Caring Commons,
Cultivating Commoners
A story of an urban farm and the young people it cares for

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Overview

• Project overview
• Connecting to urban restoration
• Who cares who?
• Commons as a framework for thinking about care
• Planning for urban restoration
PROJECT OVERVIEW
Project Overview

Project: Delivering Urban Wellbeing through Transformative Community Enterprise
Project Overview

Project Objectives
1. Understanding the role of the material, physical and social commons in youth wellbeing
2. Documenting Cultivate’s commoning process for sharing with others
3. (Co)Developing a ‘Community Economy Return on Investment’ (CEROI) tool for assessing whether it is worth it
Project Overview

Project methods:
- Ethnography/participatory observation (1 day a week, 6 months)
- Interviews (all staff and interns summer 2018)
- Workshops (staff; staff and interns; urban designers, 2018)
Project Overview

Key Themes:

- Staff were focused on caring for youth and farm (organisational scale) and land and community (community scale)

- Youth were focused on developing self care in order to work (individual scale) and the benefits of a therapeutic environment (organisational scale)
Youth Comments

When asked to describe their relations to the physical and social environment at Cultivate, youth mentioned:

• ‘Breathing room’
• A ‘sense of home’
• A ‘less stressed’ place to be
• A sense of satisfaction by doing meaningful work
• A sense of satisfaction through concentrating
• ‘A step towards happiness’ through ‘feeling good about helping’
• Exposure to ‘a different side of life’
• Knowledge about food, plants and healthy eating.
CONNECTING TO URBAN RESTORATION
Making Connections
WHO CARES FOR WHO?
Care Theory

CARE
”...a species activity that includes everything that we do to maintain, continue, and repair our ‘world’ so that we can live in it as well as possible.”


• Caring about
• Caring for
• Care giving
• Care receiving
• Caring with

Care Theory

CARE

“...a species activity that includes everything that we do to maintain, continue, and repair our ‘world’ so that we can live in it as well as possible.”


“We need to disrupt the subjective-collective behind the “we”: care is everything that is done (rather than everything that “we” do) to maintain, continue, and repair “the world” so that all (rather than “we”) can live in it as well as possible.”

Who Cares for Who?

• All the material things that make up this space care.

• That is, *they do care work* – worms, microbes, sunlight, vegetables, water, hoes, trees, gumboots...
Who Cares for Who?

One type of space is a commons – a space that is cared for by a collective, where the primary benefits are to that collective.
COMMONS AS A FRAMEWORK FOR THINKING ABOUT CARE
Commons for Urban Wellbeing

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<th>COMMONS</th>
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Source: Adapted from Gibson-Graham, Cameron and Healy, 2013
The shaded area indicates the criteria for identifying a common. ‘Commoning’ refers to the process of bringing either private or open-access property and resources into common access, use, benefit, care and responsibility.


*Modified from* Gibson-Graham, Cameron and Healy 2013, p 148
## Commons for Urban Wellbeing

| COMMONS OF CULTIVATE including individuals, organisation and wider community |
|-------------------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| ACCESS                                          | USE             | BENEFIT         | CARE            | RESPONSIBILITY  | PROPERTY        |
| Shared and wide                                 | Negotiated by a community | Widely distributed to community members and beyond | Performed by community members | Assumed by community members | Any form of ownership (private, state, or open access) |
| Youth, staff, volunteer, public birds insects microbes plants | Youth, staff, volunteers, wider community, environment | Youth, staff, volunteers, environment, ‘more-than-human’ | Staff, board of trustees, city council, youth, volunteers, microbes/worms/sunlight etc | Privately owned, temporary access |  |

Source: Adapted from Gibson-Graham, Cameron and Healy, 2013
# Commons for Urban Wellbeing

**COMMONS OF CULTIVATE** including individuals, organisation and wider community

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**National Science Challenges**

*Building Better Homes, Towns and Cities*
Commons for Urban Wellbeing

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Commons for Urban Wellbeing

• Care of commons provided by *humans* staff, etc.
• Commons-space cares *for humans*, particularly youth wellbeing and surrounding community
• Caring *with* is what cultivates humans who have a relationship with urban ecologies
PLANNING FOR URBAN RESTORATION
Planning for commons

Key points:
- Care is provided by commons, but a key characteristic of commons is **mutual** benefit and interaction, for a small group (not public)
- **How can urban restoration projects for indigenous species build in mutual care /reciprocity practices?**
- A lot to learn from other traditions of commons
Acknowledgements

Project Team:
Dr Kelly Dombroski  (Primary Investigator)
Dr Gradon Diprose  (co-Primary Investigator)
Dr Stephen Healy
Assoc.Prof. David Conradson
Dr Alison Watkins  (Research assistant)
www.cultivatingurbanwellbeing.wordpress.com
www.takebackeconomy.net