Caring for people and nature

A Summary Report on Green Care
and place-based sustainability in Finland

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Dirk Roep, Laura Secco and Maria Uosukainen**

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Contents

THIS REPORT'S HIGHLIGHTS

About Green Care in Finland:

• Green Care is a growing phenomenon in Finland, with almost **800 service providers**. It covers a wide range of diversified services and is distributed evenly across the provinces;

• The Green Care Finland Association has over **500 members** and is the largest network of Green Care professionals currently operating at national level in Finland. Since 2010, it has contributed to the development of the field through networking, development, training, and certification activities;

• According to the **Green Care Finland Association**, Green Care practices include: i) therapy and rehabilitation services, ii) health and wellbeing promotion services, iii) foster and education services, iv) supported wellbeing promotion activities, and v) voluntary and self-motivated recreation activities;

• In order to guarantee the quality and legitimacy of services, the Green Care Finland Association currently certifies service providers with two different **'Quality Marks'**— 'Nature Care' and 'Nature Empowerment'. These certifications help prospective clients select services that align with their needs and expectations;

• Green Care practices have the potential to support Finland's national sustainable development strategy (titled **"The Finland We Want by 2050"**). The strategy is aligned with several **Sustainable Development Goals** (SDGs), including, health and well-being (SDG 3), reduced inequalities (SDG 10), responsible consumption and production (SDG 12), and life on land (SDG 15).

• The **COVID-19 pandemic** has highlighted the potential of Green Care practices to promote human well-being; over the last few years, Finnish citizens have engaged in more outdoor recreation due to restrictions on mobility and social activities.

Read more about it in the Introduction (pp. 12-17)

About caring in Green Care:

• From an **'ethics of care'** perspective, caring is a process, rather than a one-time intervention. Caring is made tangible through practices and inspired by values and ethics. It always involves relationships, underscoring **humans' interdependence** with other humans and with the natural world;

• In order to understand why and how Green Care practitioners do what they do, it is helpful to notice all the caring practices they perform. Green Care are often part of a **broader set of activities** linked to supporting and appreciating **place-based** sustainability;

• In our study, Green Care practices are motivated by a sense of care for social inclusion, by the experience of human-nature disconnection and of urban-rural disconnection, and by a love for nature;

• Caring processes are shaped by caregivers, care receivers, and the natural environment in which they take place— including plants, animals, landscapes, and ecosystems more broadly. In order to make Green Care effective, it is important to **give voice** to all those involved, and to continuously improve the practices based on dialogue and feedback;

• Because Green Care practices are innovative and require ongoing experimentation and tinkering, **learning is** essential for both participants and practitioners.

About Green Care practitioners:

• Green Care practitioners are **social innovators**—they offer novel solutions to meet social needs and to enhance societal well-being. Practitioners act at the interface of different sectors, creating new networks, thus contributing to social capital;

• It takes a range of both **material** and **immaterial resources** to make Green Care happen. Resources are found at many levels: structural, organizational, community, and personal;

• **Values and emotions** matter greatly for Green Care entrepreneurs, and need to be taken into account to realize successful and effective initiatives;

• **Local context and resources** are crucial for the success of Green Care practitioners: they influence the development of social relationships, as well as relationships with specific places (including cultural and natural dimensions). At the same time, Green Care practices contribute to shaping the local context and to sustaining, appreciating, and enhancing local resources.

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About Green Care and place-based sustainability:

• Green Care practices are designed to benefit specific **target groups**, but when Green Care practitioners care about sustainability, their practices can contribute to the well-being of all species;

• Using local resources in and for Green Care activities can promote and enhance **place-based sustainability**;

• It is important to see Green Care practitioners as more than just service providers. They can be social innovators with broad social and ecological values, whose initiatives have beneficial impacts for the **wider community** and **ecosystems**;

• Policy makers and researchers could do more to **appreciate** the full range practices performed by Green Care practitioners, and specifically recognize and support their contributions to place-based sustainability.

GREEN CARE
PRACTICES

ALL THE OTHER CARING
PRACTICES THAT COMPLEMENT
AND CONTRIBUTE TO GREEN CARE

Place-based sustainability: a definition
An approach to sustainability based on the assumption that solutions can only be effective when they recognize the place-specificity of natural and institutional resources as well as local needs and capacities, and grassroots knowledge and preferences (Barca, 2009).

INTRODUCTION

About this report

Over the last 20 years, 'Green Care' has been used in Europe as an umbrella term to describe a range of **nature-based activities** that address various social needs. Social and care farming, therapeutic horticulture, animal-assisted interventions, forest-based care, and nature-based recreation and pedagogy are examples of popular Green Care activities. In **2005**, the concept of Green Care was introduced in Finland and taken up by both academic and professional communities, resulting in a rich array of well-documented research and grassroots development projects (e.g. Luke & GCF ry 2021; Ylilauri & Yli-Viikari 2019).

This report was prepared by a working group of researchers and professionals engaged in the field of Green Care. It presents the key findings of an in-depth qualitative research project undertaken from 2016 and 2021 in collaboration with three enterprises offering diverse Green Care services in Finland. Here we share **practical insights** and a set of **conceptual tools** intended to **broaden the understanding of Green Care** for laypeople, practitioners, policymakers, researchers, and other stakeholders. Overall, our research suggests

that Green Care practices not only provide social services, but they also have potential to support **place-based sustainability.** From this perspective, entrepreneurial individuals like Green Care practitioners may take an active role in developing their territories, in line with their visions and needs, in order to make them more liveable for present and future generations. However, many stakeholders are not aware of this perspective; our hope is to **increase the awareness** of all the potential benefits that Green Care practices may yield. To this aim, in this report we provide a **comprehensive view** of Green Care practices, focusing specifically on:

- the **caring practices** performed by Green Care practitioners: what they do, for whom, how, and why (Chapter 1);

- the **resources** that Green Care practitioners use to realize their activities, and how they depend and affect the local context (Chapter 2).

We conclude by reflecting on the link between Green Care and sustainable development.

In this report, we examine Green Care from multiple perspectives; for example, as:

a set of practices, embedded in a specific context, and thus influenced by its characteristics and contributing to its development

an innovative **entrepreneurial activity,** with social, economic, ecological, and cultural value

a way of living, reflecting the values, visions, and passions of its practitioners

a web of relationships, involving a diverse range of human stakeholders, as well as natural beings and elements

This report is relevant for:

Green Care practitioners interested in developing new tools to frame their practices and to learn from the experiences of other practitioners

Researchers interested in nature-based activities, social innovation, and place-based sustainable development

Policy-makers and administrators who wish to support nascent or existing Green Care practices, explore the untapped potentials of such practices, and understand the needs of Green Care entrepreneurs

and,

Laypeople and prospective Green Care **customers** and **patrons** who are curious to learn more about the field.

About the project 🔍

All the reflections, findings, and tools shared in this report originate from a **PhD project** conducted by Angela Moriggi in her capacity as researcher at the Natural Resources Institute Finland (Luke) and as PhD candidate at Rural Sociology Group of Wageningen University. The research was carried out between 2016 and 2021 and was funded primarily by the European Commission, with supplemental funding provided by the Kone Foundation. The PhD thesis was defended in June 2021 and is available online (Moriggi 2021).

The research project investigated **Green Care practitioners** operating in three different settings—a care farm, a biodynamic farm, and a nature-tourism company—as well as their respective networks of stake-holders. When referring to the two farms and the nature-tourism company, we use the term *case studies.* The terms *participant* and *customer* (used interchangeably depending on the context) describe different people directly benefiting from the Green Care activities in the three case studies.

Overall, the approach of the research was **qualitative and participatory.** The data was collected **between 2017 and 2019** through **interviews, workshops**, as well as through **arts-based** and **visual methodologies** (i.e. video interviews, photo-voice). The findings reflect the views and experiences of the people involved at the time of data collec-tion. At the core of the research project, seven Green Care practitioners participated and helped shape all stages of data collec-tion—from the initiation and project design, to the collaborative data analysis. Over the course of the study, however, participants included more than **75 people** who were connected to the three case studies as patrons, as collaborators, or as partners. They represented different sectors: private (companies and farms), research and educa-tion, government, and third sector, and we refer to them as **stakeholders.**

The **care farm** is located 25 km away from the city of Tampere. It is a family farm producing organic lamb meat sold to the local community and regional networks. Since 2015, it has provided rehabilitation services to around 15 mentally disabled people, who work on the farm and contribute to both husbandry and farming practices. Up to 10 of the clients (depending on the period) also reside on the farm in a communal 'guided-living unit'. The owners of the farm manage all operations, including collaboration with the local health and care services of surrounding municipalities. Specific staff members who are knowledgeable in nursing and social care, as well as animal husbandry and gardening, supervise the mentally disabled people. The farm has recently obtained the Nature Care Quality Mark (see page X for the explanation of the Finnish Quality Marks).

The **biodynamic farm,** which produces vegetables, potatoes, decorative flowers, and grains, is located in the Sipoo municipality outside the Helsinki metropolitan area. Farm products are sold in a small self-service on-farm shop and to nearby restaurants, schools, and kindergartens. Since the beginning of the 1980s, the farm has welcomed different kinds of people to live and work on the farm. Later, the owners joined the WWOOF (World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms) organization, which is a worldwide movement that links volunteers with organic farmers and producers. Between 2013 and 2014 the farm hosted two Green Care projects, involving long-time unemployed people, in collaboration with the local municipality and NGOs. The owners are planning to build on-site Green Care facilities in the near future.

Founded in 1992, the **nature-tourism company** provides opportunities for recreation and experiential learning through nature sports, including tour skating, skiing, paddling, hiking, and canoeing. It is located close to Tampere city and hosts local people (individuals and groups), Finnish and international tourists, and groups from companies, associations, and nonprofits. As a core part of their mission, the company also offers nature-based activities for children, people living in elderly homes, and disabled people. The staff trains interested students from universities and vocational schools to support their tours and projects. The company was an active member of the Green Care Finland Association in its early years and was one of the first in Finland to obtain the Nature Empowerment Quality Mark.

Green Care in Europe and in Finland

Green Care in Europe

Green care is an **inclusive concept** developed by a group of European researchers who contributed to research and networking activities through the European COST Action Network "866 Green Care in Agriculture" (2006-2010). The term refers to a variety of **practices** including (but not limited to) social and care farming, social and therapeutic horticulture, animal-assisted interventions, forest-based therapy, nature-based recreation, and wilderness therapy. These different practices are meant to support well-being, social inclusion, recreation, and learning.

Green Care emphasizes the importance of experiencing nature actively by applying specific methods and approaches, which vary depending on the target group involved (Sempik et al. 2010). Target groups typically include people with mental and physical disabilities, children with special needs, patients in elderly care, long-term unemployed folks, offenders serving community orders, and refugees. Green Care as a **framework** thus covers a range of diverse services provided by the public and private sector and in collaboration with community-based associations.

Green Care as a **concept** is broad and is used to mean different things across Europe. The idea that nature can be used to promote health and well-being is not new. Notions of 'therapeutic villages' have been known since the 13th century in Flanders. Traditionally, in many European countries, monasteries, hospitals, and prisons had outdoor therapeutic spaces. Yet, during the last two decades, there has been expanding interest in innovative nature-based initiatives intentionally aimed at promoting health and social care. This trend can be linked to a number of **contemporary challenges,** such as:

a. the overriding phenomena of **social alienation and exclusion,** intensified by globalization, rampant consumerism, and technological advancements (García-Llorente, Rubio-Olivar, & Gutierrez-Briceño, 2018);

b. the increasing demand for **costly long-term care** related to non-communicable diseases (World Health Organization, 2015) and in response to an aging population affected by disabling syndromes like dementia (Alzheimer Europe, 2015);

c. a growing appetite for healthy lifestyles and maximizing **contact with nature**, which has increased substantially following the COVID-19 pandemic, according to various surveys conducted in Finland and elsewhere (Beery et al. 2021).

In many countries, these issues are exacerbated by **structural issues**; for example because of strained national welfare systems vis-a-vis growing demands, governments and communities are unable to provide sufficient healthcare and social services (Begg, Mushövel, & Niblett, 2015). Due to their geographical remoteness, socio-economic marginalization, and insufficient infrastructures, rural areas have been particularly affected by this trend (Bock, 2016). There is a growing need to deinstitutionalize health care and to shift to community-based care provision and personalized care approaches (European Expert Group on the Transition from Institutional to Community-based Care, 2012).

The Finnish way to Green Care

Although activities falling within the spectrum of Green Care have existed in Finland for decades, if not centuries, the modern concept and practice of Green Care was first introduced around **2005**. Since then, practitioners and the general public have shown significant interest in the topic, with roughly **90 projects** focused on **training**, **communication**, and **networking** for Green Care implemented at regional and national levels. The introduction of the Green Care concept has brought together people from different sectors to develop collaborative projects and the concept has been adapted in line with Finland's contextual characteristics, such as its natural resources and cultural traditions.

As shown in Figure 1 (Vehmasto 2019), widely accepted academic and political discourses in Finland emphasize the diversity of activities under the Green Care umbrella. This **broad**
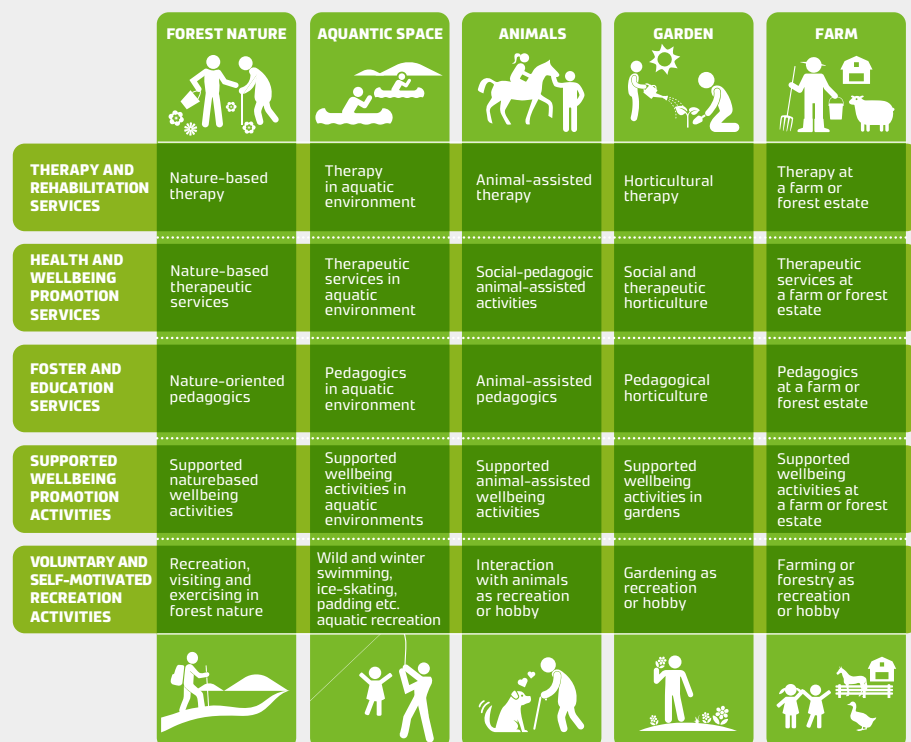
Figure 1: Typologies of Green Care practices in Finland (source: Luke 2019)

	FOREST NATURE	AQUANTIC SPACE	ANIMALS	GARDEN	FARM
THERAPY AND REHABILITATION SERVICES	Nature-based therapy	Therapy in aquatic environment	Animal-assisted therapy	Horticultural therapy	Therapy at a farm or forest estate
HEALTH AND WELLBEING PROMOTION SERVICES	Nature-based therapeutic services	Therapeutic services in aquatic environment	Social-pedagogic animal-assisted activities	Social and therapeutic horticulture	Therapeutic services at a farm or forest estate
FOSTER AND EDUCATION SERVICES	Nature-oriented pedagogics	Pedagogics in aquatic environment	Animal-assisted pedagogics	Pedagogical horticulture	Pedagogics at a farm or forest estate
SUPPORTED WELLBEING PROMOTION ACTIVITIES	Supported naturebased wellbeing activities	Supported wellbeing activities in aquatic environments	Supported animal-assisted wellbeing activities	Supported wellbeing activities in gardens	Supported wellbeing activities at a farm or forest estate
VOLUNTARY AND SELF-MOTIVATED RECREATION ACTIVITIES	Recreation, visiting and exercising in forest nature	Wild and winter swimming, ice-skating, padding etc. aquatic recreation	Interaction with animals as recreation or hobby	Gardening as recreation or hobby	Farming or forestry as recreation or hobby

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understanding reflects a desire to valorize the abundance and diversity of natural ecosystems in the country. It also recognises that Finnish people have had a strong **relationship with the outdoors** for centuries, rooted in national and regional history and folklore (Tredinnick-Rowe, J., Taylor and Tuohino 2018). Interest towards outdoor activities has grown substantially over the last ten years: visitors to Finnish National Parks have doubled, from about 2 million in 2010 to almost 4 million in 2020. During the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of visitors has increased by 23 percent (Metsahallitus 2021).

Founded in 2010, the **Green Care Finland Association** acts as a forum for practitioners and researchers interested in developing a common understanding of the concept and supporting the development of the field (Yililauri n.d.). As of the publication of this report, the Association includes 500 members. In 2017, the Green Care Finland Association established two **Green Care Quality Marks** to certify enterprises for either:

1. **The Nature Care** (*Luontohoiva*) Quality Mark certifies a number of services provided by health and social care professionals that target vulnerable groups (and which are primarily financed by public funding sources;

2. **The Nature Empowerment** (Luontovoima) Quality Mark certifies enterprises that provide goal-oriented services in nature-assisted well-being, education, and recreation (which are often purchased by private users).

Both Marks were developed by the Green Care Finland Association in cooperation with the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare[1] and the Natural Resources Institute Finland Luke[2]. The certification procedure is carried out by a Quality Board composed of five members who represent different sectors (e.g. education, social and health care, research etc.)

Once granted, the Mark is valid for three years. **The Green Care Quality Manual**[3] (Luke and THL, 2017) provides in depth information for those who wish to apply. As of January 2022, around 43 Marks have been granted in Finland. The Association also organizes a yearly **Green Care Day** that gives stakeholders from the private, public, and third sector a chance to present recent developments and innovations in the field.

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[1] https://thl.fi/en/web/thlfi-en

[2] https://www.luke.fi/en

[3] https://www.gcfinland.fi/tiedostopankki/343/Green-Care-Quality-Manual.pdf

[4] https://www.gcfinland.fi/in-english/

Number of enterprises

As Green Care is a relatively new category of service in Finland, there are not yet any reliable official statistics about the number of providers. According to a rough study of Green Care entrepreneurs in 2020, however, the number of **service providers** (companies, associations) employing some degree of Green Care methods increased from **164 in 2005** to **812 in 2019.**

In the year **2019**, 89% of these providers employed less than five people. In the year **2018**, 50% of providers were self-employed individuals, with the sole proprietor engaged in the entrepreneurial activity under his/her own name or under a registered trading name. The second biggest group was private limited companies (39%), and the rest (together 10%) of the service-units were business partnerships, general partnerships, cooperatives, non-profit organizations and foundations. Besides these private companies, there are many public service units, such as day care, schools, elderly homes, and care centers, which use Green Care practices.

Laws and regulations

There are no specific laws concerning Green Care services in Finland. Green Care is still understood as a method or service and not as a sector of its own. The laws and regulations affecting the services offered (e.g. social farming for disabled people), are the same that regulate social service provision in general. Depending on the type of practices provided, Green Care practitioners need to abide by laws and regulations regarding social and health care, animal well-being and welfare, as well as safety and accessibility.

Training & education opportunities

According to the Green Care Finland Association[4], education and training opportunities for Green Care professionals have increased substantially over the last ten years. Some education programs focus on specific methods, such as social pedagogical horse activities, horse assisted physiotherapy, or garden therapy. Green Care courses organized by various Universities are also available for nurses (registered nurse—*sairaanhoitaja* or licensed practical nurse—*lähihoitaja*), social work professionals, practitioners, and students of social sciences (*sosionomi)*, as upgrading opportunities or as a part of their professional education. Additionally, courses to learn the basics of Green Care are organized by the network of **Applied Universities** and available at online **Open Universities**. Finally, a wide range of educational training and events for practitioners and entrepreneurs are regularly organized by EU co-funded Green Care projects.

Currently, the courses and education opportunities are very heterogeneous—they vary in content, length, and quality. A few Applied Sciences Universities across Finland are collaborating together to guarantee stronger continuity and better quality of educational pathways for Green Care practitioners, building joint contents and standards.

Green Care in Finland: a look on numbers

Number of admitted Quality Marks by Green Care Finland Association from 2017 to 2022:

21

Nature Care Marks and

22

Nature Empowerment Marks, totally 43 admitted Quality Marks.

2006–2013:

Nationwide development projects:

3

Local development projects: around

17

Around

100

Green Care development projects in Finland from 2006 to 2020

2014–2020:

Nationwide projects:

2

Local development projects: around

70

Nordic cooperation projects: around

5

(Ref: Vehmasto et al. 2021).

Green Care and the SDGs

Green Care is an innovative field which can contribute to many of the **Sustainable Development Goals** (SDGs). Finland's national sustainable development strategy (first released in 2016, then updated in 2020) is titled "**The Finland We Want by 2050**—Society's Commitment to Sustainable Development" (Ministry of the Environment, 2016). According to the strategy, the government will focus on two main objectives that cover all SDGs in an integrated manner: a "carbon-neutral and resource-wise Finland" and a "non-discriminating, equal and competent Finland" (Prime Minister`s Office, 2020).

In this report, we identify how Green Care can contribute to **specific SDGs**, such as to health and well-being (SDG 3), quality education (SDG 4), decent work and economic growth (SDG 8), reduced inequalities (SDG 10), responsible consumption and production (SDG 12), life on land (SDG 15), sustainable cities and communities (SDG 11), and partnership for the goals (SDG 17). Although not highlighted in the cases presented in this report, Green Care can also be relevant for climate action (SDG 13), and peace, justice, and strong institutions (SDG 16).

The figure below has been adapted to highlight the relevant contributions of Green Care to the SDGs. The original figure, developed by the Stockholm Resilience Center underscores that the **economy and society are embedded within the biosphere** and that each realm is linked to specific SDGs. In this conceptualization, social, economic, and ecological development are not separate, but are all part of the same system.

Figure 2: Green Care and the SDGs. (Source: the authors, adapted from Azote Images for Stockholm Resilience Centre, Stockholm University)
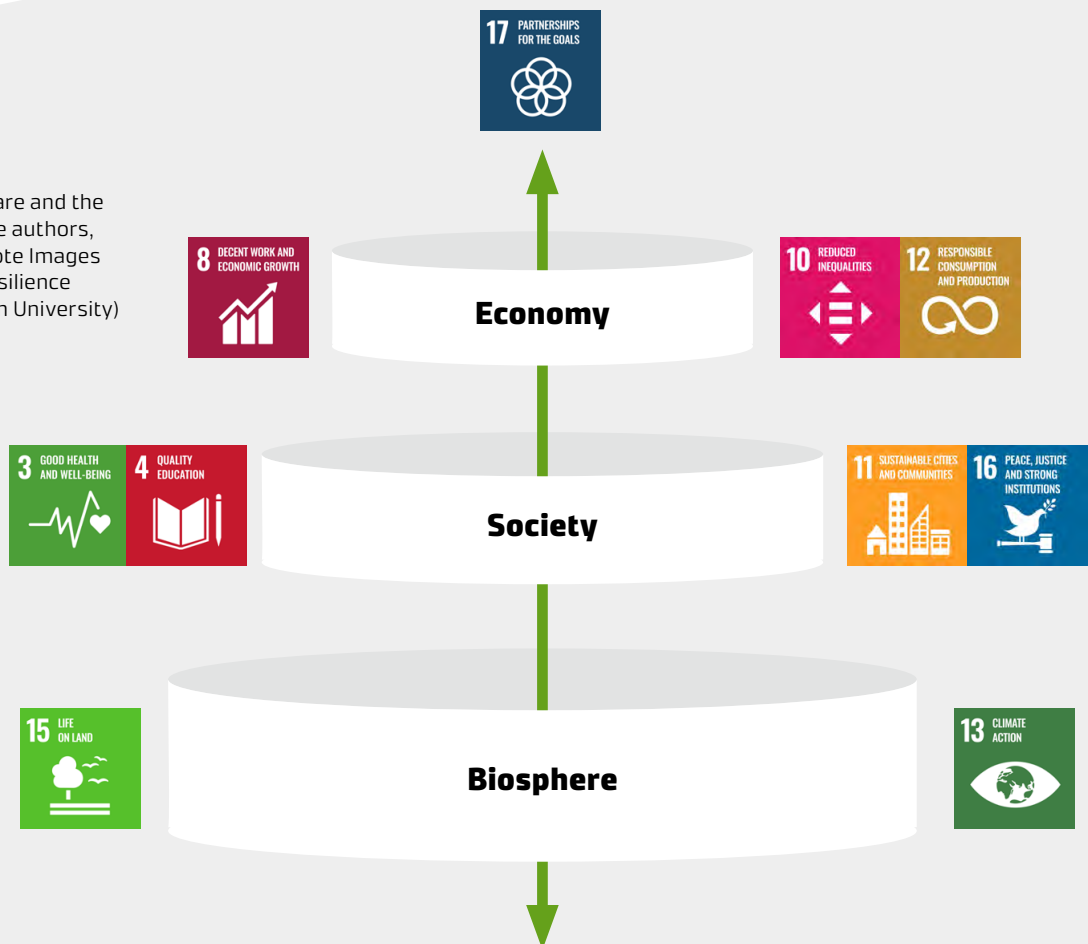
CHAPTER 1. CARING PRACTICES & POTENTIAL BENEFITS

Different aspects in Green Care

Since its introduction in 2005, Finnish researchers and practitioners have debated about which practices should be included under the umbrella of Green Care and which should be left out. Part of the **debate** is generative, but some differences of opinion are **semantic**; people often assign different meanings to the same concept, as demonstrated in the quotes below (excerpted from conversations with various Green Care stakeholders involved in this study). Some people, for example, identify Green Care with **well-being services** for humans, whereas others see it as a **holistic concept** that embraces every aspect of life and contributes to the well-being of both humans and nature.

Despite the **different meanings** expressed by stakeholders, the everyday practices performed in our Green Care case studies demonstrated that the well-being of humans and of nature go **hand in hand**—even when not explicitly stated or marketed as such. One of the important findings of our study is that, in practice, **mutual human-nature benefits are foundational to Green Care**. To explore this basic principle, and to reflect upon the potential of

Green Care practices to shape and sustain a range of specific benefits, several key question arise:

- *How do Green Care practitioners care for both people and the environment?*

- *How can Green Care practices include vulnerable people, and at the same time contribute to stronger community bonds between urban and rural areas? or to healthy local food systems? or to the preservation of rural livelihoods?*

- *How can Green Care practices make people feel empowered, while giving them a chance to learn different ways to be in and enjoy natural environments?*

We will not answer these questions in detail, but rather use them to pinpoint distinct aspects of Green Care and make them more visible. This Chapter provides an overview of **various dimensions** and **potential benefits** of Green Care, by looking more closely to the **concept and practice of caring**. We share examples of different ways of caring and their implications for practice and

"Green Care refers to all business activities in which nature is used to care for us, that is to say, to provide wellness and well-being"

"Green Care is about using the natural environment to support groups with special needs, with a goal-oriented approach"

"Green Care is about using nature as a tool to rehabilitate and improve people's health"

"Green Care refers to everything you eat and you do, the decisions you make as a consumer, how you treat nature, and how you enjoy it."

"Green Care reminds me of the living force in the soil, in the environment. To sustain the living forces, we must care for it, in every way, including waste recycling and all that."

theory. We then highlight specific ways that caring practices in Green Care not only benefit the customers of the services, but also benefit the ecosystems and the communities involved.

What is caring: A conceptual framework inspired by the ethics of care

In casual usage, the idea of caring is usually associated with health "care", or with the kind of love expressed in the domestic sphere—amongst family and friends. When examined more closely, however, the concept of care extends much further. At some point in our lives, **we are all caregivers and care receivers** (Tronto 2013). We all care about things, people, topics, and causes that go beyond our families and loved ones. In fact, **caring responsibilities** are not only within the purview of individuals and families, but also of government bodies, civil society organizations, educational institutions and so on. Caring, as a societal and individual phenomenon, is **complex, multidimensional, and pervasive.**

Throughout our research we used an **ethics of care perspective** to make sense of the meaning and practice of caring (Noddings 2013; Held 2006).

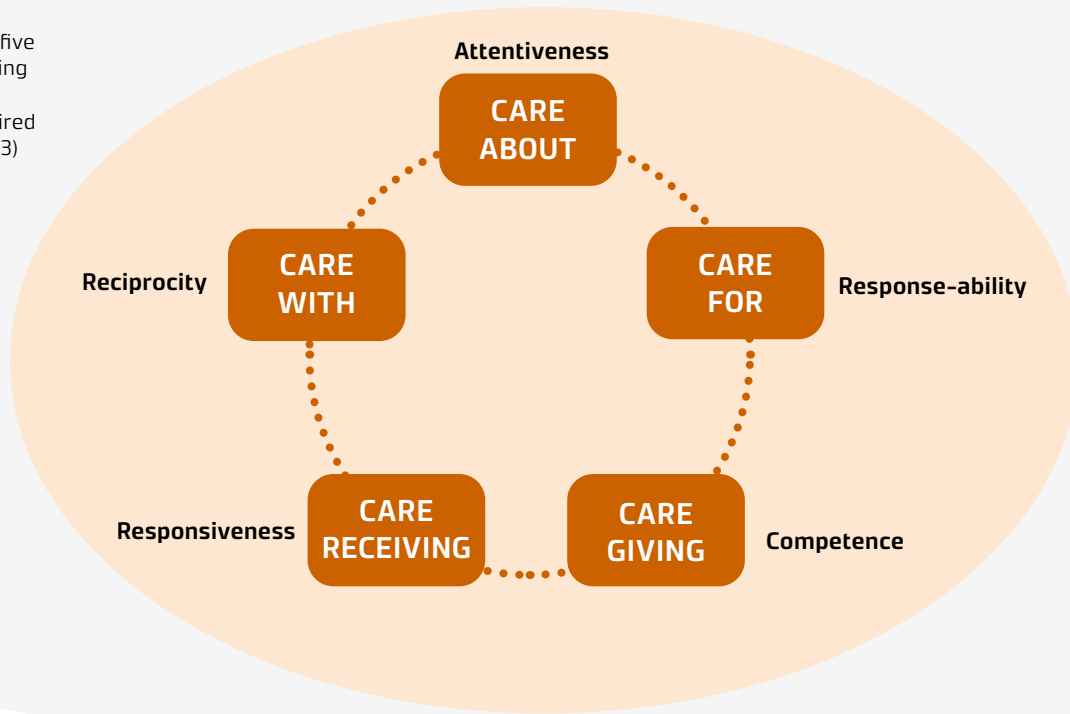From a PHILOSOPHICAL standpoint, care can be understood as a:

- **a way of being in relation,** to others and to the world;

- **a set of moral values**, which can be embodied in concrete everyday practices;

- **a way of expressing who we are** as humans, as citizens, as members of a community - by bringing those values and practices to life.

Thus caring is fundamental to the kinds of **societies** we aspire to create and the ways in which we want to sustain them.

Caring: An ethics of care-inspired definition
"A species activity that includes everything 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" (Tronto, 2013, 19).

Figure 3: The five stages of caring (source: the authors, inspired by Tronto 2013)

From a PRACTICAL standpoint, care can be understood as a:

- **a cycle:** care is not a one-time intervention—it happens over and over again, in an iterative process;

- **a learning process:** every time we practice care, we can practice it better than the previous time;

- **unique:** every person, plant or animal should be cared for in a different way;

- **a reciprocal interaction:** both care receivers and caregivers have an important role in the process of caring.

Caring is not static—it evolves and transforms over time and through experience.

The process of caring: five dimensions

According to Tronto (2013) **caring is a process** and a cycle composed of five **dimensions**. Each dimension is motivated by a moral **principle**. To aid our conceptual understanding, it is useful to look at each dimension sequentially starting from 'caring about', where the cycle of care begins. In reality, however, the various dimensions often overlap, and they can be also considered different **facets** of the practice of caring.

1. **CARING ABOUT** can be considered the starting point of the care cycle. We care about something or someone as a result of our **attentiveness**, or our ability to notice unmet needs for care around us (or even within us);

2. **CARING FOR** happens when we decide to act upon the needs we have identified, and so attention becomes intention. When we "care for", we do something tangible. This process is motivated by responsibility or (more accurately) **response–ability**, namely the ability to respond to the needs noticed earlier;

3. **CARE GIVING** occurs during the actual work of caring. It involves physical work and direct contact with the objects of care. It is a practice that requires **competence**;

4. **CARE RECEIVING** highlights that the caring process is not unilateral, but is rather a relational process. Next to the caregiver is the care receiver—the person/group/plant/animal that is being cared for—who has an active role to play, and who can be capable of **responsiveness**. In this sense, he/she/it should be put in the condition to respond to the care given. The feedback provided by the care receiver can then trigger a new cycle of caring;

5. **CARING WITH** encompasses all the other dimensions. It is based on various principles which can be summarized by the concept of **reciprocity**. Caring is a learning process for both caregivers and care receivers—the two sides of the caring spectrum. In fact, they can both give/share something throughout the caring process. They can also both be empowered. For this to happen, necessary conditions must be in place; reciprocity is fostered by respecting basic principles of dignity, equality, and solidarity for all the people and non-humans involved in the caring process.

The five dimensions of the caring process can be applied to many situations in our daily lives. The patient-doctor relationship, for example, is not always characterized by mutual learning and reciprocity. Patients often feel they lack sufficient control and knowledge over their health, which prevents them from embracing a process of **learning** and **self-efficacy** and thus from actively contributing to their own rehabilitation. In this case, there is a practice of 'care giving' from doctor to patient, but the patient is not in the position of 'caring with'. In another example, taking care of the plants in one's garden could be considered 'caring for'. Even though plants cannot speak and voice their needs, through attentiveness, we notice their rotten roots, or if their leaves are being attacked by insects or falling from the branches. In that moment, we may decide to 'care for' them in practical ways.
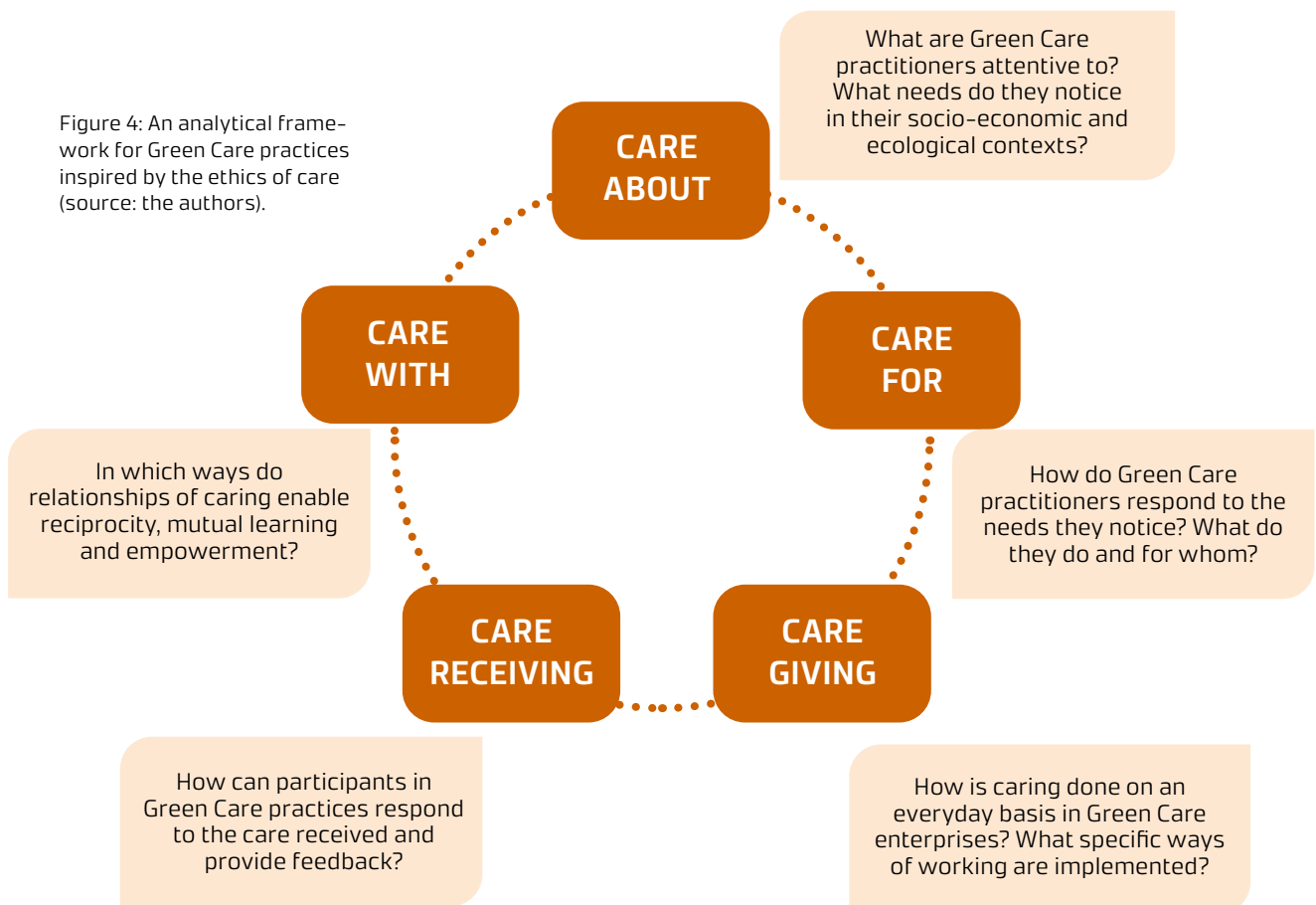
Multiple dimensions of caring in Green Care

In this section we use the five dimensions of caring as an **analytical lens** to untangle and examine the concept and practices of Green Care in more detail. Moreover, based on our empirical findings, we look at what caring means and how it is carried out from the perspective of **practitioners**.

First, we formulate specific questions to help align the five dimensions of caring with key aspects of Green Care, as shown in Figure 4 below.

In order to answer these questions, or at least generate applicable insights, we use observations, insights, and empirical information gathered from our three Green Care case studies: the care farm, the biodynamic farm, and the nature-tourism company.

Figure 4: An analytical framework for Green Care practices inspired by the ethics of care (source: the authors).

CARE ABOUT

What are Green Care practitioners attentive to? What needs do they notice in their socio-economic and ecological contexts?

CARE WITH

CARE FOR

In which ways do relationships of caring enable reciprocity, mutual learning and empowerment?

How do Green Care practitioners respond to the needs they notice? What do they do and for whom?

CARE RECEIVING

CARE GIVING

How can participants in Green Care practices respond to the care received and provide feedback?

How is caring done on an everyday basis in Green Care enterprises? What specific ways of working are implemented?

1. CARE ABOUT: what matters for Green Care practitioners

In the context of Green Care, **care about** begins at the moment the Green Care practitioners become aware of particular concerns and needs regarding their personal and professional lives, as well as societally-relevant issues. Once identified, these concerns may then become **motivations** and **drives** to engage in Green Care practices.

To pinpoint specific concerns, we asked: What are Green Care practitioners attentive to? What needs do they notice in their socio-economic and ecological contexts?
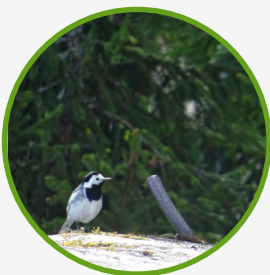
The participating practitioners were principally concerned with four topics areas that affect their personal lives, their professional realms, their communities, and the larger society: **(1) Social inclusion, (2) Human-nature disconnection, (3) Urban-rural disconnection, and (4) Love for nature.** In this section, we discuss each of these concerns in more detail and in the following section, we translate them into tangible practices.

Social inclusion

Social inclusion is "the process of improving the terms of participation in society, particularly for people who are disadvantaged, through **enhancing opportunities, access to resources, voice and respect for rights**" (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs 2016). Social inclusion is considered a cornerstone of sustainable development and a key principal in participatory democracy and socially responsible enterprise. Social inclusion was a common concern for all the Green Care practitioners in our study, although it had different connotations depending on the specific focus of their work.

Social inclusion

Urban-rural disconnection

Human-nature disconnection

Love for nature

Social inclusion: 10 parameters to measure it
The Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare (THL n.d) defines social inclusion

according to the following ten parameters:

1. I feel that my daily activities are relevant
2. I get positive feedback on what I do
3. I belong to a group or community that is important to me
4. Other people need me
5. I can influence the course of my own life
6. I feel that my life has a purpose
7. I can pursue things that are important to me
8. I can get help, when I am really in need of it
9. I feel trusted
10. I can influence some of the issues in my living environment.

> ## "Going in nature, participating in a tour in the forest for instance, that is everybody's right!"

For the **nature-tourism company,** social inclusion means to make nature accessible to everyone. This notion is also engrained in Finnish culture, as demonstrates the saying '**everyman's right to nature**', a concept institutionalized in Finnish law, which enables everyone to access and enjoy outdoors pursuits with few restrictions (Ministry of the Environment, 2016). For the founders of the nature-tourism company, activities in nature should be designed so that anyone can take part, regardless of age, physical impediments, or other factors.

> ## "Everyone has their own meaningful role in our care farm, and can get a feeling of worth[iness] and of being a purposeful part of this community".

The **care farm** welcomes mentally-disabled people to work and live together. The founders are particularly concerned about disabled people being treated as a monolithic group, a commonly-accepted portrayal in their opinion. They highlight that it is very important to understand that mentally-disabled people are individuals with **diverse needs, capacities, and aspirations** that should be valued.

> ## "It's somewhere in our principles to welcome everyone, regardless of the background or abilities."

For the founders of the **biodynamic farm**, social inclusion is about offering a home, a place where people can come and go. The farm has **welcomed folks** from different strands of life over the past three decades, to live, work, or just visit the place temporarily. For instance: volunteers affiliated to the WWOOF (World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms) organization, refugees, disabled children, people with long-term unemployment issues, and people who wanted to experience life in the countryside.

Human-nature disconnection

The topic of human-nature disconnection is found in both popular culture and in academic study. Over the past decade, numerous studies have demonstrated the importance of experiencing and relating to nature, not only for leisure and recreation, but also to maintain and enhance human well-being. Specifically, the field of **ecological and environmental psychology** has generated three well-regarded theories: Attention Restoration Theory (ART), Stress Reduction Theory (SRT), and the Biophilia Hypothesis.

Attention Restoration Theory proposes that experiencing and doing things in nature activates areas of the nervous system that improve our focus and ability to concentrate, with restorative outcomes (Ohly et al. 2016). The psychophysiological **Stress Reduction Theory** highlights that our capacity to recover from stressful situations is enhanced by exposure to green spaces. Certain kinds of landscapes help moderate and reduce states of arousal and negative thoughts, reducing the psychological and physiological symptoms of stress (Sullivan 2014). According to supporters of the **Biophilia hypothesis,** humans have a genetically based need and propensity to affiliate with other living organisms, and therefore contact with nature is essential to human life satisfaction (Kahn 1997). Recent studies have also demonstrated how connectedness to nature may positively affect **pro-environmental behavior** (Ibáñez-Rueda et al 2020).

"

"If you don't understand nature, and if you don't want to protect it, and if you only want to consume, for yourself, we, mankind, won't exist very long".

The Green Care practitioners involved in this study expressed deep preoccupation with the human-nature disconnection that results, in their view, from an increasingly urbanized model of socio-economic development. In particular, they fear that future generations may lack the ability to **"know" and "understand" natural ecosystems** and the possibilities they offer.

Urban-rural disconnection

Although rural and urban areas are economically, socially, and environmentally interlinked spaces, popular debate often frames them as opposite spaces, characterized by great divides. There are now growing calls for regional policies across the world to strengthen **urban-rural linkages**, especially by sufficiently acknowledging the role of rural resources (both ecological, economic and cultural) in sustaining healthy and prosperous cities (Tewelde and Berhanu 2019).

The practitioners of the two farms expressed concerns about urban-rural disconnection and related consequences, including, in their view, **food illiteracy** and **loss of traditional rural landscapes**.

Both farms are also attentive to the **cultural value** of traditional countryside landscapes. A big part of their work goes in maintenance and restoration of buildings, infrastructures (e.g. traditional fences), and landscape elements.

"We are trying to nourish the landscape and keep the surroundings inhabited so that it's also some kind of cultural landscape, like a rural landscape, and you lose that if you don't have grazing animals. And if you don't care about nature, this landscape will disappear."

"I would like people to notice the difference in how you can farm, how it affects the quality, and how important the social aspect is. People should have a connection with the surroundings and the goods they consume".

Both farms follow organic principles. The **biodynamic farm** has an on-farm self-service shop that attracts many customers from the Helsinki metropolitan area. Biodynamic farming has much in common with **organic farming** and treats soil fertility, plant growth, and livestock care as ecologically interrelated tasks. The **care farmers** invite people to visit the farm in order to purchase and collect the lamb meat, so that they can see where and how it is produced.

Love for nature

Alongside the broader, societally-relevant concerns that motivate Green Care practitioners, **personal reasons** also play a role in practitioners' motivations to engage in Green Care practices. Our findings suggest that the practitioners chose professions that allowed them to live and work in natural environments.

In the **biodynamic farm**, Green Care is aligned with the anthroposophical values that are at the basis of the farm. Moreover, Green Care is part of a plan to **"save the farm"** from future urban development projects. While Helsinki city was interested in making the area into a residential neighborhood at the periphery of the metropolitan area, the farm owner plans to build a new community, with a kindergarten, an elderly care home, a restaurant, and various homes.

Anthroposophy: A definition
Anthroposophy is a human-centered spiritual philosophy developed by Rudolf Steiner (1861–1925), which puts at the center principles such as collaboration, inclusivity, diversity, and initiative.

"Managing the farm and care home is not a 9-5 type of work. It's actually not work, it's a way of life".

The founders of the **care farm** said that starting a Green Care business allowed them to realize their long-standing **dream of living on a farm.** The whole staff at the care farm shares their love for animals, for countryside environments, and for community building.

"I have been involved with nature-based activities my whole life. I love being in nature, and I think it is really important to nurture an appreciation for nature since childhood, especially in a country such Finland, where nature is so amazing"

Finally, in the case of the **nature-tourism company**, both main practitioners and their staff are passionate about **outdoors and nature sports**, and longed for challenging, versatile and meaningful jobs.

Why Green Care practices? The view of the stakeholders

The findings in this study are based on the experiences and ideas of the practitioners offering Green Care services in the different case studies, but also on the perceptions and views of the stakeholders in their network of collaborators. For instance, civil servants in nearby municipalities, families of the customers, people who purchase food products from the farms, external collaborators from previous Green Care projects, etc.

In the initial part of the study, twenty-two people from the external network of stakeholders of the three cases were interviewed. During the **interviews**, they were asked: **Why did you decide to work with these Green Care providers?** They could rank four dimensions: health and well-being (of the possible customers of the services); pedagogical and educational aims; environmental reasons; economic reasons. Green Care practitioners in the three cases were also asked to rank

amongst these four dimensions when answering the question: **Which reasons motivated your desire to start Green Care practices?**

The results (Figure 5) show that **health and well-being** constitute a very important reason for both practitioners and for the external network of collaborators. However, while for Green Care practitioners **environmental** and **pedagogical reasons** also play an important role, these are not so important for the other stakeholders. **Economic reasons** are slightly more important for the external network than for practitioners.

These differences confirm one of the findings of our study: the external stakeholders are only partially aware of the **diversity of practices (and related potential benefits)** performed by Green Care practitioners. They mainly consider Green Care as contributing to the health and well-being of specific target groups, and fail to see the full picture out there.
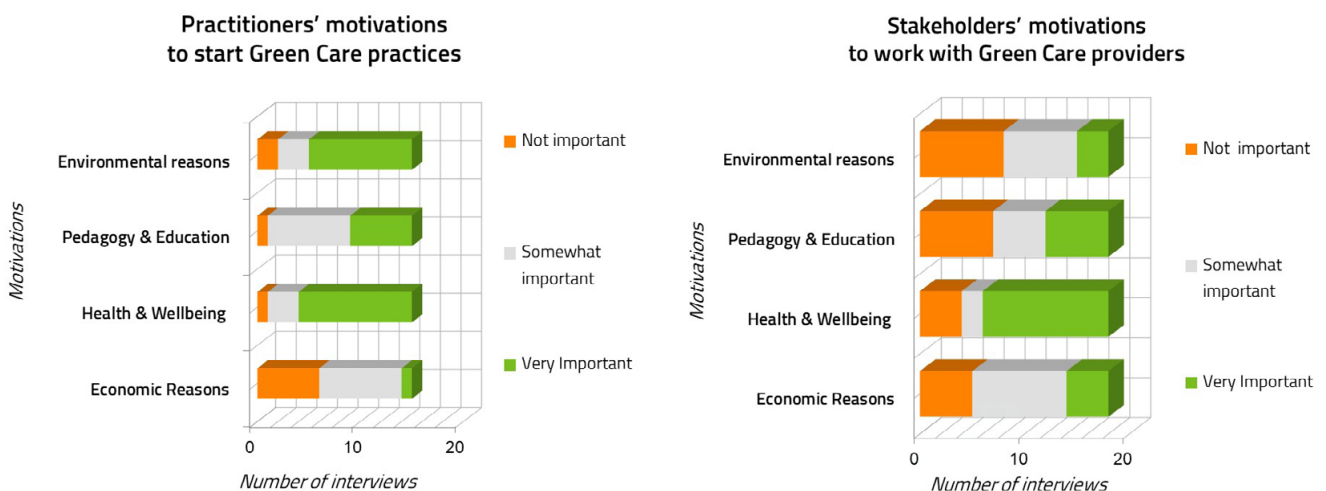

Figure 5. Comparison between practitioners' and stakeholders' motivations in relation to Green Care (source: the authors).

2. CARE FOR: all the activities in Green Care

According to the ethics of care literature, Green Care practitioners CARE FOR when they respond to needs and concerns, by designing and implementing specific activities for customers, as well as for the larger community and ecosystem. The questions we asked here were: How do Green Care practitioners respond to the needs they notice? What do they do and for whom?

In our case studies, Green Care practitioners responds to needs around them through a rich **variety of activities and services;** not only practices to enhance the **well-being** and **social inclusion** of different individuals and groups, but also activities with additional purposes and added-values, such as: e**ducation, community-building, recreation**, and **ecosystem maintenance** and **regeneration**.

Although not all Green Care enterprises are engaged in all these activities (or they may do so to greater or lesser degrees) it is important to emphasize the **diversity of activities** and their **innovative nature**. By drawing a complete picture of Green Care activities, we can clarify the multiple ways they can benefit the territories in which they take place and how they can directly and indirectly contribute to **place-based sustainability.**

Figure 6: Overview of the activities offered by the Green Care practitioners in our study (source: the authors).

CARE FARM

WELLBEING & SOCIAL INCLUSION
- All-year round health and social care interventions + rehabilitative work for disabled people;
- Assisted Living Unit on farm.

PEDAGOGY & RECREATION
- Traineeships for students;
- Trainings for prospective care farmers;
- Educational activities in local schools about rural livelihoods;
- Recreational activities for larger audiences (open days; festivals, etc.)

OUTREACH
- Community services with 'mobile unit';
- Ongoing reception of people interested in care farming.

AGRICULTURE & ECOSYSTEM
- Sheep husbandry (and organic meat purchase);
- Animal care (pigs, dogs; horses; chickens; rabbits; cats);
- Organic gardening for self-consumption;
- Rural landscape preservation and maintenance;
- Biodiversity conservation and regeneration.

BIODYNAMIC FARM

WELLBEING & SOCIAL INCLUSION
- Ad-hoc temporary projects of rehabilitative work for long-time unemployed groups.

PEDAGOGY & RECREATION
- Hosting different individuals through WOOF program;
- Engagement of students of local Steiner and Waldorf schools and kindergartens;
- Traineeships for students through BINGn (Biodynamic Initiative for the Next Generation Nordic) network & through local collaborations;
- Recreational activities for larger audiences (open days; festivals, etc.)

OUTREACH
- Grassroots advocacy to build a future community on the farm;
- Affordable living spaces on the farm for long or temporary stays.

AGRICULTURE & ECOSYSTEM
- Cow husbandry (for biodynamic farming);
- Animal care (chickens; cats);
- Organic vegetables production for local purchase (restaurants, markets, schools in Helsinki area + on-farm shop);
- Rural landscape preservation and maintenance;
- Biodiversity conservation and regeneration.

NATURE-TOURISM COMPANY

WELLBEING & SOCIAL INCLUSION
- Recreation & wellbeing activities for various groups (children; tourists; people with disabilities; elderly in care homes).

PEDAGOGY & RECREATION
- Traineeships for universities' students;
- Outdoors team-building activities for companies' employees;
- Outdoors sports trainings for various groups;
- Rental services of outdoors sports' equipment.

OUTREACH
- Daily accurate information provision about weather conditions (e.g. ice thickness) available to a wide audience through social media.

ADDITIONAL SERVICES
- Product design and manufacturing (including special equipment for disabled people);
- Catering and logistics for other companies;
- Snacks and drinks purchased at the company's premises.

3. CARE GIVING: pre-conditions and basic elements in Green Care

We explored CARE GIVING by asking: How is caring done on an everyday basis in Green Care enterprises? What specific ways of working are implemented? These questions helped us investigate in detail **how** the practices are carried out.

Before going into details of our three case studies, let us take a step back and look at the wider Finnish context. The Green Care Quality Manual recommends that services align with a set of

specific **pre-conditions** (Goal orientation; Professionalism; Responsibility) and **basic elements** (Nature-based; Social inclusion; Experiential) (Luke and GCF ry. 2021). Together, these two categories define the **'Green Care working method'** which is visually represented in Figure 5 below. The specific descriptors (e.g. flexible and customized services, guidance, togetherness, etc.) listed under each subcategory of pre-conditions and basic elements are based on the findings of this study (and not on the Green Care Quality Manual).

We now look at '**how' things are done** in the three cases studies: the biodynamic farm, the care farm, and the nature-tourism company.

PRE-CONDITIONS

- Flexible & customized services
- Human-oriented approach
- Conscious method
- Slowness

- Multiple skills & competences
- Guidance & role modelling

- Ethical working method
- Respect for both humans and non-humans
- Safety

Goal-orientation

Professionalism

Responsibility

GREEN CARE WORKING METHOD

BASIC ELEMENTS

Nature-based

- Being in & relating to nature
- Caring for animals
- Accessing nature closeby

Social inclusion

- Togetherness
- Team-building & cooperation
- Equality

Experiential

- Meaningful work
- Meaningful experience
- Physical, psychological, and social activity

Figure 7: Pre-conditions & basic elements of the Green Care working method in the three case studies (source: the authors, adapted from Luke and THL 2017).

Basic elements

"

"Actually I don't have to do much, because nature is some kind of caretaker itself".

ELEMENT NO.1: NATURE-BASED

Being in and relating to natural elements was a basic element in the Green Care practices of all three cases. According to the practitioners, plants, vegetables, flowers and the natural environment in general are important for two reasons: they trigger **positive sensorial** and **neuro-logical experiences**, and they generate sentiments of **empowerment**.

Relating to animals appears to be one of the most valued ingredients in Green Care, for participants in both farms, and especially for those directly **taking care** of animals in the care farm. The daily routine of feeding, cleaning and cuddling the animals gives a sense of **worthiness**, and makes people **feel accepted and loved,** no matter their capabilities or background.

For the nature-tourism company, it is important for people to be able to , and to guarantee that everyone can enjoy the outdoors even when living in a city.

"

"People have come from quite different backgrounds and they meet each other here and are like a family, eating and working together".

ELEMENT NO.2: SOCIAL INCLUSION

A second basic element according to the Green Care quality manual is **social inclusion**, intended as the attempt to include groups elsewhere marginalized, but also as a way to make people belong and feel part of something.

In the case studies analyzed in this study, practitioners often mentioned **togeth-erness**, which they fostered through team-building and collaboration. **Living and working together** are very important in both farms: in the biodynamic farm, a crucial moment is lunch time, where many people gather around the table and before starting to eat, thank the food they have been offered, holding their hands together. When people visit the farms, this feeling of togetherness comes across very strongly.

In the case of the nature-tourism company, togetherness is pursued by mixing up conventional roles and creating an atmosphere of **equality** and mutual learning. For instance, when a team from a company is accompanied on an outdoor **team-building** activity, it is important that everyone feels equally valued and capable, regardless of their official role in the company. This fosters group bonding while appreciating different capabilities.

ELEMENT N0.3: EXPERIENTIAL

A third basic element in Green Care is engaging in meaningful work and experiences. In both the care farm and the biodynamic farm, people carry out tangible tasks that are crucial for the survival of animals, growing food, and general maintenance of the place. This **meaningful work** also has an **educational and training** purpose: it allows people to learn new skills, and to strengthen competencies gained in school. Additionally, doing farm work has physical, physiological, and mental health benefits.

In the case of the nature-tourism company, rather than work, practitioners spoke of the importance of **meaningful experience** (*elämys or kokemus in Finnish*), meant as unique and memorable. Such experiences should **enliven the senses** and generate feelings of **joy, fun, and peace;** they often include **physical effort**, as the company eschews the use of equipment powered by motors.

"

"It is important when the farm has farm operations [other than care]. When participants have access to real work, they feel part of the community and of society in general (minna)"

"Green Care activities allow people to live a good experience together, to bond as a group, and to succeed in doing something they thought they couldn't do"

Pre-conditions

PRE-CONDITION NO.1: GOAL ORIENTATION

Goal-orientation means to design and implement interventions in nature with a **conscious rationale and method**, in order to enhance participants' well-being. In all three case studies, practitioners followed a **human-oriented approach**, driven by a desire to enable participants' capabilities. They go beyond treating participants merely as consumers buying a service, and instead craft services in a **flexible** way intended to generate specific experiences conducive to well-being.

A human-oriented approach goes hand in hand with the idea of **slowness**. It is important to follow the variable rhythms of people and nature rather than being driven by demands of efficiency.

"We want to provide the best possible care and working methods, to suit each and every individual".

"Everyone here can find something they are able to do".

"When trying to be very efficient, someone is paying for it, with too high a price, maybe the environment, or the people".

PRE-CONDITION NO.2: PROFESSIONALISM

High-level and varied expertise is important for the staff at both the care farm and the nature-tourism company. Professionalism is often coupled with passion and **"working with the heart"**—which is deeply valued by stakeholders and an identity trait of all practitioners.

Being professional also means to be able to give participants the **right guidance**. According to Green Care practitioners, it is important to be an inspiring **role model**, and to show by example how things should be done on an everyday basis.

> **"We have a workforce that varies in profession and in background and everybody brings in their know-how, and that's how the common capabilities and resources are formed"**
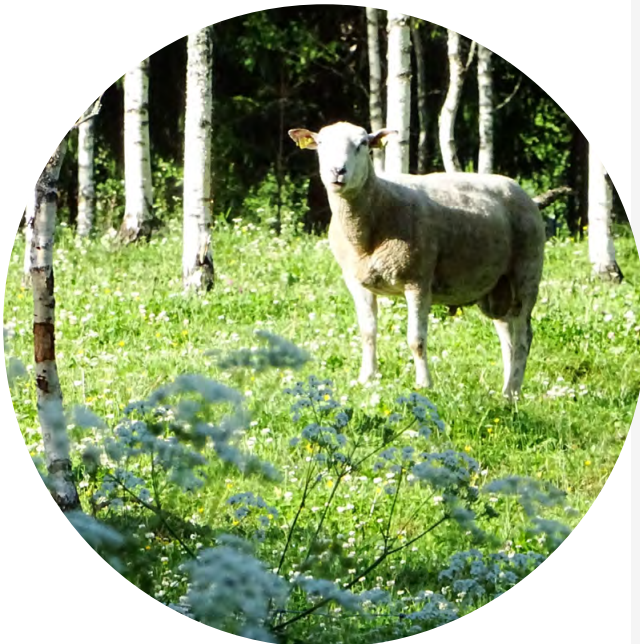
> **"We should appreciate the animals' offer, and, if we have to take the life from a sheep, then it is our responsibility to utilize the maximum amount of it."**

PRE-CONDITION NO.3: RESPONSIBILITY

The third pre-condition of a good working method is to nurture a deep sense of **responsibility** towards both the **humans** and the **non-humans** involved in the practices. In particular, practitioners often mentioned the importance of guaranteeing **participants' physical, psychological and social safety** at all times. This includes avoiding contact with poisonous plants and using animals that are of mild temperament and of reasonable size.

In addition to human safety, **respect for natural ecosystems** and for the well-being of plants and animals is also important. Both farms follow organic and biodynamic values and standards, and also take measures to reduce animals' stress and suffering.

For the nature-tourism company, respect for nature includes learning how to be in contact with the elements and understanding one's own limits as a human dealing with weather, water, ice, etc. Moreover, respect is taught through short **contemplative exercises**: for instance inviting participants to pause and listen to the sounds of the forest during a guided visit.

Beauty: an important element valued in Green Care

Besides the basic ingredients and pre-conditions needed to provide high quality Green Care services, **beauty** and **harmony** are considered important elements in Green Care. At the two farms, the surrounding environments are intrinsically diverse and well cared for, reflecting **Finnish culture and traditions.** Particular attention is given to maintaining traditional buildings and small infrastructures. The landscapes are also shaped to be pleasant and harmonious for people, which makes it a cozy, **familiar place**. At the nature-tourism company, both staff and participants value the opportunity to enjoy the **uniqueness of Finnish forests and lakes**—a source of beauty, but also of identity and pride, and something to share with others "with joy".

meaningful
knowledge
community   care
together
people   experience
professional   animals
appreciation
good-food
enjoy   beautiful
place   nature

Figure 8: Word Cloud of key elements in Green Care according to the participants in this study (source: the authors).

4. CARE RECEIVING: responding to the care received

In CARE RECEIVING we ask: How can participants in Green Care practices respond to the care received and provide feedback? To investigate this dimension, we look at two elements in particular: a) how practices are designed (for instance if they take into account participants' needs and desires); b) how the practices are assessed (what type of feedback is requested from participants, and how it contributes to the adaptation of the practices).

According to the ethics of care approach, care is not given passively to people: it is a **relationship**, in which both caregivers and care receivers have a role. For care receivers to be an active part of the process, it is important to make sure they can **express their needs, desires, and thoughts.**

We investigated how this is made possible in the three case studies, and, in particular, in the case of the care farm (where caring practices are most structured). For practitioners, it is important that care receivers are given a voice during the design of the Green Care practices, during their implementation, and afterwards. Practitioners explained that regular monitoring and assessment are useful to adapt and modify the design and implementation of the practices.

Designing the practices

In the case of the care farm, practices are designed taking into account what has to be done daily for the animals and fields, as well as considering each participant' capabilities and attitudes. There is room for **negotiation and tinkering** and for a division of roles, based on participants' degree of autonomy and his/her own desires. Driving the tractors, for instance, is an activity especially loved by some of the disabled people at the care farm, yet not all of them can do it. Some are more inclined to do indoor chores, such as cooking, while others are responsible for wood chipping. Many appreciate the possibility to feed the sheep on a daily basis. All in all, their contribution to farm work is extremely impor-tant: their workforce is necessary to keep the farm going, and not only to ensure their rehabilitation pathways. Besides farm work, there are aspects of daily life—such as weekly diets, hobbies, and social activities—which are **discussed and designed with the participants**.

At the biodynamic farm, practitioners are **attentive to individuals' capabilities and wishes**. However, since many participants are engaged in farm operations only temporarily (e.g. the WOOF volunteers), there is less oppor-tunity for them to take on complex roles and responsibilities. Similarly, participants in past Green Care projects (e.g. long-term unem-ployed) only visited the farm once a week for a few months, so most farm operations remained in the hands of the main farmer and his close collaborators.

In the nature-tourism company case it is not possible to talk about the same caregiver and care receiver relationship. However, services are **customer-oriented**, and thus are provided as per the requirement of the demand. During the activities, the tasks proposed are adapted to each person's capability, based on informal conversation and observation.

Assessing the practices

An important part of the caring process is to allow participants to voice their **feedback** about the practices and facilitate a process of **reflection**, so that they can look back at what they have experienced.

The care farm has a variety of ways to assess whether the care given has been appreciated and effective in its outcomes. First, feedback is gathered daily, through **constant observation** by the staff. Every day at lunch participants can engage in a **'daily talk' with their supervisors**, to share feelings, preferences, and thoughts. The families of the participants also provide feedback regularly. External collaborators, such as the social workers responsible for the mentally disabled people at the municipal level, **communicate weekly** with the manager at the care farm, monitoring each person's well-being on a regular basis. Finally, **formal evaluations** are carried out yearly and compiled in reports filed by the social workers.

The biodynamic farm relies on more **informal channels** to gather feedback, including attentive observation and exchanges of views with the participants during lunchtime. For past Green Care projects targeted at vulnerable individuals, the funding agencies involved in the design of the

The importance of reflection according to the Green Care Quality Manual
Reflection, either done individually or in a group allows participants to acknowledge and express different experiences and emotions that the Green Care practices may have triggered. Through the **process of reflection** it is possible to set goals for the activities, to assess their effects, to evaluate the state of the well-being, and to make adjustments when needed. Reflection is also important as it increases the **participant's awareness,** which is directly related to his/her sense of **agency** and the ability to see the consequences of his/her actions and situation. In the long run, it contributes to participants' **empowerment**, at individual, community, and societal level (Luke and GCF ry. 2021)

project administered **final surveys** to the participants.

The nature-tourism company seeks feedback about its activities and services mostly through the **observation** of participants during the activities. In some cases, it has administered **surveys** in collaboration with local health institutes in order to gather data on the well-being effects of nature-based interventions. Moreover, customers give all kinds of **feedback on social media** applications such as Tripadvisor and others.

5. CARING WITH: mutual learning & empowerment

CARING WITH encompasses the whole process of caring and emphasizes that care can be done with reciprocity, enabling everyone to learn and feel empowered throughout the process. Here we ask: In which ways do relationships of caring enable reciprocity, mutual learning, and empowerment?

Our findings show that caring has a lot in common with **learning**: it is an iterative process based on the mutual relationships between givers and receivers. At some point in the caring process, givers become receivers and receivers may act as givers which contributes to a **relationship that is deeply enriching** for all those involved. Both sides get to learn a lot, and through this relationship, people may feel empowered and strengthened in their competences, self-efficacy, and sense of worth.

"We try to see this not just as a farm, not just as a place where we take care of people. It's a combination, where everything is related to each other."

"I always try to give a good experience to customers, making them learn in a good mood, and making them enjoy nature so much that they would come back to it".

For practitioners at the nature-tourism company, learning is more effective if accompanied by feelings of **joy and pleasure**.

"The need to feel that we are important and that we are doing something with meaning is mandatory to all of us".

For participants in the care farm and biodynamic farm, learning means to understand the purpose behind daily operation, acquire news skills, and gain a **sense of worth** from the work.

"We really benefited from these exchanges of ideas. Meeting different people and talking with them, it's been really essential for the farm".

Conversations with the practitioners suggested that learning goes hand by hand with **reciprocity**. Practitioners stress that, while they give a lot to participants, they also receive a lot in exchange.

Reciprocity is a value that Green Care practitioners also nurture with the outside community, beyond day-to-day operations with their participants. For instance, they engage in many **knowledge sharing activities**: they welcome visitors and prospective Green Care entrepreneurs; engage in **advocacy and networking activities** to advance the field of Green Care in Finland; they spread the knowledge of their activities on **social media, and via community events** (e.g. in collaboration with local schools).

"It is always nice to see the interaction between our customers and the animals, this kind of communication without words. You can see there is something that I cannot explain."

For practitioners, non-human elements are considered sentient beings that we depend on and that need to be cared for. They consider well-being from a holistic perspective in which everything is related to everything else

In Green Care practices, reciprocity and learning do not exclusively involve human to human interactions. Because they are based in nature, learning in Green Care practices also happens **with natural and animal elements.** Practitioners say that despite the lack of verbal communication, participants can observe nature's response to their caring practices.

"That is one of the biggest things, people appreciating their surroundings, and the fruits of their work. You can get immediate feedback from the surroundings [e.g. the fields]".

PHOTO-VOICE PROJECT AT THE CARE FARM

The method of Photo-voice

Photo-voice is a qualitative method often used by social scientists to bring to light issues that are **marginalized** or not given enough **attention**. For instance, it has been used to give voice to health needs of youth in poor countries, or to show the struggles of citizens living in degraded parts of urban areas.

Photo-voice is also a powerful technique to include **vulnerable people** who may be unable to take part in more conventional forms of data collection, such as interviews or focus groups.

Participants are asked to take photographs of issues that matter to them, usually following a set of questions. In some cases, photos are collected in a **public exhibition** and shared with the wider community and policy-makers as a way to **raise awareness** about those issues.

(Masterson, Mahajan, & Tengö, 2018; Wang & Burris, 1997).

The main author of this report used Photo-voice in October 2017 to engage ten mentally disabled folks who, at that time, were working (and many of them also living) on the care farm involved in this study. The aim of the Photo-voice project was to **give them a voice,** and **understand their experience** of the Green Care practices offered on the farm. Five questions were asked as prompts to explore the **participants' relationship with the place** and with their **daily life** on the farm:

The shooting process was combined with a short **"walking interview"**, during which participants explained the meaning of their photographs, with the support of one of their supervisors as well as an interpreter. A week later, each participant received an **album**, with their pictures and some short captions summarizing the meaning of the picture. During a small **collective ritual** around the fire by the woods in the care farm, the participants showed their albums to their supervisors and to their peers

> What is the work activity that you like the most on the farm?

"Cooking is fun. The residents of the living unit do it together. We have a weekly list that shows the shifts. My favorite part in cooking is peeling the vegetables. This is the task I like the most on the farm."

> What is an activity that you do not particularly like on the farm?
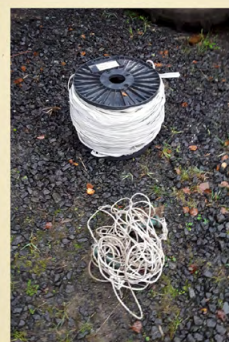
I usually don't like tasks that don't match my education. Also, all kinds of tiny work with hands, I find it less pleasant. It is difficult to come up with an example of such an activity, but for example once we had to organize barb wire that had gone messy. It was frustrating stuff. It is also unpleasant if for some reason we don't have enough work to do.

Selected pages from different photo-voice albums

"If you place the camera into someone's hand they are no longer the subject but become the storyteller".

What is your favorite place on the farm?

"I walk down this road every morning to get to the farm. The view of the fields is very lovely. I see what happens in the fields. Sometimes I pick flowers. This spot is my favorite place on the farm."

What is your favorite moment during the day?

"Sawing the wood by the sawhorse is my favorite task. First you take a suitable tree trunk, then you saw it. I have sawed plenty of woods here. By the sawhorse I get to be alone in piece and quiet. I have also used the machine that turns logs into firewood. This is also my favorite moment during the day. This is the picture I like the most in the album."

What is the work activity that you like the most on the farm?

"In the pictures you can see a fodder carriage and a fodder rack. My favorite task on the farm is feeding the sheep, putting the fodder into the rack, and picking up more fodder with the carriage. It takes at least two people to pull the big carriage."

What is your favorite moment during the day?

"In the picture you can see Lissu, one of our dogs. In the morning, he comes to greet us when we walk towards the sheep shed to start working. That's my favorite moment during the day.

CHAPTER 2. GREEN CARE RESOURCES & POTENTIAL CHALLENGES

In this chapter we look at Green Care using a **resourcefulness** lens. Green Care practitioners are resourceful individuals in the sense that a) they are innovators, capable of finding creative solutions to old and new social challenges; b) they need many different resources to realize Green Care practices.

Green Care practitioners: resourceful social innovators

Green Care practices are an example of social innovation practices; they are designed, initiated, and implemented with the goal of meeting social needs in novel ways. Green Care practitioners can be considered **social innovators** (Dalla Torre et al 2020). Our study confirms that Green Care practitioners are often charismatic and pioneering individuals who attempt to translate their visions and values into tangible actions through exper-imentation and constant adaptation. In Finland, many Green Care practices are initiated from the bottom up as a result of individuals' entrepre-neurial attitudes.

Green Care practitioners can also be seen as **change agents**—they challenge existing systems and ways of doing things, they create radically new concepts for existing products and services, and they take part in (and shape) novel **cross-sec-toral partnerships** (Hassink et al., 2013). The processes initiated by Green Care practitioners have the potential to trigger c**hanges at multiple levels**: within themselves, in patterns of collective thinking, in relations around them, and in the wider social context (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998; Westley et al., 2013, p.27).
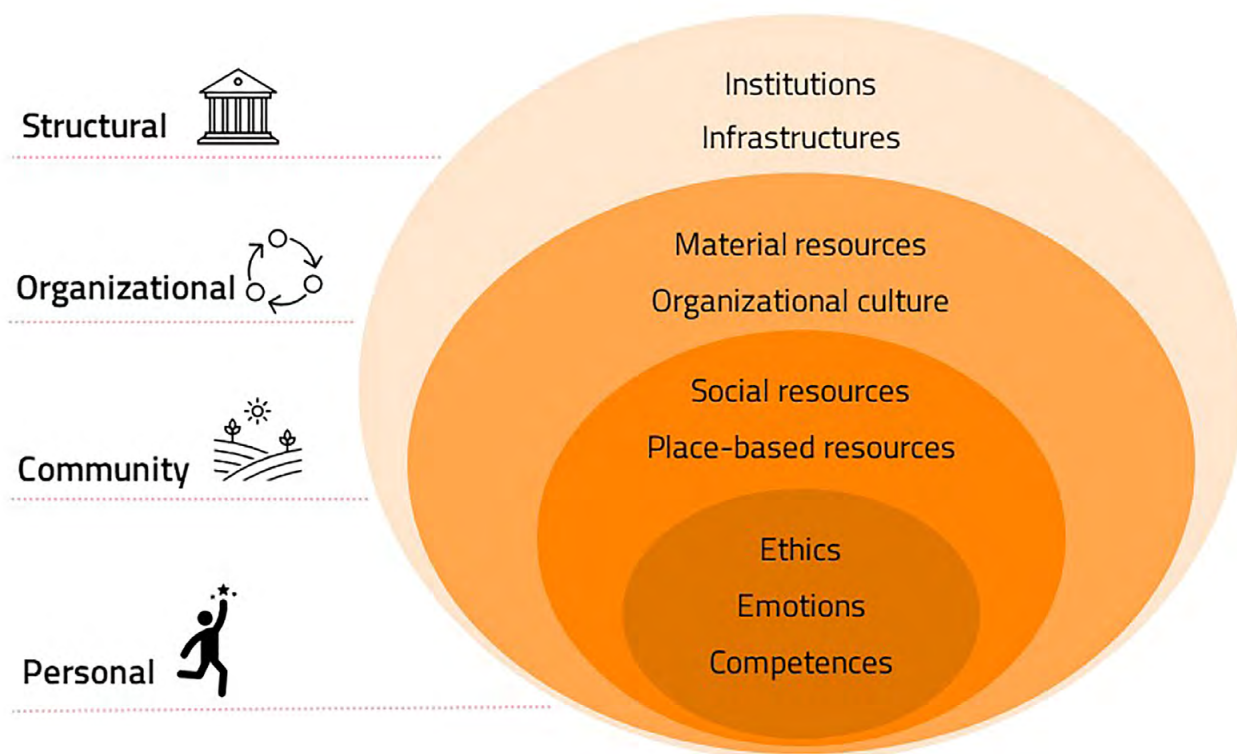
Relationships and context are crucial to the success and failure of any entrepreneurial effort. Indeed, from a sociological perspective, entrepreneurship—i.e. the process of 'making things happen' (Westley)—is not an individual achievement, but a **collaborative social process**

(McKeever et al., 2015). It is very important to understand the **context** in which Green Care practitioners operate - not only the institutional, economic and social context, but also the environ‐mental and cultural context. Within their contexts, practitioners find, mobilize, and create resources that are useful to realize their activities. Resources are defined here as the **assets, skills, and capitals that Green Care practitioners need to realize their practices.** Resources can be both material and immaterial.

A comprehensive overview of resources needed for Green Care practices

Green Care practitioners need both material and immaterial resources to realize their practices. The framework presented below distinguishes between four different levels of resources: **personal, community, organizational, and struc‐tural resources.** The different levels we use here are loosely inspired by the **Socio-Ecological Model (SEM)**, which is an established framework used in health and social care to understand the dynamic interrelations among various elements in a system (National Health Care for the Homeless Council, 2016). The categories are not static and can be subject to different interpretations.

Figure 9: Resources needed at various levels to make Green Care happen (source: the authors).

Structural level	
Infrastructures (physical and non–physical)	• **Physical infrastructures**, i.e. roads, electricity grid, sewage system, etc.; • Presence of a **welfare system**, with social security guarantees for its citizens, including people with special needs and vulnerable groups; • Presence of a **free market** and related demands for certain services for well–being/recreation, etc.
Institutions	• **Laws and regulations** that regulate/support the field of Green Care; • **Standard procedures and practices** in the bureaucratic and decision–making arenas, that may influence Green Care provisioning; • Collective understandings of Green Care in popular culture, in the media, and in civil society.
Organizational level	
Material resources	• **Equipment** and **facilities** needed for the enterprise or farm, which require maintenance, restoration, expansion etc.; • **Financial capital**, to start, maintain, or enlarge the activity; • **Time needed** to run everyday operations, but also to make sure the practices are performed respecting the needs of those cared for.
Organizational culture	• **Values, ways of working and attitudes** that form the culture shared by the people within the Green Care enterprise/ farm/ community. The organizational culture influences the ability to adapt, innovate, and to be open to various challenges.

Community level	
Place-based resources	• **Natural elements and ecosystem resources**, including non-humans, such as animals and plants, crucial to the daily operations of Green Care practitioners; • **Sense of place**, intended as the way people perceive and feel connected to the different locations where Green Care takes place: its aesthetic qualities and cultural character, influencing well-being and emotional attachment to a place.
Social resources	• **Human beings** involved in daily Green Care operations: staff, customers/participants (and their families), close collaborators, etc. • **Broader networks and relations** that Green Care practitioners nurture in order to realize their activities.
Personal level	
Ethics	• **Individual and shared values,** such as ecological care, but also trust, solidarity, and reciprocity. These values are sources of motivation for Green Care practitioners, and help to build social ties with the wider network of stakeholders.
Emotions	• **Emotions and sentiments,** such as hope for future generations, fear for the future of a place, passion for nature-based activities, which can be drivers of innovation and change for Green Care practitioners.
Competences	All the skills and abilities of Green Care practitioners, gained through a combination of life experience, education and training, & professional experience. They may include: • **Entrepreneurship and management skills**; • **Technical abilities and competences**, for instance related to farm work, or to health and social care provisioning; • **Social skills**, such as friendliness and openness to others; • **Cultural traits**, such as perseverance, determination and willfulness (in Finnish 'Sisu').

Enabling resources and constraining resources: Highlights from the three case studies

In the three cases analyzed in this study, we found that some resources are enabling practitioners to perform their activities, whereas others are missing or constraining, making their daily operations challenging. Below is an overview of our findings.

Enabling resources

According to the Green Care practitioners, the most enabling resources are those at **personal and community levels**, with some differences depending on the case.

Resources at personal level

In all three cases, personal-level resources were extremely important. Both farms and the nature-tourism company are small-scale and to some extent, family-owned. This means that the main practitioners are often the fulcrum and driving force behind the activities. Their **personality** and their **social skills, values, and visions** define the nature of the enterprise and of the practices offered.

Emotions and sentiments are also crucial in Green Care. When asked: "What makes Green Care happen?" practitioners often name emotions. For instance, fear for their farm, love for their family, passion for life in nature, hope for future generations, etc. Practitioners' passionate attitude is also important for external collaborators, who often refer to their "**good heart**" and enthusiasm.

"Why do I do this? Every time you see a customer, they are happy and smiling, so the services we provide are positive for them. And this makes me happy."

Finally, Green Care practitioners' **competences, skills, and cultural qualities** also play a strong enabling role for the practices. Skills and abilities are the combination of professional training and education, life experiences, and professional expertise. Some of the attributes that usually characterize successful entrepreneurs — such as perseverance, determination, and willfulness — are considered cultural traits in Finland, and are summarized with the Finnish word **"sisu"**.

"To make Green Care happen, we need to work hard and believe in what we are doing."

Ethics and values have a very important role in Green Care. As we have seen in Chapter 1 of this report, practitioners' attention to social inclusion and to ecological justice are among the key factors motivating their practices. Especially in farm case studies, people expressed **caring for their places,** a desire to save them from unwanted developments, and to nurture their natural and social resources following certain morals and principles.

At a collective level, values such as **trust, solidarity and reciprocity** are important because they strengthen connections between people, and ensure the support of external stakeholders and collaborators.

"Values are really important in this work. I can do the work that is doing something good to the environment and also to people."

Resources at community level

In all three case studies, the **living ecosystems** are crucial to making Green Care happen: without natural elements, animals, fields etc., there would be no Green Care practices.

For the nature-tourism company, on the one hand **"nature is everywhere"** and activities can be designed to fit any environment. On the other hand, many services are deliberately offered in the proximity to the city as a way to invite people to understand and enjoy the recreational use of forests and lakes close to urban life.

Social resources were equally important for all the three cases. People are the necessary fabric of any social enterprise or socially-oriented community, necessary to the everyday operations on site. Equally important are the **social connections** and **networks** that practitioners are able to form and maintain. **Cross-sectoral collaborations** are particularly crucial for supporting Green Care.

"Our farm is all about people really. [...] Many of them felt empowered by this environment, and by working with their hands in the dirt and eating together and being thankful for the food together."

At each of the two farms, the very particular features and combinations of the natural elements and ecosystems contribute to a unique **sense of place** with specific emotional-aesthetic characteristics that cannot be replicated elsewhere. Similarly, the animals are not just any animals: each one is **unique**, with a name, a history, and a certain character that may serve a specific purpose in the well-being and rehabilitation activities offered.

"It's just the whole atmosphere of the place, it's meant for people to be here. [...] Well, it's a beautiful place: the fields are small, it's not like an endless plain, and in a small area there is a very rich variety of different elements. It is a very traditional kind of landscape."

Constraining resources

According to the Green Care practitioners in this study, there are also resources that are harder to mobilize, that are inadequate, insufficient, or that hinder the smooth development of the operations. In most accounts retrieved from our study, the constraining resources are found at the **organizational** and **structural levels**.

Resources at organizational level

At an organizational level we find both material and non-material resources. Any organization— be it a farm or a company — needs **material conditions** for its operations, such as equipment and facilities. Maintenance and enlargement of such material assets is usually a source of preoccupation for Green Care practitioners. Moreover, obtaining the **financial means** to invest in material assets or the permits to build specific infrastructures is not easy for them, leading to frustrations and concerns.

An organization is also characterized by certain **norms, ways of working, and principles** that define its **operating culture**. Building common norms within their organization can be easier for certain Green Care practitioners and harder for others. **Intra-generational change** in some instances creates uncertainty, fear for the future, and may lead to conflicting values and ways of working among its people. Similarly, the capacity and **openness to take risks** and venture into novel arrangements is stronger for certain Green Care enterprises than others, affecting the ability of the organization to build the right partnerships needed to offer its services.

Resources at structural level

Finland guarantees the **basic infrastructures** needed to make Green Care happen, both physical (e.g. roads, electricity, etc.) and non-physical ones, such as a functioning and high-quality welfare system. The current system has a strong focus on caring services for the disabled; less so, for the marginalized.

The **regulatory framework** for Green Care practices is still not sufficiently developed to facilitate entrepreneurial efforts. Moreover, the country is currently undergoing the largest social and healthcare restructuring in history, as a result of the SOTE reform in June 2021 (Yle News 2021). For several years, this reform has created uncertainties and a general sense of caution by local administrators to allocate funds for nascent Green Care projects.

When it comes to applying for **public bids** to offer social and well-being services, Green Care enterprises have to compete with multinationals. The process of application does not account for the peculiarities of nature-based activities, therefore Green Care practitioners may find themselves in a position of disadvantage in comparison to bigger players.

Market's demands also influence Green Care practices. For instance, following the 2008 global economic crisis, companies' demand for well-being services for their employees decreased. This decision affected the nature-tourism company, which had been relying greatly on those customers until that point. The company started to diversify its services to a greater extent going forward.

At the structural level, we also find **cognitive resources**. These are the shared meanings and views that people attach to Green Care practices. Differently from other structural resources, cognitive resources have an enabling character for the development of Green Care in Finland. Indeed, the general perception of nature-based activities is rather positive in the country, thanks also to the growing **media attention** to the therapeutic effects of nature-based activities. The Green Care Finland Association has also played an important role in spreading the concept around the country and in helping to develop a common understanding and recognition of the practices.

Green Care and place–based sustainability: Key insights

This report shares conceptual tools and firsthand information that emerged from a Green Care research project based in Finland. In particular, we explored:

1. Specific **caring practices**—ie. what Green Care practitioners do, for whom, how they do it, and why;

2. The **resources** that Green Care practitioners need to be successful, and the challenges they may encounter in implementing their activities.

By looking at these two dimensions, we found important insights with regards to place-based sustainability. The practitioners featured in our study were motivated to engage in Green Care by specific **sustainability–informed concerns**, such as the problem of social exclusion, their sense of disconnection between humans and nature (and related urban–rural disconnection), and a general love for nature. As social innovators, Green Care practitioners act upon their concerns, and initiate a wide range of (caring) practices. Their initiatives have wider potential beyond the provision of social services, as we claim below.

We summarize here our key findings, according to the economic, social, ecological, and cultural **'pillars of sustainable development'** (Soini and Dessein 2016; United Cities and Local Governments, n.d.)

Economic

Green Care practitioners typically choose business models and economic relations that put p**eople, social value creation, and local issues and needs,** at the center of their goals and activities. Both ethical and business intentions motivate entrepreneurial activity. Profit accumulation, however, is not the main priority for practitioners, and surpluses are mostly used to ensure the durability of their initiatives and financial self–sufficiency, or they re-invest in the venture's social objectives.

In social and care farming, Green Care practices enable rural entrepreneurs to diversify their income flows and revitalize the social fabric of marginalized areas, thus promoting **smart, inclusive**, and **place–based development**. Green Care practitioners are indeed **embedded in specific contexts and places**. A specific context provides the anchor for **social connections** and for network–building opportunities, as well as the **ecosystem resources** and **social capital** needed to put practices into action.

The cases analyzed in this study are examples of **social innovation**, which brings new goods and services to the market, retain skilled employees, and contribute to wealth redistribution. In the long run, social innovation practices can contribute to creating **vibrant, dynamic and diverse economies**.

Social

Green Care practitioners are **resourceful individuals** who are able to translate innovative visions into reality. The success of their practices, however, does not depend on one or even a few persons only. Rather, it is influenced by the **socio-ecological, economic and institutional context** practitioners operate in. At the same time, Green Care practices can have beneficial impacts on the context. Our findings suggest that they not only benefit directly the care receivers, their relatives, and connected participants, but also the surrounding **communities, the local networks and institutions, and society at large**. The practices identified in the three case studies analyzed in this report focused on **social inclusion, well-being, recreation**, and **learning** for different target groups. At the same time, practitioners are also engaged in **networking, outreach**, and **capacity-building activities** that have spillover effects on the surrounding communities, beyond their own enterprise or farm. As social innovators, Green Care practitioners contribute to raising awareness about **social needs** of vulnerable groups, and engage citizens in the community to respond to those needs, thus enhancing social ties and well-being for the whole society.

Ecological

The Green Care practices explored in this study are informed by **deep ecological values** which run counter to the dominant economic models that over-exploit natural resources. Both Green Care farms follow biological and/or biodynamic standards and they prioritize the **health of the environment** and the **well-being of animals**, while guaranteeing the **production of healthy foods.** Practitioners on the farms also engage in **conservation** and **regeneration activities**, enriching the ecosystem's biodiversity and, more generally, contributing to the ecosystems' restoration.

Practitioners at the nature-tourism company make a significant effort to **minimize their ecological impact** and to emotionally **reconnect people to nature**. The sports and recreational activities they offer have **a low negative impact** on the environment, often include **contemplative learning experiences**, and are mostly offered in locations close to the city, specifically so that participants can learn to appreciate natural ecosystems around them. In the long run, participants' experiences may contribute to **pro-environmental behaviors**.

Green Care practices often take place in **emotionally- and value-laden locations**, which may be vulnerable in some ways— e.g. depleted social fabric, poor infrastructures etc.— but rich in other ways, such as in ecosystem resources and rural traditions. Green Care practitioners' initiatives can **re-enliven the places** where they are based and sustain them into the future, in some cases going against mainstream development pathways.

Cultural

Green Care practices tap into local cultural beliefs and traditions, and practitioners celebrate the unique characteristics of their territories. They do so in "material ways", i.e. maintaining and preserving **traditional architecture and landscapes** of rural areas; and in "immaterial ways", such as telling **traditional tales** about the relationship between humans and forest ecosystems or by sharing their knowledge about **rural livelihoods** in local schools. These practices contribute to the **quality of life** and the overall **quality of the places (or re-appreciation of the places)** where they are based; they have the potential to help rural locations become more desirable and vibrant places to live and to recreate.

When Green Care practitioners mobilize and use local resources and recognize unique local characteristics, they have the potential to increase local and regional **appreciation of the territory** they operate in. As a result, Green Care practices may enhance **resilience** through **sustainable, culturally conscious, and socially inclusive forms of local development** which may expand beyond a single community and municipality.

Based on these observations, we conclude that **Green Care** should be understood not only as a service for specific target groups, but also **as a set of practices that can contribute to place-based sustainability,** even at larger spatial and administrative scales.

We suggest that everyone interested in contributing to the field of Green Care in Finland (policy makers, civil servants, educators, researchers, patrons, etc.) takes a **holistic, cross-sectoral perspective** that highlights the myriad ways Green Care practices can **support and create value** for their territories. For instance:

WE SUGGEST THAT:

Researchers could take into stronger consideration Green Care's **environmental and cultural impacts,** as well as identify a set of indicators to measure the **regenerative potential** of the practices, i.e. the capacity to enhance the well-being of both humans and non-human elements (e.g. flora, fauna, other ecological dimensions).

Trainers and educators could place stronger attention on practitioners' **personal values and feelings** as potentially successful drivers of innovation and change, and provide ad-hoc **capacity-building and mentoring** activities for prospective Green Care practitioners to maximize the impact of their practices in all sustainability dimensions.

Policy-makers could take into account the positive role of Green Care practices in processes of **territorial sustainability,** and design targeted policy strategies to facilitate cross-sectoral collaboration and win-win solutions.

Local administrators and civil servants could give stronger attention to the added values offered by Green Care enterprises when purchasing social and well-being services or when assigning public bids.

Laypeople purchasing Green Care services could orient their consumers' choices towards practices and practitioners that provide good quality services driven by an ethical commitment to **contribute to society and ecosystems** at large.

Green Care practitioners could put stronger efforts in using **dissemination tools** in social networks and popular media, to increase the transparency and accountability of their activities, and most importantly to highlight the variety of practices they perform and the potential **spillover benefits** they bring to surrounding communities and ecosystems.

Acknowledgments

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This report is mostly based on the outputs of a PhD study that can be downloaded at the following links:

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A participatory action-oriented study in Finland

Angela Moriggi

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