

Welcome to the International Journal of the Commons

The International Journal of the Commons is a new journal set up by the International Association for the Study of the Commons. It aims to be an interdisciplinary peer-reviewed open-access journal dedicated to further our understanding of institutions for use and management of resources that are (or could be) enjoyed collectively. Many will refer to such resources and their systems of usage as 'commons'. Thus a 'commons' may be a part of the natural world used by humans or it may be a social reality created by humans, such as the internet or an urban space.

Launching a new journal is not an easy task. Doing it without funding should in principle require a miracle. And as will be known, miracles take a little time. Those who have helped us, advised us, worked with us, and pushed us along will recognize that it has indeed taken considerable time and effort. But here we are with our first issue, and here we have gotten the very best start a journal can wish for: an issue presenting surveys of and contributions to cutting edge research on the commons. Thanks to the generosity and efforts of our guest editors Elinor Ostrom and Frank van Laerhoven and the authors contributing to this issue the journal is taking a flying start.

As editors we aim at offering high-quality scientific articles, written by experts in the field, which offer new interdisciplinary insights in the functioning of commons. The work of IASC's members shows that interdisciplinarity is key to understanding the commons and their commoners, in the past, today and in the future. Articles that have been accepted to the International Journal of the Commons have therefore been peer-reviewed by three experts, usually from different disciplines.

There are important reasons for IASC to start this journal on its own rather than having a commercial publisher doing it for us. Both reasons have to do with the cost of journals and journal publishing. IASC provides a platform for researchers and practitioners in developing and industrialized countries to come together, across disciplinary lines, and share knowledge of how commons are used, enjoyed and managed. Currently this research is scattered among a large number of journals. All of them are costly to get. Academic institutions in developing countries have few resources devoted to journal subscriptions. Since our research is relevant to both teaching and policy discussions of resource governance it ought to be easily available to students,

practitioners, and professionals around the world, particularly in developing countries. Papers published on commons issues need to be in the public domain, freely available to all. A journal based on subscription would be counter to this goal. Neither can it be based on excessive author fees. As a large number of our members comes from academic institutions in developing countries, we believe that an open access journal is the best way to create a truly global platform for scholars from many different disciplines, and many different places.

The International Journal of the Commons will thus have to depend on voluntary work, contributions and support from funding agencies. This issue shows that it is worth this support.

Tine De Moor

Erling Berge

Editors of the International Journal of the Commons