

Place-Based Sustainability

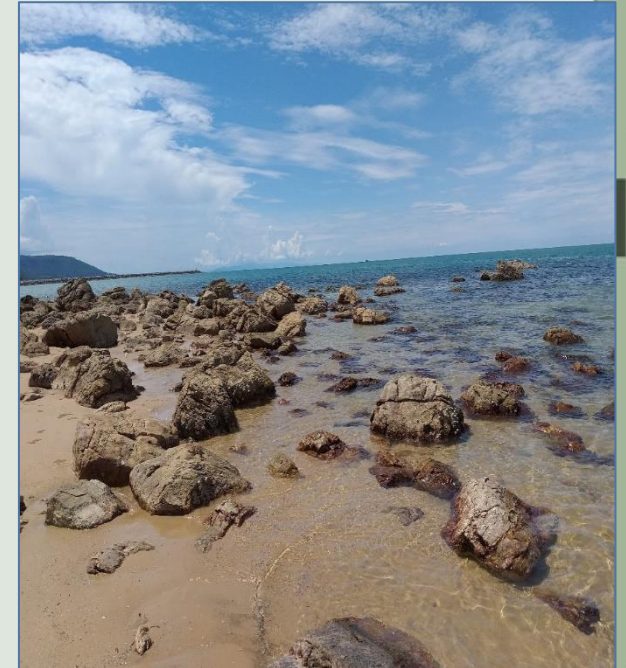
↳ and Collective Well-being



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Nakorn Si Thammarat

A province in the South of Thailand

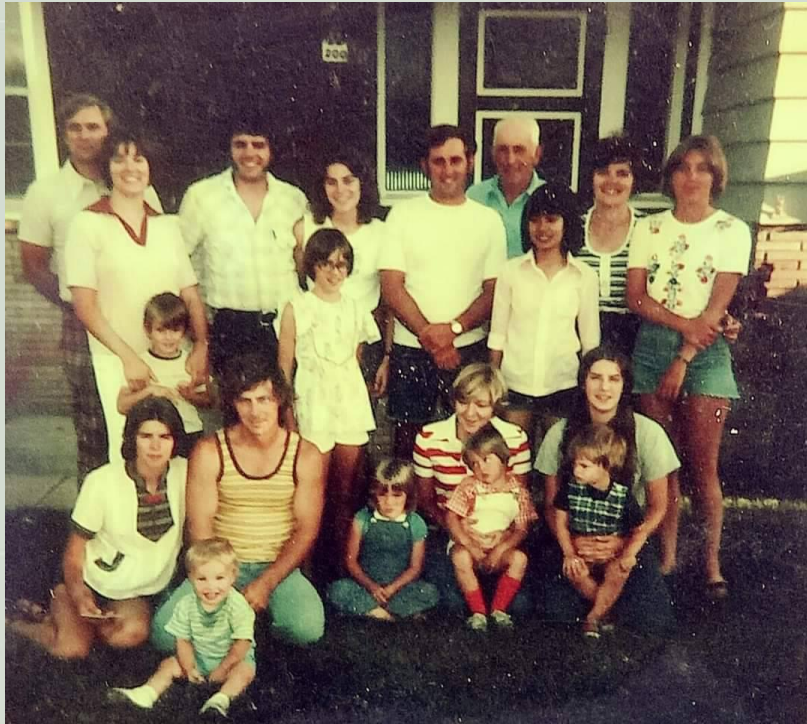


Key places where the spirit of courage, learning and adventure were fostered ...

The meaning of places, people, power of human connectedness,
interdependence, universal ethics of care

1977

Waunakee, Wisconsin, USA



2018

Waunakee, Wisconsin, USA



To honor the people
and places, spaces
where

appreciation of diversity
And key life values had
taken shape

The main purpose of my presentation

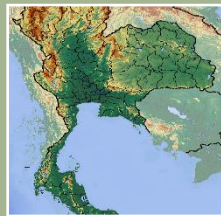
- To explore the relationship between place-based sustainability and collective well-being through alternative livelihood movements in Thailand namely Sufficiency Economy and the Buddhist Movements;
- To learn from local stories of communities and individuals namely KruBa Sutthinan of Mahachivalai Thongtin Esaan in Buriram (people's institution of learning); Rajathani Asok Buddhist Community in Ubonrajathani as manifestation of creative /alternative to mainstream livelihoods.

Brief Development History of Thailand

1932-1960

Pre Modernization - Resource Rich

- Pre Development Plans
- 1932 Changed From absolute monarchy to constitutional Monarchy
- Since then we have had Constitutions.
- Power concentrated on the Generals
- Western style democracy was symbolically and superficially embraced
- Agricultural based
- Rice export
- 1950 –paddy field



513,120 square kilometre

Modernization Resource Depletion and deterioration

1961-1999

- Five -Year National Economic/National Economic and Social Plans
- 1st -8th National Economic and Social Development Plans
- Categorized as developing and low income country (based on GDP)
- Influenced by mainstream development model
- Growth oriented/trickled down; import substitution; industrialization ; Unequal wealth distribution;
- Service industry expansion
- Inequality/Poverty/
- 1st -8th National Economic and Social Development Plans

**BOI The Second Decade (1976 - 1985)
Export-Oriented Promotions Period**

**BOI The Third Decade (1986 - 1995)
Decentralization And Regional Prosperity Period**

2000-2021

- the 9th National Economic and Social Development Plan (2002-2006) to 13th Plan
- The 12th National Economic and Social Development Plan (2017-21)
- Impact of Globalization
- Middle income country status
- AI / BIG DATA
- SOCIAL MEDIA

**BOI The Fifth Decade (2006 - 2015)
“Value Creation Period”
“Sustainable Growth”**

DEVELOPMENT DISCOURSE

The Green Revolution as a policy failed the agricultural sector

Debts incurred due to dependency on chemical intensive farming

Observation of social injustice increased among the public at large in the late 1970s
Or "Blossoming of Democracy Era"

CRITIQUE OF GROWTH-ORIENTED MODEL OF DEVELOPMENT
by grassroots intellectuals, academics, NGOs
Avant guard development thinkers and local leaders worked together and sought ways to deal with poverty, debts, of peasants
Rural development of the 70s 80s onto the 1990s have self reliance, sufficiency economy, as key concepts

Alternative agricultural practices

Sustainability agenda have become more pronounced

Sufficiency thinking

The 1997 FINANCIAL CRISIS marked a national awakening about fundamental things, from life meanings, to work, the economy, to social change.

Partial Sustainability Stories from Thailand

The presentation aims at bringing the questions of place (s) the meanings of sustainability into the center of our discussion.



the interplay
Physical space;
Psychological space;
Spiritual space that help
determine who we are amidst an
urgent call for transformation



Well- being as the
common good

Integral philosophy of Ken Wilber provides analytical framework in exploring human and social phenomena and has specifically provided a lens through which I view questions of sustainability and well being .

Partial Sustainability Stories from Thailand

Key words

Ken Wilber's Integral
Philosophy

Sufficiency Economy
principles of King Bhumibol

Buddhist Inspired
Livelihood Movement of
Asok Communities



Thailand

(Shifting) facts

- Population 66,19 million (2020)
 - GDP Per capita 7,216.6 USD (World Bank, 2020)
 - Upper-middle income country
 - Newly industrialized nation with diversified manufacturing sector;
 - Service industry contributing to growth domestic product
- [Visit : OECD, BOI websites for more facts]



Self - Reflection

How can we begin to explain a nation in transition ?

Perhaps if we are mindful enough to constantly examine ourselves collectively and peacefully,
We will have a fuller knowledge of self understand and all the analyses of what had gone wrong.

A nation that has undergone tremendous changes in six decades
and still grappling with the consequences, half – awake, half-asleep perhaps of the true status of our development.

Sixty years with 12 Master Plans and the forest areas decreased sharply

**(In 1961, 53 percent of the total land area (273 628 km out of 513 115 km²) was forested , Between 1961 and 1975,
the average annual loss of forested area was 4600 km² whereas in the period 1975-1982 it was 7 492 km².**

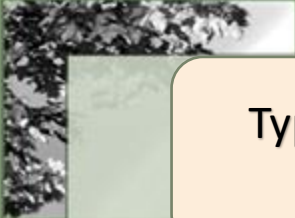
**According to the Royal Forest Department (RFD) in 2019, Thai forests cover 31.6% (102 million rai) of Thailand's
landmass)**

Some hold on to the past and see it as a way to go forward while most want to do away with ghost of the past and get
on with the new completely.

.....

People in general do not know or care about SDGs
They want to country to reopen soon so that they can get on with life
Of the new normal!

.....




Typical development pathway of developing countries of the South


Stories of heartbreaks and bankruptcy

...Thailand's development model has been a long-term structural shift from agriculture to industry; It began with an import substitution policy; then export promotion and currently an investor-friendly industrial policy since 1961.

The 1970s marked a great awakening of people in the rural sector. Green Revolution was a major cause of farmers' debts, landlessness, bankruptcy, natural resources deterioration and poor quality farm lands.

The failure of state-led growth-oriented development naturally paved way for people's struggle for self-reliance and dignity.





“The experience of boom and bust of the Thai economy became a subject of intense collective reflection, and had, in a significant way paved a legitimate space for **alternative thoughts and practices, a culture of sustainable livelihood**, to re-emerge and exist. Reflection on the 1997 economic crash made possible profound questioning on the development model and direction undertaken by the Thai state up to that point.”

(Titiporn S. Puntasen, 2017)

At the grassroots levels to produce and “live sustainably” with a set of values such as middle path ทางสายกลาง reciprocity, giving, caring for one another

Forest agriculture
Buddhist agriculture
Integrated Farming
Countering
Mono-cropping and heavy use of chemicals – the agri-business ways of production



Placed- based sustainability of Santi Asoke Buddhist Movement in Thailand



The founder of Santi Asoke, is Phra Bodirak in 1975

His core mission, and that of the organization, has been to revive the forest monk ideal of simple living and sufficiency.

Santi Asoke Buddhist communities in different regions of Thailand



Asoke standard greetings to members and outsiders alike is not 'sawadee' but 'charern tham', which means 'prosper in the Dhamma'



The Asoke monastics and lay people walk barefoot, eating only one vegetarian meal per day.



Santi Asoke livelihood is based on key principles set forth by Phra Bodhirak:

1) **Boonniyom** (Merit-ism) is a deconstruction of mainstream Buddhism and capitalism;

Critique: making merit via money becomes a doctrine of investment, i.e. to give money when Tam Boon is to expect something in return, be it in this life or next life, adding to people's KILESSA even more;

2) Phra Bodhirak set forth the highest goal of dhamma practice at the level of Lokuttara-dhamma ;

3) Collective welfare- well being (Redistribution of income in the forms of basic needs) "to share any lawful gains with virtuous fellows"

4) Natural agriculture, clean fertilizer and waste management

These areas of work are central to self reliance and sufficiency livelihood of Asoke communities.

Doing business the Asoke way...



Boonniyom market run by Santi Asoke Center in Bangkok

“O


“Asoke communities do not use modern agriculture chemicals such as pesticides and fertilizers. Santi Asoke was one of the first organizations in Thailand to start practicing organic farming.”
(Mackenzie, p. 132)

Boonniyom is interpreted to mean doing business with the intention to give or manage one's desire to want more; Asoke stores sell product below market price and sometimes below production costs...



Sustainable living

For the Asoke Buddhist communities who practice right livelihood and lead life based on collectivism and the adherence of dharma, a denunciation of material wealth and accumulation of property is intrinsically part and parcel of community organization, resulting in a unique model of community welfare.

- "What is being emphasized in this method of eating is dependence on the land, valuing of traditional rural, community orientated Thai culture and simple lifestyle. This is accentuated by the simple peasant-style clothes worn by the lay people. The image of the poor farmer then is used to express Asoke values of simple lifestyle and world renouncing anti-materialism,"
(Mackenzie, 2007,p. 133)
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Placed-based sustainable livelihood as practiced by Santi Asoke Buddhist communities

“Maintaining consistent criticism of Thai society, and that of the world beyond, Santi Asoke again grew in popularity after the 1997 Asian financial crisis, which began in Thailand and saw its currency, the baht, lose more than half of its value. In 1998, in response to the crisis, the late Thai king Bhumibol Adulyadej advised Thais to follow a “sufficiency economics” model of simple self-sufficiency. This model reflected the one that Santi Asoke members had been living by for years.”


**“Thailand’s Santi
Asoke Flourishes by
Promoting Simplicity”**

Justin Whitaker

The sufficiency economy movement inspired by the life and work of King Bhumibol Adulyadej



Amidst concerns over the intensity of social and environmental challenges facing humankind, alternative livelihood movement practiced by communities around the world has emerged with a firm commitment to carve out a sustainable path for the world's future generations. In the Thai context, Sufficiency Economy of King Bhumibol Adulyadej was interpreted in alignment with sustainable ideology of Buddhist economics and eco-sufficiency strands of thoughts have led to a quest to explore and understand His Majesty's philosophy more realistically and concretely as Thailand enters the era of global sustainability.



NICS - inspired Industrialization , the 1997 Economic Crash and King Bhumibol's Sufficiency Economy

"Sufficiency Economy thinking was formalized in the aftermath of the 1997 financial crisis that rocked economies in Thailand and the region. Embracing Buddhist principles and drawing on King Bhumibol's many decades of hands-on research and work in development, the theory is a vision of sustainable development in the global era.

Under the Sufficiency Economy thinking, the push for growth precipitated by capitalism is balanced by moderation and ethical behavior. While focused on creating a model under which farmers may enjoy sufficiency, and which mitigates some of the risks posed by the environment and marketplace, its principles can be applied on a larger scale in the public and private sectors."

"King Bhumibol Adulyadej: A Life's Work"



By Nicholas Grossman and Dominic Faulder (2011)

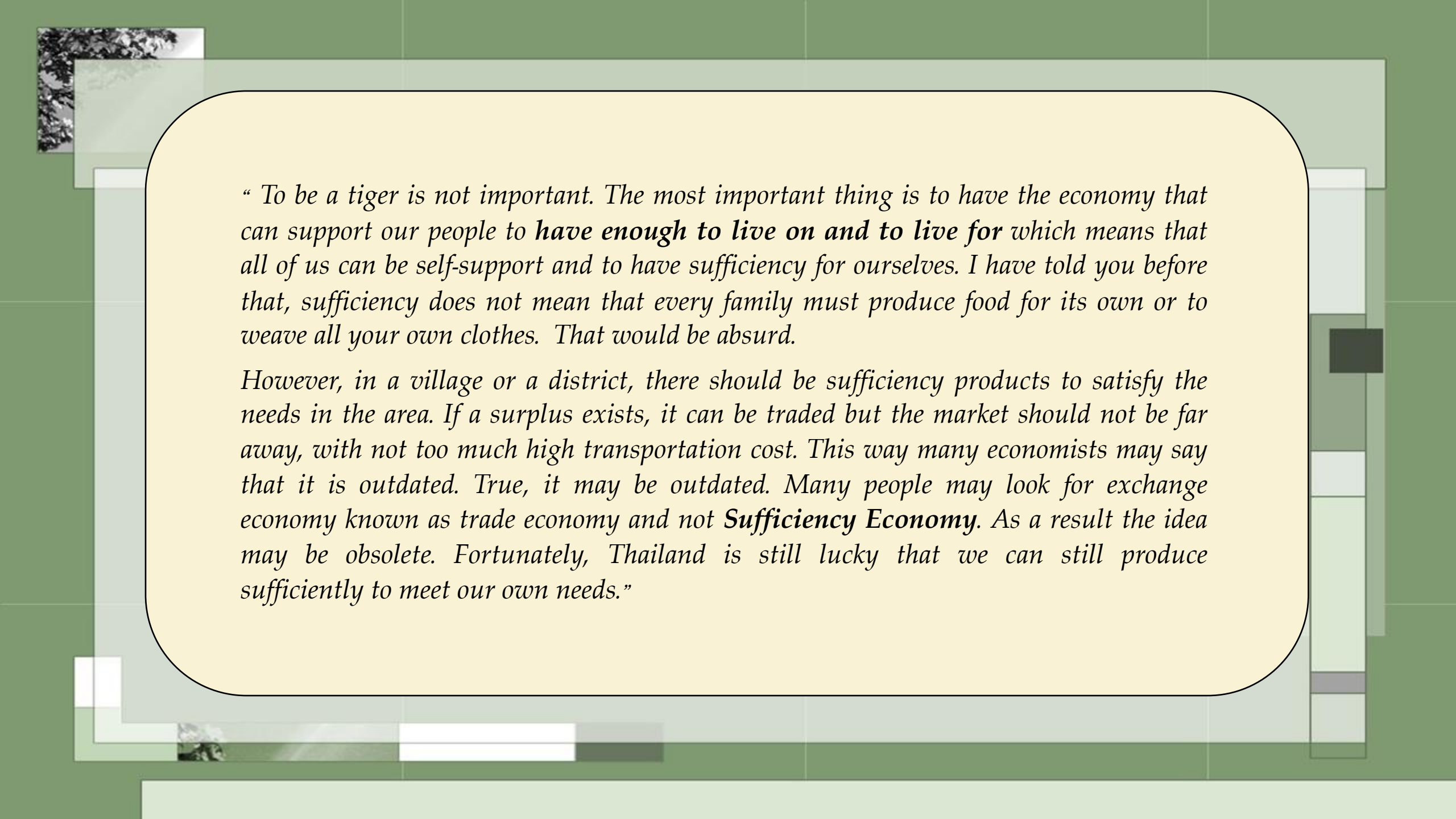


Sufficiency Economy Inspired Alternative Livelihood Movement

Sufficiency Economy was first mentioned by His Late Majesty King Bhumibol in 1974 in his speech to a group of graduating class at Kasetsart University:


*“National development must be carried out step by step, starting with laying the foundation to ensure that the majority of people **have enough to live on and live for** as the basic step. Using economical yet theoretically sound methods and equipment. **When the bases are securely established, higher levels of economic growth and development should be promoted.** If one aims for modernization, through rapid economic growth only, without due consideration of the existing condition of the country and its people, there could be problems of various imbalances that could be developed into difficulties leading to failure eventually. Economic crises faced by many advanced economies are the cases in point observed, currently.”*

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- By travelling to every province of the country, King Bhumibol saw firsthand the difficulties and problems faced by the people in rural Thailand;
 - More than 4,000 projects on health care, education, agriculture, natural resource management were implemented as a result of his countrywide visits.
 - New theory of agriculture of His Late Majesty King Bhumibol has been popularly adopted by marginalized rural small farmers;
 - The theory encourages farmers to use their own knowledge, or the technology that is economical and appropriate to the local contexts;
 - This is one way of building self-immunity when facing with rising costs of production and competitiveness in the agri-business surroundings.
- 



*“ To be a tiger is not important. The most important thing is to have the economy that can support our people to **have enough to live on and to live for** which means that all of us can be self-support and to have sufficiency for ourselves. I have told you before that, sufficiency does not mean that every family must produce food for its own or to weave all your own clothes. That would be absurd.*

*However, in a village or a district, there should be sufficiency products to satisfy the needs in the area. If a surplus exists, it can be traded but the market should not be far away, with not too much high transportation cost. This way many economists may say that it is outdated. True, it may be outdated. Many people may look for exchange economy known as trade economy and not **Sufficiency Economy**. As a result the idea may be obsolete. Fortunately, Thailand is still lucky that we can still produce sufficiently to meet our own needs.”*




The formal definition was granted by the King Bhumibol.


The following is the UNDP's English Translation (2007).

The Sufficiency Economy is an approach to life and conduct which is applicable at every level from the individual through the family and community to the management and development of the nation.

It promotes a middle path, especially in developing the economy to keep up with the world in the era of globalization.

*Sufficiency has three components: **moderation; wisdom or insight;** and the need for built-in resilience against the risks which arise from internal or external change. In addition, the application of theories in planning and implementation requires great care and good judgement at every stage.*





Apichai Puntasen, in his paper titled

“Sufficiency Economy: A Theoretical Model,” suggested key words to be drawn from His Late Majesty’s speech (, 2017)

- middle path, moderation,
- wisdom or insight (reasonableness or awareness of causal relationship), the need for built-in resilience, great care (due consideration),
- good judgement, knowledge,
- integrity and honesty
- perseverance, toleration, wisdom or insight (wisdom and mindfulness)
- strength (or stability), balance,
- economy, society, environment and culture.

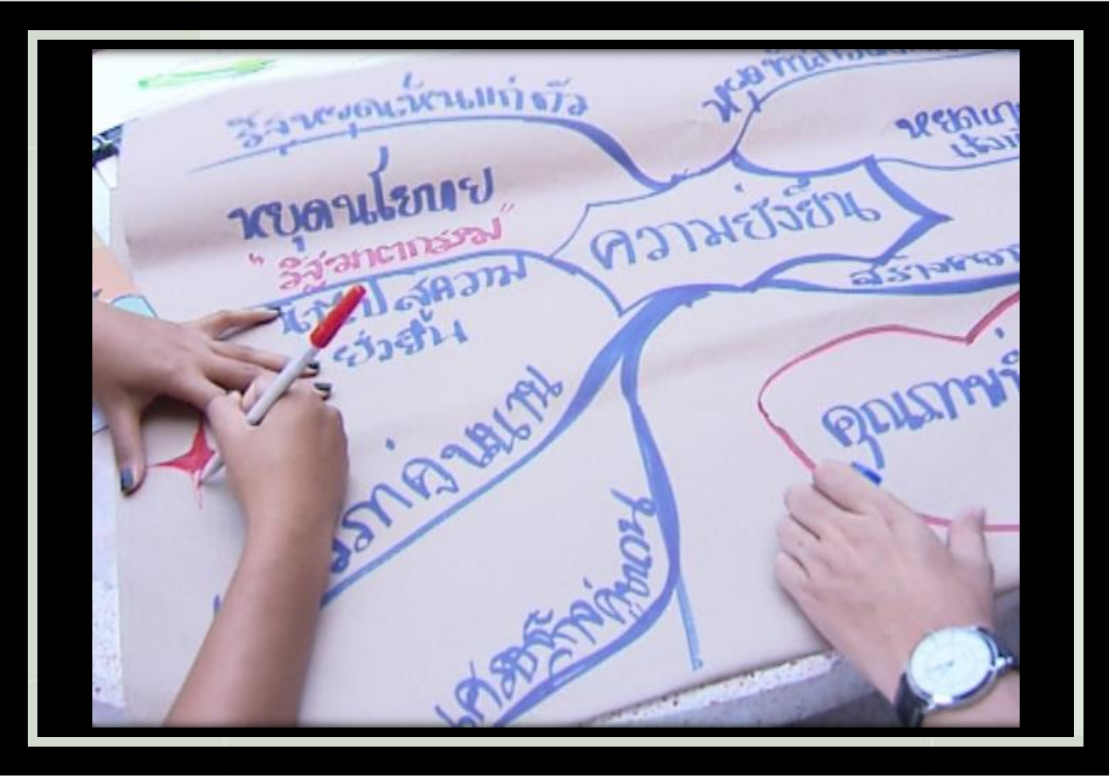
Sufficiency Economy Philosophy

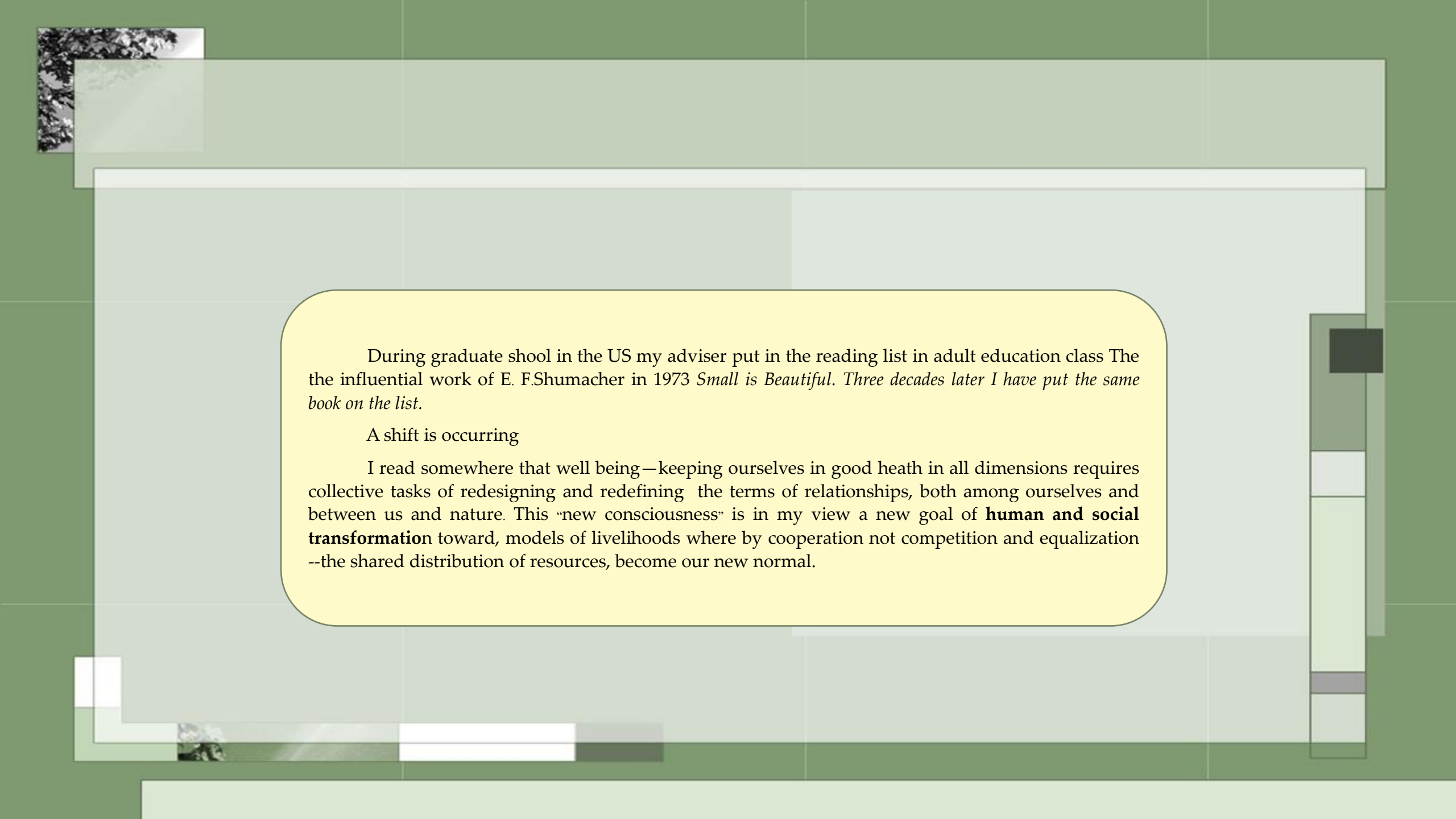
MIDDLE PATH



Source: National Economic and Social Development Board

Consciousness about the negative impact of top down economic policies on communities





During graduate school in the US my adviser put in the reading list in adult education class The influential work of E. F. Shumacher in 1973 *Small is Beautiful*. Three decades later I have put the same book on the list.

A shift is occurring

I read somewhere that well being—keeping ourselves in good health in all dimensions requires collective tasks of redesigning and redefining the terms of relationships, both among ourselves and between us and nature. This “new consciousness” is in my view a new goal of **human and social transformation** toward, models of livelihoods where by cooperation not competition and equalization --the shared distribution of resources, become our new normal.

To all who have fought to keep the earth rich and diverse so that we can become whole again, thank you for inspiring me not to ignore small things and recognize its value.



Photo by T.S. Puntasen
10.10.21



KOB KHUN KA

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