

Call for Papers

Special Issue of the *Journal of Business Ethics*

The Ethics of the Commons

Submission Deadline: **15 December 2018**

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Introduction to the Special Issue

The concept of ‘the commons’ has a long history (Sison & Fontrodona, 2012) and during the last three decades has generated increasing excitement in the scholarly literature. A major factor in the surge of interest has been the work inspired by Elinor Ostrom, Nobel memorial prize in economics sciences laureate for 2009, especially when linked to the economic and social crises that have fostered interest in different ways of organizing economic life. Recovering and implementing the concept of the commons has been hailed by scholars and practitioners as a way of creating new collective wealth (Akrivou & Sison, 2016; Bollier & Helfrich, 2014; Tedmanson et al., 2015), and for addressing what are seen as the societal ills created by neoliberalism (Caffentzis, 2010).

This is a call for submissions to a special issue of the *Journal of Business Ethics* aimed at providing an overarching perspective on the ethical dimensions and drivers of the phenomenon labelled ‘the commons’. In its broadest sense, ‘the commons’ is understood to refer simply to resources of many kinds, e.g., open access and public goods, where no individual person has the right to exclude others from enjoying their benefits. Ostrom focuses on the common property regime - a tighter concept of the commons wherein some group succeeds in making a ‘common pool resource’ a shared benefit by establishing the right of exclusion from it and managing it in a way that avoids the infamous ‘tragedy of the commons’ (Ostrom, 1990, 1999; Ostrom & Hess, 2008). This special issue particularly welcomes more bounded conceptualization of the commons.

The (re)emergence of a “commons paradigm” (Bollier, 2011) refers explicitly to how civil society organizations enable people to collaborate and share. This paradigm presents a way

that is simultaneously novel yet draws also on the deep history of analyzing social practices implemented through cooperation, collective action and solidarity.

Collective forms of resource ownership and management are often directed toward the common good in keeping with the ethics of living in a community whose purpose is both individual and collective flourishing (Argandoña, 1998; Haugh, 2007; Melé, 2009, 2012; Peredo & Chrisman, 2006; Sison et al., 2012). In this regard, commons organizations create, transform and legitimize nonprofit and community norms and rules (Bushouse et al., 2016; Marquis & Battilana, 2009; Périlleux & Nyssens, 2017). Some forms of commons require multiple forms of collective action for their management (Ostrom, 1990). These participatory methods generate ethical challenges due to the complexity of their management and collective governance.

Others have drawn attention to the way that new commons are being created in many resources and environments (Fournier, 2013; Meyer & Hudon, 2017, and how commons are being ‘enclosed’ and removed from wider access (Bollier, 2003). The idea of ‘commoning’ has become a central concept in determining how commons are created and recognized as a social phenomenon (Euler, 2015; Fournier, 2013; Linebaugh, 2008). This call seeks papers that examine the ethical landscape of the commons in any and all of these dimensions.

Possible Themes and Topics

We seek papers that shed light on the ethical foundations and implications of the commons. We welcome original papers from a wide variety of methodological and disciplinary perspectives and invite papers that provide insights into, but not limited to, the following topics:

Topic 1: Conceptualization, Ethics and Rights related to the commons

- How does ethics shape the definition and conceptualization of commons?
- How do different ethical theories provide descriptive and normative insights into commons?
- Property rights, including common property rights, are after all rights. How do the ethical implications of different property regimes compare and influence entrepreneurship and organizing?
- For organizations and communities, how do ethical drivers enable collective action in social, environmental and other commons?

Topic 2: Governance of Commons

- What are the motivations and mechanisms for cooperation and participation in commons governance and management?
- What are the ethical challenges to and limits of collective action and decision-making in commons organizations?
- How has the conception, practice and institutionalization of commons evolved over time, and what are the ethical factors that contribute to its evolution and persistence?
- How do values and culture regenerate collective practices?

Topic 3: Social and Community Entrepreneurship and Impacts

- What insights can a study of the commons offer to social and community entrepreneurship research?

- How is social value created through commons organizations?
- What are the ethical implications of new commons and new ways of commoning for entrepreneurship?
- What are the ethical impacts of commons in housing? Food? Environmental activism? Other commons?

Topic 4: The Commons in a Market Society

- Are there differences in the way that private property and common property regimes influence markets? If so, what are the ethical implications?
- Do prevailing conceptions of entrepreneurship impinge on the role of the commons as a means of producing and distributing goods, e.g., by new forms of enclosure in items such as traditional knowledge, patents, and the human genome?
- Do commons represent an ethical challenge to capitalist-market/neoliberal political systems?

Submission Process and Deadlines

Authors are encouraged to refer to the Journal of Business Ethics website for instructions on submitting a paper. Submission to the special issue by **December 15, 2018** is required through Editorial Manager at: <http://www.editorialmanager.com/busi/>. Upon submission, please indicate that your submission is to this Special Issue. For any questions, please contact the guest editors.

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