

# **Companies Contributing to the Common Good**

**An Empirical Study about the Common Good Approach  
in Entrepreneurial Practice**

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## Abstract

The Economy for the Common Good (ECG) is a social movement that claims that all economic activity should serve the common good. The common good balance sheet (CGB) developed by the movement is a corporate social responsibility (CSR) management tool that tracks the socio-ecological commitment of a company in a comparable way. Addressing the lack of research on the common good approach in entrepreneurial practice and its potential impacts on macro and micro levels, I surveyed 332 employees from companies that joined the ECG and conducted eleven interviews with ECG company representatives. Our results show that in their management practices, the companies are guided by values such as transparency, democracy, diversity, independence, cooperation, fairness, and ecological sustainability. This is exemplified by a high degree of corporate transparency, democratic ownership and decision-making structures, cooperative trade relations, the redistribution of surpluses and a preference for local and socio-ecological suppliers. The common good orientation is intrinsically motivated and part of the core business. In single owner companies it is anchored in a top-down direction via a delegation system, while it is implemented bottom-up in a company's self-conception as a socio-ecological collective. The companies studied are willing to accept profit setbacks in order to implement their socio-ecological principles. Among the companies, I identified examples of sufficiency-oriented practices. Some companies in my sample do not aim to grow, while others consider further company growth to be necessary. Due to the interaction of their re-evaluation in values, reconceptualisation, restructuring and relocation of corporate structures and business practices, redistribution of power and reduction of their environmental impact they bear the potential to contribute to a societal transition towards degrowth. The more common good-oriented a company acts, the more CSR is perceived by employees, and the more satisfied employees declare themselves with their jobs. With increasing fair distribution of work and higher workplace quality, employees experience fewer job demands. Furthermore, workplace quality positively influences the perceived support from the company. While the fair and transparent distribution of income has a correlation on pay level satisfaction, I could not

prove an effect between the public welfare-oriented investment of profits on pay level satisfaction. The value and social impact of products and services is related to the perceived meaningfulness of work, but has no influence on the extent to which employees identify with their companies. However, employees in companies with high transparency and co-determination identify better with their companies. I also found that employees are more willing to take on tasks that are not part of their official job description but serve the company if the company is cooperative with other companies. However, the outward cooperative behaviour of the company has no influence on whether employees behave cooperatively with each other. The scoring of the CGB so far includes only few aspects that explain differences in job satisfaction between the companies; a circumstance that should be remedied in the further development of the CGB. Overall, I conclude from my study that the ECG has the potential to promote the sustainability transformation of the economy, as it connects, strengthens and makes visible pioneers of socio-ecological change.

## Zusammenfassung

Die Gemeinwohl-Ökonomie (GWÖ) ist eine soziale Bewegung, die fordert, dass alle wirtschaftlichen Aktivitäten dem Gemeinwohl dienen sollen. Mit der Gemeinwohl-Bilanz hat sie ein Managementinstrument für Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) entwickelt, welches das sozial-ökologische Engagement von Unternehmen vergleichbar erfasst. Der Gemeinwohl-Ansatz in der unternehmerischen Praxis und seine möglichen Auswirkungen auf der Makro- und Mikroebene sind bislang weitgehend unerforscht. Um diesem Defizit zu begegnen, habe ich eine Befragung mit 332 Mitarbeiter\*innen und elf Interviews mit Vertreter\*innen aus GWÖ-Unternehmen durchgeführt. Unsere Ergebnisse zeigen, dass sich die Unternehmen in ihrer Managementpraxis an Werten wie Transparenz, Demokratie, Vielfalt, Unabhängigkeit, Kooperation, Fairness und ökologischer Nachhaltigkeit orientieren. Dies drückt sich in einem hohen Maß an Unternehmenstransparenz aus, an demokratischen Eigentums- und Entscheidungsstrukturen, kooperativen Handelsbeziehungen, einer Umverteilung von Gewinnen und einer Bevorzugung lokaler und sozial-ökologischer Lieferanten. Die Gemeinwohlorientierung ist intrinsisch motiviert und gehört zum Kerngeschäft. In Unternehmen mit Einzeleigentümer\*innen ist sie top-down über ein Delegationssystem verankert oder wird über das Selbstverständnis des Unternehmens als sozial-ökologisches Kollektiv bottom-up implementiert. Die untersuchten Unternehmen sind bereit, Gewinneinbußen in Kauf zu nehmen, um ihre sozial-ökologischen Prinzipien umzusetzen. Auch Beispiele für suffizienzorientierte Praktiken ließen sich feststellen. Einige Unternehmen in meiner Stichprobe streben kein Wachstum an, während andere selbiges als notwendig erachten. Begründet durch das Zusammenspiel ihrer Werteorientierung, der Neukonzeption, Restrukturierung und Relokalisierung von Unternehmensstrukturen sowie Geschäftspraktiken, der Umverteilung von Macht und der Reduzierung ihrer Umweltauswirkungen haben die Unternehmen das Potenzial, zu einem gesellschaftlichen Wandel in Richtung Degrowth beizutragen. Je gemeinwohlorientierter ein Unternehmen wirtschaftet, desto mehr CSR wird von den Mitarbeiter\*innen wahrgenommen und desto zufriedener erklären sie sich mit ihren Jobs. Mit zunehmender fairer Verteilung der Arbeit und

höherer Arbeitsplatzqualität erleben die Mitarbeiter\*innen weniger Belastungen am Arbeitsplatz. Zudem wirkt sich die Arbeitsplatzqualität positiv auf die wahrgenommene Unterstützung durch das Unternehmen aus. Während die faire und transparente Verteilung der Einkommen in einem Zusammenhang mit der Einkommenszufriedenheit steht, konnte ich keinen Effekt zwischen der gemeinwohlorientierten Investition der Gewinne und der Einkommenszufriedenheit nachweisen. Sinn und die gesellschaftliche Wirkung der Produkte und Dienstleistungen stehen in einem Zusammenhang mit der erlebten Sinnhaftigkeit der Arbeit, haben jedoch keinen Einfluss darauf, inwiefern sich die Mitarbeiter\*innen mit ihren Organisationen identifizieren. In Unternehmen mit hoher Transparenz und Mitbestimmung hingegen identifizieren sich die Mitarbeiter\*innen stärker mit ihren Unternehmen. Ich konnte auch nachweisen, dass Mitarbeiter\*innen eher bereit sind Aufgaben zu übernehmen, die nicht Teil ihrer offiziellen Stellenbeschreibung sind, aber dem Unternehmen dienen, wenn sich das Unternehmen kooperativ mit anderen Unternehmen verhält. Das kooperative Verhalten nach außen hat jedoch keinen Einfluss darauf, ob sich die Mitarbeiter\*innen untereinander kooperativ verhalten. Das Scoring der Gemeinwohl-Bilanz schließt bisher nur wenige Aspekte ein, die Unterschiede in der Arbeitszufriedenheit in den Unternehmen erklären können; dieser Umstand sollte bei der Weiterentwicklung der Gemeinwohl-Bilanz behoben werden. Insgesamt schließe ich aus meiner Studie, dass die GWÖ das Potenzial hat, die Nachhaltigkeitstransformation der Wirtschaft zu befördern, da sie Pioniere des sozial-ökologischen Wandels vernetzt, stärkt und sichtbar macht.

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### Abbreviations

Ba	Bakery
cf.	Confer [compare to]
CST	Catholic Social Teaching
CGB	Common Good Balance Sheet [Gemeinwohl-Bilanz]
CgoC	Common good-oriented company
CIC	Conventional large corporation
cm	Clothing manufacturer
CSR	Corporate social responsibility
ecc	Elder care center
ECG	Economy for the Common Good [Gemeinwohl-Ökonomie]
ed	Service provider for event design
ef	Engineering firm
EMAS	EcoManagement and Audit Scheme
e.g.	Exempli gratia [for example]
fa	Farm
GIVUN	Gemeinwohl-Ökonomie im Vergleich unternehmerischer Nachhaltigkeitsstrategien [Common Good Economy in a Comparison With Entrepreneurial Sustainability Strategies]
GRI	Global Reporting Initiative
i.e.	id est [that is]
ISO	International Organisation for Standardisation
ma	Media agency
mc	Media company
NEC	Norbert Elias Centre for Transformation Design & Research
p.	Page
par.	Paragraph

pc	Printing company
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SMEs	Small and medium-sized enterprises
SNCs	Successful non-growing companies
ws1	Wholesaler for organic food I
ws2	Wholesaler for organic food II

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## **Companies and the Sustainability Transformation of the Economy**

When people hear a term, they usually have an image of it in their mind. When people talk about companies, they typically think of large corporations. Privately held small to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) have significantly less visibility when compared to large publicly traded firms or multinational corporations (Stubblefield Loucks et al., 2010). This phenomenon also becomes apparent when we consider the extent to which a company cares about the well-being of its internal and external stakeholders; this is defined as corporate social responsibility (CSR) (see Glavas & Kelley, 2014). In the academic CSR debate, large companies have been the main topic of discussion for a long time, whereas SMEs have been neglected (Elford & Daub, 2019). This is surprising, because SMEs constitute 99 percent of all businesses in the European Union, offer two in every three jobs, and are responsible for half of Europe's gross domestic product (European Union, 2020). The impact of SMEs on society is therefore underestimated (Lepoutre & Heene, 2006).

The research literature also notes that CSR management tools used by companies to document and communicate their CSR, such as EcoManagement and Audit Scheme (EMAS) or Global Reporting Initiative (GRI), were developed with large companies in mind, with the intention of then scaling them down to smaller companies (Jenkins, 2004). However, small companies are not simply large companies on a smaller scale; SMEs differ from large firms in terms of their structural, social and functional characteristics (Spence, 2016; Spence & Rutherford, 2001; Spence & Schmidpeter, 2003). SMEs therefore claim they have difficulties applying established CSR standards (Elford & Daub, 2019; Johnson & Schaltegger, 2016). A CSR tool that has found favour among small and medium-sized companies in German-speaking countries is the Common Good Balance Sheet (CGB). The CGB was created by the civic social movement Economy for the Common Good (ECG).

In this introduction, I first present the ECG and its relation to the degrowth movement as well as the importance of companies in a socio-ecological transformation of the economy. I then explain the common good approach as a CSR strategy and briefly discuss how employees react when their companies engage in socio-ecological activities. Furthermore, I

present the importance of values in the business context and finally introduce the questions of this dissertation. In the last part of this introduction, I explain the structure of the dissertation and give hints on how to understand and classify my research.

### **The Economy for the Common Good**

In 2008, a small group of entrepreneurs came together with the Austrian Attac activist and writer Christian Felber to discuss Felber's ideas from his book *New Values for the Economy* (*Gemeinwohl-Ökonomie*, 2018). They agreed on the notion that the main purpose of all economic activity should be to contribute to the common good and that profits should merely serve as a means to an end in this context. This is how the social movement of the Economy for the Common Good (ECG) originated. In a democratic, participative and open-ended process, their supporters aim to establish an economic system in which the common good comes first (Felber, 2018).

The core instrument is the CGB, which is an assessment tool to determine whether a company's behaviour is in accordance with the ECG's core values. According to the CGB matrix 4.1, these values are human dignity, cooperation and solidarity, ecological sustainability, social justice, and co-determination and transparency. For each value category, the CGB formulates standards for how a company would ideally treat their stakeholders. The latter are, according to the CGB, a company's suppliers, investors, employees and business owners, customers and business partners as well as the social environment (*Gemeinwohl-Ökonomie*, 2013). The matrix 4.1 was replaced by the revised version 5.0 in May 2017. There are no fundamental differences between the two versions in terms of content; the differences, rather, consist in some restructuring and conceptual adaptations for the sake of greater logical consistency and clarity, and in tying in more closely with the standards in the European Union guidelines on non-financial reporting (*Gemeinwohl-Ökonomie*, 2017). In my dissertation, I primarily refer to matrix 4.1, since the companies I have investigated for this study compiled their CGBs using this version.

All actions a company undertakes in the service of the formulated values and above today's legal minimum standard score positive points in the CGB, whereas, for example,

hostile takeovers, blocking patents or the prevention of a works council reduce the score (Felber, 2018). The comparability of the results in the CGBs is ensured by peer-review processes or through an external audit (Gemeinwohl-Ökonomie, 2020d). One prominent requirement by the ECG is that publishing a CGB should be a legal obligation for all companies and that companies with better scores should be granted easier access to bank loans and given preference in public procurement processes (Felber, 2018).

To date, the ECG is active in over 20 countries all over the world: 18 unions have been founded; around 100 regional groups exist; and the webpage counts over 9,500 supporters, consisting of individuals, politicians and more than 2,000 companies (Gemeinwohl-Ökonomie, 2020c). Several municipalities in Germany and other European countries, as well as 400 companies, have compiled a CGB (e.g., Gemeinde Klixbüll, 2018; Sanchis et al., 2018). The largest companies that have published a CGB are currently *Leben und Wohnen*, a municipal company within the elderly care and housing sector in the state capital of Stuttgart with almost 1,000 employees, the training provider *WBS Training AG* with around 900 employees, the sensor technology supplier *elobau* with over 800 employees, the *Sparda Bank* in Munich with over 750 employees, and the outdoor outfitter *VAUDE* with just under 500 employees in Germany (valid as of: December 2020; Gemeinwohl-Ökonomie, 2020a). The ECG is therefore a movement supported by SMEs.

The ECG has also recorded some political successes; in 2015, the European Economic and Social Committee recommended that the ECG model be integrated into the European as well as into national legal frameworks (Europäischer Wirtschafts-und Sozialausschuss [EWSA], 2015). In subsequent years, the ECG ideas were incorporated into the coalition agreements of various state governments in Germany. The ruling coalition of Baden-Württemberg incorporated support for the ECG idea into its coalition agreement and decided to prepare a balance sheet for a state-owned company's contribution to the common good (BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN Baden-Württemberg & CDU-Landesverband Baden-Württemberg, 2016). The coalitions in Hessen and Bremen aim to support companies that wish to compile a CGB (CDU Hessen & Bündnis 90/Die Grünen Hessen, 2018;

Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands Landesorganisation Bremen et al., 2019). In 2019, several members of the Bundestag and the parliamentary group BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN brought forward a motion for a pilot project on the CGB of at least two companies co-owned by the German government (Göring-Eckardt et al., 2019). The ECG is therefore not only a vision of a theoretical nature but is already catching on in practice.

### **The Economy for the Common Good and the Degrowth Movement**

The ECG is allied with the degrowth movement (Giselbrecht & Ristig-Bresser, 2017). The degrowth movement is a social movement which, over the past few years, has brought together a multitude of discussions and projects on the theme of alternative economic activity (Burkhart et al., 2017). The core idea of degrowth is achieving global social and ecological justice for the well-being of all, whilst, at the same time, preserving the ecological basis of life. The actors within the movement question the prevailing growth paradigm and share the view that the economic and social guiding principle of *higher, faster, further* leads to acceleration, overloading, exclusion and the destruction of ecosystems (Burkhart et al., 2017; Jackson, 2009; Kallis et al., 2015; Sommer & Welzer, 2014). They therefore call for fundamental changes in modes of production and ways of life as well as a comprehensive cultural transformation. They believe that this transformation should be based on the values of mindfulness, solidarity and cooperation (Burkhart et al., 2017).

In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic shaped both public and private life worldwide and led to a massive setback in economic performance. The German and the worldwide average gross domestic product decreased in real terms by four percent in comparison with the previous year (Janson, 2020; Statistisches Bundesamt, 2020). Even though this development represents a parallel to the demands of the degrowth movement, the changes over the past few months cannot be equated with the idea of a degrowth transformation: “Despite observations that pollution and emissions have reduced, the sudden, un-planned, and chaotic downscaling of social and economic activity due to COVID-19 is categorically not degrowth. Instead, it’s an example of why degrowth is needed” (The degrowth.info Editorial Team, 2020).

Advocates of degrowth argue that, in contrast to the processes of change initiated by the COVID-19 pandemic, the degrowth transformation must proceed intentionally and democratically. Furthermore, there must be a long-term commitment to reducing the level of production and consumption as well as to shaping society differently and more fairly. Unlike the COVID-19 pandemic, the degrowth transformation should not therefore have a disproportionately negative effect on the weakest members of society, rather it should lead to more fairness and equality between rich and poor (The degrowth.info Editorial Team, 2020). In addition, degrowth advocates point out, the pandemic demonstrates two things: on the one hand, the unsustainability and fragility of current ways of life, and on the other hand, that degrowth is possible, because society and states have proven to be able to radically change the modus operandi (The degrowth.info Editorial Team, 2020).

### **The Role of Companies in Socio-Ecological Transformations**

Scholars' interest in the role of companies with regard to socio-ecological transformation concepts like degrowth has increased recently. Posse (2015) stresses that entrepreneurial responsibility goes beyond profit maximisation and that companies have the potential to take action to contribute to societal transitions. Scholl and Mewes (2015, p. 16) outline in a set of theses that "socio-ecological transition will not succeed without transformative companies, because they act from within the economy and stand for the feasibility of a consistently sustainable economy".

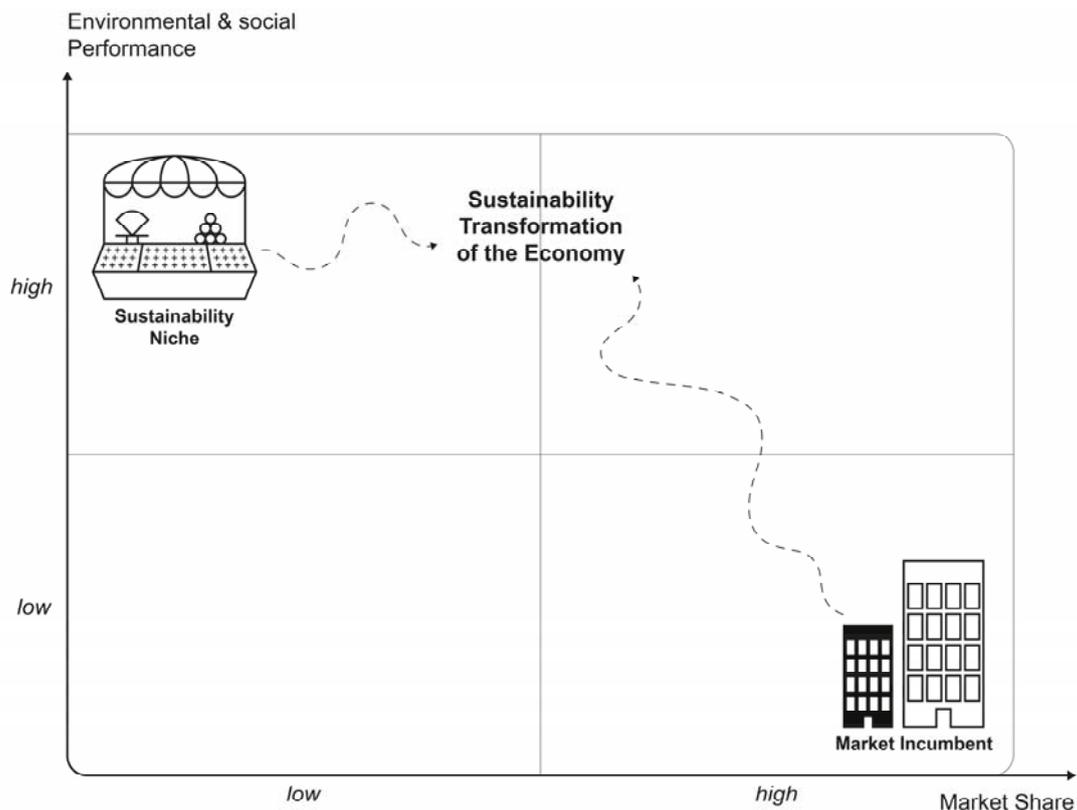
Companies who are forerunners in matters of sustainability are ascribed a particular role in the sustainability transformation of the economy. Typically, these are the small companies and new start-ups that initiate disruptive sustainability innovations in a sector (Hockerts & Wüstenhagen, 2010). Often, the actors remain in a niche with their socio-ecological products and practices, but there are also examples of these niche actors being able to initiate changes in the direction of more sustainability within their sector. Examples of these are organic food and fair trade markets (Hockerts & Wüstenhagen, 2010; Kny et al., 2015).

As soon as the niche actors are able to record a certain growth, the large, market-leading actors—the incumbents—take up the trend by offering the trend as a line extension (Hockerts & Wüstenhagen, 2010). Although the niche actors do intend to make a profit, they are significantly motivated by the desire to promote socio-ecological transformation, whereas the incumbents' intention is to capitalise on the growing trend (Hockerts & Wüstenhagen, 2010; Kny, 2020). The fact that the incumbents assimilate the sustainability innovation and make it available to the mass market contributes to the distribution of the more sustainable product or practice; the consequence, however, of the incumbents being primarily cost-driven is that the sustainability criteria are reduced within the new trend (Hockerts & Wüstenhagen, 2010). The incumbents externalise costs in order to gain a competitive advantage (see Scherhorn, 2008). This, in turn, puts the niche actors under pressure, with the result that they, too, are forced to give up at least some of their ideals in order to remain competitive (Hockerts & Wüstenhagen, 2010). The Fair Trade Labelling Organisation, for example, slackened some of its standards as a reaction to pressure from the Rainforest Alliance Label—which was adopted by the multinational Kraft (Hockerts & Wüstenhagen, 2010).

Based on these considerations, I conclude that to achieve a sustainability transformation of the economy, the market share of sustainable actors must grow while the market share of non-sustainable incumbents decreases and their socio-ecological performance simultaneously increases (see Figure 1). The incumbents will not in themselves be drivers of socio-ecological transformation, for their behaviour is primarily reactive and considerably dependent on external factors (Kny, 2020). Companies that are already engaged in socio-ecological economic management could be drivers of transformation as change agents (see Wissenschaftlicher Beirat der Bundesregierung Globale Umweltveränderungen, 2011). I suppose that more transparency in this transformation process could possibly help prevent a decline in sustainability standards as once established by the niche players.

**Figure 1**

*Small Niche Actors and Market Incumbents on Their Way to a Sustainability Transformation of the Economy*



*Note.* Adapted from “Transformation towards a Sustainable Economy by Davids and Goliaths? An Actors-Based Reconstruction of the (Proto-) Regimes for Sustainable Business Practices in Socio-Ecological Pioneer Companies vs. Incumbents”, by K. Stumpf, B. Sommer, J. Kny, and J. Wiefek, 2017, *SustEcon Conference: The Contribution of a Sustainable Economy to Achieving the SDGs*, Berlin. Based on “Greening Goliaths versus Emerging Davids—Theorizing about the Role of Incumbents and New Entrants in Sustainable Entrepreneurship”, by K. Hockerts and R. Wüstenhagen, 2010, *Journal of Business Venturing*, 25(5), p. 488, (<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusvent.2009.07.005>).

Schneidewind et al. (2012, p. 498) exemplify how companies could contribute to a sustainability transition by using business strategies that go beyond an orientation towards efficacy and make sufficiency a business case. The central element of the sufficiency approach is the question of 'when do we have enough?', which aims at reducing the absolute amount of production and consumption (Huber, 1995). For a long time now, the sufficiency strategy has been discussed in sustainability research as a necessary complement to efficiency and consistency measures (see Huber, 1995). Schneidewind et al. (2012, p. 512) describe a sufficiency orientation as a targeted and particularly effective form of resource conservation. It is particularly significant against the background of so-called rebound effects, i.e. where, for example, resource conservation is compensated in the course of process optimisation through increases in turnover or increased usage so that the absolute consumption of resources continues to increase despite efficiency and consistency measures (Heidbrink et al., 2018).

The ECG, too, requires sufficiency measures from companies. Companies are called upon to promote sufficient, i.e. moderate, consumption through information but also through reusability, durability and reparability as well as particular services. Conversely, planned obsolescence, i.e. the intentional shortening of product lifespan, is negatively evaluated and allotted minus points (Gemeinwohl-Ökonomie, 2013). The fact that the CGB addresses efficiency, consistency as well as sufficiency strategies is another unique characteristic of the CGB (Heidbrink et al., 2018).

The ECG addresses the idea that a sufficiency orientation contradicts the growth paradigm, yet is nonetheless something to strive for (Gemeinwohl-Ökonomie, 2013). In practice, this means that companies are called upon to refrain from striving for a maximum in profits and growth. Scholars discuss business concepts that are not reduced to the maximisation of turnover, profits and growth using buzzwords such as social businesses (Yunus, 2007), sustainable entrepreneurship (Schaltegger et al., 2015), transformative companies (Pfriem et al., 2015), successful non-growing companies (Liesen et al., 2015), growth-neutral (Deimling, 2017; Liesen et al., 2013) and post-growth companies (Mewes &

Gebauer, 2015). However, since growth-critical concepts are transferred into practice by niche actors only and these concepts are hardly accepted in business economics and other disciplines (Liesen et al., 2015; Posse, 2015), little is known about the characteristics and practices of such companies.

### **The Common Good Approach as a CSR Strategy**

One of the basic ideas of the ECG is that companies orient their economic management towards contributing to the common good. There is, in general, no explicit definition of the concept of the common good (Heidbrink et al., 2018; Sulmasy, 2001). Even the ECG itself does not put forward a substantial concept of the common good. Instead, it states that a democratic process is needed in order to flesh this concept out (Felber, 2018).

Garriga and Melé (2004) regard the orientation of entrepreneurial activity towards the common good as one of the ethical CSR theories. The ethical CSR theories are based on the principle of doing what is right or necessary for a good society (Garriga & Melé, 2004). The concept of the common good is a historical concept, the roots of which go back to the ancient world of Aristotle (Garriga & Melé, 2004; Heidbrink et al., 2018). In modern times, the concept of the common good has played a role as a key reference in the business ethics of Catholic social thought (Garriga & Melé, 2004). According to the common good approach, the economy—like any other social group or individual—is obliged to contribute to the common good because it is part of society (Garriga & Melé, 2004).

Along with ethical CSR theories there are also, *inter alia*, instrumental theories, in which CSR is understood as a strategic tool for achieving entrepreneurial goals and increasing profits (Garriga & Melé, 2004). The most well-known approach in this group of CSR approaches is probably that of maximising shareholder value. According to this approach, a company's responsibility consists in maximising profits for shareholders within the legal framework and the ethical conventions of the respective country. Following the shareholder value approach, all entrepreneurial decisions are oriented towards the goal of maximising profits (Figge & Schaltegger, 1999; Garriga & Melé, 2004).

## **Employees' Reactions to Perceived CSR**

Theoretical explanations (Castel, 2008; Sennett, 2010) as well as empirical studies (Dörre, 2005; Schultheis & Schulz, 2005) are available which demonstrate the operational consequences of following the principle of maximising profits and shareholder value—for employees in particular. There is also an increasing number of studies on the effects of perceived CSR on stakeholders (Glavas, 2016; Gond et al., 2017; Wang et al., 2020) Along with customers and jobseekers, employees are one of the groups that has received the most attention in the field of these micro-CSR studies (Jones, 2019).

If employees perceive that their company is concerned with the well-being of its internal and external stakeholders, this feeds into a number of positive attitudes towards the company on their part. For example, the results of a meta-analysis consisting of 65 studies show that employees who perceive the CSR activities of their companies regard their companies as having greater external prestige, have greater trust in their companies, are able to identify better with their companies, rate their organisations as behaving more fairly, feel more obligated to their companies, and are, on the whole, more satisfied with their jobs (Wang et al., 2020). In addition, the perception of CSR leads to better job performance and greater commitment among employees (Wang et al., 2020). By way of qualifying these results, it must be pointed out that the studies in the fields of both CSR and micro-CSR have primarily focused on large companies (Elford & Daub, 2019). One of the research desiderata in these areas are therefore studies focused on small and medium-sized companies (Glavas, 2016). With its hitherto exclusively small and medium-sized companies, the ECG offers an empirical field to fill this research gap.

## **The Significance of Values in the Economy for the Common Good and Organisational Theory**

The CGB distinguishes itself from other CSR tools not only through its firmly political ambitions but also through its particularly broad scope both in thematic terms and along the stations of the value creation chain (Heidbrink et al., 2018). In addition, it sets itself apart from the mere transparency requirements of other tools, such as the German Sustainability

Code (Deutscher Nachhaltigkeitskodex, DNK) or the Sustainable Reporting Standard of the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI), through comparatively strong normative requirements in terms of content (Heidbrink et al., 2018; Kny, 2020; Scheffler & Lieber, 2018). Another peculiarity of the ECG is the explicit reference to values (Scheffler & Lieber, 2018).

Companies that have published a CGB report that they see their own values reflected in the values represented by the ECG and that this motivates them to join the ECG (Heidbrink et al., 2018). Indeed, ethical-social values are one of the main motives for SMEs following CSR (Jenkins, 2006; Santos, 2011). These are more frequently referred to than the goals of improving the reputation of the company or increasing customer loyalty through CSR, i.e. goals that prioritise company turnover (European Commission, 2002).

In Schein's (2010) organisational theory, espoused beliefs and values form the second out of three levels of an organisation's culture. The beliefs and values shared within an organisation primarily guide the actions of management personnel, and if following or implementing these leads to the desired success, they are transformed into shared assumptions (Schein, 2010). If the success cannot be recorded objectively, this process can also take place by means of consensus through social validation (Schein, 2010). Similarly, because the link between performance and strategy often cannot be explicitly verified, organisational goals and aspirations may also fall into the category of shared beliefs and values (Schein, 2010). The values that are officially pursued may also be different to those that guide actions in the everyday life of the company (Schein, 2010). This is why it is necessary to carefully distinguish between those beliefs and values that are congruent with the underlying assumptions and that actually determine the performance, and those that are part of the company ideology, philosophy or rationalisation and are only aspirations for the future (Schein, 2010).

The basic underlying assumptions are unconscious, taken-for-granted beliefs and values that determine the perception, feeling, thinking and behaviour of each individual member of the organisation (Schein, 2010). They represent the first level of the organisational culture according to Schein (2010) theory. The third level of this culture is

represented by the artefacts. The artefacts include the architecture of the physical environment, the language spoken, the technology used and the products offered, artistic creations, the group's style as embodied in clothing, manners of address and emotional displays, the group's myths and stories told about the organisation, observable rituals and ceremonies celebrated within the organisation, and also its published values (Schein, 2010). Any group's culture can be studied at these three levels (Schein, 2010).

Because thus far companies have voluntarily compiled their CGBs, by publishing a CGB, companies profess to the ideas and values of the ECG. Under Schein's (2010) model, therefore, published CGBs come under the category of artefacts. In the CGB, a company's contribution to the common good is measured using the values human dignity, cooperation, solidarity, ecological sustainability, social justice, co-determination and transparency (Gemeinwohl-Ökonomie, 2013). This does not necessarily mean, however, that these espoused values are also the values that guide the actions of the company as underlying assumptions (see Schein, 2010). To explore these, we would need to consider the organisational structures and the organisational culture but also the entrepreneurial practices and the modes of behaviour of the individual employees (see Schein, 2010), which is one subject of this dissertation.

### **Questions Posed by the Dissertation**

Just as the concept of the common good is not clearly defined, neither is there a clear answer to the question of how companies can contribute to the common good. According to the ECG, a company's economic management should serve the common good by its orientation towards the values set out in the CGB (Felber, 2018). Garriga and Melé (2004, p. 62) believe that the economy contributes to the common good by creating prosperity, providing goods and services efficiently and fairly, and at the same time respecting the dignity and rights of the individual. Dyllick and Muff (2016) go a step further, arguing that a company serves the common good if it goes beyond merely trying to reduce its negative impact and actively makes a positive contribution to solving sustainability issues. Companies

that consider this their main purpose are understood to be truly sustainable businesses within the business typology proposed by Dyllick and Muff (2016).

However, there is a lack of knowledge around what these truly sustainable businesses look like and how they function in practice (Muff & Dyllick, 2014). Thus far, there have been no studies that show what entrepreneurial practice looks like when a company pursues the goal of orientation towards the common good, and what effects this has on the employees. That is why Muff and Dyllick (2014, p. 12) consider it “of critical importance to identify best practice examples” and to describe what “real life examples of such [truly sustainable] companies look like” (p. 16).

In the present dissertation, I pick up on this call and consider the common good-oriented economic management of companies in the ECG from an empirical perspective. I focus first of all on the organisational characteristics and practices of the companies. Specifically, my first step is to take a qualitative approach to answering the questions of which values guide the behaviour of ECG companies in practice, how the common good orientation of a company is reflected in entrepreneurial structures and practices, and the nature of the relationship between profit and socio-ecological commitment.

Furthermore, I am interested in the possible effects of common good-oriented economic management on the macro- and micro-level. The ECG is sympathetic to the degrowth movement (Giselbrecht & Ristig-Bresser, 2017), and the CGB requires that the companies introduce measures intended to support moderate consumption and achieve an absolute reduction in resource consumption (Sommer et al., 2016). But what kind of business characteristics and practices can actually be found among ECG companies that could support a development towards degrowth? Are there any overlaps between the values of these companies and those of the degrowth movement? These as yet unanswered questions form the point of departure for the second part of my qualitative analyses.

After focusing my research on the organisational level in the first two studies, I turn in the third study to the individuals in the ECG companies, and here I use quantitative methods. It is the individuals who embody the values within their organisations. Thus far, however, it is

unclear to what extent the employees from the ECG companies even perceive the common good orientation of their companies. With this in mind, I explore the question of whether employees from companies with a higher common good orientation and therefore higher scores in the CGB perceive more CSR than employees from companies with a lower common good orientation and therefore lower scores in the CGB. In addition, I investigate what effects a company's common good orientation may have on the attitudes and behaviour of employees.

My investigations are therefore focused on the companies and employees who are part of the ECG movement. Because thus far only small and medium-sized companies have joined the ECG, my research enriches the CSR and micro-CSR discourse—which is strongly focused on large companies—by bringing in a new perspective. My study empirically underpins the concept of the common good approach as a CSR approach and highlights (potential) effects on the micro- and macro-level. The ECG is a relatively new movement that has grown constantly over the past few years (Heidbrink et al., 2018) and has already had some political successes. In a comprehensive discussion of my results, I aim to explore the question of what contribution the common good-oriented economic management of ECG companies can make to a sustainability transformation of the economy.

### **Structure of the Dissertation**

The ECG endeavours to be “a catalyst for change on an economic, political and social level”, with the aim of achieving a good life for all living creatures and protecting the planet (Gemeinwohl-Ökonomie, 2020b, no page). In this dissertation, my aim is to illuminate the transformative potential of the common good approach in entrepreneurial practice. Overall, I intend to explore the question of how the ECG may support a sustainability transformation of the economy. In this regard, I take an empirical approach. I examine common good-oriented economic management at the organisational level using both qualitative and quantitative methods. Furthermore, I explore the possible effects of common good-oriented economic management on the micro- and macro-level.

The following first chapter contains a 2019 contribution to the *Journal for Business, Economics & Ethics* entitled “The Common Good Approach in Entrepreneurial Practice”. The contribution was written as part of the dissertation. In this paper for the special issue “Economy and Common Good”, I explore the question of how a common good-orientation is reflected in entrepreneurial practice. I present the organisational values, characteristics and practices of common good-oriented companies and discuss these in contrast with the economic management of conventional large companies. In terms of a methodology, my results are taken from an interview study involving eleven companies with a published CGB. I conducted the interviews as a research assistant on the project “Gemeinwohl-Ökonomie im Vergleich unternehmerischer Nachhaltigkeitsstrategien (GIVUN)” [Common Good Economy in a Comparison With Entrepreneurial Sustainability Strategies], which was funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research. The GIVUN project was led by Prof. Harald Welzer and Dr. Bernd Sommer at the Europa-Universität Flensburg and implemented in cooperation with Prof. Ludger Heidbrink at the Christian-Albrechts-Universität zu Kiel.

The interviews were also the basis for the second manuscript I have integrated here, entitled “Common Good-Oriented Companies: Exploring Corporate Values, Characteristics and Practices That Could Support a Development Towards Degrowth”. I wrote this article as part of my dissertation and published it in 2018 in a special issue on “Post-Growth Organisations” in *Management Revue*. In the article, I explore the question of how companies with common good-oriented economic management can potentially contribute to the development of a degrowth society. The eight principles formulated by the prominent degrowth theorist Serge Latouche form the starting point for the analysis. These are the principles that, according to Latouche, must be followed in order to develop a degrowth society. The study highlights the extent to which these principles are implemented or supported in the eleven companies under focus.

The third contribution to this dissertation is the manuscript “The Common Good Balance Sheet and Employees’ Perceptions, Attitudes and Behaviours”, which is re-submitted after first peer reviews with minor revisions to the open access journal

*Sustainability* as a contribution to the special issue “Sustainable Economy for the Common Good”. In this study, I focus on the micro-level in companies with a published CGB. I answer the question of the extent to which employees perceive the socio-ecological commitment of their companies. I also investigate whether there are any correlations between the performance in the CGB and employees’ work-related attitudes and behaviours. I am interested in how satisfied employees are with their jobs and pay (job and pay level satisfaction), the extent to which employees feel either overburdened by their jobs (perceived job demands) or supported by their companies (perceived organisational support), the extent to which employees identify with their companies (organisational identification), and to what extent they experience their work as meaningful (work meaningfulness). Furthermore, I investigate the correlations between the CGBs and the employees’ particular modes of behaviour (corporate citizenship behaviours). I conducted an employee survey with a total of 332 participants in eight German ECG companies, and this formed the basis for the study results.

In the final chapter of the dissertation I collate the results from the three studies and discuss these with a focus on the overall research objective: determining the transformative potential of the common good approach in entrepreneurial practice and how the ECG may support a sustainability transformation of the economy.

### **Understanding and Classification of the Dissertation**

From a disciplinary perspective, this study can be classified under research on the psychology of work and organisations which investigates the correlations between people’s experience and behaviour and the structural, process and target characteristics of organisations (Schuler, 1995, p. V). I join the debate about the significance of values in the business context, and I offer new insights into the characteristics and practices of socio-ecological pioneer companies in the field of CSR research, as well as into the correlations between entrepreneurial socio-ecological commitment and employees’ perceptions, attitudes and behaviours in the field of micro-CSR research.

The dissertation has been significantly influenced by my years as a research assistant at the Norbert Elias Centre for Transformation Design & Research (NEC) at the Europa-Universität Flensburg as well as by my current research work at the Institute for Advanced Sustainability Studies in Potsdam. From 2015 to 2018, within the GIVUN project at the NEC, I discussed the characteristics of the ECG and its companies, as well as the transferability of the ECG approach to large companies, in a team with experts from sociology, social psychology, futurology, environmental sciences, philosophy and ethics (see Heidbrink et al., 2018). This dissertation ties in with the GIVUN project, thereby reflecting, to a certain extent, an interdisciplinary approach. Even though I approached the dissertation as a psychologist and my ideas have been informed by a degree course in the understanding of psychology from a natural sciences perspective, I reference studies from, for example, sociology, business ethics, sustainability management and transformation research. The study therefore goes beyond a psychological focus on human experience and behaviour.

At the same time, the dissertation also represents a contribution to socio-ecological sustainability research. As a piece of transformative research this study endeavours to play a part in shaping society: it aims to promote and support transformation processes by helping people understand and implement practical approaches to solutions in the name of large-scale transformation (Wissenschaftlicher Beirat der Bundesregierung Globale Umweltveränderungen, 2011). It does so by focusing on the pioneers of change, primarily the socio-ecological pioneer companies and the grass roots movement of the ECG supported by them. By describing the characteristics of pioneer companies and the ECG as niche actors, the study creates systemic knowledge in a descriptive sense (Nanz et al., 2017; Vilsmaier & Lang, 2014). It analytically determines the possible transformation potential, offering insights that can be understood as transformation knowledge (Nanz et al., 2017; Vilsmaier & Lang, 2014). The study can therefore be classified, to a certain extent, under transformative research (which promotes large-scale transformation in practice) as well as under what is often understood as its complement, transformation research (which is concerned with the characteristics, mechanisms and causes of social transformation

processes; see Wissenschaftlicher Beirat der Bundesregierung Globale Umweltveränderungen, 2011). The two theoretical research approaches overlap within the structure of the study: by describing the behaviour of the actors and analytically determining the transformation potential of a practical approach originating from the civil society, the study could have a transformative effect based on the systemic and transformation knowledge acquired.

In this sense, the ECG functions both as a specific proposal for, and approach to, change, one that is understood as a “proxy”, surrogate or blueprint for a socio-ecological transformation vision and strategy. On the one hand, the specific features and practices of socio-ecological pioneer companies that support the ECG and represent examples of common good-oriented economic management are of interest in this regard. On the other hand, the ECG is interesting because it is a social movement which, by formulating targets for social transformation and offering the CGB as a CSR management tool, is able to provide orientational knowledge (Nanz et al., 2017; Vilsmaier & Lang, 2014). This does not mean, however, that the ideas and objectives of the ECG should be adopted uncritically. My aim, rather, is to take an open-minded and inquisitive approach to the ECG in the context of reflecting on my own personal values and my role in the research process, whilst maintaining a certain distance between myself and the object of research (see Grunwald, 2018).

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### **Study 1: The Common Good Approach in Entrepreneurial Practice\***

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The members of the social movement of the Economy for the Common Good (ECG) agree about that the main purpose of all economic activity should be the contribution to the common good, while profits should merely serve as a means in this context. In a democratic, participative and open-ended process, they want to establish an economic system in which the common good comes first. A core instrument is the Common Good Balance Sheet (CGB), which assesses a company's contribution to the common good. One prominent claim of the ECG is that publishing a CGB shall be legally obligatory for all companies and that companies with better scores should benefit from easier access to bank loans and advantages in public procurement processes (Felber, 2018). Since the ECG's foundation in 2010, the ECG has spread over 20 countries all over the world. Among their supporters are municipalities, universities, individuals, and 2,000 small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), of which 250 have published a CGB (Giselbrecht & Ristig-Bresser, 2017). Thus, businesses play a major role in this fast growing movement. After the concept of the common good has scarcely received any attention in the fields of organisational theory, business ethics and corporate social responsibility (CSR) (Argandoña, 2009), newer studies turn to this approach again (see Pittz et al., 2019, Retolaza et al., 2019). Nevertheless, up to date, there has hardly been research on the common good approach in business practice. Likewise, there is only little scientific research on the ECG yet (Gemeinwohl-Ökonomie, 2018). However, after the CSR debate has long focused on large companies, there is a slightly growing body of literature on CSR practice and reporting in SMEs (Gutiérrez-Diez et al., 2019; Jenkins, 2006; Perrini et al., 2007). And since the companies involved in the ECG

are companies with a maximum of 900 employees and more often much less, we can refer to this literature.

In this paper, we will first give a short insight how the concept of the common good relate to the ECG und how the ECG distinguish from other CSR concepts and instruments. In order to contribute to this discourse, we conducted interviews with companies participating in the ECG. We present findings regarding the following questions: How is the common good orientation of a company reflected in entrepreneurial practices, and what is the relationship between profit orientation and socio-ecological commitment in common good-oriented companies (CgoC)? We discuss our empirical observations with those from research on CSR in SMEs and findings on large companies' CSR practices from another module of our research project. Further, we highlight why the ECG is an attractive CSR instrument for SMEs.

### **Background: The Economy for the Common Good and the Common Good Approach in Business Theory and Practice**

In general, several definitions of the common good exist (Sulmasy, 2001). Thus, it is recognised to be difficult to adopt the common good as a concrete principle for action (Frémeaux & Michelson, 2017). According to Garriga and Melé's (2004, p. 62) mapping of CSR theories, the common good approach is a "group of approaches, [...] [which] holds the common good of society as the referential value for CSR [...]. Business contributes to the common good in different ways, such as creating wealth, providing goods and services in an efficient and fair way, at the same time respecting the dignity and the inalienable and fundamental rights of the individual. Furthermore, it contributes to social well-being and a harmonic way of living together in just, peaceful and friendly conditions, both in the present and in the future". The ECG does not introduce a substantial concept of the common good, but refers to a 'formal' one: its content can only be defined through a democratic process (Felber, 2018). In the CGB, the common good is operationalised through the values of 'human dignity', 'solidarity & social justice', 'environmental sustainability', and 'transparency

& co-determination'. According to the ECG, a company will serve the common good if it acts in accordance with the formulated values and creates value for all its 'contact groups' (suppliers, owners, equity- and financial service providers, employees, customers, business partners, the social and ecological environment; matrix 5.0, Felber, 2018). Thus, among other things, the ECG differs from other CSR approaches by its explicit reference to a group of values. The importance of values related to CSR in SMEs is increasingly recognized (Elford & Daub, 2019; Jansson et al., 2017; Jenkins, 2006). As Murillo and Lozano (2006) state, the values represented by the owners resp. managers of a company constitute a key factor when trying to understand the reasons behind a given CSR practice in SMEs. In fact, the identification with the values of the ECG is one of the companies' motives for joining the ECG (Mischkowski et al., 2018; Scheffler & Lieber, 2018)

As Garriga and Melé (2004) note for the common good approach in general, the ECG approach has much in common with both the concept of sustainable development and the stakeholder approach. With regard to the connection between the common good and sustainability, Dyllick and Muff (2016; 2014; Muff & Dyllick, 2014) state that to serve the common good means to contribute to overcoming sustainability issues. According to their business sustainability typology, to serve the common good is the main purpose of a truly sustainable business. They define creating value for the common good as that which benefits society and the planet as a whole. Hence, the values created change from addressing the triple bottom line to the common good, which they see in contrast to the private good of individuals or groups (Dyllick & Muff, 2016). The ECG does not regard the contribution to the private good of individuals and groups as a contrast to the common good, but explicitly demands that a company is committed to its direct stakeholders (i.e., groups and individuals such as owners, employees, customers etc.) as well as to the global ecological environment and present plus future societies as a whole (Felber, 2018). Sustainability issues therefore play a central role in the ECG's common good approach. The comprehensive understanding of the ECG of a company's 'contact groups' is similar to the view of Argandoña (1998, p. 1099) who states that "all the company's relationships will carry an element of common

good. We therefore have to extend the list of stakeholders to include customers and suppliers, banks and unions, the local community, the authorities (at different levels), interest groups, competitors, and so on, until it encompasses all men of all times". Here, the common good approach and the stakeholder theory are similar: It is the notion that a company's responsibility is more than maximising shareholder value. In this sense, O'Brien (2009, p. 25) states that the common good should help "to correct the distorted prioritization of the maximization of profit in every business decision, recognizing businesses have a multitude of rights and responsibilities, and the common good reminds us that the first of these is not always profitmaking". The ECG claims for a connection of profits and the common good in the way that economic activity should serve the common good, and that profits are a mean in this context (Felber, 2018). Companies' aspiration of profit and growth maximisation is seen critically by the ECG (Giselbrecht & Ristig-Bresser, 2017). Rather, the CGB explicitly names and calls for changes in corporate action towards sufficiency. Companies are demanded to promote moderate consumption through information as well as the, longevity, reusability and reparability of their products. Additionally, under the rubric 'ethical customer relations', the companies are explicitly asked to explain how the customer's benefit is prioritised over the company's sales orientation. At the same time, the CGB addresses the fact that a (customer's) sufficiency orientation objects to the growth paradigm, but nevertheless that the companies should support a moderate consumption (Heidbrink et al., 2018). As previous research shows, SMEs are quite willing to accept financial losses for socio-ecological commitment (Spence & Rutherford, 2001). Although there are certainly entrepreneurs, for whom the profit always comes first, it is an overriding misconception that owner-managers are overwhelmingly pursuing profit maximisation. Instead, the profit maximisation priority is only one out of four frames (besides subsistence or social priority as well as enlightened self-interest) which businesses can adopt (Spence & Rutherford, 2001). That is because the reasons for running a business are far more complex, and socially motivated, than purely financially driven (Spence & Rutherford, 2001). It is not denied that "each firm would need

to make a certain amount of profit in order to survive” (Spence & Rutherford, 2001, p. 129) and that it must be regarded that “in order to create value for the common good commercial businesses have to find ways to do this in an economical way” (Dyllick & Muff 2016, p. 166). But the difference should be considered “whether profit earned should be the maximum possible, or whether a self-determined ‘reasonable’ alternative was acceptable” (Spence & Rutherford 2001, p. 131).

The concept of the common good was developed mainly in Catholic Social Teaching (CST; Argandoña, 1998). Since the first industrial revolution, CST has been addressing the issue of corporate information disclosure in this regard. According to CST, “any stakeholder has the right to know whether the firm’s activities support the common good instead of the personal interests of a restricted group, such as top management and shareholders” (Vaccaro & Sison, 2011, p. 22). Further, the CST argues for the individuals’ right to be informed about a company’s activities and its related contribution to the common good, because proper information about these issues is seen as a necessary prerequisite for making conscious decisions. Entrepreneurial transparency should serve customers, who should be able to consciously decide which company they buy products from, as well as to employees, which should use these information to choose which company they want to work for (Vaccaro & Sison, 2011). Dyllick and Muff (2016) emphasise the need for transparency and metrics to ensure effectiveness and efficiency of business contributions to overcome sustainability challenges—which constitutes the common good contribution of a company. With regard to decisions and actions taken by companies, transparency is required in order to evaluate, compare, and improve business sustainability. However, it also relates to the effects and impacts of the actions taken (Dyllick & Muff, 2016). Transparency is one of the ECG’s core values. Through the CGB, the ECG aims to achieve comprehensive corporate transparency (Felber, 2018). But the CGB is not just about transparency, the ECG also formulates comparatively strong normative requirements in terms of entrepreneurial measures that should be taken. In this, the ECG differs from mere transparency requirements of other CSR instruments (Heidbrink et al., 2018; Scheffler & Lieber, 2018). In

addition, compared to other CSR instruments, the CGB has a particularly broad scope both in thematic terms and along the stages of the value chain (Heidbrink et al., 2018). These two features of the CGB—being far more than a transparency standard and depicting the entrepreneurial sustainability in all areas comparable across industries—make the CGB particularly attractive to the ECG’s companies (Scheffler & Lieber, 2018). Although the effort required to create a CGB is similar to the effort of reporting according to *Global Reporting Initiative* or *Deutscher Nachhaltigkeitskodex* (Scheffler & Lieber, 2018), so far, only SMEs have published a CGB. This is especially notable against the backdrop that antecedent research shows that SMEs are less inclined than big companies to implement formal measures and procedures when pursuing social-ecological business practices (Elford & Daub, 2019; Steinhöfel et al., 2019). Instead, SMEs prefer personal relationships to stakeholders and dialogue strategies to foster such practices (Elford & Daub, 2019). This refers to the culture of SMEs with a focus on informal structures, measures and procedures. In line with their informal approach, SMEs tend to not communicate their CSR efforts, in comparison to the formal and publicly released CSR strategies of larger corporations (Elford & Daub, 2019). Further, Baumann-Pauly et al. (2013) propose “that small firms possess several organizational characteristics that are favorable for promoting the internal implementation of CSR related practices in core business functions, but constrain external communication and reporting about CSR. In contrast, large firms possess several characteristics that are favorable for promoting external communication and reporting about CSR, but at the same time constrain internal implementation.” Thus, considering that the focus of CSR practices and reporting has mainly concerned large companies, further research on SMEs and their CSR strategies is still needed (Elford & Daub, 2019).

### **Sample & Method**

The results presented in this paper are drawn from the research project *Gemeinwohl-Ökonomie im Vergleich unternehmerischer Nachhaltigkeitsstrategien (GIVUN)* which was undertaken from 2015 to 2018 at the Europe-University of Flensburg und University of Kiel in

Germany. In addition to other questions, the project examined the common-good practices of companies active in the ECG—which are small and medium size companies—and the transferability of the ECG approach to large corporations which are not part of the ECG. The selection of the common-good oriented companies for the study followed the guidelines of the *generic purposive sampling* (Bryman, 2012), a non-probability form of sampling.

Companies participating in the ECG with a published CGB were selected with respect to their size and field of action. Trying to reach a *maximum variation* (Bryman, 2012), the study therefore includes individual entrepreneurs as well as companies with around 500 employees in their home country (which are Germany and Austria). The companies are drawn from all three major economic sectors (primary, secondary, tertiary; Beckert, 2007). Their legal structures include, besides the individual entrepreneurs, (non-profit) limited liability companies (in German: (g)GmbH), unlisted stock companies (in German: AG) or registered cooperatives (in German: eG). The group of 11 businesses consists of privately held businesses as well as collectively-owned companies. The sample includes an organic farm (fa), a bakery (ba), a printing company (pc), a clothing manufacturer (cm), two wholesalers for organic food (ws1, ws2), an engineering firm (ef), a media agency (ma), a media company (mc), a service provider for event design (ed), and an elder care centre (ecc). A detailed description of the sample can be found in Heidbrink et al., 2018.

The research group developed an interview guideline with help of the S<sup>2</sup>PS<sup>2</sup>-method (Kruse, 2014, p. 231). Thematically, the guideline covers the company's self-image, the interviewee's or interviewees' personal evaluation(s) of the work of the company, the company's understanding of common good, the company's motives in engaging in the ECG, the company's experiences with the ECG and CGB, an assessment of the boundaries of the ECG's impact and the ECG's future, the operational implications of common good-oriented management, the general status of the company and the (societal/political) framework conditions for common-good oriented management (the interview guideline can be found in Appendix A). In 2015, eleven semi-standardized (group) interviews with representatives from the companies were conducted. Most of the interviewees held executive positions. Initially,

the analysis of the interview material followed the principles of Grounded Theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). This initially *free* approach to the material allowed us to discover aspects of the material that might have gone undetected if research questions were pursued more rigorously. At a later stage we focused more on Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2012). Accordingly, we coded the first three interviews openly. The developed codes were sorted and structured; the resulting code tree served to code the remaining eight interviews. According to the Thematic Analysis, the coding now mainly followed the interest to find answers to the specific research questions. In addition to the interviews, we worked through the CGBs of the companies which supplemented the material. For more details regarding the methodical approach in the study see Heidbrink et al., 2018. The interviews were conducted in German, and the citations in the following section have therefore been translated into English by the authors.

## **Results**

As became apparent in the sampling compilation, a broad diversity of companies joins the ECG: They are of small to medium size, have different legal forms and ownership models and are active in various fields of business. Accordingly, as our study reveals, their *common good orientation* is reflected in diverse characteristics and business practices. Despite their differences, the companies share some common characteristics. The diversity as well as the commonalities detected are presented in this section. This includes a depiction of the relationship between profit orientation and socio-ecological commitment.

### ***Issues of Interest of Common Good-Oriented Companies***

In the interviews, the company representatives bring up specific concerns their companies care about. The range of topics is illustrated by a quote from an employee from a small media agency. With respect to the question which issues the company considers to be relevant regarding the common good, our interviewee explains that different employees from the largely non-hierarchically organised company emphasise different topics: *“I have a stronger focus on social issues [...], on distribution issues, social justice, and I would include*

*financial justice here, be it wealth creation, pension systems, such questions; also co-determination in the company. And others certainly have more of a focus on ecology or on human rights issues. Depending on who you ask here, you will get different answers”* (ma, par. 61). Thus, while some of the employees emphasise social issues in relation to the common good, for others ecology matters. Indeed, we could observe that all the common-good oriented companies studied do stress a concern about ecological as well as social concerns. The following examples show how the emphasis can be different in the individual companies.

One executive director of an organic bakery is an advocate for questions of environmental protection. He states that *“the ultimate common good is the Earth. And for me the top priority is always to preserve it. [...] So, before any social criteria, first the Earth has to be preserved. First, we have to survive or keep it viable. And then we can think about how to make any profit or undertake any social projects”* (ba, par. 147). Thus, the interviewee puts questions of environmental sustainability in first place. In his role as an executive director, he sets down environmental protection as a principle that needs to be systematically followed. For instance, he implemented an eco-management system in the company. Furthermore, the interviewee reports that the other executive director *“was always ecologically convinced,”* too. But according to our interview partner, the other executive manager is also *“socially convinced and for him the diet, healthy food, was always very important. [...] He has the food side on his agenda and the social side and I’m rather coming from the ecological field”* (ba, par. 11). Thus, the bakery has a strong ecological orientation, but is socially engaged at the same time.

Environmental issues are also a concern for the media company surveyed. The interviewee reports that *“part of our genes are in the environmental movement. [...] Climate: [regarding this topic; J.W.] we are especially networked and also have our own magazine [...]. We have also made a climate balance sheet [...] Well, we try to do a lot ecologically and fairly, staying along these lines. So our shop merchandising products and stuff are like that. [...] Of course, our new building will have standards somehow that will be impressive.”* (mc,

par. 84). However, ecological goals are less consistently pursued than in the bakery as in the media company there *“are no corporate governance regulations which, for example, demand compliance with ecological standards”* (mc, par. 165). An ecological orientation lays—as the interviewee puts it—in the genes of the company. But institutionally anchored are other principles. The cooperative is characterised by the fact that it is a self-managed company with a flat hierarchy and a low degree of organisation in which the relevant corporate decisions are not made by the owners, but by its employees: *“with diversity, it has a brand essence that is structurally safeguarded through the diversity of the ownership structure. Fifteen thousand five hundred members, each of whom has one vote, no matter how many shares he or she owns. But at the same time, the constitution states that the consumer-members have no say against the employees, so the editorial departments have the utmost structural protection against any kind of interference. [...] This is// of course, a brand essence: independence, diversity”* (mc, par. 20). So, although the company shows commitment to ecological concerns, the company emphasises the diversity within the personnel, their democratic decision-making process and ownership structures, and how they are upholding their independence. This stands in contrast to, for example, the bakery where democratic decision-making and ownership structures are of less interest.

It emerges from the previous illustrations that the companies stick to specific values they identify with and that significantly guide how they conduct their business (see also Wiefek & Heinitz, 2018). In doing so, most companies of the sample focus on explicit topics more than on others. In sum, however, we could observe a certain joint correspondence with the value system propagated by the ECG. The ECG calls for human dignity, solidarity and social justice, environmental sustainability, transparency and co-determination (Felber, 2018). One company representative describes the congruence of their corporate values and the values of the ECG as follows: *“In large parts it also corresponds to the mission statement we have developed for ourselves. So our values reappear there [in the ECG’s values]. [...] So there is a lot of what was important to us before we knew it”* (ws2, par. 143). Thus, the

companies studied were holding up the values propagated by the ECG already before they got to know the ECG. The interviewees report that their companies traditionally deal with sustainability and common-good issues, and that they are pursued out of an intrinsic motivation. A representative puts it this way: *“So the niche of the company has been since years the environmental, sustainability topic and the way how to do business [...] This is a story of the company which— we can safely say that—comes from intrinsic motivation, [...]. It's not something that's new now, marketing, political correctness or something that has been added, but that's really grown here”* (pc, par. 13). As mentioned in the quote above, the common-good oriented companies operate as socio-ecological pioneers within a niche apart from the big mass market. Within this niche, the companies strive for fairness regarding their relationships to suppliers, employees, customers and that they work on relationships of cooperation with other like-minded companies on the market. A representative of a printing company explains that they cooperate *“also with competitors, so in fact, to expand even more cooperation, because cooperation is an essential part of this common-good orientation. You don't nuke the others, but instead you try to figure out how both of you can survive”* (pc, par. 53). Therefore, the companies deliberately resist the usual market thinking of unrestrained competition.

Another outstanding attribute of the common-good oriented companies is the degree of transparency they provide. By publishing a CGB, the companies grant the public insights into almost all areas of their business. They *“get naked”* (fa, par. 109), as the farmer puts it. The bakery states that *“the common good is also transparency”* (ba, par. 148), and justifies its statement that transparency is needed to disclose what is truly sustainable. The company representative argues that transparency is an important element in being able to act in a manner that is oriented towards the common good, both for the companies and the customers. Only when sufficient transparency is given by the companies the consumers are able to *“to make reasonable own decisions”* (ba, par. 148). With the same reasoning, one wholesaler from the sample initiated a transparency initiative in 2014. The company reports that they *“not only deal with products and criteria, but also look,[...] at where the products*

come from, [...] how the people are paid locally—so we really look deeply, and then we give it to our customers in its entirety” (ws2, par. 188). That this is far from normal is illustrated by the wholesaler’s description of the accessibility of such information: “So one challenge is also [...] getting the relevant information from the manufacturers. And, of course, they’re not at all used to suddenly sharing information [...] on what they pay their employees or how they treat the environment. Maybe they’re more likely to if they do it well, [...] Or photos from the production facility that you want to publish and// So sometimes it is hard work to convince them to do it” (ws2, par. 352; see also Wiefek & Heinitz, 2018). As the media company states “it’s rare to find as much transparency as you find here” (mc, par. 132), and like almost all companies of our study it points out that it provides full information on all areas of the CGB. The companies also provide transparency on sensitive issues such as, for instance, salary dispersion and salary criteria. But in some cases, the approach of full transparency gets rejected. For example, one company has a high in-house wage transparency based on a standard wage, but it communicates its amount only to certain stakeholders. Due to its low salary level, it is afraid of a public debate about self-exploitation.

To sum up, the CgoCs studied are characterised by their strive for ecological sustainability as well as for fairness and cooperation in the relations to their stakeholders. Some deal intensively with questions of diversity and co-determination within the company and how to keep their independence. All companies are characterised by an outstanding degree of transparency. Thus, the CgoCs operate with a specific value system which shows a significant congruence with the values propagated by the ECG.

### ***Embedding the Common Good Orientation within the Company***

Within the companies, the establishment of this common-good oriented value system seems to depend significantly on the ownership and management structure of the specific company. Therefore, the “anchoring” of the common-good orientation differs in the companies. In the owner-managed companies, the common-good orientation is mainly determined by the personal value orientation of the owners—which are sole proprietors or

family entrepreneurs. Within the corporation, they establish particular socio-ecological principles top down through a delegation system. There is a difference between a vertical and a horizontal anchorage. Vertically embedded, a certain person or a whole separate department that acts as a commissioner for the socio-ecological principles and certain guidelines for action are used to ensure the company-wide implementation as well as compliance with socio-ecological standards. Horizontally anchored, however, a CSR team is responsible of developing and establishing sustainability-related criteria. The team is made up of people from departments throughout the company. The team members usually also have a non-sustainability-related function within their departments. The team meets regularly as a specialist committee and their members discuss environmental and social issues. As the team member goes back to his or her “regular job”, he or she takes their sustainability-related recommendations with him/her. For example, one member of the CSR team is responsible for production management in her department and *“for the whole quality and for the delivery dates et cetera; so for this very sober production topic, which at first should not have so much to do with CSR, in terms of personnel. It is also responsible for the social standards. So, wherever there is a core issue, so to speak, we have integrated CSR responsibility into the equation”* (cm, par. 144).

By contrast, in the self-governing, collectively owned companies the adhering to socio-ecological principles is less institutionalized. As we have already learned about the media company, for example, they have *“no corporate governance regulations here that, for example, claim compliance with ecological standards”* (mc, par. 165). Moreover, the interviewee states that *“the articles of association—how is it constituted, how is it lived? And you notice that controls itself. There is no one who can actually enforce environmental standards/directives as such”* (mc, par. 167). Although the media company considers an institutionalisation of socio-ecological principles to be reasonable for certain companies, it perceives itself—in this regard—to be *“already somewhat ahead”* (mc, par. 175) since the collective has internalised socio-ecological principles: *“a lot of this is already internalised collectively, which, in my opinion, should be sought in some companies in the first place, and*

*where control mechanisms make sense to create and sharpen awareness at all...which works here by itself*" (mc, par. 179). Thus, the common-good orientation of the company is borne by the business running collective; it is set up bottom-up as it relies on the intrinsic motivation of all (or at least most of) the individual co-workers in the organization.

While the common-good orientation of the collectively-owned and managed companies builds on the bulk of the co-workers, in the privately held companies it depends on the attitude of the owners resp. management. Part of the privately held companies with top-down anchoring problematise this fact and therefore seek legal forms to ensure the common-good orientation of the company in the future, regardless of the current management in charge. The bakery explains that it is thinking about transferring the company into a foundation. The farmer considers transferring the farm into a kind of citizen share company (in German: *Regionalwert AG*, a model to finance farms through citizens and other local small-scale investors, see Hiß, 2014).

In the implementation of socio-ecological principles co-owners or financiers who have a fundamentally different value orientation can be restrictive. One company owner talks about the different mind-set of the other shareholders of the company: *"they think a lot more in a conventional economic manner than we do. And it's always a challenge then to portray certain aspects of what's important to us, so that it's to someone who, in fact, only looks at the numbers"* (ws2, par. 344). Thus, the interviewee considers the possibility of asserting a profile as a CgoC only if the company can simultaneously prove that it can master its business successfully. In the eyes of his "conventional business partners", this can ultimately be judged by the economical success of the company. How the CgoCs handle the relationship between the common-good commitment and the core business will be discussed in more detail in the following section.

### ***Common Good Commitment, Profits and the Core Business***

Even CgoCs cannot refute one clear fact: *"you have to make money"* (pc, par. 14). The companies studied report that they have to generate surpluses for their self-

preservation, for example, because investments in new machines are necessary. *“We reinvested, meaning we renewed the machines and technology [...] To do that you have to save up money and [you need to do it] if you want to keep up technologically”* (pc, par. 14) reports the printing company. Some companies also emphasise that economic success is of great importance in order to show that a common-good oriented management is a feasible management method in this day and age and, thus, other companies will follow suit. Regarding this argument the event designer states: *“yes, and that’s why CSR is very much connected with economic success. If I succeed to manage and live that, and at the same time have commercial success, then it is a model of success. Yes, because then [...] others will also emulate me”* (ed, par. 144). Thus, also CgoCs strive to achieve certain surpluses. However, the CgoCs studied are characterised by the fact that they do not aim to maximise profit at any price. Instead, they accept reduced profits in favour of socio-ecological principles. The elderly care centre, like other companies in the sample, justifies this attitude with an awareness of their corporate responsibility: *“I do not think that [...] we benefit economically. No, we consciously invest in this field// [it is] an added value because we believe that we have a social obligation as a company”* (ecc, par. 708). As a result, profits lose importance as a success indicator for most of the companies in the sample, or they take on a different status when it comes to performance measurement. One wholesaler reports that they discussed the meaning of striving for profits when they first reached the profit zone: *“And then it has changed in the regard that we did not say any more that the company’s purpose is to make a profit, to work towards making a profit. But now the question of meaning was a completely new one: what are we doing with the money now? Only accumulating more money is not really what we imagine for ourselves”* (ws, par. 124). The socio-ecological commitment of the companies does not exist right alongside a profit-oriented core business in order to create further opportunities for growth and profit. Instead, the common-good orientation is part of the corporate core, intrinsically motivated (see above), and it fundamentally influences their business practices. And while profit maximisation is not the goal, companies are using their socio-ecological commitment to

define their corporate image as a green and social company. The clothing manufacturer describes the directional change towards these principles, which the company went through a few years ago, as follows: *“It has been always the case that we were involved in the field of ecology and social affairs, but in subprojects, in subprojects in addition to the actual business. Back then, we said that we definitely wanted to continue in this manner, but it does not work out this way; it has to be either all or nothing [...]. And that's why we decided [...] to become a thoroughly sustainable company regarding everything we do”* (cm, par. 13). In this example, the interviewee brings up an issue that has also been addressed by other interviewees: The companies face the big challenge of keeping the balance between running their production—baking bread, trading food, printing documents and so on—and investing the time and other resources in, for example, social development processes within the company. These include developing the company's mission statement or salary structure jointly with the employees, implementing transparent and participative decision-making structures, publishing a CGB and so on. One wholesaler describes the reaction of the employees when the management asked the employees to participate in the just-mentioned processes as follows: *“So there was a bit of an annoyance to see in some places over the last four years, because a lot was introduced. So we have the salary model and the mission statement and the ECG and the holocracy so to speak. And a lot of energy went into the ‘How do we change the company?’ and not so much in the actual action, i.e., in the business purpose”* (ws2, par. 333). Analogously, the companies have to decide, weighing the additional costs for ecological alternatives versus the economic profitability: *“if there is a more ecological or energy-saving option, then we take it. In principle yes, but of course we always have to look, can we also pay for it and, therefore, to always find a good and balanced measure for certain decisions”* (ws2, par. 332). So it may be that certain measures are not consistently implemented, but only first steps are taken in this direction; or, if the financial situation of the company is better, more is done, and in economically depressed times measures are restricted again. An example of this is provided by the elderly care

centre regarding the food supply of the residents: *“And organic is still more expensive and that's why you cannot change that completely, but only partially”* (ecc, par. 383). Thus, the common-good commitment is only acted upon as far as the financial situation allows it. In addition to reduced profits, other concrete disadvantages may arise for the companies due to their common-good orientation. One example is given by a wholesaler: *“In this [common good; J.W.] balance, we got a very high score at the point Internal Income Spread, because the spread is very low here. [...] And that is also a problem, [...]because it is hard to attract qualified professionals, if you offer such a low salary”* (ws1, par. 322). One interview partner puts it in a nutshell: *“Not everything that is good for the common good is good for the functioning of the firm”* (ws1, par. 324). In their decisions, companies must undergo a process of weighing their value orientation, which is beyond profit-oriented thinking, and economic compatibility.

The fact that the companies are willing to forego economic gains in favour of their adherence to social and ecological principles is also expressed by some companies in the fact that they are pursuing sufficiency-oriented measures. According to our analysis, these can be observed in two ways: On the one hand, there is the promotion of moderate consumption. This happens, for example, through a repair service offered for their products, as the clothing manufacture provides. This enables the consumers to use their products as long as possible without having to replace them with new acquisitions. This approach, therefore, aims to change the customers' behaviour. On the other hand, some companies show a sufficiency orientation regarding their own business practice. One example is the avoidance of printing advertising and packaging material by the printing company. Instead, the company prefers to produce high-quality, long-lasting print products. The company makes a decision about what kind of products it wants to produce with respect to ecological criteria. However, it is also an example of the fact that the company makes a selection of the customer base it would like to serve. If they ask for a durable product, they are served; if they want a disposable product, they probably will go home with empty hands. In a similar manner, the media company explicitly states that it selects its customers according to

specific criteria. The company emphasises its identification with the values of the ECG and *“these are the values we live by and work for, and we like to put our resources in. If you're heading that way, then you're right with us, and if not, you might want to look for someone else”* (ma, par. 14). Thus, the socio-ecological value orientation weighs so heavily that customers with a different value orientation are rejected. The company waives possible additional sources of revenue. Also, the bakery deliberately refrains from maximising profits. The company representative explains that they could certainly take higher prices for their bread. Doing so they would probably sell less bread but still achieve a higher profit, the interviewee tells. Since the bakery takes it as a mission to allow access to high-quality food products to as many people as possible, it has decided not to go down this road. At the same time, they do not want to sell their bread as cheaply as possible, because this would put other organic bakeries under pressure which cannot (yet) produce as efficiently and inexpensively as the bakery from our sample. As the interviewee tells us, the bakery has found a way of pricing their products in a solidarity manner in order to solve this problem. In the open market, they offer their bread at a *relatively* low price (but not as cheaply as they could), and at the same time they give special conditions for social institutions with a limited budget: *“we have to be careful because we do not want to ruin the bakery industry here [...] And that's why we have considered [...] that we try to get into the public catering, so [...] old people's homes, hospitals, kindergartens, schools [...] and that we may use this buffer we have, not to reduce the normal sales prices, but we use it for conditions for such structures, [...] without jeopardising the bakery industry here...”* (ba, par. 240). In this example, the principle of solidarity is therefore higher than the maxim to maximise profits.

Based on the shared condition that they do not maximise profits at all costs, the CgoCs take very different paths on how they contribute to the common good and who the addressees of their common good commitments are. See more on this in the following section.

### ***How to Contribute to the Common Good? Who are the Addressees of the Common Good Commitment?***

For the sampling compilation we were able to find CgoC in all sectors. As we can see, the companies' approaches how or with what they strive to contribute to the common good are characterized by their self-image. But it is also largely determined by their field of activity, their size and their financial leeway. For some of the companies in the sample, the expression of the common good contribution is about their product, respectively service, as well as how they do business. For example, the organic bakery explains that their main environmental and social impact stems from the fact that the raw materials (the grain etc.) for their production processes are of the highest ecological quality level, the Demeter Standard. The interviewee reports that the organic cultivation of leguminous crops (green manure) and the use of biodynamic as well as rare old grain types contribute to the conservation of biodiversity. In addition, according to the interviewee the Demeter principles allow no additives and everything within the production process is craftsmanship. This has a double social impact. On the one hand, this creates healthy food; on the other hand, a traditional craft is preserved. Thus, in this case, the common good contribution lies in both, the production method and what is actually contained within the product. Another example in this category is the media company. The representatives from this company hold the opinion that journalism is a case sui generis, which is categorically serving the public good, *"because it is just so special in promoting democracy and promoting group life"* (mc, par. 46). With its output, which are online and offline media products, the media company, according to this view, makes a contribution to the common good per se. But the interviewee sees the common good contribution not only in the product, but also in the way the collective works together. He states that *"an editorial collective, which depicts in a constant discussion process the cultures and the realities of life or even tries to move them, that is a value of its own. I interpret that as being exclusively common-good oriented, [...] actually, [this company] is the mother of all common-good oriented companies"* (mc, par. 55). The interviewee sees a particular common-good orientation in the way in which the company members work

together, namely collectively and, as we have already seen above, with a focus on diversity and independence. The common good contribution in this case also consists of the product / service and the way they do their business.

In contrast, especially for companies that offer very resource-intensive services or products such as the printing company, the clothing manufacture or the event designer, the main common good effect is embodied not so much within the product resp. service, but lays primarily in the way of doing business. For instance, the clothing manufacture is well aware that its production in Asia is linked to social problems and that the production process comprises *“many [...] pitfalls concerning the ecology”* (cm, par. 12). To improve the situation, they are always trying to make the economic process *“even more ecological, social, democratic and transparent”* (cm, par. 135). To give another example, we quote the event designers that improve the ecological impact of the events they equip technically. They report that investing in energy-saving equipment reduces the power consumption at an event many times over: *“A medium sized event may consume the amount of power of a // of a small town. [...] I believe that would be thirty-five single-family homes. [...] Through the use of LED technology and a few other tricks we get down to five houses, four houses”* (ed, par. 39). The product or service is therefore produced as ecologically as possible, but the product itself does not lie at the heart of the expression of the common good contribution. Rather, the common good contribution is about *how* the product or service is produced. Other approaches the companies are pursuing with regard to ‘how do we produce and work’ are: offering ecological nutrition to their employees and customers, implementing programs for the promotion of environmentally-friendly mobility for their employees and having fair partnership relations with their suppliers. With a view to the company's common good contribution, the interviewee from the printing company also emphasises the comprehensive eco-management system which leads to lower environmental burdens within the production process. At the same time, she comprehensively explains that the internal organisational structure of this worker collective puts a great deal of importance on the personal

responsibility of the individual members. The company is always taking on new apprentices to be trained at different levels: *“I think we are a learning space for personality, for personal development. [...] we have always trained, always had young people here [...] and also got them with this idea: learning space for self-government and, yes, personality and also the profession”* (pc, par. 17). In the self-image of the company they are “not only” a green printing company, but the firm is a school for individuals who should be trained professionally and to be promoted in their personal development by learning to take on responsibility within the self-governmental structures.

In the case of the printing company just portrayed, first addressees of the common good contribution are the members of the collective. The company offers them individual education opportunities when working in the firm: *“For years, the firm has been like some sort of flow heater for education. People come in here, they get educated and they leave educated”* (pc, par. 30). Indeed, all companies in the sample address their own firm members and direct stakeholders such as suppliers and customers with their common good commitment. These should benefit from the companies’ approach of fair, cooperative relations, the promotion of diversity and co-determination, as well as the transparency within the company and within the supply chains. Moreover, the companies studied want to have a positive impact on society. Through their ecological commitment, they contribute, for example, to the preservation of biodiversity, as well as to resource and general environmental protection (see also Sommer et al., 2016). Other examples for having influence in society are the provision of public education opportunities or the participation or creation of (new) networks in order to empower socio-environmental actors. Where and how a company can have influence depends on its field of activity. The interviewee of the media company supposes that they have a much larger sphere of influence with their nationwide daily newspaper and online media than a locally-producing medium-sized company: *“The dairy farm, they just have a limited regional reach. But [the media company] here, that is something else. Because the scope is simply much larger”* (mc, par. 52). Of course, the influence that the media company actually has is not measurable and is therefore not

comparable. The influence a medium-sized company with several hundred employees can have is illustrated by an example of the event designer. They use their (limited) market power for socio-ecological standardisation in the industry: *“I went to our supplier, and I said: ‘Everything we buy in wood needs to be certified.’ And it was not available. So we said: ‘Okay, we buy twenty-four kilometres of wood from you, within one year. I cannot accept this answer; I will give you eight weeks because we like working with you. If you do not make it until then, we will have to look for a different supplier.’ It took exactly, I believe, six weeks and then they were able to provide us with what we needed. Since that time we have introduced FSC-certified theatre planks in the [...] region. These were originally relatively expensive. Because we introduced them here, others followed suit”* (ed, par. 36). The company is thus actively working to create the practical and institutional prerequisites for a common-good oriented management for itself and others (“stretch and transform empowerment”, see also Stumpf et al., 2017).

This example also illustrates the influence of the size of a company and thus its market power on the expression and scope of the common-good oriented practice. The event designer can only enforce his claim regarding ecological certification because of his large purchasing quantity. In addition, the financial situation of a company also determines the way of its common-good commitment and how it is fulfilled. The bakery is in a good financial situation due to no external debt, a consolidated market position and sufficient demand. It can afford expensive practices such as subsidising the wages of a service provider working for them, which paid extremely low wages before the minimum wage was introduced in Germany. The representative from the printing company explains that the possibilities for common-good oriented practices are limited when there is limited financial leeway: *“We cannot do that much because we do not have the money. Of course, we could build super facilities for something, or we could make all our employees happy with certain actions if we had any money to do that...We can momentarily only do it in our mind's eye”* (pc, par. 28). However, as has been shown in this section: Even though the financial margins

are small, a company can contribute to the common good. In the case of the printing company, this includes, among other things, their self-image as a special learning space, the collective ownership, as well as the participatory organisational and decision-making structures. It is also characterised, like all CgoCs studied, through the fact that it rejects profit maximisation in favour of fair and cooperative dealings, which includes transparency in the company and beyond, as well as a striking ecological commitment.

## **Discussion**

As depicted in the results section, CgoCs are characterised by an outstanding commitment to environmental and social issues. At the same time, they strive to generate surpluses necessary for their self-preservation. In doing so, they have to balance the additional costs of their socio-ecological engagement with the economic stability of the company. Thus, it may happen that economic reasons weigh more heavily in some decisions than social or ecological arguments (see above), because the self-preservation of the company is generally given priority. This observation fits well to Spence and Rutherford (2001) empirical work, in which they found four ethical frames after which owner resp. manager align their actions (1. profit maximisation priority, 2. subsistence priority, 3. enlightened self-interest, 4. social priority). Following this frame approach, the CgoCs studied can be assigned to the 'profit satisfaction perspective' in which the companies change between the related 'subsistence' vs. 'social priority frame' depending on their financial situation (vs. the 'profit maximising perspective', which includes the 'profit maximisation priority frame' and the 'enlightened self-interest frame'). This also confirms the advantages of frame analysis over a fixed typology, since the frame approach allows owner-managers may simultaneously represent their firm's priorities through a number of different frames (see Spence & Rutherford, 2001). In adopting the 'subsistence priority frame', the CgoCs, which are small to medium in size, do not differ from conventional large corporations (CICs), which we scrutinised in another module of our research project. We studied four enterprises from different fields with tens of thousands of employees each, with respect to the question of the scalability of the ECG approach (see Heidbrink et al., 2018). In case of doubt, both the

CgoCs and the CICs, are disposed to subordinate the pursuit of socio-ecological goals to the self-preservation of the company. Unlike the CICs however, the CgoCs are clearly more willing to accept losses in profits in favour of socio-ecological principles—what according to Spence and Rutherford (2001) would be a take on of the ‘social priority frame’. The CICs occasionally also accept lower profit margins to engage socio-ecologically, but generally they strive for profit maximisation and are characterized by short-term economical oriented thinking. For them, profitability is of paramount importance and socio-ecological issues are subordinate to this (Heidbrink et al., 2018). Thus, they follow the ‘profit maximisation priority’ frame under the ‘profit maximising perspective’ described by Spence and Rutherford (2001). Further, some of the CgoCs are promoting sufficiency-oriented consumer behaviour, and show a sufficiency orientation regarding their own business practices, e.g. by rejecting to serve certain customers (see above). In doing so, the CgoCs consciously forego opportunities for growth and sales increases in favour of their social and ecological values (‘social priority frame’). This behaviour clearly differs from that of the CICs. The CICs reason that due to the high level of competitive pressure they face, it is not possible to pursue a sufficiency orientation in product design and sales without “getting swept out of the market” (Heidbrink et al., 2018, p. 49). They regard a sufficiency orientation for their own business as excluded unless additional profitable business results (Heidbrink et al., 2018). Thus, the CICs continue to search for the win-win effects of socio-ecological commitment (improvements regarding sustainability concerns and increases in profits, market share or the like), which have been long emphasised in the CSR debate (Porter & Kramer, 2011), and which characterises the ‘enlightened self-interest frame’ under the ‘profit maximising perspective’ (see Spence & Rutherford, 2001). In contrast, the CgoCs are willing to invest in socio-ecological measures without the expectation that it will pay off economically (see above). Thus, for CgoCs profit maximisation is subordinate to other goals. With reference to Dyllick and Muff (2016), with this the CgoCs leave the one-dimensional traditional business perspective behind, which only focuses on economic concerns. Rather, the CgoCs are characterised by

a multi-dimensional sustainability approach, which addresses social, environmental and economic issues. Unlikely within the dominant current economic paradigm, the purpose of their businesses is not merely to create economic value. Their perspectives are broader and try to balance economic value, environmental value and social value. The beneficiaries of the businesses are not only its owners, but with their socio-ecological engagement the CgoCs address their direct stakeholders (e.g. employees, suppliers, customers) as well as stakeholders who are only indirectly affected by their business activities (e.g. society as a whole, the eco-system). Thus, in an abstract sense they serve the common good. Dyllick and Muff (2014; 2016; Muff & Dyllick, 2014) describe this approach of multidimensional sustainability concerns and creating value for the common good as some characteristics of 'truly sustainable businesses'.

CgoCs operate in the primary, secondary and tertiary sectors. Therefore, the decision to manage a company in a common good oriented way does not depend on the sector. In the results section, however, we highlighted the significance of the financial situation regarding the style of common good engagement. The financial situation, on the other hand, seems to be related to one characteristic of the industry in which the company is active. In our sample, the financial situation of the companies which operate within an industry with an established environmental niche market tends to be better than that of the companies which act within a market without a (social-) ecological niche sector. The organic farmer, the organic bakery, the wholesalers for organic food, and the clothing manufacturer (with production of outdoor equipment) supply a niche market with an explicit demand on green goods. They are financially better off than, for example, the printing company and media agency, in which we assume, the demand for organic products is generally lower. Thus, the existence of an established socio-ecological niche within the market may be a factor that defuses the tension between profit orientation and socio-ecological commitment. Further research in this direction is needed.

Focusing on organisational perspectives, Dyllick and Muff (2016) regard the embedding of sustainability throughout the organisation as of key importance for integrating

sustainability into business. They follow other authors who “argue that simple bolt-on sustainability will not suffice to effectively manage the sustainability risks and opportunities for a company” (Dyllick & Muff, 2016, p. 161). In the case of the CgoCs the common good orientation is anchored within the organisation from the bottom-up due to the intrinsic motivation of the business running collective or top-down through a delegation system set up by the board of management. Either way, socio-ecological principles have a significant influence on the companies’ strategies and operations, governance and management processes, organisational structures and culture, as well as reporting. In sociological theory, modernity is commonly described as a process of social differentiation characterised by an increasing division of labour and function (Durkheim, 1996; Elias, 1997, both cited after Kny et al., 2015). At the actor level, this increasing specialisation corresponds to a differentiation in roles (Goffman, 2003, cited after Kny et al. 2015). In accordance with this logic of social differentiation, modern societies are reacting to environmental problems by developing new subsystems, functions and roles. At the organisational level, companies appoint sustainability officers or CSR departments. Conventional companies delegate sustainability issues to these, while the other departments continue to operate according to primarily economic criteria (Kny et al., 2015). We illustrated the example of the clothing manufacturer who anchors sustainability issues through a CSR team. The team consists of employees from all departments of the company where they hold a non-sustainability-related function. In this case, we observe a break with the differentiation into specialised functions and roles typical for modern societies. There is no differentiation between a sustainability specialist and an employee from, for example, the procurement department. Instead, the procurement employee becomes an expert in sustainable sourcing. Through this system sustainability issues are interwoven into the daily business of the employees all over the company. Thus, it seems to be a particularly promising approach with respect to the claim for embedding sustainability throughout the organisation. Nevertheless, integrating sustainability throughout the organisation does not replace a systematic performance control, which ensures the

application of socio-ecological criteria. Critical in this regard is the attitude of the media company we studied, in which the idea of sustainability is—according to the statements of our interview partner—firmly anchored bottom-up by the intrinsic motivation of the collective, but which lacks a set of regulations to implement (social-) ecological standards systematically and track adherence to these. Thus, no objective assessment can be made and there is a risk that the company overestimates its de facto (socio-) ecological engagement and results.

In sum, the CgoCs have in common that they pursue social, environmental and economic concerns (input side: what?), they anchor the concept of sustainability throughout the organisation (process side: how?), and their value creation serves the common good (output side: what for?; input-process-output perspective with reference to Dyllick & Muff, 2016). However, we observe differences in how or with what the companies pursue their contribution to the common good. For one group of CgoCs, the common good contribution consists of the product/service *and* the way they do their business. As we depicted, in the case of the bakery and the media company their products play an important role for their common good contribution. That is, because the bakery meets the need for a basic need (food), and the media company makes a necessary contribution to the democratic order of society (to provide information). In addition, certain common good effects only come to fruition due to the *manner* in which they conduct or organise their business. Because the bakery only works with grain that was cultivated according to the Demeter standard, they support the preservation of an old craft and contribute to the protection of biodiversity. It is necessary that the media company pays attention to the diversity and independence of its editorial board, so they make sure that the news is diverse and independent. For some CgoCs like the event designer, the printing company as well as the clothing manufacturer (which mainly produces functional clothing and outdoor equipment) the common good effect even lies *primarily* in the question of *how* they are doing business; in this regard the product or service offered is incidental. This may be because they operate in fields in which the production or provision of their product/service is linked to a comparably high amount of

negative environmental impact and/or social problems. Thus, as described by the event designer using the example of LED technology, the potential to achieve significant improvements regarding the environmental impact through (technological) optimisation in the process is comparatively high. Another reason might be that the need for large concerts, printing products and functional clothing may be more debatable than for a product meeting a basic need or being obviously necessary to keep up the democratic order of society.

As we have pointed out, the companies' common good oriented engagement is not economically driven and thus externally motivated, but is pursued due to an intrinsic motivation. The intrinsic motivation is based on a value system that strives for fairness and cooperation in the relationships with their stakeholders, which emphasises the diversity and independence of and within the company, claims democracy and transparency, and sees ecological sustainability as a value in itself. In the results section, we have seen that this set of values largely coincides with the value system of the ECG.

The ECG differs from other CSR tools by explicitly referring to a set of values. The identification with these values motivates companies to join the ECG and to give report about their social-ecological commitment (Mischkowski et al., 2018; Scheffler & Lieber, 2018). So far, only SMEs have published a CGB. This is remarkable, as SMEs are characterized by implicit CSR engagement and tend not to communicate explicitly about their social-ecological efforts (Elford & Daub, 2019). SMEs struggle to adapt standards like EMAS, ISO 14001 and GRI to their internal processes as well as to manage the required documentation of such standards (Elford & Daub, 2019; Steinhöfel et al., 2019); the modified versions of this CSR standards adapted to SMEs are also poorly accepted (Elford & Daub, 2019). The ECG thus closes the following gap: It serves SMEs as an identification and communication tool for CSR—which so far worked with the established CSR standards for large companies only. Thus, like Scheffler and Lieber (2018, p. 98), we assume that "especially SMEs without a formal CSR strategy, but with quiet, intrinsically motivated social responsibility [...] see in the CGB their opportunity to make their responsibility and value orientation transparent". The

reasons for this are probably manifold: The ECG was initiated by SMEs. Likewise, the CGB was designed "bottom-up" and is developed continuously by entrepreneurs from SMEs and other ECG activists. Thus, as conventional CSR standards seem to be too complex for SMEs to implement (Elford & Daub, 2019), the CGB may meet SME's requirements regarding a CSR instrument better given the influence they have on its development. As the CgoCs emphasize the identification with the ECG's values as a driving factor for joining the ECG (Mischkowski et al., 2018; Scheffler & Lieber, 2018), we support Murillo and Lozano's (2006) claim that more attention should be given to the values and cultures of SMEs if we want to understand SME's motivation for social-ecological commitment. The shared identification with the ECG's values creates mutual trust between the companies, which opens doors for cooperation. Collaboration between companies as well as between companies and other organizations is an important step towards more business sustainability. In collaboration processes, companies can learn from each other, share responsibility, risks and resources, overcoming scale disadvantages and deal better with the formal requirement of CSR reporting (Lepoutre & Heene, 2006). Research demonstrated that many small businesses perceive the impact of their efforts to improve their impact on the natural environment to be negligible and thus may not be motivated to engage in such behavior despite their abstract concern about society or the environment (Lepoutre & Heene, 2006). The ECG's character of a social movement may be helpful to overcome this obstacle for SME's engagement in CSR activities as the SMEs are likely to feel more effective in their social-ecological efforts as part of a movement. In addition, the ECG's network character may also favor the SMEs' preferred pathway to learn through networking and their peers (Jenkins, 2006). This could be another reason for the ECG's attractiveness. Further research on the question how the ECG motivates SMEs to make their social-ecological commitment explicit, and thus how the ECG accomplishes something that previous CSR instruments failed to do, seems worthwhile.

In our study on the scalability of the ECG approach, we observed that the value orientation of the CICs is altogether different (Heidbrink et al., 2018). For the CICs, the profitability of measures is the basic strategy behind their enterprise action. Corporate

cultures dominate which exclude certain claims of the ECG (Heidbrink et al., 2018). We illustrate this with the example of transparency. While the CgoCs provide comprehensive transparency into their businesses and their business relationships, the CICs widely reject any transparency that goes beyond the legal requirements they are subject to, but which fall well short of the expectations of the ECG. They are not willing to provide internal visibility of salaries and other relevant data for all employees, transparent pricing, and differentiated data on the company's environmental consumption (Heidbrink et al., 2018). Transparency's crucial role for a company's common good contribution as well as business sustainability has been illuminated by Vaccaro and Sison (2011), respectively Dyllick and Muff (2016). And it is the CgoCs that exploit this potential, which in contrast to the CICs are not legally obliged to report about non-financial issues (compare to Deutscher Bundestag, 2017). The CgoCs are thus characterised by a proactive attitude to use opportunities for sustainability improvements. Furthermore, as depicted in detail in the results section, CgoCs actively work on the creation of possibilities for a common good oriented management for themselves and also for other companies: relatively large CgoCs are using their (limited) market power to increase social and environmental standards in their industries (see also Stumpf et al., 2017). The CICs, however, adopt a more passive attitude. They do not see themselves in a position to demand higher socio-ecological standards in their industry. Although much bigger than the CgoCs, the CICs argue that they perceive themselves to be too small within their industry, that the price as well as the competitive pressure are too high, or stress their limited influence due to their intermediate position in the value chain. Thus, they assume that they can only react to the existing supply of the suppliers (Heidbrink et al., 2018). With this attitude, they miss out on opportunities to make businesses more sustainable. Other restrictions to pursue socio-ecological goals result from their ownership structure. The big stock corporations from our sample operate such as to maximise profits, because their shareholders primarily have expectations of profitability. In addition, according to the current legal situation, the management board of a stock corporation is obliged to act in this way in

order to avoid claims for damages (Ekardt, 2015, cited after Heidbrink et al., 2018). The CgoCs have a variety of different legal forms and ownership structures. They are privately held owner-managed companies (including family businesses) or collectively held enterprises (including employee companies). None of the companies is traded on the capital market. As illustrated above, the pressure to be financially successful also exists for CgoCs. However, as a result of their ownership structure, they are able to give priority to socio-ecological principles over profit *maximisation*. This is also the case in the family-controlled or owner-managed CICs, albeit they do so to a much lesser extent than the CgoCs (Heidbrink et al., 2018). However, in owner-managed companies the common good orientation depends on the attitude of the owners or acting managing directors. Thus, this orientation might not be secured in the long term. To set the company up as, for example, a benefit-corporation or choose another non-profit legal form—so that the pursuit of socio-ecological goals is formally established—may remedy this problem.

In sum, the CgoCs give good examples of how a common good orientation can be incorporated into a company and how it can be expressed in entrepreneurial practice. As our study shows, it is the small and medium-sized companies in particular, which are at the forefront of socio-ecological engagement. Therefore, they should be given more attention in business sustainability studies.

## **Conclusion**

Our empirical study reveals that CgoCs are not a homogenous group, but that the ECG movement unites a wide variety of companies (in terms of size, industry, organisational models, etc.). However, common core characteristics can be identified, i.e., an intrinsic motivation of the company owners to strive for fairness and cooperation in relations to their stakeholders, as well as ecological sustainability. Additionally, some companies intensively address questions of diversity and co-determination within the organisation and the preservation of the company's independence. The common good orientation is anchored either top-down or bottom-up throughout the organisation; especially the example of a CSR team with members from all company departments seems to be a promising approach to

embed sustainability issues in daily business. In any case, rather than the pursuit of profit maximisation, the aim of the companies is to adhere to socio-ecological principles through addressing multi-dimensional sustainability concerns. From a management perspective, the CgoCs adopt a 'profit satisficing perspective'. In general they are socially active ('social priority frame'), unless they face absolute financial restrictions ('subsistence priority frame'). Adopting the profit satisficing perspective widens the scope for practices that do not follow a primarily economic logic. For example, customers with a fundamentally different value orientation are rejected and moderate consumption is promoted. CgoCs are characterised by a voluntarily high degree of transparency in their reporting with which they exploit potentials for more business sustainability. The ECG serves SMEs as an identification and communication tool for CSR and thus fills in the gap that SMEs have so far had little systematic reporting on their social-ecological commitment. The way companies determine to contribute to the common good, and which stakeholders they specifically address, depends on their corresponding area of activity, financial situation and size. On the one hand, for example, it is possible for larger CgoCs to achieve higher industry standards and, thus, facilitate common good management practices for themselves and other companies. On the other hand, CgoCs might have a more inward-looking perspective, for example, by understanding themselves as educational incubators. Regardless of the means, all the companies examined actively seek to shape an economy that primarily focuses on the common good.

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**Study 2: Common Good-Oriented Companies: Exploring Corporate Values, Characteristics and Practices That Could Support a Development Towards Degrowth\***

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Within the academic context, discussion of the concept of degrowth has increased in recent years (Kallis, Demaria, & D’Alisa, 2015; Burkhart, Eversberg, Schmelzer, & Treu, 2017). In their anthology, *Degrowth. A Vocabulary for a New Era*, D’Alisa, Demaria and Kallis (2015) summarize the various contributions on degrowth under the following definition: “Degrowth is a rejection of the illusion of growth and a call to repoliticize the public debate colonized by the idiom of economism. It is a project advocating the democratically-led shrinking of production and consumption with the aim of achieving social justice and ecological sustainability” (first page, no page number). However, there is no homogenous definition of degrowth; instead, “degrowth has multiple interpretations” (D’Alisa et al., 2015, p. xx).<sup>1</sup> One of the best-known authors on degrowth (Kallis et al., 2015) is the economic anthropologist Serge Latouche. In his book, *Farewell to Growth*, Latouche (2009) describes eight goals which, he claims, should trigger a development towards degrowth. He calls for a

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<sup>1</sup> The heterogeneity within the discourse is characterized, among other things, by the various concepts surrounding the growth critique. Thus, in the German academic debate, the term “Postwachstum” (post-growth) is most commonly used, while “degrowth” is a concept used within the international movement (also Burkhart et al., 2017, p. 116). In this paper, we use the terms “degrowth” and “post-growth” synonymically, as we take account of contributions which use different terms but have the same objective.

societal reorientation concerning values such as altruism, cooperation and self-determination. He expects this shift in values to lead to a transformation of production structures and modes, and of the conceptual understanding of prosperity. Restructuring, in turn, is intended to accompany a redistribution of prosperity and access to natural goods (Latouche, 2009). Latouche makes no reference to the role of companies in this process. Overall, the degrowth debate has so far largely neglected the role of companies in a transformation towards degrowth (Posse, 2015). The discussion focuses instead on macro-economic developments, political approaches and questions of individual lifestyle (Pennekamp, 2011). However, regarding the role of companies in societal transformation processes, Posse (2015) observes overlaps with discourses on the solidarity economy, social entrepreneurship and the Economy for the Common Good (ECG). Indeed, the ECG social movement, in which companies play an important role, states that it sees itself as connected to the concept of degrowth (Giselbrecht & Ristig-Bresser, 2017). The ECG claims that the purpose of business should be to contribute to the common good. This contribution should be assessed by the way in which a company complies with the values of human dignity, solidarity and social justice, ecological sustainability, transparency and co-determination on the part of the company's stakeholders (Gemeinwohl-Ökonomie, 2017). Business profits, meanwhile, are seen as mere means which should not serve the interests of external investors (Felber, 2010). Felber and Hagelberg (2017) state that this should bring about a situation in which “companies are no longer forced to expand and grow. This opens up a myriad of new opportunities to design business to improve the quality of live [sic] and help safeguard the natural world. Mutual appreciation, fairness, creativity, and cooperation can better thrive in such a working environment” (p. 4). To date, over 2,000 companies—most of them situated in Austria and Germany—have declared their support for the ECG (Giselbrecht & Ristig-Bresser, 2017).

The aim of our paper is to address the research gap on those company characteristics and practices that could support a socio-economic development towards degrowth. Below, we briefly review the existing literature on the characteristics of post-growth

companies. We then introduce the ECG, as well as Latouche's circle of eight 'R's, in more detail. In the following section, we use Latouche's eight 'R's to analyse common good-oriented companies' characteristics and practices. We explore those company values, concepts, structures and practices that should, according to Latouche (2009), lead to a societal transformation in the direction of degrowth.

### **Background: Post-Growth Companies in the Literature**

So far, little is known about the characteristics of companies which are responding to the limits of growth. Posse (2015) observes that "business economics and other disciplines deal intensively with questions of sustainability in companies, but without considering post-growth issues" (p. 15). As a consequence, "little [sic] efforts have been undertaken to translate concepts of post-growth to the company level with view to business models, strategies or management concepts" (Liesen, Dietsche, & Gebauer, 2015, p. 5). Nevertheless, the existing literature does identify companies which have the potential to contribute to overall economic degrowth. Liesen et al. (2015) introduce the concept of "Successful Non-Growing Companies" (SNC), stating "We define these companies as SNCs as they are not aiming for a maximisation of traditional management indicators such as sales, market share, profit or employee numbers, but want remain [sic] roughly constant in 'size'" (p. 4). The description of the characteristics of post-growth companies provided by Mewes and Gebauer (2015) does not exclude enterprise growth generally. Their definition instead stresses a company's critical reflection on the limits to growth, a proactive approach to this topic and an aspiration to change its approach to doing business within the market (Mewes & Gebauer, 2015, p. 27). In addition to the discussion of growth issues, the authors identify the companies' endeavours to shape societal change processes as characteristic of post-growth companies. Schubring, Posse, Bozsoki, and Buschmann (2013, with reference to Sekulova et al., 2013) emphasize that, among post-growth companies, the generation of profits plays a subordinate role. They state that, for post-growth companies, "the maximization of profits is not the driving force, but the goal of a positive and meaningful role in society in which the human being with its needs is at the center" (p. 19). In the same

manner, the term “growth-neutral company” refers to companies which “do not operate their business on the basis of business parameters, such as turnover, profit or number of employees. [...] Rather, these companies are targeting alternative goals, such as process and product quality, resource efficiency, and quality of life” (Liesen, Dietsche, & Gebauer, 2013, p. 10). Deimling (2017) describes the purpose of growth-neutral companies as solving social problems, increasing the common good, creating meaningful products and addressing the concerns of all of the parties involved, while also constantly taking into account all of the social and ecological effects of their business (also Gebauer, Mewes, & Dietsche, 2015). In sum, a common characteristic of non-growing, post-growth and growth-neutral companies is that their understanding of value creation does not primarily focus on growth.

During the transition towards a degrowth society, (certain) companies *will* have to grow, although not endlessly (Bocken & Short, 2015; Gebauer & Mewes, 2015; Posse, 2016). Possible reasons for growth are, on the one hand, the fact that post-growth companies could grow to push non-sustainable companies out of the market or force them to change their practices (Bocken & Short, 2015; Gebauer & Mewes, 2015; Posse, 2016). On the other hand, post-growth companies may see themselves as being forced to grow in certain situations in order to secure their self-preservation (Gebauer & Mewes, 2015). The term ‘post-growth company’ therefore encompasses more than just non-growing companies. Indeed, it makes no direct references to the specific growth ambitions of a company. At the same time, the growth prospects of a company are not necessarily indicative of a company’s degrowth contributions. A company that is not growing is not automatically contributing to a societal transformation towards degrowth. Rather than question a company’s current growth ambitions, it therefore seems more important to explore the intended *use* of potential company growth which ultimately depends on the company’s values and objectives. Besides the limitation of the company’s size, Deimling (2017) highlights two other key strategies through which a company can contribute to a reduction in economic growth: the creation of durable, functional, repairable commodities, and the development of alternative usage systems, propertyless services and business models which promote sufficiency.

In conclusion, the term 'post-growth company' refers to a company which does not primarily focus on growth in their understanding of value creation. This ultimately depends on the values and objectives of the company and the way in which they are put into practice. The limitation of the company's size is one possible way in which a company can contribute to a reduction in economic growth. Nevertheless, during the development towards a degrowth society, certain post-growth companies will have to grow, although not endlessly (Bocken & Short, 2015; Gebauer & Mewes, 2015; Posse, 2016). Thus it seems important to explore corporate values and practices—also of currently growing companies—which bear the potential to promote both a societal and an intra-company transition in the direction of degrowth.

### **Research Object & Objective**

In the search for business characteristics and practices that could support a societal transformation in the direction of degrowth, we will now more closely examine the companies which are part of the ECG movement and which thus aim to contribute to the common good through their business activities. In the following section, we first shed further light on the ECG and then introduce Latouche's (2009) circle of eight 'R's, which we use to analyse the companies' characteristics and practices.

### ***The Economy for the Common Good***

The ECG is a relatively new social movement. The core idea of the ECG is to promote an alternative economic model that identifies the common good as the main purpose of all economic activity. Monetary profits are seen as a mere means; common good requires that everyone's welfare is addressed. According to the ECG, common good serves as an umbrella term encapsulating the most important values of a democratic society within a constitutional objective. The specific meaning of its individual components should be defined in a democratic process (Felber, 2012). Since the ECG's foundation in 2010, 9,000 entities including companies, associations, universities, municipalities and individuals all over the world have affiliated themselves with the movement. About 250 small and medium-sized companies—mainly from Germany and Austria—have compiled and published a Common

Good Balance (CGB) (Giselbrecht & Ristig-Bresser, 2017). The CGB delivers an account of the degree to which an organization acts in correspondence with the ECG's core values: human dignity, solidarity and social justice, ecological sustainability, transparency and co-determination (matrix 5.0) (Gemeinwohl-Ökonomie, 2017). These values are assessed in relation to central stakeholders such as suppliers, investors, employees, business owners, customers, business partners and the 'social environment' (referring to civil society, future generations and nature). At present, compiling a CGB is voluntary. In the long term, the movement aims to secure a legal obligation for companies to report on their common good performance as a counterpart to providing their financial balance sheet.

Some critics reject the ECG as socialist (Amon, 2012; Rodenstock, 2015), and believe that the ECG would create no incentives for entrepreneurship (die junge wirtschaft, 2013). Academic discussion of the ECG is quite rare. Several theses exist which focus on the individual effects of the CGB with respect to economic success (Frasch, 2013) or management innovations (Hensel, 2013), or which compare the CGB with other Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) instruments (Behrens-Scholvin, 2013; Nowakowski, 2014).

### ***Latouche's Circle of Eight 'R's***

The ECG strives for a realignment of business according to values as part of a societal transformation. Latouche (2009) asserts that a societal change in values is the starting point for a development towards degrowth. In his utopia of a "de-growth revolution", Latouche (2009, p. 31) describes eight interdependent changes which reinforce one another and could trigger a (societal) transformation towards degrowth. According to Latouche (2009), the goals of this "virtuous circle of eight R's" (p. 33) are: re-evaluate, reconceptualize, restructure, redistribute, relocalize, reduce, re-use and recycle. **Re-evaluation** refers to a change in values. For instance, "altruism should replace egotism" (Latouche, 2009, p. 34), and "competition should give way to cooperation" (Latouche, 2009, p. 34). Latouche (2009, p.34.) calls for "the appreciation of good craftsmanship over productivist efficiency". Citing Belpomme (2007), Latouche (2009) claims that "a sense of justice, responsibility, respect for democracy, the celebration of differences, the duty of solidarity [...] are the values we must

win back at all cost” (p. 34). He also states that “the most important thing is to get away from the belief that we must dominate nature and try to live in harmony with it” (Latouche, 2009, p. 35). Furthermore, a change in values would facilitate processes of **reconceptualization**. Without going into detail at this point, Latouche (2009) states, for example, that there is a need to redefine the concepts of wealth and poverty. Furthermore, “**restructuring** means adapting the productive apparatus and social relations to changing values” (Latouche, 2009, p. 36; emphasis added). Furthermore, Latouche (2009) calls for a **redistribution** of power, wealth and access to natural resources. According to Latouche (2009, p. 37), **relocalization** could be implemented by local factories financed on a local basis through collective savings. A process of degrowth also means a **reduction** of the impact of our consumption and production habits on the biosphere, including through the principles of **re-use** and **recycling** (Latouche, 2009, p. 38-41).

By using Latouche’s eight ‘R’s to conduct a guided analysis of common good-oriented companies’ (CgoCs) characteristics and practices, we aim to answer the following question: what business characteristics and practices can we identify among CgoCs that should, according to Latouche (2009), support a development towards degrowth? Seeking to elucidate this question, we researched the dominant values of CgoCs and the ways in which these are expressed in the companies’ structures, practices and corporate concepts (e.g., of business relations).

### **Sample & Methods**

In 2015, interviews were conducted with representatives of eleven companies from Germany and Austria, all of which have published a CGB. The companies were selected on the basis of “generic purposive sampling” (Bryman, 2012, p. 422). According to this method, participants are systematically chosen on the basis of theoretical considerations. The criteria set for selection at the beginning of the study were enterprise size (in numbers of employees) and field of activity. The selection followed the strategy of “maximum variation” (Bryman, 2012, p. 419), the goal being to achieve the largest possible variation in these criteria. The study therefore includes individual entrepreneurs as well as companies with around 500

employees in their home country. The companies are drawn from all three major economic sectors. Three companies are collective businesses: a media company (mc), a printing company (pc), and one wholesaler for organic food (ws1). They were founded in the 1970s and 1980s respectively. One organization has its origins in the Catholic Church: over 150 years ago, a pastor founded a hospital for elderly people, and from it emerged what is now an elder care centre (ecc). Seven of the eleven companies are “traditional” owner-managed or family businesses: a bakery (ba), a clothing manufacturer (cm), an engineering firm (ef), a farm (fa), a media agency (ma), a service provider for event design (ed) and another wholesaler for organic food (ws2). They were founded or taken over between 1981 and 2013 respectively. Hence, the sample represents a highly diverse selection of CgoC.

Nevertheless, the reader should bear in mind that purposive sampling is a non-probability form of sampling that cannot be generalized to a population. For the interviews, we asked to meet with those people from the companies who were most actively involved in the process of conducting the CGBs. Most of the interviewees held executive positions in their companies. They were interviewed as representatives of their organizations: in the “Results” part of this paper, statements made by individual interviewees are therefore attributed to their company as a whole.

The development of the interview guideline was based on the S<sup>2</sup>PS<sup>2</sup> procedure (Kruse, 2014, p. 231-240). Thematically, the guideline covers the company’s self-image, the interviewee’s or interviewees’ personal evaluation(s) of the work of the company, the company’s understanding of common good, the company’s motives in engaging in the ECG, the company’s experiences with the ECG and CGB, an assessment of the boundaries of the ECG’s impact and the ECG’s future, the operational implications of common good-oriented management, the general status of the company and the (societal/political) framework conditions for common-good oriented management (the interview guideline can be found in Appendix A). The semi-structured guideline and open questions aim to ensure an unbiased course of conversation. This approach allows the interviewees to bring in those subject-related topics which are most relevant from their point of view. With this method, however, it

is not possible to collect comprehensive information on all subject-related topics from all participants. The reader should bear this in mind when considering information in the “Results” section about the number of companies which addressed a specific topic in the interviews. All interviews were transcribed and then analysed with the use of MAXQDA® (version 11.1.2). In addition to the interviews, the CGBs of the companies were also viewed. The analysis mainly followed the principles of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2012). The interviews were conducted in German, and the citations in the following section have therefore been translated into English by the authors.

## **Results**

In the following section, we present the findings of our empirical analysis. The presentation is structured by Latouche’s (2009) eight ‘R’s. In order to assess the businesses’ characteristics and practices, and their possible connections to a process of degrowth, we refer not only to Latouche—who at times remains unspecific in his remarks—but also to the current degrowth debate.

### ***Re-evaluate***

As explained above, Latouche (2009) appeals for a change in values in the direction of e.g., altruism, cooperation, justice, responsibility, democracy, diversity, and solidarity. In the following section, we describe the values that our analysis of CgoCs identified. We discuss whether these corporate value orientations are in line with Latouche’s idea of a “de-growth revolution” (2009, p. 31) and thus, according to Latouche, would enable a transformation towards degrowth.

**Fairness & Cooperation.** The printing company in our sample declares that *“cooperation is an essential part of this common good orientation”* (pc, par. 53). Indeed, cooperation is a commonly-shared value among the companies in our sample. The engineering firm stresses its intention to conduct *“fair interactions”* (ef, par. 19) and the event designer states that they wish to have *“partner-like relationships”* (ed, par. 144) with their customers, suppliers and other companies. *They “do not want predatory competition or to play off our suppliers against each other”* (ed, par. 76) or to *“bamboozle”* anyone (ed, par. 76;

ma, par. 44), for example with their prices: *“I want to pay fairly, but I also want to be paid fairly”* (ed, par. 237). Several companies (ef, ma, ws2, pc) report that they even strive for cooperation with their competitors: *“In fact, also with competitors [...]. You don’t nuke the others, but instead you try to figure out how both of you can survive”* (pc, par. 53).

“Degrowth stands for a transformational path towards forms of business [...] in which the welfare of all is at the centre and the ecological basis of life is preserved. [...] The common values of the desired transformation are mindfulness, solidarity and cooperation” (Burkhart et al., 2017, pp.108-109). A consideration of the values of fairness and cooperation (in contrast with competition) places the actual needs of every person at the centre of the entrepreneurial activity. How this is implemented in practice, for example by redesigning the structure of trade relations, is explained below, under *Restructure*.

**Diversity, Independence & Democracy.** Instead of delegating the shaping of the economy and society to a few, the degrowth movement calls for a democratization which includes the participation of all (Burkhart et al., 2017). This requires open discussion processes in which different voices are heard: something which can begin on a smaller scale, within the company. The media company in the sample stresses diversity as a core value of the company: *“We are very pluralistic in our constitution. That means that you don’t have a line that you somehow push through [...] This is// of course, a brand essence: independence, diversity. [...] There was once an intern who said he has never seen an editorial department that is so disunited. [...] In every detail, there will be a fight to the finish”* (mc, par. 20). Under *Restructure*, we illustrate how this aspiration to independence and diversity is reflected in the ownership structure of the company. Under *Redistribute* we describe the fact that democratic decision-making processes play an important role, for instance, for the wholesaler (ws2). Nevertheless, the value of democracy does not play such a fundamental role for all of the companies studied. The bakery explains: *“With regard to democracy, we want to improve. But we don’t intend to make consensus-oriented decisions here. [...] Our company’s proprietor comes from that approach. They tried it. [...] And so then there was, there was nothing but discussion, or a lot of discussion. And at the time that was*

*possible, because you could sell anything as being 'eco', even bricks. But that's no longer possible today. [...] We're in a completely different market now. [...] But, as I said, a lot of decisions are made by the community"* (ba, par. 230).

**Transparency.** By publishing a CGB, the companies grant the public insights into almost all areas of their business. As the farmer puts it, they *"get naked"* (fa, par. 109). This means a *re-evaluation* of their approach to doing business, from opaque to transparent. Whereas the media company states that *"it's rare to find as much transparency as you find here"* (mc, par. 132), and points out that it provides full information on all areas of the CGB, the printing company and the clothing manufacturer reject the idea of unrestricted transparency. They do not provide any details about their turnover. Because of its low wages, the media company is afraid of a debate about self-exploitation, and the clothing manufacturer does not want key accounts and producers to be able to see which role they play in its business. One example of how transparency could be put into practice is a transparency initiative initiated by one of the wholesalers (ws2) in 2014. The company reports that *"We not only deal with products and criteria, but also look, so to speak, at where the products come from, who produces them, how the people are paid locally—so we really look deeply, and then we give it to our customers in its entirety"* (ws2, par. 188). That this is far from normal is illustrated by the wholesaler's description of the accessibility of such information: *"So one challenge is also [...] getting the relevant information from the manufacturers. And, of course, they're not at all used to suddenly sharing information [...] on what they pay their employees or how they treat the environment. Maybe they're more likely to if they do it well, so if they// Or photos from the production facility that you want to publish and// So it sometimes it is hard work to convince them to do it"* (ws2, par. 352).

Although transparency is not a degrowth-specific aspect (transparency in the supply chain also plays an important role in the overall CSR discussion), a shift in values in this direction is equally important for a development towards degrowth. The creation of transparency in the supply chain makes it possible for companies to recognize, and then remediate, social and ecological problems. Transparent reporting and communication, which

emphasizes socio-ecological business performance, could help to push less sustainable providers out of the market or force them to make changes to the way they do business (Posse, 2016).

**Ecological Sustainability.** The *Degrowth Vocabulary* places ecological sustainability alongside social justice as the aims of degrowth (D'Alisa et al., 2015). The protection of the environment, the climate and natural resources are guiding principles for all of the companies in the sample. The bakery declares that *“The ultimate common good is the Earth, and for me the top priority is always to preserve it. [...] So, before any social criteria, first the Earth has to be preserved. First, we have to survive or keep it viable. And then we can think about how to make any profit or undertake any social projects, somehow”* (ba, par. 147). The bakery's concept of sustainability therefore corresponds with a decisive element of the concept of strong sustainability: the framework for sustainable development is defined by planetary boundaries (Ott & Döring, 2004). The farmer also believes their greatest chance to influence the future lies in ecological questions: *“I did not inherit the farm from my parents, I borrowed it from my children. So, for me, this is my maxim: I must ensure the farm continues to exist in the future [...]. And for that to happen, the most important issue is ecology, that// we are absolutely convinced of that, [...] also for agriculture as a whole, in order for it to remain viable at all”* (fa, par. 31). While ecology plays an extremely important role for the bakery and the farm, ecological issues are not a top priority at the media company: *“Well, we try to do a lot ecologically and fairly and along those lines”* (mc, par. 84). However, this goal is less consistently pursued: *“There are no corporate governance regulations which, for example, demand compliance with ecological standards”* (mc, par. 165).

In sum, we observe that the companies invoke the values of fairness, cooperation, diversity, independence, democracy, transparency, and ecological sustainability. While they generally share all of these values, different companies set different priorities. For instance, the media company deals more with issues of democracy than with ecological issues and, in the case of the bakery, precisely the opposite is true. According to Latouche (2009), and with reference to the current degrowth literature, this value orientation should lay the foundation

for a development towards degrowth. In the following section, we will explore the extent to which these values are accompanied by corporate processes of reconceptualization, restructuring, relocalization and redistribution, as well as reduction, re-use and recycling. The companies studied also mentioned the values of responsibility, humanity, respect and trust. A detailed examination of these more abstract values is, however, beyond the scope of this paper.

### **Reconceptualize**

According to Latouche (2009), a change in values would trigger a process of redefining concepts. In the same manner, the ECG movement claims that the alignment of companies with values such as cooperation and sustainability should be used to redefine the concept of business success (see above). In the following section, we provide a summary of our observations regarding the relevance of traditional success indicators, such as growth and profits, for the CgoCs studied.

**The Relevance of Company Growth.** The companies in our sample attach varying degrees of importance to corporate growth. First, we will examine those companies which have decided to stop growing. When it had about 40 employees, the printing company decided not to grow any further. It assumed that further growth would be incompatible with its understanding of how it wanted to be organized as a collective: *“The factory, at the time it was growing, we actually realized that forty is the tipping point, and then we had the non-growth discussion [...]. During that time we realized that our system of manageability, of traceability—just like we want it, so that it’s workable for us—if there was a further enlargement and fragmentation of delegation and so on, that we would lose sight of the big picture. [...] The way we want to be organized, it makes no sense to grow”* (pc, par. 14). Today, the situation is different. The printing company is currently downsizing, however, not by choice. The company explains that its industry is breaking up into growing, industrial companies and small, niche actors. Because it is unable to compete on price against the big companies, it has to *“downsize the company from a medium size to a smaller, more niche-like production”* (pc, par. 9). The engineering firm, an individual entrepreneur, states that

“You cannot grow the family and the company simultaneously” (ef, par. 15). The engineer adds, “In fact, I don’t want to grow. Well, it’s fine like this, and anything I don’t like to do or [...] I’m not able to do I would buy for this purpose. [...] Why do you have to grow, anyway? Individual entrepreneurs are needed to shape the economy, too” (ef, par. 87). The farmer reports that they have changed their mind on the growth issue: “A few years ago, I would have thought that, too: yes, we have to acquire more land again. No: instead, less land!” (fa, par. 33). They are currently considering downsizing at some point in the future and orientating themselves towards “more diversified cultivation” (fa, par. 33). The bakery claims that it is relatively big for an organic manufacturer and therefore is already of a size which is “quite competitive” (ba, par. 239). In addition, it has a high equity ratio and no external debts, so it “has no need to grow in order to repay debts” (ba, par. 239).

Degrowth represents a path of transformation which includes “overcoming the capitalist mode of production with its pressure to grow, compete and generate profits” (Burkhart et al., 2017, p. 109). Non-growing companies are a prerequisite for a reduction in macroeconomic growth (Deimling, 2017). As we can see from the example of the printing company, limiting a company’s growth can also be necessary in order to maintain democratic decision-making structures. The engineer makes a connection between limiting the company’s growth and maintaining their work-life balance. The farmer wishes to focus on diversified cultivation (which can contribute to the preservation of biodiversity), rather than on growth. Thus, for them, growth is of reduced importance, and other concepts instead have come to define successful business operations. As we learn from the bakery, good conditions for a renunciation of the growth paradigm are having a high equity ratio and no external debts, and the company having found a size at which it is competitive. These requirements, however, are not met by most companies in our sample, with the result that they consider further growth to be necessary.

For example, the clothing manufacturer justifies growth as an important factor in running the company efficiently and “pushing things forward” (cm, par. 277). It believes that achieving greater market strength through corporate growth is necessary for at least two

(related) reasons: firstly, to survive in a field that is dominated by takeovers; secondly, in order to be able to produce more cost-effectively and thereby be competitive and compensate for the additional costs which result from their social and ecological measures. The company believes that, one day, it may reach its perfect size and *“then, some day, we may not have to grow like that any more, or at least not at full speed”* (cm, par. 280). The event designer describes how, as *“an extremely fast-growing company”* (ed, par. 34), they face the challenge *“of remaining sustainable despite the growth”* (ed, par. 178), even though, in their opinion, *“growth, for us, does not necessarily mean consuming more. Instead, it means managing what we do more sensibly and better”* (ed, par. 181). As a company, they want to reach a size that allows them *“to pay reasonable salaries and to work efficiently”* (ed, par. 181). Degrowth does not mean the general prohibition of growth, at least for sustainable companies (Posse, 2016). However, in order to be compatible with a development towards degrowth, ambitions to grow should not serve as an end in themselves, or serve purely to increase profits (with the aim of distributing revenues to external parties), nor should that growth last indefinitely.

**Meaning of Profits.** As with the question of growth, the importance placed on profits varies within our sample. For the event designer, economic success is still a decisive success factor. They make the point that *“living common good”* is, from their point of view, strongly connected to *“economic thinking”*: *“CSR [is] very, very strongly linked to economic success. If I succeed in managing it and living it and being economically successful, then it will be a successful model. Yes: because then others will emulate me”* (ed, par. 144). For other companies in our sample, however, making a profit is less important. Let us first consider the example of the printing company: *“To not grow, as we do here, as is our internal business policy, it actually has the following effects: we don’t generate profits, never have done [...]. Well, we’ve had long periods in which we generated revenues. Then we distributed them [...] to the people, or we bought the kitchen and [...] hired a chef who cooked for everyone here in the morning, at lunchtime, in the evening [...] or we reinvested, meaning we renewed the machines and technology [...] To do that, you have to save up money and, if*

*you want to keep up technologically, you have to make money*" (pc, par. 14). So, the printing company states that generating revenues plays an important role, with any surplus generated flowing directly back into the company. The company therefore does not declare any profits. In the same manner, the elder care centre argues that, as a non-profit organization, the company's only obligation is to the common good, and it therefore does not pursue monetary interests. The company is instead interested in *"reaching the well-known black zero [breaking even]"* (ecc, par. 24). It therefore strives to make enough money to pay its salaries and other expenses.

The clothing manufacturer explains that *"We are a commercial enterprise that is, of course, to some extent oriented towards profits. We need them in order to ensure the existence of our company"* (cm, par. 139). The assertion of being profit-oriented *"to some extent"* means that generating profits is a significant objective for the company, but it does not operate with a view to maximizing profits at all costs. Moreover, it operates profitably while also taking into account social and ecological standards. The company does not subscribe to the idea that it would be contributing to the common good were it to maximize profits at all costs: *"I am always very sceptical of philanthropic models, [...] successful American entrepreneurs who have a great business, are incredibly successful and then, in the end, at their end of their life, they start big philanthropic projects. And I think to myself: if you had had your whole supply chain under control right from the start [...] then it would have been fairer and more honest"* (cm, par. 76). The bakery also adopts a similar approach. It stresses that it could make larger profits if it raised prices. But, because the stated purpose of the bakery is to produce high-quality food and to make it as accessible as possible, it intentionally keeps prices relatively low in order to ensure as many people as possible can afford to buy its bread. At the same time, it does not lower prices—as it says it theoretically could do—in order *"to not threaten the local organic bakery industry"* (ba, par. 240). Instead, it uses these *"buffers"* (ba, par. 240) to supply public institutions such as schools and hospitals which operate on restricted budgets. In sum, generating profits plays an important role for these two example companies—but it is not an aim in itself. The goal of these two

companies is to create value for their stakeholders through a fair and responsible approach to doing business. For them, generating profits is therefore also of reduced importance as an indicator of success.

### **Restructure**

Restructuring the productive apparatus in accordance with changing values is one part of Latouche's (2009) "*road to a degrowth society*" (p. 36). Examples that we identified in this area relate to ownership structures as well as trade relations.

**Ownership Structures.** Above, we described the media company's orientation towards the values of independence, democracy and diversity. These values are also reflected in its ownership structure: "*And through this diversity, however, a profile emerges. On the one hand, it's structural: with diversity, it has a brand essence which is structurally safeguarded through the diversity of the ownership structure. Fifteen thousand, five hundred members, each of whom has one vote, no matter how many shares he or she owns. But at the same time, the constitution states that the consumer-members have no say against the employees, so the editorial departments have the utmost structural protection against any kind of interference*" (mc, par. 20). In the context of degrowth, this kind of democratic ownership structure represents a best practice, as Burkhart et al. (2017) call for "an expansion of democratic decision-making, also in the area of the economy, to enable real political participation" (p. 110). Nevertheless, at present, most businesses in our sample are (almost entirely) in the possession of the company bosses or, rather, families. Some of them, however, envisage that this may change in the future. The bakery explains that, at present, no one except the company boss holds shares, because it is considering transferring the company into a foundation to ensure that it will "*stay the same as it is right now*" (ba, par. 209). The farmer states that he is considering transferring the farm into a kind of citizen stock company (in German: Regionalwert AG, a model through which farms are financed by citizens and other small-scale, local investors. Further information: Hiss, 2014). Similarly, the clothing manufacturer reflects on ideas about how to involve its employees in the family business and states that the company "*surely will, one day, move to some extent in the*

*direction of profit participation bonds [in German: Genussscheine]*" (cm, par. 211). These kinds of developments would support Latouche's (2009) proposal that "local factories" should be "financed on a local basis by collective savings" (p. 37), and support the idea of redistributing power.

**Cooperative Direct Procurement.** An emphasis on the value of cooperation and striving for partner-like relationships with its stakeholders laid the foundations for a restructuring of the bakery's relationships with its suppliers. The bakery regularly meets the farmers who supply it at so-called round tables to directly agree on grain prices. "*Several times*" (ba, par. 14) during this process, which is based on trust and a long-term perspective, the farmers have lowered their prices. In this process, world market prices based on the stock exchange are disregarded. Instead, the focus lies on the actual needs of the local actors: an idea which is central to degrowth (Burkhart et al., 2017). This example also entails a redistribution of market power.

### ***Relocalize***

Relocalization is not only one of the 'R's of Latouche's (2009, p. 33) "virtuous circle", but also a central topic within the degrowth debate. The degrowth movement calls for "locally anchored but interconnected and open economic cycles. Because international trade is deepening social divisions and preventing ecological sustainability, the goal is to de-globalize economic relations" (Burkhart et al., 2017, p. 111).

**Preferring Local Suppliers.** One way in which a company can contribute to the relocalization of economic processes is to give preference to local suppliers. The bakery, for instance, favours grain from local farmers. From an ecological point of view, however, the bakery explains that purchasing grain from a more distant region—one with more nutrient-rich soil and higher crop yields—would in fact be preferable. The company therefore faces a kind of conflict of interests between ecological and social issues, in which it has decided in favour of the local farmers "in order to strengthen social structures and to maintain local agriculture" (ba, par. 189). Other practices which contribute to a relocalization of the

economy are abandoning growth as a company aim and establishing collective ownership structures (see above under *Ownership Structures*).

### **Redistribute**

A development towards degrowth should include the redistribution of power and incomes (Latouche, 2009; Burkhart et al., 2017). Within our sample, we found examples of practices which support the reallocation of both.

**Developing Salary Models Democratically.** One wholesaler (ws2) reconceived its salary model together with its employees. In this process, the company and its employees not only discussed criteria for the different salary brackets, such as degree of responsibility or level of education, but also decided democratically whether to disclose employees' salaries. Since "*no one wanted complete disclosure*" (ws2, par. 153), they instead decided to only disclose the criteria classifying employees into the respective salary brackets. This is an example of re-evaluation as it strengthens democracy. It also restructures corporate development and decision-making processes and redistributes power from the management to the employees.

**Raising Salaries.** Within the bakery, salaries are above average in comparison with other ecological bakeries. Furthermore, in 2011, the bakery initiated a process to improve the incomes of people employed by the distribution company which delivers the bread to its sales outlets. In 2012, they agreed that the transport company would pay its employees at least 8.50 euros per hour (this was prior to the introduction of a statutory minimum wage in Germany in 2015). The additional cost of the pay rise was borne by the bakery. These subsidies, along with investing profits in salary increases, as the wholesaler (ws2) did (see above under *Meaning of Profits*), are examples of the redistribution of profits.

### **Reduce, Re-Use & Recycle**

Degrowth calls for a "reduction of raw material, resource and land consumption as well as waste volumes and emissions of rich countries to a level which is sustainable in the long term and allows the countries of the South equal opportunities for development" (Burkhart et al., 2017, p. 109). The production practices of the companies studied include

various examples of re-use and recycling. Generally, the companies produce their goods or offer their services according to high ecological standards. For a comprehensive list of all measures, see Sommer, Kny, Stumpf, & Wiefek (2016). A discussion of all of these measures is beyond the scope of this paper. Instead, we will therefore conclude with a quote from the event designer: *“We look at everything that we use and we ask: are there other, ecological alternatives? If not, how can I recycle the material? If I can’t, how can I manage to keep it in circulation for as long as possible?”* (ed, par. 37).

## **Discussion**

The degrowth movement calls for the “democratically-led shrinking of production and consumption with the aim of achieving social justice and ecological sustainability” (D’Alisa et al., 2015, first page, no page number). Addressing the research gap on companies’ characteristics and practices that bear the potential to support a societal transformation towards degrowth, we conducted interviews with CgoCs. We examined the values, companies’ structures, corporate concepts and practices of CgoCs as they relate to Latouche’s (2009, p. 33) “virtuous circles of eight ‘R’s”. Latouche (2009) claims that a value change towards cooperation, democracy and respect for nature, accompanied by a redefinition of the concept of wealth, an adaptation of the productive apparatus in line with these values, a redistribution of power and wealth, a relocalization of economic cycles, and a reduction of our impact on the biosphere—for instance, through an increase in re-use and recycling measures—would trigger movement in the direction of degrowth.

In sum, we observed that the CgoCs we studied uphold values such as fairness, cooperation, diversity, independence, democracy, transparency, and ecological sustainability. Even if they are all generally committed to these values, priorities among the companies do vary. For instance, for the media company, independence and diversity are very important concerns, as established in its ownership structure. The company also pursues ecological goals, but these are not included in its corporate governance. By contrast, the bakery prioritizes ecological issues above all else, and wants to see its actions embedded within ecological boundaries. In practice, however, the question of whether

ecological or social (or economic) motives lead to entrepreneurial action seems to be decided on a case-by-case basis: the company preferentially purchases grain from farmers in its own region in order to strengthen local agriculture—despite the fact that, according to its own references, purchasing from regions further afield would be more sensible from an ecological point of view.

Transparency was the only value mentioned by the companies that was not explicitly referenced by Latouche (2009) in his call for a shift in values. However, Posse (2016) asserts that transparent reporting offers the possibility of enforcing changes in less sustainable enterprises. Since the CgoCs are pioneers in socio-ecological issues and are willing to provide in-depth insights into their businesses by compiling a CGB, and considering the increasing number of companies joining the ECG, we believe it would be desirable to examine this assumption more closely. Doing this and creating a link to the CSR debate, in which transparency in the supply chain is also discussed, seems reasonable.

For the companies studied, it is essential to operate profitably so they can cover their expenses. Nonetheless, for most companies in our sample, profits are of reduced importance as an indicator of success. Profit maximization is not the aim of their operations: this is reflected, for example, in the bakery's solidarity price policy. Several interviewees stated that they do not profit economically from their social and ecological engagement. The companies' understandings of the purpose fulfilled by their engagement therefore differ from those in the CSR discourse. The latter emphasizes the presumed win-win effect of CSR: CSR measures, it is believed, should go hand-in-hand with the company's increased economic success (Müller-Christ, 2014).

Whereas one part of the companies studied didn't want to grow anymore and one company was in a process of downsizing—though not by choice—, for some companies corporate growth was (still) an important issue. So to speak, these companies are not in an operational degrowth process. But the limitation of the company's size is just one possible way in which a company can contribute to a reduction in overall economic growth (Deimling, 2017). Furthermore, the development towards a degrowth society comprises the growth of

certain (post-growth) companies (Bocken & Short, 2015; Gebauer & Mewes, 2015; Posse, 2016). With reference to Latouche (2009) and the current degrowth literature, we observed overlaps of the companies' values, corporate structures and practices with claims from the degrowth movement. In addition to a change in values and reduced significance of profits as an indicator of success, we could observe democratic ownership and decision-making structures, cooperative trade relations, a preference for local suppliers and a redistribution of surpluses, as well as measures of re-use and recycling. Thus, we assume that the entrepreneurial behaviour of the companies studied has the potential to contribute to a development towards degrowth.

However, the approach of growing as sustainable companies and thereby pushing non-sustainable companies out of the market is not necessarily proving effective. As we can see from the example of the printing company, business growth is not always compatible with democratic organizational and decision-making structures. Since the company holds these principles dear, it is unable to compete on price with large enterprises. The company is therefore situated in a niche sector in which it serves only a particular clientele. It remains to be seen whether collective and democratic organizational structures are suitable only for small and medium-sized companies, or whether large enterprises may also develop more democratic structures.

Furthermore, our results reveal a contradiction between the companies' pursuit of cooperative business-to-business relationships and the aim of growth. On the one hand, the companies do not wish to have predatory relationships with their competitors. However, some of the companies do intend to grow. This means that those companies are, indeed, in competition with other companies on the market, and this may contradict their desire for cooperative relationships. This contradiction may be partially resolved if the CgoCs focus on jointly gaining shares of the market at the expense of less sustainable companies.

The companies in our study undertake various measures to reduce their environmental impact and strive for fair interactions with their stakeholders. Dyllick and Muff (2016) point out that there is a general disconnect between CSR and the achievement of

global sustainability goals. A corporation's engagement does not necessarily result in improvements in its stakeholders' situation, even if the engagement is well documented. Further research should therefore explore what impact CgoCs and other post-growth organizations' practices indeed have on their stakeholders (including the natural environment).

It should be remarked, that the results are specific to our analysed case group and, due to the low number of cases, are not generalizable to all CgoCs. Since some of the interviews were conducted with only one representative from a company, it was particularly important to look at the interviewees' statements in conjunction with the actual characteristics and practices of their companies, as well as the CGB, in order to distinguish between the possible personal preferences of the interviewee and the "actual" value orientation of the company.

## **Conclusion**

In their management practices, the CgoCs studied are guided by values such as fairness, cooperation, diversity, independence, democracy, transparency, and ecological sustainability. These values are also emphasized by the degrowth movement and, according to Latouche (2009), could trigger a transformation towards degrowth. Our study reveals company characteristics and practices which comply with Latouche's claims and are exemplified by democratic ownership and decision-making structures, cooperative trade relations, a preference for local suppliers and a redistribution of surpluses, as well as measures of re-use and recycling. Meanwhile, although operating profitably is important for the self-preservation of all of the companies in our sample, profits are increasingly losing relevance as a success indicator. Even so, some of the companies assert that they are striving for growth—in order, for example, to be able to hold their own in the market. Nonetheless, we conclude, that the CgoCs from our sample—due to their compliance with Latouche's strategies for a development towards degrowth—bear the potential to support a societal transition towards degrowth. However, further research is necessary to explore the

extent to which the companies' compliance with Latouche's eighth 'R's is indeed contributing to a societal transition towards degrowth.

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**Study 3: The Common Good Balance Sheet  
and Employees' Perceptions, Attitudes and Behaviours\***

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<https://doi.org/10.3390/su13031592>

In 2015, the United Nations summit in New York adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. With the 2030 Agenda, the United Nations has set itself 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in order to tackle globally poverty, inequality, injustice and climate change. Goal number eight consists in the requirement to “make sure that financial progress creates decent and fulfilling jobs while not harming the environment” (The Global Goals, 2020, no page). Companies, too, are therefore required to contribute to achieving the SDGs. Companies can use corporate social responsibility (CSR) management tools such as the SDG Compass, the EcoManagement and Audit Scheme (EMAS), the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) or the International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO) norms in order to document and communicate their social and ecological commitment.

For a long time, the focus in CSR research was on large companies, which is also why many of the CSR theories were developed with large companies in mind (Jenkins, 2004). The development of many of the CSR management tools was also therefore focused on large companies, although it was assumed that the tools could be downscaled so that they would also be suitable for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) (Jenkins, 2004). However, the idea of downscaling is based on particular assumptions that do not necessarily apply to the SMEs (Jenkins, 2004). In practice, SMEs have had difficulty adapting CSR management tools such as EMAS, ISO 14001 and GRI to their internal processes, as well as problems with managing the required documentation of such standards (Elford & Daub, 2019; Heras & Arana, 2010; Steinhöfel et al., 2019). In addition, the modified versions of the

CSR standards adapted to SMEs are hardly used in practice (Elford & Daub, 2019; Johnson & Schaltegger, 2016).

In contrast to the established CSR management tools, the Common Good Balance Sheet (CGB) developed by the Economy for the Common Good (ECG) is a tool that works primarily for small and medium-sized companies (Wiefek & Heinitz, 2019). With the aid of the CGB, the SMEs can systematically record their otherwise implicit social and ecological commitment, and communicate this both internally and externally. The ECG regards the contribution to the common good, operationalised through socio-ecological practices, as the primary purpose of all business activity. The aim of the ECG is to use the CGB to translate companies' common good commitment into comparable figures in order, for example, to award public contracts or credits depending on performance in the CGB. The aim is to ensure the comparability of the results in the CGBs through peer review processes or external auditing (Felber, 2018).

But what do the figures from the CGBs really say about everyday working life in the companies? To what extent does what is documented formally, and mostly at management level, extend into the workforce? Our study aims to explore these aspects. We therefore ask the following questions: a) Do employees from ECG companies perceive their companies' common good orientation?, and b) Do companies' CGB scores correlate with employees' attitudes, such as work and pay level satisfaction, work demands, perceived organisational support, organisational identification, meaningfulness of work, and employees' organisational citizenship behaviours?

### **The Common Good Balance Sheet**

The social movement of the ECG advocates an economic system based on values that promote the common good; its aim is to be a catalyst for change on the economic, political and social level (Gemeinwohl-Ökonomie, 2020c). It was founded by a small group of entrepreneurs together with the activist and writer Christian Felber in Austria in 2010 (Gemeinwohl-Ökonomie, 2020a). In 2015, the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) recommended the ECG model be integrated into the legal framework at both

European and national level (Europäischer Wirtschafts-und Sozialausschuss [EWSA], 2015). In Germany, some state governments then took the decision to implement a CGB within individual state-owned companies or to support companies in compiling a CGB (BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN Baden-Württemberg & CDU-Landesverband Baden-Württemberg, 2016; e.g., CDU Hessen & Bündnis 90/Die Grünen Hessen, 2018). In 2019, a motion was proposed at federal level for a pilot project in which a CGB would be implemented in at least two companies wholly or partially owned by the German federal government (Göring-Eckardt et al., 2019).

According to ECG data, 2,000 companies support the ECG and around 400 companies are either a member or have already compiled a CGB (as of March 2020, Gemeinwohl-Ökonomie, 2020b). Common good-oriented companies (CgoCs) operate within the framework of 'profit satisficing'; this means their objective is not profit maximisation, which leaves scope for pursuing socio-ecological principles (Wiefek & Heinitz, 2019). In the CGB, the contribution to the common good is measured using the value groups of human dignity, solidarity and cooperation, ecological sustainability, social justice, democratic co-determination and transparency. In their documentation, the companies make reference to their suppliers, their investors, their employees, their customers, and businesses in the same field, as well as to the environment and the social environment (CGB version 4.1, see Figure 2). Version 5.0 of the CGB is now available. In our study, however, we will work with version 4.1 because the companies we have investigated have compiled their CGBs using this version.

The CGB consists of 17 indicators. Each indicator formulates particular aims and requirements of the ECG, asks thought-provoking questions, and describes what the implementation of these requirements within companies might look like. The extent to which a company is fulfilling the requirements is captured by a percentage or score. The scores from the individual indicators are added together to produce an overall score. In the CGB 4.1, it is possible to achieve values between -2,350 and 1,000 points if negative criteria are included (Gemeinwohl-Ökonomie, 2013).

Figure 2

## Common Good Balance Sheet (Matrix 4.1)

	Human Dignity	Cooperation & Solidarity	Ecological Sustainability	Social Justice	Co-determination & Transparency
A) Suppliers	<b>A1-Ethical supply management:</b> Active examination of the risks of purchased goods and services, consideration of the social and ecological aspects of suppliers and service partners (90)				
B) Investors	<b>B1-Ethical financial management:</b> Consideration of social and ecological aspects when choosing financial services; common good-oriented investments and financing (30)				
C) Employees, including Business Owners	<b>C1-Workplace quality and affirmative action:</b> Employee-oriented organisational culture and structure, fair employment and payment policies, workplace health and safety, work-life balance, flexible work hours, equal opportunity and diversity (90)	<b>C2-Just distribution of labour:</b> Reduction of overtime, eliminating unpaid overtime, reduction of total work hours, contribution to the reduction of unemployment (50)	<b>C3-Promotion of environmentally friendly behaviour of employees:</b> Active promotion of sustainable lifestyle of employees (mobility, nutrition), training and awareness-raising activities, sustainable organisational culture (30)	<b>C4-Just income distribution:</b> Low income disparity within a company, compliance with minimum and maximum wages (60)	<b>C5-Corporate democracy and transparency:</b> Comprehensive transparency within the company, election of managers by employees, democratic decision making on fundamental strategic issues, transfer of property to employees (90)
D) Customers, Products, Services, Business Partners	<b>D1-Ethical customer relations:</b> Ethical business relations with customers, customer orientation and co-determination, joint product development, high quality of service, high product transparency (50)	<b>D2-Cooperation with businesses in same field</b> Transfer of know-how, personnel, contracts and interest-free loans to other business in the same field, participation in cooperative marketing activities and crisis management (70)	<b>D3-Ecological design of products and services :</b> Offering of ecologically superior products/services; awareness raising programmes, consideration of ecological aspects when choosing customer target groups (90)	<b>D4-Socially oriented design of product and services:</b> Information, products and services for disadvantaged groups, support for value-oriented market structures (30)	<b>D5-Raising social and ecological standards:</b> Exemplary business behaviour, development of higher standards with businesses in the same field, lobbying (30)
E) Social Environment	<b>E1-Value and social impact of products and services:</b> Products and services fulfill basic human needs or serve humankind society or the environment (90)	<b>E2-Contribution to the local community:</b> Mutual support and cooperation through financial resources, services, products, logistics, time, know-how, knowledge, contracts, influence (40)	<b>E3-Reduction of environmental impact:</b> Reduction of environmental effects towards a sustainable level, resource, energy, climate, emissions, waste etc. (70)	<b>E4-Investing profits for the common good:</b> Reduction or eliminating dividend payments to extern, payouts to employees, increasing equity, social-ecological investments (60)	<b>E5-Social transparency and co-determination:</b> Common good and sustainability reports, participation in decision-making by local stakeholders and NGO's (30)
Negative Criteria	Violation of ILO norms / human rights (-200), products detrimental to human dignity and human rights (e.g. landmines, nuclear power, GMO's) (-200), outsourcing to or cooperation with companies which violate human dignity (-150)	Hostile takeover (-200), blocking patents (-100), dumping prices (-200)	Massive environmental pollution (-200), gross violation of environmental standards (-200), planned obsolescence (short lifespan of products) (-100)	Unequal pay for women and men (-200), job cuts or moving jobs overseas despite having made a profit (-150), subsidiaries in tax havens (-200), equity yield rate >10% (-200)	Non-disclosure of subsidiaries (-100), prohibition of a work council (-150), non-disclosure of payments to lobbyists (-200), excessive income inequality within a business (-150)

Note. From "Handbuch zur Gemeinwohl-Bilanz", by Gemeinwohl-Ökonomie, 2013,

[https://www.ecogood.org/media/filer\\_public/c9/cd/c9cd687a-60fc-433e-a7c4-](https://www.ecogood.org/media/filer_public/c9/cd/c9cd687a-60fc-433e-a7c4-beae86541902/handbuch_v41_cc_release.pdf)

[beae86541902/handbuch\\_v41\\_cc\\_release.pdf](https://www.ecogood.org/media/filer_public/c9/cd/c9cd687a-60fc-433e-a7c4-beae86541902/handbuch_v41_cc_release.pdf)

In a factor-analytical study, the measurement model on which the CGB 5.0 is based did not prove to be valid and reliable (Ejarque & Campos, 2020; Felber et al., 2019). Ejarque and Campos (2020) identified items that need to be removed in order for the model to hold. However, further research is still needed to redefine them and retest the measurement model with the redefined items (Ejarque & Campos, 2020). Therefore, the development of the CGB is not completed, but an ongoing process.

### **Review of the Literature**

In the first few years of the ECG, the publications on the ECG were mainly bachelor's and master's theses and shorter informal studies. Since around 2016, longer publications and articles have appeared in scientific journals (Kny, 2020). Kny (2020) concludes from a synopsis of the literature that, in comparison with prevalent CSR approaches, the standards the ECG sets with a view to socio-ecological change are thematically and normatively extensive. The ECG's work-related values can be summarised as the desire to avoid discrimination and boost quality of employment, to encourage the sharing of information and worker participation, and to promote beneficial psycho-social factors at work, including flexible working hours, work-life balance, task clarity and variety of tasks, scope and autonomy (Ollé-Espluga et al., 2019).

Ollé-Espluga et al. (2019) conducted a descriptive analysis of reported work and employment conditions in 59 CGBs from German and Austrian companies and compared their results to the quality of jobs in the Austrian and German economies overall. According to their results, CgoCs provide more favourable conditions in terms of training and control over daily working time and tasks. Furthermore, the possibility of working part-time and at home is more prevalent in CgoCs, and more CgoCs report the existence of direct participation practices instead of representative participation forms. However, when compared to the Austrian and German economies overall, CgoCs stand out for their higher prevalence of works councils. Moreover, CgoCs report limited use of precarious employment arrangements, and almost half of CgoCs provide full-time salaries higher than or equal to the reference value for "living wages" in Austria and Germany. Comparison data with the

German and Austrian economies overall was not available at the time of the study. Contrary to expectations, Ollé-Espluga and colleagues (2019) observed a slightly greater wage inequality between the highest and the lowest income in CgoCs than in the Austrian and German economies overall.

In an explorative interview study, Meynhardt and Fröhlich (2017) investigated how a CGB can contribute to the development of companies from the perspective of the companies themselves. The company representatives reported, for example, an increased awareness around interacting with employees, awareness creation around reducing workload, women in leadership roles, workplaces with disabled access, and diversity of opinion, as well as the introduction of behavioural codes and a re-examination of ownership structures. In addition, the CGB increased transparency for both internal and external stakeholders (Meynhardt & Fröhlich, 2017).

Sanchis et al. (2018) conducted a quantitative questionnaire study among 206 European companies in order to assess the impact of the ECG model at the organisational level. Some companies reported, for example, improvements in cooperation strategies among businesses and better relations with suppliers, improved participation and better communication with employees and leadership as well as improvements in employees' commitment and better levels of employee motivation and satisfaction since conducting their first CGB. However, the study was not able to establish conclusively whether all these improvements were attributable to the production of the CGBs (Sanchis et al., 2018). This may be due to the fact that most of the companies – as we also found out from our own interviews with CgoCs – were already socio-ecologically committed before the CGB, so the CGB served, to a certain extent, as a tool for documentation and communication rather than as a driver of change (Heidbrink et al., 2018).

In terms of the effect on employees, we may assume, based on the results of a qualitative interview study by Mischkowski et al. (2018), that the CGB is having a positive impact on employee retention. Here, Mischkowski et al. (2018) emphasise the aspects of participation and co-determination within companies, as well as the establishment of a clear

value basis, which also creates a point of orientation for interactions both within the company and with external stakeholders. Thus far, there have been no other studies on the effect of the common good commitment on employees within CgoCs. Within CSR research, however, there have already been studies on the effects of socio-ecological commitment on employees.

### ***Employees' Reactions to CSR***

According to Glavas and Kelley (2014) definition of CSR, CSR means a company caring for the well-being of its employees and other key stakeholders, including the social and natural environment, with the aim of also creating value for the business. CSR is manifested in corporate strategies and operating practices (Glavas & Kelley, 2014).

Therefore, we understand a company's common good contribution, as the ECG defines it, as a form of CSR. Perceived CSR refers to the extent to which employees perceive the development and implementation of CSR strategies and practices within their company as well as the CSR's impact on the well-being of all key stakeholders and the natural environment (Glavas & Godwin, 2013; Lee et al., 2013).

For a long time, there was very little focus on the employee level within scientific CSR research, but over the past few years the number of micro-CSR studies has increased significantly (Glavas, 2016; Gond et al., 2017). Here, micro-CSR means "the study of the effects and experiences of CSR (however it is defined) on individuals (in any stakeholder group) as examined at the individual level" (Rupp & Mallory, 2015, p. 216). According to a review of 268 articles by Gond et al. (2017), most of the studies on micro-CSR published thus far can be divided into three streams of research: (a) drivers of CSR engagement, which relates to the predictors of, motives for, or forces that trigger employees' CSR engagement; (b) evaluations of CSR, which means how employees perceive, experience and judge their employers' CSR practices; and (c) reactions to CSR, which concerns the individual-level reactions to CSR and the underlying mechanisms and individual-level boundary conditions involved.

In a meta-analysis of 65 studies from 67 samples, Wang et al. (2020) have studied the reactions to perceived CSR from a summative perspective. They come to the conclusion that “perceived CSR is positively correlated with employees’ positive attitudes and behaviours, and negatively correlated with employees’ negative attitudes and behaviours” (Wang et al., 2020, p. 18). The results indicate, for example, that perceived CSR is positively correlated with employees’ positive beliefs and attitudes, such as perceived external prestige ( $rc = .378$ ), perceived organisational support ( $rc = .699$ ), organisational identification ( $rc = .515$ ), organisational trust ( $rc = .532$ ), organisational commitment ( $rc = .538$ ), organisational justice ( $rc = .551$ ), work engagement ( $rc = .515$ ) and job satisfaction ( $rc = .520$ ). In addition, perceived CSR is positively correlated with employees’ positive behaviours, such as job performance ( $rc = .483$ ) and organisational citizenship behaviour ( $rc = .405$ ) (Wang et al., 2020).

If we distinguish, for example, between internal CSR (CSR directed at employees) and external CSR (CSR directed at external stakeholders), Wang et al. (2020) report that perceived internal CSR correlated significantly and positively with employees’ organisational identification ( $rc = .575$ ) and work engagement ( $rc = .787$ ), but that the correlation with job satisfaction was not significant ( $rc = .264$ , ns.). With respect to perceived external CSR, they found positive correlations with employees’ organisational identification ( $rc = .489$ ), work engagement ( $rc = .727$ ) and job satisfaction ( $rc = .589$ ) (Wang et al., 2020). Moreover, the meta-analysis showed that perceived CSR towards the public and environment is positively correlated with employees’ organisational trust ( $rc = .272$ ), job satisfaction ( $rc = .427$ ) and organisational citizenship behaviour ( $rc = .410$ ) (Wang et al., 2020). However, the relationships between organisational identification and perceived CSR towards employees ( $rc = .421$ , ns.) and the environment ( $rc = .318$ , ns.) were not significant (Wang et al., 2020).

**The Role of Sex and Age in Reactions to CSR.** Wang and colleagues (Wang et al., 2020) have also highlighted the role of sex and age in relation to the reactions to CSR. Although they assume, on the basis of previous studies, that the impact of perceived CSR on employees’ attitudes and behaviours tend to be more evident among females (Del Alonso-

Almeida et al., 2017; Kahreh et al., 2014), the results of their study contradict this hypothesis. When the proportion of males in the sample was increased, the relationship between perceived CSR and attitudinal variables such as external prestige ( $\beta = -1.136$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and work engagement ( $\beta = -1.441$ ,  $p < .05$ ) was weakened, whereas the relationship between perceived CSR and behavioural variables such as employees' job performance ( $\beta = .807$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and organisational citizenship behaviour ( $\beta = .416$ ,  $p < .001$ ) was strengthened (Wang et al., 2020). Also, Islam et al. (2018) and Ko et al. (2018) found the relationship between employees' perceptions of CSR and organizational identification to be stronger among men than women. Hence, there is evidence on the role of sex in relation to reactions to CSR, though the exact directions of correlations still need to be clarified.

With respect to age, Wang et al. (2020) found the relationships between perceived CSR and organisational trust ( $\beta = .037$ ,  $p < .05$ ), job satisfaction ( $\beta = .024$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and organisational deviance ( $\beta = .060$ ,  $p < .01$ ) to be more significant among older employees, while the relationships between perceived CSR and employees' work engagement ( $\beta = -.038$ ,  $p < .01$ ), job performance ( $\beta = -.025$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and creativity ( $\beta = -.058$ ,  $p < .001$ ) are more significant among younger employees. The moderating effect of average age on the relationship between perceived CSR and employees' organisational identification and organisational commitment was not significant (Wang et al., 2020). Thus, influences of age on reactions to CSR should be taken into account when conducting micro-CSR studies.

### ***Research Desiderata & the Aim of Our Study***

Thus far, there has been relatively little research on theories and empirical studies of CSR and work meaningfulness (Glavas, 2016). Rosso et al. (2010) assume that companies' emphasis on their contribution to the common good may have positive implications for employees' experience of meaningfulness. Furthermore, Aguinis and Glavas (2019) point out that CSR could be used to create corporate cultures that are caring and compassionate. They join other scholars in calling for more research on caring and compassionate organisational cultures in order to shift away from the predominant focus on management in cultures marked by aggressiveness, competitiveness and rigid norms. Due to the relational

nature of CSR, future research ought to explore how creating caring relationships, such as caring for the well-being of stakeholders, has an impact on employees (Glavas, 2016). At the same time, Glavas (2016) observes that there are still too few studies on micro-CSR in SMEs.

Thus far, only SMEs have published a CGB, which means our study on micro-CSR in CgoCs is helping to fill a research gap. The aim of the ECG is to establish an economy based on cooperation and solidarity. Accordingly, these values must be reflected not only in business dealings with external stakeholders but also within the company cultures themselves. This is another respect in which our study on the ECG fills a research gap. Studies conducted thus far on the effects of a common good orientation (CGO) at the organisational level are of an exploratory nature and merely capture the opinions and perspectives of individual people from the respective companies. Often, the individuals consulted for the purpose of the studies are those who are involved in compiling the CGB. Interviews with 11 CgoCs for an earlier study of ours show that these individuals are frequently directors or employees with a managerial role (Wiefek & Heinitz, 2018). The aim of our study is to clarify, for the first time, if employees perceive the CGO of their companies. In addition, we aim to establish whether there is any relationship between the companies' CGO and employees' work-related attitudes and organisational citizenship behaviours. In so doing, we also look at aspects of work meaningfulness.

### **Constructs & Hypotheses**

Below, we introduce the constructs used in our study and the hypotheses tested.

#### ***Perceived CSR***

The scores from the CGBs serve as comparable indicators of the extent of CGO within a company. In general, CSR measures can only have an influence on the attitudes and behaviour of employees to the extent these employees perceive and evaluate the CSR engagement (Gond et al., 2010). The CgoCs either implement their CGO top-down via a delegation system or take a less institutionalised approach, allowing CGO to be implemented bottom-up by the collective; this is primarily the case with collectively owned companies

(Wiefek & Heinitz, 2019). If CGO is anchored within the company, the CSR commitment connected with it is also part of the company's daily operations, and every employee should come into contact with this in some capacity (see Aguinis & Glavas, 2013). Because a higher score in the CGB is supposed to be an indicator of greater CGO, we may assume that an increasing score correlates with an increase in perceived CSR. We therefore propose the following hypotheses:

**Hypothesis 1.** The total score achieved in the CGBs is positively related to perceived CSR.

### ***Job Satisfaction***

A widely used definition of job satisfaction is one proposed by Locke (Locke, 1976, p. 1304): "a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experiences". Ollé-Espluga et al. (2019, p. 4) attest to "a widespread presence of elements of good quality of work" within CgoCs. According to relationship management theory, CSR practices are an effective tool in improving the relationship between companies and their employees (Dhanesh, 2014; Rupp & Mallory, 2015). Bauman and Skitka (2012) explain how CSR may provide employees with a sense of security with regard to their material needs being met, self-esteem that stems from a positive social identity, as well as feelings of belongingness and meaningfulness at work, all of which may improve employees' job satisfaction. This is why we believe that job satisfaction is higher in companies with a higher score in the CGB. We therefore propose this hypothesis:

**Hypothesis 2.** The total score achieved in the CGBs is positively related to overall job satisfaction.

### ***Job Demands and Perceived Organisational Support***

Job demand is measured in the CGB with the indicator "C2—Just distribution of labour". The relevant figures are the proportion of all-inclusive work contracts, the overtime worked per employee, the proportion of part-time employees in the company, the number of new appointments, and the number of employee surveys on working hours and working time models. The background to the indicator is the ECG's ambition for a "just" distribution of

workload among all people capable of employment, as well as a reduction in regular weekly working hours (Gemeinwohl-Ökonomie, 2013).

The indicator “C1—Workplace quality and affirmative action” encourages companies to investigate and reflect on employee-oriented organisational cultures and structures, the promotion of health and safety in the workplace, work-life balance and flexible working hours, as well as equal opportunities and diversity. The relevant figures are, inter alia, the take-up of workplace offerings related to physical and mental healthcare, as well as the number of occupational accidents, employees on long-term sick leave and employees who have taken early retirement as a result of inability to work (Gemeinwohl-Ökonomie, 2013).

The aims of the two indicators are to keep the workplace demands on the employees as low as possible. Hence, we may assume that work-related demands should be reduced if a company scores highly in indicators C2 and C1. We therefore propose the following hypotheses:

**Hypothesis 3.** The scores achieved in indicator “C2— Just distribution of labour” are negatively related to job demands.

**Hypothesis 4.** The scores achieved in indicator “C1—Workplace quality and affirmative action” are negatively related to job demands.

The extent to which employees perceive that their companies value the employees’ contributions and pay attention to their well-being is defined as “perceived organisational support” (POS) (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Thus, POS should be shaped by the way a company treats the employees (Eisenberger et al., 1986). POS has been found to be positively related to CSR (Glavas & Kelley, 2014). Similarly, a positive correlation between perceived CSR and POS was found in the meta-analysis by Wang et al. (2020). Thus, we hypothesise that POS should improve with increasing scores in indicator C1:

**Hypothesis 5.** The scores achieved in indicator “C1—Workplace quality and affirmative action” are positively related to perceived organisational support.

### ***Pay Level Satisfaction***

The ECG's aim is to ensure a "just" and transparent distribution of pay and profits within companies, based on the standards it sets out. The aim of the indicator "C4—Just income distribution" is to measure the income distribution across a company. The compensation should be based on the employee's performance, the labour and responsibility involved in the role, the risks associated with the workplace, and the necessity of the role. The ECG enquires into the lowest and highest wages within the company, the median income, and whether the company's internal compensation system is transparent. According to ECG standards, an internal income distribution of maximum 1:4 is the ideal. Companies with a distribution of 1:12 are heading in the right direction. The minimum income should adequately meet the living costs of the respective country and region in which the company is engaging the employees (Gemeinwohl-Ökonomie, 2013).

The aim of the indicator "E4—Investing profits for the Common Good" is to measure the extent to which the profits made by a company are distributed or reinvested as fairly and meaningfully as possible, as well as in ways that promote the common good (Gemeinwohl-Ökonomie, 2013). According to the ECG, incomes should in principle be connected with performance, and capital ownership should not represent any claim to an income. The ECG makes an exception in the case of a "company founder pension", which the founders of a company could receive for a period of time equal to the time they had spent actively building up the company (Gemeinwohl-Ökonomie, 2013).

The extent to which employees are, or are not, satisfied with their pay is described as pay satisfaction. Pay satisfaction encompasses the "amount of overall positive or negative affect (or feelings) that individuals have toward their pay" (Miceli & Lane, 1991, p. 246). "Pay" is understood here as all forms of remuneration, including therefore direct cash payments such as salary, but also indirect, non-cash payments such as benefits. The construct of pay satisfaction also includes the amount of pay rises and the process by which the compensation system is administered (Williams et al., 2006). According to Williams et al. (2006), different authors have suggested replacing this broad definition of pay satisfaction

with a multidimensional conceptualisation of pay satisfaction. One dimension of pay satisfaction is pay level satisfaction, defined as “an individual’s satisfaction with his or her base pay” (Miceli & Lane, 1991, p. 245).

According to the models of pay satisfaction, the pay level should have a direct influence on pay satisfaction and work satisfaction (Judge et al., 2010). However, in a meta-study with 115 correlations from 92 independent samples, Judge et al. (2010) found that pay level only modestly correlated with job satisfaction ( $\rho = .15$ ) and pay satisfaction ( $\rho = .23$ ). Hence, the absolute pay level has only “little potential to satisfy” (Judge et al., 2010, p. 164). In Lawler’s discrepancy model of pay satisfaction, it should be the case that employees are satisfied with their pay when their perception of the pay received is equal to the amount they perceive they should be receiving (Shapiro & Wahba, 1978). If it is the employees’ perception that they are receiving less pay than they believe they are entitled to, they become dissatisfied. On the other hand, if they receive more pay than they believe is appropriate, they may develop feelings of guilt, inequity and discomfort (Shapiro & Wahba, 1978). Hence, satisfaction with payment is primarily determined by perception and the fulfilment of expectations. Processes of social comparison in relation to the perceived pay of referent others also have a role to play in the model. The perception of one’s own pay is influenced by what others are being paid and what others are being paid in relation to their input. Lawler assumes that the more one perceives what others receive, the less one perceives what one receives oneself and the more dissatisfied one becomes with one’s own salary. Also, the greater the salary one perceives others to receive, the greater the expectation will be of what one should receive oneself (Shapiro & Wahba, 1978).

The ECG’s goal is a “just” and transparent distribution of income and profits. If we assume that the ECG’s concepts of fairness correspond to those of the employees, pay level satisfaction in companies with higher values in indicators C4 and E4 should increase. We therefore propose the following hypotheses:

**Hypothesis 6.** The scores achieved in indicator “C4— Just income distribution” are positively related to pay level satisfaction.

**Hypothesis 7.** The scores achieved in indicator “E4— Investing profits for the Common Good” are positively related to pay level satisfaction.

### ***Meaningful Work***

In indicator “E1—Value and social impact of products and services”, the ECG describes one of its goals as ensuring that global production does not exceed the level of what people really need for a sufficiency lifestyle, and, at the same time, ensuring that the production and supply of products and services are as socially-oriented and ecological as possible. In addition, the companies’ range of products and services should contribute to poverty reduction and the resolution of social problems, as well as to food equality, education and health. The meaningfulness of products and services is measured by whether they satisfy a basic need and whether their production, use or disposal has negative consequences. Social impact is evaluated in terms of the personal growth of individuals, the strength of communities, and the sustainability of the natural environment (Gemeinwohl-Ökonomie, 2013).

The construct of meaningful work measures the extent to which employees perceive their work as significant. Meaningful work refers to the significance or value of work, which by definition has positive valence (Lips-Wiersma et al., 2016). It can be understood as a unidimensional concept that captures a global judgement about whether one’s work is perceived as worthwhile, important or valuable. Other scholars understand work meaningfulness as a multidimensional concept encompassing self-oriented concepts (such as self-actualisation and personal growth) along with other-oriented concepts (such as helping others and contributing to the greater good) as an aggregate of meaningful experiences (Allan et al., 2019). According to Allan et al. (2019, p. 501), experiences are meaningful “when people conduct actions that fulfil values that are relevant to their existence and explain why their work is worth doing”. If a company performs CSR, it sends signals to its employees that in addition to making a living, they are also serving others and society; this gives employees a sense that they are contributing to the common good and in turn helps employees find meaningfulness in their work (Glavas & Kelley, 2014). Glavas and Kelley

(2014) found that employees' sense of meaningfulness is increased by perceived CSR only when actions are directed towards third parties and not in terms of how the organisation treats the employee.

On the whole, we may assume that increasing scores in indicator E1 correlate with an increasing perception of meaningful work; we therefore propose the following hypothesis:

**Hypothesis 8.** The scores achieved in indicator "E1—Value and social impact of products and services" are positively related to meaningful work.

### ***Organisational Identification***

Organisational identification is a specific form of social identification (Ashforth & Mael, 1989) and reflects "the extent to which individuals define the self in terms of the membership in the organisation" (van Knippenberg & Sleebos, 2006, p. 572). Thus, organisational identification is "a perceived oneness with an organisation and the experience of the organisation's successes and failures as one's own" (Mael & Ashforth, 1992, p. 103). Research suggests that CSR is positively related to organisational identification (Glavas & Godwin, 2013; Islam et al., 2018; John et al., 2019; Jones, 2019; Ko et al., 2018). According to Wang et al.'s (Wang et al., 2020) meta-study, internal and external CSR as well as perceived CSR are in general positively correlated to organisational identification. However, the relationships between organisational identification and perceived CSR towards employees were not significant (Wang et al., 2020). A study conducted by John et al. (2019) exploring underlying processes suggests that if employees perceive organisational CSR positively, it will boost their pride in the company, which in turn affects the employees' organisational identification through the self-categorisation process. According to the self-categorisation theory, employees integrate into the companies that are most compatible with their values, with the aim of fulfilling their psychological desires for a meaningful existence and a sense of belonging (John et al., 2019). Wang et al. (2020, pp. 3–4), too, describe, with reference to a potential congruence of values, how perceived CSR will promote employees' organisational identification, based on signalling theory: "CSR signals the possibility of value fit between the organisation and employees (Gully, Phillips, Castellano, Han, & Kim, 2013;

Jones et al., 2014), through which employees can enhance their organisational identification (Gonzalez & Chakraborty, 2012).”

Indeed, CgoCs report that by publishing CGBs, they find employees who are a better fit and share their values (Mischkowski et al., 2018). We may therefore assume that the employees in the CgoCs evaluate the CGO of their companies positively and propose the following hypothesis:

**Hypothesis 9.** The scores achieved in indicator “E1—Value and social impact of products and services” are positively related to organisational identification.

The indicator “C5—Corporate democracy and transparency” describes the ECG’s ambition for employees to be involved in all essential decision-making (at least in their own area of operation) and executive personnel to be voted in and legitimised by employees. The ECG sees comprehensive transparency within the company as the prerequisite for this. The aim of the thought-provoking questions within this indicator is to establish whether all employees have access to critical information within the company, whether decision-making processes are democratic, what percentage of employees are involved in decision-making, and how transparent the decision-making processes are. Furthermore, companies are evaluated more highly if the employees are co-owners (Gemeinwohl-Ökonomie, 2013). The ECG’s aim here is to encourage extensive participation by employees in their companies. According to Wang et al. (2020, p. 4), “employees will identify with the organisation which meets their needs for sense of belonging, self-esteem, and self-identity through undertaking CSR (Jones, 2010; Lee, Kim, Lee, & Li, 2012), since they are more likely to identify with organisations that can help them gain self-esteem and a sense of self-worth (Haslam, 2001) according to organisational identity theory (Ashforth & Mael, 1989).” Hence, we may assume that organisational identification positively correlates with increasing scores in indicator C5. We therefore propose the following hypothesis:

**Hypothesis 10.** The scores achieved in indicator “C5—Corporate democracy and transparency” are positively related to organisational identification.

### ***Organisational Citizenship Behaviours***

The ECG sees solidarity as one of its most fundamental values, demanding that companies demonstrate cooperation with other companies in indicator “D2—Cooperation with businesses in the same field”. The ECG hopes that this will generate collaborations between companies, as collaboration – according to the ECG – fosters greater creativity, engenders new possibilities and more opportunities in the market, and promotes better crisis absorption than when companies are in competition with one another. The companies are evaluated according to the extent to which they work together with other companies, mutually support one another (including financially), and make knowledge as well as financial and technical information available to one another. It is suggested, for example, that companies should exchange employees depending on the order situation (Gemeinwohl-Ökonomie, 2013).

The extent to which employees demonstrate solidarity and cooperative behaviour is part of the construct “organisational citizenship behaviour” (OCB). OCB is an individual and initiative-taking behaviour that is not part of the formal job requirements and serves to facilitate organisational functioning (K. Lee & Allen, 2002; Organ & Ryan, 1995). OCB-O is organisational citizenship behaviour directed at the organisation, e.g. attending functions that are not compulsory, and OCB-I is organisational citizenship behaviour directed at individuals, e.g. helping co-workers. Research indicates that CSR is positively related to OCBs (Glavas, 2016; John et al., 2019; Jones, 2019; Wang et al., 2020). Glavas (2016) concludes from these results that if a company goes above and beyond its primary tasks (i.e. financial goals) and aims to contribute to the greater good of society by conducting CSR practices, then employees will go above and beyond their primary tasks and contribute to the greater good of the organisation, demonstrating OCBs. Hence, we may assume that employees in companies with higher scores in indicator D2 report higher levels of OCB-O.

**Hypothesis 11.** The scores achieved in indicator “D2—Cooperation with businesses in the same field” are positively related to organisational citizenship behaviours directed at the company.

CSR is also positively related to high-quality relationships among co-workers (Glavas & Piderit, 2009) and trust in relationships (Muthuri et al., 2009). According to Glavas (2016), these findings present a relational perspective of CSR, in which CSR inherently involves caring for stakeholders. Glavas (2016) concludes from this that companies who endeavour to cultivate high-quality relationships with external stakeholders are able to create a company culture in which value is also placed on caring relationships within the organisation. Wang et al.'s (Wang et al., 2020) results from the meta-study – that perceived CSR towards the public and the environment is positively correlated to OCBs – support this conclusion. Based on this assumption, we propose the hypothesis that employees in companies with high scores in indicator D2 demonstrate higher levels of OCB-I:

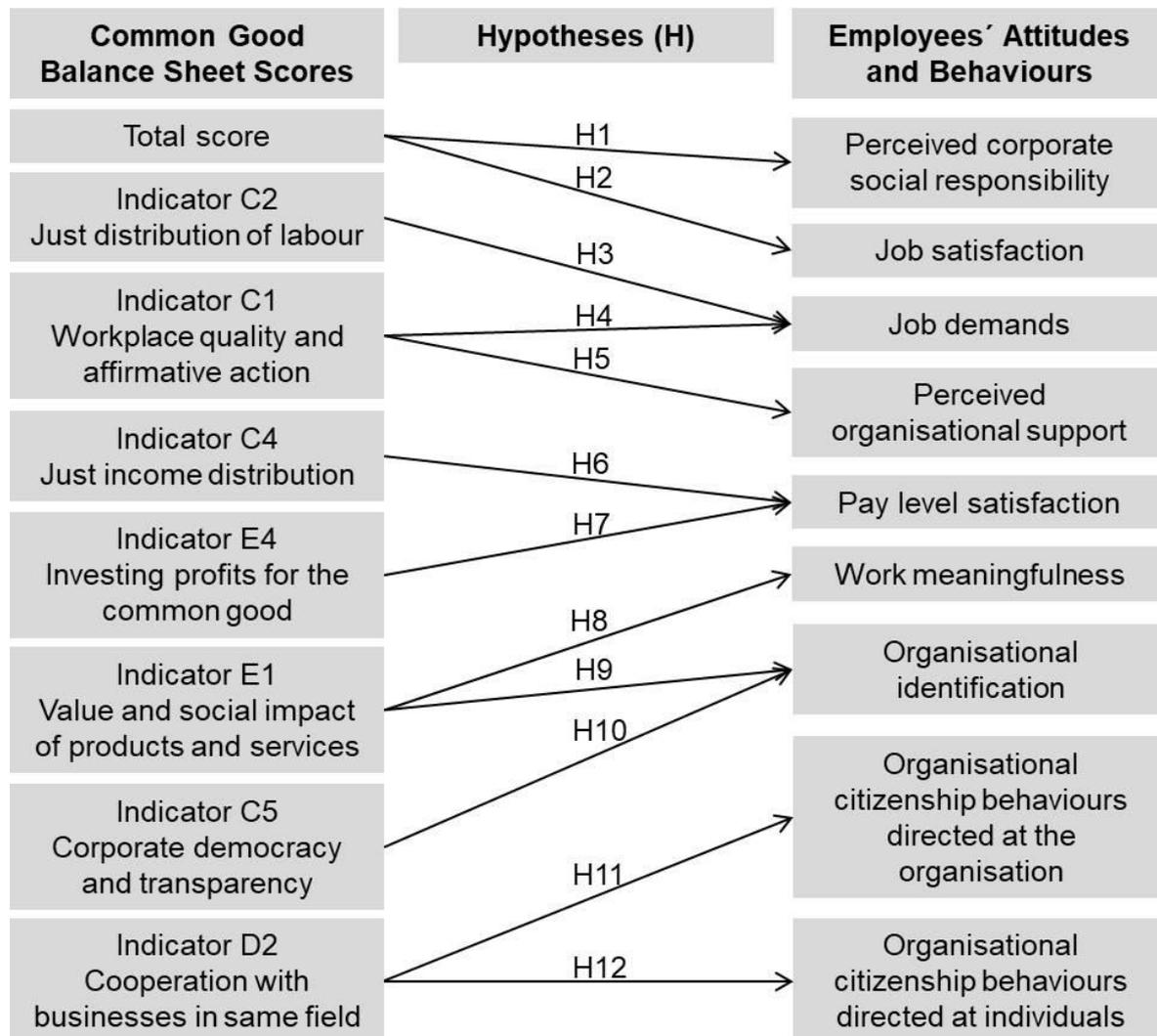
**Hypothesis 12.** The scores achieved in indicator “D2—Cooperation with businesses in the same field” are positively related to citizenship behaviours directed at co-workers.

## **Methods**

Figure 3 illustrates the research model of our study. In order to test the hypotheses, we work with the following model:  $\text{criterion} = \text{score CGB} + \text{age} + \text{sex}$ . In the model, differences due to corporate affiliation are contained in the CGB score. Thus, the model accommodates the nested structure of the data. Because age and sex may play a role in the relationship between (perceived) CSR and employees' attitudes and behaviours (Wang et al., 2020), we incorporate the variables of age and sex in order to ensure the models are more exhaustive.

## **Materials**

In our model, the total scores achieved in the CGBs or the percentages achieved in the indicators serve as predictors. The indicators are: C1—Workplace quality and affirmative action, C2—Just distribution of labour, C4—Just income distribution, E4—Investing profits for the common good, E1—Value and social impact of products and services, and D2—Cooperation with businesses in the same field. In order to achieve a certified CGB, a company must first of all undertake a self-assessment of how, in its own evaluation, it would

**Figure 3***Research Model of the Study*

perform in the indicators, i.e. in the balance sheet. It must justify or provide evidence for its evaluations. Next, these evaluations must be validated through a peer-review process or external auditor. In the peer-review process, several companies who have undertaken a self-assessment come together and check each other's balance sheets under the professional supervision of the ECG. Otherwise, an external audit is conducted by an editor trained by the ECG. An audited CGB is valid for two years (Gemeinwohl-Ökonomie, 2020d). We know from interviews with 11 CgoCs in an earlier research study that, in general, only a small group of

people from the companies is involved in the balance sheet process. The individuals involved are usually directors or employees with a managerial role (Wiefek & Heinitz, 2018).

In autumn/winter 2017/18, we conducted an employee survey with eight German CgoCs who had published a CGB. Not all of these companies published an (updated) CGB after 2014, so, in order to ensure comparability between the companies, we need to look at the balance sheets from the years 2012 to 2014. The balance sheets are based on the CGB that was current at the time: version 4.1.

In the survey, we collected data on the perceptions, attitudes and behaviour of the employees. We used tried-and-tested scales from the literature. If no German version of the scale was available, we worked with an English native speaker to translate the scale into German using the back translation method (Brislin & Freimanis, 2001). Below, we present the scales that we used. The original German version of the questionnaire can be found in Appendix B.

**Perceived CSR (PCSR,  $\alpha = .885$ ).** In order to measure perceived socio-ecological commitment, we chose a scale by Glavas and Kelley (2014). The scale included items pertaining to the social dimension (e.g., “Contributing to the well-being of employees is a high priority in my organisation”) and to the ecological dimension (e.g., “Environmental issues are integral to the strategy of my organisation”) of CSR. We recorded the responses to the items on a 5-level Likert scale from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5).

**Job Satisfaction ( $\alpha = .861$ ).** Following recommendations by Judge and Klinger (2008), we decided to measure general job satisfaction via three items. The items are: a) “All things considered, are you satisfied with your present job?”—No (1) / yes (2), b) “How satisfied are you with your job in general?”—5-level Likert scale from very dissatisfied (1) to very satisfied (5), and c) “Below, please write down your best estimates on the percentage of time, on average, you feel satisfied, dissatisfied, and neutral about your present job. The three figures should add up to 100%.—The percentage of time I feel satisfied with my present job: \_%. The percentage of time I feel dissatisfied with my present job: \_%. The percentage of time I feel neutral about my present job: \_%. Total:\_%.” For the calculation, we

z-standardised the first two items as well as the information on the amount of time the individual is satisfied with their work (Judge & Klinger, 2008). The negative and neutral percentages were not included in the calculations. We included the neutral percentage to allow the happy and unhappy mood estimates to vary independently (Fordyce, 1988).

**Job Demands (JD,  $\alpha = .734$ ).** In addition to the items pertaining to general job satisfaction, we took a selection of four items pertaining to demands at work from Fischer and Lück (2014). For example, one item is: "Often, too much is expected from us at work". The responses were recorded on 5-level Likert scales from very dissatisfied (1) to very satisfied (5) or from false (1) to correct (5).

**Pay Level Satisfaction (PS,  $\alpha = .861$ ).** Similarly, we took the items pertaining to satisfaction with pay from Fischer and Lück (2014). Here, we asked about general pay level satisfaction as well as relative satisfaction in relation to relevant others. The response format was a 5-level Likert scale from very dissatisfied (1) to very satisfied (5).

**Perceived Organisational Support (POS,  $\alpha = .908$ ).** In order to determine to what extent employees feel supported by their companies, we selected the four items with the highest factor loadings from a scale published by Eisenberger et al. (2001). The items cover two aspects of POS: the extent to which the employee's contribution to the company is valued (e.g., "My company values my contribution to its well-being") and the extent to which the company cares about the employee's well-being (e.g., "My company really cares about my well-being"). The responses were recorded on a 5-level Likert scale from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5).

**Meaningful Work (MW,  $\alpha = .916$ ).** We recorded the extent to which employees experience their work as meaningful via a multidimensional approach using nine items in total. We took these primarily from the Work as Meaning Inventory (WAMI) by Steger et al. (2012). From the subscale 'Positive meaning', we selected three items (e.g., "I have found a meaningful career"). The subscale 'Meaning-making through work' encompasses also three items (like "I view my work as contributing to my personal growth"). From the subscale 'Greater good motivations' in Steger et al. (2012), we selected two items. We replaced the

third item from this scale, which was inverse formulated, with a positively formulated item that we found in a paper by Bunderson and Thompson (2009): “What I do at work makes a difference in the world”. The 5-level response Likert scale ranged from absolutely untrue (1) to absolutely true (5).

**Organisational Identification (OI,  $\alpha = .736$ ).** In order to record to what extent the employees identify with their company, we used a scale that was adapted to the company context and reduced by one item, a scale also used by Mael and Ashforth (1992). One example item is: “When someone criticises my company, it feels like a personal insult”. The study participants gave their responses on a 5-level Likert scale from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5).

**Organisational Citizenship Behaviours (OCB).** In order to measure the cooperative behaviours of the employees (OCBs), we selected eight items that we found in a paper by K. Lee and Allen (2002). In the case of OCB-I, we decided on the items that demonstrated the highest factor loadings in the study by Zoghbi-Manrique de Lara (2008). In this study, the items for asking about OCB-I ( $\alpha = .775$ ) are formulated like, for example, “I voluntarily take time to help others who have work-related problems”. We selected the items for measuring OCB-O with the intention of recording as many aspects of the construct as possible and representing it in its full range. One example item for OCB-O ( $\alpha = .789$ ) is phrased as follows: “I take on tasks that are not required of me but that contribute to my company’s image”. The responses were recorded on a 5-level Likert scale from never (1) to always (5).

**Demography.** The study participants were asked about their biological sex, their age and their company affiliation. Sex was coded with female = 1, male = 2 and other = 3. In order to preserve the study participants’ anonymity, we asked about age in seven categories.

The final questionnaire was trial-tested on 15 employees from two companies. In order to calculate the scale values from the items surveyed, each person was assigned the average value from the items on the respective scale. As regards the calculations of the average values of the scales, we established that each person must have answered at least three items on the scale.

## **Data & Sample**

The descriptive statistics for the scores in the CGBs are summarised in Table 1. As the table shows, the companies in our sample achieved total scores of around 370 to 690 points in the CGB. According to the ECG, the value of 690 points is a very good result. The ECG would expect a company that has thus far not been particularly committed to the common good to achieve between minus 100 and plus 100 points (Gemeinwohl-Ökonomie, 2013). In our opinion, a CGB of around 370 points lies within the lowest spectrum of the balance sheets published thus far. Our sample therefore provides good coverage of the range of more or less CSR-committed companies with published CGBs.

The questionnaire was filled out online, but we also gave the companies the option of using a paper version. Two companies chose this option. In total, we acquired a data set of 378 cases. There were four cases which contained no responses to any items, so these were deleted. In addition, we deleted 11 cases in which respondents failed to provide

**Table 1**

*Descriptive Statistics of Scores in the Common Good Balance Sheets*

Score	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
CGB total (rounded to ten)	370	690	452.84	81.12
Indicator C1 (in %)	20	79	42.86	11.41
Indicator C2 (in %)	10	76	43.09	13.24
Indicator C4 (in %)	20	80	47.74	20.80
Indicator C5 (in %)	20	57	22.19	7.24
Indicator D2 (in %)	30	73	41.36	13.71
Indicator E1 (in %)	50	90	58.98	8.93
Indicator E4 (in %)	10	100	91.23	15.74

*Note.* CGB total = companies' total scores in the common good balance sheet (CGB), Indicator C1 – E4 = companies' scores in per cent in the indicators C1, C2, C5, E1 and E4 in the CGBs, SD = standard deviation.

responses after the first construct on the questionnaire. We also had to exclude 31 cases in which no company affiliation was given. The final sample composition is presented in Table 2.

62% of the 332 study participants are female, 36% male, and one person selected 'other'. 1% gave no information on their sex. 30% of the respondents were under 35 years old, 60% were between 35 and 54 years old, and 9% were over 54 years old. 1% gave no information on their age. We tried to ensure the sample was as large as possible, with employees from companies that were as diverse as possible in terms of their size and fields of activity. We already had contact with six of the companies through previous research studies (Wiefek & Heinitz, 2018, 2019), and two companies were approached by email in a second round of recruitment. In this second phase, in order to yield as large a sample as possible, we wrote only to companies with more than 100 employees. We tried to acquire further companies for the questionnaire via the ECG newsletter, however no companies responded to the call for study participants. In order to motivate companies to participate in our study and to incentivise them to encourage their employees to complete the questionnaire, we offered each company to conduct a descriptive evaluation report, in which we analysed the answers of their employees only. The present sample is as large and diverse as we were able to make it.

**Table 2**

*Study Sample (N=332)*

Company's business field	Number of total employees (rounded to ten)	N in sample	% of total employees in sample
Clothing manufacture	470	116	35
Elder care	340	10	3
Farming	10	8	2
Food production	50	9	3
Food trade I	20	3	1
Food trade II	170	34	10
Health care	250	145	44
Media production	330	7	2

### **Procedure**

The statistical analysis was conducted with IBM SPSS Statistics 27. Using scatter plots, each model was tested for linear correlations both between the predictors and between the predictors and the criterion. Outliers which clearly lay more than three standard deviations below the average scale value were not taken into account in the calculations of the respective model (following the recommendation by Bühner and Ziegler (2009, p. 672 ff.)). For each model, we tested the standardised residuals, Cook's distances, leverage values, Mahalanobis distances, standardised DFBetas, covariance ratios and DFFits, following the recommendations by Field (2018).

The case in which the respondent selected 'other' for sex was recognised as a clear outlier case in each testing. In all cases, Mahalanobis distance amounted to  $\geq 300$ , where the cut-off for models with 5 predictors (first model variants,  $p = .05$ ) was 11.07 and the cut-off for models with 12 predictors (second model variant,  $p = .05$ ) was 21.03 (critical values of the chi-square distribution from Field (2018, p. 808)). The leverage value of .997, too, was clearly above the leverage threshold value of  $3 \times [(number\ of\ predictors + 1) / number\ of\ cases]$ . This is why this case was excluded from the analyses (also from the scale reliability calculations).

We tested the residuals for normal distribution using histograms and, where necessary, also with the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk test. If there was no normal distribution, we followed the recommendations by Field (2018, p. 427) and used bootstrapping to generate confidence intervals and p-values. We tested whether homoscedasticity was present using scatter plots with z-standardised predicted values and standardised residuals. If necessary, we also tested this with the (modified) Breusch-Pagan test if there were high leverage values, or with the White test if there was no normal distribution in the residuals. If homoscedasticity was present, robust standard errors were predicted. In the case high leverage values were present, we used HC3 or HC4. If there was no normal distribution in the residuals, the bootstrapping results were reported (cf. recommendations by Urban & Mayerl, 2018, p. 279). We tested the data for multicollinearity

via the variance inflation factor. Here, we followed the threshold values recommended by Field (2018, p. 402). We observed no problematic values in this respect.

## **Results**

Table 3 presents the descriptive statistics and correlations of the variables used in this study. In order to test our hypotheses, multiple regressions were conducted. We controlled for employees' age and sex in all regressions. The following section reports the results.

### ***Perceived CSR & Job Satisfaction***

The regression to predict employee's perception of CSR based on the company's total score in the CGB is significant ( $F(4, 318) = 11.912, p < .000, 1-\beta = .999$ ), with an  $R^2$  of .130. Regression coefficients are shown in Table 4. The results indicate a positive association between the total scores in the CGB and employees' perception of CSR ( $b = .002$  [.002, .003];  $p = .000$ ), supporting hypothesis 1.

The regression to predict employee's job satisfaction based on the companies' total scores in the CGB showed a barely significant result ( $F(4, 312) = 2.441, p < .047, 1-\beta = .699$ ), with an  $R^2$  of .030. Regression coefficients are shown in Table 5. The results indicate a positive association between the total scores in the CGB and overall job satisfaction ( $b = .001$  [.000, .002]) with  $p < .058$ . When testing one-sided the result is statistically significant. Accordingly, employees who work for a company with higher total scores in the CGB report higher levels of job satisfaction, thus supporting hypothesis 2.

### ***Job Demands & Perceived Organisational Support***

Regressions are significant to predict employees' perceived job demands based on the companies' indicator score "C2—just distribution of labour" in the CGB ( $R^2 = .030, F(4, 321) = 2.461, p < .045, 1-\beta = .731$ ) and based on the indicator scores "C1—workplace quality and affirmative action" ( $R^2 = .068, F(4, 321) = 5.860, p < .000, 1-\beta = .984$ ). Regression coefficients are shown in Tables 6 and 7. The results indicate a negative association between indicator score C2 ( $b = -.009$  [-.016, -.002],  $p = .009$ ) as well as indicator score C1 ( $b = -.018$  [-.026, -.010],  $p = .000$ ) and employees' perceived demands. Hence, employees

**Table 3***Descriptive Statistics and Correlations of Variables*

V	N	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
1OI	329	4.03	.58																		
2POS	327	3.56	.92	.524**																	
3WM	331	3.45	.76	.606**	.581**																
4JS	320	.01	.89	.446**	.657**	.591**															
5JD	330	2.60	.83	-.229**	-.554**	-.351**	-.563**														
6PS	325	3.05	1.12	.258**	.355**	.312**	.330**	-.246**													
7OCB-O	327	3.64	.72	.456**	.300**	.483**	.266**	-.137*	.123*												
8OCB-I	330	4.23	.57	.315**	.202**	.239**	.231**	-.119*	.145**	.376**											
9PCSR	328	4.22	.57	.373**	.573**	.454**	.368**	-.323**	.115*	.307**	.196**										
10Age	328	3.29	1.60	.141*	-.005	.103	.026	.053	.180**	.150**	-.106	-.067									
11Sex	327	1.37	.48	.081	.053	.048	.127*	-.051	.092	.185**	.016	-.007	.138*								
12CGB	331	453	81	.001	.239**	.183**	.104	-.170**	-.100	.169**	-.135*	.317**	.100	.034							
13C1	331	43	11	.097	.288**	.102	.136	-.238	-.007	.039	.046	.180	-.047	-.034	.457**						
14C2	331	43	13	.132*	.136*	.031	.081	-.143*	.183**	-.041	.194**	-.101	-.041	-.015	-.165**	.687**					
15C4	331	48	21	.099	-.086	.087	.013	.058	.378**	.025	.086	-.255**	.179**	.073	-.315**	-.431**	.107				
16E4	331	91	16	.086	-.043	-.026	.024	.025	.072	.019	.223	.016	-.102	-.022	-.242**	.171**	.321**	.035			
17E1	331	59	9	.082	.028	.155**	.058	-.002	.320**	.119*	.043	-.042	.234**	.134*	.227**	-.243	-.014	.777**	-.116*		
18D2	331	41	14	.077	.034	.188**	.065	.001	.276**	.148**	-.020	.015	.248**	.113*	.330**	-.306**	-.283**	.715**	-.119*	.904**	
19C5	331	22	7	.113*	.216**	.230**	.122*	-.193**	.200**	.116*	.010	.015	.175**	.036	.511**	.515**	.454**	.320**	-.306**	.496**	.445**

Note. \*\*Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed). \*Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed). V = Variable, OI = organisational identification, POS = perceived organisational support, WM = work meaningfulness, JS = job satisfaction (z-standardised values), JD = job demands, PS = pay level satisfaction, OCB-O = organisational citizenship behaviours directed at the organisation, OCB-I = organisational citizenship behaviours directed at individuals, PCSR = perceived corporate social responsibility, CGB = total score in the common good balance, C1 = indicator score C1, C2 = indicator score C2, C4 = indicator score C4, E4 = indicator score E4, E1 = indicator score E1, D2 = indicator score D2, C5 = indicator score C5.

**Table 4**

*Results from Multiple Linear Regression Testing Hypothesis 1*

Criterium	PCSR (H1)					
	Robust SD (HC3), N = 323					
Equation	R <sup>2</sup>	Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	b	SE B	β	P
Score CGB+Age+Sex	.130	.119				.000
<b>Predictor</b>						
Constant			3.266 (2.930, 3.601)	.171		.000
Score CGB			.002 (.002, .003)	.000	.345	.000
35-54 years			-.132 (-.253, -.012)	.061	-.118	.032
>54 years			-.114 (-.352, .123)	.121	-.061	.344
Men			.025 (-.094, .144)	.060	.022	.678

*Note.* 95% confidence intervals reported in parentheses, CGB = common good balance sheet, PCSR = perceived corporate social responsibility.

who work for a company with higher scores in the indicator C2 and C1 in the CGB report less job demands. These results support hypothesis 3 and 4.

Also the regression to predict employees' perceived organisational support based on the indicator scores "C1—work place quality and affirmative action" is significant ( $F(4, 317) = 9.642, p < .000, 1-\beta = .999$ ), with an  $R^2$  of .108. Regression coefficients are shown in Table 8. The results indicate a positive association between indicator score C1 and employees'

**Table 5**

*Results from Multiple Linear Regression Testing Hypothesis 2*

Criterium	JS (H2)					
	Confidence intervals, standard errors and ps based on 1000 bootstrap samples. N = 317					
Equation	R <sup>2</sup>	Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	b	SE B	β	p
Score CGB+Age+Sex	.030	.018				.047
<b>Predictor</b>						
Constant			-.549 (-1.066, .008)	.284		.054
Score CGB			.001 (.000, .002)	.001	.101	.058
35-54 years			-.041 (-.253, .179)	.109	-.023	.708
>54 years			.108 (-.266, .438)	.186	.034	.564
Men			.183 (.026, .431)	.099	.128	.016

*Note.* 95% bias corrected and accelerated confidence intervals reported in parentheses, CGB = common good balance sheet, JS = job satisfaction.

**Table 6***Results from Multiple Linear Regression Testing Hypothesis 3*

Criterion	JD (H3) N = 326					
Equation	R <sup>2</sup>	Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	b	SE B	β	p
Score C2+Age+Sex	.030	.018				.045
<b>Predictor</b>						
Constant			2.933 (2.587, 3.279)	.176		.000
Score C2			-.009 (-.016, -.002)	.004	-.146	.009
35-54 years			.159 (-.044, .361)	.103	.093	.124
>54 years			.024 (-.321, .369)	.175	.008	.891
Men			-.114 (-.302, .074)	.096	-.066	.234

*Note.* 95% confidence intervals reported in parentheses, JD = job demands.

perception of organisational support ( $b = .025$  [.016, .034];  $p = .001$ ). Therefore, employees who work for a company with higher scores in indicator C1 in the CGB report higher levels of perceived organisational support, which supports hypothesis 5.

**Table 7***Results from Multiple Linear Regression Testing Hypothesis 4*

Criterion	JD (H4) N = 326					
Equation	R <sup>2</sup>	Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	b	SE B	β	p
Score C1+Age+Sex	.068	.056				.000
<b>Predictor</b>						
Constant			3.310 (2.932, 3.689)	.193		.000
Score C1			-.018 (-.026, -.010)	.004	-.244	.000
35-54 years			.151 (-.047, .349)	.101	.089	.134
>54 years			.015 (-.323, .352)	.171	.005	.932
Men			-.124 (-.308, .061)	.094	-.072	.187

*Note.* 95% confidence intervals reported in parentheses, JD = job demands.

**Table 8***Results from Multiple Linear Regression Testing Hypothesis 5*

Criterium	POS (H5)					
	Confidence intervals, standard errors and ps based on 1000 bootstrap samples. N = 322					
<b>Equation</b>	R <sup>2</sup>	Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	b	SE B	β	p
Score C1+Age+Sex	.108	.097				.000
<b>Predictor</b>						
Constant			2.481 (2.066, 2.869)	.219		.001
Score C1			.025 (.016, .034)	.004	.313	.001
35-54 years			-.113 (-.318, .111)	.099	-.061	.253
>54 years			.203 (-.180, .563)	.187	.062	.288
Men			.160 (-.055, .372)	.098	.085	.105

*Note.* 95% bias corrected and accelerated confidence intervals reported in parentheses,

POS = perceived organisational support.

### ***Pay Level Satisfaction***

The regression to predict employees' pay level satisfaction based on the companies' indicator scores "C4—just income distribution" in the CGB is significant ( $F(4, 316) = 14.530$ ,  $p < .000$ ,  $1-\beta = .999$ ), with an  $R^2$  of .155. Regression coefficients are shown in Table 9. The results show a positive association between the indicator scores C4 and employees' pay level satisfaction ( $b = .019$  [.013, .025];  $p = .001$ ). Accordingly, employees who work for a company with higher score in the indicator C4 in the CGB report higher levels of pay level satisfaction, thus supporting hypothesis 6.

Further, we find a significant regression to predict employees' pay level satisfaction based on the companies' indicator scores "E4—investing profits for the common good" in the CGB ( $N = 321$ ,  $F(4, 316) = 3.807$ ,  $p < .005$ ,  $1-\beta = .896$ ), with an  $R^2$  of .046 (adjusted  $R^2 = .034$ ). The results indicate no association between the indicator scores E4 and employees' pay level satisfaction ( $b = .007$  [-.001, .018],  $SE B = .005$ ,  $\beta = .096$ ,  $p = .125$ ) nor between indicator score E4 and sex (men:  $b = .153$  [-.100, .391],  $SE B = .132$ ,  $\beta = .066$ ,  $p = .239$ ). Although the results show positive relations between pay level satisfaction and age (35-54

**Table 9**

*Results from Multiple Linear Regression Testing Hypothesis 6*

Criterium	PS (H6)					
	Confidence intervals, standard errors and ps based on 1000 bootstrap samples. N = 321					
<b>Equation</b>	R <sup>2</sup>	Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	b	SE B	β	p
Score C4+Age+Sex	.155	.145				.000
<b>Predictor</b>						
Constant			1.906 (1.615, 2.200)	.152		.001
Score C4			.019 (.013, .025)	.003	.354	.001
35-54 years			.281 (.034, .525)	.121	.123	.024
>54 years			.281 (-.264, .820)	.256	.072	.275
Men			.107 (-.130, .350)	.124	.046	.391

*Note.* 95% bias corrected and accelerated confidence intervals reported in parentheses,

PS = pay level satisfaction.

years:  $b = .361$  [.076, .619],  $SE\ B = .138$ ,  $\beta = .158$ ,  $p = .008$  and >54 years:  $b = .655$  [.166, 1.131],  $SE\ B = .244$ ,  $\beta = .168$ ,  $p = .010$ ), our data do not support hypothesis 7.

### **Meaningful Work**

The regression to predict employees' perception of work meaningfulness based on the companies' indicator score "E1—value and social impact of products and services" in the CGB is significant ( $F(4, 321) = 2.879$ ,  $p < .023$ ,  $1-\beta = .789$ ), with an  $R^2$  of .035. Regression coefficients are shown in Table 10. The results indicate a positive association between the scores in the indicator E1 in the CGB and employees' perception of work meaningfulness ( $b = .011$  [.001, .020];  $p = .022$ ). Accordingly, employees who work for a company with higher indicator scores E1 in the CGB report higher levels of work meaningfulness, thus supporting hypothesis 8.

### **Organisational Identification**

We also find a significant regression to predict employees' organisational identification based on the indicator score E1 ( $N = 323$ ,  $F(4, 318) = 2.802$ ,  $p < .026$ ,  $1-\beta = .770$ ), with an  $R^2$

**Table 10**

*Results from Multiple Linear Regression Testing Hypothesis 8*

Criterion	WM (H8)					
	Confidence intervals, standard errors and ps based on 1000 bootstrap samples. N = 326					
<b>Equation</b>	R <sup>2</sup>	Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	b	SE B	β	p
Score E1+Age+Sex	.035	.023				.023
<b>Predictor</b>						
Constant			2.746 (2.218, 3.289)	.284		.001
Score E1			.011 (.001, .020)	.005	.129	.022
35-54 years			.062 (-.106, .245)	.088	.040	.479
>54 years			.269 (-.069, .580)	.162	.103	.095
Men			.025 (-.153, .197)	.088	.016	.783

*Note.* 95% bias corrected and accelerated confidence intervals reported in parentheses,

WM = work meaningfulness.

of .034 (adjusted R<sup>2</sup> = .022, p = .026). However, the results indicate no association between the indicator score E1 and employees' organisational identification (b = .004 [-.003, .012], SE B = .004, β = .068, p = .242) nor between indicator score E1 and sex (men: b = .069 [-.060, .197], SE B = .065, β = .059, p = .293) nor between indicator score E1 and age in respect to older employees (>54 years: b = .206 [-.039, .452], SE B = .125, β = .104, p = .099).

Although the results show a positive relation between organisational identification and middle-aged employees (35-54 years: b = .159 [.023, .295], SE B = .069, β = .139, p = .023), our data do not support hypothesis 9.

However, the regression to predict employees' organisational identification based on the companies' indicator scores "C5—corporate democracy and transparency" in the CGB is significant ( $F(4, 318) = 3.296$ ,  $p < .011$ ,  $1-\beta = .845$ ), with an R<sup>2</sup> of .040. Regression coefficients are shown in Table 11. The results indicate a positive association between indicator scores C5 and employees' organisational identification (b = .008 [-.002, .016]) with p = .052. When testing one-sided the result is statistically significant. Accordingly, employees who work for a company with higher scores in the indicator C5 in the CGB report higher levels of organisational identification, thus supporting hypothesis 10.

**Table 11**

*Results from Multiple Linear Regression Testing Hypothesis 10*

Criterion	OI (H10)					
	Confidence intervals, standard errors and ps based on 1000 bootstrap samples. N = 323					
<b>Equation</b>	R <sup>2</sup>	Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	b	SE B	β	p
Score C5+Age+Sex	.040	.028				.011
<b>Predictor</b>						
Constant			3.729 (3.533, 3.929)	.104		.001
Score C5			.008 (-.002, .016)	.004	.102	.052
35-54 years			.154 (.018, .291)	.071	.134	.040
>54 years			.201 (-.052, .460)	.129	.101	.120
Men			.076 (-.045, .197)	.060	.065	.215

*Note.* 95% bias corrected and accelerated confidence intervals reported in parentheses,

OI = organisational identification.

### ***Organisational Citizenship Behaviours***

The regression to predict employees' organisational citizenship behaviours towards the company (OCB-O) based on the companies' indicator scores "D2—cooperations with businesses in the same field" is significant ( $F(4, 317) = 6.825, p < .000, 1-\beta = .994$ ), with an  $R^2$  of .079. Regression coefficients are shown in Table 12. The results indicate a positive association between indicator score D2 and OCB-O ( $b = .005 [-.001, .011]; p = .088$ ). When testing one-sided the result is statistically significant. Thus, employees who work for a company with higher scores in indicator D2 in the CGB report higher levels of OCB-O, which supports hypothesis 11.

However, the regression to predict employees' organisational citizenship behaviours towards individuals based on the indicator scores D2 is not significant ( $N = 324, F(4, 319) = 1.656, p < .160, 1-\beta = .506$ ), with an  $R^2$  of .020 (adjusted  $R^2 = .008, p = .160$ ). Thus, our data do not support hypothesis 12.

**Table 12***Results from Multiple Linear Regression Testing Hypothesis 11*

Criterion	OCB-O (H11) N = 322					
Equation	R <sup>2</sup>	Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	b	SE B	β	p
Score D2+Age+Sex	.079	.068				.000
<b>Predictor</b>						
Constant			3.273 (3.005, 3.542)	.136		.000
Score D2			.005 (-.001, .011)	.003	.100	.088
35-54 years			.056 (-.112, .225)	.086	.039	.510
>54 years			.419 (.115, .723)	.155	.170	.007
Men			.231 (.074, .389)	.080	.158	.004

*Note.* 95% confidence intervals reported in parentheses, OCB-O = organisational citizenship behaviours directed at the organisation.

## Discussion

The scores from the CGBs give us an objective measurement as a predictor of employees' attitudes and behaviours. This is relatively unusual in micro-CSR research. As Jones et al. (2019) have established, CSR in predominantly survey-based micro-CSR research is almost always operationalised through measurements of employees' perceptions or beliefs about their employer's CSR practices. One of the reasons given for this is that employees do not typically respond to CSR practices as they objectively exist, but to CSR practices as they perceive them to exist (Glavas, 2016; Jones, 2019; Rupp & Mallory, 2015). The extent to which employees perceive CSR is also part of our study. The primary aim of our study, however, is to explore whether there are any correlations between a better performance in the CGB on the one hand and job-related attitudes and employee behaviour on the other hand. The first part of the discussion of our results is divided into the constructs under study. We also indicate here the possibilities for further research. In the second part of the discussion, we address the limitations of our study.

### ***Perceived CSR***

According to our results, the values achieved in the CGBs correlate positively with perceived CSR. Employees from companies with higher values in the CGBs indicate that they perceive more CSR. This result suggests that companies with higher values in the CGBs are more committed to the common good, not only in the eyes of the ECG evaluators but also in the eyes of their employees.

### ***Job Satisfaction***

Some CgoCs from the study by Sanchis et al. (2018) have reported that participation and communication within their companies have improved since their first CGB, and that employees' commitment, motivation and satisfaction have increased. According to Ollé-Espluga et al. (2019), CgoCs provide more favourable conditions in terms of training and participation, as well as in terms of control and flexibility regarding working hours and place of work, in comparison with the Austrian and German economy overall. Because these aspects play a role in the evaluation of CGBs, it should also be the case that companies with higher values in the CGBs also offer better working conditions, leading to greater job satisfaction.

Our results show that the values achieved in the CGBs correlate positively with job satisfaction. The employees from companies with higher scores in the CGBs are more satisfied with their jobs than employees from companies that achieve fewer points in the CGB. Hence, the conditions that lead to more job satisfaction increase in companies with higher points in the CGBs. However, we only studied companies that have published a CGB. That is why we do not know how the job satisfaction in CgoCs differs from that in companies without a CGB. Hence, to provide some context, a follow-up comparative study on job satisfaction in companies both with and without CGBs would be useful.

Nonetheless, the score in the CGB correlates positively with job satisfaction. This means that, assuming better working conditions lead to greater job satisfaction, we may conclude that the CGB is a suitable tool for a comparative evaluation of working conditions in CgoCs. However, it must be noted that the total score in the CGB is added together from the

results of the individual indicators, so it is theoretically also possible to achieve a positive result in the CGB purely through a high external CSR or purely through CSR towards the environment. Hence, the total score in an individual case does not necessarily say anything about the working conditions in the company, and in case of doubt, it should be checked against the scoring in the individual indicators.

In the overall sample, job satisfaction is evaluated as medium, with a slight positive tendency ( $M = .008$ , z-standardised value), and here we observe considerable variance ( $SD = .887$ ). This means that there are employees in the companies who are very satisfied with their job but also employees who are very dissatisfied with their work. Because only a small percentage of the variance in job satisfaction is explained by the score in the CGB ( $R^2 = .030$ ), the question remains open as to which factors significantly determine job satisfaction in the CgoCs. Even if the CGB provides for a certain level of comparability with regard to working conditions, it does not seem to include the relevant factors that determine job satisfaction. In order to identify these missing factors, we could consult theories on job satisfaction, such as Hackman and Oldham (1975) job diagnostic survey, and absorb into the indicators, where appropriate, factors influencing job satisfaction that have not yet been considered. Furthermore, it is not only the objective measures implemented by a company for internal and external stakeholders that are relevant to job satisfaction. Subjective evaluations by the employees should be incorporated into the CGO evaluation of a company and therefore into the CGB score. Thus far, merely conducting company employee surveys has had a positive impact on the balance sheet; the actual result of the surveys has not had any bearing.

### ***Job Demands & Perceived Organisational Support***

The ECG aims to establish a “just” distribution of working hours: its objective is to reduce regular weekly working hours (Gemeinwohl-Ökonomie, 2013). Our study shows that the percentage achieved in indicator “C2—Just distribution of labour” is negatively correlated with the demands in the workplace. This means that as CGO increases with regard to the distribution of labour, the demands in the workplace decrease. The fact that as CGO

increases, the demands in the workplace decrease, could explain why job satisfaction increases in CgoCs with increasing CGO. It is worth noting, however, that according to Karasek's (Karasek, 1979) job demands-job control model, there is no simple linear relationship between job demands and job satisfaction; instead, there is an interaction effect in which control in the workplace has a role to play. It is only where there are high demands coupled with a low decision latitude that the result is dissatisfaction in the workplace (Karasek, 1979). Because the working conditions in CgoCs are characterised by participation, control and flexibility (Ollé-Espluga et al., 2019), job satisfaction may even be high among employees who are subject to high demands. Hence, job demands may play a secondary role with regard to job satisfaction in CgoCs. The correlations would therefore need to be explored in further empirical studies.

The criteria of workplace quality and equal opportunity may be of relevance in explaining the increasing job satisfaction in companies with higher CGO. In the explorative interview study by Meynhardt and Fröhlich (2017), CgoCs reported that compiling the CGB not only created an awareness of the need to reduce job demands but also raised awareness around interacting with employees, women in leadership roles, disabled access within the workplace, diversity of opinion, as well as the introduction of a behavioural code. These criteria are represented by the indicator "C1—Workplace quality and affirmative action", which correlates negatively with the demands in the workplace. Hence, if a company increasingly champions workplace quality and equal opportunity, the job demands decrease. We propose the hypothesis that job demands decrease with increasing workplace quality, and that an interplay between both factors leads to increased job satisfaction. It is similar with POS. The indicator C1 correlates positively with the support the employees perceive the company offers them. Where there is increasing workplace quality and equal opportunity, the employees also feel increasingly supported. We assume there is a correlation between the increasing scores in indicator C1, the resulting increase in POS, and job satisfaction, which increases as the total scores in the CGB increase. Follow-up studies are needed in order to explain the nature of these correlations more precisely.

### ***Pay Level Satisfaction***

According to Lawler's model of job satisfaction, an employee should be satisfied with their income if the amount of perceived income corresponds to the income they feel they are entitled to (Shapiro & Wahba, 1978). Here, processes of social comparison, e.g. with friends and colleagues, have a role to play (Shapiro & Wahba, 1978). The ECG requires that companies demonstrate "just" and transparent distribution of income and profits. According to our results, the percentages achieved in indicator "C4—Just income distribution" correlate positively with satisfaction with pay. We may therefore assume that the employees in the CgoCs share the ECG's concepts of justice with regard to income distribution, and that, according to Lawler's model, increased application of these concepts and a simultaneous increase in transparency in the company lead to rising pay level satisfaction.

However, there is no apparent correlation between the scores achieved in indicator "E4—Investing profits for the common good" and satisfaction with pay. This would mean that profit distribution within the company is of no relevance to pay level satisfaction. However, it is striking that the average within the indicator is very high ( $M = 91\%$ ) and, at the same time, the standard deviation is low ( $SD = 16\%$ ). Hence, it is predominantly companies with a very high value in indicator E4 that are part of our sample. This variance restriction may lead to an underestimation of the correlations (Bühner & Ziegler, 2009), which means our result is of a provisional nature. In order to determine the influence of profit distribution on pay level satisfaction, it would be advisable to conduct a comparative study with CgoCs and companies that would achieve only very few points in this indicator.

Further studies on pay and pay satisfaction would be interesting too. Some research questions could be, for example: How high is the pay in CgoCs in comparison with "conventional" companies? In which companies are the employees more satisfied with their pay? The absolute pay level has only a slight influence on satisfaction with pay (Judge et al., 2010). As the results of our study show, a fair and transparent distribution of wages may go some way to explaining pay level satisfaction. We assume that pay is relatively low in CgoCs because of extra expenditure on their socio-ecological economic activities. It would be

interesting to establish to what extent CgoCs are able to “compensate” for their potentially relatively low pay through fair distribution and transparency.

### ***Meaningful Work***

The results of our study show that the percentages achieved in indicator “E1—Value and social impact of products and services” correlate positively with the employees’ experience of the meaningfulness of their work. As the social relevance of the products and services of companies increases, so does the employees’ perception of their work as meaningful. In our interpretation, the result shows an intersection between what the ECG regards as a company’s meaningful contribution to society and what the employees consider meaningful, i.e. what their company contributes to the world. This confirms the assumption by Rosso et al. (2010) that companies’ emphasis on their contribution to the common good may have positive implications for employees’ experience of meaningfulness. The experience of meaningful work correlates strongly with job satisfaction (Allan et al., 2019), which means that increasing meaningfulness of work as a result of the increasing meaningfulness of products and services may also be connected with increasing job satisfaction where there is a higher CGO within the company. This hypothetical correlation would, however, need to be tested. Neither is it clear whether, in general, employees from CgoCs experience more meaningfulness at work than employees from companies without a CGB. This, too, would be a question for a possible follow-up study.

Glavas and Kelley (2014) have established that the mechanisms through which employee perceptions of CSR impact their work behaviours and attitudes are still, to a large extent, unclear. Our study, too, is unable to provide empirical information about the processes underlying the correlations that have been established. The model on the correlation between the meaningfulness and social impact of products and services and the perceived meaningfulness of work has only low explanatory power ( $R^2 = .035$ ), so only a small percentage of the variance in meaningful work is explained by the meaningfulness of products and services. According to Glavas and Kelley (2014), employees’ sense of meaningfulness is increased by perceived CSR only when actions are directed towards third

parties and not in terms of how the organisation treats the employees themselves. A better elucidation of the variance in meaningful work might be possible if we also include in the model the other indicators that record external CSR (e.g. indicator “E2—Contribution to the local community”). This could be tested in future studies and could immediately provide information on which aspects of CGO are of particular relevance in the experience of meaningful work. We already know that values and value congruence have a role to play in this connection and are also important in the processes whereby CSR impacts on employees (Allan et al., 2019; Glavas, 2016). Due to its explicit reference to values, the ECG lends itself to deeper research on the significance of values and value congruence in the field of micro-CSR.

### ***Organisational Identification***

Unlike in the case of the perceived meaningfulness of work, we are unable to find a correlation between the percentages achieved in indicator “E1—Value and social impact of products and services” and organisational identification. In the meta-study by Wang et al. (2020), CSR, internal CSR and external CSR correlated positively with organisational identification. If we stay with the definition of CSR as a company caring for the well-being of its employees and other key stakeholders, including the societal and natural environment, with the aim of also creating value for the business, the creation of meaningful and socially-relevant products and services can also be understood as external CSR. This means our findings are not consistent with the research results thus far on the correlation between CSR and organisational identification. According to John et al. (2019), employees who evaluate the CSR of their company positively should be proud of their company, and this, in turn, should lead, through a self-categorisation process, to greater organisational identification. Here, CSR conveys to the employees a value fit between the companies and the employees, and the employees derive organisational identification from this (Wang et al., 2020). It is therefore surprising that we were unable to find any correlation between the meaning and social impact of the products and services and organisational identification among the employees from the CgoCs, especially as the companies report that by publishing CGBs

they find employees who are a better fit and who share their values (Mischkowski et al., 2018). It is possible, however, that we found no correlation here either because, as with common good-oriented income distribution, there is a “ceiling effect”. All the companies in the sample supply products that are geared towards basic needs, i.e. food production and trade, health and elderly care, clothing and political media, and that are therefore more likely to be evaluated as meaningful and socially relevant. This is also reflected in the descriptive statistics for indicator E1 (minimum = 50%, maximum = 90%, M = 58.98% and SD = 8.93%). That is why a study that includes companies that perform considerably worse in indicator E1 than the companies in the present sample has the potential to show up effects.

Although Wang et al. (2020) report that internal CSR correlates positively with organisational identification, Wang and colleagues indicate, at the same time, that the relationship between organisational identification and perceived CSR towards employees was not significant. According to our results, the percentage achieved in indicator “C5—Corporate democracy and transparency” correlates positively with the employees’ identification with their companies. We assume that employees’ feelings of belonging to their companies are strengthened by the extensive transparency and employee participation in fundamental decision-making processes required by the ECG, and that employees can therefore identify more with their companies (see Wang et al., 2020). At the same time, including employees in important decision-making processes increases self-esteem, which in turn leads to more organisational identification, for, according to organisational identity theory (Ashforth & Mael, 1989), employees tend to identify with organisations from which they can derive self-esteem and self-respect (Wang et al., 2020). Internal CSR, or rather CSR towards employees, connected with transparency and participation therefore has a positive influence on organisational identification.

### ***Organisational Citizenship Behaviours***

Some CgoCs report improvements in cooperation strategies among businesses and better relations with suppliers since conducting their first CGB (Sanchis et al., 2018). We observed that as the percentage increases in indicator “D2—Cooperation with businesses in

the same field”, marking the company’s stronger cooperation with other companies, the employees report more OCBs on their part towards their company. According to Glavas (2016), this finding can be explained by the fact that if a company goes above and beyond its primary tasks and aims to contribute to the greater good of society, then employees will go above and beyond their primary tasks to contribute to the greater good of the organisation. This explanation can only be correct if the employees perceive that their companies really are behaving cooperatively. The result of our study may therefore suggest that the CGBs do in fact represent the variability in the cooperative behaviour of the companies, that the extent of cooperative behaviour is also perceived by the employees, and that more cooperative behaviour ultimately results in more OCB.

By contrast, there is no confirmation of our assumption that increasing cooperative behaviour between companies results in employees demonstrating increasing OCBs towards their colleagues. We did not observe cooperative behaviour by companies having a spillover effect upon the individual behaviour of particular employees. This is not consistent with the results from the meta-study by Wang et al. (2020), according to which perceived CSR towards the public and the environment is positively correlated to OCBs, which led us to assume that CSR or cooperative behaviour towards other companies would likewise lead to more OCBs. Neither, therefore, do our results give support to Glavas’ (2016) hypothesis that companies that endeavour to create high-quality relationships with external stakeholders thereby create a company culture in which caring relationships, too, are important within the organisation.

### ***Limitations***

Unfortunately, we were unable to discuss the differences with respect to age and sex in greater depth within the scope of this paper. Further studies could explore the effects of age and sex in more detail. Because the one case where the sex was given as “other” was a clear outlier in all models, we excluded this case from our analyses. However, we were unable to decide whether the reason we saw such strong deviation in the responses was because the questionnaire was not filled out “seriously”, or whether the person in question

really does demonstrate considerably divergent feelings and behaviour that might also be connected with their gender identity. Follow-up studies could therefore focus in particular on gender identity and its role in the context of micro-CSR.

Neither are we able to rule out gender bias, for two thirds of the respondents are female. According to the study by Ollé-Espluga et al. (2019), women represent almost half of the workforce in ECG firms. However, according to the valid frequency women account for two thirds of the total workforce in their study (Ollé-Espluga et al., 2019). Hence, it could certainly also be the case that significantly more women than men work in CgoCs and that our study therefore represents the gender ratio correctly.

Unluckily, not all companies compiled a CGB in the same year. In addition, the majority of companies have not published an updated CGB since 2014. This means that in order to ensure the highest possible level of comparability, we used the balance sheets from the years 2012 to 2014. Even if a balance sheet is valid for two years, we cannot rule out limitations in comparability. In addition, the validity of our study may also be compromised by the fact that several years separate the balance sheets and the employee survey.

Furthermore, we observed that Mahalanobis distances were often higher than the threshold values. For example, we observed with the calculations for hypothesis 10 that for the first eight cases in the data set, all the values were around the value 28, whereas the threshold value in the case of 5 predictors amounted to 11.07 ( $p = .05$ ). All these cases were from the same company. Due to the frequent appearance of cases with these relatively small deviations, we did not exclude these from the analyses. We only deleted very noticeable outliers, e.g. with values higher than 300, from the respective analyses. We are therefore unable to rule out possible distortions in our calculations.

Last but not least, we would like to point out that there were nine occasions on which the respondent stopped filling in the questionnaire when they arrived at the item "My work helps me understand myself better". Because these dropouts were noticeably frequent, we cannot recommend using this item.

## Conclusion

The CGB is a CSR management tool that records the socio-ecological commitment of a company in a comparable way. Previous research indicates that companies with published CGBs provide elements of good working conditions (Ollé-Espluga et al., 2019). The companies report about positive developments on the organisational level since publishing their first CGB (Meynhardt & Fröhlich, 2017; Mischkowski et al., 2018). Yet, these development reports are from exploratory studies and depict the perspective of a few persons from each company, which are mostly people with leadership roles. With our study, we enrich the research on ECG, because for the first time we capture the perspective of employees from ECG companies on a large scale and reveal the effects of a corporate common good-orientation on the micro level.

According to our results, employees in companies with higher CBG scores perceive more CSR. Additionally, correlations between the scores in the CGBs and work related attitudes and behaviours can be found. We were able to show that an increasing corporate common good-orientation in the sense of the ECG has a positive influence on employees' job satisfaction. Employees from companies with better job quality according to ECG standards feel better supported by their companies and experience less demands at work. A fair distribution of income according to the ECG criteria leads to higher satisfaction with wages. We observed that the value and social impact of the products and services of the company has an influence on how meaningful the work in the company is assessed, but not on the extent to which employees identify with their companies. However, with increasing corporate democracy and transparency, employees' organisational identification improves. Employees from companies that are behaving more co-operatively with other companies are more willing to take on tasks that are not part of their official job requirements but serve the functioning of the company. Yet, these employees do not behave more cooperatively with each other than employees from companies that behave less cooperatively with other companies. Overall, we interpret the results of our study as illustrating that an increasing

corporate orientation towards the common good in the sense of the ECG can have a positive influence on employees attitudes and behaviours.

We conclude that the CGB captures aspects that have an impact on job and pay level satisfaction, job demands, perceived organisational support, work meaningfulness, organisational citizenship behaviours towards the company and partly organisational identification. Even though the CGB ensures comparability in common good-orientation between the companies, interpretations of our results indicate that the CGB does not include relevant factors that determine job satisfaction in its scoring. Since employees are one of the most important stakeholders of a company, the CGB should not only be used to assess the *objective* working conditions in the company, but criteria that reflect the *subjective* well-being of employees should also be included in the CGB scoring in its further development.

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## **The Transformative Potential of the Common Good Approach in Entrepreneurial Practice**

For my dissertation I travelled throughout Germany and visited eleven companies to conduct face to face interviews with company representatives and gathered information from 332 employees from eight companies in an online survey. The companies I have chosen are part of the Economy for the Common Good (ECG) and have published a Common Good Balance Sheet (CGB). In the following paragraphs, I will first summarize the questions and results of the three previously presented studies, and then discuss what I have learned about the characteristics of these common good-oriented companies (CgoCs) from these studies, and how the entrepreneurial practice is represented when the common good-orientation is pursued as a business goal. In this discussion, I focus on the question of whether the common good approach in entrepreneurial practice has the potential to promote socio-ecological change of the economy. Finally, I discuss the limitations of this dissertation, list questions which have newly arisen or are yet unanswered and present my conclusions.

### **The Common Good Approach in Entrepreneurial Practice (Résumé Study 1)**

The ECG is a relatively recent social movement supported by small and medium-sized companies that considers the contribution to the common good as the purpose of economic management (Gemeinwohl-Ökonomie, 2020b). Although the theoretical concept of the common good approach originated in antiquity (Garriga & Melé, 2004; Heidbrink et al., 2018), there have thus far been no studies showing what entrepreneurial practice looks like when companies pursue the goal of common good orientation. In my first study, I explore, by means of eleven interviews with representatives of CgoCs, the question of how a common good orientation is reflected in the entrepreneurial structures and practices of CgoCs. Furthermore, I examine the nature of the correlation between striving for profit and socio-ecological commitment within CgoCs.

The results show that the CgoCs strive for ecological sustainability, and that fairness and cooperation are guiding values in their relationships with stakeholders. Furthermore, some of the companies investigated address, in detail, questions of diversity in the

workforce, corporate co-determination and the preservation of their independence. Overall, I establish a high degree of congruence between the values pursued by the CgoCs and the values of the ECG. The ECG serves companies as an identification and communication tool for their otherwise implicit socio-ecological commitment. All the companies are characterised by a high degree of transparency due to having published their CGBs. This differentiates the CgoCs from conventional large companies; such companies are not prepared to guarantee any more transparency than the legal requirements—which are far less rigorous than those of the ECG—already demand from them (see Kny, 2020).

The common good orientation is either anchored in companies in a top-down direction, i.e. issuing from the intrinsic motivation of the company directors via a delegation system, or it is implemented bottom-up via the company's self-conception and the intrinsic motivation of the individual members of the organisation. The CSR teams introduced by some companies, which consist of members from different departments and which drive the implementation of socio-ecological standards in their departments, are an example of how to reconcile the differences in roles between those tasked with implementing CSR and employees from the departments, for these roles are based on different and often contradictory premises. The common good orientation is therefore part of the core business.

The companies see their common good contribution as based either in their products and the nature of their economic management, or primarily in the nature of their economic management—never, however, in their products alone. The CgoCs do not pursue profit maximisation, rather they are prepared to accept profit setbacks in order to implement their socio-ecological principles; the contribution to the common good is seen as an end in itself. With this “profit satisficing” (Spence & Rutherford, 2001) approach, the CgoCs differentiate themselves from conventional large companies that strive for profit maximisation and hope that pursuing CSR will open up further growth and profit opportunities (see Kny, 2020). The companies contribute to the common good by taking this “multi-dimensional sustainability approach” (Dyllick & Muff, 2016), i.e. by pursuing a balance between economic, social and environmental value, and at the same time focusing their economic management on serving

both their direct stakeholders (such as suppliers, employees and customers) and their indirect stakeholders (such as society as a whole and the natural environment) (see Dyllick & Muff, 2016; Muff & Dyllick, 2014).

### **Corporate Values, Characteristics and Practices That Could Support a Development Towards Degrowth (Résumé Study 2)**

The ECG sees itself as having an affinity with the degrowth movement (Giselbrecht & Ristig-Bresser, 2017). A central idea within the degrowth movement is that the industrialised countries need to lower the level of production and consumption on a permanent basis—purposefully, and with an emphasis on democratic structures—in order to comply with ecological boundaries and, at the same time, provide all humans on earth with a good life (Burkhart et al., 2017; D'Alisa et al., 2015; Demaria et al., 2013). In this respect, it is seen as necessary that companies orient themselves by the sufficiency strategy (Burkhart et al., 2017). Latouche (2009) formulates eight strategies or goals that must be pursued in order to develop towards a degrowth society. Latouche (2009, p. 34) argues that what is essential here is a shift in values towards altruism, cooperation, democracy, solidarity etc. (*re-evaluation*). Furthermore, he puts forward that concepts such as prosperity need to be reconceived (*reconceptualisation*) and the supply structures oriented towards the new values (*restructuring*; Latouche, 2009, pp. 35–36). At the same time, a *redistribution* of power, wealth and access to natural resources (Latouche, 2009, p. 37) and a *relocalisation* of production and consumption (Latouche, 2009, p. 37) are required. The development towards degrowth, he argues, also includes a *reduction* in the negative effects of production and consumption on the biosphere. The strategies of *re-use* and *recycling* have a key role to play in this connection (Latouche, 2009, pp. 38–41).

The ECG calls upon companies to take measures to promote sufficiency and achieve an absolute reduction in resource consumption (Sommer et al., 2016). In my second study, using the “eight Rs” formulated by Latouche (2009, p. 33), I analysed the interview material from the first study in order to find out whether the corporate values, characteristics and

practices pursued by the CgoCs have the potential to support a development towards degrowth.

The results of the analysis were as follows: the CgoCs describe fairness, cooperation, diversity, independence, democracy, transparency and ecological sustainability as the values that guide their activities, with different companies placing emphasis on different aspects. This value system overlaps with the values pursued by the degrowth movement (see Burkhart et al., 2017; Latouche, 2009). As far as possible, the companies investigated are implementing measures to reduce resource consumption as well as pursuing *re-use* and *recycling* strategies (see also Sommer et al., 2016).

Some of the CgoCs in the study do not prioritise further growth; instead, they focus on upholding democratic decision-making structures or maintaining a good work-life balance. The farmer from the sample would like to reduce the size of his business so he can cultivate his agricultural crops in more diverse ways. Such non-growing companies are an important prerequisite for a reduction in macroeconomic growth and a step in the direction of a degrowth society (Deimling, 2017). Some other CgoCs in the study do intend to grow further. Their justification for this is that they wish to reach a size that gives them economic stability, allows them to pay good wages and ensures they remain competitive. At the same time, these companies see themselves potentially desisting from growth in the future, once they have achieved their goals. Because, in working towards a degrowth society, the more sustainable companies have to grow in order to displace the non-sustainable companies (Bocken & Short, 2016; Gebauer & Mewes, 2015; Posse, 2016), growing CgoCs, too, can contribute to degrowth. However, their economic practices and products must align with degrowth values, the companies' goal must not be unlimited growth, and their growth must be less than a general decrease in consumer demand. The idea is that this will lead, overall, to a reduction in production and consumption (see Bocken & Short, 2016).

As already described in Study 1, the CgoCs do not pursue profit maximisation; instead, they are prepared to accept profit setbacks for the sake of implementing their socio-ecological principles. Nonetheless, the companies have to generate enough turnover to

ensure their survival. One interviewee emphasised that economic success is extremely important if companies are to set an example for others. For CgoCs, economic success means making enough profit to be able to commit to socio-ecological values and ensure the continued existence of the company. Because, however, these companies do not strive for profit maximisation, the profits lose relevance as indicators of success. I assess this *reconceptualisation* of the importance of profits using Latouche's models Latouche (2009) for a degrowth development.

Among the CgoCs, there are examples of democratic ownership structures. The democratic structuring of ownership is wholly aligned with the values of degrowth (Latouche, 2009). The cooperative direct procurement practices of the bakery under study are a further example consistent with Latouche's (2009) claim for *restructuring*. The farmer suppliers and the bakery meet regularly for a round-table discussion to vote, independent of world market prices, on prices for the grain. According to the interviewee, the emphasis here is on the needs of the local actors and maintaining long-term relationships between the bakery and the farmers. The round tables therefore represent a *relocalisation* in Latouche's Latouche (2009) sense. Another example of *relocalisation* is the preference the CgoCs express for local suppliers.

Processes of *redistribution* of power and income are, for example, advanced by the democratic structuring of remuneration models, as described by one of the companies. Another example is the voluntary pay increase by the transport company that delivers the bread for the bakery. Before the minimum wage was introduced in Germany in 2015, the bakery had advocated a pay rise for the drivers because their income was very low. The transport company came to an agreement with the bakery that the drivers' pay would be increased if the bakery would take on the additional costs arising from this.

As the results from Study 2 show, there are a number of examples of entrepreneurial structures and practices among the CgoCs that have the potential to promote a development towards degrowth.

### **The Common Good Balance Sheet and Employees' Perceptions, Attitudes and Behaviours (Résumé Study 3)**

In my first two studies, the focus is on organisational characteristics. In Study 2, I analyse the extent to which these have the potential to also promote changes on the macro-level. In the third study of my dissertation, I focus on the micro-level, asking how far the employees in the CgoCs perceive the common good orientation of their companies and whether there are any correlations between the common good orientation of a company and the attitudes and behaviour of its employees.

Multiple regression analyses with data from a standardised online survey of 332 employees from eight CgoCs show that employees from companies with higher total scores in the CGBs—and therefore a stronger common good orientation—state that they perceive more CSR in their companies. Furthermore, these employees are, on the whole, more satisfied with their jobs than employees from companies with lower scores in the CGB. At the same time, employees from companies with higher scores in the CGB indicators on workplace quality and fair distribution of work experience less stress in the workplace. In addition, as workplace quality increases, employees feel more supported by their companies. With increasingly fair income distribution in the spirit of the ECG, there is also an increase in pay level satisfaction. However, I found no correlation between pay level satisfaction and the common good-oriented investment of profits.

The higher the value and social impact of the products and services of the company are rated in the CGB, the more the respondents experience their work as meaningful. Yet, the value and social impact of the products and services have no influence on the extent to which the employees identify with their companies. Higher scores for organisational identification, however, were found in companies with comparatively higher corporate democracy and transparency.

Whereas employees from companies that demonstrate high levels of cooperative behaviour towards other companies in their field often report behaving in ways that are not part of their official job description but serve the operation of the organisation (organisational

citizenship behaviour directed at the company), there is evidently no correlation between the cooperative behaviour of the companies and the extent to which the employees demonstrate supportive behaviours towards one another (organisational citizenship behaviour directed at individuals).

Even though not all hypotheses are confirmed, Study 3 shows that the common good orientation of a company can have a positive influence on the experience and behaviour of employees. However, the explained variation in the model that analyses job satisfaction by means of the total score in the CGB is low; this suggests that the CGB has thus far not taken all the factors influencing the experience of job satisfaction into account in its scoring.

### **Overall Discussion**

In the following overarching discussion, I will bring together the findings from the three studies and elaborate on whether the common good approach in entrepreneurial practice has the potential to promote socio-ecological change of the economy.

#### ***Shared Values as Common (Good) Ground***

The ECG movement was initiated by a small group of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) (Gemeinwohl-Ökonomie, 2018). The CGB was created based on their experiences and has been continually developed based on their feedback (Gemeinwohl-Ökonomie, 2017). As described in Study 1 and 2, the CgoCs provide comprehensive insights into their corporate structures and practices via the CGBs. Thus, with the CGBs, the CgoCs make their socio-ecological commitment visible. In almost all of the companies I visited, the CGB is the first CSR management tool to be applied within the company. The ECG can therefore encourage SMEs to conduct CSR reporting. Thus, the ECG has achieved something that has hardly been successful so far with regard to applying established CSR tools, despite all efforts by the developers to encourage SMEs to use these tools as well (Elford & Daub, 2019; Johnson & Schaltegger, 2016; Steinhöfel et al., 2019). One relevant success factor in the dissemination of CGB among SMEs is that the ECG refers to a set of values along which companies should orient their actions (see Scheffler & Lieber, 2018). These values to which CgoCs should adhere are summarized by the following keywords:

Human dignity, cooperation & solidarity, ecological sustainability, social justice and co-determination & transparency (see Gemeinwohl-Ökonomie, 2013). As I learned in the interviews with company representatives, it is exactly this reference to values which SMEs can identify with and which motivates the companies to get involved in the ECG (see Heidbrink et al., 2018; Mischkowski et al., 2018).

The ECG unites companies under the espoused belief (see Schein, 2010) that the primary goal of entrepreneurship is to contribute to the common good and that this is achieved through the pursuit of these values, rather than through the pursuit of profits (see Felber, 2018). As I stated in the introduction of this paper, publishing a CGB is classified as an artifact according to Schein's (2010) organizational theory. Artifacts are the externally visible characteristics of an organization, such as the language spoken and observable rituals that make the culture of the organization observable (Schein, 2010). The published values, as explicitly communicated artifacts, do not necessarily have to correspond to the actual guiding, underlying assumptions or shared values in the respective companies (Schein, 2010). Thus, even if companies subscribe to the ECG, the values of the ECG and the values of the companies must not necessarily be congruent. However, as is evident in my studies, a substantial overlap can be found between the guiding principles the companies pursue, which they describe as influential in shaping their organizational cultures, determining their corporate structures, and are also reflected in the behaviour of their employees, and the values of the ECG (see Study 1 and 2). These values will be explored in the following sections.

According to my interviewees, communicating corporate values with the help of the CGB has positive effects on employee recruitment (see Mischkowski et al., 2018). A defined value system serves as a compass which helps both companies and applicants orient themselves, especially when filling vacancies in companies (Mischkowski et al., 2018). As various interviewees reported, companies use the CGB to create a relationship with potential applicants by communicating their values and can provide applicants with clearer

impressions about working for the company (Mischkowski et al., 2018). As a result, the application process is shortened (Mischkowski et al., 2018).

The sharing of values creates a sense of unity *within* companies (Schein, 2010). As I concluded from my research on ECG companies, shared values are also important regarding the relationship between companies. Interviewees told me that their companies identify with the values of the ECG (see Study 1). As Gillespie and Mann (2004) showed in a study on transformational leadership, sharing values creates interpersonal trust. Balliet and van Lange (2013), in turn, provided evidence that trust in others lays the ground for cooperative behaviour. Thus, the sharing of values lays the groundwork for one of the most fundamental changes that the ECG and degrowth movements seek: An economy characterized by cooperation rather than competition (see Burkhart et al., 2017; Felber, 2018).

### ***Cooperation for the Common Good***

“If partnerships between SMEs and their environment contribute to a culture of co-operation and help operationalise the solutions of societal problems, they can be considered as a major contribution to the common good” (Spence & Schmidpeter, 2003, pp. 106–107). This view of Spence and Schmidpeter is also shared by the ECG and thus cooperation is a core value of the ECG (Felber, 2018). When companies cooperate, support each other financially and with personnel, and share financial and technical information and knowledge, this is said to lead to better crisis management (Gemeinwohl-Ökonomie, 2013).

In the interviews, representatives from the CgoCs told me how important cooperative behaviour toward other companies was to their companies (see Study 1 and 2), and that the ECG helped companies find additional cooperation partners (see Heidbrink et al., 2018). In the CBG’s process of peer review validation, reporting companies get to know each other, exchange ideas and share inspiration for change (Gemeinwohl-Ökonomie, no date). Amongst the companies I surveyed was a one which has since founded another company with the goal of building a network of sustainably-oriented companies that want to “work together in a strongly synergistic way” (SinnBIOse Netzwerk GmbH, 2016, no page). The goal is to jointly develop new ways of doing business “that are based more strongly on

humanity and cooperation and have a positive impact on society and the environment” (SinnBIOse Netzwerk GmbH, 2016, no page).

From the interview material I examined, it is clear that the CgoCs’ interest in sustainability issues is intrinsically motivated (see Study 1). As shown in Study 1, the common good-orientation of the company in the single-owner managed companies arises from the owner’s personal interest to operate more sustainably. In this case, the common good-orientation is implemented top-down in the company via a delegation system. This is also a viable way to increase a large company’s interest in sustainability (Kny, 2020). In practice, certain policies or a CSR manager respectively CSR team ensures company-wide compliance with social and ecological standards, which are primarily pushed by the company’s management. However, some CgoCs are also collective and self-administered companies. As I demonstrated in Study 1, common good orientation is not highly regulated or institutionalized, rather is implicit. The commitment to common good is determined by the company’s perceived identity and the intrinsic motivation of the individual members of the organisation. The collective is able to implement common good-orientation practices from the bottom up (see Study 1). Whether top-down or bottom-up, in both cases the common good orientation is based on an intrinsic motivation to contribute to the common good through the company. For this reason, I conclude that the CgoCs do not comply because each company expects an individual advantage from it, but instead they do so because they are, so to speak, jointly committed to a higher goal: contributing to the common good.

As I learned from the interviews with company representatives, cooperative behaviour in business practices can lead to an immediate improvement of the situation for all players involved. One example is cooperative direct procurement, which I learned about in the interview with the organic bakery (see Study 2). In this process, where the bakery and the farmers agree on the prices for the grain independently of world market prices at so-called “round tables”, the needs of the regional parties are in the foreground. According to the bakery, the aim is to maintain stable, long-term relationships in which all participants can earn a sufficient living. This, as my interviewee reported, promotes security for both the

farmers and the bakery. This restructuring and relocalisation of trade relations is in line with the degrowth idea (see Study 2), because stable and long-term relationships lead to more resilience—which is “the ability to protect jobs and livelihoods and avoid collapse in the face of external shocks” (Jackson, 2009, p. 7).

At the same time, the example of the round tables shows that cooperation between socio-ecological niche players can strengthen their positions on the market. Through “active self-shielding”, the CgoCs can establish a safe zone in which they are shielded from the competitive pressure of market incumbents (Stumpf et al., 2017, p. 8). In this protected niche, new, more sustainable products and practices can emerge, become established and possibly break into the mainstream (Grin et al., 2010). From this, I conclude that the intensification of business cooperation envisaged by the CgoCs can represent an important contribution to a sustainability transformation of the economy. A practical example of how cooperative corporate behaviour can benefit the common good is the cooperative pricing of the bakery (see Study 1 and 2). The bakery sets a price for its products which allows them to pay employees a good wage. Due to its stable financial situation, the bakery could still offer its organic bread at a very low price. However, in order not to put the other organic bakeries under financial pressure, the bread is often sold at a mid-range price. The bakery uses the resulting margin to supply its products to social institutions such as nursing homes, hospitals, kindergartens, schools and public catering companies at particularly favourable conditions. As in the example with the round tables, the bakery creates a protected niche for organic bakeries. Moreover this practices helps organic food finds its way into conventional institutions.

On the micro-level, I made two observations about the influence of the cooperative behaviour of the companies: On the one hand, employees from companies that behave cooperatively towards other companies more often take on tasks that are not part of their official job description, but that serve the operations of the company (see Study 3). The cooperative behaviour of socio-ecological niche players thus not only strengthens their position in the market, but also strengthens them in their functioning as organisations.

On the other hand, contrary to expectations, an increase in supportive behaviour between the employees of the respective companies was not observed along with increasing cooperative behaviour of the CgoCs (see Study 3). Glavas' (2016) idea that companies that strive for quality relationships with external stakeholders can create a corporate culture that also places a strong emphasis on caring relationships within the organisation was thus not reflected in my data. According to the meta-study by Wang et al. (2020), perceived CSR towards the public and the environment correlates positively with organisational citizenship behaviours. I was thus able to prove this effect on organisational citizenship behaviours directed at the organisation, but not on organisational citizenship behaviours towards individuals (see Study 3). This result is surprising and should be clarified in further studies.

### ***Transparency as an Opportunity for Improvement***

Transparency is another core value of the ECG. Publishing a CGB is meant to promote comprehensive transparency for external and internal stakeholders (Felber, 2018). Indeed, by publishing a CGB, the CgoCs create far-reaching transparency and thus the value for them does not remain just an artifact (see Schein, 2010), but represents a value that is also reflected in corporate practice (see Study 1 and 2). Remarkably, they report on their CSR engagement although they are not legally obligated to report on the non-financial aspects of the company, unlike, since 2017, large companies listed on the stock exchange (see Gesetz zur Stärkung der nichtfinanziellen Berichterstattung der Unternehmen in ihren Lage- und Konzernlageberichten (CSR-Richtlinie-Umsetzungsgesetz), 2017). With their CGBs, these pioneering companies provide comprehensive insight into their business structures and practices which is not achieved by other CSR reporting systems, such as the Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS), the International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO) standard 26000, the German Sustainability Code (DNK) and the Global Social Compliance Program (GSCP) (Heidbrink et al., 2018). Thus, transparency in depth and breadth is a typical feature of CgoCs. It also distinguishes CgoCs from big incumbent companies, as no company with more than 1,000 employees has published a CGB so far (as of January 2021; see Gemeinwohl-Ökonomie, 2020a).

According to Ioannou and Serafeim (2011), sustainability reporting increases the social responsibility of business leaders; also, sustainable development and employee training become a higher priority for companies. Moreover, increased corporate transparency leads to more ethical practices, less bribery and corruption, and increase in credibility of managers (Ioannou & Serafeim, 2017). Corporate transparency is also a tool to make best practices accessible to others, revealing weak points in the company or supply chain where improvements are needed, and enabling consumers to make informed decisions (Gardner et al., 2019; Sodhi & Tang, 2019; Vaccaro & Sison, 2011). As business representatives told me in the interviews, their companies are already committed to social and ecological improvement before the common good accounting; however, the engagement with the CGB gives them further inspiration for improvements which are in alignment with the ECG (see Heidbrink et al., 2018). For a large number of companies which have carried out the assessment more than once, an increase in the score from the first to the second assessment can be observed (Heidbrink et al., 2018). Transparency regarding socio-ecological practices should also help to squeeze less sustainable actors out of the market (Posse, 2016). Thus, corporate transparency is an important building block for a sustainability transformation of the economy.

At the same time, it also became clear in my study that the ECG's ideas on how transparency should be lived out are always not fully accepted by the companies (see Study 2). As I learned in the interviews with the CgoCs, salary transparency, for example, is generally supported by the CgoCs. However, the publication of all salaries, as required by the ECG (see Gemeinwohl-Ökonomie, 2013), is often rejected, among other reasons as employees demand the protection of their privacy. Some of the CgoCs studied have found a compromise which allows them to both protect the privacy of employees and foster transparency, for example by publishing the criteria by which a certain wage group is reached, without providing the names of employees in each wage group (see Study 2). The result of my employee survey from Study 3, according to which pay level satisfaction is positively related to the "fair" and transparent distribution of salaries, suggests that this

transparency is an important factor for pay level satisfaction. As known from previous studies, the level of absolute pay has a minor influence on pay satisfaction (Judge et al., 2010). At the same time, Lawler's pay satisfaction theory states that social comparison processes with colleagues, among others, play a role in the extent to which someone is satisfied with their pay (Shapiro & Wahba, 1978). Thus, fairness and transparency are key components of pay level satisfaction. In order to ensure that the distribution of salaries is assessed as fair, processes which engage employee participation are useful in determining salary criteria. As the example on pay transparency shows, changes should be negotiated with those who they impact to ensure they will be implemented. This leads to another core value of the ECG: co-determination.

### ***Offering Ownership and Co-determination***

The ECG requires companies to involve all stakeholders affected by business decisions in decision-making processes (Gemeinwohl-Ökonomie, 2013). The ECG has determined sociocratic decision-making structures to be optimal and the ECG wants democratic election of managers and strives for co-ownership of their companies by employees (Gemeinwohl-Ökonomie, 2013). Kny (2020) reports that changing ownership and co-determination structures according to the ideas of the ECG is rather implausible for big incumbent companies. In collectives belonging to the ECG, collective ownership is part of company identity and important positions in these companies are filled through elections (see Study 2). But as I showed in Study 1 and 2, co-ownership and co-determination play an increasingly important role in the single-owner companies as well.

In one interview, for example, I spoke to a managing director about the sociocratic decision-making structures he was implementing in his company (see Sommer, 2018). The managing director wanted decisions to be made by members of the company with the greatest degree of competence or involvement in a topic. He expressed viewing himself as “a spider in the web”, holding the threads but increasingly relinquishing the power to make decisions. However, this assumes that the employees are willing to take responsibility accordingly. If there is no such willingness from the employees, management's

transformational efforts can fail, as I learned in my interview with the farmer (see Study 2). He wanted to give his employees a share of ownership in the family farm, but his employees do not want to become co-owners. So, he finally decided to someday transform the farm into a “Regionalwert AG” (Hiß, 2014). This is a model which allows for co-ownership of an agricultural business; it is ideal for those who want to become owners, but are not necessarily required to work in the respective organisation.

As with the value of transparency, the ECG may also have “overshot the mark” somewhat with regards to its concept of unlimited transparency and co-determination as guiding principles by not considering a need for case-by-case decisions that reflect the degree of transparency and co-determination a company’s stakeholders actually want. Similar to transparency, employee participation in corporate ownership and participatory decision-making processes in companies are important building blocks for a democratisation of society, as called for by the degrowth movement (see Burkhart et al., 2017). Thus, companies should not deny their stakeholders comprehensive transparency, co-determination and co-ownership, but should also not impose them. In an ideal scenario, these would be offered, and the scope of transparency, co-determination and participation would all be bilaterally negotiated. In this regard, the CgoCs studied prove to be good examples of how even conventionally organised or structured companies can change and thus take the first steps towards a degrowth society (see Study 2).

The employee survey I conducted shows that increasing corporate democracy and transparency can have a positive impact on employee identification with a company (see Study 3). It can be assumed that the comprehensive transparency and participation of employees in decision-making processes strengthens their self-esteem and sense of belonging to their respective companies and that employees can thus identify more strongly with their companies (see Wang et al., 2020). According to organisational identity theory (Ashforth & Mael, 1989), employees tend to identify with organisations from which they can derive self-esteem and self-respect (Wang et al., 2020). The more employees identify with their organisations, the greater the willingness of employees to take more responsibility for

improving organisational performance should be, as well as to make extra efforts to fulfil their tasks and improve their personal performance (John et al., 2019; Wang et al., 2020). As Study 3 shows, an increase in employee ownership and transparency in organisations can lead to positive feelings among employees, which in turn should improve organisational performance.

### ***Products AND Processes for a Better World***

The claim of the ECG is that the purpose of all economic activity should be to contribute to the common good. Since, as I explained in the introduction, the concept of common good is not clearly defined (Heidbrink et al., 2018; Sulmasy, 2001) nor does the ECG propose a substantive concept of common good (Felber, 2018), I learned during the interviews with the CgoCs' representatives that each company has its own understanding of what the common good is or how it can serve the common good. In the interviews, sentences like, "We want to leave our children a world worth living in" are often repeated. So, how can a company save the world? Does it do this with its products? According to my research results, my answer is: Yes, it does—but, as I learned from my interview partners, it is never just the products alone. Rather, it is a mixture of either the type of product and the way the company does business, or it is primarily the way of operating the business that makes up the transformative character of a company (see Study 1 and 2).

One value that is of outstanding importance in this context is ecological sustainability (see Study 1 and 2); another core value of the ECG (Felber, 2018). The ECG calls on companies to produce or offer their products and services as ecologically as possible. In addition, companies should promote ecological behaviour amongst their employees at work and on the way to work (Gemeinwohl-Ökonomie, 2013). In contrast to other CSR management instruments, pursuing an absolute reduction in the consumption and use of nature or environment is a comparatively strong theme in the CGB, which has the potential to contribute to a transformation towards a society which consumes less natural resources (Sommer et al., 2016). Such a development is one of the main concerns of the degrowth movement (D'Alisa et al., 2015).

Environmental sustainability as a value was referenced by all company representatives when reporting on their company values, and is expressed to a greater or lesser extent in the business practices of the CgoCs studied (see Study 1 and 2). One of the managers of the bakery, for example, explains that all the raw materials they process are made in accordance with the highest organic quality standards, called Demeter (see Demeter e.V, no year/b) (see Study 1). This strict ecological cultivation of fields, the renunciation of pesticides and the use of biodynamic as well as rare, old grain types can contribute to the protection of biodiversity and soil quality (Brock et al., 2019; Turinek et al., 2009). Since the Demeter principles prohibit the use of additives and the production process is based on traditional craftsmanship (Demeter e.V, no year/a), the bakery's impact is three-pronged: First, it creates a healthy product (see Brock et al., 2019); second, it helps to protect biodiversity and soil quality; third, it preserves a traditional craft. Therefore, the contribution to the common good lies both in the socio-ecological production process and in the product itself (see Study 1).

For the CgoCs which operate in a sector where the production process is coupled with relatively high environmental consumption or social problems, e.g. in the supply chain, the transformative approach is central to *how* they operate (see Study 1). The interviewee who represented the event designer business reported that he calculated the impact of one night of a large concert equalling the energy consumption of as much as that of 35 single-family homes. By using LED technology and a few other measures, his company would be able to reduce consumption to five, maybe four houses (see Study 1). Whereas the bakery makes its contribution to the common good via the product itself and in the way the product is produced, the contribution to the common good in the example of the event designer lies primarily in the change to the "production process". A technological solution helps to significantly reduce the consumption of resources.

The basis for this improvement is the company's intention to reduce the consumption of natural resources and a willingness to rethink business practices, to try out new ones and

invest money in order to do so. That in the case of the event designer this process resulted mainly in technical solutions is partially due to the industry in which the company is active.

A second example which demonstrates a company's efforts to infuse its *modus operandi* with the motivation to contribute to the common good is the collectively managed printing company. The printing industry is also a very resource-intensive field, as was described in the CGB of the printing company studied. With measures such as the use of ecological inks, the use of recycled paper and green electricity, etc. the printing company, as it was reported in its interview, takes advantage of such potentials for energy use reductions. These measures make the company a green pioneer in its sector, according to the statement provided. However, the company defines its contribution to the common good in a completely different way: As my interview partner reported, members of the organisation are expected to learn to take responsibility within its self-governing structures. Every collective member should learn to discover and to use scope for action on their own. Once a collective member has acquired these skills, he or she may leave the company again and use these skills to continue working transformatively in other fields of the economy or society. Thus, the company sees itself "like a sort of flow heater for education", as my interviewee describes it (see Study 1). In this way, the company wants to stimulate external social transformation through development processes that employees experience within the company.

One effect that the value and social impact of the companies' products and services can have on employees is revealed in the employee survey from Study 3. As the common good orientation of products and services increases, so does the perceived meaningfulness of work (see Study 3). The experience of meaningfulness was attributed by various interviewees to a high level of congruence between their own values and their work (see Sommer, 2018). Sommer (2018) therefore sees the CgoCs I studied as places of successful world relationships. Here Sommer (2018) refers to Harmut Rosa's resonance theory. Rosa (2016, p. 298) understands resonance as a world relationship characterised by intrinsic interest and perceived self-efficacy. The experience of resonance represents a basic human need (Rosa, 2016). In the interview material, it is clear that the interviewees are intrinsically

motivated, absorbed in their work and thus experience self-efficacy (Sommer, 2018). Sommer (2018, p. 26) concludes from this that the interviewees have relatively stable resonance relationships with their organisations or their work and cites, as an example, one interviewee who described working at his company as a “gift of life” or life enrichment.

A meta-analysis conducted by Allan et al. (2019) on the outcomes of meaningful work with 44 articles (N = 23,144), indicated that meaningful work correlates strongly ( $r = .70+$ ) with work engagement, commitment, and job satisfaction. Moreover Allan et al. (2019) found moderate to large correlations ( $r = .44$  to  $-.49$ ) of meaningful work with life satisfaction, life meaning, general health, and withdrawal intentions. Small to moderate correlations ( $r = -.19$  to  $.33$ ) were observable between meaningful work, organizational citizenship behaviours, self-rated job performance, and negative affect (Allan et al., 2019). The best fit model of meta-analytic structural equation which can explain the relationships between these variables is that meaningful work predicts work engagement, commitment, and job satisfaction and these variables subsequently predict self-rated performance, organizational citizenship behaviours, and withdrawal intentions (Allan et al., 2019). Experiencing meaningfulness in one’s work correlates with a list of other positive outcomes, both for employees and companies. Thus, meaningful products and services not only benefit consumers, but also represent an enrichment at the corporate level.

### ***Profit Satisficing Instead of Profit Maximising***

One of the companies I visited has since filed for bankruptcy. As the company disclosed, in all their efforts to serve the common good, staying profitable was a major challenge. I illustrated the importance of profits for the companies I studied in Study 1. There I refer to a model of orientation frames, developed by Spence and Rutherford (2001) which small business entrepreneurs use to orient their actions. The two researchers interviewed managers and via their research showed a correlation between profits and CSR. According to their findings, entrepreneurs have one of two ‘perspectives’ in how they orient their business activities (Spence & Rutherford, 2001): One is ‘profit maximisation’, which means the highest possible increase in company profits is one of the business’ aims. Second, is

according to the concept introduced by Spence and Rutherford (2001), the perspective of 'profit satisficing'. Entrepreneurs with this perspective do not strive to make the maximum possible profits, but rather strive to generate 'sufficient' profits. What it means to generate sufficient profits can only be determined individually by each company (Spence & Rutherford, 2001).

Adding the category of practicing social activity and inactivity results in a four-field matrix (Spence & Rutherford, 2001; see Table 13). Following the profit-maximising perspective, the company either pursues absolute *profit maximisation* and the company is not socially active at all or the company is socially involved, but in doing so still pursues an *enlightened self-interest* (Spence & Rutherford, 2001). The latter means that the social commitment, which initially represents an investment for the company, ultimately should translate to increased profits. Profits could grow in theory because the company has been able to improve its image through this commitment, which could for example draw new

**Table 13**

*Small Business Owner-Managers' Operation Frames*

Practice	Perspective	
	Profit maximising	Profit satisficing
Socially inactive	Profit maximisation	Subsistence priority
Socially active	Enlightened self-interest	Social priority

*Note.* From "Social Responsibility, Profit Maximisation and the Small Firm Owner-Manager", by L. J. Spence and R. Rutherford, 2001, *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development*, 8(2), p. 131. (<https://doi.org/10.1108/EUM0000000006818>).

customers (Spence & Rutherford, 2001). This win-win situation has long been emphasised in the discourse on CSR and should motivate companies to take up CSR (see Porter & Kramer, 2011).

However, I conclude from my studies that CgoCs see their entrepreneurial activities in a different context. They are socially and ecologically active and are willing to accept a loss of profits for pursuing their social and ecological principles. They do so without the expectation that their commitment will pay off financially in the end (see Study 1 and 2). The companies are therefore managed under the *social priority* frame (see Spence & Rutherford, 2001). My research of the CgoCs demonstrates that running a company from a profit-satisficing perspective opens up scope for socio-ecological and transformative practices, both inside and outside the company.

Study 3 indicates how employees perceive their company's commitment to socio-ecological issues. Employees from companies with higher CGB scores perceive more CSR than employees from companies with lower CGB scores and are also more satisfied with their work in general. If companies invest in good working conditions and distribute work and wages transparently and "fairly", then employees' pay level satisfaction and perceived support from the company also increases. In addition, employees report less stress at work (see Study 3). The more the common good approach—coupled with a deprioritisation of profit generation—plays a decisive role in business practices, the more satisfied employees are with their jobs.

Spence and Rutherford's (2001) frames should not be understood as a fixed categorisation, but rather show a tendency in entrepreneurial actions. A company may simultaneously act on several frames or changes frames over time, for example, depending on the economic situation of the firm (Spence & Rutherford, 2001). Accordingly, the CgoCs' interviewees reported that socio-ecological criteria have a greater influence on business decisions in good economic years than in times when money is short and socio-ecological commitment has to be scaled back so as to not threaten the company's survival (see Study 1). Both in CgoCs and large conventional companies, the self-preservation of the company is always given top priority (see Study 1; Kny, 2020). Spence and Rutherford (2001) call such

a management practice the *subsistence priority* frame (see Table 1). The fact that the self-preservation of the company always remains the central goal is thus an underlying assumption which fundamentally impacts the actions of large and small companies and their employees as it is internalised as an unconscious and taken-for-granted belief (see Schein, 2010).

The ECG sympathises with the degrowth movement, which “challenges the hegemony of growth and calls for a democratically led, redistributive downscaling of production and consumption in industrialised countries as a means to achieve environmental sustainability, social justice and well-being” (Demaria et al., 2013, p. 209). Instead of unlimited production and consumption, economic performance in the industrialised countries of the world should be guided by a measure of 'enough' (Burkhart et al., 2017; D'Alisa et al., 2015). The CGB addresses this sufficiency approach and the ECG calls for businesses to support moderate consumption (Gemeinwohl-Ökonomie, 2013). As I concluded from my studying the CgoCs, running a company under the social priority frame (see Table 1) opens up scope for sufficiency-oriented practices. One example of a sufficiency-oriented practice which was described in the interviews was the printing company's refusal of orders for promotional or packaging materials (see Study 1). According to the print shop, orders of this kind are rejected for sustainability reasons. Instead, the print shop focuses on offering high-quality, durable print products (see Study 1). Deimling (2017) describes the creation of durable, functional goods and business models that promote sufficiency as ways in which companies can contribute to a reduction in economic growth. Thus, the practice of the printing company is a good example of how a company can support a development towards degrowth.

### ***Transforming the Field***

As I explained in the introduction to this dissertation, pioneering socio-ecological companies play an important role as drivers of the sustainability transformation of the economy (Hockerts & Wüstenhagen, 2010; Wissenschaftlicher Beirat der Bundesregierung Globale Umweltveränderungen, 2011). To see how CgoCs can be driving forces for an

increase of sustainability in their industry, take for example the event designer who required that his supplier provide him with forest stewardship council (FSC)-certified wooden slats (see Study 1). The FSC certification is intended to promote sustainable forest management (Forest Stewardship Council, no year); using certified wood use can lead to substantial environmental benefits in forest management and improvements to the welfare of neighbouring communities (Burivalova et al., 2017). The event designer informed his suppliers that he would look for other supplies, should they not wish to comply and provide certified wood slats (see Study 1). In his interview, he reported that the supplier did indeed source the certified wood, as he requested, and that the supplier then was able to sell the certified wood slats to other companies in the region (see Study 1). In doing so, he was the impetus for change and the spread of a more sustainable practice within his industry. Thus, he took advantage of his limited market power to raise the socio-ecological standards in the industry rather than to drive prices down. This proactive approach towards increased sustainability distinguishes the CgoCs studied from big incumbent companies, which only partially exploit their scope for action in a more common good-oriented way and mainly act reactively in issues of sustainability (Kny, 2020).

In this example, the event designer has created practical and institutional conditions for more socio-ecological business practices for himself and for other companies. Although the CgoCs reported seeing themselves as pioneers and wanting to be role models for socio-ecological business practices for other companies, this process is ambivalent for the pioneering companies. For the CgoCs, their explicit socio-ecological profile currently also represents a competitive advantage; they use it to distinguish themselves from competition and ensure their position within a sector niche through a likeminded customer base (see Stumpf et al., 2017). As I explained in the introduction to this paper, there is a danger that the pioneering companies will experience pressure, should other companies which are primarily profit-oriented follow suit, and thus decrease the socio-ecological aspirations in order to lower costs, but still advertise using the same practice or the keep the same label (Hockerts & Wüstenhagen, 2010). I assume that the ECG can make a contribution in this process to

strengthen the pioneer companies. As stated in the introduction, the ECG wants to use the CGB to make a company's contribution to the common good comparable and the preparation of a CGB should become mandatory according to the ECG's demands (Felber, 2018). The ECG also has considered that products should bear a common good seal. This would mean products would be labelled with an easy-to-understand colour code that indicates the degree of common good-orientation the product or the company behind it has (Gemeinwohl-Ökonomie, 2013). So far, the externalisation of social and environmental costs offers companies a competitive advantage (Scherhorn, 2008). In my opinion, the measures demanded by the ECG offer the opportunity to create transparency about which companies are truly more sustainable. Following the ECG's demands that companies with better scores should get easier access to bank loans and be preferred in public procurement processes (Felber, 2018) would, in my view, support the more sustainable players in the process of sustainability transformation and could be a way to protect the pioneering companies from the pressure that arises when other companies adopt their practices.

### **Limitations and Future Directions**

In the following, I would like to address questions I was not able to answer with my research work. Furthermore, questions which arose during the research and have not yet been answered are also included herein.

As I show in this paper, transparency is an action-guiding value of CgoCs. By publishing a CGB, CgoCs provide far-reaching insight into their companies. The CGB stands out from other CSR instruments in both the breadth and depth of the issues it addresses (Heidbrink et al., 2018). In addition, the corporate transparency which the CGB strives for goes far beyond legal transparency requirements (Kny, 2020). According to the ideas of the ECG, comprehensive transparency should be achieved by making common good accounting a legal requirement (Felber, 2018). Such a requirement would enable actors, i.e., customers, to make more informed decision between conventional and more sustainable companies (Posse, 2016). Future studies could investigate the question of what concrete effects comprehensive transparency via CSR reporting with the help of CGBs has on companies

outside the ECG. Do CGBs help to disseminate best practice to companies who do not participate in the ECG and to displace non-sustainable players and practices from the market? In order to foster a sustainability transformation, it could be helpful to conduct research on the extent to which CGBs are already being used by various social players to support truly sustainable companies or how a development in this direction can be supported. Questions in this vein could include: Do public institutions give preference to CgoCs in procurement procedures and public purchasing, and if they do not, what prevents them from doing so? Do banks offer CgoCs particularly favourable conditions and if not, how can they be encouraged to do so? It is also important to examine which incentives and framework conditions would have to be created so that the products and services of CgoCs are preferred by consumers.

However, the creation of corporate transparency on social and environmental measures alone does not guarantee that corporate engagement will actually lead to improvements for the addressed stakeholders or in resource consumption (Dyllick & Muff, 2016). Dyllick and Muff (2016, p. 156) describe it as a “big disconnect” between micro- and macro-level developments that more and more companies engage in CSR, but this engagement has not yet brought about any identifiable impact in studies on the state of the planet. As my work demonstrates, the common good approach as a business approach is linked to a range of social and environmental practices. Study 2 shows that among CgoCs, examples of corporate structures and practices can be found that have the potential to support a development towards degrowth. However, the extent to which this potential actually contributes to social change towards degrowth needs to be explored.

The focus of this paper is ECG companies and their organisational characteristics and practices. I have investigated the (potential) impact of the common good approach in business practice. The common good orientation of business is a core idea of the ECG and the CgoCs are thus important supporters of the ECG. However, the ECG movement does not only unite companies, but also connects supporters such as communities, universities, politicians and individuals. Thus, the ECG’s broader significance for a sustainability

transformation could be explored in more depth in follow-up studies, especially by expanding the scope beyond companies and their practices.

The results of study 3 show that the common good orientation of companies can have positive effects on the experience and behaviour of employees. For example, overall job satisfaction increases in tandem with common good orientation. However, in the study I only compared CgoCs. Therefore, it remains unclear whether employees from CgoCs are more satisfied with their jobs overall than their counterparts from other companies or to what extent the experience and behaviour of employees in CgoCs differs from employees from other companies. To clarify this, comparative studies are needed that also include non-common good-oriented companies. In addition, complementary studies on how the common good orientation affects the company's other stakeholders—such as customers, suppliers, donors, communities and the natural environment—are also needed.

The model in Study 3 for predicting job satisfaction using the total score in the CGB while controlling for sex and age has an explanatory power of  $R^2 = .030$ . This means that three percent of the variance in job satisfaction is explained by the model. It can therefore be assumed that the CGB scoring still lacks some variables which impact job satisfaction. If these variables are identified and included in the scoring, the explanatory power of the model should improve. At the same time, the CGB could benefit in terms of content, as it would be expanded to include topics or aspects that are important for the satisfaction of the companies' employees.

In this context, a further study on the importance of workplace stress in relation to job satisfaction could be interesting. According to the results of Study 3, workplace stress decreases as the just distribution of labour within companies increases. According to Karasek's (1979) job demands-job control model, high levels of strain in the absence of control and self-determination at work have a negative impact on job satisfaction. However, as working conditions in CgoCs are characterised by high participation, control and flexibility (Ollé-Espluga et al., 2019), these conditions could reduce the negative impact high levels of strain at work has on job satisfaction. This hypothesis needs to be tested.

Study 3 shows that pay satisfaction within CgoCs increases along with increasing pay transparency and fairness, as these concepts are understood within the ECG. Comparing how high wages in CgoCs and other companies or whether there are differences in pay satisfaction between CgoCs and other companies still needs to be explored. Since CgoCs bear additional costs due to their ecological commitment and want to behave fairly in their relationships with their suppliers, it can be assumed that wages in CgoCs are not particularly high. However, since pay satisfaction depends only to a small extent on the absolute level of income (Hauret & Williams, 2019; Judge et al., 2010), it would be interesting to investigate to what extent wage transparency and fair distribution of salaries in the company are able to “compensate” for the lower wage levels. The importance of the experience of meaningfulness at work as an influencing variable on pay satisfaction could also be investigated.

In addition, Study 3 shows that the value and social impact of the products and services has an influence on the experience of work meaningfulness. However, the model has low explanatory power ( $R^2 = .035$ ), so that only a small percentage of the variance in meaningful work is explained by the characteristics of the products and services. The experience of meaningfulness at work is only increased by perceived CSR when actions are directed towards third parties and not in relation to how the organisation treats its employees (Glavas & Kelley, 2014). Including other indicators from the CGB that capture CSR towards external stakeholders (e.g., indicator “E2-Contribution to the local community”) could potentially increase the explanatory power of the model. Model calculations of this kind could help to better understand exactly which factors determine the experience of work meaningfulness.

As my studies show, the business activities of CgoCs are characterised by a socio-ecological orientation and sufficiency-oriented approaches can also be found in the business activities of CgoCs (see Study 1). Nevertheless, most of the companies I visited have plans for growth (see Study 2). As I show in Study 2, these growth aspirations do not have to be fundamentally in conflict with the concept of degrowth. On the macro level, some growth of

pioneering socio-ecological businesses is also considered necessary to displace the unsustainable players or bring them to change (Posse, 2016). In the sustainability transition of the economy, however, there must be a simultaneous shrinking of the non-sustainable players alongside the growth of the more sustainable players, structures and practices (Arnold et al., 2015; Heyen, 2016). However, since, as I will show, both in the pioneering socio-ecological companies and the less sustainable large incumbent companies, the self-preservation of the companies is always pursued as the top priority—and for large incumbent companies this means maintaining the company at least at its existing size (Kny, 2020)—a increasing proportion of socio-ecological niche players has so far meant that the economy as a whole is growing. This contradicts the intentions of the degrowth movement that economic output in industrialised countries should shrink in favour of global socio-ecological goals (Burkhart et al., 2017; D'Alisa et al., 2015). Therefore, more research is needed on how growth of more sustainable companies can be accompanied by exnovation from less sustainable structures and shrinkage of less sustainable players.

Large and small companies differ fundamentally in their corporate cultures, operating logics, structures, practices and the way they conduct CSR (Jenkins, 2004; Spence, 2016). Since only small and medium-sized companies have joined the ECG so far and the sampling was limited to companies from the ECG, I did not study large companies. Thus, the findings from my research are also limited to SMEs. According to Kny (2020), large multinationals have only rudimentarily fulfilled many of the criteria of the ECG, so that the question of how large companies would behave if they were to adopt the common good approach and what effects this would have on stakeholders remains unanswered. Another open question is what impact the involvement of large companies in the ECG would have, for example, on the further development of the CGB.

## **Conclusion**

The role of smaller companies in questions of CSR has long been neglected (Jenkins, 2004)—yet, as the results of my research show, SMEs are the pioneers in socio-ecological commitment. The ECG is a social movement that seeks to measure the success

of a company through values rather than monetary metrics (Felber, 2018). In my research, I observed that the ECG's defined value orientation attracts SMEs. Therefore, I concluded from my studies that the ECG has the potential to advance the sustainability transformation of the economy, as it connects, empowers and makes pioneers of change visible. With its peer review processes, the ECG promotes personal exchange between the pioneering companies. Sharing the ECG's values helps the companies to develop trust in each other and to establish more business cooperation. This in turn leads to an exchange and thus the dissemination of best practices and could strengthen the companies in the competitive pressure vis-à-vis the incumbents. The ECG encourages SMEs to document their socio-ecological commitment with the help of the CGBs, which leads to greater visibility of SMEs and their usually implicit CSR commitment. Through the visibility that the ECG creates for the socio-ecological pioneer companies, they could have a lighthouse effect. The transparency created by the CGBs could provide less sustainable companies with impulses for change and also offers politicians and consumers, for example, the opportunity to specifically support the more sustainable players. In addition, as my research shows, employees of companies with high transparency and co-determination can identify better with their companies. Moreover, employees show more supportive behaviour towards their company if their company behaves cooperatively towards other companies. So, as my research shows, employees perceive the socio-ecological commitment of their companies and the companies' common good orientation has an influence on employees' attitudes and behaviour.

The ECG aims to reduce the absolute consumption of resources (Sommer et al., 2016). As can be seen from my research, environmental sustainability is a value that is pursued by the companies in the ECG and implemented in practice through various measures. The companies are striving for "sufficient" profits over maximising profits. The socio-ecological commitment is pursued out of an intrinsic motivation and not linked to the expectation of generating an increase in profits. Examples of sufficiency-oriented practices can be found in the actions of the pioneer companies. The companies try out new ways of doing business and show that socio-ecological management is possible in practice. Despite

their often-low market power, pioneer companies can raise the socio-ecological standards in their sector. In my analysis, the value orientation of the companies, which is reflected in their structures and practices, can potentially support a development towards degrowth.

The employee survey I conducted shows that the higher a company's common good orientation is, the more satisfied its employees are with their jobs and their salaries, the less demanding they rate their work, and the more supported employees feel. Companies contribute to the common good through their products and the way they run their business and not just through their products. The more meaningful the products and services a company creates, the more its work is experienced as being meaningful by the employees. The sustainability transformation of the economy is driven by changes that companies initiate within their external circles and internally, in their organisation. The extent of the changes that the ECG demands from companies, such as transparency and participation practices must be negotiated with those who are affected by them.

The ECG is equally concerned with social and environmental factors; the CGB is attractive due to its thematic breadth and depth (see Heidbrink et al., 2018). Companies report that this encourages them to engage more in thematic areas that they have not yet dealt with so intensively. The results from the employee survey show how the CGB enables a comparative assessment of a company's common good orientation. The more points a company achieves in the CGB, the more CSR is perceived by the employees. However, the scoring of the CGB so far only includes a few aspects that explain job satisfaction in the companies. Since employees are one of the most important stakeholders of a company, this factor should be considered in the further development of the CGB.

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### Author's Contribution (Beiträge der Autorin)

#### Studie 1\* & Studie 2\*\*

\* Wiefek, J., & Heinitz, K. (2019). The common good approach in entrepreneurial practice. *Journal for Business, Economics & Ethics*, 20(3), 320–345. <https://doi.org/10.5771/1439-880X-2019-3-320>

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<sup>1</sup> Heidbrink, L., Kny, J., Köhne, R., Sommer, B., Stumpf, K., Welzer, H., & Wiefek, J. (2018). Schlussbericht für das Verbundprojekt Gemeinwohl-Ökonomie im Vergleich unternehmerischer Nachhaltigkeitsstrategien (GIVUN) (TEXTE 86/2015). Flensburg / Kiel.

**Studie 3\*\*\***

\*\*\* Wiefek, J., & Heinitz, K. (2021). The common good balance sheet and employees' perceptions, attitudes and behaviours, *Sustainability*, 13(3), 1592.  
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Studie 3 habe ich unter der Supervision von Dr. Kathrin Heinitz konzipiert. Die Planung und Durchführung der Mitarbeiterbefragung wurde von mir in Kooperation mit der Bachelor-Studentin Paula Bleick (Universität Leipzig, Institut für Psychologie) unter der Supervision von Dr. Kathrin Heinitz (und im Fall von Frau Bleick unter der Supervision von Prof. Hannes Zacher, Universität Leipzig) umgesetzt. Frau Bleick hat den gemeinsam entwickelten Fragebogen in das Online-Befragungstool UNIPARK eingepflegt. Ich habe sechs der acht befragten Unternehmen über Kontakte aus dem oben aufgeführten Projekt GIVUN als Studienteilnehmer gewinnen können. Frau Bleick hat zwei weitere Unternehmen akquiriert. Frau Bleick hat ihre Bachelorarbeit mit einem Teil des mir vorliegenden Datensatzes realisiert (mit Daten von sechs der insgesamt acht befragten Unternehmen, ohne die Daten zur Arbeitszufriedenheit). Die statistischen Auswertungen der Daten für den vorliegenden Studienbericht wurden von mir unter Supervision von Dr. Kathrin Heinitz ausgeführt. Patrick Krennmair (Freie Universität Berlin) und Andreas Stollberg (Institute for Advanced Sustainability Studies e.V., Potsdam) haben mich bei der statistischen Auswertung beraten. Ich habe das vorliegende Manuskript (Studie 3) unter der Supervision von Dr. Kathrin Heinitz eigenständig verfasst.

**Declaration of Originality (Eigenständigkeitserklärung)**

Hiermit erkläre ich, Jasmin Wiefek, an Eides Statt, dass ich die vorliegende Arbeit selbstständig verfasst und keine anderen als in der Dissertation angegebenen Hilfsmittel benutzt habe; die aus fremden Quellen (einschließlich elektronischer Quellen, dem Internet und mündlicher Kommunikation) direkt oder indirekt übernommenen Gedanken sind ausnahmslos unter genauer Quellenangabe als solche kenntlich gemacht. Zentrale Inhalte der Dissertation sind nicht schon zuvor für eine andere Qualifikationsarbeit verwendet worden. Insbesondere habe ich nicht die Hilfe sogenannter Promotionsberaterinnen bzw. Promotionsberater in Anspruch genommen. Dritte haben von mir weder unmittelbar noch mittelbar Geld oder geldwerte Leistungen für Arbeiten erhalten, die im Zusammenhang mit dem Inhalt der vorgelegten Dissertation stehen. Die Arbeit wurde bisher weder im Inland noch im Ausland in gleicher oder ähnlicher Form einer anderen Prüfungsbehörde vorgelegt. Frühere Promotionsversuche haben meinerseits nicht stattgefunden.

Berlin, 30.01.2021

Jasmin Wiefek

## **Curriculum Vitae**

Der Lebenslauf wird aus Gründen des Datenschutzes in der elektronischen Fassung der Arbeit nicht veröffentlicht.

## Publications

### Publications Resulting From This Dissertation

- Wiefek, J., & Heinitz, K. (2021). The common good balance sheet and employees' perceptions, attitudes and behaviours. *Sustainability*, 13(3), 1592.  
<https://doi.org/10.3390/su13031592>
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[poster award winner]

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## Appendix A: Interview Guideline (Study 1 and 2)

### Interviewleitfaden

Vorstellung der Interviewerin

Hintergrund zur Studien (inkl. Regio Trans) – Ziele und Inhalte des Interviews (knapp & sofern möglich ohne Framing des weiteren Interviewverlaufs)

Behandlung der Daten und Einverständniserklärung (off-record möglich)

Bereitstellen des Aufnahmeegerätes

Mitbringen des GWÖ-Berichtes (1x)

Einstieg – (Selbst-)Wahrnehmung des Unternehmens

**Beschreiben Sie bitte Ihr Unternehmen.**

Was macht Ihr Unternehmen aus?

Was ist das Selbstverständnis Ihres Unternehmens?

Persönlicher Bezug zur Arbeit / zum Unternehmen

**Seit wann sind Sie im Unternehmen und was machen Sie in Ihrem Unternehmen?**

Können Sie Ihre Funktion im Unternehmen kurz beschreiben?

**Was gefällt Ihnen an Ihrer Arbeit?**

**Was gefällt Ihnen nicht?**

Verständnis Gemeinwohl

**Was versteht Ihr Unternehmen unter Gemeinwohl?**

Motivation für das GWÖ-Engagement

**Warum macht Ihr Unternehmens bei der GWÖ mit?**

Wie kam es dazu, dass sich Ihr Unternehmen in der Gemeinwohl-Ökonomie engagiert?

Erfahrungen mit der GWÖ

**Wie engagiert sich Ihr Unternehmen in der GWÖ?**

Haben Sie auch Erfahrungen mit anderen Instrumenten (der Unternehmensentwicklung)? Z.B. der deutschen Nachhaltigkeitskodex, der ISO 26 000, EMAS, GSCP Framework oder GRI?

Wirkungen des GWÖ-Engagements (v.a. ökologisch & sozial)

**Wie wichtig ist die GWÖ in Ihrem unternehmerischen Alltag?**

Wer ist in Ihrem Unternehmen für die GWÖ zuständig?

**Inwiefern hilft Ihnen die GWÖ bzw. das Bilanzierungsverfahren, gemeinwohlorientiert(er) zu wirtschaften?**

Hat Sie etwas bei der Bilanzierung überrascht? Wenn ja, was?

Konnten Sie nachvollziehen, warum Sie bei der Peer-Evaluation / dem Audit andere Punkte erhalten haben als bei Ihrer Selbsteinschätzung?

Inwiefern hat sich Ihr Unternehmen durch das GWÖ-Engagement verändert?

Inwiefern hat Ihr GWÖ-Engagement dazu geführt, dass Sie jetzt **ökologischer wirtschaften**?

Inwiefern hat Ihr GWÖ-Engagement dazu geführt, dass Sie jetzt ein **"sozialeres Unternehmen"** sind?

Wirkungen intern: Mitarbeiter*innen
-------------------------------------

**Wie reagieren Ihre Mitarbeiterinnen und Mitarbeiter auf das GWÖ-Engagement?**

Hat das Instrument der Gemeinwohlbilanz aus Ihrer Sicht (Sicht des Unternehmens) Effekte auf Mitarbeitergewinnung und -bindung? Welche?\*

Wirkungen extern
------------------

**Welche Reaktionen gibt es außerhalb Ihres Unternehmens auf das GWÖ-Engagement?**

Lieferant\*innen, Banken / Investoren, Branche, Medien /interessierte Öffentlichkeit, Politik, Kund\*innen

Hat das Instrument der Gemeinwohlbilanz aus Ihrer Sicht (Sicht der Unternehmen) Effekte auf Kundengewinnung und -bindung? Welche?\*

Vorbildwirkung

Grenzen der GWÖ
-----------------

**Gibt es Punkte der GWÖ, die Sie nicht umsetzen können? Warum?**

**Gibt es Punkte der GWÖ, die Sie bewusst nicht umsetzen wollen? Warum?**

**Gibt es Themen, über die Sie im GW-Bericht bewusst keine Auskunft geben wollen? Warum?**

Offene Abschlussfragen zum GWÖ-Engagement
---

Inwieweit fühlen Sie sich durch das GWÖ-Engagement zu Veränderungen / konkreten Maßnahmen verpflichtet?

Würden Sie anderen Unternehmen die GWÖ empfehlen?

Können Sie sich vorstellen, dass ein Großkonzern sich in der GWÖ engagiert und seinen Beitrag zum Gemeinwohl bilanziert?

Situation des Betriebes (intern & extern)
---

**Wie ist die momentane Situation Ihres Unternehmens?**

Was läuft in Ihrem Unternehmen gut oder vorbildlich?

Welchen Herausforderungen steht Ihr Unternehmen gegenüber? / Wo sehen Sie Herausforderungen?

Was läuft in Ihrem Unternehmen nicht so gut?

Was hemmt Ihr Unternehmen? / Was ist für ihr Unternehmen schwierig?

Rahmenbedingungen
-------------------

**Wie könnten Sie bei Ihren Bemühungen, gemeinwohlorientiert zu wirtschaften, unterstützt werden?**

Wie könnte die Politik Sie unterstützen gemeinwohlorientiert zu wirtschaften?

Zukunft der GWÖ
-----------------

**Wollen Sie sich zukünftig weiter im Bereich der GWÖ engagieren? Wie?**

**Was ist Ihre Einschätzung: Wie wird es mit der GWÖ insgesamt weitergehen?**

Ausstieg
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**Gibt es noch etwas, das wir nicht besprochen haben, das Ihnen wichtig ist bei diesem Thema?**

**Dürfen wir im Anschluss ggf. nochmal mit Nachfragen auf Sie zukommen?**

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\* Diese Fragen wurden für das vom Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung geförderte Forschungsprojekt *RegioTrans KMU* (Universität Freiburg) mitgestellt.

### **Appendix B: Employee Survey Questionnaire (Study 3)**

Appendix B contains the questionnaire as used in the employee survey for Study 3. The questionnaire contains more items than were included in Study 3, as the questionnaire also served to collect data for Paula Bleick's bachelor thesis at the University of Leipzig (compare to Bleick, 2018. Auswirkungen der Wahrnehmung unternehmerischer Gemeinwohlorientierung auf Mitarbeiter\*innen: Abschlussarbeit zur Erlangung des akademischen Grades Bachelor of Science (B.Sc.) [Bachelorarbeit]. Universität Leipzig, Leipzig.)

**Liebe Teilnehmerin, lieber Teilnehmer,**

**herzlich Willkommen zu unserer Fragebogenstudie!**

Die Befragung ist Teil eines Forschungsprojektes an der Europa-Universität Flensburg, der Freien Universität Berlin und der Universität Leipzig. Wir untersuchen die Meinungen von Mitarbeitern und Mitarbeiterinnen über sich und ihre Arbeit (erster Teil) und über ihre Unternehmen (zweiter Teil). Die Daten werden ausschließlich für diesen wissenschaftlichen Zweck genutzt.

Ihre Antworten werden selbstverständlich vertraulich und anonym behandelt. Alle Angaben werden nur in generalisierter Form ausgewertet, sodass keine Rückschlüsse auf Ihre Person möglich sind. Die Ergebnisse der Studie werden Ihrem Unternehmen zur Verfügung gestellt. Bitte geben Sie daher am Ende des Fragebogens an, für welches Unternehmen Sie arbeiten.

Die Beantwortung wird ca. 20 Minuten in Anspruch nehmen.

Wenn Sie bei einer Frage unsicher sind, wählen Sie bitte die Antwortoption, zu der Sie am ehesten hintendieren.

Manche Fragen können wiederholend klingen. Dies dient wissenschaftlichen Zwecken. Wir bitten Sie, die Fragen mit Geduld und Ehrlichkeit zu beantworten.

Bei Rückfragen und Anmerkungen stehen wir Ihnen unter der Email-Adresse [jasminwiefek@zedat.fu-berlin.de](mailto:jasminwiefek@zedat.fu-berlin.de) gerne zur Verfügung.

**Vielen Dank für Ihren Beitrag zu unserer Forschung!**

Dipl. Psych. Jasmin Wiefek und Paula Bleick

-----  
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Universität Leipzig | Institut für Psychologie  
Professur für Arbeits- und Organisationspsychologie  
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**Bitte geben Sie an, ob bzw. inwiefern Sie den folgenden Aussagen zustimmen.**

<b>Wenn jemand mein Unternehmen kritisiert, fühlt es sich wie eine persönliche Kränkung an.</b>				
stimme gar nicht zu	stimme eher nicht zu	weder noch	stimme eher zu	stimme voll und ganz zu
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>Ich interessiere mich sehr dafür, was andere über mein Unternehmen denken.</b>				
stimme gar nicht zu	stimme eher nicht zu	weder noch	stimme eher zu	stimme voll und ganz zu
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>Wenn ich über mein Unternehmen spreche, sage ich meistens eher "wir" als "sie".</b>				
stimme gar nicht zu	stimme eher nicht zu	weder noch	stimme eher zu	stimme voll und ganz zu
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>Die Erfolge meines Unternehmens sind meine Erfolge.</b>				
stimme gar nicht zu	stimme eher nicht zu	weder noch	stimme eher zu	stimme voll und ganz zu
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>Wenn jemand mein Unternehmen lobt, fühlt es sich wie ein persönliches Kompliment an.</b>				
stimme gar nicht zu	stimme eher nicht zu	weder noch	stimme eher zu	stimme voll und ganz zu
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>Mein Unternehmen ist stolz auf meine Leistungen.</b>				
stimme gar nicht zu	stimme eher nicht zu	weder noch	stimme eher zu	stimme voll und ganz zu
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>Mein Unternehmen ist sehr an meinem Wohlbefinden interessiert.</b>				
stimme gar nicht zu	stimme eher nicht zu	weder noch	stimme eher zu	stimme voll und ganz zu
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>Mein Unternehmen würdigt meinen Beitrag zum Erfolg des Unternehmens.</b>				
stimme gar nicht zu	stimme eher nicht zu	weder noch	stimme eher zu	stimme voll und ganz zu
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>Mein Unternehmen interessiert sich sehr für meine Ziele und Werte.</b>				
stimme gar nicht zu	stimme eher nicht zu	weder noch	stimme eher zu	stimme voll und ganz zu
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Bitte geben Sie an, wie wahr oder unwahr jede der folgenden Aussagen für Sie ist.**

<b>Ich habe eine sinngebende berufliche Laufbahn gefunden.</b>				
absolut unwahr	größtenteils unwahr	weder wahr noch falsch	größtenteils wahr	absolut wahr
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>Ich sehe, dass meine Arbeit zu meinem persönlichen Wachstum beiträgt.</b>				
absolut unwahr	größtenteils unwahr	weder wahr noch falsch	größtenteils wahr	absolut wahr
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>Das, was ich bei der Arbeit tue, bewirkt etwas in der Welt.</b>				
absolut unwahr	größtenteils unwahr	weder wahr noch falsch	größtenteils wahr	absolut wahr
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>Ich habe ein gutes Verständnis dafür, was meine Arbeit sinnvoll macht.</b>				
absolut unwahr	größtenteils unwahr	weder wahr noch falsch	größtenteils wahr	absolut wahr
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>Ich weiß, dass meine Arbeit die Welt positiv verändert.</b>				
absolut unwahr	größtenteils unwahr	weder wahr noch falsch	größtenteils wahr	absolut wahr
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>Meine Arbeit hilft mir, mich selbst besser zu verstehen.</b>				
absolut unwahr	größtenteils unwahr	weder wahr noch falsch	größtenteils wahr	absolut wahr
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>Ich habe eine Arbeit entdeckt, die einen zufriedenstellenden Zweck hat.</b>				
absolut unwahr	größtenteils unwahr	weder wahr noch falsch	größtenteils wahr	absolut wahr
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>Meine Arbeit hilft mir, der Welt um mich herum einen Sinn zu geben.</b>				
absolut unwahr	größtenteils unwahr	weder wahr noch falsch	größtenteils wahr	absolut wahr
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>Die Arbeit, der ich nachgehe, dient einem höheren Zweck.</b>				
absolut unwahr	größtenteils unwahr	weder wahr noch falsch	größtenteils wahr	absolut wahr
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Bitte geben Sie im Folgenden an, wie zufrieden oder unzufrieden Sie mit Ihrer Arbeit sind.**

<b>Sind Sie alles in allem zufrieden mit Ihrer derzeitigen Arbeit?</b>	
Nein	Ja
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>Wie zufrieden sind Sie im Allgemeinen mit Ihrer Arbeit?</b>				
sehr unzufrieden	etwas unzufrieden	neutral	etwas zufrieden	sehr zufrieden
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Schätzen Sie im Folgenden bestmöglich, wie viel Prozent der Zeit Sie im Durchschnitt zufrieden oder unzufrieden mit Ihrer Arbeit sind oder dieser neutral gegenüberstehen.**

*Die drei Zahlen sollten sich am Ende zu 100% aufsummieren.*

Prozent der Zeit, in der ich mit meiner derzeitigen Arbeit zufrieden bin:	<input type="text"/>
Prozent der Zeit, in der ich mit meiner derzeitigen Arbeit unzufrieden bin:	<input type="text"/>
Prozent der Zeit, in der ich meiner derzeitigen Arbeit neutral gegenüberstehe:	<input type="text"/>
	<b>Summe: 100</b> %

**Bitte geben Sie im Folgenden an, inwiefern die jeweiligen Aussagen auf Sie zutreffen.**

<b>Es wird am Arbeitsplatz oft zu viel von uns erwartet.</b>				
falsch	ziemlich falsch	weder noch	ziemlich richtig	richtig
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>Ich fühle mich wegen der Arbeit oft müde und abgespannt.</b>				
falsch	ziemlich falsch	weder noch	ziemlich richtig	richtig
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>Sind Sie mit dem Arbeitstempo zufrieden?</b>				
falsch	ziemlich falsch	weder noch	ziemlich richtig	richtig
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>Ich kann meine Arbeit selbst einteilen und planen.</b>				
falsch	ziemlich falsch	weder noch	ziemlich richtig	richtig
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Bitte geben Sie im Folgenden an, wie zufrieden oder unzufrieden Sie mit Ihrer Bezahlung sind.**

<b>Sind Sie mit der Bezahlung zufrieden?</b>				
sehr unzufrieden	etwas unzufrieden	neutral	etwas zufrieden	sehr zufrieden
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>Sind Sie zufrieden mit Ihrer Bezahlung, wenn Sie sie vergleichen mit der Ihrer Kolleg*innen?</b>				
sehr unzufrieden	etwas unzufrieden	neutral	etwas zufrieden	sehr zufrieden
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>Sind Sie zufrieden mit Ihrer Bezahlung, wenn Sie sie vergleichen mit der Ihrer Freund*innen und Bekannten?</b>				
sehr unzufrieden	etwas unzufrieden	neutral	etwas zufrieden	sehr zufrieden
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Bitte geben Sie an, ob bzw. wie häufig Sie die folgenden Verhaltensweisen zeigen.**

<b>Ich übernehme Aufgaben, die nicht von mir gefordert werden, aber dem Image meines Unternehmens dienen.</b>				
nie	selten	manchmal	oft	immer
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Ich halte mich über aktuelle Entwicklungen in meinem Unternehmen auf dem Laufenden.</b>				
nie	selten	manchmal	oft	immer
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>Ich mache Vorschläge, damit mein Unternehmen besser funktioniert.</b>				
nie	selten	manchmal	oft	immer
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>Ich ergreife Maßnahmen, um mein Unternehmen vor potentiellen Problemen zu schützen.</b>				
nie	selten	manchmal	oft	immer
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>Ich nehme mir freiwillig Zeit, um anderen zu helfen, die arbeitsbezogene Probleme haben.</b>				
nie	selten	manchmal	oft	immer
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>Ich gebe mir große Mühe, dass sich neuere Mitarbeiter*innen in der Arbeitsgruppe wohl fühlen.</b>				
nie	selten	manchmal	oft	immer
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>Gegenüber Kolleg*innen zeige ich selbst unter den schwierigsten beruflichen bzw. persönlichen Umständen aufrichtiges Interesse und Höflichkeit.</b>				
nie	selten	manchmal	oft	immer
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>Ich unterstütze andere bei ihren Aufgaben.</b>				
nie	selten	manchmal	oft	immer
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Bitte geben Sie an,  
ob bzw. inwiefern die folgenden Aussagen auf Ihr Unternehmen zutreffen.**

<b>Mein Unternehmen wählt beim Einkauf die ökologischsten Produkte/ Materialien etc..</b>				
nie	selten	manchmal	oft	immer
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>Mein Unternehmen ermöglicht seinen Mitarbeiter*innen die Teilnahme an wichtigen unternehmerischen Entscheidungen.</b>				
nie	selten	manchmal	oft	immer
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>Mein Unternehmen macht seine unternehmerischen Entscheidungen transparent.</b>				
nie	selten	manchmal	oft	immer
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**In meinem Unternehmen haben die Mitarbeiter\*innen Einfluss auf die Auswahl der Führungskräfte.**

nie

selten

manchmal

oft

immer

**Mein Unternehmen beteiligt bei Entscheidungen diejenigen innerhalb und außerhalb des Unternehmens, die diese Entscheidungen betreffen.**

nie

selten

manchmal

oft

immer

*Bitte geben Sie an,*

*ob bzw. inwiefern die folgenden Aussagen auf Ihr Unternehmen zutreffen.*

**Mein Unternehmen achtet darauf, dass bei den Unternehmen, bei denen es einkauft, menschenwürdige Arbeitsbedingungen herrschen.**

trifft gar nicht zu

trifft eher nicht zu

weder noch

trifft eher zu

trifft voll und ganz zu

**Mein Unternehmen behandelt seine Zulieferer fair.**

trifft gar nicht zu

trifft eher nicht zu

weder noch

trifft eher zu

trifft voll und ganz zu

**Mein Unternehmen pflegt transparente Geschäftsbeziehungen zu seinen Zulieferern.**

trifft gar nicht zu

trifft eher nicht zu

weder noch

trifft eher zu

trifft voll und ganz zu

**Meinem Unternehmen ist die Weiterentwicklung des Unternehmens wichtiger als das Abschöpfen von Gewinnen.**

trifft gar nicht zu

trifft eher nicht zu

weder noch

trifft eher zu

trifft voll und ganz zu

**Mein Unternehmen investiert überschüssige Gewinne in soziale oder ökologische Projekte.**

trifft gar nicht zu

trifft eher nicht zu

weder noch

trifft eher zu

trifft voll und ganz zu

**Mein Unternehmen behandelt seine Mitarbeiter\*innen mit Respekt.**

trifft gar nicht zu

trifft eher nicht zu

weder noch

trifft eher zu

trifft voll und ganz zu

**In meinem Unternehmen haben alle Mitarbeiter\*innen die Möglichkeit in Teilzeit zu arbeiten.**

trifft gar nicht zu

trifft eher nicht zu

weder noch

trifft eher zu

trifft voll und ganz zu

**Mein Unternehmen diskutiert die Gehälter offen mit seinen Beschäftigten.**

trifft gar nicht zu

trifft eher nicht zu

weder noch

trifft eher zu

trifft voll und ganz zu

**Mein Unternehmen setzt Anreize, dass die Mitarbeiter\*innen mit öffentlichen Verkehrsmitteln, dem Rad oder Carsharing zur Arbeit kommen.**

trifft gar nicht zu

trifft eher nicht zu

weder noch

trifft eher zu

trifft voll und ganz zu

**Mein Unternehmen sensibilisiert seine Mitarbeiter\*innen für ökologisches Verhalten.**

trifft gar nicht zu

trifft eher nicht zu

weder noch

trifft eher zu

trifft voll und ganz zu

**Mein Unternehmen behandelt seine Kund\*innen fair.**

trifft gar nicht zu

trifft eher nicht zu

weder noch

trifft eher zu

trifft voll und ganz zu

**Mein Unternehmen verhält sich solidarisch mit anderen Unternehmen aus unserer Branche.**

trifft gar nicht zu

trifft eher nicht zu

weder noch

trifft eher zu

trifft voll und ganz zu

**Mein Unternehmen ist Vorreiter in Sachen Umweltschutz.**

trifft gar nicht zu

trifft eher nicht zu

weder noch

trifft eher zu

trifft voll und ganz zu

**In meinem Unternehmen ist die Förderung eines maßvollen Konsums wesentlicher Bestandteil der Kund\*innenbeziehungen.**

trifft gar nicht zu

trifft eher nicht zu

weder noch

trifft eher zu

trifft voll und ganz zu

**Mein Unternehmen macht die ökologischen Auswirkungen für seine Produkte bzw. Dienstleistungen transparent.**

trifft gar nicht zu

trifft eher nicht zu

weder noch

trifft eher zu

trifft voll und ganz zu

**Mein Unternehmen fördert den direkten Kontakt zu seinen Kund\*innen.**

trifft gar nicht zu

trifft eher nicht zu

weder noch

trifft eher zu

trifft voll und ganz zu

**Die Produkte/ Dienstleistungen meines Unternehmens helfen dabei, gesellschaftliche Probleme zu lösen.**

trifft gar nicht zu

trifft eher nicht zu

weder noch

trifft eher zu

trifft voll und ganz zu

**Mein Unternehmen leistet freiwillige Beiträge zur Stärkung der Kommune.**

trifft gar nicht zu

trifft eher nicht zu

weder noch

trifft eher zu

trifft voll und ganz zu

**Mein Unternehmen reduziert die Umweltauswirkungen seiner Produkte bzw. Dienstleistungen.**

trifft gar nicht zu

trifft eher nicht zu

weder noch

trifft eher zu

trifft voll und ganz zu

**Mein Unternehmen ist Kunde bei einer ethischen Bank.**

Nein

Ja



Biologisches Geschlecht		
weiblich	männlich	anderes
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Wie alt sind Sie?						
<i>Bitte wählen Sie die passende Alterskategorie aus.</i>						
jünger als 15 Jahre	15-24 Jahre	25-34 Jahre	35-44 Jahre	45-54 Jahre	55-64 Jahre	älter als 64 Jahre
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Vielen Herzlichen Dank für Ihre Teilnahme an der Studie!**

Bei Rückfragen und Anmerkungen stehen wir Ihnen unter der Email-Adresse  
[jasminwiefek@zedat.fu-berlin.de](mailto:jasminwiefek@zedat.fu-berlin.de)  
gerne zur Verfügung.