on them in the next

parts.

Collective job security, the job security of all members of the worker cooperative, appears to be influenced by

a. the effective functioning of the worker cooperative (similar to how the well-functioning of the cooperative influences the individual job security); social partners such as municipalities or housing associations can benefit the worker cooperative when seeking contracts because they largely share the same values
b. the collective bargaining power and control over the worker cooperative; this is strengthened by the fact that the well-being of employees is often already part of the articles of association or mission statement. At the same time, this collective bargaining power is focused on the well-being of the cooperative as a whole, and thus decisions are sometimes made in which the interests of the collective are prioritized over the individual interests of the employees.
c. lower overhead costs in worker cooperatives; this means that funds can be used to reward the work itself, and fewer jobs need to be protected in times of crisis.

This collective job security is considered important, on the one hand, out of concern for colleagues who have families to support, and on the other hand, out of concern for the cooperative, because the loss of members often leads to a loss of unique knowledge and perspectives, which can be damaging to the cooperative as a whole.

Lastly, class-wide job security appears to be primarily influenced by

a. reducing competition among workers within the cooperative. This is particularly effective when workers were previously self-employed and are no longer competing within the cooperative. At the same time, the cooperative must still operate within a highly competitive market, so competition between workers inside and outside the cooperative remains in effect.
b. work being viewed more as a collective productive activity rather than as an individual necessity for making a living within the cooperative. The use-value of work was a priority. As a result, job security and job retention got a different meaning because the loss of jobs would thus mean the loss of knowledge and labour to fulfil this social value.

Whilst the labour in the cooperative is done in exchange for wages, the cooperators describe it less as a commercial or for-profit activity and more as a productive collective activity. Thus, even though the worker cooperatives operate in a capitalist competitive market, they can redefine their activity from being individual and commercial to being collective and productive.
These results show that collective and classwide job security play a role in worker cooperatives next to the individual job security.

The mechanisms

In the previous parts, I described the experience of workers in worker cooperatives. This experience is often based on a certain mechanism in the cooperative, which allows such an experience. I already touched upon some of these, but I will elaborate on these mechanisms here to give an overview.
While only 8 people in the survey say that job security is an active part of the decision-making of their worker cooperative, in the findings job security seems to be intertwined with multiple parts of all the cooperatives.

Working conditions

In my theoretical framework, I described that job insecurity can be experienced not only as the immediate threat of being fired from a job but also as a 'concern for significant deterioration of employment conditions' (see table 3). The employment conditions in a worker cooperative are quite favourable, with a lot of flexibility and higher pay or the sharing of profits. Multiple mechanisms enable the workers to maintain these conditions. On an individual level, the workers can decide how much and when they work, without asking a boss for permission. This leaves the flexibility in the hands of the workers. Furthermore, through transparency and collective planning, the workers can get an overview and don't have to fear an abrupt deterioration of employment conditions – at least as far as the cooperative can control. I will argue further on that the cooperatives can often also react more creatively to an external crisis. Individually or collectively, the workers can decide what they will work on. Through an interplay between collective and individual decision-making, the workers can, for a large part, decide about their own working conditions.

Internal support

Whilst the working conditions might be very favourable, the cooperative still needs to generate an income, and so the workers need to work and function in their jobs in order to be able to get an income and stay in the cooperative. Nevertheless, there are some mechanisms that seem to support

the people to function in their job. First, it is up to the workers to decide together what 'functioning in the job' means. Not everyone has to take on tasks, for example. Furthermore, there are more conversations with the people if they don't seem to function in the job in order to help them. Second, when the workers have grievances about their job, either because of clients, colleagues, or something else, they can discuss them more easily with the rest. Instead of having to go to a boss or waiting on a boss to notice that there are tensions in the team, the workers can simply talk to their colleagues on even ground. Nevertheless, reflections on structural inequalities seem to be limited in the cooperatives I have talked to. Consequently, while the colleagues may talk on even ground when it comes to their position in the cooperative, other structural inequalities like gender, race, or educational background might still impact how the workers deal with the grievances. Third, like said earlier, the workers can adapt their work to their lives instead of the other way around, which may prevent that suddenly an unexpected event in their life stops someone from working, for example, because of an illness or care tasks one has to take on. Lastly, Helpgewoon is organised in a way that supports the workers in their cooperative work. A cooperative not only needs its members to do their work, but also that they do their tasks well. Therefore, they have trainings, for example, about how to hold meetings and coaches who can help the cooperatives to start and make difficult decisions. Furthermore, the umbrella organisation of Helpgewoon takes over tasks that need a lot of skill or that stand far off from the daily work of the workers, such as financial administration. Daan (p. 5) from De Loods and Til (p. 2) equally highlight the importance of guidance, support, and coaching for the functioning of worker cooperatives. Daan, who went through multiple difficulties with his cooperative, says that support is, for example, needed from a notary to fit the idea of the worker cooperative into the Dutch legislation. When it comes to coaching, Daan (pp. 6-7) explains the importance of both individual coaching for board members and collective coaching for the whole cooperative in order for them to stay on the right path. De Loods, for example, had an organisation-psychologist who helped them to overcome tensions and strengthen their democracy.

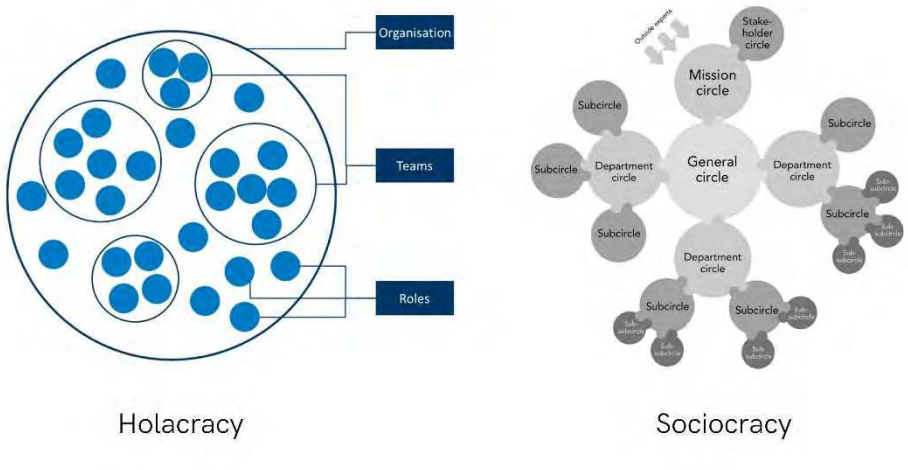
Decision-making power

In times of crisis, which is often when job insecurity increases, the worker cooperative can do multiple things to protect its members, which differentiates it from conventional companies. On the one hand, the well-being of the workers is part of the goal of the worker cooperatives, which allows it to legitimise decisions that favour the workers above, for example, profit-maximalisation. This is

enforced furthermore by the workers, who then can make the decisions collectively, instead of being dependent on the benevolence of a manager. In theory, the cooperatives have different ways of making these decisions. According to Joke (p. 11) and the PP Helpgewoon (p. 11), Helpgewoon works with a holocratic model (see figure 6). In this model, people are organised around different roles and make decisions from these roles. The people and their roles are organised in different circles who can make decisions about their own 'jurisdiction.' De Loods, uses sociocracy as one of the underlying philosophies of their decision-making (Handboek De Loods, p. 15). In sociocracy, consent and decision circles take a central role in decision-making processes, but people are not arguing from the place of their role but on personal accounts (Zelluf Organiseren, n.d.; see figure 6). The interviewees who worked in the cooperatives didn't explicitly name these differences. In Helpgewoon, the cooperative tasks are divided among the members, but next to a chair, and in some cases a board, there are not really roles. De Loods has a board instead of a general decision circle where all the other circles come together, which would be more fitting for sociocracy. Whilst there seems to have been a lot of thought about the theoretical framework behind their decision-making structure, such as holocracy or sociocracy, this did not necessarily come up in the actual practice of decision-making. All the interviewed cooperatives only employ a relatively small group of workers, which possibly makes such decision-making theory less important since they can be taken more organically.

Figure 6

The governance structure of holocracy and sociocracy



Note. Adapted from Casasola, T. (2020). Reimagine the Org Chart. *The Overlap*. Retrieved on June 16, 2026, from https://theoverlap.substack.com/

On the other hand, the collective knowledge and understanding in the cooperative allow it to be more creative. Instead of having a small team that decides about all workers as if they were all the same, the collective knowledge of the cooperatives allows them to look further and to creatively think of solutions that fit the different situations of the workers. What adds to this is that the people in the cooperative know each other, and there is more space for open and emotional conversations. The collective knowledge is thus not only bound to knowledge about the different parts of the cooperative but also includes knowledge about the people behind the workers. Although, like mentioned earlier, the reflection about different structural inequalities is limited in the cooperatives.

Revaluing work

Lastly, the cooperatives redefine work from being an individual necessity in order to pay for your life into being a collective productive activity by focusing on the collective use-value of their work. Job security thereby becomes linked to its use-value. Since these worker cooperatives all operate in sectors where work is needed, this improves job security. By working together with social partners that rely on this use-value, like municipalities, the cooperatives don't have to prove their market-value to a capitalist market. Furthermore, by organising this work together, they can limit the individual competition and decrease the threat of more desperate workers, at least at the individual level. Social partners can help to decrease the threat of more desperate workers at a collective level since they can decide to work together with the cooperatives even when their price is a little higher, for example. In a more commercial market, the cooperative is still threatened by more desperate workers in other companies since these companies can then sell the labour of these workers for a lower price.

It seems to me that the most important lesson is that if you want to provide job security, you need both collective control over the work and individual control over your own work. If work is viewed as a collective productive activity, you want to make decisions about it collectively because collaboration can lead to greater efficiency and provide more security by allowing you to support one another and share knowledge and resources. At the same time, individual freedom and trust among colleagues make it possible to structure work in a way that fits your life so that you can 'work

to live rather than live to work.' (Kim, p. 12). The mechanisms presented here can be mobilised in different ways. Some of them are passive, like the values of the cooperatives. These have to be activated in (broader) discussions among the workers in order to add to the experience of job security. Other mechanisms are more relational, like being able to share grievances more easily, which can be activated in more intimate conversations and then taken to the larger spheres in the coop, like the general meeting. Furthermore, the mechanisms can be individual, like the decision on work time, which allows individuals to mobilise them personally. Lastly, some mechanisms are organisational, like the way decisions about job preservation are made, and are thus embedded in the organisational form of the worker cooperative, as long as this organisational form is used, these mechanisms can be used. While there are thus numerous mechanisms that increase job security in worker cooperatives, some issues remain, like how to make cooperatives part of the broader fight for worker emancipation and how to make them more accessible. I will describe these issues in the following parts.

Trade unions

Not only the people inside the worker cooperative play a role in its existence, but also the network of actors that surround it. Earlier I talked about social partners that can support and benefit from worker cooperatives. While on a local and project-based level there is already some support, like in the case of the municipalities of Zutphen and Amsterdam, the support on the national level, for example through protective and specialised law, is missing (van der Sangen, 2021). Furthermore, trade unions have historically played an important role in the democratisation of the economy and socialist societies. Nevertheless, there were often tensions between the workers council, or other forms of direct worker democracy in enterprises, and the trade unions (Atzeni, 2016). It was felt that there are contradicting dynamics between organising workers' power and worker democracy. Workers' delegates could, for example, be seen as a counterforce to trade unions (Kester, 2016). In the Netherlands in the 1970s, the 'Ondernemingsraden' (OR), which are institutions inside companies that should enhance the participation of workers, were seen as competitors of the trade unions too (Vlaanderen et al., 2025). Finn (pp. 13-14) from De Loods explained that the tendency of trade unions to aim for general measures can hinder workers from striving for what is best for them in a certain situation. De Loods, for example, had a premise that everyone was paid the same, but when they decided to step into the collective labour agreement (CAO), they had to let this go, since

the CAO has different minimums for different positions and levels of experience (Finn, p. 13). This tension between collective regulation, through the CAO, and more participation was already noted by research that was done for the Dutch government in 2006, because if the OR would take a key role in the negotiations about work conditions, they would replace trade unions (Vink-Dijkstra, 2023). Finn (p. 13-14) regrets these tensions since the trade unions and the worker cooperatives strive for the same goals, but their methods are different. What may be underlying these tensions is the seemingly contradictory dynamic between security, which the trade unions strive for on a classwide level, and the freedom that the worker cooperatives strive for. In my interpretation, which is similar to Finn's view, this does not have to be a contradictory dynamic since freedom needs some basic security, like a minimum wage, and to ensure security in unregulated instances, freedom can lead to creativity, like the 80-20 rule that De Loods used during the financial crisis. The balancing of this security and freedom should be part of the deliberation and cooperation between trade unions and worker cooperatives. The tension between security for all and freedom for everyone needs to be explored in order for them not to exclude each other but to amplify each other.

Accessibility of worker cooperatives

The other issue that remains is how to make the worker cooperative fitting and accessible to more people than 'the right type of person.' Since only Daan (pp. 10-11) seems to disagree with the idea that not everybody would fit into a worker cooperative and that there is a 'type of person' that better fits, one could ask oneself what exactly characterises this 'type of person' and whether there are factors that prevent people from being such a 'type of person' (Kim, p. 14; Ronja, p. 12; Madelief, p. 5; Siep, p. 5; Til, p. 5; Finn, p. 3). As mentioned earlier, our education system trains people to be independent thinkers, which fits the idea of worker cooperatives. Certain education might thus empower more people who would fit into a self-governing organisation. Another characteristic the interviewees named was that someone should be a bit of an entrepreneur. In our current patriarchal culture, qualities that are connected to entrepreneurship, like psychosocial tributes (assertiveness, freedom, proactivity, initiative), moral values ("culture of overwork," willingness to self-transform and to self-optimize, self-manage, perseverance) and emotional profiles (courage, self-confidence, passion), are seen as masculine, which can hinder women from acting that way (Serrano-Pascual & Carretero-García, 2021). Similarly, the interviewees say that someone should be comfortable in being equal to others. One could argue that in our neoliberal capitalist system, inequality and

narcissism are deeply intertwined with our cultural norms (Kennedy, 2017). Consequently, people are encouraged to care less for others and only strive for self-actualisation (Kennedy, 2017). A shift in cultural norms might therefore be needed. Moreover, the interviewees note that someone should take initiative and take on tasks. But when people are also the chair of the football club, which is the example Joke names when explaining that workers have more talents than what they can show in their work or have other tasks in their everyday life, it can be difficult to balance all these different tasks and additionally take on tasks at work. This should not be taken as an argument against self-government, but as an invitation to look at all the other (unpaid) labour people do next to their formal work. This unpaid labour, which is often reproductive labour that sustains life, brings great value to society. Therefore, it is important to balance the energy that people use for their reproductive and productive labour. Whilst the interviewees said that they gained more from working in a cooperative in terms of money, intellectual satisfaction, and personal development, some also said that it cost them more in terms of energy because they have tasks or read the plans in their free time, for example.

The goal of socialists is to democratize the entire economy, which would give people the ability to decide about a multitude of issues concerning them. In practice, this can demand a lot of time and energy from people. Part of the intersectional socialist theory could thus be how we organise this practically in order to enable people to make informed decisions about their lives and consciously deal with the responsibility that comes with making decisions. Even when the types of persons that work in a cooperative may be similar, their way of working and being might be very different, which can lead to tensions. Therefore, it is crucial that socialist theory leaves room for tensions and discussions in its practices and does not neglect that cooperation is not a linear and harmonious process. Whilst socialist theory, following the theory of Marx, is mainly focused on the material side of the economy, I would suggest exploring the relational processes in the economy more. Not only in the sense of how to empower workers, but also how to limit people who do not respect equality.

In these results, I presented how workers experienced individual, collective, and classwide job security in worker cooperatives in relation to their social positions. These experiences seemed to be an outcome of certain mechanisms in the worker cooperatives. Whilst these mechanisms gave a lot of room to individual needs, they were not aimed at countering structural inequalities, like gender and migratory background, which make the cooperatives less accessible to certain people. Other

structural inequalities, surrounding, for example, the form of education and income, were given more attention, but given the Dutch context, they could not always be completely equalised. A summary of the mechanisms and their effects will be given in the discussion.

Discussion

In order to answer my research question about how the plurality of workers experiences of job (in)security in Dutch worker cooperatives can inform intersectional socialist theory on the democratisation of the workplace, I looked at the individual, collective, and classwide job security in worker cooperatives. Additionally, I researched the role job security plays in the cooperatives and the role the societal position of the workers plays in their experiences.

As expected from the literature review, the individual, collective, and classwide job security in the worker cooperatives was high. Some of the mechanisms that contributed to this high job security were already known in the literature, but mainly in the area of collective and classwide job security, I found some new insights. This probably relates to the fact that collective and classwide job security are less studied.

When it comes to individual job security, Shoss (2017), for example, already named the sector, (company) performance, job control, and communication as important factors. Since Shoss thoroughly researched individual job security, it is not surprising that she already named these factors. Furthermore, she suspects that the supervisor-subordinate relationship quality (which in worker cooperatives would be about the relationships between equal members) can impact individual job security. In worker cooperatives, these relations are mostly based on trust. In the worker cooperatives I researched in the Netherlands, trust seemed to form automatically, but in the examples of other worker cooperatives that were mentioned in the literature, this was not always the case, or a disproportionate amount of trust was put in former supervisors. More practical research is thus needed to see how positive and equal internal relations of worker cooperatives may be sustained. The organisational models of holocracy and sociocracy that the founders of the worker cooperatives in the Netherlands refer to could be a starting point for such research, although an organisational model may not be enough to make people act in an equal way. As I will later discuss, equality is not a passive situation but a conscious act, especially when our society creates systemic inequalities. For the cooperatives to fulfil the expectation of equality of socialist theory, this is

important to remember.

The collective control over the cooperative, which gives the workers a large amount of bargaining power, for example, in times of crisis or about working conditions, plays an significant role in the collective job security, as expected. This is amplified by internal support and solidarity between the workers, which is in line with the expectations of solidarity of socialist theory. These mechanisms in turn improve the individual job security too. However, this research was not able to explore whether the collective job security significantly amplifies the individual job security, since it is a qualitative study. Furthermore, I only have a limited insight into how the participants conceptualise collective job security, as I analysed mostly the mechanisms that the participants named and how this influences their experience and not their speech and language regarding collective job security. Nevertheless, the analysis showed that when writing about worker cooperatives, it is crucial to not only think of the collective, as Lefebvre seems to do in his definition of self-management (Eric, 2009), but also about the relation between the collective and the individual. This can be done in numerous ways. Molefe (2024), for example, proposes to learn from the ubu-ntu philosophy of personhood, in which the individual becomes a person through their relations with others (the collective). The Dutch cooperatives seem yet to be far removed from such an understanding of the individual and collective. Reciprocity, for example, is essential in such an understanding of personhood, but some cooperators mentioned that the reciprocity in their coop seems to be lacking, or at least less evident than they expected. Given the Dutch and Western tradition of individualism, it may not be surprising that philosophies that tighten the relationship between the individual and collective are not implemented. But since this form of philosophy seems to fit worker cooperatives better, it is important to explore the tension of reciprocity in Dutch worker cooperatives and the relationship between the individual and collective, both through research and practical implementation. Linked to what was said in the results about a specific type of person that fits into worker cooperatives, it could be a first step to explore if a reciprocal attitude also is an intrinsic characteristic of this type of person or if it is something that can be taught to cooperators.

Since the workers of the cooperatives only form a small group of the total Dutch worker's class, they cannot represent their whole class. In the Netherlands, trade unions take the role of representing

the worker's class. While trade unions are concerned with similar issues as the cooperatives, like class-wide job security, there were tensions between how worker cooperatives and trade unions operated. Trade unions work more towards large-scale regulations that protect many workers, for example, by negotiating collective bargaining agreements (CAO), whilst cooperatives are more focused on local and individual cases and how to facilitate their well-being in the given circumstances. Research about how large-scale regulations influence the experiences of individuals and what individuals need from the large-scale regulations may map these tensions. However, in order to overcome them, more cooperation between the different actors is needed. Most of the cooperators fall under the collective bargaining agreements. It could be beneficial to both the cooperators and the other workers that fall under the agreement if the experiences of the cooperators with self-government and ownership of the means of production were included in the bargaining process, as it can also give benefits to other workers.

The labour in the cooperative is done in exchange for a wage. Nevertheless, the cooperators describe it less as a commercial or for-profit activity and more as a productive collective activity. This allows them to prevent the commodification and erosion of the institutions of social reproduction and life and the loss of autonomy. Hereby, they defy the warnings of ecosocialists and ecofeminists about work staying in the form of labour employment (Leigh et al., 2021). Thus, even though the worker cooperatives operate in a capitalist competitive market, they can redefine their activity from being individual and commercial to being collective and productive. Other pressures of the capitalist economic system were less easily countered. As said in the literature review, having to compete against non-democratic businesses can mean that the workers have to make hard choices when it comes to their social empowerment or their rewards. Indeed, the cooperatives could not always offer their cooperators the pay or reward that they wanted. In the cooperatives in the Netherlands, this took multiple forms. For example, the cooperative not having enough capital to pay for rewards, the buyers not accepting a higher price for the work, or workers with a certain status in society not accepting lower wages than they would get in other companies. These capitalistic constraints on the worker cooperatives could have disqualified the cooperatives as legitimate case studies of how the socialist economic model could work, since ideally in a socialist economy these constraints would not play a role. Realistically, however, even if the Dutch economy were now to move to a socialist model, the following decades would still be coloured by capitalist thinking as it was ingrained into people's thinking and being. Similarly to how colonial thinking is still dominant in most European societies, even though officially they are mostly post-colonial.

Since this thesis wants to bridge the gaps between socialist theory and practice, it is important to acknowledge the capitalist pressures that the cooperatives face now and in the future. As was already said in the literature review, it is easier to recover the business than the person. On the one hand, when creating new worker cooperatives, it might not only be important to develop the ideal model of how they may function in the current context but also to think of the ways they may function despite the current context. On the other hand, organisations that aim for broader societal or policy change, like trade unions or (international) umbrella organisations, should work to diminish the capitalist pressures. This could, for example, be done by challenging the societal status that some jobs get or demanding better working conditions, which could lead to buyers accepting higher prices for the products.

Unfortunately, the participants did not reflect much on how their lived experiences and social positions shaped their perspectives, possibly because a large proportion of them seemed to share similar lived experiences with their colleagues, and these were also the people who were willing to speak with me. I was thus not able to fully move to the margins of the WEIRD-context (Western, Educated, Industrial, Rich, and Developed), contrary to my intention. But privileged identities are still identities that play into intersectionality, so I focused my analysis mostly on the things they didn't say or do regarding structural inequalities. Since structural inequalities still play a major role in Dutch society, I could be quite certain that they influence worker cooperatives. The lack of knowledge or awareness about structural inequalities could therefore also mean that they are less active to counter these inequalities. Of course, my white and academic identity could have limited the participants in how freely they talked about the inequalities they saw and experienced. During the interviews, I had the impression that, at least consciously, this did not intimidate the participants or change their answers. From some participants I heard after the interview that they appreciated my open attitude and argued I didn't have 'kapsones' (Daan, p. 15), meaning that it seemed that I didn't think of myself as better than others, which I took as compliments. While structural inequalities that might have coloured people's experiences were discussed less, it was frequently mentioned that there is a certain type of person who fits better within a cooperative and could therefore work there more effectively and for longer. This type of person was characterized as someone who is sociable, interested in the well-being of others, takes initiative, is enterprising, is passionate about their work, wants to develop themselves, and is comfortable being on equal footing with others. My comment would be that these traits are partly a consequence of how society treats people, the opportunities we offer them, and underlying structural inequalities. By neglecting these structural inequalities and replicating social and cultural hierarchies, which happened in many cases of worker self-management internationally (Omar, 1988; Hagel, 1976), the positive effects of worker self-management on job security are limited (Kaswan, 2019; Oseen, 2016). Since

my data was limited in investigating structural inequality in the worker cooperatives, I can neither confirm nor deny that the neglecting of structural inequalities limited the positive effect of worker cooperatives on job security in the Netherlands. Part of why I was not able to investigate further on this issue was because the number of worker cooperatives is limited in the Netherlands and thus also the number of structural inequalities that are represented in the cooperatives. But since the literature suggests that replicating structural inequalities can have a negative effect on worker cooperatives, instead of waiting until there are enough worker cooperatives in the Netherlands to research this, it seems better to research and strategize how to prevent worker cooperatives from replicating such structural inequalities in order to help future cooperators to be inclusive from the start. There are many trainings available that teach people to become aware and counter structural inequalities, these should be promoted by (international) umbrella organisations in order to enable worker cooperatives to create a safe space for everyone.

Since the cooperators highlight that a certain type of person fits into worker cooperatives, a good starting point for emancipatory research seems to be how structural inequalities prevent people from being such a type of person. Furthermore, the cooperators with more experience in working with different identities pointed out that patience is needed in order for people to get to know each other, learn from each other, and learn how to work together. As said earlier, worker cooperatives still have to operate in a highly capitalist competitive market, which can limit their collective ability to give attention to and be patient with their workers. Making the market less competitive, for example, by decreasing monopolies, since they make the market much less accessible and skew market relations, would be a way to give cooperatives more time to care for their workers. At the same time, the bureaucratization, which can be a consequence of having numerous working councils, associations, and other social groups, should not be underestimated, because this can take time away from people doing productive work and caring for their cooperators (Eric, 2009). At the current scale of worker cooperatives in the Netherlands, this does not seem to be a major threat, but when designing a larger cooperative system, it should be considered. Patience is not only needed in order to emancipate people who suffer from structural inequalities, but also to let people who are privileged by structural inequalities, like managers, reinvent themselves and place themselves at the service of the community. This is highlighted both by the literature on other forms of self-management and by this research (Hagel, 1976).

The questions that remain for me at the end of this research are, first, what prevents people from

becoming or being the kind of person who fits into a cooperative, and how can this be addressed? This seems to me to be a question about social emancipation. Second, part of the reason that people do not take initiative, for example, is a lack of time. If we strive to democratize society as a whole, collective decision-making will demand too much of people's time, which may prevent them from contributing to every decision. How can you structure that decision-making to prevent this while still preserving the value of employee participation? This seems to me to be primarily a design issue.

Conclusion

In this research I took a person-centred approach to see how job security was experienced in worker cooperatives and how this experience could then inform socialist theory to better include the diversity of workers. This person-centred approach did not mean that I had a neoliberal individualistic look on the workers. Instead, work was seen as a collective activity, which meant that I expanded the concept of job security to include a collective and classwide job security. The collective job security was mainly used to research how workers reflected on the job security of other workers in the cooperative. Since worker cooperatives form much more of a collective than most conventional companies, it was expected that not only the workers would experience more collective job security, but also that the mechanisms of the cooperative would ensure this collective job security. Both of these expectations were found to be true. By making decisions together the needs of the different parts of the collective could be considered and the collective knowledge of everyone involved could be used. In insecure times this means that decisions can be made that are widely accepted in the cooperative and the job security is not dependent on a small group of people in power. While the decisions were made by the collective there still was the possibility of individual exceptions, which enables the cooperatives to give room to the complexity of humans and their intersecting social position in their decisions. But since there seemed to be little reflection about structural inequalities that are ingrained into our society and thinking, the people who need those exceptions will probably have to stand up for themselves in that situation, instead of the collective offering it beforehand. Since there seems to be a lot of empathy and room for emotions in the cooperatives, trainings and the sharing of knowledge about these structural inequalities, might already allow them to act more pro-actively to counter them and make the cooperatives more accessible.

The classwide job security was based on socialist literature that explains that giving a large group, or class, insecurity about their income and work is part of the functioning of capitalism, since it allows company holders to threaten workers with replacing them with more desperate workers who work more or for lower wages. In worker cooperatives, there are no company holders, and thus the question arises if such a threat endures or if they can decrease the competition between workers. Since the worker cooperatives have to operate in a highly competitive market, they could only lessen the competition between their own workers, but the collective is still threatened by other workers and

companies. Therefore, cooperatives need to be protected through legislation that supports the cooperatives and that makes the competition fairer for smaller companies. Having more workers cooperatives could also lessen the competition, since they are able to revalue work towards being a collective productive activity instead of an individual endeavour. Therefore, it can be expected that more cooperatives can lead to a competition that is aimed towards more collective productivity instead of individual profit.

Individual job security has been a subject of many studies, and there were thus no surprises in the outcomes in the case of worker cooperatives. Macro-economic factors, the sector, the performance of the worker cooperative, transparency, control over the work, and the own functioning within the coop all played a role. Whilst worker cooperatives may give more individual job security, it is not a job guarantee. Furthermore, these mechanisms had to be actively mobilised to work, transparency for example demands that the workers take time to write and read the documents concerning their cooperative. Since the individual is part of the collective and class, the different forms of job security amplify each other. These findings seem to hold true regardless of how old the cooperatives are, in this research the age of the cooperatives ranged from a year to 40 years. This research had an exploratory approach as worker cooperatives in the Netherlands are rarely researched and because I re-conceptualised job (in)security to also include a collective and classwide scale. Therefore, some of the operationalisation, as can be seen in table 3, did not fully fit the research. First, the internal support as part of the interpersonal behaviour was not only an outcome of the mechanisms of the cooperative, but a mechanism in itself that plays an important role in the experience of job security. In my operationalisation I was looking for hierarchy, but since there is little hierarchy in the cooperatives, it might have been more insightful to look into how the internal support works and when it did not work. Second, the mechanisms were operationalised as passive and static policies or procedures. In my research I found that the supporting mechanisms had to actively mobilised and therefore dependent on the people and relationships in the cooperative. Training and support to the workers to mobilise these mechanisms, for example how to hold a meeting, are crucial to the well-functioning of the cooperative. Lastly, in my research I stumbled upon the importance people gave to the collective knowledge inside the cooperative. This was not part of my operationalisation, but was later added when I analysed my findings. Similarly, the position of the cooperative in its respective market and sector, and external factors like the health of the economy were not included in the operationalisation, these were added in my analysis because interviewees repeatedly mentioned them.

What was important in this research was that the workers in the cooperatives were not seen as a homogenous group. Therefore, I looked into how the social positions of the workers influenced their experience. I used the concept of intersectionality to be able to grasp how the overlap between

different social positions played out. Although the sample size of this research was not very big and there was not a lot of diversity between the workers, small differences between the workers, when it comes, for example, to work experience, caretaking roles, neurodiversity, or their form of education, already showed the importance of making the cooperatives accessible to different people. In order to make the cooperatives more accessible, first, people need to be able to invest time into the cooperative. Since worker cooperatives are governed democratically, every member can vote on certain issues like the finance plan. In order to be informed enough and be able to attend, people need time. Currently this time is limited in multiple ways, for example, because people have care tasks or are part of other democratic associations. In socialist theory and democratic governing structures, such as public-common partnerships, the larger ecosystem in which a worker cooperative in a socialist society would operate is mapped. But whilst these structures lay out how economic decisions can be made democratically, they rarely deal with the issue of bureaucratisation that is a consequence of democratisation. Researchers, activists and the cooperators could thus play an important role in conceptualising how to make the democratisation actually workable.

Second, this research suggests that people seem to fit better into worker cooperatives when they have certain characteristics, like being entrepreneurial and being able to treat your colleagues as equal. In our current society, these characteristics are not nurtured equally in everyone, which can make the cooperatives less accessible for certain people. Similar to what was found in the literature and other examples of worker cooperatives worldwide, discrimination and the dominance of cultural and societal hierarchies are not always addressed in the cooperatives. This can diminish the social benefits of worker cooperatives, which makes it crucial for socialist theory to address different societal inequalities.

The cooperatives could partly improve their accessibility by, for example, sensitizing the workers to how structural inequalities may prevent people from participating. Nevertheless, most of these structural inequalities are too large to counter at the cooperative level. Thus, on the one hand, social partners, like trade unions or social movements, have a role in enabling more people to choose worker cooperatives. On the other hand, institutions and organizations that are aimed at managers and business owners, like business administration courses or the VNO-NCW, should take their role in teaching their members to strive for equality in their teams and how to facilitate such a team instead of directing it. In worker cooperatives power is redistributed, this means that some need to be empowered, whilst others need to learn to take less power. For socialist theory, this means that the different elements of a democratic economy, such as cooperatives, should be made accessible to a wide range of workers. This entails, for example, that it is not only important to research 'what is a democratic economy?', but also 'how to make such a democratic economy?' because only by specifying this can we move more closely to a democratic

economy and address possible tensions.

Social concepts, like job security, are frequently used as descriptive concepts in relation to the current neoliberal state of the world. In this research I moved beyond the neoliberal paradigm to see how job security might be experienced in a different economic system. At the same time, socialist theory on the democratisation of the economy often forgets to research how such an economy would feel for the actual pluralistic workers. In this research I turned this relation around to see what benefits and obstacles different workers may encounter in a democratic enterprise and how socialist theory might anticipate this. Because it is never too early to build a well-functioning organisation of work, for when your life is no longer in the hands of your manager.

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Appendix

Appendix 1

First interviewguide (Elisa, Kim)

Blok 1 _ Intro persoon:

- Zou u uw naam en leeftijd kunnen noemen en vertellen over uw werkloopbaan tot nu toe? (7, 84,94)
- Hoe hebt u dat werk ervaren?
- Kunt u wat meer vertrellen over de grote veranderingen/keuzes daarin?
- Opleiding? (83, 106, 118)

Blok 2 – WCO -19

- U werkt sinds ... In deze wcp, zou u wat meer over deze wco kunnen vertellen en uw rol daarin? (9)
    - Rol cooperatieve waarden (63)
- Welke rol speelt de wcp in uw leven? (11, 41, 43, 71, 70)
    - Contract? (37), verschilt dat van de anderen? (66)
- Zou u wat meer kunnen vertellen hoe het loopt in deze wcp?
    - Hoe worden beslissingen gemaakt? (38)
        - Bestuur (27,28,29,30) + relatie bestuur – werkers (62)
        - Hoe zien vergaderingen eruit?/Wie spreekt?/Vervelende ervaringen?
        - Wat gebeurt bij spanningen?
        - Communicatie/transparantie?
        - Wat wordt wel/niet gediscussieerd? (10)
        - Hoeveel tijd bezig met besturen? (39, 40, 67)
        - Wat zijn de prioriteiten? (68, 56, 10)
            - Winst, gebruiksnut, duurzaamheid wco, planeet? (73-76)
- Gelijkwaardigheid?
    - Sommigen meer invloed? Wie, waarom? (16-20)
    - Letten jullie daarop? Speelt gender, achtergrond etc een rol in de wcp? (60)
- Doorstroom leden
    - Nieuwe leden gekregen? Hoe ging dat? Op zoek naar nieuwe leden? (12-15)
    - Zijn er leden vertrokkken? Waarom? Hoe? Vrijwillig? (57-58)
- Is de wcp veranderd? (33,34)
    - Doelen, Waardes, Trasparantie, Gesprek (63,32,77)

Blok 3 – Job(in)security - 13

- Denk je dat de wcp gaat veranderen in de toekomst? (47) Hoe? Hoezo?
    - Hoe zal het gaan met de banen (48, 54) Welke banen? Wiens banen?
    - (Wat) zijn de risisco's? Waarom? (49, 51, 72)
    - Kunnen jullie omgaan met deze verandering? (53)
    - Hoe voel je je over die verandering? (50)
    - Wie speelt rol in die verandering? Overheden? (78)
    - Positie WCP in samenleving? (69, 81)
        - Weerbaarheid wcp & werkers? (80, 72)
- Indiv – weerbaarheid eigen baan
    - Zou je deze baan willen houden? Waarom? (41-43)

- Maak je je daar zorgen over? Waarom (3, 4, 6, 123, 58)
  - Maakte je je daar bij eerdere banen zorgen over? (7)
- In hoeverre heb je het in je hand of je de baan houd? (8)
- Competitie (123)
- Baan in zelfde vorm houden? (1, 44)
- Hoeveel is deze baanzekerheid waard voor je? Waarom?
  - Tgo salaris, werkuren, inspraak? (45,46) Waarom?

<u>Second interviewguide (Madelief, Ronja, Til, Siep & Finn)</u>

Blok 1 _ Intro persoon:

- Zou u uw naam en leeftijd kunnen noemen en vertellen over uw werkloopbaan tot nu toe? (7, 84,94)
- Hoe hebt u dat werk ervaren?
- Kunt u wat meer vertrellen over de grote veranderingen/keuzes daarin?
- Opleiding? (83, 106, 118)

Blok 2 – WCP -19

- U werkt sinds ... In deze wcp, zou u wat meer over deze wco kunnen vertellen en uw rol daarin? (9)
  - Rol cooperatieve waarden (63)
  - Doel van de wcp
- Welke rol speelt de wcp in uw leven? (11, 41, 43, 71, 70)
  - Contract? (37), verschilt dat van anderen? (66)
  - Is dit anders dan bij eerder werk?
  - Kost deel zijn van een cooperatie meer tijd/energie/inspanning? Hoe ga je hier mee om?
- Zou u wat meer kunnen vertellen hoe het loopt in deze wcp?
  - Hoe worden beslissingen gemaakt? (38)
    - taakverdeling, bevorderingen, aansturing, sociale relaties
    - ~~Bestuur (27,28,29,30) + relatie bestuur – werkers (62)~~
    - Hoe zien vergaderingen eruit?/Wie spreek?/Vervelende ervaringen?
      - Ben jij bij alle vergaderingen geweest? Waarom niet?
      - Voelen die vergaderingen nuttig?
      - Wat vind je het meest verrassend aan de vergaderingen?
      - Ga je naar de trainingen? Waarom wel/niet?
      - Spreek je veel in de vergaderingen?
    - Wat gebeurt er als jullie het niet met elkaar eens zijn (spanningen)?
      - Besluiten met meerderheid/consensus?
      - Heb jij een keer een nieuwe idee ingebracht?
      - Heb je daarin iets geleerd over het leven en ervaringen van een ander?
    - Communicatie/transparantie?
    - Wat wordt wel/niet gediscussieerd? (10)
    - Hoeveel tijd bezig met besturen? (39, 40, 67)
    - Wat zijn de prioriteiten? (68, 56, 10) Bijvoorbeeld bij het opzetten van het jaarplan?
      - Winst, gebruiksnut, duurzaamheid wco, planeet? (73-76)
    - Er wordt nu een nieuwe WCP opgezet in Drenthe, wat zouden je tips aan hun

zijn?

- In jouw eravering worden jullie allemaal even veel gehoord in de WCP?
  - Hebben sommigen meer invloed? Wie, waarom? (16-20) Heb je daar een voorbeeld van?
  - Letten jullie daarop? Speelt gender, achtergrond etc een rol in de wcp? (60) —> Hoe letten jullie daarop?
  - Gelijkwaardig?
- Doorstroom leden
  - Nieuwe leden gekregen? Hoe ging dat? Op zoek naar nieuwe leden? (12-15)
  - Zijn er leden vertreokkken? Waarom? Hoe? Vrijwillig (57-58)
- Is de wcp veranderd? (33,34)
  - Doelen, Waardes, Trasparantie, Gesprek, Mensen, sfeer (63,32,77)
  - Heb je hier een voorbeeld van?

Blok 3 – Job(in)security - 13

- Denk je dat de wereld/omgeving zo gaat veranderen dat dit invloed heeft op de WCP?
- Denk je dat de wcp gaat veranderen in de toekomst? (47) Hoe? Hoezo?
  - (Wat) zijn de risisco's? Waarom? (49, 51, 72)
  - Kunnen jullie omgaan met deze verandering? (53)
  - Hoe voel je je over die verandering? (50)
  - Wie speelt rol in die verandering? Overheden? (78)
  - Positie WCP in samenleving? (69, 81) Is er steun voor de WCP?
    - Weerbaarheid wcp & werkers? (80, 72)
  - Hoe zal het gaan met de banen (48, 54) Welke banen? Wiens banen?
  - Hoe ging dit bij je eerdere werk?
- Individueel – weerbaarheid eigen baan
  - Zou je deze baan willen houden? Waarom? (41-43)
  - Maak je je daar zorgen over? Waarom (3, 4, 6, 123, 58)
    - Maakte je je daar bij eerdere banen zorgen over? (7)
  - In hoeverre heb je het in je hand of je de baan houd? (8)
  - Competitie (123)
    - Heb je het gevoel dat je voor jezelf kunt opkomen of dat er misschien allemaal anderen zijn die deze baan van je zouden overnemen als je teveel zou eisen van de cooperatie? Hoe was dit bij eerder werk?
  - Baan in zelfde vorm houden? (1, 44)
  - Hoeveel is deze baanzekerheid waard voor je? Waarom?
    - Tgo salaris, werkuren, inspraak? (45,46) Waarom?
    - Hoe verhoudt dit zich tot de grote verantwoordelijkheid die u draagt? Is dat vermoeiender? (mogelijk al eerder gevraagd)

Blok 4 – afsluiting

- Zijn er nog dingen of gevoelens waar ik nie naar heb gevraagd, die u graag zou willen delen?
- Nu we dit gesprek hebben gehad, kent u nog andere mensen of coöperaties die ik zou moeten of kunnen spreken?

<u>Interviewguide last interview (Daan)</u>

Blok 1 _ Intro persoon:

- Zou u uw naam en leeftijd kunnen noemen en vertellen over uw werkloopbaan tot nu toe?

(7, 84,94)

- Hoe hebt u dat werk ervaren?
- Kunt u wat meer vertrellen over de grote veranderingen/keuzes daarin?
- Opleiding? (83, 106, 118)
- Formele structuren: MT, Office manager?

Blok 2

1. U werkt sinds ... In deze wcp, zou u wat meer over grote veranderingen in die tijd? Bijvoorbeeld wetgeving, CAO, markt?
2. Hoe zijn jullie omgegaan met competitie? Was er tegenwerking vanuit een markt die anders werkt dan jullie?
3. Hebben jullie het al die tijd zelf gedaan? Was er begeleiding, inspiratie, netwerk?
4. Hoe zijn jullie omgegaan met onderlinge spanningen? Hoe ga je om met de mens achter de werker?
5. Hebben jullie mensen moeten ontslaan/laten gaan? Hoe ging dat?
6. In managersstructuren zitten ook veel zekerheidsmechanismen, Hoe kun je op een goede manier mensen verantwoordelijkheid laten dragen? Wat doe je op spannende momenten?
7. Bij andere wcp hoor je veel over flexibiliteit, aanpassen werk aan leven. Speelde dat bij jullie ook een rol?
8. Veel mensen die ik hierover spreek hebben het over een 'Type mens' dat zou passen binnen wcp, zie jij dat ook? Hoe zou je dat type mens omschrijven?
9. Denk je dat bij jullie genoeg aandacht was voor structurele ongelijkheid in de samenleving en hoe dat invloed had op jullie? Mensen met een andere naam worden minder snel aangenomen, vrouwen worden minder betaalt, Intersectionaliteit? Hoe zijn jullie hiermee omgegaan?

Appendix 2

Questions for the municipality of Zutphen (15 April)

1. Krijgt HG subsidie van de gemeente?
2. Waarom krijgt het deze wel of niet?
3. Welke voorwaarden stelt de gemeente aan HG?
4. Sinds wanneer werkt de gemeente samen met HG?
5. Zijn er openbare stukken hierover die ik kan inzien?

Interviewguide Helpgewoon Nederland - Frances (22 April)

Introductie:

- Bedanken voor gesprek
- Scriptie gaat over baanzekerheid en diverse leefervaringen in wcp
- Het doel van de scriptie is het op de kaart zetten van wat meer zeggenschap werknemers kan bieden en ook juist ruimte te bieden aan hoe de diversiteit van de werknemers deze ervaring kleurt. Ik ben bijvoorbeeld benieuwd of en hoe meer zeggenschap voor meer (baan)zekerheid zorgt en of eigenschappen zoals gender, opleidingsniveau en/of gezondheid hierin een rol spelen.
- Heb al met enkele leden van HG gesproken, maar ik had nog wat overkoepelende vragen en ook hoe HG NL functioneerd hierin
- Wilt u scriptie of flyer ontvangen?

    - Ga deze delen met o.a. FNV, snpi, cooperatieexpert
- Ik zal niet uw naam noemen, maar wel noemen als persoon binnen HG NL, is dat ok?
- Vind u het goed als ik het gesprek opneem?
- Nog vragen?
- Drie blokken: financien, rol baanzekerheid en diversiteit.

[start opname]

Blok 1 - Financien:

- Ik weet niet of jij ook over financie gaat, weet je anders iemand die ik kan spreken, die dit wel zou weten?
- Hoe wordt omgegaan met de winst binnen de cooperaties?
- De leden zijn eigenaar van de cooperatie, maar kan dit eigendom ook worden gemateraliseerd?
    - Hoe ziet dit er precies uit?
    - (bijv eigendomscertificaten, wat zijn dat precies?)
    - Vaak ook gerelgeld via een stichting, hoe en waarom is dat bij jullie anders?
    - Hoe zit het met het risico? Wie draag dat?
- "En bij een cooperatie ja dat moet je alles samen doen, want je hebt geen baas of manager. Of ja aan het eind heb je wel een eindbaas, maar daar heb je verder in de cooperatie niks mee te doen" —> wie is deze eindbaas?
- Ik hoorde dat er een jaarlijkse loonverhoging is voor de leden, maar dat zij niet zelf gaan over de lonen. Worden die lonen door jullie bepaald? Wordt dit dan doorberekend naar de wmo?
    - "ja ons uurloon liigenn wat hoger dan een normaal bedrijf. Omdat we geen manager hebben, waardoor ons uurloon wat hoger ligt. Ja en dan gaan een particulier zeggen, we gaan liever naar Pietje toe want die is goedkoper dan jullie zijn. En dat is logisch want dat zou iedereen zijn"
- Waar loop je als cooperatie tegen aan in NL? Wetten, financien, markt etc

Blok 2 - Baanzekerheid:

- Welke rol speelt het behoud van banen binnen helpgewoon?
    - Ik hoorde dat Winterswijk en Deventer zijn gestopt, weet jij wat met die banen is gebeurd?
    - Wat zie als de grootste risicos?
- Welke rol speelt baanzekerheid binnen helpgewoon?
    - Bieden jullie ontslag regeleling aan? Zit dit bijvoorbeeld in de trainingen?
    - Hoe zit dat met de CAO? Relatie tot deze regelingen die er al zijn?
    - Voorbeeld: "Ja mensen die allemaal zeggen ik ben druk en dit en dit, nou we hebben nu ook een collega, die heeft nu ook een 2de kindje kregen, die heeft best wel wat taken. Die kan nu even niet met haar bekkeninstabiliteit. Die heeft best wel veel taken, maar nog even geen clienten"
    - Mensen vanuit ziektewet blijven betrokken?

Blok 3 - Diversiteit:

- Besteden jullie als helppgewoon aandacht aan diversiteit?
    - Intern, missie, extern?
- Begeleiden jullie de cooperaties in de omgang met diversiteit en het zorgen voor gelijkwaardigheid?
    - Bijvoorbeeld ouders met kinderen, sociaal economische, racistische clienten

- Hoe gaat het met dagelijkse besturen?

Blok 4

- Als ik flyer heb gemaakt en gestuurd en jullie lijkt het interessant, kan ook zeker helpen bij trainingen hierover.
- Ik heb wat moeite met respondenten vinden.
  - Thuiszorg Amsterdam, Deventer, Twente, Utrecht, Zuid-Holland, Brabant, Drenthe lijken bij zelfde telefoonnummer uit te komen
  - Tips om hun te bereiken of respondenten te vinden?
  - Hoeveel cooperaties? 40? 17?
  - Vertegenwoordiger binnen HG NL

Appendix 3

Survey

Beste deelnemer,

Deze enquête is onderdeel van mijn scriptieonderzoek naar de ervaringen van baanzekerheid van werknemers in werknemerscoöperaties en hoe de diversiteit van de werknemers deze ervaring kleurt. Mijn hoofdvraag is hoe de diversiteit van ervaringen van baan(on)zekerheid van werknemers in Nederlandse werknemerscoöperaties, intersectionele socialistische theorie rondom het democratiseren van de werkvloer kan informeren. De resultaten van dit onderzoek worden gebruikt voor mijn afstudeeronderzoek van de master Human Geography (sociale geografie) aan de Radboud Universiteit in Nijmegen. Mijn onderzoek zal ik uiteindelijk delen met de FNV, de coöperatie expert en CECOP.

U kunt op elk moment de enquête stoppen zonder dat de resultaten worden opgeslagen, ook kunt u vragen overslaan of op een later moment vragen dat ik uw antwoorden verwijder. Uw antwoorden worden volledig anoniem verwerkt en uitsluitend gebruikt voor dit onderzoek. Enkele vragen kunnen als persoonlijk worden ervaren, deze zullen op geen moment terug herleidbaar naar u zijn. De enquête bestaat uit 16 vragen verdeeld over 3 stukken en het invullen hiervan duurt ongeveer 5-10 minuten.

Alvast heel erg bedankt voor het invullen, mocht u nog vragen hebben over het onderzoek kunt u contact opnemen met mij Noor IJpma, noor.ijpma@ru.nl of met mijn begeleider Arnoud Lagendijk, arnoud.lagendijk@ru.nl.

Het eerste stuk gaat over u als persoon.

Q1

Welke van deze opleidingen heeft u voltooid?

- [ ] Mavo/vmbo/lbo
- [ ] Havo
- [ ] Vwo
- [ ] Mbo/MTS
- [ ] Hbo/HTS
- [ ] WO
- [ ] Geen
- [ ] Dat deel ik liever niet

Q2

In hoeverre draagt u in uw dagelijkse leven zorg voor een ander, zoals een kind, ouder of bekende?

- ○ Dagelijks
- ○ Wekelijks
- ○ Maandelijks
- ○ Zelden
- ○ Nooit
- ○ Dat deel ik liever niet

Q3

Maakt u deel uit van een (culturele) minderheid (bijvoorbeeld op basis van uw religie, neurodivergentie of herkomst)? En zo ja, van welke?

Q4

In hoeverre heeft u in uw leven te maken gehad met discriminatie?

- ○ Dagelijks
- ○ Regelmatig
- ○ Soms
- ○ Zelden
- ○ Nooit
- ○ Dat deel ik liever niet

Q5

Op basis van welke kenmerken wordt of werd u gediscrimineerd?

Q6

Waar haalde u het afgelopen jaar uw inkomen uit?

- ☐ Uit werk, met een persoonlijk jaarlijks inkomen van onder de 20.000 euro
- ☐ Uit werk, met een persoonlijk jaarlijks inkomen van tussen de 20.000 euro en 50.000 euro
- ☐ Uit werk, met een persoonlijk jaarlijks inkomen van boven de 50.000 euro
- ☐ Uit mijn bezittingen (bijvoorbeeld door aandelen of het verhuren van huizen)
- ☐ Uit uitkeringen (bijvoorbeeld ook basisbeurs, AOW of WIA)
- ☐ (Uit toelagen) van familieleden of bekenden
- ☐ Anders, namelijk ...
- ☐ Dat deel ik liever niet

Het volgende stuk gaat over uw ervaring van baanzekerheid.

Q7

Hoe belangrijk is uw eigen baanzekerheid voor u?

- ○ Helemaal niet
- ○ Een klein beetje
- ○ Redelijk
- ○ In grotere mate
- ○ Heel erg
- ○ Weet ik niet/dat deel ik liever niet

Q8

Zou u (kort) kunnen uitleggen waarom baanzekerheid wel of niet belangrijk voor u is?

Q9

In hoeverre ervaart u baanzekerheid over uw baan in de werknemerscoöperatie?

- ○ Heel veel
- ○ Veel
- ○ Redelijk
- ○ Nauwelijks
- ○ Helemaal niet
- ○ Weet ik niet/dat deel ik liever niet

Q10

Welke factoren versterken uw gevoel van baanzekerheid in de werknemerscoöperatie?

- [ ] Personeelstekort in mijn sector
- [ ] Transparantie over de processen in de coöperatie
- [ ] Ik ken de mensen in de coöperatie
- [ ] Er zijn minder strenge regels
- [ ] Er is meer flexibiliteit
- [ ] Ik kan mijn werk zelf invullen
- [ ] We bepalen samen wat er in de coöperatie gebeurt
- [ ] Anders, namelijk
- [ ] Niet van toepassing

Q11

Welke factoren verzwakken uw gevoel van baanzekerheid in de werknemerscoöperatie?

- [ ] Er zijn onderlinge spanningen
- [ ] Ik pas niet goed bij de mensen in de coöperatie
- [ ] De werknemerscoöperatie past niet goed bij hoe ik graag werk
- [ ] Er zijn minder duidelijk regels
- [ ] Er zijn te strenge regels
- [ ] Het voortbestaan van de coöperatie is onzeker, omdat wetten veranderen
- [ ] Het voortbestaan van de coöperatie is onzeker, omdat er veel concurrentie is
- [ ] Het voortbestaan van de coöperatie is om andere redenen onzeker, namelijk
- [ ] Anders, namelijk
- [ ] Niet van toepassing

Het laatste stuk gaat over de rol die baanzekerheid speelt in de werknemerscoöperatie.

Q12

In hoeverre vind u de baanzekerheid van uw collega's binnen de werknemerscoöperatie belangrijk? En waarom wel of niet?

Q13

In hoeverre heeft u het gevoel dat de baanzekerheid van uw collega's wordt bedreigd?

- ○ Heel erg
- ○ Erg
- ○ Redelijk
- ○ Nauwelijks
- ○ Niet
- ○ Weet ik niet/dat deel ik liever niet

Q14

Welke van de onderstaande belangen spelen mee in de besluitvorming binnen uw werknemerscoöperatie?

- ☐ Financiële stabiliteit van de coöperatie
- ☐ Het maken van winst met de coöperatie
- ☐ Maatschappelijke waarde van de coöperatie (hoe erg jullie anderen helpen)
- ☐ Baanzekerheid van de werknemers/leden
- ☐ Eerlijke omgang met werknemers/leden
- ☐ Hogere lonen
- ☐ Anders, namelijk
- ☐ Weet ik niet/dat deel ik liever niet



Heel erg bedankt voor het invullen van deze enquête. Door op het pijltje te drukken, wordt de enquête verstuurd. Als u nog vragen of opmerkingen heeft over deze enquête of dit onderzoek kunt u terecht bij Noor IJpma, noor.ijpma@ru.nl.