

URSP 3050
 Special Topics in
 Urban Studies 1

Weeks 10 & 11: Commoning

Chapter 5

Take Back Property: Commoning

Key Ideas

1. What do we mean by commons?
2. What's the property/commons connection?
3. Where does privatisation fit in all this?

COMMONS: A KEY CONCERN OF A COMMUNITY ECONOMY

What are commons? And what does it mean to make and share a commons? A commons is a property, a practice, or a knowledge that is shared by a community. Our survival depends on many different kinds of commons:

- biophysical commons like rocks, soil, sunlight, water and air, and plant and animal ecologies;
- cultural commons like language, a musical heritage, sacred symbols, and artworks;
- social commons like educational, health, and political systems; and
- knowledge commons like Indigenous ecological knowledge and scientific and technological advancements.

TAKE BACK PROPERTY 135

COMMONS IDENTI-KIT

ACCESS	USE	BENEFIT	CARE	RESPONSIBILITY	PROPERTY
Shared and wide	Negotiated by a community	Widely distributed to community members (and beyond)	Performed by community members	Assumed by community members	Any form of ownership (private, state, or open access)

Example: The Zanjera Commons

HK Example 1: Nam Chung
 HK Example 2: The 2017 Election
 HK Example 3: YouTube
 HK Example 4: Courses – Uni & Occupy

Key Ideas

1. What do we mean by commons?
2. **What's the property/commons connection?**
3. Where does privatisation fit in all this?

132 TAKE BACK PROPERTY

- *benefit* from property must be distributed to the community and possibly beyond,
- *care* for property must be performed by community members, and
- *responsibility* for property must be assumed by community members.

The question of who “owns” a commons is open. Commons can be created with any type of property—private property (that might be owned by an individual owner, a family, a corporation, or a collective), state-owned property, or open-access property. In other words, ownership of property is largely a legal matter and does not deter land or other resources from being managed as a commons.

TAKE BACK PROPERTY 135

COMMONS IDENTI-KIT

ACCESS	USE	BENEFIT	CARE	RESPONSIBILITY	PROPERTY
Shared and wide	Negotiated by a community	Widely distributed to community members (and beyond)	Performed by community members	Assumed by community members	Any form of ownership (private, state, or open access)

BUT this also means that all types property (including open access and state-owned property) can be ‘uncommoned’.

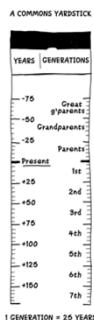
Key Ideas

1. What do we mean by commons?
2. What's the property/commons connection?
3. **Where does privatisation fit in all this?**

'Uncommoned' by
Privatising
or
Not managing

Ways of Commoning					
Access	Use	Benefit	Care	Responsibility	Ownership
Narrow	Restricted by owner	Private	Performed by owner or employee	Assumed by owner	Private individual Private collective State
Shared and wide	Negotiated by a community	Widely distributed to community and beyond	Performed by community members	Assumed by community	Private individual Private collective State Open access
Unrestricted	Open and unregulated	Finders, keepers	None	None	Open access State

'Uncommoned' by ignoring the Community Economy concern of sharing what sustains us with current and future generations



Privatisation example?

Not managing example?

Collective actions that people are taking to share what sustains us with current and future generations

- Resisting Enclosure
 - Protecting the commons we already share (pp. 149-152)
 - Reclaiming and expanding commons (p. 149 + pp. 152-154)
- Commoning Aspects of Private Property (pp. 154-155)
- Creating New Commons (pp. 155-157)