

Call for Papers

zfwu 26/2 (2025): Navigating Sufficiency in Business - Overcoming Ambivalences and Challenges

Call for Papers until **30th September 2024**

Humanity has already exceeded several planetary boundaries as a result of its current way of life and economic activity (Richardson et al. 2023). In the search for sustainable solutions, technological approaches in the form of efficiency and consistency strategies have primarily been implemented to date. However, these approaches are limited in their ability to reduce absolute environmental impacts (Ward et al. 2016; Haberl et al. 2020). Corporate responsibility for sustainability thus goes beyond pure technological improvements and requires a critical examination of the demand and production generated and the associated consumption practices (Gossen et al. 2019; Heikkurinen et al. 2019; Niessen et al. 2023).

The sufficiency strategy is consequently becoming increasingly relevant in science and practice. For companies, the implementation of sufficiency implies a radical change in traditional business logic (Jungell-Michelsson/Heikkurinen 2022). Instead of the goal of maximizing profits, sufficiency-oriented companies are focusing on promoting energy- and resource-friendly practices (e. g. by offering vegan food products) and limiting consumption and production (Beyeler/Jaeger-Erben 2022). In a growth-oriented economic system, however, this leads to ambivalences and dilemma situations (Beyeler/Jaeger-Erben 2022). On the one hand, turning away from corporate growth would be in line with the objective of limiting production. However, this approach could jeopardize the existence of the company (Gossen/Heinrich 2021) and undermine the potential for scaling up sufficiency-oriented practices. On the other hand, actively pursuing growth to scale sufficiency-oriented practices runs the risk that the intended sufficiency effect will fail to materialize and thus go hand in hand with an increase in environmental pollution. Similarly, growth-oriented financing, for example, enables access to more capital to promote sufficiency, but paradoxically leads to new growth-oriented path dependencies.

This special issue aims to shed light on ambiguities and challenges of sufficiency in businesses as well as suitable solutions in order to facilitate the adaptation of sufficiency-oriented business practices. Contributions on the following key questions are particularly encouraged:

- Which ambiguities and challenges are created by the growth-oriented economic system for sufficiency-oriented companies and how can these be mitigated?
- Which kind of relation exists between economic growth and sufficiency in terms of systematicity and normativity?
- Which kind of ethical thoughts justifies sufficiency as normative expectation to improve the political framework of economies?
- Should we understand the idea of sufficiency as part of corporate social responsibility?
- What are the characteristics and differences of these ambiguities and challenges in different business contexts (e. g. legal forms, industries, company sizes, business models)?
- Which conflicts do established companies in particular have to face if they want to transition from their previous focus on growth to an orientation towards sufficiency (e. g. conflicts regarding the roles and motivation of employees)?
- Which innovative approaches can sufficiency-oriented companies pursue as part of the design of their business models?

- How do changed framework conditions (political, market and societal) contribute to reducing conflicts and challenges of sufficiency-oriented business activities?

We invite researchers from various disciplines to critically examine these questions and share their findings in this special issue. The spectrum of contributions is deliberately broad and we encourage all contributions that explore ambivalences or challenges of sufficiency in businesses from a theoretical or empirical perspective.

The editors of this issue are Prof. Dr. Martin Müller (University of Ulm), Prof. Dr. Marc C. Hübscher (Deloitte, Hamburg) and Julia Bruckner (University of Ulm).

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Instructions for authors

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Literature

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