

Elinor and Vincent Ostrom

"In Memoriam"

**Por Christian Keen.*

Last month it has been a sad time for all those people who have a curiosity and passion to understand public policy and how we can improve our societies, especially the governance of them. Two outstanding scholars and human beings have passed away: Elinor "Lin" (August 7, 1933 – June 12, 2012) and Vincent Ostrom (25 September 1919 - 29 June 2012).

It would be impossible to describe in just a few words or even pages the contributions of this remarkable couple to the academic World but to our daily life as well. Elinor's contribution to the analysis of economic governance and especially of the Tragedy of Commons was of such level that she was awarded the 2009 Sveriges Riksbank Prize in Economic Sciences in Memory of Alfred Nobel, which she shared with Oliver Williamson. She was the first, and to date, the only woman to win the prize in this category.

Vincent Ostrom also had an illustrious professional career. Among his various achievements, he was distinguished Indiana University professor, Founding Director of the Workshop in Political Theory and Policy Analysis and Arthur F. Bentley Professor Emeritus of Political Science. Vincent has made particular study of fragmentation theory, rational choice theory, federalism, common-pool resources and polycentrism in government, basing much of his research on the work of early 20th century political economists Frank Knight, Ludwig von Mises and Friedrich von Hayek.

If you are interested in rational choice theory, [public administration](#) or how humans interact with ecosystems to maintain long-term sustainable resource yields, you should take a few hours and enjoy the work of these remarkable authors.

When I was asked to write their eulogy, I had a mixed feeling. I was sad to learn that such a remarkable couple had leaved us. Bur a few minutes later, after reviewing some of their work, I was smiling again and admiring their lifetime of contributions to the field of political science

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