

***A Commons Paradigm:
Co-Constructing a New Set of Relations
amongst Ourselves and with the Earth***

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ABSTRACT

Why do we seem to be on a life-threatening path and yet appear unable to change our local and global behaviours to be more sustainable? This dissertation considers how this question and explores how the unsustainable path may be attributed to a deep and pervasive epistemology of separation. It explores how over a long period, we have socially constructed and institutionalized this framework of meaning into our habits of governance and economics. The dissertation poses another question: **can we socially construct a different path based on interdependence and shared values of sustainability called the commons paradigm, to guide our collective choices?** The philosophical stance of social construction in relation to stages of paradigm change in general is presented including the importance of language, relational systems, legitimacy, public discourse, and developmental processes that support collective decisions. Specific emerging principles and concepts regarding the commons paradigm are presented. Then four areas of inquiry, in the form of commons workshops, a conference, interviews and a think tank, are discussed and analyzed in regards to how they may reflect the stages of co-construction of this commons paradigm. The dissertation concludes with a summary, and key learnings. It also includes further questions and possibilities regarding building the knowledge and experiential base needed to operationalize a viable new paradigm that supports a more sustainable path.