CHAPTER 2:
Completing the circle: Returning to blended learning in a culture of impunity

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> *Yes, we shall overcome because the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice. We shall overcome because Carlyle is right: "No lie can live forever" (Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., 1965).*

Abstract

The prevalent approach to Open Educational Resources (OER) and Creative Commons (CC) in Lebanon during the last two decades has been a manifestation of the 'Tragedy of the Commons' in the digital sphere. The experience of the 2019 popular uprising ('Thawra') and ensuing 2020-2021 Covid 19 Lockdown, however, Covid 19 provide examples of an alternative 'Governing the Commons' in which users of shared goods and resources can transcend narrow self-interest and work for sustainable value management collectively.

Using a contrapuntal approach, two intertwined storylines will be assessed, one based primarily on mere consumption and the other rooted in resource regeneration. Together they provide practical examples on the ground which this article will attempt to evaluate theoretically. Based on Ostrom's Law: "A resource arrangement that works in practice can work in theory", this chapter will juxtapose the tragedy and the restoration of the commons. It will argue that creating open content in the Global South provides one of many paths out of the 'free rider' impasse in which societies find themselves.

The three phases through which OER has transitioned in Lebanon during the last two decades will be presented here. This study documents the attempts made by professors and students at the government Lebanese University (LU) and Maronite-Catholic Notre Dame University (NDU) to promote respect for intellectual property

rights and original research with the support of the Creative Commons (CC) movement in Lebanon. The contours of struggle against the pervasive culture of impunity in the Middle East was accentuated by the gradual collapse of the Lebanese state in the months prior to the outbreak of the Covid 19 pandemic in February 2020.

The authors will focus on the introduction of OER and other online education formats and platforms starting in the early 2000s. They will demonstrate that this foundation facilitated the transition from blended learning to online education in 2019/2020. Finally, they will present the steps that are currently being developed to transition back to blended learning, research, and activism during the academic year 2021-2022.

Finally, the authors will offer concrete examples that demonstrate how OER helps educators, students, and administrators promote rule of law and a restoration of the commons in teaching, conference organizing, collaborative research, sustainable development, and social activism. The authors are both researchers/theoreticians and practitioners and are utilizing OER to complete the circle of academic integrity and a culture of sharing in the MENA region as of the summer 2021. The preliminary results of this final phase will be reflected upon at the end of the article, which was completed in summer 2022.

Keywords:
Open Source, ICT in education, Structural Design

Preface: a dedication to the late Professor Rima Malek

This article is a tribute to Professor Rima Malek, who passed away due to cancer on 4 July 2022. The authors started coordinating their work on Creative Commons (CC) and implementing active learning strategies during the last decade. This informal collaboration between us as professors at the Lebanese University (LU) and Notre Dame University – Louize (NDU), led to formal collaboration in 2018. We began work on this article during the COVID-19 lockdown in the spring of 2020. As an expert in educational technology in the Faculty of Pedagogy at the LU, Rima worked closely with us and augmented our knowledge in the fields of communication, political science and cultural studies.

Rima taught and helped develop information and communication technology (ICT) integration into education, ICT for special needs and digital humanities, e-libraries, e-heritage and e-diplomacy. She took part in many international educational projects. She was a recipient of the UNESCO/Keizo Obuchi research fellowships programme. She advocated for the value of e-learning and for institutional and government

accreditation for distance learning, not only in Lebanon but also in the region, a struggle which is ongoing. She was a well-respected professor, a friend and philanthropist, continuing the work of her mother since 2001 by heading the "Hand of Mercy" local association. Her aim was to protect the human dignity of the underprivileged and marginalized. Rima was the first woman to be elected as a member of the municipal council of the town of Ajaltoun (Mount Lebanon), a position in which she served with a high level of ethics and effectiveness, being able to initiate many projects, targeting youth and developing a wide range of cultural activities. She also worked as an advisor for many educational organizations. She had a PhD in ICT from l'Université de Rouen, France. During the past two years her responsibilities towards her students intensified because of political unrest, lockdown, the financial collapse in the country, and her deteriorating health. Rima continued her work and creativity using online platforms. Her support for the needy families in Lebanon was also exemplary; she witnessed former donors becoming recipients of her support. She never stopped checking on her friends and colleagues and she gave help and support endlessly, even during her illness. In addition to being an excellent scholar in her field, Rima Malek was a distinguished service-oriented woman, humble, high-principled, with profound wisdom, deep knowledge and a kind heart. She will be remembered as one of the ICT pioneers in Lebanon.

2.1 A pedagogical and political introduction

As professors of pedagogy, ICT, political science, and cultural studies, we have always gravitated towards activist scholarship and an interactive relationship with our students. Viewing our classrooms as a point of departure, we promoted service learning, student projects, field research, as well as work with civil society partners and external research organisations long before this became easy through advances in the internet. We began 'flipping' our analogue classrooms and then moved to the digital sphere as time and technology progressed. On 17 October 2019 a popular uprising broke out in Lebanon, sparked by new taxes announced by the already partially failed state, in attempts to deal with the country's collapsing economy. The uprising also transformed the world of education in Lebanon: The entire fall semester of 2019 was filled with challenges that made it difficult to meet with our students on a regular basis. In a multidisciplinary spirit we collaborated to develop a new approach to course design, transfer our classrooms to the internet and social media in a climate in which all things digital and online had been viewed with suspicion. We changed our syllabi to make them relevant to the political context and adapted

and applied social tools that would give our students the ease and freedom to learn openly. For the first time Open Educational Resources (OER) and other CC based skills and infrastructure were tested on a massive scale.

During this phase the technical and pedagogical support Rima Malek gave us was remarkable. Furthermore, many of the students wanted to learn the terms and concepts for the reality they were experiencing in the country without following a specific textbook, which reflects the reality of the Global North in many occasions. As for us, we saw in the blocked roads and lack of mobility a way to test our knowledge of OER content creation.

Despite its failure, the Lebanese uprising was a "teachable moment", in that it gave us a chance to be prepared for what would come next. While in many countries around the world "pandemic pedagogy" forced an immediate transition "from frontal teaching in classrooms and lecture theaters to online-teaching on various video conference platforms" (de Vries TJ 2021) we had the chance to prepare. Loepp (2021) discusses his own adoption of "pandemic pedagogy" and e-learning strategies for political science and international relations (IR) which paralleled ours. Many Lebanese scholars have discussed the challenges and opportunities of teaching during an economic collapse and uprising, followed by a pandemic. For example, Karam (2022) reflects on his "three-C approach", El Hage and Yehya (2022) highlights the Lebanese educational system and the weakness of information and communications technology (ICT) implementation, Mouchantaf (2020) explores the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic through an online survey comparing in-class and online learning methods. All of these were essential steps to cope with the "teachable moment", but nevertheless did not highlight open and original content creation.

In following, we will focus on the CC, OER, and Open Source (OS) movements in Lebanon as they have impacted professors, students, staff, and the larger community at Notre Dame University – Louaize (NDU), a private Catholic university established in 1987, and the Lebanese University (LU), the country's only public university, founded in 1951. This article will cover chronologically the experience of the authors at the Faculty of Law and Political Science (FLPS) at NDU as a private institution and the public Lebanese University (LU) over the past two decades to the present. It will combine three strands of information. These include pertinent aspects of the ongoing academic discussion on the topic; literature dealing with the impact of the 2020-2021 lockdown on education; and most importantly a personal report on our experience developing and implementing OER at NDU and LU, which is the core of

our methodology. We will draw conclusions that are not only relevant for Lebanon and the West Asia North Africa (WANA) region[25] but also for the ongoing debate on the future of open content creation on a global scale.

As we restructured our courses and developed additional content for the 'cultural commons', remote teaching became common place; both synchronous and asynchronous; online merged with offline; independent learning and project-based teaching were terms our students understood and embraced; we had to upskill and reskill not only or students, but also ourselves. The potential for augmented connectivity and accentuated responsibility seemed endless. And then the revolution failed, followed by the Lebanese state and its collapsing economy. The Lebanese commons is now experiencing a tragic disintegration. Henceforth we will reflect on the key issues and concepts involved in analysing this process from a historical, cultural studies, and technological perspective.

2.2 Toward justice within the creative commons

The struggle to 'set the record straight' has long been seen as a key to human progress. As stated by American civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. and British author Thomas Carlyle before him, we are constantly striving to write our own stories and control how they are shared. This article focuses on the role played by both the medium and the message. How do they contribute to bending the long arc of the universe in the direction of justice? Emphasis will be placed on open content creation, or the lack thereof, in the WANA, and Lebanon in particular, during the first decades of the 21st century. As authors, teachers, and researchers we are directly impacted by the efforts to use digital technologies in order to criticize existing inequalities, while at the same time promoting respect for intellectual property rights. This article will begin with the historical struggle for change and follow this path forward to the current political crossroads at which Lebanon finds itself. As activists and scholars, we must make decisions about social justice and sustainable development which impact our students, our communities, and our country's wellbeing. Understanding the dialectical relationship between communication and

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[25] The authors are redefining the colonial discourse and perception of the region by referring to what is alternatively known as Middle East and North Africa (MENA) as WANA. This discourse was initiated by the WANA Institute, URL:https://wanainstitute.org/en/about-us, founded in 2009 as the West Asia-North Africa Forum, which challenged the hegemony of the Global North URL: https://wanainstitute.org/en/why-wana..

technology will help illuminate the path forward and highlight the manner in which open content creation can be a key to the country's very survival.

Can the global CC and OS movements play a role in the struggle against impunity, systemic corruption, sectarian oppression, and systematic disinformation in a country like Lebanon? King's and Carlyle's above cited quotes would seem to indicate that there is reason to hope. Information, power, freedom, coexistence and justice are closely intertwined. Each one of these key issues plays a role in the development of open education and the advancement of digital resources. As we shall see below, the problems faced today by OER activists in the WANA are not new. They are also not unique to the Global South or to the Global North.

Returning to King's assertion that with enough courage and perseverance 'We shall overcome', we observed how the revolutionary changes in technology and communication have impacted the struggle for a better world, and how these movements inversely have had an effect on the use of ICT. More specifically, we explore the process of merging education, research, and social activism and how it has benefited from the revolution online and how this integrative process has reciprocally driven changes in technological development. We have experienced these changes and the endeavours to promote them first hand at NDU and LU.

In his famous "Remaining Awake through a Great Revolution" speech, King drew a line from the campaigns against slavery in the 1850s, through the liberation movements of his time (1940s-1960s), to a future world in which oppression, exploitation, corruption, and the power of lies and deceit would be 'overcome' (1965). Advances in the digital world have facilitated this struggle in unexpected ways, both in the Global North and Global South. Many of us have shared part of the journey on this arc towards justice over the last several decades. The CC and OER revolutions, rooted as they are in the 'Copy Left' opposition to commercialization of the digital sphere as of the 1970s (Vainshtein, 2021), are also part of this trajectory. Open Education built on the spirit, discourse, and the energy of the emancipatory movements of the mid-20th century, including - on the one hand - the thorny issue of free and equal access to learning, culture and recreation, while - on the other - simultaneously respecting intellectual property rights. The open content movement maintains that both options are possible and can coexistence in a dialectical, albeit contentious, relationship. According to the CopyLeft agenda private property rights and communal use are not mutually exclusive, but rather that they complement each other and help promote sustainability, profitability, and just governance in both

sectors. We will illustrate that this also applies to the global terms of trade and the manner in which the Global North has historically exploited and undermined development in the Global South while at the same time promoting relationships of mutual benefit.

Coming full circle before and after the lockdown, we will maintain that the movement to create open online content with an emancipatory perspective highlights two trends. First, that the technologies already available to us prior to the pandemic have been mainstreamed in the last few years more out of necessity than intent. Nevertheless, the impact has been far-reaching. Throughout the world, the gatekeepers who were 'holding the door closed' on free access to information have had their doors knocked off their proverbial hinges. This struggle between a traditional technological mindset and digitally literate reform activism is ongoing.

It should be mentioned here that this liberating tendency within higher education (HE) through the pandemic also opened the door for corporations to undermine the knowledge commons and attempt to (re)privatize it. According to the global labour union federation, Education International (EI), steps should be taken to protect the commons from both those in HE administration who wish to undo the progress made during the lockdown, as well as to counter the encroachment and exploitation of HE by the corporate sector.

> *Educators, students, and the unions representing them should dedicate themselves to identifying effective practices and approaches, countering the imposition of commercial models that primarily focus on profit margins or pedagogically questionable practices, and developing alternative imaginaries that might be realised through collective deliberation and action. (Williamson & Hogan, 2021, p. 4)*

The second trend we are focusing on is developments in the interaction between users and providers. Pre-COVID emancipatory movements and individual activists made big strides in the use of pre-existing technologies; web and social media developers and designers created new approaches to support intersectional movements bending the arc towards justice. We will provide concrete examples of this dialectical relationship, in which the needs of educators, media activists, and NGOs impact the online industry and the developments in the commercial and open content technology sectors. To meet the challenges of online learning effectiveness and amplify student engagement, we have established a clear 'purpose for learning'

mechanism in order to enable students to generate original content through a mapping and assessment process. This pedagogical practice positioned the students at the center of the classroom and sparked a high level of motivation. In his report for the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching in 1990 titled "Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate" Ernest Boyer discusses the educational system in the US and how knowledge is acquired while looking for a new vision of scholarship. Boyers sees that "good teaching means that faculty, as scholars, are also learners" (p. 24). Today 'Scholarship of Teaching and Learning' (SoTL) has become the infrastructure of choice on which evidence-based results are being produced by faculty and students; where they are turned into open online content and uploaded as OER under CC licence (Murphy, M.P.A., Heffernan, A., Dunton, C. et al, 2023). Details of this process will be provided below. Before dealing with specific developments in Lebanon and the WANA in general, we will reflect on the origins of the 'crisis of the commons' and the attempts to build on this crisis to 'restore the commons' in our lifetime. In Lebanon, there is a direct link between the current deep-seated, intentional and systemic political and societal crisis and the two centuries' old crisis of the commons on a global scale, which threatens the very concepts of communal responsibility and mutual development. However, as Winston Churchill is attributed to having said, "Never let a good crisis go to waste", thus we maintain that confronting the tragedy of today's Lebanon and the tragedy of the commons go hand-in-hand. Perhaps more by default than intent, open content users and creators are playing a role in restoring our shared cultural commons for future generations.

As mentioned above, this article draws on three sources in order to illustrate how the circle of the 'Commons' has been completed. We will travel between time, place, and perspective. This path starts in the early 19th century with the 'Tragedy of the Commons' (Lloyd, 1833) and is now returning to its point of departure in the early 21st century with global attempts at the restoration of the commons (Block, 2021; Niemandt, 2015; Restoring, 2022). Along with theoretical and speculative writings on the nature of the 'Commons', the 'Global Village' and the struggles against commercialization of knowledge and culture, we will build on almost half a century of our own hands-on experience in the field. The current debate on the 'Circular Economy' (Boulding, 1966; Türkeli & Schophuizen, 2019) and the possibility of developing and sustaining a 'Cultural Commons' (Doran, 2018) globally will serve as a background. Reflecting on it, we will rely on practical examples from the last two decades of the CC movement in Lebanon and link this to developments in South

Africa, which is the context of this book. This comparison is of particular interest because in many ways both countries share a common past, as well as a potential future in which the arc of history's 'bend towards justice' will benefit the establishment of a global digital commons. Secondly, we will overview some of the literature which has played a role in our thinking since the beginning of the forced digital migration of education, research and community service from 'Online and Offline (OnO)' to a fully online format beginning with the Lebanese uprising in late 2019, and back again at the end of 2021. Here we will deal with the transition from OnO to 'Online merge Offline (OmO)' (Xiao, 2019; Huang, 2021) and ask whether the same lessons that have been learned in other regions have also been learned in Lebanon. Thirdly from a methodological perspective, the story of open education in Lebanon will be told from an autoethnographic and practical perspective as we experienced these changes in our own lives. This narrative will be self-reflexive, intersectional and contrapuntal. It will show how OER became the interface for our dedication to freedom of expression, rule of law, and counterhegemonic approaches to education and social activism. Finally, we will look back on the tragic death of our co-author, digital 'companion-in-arms', and long-time friend, Rima Malek, ICT professor in the Faculty of Pedagogy at LU.

2.3 Formulating an alternative to North-South confrontation

With the shift from analogue to digital formats in text processing and curriculum design at the beginning of the century, the contrapuntality (Said, 1994) of two interrelated narratives became more evident. Two stories will be told here. Firstly, we will describe our attempt to counter the pervasive culture of impunity experienced in the WANA through the introduction of CC. Secondly, we will challenge the prevalent logic of cultural hegemony in the region. By demonstrating how dependency in Lebanon on cultural and educational institutions in France, the UK, and the United States is impeding the production of local Lebanese content, a case will be made for the creation of open educational content in the Global South, this being one of the core objectives of the OER and CC movements in Lebanon. By juxtaposing the perspectives of the Global South and Global North we by no means intend to imply that the interests of the two regions are mutually exclusive, i.e., that the one side can only improve its lot at the expense of the other. Recognising that these "intertwined and overlapping" narratives are interdependent allows us to "formulate an alternative both to a politics of blame and to the even more destructive

politics of confrontation and hostility" (Said, 1994, p. 51) so common in North-South dialogue.

The story of open education in Lebanon is directly linked to the development of OER in the United States. By promoting key democratic principles such as rule of law, transparency, and accountability, the logic of the commons also impacts the success or failure of US objectives in the WANA. Contrapuntal awareness enables researchers, teachers, and students to understand how their lives are intertwined. Maintaining and stewarding the wealth of digital data uploaded online under CC license – as a mutual project and challenge for the entire 'global commons' – speaks to both storylines. It highlights the struggle against the pervasive culture of impunity in the WANA and facilitates the creation of original creative content from a regional perspective. Thus, the maintenance of the commons helps us to jointly criticize, develop, and transform our shared 'cultural archive'.

> *As we look back at the cultural archive, we begin to reread it not univocally but contrapuntally, with a simultaneous awareness both of the metropolitan history that is narrated and of those other histories against which (and together with which) the dominating discourse acts. (Said, 1994, p. 88)*

It is almost impossible today to discuss the relationship between the WANA and the former imperial powers in the region – Britain, France, and more recently the United States – without taking Edward Said's 'Orientalism' (1978) into consideration. In the fields of communication, the arts, and education, his 'Culture and Imperialism' (1994) is of similar significance. The story of Anglo-American and French culture, science, and education is closely linked to their imperial past and current involvement in the 'Orient'. The creation of open content is positioned within these intertwined and overlapping narratives. However, these stories or texts – be they for example OS software, university curricula, research reports, audio and video material, websites, GIS-based virtual museums, or MA and PhD theses – are not stand-alone documents. They exist not only within a contrapuntal narrative of the Global North and the Global South, where academics and artists from the former colonies invariably reference cultural and scientific production from the former 'mother countries'. They are part of the larger body of intertextual cultural production which references and is impacted by texts on an interpersonal, local, regional, and global scale. This is the case for all texts, irrespective of their origin and region of production (Barthes, 1967; Kristeva, 1966).

The link between texts within the larger 'cultural archive', both on the part of the author and the audience, is particularly evident in the field of OER, where users are encouraged to make use of CC licensed digital production within the commons, adapt and rework it, and then upload it again on the commons for use by others. Thus, the global cultural commons online is by its very nature explicitly interlinked, interdependent, and intertextual. In this article, we will be using the nexus linking contrapuntal and intertextual analysis to help understand how texts are used, abused, and re-evaluated in the Global South. The 'Tragedy of the Commons' (Lloyd, 1833), as the term was established almost 200 years ago, and popularized more recently by Garret Hardin (Hardin, 1968), assumes that users exploit the commons without taking the needs of the overall community into consideration. Based on the story of OER in Lebanon below, we will attempt to illustrate that this tendency does indeed exist within the CC community in our region, but that alternative voices are also strong. The line between blatant violations of intellectual property rights and creatively using the 'pool of content that can be copied, distributed, edited, remixed, and built upon' (Creative Commons License, 2022) is fluid and often difficult to decipher. However, along with the issue of attribution and fair use, there remains a distinct reluctance in the WANA to give back in kind. Value is therefore constantly being removed from the digital commons without it being replenished, updated, and recreated. Based on anecdotal evidence gathered from our experience in the field in Lebanon during the last two decades, OER is largely seen as a place to go to get useful material and insights for teaching, research, and community service. The fact that any commons – be it analogue or digital – can only survive and thrive if value is not only taken away but also generated and contributed on a reciprocal basis, is still not understood by many professors, teachers, students, and social activists in the WANA. This lack of understanding for the 'Tragedy of the Commons' and need for its restoration has a particularly detrimental impact in the Global South, where there is a need for original content creation which speaks truth to power and simultaneously respects the property rights of journalists, academics, web designers, programmers, and artists. The need to confront the power elites is relevant on all levels, globally, within the WANA as a region, on the national level, as well as within institutions and movements, be they commercial, governmental, or based on civil society. By constantly extracting value from the commons without restoring it, we are perpetuating an 'intellectual resource curse' which accepts content at face value without confronting it with alternative voices of our own.

The nexus linking contrapuntal and intertextual analysis can only be understood when we move from theory to praxis. By linking the thinking of Said (1994), Kristeva (1966), and Barthes (1967), scholars and activists alike can harness the dynamism of CC, OER and Global South content creation, question the exploitative nature of the trade-related aspects of intellectual property rights, and navigate the territory which lies between adaptation, reworking, creative fair use, plagiarism, property theft, and criminal fraud on the one hand, and replenishing, restoring, shepherding, and maintaining shared content on the other. According to British economist William Forster Lloyd (1833), a commons where the users primarily withdraw and do not replenish will invariably end tragically. This assumption is contradicted by Elinor Ostrom's more recent work, 'Governing the Commons' (1990), according to which in many cases users in local communities develop ground rules over time which counter the tendency toward one-sided use and mismanagement. This ultimately leads to de facto arrangements which work to the benefit of all. Dubbed 'Ostrom's Law' by Lee Anne Fennel, these ad hoc but binding relationships can be transferred into the realm of legal and economic theory. Accordingly, "[a] resource arrangement that works in practice can work in theory" (Fennel, 2011), ultimately laying the foundation for economically and ecologically sustainable development. A practical example of this creative space and tension can be found by returning to the quote by King (1965) used at the outset of this article. His reference to the arc of history bending towards justice is inscribed on the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial monument in Washington DC's National Mall, and was woven into the carpet in the White House Oval Office during Barack Obama's presidency. It was extracted from an 1853 sermon by the 19th century abolitionist and Unitarian minister Theodor Parker. Was King's use of Parker plagiarism, an example of the tragedy of the commons, or perhaps something worse?

According to Clayborne Carson, professor of history at Stanford University and director of the Martin Luther King Jr. Research and Education Institute, it was more likely a typical example of intertextuality, although he does not use the term. In a 2010 interview with National Public Radio, Carson responds to NPR journalist Melissa Block as follows:

> Block: Now, many times in his speeches, Dr. King did attribute sources of quotes. He would mention Thomas Carlyle or William Cullen Bryant. Did he also mention Theodore Parker by name?

Carson: I don't recall him mentioning him by name. He may well have. Often what happens is the first time they use a quote, they do cite it. The second time, it's probably someone once said. And then the last time, it's as I've said previously. So it goes through a process in which the person kind of incorporates that into their own oratory. And as King became more famous, the fact that he said it became more important than the fact that somebody might have said it many years before. (Carson, 2010)

Taking, reshaping and using original content without continuous attribution, as was done by a moral pillar of global stature such as King, would thus seem to be an illustration of intertextuality and verification of 'Ostrom's Law'. It would thus speak against the Tragedy of Commons being inevitable as was claimed by Lloyd. As will be illustrated below, anecdotal evidence would indicate that CC and OER use in Lebanon is primarily passive, i.e., content is taken from the commons for teaching, research, and activism, without actively replacing it on a reciprocal basis.

We will attempt to determine whether the lack of active content creation within the commons in Lebanon is indicative of a tragedy of the commons or Ostrom's Law. Expressed more simply, are OER, CC and Open Content in Lebanon a manifestation of the neo-colonial dependency of the WANA and Global South in general, on hegemonic content providers, donors and project directors located in the Global North? Or, viewed more positively, are we currently seeing a set of new ground rules being laid for the good governance and restoration of the commons described by Fennel?

2.4 Governing the Commons in the Global South

We will argue that the 2019 uprising in Lebanon was the beginning of the open content revolution in Lebanon, which saw those who had already been working in the field for many years transition more easily into the new online world. It was also the 'dress rehearsal' for the two-year global lockdown, which would begin five months later as of mid-March 2020.

The transition to online has a history. Both at LU and NDU – as the chronology below will indicate – individual instructors and researchers, and later the administration, embraced what Jun Xiao et al. (2019) dubbed OnO by the late 2000s, as described above. However, OnO met with significant resistance in Lebanon in the early years, both on the institutional level and within the respective government

ministries responsible for the transition to digital research and education. A more recent article by Ronghuai Huang and colleagues (2021) – and significantly co-authored by Daniel Burgos of NDU's South African partner, the Research Unit Self-Directed Learning, Faculty of Education, at North-West University in Potchefstroom – draws on pre-COVID research in China and makes a clear distinction between the merging of online and offline (OmO) and the more prevalent side-by-side OnO use of computers in the classroom and internet and social media applications in course curriculum in the 2000s and 2010s (Huang, 2021).

> *The development of virtual (online) and physical (offline) learning environment has allowed learners at all levels of schooling to access to global communications and various resources. In this case, the combination of online and offline (OnO) features could be regarded as OnO modes. However, that is not enough or supportable for open education in modern society – which is responding to the latest evolution of the internet, the so-called Web 2.0. A learning environment of open education in the context of Web 2.0 is not only an OnO platform that expands access to all sorts of resources from offline to online (and vice versa) but also an interactive environment blurring the boundary between producers (e.g. traditional teachers) and consumers (e.g. traditional students) of content. (Xiao, 2019, p. 135)*

The other strands of this storyline will be integrated into the chronology section below. We will illustrate how Said's concept of contrapuntality and the concept of intertextuality – according to Kristeva (1966) and Barthes (1967) – play a role throughout the twenty-year period we are reviewing. This is particularly significant when dealing with the conflict between the 'CopyLeft' movement, which challenged the privatisation of online data and software as early as the 1970s and 1980s, and attempts to deal with challenges to intellectual property rights in general, as they transitioned from analogue or hard copy to digital or soft copy violations in the early 2000s. Finally, we will speculate whether the potential 'governing of the commons' will play a role in promoting a 'Circular Economy' (Boulding, 1966) and the possibility of developing and sustaining a 'Cultural Commons' (Doran, 2018) globally within the fields of education, research, and cultural production.

2.5 Creation of open content in the Global South – the narrative of OER in Lebanon

This is a story spanning over two-decades of a journey of struggle against impunity, unfair global terms of trade, and for open content creation in Lebanon. The culture of impunity has deep roots in Lebanon and is directly related to the 19th century European colonial legacy. It predates the digital age by over a century. Analogue content produced in the Global North, such as cultural and educational text material, still images and moving pictures, graphics, sheet music and audio recordings, or scientific research reports were all being reproduced in violation of international copyright laws for many decades prior to the introduction of the internet and social media. The cultural influence of France, the UK and the United States, and to a lesser extent Italy, the Soviet Union, Germany and the Netherlands, strongly impacted the educational sector in Lebanon and created a large market for French and English language curricula and educational materials generated in the Global North. By design or default, this process had tragic consequences for the 'cultural commons'. The high cost of these pre-packaged products led students and academics alike to make use of unauthorized copies of European and North American textbooks and teaching material, a practice that became standard procedure with the introduction of cheap photocopying machines in the 1990s. This tradition of systematic violations of copyrights and patents in Lebanon would be exacerbated by the widespread introduction of digitisation in the communications, cultural, and education sectors at the turn of the century.

2.6 Chronology of a revolution

The three phases through which OER has transitioned in Lebanon during the last two decades will be presented here. This study documents the attempts made by professors and students at LU and NDU to promote respect for intellectual property rights and original research with the support of the CC movement in Lebanon. The contours of struggle against the pervasive culture of impunity were accentuated by the gradual collapse of the Lebanese state in the months prior to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in February 2020. The authors demonstrate that this foundation facilitated the transition from blended learning to online education in 2019/2020. We will offer concrete examples that demonstrate how OER helps educators, students, and administrators promote rule of law and a restoration of the commons in teaching, conference organising, collaborative research, sustainable

development, and social activism. The preliminary results of the final phase back to face-to-face teaching will be reflected upon at the end of the article, which was completed in the summer of 2022. Because of the tragic death of our co-author Rima Malek, most of the story-line below will focus on the experience of FLPS at NDU. Following her passing in the summer of 2022, much of her knowledge and experience was taken with her into another sphere. Her extensive files and papers have not yet been properly archived and were thus not available for use in the writing of this article. We will however reflect on our work with Rima during the last decade.

As mentioned above, various strands from the literature will be woven into this chronological narrative. These will include the shift from OnO to OmO; the struggle of the alternative and oft-times counter culture 'CopyLeft' movement against the 'CopyRight' power elite; the implications of contrapuntality and intertextuality for Lebanese cultural, scientific, and educational development; the dichotomic relationship between the struggle against the culture of impunity and cultural hegemony; and the significance of the OER, CC, and the Open Content movements for the circular economy and cultural commons. Finally, we will ask, has the digital and online revolution helped bend the arc of the moral universe towards justice or contributed to the Tragedy of the Commons?

The first projects at NDU directly related to the CC agenda, as well as the protection and promotion of intellectual property rights in the Global South, were initiated in the year 2002. They date back to the World Trade Organization's (WTO) 1990 'Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights' (TRIPS) focusing primarily on medicine and education, and the 2001 Doha Declaration providing special rules when applying TRIPS to developing countries (World Trade Organization, 2003). The implications of the Doha Declaration, which went into effect in 2003, became immediately evident to instructors in Lebanon because of the prevalence of photocopied textbooks and other pirated analogue materials. The grace period according to Doha was to expire in 2005. For this reason, professors at NDU who were members of the American Political Science Association (APSA) and/or Modern Language Association (MLA) carried out a straw poll in 2003 among colleagues at the American University of Beirut (AUB), Balamand University, Haigazian University, Lebanese American University (LAU), Near East School of Theology (NEST), NDU, and Saint Joseph University (USJ). This informal and highly unrepresentative survey determined that all institutions did have a policy on compliance with TRIPS, but that illegal photocopying and other forms of pirating

were common place. The justification for this discrepancy was the high price of imported textbooks from the Global North. In order to deal with the impending expiration of the Doha Declaration in 2005, APSA and MLA members approached the publishers of the MLA Style Manual and negotiated the extension of their licensed edition from the Indian market to the entire WANA market as of 2004. The logic behind this endeavour was to use the MLA pilot project not only as a role model for other textbook publishers, but to also expand the logic of fair, licensed editions to fields such as food sovereignty and fair trade, medicine and healthcare in the region, and fair working conditions for labour migrants. Unfortunately, this grassroots 'wishful thinking' never spread to other publishers, let alone other sectors, and the MLA role model was allowed to expire. As assessed by the organizers, this attempt at reform failed because of the lack of anchoring of this academic rule-of-law movement in the larger NGO and civil society networks in Lebanon.

The second phase began as educational resources started to shift from analogue to digital during the 2000s; the MLA experiment took on new relevance in the online sector. NDU introduced the Blackboard Education Technology system in 2002 and launched it as an OnO provider linking in-class instruction with computer-based services. Between its introduction and 2007, Blackboard (BB) use expanded rapidly and by 2007 enjoyed general acceptance, despite its limitations as a technology available only to participants registered in a specific course at NDU, with a time limitation of one semester. As of 2008, instructors began to experiment with links between BB and Facebook (FB), later with WordPress (2011) and YouTube (2010). This grassroots 'knitting together' of various technologies and providers allowed instructors and students to transcend the limitations of BB and make teaching both on-campus and online more interactive. With the acquisition of Skype by Microsoft in 2011, and the introduction of its free messaging service in 2013, many instructors also integrated this online platform into their teaching. Skype would play a big role in the early days of the 2019 uprising before Zoom became predominant in 2020 during the lockdown. A major breakthrough in the thinking of instructors and students alike was provided by the first 'Open Sesame' Bar Camp, organized in February 2009 by Creative Commons activists in Syria and Lebanon, AUB, and the Lebanese digital media NGO 'Rootspace'. More significant than the technical expertise which was provided, this full-day exchange, which we attended with both undergraduate and graduate students, made us aware of the full potential of open education as a concept, as well as the CC-based technology movement. At this time CC Lebanon and CC Syria maintained a vibrant level of collaboration, which was to

come to an end with the beginning of the uprising across the region during the Arab Spring (Merkley, 2017).

Building on the momentum of the 2007 Cape Town meeting of open education activists and the resulting Cape Town Open Education Declaration published in January 2008 (Cape Town, 2008), professors and students at NDU attempted to formalize their collaboration with the cultural and educational commons movement in the Global South. Following a presentation by CopyLeft pioneer Richard Stallman at NDU in June 2010 and the founding of Creative Commons Lebanon at AUB with the support of CC CEO Joichi Ito and OER pioneer Prof. Lawrence Lessig in October of the same year, the APSA Student Society organised a CC and OER event in December at NDU with CC Syria activist Donatella della Ratta and CC Lebanon founder Pierre El Khoury. A variety of online events were organised by CC student activists and instructors in 2011, primarily using existing online conferencing technology at the campus computer centre and weaving it into BB, FB, YouTube, Blogspot, and WordPress. Rima Malek was one of the leaders during these formative years (Malek, 2021). The early pioneers of CC and OER were aware of the inherent danger of integrating the logic of TRIPS into their work on the commons. Simultaneously, it was clear to all that the pervasive culture of impunity in the educational and cultural sectors was not only harming big business interests, but also researchers and artists on the ground. We thus attempted to illustrate the distinction between fraud and plagiarism on the one hand, and intertextuality on the other, while simultaneously referring to Said's work on Orientalism and contrapuntality in our use of textbooks, software, and other instructional material from the Global North. Because this was often limited to the work of a handful of activists on campus, the results remained marginal.

The third phase began with a major breakthrough provided by the 'On-demand Exchange Program Promoting the Development of Open Educational Resources in Middle East and North Africa (MENA)' – a programme funded by the U.S. Department of State (DoS) - which approached the CC group at NDU in the summer of 2013. This resulted in the OER exchange programme 'Promoting Open Educational Resources MENA', organised by the DoS and the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (ALECSO), which took IT specialists from various Arab universities to the US for three weeks in March of 2014, including NDU. During the same period, the CC team video recorded a course taught by Eugene Sensenig, the first fully OER course offered at NDU with a total

of 18 sessions[26], between February and May 2014. This was the first time that OER content creation could become available online outside the restraints of BB. The fully OER course included 18 c. 100-minute videos on YouTube, with the rest of the material (tests, readers, exercises, notes) uploaded on FB. In 2015 the NDU Libraries uploaded the videos in its institutional repository (IR). Between 2015 and 2019 OER became one of the major projects supported by the university in the technology sector. The mainstreaming of CC and OER at NDU will be reported on in much greater detail in others' articles on Lebanon included in this volume. Of significance for this article is the pioneer role played by the CC activist team in launching the CC licensed e-book series with the NDU Press in collaboration with the IR, including two volumes by the authors of this article.

As the uprising began in October 2019, NDU was well prepared to take a significant segment of its activities online. On 1 March 2020 the schools and universities were closed for a preliminary period of one week, which was to be extended in various forms for almost two years. In deference to the other articles in this volume reporting directly on the role played by OER at NDU before and during the lockdown, we will now focus on the impact of forced migration of OnO to fully online instruction (March 2020-August 2021) and the attempts to implement OmO from September 2021. As of September 2022, courses at NDU are fully face-to-face and on-campus, with OER components optional as was the case before the lockdown.

Studies on the Arab region and Lebanon specifically have determined that there is inadequate awareness on the use of OER. More importantly, these studies could not determine any trends on content creation let alone a coordinated strategy to promote open content creation (Assaf et al., 2022; Ray, 2021; Tlili, 2020). The reflections presented here are based exclusively on personal experience, discussions with colleagues, anecdotal evidence, and our work with our deceased colleague Rima Malek until the beginning of spring semester of 2022 when her illness prevented her from working on the project. Focus will be placed on the link between classroom experience, social activism, and community service within the commons in order to ascertain whether we are moving in the direction of an accelerated tragedy or towards grassroots good governance (Fennel, 2011). Of primary interest will be the attempts made to move away from the 'resource curse' of mere extraction of overly abundant content to the creation of innovative teaching, research, as well as community service

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[26] https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCJaKTcnPyruCMj3StKfYAjw/videos

approaches linked to content dealing with the unique issues facing the Global South, the WANA, and Lebanon in particular.

One of the main attributes of teaching and field research in many parts of the Global South, which distinguished it from the realities in the Global North, is the lack of a stable social environment, which is seen as the bedrock of scholarship in traditional pedagogical and academic thinking (Sensenig, 2019).

> *Researchers, academics and activists – as part of civil society – must deal with this intentional lack of security, social justice and freedom. In it we can recognize a form of elite-produced, and potentially indefinite, postcolonial, systemic liminality (p. 106).*

In our opinion, teachers, students, researchers, and activists must not only speak truth to power; they must develop open content from a perspective which simultaneously promotes respect for communal and personal intellectual property, counters the pervasive culture of impunity, and jointly criticises, develops, and transforms our shared 'cultural archive'. By working in a collaborative manner with critical scholars in the Global North and Global South, the conflicts caused by the 'politics of blame', and 'even more destructive politics of confrontation and hostility' (Said, 1994, 51) can be avoided. CC, OER, and OS activists can bridge these gaps because the open content movement provides a global technological platform from which to build a cultural commons. Along with the above mentioned IR and YouTube based OER courses, the ongoing programs mentioned below have facilitated – albeit on a modest level – this global bridge building.

A variety of informal initiatives and cooperative agreements were developed at FLPS and LU during the uprising and lockdown (2019-2021) and in the OmO phase (2021-2022) coming out of it. Along with the pedagogical training provided on campus, the CC teams offered courses dealing with online and blended learning for local schools. One of the unexpected advantages of online courses and student projects was their positive impact on mainstreaming education for students with disabilities. We worked with several students during the lockdown who were able to overcome the physical barriers traditionally impeding their integration. This allowed them to not only become equal team players, but in a few cases to take on leadership responsibilities, for example in the Model Nobel Peace Prize (MNPP), Global Sessions, and United Nations human rights project mentioned below. Because the lockdown and online education had become a global phenomenon, existing

collaborations with universities both in Europe and North America were expanded to include weekly scheduled classes throughout a given semester, along with focused conferences and joint webinars with students in other Lebanese universities and in the European Union (EU). Projects ranged from a joint Model Nobel Peace Prize (MNPP) competition, which was part of a three-credit course taking place over a full semester, and is now in its third year between FLPS and Rider University in Lawrenceville, New Jersey, to the Global Sessions programme on social welfare and health care services and policy, which was carried out on-site in cooperation with universities in Northern and Central Europe, India and Lebanon over an entire week. These projects went online in 2020 and 2021; they took place in 2022 and are planned for 2023 in a hybrid format. The advantage of international blended learning and conferences is that they not only allow participants from the Global South to take part on an equal footing, but that their preparation can be planned gradually, long in advance, and be drafted and implemented incrementally using Zoom, Teams, or similar online conferencing platforms. Thus, online mobility tends to level the proverbial playing field and allow students and instructors from all regions to play an equal role in planning, design, implementation, and follow-up.

2.7 Open content creation at Notre Dame University-Louaize

A variety of research projects, training programmes, periodically scheduled events, and even online holiday celebrations were initiated at FLPS, with partners in other WANA countries and the Global North. Creative use of free, introductory, and teaser versions of existing software packages and applications and the knitting together of OS technology allowed professors at FLPS to develop fully online and blended programmes during the lockdown. These included the production of three different youth-oriented, educational radio shows remotely with university students from different Lebanese universities: LU, NDU, and AUB under the title "Radio Talk" for UNESCO's World Radio Day in February 2021, designed and supervised by Rouba El Helou. The project was planned and mentored to become a youth initiative relying exclusively on free, OS digital technologies from home. The group was trained on CC, OS values, digital rights, gender equality, environmental protection, and the 'resource curse' in the oil and natural gas sector, all of which was fully uploaded on SoundCloud[27]. Other innovations included a series of podcasts with Houston-based

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[27] https://soundcloud.com/radiotalk-lebanon

'Women Offshore[28]', dealing with access for girls and women in the fields of science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) and professional positions in the extractive industries; a 'Virtual Barbara Day' celebration blending the traditional Eid il-Burbara (Saint Barbara's Day) in the WANA with the international day for miners, geologists, and metallurgy engineers on 4 December 2020, including presenters and participants from the US, UK, and various universities in Lebanon; and finally, plans for a GIS-based, online, virtual museum on the Anglo-American cultural heritage and footprint in Lebanon, which were launched in 2018, but interrupted because of the uprising and lockdown between 2019 and 2021, kept alive online during this period, and re-started in 2022 with the support of various NGOs, church congregations, professors and students at AUB and NDU, individual artists, and the US and British embassies. All of the above examples combine the creation of original online content from a Global South perspective, a contrapuntal reading of relations between the WANA and former colonial powers in the region, an OmO approach to blending onsite and online activities, learning and research, and a clear commitment to respecting intellectual property while simultaneously speaking truth to power locally and internationally.

Finally, a novel research approach was developed with UN support at NDU which enabled the creation of a unique set of five online fact sheets (five lessons) titled "The Political Economy of Sectarianism and Coexistence in Lebanon". These sheets include trainer and learner activities, class discussions, in addition to educational videos[29] hosted on a purpose-built microsite using WordPress and the content was licensed under CC. This research is an attempt by the authors to anchor the OER approach at FLPS and to create synergy with the academic community in Lebanon and abroad. It is gendered, intersectional, and based on the principles of diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI). This has thus laid the foundation for ongoing original content creation in the field of social sciences and humanities and their application to the solution of the existing acute problems in Lebanon.

Notably, the last event that we three authors, researchers, and activists designed and carried out together as a joint team presentation, was 'Transitioning from OER to

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[28]https://womenoffshore.org/championing-women-in-lebanon-episode-29-2/ and
https://womenoffshore.org/first-woman-offshore-lebanon-episode-28/

[29] https://www.youtube.com/@gcgmlebanon

Online Instruction in a Culture of Impunity – Lebanon', which took place online at the Florida Virtual Campus, OER Summit in May 2021. The re-launching of Lebanese participation in Global OER week in March 2022 (Open Education Week, 2022) was prepared in cooperation with Rima, but took place without her because of her life-threatening illness. She died four months later.

The above-mentioned March 2022 Open Education event 'Creating Open Content in the Global South: A Dialogue Between Lebanon and South Africa' was organised by FLPS at NDU and the UNESCO Chair on Multimodal Learning and OER at North-West University (NWU) in Mahikeng, South Africa. Along with the hosts, it included presentations from professors and librarians from NWU, NDU, and AUB, as well as over 40 participants from universities in Lebanon, Austria, Lithuania, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), the US, as well as various NGOs, and individual activists. One of the common assumptions shared by most of the Lebanese speakers and members of the audience was that OER was primarily a passive tool and repository to which teachers, researchers and students can go to access abundant resources for free. Despite the title of the event, which focused on the creation of open content, the need for replenishing, restoring, and shepherding the cultural commons was not seen as a priority in Lebanon. Although the South African participants focused on content creation during their presentations, they did understand the initial need for passive use as an introductory step in Lebanon, which should be followed later by active contributions to the commons.

This lack of appreciation for open content creation went hand-in-hand with an underestimation of the value of purpose-built online platforms for those activists in a given university, NGO, or training institution who have developed open content on their own and needed an integrated repository in which to upload and host it. The problem described at the outset of this article, i.e., that active OER content creation today in Lebanon is still based on a 'self-knitted fabric' of various open-access and OS software platforms, social media such as FB, YouTube, Blogspot, and WordPress, along with the respective universities' educational technology systems (Blackboard or Moodle) and IR, has not improved significantly during the last 15 years. Nevertheless, the existence of a broad spectrum of CC and OER-generated content providers and activists does seem to indicate that Ostrom's Law can be applied to Lebanon, despite the pervasive culture of impunity, systemic corruption, and sectarianism within the power elite and population in general.

2.8 Conclusion: Bending the arc and governing the commons

The case has been made here that CC, OER, and OS activists in Lebanon have attempted from as early as the formative years of the movement to deal with the dual threats emanating from the culture of impunity at home and cultural hegemony from abroad. As early as 2003, members of the MLA and ASPA at NDU worked with partners in Lebanon and the US to find solutions to the systematic violation of intellectual property rights. Starting in 2009 they helped create an informal Creative Commons initiative, and later formed a student CC Society at NDU in collaboration with CC Syria, CC Lebanon (founded in 2010), and the university library. Simultaneously, individual activists at LU followed a similar trajectory.

Lebanon is experiencing an intentional crisis at the hands of its power elite, with tacit participation of almost the entire population. This is rooted in the proverbial 'patron-client' relationship which provides tangible rewards to the citizenry in exchange for loyalty. What is currently surprising many observers of the country is that as the sources of this payback are gradually drying up, the population remains nevertheless loyal to its respective power brokers and corrupt leaders on all levels. Sectarianism, a Lebanese variant of the toxic discrimination known in South Africa as Apartheid and the US as 'Jim Crow', is often seen as the energy source which keeps the country running despite a failed state and collapsed economy.

As teachers, scholars, social activists we view the OS movement as a tool which will allow us to speak truth to power in the classroom, online, and in the media. By countering what Carlyle termed the 'lies that [cannot] live forever' (King, 1965), we have attempted during the last 20 years to influence both the message and the medium. Creative Commons provides a platform (medium) through which to not only access alternative sources of information for free, but also allows us to create new content from a contrapuntal perspective, challenging cultural hegemony and simultaneously countering the culture of impunity plaguing our country. It would appear that, as a country, Lebanon is a good example of the 'Tragedy of the Commons' destroying an entire people. The exploitative mindset driving this gradual undermining of the country's resources is shared by individuals on all levels and in all walks of life.

In contrast to Lloyd's bleak picture of a downward spiral of disaster and destruction within the commons, Ostrom has recognized spontaneous and grassroots forces which are able to renegotiate the game rules and thus regenerate the commons (Hess

& Ostrom, 2007). The 'Governing of the Commons' in the pedagogical, communications, and training sectors would seem to be one of the few areas in which the Lebanese people, individually and collectively are resisting the logic of ultimate disaster in the country. As has been illustrated in this article, a variety of open content and grassroots initiatives are now developing alternative scenarios which are interfacing with university administrations and providing space for recovery of the commons in the WANA, despite the overall crisis in the region. Within the narrow confines of the CC, the arc of history does seem to be bending toward justice, while setting the record straight by linking content creation in the Global South to the rest of the moral universe.

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