

Better, not more

Citation for published version (APA):

Nießen, L. (2024). *Better, not more: Investigating the paradox of sufficiency-oriented business*. [Doctoral Thesis, Maastricht University]. Maastricht University. <https://doi.org/10.26481/dis.20241115ln>

Document status and date:

Published: 01/01/2024

DOI:

[10.26481/dis.20241115ln](https://doi.org/10.26481/dis.20241115ln)

Document Version:

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Please check the document version of this publication:

- A submitted manuscript is the version of the article upon submission and before peer-review. There can be important differences between the submitted version and the official published version of record. People interested in the research are advised to contact the author for the final version of the publication, or visit the DOI to the publisher's website.
- The final author version and the galley proof are versions of the publication after peer review.
- The final published version features the final layout of the paper including the volume, issue and page numbers.

[Link to publication](#)

General rights

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the public portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

- Users may download and print one copy of any publication from the public portal for the purpose of private study or research.
- You may not further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain
- You may freely distribute the URL identifying the publication in the public portal.

If the publication is distributed under the terms of Article 25fa of the Dutch Copyright Act, indicated by the "Taverne" license above, please follow below link for the End User Agreement:

www.umlib.nl/taverne-license

Take down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us at:

repository@maastrichtuniversity.nl

providing details and we will investigate your claim.

Summary

Humanity has turned into the driving force shaping the planet, with our production and consumption systems affecting other living beings, resource availability and even large planetary systems such as the climate. Human interaction with natural ecosystems has already resulted in the breach of planetary boundaries, taking us out of the safe operating space for civilisation. In addition to these environmental threats to humanity, there is also the need for more social sustainability, with many people living in poverty. The paradigm of efficiency and technological solutions has so far proven inadequate to tackle these challenges because it has ignored the need to reduce consumption to sustainable levels. This is the basis of the sufficiency concept, which can be broadly understood as resource consumption that enables well-being for all while remaining within planetary capacity. Sufficiency is needed since the current economic system is based on the continuous consumption of new products and the overconsumption of resources, which creates negative environmental and social impacts.

Businesses are key shapers of demand, through their product and service offering and advertising. As such, they also carry a responsibility and can act as frontrunners in working towards sufficiency. Therefore, this PhD thesis focuses on the role that business can play in a transition towards sufficient consumption. It asks: **“How and to what extent can businesses promote sufficiency in their users’ consumption?”**. Businesses are major drivers of consumption, yet they are often overlooked as potential leaders towards a sufficient economy. This PhD thesis investigates existing examples of companies that promote sufficiency. The chapters of this thesis attempt to put together different pieces of the puzzle of sufficiency-promoting businesses to generate a clearer picture. Through answering **“who”** these businesses are, **“what”** they do, **“(since) when”** they promote sufficiency and **“which impact”** that can create on consumers, a light is shone on them and their seemingly paradoxical activities. Furthermore, two practical tools are developed to inspire and support businesses to take action and adopt sufficiency and strongly sustainable business principles. Finally, the insights from these puzzle pieces are used to create recommendations for business and policy. The thesis contributes to existing research by expanding the knowledge base on sufficiency-promoting businesses and providing actionable tools to support business transformation. It adds to the debate on (strongly) sustainable business and what the future direction of companies might look like for a liveable future.