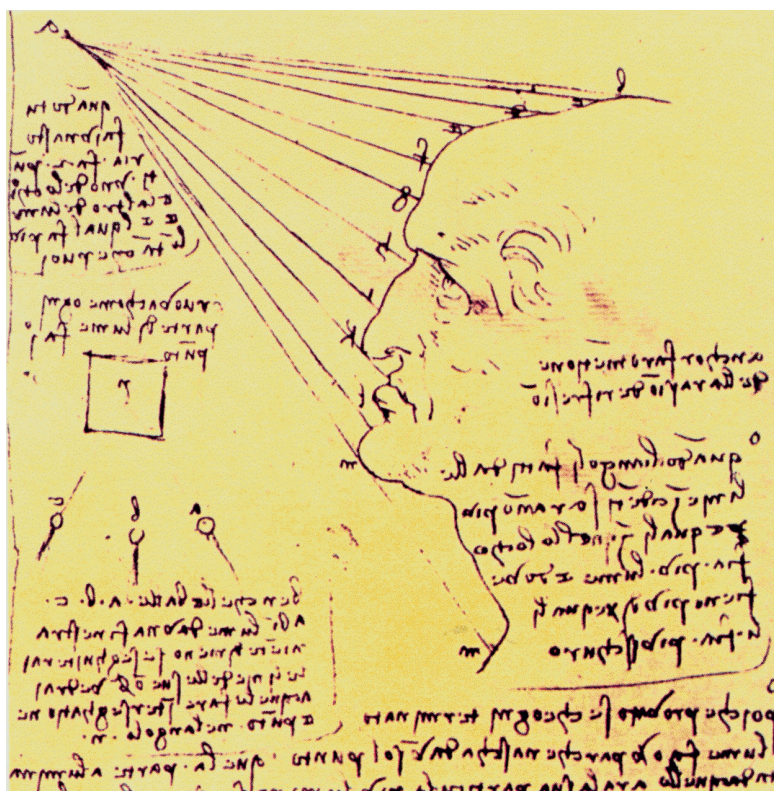


INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ANTHROPOLOGY

VOLUME 33

JULY - DECEMBER 2018 - N. 3-4



ANGELO PONTECORBOLI EDITORE
FIRENZE

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ANTHROPOLOGY

OFFICIAL ORGAN OF THE EUROPEAN ANTHROPOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

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INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ANTHROPOLOGY

is published as one volume per annum in four issues

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Cover illustration: Drawing by Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519) - Study of the Human Face

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SPECIAL ISSUE
**CULTIVATING OUR COMMONS,
MELDING TWO COMPLEX IDEAS**

EDITED BY
Gian Luigi Corinto

Cultivating our Commons, Melding Two Complex Ideas

Gian Luigi Corinto

Coordinator of the Section Environment and Territory
Department of Education Cultural Heritage and Tourism
of the University of Macerata, Italy.

In the last quarter of the XX century, four base themes powerfully emerged regarding the collective feeling and aspirations of peoples: peace, freedom, development, and environment. In the post-WWII, peace has been threatened by the nuclear arms race, which has anyhow assured the peace at world level. On the contrary, peace is shattered at many regional levels, where the superpowers confront each other by furnishing local armies with conventional weapons. The world total number of wars is decreasing, even though peace seems very far to be achieved, especially in Africa and the Middle East. More recently, terrorism appears to be the main menace to peace, at any geographical level.

In the same period, liberty has been more and more sought, after the end of colonial imperialism, the increasing contrast to totalitarian regimes, and the geographical diffusion of democracy, a political regime more respectful of human rights, of women, minorities, and local peoples. Many new independent States have been capable to improve their economies and sustain the basic needs of the poor. Nevertheless, only in the last near five decades environment (at global and local levels) entered the institutional and legal agenda. Today the environment is finally one of the arguments that entered the individual and collective aspirations, at local, regional, and global scale. Respect of nature reached the same rank of importance as other abovementioned concepts such as peace and freedom, which are well rooted in very ancient collective feelings.

The *Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future*, redacted in 1987, reports a definition of “sustainable development” coinciding with a largely diffused and very popularized affirmation: «Humanity has the ability to make development sustainable to ensure that it meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”. This definition is both beautiful and fluid, namely adaptable to any program regarding the environment as a whole, or development in itself, to industries, institutions, governments, the civil

society, and even private and public projects, hopes, aspirations, at different scales of importance and intensity. The concept is vast and adaptable so that no one can easily take a position against “sustainable development”, yet maintaining a sense of intrinsic ambiguity. Furthermore, the already familiar expression “sustainable development” often appears to have suffered a cultural downsizing in a sort of mantra, good for marketing, and in some way weak before a theoretical critique. Yet, the concept is too important for current and future generations for avoiding deepening. It offers too a multidimensional possibility of study, not to be underrated by scholars of different disciplines dealing with the environment.

Thus, which could be a paradigm capable of getting closer diverse scientific approaches in studying “sustainable development” has been the central point of many scientific meetings among the members of the Section Environment and Territory (E&T), I have the honor to coordinate. Over time, ideas for proposed joint researches have been several, ranging from theoretical to operative ones, and putting in light several topics and approaches. But two words emerged more often than other during the meetings. One is the term *the commons*. The second one is *cultivation*. Over millennia, humans had “cultivated the earth” for improving their life conditions, always producing diverse histories, geographies, and philosophies. For scholars of different disciplines, the problem of studying how social communities are capable of producing territories, transforming the space in places, appeared to be the main point of eventually shared interest. The Section E&T decided to put together all these studies in a publication dedicated to the topic *Commons and Cultivation*, inviting also colleagues coming from other Departments and Universities. The current issue of the International Journal of Anthropology gathers the selected and approved papers on the topic.

The purpose of studying jointly *Commons* and *Cultivation* is per se a challenging goal and it poses the necessity of dealing with different themes that appear to be close even though their vicinity is blurred by a certain ambiguity. This appears to be intrinsic, and not only because very diverse academic disciplines, based on different methodologies, are involved. Both the terms have a practical use, namely in real life, but both of them open problems of theoretical interpretations and do strongly challenge scholars to distinguish the concept of *complexity* from that of *complicatedness*, especially when referring to social and even natural systems. In a complicated system, individual elements can be isolated and studied as such, not finding any relational link among each other. In a complex system, the elements are more or less interrelated, and the core problem is properly that a singular element is intimately relational, and should be correctly studied considering this characteristic. In living and social systems, complexity does increase over time, yet not being fixed. It is also very clear that complexity and culture face reciprocally in a complex manner. In cultivating a commons, humans often produce a complex system of relations, involving private and public decisions, even up to originating the discussion about power and democracy.

In his following paper philosopher Francesco Totaro says: «Moreover, we have to reflect upon the derivation of *cultivare* and *cultus* from the verb *colere*, which means too dwelling an home or a territory and creating a relationship of friendship by care and attention to a person whom we hold dear» (Totaro, in this issue, p. 255), stressing the intrinsic meanings of *taking care* and *creating relation* the word *cultivation* has. I should add the eventual meanings of *increase* and *divide* contained in the same term *cultivation*, even considering the mere act of plowing land for fertilizing and producing more quantities of crops. In a metaphorical sense, cultivation is to be related to the term *culture*, and the subsequent necessity of considering the sense of cultivating the human capacities for increasing them. I can also add the consideration that *culture* derives from Latin *culter*, the knife of the plow capable of vertically cutting the ground, and thus fertilizing the farmland, and designing the shape of agricultural fields. Actually, when our ancestors traced with that knife a groove for founding a new town, they were setting fences and giving sense to borders. They did immediately separate the city from the countryside with a clear signal, and they did divide citizens from farmers or, maybe worse, civilized from savages. The use of the term *cultivation* appears in all its cultural complexity and, if you want, ambiguity. Moreover, when humans should cultivate a common land (a piece of the earth surface), the thing appears in its astonishing complexity, for philosophers as well as for any other specialized scholar, facing the problem of interpreting human behavior and rationality.

Admitting I was able to say something about *cultivation*, I will now try to deal with the other term on the floor: *the commons*. Today, in the cultural debate, the term *commons* is usually related to the *tragedy of the commons*, as exposed by Garrett Hardin in 1968, and even to the idea of necessary governance, after Elinor Ostrom's *Governing the Commons* issued in 1990. In a famous paper Hardin exposed his ideas, creating a very new research field, but confounding the idea of *commons* with that of its *governance regime*; in her equally famous book, Ostrom transformed the brilliant (but not exhaustive) idea of *tragedy* in that of *governance*. Today, all of us know that the tragedy is thinking that privatization of land will actually resolve the overexploitation of natural resources. And that the tragedy is also thinking that governing natural resources under the public domain will actually assure their best use and conservation. A vast political and economic literature put in light a double failure: that of the market and that of policy. Thus, stressing a singular point of view, or a simplified proxy of reality, is not sufficient for debating the problem of how governing the commons. It is necessary to consider the whole context individual rational choices are immersed in; namely the specific context within which outcomes depend on the actions of many interacting resource users. It is very clear that the problem is that of *collective action*, the very problematic concern of any society and government, over time and space.

Notoriously, Thomas Hobbes resolved the problem giving all the power of choice to the Leviathan. Today, problems of collective action are discussed as social dilemmas and social traps, suggested by game theory, considering democracy instead of the absolute

central power of the Leviathan. The core result of the scientific debate among scholars is quite clear. Individual selfish separate agents will always adopt strategies leading to a Nash equilibrium that provides less individual utility than what would be obtainable with a cooperative strategy. The point is that real world not always corresponds to the model of the cooperative social behavior envisaged as leading to the optimum state by theory. There are many facts regarding real people's behavior that theory put out of the mode as *ceteris paribus* which, contrarily, are fundamental determinants and should be investigated and deepened. Their deepening over time and space can help to amend both theory and policymaking. The scientific investigation is still ongoing, involving very diverse academic disciplines in a hard work. The importance of Elinor Ostrom's position is she clearly understood the necessity of studying real-world commons organization, in order to interpret how real-people resolve the conditions that produce the tragedy. Ostrom found that not always real-people chose the worst solution and the Hardin's findings were imperfect.

All the contributors to this issue of the *International Journal of Anthropology* dedicated to *Commons and Cultivations* are well aware of the huge dimension of the still ongoing scientific debate on *the commons* and the philosophical relevance of the term *cultivation*. Properly, their works are to be considered as a passionate pace in the direction of enhancing scientific knowledge on these complex topics. I will anticipate how they treated the topic as follows.

Simone Betti in the paper *Cultivating urban landscapes: horticulture*, treated relations between agriculture and society, in the changing scenario of contemporary Europe and presenting a case study of urban horticulture in the Italian Marche region. Francesca Boldrer in the paper *Communis omnium parens: Mother Earth and agriculture in Latin treatises from Cato to Varro and Columella* dealt with the theme in the ancient world, especially among the Romans. Edoardo Bressan in the paper *The Government of Commons in Alpine History. The Case of Brescia* presented a case study on the history of the Alps examining the government of the commons from the early modern period to the nineteenth century. Valentina Carella in her paper *The life we have in common. A phenomenological account for cultivation as a paradigm for a new ecological culture* shows how, during the last decades, philosophy has reconsidered the traditional understanding of man-nature relationship inherited from modernity. Gian Luigi Corinto in his paper *Cultivation as Taking Care of Plant Diversity and Global Commons: Nikolai Ivanovich Vavilov's Legacy* argues that biodiversity and agrobiodiversity should be managed at the global level, profiting of natural geographical plant variability, assumed as a fundamental scientific idea at the dawn of the 1900s by Soviet scientist Nikolai Vavilov. Carla Danani in her paper *Cultivation as Relation: Rethinking Culture* investigated the complex range and overlap of meanings of cultivation, and of to cultivate, starting from their roots in the Latin language. Catia Eliana Gentilucci in the paper *Social farming and the economic civil vocation in Italy* showed how social farming can be a model for civil economics, an ancient and still debated topic among scholars of social sciences. Francesco

Musotti's paper was dedicated to *Collective Property Rights and Land Use: Features and Timeliness of the thought of Achille Loria*, showing that the alternative prevalence of competition over cooperation, in different epochs and regions of the world, allows us to explain the characteristics of agricultural institutions in a systematic way, according to a *spiral law*.

In his paper I have already quoted, *Cultivation, generation and production*, Francesco Totaro says cultivating is actually a composition of production and generation, whereby generation can be made easier and completed by production, on condition that production itself does not arrive to an absolute denial of generation.

The papers collected in the present issue of the Journal contributed in addressing the topic with sound scientific contents, even because they accepted the double challenge of treating a culturally complex theme and comparing their cultural positions with scholars of very different disciplines. Finally, the studies on *Commons and Cultivation* put in light, by introducing theoretical ideas or illustrating empirical case studies, that for a sustainable use of natural resources (namely the whole Earth), a return to cooperation is indispensable, not yet imposing collective property rights, but designing a democratic governance of natural resources. This is certainly a Utopia, but it appears to be indispensable.

Betti S.

*Associate Professor in Geography
at the Department of Education,
Cultural Heritage and Tourism,
University of Macerata. P.le Luigi
Bertelli 1. Macerata 62100, Italy.
Email: simone.betti@unimc.it*

DOI: 10.14673/IJA2018341031

KEY WORDS: *education and
rehabilitation, inclusion, social
geography, urban farming and green
areas, Marche Region.*

Cultivating urban landscapes: horticulture

For a long time urban horticulture has represented a marginal activity generally for the elderly, after their retirement or as a part-time activity, as opposed to a main economic activity. However, in the context of post-modern society, horticulture is becoming more popular and more visible, as an activity with educational or rehabilitation purposes or as a hobby for highly motivated gardeners, individuals or groups, with no previous experience but keen to experiment with cultivating practices. The interest in urban gardening has grown considerably, assuming many forms and characteristics in different contexts both at global and local levels. The phenomenon seems to be a response to a wide range of needs that goes well beyond the production of food, as it often contributes to promote social inclusion, as well as protection and restoration of urban green areas. For many people taking care of a vegetable patch or a garden is a great way to rediscover their bond with nature, to let off steam and get away from the hustle and bustle of daily life. At the same time allotment gardens become a meeting place for the elderly or turn into an outdoor classroom where children can discover nature's way of teaching. Even more important perhaps is when vegetable gardens are located in healthcare facilities and used for their therapeutic function, thus providing support and motivation during treatment or rehabilitation. And so it seems as though garden plots are becoming a bottom-up strategy to combat the limitations and paradoxes of the current economic model.

Introduction

The interest in urban gardening has grown considerably over the last several years, assuming different forms and characteristics in various contexts at a global level. The phenomenon is a response to a wide range of needs that goes well beyond the production of food, as it often contributes to promote social inclusion, as well as protection and restoration of urban green spaces.

Urban agriculture is a non-static, often non-permanent system, scattered around the urban territory and peri-urban areas; its evolution is informal and extremely diversified when it comes to size (from small and very small scale such as family plots, to large scale such as urban farms).

In her famous work, *Governing the commons*, Elinor Ostrom demonstrates that in the most concrete cases, the use of commons proves efficient and inclusive, however one cannot but recall that such "inclusion through sharing" is limited to right holders only,

Boldrer F.

Dipartimento di Studi Umanistici
University of Macerata
Via Garibaldi 20
62100 Macerata - Italy
Email: francesca.boldrer@unimc.it

DOI: 10.14673/IJA2018341032

KEY WORDS: *Columella, De re rustica, Roman agriculture, cultivation and philosophy, Mother Earth.*

Communis omnium parens: Mother Earth and agriculture in Latin treatises from Cato to Varro and Columella

In ancient Rome, the earth was considered to be a common good (despite land being owned privately), to be regarded as both a mother nourishing all her children and a raw material (soil) to be transformed and exploited by human beings. As a result, agriculture was the most important economic activity in the ancient world. We find both aspects in the Latin treatises on agriculture, which were appreciated and carefully handed down by posterity. The authors – Cato, Varro and Columella – not only gave technical advice in their works; they also provided religious precepts while offering social, moral and philosophical recommendations. This is clear evidence of the wide culture, the commitment and the global vision that were shared by these authors. Their double purpose – professional and educational – aimed at two goals: the improvement of human agricultural work in order to know and make the most of the resources of the earth, and the consideration of nature as an animated and divine being, full of generative force, to be treated with care and respect while sharing or exchanging roles between the common mother of all and her children, bound to grow up and to become more aware of their responsibilities.

Already in ancient times, the earth was considered to be a common good (despite land being owned privately), to be regarded as both a mother nourishing all her children and a raw material (soil) to be transformed and exploited by human beings. The first point of view is related to the divine nature attributed to the earth, as a living and sacred being; the second shows pragmatism and the desire of humankind to modify and shape the surrounding world, to the point that technical progress led to an exchange of roles, power and also responsibilities between earth and human beings.

In Roman religion, Earth was often personified as a deity, identified not so much with an ancestral and primordial goddess, like Gaia in Greek mythology (Vernant, 1981), who bore the Titans and the Giants from Uranus, but with *Tellus*, a goddess of fertility, agriculture and grain crops (similar to the goddess *Demeter*, whose Roman equivalent was properly *Ceres*), honoured in April and May in the *lustratio* of the fields at the harvest-time. She was therefore associated, as protector and benefactress, with the most important economic activity in Roman society, which is agriculture, together with other minor deities related to nature and rustic life.

Traditionally, agriculture had social weight and dignity in Rome. Many eminent personalities (often politicians and highly-cultured men) wrote works to hand down and

Bressan E.

Full Professor of Contemporary
History at the Department of
Education, Cultural Heritage and
Tourism, University of Macerata, Italy.
Email: edoardo.bressan@unimc.it

DOI: 10.14673/IJA2018341033

KEY WORDS: *alpine history, territory
of Brescia, commons, Napoleonic
law*

Commons in Alpine Lombardy. The case of Brescia

The history of the Alps is a very interesting example to examine the government of commons from the early modern period to the nineteenth century, in particular in the Brescia area but also, in similar forms, in mountain territories of the Venetian Republic and Northern Italy. In the ancient social organization, this government was entrusted to an assembly of each village (called *vicinia*) and formed by the “original” inhabitants (*originari*), i.e. members of the families living from time immemorial, and “new original” inhabitants (*nuovi originari*), later admitted to the assembly. Starting from Germanists and Marxist analysis, historical studies on village communities have shown that this system was not a primitive communism, but a relationship between public and private spheres, in a difficult but effective balance of power. The aim of this work, within the framework described, is to understand how the *vicinia* managed the common resources with a great capacity to protect the environment and guarantee important elements of democracy, then compromised by the economic modernization.

The history of Alps and in general of the European mountain, from the early steps of the modern age to the nineteenth century, is a particularly significant example of government of commons, both in terms of collective resource management and in terms of territorial community administration, in a framework of common experiences. The most significant examples include the *Regole* of Trentino and Cadore, the *Vicinie* and *Patriziati* of the Central-Western Alps in Switzerland and Dauphiné, the *Comunanze* in the Apennines, especially in the Marche region, and the *Fueros* in the Pyrenean area and Northern Spain: according to Pio Caroni in regard to the Swiss case, in many ways these are indispensable realities in environmental and economic conditions characterized by great difficulties, with each of them appearing as an «necessary body» (Caroni, 1964, p. 28). This great variety of commons was the focus of an intense debate during the 1980s, with an important conference held in Lugano in 1985 titled “The Alps and Europe”, whose contributions are going to be recalled later on. For now, as Cesare Trebeschi says, it is important to underline the profound analogy that ties these institutional forms despite their difference (Trebeschi, 1992).

However, the historical and legal debate around commons comes from afar, starting from the first interpretations given by the Romanists and the Germanists regarding the collective properties in continuity with the *Ager compascuus* for the roman land structure or the institute subsequently instituted in relation to Germanic *Allmende* system (Caroni, 1964). From this perspective, the Marxist analysis, which is partially respon-

Corinto G.L.

*Department of Education,
Cultural Heritage and
Tourism, University of
Macerata, Italy
Email: gianluigi.corinto unimc.it*

DOI: 10.14673/IJA2018341034

KEY WORDS: *cultivation, commons,
Vavilov's centers, biodiversity,
agrobiodiversity*

Cultivation as Taking Care of Plant Diversity and Global Commons: Nikolai Ivanovich Vavilov's Legacy

Biodiversity and agrobiodiversity are global commons and humans should well understand the necessity of managing natural and farm induced plant variability at world level. In the 1930s, Russian geneticist, botanist and geographer Nikolai Ivanovich Vavilov carried out worldwide researches on plant variety, collecting and storing germplasm of all world major crops. His vision on world centers of origin of cultivated plants is outdated, but his scientific ideas on plant geographical diversity preceded the ongoing concerns for loss of plant variability. In fact, even today FAO considers areas originally individuated by Vavilov as global priority genetic reserve locations for wild relatives of 12 main food crops. Both storing and farming will assure societies productive and conservative services, and studying the geographical diversity of plants is a strong necessity for assuring sustainability on a global scale.

Introduction: Biodiversity and Agrobiodiversity

Prominent scholar Thomas Lovejoy coined the locution biological diversity in the early 1980s, while the word biodiversity appeared in a print publication in 1988 when entomologist Edward O. Wilson used it as the title of the proceedings of the 1985 forum during which Walter G. Rosen first proposed this term (Farnham, 2007). Since then, success in common language was constantly increasing, even though long before many other thinkers, scientists, men, and women of culture and practitioners had placed the concept of biodiversity at the center of their attention.

An empirical observation shows the compelling necessity for biodiversity. Living beings are structured to increase their own capacity to receive the sun energy necessary for life. If receiving beings are multiple and well differentiated, the overall performance of energy increases while in a simplified system performances decrease and vulnerability raises to external unfavorable events. Thus, biodiversity is the most effective expression for a better structural setting strategy in the biosphere. With farming humans have generally reduced biodiversity, focusing mainly on plants/crops more convenient for shorter and easier to manage production cycles in view of increasing productivity. Farming productivity has been until today undertaken through simplification, intensification, and diffusion of monocultures and specialized farms, reducing the complexity of land use and landscapes. Nevertheless, a new dimension of diversity came into being as *agro-biodiversity* (Wood & Lenné, 1999), a term that recognizes the historical value of cultivation, capable of orienting interactions between the processes of natural selection

Danani C.

University of Macerata - Italy

Cultivation as Relation: Rethinking Culture

DOI: 10.14673/IJA2018341035

KEY WORDS: *cultivation, culture, place, time, relationship, responsiveness, alterity, agriculture, education.*

I investigate the complex range and overlap of meanings of cultivation, and of to cultivate, starting from their roots in the Latin family of words deriving from the Indo-European *kwel and from their primary meaning which was to favour natural growth, in the way of ‘taking care of’. I try a phenomenological analysis of their uses as action, as process and as result for highlighting their relational structure, those then can help us to better understand human relationships, which always involve many elements and twists through time, place, context, and dispositions.

The Question of Cultivation

What does it “to cultivate” mean? The word covers a range of overlapping meanings that are particularly significant for human beings when they are considered in their social existences. In the case of cultivation, the set of meanings refers, on the one hand, to the links between a particular way of taking care of places and general human development, and, on the other, between both of these and the way in which we deal with contents and practices of human reason and behavior. This brings to the fore the relevant question about the connections between material and non material outputs, which in human affairs must always be something we relate to rather than contrasted. The complexity, one can say, is not concerned with the word cultivation but regards the issues that its variations of use significantly indicate. Being therefore confronted with the polysemy of “cultivation”, we may find it fruitful to investigate the connecting threads running through the many diverse meanings of this notion.

The words “cultivation” and “cultivated” went through a series of metaphorical shifts from a physical to a social or educational sense during the 17th century. They became especially meaningful during the 18th century. It seems that the primary reference was “to favor natural growth” in the sense of “taking care of”. By extension, it also meant “to inhabit”, “to dwell” (Angelini, 90) for the reason that, in order to cultivate, one has to be in a place, that is, settled. Cultivation requires continuous and constant care. For a farming society, in particular, it became easy to extend the use of *còlere* to all the activities and situations requiring this kind of ongoing attention. The word *cultus*, from the past participle of *colère*, came to indicate the diligent care that human beings have for a particular object or domain: for the capabilities of a human being, above all, those of young people, as well as for activities of worship and service. From the Latin root “col-” stems the word “culture”, which refers to all forms of knowledge, traditions, narrations, rites and practices that one considers to be fundamental for individual and social life and worth being passed on to future generations. “Cultivation” contains the sense of a transmission, a transfer, the delivery of something to something or someone else. The

Gentilucci C.E.

Researcher in the History of economic thought and Professor of Civil economics and Business economics in the Faculty of Law, University of Camerino.

Email: catiaeliana.gentilucci@unicam.it

DOI: 10.14673/IJA2018341036

KEY WORDS: *civil economy, social market economy, Catholic capitalism, Lutheran capitalism, sustainable growth, green social farming.*

Social farming and the economic civil vocation in Italy

Social farming has entered the non-profit world and despite the fact that it does not follow the principles of traditional market economy it has shown excellent economic results while promoting inclusion, sustainability and social impact (equity), all of which increase the value of the territory. The idea behind this paper is to show that the mission of social farming is consistent with the economic approach adopted by civil economics that emerged in XV century Italy. Bearing in mind that the *European Commission for Agriculture and Rural Development* has also recognized the multifunctional role of agriculture in improving the wellbeing of the community, social farming can also be seen as a way to face the current crisis.

Introduction

During the past ten years, Western economies have had to come to terms with globalization, the effects of which have worsened the processes involved in capitalistic competition and caused great economic difficulties, with countries in the Mediterranean region suffering most of all. In the effort to address tensions relating to the economic crisis and a consequent lack of financial resources, local communities have spontaneously come together to devise alternative systems of production and distribution to those employed by traditional market economy. In civil economics, these systems are grouped under the term “third sector or non-profit sector”, which combines the traditional market forces of for-profit and State.

Social farming has become a part of the non-profit world, showing excellent economic results that are designed to increase the territory’s value, and are committed to promoting inclusion, sustainability and social impact (social equity) (Hassink & van Dijk, 2006).

This trend has its historical roots in the Mediterranean (Roccisano, 2013). These roots are based on the Catholic culture with its focus on solidarity and cooperation, but within the current European economic model of a social market economy (as expressed in the Treaty of Lisbon) this culture does not seem to have found a favorable political and social context.

This paper contends that the *mission* of social farming concurs with the economic approach favored by civil economics and offers a way of tackling the systemic crisis that is underway, bearing in mind that even the *European Commission for Agriculture and Rural Development* has recognized the dynamic role played by agriculture for the common good, acknowledging its ability to create an abundance of positive externalities.

Musotti F.

Department of Agriculture Food
and Environment,

University of Perugia - Italy

Email: francesco.musotti@unipg.it

DOI: 10.14673/IJA2018341037

KEY WORDS: *Achille Loria, property rights of land, competition, cooperation, differential rent, natural resources, commons.*

Achille Loria's thought on Land Use and Collective Property Rights

Achille Loria's work is largely centered on the study of land property rights and outlined the historical evolution of such rights on the basis of two principles of allocation: the competition one and the cooperation one. The prevalence of one over the other, in different epochs and regions of the world, allows us to explain the characteristics of agricultural institutions in a systematic way, according to what we might call a *spiral law*. If land is abundant (in general, if natural resources are abundant) when compared to the size of the population that draws its material sustenance from it, the most efficient principle of allocation is the competition one.

On the other hand, under conditions of a relatively scarce amount of land (and in general of scarce natural resources) in relation to the sustenance of the population, the principle capable to maximize material wellbeing is the cooperation one, in the form of collective property.

Today, seventy years after Loria's death, world population is growing in the face of resources that appear to be ever more scarce (and polluted), and in spite of technical change, we are witnessing a situation in which, also according to "Lorian" scholars such as Boulding and Ostrom, a return to the principle of cooperation seems indispensable, if not in the form of collective property rights *stricto sensu*, at least in the form of a planetary governance of natural resources.

Introduction

The rush towards land grabbing, although concentrated in certain geographical areas of Africa, Asia, Latin America and East Europe is the current evidence of a wider, planetary-scale question, being that of the limited character of natural resources. Mainstream economists from the 19th century onwards have appeared to, as it were, "sweep" such a fact "under the carpet." Even the mainstream media, which usually zealously repeats the reckless analyses and ensuing recommendations of those same mainstream economists, has recently given this question a great deal of attention. Thus, there seems to be a real cultural reluctance if we fail to grasp the significance of a phenomenon that casts a dark shadow on the future of humanity.

It seems that the faith in technical and scientific progress (the *téchne* that Severino describes (2010)) and its ability to counteract the decreasing productivity of land and natural resources is waning. All the while, the ideas that pushed Goergescu-Roegen's

Totaro F.

*Department of Philosophy and Human Sciences, University of Macerata.
Corso Garibaldi 20, Macerata 62100.
Italy. At present President of the Scientific Committee of the Centre of Philosophical Studies of Gallarate, Rome.
Via degli Astalli 16, 00186 Rome.
Email: totaro@unimc.it*

DOI: 10.14673/IJA2018341038

KEY WORDS: *Cultivation, generation, production, technology, human being, post-human, conflict, harmony.*

Cultivation, generation and production

Cultivation means letting grow and manifest being itself, or what is originally inside the reality we are facing. In this context production, on its side, can have a right place if it is not separated from the vision of a world as a place of intrinsic and inherent possibilities, without reducing it to an unbridled manipulation and consumption. Otherwise, production drifts towards what we can name “productivism”, that is a production subordinating every people and everything to its increase, by stressing both human and natural resources. Cultivating is actually a composition of production and generation, whereby generation can be made easier and completed by production, on condition that production itself does not arrive to an absolute denial of generation. Consequently, we have to deal with the question about the technology, to gain control of the opportunities offered by technological devices, especially in the case of their steady appliances to human body. A generative power cannot be a mere ring of a productive chain. Furthermore, we have to consider seriously the conflict among beings. So our mission is, constructing the harmony of human with earth and cosmos through disharmonies. Along this path we may restructure the relationship among cultivation, generation and production.

Meanings of “cultivate”: etymology and sense

To begin with, we can analyze this issue from a linguistic perspective. In English language the verb “to cultivate” derives, as we know, from Medieval Latin *cultivatus*, past participle of *cultivare*, from Late Latin *cultivus*, which refers to Classical Latin *cultus*. The word *cultus* has a surprising range of meanings, embracing several aspects of life, from the more material to the more spiritual. *Cultus* can mean tilling fields or growing plants and practicing literature or philosophy and, eminently, religion. *Cultus* means also care of people and things and education of human character. Furthermore it means high veneration and respect for something or somebody (nowadays we say that something or somebody is “a cult” when they have a large and widespread consideration). In a general meaning *cultus* indicates habits of life and, definitively, the culture of a population. Moreover, we have to reflect upon the derivation of *cultivare* and *cultus* from the verb *colere*, which means too dwelling an home or a territory and creating a relationship of friendship by care and attention to a person whom we hold dear. Besides, Latin substantive *cultor* means not only tiller of the land, but also dweller and lover (for instance of right laws and gods). We can add that Latin *colere* probably evoked the act of pushing the plow and so it could join the root of the Sanskrit word *c'al-ayami* (to push forward). In a complementary meaning *colere* can refer to the root *c'ar*, at the basis of