

Organizing Sufficiency in the Global South: Justice, Effectiveness and Instrumentation

Research Team

Mallory Zhan



Postdoctoral Researcher, Sciences Po
Affiliations: CSO & LIEPP

Mallory Zhan's research explores topics of sustainable consumption, ecological citizenship and just transition. She is a postdoctoral fellow at CSO where she leads projects investigating grassroots initiatives and public policies promoting fair consumption in urban China.

Manisha Anantharaman



Assistant Professor, Sciences Po
Affiliations: CSO

Manisha Anantharaman's research explores inequality in ecological transitions. She has published two books connecting environmental justice, sustainability, and development: "Recycling Class: The contradictions of inclusion in urban sustainability" (MIT Press, 2024) and a co-edited volume "The Circular Economy and the Global South" (Routledge, UK, 2019).

Yamina Saheb



Researcher & Lecturer, Sciences Po
IPCC Lead Author
Affiliations: LIEPP, PSIA

Yamina Saheb is the founder of the World Sufficiency Lab, a lecturer and a researcher at Sciences Po.

Sufficiency approaches to just and equitable environmental and climate policies have gained significant traction in both public and scholarly debates in recent years. These approaches focus on avoiding and reducing the demand for energy, materials and other natural resources while delivering wellbeing for all within planetary boundaries (Saheb, 2021). However, little is known about how sufficiency is translated into policy applications in different parts of the world. Our research project brings together a diverse panel of researchers and practitioners to examine policies for sufficiency in emerging economies in an open, cross-cultural, inter- and transdisciplinary dialogue. Reflecting on key questions such as problem framing, instrumentation, effectiveness and justice, this project aims to inform future research and policy initiatives on sufficiency across contexts.

Research Context

Sufficiency implies setting a lower limit of resource consumption to ensure human well-being and an upper limit defined by planetary boundaries, with the objective to deliver equity within and across countries and generations. Implicated in this is a broader reassessment of human needs and the ways in which they can be met by avoiding the overdemand for resources. This poses significant policy challenges, both in terms of expanding the ambit of public policy intervention and raising questions at the appropriate scales of governance in which policies for sufficiency can be designed and implemented.

Sufficiency is also a cross-cutting issue that involves different policy fields and actors, relevant at multiple levels and scales; it encompasses a wide range of instruments and covers different economic areas. In the OECD countries, some sufficiency policies have been proposed and implemented, notable examples include the reduction of working hours (e.g., Belgium, Iceland), fare-free public transport (e.g., Luxembourg, Malta), emission-differentiated road traffic tax (e.g., Sweden, Finland, Germany), and the introduction of sufficiency in the French 2015 energy transition law, to name but a few. Due to the energy crisis, a great number of sufficiency policies focus on energy, but less is known about other sectors. Furthermore, there are few evaluations of sufficiency policies to date, and even less is known about sufficiency elsewhere in the world.

Roundtable Conference

On October 2-3, 2025, an international roundtable conference will bring together around 30 researchers and practitioners at Sciences Po to examine policy initiatives for sufficiency in emerging economies. The discussions will center on the framing of these policies, instruments and governance approaches, and the processes of policy development and implementation, with a strong focus on implications for justice and wellbeing.

Contribution to Policy Evaluation

Sufficiency is a rather new and fast-evolving field of policy research lacking comprehensive evaluations, with even fewer studies focusing on policies outside of Europe. The project explores central questions and difficult "dilemmas" in policy evaluation, such as the modes and instruments of governance, public acceptance, accountability and participatory processes, among others. Further, sufficiency policies and climate policies more broadly are grappling with complex global challenges; any local policies have global implications. This project creates a space for inclusive cross-cultural learnings that invites its participants to critically examine climate policies with a more global perspective. Overall, the project will contribute rich empirical and theoretical insights into existing research on eco-sufficiency policies.

Sufficiency in the Global South

Sufficiency is rapidly emerging as a key area of policy innovation in many emerging economies, which must address growing social inequalities and escalating environmental crises. These challenges require policies that both curb excessive consumption among expanding middle classes while also ensuring the provision of essential services that meet the lower threshold of sufficiency corridors. Notably, Thailand was the first country to formally incorporate sufficiency into its policies through its Sufficiency Economy Philosophy, introduced in the 1990s as a paradigm shift in development approaches.

While not always explicitly labeled as such, various sufficiency-oriented measures have already been implemented in emerging economies. For instance, fare-free bus programs have been introduced for senior citizens in Brazilian and Chinese cities and for women in the Indian states of Tamil Nadu and Delhi. To enhance the design and implementation of sufficiency policies across different contexts, this project focuses on learning from diverse experiences across the Global South.

