

Small Is Necessary

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While evoking themes in E. F. Schumacher's classic *Small is Beautiful: Economics as If People Mattered* (1973), the book manuscript *Small is Necessary: Shared Living on a Shared Planet* takes an interdisciplinary socioecological approach following Rachel Carson's classic *Silent Spring* (1962). Given economic and environmental limits, and population pressures, *Small is Necessary* explores recent directions in housing and household consumption towards compact and shared lifestyles to enhance natural and social environments alike. *Small is Necessary* explores alternatives that, in Carson's perspective (1962, 240), amount to "new, imaginative and creative approaches to the problem of sharing our earth."

Small is Necessary specifically addresses unsustainable practices associated with oversized suburban dwellings and tiny over-consuming households. It shows that traditional housing of the not too distant past was smaller, more environmentally efficient, and more communally sustainable than current suburban settlements dominated by detached single-storied dwellings surrounded by car, pool, and garden spaces. The book traces the rise of micro and luxury apartments and tiny houses—all forms of smaller housing that tend to multiply bathroom, kitchen, and laundry spaces and appliances, as well as heighten alienation and individuation. On the one hand, small does not necessarily mean less (consumption). On the other hand, sharing makes less more, and small more sociable, practical, and sustainable.

In short, *Small is Necessary* highlights the achievements of residents in eco-cohousing and ecovillages creating "alternative" lifestyles, small and sustainable buildings, and communities to achieve biophysical sustainability. Transformation is considered in "glocal" and interdisciplinary ways, drawing on cultural (material) geography and political ecology analyses to understand grassroots values, perspectives, and practices—and state and market structures as bearers of tradition and of change—towards environmental stewardship and sustainability citizenship. In eco communities solidarity, mutual support, and motivational benefits are significant.

This perspective on transformation in environment and society explores communities and neighborhoods as dynamic cultural "micro-climates" and exemplars of change, yet reveals perverse and unintended outcomes. While many ecovillages and eco-cohousing areas demonstrate that living modestly and sharing facilities have strong environmental and social benefits, others show little evidence of such achievements because they are unaffordable and residents over-consume. Once basic needs have been met, in many instances, making do without (or with less) has greater benefits than applying smart technologies.

This book, to be published by Pluto Press (London), immerses readers in questions surrounding contemporary transformation in environment and society regarding curbing our everyday overuse of natural resources in households, and overcoming our current failings to live within Earth's regenerative capacity.