

The Commons, the Common Wealth and Basic Income

How Common Wealth Dividend Vitalizes the Commons

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Overview

- This paper presents a case study that a common wealth dividend based on the principles of BI contributes to the vitalization of the commons
- Commoning emerged as a key factor and concept through the development of the commons theory and practices
- They however do not include the commons specific mode of distribution
- Two commonings: Commoning that recognizes, builds and (re)produces the commons; Commoning that implement a common wealth dividend

Overview

- The case study is a Children's BI program at a small elementary school in rural South Korea
- The study is based on interviews with 40 people
- Some Findings

(Re)emergence of the Commons

- The definition of the commons expanded from the late 1990s and early 2000s
- The target for privatization and commercialization
- Those that were thieved and devastated under the wave of neoliberalism
- The commons becoming a rallying point against the expropriation of wealth by capital
- In this sense Naomi Klein holds “reclaiming the commons” when building global social movements

Towards a new understanding of the commons

- Capitalism, accumulation by dispossession (Harvey, 2003)
- Primitive accumulation is not on-off event but an ongoing process (De Angelis, 2017; Federici, 2004)
- The commons not as a historical remnant, but something that is continuously (re)produced

The importance of “commoning,” action of collectively using, managing and (re)producing the commons

The commons can be the basis for an alternative society or a new mode of production

Ostrom's common-pool resources and its meaning

- Ostrom showed that there are ways to manage common-pool resources by community and its rules
- It works based on reciprocity, democratic management, and active participation
- But stops at presenting common-pool resources as a third category leaving the existing private goods and public goods
- In that context not understanding the relations of power and capital

Theory of “commoning”

The commons

- Social-ecological system consisting of common wealth, community, and commoning (De Angelis, 2017)
- Structure that forms a whole based on three interdependent elements: resources, community, and a set of social rules (Bolier, 2014)

Commoning

1. (re)producing what associated commoners deem to be common wealth
2. (re)producing body, affectional and social relationships that make up the commons

Common Wealth

Unlike previous understanding of the common wealth

De Angelis (2017) takes a very expansive view to include:

1. Things created by plurality (many) through history and culture
2. Cultural things transformed into common wealth
3. Resources actively pooled by plurality (many)
4. Resources claimed by plurality (many) against the state
5. Common wealth captured by plurality (many) who do not have

Two commonings

1. Activities through which the commoners recognize, use, maintain, (re)produce the commons
2. Common wealth dividend: commons specific mode of distribution
 - Unconditional and universal dividend of monetary revenue in the commons
 - Peter Barnes (2014, 2021); Guy Standing (2019, 2022); Brent Ranalli (2022)

Children's BI in Pandong Elementary School

Case Study

The case study is based on the interviews conducted with

- 31 students
- 3 teachers (including the principal)
- 3 parents (of which 2 were directors of co-op)
- 1 chair of a local consumer cooperative
- 1 village resident (alumni president of the Elementary)
- 1 county councilor

Children's BI in Pandong Elementary School

Pandong Elementary School

- Pandong Elementary is a small school located in Boeun-gun (county), Chungcheonbuk-do (province)
- Like many other rural schools in South Korea, it is in danger of closing due to the low number of students



Children's BI in Pandong Elementary School

Children's Basic Income

- Children's BI began in October 2020, giving coupons worth 2,000KW to all students that could be used at coop shop (increased to 3,000KW from December 2021)



Children's BI in Pandong Elementary School

Children's Basic Income

- In 2019, Pandong Elementary opened a coop shop in the form of social cooperative to improve school life for students
- But this led to a new problem: divide between the children able to use the coop shop and those who could not
- In other words, the coop shop based on cooperative to revitalize the commons of school, but which was not achieved

Common wealth dividend: a solution to this problem

A New Problem from the new commons

- Those children who cannot come keep cannot coming
- Children who cannot use the coop shop because they lack spending money for various reasons
- This financial cleavage becoming a stumbling block to the revitalization of the commons

Efforts of commoners to preserve the commons: commoning via a basic income

- Need to distribute equally to all unlike most anti-poverty programs
- Stimulating a sense of equality and solidarity avoiding stigma effect

(Re)producing the Commons: commoning and expanding of the commons through BI

1. Revitalizing of the commons and its changing meanings
 - Coop shop revitalizing: the commons coming to life
 - Changing and expanding meaning of the commons: equality and solidarity strengthened by BI
2. Subjectification of commoners, concerned with maintenance and expansion of the commons
 - Children's growth: a growing recognition of themselves as autonomous commoners
 - Parents' sense of responsibility for maintenance of the commons and children's BI
 - Concerns from teachers and principal

(Re)producing the Commons: commoning and expanding of the commons through BI

3. Sponsorship expansion
 - Resident
 - Outside sponsors
4. Changing attitude toward universal welfare

Conclusion

The case study of Pandong Elementary shows the potential of unconditional and universal BI as common wealth dividend in expanding the commons

1. Further vitalization of the commons if its wealth is distributed via a BI
2. BI make commoners see the commons as a more equitable space for solidarity and allowing them to build relationship on that basis
3. The revitalization of the commons through the second commoning (commoning 2) becoming an opportunity for the expansion of the commons
4. Contributing to the formation and activation of more commons

Thank you
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