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Elinor Ostrom: An Intellectual Biography

Vlad Tarko
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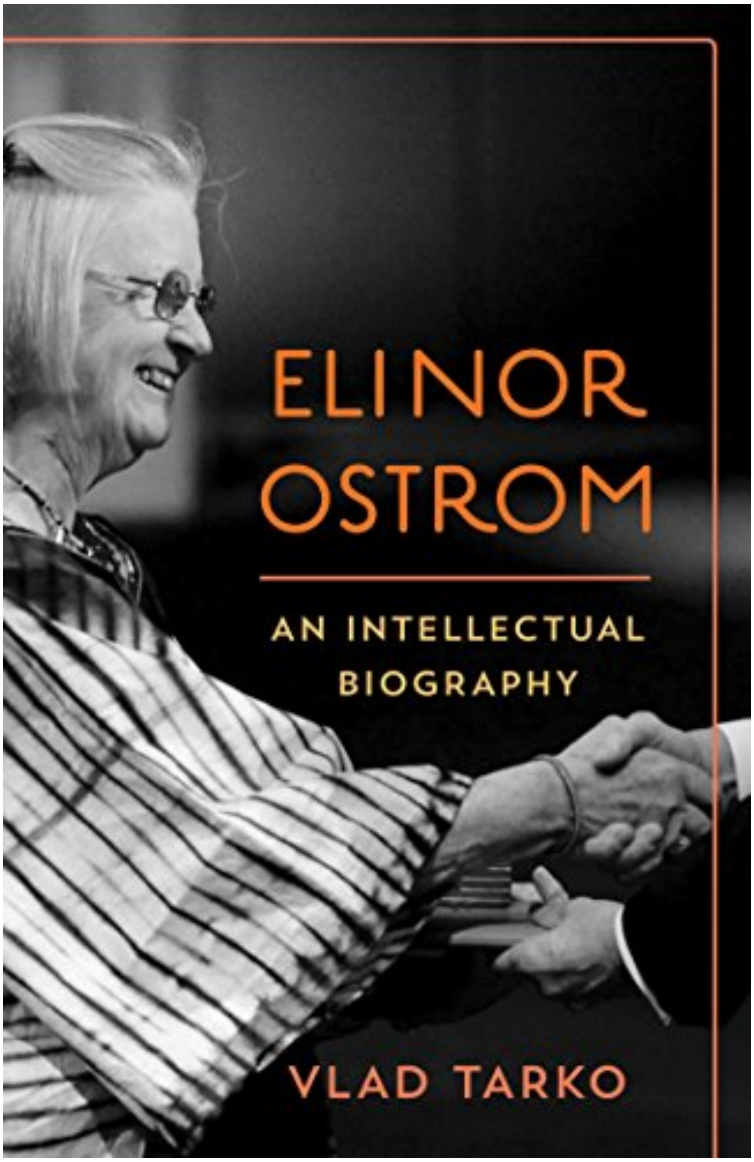

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Vlad Tarko : Elinor Ostrom: An Intellectual Biography before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Elinor Ostrom: An Intellectual Biography:

Elinor Ostrom was the first woman to win the Nobel Prize in economics. She has been at the forefront of New Institutional Economics and Public Choice revolutions, discovering surprising ways in which communities around the world have succeed in solving difficult collective problems. She first rose to prominence by studying the police in

metropolitan areas in the United States, and showing that, contrary to the prevailing view at the time, community policing and smaller departments worked better than centralized and large police departments. Together with her husband, Vincent, they have set up the Bloomington Workshop in Political Theory and Policy Analysis, which has grown into a global network of scholars and practitioners. Throughout her career, she was interested in studying ecological problems, and understanding how people manage communal properties. Her most famous discovery is that communities often find ingenious ways of escaping the ldquo;tragedy of the commonsrdquo;. Analysing a wide-variety of successes and failures, and working together with many other scholars, she was able to uncover a series of institutional ldquo;design principlesrdquo;: a set of criteria which, if followed, societies are more likely to be productive and resilient to shocks. Some of her most important theoretical insights, about polycentricity and institutional evolution, arose from this synthesizing effort. Furthermore, this led her to develop a framework for the study of the relationship between societies and their natural environment which brought institutional insights into the field of environmental studies.

[T]he book presents, in a systematic way, an excellent and easy-to-read exposition of the Ostromsrsquo; approach to social science. (Publius: The Journal of Federalism)Tarkorsquo;s concise intellectual biography of Elinor Ostrom provides readers with an authoritative account of the Bloomington School and is a masterful work of political economy in its own right. The fields of economics, political science, and philosophy would be far better off if Ostromrsquo;s insights were more widely understood, and this book should help to make that happen. (Jason Brennan, Robert J. and Elizabeth Flanagan Family Chair and Associate Professor of Strategy, Economics, Ethics, and Public Policy, the McDonough School of Business, Georgetown University)This is a masterful account of Ostrom's work. An inspiring synthesis, of an inspiring intellectual life. (Mark Pennington, Professor of Political Economy and Public Policy, King's College London)Tarko does an outstanding job capturing the breadth and depth of Linrsquo;s work to produce a course in the New Institutional Economics, as well as an intellectual history of Lin, Vincent and the many scholars associated with the Workshop in Political theory and Policy Analysis at Indiana University. (Robert L Bish, Professor Emeritus, University of Victoria, British Columbia)Vlad Tarko has written more than an intellectual biography of one of the most influential social scientists of her generation. His book is at the same time an insightful introduction and a nuanced interpretation of a fascinating research program with significant applied-level implications. (Paul Dragos Aligica, Senior Research Fellow, George Mason University)Vlad Tarko's book adds a valuable perspective on the ideas and work of Elinor Ostrom plus that of Vincent Ostrom and the Bloomington Workshop they established. The extent of their influence, and the reasons for it, come through clearly in these pages. It will be useful for readers looking for an introduction to Elinor's work, and enjoyable for readers who are already familiar with it. (William Blomquist, Professor, Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis)Vald Tarko has provided a brilliant overview of what Lin Ostrom often referred to as her and Vincent's "polycentric journey". Along the way she studied local public economies, the wrestling with common-pool resources throughout the world, and the complexity of economic development. Her enduring research legacy is to be found in both her multiple methodologies approach to studying institutional diversity, and the conclusions she drew on the possibility and sustainability of self-governing democratic societies. Tarko's book is a must read not only to those who want to learn about Elinor Ostrom and her contributions, but to all students of political economy. (Peter J. Boettke, Professor, George Mason University)About the AuthorVlad Tarko is Assistant Professor in the Department of Economics, Dickinson College, USA.