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Sufficiency in Business

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SUD 2026

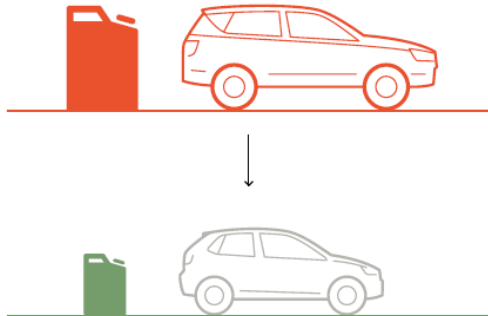
“Rethinking the economy – Sufficiency strategies for future-proof businesses”



Why are we talking about sufficiency in companies?

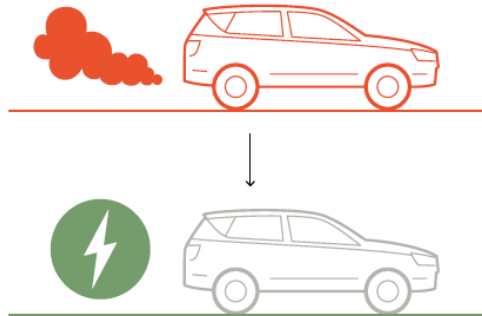


Efficiency



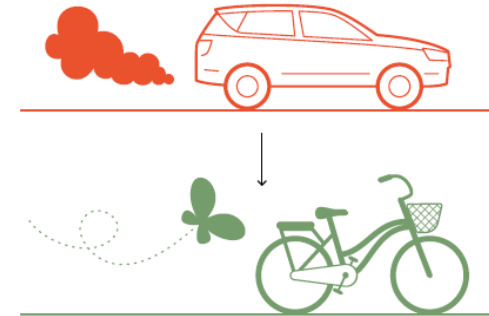
Same benefit,
lower energy
and material
consumption

Consistency



Renewable
energies and
reusable materials

Sufficiency



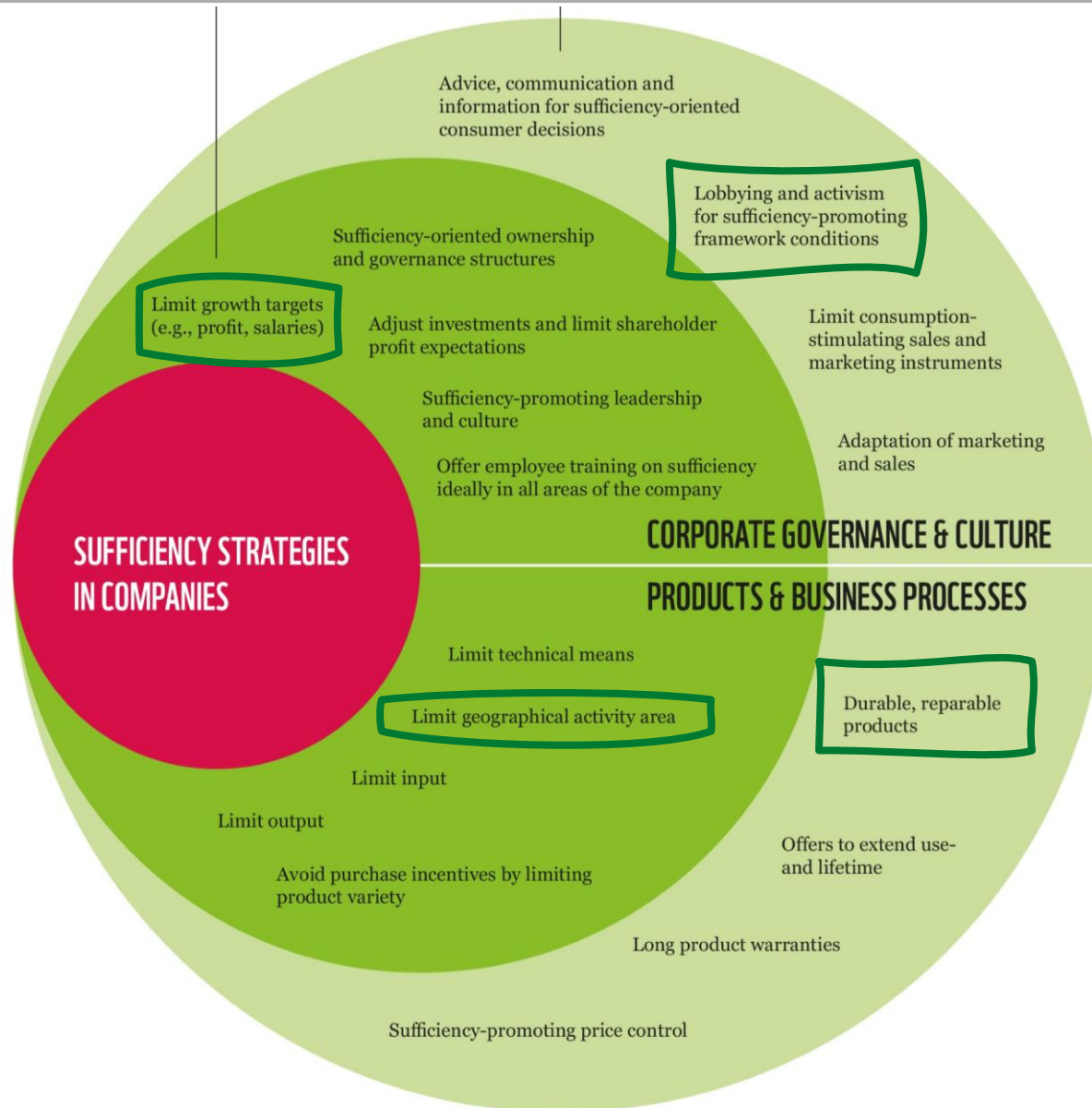
Lower demand –
for example,
driving less

What is sufficiency in a business context?



Conventional business logic	Sufficiency-oriented business logic
Sell more products	Create more value with fewer products
Faster replacement cycles	Longer product lifetimes
Increase resource throughput	Reduce resource throughput
Maximise sales volumes	Maximise usefulness & customer benefit
Encourage more consumption	Enable sufficient consumption
Success = growth	Success = resilience, purpose & long-term value

Sufficiency strategies in companies



INTERNAL FOCUS:
EMBEDDING SUFFICIENCY IN
ALL AREAS OF THE COMPANY

EXTERNAL FOCUS:
PROMOTION OF SUFFICIENCY-
ORIENTED LIFESTYLES

Structural levers in core business practices



Ownership

Who holds control over the business and are they accountable to its purpose?

Purpose anchoring: To what extent is the business purpose safeguarded by formal or informal structures?

Control & accountability: Who holds majority voting and control rights and are they accountable to the business purpose?

Profit expectations: Are there mechanisms in place to cap or moderate profit expectations (e.g. dividend caps, reinvestment rules)?

Succession continuity: Is there a succession plan to moderate profit interests in ownership and leadership transitions?

Financing

What kind of capital is used, and does it reinforce the business purpose?

Capital structure: Is the company financed in a way that protects strategic autonomy and avoids pressure for rapid growth or short-term profits?

Profit use: How are profits allocated, and what share is reinvested vs. distributed to shareholders?

Stakeholder co-financing: Is it possible to leverage stakeholders as part of the financing model?

Transparency: Are financing sources, terms, and profit uses clearly disclosed to internal and external stakeholders?

Governance

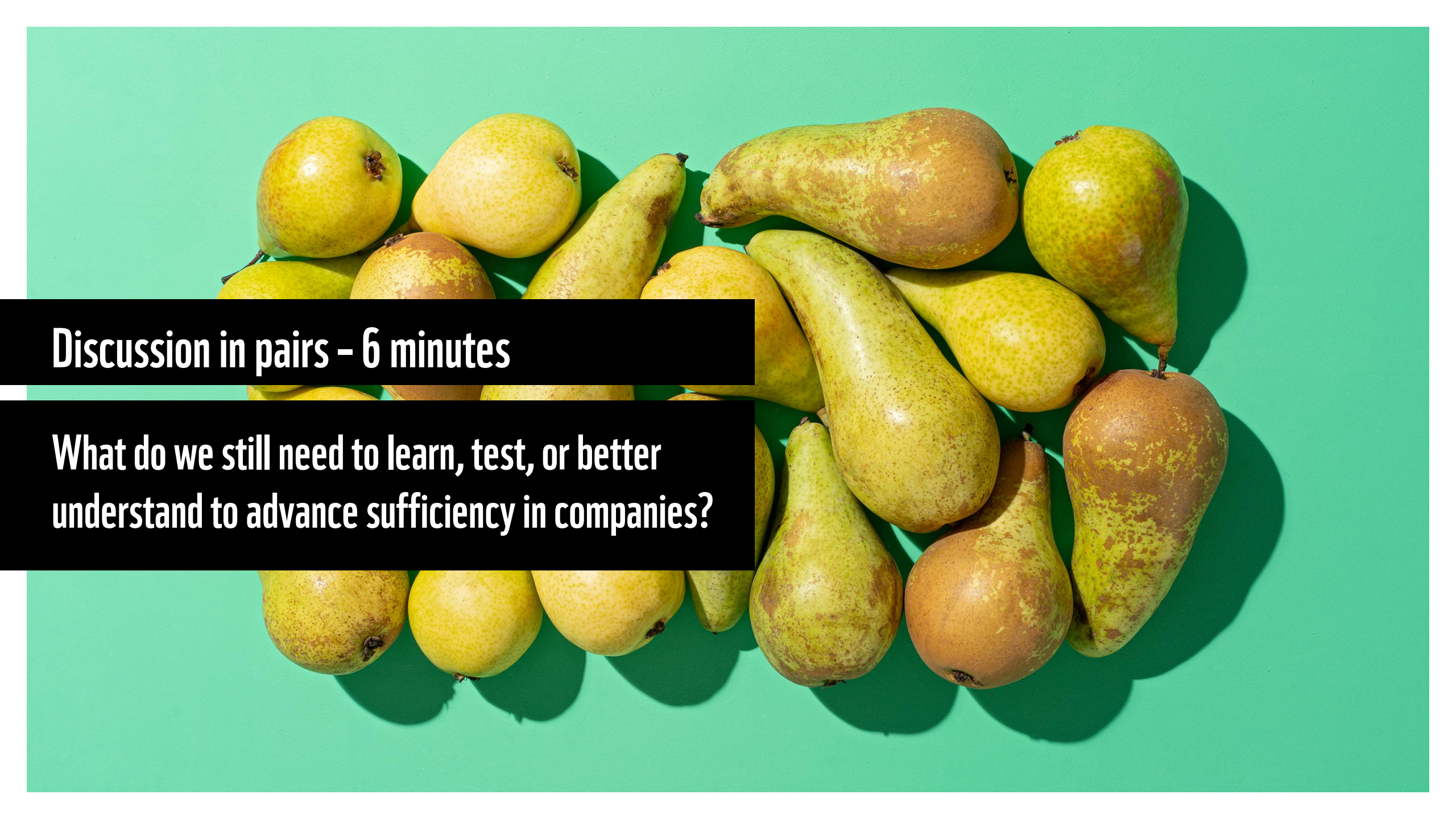
How are decisions made and who is meaningfully included in them?

Stakeholder participation: Are stakeholder voices represented on the board or in key decisions?

Metrics and incentives: Are business KPIs and leadership incentives aligned with long-term social and environmental performance?

Learning and adoption: Does leadership review and adapt practices based on stakeholder feedback or impact performance?

External collaboration: Does the business actively engage in mission-aligned networks or coalitions?



Discussion in pairs – 6 minutes

What do we still need to learn, test, or better understand to advance sufficiency in companies?

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Which sufficiency-oriented business models are economically viable?

Which ownership and governance structures support sufficiency?

How do customers respond to sufficiency-oriented offerings?

How can success be measured beyond growth?



Sharing of ideas

Why universities and practitioners matter



Universities	Practitioners
Generate (empirical) knowledge	Provide real-world challenges
Develop and test concepts	Test ideas in practice
Evaluate impacts	Provide operational experience
Facilitate learning across sectors	Understand organisational realities
Engage students and future leaders	Create pathways to implementation

Group discussion – 20 minutes

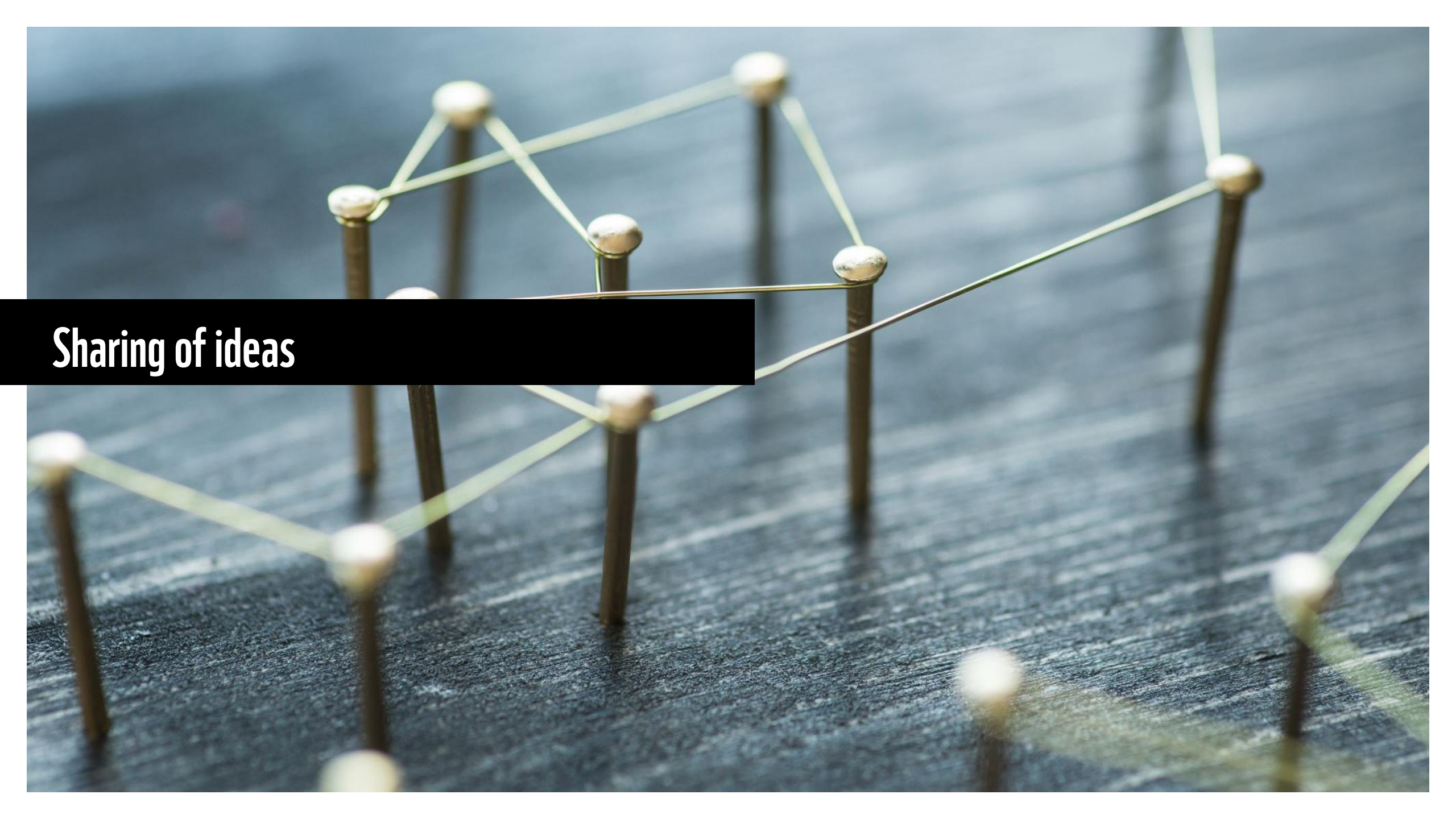


Based on the questions / points raised so far, what transfer and cooperation projects could help advance sufficiency in companies?

Points to be discussed:

- Project title and key question
- Stakeholders
- Possible barriers and enablers
- Outputs & outcomes



A close-up photograph of a network diagram. It features several small, round, metallic nodes connected by thin, gold-colored wires. The nodes are positioned on a dark, textured wooden surface. The background is blurred, showing more of the same structure. A black rectangular box with white text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

Sharing of ideas



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Break – 5 minutes

Exchange and Co-Production Formats for Joint Research



Format	Features
Co-creation formats	Open-ended, solution- or implementation-oriented.
Citizen science	Active participation of interested members of the public (level of participation can vary greatly).
Transdisciplinary research projects	Research with a view to non-scientific, societal developments and problems that require cross-disciplinary solutions.
Community-based research	Civil society is actively involved in the whole project process.
Real-world laboratories and living labs	Experiment, develop, test and explore new ideas. Initiating transformation processes in a participatory and cooperative manner and sustaining both scientific and societal learning processes.

Degree of impact generation

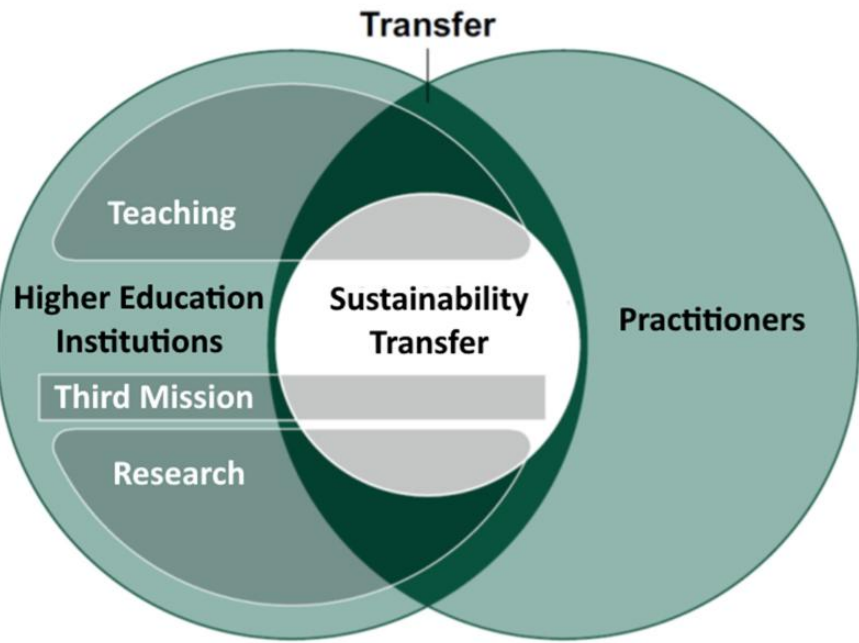


First order	Second order	Third order
Limited in space and time, affect directly involved partners. Include learning processes, the integration of scientific and practical knowledge and the development of context-specific solutions or capacity building	Project results are taken up by actors beyond the framework of the project. Knowledge share through networks or replication in other projects. Practical outputs such as workshops, guidelines, tools, and prototypes.	Outcomes become institutionalised or are adopted across a broader field of practice, e.g. changes in regulations, standards, organisational practices.

Importance of Transfer- and Cooperation Projects



The Third Mission = third core function of universities alongside teaching and research



Culture of Transfer and Collaboration				
Institutional Requirements	Strategy Is knowledge transfer an integral part of goal-setting processes and internal/external performance evaluations?	Incentives and Recognition Is the transfer recognized as a relevant dimension of academic performance and actively promoted?	Operational Processes and Structures Are there operational structures and processes in place to provide service-oriented support for the activities and stakeholders within the transfer?	Staff and Resources What staff and financial resources are available for the transfer?
	Research-Based Collaboration and Commercialization Applying research findings for societal and economic benefit	Relationship Management Building and developing personal relationships for potential future transfer activities	Research Infrastructure Provision of technical (large-scale equipment, databases) and non-technical resources (libraries, collections)	Entrepreneurship Fostering entrepreneurial thinking and action, and supporting startup initiatives
	Transfer-Oriented Teaching and Continuing Education Involvement of Non-Academic Partners in Teaching and Learning Formats	Scientific Advice for Decision-Makers and Affected Parties Structured activities to support science-based decision-making	Research and Development in Partnership with Society Involving societal stakeholders in the research process and in the development of solutions	Science Dialogue Dialogue-based formats for science communication with the public