



Women Harmonizing Sustainability Practices for a Circular Bioeconomy: Can They Transform from Within Organizations?

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Abstract

This paper is situated within the framework of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and addresses how women in organizational spaces with strongly values-driven practices can contribute to a more sustainable development in the implementation of a Circular Bioeconomy. Companies aligned with this model have a special responsibility to orient their practices towards comprehensive and fair sustainability if they want to align themselves with the policy frameworks of ecological transition. The article asks whether there is a harmonization of the environmental and social dimensions of practices in companies aligned with the circular bioeconomy and how the participation of women in management positions (in this case, white women, college-educated and non-disabled women) can promote transformative organizational change. Based on the theories of CSR practices, critical feminist perspectives, and social practices theory, a comparative ethnographic approach is used, applying a multi-method (participant observation, interviews, and documents) and multi-site analysis with four companies. The study extends the empirical evidence aimed at favoring the adoption of integrated sustainable practices in organizations. Future research could investigate broader intersectional dynamics to provide more detail on the heterogeneity of the experiences and practices of women or feminist actors and their influence on organizations.

Keywords Sustainability practices · Circular bioeconomy · Feminist practices · Harmonization · Transformative practices · Corporate feminism

Introduction

The conceptualization of CSR has varied over time, being originally understood as those organizational policies or practices that reflect the application of ethical principles in their management or an interest in generating positive externalities (Licandro et al., 2023). Currently, because of the influence of the publication of the United Nations 2030 Agenda to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (UN, 2015), CSR can also be broadly interpreted as all those voluntary actions that reflect a commitment to the promotion of sustainability in the business environment (Tyan et al., 2024). In this paper, we follow the recommendation of Carroll (2021) and understand CSR as the pursuit by organizations of the sustainability of their business while taking responsibility for their social and environmental

practices and impacts particularly (both internally and externally).

Within the diversity of studies in the field of CSR, we address the dimension of practices and how to encourage a more sustainable and fairer adoption of these from a gender perspective. In this field, the academic literature has been particularly directed to study the profitability of their implementation (Qing et al., 2024a, 2024b); as well as operational questions on how to incorporate CSR practices in corporate strategies (Arthus & Alvarez, 2013; Fedotova et al., 2023), the changes that motivate the adoption of responsible behaviors in organizations (Zu, 2023) or the influence of their different stakeholders in this process (Dagestani et al., 2024). In this last specific field on the influence of different corporate members on CSR practices, there are studies that address how gender diversity in workforces is associated with higher levels of corporate social responsibility (Soares et al., 2011; Vitolla et al., 2020), even highlighting how it can also influence greater attention on environmental responsibility issues (Esposito et al., 2023).

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However, we have found few in-depth analyses of how this influence occurs, so we have investigated how women with sustainable values influence organizations practices, paying special attention to their feminist approaches.

The authors are aware that feminist perspectives are not exclusive to women (Tienari & Taylor, 2018) and that not all women managers will necessarily promote feminist agendas or approaches. However, it was decided to adopt an approach to this group for three reasons: the first is that their position in the company places them as favorable informants and with greater knowledge of the level of integration of CSR practices in the organization; second, they are self-determined women who are aware of the promotion of sustainability and have a high level of involvement with their company; and third, an approach to feminist perspectives is relevant to understand how their values in this regard mediate their sustainable practices. Thus, we seek to make an initial contribution to the field of CSR practices from the perspective of the theory of practices with a gender perspective and invite future studies to address differences between these feminist approaches among the various members of the same organization.

This approach to CSR practices is especially relevant for those organizations linked to the Circular Bioeconomy (CBE). This model is based on the use of renewable biological resources such as water, energy and land, and is considered by the European Commission (EC) as a model that can contribute significantly to the development of a sustainable economy (EC, 2012).

In the context of the study of CBE, the academic field has highlighted the relevance of further specifying the objectives to be pursued by companies in terms of comprehensive and inclusive sustainability (D'Amato et al., 2019). In fact, requirements at the corporate level are generally found to be reduced to the incorporation of a balanced three-dimensional perspective of sustainability that includes concern for the economic, social and environmental dimensions (Lehtonen, 2004). However, these dimensions in practice tend to evolve independently (Littig & Griessler, 2005) and, for many companies, the quest to address the multidimensionality of sustainability is a challenge (Maluf et al., 2022). Thus, CSR research focusing on the conditions that enable harmonious organizational changes towards sustainability (Jan et al., 2022) can help to steer corporate sustainability (CS) towards sustainable development (SD).

Our study asks whether a harmonization of practices of different dimensions of sustainability is occurring in those companies aligned with the CBE; and, how the participation of women with sustainable values in management positions favors the implementation of harmonious practices for transformational organizational change towards sustainability.

To this end, we focus on two specific dimensions of sustainability, the social and the environmental, framed in two essential perspectives in CBE transition: the eco-technological vision and the socio-political vision (Fig. 1).

One manifestation of this eco-technological dimension is the implementation of circular organizational practices

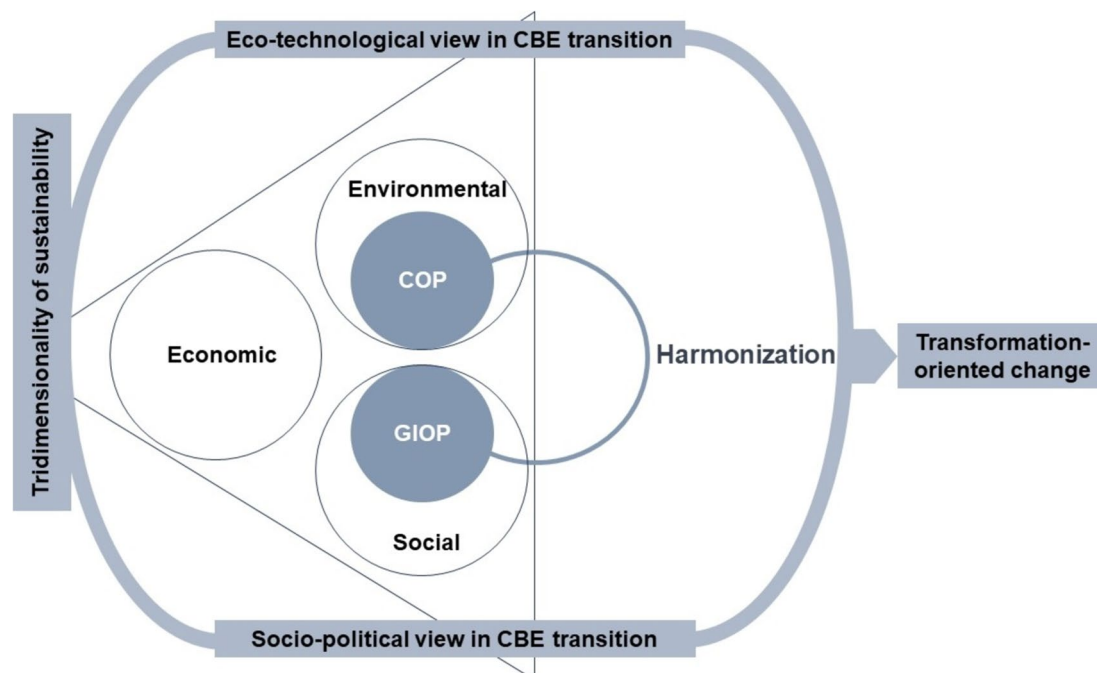


Fig. 1 Research objective delimitation

(COP) at the industrial level as an expression of the integration of technological innovations for the reduction of environmental impacts. COP aims to maintain the economic value of products, materials, and resources for as long as possible, thereby significantly reducing waste generation during production processes.

And, on the other hand, the transition to CBE also includes an important socio-political component that emphasizes the need for strategies that complement its concern for environmental and social impact (Ivanova et al., 2020), in fact, the initial policy formulation of the transition to CBE in Europe includes three fundamental aspects: sustainability, innovation and inclusion (EC, 2012). Thus, the gender approach is a crucial aspect of the socio-political nature of CBE (Sanz-Hernandez et al., 2022) and gender-inclusive organizational practices (GIOPs) are one of the clearest areas of social sustainability for companies. GIOPs are not only about equality in employment or the presence of women on corporate boards; they fundamentally involve establishing practices within the organization that integrate different ways of thinking, doing and expressing oneself among all members of the organization (Arora-Jonsson & Ågren, 2019).

We have not found studies in the CBE framework that examine CSR practices that integrate the two dimensions of sustainability (COP and GIOP) or, how to favor their implementation in countries where progress has been made in implementing CBE strategies (Heimann, 2019). Moreover, few studies have focused on how companies (as essential stakeholders) are promoting a circular and sustainable bioeconomy that is socially inclusive and equitable (Sanz-Hernandez et al., 2019).

This study has several limitations stemming from deliberate methodological decisions made in the research design regarding the cultural context of analysis (the Global North), the chosen organizational framework (bio-economic companies aligned with the principles of capitalism and neoliberalism), and the prominence given to women in corporate positions (typically white, university-educated, and European, largely representing a corporate and liberal feminism). Moreover, given our affiliation with an academy that has been heavily criticized for its liberal and Eurocentric feminism (Grosser & McCarthy, 2019; Salem, 2018) we are aware of the potential bias that we, as researchers, may inadvertently introduce, so we have tried to be especially vigilant and critical in our inquiry, analysis, and discussion.

Theoretical and Analytical Framework

CSR Practices Towards Integral and Fair Sustainability

Given the broad debate surrounding the definition of CSR, there are two key issues that need to be discussed in

order to understand the purpose and expectation of these sustainable practices. Initially, CSR was interpreted as a *behavioral attribute* that should reflect a moral obligation or responsibility to society (Garriga & Melé, 2004); however, over time, the view of CSR as a management philosophy has gained prominence. The first interpretation leads to a philosophical debate as to who companies owe this behavior to, which can lead to opposing positions on what should be done morally or what is in the interests of companies, making it difficult to reach a consensus definition of CSR (Licandro et al., 2023, p. 7). Meanwhile, its interpretation as a *management philosophy* has made it possible to articulate a greater consensus and theoretical framework regarding its scope.

Thus, locating CSR in the field of business management allows us to address, not only how it translates its philosophy into its daily practices, but also its level of commitment to practices that are voluntary; an aspect considered key in this theoretical debate (Dukić-Mijatović et al., 2023). And, for the purposes of this paper, it allows us to descend our analysis to a micro-level the attitudes, principles or values of the members of the organizations (Wang, 2011).

This definition of CSR materialized at the beginning of the twenty-first century with the publication of the ISO 26000 Guide on Social Responsibility (Licandro, 2022), which includes the responsibility to contribute to SD. This document makes explicit the three interdependent dimensions that make it up and how CSR can use them as a reference in the expectations of society and on which it must act responsibly, if possible, in an integrated manner (ISO, 2010). Thus, it is possible to integrate these objectives in business operationalization considering the multidimensionality of CSR and SD, being able to apply its practices at different levels: individual (consumers, employees, investors), organizational (culture, identity, ethics), industrial (market) or institutional (regulation) (Žukauskas et al., 2018).

However, this theoretical field that links CSR and SD, points out that, for companies to contribute to the transition towards more sustainable models, this commitment must be reflected in their corporate strategy (Tyan et al., 2024). This means that, companies should integrate a commitment to sustainability internally to achieve a formal commitment (Chen & Dagestani, 2023), implementing practices that seek to balance the three dimensions of sustainability among their priorities (Camarán et al., 2019), and this requires a real commitment from the members of the organization (shareholders, institutional investors and employees) (Dagestani et al., 2024). Thus, the individual and internal behavior of organizations is presented as a key element in the implementation of CSR practices, showing how responsible practices at the individual level by

the most committed members are key to achieving their integration into the organization's strategy. Therefore, the following are those theoretical contributions in the field of SD linked to the pillar of social sustainability that reflect the relevance of directing CSR practices towards greater social justice.

There is a debate on the conceptualization and approach to justice that, in this case, can be summarized in two currents. On the one hand, the deontological justice perspective interprets just behavior as that which complies with moral duties or norms that are considered correct by individuals (Folger, 2001). And, on the other hand, authors such as Nancy Fraser (2013) defend a social justice perspective characterized by its focus on the social relations of power that produce inequalities. This approach is especially present in studies of transition to sustainability with a gender perspective. Fraser (1995) argues that injustices can be addressed affirmatively or transformatively. The first implies rectifying injustices by compensating the affected groups but leaving intact the conditions responsible for generating inequality. The second is more demanding and seeks to eliminate the roots of injustice and address the root causes of inequality. In the organizational sphere, this may involve the transformation of organizational power structures.

Thus, both CSR and broader theories in the field of SD and social justice point to the relevance of adopting an integrated and transformative approach in guiding changes towards more socially sustainable economic models, as is expected in the CBE transition.

A Critical Feminist Perspective in Organizations

There are two major blocks of academic literature that allow us to analyze the potential feminist perspectives present among the women participants and their expectations of SD and their participation in the organizations.

Critical Feminist Perspectives

Many authors who have analyzed transformation processes towards sustainability within green economies (Scoones, 2016; Temper et al., 2018) align with more critical feminist perspectives in asserting that there is no transformation without challenging sources of domination and oppression, including capitalism, patriarchy, state centralism, and inequalities based on race, caste, ethnicity, gender, ability, sexuality, and so on. It is a multidimensional and intersectional approach that attempts to balance (harmonize) ecological concerns with social, economic, cultural and democratic spheres, while seeking to understand how different forms of oppression intersect.

This challenge to the structures of domination is articulated in more or less demanding formulations within

popular feminist approaches, ranging from the vindication of individual freedoms guaranteed by the state through legal reforms (Abazeri, 2022) of liberal feminism (corporate and neoliberal approach), to feminisms that advocate a radical and systemic transformation at different levels, such as ecofeminism (Pérez Orozco, 2019), decolonial feminism (Abazeri, 2022; Lugones, 2008), Marxist feminism (Salem, 2018), and other new approaches to popular and radical feminism in the framework of the so-called fourth wave of feminism (Arruzza et al., 2019; Fraser, 2013; Maclaran, 2015). Feminist perspectives also differ in how they conceptualize pathways to a sustainable society (Table 1).

Intersectionality has become one of the dominant approaches in feminist research, but that does not necessarily make it the most appropriate (Salem, 2018). While this approach emerges from the hand of Black women to point out the intertwining of systems of oppression (Crenshaw, 1989), this work is framed in a European liberal corporate context in which White, non-migrant or non-disabled women predominate (ENAR, 2019). Therefore, we draw on some critical aspects of corporate and neoliberal feminism from Marxist feminism, as expounded by Salem (2018), who reminds us that capitalism and neoliberalism provide the context in which social categories and identities such as gender, class, sexuality, and race are constructed.

Female Participation Mediated by GIOPs

Paying attention to the conditions in female participation in organizations, it should first be noted that they are still in the process of being optimized and this process of change depends on the dominant power structures and relations. Thus, organizational change is mainly constrained by the resistance offered by spheres of power (Bleijenbergh, 2018), and power differences between stakeholders (Benschop & Verloo, 2006). Unless organizational members with more power support the change initiative, success may be elusive, fleeting, or elusive (Higgins & McAllaster, 2004). However, studies highlight that those involved in implementing a gender approach in organizations often lack the power needed to drive change at the organizational level (Waylen, 2014). This transformation is cognitively and emotionally challenging not only for those on the receiving end, but also for those driving it (Bleijenbergh, 2018).

Second, attention should be paid to the impact of GIOPs on such participation, given their potential to increase corporate engagement in this area. Studies point to how gender-responsive planning can foster more gender-sensitive organizational practices (Turesky & Warner, 2020), or how gender-responsive leadership can promote greater presence of hands-on allies (Byrne et al., 2021). However, many studies point to ongoing challenges in the implementation

Table 1 Popular feminist approaches and pathways to sustainable society

	Types of feminism		Main descriptors	Pathways to sustainable society	
Popular feminist approaches	(Neo)Liberal feminism	Corporate and neoliberal approach	Focus on individual freedoms, guaranteed by the state through legal reforms (Abazeri, 2022)	Gradual and normative transition	Processes managed utilizing established structures and technological innovation to achieve a common goal
		Extend the freedoms enjoyed by men to women (Salem, 2018)	Focused on “professional-managerial level” experience	Continuity of capitalism but with “more women in the ruling class” sharing spaces of power with men	
	Ecofeminism	Externalization of oppression	Challenge the patriarchal capitalist model that defines gender relations (Amorós and Agra Romero, 2000)	Critique of transition models and globalization's effects	Advocate for an ecocentric, post—patriarchal, and post-colonial policy
	Decolonial feminism	Recognition of vulnerability, interdependence, and eco-dependence of life; significance of care (Pérez Orozco, 2019)	Based on intersectionality (the recognition of intersecting aspects of identity) and the dialectical relations between capitalism and social categories	Radical and systemic transformation	Approaches close to degrowth, communitarianism, and the promotion of cultural autonomy (Pérez Orozco, 2019)
	Marxist feminism	It understands capitalism as a form of power with interstructural effects on social life (Abazeri, 2022)	Focus on the intersection of gender, class, and labor exploitation (“double exploitation”: labor and domestic space)	Radical and systemic transformation	Struggle and collective organization as a response to the oppressions of the patriarchal system and colonial capitalism (Lugones, 2008)
	Novel feminisms	Capitalism shapes social identities and necessitates gender inequality, as posited by social reproduction theory (Salem, 2018)	Framed in the fourth wave of feminism, based on the mobilizing potential of social networks and Internet	Radical transformation	Highlight the perverse effects of neoliberalization (Salem, 2018)
		They challenge global injustices by rejecting capitalism	Look for equality, not equivalences; justice, not legal rights; freedom of all, not individual freedom (Arruzza et al., 2019)	Universalism shaped by diverse struggles from below (Arruzza et al., 2019)	Recover critical intersectionality
				Radical transformation	Transform structural inequalities and power relations
				Sustainability, as a relevant anti-neoliberal demand	Depatriarchalization and social justice (Fraser, 2013) require structural change
				Universalism shaped by diverse struggles from below (Arruzza et al., 2019)	Capitalism cannot address injustices
					True resolution requires new social organization (Arruzza et al., 2019)

of GIOPs as a result of the persistence of gender stereotypes and biases (both internal and external) that continue to shape organizational practices (Bull et al., 2021). In this regard, other studies have highlighted the importance of certain GIOPs, such as fostering dialog and communication (Turesky & Warner, 2020) or supporting inclusive leadership (Byrne et al., 2021), as practices that can significantly contribute to closing the gender gap in leadership positions. But how do these changes occur and what factors facilitate GIOPs?

The literature highlights that GIOP presents a significant challenge, primarily due to the lack of genuine commitment among corporate power structures (Benschop & Verloo, 2006). While organizational change can dismantle dispositions, beliefs, social practices, and hierarchies that are often considered immutable (Crawford & Mills, 2011), this transformation requires companies to adopt specific stances that reflect their commitment through attitudes and behaviors (Eilert & Cherup, 2020). Organizational learning not only reflects cultural patterns but also serves as a vehicle for transforming them. The prevailing stance among senior executives often focuses on making changes in internal processes (systems and procedures) but rarely aligns with demands related to cultural factors, limiting their transformative power (Higgins & McAllaster, 2004). Thus, the theory points out how this change is impossible without a willingness to communicate and listen differently by those in positions of authority and power (Ford, 1999), depending significantly on the individual readiness for change within the organization's members (Crawford & Mills, 2011; Leenders et al., 2020). This article makes a particular contribution to understanding the latter issue based on the individual practices of women.

A Practice-Oriented Perspective

We adopt a practice-oriented perspective inspired by Social Practices Theories (SPT), based on the definition of Reckwitz (2002, pp. 249–250), which defines practice as “a routinized type of behavior which consists of several elements interconnected to one another: forms of bodily activities, forms of mental activities, 'things' and their use, a background knowledge in the form of understanding, know-how, states of emotion, and motivational knowledge.”

SPT have their antecedents in sociological theory of the second half of the twentieth century led by Bourdieu (1977) and Giddens (1984), who used the concept of practice to underline how activity is a constitutive aspect of the social world. For some authors, practices would be mediated arrays of activity (Latour, 1992) made up of socially and technically constructed or appropriated uses and meanings (Miller, 1998). Other authors define them as sites for and modes of

critique and resistance (de Certeau, 1984; Lefebvre, 1991). Second-generation scholars have adopted the practice-oriented perspective as an effective way to understand practices in daily life, identifying three interconnected components in shaping behavior: materials (equipment and technologies), meaning (beliefs and ideas about actions or practices), and competences (knowledge, skills, and techniques) (Shove et al., 2012).

In our research, the practices approach allows us to create an analytical framework as shown in Fig. 2. This figure shows a complete formulation to contextualize our research, although we only address two specific aspects: a) the ways of linkage between COP and GIOP and how COP prevails over GIOP, and b) the ways in which women practitioners provoke reflection and action to transform sustainability practices despite structural constraints.

Methodological Approach and Methods

Case Study Context

To gain a comprehensive understanding of sustainability practices, we strategically selected a limited number of cases in Spain and conducted fieldwork in multiple sites, including various organizations and informants. This approach allowed us to get a clearer view of how sustainability practices are integrated in different companies.

In Spain, companies have shown a high receptivity to the CBE, possibly due to the important economic weight of the primary sector, which explains the prominence of those sectors associated with the CBE (Esteban & Sanz-Hernández, 2021). The implementation of circularity has also experienced an upward trend since 2015, as indicated by EU indicators (Eurostat, 2022). However, the process of change that inspires the transition to CBE is not accompanied by other structural changes, for example in employment; in CBE, only 17% of employees are women (De Cabo et al., 2023).

At the same time, we find other striking figures that indicate that 48% of Spanish companies claim to align their strategies with the SDGs of the 2030 Agenda (Spanish Government, 2020) and emphasize the goal of achieving gender equality—5 SDGs—(UN, 2015) as one of the most relevant areas. However, progress on gender approach in companies is still considered limited (EIGE, 2020), which explains the tightening of the national regulatory framework (see Fig. 3).

The eco-technological and social pathways in the Spanish context appear to be pursued independently and at varying rates (Jiménez-Caballero & Sanz-Hernández, 2024). Thus, the disconnection and asymmetry between the dimensions of sustainability within organizations arise from the lack of

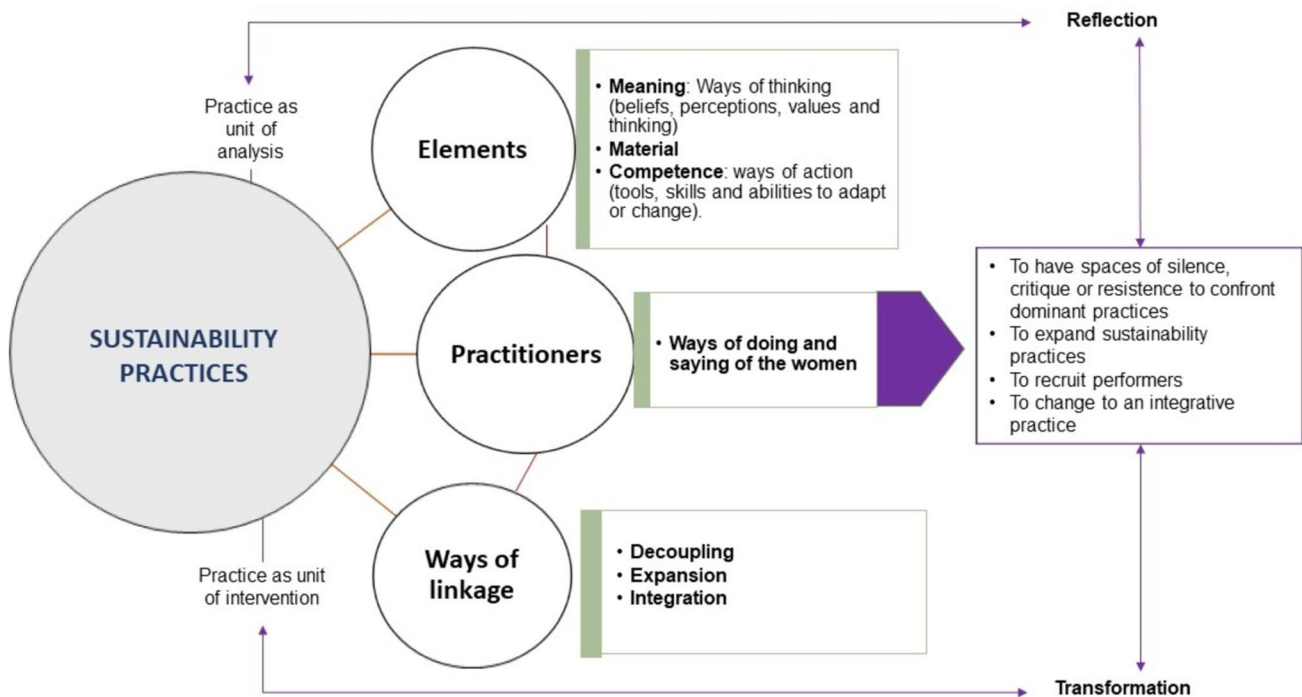


Fig. 2 The analytical framework based on the SPT

Progress towards equality in the legal framework

Directive 2002/73/EC and Directive 76/207/EEC on the implementation of the principle of equal treatment for men and women as regards access to employment, vocational training and promotion, and working conditions

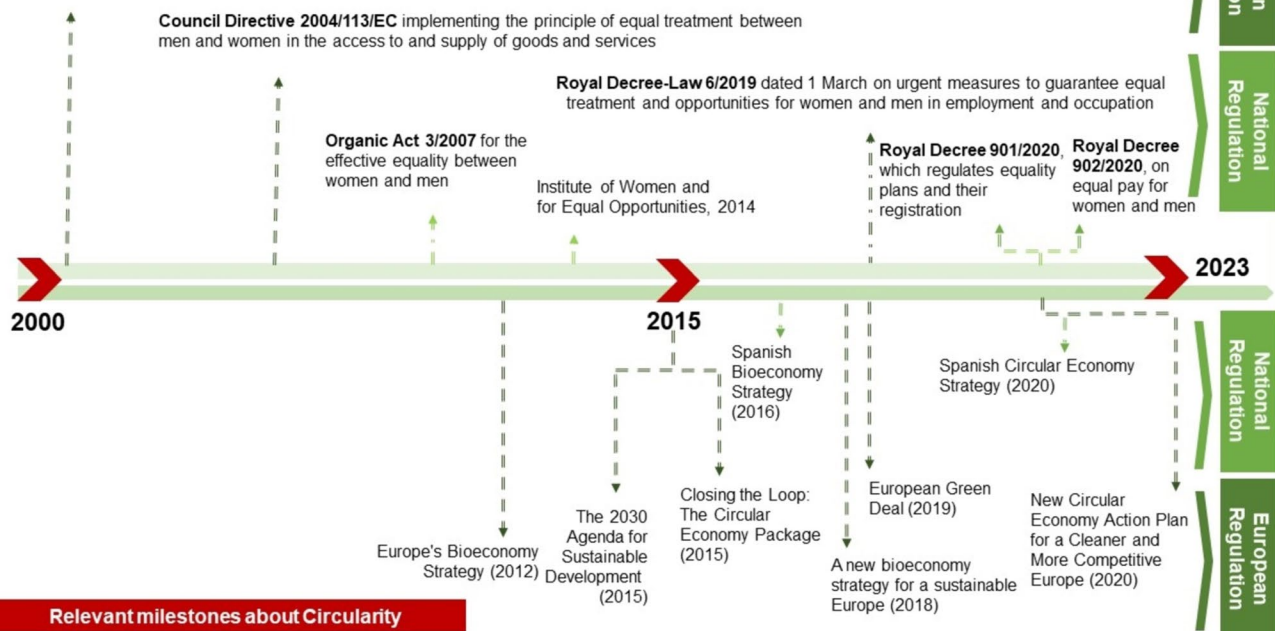


Fig. 3 Regulatory framework related to COP in CBE and GIOP

convergence between the different visions of CBE and the harmonization of their sustainable CSR practices.

The Ethnographic Method and the Potential of Comparative Organizational Ethnography (COE) for the Study of Practices

Theory of Social Practices (TSP) has been employed in the study of CSR practices, reflecting its usefulness in analyzing practices within the routine activities of everyday life, especially when seeking to address the social, cultural and material context in which they are situated (Farmaki & Stergiou, 2021). Similarly, the usefulness of the ethnographic approach to descend into the analysis of participants' pro-environmental behavior (Hargreaves, 2011) and its influence on organizations has also been highlighted, an approach that may be more limited from other non-ethnographic methods (Singh & Dickson, 2002). Thus, the ethnographic approach to organizational practices, which we refer to here as COE, is particularly appropriate given its ability to integrate the organizational and individual analytical levels, providing a behavioral change perspective over time (Hargreaves, 2011).

Based on studies that have used organizational ethnography to explore sustainability (Thaler, 2021), we propose this research approach given its relevance for ethnographic studies in pluralistic settings (Hannerz, 2003). Thus, we align

ourselves with scholars working at the interface of linkages and connections between organizations (Ybema et al., 2009).

The value of COE for our study is significant because it helps us make progress in a complex topic, not without methodological limitations. Both the potential strengths and weaknesses of COE are outlined in the following Fig. 4.

Ethnographic Data Collection Techniques and Phases

We used a qualitative research design with data collection techniques, such as observations, interviews and documentation, which are the basis of traditional ethnographies (Aguilar Delgado & Barin Cruz, 2014). This provided sufficient information about participants' practices over two years to allow a longitudinal analysis of the cases, an approach also widely used in ethnographic studies in organizations (Singh & Dickson, 2002). For follow-up data collection, we employed two interconnected research tools to produce in-depth accounts whenever possible: "shadowing," which requires a researcher to closely follow an actor (McDonald, 2005), or practices (Nicolini, 2009), and "memoing," referring to the practice of taking notes or making reflective annotations (Maxwell, 2013). To facilitate this, we utilized a reflexive journal as a tool (Aguilar Delgado & Barin Cruz, 2014), in which we recorded our concerns and personal reflections alongside our field notes.

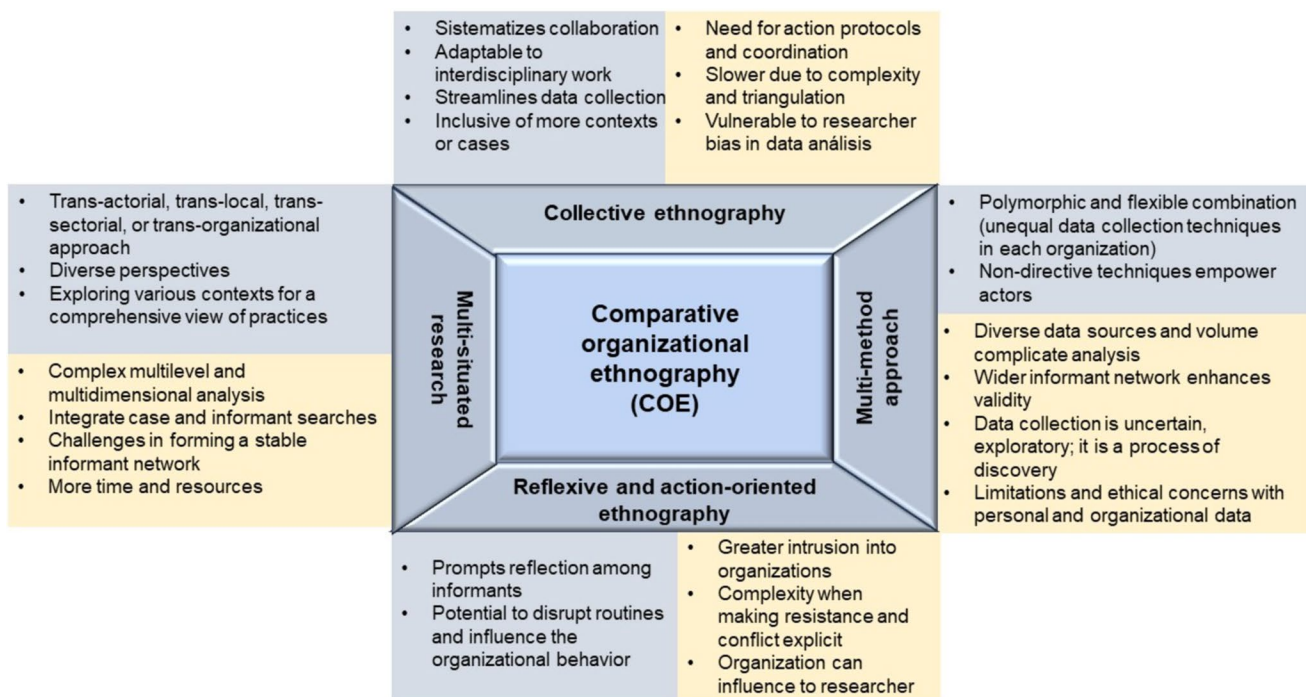


Fig. 4 COE of sustainability practices: Features, strengths, and weaknesses of the research design

This approach allowed us to critically examine our own involvement in the study, uncover personal feelings, and explore methodological justifications. We also documented the potential impacts of our presence, aligning with a reflective approach advocated by previous researchers (Singh & Dickson, 2002). This tool enabled us to identify contradictions and ambiguities in the behavior of professionals in complex and diverse settings (Putnam et al., 2016).

The data collection period spanned from July 2019 to March 2022 and consisted of the following phases:

First, we proceeded to select the companies and informants that would be part of the case. The selection process for both was complex and conducted in an iterative manner. In the case of the selected companies, they were considered “bio-economic,” representing a diversity of sectors associated with CBE, such as energy and cellulose, agricultural biotechnology, livestock and agri-food in the dairy sector, and horticulture. These companies were chosen based on (1) their size, (2) innovation within their respective sectors, and (3) their commitment to production processes aligned with gender equality and circularity principles in their corporate documents (CSR reports or equality plans). All of them have voluntarily implemented CSR standards (Appendix A in Tables 2, 3). These standards reflect their voluntary commitment to regulations in addition to mandatory regulations on ethics or sustainability, generally (although not always) associated with auditing processes that certify compliance (ISO, 2010).

In the case of informants, informal conversations were held with 15 women in managerial positions in 11 large Spanish companies. Finally, seven key informants from four companies agreed to participate, forming a stable network of informants that remained constant throughout the two years of the research process. All of them held positions of responsibility in departments such as human resource management, sustainability management, communication and finance (Appendix B in Table 4). All informants were guaranteed anonymity and their input was invaluable to the research.

Second, to gain a comprehensive understanding of sustainability practices (COP and GIOP particularly), secondary documents and materials, such as sustainability or CSR reports, equality plans and websites, were reviewed.

Third, for the ethnographic collection, mainly semi-structured interviews (via videoconference) were conducted, allowing the women themselves to highlight the most pressing issues for discussion and to propose improvements and organizational changes. Thus, the scripts address three main themes: their pro-environmental, gender-inclusive practices (both inside and outside the organization), their perceptions of the impact of their practices on the company, and assessment of their own practices (both inside and outside the organization) (Appendix C in Table 5). All interviewees

gave written informed consent, granting permission to the researchers to use the ethnographic material for their research. The interviews, which lasted between 40 and 90 min, were subsequently transcribed for in-depth analysis.

And finally, in a cross-sectional manner, the team employed extensive participant observation in a specific node of their analytical field. One of the authors assumed the dual role of researcher and collaborator in sustainability projects within that company for more than two years.

Data collection and analysis were performed iteratively and dynamically. For qualitative analysis, we used MAXQDA software, and created a list of codes, subcodes and analytical categories according to the components of the TSP that regulate the behavior (materials, meaning and competencies) of the COPs and GIOPs. The information obtained has also been interpreted from critical feminist approaches.

Results and Discussion

We highlight three main findings and areas for discussion. The first concerns the relationships between different sustainability practices, highlighting a disconnect between them at the organizational level. The second finding explores the relationship between practices and their practitioners, emphasizing the experiences of women leaders and how practices can serve as sites of domination, silence, reflection, resistance or struggle for women with sustainable values. And the third delves into the elements that contribute to women's influence in bringing change to organizations: the consistency of their practices with their values and their ethical orientation towards care and justice, and the transfer of their personal practices to professional settings.

Ways of Linking Sustainability Practices Within Organizations

We have identified three main connections (or scenarios of coexistence) of sustainability practices in organizations, analyzing how the COP and GIOP are managed and connected: decoupling (uneven growth), expansion (independent expansion of both practices, not necessarily at the same pace or with the same relevance) or integration (representing harmonization and an integrative sustainability practice) (Fig. 5).

These three scenarios can be traced by analyzing elements of the practices, such as underlying conceptualizations of sustainability (meaning), departmental structures and resources (material), or assigned tasks and competencies (competence).

Meaning of sustainability. Sustainability practices in companies transitioning to CBE are based on two ways of thinking about it, as reflected in both documents and

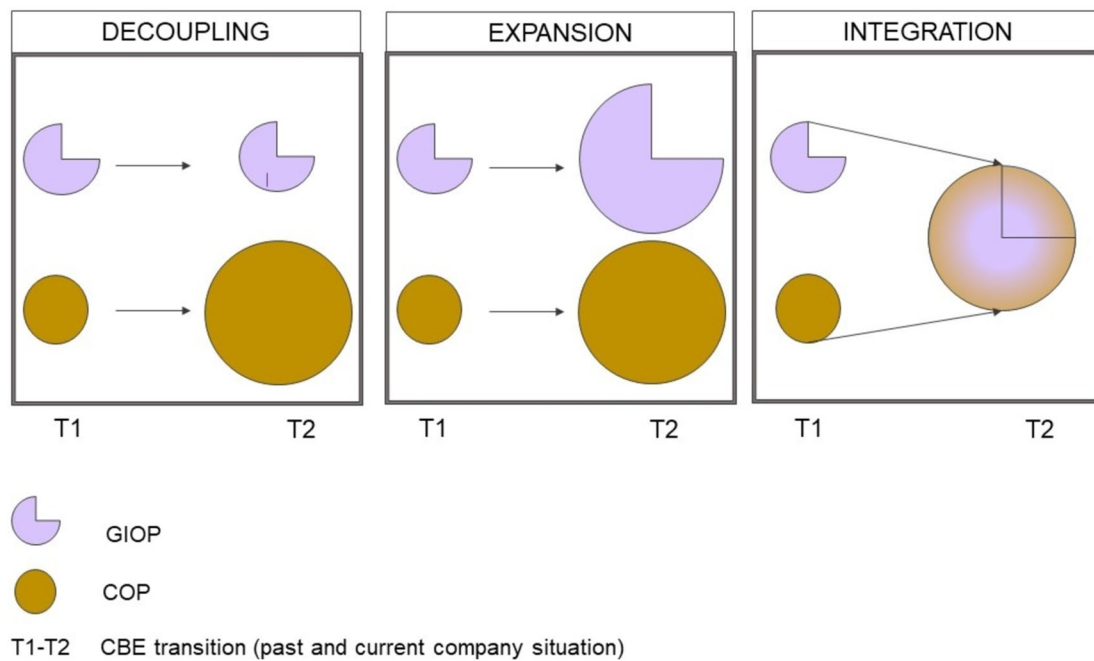


Fig. 5 Development scenarios of COP and GIOP as sustainability practices in organizations

interviews. The first incorporates a narrow view that focuses solely on implementing circularity in industrial processes and questions the self-attributed sustainable business label. The second is an extended sustainability vision that adds social and gender approach to the principle of environmental protection. All the women in our study reveal an extended conceptualization of sustainability. “For me, sustainability means being respectful with the planet, but also with the people who inhabit it” (C1/P7/I1). “We are talking about sustainability in a very broad sense, and it has to permeate all decision-making” (C2/P2/I3). This contradicts the widespread disconnect that still exists in the analysis of the relationships between sustainability dimensions in practice. All the studied companies are in a process of transition towards an expanded view of sustainability, as the importance of balanced integration of sustainability dimensions, but the development appears to be disharmonious and unbalanced.

Materials, resources and tasks. The CBE transition also involves departmental restructurings and reallocations of resources, infrastructure, and tasks that are initially strategic and economic in nature. On one hand, the incorporation of sustainability practices occurs as a reaction to internal quality or environmental business problems, and as an adaptive anticipation of new markets and customers on the other. All the analyzed companies have significantly evolved towards harmonizing the three dimensions (reflected, for example, in sustainability reports), although only C3 has taken an additional step to integrate quality, people, and sustainability within the same department. Similarly, all companies have

experienced active growth in social inclusion programs, although they perceive that in terms of gender equality they are “being dragged” (C1/P1/I2): “The social aspect needs to be worked on more. That is difficult and it will cost” (C1/P7/I3). The asymmetries of relevance between the components of practice are evident. In comparison with the eco-technological dimension, which is fully integrated into the essence of all the organizations analyzed, described as “the blood of the organization” (C4/P6/I3), “the DNA” (C1/P1/I1), the social dimension is described as underfunded, slow, and controversial, given the perceived pace of change (both observed and registered in social indicators) and the lack of proactivity in active policies (beyond legal requirements). C2 is the company most committed to achieving equal pay for men and women (by implementing formal practices to this end), followed by C4. The evolution towards an extended conceptualization of sustainability has triggered a more harmonious development, albeit independently (scenario b), framed by “a major cultural transformation in the company in both fields” (C2/P2/I3).

In summary, the research highlights the disconnection between COP and GIOP in business strategies, emphasizing the predominance of eco-technological formal practices in companies. As a result, all the analyzed companies are situated in the transition from a decoupling scenario to one with a greater expansion of the social dimension (Fig. 6). Compared to the others, C2 is the closest to harmonization.

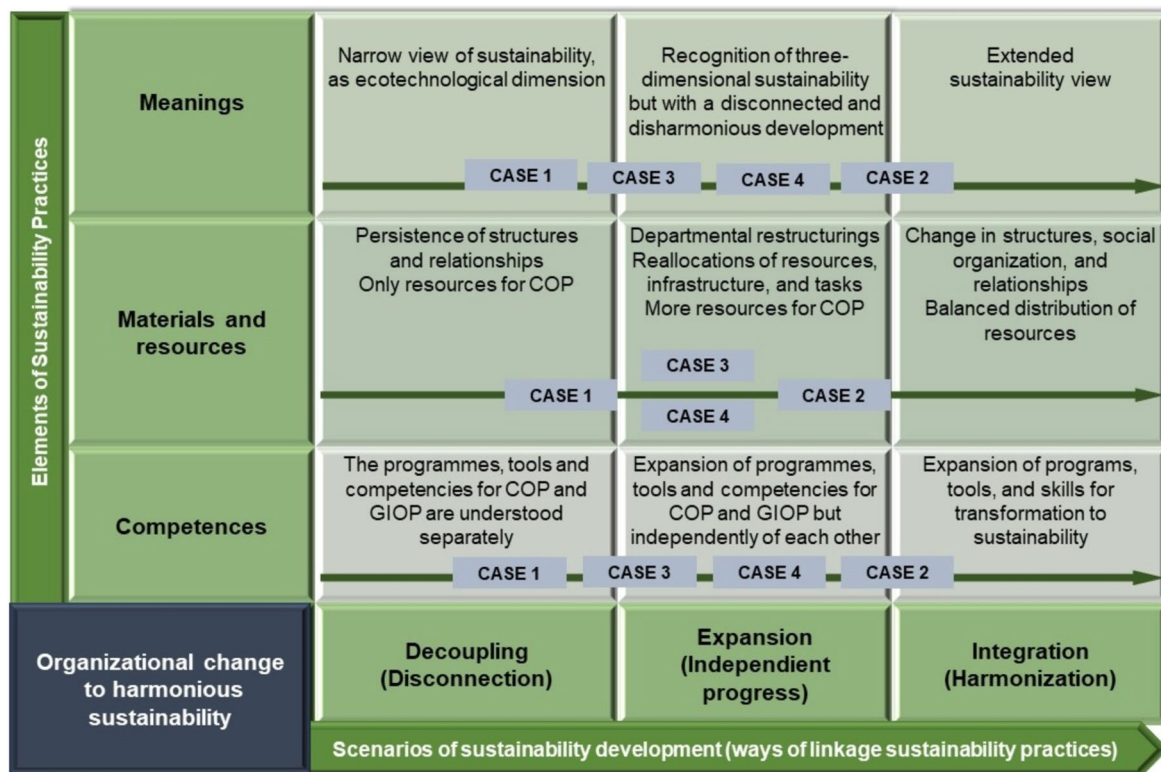


Fig. 6 Interpretive matrix of organizational change concerning a harmonious sustainability development in companies

Women as Practitioners: Pragmatic and Corporate Approach to Feminism

When analyzing the GIOP, especially through interviews with women, various forms of feminism arise, adapting to or circumventing existing dominance structures within companies.

Practice as a Silenced and Corporate Feminism

Ana, one of the participants, refrains from identifying as a feminist and distinguishes her approach to equality from what she perceives as extreme ideologies: “banner feminism” or “feminazi” ideology (C1/P7/I1); Both are pejorative concepts used to refer to the noisy and carefree feminism presented by the media. This distancing could be interpreted through a class lens by understanding that this type of femininity transgresses the boundaries of middle-class respectability (Maclaran, 2015). Instead, she focuses on demonstrating her capabilities and equality through her professional practice. She does not accept formal affirmative action practices because “it makes us weak” and because it’s an unethical practice, showing resistance to its implementation, in line with some studies (Jammaers, 2023). Her way of understanding the struggle for equality is materialized in her

professional practice, in a leadership based on demonstrating every day that she is better than the men around her. Ana believes in the existence of gender differences between men and women and justifies hidden (informal) positive discrimination practices to pragmatically navigate everyday challenges: “I think that a woman has a great capacity for work (...) women are more consistent” (C1/P7/I2). In this way, she silently aligns herself with a corporate feminism that primarily focuses on individual struggle to achieve women’s rights in the race to attain the privileges of men (Abazeri, 2022).

Practice as resistance from hope in gradual transition. Alex is a passionate activist who firmly believes that “the world will be better and more dignified, with greater rights, possibilities, and humanity if women stand at its center” (C1/P1/I1). She emphasizes the remarkable professional performance of women within the company, showcasing their numerous achievements. However, she notes the lack of inclusive practices in management structures to recognize and integrate women’s talents and the lack of courage among those who have been silenced in meetings (C1/P1/I1). Driven by a justice-seeking feminism, which aims to correct or redress gender injustices and defend women’s rights, Alex advocates for informal practices as spaces that foster freedom of creative

expression without limitations, where every voice matters equally (C1/P1/I1). She calls on companies to adopt a more proactive role, going beyond compliance with laws and regulations, and instead taking the lead in promoting gender equality and implementing more formal practices (C1/P1/I1). Alex believes that organizations can embark on an “internal re-education” journey to redefine their environmental practices and embrace a new understanding of women's contributions. Despite her feminist convictions, Alex's story reveals a paradoxical blend of determination and acceptance of the existing power dynamics within her organization that align with feminist critiques of the neoliberalization of feminism in companies (Grosser & McCarthy, 2019). She hopes that over time, with generational change, the inevitability of equality will be realized, while also acknowledging the need for gradual progress (C1/P1/I1); This is a clear example of the gradual and normative transition advocated by neoliberal feminism as a pathway to a sustainable society (see Table 1).

Functional Corporate Feminism and Leadership

Eva embodies functional feminism in her leadership role, fully integrating her avowed feminism into her professional practice. She holds a position in the company with a more harmonious socio-ecological development scenario (C2), actively promoting policies to integrate GIOP into business strategy (C2/P2/I1). Her leadership style is dynamic, energetic, and internally recognized, bringing a sense of fulfillment that she describes as “the culmination of my life's work” (C2/P2/I1). The company's formal practices are rooted in grassroots feminist movements, particularly the Spanish social movement of 2018, aiming to rectify existing inequalities. Eva's management approach is influenced by the daily experiences and knowledge shared among women in her organization. Among the women interviewed, Eva holds the highest position within the company's management hierarchy, feeling confident and comfortable in her role, attributing her success not to luck but to her personal merits. She is well aware of her capacity to create meaningful change and actively utilizes her position to advocate for equality within the organization. Despite knowing that not everyone may agree with her, she remains undeterred, as her actions are guided by a genuine desire for positive outcomes (C2/P2/I3). Her feminism has adapted to the existing power structures, and with a strong sense of pragmatism, she tries to navigate within the organization to impact on sustainability practices from within.

Practices of Empowered Super Heroines Shaping Organizational Alignment

Cristina and Isabel embody a professional practice rooted in strong self-esteem. They perceive being a successful professional as a culmination of their personal growth, seamlessly adapting to the organizational framework. What sets them apart is their profound internalization of an inclusive “we” mindset that transcends individual gender identities, emphasizing the importance of balance (C4/P6/I3) and gender-neutral mechanisms of change. They acknowledge the immense power and potential possessed by women: “Without minimizing them, I truly believe that women have substantial power and potency” (C3/P4/I3). While their discourse of being “mega super heroines” driving transformation might seem somewhat preconceived, they also acknowledge that their influence is contingent on the organizational context, which can either facilitate or hinder their efforts. They recognize the role of luck as a contributing factor in their professional accomplishments and personal satisfaction (C3/P4/I3). Thus, they emphasize the usefulness of more informal practices.

In summary, our findings reflect a mix of reaffirming corporate feminist practices among the interviewed women and internal conflicts generated by the need to adapt to dominant structures of the organizations. All the women interviewed, from the perspective of liberal and corporate feminism, seek ways to advance in GIOP without confronting the capitalist system in which their companies operate, mostly claiming more informal than formal practices and often homogenizing women's experiences and contributions. Across all interviews, a functionalist perspective rooted in organizational norms emerges, even among the more activist profiles (Bleijenbergh, 2018). This pragmatic approach tends to prioritize non-confrontational and consensus-driven feminism that satisfies both superiors and subordinates. While the women distance themselves from 'banner feminism', they may still utilize it to instigate internal practices promoting change within their organizations (C2/P2). They perceive consensus as the most effective strategy to expand and transform sustainability practices in a gradual and normative transition (Stirling, 2015), recognizing its efficacy in mobilizing agents of change, rather than relying solely on confrontational methods.

Transformative Power of Women Practitioners: Expanding and Shaping Sustainability Practices

The contributions from participants are highly limited by structural constraints, power relationships, and their position within the company (Waylen, 2014). Despite this, there are facilitators of transformation, factors that mediate so that small “reforms” can expand (Temper et al., 2018). The

interviewed women exert influence on the sustainability behavior of others through small everyday actions, while also being influenced by the behavior of others.

These women share their experiences of continuous interaction across personal, domestic, organizational, territorial, and global scales, emphasizing the inseparability of thoughts, emotions, and actions at different levels (C4/P5/I2). The ways in which these women expand sustainability practices and recruit participants depend in part, on the distribution and relationships among the elements relevant to practice (Shove et al., 2012). In this case, the role of women in the transformation of sustainability practices is amplified when there are harmonious relationships between the values and actions of sustainable practices. We have identified three mediating factors that enhance their transformative potential within organizations which are explained in the following sections (Fig. 7).

Aligning Values: Promoting Coherence for Sustainable Practice

One feature that is observed in companies having greater comprehensive sustainability management is the harmonious internal articulation of the “meaning” component (ways of thinking), specifically with regard to values. This may be understood as the proximity to the relevance granted by women and the organization to certain values, and their prioritization in daily practices. Values are expressed as general principles “in terms of good or bad, better or worse, desirability or avoidance” (Leiserowitz et al., 2006) and guide practices. In our study, we consider three distinct levels: at the most abstract level, sustainable development emphasizes three commonly competing values: economic

development, environmental protection, and social progress/equity. Women who support these values and make decisions in organizations must choose between them. The tendency is for balance as an option for some (C2 and C4). Here, the job position mediates the women's prioritization of individual values. Thus, managers in the finance department recall that social is a “luxury” that companies can only consider after “ensuring economic sustainability” (C4/P5/I3). They all accept that prioritization means matching needs to satisfiers without questioning the economic perspective of sustainability. They recognize that humanism is a disguise for “economicism”: “We are convinced because it is good for business” (C2/P2/I3).

At a personal level, the interviews highlight three values at stake: self-direction, conformity, and universalism (Schwartz, 2012) which they prioritize differently. Thus, the relative importance granted to the multiplicity of values guides their individual practices and conditions the implementation of COP and GIOP practices in the company.

Universalism is connected with altruism as a motivation for understanding, appreciation, and protection of the welfare of others and nature (Schwartz, 2012). Interviewed women value the needs of others and orient their practices towards caring for the environment and people. This connection between altruism and environmentalism has been highlighted in studies using a gender perspective (Dietz et al., 2002), based on two connected explanatory theoretical approaches: the theory of socialization and the social role theory. According to these theories, women might be inclined towards caregiving due to different socialization patterns compared to men (Vicente-Molina et al., 2018) or the expectation that this role is assigned to them (Ahmad et al., 2021).



Fig. 7 Elements of social practices that increase the transformative potential of sustainable practices in organizations

Conformity relates to the idea that managers inhibit their desire to act since they anticipate that certain proposals may disrupt or undermine the smooth interaction with the company's management and functioning (Ford, 1999). This behavior is linked to an awareness of the power relationships existing in the company and of the individual's possibilities of impacting within. These beliefs may underlie certain expressed feelings of frustration, helplessness or guilty acceptance of resignation (C1) or the understanding and acceptance of the limits established by the organization in holding certain roles: "you have to be able to understand how far you can go," the acceptance that "there are things we cannot enter into" (C3/P4/I3). Again, the counter point is marked by Eva (C2) with a "non-conforming" attitude that may be the result of a more successful female professional career.

Self-direction relates to the possibility of developing independent thought and action which includes choice, creation and exploration. In C1, women view individual and creative action as being highly limited. This contrasts with the interviewed manager from C2 who believes that she is an agent and promoter of change, and who believes that her achievement has been shared and supported by the organization: "The value I place on caring for people influences the organizational climate and gender equality" (C2/P2/I3).

Our study highlights the three afore mentioned values and emphasizes the presence of value tensions at two levels. At the personal level, women navigate their internal value tensions through various adaptive practices (Bleijenbergh, 2018). Two values that have been observed to compete with each other are achievement and conformity. Only one interviewee openly asserts individual merit (C4/P5/I3), while others derive pride from contributing to organizational achievements (once again, prioritizing the organization over the self), the personal fulfillment derived from rewarding work (which reinforces their universalism) (C1/P7/I1), and compensation for the frustration caused by external obstacles: "It is often very frustrating because I would like change to be much faster and there are still many things to change (...) I do not end up receiving what I expect." (C1/P7/I1). Value alignment with top management (not only in terms of values but also in how they are combined) and a comprehensive understanding and appreciation of all company departments appear to be facilitating factors for a more productive and rapid expansion of sustainability practices.

Ethical Orientation of the Practices

The harmonious development of practices is further strengthened when business practices are grounded in ethical reflection and action (Rolston III, 2012). This positions the well-being of individuals and the environment as a priority in decision-making processes.

In our study, ethical reflection and action manifest through two fundamental practices that frequently emerge in the narratives of women: the ethical practice of care (Phillips, 2019) which, stems from the moral duty characteristic a deontological justice perspective (Triana et al., 2012) and which also advocates for a profound transformation of organizational power structures, a characteristic objective of the transformative social justice approach (Fraser, 2013).

A care-oriented ethic motivates the women's practices in the majority of narratives, embodying the notion of individual responsibility alongside a sense of connection and ownership with the object of care: "Just like taking care of your home, taking care of the environment feels like it's something of your own, doesn't it?" (C2/P2/I3). Motherhood often enters the narrative at this point: "Work is very important, but taking care of my children is the most significant work of my life because they are mine" (C1/P7/I1). The ethic of care is presented as a matter of sensitivity, a trait often associated with femininity (C3/P4/I1), which may underlie interpersonal conflicts, interdepartmental conflicts, or hinder substantial changes (due to the lack of sensitivity among male managers). The absence of critical discourses on care, motherhood, and the feminization of environmental responsibilities characterizes these positions.

Even some women themselves accept a "greater capacity for care," which exemplifies the perpetuation of traditional gender roles (cultural background) (C3/P4/I1). Hence, it is not uncommon to see roles reserved for women often revolving around the social caregiver image. However, some women (C2/P2/I2) recognize the risk of exploiting the connection between women and care and all seek to break this association in their formal and informal practices within the organization. For example, by promoting paternity leave among men to "make visible in the organization that family responsibilities belong to both sexes" (C2/P2/I3). Thus, it can be seen how their ethical practice of caring for the environment and people (their own children and those of other members of the organization) is based on duty and they seek to avoid stereotypes and perpetuate gender differences. In line with this, in C2 (where most progress has been made in GIOP), the organizational moral discourse is based on caring for both people (of the organization) and the environment.

Nevertheless, their discourse around justice reflects how an approach to justice based on meritocracy or the achievement of individual rights (equalizing women with men) predominates (Ana, C1). This ethical orientation does not seem to favor the implementation and management of GIOP. It aligns with a corporate feminism that prioritizes values such as meritocracy, thus, contributing to the reproduction of organizational inequality (Amis et al., 2020) and individualism, which perpetuates the image of the individual heroine as the sole driver of her own professional success,

without recognizing the role of networks and collaboration (Jammaers, 2023).

Thus, the ethics of care reflected in the interviews is not without bias, as it often falls into an “organizational maternalism” that acts as a mechanism of control over those being cared for (instead of emphasizing interdependence).

Transformative Practices for Change

Finally, Appendix D in Table 6 details the competencies and tasks involved in transferring participants' personal practices to organizational settings, and vice versa, highlighting individual acts of resistance and resilience within the latter.

The personal trajectories presented by our interviewees reveal a common attribute: women's high adaptability and resilience, demonstrated through various individual resistance practices implemented within the organizational context (de Certeau, 1984; Lefebvre, 1991). Diary practices act as a subtle yet powerful catalyst for change, with women managers believing that by altering perceptions and mindsets through micro-level daily practices, they can reduce inequality and drive changes in organizational power structures. However, they differ in their views on timing and their confidence in their ability to make an impact. While C2 appears to have a sense of control over the scope of their contributions, C1, C3, and C4 are influenced by the broader context. As one participant expressed, “I may not be able to change the world, but I can make a difference in everything around me – from my home to the company” (C2/P2/I3).

Conclusions

This article concludes with three contributions that allow us to move towards the implementation of more harmonious CSR practices committed to integral and fair SD from the perspective of women with sustainable values who lead departments in CBE companies.

Firstly, relevant knowledge is provided to promote the implementation of CSR practices in organizations (Zu, 2023) that can also benefit a more comprehensive and inclusive sustainability (D'Amato et al., 2019) within them. This contribution is particularly relevant for those companies intending to orient their CS towards SD. From a comparison of the implementation of formal COP and GIOP, it can be seen how almost all companies have integrated the former into their business strategy but are still in the process of integrating the latter, reflecting the need for CBE companies to harmonize their SD-oriented CSR practices.

Second, the study extends the empirical evidence dedicated to understanding how women members of

organizations with sustainable values influence the implementation, expansion and harmonization of sustainable CSR practices (Dagestani et al., 2024; Esposito et al., 2023). In this regard, a greater harmonization of sustainable practices is seen in the company where the woman with a more non-conformist attitude towards organizational constraints is found (Eva, C2).

And, thirdly, this study contributes to contemplate the COE as a methodological approach that allows us to delve into the different sustainable practices from a gender and comparative case approach. In this sense, we expose the values that mediate the sustainable practices of women interviewed in organizations and how the alignment of these with the rest of the levels of management has facilitated the transfer of these practices to the organization.

The results show how the participants' ethical orientation towards care favors the harmonization of sustainable practices in their personal lives and, when they employ a social justice approach in their transfer of these practices to the organization, they favor more transformative changes by orienting organizational practice towards the reduction of internal injustices.

Overall, we highlight how those women in organizational spaces with strongly values-driven practices can favor progress towards harmonious sustainability from within organizations. Thus, our research shows that while it is hoped that CBE can move towards SD, the challenges faced by women managers with sustainable values in driving transformative sustainability practices in companies expose the risk that this economic model may not contribute to comprehensive and inclusive sustainability, as emphasized by the policies that drive it (EC, 2018, 2020). Consequently, we point out the relevance of public policies on CBE to include measurement and monitoring tools to harmonize the progress of the three pillars of sustainability in organizations committed to this model.

Future research can extend the study to inclusive practices by adopting an intersectional approach that incorporates the perspectives of various stakeholders with an open, broad and inclusive lens (by gender, class, ethnicity, role), within companies to analyze in detail accepted and contested COPs and GIOPs. Thus, broadening the focus beyond pro-sustainability organizations could produce different results, especially if all three dimensions of sustainability are considered.

Appendix A

See Tables 2 and 3.

Table 2 Spanish Companies selected for research and inclusion criteria

Company	Sector associated to CBE	Location	No of workers	% women in company	Alliances/networks	Three dimensions of sustainability (Table 3.)
C1	Agricultural biotechnology	North of Spain Rural Area 1 plant R + D + i (head-quarters) 18 manufacturing plants (10 national + 8 international)	1000–2000 workers	25%	YES- AN1	Sustainability Report CSR Orientation. GRI. Equality Plan D1.1/ D1.2/D1.3 // D2.1 // D3.1/D3.2
C2	Cellulose and energy	North of Spain Rural Area 2 biofactories 6 biomass factories 8 energy plants	1000–2000 workers	20%	YES- AN1	Sustainability Report CSR Orientation. GRI. Equality Plan D1.1/ D1.2/D1.3/D1.4/D1.5/ D1.6 // D2.1/D2.2 // D3.1
C3	Food group	North of Spain Rural Área 4 cooperatives 1st. Degree—more than 300 partners—2 production plants—3 service sites—1 organic fertilizer management plant	500–1000 workers	62%	YES—AN2	Sustainability Report CSR Orientation. GRI. Equality Plan D1.1/ D1.2/D1.3/D1.7/D1.8/ D1.9 // D2.2/D2.3/ D2.4/D2.5/D2.6/D2.7 // D3.1/D3.5/D3.6
C4	Dairy company	North of Spain Rural Área 7 factories 1 thermal recovery plant	1000–2000 workers	25%	YES—AN3	Sustainability Report CSR Orientation. GRI, Equality Plan D1.1/ D1.2/D1.3/D1.8/ D1.9/D1.10 // D2.1/ D2.5/D2.6/D2.7/D2.8 // D3.1/D3.7/D3.8

The selection of the companies is based on the knowledge of the researchers of the bioeconomy sector in Spain

Inclusion criteria of companies: (a) CBE oriented companies, (b) Quality and environmental care, waste recovery and efficient energy management certifications, (c) Rural territories, (d) Female managers with professional experience and positions of responsibility in the management of one of the dimensions of sustainability (economic, environmental, social), (e) Main sectors associated to bioeconomy in Spain: dairy-livestock; agriculture; energy and paper, (f) Certifications and awards on social practices, and g) Sustainability report and SDGs orientation

Table 3 Criteria of three dimensions of sustainability (Environmental; Social; Economic)

D1. Environmental dimension	<p>D1.1 ISO 14000, ISO 14001, environmental management systems. (https://www.aenor.com/certificacion/medio-ambiente)</p> <p>D1.2 AENOR- Zero Waste (reuse, recycling or energy recovery). (https://www.aenor.com/certificacion/medio-ambiente)</p> <p>D1.3 ISO 50001 Energy Management System Certification. (https://www.aenor.com/certificacion/medio-ambiente)</p> <p>D1.4 FSC®: FSC®: Chain of Custody Certification and Forest Management. (https://fsc.org/es/certificacion-de-cadena-de-custodia)</p> <p>D1.5 EMAS “Eco-Management and Audit Scheme” for the development of a Circular Economy. (https://ec.europa.eu/environment/emas/index_en.htm)</p> <p>D1.6 SURE Sustainable Resources Verification Scheme. (https://sure-system.org/en/)</p> <p>D1.7 SGE Standard 21. Ethical and Socially Responsible Management System, proposed by Forética. (https://foretica.org/sge21/)</p> <p>D1.8 Zero Emissions CO2 Calculated: certifies the veracity of the calculation of the Carbon Footprint of a product/service, that is, the set of emissions of Greenhouse Gases (GHG). (https://www.aenor.com/certificacion/medio-ambiente)</p> <p>D1.9 100% Circular: certification of the Circular Economy Business Strategy. (https://www.aenor.com/certificacion/medio-ambiente)</p> <p>D1.10 PAS 2060:2014 Standard: Carbon Neutrality. (https://www.aenor.com/certificacion/medio-ambiente)</p>
D2. Social dimension: equality, conciliation, well-being in organizations	<p>D2.1 OHSAS 18001, occupational health and safety management. (https://www.isotools.org/normas/riesgos-y-seguridad/ohsas-18001/)</p> <p>D2.2 ISO 45001, Health and Safety Management System. (https://www.aenor.com/certificacion/riesgos-y-seguridad/seguridad-salud-trabajo-45001)</p> <p>D2.3 GRASP GLOBAL GAP, Commitment to worker health, safety and welfare in agriculture. (https://www.globalgap.org/es/for-producers/globalg.a.p.-add-on/grasp/what-is-GRASP/index.html)</p> <p>D2.4 Norma SGE 21. Ethical and Socially Responsible Management System, proposed by Forética. (https://foretica.org/sge21/)</p> <p>D2.5 Certified B Corps Seal is a standard for social and environmental performance, public transparency, and legal accountability. (https://www.bcorpSpain.es/)</p> <p>D2.6 AENOR/SIGO Healthy Organization Management System. (https://www.aenor.com/certificacion/responsabilidad-social/empresa-saludable)</p> <p>D2.7 FRC/Family Responsible Company: international certification for conciliation management in the company “Good practice” for promoting conciliation management policies within companies. (https://www.masfamilia.org/)</p> <p>D2.8 AENOR EFR: AENOR Work/Life Balance Certificate. (https://www.en.aenor.com/certificacion/igualdad-diversidad)</p>
D3. Economic dimension	<p>D3.1 ISO 9001 Quality Management Certification. (https://www.aenor.com/certificacion/calidad/iso-9001)</p> <p>D3.2 ISO/IEC 17025 accreditation of testing and/or calibration laboratories. (https://www.enac.es/fundamentos-de-la-norma-une-en-iso/iec-17025)</p> <p>D3.3 Global Gap for the consumer. Represents transparency and certified and responsible production. (https://www.globalgap.org/es/)</p> <p>D3.4 BRCGS Food Safety, approach to managing the safety, integrity, legality, product quality and operations controls of the food, manufacturing, processing and packaging industries. (https://www.brcgs.com/our-standards/food-safety/)</p> <p>D3.5 CCPAE, organic farming production certification (http://www.ccpae.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=544&Itemid=255&lang=ca_ES)</p> <p>D3.6 SMETA, Ethical Trade Audit for Sedex Members. (https://www.sedex.com/es/nuestros-servicios/auditoria-smeta/)</p> <p>D3.7 EFQM Quality and Excellence as a way for self-assessment and determination of continuous improvement processes. (http://www.efqm.es/)</p> <p>D3.8 UNE 19601 Crime prevention certification for organizations reduce risks and foster an ethical business culture (https://www.en.aenor.com/certificacion/compliance-y-buen-gobierno/gestion-prevencion-delitos)</p>

Appendix B

See Table 4.

Table 4 Network of informants

Company	Fictitious name*	Age	Education	Position	Career in company	Code*
C1	Alex	52	Organizational Communication Marketing	Marketing Director	> 5 years	C1/P1/I1 C1/P1/I2 C1/P1/I3
	Ana	40	Industrial Engineer Quality	Sustainability Department Director	> 10 years	C1/P7/I1 C1/P7/I2 C1/P7/I3
	Eva	62	Law Human Resources	Human Resources Director	> 10 years	C2/P2/I1 C2/P2/I2 C2/P2/I3
C3	Alicia	50	Psychology Human Resources	Human Resources Director	< 5 years	C3/P3/I1
	Isabel	41	Psychology Communication Management Food Business Management	Director of People, Quality and Sustainability	< 5 years	C3/ P4/I1 C3/ P4/I2 C3/P4/I3
C4	Sara	52	Economics and Business Adminis- tration Corporate Finance Management Food Business Management	Director of Finance and Information Systems	> 15 years	C4/P5/I1 C4/P5/I2 C4/P5/I3
	Cristina	46	Law Human Resources	Head of Training, Internal Commu- nication	> 15 years	C4/P6/I1 C4/P6/I2 C4/P6/I3

*Codes: C (company)/P (participant) n° (order)/ I (n°) (interview number). In order to preserve the identity of the participants and maintain our commitment to absolute anonymity of their identity and institutional affiliation, we have assigned them a fictitious name that has nothing to do with their real name

Appendix C

See Table 5.

Table 5 Questionnaire used during the semi-structured interviews

Questions	Objectives
Do you consider yourself a person committed to environmental protection? Why?	Assess their environmental awareness
In your private life, what activities do you engage in to promote environmental care? Are you able to carry out these activities with the same freedom in the organizational context?	
What do you consider to be the fairest relationship we could have concerning environmental care?	
Do you see yourself reflected in the discourse that states that the role of women is crucial for a just and sustainable transition?	Determine if they align with ecofeminist ideas and relate them to the environment
I will read you the following statement related to ecofeminism: Ecofeminism is a philosophy that invites us to change our relationship with Nature (Puleo, 2013, p. 90). From this perspective, it questions what has been happening with practices and actions concerning the environment, the effects this is having on bodies, the resources necessary for living, our relationship with the ecosystem, and ultimately questions whether what has been previously considered good and conducive to well-being is, in fact, the opposite, do you feel identified with this idea?	
Do you consider yourself a feminist? Why?	
What have been your goals (both personal and professional) to achieve a more feminist world? What steps have you taken to reach them (or attempt to)?	Understand their position on feminism
Within your goals as a feminist, what do you think is the first step to raise awareness among your immediate surroundings?	
Do you think you have been able to convey your pro-environmental vision to the company? And your feminist ideals? How? Or why not?	
What similarities do you see between environmental care actions and caregiving tasks at home? Thinking about yourself, what qualities/skills do you believe have enabled you to develop this culture in your environment? Or what qualities do you think are necessary to bring about change? Why do you think this often comes more from women?	Confirm whether they identify as ecofeminists
Do you feel that you can contribute to a more sustainable and inclusive global change through your company?	
Do you notice receptiveness in the business environment to your proposals for cultural change towards environmental care? In what ways do you notice this?	
What are you most proud of as an agent of change towards greater organizational feminism? And if we consider not just gender, do you think your efforts have reached other areas of your company, improving sustainability?	Identify the ways in which they are translating their personal vision into the organization
What practices—actions—do you develop to transfer your caregiving skills to the company's environmental care culture?	
What do you feel is missing or what would you love to achieve, not just in terms of gender, but in any area that would support sustainable development?	

Appendix D

See Table 6.

Table 6 Personal practices of women to organizational settings

Competencies, knowledge, and skills in transferring personal practices to organizational settings	
<p>Maintaining a particular attitude towards introducing changes: Women exhibit resistance within a specific position while redefining their own feminism or asserting the power of women's knowledge on equal terms (C1/P1/I1, C2/P2/I3)</p>	<p>Fostering inclusiveness and consensus-building: Women implement practices to encourage inclusiveness, consensus-building, and reorganizing established ways of thinking and acting. Special attention is given to addressing the concerns of men who may feel threatened by these changes (C2/P2/I3). However, these practices can also lead to women experiencing "female burnout" (C3/P4/I3), particularly when take on excessive responsibilities, such as the "all behind my back" leadership style (C1/P7/I1) or acting as "mega superheroines" (C3/P4/I3)</p>
<p>Creative and critical management: Women adopt a critical stance, engaging in reflective analysis of the environment to challenge prevailing practices and knowledge. This approach involves using cognitive criticism and creative imagination to deconstruct, reconstruct, and transform existing norms and practices. For some women, our research has led to the activation of this revisionist mechanism and the incorporation of a more critical and creative approach (C2, C4)</p>	<p>Pursuing less ambitious but sustainable practices aligned with organizational pragmatism: Women opt for consensual practices, acknowledging that change may be delayed over time or achieved through generational succession. They rely on the gradual accumulation of progress and trust that justice will eventually become a framework for business action (C1/P1/I1, C2/P2/I3). Here, there is a risk of becoming a change-delaying practice. "It is a question of time" (C1/P1/I1)</p>
<p>Implementing communication strategies: Overall, women believe that effective communication is essential for the implementation and management of GIOP. From a stereotypical perspective, some interviewees attribute an innate communicative quality to women, which they can leverage to mitigate male suspicion in predominantly male work environments (C1/P1/I3)</p>	<p>Exchanging and combining different types of ordinary knowledge: Women draw from various sources of knowledge, including formal learning, family legacies of female experiences, and current ethnographic work experiences. These exchanges have multidirectional impacts across spheres and participants, influencing both business practices and self-knowledge (C2/P2/I3, C3/P4/I2)</p>
<p>Advocating for equality practices as a means of training: Women emphasize the importance of equality practices in identifying unconscious biases and making them visible (C2/P2/I3). Practitioners are encouraged to openly apprehend, discuss, and question implicit and explicit organizational practices (Leenders et al., 2020)</p>	<p>Advocating for opportunities for self-organization, collaboration, and networks, all women demonstrate remarkable organizational skills and approach their profession with the maxim: "It's all about organizing" (C3/P3/I1). However, a notable incongruity arises from the gender bias among female managers, as evidenced by their preference to surround themselves with women, driven by a 'gender sympathy' that perpetuates discriminatory patterns rooted in traditional stereotypes (C1/P7/I2)</p>

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