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WORKING PAPER NEW SERIES

CONSTRUCTING A NEW RESEARCH AGENDA FOR CULTURAL COMMONS

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Constructing a New Research Agenda for Cultural Commons

CULTURAL COMMONS: FIRST INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP

SILVIA SANTAGATA RESEARCH CENTRE - EBLA

Turin , Italy

29-30 January 2010

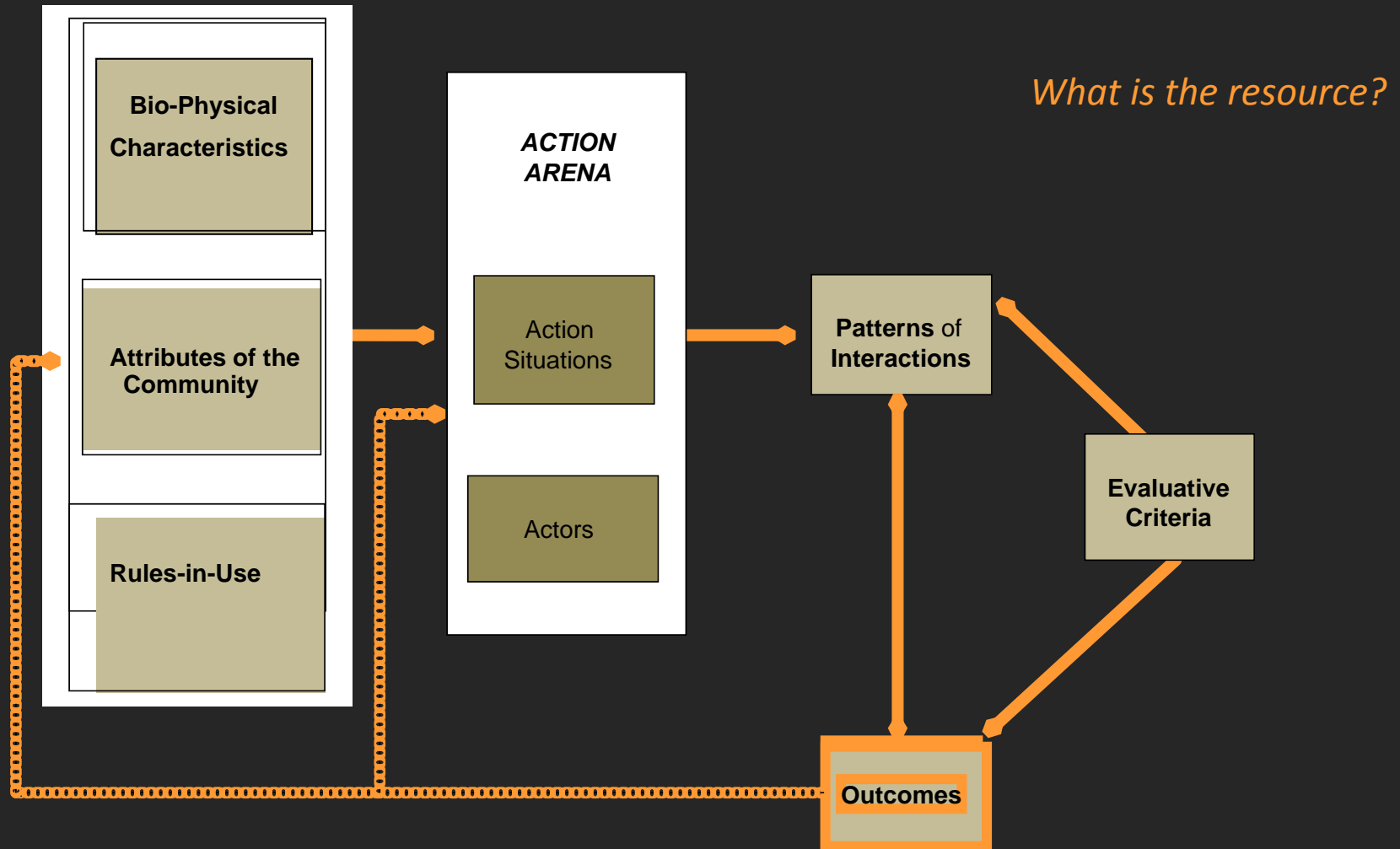
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The Study of the Commons is Recent 1985

- 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



Traditional Commons

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

Design principles

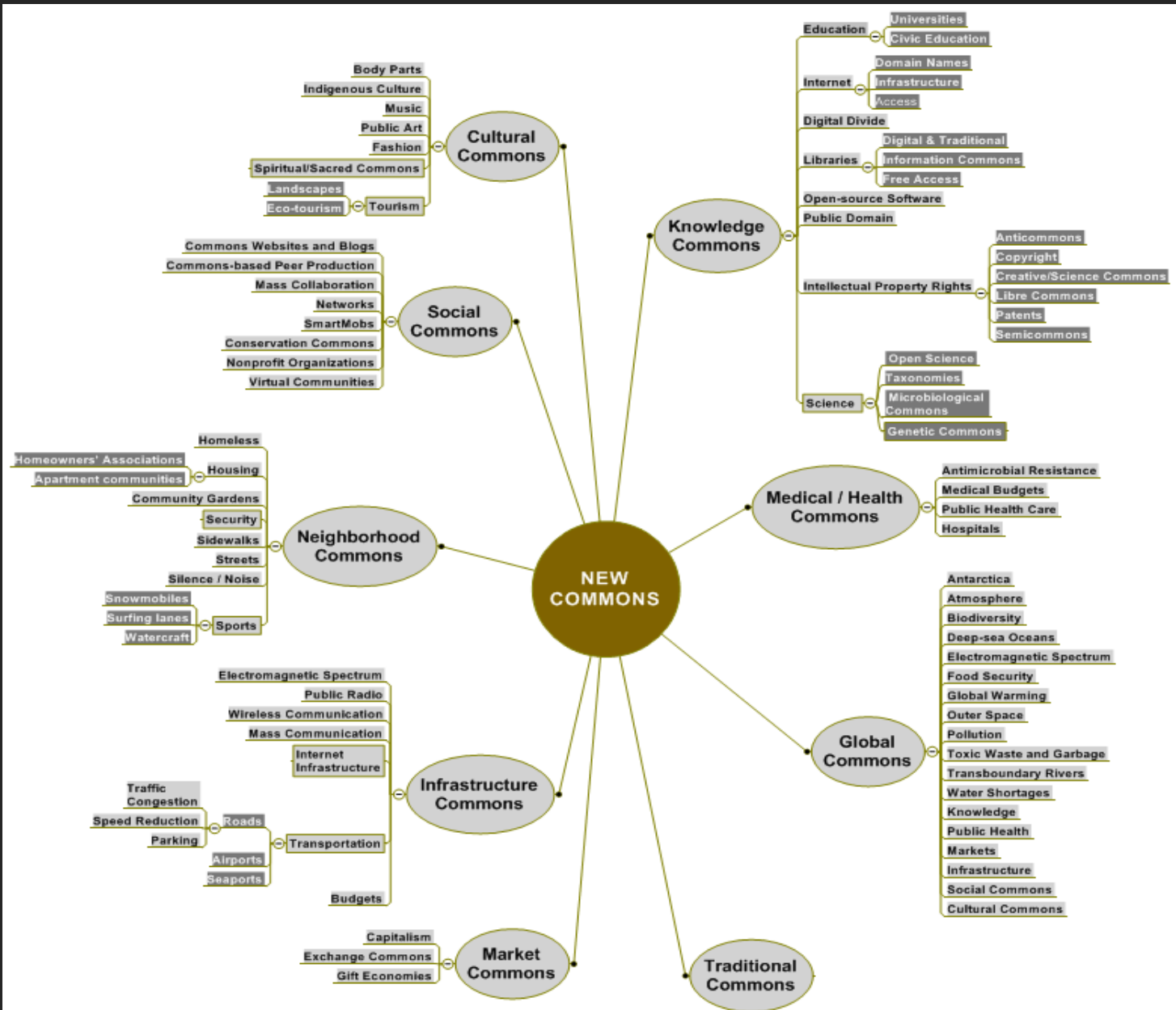
- Group boundaries clearly defined
- Rules governing the use of collective goods are well matched to local needs and conditions
- Most individuals affected by these rules can participate in modifying the rules
- The right of community members to devise their own rules is respected by external authorities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

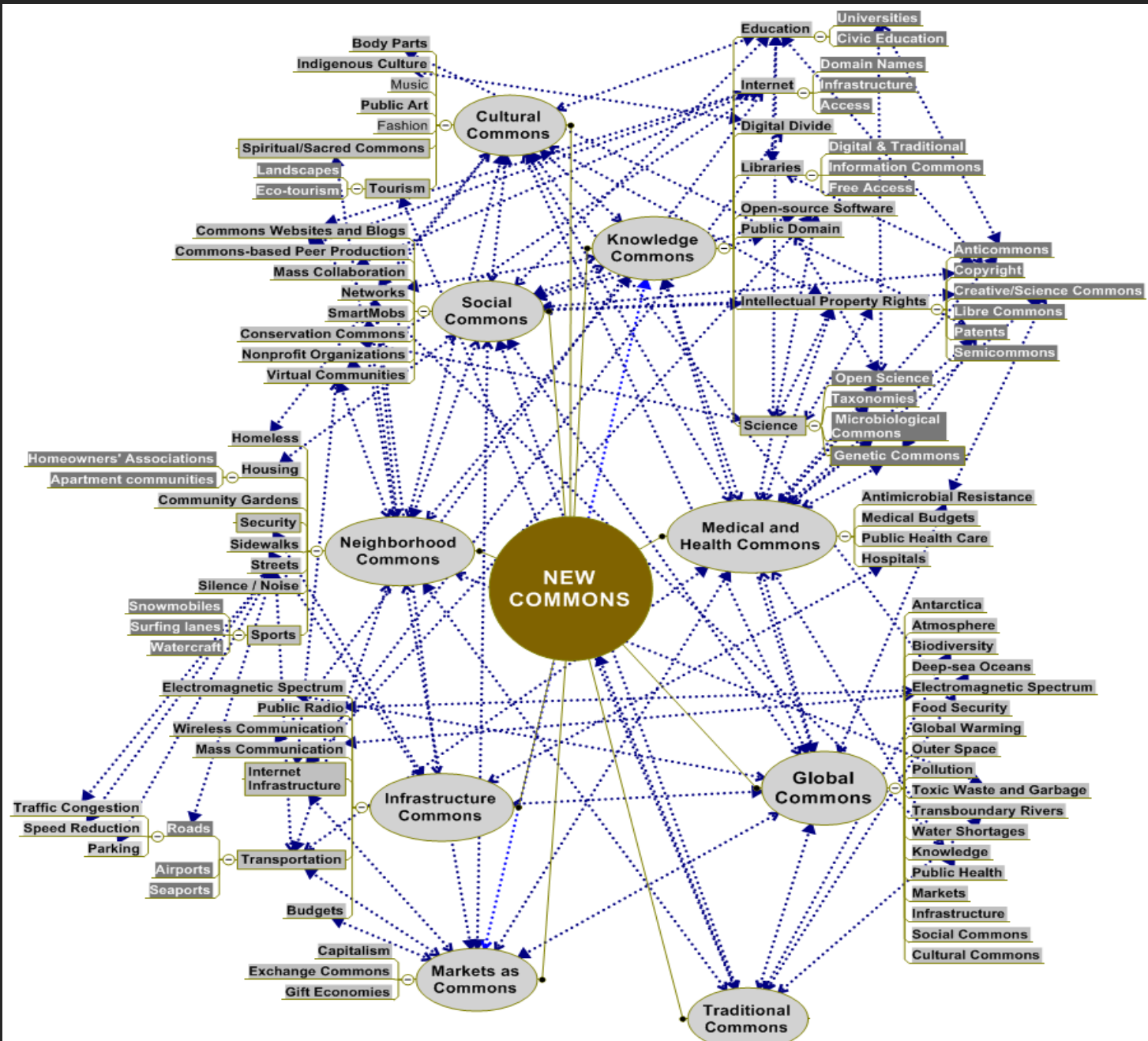
The Study of New Commons is More Recent 1995+

- 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)

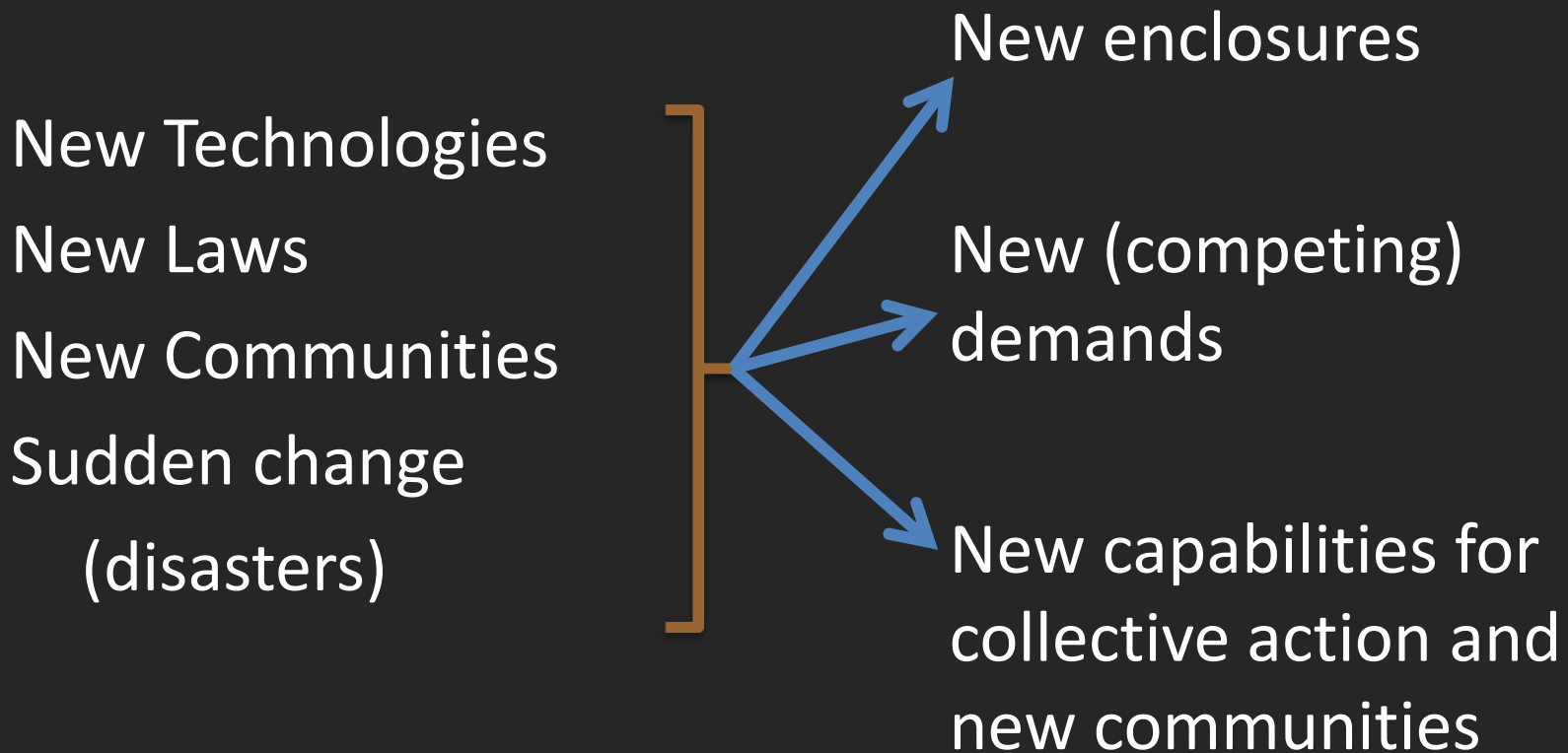
Characteristics of Commons

- 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?



Rivalry

Low

High

E
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i
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n

Difficult

Easy

Public
Goods

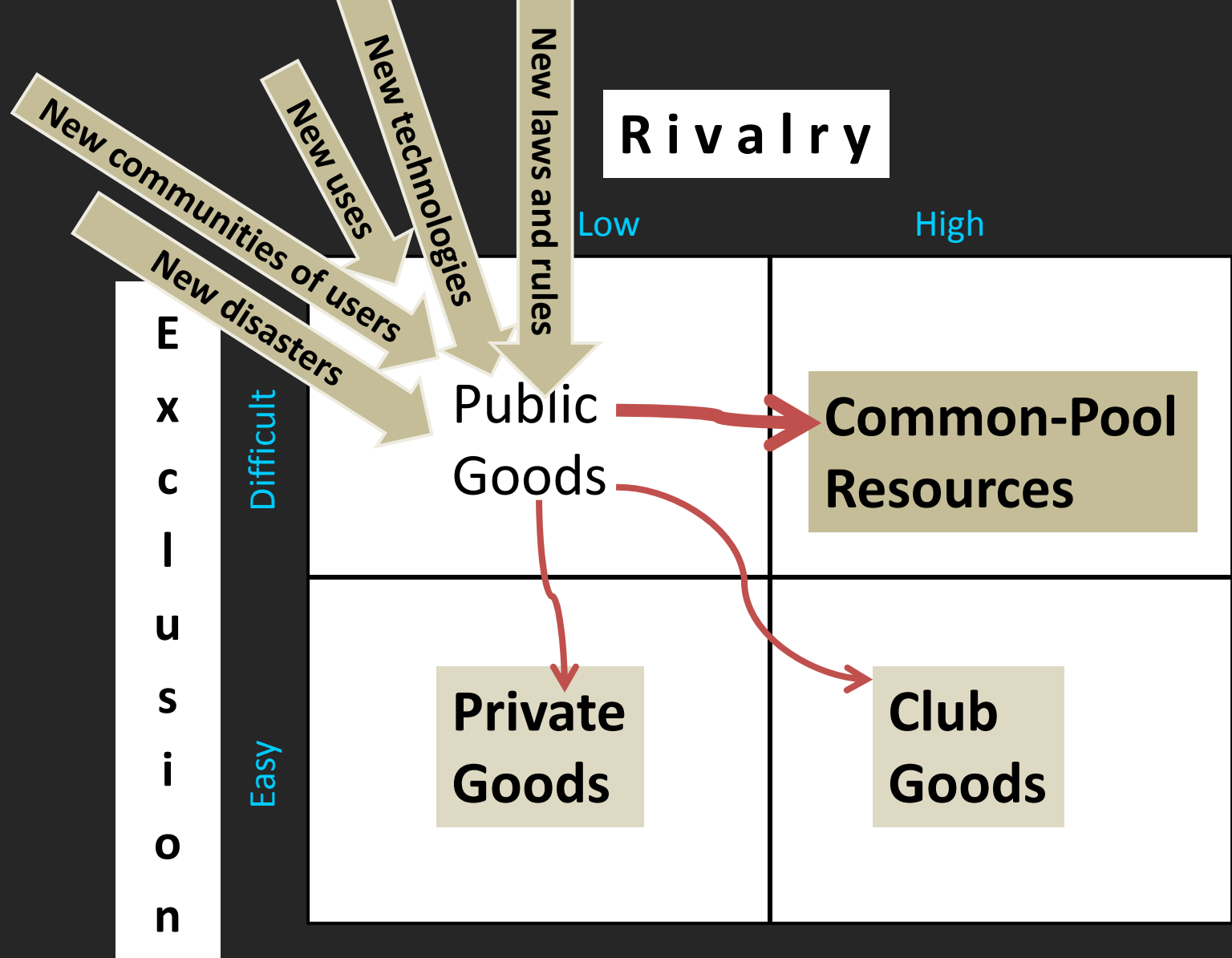
Common-Pool
Resources

Private
Goods

Club
Goods

Types of Goods

(adapted from *Ostrom and Ostrom 1977*)



The Assault on Public Goods

Entry Points



Enclosure

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

Tragedy of the Commons

warn about scarcity
and overuse

Build Civil Society

education
social responsibility
build new thinking
deliberative
democracy

Collective Action

networks
peer-to-peer
mass collaboration
collaboratories
open source

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

*Dietz, Thomas, Elinor Ostrom, and Paul C. Stern 2003. "The Struggle to Govern the Commons." *Science* 302(5652):1907-1912.

*F. Berkes, J. Colding, C. Folke, Eds., 2003. *Navigating Social-Ecological Systems: Building Resilience for Complexity and Change* .Cambridge UP.

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

