A Taxonomy of Corporate Sufficiency Strategies

Exploring Driving Factors for Sufficiency in Business

Christel Maurer

Abstract *This chapter develops a systematic approach to corporate sufficiency. It emphasizes purpose-driven sufficiency approaches beyond sustainability, as well as the role of entrepreneurs. It turns out that the literature contains inconsistent examples of sufficiency and that the range and intentions of sufficiency strategies that are not based on sustainability is underestimated.*

1. Introduction

This chapter is written from a practitioner perspective. It is based on a methodological premise: Certain questions within sustainability-oriented business studies are dealt with in the context of theoretical or social-empirical research, which can be usefully supplemented by systematically evaluated practical experience. Complete perspectives on ambiguous phenomena, such as entrepreneurial sufficiency, can only be developed through combinating scientific methods and practical experiences, a combination that resembles a transdisciplinary approach. Contrary to what is presented in most of the literature, the ambiguity of the sufficiency principle results from the fact that the underlying intention can be more or less independent of sustainability concerns.

The sufficiency debate in the corporate sector is still very young and incomplete. At the corporate level, the literature primarily justifies sufficiency with pressure for change towards sustainability (Jungell-Michelsson/Heikkurinen 2022). This focus is derived from measures based on efficiency and consistency not being sufficient to lessen the burden on the ecosphere, making sufficiency essential (see, for example, Beyeler/Jaeger-Erben 2022). The latter thus becomes part of sustainability management (Bocken/Short 2016).

Considerable definitional ambiguities are conspicuous here. Sufficiency strategies in companies are often classified according to the categories proposed by Sachs (1993) or Schneidewind/Palzkill (2011): decluttering, decelerating, disentangling and decommercialization. Decelerating and decluttering are difficult to distinguish since the deceleration of a process also reduces output, i.e. deceleration only represents another perspective of decluttering. Furthermore, disentangling does not necessarily have to lead to limiting activities because local/regional supply chains can also be geared towards maximizing surpluses. Moreover, decommercializing is more likely to be associated with subsistence than with sufficiency and, in the literature, sufficiency often covers phenomena that can hardly be distinguished from efficiency aspects.

This efficiency aspect has been covered in many ways in the literature. For example, sharing (see, for example, Schneidewind/Palzkill-Vorbeck 2011, Bocken/Short 2016) does not reduce transport demand but merely leads to more efficient satisfaction. Freudenreich and Schaltegger (2020) point out that "consumers using car-sharing services do not necessarily drive fewer miles but that about a quarter sell their personal vehicles and about half avoid an intended car purchase" (2). Further examples in this vein are energy-contracting services considered as sufficiency by Schneidewind and Palzkill-Vorbeck (2011) and Beyeler and Jaeger-Erben (2022) and open source services classified as sufficiency by Niessen and Bocken (2021), which are all efficiency measures that can even lead to an increase in demand and thus in output under certain conditions (rebound effect). Moreover, the purchase of eco-friendly products and services associated with sufficiency by Bocken et al. (2022) corresponds either with efficiency or consistency solutions. Niessen and Bocken (2021) refer to (sustainable) awareness-raising and Bocken et al. (2022) to corresponding rethinking as sufficiency, presupposing that it could be ruled out that both only lead to efficiency or consistency measures.

Without a plausible demarcation, the potentials of sufficiency cannot be fathomed because they do not extend beyond a relabeling of efficiency or consistency measures. The example of car sharing is instructive here: If an annual mileage of 10,000 km is travelled by car sharing instead of with one's own car and this is described as sufficiency, how should the halving of the mileage – regardless of the means by which the 5,000 km are travelled – be classified? This far more purposeful potential, reduction instead of pure optimization, would then not be included although it is precisely where the core of the sufficiency principle should lie.

The sufficiency principle cannot be specified without emphasizing its reductive character. For this reason, sufficiency is defined in this book chapter as "targeted and substitution-free omission" (Folkers/Paech 2020: 143), which can take effect at three levels:

- Self-limitation of an achieved level of supply, although options for its quantitative or qualitative increases would be available and fundable [...],

- Reduction of a certain level of aspiration, without completely eradicating the activity in question [...],
- Complete renunciation of an option [...] (ibid: 143).

The fact that sufficiency has so far been dealt with primarily in the context of sustainability gives rise to a second problem, which is the focus of this paper: Motivations for corporate sufficiency strategies beyond ecological concerns (see, for example, Bocken et al. 2022, Gossen et al. 2019) are generally neglected. This disregard does not change the fact that differentiation of sufficiency strategies in companies is increasing (Jungell-Michelsson/Heikkurinen 2022 and, for example, Beyeler/Jaeger-Erben 2022). Sufficiency measures can enable the pursuit of a specific purpose or patterns of action that are perceived as meaningful without directly aiming at sustainability (Maurer 2019). Scherhorn (2015) and Princen (2003), among others, have already pointed to sufficiency logics that are not necessarily located in the sustainability context. These remarks give rise to the following questions:

a) At which levels in companies are sufficiency strategies applied and how can the latter be systematized from a business management perspective?
b) What sufficiency strategies beyond ecological sustainability can be identified?
c) What role do entrepreneurs play in the use of corporate sufficiency strategies?

The chapter is structured as follows. In the following (2), possible goals and motives for sufficiency strategies in companies are presented and then (3) the role of entrepreneurs and the purpose of sufficiency in companies are discussed. In (4), the empirical approach is described, and based on that, in (5), a taxonomy of entrepreneurial sufficiency is presented together with some selected business cases of sufficiency strategies that can be classified as purpose-motivated. The chapter concludes with (6) a discussion and (7) a conclusion.

2. Possible goals and motives for corporate sufficiency

Sufficiency in business can be attributed to different motivational situations: Scherhorn (2015) does not speak of motives but mentions economy-, ecology-, society and quality-related goals with regard to limiting growth. In a systematic literature review, Gossen et al. (2019) distinguish "a societal demand to pursue sufficiency as an external perspective for companies, and a company-internal perspective on altruistic and strategic motives" (7) for sufficiency-promoting marketing. Jäger (2022) differentiates between motives of sufficiency "in three dimensions of sustainability: ecological motivation, social motivation and economic motivation" as well as "ideals as normative attitudes of companies" (35). Economic constraints can also lead to sufficiency strategies. Schneidewind and Palzkill-Vorbeck (2011) describe how the Danish logistics company Maersk extended the duration of transport by sea in times of declining turnover and, at the same time, reduced fuel consumption, thereby reducing CO_2 emissions and allowing this entrepreneurially critical situation to be overcome. Paech (2016) points out that sufficiency strategies can increase resilience. In addition, Folkers and Paech (2020) emphasize a time-economy aspect and thus "sufficiency as a prerequisite for successful consumption" (168). Using a time-economical approach, they explain that sufficiency can protect against overstimulation and excessive demands.

Often it may be a combination of different motives that leads to sufficiency in entrepreneurial activities. Sufficiency may be a consequence of an entrepreneur following his or her purpose, which can also be understood as an expression of inner abundance on the part of the entrepreneur (Maurer 2019). This aspect raises the following question: How can the management of a company be combined with a lifestyle that is not fed by material abundance or the maximization of surpluses but rather derives from a wise desire (Reheis 1998) and leaves out the superfluous in order to concentrate on the essential?[1] This lifestyle has the potential to increase "life satisfaction and meaning through focusing on non-material aspects of life" (Gossen et al. 2019: 2). To do justice to the diversity of possible (goals and) motives for sufficiency, the following categorization is suitable. It can also be found in a similar form in Gossen et al. (2019):

- Ecological sustainability;
- Economic factors (quality of products, services and corporate culture, employee satisfaction, resilience);
- Exogenous factors such as reactions to crises, political interventions, or social demands;
- Individual inclinations or a preference for extended scope for development that cannot (or need not) be justified either ecologically or economically, which does not rule out the possibility that this development may also have ecologically positive side effects.

3. The role of entrepreneurs and purpose for corporate sufficiency

One premise of this chapter is that the actions of entrepreneurs – especially in the case of owner-managed firms – cannot be represented exclusively as classic ratio-

1 Also interesting at this point is the concept of eudaimonia as formulated by Aristotle, a state that is inadequately described as bliss (Ryff 1989). "Eudaimonism refers to a person's efforts to recognise and live in accordance with the 'true self'[…]" (Waterman 1981: 764).

nal behavior. The motivation of entrepreneurs is not limited to striving for surplus maximization: a rich scene of purpose-oriented corporate models has been emerging next to the models of the market-dominating corporations (Zeyen/Beckmann 2019).

Schumpeter (2006 [1912]) distinguishes different motives of entrepreneurial activity. One is to strive for prestige and profit and is thus related to the classic idea of rational behavior. Another, which he considers no less relevant, is the motive to create something new and be active "for the joy of creative design" (138). He also presents this form of entrepreneurial action as "creating for the joy of what is created" (142). In a similar vein, Sennett (2008) describes how some people are devoted to their work for their own sake and measure their success by the quality of the values or objects they create, instead of seeing their activities only as a means to the end of achieving the highest possible market value.

Recent approaches, such as "soulful entrepreneurship" and entrepreneurship that focuses on purpose – the raison d'être of an entrepreneur and his or her company – describe how this orientation is changing the way companies are managed (Bruce/Jeromin 2020; Maurer 2017). At the same time, a distinction must be made between a person's personal purpose and a company's corporate purpose. The personal purpose can be described as a specific type of vocation – or calling – toward which the individual's actions are oriented. This purpose can manifest itself in individuals feeling a pronounced desire or strong inner drive to dedicate themselves to a particular idea or task and to implement it. Hirschi (2012) outlines vocation as "a consuming, meaningful passion for a particular career domain or work that a person perceives as her or his purpose in life" (479). Zeyen and Beckmann (2019) have elaborated on the significance of vocation for purpose-oriented entrepreneurs, who, on the one hand, pursue economic goals but, on the other, attach a greater meaning to their actions that sometimes also involve taking on societal responsibility.

In science and in practice, no uniform definition of corporate purpose has emerged. Here, I rely on the definition by Bruce and Jeromin (2020), according to which "the corporate purpose is the higher purpose of a company that goes beyond the sole profit orientation" (23). This definition is used here to define and deliver on a long-term value-creating promise, either in the company's local environment or in the global market environment directly related to the company's value creation. I posit that owner-managed companies and their entrepreneurs, can reach their potential if the corporate and personal purpose are identical. Ideally, even in non-owner-managed companies, the personal purpose of the management should be in harmony with the corporate purpose so that the people involved, and thus also the company, can develop and use their potential to the greatest extent. This relationship also applies to the employees of a company.

If the position of Bruce and Jeromin (2020) were to be followed, indicating that corporate purpose should have a greater influence on corporate governance than financial figures, there would be a turn-around in the means-purpose relationship in terms of why a company was founded and how it is managed. A conventional entrepreneur implements a business idea in order to make a profit. A purpose-oriented entrepreneur is primarily concerned with placing a purpose that goes beyond profit at the center of entrepreneurial action. The profit that results from any business activities is used to further the purpose-based business idea rather than to maximize profit. The related actions mean that, for entrepreneurs, intrinsic motives can play a more significant role than extrinsic ones based on economic incentives.

Life and work satisfaction is higher among entrepreneurs who follow their vocation (Zeyen/Beckmann 2019). It can be assumed that this satisfaction is accompanied by a sense of fulfilment in the face of meaningful activities beyond pure profit maximization. Finding fulfilment or self-efficacy in the pursuit of higher-level goals means not needing compensatory satisfaction in the form of economic or consumerist goals. Gronemeyer (2009 [2002]: 20) argues for distinguishing between "true" and "false" needs. It could be that entrepreneurs face this tension in order to follow an independent preference that can be classified as an individual vocation. The related decision-making and patterns of actions can be so satisfying that they replace – or at least reduce – conventional material desires. This satisfaction point is precisely where a gate towards entrepreneurial sufficiency opens (Maurer 2019), which is perceived not as a sacrifice but as inner abundance, life satisfaction and the creation of meaning (Gossen et al. 2019).

It is not surprising that, in their analysis of 150 companies that applied sufficiency strategies, Bocken et al. (2022) found a great number of family businesses, while large companies were significantly less represented. This difference may be due to large companies being subject to greater constraints to orient themselves towards short-term profit orientation. However, it is also not insignificant that, in such companies, where CEOs often change frequently, there is a lack of a personality that pursues and implements a pronounced purpose orientation. The example of Patagonia shows how things could be different in that the founder still shapes the company's direction.

In recent years, a reorientation of the role of companies in society can be observed. In 2019, for example, the Business Roundtable, an association of large companies in the USA, announced a move away from focusing solely on shareholder value, intending to focus additionally on stakeholder value in the future (Murray 2019). As Murray notes, even if it is debatable how serious these proclamations are, they nevertheless send a signal. At the same time, purpose orientation is gaining in importance. Even Fink (2018), CEO and Chairman of BlackRock, states:

> "the public expectations of your company have never been greater [...] every company must not only deliver financial performance, but also show how it makes a positive contribution to society. [...] Without a sense of purpose, no company, either public or private, can achieve its full potential, if the corporate purpose is based on the personal purpose of the owner." (1).

The Enacting Purpose Initiative[2], founded in 2020, aims to "establish best practice purpose governance, globally" (Enacting Purpose Initiative 2021) and works together with numerous companies to this end. These remarks raise the question of how consistently the alignment with a higher corporate purpose is pursued or whether it is a case of purpose-washing in the sense of a marketing strategy (Willan 2020). Nevertheless, it is to be expected that pioneering companies, investors, customers and employees will increasingly influence companies to align themselves towards a higher purpose. In this context, the question of how the purpose orientation of a company is measured, in terms of indicators and reporting, is also gaining in importance (Barby et al. 2021; Stroehle et al. 2022).

4. Method

The method of this study approach comprises two stages, the first of which consists of an identification of corporate sufficiency measures, taking into account the definitions and extensions of possible motivations presented above. This first stage of analysis results in a taxonomy, which is presented in the next section. In the first stage of the analysis, there were indications for some of the identified business cases that the motive of individual inclinations plays a relevant role. These cases are examined in more detail in the second stage of the analysis.

Selection of companies (Section 5.1 and 5.2)

The practical perspective, especially in the field of management consultancy, not only provides insights into phenomena that often remain closed to distanced scientific observation. It has network structures through which special cases can be recognized in the first place. The cases presented come from the business environment of the author, who works as a management consultant. Further cases were identified through research (available documents, company websites), a literature review and, in one case, through a suggestion from someone else[3]. In section 5.2, only busi-

2 "The Enacting Purpose Initiative is a multi-institution partnership between the University of Oxford, the University of California Berkeley, BCG BrightHouse, EOS at Federated Hermes and the British Academy" (Enacting Purpose Initiative 2021).

3 The business case Schatzalp Slow Mountain was pointed out by Jonathan Eiser, together with fellow students of business administration, on the course at the University of St. Gallen

ness cases that correspond with motive category d) have been selected as described above, i.e. are based on individual inclinations or preferences of the management for extended scope for development that cannot (or do not have to) be justified either economically or ecologically.

Data collection for selected business cases (Section 5.2)

The results were obtained through guideline-based expert interviews (Helfferich 2011) conducted with the entrepreneurs, with the exception of Elektrizitätswerke Schönau, as sufficient information is available for this case. In addition, there was correspondence with one of the managing directors. The expert interviews took place between winter 2014 and autumn 2016, with further interviews in autumn 2018/winter 2019 and spring/summer 2023, also to update previously collected data.

Evaluation of selected business cases (Section 5.2)

The interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed. Subsequently, they were analyzed inductively in four steps using "thematic analysis" (Braun/Clarke 2006; Braun/Clarke 2021). First, codes were generated from the transcripts of the interviews. These codes were then categorised and themes were formed on the basis of the categories. In the final step, the themes were checked for content consistency. In this way, three themes were generated on which the description of the business cases is based. Before these themes are applied to analyze a selection of business cases (section 5.2), an overview of the entire range of sufficiency strategies will be provided.

5. Empirical results

5.1 Taxonomy of sufficiency in business

The following is a taxonomy of corporate sufficiency strategies. Corporate sufficiency involves not only measures to limit capacity but also measures to limit monetary demands. Both can have a direct or indirect impact. Corporate sufficiency can lead to a reductive impact directly via certain target variables (e.g., profit) or indirectly via certain levels of action (e.g., legal form).

'Transformatik – Grundlagen einer neuen Lehre des Wandels' (Transformations – Foundations of a New Teaching of Change) by Prof. Dr. Jörg Metelmann and Dr. Björn Müller, where I gave a lecture in the winter semester of 2022/23.

Figure 1: Taxonomy of corporate sufficiency strategies.

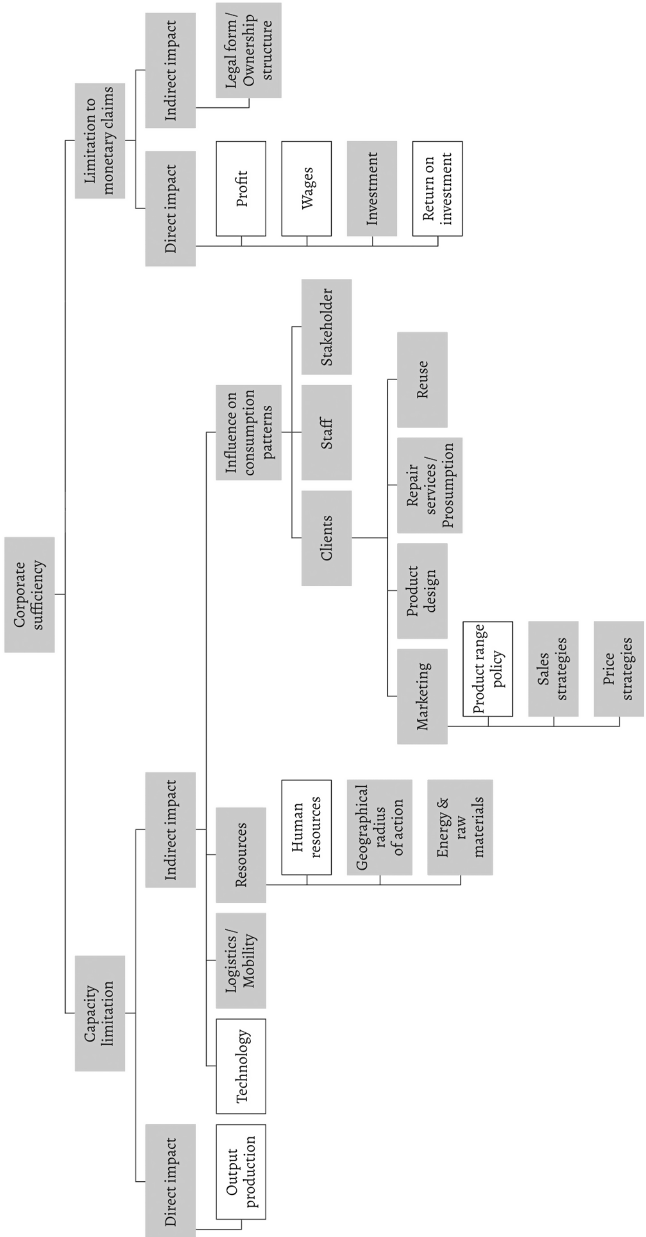

Figure 1 shows all the identified targets and levels of action for sufficiency in companies, which are based on the four motive levels described above. The white boxes indicate the target values and action levels that are described in more detail in the business cases with the corresponding sufficiency strategies from section 5.2 onwards.

Table 1 shows all the target values and action levels shown in Figure 1 with the identified sufficiency strategies and the companies that apply them.

Table 1: Overview of the aims or actions in sufficiency strategies

Target values or action levels	**Sufficiency strategy**	**Associated business case**
Production	**Limiting output**	Neue Holzforum AG, CH
Technology	**Limiting technical means**	Schatzalp Slow Mountain (Berghotel Schatzalp AG), CH
Logistics/Mobility	**Limiting logistics & fossil fuel-based mobility**	Teikei Coffee, GER
Human Resources	**Limiting the number of employees**	Ruprecht Möbeldesign GmbH, CH
Geographical radius of action	**Limiting the geographical operating area**	BBO Bank Brienz Oberhasli AG, CH
Energy & raw materials	**Limiting consumption of energy and resources**	Schweizerische Bundesbahnen AG, CH
Marketing	**Limiting marketing**	Bio Company SE, GER
Product design	**Using product design measures**	Grüne Erde GmbH, A
Product range policy	**Limiting product range policy**	Karl Siegel Vertriebs-GmbH & Co.KG, Brand Rymhart, GER
Sales strategies	**Adjusting choice of sales strategies**	Vitsœ Limited, UK (Bocken/Short 2016)
Price setting	**Using pricing measures**	Vitsœ Limited, UK (Bocken 2017)
Repair services/Prosumption	**Using repair services and/or prosumption**	Nudie Jeans Marketing AB, SWE (Bocken et al. 2022)
Reuse	**Using reuse**	Revendo AG, CH
Staff	**Promoting sufficiency practices among employees**	Standort Achim, DE, of Norsk Hydro ASA, NOR

Stakeholder	**Promoting sufficiency practices by collaboration with stakeholder**	Ebay Inc., USA, with iFixit, USA (Bocken/Short 2016)
Profit	**Limiting profits**	Premium, GER
Wages	**Limiting entrepreneurial wages**	Länggass Tee AG, CH
Investments	**Limiting investments**	Elephant Box Stainless Steel Limited, UK (Bocken et al. 2022)
Return on investment	**Limiting shareholders' profit expectations**	EWS Elektrizitätswerke Schönau e.G., GER
Legal form/ Ownership structure	**Adjusting choice of legal form or ownership structure**	Patagonia Inc., USA

5.2 Business cases

For reasons of space, the business cases described in more detail only deal with those cases that can be associated with motive category d) described at the end of section 2 (i.e. with individual inclinations or a preference for extended scope for development that cannot (need not) be justified either economically or ecologically, which does not rule out ecologically and economically positive effects occurring as a side effect).

For the following case analyses, the method described in section 4 was applied. The description of the selected cases is based on the three extracted themes, which are formulated as questions in the following:

a) On which of the three sufficiency levels mentioned in section 1 can the effect of the measure be located?
b) Can the main motive be assigned to category d) described above?
c) How do the companies manage to remain economically viable and stable in the long term?

5.2.1 Sufficiency by limiting output

(Capacity limitation with direct impact)
Business case: Neue Holzforum AG, Bern, CH

The company is considered a pioneer of modern timber construction in Switzerland. The buildings, designed using digital planning technology, are erected using a timber frame construction.

A) Markus Mosimann, owner of the company, distances himself from the prevailing growth paradigm, which he considers problematic due to his own experience with the bankruptcy of his first company. With his company, founded in 1998, he has not aimed for any further quantitative growth since completing a start-up phase, which corresponds to a sufficiency strategy also described by Beyeler and Jaeger-Erben (2022), namely to "produce less by choice" (ibid: 12). In the spirit of self-restraint, an upper limit is set on the number of houses produced each year, which corresponds to the sufficiency level of self-limitation.

B) Markus Mosimann states his intention is to develop an "optimal house". He voices three entrepreneurial goals, first, to constantly increase the quality of his products and services, especially through developing an "optimal house"; second, to create above-average working conditions for the current 13 employees; third, by limiting his output, to hopefully achieve a lifestyle that meets his needs for personal development and his convictions (Mosimann/Lettau 2012).

C) The intensive focus is on quality results and high customer satisfaction. The resulting reputation effect is reflected in recommendations, which lead to a stable order situation. Furthermore, financial and organizational risks are avoided through self-limitation.

5.2.2 Sufficiency by limiting technical means

(*Capacity limitation with indirect effect*)
Business case: Schatzalp Slow Mountain, Berghotel Schatzalp AG, Davos, CH

The entrepreneurs Pius App and Erich Schmid opened the Schatzalp ski area as a 'slow mountain' area at the end of 2009. This comparatively high-altitude and relatively snow-sure ski area is run in conjunction with a hotel that has been acquired by the entrepreneurs. Schatzalp Slow Mountain is frequented mainly by families and older people because the slopes are skied at a slower pace and there are only as many accidents during a season as there are elsewhere in a single day.

A) The company renovated the existing chairlift and one draglift without replacing them with more modern and faster gondola lifts. They also refrain from using artificial snow from snow cannons, which is why the lifts may open later in the ski season and/or close earlier if the amount of snow available is not sufficient for operation. In this way, profit losses are consciously accepted in order to offer, as Pius App puts it, "… a contemplative counter-model […] to the 'ever faster', 'ever more hectic' and 'ever more crowded' of today's winter sports arenas – a ski area in which sport and recreation can be combined" (Fitzthum 2020: 1), which corresponds to the sufficiency level of reduction.

B) The company strives to create a ski resort where winter sport enthusiasts find natural snow on slopes that are less frequented due to the lower capacity of the lifts (Schatzalp 2023).

C) Through the unconventional business model, the ski area achieves awareness and covers a niche need. In addition to the high altitude and snow-sure location, other factors are relevant for survivability. For example, the hotel and the ski resort are aimed at the same target group, which makes both more attractive. According to one of the founders, alternative skiing areas are also important for securing survival, making it possible to use a combination of conventional slopes and those of the Slow Mountain area on different days. Furthermore, the moderate profit expectation contributes to the profitability of this business model (here the sufficiency strategy of moderation in profit (see section 5.2.5) is applied).

5.2.3 Sufficiency by limiting company size regarding the number of employees

(Capacity limitation with indirect effect – sufficiency through the limitation of resources)
Business case: Ruprecht Möbeldesign GmbH, Wengi, CH

The company Ruprecht Möbeldesign offers high-quality carpentry work for furniture, kitchens and interior design. The owner Martin Ruprecht, who founded the company in 1994, rejects mass-produced work and has created working conditions that clearly stand out from the industry average in terms of quality.

A) Martin Ruprecht limits the number of employees (nine people), most of whom work part-time, in order to meet the desired quality level. This sufficiency strategy, which is also mentioned by Beyeler/Jaeger-Erben (2022), corresponds to the level of self-limitation.

B) The manager strives to ensure that he and the employees enjoy their work and that the customers are more than satisfied. Together with his employees, he focuses on excellent work and customer service and attaches great importance to the corporate culture. The employees are given freedom to design and are involved, for example, in the conception of furnishings and furniture. Like their boss, the employees are entitled to seven weeks of holiday[44] and receive a higher salary than is customary in the industry. The employees' dedication has a positive effect on the quality of their work and customer satisfaction is high due to the above-average quality of customer service.

C) Due to the high quality of the products and services and the resulting high customer satisfaction, the company enjoys a high level of reputation and is often recommended to others. Customers are willing to pay higher prices for the high-quality products, as described by Bocken/Short (2016), which is why the company has been able to avoid participating in price-squeezing public tenders for many years.

4 In Switzerland, 4 to 5 weeks of holiday are common for the age group concerned.

5.2.4 Sufficiency by product range policy

(Capacity limitation with indirect effect – Sufficiency through the limitation of consumption – influencing consumption patterns – marketing measures)

Business case: Karl Siegel Vertriebs-GmbH & Co.KG, Brand Rymhart, Stade, GER

The family business Karl Siegel Vertriebs-GmbH & Co.KG was founded in 1948, is now run by the fourth generation and currently employs around 35 people. Until winter 2021/2022, the company produced knitwear under a different brand. The brand Rymhart was launched in 2011 following the idea to produce high-quality, weatherproof outdoor clothing in the form of knitwear.

A) The key characteristic of Rymhart is its extremely limited product range in the textile sector of highest quality (woollen jumpers, hats, T-shirts), combined with a classic and timeless design (an additional strategy: sufficiency through product design, as described, for example, by Freudenreich/Schaltegger 2022). The sufficiency strategy of limitation of the range of products and services, which in business management terms can be attributed to marketing, corresponds to the sufficiency level of reduction described above in this business case. Bocken/Short (2016) depict this sufficiency strategy as concentrating on products of the highest quality, while Schneidewind and Palzkill (2011) speak of streamlining a product range.

B) Karl-Frank Siegel, the managing director, strives to produce garments that people really need. The few things that are really necessary should be loved by the customers because of the quality. Accordingly, the company is not satisfied simply with an ecologically sustainable product and service design but also generates outstanding quality and product responsibility, which results in above-average customer satisfaction. It would be more economical not to aim for this high standard. The company produces on site and offers repairs, refurbishing and alterations to extend the life cycle of the textiles (here, further sufficiency strategies are used: limiting the radius of action with regard to production as well as offering repair services [Niessen/Bocken 2021]). This approach creates an intensive relationship between user and product (Beyeler/Jaeger-Erben 2022).

C) The company hardly invests in advertising (another sufficiency strategy with regard to marketing measures used [Gossen et al. 2019; Gossen/Kropfeld 2022]). The high level of customer satisfaction, which is confirmed by positive feedback on the company's website, means that, according to the managing director, 65 to 70 per cent of new customers can be attributed to recommendations. Product-related services such as repairs and refurbishing also contribute to the conspicuously high reputation.

5.2.5 Sufficiency through moderate profits

(Limitation of monetary claims with direct impact)
Business case: Premium, Hamburg, GER

Beyeler/Jaeger-Erben (2022) assert, "even though sufficiency practitioners are not primarily oriented toward profit maximization, it does not mean that sufficiency does not generate revenues" (16). Such practitioners implement their strategies by primarily committing to the corporate purpose and not putting profit orientation at the center of their actions (Beyeler/Jaeger-Erben 2022). The following business case implements this sufficiency strategy in a radical form. Uwe Lübbermann founded Premium in Hamburg in 2001. The company produces and distributes various beverages.

A) Together with the Premium Collective, Uwe Lübbermann pursues an unconventional form of business management. Among other things, the company explicitly aims to make no profit, which corresponds to the sufficiency strategy level of complete renunciation of any profit option. Lübbermann considers that the "Premium-Kollektiv", as the company now calls itself, must have made a mistake if a profit was made because someone then apparently had too much money taken out of their pocket. When calculating the bottle prices, an amount for reserves in times of crisis is included but no profit share. Nevertheless, a profit was made several times in the company's history. This repeatedly resulted in prices being lowered.

B) The main motive for founding and developing the company was to show that a company can be run fairly and "politically correctly" and still survive on the market. Uwe Lübbermann even claims that the actual product is the "operating system" of the Premium Collective. The drinks produced are only a means to an end; something completely different could also be produced (Lübbermann/Herberhold 2021). The company uses a whole range of other sufficiency strategies, which cannot all be mentioned here for lack of space.

C) For 22 years, the Premium Collective has shown that it is possible to break with all the usual rules of business management and still survive on the market. This possibility is promoted by the management of a solidary value network (Bocken et al. 2022), whose members directly negotiate those prices, and cost rates that guarantee the survival of all participating companies.

The network organizer creates flexible decision-making processes that allow the stakeholders to adapt to changing structures and framework conditions through new supply and price agreements and to cover costs. Since all stakeholders can have a say in key decisions, there is a network with many people and organizations ready to support in times of crisis.

5.2.6 Sufficiency through the limitation of entrepreneurial wages

(Limitation of monetary claims with direct impact)
Business case: Länggass Tee AG, Bern, CH

Just as a company's profits can be restrained, so, too, can salaries. In November 2013, a federal referendum for fair wages took place in Switzerland. The popular initiative "1:12 für gerechte Löhne" (1:12 for fair wages) advocated that the highest wage of a company should not be more than 12 times higher than the lowest wage paid by the company (Bundeskanzlei der Schweizerischen Eidgenossenschaft 2023). What is usually discussed in the context of fair wages (Bottino et al. 2016) can be classified as a corporate sufficiency strategy. Limiting wages can have an ecologically sustainable effect because some potential financial resources are not available for consumption. This lack leads to the avoidance of CO_2 emissions. The Premium Collective mentioned above uses this strategy, as does the family business Länggass-Tee AG in Bern. Katrin and Gerhard Lange founded the company in 1983, a specialist tea shop with about 40 employees today. The company is currently in the process of transferring management from the first to the second generation. The company orients itself towards maximum product and service quality.

A) The founders paid themselves the same wages as the employees for several decades. Currently, the pay gap in the company is in the range of 1 to 1.5, including the salaries of the members of the executive board, and is comparatively small. The sufficiency strategy in this case corresponds to the level of self-limitation.

B) The founders are convinced that human interaction between the management and the employees does not allow for high salary differences, among other things. Because of this starting position, the members of the executive board have at certain times in the past reflected on what motivates them for their work if it is not a special salary. This reflection has led to a range of innovative products and services of excellent quality being launched, which are a pleasure not only for the executives but also for the employees and the customers.

C) The chosen sufficiency strategy – in addition to other measures – has a positive effect on the working atmosphere. The company staff and management are closely knit and times of crisis are shared. In addition, the outstanding quality of the products and services contributes to high customer loyalty.

5.2.7 Sufficiency by limiting shareholders' profit expectations

(Limitation of monetary claims with direct impact)
Business case: EWS Elektrizitätswerke Schönau e.G., Schönau, GER

In 1994, Ursula and Michael Sladek and other electricity rebels from the citizens' initiative "Parents for a Nuclear-Free Future" founded Elektrizitätswerke Schönau GmbH (EWS), a 100 percent subsidiary of Netzkauf GbR. EWS currently has five subsidiaries. Since 1997, it has been generating and supplying green electricity to households and businesses. As a result of the liberalization of the electricity market in 1998, the company currently supplies 230,000 customers Germany-wide.

A) The associated registered cooperative, which was founded in 2009, employs about 80 people and has more than 11,000 members, who can purchase a minimum of five to a maximum of fifty shares, at 100 Euro each in 2022 (Elektrizitätswerke Schönau 2021). These shares do not earn interest and dividends are distributed depending on how business is going, a decision made by the general assembly. In this case, the strategy corresponds also to the level of self-limitation.

B) The management strives to run the company according to its own values and to be able to use entrepreneurial freedom independently of profit-oriented investors, as also described by Beyeler/Jaeger-Erben (2022).

C) Due to the eventful history of the company and the strong commitment to ecological energy supply, the company enjoys a high reputation. Strong customer loyalty and a sufficiently high number of shareholders ensure the company's viability.

6. Discussion

Based on a critical analysis of the current sufficiency debate and a systematic evaluation of instructive case studies, this article leads to five key insights.

a) Until now, the sufficiency discourse has focused almost exclusively on the demand or consumption side (Jungell-Michelsson/Heikkurinen 2022). This truncated view overlooks the fact that there are various starting points and options for sufficiency strategies in the corporate sector (Princen 2003; Scherhorn 2015; Maurer 2019).
b) Motivations to implement sufficiency-oriented measures or change ways of working are not limited to environmental or ecological imperatives, as is usually assumed. Questions on purpose-creation (Bocken et al. 2022) or resilience (Schneidewind/Palzkill 2011, Folkers/Paech 2020), all focusing on particular objectives or ensuring high quality (Bocken/Short 2016), or organizational culture (Bocken/Short 2016) have proven to be no less relevant in justifying the use of corporate sufficiency strategies (Maurer/Paech forthcoming).
c) Sufficiency strategies do not necessarily equate to "sacrificing" (Zeyen/Beckmann 2019) or losing something. The case studies examined suggest that certain forms of voluntary limitations can be associated with both organizational stability and long-term business success.

d) The opportunities of entrepreneurial sufficiency extend over a surprisingly broad spectrum, covering almost all fields in business management. Until now, these opportunities have barely been acknowledged in sustainability research.
e) The sufficiency strategies systematically presented here are not a theoretical construct, they exist in reality, i.e. they have been empirically proven. The taxonomy and analysis presented here are based on forms of entrepreneurial sufficiency activities for which at least one case could be identified.

7. Conclusion

The cases presented here cannot be considered empirically representative, but they do open up the "sense of possibility" (Pfriem 2017: 17) for a conceivable transformation towards (more) sufficiency in an exemplary way, regardless of whether it is crisis-related, consciously politically steered, or a gradual spread of entrepreneurial patterns of action that can currently only be observed as niche phenomena. This article is devoted to the latter and thus ties in with insights that Schumpeter (2006 [1912]) has developed, albeit with the opposite goal, by tracing the origin of economic change back to innovative, and thus to a certain extent non-conforming, entrepreneurial personalities. This voluntaristic approach serves to explain economic growth, not in the sense of 'more of the same' but rather through the creation of new solutions and procedures that differ from previous orientations. What this entails is therefore more than 'just' economic change. It is more a case of what Pfriem (2006) understands by corporate strategies as cultural offers to society.

The present field of investigation raises questions: Are there powerful and stubborn personalities, especially entrepreneurs, who contribute to the spread of new orientations from the niche but in the opposite direction of development compared to Schumpeter (2006 [1912]), namely as a turn towards the less? And if so, can their motives, which in one way or another lead to sufficiency, be described as a purpose that, despite all situational differences, reveals generalizable patterns?

If we take an overarching view of the examples analyzed and of the associated discourse, we could speak of factors that create meaning, factors that are not simply set apart from growth, globalization, or complex technology according to a negative definition but ones that counter the maximization of surplus with another perspective of entrepreneurial fulfilment. Two basic trends are striking. First, a consistent improvement or assurance of quality, which by no means only concerns the ecological or other attractiveness of the goods, and consequently competitiveness, but represents itself as an end for entrepreneurial creation: The work that is regarded as successful (quality for its own sake) obviously provides more satisfaction than the revenue generated by it. A quasi-craft or even artistic attitude in the sense of Sennett (2008) is recognizable. In some cases, the sense of purpose relates more to a processual quality, namely the corporate culture, employee satisfaction, or the direct, sometimes hierarchy-free, interaction with them. Another quality is the direct encounter with customers whose satisfaction is an indicator of the company's success.

The second trend is a change in value systems, which occurs in two ways: First, as a measurement of the entrepreneurial sense in terms of the social benefit that results from it (climate protection, justice, solving social problems, resilience, etc.) and, second, as new trade-offs arise between individual preferences with regard to one's own lifestyle and business requirements. Thus, some entrepreneurial decision-makers do not seem to be willing to subject their personal scope for development and values to the logic of the market and competition but are willing to forgo opportunities for expansion in exchange for, for example, more leisure time and reflection as well as adherence to principles – as long as this does not jeopardize the company's existence.

Finally, the following implications are relevant:

a) In research and practice, the view should be broadened for sufficiency in companies beyond ecological sustainability.
b) It is likely that corporate sufficiency in this broader sense is much more common than has been apparent so far. This broadness should be taken into account in management training as well as in classic business studies.
c) It seems reasonable to assume that corporate sufficiency does not necessarily go hand in hand with renunciation but can also be based on fulfilment, life satisfaction and the creation of meaning. This alternative can lead to corporate sufficiency undergoing a reframing in theory and practice and gaining in appeal.

References

Barby, Clara/Barker, Richard/Cohen, Ronald/Eccles, Robert/Heller, Christian/Mayer, Colin/Roche, Bruno/Serafeim, George/Stroehle, Judith/Younger, Rupert/Zochowski,Robert (2021): "Measuring Purpose – An Integrated Framework," 25.5.2023 (https://enactingpurpose.org/assets/measuring-purpose---an-integrated-framework.pdf).

Beyeler, Laura/Jaeger-Erben, Melanie (2022): "How to make more of less: Characteristics of sufficiency in business practices." In: Frontiers in Sustainability 3, pp. 1–25. https://doi.org/10.3389/frsus.2022.949710.

Bocken, Nancy M. P./Niessen, Laura/Short, Samuel William (2022): "The Sufficiency-Based Circular Economy – An Analysis of 150 Companies." In: Frontiers in Sustainability 3, 899289. https://doi.org/10.3389/frsus.2022.899289.

Bocken, Nancy M. P./Short, Samuel William (2016): "Towards a sufficiency-driven business model: Experiences and opportunities." In: Environmental Innovation and Societal Transitions 18, pp. 41–61. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.eist.2015.07.010.

Bottino, Eleonora/García-Muñoz, Teresa/Goddio, Cintia/Kujal, Praveen (2016): "What is a fair wage? Reference points, entitlements and gift exchange." In: Journal of Behavioral and Experimental Economics 63, pp. 125–135. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socec.2016.06.002.

Braun, Virginia/Clarke, Victoria (2006): "Using thematic analysis in psychology." In: Qualitative Research in Psychology 3/2, pp. 77–101. https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa.

Braun, Virginia/Clarke, Victoria (2021): Thematic analysis: A practical guide. London: Sage.

Bruce, Annette/Jeromin, Christoph (2020): Corporate Purpose: Ein Erfolgskonzept der Zukunft, Wiesbaden: Springer Gabler.

Bundeskanzlei der Schweizerischen Eidgenossenschaft (2023): "Eidgenössische Volksinitiative 1:12 – Für gerechte Löhne," 19.8.2023 (https://www.bk.admin.ch/ch/d/pore/vi/vis375t.html).

Elektrizitätswerke Schönau (2021): "Integrierter Geschäftsbericht," 27.5.2023 (https://www.ews-schoenau.de/export/sites/ews/ews/genossenschaft/.files/ews-integrierter-geschaeftsbericht-2021.pdf).

Enacting Purpose Initiative (2021): "Purpose, strategy and performance," 2.6.2023 (https://enactingpurpose.org/).

Fink, Larry (2018): "A Sense of Purpose, Larry Fink's 2022 Letter to CEOs," 18.5.2023 (https://aips.online/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Larry-Fink-letter-to-CEOs-2018-BlackRock.pdf).

Fitzthum, Gerhard (2020): "Im Skigebiet Schatzalp ist Kunstschnee verpönt," 25.4.2023 (https://www.welt.de/reise/nah/article205168007/Skigebiet-Schatzalp-in-der-Schweiz-Kunstschnee-ist-hier-verpoent.html).

Folkers, Manfred/Paech, Niko (2020): All you need is less: Eine Kultur des Genug aus ökonomischer und buddhistischer Sicht, München: Oekom.

Freudenreich, Birte/Schaltegger, Stefan (2020): "Developing sufficiency-oriented offerings for clothing users: Business approaches to support consumption reduction." In: Journal of Cleaner Production 247, 119589. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2019.119589.

Gossen, Maike/Ziesemer, Florence/Schrader, Ulf (2019): "Why and how commercial marketing should promote sufficient consumption: A systematic literature review." In: Journal of Marcomarketing 39/3, pp. 252–269. http://doi.org/10.1177/0276146719866238.

Gossen, Maike/Kropfeld, Maren Ingrid (2022): ""Choose nature. Buy less." Exploring sufficiency-oriented marketing and consumption practices in the outdoor industry." In: Sustainable Production and Consumption 30, pp. 720–736. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.spc.2022.01.005.

Gronemeyer, Marianne (2009 [2002]): Die Macht der Bedürfnisse, Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt.

Helfferich, Cornelia (2011): Die Qualität qualitativer Daten: Manual für die Durchführung qualitativer Interview, Wiesbaden: Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, Springer Fachmedien.

Hirschi, Andreas (2012): "Callings and work engagement: Moderated mediation model of work meaningfulness, occupational identity, and occupational self-efficacy." In: Journal of Counseling Psychology 59/3, pp. 479–485. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0028949.

Jäger, André (2022): Suffizienz als Leitstrategie von Unternehmen: Potenziale, Chancen und Risiken am Beispiel der Gemeinwohlökonomie, München: Oekom.

Jungell-Michelsson, Jessica/Heikkurinen, Pasi (2022): "Sufficiency: A systematic literature review." In: Ecological Economics 195, 107380. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecolecon.2022.107380.

Lübbermann, Uwe/Herberhold, Lennart (2021): Wirtschaft hacken – Von einem ganz normalen Unternehmer, der fast alles anders macht, Marburg, Büchner.

Murray, Alan (2019): "America's CEOc seek a new purpose of the corporation," 25.5.2023 (https://fortune.com/longform/business-roundtable-ceos-corporations-purpose/).

Maurer, Christel (2017): Beseelte UnternehmerInnen: Plädoyer für einen Wandel in der Wirtschaft, Bern: Zytglogge.

Maurer, Christel (2019): "Unternehmerische Suffizienz, persönliches Glück & ökologische Verantwortung." In: Peter Buchenau, (eds.): Chefsache Zukunft: Was Führungskräfte von morgen brauchen, Wiesbaden: Springer Gabler, pp. 385–405.

Maurer, Christel/Paech, Niko (forthcoming): "Nachhaltigkeit durch sinnstiftendes und suffizientes Unternehmertum." In: Reinhard Paulesich, (eds.): Ethisch ökologische Unternehmenspolitik, Wiesbaden: Springer, Gabler.

Mosimann, Markus/Lettau, Marc (2012): Das Holzhaus der Zukunft: Ökologisch bauen mit menschlichem Mass, Zürich: Rotpunkt.

Niessen, Laura/Bocken, Nancy, M. P. (2021): "How can business drive sufficiency? The business for sufficiency framework." In: Sustainable Production & Consumption 28, pp. 109–1103. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.spc.2021.07.030.

Paech, Niko (2016): "Befreiung vom Überfluss: Grundlagen einer Wirtschaft ohne Wachstum." In: Fromm Forum 20, pp. 70–76.

Pfriem, Reinhard (2017): "Ökonomik als Möglichkeitswissenschaften." In: Ökologisches Wirtschaften 32, pp. 16–18. https://doi.org/10.14512/OEW320216.

Pfriem, Reinhard (2006): "Unternehmensstrategien sind kulturelle Angebote an die Gesellschaft." In: Forschungsgruppe Unternehmen und gesellschaftliche Organisation (FUGO) (eds.): Perspektiven einer kulturtheoretischen Perspektive der Unternehmung, Marburg: Metropolis.

Princen, Thomas (2003): "Principles for sustainability: From cooperation and efficiency to sufficiency." In: Global Environmental Politics 3/1, pp. 33–50. https://doi.org/10.1162/152638003763336374.

Reheis, Fritz (1998): Die Kreativität der Langsamkeit: Neuer Wohlstand durch Entschleunigung, Darmstadt: Primus.

Ryff, Carol D. (1989): "Happiness is everything, or is it? Explorations on the meaning of psychological well-being." In: Journal of Personality and Social Psychology 57/6, pp. 1069–1081. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.57.6.1069.

Sachs, Wolfgang (1993): "Die vier E's. Merkposten für einen massvollen Lebensstil." In: Politische Ökologie 11/33, pp. 69–72, 6.12.2023 (https://epub.wupperinst.org/frontdoor/deliver/index/docId/66/file/66_Sachs.pdf).

Schatzalp (2023): "Slow Mountain," 10.4.2023 (https://www.schatzalp.ch/slowmountain/).

Scherhorn, Gerhard (2015): Wachstum oder Nachhaltigkeit: Die Ökonomie am Scheideweg, Erkelenz: Altius.

Schneidewind, Uwe/Palzkill-Vorbeck, Alexandra (2011): "Suffizienz als Business Case: Nachhaltiges Ressourcenmanagement als Gegenstand einer tranzdisziplinären Betriebswirtschaftslehre." In: Wuppertal Institut für Klima, Umwelt, Energie GmbH, Impulse Zur WachstumsWende 2, pp. 4–20, 6.12.2023 (https://epub.wupperinst.org/frontdoor/deliver/index/docId/3955/file/ImpW2.pdf).

Schumpeter, Joseph (2006 [1912]): Theorie der wirtschaftlichen Entwicklung, Berlin: Duncker & Humblot.

Sennett, Richard (2008): Handwerk, Berlin: Berlin.

Stroehle, Judith/Soonawalla, Kazbi/Metzner, Marcel (2022): "Through the looking glass: tying performance and materiality to corporate purpose." In: Journal of the British Academy 10/5, pp. 87–123. https://doi.org/10.5871/jba/010s5.087.

Waterman, Alan S. (1981): "Individualism and Interdependence." In: American Psychologist 36/7, pp. 762–773. http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.36.7.762.

Willan, Becky (2020): "The evolution of purpose wash and how to avoid it." In: Ceo Today Magazine, 12.6.2023 (https://www.ceotodaymagazine.com/2020/12/the-evolution-of-purpose-wash-and-how-to-avoid-it/).

Zeyen, Anica/Beckmann, Markus (2019): Social entrepreneurship and business ethics: Understanding the contribution and normative ambivalence of purpose-driven venturing, New York: Routledge.