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The Politics of Sufficiency

MAKING IT EASIER TO LIVE THE GOOD LIFE

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The Politics of Sufficiency

Making it easier to live the Good Life

in cooperation with
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translated from the German
by Ray Cunningham

Translator’s note:

One of the defining features of post-war German politics is ‘Ordnungspolitik’, a key term in ordoliberal theory and in the operation of the ‘social market economy’. There is no universally accepted standard term for this in English. To quote a contemporary German economic theorist, it is ‘a term that can roughly be translated as “Institutional Policy” or as “Constitutional Political Economics”. The term refers to the legal and organizational means governments can use to influence the institutional framework of the economy. Within this framework, the economic actors are free to pursue their own goals.’ (Roland Kirstein, in an article entitled ‘Law and Economics in Germany’, published in 1999). In this book, I have generally translated it – and associated terms such as ‘ordnungspolitischer Rahmen’ – using variations on ‘institutional economic framework’ and ‘institutional political framework’, depending on the emphasis in the original.

Foreword
What this book is for

This book is intended to provoke discussion. It outlines a new field of politics, one which today's politicians still steer well clear of: the politics of 'the Good Life'. What we mean by this is policies which make it easier to practise a sustainable lifestyle and thus to fulfil our global responsibilities at the beginning of the 21st century. We call this field 'the politics of sufficiency'. So this is a political book.

It is at the same time a book based on scientific research and analysis, because the detailed configuration of our consumption habits and lifestyles is influenced by many different cultural and institutional factors. It is important to understand this, and to recognise how many of the hard-won achievements of modernity – from political freedom and participation to social solidarity – are jeopardised by the reduction of politics to a blinkered and exclusive focus on the support of economic growth.

A book promoting policies to make it easier to live the Good Life must do two things. Firstly, it must demonstrate that such policies are necessary; secondly, it must set out how such a policy programme is to be implemented. In other words, it has to show that the politics of sufficiency is feasible. It is often claimed in the wider debate that neither of these preconditions can be met. On the first, the objection is that consumption and lifestyle habits are purely individual choices, outside the domain of legitimate state intervention, and that politics must therefore not intrude. On the second, the argument is that a politics of sufficiency cannot be implemented in practice.

This book deals with both of these preconditions, or claims of feasibility, and with the objections to them. It demonstrates that a politics of the Good Life can be both justified and legitimated in modern free democratic societies – indeed, that it is an essential condition of such societies. The main section of the book sets out in detail how such a politics can be implemented, organised along four political dimensions.

At the same time, this book can only represent a beginning, and that is its aim – a starting-point for a broad discussion over the coming years. It is an invitation to join the debate. It is addressed to a range of very different readers: to people already practising lifestyles based on sufficiency, who want to link these with the political dimension of their lives; to activists for sustainability, in communities, in politics and in business, who are looking for ecological and social perspectives beyond 'green growth'; to people in civil society organisations, in companies and in science and research, and especially to politicians, who want to make an active contribution to the creation of the political conditions for the Good Life.

This book was originally written as a contribution to the German debate on sufficiency and the Good Life. Many of the examples in this book are therefore taken from or apply to the specific German context. We have been encouraged to make this book accessible to an inter-antional audience as well, since sufficiency and the Good Life are discussed all over Europe as well as in Bhutan, in Latin and North America. The politics of sufficiency is a global programme, and we hope you will enjoy reading this book.

Angelika Zahrnt and Uwe Schneidewind,
Wuppertal/Neckargemund, June 2014

Introduction
Why the Good Life is a political issue

'The Good Life': At first sight, this would seem to be a purely personal or individual concern, because in the final analysis every individual has to decide what is especially important for them in their lives – what they want to consume, with whom they want to live, or what their ultimate goals are.

It is the greatest achievement of liberal democratic societies that they enable a multiplicity of individual life concepts to bloom in mutual toleration, and it is right and proper for people to be sensitive to any perceived threat to this freedom. Any call for a general political framework which encompasses the free individual self-determination of our lives is perceived as just such a threat. People swiftly resort at such times to terms like 'the compulsion state', 'eco-dictatorship' or 'neo-socialism'.

A closer look demonstrates that the opposition between the state and liberty is not as straightforward as it is often made out to be, with on the one side, the citizen yearning for free individual expression, and on the other, the interventionist state blocking that free expression; this view represents a failure to understand either the state or politics.

The aim of politics is to regulate how people can live together on universally acceptable and appropriate terms. Good politics means that people can live their lives as they wish without thereby restricting the life choices of others. Good politics creates the room where the Good Life can be lived.

How quickly spaces of opportunity for some can become restrictions on others can be seen in the example of transport policy. Car-friendly city centres with wide streets and traffic light sequencing are helpful to car drivers, but they generally disadvantage those who want to navigate the city by bike or on foot. Politics has to achieve a balance here. Good politics creates the conditions in which the greatest number of individual life concepts can be realised.

And it is here that a sense of unease has been creeping up on us all for some time. 'Faster', 'global', 'more', 'commercialised' – these have been the lines of development over recent decades. They were made possible by an economic policy that placed its trust in free trade and in introducing free markets into as many sectors of society as possible. This has brought us unprecedented material wealth and a previously unimagined range of products and services.

At the same time we feel ourselves pressurised by the dynamic forces it has set free: ever more flexible working times, barely manageable mountains of emails, an impossible range of product choices on the supermarket shelves. It is becoming ever more apparent that a good life needs room for that which is 'slower', 'closer', 'less' and 'more personal'. This is precisely what lies behind the idea of sufficiency. We will have more to say about this in the next section.

The Good Life requires room for new balances. This means a politics which offers the possibility of self-realisation to a variety of life concepts in a spirit of common global responsibility. This is the goal of the politics of sufficiency.

What's does 'sufficiency' mean? Finding the way to a whole life

The term 'sufficiency' has its roots in the Latin word 'sufficere', meaning 'to be enough'. Sufficiency is about establishing what is the right measure. It is about having enough to meet one's needs – while thinking not only about material needs.

Wolfgang Sachs introduced the concept of sufficiency into the sustainability debate in Germany at the beginning of the 1990s. He encapsulated it in four principles, which he named the 'four Es', from the German terms he used (*Entschleunigung, Entflechtung, Entrümpelung* and *Entkommerzialisierung*). We have translated these principles into English as what we call the 'four Lessens' (with a conscious play on 'lessons'), which express the idea that we need to lessen our speed, our distance, the encumbrance of our acquired possessions, and the role of commerce and the market in our lives. We will consider these 'four Lessens' in more detail later in this book as guidelines for a politics of sufficiency.

'Slower, less, better, finer' – this was how Hans Glauber, the founder of the Toblach Talks, framed the idea of sufficiency. Sufficiency is about the quality of 'being in the world'. About finding the right relationship to space and time, to possessions and the market. For as long as humanity felt itself to be essentially at the mercy of the dangerous forces of nature, and was driven by poverty and hunger, then technological and economic progress offered freedom and emancipation from these compelling forces. Such progress gave rise to a new quality of human life; it was what made civilisation and culture possible.

But the negative ecological, social and economic consequences of this successful narrative of progress are increasingly catching up with us. So a change of course towards sufficiency means correcting the balance. It is not about abandoning the impressive historical gains in productivity, but about a new communion of productive progress and frugality.

In his book 'The Economics of Good and Evil' the economist Tomas Sédlacek describes the failure of modern economic analysis. As human beings we can develop an unlimited number of new wants. These wants come up against a limited world – one that is constrained not only by limits to the factors of production, but also by finite natural resources. Contemporary economics aims to teach us how we can get ever more out of these limited resources. It is banking on efficiency to raise productivity and thus to increase supply and satisfy our limitless demands. And we have in truth made enormous improvements in this area: the volume of goods and services at our disposal today is incredible. But still this is a race against ourselves, involving ever more participants, which we can never win. Because satisfying existing wants stimulates the human imagination to create new ones. The race cannot be won, the finishing line always moves further away from us – and meanwhile, running our economies in the way we have until now is devastating the natural foundations of our existence.

So in order to see the full economic picture it is all the more important to consider the demand side as well. A fulfilled and fulfilling human life consists precisely in not pursuing every want, in not being cogs in the machinery of ever expanding desires. It consists in being able to consciously choose to forego things, to defer things, to enjoy what is already there and to cultivate our relationship with the world as it is – rather than always demanding something new. These are all virtues that contribute to a fulfilled and fulfilling human life. Sufficiency and efficiency belong inseparably together. It is about time economic theory rediscovered this.

In this context, the sociologist Hartmut Rosa emphasises the significance of resonance experiences. Experiencing oneself as connected to the world, to nature, and especially to other people, is a fundamental element of a good life. Modern societies, with their hectic rush, their overwhelming mass of stimuli and their commercialisation of so many areas of our lives, make such resonance experiences ever rarer. This becomes particularly apparent in the sterile atmosphere of shopping centres, airports and many of the pedestrianised precincts of big cities. It is hardly possible for an authentic connection to our shared natural and social world to arise in such an environment, radically insulated as it is from time and space and with a universally interchangeable array of shops and goods. The politics of sufficiency is therefore one which would improve the preconditions for resonance experiences and make the Good Life easier.

Why sufficiency is a social issue as well – sustainability policy beyond the efficiency revolution

But it is not only at the individual level that sufficiency plays an important role in the achievement of the Good Life. The global challenge that sustainable development poses to society at large will not be overcome without sufficiency. Sustainable development means development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Since the Brundtland report of 1987, the concept of sustainable development has been used to combine the environmental and the development agendas. It is about striking a fair balance between the countries of the global North and South and simultaneously about the long-term protection of resources and the environment. It will hardly be possible to achieve both. This is particularly graphically illustrated by the climate issue: the prosperity enjoyed by the industrialised world over the last decades was made possible only by massive use of fossil fuels – coal, oil and gas. So the huge increase in CO_2 emissions into the atmosphere can be put down to how the economy works in those countries. Every US American emits around 20 tonnes of CO_2 every year; every German around 10; an Indian or African, by contrast, just a tonne.

However, the ecological consequences of the very substantial rise in green house gas emissions impact mainly on the poorest countries, those that cannot protect themselves: increasingly frequent extreme weather events such as hurricanes, floods or droughts strike countries like Bangladesh, Vietnam or Haiti – countries that bear hardly any responsibility at all for the rise in CO_2 emissions.

At the same time the poorer countries insist on their right to an economic development comparable to that enjoyed by the industrialised countries. Many of the emerging economic powers, with China in the lead, have already made impressive progress in catching up – including in terms of the associated CO_2 emissions. Thus, China now has a figure of over five tonnes of CO_2 per capita, and – because of its larger population – has overtaken the USA as the world's biggest producer of CO_2.

For a long time, the search for solutions to this problem met with an answer along these lines: we need to decouple negative environmental impacts from economic activity by increasing eco-efficiency. This concept denotes production processes and products which achieve equal or even better economic performance with much smaller environmental impact. The key to this is technological innovation. And there have been substantial successes in this area in recent years: modern car engines are far more efficient than the models of the 1990s, and the energy needs for many chemical production processes have been sharply reduced. All this produces the nice illusion that, because new green technologies quickly turn into important export winners, ecology and classical economics can be successfully combined without difficulty. This is the Green Economy – the great hope.

Current studies indicate that it has indeed been possible to achieve substantial relative decoupling in many fields, so that environmental impact per product unit was reduced. However, these relative savings were then more than cancelled out by a simultaneous growth in product volume or by increased product turnover. The consequence is that absolute environmental damage continued to grow – even where global tolerance limits have already long been exceeded, for example with respect to climate change. Thus, rather than decreasing, global CO_2 emissions have increased by 20 percent since the major conference on sustainability in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 – and this despite the huge technological progress of the last 20 years.

And this increase is linked to the efficiency gains made, because eco-efficient engines and production processes reduce not only environmental impact but cost: that is, they are not just ecological, they are also economical. The economic savings are an incentive to increase production or expand the range of fittings and accessories. That is why the latest sequel to the VW Beetle, launched in 2013, not only has a much more efficient engine than the 1960s model but also far more and better equipment fitted as standard, and is therefore heavier and has far more motorised parts. The end result is that the fuel requirements per 100 kilometres travelled are very similar for both models, even though there is a 50-year gap between them. This is an example of the inbuilt growth stimulus of efficiency gains – what economists call the “rebound effect”. This effect takes many forms, and it is an important factor in explaining why efficiency alone cannot solve the challenges of sustainable development.

Sufficiency is therefore an important tool for dealing with the challenge of sustainable development. Instead of relying on technological innovation alone, sufficiency enables social innovations. Sufficiency creates prosperity with less use of nature and materials.

From the perspective of sustainable development, it is a notable advantage of sufficiency that under favourable conditions it can be implemented far faster than new technologies can be developed. New technologies have to be conceived, tested, improved and brought to market in a complex and expensive process. This can take years or even decades. But – particularly in the field of climate change – time is pressing. That is why it is important to come up with approaches that will have an impact straight away. The energy saving initiative Setsuden, introduced in Japan following the Fukushima catastrophe, shows how this can be done. The reductions needed in electricity use were very quickly achieved. Energy savings of around 15 to 20 percent were made without appreciable cuts in supply: for example, lighting has been used more sparingly and conscientiously since then, and in Japanese offices workers have adjusted their dress code to the temperature rather than switching on the air conditioning. In Germany, the Federal Environment Agency has calculated that the introduction of a national upper speed limit of 100 km/h (about 62 mph) would deliver an immediate fuel use reduction of some five percent.

In matters of sufficiency, we can all learn from each other as global equals. For unlike technological innovations, which need competitive industrial sectors and a sophisticated research and development system, sufficiency innovations can originate anywhere. Just as we can learn from India's vegetarian culture, we can also take lessons from Bhutan's Gross National Happiness Index or from the cycling culture of Copenhagen, where today it is perfectly normal for people to travel to work by bike, and where over one-third of all traffic journeys are made by bike.

The politics of sufficiency creates a framework within which both social innovation and new forms of technological innovation are possible. It extends existing innovation policy in order to create the foundations for a civilisation capable of allowing the full breadth of human potential to unfold and of living up to its responsibility for sustainable development.

The politics of sufficiency as a contribution to an enlightened liberalism

Does the politics of sufficiency encroach on the freedom of the individual? Those who advocate a more supportive framework for sufficiency are quickly accused of being authoritarian. A closer look at the core of what liberalism means may be of some help here; it will soon reveal that such accusations arise out of a very narrow understanding of 'liberalism'.

If the members of any society are regarded only as consumers, then liberalism becomes no more than a pure liberalism of consumption: everyone can buy and consume what, where and how they like – from long-haul flights and gas-guzzling cars to jet skiing on holiday. From the perspective of true freedom, this sort of 'free' consumption by 'free' citizens soon reveals a number of hidden problems. Firstly, it is open only to those with the financial means to afford this kind of consumption. Secondly, the free exercise of the right to consume immediately reduces the rights of others who suffer from its impact on their own freedom and self-development. For example, the cyclists who no longer feel safe in traffic because of the number of oversized cars on the road; or the sunbathers and swimmers in search of relaxation who feel annoyed and endangered by jet ski riders; or those living under airport flight paths and suffering from noise pollution. Nor does this take into account the rights of all those people around the world suffering the consequences of climate change and the other forms of environmental damage wrought by our consumption.

This is why the German constitution (known as the ‘Basic Law’) contains paragraph 14.2, which stipulates that ‘property entails obligations’. The exercise of freedom always comes up against limits at the point where it restricts the freedoms of others. It is precisely in order to strike a balance in this regard that a political framework is needed. A properly liberal politics therefore has regard to the individual not just as consumer but also as legal citizen. Enlightened liberalism aims to provide all citizens with the maximum opportunity for individual personal development. It is about tolerance towards a variety of different lifestyles existing side by side. As a rule, lifestyles based on sufficiency are minimally invasive: that is, they barely impinge on others in the realisation of their own life choices. A politics that makes a sufficient life easier is therefore at heart a liberal politics. It opens the prospect of a multiplicity of lifestyles co-existing in global responsibility.

The politics of sufficiency, as a politics of enabling, pays full and proper regard to all citizens, and to the whole citizen. It weighs up conflicting interests, and debates the alternative development paths and the possibilities for co-existence of different lifestyles. That is why the politics of sufficiency is also highly participatory – as the following section will show.

The essential elements of the politics of sufficiency

The preceding sections demonstrated the potential benefits of a political approach that opens up more space for sufficiency – both as an extension of the possibilities for individual personal development and as a contribution to dealing with the challenges of sustainable development.

A politics of sufficiency would create a framework for actions and lifestyles which could spread not only across one country but around the globe. It is the logical extension and continuation of the social market economy; that is, it represents an institutional policy which brings individual personal development and social and ecological concerns into a new balance.

But how would it function in practice? How exactly can politics create conditions which ‘make it easier to live the Good Life’? What are the defining characteristics of a politics of sufficiency?

Cross-cutting politics. Sufficiency politics extends into many policy fields – into consumer and transport policy, but equally into housing policy, planning policy, health and social policy. It can be applied in local government just as well as in regional, national and European government. It can affect our lives at different levels, addressing both fundamental institutional elements of our economic activity and detailed and specialised policy areas. On the one hand this is a challenge, because it means that sufficiency policy cannot simply be delegated to an existing department; on the other hand it is a big opportunity, as it means that sufficiency policy can be introduced at, and can develop momentum from, numerous different starting points.

Similar considerations apply to other policy fields: health policy, gender equality policy or policies on demographic change are all confronted with the same challenges. But it has proved possible to establish these as overarching issues and to create institutions and offices responsible for the implementation of cross-cutting policies. Sufficiency policy can draw inspiration and learn from the experience gained in these fields.

Multi-level politics. Creating the framework conditions in which it is easier to live the Good Life is just as possible at the international or national level as it is regionally or locally. Sufficiency policy can gain a foothold at any of these levels. So it is equally appropriate as a topic for the town council as it is for regional or national government. Initiatives at these different levels complement each other, and their reciprocal interaction reinforces the framework for the Good Life, so they must be considered in relation to each other.

Experimental politics. Traditional business and technology policy, and social policy as well, are well-established policy fields, in which complex institutions and political arrangements have evolved over decades. Sufficiency policy is a new political approach. It can make use of existing institutions, but it will also be dependent in part on entirely new forms and formations. So the path to a politics of sufficiency will be one opened by trial and error. What will be needed is a highly sensitive weighing up of different possibilities for personal development and personal freedom. This requires creative energy, but also a readiness to learn from one's mistakes and to allow the politics of sufficiency to grow organically.

Participatory politics. The experimental character of sufficiency-oriented politics – but even more the fact that it is about enabling the Good Life – means that it is essential for it to be created through a participatory process. Citizens must be able to participate in the discussion and design of a legal and regulatory framework that would make possible a varied and fulfilling life for the greatest possible number.

Sufficiency-oriented politics therefore stands for:

(1) an enlightened liberalism, one that also offers a fair chance of fulfilment to sustainable life choices,

(2) an institutional policy based on the goal of prosperity – that is, one that takes into account the entire range of factors of prosperity, and not just economic growth,

(3) a perspective of cultural optimism, one that empowers politics, civil society and business to turn new values into political and economic reality,

(4) policy development that is informed by social science and understands that individual actions are always embedded in institutional and social contexts.

The politics of sufficiency – an approach along four dimensions

In the chapters which follow, this book will present four detailed approaches towards a politics based on sufficiency (see also the figure on p. 159). The intention is to take forward a debate which might in the future lead to sufficiency becoming an established and central concern of politics:

Framing – the prospects for a new institutional politics. The concept of sufficiency-oriented politics is an extension and development of the market economy. It is about having an institutional framework for economic activity which is constructed not just with the national social settlement in mind but with global social justice as well. So in the first place, sufficiency politics is institutional politics which creates a framework supporting the objective of the Good Life. This includes, for example, new measures of prosperity for the national economy – because gross domestic product (GDP) is an increasingly poor indicator of what constitutes genuine prosperity in a society. It is about having competition rules and a fiscal policy which ensure that common or collective goods – the commons – are not depleted; or at least that the user pays for their depletion. Framework policy takes responsibility for infrastructure that enables a good life for all, from cycle lanes in cities to easily accessible recreation areas. Finally, policies for social justice and for redistribution are an important element of a framework policy for the Good Life, because prosperity in modern societies is driven to a much greater degree by relative equality and justice than by the absolute level of GDP. Recent research has demonstrated this impressively.

Orienting – the right measures for time and space, property and the market. Political approaches which provide orientation are a second pathway for sufficiency policy. They address the characteristic tendencies of modern societies: acceleration, globalisation, quantitative growth, commercialisation. These tendencies have structural causes. So on the one hand sufficiency politics has to address the structural causes; on the other hand, it requires policies which offer contrasting points of orientation, which demonstrate an awareness of the values of deceleration, localisation and the search for the right measure. Such political approaches also serve to raise consciousness: they point the way for the kind of development that is needed for the future, and thereby provide support for the simultaneous approach via the other political pathways described here.

Shaping – mobility, housing, food. Good Life policies apply to specific fields of human activity: transport policy, planning and housing policy, or food and agriculture policy. These are policy fields that offer great scope for the promotion of sufficiency. The great advantage of using this way in is that these are established policy spheres with dedicated departments at at all levels of government. So sufficiency policies can be hooked on to existing policy instruments to extend them in new directions and integrate them across different departments. Moreover, it means that a healthy competition for effective sufficiency policies can arise between different countries, regions and municipalities – which presents an opportunity to develop a political culture of experimentation.

Enabling – creating resources for sufficiency through employment, education, health and consumer policy. Good Life policies benefit greatly from being flanked by complementary approaches in other policy fields: education policy, employment (and working time) policy, and appropriate consumer and health policies. In these fields, too, the foundations and the skills for the Good Life are being and will be created. The further these 'resources' for the Good Life can be developed, the easier it will be to live a life based on sufficiency.

Chapter I
Framing – The prospects for a new institutional politics

How we organise our economy has a decisive influence on how much prosperity is produced in a society. Since the end of the Second World War, the 'social market economy' has proved a successful model of modern economic organisation. It encouraged personal initiative and the dynamism of the markets and at the same time ensured social equity and security. It brought Germany and other parts of Europe unprecedented prosperity. The German economic miracle was secured by continuous economic growth. This was essential to creating the political space for the improvement of social equity

This model first began to falter in the 1970s. The oil crisis sharpened the dawning perception that the growth experienced over the first 30 post-war years could not continue. The scope for social redistribution was diminishing. From then onwards, inflationary policy and later public debt became the means of continuing the pursuit of social equity while growth rates declined.

The spread and acceleration of globalisation over subsequent years removed the option of requiring the owners of capital assets, via taxation, to pay for the continued pursuit of social equity. For in the liberalised global economy, it was capital which turned out to be the most mobile of the factors of production. The balance between the interests of 'democracy' – in the sense of all citizens having a fair share in a society's prosperity – and 'capitalism' – in the sense of protecting the interests of capital so as to ensure adequate investment – tilted increasingly towards capital. The state, too, made increasing concessions to capital. Since then, income from capital has been rising much faster than income from wages.

This is why Wolfgang Streeck, the Director of the Max Planck Institute for the Study of Societies, speaks provocatively of a 'deferred crisis of democratic capitalism'. He makes it clear that democracy and capitalism are not always and necessarily a harmonious partnership. The world today offers many examples of how a capitalist economic system can co-exist with an extremely undemocratic political regime. This suggests that the balance between democratic politics and the economic creation of sufficient levels of prosperity must be continually re-established and re-aligned. The social market economy model was an example of just such a successful alignment. It is an institutional framework that we need to maintain and develop.

The reason why this has a lot to do with sufficiency is that since the 1970s a new phenomenon has been observed: beyond a certain income threshold, further economic growth does not seem to lead to an appreciable rise in happiness. This phenomenon was investigated for the first time by the American economist Richard Easterlin in a famous essay from 1974. He showed that the American population was barely becoming happier in spite of substantial increases in national income. Many further studies since the 1970s have confirmed this phenomenon, now called the 'Easterlin paradox'. Beyond a certain income threshold, happiness and quality of life are influenced far more by other factors than by rising national income.

This has important implications for a sustainable prosperity policy. Rather than being focused only on the institutional framework supporting economic growth, such a policy needs to take account of the whole range of factors affecting prosperity within a national economy. In practice this means extending the social market economy.

Work is now being carried out on these very issues at an international level. It is interesting to note that it is the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) which is taking the lead. This is an organisation of over 30 leading European, American and selected Asian states together with Australia, all of which are committed to democracy and the market economy. The OECD provides comprehensive statistical analysis of the international economy in order to support policy in its member states. So for some time now it has also been interested in the factors affecting 'human well-being' in those countries and also in the question of the extent to which these factors are linked to the growth of GDP. These questions are being addressed in the OECD's 'Better Life Initiative', which is concerned with 'better policies for better lives'.

The insights from these analyses are very interesting. The OECD identifies eleven factors of central importance for our well-being:

- income and wealth,
- jobs and earnings,
- housing conditions,
- health status,
- work-life balance,
- education and skills,
- social connections,
- civic engagement and governance,
- environmental quality,
- personal security,
- subjective well-being.

Three of these factors are of a direct material nature and are therefore closely linked to the level of gross domestic product (GDP): income, jobs, and housing conditions. The eight other factors turn out to be much more loosely linked to GDP, and some are completely independent of it. This also explains why, for example, in some countries with relatively low per capita GDP, life satisfaction levels are as high as or even higher than in countries with much higher per capita GDP. Empirical evidence shows that it is possible to achieve very high life satisfaction scores at a per capita GDP level of (or purchasing power parity equivalent to) around 10,000 euros, because this is the threshold beyond which it is possible for all important basic material needs (such as housing, food, education, health and mobility) to be satisfied.

The health system in the USA illustrates starkly how large a gap can develop between the well-being and the material wealth of a country. It is the best-funded health system in the world. Per head of population, Americans pay twice as much for their health system than the OECD average. Despite this, around 50 million US Americans have no health insurance and practically no access to health care – with serious consequences for their health status. This example shows that higher GDP does not automatically ensure higher quality of life if the institutional framework is faulty.

It is precisely this question which forms the topic of this chapter: what kind of institutional framework is needed to guarantee a good life for the majority of the people even when GDP is rising only slightly or not at all?

New measures of prosperity – orienting our politics correctly

Knowing your ultimate goals is of central importance for every political movement. It is those goals which provide your compass direction – which in turn determines the shaping of the institutional framework. The orientation over recent decades was clear: it was given by economic growth – as measured by GDP. This guiding measure has embedded itself deep in the collective political and social consciousness. Every new growth forecast is awaited anxiously; all the party manifestos are full of new policy initiatives for growth.

Notwithstanding methodological criticisms of various kinds, the use of GDP as a guide was sensible enough; certainly for as long as quality of life was closely linked to rising GDP. But this is becoming less and less true, as we saw above. It is perfectly possible for GDP to be rising at the same time as people's quality of life is hardly changing on average, or even declining.

Politics is therefore in need of new guiding measures.

From 2011–2013 the German Bundestag conducted a Study Commission (or 'Enquête Commission') on this issue, with the title 'Growth, Well-being and Quality of Life'. One of its most important tasks was that of proposing an alternative political indicator for the future measurement of prosperity. Unfortunately, it failed in this task. It proposed merely to set alongside GDP nine additional economic, social and ecological indicators. This creates another broad set of indicators to add to the numerous similar sets already circulating in the political and wider debate around sustainability. But in view of the large number of indicators used in this new set from the Enquête Commission, it can hardly be expected to replace GDP as the dominant indicator and guide for the future direction of politics.

The debate within the Commission unfortunately paid too little attention to the international discussion, where the search for alternative guiding measures for a future politics of prosperity has already advanced a great deal further. And this applies not only to the OECD, with its nuanced analysis of contributory factors to social prosperity.

Some Canadian and US American federal states, such as Maryland, are working with an aggregate alternative indicator for the measurement of prosperity – the Genuine Progress Indicator (GPI). This measures 'real' progress by including work in sectors (such as the household and family) that had not been reflected in GDP before. In particular, though, it filters out items which may increase GDP but which do not indicate genuine progress (amongst other things: the costs of dealing with environmental damage, the costs of criminal activity, accidents or traffic jams, etc.). The results of such a calculation are striking: despite a substantial increase in GDP per capita over the same period, GPI per capita has barely risen in Maryland since 1960. A substantial proportion of the economic growth over that time has been swallowed up by the compensatory or follow-up costs of social and ecological damage.

In Germany, Hans Diefenbacher and Roland Zieschank have created a similar index, the *Nationaler Wohlfahrtsindex* (National Welfare Index, NWI). This similarly adjusts the standard domestic product measure for excluded contributions to welfare and for the follow-up costs of ecologically and socially damaging activities which currently find their way into GDP as if they represented positive contributions. Diefenbacher and Zieschank also take income distribution into account in their index. For when an addition to the GDP is shared only among a small number of people, on account of unequal income distribution, then the impact on overall welfare is far smaller than when a large number benefit. Here, too, the results are surprising. In 2011 the NWI was calculated for the German Land of

Schleswig-Holstein for the period 1999–2008. Over that time, GDP in Schleswig-Holstein increased by only 0.2 percent, whereas the NWI rose by 9.4 percent. The trend at national level went in the opposite direction: there, GDP over the same period rose by 7.4 percent while the NWI fell by 3.2 percent. Better environmental quality and greater social equality in Schleswig-Holstein meant that the quality of life there rose by more than the national average.

These examples alone are enough to demonstrate clearly how significant a step it would be if national and regional governments were to use an alternative measure of prosperity by which to orient their political programmes, or if their success or failure were to be judged on whether the national or regional welfare index, rather than GDP, had risen over their term of office. Individual cities, too, could use a welfare indicator of this kind as their political compass. This would make possible a genuine political re-orientation – a serious consideration of those factors that affect and can increase the level of prosperity in a society beyond what is measured by GDP.

This can hardly be achieved simply by employing a broader set of indicators – as is shown by the experience of the Federal German government with the use of sustainability indicators, which are barely registered either by the wider public or by the relevant political bodies. However, a new guiding measure in and of itself does nothing to change the structural dependency of modern economies on growth. But it does create a solid platform from which to address these issues.

The extent of the reorientation made possible by a consistent change to a different indicator has been shown by the small country of Bhutan. For a number of years now Bhutan has been using a 'Gross National Happiness' index (GNH) as its political guiding measure. The GNH measures prosperity along seven dimensions which are subsequently aggregated:

- Economic Wellness,
- Ecological Wellness,
- Physical Wellness,
- Mental Wellness,
- Workplace Wellness,
- Social Wellness and
- Political Wellness.

These dimensions are similar to the eleven determinant factors identified by the OECD. The use of GNH as a compass in Bhutan has led to a completely different kind of prosperity policy, one which places far more emphasis on health, education and social conviviality, and which involves the intensive participation of the population in policy making.

Examples such as these demonstrate – notwithstanding all regionally specific conditions and challenges – that it is possible to develop guiding measures for the Good Life beyond increases in GDP. So a political programme to 'make it easier to live the Good Life' has to use guiding measures that capture the determinant factors of the Good Life in all its dimensions.

Institutional politics and competition policy to protect the commons

The founding fathers of the social market economy knew that the market could develop to its full potential only if its foundations were protected and secured. Without a guarantee of genuine competition, without social harmony and social justice, it is impossible to maintain a sustainable, functioning market and social order. All of these, however, are factors which markets may need in order to function but which are not reproduced by the markets themselves; because from the perspective of the individual market participant it is always rational to undermine these foundations in order to maximise one's own economic benefits.

This is why it is necessary to have an institutional framework for the steering of the economy. And this is why, for example, social security systems and robust employees' rights developed within the social market economy. These are collective social goods that enable a properly functioning and fair market economy.

For at least 20 years now it has been becoming ever more apparent that a national framework system consisting solely of direct social protection measures for employees is neither appropriate nor adequate. It is only rarely the case today that this system is circumvented for the purpose of increasing the returns to capital. Rather, the exploitation of collective goods has been relocated, socially as well as ecologically. Globalisation has meant that social exploitation now takes place in other parts of the world. The tragedies of the textile workers in Bangladesh dramatically demonstrated this. But massive ecological exploitation, in particular, is now also taking place: a large proportion of our wealth is based on resource depletion and environmental destruction, which are not paid for by the companies or consumers who profit. We derive great benefit today from raw materials like oil, gas, coal and palm oil which are priced far too low. The massive environmental consequences, in the form of water pollution, climate change and devastating biodiversity loss, have to be borne by coming generations and by people on the other side of the world.

The economist Gerhard Scherhorn describes this as a new form of 'unfair business practices'. Companies exploiting these supposedly 'free' resources derive a competitive advantage over those that observe the duty to preserve the commons. He therefore proposes – basing his argument on Articles 14.2 ('property entails obligations') and 20a ('the state shall protect the natural foundations of life') of the German constitution – that the law against unfair business practices in Germany should be extended accordingly. The depletion of common goods without adequate compensation should be treated as an infringement of this law. This proposal demonstrates the scope for an institutional approach to the protection of common goods that are central to the Good Life.

A form of institutional politics which is both more obvious and easier to implement involves ensuring that the value and the consequential costs of common goods are reflected in their prices. Ecological tax reforms and emissions rights capped at ecologically defensible levels are appropriate instruments for such an approach. They make the use of environmental resources more expensive and thus increase the incentives for arranging our economic life in a way that preserves its essential ecological foundations.

This is very important for the encouragement of ways of life based on sufficiency, as it makes lifestyles with low energy and resource requirements more economically attractive.

Creating an infrastructure that supports sufficiency

Many of the factors of the Good Life are dependent on infrastructure: traffic systems that encourage cycling and walking, parks, swimming pools and green spaces for rest and recreation, education and health facilities are just some examples. The more infrastructure of this kind is available to people, the easier it is to live a good life even on a low income. The fewer such public infrastructural facilities there are, the more a good life depends on high income levels, because people who earn a lot can afford to live in the country and commute to work every day, to have their own pool, and to pay for the provision of a wide range of educational and vocational options for their children.

So infrastructure policy is an important element of an institutional framework that supports sufficiency. A lot of what is involved in this takes place at a local level. Good town planning can achieve a lot in terms of creating a healthy, ecologically sound urban environment suitable for all age groups. The transformation of traffic-choked town centres into pedestrian zones from the 1970s onwards demonstrated for the first time how infrastructural changes directly affected the quality of life (see also the section ‘Housing’ on page 71).

Interesting possibilities often arise from having an innovative framework within which to undertake infrastructural renovation. A good example is the 'renaturing' of the Emscher river in the northern Ruhr valley in Germany. From the middle of the 19th century onwards, due to intensive coal mining and industrialisation, the river had become an industrial drainage channel for the entire Ruhr district. At the beginning of the 1990s a wide-ranging renaturing was set in train. The success of the project can be seen today. The Emscher cycle path and the Emscher park have become popular places to relax and unwind. The quality of life for local residents has been markedly improved, and this has contributed to a regional economic boom. The Emscher renovation is a good example of how infrastructural renovation can become part of a policy based on improving the quality of life.

In waterside towns and cities the 'urban blue', that is, the city waterways and waterfronts, is increasingly being rediscovered as an important element of urban infrastructure. Internationally, Copenhagen is in the vanguard of this movement, just as it was with the promotion of cycling. Copenhagen harbour, in the centre of the city, was long used only as part of the transport infrastructure; the idea of swimming in its filthy waters would not have entered anybody's mind. This situation has been turned around in recent years by means of a thoroughgoing policy programme for the revitalisation of the city and surrounding region. Today this area includes among other things three harbour swimming pools. The city centre harbour is now an important location for recreation and other activities contributing to the quality of life.

Towards a distribution policy that encourages sufficiency

'The Spirit Level: Why More Equal Societies Almost Always Do Better' is the title of a book published in 2009 by Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett. In it, the two epidemiologists examined a series of indices of social welfare, for example life expectancy, health status, the incidence of obesity, mental health, educational performance, the rate of violence, the prison population, teenage pregnancy rates, and many more. They then examined what these values were most closely associated with. Their hypothesis had been that higher material wealth would be very closely related with positive values of these indices. Interestingly, this turned out not to be the case. The closest association was instead with the rate of inequality in a society: the more unequal the distribution of income and wealth in a country, the worse the levels of health, personal safety and educational opportunity. A political programme with social justice and a fair distribution as its goals is therefore an important framing element for a good life for all.

An interesting scientific experiment has been carried out on this issue. When asked which of two societies they would prefer to live in – one in which they themselves would have an annual income of 50,000 euros while the average income was 25,000, or one in which their own income would be 100,000 euros whereas the average was 200,000 – the vast majority of those asked chose the first alternative. Above a certain income threshold, the relation between one's own income and that of the rest of the society is much more important for life satisfaction than the absolute level of income.

These findings turn the received wisdom on distributional politics on its head. Politicians believed for a long time that greater fairness in income distribution could only be brought about by more growth – for then there would be more available to be shared out. Instead, the opposite happened. More growth led to more inequality, and as a result to more dissatisfaction. So for the Good Life it is important to back policies for fairness rather than policies for growth.

Here, too, fiscal policy provides a good starting-point. Gerhard Scherhorn makes clear how distributional inequality today is being increased particularly by capitalism's inherent tendency towards the creation of monopolies, which is undermining the market economy. This could be counteracted firstly by the taxation of monopoly rents and their transformation into a basic income related to needs, accompanied by the removal of externalities. For example, the taxation of ground rents could put an end to land grabbing (the large-scale acquisition of land in developing countries by international actors). In international climate negotiations, it has now also been recognised by national finance ministries that a carbon tax – in economic terms the removal of an externality – is a potential source of tax revenue, one that provides an answer to the problem of capital flight and capital tax avoidance. Secondly, Scherhorn proposes replacing taxes on income and wages with a progressive consumption tax, a fiscal policy instrument which tends to encourage sufficiency and fairer distribution.

Chapter II
Orienting – The right measures for time and space, property and the market

Our society is characterised by a self-fulfilling expectation of escalation. The mantra of 'further, faster, more' knows only one direction, whether in the growth of GDP or the growth of personal living space. This escalation becomes life-threatening when it raises the rate of use of energy, resources and land above what human beings or the planet can tolerate. We in the industrialised world have grasped, in theory, that we need a programme of reduction (of 80–90 percent in the demand for resources), but yet we want to hold on to our programme of escalation. So we keep inventing new labels to mask our self-contradictory behaviour – such as 'green' growth or 'inclusive' growth. But our balancing act looks increasingly likely to end in us doing the splits.

With this book we want to plead for a replacement of the escalation expectation with something else – with the right measures for time and space, for property and the market. That will – not always, but often – mean 'less': that is, having less and doing less. But it will also sometimes mean 'different', sometimes 'better', and sometimes 'finer'. Wolfgang Sachs's 'four Lessens' can serve as our guidelines in the search for the right measures and for strategies for sufficiency. With them, Sachs mapped out early on, along four dimensions, a new pathway for good living:

- in time: *'less speed'*, meaning more slowly and more reliably,
- in space: *'less distance'*, meaning closer and clearer
- in the material world: *'less clutter'*, meaning simpler and fewer
- in the economy: *'less market'*, meaning providing and making for oneself.

The 'four Lessens' are good starting-points for reflection and for making changes in one's own lifestyle. In the following section we hope to make clear that they can also function as guidelines for political strategies for sufficiency along the different dimensions.

A politics oriented in this way, taking the 'four Lessens' as its compass, is symbolic politics, in a good sense. It demonstrates that a different configuration of the Good Life beyond the expectation of linear escalation is possible, and that politics can support the realisation of such alternative ways of living. It can help to spread a culture based on different measures of time and space and different lifestyle priorities, involving fewer things and fewer commodities, and to demonstrate that such a culture is equally valid and has an equal right to be supported by the common institutional framework.

It is interesting in this context to note what Ludwig Erhard (Federal Chancellor of Germany in the early 1960s, and regarded as one of the founders of the social market economy) wrote in a 1957 book, published in Germany under the title 'Prosperity for All' ('Wohlstand für Alle'): 'We shall certainly arrive at a point when, quite rightly, the question will be put whether it is still right and useful to produce still more goods, to increase material prosperity, or whether it would not be more sensible, in forgoing such "progress", to gain more leisure, more time for thought, and more rest.' And later in the same book: '… then eventually we shall have to correct our present economic policy. No one must then be so dogmatic as to continue to regard further expansion as a benefit for all.' Erhard's careful reflection was unable to make itself properly heard during the 1950s and 1960s. Today his thoughts from that period seem highly topical.

The following sections will show that political orientation plays a role in the other approaches to the politics of the Good Life. It helps us to see the framework in a different perspective. ‘Less speed’, for example, can apply equally to a default speed limit of 30 km/h (around 19 mph) in urban areas and to five-year warranties on consumer durables.

The ‘four Lessens’ are also important guidelines for the supportive policies that enable us to live a good life. So for example it is important to learn how to handle rhythms, to learn how to alternate moderation and expansion, or how to develop an instinct in tune with our immediate environment.

The ‘four Lessens’ overlap at certain points. For example, less speed in the production of new models is at the same time a measure that prevents the accumulation of outdated products and in that sense helps to create less clutter. Producing things that can be repaired represents a contribution to localisation, because it is within the local region that repairs are carried out. Making things for oneself contributes equally to less market, less distance and less clutter, as self-made items are used for longer. It is in their interplay that the politics of the ‘four Lessens’ creates a culture of the Good Life.

Less speed – doing politics at the right tempo

"What defines the Good Life for you?"

"More time!" – is very often the first answer. We have been living for many years now not in an epoch of material scarcity but one of time scarcity. Economic life is geared to speed: bringing your innovation to market ahead of the competition; scooping the other papers with the latest news item; exploiting early inside knowledge on the stock markets; and above all – never, ever missing an important new email in your inbox. All this is familiar to us from our daily working lives, and increasing numbers of people simply carry this stress straight over into their private lives.

A political programme to make it easier to live the Good Life must create a framework within which it will once again be easier to live life at a flexible tempo. Such an approach to time is a cross-cutting policy. It applies to all areas of life and at different political levels. In what follows, we want to examine more closely three aspects of temporal policy:

- support for less speed in everyday life,
- promoting longer product life,
- new policies on working and leisure time.

Less speed in everyday life. We experience acceleration in many areas of our daily lives – when on the move, when eating, even on holiday. That's why initiatives like 'Slow Food' and 'Slow Travel' have won such support in recent years. Time policy can support a deceleration. There is great potential here, especially in the field of transport: lower speed limits on motorways and on residential streets, or traffic management that favours cyclists, pedestrians and public transport, can create new mobility tempos.

Longer product life. Acceleration is affecting the quality of our products. Poor workmanship, planned obsolescence, new product cycles with a timespan measured in months – all this is part of our everyday experience today. But the experience of durability is a central element of our sense of time. Politics can provide support for this: extending warranty periods, introducing stricter product liability regulations, or compulsory repairability for products, are all important tools for this job. Second-hand markets can be supported by means of tax breaks on trades with used goods or community exchange systems for building materials. In these examples, policies to promote less clutter and less speed work hand in hand.

Work-life balance policies. Time prosperity requires especially time for oneself, so that one can devote oneself to things beyond the pressure to earn money and to make a career. It is very difficult for people today to escape these time pressures. Time policy aims to make it easier to live a time-autonomous life. This is a challenge for employers and unions. Pathways to a new time prosperity include options for part-time working, working time accounts and sabbaticals. Politics can support such developments by strengthening employee rights.

Less distance – a life rooted in the region

The global division of labour is a significant factor in the drive for escalation and growth in modern societies. It is this which has made possible such a vast range of products at such cheap prices. Global markets and labour differentiation enable enormous production quantities and the associated 'economies of scale' (savings in unit production costs). Globalisation also offers the opportunity to produce in those locations where labour, resources and energy are cheapest. On the one hand, the division of labour is a blessing, because without it, it would not be possible for so many people to live in hitherto unknown material prosperity. But on the other hand it is a curse, because it offers a permanent incentive for poor working conditions in other parts of the world and for the exploitation of ecological resources. In addition, it de-personalises our relationship to things: we are increasingly surrounded by globally produced and universally interchangeable goods.

A pedestrian shopping precinct in Düsseldorf today is barely distinguishable from one in Boston, Beijing or Melbourne. Regional and cultural identity is being lost.

The more our material needs are satisfied, the more we need to think about whether the time has come for a re-balancing between global and regional wealth creation. Creating wealth at the regional level can certainly be more expensive than doing so globally; but it builds other forms of value which are often of much greater importance for our sense of well-being today. Niko Paech has highlighted some of the particular advantages of regional wealth creation:

- the *transparency* that comes with knowing where the products we use come from and knowing what goes into them,
- *empathy and social embeddednes*s – that is, producers who have ties to the regions where their products are sold and who are socially engaged there,
- a *congruence between the interests of investors and entrepreneurs,* which arises when the finance for regional enterprises comes from within the region. When we can see how and where our capital is being employed, it automatically puts limits on excessive profit-seeking,
- a *reduction in capital intensity* and an increase in labour intensity, which arises when the removal

of economies of scale leads to other, medium-scale technologies becoming economically viable once more.

The trend towards regionalisation is growing particularly fast with regard to food, but also to (renewable) energy production. If the people having wind farms built outside their front door are the same people who benefit from them financially, then the enthusiasm for the energy transformation rises markedly. This is why community wind farms and solar parks are so important.

Regionalisation builds identity and a new proximity between production and use. It therefore represents an important sufficiency strategy for the containment of the ecological consequences of our activity. A whole series of policy measures is available to support more intensive re-regionalisation.

Prices that tell us the ecological truth. Low energy costs are an important part of the explanation for the continuous spread of the global division of labour. The fact that it makes economic sense today to fly prawns to Morocco to be peeled, to fly in fresh flowers from Tanzania, or to eat Chilean grapes in winter is closely connected to the fact that oil and other fuels, notwithstanding higher prices today, still cost far less than they should do bearing in mind the ecological damage that their use entails. And many consumers find it hard to resist the temptation of the low prices offered in the discount supermarkets. That is why we need a worldwide system to raise fossil fuel prices through taxes and emissions trading – especially in the transport sector. Such measures would help to restrict the global division of labour to those sectors where it can add value without ecological exploitation. In other areas, they would encourage a greater regionalisation of production. Stricter labour standards and stricter monitoring of them in developing countries would not only improve social conditions there but would also contribute to regionalisation.

True, energy prices would also change our holiday behaviour. If the prices for long-haul travel reflected its ecological cost, then local holidays, finding your rest and recuperation in your own immediate surroundings, would play a bigger role again. At the same time, the possibilities opened up by new media technologies offer us entirely new forms of both real and virtual participation in the goings-on in the world. Being a citizen of the world today is far less dependent on actual physical travel than it used to be. Instead, new lifestyles are emerging that combine a strong regional attachment with global awareness. The most impressive example of this is the Transition Towns movement: a closely-linked global network movement that now numbers several thousand Transition Towns, defining themselves as sharing a common commitment to regional embeddedness and sourcing.

Local money. Global taxation of fossil transport fuels is a form of sufficiency policy that requires international co-ordination. The introduction of local currencies points in a very different direction, one which also strengthens the local economy. Such a currency is valid only in one specific region. It can be used to pay for products and services from that region. This not only encourages local production and consumption, it also takes away the basis for any form of speculation or complex financial products. Money reverts to being a medium of exchange, an enabling instrument for the regional trade in goods.

This kind of currency has now been introduced in many places around the world. A number of policy measures can be used to support local currencies, for example reducing banking bureaucracy that can obstruct their introduction.

Regionalisation and sufficiency work hand in hand in many 'sharing economy' initiatives, because the exchange and lending out of goods depends on trust – and that is created most easily within a region.

Re-balancing globalisation and regionalisation is an important starting-point towards the Good Life.

Less clutter – decluttering and the politics of less

In the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary, ‘clutter’ is defined as ‘a confused collection; crowded confusion; litter’. We have numerous other words for clutter, most of them – junk, rubbish, hodgepodge – slightly derogatory, though there are some with more positive connotations, such as ‘odds and ends’ or ‘bits and pieces’.

Clutter seems to be everywhere, though it has a particular predilection for attics, basements and garages; it is also found on bookshelves, and in wardrobes, kitchens and workshops. For large-scale decluttering, for example house clearances, there are specialised professional companies; for individuals, there are countless ‘how-to’ books offering advice on decluttering your mind and your life (entering ‘declutter’ into the Amazon UK books search box brings up 1,807 results). There are training courses on how to throw things away and professional one-to-one coaching from specialists in orderliness. Television shows in which collectors of junk are liberated from their suffocating piles of rubbish are riding high in the ratings.

The desire to be free of this ballast seems to be very pressing and very considerable. We are not concerned here with how the individual can get rid of it all, but with the question of whether sufficiency policy can do anything to prevent the accumulation of clutter.

The most important starting-point for 'decluttering' policies is not to allow clutter to develop in the first place. This is where sufficiency strategies can help to prevent clutter.

Pointing consumers in the right direction. Everything that tells consumers whether what they are about to buy is a durable and useful commodity or soon-to-be junk is helpful. Useful measures in this respect range from labels providing information on the durability and repairability of products, to the introduction of deposit and return systems so that valuable raw materials – for example in discarded mobile phones – are not left lying around in our homes, to consumer advice services that include alongside advice on new purchases advice on alternatives such as non-purchase or buying second-hand or co-ownership, and to public procurement that prioritises quality and thus offers a model for consumption oriented towards durability.

Promoting an environment free from the permanent pressure to consume. The clutter that daily surrounds us is often the result of spontaneous and impulsive purchasing. Hardly have we bought it, or used it once, than we regret it – and it is consigned to its destiny of uselessness in the wardrobe or the box room. What can help here is to shape our immediate environment so that it isn't permanently sending out the message 'buy something'. Part of this is restricting advertising in public spaces and on television, as well as town planning which doesn't make 'temples of consumption' into the core of our inner cities and the only places that invite us to linger.

Measures against planned obsolescence. In recent years, a new phrase has gained currency, one that rightly set off a frisson of shock among consumers: 'planned obsolescence'. This describes predetermined product breaking points that will render them obsolete, unattractive or beyond repair after a fixed time. It turned out that a number of producers quite deliberately accepted product obsolescence of this kind, or even built it in, so as to stimulate the early purchase of replacements – from light bulbs with weak filaments to kitchen appliances with unrepairable plastic components that wore out after a set time. There are a number of possible measures to prevent such production of clutter: providing consumer information, extending warranty periods for goods, even penalties for verifiable and particularly serious cases of deliberate deception of this kind – perhaps backed up by the right of consumer organisations to take class actions.

Supporting repairability and repairs. A culture in which more repair work is carried out is an important factor in extending product lifespans and reducing clutter. It can be promoted through a number of measures. Of great importance in this context is an ecological tax reform that would make depletion of environmental resources more expensive and at the same time make work cheaper (by reducing non-wage labour costs), because labour-intensive repair work would then become economically viable once more compared with the material and energy intensive alternative of new production.

In addition, it is possible to provide support to facilities, initiatives and enterprises that repair things, or that provide skills, tools or spare parts for repair work, or that give away or sell cheaply things that have been used and repaired. It is helpful if the local council or community can provide at low cost a space for setting up a repair cafe.

Prioritising recycling for re-use. Recycling in the sense of the re-use of an item following its initial use, whether for the same purpose or a different purpose, is much more sustainable than the breaking down and recycling of the raw materials of an item for a new use. The following measures are possible for the promotion of re-use:

- tax rules that support the production or use of re-usable parts,
- education in manual and craft skills,
- local authority or community spaces where these

skills can be practised and developed (e.g. community Do-It-Yourself workshops),
- the organisation of municipal bulky waste collection in a way that enables re-use by private individuals or selling on for re-use. In Bremen, the city's construction materials exchange performs just such a function. Its aim is to maximise the proportion of building materials reclaimed from demolition and renovation projects that is re-used. Its customers include private citizens, small craft enterprises, demolition companies, construction companies, architects and public departments.

Clutter is not simply a problem that costs us as individuals time and money. A great deal of energy and resource materials are bound up in its production, and it takes a great deal of energy again to recycle or dispose of it. Policies that prevent clutter arising in the first place are therefore a contribution to the protection of the environment.

Less market – prosperity beyond the marketplace

Commercialisation means the extension of the market and of an economic rationale into other areas of social life. 'Less market' is about limiting this spread and pushing it back to protect or extend non-marketised goods, services, infrastructure and activities. For economic rationality, with its cost-benefit analyses and efficiency mindset, has expanded deep into our private lives and has hampered spontaneous, non-instrumental creative, altruistic behaviour. Economists have demonstrated by means of experiments how the market tends to displace the ethical standards previously governing many areas of our lives.

It is not a matter of entirely doing without the productive coordinating powers of the market, but rather of embedding them in our lives in such a way that the logic of the market does not permeate everything. The politics of sufficiency is intended to strengthen people's freedom of choice so that they can decide whether to meet their needs with more or perhaps with fewer market goods – making greater use of the commons, and producing more of the goods and services they need by themselves or together with others.

Education policy. The takeover by economics of other ways of thinking and acting is closely connected with the economists' understanding of human nature – the 'Homo oeconomicus', an abstract conception of the human being as an individual who pursues the maximisation of her or his (above all material) 'utility'. The spread of this concept in the western world is linked to the dwindling influence of religion. The disciplines of empirical economics, psychology, neurology and the new and interdisciplinary field of happiness research all display a comparatively much more nuanced view of human beings as social creatures with immaterial needs and a strong connection with nature.

Education policy should build with confidence on these insights to enable greater independence at the individual level from the all-pervasive cost-benefit calculation. If children and young people experience non-purposive activities as an unalloyed source of joy and freedom, this builds up a counterweight to instrumental rationality.

The commons, or shared and publicly accessible spaces and facilities, play a very important role in any strategy to reduce the role of the market. The commons includes for example parks, playgrounds, libraries, swimming pools, zoos, museums and theatres. These are places which are open to everyone and usually publicly financed. Their preservation and maintenance is an important plank of any de-commercialisation strategy. They provide access to a source of life enhancement independent of purchasing power. Where such common facilities are run by citizens' groups or charities then it is important that civic engagement of this kind receives administrative support. In addition to the commons, politics should also support the 'sharing economy', the economy of the sharing and exchange of all kinds of products (and of knowledge). This area often links non-commercial, public-spirited aims with innovative business models and communication technology.

Recently a whole series of new communal initiatives has emerged, such as spaces for 'Doing It Yourself', public bookcases (or 'little free libraries'), community craft workshops, tool exchanges, community allotments, urban gardens and intercultural gardens. Such initiatives display a great variety of ownership models – some are community owned, some private, some are cooperatives and some owned by charitable foundations. They create new forms of public infrastructure which vividly demonstrate the scope for value creation beyond market coordination. Here too it is important to provide proactive support for these activities, by making suitable spaces available and by reducing red tape.

Self-provisioning is another important aspect of de-commercialisation. Having more time allows one the room to make things for oneself, but also to engage in community activities. In addition to time, self-provisioning requires Do-It-Yourself skills. The extreme division of labour in our economic and social lives has led to the loss of many of these skills – from growing vegetables in the garden to cooking, repair work and handicrafts. That is why it is important to have places of education and further education where the skills for making it yourself, repairing it yourself, and for organising things yourself can be learned, practised and developed.

Other measures to enable ‘less market’ go together with approaches we have already discussed in the context of ‘less clutter’: less advertising in public spaces, consumption-free spaces, and attractive spots where we can rest and linger in our town centres and pedestrianised districts.

Chapter III
Shaping – Mobility, Housing, Food: implementing policies for the Good Life in practice

We experience the elements of the Good Life most directly, most tangibly, in relation to our most fundamental needs: housing, food, mobility. Our homes, our cars or bikes, the visit to the Italian restaurant around the corner: all of these are individual choices, and it is understandable that nobody wants to have that choice taken away from them.

But how we are able to meet our fundamental needs is dependent on numerous external constraints. Whether we have any alternatives to car travel depends on the existence of good cycle paths and the quality of local public transport services. Planning and housing policies determine the quality of life in urban areas, or whether it is only possible to live a pleasant life in the country. Farming policy and consumer protection regulations have a huge influence on the food that ends up on our kitchen table: what is available to us, its quality and its cost.

So in all these areas, politics has always played an important role. That is why we have government departments and agencies for transport, construction, consumer protection and food, at both national and regional levels. Local government, too, has considerable influence on how our fundamental needs are met.

This represents a big opportunity for a politics of the Good Life, because it is not necessary to invent a new form of politics here, only to develop in new directions the broad thrust and the specific emphases of existing political programmes. What is needed is to create overall guiding concepts and to translate these into policy instruments. Just as the guiding concept of traffic-friendly cities in the 1960s and 1970s gave us the elevated urban motorway, so the guiding concept of short and ecological journeys, of the 'compact city', will enable us to give our cities a different face in future.

This chapter goes into the policy areas of housing, mobility and food. It shows how detailed policy measures in these areas can create the conditions for the Good Life.

Housing

Cities are already responsible today for two-thirds of the global demand for energy and water and of greenhouse gas emissions. By 2050 the worldwide number of people living in cities will have doubled to over five billion. How to cope with the growth of cities, socially and ecologically, is therefore regarded as one of the biggest challenges of the 21st century. And even if in Europe most cities are no longer growing, they face numerous problems: urban sprawl and land use change, climate change, the ageing population, social divisions, the loss of public infrastructure, and indebtedness.

From a sufficiency perspective, urban and land use policies are critical. Despite declining populations, more and more agricultural or forestry land is being built over – with streets and parking places, residential and commercial buildings. This process seals the land surface, reducing water infiltration capacity and biodiversity. More building also damages the climate, globally but also locally when the sealed surfaces and the buildings heat up and air circulation is reduced. In addition, building over (or 'development') involves intensive use of energy and materials, not to mention the ongoing energy requirements for maintenance and use. A quarter of the ecological footprint of the average German citizen is due to housing alone.

That is why the Federal German government's national sustainability strategy includes a target to reduce land use change to 30 hectares per day by 2020. The reality looks different: the current figure is 80 hectares per day. Even in the region of Baden-Württemberg, which in 2006 set itself the exemplary target of a zero increase, in fact six hectares were built over every day in 2011.

One driver of increasing land use change is the expansion of living space per head: from 14 square metres in 1950 to 43 square metres today. Yet this expansion does not mean that everyone in reality has more space for living, because an increasing number of people live alone or in couples, so that a greater proportion of each person's domestic space is used up by kitchen, bathroom and hallway areas.

Another widespread trend in Europe is the increasing construction of houses for one or two families, usually in the suburbs. In the early 1990s such houses accounted in Germany for 40 percent of new housing by area; ten years later it was almost 70 percent, and every year around 50,000 new one-family homes are added.

Urban sprawl brings with it ecological and financial problems, because the requirements for construction, maintenance and operation of the necessary infrastructure – such as roads, utilities connections, public transport and refuse collection – are considerably smaller when people live closer together. This applies also to car traffic: people do not drive as much if they can easily get to shops, schools, sports and cultural facilities on foot, by bike or with the bus. Compact residential development therefore helps to save money, energy and emissions of pollutants and greenhouse gases.

The first challenge for urban policy for sufficiency follows directly from this: we need to re-shape our towns and cities so that people can live well there with less private space even at high residential density.

The second challenge is more broadly conceived. People live together in community-oriented multi-generational housing in a different way compared to how they live together in sterile tenement blocks; on a quiet residential street street with trees and grass they interact differently from on a concrete traffic corridor. So the challenge is: how can urban design contribute to a living community that supports sufficient lifestyles?

In the discussion of sufficiency policy measures which follows, the impact on traffic will only be considered in passing, as there is a separate sub-chapter devoted to mobility (see page 85). Nor can this short section do justice to such topics as energy- and resource-efficient construction, social cohesion (as opposed to division into rich and poor residential districts), industrial estates or rural areas.

Political framework. Politics at the national level can influence land use through legislation, through financing research and through support for exemplary projects. The inclusion of the 30 hectares target in the German national sustainability strategy in 2002 brought land use into the public debate and onto the political agenda. However, despite promising new practical initiatives in some towns and regions, very little has actually come of this, as is shown by the continuing high rate of land use change.

There are of course powerful incentives driving land use change: pressure from the construction industry, pressure from landowners, and pressure from businesses demanding new commercial and industrial sites. Local communities are also dependent on revenues from taxes on income and business, so they have an interest in attracting as many people and firms to their community as possible and are accordingly generous in identifying development land for housing and industry – especially since the neighbouring community will certainly do so if they don't. This competition must be appeased by means of increased cooperation at the local community level and if necessary a reform of local taxation.

In general, there are still too many incentives for building new houses, especially in the suburbs. Subsidies for such activities need to be abolished, and the building of new houses – as opposed to the renovation of existing housing stock – needs to be made more expensive. Proposed changes to laws and planning regulations should be tested against the overriding need to reduce land use change. Other measures already under discussion include tradable land certificates similar to emissions trading rights, a moratorium on land use change for new housing and making the investment costs for new buildings reflect their real costs. Up until now, investors have only had to pay the construction costs for infrastructure, but in future they should also be obliged to carry some of the follow-on infrastructural costs that new buildings entail; this would create an incentive to locate more projects in inner cities.

Town planning. Plans for urban development and housing, plans for commerce and industry, plans for transport, climate and energy, plans for maintaining biodiversity, landscape plans and development plans – there is no shortage of instruments that could be used to facilitate lifestyles based on sufficiency in our towns and cities. The problem is that reducing land use change and preserving nature and the environment often play only a subordinate role in these plans: when conflicts arise, even valuable animal and plant habitats, links between biotopes, and recreational spaces all have to give way to the interests of the developers.

What is needed is to integrate all these plans into a comprehensive strategy for a prudent and cautious land use policy – and then to implement this strategy consistently and universally. This in turn requires clearly defined guidelines as to how much new development is allowed, how much land can be sealed over and where the outer borders of future residential developments will run.

In order to reduce the pressures driving continuing urban sprawl, towns and cities should make regular inventories of empty houses and commercial buildings. In Germany, almost ten percent of houses are unoccupied. So it is worth checking whether there is a real need for new housing. Further relief from the pressure can be achieved by transforming redundant commercial buildings into housing. In both Frankfurt and Munich, for example, around two million square metres of unused office space is available.

Helping people to move into smaller homes is another way of using the existing housing stock better. The proportion of older people in the population is growing – and increasing numbers of them no longer need the large family homes they are occupying. Our municipal authorities should help those who want to move into smaller homes. For example, they can set up home exchanges and advice centres to give older people a hand to deal with the difficulties involved in moving.

Public buildings and land, too, can be used more effectively by allowing different groups access at different times.

Schools, for example, offer a multifaceted infrastructure for learning, creative activities and exercise that could be used for many other purposes out of school hours.

Insofar as new building is needed, serious consideration should always be given to using brownfield sites – if these are not to be used for a community purpose such as gardens, nature experience parks or urban wilderness areas. Additionally, housing plans should be based on higher residential densities, and single-family or two-family houses should be permitted only as infill in existing areas of such housing.

Quality of life. Putting an end to urban sprawl does not mean penning people in cramped, noisy, ugly townships. On the contrary, it is about creating a new and sustainable urban quality of life. It will only be possible to implement policy measures against urban sprawl and increasing land use change if our towns and cities provide a good living environment. Only if public spaces are attractive will people be prepared to abandon the continuous spread of private residential and garden space.

Urban design can stimulate sufficiency-based lifestyles in other ways. Town dwellers must not be faced at weekends with a choice between escaping to the country and shopping – they must be able to find community, recreation and nature within the town.

The public realm as 'shared space'. Streets do not have to be just for cars, and parks do not always have to be car parks; and removing kerbs and putting in a fountain does not transform the 'car-friendly city' overnight into a 'shared space' that can be used flexibly for different forms of mobility and repose. It is a simple equation: less traffic, moving more slowly, equals more space, more peace and more safety for pedestrians, cyclists and children at play.

Derelict areas, previously left to become rubbish tips, can be used for farmers' markets or flea markets, or turned into green spaces or gardens. Local authorities can support such transformations by taking possession of unused plots of land or industrial sites, developing plans for their use with interested parties and providing resources for their maintenance. Another perfectly acceptable option is to let such areas revert to wilderness and not to interfere further with the plants and animals there.

Existing green spaces can often be made more attractive, for example with playgrounds and paddling pools for children, or areas for ball games, or with table tennis tables and volleyball nets for young people and adults. Even simple information or guidance, with no costs attached, can raise the utility of such spaces, for example using signage to designate different areas for sports, barbecues and sunbathing so as to avoid conflicts.

Urban planners should also focus more strongly on the blue networks in addition to the green ones. In recent years, some cities have demonstrated how water can be rediscovered as a resource: rivers, canals and streams have been restored to their natural state, dragonflies, frogs and nature-lovers have found new habitats, and urban beaches with a tropical vibe have sprung up next to riverside boulevards, floating cafes and dockside open-air cinemas.

Nature and architecture instead of concrete and commerce. People do not need to move to the country; we can bring nature back into the town, with more green spaces, of different kinds – from carefully-tended gardens to urban wilderness, more flowerbeds, shrubs and trees instead of uniform greenery separating paths and houses, more avenues, and more living plants on facades and roofs.

All of this is more than merely decorative. Plants give shade; their metabolic activity helps reduce the temperature; they filter out fine dust and other pollutants; they absorb noise and increase human well-being, mental and physical.

Man-made architecture, too, can be life-enhancing. But up until now, the aesthetic impact on the population of many new buildings (especially perhaps of public buildings, office buildings and department stores) has hardly been considered – what mattered was functionality, image and modernity. Here, too, much could be achieved at no additional cost, if more account were taken of human scale, of regional architectural styles and building materials and of the character of the surrounding town quarter.

All this is of little help, however, when the walls are covered with flyers, posters and neon signs, and even the bus and tram windows are covered in advertising. Sao Paulo, of all places, has shown that it doesn't have to be that way by banning public advertising. The cries of protest from businesses have subsided, the citizens continue to buy – and they are pleased by how much more attractive their city looks.

Sufficiency-based housing structures for a greater sense of community. Let us imagine what buildings and homes could be like …

The future occupants are involved already at the planning stage, and – depending on their willingness and their skills – in the construction process as well. The accommodation layout is flexible so that the space can be adapted to suit changing needs. There are communal guest rooms and community rooms for parties, sports and craft activities; ramps and lifts make the multi-generational housing accessible for everyone, and sandpits and swings make it more attractive for families with children. Given all this, with a bit of luck (and good organisation) it is possible that a community spirit can be engendered where the occupants help each other out: working parents take turns to cook, taking pleasure in the activity instead of just preparing ready meals every day; nobody has to drive the kids to extra tuition classes because the retired teacher next door has taken an active interest in their progress; and many items that are not needed every day are shared around on a reciprocal basis.

Whether such housing structures and ways of living can be realised in practice depends in part on politics. The state can exert influence by supporting model projects, by providing advice and seed funding, by approving planning and building applications and via publicly-owned building societies and housing associations. In addition to multi-generational houses, there are many other more common forms of communal living arrangements besides the family, such as houses or flats shared between students, single people or older people. Municipalities should give preferential support to such housing forms as alternatives to individualistic small apartments.

Beyond that, it is important to ensure that people who want a sufficiency-based lifestyle can find affordable accommodation. Not every old apartment block has to be renovated to the latest and highest standard of luxury! Some people prefer more modest specifications, and prefer to spend their time on living well rather than on earning well. And anybody who wants to contribute to the building process to keep down costs (and at the same time to personalise their accommodation to a much higher degree) should be able to do so.

A social infrastructure that accommodates diversity. In order for the city to provide a tranquil environment for everyone, and not just a frantic, glittering retail experience for consumers, traditional public infrastructure must be maintained and expanded – things like swimming pools, libraries, adult education centres and music schools.

Alongside this, cities should be supporting new civic engagement initiatives as well: self-help groups for relatives of dementia victims, meeting places for immigrants and local communities, free-access bookcases, exchanges for goods and services and second-hand shops, community DIY workshops and communal gardens – the whole spectrum of the 'do it yourself' and 'do it together' movements. The list of such activities is long, and much is happening without any external help. But more could develop if cities were to provide a more favourable environment by making suitable spaces available and through other external forms of support, such as help with insurance issues.

Participation – citizen planning, citizen action. In Germany, the Stuttgart railway station project, the new Berlin airport and the Elbe Philharmonic Hall in Hamburg have all demonstrated, with great media resonance, what engaged citizens have long known and what academic research has confirmed: citizen participation leads to better and better-value decisions that enjoy more popular support. Politicians and officials must not treat civil society as an annoyance, to be consulted only as a formal necessity; rather, they must recognise citizens as equal partners in discussions, consider their objections and suggestions seriously, and exploit their knowledge and abilities in the development of the city. A new culture of participation means inviting all stakeholders to get involved, organising conferences that are completely open as to outcomes, and introducing participatory budgeting. The result is a city that is more lively, more liveable, and more sufficient; one that is not subject to the dictates of conservative bureaucrats, risk-averse politicians or influential lobby groups.

Just as important as the citizens' political engagement is their practical engagement. They may get involved with libraries and museums, they may adopt trees and streams, or they may simply plant the little parcel of open land outside their front door – with more love and more personality than the municipal parks and gardens department could bring to the task.

This is why cities should respect – and support – the tradition of civic volunteering. They should create formal points of contact within the administration for citizens' initiatives, for example in the context of decentralised neighbourhood management schemes. They should make resources available so that projects in which volunteers have invested hundreds of hours of work do not fail for the lack of a few euros.

Living well in the city. The dense physical structure of Europe's medieval cities was long considered a problem for town planning, as it left little room for multi-lane highways, car parks or temples of consumption.

Yet this historical density and its underlying structural design offer an opportunity for a lifestyle of sufficiency which could serve more widely as a model – for a 'compact city', one of short distances easily covered on foot or by bike and divided into numerous small districts marked by typical but varying architectural style, and with an engaged citizenry.

For that to happen we need the idea of sufficiency to gain political traction. Reduced land use change must become the norm rather than remaining an interesting but irrelevant model concept or pilot project. 'Business-oriented' and 'car-friendly' cannot remain the dominant watchwords; our cities must become something different: healthy, safe, green, aesthetically pleasing and community-oriented.

At a glance: sufficiency in urban planning

Less

- urban sprawl and land use change
- construction of land-intensive one-family houses
- construction of individualistic (mini-)apartments
- urban flight, and fewer short holiday journeys
- concrete and monotony
- advertising and consumption

More

- diverse and attractive places to linger in the public realm
- possibilities for meeting and for community
- tranquillity and clean air
- attractive and human-scale architecture
- urban nature
- recognition that people like to be in cities

Mobility

'Transport policy' is the usual term, and most countries have a 'transport minister'. Transport is usually understood to mean motorised transport: cars, trains, aeroplanes, and ships. Transport policy is supposed to provide these means or modes with the appropriate infrastructure in the form of roads, railways and ports to enable them to function at high speed; the faster, the better.

The foundation for this system of transport is provided above all by the fossil fuels of oil and natural gas. But a 'transport transformation' of the kind set out already in 1990 by the Berlin Institute for Ecological Economy Research (IÖW) is needed now, and not only on account of the climate impact of CO_2 emissions. Motorised transport is also responsible for using up resources and land, intrusions into nature and urban landscapes, the spreading of pollutants and noise, and direct threats to health through accidents.

For this reason it is not enough to raise the efficiency of transport modes and to replace fossil fuels as energy sources; nor would the most efficient electric car possible represent a solution. Firstly, because the forecast growth in air and lorry traffic will more than outweigh efficiency gains from car traffic; secondly, because it is difficult to justify more than a small switchover to biofuels, given that their cultivation represents a competition over land use with food cultivation and has negative environmental impacts; and thirdly, because land use change and accidents can only be partially reduced through efficiency measures.

Mobility policy for the future requires a change of direction along three dimensions:

Differently. We have to think in new categories in the transport field. Instead of allowing our perspective to be narrowed down to motorised transport, we should be thinking about mobility irrespective of the means of locomotion – that is, with equal regard for pedestrians and for those on bikes or in wheelchairs or prams. We should stop giving priority to individual car traffic and start favouring collective and integrated transport systems.

Slower. Deceleration is called for. It makes more sense to adapt infrastructure and driving culture to natural conditions than to continue endlessly trying to overcome 'spatial resistance' by widening and straightening roads and building new tunnels and bridges. In fact, if we want cars to travel more slowly and safely, in built-up areas especially, it makes sense to increase spatial resistance.

Less. We should also ask ourselves again what our mobility needs are. Why do I want to travel what distance, and at what speed? For shopping, on the way to school or the office, in my leisure activities, on business or holiday trips … What generates mobility? For people? For goods? Which infrastructure elements, what price structures, what mental structures support and enable it?

A change of direction of this kind can be promoted by a range of policy measures:

'True costs'. Transport – especially by car and plane – imposes burdens on human beings and the environment. But the transport users do not pay for the burdens of noise and air pollution, landscape destruction or the paving over of land. As a first and overarching measure, the people who cause these problems must be 'burdened' with their follow-on costs, through the further development of environmental tax reforms, for example, or of taxes on air travel and the EU emissions trading system. This would also reduce freight traffic, which is otherwise only indirectly affected by sufficiency policies.

Traffic prevention measures. Town planning and housing policy are critically important approaches to preventing traffic. The compact city model promotes greater density in town centres, attractive leisure walking possibilities, nature experience spaces, car-free zones and shopping facilities in the town centre rather than out of town. Spaces are created within the town itself for exercise, play, sports, music and relaxation: free football and volleyball pitches, table tennis and soft tennis, artificial beaches by rivers and canals creating a Caribbean atmosphere, opportunities for communal activities such as barbecuing, playing chess or making music – or just benches and sunbathing lawns.

Beyond the towns, what is important is to prevent urban sprawl and to enhance local recreation areas by means of good public transport facilities, bike paths and footpaths, left luggage facilities at popular bus and train stops and places to hire bikes, canoes or skis.

Traffic prevention should be pursued with respect not only to travel for consumption and recreation but also to business and work-related travel. Sufficiency policy means encouraging a self-provisioning regional economy, blurring the boundaries between living and working (above all ending any fiscal support for commuting) and making it easier to work from home.

Supporting forms of mobility based on sufficiency. Public transport, and how it links up with other forms of transport, is crucial in reducing individual car use. Providing parking spaces at railway stations is not enough; cyclists and pedestrians also need to be linked in better. Support should be available not just for public transport provision but also for other collective forms of transport: car-sharing and 'citizens' buses' (voluntary transport services, especially in the country), better use of taxis (short-hop fares, on-call taxis, taxi sharing, access to bus lanes) and the development of new mobility services for the transport of goods (courier services). Lift-sharing schemes can also be improved.

Public transport should be expanded and made more user-friendly. For example, bus shelters and free seating facilities in railway stations (not only in the 'comfort lounge') would improve the waiting experience. Information boards showing anticipated waiting times for bus and train services give customers the security of knowledge. Altogether, the public transport system should slow down a little and build in sensible time cushions and connection transfer times – and to make up for this it should become more reliable. And the railways should think less in terms of top speeds and more in terms of the speed of the system. What does the customer gain if the intercity express rockets even faster but the nearest stopping station is miles away and the connecting train service poor?

We need more bike paths. On busy routes if at all possible these should have two lanes, so as to accommodate varying speeds and to increase safety. Traffic lights that allow cyclists a head start on cars wanting to turn off the road also contribute to road safety. In addition, bike paths need better signage and maintenance, which includes keeping them free from snow, grit and wrongly-parked cars. And once at their destination, cyclists should be able to lock up their vehicles quickly, securely and in comfort. Why is it that we invest so much in car parks – conventional, multi-storey and underground – and so little in covered and supervised bike racks (ideally with charging points for electric bikes). In particular, regional public transport bye-laws should make the provision of cycle parking facilities compulsory to help create integrated bike and public transport routes.

Pedestrians need traffic lights to be adjusted to their walking pace. And they only feel comfortable when cars have been slowed down to a human tempo. Who wants to walk along a street where cars are driving at 50 km/h (30 mph) or more? Such streets are not only loud and dangerous but unwelcoming. No cafe will open out, with tables and flowerboxes, on to a street like that – it is not a continuously varying space in which to enjoy and experience life, but merely a means to a distant end.

In order for this change of direction to occur, we need to stop ploughing research money primarily into technical projects like electric cars. Framing the questions in different ways may be less exciting for traditional engineers, but it is more important for sustainable mobility. What are the options we have for integrated mobility chains, for cooperation between regional transport networks, for mobility for older people, for communal forms of transport use – including the possibilities being opened up by new communication technologies? And it is not just about theoretical possibilities. We have to evaluate empirical experience in these areas and gain new experience from model projects – and think carefully how to scale up successful experiments.

Symbolic projects can also help promote a fundamental change in transport, infrastructure and research policy: car-free streets on chosen weekends, car-free Sundays, bike days – initiatives like these help to establish a new culture of mobility and to gain acceptance for it.

Sufficiency policy for cars. Slower is better. All measures for slowing down cars – speed limits, narrow streets, speed bumps, chicanes, mini-roundabouts – work on several levels simultaneously: they reduce the harmful impacts of car traffic, they slow car travel down in relation to other transport means and thereby make it less attractive, and they increase safety and enjoyment for cyclists and pedestrians.

All cars are not equal. Sufficiency policy should promote small, petrol-efficient vehicles, for example by means of appropriate car fleet policies for public bodies. Conversely, fiscal policies that subsidise company cars and favour bigger, faster models should be abolished. Heavy, petrol-guzzling SUVs should be taxed more heavily, and oversized lorries that require infrastructure more appropriate to the Australian outback should not be licensed for our roads.

Sufficiency policy for air traffic. Flying represents a particular problem for sufficiency. Although the facts concerning the high CO_2 emissions of aircraft and their greater impact at altitude are widely known, and although new airport construction proposals have provoked (sometimes successful) resistance initiatives from local residents and other groups, the attraction of flying remains undiminished and big increases are predicted for air traffic. Self-imposed restriction seems to be very difficult for individuals in this area, and only a few use the financial CO_2 off-setting schemes to close the gap between what know they should do and what they actually do. However unpopular it may be, sufficiency policy has to involve making flying more expensive, stopping airport expansion and reducing the number of existing airports, especially regional ones.

Three key symbolic measures for sufficiency policy: speed limits, car-sharing, priority for pedestrians. The catalogue of measures above is not comprehensive; some of them are not new, some have already been introduced here or there, some are being tried out, and some are still just ideas. Listing them together here serves the purpose of enabling an overview of the diverse range of possible starting-points for sufficiency policy – and of encouraging new proposals.

From this broad range of sufficiency policy measures, we would like to highlight three for their capacity to demonstrate the new thinking that is needed:

1. *Speed limits* are simple and effective. There should be a general speed limit of 120 km/h (around 70 mph) on motorways and a default speed limit of 30 (20) in built-up areas. These limits would reduce both the number of accidents and CO_2 emissions. The motorway speed limit would lead to cars no longer being designed to travel at very high speeds, and in turn to the development of lighter vehicles with more economical engines, using less material in their production and taking up less road surface for driving and parking. The limit in built-up areas signifies that towns and communities are not primarily roadspace for car traffic, but places where residents and visitors live and breathe.

2. Dedicated *spaces for car-sharing schemes* should be provided on public streets. In some countries, this might require a change in the national legislation governing public roadways to create a common legal basis on which local authorities can set up such spaces. It would enable

the operators to site cars even in those densely built-up urban areas where today it is impossible to rent private car parking spaces.

3. *A continuous green light for pedestrians?* It sounds mad, but it works. In a trial project in Graz in Austria, the default settings on push-button traffic lights – green for motorised traffic, red for pedestrians – were simply reversed. Now the drivers of cars and lorries have to request the right to pass. Of course, they don't actually have to press a button – their approach is automatically registered by an induction loop in the road. This new traffic light programme symbolically prioritising pedestrian rights comes into its own in periods of low traffic volume. And it has shown not only that pedestrian waiting times can be reduced but that road culture can be made more pedestrian-friendly. Graz's trial project has been retained and extended; other towns and cities should give priority to their pedestrians as well.

Participation towards a new mobility. Our citizens stumble over the problems of transport policy with every step (or bike trip) they take. And notable successes such as car-free city centres, lower speed limits in residential areas and physical traffic-calming measures are similarly experienced in a very direct and personal way, as is resistance to major road, railway or airport development projects. This is why many civil activists are especially engaged in opposing traditional transport policy and helping to shape a new mobility.

The political system must meet this desire for more participation halfway. Up until now, it was principally the perspectives and experience of male transport planners which set the agenda, along with the interests of the manufacturers of transport vehicles and infrastructure. No wonder these voices spoke in favour of the expansion of traffic. It is about time the needs of all transport users were given appropriate consideration. This will shift the emphasis away from the car towards public and non-motorised transport, and from long-distance to local travel.

Moreover, numerous examples, particularly from Switzerland, show that major projects are subject to much more careful and critical examination when citizen participation is part of the process – including in terms of alternative uses for the funds (for example in social or education projects in local communities). Especially at the local community level, it is citizens who are the experts on pedestrian and bike traffic. Involving them at an early stage improves the quality of the plans and guarantees them a better reception. And beyond this, citizens' independent initiatives should be encouraged and taken up, and innovative ideas that emerge from 'future laboratories' and workshops should be cooperatively implemented.

For these reasons, participatory processes should be better embedded and financially supported, for example through a budget, under citizens' control, for expert facilitation and consultation services. In particular, there should be provision for early consideration of the 'zero (or 'no change') option' (the maximal sufficiency option).

More speed – but only for the mobility transformation. The 1960s dream of the car-friendly city is over; the delusion that we could manage the growing numbers of cars and journeys by means of more and faster roads has ground to a halt in our choking traffic jams; the mania for maximum speed on the railways has been brought under control by rising delays and citizens' protests.

The mobility transformation is already well under way, with successful local transport systems in towns and regions, with cycle paths, car-free town centres and traffic calming in residential areas. These changes were brought about principally by committed local politicians with the help of inventive planners, local citizens' initiatives, environmental associations and NGOs working in the area of mobility – often by way of fierce local clashes.

The opposition to a mobility transformation remains strong, with its base in the car and aircraft industries but also including airlines, the construction industry and politicians, and all the way down to the motorists' associations and the dyed-in-the-wool car drivers. But the car, for so long a status symbol, is losing its lustre, especially among young urbanites. Among this group it is taken for granted that their lifestyle does not require ownership of a car, and this self-confident assumption contributes to the creation of new styles of mobility. This development needs the support of appropriate sufficiency policies so that more people will get on board and turn it into a mass movement.

At a glance: sufficiency in the area of mobility

Aims in the area of mobility

- less motorised traffic
- fewer CO_2 emissions
- less use of resources and land
- less speed
- fewer pollutants
- less noise
- fewer accidents
- less damage to nature and towns

Advantages of sufficiency in the area of mobility

- more freedom for more and different forms of mobility
- more safety
- better air quality
- better health through active mobility (walking and cycling)
- more contact with people, landscape and nature through slower and more mindful locomotion
- more options for people without cars, especially for children, old people and disabled people

Food

This is the challenge. With the world population currently standing at seven billion, over 800 million people are starving. By 2050 the world population will have risen to nine billion. How can all these people be fed?

Many are still pinning their hopes on the global adoption of industrialised agriculture. By means of artificial fertilisers, herbicides and genetic engineering, they want to increase land productivity to such a degree that even the high consumption levels of meat and dairy products in the industrialised countries could be replicated in the countries of the global South.

But increasing numbers of people are calling for a transformation of policy on food and agriculture, including the expert members of the International Assessment of Agricultural Science and Technology for Development (IAASTD), the agricultural counterpart of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). In its 2008 report on world agriculture it recommended a fundamental change of direction for global agriculture. Industrialised agriculture is reducing soil quality and destroying biodiversity; using up and polluting water resources and contributing massively to climate change; and mistreating animals and damaging human health through excessive use of antibiotics. That is why the FAO (the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations) too, is now calling for small-scale, multifunctional and locally oriented farming that uses and builds on traditional knowledge.

In order for this transformation to succeed in the South, the North will have to change its consumption patterns. Otherwise, rainforest will continue to be cleared in South America to make way for the production of soya for export as animal feed; the seas will continue to be subject to overfishing, because the demand for fish – partly for use as fish meal for livestock and fish farms – continues to rise in the North; and more and more shrimp, which have become a standard menu item in the gastronomy of the North, will be farmed in the mangrove forests of Bangladesh. And of course it is now taken for granted that the South will provide us not just with exotic tropical fruits but with our daily fruit and vegetables, which we expect to find in the supermarket regardless of the season.

Our food habits are bad for the South – and for our health. We eat 'too much, too fatty, too sweet, too salty'. Increasing numbers of people don't know how to cook – and they anyway lack the time to do so. Even eating has been speeded up: ready meals and fast food are replacing traditional cuisines in our everyday lives. At the same time we throw away between one-third and one-half of our food.

The 2010 film 'Taste the Waste' dramatically confronted us with the stark contrast between our wastefulness with food – which is simultaneously a waste of energy, water and other resources – and the starving people from whose countries we extract our food and animal feeds. The European Parliament called for a strategy to halve the wastage by 2025, which was adopted by the Federal German government. Achieving it is clearly going to be difficult, because mindsets are fixed on 'more production'.

Sufficiency policy makes it easier for people to practise a nutritional lifestyle which is healthy and promotes a good eating culture, which reduces environmental damage both at home and in the countries of the global South, and which for those reasons can be safely adopted around the world. Sufficiency policy can put a stop to wastage if it succeeds in reducing the consumption of meat and of other foods with a big ecological footprint. So sufficiency policy starts with consumption, and with changes on the supply side: new rules for the production, trade and transport of foodstuffs. Given the complex and interconnected global web of regulations, action needs to be taken at the international level (WTO) as well as in agricultural and development policy at the EU level, but also at national level and right down to regional and local levels.

Reducing meat consumption. The Sunday roast used to be a special treat precisely because you could not afford it every day. One of the reasons why meat is now served up from Monday through to Sunday, and from breakfast through to supper, is that meat is so cheap. This could be changed by introducing upper limits on the size of animal housing facilities, stricter welfare regulations on how animals are kept and transported, and a more stringent climate protection regime.

It goes without saying that subsidies for factory farming should be abolished – only very responsible practices, such as are widely used in organic farming, deserve to receive public subsidy. Indirect subsidies also need to be taken into account. The German Advisory Council on the Environment proposed in its 2012 report that consumption taxes on animal products should no longer be applied at the lower rate of 7 percent generally applied to foods but at the standard rate of 19 percent. In addition to this, a differentiated tax should be applied to meat to favour multifunctional and humane animal husbandry, so that the fatted factory pig pays the full rate, while the goat from the nature conservation area gets a discount.

Protecting children against the seductions of advertising. Children can be very particular about what they eat. That does not mean they are not open to influence. And what is more, the eating habits we acquire when young stay with us for the rest of our lives. The food industry knows this, and invests in advertising fatty, salty, ready-made products that can be gulped down between meals.

Food advertising targeted at children and young people should therefore be restricted, or better still banned. Advertising of this kind is already prohibited in Sweden and Norway, and the European Court of Justice has declared this permissible. The German federal government did announce in its 2008 action plan for healthy eating the aim of ending food advertising targeted at children under twelve, but as this was to be achieved in cooperation with industry, it remained no more than an objective.

Educating (tomorrow's) consumers. Because individual eating habits are formed at an early age, teaching 'food skills' in nurseries and schools – as well as at home – is crucial. How do I grow herbs and vegetables at home? How do I buy seasonal produce? How can I tell if food is past its best? How do I cook, and how do I cook leftovers? Sufficiency policy needs things like this to be put on the curriculum, and it needs to make sure that what is preached is also practised – in school gardens and school kitchens, and with organic menus at school meals.

Not everyone will become a nutrition expert. That is why we need clear, easy-to-grasp information on packaging –

like the food traffic light system that tells us how healthy a product is. One item of information that is already on most foods is the 'best before' date. But this is too often mistaken for a 'use by' date. What is needed here is better consumer education, perhaps combined with a more nuanced labelling system for shelf and fridge life.

Labelling that guides rather than confuses. Labels are supposed to make it easier for consumers to choose. This is why for organic foods there is not only the mandatory EU certification system but also the certification systems used by the big organic producers.

Labelling for animal products is not yet equally advanced. Alongside the statutory certification system in Germany for eggs produced under different farming methods, there has long been a certification system for meat reared to certain welfare standards, and there is now also a recently introduced seal of meat quality developed by a number of producers together with the German Animal Welfare Federation. Beyond this, specific certification systems with their own standards have been developed in some regions, for example for sheep from the Rhön or pigs from Schwäbisch-Hall. Some standardisation is needed here at the EU or national level, analogous to the organic certification system, which allows certification indicating standards that go beyond the minimum, in the way the

Demeter label for organic products goes beyond the EU organic certification.

In the area of social policy, the Fairtrade certification system, developed by civil society organisations, has succeeded in establishing a recognised yardstick for fair labour standards in developing countries that increasingly also integrates ecological standards.

Regional labels represent another group. They emphasise local identity and short supply chains, but have widely varying production standards.

And finally, producers and retail chains create their own fantasy labels in green colours and with friendly, reassuring names. Such names often suggest traditional, small-scale farming, but behind them may be companies whose marketing is better than their production standards.

The crazy proliferation of labels confuses and frustrates consumers. Ambitious and exacting labelling systems devised by private sector organisations can have a pioneering function, creating niche markets and raising awareness of problems, but for a system to achieve widespread coverage it needs to have universally recognised and legally underpinned labels indicating verifiable standards the infringement of which will have legal consequences. And misleading brand names and labels have to be banned at the same time. This is the only way to achieve reliability and acceptance, and thus to have broad impact.

Alongside this, statutory labelling also makes it possible to inform consumers about objectionable production methods. For example, if animals have been factory-farmed or fed using genetically modified organisms, their meat should be compulsorily labelled to indicate this.

Showing the way by consumption and procurement in the public sector. Plentiful, good value, palatable – these are the criteria against which canteen food is judged. But what if we were to ask all public sector institutions – from the town hall to the government ministry, schools and universities as well as hospitals – to try to meet new standards? Seasonal and locally-sourced, organic and free range, vegetarian options every day and meat-free Mondays!

Meat-free for everyone? Some may find this a very surprising and unrealistic idea. But meat-free menus are already served every week in Bremen and 30 other German cities. And if innovations like this set off discussions over lunch, so much the better! New expectations become the norm after a while, and then company canteens and hotels will find themselves having to listen to complaints because they do not know where their steak comes from, or because they are offering strawberries in the middle of winter. “Oh, and by the way, don’t you have any smaller portions at lower prices? What a waste of food!” – no manager or chef wants to keep hearing that.

Taking time to eat well. A sufficiency-oriented diet needs time: Time for planning what fresh food you need and for shopping at the food market; for handling your food properly and for making good use of leftovers; for cooking and baking and eating together ('slow food'). A policy programme that includes reducing working hours, equal pay for men and women and a different work-life balance holds out the possibility of a more equal division of paid work and care work, which would not only bring benefits to individuals but would also contribute to reducing ecological stress.

Anyone who wants to grow their own food needs even more time. Little vegetable gardens and herb pots on the balcony – some may dismiss this as irrelevant, pointing out how small the total contribution to the food supply is. But their real significance lies in the experience they provide of gardening. Anyone who selects seeds and seedlings, plants and waters them, weeds and harvests them, gains a new respect for food. So local authorities should support allotments and community gardens and other ways of reducing the distance between consumers and producers, like city farms and farmers markets.

When will the food and agriculture transformation happen? Ever-growing numbers of people find the treatment of farm animals, the constant threat to human health from antibiotics in meat, and the repeated scandals in food production unacceptable, and cannot carry on simply shrugging their shoulders after a brief spasm of outrage. So the reaction in civil society is growing ever stronger. Animal welfare groups and environmental protection organisations are working together, and new groupings focused on food issues are joining them. The stream of converts to vegetarianism is growing, especially among young people; it combines animal protection with health concerns, and pragmatically accepts part-time vegetarians too. The growth in diet-related illness, and in the associated costs, is a source of concern to health care professionals and politicians, and the fact that these problems disproportionately affect disadvantaged groups is drawing social welfare associations and their political spokespersons into closer engagement with food policy issues. Many of these activists have joined together to form a protest movement against prevailing agricultural policy, and are giving political voice and momentum to their concerns under the slogan ‘We’ve had enough!’.

At a glance: sufficiency in the food policy area

Aims in the area of food policy

- throwing less away
- less meat
- less factory farming and animal cruelty
- less environmental pollution and fewer greenhouse gas emissions
- fewer ready meals and less fast food
- less hunger in the world

Advantages of sufficiency in the area of food policy

- more regional and seasonal specialities
- more healthy and tasty meals
- more biodiversity
- more freedom of choice and more agency for consumers

Chapter IV
Enabling – Creating resources for sufficiency through employment, education, health and consumer policy

So far, we have approached a politics of sufficiency along three dimensions. *Framing* dealt with changes to the institutional framework around our economic activity, from a new measure for prosperity and changes to ownership and competition regimes to policies for greater social justice. In the chapter on *Orienting* we investigated the origins and drivers of current unsustainable ways of producing and living – acceleration, globalisation, the orientation towards More, and commercialisation. We called for a politics which would take sufficiency as its measure, with the 'four Lessens' – less speed, less distance, less clutter and less market – as guidelines. Then, in the chapter on

Shaping, we set out the measures needed to bring about such a re-orientation in the specific policy fields of housing, mobility and food.

Under the fourth of our pathways to sufficiency politics, *Enabling,* we want to look at different policy areas (labour policy, education policy, health policy and consumer policy), which have a big impact on the ability of individuals to lead and contribute to the Good Life in a sufficient society. What is needed here is to build capacity and resources for the Good Life beyond economic growth. In fact, the whole book is about enabling sufficient lifestyles. But this chapter is about a specific aspect of that enabling, namely the personal resources that make living the Good Life easier: resources like education, knowledge, the freedom and capacity to choose one's own path, time and health.

The policy branches capable of creating such resources are today often still dominated by the dogma of economic growth, and so they are often focused on the creation of jobs and of more consumption – which means that they pass up opportunities to support lifestyles based on sufficiency.

Supposedly 'unproductive' areas of policy then become the focus of political attention because of the perception of some problem or deficit, such as the need to integrate groups such as the unemployed – or older people who have left the labour market, or men and women who are under-employed because they are looking after children – back into economically measurable productive labour. Young people, too, must be made as productive as possible through appropriate training – and this is called 'investing in education'.

The health economy is seen as an important growing market in an ageing society, so health policy too becomes a branch of economic growth policy.

This fixation on work and consumption fails to do justice to our lives in their entirety. It is also a mistake in purely economic terms, as over half of all work takes place outside the formal economy (in the household, in caring for children and others, in voluntary work). Moreover, this informal work is a prerequisite without which no formal paid employment would be possible, and it is essential for social cohesion. Politicians are now becoming aware of this link between formal and informal work and are bemoaning the 'erosion of social capital'. Yet this sort of economic instrumentalism threatens to turn our cultural institutions, nurseries and hospitals, which used to be part of what supported and gave purpose to our lives, into mere factors of economic investment decisions.

A sufficient society will not be primarily concerned with functionality within the economic system. It takes its orientation from a conception of human beings as social and cultural creatures with a wide and diverse range of needs, of which the economic ones are only a sub-group. According to Skidelsky, these needs are:

- Health
- Security
- Respect
- Personality
- Harmony with nature
- Friendship
- Leisure

Resource policies are designed to improve the conditions for the satisfaction of these needs, independent of any measurable contribution they might make to raising GDP. Of particular importance for this goal are health policy, labour policy, education policy and consumer policy.

Health, sufficiency and the Good Life

When people are asked what is especially important to them, or what they would wish for over the coming year, the first answer is almost always ‘good health’. Sufficiency and health are linked together in multiple ways: for one thing, health is in itself a central human need, and it is a central aspect of a good life. So it is important to consider how good health can be attained or maintained without permanently rising costs for the health care system.

Furthermore, good health makes a good life easier. Mobility on foot or by bike, social interaction with others, learning new skills – all of these things are easier if one is healthy.

Finally, health policy is closely connected with other sufficiency policies because stress and stress-related illnesses are strongly related to how work is organised in today's society.

The fact that we have such a high general level of health in modern societies is, however, closely linked to increased economic prosperity. Without the substantial increase that has taken place in GDP over the last decades there would not be the nationwide network of hospitals and doctors, nor the comprehensive and expensive health care provision, nor the development and production of innovative medical treatments that we have today.

At the same time we sense that ever higher expenditure on the health system does not automatically mean more health. Growth in the health sector can even be linked to counterproductive effects. For example, there is an increasing number of reports about unnecessary knee and hip replacement operations the purpose of which is to maintain utilisation rates for equipment and hospitals. Cosmetic surgery is booming. And the products that provide most pharmaceutical companies with the bulk of their turnover are medications against classic diseases of affluence like heart disease or diet-related diabetes. These illnesses have their origins in part in individual lifestyles, so external conditions which make it easier for those affected to live a healthier life – regardless of trends in economic growth – would be of some help here. Doctors today earn money only from ill patients, so they have little incentive to practise preventive health care. It is good news for pharmaceutical companies today if new 'diseases' arise. In this context, the debates around ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder) have aroused particular public interest. In 2013 the German health insurance company Barmer GEK reported that 20 percent of boys born in 2000 had been diagnosed as suffering from a 'hyperkinetic disorder' of this kind between the ages of six and eleven, and a high proportion of them had been prescribed medication. Twenty years ago, this disease/diagnosis was completely unknown.

Another unfortunate developmental dynamic seems to apply to extremely expensive modern diagnostic equipment. Computed tomography (CT) and magnetic resonance tomography (MRT) are substantial additions to the armoury of diagnostic medicine. However, at over one million euros, the equipment needed for these procedures is extremely expensive. Once such equipment has been purchased its utilisation therefore has to be maximised, and if at all possible, made continuous. Around 5,000 CT and MRT scanners are now in operation in Germany, and in the last ten years the number of diagnostic investigations has increased massively – and to a considerable degree unnecessarily.

All of this clearly illustrates that a health policy which aims to promote a good life cannot focus only on the growing market that is the health economy. That would be disastrous not least because the great majority of health costs in many health care systems today represent public costs within a system based on redistribution and solidarity. So every rise in health costs jeopardises fair and equally accessible health care provision for all and increases the strain on public finances.

Health policy for a good life must therefore resolutely set new priorities. Three aspects will be important here:

Preventive care rather than treatment. The most significant diseases in affluent societies are linked to the way we live now: cardiovascular diseases, joint diseases and disorders of the metabolism like diabetes are caused in large part by poor diet, excess weight and lack of exercise. So the best preventive medicine to ensure future health is to change bad living habits. This would mean that the health care system would be able to focus more on health disorders unconnected with individual behaviour. Precautionary health care and disease prevention have therefore been on the health policy agenda for some time. However, the practical implementation of this strategic reorientation has been slow to date. A key element is the introduction of incentives for both patients and service providers to reward preventive measures. The Swiss health care system offers many diverse examples in this area. It has proved possible there, through higher personal contributions to costs, discounts to insurance premiums for health promoting activities and family practitioner (or 'gatekeeper') models, to motivate preventive health care behaviour and to achieve high levels of health in Switzerland in spite of much lower costs relative to GDP than in other economies.

Creating the conditions that make healthy living easier. It is not individual willpower alone that enables a healthy life; the living conditions in which people find themselves exert a strong influence. Health protection and health promotion measures at work, a planning regime that promotes green urban spaces, parks, local recreation facilities, cycling and walking, and active community politics in disadvantaged areas – all of these contribute to health policy as well, because they help to prevent the adoption of unhealthy lifestyles.

A new attitude towards health and disease. The idea of sufficiency is directly relevant to the third area of preventive health policy. Our attitude towards health has undergone huge changes in the last decades. We perceive our bodies as machines that are expected to function smoothly right up to the end of our lives. Illness and bodily impairment are not seen as normal and sometimes important life experiences but only as disagreeable privations.

The greatly increased powers of medicine have bolstered our illusions about what is possible. Unrestricted vigorous life right up until its end appears to be within our reach. All this does not alter the fact that the finitude of our earthly lives is irrevocable. But because the complete elimination of suffering seems to be a real possibility, our frustration when we do nonetheless experience pain and physical ailments is all the more intense. The growth in cosmetic surgery is one result of this vicious circle.

Accepting illness, pain and death as elemental factors of human existence, and developing the capacity to cope with them, makes every individual more robust and more resilient. What we are talking about here are mental and spiritual resources that support a good life in its totality.

All three aspects make it clear that health policy for a good life requires at its core not more growth but entirely different priorities. Even in an ageing society it is likely that good health policies will be ones that use fewer resources than today.

Making Good Work easier

Work is a multi-layered phenomenon. In modern societies it has many functions beyond just that of securing our livelihoods. Work is a pathway to social participation, and work gives us self-esteem through the pay and the recognition that we receive for it. Very often it enables the development of our personal skills and capacities. So the Good Life has a lot to do with how our work is evaluated and organised.

The economic perspective on work is therefore a very narrow one. It focuses exclusively on paid work in economic processes of value creation. What counts here is maximum labour productivity, that is, maximum value creation per hour of paid work.

Against this background, three forms of work-related policy can be distinguished at present, as analysed in the report from the German parliamentary Study Commission ('Enquête Kommission') on 'Growth, Well-being and Quality of Life' in 2013:

Policies for continued productivity growth and the extension of paid employment. This is the dominant form of current labour policy. It is a response to concerns over declining growth rates, a decline in the international competitiveness of the German economy, and demographic changes which reduce the number of workers available. Its goal is to mobilise more paid employees into the labour market and in particular to encourage more women to participate, to extend working life and to integrate hitherto low-skilled workers into the labour market.

At the same time, work is to be adapted further to the needs of international competition – for example through flexible working hours or weakening employees' protection against dismissal. In return, employees are to be trained to deal better with stress so that they are better equipped to cope with the demands placed on them by flexibilisation.

This is a labour policy that amounts to 'business as usual', one that is gambling on the continuation of the existing growth model – even under worsening general economic conditions. In this model, the Good Life is attainable only through still more material prosperity, so it requires an even closer alignment of life expectations with the conditions of the globalised labour market and thus the continuing guarantee of increasing material growth in the future.

This is what leads to the fundamental paradox of our economic system, one that the sociologist Daniel Bell already described in the 1970s. We live increasingly in two worlds which are culturally totally distinct. In the world of work we value qualities like performance, prudence, the readiness to suppress our individual needs and to adapt, all of which help us to meet the challenge of remaining internationally competitive. Outside of work we are encouraged to take it easy, to indulge in hedonism and – let's not forget – consumption. This contradiction is made even more stark by labour policies designed to pursue continuing increases in productivity.

The concept of Good Work. The concept of 'Good Work' aims to at least soften this contradiction. Here, too, paid employment is at the centre of labour policy. But in this approach the task for policy is primarily to ensure the high quality of the jobs available by setting the political framework. The aims are to prevent unhealthy working conditions, to increase employees' agency with respect to their working conditions, and to flexibilise those conditions in the employees' interests, for example through better recognition of and adaptation to their support and care responsibilities, options for sabbaticals, and better work-life balance. Gender equality has a particular role to play here. It transpires namely that women are not only paid less on average for their work than men but that they also find it much more difficult to negotiate the working time arrangements they want.

Good Work therefore aims to achieve gender-equal pay that is appropriate to the work involved and enables a life at a materially acceptable standard.

Good Work seems a very promising approach to bringing work and the Good Life into a better alignment. However, its focus on paid employment means that it fails to break out of the mindset of global markets and competition. How far it will prove possible to firmly establish good working conditions in a context of international economic competition is an open question. But we should welcome political initiatives in this direction – especially since a significant proportion of paid employment takes place outside the arena of international competition.

Holistic labour policy. Against this background, it is worth considering what a holistic labour policy might look like, one which did not focus exclusively on paid employment but took into account the many forms of unpaid work: supporting and caring and family work, voluntary civic engagement, and new forms of self-provisioning. A major part of social value creation takes place in these sectors but does not figure at all in GDP data. And according to survey data from the German Federal Statistical Office, more hours are spent in unpaid work in Germany than in paid work.

And the wider social significance of unpaid work continues to increase. Demographic change means that the number of older people taking up various forms of voluntary engagement after retirement is increasing. New forms of self-provisioning in alternative living projects are becoming more popular among young people, too.

So there is a lot to be said for devising a labour policy approach that would take equal account of all forms of work, and also of the interrelationship between paid and unpaid work. Such an approach will be very difficult, as our social security systems are predicated on a system of paid work. Moreover, social esteem and integration are much more strongly associated with paid work than with unpaid work.

Nevertheless, a broader labour policy approach would open up possibilities for a good life above and beyond those offered by further increases in GDP, so investigating and developing options for an integrated labour policy over the next few years would definitely be worthwhile. Sufficiency-based politics needs a broader perspective on work, and needs the courage to experiment.

New working time models enable new combinations of paid and unpaid work. Equally potentially useful would be the adaptation of our social security systems to make them less dependent on paid work. The proposal for an unconditional basic income is one option in this direction, albeit one which is highly controversial.

Education for the Good Life

Sustainability requires massive reductions in energy and resource use in the industrialised countries – and that means a reduction in people's individual expectations of their own use, too. But we are living in a consumer culture and we want 'further, faster, more'; we compete against each other in a society fixated on success and we measure our status above all by income and wealth.

A straightforward programme of cutting consumption will not be enough to get us to a sufficient lifestyle – we have to re-think and re-evaluate wealth in terms of goods, time and relationships. Crucial to this will be an education system which is not primarily directed towards economic functionality but which looks at life in a holistic way. An education that enables people to lead meaningful, free and independent lives, to satisfy their many and diverse needs - for health, security, respect, personal development, harmony with nature, friendship and leisure – and to find their own form of happiness in their own way and not at the cost of the happiness of others.

An education of this kind will include the knowledge of practical, craft and artistic pursuits, in addition to the sorts of knowledge hitherto considered most important. Such an education enables people to find affirmation and self-realisation outside their careers. It equips them to contribute to the household, to the family and to the wider society via voluntary engagement and participatory processes. It facilitates greater self-provisioning with goods that one has made or repaired or shared with others. It enables a lifestyle that is light on resources and rich in relationships and combines practical knowledge about how to live well with knowledge about the art of living.

Education for a sufficient society should include the social, ethical and aesthetic dimensions of life. Knowing how to take one's bearings and having the capacity for critical reflection strengthen one's judgement, with regard both to leading one's own life and to political participation. This kind of education can help us to (re)gain freedom and control over our lives, and to understand and deal with the complexity of the world. It can help to prevent the paralysis that can be brought on by the never-ending range of choices, or the compulsion always to keep all options open, and to learn what do without. Education helps us in the search for the right measure, which must always be found anew.

It was the yearning for the simple life that inspired the American writer and philosopher Henry David Thoreau 150 years ago to take up his 'Life in the Woods'. Today, in a world that is much more complex, this yearning can be seen again in many places, for example in the success of self-help publications with titles such as 'Simplify your Life' and in the numerous magazines about the simple pleasures of living in the country. In Germany, the magazine 'Landlust' alone (the title means something like 'Let's move to the country'), with a print run of 1 million copies, overtook the leading German political magazine 'Der Spiegel' in popularity in 2012. Of course, many people are still chasing after the happiness promised by consumerism, but they are running ever shorter of breath, and asking themselves whether they are ever going to catch up with it. Instead, they find themselves experiencing a growing yearning for the simple life, with its promise of a different happiness; that of a life more beautiful, more relaxed, more pleasurable. But it is not quite that easy. Philosophers and psychologists agree that there is no pleasure without some measure of self-denial. Practising asceticism does not mean starving oneself, but remaining flexible, to be more free from external contingencies, and being free to devote oneself to what is essential. The simple life, or the simpler life, is also important because it can contribute to the stabilisation both of one's own world and of the environment. This congruence between personal life and social duty makes one happier, which is why the two issues of 'the Good Life' and 'the right measure' – or the questions, 'How should I/we live in future?' and 'What do I/we really need?' – are central to an education for sustainable development.

The learning content on our educational journey to a sufficiency society must therefore place more emphasis on skills alongside knowledge, on making it easier to find our way in a complex world, and on strengthening our powers of judgement. Educational institutions must promote the experience of non-material sources of happiness such as self-efficacy (the knowledge that I can achieve something), construction of meaning (the knowledge that my actions have meaning), and the sense of solidarity that comes from communal action. Acting in solidarity can counter the competition for social status that drives material consumption. Whether introducing 'happiness' into the curriculum, as some schools have done, increases people's ability to be happy is something that should be debated, tested and researched.

A thoroughgoing focus on skills played a key role in the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005–2014), and was energetically and innovatively implemented in numerous projects in schools and universities, but also in nursery schools and in the adult education sector. Many of these projects contribute to a sufficiency-based lifestyle and should be disseminated further, because personal experience is often more important than knowledge and can itself stimulate a desire to learn. That is why opportunities for experience and for experimentation – whether individual or communal – are so important. Both paths 'from knowledge to action' and 'from action to knowledge' are routes to a lifestyle of sufficiency.

Consumer policy

Industrialisation brought with it an increasing distance between producers and consumers, and a corresponding de-personalisation of the responsibility borne by companies. That is why the conviction arose towards the end of the 19th century that consumers needed legal protection against producers. The legislation passed in 1894 in Germany providing for a 'minimum level of protection' was intended to improve consumer rights, product safety, and environmental and health protection and to help consumers make better purchasing decisions through information, education and advice. For Ludwig Erhard later on, such legal protection for consumers was an important element of the social market economy, supporting them vis-à-vis companies, which would otherwise tend to be in more powerful market positions, and at the same time limiting the market powers of the major companies. Erhard therefore saw the cartel laws and the law against unfair competition as constitutive elements that would help ensure a productive and balanced interaction between the forces of the social market economy.

Since then, ensuring functioning competition, market transparency and individual legal protection rights have been fundamental pillars of consumer policy, which aims to enable people to buy good products at reasonable prices on the basis of good information and with the protection of national and EU legislation.

Meanwhile, however, new challenges have arisen for consumer policy. The principle of sustainability, with its inherent requirements for global and intergenerational justice, requires not only the welfare of the domestic consumer to be taken into account but also the conditions under which a product is manufactured in the global supply chains. Whereas it was possible to assume when products were manufactured in Germany or Europe that a reasonable level of labour standards applied, outsourcing to newly-industrialised or developing countries with very unsatisfactory and unmonitored safety regulations, although it led to low consumer prices, also often led to unacceptable labour standards and massive health and environmental impacts. These consequences of the externalisation of costs onto other people and the environment were not immediately apparent to many consumers. In the meantime, however, research and information from NGOs and church organisations working in human rights and environmental policy have raised awareness of the high costs of low prices, something that contradicts the simple assumption that cheaper is always better. Civil society initiatives to develop standards for fair trade or sustainable production for particular product groups are creating opportunities for action for those consumers who are not only aware of their global responsibilities when making purchases but want to act accordingly. It is encouraging to note that the number of such consumers is rising – slowly, perhaps, but steadily.

The task of consumer policy here is to work actively and internationally for human rights and for humane labour standards too, as well as for the protection of the environment and nature, and to make it easier for consumers to choose in accordance with their international responsibility. Consumer policy needs to prepare consumers for the fact that the era of cheap consumption at other people's expense is coming to an end, that the consequence will be higher prices under fairer conditions, and that there will be a reduction in the quantity of consumer goods available. The coming price rises for energy and resources as a result of increasing resource scarcity and climate change will also contribute to higher product prices. The goal for consumer policy on this point should not be that of the lowest possible prices for everyone, but rather that of ameliorating the social problems that will arise for low-income groups, through better budget management advice, new financial innovations and social policy measures.

Another reason why more thought needs to be given to the absolute quantity of consumer goods is that a globally more equal utilisation of energy and resources is a fundamental element of sustainability. This leads to political demands for sustainability targets in the industrialised countries that include a reduction in energy and resource use of 80 to 90 percent by 2050. The necessary reduction in the energy and resource use attributable to consumption can be assumed to be on the same scale. This has to be achieved by re-orienting consumers towards 'sustainable consumption' and a corresponding product range based on low energy and resource input.

As important as these efficiency-oriented measures are, a consumer policy oriented towards sustainability and implementing strategies for sufficiency will be just as important. This means that the guiding principles of the 'four Lessens' described above (lessening speed, distance, clutter and commerce) would also need to be adopted as guidelines for consumer policy. What this might mean in practice could include a stronger and legally-based response to the problem of planned obsolescence and ensuring that consumers can see at the point of purchase whether products can be repaired.

Thus consumer policy would acquire new tasks. Although it will of course remain important to ensure the quality of new products, to inform consumers and to underpin their legal rights, all of this would now have a different significance and emphasis. Consumer education and advice in the new era will strengthen powers of critical judgement. It will not simply ask which large-screen television set has the lowest energy consumption, but will also ask how big a new television needs to be? And how many gadgets are needed in the household anyway? It will pose the zero-option question – non-purchase – and other questions about alternatives. It will place more emphasis on understanding the needs and desires that lie behind the wish to buy, and it will take into account the ecological and social consequences of any purchase. And finally it will invite the consumer to think about the relationship between the possession of goods and happiness.

In addition to this, a new consumer policy will set narrower limits on advertising. It will also set legal restrictions on the capacity to develop and exploit the consumer profiling made possible by new information technologies. It will limit aggressive advertising for credit facilities, and will increase debt advice services. It is not only national budgets that need 'deficit control'.

But in a society oriented towards sufficiency, alongside the consumers seeking to satisfy their wants with products and services from the marketplace, increasing numbers of people will be self-provisioning by making products themselves or together with others and by providing services (such as repairs, advice or support) free of charge, whether in their own homes or in communal workshops or communal living arrangements. We need a debate over whether political support for such developments – for example through the creation of new legal structures for new models or forms of ownership, use and work – is necessary or possible. And it would be useful to investigate which experimental forms of newer, less consumption-oriented and more communal lifestyles can receive such support, and what socially important insights might be gained from linked research projects.

It is in the area of consumer policy that the underlying tensions between growth, sustainability and sufficiency can be seen with particular clarity. The political mainstream wishes to retain consumption as the motor of economic growth – even if it has to be in the modified form of sustainable consumption. So is there then any prospect of firm political support for a elective non-consumerism? Is it conceivable that the ministry for consumer affairs could launch a campaign for sustainability based on advertising promoting lifestyles of sufficiency?

Chapter V
Civil society, business and research as agents for a politics of sufficiency

The preceding chapters have shown how a range of policy measures can be used to create the conditions that would make it easier to live the Good Life. They delineate the contours of a comprehensive and systematic politics of sufficiency.

There are already a number of different concepts and projects that embody sufficiency policy, but as yet it is still some distance from finding its way into any political programme. And although there is clearly a demand, in the wider society as well as in the world of politics, for a change of direction (as is shown not least by the Enquête Study Commission in Germany already referred to), it is also true that any such change of direction brings with it uncertainty and opposition; the more so in this instance, as sufficiency policy would represent an alternative to the dominant policy of economic growth. Meanwhile, all the political parties are committed to a policy of growth.

This is why the transition to a politics of sufficiency requires a social transformation to precede and accompany it, in order for the outlines of a new kind of politics to become visible and for support for a change of direction to grow and become audible.

Three sectors have an especially important role to play in this social transformation as agents and catalysts for a politics of sufficiency:

Civil society. The louder the call for a re-orientation of our politics towards the creation of prosperity – from individuals, initiatives and all kinds of civil society organisations, and from environmental associations to churches and trade unions – the better the ground will be prepared for the implementation of new policies.

Business. When it becomes clear that a change of orientation towards the Good Life will also bring new business opportunities, then some companies at least will show a greater readiness to support such a change. The ecological restructuring of the German economy from the 1980s onwards was also driven by pioneering firms.

Research. How new policies for prosperity should be designed in detail, and what effects they can be predicted to have on society as a whole – these are issues that can be scientifically researched. The results of such research can then facilitate a change of political direction.

In what follows, the focus is on possible starting-points within all three sectors.

Civil society

The last few years have given people cause for thought. The economic and financial crisis resulted in many people losing their faith in the security and reliability of traditional career structures. This in turn increased the general receptiveness to the idea of personal re-orientation. In local government, the acute financial shortfall has increased the readiness to support sufficiency-oriented projects, because they cost little and can strengthen social cohesion as well as having a positive effect on what it feels like to live somewhere. Published research and a plethora of personal experiences of rebound and growth effects negating efficiency increases have led to a rising number of people losing confidence in the idea that technology alone will deliver us a sustainable future.

All this has changed the tone in which lifestyles are discussed today, and the attitude towards the – increasing – appetite for lifestyle experimentation. Although the topic of lifestyle change was long dismissed as the preserve of harmless aesthetes or over-earnest moralists, today it appeals increasingly to the sensibilities of a young and unconventional generation, especially in the cities. 'Urban gardening' suggests a different vibe from that associated with 'allotments', and 'Transition Towns' sounds more positive and inspiring than 'Agenda 21'. Some of the older generation of activists may sometimes find themselves bemused and even a little frustrated by this turn, but ultimately it is surely good news that the concept is now trendy and is losing its overtone of self-righteousness.

In these young and predominantly urban milieus a dynamic of sufficiency-based living has sprung up. Countless initiatives and projects are not just talking about the Good Life, but trying to live it; they are not waiting for political and structural change, but changing their own lives and creating the space in which to do it – 'do it yourself', and 'do it together'. They are turning their ideas and dreams into reality through spontaneity, creativity, cooperation and crowdfunding. This is a reality that is also fascinating and inspiring others, via an international exchange network – for project information and experience, and for practical action guides like the Transition Handbook for the international Transition Town movement.

All of this is the expression of a wide-ranging transformation in (civil) society that is preparing the ground for a politics of sufficiency. It creates the space for a multitude of experiments, and that can result in pioneer projects for a few becoming real alternatives for the many.

However patchwork and uncoordinated this movement for the Commons, it does challenge the ideology of the market and – through its emphasis on common purpose and cooperation – the individualistic 'Homo oeconomicus'. If this movement spreads, if it develops into something more than an appealing niche phenomenon, then it will inevitably come into conflict with existing political and economic interests. That is why sufficiency must not consist only of small-scale projects but needs to be taken seriously as a matter of wide political significance, so that supporting framework conditions can be put in place to enable it to spread even within existing structures. That is why it is so important for debates over growth, sustainability and the Good Life to be conducted in the political arena and in wider society in order to promote a reorientation. For policy implementation to happen, a political drive for a transformation to sufficiency and a detachment from growth needs to emerge out of the different movements (traditional as well as new).

Established civil society organisations – and especially those with decentralised structures and active members on the ground – will play a central role here. They have the opportunity to link together good living at the individual level with practical projects and an engagement in sufficiency policy, and they can do this at all of the different levels of action – local, regional and national, as well as European and international. They are key agents for citizen participation and engagement.

The **environmental and conservation associations** are very important for sufficiency policy. Already in the 1970s they were criticising growth policy, consumerism and waste. They concerned themselves from an early point with the concept and practice of sustainability and have adopted it as a guiding principle.

A core element of their work is the call for the careful use of energy, resources and land, as is the conviction that technical improvements may be helpful but are not enough, and that a cultural transformation and changes in lifestyles are also needed. Friends of the Earth Germany, for example, the biggest environmental association in that country, together with the German Catholic Bishops Organisation for Development Cooperation and the Protestant development movement 'Bread for the World' ('Brot für die Welt'), published two studies on 'Sustainable Germany' (1996 and 2008, carried out by the Wuppertal Institute), which took the debate around global and intergenerational justice and new low-consumption lifestyles into the mainstream.

By communicating knowledge and practical skills, together with the experience of working with and being in nature, the educational work of the environmental associations strengthens the ability of people to find their own path to a good life lived in conscious responsibility. This is where it is possible to combine a change in one's own lifestyle with a committed engagement in bringing about a change in social and political structures.

Thus sufficiency and sufficiency policy do not represent new territory for the environmental associations. Nonetheless today, in a changed social context, they can ask themselves anew what strategic approach they want to take to the issue. Environmental associations have no vested interest in a continued expectation of escalation. Thanks to their independence they are able to take risks and to push hard for sufficiency. They can make sufficiency policy the guiding principle of campaigns in different policy fields, for example in transport policy, in agricultural policy or in waste management policy. Although greater energy efficiency is needed, there are now many organisations campaigning for this. In fact, it has grown into a business sector, with countless firms and industries involved. A similar development is possible for sufficiency, even though it has not yet happened (as the following section will show). Environmental associations play an important role here as civil society organisations – through their influence on public opinion, through their structures, through their public impact and their political influence, they can develop new concepts and risk new visions, they can demonstrate the alternatives to 'further, faster, more' in practical projects, they can set the tone within their own sphere and engage their members as agents for sufficiency. At the same time they can put a spoke in the wheels of the ideology of escalation; they can win time by means of blockades, create public pressure for a complete re-think, and push through alternative solutions to problems – especially through public participation. They can help to transform a resigned sense that 'there is no alternative' into an inspiring belief that 'another world is possible'.

But the issue of sufficiency is by no means only of interest to the environmental associations: The **churches** are another important player in this area. The Good Life, justice, working together above and beyond one's own interest, these are all central themes for the churches and form an important element not only of the Christian code of values. The German Protestant 'Kirchentag' – a national and European meeting of over 100,000 participants every two years – is an important platform for such debates. The Kirchentag in Hamburg in 2013, which took place under the slogan 'As much as you need', was indicative of the impact the debate over the non-material dimensions of the Good Life is having in the churches and in society at large. The emphasis being put on justice and global poverty by the new Pope Francis means that these issues are particularly topical in the Catholic Church as well.

For the **trade unions** too, the Good Life is a central issue. The struggle for a good life for as many people as possible marked the start of the labour movement in the 19th century. Alongside core demands for better legislation to restrict working time and improve working conditions and health protection, the objectives at that time also included communal institutions like better shopping facilities, gardens for self-provisioning, education and leisure opportunities. The vibrant working-class culture of the time, especially in its practical self-help programmes and in the way its goals went beyond the purely material, had much in common with the approach of contemporary movements.

The call for a reduction in working time for all, still a part of the trade union programme in the late 1980s, may have lost some urgency, but part-time work, sabbaticals, and parental and carer's leave have all meanwhile become fixtures on the unions' agenda. However, sufficiency policy represents a much bigger internal challenge for the trade unions than it does for environmental associations or for the churches, because the orientation towards paid employment, full-time jobs and wage increases remains an important characteristic of trade union politics. And this means that maintaining economic growth can easily become the knee-jerk response to any crisis.

It is all the more impressive, then, that the German environmental associations, churches and trade unions got together in 2012 to mark the 20th anniversary of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro by holding a national 'Transformation Congress' to underline the importance of a comprehensive social transformation to all three movements. The Congress created a platform for closer cooperation in future in the search for alternative social models. One important binding element in this is the issue of justice. All the organisations are in agreement that business as usual in the economy is no answer to growing national and international inequality, which poses a serious threat to a good life for all. In any effective call for a courageous politics of sufficiency, civil society must be the central voice.

Business

How dynamic and innovative will a 'sufficient' society be – one that seeks new equilibria beyond 'faster', 'globalised', 'more' and 'more market'? There is a widespread concern that an abandonment of the contemporary escalation imperative will come at the cost of stagnation and monotony.

The reality is probably the opposite. A society seeking the proper balance between too much and too little, between acceleration and deceleration, market and self-provisioning, the global and the local, is more colourful and requires much more imagination than one that follows only the linear compulsion of escalation.

That is why the 'four Lessens' which we have presented in this book as guidelines for the politics of sufficiency also represent a great opportunity for entrepreneurs. An economy based on sufficiency will be less commercialised than today's economy is. But traditional commercial activity will remain a central part of economic life and will require the same amount of creativity and enterprise. It is already clear today that the new orientation is opening up business opportunities which are not obvious at first sight:

Less Property – From de-cluttering to the Sharing Economy. The cultural trend towards 'decluttering' and the principle of Less has been taken up in important areas of life and of the product markets. Many young people, especially in big cities, no longer want to possess their own car. Cars have lost their attraction as a status symbol; keeping and maintaining them, and the tiresome search for a parking space, mean that a car has become more of a burden than a pleasure. The car manufacturers have responded to this change. Whereas car sharing was at first a self-organised alternative form of mobility among environmentally aware groups, all the leading car makers now offer some form of share system. The intelligent use of fewer vehicles is becoming a business model. And the shared use of cars is just the first step to a 'sharing economy'. New media channels are helping to extend the principle to many other consumer goods. This is why the world's biggest computer trade fair, Cebit, chose this trend as its focus for 2013. A new purism is taking hold in many areas of life, from single speed bikes to minimalist interior decor, and it needs entrepreneurs who can provide appropriate products and services. But it is important that simplified products do not just become additional consumption, as that would mean we would only be dealing with a 'sufficiency rebound' – that is, sufficiency as a catalyst for greater consumption. What can help here is the presence of many companies that are growth-neutral themselves, meaning that their strategy is not geared towards growth. And a whole range of such companies already exists today.

Less Speed – Deceleration as market opportunity. Something similar can be observed in the appetite for a new tempo as the right measure between acceleration and deceleration. The 'Slow Food' movement, for example, has attracted a huge number of followers in the recent years. The rediscovery of eating as an experience of conscious and slowed-down pleasure is booming and many restaurants have recognised the commercial opportunity this represents. The same applies to 'Slow Travel'. And in the industrial sector, too, it has long been recognised that slowing down certain logistical chains can substantially increase the reliability of deliveries and reduce transport costs. The rediscovery of long-life products capable of being repaired, and with a long-term maintenance and service agreement, is a response to growing disenchantment with the development over recent decades of a throwaway culture and of planned obsolescence. Just as with car-sharing, here too the germ of a new business model grew out of a culture of voluntary 'repair cafes', because the cultural transformation is making repairable products attractive again and creating a need for new forms of skills training and of information exchange about how to get products working again.

Less Market – De-commercialisation as an incentive for re-learning lost skills. Even where it seems at first glance that commercial companies have nothing to gain, namely under the rubric of de-commercialisation, nevertheless opportunity knocks for innovative entrepreneurs. Anybody who wants to cook, repair or restore things, or to do gardening, often has to (re-)learn lost skills; and this creates a market for training courses, guidebooks, and locations and online platforms for the exchange of practical experience.

Less Distance – the trend towards disentanglement and localisation. Of the guiding 'four Lessens' it is 'less distance', in the form of regionalisation or localisation, which has been the most influential to date. The rediscovery of local connectedness as a positive selling-point for a product plays an especially significant role with respect to foods. Today even big fast food chains attach great importance to ensuring that as many of their supplies as possible are locally sourced, as a sign of the high quality of the food they offer. Meanwhile, many other producers also use local production as a marketing tool to attract more customers.

Notwithstanding all this, commercial enterprise based on the 'four Lessens' is still a niche phenomenon today, and developing a sufficient society will not be achieved through market mechanisms alone. But the examples outlined above show that dynamic and innovative firms will continue to play an important role even in a sufficient society. So a society in which it is easier to live the Good Life requires not only the right political framework but also companies that take up in an innovative way the opportunities that framework offers. Over the last 30 years we have seen the blueprint for this kind of interactive development in the renewable energy sector. There too, it was a small number of pioneering eco-technology fanatics or small entrepreneurs, often seen as slightly mad, who built solar and wind energy installations in their garages and showed. They showed that a different energy future was a technological possibility. With the support of appropriate and innovative political initiatives, the market for renewable energy grew out of this; and now a totally renewable energy supply system by 2050 is within our reach.

Just as with the field of work, it is important not to limit our understanding of 'enterprise' to the commercial sector. In recent years the 'social enterprise' has grown substantially in importance. What lies behind this term is enterprise for social purposes. Social entrepreneurs seek innovative solutions to ecological and social problems: new organisational structures and new forms of cooperation to deal with illiteracy, for example, or with poverty, discrimination against women, or violence. The outcome of this kind of enterprise is not a marketable product but a solution to a specific social problem. Yet the qualities that distinguish a social entrepreneur are similar to those required for a classic entrepreneur: a good understanding of the problems faced by the target group, creativity, a love of experimentation, and perseverance.

Firms like the GLS Bank or the Schönau electricity cooperative in Germany combine traditional and social entrepreneurship. GLS Bank is a cooperative in which the customers have a say in how and where their money is invested. The Schönau electricity generating cooperative considers itself to be not just an energy company but an agent for the energy transformation.

All of this makes it clear that even in a sufficient world there will be competition and creative enterprise. The more we see of this kind of enterprise, oriented towards the Good Life, the easier it will be to implement policies supporting a similar change in the wider society.

Research

One of the tasks of research is to envision possible futures. By doing so it supports the development of social and political alternatives. The introduction of green (or ecological) taxes was made easier by the fact that early studies demonstrated that a reform of this kind would not destroy jobs but would instead create more. And the decision to commit to the German energy transformation in 2011 and the phase-out of nuclear power would probably not have been taken without the numerous studies carried out beforehand, which demonstrated that a switch to 100% renewable energy supply, globally and nationally, was both technologically and economically feasible.

But when it comes to alternatives to today's economic model – alternatives outside or beyond the growth and escalation traps – then the economic research community fails us miserably. 'Growth!' is the title of the book written by the Magdeburg economist Karl-Heinz Paqué on the future of global capitalism. In a sense, it is the programme title of the guild of professional economists. In the German Enquête Study Commission into 'Growth, Well-being and the Quality of Life', it was the established economists invited to contribute who thought it made little sense to consider alternatives to economic growth or to develop alternative indicators to replace GDP.

In order to have a better economic understanding of the prospects for a sufficient society we still need answers to many research questions. How can social security systems be adapted to increasingly sufficiency-based lifestyles? What are the incentives for taking up and continuing voluntary civic engagement and work? What prospects will sufficient societies have in a competitive global system? How will sufficiency-based business models fare in certain business sectors? What will the effects of de-commercialisation in certain areas be on the prosperity of the society as a whole? How can alternative measures of prosperity be established in a way that can be statistically monitored and evaluated? What kind of international trade regulations are needed to ensure that national sufficiency strategies can be implemented independently?

These few research questions make it clear how important it is that serious consideration is given in at least some corners of the research system to alternatives to the current pattern of economic development. And these questions cannot be answered by means of economic modelling alone. They require new methodological approaches, both at laboratory scale and in the form of field trials.

Yet to date only very few established economists have engaged seriously with alternatives to the economic mainstream. Organisations such as the Institute for New Economic Thinking (INET) and economists such as Herman Daly and the Nobel Prize winner Elinor Ostrom have given impetus to alternative economic thinking in the international debate. In Germany, Martin Hellwig, Director of the Max Planck Institute for Research on Collective Goods, has made important contributions to the debate on the future regulation of financial markets, and the economist and Leibniz Prize winner Armin Falk at the University of Bonn has shown how market processes undermine our traditional ethics. These all represent small but important steps on the way to a new and more pluralist economy.

At the same time, the demand for such alternative measures and models in our society is growing – and particularly amongst students. Many students of economics are turning away in disappointment from the courses on offer in economics departments and organising their own seminars and lectures in order to grapple with the questions which led them to the universities in the first place. Examples include the national German network on degrowth ('Netzwerk Wachstumswende') and the International Student Initiative for Pluralism in Economics.

Yet the theorists in the vanguard of the new economy are denied entry through the hallowed portals to the heights of the profession, meaning that the economic debate loses the alternative models and maverick thinkers it needs in order to take the discussion on alternative economic perspectives forward.

The discipline of sociology is further ahead in some respects, although here too there is still some catching up to be done. Here, critical engagement with modern growth society can be found at the top levels of the research establishment. In 2011, the German Research Foundation set up a research group on 'Land Appropriation, Acceleration, Activation. Dynamics and (De)stabilisation of modern growth societies' led by the Jena sociologists Klaus Dörre, Hartmut Rosa and Stephan Lessenich, Chair of the German Sociological Association in 2013. The Max Planck Institute for the Study of Societies in Cologne is considered the most important institution for basic research in the social sciences in Germany and is led by Wolfgang Streeck, whose analyses of the 'deferred cris(e)s of democratic capitalism' are highly critical of the contemporary economic system (although they fail to take account of the ecological dimension). All this finds only a very weak counterpart in economics.

At the international level, the first alternative think tanks are emerging, such as the ‘Institute for New Economic Thinking (INET)’ in New York. The financial crisis has at least shaken up the economics profession in the USA, even if the majority of economists there, as in Germany, still hold fast to the classical paradigms.

How could a change of course in the research system be brought about? A central issue is the need for a substantial increase in the capacity of the research system to think seriously about new forms of economic activity. We would like to make two suggestions in this area:

1. There is a need for at least **some economics departments** with a critical mass of economists who think along alternative lines and who work in an interdisciplinary way. Only then will it be possible for study courses, doctoral programmes and other graduate opportunities to advance the next generation, and for major research proposals – based, like the learning opportunities, on a new economy – to be developed. A change of direction of this kind within the university sector is not easy; but it does present an opportunity for individual institutions to carve out a distinct profile and could be supported by appropriate funding programmes.

2. It would be welcome if alongside selected universities one or two publicly supported **thought leadership institutes** for a new economy in Germany could be established. The funds are there. There are currently six economic research institutes just within the Leibniz Association, which is funded by the national and Land governments. Alternative economic research is carried out today almost exclusively in independent pioneering establishments like the Institute for Ecological Economy Research (IÖW), set up in the mid-1980s, which have to make their way without any public core funding. More heterodox economic think tanks in Germany with equivalent financial research independence to that enjoyed by the conventional economic research establishments would be welcome. The example of the Institute for New Economic Thinking (INET) in New York shows that private funders too can stimulate the creation of alternative think tanks.

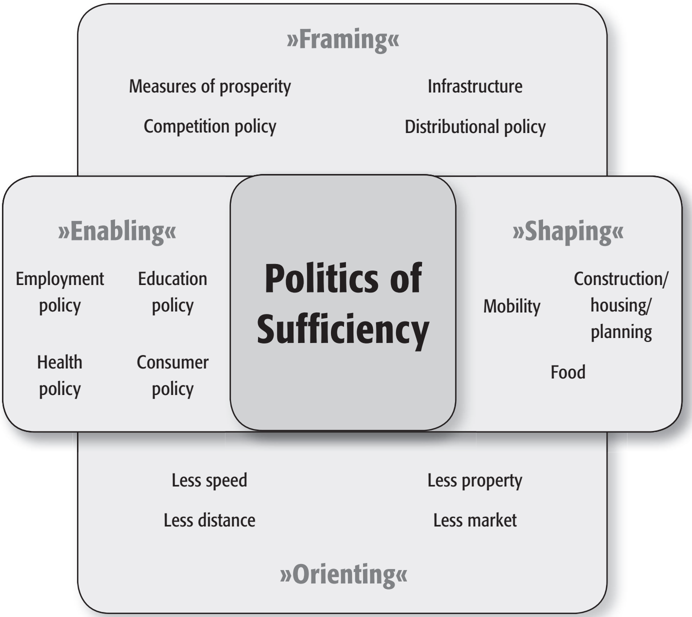
In order for the Good Life to become easier, alternatives have to be imagined and thought through scientifically. This is why research is a central agent for sufficiency policy. And in order for the potential in economics in particular to be realised, new research policy initiatives are needed.

Conclusion
How to contribute to the politics of sufficiency

This book was written to demonstrate that sufficiency as an overarching political programme is not only possible, but is a necessary condition for the improvement of the prospects for a good life for all. The project of sufficiency politics connects with existing political and social structures and agendas at numerous points, which in turn are closely interconnected with each other, and this offers many political starting-points for our project. We divided these into four areas, or pathways (see the figure on p. 159), which we called the politics of Framing, Shaping, Enabling and Orienting (and for this last area we suggested as guidelines the 'four Lessens': less speed, less distance, less property and less market).

This book is a beginning. It is intended to provoke a debate that will mark out the territory for a new field of politics. This will take time. The debates and discussions need to start simultaneously in many areas of society – in the sphere of politics, but also in civil society, in business and in the research community. It is just such debates that the book aims to provoke. Over the coming months, the book will be followed up through lectures and discussion events, both real and virtual (online at *www.postwachstum.de*). We look forward to many controversial debates taking these ideas forward, and we welcome comments, observations, questions and suggestions by email to suffizienzpolitik@wupperinst.org

The four pathways to a politics of sufficiency



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»To achieve our climate and resource use goals, we need a politics of sufficiency.«

Uwe Schneidewind & Angelika Zahrnt

»Growth« is the only political, economic and social goal recognized today. But it brings us up against the ecological limits of the planet – and against the increasingly widespread recognition of the fact that material wealth alone cannot make us happy. For this reason, ever growing numbers of people are seeking and discovering alternative and sustainable ways of living. This is to be welcomed, but it is not enough. We need a politics of sufficiency that will make it easier to live with fewer resources but with stronger relationships. This book outlines the political framework and policy guidelines that will enable us to reduce the speed, complexity, clutter and commercialization currently blighting our lives. And it demonstrates what that would mean in practice for where we live, how we get around, and how we eat, work and learn.

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