



# Practicing the **commons**

Self-governance, cooperation and institutional change

10-14 July 2017  
Utrecht, the Netherlands  
XVI Biennial IASC-Conference

## **(RE) - CREATING THE COMMONS: SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF NEW COMMONS**

**Learning from the case of water management  
in the city of Naples (Italy)**

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# INTRODUCTION

- Lack of studies & literature on the emergence of commons (Madison et al, 2009; McGinnis & Ostrom, 2014)
  - ▶ those rare studies focus on
    - resilience of institutions and organisations (Olsson et al, 2004; Armitage et al, 2009; Hannachi et al, 2010; Vollan, 2012; Dedeurwaerdere et al, 2017)
    - community building (Poteete et al, 2010; Ruiz-Ballesteros and Gual, 2012; Duraiappah et al, 2014; Ohler and Billger, 2014; Lindahl et al, 2015)

Therefore, little is known about  
how commons emerge



# OBJECTIVES OF THE PAPER

## 1. HOW DOES A NEW COMMON EMERGE?

**1a. WHO ARE THE KEY ACTORS** involved in the creation of a common?

**1b. THROUGH WHICH PROCESS** those actors contribute to the creation of the common?



# METHODOLOGY

- qualitative research design (Dumez, 2016)
- case study methodology (Eisenhardt, 1989; Yin, 2003) (some infringements)
- semi-structured interviews
- narrative methodology

NAPLES because:

- Italy is the only country that legally included a «commons» category in the Constitution
- Water management in Naples is the first -and the most-advanced epitome of this constitutional change (Bailey and Mattei, 2013; Mattei, 2013)



# RESULTS

Ante 1994: water management as a complex interaction of

- natural resource (water)
- human infrastructures (e.g. aqueducts)
- heritage.

Municipal management of water (AMAN)+ local actors>

water's management at a *human scale*



Roman aqueduct in Naples,  
Augustus time

source: <http://napoli.repubblica.it>

# RESULTS

1994: Law Galli, *hydrogeological scale* of water's management (ATO), aims of cost-effectiveness and profit of the single provider (ARIN)



2009-2011: Ronchi Decree paves the way towards privatisation

# RESULTS

Turning point: citizens uprising > water activism articulated in

- ▶ manifestations
- ▶ petitions
- ▶ events

+ support of

- ▶ open-source software activists
- ▶ lawyers



# RESULTS

12th June 2011: water activism results in an abrogative referendum, leading to:

1. regulatory innovation, water as a common good

2. organisational innovation, ABC

3. social innovation, participatory democracy, and symbolic innovation





# 1. HOW DOES A NEW COMMON EMERGE?

<i>Process</i>	<i>Key players and actions</i>	<i>Steps</i>
Raising awareness among users and federate them	<u>Activists</u> propaganda, develop and deliver mass communication and public awareness campaigns	Community building started
Shaping a shared definition of the common and requalification of the collective resource	Experts and <u>activists'</u> interactions	Common concept re-appropriation
Legal protection of the common	Politics and <u>activists</u> lobbying (referendum and constitution change)	Regulatory innovation
Shaping the governance system of the common	Innovative entrepreneurs and <u>activists'</u> interactions (experimentations and adaptive management)	Organizational innovation
Enlarge empowerment of users and transformation of the community (strengthen the legitimacy inside the community)	Entrepreneurs and <u>activists</u> launch popular education (museum, educative comics book, water festival...)	Set of new institutional arrangement
Struggles for the defense of the commons (strengthen the legitimacy outside the community)	Lawyers, politics, <u>activists</u> and entrepreneurs	New common raised

# 1a. WHO ARE THE KEY ACTORS involved in the creation of a common?

- Citizens
- Local representatives, syndicates, religious bodies
- Law experts (e.g. Ugo Mattei)
- Environmental/ anti-globalisations/ open-source softwares associations
- Water activists associations all over Italy

*«The war for privatisation was started by politicians in political arenas, but it has been won on the internet by the activists against private property» (a water militant)*



# 1b. THROUGH WHICH PROCESS those actors contribute to the creation of the common?

- Rodotà Commission (new category of legal property)  
*«The same way you need to fight fire with fire, you need to fight laws with laws... And we have been able thanks to jurists to create some regulatory innovations»* (a local elected representative)
- Massive awareness-raising campaign + Internet petition
- Participative democracy (ABC)
- Co-creation of a new model of governance

# CONCLUSIONS

- Performativity of the concept of commons: broad definition so as to enhance its creativeness and operativeness
- Key actors: institutional entrepreneurs; Ugo Mattei and other actors
- Process: social movements frame the *emergence* of the common, translation into regulatory innovation and organisational innovation



# LIMITS & PERSPECTIVES

- Grounded understandings BUT little room for generalisation
- Need of further participative researches

ARE THERE OTHER SIMILAR EXPERIENCES  
THAT CAN BE BROUGHT TO THE TABLE?

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