Public Administration within the Sufficiency Economy

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Abstract

Sufficiency Economy, sometimes also called Sufficiency Economy Philosophy, is an alternative socio-economic, Thai development concept conceived by HM King Bhumibol Adulyadej (Rama IX). As it is such an overarching concept, what do the respective assumptions mean for the shape of Public Administration (PA)? This essay tries to answer this question, first, via an investigation of what Sufficiency Economy really is. On this basis, the characteristics of PA within the Sufficiency Economy will be explored; these are then placed in the context of global-Western PA in order to see to which contemporary PA paradigm it would fit.

Keywords: Sufficiency economy, Buddhist economics, Buddhist public administration, Thai public administration, public service motivation, Weberian public administration, neo-Weberian state, New Public Management

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รัฐประศาสนศาสตร์ภายใต้แนวคิดเศรษฐกิจพอเพียง

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บทคัดย่อ

เศรษฐกิจพอเพียงหรือบางครั้งเรียกว่าปรัชญาเศรษฐกิจพอเพียง เป็นแนวคิดทางเลือกในการพัฒนาเศรษฐกิจและสังคม ซึ่งพัฒนาขึ้นโดยพระราชดำริของพระบาทสมเด็จพระเจ้าอยู่หัว ด้วยเป็นแนวคิดที่ครอบคลุมฐานคติที่มีนัยสำคัญสำหรับรัฐประศาสนศาสตร์อย่างกว้างขวาง คำถามก็คือ ฐานคติดังกล่าวมีนัยที่สำคัญอะไรบ้าง สำหรับรูปแบบและเอกลักษณ์ของรัฐประศาสนศาสตร์ บทความนี้จึงเป็นความพยายามที่จะตอบคำถามนี้ โดยประการแรกจะเป็นการพิจารณาว่าเศรษฐกิจพอเพียงคืออะไร แล้วจึงจะเป็นการพิจารณาว่าลักษณะของรัฐประศาสนศาสตร์ภายใต้แนวคิดเศรษฐกิจพอเพียงจะเป็นอย่างไร ท้ายสุดจึงจะเป็นการพิจารณาว่าลักษณะของรัฐประศาสนศาสตร์ดังกล่าว ภายใต้บริบทของรัฐประศาสนศาสตร์ตะวันตกจะตรงหรือสอดคล้องกับกระบวนทัศน์ใดของตะวันตกปัจจุบัน

คำสำคัญ: เศรษฐกิจพอเพียง เศรษฐศาสตร์เชิงพุทธ รัฐประศาสนศาสตร์เชิงพุทธ รัฐประศาสนศาสตร์ของไทย แรงจูงใจในการบริการสาธารณะ รัฐประศาสนศาสตร์แนวเวบเบอร์ รัฐประศาสนศาสตร์แนวเวบเบอร์สมัยใหม่ การจัดการภาครัฐแนวใหม่

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Introduction

Sufficiency Economy, sometimes also called Sufficiency Economy Philosophy, conceived by HM King Bhumibol Adulyadej (Rama IX), was first outlined in an address in 1974 and came into more concrete shape in speeches in 1997 and 1998 (Office of the National Research Council of Thailand, 2004; Kawan cited in UNESCO, 2013). Sufficiency Economy is well summed up by Noy:

> *"In its fullest form, sufficiency economy has been presented as an all-round philosophy by which to live and make economic decisions, as well as to arrange the local and macro economy. It is a moral theory about how economic agents, as well as political and bureaucratic actors, ought to act to align themselves with spiritual realities. Drawing on Buddhist teachings, its core principles are moderation, full awareness of the consequences of actions, and protecting oneself from risk. These three core principles (which have been translated from Thai to English as "moderation" "reasonableness" and "self-immunity") are supported by two human qualities that must be cultivated as part of economic life: wisdom and virtue. Taken together, these principles and qualities form the essential principles of sufficiency economy and can be applied to the decisions of individuals or corporations, as well as to macro-economic policy and to public governance"* (Noy, 2011: 597).

In addition, Sufficiency Economy has practically always placed an emphasis on small-scale, traditional, sustainable farming (Office of the National Research Council of Thailand, 2004; UNESCO, 2013) typical for Buddhist Economics (Schumacher, 1974).

The *Erkenntnisinteresse* of this paper is, if Sufficiency Economy is such an overarching concept for Thailand, what do the respective assumptions mean for the shape of PA? I will try to answer this question by a brief investigation of what Sufficiency Economy really is (this seems necessary because in a PA context, knowledge of this cannot necessarily be assumed, plus the definition is also somewhat controversial). From this, I will extrapolate the characteristics of PA within the Sufficiency Economy once this is done, seeing that PA is a global discipline with a globalized discourse, I will place these in the context of global-Western PA in order to see to which contemporary paradigm Sufficiency Economy PA would more or less belong or at least fit. While doing so, I will occasionally refer to the Bhutanese concept of 'Gross National Happiness' (GNH), the one most similar to Sufficiency Economy, with which it is fruitfully compared.

What Is Sufficiency Economy?

Sufficiency Economy is, in short, an alternative socio-economic, specifically Thai development concept. This is why 'Sufficiency Economy' is the better designation than the vaguer, unspecific 'Sufficiency Economy Philosophy' label, but for those who had issues with the specific economic aspects of Sufficiency Economy, the latter might have sounded safer. And indeed, parallels of Sufficiency Economy to several non-market utopias, such as William Morris' 1890 *News from Nowhere* (2004), are readily apparent. Sufficiency Economy is, altogether, definitely unorthodox as an economic concept (Office of the National Research Council of Thailand, 2004: 5, 16). From a mainstream perspective, this makes it suspect from the outset; from a heterodox one, it renders Sufficiency Economy attractive right away, looking at the dismal track record of global-Western capitalism and standard textbook economics (cf. Drechsler, 2011b). Sufficiency Economy is rather in line with contemporary alternative development economics (cf. Ghosh et al., 2016; Altmann, 2011), or at least parts thereof, which also reflect an opposition to the 'Washington Consensus' and to the International Finance Institutions. And while Sufficiency Economy has been to some extent developed within the context of the Asian Economic Crisis, as Anantha Duraiappah has stated,

> *"I do have to take my hats [sic] off to the King of Thailand for being a thought leader who basically questioned this economic paradigm that we are so linked with—this neoclassical economic paradigm that has been growing in strength since the end of the [sic] World War II. He questioned it at a time when economic prosperity was thriving, according to the traditional indicators. He was already questioning then whether this progress was sustainable, while people usually won't start questioning until things go bad as the rest of the world is doing now"* (UNESCO, 2013: 48).

The same cannot be said for Thailand as such, whose economic culture is rather market- and business-oriented, and where there is a dominant 'elite' drawing profit from this position (Unger, 2009: 141). Nor is Sufficiency Economy of course a very attractive position to take for the professional protagonists of standard textbook economics, and a compilation of the discussions among a group of leading Thai economists in 1999 (Office of the National Research Council of Thailand, 2004) shows how divided the economics community was and presumably is. Only one group saw Sufficiency Economy as fundamentally opposed to standard textbook economics, although it very clearly is, whereas the others constructed Sufficiency Economy as compatible with standard textbook economics.

Likewise in politics, the compatibility or complementarity of Sufficiency Economy—then often called Sufficiency Economy Philosphy—with globalization and international trade has been stressed, such as recently by former ASEAN Secretary General Surin Pitsuwan (*The Nation,* 2015). And while Sufficiency Economy does have a *mesotes* element, as it is 'in Thai ... "not-too-little, not-too-much" and refers to the idea of the middle path, the classic label for the spiritual approach which Buddha taught' (Noy, 2011: 597), and especially if we see as middle path the one between the luxurious and the ascetic life as the Buddhist idea (Greschat & Kraatz, 1985: 10; for Buddhist Economics, cf. Swearer, 2011: 130-139; Whelan, 2006: 236), this 'compromise' is systemically unacceptable for orthodox economic theory, because standard textbook economics is about the pursuit of profit maximization by the homo oeconomicus at all costs (see Drechsler, 2011b).[1]

In addition to economic heterodoxy, a main appeal of Sufficiency Economy lies in this very Buddhist foundation itself. Thus, together with its ecological-sustainable aspects, it also has a strong prima-facie attractiveness for many global-Western intellectuals, even or maybe especially from the 'Left' (cf. Kittiprapas et al., 2008; Office of the National Research Council of Thailand, 2004; Noy, 2011).

Thailand is one of only three Buddhist Kingdoms left; the other ones are Bhutan and Cambodia, and a fourth contender is the specific case of Yogyakarta in Indonesia (Drechsler, 2016). This is not coincidental for the Buddhist aspect of Sufficiency Economy, as both a contemporary and a classic central role of the Buddhist King (depending on time and development of Kingship) is *that of the dhammaraja,* i.e. that of facilitator for his subjects to attain Enlightenment (Akira, 1990: 98; Heine-Geldern, 1942; on Thailand, cf. Bowornwathana, 2010: 31; but cf. classically and influentially Prince Dhani, 1947). The importance of this kind of Kingship in the Buddhist context is that because of its specific role and legitimacy, it allows the King to set goals and to steer people towards what is recognized as genuine, rather than short-term and just-perceived happiness, contrary to, e.g., a democratic government, for which such a mandate would be much more difficult to justify.

Sharpening the point, one can clearly say that Sufficiency Economy is a form of Buddhist Economics, although it has sometimes been argued, not least in Thailand, that 'if it's Buddhism, it's not really economics'—hence, again, the occasional tendency to label it 'Sufficiency Economy Philosophy' (See Office of the National Research Council of Thailand, 2004: 19, 25, 38; Mongsawad, 2010; Guruge, 2006: 124). It may well be that 'it was never the intention of the Buddha ... to dictate policies to contemporary rulers' (Guruge, 2006: 122), but 'although the Buddha never specifically taught about the subject of economics, teachings about the four requisites—food, clothing, shelter and medicine—occur throughout the Pali Canon. In essence, all of the teachings concerning the four requisites are teachings on economics.'And much this, of course, implies policy. (Payutto, 1994: 47-48) Also, whether the Buddha taught precisely on the subject or not has little implications for economics or governance – Islam and Confucianism, for instance, also do not have any of it in their most basic texts, but a complex edifice based on them has developed over the centuries or even millennia, and it is legitimate to use that designation (Drechsler, 2015).

That there is not one Buddhism but many and that the context of time and space has always mattered is a truism that has never been called into question (Greschat & Kraatz, 1985: 5-8; on Thailand, sociologically, cf. Puntarigvivat, 2013). It is clearly visible, however, that there is also such a thing as Buddhism as such, and as in most (and all of the larger) religions, there is a particular emphasis on skepticism against earthly possessions and material success as goals *per se* as stated *supra*, though this skepticism is especially strong here. If not poverty but 'non-greed' (Swearer, 2011: 131-132) is essential for Buddhism, it is at odds with an economic system that is propelled by greed or, rather, denies that greed is a viable, pejorative concept. And that is as true today as it ever was, perhaps more so; it may very well be that the Buddha talked about another time and age, but dismissal of it because of an alleged contemporary complexity of life (Wagner cited in Guruge, 2006: 111-113) is again begging the question and on an equal level as dismissing Aristotle or Machiavelli or Smith or Marx today just because our world has partially changed (see Drechsler, 1997).

An apparent indebtedness of Sufficiency Economy to the Western key Buddhist Economics text which emerged at the same time, the short chapter on 'Buddhist Economics' in E.-F. Schumacher's *Small Is Beautiful* (1974: 44-51), has often been noted, although occasionally, Schumacher is also seen as more Gandhian and more radical than Sufficiency Economy (Noy, 2011: 606; Guruge, 2006: 87). Whether this argument, which was only meant as a random case study by Schumacher (1974: 43), is 'correctly' Buddhist or not, it certainly is the interpretation, or construction (as such theories always are; see Swearer, 2011: 129), that has been most meaningful globally, as this is what most people today understand as Buddhist Economics (Swearer, 2011: 129; Guruge, 2006: 71). What is important in our context is that Schumacher stresses the difference of Buddhist Economics from standard textbook economics (46-48) and the *prima-facie* point even for non-Buddhists that standard textbook economics just is not satisfactory (51).

Thai interpreters have occasionally emphasized that Sufficiency Economy is interdenominational, lest it might sound sectarian: 'While drawing on the Buddhist thinking of the "middle path", the philosophy is not exclusively grounded in one thought, but has also found Muslim and Catholic proponents in the country. It has likewise gained appreciation as an approach in line with humanist economics that emphasize humanity and happiness above economic priorities' (UNESCO, 2013: 14). But this is *a non sequitur*—that non-Buddhists can appreciate Sufficiency Economy does not mean that Sufficiency Economy draws on any other edifice of thought than Buddhism. What one can do, of course, is to see Sufficiency Economy in the context of 'religious economics' generally, which makes clear that while Sufficiency Economy is not mainstream, it is by no means odd (Cornille & Williams, 2011; Noy, 2011). The most recent speeches by Pope Francis, e.g., echo exactly the denunciations of Global Capitalism (Yardley & Appelbaum, 2015) found in Sufficiency Economy. One might however add at this point that Buddhism is not the state religion of Thailand, and that—as has been argued—especially younger Thais today, while still religious, do not derive their ethics from Buddhism anymore, including those ethics that have a direct impact on public affairs (Vichit-Vadakan, 2010: 83-85).

The concept most similar to Sufficiency Economy, and probably the more prominent one today, is, as was mentioned, Bhutan's 'Gross National Happiness' (GNH), which like Sufficiency Economy has a happiness or life-quality focus, rather than a material growth one (Noy, 2011: 598; Swearer, 2011: 145-146; Indaratna, 2007; Kittiprapas et al., 2008: 10-11 *et passim).*[2] GNH also emerged in the 1970s (see Dorji, 2015b), and it was conceived by a King as well, HM the *Druk Gyalpo,* Jigme Singye Wangchuck (the '4th King'), who sees himself, if coming from a slightly different tradition, also as a *dhammaraja* (Ugyel, 2015, July 3. Interviewed).[3] Not for nothing have Sufficiency Economy and GNH been called the most important Buddhist Economics manifestations, including being even a litmus test of whether Buddhist Economics can work or not (Guruge, 2006: 124).

The focus of economics away from things and towards the human person that is at the core of Buddhist Economics is a primary feature of some heterodox development economics generally, such as those based on the German Historical School (Drechsler, 2015). Wilhelm Roscher, its main founder, begins his basic book on the topic, simply, with the statement, 'The starting point, as well as the object-point, of our science is Man' (Roscher, 1878: 1, see 52). And the leader of the Younger Historical School, Gustav V. Schmoller, in his 1897 Rektoratsrede at the University of Berlin, sums it up like this: 'Thus, a mere science of market and exchange, a sort of business economics which threatened to become a class weapon of the property owners, returned to being a great moral-political science … which has its central focus not on the world of goods and capital but on the human person' (Schmoller, 1897: 388). If real countries change 'the development paradigm from economic development to people-centered development' (Kawan cited in UNESCO, 2013: 27), this is an unusual policy step in this direction.

For an economist not familiar with the specific context, based on the English word, the assumption would, however, be that Sufficiency Economy means sufficiency in the sense of autarky, i.e. with an emphasis not (only) on the personal, but (also, perhaps even primarily) on the international level. Indeed much of it, or so it has been argued by Thai economists, is what this is (Office of the National Research Council of Thailand, 2004: 13-15). Autarky is a concept mostly theorized in the early 1930s, at the end of the time between the world wars, such as by another of the leading GHE economists, Werner Sombart, head of the Youngest

Historical School (e.g. Sombart, 1932: 39-44) and, even more famously, by Lord Keynes, although his argument takes place in a very specific Irish policy-making context (Keynes, 1933). And while again there is most likely no direct link, i.e. HM the King did not base himself on Keynes or Sombart, there are very clear parallels between this kind of autarky and Sufficiency Economy. This includes a strong emphasis on partial autarky, not—explicitly not—one hundred percent or total by both (Sombart, 1932: 39-40); Keynes strongly emphasizes moderation and graduality—'I sympathise ... with those who would minimise, rather than with those who would maximise, economic entanglement between nations. Yet, at the same time, those who seek to disembarrass a country of its entanglements should be very slow and wary. It should not be a matter of tearing up roots but of slowly training a plant to grow in a different direction' (Keynes, 1933: 181).

Sombart also emphasizes the possibility and indeed necessity of smaller economies to collaborate for autarky's sake (Sombart, 1932: 40), as this is—as Sufficiency Economy holds—primarily an insulation from the vagaries of the global economy, not an (impossible) withdrawal from it (Sombart, 1932: 41). One of Sombart's key points is autarky as autonomy, i.e. that one 'is not completely dependent on the relations with other peoples'; autarky means the possibility to 'in case of need be able to do without imports, without endangering [one's] substance' (Sombart, 1932: 41-42). First and foremost, therefore, Sombart calls for reagrarization (Sombart, 1932: 44). Core Sufficiency Economy features such as reduction of dependence from outside nations, also via less need for luxury imports, and at the same time an emphasis on farming would therefore be something one can take quite directly from Sombart. Keynes, too, includes agricultural products in the sufficiency agenda (Keynes, 1933: 183).

Sufficiency Economy has had and has its critics both from standard textbook economics economists, as has been said, and from academics basically critical-minded towards contemporary Thai governance (see Unger, 2009: 139, 145; Noy, 2011: 598-599; Swearer, 2011: 145). The former and the latter usually are in opposite camps, and it is probably fair to say that the latter should actually like Sufficiency

Economy but do not because it comes from the Thai 'elite' system against which their activism is directed. Empirical and case studies of the effects of Sufficiency Economy on farming and other aspects of the economy have thus also gone one way and the other, as is to be expected (see Unger, 2009: 145-146) What the critics of Sufficiency Economy tend to overlook is the above-mentioned collusion of standard textbook economics and a certain type of local 'elites'—if the latter 'can be convinced that neo-liberal reforms such as deregulation and privatization will offer them an opportunity for enrichment, the tensions of neoliberal reform may be minimal, and, in point of fact, even beneficial among the upper classes' (Springer, 2009: 273). Therefore, even some of the most severe critics have actually seen—had to see—the subversive potential of Sufficiency Economy, which is actually not legitimizing, but delegitimizing key claims and practices of said 'elites' (See Noy, 2011: 600; Unger, 2009: 145-147; cf. Swearer, 2011: 145).

But even if the implementation of Sufficiency Economy in Thailand today might be deficient—one could also say, as Noy states, that

> *"the sufficiency economy model remains an economic philosophy, a classic example of an attempt to specifically reformulate modern Western capitalist economics according to endogenous religious values.—The power of the sufficiency economy philosophy may ultimately rest not in its political rhetorical deployment, but in its ideas. ... Perhaps the real impact and implementation of sufficiency economy is still to come"* (Noy, 2011: 600, 606-607).

What Is the Public Administration of Sufficiency Economy?

The *Erkenntnisinteresse* of this essay is, to repeat, what would PA within the Sufficiency Economy look like? Any economic policy, indeed any policy whatsoever, needs PA in order to be implemented, but if we assume that any policy in any context needs a specifically suited PA system to implement it well, then the best PA for Sufficiency Economy could perhaps be complementary to Sufficiency

Economy, and that would be a very interesting line to follow (I have made that argument for Confucianism; Drechsler & Karo, 2016). But for the purpose of this essay, we are looking for a PA that fits directly into the context and background of Sufficiency Economy, that would be part of it, and we are trying to describe Sufficiency Economy PA in global-Western terms. The reason for this is heuristic, rather than to argue that Sufficiency Economy PA would have to converge at one point with the global-Western mainstream of PA in order to be 'good'.

The latter, non-specific view, without an argument, has long dominated PA but is now slowly waning—what has been called global PA today is really Western PA, and Western PA is largely Anglo-American PA (Drechsler, 2015; Pollitt, 2015). But such an unspecific, universalist view—which is echoed in the standard textbook economics discourse as well as in certain universal rights and ethics discourses—while often billed as being Western, actually goes against the Aristotelian foundations of Western political thought. As Aristotle famously says in his political magnum opus, the Politika, when listing the necessary qualifications for members of a government or administration:

> *"First, sympathy for the constitution as it actually exists; second, competences that are in line with the tasks of their specific office; third, a sense of virtue and justice that matches exactly those of the state in which they live—because, if the concept of justice is not the same in every state, it is obvious that there must be different kinds"*

What we can say is that Sufficiency Economy is a particularly strongly state-centered concept because it does not let the market, or international fashion, call the shots; therefore, a strong, capable state agency is especially needed (see Blackman et al., 2010 for Bhutan). That, in general and classically, is true for development generally and development economics in particular (see Nurkse, 2009; Ghosh et al., 2016). One therefore would expect great attention for the PA side, and for its specific shape, within Sufficiency Economy.

Sufficiency Economy texts hardly topicalize the PA perspective at all, however, so there is very little on institutional Sufficiency Economy PA. The Sufficiency Economy concept is applied to the public sector, but rather casually and usually only an individual level—concerning the motivation of the civil servant—not on an institutional one: '... so that everyone, particularly *public officials*, academia, businessmen at all levels, adhere first and foremost to the principle of honesty and integrity' (Sathirathai & Piboolsravut, 2004: 9; italics mine). The element most often mentioned beyond this is a kind of pragmatic case-by-case approach, as opposed to pre-conceived planning or ideology: 'Sufficiency Economy at the national level starts with a national administrative and development plan that encourages and enables people to live their own lives and to cooperate with others in development based on the Philosophy of Sufficiency Economy, while prudently implementing the plan step by step' (Office of the National Economics and Social Development Board, 2007: 17).

This lack of PA focus can only be partially explained by the attitude of implementing Thai standard textbook economics economists who try to emphasize the match between Sufficiency Economy and standard textbook economics, and who quite naturally give the government, and thus somehow also PA, the role to correct 'market failure' (Mongsawad, 2010: 138-139). Unger, in one of the best and most even-handed international essays on Sufficiency Economy (together with Noy, 2011), finishes thus:

> *"This giving-priority-to-norms (Buddhist) approach brings to mind a recurring puzzle in contemporary Thailand that goes beyond the Sufficiency Economy Philosphy to encompass many facets of economic and political thought: why so little belief in the efficacy of institutional reforms? In recent decades, poverty and the worst inequalities of wealth were minimized in places such as South Korea and Taiwan, largely through the workings of the market in interaction with activist states. Why is it that in*

> *Thailand the king, and so many other Thais, put so little faith in the state? The state's typically poor performance may, or may not, provide our answer"* (Unger, 2009: 154).

But the above-mentioned, ubiquitous emphasis on the individual civil servant is actually not a cop-out, but indeed in the logic of Sufficiency Economy and Buddhist Economics. The general Buddhist idea is arguably that 'a just and righteous government is the government which is comprised of righteous persons who ethically and professionally train themselves well, abstain from luxurious life, do not crave wealth and profit for themselves, and represent the interest of people' (Puntarigvivat, 2013: 183). From the point of view of an institutionalist, this is a problem, as it is precisely one of the ideas of institutions that they counter-balance human weaknesses and failures, but the radically human-centered Buddhist approach does not permit this solution but must start with the human person, difficult or not.

The clearest statement pulling what we do have in Sufficiency Economy regarding PA is this, in the official *Sufficiency Economy—Implications and Applications* (Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board, 2007), a publication by the Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board, Sufficiency Economy Movement Sub-committee, under the heading 'Application of Sufficiency Economy for Government Officers':

> *Government officers and staffs should first apply Sufficiency Economy in their own lives; starting with realizing their roles and responsibilities as social-service providers enhancing a social environment so that people can live in harmony within society and in balance with ecology. Each officer should be morally conscious and honest, leading lives with perseverance and prudence, knowing the causes and effects of their actions, being moderate in his or her life, and having prepared oneself for impact from internal and external change. An officer should prepare and implement policies,*

plans, and projects pertinent to Sufficiency Economy with emphasis on the balanced development of economy, society, environment and culture, so that eventually people and the community as a whole can depend on themselves and appropriately cope with challenges in the world. Government officers should be careful not too much impose their own ideas but to encourage people to think by themselves. Also, they should remember the principle of "helping people to help themselves" (Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board, 2007: 27-28).

So, the key to Buddhist PA is precisely the emphasis on the good individual, never mind what the system will look like—difficult as it may be to bring off (See Guruge, 2006: 122). The goodness of the individual is, of course, the way to Buddhist enlightenment and the realization of the *dhamma*—and that, as we have seen, is not really measurable. Less specifically and in Western PA parlance, what Sufficiency Economy in PA calls for is a form of *intrinsic motivation.*

Which Type of PA Would Be Most Suited for Sufficiency Economy?

We can sum up much of the previous three chapters by saying that Sufficiency Economy, in essence, is a heterodox socio-economic concept that forms a conscious alternative to Anglo-American mainstream thinking; it comes from a context that opposes the International Finance Institutions and neoliberalism; it requires a strong, capable state actor; it is about genuine happiness, not material wealth (and these two are only tenuously related); it has produced no explicit PA model as of yet; it is based on the intrinsic—Buddhist—motivation of civil servants to do the right thing, rather on them being controlled for performance via indicators; we may add that it is about step-by-step approaches rather than grand schemes; and that it (therefore) focuses necessarily on specificity and context.

If we want to describe or better construct Sufficiency Economy PA in a more specific, concrete way, and if we therefore look for hints from the global-Western discourse (again, with a heuristic interest, not one of transfer—just to see whether and where Sufficiency Economy can potentially fit in), we can start by saying what Sufficiency Economy PA cannot be. The opposite of Sufficiency Economy PA is very clearly the New Public Management (NPM), the last universal but very Anglo-American paradigm of global PA (Drechsler, 2005). NPM is nothing more nor less than the transfer of business and market principles and management techniques from the private into the public sector, symbiotic with and based on a neo-liberal understanding of state and economy (cf. Powell & de Vries, 2011: 99; Pierre, 2013: 119-121). NPM is, therefore, the PA equivalent of what standard textbook economics is in economics (Drechsler, 2005). The current state of the art of PA as a scholarly discipline is that NPM as a paradigm has been a disaster—the very best one could say is that it cost a bit more and worked a bit less than other models (Hood & Dixon, 2015). NPM is also the PA of the Crisis, which was one of the main reasons of the decline of NPM (in spite of some rise later on again; Drechsler, 2011a; Drechsler & Randma-Liiv, 2015b). NPM is strongly quantitative in scope, and as a paradigm it is a very grand scheme that claims universal validity to a very large extent (Drechsler & Randma-Liiv, 2015a; 2015b). Further, NPM has been strongly promoted by the International Finance Institutions (Drechsler, 2005; Baker, 2004: 44; Springer, 2009: 273), and it has been an especially big failure in the transition and development context (see de Vries & Nemec, 2015; Drechsler & Randma-Liiv, 2015a; 2015b).[4] Altogether, NPM must therefore be the opposite of what Sufficiency Economy PA could be.

Put positively, what Sufficiency Economy asks for is therefore a PA system that is opposed to NPM—and one that emphasizes intrinsic motivation (All Buddhist Economics PA would very likely look like this as well; Puntarigvivat, 2013: 51-52). And in fact, after some very institutionalist times, emphasizing PA performance through motivation and not monitoring is a very contemporary, much-discussed approach. Even in the private sector, the most recent research in business management suggests, or hints at, a turnaround—as Rock and Jones have argued in the *Harvard Business Review* (Rock & Jones, 2015), there seems to be a trend in the top companies, law firms and the like to discontinue indicator-based ratings and to more or less softly judge the entire performance of people. Partially this is for different reasons such as the changing nature of work, but mainly the argument is quite the same:

> *"Companies who have replaced ratings tend to be anxious about it beforehand and enthusiastic about it afterward. Their employees are happier, which encourages more engagement and better performance. It should be no surprise that treating an employee like a human being and not a number is a better approach. Yet it has taken a few bold companies to lead the way and show us that life is better on the other side. Only time will tell how lasting the trend truly is, but I strongly suspect we are at the beginning of something big"* (Rock & Jones, 2015).

In PA itself, this is the discourse of Public Service Motivation or Public Service Motivation associated with Jim Perry and others[5] (see Perry et al., 2010 for a good survey) and in economics and larger organization theory the notion of motivational capital as promulgated by Nobel Prize winner George A. Akerlof (see Akerlof & Kranton, 2005: 29). The definition of Public Service Motivation as 'belief, values and attitudes that go beyond self-interest and organizational interest, that concern the interest of a larger political entity' (Vandenabeele, 2007: 547) is what Sufficiency Economy is arguably about.[6] Singapore, by many accounts the most successful country in Asia, if not globally, regarding PA as well as otherwise, has most recently placed an emphasis of PA reform on Public Section Innovation with an initiative to create, with the UNDP, the 'New Public Passion' for other countries to learn from, since almost 'everywhere, except in Singapore, public service is in crisis. Morale and motivation in the public sector have collapsed in many countries across both the developed and developing worlds' (Everest-Phillips, 2015).

But Public Service Motivation is only one aspect. If we look for a paradigm that entails this attention to Public Service Motivation, a model close and similar to what Sufficiency Economy needs as PA, then I would argue that this is the most classic modern PA system of them all, viz. Weberian bureaucracy, or its most contemporary form, the Neo-Weberian State (Drechsler & Randma-Liiv, 2015b).[7] Weberian PA is the *bête noire* of NPM, which always presented a caricature of it. Apart from the caricature, for Max Weber, after whom they are named, the most efficient and thus quintessentially modern PA was a set of offices in which appointed civil servants operated under the principles of merit selection (impersonality), hierarchy, the division of labor, exclusive employment, career advancement, the written form and legality. This increase of rationality—his key term—would increase speed, scope, predictability and cost-effectiveness, as needed for an advanced mass-industrial society (Weber, 1922: 124-130).

Buddhist PA is arguably more or less neutral on the rationality and rationalization features, but some of these do work in different global (and that means Capitalist) contexts and by traditional indicators even very successfully so, i.e., for instance, developing countries without them do worse than those with (Evans & Rauch, 1999). But what is important for us is that, as Akerlof has underlined again, Weberian PA is based on motivation, not monitoring—there is strong tenure and only a minor performance aspect. Akerlof consciously validates his work by linking it to Weber's concept of successful bureaucracies being based on the motto 'an office is a vocation' and all that this implies (Akerlof & Kranton, 2003: 29). Performance Pay, anyway, is flawed because too strict supervision leads to less quality and a declining output (Akerlof & Kranton, 2003: 11, 22-26). And in any case, as Bruno Frey has pointed out, 'For no position—except perhaps the most simple assembly line work—can all relevant aspects be defined and measured' (Frey, 2007: 209).

It seems that fundamentally, with all its weaknesses, the Weberian model still is the best 'global' one around, where it fits the context—it is, to borrow the Churchillian phrase, the worst form of PA except all others. But in the context of the (aftermath of the) global financial crisis, one of the most discussed models for the administrative paradigm that follows NPM, i.e. post-NPM, is not a return to the previous one, but, according to Pollitt and Bouckaert, the Neo-Weberian State, a metaphor describing a model that co-opts the positive elements of NPM, but on a Weberian foundation, so that both are asymmetrically *aufgehoben* (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2004: 96-102). The Neo-Weberian State focuses more than any other post-NPM models on a genuinely competent and motivated civil service, even tolerating, if not promoting, a 'Return of the Mandarin', i.e. of a highly capable, responsible, motivated, long-term-oriented senior civil service, among other Neo-Weberian and indeed classical Weberian institutions (see Drechsler & Randma-Liiv, 2015b). And precisely this seems to be the kind of civil service that would match the Sufficiency Economy, generally speaking.

That, however, would be a global answer and not one taking Thai specificities into account (Drechsler, 2015a). The problems of performance measurement, however, are neither Weberian nor even Western; they were first formulated about a millennium ago, by Wang Anshi, for the classic Chinese-Confucian system of Imperial Administration—which shows many parallels to Weberianism (Drechsler, 2013). But the Sufficiency Economy context is, as we saw, primarily Buddhist plus Thai (Office of the National Research Council of Thailand, 2004: 42). Sufficiency Economy PA, as a form of Buddhist PA, can therefore be postulated to be different from NPM and possibly similar to Weberian PA or the Neo-Weberian State.

It seems to me, however, that real-existing Thai PA itself never linked itself to Sufficiency Economy; what the typical accounts show that a foreigner would turn to is the usual and expected take-up of global-Western ideas, including NPM during the NPM fashion time and beyond, with the likewise expected results that this did not really work, partially because the context was not taken into consideration (see the Thai section edited by Ponlapat Buracom in Berman, 2010: 27-137; the work by the late Bidhya Bowornwathana, e.g. 2000, 2004; specifically also Punyaratabandhu & Unger, 2009). Also, if it is true, as reported *supra*, that

Buddhist values that motivate people to act in a certain way or not are on the decline in Thailand, then there is a problem here—but the starting assumption of this essay is that Sufficiency Economy is a, if not the, valid Thai socio-economic development concept.

It may be worth mentioning here that Bhutan, as well, has not focused much on this topic, i.e. what kind of PA might be in line with the GNP, nor has scholarship generally recognized this as an issue (see Dorji & Schreven, 2007).[8] Even HM the 4th King seems to have held, in the mid-1980s at least, the high time of NPM, some very global-Western ideas, specifically regarding PA reform, down to across-the board downsizing (Dorji, 2015b). GNH is administered today by using global or foreign PA paradigms (Ugyel, 2014; Givel, 2015: 103). However, most recently, the chairman of the Royal Civil Service Commission, Karma Tshiteem, addressed the GNH-PA connection, apparently in a post-NPM context, and here, too, we find a focus on motivation rather than structure or implementation, but Public Service Motivation is connected to the Monarchy rather than to Buddhism (Dorji, 2015a).

Conclusions

The purpose of this essay was to ask what PA within the Sufficiency Economy would look like if we place it into the context of global-Western PA. Given the economically heterodox, Buddhist, Thai characteristics of Sufficiency Economy, we can say that the least suited PA system would be that of the NPM, which ticks virtually all boxes of what should not be the case according to Sufficiency Economy and Buddhist Economics. One of the most helpful contemporary PA discourses for this debate would be that of Public Service Motivation because of the Sufficiency Economy focus on the intrinsic motivation of the individual civil servant. The paradigm closest to what we might expect to be Sufficiency Economy PA would be Weberian PA or the Neo-Weberian State. What this means is that a specific Sufficiency Economy PA is eminently possible within the current PA discourse. A more radical debate, going towards something that could be called Buddhist PA, seems for Thailand as challenging and, indeed, remote as it would be fascinating and even promising. But as it may be in line with the most recent global developments in management and organization; this may even happen sometime in the not too distant future.

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Endnotes

[1]This *mesotes* aspect of Sufficiency Economy has, however, found proponents and has even been recommended for lesson-drawing to China; Zhou, 2008: 43-44.

[2]Within the GNH discourse, 'sufficiency' however means something completely different; it is a 'false friend' to the meaning within Sufficiency Economy—in Bhutan, it means that there is enough of one aspect of what has been defined as a component of happiness; Ura, 2015.

[3]HM King Norodom Sihamoni of Cambodia likewise probably sees himself, and definitely acts on a spiritual-cultural level, as *a dhammaraja as* well (Koeuth, 2015, August 8. Interviewed), but his political options are currently very limited.

[4]As NPM will always put efficiency over any values (O'Flynn, 2007: 363; Baker, 2004: 39)—and then

not achieve this efficiency, either—it has, as neoliberal reforms do generally, an anti-democratic track record, not least specifically in Southeast Asia (SEA); Springer, 2009. What confused some observers in this respect was that if we assume a democratization trajectory, NPM happened parallel to it but in effect basically blocked or lessened democracy, too; Baker, 2004. The reason that in many SEA countries, NPM was and is supported by some reformist academics and activists is that it was seen as a break-up tool for entrenched state-bureaucratic oppressive structures, and one that came with international, scientific rhetorical endorsement.

[5]Strictly speaking, Public Service Motivation is not the same as 'intrinsic motivation' in the PA context, as the latter has by now often been defined more or less as pleasure-oriented or otherwise self-interested (Perry et al., 2010: 68-72), but for the current context, the two can be used more or less interchangeably—the line is difficult to draw, anyway. Non-monetary incentives that are premised on the fact that people just do not maximize profits, but utility as perceived are particularly suited for a Monarchy with its elements to motivate people in a non-monetary way, and a fortiori for a spiritual one, where proximity to the King carries very strong incentives.

[6]Some recent research suggests that Public Section Innovation is not 1:1 transferable across the paradigms, i.e. the conditions in a Confucian system (such as South Korea) are simply too different from a Western (i.e., Anglo-American) one for which Public Section Innovation was developed that one could do so (Park & Kim, 2015: 357, 362; on Confucian PA as paradigm, see Drechsler, 2015), but in this essay, we are just looking for global-Western parallels and not for transfer options. (There is, incidentally, nothing Confucian about Thai PA, unless one defines it extremely loosely as 'Asian', as in Jingjit & Fotaki, 2011: 62-63)

[7]Another post-NPM paradigm that comes to mind in our context and that would be interesting to pursue is Value Governance; Moore, 1995; O'Flynn, 2007.

[8]An exception is the excellent Blackman, et al., 2010, which focuses on what strategic human-resource management should specifically look like if it were to support GNH, and which takes the non-Western aspect fully into consideration.

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Appendix: Interview Schedule

Koeuth, S. Interviewed, August 8, 2015.

Ugyel, L. Interviewed, July 3, 2015.