

# UNI-FORMED

uninformed

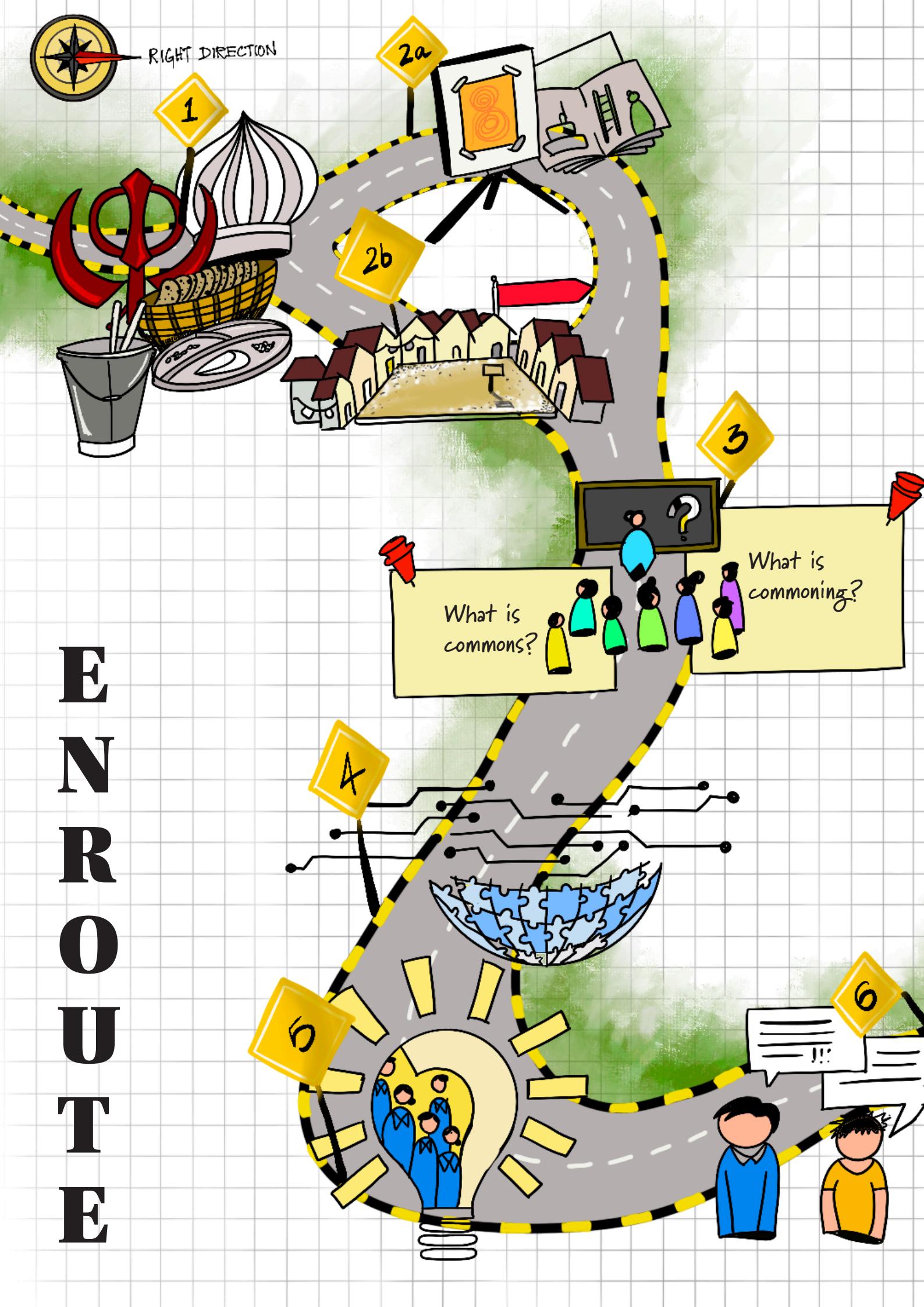


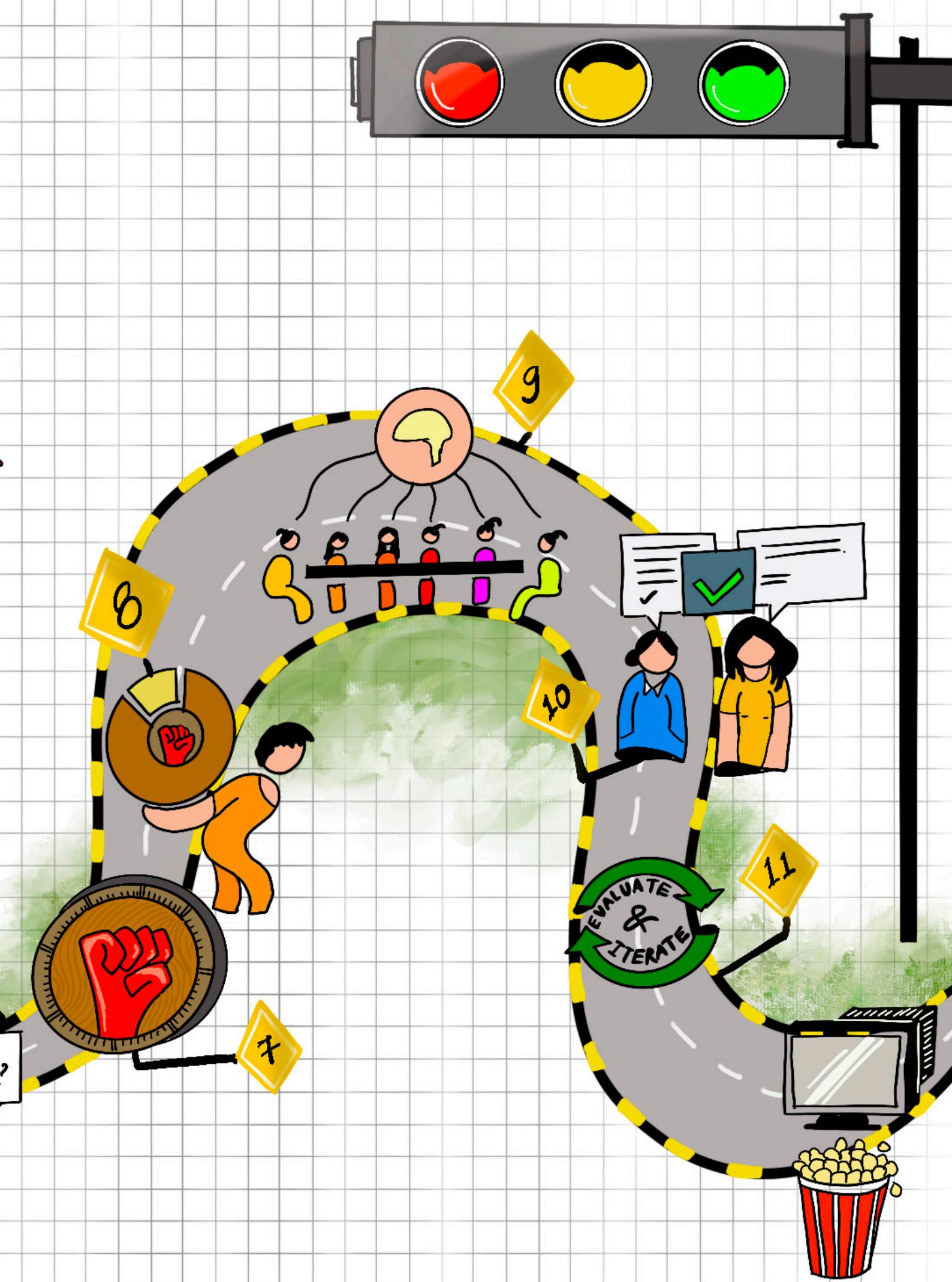


## ABSTRACT

This book is an accumulation of our research trying to establish a commoning between the support staff and the other active members of Srishti Manipal Institute (SMI), primarily focussing on the students and the faculty. After multiple iterations of field visits, observations and interviews, the idea of commons eventually evolved, resulting in identifying existing commons in practices, that could be potentially intervened. Our exploration ultimately laid the ground work for potential interventions aimed at enhancing collaboration and cohesion among all members keeping reciprocity in mind.

# ENROUTE

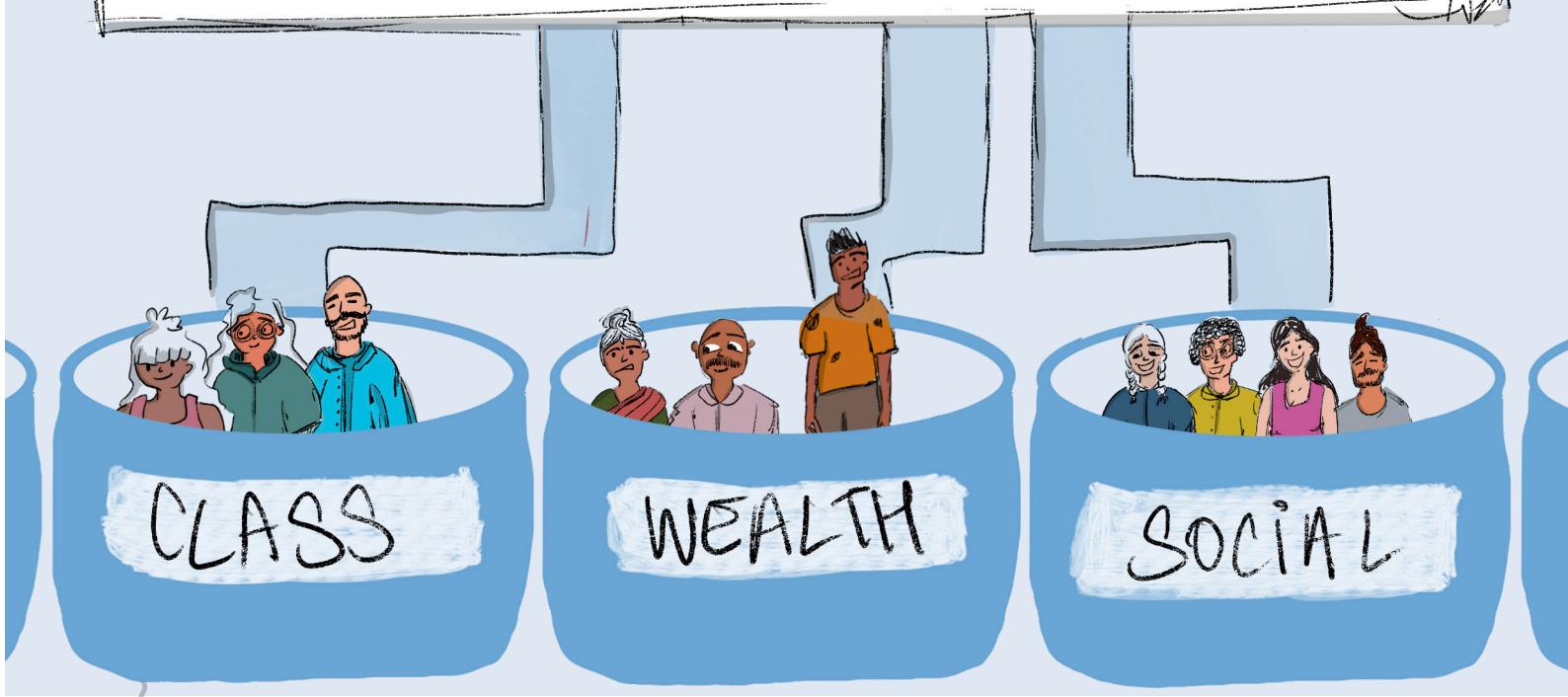




# QUESTIONING THE IDEA OF COMMONS



THE SOCIETAL DIVIDE MACHINE



The idea of commons, was bewildering, at first. We were introduced to the idea of commons through a series of videos and a visit to the community kitchen. Without truly understanding the meaning of common, we assumed the community we witnessed in the community kitchen in Gurdwara as a form of common. With each passing day, and the information we gained, our idea of commons evolved.

### **“The Tragedy of Commons” by Hardin**

In Hardin’s paper, “The Tragedy of the Commons,” he talks about commons like a shared area for grazing. According to him, commons changed to everyone sharing resources equally. But if common means sharing equally, how can anything be common in a world where people are different due to wealth, class, status, and where they live? Even though water, air, and food might be the same, getting them depends on filters and fitting into specific groups. This makes us wonder what really makes something common. Is it just an idealistic idea? Does it only exist in perfect stories, or can it be part of our not-so-perfect reality? If it can happen, when does it? Would there be rules for the common, and if yes, what would they be?

Some argue that we all share Earth’s resources, so isn’t everything common? If we ignore the differences in access, then technically, everything should be common. So, to us, it seemed pointless to define commons without considering the differences ingrained in society.

The global divisions leading to different needs made us define commons as “sharing resources fairly, recognizing differences, and having a shared attitude.”

### **“Patterns of Commoning”**

The book titled, ‘Patterns of Commoning’, defines commoning, as “a social process that creates and manages a shared resource for collective benefit.” However, the very same book also argues that ‘commons more than the combination of resources, communities and rules’. In that case, what again entails as a common poses a huge question.

### **Forest Commons - A Case Study**

The case study explores how the women of Nichlagarh, an adivasi village in Southern Rajasthan, traditionally managed their forests as a common resource. In this approach, they collectively took care of and used the forests to ensure sustainability and equal access for everyone in the village.

However, in the 1960s, the Forest Department took control of the forests, disrupting this traditional communal system. This shift resulted in negative consequences such as a decline in forest health due to the prioritization of logging over sustainable management. Additionally, the villagers lost their autonomy and the ability to influence how the forests were utilized.

Currently, the women of Nichlagarh are actively working to reclaim their rights to the forests and reinstate communal management. They believe that commoning is the most effective way to ensure the long-term health of the forests and meet the needs of the village. This case study illustrates the positives of commons in a dystopian reality, with the women recognizing and embracing the differences among people, and also how commoning could be beneficial for a broader society that extends beyond humans.

### **What’s Next?**

Examining an actual case study offered clarity and optimism regarding the concept of commons, prompting us to recognize its significance. The entire magazine revolves around the theme of commons and commoning. Despite addressing various subjects, the common thread across all topics is the notion of commons and its diverse interpretations.



## Campus and Commons?

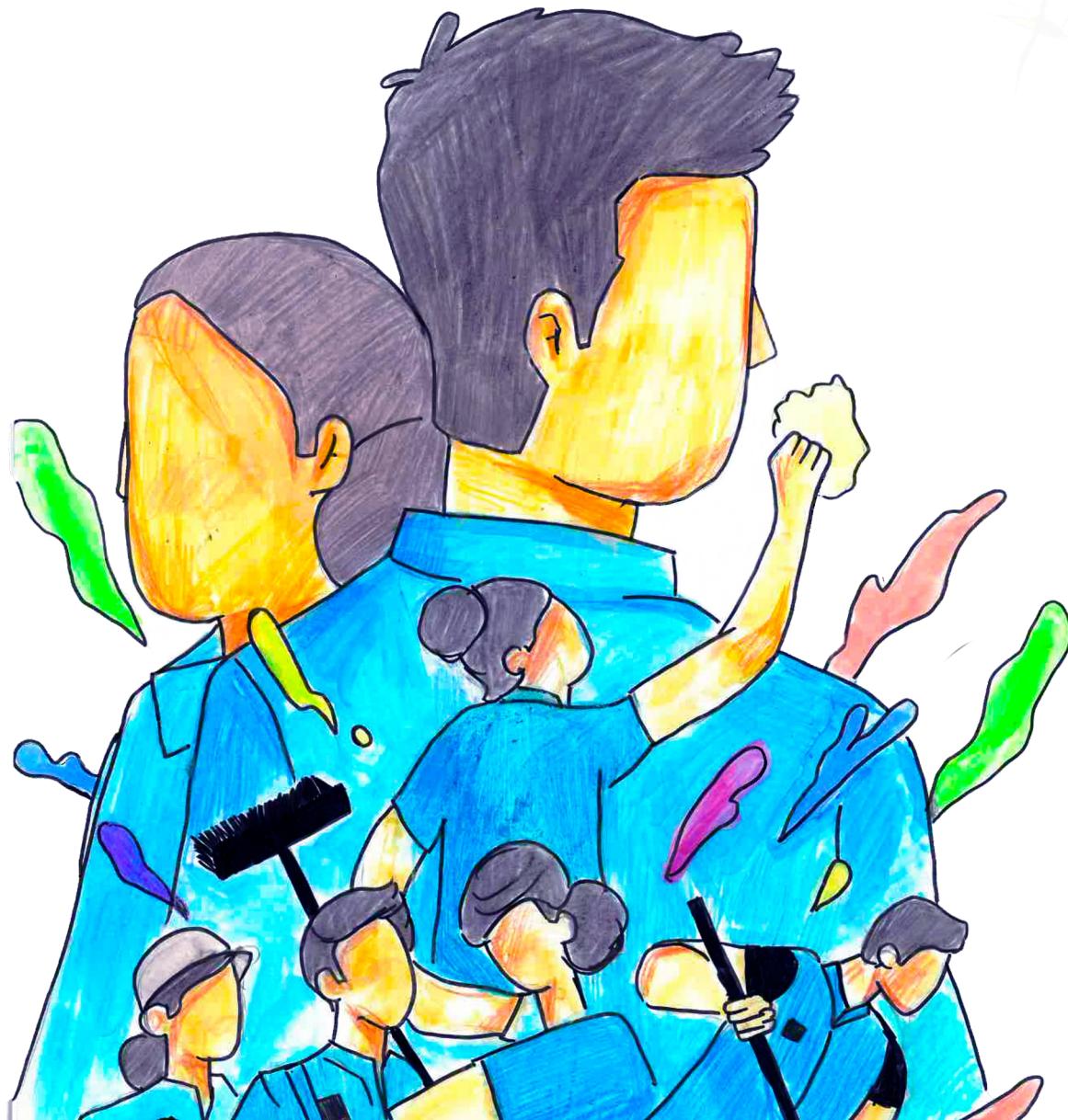
Students are the beating heart of any educational space, their thirst for knowledge and youthful energy further adds meaning to the space.

Yet to solely view students as the sole pillars of a learning platform is to overlook the intricate ecosystem that fosters their learning. It's important to recognize that these learning environments are collaboratively operated by a variety of stakeholders, including directors, faculty, assistants, admissions staff, support staff, counselors, and more. The institutional framework of these spaces would put its survival in jeopardy in the absence of extensive coordination of all of the aforementioned. Each and everyone who is part of an institution has their spaces, activities and actions carved out for them to seamlessly situate themselves in the realm of a learning center bringing about a sense of belongingness as part of their experience.

However, as we tried to look at our learning space here at Srishti Manipal Institute through the lens of belongingness, it was interesting to observe how our support staff ( Security Guards, Housekeeping Staff, Canteen Attendants, Garden Maintenance Staff and other) interacted with their work environment. Their quality of experience in a learning space like Srishti Manipal Institute just was limited to their straightforward work. The space seemed to have poorly reciprocated in terms of 'give and take'.

While we tried to understand what commons and comonning is, we halted and found that our learning space had the potential to be envisioned in a way that it could be seen as a equitable shared resource across all participating members.

# Positioning in Commons





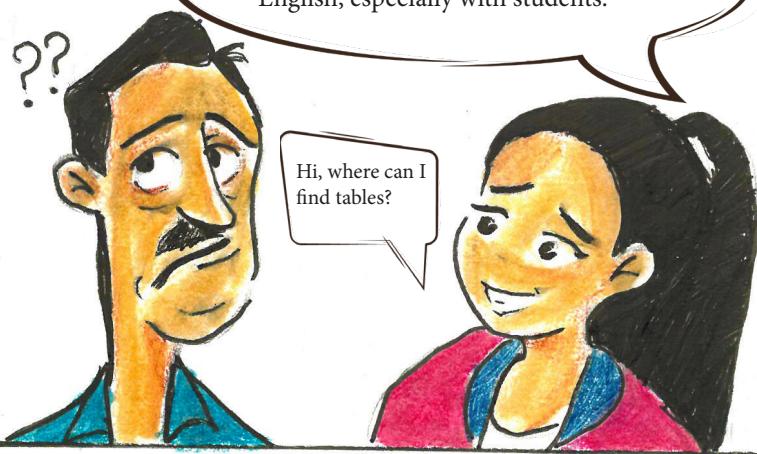




"I take English and Hindi classes in Manipal and I am eager to participate in college events"



"I find difficulty communicating in English, especially with students."



EDOF 2013

"I would love to teach rangoli to students."



"I enjoy watching the events at SMI."



the excerpts from the initial interviews illustrated

## PAIN

- Financial Motivation
- Limited Career Growth
- Language Hesitancy
- Work-Life Balance
- Struggles in Interaction
- Discontent and Exploration
- Limited Participation

## GAIN

- Enjoyment of College Atmosphere
- Contentment with Role
- Positive Interaction with Students
- Comfortable Interaction in Kannada
- Eager to Participation in College Events
- Language Education Commitment
- Multilingual Interaction
- Willingness to Participate

### Insights from Support Staff Interviews and Shared Principles

The interviews with support staff reveal potential factors contributing to union formation or aligning with core principles of unions. Shared employment roles, language barriers fostering a collective effort for language support, common interest in learning, and diverse attitudes toward event participation collectively lay the groundwork. The shared perspective on motivations beyond monetary aspects, along with active participation in events and educational initiatives, establishes a foundation for potential solidarity among the support staff. This suggests a pathway for discussions and actions that may lead to the formation of unions or are in line with some fundamental principles associated with unions.



# Unions as Commons

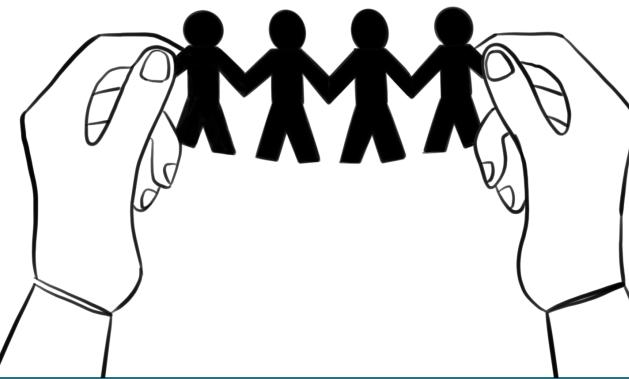
Viewing Unions through the lens of Commons



**Unions as Commons :** Viewing unions through the lens of commons In the vast landscape of the modern workplace, often characterized by competition and individualism, unions emerge as verdant havens of collective spirit, much like the vibrant commons of old. These associations, formed by the hands of workers, create spaces where shared interests and needs are nurtured, fostering a sense of solidarity and belonging.

Just as the commons provided a shared resource for sustenance and livelihood, unions act as a collective resource for safeguarding the rights and well-being of their members. Like the commons, where individuals cooperate for mutual benefit, unions promote collaboration and collective action, empowering workers to stand together and advocate for a better future.

Furthermore, the spirit of the commons resonates in the shared responsibility and governance that unions foster. Just as individuals contributed to the upkeep and improvement of the commons, union members actively participate in shaping the organization. They elect representatives, hold discussions, and vote on decisions that impact their collective interests. This democratic structure echoes the egalitarian ethos of the commons, ensuring that power rests within the community rather than concentrated in the hands of a few.

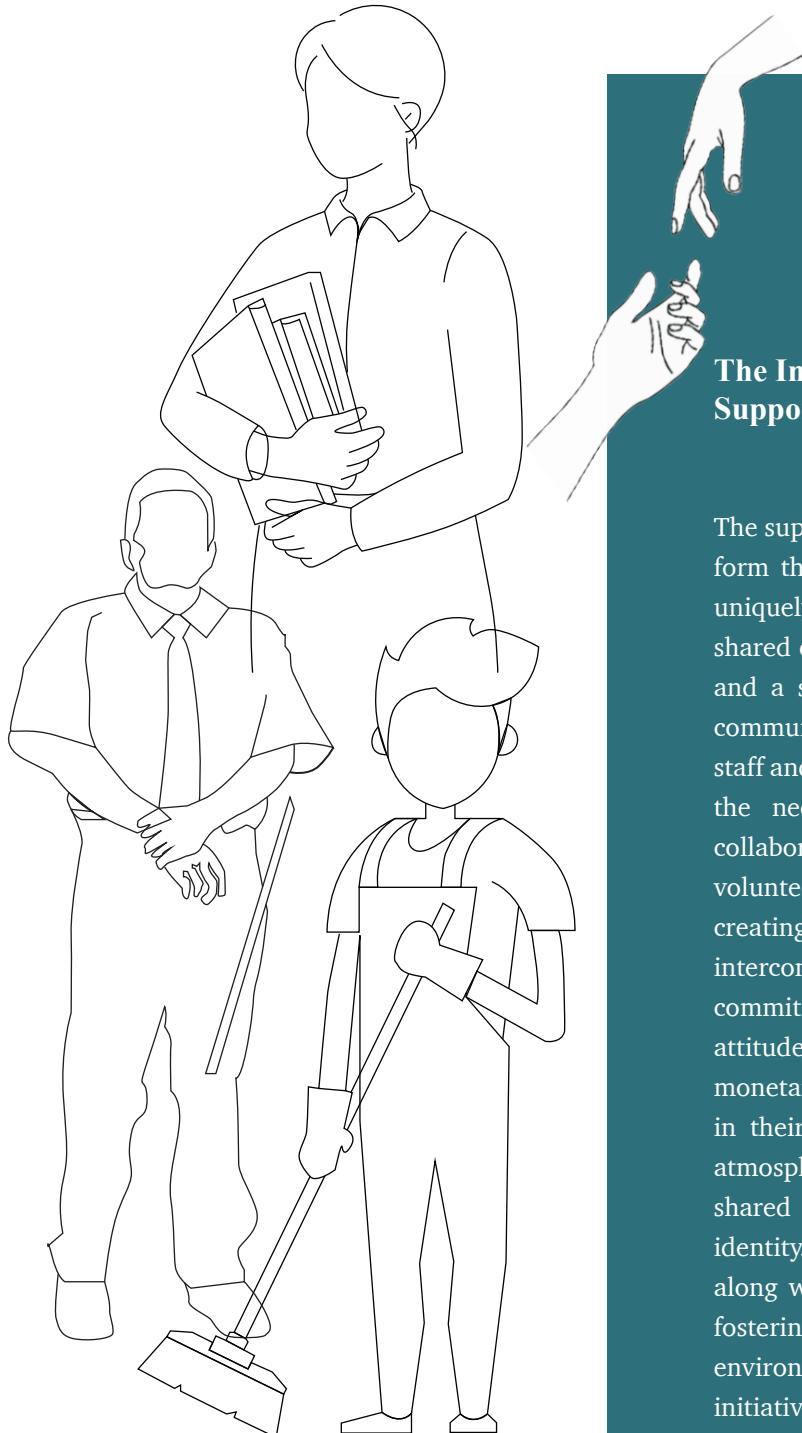
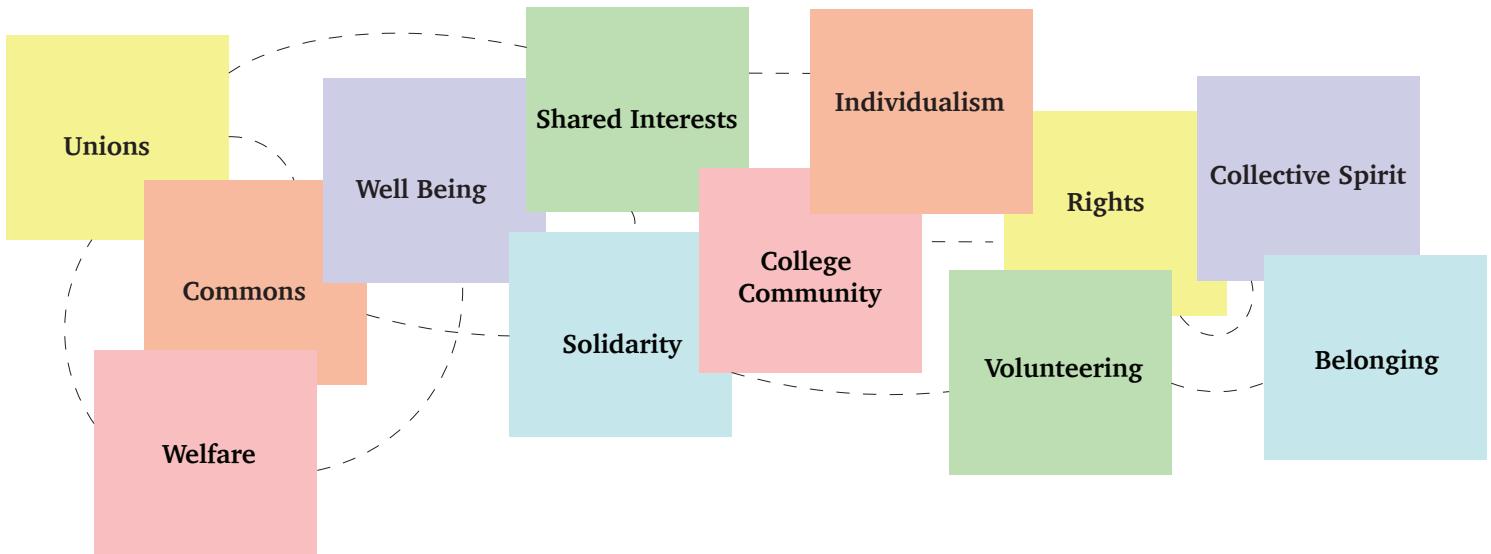


Beyond the realm of rights and governance, unions foster a sense of community and belonging, akin to the social fabric woven by the commons. They create spaces for interaction, support, and solidarity, transforming the workplace from a cold, impersonal environment to a place of shared experience and mutual understanding. This sense of belonging fosters a more positive work environment, leading to increased morale, reduced stress, and ultimately, a more productive workforce.

The similarities between unions and commons extend beyond the tangible benefits they offer. Both represent a fundamental human desire for cooperation and collective action in the face of common challenges. They embody the belief that individuals are stronger together, and that shared resources and shared responsibility are cornerstones of a just and equitable society.

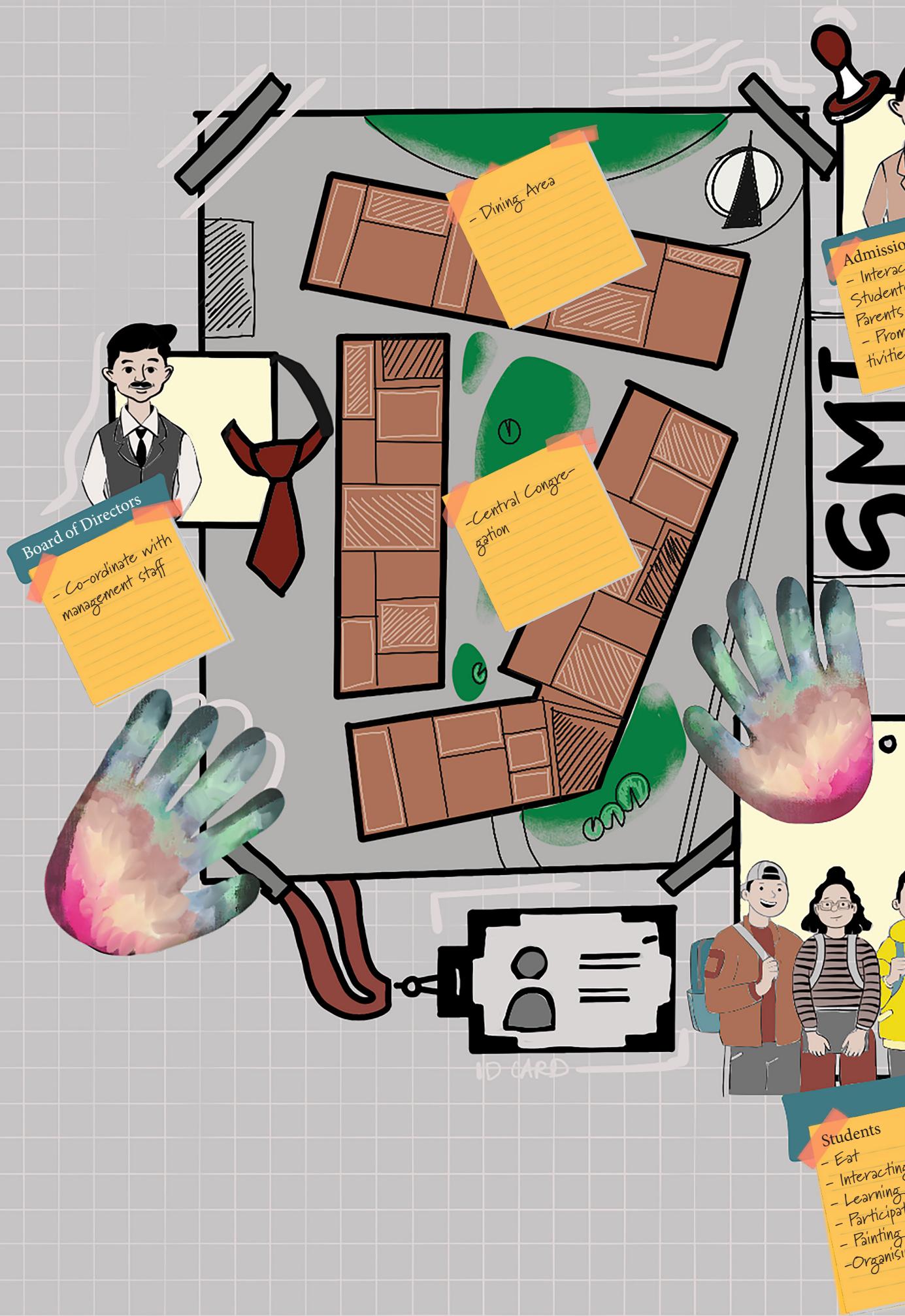
In conclusion, the parallels between unions and commons are striking. Both act as counterbalances to power imbalances, ensuring that individuals are not left at the mercy of external forces. Both provide a sense of security and belonging, fostering a collaborative and supportive environment where individuals can reach their full potential. Both are testaments to the power of collective action and shared responsibility, demonstrating that by working together, individuals can build a fairer, more equitable, and more prosperous future.





### The Interconnected Community of College Support Staff, Faculty and Students

The support staff, along with faculty and students, collectively form the heart of the college community, each contributing uniquely to its vibrant functioning and atmosphere. Their shared employment environments foster a sense of belonging and a shared experience, connecting them with a broader community. Language barriers, experienced by both support staff and students, become a collective challenge, emphasizing the need for mutual language support initiatives. The collaborative spirit extends beyond staff roles, as seen in volunteering for various tasks and active involvement in creating a positive work environment, demonstrating the interconnectedness of the college ecosystem. The collective commitment to personal and professional growth, varying attitudes toward event participation, and motivations beyond monetary aspects align the support staff, faculty, and students in their pursuit of shared goals. Enjoyment of the college atmosphere, participation in educational initiatives, and shared observations of events contribute to their shared identity. Recognizing these commonalities, the support staff, along with faculty and students, may find strength in unity, fostering discussions about their welfare and work environment, and collaboratively paving the way for initiatives aligned with their collective well-being.





### Identified Commons

- Dining Commons
- Communication/Information Commons
- Activities/Events Commons
- Learning Commons

By mapping out all the primary members of SMI and the activities they engage in, we tried identifying existing commons/commonings. While multiple activities were shared, we realised the potential these commons have and tried investigating further into.

# COMMONING IN SMI

Based on the identified potential commonings, we went ahead to interact with both students and support staff and gathered as much information as possible:

## Learning Commons



## Dining Commons

Lunch at 2 pm would love to eat lunch with students

I would love to share my food, I would be happy with the support staff but it will depend if I will eat their food (I usually have PG food)

Different times for lunch (12.45 - 2:30), loves eating food together but prefers home cooked food

I would love to have dining experience with them and know more about their journey

It's nice to think about eating together with everyone sharing food is also nice when we all become close to each other

Lunch time is 1:30, would love to eat with students

I would be happy to sit and eat with the support staff

Lunch time is 2:30 pm and likes having lunch with students

I would be happy to share and eat my food with the college support staff, it is always great to build more connection

Lunch at 2:30, likes to eat with students

They don't prefer eating with students they feel inferior to students

## Communication Commons

Outlook, Email, Whatsapp Group, Instagram

Whatsapp group with supervisor

Instagram

Whatsapp group + daily briefing

Daily meetings

Email and Instagram, Word of Mouth

I don't get to know most things till they happen

Group meetings

Whatsapp group

Email, Instagram, Word of Mouth, but, I still don't get to know most things happening

The iterative interviews that led to the compilation of the aforementioned pointers were instrumental in recognizing the vast potential within the proposed common areas. Through engaging conversations with both our dedicated support staff and students, we discovered a multitude of skills that they expressed interest in teaching and learning. This exploration revealed numerous synergies among these skills, suggesting the possibility of fostering a robust sense of community through shared learning experiences.

As we delved deeper into the realms of dining and information exchange, we encountered challenges stemming from existing technical constraints. Notably, establishing effective commoning in these areas proved to be more intricate. Diverse lunchtime schedules among students and support staff, coupled with variations in information dissemination methods, presented hurdles. The support staff, predominantly reliant on information from their supervisors, found themselves navigating a landscape where preferred modes of communication between staff and students exhibited significant diversity.

 students answers  
 support staff answers

# Interventions

Our intervention revolves around the idea of...

Based on our research, upon understanding the potential for learnign commons, we tried testing it out on a very small scale where we asked a support staff to teach us how to put a rangoli. Not only did she teach us to put a rangoli, but also, she taught us about the point system (mathematical aspect) behind the rangoli. She even gave us tips on colouring and the colours to use.



Our intervention revolves around the idea of...



Limitations of the intervention

Our intervention revolves around the idea of...

**“A shared resource open to all, nurtured by a culture and governed by prioritizing equity through access, promoting fair peaceful coexistence and a sense of belonging for all.”**

**“  
r idea, accessible  
collaborative atti-  
y those who utilize it,  
rough tailored ac-  
ness, inclusivity, and  
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or all.”**



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Moreover, we extend our gratitude to our peers for their camaraderie and willingness to share their knowledge. Their collaborative efforts have not only enriched our course of study but have also fostered a sense of community and shared learning that goes beyond the confines of the classroom. Lastly, we acknowledge the unwavering commitment of everyone involved, from facilitators to support staff to our peers. It is this collective dedication that has transformed our project into a collaborative journey of growth and discovery.