

Self-sufficiency in a Nutshell

In practice, self-sufficiency means striving towards reducing dependency on others - in other words, the process of becoming more self-sufficient. As individuals we can reach full scale self-sufficiency in different areas of life. As we become more self-sufficient, dependencies change. A subsistence devotee needs, in addition to a diverse natural environment, good health and room to deliberate their activities in a holistic manner.

With regard to communal self-sufficiency, it is hard to differentiate between a voluntary division of labour and an individual's obligation for reciprocity within the community. As an example, a community may be self-sufficient, but at the same time deny an individual's efforts towards reducing their dependency on the community (authoritarian self-sufficiency).

The most fundamental manifestation of self-sufficiency is probably subsistence farming: the striving towards self-sufficiency in food by practicing agriculture that does not rely on shop-bought fertilizers, uses own seed stocks and relies on work done without machinery. However, the concept reaches well beyond primary production.

Responsibility

Self-sufficiency means independence and self-reliance. We lead lives where the taking care of the basic necessities of our lives has been externalized to various other people. If we are inactive with regard, and unaware of the foundations on which our life rests, are we able to bear a genuine responsibility for our own lives?

The ever-increasing specialization in the area of work creates a network of interlaced dependencies, which are hard to shake off. In the short run it can promote societal peace, but at the same time it weakens a society's ability to make necessary changes.

A human being will instinctively leave unquestioned those arrangements on which their livelihood depends. On the road to self-sufficiency, as the meaning of money declines, we may also become mentally more independent. We may depart from the masses and find paths where others don't believe they exist. The individual actions of people constantly create diversity in the world. This is beneficial in changing circumstances.

Character

Self-sufficiency moulds itself into the framework defined by nature, whereas a technological approach aims to rule over it. The risks related to technological solutions are in proportion to the magnitude and width of their applicability.

In our attempts to manage world-wide problems we unwittingly create new problems by trying out newly created solutions. However, we do have historical knowledge about the functionality and harmfulness of certain ways and means. The model of self-sufficiency creates smaller problems and applies more familiar solutions.

Defining the relationship to the problems created by the dominant culture of speed, accomplishment, force and repression is a serious challenge for the model of self-sufficiency. As an approach that uses few resources, its strength isn't in retroactive mending of errors but in prevention. The dominant culture is able to carry out spectacular rescue operations, but the next problems are already brewing in its subjugated structures. In that state of things, the wisest course of action may be to break free from the cycle and channel as many physical and mental resources as possible away from the dominant culture and towards serving decentralized communality.

Kindness

A self-sufficient household/subsistence economy is a highly energy efficient system of production compared to the industrialized society, which requires a wide societal infrastructure in order to produce food and goods. That is why it has been able to support us for thousands of years.

Self-sufficiency has an important role in times of crisis. However, a more significant attribute is its ability to prevent crises. Self-sufficiency survives on few and local natural resources, so there will be fewer conflicts over resources.

The independence created by self-sufficiency reduces the creation and corruption of structures of power. Societies that have become centred on power, such as our own western society, need a sizeable governance and balancing system, in order for the society to function. In a crisis, this need makes the society vulnerable to (also green) totalitarianism. A society that is decentralized/based on self-sufficiency can more easily be democratic and is not as vulnerable to global swings.

A way of life based on self-sufficiency enables perhaps the only form of economy which supports the unrestricted sharing of knowledge and skills, because it is beneficial for all. The dominant market economy, in contrast, favours exchange facilitated by payment and motivated by personal gains.

Ownership is an unresolved dilemma between human and nature.

Mind

Do-it-yourself know-how boosts self-confidence and reduces fear. This stabilizes interpersonal relationships especially in times of tension. Being self-reliant is not the same as being selfish. A person who is mentally and spiritually well is in a position to share.

A reduction in the material standard of living in the future feels unavoidable. A peaceful descent is psychologically very hard, because diminishing resources will not be divided equitably. People experience increasing inequality, and this creates hate, which is seeking a way to manifest itself. Our minds tend to blame other people rather than complex societal structures – a strategy favoured especially in populist politics.

A decentralized society based on self-sufficiency is self-limiting. It is not represented by a person who draws other people's resent. The drop in the societal standard of living (the ability to utilize resources) can easily even go unnoticed by a practitioner of self-sufficiency who runs their household well.

Planet

The migrations of people have come to stay, and borders will not stop them in the long run. Would the development of self-sufficiency give better opportunities for the integration of immigrants? The solution would be akin to the settling of Karelian evacuees in Finland after the war. Over 400 000 people evacuated from the ceded territories in the Karelian provinces were settled all over Finland. Farmers, who formed the majority of the evacuated population, were all given homesteads, which were partitioned either from state-owned lands or privately owned larger estates and farms, which received financial compensation for this.

As we move towards self-sufficiency it is beneficial if our neighbour is also doing well. Networking is a natural way to develop non-aggressive economy around natural resources, across the boundaries created by people. It has to be remembered, however, that keeping in touch and communication also make use of vast resources. In Finland, a vegetable garden with the area of 500 square metres supports one person all year without bought-in food. This is very efficient and only requires a few hand tools.

Thank you for being.