

The Generative Logic of the Commons

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Keynote

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Commons Beyond State and Market

„What one can observe in the world, ... is that neither the state nor the market is uniformly successful in enabling individuals to sustain longterm, productive use of natural resource systems. Further, communities of individuals have relied on institutions resembling neither the state nor the market to govern some resource systems with reasonable degrees of success over long periods of time“

**Elinor Ostrom (1990), Governing the Commons, p.1
(German title, re-translated: The Constitution of the Commons – Beyond State and Market)**

Society, Production, and Commons

- Humans do not »find« their livelihoods, they **produce** them societally using resources
- Production does not only include creating **things**, but also creating **knowledge** and **social relationships** when creating things
- ▶ All is produced: things, knowledge, sociality
- Commons is a quite »natural« way to do this
- Commons produce things, knowledge, and social relationships **we value**
- ▶ Commons is producing livelihoods according to our **needs**

Capitalism from Commons Perspective

- Capitalism is an **anomaly**: it is doing basically the same as Commons do, but in an alien way:
 - Separation of producers from each other
 - Separation of producers from consumers
 - Separation of different needs from each other
 - Mediation via an unidimensional, blind entity: money
 - Scarcity rules over abundance
 - Waste rules over sustainability
 - Competition rules over cooperation
 - Commodity rules over sociality
 - Stuff does only count by its **economic value** to gain profit
- ▶ Polanyi: Dis-embedding of economy from society

Commons and Commodities

Two Types of Value

- **Need-based value:** subjective meaning of things, knowledge, sociality, that is sth. worth for us, e.g.
 - Sharing software to help the neighbor (»freedom 2«)
 - Spending time with children or older people
 - Living in a healthy environment
- **Economic value:** objective meaning of things, knowledge, sociality, that can be sold on markets
 - Proprietary software
 - Private kindergarten or retirement home
 - Spa
- The latter needs the first, but **not vice versa**
- The value types represent **incompatible** logics

Why »Incompatible Logics«?

Commons:

- Needs are negotiated prior to production
- Conflict of aims are handled internally
- Values are a multi-dimensional plurality
- Time spending is a quality of life
- Defending against ongoing enclosures

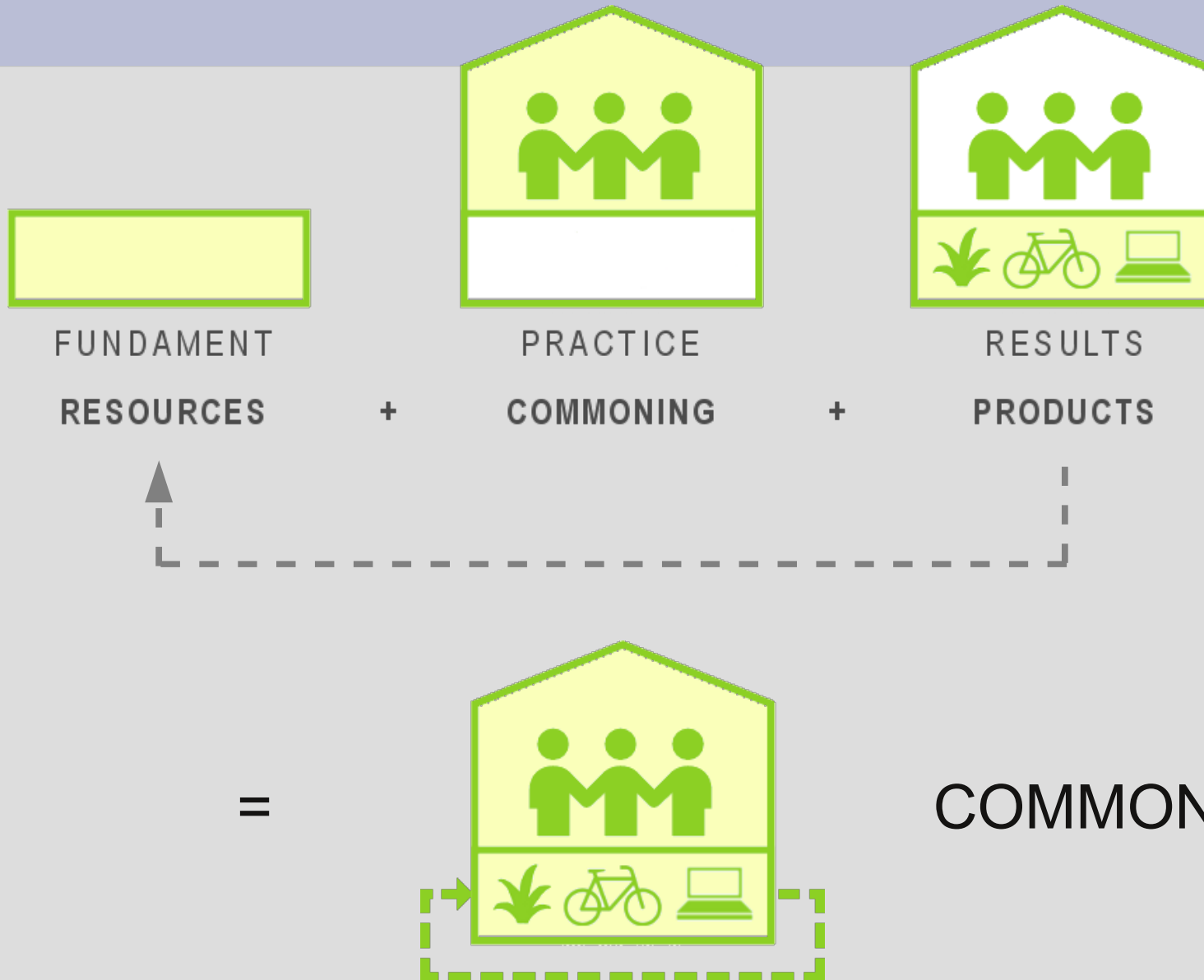
▶ **Logics of inclusion**

Commodity:

- Needs are confirmed after production (or not)
- Conflict of aims are externalized
- Value is a uni-dimensional „number“
- Time saving is an unavoidable coercion
- Executing continuous enclosures

▶ **Logics of exclusion**

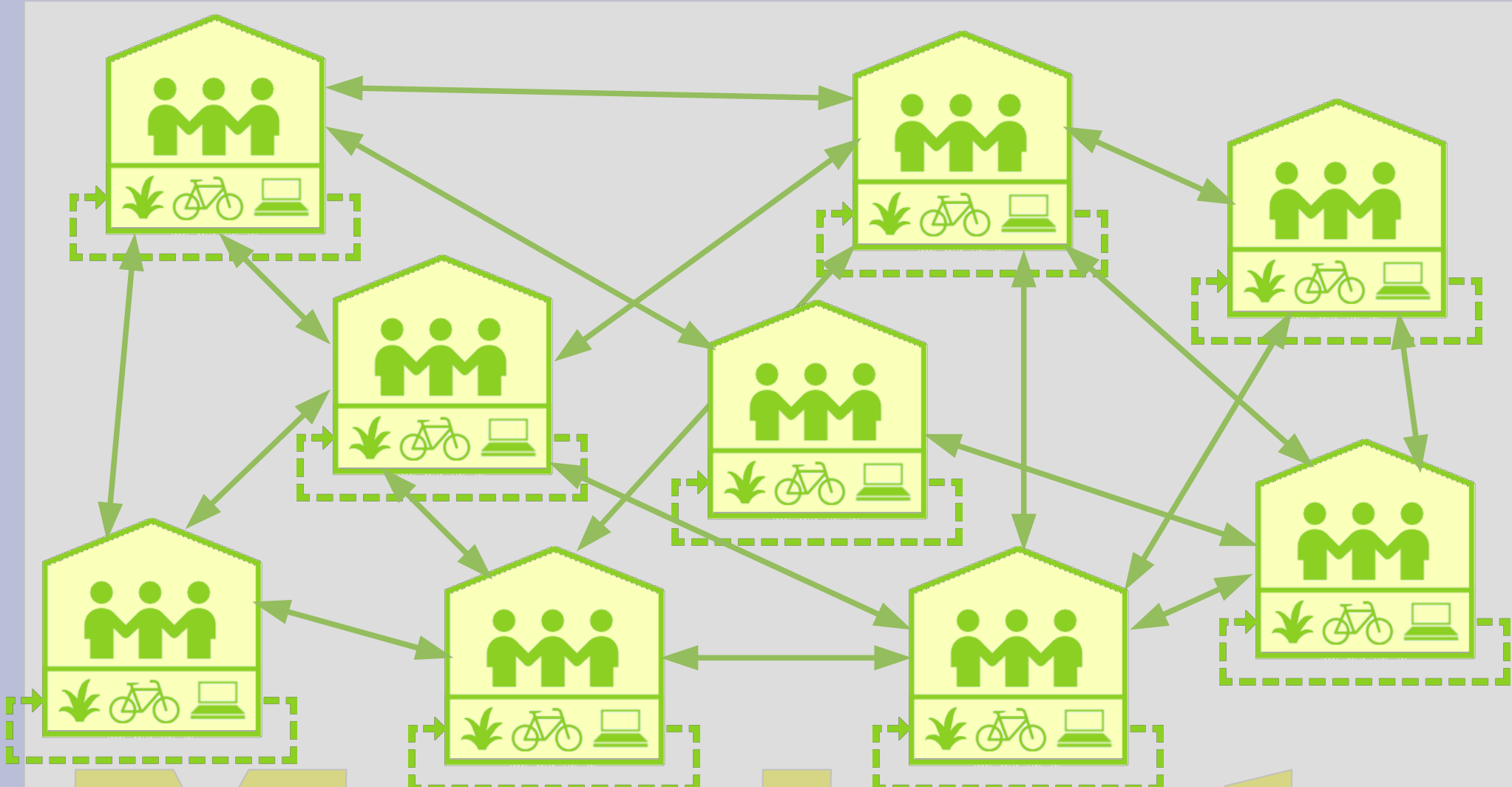
Commons Building Blocks



Commons in a Dangerous Environment



Commons-Mesh Crowds Market Out



Market

Designing Interfaces

Keeping commons alive requires to separate their **generative logic** from **exploitive logic** of markets

However, **interfaces** between commons and market do exist – they have to be **designed carefully**

Some design proposals

- **Separate** commons survival from market activity
- **Do not sell** your commons products on market
- **Replace** market functions by your commons to save money
- **Distribute** your commons results internally according to needs or by stakeholding

What about the state?

Again, the state has its **own logic** being **alien** for the commons (can not go into detail here due to time)

Recommendation: Keep **distance** to state and market

However:

- State can be partially **influenced** by politics
 - State can act as an **enabler** for the commons
 - Key question: Handing-over of **resources**
 - State can act as **trustee** where commons yet can not (e.g. global commons)
- ▶ Use the state, but don't trust in the state
- ▶ **Trust in the commons!**

Thank you :-)

Read more about the commons:
www.keimform.de/category/english

Finally...



Cartoon by great Nina Paley under CC-by-sa license
<http://ninapaley.com/mimiandeunice/2010/10/27/viral-patent>