

Spectrogram - Private Property or Common Wealth

Jan Edwards 2005

The **Spectrogram** is an exercise that allows everyone in the group to express their opinion at once [like raising of hands] but also allows a way to show degree of feelings on a subject [unlike raising of hands.] It also gets folks out of their chairs, so it makes a good break in a presentation. A Spectrogram can be used for any subject, only the statements will be different. This one was created to explore the group feelings, thoughts and convictions around property and commons.

Way 1 to do the Spectrogram:

In a clear area of the room, put a sign on one wall saying “**Strongly Agree**” and on the opposing wall “**Strongly Disagree**”. In the mid-point between the walls, mark the floor [with masking tape or some object] this is to be the line between **Agree** and **Disagree** or **No Opinion**. The participants stand in the space and move to the place on the Spectrogram that best represents their feeling about a statement that is read aloud. The statements can be read quickly and the positions taken without much discussion or thought...just a gut-level reaction. Or the statements can be taken more slowly and the folks standing at the most extreme positions can voice their reasons for standing where they are and see if they can convince others to move closer to [or further from] their positions. If time allows, the participants can make statements from within the Spectrogram off the top of their heads and they and their fellow participants can show the group feelings on the statement.

Way 2

Another way to do this exercise is to take the list of magnet words [Private Property or Common Wealth] and use these words in place of statements. If you do this, the signs should read “**Private Property - 0**” and “**Common Wealth - 10**” with the mid-point marked as “**5**”. The question should be posed “On a scale of 0-10, with 0 being completely Private Property, and 10 being completely Common Wealth, where would you place the following word or words?”

Statements for Way 1: *Make first statement and then follow-up statements if needed.*

If a person buys beach front property, they should have the right to restrict others from crossing their private property to get to the beach. [If it is the only access for 10 miles.] [If there is a public staircase 100 ft. away][If this was a pathway that the community had been using for decades]

An author of a book and his heirs should have the right to the royalties from that work for 10 years. [For 50 years] [For 100 years] [Forever.]

A pharmaceutical company who holds a patent on a new drug should have right to charge what the market will bear. [Even if most of the research was paid for by taxpayers.] [Even if the medicine is lifesaving and its cost is prohibiting patients from access] [Even if it was from a tradition plant remedy.]

A corporation who owns desert land should have the right to drill a well into the aquifer and sell the water. [Even if it causes the water level to drop.] [Even if this destroys the aquifer] [Even if they choose to sell the water to another country.]

A timber company should have the right to cut timber in national and state forests. [If they pay a fair market price] [If the cutting reduces fire hazzard] [If local jobs are created.]

A coal company should have the right to the coal underground if they buy the mineral rights. [Even if

mining the coal causes homes to collapse.] [Even in environmentally sensitive areas] [And any restrictive legislation should be considered a “takings” and the company paid for future profits]

The oceans are common territory and fishing in them should be unrestricted. [Even if certain species are driven to extinction] [Even if certain nets cause dolphin casualties] [Even though industrialized nations are depleting the fisheries that less developed nations rely on.]

Global warming must be stopped. [Even if that means outlawing all personal vehicles] [Even if that means poor countries will not be able to have electricity] [Even if that means going to nuclear power.]

Quiet is a common and everyone should have a right to quiet. [Even if that means no one can play a stereo or practice the violin] [Even if that means noisy subways will be shut down.] [And that includes noisy dogs, geese, roosters, crows, and other loud animals]

Genetic Engineering is an extension of traditional plant breeding practices and the resulting plants should be privately owned by the companies that produced them. [Even if the propagation of these plants contaminates the plants in the commons] [And the saving of these seeds will be illegal] [Because the companies invested capital in the creation and marketing of these plants]

A shopping mall is private property and the owner should have the same private property rights as a homeowner. [And that includes the right to restrict free speech and expression] [And that includes keeping certain people off the property] [Even though the city government has given them big tax breaks.]

Because a contract is considered a form of property, the cancellation of a California contract with a Canadian corporation should be considered a takings and a loss of future profits for the corporation. [Even if the product canceled was polluting groundwater] [Even though any jobs lost during such a cancellation are not considered loss of future profits for the workers.]

An idea you think up and patent should be your private property. [Even if you thought it up while being employed by another company.] [Even if it draws heavily on the commons knowledge]

This is a warm up exercise for use before the **Tapestry of the Commons** presentation. It is not about what IS private or common, but about what folks thinks SHOULD BE. That way there is no right or wrong answers, but a mind stretching exercise.

At an office supply store you can buy magnet paper [5 sheets for about \$15] and you can print the words out on your ink jet printer, or you can print them out on plain paper and go to a copy shop and have them print on magnet paper for you. The words are laid out below to take 2 pages of paper. Cut the words out with scissors.

I bought a 23"x35" white board that is also a magnet board for \$14 at Target. It came with a black erasable marker. I marked a scale on the long side of the board numbers 10-0 [3" apart] leaving some room at the top to put the Common Wealth magnet on top of the 10 and the Private Property on top of the 0. The idea is to have the board out on a table with the rest of the magnet words on a tray in front of it. As the audience comes in for the presentations, they can take a few minutes to place some words on the board. Other folks can move the words if they want to. It is just to get folks thinking about where they think the lines should be drawn between commons and private property.

These words can also be used for the **Spectogram** exercise.

Common Wealth Private Property

Sky Air Ozone layer Sun Moon Tides Stars
Planets Outer space Land Topsoil Food Chess
Grazing animals Mountains Valleys Beaches
Water Watersheds Rivers Lakes Wetlands
Aquifers Fisheries Forests Habitat Seeds Plants
Wild animals Domestic animals Pets Humans
Minerals Metals Gems Oil Oil wells Uranium
Gold Gold mines Natural gas Coal Climate Rain
Snow Weather Icebergs Oceans Kelp forests
Coral reefs Sea animals Energy plants Electricity
Wind power Solar power Nuclear power DNA
Airwaves Radio stations TV stations Satellites
Quiet Views Words Languages Names Golf
Numbers Symbols Mathematics Clubs Parks
Computer languages Knowledge Folk wisdom
Science Recipes Cures Medicine Drugs History
Stories Antiquities Art Music Crafts Fashion
Literature Bible The Iliad Hamlet Fairy tales
Press Paths Trails Roads Airways Sea lanes
Society Law Communities Schools Democracy
Money Tools Wheel Plow Trains Inventions
TV sets Processes Traditions Grain Religions

Holidays Myths Superstitions Houses Farming
practices Healing plants Libraries Cars Churches
Theaters Town squares City Halls Playgrounds
Historic sites Football Baseball Jump rope
Nursery rhymes The waltz The twist Checkers
Madam Butterfly Animal breeds Media
Ring-around-the-rosy Internet Newspapers Shoes
Ham radio Corporations Invention of the hammer
Making of the hammer Selling of the hammer
The hammer in your toolbox Concept of music
Musical notation Invention of piano Your guitar
Invention of musical recording Invention of the CD
Library of all music Music distribution Your genes
Original song recorded last year Wells Sidewalks
Folk story of Snow White Golden Gate Bridge
Disney's film Snow White Statue of Liberty Malls
Peace symbol Nike swoosh The DNA of soybeans
Churches Your computer A cure for cancer
"Christmas" on a bag of coffee Empire State Bldg
Words starting with "Mc" Prescription drugs
Hospitals Health care A street tree A park tree
Your backyard tree An old growth redwood Ideas
Concept of computers Stock market Flea market
Neighborhood store Easter Bunny Bugs Bunny