

Research background

Hoffman:

In his PhD [Hoffman, Matthew David. 2011. "*Land and Community: Property Rights and the Future of Rural Landscapes*." PhD, Graduate School, Cornell University.] he took a broad perspective, recognizing that most of the benefits of sustainable agriculture have the nature of public goods - benefits arising over the long run at the landscape or food-systems level - highlighting the need to situate the fight for healthy landscapes and healthy communities in the context of agricultural politics, land use planning, and regional development policy. The dissertation is comprised of four separate articles describing four separate studies, all of which deal with property rights and problems of collective action in land use. Each of the studies addresses the same central question: How can the problems associated with fragmenting a landscape into separate spheres of control be avoided while still maintaining a wide distribution of private rights? Two of the studies are about cooperation between private landowners, and two of them describe situations of shared ownership. The first, which was located in Vermont, uses a mail survey to answer the question of whether conservation on private land is impeded by problems of collective action. It also explores the question of whether the public planning process can be an effective means for citizens to overcome these problems. **The second study deals with cooperation between private landowners in Norway.** It describes how two seemingly contradictory imperatives—coordinating wildlife management across large areas, while keeping benefits and control in the hands of local resource users—are resolved through a nesting of management institutions; and it identifies some of the key factors, both structural and cultural, that contribute to the success of this system. **The third study looks at land reform in Scotland,** which, rather than breaking large estates into many small holdings, facilitates the transfer of land into community ownership. Using historical analysis and in-depth interviews with contemporary land reformers, this study explains why community ownership makes sense in rural Scotland today. **The fourth study looks at the much older example of common property in Norway** and offers those interested in Scottish land reform a glimpse at how well this type of ownership might meet their expectations. The study compares two similar Norwegian cases in order to understand whether community ownership makes a difference or whether it is sufficient for local users of the commons to have secure use-rights. A theme that emerges across all four of these studies is the significant and often unexpected role of the state.

Shimada:

In Shimada's latest article [Miyana, Kentaro, and Daisaku Shimada. 2018. "'The tragedy of the commons' by underuse: Toward a conceptual framework based on ecosystem services and satoyama perspective." *International Journal of the Commons* 12 (1):332-51.] he and Miyana studies underuse rather than overuse of a commons. Most commons researchers have so far focused on a theme of resource overuse or overconsumption. In contrast, the objective in this article is to address the mechanism of common pool resources (CPRs) declining or disappearing due to underuse, which has been understudied in the commons research field. Using two analytical concepts, ecosystem services and satoyama, and through a case study of Japanese semi-natural grasslands, we examine two themes concerning the underuse problem: (1) consequences of underuse and (2) causes of underuse. As to aspect (1), many commons researchers would perhaps recognize that it is far from a tragic situation to underuse resource units from CPRs because no resources are depleted. However, the analysis showed that underuse sometimes has negative impacts on biodiversity and the ecosystem through complex socio-ecological system channels, thus bringing about a decline in resource units. As to aspect (2), three drivers were identified that induce resource units to be underused: (1) demographic drivers, (2) socio-economic drivers and (3) institutional drivers. First, depopulation (especially in rural areas) can cause fewer human–environment

interactions and therefore lower depletion of resource units. This situation contrasts with a normal assumption of traditional commons analyses, namely overpopulation triggering tragedy. Second, ecosystem services, especially provisioning services, are underused due to the declines in their economic function. On the other hand, conventional debates generally share a common presumption that resource units have a larger extent of economic value. Third, the ownership structure or property rights regime can bring about resource underuse, which anti-commons theory has suggested, and our case study of Japanese semi-natural grasslands suggests that the tragedy outcome would possibly occur when institutions that prevent an anti-commons tragedy are weakened and inactive through demographic and/or socio-economic drivers.