



COMMONsense

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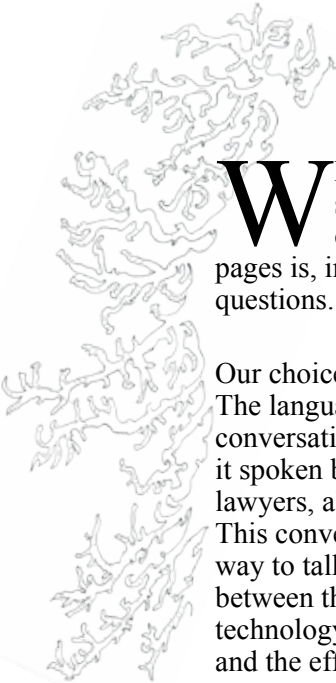
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COMMONSENSE

There once were lanes in nature's freedom dropt,
There once were paths that every valley wound,—
Inclosure came, and every path was stopt ;
Each tyrant fix'd his sign where paths were found,
To hint a trespass now who cross'd the ground :
Justice is made to speak as they command ;
The high road now must be each stinted bound :
—Inclosure, thou'rt a curse upon the land,
And tasteless was the wretch who thy existence
plann'd.

JOHN CLARE.



What do we mean when we talk about ‘common sense’? And what do we understand by ‘the commons’? Everything you will find in these pages is, in some way, a response to one or both of these questions.

Our choice of theme started with the second question. The language of the commons has become a place where conversations from different worlds converge: you hear it spoken by artists and anti-globalisation activists, IP lawyers, allotment holders and computer programmers. This convergence can make sense when it gives us a way to talk about the common ground, here in Sheffield, between the activities of Access Space, recycling technology and promoting Free, Open Source Software, and the efforts of Grow Sheffield to build community around food growing. But are there times when using the same words disguises different meanings and intentions? How do we apply some common sense to all this?

The imaginary commoners of Garrett Hardin’s 1968 article ‘The Tragedy of the Commons’ (an excerpt from which appears on p.7), have no common sense at all. Their individualism leads to social breakdown, and only the introduction of individual property rights can save them from themselves. Despite its disregard for actual examples, Hardin’s article has been hugely influential. Yet the words of Bodmin commoner Graham Lawrence (p.31) illustrate how, in practice, such a breakdown is most likely when external rules and incentives interfere with local self-management.

Today, enthusiasts for the Creative Commons turn the tables – arguing (as Jay Cousins does on p.26) for the economic and social benefits of abandoning proprietary rights, just as Hardin did for the benefits of enclosure. Yet might this risk leaving out something important? Another theme which emerges here is the commons as made up of our relationships, with other people (Wayne Hill, p.22) and with particular places (Jennifer Lee, p.24-5).

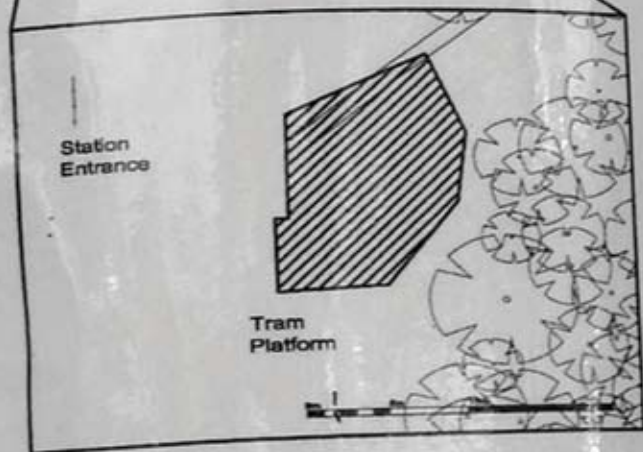
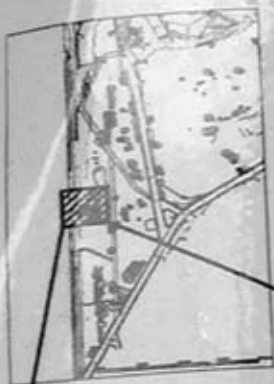
The philosopher Sajay Samuel has spoken of the ‘sensus communis’, the ‘common sense’ which fits together the perceptions of our eyes, ears and so on, and which was once treated as the starting point for all knowledge. This, he says, was displaced by a mathematical model of reality, in which the evidence of the senses is mistrusted – and in which the starting point for knowledge becomes calculation, rather than attention to our surroundings. With this loss of common sense goes, also, a loss of the sense of proportionality. Perhaps this can provide a clue in trying to connect the two questions with which we started?

It has been a pleasure trying to fit these pieces of COMMONSense together. Thank you to everyone who contributed their piece, and to those who allowed us to reuse their work. Particular thanks to Anne-Marie Culhane whose creative direction, working together with Jo Salter, has brought the magazine to life – and to Jake Harries at Access Space for commissioning and publishing it. Finally, for me, the shape of this project owes a great deal to conversations with Anthony McCann, who always challenges me to think more carefully, and with Hannah York, who made so many of the connections.

Dougald Hine



THE PUBLIC HAVE PERMISSION TO ENTER
THIS LAND ON FOOT FOR RECREATION BUT
THIS PERMISSION MAY BE WITHDRAWN AT
ANY TIME



The tragedy of the commons develops in this way. Picture a pasture open to all. It is to be expected that each herdsman will try to keep as many cattle as possible on the commons. Such an arrangement may work reasonably satisfactorily for centuries because tribal wars, poaching, and disease keep the numbers of both man and beast well below the carrying capacity of the land. Finally, however, comes the day of reckoning, that is, the day when the long-desired goal of social stability becomes a reality. At this point, the inherent logic of the commons remorselessly generates tragedy.

As a rational being, each herdsman seeks to maximize his gain. Explicitly or implicitly, more or less consciously, he asks, “What is the utility to me of adding one more animal to my herd?” This utility has one negative and one positive component.

1 The positive component is a function of the increment of one animal. Since the herdsman receives all the proceeds from the sale of the additional animal, the positive utility is nearly +1.

2 The negative component is a function of the additional overgrazing created by one more animal. Since, however, the effects of overgrazing are shared by all the herdsmen, the negative utility for any particular decision-making herdsman is only a fraction of -1.

Adding together the component partial utilities, the rational herdsman concludes that the only sensible course for him to pursue is to add another animal to his herd. And another; and another. . . . But this is the conclusion reached by each and every rational herdsman sharing a commons. Therein is the tragedy. Each man is locked into a system that compels him to increase his herd without limit—in a world that is limited. Ruin is the destination toward which all men rush, each pursuing his own best interest in a society that believes in the freedom of the commons. Freedom in a commons brings ruin to all.

from Garrett Hardin, ‘The Tragedy of the Commons’ (1968)

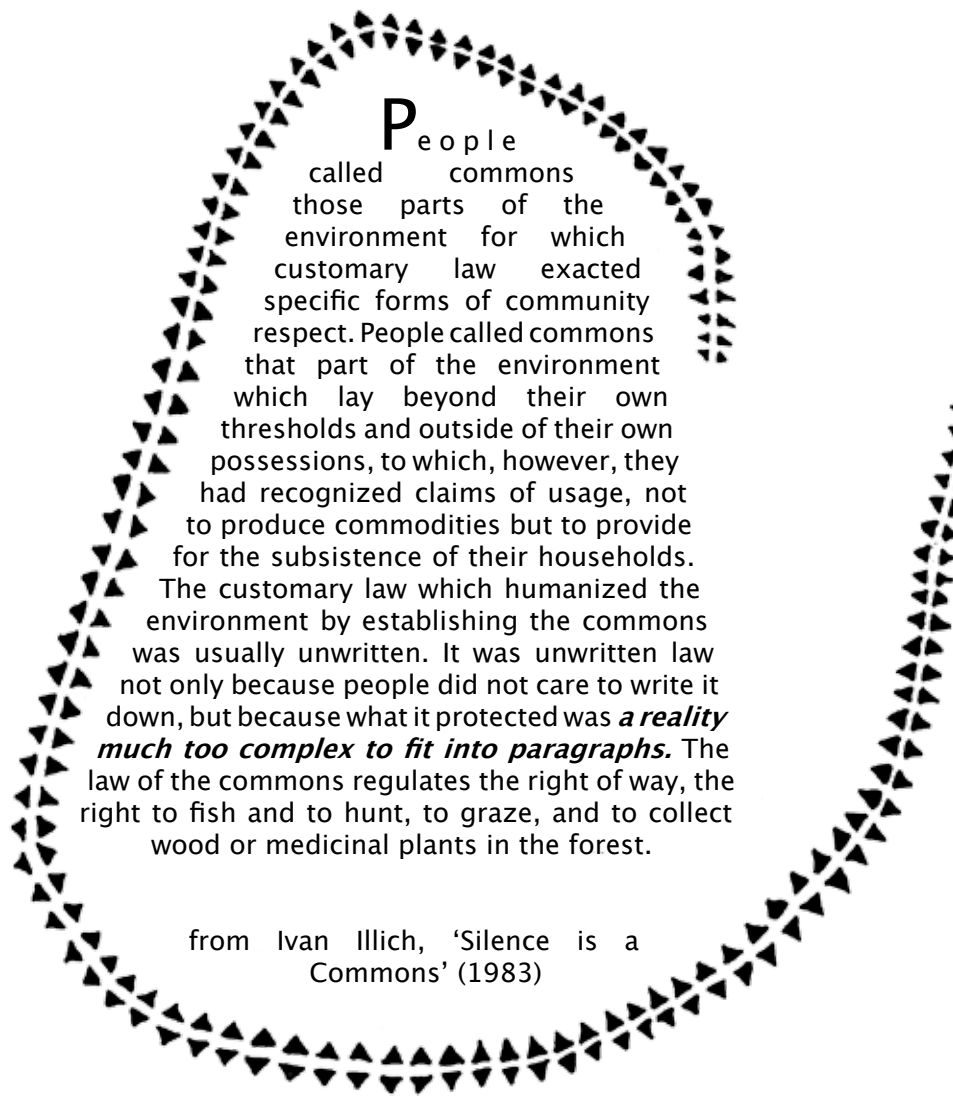
Commonplace – Common land

Commonplace books emerged in the 15th Century with the arrival of cheap paper. They gather together useful scraps of knowledge, though they are not scrapbooks in the sense of memory-keepers. Rather they are future facing: a place to hold or build thoughts that carry potential. They make no claim to linearity, with quotes, ideas, facts and sketches appearing in the order that they are discovered. Commonplace books tend to generate an accidental jumble – something like the mental rush of middle of the night thoughts, but with the difference that they're held in place. Everyone should keep one.

One of the richest items in my own commonplace is the story of a vet who successfully campaigned to return a herd of Red Poll cattle onto some of the common grazing land that still exists in central Cambridge. They have a gorgeous deep reddy-brown coat, and keep the grass short and fertilised. They are butchered and marketed within a few miles, giving the city's omnivore children a chance to understand a little more about where (good) burgers come from. It strikes me that a city is a good scale on which to model thinking about how we might manage global collective resources in ways that are productive, sustainable and – in varied meanings of the word – beautiful.

Joe Smith





People called commons those parts of the environment for which customary law exacted specific forms of community respect. People called commons that part of the environment which lay beyond their own thresholds and outside of their own possessions, to which, however, they had recognized claims of usage, not to produce commodities but to provide for the subsistence of their households. The customary law which humanized the environment by establishing the commons was usually unwritten. It was unwritten law not only because people did not care to write it down, but because what it protected was *a reality much too complex to fit into paragraphs*. The law of the commons regulates the right of way, the right to fish and to hunt, to graze, and to collect wood or medicinal plants in the forest.

from Ivan Illich, 'Silence is a Commons' (1983)

.....*A reality much too complex to fit into paragraphs....*(Illich)

Assume a common subject to rights to graze 100 sheep, where the register shows that the rights are divided equally between farms A and B, each dominant tenement having the right to graze 50 sheep attached to it. The owner of Farm A dies and the farm is divided equally between that owner's two children. Two new dominant tenements A1 and A2 come into being and the operation of Part 1 of the Act will ensure that to each is attached the right to graze 25 sheep. Farm B is sold to a developer who in turn sells it off in 50 plots of equal size, each with a house built on it. Each of those plots will have the right to graze one sheep. The register will show a common subject to two separate rights to graze sheep attached to the two 'historic' dominant tenements, A and B. The register would in each case identify the rights and identify the land to which they were attached. At the conclusion of the events described above, the owners of the new dominant tenements formerly comprised in farms A and B will be able to trace their entitlement to exercise their rights of common by reference to the historic dominant tenements subsisting in the register. For example, each owner of a house built on farm B will be able to show that they occupy 1/50th part of the area of the historic dominant tenement B, and (applying the rules of pro rata apportionment) therefore each has attached to it 1/50th of the rights recorded as attached to historic dominant tenement B. It will be possible to show that each owner is entitled to exercise the rights by virtue of the attachment of the rights to their house (the attachment will be shown in the commons register), and ownership of the house (which may be registered in the register of title to land kept by the Land Registry).

from Commons Act 2006, Explanatory Note 57



Corn Dollies,
performance action

The first thing you've got to remember about sharing a common is that you can fall out with everybody, but it gets you nowhere, in the end. So you find some way of all living together. If the man with 100 has 150 out there in the summer and there's lots of grass and it wants to be eaten out, then nobody complains – because probably some of the others use it in the winter as holding ground to feed cattle. You have a few arguments and a few up and downs, but the bottom line is, you need them to keep an eye on your stock over there, and I need to keep an eye on stock that is over here – so, it works.

Graham Lawrence, Bodmin Moor Commoner,
October 2008

Where the Wild Wind

I am
a turning bubble but a million times bigger,
a mystery of mountains and valleys and water,

I am
hanging in the sky with the moon and the weather,
watching the stars and space stretching forever,

I am
your backyard, your garden, your future,
your promise, your playground, your treasure,

I am
where the wild wind rushes over,
yours to live on, yours to look after

Matt Black

Commons is what we hold in trust. It is what we gather from one generation and pass down to the next.

It isn't that the commons shouldn't be owned, it is that it can't be owned. No more than you could own a tradition, a custom or a good mood.

The commons is what makes a place unique, even if that place isn't anywhere but is always everywhere, like the internet. You can't predict what will come out of the commons, nor when you'll need to fall back on its wisdom and resources.

You can't ignore the commons. Plans which pretend the commons doesn't exist are boring and sterile. When we're lucky these plans have cracks, in which the commons seeds and grows. But this only happens with luck or effort.

We need to invest in the commons. Change is coming, and times could be hard. I want to face that future hand in hand with other people. We're going to need to face that future hand in hand with each other.

Commons is everywhere a hand is in a hand. Commons is what we hold in trust for each other.

Tom Stafford



Common Sense (Or lack of?)

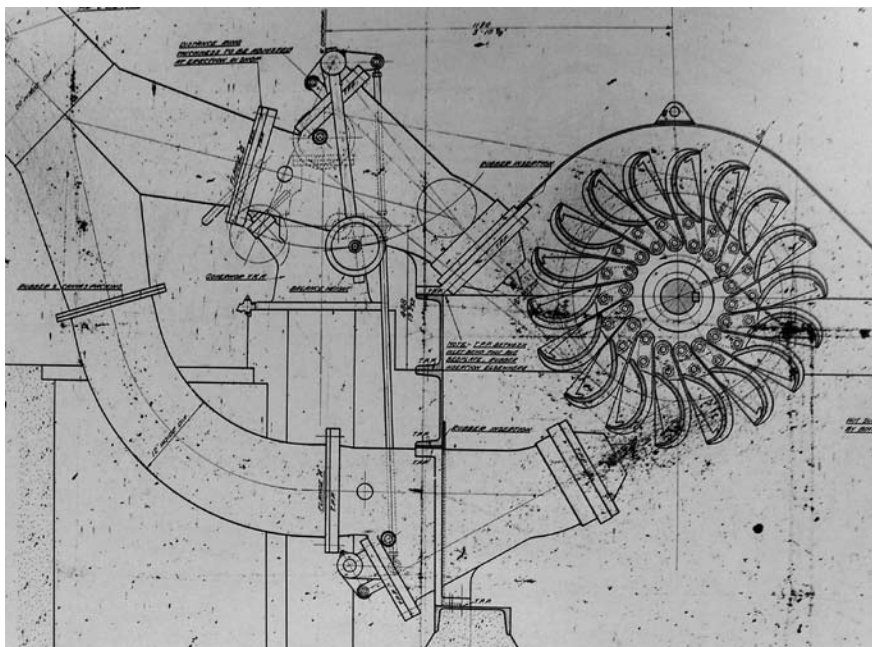
When assessing people's common sense what do we look at? Are they common, or do they have sense? Do the two go hand in hand?

Common sense is closely linked to free will. One is a product of the other. Free will is controlled by common sense, yet free will is controlled under an illusion of common sense. It becomes an exploitation of free will, endured by people who do not even realise the gift they have – those that look to society to offer them sense of a common nature.

Newspapers, Internet and media instruct us, and often replace our own common sense. Switch your lights off, preserve energy. Am I the only person that thinks this is somewhat patronising towards common sense? Of course switch off lights, of course preserve energy. That just makes sense, surely? I do wonder how many people waited for society to tell them that's what they should do. If I were to tell you that if you wrapped your hand in twenty pound notes and put it in a fire, that they would all turn to fifties, would you do it?

Common sense is intrinsic to everyone in any given situation. Sure, you'll get it wrong sometimes, but surely that's what life's about? Use it or lose it!

Tim Roche



plan for pelton water wheel, Trefriw Woollen Mill

Common Sense?

(In a café)

Mum I don't know what you see in him, Brenda. He's never around.

Brenda He works on an offshore oil rig, mum.

Mum Hmmm. "Absence makes the heart grow fonder," if you ask me.

Brenda Oh? And what did gran tell you when dad ran off with that librarian, again? "Out of sight, out of mind," wasn't it?

Mum (Sadly) Well, that was true – I did go out of my mind, Brenda.

Brenda I don't think that's what it means, mum... Anyway, I can't think why you've agreed to take dad back.

Mum He's promised to be faithful from now on.

Brenda Ha! I'll believe that when I see it. "You can't teach an old dog new tricks," you know.

Mum Excuse me, but my uncle took up playing the banjo at the age of 90. "You're never too old to learn," he used to say.

(A neighbour, Mrs Gossip, enters the café)

Mrs Gossip Oh! Mrs D – and Brenda too. How nice! Mind if I join you? (Sits down)

Brenda Oh, er, yes – the more the merrier...

Mum (As she leaves) Must dash – two's company, three's a crowd, as they say!

COMMONSense

It was just common sense, she said,
like when you reach out for someone who's hurt,
your magic human touch, your ET factor.
Only us humans, we're ET+.

But he wanted it alienated, enclosed,
dissected, weighed up and registered
with the patent office, exchanged
for derivatives and common futures.

And then they got together, made love
with their common senses, broken fences,
out of wedlock, possessing each other's
private property—the © u n t and the © o c k .

Robin Vaughan-Williams



Mind the gap

Last week I met up with an old school-friend. She's going travelling and I had some bits and pieces to pass on, but it was also a chance to catch up – and the first thing she did was tell me about her “bizarre” morning.

She'd parked her car at a friend's house near the train station. He – the friend, that is – had then begun a conversation which went something like this:

“Given our mutual attraction, we should have sex. My brother agrees.”

Unsurprisingly, she was rather disconcerted. Thinking about it, I realised I had had a couple of similar experiences, though an accurate distillation would have been: “Clearly we love each other, so we should get married. All our mutual friends agree.” Not identical, but seemingly representative of a gap in male logic.

Common sense – from the perspective of my friend and me, and potentially women in general – would suggest that the opening hypothesis be tested before the conclusion is stated, leaving aside the fact that the conclusions do not follow directly from the hypothesis.

Does it not make better sense to begin tentatively, and allow space for tactical retreat? Something simple like, “You know I've always found you very attractive...” would surely be a better place to start.

So there it is. This sample of mankind may not be representative, but it does make me question the existence of one ‘common sense’.

Iona Hine



La Tempesta,
Giorgione, 1507

Most people converted to new ideas come through a personal contact, mostly someone they fancy.

Commons

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Here is vacant space to fill.

You and she or he came close,

Then this opened up between you.

You know all the rooms now, upstairs and down.

The fire, the insides of the pantry and the fridge,
the walls you leaned against when her or his beauty
was so near there wasn't any wall

in what your words were doing or your laughter.

Some of what she or he believed in

or what was outrageously funny

is still here, though she or he is gone.

This open space in the darkness

is an invisible house you hold in common

with the strangers living up and down your road.

You open the door, let each other happen to

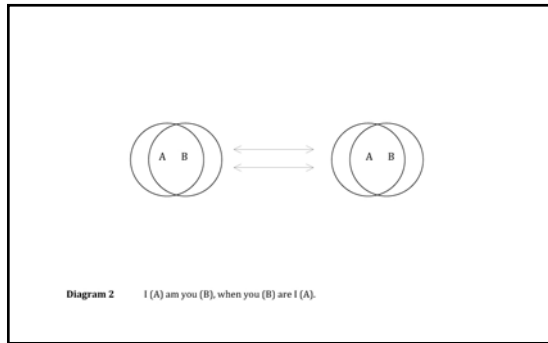
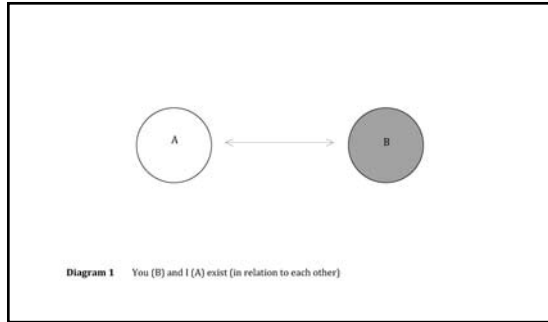
fill and leave its unspoken corners

the way the light slops safely night by night

over the serious face that's always in the moon.

This commons is an intimate layer underneath many others. It's undeveloped open space. It's one component of happiness in a serious world (a rich, productive melancholy) to let the common tide weigh comfortably down on then leave alone for a while. This sideways movement doesn't always make sense, but in unspoken awareness and kindness we pick things up, and new ways emerge of working freely together.

Wayne Hill



Signe Frederiksen

Education and CommonSense

*S*weet are the uses of adversity,
Which like a toad, ugly and venomous,
Wears yet a precious jewel in its head;
And this our life, exempt from public haunt,
Finds tongues in trees, books in the
running brooks,
Sermons in the stones, and good in
everything.

– William Shakespeare, *As You Like It*,
Act 2, Scene 1.

In the depths of a crisis in my academic career, I sought refuge in something I loved: foraging for food, especially bilberries.

To gather, of course, itself means both 'to collect' and 'to understand'.

So we gather. – Jay Griffiths, *Wild*, p. 25.

And so, over the years, I have studied how bilberries affect the life of people who live on the edge of heath land. And I have been educated. I have gathered stories as I have collected bilberries, foraging across the terrain. Never taking more than I need, sharing in a bounty that is there for all yet will be lost with the turn of each season.

*Ideas not followed through can be taken
up later. A record not made is lost for
good.*

– Nature (editorial)

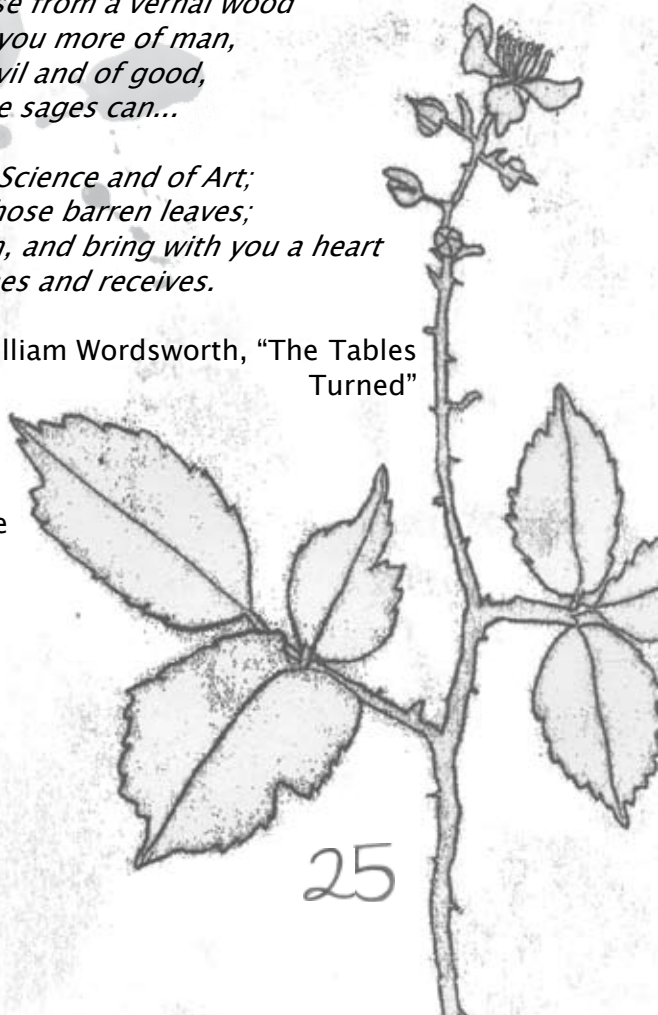
Bilberries are the idea; Records are the
stories. The stories tell of the importance
of access to the commons: not just for
picking berries, not just for feeling part of
nature, but also for learning.

*One impulse from a vernal wood
May teach you more of man,
Of moral evil and of good,
Than all the sages can...*

*Enough of Science and of Art;
Close up those barren leaves;
Come forth, and bring with you a heart
That watches and receives.*

– William Wordsworth, “The Tables
Turned”

Jennifer Lee



Intellectual Property is theft

Let us not deceive ourselves any longer: all forms of property and property rights are about control and power. They change the rules of the world, and make us play zero sum games.

The fencing off and privatising of the “Commons” represents nothing less than theft from the community, it prevents the community from utilising a resource that belongs to us all. It artificially conveys rights to the privileged and the powerful, enabling them to control the flow of resources. This applies to the Intellectual as well as the Physical Commons.

Ideas are not ours to possess, they are not our solitary creations. They’re built on foundations of years of prior thought, innovation and perception. An idea is just waiting to be spotted: just because there is a cost attached to looking for it, doesn’t mean you have the right to it when you stumble across it. Proprietary rights prevent social advancement. Imagine if we had IP before the wheel, the spade and the plough.

If restricting access to ideas and knowledge results in death, what right have we to put profit over people?

Freedom is a word touted by the Capitalist ecosystem; without commons access, we are not free.

Jay Cousins

The target market

by STOWELL & LAWLER





The University of Sheffield



Information Commons



Construction starts here in May 2005 on the University's new learning resources centre. Bringing together library and computing facilities, the new centre will create an integrated learning environment for students, providing 1,000 high-quality study spaces, along with social and teaching space.

FMD

Facilities Management Services

Development & Strategy

Turner & Townsend

Construction and Management Consultants

www.turner-townsend.com

Main Contractor



The University Library

RMJM services

A/H

CICS Corporate Information and Computing Services

WhitbyBird structural engineer

RMJM architects

STEPHENSON

Wanting To Be Free

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I sent a message to a photographer about a picture I wanted to re-use.

Yes, I was more than welcome to it, she said. In fact, I needn't have asked, because the CC symbol meant it was fair game. And she sent me some links to more information about the Creative Commons.

It's interesting, I replied, after thanking her for the links. Even when I see a picture with the CC logo, my reflex is still to ask before using it - which reminds me of the "Free Shop" at a social centre I was involved with, and how uncomfortable it could make people to take something without paying. I guess it shows how deeply engrained conventions of property can be.

Her one line email came back: Information wants to be free!

Now, I knew the quote - Stewart Brand is a long-term hobby of mine - but I'd never been so struck by its strangeness. How can information have desires? And was there a connection between this and the substitution of legal code for customs of sharing embedded in social interaction? Shouldn't a commons be held together by relationships, human freedoms, your desires and mine?

Dougald Hine

As a proponent of Free Culture, I try to come up with ways of alleviating any negative economic consequences for producers caused by the effective absence of copyright under copyleft. I'm quite happy that I have a good grasp of how this works for fine art, for film, for television, for computer games and for popular music. But books are another matter.

Michael Moorcock is a literary hero of mine. He writes, of an earlier stage in his career, "*I had another child to support, but by then I was selling very well and had royalties and foreign rights coming in. This enabled me to devote the kind of time I came to devote to the Pyle books which were something my conscience demanded I write.*"

The rights by which Moorcock describes supporting his family and his art do not exist under copyleft. So would Moorcock not have been able to feed his children and create the art that he was driven to make, without Cory Doctorow-style NonCommercial restrictions?

I will ignore the question of whether he "should" be able to or not. As far as I am concerned it would have been a loss to the collective imagination if those books had not been produced. I support the end, I'm just talking about the means.

No single solution can replicate the effects of copyright (no single application of copyright replicates the effects of copyright...) but I think that its benefits can be approximated. The question I need to work on is whether that approximation can replace copyright economically speaking, and thereby generate a cultural superstructure of the kind that Moorcock's copyright did and does.

Rob Myers

10 out of 300

To increase the food production after the war, they brought in the headage system to pay for production of beef and lamb. What they did was, they paid so much per head and some of them, only a few, maybe 10 out of 300 on Bodmin Moor decided they were going to keep way in excess of what they were legally allowed to keep. They were using the common as land rather than their using their own land and using the common or manorial waste as extra or surplus. They were farming the common and not the farms adjacent to the common and because we were in the position we needed the food, everyone turned a blind eye to it.

Of course, the more they kept, the more they got paid, the bigger they got and the more they grabbed - and the more they drove the little ones out and all the rest of it. And this went on and on and on, and some people were totally out of control with it. They just did what they wanted and everyone else was saying, you're eating everything on the common. [But they just said,] it's up to you - if you haven't got enough cattle on it, put more out there.

The problem was the government were paying out the money. It was their responsibility to be morally right with it.

Graham Lawrence, Bodmin Moor Commoner,
October 2008



31

Tribe

Our tribe is on the move again.

Crossing the plains in our silver Polos.

Gathering the root crops in

from the organic section at Tesco's.

Contemporary, but we don't need labels.

Angry, but with nowhere to go.

Matt Black



‘Sitting’
Alex Wolcott

Quotidian:

Common but not commonplace. The memorable nature of the everyday. Memory walking down a street and turning a corner. Memory buzzing in a hard disk. Ubiquitous, the dirt in a site, the fog in a liminal zone, that which is thickened through repetition.

Milk, computers, onions, computers, pyjamas, computers, carpal tunnel syndrome, computers, accidents, computers, sex, computers, bread, computers, night, computers, class, computers, skin, computers, love, computers, money, computers, headaches, computers, police, computers, buses, computers, bicycle, computers, radio, computers, horoscopes, computers, matrimonials, computers, funerals, computers, biscuits, computers, conversations, computers, silences, computers.

The quotidian is that which makes a journal turn, over time, into a history, because it induces the search for patterns and meanings in an otherwise tangled mass of time, in memes iterated beyond reasonable limits. Routine, yet random, the quotidian nature of anything demands fleeting moments of lucid engagement with the real world, which now includes within it the world that is forged every time any fingers do a qwerty dance on a keyboard. The quotidian is a measure of all things, rare and commonplace.

from Raqs Media Collective, 'A Concise Lexicon of / for the Digital Commons'



'Pigeon'
Theo Parmakis



'Common Sense'
Trevor Tomlin

Dynamics of Enclosure

Enclosing characters of social change don't happen by way of humungous invisible hands that sweep us into an inevitable further stage of commodifying existence. Enclosure happens when people interact with people, when attitudes have consequences, as they only ever do, when the smallest rhetorical layerings of absolutism, domination, oppression, coercion, and violence are anointed with stealth and blessed with the silent pull of gravity on account of their banal humanity.

What in the long term will be a pretty big deal is often in the short term left unnoticed. Such ways of thinking are not better or Darwinistically superior. For those of us who are uneasy about them they can be simply different, but the consequences of that difference are where the possibilities of critique and transformation lie. Whether or not such ideas become more influential depends on politics, on how energetic, persuasive, or coercive people become with regard to their propagation, with how acquiescent or participatory we become with regard to their acceptance.

Enclosure tends to be a process in which we ourselves often engage and participate, often regardless of or on account of our oppositional rhetoric. As such, our greatest contribution in our encounters with the dynamics of enclosure may well be to consider that there is nothing more political, personal, or relevant than the character of our own attitude.

Anthony McCann

COMMONSense: A Platonic Reflection

Socrates: ‘...when one man takes on another for one need and another for another need, and, since many things are needed, many men gather in one settlement as partners and helpers, to this common settlement we give the name city.’ (Republic 369b–c).

The city admits no-one’s self-sufficiency for it is a web of relationships in time and space. This city educates. Its citizens look beyond themselves to the Good. Through discourse they ascend by way of bodily and worldly signs to the beyond. They disseminate through the city the goodness they have met.

This politics admits no autarchy for the city exceeds itself. It constantly receives itself anew from beyond. Its life in common is therefore festal (Laws 528a–b) with citizens strung ‘together on a thread of song and dance’ (653c). The citizens become god-like because they share in goodness and because they are the cause of goodness in others (cp. Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I Q.103 art. 4 resp.).

The only route to this common goodness is through the city and its mediations. But the only way to found a true city is for it to exceed itself, passing from politics to praise of the divine which offers itself for the partaking.

The Revd Dr Matthew Bullimore



Brian Glover, Market Trader, The Moor, Sheffield

the future is not bright for the traders, Deutsche Bank, who now own The Moor, dont want them as they are unsightly, but the traders have nowhere else to go...

Deutsche Bank, committed to our clients

A Passion to Privatise

Deutsche Bank



Kennington

What is marked on today's maps as Kennington Park was once Kennington Common: the crossing point of two ancient roads into London, the last common before the centres of power, and a site charged with historical and political significance.

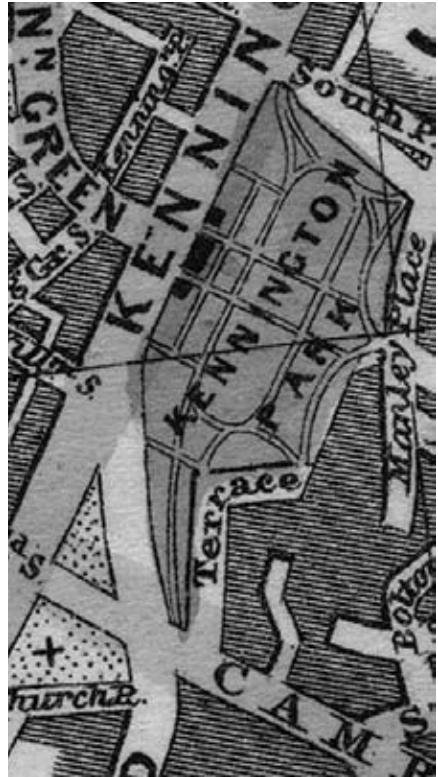
History was never stronger here than in April 1848, when the common became the gathering point for the Chartist monster rally, the high point of a great popular movement for democracy and social justice. Within a few years of this event, which had shaken the British establishment, the common was enclosed and transformed into a Royal Park.

This story and the whole past and present of the ex-common has been an ongoing fascination for the artist Stefan Szczelkun. Over the years, this has led to pamphlets, photographs and guided walks of the area, and much of this material is now collected in a DVD to be released in 2009.

Perhaps the most interesting suggestion hinted at in Stefan's work concerns the symbolic reconfiguration of the place in its transformation from common to park. A series of anonymous monuments placed at apparently random locations seem to steer the attention away from those sites which, by their history, would have the most powerful emotional resonance. When we talk about enclosure in political and economic terms, we may miss the effect it has on the meaning of a place to people whose relationship to it cannot be summed up in legal clauses.

* 'Kennington Park – an active archive' by Stefan Szczelkun will be available on DVD in 2009

Dougald Hine



“Observing the changes on the map, the modifications of historical use and interpretation of the space only begins to describe what the enclosure of Kennington Park ex-common meant. This continual process of privatisation and commodification of public space was not only about spatial control. The enclosure was as much an attack on the interpretation of that space; the ability of the people who used the park to collectively imagine new uses for it and stories about it.”

Saul Albert

ABCDEF
GHIJKLM
NOPQRS
TREEUV
WXYZ

Alec Finlay



WHERE THE TRACKS USED TO BE

Ten thousand shades
of tender green
beside the Langley road

remember when there was dancing
and Bellinis and tealights

they would only lay
the flat clay roof
at the full of the moon

then darkness
with echoes remaining

fingerprints
of coal dust
on the stripped door

straight out of the sauna
we roll through new snow

the timeless
and hungry arms
of emptiness

in her dreams she always slept
in a different bed

he knew
all his wishes
would never come true

white lilac is pompom
and poodle and first communion

hand-made soap
wrapped in paisley
on the wicker platter

if my love were jam
it would be fig and ginger

moonseeds —
pine cones tumbling
out of the sky

everyone has the same cold
that goes then comes back

at death
she might
let go

I imagine your favourite jumper —
green cashmere, tudor-sleeved

nose to tail
the lurcher pup
wiggles free

a mother skips with her child
where the tracks used to be

wild daffodils —
smaller, softer
more golden

at sunset
all we caught was rain.

a nijuin renga in summer
Garden Station, Langley,
18 June, 2006

participants

Linda France (master)
Subhadassi (master)
Tim Foxall



nijuuin renga schema

	<i>spring</i>	<i>autumn</i>	<i>summer</i>	<i>winter</i>
1	spring	autumn	summer	winter
2	spring	autumn	summer	winter
3	spring (○)	autumn (○)	summer (○)	winter ○
4	no season	no season	no season	no season
5	summer	no season	winter	summer
6	summer	summer	winter	summer
7	no season	summer	no season	no season
8	love	no season	love	love
9	love	no season	love	love
10	no season	love	no season	no season
11	autumn	love	no season	no season
12	autumn	no season	autumn	autumn
13	autumn ○	no season ○	autumn ○	autumn (○)
14	no season	winter	autumn	autumn
15	winter	winter	no season	no season
16	winter	no season	no season	no season
17	no season	no season	no season	no season
18	spring	spring	spring	spring
19	spring	spring	spring	spring
20	spring	spring	spring	spring

platform projects^{pp}

writing sheet for the renga platform,
Alec Finlay & Martin Lucas (2004)
published by platform projects, 2004
www.renga-platform.co.uk

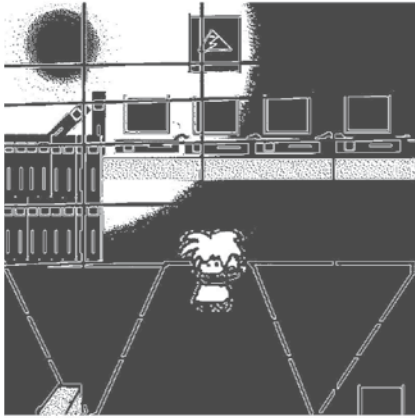




The image which I have chosen to reflect the theme of 'Commonsense' and Creative Commons is a photo of me as 'Amy Swinehouse' at Sheffield Gay Pride 2006. From the towering 2-foot high teatowel-wrapped beehive wig on a conical frame to the pieces of black electrical tape I used to make the heavy eyeliner at the corners of her eyes, to the absurd 'Mr. Blobby' parody of a 1950's polkadot dress, my 'Amy Swino' is a calculated exercise in clowning created to reclaim the highest echelons of 'Trash Celebrity' for the masses. Even though Amy is highly valued and adored as a latter-day goddess (or even martyr) to the drugs-addled underbelly of the Gay and wider communities, the REAL Amy herself is at once an absurd parody of what she might have been, strewn in the metaphorical gutter and at one with the stars, with her comfort-blanket of her outrageous wig (Which she uses as a spare depository for her spare bedding and kitchen-linen) and her surrealistic combined eyebrow-weaves and eyeliner which make her begin to resemble Mr. Spock's daughter...
....This is Entertainment, Captain, but Not As We Know It...

Dan J. J. Kahn

[HTTP://SPACERS.LOWTECH.ORG/SPACED_OUT](http://spacers.lowtech.org/spaced_out)



HELLO. I'W DOWN.
PROFESSIONAL EXITF.



SPACED_OUT IS A WORLD VERY
LIKE ACCESS SPACE.



AND I'LL BE INTRODUCING YOU
TO SPACED_OUT.

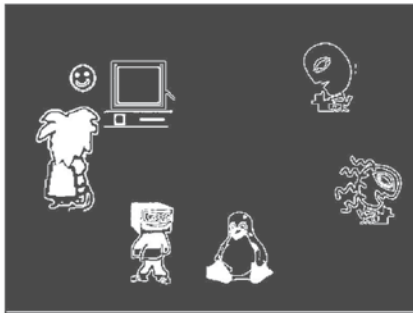


LET'S GO FOR A TRIP IN THE
WHITE SPIN MACHINE!



BUT VERY DIFFERENT.

SPACED_OUT DOES NOT EXIST WITHIN 'REALITY'.



**IT
WAS
ITS OWN
CONSENSUS
REALITY.**



**THE PEOPLE, PLACES AND OBJECTS
ARE ALL DESIGNED BY ANYONE WHO
VIEWS THE SITE AND WANTS TO
CONTRIBUTE.**

**ITS EASY TO UPLOAD
IMAGES USING THE FORM ON
THE SPACED_OUT PAGE!**

**YOU CAN ALSO EMAIL WE
IDEAS FOR EVENTS IN THE
'PLOT'. SUCH AS THERE
IS ONE...**



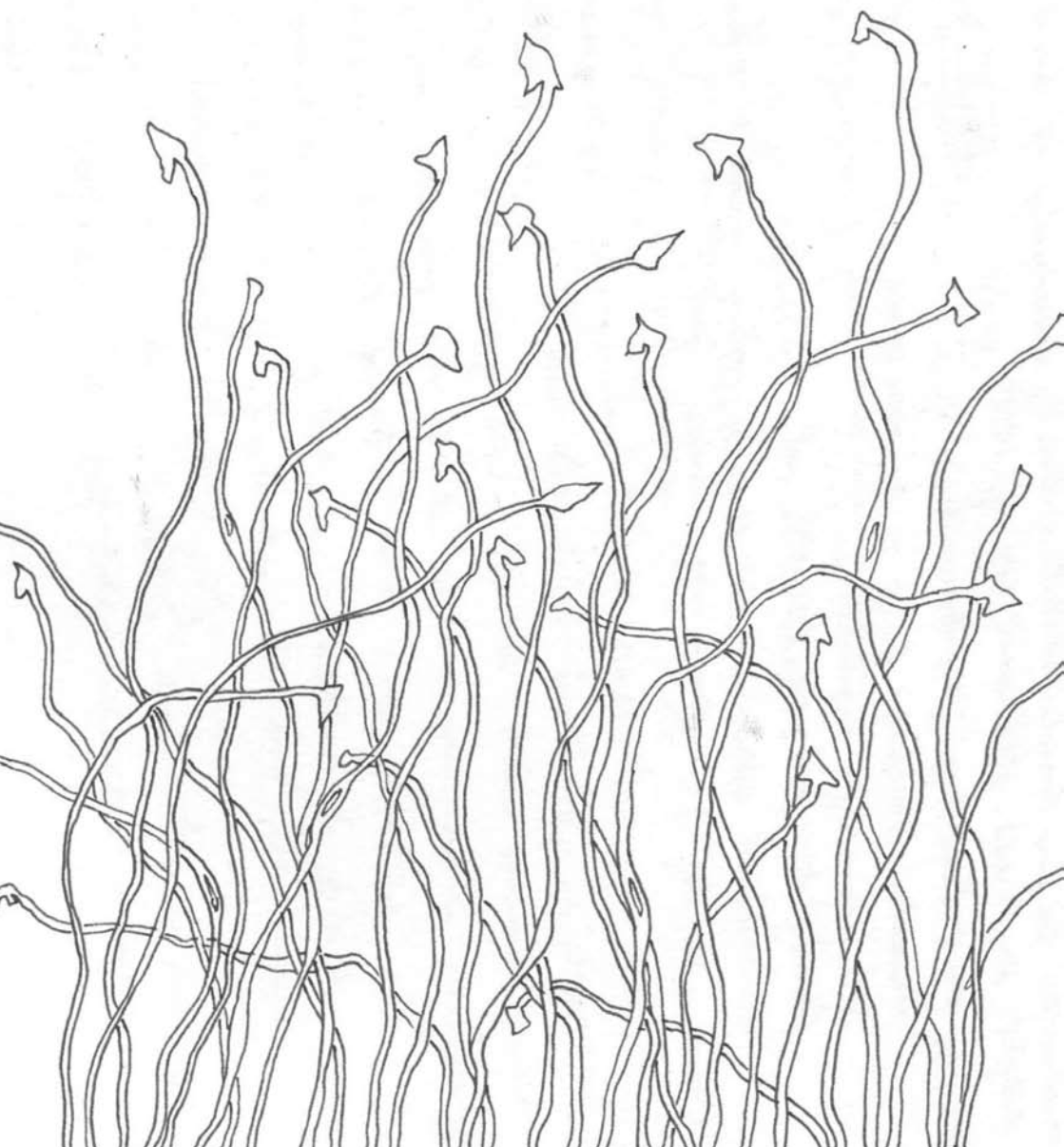
**WHICH IS HANDY
WHEN YOU'VE
BEEN EXILED
FROM YOUR OWN
REALITY.
STGN.**



[HTTP://SPACERS.LOWTECH.ORG/SPACED_OUT](http://spacers.lowtech.org/spaced_out)



Harriet Lowe



Moving On

Whether we think about it or not we all live in the commons. The commons of the mind, of society, of environment – our engagement with one another is underpinned by it, and we are shaped by it. Not just us but the people before us and the people after us. It is the unspoken heritage.

And we must move on from it.

Implicit and oft-times invisible, the commons carries with it a definition of authority of action, of interaction, of unspoken guidelines of how we should be and say and do – and that shape is all too often crafted with the best of intentions, and leaves us a market of well-meaning that limits those who engage in it.

We must move on from it.

We must move on from it, move beyond its ground, and in doing so have it follow where we walk, changing with the new challenges and the new ideas and the new people who can benefit from it, and to be changed by those who may be harmed by it. The commons is for the people, but all too often when we find common ground we are in danger of dying by taking root there.

Colin Tate

Community land trusts (CLTs) form part of a long British tradition of seeking ways to protect the asset value of land for the benefit of the community, beginning in the 19th century with the work of the Chartist Land Company, Octavia Hill and John Ruskin to defend and preserve the ‘commons’ from the threat of complete enclosure. This work was taken up subsequently by Ebenezer Howard and the early Garden Cities movement, along with the co-operative housing movement from 1903 onwards. The practice died away after 1918 with the government’s preference for public land ownership, but over the past decade, community land ownership has been revived as a practice in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland through ‘community buy-outs’.



In their modern form, CLTs have retained a clear and defined purpose. They exist to sustain community ownership, lock in land value and support community based housing and enterprise. In the context of escalating house prices in recent years, they can deliver affordable rural housing to local people on modest incomes by taking the land cost out of the development equation. In the context of urban regeneration, they provide a route for public assets to be transferred to local ownership, thereby engaging and involving the community with its valuable understanding of local needs and circumstances.

from ‘Community Land Trusts – A Practitioner’s Guide’

In 1991, four of us set up a challenge to landed power in Scotland. We did it because two thirds of private land was owned by just one thousand owners in literally a feudal dynamic. We created something called the Isle of Eigg Trust and we announced in a press conference in one of the poshest hotels in Edinburgh that we were going to attempt to buy the Isle of Eigg into community ownership.

The irony was that our worst fear was that we might actually succeed. Because if we had done, it would have been just us four people, and whether we wanted to or not, we would have been seen as the new Lairds.

What actually happened, between 1991 and 1997, is that we managed to effect a process of gradually stepping back and yet staying very deeply involved, helping to hold the situation. The community took it over. The community got Eigg into community land ownership in 1997, with the help of 10,000 donations from all over the world.

Today, we have the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 in place and two percent of Scottish land – more than a third of a million acres – is now in community control.

How did that come about? It wasn't us and the many others like us that did it. The deep forces of life are what did it – we just helped to hold things and to take our station.

Alastair McIntosh





ABUNDANCE Urban Fruit Harvesting

Sheffield is one big orchard with houses and factories in between. Each tree in the city has come from the knowing or unknowing act of an individual, often dead or long gone.

Abundance is a project that claims and celebrates this shared inheritance as well as teaching the growing skills needed to perpetuate the harvest. We harvest – through agreement, collaboration, reciprocation and permission where appropriate – in backyards, church grounds, hospital car parks, industrial estates, waste land, streets, scrub, derelict property, private businesses, public authority housing, parks, green spaces and distribute these private ‘resources’ publicly.

This is permissive scrumping. Scrumping itself was born out of the concept of waste, excess and glut, which Abundance tries more openly to point out and celebrate as bounty.

Abundance as a city-wide project has its own obsolescence built in. By focusing on this common resource, the aim is to encourage other groups to care for and plant their own trees and to distribute and share at street level with neighbours, friends and institutions on their doorstep.

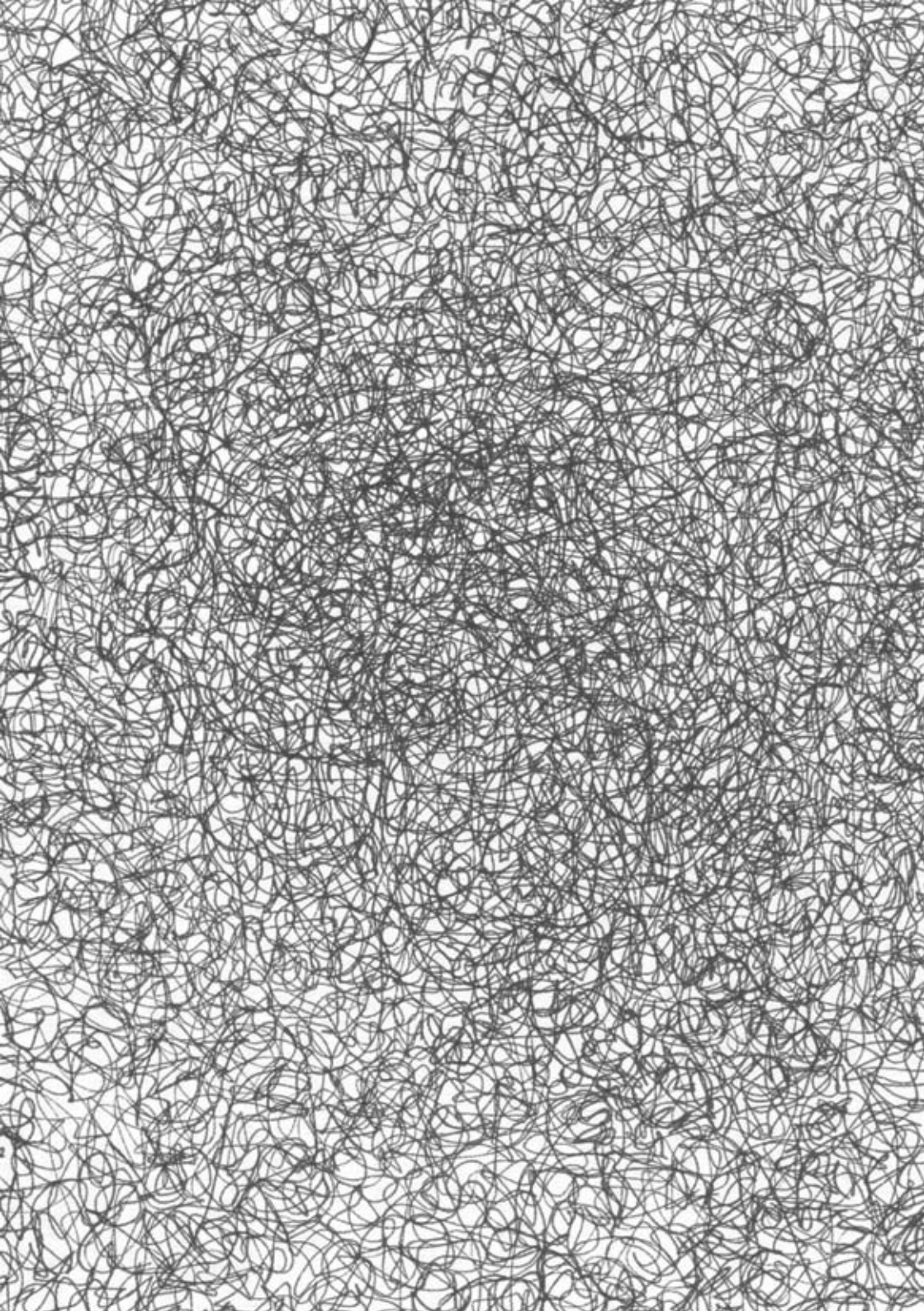
When 95 per cent of the fruit that we eat is imported, Abundance is one small step towards taking control of our own food and sustainability, together.

Anne-Marie Culhane

Spuds & Loops

Potatoes and sound loops: two of my favourite things, and cut from the same cloth. How so? Start with spuds. Raleigh didn't discover them – Peruvian farmers have been growing potatoes for millennia. The homogenised chips, crisps and 'product' we eat are one tiny genetic fibre. They've developed thousands of varieties, all the time experimenting in chacritas – their gardens – talking, testing, exchanging, cross-breeding. They've woven a tapestry of genetic diversity over the Andes. It's a living, breathing quilt a million miles from IP-protected superspuds owned by multinationals. In Monsanto-world, farmers are reduced to mindless labourers. And loops? A 21st century global colony of music-makers forage for sounds, recombining them endlessly. Coldcut call it an 'elaborate megamix' – a seething evolution that acknowledges its sources as it giggles at copyright. Loops leap from net to mix to dancefloor and back again: we're the landscape where they thrive or die. So? For us, it's about freedom to create; in Peru it has meant survival. Open source isn't new, then. It's always been about control. In the Andes, autonomy, creativity and survival are entwined threads. Our own cultural viability means heeding the spuds and loops, and binding our own threads together.

Dan Olnier





The fish that was yesterday miles away from the land was claimed by the landlord the moment it reached the shore. and so also were the birds of the air as soon as they flew over his land. The law made it so, because landlords were themselves the lawmakers, and it was a wonder that the poor man was allowed to breathe the air of heaven and drink from the mountain stream without having the factors and the whole of the country police pursuing him as a thief.

Skye crofter, speaking in 1884

Credits:

All illustrations by Anne-Marie Culhane. Design and layout Anne-Marie Culhane & Jo Salter (JAM design) www.amculhane.co.uk

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p.8 – Joe Smith, *Commonplace – Common Land*

p.9 – from Ivan Illich, 'Silence is a Commons', *The CoEvolution Quarterly* (1983)

p.10 – from the Commons Act 2006 (c.26), Explanatory Notes

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<http://bit.ly/cousins>

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p.29 – Dougald Hine, 'Wanting To Be Free'

p.30 – remixed from Rob Myers' blog post, 'Copyleft and Literary Genius' – <http://bit.ly/myers>

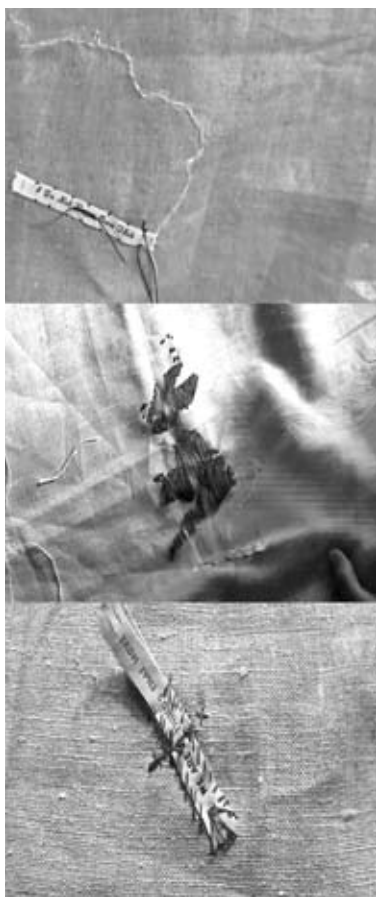
p.31. Graham Lawrence, Bodmin Moor Commoner, interviewed by Anne-Marie Culhane, October 2008

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p.33 – Alex Wolcott, 'Sitting'

- p.34 – from Raqs Media Collective, ‘A Concise Lexicon of / for the Digital Commons’ – <http://bit.ly/lexicon>
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- p.52 – ‘Community Land Trusts – a Practitioner’s Guide’ was produced by Community Finance Solutions, an initiative of the University of Salford – www.communitylandtrust.org.uk
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- p.54 – Anne-Marie Culhane, ‘Harvesting’
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- p.59 – Skye crofter speaking in 1884, from James Hunter, ‘The Making of the Crofting Community’ (1976)
- p.62 – Mappa mundi, Renata Tyszcuk, www.interdependenceday.co.uk

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mappa mundi, The Map Room, Royal Geographical Society, London.
The map tells common and uncommon stories about the world.
Renata Tyszczyk

Not so long ago, the only people who talked about “the commons” were historians. Today, the language of the commons is central to debates around intellectual property, environmental protection, and resistance to globalisation. These international debates find their echoes here in South Yorkshire – in the activities of Access Space, recycling waste technology and promoting Free, Open Source Software, or in Grow Sheffield’s efforts to build local food networks and seed city centre wasteland. Can talk of “the commons” help us find common ground between such projects? Does using the same words mean we’ve found a common language – or can it disguise different meanings and intentions?



Edited by Dougal Hine
Creative Direction Anne-Marie Culhane

Published by Access Space





COMMONsense

“People called commons that part of the environment which lay beyond their own thresholds and outside of their own possessions, to which, however, they had recognized claims of usage... the right of way, the right to fish and to hunt, to graze, and to collect wood or medicinal plants in the forest.” – Ivan Illich

“Just as the coming industrial revolution provided an excuse for the wealthy to enclose the commons grazing land, the current information age is providing an excuse for the publishers, music distributors, etc. to fence off access to our information commons.” – Howard Besser

Not so long ago, the only people who talked about “the commons” were historians. Today, the language of the commons is central to debates around intellectual property, environmental protection, and resistance to globalisation. These international debates find their echoes here in South Yorkshire – in the activities of Access Space, recycling waste technology and promoting Free, Open Source Software, or in Grow Sheffield’s efforts to build local food networks and seed city centre wasteland. Can talk of “the commons” help us find common ground between such projects? Does using the same words mean we’ve found a common language – or could it disguise different meanings and intentions?

These questions were our starting point. We invited people in Access Space and beyond to think about them and to send us their thoughts, poems, polemics, stories, photographs, cartoons and quotations. This magazine is the result of that invitation.



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