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International Association for the Study of the Commons

1st Thematic Conference on the Knowledge Commons

Governing Pooled Knowledge Resources: Building Institutions for Sustainable Scientific, Cultural and Genetic Resource Commons

12-14th September 2012

Université catholique de Louvain, Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium

CALL FOR PAPERS

Organized by:

Université catholique de Louvain (UCLouvain), Belgium

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In Collaboration with

CODATA (International Council for Science : Committee on Data for Science and Technology) : GICSI taks group on

Global Information Commons for Science

Faculté Universitaire Notre-Dame de la Paix (FUNDP), Belgium

Ghent University, Belgium

International Association for the Study of the Commons (IASC)

UNU-Merit (Maastricht)

University of Utrecht, Netherlands

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1. Conference theme

The rapid advances in technologies and digital networks over the past two decades have significantly altered and improved the ways that data and information can be produced, disseminated, managed, and used, in science, innovation, culture, and in many other spheres of human endeavor, and have created unprecedented opportunities for developing new policies. These developments are part of the emerging broader movement in support of formal and informal “peer production” and global dissemination of information by mobilizing the cooperation of distributed knowledge communities in open networked environments. Indeed, as recognized increasingly in the literature, the emerging economics of knowledge in the digital environment can be seen as a complex mix of social sharing and exchange in self-governed communities of peers as a modality of production, along with public support and private appropriation as an incentive for translating knowledge outputs into new commercial applications.

The 1st Global Thematic IASC Conference on the Knowledge Commons aims to bring together leading people from a number of international scientific research communities, social science researchers, practitioners and policy analysts, to discuss the rationale and practical feasibility of institutional arrangements designed to emulate key public domain conditions for collaborative research. A variety of initiatives and policies have been proposed that are going beyond “open access”, and aim to facilitate more effective and extensive (global) sharing on local and global pools of not only scientific information and data but also genetic resources and cultural expressions. There is thus a need to examine a number of these proposals’ conceptual foundations from the economic and legal perspectives and to analyze the roles of the public domain and commons in facilitating sharing of scientific and technical data, information and materials. But it is equally important to examine the available evidence about actual experience with concrete organizational initiatives in different, and to devise appropriate, contextually relevant methods of assessing effectiveness and identifying likely unintended and dysfunctional outcomes.

The motivating questions for this conference is how best to devise and diffuse institutional and organizational models that would maximize social benefits and returns from the knowledge commons, by promoting broad access to and reuse of research resources, rather than restricting it; and how this can be done while preserving reputational benefits and essential ownership rights, as well as transparent and shared quality standards. The conference on “Governing Pooled Knowledge Resources in a World of Rapid Social and Technological Change. Building Institutions for Sustainable Scientific, Cultural and Genetic Resource Commons” approaches these questions by building upon previous initiatives in which the organizers have been involved -- specifically, the Global Information Commons for Science Initiative (GICSI) that was launched by the Committee on Data for Science and Technology (CODATA) in collaboration with other international organizations at the Tunis World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS, November 2005), the Conference on Global Science and Economics of Knowledge-Sharing Institutions (G-SEKSI, 2nd COMMUNIA Conference, June 2009, Torino, Italy) and the Microbial Commons Symposium at the US National Academies (Washington, October 2009) (add : call on New Commons within IASC conference at Brescia).

This event therefore differs in several respects from other larger conferences that have been organized on the subject of “open access” (OA), and “access to knowledge” (A2K). It seeks to address in an integrated way the problems of knowledge sharing, by initiating a systematic comparative analysis of the broad range of existing experiences with commons based modes of production of knowledge.

Sustainable knowledge commons will prove crucial to tackle global challenges faced today. An important focal area to be considered at the conference that emerged from early discussions in the scientific committee is the scientific research and genetic resources common's potentially important role in sharing and coordinating the diffusion of reliable knowledge and practices required to address problems of global warming and climate change.

6 thematic sub-areas that will be addressed in the conference are: Cultural Commons, Genetic Resource Commons, Scientific Research Commons, Historical Knowledge Commons, Digital information commons, Innovative Intellectual Property Governance.

To address these issues, the conference organizers contemplate a three days conference, including introductory sessions by high level key-note speakers, parallel sessions with selected papers from the call for papers and three policy panels organized at the end of each afternoon.

2. Thematic conference tracks

Track 1 on “Scientific Research and Innovation Commons” (track coordinated by: Paul Uhlir)

Beginning with the open source software movement in the 1980s, digital technologies have been applied for the global sharing of data and literature in various research fields, leading in the past decade to an explosion of research and innovation commons in almost all scholarly disciplines and knowledge contexts. In recent years, these disparate commons, developed largely from the bottom-up by the researchers who saw the need and the capabilities and seized the initiative, have begun to be institutionalized from the top-down by research funding agencies, science policy organizations, and even some legislatures. The researchers themselves have moved beyond the development of initial commons designed for specific information types and narrow discipline use, to more integrated and holistic “open knowledge environments” that take full advantage of the advancing digitally networked technologies. It is therefore both timely and appropriate to take stock of where we have been, what the current landscape of scientific research and innovation commons is, and where we can and should be going. This track of the Conference, therefore, will examine issues such as:

- The historical, current, and future trends in the development of institutional and governance models for scientific research and innovation commons, and the variability in disciplines.
- The relative strengths and weaknesses of fully open, semi-commons, and proprietary approaches to research and the progress of science, in both the public and private sector contexts.
- The institutional sustainability of different digitally networked commons in different sectors.
- The social, cultural, and political norms and practices that are both enabling and inhibiting the development of research and innovation commons.
- Evaluation techniques for better understanding the positive and negative effects of digital commons, specifically on the progress of science and innovation, and on economic growth and social welfare more generally.
- Strategies for promoting successful approaches to institutionalizing such commons.

Track 2 on “Digital Information Commons” (track coordinated by: Melanie Dulong)

Digital and network technologies make it easier to share information, whether in the commons or not. Building upon these technical possibilities, various communities define rules of use and re-use of these resources (such as through common use licensing) that support the good functioning of the common digital knowledge resources. User communities may include artists, researchers, educators, media, governments and the digital information potentially includes text, images, databases and audiovisual material.

The emerging research field needs to develop theoretical exchanges with more grounded scientific domains and areas of the commons. Besides, both researchers and advocates would benefit from collecting documented use-cases and scalable argumentation on the impact of the digital commons on economy, democracy, education, health and social welfare as a whole. Issues related to incentive to

share, incompatibilities, network effects, reputation and evaluation require further research to be overcome and provide evidence and guidance for various user communities and policy-makers.

Track 3 on “Historical experience of the knowledge commons” (track coordinated by Tine De Moor)

Although knowledge commons seem to be a fairly “new” concept, Europe has a long history of similar institutionalized initiatives, which can in fact also serve as a source of inspiration for the present day exchange of knowledge. One type of such an institution for collective action -and no doubt the most important until the 19th century- was the craft guild which tried to limit professional and personal risks for artisans, from the late middle ages onwards. Guild members their main objective was to provide a minimal but secure income for their members. The capital good they pooled in order to prevent running great risks, was their skill in combination with specific knowledge about their craft: by joining and exchanging their knowledge and training, and taking advantage of the scale of organization they could offer a uniform, high quality good, that would be sold at a minimum price. The guild system enforced the rules of apprenticeship against free-riding and exploitation and offered institutional and practical support to the migrant apprentices, journeymen, and masters who transferred their knowledge from town and region of Europe to another.

Track 4 on “Genetic Resource Commons” (track coordinated by Tom Dedeurwaerdere)

Research on the exchange of genetic resources in various fields (microbial, animal and plant) shows that networking collections or of genetic resources in global and local common pool resources is a workable alternative to market-based solutions, which have been shown to be unable to generate sufficient investment in the vast quantities of genetic resources that are neglected because of their low commercial value or potential but as yet unknown future values.

For the improving our understanding of the design of these genetic resource commons however, a more systematic approach, based on a systematic analysis of the structure of the exchanges practices, the terms and conditions of exchanges, and the role of non-market values in the actors’ motivations is needed. The main issue that has to be addressed in this context is the creation of a better fit between the design of institutional arrangements for building the genetic resource commons and the norms and practices of the various user communities. Examples which illustrate, amongst others, attempts in that direction are the use of standard material transfer agreements for exchanges within the global crop and microbial commons ; breeding associations for animal genetic resources, organizations for informal seed exchange in developing countries or participatory breeding in the organic farming sector.

Track 5 on “Cultural Commons” (track coordinated by: E. Bertacchini, G. G. Bravo, M. Marrelli and W. Santagata)

“Cultural Commons” refer to cultures located in time and space – either physical or virtual - and shared and expressed by a socially cohesive community. The concept of Cultural Commons proposes a new perspective for studying and analyzing cultures and cultural production. The approach is based on

understanding cultures and cultural production as intangible resources shared by communities, whose generation and maintenance involve social dilemmas and collective action. Examples are: cultural district or cultural cluster in a city, a local language, the creativity expressed by designers' communities or traditional knowledge of indigenous communities.

Cultural Commons may be analyzed and defined along three main dimensions: Cultural expression, Space and Community. These dimensions are useful to understand cultures as a new category of shared resources, which encompasses different forms of expression produced by various communities and in several contexts. Cultural expression represents the resource that is produced and managed in a commons-like framework. The spatial dimension reflects the environmental characteristics wherein interactions take place between community members. Finally, the community, built upon an identity and symbolic dimension, takes into account the cohesiveness of its members and their involvement in the cultural process. The community can be described along the density dimension, starting from a close-knit designers' group to a loosely spread community of players on massive multiplayer online games.

Track 6. Focal area of application on climate change (track coordinated by : Paul David and Luc Soete, UNU-Merit)

This focal area of the conference will address climate change governance and its relationship to knowledge commons. In particular, it will focus on the contribution of commons based solutions to the sharing and diffusion of reliable scientific knowledge and innovations, and of sustainable use of genetic resources and traditional knowledge, which can contribute to address problems of adaptation to and mitigation of climate change.

3. Abstract Submission

There will be six tracks for abstract submissions:

Track 1 on "Scientific Research and Innovation Commons"

Track 2 on "Digital Information Commons"

Track 3 on "Historical experience of the knowledge commons"

Track 4 on "Genetic Resource Commons"

Track 5 on "Cultural Commons"

Track 6 Cross-cutting conference on climate change

All of them require an online abstract submission of max. 400 words. Deadline for submission is 15th of January 2011. All submission will be reviewed by an international review panel on the basis of scientific quality, relevance to the conference themes and originality before being accepted.

All abstracts should be uploaded through the conference website.

For full paper presentations, the paper has to be submitted no later than 1 August 2012. Conference organizers are undertaking all efforts to ensure funding to reimburse travel costs and participation fees of presenters coming from non-OECD countries.

4. Conference website

<http://biogov.uclouvain.be/iasc/>

5. Conference Venue

Auditoires Socrate
Université catholique de Louvain
1348 Louvain-La-Neuve
Belgium

6. Committees

International Scientific Program Committee

International Scientific Program Committee is responsible for the overall scientific content of the conference and for monitoring the scientific review process.

- Tom Dedeurwaerdere, Université Catholique de Louvain, Belgium.
- Paul David, Research Chair in the Digital Economy, Telecom-ParisTech and l'Ecole Polytechnique, France, and Stanford Institute for Economic Policy Research, US.
- Jerome Reichman, Duke Law School, US.
- Gurdial Singh Nijar, Director of the Centre of Excellence for Biodiversity Law, Malaysia
- Carlos M. Correa, Director of the Center for Interdisciplinary Studies of Industrial Property Law and Economics at the University of Buenos Aires (UBA)
- Charlotte Hess, Associate Dean for Research, Collections, and Scholarly Communication
- Paul Uhlir, Director of the Office of International Scientific Information Programs, The National Academies, US.
- Michael Halewood, Head of the Policy Research and Support Unit at Bioversity International (CGIAR), Headquarters in Rome, Italy
- Eric Brousseau, Université Paris Dauphine, Paris
- Françoise Genova, Director Strasbourg astronomical data centre, France
- Geertrui Van Overwalle, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Belgium

Executive organizing committee

The executive committee is responsible for organising the conference including the venues, the review process, the keynote speakers, the organisation of sessions, and other organizational details in coordination with the local organizing teams in Oldenburg and Bremen.

- Tom Dedeurwaerdere, Professor at UCLouvain, Belgium.
- Severine Dusollier, Professor at Facultés Universitaires de Namur, Belgium
- Kathleen Cass, Executive Director, Committee on Data for Science and Technology (CODATA), Headquarters in Paris, France
- Peter Dawyndt, Professor at Ghent University, Belgium
- Tine De Moor, Professor at Utrecht University, Netherlands

Local Organizing Committee

The organizing team is responsible for the organizational details, in particular rooms, transportation, catering, and alike. There will be local organizing teams in Oldenburg and Bremen to prepare the particular events at the particular locations. The teams will be supported by a larger number of student volunteers at both conference venues.

- Tom Dedeurwaerdere, Professor at UCLouvain, Belgium.
- Caroline van Schendel, Administrative assistant at UCLouvain, Belgium
- Florin Popa, Project Manager, Biogov unit at UCLouvain, Belgium

7. Partners and sponsors

Partner Organisations

- CODATA (International Council for Science : Committee on Data for Science and Technology) : GICSI taks group on Global Information Commons for Science. <http://www.codata.org/>
- Faculté Universitaire Notre-Dame de la Paix (FUNDP), Belgium : CRID (Research centre on IT and law; http://www.fundp.ac.be/en/dro/crid/page_view/presentation.html
- Ghent University, Belgium : Laboratory of Microbiology. <http://img.ugent.be/index.php>
- International Association for the Study of the Commons (IASC). <http://www.iasc-commons.org/>
- UNU-Merit (Maastricht). <http://www.merit.unu.edu/>
- University of Utrecht, Netherlands : Research institute for history and culture, <http://www.collective-action.info/>

Sponsoring organisations



European Union EU 7th Framework Program in Research and Development

<http://ec.europa.eu/research/index.cfm?pg=dg>

http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/home_en.html



Fonds National de la Recherche Scientifique (be) <http://www1.frs-fnrs.be/>



Fonds voor wetenschappelijk onderzoek (nl) <http://www.nwo.nl/>



International Council for Science : Committee on Data for Science and Technology <http://www.codata.org/>



Bioversity International
<http://www.bioversityinternational.org/>

