

4. A normative framing for fair and sustainable Resource Politics

Resource Politics looks at who controls and uses nature in which way. The answers are complex and full of contradictions. Institutional structures, power, knowledge, scale and time are important underlying factors. Equally important are human agency (with conflicting perspectives) and the interactions between political strategies of competing groups and actors. There are three important fundamental principles that together can help to create *Resource Equity*:

Ecological equity: There are risk and tipping points when it comes to how much pressure our planet can tolerate without harming humanity's wellbeing. These need to be respected at all levels (from local to global) in their interconnectedness to safeguard the wealth and the resilience capacities of ecosystems for present and future generations.

Social equity: People need nature, biodiversity and nature's reproductive capacity to survive. In order to protect human rights and fulfil the basic needs and wellbeing of every human a very different distribution of resource access, control and use (between countries and people, ages, gender, generations etc.) is needed. The equitable way to use water, forests, knowledge, seeds, information, to name just a few examples, is to ensure that one person's use of those resources does not restrict anybody else's potential to use them, or even deplete the resources themselves. That implies fair use of everything that does not belong to only one person. It's about respect for the principle «one person – one share», especially with regard to the global commons. To achieve this requires trust and strong social relationships within communities and between individuals.

Democracy: Everybody who is or will be potentially affected by a certain decision needs to be part of the decision-making process. Gender, age, race, class, origin, sexual orientation, bodily and mental (dis)ability must not determine whether or not we have the power to decide. However, it is not merely a set of useful tools and procedures for participation that forms the basis of democracy. Real democracy sets a much higher bar and includes a full realization of human and peoples' rights (including their material base), equity and justice.

All of these three principles are closely interlinked and interact with each other. To really respect all three principles of Resource Equity is quite challenging in practice.

For example: full participation at the local level does not necessarily lead to decisions that respect global planetary boundaries. And participation alone – if performed within highly unequal power relations – is never enough. What is being proposed here instead is to take these three principles into account when searching for solutions and to set out an enabling policy frame at every level of decision-making.

There is an infinite number of possible visions for a better future. Actually spelling them out is extremely challenging. Once put on paper, they will always be vulnerable because they can never be complete. But sometimes it can help to dream a little. Just imagine the principles described above were actually being taken seriously – what kind of world would we live in? What would one possible vision of the future look like?

A Message from the Future: Welcome to the Fair Future Forum 2044...

2044: Today the world is close to fully phasing out fossil fuels (including those for synthetic fertilizers) and the positive effects have already been experienced without major social disruptions. No new coal or nuclear power plants have been built in the last 25 years and the massive deployment of decentralized and off-grid renewable energy systems – as well as clean water and sanitation – has greatly improved the livelihoods of poor rural and urban communities around the world.

The vast number of successful bi- and multilateral fair and sustainable raw material partnerships prepared the ground for the UN Resource Convention that is now successful in its 10th year of implementation. All major regional and global territorial and resource conflicts have been solved peacefully.

Organic small and medium farmers around the world secure the human right to food. Since pesticides are hardly used anymore bee populations have doubled. Land reforms which respect communal land use have secured land rights for small farmers. Women and men have equal access to productive resources and share productive and reproductive work equitably across gender and age. National agricultural extension services provide farmers with knowledge that combines traditional production practices and a variety of non-patented seeds with the latest scientific knowledge of compost management to safeguard soil quality.

Due to modern dietary education, the consumption patterns of the global middle class have changed dramatically. People eat meat only once or twice a week while nearly half of the population of North America and Europe turned to vegetarianism – and is a lot healthier today. Those animal populations consumed by humans are linked to the surface area they can be fed by. This fostered regional and local economic cycles in all parts of the world and reduced pressure on land. There is no global market for animal feed anymore. In addition, modern transport, education and cultural infrastructure have greatly increased the quality of life in many rural areas.

Modern cities today provide free public transport for everybody, reducing the absolute number of privately owned cars in cities by 90% compared to 2014. The global consensus to create a closed-loop, zero-waste economy has greatly lifted recovery rates of minerals and metals, creating a great number of new jobs in urban mining and recycling in the world's mega cities.

Fresh water – not too long ago considered one of our scarcest resources and potential source of conflict and war – is nowadays a major source of cooperation amongst watershed communities, including across national borders. It is hard to imagine that our widespread public-commons water companies were once considered strange beasts.

Already in the second decade of this century we saw a new trend: global deforestation rates slowed steadily until 2025 when they reached zero. Today the natural forest cover of our planet is increasing again, and even more importantly: forest peoples' rights are secured. Monocultures are hard to find today. More than 10% of all ecosystems are protected – thus exceeding the ambitious targets of the UNCBD convention signed in 1992 – and the race for even higher targets is on. The new diversity can even be witnessed in cities across the globe: urban gardening is a mass movement, (trans)forming industrial landscapes, societies and cultures.

The internet has connected everything to everyone. A new technology infrastructure has overcome the divide between consumer and producer. Prosumerism prevails and has limited the power of markets. Peer to peer networks (communication amongst equals) are the backbone of an ever growing non-profit sector. Capitalism as we know it is challenged to its core. Care work is recognized for what it is: the precondition of the human capacity to work.