

Funding the Future

What's a better term for rentier?

Published: January 13, 2026, 1:47 pm

I thought this [thread](#) fascinating and wondered if people here had any better suggestions to make since addressing what is technically described as rentierism is key to building our economic future. The problem is, very few understand the term.

Ben Southwood @bswud

I think economics could do with a better term than 'rent seeking', which is very confusing to non economists who are unfamiliar with the eccentric sense of 'rent' being used. What better term could we use?

1:03 PM · Nov 25, 2022 · Twitter for iPhone

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Ben Southwood @bswud · 18h
Replying to @bswud
This one is the best so far

Matt Dobra @mattdobra · 18h
Replying to @bswud
Bhagwati proposed "directly unproductive profit-seeking" back in the day.

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Ben Southwood @bswud · 18h
This is my second favourite

Jeremy Horpedahl @jmhorp · 18h
Replying to @bswud
Strong case for Privilege Seeking
@Matt_d_Mitchell @davidrhenderson

Ben Southwood @bswud · 14h
Here's a good idea of what we're looking for

John Fingleton @JohnFingleton1 · 14h
Replying to @bswud
John Kay defined it as effort that goes into appropriating wealth created by others, rather than creating it oneself.

In a week where a fogged brain has prevented very little real thinking, this has been one of the few issues that has really engaged me. Rentierism has disguised itself as if it is normal business activity. It is not even close to it, but because it has been able to sow confusion as to its nature and purpose it has become the de facto norm for those seeking to maximise their profits in our economy, leaving the rest of us dispossessed. That is true both politically and economically since the acceptance of rentierism is now normal amongst mainstream political parties. That is why we need to name it, but the aim is not to shame it: the aim should be to eradicate the abuse it creates.

And please accept my apologies if moderation is slow: I am feeling better than I was but it is taking time and rest to get over this bout.