nRhythm Design Sprint

Free, Fair and Alive – The Insurgent Power of the Commons for Regeneration, With David Bollier
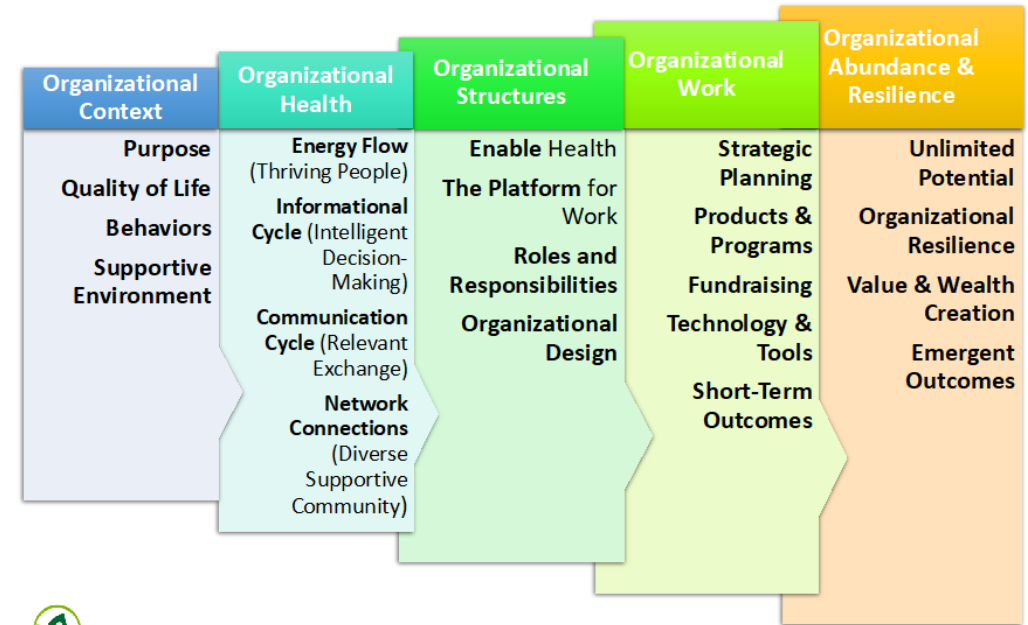
January 27, 2-3pm ET

@nRhythm.co

About nRhythm Design Sprints

nRhythm Design Sprints are 60-minute intentionally structured conversations designed to re-imagine systems – from agriculture to capitalism to the built environment. We interview leaders across a variety of industries utilizing nRhythm's Regenerative Framework to frame and land the conversation operationally in order to inspire and ignite systems change locally and globally.

- **Context.** What is the big why? What is the quality of life in a regenerative agricultural system? What behaviors do we need to live into in order to regenerate agriculture?
- **Health.** How can we enable the health of the system?
- **Structures.** What structures that would enable the health of the system and create the impact that we all want?
- **Work.** What work will we do to realize the context?
- **Abundance.** What does abundance and unlimited potential look like in the system?

The following slides capture the conversation.

The Regenerative Framework

Organizational Context	Organizational Health	Organizational Structures	Organizational Work	Organizational Abundance & Resilience
Purpose	Energy Flow (Thriving People)	Enable Health	Strategic Planning	Unlimited Potential
Quality of Life	Informational Cycle (Intelligent Decision-Making)	The Platform for Work	Products & Programs	Organizational Resilience
Behaviors	Communication Cycle (Relevant Exchange)	Roles and Responsibilities	Fundraising	Value & Wealth Creation
Supportive Environment	Network Connections (Diverse Supportive Community)	Organizational Design	Technology & Tools	Emergent Outcomes
			Short-Term Outcomes	

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About David Bollier

David Bollier is Director of the Reinventing the Commons Program at the Schumacher Center for a New Economics (Massachusetts, US), and cofounder of the Commons Strategies Group, an international advocacy project. Bollier is an editor or author of nine books on the commons, including Think Like a Commoner (2014), and (with Silke Helfrich) Free, Fair and Alive (2019). Prior to his commons work, Bollier collaborated with television writer/producer/activist Norman Lear for twenty-five years and worked with Ralph Nader in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Bollier lives in Amherst, Massachusetts.
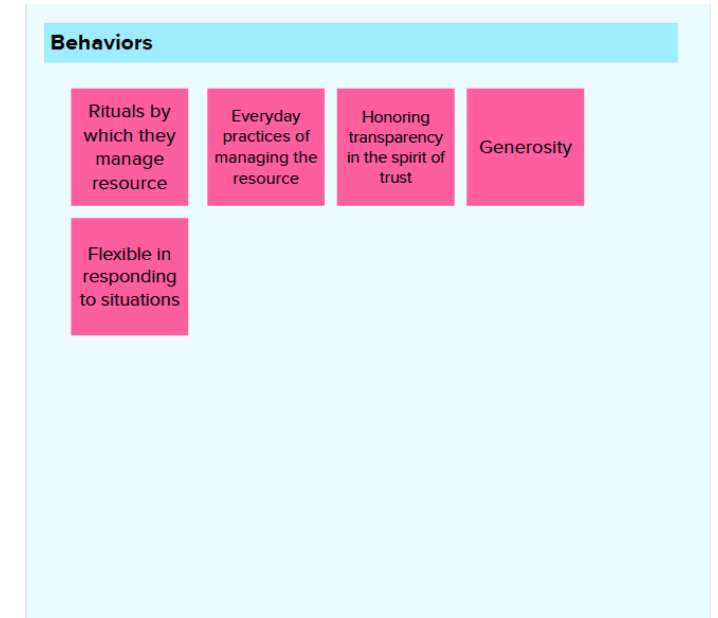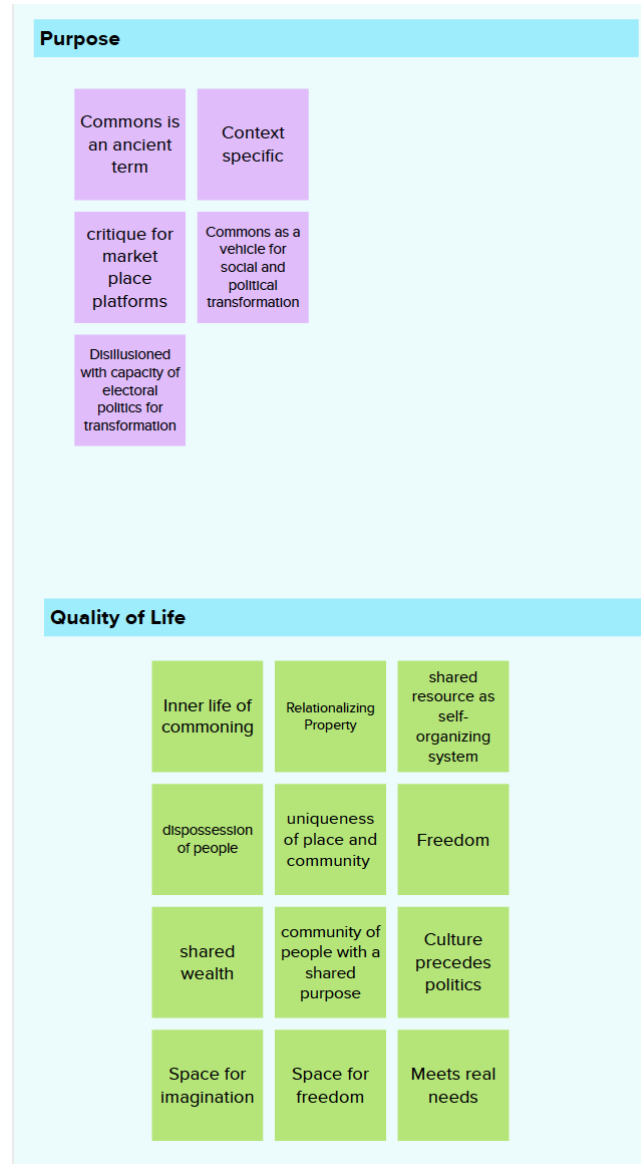

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CONTEXT

A system's Context provides a shared purpose for all decision-making. This purpose must be clear, meaningful and co-owned by all members. This Context should also include agreements on desired behaviors for engagement between members.

We explored questions such as:

- What gives you the most energy doing this work?

- The terms 'commons' is used in a lot of different ways – what is a commons to you?

- How do people need to behave in order to ensure the outcomes we desire?

- What is the quality of life that we wish to cultivate?

Purpose

Commons is an ancient term	Context specific
critique for market place platforms	Commons as a vehicle for social and political transformation
Disillusioned with capacity of electoral politics for transformation	

Behaviors

Rituals by which they manage resource	Everyday practices of managing the resource	Honoring transparency in the spirit of trust	Generosity
Flexible in responding to situations			

Quality of Life

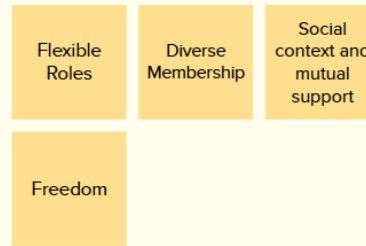|		
Inner life of commoning	Relationalizing Property	shared resource as self-organizing system
dispossession of people	uniqueness of place and community	Freedom
shared wealth	community of people with a shared purpose	Culture precedes politics
Space for imagination	Space for freedom	Meets real needs

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HEALTH

Insights derived from living ecosystems, these foundational processes are core for a healthy functioning environment. The fundamental belief is that systems must create the conditions for members to thrive. Abundance and resilience emerge as a by-product of the system. The active processes include:

- **Energy Flow:** Energy Flow is the energy created and transferred between members of a system. The more engaged and thriving the members, the greater the energy flow.

- **Communication Cycle:** Core to the success of any system is the delivery and exchange of intelligence and wisdom to all its members. Healthy systems have open, transparent flow of information that is actively exchanged with members.

- **Network Connections:** The mutualism, diversity of connections, and transparency that exist within the system will enable the operating environment to thrive.

- **Informational Cycle**: Healthy systems are receptive to new ideas and thinking by learning from previous decisions. Healthy decision-making is contingent upon wisdom being generated by the system.
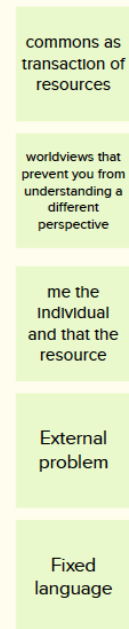
We explored questions such as:

- How do you ensure Commons are beneficial for their members?

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Energy Flow: Thriving Members

Flexible Roles	Diverse Membership	Social context and mutual support
Freedom		

Informational Cycle: Intelligent Decision-Making

What needs to die?		To give life to..	
commons as transaction of resources		Commons as relational	"care wealth"
worldviews that prevent you from understanding a different perspective		ontological shift - "ontoshift"	Learn new ways of doing things
me the individual and that the resource		we are not isolated individuals - nested eye	States need new ways of working with commons
External problem		New perceptions	
Fixed language		Noun language	

Communication Cycle: Relevant Exchange

Barriers in Language	Shared understandings

Network Connections: Interconnected Partners

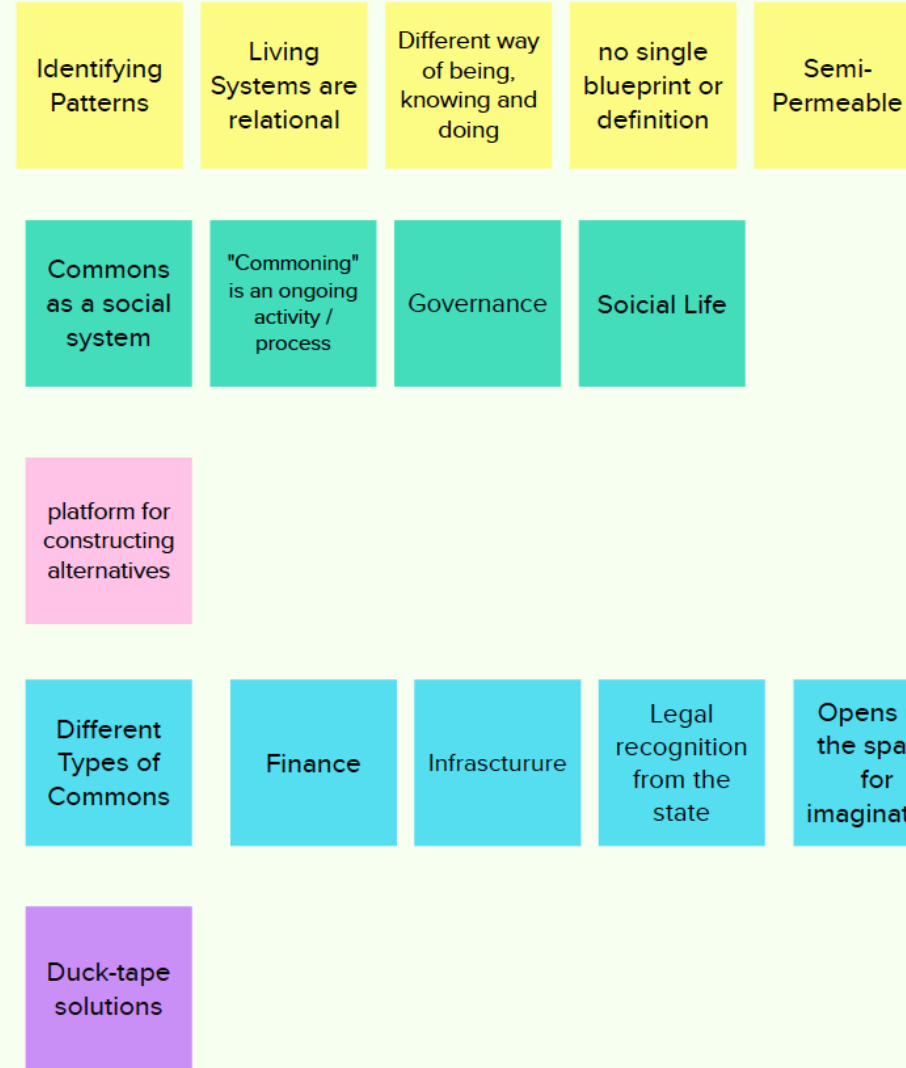| Ralph Nader	Elinor Ostrom	Living systems are relational
Norman Lear	Andreas Weber	It's less about resources than about relationality in managing resources
Indigenous wisdom		
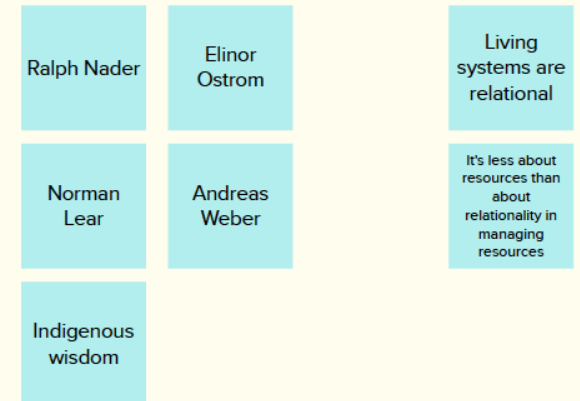
STRUCTURES

Structures should be designed to enhance or strengthen the intrinsic health (Energy Flow, Informational Cycle, Communication Cycle & Organization Connections) of the system. Here are a few examples of operating structures: 1) Roles and Responsibilities, 2) Governance, 3) Meetings, 4) Monitoring and Evaluation. However, all structures must adapt and evolve with the current operating conditions to maintain relevance.

We explored questions such as:

- Are there are any "rules" or structures for commons?

STRUCTURES

Identifying Patterns	Living Systems are relational	Different way of being, knowing and doing	no single blueprint or definition	Semi-Permeable
Commons as a social system	"Commoning" is an ongoing activity / process	Governance	Soicial Life	
platform for constructing alternatives				
Different Types of Commons	Finance	Infrascturure	Legal recognition from the state	Opens up the space for imagination
Duck-tape solutions				

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WORK

Work is about the design and implementation of the vision and goals in the system. This involves agreeing upon and prioritizing the primary strategies and/or activities to create the most impact. In a healthy system, all of the activities are being achieved while being rooted in its purpose and without compromising the health of its members.

We explored questions such as:

- Okay I want to start commoning, or build a commons – How do I go about that?

- Once a commons is up and running – what do you need to do maintain them?

WORK

Barriers to Abundance

- Existing institutions don't have the trust to do what needs to be done
- Given time and right circumstances, could re-engage commons in the political economy
- States haves their own logic and problem-solving
- Centralized control of states
- Internal Problem to address
- Unlearn our current modern approach
- Not a magically pixy dust

Strategies

- working at the cellular level
- Recent book - Free, Fair and Alive with Silke Helfrich
- Different types of relationships
- Alternative to the current system

ABUNDANCE

Abundance is the outward manifestation and ideal state of the work we are doing in the world. It is deeply rooted in our context without time boundaries and limitations. It is the ultimate expression of the transformation we would like to see in the world.

We explored questions such as:

- What is the power of the commons?

REGENERATIVE FRAMEWORK

The Regenerative Framework is designed upon the insights and principles of living systems. It is a process, design and decision-making framework for creating the conditions for systemic health while regenerating potential and abundance.

The image on the right is the whole design captured in this nRhythm Design Sprint.

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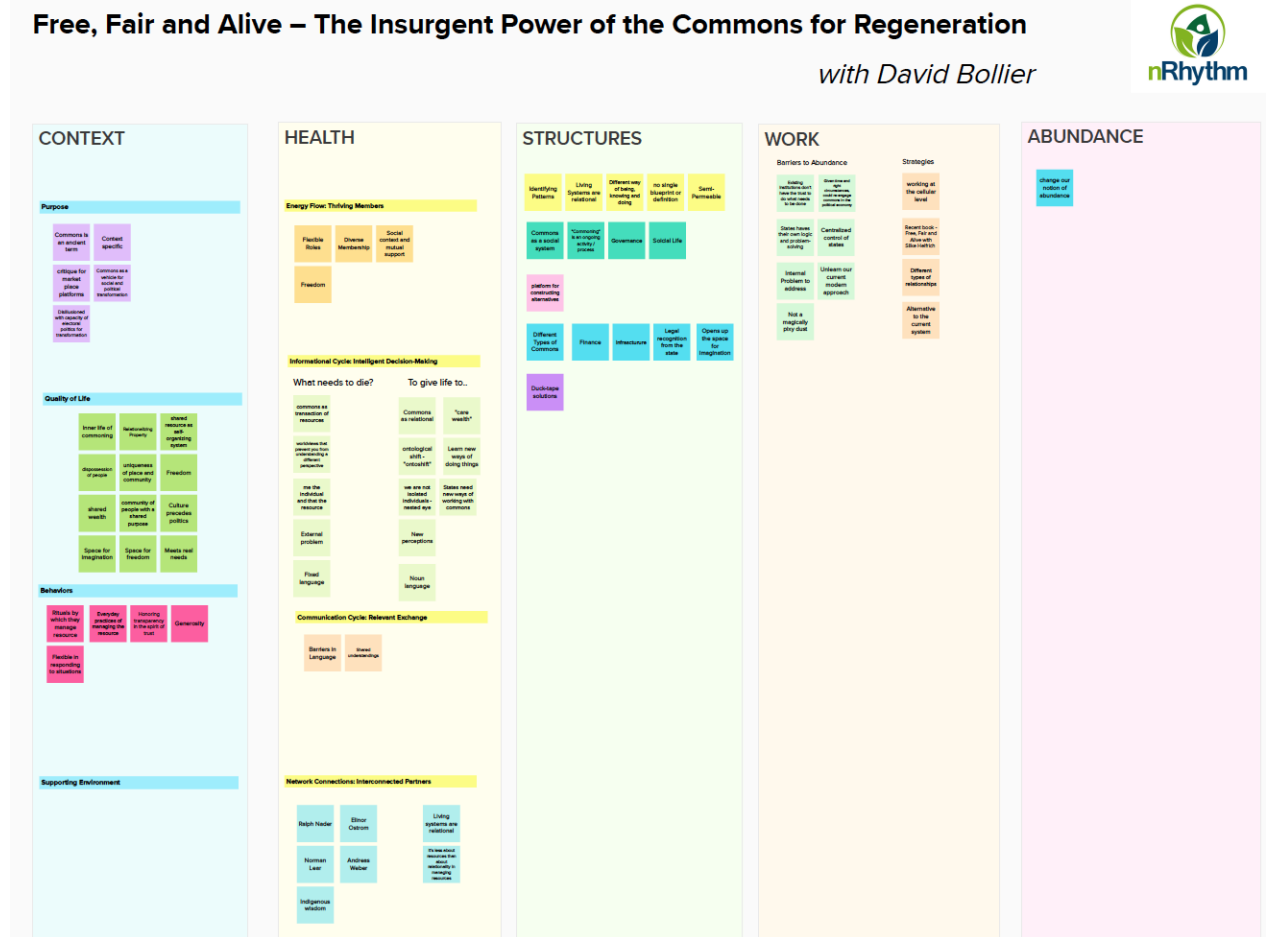
THANK YOU!

Learn More About nRhythm's Approach:

Read our blog on Regenerative Design Principles

Discover hidden potential with our mini-workbooks

Explore your relationship with your role at work with the Thrive Index

Shift your mindset, behaviors, and practices with Regenerative Fitness Challenges

Learn the Foundations of a Regenerative Approach

Design (or Re-Design) Your Team or Project in the Regenerative Design Lab

Monitor the underlying health of your organization with the Health Index