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Sustainable consumption, resonance, and care

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Consumption is a key issue for more sustainable development. In our quest to understand the role of care for more sustainable consumption, we make use of the concept of resonance. Resonance assists in explaining the role of care for more sustainable consumption, emphasizing the relationships people have with the world. Through resonance, we add to debates on sustainable consumption that focus on the good life. Resonance describes a responsive mode of being-in-the-world and therefore depends on how we (passively) experience the world and how we (actively) appropriate or assimilate it. It is a reciprocal relationship between the individual and the world through which both are shaped. According to Hartmut Rosa, resonance as world relationship can be detected on three axes on which individuals relate to the world: (1) horizontal (people and politics), (2) diagonal (things), and (3) vertical (collective singulars such as nature, art, history, and religion). Using these axes as heuristic, we analyze solicited journaling method as well as in-depth interview data. Caring relationships can be detected along the three axes of resonance. Resonance thus helps to advance the characteristics of care as not limited to relationships between humans but also for things or collective singulars such as nature. Resonance also highlights how caring relationships support sustainable consumption in a positive way by focusing on its relational and reciprocal dimensions.

KEYWORDS

care, sustainable consumption, resonance, world relationship, caring

Introduction

Sustainable consumption has figured prominently in policy and public debate. The detrimental consequences of excessive consumption patterns have led to increased attention and the need to gain insights and shape action toward a reduction in such impacts (e.g., Middlemiss, 2018). Research and politics on sustainable consumption often focus on the environmental dimension of sustainable development with regard to the environmental impact of consumption. However, the social and economic dimensions are relevant as well (Fuchs et al., 2021). The social dimension of sustainable development emphasizes social inequality and social justice, while the economic dimension affords economic equality and systems of provision to be more durable. In this study, we acknowledge the contested nature of sustainable consumption and the heterogeneous debates on the phenomenon. By fathoming care relationships as a way to better understand consumption in terms of environmental, social, and economic sustainable development, we underscore not only all three dimensions and the embeddedness of consumption in day-to-day mundane processes but also move away from the perspective that markets will provide appropriate solutions for the impact of consumption.

This study contributes to sustainable consumption debates that foreground the role of the good life for more sustainable development (Fuchs et al., 2021). To live a good life is often the normative goal of everyday mundane processes. For the good life, some resource consumption is a necessity: For instance, consumers need to eat appropriate amounts and qualities of food or live in adequate shelter. The good life also means that a few privileged people should not live too excessively as resources are limited. Even though the normative concept of the good life has many facets, it resolutely addresses the quality of relationships we maintain with the world we live in. Emphasizing the relationships of human subjects being positioned in the world, this article builds on the good life as associated with the concept of resonance (Rosa, 2018). Resonance can be described as caring relationships, coming across with transformative qualities that might be necessary for more sustainable development to emerge. The aim of this article is to explore resonance as a concept that elucidates why care is relevant for more sustainable consumption. Central to our argument are relationships, and we start with the assumption that a caring relationship is a resonant relationship. Care might accordingly be considered a prerequisite in promoting more sustainable consumption through resonating relationships with people (i.e., the social world), materials (e.g., as in resources), and collective singulars (such as the environment). Accordingly, our research question asks: how can the concept of resonance assist in explaining the relevance of care for more sustainable consumption? We add to the literature on sustainable consumption and care (see Shaw et al., 2017; Godin and Langlois, 2022) by emphasizing caring relationships people have with the world. Consequently, resonance assists in shedding novel light on care for more sustainable consumption.

Caring relationships are often understood as care in social relationships. Conceptualizing caring relationships as resonant relationships moves beyond such focus. Care also involves caring for the environment, caring with and for other people, and caring about the economy. All of these caring relationships have lots to do with sustainable consumption: Godin and Langlois (2022) describe care as the maintenance of wellbeing of the self and others (human and non-human) emphasizing three key characteristics of care—vulnerability, interdependency, and responsibility. Some consumers are more vulnerable than others. We live in a world in which we rely on other people and also on more than human entities, and we are interdependent and relate to other humans, things, and other entities. In addition, consumption comes across with consequences for which we are responsible. These three key characteristics of care, namely vulnerability, interdependency, and responsibility, point toward relationships. The concept of resonance emphasizes world relationships and the interdependence of humans, things, and other entities. Fisher and Tronto (1991, p. 40), in their often-cited definition, understand care as "*a species activity that includes everything that we do to maintain, continue, and repair our 'world' so that we can live in it as well as possible.* That world includes our bodies, ourselves, and our environment, all of which we seek to interweave in a complex, life-sustaining web." This means that the key characteristics of care, i.e., vulnerability, interdependency, and responsibility, should be considered as enmeshed not only in human relationships but also in a broader conception of world relations. Reading Fisher and Tronto's definition with regard to sustainable development raises the question of what the world consists of or how the environment is understood. This is where we bring in resonance: The complex, life-sustaining web described by Fisher and Tronto (1991) can be considered as the world relationships theorized by the concept of resonance (Rosa, 2018).

We suggest that this life-sustaining web can be understood as resonating relationships. This aligns well with what Godin and Langlois (2022) propose: Relationships are central in a way that such an understanding of care can convey sustainable consumption in two ways: first, but not only, with regard to the marketplace and economic relations and, second, with relations in social reproduction. Building on these ideas, we consider that the concept of resonance can help in understanding the relational dimensions of care. Emphasizing marketplace, economic and social relations, as well as caring for the environment, resonance assists in explaining why care is relevant for more sustainable consumption. The following section outlines the principal ideas of resonance that will help us to explain why care is relevant for sustainable consumption. Then, we present the methods and data we used for this article, a solicited journal method plus in-depth interviews and how we analyzed them. In the result section, we describe different axes of resonance that assist us in better understanding the role of care for more sustainable development. In the discussion and conclusion, we answer our research questions and outline ways forward.

Theoretical background: Axes of resonance

As a social science concept, resonance has been introduced by sociologist Hartmut Rosa (Rosa, 2019) foregrounding the good life in resonant subject–object relationships (Rosa, 2018). The concept is borrowed from physics, which understands resonance as a mutual vibration between two entities. It is thus a relational concept used to describe how two entities "mutually affect each other in such a way that they can be understood as *responding to each other*, at the same time each *speaking with its own voice*" (Rosa, 2019, p. 329). Such a relational understanding can be used to scrutinize how the complex, life-sustaining web of bodies, selves, and environment, takes shape. Rosa considers resonance as the conceptual counterpart to the critical theory concept of alienation. Resonance thus signifies a mode of *being-in-the-world* through which the subject relates to the world, to others, and to its objects. This justifies why resonance helps us to elucidate why care advances more sustainable consumption. In the following paragraphs, we emphasize those aspects of resonance that assist in better understanding care as a way to advance more sustainable consumption. We take resonance as a heuristic concept that sheds light on the relational and qualitative dimensions of care.

Resonance as relations between entities involves four different elements (Rosa, 2020). *First*, relations between entities must entail a *contact*, one is affected or touched by a friend, an idea, a music, or a landscape, it is an appeal or a call, and the world is not muted or reified anymore. Resonance exists when this contact entails a response, which involves a physical

reaction, an emotion. *Second*, relations need an experience of *self-efficacy* as it allows a movement outwards. Such a responsive encounter is the core of the concept of resonance. However, such an encounter has to provoke a *transformation*, which is the *third* element of a relationship. "[A] change in how we relate to the world is constitutive of resonant experience" (Rosa, 2020, p. 34). Finally, resonance cannot be controlled, accumulated, or provoked. Its *uncontrollability* (*Unverfügbarkeit*) is thus the *fourth* and last element of relationships. Resonance cannot be provoked or guaranteed in a given situation, even if the contact happens, the response might not arise, or the transformation could be inexistent. Thus, resonance is neither a simple encounter with something beautiful or touching (which would mainly involve the first element, being affected), nor can it be described as a state of harmony or fusion with the world (which would not consider the relationship between the two entities).

As a mode of relating to the world, resonance encompasses interactions of a very different nature. Hartmut Rosa (2019) presents three main axes of resonance on which individuals can construct and experience resonant relationships: (1) *horizontal* (family, friends, and politics), (2) *diagonal* (material world, objects, things, and activities), and (3) *vertical* (collective singulars such as nature, art, history, and religion). We use these axes as heuristic to explain why care (along these axes) advances more sustainable consumption. The delineation of the axes can be considered somehow arbitrary: work relationships can also involve friendship, and religious practices also engage social interactions and relationships to material buildings and objects. Nevertheless, these axes allow us to highlight how the salient way of relating to the world is experienced in differentiated spheres of action. These serve to better understand the complexity of the life-sustaining web of our relationships with the world, which are central to care. Even though resonance can only exist within a subject, these axes are not merely individual, they are also socially structured. Each social formation "forms and prestructures how subjects relate to the world in these three ways, establishing specific cultures, spheres, or spaces of resonance in which its members can discover and construct more or less individual axes of resonance" (Rosa, 2019, p. 391). This means that even if the experience is embedded in the subject, its relationships with the world are culturally and socially rooted. A given society at a given time will influence specific types of resonant relationships.

Resonance is a quite young concept in social science and is so far mainly credited to Hartmut Rosa. It has nevertheless been widely discussed and also criticized (see, for example, Haugaard, 2020; Susen, 2020; Voirol, 2020). Our aim in this article is not to examine the limits of the concept of resonance but to use the concept as a possible way to elucidate why care is relevant for sustainable consumption. Resonance is thus considered a heuristic and resonant relationship that explains how and why care can enhance sustainable consumption. We will specifically focus on the three axes of resonance to explore how care can foster more sustainable consumption with regard to these three axes. In the following paragraphs, we present the axes proposed by Rosa in more detail.

Horizontal axis: People and politics

The so-called horizontal axis encompasses the social relationships of the subject. In late modernity, the focus lies on three different spheres of interactions: family, friendship, and politics. Family is often considered the main space for resonant relationships. Whether within a couple or a parent–child relationship, everyone expects a positive and responsive relational experience. If studies show that these relationships are the locus of many resonant moments—i.e., the love encounter or the first steps of a toddler—the high expectations on this specific sphere are also feeding many frustrations and family conflicts. Friendship, on the contrary, appears as a less constrained place of resonance. Unlike the family sphere, friendships are not constrained by rights and duties and are seen as non-exclusive. Friendship is thus a place of resonance with a lot of freedom, in which many contemporary subjects experience responsive relationships.

The involvement of citizens in the political and administrative order can also create a "zone of civic resonance" (Rosa, 2019, p. 430). Politics is here understood in broad terms as the arena where citizens can interact and participate in the shaping of their own world. The current political system, with its many administrative layers and power struggles, is often seen as establishing a non-resonant or mute mode of relating to the world. Nevertheless, many examples of citizens engaged in new forms of actions and organizations, such as cooperatives or citizen-led initiatives, can be considered attempts to develop resonant relationships in the political sphere.

With regard to sustainable consumption, environmental movements have been involved in such politics because they care for the environment. As resonance is the counterpart of alienation, late modern consuming subjects can be considered alienated from their producing counterparts. As a world that is demarcated by commodification, the relationship between producer and consumer has vanished. This might explain why some initiatives try to (re-) establish the link between producer and consumer, as, for example, in community-supported agriculture. Such a re-establishment of the link is considered to advance more sustainable patterns of production and consumption.

Diagonal axis: Things and activities

The diagonal axis indicates relationships to the material world and to things in general as well as to activities. It encompasses our relationship with objects with which we can develop a resonating or mute relationship. Rosa (2019) draws on examples from anthropological research: Objects can "talk" to us and transform us. These interactions are well exemplified in work and education but also in terms of consumption: the carpenter and their wooden boards, the baker and their bread, the researcher and their books, the eater and their food, the driver and their car, the gardener and their plants, and birds and other species. All can in certain conditions experience a resonant relationship, in which the object is not just a mute resource or product but interacts with the subject in a responsive and transformative way. School and education can also allow for such a resonant mode of relation. It is an

interaction between a teacher, a student, and a material to which each of the entities is related. This triangle can be a zone of alienation in which "teacher, students, and material effectively have nothing to say to each other and, moreover, confront each other as indifferent or repulsive and hostile" (Rosa, 2019, p. 479). It can also be turned into a zone of resonance if the material is resonating with both the teacher and the students, "talking" to them and transforming them into a mutual interaction making the material evolve. This resonating educational experience is not limited to some materials that would have a specific characteristic but is the result of the creation of a resonant learning context, which involves all stakeholders.

Adding to these different examples, Rosa (2019) presents sports and consumption as other possible spheres of resonance in the diagonal axis. Sports, as an activity of enhancing the dialog between body and mind, can foster a resonant relationship with the world. Many subjects engage in sports, either as athletes or even as spectators, looking for this experience of responsive and transformative mode of relating. Consumption then can also be, to some extent, considered as a possible resonance sphere. Purchasing things as commodities or making use of a service is a quest toward the *promise of resonance* (Rosa, 2019, p. 501). Nevertheless, this promise can be fulfilled in the case that the object will effectively affect the subject who can experience his own self-efficacy in using and interacting with the object.

If consumption is considered a mundane day-to-day process that involves things and their use (i.e., activities), it becomes obvious that this diagonal axis is relevant when it comes to a caring relationship in terms of sustainable consumption. Living a (good) life involves the material world, the food we eat, and the bicycle we ride, all of which might involve resonant relationships. Such resonant relationships not only assist in explaining why some more sustainable practices prevail but also why less sustainable consumption patterns matter to people. Driving a fast car might involve a resonant relationship, even though it might not be as sustainable as traveling by train.

Vertical axis: Collective singulars such as nature, art, history, and religion

The vertical axis refers to what could be described as a transcendental relation to the world. It is a relation to the world itself, to life and existence in a broad sense. This axis encompasses collective singulars with which subjects can experience responsive relationships. Nature, religion, history, or art all are seen as spheres of vertical resonance. Whether arriving at the top of a mountain during a hike, feeling touched by something superior while entering a religious building, being moved to tears by music, and feeling overwhelmed while visiting an historical site, individuals experience resonant moments with these entities very often. The mountain is "talking" to the subject who will feel transformed by this experience. Resonance on this vertical axis is bringing together the inner and the outer world. The moment of resonance happens in the "momentary perception of their constitutive, dialogic connectedness" (Rosa, 2019, p. 597).

Sometimes overlooked in sustainable consumption research, this axis is nevertheless important to understand (un)sustainable consumption. The relationship with nature is central to the motivation of people to embrace sustainable consumption. Some research also demonstrates a link between sustainable consumption and spirituality, as many individuals and collectives bring some spirituality in their quest for more sustainability (Léger and Hervieu, 1983; Stroude, 2021). Conversely, shopping centers are also sometimes described as "cathedrals of consumption," showing that in unsustainable consumption a transcendental relationship can also be experienced through collective consuming environments.

Methodology

To explain resonant relationships and their role in better understanding how care contributes to more sustainable consumption, we draw on qualitative fieldwork conducted in Ireland during spring 2021. The data derive from a research project focusing on sustainable practices and how people transform their relationship with the world. Characterized by a very recent and exponential economic development, the Republic of Ireland is a very interesting place to focus on sustainable consumption. Consumption of goods and services has exploded in the last two decades, and the reduction in unsustainable consumption is a big challenge as it is often experienced as a newly acquired prosperity. Focusing on people that are already enacting sustainable practices allows us to detect the nuances of resonance to explain the role of care for more sustainable consumption.

The fieldwork was carried out during one of the COVID-19-related lockdowns in Ireland. The data were collected through a solicited journaling method and final in-depth interviews. Journaling methods have been used in different contexts and disciplines (Hyers, 2018) and have gained interest over the last decade. It is an adequate approach to collect in-depth data during the lockdowns as it provided a space for introspection on daily activities and experiences (Sahakian et al., 2022). Participants have been recruited through social media and associations promoting sustainability. A total of 20 participants, describing themselves as adopting sustainable practices, engaged in a 1-month solicited journaling exercise. They received a set of questions on Mondays and were asked to provide their answers by Sundays. The data collected include texts (between 4 and 10 pages per participant, handwritten or typed) and pictures provided by participants to visually support their written answers.

Each week was designed around a specific theme. The 1st week focused on materials and objects involved in their sustainable practices. The 2nd week invited them to recall a specific moment during which they felt they were "resonating" with their environment and acting in a meaningful way in relation to their ecological concerns. The 3rd week was centered on their idea of a "good life" and their need to achieve wellbeing. The fourth and last week was a visualization exercise of three different futures 5 years from now. At the end of the prompted journaling exercise, a qualitative in-depth interview has been conducted with each participant, either online or walking outdoors. Interviews allowed us to explore specific elements of the journal entries and discuss

some of the ongoing analyses and hypotheses. They were then fully transcribed with a transcription program. During the analysis of these data, the link with care appeared to be very significant and recurring especially linked with experiences of resonance. These data were then used to nourish a theoretical ongoing discussion between the authors of this article.

For this article, these data are thus used as empirical vignettes to reflect on how resonance can help to understand the role of care for more sustainable consumption. As the data only account for subjective experiences of people willing to adopt sustainable practices, they do not allow to assess the role of resonance in unsustainable consumption practices (which might be relevant too), but the importance given to care in the participant experiences served as an impetus for the theoretical elaboration presented in this article. In the following section, we present the data that we used, drawing mainly on the 2nd week of journaling and exploring experiences of resonance. Relevant data emerging from the interviews and from other weekly entries have also been considered and included in the result section.

Results

In this result section, we present different examples of resonant moments arising from the fieldwork, which can be considered as caring relationships with regard to sustainable consumption. Drawing on these examples, we show how resonant relationships are embedded in caring relationships. The results are presented through the heuristic of the three axes of resonance theorized by Hartmut Rosa. Nevertheless, many examples weave the different axes together, providing a more complex understanding of the interrelatedness of the different resonant relationships and how they might contribute to more sustainable consumption.

Caring with others, caring for each other: A resonating experience

The horizontal axis emphasizes the resonant relationships with people and politics. It thus encompasses experiences of resonance with other human beings, whether in the circle of the family, with friends, in the community, or in the political arena. Our respondents engaged in sustainable practices, where these relationships with other people and politics appear to be fundamental. Resonance in this axis is often experienced through a common practice of repairing, maintaining, or creating.

> *"I was picking buttons to repair a crocodile teddy bear with my 7-year-old daughter. She's just learning to sew. My friend and her two-year-old twins were with us, marveling at the delightful 'treasures'. (…) It was a very connecting experience both with my daughter and my friend and her children" Cristina, journal, second week*

In this example, the activity of mending the teddy bear is meant to build a relationship, in order to connect and share skills between mother and daughter. The activity itself could be seen and experienced as a chore. Therefore, it is not a "special" or resonating moment as such, but it is experienced as a resonant moment through the relation between the persons involved. They gather for repairing the teddy bear, sharing competencies and positive, joint emotions. Care is involved as the activity is based on a willingness to take care of the teddy bear, by repairing it. But resonance is not experienced here in the relationship with the teddy bear (it could), it is experienced between the people engaged. Even if their activity is about caring for this teddy bear, it is through caring for each other that they create a space in which a positive resonant relationship can be experienced.

In this horizontal axis, daily experiences of resonance within a community are also often recounted. These experiences are linked to a sense of belonging and commitment to a place of residence and the people living in the close surroundings.

> *"Since we bought a house and have decided to settle down, I can see myself engaging with the neighborhood and the community. I often have the feeling that the energy that I put to care for this place flows back to me." Deirdre, final interview*

Three participants that took part in the research were living in an ecovillage. They described their community as a place based on resonant relationships:

> *"Last week I went for a walk in the ecovillage and stopped many times to talk with my neighbors. (..) I feel connected and rooted to this place. I value the diversity of the community, the challenges we face are many but we meet these together. I feel grateful that I am here, although I don't earn much I have a rich life and celebrate having a community." John, journal, second week*

These examples of resonant relationships within the community are closely intertwined with care as the relationships cannot be purely instrumental and must be ingrained in care for each other and for the shared space.

> *"some of the work that we're doing here in the ecovillage will be better framed with the idea of sustainable wellbeing. So it's about our health and wellbeing of the people, the land, the communities. (…) what we're doing here isn't providing care. What we're doing here is instiling a sense of care for each other." John, final interview*

These examples describe resonant relationships in care processes that manifest in the experience of people engaged in sustainable practices. On this specific horizontal axis, care is not just limited to a narrow conception of "caring for" someone. By caring together for something (like a teddy bear, a neighborhood, a community, or a political cause), resonance can be experienced collectively and is supported by a sense of care for each other. This collective resonance in practices of caring for people also points and is intertwined to care for things, which we turn to next.

Caring for things and activities: A responsive relationship

Encompassing experiences of resonance with things and activities, the diagonal axis appears very important in the

journey toward a more sustainable life. As for the mending of the teddy bear, repairing or doing things by oneself is not only valued because of the achieved goal but also experienced as positive when the person is alone to carry out this activity.

> *(Talking of her son having sewn fruit bags himself) "it's not just the making, but it's the fact that he made it himself. He's so invested in it, wants to use it at every opportunity. He's so proud of them every time we're in the shop. And I think there's a big connection when you make something by yourself, or repair it, you have a special connection to the object." Isabel, final interview*

Being involved in creating things is associated with more resonant relationships such as caring for these things. The process of making is closely linked to emotions. If purchasing an object can be seen as a quest toward the *promise of resonance* that can only be met if the object affects the subject, making or repairing is not just more sustainable from a resource consumption point of view, and they provide a possibly more resonant relationship. By enabling the person to experience self-efficacy, making and repairing practices carry one of the major characteristics of resonance, setting the stage for more resonant relationships on a diagonal axis.

In addition to these types of activities doing things themselves, other activities that aim at caring for the environment are also often seen as resonant, even though some are not pleasurable as such. Litter picking appeared in different journals as an activity that could trigger positive feelings.

> *"(...) instead of just looking and complaining, I started collecting all the cans and bottles. I filled 4 big rubbish bags, and there was still more. But it felt good knowing that I prevented 200 cans from blowing into the river, and I'm sure the swans that were supervising my litter picking were happy too." Mariana, journal second week*

Moreover, activities on the diagonal axis seem to encompass gardening, feeding birds, or protecting wildlife. For example, Faith explains in her journal how she carefully grew tree saplings and then went to plant them in her community, experiencing a very resonant moment through this activity

> *"The sun was shining, hope was in the air and I felt for a time at one with the world, shovel in hand, trees in pots, selecting space, digging the holes and carefully handling roots and placing and planting trees for a healthy habitat, for birds, insects and biodiversity and potentially for future generations to hopefully enjoy."*

> *She then finds a young tree sapling in another field, which had managed to grow by itself even though the soil was full of concrete debris. "(. . .) I gathered other small stones to encircle it, to protect it from being trampled underfoot and to highlight that there is a tree growing there and I will do my best to care for it. ≫ Faith, journal, second week*

In these examples of diagonally resonant relationships, sustainable practices encompass very different activities such as upcycling and making, litter picking, and planting trees. Through these activities, care is deployed toward material elements of the world that become responsive and allow for a resonant experience: the bags that are valued and valorizing, the clean public space is considered a common and appears thankful through the look of a swan, and a young tree sapling as a witness of appreciation of the replanted land.

Being with nature: A vertically resonant relationship

Beyond these resonant experiences related to people and activities, other descriptions relate to a more general conception of a locus of resonance. Due to the framing of the research, the vertical axis is mainly about nature but does also encompass a sense of historical responsibility, a stance for arts, and beauty, and the spiritual dimension is often recognized.

> *"I felt really connected (. . .) to nature as well, just a sense of interconnectedness as we were able to take in other people from afar, the animals we saw, the plants and other creatures, the beach, the woods. In particular, I felt very drawn to the woods somehow; there is something almost mysterious about them, and by being in that setting, and witnessing the fallen tree, for example, it just brought home to me the power of nature. There was also a sense of the timeless, of being connected to others who, generations before, may have had a similar reaction or feeling when being in this space." Ann, journal, second week*

As stated in this example, the connection with nature is experienced as relational, as if nature itself was "talking" and "reaching" oneself. It is also here connected to a sense of history, of being connected to the past. History as a collective singular can indeed explain why past experience (in the short-term as well as in a more long-term perspective) leads to more resonant relationships. If past experiences have been resonant or alienating, those might affect future developments. Moreover, resonance is experienced when both entities mutually affect each other so the connection to nature is grounded in a stance toward nature, a willingness to engage and to care for nature.

> *"It was a moment of presence, of being with nature, of being in the calm, stillness of a lovely April evening. I was standing at the door of my garden shed over from the budding sycamore tree & hearing the birdsong of my favorite, beloved birds—robin, blackbird & many more.*

> *The situation was me opening the lock of the shed door to go in for peanuts to fill the 4 bird feeders I have in the garden, just outside my living room window. I stood for a brief while, to be in the moment & savor the fleeting joy of the evening. Then I went into the shed & filled the feeders.*

> *I thought of all the times I have watched the many birds on the feeders & my efforts to identify them. I noticed how the numbers have increased in recent years" Kathleen, journal, second week*

Being "with" nature does here describe the specific mode of *being-in-the-world* evoked by Hartmut Rosa. Through a presence that is both active but also open to being touched, Kathleen is engaging with nature and not just using it or taking it as a given. Caring for the birds, feeding them, and trying to identify them can be seen as the premise for resonance. They do not necessarily trigger resonance but do open the space for it. Kathleen might have fed the birds many times in a very automatic way, but this caring stance did set the stage for this resonant moment she experienced on this specific evening.

The vertical axis then encompasses experiences in which nature is the locus of resonance. Caring for nature is not only an active practice here but also an openness to being touched and moved by it. This caring stance thus opens the possibility of resonance as an experience of the interconnectedness, the being "with" nature. As in Patricia's account, this experience is often connected to a more explicit spiritual dimension. Asked to describe an object that best describes her journey toward more sustainable practices, she mentions a spiritual daybook called "Gardening the Soul" by Sister Stanislaus Kennedy. Each morning, she wakes up and reads the quote of the day:

> *"It highlights for me, our interconnectedness with the universe and nature, connecting our inner journey and our outer one. (. . .) it makes me aware that we are all part of the whole, all an integral part and the onus is on each of us to care for our world, in whatever way we can. (. . .) I am reminded daily that there is a power, a source that has always been there and to trust this source and cycle of life to help me live sustainably, in harmony with myself, others and nature." Patricia, journal, first week*

If caring for nature has sometimes been described as stewardship (Mathevet et al., 2018), these examples show that it cannot be considered a one-way relationship. Caring for nature is a mutually responsive relationship and is experienced as an important sphere of resonance, often connected to a sense of history or to a spiritual experience.

Discussion

The results presented here give some first empirical illustrations of how caring relationships can be described as resonating relationships. The three axes of resonance are socially constructed (Rosa, 2019) and have been considered heuristic rather than clear-cut entities to locate care in resonant relationships. The empirical vignettes also highlight the extent to which these caring relationships might be used to better understand ways forward toward more sustainable consumption. People engaged in caring practices resonate along the three axes with and for others, as well as with and for things or nature. Our respondents describe how they act in a more sustainable way, and how these practices are in fact reshaping their relationship to the world on these different axes of resonance (people and politics, things and activities, as well as collective singulars) that might explain the role of care for more sustainable consumption. Our vantage point was an understanding of care that follows the thinking of Fisher and Tronto as activities that *"maintain, continue, and repair our 'world' so that we can live in it as well as possible"* (Fisher and Tronto, 1991, p. 40). Our results indicate that looking at care through the lens of resonance allows us to better define our "world," considering it as the interrelation of the three axes proposed by Rosa (2019). In addition, by discussing the link between care and resonance, our results also deepen the understanding of the key aspects of care, proposed by Godin and Langlois (2022): interdependency, vulnerability, and responsibility.

If sustainability is often understood as care for nature, our empirical illustration of resonating relationships suggests that sustainable consumption is not limited to a sense of care to such collective singulars as nature (the vertical axis). It is rather a mode of relating to the world in different ways that can be understood through the three axes of resonance, including people and politics as well as things and activities. Understanding care through the lens of resonance can be seen as underscoring a relationship with people, objects, and activities, as well as with more general entities such as nature or history, emphasizing **interdependency**. Through developing caring relationships on those different axes, people engaged in sustainable consumption practices transform their way of relating to the world. The experience of resonance cannot be made available, but care can be seen as one of the components of resonant relationships. Thus, caring enables the possibility of resonance as it entails both the willingness to reach, maintain, and repair the world as well as an openness to being touched, moved, and transformed by the encounter.

In the last few years, vulnerability has gained interest in the literature around care (Fineman, 2010; Vaittinen, 2015; Laugier, 2016; Engster, 2019). This reframing of care around vulnerability has broadened the scope of our analysis, focusing less on the caregivers or the caring activity itself but rather acknowledging the universal condition of vulnerability that makes care essential to human relationships with the world. As Engster (2019, p. 104) puts it "vulnerability encompasses real and potential, short- and long-term threats to our wellbeing that arise simply from being in the world and living in relation to others". Care is thus a recognition and a response to these threats, and it is what is done to prevent or "reduce human beings' susceptibility or exposure to harm, needs, loss, coercion, domination, and other unwanted conditions or events" (ibid. p. 106). In this perspective, vulnerability is not an individual characteristic but a shared condition of human (and non-human) beings.

The lens of resonance expands these analyses by broadening the understanding of vulnerability. To allow resonance to happen, both entities must be vulnerable so that they can be touched by each other and resonate together. Our empirical illustrations emphasize that vulnerability is not a weakness, a lack of security, or a risk to be harmed. Instead, it can also be understood as an openness to being touched that does entail the risk of being harmed. It is a common condition, a sensitivity to potential threats to our wellbeing. Bringing vulnerability back to care and sustainable consumption, vulnerability is a shared condition of both entities involved in caring relationships. However, vulnerability does not

exclusively relate to human beings. Resonance and care both entail non-human entities such as highlighted through the different axes of resonance. A tree, a bird, or a neighborhood can be considered vulnerable. Vulnerability is, thus, a key starting point for reconsidering sustainable consumption as in caring relationships.

Dodds highlights dependency and vulnerability as the core of many care theories, but the distinction between concepts is often lacking (Dodds, 2014, p. 181). Dependency can be defined as a form of vulnerability "that requires the support of a specific person (or people)—that is, care" (p. 183). In this view, dependency is the premise for the caring relationship. If both entities are vulnerable, but are not dependent on each other, then there is no care. Care is the ability to provide the answer to one's needs and to answer to the vulnerability of each other. Going further if vulnerability is a shared condition, then dependency is not a fixed state. "Rather than being dependent or independent, people are, at different points of their lives, both responsible for and reliant on the caring of others" (Bowlby et al., 2010, p. 38). Resonance, as a concept, helps to grasp this two-sided dynamic relationship in which vulnerability—understood as the openness to be touched, moved, and thus harmed—is on both sides and in which the dependency is mutual and evolving. People, objects, and nature itself can all be caring and cared for.

Vulnerability and interdependency are closely linked to responsibility from the care perspective. As in the sustainability discourses, responsibility is often tied to moral issues. To be a "good" citizen, one must act in a responsible way and care for other people or adopt sustainable practices. This does raise a lot of issues and criticisms (see, for example, Friedman, 2009) on the possibility to generalize such behaviors as they are always taking place in specific social contexts. By reframing the responsibility to care around vulnerability, many moral issues can be overcome. As vulnerability is a shared condition, not merely linked to a specific stage of life, and is highly dependent on the social contexts, institutions, and norms, the responsibility cannot be seen as relying on individual moral values. The responsibility to mitigate this common vulnerability is shared (Engster, 2019), and it is a political stance for social justice and equality, described as "caring with" by Tronto (2013, p. 23).

In the discourses about sustainable consumption, the focus often lies on responsibility, solidarity, acting in a "good" way, and ethical pressure on consumers (see Shaw et al., 2017). Responsibility has been problematized as focusing too much on individual consumers. Considering responsibility in care terms and linking it with the concept of resonance broaden the perspective. It also entails a response-ability. It is the ability to respond to the vulnerability of another human being, object, and collective singular. This means that it is not a one-sided movement—caring for a tree sapling—but a two-sided dynamic relationship in which both entities resonate and are transformed in this caring relationship. Based on these observations, we would then like to raise the idea that the three axes of resonance can help better understand care as a mode of relating to people, to things and activities, and to collective singulars such as nature or history. Framing sustainable consumption as grounded in caring relationships on those different axes allows to understand better the entanglement of material, symbolic, and social relationships involved. It also allows to deepen the understanding of care as a dynamic relationship, involving vulnerability, interdependency, and responsibility.

Conclusion

The aim of this article was to explore resonance as a concept that elucidates why care is relevant for more sustainable consumption. Resonance considers relationships on three different axes that we deployed as heuristic and illustrated empirically. In the discussion, we reflected on the key characteristics of care, namely vulnerability, dependency, and responsibility, and how resonant relationships might be explained as caring relationships. Such an endeavor allows us to consider resonance as a prerequisite for care and vice versa. In this conclusion, we would like to move back to our research question and outline what care thinking (in terms of resonant relationships) means for more sustainable consumption. We do not aim to come up with practical guidelines but rather ways of approaching and thinking about sustainable consumption as a phenomenon. Care as resonance moves the thinking about sustainable consumption not only away from market activity but also opens up novel vistas for thinking about sustainable consumption, as, for example, with regard to the good life (Fuchs et al., 2021). In addition, resonance also allows us to better understand why some more unsustainable consumption practices prevail, simply because people also care for (un-) sustainable practices. The good life with resonating relationships is a sort of qualitative fulfillment, feeling better about daily life with sustainable consumption—a good life could be explained through resonance and resonating relationships. Resonant and caring relationships accordingly do not only assist in understanding sustainable consumption but also why unsustainable practices prevail.

Understanding caring relationships as resonant relationships emphasizes the link between sustainable consumption and the good life. The good life might be as highly contested as sustainable consumption. Both might be perceived differently by individuals, yet in consumption practices, consumers are well aware of what is resonating. Care can be understood not only as an activity but also as an ethic, as a set of virtues "that offers a way of thinking about what is necessary for human wellbeing, flourishing, and indeed survival" (Barnes, 2012, p. 5). Ecofeminist scholars have highlighted the conceptual link between care and environmental concerns (Merchant, 1996; Mellor, 2000). For these scholars, earth is considered a household in which ecological systems and human activities are seen as mutually interactive. They might not consider earth as a collective singular, but the perspective of resonance might well do so. Care understood in resonating relationships is thus not an individual stance toward others or toward nature, but it is the experience of a specific relationship between people and nature (Macgregor, 2006). Wellbeing and the good life are thus the goal of care which is not limited to people but also encompasses things and activities, as well as nature and other collective singulars such as history or spirituality.

The framing of care as in resonating relationships also draws some new perspectives on sustainable consumption. Resonance affords a critical reflection on care and its current commodification. It moves away from the understanding of consumption as tight

to the market and commodity exchange. Resonance also points to the good life as it aims to offer an alternative to the mainstream conception of the good life based on the availability of resources and the controllability of the world. It posits that the quality of life "depends on the ways in which world is or can be passively experienced and actively appropriated or adapted" (Rosa, 2019, p. 63). Resonance thus invites a reframing of care and sustainable consumption. Caring for others or for the environment is not merely a moral stance or a duty, but it is a mode of being-in-the-world that allows for more resonant relationships. Our results demonstrate that sustainable consumption is not just about lowering carbon footprints or reducing waste, but it is about aspiring a good life and experiencing resonance on the different axes, through a caring relationship to social, material, and symbolic surroundings. The quality of relationships with the world is less discussed in sustainable consumption research. Nevertheless, our results show that consumption cannot be seen as a specific practice and must be understood in a web of relationships, that should be caring and resonant, to foster sustainable consumption.

Our perspective on resonance and the good life is thus a way of exploring sustainable consumption. If theories of needs and satisfiers have been gaining momentum and do point to some useful distinctions, they are still somehow entrenched in economic thinking with a focus on market activities. To advance strong sustainable consumption, we need to understand why people are driving a car or eating meat because these might be resonant relationships too. Thus, resonance itself does not necessarily open to sustainable consumption, but when it is experienced through a caring relationship, it fosters another way of consuming and relating to people and politics, things and activities, as well as collective singulars. If resonance is the positive counterpart to alienation, could care be the positive counterpart to consumption?

Data availability statement

No restrictions. Requests to access these datasets should be directed to aurianne.stroude@unifr.ch.

Ethics statement

Ethical review and approval was not required for the study on human participants in accordance with the local legislation and institutional requirements. The patients/participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study.

Author contributions

AS was responsible for gathering the data. AS and SW jointly drafted the manuscript from developing the framework, toward finalizing the manuscript. Both authors contributed to the article and approved the submitted version.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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