

ed on paper and made into a physical book. A computer-rendered design for furniture can be physically manufactured in wood. This conversion from digital to physical invariably has costs. Often the digital resources are managed in a free and open way, but money is charged to convert a digital resource into a physical one.

Beyond this idea of physical versus digital, the commons, market, and state conceive of resources differently (see Fig. 3). The market sees resources as private goods—commodities for sale—from which value is extracted. The state sees resources as public goods that provide value to state citizens. The commons sees resources as common goods, providing a common wealth extending beyond state boundaries, to be passed on in undiminished or enhanced form to future generations.

People and processes

In the commons, the market, and the state, different people and processes are used to manage resources. The processes used define both who has a say and how a resource is managed.

In the state, a government of elected officials is responsible for managing resources on behalf of the public. The citizens who produce and use those resources are not directly involved; instead, that responsibility is given over to the government. State ministries and departments staffed with public servants set budgets, implement programs, and manage

resources based on government priorities and procedures.

In the market, the people involved are producers, buyers, sellers, and consumers. Businesses act as intermediaries between those who produce resources and those who consume or use them. Market processes seek to extract as much monetary value from resources as possible. In the market, resources are managed as commodities, frequently mass-produced, and sold to consumers on the basis of a cash transaction.

In contrast to the state and market, resources in a commons are managed more directly by the people involved.⁷ Creators of human produced resources can put them in the commons by personal choice. No permission from state or market is required. Anyone can participate in the commons and determine for themselves the extent to which they want to be involved—as a contributor, user, or manager. The people involved include not only those who create and use resources but those affected by outcome of use. Who you are affects your say, actions you can take, and extent of decision making. In the commons, the community as a whole manages the resources. Resources put into the commons using Creative Commons require users to give the original creator credit. Knowing the person behind a resource makes the commons less anonymous and more personal.

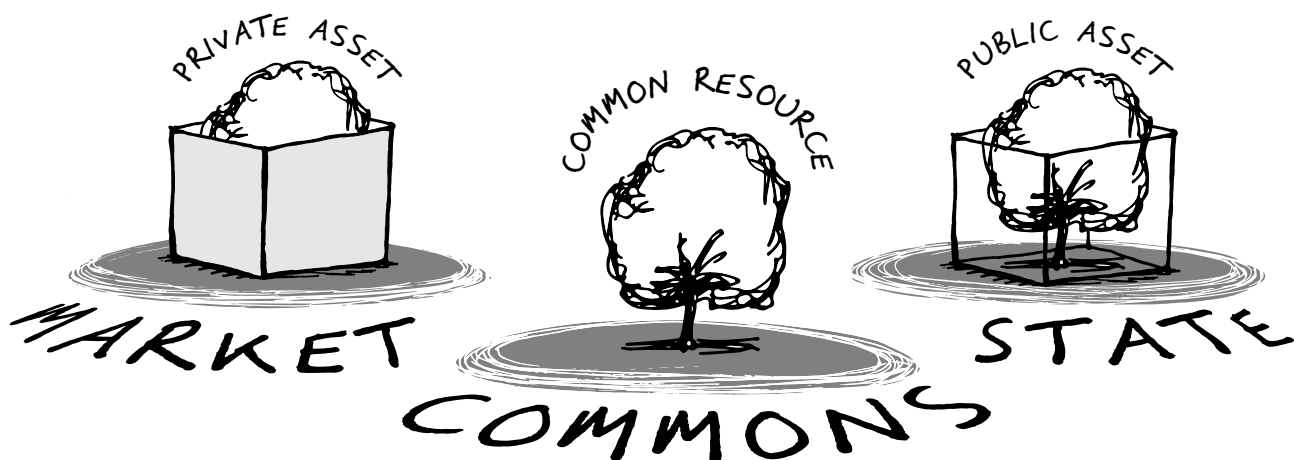


Fig. 3. How the market, commons, and state conceive of resources.