

Land tenure and ecological restoration

The next few readings explore issues of land tenure and ecological restoration in China and Europe.

2.16 Watch “Loess Plateau.” (5:14)

<p>Loess Plateau</p> 
<p>Liu, John D. “Loess Plateau,” video, 5:14, posted by GreenTV to YouTube on June 20, 2011. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wc9_6TrUMsk (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wc9_6TrUMsk)</p>

In 2015, the Global Sustainable Development Goals were adopted by the United Nations and the Paris Agreement on climate change. The Global SD Goals recognize Indigenous rights and the role of commons, both for preserving cultural diversity, reducing poverty and hunger, creating political stability and addressing climate change. Both also recognize legal protection of common lands as central to implementing the agreements.

While advancing community and commoners legal rights is an important front in the struggle, the actual restoration of degraded lands and eco-systems is also a big challenge. The Lessons of the Loess Plateau is a compelling documentary on the largest ecological restoration ever undertaken (an area the size of Belgium) on the Loess plateau in north central China. The Loess Plateau is known as Huangtu Plateau, 黄土高原 (Huángtǔ gāoyuán) in Chinese. Loess means loose, a description of the friable yellow earth. This first clip introduces the dramatic transformation in peoples’ livelihoods and quality of life through ecological restoration and regenerative agriculture.



Figures 2.2a and 2.2b. The Lessons of the Loess Plateau.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8QUSIJ80n50> (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8QUSIJ80n50>)

© 2007 Environmental Education Media Project (EEMP). Left: degradation prior to 1994 Loess Plateau Watershed Rehabilitation Project efforts to restore the environment, right, ten years later. Reproduced by permission from John Liu.

2.17 Watch “The Lessons of the Loess Plateau 3/6” (9:12)

	<p>The Lessons of the Loess Plateau 3/6</p> 	
<p>Liu, John D. “The Lessons of the Loess Plateau 3/6,” video, 9:12, posted by EarthsHopeChannel to YouTube on February 6, 2009. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FkzKAYJc_Q8 (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FkzKAYJc_Q8)</p>		

Segment three from “The Lessons of the Loess Plateau” introduces the multi-level nature of this undertaking, the critical role of planning, the role of the state, and the strong emphasis on community education and participation. Note the crucial parts that land tenure and property rights reform play in achieving transformational impacts. Give yourself time to reflect on these clips. Notice the relationship between the landscape and regime level factors that motivated this major investment. Also, note the role of land tenure reform in achieving such remarkable results.

2.18 Read “Terre de Liens.” (12 minutes)


Rioufol, Véronique and Sjoerd Wartena. “Terre de Liens: Removing Land From the Commodity Market

and Enabling Organic and Peasant Farmers to Settle,” in “Access to Land for Community Connected Farming: Seven Case Studies from the UK, Germany, Romania, France, Lithuania, and Italy,” eds. Véronique Rioufol and Neil Ravenscroft, November 2011. http://www.agter.org/bdf/_docs/tdl_fs_2012_case-study-series_pt.pdf (http://www.agter.org/bdf/_docs/tdl_fs_2012_case-study-series_pt.pdf)

In this reading our exploration of the de-commodification of land for food and ecological restoration segues from China to Europe. As part of a larger collection of case studies in the European Union, Véronique Rioufol and Sjoerd Wartena introduce us to the French movement Terre de liens. In just five years, the movement has made significant progress towards freeing land from the commodity market so that it can be preserved or transitioned into sustainable, ecologically grown food for more localized markets. The foregoing examples reveal the strategic importance of the how these communities and movements own land and how rights to land use are defined and protected.

This becomes even more important as we struggle to contain and reverse the impacts of climate breakdown on land. Land ownership, purposes, and uses play a central role in both reducing emissions and drawing down carbon from the atmosphere. Therefore, we want to end this unit by re-visiting an important and positive book: Drawdown: The Most Comprehensive Plan Ever Proposed to Reverse Global Warming.

2.19 Watch “Drawdown: The World’s First Comprehensive Plan to Reverse Global Warming,” from minute 12:36 to 36:55 (~25 minutes).

<p>Drawdown: The World’s First Comprehensive Plan to Rever...</p> 
<p>Reinvent Media. “Drawdown: The World’s First Comprehensive Plan to Reverse Global Warming,” video, 1:01:35, posted by the creator to YouTube on August 2, 2017. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dLNfR_Litlo (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dLNfR_Litlo)</p>

In this presentation, Paul Hawken, the founder of the Drawdown project, provides a brief review of the 80 solutions to reducing emissions and drawing down carbon from the atmosphere. Nine of the eighty solutions have to do with land use. In the food category, another ten solutions depend on land-based approaches to growing chemical free food in ways that restore land fertility and draw down greenhouse gases (GHG) from the atmosphere. If we took up these nineteen existing solutions, GHG impacts would decline by 30 percent over the next 30 years. In the food and energy modules you will be introduced to

proven and emerging solutions. For now, while reflecting on the alternatives we have introduced for land tenure and ownership, browse the land use solution section of the Drawdown website.

2.20 Browse the Drawdown website. (~15 minutes)

Project Drawdown. "Land Use: Sector Summary," accessed December 31, 2018.

<http://www.drawdown.org/solutions/land-use> (<http://www.drawdown.org/solutions/land-use>)

Perhaps you did not expect delving into the ownership, tenure, and use of land would have such scope and so many implications. Land will show up in many other ways in the modules ahead. Land and food is obvious. Some renewable energy such as solar and wind farm technologies must be located on land. Financing, as you will see, almost always requires land as a source of security. In the finance module you will see how financial institutions have packaged up sub-prime, high-risk household mortgages securities for sale in the financial markets. In 2008 this practice had created a huge speculative bubble. It burst, banks crashed and then were bailed out by taxpayers. Low-income and middle-class home-owners were less fortunate, 5 million of whom lost their homes.

Likewise, even social and health care make uses of land in ways that are restorative to people's well-being. Moreover, the urban commons movement, not covered in this introductory course, inevitably involves reclaiming and designing space for public use.