



The Sustainable Economics of Elinor Ostrom: Commons, contestation and craft (Routledge Studies in Ecological Economics)

By Derek Wall

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Elinor Ostrom's Nobel Prize-winning work on common pool property rights has implications for some of the most pressing sustainability issues of the twenty-first century ? from tackling climate change to maintaining cyberspace. In this book, Derek Wall critically examines Ostrom's work, while also exploring the following questions: is it possible to combine insights rooted in methodological individualism with a theory that stresses collectivist solutions? Is Ostrom's emphasis on largely local solutions to climate change relevant to a crisis propelled by global factors?

This volume situates her ideas in terms of the constitutional analysis of her partner Vincent Ostrom and wider institutional economics. It outlines her key concerns, including a radical research methodology, commitment to indigenous people and the concept of social-ecological systems. Ostrom is recognised for producing a body of work which demonstrates how people can construct rules that allow them to exploit the environment in an ecologically sustainable way, without the need for governmental regulation, and this book argues that in a world where ecological realities increasingly threaten material prosperity, such scholarship provides a way of thinking about how humanity can create truly sustainable development.

Given the inter-disciplinary nature of Ostrom's work, this book will be relevant to those working in the areas of environmental economics, political economy, political science and ecology.

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Editorial Review

Review

'With great clarity and erudition, Derek Wall reveals the complexities of Elinor Ostrom's thinking as she formulated her brilliant insights about human cooperation and the commons. This book is a captivating intellectual biography that explains how Ostrom challenged the economic and political orthodoxies of her time, built a robust international network of scholars, and produced a body of literature that continues to nourish the contemporary commons movement.' ? David Bollier, independent commons scholar and activist, and author of *Think Like a Commoner*

'One of our age's most elusive yet most necessary aspirations is an ecologically sustainable self-governing society. So how is it that so many of us managed to miss Elinor Ostrom for so long? She spent a lifetime exploring this aspiration, and drew on an extraordinary range of sources to do so. Derek Wall has written an inspirational book about this key figure of our times. We have much to learn from her - and from him.' ? Andrew Dobson, Professor of Politics, Keele University, and author of *Green Political Thought*.

'Elinor Ostrom's magisterial and influential work deserves engaging and full-length treatments such as this. Her innovative research opened new pathways and influenced both the left and the right. In this highly-engaging and well-written study, Derek Wall gives us a view from the left. It is a strong and valuable interpretation that will intensify the debate on her legacy.' ? Geoff Hodgson, editor of the *Journal of Institutional Economics*

'By opening up space for discussion between the dichotomy of market and state, Ostrom's work offers an empirically grounded counterpoint to the impasse of 'market vs. state-managerial' solutions to a vast range of ecological problems, and issues of long-term sustainability. The sooner this concept is absorbed into the core research agenda of human ecology, the better.' ? Eoin Flaherty, *Human Ecology*

'Derek Wall, in presenting an accessible account of Ostrom's ideas, and placing them within the context of the economics thinkers who influenced her, provides a useful and productive insight into how a reconsideration of the historic and present manner in which people have governed commons can provide valuable ideas about what role the commons can play in building a sustainable future.' --- Christopher Shaw, *Environmental Change Institute, University of Oxford*

About the Author

Derek Wall is Associate Lecturer in the Department of Politics at Goldsmiths, University of London, UK.

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