

Tragedy of the Commons

Garrett Hardin

Garrett Hardin – Economist



Authored essay in 1968 titled
“The Tragedy of the Commons”.

Focuses on:

1. environmental degradation
2. population growth
3. limited natural resources
4. privatization of land

What does commons mean?

“Held in common” means the resource is owned by:

- No one...or
 - Owned by a group
- =all who have access to the resource.

What are common resources?

1. Air! No one owns the air-avail to all

2. Water in oceans & rivers is avail to all.

3. Fish of the sea avail to all.

Common Resources



Common Resources



Common Resources

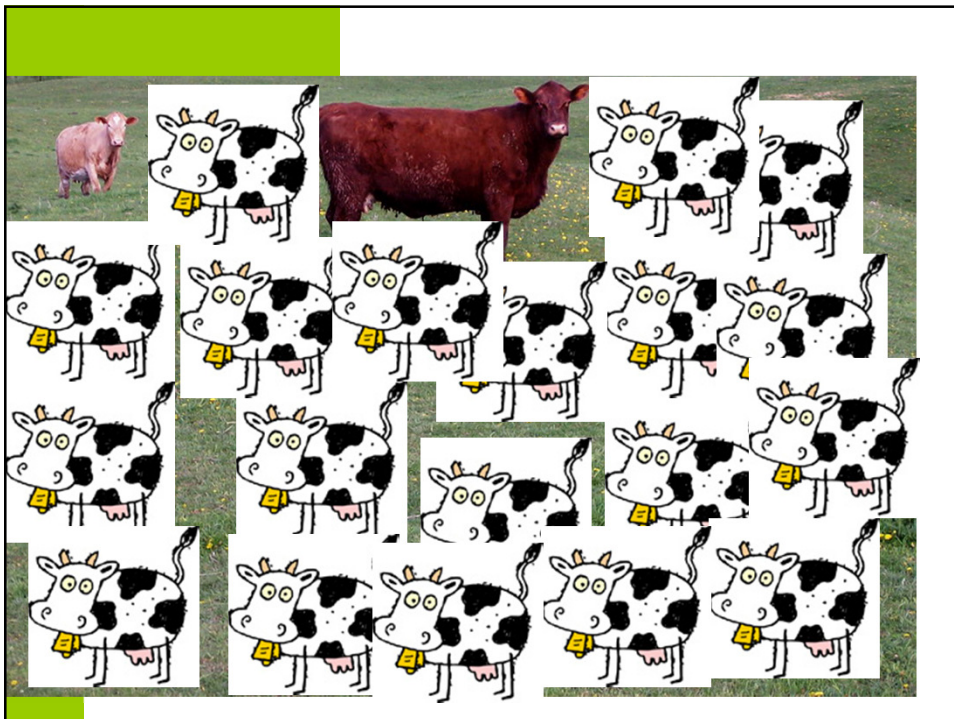


Common Resources



Imagine...

- Hardin's essay involves a pasture "open to all."
- He asks us to imagine the grazing of animals on a **common** ground.
- Individuals are motivated to add to their flocks to increase personal wealth.

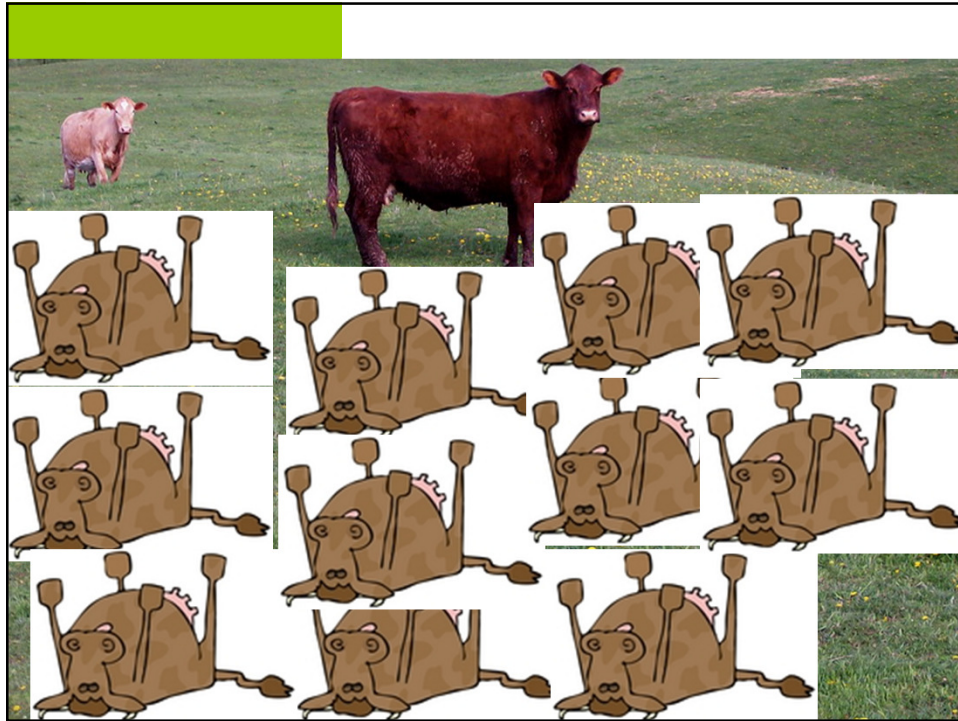


Tragedy of the Commons

- Every animal added to the total degrades the **commons** a small amount.
- Although the degradation for each additional animal is small, the gain in wealth for the owner is greater.

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- As selfish stewards, each owner adds another to their flock and the pasture.
- If all owners follow this pattern the commons will ultimately be destroyed.



Tragedy of the Commons

- As a result, the commons were **overgrazed** and degenerated to the point that they were no longer able to support the villagers' cattle.

This failure of owner of these private lands to preserve the natural resources is known as "the tragedy of the commons."



What is the “tragedy”?

- **“We can avoid tragedy only by altering our values.” Hardin, 1968**

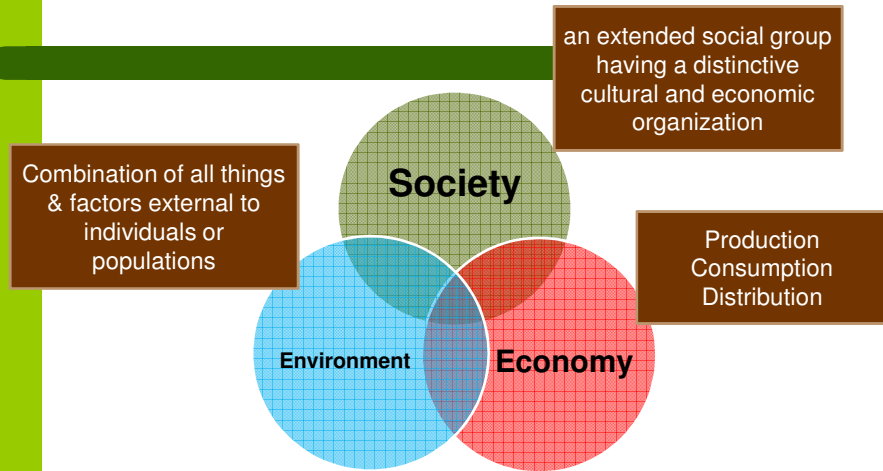
This means we can change the way we live (sustainably) by preserving our natural resources—even in the private sector.



Sustainability...

Meeting **present needs of today's populations** without compromising the **needs of future generations.**

Standards of Sustainability= “SEE”



Easter Island Video