

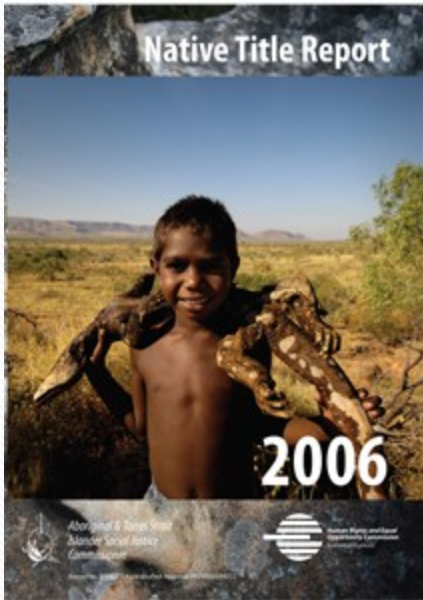
‘Buy Land; they’re not
making it any more’ Mark
Twain

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

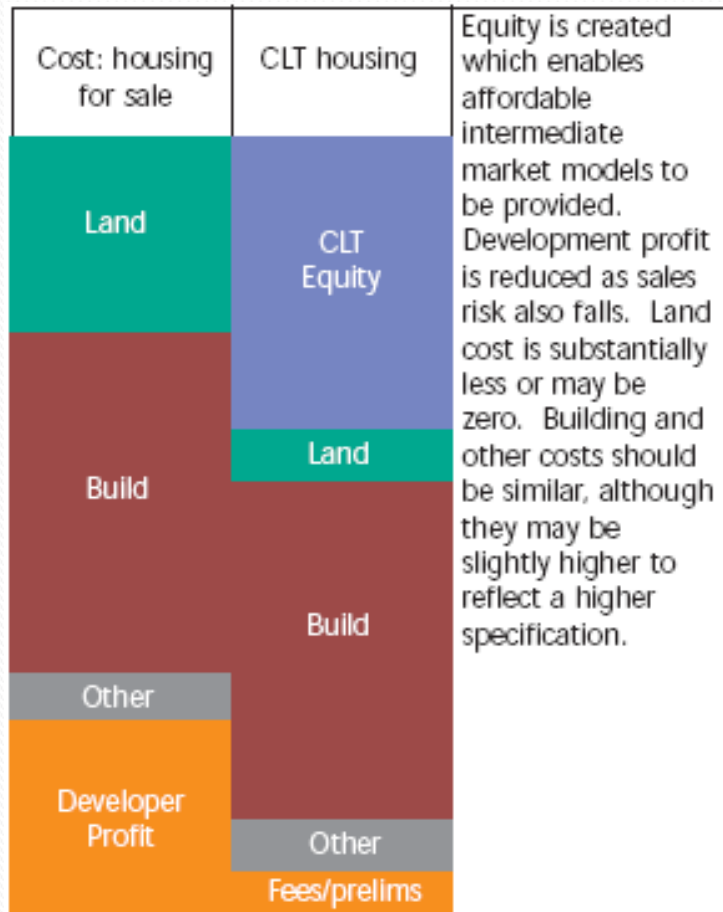
- The natural world is essentially there for our benefit, our use, our comfort. The Colorado River is there to provide water for the people and farms of Southern California, needing only the technology of a Boulder Dam to complete what nature forgot to do; the Northwestern forests are there to provide 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.

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



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

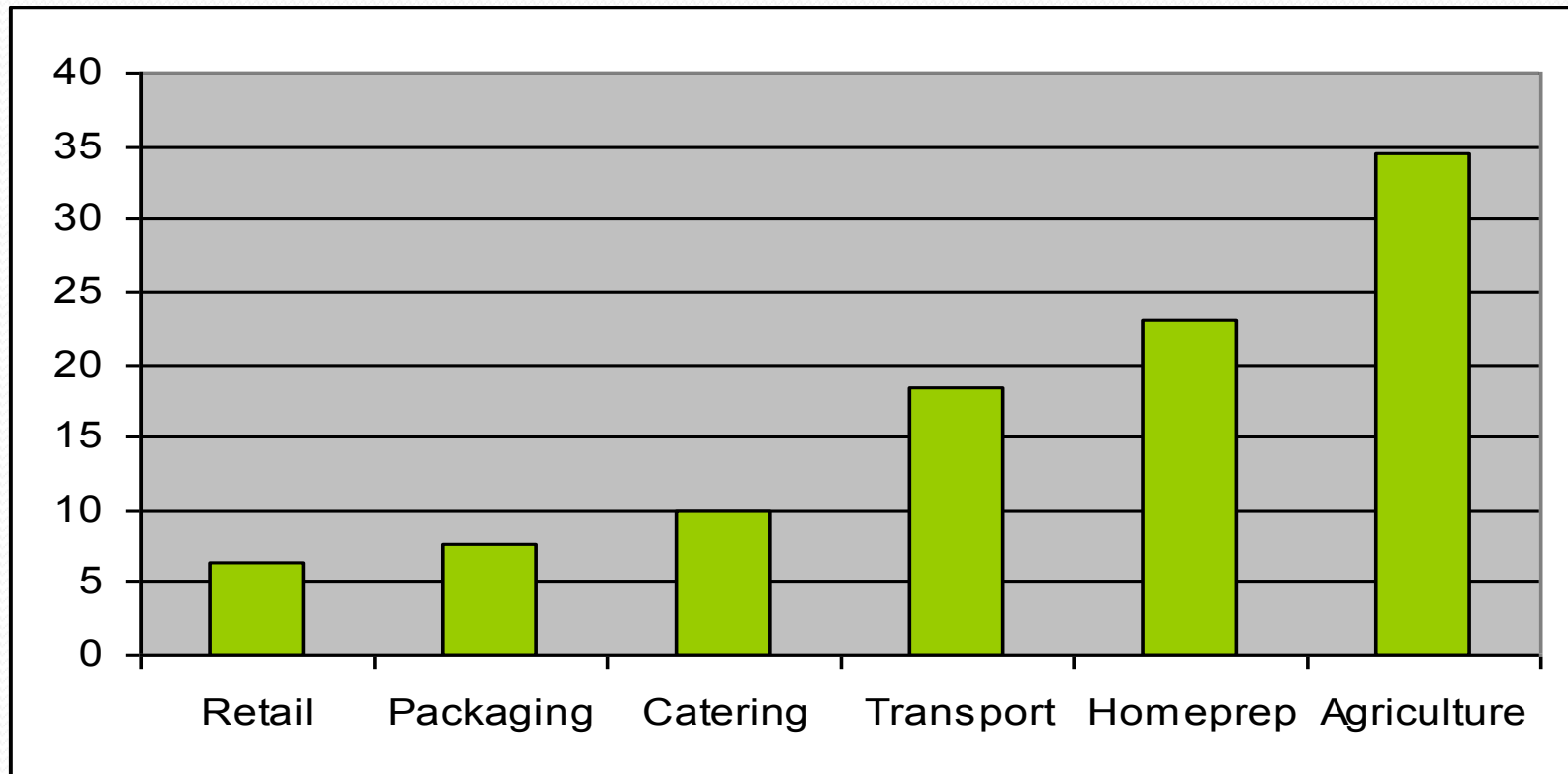
„Nature is not a place
to visit, it is *home*“
Gary Snyder



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.*

Welfare and community

- Side by side with family housekeeping, there have been three principles of production and distribution:
 - Reciprocity
 - Redistribution
 - Market
- Prior to the market revolution, humanity's economic relations were subordinate to the social. Now economic relations are now generally superior to social ones.



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

Reclaiming the local food economy



Stroud Community Agriculture



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



Mapping the Bioregion

- Work with a partner or in a small group
- Think about a piece of land you all know well
- Think about what resources are available in this land
- Draw a map showing how you could find all the resources you need in the local area
- What might you have available as surplus to trade?
- What might you have to import?