

# Commons as local institutions

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## TO CITE

Torre, A. (2023). Commons as local institutions . In *Proceedings of the Paris Institute for Advanced Study* (Vol. 21). <https://paris.pias.science/article/commons-as-local-institutions>

## PUBLICATION DATE



10/11/2023

## ABSTRACT


*Sixième séance du cycle de conférences "Paris IAS Ideas", avec la participation d'Angelo Torre, Université du Piémont Oriental, chercheur-résident de l'IEA de Paris*

This research aims to read common lands as local resources using a spatial perspective. This approach is directly suggested by judicial sources related to the commons, which often originate from border disputes between neighboring settlements. The very structure of the communities in which the commons are located poses difficult reading problems. Even in the nineteenth century, at least in France and Italy many commons belong to very specific areas of the village (“biens sectionaux”, fractional assets), and not to the whole municipality. The geography of the commons highlights a fragmented and polycentric settlement model, hitherto investigated by geographers exclusively in regional terms, while it could allow a global survey of the territorial formation of municipalities. This spatial study of commons makes it possible to refigure the concept of the peasant community, a crucial issue for the social sciences. Seen through the commons, the community consists of groups of undivided co-owners, more or less solidary and isolated in space, which revolve around the management of shared spaces on the basis not so much of equality, as of relationship with the property: the access to the undivided property relates to the resources that one can dispose of during the winter season. In this sense the collective resources are less an expression of redistribution (e.g. intended for the poorest) than of belonging or citizenship (intended for those who produce a place).

# Paris IAS Ideas




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## Commons as local institutions

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9:00 am New York | 2:00 pm London |  
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