GV120 - Politics and Economics Policies

University of Essex - Department of Government

Lorenzo Crippa

Week 4 – 25 October, 2019

Office 5B.153
Wednesday 14:00 to 16:00
l.crippa@essex.ac.uk

Seminar timetable

Week number	Groups and activities
4	Ester Cavaioni and Blake Mallon
5	Emma Paulinyova and Emma Sornlund
	Sònia Villalba and Sally Touray
6	Discuss take-home assignment
	Samuel Leonard and Joshua Kelly
7	Discuss in-lecture test
	Halide Asafogullari and Azhan Airwan (week 6)
8	Henry Adebiyi and Nyima Jobe (week 6)
	Kwamina Keelson and Shiv Bhatt (week 7)
9	Ethan Liddel
10	Dorsa Heidari and Aleksandra Waszescik
	Domantas Seveliovas and Abigail Kiely
11	Amine Yemmou (week 10)

The Tragedy of the Commons

Hardin, Garrett (1968). The Tragedy of the Commons. *Science 162* (3859), 1243-1248.

Main argument: The population problem has no technical solution. A "technical solution" does not involve moral choices of sort.

The population problem

- What is the population problem?
  - Population grows exponentially. Resources are finite
  - Malthus' *Principles of Political Economy* (1820)
- Why can't it have a technical solution?
  - Because of the Tragedy of the Commons
  - A technical solution (economic rationality) leads to tragedy

The tragedy of the commons

- Quintessential examples (common field, oceans, fishing and polluting)
- Commons are *not* pure public goods
    - They are non-excludable
    - They are a finite resource, thus they are (partly) rival
    - Public costs and private benefits
- A strong argument against A. Smith's reliance on private interest (commons are no market!)

From ToC to the population problem

- Freedom to overbreed (population grows exponentially)
- Given limited resources, a tragedy is inevitable
- "Freedom to breed is intolerable" (Hardin 1968, 1246)

What solutions to the ToC?

1. Privatise them: Back to A. Smith
2. Introduce mutually agreed-upon coercion (Hardin)
3. Rely on self-organisation
   - "Conscience is Self-Eliminating" (Hardin 1968, 1246) in the long run and produces anxiety in the short run
   - Self-organisation can emerge naturally at the level of small communities (Ostrom 2003)

Conclusion: Two questions to discuss

- What solution is just?
- What solution is practical?

Further suggested readings

On the differences between Public Good Games and Prisoners'
Dilemma Games:

1. Conybeare, John A. C. (1984). Public Goods, Prisoners'
   Dilemmas and the International Political Economy.
   International Studies Quarterly 28 (1), 5-22.

On the introduction of relational payoffs for agents:

2. Grieco, Joseph M. (1988). Realist Theory and the Problem of
   International Cooperation: Analysis with an Amended
   Prisoner's Dilemma Model. *The Journal of Politics 50* (3),
   600-624.

On the benefits of sustained interactions over time:

3. Axelrod, Robert (1984). *The Evolution of Cooperation*. Basic
   Books, New York.

References

Dietz, Thomas, Elinor Ostrom, and Paul C. Stern (2003). The struggle to govern the commons. *Science 302* (5652), 1907-1912.

Hardin, Garrett (1968). The Tragedy of the Commons. *Science 162* (3859), 1243-1248.

Malthus, Thomas (1989) [1820]. *Principles of Political Economy*. Edited by: John Pullen. Cambridge University Press.