



**The Commons:
Collective Action
and the
Environment**

Types of "goods"

Rival
Land

Land
Air
Species

Species?

Air

Non-rival

Types of "goods"

Excludable
Land

Water

Species?
Water?

Air

Non-excludable



Good type can change

Plant and animal species

- partially based on physical dynamics
- but also culture or politics
- not always about tangible goods

biodiversity

services

justice

Property and Control

Excludable

| | | Yes | No |
|-------|-----|----------------|---------------|
| Rival | Yes | Private goods | "the Commons" |
| | No | Patented goods | Public goods |

"Tragedy of the Commons"

**Garret
Hardin**

Science, 1968
[no. 162]
pp. 1243-1248

**"Self-interest without responsibility
inevitably leads to resource collapse."**

**"You take and you take and you take,
but you never give back."**

Solution: Enclosure

COMMON property becomes
PRIVATE property

- Tied responsibility to gain
- Economic incentives for conservation
 - limiting herd size
 - maintenance of the pasture

“Truth” of the Commons

- Land was owned - by communities
- Complex rules and responsibilities
- Sustained over centuries

“Dilemma of the Commons”

How to prevent the destruction of resources, without turning them into purely private goods?


Common Pool Resource Management

Excludable

| | | Excludable | |
|-------|-----|----------------|---------------|
| | | Yes | No |
| Rival | Yes | Private goods | "the Commons" |
| | No | Patented goods | Public goods |

Common Pool Resource Management

Working together, we can ensure
the resources we hold in common
are used in sustainable ways

A grayscale photograph of a large herd of sheep grazing in a field. The sheep are scattered across the frame, with some in the foreground and others receding into the distance. The background shows a line of trees under a bright sky. The overall tone is soft and natural.

A grayscale photograph of a herd of sheep in a field, serving as a background for the text. The sheep are scattered across the field, some facing the camera and others with their backs to it. The field is open and appears to be a pasture.

Working together

a.k.a. "Collective Action"

- not random or accidental
- semi-permanent
- norms, rules, regulations

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Dilemma of the Commons

How to prevent the destruction of resources, without turning them into purely private goods?

Challenge of the Commons

“Can we learn to cooperate to prevent environmental destruction, and avoid a world of purely private goods, or an all-powerful, oppressive government?”

Why does it matter?

Successful cooperation

- sustains shared values
- increases potential for cooperation
- solidarity against further threats

What are the alternatives?

What kind of a society do we want?

What kind of a world do we want?



...and the environment?

challenges

- political success is always based on successful organization

resources

- help with organizing, but careful use stretches their effectiveness

distribution

- who pays and who benefits helps to predict resistance and support