CONSTRUCTING A NEW RESEARCH AGENDA
FOR CULTURAL COMMONS

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CULTURAL COMMONS: FIRST INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP
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The Study of the Commons is Recent
1985

- Natural resources
- Indigenous
- Pre-existing communities and rules
- Multidisciplinary
- Focused on property rights and social dilemmas
- Drew from Tragedy of the Commons, European Enclosure Movements; work of Gordon and Scott
Diagnostic Tool for Commons Analysis: IAD Framework

- Bio-Physical Characteristics
- Attributes of the Community
- Rules-in-Use

ACTION ARENA
- Action Situations
- Actors

Patterns of Interactions
- Outcomes

Evaluative Criteria

What is the resource?
Traditional Commons

• Natural resources + indigenous regimes + small and homogenous communities + collective action =

Design principles

• Group boundaries clearly defined
• Rules governing the use of collective goods are well matched to local needs and conditions
• Most individuals affected by these rules can participate in modifying the rules
• The right of community members to devise their own rules is respected by external authorities
• Monitoring mechanisms by community
• Graduated sanctions
The Study of New Commons is More Recent 1995+

- Focus on evolution or building new types of commons
- No pre-existing rules and norms
- Increasingly complex
- Size, communities, incentives often unknown
- Extremely dynamic
New Commons

• Characteristics of new commons
  – In the process of evolving
  – No clear rules
  – Heterogeneous community
• Reacting to threats of enclosure
• New forms of collaboration and collective action
• We don’t know much about them
• We know less about global commons
Commons

Resources shared by a group of people

Vulnerable to enclosure, degradation, and social dilemmas

They can be:
• small (the family refrigerator)
• community-level (sidewalks, playgrounds, libraries)
• large, at the international and global levels (deep-sea oceans, the atmosphere, the Internet, and scientific knowledge)
Characteristics of Commons

• Self-governing
• Participatory
• Social dilemmas
• Social capital—trust—reciprocity
• Communication & dialogue
• Locally-designed rules

*Governance of shared resources is hard work*

Community members are “artisans” who “craft” appropriate institutions
Why do *commons* arise?

New Technologies
New Laws
New Communities
Sudden change
    (disasters)

New enclosures
New (competing) demands
New capabilities for collective action and new communities
Types of Goods
(adapted from Ostrom and Ostrom 1977)
The Assault on Public Goods

- Public Goods
- Private Goods
- Common-Pool Resources
- Club Goods

Exclusion

- Easy
- Difficult

Rivalry

- Low
- High

- New communities of users
- New uses
- New technologies
- New laws and rules
- New disasters

New laws and rules

Public Goods

Common-Pool Resources

Private Goods

Club Goods
Enclosure

privatization (rapid rise in PRs and IPRs & capture-ability of new technologies)
corporatization
commodification
protect natural resource

Collective Action

networks
peer-to-peer
mass collaboration
collaboratories
open source

Entry Points

Tragedy of the Commons

warn about scarcity and overuse

Build Civil Society

education
social responsibility
build new thinking
deliberative
democracy

Hey! Another Commons!

traditional commons approach
Enclosure

“a revolution of the rich against the poor”

Dramatic rise of

Intellectual property rights (i.e. patenting of everything, including life)
- New enclosure movement—Boyle
- New colonization -- Shiva

Privately owned “public” resources (such as water systems & groundwater basins, highways)

Globalization and Corporate domination (Of the 100 largest economies in the world, 51 are global corporations; only 49 are countries); also the corporatization of Higher Education
Enclosure

• Lack of preservation
• Problem of technology migration
• Withdrawal
• Censure
• Destruction
• Loss
• neglect
What are Cultural Commons?

People are reclaiming bits of nature and of culture, and saying this is going to be public space. -Naomi Klein 2001

“The cultural commons is about people, about ways that people have of forming relationships, about ways that people deal with each other, ways they treat each other. The cultural commons is the stuff of life in traditional transmission.”- McCann 2000
Types of Cultural Commons

• Public art, public space, fashion, public radio, music, silence, stories, dance...
• Sacred spaces, hospitals, schools, libraries, public land, parks, forest paths, landscapes, garbage dumps...
• Apartment buildings, community gardens, sidewalks, playgrounds, streets and roads...
• Indigenous knowledge, scientific knowledge, the Internet, public domain, open science, open source software, Wikipedia...
• Also: noise, brownfields, toxic waste sites, disaster areas...
Cultural Commons

Rules and norms vary greatly from one culture to another

Local design matters
Importance of Language for Analysis

*There can be no more important aspect of scholarship than the business of concepts and language* - Bromley 1992

- Ownership vs property as bundles of rights
- Property vs sense of *belonging*
- Goods vs Good
- (Homo economicus vs. Homo communitas)
- Common-pool resources and common property
- Combine case studies with theoretical analysis
Natural Resource Commons vs. Knowledge and Information

- **Forests and Fisheries**
  - Rivalrous
  - Depletable
  - Open Access -- Bad
  - Rapid change
  - Threat of Overuse (tragedy of the commons)

- **Knowledge**
  - Non-rivalrous
  - Non-depletable
  - Open Access -- Good
  - More rapid change
  - Threat of Underuse (anticommons)
Why is the *commons* helpful?

- Tendency to privatize
- Critical need to better understand complex adaptive systems
- Need to devise effective governance systems: Alternative ways of governing often not recognized. Global and national environmental policy frequently ignores community-based governance and traditional tools, such as informal communication and sanctioning
- Many only know about the commons from the tragic perspective.
- Concerted collective action is powerful


Necessary Tools to Build Commons

• Collective action
• Communication and dialogue
• Information
• Social capital, trust and reciprocity
• Effective rules
• Participation
• Monitoring and sanctioning
Lessons Learned

- Local matters
- Rules matter
- No one rules applies to all
- Participation counts
- Communication is essential
- Ostrom’s design principles
Experiments show

• Trust and Reciprocity are very key to explaining levels of cooperation
• Social Dilemmas such as overharvesting—communication and common understandings are essential for people to cooperate
• Incentives for authors and scientists
• Need robust and flexible institutional infrastructures