(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

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
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
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?**

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


GRAZIE FOR YOUR ATTENTION!