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Sent: Friday, July 5, 2024 4:11 AM
To: Jenna Kay; Amy Koski; Sylvia Ciborowski; Dana Hellman; tlunsford@parametrix.com; Nicole Metildi; Ben Duncan; Harrison Husting
Subject: Criminalizing ecocide and policy ideas

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Pella Thiel: "Criminalizing Ecocide: The Rights of Nature" | The Great Simplification
https://youtu.be/JgRlgKHvKCE?si=llgKNsCw_SSwrvvy

Here is a summary of the key points from the video:

Summary of Ecocide Criminalization:

- Pella Thiel, an ecologist and activist, is working to have "ecocide" recognized as a 5th crime against peace at the International Criminal Court. Ecocide refers to the extensive damage or destruction of ecosystems.
- Ecocide law would make it a criminal offense for individuals (e.g. corporate executives) to make decisions that risk severe, widespread, or long-term environmental damage. This shifts the risk landscape for such decisions.
- Ecocide law is seen as a way to protect nature's rights and shift societal values, norms and behaviors away from an anthropocentric, resource extraction mindset. It builds on the growing "rights of nature" legal framework.
- Ecocide law is gaining momentum, with Belgium and the EU taking steps to incorporate it. Thiel believes it could be formally proposed to the ICC within 5 years.

Policy Ideas:

- Enshrine the "rights of nature" into local laws and regulations, giving natural ecosystems legal standing and representation. This could apply to rivers, forests, wildlife habitats, etc.
- Incentivize and require regenerative, nature-based development practices that enhance, rather than degrade, local ecosystems. This could include green infrastructure, urban forestry, etc.
- Limit expansion into greenfield sites and instead focus growth within the existing urban area through infill and redevelopment. Protect critical natural lands from development.
- Empower community members and stakeholders (including nature's representatives) to have a strong voice in land use decisions that impact the local environment.
- Align economic development strategies with environmental stewardship, favoring industries and businesses that operate in harmony with natural systems.
- Educate the public and decision-makers on the intrinsic value of healthy, functioning ecosystems and the need to shift away from an exploitative mindset.

Whatever we do to the Earth, we ultimately do to ourselves, because we are an integral part of nature. That should be the guiding principle behind any policies or actions we take.

Building on that, here are some additional overarching policy ideas:

1. **Adopt an Ecocentric Worldview:** Shift the fundamental mindset from an anthropocentric view that sees nature as a resource to be exploited, to an ecocentric view that recognizes humans as part of the interconnected web of life. Enshrine this worldview in the city's planning documents and decision-making frameworks.
2. **Establish Ecosystem Health as the Primary Metric:** Rather than solely focusing on economic growth and development, make the health and resilience of local ecosystems the primary metric for evaluating the success of the city's growth management strategies. Develop robust ecological monitoring programs to track key indicators.
3. **Empower Indigenous Stewardship:** Partner closely with local Indigenous communities to learn from their traditional ecological knowledge and incorporate their values and practices of environmental stewardship into land use policies and management decisions.
4. **Promote Regenerative Land Use:** Incentivize and require development practices that actively regenerate natural systems, such as urban agriculture, agroforestry, habitat restoration, and green infrastructure. Disincentivize extractive, damaging land uses.
5. **Close the Loop on Resource Flows:** Shift towards a circular economy model that minimizes waste and pollution, and ensures that resources are reused and recycled rather than discarded. This could include municipal composting, water recycling, and sustainable material flows.
6. **Cultivate Environmental Citizenship:** Invest in public education, engagement, and empowerment programs that foster a deep sense of environmental stewardship and responsibility among all residents. Encourage community-led initiatives that care for local ecosystems.
7. **Adaptive and Participatory Governance:** Establish flexible, iterative governance structures that can adapt to emerging environmental challenges. Ensure meaningful public participation, with a strong voice for marginalized communities and nature's representatives, in all planning and decision-making processes.

The overarching vision should be to transform Vancouver into a thriving, regenerative city that is in harmony with the natural world, recognizing that the health of the human community is inextricably linked to the health of the broader ecological community. This systemic, ecocentric approach is essential for a sustainable future.