



The Logic of Sufficiency: Rethinking Lifestyles and Energy Policy

Marta Oliveira Panão¹

¹Universidade de Lisboa, Faculdade de Ciências, Lisboa, Portugal.

E-mail address: mopanao@ciencias.ulisboa.pt

Abstract

This paper explores energy sufficiency as a crucial pillar in decarbonization, alongside efficiency and renewable energy. Inspired by the CLEVER report, it distinguishes sufficiency as an approach that reduces energy demand through moderated consumption, rather than solely through efficiency improvements. This approach raises the question: “How much is enough, and how much is too much?”—a perspective championed in Thomas Princen’s *The Logic of Sufficiency*^{*}, which critiques society’s obsession with maximizing efficiency at the cost of increased consumption. Historically tied to energy conservation, sufficiency has been overshadowed by efficiency in policy. Yet, actions such as setting moderate indoor temperatures or choosing appropriately sized appliances (1) align energy use with genuine need. For instance, the energy efficiency fallacy shows that energy labels, focusing on relative rather than absolute consumption, often promote larger appliances that inadvertently increase demand. The paper also challenges the perception of sufficiency as a personal virtue rather than a societal value that could inform policy. It concludes with three guiding principles: “Less is enough”, advocating minimalism; “Having enough, and no more”, which emphasizes needs-based consumption; and “Finding fair alternatives”, encouraging creativity in meeting needs sustainably. Ultimately, sufficiency is presented as a cultural shift, urging a collective reevaluation of energy use to foster a sustainable future.

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