

Foreword

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Sufficiency is a concept that is becoming ever more important in developing nations to come to sufficient levels of health, education and nutrition for all, and in developed nations, to start addressing unsustainable levels of consumption. In this way, sufficiency is at the heart of sustainable development. However, the world is on fire, and at the time of writing in autumn 2023, 6 out of 9 planetary boundaries have been crossed (Richardson et al. 2023). And still, we do not yet have a concrete plan to break through business as usual.

The way in which products and services are produced and consumed drives our global footprints. From a business perspective, this can be captured conceptually in a “business model”, which provides an overview of how a business proposes value; creates and delivers this value and captures financial and other forms of value, preferably in a sustainable way. The business model lens therefore has the potential to break through unsustainable production and consumption patterns.

In the now popular area of the circular economy, we coined the resource strategies of narrowing the loop (using less resources per product and using less in general), closing the loop (in essence, recycling), slowing the loop (extending the life of products) and regenerating loops (improving natural resources). While the closing the loop model is still the most common circular business strategy, ample research has shown that we cannot recycle ourselves out of the environmental crisis, as recycling uses energy, exacerbating carbon emissions and cannot continue perpetually because of material degradation.

One solution would lie in pursuing a *sufficiency-driven business model* – the ultimate type of business model to counteract unsustainable consumption. This idea emerged from the observation that not all businesses had the typical “take-make-waste” linear model based on planned obsolescence but quite the opposite. Mark Adams, Managing Director of furniture company Vitsœ talks about his company enabling: “Living with Less that Lasts Longer”. Outdoor company Patagonia asks us to not buy stuff at all or to buy second-hand where possible. Inspiring examples led us to conceptualize a sufficiency-oriented business model.

Sufficiency in business might sound like an oxymoron but there are many opportunities to create value in a more *sufficient* way. These would include longer last-

ing and durable products, offering quality over quantity, designing for upgrading and multiple life cycles, offering second-hand or vintage marketplaces, frugal innovations, offering alternatives to materialistic consumption and services rather than products.

While this idea of *sufficiency in business* stimulated discussions on desirability, feasibility and viability, on top of the long-term concerns about *the economy* if we were to consume less, I am happy to see that Sufficiency in Business is now an important theme in business and academia.

The editors of this book have taken on the challenge to bring together different perspectives on Sufficiency in Business. It is almost impossible to do this type of research without a personal conviction to make a change in the world. Maike Gossen and Laura Niessen have created their own strong voices in shaping the *sufficiency debate* and how business could play a role in this. Sufficiency in Business is no longer a term to shy away from but a topic to investigate, debate and put in practice. On the macro-economic scale, debates about degrowth and alternative forms of valuing the world around us, beyond the economic, are continuing to take shape.

Some final words from others that find themselves on a sufficiency journey and feel insecure about the future – a word of wisdom borrowed from American computer scientist Alan Kay: “The best way to predict the future is to invent it!” So let us all try and contribute to this positive future.

References

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