

Commons Sense

FOSTERING A
COMMONS CULTURE



Previous page: Seaweed and fishermen's rope, finds from the beach entangled by hand.

This page: Boundary stone, St Leonards on Sea



Master Module Workbook

MA Sustainable Design

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Project Overview

‘Commons sense’ is a continuation of my research investigating commons and commoning (commons/-ing) practices through design practice. This study explains how commons/-ing is a potential route to a sustainable future and a reaction to capitalism and our ‘consumer democracy’.¹

Commons is a broad topic. Historically it relates to enclosures, today it is a call to reclaim our commons as an effective way to tackle the climate crisis. Commoning practices that include collective stewardship and care, are crucial to the survival of the commons. Communicating the importance of commons can expose the consequences of abusing resources, and even better, show that these resources as part of the same system as ourselves. Although commoning practices exist across the globe, the commons is an emerging concept with academics and thinkers still framing what the commons is and how it can operate.

This project is an inquiry into the potential design has to contribute to making visible commons/-ing. This workbook will present the design research, theoretical context and practice through a variety of methods and studies. In my locality, I ask what people understand about commons and explore where and how commons/-ing takes place. I speculate on what other commons might be possible. I develop designs to communicate commons concepts. Each study attempts to create conditions for dialogue and ways to encourage participation. I discover the importance of situated practice, our relations to nonhuman worlds, the need for diversity and design for every day lives.

This work builds on my strong relationship as a resident and designer, with the local community of Hastings and St Leonards. The ongoing work is a collective attention² towards reimagining our local environment, economy, institutions and social networks and strengthening our resilience. As Donna Haraway tells us the ‘sustaining creativity of people who care, and act animates the action’.³ I would normally use participatory design methodologies working to facilitate the design capabilities of local people. This has not been possible in Spring/Summer 2020 because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, the work is more speculative with proposals for workshops and future projects.

1 Tony. Fry, *Design as politics* (Oxford: Berg, 2011). <http://capitadiscovery.co.uk/brighton-ac/items/1223462>. 9

2 Jenny Odell, *How to Do Nothing: Resisting the Attention Economy*. (New York: Melville House, 2019). 126

3 Donna Jeanne Haraway, *Staying with the trouble: making kin in the Chthulucene* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016). <http://capitadiscovery.co.uk/brighton-ac/items/1506044>. 5

Designer statement

I am a socially responsible designer, researcher, activist and commoner.

I have a long-held interest in the natural world, materials, cooperative practices and communication through art and design. This stems from years grappling with the individualism of life that has been perpetuated in society since my birth. Also, during my lifetime humans have tipped the Earth into a climate crisis due to exploitation, extraction and over consumption.

I have worked in technology since the early 2000s but have become increasingly disillusioned by the limitations it has to contribute to social change. To make significant shifts in behaviours and everyday living I see more benefits in focussing on actions in the public, physical realm.

My design work is situated in the emerging area of the designer as a facilitator alongside citizen-designers and their visions for a sustainable lives. My practice centres on meta and transition design, participatory design, systems thinking and design anthropology. This involves active listening and care for others, be they human or nonhuman. We must work collectively, translocally, collaboratively, empowering communities and promoting the need to give back to ecological systems.

My ambition is to focus more on knowledge and wisdom of people in local communities and also from the more than human world.

Beyond the MA Sustainable Design, I hope to establish a cooperative design consultancy to catalyse and support commons-based practices within local communities, the public and the private sector.

From November 2020, I have been invited to join the Board of Trustees at the Heart of Hastings, a local Community Land Trust establishing the Hastings Commons in the town centre.

Statement of intent

Starting from the premise that humans are part of nature, design is used as a tool to introduce others to the concept of commons.

A constructive moving away from privatisation of shared resources and the individualisation of society to collectively build a low carbon future.

However, the commons is an emerging concept, we are still framing what the commons is and how it can operate. It is known more widely within digital domains, such as Creative Commons, sharing economies but less as a wider concept or even a potential social movement.

This research work asks, “**Can design foster discourse on the topic of commons/-ing within local communities?**” The work is situated in the towns of Hastings and St Leonards, East Sussex. It explores the lexicon of commoning and how we might translate it into a language which is more relatable and accessible. It uses design to better understand local perceptions of commons, to build comprehension and facilitate and support new forms of commoning.

Discursive objects and design artefacts are used to facilitate conversations and gain insights into the knowledge and practices of the local community. The intention is for the design practices in this workbook to provoke dialogue and present possibilities for futures thinking. The work also looks for new ways to understand through design and art practice, as well as possible new methods. It involves considering the nature of design itself.

Research question

*Can design foster
discourse on the topic of
commons/-ing within local
communities?*

Audience

This work is aimed primarily at local community change agents. Additionally some aspects are aimed at publics. The work as a whole may be of value to commons activists and academics.

Primary

Local change-agents

Secondary

Publics/citizens

Tertiary

Academics within the field of design or from other disciplines

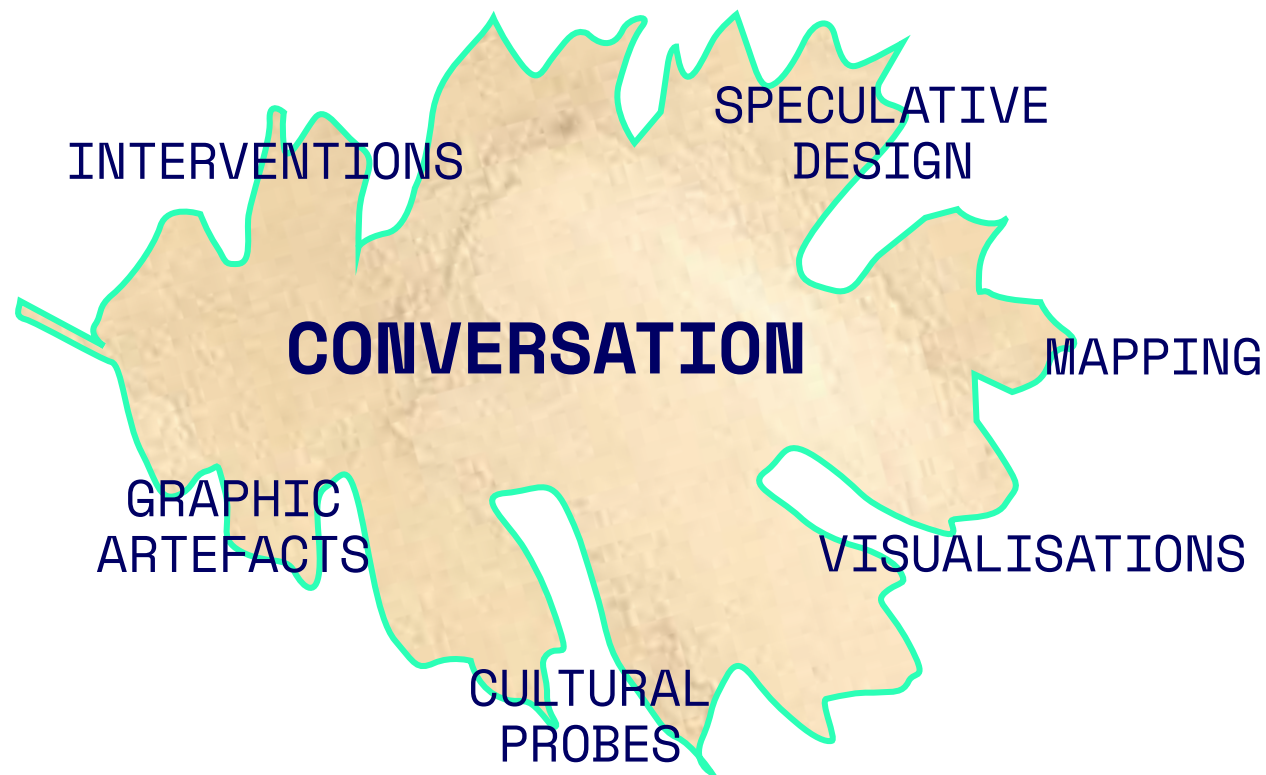


Fig 1

Research outputs

This section briefly outlines the research studies undertaken. Each study is designed to respond to the research question **Can design foster discourse on the concept of commons/-ing in local communities?** in a specific way.

The outputs are varied as I attempt new methods and test designs that create discursive objects as well as conditions for dialogue (see Fig 1). I make visible existing practices of commons culture and gather new knowledge and insights through design practice.

It has been necessary to work around the limitations of movement and interaction enforced by the UK government to mitigate the impacts of the COVID pandemic.

UNDERSTAND

Mapping the local commons

The act of mapping commons practices in Hastings and St Leonards makes visible projects otherwise invisible or unacknowledged as commons/-ing. Further insights are gained by visualising key points from interviews with those active in these projects. This work forms a picture of the agency of the commons in my local community.

Commoning can take place with little understanding of contemporary concepts of commons. Work is needed to directly support these projects to be more commons like, for example, through documentation, a set of rules, improved governance, increases in participation and diversity, shared best practice and through acts of care.

SPECULATE

Mapping potential commons

This mapping project builds on the existing commons practices in Hastings and St Leonards and imagines 'new commons' that could become part of a wider network of commons practices. These practices work regeneratively to support local natural ecosystems and include community woodlands, sea commons, beach commons and urban commons such as the contested old bathing pool site in West St Leonards.

INTERVENTIONS

Design proposals in public space

'Sink or Swim' festival proposal is a situated practice, using the contested old bathing pool site as a public space to create visibility of the commons and facilitate dialogue around possible futures of the site and its surrounds. The practice involves embedding design activism and event design into a local campaign to save a neglected public open space from private development.

It is important that the local community are part of the design process. This practice reveals the need for design to support the needs of local people above any need to communicate about the commons.

COMMUNICATE

Graphic artefacts as discursive objects

Graphic approaches to presenting ideas of commons and commoning that could form part of a communication strategy to raise questions and the concept of commons in the public domain.

Graphic devices work best when situated in an appropriate context, ideally as part of a commons project.

FACILITATE

Graphic artefacts as discursive objects

Cultural probes to motivate participation and engagement in concepts of reciprocity (eco-commoning). This exercise attempts to work with care in human/ nonhuman relations by creating conditions for people to reflect on the wider ecological ecosystem and their responsibilities to it. They experience being on the beach discovering what's there and reflecting on our connection to place and ecology and possibility reflecting on the negative impacts we humans have on this precious ecosystem.

Measures of success

1. Making visible commons practices in my locality.
2. Clarity on attitudes to commoning in my locality.
3. Design being successfully used to support comprehension of commoning work.
4. Development of the seed of a local social network emerging around commons/-ing.
5. Emergence of a wider interest in the commons and concepts of care and reciprocity.
6. Ideas for events and new commons positively received.

Shell wrapped in fishermen's rope both
finds from the beach



Introduction

Sustainability cannot be of some things and not others; it can countenance no boundaries of inclusion and exclusion.⁴

While this work is a continuation of an interest in local community-led climate action and the concepts of commons and commoning, this collection of design studies attempts to move away from a human centred approach towards situation centered and more than human centred worlds.

Commons Sense takes a holistic look my local community's ecosystem in relation to acts of commoning as a means to create sustainable futures by design. It does this by exploring how commons is currently understood within the community and how to communicate the concept of commons to a wider audience. Additionally, it explores systems thinking, acknowledging that we humans are inextricably connected to nonhuman worlds and how we might act within this dynamic.

First, I will state my position in terms of 'design' and 'sustainability'. Design is a political act. As Tony Fry states, design needs to focus on what to "bring into being to transcend the unsustainable, sustain all that needs to be sustained, and make viable futures possible".⁵

While capitalism is the default economic model sustainability will not be achieved. Citizens are disempowered by the current democratic process and instead are 'consumed' by capitalism which exploits, extracts and commodifies nature.

Capitalism lives by exploiting wage labour, free riding on nature, public goods, and the unwaged social reproduction.⁶ This is, of course, not sustainable. Our natural, common pool commons are under threat from capitalist practices of privatisation and exploitation. Capitalism also takes us away from nature, commodifies it and turns it into 'other', it does this with the aid of design.

4 Ingold, Tim. "Art and Anthropology for a Sustainable World." *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 25, no. 4 (2019): 659-75. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9655.13125>. 667

5 Tony. Fry, *Design futuring: sustainability, ethics and new practice* (Oxford: Berg, 2009). <http://capitadiscovery.co.uk/brighton-ac/items/1163392>. 20.

6 Arruzza, C., Bhattacharya, T., & Fraser, N. (2019). *Feminism for the 99 percent: A manifesto*. London, UK: Verso.16-17

Citizens have little power to influence government policies and activities as so-called democratic politics does not operate in a sufficiently democratic way⁷ Disenfranchised local communities can take action by working with the commons to change with way we ‘think, act and occupy the world’.⁸

The UN *Sustainable Development Goals* still position nature as managed by humans. It is considered ‘passive, controlled, mute and powerless’. Meanwhile, initiatives that advocate for all species, such as the Earth Charter, remain marginalised.⁹

For Ingold the art of sustainability is a conversation, embracing all nonhuman animals of all sorts.¹⁰ Sustainability must come from this new way of being and thinking about the world. This leads to acts that focus on care for nature, acknowledging that humans are a part of nature. This way of thinking includes thinking in systems.

Jenny Odell says:

And ecological understanding allows us to identify “things” – rain, cloud, river – at the same time that it reminds us that these identities are fluid. Even mountains erode, and the ground below us moves in giant plates. It reminds us that while it’s useful to have a word for that thing called cloud – when we really get down to it, all we can really point to is a series of flows and relationships that sometimes intersect and hold together long enough to be a “cloud”.¹¹

We need alternative economic models that understand all things are interconnected, this is a key design task.¹²

Commoning is a collective ‘imaginative act of casting our experience forward’. Only through this practice can citizenship be truly sustainable. For Ingold the route to sustainability lies in correspondence.¹³ Commoning practices allow citizens to collectively and inclusively steward and take care of nature. They consist of space and process as a route to reclaim our shared inheritance in order to build a better, sustainable future, economically, environmentally and socially.

7 Tony Fry, *Design as politics*. 37

8 Tony Fry, *Design futuring: sustainability, ethics and new practice* (Oxford: Berg, 2009). <http://capitadiscovery.co.uk/brighton-ac/items/1163392>. 22

9 Louise St. Pierre, *Design and Nature: A History in Design and nature: a partnership*, Kate Fletcher, Mathilda Tham, and Louise St. Pierre (London: Routledge, 2019). <http://capitadiscovery.co.uk/brighton-ac/items/1501616>. 98

10 Tim Ingold. “Art and Anthropology for a Sustainable World.” *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 25, no. 4 (2019): 659-75. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9655.13125>. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1111/1467-9655.13125>. 671

11 Jenny Odell, *How to Do Nothing: Resisting the Attention Economy*. 151

12 Tony Fry, *Design as politics*. 112

13 Tim Ingold., “Art and Anthropology for a Sustainable World.” *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 25, no. 4 (2019): 659-75. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9655.13125>. 675

Commoning is a shared resource (or a process of producing a shared resource) governed (or even owned) by the users of that resource. I align my work to Samuel Moore's definition of commons as "a situated practice of care positioned towards a commons horizon."¹⁴ Commons is performative care.¹⁵ We need to talk about how we can steward nature, rather than manage natural resources and what it means to care for the nonhuman world.

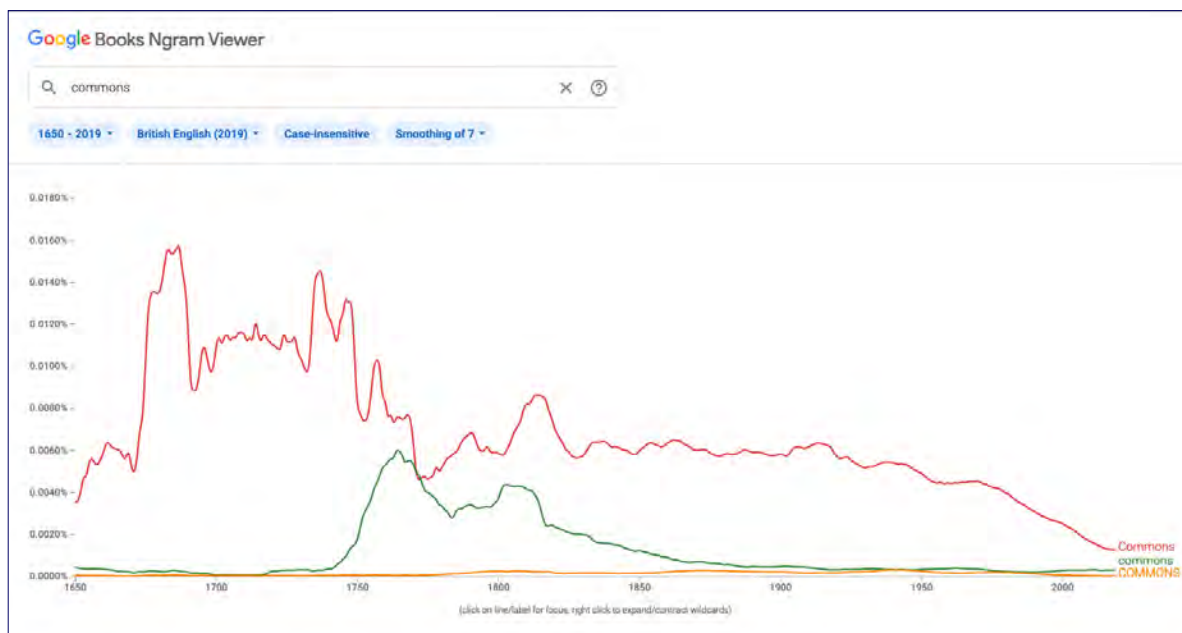


Fig 2. Popularity of 'commons' in literature from 1650–2019. ©Google Books Ngram Viewer

Commoning aims to create gifts to the future.¹⁶

Understanding that there is no one future for all but a series of futures¹⁷, within a local situated environment a collective of people can work together to imagine and deliver on their preferred future with their own agreed definition of sustainability. Reasons for participation may be varied but the work is underpinned by a shared purpose.

Gifts are often part of building relationships.¹⁸

Considering commons as gifts, with commoning we can give (or gift) back. With eco-commoning in particular, humans coexist with plants and animals. The work is regenerative. Eco-commoning is a 'situated practice driven by translocal community projects'.¹⁹

Awareness is the seed to responsibility.²⁰ In order to do the work, no one discipline holds the answers, we need to work together, and design is the bridge."²¹ Design can give us the attention holding space for reflection and conversation, leading to agreement and then action.²²

- 14 Samuel Moore, (2019, March 18). *The 'Care-full' Commons: Open Access and the Care of Commoning*. Retrieved April 19, 2020, from <https://www.samuelmoore.org/2018/06/27/the-care-full-commons-open-access-and-the-care-of-commoning/>
- 15 Fry, *Design as politics*. 207
- 16 *Ibid.*, 252
- 17 Rachel Charlotte Smith et al., eds., *Design Anthropological Futures* (London / New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016). 2
- 18 Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World, On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2015). 125
- 19 Dimitris Papadopoulos, (2020, April 29). Eco-Commoning. Retrieved August 14, 2020, from <https://commoners.craftspace.co.uk/research-network/eco-commoning/>
- 20 Jenny Odell, *How to Do Nothing: Resisting the Attention Economy*. xxii
- 21 Andrea Lipps et al., *Nature: Collaborations in Design* (New York: Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum, 2019). 9
- 22 Paul Pangaro, "Wicked Challenges need wicked possibilities" Presentation at Wicked Possibilities: Designing in and with systemic complexity [webinar], University of Brighton, UK, July 15, 2020. Available at <https://vimeo.com/435519533/bef09fc699>

Commons is not yet part of everyday vernacular. As fig 2 shows the word commons has been in decline in use in literature since the mid 1800s. It is understood in its historical context but not by contemporary definitions and explorations. In this research project I discover local activists use commons in a variety of ways and that the work is equally varied in terms of how they correlate to definitions of commons practice.

This project digs deeper and assesses what work in the town is close to a commons culture. By conversing with local activists and mapping commons activities in my local community I build a picture of this culture. I am then able to more successfully speculate on what other forms of commoning might be possible – across various aspects of everyday life including food, transport, our natural spaces and places, housing and wellbeing. Additionally, I explore a variety of ways that the commons and commoning could be more easily understood. I do this using cultural probes, graphic communications, event design.

This is design as a form of inquiry relevant to ‘investigating phenomena that are not very coherent, barely possible, almost unthinkable, and consistently under-specified because they are still in the process of being conceptually and physically articulated’.²³

Throughout this project I have attempted to immerse myself more fully in the nonhuman worlds around me. I have included diary entries that document my thoughts and feelings on this and other noticings.

23 Smith et al., *Design Anthropological Futures*. 89

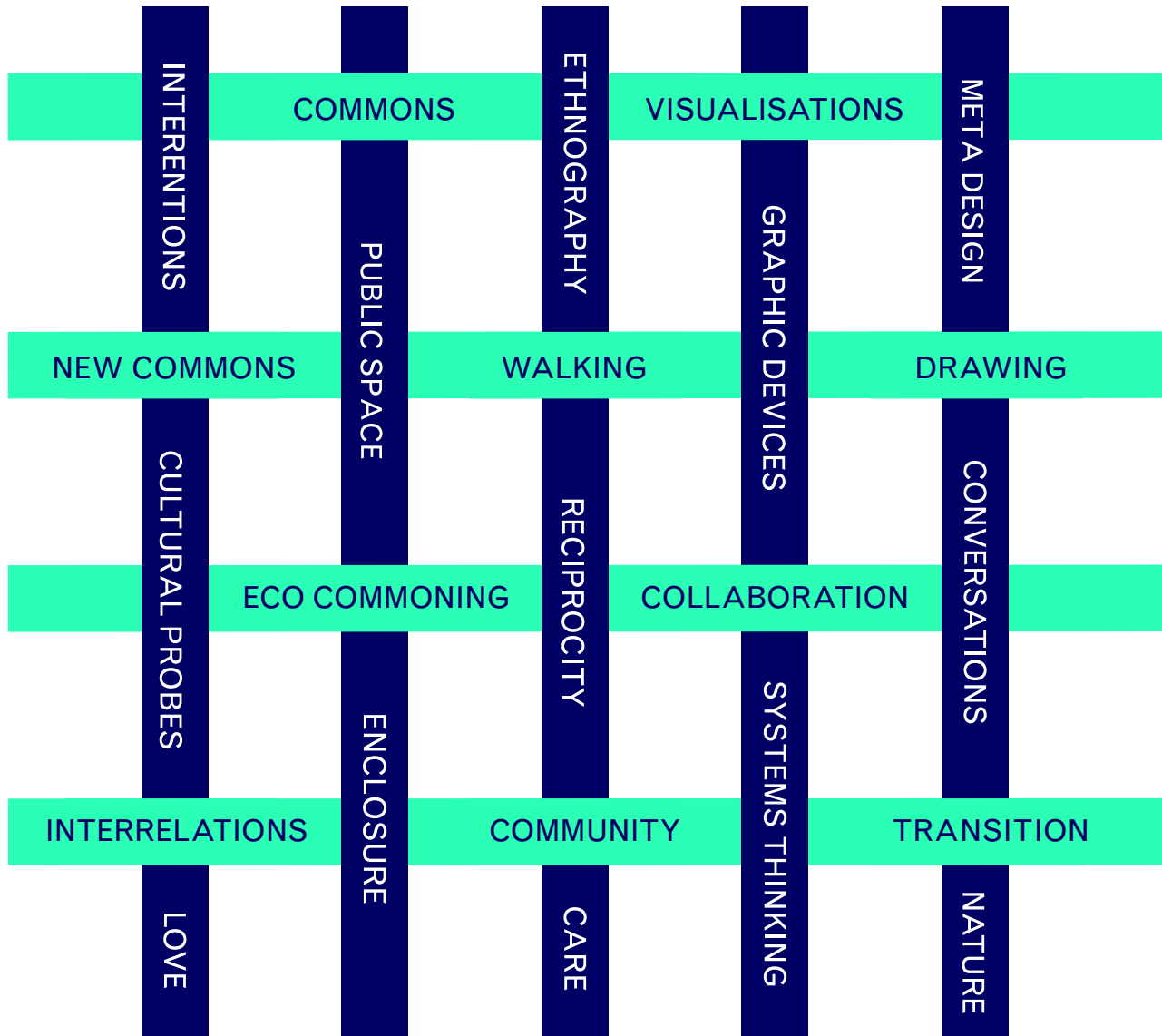


Fig. 3 Mapping my research and practice.

Contextual review

This project has multiple strands of influence. These are mapped in the diagram (Fig 3) and discussed in detail in the following *Contextual review* and the *Methodology and methods* section (p32).

I see the methods, theories and practices as very interconnected, like the ecosystems that operate all around us on earth.

Commons thinking and culture

Commons is not just a resource but it's a living, self-organised, social system.²⁴

The Commons is an emerging concept that presents society with an alternative economic model to mainstream capitalism and its tendency to exploit, extract and commodify nature.

As an antidote to 'consumer democracy' commoning invites citizens to play an active role in designing their everyday lives while acknowledging humans are relational to the ecosystem and to each other.

While common-pool examples of commons (such as air, water, common land) are fairly well understood by contemporary society, increasingly the term commons is used for a broader set of domains, e.g. knowledge commons, digital commons, urban commons, cultural commons, food commons. Commons practices manage socio-environmental relations in ways that attend to the finite nature of human and natural systems in a way to ensure their infinite abundance continues.²⁵

Commons is deeply rooted in cooperation. This is not resource management but a practice in collectively take power with a shared responsibility to steward and take care of resources, knowledge and practices.

We need, as David Bollier states, a 'new mindset', one that recognises we (the Earth, humans and nonhumans) are all part of the same living ecosystem. We need to intensify relationality and reciprocity.²⁶

24 David Bollier, and Silke Helfrich, *Free, fair, and alive: the insurgent power of the commons* (Gabriola Island, BC: New Society Publishers, 2019). 17

25 [Kenrick, J. \(n.d.\). *Commons Thinking, the ability to envisage and enable a viable future through connected action.* Retrieved February 3, 2020, from arts.brighton.ac.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0004/5737/Commons-Thinking.pdf](https://arts.brighton.ac.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0004/5737/Commons-Thinking.pdf)

26 David Bollier, *Commoning Innovations for a Post-Pandemic Worlds*, Stir, Magazine for the new Economy, Summer 2020. 5

Serge Attukwei Clottey



GoLokal performance with 'yellow brick road'
© Nii-Odzenma. Courtesy of Gallery 1957, Accra

The work of Serge Attukwei Clottey uses yellow gallons that are normally used to contain water in Ghana. His work is a celebration of community with pieces cut from the gallons to make art works (often collaboratively) as well as pathways through his community that reclaim space. Liz Whitehead, Director of Fabrica Gallery in Brighton calls his work an 'ecosystem of ideas', ideas that include pollution, collective histories, globalisation, trade and migration. Clottey 'weaves' the pieces of plastic together to unite them, having come from different people and different parts of the country.¹

1 Current Affairs: Serge Attukwei Clottey [Video file]. (2019, May 01). Retrieved July 02, 2020, from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u84v6B_3yJQ

Enclosure

Inhabiting public spaces gives citizens a voice, at a time when this space, and access to it, is diminishing and public life is pushed more into technological spaces. Today public space is under threat and often appropriated by private enterprise. Commons are anti enclosure. Enclosures are a disconnect with nature but also with culture. As public space is being lost, local people are rising to defend it.

Eco-commoning

The appeal of commons is that they can bring humans closer to nature. They create connection to natural resources and an awareness of the rhythms and limits of natural systems.²⁷ Eco-commoning is the 'immersion into the worlds one inhabits and shares with other nonhumans'. A process of transforming the everyday in alliance with the nonhuman creatures that makes our living possible and not just by using nonhumans to clean up the toxic by products we put in the air, the water and the soil.²⁸

Our social and political institutions can't confront what is happening environmentally at local and planetary levels as a single general problem to be solved at once. In this sense, eco-commoning is a situated practice driven by translocal community projects.²⁹

Community projects

This work is situated within the realms of local, everyday life. It requires the designer to operate in an immersive way, as part of the community they are practicing in. Research that is participatory helps understand the relationships at play between things, people, localities and media.

As Pink states, the everyday is the 'centre of human existence, the essence of who we are and our location in the world'. We must pay attention to the relationships between practice and place, through the experiential, the senses and movement.³⁰ Pink adds that we need to find similarities and patterns at a collective level without overlooking the diversity and potentialities of everyday life.³¹

27 Bollier, *Free, fair, and alive: the insurgent power of the commons*. 111

28 Dimitris Papadopoulos. (2020, April 29). Eco-Commoning. Retrieved August 14, 2020, from <https://commons.craftspace.co.uk/research-network/eco-commoning/>

29 Dimitris Papadopoulos. (2020, April 29). Eco-Commoning. Retrieved August 14, 2020

30 Sarah Pink. *Situating Everyday Life: Practices and Places*. Los Angeles, Calif. 149

31 *Ibid.*, 144

We require each other in unexpected collaborations and combinations... We become-with each other or not at all.³²

Commoning operates at the level of community. It is a reaction to the atomization of society which has increased alienation and made abuses of power more possible³³. Giving can create community and connection. Giving up something can sustain a commitment to the collective wellbeing.³⁴ Humans, Neera Singh writes, are not only hardwired to maximise utility but are also driven by the desire to care, give, and be valued as givers. Thinking and feeling are part of embodied ways of being and negotiating our environments.³⁵

Stewardship and care

The graph in fig. 4 shows how UK citizens have very high pro-environmental values. However, their actions, particularly in relation to conservation, do not live up to their values.

One approach of conversing about stewardship and taking responsibility is through the lens of commoning. I use the term stewardship instead of conservation, which feels paternalistic. Once engaged in commons practices, one behaves and thinks like a commoner. Explicitly this is a need for care. With commoning we can use our time for 'non-instrumental, non-commercial activity and thought, for maintenance, for care, for conviviality'.³⁶

In caring for air quality, soil and water we are caring for ourselves. We might consider the environment as 'an extended care structure'.³⁷ Care can be an explicitly materialised example of design as politics. By taking care of environment we may inadvertently take care of more recognised human care concerns (e.g. social care).

Talking about care can be tricky territory, where social care work and social reproduction are often ignored or devalued. Ethically, it is not straight forward to talk about caring for someone or something.

32 Haraway, *Staying with the trouble: making kin in the Chthulucene*. 4

33 bell hooks, *All About Love: New Visions* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2016). 130

34 Ibid., 142

35 Neera Singh, "Becoming a commoner: The commons as sites for affective socio-nature encounters and co-becomings," *Ephemera Journal* volume 17(4) (2017). 760

36 Jenny Odell, *How to Do Nothing: Resisting the Attention Economy*. 28

37 Tony Fry, *Design as politics*. 207

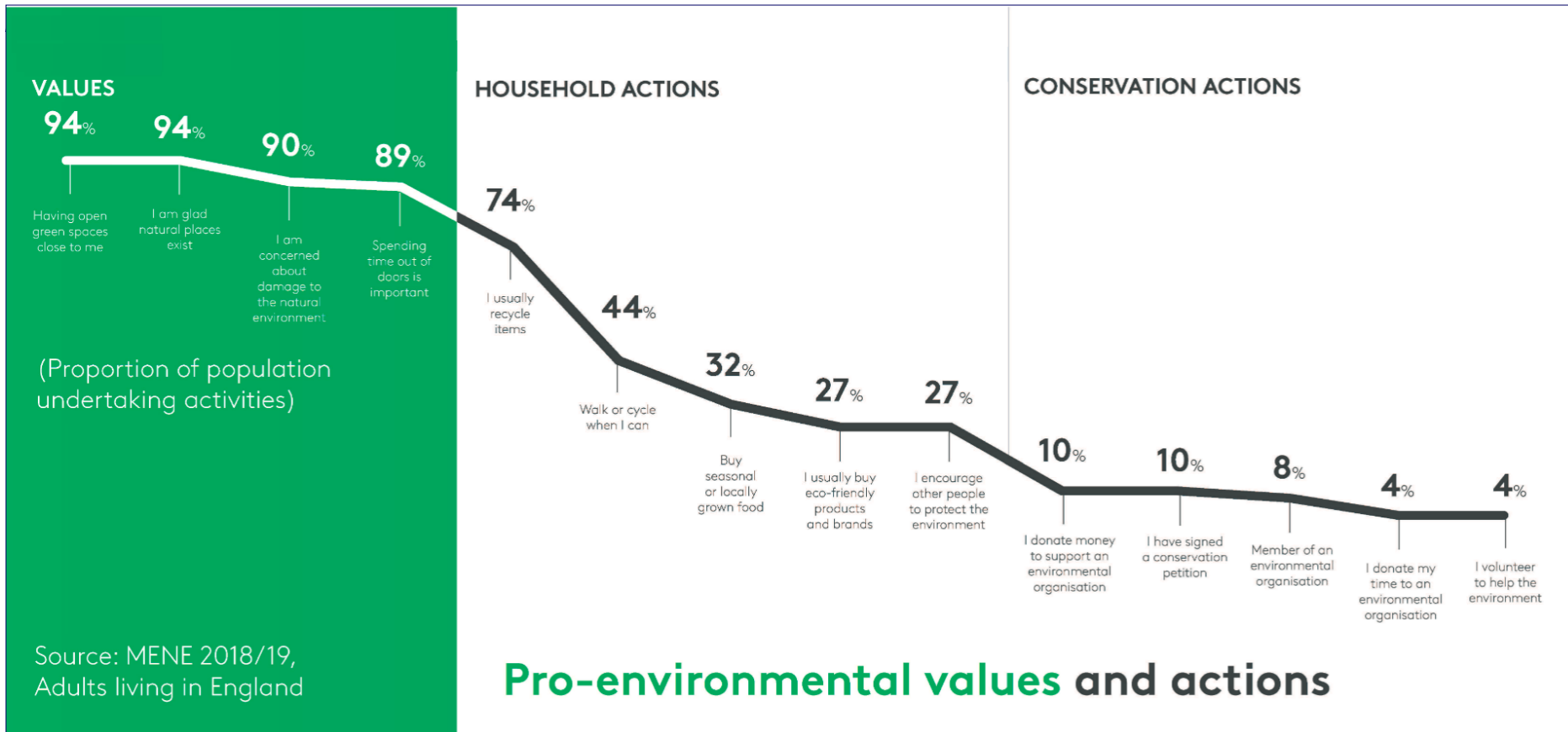


Fig. 4. © Natural England. Pro environmental values and actions

In *Matters of Care*, Puig de la Bellacasa exposes open-ended meanings of care, specifically in regard to more than human worlds. She confirms that for living to be possible there must be some form of care and insists that maintenance is a vital aspect of care as it includes the work, not just the disposition to ‘care about’.³⁸

Puig de la Bellacasa asks ‘how can engaging with care help us to think of ethical “obligations” in human-decentered cosmologies?’³⁹ Bellacasa explains that ‘webs of care obligations are impure’. Care must avoid using nonhuman world to clean up the toxic waste we put in our commons. Are we obliged to all nonhumans such as worms working to build the soil?⁴⁰

We might practice thinking with care, seeing how interdependent care is, considering obligations of human carers and how best to properly care for the nonhuman world. We need

38 Maria Puig de la Bellacasa, *Matters of Care, Speculative Ethics in More Than Human Worlds*, ed. Cary Wolfe, *Posthumanities* 41, (Minneapolis / London: University of Minnesota Press, 2017). 5

39 *Ibid.*, 13

40. *Ibid.*, 220

‘involved knowledge’, being touched rather than observing from a distance.⁴¹ However we understand care, it is important to get on with the work, to disrupt the status quo.⁴²

Mathilda Tham states, “Care is continuous and involves micro reflections to get it right... what’s careful in a situation is careless in a different one”. She believes an ethical care is important, something different to the outside frameworks like the SDGs, something that feels good and at the same time acknowledges when we get it wrong.⁴³

Learning from Nature

Schwann confirms that the more we re-connect to nature the greater our sense of belonging to place. “Landscape is a repository of knowledge where people gain experience and learn through intergenerational transfer and continuing practices”.⁴⁴

Intelligence is linked to a sensing of environment says Michael Marder. We can learn a lot from plants. “We only know 2-3% of capacities of plants. It’s a historic prejudice that humans are a better animal.” He argues that we have suppressed/repressed our vegetal heritage (growth, decay and metamorphosis). He explains that the Occupy Movement temporarily put down roots and behaved more vegetal.⁴⁵ With commoning can humans behave more vegetal?

David Abram says:

If we open our hearts and open our senses to the wider sensuous earth, I think we imbibe this deep teaching of diversity, of the need for an irreducible pluralism, and for celebrating otherness and radical alterity, radical otherness in our world, not looking to just shelter ourselves among those who think just like us or speak just like us or look just like us, but taking deep, new pleasure in otherness and strangeness.⁴⁶

41 Puig de la Bellacasa, *Matters of Care, Speculative Ethics in More Than Human Worlds*. 93

42 Ibid., 11

43 Mathilda Tham, at *Wicked Possibilities: Designing in and with systemic complexity* [webinar], University of Brighton, UK, July 15, 2020.

44 Alyssa Schwann, “*The Poetics of Cultural Landscapes through Ecological Wisdom*.” In *Design and Nature: A Partnership*, edited by Kate Fletcher, Mathilda Tham and Louise St. Pierre, 179-85. Oxon: Routledge, 2019. 180

45 Serpentine Podcast Episode - *General Ecology: With Plants* on iHeartRadio. (2019, May 31). Retrieved September 11, 2020, from <https://www.iheart.com/podcast/256-serpentine-galleries-31047104/episode/general-ecology-with-plants-45540396/>

46 David Abram, (n.d.). *The Ecology of Perception - Interview*. Retrieved July 12, 2020, from <https://emergencemagazine.org/story/the-ecology-of-perception/>

Seagull footprints in the sand on the beach



Design as Future Making

Historically design has pushed humans further from nature and seen nature as utilitarian. As Tham states, design has been the instrument that distinguishes humans from nature.⁴⁷ Today, designers are working on design with nature practices that help ‘people develop a sense of treasuring nature’.⁴⁸ More importantly designers should be working collaboratively with other disciplines and with citizens to develop a new relationship with nature.

Design is ontological, and brings about particular ways of being, knowing, and doing.⁴⁹ This requires a social practice ‘embedded in and meditated by the space, places, messages, and things encountered everyday’.⁵⁰ Design can play a role in encouraging people to use their imaginations and tell new stories about their everyday lives.

As identified in my Studio module, my work aligns with Transition Design. This involves a systems thinking, multi-stakeholder approach that involves backcasting, linking and amplifying projects.⁵¹

This research work has revealed to me a synergy between commons and future focused design theories and practice like metadesign. This notion relates to Ingold’s definition of commoning as an ‘imaginative act of casting our experience forward’.⁵²

Metadesign creates the conditions for citizens to be empowered to take action in their own lives and communities. To develop the capabilities of ‘change-agents’.⁵³ An emerging design practice, metadesign creates social and technical infrastructures in which new

47 Mathilda Tham, *Dirty Design (or A Bloody Mess)* In *Celebration of Life Affirming Design in Design and Nature: A Partnership*. London: Routledge, 2019. <http://capitadiscovery.co.uk/brighton-ac/items/1501616>. 137

48 C Condell., Bertrand, G., Lipps, A., & McQuaid, M. (2019). *Nature: Collaborations in design*. New York,, NY: Published by Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum. 14

49 Arturo Escobar, *Designs for the Pluriverse, Radical Interdependence, Autonomy and the Making of Worlds*, ed. University of North Carolina Arturo Escobar, Chapel Hill and Clark University Dianne Rocheleau, *New Ecologies for the Twenty-First Century*, (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2018). x

50 Susan Yelavich and Barbara Adams, eds., *Design As Future-Making* (London / New York: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2014).12

51 Sarah Macbeth, Studio module workbook, 31.

52 Tim Ingold, “Art and Anthropology for a Sustainable World.” *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 25, no. 4 (2019): 659-75. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9655.13125>. p675

53 Fry, *Design as politics*. 79

forms of collaborative design can take place.⁵⁴ It is a space where users of systems can be the designers.

The world of collective, unremunerated action (such as Creative Commons, community gardens, gift economy) sits comfortably with metadesign practice.⁵⁵ Fuad-Luke chooses to position metadesign away from environmental wellbeing⁵⁶ but I would argue it is integral to its practice. John Wood states that metadesign is a self-reflexive design practice with an environmental agenda. It's an 'enterprise of seeding ("how things might be")'.⁵⁷

Mathilda Tham calls meta design 'a license to dream' (after John Wood) and an uncompromisingly systemic approach to future making.⁵⁸

Tham suggests we put big models and frameworks aside to instead start digging where we stand and get dirty. 'It is so clear in design that the genuine love of a project comes when we start digging deep, with our bare hands, getting our psyches and souls in there'.⁵⁹

Communicating Commons

Many commons projects are started by academics and/or influenced by academic discourses. This can lead to communication and comprehensibility issues.

Language choice can play a big role. How do you describe your housing project? "De-commodifying housing by separating use value from exchange value," "Cheaper housing without land speculation," or "No profit with the rent!"⁶⁰ Better to use clear language that aligns with the everyday experience of citizens.

The local community and wider public may be more interested in the reasons behind the start of the commons project, its day-to-day work, its values and mission, and how to get involved. While it is difficult to control image, it is possible to shape the three core aspects of identity: communication, behaviour, and design. The more these three layers overlap and agree with each other, the more authentic and credible the image will appear.⁶¹

54 Jonathan Chapman and Nick Gant, *Designers, visionaries and other stories: a collection of sustainable design essays* (London: Earthscan, 2007). <http://capitadiscovery.co.uk/brighton-ac/items/1115620>. 30

55 Ibid., 103

56 Ibid., 36

57 Ibid., 102

58 Mathilda Tham, "Wicked possibilities." Presentation at Wicked Possibilities: Designing in and with systemic complexity [webinar], University of Brighton, UK, July 15, 2020. Available at <https://vimeo.com/436882571>

59 Mathilda Tham, Dirty Design (or A Bloody Mess) In Celebration of Life Affirming Design in *Design and Nature: A Partnership*. London: Routledge, 2019. 139

60 Mary-Dellenbaugh-Losse, Nils-Eyk Zimmermann, Nicole de Vries. "The Urban Commons Cookbook." iBooks. 145

61 Ibid., 145



Zoom workshop for PDC 2020

Participatory Design Conference

On June 16 2020 I participated in an invitation only workshop “Commoning Design and Designing Commons”, part of the *Participatory Design Conference (PDC) 2020*. The workshop was designed to explore what participatory design (PD) researchers, activists, and practitioners can contribute to the commons, and how. It was an act of commoning in itself, a collaboration on the production of an **open pluriversal card deck** about the topic of commons/-ing and its relationship with PD.

Prior to the workshop date – with Maurizo Teli, Roberto Cibin and Amalia de Gotzen – we discussed common aspects of our own work and began to populate the collaborative card deck. We agreed that both Amalia and I were giving data back to the community. Roberto Cibin suggested we are ‘making commons visible’. This confirmed I was asking a relevant research question in this project.

The workshop

On the day we built on the framework document: *A pluriversal commoning slide-deck*. (<https://fairkom.net/nextcloud/index.php/apps/onlyoffice/s/LqZHcC8taK2QnsE#app-content>). This contained the following sections: Definitions, Vocabulary and Jargon, Commoning Practices, Cases and Tools. The workshop raised important issues in relation to commons:

- Who is self-selected to create and talk about the work and history?
- Radical alterity – questioning the boundaries of who participates.
- Visualising can show the diversity.
- Commons is performative and emerging.
- Is there unconscious commoning, what’s the entry point?

My Observations

Experienced, published academics are questioning what commons and commoning are. They don’t have all the answers. From the discussions about the card desk it was clear that practice was what mattered in commons, over the actual commons (be they ecological, economic, knowledge etc.). Conversations are an important method for 'finding out'. However, they are difficult to capture succinctly, they need some kind of easy to digest documentation. These conversations are also a privilege to be a part of.

This workshop format was far too ambitious in its aims and while it asked some important

questions there was little time to unpick them. However, the card desk becomes part of the ongoing conversation. It shows how broad a topic commons is and, therefore, how challenging it is to communicate it to others. Some language used is complex and academic.

The card deck was a concrete outcome of the workshop, a version that can be forked into other projects and, as I suggested, possibly translated into other languages. This output and the conversations in the workshop were extremely useful for this research as they gave me insights into some unknown aspects of commons. It also helped me identify concepts such as reciprocity and stewardship that might be helpful in communicating the broader topic. I noticed how commons/-ing practices stretch beyond projects and into design methodologies. Ideas, practice and the creation of a new tool are all collaborative and shared transparently. Research can be an act of collaboration and connection or correspondence⁶², and an act of care.

I asked participants their thoughts on the beach as a commons. Several participants responding that it is a place for commons but not a commons itself. A commons space is where commoning acts take place, such as maintenance and care of the shoreline, making the ideas for a Transatlantic or Foreshore Commons potentially viable.

Next Steps

I will continue to contribute to this project. A follow up session takes place on 7 October 2020 where participants have an opportunity to feedback on the progress of the card deck.

62 Tim Ingold, "Art and Anthropology for a Sustainable World." *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 25, no. 4 (2019): 659-75. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1111/1467-9655.13125>. 666

New Normal

To interrupt a habit is to make it visible.⁶³

Since the spread of the COVID-19 virus, commentators across all political spectrums are observing the need to change our behaviour and our current systems. It has become clear that centralised systems now don't work. It has also shown how we are interconnected and dependent on each other. The necessity to socially distance oneself provided an opportunity to more closely observe animal and plant life. People reported sightings of animals and bird life previously unseen and also people have watched the plants grow around their neighbourhoods and taken up gardening and growing food with renewed spirit.

During lockdown I took walks in the streets and on the beach foraging for sea beet and sea kale. I also took up almost daily swimming practice which immersed me in sea water to the point where I was dreaming of the movement of the waves.

Many people in the town united around a new organisation called HEART (Hastings Emergency and Resilience Team), a mutual aid group managing over 400 volunteers able to support their local neighbourhood collecting shopping, walking dogs, making phone calls to isolated people... the culture of commoning at work.

A note from my journal on April 9th, 2020:

Today I read a news article in the Guardian⁶⁴ about how the virus was spread quite rapidly where people attended big gatherings. Gathering where people were intimate such as Mardi Gras, church events and funerals. When people are connected the virus spreads. Now I'm reading in Stir Magazine about social movements and how, in a crowd, people are comfortable with intimacy. Relevant to collectives, Jodi Dean discusses the concept of 'contagion' in relation to a crowd. In order to move from individual cognition and decision making you need 'contagion', "What matters are affect and imitation; rather than making arguments, what matters is contagion".⁶⁵



Grains growing amongst trees in the street, St Leonards, July 2020

63 Charles Eisenstein, (2020, March). *The Coronation* [Web log post]. Retrieved April 02, 2020, from <https://charleseisenstein.org/essays/the-coronation>

64 P Oltermann., Davidson, H., Laughland, O., Ratcliffe, R., Willsher, K., Walters, J., & Tondo, L. (2020, April 09). *The cluster effect: How social gatherings were rocket fuel for coronavirus*. Retrieved Apr 9, 2020, from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/apr/09/the-cluster-effect-how-social-gatherings-were-rocket-fuel-for-coronavirus>

65 Interview: Jodi Dean [Interview by 936757808 732802714 J. Gordon-Farleigh]. (202, Spring). *STIR The Magazine for the New Economy*, (29), 21-25.



Plants left to grow on the pavement, St Leonards, June 2020

This is a helpful insight when considering how to foster participation and behaviour change, but might we need to move even beyond imitation in social environments to imitating other nonhuman species too?

Given the current situation with COVID-19 it seems pitifully obvious that we need to curb our habits that exploit the natural world. Whether this virus has come from the lab or from wild animals we need to acknowledge that we are all, human and nonhuman, part of a single ecosystem. Humans are continually encroaching on and destroying natural habitats and, as a result, creating the conditions for viruses to survive.

How do we make the invisible visible? It's a problem brought sharply into focus during the pandemic. The virus is invisible to the eye but very much part of the natural ecosystem. The commons too are invisible within our current economic system. Equally, systemic problems like pollution, waste, micro-plastics and other environmental issues often remain out of sight.

The virus can breach boundaries (as can pollution). It doesn't abide by political borders, walls and fences, is not owned by anyone, as such taking the right actions to be able to manage it is difficult. It's no single nation's responsibility. The pandemic has shown us that nation states are not good at working together, instead they blame, shame and become protectionist.

During the lockdown in the UK there has been a lot of talk about 'building back better'. However, the action taken by the UK government always focuses on large scale infrastructure, deregulations which benefit large corporations and citizens encouraged to consume, as if they have nothing else to offer.

Meanwhile, communities are doing things that are really hard work – this work needs to flourish. Local and national government need to trust local people to deliver on their own ideas and projects. We must accept that uncertainty is an inevitable element of our lives.⁶⁶

66 Yoko. Akama, Sarah. Pink, and Shanti Sumartojo, *Uncertainty and Possibility : new approaches to future making in design anthropology* (London / New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018). 125

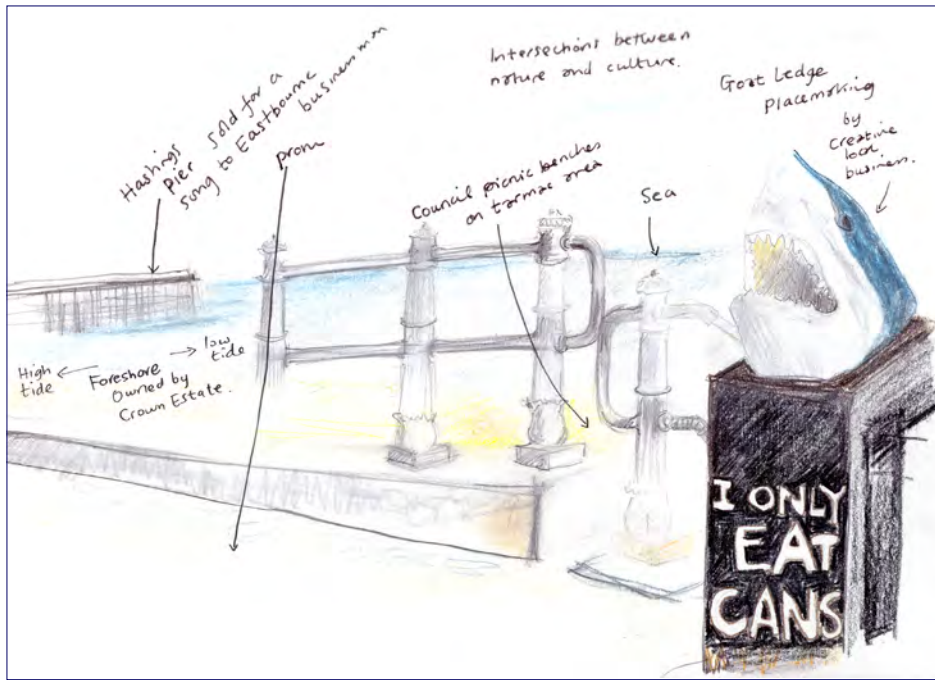


Fig 5. Drawing of St Leonards promenade near Goat Ledge café, June 2020

Methodology

To explore the commons in my local community I needed intuitive, embodied methods of inquiry. Some methods are from design anthropology, discovering insights in everyday activities, including interventions that catalyse awareness, to help people become aware of hidden dimensions and provide alternative perspectives.⁶⁷

Methods

Drawing

Drawing is a valuable tool for problem solving, it is the perfect analytical tool that allows complete freedom.⁶⁸ One of the earliest practices undertaken was drawing to help understand issues related to the commons. In fig 5 I sketched the seafront at St Leonards and considered the different uses of the space and ownership and where commons/-ing might take place. Another drawing was made possible with access to a printed map of St Leonards used in a community asset mapping project. All known 'private' spaces were eliminated from the map by being cut out with a scalpel blade. The 'dissection' of the town's space allowed for reflection on what is private, what is public (i.e. potential to be urban commons) and what seems to fall in between, or what is notionally accessible, even without being labelled as such. (see Fig 6). This practice revealed the following:

- Paths and roads take up a significant amount of public space, although they have many conflicting uses, walking, cycling, driving, litter and its collection, trees and other plant life that need care and attention. With COVID-19 2 metre requirements to distance from others, footpaths and alley ways are certainly not wide enough.
- The largest outdoor, public space in the town centre is the shoreline including the prom, beach, sea and some public and private buildings.
- There are few large outdoor spaces in the town centre aside from the beach where people can socially distance.

67 Akama, Pink, and Sumartojo, *Uncertainty and Possibility: new approaches to future making in design anthropology*. P2

68 Tania Kovats, ed., *The Drawing Book* (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2007). 40

Fig. 6. Cut out private space from a printed map of St Leonards on Sea





Making Oak Gall Ink, April 2020



Walking

It is a way of developing new knowledge, including knowledge about design.⁶⁹

During the COVID lockdown I took walks as a 'speculative mode of engagement'.⁷⁰ Walking allowed for noticing and noticing created space to speculate on how the streets might be different. Plants that would normally have been strimmed or pulled up were thriving on walls, around trees, on grass verges and small plots of land.

A diary note from this time:

For years I've been observing where nature is making space for itself, fighting back against roads, paving, developments, fences etc. Even I peel ivy off the side of the house, and the language I use to describe it has negative connotations - it's *unwanted* as it might cause *damage*, it's *taking over* the garden, it's *invasive*. Nature is 'enclosed' in these spaces and also annihilated by the local council contractors spraying Glyphosate [a toxic weed killer with detrimental health effects⁷¹] across pavements, along walls and pathways in the town.

Collecting objects

Collecting objects in the street and on the beach has helped me pay more attention and generate ideas, such as workshop ideas and visualisations about commons.

Oak galls collected on walks were turned into Oak Gall Ink to use for drawing. Oak Gall Ink was used to write the Magna Carta in June 1215 so has a nice link to the commons. I have used the ink in drawings and sketches and also in my visualisations of the interviews (pp 41 & 43). The story and making of the ink could be another way to introduce the concept of the commons in a workshop scenario.

Items collected on the beach included Sea Kale seeds (which could be used in a future workshop at the bathing pool site), pieces of plastic, fishing rope, shells etc that informed the kaleidoscope cultural probes.

Diary writing

Partly inspired by the practices in the book *Design and Nature: A Partnership*, I have written diary entries while taking notice of my environment. These have helped frame ideas and document my thought process.

69 Fletcher, Kate, Mathilda Tham, and Louise St. Pierre. Section IV: Walking, *Design and Nature: A Partnership*. London: Routledge, 2019. <http://capitadiscovery.co.uk/brighton-ac/items/1501616>. 144

70 Ibid., 190

71 Glyphosate. (2019, February 06). Retrieved July 17, 2020, from <https://www.pan-uk.org/glyphosate/>



Cultural probes design development on the beach

Ethnographic workshops, discursive objects and interviews

Discursive objects, such as the kaleidoscopes, are used to raise ideas, arguments, and questions⁷² around the concept of commons. Known as discursing-through-design, conversational discourse or communication occurs or is expressed through an artifact.⁷³

Design interventions such as those presented in the bathing pool proposals, ‘enable new forms of experience, dialogue and awareness’ about the concept of commons and about the potential future of the site.

Design artifacts and interventions serve a variety of purposes from eliciting responses from workshop attendees who are making their own artifacts, which gives them time to reflect during the making process and also design objects that present new narratives sparking conversations and debate, more specifically termed ‘conversation dispositifs, speculative and interventionist research experiments to open up dialogue’.⁷⁴

Working with objects can generate insights from those less confident in their points of view, those less familiar with specific concepts of terminology.

The core ethnographic virtues of empathy, open-endedness and attentiveness to situatedness are combined with the articulation of new possibilities communicated through design proposals.⁷⁵ The aim is to support participants, to give them agency. Collaboration is not a choice but a condition for constituting research.⁷⁶

Digital ethnography was the main method for this project due to the restrictions placed on the research during the COVID pandemic. Interviews took place online.

72 Bruce M. Tharp, and Stephanie M. Tharp, “What is discourse, discursing and discursive design? in Discursive Design : Critical, Speculative, and Alternative Things,” in *Discursive Design : Critical, Speculative, and Alternative Things* (2018). 76

73 Ibid., 80

74 Smith et al., *Design Anthropological Futures*. 121

75 Ibid., 92

76 Ibid., 108

Research Outputs

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UNDERSTAND

Mapping the local commons

Mapping is a commonly used design tool for creating visibility of behaviours, emotions, activities and geographies. To get a picture of the agency of the commons in the local community, I have mapped existing projects that had a commons culture. Additionally, I interviewed those active in specific projects to gain insights into their practice and their understanding of commons. The output is a set of visualisations of quantitative and qualitative data, or 'knowledge visualisation'.⁷⁷

Given the emerging nature of commoning, rather than expect projects to label themselves as such and fully understand the principles, I focus on work where elements of commons culture are visible. Work that demonstrates an alternative to capitalist forms of economics and forms part of the economic diversity⁷⁸ of the town. These projects are self organised, collaborative and empowering. But also, what Stone calls, 'fractal, messy, adaptive, and exciting'.⁷⁹

For Helfrich and Bollier, commoning is people doing common things that only seem uncommon to market oriented societies.⁸⁰ They state that there is no commons without commoning and there is no commoning without peer governance.⁸¹ This has guided my choice of projects and led me to ask a specific question about governance. Influenced by the work of Helfrich and Bollier, I have used the following indicators to identify local commons projects:

- **Not profit driven**
- **Self organised group of people** – in the sense that the project concept and development is actioned by those involved.
- **Collaborative**, with consensus decision making.
- Where there is a **resource or commons** in 'collaboration'.

77 Joanna Boehnert. "Data Visualisation Does Political Things." DRS2016: Design + Research + Society: Future-Focused Thinking, University of Brighton, 27-30 June, 2016. 1

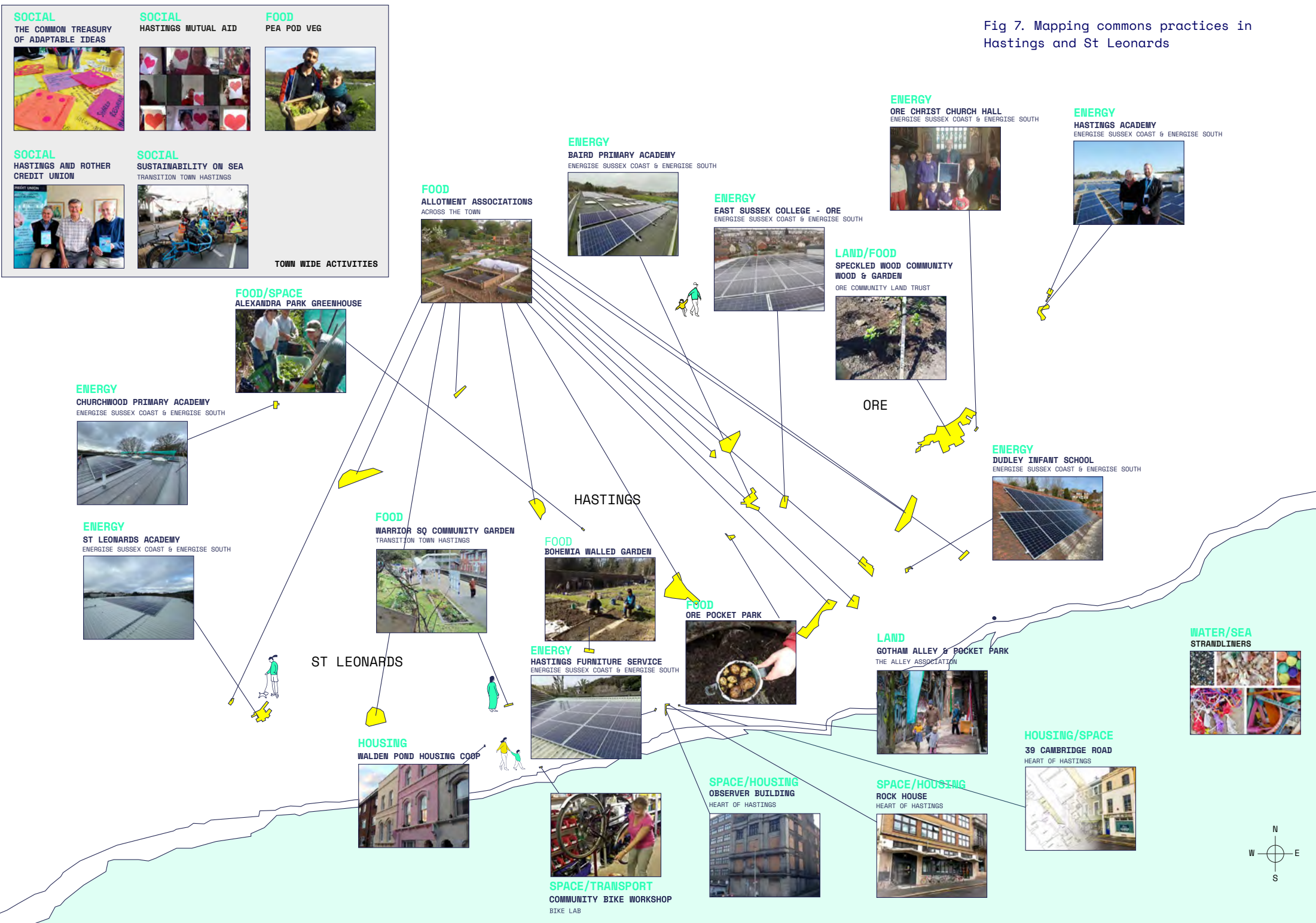
78 Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World, On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins*. 65

79 Lucy Stone. (2020, August 26). *Commoning our way through the climate crisis*. Retrieved August 23, 2020, from <https://www.shareable.net/commoning-our-way-through-the-climate-crisis/>

80 David Bollier, *Free, fair, and alive: the insurgent power of the commons*. 28

81 *Ibid.*, 75

Fig 7. Mapping commons practices in Hastings and St Leonards



Mapping the Commons

This research project proposes a method where urban commons are discussed, defined with parameters and represented by documentaries. Research participants included activists, artists, social scientists and students from different disciplines aiming to trace the contemporary role of the commons in the cities such as Istanbul and Athens.¹

The proposed method:

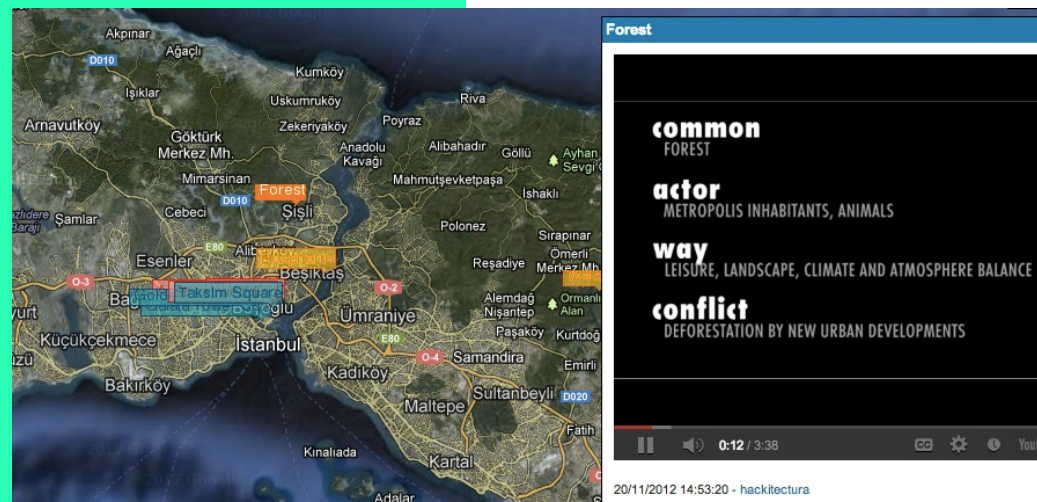
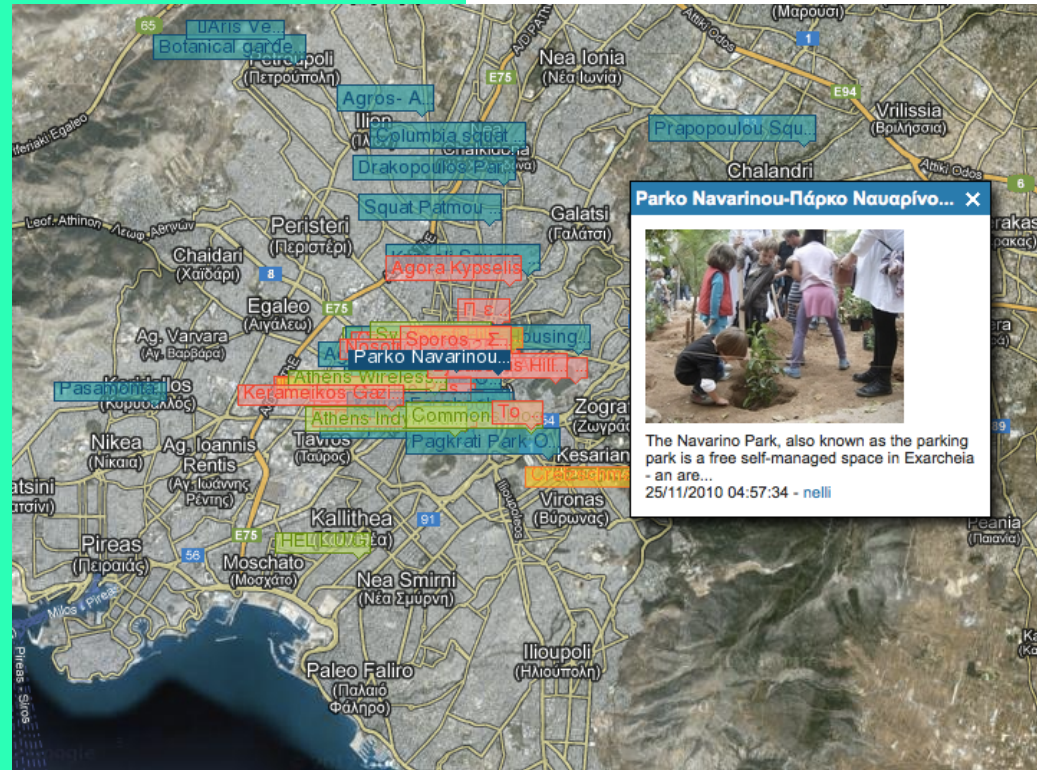
1. Discussion the literature
2. Mapping projects. Parameters included how the commons are maintained and/or threatened. Additional parameters showed wealth, benefits, rents generated, scale, open to all, restricted access and more.
3. Video documentaries²

The online maps and videos make visible the commons in the participating cities.

The project presented 'elements of sociability, openness, sharing and accessibility' and 'peer to peer practices, community networks and forms of exchange economy.' They explored the types of 'wealth' being produced and the risks of its enclosure and exploitation.³

This project presents a more detailed approach to mapping commons. It is a prototype that shows the potential to create a larger global map of commons practices.

- 1 Mapping the Commons. (n.d.). Retrieved July 6, 2020, from <http://mappingthecommons.net/en/about/>
- 2 Method. (n.d.). Retrieved July 6, 2020, from <http://mappingthecommons.net/en/methodology/>
- 3 Bollier, D. (2012, November 16). Mapping the Commons in Athens and Istanbul. Retrieved September 19, 2020, from <http://www.bollier.org/blog/mapping-commons-athens-and-istanbul>



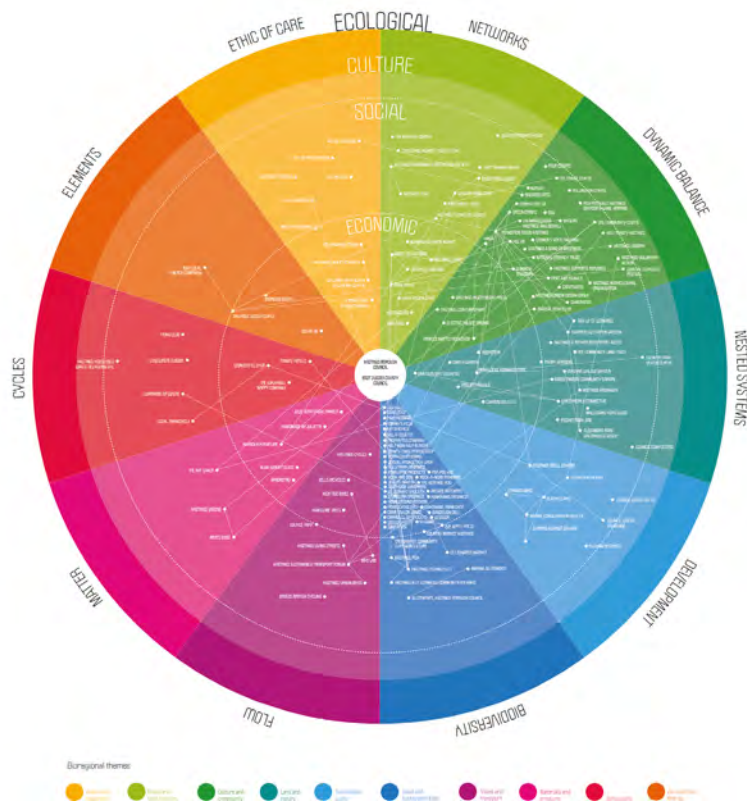


Fig 8. Hastings and St Leonards social ecosystem of climate active projects

In my Studio module, I produced a local social ecosystem map based on groups and businesses that participated in the Sustainability on Sea festival in September 2019 and those listed in the Transition Town Hastings Green Directory. (See fig 8) The map highlighted a need to think of the wider ecosystem where ecology supports all other activities. In effect, it is the bioregion that needs to frame the next economy.⁸²

This 'ecosystem' is something almost unseen. As are acts of commoning that are taking place across the town. There is little awareness of what commoning means and the values that sit behind 'commons culture' projects. Using a systems thinking approach we can make visible a network of commons practices. A system that's self-organising, self-repairing, resilient and evolutionary.⁸³

I revisited my local ecosystem map to identify key groupings of projects that relate closely to aspects of the commons: Land; Woods and Forest; Culture and Knowledge; Water; Air, Sun, Wind; Civic/urban commons and Food. From this listing I have created a new set of 'commons culture' categories: Civic, food, energy, housing, social, transport, space or workspace. These categories appear on the map of current projects as seen in fig 7.

Insights

In relation to the whole town area, the mapping shows that these projects make use of very small pockets of land. The largest footprint is the allotments (a mix of private and council owned land). This highlights the limited visibility of commons practices in the town. However they are likely to have wider impacts on the surrounding communities - e.g. local energy projects benefit local residents as well as the schools or buildings that house the solar panels. Most projects are unlikely to see themselves as a commons. Most are food or land based and more are situated in Hastings than in St Leonards or Ore.

Next Steps

Since completing the map I have been asked me to produce a map for the Common Treasury of Adaptable Ideas in Hastings. This might be a slightly adapted version of the map already created. It would be a visualisation useful to present to the funders to show outcomes. Given the small scale of projects in my locality, would a national or global mapping project help make commoning more visible? If we think of each project here as an element in a system, can they reproduce? Can this identified commons ecosystem support the emergence of new commons? In the next study 'Mapping potential commons' I show where new commons might have potential.

⁸² Sarah Macbeth, Studio workbook, March 2020.

⁸³ Donella Meadows, *Thinking in Systems : a primer* (VT / London: Chelsea Green Publishing, 2008). 12

Interviews with local activists

I carried out digital interviews with local activists from selected projects from the mapping of commons practices (fig X). I asked what they understand about commons to gather some measurable data and also how they practiced their own work, about values and benefits and futures to gather qualitative material. (see Appendix 1 for full transcripts of interviews).

The interviewees were Jess Steele, Hastings Commons; Richard Watson, Energise Sussex Coast (ESC)/Energise South (ES); Sherry Clarke, Transition Town Hastings (TTH); Alison Cooper, St Leonards Community Garden; Kate Meakin, ESC/ES; Julia Hilton, Common Treasury and Amanda Jobson, Ore Community Land Trust.

Figs 9 and 10 below show the results of questions explicitly about commons. Fig 9 shows that most people understand it as working with resources in a shared and equal way, but didn't recognise its use in a wider sense. The two people that see it as space are those working directly on the land. Fig 10 shows that the more emerging commons focussed words are less well known. Words relevant to cooperatives and localism are better known. Less than half were

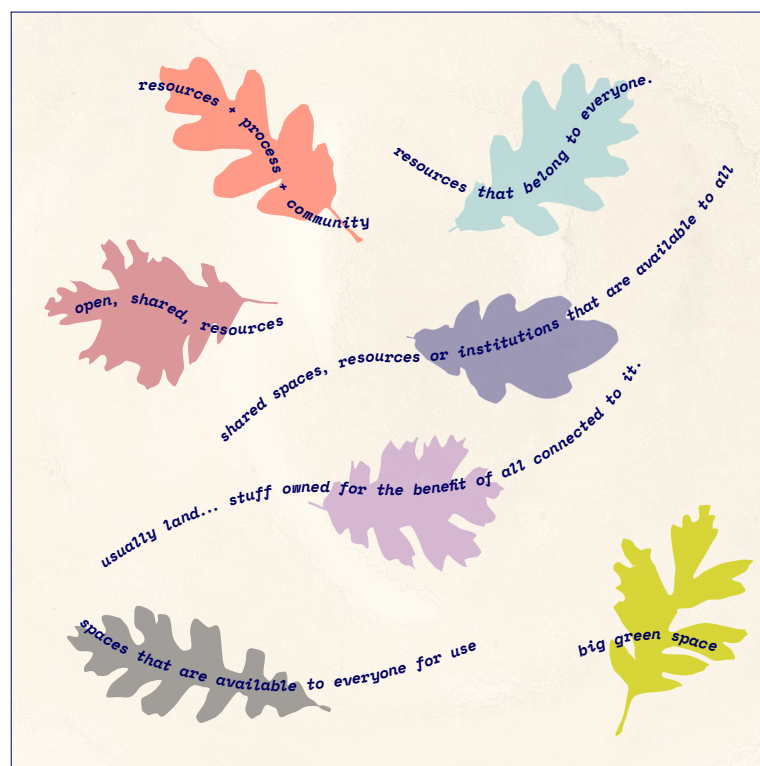


Fig 9. How commons is understood in my locality. From answers to the question: *How would you define the commons?*

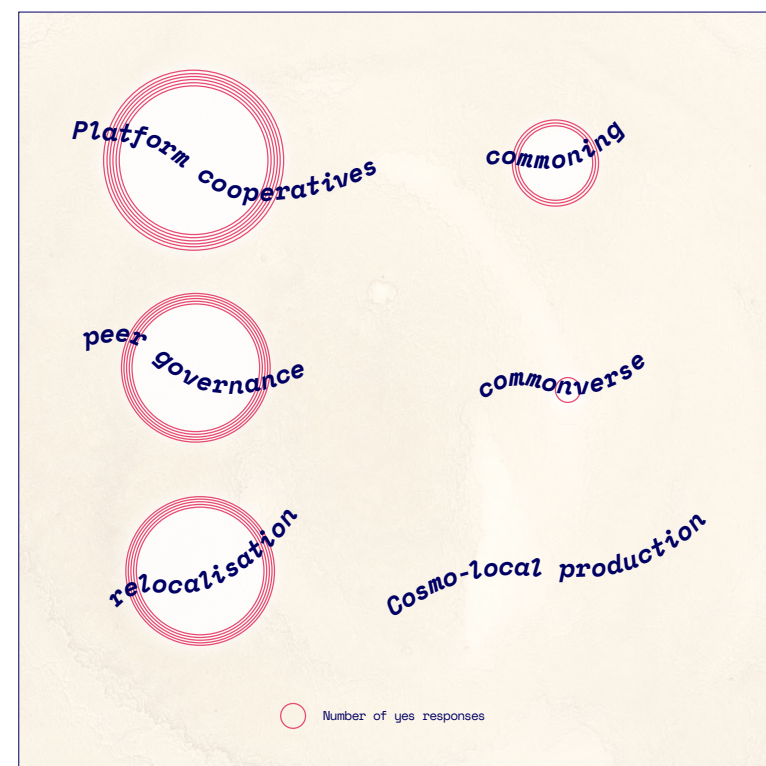


Fig 10. Local knowledge of commons vocabulary. From answers to the question: *Are you familiar with these terms?*

Giorgia Lupi



Visualisation of the four-month journey of a friend's child's illness.

For “Bruises – The Data We Don’t See”, Lupi created a visual timeline plotting the symptoms of the child alongside the emotional responses from her mother, her hopes, fears and stresses.¹ This work visualises the empathy at play in following the child's illness.

Lupi has also worked with Stefanie Posavec on the slow, analogue data visualisation project “Dear Data” a project where each designer sent a postcard with a hand drawn visualisation of their daily habits, thoughts, feelings. They claim that by noticing their behaviour they were influencing their behaviour. Visualising data can reveal the hidden patterns in behaviour.²

1 Lipps et al., *Nature: Collaborations in Design*. p26

2 Giorgia Lupi and Stefanie Posavec, *Dear Data* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2016). xi

familiar with the word commoning. Given the importance of the practice, this is a key insight. Commoning is more important than commons alone.

Qualitative visualisation

Given that there is a dominance of quantitative data in today's media and publishing sectors, I also attempt to visualise and examine qualitative data. Joanna Boehnert tells us that working with quantitative data is not necessarily the most relevant mode of analysis for complex and controversial problems. 'Purely quantitative approaches fail to capture power relations, ideologies, attitudes, motivations and behaviours'.⁸⁴

Boehnert adds that qualitative visualisation, or knowledge visualisation, 'can support integrated learning on complex problems and nurture relational perception'.⁸⁵

The materials from the remaining interview questions is presented as a knowledge visualisation (Fig X). I map each individual's answers by the project they are connected to (as Richard Watson and Kate Meakin both work for ESC and ES I have assigned one project to each person) and separate the answers into three types: current practice, current concerns and future concerns.

The projects act like nodes in a system. At this stage working with absolute numbers would not be an accurate reflection of what's happening in the local community. Following Ingold's thoughts, some things are difficult to enumerate (like trees, clouds, waves). These things are always forming and dissolving, growing and decomposing, part of a system. By counting heads you abstract them from the living breathing bodies they belong to.⁸⁶

Insights

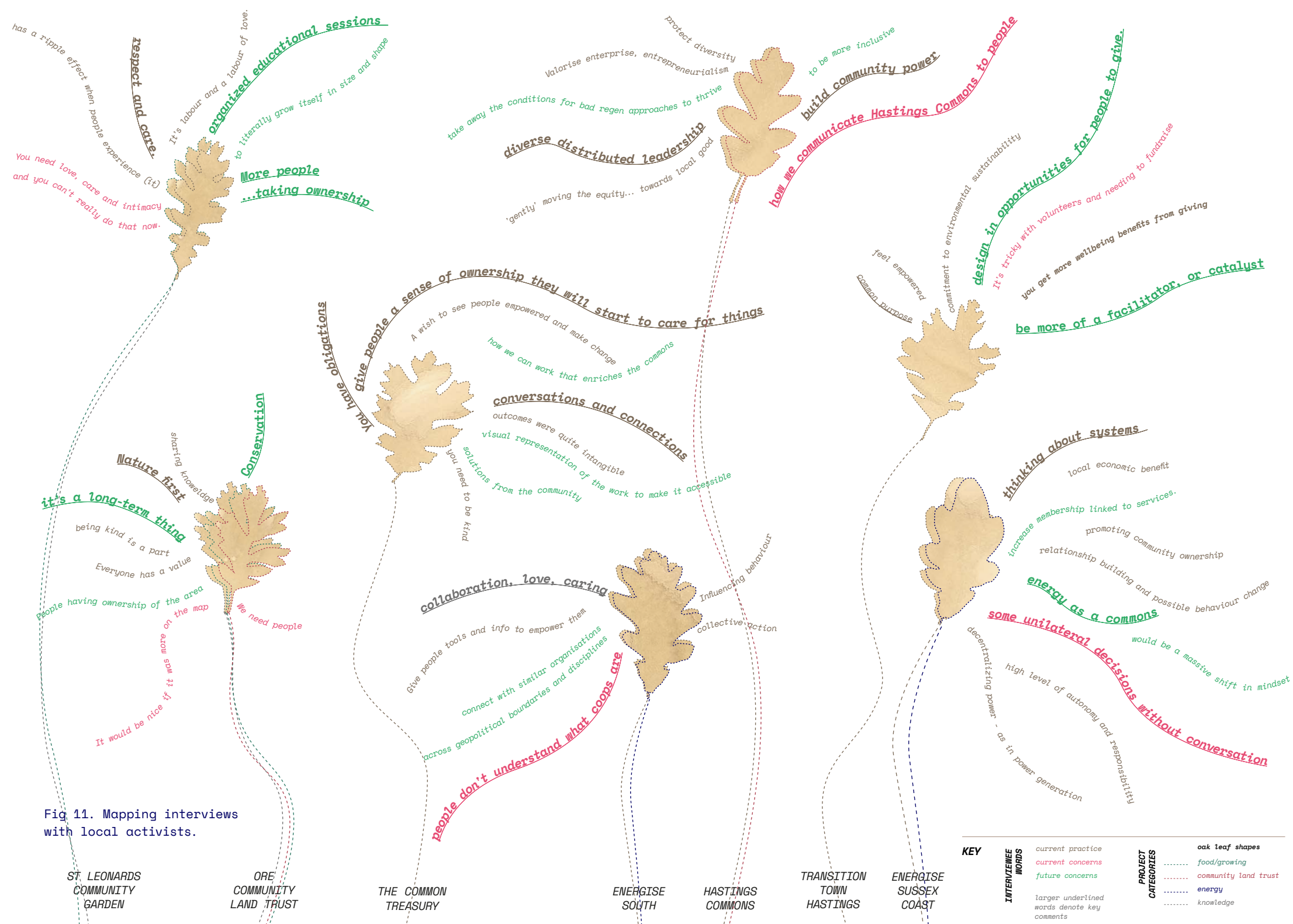
The interviews helped identify that the commons is mainly understood as shared resources or public space. Jess Steele was the only person familiar with more contemporary concepts of commons. While the interviewees were not familiar with emerging language around commons/-ing, they used words associated with commons such as 'care', 'love', 'diversity', 'taking/sense of/community ownership', 'collaboration', 'empowered' etc. We need to speak in a language that people understand.

In relation to governance, there as a mix of non hierarchical and semi-hierarchical set ups and most were comfortable with this. Most people referred to the importance of the environment and nature and all understood that they were doing something different at a

84 Joanna, Boehnert. *Design, Ecology, Politics: Towards the Ecocene*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018. <http://capitadiscovery.co.uk/brighton-ac/items/1476889>. 171.

85 Ibid, Boehnert, 1

86 Tim Ingold. “Art and Anthropology for a Sustainable World.” *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 25, no. 4 (2019): 659-75. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9655.13125>. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1111/1467-9655.13125>. 667



systemic level. It is clear that all the 'commons' practices are different and have their own reasons for the work they do.

In the knowledge visualisation (Fig 11) I have highlighted the comments I consider most important to the study. Of significance are the concerns about how to communicate the work to others: "How we communicate Hastings Commons to people", "visual representation of the work to make it accessible", "people still don't know what coops are". Julia Hilton emphasises the importance of conversations and connections within the Common Treasury work. This is important for amplifying the commons. She mentions obligation as an aspect, saying that commons is not a free for all. Also acknowledged is that these are long term practices, not quick fixes. As noted by Alison Cooper and Jess Steele, projects need variety and/or diversity. Or I will interpret this, as Haraway says, the need for diverse human and nonhuman players.⁸⁷ When communicating about commons we need to appeal to all types of people.

More of an issue was the need for more people, especially in the voluntary growing projects. These land based projects (Ore CLT and the St Leonards community garden) are more focussed on the care and conservation of land, therefore more closely connected to nature. As people in the UK feel strongly about the natural world but do not act on that sentiment we need to design ways for people to give (as suggested by Sherry Clarke), to participate. If we relate to place or a resource as a commons we begin to act like a commoner.⁸⁸

A change of mindset - if you give people a sense of ownership they will start to care for things.⁸⁹

Self-organising systems develop hierarchies over time. If we consider this grouping a system, a potential system hierarchy could exist with key organisations like Transition Town Hastings playing a facilitation role towards other groups (it already supports the work of the community garden) and Common Treasury supporting the formation and development of other projects. Any hierarchy must balance the welfare, freedoms and responsibilities of 'subsystems' with enough control but enough autonomy.⁹⁰ Resilience, self-organisation and hierarchy are the reasons dynamic systems work well.⁹¹

87 Donna Jeanne Haraway, *Staying with the trouble: making kin in the Chthulucene*. 55

88 Singh, "Becoming a commoner: The commons as sites for affective socio-nature encounters and co-becomings." 769

89 Interview with Julia Hilton, See Appendix 1.

90 Donella Meadows, *Thinking in Systems : a primer*. 84

91 Ibid., 85

Critique/next steps

A better set of questions could have been developed for the interviews. Although some issues were raised by the interviewees, I could have included a question about the challenges of the project. For future studies, more detailed analysis of commoning practices could be done. Like the Mapping the Commons project, further data could be used to assess levels of participation, the economics of running these projects, the risks and the opportunities for collaboration within the groups.

Although I haven't referred directly to the question about reciprocity I have used some of the responses in the visualisation. It's important to not include guided questions that give answers that create bias in the work.

Data visualisation is always based on decisions the designer makes about which data to collect, which to illustrate etc. The work then reflects 'assumptions, unstated (often unacknowledged) ideological perspectives and subjective judgments'.⁹²

92 Boehnert, Joanna. "Data Visualisation Does Political Things." DRS2016: Design + Research + Society: Future-Focused Thinking, University of Brighton, 27-30 June, 2016.

SPECULATE

Mapping potential commons

This study looks at the potential to establish new commons across my local community. Suggested here are 'open concepts' that could lead to many starting points.⁹³ As we saw from the interviews, the Commons is understood in a fairly simplistic way by people in my community. However, during the interviews several people became excited by the prospect of considering aspects of the local community as commons, such as community energy and the Hastings Greenway.

Here I outline potential commons ideas for the Hastings and St Leonards area. These project ideas are mapped out in fig.12.

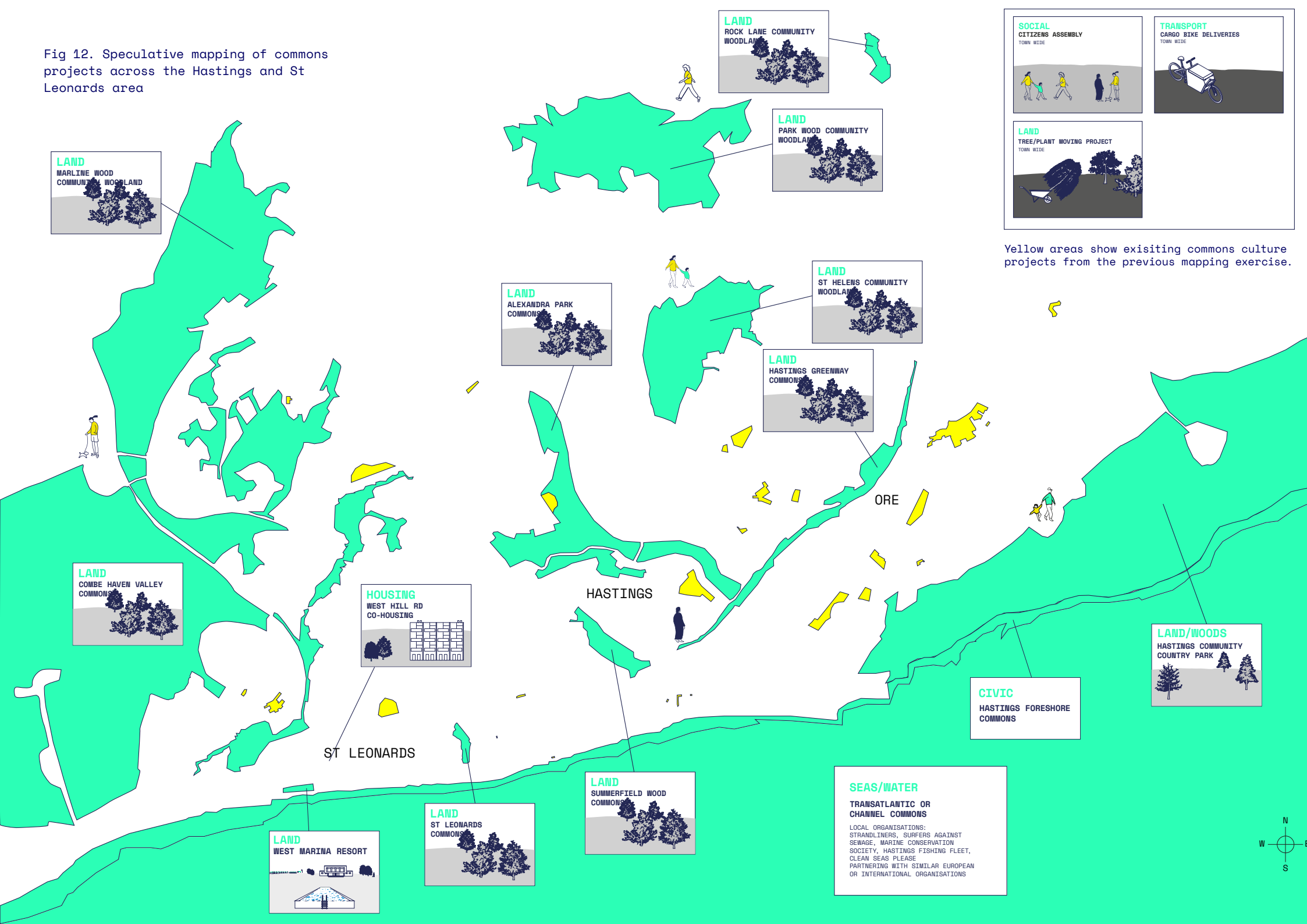
- **Hastings Greenway** – a walking and cycling route already proposed and designed, to aid sustainable forms of transport within the town. The Greenway will link up separated pockets of open space including the urban parks, country parks and wooded area.
- **Urban/neighbourhood tree farm and community woodlands.** There have already been conversations amongst members of Transition Town Hastings to establish a community woodland.
- **Tree and plant moving and sharing** (rather than have your garden tree cut down because of its location or issues with fences/buildings, have it moved to a neighbours garden or local park. Seed sharing could be another aspect of this project.
- **Food Commons** – local food network that can compete with the industrial food system! It would include Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) projects like Pea Pod Veg that farms near Hailsham in East Sussex. In a CSA, members commit to a whole season, taking on the risk alongside the producers. The transportation of produce is reduced, in terms of mileage, reduced amounts of packaging are used and all food is organic with prices comparable to supermarkets.⁹⁴ Working with a network of producers will require some distribution centres and increased take up by local people. Jose Vivero Pol suggests we need a 'commons-based governing system for production, distribution and access to food to revalorise it as an essential resource, human right, cultural item and tradable asset'.⁹⁵ The food commons can self organise around best practice and agree a set of guiding principles and values, such as fair wages, minimal transportation, organic standards etc

93 Akama, Pink, and Sumartojo, *Uncertainty and Possibility : new approaches to future making in design anthropology*. 5

94 Pea Pod Veg. (n.d.) Accessed on Aug, 8,2020. from <http://www.peapodveg.co.uk/>

95 Andy Hilton and Guido Ruivenkamp, *Perspectives on commoning: autonomist principles and practices* (London: Zed, 2017). <http://capitadiscovery.co.uk/brighton-ac/items/1451131>. 360

Fig 12. Speculative mapping of commons projects across the Hastings and St Leonards area



Yellow areas show existing commons culture projects from the previous mapping exercise.

LAND
MARLINE WOOD
COMMUNITY WOODLAND

LAND
ROCK LANE COMMUNITY
WOODLAND

LAND
PARK WOOD COMMUNITY
WOODLAND

LAND
ALEXANDRA PARK
COMMONS

LAND
ST HELENS COMMUNITY
WOODLAND

LAND
HASTINGS GREENWAY
COMMONS

LAND
COMBE HAVEN VALLEY
COMMONS

HOUSING
WEST HILL RD
CO-HOUSING

LAND
ST LEONARDS
COMMONS

LAND
SUMMERFIELD WOOD
COMMONS

LAND
WEST MARINA RESORT

SEAS/WATER
TRANSATLANTIC OR
CHANNEL COMMONS

LOCAL ORGANISATIONS:
STRANDLINERS, SURFERS AGAINST
SEWAGE, MARINE CONSERVATION
SOCIETY, HASTINGS FISHING FLEET,
CLEAN SEAS PLEASE,
PARTNERING WITH SIMILAR EUROPEAN
OR INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS

CIVIC
HASTINGS FORESHORE
COMMONS

LAND/WOODS
HASTINGS COMMUNITY
COUNTRY PARK

SOCIAL
CITIZENS ASSEMBLY
TOWN WIDE

TRANSPORT
CARGO BIKE DELIVERIES
TOWN WIDE

LAND
TREE/PLANT MOVING PROJECT
TOWN WIDE



- **Sustainable transport** – If considerably more land was common land this could open up opportunities for more sustainable forms of transport, particularly cycling and walking. Recently, a cargo bike cooperative has been set up in the town providing a delivery service to local businesses. This proved very popular during lockdown.
- **Housing** – cooperative housing is extremely limited in the Hastings area. Currently there is only one project, Waldon Pond. There are many undeveloped sites around the town.
- **Energy** – As Kate Meakin commented, energy can be a commons and Energise Sussex Coast and Energise South are well placed to promote this in Hastings.

- **Public space**

Public space tends to be owned and managed by local authorities, the state or the Crown, and certain rules governing the space which may or may not have been agreed upon with the people who use that space. The local authority can decide to permit cafés to place their furniture on public pavements or allow for street selling. This happens in Hastings but there is significant red tape and costs involved. Social distancing for COVID has shown a need for this kind of intervention in public space. Dellenbaugh-Losse et al suggest the characteristics of public space may change over time in different places relative to use and management intensity as well as change in the state and market. They imagine the development of commons-based public space management will require a blend of common-pool resource and common property management approaches.”⁹⁶ In Hastings this could include the proposed Greenway route which is already in the local plan, but it could also include streets and roads, parks, grass verges and trees and other public spaces.

- **Sea commons**

Plastic pollution has become a modern-day neglect of the commons, in this case in the marine environment.⁹⁷ It is clear that changes are needed on multiple levels: individuals, market, institutions, etc. To manage pollution in places like Hastings, settlements and waters that relate to it, could the creation of a North Atlantic or Channel Commons bring about effective changes in behaviour? It could operate in a similar way to the Great Lakes Commons, guiding people to understand their responsibilities and opportunities to gift back to the sea.

Overleaf I write about the potential of the beach as a commons.

⁹⁶ Dellenbaugh-Losse, M., Zimmermann, N., & Vries, N. D. (2020). *The Urban Commons Cookbook Strategies and Insights for Creating and Maintaining Urban Commons*. Berlin. 20

⁹⁷ Vince, J., & Hardesty, B. (2018, May 30). *Governance Solutions to the Tragedy of the Commons That Marine Plastics Have Become*. Retrieved June 12, 2020, from <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fmars.2018.00214/full>



Beach at Bulverhythe

SPECULATE

Beach as a commons

The walking and drawing practices led to observations about the beach. The beach is part natural commons, part urban commons. Our seas and oceans are already recognised as global commons with calls to improve their biodiversity and protect them from pollution.

The beach is partly owned by the local authority (or held in trust by the Foreshore Trust which the council manage). Also, the Crown Estate manage around 50% of the foreshore in the UK, the land between low and high tide.

As an ecosystem it is teeming with wildlife, plants, sea life as well as various man-made structures and materials. It is the boundary of land and sea and a place already seeing the effects of the climate crisis. Sea temperatures are rising, sea life populations are changing, plastic pollution impacts wildlife and water quality and low-lying areas of the coastline are impacted by flooding.

The beach is seen as a boundary between nature and culture. John Stilgoe describes it beautifully here:

Wading into the ocean on a summer day reveals the essence of landscape. Seaward lie deeper water, surf, riptides and undertow, ocean rollers, and an arc of horizon never still and mocking human control. Landward the beach glows in sunlight, interrupting the storms which sweep sand and dunes and smooth cobbles and boulders. Like the margin between the end of type on a page and the edge of the page itself, every beach is marginal, literally the marge, a limicole zone contested by wilderness and human order. With back to the sea, the wader sees sand and seawalls, as well as cottages and hotels and pathways that are beyond the reach of all but hurricanes and incremental sea level rise. Somewhere in that space lies the ragged edge of what most people too casually dismiss as landscape, the controlled spatial and structural construct, permanent (presuming ceaseless maintenance and continuous renewal), the common built form easily taken for granted, all too easily half seen.⁹⁸

But is it so easy to see a duality between nature and culture? How do we delimit each? And isn't the boundary a changeable one? The high and low tides changing daily. And, as Donella Meadows highlights, great complexities can occur at boundaries where species can cross boundaries. This 'mixed-up borders' are a source of diversity and creativity.⁹⁹

98 John Stilgoe. (2019, December 29). *How to Read the Land*. Retrieved August 09, 2020, from <https://thereader.mitpress.mit.edu/reading-landscape/>

99 Donella Meadows, *Thinking in Systems : a primer*. 95

Swimming, diary entry, June 13th

“A practice that’s become regular for me in the lockdown is sea swimming. At night I find myself feeling the movement of the waves, a sea-sick motion. It’s an entanglement of me and the water. The motion is a constant reminder of the experience of submersion in choppy waters, a motion memory. A ‘connectedness’ between my body and the vast ocean, with moving, saline water and the multitude of species contained within it”.

During COVID-19 the beaches have been busier than ever. Spending time near water is good for mental health. Where water meets green space gives people the opportunity for exercise, they are social spaces and social levellers (attracting all sectors of society). There is some evidence that people think more about the environment and less about their own issues.

A UK survey showed that coastal proximity lead to better mental health for people on low incomes, because it offsets inequalities.¹

But to tell the full story of the landscape of the beach we need to get to know all the inhabitants be they human or nonhuman.² We can begin to do this with some design practices such as work based on visibility and practices of noticing.³

- 1 Blue Health; Talking to the dying; Diet or exercise to halt memory decline [Radio series episode]. (2020, July 1). In *All in the Mind*. London: BBC Radio 4.
- 2 Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World, On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins*. 159
- 3 *Ibid.*, 160

It’s a space of unintentional design.¹⁰⁰

The beach is a kind of utopia. Utopia literally means nowhere, it’s not real, an imagined, perfect place. I think the beach gives one space to dream, to imagine other places, other worlds and other futures. In the TV series *Utopia: In Search of the Dream*, Richard Clay tells us that Commoning too is a form of utopia.¹⁰¹ Commoning looks forward to a new way of living and working but within the towns and cities we currently inhabit.

Back in May this year, sitting on Fairlight Glen beach I watched the RNLi boat head out into the English Channel to support a rescue operation. At least one, maybe two boat loads of refugees had entered UK waters. These desperate people dream of a better place to live and work, a kind of utopia, a safe haven for them and their families.

Friday 7 August 2020. Radio 4 News announced that 3,500 migrants have managed to cross the channel this year. Again, the news on Aug 9th announces that over 500 migrants have attempted to reach the UK coast in the past three days. It’s a dangerous operation. The French authorities say people threaten to jump in the water if they are stopped from making the journey out of French waters.

In the world today there are many anti-utopian policies and devices. Boundaries exist around nation states and continents. Within the EU a mass panic of imaginary “floods” of migrants prevails, fed partly by right-wing politicians and media.¹⁰²

Migration is all about movement, it’s a natural part of human existence, it keeps things fluid and prevents fixity.¹⁰³ Utopias keep you going, they create hope. “Hope is the precursor to change. Without it, no better world is possible.”¹⁰⁴

As the weather has got better into the summer, the beach has become busier, busier than ever. It’s a refuge from the pandemic and an opportunity to breathe fresh air, get exercise and see other people. People can get closer to nature – commune and collaborate with the sea. The beach is a perfect place to enact commoning, to steward the land and sea that are part of its landscape. Can we design the beach as a commons?

100 Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World, On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins*. 152

101 Blueprints for Better [Television series episode]. (2020, April 20). In *Utopia: In Search of the Dream*. BBC.

102 Ulrich Best, “*The EU and the Utopia and Anti-utopia of Migration: A Response to Harald Bauder*,” (2003). 198

103 *Ibid.*, 199

104 Olivia Laing, (2020, March 21). *Feeling overwhelmed? How art can help in an emergency* [Web log post]. Retrieved June 3, 2020, from <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2020/mar/21/feeling-overwhelmed-how-art-can-help-in-an-emergency-by-olivia-laing>

Great Lakes Commons

David Bollier interviewed Phil Baines from The Great Lakes Project about the stewardship of water and changing how people relate to the lakes to affect larger motivations for change.¹

The project explores responsibilities to water, key relationships and signals. They consider water beingness. Baines talks about reciprocity and asks, “What’s water giving and what do I give in return.”

He talks of a shift in language away from resources, commodities, assets, stocks and flows to commons, responsibilities and gifts. It’s human nature to reciprocate a gift. He adds that, “we can start to think about our responsibilities to water and what is that gift?”

This idea of gifts helped to develop the design of the kaleidoscope making workshop and the need to consider what we can give back to the beach.

Finally, he talks about focussing on what’s happening in the water rather than what’s happening in a town or state. e.g. challenging a pipeline across political jurisdictions.

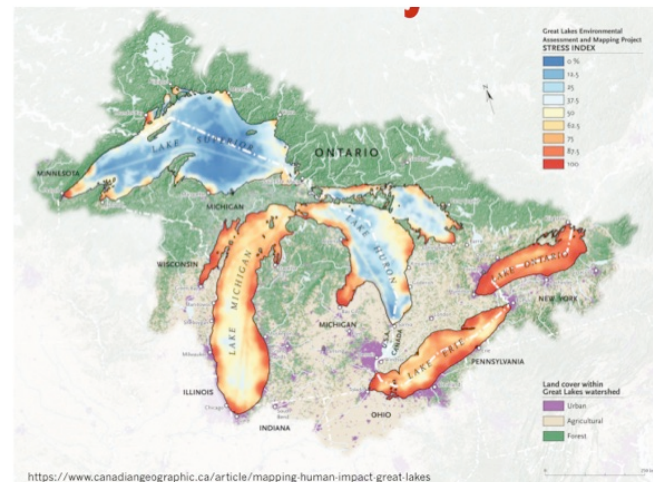
This final point inspired the idea of a NorthAtlantic or Channel Commons to help steward the sea close to Hastings.

1 Bollier, D. (2020, June 08). The Great Lakes Commons, Frontiers of Commoning Podcast Episode #3. Retrieved August 08, 2020,



Water Friendship workshop

Nails are Not Enough



Mapping human impact

Sitting on boundaries, diary entry, July 17th

Today there are lots of people. Picnics, children playing, music piping from the prom café. Seagulls mingling.

Up close broken shells sit amongst pebbles like salt and pepper. The shadowy profile of the South Downs lies to the west. What are the boundaries at play here?

The café area is for its customers. The promenade is for all to use, the sea is for swimmers, sailors, kayaks, paddleboards, fish, birds, seaweed and other sealife.

Tiny flies hover around my notepad. What boundaries lie between me and the flies? Language, understanding, intimacy. What connections? We breathe the same air, we respond to the elements such as sun and rain, sometimes we eat the same food.

These are human thoughts and are framed by my experience, my education where nature is looked on as separate to human life.

Insights

These ideas are sketchy and act as prompts for more in-depth conversations. They form the beginnings of a new narrative around commons in Hastings and are presented in a map form to open up dialogue about what might be possible. Considerably more research would be necessary to see if they are viable.

Adding woodlands, country parks, the sea and foreshore creates a very different picture to the previous commons map (fig 11). Now the town landscape begins to look very different.

Critique

A great deal of the new commons spaces are on the outskirts of town and not always close to houses and businesses. Given that situated practice is important, are commoning practice more likely to emerge around places where people carry out their every day lives?

While there is some value in speculating on commons projects this type of work should always be done in collaboration with stakeholders. In the next study I work with a local campaign group to develop ideas for a contested public space and overlooked part of the town in West St Leonards.

The narrative about the beach as a commons is a valuable output as it builds a convincing narrative of a potential commons. However it is important to remember that commoning must be part of the process. Commoning is more important than commons. There are various collective commoning practices that could be performed around the beach, for example, sustainable fishing, beach cleaning, educational projects, citizen science labs.

The diary entries act as punctuating points of reflection within the whole project. They keep a certain train of thought active. They keep the connections alive. They also serve as examples of what community storytelling and writing workshops related to design might look like.

ANCHOR YOURSELF IN WEST ST LEONARDS

SINK

3-4 MAY 2021

10AM-4PM

OLD BATHING POOL
SITE, WEST ST
LEONARDS

OR

SWIM

festival



KAYAKING, SWIMMING RACES, YOGA SESSIONS, WEIGHT TRAINING, PARKOUR, GUIDED WALKS, PADDLING POOL FOR CHILDREN, BIKE REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE CLASSES, FOOD STALLS, MUSIC AND STORYTELLING

Fig 13. Poster for Sink or Swim festival

INTERVENE

Design proposals in public space

This practice attempts to communicate concepts of commons that are situated in place.

The bathing pool site in West St Leonards is in danger of imminent enclosure. Hastings Borough Council have been escalating plans for its sale to property developers who intend to develop housing.¹⁰⁵ This study uses the contested site as a public space to speculate on interventions that create visibility of the commons and facilitate dialogue around possible futures of the site and its surrounds.

I was supplied with community engagement documentation (See Appendix 3) by the West Marina Group and I also discussed the campaign vision with two members of the group. I was then able to synthesise ideas already generated by key stakeholders. My intention was to combine my ideas about commoning with the ideas from the local group, embedding design activism into a local campaign to save a neglected public open space from private development.

I produced a set of proposed interventions for public events (see poster design in fig 13) and for public engagement to support the work of the local neighbourhood plan. (See Appendix 4). The design proposals are intended to empower the beneficiaries.¹⁰⁶ An essential element of this project is to build up capabilities of local people to support their ongoing work even if they fail to stop any new private development. It's a co-design project, and a chance to build a long-term relationship between designer and community. By engaging with the local group, I step into the 'in-between- space as identified by Akama and Prendiville, a space that is 'dynamic, emergent and relational' creating a set of proposals in collaboration.¹⁰⁷

I also considered the history of the site which is adjacent to the Combe Haven Country Park, a site on the route taken by William the Conqueror to the Battle of Hastings. Once in power, William gave away large pieces of land to members of his court, known as the great enclosures. This connection with enclosure also adds meaning when communicating about commons.

¹⁰⁵ *The winning submission* [Web log post]. (n.d.). Retrieved July 10, 2020, from <https://www.westmarina.org/our-news/news-articles/825-the-winning-submission>

¹⁰⁶ Elizabeth Resnick, *Developing Citizen Designers* (New York/London: Bloomsbury Publishing 2016). 288

¹⁰⁷ Akama, Pink, and Sumartojo, *Uncertainty and Possibility: new approaches to future making in design anthropology*. 7



The site was home to one of Britain's finest bathing pools, opened on May 27th 1933. In 1992, the pool was demolished leaving behind fragments of its existence, a hut and several small decks that overlook the beach and considerable demolition waste buried beneath the ground.

The group are keen to see the site become a destination site. There is interest in developing sports activities and seeing a return of a bathing pool.

The proposal document (see Appendix 4) outlines an idea for a mini festival called 'Sink or Swim'. This document will be shared with the local group who are free to use any aspects they wish. Ideas that relate to commons include acting out Beating the Bounds, which Helfrich and Bollier suggest as one of the four strategies needed to grow the 'commonverse'¹⁰⁸ and event signage (Fig 14) to prompt questions and debate around the future of the site.

Insights

Without moving this project into practice it is not possible to know the outcomes of the proposals. However, my observations are that it's difficult to combine commons concepts with the needs of the local community. Once engaged with the West Marina Group it was harder to introduce event ideas where commons was the dominant message. Instead the proposal has some commons related elements and a commons spirit, while responding directly to the ideas already imagined by the local community. It is important that the local community are part of the design process. This study revealed the need for design to support the needs of local people takes priority over any need to communicate about the commons.

Critique

Overall this study presents multiple design ideas for a contested site. These ideas can make a contribution to the work of making commons more visible. Context is important in communicating the commons but it is still a challenge to find ways to communicate the concept to those not already engaged in related concepts or projects. To focus only on commons communication (rather than the wellbeing site) in a public space it would be better to carry out discrete interventions. I attempt this in my final study, where I use cultural probes to explore concepts of commons.

Fig 14. Proposals for signage.



One Tree Project, Natalie Jeremijenko

Jermijenko's work can be labelled as "information Politics". Her work on the One Tree Project asks if public displays of environmental information prompt lay people to engage in debates with experts.

Jermijenko states: "If the air we breathe and the water we drink is improved, there is a common good. Trees need to be evaluated in that context. Wealth (such as trees) with demonstrable social value is good".¹⁰⁹

The beauty of the project is that there is no making other than the planting of trees.

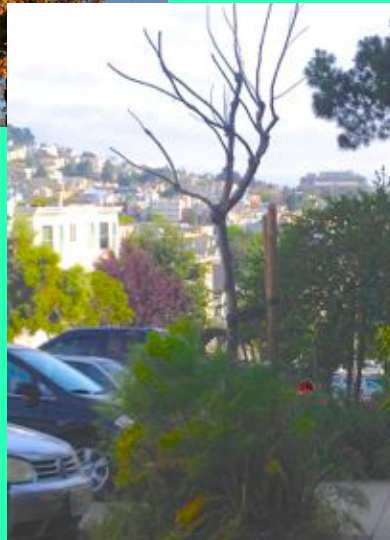
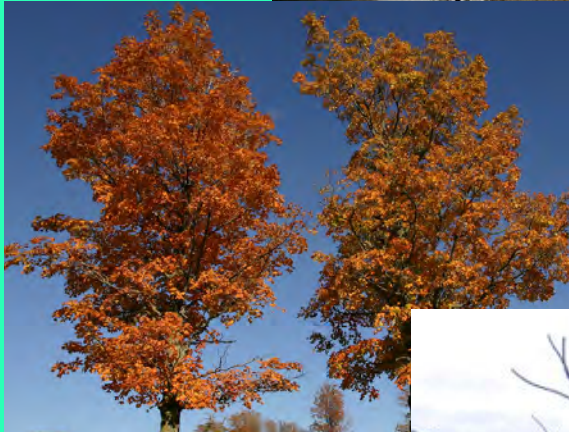
One Tree Project is linked to another of her works called the "Two Wheels Project" where bike rides are organised between the planted trees. This is one way to keep the project fresh in people's minds and make connections between trees and human activities.

But are the trees looked after and do the messages of the project get forgotten? Some trees did not survive beyond a few years, and the project website eventually stalled.

Shea asks if a tree lives or dies in the urban forest, and no one notices, does it make a statement?¹¹⁰ And these trees have been left to fend for themselves. Adding a stewardship or care aspect to this project would give the message that trees can survive beyond the realms of private wealth. This would make the trees less instrumental to the needs of the project and take on healthy, long lives of their own.

¹⁰⁹ Zahid Sardar, C. (2012, January 20). Society's signposts / Natalie Jeremijenko's trees aren't simply decorative -- they can be read like a social register. Retrieved June 4, 2020, from <https://www.sfgate.com/bayarea/article/Society-s-signposts-Natalie-Jeremijenko-s-trees-2641315.php>

¹¹⁰ E. Shea. (2014, July 18). OneTrees: The Forgotten Tree Art Project [Web log post]. Retrieved September 02, 2020, from <https://www.deeprooot.com/blog/blog-entries/onetrees-the-forgotten-tree-art-project>



COMMUNICATE

Graphic artefacts as discursive objects

These poster designs (fig 15) play with familiar phrases to communicate commons themes of sharing, connecting and doing something 'uncommon'. The designs are inspired by the work of designer Anthony Burrill and the artist Jeremy Deller.



Fig 15. Poster designs related to concept of commons

Anthony Burrill

Well known for his large format typographic works, posters, books etc with 'positive propaganda'. However, they steer clear of provocative or political messaging.



Critique

The messages on the posters could relate to lots of activities and everyday practices, not just commons/-ing. It makes sense to design a poster for a particular campaign and use in a particular context, exemplified by Jeremy Deller's 'Thank God for Immigrants' poster.

The following page shows some further poster ideas that make use of place and context.

Jeremy Deller

Jeremy Deller's 'Thank God for Immigrants' poster was published to be placed in windows during lockdown. It acted as a reminder that refugees are often our key workers (in care homes and hospitals) and it also made use of the rainbow colourways that were being used by children across the country.



These poster designs (fig 16) would sit on the side of the Observer Building, the largest development in the Hastings Commons portfolio of properties. They communicate the decommodification of the work at Hastings Commons and reinforce the use of commons in describing the space.

These are more likely to create a reaction in those interested in the Observer Building but are still abstract and not directly related to every day life. Tapping into pro-environmental values could be a more successful approach.

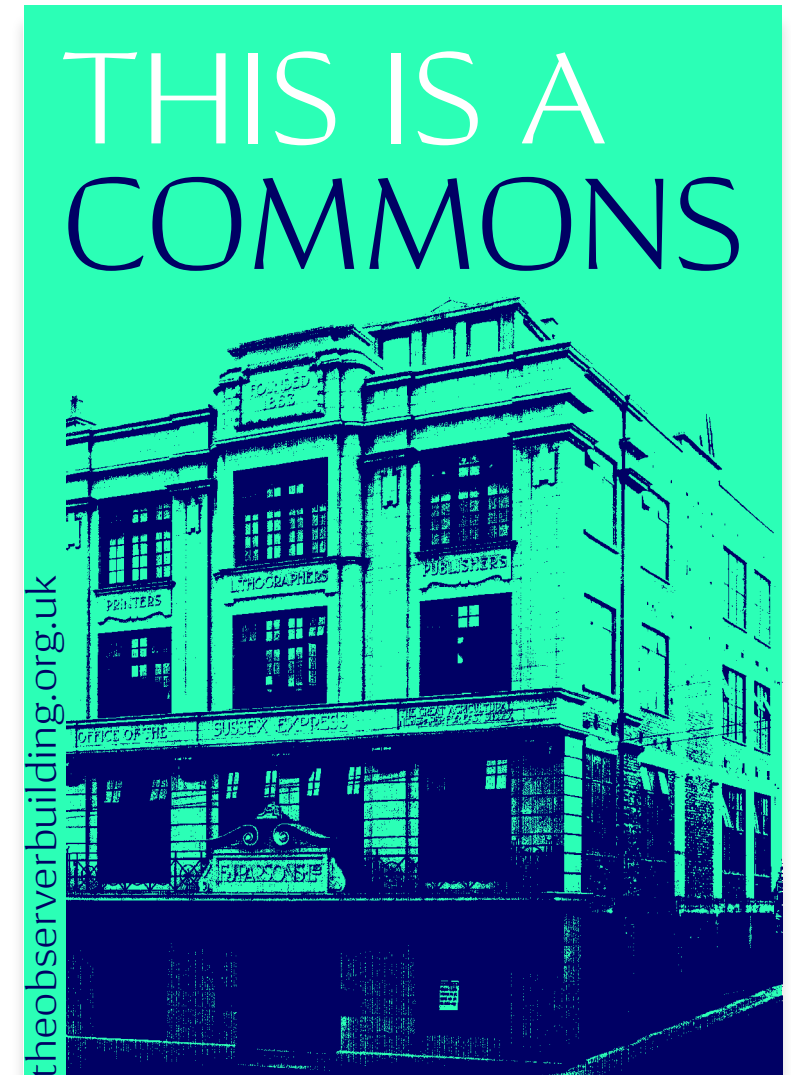
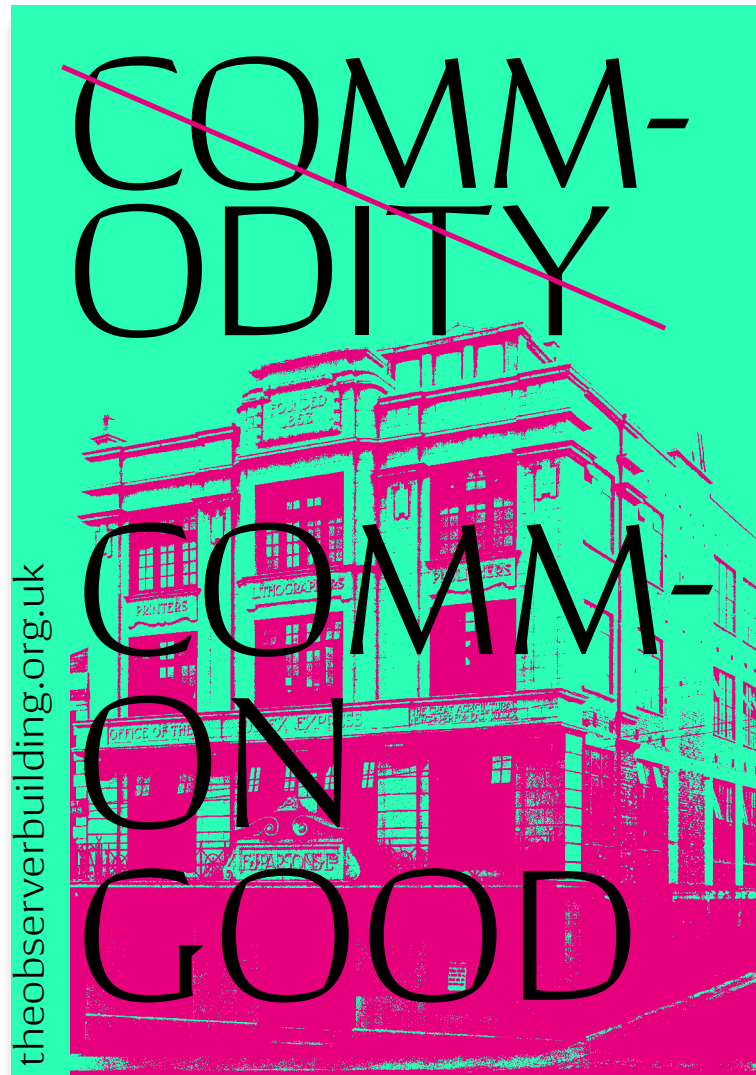
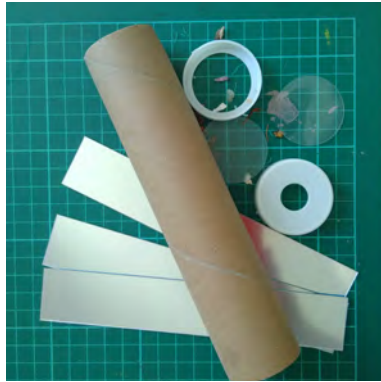


Fig 16. Poster designs related to Hastings Commons



Testing the kit



FACILITATE

Cultural probes as discursive objects

The interviews with local activists identified that commons was mainly understood as shared space. Therefore, it makes sense to work in such spaces with participants of workshops or making practices. The beach is a perfect shared space.

I developed Cultural probes to motivate participation and engagement in concepts of reciprocity as a way to introduce the idea of the commons. Inspiration came partly from collecting objects in public places. The simple and engaging activity aims to tackle what could be a complex concept to communicate.

I chose to work with the concept 'reciprocity' (between humans and non human worlds) as a specific concept within commons/-ing that I felt could communicate some of the purpose and values behind commons. Reciprocity was one of the 'Inspiring Concepts' of commoning flagged up in the "Commoning Design and Designing Commons" workshop.

Participants are given clear instructions for making a kaleidoscope from materials provided. They are asked to collect small items from the beach to place in the kaleidoscope (see Fig. 17). They are asked what they might 'gift' back to the environment they are in.

Insights

Making as a design practice is a successful way of engaging participants in dialogue about specific topics.

This exercise successfully creates a space for people to reflect on their connection to place and ecology. They experience being on the beach discovering what's there and reflecting on their responsibilities to that place. A reaction to the materials generates interest in the topic and perhaps, what the participants feel about the issues relating to place. These become discursive objects that can conjure scenarios through the experience of creation and use. There is a lovely element of surprise when the kaleidoscopes are made. It is important to bring in play when engaging with others, as Hella Jongerius says 'without play there can be no design that inspires'.¹¹¹

¹¹¹ Hella Jongerius & Louise Schouwenberg, BEYOND THE NEW, A SEARCH FOR IDEALS IN DESIGN, <https://www.dezeen.com/2015/04/10/hella-jongerius-louise-schouwenberg-manifesto-beyond-the-new-design-impooverished-field/>, Accessed Aug, 8, 2020

B E A C H K A L E I D O S C O P E

I'd like you to carry out the following tasks:

Visit the beach

1. Pick a location on the beach and make a note of what you see. Take some photos too if you like.

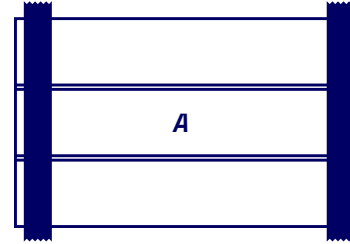
2. Collect some small items that interest you from the beach area, placing them in the 'gift' bag supplied. You will probably find the more interesting things along the strandline (this is where waves carry debris including seaweed and driftwood, accumulating just above the limit of the highest tides).

Back at home

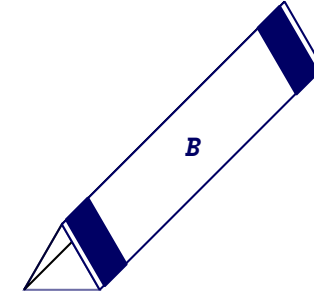
3. Make your beach kaleidoscope (see overleaf for instructions).
4. Take tiny pieces of your items and place them in the end of your kaleidoscope (they need to be fairly small to be able to move around in the space so you may need to use scissors!)
5. See the magical results through the kaleidoscope
6. Apart from your gift bag goodies what other gifts does the beach and the sea provide for people and what gift might you consider offering back to them in exchange?

Making your kaleidoscope

A. First make the mirrored section. Take the three mirrored remove their protective film, place them mirror side down with the long sides almost touching with about 2mm gap. Take some tape and secure it across the backs of all three mirrors on both ends.



B. Close the mirrored pieces together with the mirror on the inside. Secure with some more tape.



Now piece together the rest of the kit as follows:

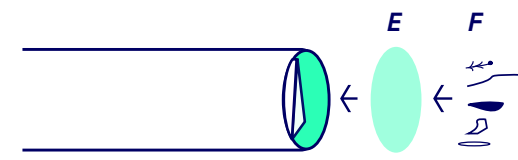
C. Add the viewing hole piece to one end of the tube



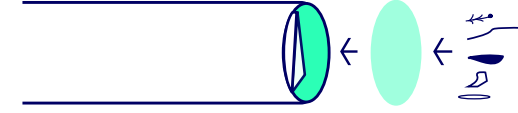
D. Add the mirrored section inside the tube.



E. Place the clear plastic circle inside the tube on top of the end of the mirrored section.



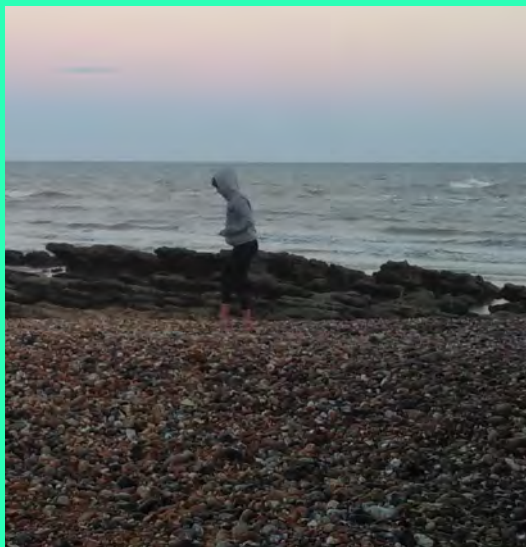
F. Add your found items from the beach



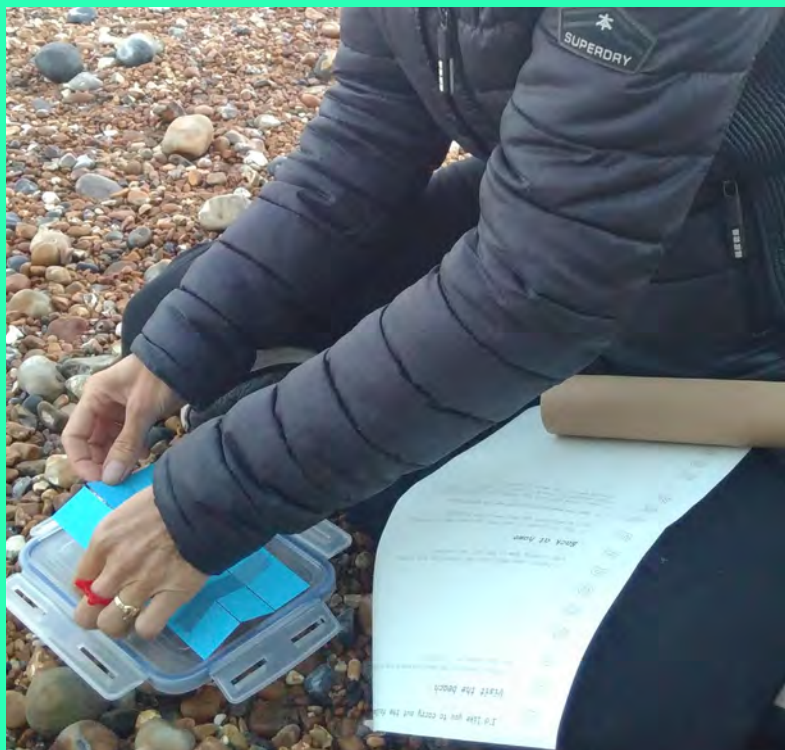
G. Add the opaque plastic circle inside the final ring and push these on to the other end of the tube.



Fig 17. Handouts designed to be packaged with the kaleidoscope kit.



Testing the kit on the beach.



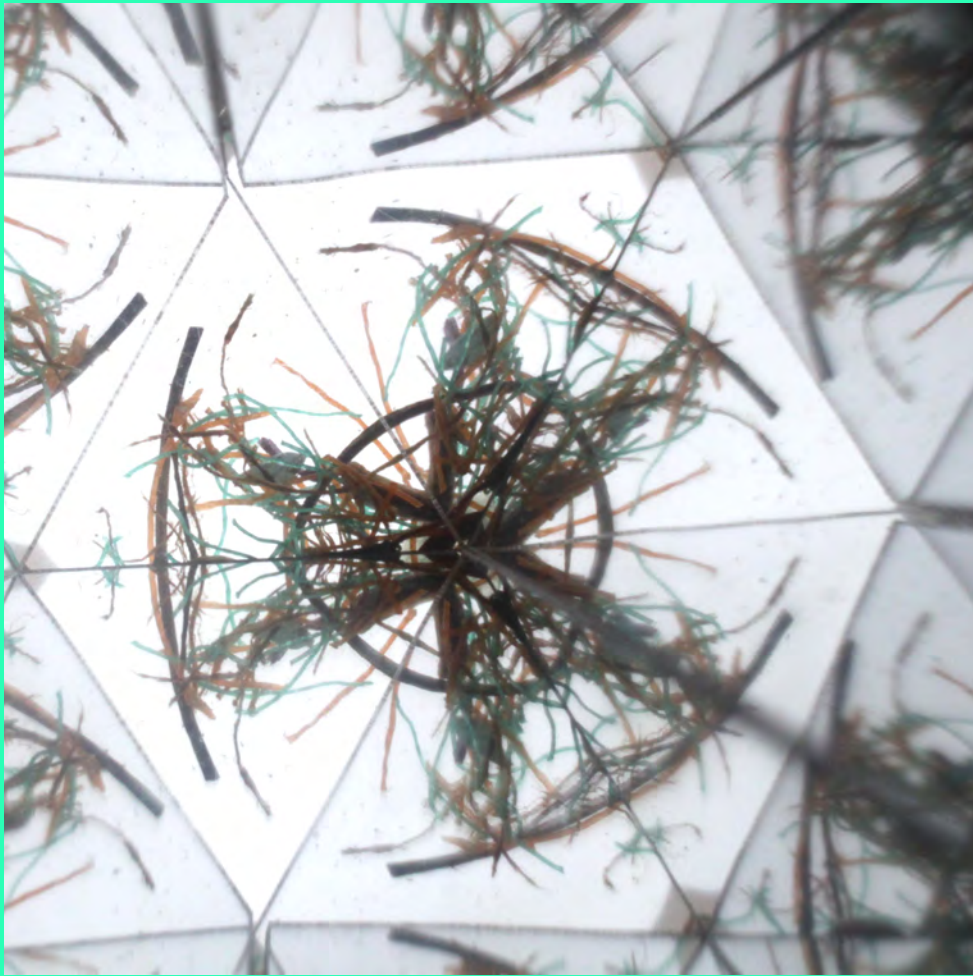
Due to restrictions I was only able to test this with a few close friends. The exercise was well received and both people successfully created their kaleidoscopes and responded positively to the question about gifts (e.g. "I would make it nicer than I found it"). This prototype stage was important as it helped me develop the concept so it was more clearly understood. I learned to keep the instructions very fine grained, not to make any assumptions, to keep the task simple and limit the number of questions asked (in this case to one).

Critique/Next steps

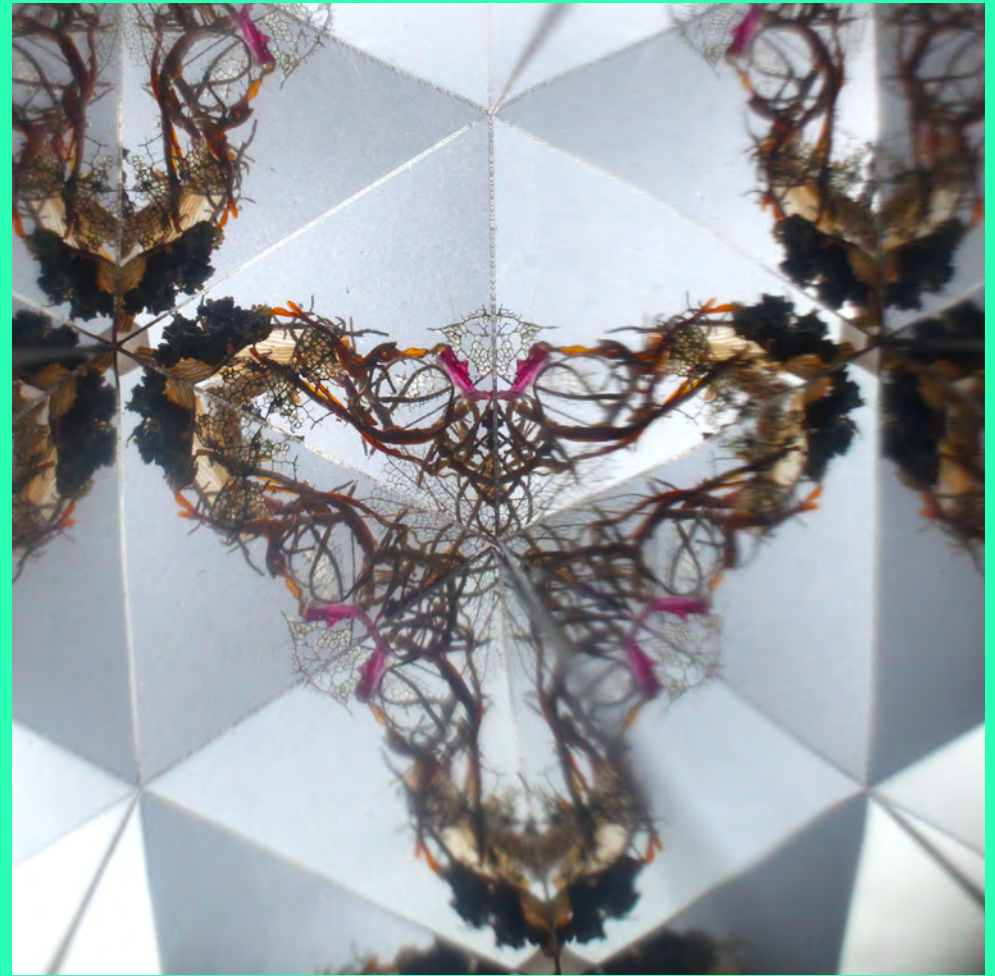
Due to limitations on access to materials and tools I had to purchase parts of the kit. This meant using some pieces of plastic. This does not give the right message when bringing the topic of plastic pollution into the conversation, or talking about the environment in general. Sustainable materials would be sourced for future workshops. There is also the option to reuse materials such as food packaging.

While this exercise can generate insights into what people would do to gift to the beach and sea, it was designed as a individual practice. It was designed specifically to communicate ideas around responsibility, reciprocity, care and interconnectedness to nature. However, it does then place the responsibility on the individual. Any dialogue would need to be guided towards collective responsibility.

It would be interesting to design the exercise so that participants work collaboratively. This might communicate ideas around collective action. I would need to develop the discussion part if, in the future, I ran this workshop in a public space with a group. Data or knowledge visualisations could be produced from outcomes and feedback from the workshop practice.



Images created with the kit using plastic waste from the beach mixed with natural materials.



Images created with the kit using natural materials.

Analysis of the studies

This section presents a summing up of the key insights from across all studies that use design to discover insights and to create conditions for dialogue.

In my locality, and likely across other geographies, there is a lack of clarity about what the commons is. There is a basic understanding of common land and what commons means as a word (shared/resources) but much work is needed to communicate contemporary definitions and the value of the work of commoning. People understand commons based on their personal experiences. We need to be mindful that not all commons/-ing are likely to be the same.

The language we use for both activists and publics needs to be clear and accessible. Communicating how people can act on their pro-environmental values is important. We need to understand what reason people need to get involved. Mapping commons in my locality showed the geographical limits of emerging commons practices. I suggest a national or global open source map of commons/-ing to create a bigger picture and also act as a documentation and promotional tool.

Using context can improve comprehension of what are otherwise quite abstract concepts. Also situated activities may give a stronger message than distinct communications such as posters. Need for sustainable materials in all practices.

When speculating designers should consider how designs might relate to everyday lives. Then use this to inform messages (such as improved well being, healthier food, cheaper energy etc). Some concepts of the commons can be communicated by design artefacts but care must be taken to design 'in' the wrong message. Designers also must acknowledge any biases and work with stakeholders and beneficiaries of the projects.

With research you need to be careful not to prompt answers via leading questions. Working on collaborative research could help avoid this. Taking care together.

Self reflection is an important aspect of a designer's work. We must consider ethical approaches to working with 'others'. Good communication requires good noticing and listening. Communicating about commons is a very broad area. Successful design work in this area needs clear aims for a single study. One study documents existing activities, another communicates ideas about enclosure, in another still, you may only begin to give people a sense of connection to nature. This work is long term.

Conclusion

Commons is a broad topic to explain, given that most things can be a commons. Also its contemporary meaning has shifted away from its historical one. However, work is being done to explore, document and make visible commons/-ing. Design in its many forms can support this work.

Design can play a role in people understanding the contradictions between their values and their habits and the need to get their hands dirty and do the work of commoning. Designers can design more ways to open up dialogue around commons/-ing and encourage participation, designed around people's every day lives.

Today, the action of commoning is the vital part of the commons. Various aspects of the research in this project confirm this. The project also shows that conversations and connections are important to building and amplifying the work. And diversity is crucial.

COVID-19 makes collective work much harder to do. Humans need to be connected, to each other and to 'more than human worlds'. Stewardship is an aspect of commons that connects us to the wider ecosystem. Not all commons need be the same but we need to care and be careful in the work we do. It must be an act not a disposition.

Methods like drawing, walking, collecting objects and writing are valuable for supporting design practice. We must question our practice and be self reflective. We need to move away from human centred to situation centred and nature centered practice.

This work requires us to dig deeper, to talk more.

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Appendix 1

Commons Interviews

Richard Watson, Energise Sussex Coast (ESC)/ Energise South (ES)

How would you define the commons?

As assets (but don't like the word), as resources that belong to everyone.

Are you familiar with these terms:

Commoning - y

Relocalisation - y

Cosmo-local production - n

Platform cooperatives - y

Commonverse - n

Peer Governance - y

Can you talk about the work you are doing now?

We are rebooting our community benefit society as a consequence of COVID-19 and economic downturn. Like Europe, we see transformation coming from the community and people centred action. Mainly working on renewable energy ownership, shared with the community. TO generate a benefit fund, address health and income inequalities.

Is the governance non hierarchical? If no would you like it to be more non hierarchical?

Yes - I have suggested everyone gets paid the same. Like a workers coop.

What values underpin the work?

Justice, fairness, environmental protection, cooperation, collaboration, love, caring - "It's about how you care for environment and people, it's connected".

What do you see as the benefits of the work?

Mitigate energy poverty. Give people tools and info to empower them. Rather than fixing and creating dependence. Assumption that market will solve the problem in government, only 10-15% of people actually switch. Trying to convey a sense of collective action, thinking

about the commons. Tangible impact on climate change (E.South). Influencing behaviour. Eventually to have peer to peer trading.

Do you see a need for gentle reciprocity (mutual care) in these current times?

It's definitely happening! But there's a need for it beyond COVID-19

What would your preferred future look like for your organisation?

To connect with similar organisations across geopolitical boundaries and disciplines. To think collectively and create partnerships.

Any final thoughts?

What ESC has done for the most part is gifted projects to partners - CES, BHESCO, SEC, Ovesco, BEC, WVSC. There is so much trust in the relationships. Thinking of commons, people feel excluded if there is a different sort of language. Coops have been around for 200 years, but people still don't understand what they are. You need to see patterns to see how things fail, you need people that want the same things, or they don't work. I've been talking to Charu about the citizens science lab - getting kids to measure and identify waste on the beach, record litter.

Alison, St Leonards Community Garden

How would you define the commons?

Spaces that are available to everyone for use. E.g. for entertainment social gatherings, activities, education, investigation. Where everyone is on an equal playing field.

Are you familiar with these terms?

Commoning - N

Relocalisation - N

Cosmo-local production - N

Platform cooperatives - N

Commonverse - N

Peer Governance - N

Can you talk about the work you are doing?

I'm one of a few volunteers helping at St Leonards Community garden. Tidying, trimming, pruning trees, composting, the earth needs enriching. We're working towards being better prepared for Spring.

Is the governance non hierarchical? If no would you like it to be more non hierarchical?

Yes. There's no... it happens that me, Chris and Mick are often there and have been there the longest. But we encourage others to take on a project and to have ideas. Some when they want, definitely self-organise. People find their own plot and tend it, build things. It's lovely.

What values underpin the work?

Being open, to anyone joining in. No hierarchy, equal. Anyone can come and help. Its valuable to grow, to be self sufficient. To teach each other, sharing and learning from each other. Even people that don't join in can share. It's demonstrating respect and care. It's a lot of work but it's for everybody.

It's labour and a labour of love. It's positive and has a ripple effect when people experience the garden. It's 'feel good'. Like a butterfly that flaps its wings on one side of the world, having an effect elsewhere.

What do you see as the benefits of the work?

There's beauty and variety. Both volunteers and people that see it. And the fact that people are caring, creating and growing something for people to eat. How it looks and how visitors and local businesses react. If you are in an area where something is beautiful it shows pride and maybe makes people think they should bother and make even more of a difference.

Do you see a need for gentle reciprocity (mutual care) in these current times?

Yes. It feels as though there is always a need. Because we've become so individualistic. It's based on fear. Culturally and in the media, there lots of fear instilled, it stops people reaching out. Especially with COVID and people's mental health. With mutual care you wouldn't be so isolated. The direct impact of mental health must cost the government a lot. You need love, care and intimacy and you can't really do that now.

What would your preferred future look like for your organisation?

That I wouldn't feel I had to be there as much. More people regularly volunteering and taking ownership of the garden. It's running itself a bit, without the need for the three regulars. More of a life of its own. And to literally grow itself in size and shape – evolving even more. More projects, more initiative from people.

Any final thoughts?

It would be really nice if there was more activity in the week. E.g. classes for kids, vulnerable groups. So, it would be impactful for people to forget their troubles. More organized educational sessions to benefit the community. Thank you – This has made me remember how powerful it is. How it can be appreciated and inspiring. It fires me up. Talking about the project can help me understand why I do it!

Sherry Clark, Transition Town Hastings

How would you define the commons?

At Well London I worked on a creative commons license, a shared ownership of the IP. I as interested in how people who wouldn't be able to access info could – knowledge is power. I worked with UsCreates. It's around a need to break down control and ownership of resources that really should be shared. I had to argue for it as it was when I worked for the NHS Trust. Its about open, shared, resources. Also, we are not used to it in Canada, we moved to Harpenden and went to the common there and there were cows and cricket and a village fête.

Are you familiar with these terms?

Commoning - n
Relocalisation - y
Cosmo-local production - n
Platform cooperatives – y
Commonverse - n
Peer Governance - y

Can you talk about the work you are doing now?

In Transition Town I see it as a way of having common purpose. I like the idea of the garden. The station land was so ugly before. It's such an impact when we get off the train. I'm interested in the relationships, who has power. People can use some common resource in a powerful way. People involved feel empowered. Being part of a common effort. It builds confidence, competence, creates an energy field.

SOS festival – It gains traction and energy.

It's intangible, not quantifiable It's a limited space, I've often thought it becomes owned by a small group of people the ones there the most take ownership and it becomes exclusive. But there are new activities and new people (some came to the recent open day). The space is not a natural space you'd go to, like a garden. It doesn't help that its part of the station, a transient space for people on journeys.

Is the governance non hierarchical? If no would you like it to be more non hierarchical?

I don't think it is, but less than other groups I've been involved in. There has to be some leadership, to get things done. I'm always surprised people come to meetings and they feel they can say what they like. It's not a problem.

What values underpin the work?

Explicit: A commitment to environmental sustainability. Implicit: To do with shared experience. We have a shared bond by having a different set of priorities to people with family. Importance of land, nature, natural environment.

What do you see as the benefits of the work?

The garden - keeps us grounded. A place to go to and literally get your hands dirty. IN terms of wellbeing you have meaning and purpose. You can see what you are doing, transforming a space. Impact on the community - even the drinkers love it. One man was showing his friend how to put mint on his potatoes. Mums and kids too. Someone has been sitting on the bench this week. Relationship with the station has added credibility. We have traction, reputation. It's a long game. We've built it year on year. Literally people can pick fruit and take it home. Re. TTH, it draws people of a certain type valuing the natural environment. Making change happen at a social environmental level. There's an awful lot of good will and people feel strongly in common. There's a lot of social capital in the network, there's a lot of trust.

Do you see a need for gentle reciprocity (mutual care) in these current times?

There's massive problem in understanding the need for reciprocity. There is a culture of dependency, always has been in this country. Basically, you have to be a receiver and a giver. In Time banks it's mutual but making a case for it is difficult. People can't see that you get more wellbeing benefits from giving, even if you are in great need. People can give to nature. You have to design in opportunities for people to give.

What would your preferred future look like for your organisation?

I'd like TTH to be more of a facilitator, or catalyst. TTH has lots of potential (like SOS), to be leading the agenda, bringing group together in a more integrated way. It blurs boundaries, there's lots of convergence. To be able to say, 'We are bigger than the sum of our parts'. But I wouldn't want to lose the practical stuff. In the garden, it's great but I'd want to do more SOS stuff. It's tricky with volunteers and needing to fundraise. Helping orgs that are more conventional to do more, to change what they do. Facilitate the connections and create this common energy. It becomes generative. It's a kind of commons. You get 'ordinary miracles'!

Any final thoughts?

I was thinking about the network, the Big Lottery money. Trying to create a commons. When we get money, we fall into the old patterns of command and control. It shifts the power so much. If someone is being paid others don't think they have to do it. How can you keep it common? How do you not go into the hierarchy? e.g. 3 days a week working, or universal basic income.

Jess Steele, Hastings Commons

How would you define the commons?

Resources + process + community. Resources may be tangible or not (e.g. data). Commons doesn't exist without process and in process you build community. That community is made of people that care about the same things. Hastings Commons is based on shared values, people must buy into the work. Place is the glue that binds strangers. It's both decision making + action. Hastings Commons is focussed on DIY process. In community organising you nurture and prod to get the idea, you need to find out what people want.

Are you familiar with these terms?

Commoning - y

Relocalisation - n

Cosmo-local production - n

Platform cooperatives - y

Commonverse - n

Peer Governance - y

Can you talk about the work you are doing now?

We are working to build the Hastings Commons, moving difficult and derelict buildings into custodian ownership. We are using a shareholder's agreement that will lead to full community ownership. We are using a shareholder's agreement that will lead to full community ownership. HoH will buy out the other 2/3 of WRNV (White Rock Neighbourhood Ventures) that is currently owned by Jericho Road and Meanwhile Space, who are currently taking the risk. We first talked about an ecosystem where all our different buildings share the same values and process but have different legal structures and access to money. It's a complex system. The Ecosystem is more important than the commons.

Is the governance non hierarchical? If no would you like it to be more non hierarchical?

It's diverse distributed leadership. There are hierarchies but not one single hierarchy. No one organisation is more important. We don't use tools, but we make decisions by consensus. I think of it as community when tenants get involved and go beyond their tenant role. Now Nathan's role is to work with tenants. I'd like it to be more inclusive. Hierarchy is a red herring as most governance is messy and for example, in the voluntary sector it exists but not much. People think it's [HoH] my project but there are people, like John Brunton that are massively important, but no one has heard of him. We need to reconsider who we call Community Leaders.

What values underpin the work?

Inclusivity, even Ultra Inclusivity. Values around being grateful for what you've inherited, being willing to take action/work in order to hand it on. Giving, creating, handing on. Valorise enterprise, entrepreneurialism to harness resources. Capping rents, there should always be affordable places for people to live and work, to protect diversity. This includes income diversity - I'm concerned about the people that won't come to the area (eccentrics, creative...). Anti-homogenization.

What do you see as the benefits of the work?

Buildings that were derelict for four decades. It makes me angry that no one has done anything about it, well paid regeneration professionals didn't do the work. We are showing up the mistakes of the past. Despite this the council still say we need them. We must involve people. We show a different way. We build community power, building a stake in the market.

Do you see a need for gentle reciprocity (mutual care) in these current times?

It's an economic act, it's sensible. I recognise we need it. It's like the Deptford Tenner, an informal safety net, a community level investment. Personally, I'm willing to give more to the community. We've been exploring a neighbourhood bond. We are 'gently' moving the equity, getting people (who have unearned equity) to put it towards local good. COVID has enhanced the local in public discussion.

What would your preferred future look like for your organisation?

To restore buildings at various levels and, in 2029, or maybe sooner, Heart of Hastings buys out the investors at below market rate. Then I [Jericho Road] can invest the money elsewhere. Lots of things will change including local government. It will be unpleasant (at borough and county level) and impact on everything. Maybe we can collectively shift it. We call it darning the social fabric. A political revolution opens up opportunity for social change whereas social revolution changes the fabric of society. We need to take away the conditions for bad regen approaches to thrive, right now some in the community are colluding with them.

Any final thoughts?

We are currently looking at the challenge of how we communicate the Hastings Commons to people. We are working on a creative brief which includes a visual identity but it's not an organisation and not an area. It's a communication challenge. We want to get across that there are values behind it. We have internal complexity but need external clarity.

Kate Meakin, ESC/ES**How would you define the commons?**

Commons are shared spaces, resources or institutions that are available to all and used by everyone. Everyone can access them equally.

Are you familiar with these terms?

Commoning - N

Relocalisation - Y

Cosmo-local production - N

Platform cooperatives - Y

Commonverse - N

Peer Governance N

Can you talk about the work you are doing now?

Energy advice for people in fuel poverty. New online advice because of COVID. Reaching people in fuel poverty and giving help to access grants.

Green Homes which offers 2/3 of costs up to £5000 for insulation etc.

Launching new round of energy advice. EU Project bid - more advice, energy coaching with follow up calls in 3 months, 6 months. Relationship building and possible behaviour change.

Relaunching solar projects and green team service to do basic energy efficiency in homes. Linking energy to food consumption and gardening.

Thinking about systems as everything is siloed. There is money available for green businesses to set up and we hope to work with Aaron to deliver services. Energise South solar installations - the FIT has been extended again to the end of March 2021 and we have up to 80 potential solar sites. We will increase membership linked to services. Green Hub - still in conversation with Rosanna from the Refugee Buddy Project.

Is the governance non hierarchical? If no would you like it to be more non hierarchical?

No. Everyone has a high level of autonomy and responsibility, but the director does take ultimate responsibility for the organisation and has the strongest steer over the strategic direction of the co-op. The governance is non hierarchical but the power dynamics aren't necessarily as the Founder is looked to for steer on most decisions. This is more accidental than by design.

What values underpin the work?

Acting cooperatively, valuing justice, energy justice, valuing the environment and tackling

climate change. Championing community responses, promoting community ownership.

What do you see as the benefits of the work?

There's a local economic benefit, saving people money, especially those in poverty, carbon saving benefit, small benefit in terms of local ownership, decentralizing power (literally as in power generation) and the ownership of our power.

Do you see a need for gentle reciprocity (mutual care) in these current times?

Yes, definitely do. Especially as now there is the potential for anyone to get disconnected. You need to receive and give and connect. Doing things that don't rely on money.

I'm worried about everything going online. People aren't online or don't have phones. Jeremy Corbyn's universal broadband idea might happen now.

What would your preferred future look like for your organisation?

A big membership that feels more interactive. Stuff coming from the membership. So people feel like they are in a bit of a movement. I'd like us to become the trusted installer for retrofitting, moving from advice to services.

Energise South would be a known and trusted solar installer that all schools want to generate their own power and then can pay for staff like an extra teaching assistant. Microgeneration

Any final thoughts?

Thinking of energy as a commons. An energy commons as a concept would be a massive shift in mindset. Rather than sending your money to a big organisation. We can write this on our about page, our mission statement or values. It's a way of framing that's not really out there – it would be a substantial shift.

Julia Hilton, The Common Treasury

How would you define the commons?

Usually land but stuff owned for the benefit of all, or all connected to it. If a place it's something you feel ownership of, you have some power and agency in how it's looked after, it's future and purpose. A park too could be a commons.

You have obligations, it's not a free for all and you have agency. It's something that can't be sold. Something outside the market, held in trust for future generations. Also, digital commons, open source software. But mostly land/housing a concept of shared resources

and shared skills.

Are you familiar with these terms?

Commoning Y

Relocalisation Y

Cosmo-local production N

Platform cooperatives Y

Commonverse N

Peer Governance Y

Can you talk about the work you are doing?

We're coming to the end, but the Common treasury came out of interest in Community Wealth building (Preston Model). Instead of big project work you focus on what you've got.

We felt it was happening else where but not in Hastings. How do you build capacity, create good community business and how it could be applied?

It was about what it triggered not copying projects.

It was ambitious. It triggered more conversations. Partly because of COVID barriers have broken down between community and the council etc. there is more willingness to do joint projects.

One thing we are keen on is the visual representation of the work to make it accessible and easy to understand. E.g. postcards, recipe book, a deck of cards with inspiration points, it would give out prompts, suggestions.

It's now a receptacle, to grow. It doesn't have to be owned by anyone. We need to get beyond the emergency stuff. It's how you frame a question that gives you direction.

Is the governance non hierarchical? If no would you like it to be more non hierarchical?

Yes it is. It's small because it came from four people from several organisations. Its strength is its not an organisation but its difficult to know who is responsible and who does what. It's a challenge to bring in more people and could be accused of being cliquy. But the most valuable thing is the conversations and connections.

What values underpin the work?

Curiosity, questioning, A wish to see people empowered and make change, creativity, openness. We spent a lot of time thinking about how to make the events interesting, thought provoking – work on the design process was driven by this. Solutions need to come from the community, not top down. And be allowed to be messy. And valuing it, value in the process.

What do you see as the benefits of the work?

A lot of people were inspired, they heard ideas they hadn't heard before. Values acknowledged projects that don't look at the bottom line first. Unexpected conversations. One attendee said it was good to just have time out and hear and make contacts, be able to take a step back.

Creating a different place that's about ideas, creativity. That doesn't happen in crisis mode. The outcomes were quite intangible. Very well-designed events – we can use the model for other events (thematic e.g. housing)

Do you see a need for gentle reciprocity (mutual care) in these current times?

Definitely, A real need to be kind and recognize you might not agree with how people are making change, but you need to be kind.

One of the things in community during COVID has been the positivity of that. How do we keep it onto the next change?

There's more to life than the bottom line, you need to earn a living but there are other things. How we value or measure things like GDP, how we measure other outcomes. We still use jobs etc instead of if people are happier. For most community businesses it's embedded in.

What would your preferred future look like for your organisation?

It was originally 1 year, extended to 2 years. We hope it will feed into other things in Hastings – as part of the recovery. Think about how we can work that enriches the commons, housing, things we share. When the council bought litter picking back in house, they could have made it a coop. Developing cooperative ways of working with the people running it owning the business. Need to put the frameworks in place. Start with a non hierarchical set up. This is more my personal belief than the organisation.

Any final thoughts?

This has made me think, as I have a meeting next, how would the Greenway fit into the commons.

And my work as a landscape architect, there could be more opportunities for the people I work for to take over space and have some agency. The downfall of green projects is the legacy stuff. How do you change the ownership model? If that's different at the beginning people might split the money differently. If they were given the money how would they spend it? A change of mindset if you give people a sense of ownership they will start to care for things.

Amanda Jobson, Ore Community Land Trust

"If you take something you need to put back".

How would you define the commons?

A big green space with wildflowers, lots of grass and trees. Not too many, but here are trees, and hedgerows. They have evolved, maybe there aren't as many as we think? There are other wild spaces.

Are you familiar with these terms?

Commoning - n

Relocalisation - y

Cosmo-local production - n

Platform cooperatives - y

Commonverse - y

Peer Governance - y

Can you talk about the work you are doing now?

A community garden in a woodland. What we bring is biodiversity of plants for insects and other species. But also, for people to enjoy, to bring seeds, and share food. We put back and share. We grow trees: apple, pear, hazelnut. Also, blackcurrants, blackberries, red currants and gooseberries. Bushes too but we try and get a balance between light and shade. It's about connecting with nature and forest gardening. It's modelled on my garden, I have borage, toads etc. We aren't clearing all the areas we keep things like nettles for butterflies. We need people and want people to learn, especially in Ore. It's the most deprived area of Hastings. Kids are told (by their parents) not to go to the wood. Some don't know it's there or people don't know how to get there. I'm learning stuff and bring what I learnt from my parents who were keen gardeners. We don't have a greenhouse; we germinate at home. Debbi from HVA is having a shared food event in September.

Is the governance non hierarchical? If no would you like it to be more non hierarchical?

I do question it. Because I'm a woman. I'm project managing the garden part. I do delegate. We (the CLT) have meetings once a month. Some of those people aren't active in the wood. There is a conflict. In the CLT there is a secretary, a chair, a treasurer, I'm the fundraiser. Yes, I think it should be more non hierarchical. I've been involved with green Party and XR - they do things differently. XR get things done really quickly and there's an action plan. There is a bit of an urgency.

What values underpin the work?

Nature first. People are just as valued. We try to incorporate everyone. Everyone has a value. If people want a role, they can have it e.g. looking after the orchard. It's about everyone having a say.

What do you see as the benefits of the work?

It's a long-term thing. Soil, wood, people. More people are coming to natural spaces (esp. since COVID). There's some thinking about the Greenway running through the wood but it should be natural materials. Conservation should be at the heart of it.

Do you see a need for gentle reciprocity (mutual care) in these current times?

Yes, I think there is. I firmly believed in it. People in the group have different histories, being kind is of part of the practice, understanding. It is there. I sent one of the drinkers a food bag and numbers to call. But he is a long-term drinker and he has got worse not better. You act if you see signs or warnings people need help.

What would your preferred future look like for your organisation?

Abundant growth of plants and wildlife. All the things you'd love to see. People enjoying nature more. People having ownership of the area, so they are proud of it. So, it's there's. I say "it's the community's" I want to give it back one day and leave it. Some young kids involved. An educational space working with scientists on knotweed. Good solutions. It would be nice if it was more on the map. It's in the High Weald but lots of the woodland is neglected, it has invasive species. The council own parts of it and some of it is privately owned.

Any final thoughts?

I'd like to see more projects of this kind. A linking up of groups. It's nice to see a non political group coming together in a non commercial way. But it's productive in the way we work, sharing knowledge. It's rare that people help you. People complain about things but don't get involved. It needs to be more connected and must stay in the hands of the community, not sold off.

Appendix 2

Combined Forums and Survey Summary for West Marina

3 forums were held for local residents and attracted about 70 people. 167 survey forms were returned, by post, on-line, at the three forum meetings and from door to door canvassing. Thanks to leaflet deliverers, canvassers, leaders of and attendees at the forums and to all those who completed the surveys. Thanks also to Graham Wilkins for fielding the on-line returns, to Eve Montgomery for entering all the Survey responses into a spreadsheet and to Alexia Masardo for helping compile the returns.

It is hoped, as soon as possible, to canvass the opinions and ideas of local businesses (there are about 150 in the area) and also amenity and recreation groups who use, or might use, attractions in the area.

A grouping of the responses by issue follows. Where there were several very similar answers they've been summarised in one phrase. A selection of direct quotes is included. No attempt has been made to reconcile some potentially contradictory views!

Friendliness, Solidarity, Safety and Security

An outstanding feature of the comments at the Open Forums and the feedback from the Survey is the number of people who stress the strong community feeling in the area and the friendliness of their neighbours. One advised that it "lifts your spirits". One mentioned that there is a "creative community". Another "I was born and bred here." Concerns were expressed that the area "Feels neglected", "The Cinderella end of the town."

One person noted that the area is safe and free from violence though there is concern about recent petty thefts and mugging. We were advised that police are disinterested and community patrols are needed. Others were unhappy about poor footpath maintenance and lighting making them feel less safe and forcing them into the road. One person commented that the beach huts were, it seemed, only for "owners" who were "not welcoming". The poor behaviour of some Filsham Secondary School pupils passing through the area was noted.

Attractions

A very wide range of features, activities and facilities were identified as attractions for residents and visitors. Three main dimensions can be seen. The seaside, the countryside

and the urban heart. These are seen as complementary for local people: “country living with good town amenities.” The presence of the Combe Haven Holiday Park was noted. Comments include: “Maintain what is in West St Leonards already” and “Promote W St Ls as an area for well-being and quality of life activities.”

The sea itself, unrestricted views out to sea and fresh sea air were frequently mentioned. Specific draws along the seafront are: the small fishing boats, the Amsterdam wreck, Harold and Edith’s Statue, pitch and putt, bowls and a public toilet in Grosvenor Gardens, the kayak club, the start/finish of the Half Marathon and the Park Runs, the beach huts, the sea cadets’ premises and climbing wall (though noted as not accessible to the public), the seafront shelters (though needing refurbishment and with concerns about the homeless users), walks, including dog-walking, the children’s play area, jogging and kite-flying, and other informal leisure activity along the seafront, on the old bathing pool site and in Grosvenor Gardens. There is access to the seafront along the cycleway, on foot over the Bridge Way foot bridge, by train from West St Leonards station and by bus from Hastings and Bexhill (though train and bus services need improvement). Free car parking for visitors was flagged up - though the need for the large area taken up by parking and road space between Grosvenor Gardens and the sea was queried. There is nevertheless a perceived lack of attractions actually on the promenade, and a lack of lifeguards and water points or recycling bins on the beach. There is a need for more seafront trees, “to absorb CO2 and look nice”. There are concerns about inadequate Grosvenor Gardens maintenance.

The Combe Valley Countryside Park including the Discovery Centre, the former tramway and Sophie’s play area, also the fields in Filsham Valley were mentioned, with particular reference to walking, dog-walking, watching birds and other wildlife and football, athletics and other sporting activity. Some concern was expressed about the adequacy of access to the Countryside Park, e.g. muddy footpaths and flooding. The mental health benefits of access to fresh country (and sea) air were stressed. Other open areas were valued including land off Cliftonville Road.

The urban amenities of the area included the parade of shops (with a pharmacy, greengrocer and butcher, cafes and takeaways and Post Office but lacking a bakery and deli, a bank, ATM and fishmonger), four nice pubs (Fountain, Bo Peep, Bull and Comet), the new Health Centre, the Cinque Ports Way car wash, the accessible Ravenside retail park and indoor swimming pool, the new Aldi (though with reservations about the likely traffic impact), access to the recycling centre (though not for pedestrians or cyclists), St Ethelburga’s Church, the Community Centre (though needing renewal), three Schools (though with some concerns about Secondary pupil behaviour, whether there is enough School choice and a lack of nursery provision). Missing might be a cinema.

Character

It was noted that this is a quiet but not isolated area “close enough to everything but not too close”. And “with enough going on.” One noted however that “The area needs its own identity”.

St Leonards was flagged up as the third sunniest place in the UK. West St Leonards is seen as a quiet and safe environment (with reservations as above). Attention was drawn to the open rural landscape separating Bexhill and St Leonards and in Filsham Valley and the presence of some unmade roads was noted. The importance of the views over the sea and across open land was stressed: “a seaside countryside mix”. The bathing pool site in a prime seafront position “could be amazing”. Attention was drawn to a number of characterful buildings contributing to the ambience of the neighbourhood including Railway Cottages, Victorian seaside homes, the Church, and period buildings towards the east end. But Bexhill Road is thought to be scruffy “... from Bo Peep to Stamco. A lick of paint is needed.” “Scruffy places. Landlords don’t care”. Concern is expressed about the quality of some buildings that have been approved by HBC.

“WSL needs to be loved not driven through.”

Memory/history

Great pride is taken in the historical associations of the area - “masses of history” “original St Leonards” - including the Amsterdam Wreck, St Mary’s Chapel, Harold and Edith’s statue and the Bulverhythe rail sheds. More intimate are memories of a mother and grandmother spending their days at the Bathing Pool and of sledging on the slopes of Filsham Valley.

Social and Community facilities

One resident claimed that one of the three schools in the area is “the best primary in St Leonards”. Some concern was expressed about the capacity of the schools to accommodate new development. The Community Centre is seen as important though needing refurbishment or perhaps re-siting. The new medical centre was welcomed, though residents off Harley Shute advised that getting down to Bexhill Road by bus is difficult. The TA hall and naval cadet units were noted. The need for more toilets was posited.

The youth club has closed. “Not a great place for children of all ages to play/hang out!” A need for volunteer mentoring was identified.

Housing

Several people commented on the extent of visible homelessness including rough sleepers in seafront shelters and illegal caravans. It was claimed that generally there was a sympathy for these people in the area. It was important that provision is made for them including genuinely affordable social housing. Strong objections were raised to current proposals for housing on the Bexhill Road playing fields and the former bathing pool site. It was also suggested by a few that some housing might be included on the bathing pool site and that on this, and other land subject to flooding, it might be worth exploring options such as houses on stilts or housing above retail/entertainment uses. Many voices stated that priority should be given to putting housing on already agreed sites including Grove School or on West Hill Road. Reference was also made to use of waste to energise houses and conversion of sea water as drinking water.

Employment/Business/Commercial interests

The number and range of businesses in the area was noted, including the rail sheds in Bridge Way, the ice cream warehouse in Bulverhythe Road and several locally run independent shops including e.g. an environmentally conscious greengrocer. Business involvement in any neighbourhood cooperation was seen as important. The possibility of commercial sponsorship for local projects, e.g. cycle path improvements, was pointed out.

Recreation/Leisure/Tourism

Many existing opportunities for recreation were set out. (Several of these are already referenced above under attractions.) It was thought there was a lack of investment areas for children to play. More recreation facilities should be provided for children and the elderly. The need to protect open green spaces such as Filsham Valley was stated.

More leisure opportunities are needed along the seafront e.g. free public table tennis. The bathing pool site was described as “the Heart of St Leonards”. It could be “a waterside park of beauty.” The park run and Hastings Half Marathon are already important to bring people in to the area. It was thought that priority on the old bathing pool site should not be for housing but to make “a destination” and/or for e.g. kids, sport, families, playground, public park, café, boat launching, kite surfing, paddle boards, retaining the kayak/canoe club already there, and an open air swimming pool which might be saltwater, might be closed in bad weather or heated (ref. Germany and Belgium swimming pools in all towns). Beach showers and a dedicated dog toilet were suggested. Other ideas include: “café/restaurant above ground level to give spectacular views out to sea – use underneath area for secure units for canoes, water sports.”; a 1066 Centre; a Turkish bath/luxury spa; beach hut saunas;

a harbour. A festival based around the bathing pool site was suggested.

The leisure “offer” of Grosvenor Gardens of, bowls, pitch and putt and Harold’s statue might be enhanced by including the road way and parking area between it and the sea. Botanical garden. Sensory garden. The possibility of greater public access to the naval cadet centre and climbing wall was raised as was more public access to the beach huts. There is need for a dog-friendly park. More seasonal attractions are wanted “nothing going on in winter.” It was suggested that the children’s playground in Edinburgh Road needs secure fencing, swings, flowers, shrubs etc. and there was some concern that it could be at risk of development. The example of creation by community effort of Sophie’s playground and continuing work to improve access to it were recorded. Flooding on the Bexhill Road Playing Fields limited their use.

The allotments (off Tudor Rise) were referred to.

Wildlife/Nature etc.

Many voices spoke up for protecting and enhancing the important nature reserves and wildlife sites in the area. The areas included Combe Valley and the SSSI and reed beds, the South Saxons wetlands and Filsham Valley pond. The importance was stated to be for the local ecology, wildlife protection e.g. frogs, plants and bird life, recreational bird-watching, outdoor environmental activity and learning and general relaxation, e.g. for young people learning animal husbandry, landscaping and gardening post-prison. A wildlife educational centre was suggested. Reference was made to the possibility of extended walks to say woods at Hollington Park. The idea of guerrilla gardening in the more built up areas was put forward. There was regret at a loss of trees e.g. on the railway embankment at West St Leonards Station. “There should be greening of the north side of Bexhill Road with trees”. The former W St Ls Primary School field should be re-opened.

Environmental Health etc.

There were numerous detailed concerns about widespread and persistent problems with litter e.g. from gulls assailing rubbish sacks, street cleaning, hedge trimming, dumped cars, dog waste not being picked up, discarded rubbish including prams, furniture, bottles, paper etc. and about a lack of action from responsible agencies. There was concern about the “down and outs” in the Promenade shelters.

Also raised were unsavoury and possible hazardous smells from the Freshfields tip, the stormwater overflow at the Bathing Pool site, broken sewers in Bexhill Road and drains blocked with rubbish and flooding. “Squalid gutters.” Reference was made to cliff collapse in Caves Road, traffic noise and air pollution in Bexhill Road and the lack of clarity about the anthrax burial site in Filsham Valley.

Broken surface water drains and frequent flooding of recreation areas were noted.

Pedestrian/cycles

Many residents stressed the importance to them and visitors of walking in and around and to and from the area and giving priority to pedestrians, e.g. from the bottom of Filsham Road to Grosvenor Gardens. There should be more footbridges across the railway line to the sea. A lot of concern was expressed about poor street sweeping and hedge clearance in many places, surface maintenance e.g. the footbridge between Bulverhythe and Bexhill Roads, lighting of paths e.g. on the Black Path and between Filsham Road and Edinburgh Road. Unclear directions and poor access to, in particular, the Countryside Park. Difficulties crossing the busy Bexhill Road and need for traffic reduction were mentioned, e.g. a bridge rather than zebra crossing at Glyne Gap. A lorry ban on Bexhill Road was suggested. Cycling was also seen as important. The seafront cycleway was referred to. A need for more, better and safer cycleways was noted. It was suggested that an overall approach to a pedestrian and cycle network was needed along the lines of (say) Living Streets. Commercial sponsorship might be found. Sheltered cycle parking is needed.

Public transport buses/trains

The area being on public transport links between Hastings and Bexhill and Hastings and London was welcomed. However, there are only limited evening and Sunday services and the timetable results in a bunching of the 98 and 99 buses. There is need for an earlier and later service every ten minutes. There is only a summer seasonal direct bus service between the Harley Shute area and Bexhill Road, which should be a bus route to the new Health Centre and to the local and Ravenside shops. There are no direct bus services to the hospital or the industrial estates and some schools. Bus fares are expensive. It was felt by some that more trains should stop at West St Leonards. The re-opening of the West Marina station to facilitate journeys to access the Brighton to Ashford line was proposed. Limited car parking and poor disabled access at West St Leonards station were noted. An (electric) tram service was proposed from Old Town to Grosvenor Gardens.

Highways inc.cars and parking

Major concerns were the speed and volume of car traffic on Edinburgh Road, Bexhill Road (and the likely impact of the new Aldi) and Harley Shute. Congestion on Bexhill Road despite diversion to Combe Valley Way. The bus lanes are dangerous and a waste of money and should be taken out. Too many roadworks. Fast and reckless driving and turning at dangerous junctions including St Vincents Way/West Hill Road and Sussex Road/Marina. Speed bumps were suggested for Edinburgh Road. Hold ups at the junction of Harley Shute and Bexhill Road were mentioned with suggestion of a left filter lane out of Bexhill Road and bus stop re-siting. Free parking for visitors and residents was commended. Illegal

parking on the Grosvenor Gardens frontage was observed. Inconsiderate and dangerous parking near the Schools in Harley Shute. Residents' parking permits were suggested.

Development

Comments on possible development include: "Not really any space". "No". "Have enough already." [put it] "Five miles south." It should be: away from the seafront where it would not restrict access to use the Promenade; and "Somewhere that doesn't disturb wildlife and values green space." "Away from flood plain." However one comment was "Not much for young people, support Bulverhythe development." A need for more attention to sustainability was stressed. More imaginative developments were needed, e.g. as in Copenhagen, a ski slope on a block of flats.

Building on valuable used green space, e.g. the Bulverhythe Rec./Bexhill Road playing fields ("No Way") "without appropriate infrastructure" and bathing pool site, was thought to be a bad thing. "The Council's dogmatic stance on building in the green space." "Leisure facilities on the bathing pool site not housing." "Priority should be given to brownfield and other possible development sites." These might include the old Stamco lumber yard and the MoD site and buildings in Cinque Ports Way which might be developed alongside future plans for the bathing pool site; the derelict site behind the Bo Peep and Gambier House both in West Hill Road; the Grove School site; the vacant Essenden Road surgery; the former West Marina Station goods yard; the ice cream warehouse in Bulverhythe Road and other possibly empty or under-used commercial premise. Use should be made of empty houses in the area; sites in Combe Valley Way and Queensway; old student housing in Warrior Square. The possible use of compulsory purchase powers to progress development was suggested. A lack of Council investment was noted. "Too much time has been spent over the last 50 years by various HBC Councils ... and [e.g.] nothing has come to fruition at the old bathing pool site."

Engagement/Neighbourhood

Sample comments include: "Encourage community care and responsibility." "More cross-generational and cross-community interaction and communication." "Don't screw it up" "Be pro-active rather than reactive." "Just keep going."

In terms of a possible boundary the majority supported the suggested boundary. One resident used mostly Ravenside and the nearby beach and felt more connected to Bexhill. If a neighbourhood plan presses for the former Grove School site to be a priority for development then it was suggested the residents of Darwell Close ought to be involved. There was a query whether or not more of Essenden Road should be included. Another questioned whether the area was too large.

There was a large majority agreeing (in one forum, unanimously) the need for an umbrella

neighbourhood forum to help support and liaise between existing groups e.g. Friends of Combe Valley, and take forward projects affecting the whole area. Such neighbourhood work should add to and not detract from existing groups' work. There was support from many to create a neighbourhood plan "to give us some control over development and say what is needed in our area". A "comprehensive plan to regenerate the area, organised by residents." It was noted that a Neighbourhood Plan is a large undertaking needing many volunteers. It was also suggested as a possible alternative that a neighbourhood group might better focus on a small number of specific projects e.g. getting a new community centre. Another idea was a local committee to provide urban design oversight – to stand on a voluntary basis for 6 months or 1 year (good for local democracy). There might be an information exchange about what all groups are doing inc. e.g. sports groups and activities.

There would need to be "a name and a view for the future" and a need to build a community feeling and organising as a unit. Residents would need to vote on the organisation to interact with HBC on the community's behalf.

There should be a Website and Facebook page for local contributions and access and further regular meetings. The group should involve the Hastings Independent Press and Hastings Online Times – invite them along. And the group must try to involve younger age groups, involve schools – perhaps on environmental education projects -, go and see Head teachers and parent associations. (This may also help with behaviour problems).

There is a need to research what there is, an audit of the area. There will be a need to engage with people who have particular interests for the area (health pursuits, gardens, the arts, history) – fliers, surveys. The group should continue to gather opinions and ideas and further develop awareness of community issues e.g. by organising outdoor events. Annual community events were suggested.

And the Council needs to "listen to us" and be more forthcoming with information about what is being planned and proposed. "It is in the interests of the Council to keep us in the dark?"

Appendix 3

Excerpt of Town Deal Application for West Marina

Project Proposer: West St Leonards Forum, the West Marina Group, and Save Our Bathing Pool Site (SOBS)

Council Ward(s): West St Leonards, Maze Hill and Central St Leonards

Project Aim:

To create the physical, cultural and commercial foundations for the resurgence of West Marina as a vibrant coastal neighbourhood centre and visitor destination.

Project Summary

The Project Proposers will work with local business, sports and cultural communities to establish and progress "meantime" environmental improvements and a series of sports and arts events using existing and other "pop-up" facilities to promote activity in and longer term regeneration of West Marina. The Proposers and partners will in parallel prepare a business development/action area plan with fully worked up project propositions for permanent investment and funding bids. A locally representative managing board will work with a part-time community coordinator and draw on technical advice from appropriate local experts. A pop-up shop/office will be established as focal point for West Marina regeneration.

Outputs

1. A series of "mini-festivals" utilising a mix of small indoor and larger outdoor performance spaces. These could include:

- Westmarine an open air event celebrating and promoting awareness of the potential of the Marine Conservation Area for tourism, sustainable fishing and aquaculture, wildlife protection and underwater archaeology.
- Westwednesday a series of indoor and outdoor musical and theatrical events e.g. a chess

tournament using human pieces.

- Westweekend celebrating, in particular, water-based recreational activities.

- Westgallery as part of the Southern Arts open days.

2. A demountable or “pop-up” swimming pool, a “pop up” performance space and a “pop-up” sports education facility on the former bathing pool site and equipment for seasonal off-shore recreation such as diving rafts.

3. Temporary awnings, seating, sound systems and screens for outdoor events.

4. Beach showers, changing screens, bike/e-scooter stands, a lifeguard stand and secure out-of-season storage space for equipment.

5. Tourist information boards about current attractions and past history of the area.

6. Street scene improvements to the Bo Peep shopping parade and along the West Marina seafront and Cinque Ports Way, including a support fund for decorating materials.

7. “Meantime” landscaping of the bathing pool site including raised beds, seating, waste bins.

8. “Meantime” re-organisation including bike/e-scooter stands and upgrading of the appearance of the Keats Close and Carpetland car parks.

9. Traffic calming on Bexhill Road and Grosvenor Gardens.

10. Signage and footway improvements to and from West St Leonards station.

11. Re-positioning of bus stops and advance signage.

12. A detailed Business Development and Action Area Plan based on detailed engagement with local businesses and residents, and existing and potential visitors to and users of the area leading to

13. A set of detailed, costed longer term projects with local and institutional support for the permanent regeneration of West Marina. These are not part of the current bid but might include:

- A managed, balanced and appropriate phasing of new housing development on brownfield sites across the area.

- Support to existing and new small business, craft studios and other workshops in Caves Road and Seaside Road.

- Support to existing and new guest houses in the area.

- A series of new permanent recreational and leisure facilities within the former bathing pool site, West Marina Gardens and in/on the adjoining sea including a keynote attraction or attractions such as a saltwater open air pool, an active creation of a full-size copy of the Amsterdam, a sculpture garden, a permanent outdoor music or theatre space.

- Reopening of access to the Brighton/Ashford rail services, by re-using the West Marina Station platforms or extending West St Leonards Station.

- Creation of a permanent mixed pedestrian and short-term parking plaza between West Hill Road, the Bo Peep Public House and the Bexhill Road shops.

- Stabilisation of the Caves Road cliff and wildlife area and re-opening of the Sussex Steps, a key pedestrian route between the seafront and housing.

- Support to “little and often” seafront public transport.

Appendix 4

WEST MARINA AND THE BATHING POOL PROPOSALS. PDF

Making West Marina a destination site: Proposals for interventions, events and community engagement at the Old Bathing Pool site and the West Marina area. appear on the following pages.

WEST MARINA AND THE BATHING POOL SITE EVENTS AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROPOSALS

Sarah Macbeth, Sept 2020

MAKING WEST MARINA A DESTINATION SITE

Proposals for interventions, events and community engagement at the **Old Bathing Pool** site and the **West Marina** area.

Background

West Marina sits within the West St Leonards area at the far west end of the Hastings and St Leonards seafront. The Bathing Pool site sits adjacent to Combe Valley Countryside Park, where the river Combe Haven flows into the sea.

The old bathing pool site is a contested public space. An art deco outdoor bathing pool opened on May 27th 1933 in time for the 1934 Empire Games. Records stated that the sun was shining on the open day. The site was festooned in flags and bunting and hundreds of swimmers awaited the first gun to indicate the "big splash."

In 1992 it was demolished, the rubble buried directly on the site. Fragments of its existence remain: a hut, several small decks overlooking the beach, one is now the site of a café.

Consultation with West Marina Group

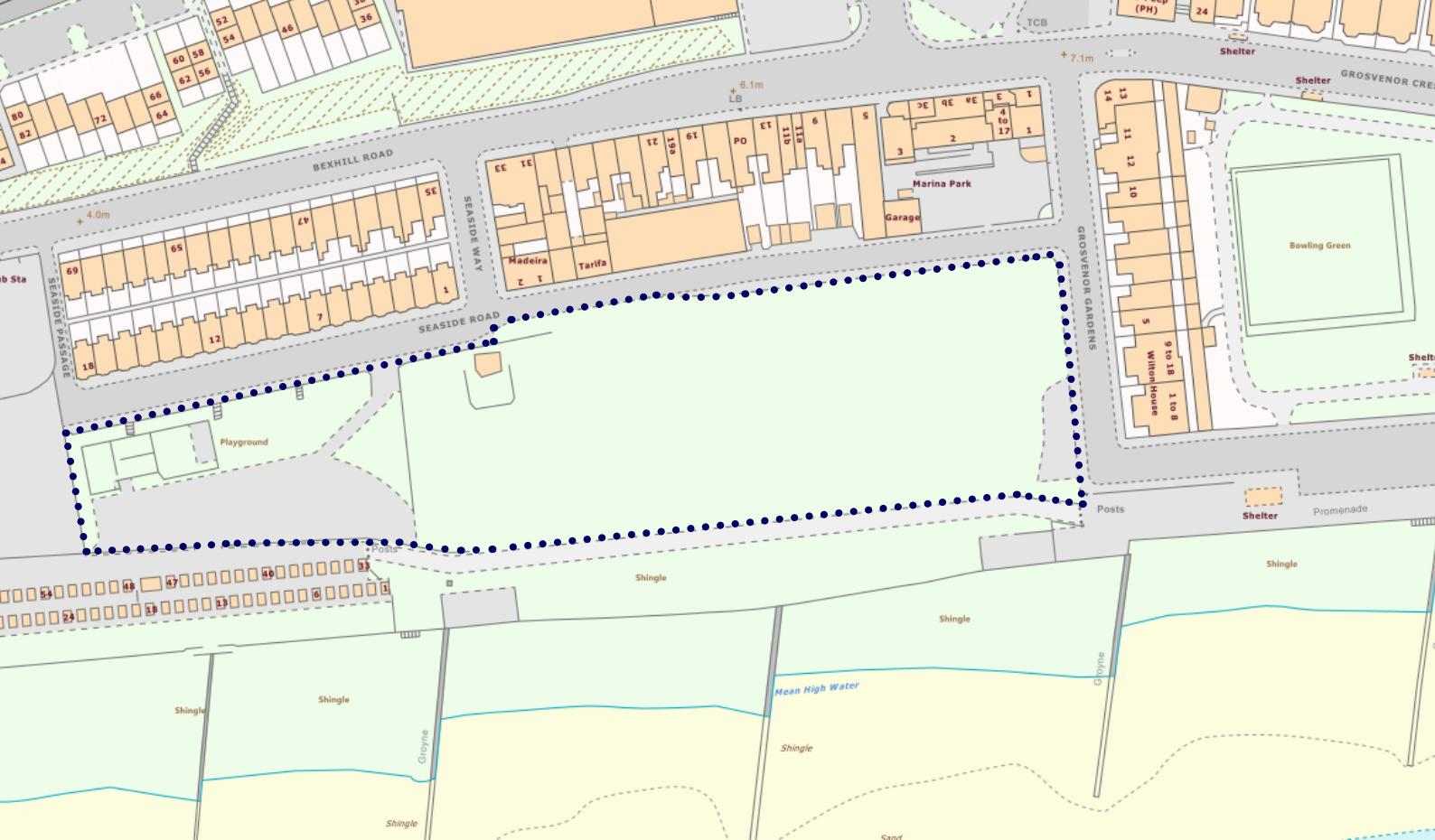
A local campaign group, West Marina Group, have been consulting with local people about their thoughts on the area. They have engaged with around 160 people and the response has been 99% positive. At the same time Hastings Borough Council have been escalating plans for its sale to property developers who intend to develop housing.

The group have support from Locality and have applied for over £400,000 from the Town Deal fund.

"Instead of a housing estate, let there be a swimming pool, flower gardens, a sculpture park, an iconic building or other such amenity that will give pleasure and inspire, and help with the much-needed regeneration of the town."
Virginia Vilela, Chairperson, West Marina Group



The Old Bathing Pool ©trainsandstuff



The Old Bathing Pool and surrounds at West Marina

Destination site

The West Marina area, including the Bathing Pool site, needs to become a destination site.

Local people believe this cannot be achieved with a new housing project. Instead they want to see the community flourishing by introducing features and activities that draw visitors in and improve the lives of local people.

Problems with the site include:

- Debris from the pool demolition is sitting on the site under soil.
- Southern Water have underground tanks below the ground on approx 1/3 of the old bathing pool site and need constant access to these.
- Access isn't great and car parking is limited. However, the site is directly on the NC2 cycle route.

- The surrounding environs to the west and north of the bathing pool site are not attractive. e.g. Retail park, busy main road.
- Some issues between different user groups e.g. cyclists and car drivers.

The group aims:

- To create a destination site, not a site for housing and related amenities. Housing can be developed on other sites close by.
- Take advantage of Locality support for the local neighbourhood plan to pay for design work and community engagement.
- If successful in getting the Town Deal funds they can go ahead and plan events and move the local neighbourhood plan forward.

PROPOSALS

'Sink or Swim festival' at the Old Bathing Pool

Sink or Swim would be a one day or weekend mini festival. The activities all assume temporary use of the site. The concept centres on what Jenny Odell calls 'resistance-in-place'. It becomes the site of resistance to inappropriate development and a lack of community involvement. Nothing will be for sale, *expect the very land we will be standing on.*

Concept

Given the historical connections to the land enclosures and reductions in common land that took place after the Norman Conquest and the need to improve the area, it feels appropriate to create an event or series of interventions that sit under the banner of the *Commons*.

Nearby Combe Haven was a site on the route taken by William the Conqueror after landing at Pevensey and heading inland towards Battle. William gave away considerable parcels of English land to members of his court. Known as the great enclosures, this set the foundations for English land to be placed in the hands of the few. In more recent times, the Tragedy of the Commons (Hardin, 1968) theory (that claims commoners will always over exploit common land) has been used as a smear campaign against common property institutions.

The "West Marina Group" are in a position to create a new commons on the site, working collaboratively with the

local residents as the beneficiaries of any new commons that emerges.

Any event should be fun and allow people to use their imagination and consider uses for the site, an opportunity to think "What if?" or "Why not?".

Relating the land to leisure and the commons, signs could be added to act as provocations such as "Public Land", "Deep End", "Shallow End", "Flood Plain", "Nothing is for sale here" (Fig 1).



Fig 1.

Sports and well being activities

The event takes inspiration from the history of the old bathing pool, proposing the site as a potential wellbeing resort. Visitors will be able to try out a wide variety of sports and wellbeing activities such as swimming, weight-lifting, parkour, yoga, acroyoga, kayaking, wind and kite surfing etc.

Signage for the event can imply that the site is a wellbeing resort (see Fig 2), to act as a "Why not?" provocation.

west marina

WEST MARINA WELLBEING RESORT*

* OFFICALLY ONLY AN IDEA!

Fig 2.

Sports activities can be facilitated by various local groups such as Park Run, Hastings Runners, Hastings Urban Bikes, Breeze Womens bike rides, Bike Lab, Azur Swimming Club, Kayaking club, Epic Life Paddleboarding (SUP) and Kayaking classes, Outdoor Gym groups and trainers, Source Park BMX bikes, parkour, yoga and acroyoga practitioners and much more.

Walking activities could include:

- Walking the Bathing Pool site and discussing potential ideas for the site.
- Walking the West Marina area, considering where it's boundaries lie and discussion changes that could improve the area. A test run of Beating the Bounds (see ideas for the West Marina area).
- Walking on the edge of nature and culture, walk about biodiversity and connecting with nature.
- Walking to Battle and or Crowhurst via the link to the 1066 country walk. Various routes can be taken via Filsham Reed beds and Combe Haven Valley.

The key visual elements are sand bags (all the same colour or pattern ideally) constructed into seating, walls or to create spaces designated for different activities. Sandbags are a strong image reflecting the dangers of flooding but



©LoFi Studio



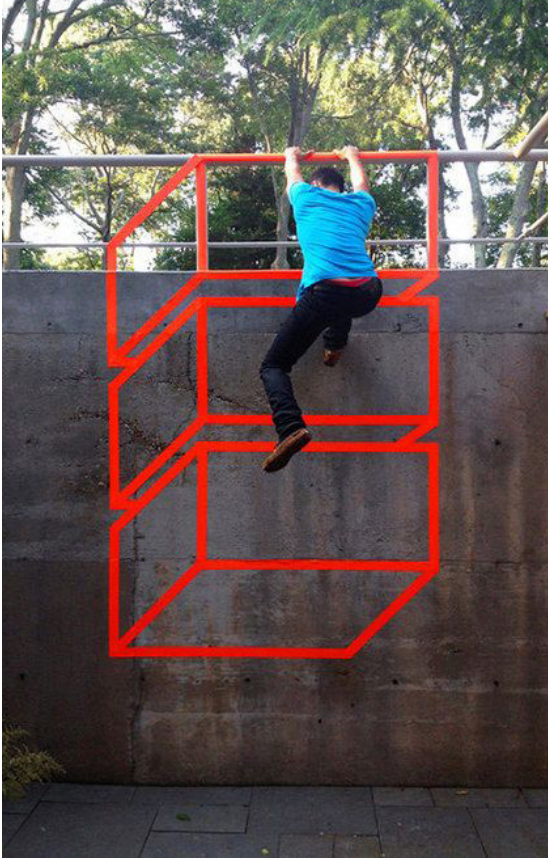
©Yoga Lifestyle with Melissa



©Mountain Tactical Institute

A more extensive mood board can be viewed at:
<https://www.pinterest.co.uk/afreehour/ma-sustainable-design-research/bathing-pool-site/>

©Akash Mhatani



they are also useful objects for sports, to create safe barriers and to be used as weights for training.

Using the existing structures and adding temporary walls, blocks and other constructions can provide an environment for parkour, skateboarding, climbing and other physical activities. Use of graffiti and taped or painted graphic devices will make the spaces more visually engaging.

A padding pool, mini diving board with crash mats and a trampoline could act as a reminder of the original bathing site.

A marquee can provide shelter and a space to engage with people about the local neighbourhood plan and gather local residents' ideas and stories about the site.

A poster design and postcards or boards for visitors to complete appear on the following pages.

©Something & Son



Trampoline



Existing structure on the Bathing Pool site.

ANCHOR YOURSELF IN WEST ST LEONARDS

SINK

3-4 MAY 2021

10AM-4PM

**OLD BATHING POOL
SITE, WEST ST
LEONARDS**

OR

SWIM

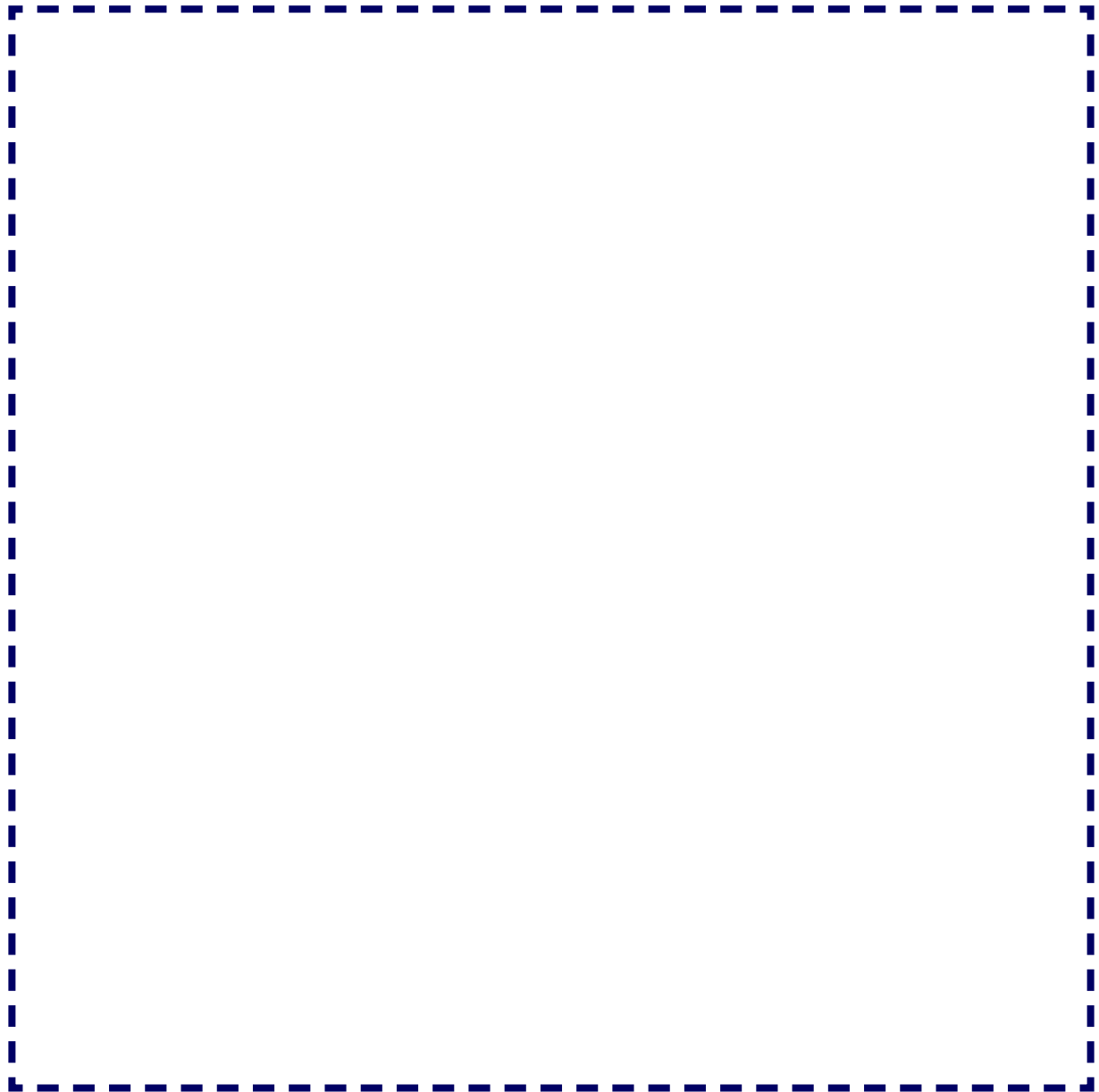
f e s t i v a l



**KAYAKING, SWIMMING RACES, YOGA SESSIONS, WEIGHT
TRAINING, PARKOUR, GUIDED WALKS, PADDLING POOL
FOR CHILDREN, BIKE REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE
CLASSES, FOOD STALLS, MUSIC AND STORYTELLING**

west marina

**WHAT WOULD
YOU LIKE TO
SEE IN THE
NEIGHBOUR
HOOD?**

A large, empty rectangular box with a dashed blue border, intended for a response to the question above.

west marina

**TELL US
YOUR STORIES
ABOUT THE OLD
BATHING POOL**

A large, empty rectangular box with a dashed blue border, occupying the central portion of the page. It is intended for a user to write their story or upload a photo related to the 'Old Bathing Pool'.

west marina

Local neighbourhood plan community engagement

Beyond the festival engagement will be needed to keep local people informed about the local neighbourhood plan and how they can get involved.

Here are some suggested activities:

Planting temporary vegetable or flower garden on the bathing pool site and establishing a community growing project. Handing out seed packets to local residents.

Beating the Bounds - a historic activity to continually define the boundary area of a piece of common land using willow and birch twigs. These could also be used to make structures for the garden or basketware.

Designing a West St Leonards map

Further walks across the seasons – during full moon, low tides, walks for foraging and plant identifications.

Water related projects – water fountains for drinking water and for display.

Community-led street signage.

Developing the wellbeing theme by adding a swimming pool and sauna to the site.



Beating the Bounds

©The Decorators



©H3T architekti



©Refill Ambassadors



©WeAreStreetSpace

