

CULTURAL COMMONS

FIRST INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP
SILVIA SANTAGATA RESEARCH CENTRE - EBLA
Turin (Italy) 29-30 January 2010

Call for papers
Submissions of the extended abstracts:
deadline : 20th of November 2009

Aim of this international workshop is to analyse **Cultural Commons** from a number of different perspectives.

Cultural Commons refer to cultures located in time and space – either physical or virtual - and shared and expressed by a socially cohesive community. Some examples are: the cultural image of a city, the brand of Chianti wine from Tuscany, artistic movements, user generated contents on the web, traditional knowledge held by indigenous communities and the creativity expressed by designers' communities.

All the above examples share intangible cultural and symbolic values, which may be embodied either in products or content. In some cases, the production and appropriation of the cultural commons value follow market logic, in others they rely on social mechanism of production and exchange. In some cases, the cultural commons is produced by close knit groups, in others it relies on the openness of communities and on the voluntary contribution of its members.

Thus, how can a *Cultural Commons* be defined? Which are their peculiar characteristics and how do they work?

To explore all these questions the workshop will be divided into the following sections:

I. Cultural Commons and the theory of Commons

Which are the main theoretical differences between **Commons** and **Cultural Commons**?

First, because of their intangible nature, **Cultural Commons** do not suffer from limited carrying capacity. **Cultural Commons** focus upon the analysis of the behaviour of *contributors* rather than the rationale of self-damaging choice of the *appropriators*. In this case **Cultural Commons** benefit from scale and network effects.

The transmission of a **Cultural Commons** to the next generation depends on the capacity of cultural development of the community, i.e. on the increase of the accumulated stock of cultural capital. Without reaching an optimal development rate, culture tends to become stationary, without any dynamic force moving it forward to the next generation. As corollary of this issue comes the distinction between stationary and cumulative culture, and the notion of cultural resilience.

According to which rationale **Cultural Commons** rise, fall and survive? In particular: does empirical evidence show the existence of standard pattern in Cultural Commons life-cycle? Is it possible to identify the causes of a Cultural Common decline? Does creativity fosters the development of **Cultural Commons** or destabilize the existing forms of cultural expression?

When looking at the symbolic content of **Cultural Commons**, the internal dynamics of the community should also be examined. There exists "field of forces" *à la Bourdieu* ? Which are the main axes crossing the field? Who is in the dominant position? Which are the strategies both of those willing to enter and of those willing to maintain the *status quo*?

Interesting cases studies from languages, handicraft, music and dance, art, and technologies can illustrate this point.

II. Governing the Cultural Commons

A fundamental issue in the Commons theory is how to govern them and how to rule individual cooperative behaviour. This matter seems a crucial one also for **Cultural Commons**. When the institutional top-down approach is successful for the creation of **Cultural Commons**? What kind of policy intervention can facilitate the evolution of a potential **Cultural Common** into a real one? Which is the role of intellectual property rights? In which conditions intellectual property rights can provide the right incentives to produce, conserve, and access culture?

III. Cultural Commons and Cultural districts

The economic theory on industrial districts is based mainly on the Marshallian externalities of localized firms. The link between culture and the local society is provided by the concept of idiosyncrasy of the cultural phenomenon. Many case studies confirm the powerful role of cultural districts in local economic development.

Is there a nexus between **Cultural Commons** and Cultural Districts? What an appellation of origin of a wine, a language, and a User-Generated Content web site (i.e. Flickr, YouTube, Wikipedia etc.) have in common?

Can new institutional settings increase the link between **Cultural Commons** and local development? Do *Cultural Commons* offer a better perspective when dealing with local development processes? How do free contributors compete each others while participating to the construction of a **Cultural Commons**?

Long term effects of **Cultural Commons** on local development can be found especially looking at their power in mobilizing economic forces and original institutions around a culture identity.

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Theoretical contributions as well as case studies are welcome. The workshop is open to scholars, doctoral students and young researchers, from economics, sociology, law and other related fields. A selection of the contributions will be published in a special issue of a review or in book.

Please submit abstracts to: centrostudi@css-ebila.it

The deadline for extended abstract submission is the 20th of November 2009:

Some travel and accommodation funds are available.

Acceptance will be notified respectively by the 1st of December 2009.

For more information about the conference and further questions please visit www.css-ebila.it or contact centrostudi@css-ebila.it