

## **Public goods and commons, some preliminary reflections**

*Sofia Costanza*  
University of Roma Tre

Draft 15.05. 2014

### ABSTRACT

The spread of the economic crisis has opened a window of opportunities for a collective reflection about dynamics of growing complexity and interconnections. In turn, this leads to a transformation of the paradigms and perceptions, especially regarding the economic crisis as an epiphenomenon of environmental, social and political challenges. In this context, the theme of the commons and collective action is gaining momentum. As McCarthy (2005) suggests, this issue is in fact strictly related to current requests by social movements and citizens to recollect new social bonds, democratic participation and the right to nature and culture, threatened by temptations of greed within the market domain.

“Commons” can be conceived as a topic historically related with a main “substantive” economic problem involving processes of decision and rule-making associated with use, access, withdrawal and property of natural resources and basically linked with three main sub-sets: appropriation, groups, and environmental-social externalities as market failures.

Due to the high number of matters and fields involved and intertwined within this issue connecting facts, theories and policies in a complex bundle of perspectives, long time before the appraisal of Hardin’s “Tragedy of the commons” and Ostrom’s studies on Common Pool Resources, many authors had explored different approaches to the problems concerning the nature of the commons, swinging between private and public goods. For this reason, the issue of the commons has developed along human history and economic literature, enriching itself of contents and emerging questions in the domain of political-economic management of resources by communities and groups, of local and national policies, of environmental pressures and so on, launching seeds for fruitful interdisciplinary paths of research. Along this walk, the notion of the commons is now transforming also its meanings and understandings beyond the célèbre current definition of common pool resources provided by Ostrom by the underlying action of groups and historical events. Starting from the economic debate about the notion of public and collective goods, the paper tries to illustrate part of the debate on public goods and the definitions of the commons, in order to provide some insights about this topic and its definition, and to design a brief analysis of emerging processes related to facts, theories on governance of the commons, potential limits and related policies.

## **Introduction**

The aim of this brief is to focus on the definition of the commons and collective goods, in order to recall and add features to look to these concepts from a renewed perspective. The starting hypothesis of the work is that every economic concept derives its meaning from historical, social, cultural and political circumstances in which it grows. The introduction of the first paragraph acknowledges that a conception of human beings' nature and related intrinsic motivations lays behind each definition of collective goods and each solution to address the free-riding problem, and then that from this stand, visibly, different definitions of commons and collective goods imply diverse understanding of democracy and of role of State and market.

On this path, in the first part I suggest that the definition of the commons is the result of a swinging from public goods and then I linger on the potential outcomes related to proposals of attribution of bundles of rights associated to common resources, as proposed by several authors (in particular Demsetz (1967) and Ostrom and Schlager (1992; 2000)). Nowadays this topic results pivotal in Italy and many other countries, since an involvement of communities and civil society is increasing around the issue of the commons both as a theoretical and a practical issue. On this path, the second part of the work arises two points: that Ostrom's definition of common pool resources can't contain the manifold experiences related to the commons and their management (and then new reflections on this topic are required); that actual circumstances and the emphasis on the commons are pushing for a change in human self-perception and conception of identity and citizenship potentially leading to *new* social and economic forms.

## **Public goods and commons**

*"The causation of a particular event tends to be seen as multiple; a series of nested processes generally generates an occurrence. Institutions, physical factors, language, culture and strategic human action all come into play."* (Wall 2014: 53)

There is a wide economic literature about commons and collective action problems. As an issue, the commons basically recall that diverse conceptions about human beings and society are bases of every economic model and system, and that each perspective bores in a specific historical, institutional environment (Jessop, 2010). Yet in 1740, in his *Treatise on Human Nature*, Hume argued that men are led by their own specific interest that often does not extend beyond the strict circle of their nearest friends and acquaintance, even though it is in their own interest to preserve peace in society following the rules of justice (Hume, 1740: bk3, part 2, sect. VII).

"The only difficulty, therefore, is to find out this expedient, by which men cure their natural weakness, and lay themselves under the necessity of observing the laws of justice and equity, notwithstanding their violent propension to prefer contiguous to remote. It is evident such a remedy can never be effectual without correcting this propensity; and as it is impossible to change or correct any thing material in our nature, the

utmost we can do is to change our circumstances and situation, and render the observance of the laws of justice our nearest interest, and their violation our most remote” (Hume, 1740, book 3, ch. 2, sect. VII)<sup>1</sup>

In economic literature, public and collective goods are intertwined in this same collection of problems. Indeed, these questions are strictly linked with philosophies of being that determined cultural approaches, conceptions of the substance of economy and related policies (Marshall, 1890; bk.1; ch.2; bk.2; ch.2)<sup>2</sup>.

Clearly this notions cannot escape considerations about the practical problems of non-coordination between collective and private interests<sup>3</sup> and have special implications on the issue of governance, its dimension, aims and rules<sup>4</sup>. As Marshall wrote in his *Principles*:

“What business affairs should be undertaken by society itself acting through its government, imperial or local? Have we, for instance, carried as far as we should the plan of collective ownership and use of open spaces, of works of art, of the means of instruction and amusement, as well as of those material requisites of a civilized life, the supply of which requires united action, such as gas and water, and railways?” (Marshall 1890, bk:1; ch.4; p.4-5).

Through the issue of collective goods so, the problems of society and collective action, levels of government, open access and common ownership, provision of essential goods for human life and well being are rebounded in the political dimension of economy, enlightening the strong link between economics, facts, theory and policies as source and results of the social domain and of cultural beliefs. Each consideration started from a conception of human beings’ ontology (or nature) and related intrinsic motivations and had core in a dialectical vision of market and state as mechanisms to address individual attempts to socialize costs (or minimize private cost) and privatize benefits in the process of contribution and consumption of public or collective goods. In this perspective, commons as collective goods are direct derivation of public goods. The literature on public goods in fact discovered the commons while addressing the problems of externality and market failures, designating systems to solve them<sup>5</sup> and trying to evaluate social effects entering the relation between externalities, “appropriability” (Arrow 1970:1) and exclusion (see Arrow 1970). From theories on public expenditure and of voluntary exchange in public economy (Musgrave, 1939) to theory on club goods and local expenditure (Buchanan 1965, Tiebout 1956), many efforts have been spent to tackle the free rider problem, imagining working rules and institutions via mechanisms of collective

---

<sup>1</sup> From this stand, Hume defined the origin of civil government and legislation in the hand of some men to preserve society. Indeed, Hume assumed that men’s “nature” can’t give them any possibility to escape the “law” of individual interest, and that, for these reason government is required. In brief, a number of men are to be assigned to a position to make other people respect the laws of justice and preserve society.

<sup>2</sup> “Economics is a study of men as they live and move and think in the ordinary business of life. ...No one can compare and measure accurately against one another even his own mental states at different times: and no one can measure the mental states of another at all except indirectly and conjecturally by their effects. Of course various affections belong to man's higher nature and others to his lower, and are thus different in kind.” (A.Marshall 1890; bk.1; ch.1; Introduction)

<sup>3</sup> “(...)What are the proper relations of individual and collective action in a stage of civilization such as ours? How far ought voluntary association in its various forms, old and new, to be left to supply collective action for those purposes for which such action has special advantages?” (Marshall 1890, bk:1; ch.4; p.4-5)

even though they do not totally pertain to the fields of economics (Marshall, 1890, bk.1, ch.4, p.4) : “...Taking it for granted that a more equal distribution of wealth is to be desired, how far would this justify changes in the institutions of property, or limitations of free enterprise even when they would be likely to diminish the aggregate of wealth?(...) How ought the burdens of taxation to be distributed among the different classes of society? Ought we to rest content with the existing forms of division of labour? Is it necessary that large numbers of the people should be exclusively occupied with work that has no elevating character?...”

<sup>4</sup> As known, the same occurred in Pigou (1924; Part II, Ch. IX) who addressed the issue of government to regulate the private sector. Also nowadays in a transforming situation, as Quilligan (2012) suggested, the literature on the commons is pushing for a change in perspective of what is value and worth within our current culture, and many efforts are now spent in a recollection of the meaning of commons, in particular within the juridical and political framework.

<sup>5</sup> (Samuelson 1954; Musgrave 1939, 1957; Strotz 1958; Davis and Whinston 1967; Head and Shoup; 1969; Mishan 1969; Auster and Silver 1973; Marshall 1890; Pigou 1924; Young 1913; Knight 1924; Commons 1931; DeViti de Marco 1936; Musgrave 1939; Hicks 1940; Kuznets 1948; Commons 1950; Meade 1952; Scitovsky 1954; Tiebout 1956; Marschak 1959; Coase 1960; Buchanan and Stubblebin 1962; Demsetz 1964, 1967; Thompson 1968; Mishan 1969; Arrow 1970; Mc Guire 1972, 1974; Deacon and Shapiro 1975)

competition or cooperation. But the different actors (State, community or private sector) and the ways (forms of redistribution, cooperation, competition) through which public goods were to be provided according to the authors, constitute same pieces of a wider framework in which social and political cultures confronted. In the same way, visibly different definitions of commons and collective goods imply diverse understanding of democracy and of role of the State.

By way of example, contrasting conceptions of the world underlying the notion of collective goods are clearly evident in the comparison between Musgrave and Tiebout, and their respective elaborations of merit and collective goods<sup>6</sup>. The origins of the two are probably related with the historical and cultural contexts in which they stemmed. Tiebout's "A Pure Theory of Local Expenditure" is settled in the same perspective of Hayekian "The use of knowledge in society" (1945) (Stansel, 2012) and grew in a context of faith in market self-regulation, distribution of knowledge and information through decentralized, polycentric self-regulated systems via market mechanisms. On the contrary, Musgrave's conception (1957) is rooted in the discourse about the impossibility of spontaneous decentralized solutions by Samuelson (1954) and focused on redistributive issues and cooperation, in the attempt to avoid a "rush to the bottom" of public goods provision due to tax competition among communities or localities (see then Musgrave 1959, 1997).

In this perspective, in Tiebout (and then in Warren and Vincent Ostrom) cohabited two hayekian visions of individuals: the first as distrust in the inter-subjective dynamics and unbalances among individuals which can be only neutralized by market forces and competition, the second as a belief in human capabilities, since everything is source of individuals actions and thoughts, rather than of collectivities, without any space for the conception of "social phenomena"<sup>7</sup>. On the same side, but in a way more similar to a "second" Hayek, Musgrave started from an envision of the limits of human rationality with individuals as people normally "unable to fully understand all the social and inter-temporal consequences of their choices"(Masini, Costanza 2013), and this justify state intervention as a collective process of public/merit goods provision, instead of leaving choices and responsibility for it upon individuals' shoulders.

Definitions of collective goods thus swing within a range of perspectives. Deepening this discourse, dwelling on the relation between public goods and commons, the notion of public goods by Samuelson (1954) highlights the relevance of excludability and efficiency as core underlining features to deal with.

Also today, a reflection about a definition of commons, if possible, needs to hang on concepts of exclusion and efficiency, an effort to compare positions about their qualitative meaning, as features leading the

---

<sup>6</sup> Musgrave's "merit goods" were considered as goods whose provision should be guaranteed by national and/or local authorities irrespective of consumers demand and of firms supply (Costanza, Masini, 2013). This consideration was mainly based on the conception of individuals as people normally "unable to fully understand all the social and intertemporal consequences of their choices" (Costanz, Masini, 2013: 9) and then on the task of the government to provide these merit goods, through general taxation. Tiebout's perspective instead was focused on "local public goods" (1956), so public goods whose provision and consumption could have been better defined through the local dimension. For the former, the solution laid in the provision of "merit goods" by public/collective institutions, for the latter, collective goods should be provided by the community or the local government for the community, in order to better match individual preferences and create a *virtuous* path of competition in their provision. Looking at collective goods on a range between public goods and private goods, the characteristic of non excludability of public goods suits then more with Musgrave's merit goods, for which these problems had to be solved within the public-political framework, than with collective goods conceived by Tiebout.

<sup>7</sup> This is a real interesting point of perspective about the issue at stake: in fact, even though social phenomena are considered as unexpected outcomes of expected actions, which role do cultural beliefs play within this framework? Even though social phenomena and then cultures are results of individuals' aggregate efforts, from this stand, social phenomena do not exist and individuals are responsible of the disordered outcomes of society, and so a paternalistic approach is required, rather, from the opposite perspective, individuals are able to change society thanks to their own isolated effort, and so a push for competition is required. This elimination of social phenomena, even though motivated by fear of totalitarianism and of Schmitt's conception of democracy, is artificial, because also environment properly influences individuals and shapes individuals' actions. This is evident in particular looking at Ostroms' methodological approach(es).

economic (social) practices linked to provision, contribution and management of public and collective goods. This point is rational rather than normative, if we follow the logic for which it is impossible to understand a concept, in particular an economic one, outside the context and the problems that determined its definition. If an issue indeed appears today, this is the existence of manifold perspectives and experiences related to the commons, that won't lead to just one definition of them, pushing for a retrieve of epistemological relativism and of open approaches and curiosity toward the manifold expressions of common management.

Looking back to the previous literature, the emphasis on exclusion has been supported by Davis and Whinston (1967), on the path delineated by Buchanan (1965), according to which "physical exclusion is possible given sufficient flexibility in property law, in almost all imaginable cases, including those in which the interdependence lies in the act of consuming itself" (Buchanan 1965:13), in particular with an emphasis on market neutrality and market failures related to public goods for which "for a consumer actually to make a payment would be nothing more or less than an act of pure charity"(Davis and Whinston 1967: 362). In order to face the problem the authors arose two points. The first is the need for a constitution of property rights for every exchange, control and exclusion over the public good or service. The second is the relevance of technological characteristics of the goods or service as pivotal in considering possibilities for a market of public goods, and a vision of law and institutions as technological devices to create conditions for exclusion in order to support market for public goods (Davis and Whinston 1967: 366). Recalling the previous considerations, this vision suits with an Hayekian conception of individuals as atoms whose efforts require the markets as paths of competition to neutralize unbalances in power, and a role of law and state in supporting markets' construction. This discourse similarly applies with Demsetz's perspective based on the strengthen of contracts and assignation of property rights to address externalities and free-riding behaviors (in particular Demsetz, 1967). As known, anticipating Hardin's "Tragedy of the Commons", he forcefully arose the issue of free – riding in communal property, arguing the only solution to lay in a strengthening of private property rights. As know, in a way, a turning point of these debate is represented by the contributions by Elinor Ostrom<sup>8</sup> and the Bloomington school, in particular concerning their field studies on how local communities can best deal with these problems creating local formal or informal contracts and jurisdictions.

In this vision, individual interest and collective interest are considered as potentially overlapping, due to the local dimension of the problem, consenting a direct participation to the formation of working rules, their collective enforcement - also via mutual control -, and the possibility to create local arenas to settle controversies.

But it must be noticed that part of the literature on the commons by Ostrom, also for biographical reasons, is non controversial with the previous literature by Buchanan on club goods (1965) and then by Demsetz (1964, 1967) on enforceability of contracts through property rights (Masini, Costanza, 2013). In particular, the emphasis posed by Ostrom and Schlager (1992) on the rules as individuals' "bundles of rights" associated with the access, use, withdrawal, exclusion and alienation of the resource, insists on a framework designed by the previous authors, through the assignation of rights on resources in order to avoid the tragedy of open access regimes<sup>9</sup>. In a sense, this approach recalls conception of human beings and rules in society as those

---

<sup>8</sup> In trying to deal with the problem of the tragedy of the commons arisen by Hardin, Ostrom defined commons (1990) as common pool resources (CPRs). But the term "commons" indeed is defined as follows in the Digital Library of the Commons:

"The commons is a general term for shared resources in which each stakeholder has an equal interest. Studies on the commons include the information commons with issues about public knowledge, the public domain, open science, and the free exchange of ideas -- all issues at the core of a direct democracy."

(Digital Library of the Commons - <http://dlc.dlib.indiana.edu/dlc/contentguidelines>)

<sup>9</sup> One of the main argument provided by ostrom in response to Hardin's "*Tragedy of Commons*" (1968) was in fact based on the distinction between common properties and open access regimes. (see Ostrom 2000)

by Hume, for which three main laws lay on the constitution and stability of any society even without any government: “stability of possession, translation by consent and the performance of promises” (Hume 1739, book 3, part 2, sect.VIII, p. 277 and in general all part 2 sect. II, VI, VIII). These “laws” are necessary to avoid Hobbesian “state of nature” and to guarantee against violent acts of appropriation, via mutual formal or informal agreements. Notwithstanding these features, their formalization in order to assure the preservation of the commons generates a practical problem, since they do not provide a better assurance to the stability and protection of the society, if this last is based on power unbalances as starting conditions.

To better articulate this point, let’s look to the definition of commons provided by Ostrom as common pool resources. These are

“natural or human-made facilities (or stocks) that generate flows of usable resource units over time. CPRs share two characteristics: (1) it is costly to develop institutions to exclude potential beneficiaries from them, and (2) the resource units harvested by one individual are not available to others” (Ostrom, Gardner, Walker 1994)

Commons are non excludible and rival. The assignation of property rights, or bundles of rights (access, use, withdrawal, exclusion, alienation) associated to individuals seems to solve the problem of management of the commons through these rights, i.e. through the definition of common properties (even though Ostrom (2000) insisted on the definition of the commons as different from common property regimes). So, in many cases, the solution to the problem of rivalry is found in adding the characteristic of excludability to rivalry via assignation of individual rights (for enforceable contracts) on the common. From public goods, non excludable and non rival, treated in the local context as rival by people directly facing the problems of scarcity of such resources, the solution to rivalry in consumption stem in a “privatization” of the common, transforming it in a club good.

In complete opposition to some conclusion by Ostrom (2012), this evidences a vision of individuals as consumers-citizens, instrumentally behaving, a perception of government as an institution needed to support a market of property rights on resources, and of communities acting as isolated competing atoms. Indeed, considering the issue of ownership and property rights by Demsetz, by communal ownership the author referred to "a right which can be exercised by all members of the community"(Demsetz, 1967: 354), but these groups for Demsetz are "communities oriented to private property" (ibid.). From this perspective in effect, whilst the private owner will internalize externalities of her/his work on the resources for the benefits of her/his grandchildren, “acting as a broker whose wealth depend upon how well he takes into account the competing claims of the present and the future” "(Demsetz, 1967: 355), the contrary will be held by “commoners”. According to Demsetz, for this last category, the incentives to privatize benefits i.e. from common land work, will result indeed in a socialization of costs without taking into account the effect on future generations and neighbors.

Recollecting this logic with the objective of preserving resources and commons, and of designing useful framework for their governance, this path finally supports Tiebout’s theory of local expenditure (1956, and Ostrom, Warren and Tiebout 1961), looking at communities as providers and customers of services, managers of their proper resources, organized on the base of their working rules in autonomous - “feudal” or “corporative” - units. This approach is oriented to group-al property and competition, stressing another time how theories on commons and collective goods have important and even contrasting implications on facts and policies.

### **Definition(s) of the commons from multiple perspectives: methodology, conceptions of individuals and systems of governance in transition**

To cope with this impasse we need to recall some further contributions by Ostrom and Bloomington School, and to add some considerations about the relation between public goods and commons.

Three interconnected innovations can be mentioned about Ostrom’s works and the Bloomington School studies. These are related to methodology, conceptions of individual agent, and systems of governance.

The first concerns methodology: the researches by Ostrom and the Bloomington school are all defined coming back and forth from theory to practice, via field studies, in an attempt to deal with complexity and to overtake strict disciplinary dichotomies. In this vision, researches and contributions spaced from methods and assumptions close to Public Choice approach, to those of new institutional economics and behavioral economics, to the study of local public economies, in an interdisciplinary contamination between political sciences and economics (Ostrom, 2012). The purpose and related methods used in the researches so, always connected political, cultural and social dimension related to the field of economy. These methodological conceptions have deep roots in methodological individualism and remind a connection with Hayekian conception of knowledge and information as dispersed within the society, not being a case if they lead to acknowledgements in the field of research about individual behaviors in social dilemma situations. On the same side, they maintain a distinction between theoretical and practical parts of economic science, as it was for Menger (Cubeddu, Vannucci, 1993), using the observation of outcomes of individuals' action and related cultures supporting them, without aiming to provide receipts for policy intervention. From this stand, as known, Ostrom's results challenged the strict assumption of homo oeconomicus, deepening in the description and study of behaviors in complex situation observed on the ground.

These "discoveries", associated with Herbert Simons' model of individual bounded rationality and studies in neurosciences and economics (Kahneman) determined changes of patterns in the field of economics. Notwithstanding these features, the shift from homo oeconomicus to patterns of *homo reciprocans* (Fehr and Gächter, 1998), *homo ecologicus* (Becker 2006), *homo politicus* (Faber et al., 2002) ..., related with the catalogue of communities' capacities to craft working rules and institutions by Ostrom, determines severe implications in the political and economic domains.

The first one is a recognition of the capacity of the civil society to craft working rules and institutions regarding the management of common resources, many times with greater results and "efficiency" than for market mechanisms allocation and state intervention. The second is the manifest acknowledgement of the complexity of societies, systems and institutions that need to be addressed overtaking the temptation to give systematical and universalistic solutions in policies, approaches and theories.

These stances imply theories of governance beyond government, based on polycentricity and coordination, rather than on State direct intervention, leaving open manifold paths of research both in economic and political field. Ostrom referred to two main widening perspectives: the Social-Ecological System (SES) framework<sup>10</sup> and systems of polycentric governance<sup>11</sup>. The first one is a useful frame designed to organize system of governance related to nested, concentric systems of resources with arenas to address instances from the bottom to the top, and vice versa, also through subsidiarity, and it gives prominence and role also to multiple levels of governments. The second one is composed by a net of entities, decentralized and

---

<sup>10</sup> According to Anderies, Janssen and Ostrom (2004):

"A SES is an ecological system intricately linked with and affected by one or more social systems. An ecological system can loosely be defined as an interdependent system of organisms or biological units. "Social" simply means "tending to form cooperative and interdependent relationships with others of one's kind" (Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary 2004). Broadly speaking, social systems can be thought of as interdependent systems of organisms. Thus, both social and ecological systems contain units that interact interdependently and each may contain interactive subsystems as well. We use the term "SES" to refer to the subset of social systems in which some of the interdependent relationships among humans are mediated through interactions with biophysical and non-human biological units. A simple example is when one fisher's activities change the outcomes of another fisher's activities through the interacting biophysical and non-human biological units that constitute the dynamic, living fish stock. Furthermore, we restrict our attention to those SESs where the cooperative aspect of social systems is key, i.e., where individuals have intentionally invested resources in some type of physical or institutional infrastructure to cope with diverse internal and external disturbances. When social and ecological systems are so linked, the overall SES is a complex, adaptive system involving multiple subsystems, as well as being embedded in multiple larger systems."

<sup>11</sup> This last point is strictly connected with the previous literature by Vincent Ostrom, Tiebout, Warren (1956) Buchanan (1965) and Michael Polanyi, see Aligika and Tarko (2012).

coordinated and is more anarchic, competitive and potentially de-structured<sup>12</sup>(Aligika and Tarko, 2012, 2013: 2).These ideas remind both Robbins’ constitutional federalism (Masini, 2012) and what Samuel Bowles (2011) named as “the Capitalistic Utopia of decentralized coordination” (see also Alchian and Demsetz, 1972: 777)<sup>13</sup>. The issue at stake here, is the “choice” on a range of different kinds of governance related with different cultures and practices, underlining the importance of the reflection about the definition(s) of the commons in economics and perceptions about individuals as human beings.

In vision of the second part of this brief, indeed, can commons constitute an expedient of change in individuals’ self perception leading to a re-thinking on public goods and forms of governance upon them?

In order to provide elements to rejoin this question, let’s consider others three perspectives from which commons can be conceived. The first deals with the fact that, according to Ostrom (2000), commons must be distinguished from the system of resources that generate them. By mean of example, according to the Author (2000) an irrigation system or basins managed by local community within the village is a common, whilst the wider water system is not. In the same way, the Mediterranean sea as an ecosystem is a resource system generating bench of fishery – units of resources - whose rival consumption can push limited group of fishers to define working rules and institutions for its access and withdrawal. According to Ostrom, rivalry is embedded in the common.

Notwithstanding this point, if we consider the same sample in a wider perspective - fishery in oceans and seas as a system of resources, theoretically non excludable and non rival -, then we should speak about resource systems as global public goods and not as commons. But in fact, this resource (or system of resources) is necessary for human survival on earth, for the stability of ecosystems, and indeed rivalry in consumption exists and forms of agreement and institutions are required at global level, as forms of collective resource management by the global community<sup>14</sup>. From this perspective, the system of resource – fishery, oceans, seas – can thus be conceived as a global common.

The next step refers to public goods and commons as social rights and merit goods. At least in countries identified as “social-democracies”, public goods in normative terms are considered as Musgrave’s merit goods, whose provision should be guaranteed by the “State-community” for all the “State-community” (not only for citizens but for all residents within state boundaries) irrespective of consumers demand and of firms supply. Education, health care, television frequencies, the quality of environment and air, the protection of historical-artistic patrimony, culture, are – at least should be - sustained and provided by the State for all the citizenship. In the same way, but without taking into consideration the redistributive issue, a community who guarantees these rights via collective action is indeed offering public goods paid through the work of community members at a local level, thus manifesting a need or an interest in them.

So which is the difference between public goods and commons? The difference seems to lay on the actor providing the goods, and the territory and citizenship consuming or preserving it<sup>15</sup>.

This way, commons are public goods provided at a local level – in this sense rival - from the community on the base of shared rules among its members.

---

<sup>12</sup> According to the analysis by Aligika and Tarko (2012) about polycentric governance and the relation between Michael Polanyi’s works and the Ostroms, the mix/combination of four main features that can lead to at least to 288 different kinds of polycentric governance (Aligika and Tarko, 2012: 257)

<sup>13</sup>“*The mark of a capitalistic society is that resources are owned and allocated by such non governmental organization as firms, households, and markets. Resource owners increase productivity through cooperative specialization and this lead to the demand for economic organizations which facilitate cooperation.*” (Alchian, A. A., and Demsetz, H., 1972: 777).

<sup>14</sup> Examples of them are roundtables and international agreements on issue like fishery control, environmental issues, that indeed often lack the involvement of direct interested communities subjected to the outcomes of political decisions.

<sup>15</sup> For instance, according to Grazzini (2012) an objective as well as a subjective notion of commons exists. The latter is submitted to the existence of the community, whilst the former is related to intrinsic features.



In order to complete this picture, it is now worth to add the relation between public and private goods production and commons: to consider a private good, i.e. bread, do not prevent us to look to resources upon which bread production depends (land, water, seeds, clean air) as commons. In a way, this throws the definition of the commons, more closer to that of merit and essential goods, leading us also to an “economics of non-market goods and resources<sup>16</sup>” (Bateman, 2014), and thus to the second part of this brief.

Even though these perspectives are oriented towards the *practical part* of economic science and could be accused of normativity (for their focus on what “should be” than on what “will be” as in the critique by Auster and Silver (1973)), it’s worth to remind that each perspective has a philosophy and a set of values at its base. The same critique in fact could be applied to Davis and Whinston (1967) who, following a path linked with Hayek and Mont Pélerin Society’s conception of State sustaining the market (Mirowski and Plehwe, 2009), claimed for law to be used to support market for public goods, if it was not feasible via technology.

Here, the perception of individuals can help us to make a step further.

First of all, exiting the pattern of the homo oeconomicus and dealing with complexity and the refuse of systematic solutions, means that choices are left on individuals’ shoulders, who gather the responsibilities for social effects of their actions. This consideration opens space for the definition of the commons always enriched by the description of new experiences and economic practices related to this subject.

If some of these experiences conceive the commons as non-market goods, public or merit goods, it follows that commons are related with collective actions and re-appropriation of the power of decision making by individuals, in an attempt to reconstruct meaning(s) of institutions via practices of sharing, agreement and conflict. From this stand *methodological individualism* and *methodological collectivism* seem not “unreconcilable modes of perceiving social phenomena and the data from which human knowledge proceeds”(Cubeddu, Vannucci1993: 91).

Moreover, “Individuals often must make choices based on incomplete knowledge of all possible alternatives and their likely outcomes” (Ostrom 2012: 59). The assumptions of bounded rationality and imperfect knowledge meant that also in the democratic processes, incomplete information and “stochastic errors” are to be considered, with a consequent refuse to find “optimal solutions” on the curve of contracts, (as it was for Public choice approaches) and a need to orient policies also to *fruitful* “long, time consuming, *inefficient* processes” (Ostrom 1990: 31). The decisional efficiency, at least at local levels, may destroy in fact spectra of perspectives that sometimes result pivotal for a good functioning of working rules and of economy (Bowles and Gintis, 2004). From this stand, an evolutionary focus on intentions and individuals’ self-perception as a simple reflection and not as a normative assertion may be worth.

If today commons are conceived as a third way between the state and the market, public and private goods, it is thus possible to envisage them as a category of reconciliation of two main substantive factors of economy: work and land; efforts of society and environment; culture and nature, from which the spiritual and material survival of mankind depends. If “economy” (*oikonomia*) means the management of household affairs, commons require the government of a common house by interconnected and interdependent individuals who should insist in perceive themselves as sharing or being the same.

This consideration does not force the economic discourse, but link it with political practices and cultural reflections underlining the importance to consider the individual, social and environmental aspects of

---

<sup>16</sup> “such as those provided by the environment or via public expenditure. This broad category includes a diversity of goods ranging from recreation in open-access wilderness areas to health and safety improvements and across resources as different as the global climate system, the ozone layer and clean water. These are the goods and resources which determine so much of the quality of life and upon which the sustainable continuance not only of the market system but life itself depends.” Source: <http://www.springer.com/series/5919>

economy in a context of social and environmental crisis that is requiring a change of patterns, and may bring to new individuals' self-perception.

In this sense, the second part of the brief is dedicated to a perception of commons and collective action within these crisis.

**Policies: which lessons from commons within the crisis?**

*“The words we use and the ideas with which we work are most fundamental part of human reality. How we communicate with one another, think, act and do whatever we seek to achieve is shaped by the ambiguities of language.*

*What we presume to be true is expressed and mediated through the conventions of language and the experiences that human beings share in talking with, relating to. And working with one another. The exigencies of language and culture apply to what people profess as knowledge, what they do, and how they relate to one another in whatever they manage to achieve.” (Ostrom V. 1997:8 in Wall 2014: 55)*

Discussing about the definition of the commons, brought us to consider how basic economic concepts are results of human thought, history and cultures and are subjected to changes in perspectives, with some effects in their application into reality.

In particular, some historical factors had already played a role in the definitions of the public and private goods briefly analyzed in this paper: for instance, technological factors prove good insights about the attribution of rights on TV frequencies to private companies thanks to the invention of electronic devices.

If we consider examples and the following categorization provided by Adams and Mc Cornick (1987: 194):

		<b>Exclusion</b>	
		<b>Feasible</b>	<b>Non-Feasible</b>
	<b>Rival</b>	<b>1 Private Goods</b>	<b>2 Common Property Resources</b>
<b>Consumption</b>	<b>Congestible</b>	<b>5 Club Goods</b>	<b>6 Non-Marketable Impurely Public Goods</b>
	<b>Non-Rival</b>	<b>3 Marketable Public Goods</b>	<b>4 Non-Marketable Public Goods</b>

**Figure 2.**

and then consider the technological capabilities of our recent times, a question turns out immediately: in light of actual technological gains, do non-marketable public goods still exist? What does prevent typical examples of pure public goods like water, air, sky, forests and space to be marketed? If it is not because of the technological chain, on which base does their “non-marketability” rely upon?

If the answer provided to this question is “law”, the next step is to wonder which elements are basis for laws, their legitimacy and enforcement, turning the discourse to its political, cultural and social dimension.

In this perspective, something seems to have changed overtime today and we can maybe try to insert some endogenous variables affecting this discourse and related with technological and socio-structural changes leading to potentially renewed conceptions of state, public goods, global public goods, commons and citizenship. Some external conditions have in fact changed and shaped the transformations of society and individuals, and thus the sentence by Hume can provide some interesting insights:

*“Though government be an invention very advantageous, and even in some circumstances absolutely necessary to mankind; it is not necessary in all circumstances, nor is it impossible for men to preserve society for some time, without having recourse to such an invention. Men, it is true, are always much inclined to prefer present interest to distant and remote; nor is it easy for them to resist the temptation of any advantage, that they may immediately enjoy, in apprehension of an evil that lies at a distance from them.”* (Hume 1740, book 3, ch. 2, sect. VIII)

But which institution can best solve this problem? Are institutions key factors within this discussion? Like the solution of government for public goods and public interest against individual attempts to free-ride, the commons address the same problem. Since, according to Hume, it is not possible to change human nature, maybe some external conditions or circumstances may help in observing that “laws of justice are our nearest interest, and their violation our remote”. It is in this perspective that, according to the historical analysis by Laborda Péman and De Moor (2012), institutions for collective action grew. Indeed, as the authors (2012) pointed out, different factors such as environmental pressures and political fragmentation connected with population growth, urbanization and market development, had lead to the earlier formalization and spread of the commons during the late middle ages in Western Europe, in particular thanks to economies of scale, abatement of transaction and information costs and risk sharing.

As already underlined by Elster (2000), crisis provide opportunities for new “constitutions” and in this perspective, “resolution of crisis often involves agreements among contending - and often previously warring - groups of citizens that end hostilities and create new agreements about governance” (Weingast, 2005: 97). Moreover, as suggested by Jessop (2010: 346) “A significant moment in the development of economic imaginaries is the emergence of crises affecting economic identities and performance. Crises often create profound cognitive and strategic disorientation and trigger proliferation in interpretations and proposed solutions.” Nowadays, the growing interdependence, the climate change and others interrelated factors of social and economic instability are leaving breaches for social requests of autonomy and self-organization in different fields, raising several questions about the possibility and efficacy of self-organization and coordination for the management of global and local public goods as commons. On the other hand, these global pressures are increasing a general consciousness of the relation between individual and social well-being, and of the importance of global public goods, local commons and associated problems as limits and opportunities to deal with, in order to find “shared” solutions.

Recalling the previous observations on externalities<sup>17</sup> and property rights by Demsetz (1967)<sup>17</sup>, it is now worth to add an historical perspective on this issue. As just argued, indeed, social interdependencies are now clearly involved in everyday life due to a stronger net of social and economic relations, motivated by a shift in technological chain, via the spread of ICT, and by growing environmental chains (OECD). In this context so, externalities have increasing aggregate impacts and constitute a main problem rather than isolated – exclusive phenomena (Masini 2011: 65). Following these considerations, conception of property rights associated to common resources might change to achieve a greater internalization of social costs related to a wider community.

Indeed, the division and alienation of resources and lands through property rights in order to preserve them has already demonstrated its inconsistency. Examples of land grabbing, forest disruption, aquifer pollution and soil erosion linked with private property of these areas are already sadly evident, and sometimes constitute outcomes of mutual agreements between markets and governments, irrespective of social and environmental needs (see D'Alisa, G., Burgalassi, et al., 2010; Koopman, 2012; La Francesca, 2013). In this situation, as McCarthy (2005) suggested, requests by social movements and citizens arose to recollect social

---

<sup>17</sup> “a primary function of property rights is that of guiding incentives to achieve a greater internalization of externalities. Every cost and benefit associated with social interdependencies is a potential externality.” (Demsetz 1967: 348)

bonds, democratic participation and the right to nature and culture, threatened by temptations of greed within the market domain<sup>18</sup>.

So, the discourse about the commons suits with a tension towards the definition of rules of collective management of resources not-based on property rights but on shared representations and objectives, a point on which I will return beyond. Even though, as for Arrow's paradox, an efficient, wholly satisfactory outcome is not possible to reach via democracy, it is also true that the privatization of territories, on which communities' lives depends, determine the non internalization of any social and environmental cost for a community. This was a main argument against privatization, but unfortunately the same discourse may apply to governments intervention, further concerning the attempts to sell public land and patrimony to private investors. As suggested by Aligika and Tarko (2013) in the attempt to create "public value" a community engages in a collective action in which an input (of resources, ideas, energy and time) is transformed into an output of public relevance, according to some shared basic values and normative criteria within the community. This is not a theoretical discourse since now the question turns out immediately, explaining why commons are so relevant in public debates today: who makes the rules?

Insights by Hume offer once more a point of reflection:

"There is no quality in human nature, which causes more fatal errors in our conduct, than that which leads us to prefer whatever is present to the distant and remote, and makes us desire objects more according to their situation than their intrinsic value. *Two neighbours may agree to drain a meadow, which they possess in common; because it is easy for them to know each others mind; and each must perceive, that the immediate consequence of his failing in his part, is, the abandoning the whole project.* But it is very difficult, and indeed impossible, that a thousand persons should agree in any such action; it being difficult for them to concert so complicated a design, and still more difficult for them to execute it; while each seeks a pretext to free himself of the trouble and expence, and would lay the whole burden on others. Political society easily remedies both these inconveniences.(...) by the care of *government, which, though composed of men subject to all human infirmities, becomes, by one of the finest and most subtle inventions imaginable, a composition, which is, in some measure, exempted from all these infirmities*" (Hume 1740: bk.3 sect.VII, *On the Origins of Government* italic emphasis mine)

Even though as Hume suggested governments bore for these reason, from a certain point of view, present times show things differently. As just suggested, globalization (ICT development) and environmental pressures constitute two main factors of change, but other important factors occur.

In recent times, especially after economic crisis of 2007, states increasingly found themselves more as economic than as political actors with no interest in balancing markets' rules, as effect of a "cultural dismantling" of the framework of welfare state, and within a change of perspective about individual's merits and faults in a competitive system dominated by "markets' neutrality". Italy<sup>19</sup>, as well as others EU "peripheral" States, forced by constraining pressures of competitive financial markets and expectations on interest rates in the EU framework, is proceeding on the path of so-called "neoliberal agenda" with initial

---

<sup>18</sup> See D'Alisa, G., Burgalassi, et al., 2010; Koopman, 2012; La Francesca, 2013; Grain, J., Temper, L., et al. (2014); Zimmerer, K. S. (1993); Armiero, M., & D'Alisa, G. (2012); Di Costanzo, G., & Ferraro, S. (2013)

<sup>19</sup> According to Benkler and Jorgensen (2011 : 6-9) "The north-east of Italy formed part of the German-centred productive system as well (Mazzocchi 2010: 261). Parts of the Italian economy were rather export-oriented. Nonetheless, economic development in Italy was characterized by low productivity increases, very low economic growth and partial downgrading in the international division of labour (Barucci/Pierobon 2010: 34 ff.). Financialization was rather weak and the banking industry followed a conservative model" (....) "The problem of inflated financial assets and structural over-indebtedness of a part of the banking sector and private debtors was not tackled. The appearance of normal activity was sustained but the financing of productive activities came under pressure (Toporowski 2010a: 31). The re-regulation of the financial sector was restricted to minor changes. By and large, the status quo remained unchanged (Redak/Weber 2010, Troost 2011).(....) Contrary to this focus on the financial sector, the activation of the productive sector was of secondary importance."

rescue responses directed to the financial sector, policies of “austerity” through cuts in public expenditure, increase in fiscal pressure, privatizations and a final sell of public assets and heritages. Moreover, “generous discretionary powers have been given to the executive, or its nominees to solve the crisis” (Jessop 2010: 348). Tensions between the European-national and local-municipal levels increased with the insertion of stronger norms of control on public spending, also through constitutional modifications (i.e. for art.81 of Italian Constitution) by Parliaments, in a rush of top-down interventions justified by national Italian policy-maker as a necessary answer to a European will. Inserting the discourse into the theoretical pattern described before, States are decreasing production of public goods and services, (or) increasing social costs (taxes) for their (lower) production, allowing their distribution and provision by private markets<sup>20</sup>. The result of these policies is a misalignment of state and public interest whose concurrence normally legitimates the institution(s). In spite of this situation, several communities began to organize themselves in order to provide at least a part of essential “public” goods and services thanks to citizens’ work and via collective action. In many territories, and in many urban areas, public goods *de iure* – from parks and fields to closed buildings and theaters –*de facto* treated as open access regimes, abandoned, wasted or let to public indifference, then sold to private investors, became what Ostrom (2000) called *commons “de facto”*, re-taken, re-shaped and managed by communities for social purpose on the base of local knowledge and know-how, to provide services and solutions to local needs and problems.

By this way, natural commons like basins and fishery whose management via collective action requires shared representations, formal and informal norms, rules and institutions to solve conflicts related to scarcity and to potential attempts to free ride on the resource, are not different from urban common spaces potentially managed by communities to provide collective goods and services in a time of scarcity and pressure due to an economic crisis, (both through mechanisms of conflict and mediation with local and national institutions).

Examples of urban commons managed by communities are now manifold in Italy (in particular in Rome, Naples, Pisa, Bologna) Greece (Embros Theatre in Athens,) and other States, and studies in economic literature about this topic are growing (Tumminelli O’Brien, 2012; Foster 2011; Lee, Webster 2006).

Now another step is necessary, as it was for the consideration of a Social-ecological system in the conceptual framework of polycentric governance previously cited. Out of any illusion, but from a perspective on theories as versions of the world (Goodman, 1978<sup>21</sup>), if individuals build meanings by experience and perceptions of reality, commons are now assuming a different significance. The outcome of these experiments can’t be closed in the definition of common pool resources provided by Ostrom<sup>22</sup>.

### **Tentative concluding remarks**

Through the commons and related political participation, individuals and communities are now re-embedding government and market within a common sense of society, through an evolutionary conception of identity. These communities have their own working rules, but they are not isolated atoms in the social domain nor clubs supposedly because of the two endogenous (and interrelated) factors mentioned in this change of perception on the commons: globalization and environmental crisis. Both are in fact related with ontology and perception of identity, the former as major potential connection with other ideas, human beings and perspectives, the latter as a common problem whose solution requires an effort of coordination and a share of objectives and representations, via a long, “inefficient” process (Ostrom, 1990:31) of collective

---

<sup>20</sup> In contrast with a conception of public good and merit goods designed by Alfred Marshall and then Musgrave, whose conception, provision also without demand characterized the

<sup>21</sup> in Flick 2009:97

<sup>22</sup> “common-pool resources (CPRs) are natural or human-made facilities (or stocks) that generate flows of usable resource units over time. CPRs share two characteristics: (1) it is costly to develop institutions to exclude potential beneficiaries from them, and (2) the resource units harvested by one individual are not available to others” (Ostrom, Gardner, Walker 1994)

action and risk sharing. If commons should be perceived as public goods, potentially rival, whose provision and interest are in charge of concentric and increasingly wider communities (to tackle and discuss problems of externalities and develop common working rules), then commons reshapes social organizations and the perceptions of identity, providing a shift in the conception of citizenship<sup>23</sup> via the recognition of inter-subjective, interconnected, stratified, overlapped identities that seem to characterize the individual in present times. On this path, perception of individual identity is evolved as in constant connection with others' identities, efforts and history(ies) in a complex frame, suggesting the same shift in the conception of individual property as a base and a burden toward a sharing of common interdependencies, wealth and risks. A reflection and deepening of identity self-perception by individuals and acknowledgments of human interdependence can be interesting in addressing the consequent emerging issue of conflicting ethics.

## References

- Adams, R. D., & McCormick, K. (1987). Private Goods, Club Goods, And Public Goods As A Continuum\*. *Review of Social Economy*, 45(2), 192-199.
- Alchian, A. A., & Demsetz, H. (1972). Production, Information Costs, and Economic Organization. *American Economic Review*, 62(5), 777-795.
- Aligica, P. D., & Tarko, V. (2012). Polycentricity: from Polanyi to Ostrom, and beyond. *Governance*, 25(2), 237-262.
- Aligica, P. D., & Tarko, V. (2013). Co-production, polycentricity, and value heterogeneity: the Ostroms' public choice institutionalism revisited. *American Political Science Review*, 107(04), 726-741.
- Armiero, M., & D'Alisa, G. (2012). Rights of resistance: the garbage struggles for environmental justice in Campania, Italy. *Capitalism Nature Socialism*, 23(4), 52-68.
- Arrow, K., 1970. Political and economic evaluation of social effects and externalities. In *The analysis of public output* (pp. 1-30). UMI.
- Auster, R., & Silver, M. (1973). Collective goods and collective decision mechanisms. *Public Choice*, 14(1), 1-17.
- Bateman, I.J. (2014) *The Economics of Non-Market Goods and Resources*, Springer.
- Becker, C. (2006). The human actor in ecological economics: Philosophical approach and research perspectives. *Ecological Economics*, 60(1), 17-23.
- Becker, J., & Jäger, J. (2011, September). European Integration in Crisis: the Centre-Periphery Divide. In *17th Euromemo Workshop on Alternative Economic Policy*, Vienna (pp. 16-18).
- Bowles, S. (2009). *Microeconomics: behavior, institutions, and evolution*. Princeton University Press.
- Bowles, S., & Gintis, H. (2004). Persistent parochialism: trust and exclusion in ethnic networks. *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization*, 55(1), 1-23.
- Buchanan, J. (1965). An Economic Theory of Clubs. *Economica*, 32, February
- Buchanan, J., and Stubblebine, W. C. (1962). Externality, *Economica*, 29, 371—384
- Buchana, J. (1967). Public Goods in theory and practice, *journal of law and Economics*, 10, 193-197.
- Coase, R. H., 1960. "The Problem of Social Cost, *Journal of Law and Economics*, 3, 1—44.
- Commons, J. R. (1931). Institutional economics. *The American economic review*, 648-657.
- Commons, J. R. (1950). *The economics of collective action*. Macmillan.
- Costanza S., Masini F., (2013). Governing the Commons.A Historical Perspective, Working paper X STOREP conference, 2013 unpublished
- Cubeddu, R., & Vannucci, A. (1993). Economic planning and the Austrian School. *Revue européenne des sciences sociales*, 85-131.
- D'Alisa, G., Burgalassi, D., Healy, H., & Walter, M. (2010). Conflict in Campania: Waste emergency or crisis of democracy. *Ecological economics*, 70(2), 239-249.
- Dalton, R. J. (2008). Citizenship norms and the expansion of political participation. *Political studies*, 56(1), 76-98.
- Davis, O. A., & Whinston, A. B. (1967). On the distinction between public and private goods. *The American Economic Review*, 360-373.
- De Viti de Marco, A. (1936). *First Principles of Public Finance*. Jonathan Cape, London.
- Deacon, R., Shapiro, P. (1975). Private Preference for Collective Goods Revealed Through Voting on Referenda, *American Economic Review*, 65(5), 943-955.
- Demsetz, H., (1964). The Exchange and Enforcement of Property Rights, *Journal of Law and Economics*, 7, 11-26.
- Demsetz, H.,(1967). Toward a Theory of Property Rights. *American Economic Review*, 57, 347- 359.
- Di Costanzo, G., & Ferraro, S. (2013). The Landfill in the Countryside: Waste Management and Government of the Population in Campania. *Capitalism Nature Socialism*, 24(4), 17-28.
- Elster, J. (2000). *Ulysses unbound: Studies in rationality, precommitment, and constraints*. Cambridge University Press
- Faber, M., Petersen, T., & Schiller, J. (2002). Homo oeconomicus and homo politicus in ecological economics. *Ecological Economics*, 40(3), 323-333.

---

<sup>23</sup> On this issue see Dalton (2008)

- Fehr, E., & Gächter, S. (1998). Reciprocity and economics: The economic implications of “Homo Reciprocans”. *European economic review*, 42(3), 845-859.
- Flick, U. (2009). *An introduction to qualitative research*. Sage.
- Foster, S. (2011). Collective Action and the Urban Commons. *notre dame law review*, 87, 57.
- Grain, J., Temper, L., Munguti, S., Matiku, P., Ferreira, H., Soares, W., ... & Singh, S. J. (2014). The many faces of land grabbing.
- Goodman, N. (1978). *Ways of worldmaking* (Vol. 51). Hackett Publishing.
- Grazzini, E. (2012). *Beni comuni e diritti di proprietà. Per una concezione giuridica*.
- Head, J. G. (1966). On merit goods. *FinanzArchiv/Public Finance Analysis*, 1-29.
- Head, J. G., & Shoup, C. S. (1969). Public goods, private goods, and ambiguous goods. *The Economic Journal*, 567-572.
- Hicks, J. R. (1940). The valuation of the social income. *Economica*, 105-124.
- Hume, D., 1739. *A Treatise of Human Nature*, 1896, L.A. Selby-Bigge, M.A. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1896) av.at [http://michaeljohnsonphilosophy.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/5010\\_Hume\\_Treatise\\_Human\\_Nature.pdf](http://michaeljohnsonphilosophy.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/5010_Hume_Treatise_Human_Nature.pdf) last search 18/03/2014
- Jessop, B. (2010). Cultural political economy and critical policy studies. *Critical policy studies*, 3(3-4), 336-356.
- Kaldor, N., 1935. Market Imperfection and Excess Capacity, *Economica*, Vol. 2, pp. 33—50.
- Knight F. H., 1924. "Some Fallacies in the Interpretation of Social Cost," *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, Vol. 38, 582—606.
- Koopman, J. (2012). Land grabs, government, peasant and civil society activism in the Senegal River Valley. *Review of African Political Economy*, 39(134), 655-664.;
- Kuznets, S. (1948). On the Valuation of Social Income-Reflections on Professor Hicks' Article. Part I. *Economica*, 1-16.
- LaFrancesca, j. (2013). Land Grabs and Implications on Food Sovereignty and Social Justice in Senegal" (2013). Master Theses. Paper 79.;
- Laborda Péman, M., De Moor, T., 2012. A Tale of Two Commons: Some Preliminary Hypotheses on the Long-Term Development of the Commons in Western and Eastern Europe, 1000-1900, (31). Available at: <http://www.cgeh.nl/working-paper-series/>.
- Lee, S., and Webster, C. (2006). Enclosure of the urban commons. *GeoJournal*, 66(1-2), 27-42.
- Marschak, T., 1959. Centralization and Decentralization in Economic Organizations, *Econometrica*, Vol. 27, 399—430.
- Marshall, A., 1890. The Principles of Economics <http://socserv2.socsci.mcmaster.ca/~econ/ugcm/3ll3/marshall/prin/index.html>
- Masini F. (2011). Economia malata: oltre la sindrome di Beck?“, *Il Ponte*, maggio, LXVII(5), 64-7.
- Masini, F. (2012). Designing the institutions of international liberalism: some contributions from the interwar period. *Constitutional Political Economy*, 23(1), 45-65.
- McCarthy, J., 2005. Commons as counterhegemonic projects. *Capitalism Nature Socialism*, 16(1), 9—24.
- McGuire, M. (1972). Private good clubs and public good clubs: Economic models of group formation. *The Swedish journal of economics*, 84-99.
- Meade, J. E. (1973). *The Theory of Economic Externalities: The Control of Environmental Pollution and Similar Social Costs* (Vol. 2). Brill Archive.
- Meade, J. E., 1952. External Economies and Diseconomies in a Competitive Situation, *Economic Journal*, Vol. 62, 59—67.
- Mishan, E. J. (1969). The relationship between joint products, collective goods, and external effects. *Journal of Political Economy*, 77(3), 329-48.
- Mirowski, P., & Plehwe, D. (Eds.). (2009). *The Road from Mont Pelerin*. Harvard University Press.
- Musgrave, R. A. (1939). The voluntary exchange theory of public economy. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 53(2), 213-237.
- Musgrave, R. A., (1959). *The Theory of Public Finance: A Study in Public Economy*, New York.
- Musgrave, R.A., (1957). A Multiple Theory of the Budget, *FinanzArchiv - New Series*, 25(1), pp. 33—43.
- Musgrave, R. A. (1997). Devolution, grants, and fiscal competition. *The journal of Economic perspectives*, 65-72.
- Ostrom, E., (1990). *Governing the Commons, The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Ostrom, E., (1994). *Neither Market nor State: Governance of Common Pool Resources in the Twenty-First Century*, Washington, D.C.: International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI).
- Ostrom, E., (2000). Private and Common Property Rights, in *Encyclopedia of Law and Economics*, Vol. II: Civil Law and Economics, pp. 332-379. Ghent, Belgium: University of Ghent. Available at: <http://www.sfu.ca/~allen/commonproperty.pdf>.
- Ostrom, E. (2007). A General Framework for Analyzing Sustainability of. In *Proc. R. Soc. London Ser. B* (Vol. 274, p. 1931).
- Ostrom, E. (2009). Polycentric systems as one approach for solving collective- action problems. In M. A. Mohamed Salih, ed. *Climate Change and Sustainable Development: New Challenges for Poverty Reduction*. Northampton Massachussets: Edward Elgar Publishing, pp. 1—22.
- Ostrom, E. (2010). Beyond markets and states: polycentric governance of complex economic systems. *The American economic review*, 641-672.
- Ostrom, E. (2012). coevolving relationships between Political science and economics. *Rationality, Markets and Morals*, 3(54).
- Ostrom, V., Warren, R., Tiebout, C. M. (1961). The organization of government in metropolitan areas: a theoretical inquiry. *The American Political Science Review*, 831-842.
- Ostrom, V. (1997). *The meaning of democracy and the vulnerability of democracies: A response to Tocqueville's challenge*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Pigou, A.C., 1924 “The economics of welfare” Transaction Publishers.

- Quilligan, J. (2012). Why distinguish common goods from public goods. *The Wealth of the Commons. A world beyond market & state*. Levellers Press. Amherst, MA. Abridged version available at [http://p2pfoundation.net/Public\\_Goods\\_vs\\_Common\\_Goods](http://p2pfoundation.net/Public_Goods_vs_Common_Goods).
- Samuelson P. A. (1954). The pure theory of public expenditure. *The review of economics and statistics*, 387-389.
- Samuelson, P. A. (1950). Evaluation of real national income. *Oxford Economic Papers*, 2(1), 1-29.
- Schlager, E., & Ostrom, E. (1992). Property-rights regimes and natural resources: A conceptual analysis. *Land economics*, 68(3).
- Scitovsky, T., 1954. "Two Concepts of External Economies," *Journal of Political Economy*, Vol. 62, pp. 143—151.
- Stansel, D. (2012). Competition, knowledge, and local government. *The Review of Austrian Economics*, 25(3), 243-253.
- Strotz, R. H. (1958). Two propositions related to public goods. *The Review of Economics and Statistics*, 329-331.
- Tiebout, C. M. 1956. A Pure Theory of Local Expenditures. *Journal of Political Economy*, 64 (October): 416-424.
- O'Brien, D. T. (2012). Managing the Urban Commons. *Human Nature*, 23(4), 467-489.
- Wall, D. (2014). *The Sustainable Economics of Elinor Ostrom: Commons, Contestation and Craft*. Routledge.
- Weingast, B. R. (2005). The constitutional dilemma of economic liberty. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 89-108.
- Young, A. A. (1913). Pigou's wealth and welfare. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 27(4), 672-686.
- Zimmerer, K. S. (1993). Soil erosion and social (dis) courses in Cochabamba, Bolivia: perceiving the nature of environmental degradation. *Economic Geography*, 312-327.