

Sufficiency and the Logic of Care

Transforming the Relationships, Practices and Temporalities of Businesses

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Abstract *Sufficiency in business represents a shift from a logic of profit towards a logic of care. The purpose of sufficiency-oriented businesses is to serve the fulfilment of needs. A logic of care transforms the relationships, practices and temporalities of businesses and represents leverage to enable sufficiency in praxis.*

1. Introduction

A growing number of studies and research fields are interested in ethics of care and its relevance for a just and ecological transformation of the economy and the society, for example, in sustainability sciences (Dengler et al. 2022; Gottschlich/Bellina 2017), in feminist care economics, or care geographies (Gibson-Graham et al. 2019). The connection between an ethic of care and the practical application of sufficiency is also gaining recognition in sufficiency research. A review by Jungell-Michelsson and Heikkurinen (2022) highlights altruism as a key foundation of sufficiency, indicating that individuals adopt sufficiency practices out of concern for the well-being of others and the environment. Caring for people and the planet has also been empirically identified as a characteristic of sufficiency in business practices (Beyeler/Jaeger-Erben 2022).

To examine the ethics of care in the context of sufficiency and business, it is important to understand the concept of care work. The capitalist economy separates productive and reproductive work, the latter being called unproductive (Dowling 2021; Eisler 2012). Within this hierarchical division of work, care work is only associated with social reproduction, which consists of the reproduction of labor power and life-sustaining activities (Dowling 2021). Feminist care economists call for an extension of care work to the productive sector while condemning the narrative that categorizes care work as unproductive. Knobloch (2019) pictures an economy of provision, in which all productive work is oriented towards the fulfilment of needs.

Thus, productive activity becomes care work the same as reproductive activity is. Care scholars advocate for the integration of an ethic of care into the productive sector and the entire economic activity. This signifies a transition from capitalist and growth-oriented means of production to a care and needs-centered economy (Knobloch 2019; Eisler 2012).

Since sufficiency differentiates between the production of goods and services that satisfy basic human needs and the ones that animate superfluous consumer wants (Gorge et al. 2014; Spengler 2018), it appears that sufficiency advocates for the same transition towards a needs-centered economy. From a sufficiency perspective, this transition represents a reduction in production and consumption volumes. From a care perspective, the transition can only occur with the integration of ethics of care in the production sectors. It becomes evident that following a logic of care in economic activity is an essential leverage point to enable sufficiency. This chapter argues that sufficiency can only be achieved if businesses embrace a logic of care. It claims that sufficiency-oriented businesses are inherently doing care work if they align their practices with the fulfilment of human and more-than-human needs.

To support this argumentation and illustrate the link between sufficiency and care in business practices, the author reviewed relevant care literature to identify and describe essential aspects of care. Based on the characteristics of care observed in care literature, empirical data from pioneering sufficiency-oriented businesses was analyzed with the goal of exploring which aspects of care sufficiency-oriented businesses are implementing and how a logic of care is shaping the business practices.

The following section gives a short review of the care literature and the essential characteristics of care. After describing the methodology of this research, the results present aspects of care that exist and emerge in sufficiency-oriented business practices. The discussion part discusses the implications of the empirical results for businesses and gives recommendations to further improve the logic of care in business practices.

2. Literature review on care

A look at the extensive literature on care reveals that the core of care lies in understanding and describing what human beings are (Tronto 1993; Lynch et al. 2021; Mol 2008). Humans are vulnerable and needy beings (Tronto 1993). They depend on others and on the social and ecological systems of which they are a part to meet their needs (O'Hara 1998). Care is thus a relational concept, namely that the well-being of humans depends on their ability to engage and care for the relationships with others around them (Hofmeister et al. 2019). Additionally, it is existential for vulnerable beings, such as humans, to receive care from others. The vulnerability of humans is

more accentuated in some phases of their lifetime, for example, as new-borns or elderly people (Keller/Kittay 2017). In these phases, human beings require more attention and care than in other more autonomous phases. However, even in times of higher autonomy, humans are never emancipated from interdependent care relationships (Madörin 2007). When not as care receivers, humans give care to others in need, re-initiating a form of dependency and mutuality with other beings (Knobloch 2013). The fact that humans are relational and vulnerable beings counters the ideal of a solely autonomous, independent and rational *homo economicus* (Petit 2014). Instead, the ethics of care assert the diverse spectrum of human experiences, from vulnerability and mutual dependencies to periods of autonomy and insist on the manifold and diverse interdependencies present throughout human life (Keller/Kittay 2017).

However, human beings are not the only beings with needs and vulnerabilities and care relationships are not exclusive to them. Depending on the research fields and their focus, care theories differ in the question of agency in care relationships. Feminist economists, by redesigning economic mechanisms and norms, focus on humans as the primary recipients and providers of care (Aulenbacher et al. 2018; Plonz 2011; Madörin 2007; Ruby/Scholz 2018). In this case, humans are the main subjects of care relationships and own the agency to create, influence, or end caring relationships. Ecofeminism extends care agency to the relationships between humans and nature (Hofmeister et al. 2019; Dengler 2022; Bauhardt 2012). While the human body is an essential concern of care, embodying the vulnerability and limited nature of human beings, ecological feminists and science and technology studies pinpoint that all, human and non-human, bodies are part of nature and require care (Bauhardt 2017). A new relationship between the human and the more-than-human world, which overcomes the hierarchy and the opposition between nature and culture, is proposed by Haraway's concept of naturecultures (Haraway 2007). Naturecultures is a way of conceptualizing the interdependencies of all species, technologies, sciences, emotions or spiritualities that co-exist and co-produce nature and culture (Bauhardt 2019). In her book *Matters of Care*, Puig de la Bellacasa (2017) yields agency of care to all humans and other species as well as other-than-human entities that are interconnected in a web of life, leaving behind the anthropocentric relations between humans and nature (Bauhardt/Harcourt 2019). As Puig de La Bellacasa describes in her book chapter about the practice of permaculture, the matter of care in more-than-human worlds is "an attempt to decenter human ethical subjectivity by not considering humans as masters or even as protectors of but as participants in the web of Earth's living" (2017: 129).

As humans, animals, other living organisms, natural resources and non-living entities, such as objects and technologies created by humans, depend on care relationships to strive and exist in the world (Puig de la Bellacasa 2017), it becomes clear that care is unavoidable, permanent and always on-going (Puig de la Bellacasa 2017;

Dombroski 2020). Care necessitates constant work to fulfil the needs of the individuals living in the world. Besides being a relational concept, care is thus best understood as practice: a bundle of actions and thoughts oriented towards the fulfilment of human and more-than-human needs (Tronto 1993).

Care as a practice consists of all the activities performed every day by agents to sustain life. For care activities to take place, the presence of specific competencies, norms, values and materials is required. For example, attentiveness to one's own needs and to the needs of others is an essential competence in care practices (Sevenhuijsen 2018). Dependent relationships rely on attentiveness to receive care, to the extent that the absence of attentiveness can be considered a moral failure to give care (Tronto 1993). According to Sevenhuijsen (2018), attentiveness in care practices emerges from a series of skills and activities such as being present, seeing, listening, thoughtful speaking or being reliable. Additionally, care practices rely on scientific knowledge, specific technologies, or financial resources as their presence in the practices can enhance and support the fulfilment of needs (Mol 2008). The lack of financial resources available in care sectors, such as health care or the education system, is regularly denounced by feminist economic researchers as one major factor of deficient care systems (Himmelweit 2007; Schmitt et al. 2018; Gubitzer/Mader 2011). Finally, care as a practice is not individualist. It is an act of collaboration that builds upon a culture of solidarity where every member takes responsibility for the interdependent relationships (O'Hara 1998; Conradi 2015). Solidarity and collaboration are thus important values and norms that enable and support care practices.

Describing care as practice further shows that good care is not reliant on a set of moral principles, as modern ethics would advocate (Mol 2008). Rather, good care depends on the situation and the context and will always emerge from the care practice itself (ibid.). Everyone receiving care has different needs and might react differently to the care interventions. Thus, good care relies on the capability to respond to individual needs, the specific context of the situation and the acceptance that vulnerable beings, things and life are unpredictable (Mol 2008). For Tronto (1993), good care can also be described as a process that requires attentiveness, responsibility, competencies of care-giving and responsiveness.

However, a good care process is not simple, as mentioned by Tronto: "Care involves conflict; to resolve this conflict will require more than an injunction to be attentive, responsible, competent, and responsive" (1993: 150). The care process is ambivalent, and many conflicts will arise while doing care. Dilemmas and trade-offs between the needs of different groups of people, different species or living organisms and the material or natural resources are inherent to care (Cook/Trundle 2020). It is usual that, within care practices, contradictory elements exist and sit together in tension, for example, competitiveness and solidarity; hope and disappointment; suffering and release (Nguyen et al. 2017; Puig de la Bellacasa 2017; Mol 2008). With the emergence of conflicts, ambivalence, risks and insecurities, it reveals that doing

care is not always attractive or easy. It entails difficult decision-making or complications.

Additionally, time plays an important role in the care process because care work is time-intensive. Productivity gains and time efficiency of care activities are often not possible without a deterioration of the quality of the care work (Aulenbacher/Dammayr 2014; Himmelweit 2007). Moreover, the care process necessitates time for experimentation of new paths, adaptation to the unpredictable and learning from experiences (Kohlen 2018; Mol 2008). Care temporalities challenge dominant narratives of constant progress, productivity gain and efficiency optimisation (Kohlen 2018; Mol 2008). Care requires making time for the “in-efficient” and “un-productive” but existential work of sustaining life (Puig de la Bellacasa 2015).

3. Method

This chapter observes and analyses how care manifests and materializes in sufficiency-oriented businesses. Interviews and podcasts with representatives or founders from 14 sufficiency-oriented businesses have been analyzed through the lens of care. The sufficiency-oriented businesses have been selected from different online databases and websites from associations of businesses for the common good, B corporations, or regional circular economy associations. Additionally, several Google searches with keywords related to sufficiency were conducted. To be selected in the sample, the businesses had to correspond to the following criteria:

- The business must operate with at least one and preferably several of the lessen strategies according to Schneidewind and Palzkill-Vorbeck (2011): *Decluttering, decelerating, disentangling and decommercialization*.
- The business must actively and publicly identify with a sufficiency-oriented purpose, explicitly quoting a reduction of material and resource use or of consumption or production volumes in their mission statement.
- The business is part of the fashion and electronic sector. These two sectors have been selected because both sectors showed interest in and experimented with sufficiency strategies. Moreover, similar and comparable sufficiency strategies, such as long-lasting product designs, repair or reuse offerings or support for consumption reduction, were identified in both sectors.
- To ensure comparability, the selection of businesses was limited to the European context. The selected businesses had primary data (interviews) and secondary data (e.g., websites, blogs, advertising, social media) available in German, French and English.

The collected data (interviews or podcasts with the founders of the businesses and secondary data such as websites, blog posts, videos and newsletters) were analyzed through the lens of care with the help of characteristics of care identified in the care literature. A literature review in several research fields applying care theories, such as care economics, ecofeminism, ethics of care, geographies of care or science and technology studies, has been conducted to understand what care is and which core aspects define it. Four relevant aspects of care served as categories and orientation to deductively analyze the empirical data:

- *Care as a relational concept*: which care relationships exist in sufficiency-oriented businesses?;
- *Care as a practice*: which competencies, norms, values, technologies or resources relevant to care practices are observable in sufficiency-oriented businesses?;
- *Care as an ongoing and unattractive process*: which ambivalences, conflicts or learning aspects are present in sufficiency-oriented businesses?;
- *Temporalities of care*: which temporalities exist and are experienced in sufficiency-oriented businesses?

By analyzing the interactions and the emergence of the elements of care in the practices of sufficiency-oriented businesses, this chapter tries to explore the formation of a logic of care in businesses. A logic that could be useful to apply to other conventional businesses when a transition towards sufficiency is aimed for. Integrating sufficiency in business practices could be facilitated by concentrating not only on specific sufficiency strategies but also by implementing an entirely different logic, from a logic of capital to a logic of care. The results of this inductive-deductive research process are presented in the next section.

4. Care in sufficiency-oriented businesses

4.1 Care as a relational concept

The sufficiency-oriented businesses from the study see their organization as an entity connected to other actors. They often acknowledge their own vulnerability and their dependency on the well-being of other actors. In consequence, the business's internal and external relationships shift from a logic of exploitation, competition and growth towards a logic of care for each other, for nature and for the material world.

First, the relationship of sufficiency-oriented businesses with other economic and societal actors shifts from competition to collaboration and solidarity. Sufficiency practitioners repeatedly mention the importance of personally knowing their

stakeholders, in the sense that they often develop personal and close relationships with other like-minded organizations. They work together to exchange knowledge and competencies, to receive feedback and improve their practices, or to join forces for lobby activities. For example, a French sufficiency-oriented fashion brand gathered 400 sustainable fashion brands to lobby for legislation that would encourage a reduction of production volumes, support reuse and enable the decarbonization of production processes (En Mode Climat 2022). An economy in the logic of competition assumes that the individualistic *homo economicus* is unable to collaborate and that individuals thrive when competing with others (Knobloch 2019). For care scholars, it is apparent that vulnerable and dependent beings rely on collaboration to fulfil their needs and act for the common good (Knobloch 2013). The attention sufficiency-oriented businesses pay to the actors surrounding them and the collaboration for the common good are both an expression of a logic of care. This attention for the needs of others is not exclusive to proximate actors. While most of the businesses in the study highlight the efforts to foster the local relationships with producers, they also pay heed to the needs of others in other regions that are also connected to the businesses through their activities. For example, to increase fairness in the sourcing and mining of mineral resources, Fairphone builds alliances in the market to improve working conditions and set better standards for resource extraction and social justice (Fair Cobalt Alliance 2023).

Second, a business itself is a subject of care with its own specific needs that have to be met. A care relationship within and with the business itself is thus observable in praxis. Sufficiency practitioners reflect on the essence of being a business. For them, being a business means serving the common good and delivering goods and services that fulfil human or more-than-human needs. Purposes for the common good and for social and environmental justice that the sufficiency practitioners describe include reducing the amount of new goods produced, setting fair and just working conditions for all as default in their industry or producing without or with minimal environmental impacts: “It is not just a marketing talk. Hopaal’s entire business is organized and continues to be organized around the purpose of answering to human needs, instead of creating desires” (Hopaal, publicly available podcast, December 2020, author’s translation).

Sufficiency-oriented businesses understand and acknowledge their own limitations and vulnerabilities. No business in the sample envisions endless growth of their organization and production. Loom, a French clothing brand, for example, shared its effort to remain a small team with a limited number of employees. This results from a desire to keep the activities and the organization of the business at a human scale and in consequence be able to stay attentive to the needs within or outside of the business (Plonz 2011). Additionally, sufficiency practitioners recognize the impossibility of endless economic growth on a planet with limited resources. Thus, sufficiency practitioners envision an end to their own organizational

and material growth. Like every living being, sufficiency-oriented businesses from the study experience a phase of growth until they reach a mature size in the market. Once they reach a legitimate size, which allows the business to influence other actors or set specific standards for their industry, sufficiency practitioners continue to grow but by different means. Sufficiency practitioners qualitatively grow by transferring knowledge and ideas, improving the quality of products and supply chains, creating synergies with other actors, or investing in the growth of their economic ecosystem.

In addition to the boundaries and essence of the business itself, the internal relationships among employees, investors and decision-making individuals of the business are worthwhile consideration. Sufficiency practitioners in the data reflect on their relationships with capital owners, decision makers, people with strategic responsibility, as well as employees. The ownership and responsibility for the business are often distributed among like-minded individuals and groups or remain in the hands of the founders who retain control over the sufficiency-oriented practices. Following a logic of care, sufficiency practitioners make an effort to avoid powerful dependencies between the people involved in the financing, management and labor of the company. Democratic decision-making processes or capital involvement of the employees are possible internal relationship forms that emerge from a logic of care.

Finally, sufficiency practitioners redefine their relation towards consumption. Instead of consumption driven by consumer wants and desires, sufficiency-oriented businesses in the study acknowledged that products and services should exist to serve human needs, such as shelter, clothing, education or health care and assistance (Gough 2015; Jonas et al. 2023). Thus, sufficiency practitioners only offer goods and services that aim at fulfilling basic human needs. Sufficiency practitioners ask which goods and services are necessary to fulfil human and more-than-human needs and how much of these goods and services must be delivered. The production of new products can, for example, be avoided if unused and functional second-hand products are made available for reuse or with repair services that increase the use of existing products. The pursuit of insatiable consumption preferences with the animation of individual desires and wants is thus irrelevant in sufficiency-oriented business practices.

4.2 Care as a practice

Care as a practice is the understanding that care is not limited to a value or an emotion that individual people have. Care consists of actions and thoughts oriented toward the fulfilment of needs (Tronto 1993). As described in the literature review, care practices require specific competencies, values or materials to perform the activities

and enable good care. In the data, elements that are essential for care practices and influence the sufficiency practices have been identified.

Care practices require an awareness of unmet needs and a responsibility to fulfil them. Both attentiveness and a sense of responsibility are present and play an important role in sufficiency-oriented practices. All sufficiency practitioners identified growth imperative and affluence as the main drivers of current environmental and social crises. They are attentive to social justice or unfair production practices in global supply chains and to a call from civil society to develop alternative production and consumption practices. They describe a need for reduction of material dependency and production volume if life on this planet is to be sustained. In other words, the sufficiency practitioners are attentive to the unmet needs of different agents of care, namely nature and its ecosystems, workers in supply chains, consumers or citizens that have little to no choice of affordable sufficiency-oriented consumption practices. Then, by shifting towards sufficiency, they take responsibility and actively develop business practices that allow them to meet these unmet needs.

Further competencies that support the development of these sufficiency-oriented practices are transparent and constant communication between the businesses and their stakeholders, creativity and resilience. For example, sufficiency-oriented businesses use their platform to educate and share knowledge about the shortcomings and problems of current economic practices. They critically reflect on them and communicate how they try to overcome them. Their solution-oriented doings require creativity to find new paths and resilience to oppose capitalist norms while ensuring the viability of the business.

In redefining the business' relationship with others, values such as solidarity and collaboration become dominant in sufficiency-oriented practices: "It is very important for us to appreciate others. We do not speak about competition; we do not see others as competitors. We are co-change makers [...]. It is important for us to create good relationships" (TEIL, personal interview, August 2021, author's translation). Collaboration and solidarity are observable in the alliances they form to do lobby activities, in the financial and ideal support companies and organizations give to each other or in the networks they are building to spread their practices. Appreciation for the relationships, for the products or for the natural and material resources used or preserved in their activities is also an important aspect of sufficiency-oriented businesses that relate to a logic of care.

On the material dimension, one similarity between care and sufficiency-oriented practices is that financial means are essential for a successful process. However, both sufficiency practices and care practices often lack financial resources because they are not economically profitable and sometimes produce more costs than revenues. Sufficiency practitioners engage in sufficiency practices despite low revenues. Fortunately, sufficiency practitioners manage to find financial investments. They receive financial resources outside of a growth-oriented shareholder

system. Sufficiency-oriented businesses are funded often by personal investments, by foundations, the community of consumers or investments from other profitable sufficiency-oriented projects. These investments are often less bound to expected returns on investment demanded by shareholders. They give the sufficiency practitioners time and space to experiment with new forms of doing business with low monetary pressure.

4.3 Care as an ongoing and unattractive process

As described in the care literature, care is not always attractive. It is an ongoing effort shaped by ambivalences and conflicts, which requires time and learning competencies. These care characteristics are mirrored in the sufficiency-oriented business practices.

In the dominant capitalist system, profit maximization, returns on investments, or rapid growth are the norms and standards of doing business (Donaldson/Walsh 2015). It is difficult and inconvenient for sufficiency-oriented businesses to resist and go against these norms. Some of the sufficiency strategies of the businesses in this study, such as a reduction of working hours for employee well-being, lifelong repair or reuse services, or the creation of a trustful and close relationship with sustainable suppliers, all necessitate time, money and endurance. Even if sufficiency-oriented practices seem inconvenient, the logic to care for the people and the planet is attractive and motivating enough to resist capitalist norms. The inconvenience of sufficiency becomes bearable and even desirable when the business practices switch from a logic of environmental and social destruction to the logic of care (Mol 2008).

Additionally, the experience of sufficiency-oriented businesses reveals ambivalences in their practices. Similarly to a care treatment, in which a care team must respond to unpredictable turns, problems or complications (Mol 2008), sufficiency practitioners stumble and face contradictions between their intentions and the outcomes of their activities. One prominent strategy used by sufficiency practitioners is the early involvement of consumers in the design and production phases of the supply chain (Niessen/Bocken 2021). For example, consumers pre-order the products before the production process begins, with the aim of only producing products that are needed and ensuring a long-lasting use of the products (Stumpf/Varela 2022). When products are customized to consumers' needs, the probability of long use of the products increases (Kropfeld/Reichel 2019; Reichel 2013). While involving consumers before production is an effective method to limit the production of new goods, rebound effects are possible. The early involvement of consumers can still animate unnecessary consumption desires (Beyeler/Jaeger-Erben 2022). The ambivalence lies in the difficulty for both consumers and producers to differentiate between consumption wants and needs (Gough 2015). Consumers might unconsciously pre-order products that they do not necessarily need because they are embedded in an

economic system that prioritizes wants over needs. The contradiction between the reduction intentions of the strategies and the potential increase in consumption necessitates an awareness of the difference between needs and desires. Such an awareness is not always observable in the data of this study. A participatory process involving different stakeholders and defining needs collaboratively might be a useful addition to the pre-order strategies of sufficiency-oriented businesses (Guillen-Royo 2020). Ambivalences are not negative or unsuccessful. Practitioners can learn from them and adapt their practices. It is likely that ambivalent circumstances co-exist until new paths, solutions, or structures unfold.

4.4 Temporalities of care

Beyond the dominant narrative of productivism and time efficiency, Puig de la Bellacasa (2015: 4) highlights that different social and ecological temporalities exist side by side:

Looking at temporality from the perspective of everyday experience shows that time is not an abstract category, nor just an atmosphere, but a lived, embodied, historically and socially situated experience. Time is not a given, it is not that we have or do not have time, but that we make it through practices (ibid).

The sufficiency practitioners from the study similarly experience and produce different temporalities within their daily practices. The practitioners describe an attempt to slow down the production and consumption rhythm. They want to take time to produce at their pace specially to ensure high product quality and longevity. Moreover, repair services, lifelong product guarantees, reuse possibilities and secondary markets are all efforts to reduce the frequency of material consumption. The experience of slowing down also emerges from the time-intensive work the sufficiency practitioners are doing. Controlling and ensuring social standards, collaborating with like-minded partners or sustaining careful relationships with them are time-intensive activities that automatically slow down the daily processes of businesses.

The sufficiency-oriented practices are additionally influenced by long-term planning and visioning. Many costly actions taken in the present day might only have effects and benefits in the long-term, for example, for future generations. However, sufficiency practitioners also report a feeling of urgency that influences their actions. Although their activities require time and the planning is oriented toward long-term achievements, the environmental and social crises drive the practitioners to act now and diffuse their practices fast enough to rapidly tackle challenges such as climate change.

5. Discussion

Looking at sufficiency-oriented business practices from a lens of care revealed that sufficiency and care have many interferences. To orient the business practices towards the fulfilment of needs is leading businesses into a logic of care. The logic of care that sufficiency-oriented businesses in this study tend to adhere to shapes many elements in their practices. One main result of this study is that sufficiency-oriented businesses recognize the vulnerable, interconnected and dependent nature of human beings. Interdependent and vulnerable beings require relationships with other beings to fulfil their needs. Sufficiency-oriented businesses see their stakeholder relationships as care relationships. They are aware of their own needs and the needs of other actors in their environment, and they recognize that the fulfilment of these needs can only be reached in collaboration and solidarity with others.

Many feminist scholars denounce the inability of capitalist and neoliberal institutions to meet the fundamental needs of humans and more-than-humans (Winker 2015). Only needs that warrant purchasing power are selected and offered on the free market (*ibid*). Fundamental needs, such as health care, education or childcare, are undervalued and barely fulfilled for everyone in the world (Plonz 2011; Knobloch/Kleinert 2022; Winker 2015). Additionally, the social and environmental costs in the supply chain, which are externalized and ignored by many conventional businesses, represent further unmet needs that a company in a capitalist logic does not account for (Bauhardt 2014). With their efforts to reduce production and consumption volumes as a means of environmental protection and social justice, sufficiency-oriented businesses take a responsibility to fulfil fundamental needs that neoliberal and capitalist systems often neglect. Sufficiency orientation in businesses is a matter of care, essential to counteract the continuous neglect of care that neoliberalism is perpetuating.

Sufficiency-oriented business practices have developed essential care competencies, such as attentiveness, responsibility, transparent communication, creativity and resilience. The values of solidarity and the appreciation of the value of humans and more-than-humans are also essential care elements observed in sufficiency-oriented business practices. Lacking financial means can however jeopardize the sufficiency-oriented practices, which is a common and recurrent problem of care work and activities in the reproductive sector (Dowling 2021). As care scholars have highlighted, care requires time and is often inefficient in generating capital accumulation (Razavi 2012; Gubitzer/Mader 2016; Raghuram et al. 2009). Sufficiency in business practices makes time for care activities. A logic of care requires accepting the diversity of temporalities that exist in different contexts or periods and for different care subjects (Puig de la Bellacasa 2015; Raghuram et al. 2009).

Moreover, the integration of sufficiency in business practices is filled with contradictions and ambivalences, as it shifts business relations and references on many

scales (Nesterova/Buch-Hansen 2023). In this non-binary and non-linear process, capitalist elements and sufficiency strategies can temporarily co-exist (Nesterova et al. 2023). Learning loops, solidarity, patience, creativity or the ability to adapt to the unpredictable are a few examples of competencies that sufficiency practitioners develop to persevere and continue to care. From a care perspective, contradictions and ambivalences are inherently part of the practices (Mol 2008). Thus, the integration of sufficiency in business practices can be approached with empathy and kindness, instead of fearing a transformation due to inconsistencies (Nesterova et al. 2023).

Despite the many elements of care identified in sufficiency-oriented businesses, it is interesting to highlight the aspects of care that are still missing in the data to further improve a logic of care in the context of businesses. One relationship of the businesses that is not redefined by the business in the study is the relationship to nature and the more-than-human world. In a logic of care, the relationship between nature and the more-than-human world is not solely centred around the interests and needs of humans. Rather, the interconnectivity and interdependency with the more-than-human world are emphasised and every species and organism of nature becomes part of ethics and culture (Bauhardt/Harcourt 2019). It is worthy to observe the approach permaculture has when it comes to the role and responsibility of humans in a non-anthropocentric system. Puig de la Bellacasa describes humans' role as a member of nature as follows:

In spite of this nonhuman-centred stance, of the affirmation that humans are not separated from natural worlds, permaculture ethics cultivate specific ethical obligations for humans. Collective-personal actions are also moved by ethical commitment and an exigency to respond in this world. Possibly, this ethically decentred form of obligation conveys a tension but not, I believe, a contradiction (2017: 129).

Sufficiency-oriented businesses similarly might assume ethical obligations not only to protect nature but also to actively care for nature's needs. For example, more-than-human beings could be involved as actors in the production process, as consumers are as well. Even though sufficiency practitioners acknowledge the vulnerability of nature and engage in practices that minimize or suppress negative environmental impacts, human needs and ethics are still at the center of their businesses. A relationship shift from anthropocentrism to human beings embedded in a web of interdependent animals, plants, microorganisms or natural resources was not observed in the empirical data and has yet to be put into practice.

When sufficiency-oriented businesses acknowledge their own limitations of the businesses, they envision an end to their organizational and material growth. When reflecting upon the limitations of humans or other beings, care theories include the consideration and act of ending specific care relationships. Care is not only about creating connections to meet needs but also about a conscious disconnection of care

relationships if they do not serve the purpose anymore or if they are causing more harm than good to the goal (Pitt 2018; Puig de la Bellacasa 2017). In the logic of care, sufficiency-oriented businesses could reflect upon and consider their own end. To imagine what happens when the purpose of a sufficiency-oriented business is accomplished could be an active practice of sufficiency in business. Because needs are satiable or changing with time, technological improvement or societal structure, some (unsustainable) business practices can become obsolete for the well-being of society and nature (Heyen et al. 2017). Thus, in a matter of care, sufficiency-oriented businesses ought to consider ending their activities or switching to deliver other prevailing needs as soon as their practices are not caring anymore. To consider ending some parts of the business or taking unsustainable products from the market might especially be relevant for conventional businesses which would be willing to start a sufficiency-oriented transformation process.

Due to the vulnerabilities and dependencies, care relationships are always asymmetric and thus exposed to power relations and abuse (Jochimsen 2019; Martin et al. 2015). By rendering care invisible, neoliberal institutions systematically discriminate against some social groups, for example, by preventing access to good care for people according to their bodily or mental abilities, their race, their class, their gender or their sexual orientation (Tronto 1993). Studies in the UK or in the United States depict the higher exposure to illness or early death of Black, Asian and other minority ethnic groups due to systemic and discriminating factors such as economic insecurity or lack of access to medical insurance (Platt/Warwick 2020; Raifman/Raifman 2020). At the same time, the people with the least access to care services are the ones who carry out most of the care work (Tronto 1993). Privileged people can pass the devalued care work to others. This shift of unwanted care work to others is a recurrent exercise of power in Western history as described by Aulenbacher et al.:

From a historical viewpoint the transnationalization of care work is by no means new: under colonialism, the people snatched from African countries included not insignificant numbers of women and girls, who had to 'serve' as domestic slaves in their owners' households. [...] In the 21st century, the employment of care workers in middle- and upper-class households of high-income countries has developed into the most important labor market for female migrants worldwide (2018: 4, author's translation).

Care relationships have always been vulnerable to power and discrimination, especially in capitalist, patriarchal and colonial contexts. Introducing a logic of care does not magically dissolve power inequalities and injustice. Thus, even with a logic of care, sufficiency-oriented businesses must be responsive to inequalities and possible power abuse and be constantly aware of the vulnerability of care relationships. A logic of care only goes hand in hand with a concept of justice (Tronto 1993) and

is a de-colonial intersectional and queer feminist project according to many care scholars (Bauhardt 2012; Dengler 2022; Raghuram 2016). Some of the producing sufficiency-oriented businesses in this study are yet to follow such a decolonial path as their concept of fairness or solidarity is often still connected to extractivist patterns when resources are extracted in the Global South solely for consumption in the Global North (Riofrancos 2020).

Finally, in the capitalist context, in which all the companies in this study are embedded, narratives of care might be utilized for commercial purposes. As Puig de La Bellacasa (2017: 9) describes: “Calls for caring are everywhere, from the marketing of green products, by which companies compete to show how much they care, to the purchase of recycled items, by which consumers show that we care”. However, a logic of care in businesses does not manipulate care values for marketing purposes and discourses. Thus, scholars and practitioners ought to be attentive to narratives manipulating care without deviation from the logic of profit and growth. A logic of care goes beyond marketing. It radically transforms business doings in an anti-capitalist manner and reorients production and consumption practices towards the fulfilment of human and more-than-human needs.

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