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Chapter 2

Expanding commoning: in, against and beyond capitalism?

Common worlds may overspill enclosures

Through the process of normalization, domination crafts social worlds in which the different groups of the society find their place. In those defined worlds, belonging becomes important in shaping social relations and in producing different forms of consent. In contemporary capitalist societies, distinct social worlds can be established on various levels of social organization. Urban enclavism, however, tends to become the prevailing mode of circumscribing a common world for people to recognize and, indeed, to 'inhabit'. Common worlds tend to be defined and reproduced as worlds with recognizable boundaries. In them, belonging crafts consent and consent crafts belonging.

Within the boundaries of a common world, people accept and perform shared identities, shared habits and, often, shared values. As subjects of belonging to this common world, people tend to experience it as explicitly separated from a hostile or simply alien outside. Participating in a common world is often connected to practices of securing the limits of this world and to practices that reproduce this separation. This is why, as we shall see, common worlds are not necessarily linked to practices which overspill the boundaries of a community, no matter how 'real' or 'imagined' this community may be. Common worlds

may be crafted as homogeneous and homogenizing structures of beliefs and habits. But in the process of their creation and reproduction lies the possibility of transforming them to worlds of commoning. Worlds of commoning are not simply worlds of shared beliefs and habits but are strongly connected to ways of sharing that open the circle of belonging and develop forms of active participation in the shaping of the rules that sustain them. Worlds of commoning are worlds in movement.

Rancière attempts to retheorize 'community' starting from the notion of 'common world'. He emphasizes the importance of being able to recognize a socially crafted 'distribution of the sensible world'. This world, however, according to him, is always more than a shared ethos and a shared abode. This world 'is always a polemical distribution of modes of being and "occupations" in a space of possibilities' (Rancière 2006: 42). Reducing this 'space of possibilities' to a rigid social order means replacing politics with 'police'. For Rancière, what is at stake is a constant redefinition of what is considered as common. This is what creates a common world and this is what, consequently, is at the basis of understanding and symbolizing community. 'Police' is characterized by a way of conceiving community 'as the accomplishment of a common way of being', whereas 'politics' conceives community 'as a polemic over the common' (Rancière 2010: 100). Inherent in the community is a process which recognizes the common as an issue rather than as a fact or an unambiguous norm. When this dispute or polemic over the common is silenced, community ossifies. Community becomes an ordered social universe rather than a process. Interpreting Rancière's understanding of the bond between community and politics, we could say that he sees community as an open political process, through which the

meaning and the forms of living together are questioned and potentially transformed.

In this context, Rancière is against consensus, which he describes as a form through which 'politics is transformed into police' (*ibid.*). Can we, however, introduce to this theorizing of community a way of understanding consensus and dissensus that may describe the multifarious processes of creating agreement between people?

Communities may keep on defining the common worlds which their members inhabit through processes of negotiation and dispute without necessarily being reduced to endless battle over the common. The production of a common world does not need to be the result of a homogenization process. It does not need to be the explicit and unavoidable result of normalization power strategies. If we understand a common world as the result of social relations (which are necessarily open to the history of minor or major transformations), then common worlds not only may permit differences but are the means of establishing a common ground between them. It is this kind of common world that is being expressed in public space, if public space is understood not as the locus of domination but as an always-contested area (Hénaff and Strong 2001, Loukaitou-Sideris and Ehrenfeucht 2009).

We can possibly compare different societies in terms of how open to changes and negotiation practices are the common worlds which express and sustain them. In the search for ways towards social emancipation we can possibly learn from those societies (and communities) that actually open or keep open the processes through which common worlds are being developed. But this is not as simple as it seems. We need to explore first what

kind of practices potentially prefigure social emancipation and what kind of values seem to be connected with them. This is where the political importance of the discussion on commoning becomes evident and challenging. As Linebaugh convincingly suggests, 'the commons is an activity' and this is why it 'expresses relationships in society that are inseparable from relations to nature' (Linebaugh 2008: 279).

According to this approach, it is politically meaningless to separate common goods (goods meant to be shared) that are 'natural' (resources such as the air, the forests, etc.) from those that are produced by human societies, that is 'artificial'. By the very process through which a society defines and describes a certain 'natural' good and the rules of its appropriation, such a society literally creates it as socially meaningful good. Commoning is not a process of production or appropriation of certain goods meant to be shared. Commoning is about complex and historically specific processes through which representations, practices and values intersect in circumscribing what is to be shared and how in a specific society. We generally think that what is to be shared has to do with goods and sharing is an economic process or a predominantly economic process. On a first reading, D. Harvey's definition of the common, no matter how broad and anti-essentialist, corroborates this view: for him, the common is not 'a particular kind of thing' but 'an unstable and malleable social relation between a particular self-defined social group and those aspects of its actually existing or yet-to-be-created social and/or physical environment deemed crucial to its life and livelihood' (Harvey 2012: 73).

However, the distinction between the two terms 'life' and 'livelihood' may possibly hint at a complementarity: social life

comprises a multitude of practices that express and perform social relations of power. Assigning meaning to those relations is a crucial aspect of social reproduction.

Livelihood is undoubtedly important for a society's persistence. But social life is by no means reduced to processes that sustain a society's livelihood, and the efforts to ensure social livelihood are not the sole explaining factor of social life. Commoning unfolds in all levels of social life. To reduce commoning practices to practices focused on social livelihood is an economic fallacy. Relations of production and relations of power jointly (albeit not necessarily in harmony) shape the specific historical status of a specific society. Both sets of relations are expressed in social struggles, and especially through struggles over the definition, the control, the representations and the forms of appropriation of the common.

If commoning is based on practices which give form to sharing processes, then those practices are characterized both by the means they employ and by the subjects who participate in them (Bollier and Helfrich 2012). Commoning practices shape both their subjects and their means; commoning practices literally produce what is to be named, valued, used and symbolized as common.

On the subject of what is considered as common in a specific society, discussions necessarily include specific historical analyses of the social context in which 'commons' are recognized as crucial social stakes. Enclosure acts have been analysed in many studies according to the different characteristics of the corresponding societies and communities, including the structure of power relations (Linebaugh 2008, Linebaugh and Rediker 2000, De Angelis 2007, Federici 2004).

What Hardt and Negri explicitly propose is that new forms of commons have emerged in contemporary capitalism: those especially connected to immaterial goods which can be shared as knowledge, information codes, but also affects and forms of social relationship (Hardt and Negri 2009: 132). From this catalogue it becomes clear that these new potentially shared commons directly involve human relationships not simply as the means of producing commons but, essentially, as products of commoning themselves.

It seems that this reasoning attempts to locate a specific historical period in capitalism in which commoning has to do predominantly with the production of subjectivities. This view is highly debatable, however, if we take into consideration the fact that subjectivities are indeed the most important products of a society that aims at ensuring its self-reproduction. Is it that commoning becomes the new condition of this production? This also is not easily provable. Different societies in the past contained differing sets of commoning practices (not necessarily immaterial but connected, for example, to land cultivation) through which social subjectivities were established and reproduced (Godelier 2011, Esteva 2014).

What seems to be at the core of the Hardt and Negri argument is that in today's capitalism commoning practices produce subjectivities which acquire characteristics that threaten this society's reproduction. Giving new form to the Marxian idea that capitalist society contains and produces relations that may undermine it (the idea of contradictions such as the immense potential of development of means of production which is thwarted by private ownership), Hardt and Negri discover the constitutive contradiction that may lead to contemporary

capitalism's destruction. This is probably what they try to locate in the dynamics of the multitude (Hardt and Negri 2005, 2009). The multitude is considered as a vast agglomerate of potential subjectivities which emerge in the context of contemporary commoning. The multitude is a set of 'singularities' which are inherently multiple and are connected through multiple forms of coexistence. Exactly because the multitude is produced through commoning and produces various kinds of commons (especially those already referred to as 'immaterial'), the multitude may potentially constitute itself as a multiple political subjectivity that surpasses capitalism (Hardt and Negri 2009: 165–78).

Why do contemporary forms of commoning possibly give rise to political subjectivities which threaten capitalism's reproduction? Is it because inside capitalism commoning is always a source of anti-capitalist struggle? From the examples already referred to, it becomes apparent that commoning is not necessarily an anti- or post-capitalist process. Commoning may support the reproduction of existing communities and their struggle to defend their collective symbolic or legal ownership. This kind of ownership may have been the product of enclosure practices which limit access or define privileges of use, as in the case of common facilities and open space in a gated community, a 'private' club or a 'whites only' playground. Furthermore, commoning in general may create areas of conflict between different communities or societies. Can these conflicts be resolved by reference to principles connected to commoning, or is this a problem which lies outside commoning reasoning?

In the search for answers to this question let us return to the historical specificity of contemporary in-capitalism commoning. Practices of collaboration obviously pre-exist today's

capitalism. Practices of capitalist command exercised on various collaboration forms obviously have their history in capitalism's transformations. It seems that at least two very important new qualities characterize contemporary collaboration practices that connect them to commoning: the tremendous rise of information and transmission technologies and the predominance, as a result, of the model of networking in social relations. Affects and knowledge(s) used to bind people in various epochs. Codes and languages too become crucial aspects in almost all forms of human collaboration. It is the networking model (Castells 2010, Castells and Cardoso 2005) that seems to create today unprecedented possibilities of human collaboration and interaction (De Peuter and Dyer-Witheford 2010) which may proliferate in ways that capitalist command fails to predict and control. Information technologies have widely diffused the networking model. This model, however, is at the same time a very powerful tool of social control. We already know that dominant control mechanisms can seriously affect information flows, can efficiently connect dispersed units of domination and can process data with speeds that may put them ahead of collaborative acts of resistance.

We probably need, then, to distinguish between those practices of collaboration, communication and cooperation that may escape command or appropriation and those that are part of domination and exploitation processes. This is possible if we develop certain criteria through which we can evaluate commoning practices or processes according not to their pro- or anti-capitalist 'essence' but according to their beyond-capitalism dynamics. Commoning retains such a dynamics, I maintain, only if it is always expanding beyond the limits of any community

that gives it ground and develops it. In terms of collaboration, this necessarily presupposes an ever-expanding community of potential collaborators. To develop the means and the rules that may include ever-new participants in the collaboration-cooperation-communication practices of commoning is the most important prerequisite for commoning to exceed the limits capitalism imposes on it through enclosures and privatization of the products of commoning and through controls that subsume commoning under capitalist command.

The networking model surely creates new opportunities for expanding commoning. It is not enough, though, to insist on these opportunities if we don't accept that networking can be the very form of capitalist command (and of the capture of the common). The problem of retaining the anti-capitalist potentialities of commoning (Caffentzis and Federici 2014, Hardt 2010, Harvey, Hardt and Negri 2009) is indeed a political problem. That is why the means of expressing these potentialities have to do with the characteristics of collaboration that sustain commoning practices. If commoning creates potential political subjectivities, it is important to know what kind of social relations actually open or orient those subjectivities towards sustaining and expanding commoning. What kind of practices of social relationality keep commoning alive and equip it with the power to escape the traps of enclosure and control? Can we really talk about forms of repeatability of those practices that not only expand the circle of potential commoners but also open the field to new forms of commoning, to new forms of commons and thus, necessarily, to new forms of cooperation? Can we really speak, in this context, of practices that invent open institutions of expanding commoning?

Institutions of expanding commoning

For commoning practices to become important prefigurations of an emancipated society, commoning has to remain a collective struggle to reappropriate and transform a society's common wealth (Hardt and Negri 2009: 251–3) by always expanding the network of sharing and collaboration.

Dominant institutions legitimize inequality, distinguishing between those who know and those who do not, between those who can take decisions and those who must execute them and between those who have specific rights and those who are deprived of them. Thus, dominant institutions focused on the production and uses of public space are essentially forms of authorization which stem from certain authorities and aim at directing the behaviours of public space users (Stavrides 2012: 589).

True, there also exist dominant institutions which appear to be grounded upon an abstract equality: real people with differentiated characteristics, needs and dreams are reduced to neutralized subjects of abstract rights. Thus, in public space general rules appear to be addressed to homogenized users, users who can have access to a specific place at specific hours of the day and under specific conditions (including discreet or straightforward surveillance).

In spite of their different role in social normalization, both types of dominant institutions classify and predict types of behaviour and deal with only those differences which are fixed and perpetuated through the classifications they establish. There are, obviously, differences in terms of content: an institution that aims at guaranteeing a certain form of equality (no matter how abstract) is different from an institution that openly imposes discriminations.

Institutions of commoning established in a stable and well-defined community may very well look like the dominant institutions in the ways they regulate people's rights and actions. Institutions of expanding commoning, however, explicitly differ from the dominant ones as well as from the institutions of what can be termed enclosed commoning. This makes them potentially different 'social artifices' which are oriented towards different social bonds.

Three necessary qualities characterize the institutions of expanding commoning. First of all, these institutions establish the ground of comparisons between different subjects of action and also between different practices. Subjects of action and practices themselves become comparable and relevant: what is at stake is to invent forms of collaboration based not on homogenization but on multiplicity (Hardt and Negri 2005: 348–9). Instead of keeping or creating distances between different subjects and practices (situated in a rigid taxonomy), institutions of this kind encourage differences to meet, to mutually expose themselves and to create grounds of mutual awareness. Mere coexistence does not capture the potentiality of comparison. Differences mean something because they can be compared. Differences are relative and relational.

Let us consider an example. In the case of the occupied Navarinou Park in Athens (a car park converted to a lively urban square and garden through a neighbourhood initiative), people could have created distinct working groups in which participation would be based on each one's knowledge and abilities. This, however, would have latently reproduced a role taxonomy based on the 'innocent obviousness' of existing differences. As a young architect who participated in the park's assembly recalls: 'People

involved felt that they had to reposition themselves outside of their normal position and profession' (An Architektur 2010: 5). Even in areas of her expertise she was careful to express her opinion 'as one opinion among others, and not as the expert's opinion' (ibid.). What makes Navarinou Park an experiment of common space creation is that any form of work and cooperation is implicitly or explicitly an act of collective self-regulation and self-management. Collecting the rubbish can become a test in such a context, as can a discussion regarding direct democracy in the park's assembly. The rules established by the assembly formed institutions of commoning, as did the rules that established a rotation of duties (such as, for example, the collection of rubbish). Institutions of expanding commoning need to be flexible because 'newcomers' need to be included in them without being forced to enter a pre-existing taxonomy of roles. Comparability is the motor force of expanding commoning.

However, comparability is not enough. Institutions of commoning need to offer opportunities as well as tools for translating differences between views, between actions and between subjectivities, one to the other. If comparability is based on the necessary and constitutive recognition of differences, translatability creates the ground for negotiations between differences without reducing them to common denominators. 'An emancipated community is a community of narrators and translators' (Rancière 2009b: 22). Obviously, this is quite difficult, since dominant taxonomies tend to block those processes of establishing a socially recognizable common ground that are not based on the predominance of the ruling elites. Translation seeks correspondences but cannot and does not aspire to establish an absolute unobstructed mirroring of one language to the

other. So does or should do an institution which keeps alive the expanding potentiality of commoning. Indeed 'the common is always organized in translation' (Roggero 2010: 368). Expanding commoning does not expand according to pre-existing patterns; it literally invents itself. Translation is this inherent inventiveness of commoning which always opens new fields and new opportunities for the creation of a common world always in-the-making.

The creation of common spaces involves practices of translation that build bridges between people with different political, cultural or religious backgrounds. In a collectively managed neighbourhood kitchen in today's Athens (or in Buenos Aires during the 2001 *Argentinazo*), people have to communicate in order to collaborate in facing urgent tasks connected to everyday survival. It is not only that pre-existing common languages and codes are employed in establishing these kinds of communication. It is always necessary to invent forms of translating 'experiences' or 'intellectual adventures' (Ranciere 2009b: 11), thus creating intersections between individual trajectories. Immigrants can join in the social kitchens as commoners only if such translations are being worked upon, but translation is not only necessary for establishing correspondences between different spoken languages. Immigrant cultures contain important seeds of commoning which can be planted effectively in a new collectively cultivated ground. Around a collective kitchen's pot, at the benches of an occupied square and during the long sleepless nights in front of the popular barricades of Oaxaca Commune (Esteva 2010), common space was weaved through acts of translation that created common stakes, new shared habits and views and new common dreams. The power of expanding commoning depends upon acts of translation that

always invite newcomers without attempting to diminish or engulf their otherness.

A third characteristic of institutions of expanding commoning has very deep roots in the history of human societies. Social anthropologists have documented very well the existence of mechanisms in certain societies which prevented or discouraged the accumulation of power. Depending on the case, these mechanisms were focused on the equal distribution of collected food, on the ritual destruction of wealth, on the symbolic sacrifice of leaders and on carnivalistic role reversals, et cetera.

If institutions of commoning are meant to be able to support a constant opening of the circles of commoning, they need to sustain mechanisms of control of any potential accumulation of power, either by individuals or by specific groups. If sharing is to be the guiding principle of self-management practices, then sharing of power is simultaneously the precondition of egalitarian sharing and its ultimate target. Egalitarian sharing, which needs to be able to include newcomers, has to be encouraged by an always-expanding network of self-governance institutions. Such institutions can really be 'open' and 'perpetually in flux' (Hardt and Negri 2009: 358–9) but in very specific ways connected to the practices of expanding commoning. Power is first and foremost the power to decide. If, however, the power to decide is distributed equally through mechanisms of participation, then this power ceases to give certain people the opportunity (legitimized or not) to impose their will on others.

Raul Zibechi has carefully observed the way neighbourhood communities in the city of El Alto, Bolivia, have organized their struggle against the privatization of water (Zibechi 2007, 2010). He starts from the idea that 'Community does not merely exist,

it is made. It is not an institution, not even an organization, but a way to make links between people' (Zibechi 2010: 14). By tracing the actual practices through which communities organized their struggle, Zibechi found out that those links did not only produce a stable form of centralized leadership out of a series of recognizable social bonds. In the Aymara city of El Alto, community was not simply transported as an enduring model of social organization from rural areas to urban areas. Community form was, according to Zibechi, 're-invented' and 're-created' (ibid.: 19). This kind of community was organized to cope with the everyday problems of a poor population which migrated en masse from rural areas and which based its survival on rich networks of solidarity. Community, thus, was really a network of smaller micro-communities (the smallest unit of which being the neighbourhood block), each one with its local council and distinct decision-taking assemblies. A form of dispersion of power was produced in practice which created various levels and forms of intra-neighbourhood cooperation (ibid.: 30).

During the days of struggle these communities fought against the usurpation of natural resources in many inventive ways. What characterized these methods was a dialectics, one could say, of dispersal and regrouping: 'First of all there is a massive sovereign assembly; Secondly a series of multiple actions in the community, deployed in parallel; And thirdly, a regrouping, or rather a confluence, but rather of a much larger scale than the original' (ibid.: 58).

Community thus, through the dispersed initiatives of the micro-communities which constitute its fabric, manages to fight both the external enemy, in this case the central privatization policy, and the internal enemy, the ever-present danger

of concentration of power which inevitably creates hierarchies, exploitation and, of course, corruption.

It is important to note that consensus was pursued on the level of massive neighbourhood assemblies, but decisions were more like guidelines for dispersed and improvised initiatives of action, unified by the struggle's common cause as well as by a feeling of equal participation. In Rancière's reasoning, these communities should be considered as political communities, so long as acts and decision making were not contained in a pre-established centralized order ('police'). What Rancière perhaps misses is that consensus can be a practice; consensus can be a project which takes different shapes and does not have to reach a final and definitive stage.

In the recent Occupy movement, as well as in many other forms of direct democracy which were tried in neighbourhood initiatives, an open assembly explicitly tried to establish equality in terms of decision making. Everyone had the right to participate. In many cases decision making was based not on voting but on consensus reached through extended and sometimes exhaustive debate. Establishing equality of opinions is a difficult process. It depends on who is willing to participate, what is at stake in the decision, how decisions are linked to specific tasks and who chooses to take the burden. And of course an important issue is how a person forms his or her opinion and what kind of access to knowledge, education, experience and bodily abilities a person has. Often, advantages in all those fields latently legitimize certain opinions as superior to others. How does one treat, for example, the opinion of somebody who rarely participates in the everyday hard work of a common space's maintenance? And

do those who participate more frequently than others have the right to decide against the opinions of others?

The main argument of those who accept forms of concentration of power in groups of individuals involved in a movement's initiative is efficiency. Quick or coherent decisions, they say, need to be taken by representatives, who, of course, should be elected democratically. The squares movement experience has shown that an obstinate insistence on direct democracy can also create coherent decisions and an efficient distribution of tasks collectively agreed upon. The Spanish 15M movement, for example, was organized on the basis of daily open assemblies which would vote on proposals formulated by thematic commissions with titles such as 'power', 'action', 'coordination', 'logistics', and so on (Hughes 2011: 412). Of course, institutions of expanding commoning have to deal with difficulties arising from a change in scale. This is a very well-known problem of direct democracy. If, however, power dispersion remains a guiding principle and is established through institutions that give form to a de-centring re-centring dialectics, then questions of scale become questions focused on the organization of different levels of participation.

Autonomous Zapatista municipalities and Juntas de Buen Gobierno offer a relevant, very interesting and inspiring example. As we know, Zapatistas never chose to base their emancipating struggle on indigenous Maya fundamentalism. They chose neither to accept the 'reality' of self-referential traditional societies excluded from Mexican civil society nor to struggle for an independent Maya state (Stavrides 2010b: 121). Autonomy meant for Zapatistas self-governance of Zapatista communities and the creation of a second level of autonomous

institutions which interconnects and coordinates community decisions and activities through the Juntas de Buen Gobierno. Zapatistas attempt to limit the possibilities of an accumulation of power to community representatives by insisting on a rotation in 'government' duties (with very short rotation cycles). This possibly limits efficiency, if efficiency is measured by managerial standards, but effectively educates all the people in community self-governance (ibid.: 126–7 and Esteva 2014).

Comparability and translation form potential links between strangers and therefore create possibilities of exchanges between them. Egalitarian sharing may support an always-expanding network of exchanges that is open to newcomers. What those three characteristics of emergent open institutions of commoning establish is forms of sharing that defy enclosure and take equality both as a presupposition for collaboration and as a promise for a just society. There is perhaps one more social relation that expands and also transforms egalitarian sharing: the gift. In most anthropological approaches, gift exchanges are shown to be based on explicit or latent obligations that enforce (or euphemize) asymmetries of power (Mauss 1967, Godelier 1999, Peterson 1993). There can, however, be forms of offering which essentially transgress self- or group-centred calculations and possibly hint at different forms of togetherness and solidarity. In conditions of harsh inequality (including differentiated access to knowledge and poorly developed individual abilities resulting from class barriers), commoners of expanding commoning need to realize that they often need to offer more than they expect to receive, to speak less and hear more than those who are not privileged speakers and to contribute to common tasks without demanding a balance among individual offers (De Angelis and Stavrides 2010: 23).

Protest camps in many parts of the world were actually sites of commoning practices that encouraged gift offering. In the occupied Tahrir Square in Cairo, for example, food offering was part of a process that extended socially important habits of hospitality, usually connected to the realm of the family house, to the appropriated public space. Maybe this is an essential part of the process of converting an occupied square or a protest camp to a collectively crafted home (Feigenbaum et al. 2013: 43, Alexander 2011: 58). Food offering, thus, contributed to forms of sharing in and through space that ‘enable alternative forms of circulation and distribution, and encourage forms of relationality different from capitalism (in both its welfare and neoliberal renditions)’ (Mittermaier 2014: 73). Solidarity is both a prerequisite of egalitarian sharing and a set of practices that create equality through offering.

As we can see, institutions of expanding commoning do not simply define modes of collective practices but also, importantly, forms of social relations through which collective subjects of commoning are being shaped. Compatibility, translatability, power sharing and gift offering are indeed forms of relations between subjects of commoning that encourage commoning to expand beyond the limits of any closed community. This is why expanding commoning necessarily activates processes of identity opening. In order for subjects of commoning to be shaped through comparison, translation, shared mechanisms that prevent power accumulation, and gift gestures that help in diminishing existing inequalities, those subjects have to be open to new definitions of what is considered as common. We can actually contextualize differently Rancière’s understanding of politics as ‘a manifestation of a “we” that restages the scene

of the common' (Rancière 2009a: 121). Expanding commoning always activates and develops a manifestation (and, of course, a production) of a 'we' that restages the scene of the common, 'the objects that belong to it and the subjects that it counts' (ibid.). Belonging to this kind of 'we' means being able to consider the possibility of employing new practices for restaging the 'scene of the common' and, thus, recognizing new subjects that are being shaped by their inclusion in the expanding commoning process.

Expanding commoning involves specific and characteristic processes of subjectivation. It constantly invites 'newcomers' and thus transforms the community from which commoning radiates as well as those who are not simply attracted by and integrated into it but who essentially become co-producers of a modified common world. The phrase 'restaging the scene of the common' implies perhaps that the process of redefining what is common is always a process of both material and immaterial transformations. Giving new meaning to existing practices and goods becomes just as important as inventing new practices and products. Newcomers, thus, may upset dominant taxonomies and dominant role distributions even in communities and societies that tend to become homogenized through commoning. Expanding commoning orients commoning practices away from homogenization – which necessarily encloses and keeps 'others' outside – and directs actions towards constant negotiations with others as potential co-commoners. Expanding commoning feeds on differences but does not simply tolerate or recognize differences. Expanding commoning always invites different groups or individuals to become co-producers of a common world-in-the-making.

Institutions of expanding commoning establish the common ground on which such encounters may take place. They are not simply forms of openness to contingency; they are mechanisms which give shape to potential transformations by ensuring that commoning will continue to be a set of practices of sharing that treat commoners as equals but different.

Clearly the perspective of this book aspires to be political rather than economic. Alternative economies and forms of solidarity economy indeed go well beyond a mere alternative model of production and consumption. They generate and encourage social relations based not on exploitation but on mutual support. One should not reduce those forms to an allegedly 'fair trade', although so-called fair trade networks of distribution are often based on ethical codes and agreements which lessen exploitation and certain inequalities. A solidarity economy may directly involve forms of organization of production and consumption that attempt to organize the creation and distribution of common goods and services through forms of association and collaboration based on sharing practices.

Perhaps we need, however, to disentangle commoning from an imaginary of emancipation in which economic reasoning prevails. One needs to respect and support ideas of developing a parallel economy, and people all over the world often develop those ideas and relevant practices in order to survive in harsh conditions of the utmost exploitation. One can even suggest that the 'circulation of commons' or the 'multiplication of commons' which 'can only arise from the circulation of struggles' (De Peuter and Dyer-Witheford 2010: 47) may be the essential characteristics of such a developing parallel economy. In order, however, to be able to envisage anti-capitalist or post-capitalist

perspectives, one has necessarily to focus explicitly on alternative forms of social organization. And those forms can of course include work relations, or, generally, production relations, but should not be reduced to them.

It seems that the work of E. Ostrom, which has undoubtedly offered important arguments to those who try to oppose the logic of aggressive individualism, limits its praise for the commons to economic reasoning. Ostrom studied 'common-pool resources' extensively and developed theoretical proposals about their effective management (Ostrom 1990, Ostrom et al. 1994). Her main arguments are in support of collective management of the means of a community's or a society's subsistence. She does not question, however, the assumption that societies always treat or have treated those means as resources. Different cultures in different times give different meaning to natural elements that the current society recognizes as resources. It makes a lot of difference if people think that they do not simply have to calculate the outcome of their various acts of production but have also to acknowledge the results of acts of sacrifice (for example in acts of ostentatious expenditure or in expiatory rituals). Gift-exchange socialities, the shared gratifications of friendship and solidarity, ideas (such as patriotism) and affects (such as love) also have the power to defy self- or group-centred calculations. The very concept of 'benefit' (individual or collective) is culturally and historically determined. And it is open to struggles that contest it, transform it and connect it to different shared values and meanings. Even the allegedly innocent term *access* (which is employed in problematizing the management or governance of resources) more often than not presupposes a prevailing scarcity principle that shapes human behaviour and demands. Using the

term to describe the opportunity to share knowledge enclosed by those who profit from its uses hides the fact that the production and circulation of knowledge is not an economic process (and is not subject to the logic of scarcity). It is the capitalist logic of transforming everything to economic entities and reducing human creativity to economic-benefit-oriented work that creates a knowledge economy (an economy of knowledge). It is not, of course, enough to disentangle knowledge from economic reasoning to open it to commoning. It is equally important to free knowledge from practices of domination in which knowledge is performatively declared as a source of power. The term *access* may even hide these aspects of knowledge enclosure that have survived and continue to thrive in capitalism ('sacred knowledge' guarded by 'priests', elitist knowledge guarded by connoisseurs, etc.)

Societies are being structured through geometries of power, and it is those geometries that commoning should challenge. Domination is being imposed and legitimized in every field and at every level of social life, production of goods obviously included. Perhaps going beyond capitalism would mean taking away from the economy and economical reasoning the power to dominate all the other systems of social structure. Creativity, play, passion and experiments in social relations that are not the means to something else but themselves the ends of social common life are modes of social organization that may describe a way out from the predominance of the economy. This predominance, after all, seems to characterize a small part of human history. This is how we can understand commoning not as an alternative economy but 'as an alternative to economy' (Esteva 2014: 1149). Commons can indeed be 'the cell of the new society'

(ibid.: 1147) not only if common is 'the cellular form of society beyond capital' (De Peuter and Dyer-Witheford 2010: 44 and Dyer-Witheford 2006) but if commoning is to be a process of sharing both resources and power. Commoning, thus, may possibly develop not simply as an ever-expanding network of alternative economic relations but as an ever-expanding network of equalitarian forms of social organization, an ever-expanding network of alternatives to economocentric reason and to exploitative power relations.

Common space as threshold space

Common spaces are those spaces produced by people in their effort to establish a common world that houses, supports and expresses the community they participate in. Common spaces, thus, should be distinguished both from public spaces and from private spaces. Public spaces are primarily created by a certain authority (local, regional or state) which controls them and establishes the rules under which people may use them. Private spaces belong to and are controlled by specific individuals or economic entities that have the right to establish the conditions under which others may use them.

Common space can be considered as a relation between a social group and its effort to define a world that is shared between its members. By its very conception such a world can be stable and well defined, completely separated from what is kept outside and the 'outsiders'. This is indeed the kind of world that can be contained in an urban enclave: enclaves can be secluded common worlds, as in the case of a *favela*, or of a gated community.

Common space, however, can also be a porous world, always in-the-making, if we consider the relation that defines it

as dynamic both in terms of the formation of the corresponding group or community and in terms of the characteristics of the common world itself. Common space, thus, may be shaped through the practices of an emerging and not necessarily homogeneous community which does not simply try to secure its reproduction but also attempts to enrich its exchanges with other communities as well as the exchanges between its members. Common space may take the form of a meeting ground, an area in which 'expansive circuits of encounter' intersect (Hardt and Negri 2009: 254). Through acts of establishing common spaces, the discriminations and barriers that characterize the enclave's urbanity may be countered.

From the the perspective of reappropriating the city, common spaces are the spatial nodes through which the metropolis becomes again the site of politics, if by 'politics' we may describe an open process through which the dominant forms of living together are questioned and potentially transformed. This is how a group that almost ignited the Gezi Park struggle – in defence of a park that was meant to be destroyed by the government's plans in Istanbul, Turkey – described the collective experience of reappropriating the metropolis: 'The struggle for Gezi Park and Taksim Square set a new definition of what public space means. Reclaiming Taksim has shattered AKP's [the governing party] hegemony in deciding what a square is supposed to mean for us citizens, because Taksim is now what the Resistance wants it to mean: our public square' (Müştereklerimiz 2013). Interestingly, the group's name may be translated as Our Commons.

The prevailing experiences of urban enclosures and the dominant imaginary of recognizable identity-imposing enclaves colonize the thought and action of those who attempt to reclaim

politics. We need to abandon a view that fantasizes about uncontaminated enclaves of emancipation (Stavrides 2009: 53 and Negri 2009: 50). Threshold experience and the threshold metaphor offer a counter-example to the dominant enclave city (Stavrides 2010b). Rather than perpetuating an image of this city as an archipelago of enclave islands, we need to create spaces that inventively threaten this peculiar urban order by upsetting dominant taxonomies of spaces and life types. Spaces-as-thresholds acquire a dubious, precarious perhaps but also virus-like existence: they become active catalysts in processes of reappropriating the city as commons.

Threshold spatiality may host and express practices of commoning that are not limited to secluded worlds shared by secluded communities of commoners. Thresholds explicitly symbolize the potentiality of sharing by establishing intermediary areas of crossing, by opening the inside to the outside. As mechanisms which regulate and give meaning to acts of passage, thresholds may become powerful tools in the construction of spaces which escape the normalizing urban ordering of the city of enclaves.

Thresholds may appear as mere boundaries which separate an inside from an outside such as, for example, in a door threshold, but this act of separation is always and simultaneously an act of connection. Thresholds create the conditions of entrance and exit; thresholds prolong, manipulate and give meaning to an act of passage. This is why thresholds have been marked in many societies by rituals which attempt to control the inherent potentialities of crossing. Guardian gods or spirits dwell in thresholds because the act of passage is already an act that brings into a potential connection an inside and an outside. Entering

may be taken as an intrusion, and exiting may convey the stigma of ostracizing.

Thresholds acquire symbolic meaning and are often shaped in ways that express and corroborate this meaning. Societies construct thresholds as spatial artifices which regulate, symbolically and actually, practices of crossing, practices of bridging different worlds. And those practices may be socially beneficial or harmful. Societies also use the image and the emblematic experience of thresholds to metaphorically invest meaning into changes of social status which periodically and necessarily happen to their members. Passing from childhood to adolescence, from single to married life, from life to death, from apprenticeship to the status of the professional, from trainee to warrior, and so on, are cases of supervised social transformation that mould individuals. Societies often understand these changes as the crossing of thresholds: initiation procedures guarantee a socially 'safe' crossing by directing neophytes to the 'other' side (Van Gennep 1960: 15–25).

As the anthropologist Victor Turner has observed, threshold crossing contains an inherent transforming potential which is not necessarily bound to the rules of social reproduction. People-on-the-threshold experience the potentiality of change because during the period of their stay on the threshold a peculiar experience emerges, the experience of *communitas* (Turner 1977: 96–7). People who have lost their previous social identity but have not yet acquired a new one linger on the threshold of change 'betwixt and between' (ibid.: 95), almost reduced to the common characteristics shared by all humans. Social differentiation may appear quite arbitrary during such an experience. A kind of equalizing potentiality seems to dwell on thresholds.

Liminality, the spatiotemporal quality of threshold experience (Turner 1977 and 1974: 197), is a condition which gives people the opportunity to share a common world-in-the-making in which differences appear as pre-social or even anti-social.

Turner thinks that 'there are ... two major models for human interrelatedness' (Turner 1977: 96). The first one refers to the hierarchical set of relations which characterizes societies in general and which is most of the time organized as a system of 'politico-legal-economic positions' (ibid.), a 'structure', in Turner's terminology. 'The second ... is of society as an unstructured or rudimentarily structured and relatively undifferentiated comitatus, community or even communion of equal individuals' (ibid.). Turner names this *communitas* to distinguish it from *community*, which for him is an 'area of common living' (ibid.). *Communitas*, therefore, is an exceptional collective experience which happens in cases in which people lose, don't pay attention to or consciously bypass, ignore or challenge forms of distinction that separate them. This may indeed happen in the ritual context of rites of passage. It may also be the product of experiences connected to 'liminoid' phenomena, those phenomena that share the same 'anti-structural' expressions as the phenomena of ritual liminality. Connecting to Sutton-Smith's idea that 'anti-structure represents the latent system of potential alternatives from which novelty will arise' (in Turner 1982: 28), Turner considers liminoid phenomena – in which he includes charivari, fiestas, wearing masks at Halloween, etc. – as the 'seedbeds of cultural creativity' (ibid.). Although he did not choose specifically to connect liminoid phenomena with collective acts of transgression, Turner thought of the experience of *communitas* as equally present in those phenomena. In a somewhat alienated form, the feeling of

communitas persists in mass entertainment experiences as well as in the so-called 'high art' collective contemplation (when, for example, one goes to the museum, to the opera, to the cinema, etc.). Whereas, however, these forms of communitas unite individuals without supposedly highlighting their cultural or social differences, they often end up being mere simulations of communitas experience: the mass audiences are often united in their common fantasies and their common consumer appetites (sports and games audiences included). What a discussion on the equalizing experience of communitas can offer to a problematization of the commoning practices is the means to understand a community of commoners as a community which develops in its members a feeling of the sharing of qualities which are common to all. And this feeling liberates people from their anguish to prove that they are better and stronger, et cetera because of their neighbours. In such a context, communitas may be taken to represent not a feeling of belonging to a specific closed community but a feeling of becoming part of a community that is potentially limitless.

Initiation threshold spaces are defined through the ritual practices which bring them into existence. Such threshold spaces are under society's surveillance, and any form of communitas is carefully limited to an ephemeral initiatory existence. However, in thresholds which give ground to and shape institutions of expanding commoning, communitas is experienced as an always-in-the-making community of participating commoners. These people do not experience the potentialities of equality by being ritually reduced to a common degree zero of humanness (as do the initiated in rites of passage). Rather, they construct through their acts a community of equals because they choose

to define at least part of their life autonomously and in common. Emergent communities of creators and users of city space: isn't this a prospect that transforms city space to common space, to space-as-commons?

In what follows, an attempt is made to study practices of urban commoning and to discover in them potentialities that hint at different forms of social relations and organization: can commoning practices offer us glimpses of a different future, of a just and emancipated society?

As we will see, in many cases common spaces give ground to prefigurations of such a different future. Common spaces, however, as well as commoning practices should not be taken into account only because of such inherent potentialities. In today's hierarchical, divided and often harshly partitioned predominantly urban societies, real people attempt every day to control at least fragments of their lives themselves. Explicitly organized struggles for common spaces and for the strengthening of commoning practices of collaboration (in recuperated sites of production, for example, or in less ambitious neighbourhood garden initiatives) are not the only important sources of inspiration for opening passages to a different future. Lots of small, even mundane, initiatives exhibit the power commoning has to shape habits and acts of sharing as well as bonds of solidarity. Commoning practices become reinvented in today's metropolises in acts of collective everyday survival. Commoning practices also erupt in attempts to secure channels of communication and exchange that are not regulated solely by the destructive rules of exploitation. Everyday forms of encounter and collaboration indeed take shape in and through commoning without even declaring themselves to be an alternative to the existing social relations.

Institutions of expanding commoning may or may not be present in all of these implicit or explicit commoning practices. Such practices sometimes struggle to manage themselves, to become repeatable and recognizable, to establish collective identities and to circumscribe collectively agreed-upon stakes and targets. But commoning practices are necessarily caught in an antagonistic social context which supports dominant capitalist command and forms of capitalist usurpation of the commons. We have to carefully study common spaces not as pure expressions of a different culture but as necessarily hybrid collective works-in-progress, in which glimpses of a different future emerge. Commoning in those spaces may fall into the trap of enclosing itself (reversing, thus, those potentialities) or may strive to go beyond capitalist capture. Commoning, thus, is not anti-capitalist by essence but may activate and express attempts to go beyond capitalism.