

Women's Congress for Future Generations Jan 9, 2014 Briefing Series

Ecological Economics and the Commons

Introduction to the Commons

<http://onthecommons.org/work/introduction-commons>

The commons is the essential form of wealth that we inherit or create together, and which must be shared in a sustainable and equitable way.

Ranging from water to biodiversity to the Internet to community organizations, the commons provides the foundation of our social, cultural, and economic life. To ensure a hopeful future for ourselves and coming generations, we must vigorously protect and promote the commons.

Our future depends on our commons and each of us as commoners. We all have a mutual responsibility to name, claim, protect and equitably manage what belongs to all of us for today and future generations. The framework underlying that system is discussed in greater detail on the website so you can learn how to understand and animate the commons in your own field.



<http://onthecommons.org/work/commons-framework>

Commons Principles

"A commons arises whenever a given community decides that it wishes to manage a resource in a collective manner, with a special regard for equitable access, use and sustainability. It is a social form that has long lived in the shadows of our market culture, but which is now on the rise." —David Bollier

Principles

- Without exception, we all belong to our community, and we each have an equal stake in what happens.
- We must recognize and repair the damage that has been done, and the inequities that have been created, by our current, market-based society.
- The things that belong to all of us must be named, claimed, defended, protected, and improved. We have a mutual responsibility to take care of these commons and pass them on to the next generation in better shape than we found them.
- We must honor our full humanity. We are not merely individuals and consumers—we are neighbors, community members, citizens, and experts on the places we live.
- We are surrounded by abundance and opportunity that the market does not recognize or value. We must see and claim this abundance for the benefit of all.
- Everyone should have the chance to participate in defining, restoring, creating, managing, leading, governing, and owning anything that is important to the future of the community.
- People most affected by critical decisions must be included in the process of making them.
- History, cultural distinctiveness and people's personal stories are important factors in setting goals and making decisions, as well as simply understanding our community.
- Sufficiency and resilience are the opposite of the folly of growth.

To create a commons based society people need more than exposure to new ideas; they need tangible ways of experiencing, practicing and living out these bright possibilities. To ensure the survival of the community and of our common assets, we must create new customs, understandings, systems, and structures.

Additional Resources:

How You Can Become A Commoner, Julie Ristau

<http://onthecommons.org/magazine/how-you-can-become-commoner>

Legal Structures for Protecting the Commons

<http://onthecommons.org/work/legal-structures-protecting-commons>

All That We Share: A Field Guide to the Commons

<http://onthecommons.org/all-that-we-share>

Capitalism 3.0, A guide to reclaiming the commons by Peter Barnes

http://capitalism3.com/files/Capitalism_3.0_Peter_Barnes.pdf