

The Order of Sharing

Thesis and outline of a universal usage order for non-scarce goods

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STATUS

This is a thesis paper: an own, supportable theory in working state — with principles, lines of justification, the strongest objection, and criteria of testability. It judges no persons. As always: standpoints, not dogmas; the argument decides.

1 SUBJECT: WHY A NEW ORDER IS NEEDED

Non-scarce goods — knowledge, designs, source code, data, cultural works — behave differently from scarce ones: use by one person does not diminish usability for others, and sharing increases their value instead of consuming it (Hess & Ostrom, 2007). Our prevailing orders — property, exploitation, valuation, handling — were formed on the scarce good and are transferred onto the non-scarce: artificial scarcity through barriers, titles, licences, patents. This mismatch is the starting point. **What is needed is an own definition, interpretation, order, consideration, valuation and mode of use for non-scarce goods** — not as a reform of the old order but as an own one beside it.

2 THE THESIS

For non-scarce goods an order is possible and superior to the existing one which (a) grants all humans equally unconditional use, (b) triggers a participation share only upon monetisation, (c) works with minimal structure, and (d) measures itself at its weakest link. **Core claim: such an order accelerates overall progress**, because it removes access gaps and thereby lets more contributors become effective earlier. This claim is meant empirically and is testable (section 6).

P1 · UNIVERSALITY

The order addresses humans as humans. States, nationalities, religions and every form of segregation are no access categories. For all equally — no order for a commons carries otherwise.

P2 · UNCONDITIONAL USE

Use is free — immediately, without registration, without consideration. Withholding a non-scarce good justifies itself by nothing: what I do not need while others need it, I share. Possession grounds itself in use, not in title.

P3 · PARTICIPATION UPON MONETISATION

Whoever earns money with the good, directly or indirectly, returns a share to the commons — by an open, fixed, discretion-free rule. Not as punishment but as backflow: the yield stands on common groundwork. The RETURN protocol is a concrete mechanism instance of this principle.

P4 · MINIMAL STRUCTURE

Foundations and structures: as much as necessary, as little as possible. Every rule carries the burden of proving its necessity. Empirically grounded: durable commons orders manage with few, locally adapted rules set by the participants themselves (Ostrom, 1990).

P5 · WEAKEST LINK

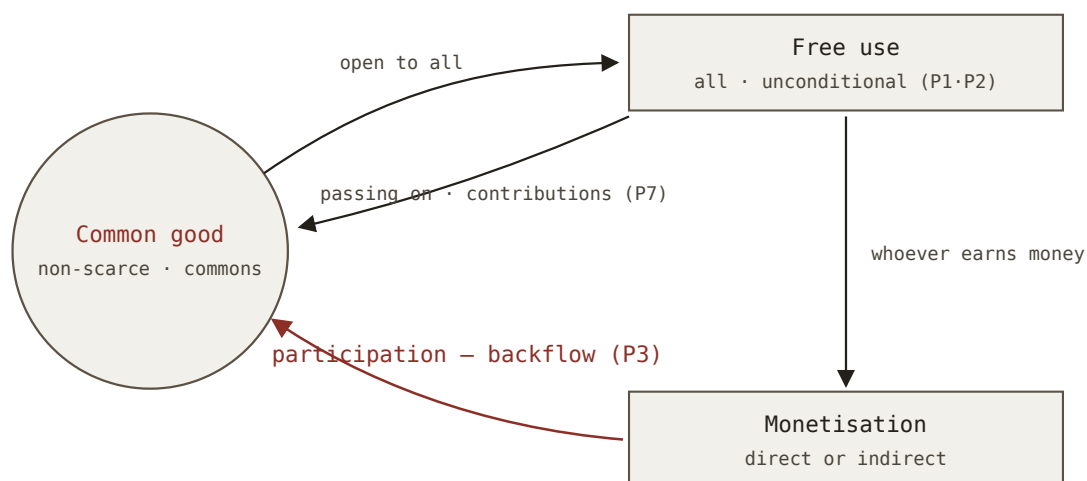
The order measures itself at its weakest link — everywhere, as an absolute principle. Improvements count first where there is least (difference principle: Rawls, 1971); as in Liebig's law of the minimum, the scarcest factor determines the growth of the whole. Protecting the weaker is no charity but a system condition.

P6 · GAP REDUCTION

Asymmetry also arises from asynchronicity: knowledge and access reach people at different times, and whoever is earlier converts head start into disposition power (p/δ). The order actively reduces such gaps — not out of levelling, but because every removed gap frees additional contributors and accelerates overall progress.

P7 · VOLUNTARINESS INSTEAD OF ACHIEVEMENT COMPULSION

Everyone does what they consider meaningful — and shares. No achievement society, no carrier thinking, no valuation of persons. That self-chosen, unpaid contributions in open cooperation produce great things is not a hope but documented practice (commons-based peer production: Benkler, 2002, 2006).



frame: minimal structure (P4) · weakest link (P5) · gap reduction (P6)

Fig. 1 – Cycle of sharing: free use for all; participation only upon monetisation, as backflow into the common good (P1–P7).

4 LINES OF JUSTIFICATION

Economic. Non-rivalry makes exclusion of a non-scarce good a pure loss operation: every excluded use is foregone benefit without saved cost. Open, self-selective production additionally lowers transaction and allocation costs, because tasks find the people who most want to solve them (Benkler, 2002).

Justice-theoretical. P5 adopts the difference principle: inequalities are justified only if they serve the least advantaged (Rawls, 1971). For non-scarce goods this sharpens: since sharing costs nothing, inequality here lacks even its usual incentive justification.

Systemic. Progress is a network achievement. The earlier an additional node gains access, the earlier it can contribute; gap reduction (P6) therefore acts not additively but acceleratingly. Our own research supplies the counter-proof: where category and access power stays concentrated, benefit and consequence-load systematically come apart (ρ/δ master theorem; "Disclosure as Enclosure").

5 THE STRONGEST OBJECTION: FREE-RIDERS

The standard objection against any commons order runs: it will be exploited by free-riders — by those who take, exploit, and give nothing back. The order of sharing takes the objection seriously and answers it precisely:

1. **Free use is not parasitism.** Whoever uses, learns, passes on, is an intended part of the order — even without ever contributing (P2, P7).
2. **Parasitic is monetisation without backflow.** Only whoever draws private yield from the common and refuses the participation share (P3) enriches themselves on the community.
3. **The countermeasures are known and tested:** graduated sanctions as a design principle of durable commons (Ostrom, 1990), reciprocity with memory (Axelrod, 1984; instantiated in the RETURN protocol as karma mechanics), and — as a later step — legal safeguarding and enforcement via private-law licence instruments, which work internationally without presupposing a state.

The sequence is deliberate: first openness, then rule, last enforcement — minimal structure (P4) also in protection.

6 TESTABILITY

The core claim (acceleration through gap reduction) is stated falsifiably: **if** access gaps to a non-scarce good fall, **then** — under otherwise comparable conditions — the rate of usable contributions rises over-proportionally to the number of newly accessing people. Test paths: comparison of open and closed development lines of the same problem area; natural experiments at licence changes (proprietary → open and vice versa); diffusion curves after removal of paywalls. If the claim fails on clean data, the thesis in this form is to be rejected or restricted — that belongs to the order itself (no endpoint; re-examination decides).

7 RESEARCH NOTE: THE BIOLOGICAL MIRROR

Noted as an own future line of investigation: the free-rider constellation of section 5 has an exact counterpart in biology — parasite–host interactions. Remarkably, nature has long maintained working counter-strategies there: immune responses, policing in insect colonies, partner sanctions in mutualisms (shown experimentally e.g. in the legume–rhizobium symbiosis: Kiers et al., 2003). The hypothesis for later: these strategies can be read as templates for enforcement mechanisms of the sharing order — the same structure that appears psychologically-economically as the free-rider problem has been solved biologically many times over. This line is only marked here, not developed.

The thesis claims validity for non-scarce goods; it expropriates nothing scarce and replaces no rule of law. It values no persons and erects no rankings (P7). It is no end state but an order that includes its own revision. And it is forkable: whoever wants to frame it differently, frame it differently — re-examination decides which framing carries.

§ RELATION TO EXISTING WORKS

The paper bundles and generalises: the RETURN protocol (mechanism instance of P3), the ρ/δ master theorem FORSCH-0083 (asymmetry analytics behind P6), "Disclosure as Enclosure" (enclosure diagnosis behind section 1), and the statement of principles "Knowledge Is a Commons" and the concept sketch "Free Science" (normative and institutional frame).

→ FURTHER

What this order looks like in operation — method, platform, cooperation: [system paper "The Syntagma System"](#).

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