

EARTH RIGHTS ECONOMIC POLICY VISION STATEMENT

Ed: this is what Alanna Hartzok recently submitted to the Global Progressive Forum/Party of European Socialists in response to the question: "What do you think are the biggest challenges for social democracy today"

The biggest challenge for social democracy today is to articulate coherent policies based on a unifying vision for society. The policy approach should transcend the usual right/left divide and articulate a clear analysis of the problems inherent in the neoliberal macroeconomics structures.

The major problems to address include: (1) the enormous worldwide wealth gap and the underlying concentration of land and natural resource ownership and control; (2) the privatised mone-



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ary structures; and (3) building global governance institutions and financing governance and development in such a way as to divert funds from military industrial profits and into social development and environmental restoration.

We need a basic clarification of First Principles on the concept of "ownership", starting with the principle that the land and natural resources of the planet are a common heritage and belong equally as a birthright to everyone.

Products and services created by individuals are properly viewed as private property. Products and services created by groups of individuals are properly viewed as collective property.

We can hatch many birds out of one egg when we shift public finance OFF OF private property and ONTO common heritage property. From the local to the global level we need to shift taxes off of labor and productive capital and onto land and natural resource rents. In other words, we need to privatise labor (wages) and socialize rent (the value of surface land and natural resources). This public finance shift will promote the cooperatisation of the ownership of capital in a gradual way with minimal government control of the production and exchange of individual and collective wealth. Natural monopolies (infrastructure, energy, public transportation) should be owned and/or controlled or regulated by government at the most local level that is practical.

The levels of this public finance shift can be delineated thusly: Municipalities and localities to collect the surface land rents within their jurisdiction. Regional governing bodies to collect resource rents for forest lands, mineral, oil and water resources; the global level needs a Global Resource Agency to collect user fees for transnational commons such as satellite geostationary orbits, royalties on minerals mined or fish caught in international waters and the use of the electromagnetic spectrum.

An added benefit of this form of public finance is that it provides a peaceful way to address conflicts over land and natural resources. Resource rents should be collected and equitably distributed and utilized for the benefit of all, either in financing social services and/or in direct citizen dividends in equal amount to all individuals.

A portion of revenues could pass from the lower to the higher governance levels or vice versa as needed to ensure a just development pattern worldwide and needed environmental restoration.

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In the area of monetary policy we need seignorage reform, which means that money should be issued as spending by governments, not as debt by private banking institutions. We also need guaranteed economic freedoms to create local and regional currencies on a democratic and transparent basis. ■

