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## Cosmopolitics and The Commons

Robert Farrow<sup>1</sup> [\[0000-0002-7625-8396\]](#)

<sup>1</sup> Institute of Educational Technology, The Open University (UK)

This paper explores the intersection of cosmopolitanism, cosmopolitics, and open education, focusing on how open educational practices (OEP) can foster a global commons while navigating political and ethical challenges. The central argument posits that openness should be conceptualised as a dynamic, situated and reflexive practice. Open education is defined as a practice aimed at expanding educational access and equity through open educational resources (OER) and open practices. The paper critiques the common policy stance that publicly funded outputs should always be openly licensed, suggesting that this stance implies a commitment to a “weak” or minimal form of cosmopolitanism, or “global citizenship.”

The concept of cosmopolitanism as it relates to open education is explored, and tensions are surfaced between the universalist perspectives of cosmopolitanism and the recent emphasis on political issues such as social justice, decolonisation, equity, diversity and inclusion in open education research and practice. The example of indigenous or traditional knowledge is used to illustrate this tension, which represents a challenge to the cosmopolitan position. How can openness be used to justify both sharing and non-sharing at the same time without contradiction? The answer provided is an approach which considers openness as “counter-enclosure,” where openness serves as a form of resistance to the privatisation and commodification of knowledge and educational resources. This perspective challenges neoliberal conceptions of knowledge ownership while also aligning with a moral commitment to social justice.

Attempting to resolve these tensions, a concept of openness as ‘counter-enclosure’ is explored and an argument is made for the relevance of a cosmopolitical perspective on open education. Rather than assuming that openness inherently equates to educational justice, the paper argues that without careful attention to power imbalances and epistemic diversity, openness can inadvertently reinforce existing inequalities. A cosmopolitical approach foregrounds the importance of engaging with diverse perspectives and recognizing that openness must be continually negotiated within specific cultural and institutional contexts. Cosmopolitics, in this sense, becomes a way to balance global aspirations with local needs, fostering responsible, strategic openness.

This approach calls for greater reflexivity among educators and policymakers, emphasising the need for open practices to be adaptable and sensitive to diverse educational environments. Strategies for implementation may include fostering collaborative networks that prioritise inclusivity, developing policies that balance openness with local autonomy, and encouraging critical dialogue among stakeholders to ensure that openness does not become a tool for cultural dominance or economic exploitation. The paper highlights the need for collaborative frameworks that bring together diverse stakeholders, including educators, learners, policymakers, and community representatives, to co-create open educational resources and practices. This participatory approach ensures that open education is not only a top-down imposition but also a grassroots movement rooted in local realities. By integrating community voices and respecting diverse knowledge systems, cosmopolitical open education can challenge dominant paradigms and foster a more equitable distribution of educational resources and opportunities.

To more clearly conceptualise the perspective of openness as “counter-enclosure” a conceptual framework from Leonelli’s (2023) work on open science is adapted and expanded. This provides a way to

acknowledge highlighted tensions between universal and particular by elaborating a strategic space for openness as “counter-enclosure.” This nuanced understanding challenges the dichotomy between global and local, proposing instead a continuum where openness can adapt and evolve according to situational demands. The discussion considers this framework in relation to recent developments in the commons: notably generative artificial intelligence and cyberlibertarianism, both of which challenge long established notions of copyright and commoning and convey ambivalent attitudes towards the recognition of intellectual property.

In a digital world, the value of cosmopolitics is in recognising, adapting to, and operating within such tensions, fostering a plurality of approaches that acknowledge competing epistemologies while resisting the totalising tendencies of dominant economic and technological forces. To engage in the project of open education is inherently political. A cosmopolitical perspective recognises openness not as a purely ethical commitment but as a situated practice requiring negotiation and responsiveness to local contexts. Cosmopolitics provides an invitation to reflect on the political realities that inhibit the realisation of better worlds. A cosmopolitical approach thus reshapes education as a space of ongoing negotiation between different epistemologies, ontologies, and values. In light of this, several avenues for further research which builds on a cosmopolitical view of open education are identified, including decolonisation of curriculum, emancipatory praxis, policy, curriculum design, assessment and researcher positionality.