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Chapter 6

Grounding social revolution: elements for a systems theory of commoning¹

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We never see the enemy because we can't see ourselves clearly.
(Sun Tzu, The Art of War)

Introduction

Starting from the position that we should not confuse the commons with resources held in common, I approach commons as social systems in which resources are pooled by a community of subjects who *also* govern these resources to guarantee their sustainability (if they are natural resources) and the reproduction of the community, and who engage in commoning, a form of social labour that has a direct relation to the needs, desires and aspirations of the commoners. Thorough commoning, subjects create conditions of resilience and self-organisation and may develop from grassroots into more all-encompassing systems. Thus, commons come in many shapes and sizes.

In terms of a political definition of commons, what is crucial is the fact that, as systems, commons are defined not only by their own internal relations – from which, for example, Elinor Ostrom (1990) derived her principles of sustainability of commons – but also in relation to their environment. The commons environment includes other systems. In the first place, this means ecosystems. Many commons rely on the natural environment for their resilience, so have a special interest in developing ecologically

sustainable practices and struggling against the ‘externalities’ of other systems, especially that of capital. Second, commons relate to other social systems. These are of several types, related to other commons, and in different ways, as well as to the state and to capital: the typology of commons systems is quite broad in range. It must be remarked that, at this preliminary stage, the commons seem to have an ontological equivalence to social systems such as state and capital. To the extent that they are all *social* systems this is correct, but as soon as we begin to investigate their own processes, key ontological differences emerge.

The phenomenology of commons is grounded in daily life. Households are one example of commons, when patriarchal hierarchies do not turn them into micro-states, that is, or corrupt commons, as in Hardt and Negri (2009), or in the vernacular, and from the perspective of subaltern subjects, ‘fucked up’ commons. Networks of supporting friends are another sphere of commons, consisting of life-long connections or ephemeral relationships: temporary commons are still commons.² Community organisations, housing co-ops and social centres, self-managed workshops, community gardens and water associations, these are all forms of commons systems, as are peer-to-peer (P2P) networks in cyberspace for sharing codes, files and documents (so music, books, etc.) and generally promoting all forms of digital cooperation. As the listing of friendship and virtual networks implies, commons may occupy a social space rather than physical place; they do not need to be situated in a particular locality, although those that are have the additional strategic task of claiming a territory.

Importantly, I argue, we should not think of commons as a third sector, beyond state and market. Or, if we want to do this,

then we should not think of the sectors as discrete divisions operating alongside of or in parallel with one another. Commons are 'inside' the state and capital, and, to the extent that states and capital influence the subjectivities of commoners reproducing commons, states and capital are inside commons. Thus, we also find commons in private enterprise, on the shop-floors of factories and in the canteens of offices among co-workers supporting one another, sharing their lunch and developing forms of solidarity and mutual aid; and we find commons inside state schools and universities, often divided along hierarchical lines: the management commons, the teachers' commons, the students' commons (literally, in the 'common room').

Therefore, not only are the commons related to pooled resources governing rivers, coastlines, forests and rivers and their ecosystems, as studied by Ostrom and many of his associates at the International Association for the Study of Commons; nor, moreover, are they only found outside of and in opposition to capital (and state), as in the unemployed squatting in empty houses and sharing tricks on how to fool the benefits office, but also they are within and at the heart even of capital, such as among the rich and privileged. Bill Gates, for example, becomes a commoner with respect to his family and his class, even though his peculiar family commons is part of that 1% of society that concentrates 50% of the world's wealth (Oxfam, 2015) and the physical siting of his commons systems is most likely protected by barbed wire and security cameras that warn armed security guards transforming a commons boundary into a border that keeps the poor and their commons systems out. Indeed, the relation among commons is not something given, but must be politically constructed through boundary commoning (see below).

Both commons and capital may employ high or low tech, make use of oil or not and have functions that require a certain level of authority. Nevertheless, commons and capital are two distinct, autonomous social systems: that is, they both struggle to 'take things into their own hands' and self-govern on the basis of their different, and often clashing, internally generated codes, measures and values. They also struggle to be distinct autopoietic social systems, in that they not only aim to reproduce their interrelations but also the pre-production of their components through their internally generated codes and values. They do this, of course, in a clear, distinctive way. Capital reproduces itself through profit and its accumulation, commons through a set of interrelated values referring to resources and community that define a sharing culture. Commons are generated insofar as subjects common (become commoners), insofar as their social being is enacted with others, at different levels of social organisations, through a social practice that is essentially horizontal and may embrace a variety of forms depending on circumstances (implying the broad typology), but ultimately grounded in community sharing, doing in common and participatory democracy. Capital, by contrast, tends to objectify, instrumentalise and impose hierarchical order.

When we consider commons, we are not (should not be) indicating utopia and pointing to capital as a dystopia. It may appear clear that capital cannot bring us to utopia, since its own *conatus* of self-preservation (De Angelis, 2007) is boundless accumulation, and the processes for realising this are not only environmentally destructive, but also socially divisive and exploitative. It is equally the case, however, that we cannot claim (should not imagine) that commons will lead us to utopia,

since utopias are not made of concrete structures contingent on particular situations. What we can claim, though, is that the autonomy and autopoiesis that commons and capital struggle to achieve have a distinct and conflicting character.

Commons and capital/state are often linked, coupled through the buying and selling site of the official market: that is, the 'economy'. Both capital and the commons produce and trade, regulated by state laws (of contract, taxation, health and safety, etc.) and enforced by the state policing and judicial/penal systems.³ Even in this official linkage, however, they have fundamentally different priorities. Capital buys in order to sell, at a profit – in the case of commercial capital, or as means of production, to turn resources into commodities (add value). Commons, on the other hand, when engaged in market operations, tend to sell commodities in order to buy means of sustenance and reproduction. For example, one or two members of a household sell their labour power to gain an income in order to be able to purchase the goods necessary for the process of reproduction of that household; or an association engages in petty trade to fund itself, or a social centre sells beer at a concert to purchase the materials to build a kitchen. In the case of capital, quantity is paramount: greater production and higher sales imply increased returns; for commons, however, it is sufficiency that is required (there is no internal logic of expansion).

Buying in order to sell and selling in order to buy are two opposite praxes, as they have been from the time of Aristotle, the former governed by a life-activity ultimately wasted in accumulation and the latter governed by the needs and desires of reproduction (subject to market constraints). In other words, and as this chapter explains, while the reproduction of

labour power is a feature of the commons' production (of the commodified labour power) that is sold to capital, capital does not necessarily control (or controls only in part through the state and the education system) the labour of reproduction that is fundamental to the commons. The constitution of selling in order to buy that is typical of the labour-power circuit is only the market moment of a commons social system. It is certainly here that labour power is reproduced – but not only labour power.

The various commons all reproduce certain basic elements, at least in their general sense. Thus, at a general organisational level, in order to have commons – of whatever type – we need to have at least three constituent elements, the dry specification of life-enhancing, organic development, a socio-ecological, metabolic process in which cultures of sharing are (re)produced:

- Pooled resources (material or immaterial);
- A community of commoners: that is, subjects willing to share, pool and reproduce the resources that are necessary for their own reproduction (not necessarily a local community in the classical sense of village, territory, etc.);
- Commoning.

Fundamental to all systems as the basis of their dynamics, the concepts of stocks and flows apply to this listing also. The first two elements here (resources and commoners) are stocks categories, referring to that with which any commons begins its reproduction (the resources as object, or target, and commoners as subject, or agent), while the third, commoning, is a flow category, allowing the transformation of the resources into new or renewed forms.⁴ Commoning is a social process occurring

within a domain that even in the most homogeneous contexts articulates a diversity of values – inducement to social force – to produce a common goal – a force-field oriented in one direction (Lewin, 1997). In commoning, these two aspects (diversity of values and common goals) are not aligned through top-down discipline as in centralised organisations and political systems associated with capital and the state. Rather, the series of stock-flow relations are accompanied by reinforcing and balancing feedbacks, of which the commoners are aware, that they value and recognise and for which commons institutions are created or develop (consensus procedures, swarming, assemblies, intermediation, conflict-resolution procedures, etc.).

Regarding the first of the three constituent elements, material resources include anything physical, or tangible (from food, houses, warehouses and transport to tools, IT, DNA and energy), however obtained (purchased or donated, loaned or occupied). Immaterial resources, on the other hand, comprise the skills, qualities, knowledge and know-how of the subjects involved in the commons – the commoners – who have obtained these through their life histories, which means these include Bourdieu's (1986) symbolic, social and cultural capital (or rather, perhaps, social, symbolic, cultural wealth, since the purpose of pooling them, unlike for capital, is not accumulation).

In the epistemology of the commons, the second element, the community of commoners, might be understood as the collection of subjects and their interrelations as commoners, that is, as sharers (protectors, developers, etc.) of the resources (or of a particular subset of this collection). This presupposes a particular set of interrelated meanings and values that are shared (understood, performed and/or evocative) – in short,

some common ground, even if only at an initial, limited and tentative stage. This constitutes a common power – a given social force and the possibility that a given collectivity has of inducing one in specific circumstances (following Lewin, 1997). Clearly, an initial common ground and common power may, through a series of commoning iterations, come to develop, mutate and strengthen the living force that enables the community of commoners to (further) develop that power and their connections with other commoners.

This chapter takes the third element as its subject, the flow concept, commoning, through which wealth is reproduced and extended and comes to serve as the basis for a new cycle of commons (re)production. The discussion presupposes the existence of some common wealth, substantiated in any form (material and immaterial) to whatever degree and regardless of its source at the origin of its pooling. Thus, in tackling the question ‘What is commoning?’, I first look at some historical pointers in order to distinguish categories for analysis and theoretical development. For this, I concentrate on Middle Ages English peasantry commoning as reported by the work of Linebaugh (2008).⁵ Then, in the main sections of this work, I offer some reflections on the senses and implications of commoning as an autonomous and autopoietic activity. In the last section, I discuss in general terms the crucial dynamic of boundary commoning, the type of commoning that occurs at the boundary of the commons and that is the condition for any development of the commons as a social system of production and reproduction and thence as grounding for societal transformation.

Commoning

In his book *The Magna Carta Manifesto*, historian Peter Linebaugh (2008) traces the origin and development of this crucial constitutional text as emerging from the commoners' struggle to have their rights to the commons recognised and acknowledged by the state. In this context, commoning is the activity of the commoners in organic relation to the 'commons' (as pooled resources that need to be sustained and reproduced) and to one another. This implies that commoning is an activity that develops relations preoccupied by their (re)production and therefore – to use a modern term – crucially founded on their own 'sustainability'.

What is also very important to us today is that commoning is constituent of rights, commons (or more generally, common) rights, which should not be confused with legal rights. The latter are granted within the context of the state, by the powerful; common rights instead originate in their being exercised, so the state can only acknowledge and confirm them (or else deny, restrict, etc.). This recognition is precisely what happened in the history of the freedom charters discussed by Linebaugh – the 1215 Magna Carta and the 1225 Charter of the Forest – in which rights were taken by the people, which forced the king to acknowledge them. For the state (the king) to reach the point of confirming commoners' rights (legislate for the common) implied, in fact, that the commoners were already commoning; people were taking their lives into their own hands before commons rights were granted.⁶ Equally today, therefore, the state does not only (and, in fact, does not tend to) grant common rights, but (rather) confirms rights (if it does) already exercised by the commoners, as in the case of the customary rights confirmed in thirteenth century England.

If the origin of common rights is in commoning, as an element of commons, we are in the presence of a social system generated by its own operations, codes and values, discussed below in terms of autonomous and autopoietic systems. Inevitably, these are framed by the context of their circumstances. Thus, from the perspective of the medieval English commoners, the right to common was embedded in a particular ecology and corresponding local husbandry (Wolcher, 2009). The issues that preoccupy the commoners are thus moments of a reflective stance grounded in the needs of resource and social relational sustainability. Commoning is actualised through communication processes, performances, affective circuits and social labour that act on and arrange the material. Commoners do not think first in terms of who owns property but rather of human need. What can we grow on this land? How shall we use the water? Research and exploration is central to the practices of commoners.

Commoning is not only arranging selections through communication, however; it is also communicating through actions, through labour. Going ‘deep into human history’ – as far, in fact, as that history goes – ‘commoning is embedded in a labor process; it inheres in a particular praxis of field, upland, forest, marsh, coast’; therefore, ‘Common rights are entered into by labor’, ‘commoning is collective’ and, ‘being independent of the state, [it] is independent also of the temporality of the law and state’ (Linebaugh, 2008: 44–5). It follows that the definitional elements of commoning must include autonomy and direct action and relational modes among commoners and the commons that are ‘organic’.

Commoning as struggle for autonomy and self-reliance
 The first constituent element of commoning in this working definition is that of autonomy: this is a striving of communities to take things into their own hands in respect of certain material or cultural aspects of their (re)production. Autonomy has different meanings, depending on the domain in which it is applied. It can refer to a state or institution's right of self-government, or to a community's self-government. It may indicate a Kantian notion of the freedom of the will giving itself its own laws or class autonomy vis-à-vis capital. But commons are not individuals, or states or classes, although they can relate to them all.

In order to understand commons autonomy, I am inspired by the biological definition of autonomy at the cellular level, from which I derive – with due caution – an understanding of autonomy in the commons. There, autonomy refers to a condition, the condition of autonomy, of some organic unity controlled only by its own laws and not subject to any other. With respect to a social system, two senses of autonomy can thus be derived. The first is from the perspective of a social system in relation to others, where autonomy defines a commons dynamic vis-à-vis (other) systems in their environment, namely, the state and capital. At this level, autonomy is pretty much understood as a political struggle and does not require much elaboration. It means first of all the establishment of an autonomy in relation to heteronymous pressures coming from outside, in terms of measures, in terms of cultures, in terms of what and how production processes and ways of life should be.

Politically, today, this means establishing an autonomy from (against, in response to, thus defined by) the values and rationales of capital. Institutionalised capital wants us to eat GM food.

Commoners develop commons that promote agroecology and community networks that support them. European capital enforces austerity in terms of basic as well as consumer needs. Commoners develop solidarity economies linking different commons in order to meet needs and reframe desire, as in Greece since 2009 (see below). This autonomy has both quantitative and qualitative dimensions. The former concerns the amount of commons resources and numbers of commoners mobilised within a given space, and the fact that the latter is still in a minority in relation to the capacity of mobilisation of capital is simply a strategic condition and problem of its development. The latter refers to the second sense of autonomy.

As well as understanding autonomy as a relational aspect in terms external to the commons, we must ask how 'its own laws' are generated. For a commons to establish autonomy vis-à-vis capital and the state is not simply a matter of going onto the street and protesting – however difficult is the organisation of such events – since the organisation of other production processes vis-à-vis capital in the manner of resistance is a social, economic and political matter as well as a question of establishing new forms of governance and non-state 'rules', and this in the context of social and cultural fields dominated by capital/state forms of production. At this point, the question of autonomy posed by biologist Francisco Varela for biological unities is as relevant for socioeconomic systems such as capital – Marx asked incessantly about the 'laws of capitalist development' – and the commons. Thus, for Varela, autonomous systems are

defined as a composite unity by a network of interactions of components that (i) through their interactions recursively

regenerate the network of interactions that produced them, and (ii) realise the network as a unity in the space in which the components exist by constituting and specifying the unity's boundaries as a cleavage from the background. (Varela, 1981: 15)

From the perspective of a social system, autonomy is the property generated by the interaction of components across a social network in such a way that the network that produced those interactions is regenerated. The network, therefore, is reproduced through a recursive loop. Recursion here generally means that an object – a network of interaction among components – is produced (regenerated) by the network itself. Thus, the network of interaction can define a boundary vis-à-vis the outside and thereby constitutes a unity. It is this unity identity – continuously reshaped and redefined by the recursive interaction – that gives the commons system its autonomy.

The components of commons networks – the subjects and the resources, the latter comprising immaterial wealth and the elements of commons material wealth available to the pool – will lie dormant in their respective locations, locked in the human memories and in the physical and virtual places of origin unless and until they are metabolised, transformed from material and immaterial elements of common wealth, into utilisable common wealth. In a forest common (for this and many other traditional commons examples, see Princen, 2005), in order to share the wood of a forest for construction or to burn it to create heat in the houses of a town, it is necessary not only to share the trees but also the logs, which obviously involves a collective process to produce them (as an empirical fact, if not a logical necessity). A collective production process is at the same time both a process

of social labour – the mental and physical exertion of energies towards a goal – and of social relations among the commoners. In this light, commoning is thus the recursive life activity that regenerates and develops the social relations constituting the commons; it is the socially defined life activity that reproduces the social relations among subjects and their metabolism with the common resources.

Networks were regenerated and developed, for example, in solidarity movements in Greece during the height of the recent crisis, when unemployed communities blocked access to the tribunal where dispossessed houses were auctioned and where they reinstated electricity to poor households when this was disconnected. And networks at the basis of commons are regenerated and developed as well as their components when workers threatened by redundancy occupy their factory, convert it, connect it to newly created solidarity networks to sell their produce, and open up the space for children and other community activities. To each of these and many other events corresponds a social activity, in which a network is regenerated and developed and a boundary is drawn.⁷

But what, then, are the interacting components of commons as social systems? Not resources and community, but *common* wealth and commoners – that is, resources and people that bear the mark of commons components, that are recognised as such, that are socially ‘initiated’ into, as belonging to the system of meaning and values constituted and reproducing the commons. The actual physical resources and the actual psycho-physical (biological) individuals are only the punctuated bearers, the signifiers of the commons signified, the ontologically subsequent that only later constitute the components of systems. Thus,

commoners can reproduce themselves only via the medium of common wealth, and common wealth can reproduce itself only through the medium of commoners. Commoners are not objectively defined, but relationally defined – so the commoner who abandons the sphere of commons and enters the sphere of capital or the state just disappears, magically turned into workers, commodity labour power, employees, civil servants, administrators, at whatever level of significance we are looking for, even if they have the same body and knowledge. The commoning recursive loop is broken, at least momentarily.

It is the same for the common wealth. The ostensibly same (im)material things and knowledge and experience (know-how) of individuals transforms from common wealth into capital (or public goods), insofar as some agents aim to ‘invest’ it into (or subsume it under) a capitalist (or statist) production process, defined by another recursively generated autonomy and another unity. And it follows from this as a fact of everyday life that people, we, as (self-conscious) subjects daily bouncing in and out of commons and capitalist and statist circuits, bear witness to this: it is we, the self-same subjects who go to work in a company factory or government office by day, for example, who go commoning in a social centre or a local bar – and at home – by night. Our subjectivities change, our identities become multiple, and we shift between them as we move between qualitatively different circuits (the circuit types of capital/state and commons), which may require certain types of skill and lead to forms of psychic fracturing.

Just as production in capitalist/statist circuits secretes capitalist/statist value, so does production in commons systems secrete commons values. The recursive character of social interrelations

throughout the network is possible only through values. Capitalist/statist values geared towards the production of commodities/ideologies have a dominant dimension. Capital exchange value, hence cost minimisation and maximisation of profit, is broadly obtained through a range of strategies based on intensification of labour (relative reduction of its cost), while in the case of the state, value is attributed to and derived from hierarchy, through obedience to rules and principles (applied to regulate behaviour in state-defined ways). Commons production through commoning, on the other hand, secretes a variety of values, among which selection is collectively made through feedback mechanisms (informally through the process of production and formally in moments of group decision-making). Commoning thus relies on a dance of values on the floor of community sharing. Internal autonomy reproduces relationships through a variety of values but reproduces the commons as a whole unit, with a character that in terms of value production distinguishes it clearly from capitalist statist unities.⁸

To the extent that commoners pool a common wealth (i.e. the components of network), and to the extent that commoners interact with one another qua commoners – establishing, thereby, broadly horizontal relations (adjusted, of course, to the shifting authority of some in given contexts due to their contingent know-how) – each of these components recursively interacts, they regenerate the commons networks and define its boundaries. System autonomy implies that subjects of the community constitute the systems of interactions as a unity, recognisable in the domain in which the process exists, and this implies the constitution of a boundary between the systems of interactions and the environment. Of course, the existence of a

boundary does not mean that nothing passes through; rather, it operates as a filtering membrane, in this case connecting a common to its environment – which means also that this boundary often becomes the frontline for (and that defines) the clash with state and capital.

Communities giving shape to commons around the world have taken things into their own hands in the double sense of autonomy, both through regenerating and developing their own value practices and through generating communities of struggle and resistance. In particular, over the last two decades we have witnessed the emergence of an activist commoning, a form of grassroots movement that makes horizontality and direct action two key principles of their political praxis. This is a politics grounded in the particular circumstances of the current phase of the neoliberal capital–state dynamic. Continuing organisation across networks has defined clear boundaries between them, as communities of resistance, and the privatising and enclosing ‘enemy’ – large (especially multinational) companies – taking away community land to build a dam or establish new mining operations, for example, or patenting the genes of living species. Also, they take things into their own hands and develop a life of their own, such as when city youth acquire an empty building and turn it into a self-organised social and cultural centre for the local community.⁹

Here, networks of activists are first generated through the concentration of forces on a new goal, acquiring and securing the place, whose walls physically institute the common, functioning as a protective and insulating boundary, which then further expands and regenerates further networks through its activities. Both senses of autonomy – the one established in oppositional

relationship to capital/state forces and the other recursively established through the activity of commoning – constitute and (re)produce the network boundaries. In the first case of autonomy especially, the boundary might be an immediately antagonistic frontline, as in the case of squatting, but establish filtering mechanisms like anti-racism and anti-fascism. Then, with solidarity activities with migrants, state migration laws and organised xenophobic forces confront the established commons. In the recursive sense of autonomy, the boundary may instead take a more symbolic or cultural form and the new commons generate a cultural opening of new horizons for generations permeated with mainstream values where it is possible to engage in artistic, socioeconomic and other forms of experimentation.

In all these examples, the very ability to point to phenomena implies their definition as unities constituted through autonomous doing in common, through commoning. In other words, the contexts and sitings for the actualisation of a resisting struggle for autonomy and the common urge for self-reliance are potentially endless, and the actual social form that actualises this struggle depends – more or less – on strategic choices of the commoners in given contexts.¹⁰

Further observations on autonomy

The autonomous force based on commoning often encounters issues of legality. For example, many self-organised social centres in Italy began their journey of commoning outside the law, by squatting. Where they gained a sufficient degree of legitimacy in the community, they also acquired a certain power to negotiate with the state for their permanence on the site, perhaps through a legal tenant's contract, usually at a low cost. Legitimacy is thus

the first resource that must be generated and accumulated by the practice of commoning. This involves the participation of widening circles of communities within the extending boundaries of a common – that is, an intensification among as well as expansion of the domain of interaction of the components of a network through the creation of social values clearly recognised as such by a wider community and other networks. Legitimacy is thus an acquired common wealth that can be contrasted to legality and its state instrument of force, up to the point of legislation of a commons practice.

It is important to point out, therefore, that, notwithstanding general observations made with respect to the relationship between commoning and the state (between granting and acknowledging rights), in combination with the relational aspect of commoning (its characterisation as oppositional), we should not see the issue of autonomy and self-reliance as something necessarily sited outside a given legal framework. This would be forcing the argument onto an ideological ground, forgetting that in many concrete situations there is plenty of space in which things are not done and could be done within the existing laws, in the interstices of the capitalist/state system, such as in the recursive production employing ‘detritus’ from capital’s systemic interactions.¹¹

In the case of disused buildings, for example, the alternative to squatting of pooling money collected through donations and fund raising (financial commoning) so as to rent represents a strategic choice, a developmental trade-off between what many perceive as an ultimately impractical (unsustainable) radical ideological correctness and what others see as a ‘selling out’ for some degree of bourgeois stability and peace of mind so as to

organise a free space in relative comfort. In other words, the choice about how to obtain and hold the means to take things into one's hands, to take direct action in respect of one's own life, involves contextualised options specified by the relation of forces on the ground, by tactical shrewdness and, especially, by strategic ambition. What is certain, however, is that regardless of the manner in which one gains and maintains access to the means for collective direct action, commoning autonomy requires the imagination of independence – or 'doing direct action is simply disregarding existing power structures and doing it ourselves,' as one activist of the Grow Heathrow projects in London puts it.¹²

Indeed, commoning is expressing a struggle for autonomy and self-reliance that often contrasts with the depressed (oppressed) condition of detritus and alienation in which communities are living before the activity of commoning. This autonomy and self-reliance is actualised by a process that creates and revitalises communities, through some form of access to the means of production – whether through squatting, renting, pooling or redistribution – and the creation of material, social and psychic rewards, which feed back into the system in multifarious ways, including the human motivation to continue, to enter further into the commoning relations, which in turn energises the recursive. The rewards are not – must not be – just individualised payoffs, even though these are important precisely for reducing people's dependence on capitalist markets and increasing state benefits that blackmail them back into low-waged and precarious work; commons also reward through the communal, through staying together and learning from one another, through the forming of intimately human links to replace the tenuous, formal or alienated connections that exist in the neoliberal city that is always on

the run, through the bonding made of relations between people as subjects expressing their selves.

We have in this autonomy also a first element with which to understand the relationship between commoning and the quality or state of being worthy of esteem and respect, or dignity. If esteem in the capitalist market is established with the outer symbols of conspicuous consumptions (Veblen, 1973) and under state tutelage through formalised positions in its apparatus, then in commoning it is established by the daily struggle to overcome detritus. In the same way that bio-mass decomposition by millions of diverse biological and chemical iterations in ecosystems supports soil fertility and allows the growth of new plants, so does commoning turn detritus into a social humus in which new ideas can flourish into new organisational practices and bloom with new wealth.

Commoning as a generative force of autopoiesis

Another aspect of commoning, beyond autonomy, is auto-production, or autopoiesis. Autonomy and autopoiesis are related but are not the same: autopoiesis is a particular aspect of autonomy, one that coincides with a higher degree of resilience, in which not only the interaction among components of a system are regenerated but also the components themselves, namely, here, the commoners and the common wealth. In autopoietic commons, therefore, not only are the relations among subjects and the metabolism between subjects and wealth produced, but also these components themselves:

An autopoietic system is organised (defined as a unity) as a network of processes of production (transformation and destruction) of components that produces the components that

1. Through their interactions and transformations continuously regenerate and realise the network of processes (relations) that produced them; and
2. Constitute it [the system] as a concrete unity in the space in which [the components] exist by specifying the topological domain of its realisation as such a network. (Varela, 1979: 13)

With the components of commons being commoner communities (relationships of subjects qua commoners) and common wealth, commoning (re)produces the bodies and subjectivity of commoners as commoners and the wealth as common wealth. It does not matter whether some material aspects of the wealth come from outside the commons or if the subjects have a predominantly non-commoner subjectivity, as long as (and to the extent that) the recursion established by commoning recreates subjectivities and resources as components of the commons. Or, in other words, while commons autonomy – as we saw – refers to a condition of commons systems controlled only by their own laws and relations, commons autopoiesis adds to this condition the production of the components of the systems: the knowledge, the mind and bodies of the commoner subjects, the material and immaterial resources.

Here, an analogy with capitalist circuits is helpful. In a capitalist circuit, the sum of the exchange values of, on the one hand, the physical components of capital (raw materials and tools, understood and valorised as capital) and, on the other, labour power (the capacity to work, sold for a wage), provides the whole capital invested (at the beginning of a capitalist circuit). Both of these elements have a price tag that makes

it possible to measure their cost, in spite of the fact that they constitute quite different (categorically distinct) things.¹³ The final result is a new product, which, if sold to the market, would autopoietically reproduce the components of the capitalist system for the next round of capitalist production, that is capital (through profit and amortisation) and labour power (through wages).

In this example of the autopoiesis of capital, the system's components are not machines and labour power, but constant and variable capital – which, as Marx identified, is the value expression of those commodities – and only insofar as it is expected that their use will bring more value at the end of the labour process, a profit. Therefore, the process of accumulation reproduces these components *as* capital. Analogously, albeit through radically different measures, the autopoiesis of commons is obtained through commons circuits that reproduce the common as a social system. After the pooling of a set of resources and gathering of commoners who will at one point engage in commoning as determined by their collective engagement and internally generated values (establishment of a common), autopoiesis of the commons involves the reproduction of the resources and subjects involved in the commoning as further or new common wealth and commoners, agents of these commoning circuits.

The fact that some resources pooled as common wealth do not have (are not measured as) a common monetary exchange value, simply because at no point have they been commodities, does not affect their utility in the commoning process. For those resources that the commons has to buy on the market, it will be necessary to find a source of monetary income – one

would need discussion of the type of market, which limitations of space preclude here – however, the budget of the financial ins and outs only describes a relatively minor aspect the overall health of the commons. The fact is that for a household common, the selling of labour power and the buying of consumer goods is only one moment of reproduction of the household – the other being the labour of reproduction, just as for the commons at a greater scale that still depends on some form of market exchange. The commons have other goals than profit (even if some revenue may be one of the goals) and other measures than those impelled by capital's relative and absolute surplus value strategies. If the commons must trade commodities, this is generally done in order to buy other commodities necessary for the commons reproduction, or to give revenues to communities with which they hold solidarity links, and not to accumulate. Exchange value is a measure that appears only in those commons that have to relate to the market, and even then it is routinely subordinated to other features that contribute to the measure of commons (the value expression), such as equity and sharing, solidarity and conviviality. Indeed, the fact that the financial resources utilised are pooled makes them also (reproduces them as) components within that common. The health of a common depends on an appropriate density and balance of all relational circuits, including mutual aid, solidarity and affective circuits.

A characteristic of both autonomous and autopoietic systems is their organisational closure, which does not mean that they do not interrelate with the environment – obviously they do – but rather that

their organisation is characterised by processes such that

1. the processes are related as a network, so that they recursively depend on each other in the generation and realisation of the processes themselves, and
2. they constitute the system as a unity recognisable in the space (domain) in which the processes exist. (Varela, 1979: 55)

This implies that autonomous systems – and the autopoietic as a part of them – change their state in response to external events and are realised and propagated only within the networks of processes that produce them and, therefore, through the value(s) that these networks set in operation.

Boundary commoning as a recomposing and generative force

From a political perspective, the autonomy and the autopoiesis of commons initiated and developed by commoning are a necessary but insufficient condition for overcoming the capitalist hegemony as a mode of production and the existing socioeconomic divisions of the proletariat generated by capitalist processes and statist orderings and selections. They are necessary, in that the production of new systems of life and production requires the development of social systems like commons that exercise their autonomy and autopoiesis vis-à-vis capital and the state – that is, by positing their different measures, values and senses of things in praxis, by engaging in the construction of another common sense and another material life. This parallels Marx's idea that social rather than political revolution is a primary condition for

overcoming the capitalist mode of production and its state apparatus. But it is not enough.

Solidarity and mutual aid – to list two measures used in the commons that are opposed to the values of capital praxis – are also practices that shape their own boundaries. How boundaries are constructed, and the type of values used to filter interactions across commons and subjects in the ‘multitude’ and for what purpose are also important questions from an emancipatory perspective. Thus, for example, oppressive, hegemonic power constructs may be expressed, like conventional (patriarchal) forms of gender relations, by various overt and covert exclusions from a co-op’s decision-making or membership even applied to women or non-heterosexuals (LGBT-identifying groups and individuals); or a political organisation may organise a momentary commons by distributing food to a crisis-hit population but only to those who belong, say, to a particular nationality or ethnic group – as the neo-Nazi group Golden Dawn has done in Greece.¹⁴ Also, and less aggressively, community organisations of all types are formed that do not ask for a record on people’s stance on things like human rights but that organise on some type of affinity: football fan clubs, some youth subculture circles, affinity groups of all types, in fact, reproduce their distinct symbolic identities.

Even while becoming a medium for the development of diverse subjectivities, these types of commons and activities of commoning will not bring about a fundamental transformation of the capitalist-statist system, only of its structural development.¹⁵ Again following terminological usage in biology, by ‘structural development’ I mean to say that only the components of the capitalist system change – the types of subjectivities and

technologies for example, or its models of state governance in any case predicated on the reproduction of hierarchies – and not its fundamental organisation of social production, based on abstract labour, enclosures and exploitation. The emergence of the ‘network society’ (Castells, 1996) may represent a more fundamental, structural development. Of course, contextualised by the age of neoliberal capital, it has served to extend capitalist relations globally and allowed the utilisation of new technical components and know-how in social and economic processes to this end – but it has also opened up opportunities for new organisations of the commons and new commoning practices – p2p in cyberspace is one important example – and it has also amplified the potential for commoning across commons, or boundary commoning, given the time–space compression that comes with the globalised condition of daily life (Harvey, 1990).

In some areas this structural development of the last thirty years has also absorbed *some* of the anti-authoritarian, anti-racist and feminist demands of the 1970s, for example by expanding a black middle class in the US and facilitating access to a wage (and an equal wage) for women in many areas of the Global North. These ‘progressist’, inclusive and non-discriminatory practices create new ‘components’ in global systemic interactions in capitalist and statist circuits and hence structural change, but not new socioeconomic organisational unities beyond capital and the state, with new goals and new social relations. Indeed, the structural changes in these circuits have also forged new, and deeper, hierarchies, both inside world regions and countries and across the globe. Neoliberal capital and state absorption of the struggles of the 1970s have run parallel with a deep wave of new enclosures that continues today alongside a renewed

concentration of wealth, expanding to an unprecedented global scale. Ultimately, though, the world is still divided between capital/state loops and commons loops, the former enforcing enclosures, exploitation and abstracting (precarious, low-paid labour), and the latter aiming at various forms of fulfilment and justice while valorising labour power through non-profit values of solidarity and mutual aid.

Structural change of this partial nature, which diversifies components in capital's loops, is only a condition for a mutation of social systems – to maintain the biology parallel – in the sense that it can favour the overcoming of capital and amplifies the mutation of societies towards a commons hegemony. Such a mutation of society can occur only when the commoning interactions reach a sufficient network extension and density, a sufficient autopoietic level to balance (resist, oppose) capital enclosure and reinforce the resilience of commons while drastically reducing capital's loops to below a resilient critical level. In other words, such a mutation corresponds to a change in the DNA of social reproduction, when the measures and codes through which social labour appropriates and metabolises nature evolve in the direction of principles such as, for example, 'from each according to her/his capabilities and to each according to her/his needs'.

The way towards this mutation, I think, is twofold. First, it is, of course, necessary to continue the ongoing struggles for any aspects of structural change acknowledging the capability, needs and dignity of all, both generally and specifically with regard to the commons. This includes issues related to race, gender and sexual orientation and disability, to which list we have learned in recent decades to add ecological considerations and the key

responsibility that social systems have to face the consequences of social action in respect of climate change and environmental degradation and destruction. Also fundamental are structural changes that redistribute wealth and reduce the wealth gap, and any changes that open up a greater measure of resource sharing. This range of structural change can only be pursued through a dialectic system (feedback process) between grassroots struggles and the state, pushing to move away from a neoliberal Plan A of capital to negotiate a more redistributive and ecologically sensitive Plan B. But such a Plan B is not in itself a solution since it tends to co-opt structural change imposed by previous waves of struggle into capital's loops unless it opens a space for extending commoning outside those loops.

This extension of commoning, I argue, is a necessary condition of emancipatory social change, whatever the plan of capital. It is predicated on what I call boundary commoning, which is the commoning that produces a structural coupling between and among different commons; by structural coupling I mean the continuous interrelations among systems, in this case commons systems, such that these come to construct something new, a wider sphere of commons that grow dependent on one another, resulting in an enlarged, internally interdependent commons. This constitutes the second route to a mutation of society: through the repeated interactions of two or more commons for the development of a wider sphere, a new systems environment emerges.

Structural coupling among different commons systems constituting a commoning systems environment does not simply involve the sharing of goods or information or acts of solidarity among commons. Rather, through the continuous interactions,

structural coupling allows 'the boundaries of one system [to] be included in the operational domain of the other' (Luhmann, 1995: 217). For the boundaries of one system to be included within the operational domains of another is for that system to make its own complexity 'available for constructing another system'; and then to make this complexity available for the other system is to make its own 'sense' available to other systems, 'and with it indeterminacy, contingency, and the pressure to select' (Luhmann, 1995: 213). Through boundary commoning, new senses are developed that modify the horizon in relation to which strategic decisions are made. In other words, the structural coupling that boundary commoning implies corresponds to the construction of a commoning sense and the constitution of 'a state in which two systems shape the environment of the other in such a way that both depend on the other for continuing their autopoiesis' (Moeller, 2006: 19).

Through coupled repetition of relations, structural coupling among commons may drift into different social forms, a typology of which has not yet been attempted. If we were to follow the indication of biology, we would identify two general directions for the drift: that of (toward) meta-commonality (meta-cellularity in biology) and of symbiosis (Maturana & Varela, 1998: 88). The meta-commonality way is taken when the recurring coupling among the commons units maintains each common's identity and internal commoning, while at the same time establishing a new systemic coherence among two or more commons. An example could be when reclaimed occupied factories in Argentina or Italy not only change their structural components by changing their production methods and outputs, but also establish ongoing links with the community and its organisations (for childcare,

training, festivities, meetings, etc.), thus developing commons outside the reclaimed factories related to the latter for mutual resilience.¹⁶ The symbiosis way is taken with the inclusion of the boundaries of two (or more) commons into one unit. An example might be the case of a self-managed social centre like the Forte Prenestino in Rome, an old fort that was occupied in 1986 and has since been collectively managed by an assembly of diverse groups and projects that share a basic ethical code and are involved in a variety of activities, including an infoshop, music and dance labs, and a wine cellar, bakery and farm market.¹⁷

I conclude this section with two further examples of the developing commons – the Genuino Clandestino network of farmers and consumers in Italy and water associations in Bolivia – to show how boundary commoning operates in the production of two types of meta-commonality, dubbed conglomeration and second-order commons. The Italian, nationwide, Genuino Clandestino network of farmers and consumers¹⁸ aims to develop a space outside of state-regulated ‘organic’ certification. In order to obtain the organic label and thereby enter that trading circuit, farmers have to pay a private agency to come and check the land and take a soil sample back to the lab for testing. This certification labelling process has become an expensive procedure for small farmers (costing hundreds if not thousands of euros) and is wide open to corruption (essentially, the labelling can be assured by paying the right agency enough money).

In response to this failing of the state, a commons approach has emerged with the establishment of the Genuino Clandestino network, which operates through relations of trust. These are founded on proximity, as in the village community, where reputation is mainly built or damaged by the quality of foods

supplied, and local people can easily check on the farming conditions (the type of fodder used, the living conditions of animals, etc.). In other words, proximity creates reliability of product through trust in the process at the level of human relations and so without the need for state intermediation, a trust that is secreted by commoning processes in a variety of forms in the locality and distributed through networks of friends or acquaintances. Extending the sense of community from the physically located (bound to the land) to the socioeconomically defined (thus unbound), the Genuino Clandestino network then reproduces the conditions of generation of this village-type trust throughout trading networks that extend into urban spaces.

Trust among consumers and producers is maintained through regular meetings – in the first place, in informal conversation at the regular markets. Consumers are also welcome to visit the farms, and in some cases they work on the farm, at harvest or other busy times, especially the farms that they administrate together with farmers. In the case of the Bologna node – called *Campi Aperti*,¹⁹ organising more than eighty producers and five weekly markets – each market holds monthly assemblies among producers and consumers to deal with questions of boundary, quality and prices, while bimonthly assemblies are held among the five markets for strategic and political decisions. The level of trust is so significant that one cooperative linked to *Campi Aperti* – *Arvaia*, in the Bologna area²⁰ – decided to dispense with boxes and scales. The members of the cooperative just take the fruit and vegetables they need from a warehouse, having paid at the beginning of the year an amount in proportion to the number of the people composing the household so as to guarantee the farmer income.

Thus we have here a situation in which distinct farmer-consumer commons across Italy engage in their autopoietic operations, while at the same time forming structural coupling links with one another that give rise to a network which is not just like a network of acquaintances who occasionally meet but a meta-commonality network that organises a range of campaigns and events and propagates a method and philosophy of doing agriculture based on food sovereignty and trust-building. Thus, through a process of boundary-commoning, many growing commons have come together to form a network of commons with its own autopoietic process scaled up from the autopoietic processes of the individual commons. Finally, within this commons conglomeration, repetitive relations among commons and subjects commoners as subjects give rise to and reinforce ways of interacting within this environment – for a new commoning sense.

Another example of the meta-commonality drift brought by boundary commoning is the relation between two community organisations constituting a third that includes them both in the mode of associations at a second level – or second-order commons. This can be illustrated by the history of a wave of struggle in Bolivia that succeeded in reverting the privatisation of water there, the Cochabamba Water War in the first months of 2000. This massive movement developed out of water commons established in the preceding decades among communities in the poorer south of the city of Cochabamba and surrounding rural areas to deal with the lack of public water provision and escape the usury prices charged by private traders.

Frustrated by the lack of state provision and poor private provision (traders offered water in unsafe water tanks and at

three or four times the public water price paid in the wealthier, northern part of the city), communities originally took things into their own hands by digging wells, laying pipes and building systems of urban water storage and distribution (Zibechi, 2009). Through thirty years of activities involving urban migrants and rural networks, commoners established water associations drawing and distributing water communally. Then they established associations to facilitate coordination among local community associations and effective intra-community sharing of resources (water pumps, cistern tracks, skills, etc.) and to constitute institutions of political representation vis-à-vis the state. These associations created for and from the primary associations thus operated as a secondary tier, as second-order commons, representing a form of meta-commonality.

At the end of 1999, a neoliberal-inclined government passed water privatisation laws giving (multinational) water companies the right to claim ownership of all water, including that extracted and distributed by the community plants – a clear form of enclosure not just of a generic right, but of a very specific type of common. The rural indigenous communities in the mountains then descended into the city in protest and kick-started a major process of political re-composition in many social networks, starting from the communal-based water associations in the city, mobilising communal resources and giving rise to what Zibechi (2010) dubbed a ‘Society in Movement’ – which, in our terms, is another, quite extensive, form of meta-commonality clashing with the state/capital.

After four months of social mobilisation and confrontation with street battles, on 10 April 2000, the national government reached an agreement with the protestors to reverse the

privatisation. In what was effectively a U-turn of state policy and collapse of the water capitalisation project, this opened the way to a state recognition of the communal economy, with the commons thereby gaining a place in the new constitution ratified in 2009 (cf. the issue of legality, above). The water associations continue their operations while campaigning for the public water board to invest in water structures still administered by the communities.

Concluding reflections

In this chapter, I have offered elements for a conceptualisation of the commons as social systems and commoning as the living force of their reproduction, sense-making and development. My overarching preoccupation has been the problematic of social revolution (de Angelis, 2014), of a radical change or mutation of mainstream modes of production and governance based on capital and the state that are generated from the emergence of new modes of production and governance from below. We have reached an age in which the desire for such a revolution is widespread and its need more urgently felt the more the various destructive crises intensify. Fatalism, cynicism, unreformed socialist, communist and anarchist ideologies, divided class conditions and subjectivities and partisan 'rent positions' within the multitudes make it difficult to conceive the historical movement and the social forces underpinning it that have a chance to bring about such a change. Here, however, I dare to offer such a conception through the hypothesis that social revolution is nothing else than the 'accumulation', diffusion and acceleration of commoning, in both quantitative and qualitative (meta-commoning) terms.

Ultimately, the only way to generate commoning social systems that are autonomous (independent of and contrary to the values of capital and the state) and autopoietic (in the sense of being able to produce their own subjectivities, senses, materials, ideas, knowledge and common wealth) is to live a life of joy, abundance and love in action. Social revolution is nothing else than the exponential growth of occasions of boundary commoning across commons, the only way to constitute a social fabric flexible, resilient and strong enough to counter capital and the state. With some luck and determination, we (the commoners, the movers of history) will reach a point at which the old adage will come true and we will be sitting at the gateway of hell singing, 'It will be a laughter that will bury you!'

The argument that I have proposed here only indicates an approach for the conception of societal transformation grounded in alternative social relations and forms of cooperation through values and measures that are unlike those of capital and the state. This is not an approach that normatively posits a specific set of alternative goals, a compass of values to orient action (beyond, of course, the generic of commoning). To do so – to detail a positive programme, or a commons manifesto, for example – is of course also important, and not just from a theoretical perspective but also very much for the given set of 'radical' values upon which decision-making and strategy selection can be based in actual daily practice contextualised by real situations.²¹ Rather, the approach outlined here starts out from the observation of systems that set alternative values and that contain a variety of subjectivities in movement.

This method of enquiry allows insight into contradictions within commons and their sets of values inducing or restraining

actions on the assumption of commons as systemic rather than universal entities (whether radical or mainstream). It helps to make sense of the fact that the diversity of constituent subjects, cultures and resources and the vast arrays of operational contexts and scales mean that the commons even reproduce within themselves subjects in conflict over the set of values to be adopted in a given situation. Sidestepping the need for a universalisation that tends to essentialise and naturalise, to reduce the commons to some primary properties or characteristics (allowing merely reference to things like 'sharing' and 'solidarity'), a systems theory approach can better get at the intra- and interrelations among commons.

Also, approaching commons as social systems with a unity produced by their operations can prevent their (abstract and material) demise at the hands of other systems, such as capital, through their evolution and adaptation to new conditions. This framework, therefore, allows for a reflection on the commoners' condition, one that has a very long history, far beyond the history of working class organisation and the socialism, anarchism and communism associated with industrialisation since the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Like the indigenous movements around the world reconnecting to a practice of life and struggle that actually reaches up through history and pre-history, the reproduction of commons and commons cultures did – does – not begin with capitalism; indeed, it has mutated several times in different contexts of state despotic and capitalist modes of production.

To see ourselves as commoners reproducing our own communities and networks and then reconstituting them anew, and in so doing becoming workshops and laboratories of

value and sense, is not only to become aware of our politically charged connections with other systems, like capital and the state, but also of our historical connections with the past, and the ecologies we depend on. Furthermore, thinking in terms of commons systems allows us to see things strategically: only by seeing ourselves through commoning can we see the commons' historical enemies, capital and the state, as an alien force. In this respect, the pertinent practices of commoning are those that enquire about and experiment with the leverage points in commons systems in which social force can be applied to further develop the practice of commoning, and push capital/state systems back from our lives.

Notes

- 1 This article contains some passages from De Angelis (2017).
- 2 See e.g. Bey (1991) on temporary autonomous zones.
- 3 Both capital and the commons also avoid and evade state regulation, of course, in various ways.
- 4 The act of commoning is also transformative of the agent, of course: people/communities change as they engage thus.
- 5 The history of indigenous modes of production around the world would offer another crucial entry point, one that I suspect would have many parallels to that I refer to here.
- 6 For example, building from Linebaugh, law professor Louis Wolcher discussed the meaning of the commons during 'The Law of the Commons' conference, organised by the Seattle Chapter of the National Lawyers Guild on 13 March 2009. Commenting on the commoning of the English farmers in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, Louis Wolcher put it thus: '[T]o common was to engage in a form of life in which you took your life, your subsistence, into your own hands and you did not wait at the table for crumbs to drop from the powerful' (Wolcher, 2009). The use of the past tense here refers

to the history of the commons in England before their enclosure, but this element of ‘taking things in one’s own hands’ is crucial also in contemporary situations, all around the world and at different scales of social action, and help us to understand the relation between legality and legitimacy.

7 On the types of solidarity actions in Greece during the crisis, see *Solidarity for All* (2013: 13–24).

8 Thus, for example, in my experience of community gardening, the occasional bossiness of some (expressing the value of authority of those ‘in the know’ regarding how to grow a vegetable and an inherited culture, a *habitus* of hierarchy) is not a recognised practice within a role, so it is tempered by others through open jokes and on the basis of knowledge researched on alternative methods of food production (establishing the value of equity as well as of sharing knowledge) and purchase of tools (greatly dependent on commodity values), while the crop is distributed through sharing principles (the value of community sharing). After a few recursive iterations, bossiness disappears and is substituted with a more humble behaviour, moulded to the community of gardeners, which is also thereby confirmed. If, however, a hierarchy were to ossify, the commons would have started its metamorphosis into something else.

9 See, for example, the case of XM24, a self-organised occupied centre in Bologna, established in 2002 from roots in the anti-globalisation wave of the 1990s. After several years of conflict and negotiation, the council authorities of Bologna granted the right for the centre to exist and administer itself with the establishment of a third authority which vouches for XM24 but does not represent it. This allows the centre to be a heterogeneous space of self-management of everyday life, governed by a weekly general assembly operating through consensus. Among the activities that are organised are a people’s bike shop (which also promotes the Bologna Critical Mass against the Bologna Motor Show); people’s kitchen, a vegetarian cruelty-free space available for movements to organise fundraising for legal aid, political prisoners and projects; a people’s free gym giving access to free yoga classes and other arts in

the neighbourhood; a weekly market operated by *Campi Aperti*, a network of more than eighty small farms and consumers themselves operating through horizontal and participatory practices (see Casey & Foresti, 2014).

10 Thus, commoning is not only a praxis of emancipatory forms, but also of social movements like the Tea Party. Clearly, these differ in terms of objective (to promote a right-wing agenda), conception (libertarianism) and origin (in the Tea Party case, promotion by corporate entities); this is revealed especially in its boundaries (illegal migrants, for example, are refused membership of the Tea Party's 600 local chapters).

11 The detritus of capital consists of negative externalities, such as the by-products of 'development', that accumulate in eco-, commons and psychic systems, where capital produces least (perhaps no) capital wealth; the condition of detritus reproduced by capitalist relations then becomes a stock, a condition that by its own nature produces the material out of which the common can grow, even within a given set of laws (De Angelis, 2007).

12 <http://www.transitionheathrow.com/grow-heathrow>

13 It is not just any human labour involved in this equation, of course, but abstract human labour, labour expended 'without regard to the form of its expenditure' (Marx, [1887] 1976: 128), work that is only important if and insofar as it increases the amount of surplus value – and thus profit – at the end of the process.

14 See e.g. 'Police shut down Greek-only soup kitchen,' Al Jazeera, 2 May 2013. At <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/europe/2013/05/201352103715660344.html>

15 This goes for the Tea Party case (above), in which the commoning only affirms the capitalist system in its reduction of state.

16 See e.g. Rimaflow, in Milan (<http://www.rimaflow.it/>), and Officina Zero, in Rome (<http://www.officinezero.it/>); for Argentina, see Ruggieri (2010).

17 <http://www.forteprenestino.net/>

18 <http://genuinoclandestino.noblogs.org/>

19 <http://www.campiaperto.org/>

20 <http://www.arvaia.it/>

21 For a compass of values that would distinguish radical commons from others, see e.g. Midnight Notes and Friends (2010) and Caffentzis and Federici (2014).

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