

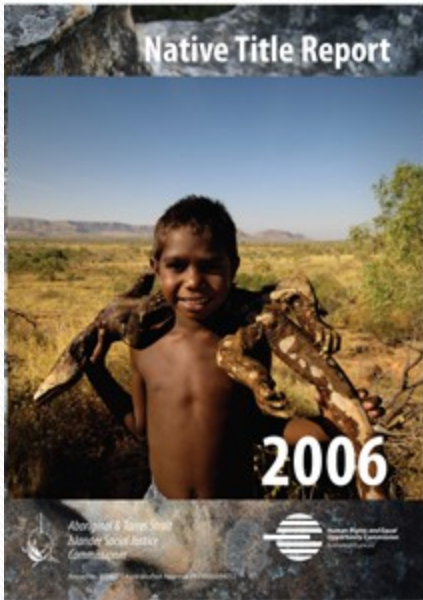
‘Buy Land; they’re not
making it any more’ Mark
Twain

Land: The Most Fundamental Resource
in a Green Economy

What is land?

- Classical economists focused on land: ‘the distinguishing feature of land is that it is essentially in fixed supply to the whole economy even in the long run’
- It includes all the resources contained in the land
- Not considered inherently different from capital and can be discussed as an equivalent ‘factor of production’
- Private ownership leads to efficient use of land
- Can be sold in a market which determines its prices in terms of supply and demand
- Can provide a living from rents

The indigenous perspective



- In societies whose very existence depended upon knowing the earth and how to hunt its animals and forage for its foods—the way of life for 99 percent of human history—respect for the natural world and an appreciation of the land itself as sacred and inviolable was surely inevitable. That sensibility was literally so vital that it was embedded in some central place in each culture’s myths and traditions and was embodied in each culture’s supreme spirits and deities.

- Kirkpatrick Sale

- All land is sacred. It is their bible. Indigenous people do not see the land as a commodity which can be sold or bought. They do not see themselves as possessors but as guardians of land. A fundamental difference between the indigenous concept of land and the western idea is that indigenous peoples belong to the land rather than the land belonging to them.

- Zapata and Schielman

Does the land belong to us?



The Enlightenment position

- The natural world is essentially there for our benefit, our use, our comfort. The Colorado River is there to provide water for the people and farms of Southern California, needing only the technology of a Boulder Dam to complete what nature forgot to do; the Northwestern forests are there to provide lumber that the growing populations of the carelessly sprawling suburbs need to build their rightful houses; the Hudson River flows purposefully to the Atlantic so that human wastes and industrial poisons such as PCBs can be carried away, out of sight and mind, to the sea.

Exploitation vs. ecology

- Neoclassical economists no problem with ‘exploitation’ but ecologists do
- Three insights from ecology:
 - ‘carrying capacity’
 - ‘regenerative capacity’
 - ‘ecological niche’
- Population and consumption within the limits of that ecosystem’s regenerative capacity, and not exceeding what it can support or ‘carry’

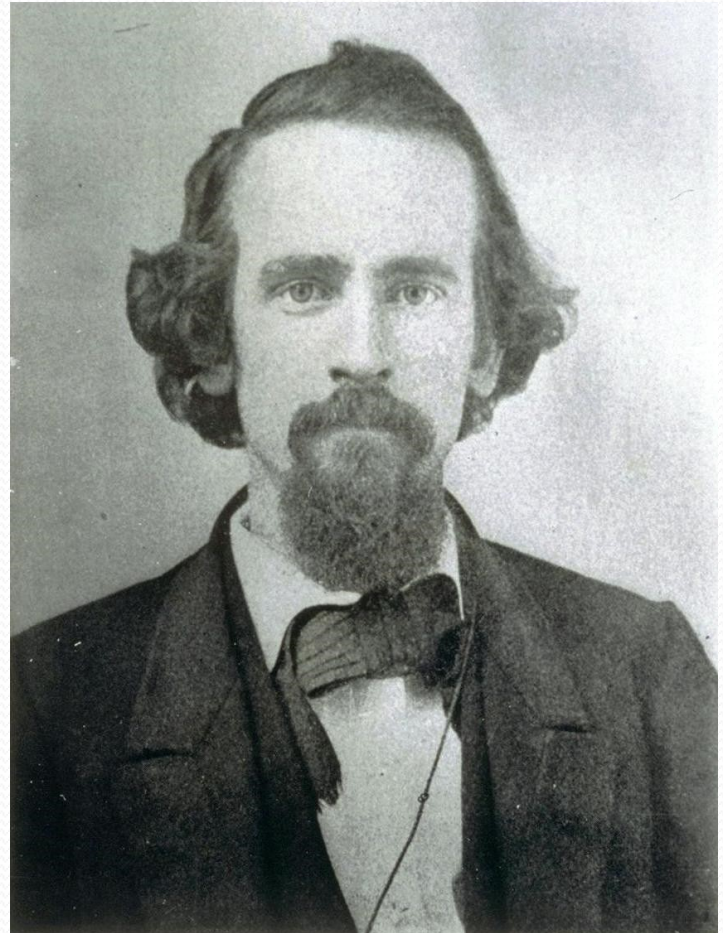
Guiding principles of a green approach to land:

- Land ownership is conceptually dubious: there is a preference for stewardship
- Rather than exploiting the earth and its resources we should adopt a posture based on respect for the land, almost as an entity in its own right
- Since land is a ‘common treasury’ or ‘common wealth’ it follows that it should be shared fairly between those who have a need for it, and according to that need



Who gains the benefit from land?

- Henry George
- *Progress and Poverty*, 1880
- The 'single tax'
- Site-value tax or Land Value Tax
- Herr Dr Professor Johannisova



Reasons for taxing land



- It is fixed
 - The proceeds of the most valuable resource should be shared
 - It leads to efficient use of land and means it is not left 'idle'
-
- Reduce the concentration of land ownership
 - Can work with planning system to influence land use

Structure of Land Value Tax

- Land Value Tax is levied on the annual rental value of each parcel of land
- Based on unimproved value, so not a tax on capital
- Need a baseline survey of the values of certain types of land and survey of land holding

- Bramhall, R. (1999) „Land Value Tax“, in Scott Cato and Kennett (eds.), *Green Economics: Beyond Supply and Demand to Meeting Peoples Needs* (Aberystwyth: Green Audit).
- http://www.sustecweb.co.uk/past/sustec13-1/land_value_taxationrichard.htm

Canons of good taxation practice

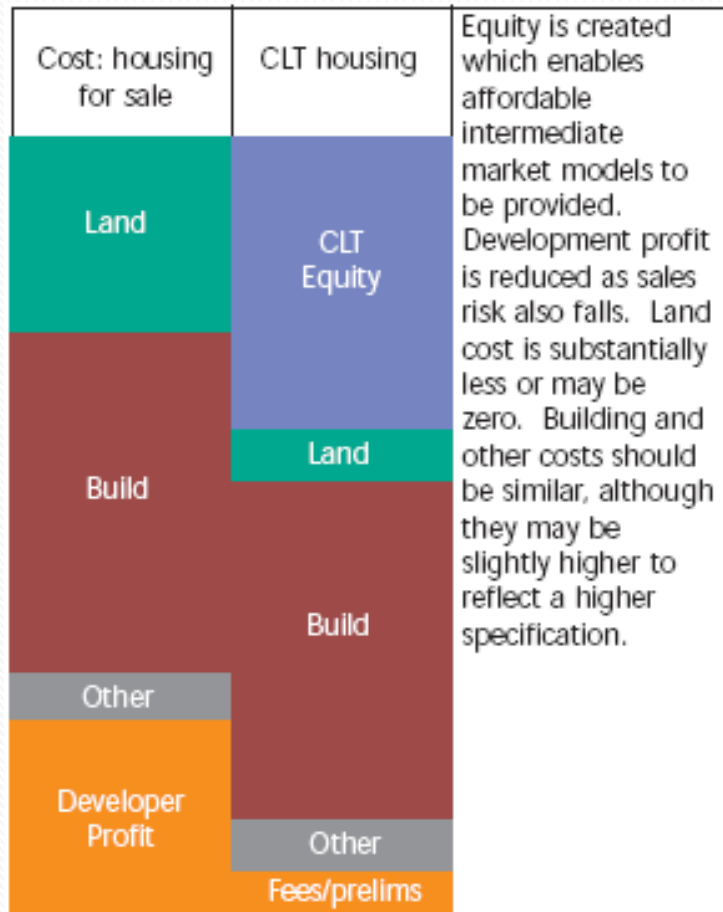
- Cheap to collect
- Difficult to evade
- Should fall lightly on production—sales and employment taxes discourage economic activity
 - Discourages speculative land holding, e.g. Olympic site in Greenwich
 - Encourages active use of land

- LVT combines practical advantage with moral justice. Landowners did not create the land, so, however legitimately they may have acquired it, land it is owned ultimately only by "right" of conquest. And just as landowners didn't create the land, neither do they create its value. Land values are conferred by the existence of the human community and its collective economic effort. It is therefore morally just to redistribute the advantages of holding (as opposed to using) land which otherwise accrue to private profit.

Land taxes in different countries

<i>Country</i>	<i>Experience</i>
Australia	Some form of LVT in every federal state
Russia	Following privatisation of land in 2001 land tax was set at fixed rate per hectare
Denmark	Land tax levied on all private property, at a rate that varies between municipalities
USA	Two-rate property and land tax used in Pennsylvania; two rate system used in Pittsburgh between 1913 and 2001
Canada	Some cities and provinces tax land values at higher rates than improvements—a commitment to the principle of land value tax

Community land trusts



- Shared ownership of land
- Separating land values from the need for a home
- How to keep the value with the community as prices rise?

Building on land

- Holism: melding of ecosystem management, regenerative resource use and conservation, regional planning, regenerative systems, and sustainable community design
- Linking homes and livelihoods
- Ecovillages



Co-housing

- Energy-efficient
- Shared eating and equipment saves energy
- Helps to build community
- How to get away from ‘the Englishman’s home is his castle’?



Questions

- Do you own any land today?
- Do you ever expect to own land?
- How much? What will you use it for?
- How does land ownership work in your country/home community?
- Has your country ever had a land reform?

Taking a bioregional approach to land

„Nature is not a place
to visit, it is *home*“
Gary Snyder




What is a bioregion?

- ‘a unique region definable by natural (rather than political) boundaries’
- A *bioregion* is literally and etymologically a ‘life-place’—with a geographic, climatic, hydrological and ecological character capable of supporting unique human and non-human living communities. Bioregions can be variously defined by the geography of watersheds, similar plant and animal ecosystems, and related identifiable landforms and by the unique human cultures that grow from natural limits and potentials of the region

An economic bioregion

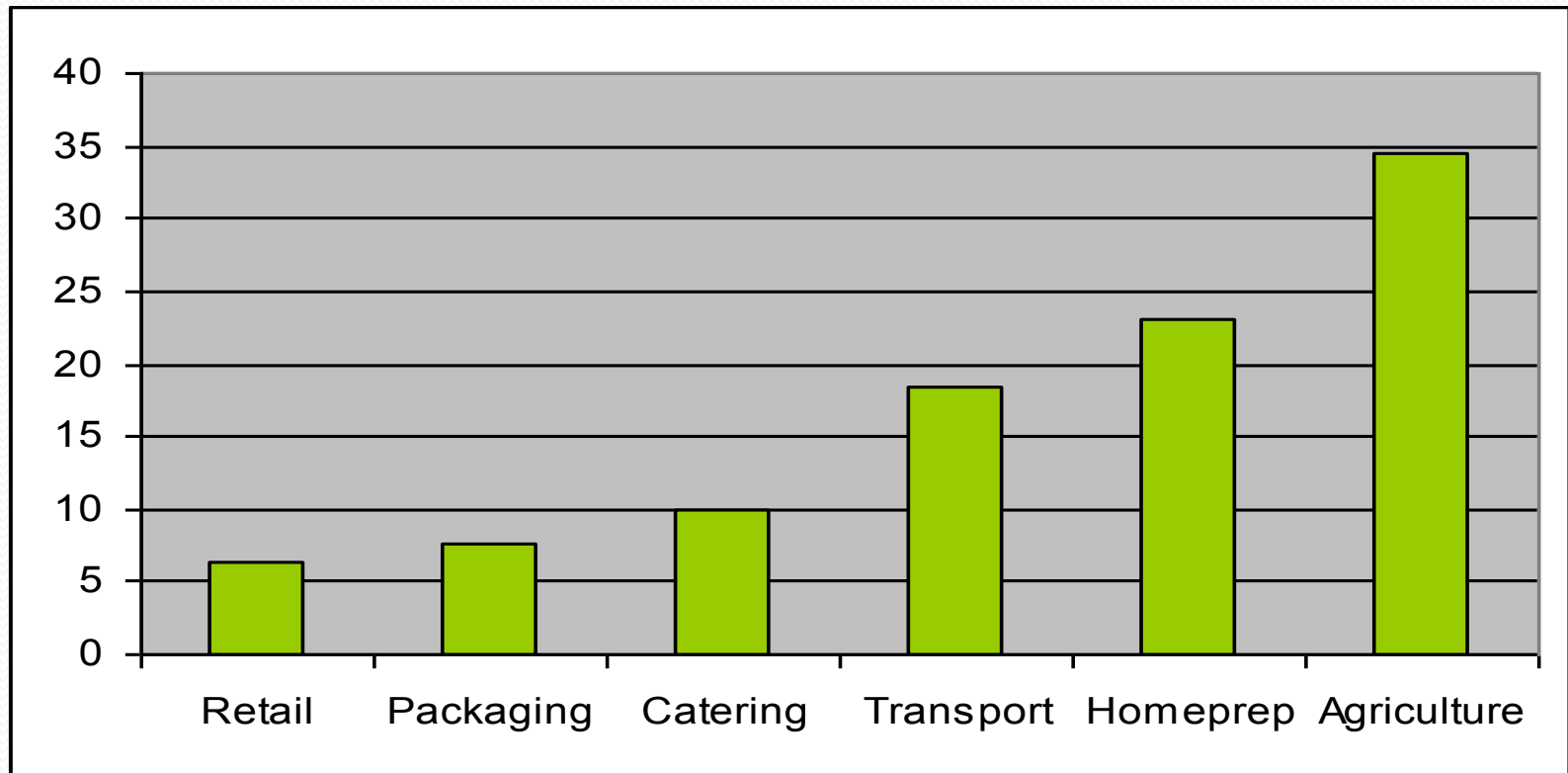
- A bioregional economy would be embedded within its bioregion and would acknowledge ecological limits.
- Bioregions as natural social units determined by ecology rather than economics
- Can be largely self-sufficient in terms of basic resources such as water, food, products and services.
- Enshrine the principle of trade subsidiarity

- 
- [We] have ‘forgotten’ that the economy and all its works is a subset and dependent upon the wider ecosystem. . . Modern citizens have not only lost contact with the land, and their sense of embeddedness in the land, but at the same time they have lost those elemental social forms of more or less intimate and relatively transparent social relations. Thus a basic aim of bioregionalism is to get people back in touch with the land, and constitutive of that process is the recreation of community in a strong sense. (Barry, 1990: 9).

Land's most important use . . .



Percentage of oil used in different aspects of food production and distribution



Source: Lucas, Jones, and Hines (2006), *Fuelling a Food Crisis*

Colin Tudge on self-reliance

- *A system of farming that was truly designed to feed people and to go on doing so for the indefinite future, would be founded primarily on mixed farms and local production. In general, each country . . . would contrive to be self-reliant in food. Self-reliant does not mean self-sufficient. . . Self-reliance does mean, however, that each country would produce its own basic foods, and be able to get by in a crisis.*

Let's think about . . .

- Bananas
- (thanks to Pamela Robinson of Cardiff School of Social Sciences)



The Global Banana Trade

- Three major banana TNC producers: Chiquita International, Dole Food and Fresh Del Monte dominate the global market
- The global market is estimated to be worth approx. US\$ 5bn (cost prices), around 6.5m tonnes
- The three TNC producers supply approx. 56% of the world's bananas



Global Banana Supply Chain

- Supermarkets dominate the fresh food market in the UK
- The annual retail market for bananas in 2007 was worth in excess of £575m (retail prices)
- Approximately a 140 million bananas are consumed each week, 7 billion each year
- Bananas are the biggest selling fruit item in the UK grocery market—took over from apples in 1998

The Ethical Dilemma



- *Why is it that bananas, a non-indigenous and highly perishable fruit, is one of the biggest selling food products on the shelves of UK supermarkets today? And why are they so cheap?*

Banana wars—1999-2001

- Lomé Convention allowed favourable treatment for former colonies in the Caribbean



- Only 7 per cent of Europe's bananas come from the Caribbean, US multinationals controlled 75% of the EU market
- The Clinton administration took the "banana wars" to the WTO within 24 hours of Chiquita making a \$500,000 donation to the Democratic Party



FAIRTRADE

Guarantees
a **better deal**
for Third World
Producers

Growth in fair trade

- Figures from the Fairtrade Labelling Organizations International indicate that consumers worldwide spent £1.1bn on certified products in 2006—an increase of 42% on the previous year.
- Particularly large increases were found for cocoa (93%), coffee (53%), tea (41%) and bananas (31%).

Reclaiming the local food economy



Stroud Community Agriculture



Apple day



Celebration!



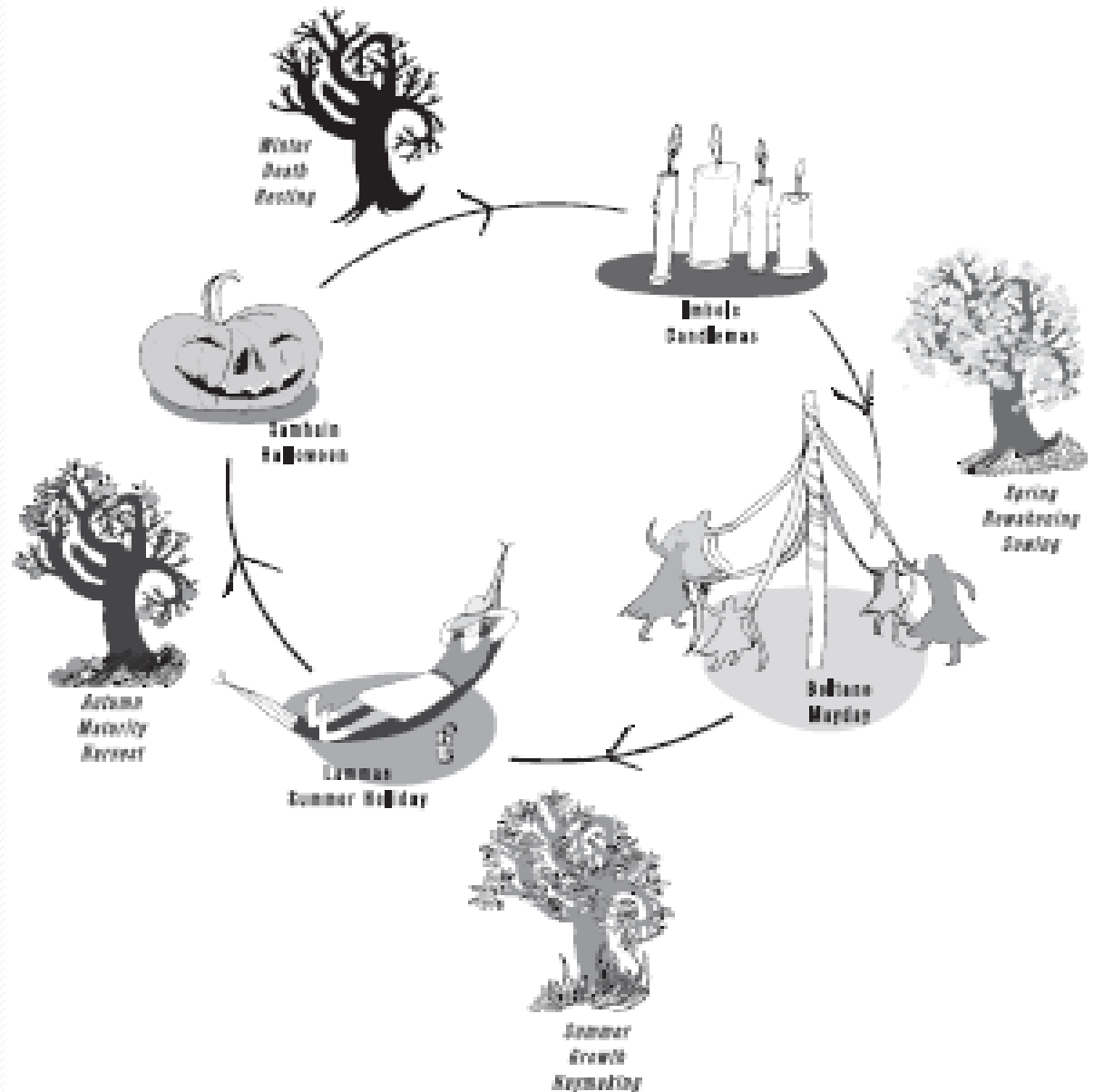
Preservation



- Close to zero food miles
- Genuine ownership
- Production not just consumption
- Seasonality and concept of 'share'
- Annual cycle and community in festivals



Seasonality and the annual cycle



You are the bioregional council

- 1. How do you decide who is on the council: which groups are presented? Future generations? Other species?
- 2. What evidence/information do you accept?
- 3. Which are your most important resources?
- 4. Can you develop a hierarchy of needs?
- 5. How would you balance the need for biofuels against the need for meat?
- 6. How would you encourage people to live more sustainable lifestyles?