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## BOOK REVIEW PERSPECTIVES

### Thomas Princen, *The Logic of Sufficiency*

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#### Diana Mincyte

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The publication of the Brundtland Report in 1987, followed by the Earth Summit in Río de Janeiro in 1992, brought worldwide attention to the environmental consequences of economic growth. Sustainable development quickly became one of the key visions promising changes in global and local economies. Although its undetermined definition has been widely criticized, sustainability has become the primary international political tool aimed at solving complex environmental problems. As individual countries have introduced their national sustainable development plans bringing new and stricter environmental standards to local economies, the contours of a new—much more environmentally conscious—economic paradigm are beginning to emerge.

However, the actual implementation of sustainable development plans has failed to deliver the material changes that so many scholars and environmental activists—as well as those directly exposed to environmental disasters—have been calling for. While individual countries are reducing their emissions, global levels of natural resource usage and waste emissions have never grown so fast.

Thomas Princen's *The Logic of Sufficiency* provides an in-depth analysis of why global production, distribution, and consumption systems are resistant to sustainable development plans and continue exacerbating the ecological situation. Additionally, Princen introduces a conceptually new vision of sustainable economy. *The Logic of Sufficiency* stands out from many other attempts to theorize sustainable development in that Princen moves far beyond pragmatic—economic, political, as well as social and cultural—factors to demonstrate that solving the environmental problem requires fundamental changes in the organizing logic of today's economy. Princen's main argument is that to adequately deal with growing environmental problems, we need to move from an economy built around the principles of profit maximization and efficiency to that of sufficiency.

To pursue his argument, Princen organizes his book into two parts. Part I exposes the roots of today's environmental problems and defines the concept of sufficiency as a viable alternative solution. The first two chapters in Part I problematize the implementation of efficiency and cooperation as means for solving environmental problems and introduce an alternative—ecological—rationality. Princen defines ecological rationality as a set of values resting on long-term, intergenerational resource-use goals, sustainability principles, adaptive approaches toward environmental systems, experiential knowledge of practitioners, and development of interdependencies between natural resources and social systems. Underlying these elements of ecological rationality, he argues, is the concept of sufficiency, which the subsequent chapters in Part I further contrast to the economic rationality of efficiency. Chapter Three historicizes efficiency as the key social and economic value in modern societies. Chapter Four focuses on measuring efficiency using ratios and deconstructs such measurements as value-neutral, objective systems. Chapter Five places efficiency in the context of labor history and delineates the emergence of consumer society to demonstrate that the growth of a large-scale, specialized, and limited liability corporate world is failing to deliver its promises to producers and consumers and, most importantly, regarding social and environmental well being. The second part of the book provides three specific case studies—the Pacific Lumber Company, Monhegan Lobstering, and the Toronto Island Project—where the key principles of sustainability and sufficiency were successfully implemented. These cases bridge the theory of sufficiency to the empirical world.

Among other things, Princen brings two major contributions to conceptualizing and implementing sustainability principles. First, and most prominently, the book exposes the incommensurability between an economy built around efficiency and environmental protection. He demonstrates that the governing economic principles of efficiency and profit maximization naturally displace the actual social and environmental costs of economic growth onto the public sphere. The drive toward efficiency has led to the loss of social fabric as well as to exhaustion of natu-

ral resources and often to irreversible pollution of human and natural habitats.

On the surface, Princen's criticism of efficiency is directed at contemporary economics. Yet, it has far-reaching consequences for today's environmental politics. In light of his argument, we begin to see the limits of today's sustainability politics. Indeed, can sustainability be achieved without compromising economic growth? Can we protect the environment with new and more efficient technologies or do we need more fundamental changes? Princen's answer is clear—business-as-usual is not going to work; we need to rethink the foundations of our economic activities.

In this sense, the *Logic of Sufficiency* implicitly criticizes the Brundtland Report, as well as national sustainable development plans where it is assumed that economic growth cannot—and should not—stop and where the foundations of consumer society and global systems of production and distribution are accepted as a givens. By questioning the organizing logic of contemporary economics, Princen challenges the very definition of sustainability—that sustainable development can only be achieved through the optimization of economic, social, and environmental factors. In the context of the ongoing political debates on how to better integrate science and technology into the creation of sustainable societies, Princen's book offers an important intervention into how we define and design socio-environmental systems.

Beyond theorizing sustainability around the concept of sufficiency, one of the key strengths of Princen's book is its basis in empirical case studies. As the three cases testify, the logic of sufficiency has yielded the desired socio-environmental ecologies where natural constraints are taken seriously and where socio-economic systems are designed to provide a buffer from resource exhaustion. This is important for two reasons. First, the reliance on the specific case studies bridges the vision of sustainable development with actual human practice and, by so doing, demonstrates that the implementation of sufficiency and ecological rationality is viable. For the reader, this move pushes the theory of sustainability from the purely theoretical (or political) domain to that of everyday practice. For those deeply involved in designing, implementing, living in, criticizing, or imagining sustainable socio-environmental landscapes, Princen calls for “alternative logics, ones that twist and fall, that have mystery and surprise, that do not maximize anything.”

Additionally, Princen's emphasis on actual case studies suggests that the social and material infrastructures necessary for the implementation of the sufficiency principles and ecological rationality may already be in place. Even though Princen points out

that instances of truly sustainable ecologies are few and far between, the case studies imply that sustainable development's future lies not in more advanced technologies and political mechanisms, but in already existing alternative practices organized around the long-term stewardship and acceptance of the limits of nature and of human control. In contrast to those who imagine that increasingly efficient resource use and new technology can achieve sustainable economies, Princen proposes a very different future where those societies that function at the current economic margins become forerunners of a new environmental regime. In this vision, “Alpine meadow grazers and Norwegian fishers and Amazonian ranchers and Filipino irrigators are not quaint throwbacks to bygone eras, but highly sensible adapters to complex environments.” This observation means that some of the models and solutions for dealing with environmental problems can be found in the places near to us.

In short, through the theory of sufficiency, but most importantly, through the case studies that illustrate the principles of alternative rationality, Princen's book maps new terrain in sustainability. It not only deconstructs and historicizes the key principles of today's economic rationalities, but also questions the foundations of current environmental policies and sustainable development politics. In broader terms, *The Logic of Sufficiency* is deeply sociological and offers insights into how individuals participate in collective action, specifically in solving environmental problems. Princen demonstrates that individuals are never sovereign consumers or producers, but agents capable of changing structures. While he recognizes the significance of structures to shape one's place in a socio-environmental system, he implies that we bear individual responsibility to connect “the limits of the planet to the limits of the everyday practice.” I hope that Princen's next book will flesh out how to design and steer individual practices into large-scale environmental changes. For now, I look forward to sharing this book with my students in a Green Consumerism class this semester.

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### Gabriela Kütting

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In *The Logic of Sufficiency*, Tom Princen argues for the concept of sufficiency to replace the economic rationality of efficiency, which has become the guiding principle for the management sector. However, he asserts that what is perceived to be efficient is anything but. With various examples, Princen demonstrates that economic organization based on

the long-term survival of a resource being exploited is possible, and indeed desirable, and he sees this as the way out of our environmental malaise. In Chapter 1, he outlines the principle of sufficiency, then in Chapters 2 and 3 contrasts it with the history and evolution of economic efficiency as the organizing principle of the current economy. Efficiency today is interpreted in a very narrow social and economic context that in many ways has very little to do with efficiency as common sense would define it.

Princen argues on the basis of three case studies that true sustainability would mean replacing efficiency with sufficiency as the guiding concept of economics. He first discusses timber logging on the West Coast of the United States by a company that successfully put sustainable yield and selective logging as its priority and became an admirable model. His second example is lobstering in the northeastern part of the country and how a dispute over fishing-ground access led to the institutionalization of restricted access and thus a long-term view on resource availability. Princen's final study moves away from resource management to the role of the automobile and how an urban island in Toronto has made deliberate choices not to be fully co-opted into the North American model of the car society.

Researched with excruciating attention to detail, this book provides a thorough historical overview of the development of efficiency, sustainability, and sufficiency. Its strength is the theoretical and empirical treatment of sufficiency as an alternative to existing economic organization. The argument for sufficiency does not suggest a notion of sacrifice or radical lifestyle change. Rather, it questions the logic that efficiency, as defined by economies of scale and instant maximized profits without regard for the future, is the best organizing principle for the economy and society. Princen approaches this task from an ecocentric resource-use perspective and thus neatly slots into (and indeed has helped to found) a growing literature that addresses this point from a similar interdisciplinary vein. Consumer psychologists have conducted studies showing that instant gratification and indiscriminate material consumption actually lead to less rather than more happiness. A burgeoning literature on the ethics of consumption has questioned neoliberal lifestyles. Of course, various civil society movements are engaged in the same activities. Princen's work contributes to and defines this literature in a new way. It also raises questions on unaddressed issues regarding how exactly we can arrive at a society based on a logic of sufficiency.

Three areas are particularly pertinent for taking the concept of sufficiency further: public/private distinctions, the role of agency, and equity and the global dimension. In his work, Princen implies rather

than articulates the interplay between public and private domains when it comes to sufficiency. While his studies of the logging industry and of lobstering are predominantly situated in the public domain, and deal with public institutions, the study of car society in Toronto's island community combines aspects of public and private agency. Sufficiency is a concept of economic organization as well as of private choice and the implications of spanning the two dimensions need to be explored further. This point ties in with questions about agency. To follow Princen's logic, we need public institutions based on sufficiency. However, we also need a more sufficient mindset in the private sphere, in the behavior of citizens and consumers that replaces consumer society's instant gratification. Achieving a change of thought in the public and private domains requires re-examining two sides of the same coin. However, seeking an ideological shift leads us back to the same well-trodden paths of civil-society engagement, education, and piecemeal change by a minority of committed citizens who will ultimately bring about new public modes. Princen stays well away from these standard recipes for averting an environmental crisis. He avoids all the clichés, but also leaves the reader hoping for a blueprint for instituting the logic of sufficiency.

The concept of sufficiency also needs international consideration through global institutions as well as through local-global linkages. Global governance discourse and environmental governance institutions generally focus on management strategies that exclude issues such as equity and reduction of resource use. Any concept of sufficiency, be it at the local or global level, could only be successful if it takes into account inequalities of wealth, power, and access to material resources, as well as such nonmaterial resources as knowledge. In a world where most rules of economic organization are made at the global level, and where the economy is based on global production and consumption patterns, the concept of sufficiency quite clearly needs a global dimension. Thus several aspects of the logic of sufficiency need to be explored further and Tom Princen's work provides an ideal starting point for considering these issues.

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### David L. Goldblatt

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Pitting oneself against the most important idea of the 20th century, even to save the 21st century from ecological collapse, creates niche appeal at best. Yet

in his writings, Thomas Princen forthrightly assails the economic growth obsession and its closely coupled increasing material throughput for their role in destroying the global environment. In reviewing the works of numerous researchers in various fields with bearing on sustainable consumption, I have found none more compelling and eloquent than Princen's. His latest book, *The Logic of Sufficiency*, is a highly readable and accessible presentation, split between theory and extended case study, and unsparingly critical of the expansionist, cornucopian, consumerist political economy for eroding the ecological basis of its future sustenance. Penetrating, iconoclastic, and eloquent, the book is also as comprehensive as could be expected from a single author.

Princen's concern is the global ecological crisis: climate change, biodiversity loss, persistent toxic chemicals, dwindling freshwater, particularly the criticality of these problems, their irreversibility, long time lags, and limited predictability and control. Princen casts most of the blame on the modern political economy, especially its "shading and distancing of commerce," the tendency to export environmental threats and escape responsibility for their creation. Princen explains that "globalization, privatization, and diminishing state capacity conspire with technological innovation and market manipulation to skew the benefits and costs of economic activity, creating the illusion of environmental progress." At the heart of the problem is a central tenet of economics and engineering, hailed as a sign of progress and modernity and held up as a cure for economic, social, and even environmental ills: efficiency.

The book brilliantly, and at times acidly, deconstructs the political manipulation of efficiency ratios. Efficiency ratios are not purely technical indicators but are also political and strategic instruments. More often than not they are used to serve the interests of the commercially powerful, whose worldview is cornucopian and mechanistic, over the integrity of the global environment, which is best characterized through a complex systems perspective. Masquerading as if facilitating progress and advancing broad social agendas, efficiency ratios can be used to externalize costs over time and distance.

Trumpeting increases in automotive fuel economy, while the energy consumed by private transportation climbs steadily in the aggregate, is an example of the "individualizing" tendency of efficiency ratios. These data ignore the collective choices and the infrastructural and cultural developments that enable or constrain individual choice, for example, those that offer people scant transportation alternatives to driving. Whether a gain in an efficiency ratio translates into environmental improvement overall—for instance, whether total fossil-fuel use and carbon-

dioxide emissions decline—depends foremost on personal, social, and infrastructure choices, not principally on how much technological performance has been improved per unit of energy services (e.g., gallons per mile, watts per light bulb).

*Sufficiency* is at the heart of the alternative rationality Princen promotes in this book in place of the economic and legalistic rationalities that champion efficiency. In former times, discussing sufficiency might have been considered as banal as lauding the age-old virtue of moderation; today, it is necessary to explicate sufficiency since excess has been so deeply systematized in economic theory and society that it has become the water in which we all swim. Restraint, a key component of sufficiency, functions when biophysical signals register in human social systems, establishing a negative feedback loop to ensure the ecological integrity of the resource base. To restore restraint and sufficiency, Princen argues, companies and social institutions must be reordered so that resource managers can receive and act on these signals. The book's in-depth case studies show sufficiency in action through people's apprehension in intuitive, experiential ways without top-down coercion, technocratic knowledge, strong environmental convictions, or loss of the profit motive.

As a normative class of prescriptive principles, sufficiency stands in strong contrast to cooperation and efficiency. Similarly, the logic of sufficiency is necessary to *counter* the logic of capital(ism), and not—as in popular sociological theory—to be applied alongside it. The two logics are fundamentally opposed in their *Weltanschauung* concerning material use. Princen also criticizes the standard environmental protection approach and, implicitly, standard sustainability formulations, as inadequate or misguided. Sustainability is often described as a balanced triad of environmental, social, and economic interests. However, although it is apparent by now that economics as normally practiced ("sustainable growth") is frequently antithetical to long-term ecological integrity, few practitioners admit it openly. To his credit, Princen points out this elephant in the bedroom of conventional moderate sustainability advocates.

*The Logic of Sufficiency* departs radically from the mainstream in both its message and its target audience. Princen admits he is preaching to the choir in this book and holds no hope of converting the non-ecological, rationalist majority to his views. Most of the public, as well as policy makers and media-opinion setters, he suggests, will only be convinced by mounting inconsistencies as they are forced to reckon with ecological constraints, or society will have to wait for them to die off. But this may prove too late. If things are as bad as Princen fears, why is

he not more concerned about running out of time before the majority sees the light?

In effect, then, the book is something like intellectual and moral support for the faithful to keep them from losing themselves and their hope before the neoliberal onslaught. One wonders if such a thorough deconstruction of efficiency and associated shibboleths is necessary for his intended audience to remove all doubts and make them true believers. Princen says the promise of sufficiency is hope. Herman Daly, one of the founders of ecological economics, has tried to deliver a similar message in academia and at the World Bank without having made an appreciable dent in the contemporary obsession with (throughput) growth. I suggest we need a parallel approach with a somewhat more mainstream appeal that is still faithful to this message and mindful of the late hour. Somehow, and better sooner rather than later, we must begin to mainstream the ultimate economic heresy.

To this end, it may help to anticipate the main camps of resistance to Princen's arguments in the book. As noted, the proponents of the growth-centered neoliberal order will dismiss the book as environmentalist radicalism, rabid antiglobalization, or a recipe for economic depression—assuming they ever hear of it.

- Fellow social scientists, even environmental ones, may find it academically questionable or intellectually inauthentic to be so overtly normative and prescriptive.
- Policy makers will struggle with Princen's contention that sufficiency operates with a comfortable buffer from the maximum. What this means in practice is to be established experientially from years of close contact with the resource in question (e.g., a fishery or a forest), and not experimentally or exactly through modeling. The suggestion that sufficiency is not rigorously quantifiable will rile many policy makers, who will say if it is not quantifiable, it is not amenable to their manipulation and control, and therefore none of their concern.
- Environmental economists, engineers, and other advocates of ecoefficiency will bring technological and economic arguments against Princen's relentless criticism of efficiency as one of the causes of, not a solution to, the ecological predicament. They will be especially critical of his refusal to be content with lamenting efficiency's extension beyond the factory floor to social and cultural realms. During the transition to a renewable energy system, and while existing housing and transportation infrastructure is still being replaced, they will argue, improvements in tech-

nological efficiencies are vital to our ability to extend the nonrenewable resource base and to reduce emissions. In the name of environmental protection—or more to the point sustainability—can one champion increases in efficiencies in the technological realm as long as they are not extended to the wider society? It is arguable whether most technological efficiency increases are self-defeating by precipitating throughput increases. Princen also suggests that at the same time that efficiencies are improved, consumption cannot be successfully held down via conventional policy instruments like taxes, but others dispute that as well.

*The Logic of Sufficiency* belongs to the body of visionary sustainability literature. It describes how and why the current political economy is undermining the environment and provides a clear vision of how it should be arranged under conditions of sufficiency, with rigorous elaboration of principles, conditions, and even enabling institutional conditions. The advocates of alternative reasoning and alternative choices need more than an ideal or a utopian fantasy, they need a realistic option, he says. But Princen's work *is* utopian, if brilliantly so; he uses real-world examples of sufficiency in action, but while they may not be on the fringe, they are very small scale. The tiny holdouts against completely open-access automobile and airplane mobility on Toronto Island, for example, are not nearly enough to constitute a critical mass for social change. Princen derives many sufficiency principles from those who interact directly with natural resources—fishermen, loggers, farmers—but are these ecological rationalities scalable to the global economy? Princen does not offer much about how to get from here to there on a global, or even a national, scale. The mechanics of a smooth transition are important and likely to be much more problematic than Princen hopes when he writes, with reference to the American factory farm meat-production system (an apotheosis of efficiency), “it is really quite simple. And thoughtful people know society will get there one way or another.” Some ways will prove much uglier than others.

All of Princen's longer case studies are in North America. How extendable are the lessons he draws from them to the rest of the world? Despite globalization based on the Western model, legal and cultural idiosyncrasies in other countries may limit their generalizability. And most troublesome, what about the growing parts of the world that are immune to the logic of sufficiency, and to the logic of capitalism for that matter, whether because of corruption, dictatorship, thuggery, or militant fundamentalist ideologies?

Princen devotes relatively little space to individual human agency. With the accelerating loss of the global “sustainable middle” class, there are strong socioeconomic and strategic reasons why people, even if they agree with Princen’s sufficiency principles, will not embrace them as long as they are marginal or transitional. In the United States, to avoid slipping into the class confined to polluted, deteriorating, crime-ridden urban neighborhoods with execrable schools and public transportation, many are forced to “buy into” the global political economy. And even those who subscribe to sufficiency in their personal lives will likely eschew embracing sufficiency’s implications at the professional or political level.

In a smaller illustration, Princen cites dairy farming in the Alpine regions of Switzerland, my adoptive country, as an example of a sustainable practice in a region where farmers continue a centuries-old lifestyle. He notes that Alpine farming is not the basis of the Swiss economy, and in fact these communities are now only economically viable with enormous subsidies from the central government. This is money raised largely via an economy of international banking and finance that feeds on and fuels the unsustainable global economy.

At the individual, communal, and national levels, problematic interconnections complicate the search for an ecological ethic of behavior that still enables one to survive. On one hand, what guidance would Princen offer in conducting oneself to avoid complicity in an amoral political economy whose operation is undermining the biophysical basis of future life and civilizations?

On the other hand, we may rest easier not probing too deeply. Princen means to lend moral support to the faithful as they hew to a different, lonely path, but shedding too much light can lead to guilt, moral paralysis, environmental fatigue, or fatalism. As Solomon noted in the Book of Ecclesiastes, “For in much wisdom is much vexation; And he that increases knowledge increases sorrow.”

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**Rejoinder from the author**  
**Thomas Princen**

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First a word of gratitude to Editor Maurie Cohen for organizing these book reviews on *The Logic of Sufficiency*. And another word to the reviewers for their careful reads and thoughtful comments. I hope my reply is worthy of all four people’s efforts.

Second, it is, of course, gratifying to have one’s work so reviewed and, as it turns out, on the whole, reviewed so positively. In the interest of pushing the conversation further (the conversation on the conditions for sustainability, say), I will refrain from noting points of agreement and instead focus on those of disagreement, or at least on those that warrant elaboration and clarification, and those that call for next steps.

Diana Mincyte usefully frames the contribution of *The Logic of Sufficiency* as a way “to see the limits of today’s sustainability politics.” Gabriela Kütting takes sufficiency as that which “questions the logic that efficiency...is the best organizing principle for the economy and society.” And David Goldblatt interprets it as a “counter [to the] logic of capital(ism).” I find these to be useful frames, yet more negative than I had intended. Environmental studies and, for that matter, academe, is almost cursed by its focus on the critique, on the analysis and deconstruction of existing theory and practice, all as if the alternative just follows. I prefer to think of sufficiency (and like concepts) as a positive step toward the alternative. Of course, the risk, as I have witnessed already in some not-so-complimentary reviews, is to be slammed for being “normative” (which to me is no slam at all; see below) or ideological or naïve or “utopian.” So here I wish to make three points, calling for normative theorizing, for more concept development, and for care in getting the applications right.

The first point is theoretical yet starts with the empirical (where I believe all theory should start). The case studies are indeed all in North America. In part this is because of geographical and cultural proximity, and in part it is because it just so happens that North America is the source of much of the world’s global dynamic of endless growth, consumerism, the depreciation of work, the rhetorical use of efficiency, and so on. I cannot wait to see related empirical work in other cultural settings. Then, and maybe only then, we might be able to formulate a “theory of sustainability.”

Kütting describes the book as a “thorough historical overview of the development of efficiency, sustainability, and sufficiency.” I accept that description for efficiency but this work, as incomplete and preliminary as it is (in my mind), is really an exercise in normative theorizing. And that theorizing is simultaneously broad (with respect to the large societal goal of sustainability) and narrow (with respect to principles—just one, sufficiency). I raise this because I think all of us, academics and practitioners, who hope to make a contribution to reversing the trends in environmental degradation and getting society on a sustainable path have to accept that our work is not primarily a descriptive, explanatory, or predictive

enterprise; it is a normative one, just as are all those academic enterprises that claim to be strictly “scientific” or “historical” or “realist” or “positivist.”

That said, I am somewhat surprised that none of the reviewers found fault with the avowedly normative stance of the book. Maybe this is only an issue for the positivists, those remaining hard-core scientists and wannabe scientists who still believe values do not infuse their work. As one who encounters such believers almost daily, this is an issue, and not just a methodological or theoretical issue. The positivists do believe they are doing good by objectively and neutrally collecting data, analyzing them, and dispersing the results to the public and policymakers. They can conduct five-year, million-dollar studies and wholeheartedly believe that doing so will make the difference, especially if we can keep the “politics” out of it. To take this position is to implicitly act as if the current political economy is the wealth-generator we have and the wealth-generator we must work with, as if the current political economy is not fundamentally flawed, as if a bit of tweaking, a little fine tuning of this otherwise perfect machine, is all that is needed.

The rest of us can lament the narrowness of this belief system, even its naiveté; we can deconstruct the assumptions and demonstrate the implicit values that inform the science. We can show there is a “politics” in everything, in concepts like efficiency and, yes, sufficiency, and in science itself. But somehow we have to do better, notwithstanding Thomas Kuhn’s observation that many of those wedded to their paradigm will just have to die off. I do not have the answer, but I suspect it is going to start with a demonstration of the narrowness *on their own terms*. For example, the Stern Report on climate change that came out of Britain last year was supposed to be an economic assessment of, in its words, “the greatest market failure the world has ever seen.” Yet many of its key recommendations were about cultural change—education, public awareness, international cooperation, partnership. Moreover, there was no critical assessment of, for instance, the use of discount rates or the structure of capital markets, nothing that would connect such instruments and institutions to the very problem at hand—namely, excess throughput of material and energy resulting in the destabilization of a complex system with limited predictability, a system called “the climate.” This is the critical task as I see it. And the necessary complement to the critical is the normative, that is, normative theorizing and, my second point, concept development.

Every major societal goal (from democracy to peace to economic growth) is subject to distortion and dilution by the “politics.” We saw that with effi-

ciency. The challenge for those of us who see sustainability as a major goal of our time, if not *the* major goal, is to continually debate and refine that goal, just as proponents of democracy and peace must do, and just as proponents of endless, harmless growth have so successfully done. Part of our project is to develop a language (literally and conceptually) to fit the distinctiveness of the goal. Hence, sufficiency—and polluter pays and precaution and zero discharge and reverse onus. But we need more, lots more so that we can analyze and apply them and, after sifting and winnowing, select the good ones, those that really do, as Mincyte says, create “fundamental changes in the organizing logic of today’s economy.”

I emphasize this need to proliferate new concepts (including variations on old ones) so as to guard against the propensity we all seem to have to seize upon the latest concept as “the next big thing” and then subsume all sundry objectives under that new thing (think peace, freedom, sustainability). I have actually experienced a bit of that with sufficiency where some readers have attempted to stretch the concept to, in effect, become the next sustainability, or sustainable development, or conservation. The more I think about this concept-stretching issue, the more committed I become (theoretically and otherwise) to developing *many* principles, not *the* principle. And then the real task becomes analogous to nature’s practice of producing more individuals than will survive, more brain cells than are needed, and allowing selective pressures (e.g., political processes, human need, self-organization) to identify the successful ones.

So, for example, Kütting interprets the book’s theme as replacing efficiency with sufficiency in management and economics. I prefer to see the theme as *subordinating* efficiency to sufficiency and other ecologically informed principles. This distinction is important because it points to the ongoing need to construct a *hierarchy* of social organizing principles for sustainability. I do believe that a well-specified efficiency principle will be in that hierarchy, only *below* principles like ecological capping, zero waste, buffering, problem absorption, precaution, and polluter pays.

The third point regards “next steps” and “how to get from here to there” which, in different ways, all reviewers call for. I must say, upon finishing this work, that is exactly what I had intended. Before I knew it, though, I was working on a “neo-prudential order,” the conditions for anticipation and prevention, for long-term decision making, for a coherent theory of sustainability. Deciding how far to go into the applications realm is an issue all of us academics must grapple with. I have come to the conclusion, cop-out though it may be, that my niche is social theorizing.

Others are far better at making the translations to practice. As partial confirmation of this position, I have been pleased to learn that professionals in electric power utilities, in the energy-conservation field (even the energy *efficiency* field!), in environmental protection agencies (e.g., the United States Environmental Protection Agency), in nongovernmental organizations (e.g., environmental health, globalization, consumerism), and foundations, not to mention academics from sociology to religious studies to engineering to, of course, environmental studies have indicated they are using *The Logic of Sufficiency*. I prefer to see my work as informing their work, as being one of many tools they can use. And I see the most useful “next steps” (in addition to working with some of these practitioners, which I am doing) as going beyond sufficiency, not only proliferating concepts and principles, but exploring questions of transition, as Goldblatt rightly emphasizes.

The how-to-get-there question is indeed important and, despite my assertion, not “simple” (certainly not in the sense of “easy”), and, yes, much will be ugly. Personally, I am reluctant to jump straight to projects and regulations, if for no other reason than that such ideas tend to be recycled variants on the same theme—more office recycling, more fuel-efficient cars. A far better task, especially for academics, is to parse out theories and histories of transition, formal and informal, explicit and implicit. The prevailing ones, it seems to me, are incremental change, technological innovation, market correction, and education. Another is organic reinvention, the bottom-up reassertion of control of basic natural resources such as food and water. I trust there is a relevant literature on transitions that sorts this all out. If not, here is an area ripe for research.

Kütting calls for better bridging of the public and the private realms. I agree, but I wonder how distinct really are the two realms. If the history and rhetoric of efficiency is any guide, they are not, no matter how useful analytically the distinction might be. And for the objective of transitioning to sustainable practices, it might be best to avoid the distinction altogether so as to find principles that are generally applicable.

On the other hand, Kütting is absolutely right that an extended sufficiency should include “the role of agency, and equity and the global dimension.” Regarding equity and the global, I am inclined toward developing new principles rather than, as noted, risking the all-too-familiar pattern of stretching a concept to fit all agendas. Again, I find it more useful to conceive of a nested set of principles each of which addresses distinct concerns—e.g., ecological integrity, human security, environmental justice—and to guard against concept stretching.

Put differently, even if sufficiency makes perfectly good sense, even if it is logical, economically, socially, and ecologically logical, it is only one social organizing principle of sustainability, indeed one candidate for a principle of sustainability. So many times I have felt stumped in my professional and personal life bumping up against the other principles—efficiency, growth, cooperation. I am as much a product of the dominant unecological principles as anyone (disclosure: I taught microeconomics in a well-regarded institution for a number of years—and zealously so!). All of us who know that the world needs an alternative framework must offer up tools to counter the hegemonic framework. We have a lot of work to do developing new principles, new stories, new ways of understanding the good life and justice and democracy.

Finally, Goldblatt makes a plea for urgency, arguing that providing the “intellectual and moral support for the faithful” is useful but what is really needed is to “mainstream the ultimate economic heresy,” namely, to challenge economic growth. I share that sense of urgency and need for mainstreaming but the question, as always, is how. *The Logic of Sufficiency* does no more than offer one tool, one concept (with some subconcepts like restraint and respite), one that is hopefully well grounded in practice and well constructed in theory. And, yes, for now it cannot pretend to convert the very people who have structured their lives around the current order and benefited so handsomely from it. But that order is changing, rapidly it seems to me. The “faithful” are no longer us “good enviros” but a wide swath of people, across the ideological and socio-economic spectrums, people who realize the system is broken, fundamentally broken. The more bankrupt it appears to people, the more they will cast about for new ideas and models and stories. This is where notions like sufficiency come in. No one such idea is, or should be, “the answer.” They all should be tested and subjected to various forms of selective criteria (e.g., is it really “ecological” and amenable to just outcomes?). And they should be intelligible to specialist and lay alike. Yes, there will be “camps of resistance.” But they do not trouble me: a couple more “Katrinas”, a foot or two of sea-level rise, a race to find “new sources” of freshwater, and these skeptics are suddenly irrelevant. Let us prepare for that day!