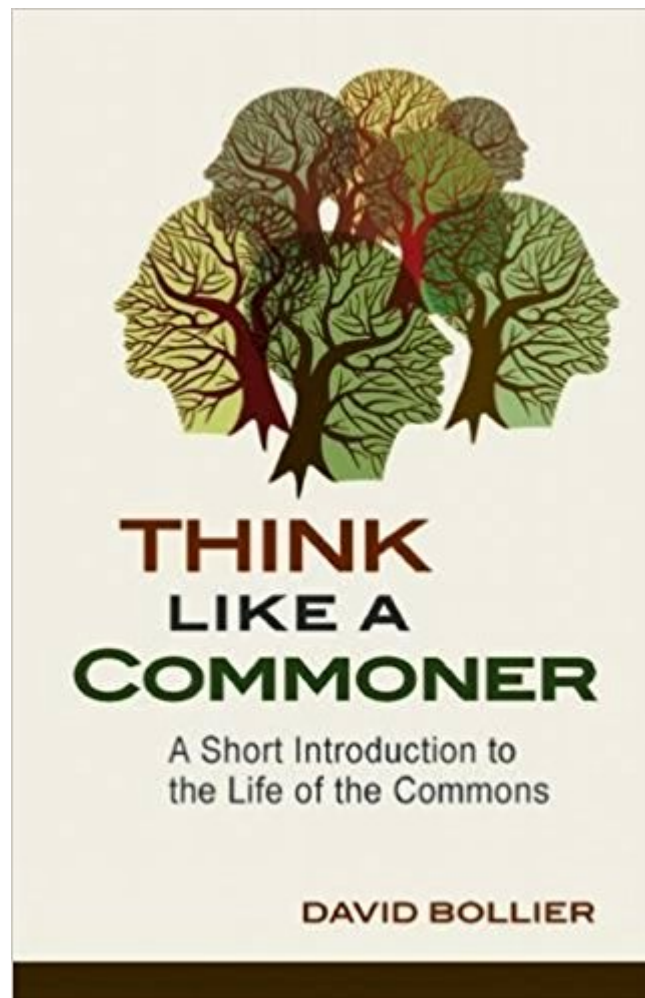




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# Think Like A Commoner: A Short Introduction To The Life Of The Commons



## Synopsis

The biggest "tragedy of the commons" is the misconception that commons are failures—relics from another era rendered unnecessary by the market and state. *Think Like a Commoner* dispels such prejudices by explaining the rich history and promising future of the commons—an ageless paradigm of cooperation and fairness that is re-making our world. With graceful prose and dozens of fascinating stories, David Bollier describes the quiet revolution that is pioneering practical forms of self-governance and production controlled by people themselves. *Think Like a Commoner* explains how the commons: Is an exploding field of DIY innovation ranging from Wikipedia and seed-sharing to community forests, collaborative consumption, and beyond Challenges the standard narrative of market economics by explaining how cooperation generates significant value and human fulfillment Provides a framework of law and social action that can help us move beyond the pathologies of neoliberal capitalism We have a choice: ignore the commons and suffer the ongoing private plunder of our common wealth, or *Think Like a Commoner* and learn how to rebuild our society and reclaim our shared inheritance. This accessible, comprehensive introduction to the commons will surprise and enlighten you, and provoke you to action. David Bollier is an author, activist, blogger, and independent scholar. He is the author of six books on different aspects of the commons, including *Green Governance*, *The Wealth of the Commons*, and *Viral Spiral*, and is a frequent speaker at conferences, colleges and universities, and policy workshops.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"The Commons is among the most important and hopeful concepts of our time, and once you've read this book you'll understand why!" ---Bill McKibben, author *Deep Economy*

*Think Like a Commoner* is a brilliant, accessible, practical, path-breaking intellectual tour de force. A defining contribution to the New Economy movement and an essential read for everyone who cares about the human future. I expect to return to it as a basic reference for years to come.---David Korten, author, *Agenda for a New Economy*, board chair YES! Magazine, and co-chair, New Economy Working Group

Foreword Review #151; Spring 2014, Anna Call February 27, 2014

Straightforward political and business models for a reconciliation of natural resources opens the door for social activists and common armchair readers alike.

*Think Like a Commoner* is a brief history and explanation of the commons, which are mutually held, collectively managed property. Though this concept may seem alien to modern eyes, managing commons is a long-held tradition that has included forests, water, air, and other natural resources that technically don't belong to anyone. David Bollier describes the history of the commons and projects its future as a possible fixture of modern life. His ultimate aim is to educate, but this extremely clear and fascinating work may serve just as well to galvanize.

This book stresses "enclosure," which some economists might recognize as "resource grabbing," as both a critical attack on resources and a primary cause of poverty. Resources once held in common, like British forests and California water, are attractive enough to perpetrators of business ventures that they tend to be unilaterally claimed, which is not necessarily fair to the people who once relied on them. The most strident example cited in this book is the British woodlands, which had supported a nation of peasants with free wood and food but were eventually claimed for the exclusive use of British aristocracy.

Bollier's statements against the destruction of common property are particularly effective in that they are backed up by facts, examples, rational argument, and compromise. Even dyed-in-the-wool capitalists may find themselves intrigued. Though he criticizes large-scale political and commercial structures for their role in the erosion of the commons, Bollier presents a number of useful ideas, as well as his own opinions, on how to reconcile the commons with current business and government models in such a way that everyone wins. This perspective is refreshing in activism, where even leaders are often all-or-nothing absolutists.

*Think Like a Commoner* is extraordinarily well structured. Though the concept of common property is hardly simple, Bollier's explanations, well supported by multiple examples, are so straightforward that even high school students will find this book easy to understand.

As an introduction to a massive topic, this book serves admirably as a quick review, an informative tract, and an appetizer all at once. While *Think Like a Commoner* won't make or break any experts, it certainly opens

the door; interested readers will find plenty to fill their time with in the extremely comprehensive reading list included in the back matter.

Review - Sharable.net, April 2014

Think Like a Commoner explores the commons in layman's terms, making it the ideal introduction for anyone wishing to learn more about what Bollier calls our "shared inheritance."

Review - Grassroots Economic Organizing Wolfgang Hoeschele

If you are vexed by the question "What is to be done?" here are at least parts of the answer. "The commons is truly the new paradigm, the missing third link for the reform of civilization. But the commons is not a thing, but above all the expression of a cultural revolution and of subjective changes. David Bollier has done a great job of explaining the importance of this great cultural shift." ---Michel Bauwens, Founder, Foundation for Peer-to-Peer Alternatives

"Our world is in need of reviving an ancient wisdom if it is to survive. David Bollier has a beautiful, bold but practical vision for our commons future and lights the path forward. I love this book!" ---Maude Barlow, National Chairperson of the Council of Canadians; international water activist

"It probably surprises you to know that the wealth we own together as a commons is far more valuable than the wealth that we and corporations own separately. Corporations know this and have commercialized or taken control of what we the people own -- such as the public airwaves, the public lands, our genes and trillions of dollars of knowledge (eg. research and development) paid for by taxpayers -- for starters. For this and more you must read Bollier's brilliant distillation of the huge variety of commons and how we can take control of what we own in order to transform our economy for us, our posterity and the planet. Once you pick it up, you'll all tremble with the excitement of what we all own in the form of the commons that somehow escaped our notice in our years of formal education." ---Ralph Nader, Consumer advocate and author, Unstoppable: The Emerging Left-Right Alliance to Dismantle the Corporate State

"The Commons is among the most important and hopeful concepts of our time, and once you've read this book you'll understand why!" ---Bill McKibben, author Deep Economy

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A new world based on fairness, self-reliance and pride is closer than you think; if you learn to think like a commoner! The Commons is among the most important and hopeful concepts of our time, and once you've read this book you'll understand why! ---Bill McKibben, author *Deep Economy*; *Think Like a Commoner* is a brilliant, accessible, practical, path-breaking intellectual tour de force. an essential read for everyone who cares about the human future. ---David Korten, author, *Agenda for a New Economy*, board chair YES! Magazine, and co-chair, New Economy Working Group With graceful prose and dozens of fascinating stories, Bollier introduces the people, projects and vision now spawning a global movement. *Think Like a Commoner* explains how the commons: Challenges the standard narrative of contemporary market economics; Provides a framework of law and social action that can help us move beyond neoliberal capitalism; Is an exploding field of DIY innovation ranging from Wikipedia and seed-sharing to community forests and collaborative consumption, and beyond. We have a choice: Ignore the commons and suffer the ongoing private plunder of our common wealth. Or *Think Like a Commoner* and learn how to rebuild our society and reclaim our shared inheritance. This accessible, comprehensive introduction to the commons will surprise you, enlighten you, and provoke you to action. Our world is in need of reviving an ancient wisdom if it is to survive. David Bollier has a beautiful, bold but practical vision for our commons future and lights the path forward. I love this book! ---Maude Barlow, National Chairperson of the Council of Canadians; international water activist David Bollier is an author, activist, blogger and independent scholar. He is cofounder of the Commons Strategies Group and an author or editor of six books on

different aspects of the commons, including Green Governance, The Wealth of the Commons and Viral Spiral.

Bollier reveals how the corporate world has been encroaching and usurping the resources that were once held in Common by the citizens of Earth. If you want to know how international corporations operate, this is a good book for you. Also, he gives us hope by showing how ordinary people are resisting these efforts by creating new commons. A very good read.

Another way to look at life and the why and how it changed for just regular folk, that something we all miss...Good and thoughtful read

This is such an excellent introduction and explanation of the Commons movement. I find it well written, with excellent real-life stories to anchor my understanding. Well done.

David Bollier does a masterful job of reminding us about the potential to manage shared resources collaboratively, without relying solely on markets or governments. Timely reading in the context of debates about Internet Governance. He shows that there is a third path that can help resolve debates about conflicts between property and liberty.

This book is our future.

I highly recommend this primer on the commons. Bollier strikes the perfect balance in defining the commons by being straightforward without being simplistic. The commons emerges as a tangible path out of the crises we face that is beautiful, complex, and most of all, practical.

Inspiring and well researched.

This is an amazing book. Very impressed.

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