



The International Commons Conference

Berlin, Germany, November 1-2, 2010
Sponsored by the Heinrich Boll Foundation
in cooperation with the Commons Strategy Group

An Interpretive Summary by David Bollier

For years the commons has been gaining momentum as a new paradigm of economics, politics and culture. Its rise can be seen in countless milieus around the world: among indigenous peoples in Latin America determined to protect their ecosystems and cultures; among farmers in India defending the right to share seeds; among Croatians seeking to prevent the privatization of cherished public spaces; among communities trying to preventing multinational bottling companies from appropriating local groundwater; and among diverse digital commoners who are creating “shareable” resources such as free software, Wikipedia, open educational resources and open access journals.

Until recently, mainstream political culture has regarded the commons as an inevitable “tragedy” that results in the over-exploitation of scarce resources. This has helped make the commons a marginal side-story that could be safely ignored. But after the “economic crisis” of October 2008, it

has been much harder to dismiss the commons as a tragedy, anachronism or novelty. It became even harder after the Nobel Prize in Economics was awarded to Professor Elinor Ostrom, a pioneering scholar of the commons, in 2009. The growth of countless Internet commons has also been a pointed rebuttal to orthodox economists who regard the market as the only serious means for generating valuable resources.

For these and other reasons, the commons is increasingly being seen as a rich seedbed of community empowerment and a template for new types of fair and sustainable resource management. It offers a way to critique the failures of neoliberal capitalism while encouraging the development of innovative policy alternatives.

It was in this context that the Heinrich Böll Foundation – a publicly financed nonprofit organization affiliated with the German Greens that works independently with various partners through its 28 worldwide offices – decided to convene a major international conference on the commons. Working with the Commons Strategy Group, a small partnership of commons thinkers and activists, the Böll Foundation brought more than 180 international, Germany- and European-based commoners, intellectuals, activists and policymakers to Berlin, Germany, for the November 1-2, 2010, conference, preceded by project visits on October 31.

The stated goal of the event was “Constructing a Commons-Based Policy Platform.” To that end, the conference sought to assess the range of existing and potential commons-based policy approaches; develop the fundamentals of a policy framework that supports the commons; and identify and explore specific strategic opportunities to advance commons-based approaches.

The event also sought to foster new types of participation and self-organization among commoners worldwide; to promote new forms of networking that could spur new collaboration and cooperation; and to inaugurate new types of open, non-linear ways to search for solutions. The goal was to incubate new ideas and strategies and identify new communication strategies, prototype commons, funding models and research needs. Finally, the event aimed to enhance the visibility of the commons in the media, the blogosphere and other online venues.

“The simple yet powerful and complex question to be explored

throughout the conference,” the Böll Foundation stated in its announcement of the conference, is: “What does a commons-based policy framework look like? What already exists and what do we still need to develop to nurture and protect diverse sorts of commons?”

This report, by David Bollier of the Commons Strategy Group,¹ is an attempt to describe the highlights of the conference and the more significant themes, philosophical tensions and strategic opportunities that emerged. This document is *not* a comprehensive account of the conference; there were too many different perspectives presented to capture that richness. This report is, rather, a selective, interpretive synthesis. For a more complete sense of the conference, please consult the videos of presentations and other primary documents at the Boll Foundation website² and a variety of other papers, reports and blog posts at the official conference wiki.³

An Overview of the Conference

Barbara Unmüßig, President of the Heinrich Böll Foundation, opened the conference by noting how a woodland in the city of Templin, Germany, near the Polish border, had been entrusted to a trust following the fall of the Berlin Wall. The legal successor to that trust is now seeking to sell the wood to private parties – even though citizen and town authorities want to reclaim the wood as a common, ensuring that it will be accessible to everyone. But privilege is given to the private investor.

“Such controversies can be found all over the world,” said Unmüßig. “The question is always, ‘Who does it belong to? Who has the right of access to Griebnitzsee Lake, for example? Who do the water resources in a federal state belong to? Who do derelict inner-city sites belong to? Or the Internet? The Land? The drinking water or the waterworks? To whom does biodiversity belong?’”

Unmüßig noted that the Boll Foundation has been exploring the issue

¹ The Commons Strategy Group is an internationally focused group consisting of Silke Helfrich (Europe), David

Bollier (North America), Michel Bauwens (Asia) and Beatriz Busaniche (Latin America).

² <http://www.boell.de/economysocial/economy/economy-commons-10451.html>

³ http://p2pfoundation.net/Berlin_Commons_Conference. At the conference, most plenary conference proceedings were translated from English into Spanish or Spanish into English (except for Stream II). English/German – German/English translations were provided during the public evening event on November 1.

of the commons for years, with such initiatives as a 2006 conference in Mexico City, a 2008 book anthology, *To Whom Does the World Belong?* and a series of political salons in Germany. She called on conference participants to explore “a new framework for the triangular relationship between ‘our’ commons, the market and the state.” She also urged new policies to support “the idea of the commons instead of regarding gross domestic product as the benchmark for everything in a market economy!”

In his welcome on behalf of the Commons Strategy Group, David Bollier noted, “Much of what brings us together is our shared resistance to a destructive system of market fundamentalism that insists upon the supremacy of private property and the price system over basic sustainability, equality, fairness and humane values.” But he noted that the commons movement “does not claim a unified-field theory of political change.” Rather, it is committed to an agenda that is “more modest, experimental and results-oriented. We are not looking for Big Daddy leaders to save us. We are stepping up to solve problems ourselves, without waiting for government or blue-ribbon commissions or corporate resources.”

In a sense, the conference actually began on October 31, when participants were invited to take tours of commons-based projects in Berlin. One project was a women’s housing and work project, Genossenschaft Schokofabrik eG. Another was a community-based nursing project, AKB. A third, NKL Karlshof, was a noncommercial agricultural project. Conference participants also got to know each other through a website containing short profiles of everyone, along with various commons-related documents.

In an attempt to synthesize some key points about the commons for discussion and reflection, the conference steering committee issued a two-page document, “Some Thoughts on the Commons,” which is included below in Appendix A.⁴ Also released at the conference was a major report written by Silke Helfrich, Rainer Kuhlen, Wolfgang Sachs and Christian Siefkes, “The Commons – Prosperity by Sharing.”⁵

The conference itself began with a session, ***An Overview of the Commons as a Transformation Paradigm***. This was followed over the next two days with three thematic streams:

Stream I: *The Commons as a Challenge for Classical*

⁴ http://p2pfoundation.net/Some_Thoughts_on_the_Commons

⁵ http://www.boell.de/downloads/20101029_Commons_Prosperty_by_Sharing.pdf

Economic Patterns and Thinking, and a New Narrative for the 21st Century;

Stream II: The Commons as a Challenge to the Market/State Duopoly; and

Stream III: The Generative Logic of the Commons.

For each stream, there were several “consolidation workshops” that explored that stream’s themes in greater depth. To let participants explore topics of their own choosing, anyone could propose a self-organized “innovation workshop.” (A complete listing of these can be found in Appendix B. Documentation about some of them can be found on the conference wiki at http://p2pfoundation.net/Berlin_Commons_Conference.) So, in addition to seven keynote presentations (in the introductory plenary session and three Streams), the conference featured “kickoff” speakers in more than twenty workshops.

The conference featured a number of other interactive formats as well:

“Speed presentations” of exciting commons projects, in which eight speakers had five minutes apiece to describe their initiatives;

World Café, in which self-organized discussion groups discussed basic principles of a “generative commons paradigm”;

A public event, in which two keynote speakers and two respondents considered the question of “the commons as the template for our future”; and

A closing plenary session, in which participants reflected on what worked and what didn’t work at the conference, and what strategies should be pursued in the future.

Introductory Session
The Commons as a Transformational Paradigm

In the introductory plenary session, Ruth Meinzen-Dick, President of the International Association for the Study of Commons (IASC) outlined the scope and importance of the commons in contemporary societies around the world.

“Once you start looking at commons, you see them everywhere,” said Meinzen-Dick. “That is part of what we have come together to celebrate and discuss in this gathering. The commons play a vital role in the livelihoods of billions of people. Over 1.6 billion people live in and actively use the 30% of the global land mass that is forest, and close to one billion people use the 40% land mass that is drylands.” A 1996 study found that community forests contribute up to 29% of people’s income in India, or \$5 billion a year, which was twice the development assistance to India that year.

“These areas, although often classified by national law as public lands,” said Meinzen-Dick, “are in many places actively managed by their inhabitants, very often through common property arrangements. In addition to many forest and dry land areas, fisheries, pastures, irrigation systems, and the oceans are examples of commons. Even private lands may have an element of commons, such as when farmland is used for grazing in the dry season, or in the Mekong region where flooded rice fields are used for collective fishing, supplying poor people with important sources of protein and maintaining the biodiversity of fish species.”⁶

Meinzen-Dick noted with disappointment, “Garrett Hardin is still being taught in an uncritical fashion, as ‘truth’ rather than ‘myth’. Professor Elinor Ostrom has noted that at some universities in the U.S., the average student is assigned Hardin’s [“tragedy of the commons”] article three times.” Meinzen-Dick urged that we “move to correct university curricula, so that the ‘tragedy of the commons’ is replaced with a ‘strategy for the commons,’ and that we tap into the optimism of youth, combined with knowledge of the possibilities of collective action to trump cynicism and narrow self-interest, in a really transformational paradigm of the commons.”

In a second keynote introducing the commons as a transformational paradigm, Michel Bauwens, Founder and President of the Foundation for Peer to Peer Alternatives, gave a sweeping review of the evolution of cooperation throughout human history. Commons have existed from the pre-modern

⁶ The full text of Meinzen-Dick’s remarks can be read at http://p2pfoundation.net/Commons_as_a_Transformation_Paradigm.

period, which featured slave, feudal and imperial orders, to the modern era of market-based, industrial order. But what distinguishes our time, Bauwens said, is the possibility of “globalizing the mutual coordination of small groups,” going well beyond “centralized hierarchy” to provide “autonomous, commons-based modes of provisioning.”

Achieving the potential of the commons in the peer-to-peer environment made possible by the Internet, however, requires some changes in the two dominant orders of power, the market and the state. Instead of a “welfare state” or “corporate welfare state,” governments need to become the “partner state,” facilitating the development of commons, said Bauwens. In addition, commoners need to “dis-embed markets from global capitalism” and make them more socially accountable. (verb missing in the following sentence) Two examples of the Arduino open-source computer hardware initiative, which makes sophisticated microelectronics cheaply available for customized purposes, and the initiatives by farmers to share seeds and so bypass the “artificially created scarcity” of genetically modified crops such as the “Terminator seeds.” (Under the Convention on Biological Diversity, there is a moratorium on Terminator Seeds and other “genetic use restriction technologies” (GURT), thanks to activities of civil organizations and farmers worldwide, some of them participating in the ICC, but the moratorium will certainly not last forever.)

“Bottom-up organizing” of new sorts of stable, networked communities is an important way to “embed value” outside of traditional markets, said Bauwens. But the commoners must also develop new sorts of “social charters” and legal mechanisms to protect their shared resources. They must also find better ways to connect with other players in the same ecosystem, and to escape monetary exchange and predatory market systems altogether, if possible. As an example, Bauwens pointed to the rise of “phyles,” or “sustainable, transnational value communities” that represent a new sort of self-provisioning model.⁷

The real challenge for the commons, said Bauwens, is how to secure the necessary support for its very different logic while still living within the existing market system. Another important challenge is how to create a global network of policymakers to advance the new value system.

⁷ For more, see David de Ugarte’s essay, “Phyles: Economic Democracy in the Network Century, at <http://deugarte.com/gomi/phyles.pdf>.

Stream I
**The Commons as a Challenge to Classical Economic Thought
and a New Narrative for the 21st Century**

The commons offers a powerful critique to classical economic thinking and policy discourse that enshrines the market as the only serious system for meeting human needs. This critique is not just intellectual, but practical. There has always been a cornucopia of natural, cultural and social common pool resources. Self-organised commons are as ancient as community irrigation and as contemporary as the Internet. Stream I, organized by Silke Helfrich and Beatriz Busaniche, was based on a rejection of the economic orthodoxy that people cannot successfully manage shared resources over the long term for the benefit of all. Another premise of Stream I was that the commons is capable of helping us address the multiple crises of our time – economic, environmental, social, civic – while confronting the larger “growth-ist” paradigm.

There are many questions and uncertainties about actualising the commons as a new narrative, however. The relationship of the commons to the market and the state needs to be thought through. And if the commons is going to supplant the market in certain respects, people must be open to developing new means for reproducing their livelihoods. Appropriate policy support and physical infrastructure may be needed. Unlike the market order, which is built upon a strict separation between (economic) production and (social) reproduction, and between individual and collective interests and social and ecological concerns, the commons seeks to bridge these divisions and bring them into closer, more organic alignment.

This reintegration, however, will be impossible unless we first invent a coherent new narrative and policy framework. Two keynote speakers addressed these themes in a plenary session.

Alberto Acosta, Economist at Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales (FLACSO) and the former President of the Constituent Assembly of Ecuador, explained his country’s innovative proposal to protect a rich zone of biodiversity within Ecuador. Speaking in Spanish, Acosta explained how the government of Ecuador plans to renounce the exploitation of a huge discovery of oil in a region renowned for its biodiversity, Yasuni National Park, in order to protect Yasuni ecosystems and the indigenous peoples living in voluntary isolation there if there is international cooperation to do so, since the benefits of such an initiative are shared by the whole mankind

(CO2 reduction). The government also wants to prevent future carbon emissions into the atmosphere that would result if the oil were extracted and burns. So it proposed an innovative trust, the Yasuni-ITT Initiative, under the auspices of the United Nations Development Programme. The Initiative promises to leave the oil in the ground if industrialized countries contribute at least half the market value of the oil into a special trust fund, which would be used to support renewable energy sources, reforestation, and social development within Ecuador.⁸

The plan represents a huge financial sacrifice for the Ecuadorian government because it depends upon oil for half of its tax revenues and 20% of its GDP. For the rest of the world, the plan represents just nine days without petrol. Yet despite its own sacrifices, the Ecuadorian government recognizes the long-term importance of protecting the remarkable natural biodiversity within its borders and reducing the release of additional carbon into the atmosphere.

Acosta called the Yasuni-ITT Initiative a new way to manage a global commons, the atmosphere, by re-aligning relationships among the industrialized nations and poorer nations. The richer countries of the global North “have a huge ecological debt to the world’s poorest countries,” Acosta said, citing the \$90 billion in environmental damage that has been inflicted by British Petroleum, Chevron and Texaco. The Yasuni-ITT Initiative, he said, offered a practical scheme for exercising “co-responsibility in protecting the Amazon.” That is why the tagline for the proposal – which remains underfunded – is “An opportunity to rethink the world.”

A second keynote about how the commons can challenge conventional economic thinking was delivered by Philippe Aigrain, co-founder and strategy adviser of the advocacy organization, La Quadrature du Net, and founder and CEO of Sopinspace, the Society for Public Information Spaces.

Aigrain described nine specific models by which the commons and markets may interact sustainably to their mutual benefit. He noted that historically commoners have been focused on how to prevent their resources from being turned into private property for sale on the market. However, in his talk, he sought to “go one step further” and consider “what type of

⁸ The Yasuni-ITT website is here: <http://yasuni-itt.gob.ec/espanol/trust-fund-terms-of-reference>. The official proposal can be read here: http://yasuni-itt.gob.ec/wp-content/uploads/initiative_change_history_sep.pdf.

relation we want to exist between the monetary economy and the commons. How can we organize their relations in order to guarantee the conditions of existence for *extended* commons? How can we ensure that individuals and independent groups have means to invest in the maintenance and the enrichment of the commons?"

Aigrain proceeded to review nine distinct models for combining the market economy with a commons. These models include:

1. *Direct investment* in a commons by economic players who had a stake in it;
2. *The acquisition of basic skills and personal reputation through participation in a commons.* These skills and reputation can then be marketed to obtain jobs or work for hire;
3. *A requirement that successful market players spend or invest* some portion of their extraordinary income on valuable social, environmental or knowledge-producing activities – i.e., commons and social public goods.
4. *The use of alternative currencies within the commons* that, up to a specified maximum, could be “converted” into “normal” consumption currency (i.e., the credits could not be invested in speculative ventures or held indefinitely).
5. *Voluntary resource-pooling* to fund commons-based projects, perhaps with the help of new intermediaries that can act as brokers between potential donors and project proponents.
6. *Statutory resource-pooling*, such as a government-mandated flat tax – but unlike most flat taxes, people could directly *choose* how the pooled money is spent.
7. *Public trusts*, a multi-stakeholder organization that is set up by governments or international organizations that fund them, which manages a designated commons (coastal land, natural reserves, the climate, etc.).
8. *Tax-financed public subsidies* that have some element of peer management, as, for instance, in science.

9. A *basic income* that enables people to freely decide how to allocate their time and talents to various commons, or earn more money in market activities.

Stream II

The Commons As a Challenges to the Market / State Duopoly

The history of industrial society is one of markets and the state dominating civil society, with periodic pendulum swings between periods of stronger regulatory states (the welfare state paradigm of social democracy and the New Deal, as well as the soviet and fascist state forms), and periods of “market-dominated” states (the corporate welfare state of neoliberalism). However, today, both the market and state are suffering from a strong and persistent *systemic* crisis, particularly since the meltdown of 2008. Meanwhile, civil-society networks are experiencing a resurgence, as seen in the growth of peer production models, the commons paradigm, and sharing practices and infrastructures.

Stream II, hosted by Michel Bauwens and Heike Löschmann, assessed the significance of these trends for various civil-society movements. It also looked at how the commons may shape the future of markets and the state, and local and global governance. James Bernard Quilligan, Chairman of the Secretariat, Global Commons Trust, made a keynote presentation about what he calls “Multilateralism 2.0,” a new international regime in which global citizens and social charters are forces in managing the emerging global commons.

In advance of the conference, Quilligan made the case for commoners becoming actively involved in imagining and advocating for new sorts of multilateral institutions. “Multilateralism gets a bad name because it’s associated with governments and their limited abilities to provide people- and ecologically-centered goods and services through international cooperation,” said Quilligan. “That’s certainly the case at the present. Let’s not forget that the multilateral institutions were initially created after WWII to provide global public goods. This experiment has been bungled for many reasons, mainly the one that you note, that neoliberal ideology has taken over.”

He continued: “That philosophy needs to be rooted out from the

bottom-up, yes, but it cannot happen without sympathetic support from the top-down. Yet this is not simply a matter of tone, it's a matter of actual laws and institutions. The commons will never scale up to the global level (or, to put it another way, become scale-free) simply through associations of like-minded commoners. It also needs institutional support from governments and the private sector, of course, to the extent that they will endorse this tripartite arrangement; but it also requires institutional support at the trans-boundary level of global common goods. The sky, the Arctic, the seabeds all need to have specific watchdogs and managers. Who is capable of organizing that? Not commoners, not public sector or private sector. They have no authority to do so and never will under the current circumstances."

Quilligan added: "That's why the commoners and multilateral institutions are (ultimately) natural allies -- which commoners have not yet realized. The break will come when government power evolves upwardly to empower new multilateral institutions in charge of managing specific global commons, and downwardly to the commoners who are vigilantly watching the commons across the world and who will work alongside the multilateral institutions for the protection of the commons -- now with actual authority for the global commons. The time will come when commoners will sit on the board of the (existing and new) multilateral institutions, along with government reps (let's keep the private sector out of this). I don't see anyone grappling with these matters," said Quilligan, who urged that commoners begin to think about new sorts of multilateral institutions that could truly protect various commons, especially global ecological ones.

Stream II Workshops

Stream II was followed by a series of workshops that went deeper into the key themes of the stream. Workshop II/1, "***Recovering the Autonomy and Primacy of Commoners,***" explored the role that social charters, open licenses, access rights, the general demand for openness and transparency can play in securing the commons. More generally, the workshop sought to identify the set of (design) principles that allow for a commons-based making of rules, guidelines, laws and institutions. Denis Jaromil Rocio, a free software programmer and media artist who lives in Italy and The Netherlands, gave a kickoff presentation on these themes.

Workshop II/2, expanded upon the themes of the Quilligan keynote presentation by focusing on "***The Commons and the State: Towards a***

Global Partner State.” The workshop stated: “Since it is unlikely that the State will wither away, and yet the commoners are inventing new modes of governance and autonomy for themselves, what should be the proper interrelationship of the commons and the state? What differential principles and design mechanisms might apply at different levels of governance, but specifically, at the global level?” These questions were addressed by Benjamin Coriat of Paris Nord University, France, and Ana Valadéz of Otros Mundos, Mexico.

Workshop II/3 focused on ***“The Commons as a Trust for Protecting the Earth: The Polycentric Governance Approach.”*** Frank van Laerhoven, Copernicus Institute of Sustainable Development, Utrecht University, Netherlands, gave a kickoff presentation that started with the familiar quadrant that classifies goods by their “subtractability” and “rivalrous” nature (difficulty of excluding potential beneficiaries). The chart is often used to define resources as club goods, private goods, public goods or common pool resources.

This workshop focused in part on the value of “polycentrism” as a policy approach that could foster commons-based solutions. Polycentrism, a concept developed by Professor Elinor Ostrom and her colleagues, sees affirmative value in multiple levels of governance, each interacting with the other in a dynamic, fluid manner, rather than fixed, centralized and bureaucratic models of governance. In a polycentric model, power is diffused and participation is more feasible, which leads to a plurality of possible solutions to problems. It is unclear how the commons interacts with representative democracy, which ostensibly is the most legitimate way of addressing problems – but which, in practice, often results in unaccountable power and poor implementation. It was also unclear how customary law and practices can be honored in the face of markets and representative democracy.

Maude Barlow, a leading activist fighting water privatization and the National Chairperson of the Council of Canadians, explained how governments are colluding with private companies in giving away their water commons. In Australia, for example, the government gave companies licenses to extract water at no cost, claiming it would enhance efficiency; in 2005 a new government began to buy back water rights in competition with hedge funds and banks. One encouraging counter-trend: The State of Vermont has claimed its groundwater as a common asset by invoking the

“public trust doctrine” (although the legislation does not refer to the water as a commons).

In addition to the “consolidation workshops” proposed by the ICC Steering Committee in Stream II, there were two “self-organized workshops” initiated by participants. Workshop II/4, ***The Commons and Basic Income***, was organized by Ulrich Steinvorth and Michael Opielka. Workshop II/5, organized by Massimo De Angelis, Jai Sen and Richard Pithouse, explored ***Commoning Through the Crisis: Creating Commons Power and Resisting Enclosures and Cooptation***. The workshop explored the relations between commons, commoning and the crisis in the context of power (especially “power-to” rather than “power over”), and with reference to struggles to resist enclosure and cooptation.

De Angelis, Editor of The Commoner website and a professor at the University of East London, stressed that an analysis of power is crucial when discussing the commons, especially in talking about “power-to” relations rather than “power over.” Unless political and power relations are candidly discussed when talking about a commons and the social practices of commoning, De Angelis warned, the commons risks being neutralized and coopted. Jai Sen of the Commons Convergence in India pointed out the significant differences between types of commons, such as free software and seed-sharing commons, and the need to overcome the cultural differences that separate commons by building a common language and trust within and between movements.

Stream III **The Generative Logic of the Commons**

The value produced in the commons – its “generative logic” – is deeper than exchange-value for the market and comprehends much more. It is important to understand this fact in order to develop appropriate institutions and public policies that can support the commons. It is also important to strike a prudent balance between openness and control within the commons. Stream III, organized by David Bollier and Julio Lambing of e5 (European

Business Council for Sustainable Energy), examined how the commons can produce abundance, both materially and socially, if there are appropriate relationships between the commons and markets.

Keynote speaker Roberto Verzola, an agricultural activist from the Philippines, talked about the “abundance of the commons.” He noted that “the fundamental assumption in economics is scarcity,” and yet a natural abundance can be seen in the human urge to communicate, in the urgent need of every living organism to reproduce, in the energy from the sun and in webs of positive human relationships. These different forms of abundance are what create commons, Verzola noted. To illustrate how abundance is something of a subjective condition, he told a joke: “Question: Before refrigerators, what did people do when they had too much food? Answer: They threw a party!”

“Under conditions of abundance,” Verzola continued, “reliability becomes more important than efficiency....Reliability means ensuring that the fruits of abundance are enjoyed without fail by all social sectors, our generation, as well as future generations. We optimize it by putting risk-reduction ahead of gain accumulation.”

Abundance can be dealt with in two different ways, said Verzola: People can “monopolize abundance for private profit-making” or they can “hold abundance in common for the good of the whole community and future generations.” Unfortunately, corporate privatization of the abundance of the commons is the norm, he said: “Corporations have destroyed the fertility of our soils, substituting commercial synthetics in their place; they have stopped the natural flow of mothers’ milk in favor of commercial formula; they have bought out independent seed companies, to force-feed us with genetically modified toxic foods, all in pursuit of profit. They have become, in Wolfgang Hoeschele’s words, ‘scarcity-generating institutions’.”

A key challenge facing commoners, Verzola said, is to cultivate the consciousness of abundance “by relying on each other and on commonly held sources of abundance that we ourselves can build and maintain.”

In a second keynote speaker, Stefan Meretz, a computer scientist, free software activist from Berlin and blogger with Keimform.de, offered his own perspective on the need to fortify the generative logic of the commons. He noted that his thinking has been deeply influenced by the example of free software, and of the functional viability of a software commons independent

of the marketplace.

Meretz said that while markets create many products and services, “these things matter only if they can generate a profit. They are not focused on need-based value.” Moreover, capitalism has its own distinctive logic: it separates producers from each other, it separates producers from culture and it separates different needs from each other. In all these ways, markets serve to disembody the economy from society, and “forces us to meet our many different social and personal needs through a uni-dimensional medium, money.”

By contrast, the commons “produces things, knowledge and social relationships” but with a very different logic. In a commons, needs are negotiated *prior* to production, whereas in markets, needs are satisfying *after* production, through shopping. In a commons, conflicts are internally negotiated and resolved within the community; in markets, conflicts are externalized and displaced onto others. In a commons, values are multi-dimensional and pluralistic; in markets, values are expressed through money or numbers. In a commons, spending one’s time contributes to the quality of life; in markets, time-saving is an unavoidable coercion.

As this list suggests, said Meretz, the commons represents a logic of inclusion while the commodity logic favors exclusion. Commodity logic is incompatible with the commons, Meretz argued, because it tends to exploit and enclose the commons. Yet the market is the dominant social reality and must be dealt with. Therefore, he said, it is best to segregate the commons from markets as much as possible. But if the two are to interact, then great care must be taken in designing safe interfaces between them. Ultimately, he said, the goal ought to be to replace market functions with commons alternatives. As for the state, it may sometimes act as a trustee for the commons, and it should help assure our access to commons resources. But since state has its own logic and limited accountability, said Meretz, “It is best to use the state, but don’t trust the state. It is better to trust the commons.”

Audience reaction to the two presentations was quite spirited. Some argued that business as now constituted cannot truly be made compatible with the commons. Others argued, however, that a workable rapprochement between business and commons is entirely possible. “The desire to secure a purity of the commons doesn’t work,” said Philippe Aigrain of Sopinspace, France, citing the history of the commons in various contexts. He added that

it is not self-evident which needs are best fulfilled by markets and which by commons. “Needs are very complex things,” he said. There was wide agreement that the terms of engagement between market and commons deserve much more discussion.

Stream III Workshops

Workshop III/1, ***“Understanding Value in a Commons Economy,”*** started with the premise that a commons is at once economic, social, cultural and moral. It is also rooted in a particular local context. To understand the proposition of the commons, then, it is important to ask: How does a commons generate what we need for our lives? How does commons-generated value differ from that generated by markets, and how does it vary from one commons to another? What means can protect commons-based wealth?

Veronika Bennholdt-Thomsen of the University of Natural Resources and Applied Life Sciences in Vienna, started by distinguishing exchange-value, the form of value that generally prevails today, from the value generated by a commons. She then argued that the co-existence of exchange value and common value is unsustainable because exchange value typically seeks to extract value from the local and shift it to global players. This has been the historic role of money and taxation in former colonies, for example. Exchange value tends to produce exploitation and exclusion, she said.

Adam Arvidsson of the University of Milano, Italy, agreed that we need a revolution in the value system, but – in his vision – this revolution is already taking place in the networked economy. The economic logic of capitalism has historically been based on “institutionalized social value” – i.e., market exchange value, Arvidsson said. This has been the “iron cage” that has permitted modern efficiency. But in today’s industrial capitalism, he said, this base of value no longer works in immaterial production (design or knowledge creation, for example), nor in the diffused and networked forms of material production. That is because value is no longer enclosed within

the walls of private companies, but rather is socialized in the general intellect. Value is about maintaining coherence within complex networks, but this is harder for companies to do today, he said, because, in environments of heavily socialized and abundant resources, it is possible to create and re-create productive work relations without relying on hierarchies. In Arvidsson's opinion, the emerging "ethical economy" is in this way causing a crisis of value of capitalism.

Workshop III/2 examined ***"Institutional Structures and the Commons: Advantages and Challenges."*** Brian Davey of FEASTA, Great Britain, and Marc Mascarenhas-Swan of Jas-econ, a Bay Area economics cooperative in the United States, discussed some of the institutional, legal and policy structures that can help maintain a commons.

For decades, there have been two competing (or at least, unconnected) strategies. One group of commons activists has sought to build up their own complex administrative institutions in the hope of changing societal institutions. This strategy is embodied in such examples as cooperatives, land trusts and the General Public License for software. Meanwhile, others have focused on changing micro-practices and on building up networks of small grassroots institutions with modest-to-nonexistent infrastructures. In many cases, both parties accuse each other of acting in a futile and ineffective way, especially when it comes to the question which strategy is apt to establish a more commons-sensitive economy. This workshop evaluated the strategic effectiveness of different approaches and looked at the design principles of successful commons in general and for specific types of resources.

Finally, Workshop III/3, ***"Limits and Boundaries vs. Openness and DIY Approach,"*** explored the deep tensions between the open-to-all platforms and a bounded commons of distinct members and rules. For example, it is not self-evident how safety can be assured in open-design automobiles and or how practitioners of DIY [do it yourself] synthetic biology can be trusted to prevent irreversible biological harms. Some people question Wikileaks' disclosures of "state secrets" as putting lives at risk. Others believe that indigenous people's sacred knowledge and practices should be controlled by them, and not made openly available to everyone.

Pat Mooney, Executive Director of the ETC Group in Canada, noted that "one community's openness is another's enclosure." Thus, for example, trade negotiations at a recent round of talks in Nagoya, Japan, did not raise

the question of digital access to the DNA of indigenous peoples. This means that digital maps of germplasm can be compiled with no stipulated benefit to the people from whom it was taken. In another context – synthetic biology – open access to knowledge about DNA means that anyone can theoretically assemble her own strands of DNA using “BioBricks” and treat the basic elements of life like Lego blocks. This raises serious questions about how to control potentially harmful and irreversible genetic innovations. Mooney added that DIY biologist-hackers are not the most serious risk; the most serious dangers are likely to come from normal, commercial releases of synthetic biological organisms. One example is synthetic microbes being designed for biofuels in Brazil.

Glyn Moody, a tech journalist who blogs at “Open Source, Open Source, Open Genomics, Open Content,” noted that there is no way to stop or police the DIY experimentation of synthetic biology. The best approach is to assure openness in order to encourage a large community of practitioners to try to identify and control dangerous practices. Mooney agreed that cultivating social norms about the control of synthetic organisms is the best, long-term approach. Unfortunately, in the short term, citizens have little political power in securing new laws and international treaties to control open biological innovation. Furthermore, the pace of change is just too fast.

However, he said, it would be useful if the United Nations or another international body were to develop new international standards and procedures for evaluating new technologies. Mooney takes some comfort in the fact that 85% of the world’s food production remains outside of the control of Monsanto, DuPont and other ag-biotech corporations.

Speed Project Presentations

To give quick introductions to a variety of exciting commons projects and showcase the practical value of the commons approach, the conference heard eight “speed project presentations,” as moderated by Beatriz Busaniche.

1. Open Hardware: Arduino, Massimo Banzi, Italy.

Banzi described the Arduino open-source design community that develops cheap, easy-to-use computer components that can be shared and modified by anyone (*weblink: <http://www.arduino.cc>*). The enterprise has a business

model that is based on the counter-intuitive notion of “giving away what we design.” While anyone can freely copy and modify the electronic components designed by Arduino, the enterprise has a trademark on its name. It makes money and controls its brand reputation by licensing its name to anyone wishing to sell Arduino-designed boards. Arduino’s designs have attracted considerable attention, and even companies like Microsoft use Arduino-designed products to prototype their new devices. Banzi also described a variety of innovative uses of Arduino kits, from wrist-devices for BlackBerries to clothing with electronic sensors to a homemade, open-source Segway scooter.

2. Commons - Spaces of the Poor: Foundation for Ecological Security, Jagdeesh Rao, India.

Rao described a people’s movement for reforestation in India and the attempt by the Foundation for Ecological Security (*weblink: <http://www.fes.org.in>*) to claim “wastelands” used for subsistence by poor people, as commons. He noted that the National Wastelands Development Board in India has been eager to use the lands to support biofuels production, and local cooperatives are focused on earning profits and tend to disenfranchise commoners and harm the ecosystem. “This has produced serious inequality among some villages, driven in part by coops that are market-driven.” The FES seeks to persuade government to institute new policies that would protect the commons for subsistence use by commoners. Rao’s organization will co-host the 13th Biennial Conference of the International Association for the Study of the Commons in Hyderabad, India in January 2011 (*weblink: <http://iasc2011.fes.org.in>*).

3. Traditional Knowledge Commons: Natural Justice, Gino Cocchiaro, Australia/South Africa.

Cocchiaro spoke of the importance of traditional knowledge to the indigenous peoples. His organization, Natural Justice (*weblink: <http://www.naturaljustice.org>*), is committed to “facilitating full participation of indigenous people in modern communities and the implementation of law and policy that affect biodiversity and cultural heritage.” The focal point of Cocchiaro’s talk was a “traditional knowledge license,” which enables communities to license their knowledge for noncommercial uses, typically to

academics and other researchers. The licenses stipulate the specific terms of usage, such as attribution of the community, returning any research back to the community, or requiring that any derivative knowledge be shared with others.

**4. Reputation Based Exchange Commons:
Digital Trust Platform, John Clippinger, The Law Lab, Harvard
University, USA**

Distilling seven years of research, Clippinger explained how he and his colleagues at the Law Lab (*weblink: <http://cyber.law.harvard.edu/research/lawlab>*) are attempting to develop new sorts of “trust frameworks” for “member networks” on the Internet. The goal is to assure people’s digital identities, privacy and security by helping them control information about themselves. The project also seeks to design new sorts of trusted “governance platforms” that enable new ways of governance and collaboration. The platform is based on open source software and transparent social norms, and offers the rare opportunity to re-invent certain societal institutions and develop new systems of community-negotiated, evolvable “law.” These innovations depend fundamentally on finding new software systems for protecting user-centric identity, assuring “honest signaling” that engenders social credibility and accountability, and prevents collusion and corruption of the system and those who govern.

**5. Digital Cultural Commons:
José Murilo, Ministry of Culture, Brazil**

Murilo described how Brazilian leaders are helping transform digital culture policies from within the government. The effort started with Gilberto Gil, the world-renowned musician who became minister of culture in 2003. Gil grew out of the *tropicale* musical movement in the 1960s, which prized openness, cross-cultural communication and a new fusion of left/right politics – traits that inform the digital policies that Murilo has been working to implement. These include the development of a social network platform that allows for open and collaborative public policy design; reform of the Brazilian copyright act; a national broadband program; and empowerment of local communities by providing them with digital media, open source software and technical workshops. “This is an example of how culture and politics can push the commons into a new narrative,” said Murilo. (*Weblink: http://p2pfoundation.net/Brazilian_Digital_Culture_Forum*).

**6. Urban Commons:
Transition Town Movement, Gerd Wessling, Germany**

Wessling described the rise of the Transition Town movement (*weblink: <http://transitionnetwork.org>*), a global, grassroots movement to re-localize economies in anticipation of the economic and environmental shocks of “Peak Oil” and climate change. The idea originated with Rob Hoskins in Totnes, Great Britain, who, as a permaculture teacher, is accustomed to “working with what you have and thinking holistically,” said Wessling. Transition Towns are initiating pragmatic, experimental innovations to try to make their localities more self-reliant and ecologically sustainable while retaining a sense of the global conditions of the planet and other localities. It turns out to be a fast growing and inspiring movement especially in Europe. Founded in 2006, there are now 341 official transition initiatives and several thousand mulling.

7. Credit Commons: Thomas Greco, USA

A major problem with our economy, said Greco, a long-time advocate for alternative money systems, is the private control of access to credit by banks and national governments. A growth imperative is built into the money system, and debt must increase simply with the passage of time. Greco’s work is focused on calling attention to the “credit commons”; educating people about historical and current exchange alternatives that can be optimized and scaled up to provide a sufficient supply of credit to productive enterprises; and trying to develop an honest and equitable network for facilitating cashless, interest-free trading over wide areas – an innovation that Greco calls “social money.” To succeed, credit-clearing networks will require governments to respect the rights of contract and association, and not interfere with the new credit systems. Greco is the author of *The End of Money*, among other books on reinventing credit; his websites include <http://reinventingmoney.com> and the blog <http://beyondmoney.net>.)

**8. P2P Urbanism:
Nikos Saligaros, Greece.**

Salingaros spoke about his group's explorations of peer-produced urban design, which is more human-scale and ecologically sensitive than traditional urban design of the past century. The latter, he said, "is not fit for human habitation" because it "imposes anti-human, anti-social geometric patterns on people." P2P urbanism attempts to "extract geometries that enhance life, usually found in traditional settlements and towns that have been settled for thousands of years," and then identify their rules and publish openly about them. Anyone can then use the rules and anyone can contribute to the body of knowledge. The designs are used as "DNA for urban spaces" around the world, but in each case they adapt to the local circumstances and so are responsive to local needs. (For more on Saligaros and P2P Urbanism: http://p2pfoundation.net/Nikos_Saligaros.)

**Public Event
The Commons as the Template of Our Future**

Because the ICC could not accommodate all the people who wished to attend, and because there is keen interest in Berlin about managing shared public resources, conference organizers planned a public event featuring two speakers about "the commons as the template of our future." Both speakers see the commons as attractive alternative forms of governance, resource management and social equity and both predict that it will have larger political and economic implications at all levels of governance - local, regional, national and global.

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The first speaker was María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés, Minister of National Patrimony (MNP) for Ecuador, who is coordinating ten ministries. Garcés delivered a bracing talk in support of the commons as a way to address economic inequality, social exclusion, market enclosures and the failures of neoliberal public policy. To talk about the commons, she said, invites us to ask new sorts of questions about participation in policymaking,

property structures and “access modalities” that limit or open people’s access to resources.

The commons also raises questions about the proper “institutional frameworks” for managing resources, said Garcés. “Is the multilateral, regional system adequate?” she asked. “Perhaps no.” The geopolitical perspective does not take account of localization, biodiversity and carbon dioxide emissions on a global scale, she noted. “We need to reassess the role of the state and, for example, the very categories of public and private.”

A key question, Garcés continued, “is, How should the management of the commons be realized in a market economy?” One way to start is to “replace the idea of ‘development’ with ‘good living’ or ‘a rich life’ - the concept of *buen vivir* as discussed in many Latin American countries” - by which Garcés means “a life lived in abundance and in relationship with nature.” The primary goal of policy should not be to boost Gross Domestic Product, with per-capita income as the metric, but to develop new indicators for measuring happiness.

That said, “it is not a responsibility of the state to provide happiness,” she added. What is most needed is *minga*, or “mutual support” (*minga* is also a classical form of collective water management in Ecuador). Garcés concluded by noting that “The concept of the commons must become part and parcel of politics. Without it, politics will cater to corporations, encourage non-participation and revive colonialism.”

The second speaker at the public event was Silke Helfrich, a commons advocate, lead organizer of the conference and co-founder of the Commons Strategy Group. Helfrich started by describing a number of enclosures of until now public resources and their anti-social consequences in European urban spaces. When she was visiting Florence, Italy in July 2010, she noted with dismay, “There were no places to sit or get a drink of water unless you went to a café or some proprietary space. If you don’t want to just sit on the ground, as some young people do, you have to pay 2.8 euros for water just so no one seems to notice.”

Nanotechnology may provide interesting solutions to some of the problems we face, but it triggers also a new dynamic of enclosure of nature that is marching forward with alarming speed, said Helfrich. The European patent office expects that the market value of nanotechnology products will be 1 trillion euros by the year 2015. The problem with nanotechnology is its

role in “privatizing matter.,” she said. “Using nanotech methods, matter as we know it is broken down to the nanoscale, then claimed as private property, which broadens the scope of the patents enormously for products stemming from nanotech research.”

Helfrich also noted the privatization of the Berlin main train station and the current battle between transit officials and citizens in Stuttgart over the planned destruction of a treasured train station in order to speed up train traffic. It is important to realize that “the commons is not a discussion about objects,” said Helfrich, “but a discussion about *who we are and how we act*. What decisions are being made about *our* resources?” One of the great virtues of the commons, she added, is that it “draws from the best of all political ideologies.” Conservatives like the idea of responsibility in a commons; liberals are pleased with the focus on equality and basic social entitlement; libertarians like the emphasis on individual initiative; and leftists like the idea of limiting the scope of the market. Over the long term, said Helfrich, “the commons has the potential to fundamentally transform society.”

There were two brief responses to both presentations. Richard Pithouse of Rhodes University and a poor people’s movement activist in South Africa warned against easy binary oppositions when talking about the commons, such as pitting “capital” against “indigenous peoples.” “This encases indigenous people in a bubble as objects. They may in fact have their own aspirations to modernity, and cosmopolitan people for their part are often dispossessed from their own resources.” While the commons helps us begin to address the global crises that are upon us, Pithouse also warned that this framing of the big picture may eclipse the immediacy of the crisis at hand. It can privilege the human agency of more affluent, enfranchised people and marginalize the urgent needs of poor people.”

Barbara Unmüßig, President of the Heinrich Böll Foundation, urged “resistance and solidarity for those who want to protect the commons,” and stressed the need for new sorts of North/South solidarity. In industrialized nations, a key question is how to reform the welfare state, which is based on redistributing the prosperity of the market economy. How do we de-couple justice from economic growth? No one knows how to solve this.” However, to talk about the commons is to begin to address the “democratic deficits” that various market enclosures reveal. It is also a way to begin to think about social innovation and alternatives to growth and market exploitation.

How to Move Forward?

A final, plenary session solicited the viewpoints of all participants about how work on the commons should move forward in more specific, strategic ways.⁹ First, a number of unresolved issues were identified for further reflection and debate. These included:

- Tensions among commoners with very different perspectives based on different regional and social experiences (e.g., grassroots vs. more elite experiences; in attitudes toward the state; and between the global North and South generally);
- Tensions between traditional and natural resource commons on the one hand, and knowledge and digital commons on the other;
- Differences in whether hybrid solutions offer greater potential than “purer” solutions, and whether the commons is a complement to the market economy or a viable substitute for it over the long term;
- Tensions between those who focus on local commons and global commons;
- The absence of many voices at the conference for gender issues, and endangered local communities, for example;
- The urgent need for a commons-based policy platform but a lack of time to develop one in the face of emergency needs;

In terms of moving forward, there was much emphasis on the need to focus on commonality and to find new ways to mobilize collective intelligence. This is important in attracting more people to embrace the commons as part of their daily lives. Some people want to address the challenge of developing new livelihoods for people who wish to move away from corporate life forms and wean us from dependencies. Others believe that the commons must be about growing power, but to do this we have to think about power differentials and especially about “the enemy.” There were also reminders that the history and genealogy of the commons has much to teach us, including legal precedents that we can use.

⁹ The full list of suggestions can be viewed here:
http://p2pfoundation.net/Berlin_Commons_Conference/Final_Plenary

A number of suggestions were made for advancing the commons in specific ways:

- Develop a policy platform that can be used by political representatives;
- Recognize that no single blueprint will work for all commons, because each commons is unique and plans must emerge organically;
- Use the World Social Forum in Dakar as an opportunity to organize and reach out to others;
- Organize a network of commons-oriented media people; create a global online video service to share video about the commons; and produce a documentary and attractive symbols for the commons;
- Create “commons alliances” in different regions, as India has done, and consider creating a “school of the commons”;
- Establish an “observatory of commons initiatives” to map and coordinate commons initiatives, resources and academics, and bring initiative to wider awareness;
- Find new ways to defend and transform public services using commons framing and language; and
- Host a larger international conference about the commons, with greater funding for people from the global South.

Because it is impossible to cover the many issues discussed in more than twenty self-organized workshops, the reader should consult the conference wiki (http://p2pfoundation.net/Berlin_Commons_Conference) for further documentation about those sessions. More about the final plenary session can be found at http://p2pfoundation.net/Berlin_Commons_Conference/Final_Plenary.

The International Commons Conference ended with a great deal of enthusiasm for continuing the conversation, developing new collaborations, identifying promising strategic opportunities and reaching out to a wider

range of commoners. The event raised far more questions and challenges that it could possibly resolve, yet it was nonetheless an inspiring, catalytic gathering. It introduced more than 180 global commoners to each other in a shared set of presentations and dialogues. It demonstrated the rich range of commons initiatives now underway worldwide and showed the strong interest in advancing commons-based research, activism, organizing and media work. It elicited new ideas and proposals for moving forward and helped identify available resources. Finally, it helped identify many key thinkers, activists and institutional players who want to work together to develop a shared agenda.

For all of these reasons, the conference was less of an ending (after months of planning and organizing) than a new beginning. A new vista of opportunities was revealed. As Michel Bauwens wrote on his blog, “The various constituent movements related to the commons met for the first time, entered in a serious dialogue and recognized the need for joint policy frameworks about the global commons. The wish to continue this conversation and constitute a intermeshed global movement was palpable.” His post was entitled, “The Emergence of a Global Commons Movement, Year Zero.”¹⁰

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¹⁰ http://p2pfoundation.net/Emergence_of_a_Global_Commons_Movement,_Year_Zero

Appendix A: Some Thoughts on the Commons

Prepared by the Steering Committee, International Commons Conference, to stimulate
discussion and reflection

(Michel Bauwens, David Bollier, Beatriz Busaniche, Silke Helfrich, Julio Lambing, Heike Löschmann)

*Commons are the enabler for all other social goals,
including environmental ones, which in essence are social.*

STREAM I: The Commons as a Challenge for Classical Economics

- A.** The commons will not succeed in challenging contemporary economics and conventional institutional design unless it:
- challenges the core beliefs of underlying conventional economics and the behavioral correlations induced by prevailing institutional designs;
 - reinterprets the meaning of property from private ownership to collective stewardship; and
 - develops coherent concepts that are also empirically provable and convincing alternatives to the conventional numerical "bottom lines".
- B.** The inherent features of the commons are abundance and diversity.
- If we respect diversity and engineer for abundance, the commons continuously (re-)produce enough for all.
 - Wherever we can – in case of nonrival resources and generosity – the product of the commons should be universally available; where we cannot – in case of rival resources – the product of the commons should be equitably distributed.
- C.** A viable society is based on cooperation and co-production rather than the classical division of labor that separates resource producers and providers from resource users, which treats nature, community and culture as exploitable externalities.
- D.** Markets are not the only source of wealth creation. The commons, which are responsive to popular, democratic voices and to the pressure on our biotic resources, can function as parallel economies to the cash economy, including subsistence and gift economies. Another promising way to do this is by developing community-based software platforms. Over time, such communication platforms can extend to new types of social exchange, for instance digital currencies, outside of national currencies and conventional markets. Such processes would strengthen resilient rural and urban communities and enable them to take the reproduction of their livelihoods into their own hands.
- E.** The whole economic system in modern societies deeply depends on the state, which

creates entire industries and provides regulative structures. The demand for goods and services by the state is another example. In fact, public procurement and infrastructure development constitute the lion's share of our economies. Therefore a shift towards commons-based public procurement is urgently needed. That includes, e.g., tax privileges for freely generated knowledge, information and infrastructures or bidding processes based on stipulated criteria that strengthen the participation of affected communities.

- F. There is a need to clearly identify and communicate the "success criteria" of the commons and/or a loose taxonomy of successful commons. But developing indicators for creative and productive commoning is notoriously difficult. It is therefore essential to contribute to the development of inclusive metrics that recognize key criteria for broader wealth creation.

STREAM II: The Commons Challenges the Market/State Duopoly

- A. The commons is the third element, beyond market and state, which needs structural and intellectual support.
- B. The commons offers a rich set of governance models, and its constituting nature strives for a new style of social appropriation and participation. Despite its diversity and its dependency on certain laws or state support, the commons tend to be stable and to facilitate social autonomy and effective resource management. Nonetheless, a successful commons is always the product of a continuous effort and struggle.
- C. "The commons *beyond* market and state" does not necessarily mean *without* market and state, if we consider their rich history, enormous diversity and geographic dispersion. But it necessarily means that the people and their commons, supported by a partner state, become the core of wealth creation. It aims to create a vibrant ethical economy of new market forms that do not ignore natural and social externalities, but include them in their functioning logic.
- D. Commoners transcend nation-state based citizenship and national civil societies. And their identity goes beyond that of passive consumer to responsible co-producer. Commoners are rooted in an enormous variety of mutually dependent communities. One of the core beliefs of the commons is the idea that the protection and creation of common wealth are not just beneficial to the commoners themselves, but to the local and global societies to which they also belong. A core belief in the commons is: I need others and others need me.
- E: What we need is not just regulation by the state but greater responsibility of and accountability to affected communities regarding the criteria of human well-being. This is key. Instead of downsizing the state by strengthening the logic of the market, a commons-based policy campaigns for downsizing the scale and scope of the market by strengthening 'commons institutions'. That means establishing institutions designed for acting as trustees for the commons and enablers of the commons. New social technologies and distributed networks - which must be based on sustainable energy use - can spur this process.
- F. Global commons entail a new kind of multilateralism which empowers local people as

global citizens and enables nation-states to collaborate more effectively to overcome global collective-action problems.

STREAM III: The Generative Logic of the Commons

- A.** For building commons we have to build resilient communities, which in turn need cooperative and deliberative forms of communication and decision making. The communities also serve as learning arenas for the unfolding of skills and the underlying attitudes and mindsets for commoning.
 - B.** The commons as a self-organized form of peer-to-peer production follows its own logic. Peer-to-peer production assumes equipotency of its participants, is based on free cooperation, aims to the creation of common goods and seeks to serve the greatest good for everyone. We believe this mode of production can be at least as productive as models that ignore the commons. And in terms of addressing social wealth and the reproduction of diversity, commons-based production models can even be more successful than those based on command, control and/or selling.
 - C.** Productivity cannot be simply an artificial measure of an enterprise's performance; it must take into account all costs, including hidden subsidies, damages to the environment and other sorts of non quantifiable, non-market value that the commons routinely provides.
- X.
- D.** The commons is about taking one's life into one's own hands. Knowledge is key to do so, but knowledge is more than access to knowledge; and access to knowledge is something more than building technical infrastructure. Rapid diffusion of knowledge and innovation to all who need it requires:
 - the sharing of information, code, skills and design through universally accessible or community based platforms
 - the skills for understanding and reflection *and*
 - their appropriation for shaping our social habitats.

Conceiving knowledge as a commons guarantees a fair share of innovation, without the friction and suppression of sharing caused through excessive intellectual property regulations.

- E.** Institutional structures can articulate and make possible new commons, but they can also undermine the social connections and ethics that are indispensable to the commons. Therefore, a key challenge in devising effective commons-based policies is to balance these two concerns properly. The bureaucratization of the commons is not a commons, but a paradox to which we must be attentive.

For the success of a commons oriented politics, an alliance and an earnest exchange of experiences and know how between all those who work on the social, ecological, cultural and digital commons, is imperative.

October 31, 2010

Comments are welcome at comments@commonsstrategies.org.

Appendix B: Innovation Workshops

The names listed are the organizers of each workshop.

Stream III Innovation Workshops

III/4 The Ways of Knowledge and the Means of Shaping the Habitat: Policy Implications

of Different Models of Sharing Knowledge

Narahari Rao

III/5 Global Villages: Finding Common Ground Between Mountain Villages Around the World

Betsy Taylor, Maria Bareli, Effrosyni Koutsoutis, Franz Nahrada

III/6 Digital Commons: Mapping the Digital Commons, Development of a Common View and

Analysis of Sustainability and Governance Models

Mayo Fuster and Philippe Aigrain

Other Innovation Workshops

Economics

i1 The Role of Money/Credit/Currencies in the Commons Context

Thomas Greco, Ludwig Schuster

i2 Creating Abundance Art Centers: Cultivate the arts, skills, knowledge and networks that

nurture abundant life.

Wolfgang Hoeschele

Technology

i3 New Enclosures of the Commons: The transition to the Biomass Economy and Geo-engineering

Pat Mooney

i4 Creating Knowledge Commons Within Universities: Strategies for Re-orienting Higher Education

Silje Graupe

i5 Knowledge Networking and Education
Leo Burke, George Pór

i6 Open Access as a Knowledge Commons
Rainer Kuhlen

Politics, Law and Concepts

i7 Creating a Political Voice for the Commons
Ruth Meinzen-Dick

i8 Legal Aspects/Problems/Solutions Regarding the Commons
Carolina Botero, Claudio Ruiz

i9 Bringing the Discussion on the Commons to Dakar, the World Social
Forum, in February 2011
*Frédéric Sultan, Suzanne Humberstet, Hervé le Crosnier, Valérie Peugeot,
Alain Ambrosi, Simon Roux*

i10 Enabling a Mutually Beneficial Collaboration Among Diverse Commons
Groups at All Levels,
using the United Nations
Linsinka Ulatowska

i11 The Rights of Mother Earth versus the Commons?
*Nicola Ballard (Focus on the Global), Alberto Acosta (FLACSO), Maude
Barlow (Council of Canadians)*

i12 Common Heritage of Humanity
James Quilligan

i13 What Can the Commons Paradigm Contribute to the Transformation of
the Welfare State?
Brigitte Kratzwald