

# Commons discussion at the GLIF

## A digression into Economic theory.

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# The Commons

- Aim: What is the role of the Commons in the GNA?
- Why am I doing this?
- Other questions:
  - Is this a new feature of the Internet?
- Fundamental notion is one of “sharing” whatever that might mean.
  - Long ago it might have meant sharing land.
  - More generally now it denotes sharing a resource
- Equally it must be recognized that this is a discussion about fundamental Economic principles.
  - It is not a technical discussion about how to manage networks.

# Classic definition

- In recent times the Commons refers to cultural and natural resources that may be of finite extent but are available to all, such as information in the cultural sphere or air, water and other resources in the natural sphere.
  - Key to this is the idea of resource allocation.
    - Generally would be thought of as an essential resource but might also be a desirable one.
      - Water vs open swimming beaches
- Since this is a fundamental Economic Principle it applies to any resource.

# Digital Commons

- "as an information and knowledge resources that are collectively created and owned or shared between or among a community and that tend to be non-exclusive, that is, be (generally freely) available to third parties. Thus, they are oriented to favor use and reuse, rather than to exchange as a commodity. Additionally, the community of people building them can intervene in the governing of their interaction processes and of their shared resources"
  - **Mayo Fuster Morell**

# Framework for the Commons

- Elinor Ostrom has identified eight "design principles" of stable local common pool resource management.
- Why do we need these principles?
  - The Commons are not an unregulated environment.
  - Unregulated environments would be subject to the “Tragedy of the Commons”.
    - A failure scenario that is a topic for another talk

# "design principles" of stable local common pool resource management.

- “Clearly defined boundaries (clear definition of the contents of the common pool resource and effective exclusion of external un-entitled parties);
- Rules regarding the appropriation and provision of common resources that are adapted to local conditions;
- Collective-choice arrangements that allow most resource appropriators to participate in the decision-making process;
- Effective monitoring by monitors who are part of or accountable to the appropriators;

# "design principles" of stable local common pool resource management.

- A scale of graduated sanctions for resource appropriators who violate community rules;
- Mechanisms of conflict resolution that are cheap and of easy access;
- Self-determination of the community recognized by higher-level authorities; and
- In the case of larger common-pool resources, organization in the form of multiple layers of nested enterprises, with small local CPRs at the base level.

# Role of the Commons in the GNA

- The most critical, aspect of the Commons to be understood is that this is a discussion of resource use and management:
  - whether it be grazing land or bandwidth, is an **economic** question.
- **It is not a technical or architectural question subject to technical solutions.**



# Key Takeaway

- **Defining the Commons is not a technical or architectural question subject to technical solutions.**
  - How any given organization chooses to implement this is up to them and subject to local considerations.
  - Any local adaptation will take the principles into account
    - There is no unified Global approach, nor should there be.
- The principle of “**Sharing**” is a policy decision that is a fundamental feature of the GNA.

# Ostrom's Law

- *A resource arrangement that works in practice can work in theory.*<sup>[</sup>