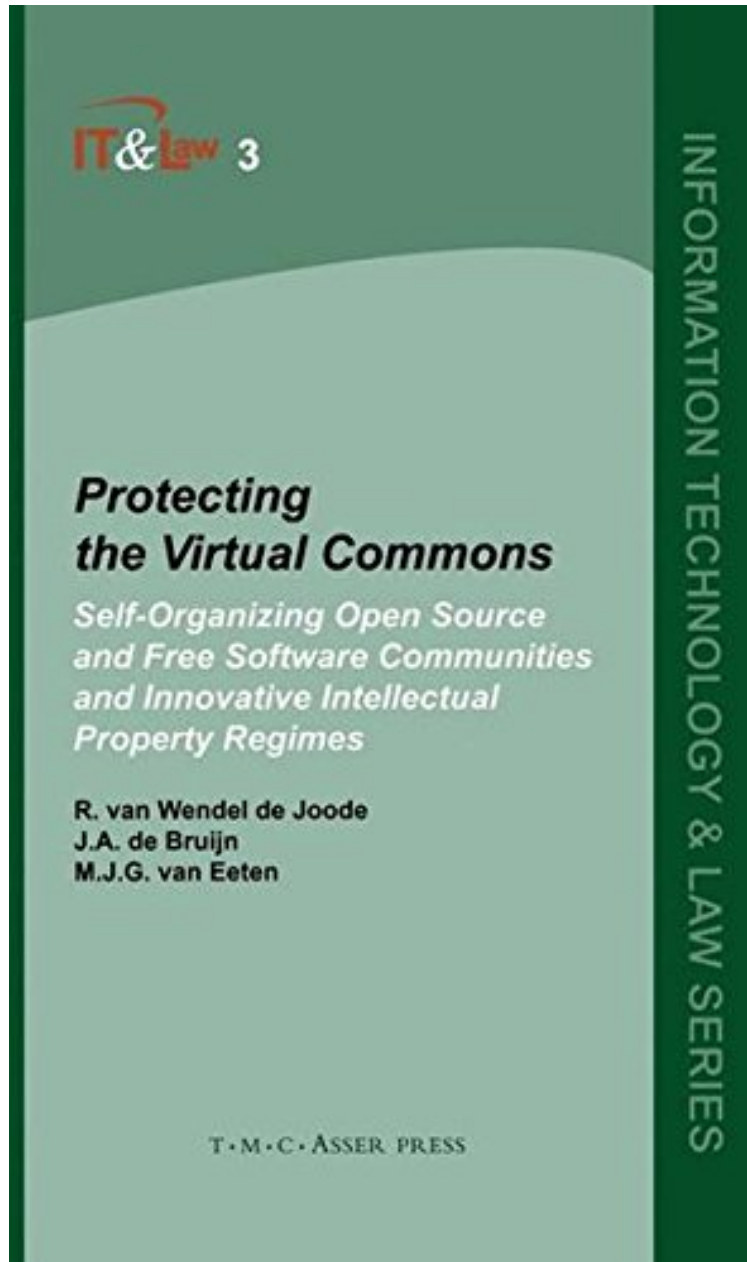


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Protecting the Virtual Commons (Information Technology and Law Series)

R. van Wendel de Joode, J. A. de Bruijn, M. J. G. van Eeten
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New organizations have emerged from the increasing adoption of the Internet. One example is the so-called virtual community. Most virtual communities consist of people who are focused on solving or discussing a certain problem or issue. Literature about collective action (Olson, 1965) and common property resource management (Ostrom, 1990) predicts that cooperation and coordination in such communities would be difficult to achieve and sustain. Perhaps this is why many virtual communities remain popular for just a limited amount of time without ever having much economic impact. One exception, however, is the so-called open source and free software communities. In open source and free software communities, Internet users, primarily hobbyists, develop an enormous variety of software. Communities like Linux, Apache and Debian are the flagships of open source and free software communities. These communities have proven themselves capable of developing software that can compete with the products of even a commercial software giant like Microsoft.

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