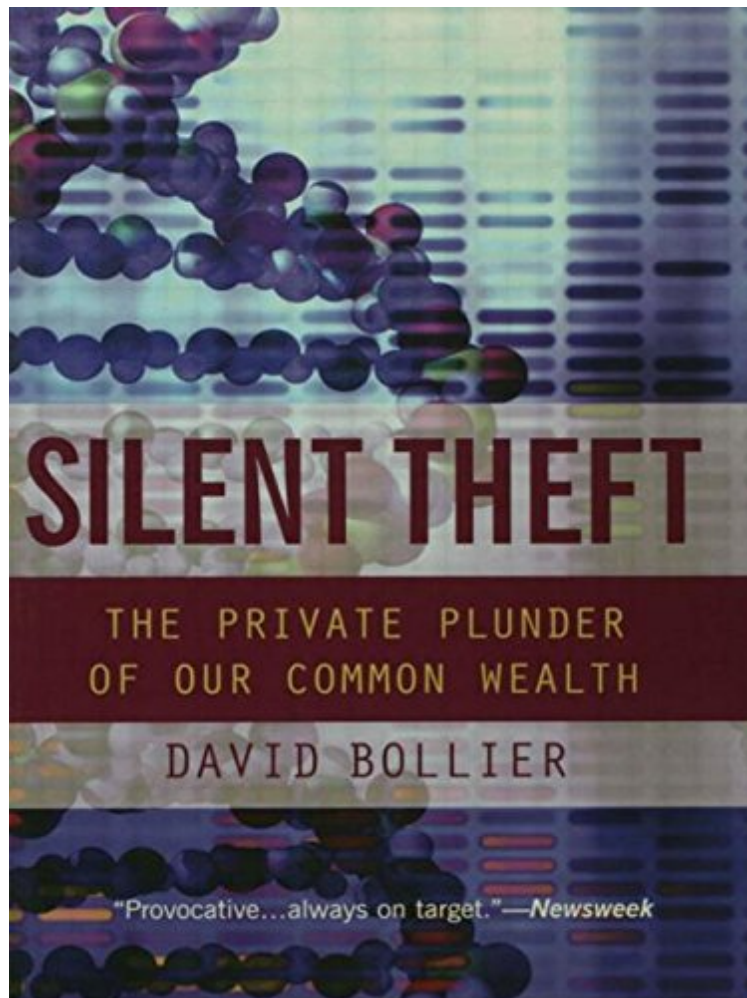


[FREE] Silent Theft: The Private Plunder of Our Common Wealth

Silent Theft: The Private Plunder of Our Common Wealth

David Bollier

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#1053778 in Books 2003-02-09Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 9.12 x .74 x 6.04l, .97 #File Name: 0415944821272 pages | File size: 60.Mb

David Bollier : Silent Theft: The Private Plunder of Our Common Wealth before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Silent Theft: The Private Plunder of Our Common Wealth:

34 of 34 people found the following review helpful. Highly UsefulBy Douglas DoepkeBollier has written a very useful little book, of particular interest to liberals, Greens, and Libertarians, as well as the broader public. The book's thesis holds that the 'commons' -- understood as our collectively owned assets, (natural resources being one example) -- are under steady threat of enclosure (privatization) by an increasingly aggressive commercial sphere in search of expanding profits. His use of the more archaic terms 'commons' and 'enclosure' to describe the process is a shrewd one, connecting current encroachments to those more infamous enclosure laws of time past. Despite appearances, this is not an abstract bookish issue. Daily, the public faces such benchmark symptoms as depleted public resources, brand-name idolatry, open spaces overwhelmed by advertising, and threats to an unfettered internet. Ironically, what is

disappearing, as Bollier points out, are those very public and personal places that provide a market economy with the societal wherewithall it needs to reproduce itself. Inasmuch as the market has its own parochial definition of rationality -- one that has increasingly become the public standard -- such commons are too often unable to justify themselves and thus are contracted and sold, disappearing at an alarming rate. Government's role in aiding and abetting these enclosures is also detailed, and while the book is severely critical of market myopia, it does not call for their elimination, but for an intelligent circumscription. Traditionally, liberals have defended the public sphere. This work should help provide some backbone for rediscovering the importance of that commitment. It is a call to arms for those who understand the long-term significance of what the author calls the "Gift Economy", i.e. a free exchange among parties, as exemplified in the conditions leading to the explosive growth of the internet. Greens should like the emphasis on community-based solutions, while Libertarians should feel challenged to justify their paradigm, given the sociological priority of gift economies. Bollier's style makes for easy reading, along with a helpful bibliography. The book is neither weighty nor deep, but it does maintain a steady focus and serves as a useful compendium for understanding the rapidly shrinking public domain, and what we are losing in the process. 1 of 6 people found the following review helpful. That Routledge prices an essentially POD paperback at \$35 is ironic. By miss prism Next time, Bollier might consider self-publication via [...] or a small press either willing to agree to a modicum of author-controlled pricing, or who can be trusted to have an incentive to sell to the general public, and thus to price low for that market, rather than assigning his copyright to a maximalist corporate monetizer (non-profits being every bit as interested in self-interested monetization as for-profit firms. Indeed, they tend to gouge the consumer much more than for-profit firms, sometimes due to the fact that their smaller markets are actually higher cost, sometimes due to their own inefficiencies). Authors are far more interested in free dissemination for the lowest possible price, that is, just over cost, than are publishers to whom authors hand over exclusive control. Authors should insist on retaining controls. If individuals retain controls and approvals over the use of their property rights, then they are able to defeat the efforts of corporate assignees to monetize their intellectual property inappropriately. That means that intellectual property rights must be defended, not condemned. Thus, the netizenry has leapt to the wrong conclusion in their calls for the abolition of property rights. Property controlled by individuals themselves is far more secure from the sins of corporate hoarding and aggregation that Bollier here deplors. 11 of 24 people found the following review helpful. Nothing new here. By A Customer Bollier does a credible job outlining the issues surrounding the theft of the public commons. Many of the issues he highlights are unbelievable. Just thinking about how much of the public commons are being given away is truly astounding (the mining act of 1872 is one example that has always bugged me. A pretty good deal to lock up mineral rights for a few dollars an acre.) However, Bollier comes up short in his recommendations. He outlines a few suggestions as to how to stop the "silent theft", however, many of his ideas will require a quantum change in how business operates. There is no way Congress will agree to any of them. I would love to have seen him address how to jump that obstacle.

'They hang the man and flog the woman That steal the goose from off the common, But let the greater villain loose That steals the common from the goose.' - Traditional nursery rhyme Until a 1998 federal court decision, a Minnesota publisher claimed to own every federal court decision, including *Roe v. Wade* and *Brown v. Board of Education*. A Texas company was recently allowed to claim a patent on basmati rice, a kind of rice grown in India for hundreds of years. The Mining Act of 1872 is still in effect, allowing companies to buy land from the government at USD5 and acre if they plan to mine it. These are resources that belong to all of us, yet they are being given away to companies with anything but the common interest in mind. Where was the public outcry, or the government intervention, when these were happening? The answers are alarming. Private corporations are consuming the resources that the American people collectively own at a staggering rate, and the government is not protecting the commons on our behalf. In *Silent Theft*, David Bollier exposes the audacious attempts of companies to appropriate medical breakthroughs, public airwaves, outer space, state research, and even the DNA of plants and animals. Amazingly, these abuses often go unnoticed, Bollier argues, because we have lost our ability to see the commons. Publicly funded technological innovations create common wealth (cell phone airwaves, internet addresses, gene sequences) at blinding speed, while an economic atmosphere of deregulation and privatization ensures they will be quickly bought and sold. In an age of market triumphalism, does the notion of the commons have any practical meaning? Crisp and revelatory, *Silent Theft* is a bold attempt to develop a new language of the commons, a new ethos of commonwealth in the face of a market ethic that knows no bounds.

"Bollier gives convincing examples of how natural resources (including water), public information, federal drug research, and public space are all being snapped up for private gain. Mr. Bollier describes valiant efforts to reclaim those things, places, and information held in common-to be shared forever by the private gain of no one." - Brian Smith, *Earth Justice IN BRIEF*. "From the Publisher" The subject of *Silent Theft* is urgently important, and Bollier's handling of this complex set of issues is both deft and straightforward. The more people who read *Silent Theft*, the better our world." - Norman Lear "This beautifully written, carefully argued book shows how little we learned from the past. Free

and open resources have always been central to creativity and growth; Bollier shows how in a range of important contexts, free and open resources are being enclosed, to the benefit of the corporate class, and burden of Americans generally." --Lawrence Lessig, Stanford Law School, and author of *The Future of Ideas: The Fate of the Commons in a Connected World* "A calm reasonable primer on a topic of enormous importance. Buy a copy, and when you've read it, donate it to that wonderful commons called your local library."--Bill McKibben author, *The End of Nature* About the Author David Bollier has worked for twenty years as a journalist, activist, and public policy analyst. He is Senior Fellow at the Norman Lear Center at the USC Annenberg School for Communication and Director of the Information Commons Project at the New America Foundation. He is also co-founder of Public Knowledge, a public-interest advocacy organization dedicated to defending the commons of the Internet, science and culture.