



Creating research perspectives and achieving equity
in a sustainable economy

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Doing Sustainable Economy at the Crossroads of Gender, Care and the Green Economy

Debates – Common Ground – Blind Spots

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Content

Project Context	4
1. Introduction	4
2. Approaching Green Economy	6
2.1 What is Meant by Green Economy?	6
2.2 Feminist Criticisms of Prevailing Green Economy Concepts	7
a. Marginalisation of Feminist and Critical Perspectives	7
b. Treating the Male-Breadwinner Model as a Black Box	8
c. The Autonomous, Independent, Self-Interest Maximising Subject ...	8
d. The Growth Imperative	9
e. An Exclusive Focus on Efficiency	9
3. Approaching Care	9
3.1 Beginnings of the Care Debate(s): Feminist Ethics and Feminist Economics	10
3.2 Care as an Analytical Category and a Transformative Principle ...	11
3.3 The (Social) Reproduction Crisis: the Care Crisis	12
3.4 Excursion: a Critical Look at the Care Discourse	13
3.5 From the Crisis of Reproduction to the Crisis of Reproductivity and the Debates over the Relationship between Care and Nature ...	14
3.6 Care as a Democratic Principle	15
3.7 Our Understanding of Care as a Principle for Doing Sustainable Economy in the Context of CaGE	16
4. Countering the Marginalisation of Care in a Sustainable Economy	17
4.1 A Gender Perspective as a Critical Impetus for Economics and Science	17
4.2 Our Understanding of a Green Economy in the Context of CaGE ..	18
a. A Holistic Understanding of Economics and Work	18
b. Viewing Households Differently: the Smallest Economic Unit	18
c. Caring for One's Self in Context and Creating New Logics of Action	19
d. A Consideration of Other Models and Measurements of Prosperity	19
e. An Appeal for Sufficiency	20
5. Next Steps: Rethinking Economics	20
6. References	23



Project Context

In light of the grave social and ecological crisis phenomena that we are facing – climate change, financial crises, poverty, and dwindling resources – the concept of a “green economy” was declared to be a central instrument of sustainable development. Yet, this notion has been found to be seriously lacking when it comes to making the necessary linkages between economic, environmental and social aspects in research, politics and economics, as well the inclusion of a gender perspective.

The goal of the collaborative project “Care, Gender and Green Economy: Creating research perspectives and achieving equity through sustainable economy” (CaGE) was to enhance the potential for innovative research on gender and care in economic studies and the environmental and natural sciences. Innovative approaches in these areas were identified and communicated using a range of tools (networking, a knowledge and communication platform, dialogues between researchers and practitioners, and CaGE texts) tailored to different target groups.

The collaborative project, supported by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research, was carried out in two components.

The first component was devoted to identifying the linkages between care, gender and the green economy, and key actors took part in networking; integrative approaches were identified in the research on gender, care and the green economy, giving rise to strategies and recommendations on how to integrate gender dimensions into the research on sustainable economics and green economy, as well as how to further promote equal opportunities and gender mainstreaming in these research areas. An expert workshop enabled exchange between leading researchers in the field and helped to identify gaps in the current research. In a dialogue between researchers and practitioners, a range of additional actors from research, research funding bodies, and the field came together to discuss initial results and create momentum for scientific and social change. The component was conducted by LIFE e.V. with the help of Leuphana Universität Lüneburg.

The second component focused on the areas of scientific institutions, care and the green economy, and the role of scientific institutions in integrating care and gender into the green economy. The aim was to develop strategies and recommendations for innovative sci-

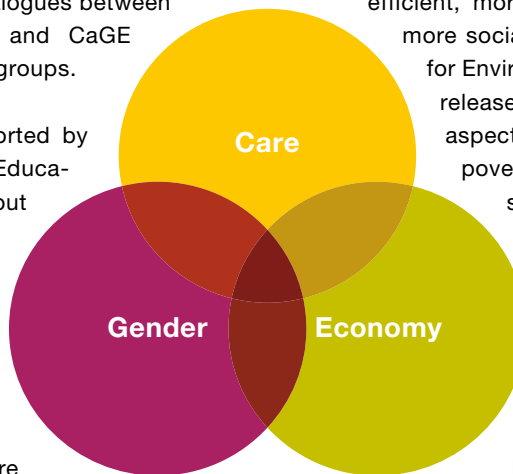
ence and research policymaking, to help create future-driven scientific institutions and reveal and strengthen their role in social transformation processes. The research results were presented and discussed during a dialogue between researchers and practitioners. This second component was carried out by the Freie Universität Berlin.

1. Introduction

Everyone is talking about the “green economy” – particularly since it was a central topic at the Rio+20 conference in Rio de Janeiro in 2012. In parallel to these international discussions, the German Federal Ministry for Education and Research (BMBF) initiated a process of developing a new research agenda to encourage the transformation of the economy into a greener economy. “The aim of the ‘green economy’ is to make future economic activities more resource efficient, more environmentally friendly and more socially inclusive” (German Ministry for Environment (BMU) and BMBF press release from 04.09.2012). Although aspects such as fairness and tackling poverty are mentioned in this understanding of a green economy, the discussion has nevertheless focused primarily on the transformation and expansion of the environmentally-oriented branch of the economy, on technical innovation (for example, renewables and e-mobility) and the creation of so-called ‘green jobs’

with the aim of managing the economy in more environmentally-friendly manner while remaining competitive (BMBF and BMU n.d.). Timed to coincide with the UN special climate summit, a report titled “The New Climate Economy. Better Growth, Better Climate” was released by the Global Commission on the Economy and Climate in September 2014 and also emphasises that climate protection pays off and does not need to come at the expense of growth. On the contrary, measures to protect the climate could result in long-term economic growth while reducing the immense risks of climate change, if only production were conducted more efficiently and investments were made in low-carbon infrastructures and especially technological innovations (Global Commission on the Economy and Climate 2014: 6).

Both examples reveal that the claim that economic growth and ecological sustainability are principally compatible is gaining new momentum due to the





green economy discussions. The key tenets of this claim – a revolution in efficiency, decoupling and dematerialisation – locate the green economy within the discourse of ecological modernisation that has been around since the 1980s (see, for example, Huber 1982; Jänicke 1993; Weizsäcker et al. 1995; Mol et al. 2009).

However, conceptualising the ecological crisis primarily as a problem of efficiency, management or modernisation often means that social relations are neglected. Dominant understandings of the green economy, for instance, fail to take into account rebound effects¹ (through which reductions can actually be diminished by improvements in efficiency), or that problems are often deferred rather than solved by risky technologies, given that their consequences are insufficiently researched, as is the case with gene technology or fracking. Moreover, the discussions around the green economy are largely gender blind and either entirely fail to address the well-established linkages between gender relations and sustainability or only do so in a superficial manner (Hofmeister et al. 2013). The typical dichotomy that exists in conventional economic thinking between the reproductive and productive spheres thus remains unchallenged, although feminist economists have extensively criticised the invisibility and lack of recognition of both paid and unpaid care work, at the same time emphasising their economic importance. On average, the hours spent on unpaid work in Germany outnumber those that are paid. According to the results of the last time budget survey (2001/2002), all individuals over the age of 10² worked around 25 unpaid hours on average, while only 17 hours were dedicated to paid work. The time spent on unpaid activities was therefore around 1.7 times higher than the time spent on gainful employment in 2001, although women spent more hours doing reproductive labour than men (Schäfer 2004)³. This core part of the economy – and with it the basis of our existence – is continually disregarded. Yet economics (ancient Greek: oikos = house, nomos = law) is actually the study of household laws and according to its original mean-

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 1 The rebound effect means that improved efficiency of production is relativised by a resulting increase in consumption and, hence, increasing production levels.

2 “In order to convey the time use as precisely as possible, all individuals over 10 years of age in selected households were each asked to record their daily activities in a diary for three days. Participations were able to describe both their primary activities and other activities which took place at the same time in their own words. In addition, it was possible to specify simply by checking boxes where and with whom the time was spent. The length of each activity was entered on a time scale, which lists 10 minute increments. In order to unify the various different diary entries for evaluation, a list with over 230 different activities was used for data entry” (<https://www.destatis.de/DE/ZahlenFakten/GesellschaftStaat/EinkommenKonsumLebensbedingungen/Methoden/Zeitbudgeterhebung.html>).

3 Women do around 31 hours and men around 19.5 hours of unpaid work (Schäfer 2004).

ing was initially aimed at satisfying human needs. Although this original definition is often mentioned in the opening pages of the introduction in many economic textbooks, it generally disappears in the following chapters. Basic needs such as food or accommodation are no longer dealt with (these are regarded as private matters, which are supposedly non-productive and primarily socially constructed as women’s work); instead, the focus is on the “higher, more noble male sphere: the market” (Praetorius 2009). Subsequently, the economist Kate Raworth⁴ recommends “hacking the textbooks” to make the invisible seen, and to re-discover that which is taken for granted and place it in the centre.

That is precisely the intention of this discussion paper. A sustainable economy requires more than just “greening” the economy. It involves comprehensive and structural economic and political changes, including the redistribution of work, finances, and resources. Bringing sustainability and gender equity together is not just about getting rid of a (gendered) division of labour or redistributing work; indeed, it is essentially about drawing attention to the connections between capitalism and gender, revealing the bias of capitalism towards a white and autonomous male subject and the traditional ideal of a heteronormative family model.

To start thinking about gender in connection with care and an alternative definition of a green economy, it is crucial to examine the crisis of social and ecological reproduction. Undervalued and invisible care work nonetheless requires time and resources, yet in the current neoliberal economic system, with its often precarious wage labour conditions, the care economy is not readily supplied with either resources or time. At the same time, the state is also increasingly introducing funding cuts or privatising sectors such as education, health, care and social services (Winker 2011: 365). Similarly, the ecological reproduction of nature remains hidden and is monopolised within economic processes as a presumably infinite and readily available resource. The productivity of nature is consequently not evaluated within the economy: it is externalised and invisible. The term “productivity of nature”, however, emphasises the fact that we are dealing not only with usable resources, but with output or natural processes. Thus, in addition to being productive, nature is simultaneously a product (at least in part) produced by economic and social negotiation, which is why it is no longer appropriate to view society and nature as separate entities. “There is no (longer) such thing as nature, separate from society, that it to be maintained

.....
 4 <http://steps-centre.org/2012/blog/live-streamed-seminar-kate-raworth-oxfam/>



and protected, they are now connected to one another” (Biesecker and Hofmeister 2008: 437). Intentionally and unintentionally co-produced nature(s), or products of nature that occur during economic processes (such as genetically modified plants, contaminated furniture, and radioactive waste), are presumed to be manageable and taxable, often resulting in the shifting of problems and ultimately, in an exacerbation of the social and ecological crisis (ibid, 437f).

Current crises, such as the energy crisis, work-related crises, demographic change, the financial crisis, and climate change, all highlight that our economic system and our way of living need to change. Rather than separate crises which exist independently of one another, we are facing a range of mutually connected crisis phenomena that are endangering the socio-ecological foundations of society, which is why we speak of a crisis of reproductivity (German: Krise des Reproduktiven) (Biesecker and Hofmeister 2013; see also Chapter 3.5). This predilection to crisis brings with it a need for change; thus, at the same time, we are presented with an opportunity to bring about fundamental societal transformations.

What would a concept for a green economy look like if we were to learn from a care perspective which places the mutual care and concern for people and nature at the centre, which is based on needs, and which takes the transformation of power relations with the aim of creating a fairer society seriously? Before we address this question and subsequently the linkages between gender, care and a green economy in Chapter 4, we will first provide an overview of the concept of green economy and the related feminist critiques (Chapter 2), followed by the debates surrounding care (Chapter 3).

2. Approaching Green Economy

The concept of the green economy is the current strategy adopted towards the socio-ecological crisis in its various forms. Yet does a ‘greening’ of the economy represent an adequate strategy to tackle the diverse socio-ecological crisis phenomena we are facing? And what exactly is meant by a green economy? Like the term sustainability, green economy tends to be defined differently according to context, giving rise to a variety of different approaches and concepts. In the following, we will thus address some of the leading conceptions of the green economy (Chapter 2.1). Subsequently different, yet related, critiques of the current dominant discourse on the green economy will be presented (Chapter 2.2).

2.1 What is Meant by Green Economy?

Business and worker’s organisations, including, inter alia, the Berlin Chamber of Industry and Commerce (Industrie- und Handelskammer Berlin 2009) and the Confederation of Employers’ and Business Associations of Berlin and Brandenburg (Vereinigung der Unternehmensverbaende in Berlin und Brandenburg e.V. 2009), view the green economy primarily as an opportunity for a new form of ecological and efficient production which relies on new technologies and creates employment (green jobs) using upcoming, expanding markets. By adopting a strongly “technologically-oriented, industrial approach” (Röhr 2011: 2), these actors uphold the logic of economic growth and emphasise in particular the potential of a greener economy given the technological advancements in the field of renewable energy, as well as energy efficiency and a generally more environmentally friendly mode of production (ibid). This understanding of a green economy is linked to the notion of ‘green growth’, promoted by the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and other institutions. They see it as “[...] a framework for how countries can achieve economic growth and development while at the same time combating climate change and preventing costly environmental degradation and the inefficient use of natural resources” (OECD 2011: 3).

In the report “Towards a Green Economy”, the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) regards the green economy as an economic situation that “results in ‘improved human well-being and social equity, while significantly reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities’. In its simplest expression, a green economy is low-carbon, resource efficient, and socially inclusive” (UNEP 2011: 16). This definition is by far more comprehensive than those mentioned above. Firstly, the UNEP definition takes into consideration of the social dimensions of the economy and makes note of the justice aspects of sustainable development. Secondly, it at least mentions the necessity of gender-specific strategies in some areas, such as agriculture and water resources management (Röhr 2011: 2).

In “The Future We Want” (2012), the outcome document of the Rio+20 conference, the green economy concept also plays a central role. It stresses that the green economy should not replace the term sustainability, but rather should be understood as an instrument which can be used to achieve the goals of sustainable development⁵. The understanding of eco-

5 „In this regard, we consider green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication as one of the important tools available for achieving sustainable development and that it could provide options for policymaking but should not be a rigid set of rules” (General Assembly 2012: 10).



nomics in the Rio+20 outcome document links economic change with social and political aspects. For one, it is combined with the demand that the living conditions of those who are socially disadvantaged or discriminated against are to be improved, and their livelihoods secured. Furthermore, the green economy is also coupled with the International Labour Organisation (ILO) concept of humane working conditions, or decent work (General Assembly 2012: 11). It is partially due to the lobbying of social movements and organisations that these positions made it into the final document (Gottschlich 2015: 412ff).

Green economy is often used as a synonym for the notion of a “Green New Deal” (see, for example, Green New Deal Group 2008; UNEP 2009; Fücks 2013). At an international level this notion is promoted by the United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP) and at a European level, primarily by the Green Party. In Germany it is mostly raised by the Heinrich Böll Foundation. Working from the assumption that social relations are entrenched in crisis, they demand an “industrial and social revolution” (Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung e.V. 2011: 5). The concept of a Green New Deal, as it is described by the Heinrich Böll Foundation, would require considerable investment in a range of sectors (climate protection, city planning, energy renovation, education, etc.), as well as social inclusion and far-reaching redistribution both within and between countries in the global North and global South (Röhr 2011: 2).

2.2 Feminist Criticisms of Prevailing Green Economy Concepts

From a feminist and critical perspective, these notions of a green economy are flawed, as they contain oversights and fall well short of the goal of a fundamental transformation of economic relations. In the following we will explore a number of criticisms and demands that feminists already began making some time ago.

a. Marginalisation of Feminist and Critical Perspectives

From the very beginning, the sustainability discourse faced criticism that the unequal power relations were largely ignored in the debate about global social and ecological crises (see, for example, Eblinghaus and Stickler 1996). A number of demands relating to the unequal impact of socio-ecological problems as a result of gender-specific roles and responsibilities were included in the text of Agenda 21 (the document to come out of the United Nations Conference for Environment and Development conference in Rio de Janeiro in 1992) following considerable pressure by many feminist and women’s organisations (Wichterich 1992: 15f). Yet despite their inclusion in international political outcomes addressing sustainability, feminist perspec-

tives and demands remain largely marginalised and neglected in the sustainability discourse (Röhr 2011). In light of the global crises, the unequal distribution of power and resources is occasionally addressed, yet it is not deemed to be a central concern of the sustainability discourse. The marginalisation of critical and feminist perspectives also occurs in the context of the green economy discourse; although the Rio+20 outcome document links the idea of a green economy with the concept of “decent work” (see. Inter alia General Assembly 2012: Para. 23, 56), humane working conditions refer here exclusively to the sphere of gainful employment (Gottschlich 2015: 419). Again, paid and unpaid care work is not taken into account.

According to a study conducted by Mara Kuhl, the strategy papers of the European Greens on the implementation of a Green New Deal⁶ also lack concrete measures to adequately address gender perspectives, despite the fact that gender justice is listed as a goal. Furthermore, according to Kuhl “large sections of the strategy papers are gender blind or based on androcentric premises” (Kuhl 2012: 6)⁷. Similarly, the Heinrich Böll Foundation’s outline for a Green New Deal makes reference to the social dimensions of social transformation and also to the notions of equality and participation, yet aspects of gender justice are missing from the recommendations for implementation (Röhr 2011: 3).

The German parliament’s Enquete Commission on “Growth, prosperity and quality of life” also faced criticism by feminist academics because female experts were almost entirely excluded from the process. Critics expressed concern about the ongoing omission of non-market based, everyday perspectives and the subsequent lack of analysis of how power relations contribute to exclusion. This is because the view presented on growth, prosperity and quality of life – influenced by mainstream economic thinking – paints a picture of reality that is only partially complete, despite claiming to reflect the whole. Life sustaining processes were excluded: above all unpaid care work, which is still predominately carried out by women around the world, and natural processes (Biesecker et al. 2012). This exclusion is so inherent in today’s economy that

6 In her study, Mara Kuhl examines the four following strategy papers by the Greens: The Greens, EFA Green New Deal Working Group (2010b); The Greens, EFA Green New Deal Working Group (2010a); The Greens, EFA Green New Deal Working Group (2011); European Green Party (2010).

7 Mara Kuhl’s analysis points to three fundamental gaps: 1. The concept of sustainability was reduced to ecological sustainability in the policy guidelines; 2. Remains caught in a traditional model of economics which firstly neglects the sphere of the “private household economy” and fails to address the relationship between the public, the private sector and private household economies; 3. The neglect of the role of the state and the public sector as actors and guarantors of social and environmental justice (Kuhl 2012: 6).



Adelheid Biesecker, Christa Wichterich and Uta von Winterfeld speak of “externalisation as a principle”. “It is necessary to overcome this principle in order to see the economy and work as a whole entity, as something inseparable and interwoven. This is the only way to encompass all of the forces which bring about prosperity” (Biesecker 2012). Indeed, this is the only way to address the question of “how a society organises the care, supervision and provision for children and the sick and elderly”, which is becoming “an increasingly central question for economic, social and ecological development” (Baumann et al. 2013: 6). Yet, despite these and other feminist interventions, this biased market-focused approach to economics is repeatedly upheld in new attempts to transform the crisis-prone economic system, as demonstrated by the BMBF agenda process on Green Economy. Here, again, the capitalist model of growth is set to remain in place, with a stronger focus on the connection between economic profitability and ecological production and consumption.

b. Treating the Male-Breadwinner Model as a Black Box

In addition to the general criticism that green economy concepts are based upon an understanding of economics which remains within the familiar limits of neo-classical theory, Elisabeth Stiefel (2014: 1ff) draws attention to the problematic construction of the industrial male-breadwinner household – an outdated patriarchal concept to which even green economists remain nevertheless attached. In this model, only the head of the household is deemed to be a fully-fledged consumer and other adults in charge of running the household remain obscured within the black box of the household. Women, children and the elderly are perceived exclusively as consumers of the head of household’s income. As such, care-related tasks are not considered to be financially relevant, unlike the costs caused by the family as an economic unit⁸. According to Stiefel, the notion of the patriarchal male-breadwinner household as a basic figure of industrial economies has never actually reflected the social reality of industrial society in a plausible way. Yet it continues to manifest itself in the macroeconomic calculations of national income and expenditure, for instance, as a means of establishing per capita income: “Although the vocabulary of economics comes from the Ancient Greek *oikos*, (neo)classical economists have never questioned the fact that **the economy does not make reference to the household members, but solely to the producer of goods as the housekeeper**. In the context of the national accounts, which forms the basis of the GDP,

8 According to Stiefel (2014: 2), this includes a wage and salaries for household staff but also the expenses of maintaining the family.

all work-related earnings are attributed to a head of household (even nowadays generally assumed to be male), before the income per capita/per inhabitant is determined (according to one of the OECD equivalence scales)” (Stiefel 2014: 2; emphasis in the original). Feminist economists, therefore, demand a radical re-orientation: green economy approaches seeking to contribute to a sustainable economy must shed light on the smallest economic unit – the household – and break with equating the breadwinner with the household (ibid: 4).

c. The Autonomous, Independent, Self-Interest Maximising Subject

From a feminist perspective this is closely related to the need for a revision of our notion of the human subject. Based on neoclassical economic theories, this concept continues to shape our economic practices, and thus must be drastically altered if we are to achieve a transformation of the existing economic system. The concept of green economy, too, fails to distance itself adequately from the idea of a “*homo oeconomicus*”, even though heterodox schools of economic thought have long since recognised this notion of a rational and competitive “*homo oeconomicus*” bent on maximising his own self-interest as a misleading economic concept, which is not compatible with sustainable development (Biesecker and Kesting 2003: 172; Stiefel 2014: 1). Furthermore, feminists also criticise dominant economic concepts for largely failing to portray humans as social beings that are indeed capable of assuming responsibility for the community and refraining from acting according to their own preferences (see, for example, Schnabl 2005). The actors to which the economic transformation are addressed are perceived to be free and autonomous and the resulting strategies are thus focused primarily on white, working men (and women), marginalising other lived realities (Habermann 2008). Yet, human beings are not free and autonomous subjects, because we are constantly relating to one another and also to our “natural” environment (Gottschlich 2012a)⁹. To ignore this connection means endangering the processes of social and natural reproduction, resulting in the existential crisis which we have already been in for years. Bringing about change towards a more sustainable society thus requires a different concept of humanity based on humans as social beings which are capable and willing to cooperate and participate, and which recognises the importance of care (Gottschlich 2015).

9 “Stockbrokers, too, spend much of their lives in social contexts, for example, when they speculate with stocks. While they work, they have emotions, enter into personal relationships and move within structures of social loyalties and specific cultural patterns, and have to feed themselves just like everyone else” (Madörin 1997: 83).



d. The Growth Imperative

What the prevailing green economy concepts, including those outlined above, arguably have in common, is their failure to question the capitalist logic of value and the idea of growth.

It is stipulated that a Green New Deal would involve “environmentally friendly growth with improved health, better education and more qualified jobs”, decoupled from the consumption of resources (Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung 2011: 9). Additionally, the Rio+20 outcome document refers to “sustained, inclusive and equitable economic growth (General Assembly 2012: Para. 4, 6, 10, 58). Yet despite this, the satisfaction of human needs is still not perceived to be the primary function of economics; instead, the economy remains oriented towards profit rates and growth forecasts. According to this logic prosperity is deemed to be the same as having an abundance of goods – that is, an increasing volume of goods and accordingly, growth. The economy continues to be limited to the market economy (Biesecker et al. 2012).

However, economic growth does not typically lead to more prosperity, but rather to a constant increase of consumption (genanet 2011: 1). Decoupling growth from the consumption of resources has also proven to be an unsuccessful strategy to date, as a result of the rebound effect (ibid: 3; see also Santarius 2012; Paech 2011). Furthermore, while new and “greener” technologies might have resulted in more efficient production processes, they also run the risk of simply shifting problems elsewhere and creating further as yet unknown risks, such as when the use of biofuels in Europe results in the dispossession of small-scale farmers in Indonesia and the cultivation of oil palm monocultures (Brand 2012: 4). When green economy concepts fail to broach the issue of unequal power relations and merely link matters of social justice to the creation of green jobs and the financial alleviation of poverty, the actual causes of the crisis remain hidden (BUKO AK GesNat 2012).

Doing economy with a focus on the principles of care for other human beings, and an awareness of social inequality, as well as the need to care for future generations and nature, is incompatible with a belief in unlimited economic growth (genanet 2011: 1). Material wealth does not automatically result in well-being and satisfaction. Improving equality is a key precondition for an improvement of social relations, which are also necessary for a sustainable society, as Wilkinson and Pickett (2010) have highlighted.

e. An Exclusive Focus on Efficiency

While feminists are certainly not opposed to low-resource, low-emission economic activities, they do argue more will be required than green technological solutions to create a new balance between wealth and well-being; an increase in the efficiency of the production of goods will not be enough. Aside from that, the implications of this process for gender relations have not yet been examined: “As long as the impacts of greater resource efficiency on the concentration of employment, on time shortages, and for the (material and immaterial) costs of so-called reproduction, have not been examined, extreme scepticism is called for from the perspective of (paid and unpaid) care work (Stiefel 2014: 2f).

Furthermore, it is essential to challenge the notion of efficiency given that, according to neoclassical theory, efficiency is “not a means, but rather a goal in itself, [which involves] using the resources given to achieve the maximal or desired result with the least amount of effort. Economic efficiency is based on an assumption of rational individuals who want to maximise their own self-interest or profit. This kind of economic efficiency has no social or ecological dimension and is oriented towards the short-term” (Biesecker and Gottschlich 2005: 34f). When it comes to the care economy, however, the idea that efficiency is something that ‘pays off’ becomes absurd and risky. This is because increasing productivity through efficiency is rarely possible, or only at the expense of the caregivers and those receiving care (genanet 2011: 6). Even if we were to focus purely on the notion of ecological efficiency, this understanding also does not consider whether our lifestyles, our needs, or our economy is compatible with the regeneration processes of nature (Biesecker and Gottschlich 2005).

What exactly does a feminist critique imply for our understanding of a green economy (see Chapter 4)? To what extent does the notion of a green economy change when we consider feminist perspectives, and what can we take away from the discussions around care and feminist economics (in Chapter 3) to help gain an understanding of a sustainable economy?

3. Approaching Care

In the following chapter, we will explore the feminist discussions surrounding care, the care crisis, care justice, reproduction, the crisis of social reproduction (Chapter 3.3) and the crisis of reproductivity, the junction of the social crisis and the ecological crisis (Chapter 3.5). These discussions have been conducted over the past years but, interestingly, have gained a particular intensity of late.



The term care describes “essential tasks such as providing [...] childcare, nursing care and support, both paid and unpaid, in institutions and in private relationships, and in relation to health, education, general care services, and many other things” (Care.Macht. Mehr 2013). It draws attention to their relevance for the wider economy and also for the maintenance of the entire society. At times, care is used synonymously with the term reproduction or reproductive labour, yet sometimes it entirely replaces the term reproduction in debates (Heck 2011: 408; Chorus 2013: 31). It is precisely this shift in meaning which has resulted in criticisms of care and a debate between feminists (see Chapter 3.4).

In the following, we will provide an outline of the beginnings of the care debates of the 1980s, which have important roots in the conflicts around feminist ethics, but which were also interwoven with the early feminist debates on the separation of work into paid employment and unpaid reproductive work, and the question of how to make this visible in economic studies (Biesecker and Gottschlich 2013: 178; see also Chapter 3.1). Even if the care debate (and the majority of the publications produced in its course) can be identified as a part of the field of feminist economics which began forming in the 1970s and 1980s, the fact that it has taken place in two areas (ethics and economics) has meant an at times divergent focus on the terms “care” or “reproduction”: whereas care is primarily about the particular quality of care work and the related welfare rationality, as well as its relevance for the public good, reproduction, on the other hand, is primarily focused on the function of reproductive labour within capitalist modes of production, including the related structures of power, hierarchy and gender. From our perspective, however, the use of the terminology is not a case of “either/or” – the term care provides a complement to the previous theoretical developments within feminist economics, which span the term reproduction and the dichotomy between production and reproduction tasks, without making them obsolete (Chorus 2013: 31). Aspects of both terms can be found in the debates on the crisis of (social) reproduction or the care crisis (Chapter 3.3), as well as the new debate, which is relevant to our range of topics, and on care as a political, democratic category (Chapter 3.6).

The fact that care is part of both feminist ethics and feminist economics also provides an explanation as to why current debates on care and the care crisis often address different questions, which we are unfortunately unable to fully address in this paper: It’s partially about the economic relevance and size of the care economy, the attributes and logic of the “other economy” (Donath 2000), societal changes at global,

national and local levels, as well as the consequences of these new arrangements and the changes to individual lived experiences. At the same time, there is a dispute taking place in socio-ethical and feminist theological contexts over care, linked to earlier debates over the ethics of care (see, for example, works by Praetorius 2005; Praetorius and Stöckli 2011; Schnabl 2005; Plonz 2011).

3.1 Beginnings of the Care Debate(s): Feminist Ethics and Feminist Economics

The care debates began in the 1980s during the discussions around a ‘development of female ethics’. The term “ethics of care” was mentioned for the first time in the study “In a Different Voice” by Carol Gilligan (1982). In her research on the development of morality in young men and women, Gilligan discovers two different ethical perspectives which could be attributed to varying experiences of socialisation: the justice perspective and the care perspective. “While protection against oppression and the ideal of autonomy is at the centre of the justice perspective, the care ethic is more about protection against loneliness, helplessness or separation” (Wendel 2003: 69).

According to Gilligan, “care ethics” is a moral compass which provides a frame of reference for making decisions. Care ethics is not based on the assumption of an autonomous subject; instead, it brings the connectedness of people and their relationships with one another to the fore. In moral conflicts, Gilligan observed that young men tended to adopt a justice perspective, as a result of their early childhood experiences, whereas young women tended more towards a care perspective. She argues that the “different voice” (1982) which guides the female moral development towards caring is excluded from empirical studies in the field of psychology, and thus, from the creation of theory¹⁰.

Following Gilligan’s research, care concepts increasingly became a subject of discussion in the nursing sciences from the middle of the 1980s onwards (Kohlen and Kumbruck 2008: 3ff.)¹¹. An interdisciplinary discourse emerged around care and care ethics (Tronto 1993; Held 1993; Nagl-Docekal and Pauer-Studer 1993). Authors Berenice Fisher and Joan Tronto provide a comprehensive definition of care: “On the

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¹⁰ Gilligan’s assertions about female ethical development were a long-standing focus of feminist ethics and were strongly criticised. While we are unable to take a detailed look at this discussion, Wendel (2003: 80ff.) provides a good overview.

¹¹ Feminist approaches towards the bioethical discourse, and indeed others which examined a variety of power relations, were hardly given any regard in nursing sciences debates at the time. For a more detailed examination of the care ethics debate in nursing sciences, see Kohlen and Kumbruck (2008).



most general level, we suggest that caring be viewed as a species activity that includes everything that we do to maintain, continue, and repair our ‘world’ so that we can live in it as well as possible. That world includes our bodies, ourselves, and our environment, all of which we seek to interweave in a complex, life-sustaining web” (Fisher and Tronto 1990, cited in Tronto 1993: 103; see also Chapter 3.5 and 3.7).

The care debate was, and still is, a debate about the definition of societal wealth (and how it comes about), as well as a critique of the gender blindness of (macro) economic theories and statistics, which do not recognise care as a specific working process, or as a component of economics. Feminist macroeconomists such as Isabella Bakker and Diane Elson (1998) illustrated that the national prosperity of a society is the result of an interaction between four sectors of the economy: contributions to the economy are made firstly by the goods production of the formal and informal private sectors; secondly, the public service economy; thirdly, the unpaid care economy which produces family and community-oriented goods; and lastly by the sector of (paid and unpaid) volunteer activities (eg. work for NGOs). Other authors also argue for the integration of the care economy in economic theory, such as Sabine O’Hara (1997), Maren Jochimsen and Ulrike Knobloch (1997), and Mascha Madörin (2006, 2010). We have highlighted in another context (Biesecker and Gottschlich 2013: 186) that Madörin in particular emphasises the magnitude of the care economy and is thus able to show that care work measured in hours, for example, makes up the largest share of work conducted in all industrial capitalist countries, and that all calculations of national product that don’t encompass care provide a misleading picture of the economy in question (see also Chapter 1).

3.2 Care as an Analytical Category and a Transformative Principle¹²

While going forward, it would be desirable to expand the current narrow, market-focused understanding of economy, the goal is ultimately to create an entirely different economy: indeed, care-related economic principles should change the market economy. The “Network Vorsorgendes Wirtschaften”, for example, has developed a concept that provides a critique of conventional economic thinking based on self-interest, competition, and an orientation towards profit and growth rates, and which can be distinguished from the above by three key principles: caring, cooperation and an orientation towards things which are essential for a good life (Theoriegruppe Vorsorgendes Wirtschaften 2000).

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 12 This chapter is primarily based on remarks on the care debate which have been taken from Biesecker and Gottschlich (2013: 186), with selected additions.

The particular characteristics of care, which are frequently emphasised (and also criticised) in feminist debates (see Chapter 3.4), must be seen as relational, in particular when it comes to the relationship between carers and cared-for. The relationship is often understood to be an asymmetrical interaction: a person-to-person relationship in which the stance towards or motivation for caring is important and which is also about dependence and power (Jochimsen 2003). Feminists argue that paid (as patient-oriented services) and unpaid care work should be organised in such a way that allows for this motivation to be sustained. The ethics of “caring practices” (Kumbruck et al. 2010) thus require employment to be organised differently than in an industrial capitalist society, leaving time for the development of a caring relationship. This requires both resources and a supporting infrastructure.

In order to identify and provide this supportive framework, it is necessary to conduct a precise analysis of the socio-economic and institutional conditions under which care work is carried out. By way of example, a study conducted by the United Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) from 2006-2009 looks at the political, social and economic dimensions of care in eight countries¹³ and takes the concept of “care diamonds” as a starting point. The metaphor “care diamonds” is used to describe those actors relevant to paid and unpaid care work (household/family, state, market and non-profit organisations) and their interaction in various institutional contexts (see Madörin 2010: 84; Plonz 2011: 374). These connections are necessary to help understand the global dimensions of care and the embeddedness of international care chains (see also Chapter 3.3), as well as the complexity of care regimes and their structures (Kontos 2010).

Bestowing care work with its own rationale – the rationale of caring) – also enables a critique of the predominant narrowly-defined economic rationality of efficiency (Biesecker and Gottschlich 2005, see also Chapter 2.2). By highlighting these two oppositional rationales, the care debate develops anti-capitalist potential: in this sense, “labour research is able to use the topic of ‘care’ to broach the contradiction between the productivity of caring acts and the capitalist logic of utilisation, the predominance of which allows the former to be denied on the one hand, and exploited on the other” (Plonz 2011: 372).

The debate on care and the care crisis has provided new momentum, in particular for feminist economics, as a glance at the previous years reveals. Although the

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 13 Argentina, Nicaragua, South Africa, Tanzania, India, South Korea, Japan, Switzerland.



formation of the “International Association for Feminist Economics” in 1992 was accompanied by growing interest and the institutionalisation of feminist economics in economic studies (Bauhardt and Çağlar 2010: 7), by 2009, Madörin argues in an essay that this has largely “disappeared” and remains marginalised, both in economic studies and in debates on capitalism and social criticism (Madörin 2009: 11). Yet five years later – after the serious experiences of crisis in its different forms – feminist economics is once again becoming a key starting point in the search for more sustainable forms of economy. The editors of the *Denknetz* yearbook 2013 note that the care debate is being conducted in widening circles – particularly in left-leaning political and academic networks. The care debate is thus considered to be “prospering” (Baumann et al. 2013: 6) and the relevance of the care economy is receiving increasing recognition within society (ibid: 6f).

In order to convey an accurate picture of the economy and work, the care debate is able to offer considerable potential for “what’s taken for granted to be placed back into the centre of the economy” and overcoming the narrow, one-dimensional view of economy and work which currently prevails. To bring about this change, we need to examine the different facets of the crisis. “Even though individual topics are raised in public discussions (expansion of day care, the nursing crisis, burnout, etc.), fundamental solutions are yet to be found. The extent of the crisis will only be revealed when all aspects of care are brought together on the same page” (Care.Macht.Mehr 2013).

3.3 The (Social) Reproduction Crisis: the Care Crisis

Housework, care work and nursing tasks require time and resources, which are increasingly scarce in busy daily lives. Balancing family and friends, gainful employment, commitments in sport clubs or political groups, represents a perpetual challenge. At the same time, working conditions in the healthcare and nursing sector are becoming increasingly precarious, not least because of demographic changes which are creating higher demand for paid and unpaid workers. Reproductive tasks – caring for one another, household chores, caring for the elderly and/or sick people, looking after children and volunteering – are all necessary and indispensable for individual and societal reproduction. Yet they receive little acknowledgment within society and remain economically undervalued, unpaid or carried out under precarious working conditions. Thus, many scholars point to a “crisis of reproduction” (Rodenstein et al. 1996; see also, Winker 2011: 365; Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung 2012; König and

Jäger 2011; Biesecker and Hofmeister 2008; trouble everyday collective 2014), or a crisis of care¹⁴.

Social changes can exacerbate the crisis of reproduction, such as the dual-income household, which has essentially replaced the model of the single bread-earner, as well as the privatisation and individualisation of care work, the tightening of public budget austerity, and the increasing precariousness of working conditions (see, among others, Winker 2011; König and Jäger 2011; Wichterich 2011).

The financial crisis and the austerity measures prescribed for countries like Greece reveal the consequences for every part of life – not least when it comes to the new demarcation of the public and private spheres (see Gottschlich 2012b). “Overcoming” the debt crisis results in cuts to public infrastructure. The ensuing outcome is described by Claudia von Braunnühl and Uta von Winterfeld in 2003 as “double privatisation” (then with reference to the neoliberal restructuring of the welfare state in Europe): on the one hand, public services (primarily at municipal level) and welfare are put in the hands of the private sector, meaning that citizens then have to pay for their services as customers. On the other hand, formerly shared tasks are shifted – or shifted back – to private households, and thus to care workers and/or volunteers.

Changes to gender regimes which take place in the context of changing economic relations tend to be ambivalent (Young 1998). The gendered division of labour (which characterised Fordism, for example) has been noticeably dissolved by the increasing employment of women. Aside from the fact that many women want to be employed, many families, and not just those with low incomes, are now dependent on two incomes as a result of sinking real wages and the continual dismantling of the welfare system (Winker 2011: 366f). As such, life is “centred around employment for all, regardless of gender” (König and Jäger 2011: 150), meaning that time saving and efficiency become crucial for managing daily life (ibid)¹⁵. This subsequently results in a relocation of care work, even sometimes across national borders. “Global care chains” have emerged (Hochschild 2001) due to the increasing em-

14 For a feminist discussion on the relationship between crisis and gender relations, the understanding of crisis in feminist debates, and also related to this, a consideration of the change of masculinity and the expansion of the debate to include a materialist feminist take on crisis, see Dück (2014).

15 Although there it is still predominately women who undertake reproductive tasks parallel to employment, the conventional gender arrangements are shifting; König and Jäger (2011) thus come to the conclusion that the responsibility of women for reproductive labour can no longer be seen as true in all counts – at least for work within the family and household. It remains unclear, however, how and when both women and men are supposed to recover from the various tasks” (ibid).



ployment of women, a crisis or gap emerges in care systems leading to the formation of markets for paid care work¹⁶. Simultaneously, more and more women in the global South emigrate to wealthier regions to carry out paid care work and send remittances home to pay for their families to attain a higher standard of living and education (Kontos 2010). Their own care responsibilities at home are often taken over by other women in turn, giving rise to care chains and complex relationships between global North and global South, as well as between cities and rural areas. Since countries in the global North are once again appropriating resources from the global South – in this case poorly compensated social and emotional resources – in order to compensate for a growing need of care labour, Maria Kontos (2010) refers to this situation as colonial-like relations¹⁷.

3.4 Excursion: a Critical Look at the Care Discourse

At this point it is worth taking a short excursion to look at the criticism of care, which is primarily directed at the previously mentioned replacement of the term reproduction with the term care¹⁸. This comes as a result of the apparent ‘success’ of the term care, which has led some feminists to ask what it actually means, what it highlights and what might be lost if we are no longer talking about reproductive labour, housework etc., as well as why such shifts might have resulted. The following critiques, which we have selected as a sample and without the intention of trying to cover everything, reveal that the very lively discourse around care, reproduction and new ways of doing economy are a work to be seen as a work in progress. These differentiated feminist positions are also significant for the debates linked to sustainability and the Green Economy, as they make power relations the centre of focus.

Barbara Duden, for example, argues that the discussions on unpaid housework should not be replaced by the term care, as the criticism of the invisibility of

this work should be revived. Due to gender equality rhetoric and the present employment-based focus of capitalism, it is no longer possible to refer to unpaid housework as a form of output, meaning that these activities are once more made invisible, feminised and relegated to the private sphere (Duden 2009: 25f.).

An edition of the magazine “Das Argument” (The Argument) in 2011 is also devoted to providing a critical study of the term care and related debates. Frigga Haug, for example, warns of the “care syndrome” and is concerned that the terminology is a “melting pot of very different meanings” (Haug 2011: 358). She criticises firstly the lack of analytical clarity in current feminist discussions, and secondly, the missing links between these and previous socialist feminist analysis and concepts, and also the political goals expressed in the past. She questions, among other things, what happens when the English term “care” is transferred to other contexts (in Germany), which could mean that this specific feminist history is then forgotten (ibid: 345). Making reference to the earlier discussions about wages for housework, Haug draws attention to the fact that from a feminist perspective, it is not about what exactly the nature of these activities might be, or where they occur, it is about the conditions which they take place in.

Yet, Frigga Haug’s critique can arguably also provide a starting point for delineating the other perspective. According to Heck, some authors chose the term care intentionally in order to distinguish themselves from the Marxist feminist position, because they believe that the emotional and social aspects of reproductive work have been neglected and use the term instead to emphasise particular characteristics of care work (such as emotional relationships) (Heck 2011: 409). In some approaches (such as that taken by Folbre and Nelson), Heck notes that the context of care work and the framework of capitalist production remains unmentioned, shifting the critique to an ethical level. Thus, Heck deems the term reproduction to be crucial in order to make visible the relationship between care, societal production and reproduction in the capitalist system. To Heck, both are relevant: the emotional and psychological side of care, with its particular characteristics and expansion of paid and institutionalised care work, as well as the setting of capitalist modes of productions, and the need to emphasise the relevance of care for the entire economy and criticise the socio-economic conditions under which care work is carried out (ibid: 410f).

In her master’s thesis, Anika Thym (2014) also highlights a number of gaps and limitations in the current care debates. She attributes these primarily to an es-

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 16 “85% of the Filipino nurses work in foreign countries, 20,000 highly qualified doctors and nurses leave southern Africa years, often with a cascade effect. The gap emerging in South Africa as a result of the emigration of skilled personnel is filled by recruiting others from Zimbabwe and Cuba” (Wichterich 2011: 134f.). The estimates on the numbers of migrants working in German households are varied, ranging from around 100,000-200,000 migrant domestic workers (Apitzsch and Schmidbauer 2011: 3) to around 200,000-300,000 migrants working in German homes (Da Roit and Weicht 2013: 474, Table I).

17 In addition, many of these working arrangements are also irregular (with no social security) and especially in private households, women without visas or work permits are frequently employed (see, for example, Apitzsch and Schmidbauer 2011).

18 In Chapter 3.5 we look at arguments focusing on environmental issues, as well as the idea that the term care could be seen as having lost the dual socio-ecological meaning that was contained in the term ‘reproduction’, and thus resulted in the connection to the ‘reproductive’ contributions of nature being forgotten.



sentialist understanding of care, and a related qualitative distinction between economy and care economy, as well as a homogenisation of both spheres. Thym questions the concept of care as an anthropological constant (Thym 2014: 67). This is somewhat provocative, because in most texts care is primarily defined according to specific essential features: it always has an interpersonal component, care relationships are often asymmetrical and involving dependencies, and special competencies are needed to conduct care work (see, for example, Madörin 2010: 87ff.; Chorus 2013: 17, 37). Thym argues that the focus on the (intrinsic) content of these tasks results in the loss of their social and historical context. Instead of considering the extent to which current care work might be a component of the specific social conditions under neoliberalism, or whether care work itself perhaps gives rise to these conditions, care is assumed to be an anthropological and metaphysical given. The subsequent designations of two qualitatively different, homogenous spheres – the goods producing economy and the care economy – prevents a more comprehensive analysis of the heterogeneity within these spheres (for example, within the care economy), as well as linkages which might exist with other parts of society (ecology, education etc.) (Thym 2014: 81, see also the following chapter).

3.5 From the Crisis of Reproduction to the Crisis of Reproductivity and the Debates over the Relationship between Care and Nature

While most authors relate care to human relationships and certain kinds of actions, Joan Tronto and Berenice Fisher at the beginning of the 1990s already began making reference to the “life-sustaining web” based upon a more comprehensive definition of care, which includes care for the non-human environment. Various scholars researching gender and sustainability continue to draw upon this understanding of care (Gottschlich 2012a; Gottschlich and Katz 2015) and argue that there is need for further research in the area of care and nature (Biesecker et al. 2014).

However, given that the broader definition of care suggested by Fisher and Tronto (see Chapter 3.1) was not widely adopted, authors such as Adelheid Biesecker and Sabine Hofmeister have suggested that the link to non-human nature was somewhat lost when the category reproduction shifted to care (Biesecker and Hofmeister 2013: 240f.). Indeed, this meant that the focus was no longer on the “socio-ecological dual meaning contained in the term ‘reproduction’, with the consequence that the core of the socio-ecological crisis cannot be uncovered and tackled” (ibid: 244). They see the crisis-ridden core in the separation of production and reproduction which results in the daily appropriation and devaluation of both care work (with its con-

notations for women) and ecological reproduction. The crises are “located in the sector of reproduction; there, where the ‘blind spots’ of the economic system can be found, where productive activities are unheeded, not given recognition and not assigned any value. This means that both areas of crisis – interpreted as one entire socio-ecological crisis – have the same origin. We argue that the core lies in economics” (Biesecker and Hofmeister 2008: 438f.).

This idea that the social and ecological crises originated from the same cause can already be found at the end of the 1970s/beginning of the 1980s in the works of the subsistence theorists Maria Mies, Veronika Bennholdt-Thomsen and Claudia von Werlhof (1983). In their subsistence approach they examined not only the housework done by women, but rather all activities which were necessary for the production and maintenance of life, such as small-scale farming and subsistence work. The aim was to make visible the hidden basis of capitalist production: subsistence. The subsistence theorists also use this category to draw critical connections between the exploitation of women’s labour, the exploitation of people in the global South, and of natural resources and nature (Mies et al. 1983; Gottschlich 2015)¹⁹. They pictured the economy as an iceberg with the tip visible above the water representing paid employment, and the bulk of the ice which remained under water as the unpaid activities and the ecological contributions of nature.

Making the invisible once again visible, placing the focus on that which is taken for granted, reshaping the basic principles of how we do economy – these matters are not just pursued by a few authors (Christa Wichterich is often named here in the place of many others), but also by feminist networks (such as *Vorsorgendes Wirtschaften*²⁰ and different branches of theory (including the subsistence approach, ecofeminist approach, and feminist ecological economics). In particular the latter reveals, however, that the term care is not necessarily purely limited to human-human relationships. Feminist ecological economics is based on an understanding of care as a productive force, rather than a “reproductive” one, analogous to the productivity of nature. It thus calls for a “sustaining production theory” (O’Hara 1997) to make the invisible thoroughly visible, both in regard to care work and the contributions of nature (Jochimsen and Knobloch 1997). Thus, the term care does not automatically result in the exclu-

19 Subsistence, however, is also a vision which stands in opposition to the impositions of neoliberalism (Werlhof et al. 2003). The processes of neoliberal globalisation have received increasing attention in feminist critiques of economics since the beginning of the 1990s (see Young 1998; Young 2002; Wichterich 1998, Wichterich 2003; Gottschlich 2004; Madörin 2010: 81).

20 See www.vorsorgendeswirtschaften.de



sion of nature and its productive output, although this link might have to be made consciously (this is also true of reproduction, however, to avoid limiting reproduction to social reproduction).

The term “reproductivity”, which places a stronger emphasis on the process, and thus the processes of creation and renewal, allows for the dual nature of the socio-ecological crisis to be emphasised. This allows for the analysis of the crisis of reproduction (see Chapter 3.3) to be furthered. Given the ongoing separation and appropriation of both spheres – the ecological sphere and the social sphere of every-day life – the ecological crisis and the crisis of reproduction are crisis phenomena which share structural commonalities, and thus together turn into the *crisis of reproductivity*. This label can be attributed to Adelheid Biesecker and Sabine Hofmeister (2008) and their defining concept of (re)productivity, which has been central for the interface between care, gender, and green economy, as well as for sustainable economy.

Working from the assumption of an “ecological crisis” and a “crisis of productive labour”, Biesecker and Hofmeister (2006) link the historically separate categories production and reproduction, and therefore emphasise the productive nature of reproductivity. As a result they develop the category (re)productivity, which allows for a new conception of the notion of productivity, and for the separated and devalued sphere of reproductive, socially female work and ecological contributions²¹ to be thought of in productive terms (ibid: 17ff.). The category (re)productivity is not directed at generative reproduction; instead, it should be seen as an appeal for an entirely different way of doing economy – for a new way of conceiving of economics and of conducting economic and social actions (Biesecker and Hofmeister 2008: 434). “This term undergoes a significant transformation with its expansion to include the dimension of time: it is turned into a category which allows for sustainable forms of economics and living to be considered, in a way that makes it seem possible looking forward. First of all, sustainable de-

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21 The productivity of nature is currently only valued when nature is privatised and thus seen as a product or good (Biesecker et al. 2012). Thus, nature becomes, for example, “plant genetic resources” which are then tradable as goods on the market through the distribution of property rights and patents (Wullweber 2004). This process of commodification and financialisation is criticised by feminists (and others). This is about preventing the free usage of the commoditised resources, which is then secured by international agreements and regulations, such as the Biodiversity Convention (1992) (Wullweber 2004). Accordingly the feminist argument is not to push for the inclusion care work in the rationale of employment; this has been viewed critically since the discussion around the call for ‘wages for housework’ in the 1970s, because care tasks are then subjected to the same pressure of rationalisation. These new forms of exclusion and devaluations give rise to new boundaries between the productive and the reproductive (Biesecker and Hofmeister 2008: 446f.; Biesecker and Hofmeister 2010: 72).

velopment need to develop a better understanding of the certain time frames of various things – a careful and mindful way of going about change and dealing with the future” (Biesecker and Hofmeister 2013: 251).

3.6 Care as a Democratic Principle

Recently, the debates on care have no longer been limited exclusively to feminist economic and/or ethical questions, and have instead begun addressing care from a political perspective as a social practice. The starting point is the feminist criticism that viewing care as a private matter serves to negate its social relevance and value within society.

Changing the recognition of caring, however, is essential since it is also about „maintaining the social structure as a whole, about the re(making) of society” (Gottschlich 2012b: 3). Yet although there is a substantial need for the social practices of caring for oneself, for others and for the socio-ecological good of society, the question of who takes on the care work when everyone is expected to be employed, is neither raised nor answered in the political arena (Winker 2011: 8). For Joan Tronto, however, the distribution of the responsibility for care is one of the most fundamental questions a political polity faces (Tronto 2013: xiii). Firstly, this distribution requires about creating and/or changing structures to allow for decent caring. Secondly, it necessitates attention to the symbolic, as well as to the material level. This is not just a case to be made for a different distribution of care work (say, between the genders, between the level of individuals/families and the collective/societal level), but rather for an entirely different political culture. Indeed, while the call for a “caring state” such as that made by the network Women in Development Europe (WIDE) focuses more on the material level of concrete structures and care institutions, Tronto’s idea of a “caring democracy” (2013) makes the hidden dimensions of care a central concern for politics. The reorganisation of the economy with an orientation towards care as a supportive, socio-ecological transformative principle thus becomes a question of democracy, based on an acknowledgement that “human interests cannot be realised by profit-oriented accumulation of capital, but by political action oriented around care” (Winker 2011: 11). In fact, quite recently feminist academics and practitioners have managed to successfully politicise care in Germany and elsewhere. It would not be an exaggeration to point to an emerging ‘care movement’, which is increasingly politicising and linking struggles against the invisibility, devaluation and appropriation of care work, opening up spaces for encounters be-



tween academic analysis and practical knowledge and creating networks²².

Tronto's "caring democracy" also goes beyond a politicisation of the issue, however, and is directed towards a transformation of democracy itself – one based on the principle of "caring with". "Caring with" is not about asymmetrical relationships (as is often the case with feminist economics, which seeks to identify the characteristics of care). Indeed, "caring with" is more comparable with Hannah Arendt's notion of 'collective power' – the kind of power which is not destructive, but creative, and which describes the efforts of free individuals collaborating in the political sphere for the common good (Arendt 1970). Thus, it is not based on the assertion of one's own interests, but rather on taking responsibility for one's self and for others, and therefore also for democracy. Given that this idea stands for a fundamental paradigm change, we will conclude this section by citing Tronto at length: "Caring with' [...] requires a change in the values of citizens. It requires that citizens care enough about caring – both in their own lives and in the lives of their fellow citizens – to accept that they bear the political burden of caring for the future. That future is not only about economic production but also about caring for the values of freedom, equality, and justice. That future is not only about oneself and one's family and friends, but also about those with whom one disagrees, as well as the natural world and one's place in it. That future requires that we think honestly about the past and accept some burdens and responsibilities that have been deflected or ignored, realising that if all such responsibilities are reconsidered, democracy will function more justly" (Tronto 2013: xii).

What results from this chapter, and those prior, for our understanding of care?

3.7 Our Understanding of Care as a Principle for Doing Sustainable Economy in the Context of CaGE

As the previous chapters have made clear, there is no single definition of care and as such, the terms care work, caring and care can be used in a variety

22 Worth mentioning in this context are the recommendations made by the Social Platform for a "caring society" in the EU (2011), as well as the activities of the "Care Revolution". In March 2014, more than 500 people attended a conference of the same name in Berlin. One area of focus was the current conditions in central areas of social reproduction: health, nursing and assistance, education and childcare, social work, nutrition and living. A further aim was to create a space for a discussion about the different perspectives and experiences, as well as challenges and visions of a needs-oriented care economy which should enable a good life for all people. Rather than competition and profits, people and their living conditions are at the center of the final document: "Together we can create the conditions in which varied, individual, collective and social needs and interests can be fulfilled: a good life for all – worldwide!" (<http://care-revolution.site36.net/>).

of ways. In the following, we would thus like to clarify and make transparent the understanding of care and the terminology used in the context of the CaGE project – even though we are also unable to offer a unified definition and also draw on various different ideas and contexts.

Caring describes the process, that is, the concrete action and activities. Care economy, on the other hand, denotes the sector – the part of the economy made up of unpaid and paid care work. We see *care* as a *principle for doing sustainable economy*, which places the everyday reality of life and human needs in the centre of economic thinking. Economics should thus be focused on the satisfaction of needs and securing the basic existence of all individuals, rather than primarily maximising profits. *Care as a transformative principle* allows for the ethical level of (care) work and its quality to be considered.

Against the background of the crisis of reproductivity (see Chapter 3.5), *care work* for us is both paid and unpaid care labour, as well as the reproduction of natural foundations. We regard nature as a living counterpart and as inseparable from society. Humans, too, are nature and social activities and natural processes are so strongly interwoven, that neither the social nor the natural can be conceived of in this context as something separate or describable on their own. Thus, we define care as a *principle for the regulation of the societal relationship to nature and a mindful ('careful') approach to nature*. Moreover, we regard *care as an ethical and political principle*, which provides a means of drawing attention firstly to the connection between a practicable ethics of care and the socio-political and structural background and secondly, to address the unequal power relations which mean that care is devalued.

Care-related tasks, treating others in a considerate manner, communication and the reproduction of nature all require different temporalities to be taken into account. The various inherent times of ecosystems and living creatures, such as the temporal rhythms of animals, the time scales of metabolic cycles and the distribution times of matter in the atmosphere should all be taken into account in the production and consumption of resources (Kümmerer and Hofmeister 2008). Moreover, caring for one's self and others takes time²³. Accordingly, the view of care as a principle of *Vorsorge* should ensure that these different time

23 The reduction of time assigned to certain tasks (as well as the separation of work duties and the hierarchies for personnel) has resulted in the situation that, for example, doctors are unable to find the time to make diagnoses by consulting with patients, since this communication is taken over by more poorly paid staff. Subsequently patients often feel that they are being dismissed and not taken seriously (Madörin 2010: 88f.).



frames are taken into account and include the concept of care to make a good life possible for all in the future.

Care work is shaped by dependent relationships, which are sometimes asymmetrical (care for children, sick people, etc.). Yet essentially, every person is dependent on care and responsible for satisfying their own needs. Indeed, dependencies and connections even exist between those individuals who are generally able to care for themselves, which also involve time and resources (living communities, friends, romantic relationships). *Care, therefore, includes for us caring for one's self and caring in relationships that are not necessarily asymmetrical, even though other definitions might very well define care by this asymmetry.*

We view care and the related crisis of reproductivity as a starting point for social criticism of things as the way they are, but also as an opportunity for change and finding new, alternative concepts for a caring, and thus sustainable, economy.

4. Countering the Marginalisation of Care in a Sustainable Economy

Working from the understanding of a crisis of *reproductivity* and against the backdrop of feminist criticism of the predominant understanding of a green economy, as well as our understanding of care as a principle for sustainable economy, in the following we will summarise the outcomes of this paper to provide insights for future work and research in the field of gender, care and green economy. First we will explore the critical potential of the gender approach for a sustainable economy and scientific research, in order to then convey our understanding of a green economy and how this could be part of a comprehensive socio-ecological transformation.

4.1 A Gender Perspective as a Critical Impetus for Economics and Science

The starting point for bringing together green economy and care economy, as we have highlighted in previous chapters, is the exacerbation of the related social and ecological crisis phenomena in recent years. Both our social reproduction and ecological resources, which provide the basis of all forms of life and economy, are facing existential threats and are being rapidly destroyed. “The deadly consequences of earthquakes, as we see in Haiti, or floods, as we seen in Pakistan, reveal the tremendous lack of relief structures. They are catastrophes in the most literal sense: they turn things bottom up. The collapsed buildings and the flooded fields and houses expose the failure of national governments and so-called development aid, in which hu-

man needs and vulnerabilities hardly play a role, but contrary economic interests do. They reveal the continual marginalisation of ‘care’” (Plonz 2011: 374). To guarantee societal reproduction, to uphold social and ecological qualities and make a good life possible for everyone, economics must be oriented towards human needs, as well as thinking about the needs of future generations. In other words: a sustainable economy must successfully counter the marginalisation of care (see also Chapter 2.2).

Yet, how can we make that happen? What are care-based structures, exactly? Who should put them in place and maintain them, and how? And are gender and care really relevant for the various projects and ideas that come together under the label green economy? Shouldn't gender researchers come up with constructive suggestions to translate feminist claims into concrete, usable results for work on the ground – perhaps in the form of checklists, instruments and a catalogue of demands?

As much as we can related to the desire for concrete points to begin with, there is no short and simple user-guide for the transformation to a sustainable economy driven by care. Social changes cannot be reduced to the matter of the right kind of management because they aim for the transformation of existing power relations and demand a new political culture. Indeed, the trademark of feminist research is arguably its ability to critically examine existing economic practices and also research practices. A gender perspective “makes it obvious, and sensitises us towards the fact that the production of scientific knowledge also has a gender bias, highlighting how our supposedly objective worldview is shaped by those who conduct science and discoveries, to be rather strongly anthropocentric and male-focused” (Schneidewind in an interview with Katz 2014: 273).

In recent years, gender researchers have dealt with the most varied facets of the sustainability discourse²⁴. However, many questions remain unanswered and the potential for innovation remains enormous when it comes to contemplating, rethinking and thinking creatively at the interface of gender, care and green economy. In order to give this subject area more weight in scientific policy-making – and given its relevance for the desired socio-economic transformation – it would be worthwhile to conduct an open-ended call for tenders on sustainability and gender. By providing structurally secure funding, by way of gender-orientated sustainability research program it would be possible,

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24 The abundant literature is represented here by a number of edited volumes by Weller et al. 1999; Schäfer et al. 2006; Hofmeister et al. 2013; and Katz et al. 2014.



for example, to conduct a systematic evaluation of previous research in the field of gender and sustainability “focusing on the question of whether gender dimensions were considered in research projects and looking at how gender dimensions were addressed theoretically, conceptually and in the research practices” (Schultz et al. 2014: 217). Furthermore, this kind of funding support aimed at the interface of gender, care and sustainable economy could also enable longer-term transdisciplinary research with entrepreneurs.

During a one year project, as was the case with CaGE, it is already a success when actors from research and the field participate in a dialogue and in the feminist critique of previous understandings of economy and work, and green economy concepts. It will take a considerable amount of encouragement and intervention to question and rethink the paradigmatic foundations of economics. Yet this is exactly what is needed – a new way of thinking about economics and economic and social behaviour.

The final discussions in Chapter 4.2 therefore engage with a number of aspects of the critique expressed in Chapter 2.2 and attempt to apply them constructively.

4.2 Our Understanding of a Green Economy in the Context of CaGE

We share the critique of the use of the term green economy, as a result of its linguistic limitations and focus on ‘green’ growth and technical innovations. However, in spite (or perhaps because) of this we do utilise this term and would like to reclaim and recreate it. For us the green economy is more than an ecological modernisation of production, resource efficiency or new technologies. Instead, we see it in a more holistic manner as the aim of a process towards a sustainable economy and as part of a far-reaching socio-ecological transformation. What this would require will be discussed in the following:

a. A Holistic Understanding of Economics and Work

This first demand has been around since the very beginning of feminist economics, but is more urgent than ever: social-ecological societal change requires a shift away from the previous economic logic of maximising profits towards an economic model based on human needs and securing the social and natural foundations needed for living. This calls for an economic model based on caring for others, for nature and for future generations to ensure a good life for all (genanet 2011: 2). This involves recognising both the productivity of the supposed reproductive output of human and societal tasks, as well as the ecological productivity as a basis and part of the economy. On this basis what we understand to be economics must be redefined.

A holistic way of thinking about economics requires a new definition of work which recognises the various forms of work as part of the economy and is also oriented towards a social and ecological public good (Gottschlich and Mölders 2008). For this, the prerequisite would be having a discussion about which kinds of work are necessary for society and promote the public good. In order to fairly distribute the work needed for society between and within generations and to create possibilities for making decisions regardless of gender, we also require a “fundamental reorganisation of the current gender order of modern societies” (genanet 2011:7). The demand for the provision of adequate childcare places, for example, is no longer a question of gender justice when it is not primarily addressed in the context of a good infrastructure for societal welfare. As long as this matter is overshadowed by the question of how to raise the still under-utilised working potential of mother and fathers and integrate it in the national economy, the fixation on employment will remain unchallenged and the subordination of care will exist, and thus, “the emancipation of women will be placed at the service of the capitalist accumulation machine” (Fraser 2009: 52). With a view to the socio-ecological transformation it is thus worth asking which kinds of work we need and who should be conducting this work, under what conditions.

b. Viewing Households Differently: the Smallest Economic Unit

Adopting another view on economics and the subsequent consequences for our economic activities also requires us to start thinking differently about the smallest economic unit – the household – and regard the members of a household as more than mere consumers. Instead, they could be seen as care workers with particular mobility needs, or as energy actors, for example. Meike Spitzner (1994, 2002, 1999) attempted to do this by highlighting the androcentric bias in the transport sector. Even today, transport is primarily conceptualised as involving trips from home to the work place and back; transport needs connected to care work, continue to be marginalised in both theory and practice. For a socio-ecological transformation, however, integrated concepts are needed in the sectors of transport, renewable energy, power and heat supply, etc. Initial ideas for a more proactive economy could be provided by *Prosumerforschung*, which aims to generate knowledge about people’s motivations for using energy more sustainably, for example, to encourage them to become flexible energy actors. In a decentralised system based on renewables, users are no longer able to remain mere consumers of energy, they must become active participants in the production of energy. These active consumers are labelled Prosumer because they produce and consume (Welle 2014).



The variable ‘gender’ has not yet received much attention in this context, however. Women are often the driving force behind, for example, a household changing to green power – yet the reasons why this is the case have not yet been adequately explored (Röhr et al. 2012).

An altered view of the household as the smallest economic unit directly involves an analysis of the changed gender roles and their consequences. “The man as the breadwinner is on the decline: the invisible woman in the background of the family has emerged as a supplementary earner, if not the sole earner. This has meant a loss of resources for the domain of maintenance and care. Men’s involvement in the household and family has not kept up with the pace of change” (Stiefel 2014: 4). A debate between individuals of all genders is thus necessary, in which in particular the role of the father is examined.

c. Caring for One’s Self in Context and Creating New Logics of Action

In a society shaped by care, the benchmark for determining how to act cannot be set by the logic of the market. Alternatively, critical definitions of a green economy must leave the picture of individuals as isolated and competitive – the ‘homo oeconomicus’ – behind and instead start to conceive of humans as social creatures, capable of caring for themselves and others, as well as future generations and the non-human natural environment. This notion of a “caring self” is always a “self in context”, according to Biesecker and Kesting (2003: 170), which does not simply follow its own interests, but is capable of foresightedness and empathy towards others (Biesecker and Gottschlich 2013: 321).

Showing empathy towards others is not just relevant to people. For ecological agriculture, which is identified as one of the key markets of a green economy, caring is an important principle when it comes to animals, but also with soils, for example.

d. A Consideration of Other Models and Measurements of Prosperity

The measurement of wealth used to calculate GDP is insufficient – material wealth is important, but many additional aspects determine well-being and social prosperity, such as individual fulfilment, self-determination, social connections, security, acceptance, ease, and creativity. Alternatives to a purely financial measure of wealth offer different concepts which emanate from the right of all people to a good life – including the ability to determine individually what that means.

“Martha Nussbaum and Amartya Sen have defined a good life by the ability of individuals to freely develop capabilities which will allow them to shape their own lives” (Nussbaum 2000 and Sen 2009, s quoted in Wichterich 2012: 47). According to this understanding, prosperity is measured in multidimensional ways and not limited to a single number. A study by Wilkinson and Pickett (2010) reveals that equality and justice are considerable factors for the level of satisfaction and well-being in a society. A large material gap between rich and poor and the subsequent pressure created by competition creates illness, dissatisfaction and distrust within all sections of the population (Wilkinson and Pickett 2010). It is therefore necessary to establish collectively what wealth actually means and how we want to live and manage our economy.

It is, however, quite challenging to derive a simple converse argument from the critique of externalisation detailed in Chapter 2, as Biesecker, Wichterich and von Winterfeld emphasise: “It is not just about internalisation, inclusion and revaluation within a growth and profit-driven goods economy. If, for example, the ecological costs are calculated in the prices, they would rise significantly: many things would become unaffordable for the poor, and for the rich it wouldn’t make much of a difference. The internalisation of costs would be fairer from an ecological point of view, but without an overhaul of the structures of social inequality this would only lead to a new dilemma for social justice. When care work is paid, it doesn’t change the hierarchical gendered division of labour. Including poor women in financial markets by distributing microcredits also does not automatically change the structures of poverty. Any measure which only addresses one problem at a time will be inadequate. From a feminist perspective, when we think about “growth, prosperity, and quality of life”, it’s not just about finding ‘more fitting’ indicators, but about discovering and strengthening a new path of development – one which leads away from a market and money-driven compulsion for economic growth and towards a society with a way of living and conducting economic processes that is sustainable, in which all can take part in and have a share. It is this kind of sharing and participation that will enable us to tackle social disintegration – this is the only way to address democratic deficits and a lack of orientation. In order to promote this path of development at a political level, the ‘crude bourgeois’ will have to be dealt with. Indeed, a democratic society is incompatible with this kind of attitude and a retreat from social responsibility. The paths to sustainability are thus controversial and disputed. A good life for all cannot be achieved otherwise, and besides – democracy also implies conflict and the ability to have disagreements” (Biesecker et al. 2012: 39).



e. An Appeal for Sufficiency

It is not only about more efficient production; equally important is the idea of living more sufficiently. This does not mean that everyone has to live a life of asceticism, yet it does require us to ask what exactly should be produced, which products are necessary and for whom, and whether the social and ecological consequences of the production are socially acceptable (genanet 2011: 5). Living more sufficiently does not mean shifting the responsibility to private households or merely changing every day, individual behaviour or lifestyles. Instead, it involves transparency, the inclusion of consumers and a debate within society, for instance, about the way products are made, who sells them and how the earnings are to be invested (ibid).

However, the appeal for sufficiency from a feminist perspective is rather demanding and requires a specific debate over what exactly is called for. Sufficiency sounds uncomfortable; in the sustainability discourse it is usually used to refer to individual consumption and is thus reduced to a moral category (Winterfeld 2011: 59). Uta von Winterfeld conceives of sufficiency, however, as a right of protection, according to the idea that “no one should have to want to have more and more” (Winterfeld 2002). She thus emphasises the political dimension of sufficiency. Rather than an individualistic category, sufficiency is a social category that aims for more solidarity, which can be used to criticise the idea of scarcity. In the current system, the assumption of scarcity is used to maintain the idea that there is not enough and that we will need more of everything in the future²⁵: more jobs, time, money, resources. Therefore, everything must increase. At the same time, “despite all this talk of growth, social security, or rather the provision of services in the event of illness or old age, a diminishing factor” (Winterfeld 2011: 60). A critical sufficiency-based perspective allows for a change of perspective by no longer asking how much is enough, and instead focusing on how much could be considered too much: increasing workloads for many, omnipresent advertising, perpetual new versions of software and hardware, etc. Thus, sufficiency does not necessarily raise the question of whether boundaries are necessary, but rather what problems are caused by a lack of or a blurring of boundaries” (ibid). For Winterfeld, sufficiency becomes a critical category which, instead of formulating positive conditions, can be used as in critical theory to uncover “the downsides and the

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25 “Jobs, for instance, are a scarce commodity, which is why the economy has to grow, so that companies invest and create jobs. Food, for example, is running low, which is why agriculture has to be rationalised and made to produce more agricultural products by way of technical advancements (including genetic interventions). Time, for instance, is running short, which is why there are more and more cars and other forms of transport cutting through space, to make us to get from here to there faster” (Winterfeld 2011: 60).

impositions, whether it’s those of excess or those of crossing and blurring boundaries” (ibid). Interpreted in this manner, sufficiency becomes a right and no longer an annoying duty.

Uwe Schneidewind, one of the prominent advocates for transdisciplinary socio-ecological research (as part of the change within the research field requires for a social transformation), highlights that sufficiency and behavioural aspects were only taken up in the highly technological debate about energy transitions as a result of urging by feminist researchers (Schneidewind, in an interview with Katz 2014: 274).

5. Next Steps: Rethinking Economics

How do we progress from our critique (Chapter 2.2) to a more holistic understanding of economics and work, to a changed view of the household as the smallest economic unit, to a “caring self in context” and new logics of action, to a new way of thinking about models of wealth and measuring prosperity (Chapter 4.2)? In order to answer this question we will present a number of initial steps that can help us move towards this vision for the future. We consider these recommendations to be a contribution to a more comprehensive strategy of sustainable economics and place a particular focus on the production of knowledge.

Scientific actors function as producers of knowledge and as developers of innovation. They help to shape topics, content, values and discourses on green economy, care, gender and societal innovations and transformation processes. Scientific discoveries influence how society perceives specific topics and are thus part of the construction of realities. Advances in scientific knowledge are thus always context-bound. In light of this, feminist philosophers of science view all knowledge as *situated knowledge* (Haraway 1988) and seek to address the relevance of power relations as they pertain to producers of knowledge. For the research, teaching and the production of knowledge surrounding green economy, this is of crucial relevance: it reveals that the knowledge produced on the topic of green economy, and on the processes of change and innovation linked to it, is neither objective nor gender-neutral.

In particular when we expect science to provide answers to complex problems (and research on sustainability does consider itself to be explicitly generating system knowledge, target knowledge, and transformative knowledge), we have to ensure that knowledge production is fostered and strengthened, that the causes of current social and environmental crises are analysed, and that different kinds of knowledge are in-



cluded, enabling the creation of foundations for the development of a socio-ecological transformation. In this sense, the inclusion of the care perspective and the category gender can function as an eye-opener, drawing attention to the various interlacing conditions of social inequality and actively contributing to the consideration of feminist theory and intersectional debates, which help make the distortions and blind spots of many traditional analyses visible (Gottschlich and Katz 2013; Schultz and Wendorf 2006).

Recommendation I Promoting the Critical Production of Knowledge

We position ourselves in line with a critical and self-reflective transformative research tradition (Gottschlich 2013; Jahn 2013), which aims to expose the gender blindness of mainstream research and debates on green economy and take into account further categories of inequality, such as ethnicity, class, age, etc. Moreover, it is also about strengthening and further developing feminist research and in particular feminist economics, with all of its developments and shifts in the past decades (from the housework debate to the politicisation of care work).

The call for work to be revised and re-evaluated is not new, yet given the increasingly difficult working conditions in the areas of nursing, education, and health care, and against the backdrop of social and demographic changes, it seems more relevant than ever. A more nuanced analysis is needed to examine how the care economy can be acknowledged and valued, without commodifying care work or merely integrating it into the previous economic system and thus submitting it to the usual profit mentality. Thus, at the same, it is also crucial to include in this analysis the current discussions about the commodification of nature and the ongoing exploitation of natural resources, with all of the related ambivalences. This would require exposing divisions and thinking about linkages in a new light.

Furthermore, the connection needs to be made between the various overlapping areas of care, gender and green economy and the current debates on degrowth, commons, share economy etc. Although a number of researchers and other actors contribute feminist and critical perspectives to the debate, there are not enough attempts made to include issues such as the care economy and related unequal gender relations in, for instance, the discussion around the basic income. In addition, the inclusion of intersectional perspectives is lacking, as are analyses on interlocking and shifting categories of inequality.

Alternatives and new ways of questioning the existing system can simultaneously bring about fears of individual changes and disadvantages, as well as uncertainty about major societal upheaval. These fears are to be taken seriously, particular given the current context of emerging right-wing populist and extreme right-wing parties and nationalist discourses in Europa. It is therefore necessary to also examine thought patterns and the level of emotions.

Finally, gender-relevant data is lacking. A differentiated collection of data and the development of appropriate methodologies, which depict the paid and unpaid work conducted yearly within the EU, would help to clarify the employment-based and care-based economic distribution of labour. Further efforts are also needed to implement the category of gender, both in the production of knowledge and in research funding.

Promoting the critical production of knowledge:

- Further develop feminist research, and in particular feminist economics, to make visible the structures which result in the marginalisation of gender and care perspectives in the production of knowledge, and to identify attempts at change.
- Consolidate the inclusion of feminist content in teaching (and teaching materials) and research, including in measures to enhance the skills of teaching staff, over the long term and irrespective of who is involved.
- Analyse and reveal the contradictions and ambivalences that become visible when studying the linkages between care, gender and green economy, in order to avoid further exclusions.
- Link analyses of gender and care to current debates on degrowth, commons and share economy, etc.
- Collect comprehensive and differentiated gender-relevant data (such as time-budget studies).

Recommendation II Strengthening Existing Efforts and Building New Alliances

The call for existing collaborative efforts and networks to be strengthened and for new alliances to be formed is primarily directed at the *scientific community*, by which we mean actors involved in research both at universities and in other settings. Expanding cooperations and networks beyond these contexts is deemed to be important in order to integrate current approaches and build upon work which has already been conducted. This



should therefore be encouraged and financially supported. Funding for research and innovation is particularly called upon to enable this process and to provide middle to long term structural support. For interdisciplinary cooperation, and most of all in the cooperation between different institutions, it is about providing translations to help convey the relevance of gender, care and sustainable economics. This is not limited to the translation of scientific findings into practicable measures; rather, it involves a shared production of knowledge and taking social problems and turning them into concrete research questions. In this context it is helpful to recall that knowledge is always connected to values, which should thus be exposed and contemplated. This requirement of reflection subsequently includes application-oriented knowledge, which is acquired through the participation of the largest possible number of social actors and should help to shape the processes of socio-ecological transformation – in particular in light of unknown future developments and when dealing with a lack of knowledge (Jahn et al. 2012).

For a production of knowledge that seeks to make a significant contribution to a sustainable economy and society, the consideration of gender and care as the (re)productive basis of every society is a basic prerequisite. Furthermore, it is necessary to learn from other concepts and include perspectives from different regions, for instance *buen vivir*, *feminismo popular* or *environmental justice*. That being said, these concepts should not be adopted without proper consideration or used merely as empty expressions, but rather they should be used to challenge predominant Eurocentric concepts and standards, such as that of justice, for example; this means taking into account how these ideas emerged and their influence on our understanding of universal concepts like justice.

Our recommendations are finally also an appeal for alliances to be created between feminist research on sustainability, the political care movement and social movements which are forming around alternative concepts of economy and every-day practices and are currently gaining momentum, such as the movements on degrowth, commons and sharing economy.

Strengthen existing efforts and build new alliances

- Learn from others (and other disciplines, concepts, every day experiences, etc.) and collaboratively (re)define terms
- Translate knowledge in collaborative efforts and networks and include different forms of knowledge to solve real-world problems.
- Strengthen and fund transdisciplinary research to generate application-oriented knowledge with the participation of social actors.
- Initiate discussions and negotiation processes and create awareness of current research structures and practices
- Build alliances between feminist research on sustainability, the political care movement and social movements on alternative economic concepts.

The project Care, Gender and Green Economy: creating research perspectives and achieving equity in a sustainable economy (CaGE) managed to raise a number of questions during its 14 month duration, which require further in-depth consideration. These include, for example, questions regarding the limits of participation, as well as questions about the appropriation, significance and evaluation of care work, and how we can define the concept of social innovation in a manner that will prevent it from being easily co-opted or understood purely in economic terms.

Our networking activities have created a foundation which can be further expanded upon. This will require a strong platform which promotes integrative efforts on gender, care and sustainability in a range of institutional contexts and ensures that this is implemented in all sustainability-related research programs and projects. This platform, however, cannot be based on strong collaborations alone, but will additionally require suitable research and policy conditions, as well as financial support.



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