

*Extending the Ostrom perspective in history: collective resources in the Kingdom of Naples in the 13th and 18th centuries.*

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Historical studies on commons were regarded for a long time as individual cases, local or regional, until the work of Elinor Ostrom provided a solid theoretical approach and allowed the development of comparative projects both in the national and international level (De Moor, Shaw- Taylor and Warde 2002; Alfani, Rao 2011). Until then in Italy as in Europe studies focused on the legal aspects of the phenomenon in their broader meaning – such as the establishment of a body of collective goods, its corpus of rules and its conflicts - as well as investigating their end which started during the 18th century and continued especially during the liberalization wave of the 19th.

In the light of Ostrom results, Garrett Hardin 's thesis concerning the indiscriminate exploitation of the commons has been revised also regarding the past. In reference to some European areas, historians have shown, on the basis of empirical and archival research, the existence of a rules governing the management of the commons capable of regulating and restricting the use of local resources in order to achieve a sustainable management (Van Zanden 1999, De Moor 2009).

This paper refers to Southern Italy, an area covering over 70,000 sq and presenting extremely different geographical and environmental features (from the high Appennines to the Mediterranean coastal plain). The attention will be directed toward the following points: 1) the rules regulated the use of the commons; 2) the amount of the communal assets which produced income and was recorded in the balance sheets between seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

The endogenous origin of the institutional aspect plays a significant role in the economic governance of the commons and, in effect, constitutes the basis for comparison to evaluate if there are successful settings or settings destined for failure. The eight design principles drawing by Elinor Ostrom are used as a guide to define the CPR (Common Pool Resource) in Southern Italy. The examination of the historical evidence reveals the extent to which the conceptual framework developed by Elinor Ostrom can be applied well beyond the original parameters and allows us to recover a rich experience at self- governance where the institutional aspect of endogenous matrix assumes a significant role in economic governance.

Finding common elements involves looking at the rules that regulate the use of the commons. Local customs were in force over long period of time (from the thirteenth to nineteenth). Time periods, places, quantities, periodic redistribution methods, procedures and techniques were defined. There were multiple aims: to ensure sufficient resources for the needs of the family nucleus of all citizens; to preserve such resources in time in order to guarantee their reproduction and claim a tax, in terms of agricultural produce or money, for the creation of revenue for the *universitates* (local communities) balance sheets.

The municipal customs had the force of law and precedence of every other law in the hierarchy of regulatory institutions. Although the customs were rarely codified, the municipal statutes and chapters, undersigned by the local communities and the sovereign and the feudatory, contain long references. No authority present in the territory could intervene to modify the customary rules and only municipal institution, the *bagliva*, had the power to ensure their enforcement.

The force of custom did not determine the hardening of the system. Rather they were rules able to adapt in time to the needs of the communities and to follow their changes. As has known, the use of the municipal property was function of the demographic dynamics and the demand for land and, during constant use, recorded the prevalence of either the grazing land or sowing or highly intensive cultivation.

The questions that I'll try to answer are:

If the management of commons had continued life for over five centuries can therefore be concluded that it was efficient and sustainable?

What kind of conflicts arose regarding the use of common goods and who were the stakeholders and what interests were they carriers of?

Finally, it is true that no external authority had the power to act on the rules of management whose adaptations arose from within, but did the strong powers on the territory (feudality, Church, the ruling elites) have room to manoeuvre in the path of appropriation and dispossession of communal resources ?