



Discussion Paper



Intersections of care work and ecological sustainability. To what extent can time be a common currency?

Hanna Völkle

**Harriet Taylor Mill-Institut für Ökonomie und Geschlechterforschung
Discussion Paper 41, 07/2020**

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Discussion Papers des Harriet Taylor Mill-Instituts für Ökonomie und
Geschlechterforschung der Hochschule für Wirtschaft und Recht Berlin

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Discussion Paper 41, 07/2020

ISSN 1865-9806

Download: <http://harriet-taylor-mill.de/index.php/de/publikationen/discussion-papers>

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Abstract

To overcome multi-level crises, it takes transformative alliances to develop respective ideas and narratives to make the intersections of care work and ecological sustainability visible. The paper analyses three approaches along the several overlaps of care work and ecological resources. It aims to elaborate to what extent time can serve as a common currency. Furthermore, it highlights common topics and persistent differences of the analysed concepts. Thus, the paper contributes to a pluralistic feminist economic discourse that is able to head towards the abovementioned transformative alliances.

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1. Introduction and relevance

Natural resources are limited. Global climate is changing. Marginalized groups are affected most by the impacts of climate change. Unequally distributed chances and discriminating structures tend to rather increase than to shrink. Living in a world of limited natural resources and social inequalities, the question might arise how to overcome both threats at the same time? Might those crucial current issues at the end have similar or even the same reasons? And if there are similarities concerning the point of origin might there even be synergies which need to be acknowledged to elaborate a proper analysis leading towards a common solution? In the 21st century we do know a lot about sustainable ways of living. We also know that sexes are treated differently and that this is not fair – especially concerning the distribution and the payment of work and labour.

But how come? Why are some natural resources prized and others rarely aren't? Why is some work defined as paid and some as unpaid? Who decides which resources and labour is commoditized and which not? Capitalist economic systems tend to commodify all goods and services. Neoliberal capitalism is exploiting reproduction work and natural resources. Fraser et al. (cf. Fraser et al. 2019) also mention the political system that is used by free riding capitalism. Capitalist structures do not call into question unpaid and unlimited access to two crucial resources: reproductive work and natural resources. Neoliberal capitalism can be framed as a free rider that uses and exploits social, ecological and also democratic preconditions unpaid and unvalued (cf. Fraser et al. 2019). An economic system that relies resources which it constantly uses without providing its sustainability "Feminist and ecological economics argue that mainstream economic thinking has historically ignored issues of gender and the environment", (Mellor 2005: 120f). Mary Mellor is one of the leading ecofeminist scholars. With the abovementioned quote she points to the fact that mainstream economic approaches marginalize and exploit key sources of the wealthy of industrialized economies: women and nature. *Ecofeminism* states that prevailing power structures and institutional bodies exclude and marginalize the exploitation of women and natural environment. Unpaid household work as well as the pollution of the atmosphere through emissions aren't taken into account. Feminist and ecological economists thereby share at least one common issue; namely the widespread invisibility in economic balance. This paper aims to contribute further similarities and

intersections of both approaches while being aware of respectively unsolvable and remaining differences and conflicts. The relevance of this paper is based on at least three different levels. On a global and especially on a European level, we live in decades of multilevel crises in which the scarcity of planetary boundaries, issues of social cohesion and the experience that democratic structures aren't for granted, are present every day. Simultaneously, almost all industrialized countries have to cope with demographic changes and aging populations. Key issues hereby are for example the access to remaining (energy) resources as well as the amount of care work which needs to be provided within aging societies.

To take care of others is one of the key pillars of our livelihood. Taking care means, not at least, to take a certain amount of time to use it for caring. Or in other words: One needs to have time to take care of others. Hereby, the distribution of time is crucial. Time as a resource is unequally distributed between men and women. "There are big differences in the time women and men devote to caring for themselves or caring for others. This is affected by gender stereotypes which associate domestic and care work with women and paid work with men, and which have the effect of devaluing care work," (EIGE 2017: 37). Regardless its valuation, care work is the basis for the economic growth in industrialized countries – at least indirectly, since it enables to sustain the androcentric ideal of a mostly male fulltime worker. "Androcentrism is an epistemological structure, in which mainstream economic concepts exclude both the private household economy and the service and care economy, despite their importance for economic growth and wealth production," (Kuhl/Maier 2012: 5). In other words, androcentrism is a term which describes the mainstream (economic, social, political) perspective in which benchmarks, standards and ideal types are described and defined along a stereotyped image of a (white) man – all others are excluded or marginalized since they are atypical, not normal. In an andro-centrist world, care is not important – especially not as an economic issue. However, in recent academic discourses as well as in policy making care at least is a social topic. Measurements to improve public care infrastructure, possibilities to reconcile work and family as well as initiatives to improve the conditions for professional care workers as nurses or teachers. "Care-economic activities are prerequisite for all social activity and are performed in the private household economy as unpaid work and in the public sector and private market sector as – mainly – low-paid work," (Kuhl/Maier 2012: 28). Care becomes more visible and more discussed, but it mostly remains a social,

a non-economic issue. One, that has to be solved by those who face daily care responsibilities – neither by the society as a whole nor by economic actors as e.g. companies in specific. To improve the imbalance of acknowledgement and importance of care it needs a double framing – a social as well as an economic one. “Alle Arten der unbezahlten und bezahlten Care-Arbeit sind wichtig für unsere Existenz, unseren Konsum- und Lebensstandard und damit für unser Wohlergehen. Sie sind Teil dessen, was wir irgendwie in irgendeiner Form alle brauchen,” (Madörin 2017: 46). In other words: care should not be decoupled from its social dimension and simultaneously it needs economic visibility.

Visibility in a system of finite resources is crucial. Beside the abovementioned resource of time, other resources are limited too. Planetary boundaries are nearly reached and the debates oscillating between sustainability, resource efficiency, socio-ecological transformation, and ideas of postgrowth systems are vivid. Decoupling natural resources from economic growth is one strand of the abovementioned various discourses. The use of natural resources ought to be more efficient or even reduced absolutely reflecting questions of sufficiency: What is enough? How much and what is needed for “good living”? What the proponents of this approaches mostly miss, is to define for whom the good living should be designed for. Who is engaged in the local neighbourhood? Who plants vegetables in the front garden? Who goes shopping in the organic, regional food store? And who teaches the children to treat their environment with respect? The efforts and costs of care are assumed to be inherent. If it is about a sound transformation – a socio-ecological transformation – than no costs within a prevailing system should be invisible or assumed. The crucial dimension thereby is time. Who invests time to create a good living? “Both production and re-production take time,” (Perkins 2007: 238). Investing time to plant vegetables and to raise children – both are investments in the future; the currency is time and the interest is intergenerational. Meaning: Providing and sustaining resources for future generations. The intersections of feminist care debates and sustainability approaches are several. Both debates mostly remain inside their theoretical boxes. Nevertheless, there are a few approaches to fill the gap of nearly missing potential synergies and the definition of common goals.

Sustainable livelihood is a socio-economic approach that interrelates local livelihood with a global context. “The term sustainable livelihood can be a means of making the connect between our day-to-day lives and the means by which we

can sustain all this into the future without damaging any one else's prospects along the way," (Morse/McNamara 2013: 6). Furthermore, the livelihood approach is aware of the importance of care work to sustain a good living. "Der Livelihood-Ansatz greift die lokalen Reproduktionszusammenhänge auf und orientiert sich an der Sicherung und dem Erhalt der natürlichen sowie sozialen Existenzgrundlage," (Soete 2014: 155).

Vorsorgendes Wirtschaften was established in the 1990s by German, Austrian and Swiss feminists, which founded a research network to add a gendered element to the sustainability research. The key idea is, that an innovative concept of economy needs to comprise caring for natural resources as well as for humans to be soundly sustainable (Meier-Gräwe et al. 2013: 243). Furthermore, the duty to sustain resources and the access to them for future generations is a determined feature of this approach "Ziel einer vorsorgenden Wirtschaftsweise ist es, diese eigentlichen Quellen des wirtschaftlichen Reichtums zu erhalten. Das handlungsleitende Prinzip einer solchen Ökonomie lautet: Erhalten im Gestalten, wobei Erhalten immer auch Erneuern bedeutet," (Biesecker 2010a: 1). To sum up, a caring economic approach is not only concerned about the present but also about the future performance of an economy and its dependents.

Another approach, trying to bring both perspectives closer together is Ecofeminism. It basically describes the double burden of women. It's mostly them who struggle to sustain a livelihood in times of economy expansion where no stone remains unturned and no body unused. Ecofeminism as a political perspective connects ecological as well as social issues facing expanding neoliberal paradigms. Thus, it is the ideal starting point to analyse the linkages between the gender division of labour and the use of natural resources in modern societies.

Besides the abovementioned explicit approaches, this paper wants to contribute arguments, why the triangle of care, sustainability and time is convincing. The 1) first sub-question thereby is, to what extend the equal distribution of time could be a bridging and valuating element to overcome the logic of separation of carers and earners? Secondly: 2) Could the idea of sufficiency be promoted if less time would be invested in paid work and thereby economic growth? And lastly but by no means least: 3) To what extend can time be a key resource for care as well as for ecological sustainability? The main research question hereinafter is: "Intersections of care work and ecological sustainability: To what extend can time

be a common currency?" The following chapter (2) provides an overview of recent literature and debates thereby especially focusing on care work and ecological sustainability. Having discussed respectively key concepts the third chapter (3) elaborates a theoretical framework to be able to compare selected research approaches that move at the interfaces of care and sustainability. Chapter (4) uses the previously developed framework as a pattern into which the approaches *Sustainable Livelihood*, *Vorsorgendes Wirtschaften* as well as *Ecofeminism* are classified. Intersections as well as differences are elaborated and analysed. The concluding chapter (5) sums up the findings of this paper, points out respective limitations and thereby formulates further research needs. This paper does not offer any new theory, but it aims to identify a discursive opportunity to elaborate a transformative, proactive narrative to open political alternatives.

This paper focusses mainly on the horizontal intersections and overlaps of ecological sustainability and care work with a focus on issues of gender. Vertical intersections regarding e.g. race, ethnicity or migration background are not explicitly discussed due to the research economic limitations of this paper. Nevertheless, the author is aware of this additional even more power- and hierarchy-critical perspective of intersectionality.

2. Literature review

The multiple crises of the current decade are multidimensional. Financial, economic, environmental and social issues overlap and influence each other at several points. The question of gender thus is a crucial one to analyse the structures as well as the impacts of the multiple crises. What is actually meant by the term *gender*? Gender is a structural category and thus more than the biological sex of an individual; it puts men and women in a specific relationship and mutual opposes male and female human beings by simultaneously excluding all of which cannot be put in this fixed pattern. "Geschlechterverhältnisse werden immer im Kontext des Alltagslebens gemacht und neu gestaltet. Wenn wir es nicht in die Welt setzen, gibt es Geschlecht nicht, " (Connell et al. 2013: 106). This idea that gender is a constructed, artificial category goes back to the French feminist Simone de Beauvoir. She states that one is not born as a woman (or man) but is made or raised as such (cf. de Beauvoir 1949). When *women* are homogenized and generalized as an aggregated group and are as such systematically differentiated

from *men*, then the biological sex becomes a structural category. "Die Vergesellschaftung prinzipiell aller Frauen über die Zuschreibung der Verantwortung für die soziale Reproduktion und die prinzipielle Freistellung der Männer von dieser Verantwortung über ihre Vergesellschaftung im Lohnverhältnis macht aus „Geschlecht“ eine Strukturkategorie," (Bauhardt 2012: 8). What Bauhardt states here is the dichotomic and thus separational logic along the structure of gender: Men and women, production and reproduction, paid and unpaid work, public and private sphere. This separation is accompanied by issues that affect men and women differently; even though their preconditions seem to be equal the respective outcome might differ because of gendered structures (cf. Kuiper 2004: 40, Sachverständigenkommission zum Zweiten Gleichstellungsbericht der Bundesregierung 2017: 35f). However, in this paper gender is mainly used as structural category to analysis prevailing inequalities produced and reproduced by the abovementioned logic of separation.

In times of the abovementioned multiple crises and unknown insecurities the winged word of *sustainability* is on everyone's lips. As a key term it gained popularity in the recent years; in academia as well as in politics, economy and society. To narrow the several meanings of the word, the following literature review focusses especially on *ecological sustainability*. Furthermore, debates and arguments concerning the topic of *care* are collected. As with the concept of sustainability, the debate about care must also be limited. Thereby the literature review mainly focusses on *care work*. However, the following section starts by introducing *ecological sustainability*; hereinafter *care work* is discussed.

2.1. Ecological sustainability

Sustainability is originally a term of the forestry. The basic meaning is literally to take just as much as regrows in a respective period of time. "It implies a sense of longevity — something that will last well into the future — and as a consequence it implies a resilience to the turbulence of our politics, economic systems and environmental change that seems to be so embedded within our world," (Morse/McNamara 2013: 1). Internationally the term *sustainable development* gained popularity as it was mentioned in the Brundtland Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) in 1987. The globally acknowledged report stated, that economic growth, environment protection and

social equality need to be equally considered to achieve sustainable development. Moreover, Eriksson adds that the report frames sustainable development as a “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs,” (Eriksson 2016: 13).

This focus on future generations is based on the conviction of being connected with future generations, of being embedded within a certain societal system (cf. Mellor 2013, Morse/Mc Namara 2013). The three pillars on which sustainable development is based are economy, environment and society. All three include the abovementioned future orientation. Sachs differentiates between three perspectives of sustainable development: the contest perspective, that aims to increase efficiency facing scarcity of resources; the Astronaut’s perspective, which considers planetary boundaries and assumes global responsibility; and last the home perspective that focuses on social justice and follows a (local) sufficiency strategy (cf. Sachs 1999). The most dominant perspective in the current (mainstream) discourse of sustainable development is the contest perspective: increasing economic competitiveness within a globalized market through investing in new technologies, especially in those of the energy industry, to combat resource scarcity in a zero-sum, finite game of economic growth. An example would be the report of the European Commission *Europe 2020* and the flagship initiative *A Resource Efficient Europe*, in which the European Union aims to increase its resource efficiency (cf. EU Commission 2011). The report is part of the strategy towards a green economy; growth is provided through increased resource efficiency. “At the same time, the affluent North continues to generate more industrial pollution by manufacture of 'renewables' to sell to the global South for 'climate adaptation'. This kind of self-serving gesture is legitimised in the name of 'development',” (Salleh 2010: 122). Among others, (eco-)feminist scholars as Biesecker and Hofmeister hold against the abovementioned efficiency strategy and argue that it is no longer sufficient to try to reach sustainability only through a technologically based increase of efficiency (cf. Biesecker/Hofmeister 2010: 67).

Moreover, a sound approach of ecological sustainability needs to have a more widen perspective. “An ecologically sustainable economy would start from the embodiment and embeddedness of human lives, from the life of the body and the ecosystem,” (Mellor 2013: 33). Sustainability hereinafter means more than just a certain type of economic, resource-based balance. “It implies a sense of longevity — something that will last well into the future—and as a consequence it implies a

resilience to the turbulence of our politics, economic systems and environmental change that seems to be so embedded within our world," (Morse/McNamara 2013: 1). As already mentioned, this long-term perspective is key to the overarching definition of sustainability since it connects the present with the past but especially with the future to come. "Das [...] Leitbild von Nachhaltigkeit beschreibt das Ziel, die Entwicklungschancen zukünftiger Generationen nicht zu beschneiden und einen global und sozial gerechten Zugriff auf Ressourcen zu ermöglichen (inter- und intragenerationelle Gerechtigkeit)," (Meier-Gräwe et al. 2013: 239). This double justice principle (Gottschlich 2012: 1) points out that a sound sustainability approach has to acknowledge the needs of present as well as of following generations to be literally just.

Beside this justice claim over time, sustainability needs to be aware of prevailing gender hierarchies (Bauhardt 2012: 2). "The gendered economy needs to be freed from its narrow focus on markets and paid work, to embrace a much wider notion of human activities in meeting human needs and sustaining the natural world," (Mellor 2013: 32f.). Gendered economies are unsustainable. However, vice versa also feminist economists have a sensitive blind spot; their research widely ignores ecological concerns (Perkins et al. 2005: 108). The mutual interdependence of both research fields is undeniable. Especially the concern about (the) future (generations) is unifying – taking care of others as well as natural resources might have similar motivational reasons. "Who will do the work of growing the tomatoes on urban rooftops, recycling the post-consumer materials, carrying the glass jars to the bulk food stores to be refilled with beans, soaking and cooking and refrying the beans?" (Perkins 2007: 238). What becomes clear is, that it takes to care about others as well as for a conscious, good way of living. The following section embraces the current debate of *care work*.

2.2. Care work

Care work is a conceptual framework for all care activities, regardless of the subject and type of care and regardless of the organizational form (cf. Sachverständigenkommission zum Zweiten Gleichstellungsbericht der Bundesregierung 2017: 35; Kopp et al. 2017: 30). In other words, care work is a pattern which suborders care for elderly, for children and any other group of people

whom are dependent on care givers; whether this work is paid or unpaid, professionalized or privately organized. However, the term care *work* thereby has at least two essential pillars. First, it makes the encompassing societal importance of care and care givers visible. "Zweitens geht es darum, den Arbeitsbegriff umzudeuten: >Arbeit< besteht nicht nur aus Lohnarbeit und umfasst mehr als die effiziente Produktion von Dingen und Dienstleistungen," (Kopp et al. 2017: 31). Since the results of care work aren't part of economic balances yet, visibility as well as the working character are crucial to be acknowledged; labour in the household remains widely *un-theorized* in the economic sphere; this goes back to a specific *motherhood-cult* in the 19th / early 20th century which normatively glorified the work done by women, especially mothers, and thus excluded it from any statistical (economic) evaluation (cf. Kuiper 2004: 42). Through this normative exclusion of (women's) care work it remains incomparable – in particular in contrast to (men's) (productive) paid income work. "Wird durch die (Erwerbs-)Arbeit für den Markt produziert und Wert geschaffen, so gilt die Care-Arbeit als un-, bestenfalls als „reproduktiv“, ihr Ergebnis geht nicht in die ökonomische Wertrechnung ein," (Biesecker 2010b: 2).

However, the dichotomic differentiation between *production* and *reproduction* thereby reinforces the marginalization of care and care givers and simultaneously reproduces the separation logic (cf. Winker 2011: 336). "Die Dichotomisierung von produktiven und „reproduktiven“ Tätigkeiten und Leistungen, wie sie in der ökonomischen Theorie vollzogen worden ist, hat in der physischen Sphäre keine Entsprechung," (Biesecker/Hofmeister 2010: 52). This means that there is actually no tangible difference between so-called productive and reproductive work – besides the economic degradation, marginalisation and invisibility of the latter. "[...] there is hardly any area as important as care (work) that is subject to so much degradation and marginalisation," (Schildberg 2014: 5). The aspects of degradation and marginalisation are key to understand the issue of especially unpaid care work. "Sorgearbeit ist unsichtbar, oftmals unbezahlt und gleichzeitig für die Gesellschaft unverzichtbar," (Kopp et al. 2017: 30).

According to recent data, in Europe especially women are engaged in care for children, elderly and other dependents: 38 per cent of European women spend more than one hour per day for care, while only a quarter of men does so (EIGE 2017: 39). With 46 per cent in particular working women share the highest percentage of those carrying out unpaid care work (EIGE 2017: 41). A key feminist

claim thus is to acknowledge care work as a productive part of economic balances as well as to free care from biologist attributions (cf. Bauhardt 2012: 3f). "The gendered economy needs to be freed from its narrow focus on markets and paid work, to embrace a much wider notion of human activities in meeting human needs and sustaining the natural world," (Mellor 2013: 32f).

Nowadays, unpaid care work can at least be estimated. „Wenn man bezahlte und unbezahlte Arbeit zusammennimmt, arbeiten Frauen über 18 Jahre mehr als Männer, nämlich durchschnittlich 45,5 Stunden pro Woche, während Männer im Schnitt auf 44,5 Stunden kommen," (Sachverständigenkommission zum Zweiten Gleichstellungsbericht der Bundesregierung 2017: 38f). Mellor adds that the more work is valued by money, the more it is done by men and vice versa: the more unremitting it is, the more female-dominated and unpaid it is (cf. Mellor 2013: 31). In Germany, for example, more than a half of the amount of work is done unpaid (cf. Kopatz 2012: 27). Feminist economics argue that a new calculation of economic performance is needed. "Letztlich geht es darum zu verstehen, wie viel Arbeit getan wird, die nicht bezahlt wird und wie sich die Geldströme verändern (müssen) soll ein Teil davon bezahlt werden," (Madörin 2017: 61).

Furthermore, an explicit political recognition of care work would help to increase its visibility. "The State together with civil society should strengthen and develop organizations, institutions and social policies that ensure that the combination of income-earning and caregiving roles is not divided along gender, class or >ethnicity< / >race< / nationality or age lines," (Schildberg 2014: 4). Winker adds that politics needs to enable a reduction of income work while simultaneously providing financial security for care givers (cf. Winker 2011: 342). Among others, Fraser presents a respective caregiver parity model in which gender equity is explicitly supported by state institutions (cf. Fraser 1994: 593; Meier-Gräwe et al. 2013: 227). While the academic discourse is well advanced, policy making falls behind. In 2017 the Expert Commission on the Second Gender Equality Report of the Federal Government proposed an earner-carer-model: "Danach soll es allen Menschen je nach den Anforderungen im Lebensverlauf möglich sein, neben der Erwerbsarbeit auch private Sorgearbeit zu leisten; gleichzeitig muss informelle Sorgearbeit jederzeit zusammen mit Erwerbsarbeit gelebt werden können," (Sachverständigenkommission zum Zweiten Gleichstellungsbericht der Bundesregierung 2017: 45). Kuhl and Maier add furthermore, that state bodies as employer in the public sector could serve as role-models to implement respective

models (cf. Kuhl/Maier 2012: 35). To sum up, care work is key to keep economic, societal and political systems running and it is important to increase its visibility as well as those who are involved in it.

3. Framework: How to compare care work and ecological sustainability

To make different approaches comparable it is useful to develop a common and theory-based framework. Literature based dimensions or trends thereby will be transformed into concrete criteria of comparison. Through the elaborated pattern selected approaches concerned with care work as well as with ecological sustainability can be compared; intersections, similarities as well as differences and remaining conflicts thereby can be extracted. As theoretical backgrounds mainly serve three theoretical strands. Firstly, a feminist economic theory is analysed to develop criteria concerning gender equality, division of labour as well as the general recognition of care work. Second, theory along the debates of good living and sufficiency as well as economic alternative theory oscillating around sustainability and socio-economic transformation are to be considered. Lastly, the aspect of time allocation and the gendered distribution of time is thematised and extracted into elements of criteria. These three strands of argumentation are useful regarding the research question of this paper since they cover the crucial triangle of care, sustainability and time.

3.1. Feminist Economics

In her essay "Wege aus der Krise" Christine Bauhardt, a leading feminist ecological economist, analyses alternative economic approaches through a feminist perspective (cf. Bauhardt 2013). Strictly speaking she examines the concepts of a *Green New Deal*, a postgrowth or *degrowth economy* and that of a *solidarity economy*. Hereby she uses three dimensions to compare the respective approaches. The first argument she cites refers to the undeniable importance of care work for economic systems; even though care work mostly takes place in the private sphere and remains unpaid (see also Kopp et al. 2017: 36). The invisibility of care work is the consequence of a decision not of reversible circumstances or even inherent aspects of care itself. If welfare regimes rely more or less on the unpaid work done within families than its importance is hardly to deny. Secondly, she argues that gender equality remains dependent from the equal labour market

participation of men and women as long as the ability to participate within any societal context remains bounded to employment and income (see also Kopp et al. 2017: 35f; Meier-Gräwe et al. 2013: 232). In other words, this means that only those who don't have any (care) responsibilities have the possibility to e.g. take up any volunteer work within the community, the neighbourhood or in local politics. As long as work remains distributed along gender boundaries, the ability to participate in civil society will be gender-biased. This fluently leads to another argument of Bauhardt. She concludes that unpaid care work needs to be equally distributed between men and women, since this unbalance hinders individual income chances (see also Winker 2011: 341). Table 1 provides an overview of Bauhardt's arguments and adds compressed criteria of comparison to make their respective essence even clearer.

Feminist economic arguments	Criteria of comparison
Care-work as a key element of economy, even though it remains unpaid.	Recognition of care-work
Gender equality is dependent on the equal labour market participation since societal participation is closely linked to employment and income.	Labour market participation
Employment opportunities are restricted by care work thus unpaid care work needs to be equally distributed between men and women.	Division of labour

Table 1 Feminist economic arguments: Author's own composition based on Bauhardt 2013.

Key terms and hereinafter criteria of comparison derived from Bauhardt's analysis are *recognition of care-work*, *labour market participation* of women and men and the *division of labour* - be it paid or unpaid. These selected feminist economic arguments will be revisited in the comparative framework in chapter 4.

3.2. Good Living and sufficiency

In their 2017 published anthology "Auf Kosten anderer?" Kopp et al. question to what extent imperial ways of living contradict a good way of living. Besides other topics they also discuss the issue of care work. According to Kopp et al., care work is the basis for the vision of a good living. To take care of others thereby is the

key element of social cohesion or social coexistence (cf. Kopp et al. 2017: 38). Besides this social aspect the framework of comparison should also contain a more economic criterion: sufficiency or the right measure of enough is a useful addition to the framework to be developed. Among others, sufficiency is discussed by Sachs, a researcher in the field of environment, development, and globalization. Besides an increase of efficiency based on technological innovation and a certain degree of consistency or resilience the aspect of sufficiency is essential too (Sachs 2015: 4; see also Mies 2014: 62; Gottschlich 2012: 6). This means, that only a technical change is needed but also an individual and societal reflection about the respective manners of consumption: How much is enough? Furthermore, Soete claims for the awareness that also new (ecological) economic approaches might be gender-biased; meaning which chances and risk do men and women have to face on the way towards as structural ecological change (Soete 2014: 153). Since the prevailing structures are gendered, it is logical that a change of these structures has different or gendered consequences for the respective people – if this gender-bias remains unreflected within the process of change or transformation. A key question hereinafter would be, who has the ability to grow groceries in their own garden instead of selling their labour force on the market? Is a full-time income with traditional gender roles necessary to follow a good and conscious way of living? Table 2 provides an overview of the abovementioned arguments and the resulting criteria of comparison.

Good living and sufficiency arguments	Criteria of comparison
Care as a starting point for the struggle for a good life. Care work as the basis of social coexistence.	Good living
Sufficiency is needed to create a sustainable future.	Sufficiency
Awareness of chances and risks which men and women have to face within structural (ecological) economic changes.	Gender awareness

Table 2 Good living and sufficiency arguments: Author's own composition based on Kopp et al. 2017, Sachs 2015, Soete 2014.

Key terms and hereinafter additional criteria of comparison derived from the abovementioned authors are the idea of *good living*, the necessity of *sufficiency* and lastly *gender awareness* when it comes specific consequences of changes. As

well as the abovementioned feminist economic arguments also these points of comparison will be revisited in the comparative framework in chapter 4.

3.3. Time as a value of exchange

Time is money. In modern times clock time is the technology to measure and value time. Since time is money, time needs to be saved. "When time is money then time compression and rationalization schemes become economic imperatives," (Adam 2002: 18). Facing multiple crises and the finite of resources it is obvious that money is not an adequate tool or currency to measure all costs nor the paradigm of unlimited growth. "[...] as the material and ecological inequalities of global society are accentuated, we have every reason to critically scrutinize the assumption that money and exchange value are the measures of all that is significant for understanding processes of economic growth and accumulation," (Hornborg 2003: 5). Caring for others, oneself and/or the ecological environment takes time. In a capitalist economic system exclusively that time, which can be transformed into a saleable commodity, has a countable, monetarized value (cf. Biesecker 1995: 193). This is misleading since the allocation of time, more specifically clock time is gendered. "Across the world, work that is not easily fitted into the clock time structuring is considered 'women's work', irrespective of whether or not it is carried out by women," (Adam 2002: 16).

The technology of clock time thus impacts socio-economic systems. Clock time tries to transcendence from seasonal or biological periods or time patterns (cf. Adam 2002). Care work responsibilities which do not fit into clock time patterns, shrink the amount of time which can be used for employment or leisure time activities. As already mentioned, most of the (unpaid) care work is done by women. Thus, the distribution of time is gendered. Meaning: The access to the limited resource of time differs along gendered borders and is unequal. Rubery, a feminist economist focussed on labour market policies, states that a balanced allocation of time is a key element towards gender equality (cf. Rubery et al. 1998: 72).

Furthermore, this would lead to a better balance of wage and non-wage work (cf. Rubery et al. 1998: 90); or in other words a more gender equal distribution of paid and unpaid work and thus a gender balanced share of care-work. Within a clock time system not only carers but also those who subsistence ecological resources

e.g. farmers have no other option than to refuse to decontextualize their invested time and individually must handle with the consequences. “For carers in the home and subsistence farmers the world over, the shift to clock time is not an option. Such resistance to incorporation into the logic of decontextualized time means that their work, and similarly placed activities that badly fit the machine-based clock-time regime, are consistently accorded low value on the global labour market,” (Adam 2002: 17).

Kuhl and Maier draw the logical conclusion from this to the household level: Time is the main currency within private households and is thereby a powerful and structural resource (Kuhl/Maier 2012: 29). Those who have it, can use it for employment, get an income and a specific pension. Whereas those whose time budget is limited through care responsibilities have less time for employment, get a lower income and a respective lower pension.

Gender pay gap, gender pension gap and gender care gap are just three examples of the measurable consequences of the gendered distribution of time. The gender pay gap indicates the gendered differences of income. In Germany for example the unadjusted gender pay gap is about 22 per cent (cf. Statistisches Bundesamt 2017); this and the often-interrupted occupational biographies of women due to their care responsibilities lead to a gender pension gap of 53 per cent in Germany (cf. WSI 2017). The abovementioned unequally distributed care responsibilities result in a gender care gap, which is about 52 per cent – indicating that women do more (unpaid) care work than men (cf. Sachverständigenkommission zum Zweiten Gleichstellungsbericht der Bundesregierung 2017). Table 3 collects the abovementioned arguments concerning time allocation and suggests again specific criteria for the theoretical framework of comparison.

Time allocation arguments	Criteria of comparison
Within economic systems only time which can be transformed into a commodity has a value.	Value of time
A balanced allocation of time is a key element of gender equality.	Allocation of time
Time is a main currency of private households.	Time as a currency

Table 3 Time allocation arguments: Author’s own composition based on Biesecker 1995, Rubery et al. 1998, Kuhl/Maier 2012.

Key terms and hereinafter criteria of comparison derived from the abovementioned authors are specific *value of time*, the structural and thus gendered *allocation of time* and lastly the framing of *time as a currency* of private households. In the next chapter all the elaborated criteria along the arguments of feminist economics, the idea of good living and sufficiency as well as those of time allocation are summarized as a framework. This elaborated pattern is then applied to the selected approaches to analyse respective intersection and similarities as well as differences and conflicts regarding the issues of care and sustainability.

4. Intersections and differences of selected approaches

Which are the intersections and differences of the issues of care work and ecological sustainability? And does the dimension of time indeed provide specifics for both topics? In this section the previously developed framework will be used as a pattern into which the selected approaches of *Sustainable Livelihood*, *Vorsorgendes Wirtschaften* as well as of *Ecofeminism* are classified. Thereby brief overviews of the approaches are provided and in a second step analysed regarding the framework develop in the previous chapter (3). Where does the application of the framework fit and where not? However, intersections and differences will be elaborated and thereby become visible and comparable.

4.1. Sustainable Livelihood

The Sustainable Livelihood approach is the sufficient answer to a mainstream economic focus on efficiency facing resource scarcity, a growing world population and its ever-growing energy hunger. Efficiency approaches can lead to rebounds; meaning more resource efficient technologies or ways of production lead to an increased demand that diminishes the resource savings in total (cf. Santarius 2014). "Wenn man nicht die Straße der Hybris einschlagen und der Evolution des Anthropozäns mit Mitteln wie dem Geoengineering, der synthetischen Biologie oder der künstlichen Intelligenz steuern will, ist Rückzug angesagt," (Sachs 2015: 3). What Sachs emphasises here is the assumption, that efficiency without a critical reflection of the demand side remains unsustainable. Is the withdrawal into local communities more sustainable concerning economy, environment and society? The Sustainable Livelihood approach is *peoplecentric* (Morse/McNamara 2023:

10). This means that not only quantitative improvements are useful to reach more sustainability.

The sustainable approach focusses on qualitative change within societies along a closely linked exchange relation with the respective environmental surrounding (cf. Salleh 2010: 139). "Das Alternativkonzept von Sustainable Livelihoods will die Ausbeutung von Natur und Menschen beenden und stellt der Wachstumsorientierung eine Bedürfnisorientierung gegenüber," (Bauhardt 2012: 4). People are not only key actors of change but also profiteers since the transformation goes along with the claim of an increase of individual capacities to create their own good way of living (cf. Bauhardt 2012: 14). These individual chances are embedded within a (local) societal context, a (local) network of individuals. Local thus no longer means isolated or regressive. The local community is connected to global think tanks of economic, social and also political alternatives (cf. Sachs 2015: 5). People will always need a livelihood or a neighbourhood (cf. Morse/McNamara 2013: 12). The protection of this basic need of human beings thereby is key for further developments. Within this inherent anticipation, the Sustainable Livelihood approach connects present (local) livelihoods with those (unknown) of the future. "So the term sustainable livelihood can be a means of making the connect between our day-to-day lives and the means by which we can sustain all this into the future without damaging any one else's prospects along the way," (Morse/McNamara 2013: 6). Sachs adds that these local communities are tied to a specific location while they remain open for global circulations and dynamics (cf. Sachs 2015: 5). But furthermore, the Sustainable Livelihood approach has not only an intergenerational but also intragenerational claim. This includes gender equality, at least theoretically (cf. Soete 2014: 155). Perkins adds another crucial aspect of Sustainable Livelihoods. Their potential scope of impact is limited. "Generalizations tend to lead to exploitation, misunderstandings, power inequities, and management errors, while perpetuating harmful and misguided approaches. The sustainability conundrum can only be effectively addressed at small scales," (Perkins 2007: 234). The ideal local community acknowledges all types of work: employment, care-work and engagement for the community (cf. Sachs 2015: 7).

Furthermore, this approach asks for more individual and collective responsibility and assumes preconditions as "Naturnähe, Gelassenheit und Gesundheit" (Sachs 2015: 7). Under gender aspects this is critical since the secured spheres of

Sustainable Livelihood remain on a macro-level embedded in economies with unjust division of labour and gender stereotypes concerning (unpaid) care-work. Taken up more responsibility for a local community, visiting the farmers market, growing vegetables and preparing home-made food could be additional burdens for caregivers, mainly women (cf. Bauhardt 2013, Soete 2014). "Auch der Ansatz kleiner neuer Gesellschaftsverträge im Kontext sozialer Experimente und Kämpfe ist nicht gefeit vor Hierarchie und Ausschluss, ist nicht Garant dafür, dass es nun automatisch und per se demokratisch zugeht," (Biesecker/Winterfeld 2014: 220).

Over and above that, one could add that new societal structures are not automatically gender equal. Even on a small scale, absoluteness claims are always excluding and thereby unjust and unequal; making a normative difference between one's own and the others and thus building up new or sustain old hierarchies. Misunderstood sufficiency or good living approaches do not include everyone. If rooms of experiment themselves become exclusive then their inherent creative and progressive vision may be neglected by a benchmark as "Wir machen es richtig und die anderen sollen es auch so machen," (Biesecker/Winterfeld 2014: 223).

Regarding the developed criteria, the following intermediate conclusion can be drawn for the approach of Sustainable Livelihoods. The approach *recognizes care-work* activities and a *division of labour* is in so far equally discussed as it is divided within the respective community. In terms of the criteria *good living* and *sufficiency* the Sustainable Livelihood approach is quite advanced since it has a special focus on the individual livelihoods which it reflectively connects with broader contexts. The arguments concerning *time* (allocation/distribution) are only indirectly addressed since it embeds human societies in a specific context and thereby in a certain relation with the processes of nature – namely time and space (cf. Schildberg 2014: 5).

4.2. Vorsorgendes Wirtschaften

The approach of Vorsorgendes Wirtschaften or *Caring Economy* goes back to the very beginning of the discussions about sustainable economy or sustainable development in the 1980s (cf. Jochimsen 2005: 133). Vorsorgendes Wirtschaften is more of a network of researchers than a research approach. The researchers engaged in this network have a specific economic perspective and hereinafter its premises are fundamentally different from mainstream economic research. "The

term 'Vorsorgendes Wirtschaften' or 'Caring Economy' was created to indicate this shift from the focus and content of other approaches in ecological economics," (Jochimsen 2005: 133). This alternative perspective enables the researchers to start from those who were excluded, exploited and marginalized under the umbrella of "reproduction", namely women and nature (cf. Biesecker 2010a: 6, Biesecker/Hofmeister 2010: 70). *Reproduction* in this context means the opposite of *production*. The dichotomic differentiations between men and women, public and private sphere as well as production and reproduction are key aspects of mainstream economic theories which base on systematic exclusion of costs (cf. Kuiper 2004: 44). A future-oriented economic concept needs to include all costs – also those of unpaid household or care work as well as those of nature and its recovery. Otherwise certain parts will remain excluded and invisible in economic balances. "Ein zukunftsfähiges Ökonomiekonzept muss folgerichtig im nachhaltigen Sinne Sorge für Mensch und Natur tragen," (Meier-Gräwe et al. 2013: 243). Through this alternative, caring economic approach the non-commoditized (reproductive) resources of (economic) wealth are acknowledged and sustained (cf. Biesecker 2010a: 1).

The resulting care economy has basically three guiding premises or principles. The first is the principle of *care* and thereby the logical linkage between present and future generations. "Aus dem Sorgen um die Zukunft entsteht die Vorsorge in der Gegenwart," (Biesecker 2010a: 3). The second principle, in contrast to a competitive mainstream economy, is that of *cooperation*. A caring or provisioning economy always interrelates people with each other and with nature. This means that cooperation is the necessary consequences if the common aim is to achieve an intra- and intergenerational just way of economizing (cf. Biesecker/Winterfeld 2014: 214). Lastly, the orientation along the (vision) of a *good life* serves as a key guideline for the approach of Vorsorgendes Wirtschaften (cf. Jochimsen 2005, Biesecker 2010a). This last principle is closely linked to another economic perspective. "Es geht nicht nur und zu aller erst um die Frage: Ließe sich noch energiesparender und emissionsärmer produzieren, sondern darum, was überhaupt hergestellt werden soll und was nicht," (Gottschlich 2012: 6). What Gottschlich states here is the question of sufficiency. What is necessary for a good living? "A sufficiency provisioning economy would stress sufficiency rather than profit and growth and stress needs rather than wants. Sufficiency is most clearly defined by what it is not. It is not 'too much' or 'too little'. It must be socially just,

as sufficiency for one must be sufficiency for all,” (Mellor 2013: 33). Sufficiency as well as *Vorsorgendes Wirtschaften* also has the premise to link today’s question of “What is enough (for a good living)?” with the needs of future generations. Profits of today might be costs for tomorrow. As well as the approach of Sustainable Livelihood also *Vorsorgendes Wirtschaften* aims to create an alternative social contract which includes gender equality and sustains resources for a good living (cf. Soete 2014: 155). A part of this new social contract along the principles of *Vorsorgendes Wirtschaften* would also propose a new definition of what is work. “Der Arbeitsbegriff wird erweitert und Erwerbsarbeit sowie Sorgearbeit sind gleichwertig,” (Soete 2014: 155). This is due to the conviction, that the economy is socially embedded and the dichotomic boundaries between production and reproduction blur and dissolve. The approach of *Vorsorgendes Wirtschaften* is in progress; meaning that there are no fix and unchangeable certainties (cf. Jochimsen 2005: 134). Biesecker and von Winterfeld briefly point to the fact that this research process does not shy away from critical self-reflection. “Die Handlungsprinzipien für vorsorgendes Wirtschaften scheinen eine ausschließlich *gute Welt* zu skizzieren – mit *guten Menschen* und voller Harmonie. Aber so ist es nicht und so ist es auch nicht gemeint,” (Biesecker/Winterfeld 2014: 215). It’s economic vision of new premises not the utopian idea of new human beings.

Regarding the developed criteria, the following intermediate conclusion can be drawn for the approach of *Vorsorgendes Wirtschaften*. A starting point of this approach is the inherent conviction that gender matters; meaning a *gender awareness* is given. This goes along with the key importance and thereby recognition of care work. A new definition of what is work includes a critical reflection of the *division of labour*. Besides the gender sensibility the idea of *sufficiency* is another key aspect or even equivalent pillar of this approach. The dimension of *time*, similar to the previously discussed approach, remains only indirectly analysed in terms of care and intergenerational sustainability. One could assume, that the equal distribution of time and its value are necessary preconditions to achieve the abovementioned new societal contract which *Vorsorgendes Wirtschaften* proposes.

4.3. Ecofeminism

Feminist economists are convinced that a proper economic calculation needs to consider all work that is done within an economy; no matter if it is paid or unpaid. Quantifying life and society are key interests of capitalism (cf. Mies/Shiva 2014: 281). Thus, all of which can't be calculated is excluded and marginalized from the mainstream economic perspective. "Feministische Ökonominnen sind der Verbesserung des ökonomischen und sozialen Status von Frauen und anderen durch den ökonomischen Main-/Malestream Marginalisierten verpflichtet," (Bauhardt 2013: 10). Eco-feminism is a certain sub-perspective within the feminist economic theory. "Sie gehen von der strukturellen Ähnlichkeit der kapitalistischen Ausbeutung und Beherrschung der Natur und der Frauen beziehungsweise der weiblichen Produktivität aus," (Bauhardt 2012: 9). Nature and women provide the satisfaction of (societal) basic needs – no matter the surrounding economic systems. "Centered around social provisioning of basic needs within and across generations, feminist ecological economic analysis shows the importance of women's unpaid work, ecological destruction, and material throughput without necessarily commodifying or monetizing these elements, which are regarded as externalities in mainstream economics," (Benería et al. 2016: 85). Thus, ecofeminist scholars assume that the exploitation of nature's resources and unpaid work, mostly done by women, go hand in hand and have a common reason: an economy concept, that bases its gains on externalization of costs (cf. Perkins et al. 2005: 108). Meaning, the costs caused using natural resources and unpaid household work are not calculated by capitalist economists. "Der Mechanismus des absplattendes Einbeziehens von Natur und sozial weiblicher Arbeit legt nahe, dass es etwas Anderes, etwas Externes geben muss, damit das Eigene und Interne funktioniert," (Biesecker/Winterfeld 2014: 219).

This structural externalization (of costs) goes along with a marginalization, which is analysed by ecofeminists: dominant groups live as if they weren't embedded and dependent on a certain environmental and societal context (cf. Mellor 2005: 126). Mies compares this unjust exclusively relationship with former colonial history of exploitation. "Today, a similar colonial relationship exists between Man and Nature, between men and women, between urban and rural areas. We have

called these the colonies of White Man. In order to maintain such relationships force and violence are always essential," (Mies 2014: 56). The assumed closer relationship between women and nature serves as an additional structural instrument of marginalization regarding the so-called nature-given argument of fertility and thereby reproduction (cf. Bauhardt 2012: 2).

However, Ecofeminism has the power to influence policy (making) and public debates (cf. Buckingham 2014: 146). The United Nations have acknowledged the intersections of gender equality and ecological protection. "According to UN World Survey on the Role of Women in Development 2014, there are proven synergies between women's empowerment and economic, social and environmental sustainability," (Eriksson 2016: 10). Ecofeminists see these intersections as well. They thematise how the ecological crisis is interrelated with a gendered hierarchy, that intensifies the crisis of reproduction (cf. Bauhardt 2013: 12). In other words, whereas ecological economists are mostly concerned with the future of our (natural) planet, ecofeminists are worried about the future of our societies and future generations. Both perspectives are future oriented. "And both [feminist economics and ecological economics] share a common vision of sustainable and equitable development that addresses and maintains the balance between the provisioning needs of the current generation and that of future generations," (Benería et al. 2016: 83). Ecological sustainability and gender equality seem to be interdependent and reciprocal; thus, a shared responsibility for caring is needed and necessary. "Only when men begin seriously to share in caring for children, the old, the weak, and for nature, when they recognize that this life-preserving subsistence work is more important than work for cash, will they be able to develop a caring, responsible, erotic relationship to their partners, be they men or women," (Mies/Shiva 2014: 295).

Regarding the developed criteria of comparison, the following intermediate conclusion can be drawn for the approach of Ecofeminism. *Care work* is more than recognized; it's a key element of the approach of Ecofeminism. Furthermore, the definition of care even includes to care for environmental surroundings and natural resources. That *gender* is a structural dimension and thereby need to be considered is also as self-evident as the recognition of care work. Especially in the last quote of Mies and Shiva it becomes obvious, that the gender equal *division of labour*, including all kinds of work, is a key demand of the approach of Ecofeminism. As in the latter approaches, also Ecofeminism is aware of the

importance of time and time allocation. Since work should be equally divided one can assume, that the advocates of this approach would agree that time has a certain value and functions as a currency in private households.

4.4. Summary of comparison

The three approaches oscillating along the theoretical overlaps of care work and ecological sustainability show several similarities as well as undeniable differences, especially regarding their respective starting point or focus of research. Nevertheless, what already has become clear is, that the dimension of *time* and time allocation or distribution yet does not play a crucial role within the discussed theories. More similarities or coincidences can be elaborated regarding the dimensions of *feminist economic* arguments and those of *good living* and *sufficiency*. However, in the following section the developed framework of comparison is applied to the approaches of Sustainable Livelihood, Ecofeminism and Vorsorgendes Wirtschaften. The elaborated key terms or points of criteria are used as items to make the comparison along the framework clearer. Each of these nine items will be discussed in detail. The sub-questions of this paper thereby build a kind of guideline. 1) Can the equal distribution of time be an instrument to overcome the dichotomic logic of separation? 2) Would sufficiency be promoted if less time would be invested into employment? 3) To what extent can time be a key resource for care as well as for ecological sustainability?

Table 4 provides an overview of the comparison. Starting with the dimension regarding the *recognition of care work*, all the three approaches show similar concepts. Whereas the Sustainable Livelihood approach states that all types of work, thus also care work, need to be recognized, the other two approaches go even further. They abstract the idea of recognition of care work by focussing on the externalizing aspect; meaning the fact, that all costs need to be considered within a socially just economy. For the approach of Vorsorgendes Wirtschaften care work is a central link to future generations; for *ecofeminists* care is not only care for other (human beings). It also includes the care for nature and natural environment.

Regarding the item of (equal) *labour market participation*, only the approach of Vorsorgendes Wirtschaften, provides a more or less concrete answer to it. Advocates of this approach are convinced that income and care work are

equivalent since the economy is socially embedded and not, as mainstream economists tend to assume, independent or influenced by any other (social, ecological, uncalculated) surrounding or context. The ideal worker literally has no past and no future but is free to follow his interest. A so-called *mushroom man* is "a figure that pops up out of nowhere - is without a childhood, without an old age or sickness - he is just there to optimize his use of resources in a situation of constraints, he has no past and no interest in the future," (Kuiper 2004: 45). If care and income work would be equivalent or equally valued one can assume, that the labour market participation of men and women would be (more) equally: This would combat the inherent structural stereotypes which highly influence e.g. the payment, the social securities and non-the-less the pension of a certain profession.

This leads to the next item: the *division of labour*. The Sustainable Livelihood approach emphasises that the work, which needs to be done, should be distributed between the individuals living together as a collective unit; it links the individual with the society in which it is embedded. However, the dimension of gender concerning the division of labour remains undiscussed within this concept. *Vorsorgendes Wirtschaften* is aware of the dichotomic division of labour and aims to change this. Cooperation thus is a leading guideline concerning this item. The idea of cooperation thereby contrasts the inherent feature of capitalist economic approaches, which base on the ideal of absolute competition. The approach of Ecofeminism emphasises that a proper economic system needs to consider all types of work (cf. item *recognition of care work*) and claims for a shared and overarching responsibility. That the division of labour thereby goes along the same lines can be assumed.

The idea of a *good living* is discussed by the approach of Sustainable Livelihood and that of *Vorsorgendes Wirtschaften*. For the latter it is one of three key guidelines or premises and serves orientation to adjust a respective economic approach. The Sustainable Livelihood approach puts the people in the centre and thus also their living conditions; it's people centric (cf. chapter 4.1). Above that, the conviction that people are not only individuals but are embedded in respective societies goes along with idea to find a way of good living for all: intra- and intergenerational justice thereby go hand in hand. The idea of embeddedness goes back to the sociologist scholar Polanyi. He states, that an unregulated market and the commodification of societies and thereby of individuals initiates a deconstruction of society since it provides a process of atomisation. "To allow the

market mechanism to be sole director of the fate of human beings and their natural environment, indeed, even of the amount and use of purchasing power, would result in the demolish of society," (Polanyi 1965: 73). This means that an unregulated market in would be totally disembedded from societies. Even more: people need to sell their labour force on the market, adapt to the market, commodify themselves in order to be able to reproduce themselves and their dependents. Mies as an *ecofeminist* directly refers to this: "If more and more people buy this commodity the GDP grows. But what also grows at the same time is the erosion of community, the isolation and loneliness of individuals, the indifference and atomization of the society, As Polanyi remarked, market forces destroy communities. Here, too, the processes are characterized by polarizations: the higher the GDP the lower the quality of life," (Mies 2014: 61). In other words: more income does not go along with more happiness or a higher degree of good living. To a certain extent, it could even be said that it is rather the other way around: more growth, less good living.

This latter point leads directly to the item of *sufficiency*. For the approach of Sustainable Livelihood sufficiency is the alternative or the answer to the dominant strategy of efficiency, driven by technological innovation. Different from mainstream economic thinking and its green-washed idea how to decouple the material throughput from the outcome, the Sustainable Livelihood approach goes along with the approach of sufficiency. This means that the quality rather than the quantity is focussed. Instead of reducing the use of resources for a specific product, the product itself is critically questioned. "Der Verzicht heute macht in der Tat nur Sinn, wenn die Identifikation mit der Gesellschaft und den eigenen Nachkommen hoch ist und ferner die Chancen auf Veränderung der ebenfalls hoch eingeschätzt werden," (Rinderspacher 1996: 12). This social aspect of the sufficiency strategy follows also the argumentation of the other two approaches: sufficiency interlinks generations and their respectively available resources. A reduction or even a conscious non-consumption, non-production can only be targeted if the respective people are convinced to be interconnected with future generations. Otherwise a renunciation would make no sense.

The item of *gender awareness* is closely related to the latter point of intergenerationality since it is concerned with the idea of intragenerational justice. For the Sustainable Livelihood approach, it serves as a key conviction that individuals are connected not only to their respective society but also with other

societies. To what extent, this consciousness includes a specific gender awareness, remains undiscussed. For the approach of *Vorsorgendes Wirtschaften* and that of Ecofeminism the gender awareness is an inherent element. For the former it is the starting point of analytical analysis since it adjusts its focus along those who are excluded e.g. women. The latter has a more global conviction and generalises that *colonies of White Man* (cf. Mies 2014, chapter 4.3) dominant and exclude others as if they weren't embedded in a certain societal context. Thus, gender matters and creates and reproduces gender-biased structures – at least for the advocates of the approaches of *Vorsorgendes Wirtschaften* and Ecofeminism.

The three items of *time* are at least discussed by the selected approaches. Nevertheless, the dimension of time is an inherent and simultaneously necessary factor for all of the three approaches. Concerning the approach of Sustainable Livelihood, it can only generally be assumed that the distribution of the resource of time matters since it is needed to sustain and renew (natural and social) resources for future generations. More concrete is approach of *Vorsorgendes Wirtschaften* by valuing all types of work in the same way: since all types of work are equivalent also the respectively invested time. This includes the assumption that time is a resource, which thus has a *value* and thereby needs to be *equally distributed* within a concept of a just society. Being a scarce resource, time thereby has a debatable value which can be discursively be exchanged. When there is exchange there is a *currency* serving as means of exchange. As the approach of Sustainable Livelihood also *ecofeminists* emphasise that time is needed to maintain living in societies and their natural environment. Through this provisioning investment of time a good way of living for following generations can be provided – similar to a bank account or monetary savings or heritages. Framed as an investment time thereby serves indeed as currency of exchange – as a common currency of care for human beings as well as for ecological resources.

	Sustainable Livelihood	Vorsorgendes Wirtschaften	Ecofeminism
Recognition of care work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – All types of work are recognized 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Recognition of all costs – Link to future generations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Care as a key element including also care for nature – Combat externalization of costs
Labour market participation		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Employment and care work are equivalent since economy is socially embedded 	
Division of labour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Shared, but the dimension of gender remains undiscussed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Aware of dichotomic division of labour: needs to be changed – Cooperation instead of competition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Proper economic balance needs to consider all types of work – Shared responsibility needed
Good living	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Peoplecentric – Individuals are embedded in societies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Orientation and guidance – One of three key premises 	
Sufficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Sufficient answer to strategy of efficiency – Quality instead of quantity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Link to future generations and their resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Maintain the balance of provisioning for present as well as for future generations
Gender awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Key conviction – But: not in detail discussed (cf. division of labour) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Starting point: perspective of those who are excluded e.g. women – Gender matters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Dominant groups live as if they weren't embedded – Colonies of White Men
Value of time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Only indirectly discussed: present society is connected with former and future ones (intergenerational) – Time to sustain resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Since employment and care are equivalent, the invested time is also worth the same 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Time is needed to sustain resources ~ value of time
Allocation of time		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Equal distribution of time as a necessary precondition to achieve a new societal contract 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Since work shall be equally distributed, time will be gender equally distributed too
Time as a currency		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Intergenerational sustainability – Investment ~ currency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Investment ~ currency

Table 4 Comparison of selected approaches: Author's own composition.

Besides the different perspectives and argument discussed along the developed framework there is however a more general difference between the issue of care work and that of ecological sustainability. The items of the pattern as well as the selected approaches might have not made it as visible as it needs to be. Whereas care work, as a feminist economic approach, is aware of prevailing structures which differentiate or separate societies, the approach of ecological sustainability, as an ecological economic approach, assumes that a homogenous society is responsible for the envisioned outcome of a (more) sustainable economy. This might be the unsolvable difference or conflict between the two debates. Whereas the former focusses on prevailing structures, the latter focusses on an envisioned outcome – the starting points thus are totally different. Nevertheless, the profound critique on the prevailing socio-economic system and its respective impacts is a unifying overlap of the two approaches. “Much of feminist economics, like much of ecological economics, critiques the growth-based capitalist economic paradigm and proposes various kinds of policies to modify market systems and reduce open access for capital on equity and sustainability grounds,” (Perkins 2007: 228).

One of those harmful and thus criticised impacts is the logic of separation. Regarding sub-question 1) one can thus summarize that the equal distribution of time indeed can be an adequate instrument or lever to overcome the gender logic of separation. Or in other words: The separation between men and women, production and reproduction and further on would be equalised by distributing the available time in a just manner. This goes along with changes concerning labour market policies meaning that care work and income work need to be equally distributed (cf. *earner-carer model*, chapter 2.2.). To what extend more care work thereby goes along a sufficiency strategy and absolute reduction of resource use remains debateable, especially regarding concrete policy measures (cf. Rinderspacher 2017: 74). For sub-question 2) this means that the impact of an equal distribution of time regarding care and employment and its respective impact on a general strategy of sufficiency remains debateable and needs indeed further research. However, the comparison has broadly elaborated that time is an inherent and at the same time a nearly undiscussed element of all the selected approaches connecting the key issues of the debate of care work and ecological sustainability. Regarding the last 3) sub-question thus it can be concluded that time indeed is a key resource for care as well as for ecological sustainability.

Literally framed as an investment in the well-being of future generations it indeed matters how time is distributed and structurally embedded in present societal and economic contexts. Furthermore, the aspect of time can serve as a common and thus promoting topic for both debates. To make time visible is a key future challenge: time is a limited resource with a specific value, can be exchanged and compared as a currency and nonetheless thereby needs to be included in proper economic balances (cf. Biesecker 1995: 191). Seel emphasises that time cannot be invested; but periods of time can be transformed into work for e.g. the future, for coming generations or for the maintenance of the natural environment (cf. Seel 1996: 136). However, to summarize the previous comparison in terms of the overall research question of this paper, one can say that time is a gendered resource that is crucial for the issues of care and ecological sustainability.

5. Outlook

Taking care of others and being concerned about the available resources for future generations takes time; literally it binds time. And since time is a limited resource, the access as well as the available amount are crucial obstacles regarding an equal distribution of this scarce resource. Within a system of gendered structures, the distribution of resources is gendered. Thus, time is a gendered resource. Or in other words and more briefly: time is gendered.

The comparison of the selected approaches of Sustainable Livelihood, Vorsorgendes Wirtschaften and Ecofeminism has shown, that there is a bundle of similarities in general. All of the approaches formulate alternative economic premises to cope with the issues of care work and ecological sustainability. All of them are aware of the mainstream economic problem of externalization of costs – be it unpaid care work or the unrestrained use of natural resources. Simultaneously these abused resources are necessary and thus important components of economic balances since they provide the respective (unpaid) reproduction. This reproduction work bases on the use of time. Growing vegetables, recycling jars, educate children or caring for elderlies takes time. At least two different uses of time thus can be differentiated: time as something valuable in itself or time as a means to another purpose – the former is called *leisure time*; the latter is *work* (cf. Seel 1996: 134). So, time as a means for a more sustainable way of living thus is work not leisure. Time is a relevant common ground for care and

sustainability since it reflects the effort invested in our common future. Since the distribution of time is gendered, it is crucial to change or at least to question the structures in which (clock) time is distributed. This leads directly to the division of labour, which is also gendered along the dichotomic borders of paid and unpaid work, production and reproduction, public and private sphere and not at least men and women. A sound sustainable economic concept thus needs to include gender equality – otherwise it is literally not sustainable nor future-ready. The conscious decision to invest time in a common future or future-present needs to be acknowledged, not marginalized. Gender-equal earner-carer-models which have been known theoretically for decades, need to be politically implemented. A significant lever for that would be a new working time policy which acknowledges care as work or valuable action and thus includes it into sound economic balances and performance – instead of leaving it invisible and devaluated in private households, subsistence farming or other contextualized, embodied situations.

New structures of time would lead to a (more) equal distribution and access of care work and for that a new concept of working time policy would have a certain influence regarding gender equality (cf. Rubery et al. 1998: 72). At the same time a new division of labour orientated along an earner-carer-model would be good for the climate as well – and that even twice. Firstly, it would enable people to participate in their communities and engage themselves for a good living along the premises of sufficiency (cf. Kopp et al. 2017). And secondly, less time for employment increases the living quality and thereby has the potential to decrease the level of consumption (cf. Kopatz 2012: 51) and consequently the level of production would be influenced too (cf. Rinderspacher 1996/ 2017). Less consumption fits to the idea of sufficiency. What is needed? Or put differently: What needs to be produced and what not? The conviction to be embedded and embodied in a societal context that had had a past and will have a future, individuals on a social level are able to be responsible for their decisions and actions and e.g. sustain resources for those who follow. As just one pearl in an intergenerational chain we must know our profits based on externalization might be the costs of our grandchildren. However, as already mentioned in the former chapter (4.4) further research is needed to analyse the concrete impact of an equal distribution of labour regarding an economic strategy of sufficiency.

The idea to be aware of all costs and to stop the ongoing externalization to ever gain more profit thus can even go further and beyond our own societies. A good

living can only be sustainable if it possible for all. While this paper has mainly discussed the horizontal overlaps and intersections of care work and ecological sustainability, the author is well aware of the probably even more profound problem of the respective vertical dimension. The cutting issue goes further than the gender dimension: It is about class aspects, questions of race and ethnicity, migration experiences, religion and level of education – to name just a few aspects of the topic of intersectionality. One has to be carefully aware of these cutting issues in order to do not fall into the next trap of externalization, marginalization and exploitation and thus unsustainability. Even though this paper aims to highlight the overlaps of ecological sustainability and care (in)justices it needs to be clear that there always remains a danger of a unintended backlash or the reproduction of unjust, patriarchal, gendered power relations. While in the concept *caring for*, nature remains an object, advocates of *caring with* claim nature a subject. Preferring the first viewpoint Hofmeister et al. explain the threat of a newly essentialism in the debate of Ecofeminism. "Unsere Positionierung wendet sich wider den Essentialismus. Wir möchten davor warnen, dass ein essentialistisch verstandener Ökofeminismus mit den Care-Debatten wieder Einzug in feministische Theorien und Politiken halten könnte," (Hofmeister et al. 2019: 135).

Regarding the overall research question of this paper it can be concluded that there are as abovementioned a several intersections and overlaps of care work and ecological sustainability. Furthermore, time can thereby indeed be framed as a common currency or a connecting line for both topics. Facing multilevel crises, solutions or transformational ideas need to multilevel and interdisciplinary too to have an impact. Or as Naomi Klein analyses that capitalism taught us to look for mono perspective solutions: „Das liegt wohl daran, dass man den meisten von uns beigebracht hat, eine systemische und historische Analyse des Kapitalismus zu vermeiden und so ziemlich jede Krise, die unser System erzeugt, in sauber getrennte Fächer zu sortieren - von wirtschaftlicher Ungerechtigkeit über Gewalt gegen Frauen bis zu ‚white supremacy‘, nicht enden wollenden Kriegen und Umweltzerstörung," (Klein 2019: 68).

Through the lever of time both topics could gain more visibility and add new connectable arguments to the public and political debate. Thereby both topics and their respective approaches could leave their research niches and step out of their boxes – namely social, economic or ecological science. Moreover, the fact that time is a gendered resource could be an additional lifting aspect. For the debate of care

the gender inequality in terms of time use or time allocation has already arrived in the political debate (cf. Sachverständigenkommission zum Zweiten Gleichstellungsbericht der Bundesregierung 2017; EIGE 2017). By widening the perspective of what is care to the topic of ecological sustainability the claim for gender equality would gain more importance. A new time regime thus would include all types of work needed to maintain a society - no matter if it takes place in the office, at the workbench, in the garden or in the kitchen (cf. Haug 2009: 407).

So, time is twice a common currency for care work and ecological sustainability. First, time is a necessary and the same time constructive factor for both issues – time for care and time for a sustainable way of living. And secondly, time can be the bridging element for the several approaches along the overlaps of care work and ecological sustainability which is at the same time connectable to currently ongoing political debates concerning new working time policies and gender equality. An equal distribution of time can initiate more structural changes regarding the division of labour, a good way of living, sufficiency strategy and not at least gender equality and thereby blur the dichotomic logic of separation. State institutions have the ability to initiate structural transformations (cf. Kuhl/Maier 2012: 9).

However, feminist state theorists claim, that the state itself is an arena of social struggles. Gender stereotypes and dichotomic structures thus are reproduced and need to be critically reflected (cf. Wöhl 2014). It is crucial to relief gender equality out of its structural and thereby invisible black box and to establish it as probably *the* crucial cross-cutting issue of our times; be it on an economic, ecological or social level: gender matters and the debate about time might be a key lever to overcome gender inequality and thereby unsustainability. Moreover, gender inequality is not a single issue of a specific policy field. As this paper has presented, gender inequality is a structural bias and thus influencing all fields of policy making. A key word hereby would be *gender mainstreaming*. This means to include the gender perspective in all political decision-making processes and their outcomes. As shown in the comparison of this paper alternative ecological economic concepts do not necessarily include gender sensitive benchmarks. As already mentioned in the summary of the comparison a remaining difference between the approach of care work and those of ecological sustainability is the

starting point of critique: whereas the former criticises mainly the prevailing structures, the latter mainly aims to create an alternative outcome.

Demanding more consciousness in the way we live and proposing more local livelihoods needs to include answers to questions as who invests time in growing vegetables or preparing home-made food instead of buying, consuming convenience foods? The time for social reproduction needs to be equally distributed between men and women; otherwise those who do not care have more leisure time to recreate themselves in terms of e.g. personal aesthetics, serenity and health. To have time for personal recreation is a sign of wealth – especially in times of globalization, digitalization and thus commodification. Those who have the time to cook home-made food, to work in the garden, to take the bicycle, to be engaged in their neighbourhood or to play with their children are privileged. This is a kind of historical roll-back. In the early 19th century on the doorstep of industrialisation with its ever-faster processes of automatization and segregation of work, it was *en vogue* to walk with turtles in order to demonstrate one's wealth and one's capacity to resist the general trend of commodification. „Um 1840 gehörte vorübergehend zum guten Ton, Schildkröten in den Passagen spazieren zu führen. Der Flaneur ließ sich gern sein Tempo von ihnen vorschreiben,“ (Benjamin 1974: 557). Those *flaneurs* did not have to sell their labour force on the market. They had the full sovereignty over their time. The concept of time sovereignty is relevant again today (cf. Rinderspacher 2017: 73). Regarding the recently published Gender Equality Index it becomes once again clear that time is a gendered dimension. “The scores in the domain of time reveal persistent and growing gender inequalities in women's and men's time use in Europe,“ (EIGE 2017: 38).

How to enable all people a sovereign use of their time might be one of the key future research questions regarding dramatic transformations due to demographic changes, new forms of work, digitalization and an undeniable finiteness of natural resources. To what extent ideas as that of a basic income or a general right to care could provide or support a new distribution and access to the resource of time still needs to be found out. However, positive narratives are needed to design a socio-ecological transformation. „Zukunft lässt sich nicht negatorisch entwerfen, das geht nur mit positiven Bestimmungen,“ (Welzer 2019: 55).

In separate monodisciplinary discourses such positive images will neither be designed nor communicated. Especially in times of multiple crises one needs to be

well aware of the importance of this resource. Every form of crisis is sorted into "sauber getrennte Fächer" (Klein 2019: 68) - also a capitalist idea that can be handed down. Current crises overlap and are inextricably linked (Klein 2019: 68). Solutions that want to initiate a holistic transformation must acknowledge this and address it precisely there: Think not in silos but in connecting lines and enter into transformative alliances. One of these connecting lines is time, which in a resource-ending world is a valuable resource that has never been unaffected by power and domination and inequalities, and will never be, if the future shaping of capitalist structures is left to it. Time is a crucial resource and besides the sovereign access to it, the ability and the right/duty to invest it into a socio-ecological, careful and thus sustainable future is needed.

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