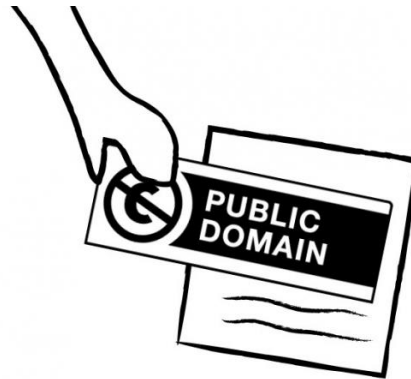


# Commons-washing, information technologies and online platforms. The semantic appropriation of the commons



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# What is commonswashing?

- Appropriation of the concept and the values of the common in the dominant discourse by private actors
- Claim elements of language of openness and the ethics of sharing to designate for-profit endeavours
- Enclosure of the commons and commodification is old
- Commonswashing as additional phenomenon
- Semantic appropriation can be seen as an extension of the logic of greenwashing

"a form of spin in which green PR or green marketing is deceptively used to promote the perception that an organization's products, aims or policies are environmentally friendly" (Kahle, Gurel-Atay, 2014)

# Enclosure of the mind

- Capture of the resources, of the language
- but also potentially of the imaginary,
- and the legal and policy frameworks in place to protect and sustain the social benefits of the commons
- Such appropriations lead to new forms of “enclosure” of common resources,
- as private actors come to dominate the governance structures
- for the commons-based production of a good, or the provision of a service
- thereby perverting key features and values of commons-based production
- takeover it is one that happens with the private actor pretending to work for the commons, or at least using its semantics

# Underlying phenomenon

- Financialization and quantitative management approaches
- Chiapello, Ève (2017). La financiarisation des politiques publiques. Mondes en développement (178): 23–40
- Neoliberal theories of the commons
- Extension of neo-liberalism in new fields, the commons and the wider social and solidarity economy
- A way for the capitalist logic to colonise spaces that still were outside of its ambit
- Claim the values of ‘openness’ for their projects, while maintaining a neoliberal extractive agenda

# **Examples in France of regulations blurring boundaries between social solidarity and start-up statutes**

Commodification/financialisation/quantification of traditional approaches to funding the commons

Creation of social impact bonds giving private corporations an important role in defining public policy

Creation of a new status for corporations: "mission companies"

HARPIC working to save the world's water resources:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oKsgMhycxxo>

# Examples of appropriation in the information and digital realm

- Hospitality and the "sharing" economy
  - Commodification of the couch: commons in hosting websites Schöpf, 2015
  - Couchsurfing gift economy vs AirBnB sharing economy
- Libraries, Wikipedia, and copyfraud
  - Institutions adding a layer of copyright protection on digitised versions of public domain work (IASC 2011)
- Community networks and the blockchain (netCommons)

# Northface and Wikipedia

The North Face

Ad campaign

hatched a scheme

to get its products

to the top of Google Images

by replacing Wikipedia photos

with its own product placement shots

# The hack: marketing smuggling

trekking to popular tourist destinations

like Guarita State Park in Brazil and Huayna Picchu in Peru

to take photos prominently featuring its products  
swapped out the original Wikipedia photos for its own or

in some cases, outright Photoshopped a North Face product into an existing photo







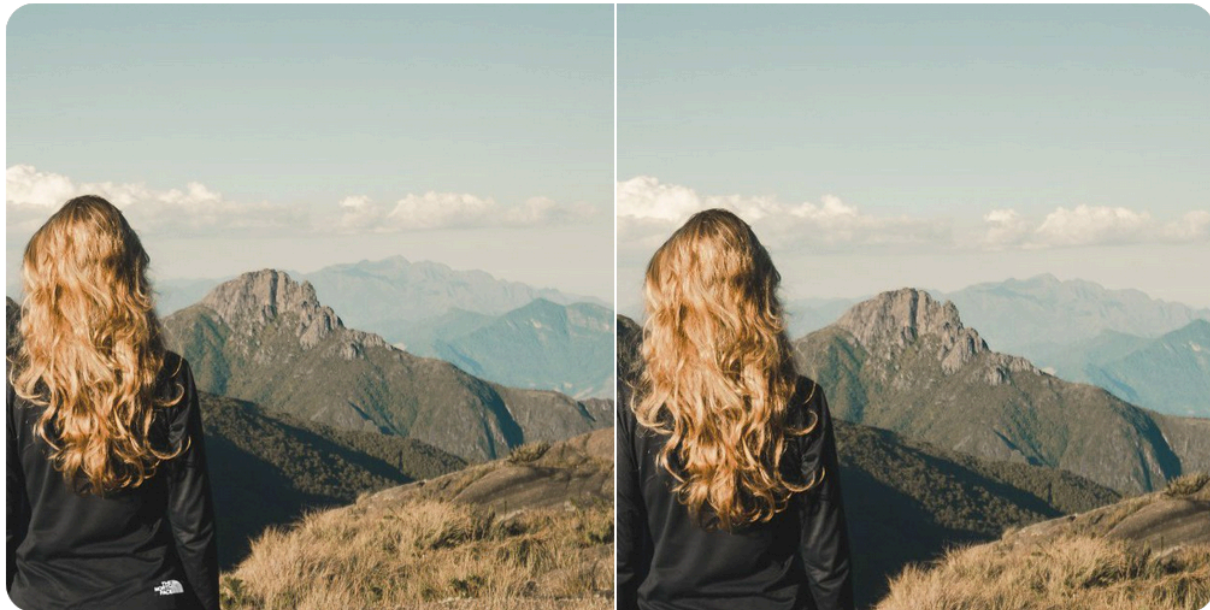
**Mike Dickison**

@adzebill

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"The biggest obstacle of the campaign was to update the photos without attracting attention of Wikipedia moderators." Volunteers quickly found and took down all 12 photos, or, amusingly, let them stay but cropped out the North Face logo.



11:58 PM - 28 May 2019

# Community networks

- Shared connectivity developed and managed by a community
- Sustainability
- Complex commons
  - Knowledge
  - Digital
  - Spectrum
  - Urban

# Blockchain-based CNs

RightMesh, Ammbr, Skycoin, Wifecoin  
resurrected the narrative of making money  
by sharing one's Internet connection  
"Get paid to share your internet connection  
with the world"

Problematic narrative

promotes the idea that the major obstacle  
for community networks are incentives  
for personal profit

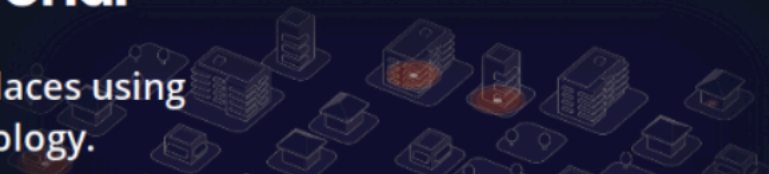
# Better Internet for everyone, built by anyone.

HyperMesh is a decentralised network platform. Allowing any individual, small & large ISP to join together and provide internet connectivity to billions of people.



# Get paid to share your Internet connection with the world.

**Ammb** brings the Internet to new places using blockchain and wireless mesh technology.



# netCommons brand



THE PROJECT ▾

GET IN TOUCH ▾

MEDIA ▾

RESULTS ▾

## Blockchain and Community Networks: friends or foes?



SUBMITTED BY PANOS ON JANUARY 24, 2019 – 3:32PM

There is a lot of discussion and numerous initiatives that aim to explore blockchain technology in the context of Internet access sharing and more general Community Networking.

At the IGF 2018, I did a small intervention at the workshop [WS279](#) "Scaling community networks: exploring blockchain and efficient investment strategies". This was a merge of two workshops, one of which was titled "**Community networks meet blockchains: friends or foes?**".

I tried to give my own answer to this original question in the IGF 2018 workshop WS279, based on the book chapter I co-authored with Jens Martignoni for the new DC3 book "[The community network manual : how to build the Internet yourself](#)" edited by Luca Belli.

### Recent blog posts

**Blockchain and Community Networks: friends or foes?**

[Universal deployment model](#)

[Encounters in the hybrid city: Berlin](#)

[netCommons guidelines for telecom policy-makers](#)

[Network infrastructures: The commons model for](#)

# Guifi vs Ammbr

Blockchains accounting for interactions

"Built-in speculation element, questionable governance, impact on energy consumption"

These community members

do not only share their spare Internet capacity

without any direct reward

but it's quite the opposite case

They invest a significant amount of time and effort

fighting for our right to share

despite the severe technical, legal, and political obstacles

that such "natural" sharing practices face today

# How to protect both the commons and the concept of commons

- Solutions against enclosure, commodification and commonswashing
- Activist scholarship
- Public policy recommendations to maintain sustainability
  - Legal defense positive protective status for the commons + sanction to avoid enclosure
  - Legal hacks towards commons private regimes
  - Public/commons partnerships and the partner state



# Resistance through political imaginaries and policy solutions protecting the commons

## Reform existing law, build legal de/fences

- recognition of copyfraud status against the enclosure of the copyright public domain

## Subvert applicable law through legal hacks

- copyleft licensing
- ecocide for future ecological crimes

## Lobby to allocate a portion of public funding for commons

- culture subsidies from collective societies to Creative Commons works
- European funds for local connectivity for Community Networks

Communia Manifesto <https://publicdomainmanifesto.org/>

copyright public domain  
information/digital/knowledge commons

Reframe the narrative and the political imaginary

Example of copyright reform

From research to campaign



# Public policy recommendations

## Structural public domain

- Temporal public domain: expiration
- Informational commons: data, facts, procedures

## Functional public domain

- Informational commons: open licensing and voluntary public domain
- Legal commons, users' rights, fair use, exceptions to exclusive right

# Definition of a positive status

Chilean Law No. 17,336, article 11 stipulates that the Public Domain shall include, inter alia, “(c) *works whose owners have waived the protection granted by [copyright] Law*” which “*may be used by anyone, provided they respect the ownership and integrity of the work.*”

## Protection against copyfraud

Chilean Law No. 17,336, article 80 provides that “(a) *anyone who knowingly reproduces, distributes, makes available or communicates to the public a work belonging to the public domain [...] under a name which is not that of the true author*” or “(b) *anyone who claims or demands economic rights in works in the public domain*” shall be “*deemed to have committed an intellectual property violation.*”

# Recognition of the validity of voluntary public domain dedication

The voluntary relinquishment of copyright in works and dedication to the public domain should be recognised as a legitimate exercise of authorship and copyright exclusivity, to the extent permitted by national laws (possibly excluding any abandonment of moral rights) and upon the condition of a formally expressed, informed and free consent of the author.

Chilean Law No. 17,336, article 11 stipulates that the Public Domain shall include, inter alia, “(c) *works whose owners have waived the protection granted by [copyright] Law*” which “*may be used by anyone, provided they respect the ownership and integrity of the work.*”



**Digital reproductions of works that are in the Public Domain must also belong to the Public Domain.**



**Any false or misleading attempt to misappropriate Public Domain material must be declared unlawful.**



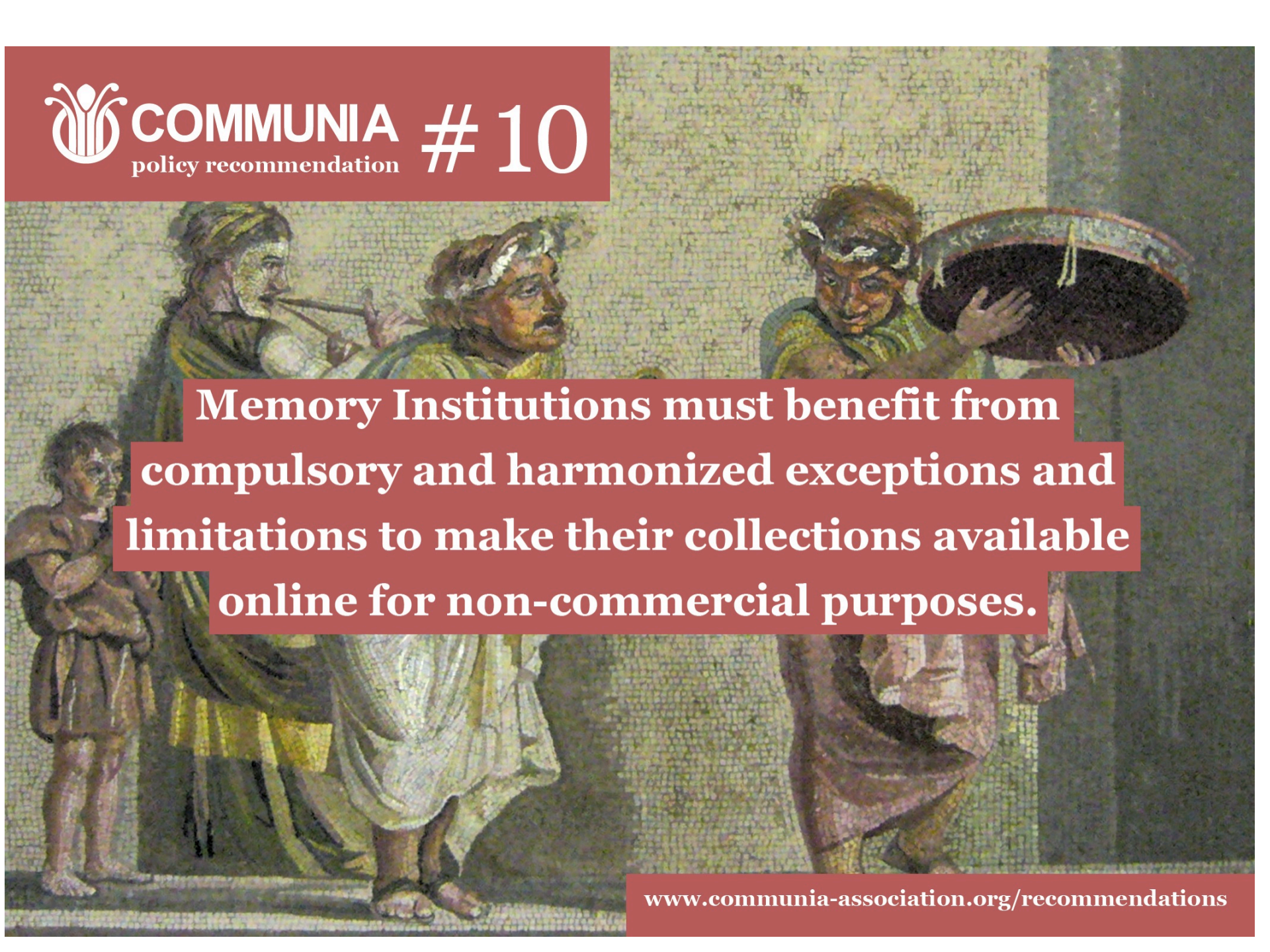
**The Public Domain needs to be  
protected from the adverse effects of  
Technical Protection Measures.**





**COMMUNIA**  
policy recommendation

**# 10**



**Memory Institutions must benefit from compulsory and harmonized exceptions and limitations to make their collections available online for non-commercial purposes.**

[www.communia-association.org/recommendations](http://www.communia-association.org/recommendations)



**COMMUNIA**  
policy recommendation

**# 11**

**Digitization projects that receive public funding must - at the minimum - ensure that all digitized content is publicly available online.**

[www.communia-association.org/recommendations](http://www.communia-association.org/recommendations)

# COMMUNIA policy [paper](#) on digitization agreements - best practices

**No copyright protection: Public Domain Mark + CC0**

**No contractual restrictions**

Access and reuse to Public Domain works should be unrestricted, both on premises and on the Internet for any type of use and reuse, including for commercial purposes.

No exclusive agreements should be made between the cultural institution and the commercial vendor that would preclude another vendor or institution from digitizing or distributing the same Public Domain material.

**Openness & Transparency**

The institution should use standardized, open technological formats and request the contractor to transfer digitized material and metadata in standardized open technological formats.

Bidders' offers should be made publicly available. Transparency should prevail in the decision-making process affecting public access to our common cultural heritage collections.

# Sources of the photos and license

The postcards featuring the policy recommendations of COMMUNIA association for the public domain can be downloaded at:

<http://www.communia-association.org/recommendations-2/>

The COMMUNIA policy paper on digitization agreements for Public Domain works is available at:

<http://www.communia-association.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/COMMUNIA-digitization.pdf>

and:

<http://www.communia-association.org/2014/06/13/communias-policy-paper-on-digitization-agreements/>

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