Public Good or Common Pool Resource?
What does it mean to share an OER Commons?

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The Opposing Sides

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Some basic terminology

The Econ 101 matrix of goods:

Def. “excludable”: the degree to which a good or service can be limited to paying customers

Def. “rivalrous”: a good is rivalrous if one consumer’s enjoyment of the good prevents other consumers from enjoying the same good at the same time

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Excludable</th>
<th>Non-excludable</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rivalrous</td>
<td>Private Goods</td>
<td>Common Pool Resources</td>
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<td></td>
<td>e.g., cars, clothes, houses</td>
<td>e.g., fisheries, forests</td>
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<tr>
<td>Non-rivalrous</td>
<td>Club Goods</td>
<td>Public Goods</td>
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<td></td>
<td>e.g., theater, theme parks</td>
<td>e.g., highways, national defense</td>
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OpenEd18: “Questioning the OER Orthodoxy: Is Commons the Right Metaphor for our Work in OER?”

OER is not a commons; it’s a public good:
1. OER is non-rivalrous
2. OER does not face a problem of enclosure
3. OER does not require community collaboration to manage the resource (the license is perpetual)

OpenEd19: “OER Sustainability: Does Open Drain the Pool?”

OER aren’t the resource, they are byproducts of the resource, which is the academy (a learning commons)

Educational products suffer from:
- enclosure by for-profit entities
- uneven distribution
- lack of reciprocity, sharing, and mission-driven principles
Chief goals of OER stewardship:
- Encouraging production
- Increase funding (through private and public means)

Chief threats to OER:
- Free-riding

Chief goals of OER stewardship:
- Emphasize the educational value of open
- Increase reciprocity
- Empower faculty to create and share

Chief threats to OER:
- Corporatization and monetization
Understanding Knowledge as a Commons

Commons as a complex system of practices
- local norms and governance structures
- enforcement mechanisms for behavior
- participatory and democratic processes for setting and enforcing rules

Knowledge as a commons resource
- knowledge is fundamentally shared and collaborative
- preserving and sustaining knowledge requires shared practices, standards, and know-how

Hess and Ostrom (2007)
Examples of knowledge commons

• Libraries and scholarly communications
  • Libraries used to provide a framework for supporting a knowledge commons
  • Increased digitization promises greater accessibility
  • But, in fact, DRM encloses the commons
  • Open Access movements try to re-common the library
  • Preservation and continuity of digital materials

• Wikipedia
  • Volunteer-based production of encyclopedic information
  • Community standards, moderation, and editing norms

• Learning communities, conferences, scholarly associations
  • Informal and formal practices of sharing knowledge
  • Community standards and practices
  • Largely volunteer services
Education as Resisting the Tendency of Private Accumulation of Property

- Paolo Friere: the “banking model” of education (exclusionary, gatekeeping)
  - Education is collaborative
  - Education benefits from greater democratization

- Capitalist private enterprise has an extractive and accumulative inclination (private enclosure)
  - Education is ampliative and contagious
  - Education benefits from greater openness

These forces conspire with Intellectual Property law to impose barriers on knowledge as a resource
The CARE Framework (2.0?)

- Articulate the values that govern OER
  - Contributing
  - Empowering
  - Attributing
  - Releasing
  - Protecting Privacy
- Open is about more than artifacts
  - Teaching and learning practices
  - Reforming the production and distribution of knowledge
Concluding thoughts

OER artifacts (textbooks and learning materials) behave like public goods
  • they need funding to enable production

Open education is a knowledge commons
  • it needs collective practices and values
  • it can be harmed through enclosures (restrictions on sharing and IP)
  • it is sustained through communities of practice