# Crafting New Commons: Designing for Robust Collaboration, Participation, and Sustainability

*Infrastructuring the Commons* Seminar
Aalto University
**School of Arts, Design and Architecture**

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# Dedicated to:

**Gerald Vincent Bernbom**

July 19, 1952 - November 7, 2003

*"Our actions are our only true belongings."*

# Abstract

Interest in commons is rapidly growing throughout the world. This draw to alternative forms of sharing resources and collective forms of collective problem-solving may reflect the rising frustration citizens feel toward ineffectual governments and corporate domination, and mass indifference/inaction to local and global problems. Commons are about local people engaging in self-governing mechanisms to solve problems and share knowledge and resources. Commons are "institutions" that fall between markets and states.   While people have been sharing resources for millennia, we have only been collectively studying "commons" and how they work for about thirty years.

Creating effective commons—whether traditional, natural-resource commons or new types of cultural, knowledge or urban commons--requires a combination of ingredients.  "Commonning" or "commons-crafting" involves intentional design, good methods of communication, and active participation of its members. The design craft also necessitates a thorough knowledge of the resource, an understanding of the user community, and adaptation of appropriate rules-in-use.  This presentation draws from the teaching, methodologies, and rich body of research developed at the Vincent and Elinor Ostrom Workshop in Political Theory and Policy Analysis at Indiana University.

# Outline

- Background on Workshop
- What are commons? CPRs? Difference between global and local, rival and nonrival/ generative
- Do definitions matter?
- Institutions and Institutional design
- Characteristics of commons  (no panaceas!)
- Background traditional commons vs. new commons➔
- How to understand and manage commons
  - IAD framework
  - Design principles
- Building local commons—what works  (just begin, communicate, document, share, monitor how you're doing
- Why are  commons important ?
- Ripped from the headlines
- What is do be done?

## Commons are:

**People working together
in self-governing groups
independently of the state
in order to solve problems and
share knowledge and resources.**

**All commons are vulnerable to social
dilemmas and threats of enclosure**

Commons are *"institutions"* that fall
between markets and states.

# Characteristics of Commons

- **Self-governing**
- **Participatory**
- **Social dilemmas**
- **Vulnerable to enclosure**
- **Social capital—trust—reciprocity**
- **Knowledge sharing**
- **Communication, dialogue, and adaptable rules**
- **Local design**—"no panaceas"
        (no cookie-cutter commons)

# Traditional and New

Forests, water, fisheries, agricultural fields, pasture lands, rivers and irrigation systems

**Antarctica, the high seas and deep seabed minerals, the atmosphere, and space**

Free and Open Source Software
Wikipedia*
Creative Commons
P2PFoundation
**Commons.fi**
On the commons.org

 **Commons around disasters**
 – **Crisiscommons**
 – **Recovers.org**
 – **Rebecca Solnit's book, *A Paradise Built in Hell: The Extraordinary Communities That Arise in Disaster***

**Collaborative and crowdsourced science**

 **Zooniverse** (GalaxyZoo is) citizen science

**Educational commons**

 **OER Commons** (Open Education Resources)

**Arts and design commons**

 -**Hackerspaces / Makerspaces**

**Citizen journalism**

**Collaborative consumption / social economy**

 – **Neighborgoods**—sharing what we own
 – **ZipCars, RelayRides, Autolib**
 – **Oranssi Housing Company (Helsinki)** (Amplify Creative Communities) [http:// amplifyingcreativecommunities.net/ caring.html](http://amplifyingcreativecommunities.net/caring.html)
 – **Euclid Terrace lawnmower**
 – **Airbnb**
 – **Collaborative online cookbooks**
 – **Mondragon*** and other successful cooperatives

**Money as commons** (Mary Mellor lecture here)

Economics and the Commons Conference Berlin
[http://p2pfoundation.net/ Final_Report_on_the_Economics_and_the_Commons_Conference](http://p2pfoundation.net/Final_Report_on_the_Economics_and_the_Commons_Conference)

# Background on the Workshop in Political Theory and Policy Analysis, Indiana University

## Vincent Ostrom and Elinor Ostrom

- Importance of institutions and commons

- Institutions relate to the most basic question of human societies: how can disparate and fallible beings come together and agree on decisions in order to get something done?

- Making rules in order to share, make policies, constitutions

- Institutions require an agreed upon language and a minimal level of cooperative behavior.

 VO=macro   EO=micro

# Brief History (perspective & primary disciplines*) *all are interdisciplinary



Early studies
   1968 Tragedy of the Commons
      1985 NRC Council
         1988 IASCP (2006 IASC)
            1990 *Governing the Commons*
               1995+ Knowledge, new commons
                  2000 Digital Library of the Commons
                     2001 Conference on the Public Domain
                     2009 Nobel Prize
                        Today: Explosion of Commons

# Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action, 1990

- First comparative analysis of case studies
- Defined commons *common pool resources*
- Demonstrated that rules and institutional design matter
- Determined the eight design principles successful commons
- Proved Hardin's tragedy of the commons hypothesis wrong: people can and do collaborate

# Lin Ostrom's Methodology

- 1970-82: Designed the IAD Framework with Vincent and Workshoppers
- Built an international network of scholars
- 1985-9: Hired a librarian to collect the international grey literature on the commons
- Together with grad students sorted through +/- 2000 case studies; chose 86 studies
- Applying the IAD framework drafted over 30 coding instruments for recording very detailed information
- Fed instruments into a relational database

# The Bloomington /Ostrom School

The Ostrom's and the "Workshoppers" with strong ties to **iasc**

Focus on:

- institutions and collective action
- commons as an economic good
- Property rights as bundles
- the study of the commons **through** field work, teaching, theoretical analysis, experiments, and game theory to find out what works?

# The Legal 'Open Commons' School

Rose, Benkler, Boyle, Lessig, Samuelson, Frischmann, Madison, Strandburg et al.

Focus on

**Enclosure of the public domain**

**Advantages of commons over property** particularly with nonrival resources such as ideas and knowledge

**Law, more recently on collective action as well:**

   **Commons-based peer production**

   **Constructed cultural commons**

The Focus on the study of Stronger in US ? (except for Lessig/CC)

# The Activist/Economic Commons School
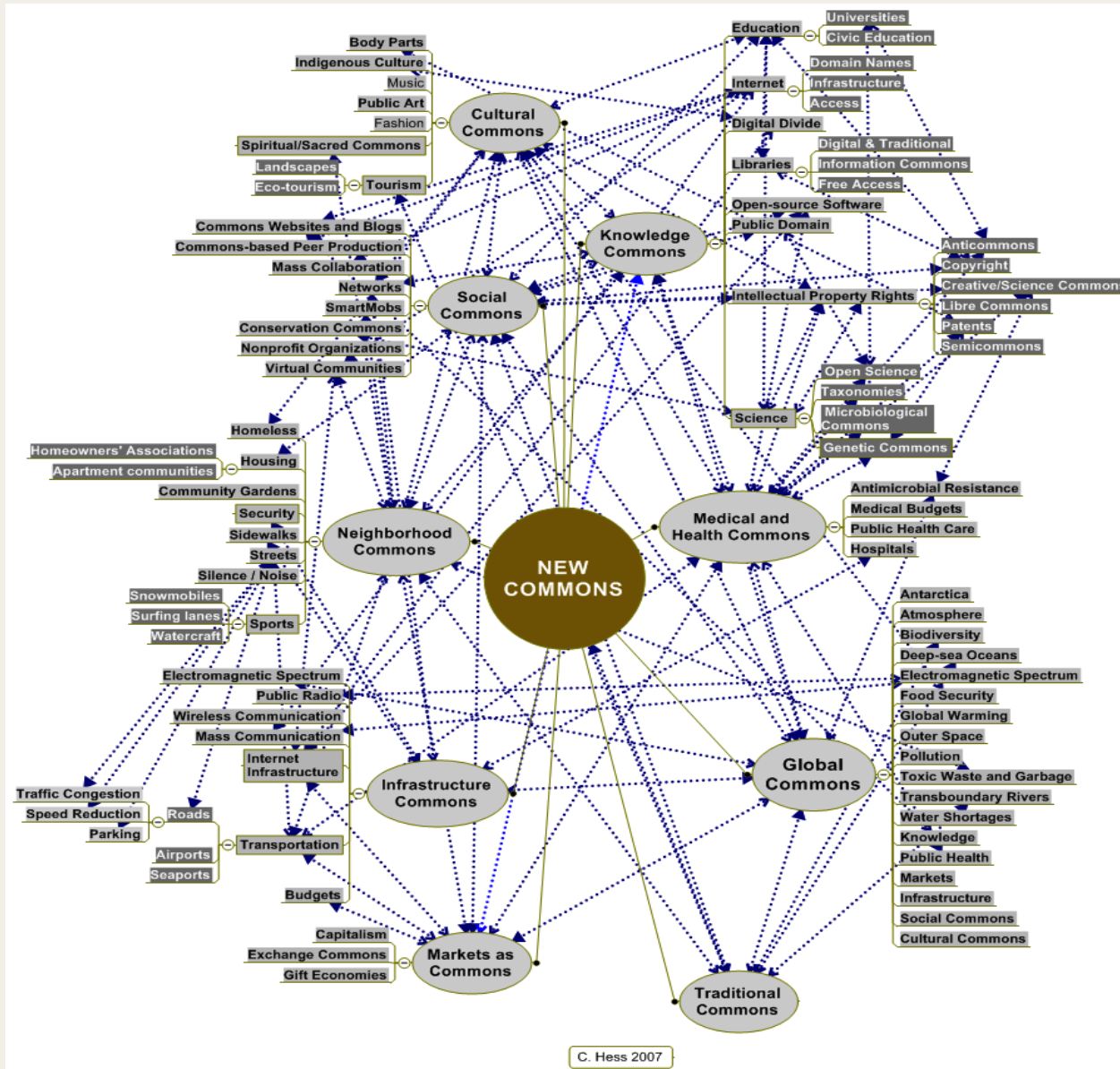
Helfrich, Bollier, Bauwens  et al.

Focus on

Demonstrating the feasibility of commons-based provisioning  and bring about **effective action for change.**

The importance of commons **study, informing, and action**

Draws from all salient studies; applications and often bridge the gap between the two other schools

Stronger in Europe at the moment

# new commons map



C. Hess 2007

# Differences between natural resource and knowledge/ digital commons

| | |
|---|---|
| Depletable/exhaustible *vs* | Generative/ regenerative |
| Participation | Peer Production |
| Rivalrous | Nonrivalrous |
| Scarcity | Abundance |
| Open access--bad | Open access -- good |
| Physical | Physical + intangible |
| Threat of overuse | Threat of underuse |

# Knowledge Commons
## Dualing Revolutions

**Enclosure**

Increased Intellectual Property Rights &

Privatization

Commodification

Corporatization

Globalization

Lack of govt & corp transparency

Loss of privacy

→Disempowerment

**Greater Access**

New ways to collaborate

Free and Open Source Software

Commons-based peer production

Open access movement

Open science

Online Collective action

→ Empowerment

# Why do *commons* arise?

New Technologies

New Laws

New Needs

Sudden change
  (disasters)

New Communities

New threats of enclosure, privatization, degradation and ruin

New (competing) demands

New capabilities for collective action and new communities

# Global Commons

- Global Commons—transboundary, local with global consequences
- Traditional: **Antarctica, the high seas and deep seabed minerals, the atmosphere, and space**
- Think **climate change** (ice melt, ocean rise, violent weather, dangerous temperature rise, land flooding and land loss, mass migration, increased scarcity…)
- But also threats of destruction of **forests, biodiversity, water resources, animal and plant species (bees, bats, frogs, shells, iguanas, fish…), coral reefs, oil and other biofuels, mass resistance to antibiotics, public health**, **seeds and other plant genetic resources** … the list is long
- **Knowledge, especially in digital format, the Internet, peer production**
- Most of these commons are rival, depletable and lead to scarcity except for ideas and knowledge which are generative

# Why are commons important??

Can be a more effective solution

> Inform society, corporates and policy makers that there is another way of doing things.

Build practice of democracy in action, learning how to self-govern to manage resources, better nurturing ourselves and the environment

> Provide an antidote to the isolating and colonializing effects of the neoliberal economy

Promote creativity and innovation, experimentation, and freedom

# Ripped from the headlines…

- **Naomi Klein: "How science is telling us all to revolt"** Oct. 29, 2013 reports on the paper "Is the Earth F**cked? "earth-human systems" are becoming dangerously unstable " One hopeful dynamic: resistance , direct environmental action

- **A. Goodman report** 25 Sept 2013

  "Hope lies in the global grassroots movement that is growing…"

The power of global commoners!

# What is needed:

**\*Better knowledge sharing\***

International bridging of commons communication, movements, and research

*Commonsfinder* website

\*Global Commons directory, and tutorial, action network

# and

**Better commons sharing**

- Collaborate with other involved citizens (noncommoners) like community organizers, policy makers, churches, nonprofits, etc.

- Expand our stewardship of the **"commons knowledge commons"** (our knowledge and expertise) *about* commons

- Integrate commons within our core beliefs and practice ("deep commons")

- Commit to the hard work of commons

- Teach and involve our children and grandchildren in giving back

# Conclusion

- Commons from local to global problems need to be identified as commons

- Collective Action: "don't just sit there and wait for the big guys up there to do something"

# Thank you!

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