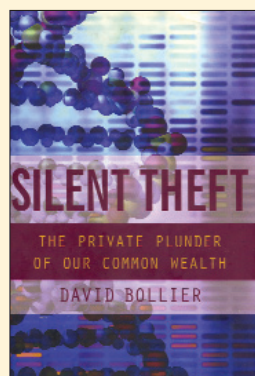


Expand your commons knowledge

Silent Theft: The Private Plunder of Our Common Wealth

by David Bollier

David Bollier expertly knits the threads of our commons ownership into a tapestry of strategies for building a common future. www.silenttheft.com.



The State of The Commons 2003/04: A Report to Owners from Friends of the Commons

We are richer than we think. But we're leaving our children poorer.

Download or purchase your copy at www.friendsofthecommons.org.



What Tragedy?

Fresh water and human knowledge are two of our common inheritances. A crucial question in thinking about such different commons is this: How much does one person's use of the resource affect another's? With fresh water, my use would subtract from what's available for you. On the other hand, in the public domain of human knowledge, my use would not reduce yours. Just the opposite, in fact; the more people use it, the more it grows.

Ever since 1968, when biologist Garrett Hardin popularized the phrase "tragedy of the commons," we've thought mostly about that first kind of commons. But even in those situations, there are flaws in Hardin's claim that users of a commons will inevitably destroy the resources on which they depend. Researchers around the world have found that, where traditional social systems remain intact, few commons fall victim to such selfish overuse. Many are carefully governed by social arrangements that recognize the advantage of self-restraint and fairness in the local community, thus protecting the commons for the long term.

Tragic ends are not inevitable for modern societies either. We have explored a few of the market and technological tools that can help us to realize the "opportunity of the commons." Our stores of natural and social capital amount to a vast wealth. If we use them wisely, the commons can satisfy all of our needs.

Successful commons management depends on trust and reciprocity. In our modern times, some arrangements for commons management will have to be worked out with our counterparts around the globe. But others will require that we reestablish the local and regional scales of stewardship that provide the glue for well managed commons. We all care about our own backyards, after all. Along the West Coast of North America, we call this backyard Salmon Nation. It's a place where we draw upon a common heritage and build a common future. A place where we not only live, but thrive.

Welcome home.



Groups building our common trust:

- **Common Assets Defense Fund** www.commonassets.org
- **Tomales Bay Institute** www.earthisland.org/tbi

Learn more about these commons:

Sky

- **The Sky Trust Initiative** www.usskytrust.org

Water

- **Public Citizen** www.citizen.org/cmep/water

Knowledge & Culture

- **Public Knowledge** www.publicknowledge.org

Airwaves

- **New America Foundation** www.spectrumpolicy.org

Internet

- **Center for Digital Democracy** www.democraticmedia.org

Public Spaces

IN PORTLAND:

- **City Repair** www.cityrepair.org
- **Southeast Uplift** www.southeastuplift.org

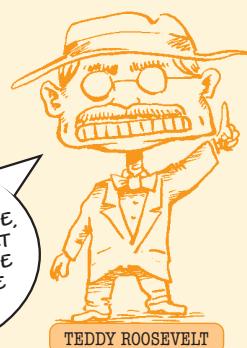
IN BAY AREA:

- **Peninsula Open Space Trust** www.openspacetrust.org
- **Planet Drum** www.planetdrum.org
- **San Francisco League of Urban Gardeners** www.slug-sf.org

What's the Big Idea?

Click on [What's the Big Idea](#) at www.SectionZ.info.

"THE TRUE FRIEND OF PROPERTY, THE TRUE CONSERVATIVE, IS HE WHO INSISTS THAT PROPERTY SHALL BE THE SERVANT AND NOT THE MASTER OF THE COMMONWEALTH."



TEDDY ROOSEVELT

FEEDBACK MATTERS Please let us know what you think of SectionZ. Write comments@SectionZ.info.

SECTION Z

A PUBLICATION OF ECOTRUST
ISSUE #5

SECTION Z

MAKING OUR ECONOMY SAFE FOR PEOPLE AND NATURE

Making our economy safe for people and nature

The blessings of the free market have won endless praise. But wait a second. If Adam Smith's "invisible hand" is so deft, why are problems like climate disruptions and ever-widening wealth gaps so clearly visible?

We can change all that by rethinking some of our basic assumptions. Let's start by recognizing that the "economy" is but a part of the larger "ecology." The result will be more prosperous lives for all of us.

The science is there, the economics is there, and we need you there, too.

Learn more:

www.SectionZ.info

Order copies of SectionZ at www.SectionZ.info/orders.

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"SOME DAY, SON, NONE OF THIS WILL BE YOURS."



UNLESS...

SectionZ: Making our economy safe for people and nature. If we keep planet, profit and the public good all in mind, there's no reason that one has to run roughshod over the others. Over the course of six issues, SectionZ will present a slew of ideas that have the power to change everything. Learn more online at www.SectionZ.info.

Building our common assets

What's your most valuable stuff? Not the house or car. It's the things we share in common: gifts of nature, like air and water, and the sum of all human knowledge and experience, including science and culture. They form the basis of humanity's common wealth, and without them we couldn't breathe, drink, or create. We call them, collectively, "the commons."

Despite their importance, we've forgotten how to recognize the commons and act like the rightful owners of these riches. Our ancestors saw more clearly. The stewardship of our shared inheritance is embedded in our religious traditions, and laws about the commons date back to Roman times. Some early American states called themselves "Commonwealths" and made the government responsible to care for that common property for "generations yet to come."

But these days our commons are threatened as never before. Some are being run into the ground, and others are being swallowed up as private property. But if we look closely, our commons are still there for us to claim and protect. Now's the time.

In this issue of SectionZ:

Let's Reclaim The Commons

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