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UN vote to end private land ownership

In modern times the much lauded growth in individual home ownership has, in fact, turned out to be entirely illusory. Over the last 50 years, the burden of average mortgage debt repayments on household budgets has tripled in the UK. As the size of mortgages relative to disposable income has increased, the possibility of 100% home ownership has actually receded.

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Today the United Nations, in defiance of powerful vested interests, voted unanimously to return all land, worldwide, back into public ownership.

The One Land Tax, which is one of the UN's 2020 Vision Development Goals, promises to end the cycle of [boom and bust](#) which has afflicted developing nations for 300 years. The agreement provides a framework through which UN member states can safely phase out all existing forms of taxation and replace them with a single land tax.

"This decision provides a radically different solution to an [unsolved problem](#)" commented UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. "Complex tax regimes have left citizens bewildered. The One Land Tax will simplify everything. You will no longer be asked to pay tax on monies earned, on food, drinks, medicines, on homes, on savings & investments, fuel, travel and road use, on inheritance, or on unemployment benefit."

There are undeniably advantages to the proposed One Land Tax. Firstly, it will be easy to calculate and collect, but much harder to evade. Secondly, the amount charged will be transparent and easily understood, since the amount paid will be proportionate to the tangible benefits of living in the community in which an individual's land is situated. Thirdly, the tax will leave both workers and businesses with more disposable income and less dependent on loans.

NGOs have welcomed the One Land Tax for its potential to devolve power and to revive local participation in democratic decision making. One immediate benefit will be that communities will be able to invest in their own priorities without first going cap in hand to central government.

The One Land Tax is to be collected in its entirety by local councils. A proportion, no more than 50% of monies collected, will be forwarded to central government. With increased responsibility devolved to local and regional councils, central government will be free to refocus on issues of more long-term strategic concern including improvements in



infrastructure, defence, food and energy supply, and global security.

The One Land Tax in its simplest form, is simply a contribution to the communal budget equal to the rental value of the land a person holds as if it were their own. It will be collected by the authority responsible for services and infrastructure from which this land benefits. The logic behind the tax is surprisingly simple. House buyers can already see that the quality and convenience of public services and the standard of nearby employment or educational opportunities has more influence on property prices than the relative quality of the dwellings themselves. The law of relative land value is already explicit in the estate agent's cry 'location, location, location'.

Over the last 20 years the boom and bust cycle has traumatised the populations of sophisticated nations such as the US, UK and Japan. Governments have even been elected on the strength of their promise to put an end to recessions - this is a measure of how seriously the downside of the cycle affects people. Yet, in spite of this, colossal mountains of mortgage debt have still been allowed to accumulate, necessarily damaging livelihoods, aspirations and businesses.

Even critics of the One Land Tax concede that no other policy tool has succeeded in ending the speculation in land which inevitably leads to unaffordable homes and the concentration of land ownership into ever fewer hands. In modern times the much lauded growth in individual home ownership has, in fact, turned out to be entirely illusory. Over the last 50 years, the burden of average mortgage debt repayments on household budgets has tripled in the UK. As the size of mortgages relative to disposable income has increased, **the possibility of 100% home ownership has actually receded.**

Supporters say that few political decisions will result in greater absolute numbers of beneficiaries than this tax. For all families with existing mortgages, the repayments on the land component will simply be redirected from the bank or building society to the local authority responsible for public services.

As speculators and landowners move to evade the new tax by returning land to the market for sale, experts predict that land values and rents will fall back into rational alignment, initially reducing property prices. This will make it possible for first time buyers to buy a home without becoming tied to excessive debt repayments. Families will also be able to trade up to a larger property as it will cost so much less to do so.

Extra costs involved in developing homes and communities with more sustainable forms of materials, water, energy and waste management will produce fewer moans and groans from developers and house builders as households find that they can afford to invest much more money in the building itself.

An end to rollercoaster house prices also means an end to the difficulties of associated recessions and job losses which make it hard for the building trade to retain skilled craftsmen. In the era of peak oil, the best gift any individual of this generation is likely to be able to make to his or her children, will not be the extended loan. It will be

the proof of not having used natural resources entirely selfishly. Passing on a home which is part of a truly 'zero carbon' community may be just the proof that tomorrow's children will be looking for.

Thanks to the United Nations, this radical transformation is within our grasp. It is not a new idea. Indeed Henry George outlined the virtues of a Single Land Tax in 1879, arguing in *Progress and Poverty* that we should let productive workers, businesses and those who invest their earnings, keep the full reward of their efforts. A tax on land is the fairest of all, he argued, since only community, public services and infrastructure give land value. Current territorial battles do suggest that he is right. Whatever resource the land we so fleetingly inhabit has to offer, it must allow for the positive transformation of the surrounding community. If, as is often the case, it doesn't, our presence will be perceived as a form of monopoly and theft of that resource. This will be resisted, because it is not just.

The One Land Tax is not yet a reality and loud objections are inevitable. Individuals sitting on large tracts of vacant land will need to adjust, as will full-time property speculators, high rolling tax evaders, money-lenders, and businesses who have historically monopolised resource rich lands. It will be especially hard for chancellors to relinquish the power to raise further taxes beyond the One Land Tax.

But this is the UN's 2020 vision - a world in which the tax system is entirely transparent. You pay only one tax - a sum based on the share you have of land, based on the benefits of living in your location. You will know exactly how much you are paying into the public purse in a given year and you will, therefore, be able to make a rational judgement on whether you are getting good value for this from the services you receive and the employment opportunities you enjoy. If you don't get value, you will vote for change or get involved with local decision making in order to bring about change.

In this future scenario the right to own a home remains as strong as ever - in fact 100% home ownership will be achievable in a much shorter time. Advocates of the tax say that we will have increasing, rather than diminishing, disposable earned income. An adult life shackled to ever growing debt repayments will no longer seem inevitable. Every additional pair of hands - every new child - will be welcomed as an asset rather than costed as a burden. Education and healthcare will be available to children from Nigeria to Siberia, and people will find they can achieve a respected place in society through learning, personal initiative and leadership rather than the old habit of stealing value from others.

We are, as from today, all in the [same boat](#). Nobody should be left behind. This is the future to which the UN, today, propelled us. A hopeful vision where we are no longer alone in this world.

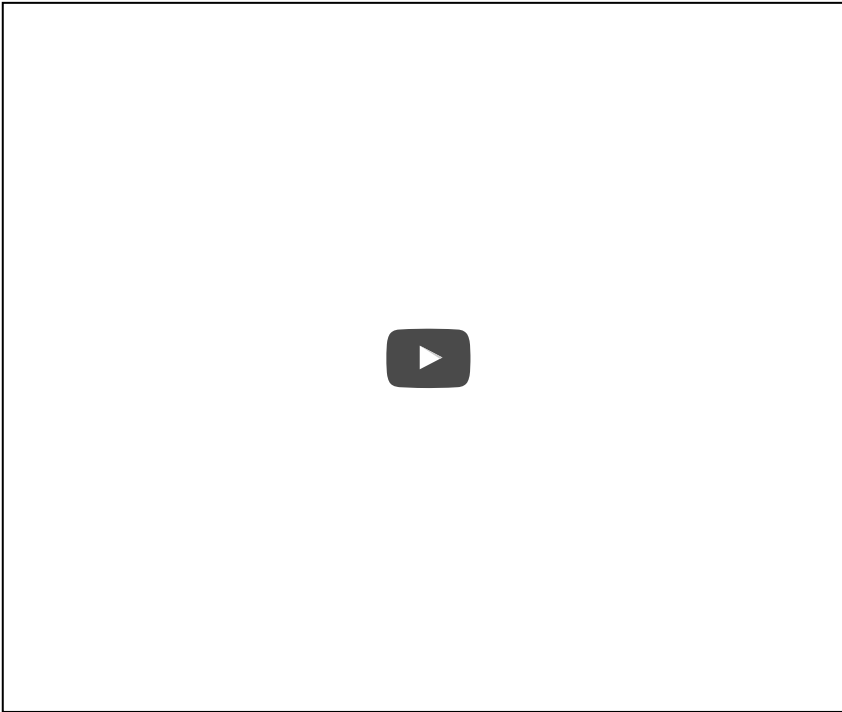
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Essential Reading:

The Great Hunger - Ireland 1845 - 1849 by Cecil Woodham-Smith
Histories of the Hanged by David Anderson

Related Viewing:



Video: E.F. Schumacher on Land Speculation, 1977

Interesting Idea:

Sun Yat-Sen (China 1866-1925) had an elegant solution which ought to balance the needs of the individual and the community:

- 1) Let individuals put a value on the land they treat as their 'own'
- 2) Let the local community % tax this declared value
- 3) Let the community/state retain the option to buy the land off the individual at the declared value

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