



DISTRICT COMMONS

new possibilities

"It always seems impossible until it's done"

Week 1: "What is a common good? How does it differ from other types of types of goods?"

This week let's learn about what determines whether a good is common, public, private or club. This [lovely 5 minute animated video](#) explains this really clearly!

The commons is not a resource. It is a resource *plus* a defined community *and* the protocols, values and norms devised by the community to manage its resources.

Housekeeping: I am experimenting with units and want to keep these very basic and low overhead to make room for the most people, but if others have extra readings, lectures or discussions, feel free to post in the thread. This way people who just want to skim can join but those of us who might want to go deeper can. So that these units don't become a link graveyard, please don't post links without posting a sentence or two about the link, why you wanted to share it, what struck you, what about it do you think the group will find interesting. Feel free to post questions and discussion threads, reflections or other learning materials if interest.

David Bollier is a writer and commons theorist. [This is their short introduction into the commons for P2P foundation.](#)

The commons is:

- A social system for the long-term stewardship of resources that preserves shared values and community identity.
- A self-organized system by which communities manage resources (both depletable and and replenishable) with minimal or no reliance on the Market or State.

- The wealth that we inherit or create together and must pass on, undiminished or enhanced, to our children. Our collective wealth includes the gifts of nature, civic infrastructure, cultural works and traditions, and knowledge.
- A sector of the economy (and life!) that generates value in ways that are often taken for granted – and often jeopardized by the Market-State.

There is no master inventory of commons because a commons arises whenever a given community decides it wishes to manage a resource in a collective manner, with special regard for equitable access, use and sustainability.

> > Next week will be "How do we govern and protect common goods?"

Week 2: Design Principles for Governance of the Commons!

This [VERY short video introduces the 8 design principles of Elinor Ostrom](#). Ostrom was a political economist who changed our understanding of economic governance & common pool resources, work for which they were awarded the Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences.

Ostrom's 9 Design Principles (text summary)

1. Define clear group boundaries.
2. Match rules governing use of common goods to local needs and conditions.
3. Ensure that those affected by the rules can participate in modifying the rules.
4. Make sure the rule-making rights of community members are respected by outside authorities.
5. Develop a system, carried out by community members, for monitoring members' behavior.
6. Use graduated sanctions for rule violators.
7. Provide accessible, low-cost means for dispute resolution.
8. Build responsibility for governing the common resource in nested tiers from the lowest level up to the entire interconnected system.

Task this week - go and find out what some common goods in the community are and figure out how many principles are used in the management of those goods.

Week 3. Collective Action and the Evolution of Social Norms

For anyone who wants to read a little deeper, this is the 2000 paper "*Collective Action and the Evolution of Social Norms*"

It basically says look we used to believe in the zero contribution thesis **, however, empirical observations of everyday life suggest humans behave otherwise, or can behave otherwise.

****Zero Contribution Hypothesis:** *"Unless the number of individuals in a group is quite small, or unless there is coercion or some other special device to make individuals act in their common interest, rational, self-interested individuals will not act to achieve their common or group interests."*

*In all known self-organized resource governance regimes that have survived for multiple generations, participants invest resources in monitoring and sanctioning the actions of each other so as to reduce the probability of free riding (Ostrom, 1990).**

Here Ostrom attempts to integrate these findings into a theory of collective action.

"A substantial gap exists between the theoretical prediction that self-interested individuals will have extreme difficulty in coordinating collective action and the reality that such cooperative behavior is widespread, although far from inevitable."

Conclusions

Instead of pure pessimism or pure optimism about how to resolve collective action situations we see variation, and need further understanding of the contextual variables that are seen to enhance cooperation and which discourage it.

"A central finding is that the world contains multiple types of individuals, some more willing than others to initiate reciprocity to achieve the benefits of collective action. Thus, a core question is how potential cooperators signal one another and design institutions that reinforce rather than destroy conditional cooperation."

"We need to understand how institutional, cultural, and biophysical contexts affect the types of individuals who are recruited into and leave particular types of collective action situations, the kind of information that is made available about past actions, and how individuals can themselves change structural variables so as to enhance the probabilities of norm-using types being involved and growing in strength over time. "

The piece closes by suggesting that public policies based on the principles of the zero contribution hypothesis (as they often are), as this might actually prevent the norms needed for cooperation (!!). That public policies should be designed to enhance "***socially beneficial, cooperative behavior based in part on social norms". **Lastly they suggest that increasing local autonomy to self regulate and self govern will result in norms that are optimally suited for collective action.

Week 4: From Commons to Commoning

This is the first few pages from Perspectives on Commoning: Autonomist Principles and Practice

Introduction - Perspectives on Commoning

- Discourse on the Commons was originally centered on property rights in feudal Britain.
- More recently there has been a shift from commons as resources to commons as relational social frameworks
- Commoning is the verb associated with the reproduction of the commons
- More recently commoning serves dual functions of resisting capital accumulation whilst also forging new ways of working, living and being in common.
- Autonomist principles for commoning are then described.
- Angry emoji if you manage to read any of the text so that I know how useful it's been to people



Week 5: theory of the commons

From David Bollier- [The commons is:](#)

- *A social system for the long-term stewardship of resources that preserves shared values and community identity.*
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[Commoning as a Transformative Social Paradigm by David Bollier](#)

Week 6: governance of the commons

Ostrom's research concludes that “polycentric governance*” based on complex designs of complex systems must underline the management of the commons (Ostrom, 2010). These findings confirm that communities and people can develop sustainable management systems by creating social consensuses on the management of “resources”. When done well, abundance prevails.

* governance with multiple centers of decision making, each of which operates with some degree of autonomy ([E. Ostrom, 2005](#); [V. Ostrom, Tiebout, & Warren, 1961](#))

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Week 7: Conflict & sanctions

Week 8: Putting this into praxis - Starting an Intentional Community

This is a place to share resources as well as build out our own guides to starting, maintaining and diversifying intentional communities

Sharing the Conscious Coliving Community Facilitation Handbook

<https://www.consciouscoliving.com/the-community.../>

The Supernuclear newsletter!

<https://supernuclear.substack.com/.../introducing...>

[Starter guide from the Foundation for Intentional Communities](#)

[Please add and make suggestions, this is a living document](#)
bit.ly/hsc_communeGuide

reading

<https://systemicalternatives.org/2017/03/20/the-commons/>

https://blog.p2pfoundation.net/commons-short-sweet/2017/09/25?fbclid=IwAR39ma3bsj_NYIOSckV_yBZS_5EXySejo-yWtcEe5IL3U7IFh81XUq3er3o

Commons and Collective Action Journal Club

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