

The Logic of Sufficiency

By Thomas Princen

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What if modern society put a priority on the material security of its citizens and the ecological integrity of its resource base? What if it took ecological constraint as a given, not
a hindrance but a source of long-term economic security? How would it organize itself, structure its
industry, shape its consumption?Across time and across cultures, people actually have adapted to
ecological constraint. They have changed behavior; they have built institutions. And they have
developed norms and principles for their time. Today's environmental challenges -- at once global,
technological, and commercial -- require new behaviors, new institutions, and new principles.In this
highly original work, Thomas Princen builds one such principle: sufficiency. Sufficiency is not
about denial, not about sacrifice or doing without. Rather, when resource depletion and
overconsumption are real, sufficiency is about doing well. It is about good work and good
governance; it is about goods that are good only to a point.With examples ranging from timbering and
fishing to automobility and meat production, Princen shows that sufficiency is perfectly sensible
and yet absolutely contrary to modern society's dominant principle, efficiency. He argues that
seeking enough when more is possible is both intuitive and rational -- personally, organizationally
and ecologically rational. And under global ecological constraint, it is ethical. Over the long
term, an economy -- indeed a society -- cannot operate as if there's never enough and never too
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The Logic of Sufficiency By Thomas Princen Bibliography

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Editorial Review

Review

After reading this book, anyone still using the word 'efficiency' is bound to stumble and stutter. Masterfully dissecting the hidden economism among policymakers, Princen audaciously calls for 'sufficiency' as the cornerstone of a growth-free society.

(Wolfgang Sachs, Wuppertal Institute for Climate, Environment, and Energy)

Our economy depends on maximized growth and consumption but our finite planet simply cannot sustain endless expansion. Tom Princen challenges the status quo and demonstrates how the principles of restraint, moderation, and thrift can guide us safely into a sustainable future. This book is a terrific guide for those who are deeply troubled by a runaway global economy that seems to be doing as much damage as good. Princen calls for a new focus on human well-being and a rejection of efficiency as the supreme economic value. Anyone in search of a clearer economic vision for our future should read this book.

(Betsy Taylor, President, New American Dream, author of *Sustainable Planet*)

[A] detailed and engaging history of the efficiency principle and its role in supporting the paradigm of unlimited economic growth.

(*Nature*)

...an admirable and timely book... a first-rate effort at breaking new ground in the consumption debate.

(*Science*)

The Logic of Sufficiency is the most thought-provoking book I have read on the interaction of the individual, society, economics, and the environment. You will not be disappointed with Thomas Princen"s cutting-edge thinking about humans living in harmony with the land that sustains us.

(Mike Dombeck, GEM Professor, University of Wisconsin- Stevens Point, UW System Fellow of Global Conservation, and former U.S. Forest Service Chief)

This book is a significant contribution to the field of global environmental studies. Many books and articles in environmental studies mention sufficiency, but none develop the concept in a systematic way. The book will remain the core text that critiques the principle of efficiency and advocates the principle of sufficiency for years to come.

(Peter Dauvergne, Canada Research Chair in Global Environmental Politics, University of British Columbia)

In this thoroughly original, imaginative, and deftly written book, Princen presents a powerful critique of the

environmental consequences of economic efficiency while advocating, with intelligence and thoughtfulness, the principle of sufficiency. Many books and articles in environmental studies mention sufficiency, but none develop the concept in a systematic way. The scholarship is comprehensive, cutting across numerous disciplines with depth and accuracy. This book will be at the forefrontof normative global environmental studies and will remain a core text for years to come.

(Peter Dauvergne, Canada Research Chair in Global Environmental Politics, University of British Columbia)

About the Author
Thomas Princen explores ecological and economic sustainability at the University of Michigan. He is the author of *Treading Softly: Paths to Ecological Order* and *The Logic of Sufficiency* (both published by the MIT Press).

Users Review

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Christopher Watson:

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