

Funding the Future

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The frequent commentator on this blog who uses the name Schofield [suggested this morning](#), in response [to today's video](#), that:

Not being willing to pay tax is a form of “sociocide” a rupturing of the social fabric because a government’s ability to create money from nothing in order to spend on reserves for the payment settlement system, deal with emergencies, and optimise the economy requires a return flow in the form of taxation in order to avoid triggering strong inflationary pressures. Rich people who try to avoid paying an equitable share of taxes should therefore be called “sociocidal”!

I did some quick research and noted that the term "sociocide" is not new. The philosopher and sociologist [Johan Galtung](#) suggested it [in the 1980s](#) when explaining that there are many ways to destroy a society.

Violence is the obvious one.

Genocide is another, with its focus on the elimination of peoples.

He suggested that sociocide meant the destruction of the social fabric that makes collective life possible.

The question is, might the abuse of tax systems by the wealthy belong in that category? That idea seems worth thinking about for a number of reasons.

First, tax is not just about money. It is the way in which we agree to make our societies work. It is the mechanism by which we share resources so that the things we need - health, education, infrastructure, security, care - are available to all. Tax is the glue that binds us into reciprocal obligations, a recognition that our well-being depends upon one another. I once described this as '[The Joy of Tax](#)'.

Second, when the wealthy avoid tax, however they achieve that goal, they opt out of that shared responsibility. They are not just protecting “their” money. They are deliberately undermining the system of reciprocity upon which the possibility of society depends. They intentionally weaken the capacity of governments to act in the public interest. They increase inequality by shifting the obligation to pay tax onto those who

cannot avoid it. And they spread cynicism, signalling that obligations only apply to the powerless. "Only the little people pay tax", as [Leona Helmsley once said](#).

Third, the result is corrosive. Communities are fragmented. Trust in institutions collapses. Collective services are starved of resources by those politicians who think tax pays for them. And resentment flourishes as people see that the rules apply only to some, while the wealthy make themselves exceptions. In that sense, tax avoidance eats away at the core of social life.

That is why I think it might be appropriate to call tax avoidance by the wealthy sociocidal. It is not merely a technical problem or a matter of loopholes and supposedly clever lawyers and accountants who abuse them. It is a deliberate assault on the bonds that hold us together.

If we are to rebuild societies fit for the future, naming this behaviour for what it is can be important. Those who undermine the common good in the pursuit of private gain are not innovators or wealth-creators. Nor are they astute financial planners. They are simply destroying the very possibility of society itself. And if that is not sociocide, I am not sure what is.