



Liberals, Property and the Environment

15 - 27.10.2017
Theodor-Heuss-Academy
Gummersbach
Germany

source: wikipedia.org

Programme overview

The 12-day workshop at the International Academy for Leadership will begin with an overview of the most important environmental challenges we currently face and an assessment of the efficacy of efforts to meet them. We will also look at the policies and measures liberals have promoted over the past years, their visibility, consistency, efficacy and success, if any.

Following these initial steps we will take a closer look at property rights and how their strengthening might produce viable answers to some or many of the problems identified in the initial part of the workshop. Many liberals claim that more attention to using property rights-based solutions might help solve a range of environmental problems without endangering or undermining liberal visions of society.

For liberals private property is a defining characteristic of a free society. It is difficult to see how freedom can survive without it. Indeed, private property is the most important factor that distinguishes a liberal society from socialist or communist ideals. It assumes self-ownership and accepts that the right to own the things we need ensures peace, a livelihood and, with time, prosperity.

Yet many of our contemporaries believe otherwise. This applies to a considerable number of people, politicians, scientists, journalists and NGO activists who are opinion leaders and who campaign for better management of our natural resources and a cleaner environment.

The workshop will examine the following assumptions, that in the fields of

politics property promotes stability and constrains the power of government;

ethics property is legitimate because everyone is entitled to the fruits of his/her labour;

psychology property enhances the individual's sense of identity and self-esteem;

economics property is the most efficient means of producing wealth;

environmental policy property promotes the judicious, sparing and, hence, sustainable use of natural resources and, at the same time allows individuals and groups to be held accountable for their actions in a more effective and meaningful manner.

Unfortunately, however, early liberal thinkers all too often took private property and its benefits for granted. They assumed that they were so self-evident and hence did not warrant explanation. This was part of the reason why socialists were so successful in slandering and undermining the institution of

private property. Only recently – and, in particular, after the velvet revolution – have policy makers rediscovered the importance of private property. The liberal economist Hernando de Soto even goes as far as to claim that unprecedented development would occur if informal property in so-called third world countries could be formalised.

In a third step the workshop will explore how the concept of private property might conceivably be a solution to problems as diverse as pollution, land degradation, overfishing, deforestation, species extinction and waste. Might the enforcement of robust property rights conceivably help in efforts to protect the environment, rehabilitate areas that have suffered considerable damage, and promote the aim of achieving sustainability in the use of natural resources? Would the poor and disadvantaged sections of society stand to benefit? To what extent would successful “green” and “blue” growth policies benefit from efforts to apply and foster a property rights-based approach to economic growth and well-being? Could such an approach produce circularity, zero emissions and zero waste – as many proponents of blue growth would wish? Would it be sensible to go for such aims? These and many other questions will be dealt with here

The excursions

A half-day and a 3-day excursion will be devoted to looking at and analysing initiatives and innovations in Germany that might be seen as examples of applying liberal policies to environmental problems. The focus will be on political and private sector initiatives relevant to the subject matter of the workshop. The shorter excursion will take participants to Cologne, the longer one to Hamburg or Stuttgart

Final sessions

The last two days will focus on examples of successful application of property rights-based solutions for environmental problems and their relevance for countries represented at the workshop. Can these examples be applied elsewhere and under what conditions? We will then try to develop a series of liberal guidelines for tackling environmental problems that a) all participants can identify with and b) demonstrates how an economic system based on liberal principles can best cope with the challenges mentioned during part 1.

Opportunities and objectives

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- explore liberal thinking and policies related to environmental issues and

- their resolution
- study the effects that robust private property rights have – or might conceivably have – in dealing with environmental degradation
- look at the policy implications of trying to apply liberal ideas to environmental issues and the imperatives that derive therefrom.

The overall objective is to develop a set of liberal policy guidelines that incorporate the ideas that emanate from discussions during the workshop.

Facilitators



Dr Stefan Melnik

Born in Oldham, UK, married, two daughters. Universities: Cambridge, UK (history, specialising in economic and social history); Bochum, Germany (communication, psychology and political science). As an independent consultant he designs and runs various programmes for executives [communication, coalition-building, negotiation, conflict resolution]. Furthermore, he designs and directs workshops on human rights (with a focus on property and minority rights), the market economy, environmental issues, basics of liberalism, secularism and education reform. He has authored and/or edited books and articles on many of the aforesaid subjects.

Target group

Participants of this seminar must have a good grasp of modern liberalism (there will be no introduction to this topic!) and be involved in policy development, implementation or in the assessment of policy. It is essential that participants consider themselves to be liberals and identify with liberal causes. Participants must also have a background working for political parties, think tanks or the media. A background in business, economics or in environmental management would be most useful.



Dr Emmanuel Martin

Dr Martin holds a PhD in economics from the University of Aix-en-Provence. A French citizen, he has worked with French think tanks such as ALEPS, but also with the Cato Institute in Washington DC. He has been the editor of the Atlas Economic Research Foundation francophone platform, LibreAfrique.org and the director of the Institute for Economic Studies-Europe, which runs pro-liberty seminars across the old continent. He is an expert with Geopolitical Information Service and his Opeds are republished in various publications such as Les Échos in France, L'Écho in Belgium, Libération in Morocco, Il Foglio in Italy or the Wall Street Journal - Europe. He is now the executive director of the École de la Liberté, a freedom-oriented MOOC programme in France.

The Foundation

We, the **Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom**, promote individual liberty, free and open societies and free markets in Germany and throughout the world. To us freedom is the guiding principle in policy making. We believe that free and open societies are the only societies that allow human beings to decide for themselves what is best, to develop their full potential and to pursue their dreams. This is what we mean when we claim to value human dignity. And it is freedom that produces prosperity. Together with our counterparts – who all share a similar set of values – we support initiatives in Germany and abroad that serve to enhance respect for the rule of law, private property and human rights, that foster tolerance and that strengthen economic freedom rights and democracy.

The programmes of the Foundation's International Academy for Leadership (IAF) form an integral part of our international work and offer Liberals from all parts of the world opportunities to engage in dialogue, an exchange of ideas, networking and mutual cooperation. We aim to inspire.



Venue

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