



## Special Issue in Honour of John A. Weymark

Craig Brett<sup>1</sup> · Claude d'Aspremont<sup>2</sup> · Maurice Salles<sup>3</sup>

Published online: 29 November 2022

© Springer-Verlag GmbH Germany, part of Springer Nature 2022

This special issue in honour of John Weymark has its origin in a conference organized by Martin Van der Linden with Tommy Andersson, Craig Brett, Eun Jeong Heo, and Diana Weymark at Vanderbilt University in Nashville on April 13–14, 2019. This issue is not conference proceedings. Instead, the conference served as a springboard for this project and an invitation to colleagues to submit papers in honour of John. We are delighted that so many of them chose to do so. It is obvious that *Social Choice and Welfare* is the perfect outlet for such a tribute to John.

The scope of John's contributions is impressive, going well beyond economics with incursions in other academic domains such as philosophy and biology. Incidentally, according to his CV, his first published article appeared in *Philosophical Studies*, a respected journal of analytic philosophy.

Regarding economics, John's research interests have not been limited to social choice and welfare theory, although most of his papers deal with what can be broadly defined as normative economics. His thesis, under Karl Shell's supervision, was on public economics. He wrote contributions in the field from the end of the 1970s onwards. Several important papers on optimal taxation were published in 1986 and 1987, and more recently (with co-authors—a paper on this topic appeared as recently as 2020). One can also mention that one of his most cited publication is a joint paper in industrial economics on cartel stability (developed while he was at CORE, the renowned research center of the Catholic University of Louvain) which appeared in the *Canadian Journal of Economics/Revue Canadienne d'Économie* in 1983.

Concerning social choice theory, he made fundamental developments in the literature about Harsanyi's utilitarianism theorems, providing precise mathematical formulations and rigorous proofs which greatly clarified the subject. He wrote several papers on Arrovian aggregation, considering incomplete social preferences and studying

---

✉ Maurice Salles  
maurice.salles1@gmail.com

<sup>1</sup> Mount Allison University, Sackville, New Brunswick, Canada

<sup>2</sup> CORE, Université Catholique de Louvain, Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium

<sup>3</sup> Université de Caen-Normandie, Caen, France

restrictions on individual preferences with ‘economic’ characteristics when the set of alternatives has some Euclidean structure and preferences obey standard microeconomic analysis, such as convexity and continuity properties. These developments about the so-called economic domains were mostly co-authored with David Donaldson and Michel Le Breton. John also considered the literature on strategy-proofness of social choice rules, in particular when the set of alternatives and the individual preferences have some formal structure going beyond the notions that individual preferences are complete preorders on arbitrary sets. Other unexpected topics such as mathematical biology have also been tackled with Walter Bossert, Chloe Qi and the philosopher Samir Okasha (who pioneered the use of social choice in the choice of (scientific) theories as an alternative to Thomas Kuhn’s approach). Related with his work on Harsanyi, we must also indicate that John published several papers on interpersonal comparisons of utilities, often with Charles Blackorby, Walter Bossert and David Donaldson, and recently with Michael Morreau.

John’s work on economic inequality was fundamental in its axiomatic treatment of indices based on the mathematical theory of measurement as developed by David Krantz, Duncan Luce, Patrick Suppes, and Amos Tversky in a famous book. The paper on generalized Gini indices (published in 1981) is one of his most cited paper (second to the industrial economics paper previously mentioned). John’s interest in this area did not fade away, as can be seen with more recent publications (with Thibault Gajdos, for instance).

This brief description of John’s body of work is quite limited. For more detailed information, we recommend the reading of the long interview of John Weymark by Felix Bierbrauer and Claude d’Aspremont which appeared in 2021 in *Conversations on Social Choice and Welfare Theory* Volume 1 (Springer).

Let us conclude this editorial by mentioning John’s commitment to the cause of social choice and welfare economics. He has been associated with this journal as member of the board of editors from 1990 until 2004, then as managing editor during three years (2005–2007), and he is advisory editor since 2008. He was a member of the Council of the *Society for Social Choice and Welfare* in the period 1996–2002, becoming President-elect, President and past President in the period 2006–2011. He organized several conferences on social choice and welfare economics, including a conference on Justice, Political Liberalism, and Utilitarianism in honour of John Harsanyi and John Rawls in Caen in 1996, a conference on Social Ethics and Normative Economics in honour of Serge-Christophe Kolm again in Caen in 2007, several conferences on mechanism design (Istanbul, Nashville), a conference on Inequality and Risk in Paris in 2010, and several conferences on taxation theory. He has been a member of the scientific committees of many other conferences all over the world.

The *Society for Social Choice and Welfare* owes him very much not only for what we mentioned above but also for organizing its very successful fourth meeting in Vancouver in 1998 and for being a member of the programme committees of most of these meetings from the first one in 1992.

The papers published in this special issue have been subjected to the standard editorial procedure in usage at *Social Choice and Welfare*. We are very grateful to our referees and to Clemens Puppe for their help in making this issue a deserved homage to John Weymark.

**Publisher's Note** Springer Nature remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.