

Shapeshifting: The Cultural Production of Common Space

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Doctoral dissertation submitted to obtain the degree of
Doctor of Social Sciences: Sociology

Faculty of Social Sciences - Antwerp, 2020

*The law locks up the man or woman
Who steals the goose from off the common
But leaves the greater villain loose
Who steals the common from off the goose*

(17th century folk song against the English enclosure movement, author unknown)

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SHAPESHIFTING

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THE CULTURAL PRODUCTION OF COMMON SPACE

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Acknowledgments

Monday, September 10th, 2018. The location: the ‘Prinzessinnengarten’ urban garden, Berlin, Kreuzberg. I find myself in the midst of the Neighborhood Academy, a get-together on Monday evenings among urban activists, artists, and more generally, all those with an interest in the concept of the commons. A multitude of questions takes centre stage: through which tactics may we protect the Kreuzberg Borough from further gentrification? How shall we work together with neighborhood organizations in order to make this a joint endeavour? Do we expect the state to protect the urban commonwealth? How may we become independent from market mechanisms? Meanwhile, outside, the entertainment industry of Kreuzberg marches on.

It is the commoner, first, to whom this study is dedicated. I devote my work to those, like the commoners at the Neighborhood Academy, who make the considerate choice to spend their time on earth in search for a more just and equitable urban condition. The urban tissue is infused with commoners, everywhere: from the ones at the Loughborough Farm (London) struggling to restore their neighborhood to collective use, to the ones at Pension Almonde (Rotterdam) seeking to shelter those falling through the cracks of the housing allocation system; from the activists gravitating around Recetas Urbanas throughout the Spanish peninsula, to the countless initiatives in Athens that are currently mobilizing a ‘life-in-common’ against neoliberal impediment. Therefore, I thank those who have enriched this project as interviewee or helping hand: Santiago Cirugeda, Jon Garbizu, Gloria G. Durán, Wim Cuyvers, Jan Liesegang, Gigi Argyropoulou, Christos Giovanopoulos, Christof Mayer, Doina Petrescu, Petra Pferdmenges, Markus Bader, Marco Clausen, Florian Koehl, Martin Schwegmann, Paul Emilieu, Seppe De Blust, Jorge Toledo, Alex Axinte, Cristi Borcan, David Berkvens, Torange Khonsari and Andreas Lang. Furthermore, I send gratitude and support to the commoners at The Public Land Grab, London: Tom Dobson, Anthea Masey, Sonia Baralic and Alison Minto. The same goes for those building the commons in Rotterdam: Ana Džokić, Marc Neelen, Piet Vollaard, Melle Smets, Erik Jutte, Daan Den Houter, Rolf Engelen and Michelle Teran. Finally, I thank all those who have contributed to the Montaña Verde case study: Sara Weyns, Jan Spanenburg, Hans De Beule, Ian Cooman, Pieter Boons, Koen Wynants, Michel Zaalblok, Jochem van den Eynde, Eva Naessens and Lotte Schiltz.

This study, furthermore, would not have been possible without the skillful and continued support by those who have been willing to guide me through the intricacies of academic enquiry. In the first place, I thank dr. Pascal Gielen whom, after seven years of joint research, I can now call a friend. The wildness with which this man infuses ideas such as the commons into the current cultural and activist scenes is exiting and necessary. The love and laughter which he channels into the corridors of the university are both energizing and unique. Dr. Gielen's undertaking of setting up the Culture Commons Quest Office (CCQO) at the University of Antwerp in October 2016 has directed the course of my life and work in a novel yet wanted direction. The CCQO meant to me not only the opening of new sociological horizons, but also the liaison with a group of people that will continue to be life-long peers: Hanka Otte, Giuliana Ciancio, Lara García Díaz, Maria Francesca de Tullio, Katinka de Jonge, Liesje De Laet, Karina Beumer, Arne Herman, Walter Van Andel, Thijs Lijster, Evert Peeters. The team is growing nowadays, so I am also grateful for the short yet close encounters we've already had, Marlies, Vivi, Aart, Bart and Kato! To all these interlocuters: thank you for the inspiration, the feedback, the comradery. I also thank dr. Walter Weyns, this study's co-supervisor. His genuine respect for the various topics that I have thrown on the table along the way have inspired this project when necessary. Furthermore, I thank dr. Stijn Oosterlynck and dr. Stavros Stavrides, the former for his continued support as chair of the jury, the latter for having put on the academic agenda the concept of common space. I take both Oosterlynck and Stavrides as guiding examples of what it means to build up a trajectory of academic enquiry that is both intellectually challenging and socially engaged. I send final gratitude to professors Caroline Newton and Liesbeth Huybrechts for reading and commenting upon the entire work at the very end of the journey.

Lastly, a word of thanks goes to my parents, Marilou and Edwin, and my partner, Selena. I am grateful for these people's endless efforts to listen to my stories; their patience during the many hours in sole confinement; their acceptance of my quickly changing moods when writing would stall; their encouragement when writing would relaunch; their approval of the horizons I chose to explore; their support for the future, both personal and social, that I set sail for. Without their unconditional love, there would have been no 'Shapeshifting' today.

General Introduction: Franciscans Have Come to Town

This enquiry puts the concept of common space to the test. My guiding question, is this one: how is ‘common space’ produced within the current conditions of urban development? Put differently: through which tactics do urban activists give a spatial expression to the concept of the commons? A chain of key terms has passed, at this point already, before us: commons, common space, urban activists. The task of this General Introduction is to shed light on each of them, in order to get prepared for the journey that lies ahead.

In its most bare form, a commons refers to a resource shared by a group of people, as a third way beyond the state (‘provision’) and the market (‘competition’) (Ostrom, 1990). Before turning to urban applications of this basic characterization, let us take a step back. The commons as ‘shared resources’ can be traced to the feudal mode of social organization, flourishing in Europe between the 9th and 15th century. In that constellation, the notion of *Allmende* (see also the Dutch version of ‘de meent’ and by extension ‘gemeente’) referred to unparcelled pieces of rural land (Neeson, 1996; Pelger et al., 2017). Whilst still in possession of the ruling monarch, and in return for military support, land was distributed among manorial lords. The latter, known in England as ‘lords of the soil of the common’, coordinated a system of ‘open field strip farming’. Open field strip farming meant that each village, with in the centre the manor of the lord, divided its fields into narrow strips of arable land that were cultivated by peasant families. The system also included woodlands and pastures for common usage, land where peasants and lords alike could graze cattle and harvest timber: the commons (Zückert, 2012). For the landless mass and for disparate groups of tradesmen, artisans and immigrants, survival depended entirely on natural common resources as a means of subsistence, a dependence which was enabled by customary law or outright trespass (Linebaugh, 2008, 2014).

However, upon the commons as ‘shared resources of subsistence’ were layered two additional elements: a community of ‘commoners’ and a mode of doing: ‘commoning’. The custom of commoning necessitated an everyday cooperation among those jointly responsible for the resources they relied on. An example can be found in the village cooperative: if there was a risk of overgrazing, the cooperative had the power to limit the number of cattle. But there were other customs as well: when wood became

scarce, for instance, allotments were set and disputes could be settled in the village court. On New Year's Day, finally, herdsmen would go from door to door and receive gifts from peasants. As such, peasants expressed esteem for those handling the livestock on which they were to depend. Whether it was an annual procession around the boundaries of the commons or a drink after the audit of the funds, a series of customary rites continued to underwrite 'life in common' (Giangiacomo & De Moor, 2008; Neeson, 1996; Perelman, 2000). What I want to take from this first encounter with the concept of the commons is that upon their existence as a physical substrate, the commons necessitate a community of commoners and a jointly devised framework of commoning principles. Therefore, I deem the current crossroads an appropriate one to add to the analysis De Angelis's 'three-term' definition of the commons. "Conceptualizing the commons", De Angelis (2010) argues, "involves three things at the same time". He continues:

"First, all commons involve some sort of common-pool resources, understood as non-commodified means of fulfilling people's needs. Second, the commons are necessarily created and sustained by communities (...). Communities are sets of commoners who share these resources and who define for themselves the rules through which they are accessed and used (...). The third and most important element in terms of conceptualizing the commons is the verb 'to common' – the social process that creates and reproduces the commons".

This definition by De Angelis is of absolute importance within the grander scheme of this study. Over and over again, these three elements will be seen to recur: the 'common good', the 'community' (of commoners) and the practice of 'commoning'. Illich (1983) adheres to a similar definition when he states that "[...] people called the commons that part of the environment which lay beyond their own threshold and outside of their own possessions, to which, however, they had recognized claims of usage, not to produce commodities but to provide for the subsistence of their households". Once more, the three central tenets that will recursively take centre stage throughout this work can be highlighted: the 'common good', 'community' and 'commoning'.

We now know, hence, that the commons have long preceded their current existence as a ‘buzzword’ in academia and activism; a status to which this study certainly attests. Both as a material substrate (the common good) and as a customary way of life (community, commoning), the concept seems intrinsically linked to what Hardt & Negri (2009) have called ‘the fruits of the soil’ and ‘nature’s bounty’. Today, however, it is safe to assert that ‘the commons have come to town’. The concept of the commons has found refuge in the cities we build, the neighborhoods we inhabit, the streets we move through. There remains, however, one pivotal link between the urban and the originary commons. My contention, is this: the city constitutes the locus where the very *negation* of the commons continues to unfold. The landed commons, pointed to just before, have since the 15th century been gradually transposed to private ownership, a process generally known as the enclosure of the commons. The enclosure of the originary commons falls outside the scope of this study and has been taken up elsewhere (Blomley, 2007b, 2008; Hodkinson, 2012a; Linebaugh, 2014). Yet it is Marx, and more specifically a ‘correction’ to his account, that will provide smooth sailing from the rural to the urban.

Siphoning land from communal to private ownership was effectuated by myriad methods: by ‘piecemeal’ arrangements whereby landowners would take small pieces of land out of the commons for exclusive use, by evictions, by purchase, by walling, hedging, fencing. An ideological assault on the figure of the commoner as inhibiting progress and economic growth, too, unfolded through an alleged vocabulary of ‘drunks’, ‘barbarians’, ‘thieves’ (Hodkinson, 2012a, p. 503). The process of enclosure has been captured in the finest detail in Part 8 of Volume 1 of Marx’s *Capital*. Marx invokes the term of ‘primitive accumulation’, suggesting that the enclosures of the landed commons constitute a first and necessary precondition for capitalism to emerge. Marx (1867/2013, p. 513) stated: “the robbery of the common lands, the usurpation of feudal and clan property, and its transformation into modern private property under circumstance of reckless terrorism, were just so many idyllic methods of primitive accumulation”. However, a series of post-Marxist authors has been adamant to state that enclosures do not necessarily constitute the ‘prelude for’, but the very ‘essence of’ capitalism (Caffentzis, 2010; De Angelis, 2007; Harvey, 2004; Midnight Notes Collective, 1990). The separation of people from shared resources would constitute a continually recurring mechanism for capitalism to survive.

It is here where we find the main link with the city: today, the neoliberal genome that runs through our cities proves to be as enclosing as were the land seizures that accompanied the feudal system's evolution into a capitalist mode of production. It should therefore be asked: how do enclosures continue to recur in our cities? Through which 'myriad methods' does the process unfold? Are the post-Marxists right to state that enclosure is a 'recurring' rather than a one-time 'enabling' mechanism?

Although not using the term of 'enclosure' themselves, Brenner & Theodore (2002, p. 362) present to us a lucid 12-point framework of 'politico-institutional mechanisms' employed by national and urban-municipal coalitions in order to make the urban commonwealth suitable for profit and privatization. I will refrain from discussing all twelve points, but I will lift out three of them, namely the ones that come closest to the cases that will appear in this study. First: the 'privatization of the municipal public sector and collective infrastructures'. During the first case study, the project of 'The Public Land Grab' in London, a community of commoners will be seen to engage in an ongoing struggle with the municipal government of Lambeth Council regarding the alleged attempt to privatization (namely, transformation into private housing) of a youth centre and a children's playground, both being part of a neighborhood-wide commoning network.

Second: 'the gentrification-led restructuring of city centers and inner-city housing markets through gated mega-development projects, widespread clearance of public housing and other low-rent accommodation, and the elimination of various regulatory protections for tenants'. Bottomley & Moore (2007, p. 173) speak in this regard of the 'fortress city', Stavrides (2010) of the 'enclave city', Jeffrey et al. (2012) of 'archipelagos of wealth and poverty'. More concretely, during the second case study ('Pension Almonde' in Rotterdam), it will be seen how the area in which the commoning project is located has been sold in its entirety – by the City of Rotterdam in collaboration with a social housing association (Havensteder) – to a private market player for the purpose of redevelopment toward an inner-city zone of creative industry: 'New Zoho'. More so, it will be discovered that the catalyst for Pension Almonde has precisely been the 'elimination of various regulatory protections for tenants', given the fact that the project unfolds within a street of vacant infrastructure from which original tenants have been temporarily displaced.

Third: ‘the privatization and intensified surveillance of public spaces and the creation of new, privatized spaces of elite/corporate consumption, both governed by zero tolerance, discriminatory and illiberal social control’. Kodalak (2015, p. 70) calls this enclosure ‘on an experiential’ level, namely when urbanites “are not allowed the possibility to substantially intervene, contribute or manipulate [infrastructural] compositions”. Urban infrastructure, then, is experienced as pure objectivity, a *fait accompli*. Examples are found in the chemical composition of public walls, rendering them immune against the threat of graffiti; spiked benches to stave off the homeless; or the watchful eyes of CCTV surveillance in what is generally understood as ‘public’ space. In Part IV, we will encounter the police-led deconstruction and eviction of the commoning project ‘R-Urban’ in Paris, replaced in its entirety by a car park. Saskia Sassen queried in this regard¹: “who owns the city in an era of corporatizing access and control over urban land and corporate buying of whole pieces of cities?”. As this study’s introductory poem suggests, what we call privatization today is not a novel phenomenon.

It is against the backdrop of these premises that the main question of this enquiry should be located. Whilst the scientific analysis, conceptualization, codification and criticism of urban enclosure currently constitutes a necessary and ongoing endeavour (Brenner et al., 2009; Brenner & Theodore, 2002; Hodkinson, 2012a; Jeffrey et al., 2012), this work can be seen as a diametrical ‘complement’ thereto. Given the fact that the urban tissue is troubled by enclosure, I will ask: how do urban activists give a spatial expression to the concept of the commons? How, hence, is common space effectively produced? To put it in the words of Van den Broeck et al. (2020): our urban commonwealth is characterized by both ‘land taking’ and ‘land making’; it is the latter act – the making, the producing – to which this work will be dedicated. After all, not only the enclosure, but also the flame of commoning itself seems to have found its seat in the setting of the city. From community gardens and urban farms to the square occupations in the slipstream of the Arab Spring (2010); from informal neighborhood networks sharing amongst each other the means to survive to the Bologna Regulation which allows citizens to take over the governance of urban infrastructure; from housing cooperatives to the securization of entire sections of the city against gentrification, it is safe to assert that the concept of ‘common space’ is on the rise.

The hitherto mentioned enclosures of the urban commons justify the latter part of this study: an exploration of what a properly political production of common space might entail. We are seeing today the first signs of the commons' discovery and subsequent (ab)use within urban and national governance schemes. I may be allowed to pinpoint some examples that will recur throughout the work. First, the City of Bologna is since 2015 home to the Bologna Regulation; fully stated: 'The Regulation on Collaboration between Citizens and the City for the Care and Regeneration of Urban Commons'. Citizen initiatives aspiring to revitalize a neglected piece of urban infrastructure (squares, green zones, deserted buildings) can engage in a 'pact of collaboration' with the municipal government in order to realize their ideas in common. In the words of Arena & Iaione (2012), the Bolognese citizenry shares "time, skills, experiences and ideas with the public administration in the sake of the general interest". The City of Ghent, too, has implemented a 'commons transition plan'. The plan allows citizen initiatives to act jointly and autonomously on issues such as food, shelter and mobility. As in Bologna, the municipality steps forward not as a coercive body but as a 'partner city' (rendering the place 'the commons city of the future'). The UK, finally, issues a similar intention through the so-called Localism Act. Being part of the Big Society policy scheme, the Act affirms the neighborhood community as the principal agent for urban development (Allmendinger and Haughton 2012; Bailey and Pill 2011, 2015; Deas 2013). Communities can formalize themselves in a Neighborhood Forum from where they can propose a land use strategy under the nomination of a Neighborhood Plan. The act devolves decision-making power from the state to the citizenry while replacing an adversarial planning system with one based on 'consensus building' (Brookfield 2017, p. 399).

Against this backdrop, it seems safe to assert that the commons have become part of the neoliberal urban development canon. There is no shortage of concepts in order to describe such trend: 'the commons fix' (De Angelis, 2013) and 'corrupted commons' (Hardt & Negri, 2009) have already seen the light of day, while the idea of 'commons (instead of art) washing' is currently on its way. Since the 2008 credit crisis, cities and nations now act under austerity measures while turning to the urban citizen in order to "(...) deal with the devastation of the social fabric (...)" (De Angelis, 2013, p. 605). In other words, rather than to *produce* a renewed and more just society, the commons are invoked to

reproduce ‘more of the same’ (Mould, 2018). In this vein, Changfoot (2007, p. 130) delivers the confronting yet rightful insight that it has become possible for various actors of urban activism to perform – even while acting critically – an obedient form of neoliberal citizenship. Occupying public spaces and forging place-based solidaristic bonds can indeed be easily combined with “the neoliberal rhetoric of self-sufficiency, entrepreneurialism and independent local action” (Long, 2013, p. 55). Of course, urbanites uniting to instigate a community farm (Chapter 5), a self-organized space for cultural production (Chapter 6) or a collective work of public art (Chapter 7) should be lauded; but quite often, the ideology of utilizing and exploiting civil energies should not.

This is precisely why an assessment of commoning’s political potency gains all the more significance. In the final Part of this study, the critical tongues of Mouffe (2005, 2013), Rancière (2015, 1999) and Webb (2017) will allow us to uncover that there is a pivotal difference between making a local, particular demand on the one hand (‘we want a school here’) and making a counter-hegemonic, universal claim on the other (‘we struggle for an equitable provision of public services’). It can be stated in other words as well: these authors will direct us to the fine yet significant line between pursuing one’s interests *within* and making a statement *against* any dominant power system. To bring it to a point: these thinkers make us familiar with the difference between con- and dissensus, between mere deliberation and proper ideological agonism. This study’s empirical material will showcase how commoning endeavours may indeed become a cure or ‘quick fix’ for the outcomes of profit-driven development schemes. However, these same common spaces will simultaneously be applauded as places where a properly political production of common space can be prepared, where the imagination of the commoner can be tickled, where alternative futures can be prefiguratively tested. In this vein, Henri Lefebvre (1970, 1991b) seems to be right when he states that in the cracks of the most unpromising conditions, a new politics can always emerge.

For now, suffice it to say that the question of the political will run *implicitly* throughout the first three Parts. Its traces hang in the air, so to say. This is so because the question of the political became part of my work in a gradual manner. Eventually, an exploration of the intersection between politics proper and common space has resulted in a separate research aim to be taken up in Part IV.

We may continue by asking: what is ‘common space’? Whilst Chapters 1 and 2 will evolve entirely around the positive development of the concept, I assume merit at this juncture in stating what it is *not*. In this vein, I follow the conceptualization of Stavrides (2016, p. 54) when he argues that “common spaces should be distinguished from public spaces and from private spaces. Public spaces are primarily created by a certain authority 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”. This does not mean, however, that a common space cannot unfold *on* or *in* what is generally known as public or private space. Each of this study’s common spaces, to be explained below, will be seen to be nested ‘on’ or ‘within’ a spatial substrate that is owned by a public or private entity. This will be labelled as ‘usus fructus’: the right to use a thing possessed by another party. We shall learn that usus fructus has disadvantages, such as the heteronomous imposition of how commoning should proceed, but also advantages, such as the creation of ‘common property’, delivering to the commoner, to use the words of Blomley (2007b, p. 15), ‘a right not to be excluded’.

Before I spell out an overview of the chapters in the remainder of this introduction, I wish to dedicate a final word to this study’s ‘target group’. Who are the people that I have interviewed? What is the binding factor that renders the interviewees a coherent ensemble? I may be allowed to sidestep to a figure whose labors resonate in the ethos of this study’s respondents: Danilo Dolci (1924-1997). Dolci was an Italian architect who gave up his false hopes in design and abandoned conventional architectural practice in order to confront Sicilian poverty in the 1950s. Sought by Dolci was a fairer and better spatial environment for Sicilian peasants. But Dolci did not aspire to act as a ‘Deus ex Machina’ that would descend from the heavens and build whatever would be needed or demanded. Rather, he sought to engage with a plethora of local communities: to jointly erect an infirmary; to secure the promise (by a local government) of an irrigation system through a hunger strike; to organize a ‘strike in reverse’ by repairing a road with strikers and volunteers. With the Sicilians, Dolci built roads, dams, hospitals, but more importantly, he was in search of ‘a mentality of research’ from ‘which a clear strategy would emerge’ (Coleman, 2014, p. 50). In this vein, he implemented the ‘Centro Studi’ for research into full

employment. He was in jail at least twice, was nominated two times for a Noble Prize, and gradually became an enemy of the Italian state. In the foreword to Dolci's (1970) 'Report from Palermo', Aldous Huxley characterizes Dolci as a 'Franciscan with a degree'. Such figure, Huxley wrote,

“[...] requires more than compassion and seraphic love. He needs a degree in one of the sciences and a nodding acquaintance with a dozen disciplines beyond the pale of his own special field. It is only by making the best of both worlds – the world of the head no less than the world of the heart – that the twentieth-century saint can hope to be effective”.

With these remarks in mind, we stumble upon the crux of this study's respondents, which I will call: 'urban practitioners'. One by one, the urban practitioners discussed in this work are part of cultural organizations that are active in the grey zone between art, activism, spatial production and community organizing (Public Works, City in the Making, Recetas Urbanas, Raumlabor, to name just the master cases). Some of them are schooled in design or architecture, but have shifted from conventional practice to critical activism. Others emerge from the grassroots, but have found in the urban public realm the *locus par excellence* to pursue an alternative future. As Bader & Rosario (2017, p. 21) argue, 'urban practice' can be understood "as a transversal approach for enacting spatial transformation. It is a social and collaborative practice, for the art of city-making cannot be limited to one single discipline". What binds this work's urban practitioners is first of all a mentality of research: the ongoing quest to mobilize the urban tissue in order to bring about a non-discriminatory urban milieu based on use value. What binds them, second, is their intent to pursue common space 'with, not for' people: they engage with neighborhood groups, citizen initiatives, activists, commoners. These two traits of active, experimental research and acting in collectivity converge in the former citation of Huxley: 'the world of the head no less than the world of the heart'. Overall, the urban practitioner (or 'space-commoner') will be seen to be at the heart of the cultural production of common space.

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The outline of this dissertation will be as follows. ‘Part I. The Dyad’ will set the conceptual and theoretical scene for the case studies that are to follow. Chapter 1 within that Part (‘Theoretical Approaches’) puts forward two streams of thought: the ‘Ostrom-theoretical approach’ and the ‘Radical-theoretical approach’. Each of these streams will be discussed along the three De Angelean elements put forward earlier: common good, community, commoning. Chapter 2 within that Part (‘First Encounters’) applies these approaches by way of a first ‘pilot case study’ on the Madrilenian common space of the *Campo de Cebada*. The Chapter will end with a series of conceptual refinements. There is, however, one conceptual refinement that I wish to highlight at this point already. It will appear that each of the aforementioned theoretical approaches advocates a specific form of ‘engagement’ with state and market actors. The former advocates a ‘co-governmental’ engagement with state and market forces, the latter a more critical, dissensual one². These two forms of engagement will be called ‘Symbiotic Commoning’ and ‘Oppositional Commoning’, respectively. Now, it is of pivotal importance to announce that Symbiotic and Oppositional Commoning *do not necessarily collide* with the Ostrom-theoretical and the Radical-theoretical approach. Rather than to postulate this in advance, it will be my *question* how the substance of the *theoretical* approaches resonates within the *actual* forms of commoning that are called Symbiotic and Oppositional Commoning. One should therefore continue to distinguish the theoretical approaches from what they actually advocate, hence: Symbiotic and Oppositional Commoning³.

‘Part II. The Triad’ should be read as this study’s methodological passage. I wrote earlier that I aspire to discover how common space is *produced*. The three De Angelean elements of ‘common good’, ‘community’ and ‘commoning’ do not entirely allow, I will argue, to bring into vision the production of common space. In order to fill this lacuna and in order to give credence to the notion of ‘production’, Lefebvre’s (1991b) theory of the production of space will be mobilized. The first Chapter within this Part (‘Chapter 3. The Triad as a Tool’) discusses Lefebvre’s apparatus of the spatial triad. I will develop and rework this construct in order to make it useable for empirical research. As such, three ‘force fields’ will emerge – ‘representation’ (space as *thought*), ‘configuration’ (space as *built*) and ‘signification’ (space as *lived*) – through which the production of common space can empirically be captured. This

chapter may be theoretical in kind, but I do consider it a methodological exercise. After all, the spatial triad constitutes this study's threefold 'lens' through which to lay bare and assess the production of common space. The second Chapter within this Part ('Chapter 4. Methodological Outline') discusses the data corpus, data collection, data selection and data analysis.

'Part III. Shapeshifting' comprises three in-depth cases of space-commoning. The cases will be linked to the aforementioned forms of commoning: Oppositional and Symbiotic. The first case study is the project of 'The Public Land Grab', London (Chapter 5; the 'Oppositional case'). This project started with an illegal claiming of a derelict piece of urban land, an operation which in the following years instigated the development of a neighborhood-wide commoning network. Thereafter, we move to Rotterdam: 'Pension Almonde' (Chapter 6; the 'Hybrid case')⁴. Pension Almonde constitutes an occupation and appropriation of vacant housing. Informed by the concept of the commons, the organization 'City in the Making' will be seen to mobilize vacant infrastructure in order to shelter 'the urban nomad' (from the homeless to artists, from expats to sans papiers). Finally, we 'come home' in Antwerp with the project of Montaña Verde (Chapter 7; the 'Symbiotic case'): an outdoor laboratory for the cultivation of plants and vegetables. This common space embodies a collaboration between the city's Middelheim Museum, the Green Department and the Spanish activist architecture collective Recetas Urbanas. Each case study will be accompanied by a fore- and afterword. In the foreword, I take the liberty to engage with urban theory – Ebenezer Howard, Constant Nieuwenhuys – that I deem valuable to frame and introduce the case under consideration. *These digressions should not, however, be seen as being part of the general argument.* Finally, I may mention that the three case studies constitute an expanded version of journal articles that are at the time of writing in their final stages.

Finally, 'Part IV. The Cultural Production of Common Space' will bring together the insights that will have emerged from the combination of theory and empirical practice. First, we shall embark on this study's tailpiece: the 'Taxonomy of Tactics for the Production of Common Space' in which eight ideal types of tactics, ranked from 'Symbiotic' to 'Oppositional' will be presented. Subsequently, Chapter 9 highlights a series of 'Conclusive Theses on the Production of Common Space'. By way of turning back to what was announced in Part I, it will be learnt (These One) that a case of Oppositional

Commoning may contain in itself the predicaments of *both* the Ostrom-theoretical and the Radical-theoretical approach. The same can be said about a case of Symbiotic Commoning: here too, we will encounter resonances of *both* the hitherto mentioned theoretical approaches. Secondly (These Two), it will be highlighted that in order to engage in Oppositional Commoning, the commoner need not necessarily to ‘desert’ politico-economical institutions. Thirdly (These Three), it will be shown that each of the triad’s force fields – representation, configuration and signification – may ‘undermine’, but may also ‘underwrite’ the act of commoning. For reasons spelled out in the remainder of that Part, Part IV will continue with an Excursus to the relation between commoning and political action (‘Chapter 10. Excursus: Commoning Between Politics and the End of Dispute’). It does so, finally, in order to end with an Epilogue in which I spell out a ‘properly political’ production of common space (Chapter 11. Epilogue: Towards a Political Production of Common Space). As such, apart from the techniques pointed to in Chapter 4, this study’s overall method is one of ‘approximation’: the continuous reformulation and development of a key theme: common space. Finally, eight methodological Appendices can be found, including a two-page summary in English (Appendix VII) and a two-page summary in Dutch (Appendix VIII).

To recapitulate and refine, this study asks: how is common space produced in an Oppositional (case 1), Hybrid (case 2) and Symbiotic context (case 3)? To this, three separate research aims are coupled. First, to investigate the production of common space ‘in-depth’ through a detailed description of three master cases (Chapters 5, 6, 7); second, to develop a Taxonomy of Tactics capturing the production of common space through the construct of ‘ideal types’ (Chapter 8); third, to explore a properly political production of common space (Chapters 9, 10, 11). With these premises in mind, it is necessary, finally, to highlight that this study constitutes a theory-driven endeavour. Even though building on empirical data (individual and group interviews, document analyses, participatory observation and personal presence) this study takes a ‘relativist approach’ and builds theoretical arguments and predictions that are laying bare for future analysts to test, refine or discard. The data mobilized, hence, shall serve as illustrations and companions during the development of a theoretical framework on the production of common space.

Notes

¹ As stated in The Guardian, entitled: ‘Who Owns Our Cities – And Why this Urban Takeover Should Concern Us All’. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2015/nov/24/who-owns-our-cities-and-why-this-urban-takeover-should-concern-us-all>.

² Given the fact that this study looks into urban commoning, ‘state and market’ will be turned into ‘Municipality/Market’.

³ The notions of the ‘Ostrom-theoretical approach’ and ‘Radical-theoretical approach’ are not the most eloquent nominations. I continue to use them, however, for it is important that these theoretical approaches be distinguished from the actual forms of commoning they advocate: Symbiotic and Oppositional Commoning.

⁴ One may rightfully state that it is hard to effectively define the notion of ‘hybrid’. For now, suffice it to say that the labels of ‘Oppositional’, ‘Hybrid’ and ‘Symbiotic’ are *explorative* labels. They capture, namely, how I interpret the cases *before* entering into long-term empirical research. Hence, ‘hybrid’ means that signals of both ‘collaboration with’ and ‘opposition to’ the Municipality/Market are present, before entering the field. The hybrid case (Pension Almonde) will at a later point in the analysis be described as a Symbiotic one, showing once more these notions’ fluidity.

PART I. THE DYAD

This Part will start with two theoretical corpuses on the commons: the Ostrom-theoretical approach on the one hand, the Radical-theoretical approach on the other. Each approach will, according to De Angelis's (2010) three elements set out in the General Introduction, be highlighted and compared qua 'common good', 'community' and 'commoning'. This Part's second chapter ('First Encounters') will apply yet also reshuffle these elements through a preliminary application on a Madrilenian common space (the Campo de Cebada). It is in this second Chapter, also, where the theoretical approaches will be distinguished from Symbiotic and Oppositional Commoning. The second Chapter will end with an outline and plan of the work that lies ahead of us.

Chapter 1. The Dyad

The Ostrom-Theoretical Approach

The work of Elinor Ostrom, who in 2009 became the first woman to be awarded the Nobel Prize in economics, represents a direct challenge to the so-called 'tragedy of the commons' (Hardin, 1968): the assumption that the sharing of resources would invariably result in depletion. Ostrom, however, showed how communities of commoners, in the absence of favorable market conditions or adequate governmental regulations, have managed through space and time to govern autonomously the resources on which they were to rely. Examples range from shared pastures in the Swiss Alps to irrigation systems around Valencia, and from commonly held forests in Japan to fisheries jointly managed in Turkey. As announced in the Introduction, it is possible to theorize both approaches to common space along the 'common good' (what is shared?), the 'community' (who does the sharing?) and 'commoning' (how does the sharing unfold?). To begin with, thus: the common good. Ostrom (1990, p. 30) conceptualizes the commons in terms of 'common-pool *resources*' (CPRs). A CPR is "a natural or man-made resource system that is sufficiently large as to make it costly (but not impossible) to exclude potential beneficiaries from obtaining benefits from its use". Two traits couple to the CPR: it lies open to be used ('openness'), but use by one person diminishes what is left for others ('rivalry').

The second De Angelean element relates to the community (of commoners). In this vein, Ostrom advocates the installation of ‘boundaries’ to facilitate exclusion. Ostrom is clear in this regard: commoning is an exclusionary affair. It should be noted that Ostrom has in mind ‘social-spatial’ boundaries. Ostrom (1990, p. 90) contends in *Governing the Commons*: “individuals or households who have rights to withdraw resource units from the CPR must be clearly defined, as must the boundaries of the CPR itself”. Spatial boundaries may refer to the kind of interventionism that accompanied the enclosure of the originary commons: hedging, fencing, walling. Qua social boundaries, Ostrom turns to the village of Törbel, Switzerland. For centuries, Törbel’s commoners have tended privately owned plots but shared communal pastures to graze their cattle. Whilst this real-life example could prove to underwrite a ‘tragedy of the commons’, Ostrom found out how communal resources were managed sustainably through shared ownership and mutual agreement. However, in order to do so, Törbel’s commoners had to devise mechanisms to exclude outsiders from their commons. In Törbel, it was not enough to own land in the village if one was to be admitted as a co-owner of the commons: one had to be *allowed access* by already existing owners. Netting, as quoted in Ostrom (1990, p. 62), wrote: “the law specifically forbade a foreigner (*Fremde*) who bought or otherwise occupied land in Törbel from acquiring any right in the communal alp, common lands or grazing places, or permission to fell timber”. Ostrom’s account is purely economic: it seeks efficiency, efficiency only. She contends that especially when a community of commoners is non-mobile and culturally homogenous, communal property rights can be expected to emerge. By contrast, if a community of commoners is mobile and culturally heterogenous, individual property rights may work better. The latter, after all, ‘minimize the need for agreement’ amongst resource users.

The third element: ‘commoning’. I will describe the Ostromian conception of commoning as *instituted*. With instituted I mean the following: instituted refers to the *a priori* definition of a regulative framework. When we are looking to the *a priori* definition of commoning principles, we encounter Ostrom’s (2003; 1990) infamous series of ‘design principles’ for sustainable commoning. These principles imply, first, a congruence between the rules for resource use on the one hand and local conditions on the other. A second principle entails ‘collective choice arrangements’. This principle

implies that individuals affected by the rules for CPR usage can participate in modifying them. Third: mechanisms of monitoring and enforcement should be installed. In the communal forests of Hirano, Nagaike and Yamanoka, Japan, residents agreed to appoint detectives who patrolled the communal woods. In case of a violation such as resource use outside of the harvesting season, it was appropriate for the detectives to demand cash and *saké*¹ from the offender (Ostrom, 1990, p. 68). Lastly, dispute resolution should be in place. Because of the irregular pattern of rainfall, the Valencian irrigation systems are prone to disputes around water access. Tribunals and courts organized by the commoners themselves allow for conflict resolution and are known to have helped to sustain the canal system over the centuries. Ostrom's last yet pivotal design principle, is this one: 'minimal recognition of rights to organize'. This last principle means that the 'right to commoning' is not challenged but legally embedded and recognized by governmental authorities (Ostrom, 1990, p. 90).

However, the concern of this study lies with city space. One might therefore ask: how does the formerly described Ostromian framework resonate in urban contexts? Since around the 2010s, a stream of academic research has seen the light of day under the denominator of the 'urban commons' (Foster, 2006, 2013; Foster & Iaione, 2016; O'Brien, 2012; Parker & Johansson, 2011; Radywyl & Biggs, 2013). In this stream, investigators have started to highlight how citizens take over the 'governance' of urban infrastructures – such as green spaces, squares and abandoned buildings – from city governments. Furthermore, in her *Mapping the Commons*, Ostrom's colleague Charlotte Hess (2008) expands the notion of the common-pool resource to "various types of shared resources that have recently evolved or have been recognized as commons (...) without pre-existing rules or clear institutional arrangements". Hess classifies the new commons under the categories of 'cultural commons' (such as non-profit organizations), 'knowledge commons' (such as the Internet), but also 'infrastructure commons' (such as communication lines) and 'neighborhood commons' (such as streets, sidewalks and housing).

A notable 'urban' application of Ostrom's precedent is found in the city of Bologna where, in 2014, the City Council approved 'The Regulation on Collaboration between Citizens and the City for the Care and Regeneration of Urban Commons' – in short: The Bologna Regulation. The Regulation enables collaborations among the administration and the urban citizenry, in order for the latter to become

directly involved in the care for urban CPRs such as squares, green zones or deserted buildings (Kühne, 2015). Supporters of the Regulation argue that it releases citizens' 'civic energies' (Iaione, 2016); critics of the Regulation contend that it is a symptom of a current urban governance crisis, one whereby municipal governments seek unpaid help to address the multiple claims of a fragmented citizenry (Bianchi, 2018). Scholars following closely the unfoldment of the Regulation locate the need for enhanced collaboration between the urbanite and the administrator in what we may call an 'urban tragedy of the commons'. The pasture that has become the city has suffered, argue Arena (2012) and Iaione (2015) from the word 'more': more people, more mortgages, more buildings, eventually resulting in a generalized degradation of the urban environment and a decline of public space and services. In order to tackle such tragedy, a centralistic, hierarchical administration is expected to make way for a polycentric, relational one whereby "citizens can and must share their time, skills, experiences and ideas with the public administration in the sake of the general interest" (Arena & Iaione, 2012). In line with Ostrom's last design principle, the role of the municipal government resorts to "enabling and supporting this new collaborative ecosystem" (Foster & Iaione, 2016), equally called a CGC or 'Collaborative Governance of the Commons'.

The Bologna Regulation encapsulates both early and late-Ostromian CPRs: tangible goods² such as public spaces, buildings and community gardens, but also intangible ones such as street art and digital peer-to-peer networks, all of which, "through participative and deliberative procedure, are recognized to be functional to the individual and collective well-being"³. Practically, a CGC initiates on the part of the citizen – individual or associated – who presents a proposal to the city administration. The proposal is subsequently assessed by both the municipal government and the concerned Neighborhood Council in order to determine whether the envisioned project is in harmony with public and private interests. If approved, a 'pact of collaboration' is signed: citizens now step forward as 'custodians of the goods' whilst the local government aids in planning, gives free access to municipal spaces, provides equipment and foresees reimbursements (Bianchi, 2018). As will be seen in Part IV, I will consider the Regulation as a 'post-political' expression of common space⁴. But for now, suffice it to say that the Bologna Regulation perfectly encapsulates what is meant by the aforementioned notion

of ‘instituted’ commoning. Even though the commoners on-site may ‘propose’ to the municipal government how they envision their commoning to unfold, the pact of collaboration sets the ground rules up front. Even though commoners may bring their ideas to the city and propose ‘space X or Y’ to be commoned, the commoning has in fact been pre-conceived, instituted, by the city itself.

The Radical-Theoretical Approach

In recent years, a proliferating body of post-Marxist scholarship has attempted to theorize and substantiate empirically the commons in explicit contradistinction to the spheres of the state and the market (Chatterton, 2010; De Angelis, 2017b, 2017a; Hardt & Negri, 2009; Hodkinson, 2012b; Stavrides, 2016, 2019). Some within this stream posit commoning as the commoner’s active protection of our world’s shared wealth; a struggle, hence, *vis-à-vis* the enclosing tendencies of capital backed up by ever-more flexible state regulations⁵. Caffentzis & Frederici (2013, p. 94), in this vein, describe commoning as a counter-tendency within “a world in which everything, from the water we drink to our body’s cells and genomes, has a price tag on it [while] no effort is spared to ensure that companies have the right to enclose the last open spaces on earth and force us to pay to gain access to them”. Others within this stream assume no merit in theorizing the commons ‘defensively’. By construing them as something lost that needs to be recovered, these authors would argue, one puts up the commons against the presupposed, primordial position of the state and the market. Dardot & Laval (2019, p. 2) argue in this regard: “saving the world today is not therefore so much a matter of isolating and protecting some natural ‘good’ or ‘resource’ considered fundamental to human survival, as it is a matter of profoundly transforming the economy and the society by overthrowing the system of norms that now directly threatens nature and humanity itself”. Overall, within the Radical-theoretical approach, commoning emerges as an everyday struggle that stands in opposition to state and capital-driven forces.

Qua common good, first, one may argue that whilst Ostrom seeks the existence of a commons in the properties of a spatial substrate, those active in the Radical-theoretical approach will argue that ‘any’ substrate can always be commoned. As laid out earlier, Ostrom captures the concept of the commons through the notion of the CPR. Her reasoning is the following: *if* a spatial substrate is

characterized by properties X and Y – openness and rivalry – *then* it is a commons, a CPR to be more precise. Those working on commoning within the radical approach, by contrast, generally express the view that the commons do not simply exist, but are created in action. Any spatial substrate, the reasoning goes, regardless of its physical characteristics, may potentially be transposed to common status. In this vein, De Angelis (2017b, p. 30) draws our attention to “the twofold character of a common good (...): on the one hand it is a use value for a plurality; on the other it requires a plurality claiming and sustaining the ownership of the common good (...)”. Harvey (2013, p. 73) endorses such view, as he understands a commons as a “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”. Whether we consider occupied squares, squatted buildings, anti-gentrification struggles or a deserted factory turned into a locus for cultural production, with Harvey (2013, p. 73) on our side we can state: when seeking the urban commons, “it takes political action on the part of citizens and the people to appropriate them and make them so”.

From the foregoing remarks follows an additional difference with the Ostromian approach qua common good. Whilst for Ostrom the common good constitutes merely ‘a resource’, those active in the Radical-theoretical approach construe it as a *means* through which to explore and express alternative forms of social organization. Urban voids, such as former parking lots, may be reclaimed in order to instigate an urban community farm (as seen in the Loughborough Farm, London); an abandoned building may be occupied in order to provide studios and ateliers for those active in the arts (as seen in Pension Almonde, Rotterdam); a public square may be taken hold of, as during the 2011 Syntagma Square uprising in Greece. As Stavrides (2012, 2013b) has vividly argued, the square became indeed a *means* through which to experiment with and publicly showcase the force of direct democracy (through one General Assembly and a series of dispersed, decentral ones), the act of sharing (of information, food, shelter) and care for the urban environment (since protestors left a clean square after the occupation)⁶. It would be a rightful objection that in these cases the spatial substrate of the city still embodies the status of ‘a resource’, but more than in Ostrom, its use expresses a broader imaginary and vocabulary of social organization beyond state and market forces.

Secondly, the element of community. As shown before, Ostrom's sense of community is a static one. If the commons are to be governed sustainably, commoners should conceal their goods through socio-spatial closure. After all, strong group ties, internal trust and a homogenic composition proffer higher chances of long-term efficiency – thus runs the Ostromian argument. Diametrically against Ostrom's account, De Angelis is among a group of authors envisioning a more 'centrifugal' figure with regard to the term of community. De Angelis's community of commoners does not identify with any transcendental principle, such as: ethnicity, class, profession or political ideology. De Angelis's (2017b, pp. 230–231) community is open to enter, perpetually in flux: "it's a dance of values on the floor of community sharing". When a community is open to whoever intends to pitch in, one runs the invariable risk of conflict or dominance by one group or individual. But, argues De Angelis, such risk forces the community to constantly redevelop the orientation of 'its doing in common': the relation between common good and commoner refrains from solidifying into final form.

Stavrides (2013b) has also engaged in this line of thinking and has refined the concept of the commoning community further; he speaks of 'communities in movement'. Stavrides mobilizes a powerful metaphor in order to describe a 'community in movement': the *threshold*. First, the notion of the threshold can be invoked when pointing to what 'circumscribes' or encircles a commoning community. Stavrides had in mind a porous perimeter: a fluid membrane rather than an Ostromian 'border'. "Thresholds", Stavrides (2015, p. 12) writes, "may appear to be mere boundaries that separate an inside from an outside, as in a door's threshold, but this act of separation is always and simultaneously an act of connection. Thresholds create the conditions of entrance and exit". But the idea of the threshold, at least in my reading of Stavrides, may equally apply to the commoning community *itself*. When opening up the inside to the outside, the community will be variable, constantly changing. Thus: the community becomes a 'threshold' itself. People *in* the commoning community, in fact, find themselves *in* a threshold condition, they find themselves in a social constellation that is 'neither this, nor that'. Finding inspiration in the rites of passages meticulously described by Turner, Stavrides continues: "people on the threshold experience the potentiality of change because during the period of their stay on the threshold a peculiar experience occurs, the experience of 'communitas'". To bring it

all together, whilst Ostrom demands a stable, homogenous and exclusionary community ('bounded'), Stavrides envisions a changing one; he demands a community 'in movement' that, to use the words of Zibechi (2010, p. 19), is perpetually "reinvented, recreated".

Third and final field: commoning. I wish to express the difference 'qua commoning' between the Ostromian and the radical approach in terms of the following distinction: *instituted* in contrast to *instituent*. To recapitulate: 'instituted' referred to the *a priori* definition of commoning rules and principles, necessarily embedded in state or municipal bodies. Instituted commoning is what the commoner 'enters into'. Yet, the *instituted* nature of commoning now changes to an *instituent* one. With 'instituent' I mean the following: commoning principles are not defined 'up front', but emerge 'out of doing'. Stavrides (2014, 2015) has gone furthest in a theorization of what self-invented institutions of commoning might entail: 'comparison', 'translation', and the 'non-accumulation of power'.

Institutions in the realm of comparison "encourage differences to meet, to mutually expose themselves, and to create grounds of mutual awareness" (Stavrides, 2015, p. 14). Commoning organized on comparative grounds is not based on *a priori* anticipated roles; rather, it implies a form of commoning whereby commoners continually reposition themselves beyond their default position. It means to recognize differences without consolidating them. A rotation of duties within the commons gains significance here, such as collecting garbage after an occupation or tidying the room after an assembly. Another example is the 'Soup Tuesday' within the Pension Almonde project in Rotterdam. The project is home to 52 living units, meaning that if every unit prepares a pot of soup one time a year, the entire community receives one free meal, every week, for one year. Hence, the organization of the task of soup making is not based on differences – "let the cooks do it" – but constitutes a collective moment where differences may meet and exchange horizontally instead of vertically. As such, the principle of comparison 'opens up' the community to outsiders, for the latter do not enter a pre-existing taxonomy of roles and positions.

A second commoning principle is the act of translation. If comparison recognizes differences, translation creates the ground for negotiation between these differences. Translation, hence, can be seen as a design principle for the communication between diverging subject positions, albeit with the pivotal

condition that during the conversation no language is established as inferior or superior. Avoided in this context are ‘common denominators’, such as: “the majority of us speaks English, therefore we should discuss in this language”. But, I wish to contend that there are other, more equal ‘common denominators’ that enhance the communication of different subject positions in the field of commoning. There are, for example, Occupy’s ‘hand signals’, used by protestors to negotiate a consensus during the square occupations. Hand signals, in order to express consent, dissent or unclarity, are used instead of audible signals such as shouting or applauding. This system allows the front of the crowd to repeat what the speaker has said to the back of the crowd: the idea of a human microphone. Such invention of a new language and communicational device, I contend, mirrors Stavrides’s (2015, p. 14) statement that “commoning does not expand according to pre-existing patterns; it literally invents itself. Translation (...) constantly opens new opportunities for the creation of a common world always-in-the-making”.

Commoning institutions, finally, will need to contain mechanisms that are designed to prevent an accumulation of power by groups or individuals. Envisioned in this realm is a dispersion of ‘the power to decide’ (Stavrides, 2015) through mechanisms of participation, so that no party can impose its will on others. An example of non-accumulative power distribution is found in ‘Ex Asilo Filangieri’, a formerly squatted, now legally recognized autonomous centre for artistic production in the city of Naples. In the winter of 2017, my research team and I had the pleasure to immerse ourselves half a day in the ambience of this social centre. The center’s artistic schedule is devised through monthly assemblies, and tasks ranging from cleaning toilets to presiding meetings are subject to a system of rotation. Asilo’s theorist and activist Giuseppe Micciareli describes the center’s experimentation with these direct and non-accumulative forms of decision making as “the creation of participative democracy where the institution gives citizens the space to be active in forms of co-management of the political and cultural process of the city” (quoted Ciancio, 2018, p. 289).

Instituent commoning is a notion that will be returning time and again throughout this work. Whilst Stavrides provides us with the aforementioned ‘institutions of expanding commoning’, I may be allowed to shift the analysis in the direction of what could be seen as the underlying, theoretical DNA of an ‘instituent’ commoning endeavour. Here, the work of Castoriadis (1994, 1998) becomes

particularly significant. Without wanting to bring into vision the full range of this author's work, two concepts will shed light on commoning's instituent variant: 'Creatio ex Nihilo' and 'Magma'. Castoriadis, first, is unwilling to accept that the world in which we are thrown – its languages, norms, ways of life – would occupy exclusively a heteronomous existence 'beyond' the faculty of human invention. It is not only what we 'enter into'. As such, Castoriadis (1998) replaces 'being determined' (The Abyss) with the concept of 'Creatio ex Nihilo': 'creation out of nothing'. Instead of downgrading the imagination to mere reflection, Castoriadis argues that radically new institutions *can* effectively take root in the imagination before being materialized in the physical world. Creatio ex Nihilo entails society's 'self-institution': language, ways of life, values and norms, ideologies, and so forth. Instead of resigning to the acceptance that, for instance, public and private space would exclusively determine urban life, Castoriadis maintains that people are always in the conscious direction and development of their own lives (as in the production, for instance, of *common* space). Humankind's self-invention and reinvention, then, comes forth from what Castoriadis calls 'Magma'. Magma is the very source of social life and its institutions, the ever-flowing, inexhaustible repertoire of human imagination. Magma's fundamental characterization is indeed its 'indeterminacy': when it erupts, it does so in an always flowing, always changing manner. It never solidifies into in an inalterable form. When the latter happens, after all, it stops being Magma. To delve into Magma, 'the source', and from there on out, to Create 'out of nothing', constitutes according Castoriadis one of the basic drives of human existence (Klooger, 2011). Stavrides's idea of a 'common world always-in-the-making' through the acts of comparison and translation constitutes, I will maintain, the very embodiment thereof.

One may debate whether one can ever 'invent' *something out of nothing*. Castoriadis (1998, p. 195) clarifies the point: he is adamant to state that creation 'from nothing' should not be equated with creation *in nothing* ('in nihilo') or *with nothing* ('cum nihilo'). Creation may be constrained by a situation that precedes it, but this does not mean that it is entirely determined by it. Dardot & Laval (2019, p. 297) take the point still further. They issue the idea of creation *ex aliquo* but *sine causa*: *out of something* but *without cause*. The authors acknowledge the impossibility of unconditioned creation, but argue that one must not reduce the act of creation to a necessary effect of its preceding conditions.

Finally, I would want to argue that what roams the Radical-theoretical approach, is this: change, variability, invention, reinvention, the non-solidification into final form. “Commoning”, Stavrides⁷ argues, “includes the process in which you define the uses and rules and forms of regulation [through which] you keep this process alive. You need constantly to be alert in avoiding that this process solidifies and closes itself and therefore reverses its meaning”. Whether this ethos of perpetual turnover will be able, however, to render commoning an oppositional endeavour *vis-à-vis* rather than ‘with’ the state and the market, remains a question to be taken up in these pages.

It is time to conclude. By way of staging a meeting between the Ostrom-theoretical and the Radical-theoretical approach, Figure 1 highlights the different conceptions of the De Angelean elements of the ‘common good’, ‘community’ and ‘commoning’. As the subsequent Chapter will argue in more detail, the table below runs the unavoidable risk of constituting a simplification, an abstraction. It may, indeed, be expected that the dual dimensions of these elements can be combined in various ways during on-site commoning endeavors. Nevertheless, I will ask the reader to consider the table, for the three elements and their empirical embodiments will be returning time and again in the analyses that lie ahead.

Figure 1. The De Angelean elements’ dual dimensions

	Ostrom-theoretical approach	Radical-theoretical approach
Common Good	CPR	MEANS
Community	BOUNDED	IN MOVEMENT
Commoning	INSTITUTED	INSTITUENT

Notes

¹ A Japanese wine.

² To be more precise, 60% of the cases is related to physical urban spaces.

³ Retrieved from the document by the Comune di Bologna (2015), entitled: “Regolamento sulla collaborazione tra cittadini e amministrazione per la cura e la rigenerazione dei beni comuni urbani”, translated by Bianchi (2018, p. 295).

⁴ Using the words of Swyngedouw (2005), we may label this form of commoning as a ‘governance-beyond-the-state-arrangement’: the municipality peels off the responsibility for solving urban matters on the part of the commoner but at the same time consolidates itself as the principle institutional form for urban governance.

⁵ As Bob Jessop (2002) argues, the state (in the context of this study: the municipal government) is capitalism’s necessary, significant ‘other’.

⁶ The occupation of Athens’ Syntagma Square, encapsulated in a number of Stavrides’s (2012, 2013b) accounts, constitutes an adequate example of space-commoning within the Radical approach. The Square, *in se* a public space, became a common space in the context of the 2011 demonstrations against the Greek government. Stavrides (2012, p. 588) describes how during the occupation the square shapeshifted into a myriad of ‘micro squares’, each of which catered its urban environment to a specific task: a playground for children, a reading and meditation area, a time bank, a media centre, a first-aid stand, and so forth. The manifold micro squares issued their own aesthetic and routines but were connected through a perpetual in- and outflux of participators. The variety of dispersed initiatives was united by a General Assembly, functioning as an open-to-all-discussion area where decisions were made by vote in order to be taken ‘back home’ to the micro squares. “No group was allowed to dominate”, Stavrides (2012, p. 589) recounts, “and nobody was silenced”.

⁷ From the interview by Marc Neelen & Henrietta Palmer following the *Commoning the City* conference, Stockholm, April 12, 2013 (quoted in Džokić & Neelen, 2015, p. 24).

Chapter 2. First Encounters

Imploding Oppositions

The goal of this intermediary Chapter is threefold: first, I seek to question the stark opposition between the two approaches as laid out in Chapter 1; second, I aspire to highlight a ‘first encounter’ with the act of space-commoning; third, I turn to the theoretical lacunae that this work seeks to fulfil.

To begin with, I will anticipate that, ‘horizontally’, the aforementioned dual dimensions of each of the De Angelean elements (‘CPR’ versus ‘means’; ‘bounded’ versus ‘in movement’; ‘instituted’ versus ‘instituent’) should be seen less as stark opposites. Regarding the element of the common good, it is readily conceivable how the aforementioned distinction between *resource* and *means* may dissolve. Take, for instance, the case of a community garden. Prima facie, one could state that community gardens are located on the resource side of the common good. After all, following Ostrom, ‘the common good’ in such a commoning endeavour is difficult to shield off from outsiders (‘openness’) and resource use by one person diminishes what is left for others (‘rivalry’). Several authors (Blomley, 2004; Eizenberg, 2012; Staeheli & Mitchell, 2007; Thompson, 2015), however, have shown how ‘the common good’ in community gardens may simultaneously constitute a *means* for political action. Staeheli & Mitchell (2007, p. 107), in their study on urban gardens in New York City, note how “the gardeners claimed a right to public space for communities that were otherwise deprived of the resources of the city. Their claim was that as marginalized communities, they had a particular communal right to the space in which they could organize, mobilize, and seek empowerment”. Furthermore, Blomley’s (2008) work on the urban commons expresses a similar signal. He describes the case of ‘Woodward’s’, a Vancouver community store that was redeveloped into private housing. Blomley showed how residents, when the store was in the process of redevelopment, “brought a broom and a friend to the site and began sweeping the streets and cleaning windows. Participants painted the store, decorating the windows with images (...) and with slogans”. Such continued usage of a common-pool resource, ‘collective habitation’, allowed commoners to challenge the power relations of the redevelopment in a way that benefitted the voice of the community that was under gentrification threat.

Regarding the element of the community, one may anticipate how the aforementioned distinction between a closed, stable or homogenous community and an open, variable, heterogenous one may be subject to implosion as well. Remaining in the sphere of community gardens, Staeheli & Mitchell (2007, p. 105) laid bare how, in their investigated NYC gardens, commoners imagined “the gardens as places where people could work together (...) in the building of an inclusive community and in developing a voice that could be heard in the city as a whole”. However: “they did not (...) make the same sort of claims about the necessity of gardens for the wealthiest areas of the city” (2007, p. 107). In that vein, Staeheli and Mitchell turn to the act of exclusion as a legitimate act precisely because it was exercised in the name of citizen empowerment, rather than to discriminate or exclude an identifiable party. What I want to take from this example is that openness and closure may occur simultaneously in a commoning community. One might therefore suspect that in order to keep a commoning community open ‘for some’ (commoners), it will have to be closed ‘for others’ (capitalists). Even though it seems primarily focused on openness and inclusion, Stavrides’s idea of the threshold, the ‘porous perimeter’, implies such condition of entrance and exit. I return extensively to this point in Chapter 10.

Regarding the element of commoning, finally, it is readily conceivable how the aforementioned distinction between ‘instituted’ and ‘instituent’ may start to crumble, too. It is predictable that commoners who commenced a commoning endeavour because the municipality pre-anticipated it (instituted), may valorize that very moment as an opportunity to self-invent new and additional projects from there on out (instituent). This will be seen at the case study of the Public Land Grab: commoners use, or rather subvert, commons-enabling legislation in order to self-invent their own, desired ways of restoring their area to collective use. One may also suspect that commoners may oscillate between periods of vast, regulative frameworks and the redefinition thereof. Scholarship regarding commoning in housing estates underwrites such presumption (Huron, 2015; Noterman, 2016). Noterman (2016, p. 445), in this regard, coined the notion of ‘differential commoning’. The latter idea recognizes that commoning cannot be uncoupled from internal power relations and regulative frameworks in order to govern a shared resource, but stresses that this is something “to continually grapple with, rather than a tendency that can be eliminated”.

At the Campo de Cebada

In the following description, I do not only intend to highlight the Campo de Cebada as a ‘first encounter’ with the act of space-commoning. I also want to mobilize the description as a way of reiterating the point made in the previous section, namely: the fact that the dual dimensions of the common good, community and commoning should be seen less as opposites, but may occur together in one and the same case. In the grander scheme of this work, the Campo de Cebada constituted for the author, too, a first encounter with common space, the consolidation of which can be retrieved in the article ‘DIY Urbanism & The Lens of the Commons: Observation from Spain’ (Volont, 2019), published in *City & Community*. What follows is a reworking of sections of the paper.

In the case of the Campo de Cebada, a 5500-square meter sunken plot of concrete has been converted into a multifunctional common space amidst the Madrilenian La Latina area. The spatial substrate of the Campo de Cebada (the common good, one might say) consists of a now-empty and open-air swimming pool, a former public infrastructure. The municipal government presented plans for reclassifying the facility, which was to be rebuilt and managed by a private development company. The financial credit crisis of 2008/2009, however, put a halt to these redevelopment plans. The Campo de Cebada, now, would lay dormant until further notice. Yet, those living near the site began to question why the municipal government had stalled the work and had refrained from fulfilling its promise of providing new public facilities. After a year of non-activity, the Campo came to play a pivotal role in Madrid’s ‘White Night’, an event unfolding around the citizen-led occupation of public spaces in order to rethink the relationship between the municipality and its citizenry. Boosted in confidence by the former event (wherein the Campo was explored as a space for creativity and performance), a group of citizen initiatives and activists organized itself and formally took to the municipal government in order to project upon it a demand for temporary use. In 2011, an agreement was reached with the city’s Finance Department, the formal owner of the site, concerning the temporary ceding of the Campo de Cebada. In the meantime, commoners have been able to reconfigure the sunken plot into a sports field, an urban garden, a debate stage and a facility for performances and cultural production. The Campo de Cebada (‘The Barley Field’) was born.

The Madrid-based architecture collective Zuloark initiated the unfoldment of the Campo by providing those engaged in the project with a ‘common-good-as-a-CPR’. A shipping container was put in the middle of the plot, filled with tools through which the commoner could take up autonomously the production of common space: watering materials for the community gardens, screwdrivers, drilling machines, and so forth. Yet, the goal of this ‘pooling of resources’, a member maintains, also constituted a *means* to exert a public narrative: “we try to make public space into a commons. If you go into the street, you cannot do ‘this’ and you cannot do ‘that’, which is absurd. Instead of everybody owning tools individually, this could be a public thing. The Campo is an extension of our personal living space”.

One could contend that the Campo constitutes a common-pool resource according to the classification put forward in Chapter 1: it is difficult to exclude outsiders from use, and use by one person (of the space itself, but also of the tools) diminishes what is left for others. In order to safeguard the Campo from a ‘tragedy of the commons’ (overuse, the square becoming a place for nightly drinking), Ostrom’s design principle of socio-spatial closure commenced to gain significance. Given the fact that the Campo unfolded on an empty wharf, the site was still enclosed by a fence. The activists I interviewed emphasized the necessity of leaving the fence *in place*, and more so, of locking it. The Campo was guarded with a padlock, the code of which was spread among a select group of activists that put the project on its rails. But another kind of closure appeared as well, one highlighting, as argued before, how a community of commoners cannot be said to be invariably ‘open’ or ‘closed’ but might be expected to contain a residue of both. Organized at the Campo was a weekly *assamblea*, an assembly open to everyone with an interest in organizing events or performances in the Campo. However, cases appeared that people and their proposals were withheld. “We always tried to assure that everybody could take part and express ideas”, argued one of the commoners, but when Red Bull proposed to organize a tournament amidst the Campo, it was suspected that “they just want to make money, because it’s a cool and a cheap place, so we said no”. We may reiterate a statement made earlier: “in order to keep a community open ‘for some’ (commoners), it will have to be closed ‘for others’ (capitalists)”. This point shows how ‘CPR’ and ‘means’ can be combined: the Campo figures not only as a shared resource, but also as a spatial substrate mobilized to explore cooperative, non-capitalist forms of urban development.

The two dimensions of instituted and instituent commoning converge as well, finally, at the Campo de Cebada. In the aforementioned *assamblea*, a vast, regulative framework was put centre stage: ten basic principles were formally instituted up front. This included, to give just one example, a declaration of intent *not* to let the Campo evolve into what in Spanish terms is called a ‘botellón’, a gathering square for outdoor drinking and nightly pastime, as well as a declaration of intent to let *all* activities take place for free. But the *assamblea*’s function was precisely to render the Campo subject to various and changing mobilizations. The *assamblea* remained open to new participants: citizens, citizen initiatives, activists and commoners could pass by, propose activities and put ever-new events and uses on the agenda. Through this lens, we can see how commoners may oscillate between vast and regulative frameworks constituted up front and the redefinition thereof.

Moreover, the idea of temporarily claiming the Campo as a space for urban creativity emerged initially in the minds of the commoners themselves, but could only be realized because of the legal recognition by the Madrilenian Financial Department (cfr. Ostrom’s ‘minimal recognition of rights to organize’). However, after a number of years of on-site commoning, and at a time when budgets for urban renewal became available again at the municipal level, the community of commoners was seen to mobilize the occupation in order ‘to get its foot to the ground’, that is: to step forward as a confrontational voice which would self-initiate and self-invent the possible futures the Campo could adhere to. One of Zuloark’s activists described the project in terms “of a loudspeaker” *vis-à-vis* the municipal government and the redevelopment firm it worked with. In this vein, a ‘to-and-fro’ between municipal authorities and market actors on the one hand, and the Campo’s protagonists on the other, currently explores the extent to which sections and structures of the Campo could be inserted into the building that is expected to take its place. Through this lens, we can see how commoners who commenced a commoning endeavour themselves (instituent) sought the support of a municipal structure (instituted) in order to take that very collaboration as an opportunity to self-invent new, additional projects (back to instituent). Preliminary, one might hypothesize that both forms *need* each other: in order to be able to redefine or reinvent one’s commoning endeavour, one needs the stable ‘ground’ on which to do so.

When at looking these elements' twofold nature, we discover how a common good can be both 'a resource' (the container of tools) and 'a means' (for exploring non-capitalist forms of urban development); how a community can be both 'in movement' (for commoners) and 'bounded' (against Red Bull); and how commoning may unfold through an instituted (the *a priori* definition of rules, acknowledged by external bodies) and an instituent (self-invention and re-invention) variant. This tickles my interest to further explore how the predicaments of both the Ostrom-theoretical and the Radical theoretical approach might be present and combined within one and the same case; a task to be undertaken in the remainder of this study.

Figure 2. The Campo de Cebada, Madrid



Figure 3. Container with Shared Tools



Figure 4. Community Gardening at the Campo de Cebada



Figure 5. Tribunes and Benches



Figure 6. The Campo de Cebada in Full Swing (Wikimedia Commons)



Figure 7. A Modular Composition (Wikimedia Commons)



Figure 8. A View from the Inside to the Outside (Wikimedia Commons)



A Series of Specifications

I now want to discuss three issues that require to be specified in the remainder of the study. These issues include: the notion of the ‘Municipality/Market’, the difference between common space and public space, and the distinction between Symbiotic and Oppositional Commoning.

First: the ‘Municipality/Market’. In this study, I follow De Angelis’s (2017b) suggestion not to study the commons – in my case, common space – as an *endogenous* system, but as an *exogenous* one. With this statement, the following is meant: the course of a commoning endeavour cannot solely be attributed to the commoners active and the decisions taken *within* the project itself. By contrast, the course of a commoning endeavour is also dependent on and influenced by external, exogenous social forces that will affect it. Hence, it is crucial to recognize that endeavors of space-commoning are not only defined by their own, internal dynamics, but stand in relation to an ‘environment’ (De Angelis, 2017b, 2017a). Pointed to, in this regard, is not necessarily a physical or a territorial environment, but a discursive, institutional one. Space-commoning’s environment may be found, first, in the sphere of the ‘public’ production of space: the municipality, its institutions for spatial production and maintenance, its policies and its corresponding implementors¹. Space-commoning’s environment may be found, second, in the sphere of the ‘private’ production of space: the market, its organizations for spatial production, and once more its corresponding executives². In all, throughout this study, space-commoning’s environment will appear in the form of what I will call: the ‘Municipality/Market’.

The idea of the Municipality/Market is a reformulation of what Bollier calls (2015) the ‘Market/State’. As Jessop (2002) similarly argued, the state is capitalism’s necessary, significant ‘other’. Yet, the concept of the Municipality/Market allows me to articulate commoning endeavors’ institutional environment in urban contexts, a locus where it is mostly not the state, but the municipal government, often in collaboration with market actors, that sets the terms for what is possible, and what not, in the urban public realm. In the case of the Campo, we saw already how the Madrilénian municipal government had sold the plot to a private developer. In Part III, a similar signal will appear. In the case of the Public Land Grab (case study one), it will be seen how Lambeth Council issues an interest to sell sections of a neighborhood-wide commoning network to private housing developers. The marriage

becomes even more tangible at Pension Almonde (case study two). This common space, namely, is located amidst the Zoho area (Rotterdam) which has been put up for sale in its entirety (by the City of Rotterdam and the housing association Havensteder) in order to be redeveloped into a ‘creative-entrepreneurial’ zone (New Zoho). When there are no commercial interests involved, as in the case study of Montaña Verde (case study three), I will solely point to ‘the municipal government’.

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A second specification relates to the difference between ‘public space’ and ‘common space’. In this vein, it is important to stress that when I use the notion of ‘public space’, I am strictly pointing to the physical substrate of streets, squares and buildings that are owned by, maintained and regulated by municipal authorities. As such, I follow Stavrides’s (2016, p. 54) definition when he states that public spaces “are created by a certain authority (local, regional, state) which controls them and establishes the rules under which people may use them”. Common space, by contrast, refers to those places where commoners define *themselves* the forms, functions and meanings of the substrate they occupy. Whether this unfolds ‘as resource’ or ‘as means’, through a bounded or variable community, or through instituted or instituent commoning, common space is produced, to use the words of Stavrides (2016, p. 54), “by people in their effort to establish a common world that houses, supports and expresses the community they participate in”. The following stance by a commoner at The Public Land Grab, the London case study, will clarify the point: “one criterium to make a commons is responsibility, taking care. Most people don’t give a shit about public space. They think the state is responsible, that somebody else is responsible. This, for me, is one of the main characteristics of a commons, that we share, and that by sharing we are responsible for keeping it alive and maintaining it”.

Two specifications should, however, be added. If we are to conceive of public space as the space owned and maintained by municipal authorities, it becomes readily conceivable that common space may unfold *on* or *in* public spaces. Hence, whilst public space exists legally as ‘public property’, common space exists as a relationship of *use*. As will be seen in this work’s three case studies, each common

space will take hold of a publicly owned spatial substrate: a piece of derelict urban land in London (The Public Land Grab); a street of vacant housing in Rotterdam (Pension Almonde); a public square in the city of Antwerp (Montaña Verde). I will label such relationship of use as ‘*usus fructus*’: the commoner’s decision (sometimes legal, sometimes illegal) ‘to use a thing possessed by another party’.

The second specification follows from the following question: if the difference between public space and common space should be attributed to a difference in ‘producing actors and their corresponding modalities of use’, how do public and common space, then, relate to the idea of the public *sphere*? I would want to unravel the following argument by sticking to two conceptualizations of the concept: the one exerted by Habermas (1991) and the one put forward by Fraser (1990). Following Habermas, the public sphere can be conceived of as the space in which the citizenry deliberates ‘matters of common concern’. It is a metaphorical realm where opinion is formed through rational deliberation and where the attainment of consensus remains possible. Habermas saw the public sphere emerging as from the 18th century, more specifically in the physical locale of the coffee house. In principle, the public sphere would be ‘open to all’ and would thrive on a putting between brackets of individual difference. Participants would ‘optimally’ engage in the public sphere as social equals. Even though the ideal of an openly-accessible and power differential-free public sphere did not live up to its full potential, Habermas argues that the bracketing of difference has significant emancipatory potential.

Nancy Fraser, however, adding a series of corrections on Habermas, set out to argue that the public sphere is not always free from power differentials, that private rather than common concerns may enter the discussion, and that one cannot speak of ‘one public sphere’ but of ‘multiple publics’. Fraser argues that a Habermasian public sphere was elaborated by a masculine bourgeoisie in order to posit its own interests as *universal* interests against those of women and the working class. The ideal of setting aside power differentials was according to Fraser never achieved: ‘open to everyone’ effectively meant ‘open to everyone like us’. Therefore, Fraser (1990, p. 67) coins the notion of ‘subaltern counter-publics’: “a discursive arena where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counter discourses, which in turn permit them to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs”. As such, we come close to Stavrides’s earlier formulation of common space.

Whether it is about self-organization against gentrification (London) or the sheltering of the urban nomad (Rotterdam), a common space constitutes a zone “where people establish a common world that houses, supports and expresses the community they participate in”.

Therefore, one could state: a common space, *whilst different from public space*, can be seen as *a* public sphere, and this for two reasons. The first reason is that a common space, just as a public sphere, necessitates a physical infrastructure; this is visible in both Habermas and Fraser. Habermas’s project remains a significant one for it demonstrates how specific places, the coffee house, are required for a public sphere to emerge. Just as common space requires the substrate of public space, a public sphere seems to require a physical microcosm to emerge. Fraser makes a similar argument in relation to subaltern counter-publics: they thrive in a zone where they can establish their own norms and interests collectively, such as in book shops, festivals, meeting places, and so forth. The second reason is that a public sphere constitutes a realm that is *separate but by no means unaffected* by the state and the market. This point is made explicit by Fraser particularly. A public sphere, after all, is a site of circulation of discourses that can be critical of the state. A public sphere, too, is an area of discursive rather than market-based relations of buying and selling. This does not mean, however, that the state and the market (the Municipality/Market) do not affect the public sphere. Sennet (1977), for instance, clarifies a decline of public life since the 18th century with capitalism’s associated rise in intimacy and narcissism. Low & Smith (2006), on their turn, argue that a global clampdown on public space by state and market actors (surveillance, privatization) affects the possibility for spontaneous gathering and deliberative action altogether. In this vein, the most correct statement one could make, for now, is that common spaces can be seen as attempts to embed *one of many* public spheres in the built environment³.

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A third and final specification brings us back to two actual forms of commoning: Symbiotic Commoning and Oppositional Commoning. What the introductory case study on the Campo de Cebada has thought us, is that elements from *both* the Ostrom-theoretical approach and the Radical-theoretical approach

may be present in one and the same case of commoning. It was discovered how the *assemblea*, in principle open to anyone, was closed to those seeking to valorize the Campo as an asset for entertainment (Red Bull). It was also seen how the Campo itself was a shared resource, but also a means to explore cooperative and non-capital-led forms of urban development. And finally, both instituted and instituent forms of commoning (*a priori* defined regulative frameworks and changing materializations) emerged in the sunken plot of the Campo. Given the aforementioned fact that I resolutely place the production of common space in relation to its institutional environment, I will be specifically interested in how additional cases combine these elements as well.

Now, I will distinguish between two directions in which this relationship with the Municipality/Market may evolve. In this vein, it is safe to assert that the two theoretical approaches described so far (Ostrom-theoretical, Radical-theoretical) have a specific ‘modality of engagement’ with the Municipality/Market in mind, normatively that is. The Ostrom-theoretical approach, to begin with, advocates a co-governmental relationship with the Municipality/Market. Whilst Ostrom mainly investigated environmental commons, her co-governmental undercurrent has recently been translated to urban matters as well (Foster, 2013; Foster & Iaione, 2016; Iaione, 2015, 2016). Iaione (2016), for instance, has taken an inspiration in Ostrom’s precedents in order to conceptualize what he calls the ‘Co-City’. The Co-City is expected to thrive on a ‘partnership arrangement’ between municipal governments on the one hand and commoners on the other. A pivotal actor in the Co-City is what Iaione (2016) calls the ‘enabling state’ or what Bauwens & Kostakis⁴ have called the ‘partner state’. These labels encapsulate the normative stance that public authorities should facilitate monetarily, infrastructurally and legally the creation of common spaces as well as the commoner-led governance thereof. Examples can be found in the Bologna Regulation’s ‘Collaborative Governance of the Commons’ arrangements⁵ as described in Chapter 1. Now, essential to take with us from the preceding remarks is that in this first modality of engagement, the relationship between the commoner and the Municipality/Market is normatively posited as a ‘consensual’ one (Foster & Iaione, 2016; Iaione, 2016). This is what Parker & Johansson (2011), on their turn, call ‘cross-sector collaboration’, an idea entailing the co-governance, between ‘cities and citizens’, when it comes to the management of collective

resources in urban settings. To bring it to a point, I will call this first modality of engagement, advocated by the Ostrom-theoretical approach as: Symbiotic Commoning.

When it comes, on the other hand, to the Radical-theoretical approach's preferred modality of engagement with the Municipality/Market, we arrive in a more frictional 'to-and-fro' between common space and its institutional environment. Space-commoning, then, ceases to figure as an endeavour that is 'enabled' (Iaione, 2016) by a partnering Municipality/Market, but commences to unfold as a critical rethinking *of* that very relationship. In this vein, Stavrides (2014, p. 549) posited space-commoning as a venture "in-against-and-beyond the metropolis, by upsetting dominant taxonomies of urban spaces as well as dominant taxonomies of political actions". Chatterton (2010, p. 627), likewise, contends that building common spaces "requires the ability to control and imagine governance in new ways". Examples can be found in momentary resurrections against neoliberal policies trying to confiscate the urban commons in the name of private interests – the 2013 occupation of Istanbul's Gezi Square was led by a group called 'Our Commons' – but can also be recognized in long-term attempts to self-organize spaces for political dissent, often coupled to cultural production (Mouffe, 2013), which can be seen in the politically transformative role played by socio-cultural centers in Italy and the UK⁶ (De Angelis, 2017a; Hodkinson & Chatterton, 2006). The relation, hence, between the space-commoner and the Municipality/Market is not one of co-governance or partnership, but of mutual critique, dissensus, struggle. To bring these remarks to a point as well, I will call this second modality of engagement, advocated by the Radical-theoretical approach as: Oppositional Commoning.

Before us, hence, appear two strands: 'pragmatic engagement' and 'direct confrontation'; *asking* for common space, or *claiming* it in practice; to step forward as a partner in relation to the Municipality/Market, or as its rival counterpart. In all: Symbiotic Commoning and Oppositional Commoning. However, there is one essential caveat: whilst both forms of space-commoning are advocated respectively by the Ostrom-theoretical and the Radical-theoretical approach, I will *not* presume as such. This is a pivotal point: whether Symbiotic Commoning would come forth from governing a CPR, with a bounded community and through instituted commoning, as is predicted by those active in the Ostrom-theoretical approach, is a *question*, rather than a presumption. So, too,

whether Oppositional Commoning will come forth from mobilizing space as a ‘means’, with a ‘community in movement’ and through instituent commoning, is a *question*, rather than a presumption. In all: during the analyses that are to follow, I am interested to discover if and how space-commoners work with the elements of *both* theoretical approaches within a case of Oppositional Commoning (London), within a case of Symbiotic Commoning (Antwerp), and within a hybrid case (Rotterdam). Hence, I refrain from assuming that the elements present within the Ostrom-theoretical approach will necessarily lead to what I called Symbiotic Commoning, or that the elements present within the Radical-theoretical approach will necessarily lead to Oppositional Commoning.

Lacunae & Plan of the Work

By way of ending the chapter, I intend to turn to a number of lacunae traversing the current body of scholarship on common space. The goal will be to highlight three gaps within the field as well as to elaborate on how the current study will seek to fill these voids. The lacunae can be expressed as follows: the non-consideration of *both* the Ostrom-theoretical and the Radical-theoretical approach; the shortfall of analytical inferences highlighting how common space is effectively *produced*; and the paucity of assessments in terms of ‘common space’.

The first lacuna entails the non-consideration of *both* the Ostrom-theoretical and the Radical-theoretical approach to common space. To be more precise, we are confronted today with two growing bodies of scholarly research that tend to work within their own conceptual and empirical confines. On the one hand, Ostrom’s (1990) *Governing the Commons* has found its way to a well-established canon of accounts that explicitly seeks to translate and apply her precedents in urban conditions (Foster, 2006; Fournier, 2013; Parker & Johansson, 2011). In this vein, what might be called the ‘Co-City literature’ (Foster, 2013; Foster & Iaione, 2016; Iaione, 2016), taking as its primary case the aforementioned Bologna Regulation, seeks to establish an ‘Ostrom 2.0’ in that it actively attempts to define the design principles that are needed in order for citizens to sustainably take care of and revive underused urban infrastructures. Design principles that have already emerged in this vein entail ‘collaborative

governance’ (between civil society and municipal governments); ‘the enabling state’ (states and municipal governments recognizing commoners’ rights to take matters into their own hands); ‘social and economic pooling’ (the presence of circular economies in underserved sections of the city); ‘experimentalism’ (policies for the commons remaining adaptive); and ‘tech justice’ (digital infrastructures enabling the co-creation of common spaces).

On the other hand, Stavrides’s (2016) *Common Space* as well as De Angelis’s (2017b) *Omnia Sunt Communia* have equally found their way to a well-established canon of accounts, a canon more active in framing how the commoner engages in a confrontational (Oppositional), rather than in a co-governmental (Symbiotic) relationship with the Municipality/Market (Chatterton, 2010; Hodkinson, 2012b; Hodkinson & Chatterton, 2006; Jeffrey et al., 2012). Apart from theoretical exercises (Dardot & Laval, 2019), this stream seeks to discover how the formerly described principles of the open, variable community ‘in movement’ and instituent commoning may be recognized in cases such as socio-cultural centers (Hodkinson & Chatterton, 2006), community gardens (Eizenberg, 2012), urban-artistic interventions (Kodalak, 2015), housing cooperations (Huron, 2015; Noterman, 2016) or urban protest and occupation (Stavrides, 2013b).

Taking stock of this dual development, it is safe to assert that both fields of research continue to constitute separate realms. One might even argue that there exists a certain ‘disdain’ between the two camps: Ostromians argue that the radical stream constitutes a utopian vision, lacking in legal recognition and embedding; radical scholars, on their turn, criticize the efficiency-oriented, economic (‘optimal use’ of resources) and collaborative (with the Municipality/Market) undertone exerted by the Ostromians (2017b). I dare to propose that this research project is not neutral either: the catalyst for this endeavour can be found in the Radical-theoretical approach: its principles of the common-good-as-means, the ‘community in movement’ and instituent commoning are the ones I consider to be necessary for a more socially inclusive and less commodified urban constellation. However, if we are ever to tease out an effective implementation of these latter principles within the current conditions of urban development – that is: if commoning is ever to reach the status of a counter-hegemonic project – it is my contention that a look ‘over the fence’ *will* be necessary. This study, therefore, sets out to focus not on one of both

sides, but on the interplay between the two, that is: between the elements of the Ostrom-theoretical approach and the Radical-theoretical approach. In order to lift the veil already, I may be allowed to announce certain elements put forward within the Ostrom-theoretical approach will be seen to contribute to Oppositional Commoning, and vice versa, that some elements put forward within the Radical-theoretical approach might unwillingly generate the emergence of Symbiotic Commoning.

The second lacuna implies a shortfall of analytical inferences highlighting how common space is effectively *produced*. In preparation of the argument below, two preliminary points need to be made. First, when looking at the production of common space, scholarly research on the latter concept generally engages in ‘thick description’. One uncovers, for instance, the intricacies of common life within community land trusts (Bunce, 2016; Thompson, 2015); the social relations unfolding within public gardens (Blomley, 2004); the unfoldment of social life in housing estates (Huron, 2015); and the acts (‘to bring a broom and friend’) executed by commoners in order to save a community store from capital-led regeneration (Blomley, 2008). Lacking among these accounts, however, is a guiding framework, that is: a steering principle through which the researcher attempts to bring into vision the production of common space. Second, it could be stated that those working within the Ostrom-theoretical approach as well as those working within the Radical-theoretical approach tend to posit common space as that ‘which already exists’. On the Ostrom-theoretical side, this statement can be recognized through the idea of the ‘urban CPR’ (Parker & Johansson, 2011): those urban spaces prone to depletion and in need of a symbiotic co-governance between commoners and their municipal authorities. On the Radical-theoretical side, this statement can be recognized through a conglomerate of authors characterizing common space as something which was ‘the people’s’ at first, but should be reclaimed *vis-à-vis* the privatizing tendencies of municipal authorities and private market actors (Caffentzis & Frederici, 2013; Klein, 2001; Radywyl & Biggs, 2013).

With these two points in mind, it is my contention that the current state of common space scrutinizing will merit from the invocation of a structured, guiding framework which will enable us to lay bare how common space does not necessarily pre-exists, *but is produced in action*. In order to fill this lacuna, I will invoke the guiding principle of Henri Lefebvre’s (1991b) ‘spatial triad’, the content

of which will be discussed in Part II. The spatial triad entails three distinct elements (to be labelled ‘force fields’) that simultaneously affect the production of common space. These fields are: ‘representation’ (the production of space, determinatively, through the visual, verbal or written duplication thereof), ‘configuration’ (the production of space through ‘the hand’, crafting it, moulding it physically) and ‘signification’ (the production space, non-determinatively, through multiple interpretations). Mobilizing the spatial triad, I maintain, enables us to distill a specified set of tactics for the production of common space, useable for both commoners and scholars, which will be finally captured in Chapter 8’s Taxonomy of Tactics for the Production of Common Space.

One may ask: why not simply invoke the three De Angelean elements and their dual distinctions to bring into vision the production of common space? The answer lies in the fact that De Angelis’s elements allow us to see *what* commoners do with the common good (which materials do they mobilize?), community (which actors do they in- or exclude?) and commoning (what frameworks do they develop?), but not *how* they do it. For instance, do they produce common space through vast, unilinear determination (as in the force field of representation), or through the chasing of multiple meanings (as in the force field of signification)? Second, the construct of the spatial triad will help us to structure the tailpiece of this study: the Taxonomy of Tactics. As such, tactics can be interpreted as being oriented toward representation, configuration or signification, or combinations thereof. Finally, the triad entails in itself a component that is absent from De Angelis’s elements: ‘representation’: the visual, the mental. This field will play a pivotal part in the production of common space. To bring it to a point: the sought-after, guiding principle within the master case studies and the taxonomy will not be a systematic exposure of the three elements, but a bringing into vision of *how* the triad’s three force fields are mobilized by space-commoners in order ‘play with’, combine, connect and disconnect the De Angelean elements within a case of Oppositional Commoning (London), a Hybrid case (Rotterdam), and a case of Symbiotic Commoning (Antwerp).

The final lacuna relates to the overexposure of the concept of the ‘urban commons’. This presents a lack of conceptual leverage concerning the more promising concept of ‘common space’. The majority of scholarly accounts exploring the relationship between the commons and city space does so

under the denominator of the ‘urban commons’ (for an overview of the concept, see Borch & Kornberger, 2015; Dellenbaugh et al., 2017). One might state that within the urban commons literature, scholars have investigated public parks (Németh, 2012), sidewalks (O’Brien, 2012), community gardens (Radywyl & Biggs, 2013), urban green spaces (Colding et al., 2013) as well as public transportation systems and public art (Susser & Tonnelat, 2013) as a specifically *urban* variant of common -pool resources.

Two remarks, however, should be made against this backdrop. First, the aforementioned accounts refrain from distinguishing specifically between ‘public space’ and ‘the urban commons’. They depart, namely, from the assumption that public spaces are, in fact, ‘the commons’. Under ‘A Series of Specifications’, I have already pointed to the difference between public space and common space, but for now, I may reiterate that publicly owned and regulated spaces may *become* common spaces through continued use by a community of commoners that is steered by a common cause. In this vein, one might say that Antwerp’s De Coninck Square (case study three) constitutes on itself a public space, but that for the duration of Montaña Verde, it became a common space.

Second, the commons described in the hitherto coined accounts appear as ‘urban’ simply for the fact that they are located in cities. Susser & Tonnelat (2013, p. 109), for their part, imply that the ‘three urban commons’ of ‘public services’, ‘transportation networks’ and ‘public art’ are *urban* because they are “numerous in the cities”. Traversing throughout the urban commons literature is a recognition of the city as a key location for commoning to unfold; or, as Kip (2015, p. 43) argues, the city is seen as “the Promised Land for commons-based politics. And so, it is not surprising that the hype around the commons thus finally came to town”.

But, one is obliged to ask: what makes urban commons *urban*, except for the fact that they are located in cities? We need only look at the cases that make up the bulk of this enquiry. The Public Land Grabbers (London) seeking to autonomously set up a community farm, urban or rural? Recetas Urbanas, seeking to conceive and construct an outdoor laboratory for the cultivation of plants and vegetables: rural or urban? Now, the question of ‘what is the urban?’ falls outside the scope of this study and has been taken up elsewhere (Brenner, 2000, 2013, 2014; Lefebvre, 1970b). Yet, suffice it to say that I

consider the notion of common space a conceptually more correct and promising idea than the notion of the ‘*urban commons*’. By invoking and pushing forward the concept of common space, the two aforementioned issues retreat to the background. First, we move beyond the equation of ‘common space’ and ‘public space’; second, we move beyond the assumption that urban commons are ‘urban’ for the sole fact of being located within the limits of a city (notwithstanding the fact that this enquiry’s three cases are, indeed, located in the cities of London, Rotterdam and Antwerp). The dominance of the notion of the urban commons, I would want to argue, makes the corresponding field of study less productive in conceptual terms, for it can be said that ‘urban commons’ present a one-size-fits-all-nomination for city-centered, publicly regulated spaces. If we are to restore ‘the commons’ in ‘urban commons’, then the concept of common space paves the way.

Notes

¹ Such ‘public corresponding implementors’ can be found in: Lambeth Council (Public Land Grab case study), the City of Rotterdam (Pension Almonde case study) and the City of Antwerp and its Green Department (Montaña Verde case study).

² Such ‘private corresponding implementors’ can be found in: Meanwhile Space (Public Land Grab case study) and Havensteder (Pension Almonde case study).

³ One could say, hence, that a ‘commoned’ public space can be seen as a ‘counter-public sphere’. When the commoning is taken away from the spatial substrate, public space falls back onto its physical function, for example circulation (the street), leisure (the square) or profit (the mall).

⁴ As argued in the article ‘Peer-to-Peer Production and the Partner State. Retrieved from <https://blog.p2pfoundation.net/peer-to-peer-production-and-the-partner-state/2017/08/30>.

⁵ In the context of the Bologna Regulation, urban commons are being claimed in the form of what is called ‘social streets’, the purpose of which is to “promote socialization between neighbors in the same street in order to build relationships, to interchange needs, to share expertise and knowledges, to implement common interest projects, with common benefits from a closer social interaction”. One Bolognese example can be found in the social street ‘Residenti in Via Fondezza’. The street’s citizen initiative has installed a system of bike sharing where residents offer bikes to their neighbors. Retrieved from <http://www.socialstreet.it/>.

⁶ Many self-organized ‘centri sociali’ (socio-cultural enters) in Italy began their commoning practice outside of any legal framework, for example by squatting (Ciancio, 2018; De Angelis, 2017a). At the point of obtaining a sufficient degree of legitimacy in the community, they acquired enough power to negotiate with their local government so permanence could consequently be achieved.

PART II. THE TRIAD

This Part lays bare the methodological base upon which my enquiry rests. In the pages that are to follow, I will describe and justify the selection of case studies and urban practitioners that have contributed to this project. Subsequently, I throw a light on the process of data collection: how were interviewees approached? How were questionnaires developed? The Part concludes with an unraveling of how the data were analyzed following Braun & Clarke's (2012) six-step model for thematic analysis. First, however, I make a detour via Henri Lefebvre's (1991b) 'spatial triad'. Thus, whereas the remainder of this Part addresses the technical aspects of data corpus, collection and analysis, the spatial triad is firstly mobilized as a conceptual-methodological framework through which to investigate the production of common space.

Chapter 3. The Triad as a Tool

The Precedent

Henri Lefebvre¹ is far from a 'much-cited' reference when it comes to common space literature, even though Stavrides (2013a, 2019) has started to infuse the debate with a number of Lefebvrian ideas to which I will later return. What could be the reason for Lefebvre's absence in common space theorizing? A possible explanation may be found in Lefebvre's grander scheme of things: his project seeks to lay bare the intricacies of capital- rather than commons-led urban development. It should also be borne in mind that Lefebvre has bequeathed to us an array of topics far exceeding the confines of the setting of the city. In an oeuvre of over ninety books, he made contributions to the theory of the state (1974), the sociology of the arts (2014) and formulated the foundations for what would later become a sociology of everyday life (1991a, 2002). It is, however, not my intention to convey the meandering range of Lefebvre's thought. My aim is more modest, namely to focus on Lefebvre's 'urban period', seeing the light of day amidst the Parisian revolts of 1968 with *The Right to the City* and ending in 1974 with *The Production of Space*. Lefebvre was, moreover, a colorful figure. He fought against Fascism in the Resistance Movement; drove a cab in Paris; investigated subjects as diverse as rural peasant life and

industrial settlements; travelled to Amsterdam to meet Constant and co-invent New Babylon; roamed the dikes of the Seine with Guy Debord and the Situationists; inspired a generation of ‘1968 protagonists’ at the University of Nanterre; blasted out books, many of which were transcribed by his secretaries²; and was a member of and expelled from the French Communist Party. Merrifield (2006, p. xxi) must be right when he asserts that “Lefebvre was a man of action as well as of ideas (...), an intellectual *engagé*”.

The concept under scrutiny in this study is “the production of common space”. This Chapter directs attention to the ‘production’ part of the equation. Lefebvre’s interest in the production of space was announced in *Dialectical Materialism* (1939/2009), a critical reading of Marx’s *Capital*. Lefebvre argued that *Capital* was a work about *time*: how does the capitalist slice up the worker’s time in order to generate capital? In so doing, professed Lefebvre, Marx neglects the spatial aspect of production: how is not only time, but also space sliced up for profitable purposes? Consequently, Lefebvre announced the grand task to put Marx’s system in a new light. In *Writings on Cities*, one reads: “in Marx’s time, economic science was getting lost in the enumeration, description, and accounting of objects produced. Marx replaced the study of things by the critical analysis of the productive activity (...). Today a similar approach is necessary with regard to space”. With this precedent in mind, Lefebvre (1991b, pp. 89–90) makes a quantum leap. He declares a shift from investigating ‘things in space’ to the ‘actual production of’ space itself. When thinking about space, Lefebvre contends, we seem to fetishize it: we take it as ‘a thing in itself’ while veiling the productive acts that lay underneath it.

Lefebvre, for his part, is in pursuit of a ‘unitary theory of space’, the expression of which is encapsulated in the model of the spatial triad. The triad provides three building blocks, with each building block representing one aspect of the production of space. In Lefebvre’s vocabulary, these fields are ‘representations of space’ (space as *thought*), ‘spatial practice’ (space as *built*) and ‘spaces of representation’ (space as *lived*) (this will later in the Chapter be reworked to the aforementioned notions of ‘representation’, ‘configuration’ and ‘signification’). The triad became available to Anglo-Saxon scholarship in 1991 following the English translation of *The Production of Space*. There is, however, little evidence of Anglophone scholars effectively applying the triad to concrete cases. Whilst one is

offered a range of interpretations of the triad (Merrifield, 2006; Shields, 2013; Simonsen, 2005; Soja, 1996), only a small section of research valorizes the triad as an analytical tool. Shields (1989), for example, mobilized the model in order to show how visitors to the West Edmonton Mall (Canada) ‘hijacked’ mall space for their own, ‘clandestine’ purposes. Allen & Pryke (1994), furthermore, put forward the City of London as a capital-driven space standing in stark contrast to the everyday lives of those working in the low-income support segment for the financial sector. Cartier (1997), finally, laid bare how preservation activists in Melaka, Malaysia, used representations of space to fight against the redevelopment of heritage sites. At the time of writing, we dispose of only one scholarly account applying the triad to the concept of the commons. In her *Actually Existing Commons*, Efrat Eizenberg (2012) unpacks New York City community gardens following the three Lefebvrian elements: representations of space, spatial practice and spaces of representation. Eizenberg shows how New York-based community gardens are encapsulated in ‘media and memory’ as a representation of space; how they are claimed and worked upon, thus ‘spatially practiced’; and how they are experienced in the everyday life of their users. Absent in Eizenberg’s account, unfortunately, is the question of how these three fields effectively *interact*. We do not learn from the study how the fields of thinking space, building space and living space may ‘push and pull’ the production of community gardens in one or the other direction.

The Triad

I shall now lay bare the content of the spatial triad, respectively, in terms of ‘representations of space’, ‘spatial practice’ and ‘spaces of representation’. The discussion that follows takes as its starting point Lefebvre’s announcement of the triad in the opening chapter of *The Production of Space*. Notwithstanding his announcement that a “conceptual triad has emerged to which we shall be returning over and over again” (Lefebvre, 1991b, p. 33), its reappearance in *The Production of Space* is left for the reader to discover. On one side, the triad’s existence as ‘assumed rather than affirmed’ feeds into Lefebvre’s disdain for abstraction. On the other hand, the absence equally proffers the possibility to add one’s own flesh, the result of which is engrained in the paragraphs that are to follow.

A first sphere within the spatial triad is labeled by Lefebvre as ‘representations of space’: reductive duplications of ‘life on the ground’. Representations of space are the result of the mental activity *about* physical space, and this in contradistinction from physical space itself. Representations of space come in many forms. They may resort to visual constructs for analytical, administrative and property development purposes: maps, master plans, zoning documents, design conventions. They may equally be expressed through a “system of verbal signs” (Lefebvre, 1991b, p. 39), both written and spoken: policy documents, policies *per se* or normative discourses projecting the future development of a given locale. More broadly, representations of space may be engrained in place-based rumors, memories, anecdotes. With this diversity of expressions in mind, a personal representation of space can be found in an architect’s design for a dwelling yet to be built. A collective representation of space is seen, for example, in the ‘imago’ of Ibiza and Benidorm: places of feast for the young and rest for the elderly, respectively. As Harvey (2006, p. 122) argues, representations of space are mental conceptions depending on the “frame of reference of the observer”.

As a process, representations of space stand in conjunction with mental activities as diverse as thinking, analyzing, planning, developing and illustrating space. Lefebvre is adamant to link these acts to what we may call ‘the protagonists of representation’, that is: “scientists, planners, urbanists, technocratic subdividers and social engineers” as well as “a certain type of artist with a scientific bent – all of whom identify what is lived and what is perceived with what is conceived” (Lefebvre, 1991b, p. 38). A telling example of representing space can be found in Rob Shields’ (1991) notion of ‘social spatialization’, once more an instance where beliefs about space steer our acting in it. Shields uncovered the successive, collective representations of Brighton, a city in the south of England. Brighton was characterized, in the early 19th century, as a medicalized pleasure zone for the upper classes. Then, in the late 19th and early 20th century, Brighton was depicted as a carnivalesque zone of festivity due to the appearance of mass seaside excursions. Even more recently, the city is seen as the place of the ‘dirty weekend’, as a locus of escapism. Apparent from the example of Brighton is that the beliefs we have about a place are able to determine how we act in it; a process which recursively provides empirical substance to reinforce the representations that preceded the act.

A second aspect within the spatial triad is called 'spatial practice'. Spatial practice refers to the making of space 'hands-on', rather than through mental activity. Personal expressions of spatial practice can be found in one's day-to-day commuting route or one's arrangement of furniture in order to render the act of living as smooth and comfortable as possible. Collective expressions of spatial practice can be seen, for example, in transport and communication systems or in the publicly organized installation of road signage. To 'practice' space means to mould it, to adapt it, to reconfigure it by way of putting its properties to use. Spatial practice is what 'secretes', argues Lefebvre, from a society's relationship to the space it encounters; like an animal that 'zones' its territory through olfactory tactics. Lefebvre's choice for the wording of secretion does not seem to be a mere coincidence. Marx (1867/2013, pp. 120–121), on his part, argued in the first volume of *Capital* that what distinguishes human labour from animal labour is our capacity to understand and preconceive what we are doing: "a spider conducts operations that resemble those of a weaver, and a bee puts to shame many an architect in the construction of her cells. But what distinguishes the worst architect from the best of bees is this, that the architect raises his structure in imagination before he erects it in reality". To 'raise a structure' in imagination and to implement it afterwards – a network of roads, a landing strip, or the simple question where the kitchen table should stand – gets to the core of spatial practice. Spatial practice evolves around the reasoned configuration of individual or societal infrastructure, and this in order to ensure a societal "continuity and cohesion" via "routes and networks which link up the places set aside for work, 'private' life and leisure" (Lefebvre, 1991b, p. 38). A trait, one might say, which equally resembles the work of bees and spiders, of all living creatures in general.

As a societal process, one discovers a final element in spatial practice: its role within the reproduction of the capitalist relations of production. "Spatial practice in its entirety has saved capitalism from its extinction", wrote Lefebvre afterwards (1991b, p. 346). Increasingly, Lefebvre foresaw, spatial practice would be detracted from the hands of laymen and resort to an exclusive domain for those working in the name of the state and the market. Today, indeed, we may discover in the world around us how spatial practices mobilize the surface of the earth for capital's demands. One may think of industrial transportation lines by land, air or sea, such as the recently completed trainline between the

Chinese city of Tangshan and the port of Antwerp. One may think of resource exploitation, such as at the Roşia Montană mining project in Romania where communities of inhabitants have been displaced in order to make room for gold and silver mining (Velicu & Kaika, 2017). Here reverberates once more a Marxian idea, namely the ‘annihilation of time by space,’ as expressed in the *Grundrisse*³. As the mobility of capital increases, it has to overcome physical barriers. As such, transportation networks and lines of communication become imperative for the continued production of surplus value. Yet one may wonder whether it is *time* that is annihilated - or space itself.

Third element: spaces of representation. Spaces of representation are spaces that evoke a sense of meaning. Instead of being passively *re-presented* (as in representations of space) or infrastructurally tweaked (as in spatial practice), a space of representation is “alive, it speaks” (Lefebvre, 1991b, p. 44). Private spaces of representation are those spaces imbued with personal memory: spaces whose past we have been part of, whose future we will live to see. Examples can be found in one’s bedroom, the church where one was married, the graveyard where one will rest or any space symbolizing more broadly a past, present or future personal connection. Collective spaces of representation are spaces that people recognize as significant beyond themselves as individuals. Places of collective effervescence come to mind: nightclubs, the plazas where the Occupy movement found a temporary home, places of worship such as the Wailing Wall, or places of remembrance such as New York City’s Twin Tower site.

From a processual standpoint, spaces of representation form the basis for what Lefebvre calls *lived* space. To ‘live’ space means to decode and recode it with a meaning, personal or collective, that cannot be captured through the rigidity of mathematics or structured visualization – as found in the corner of representations of space. Shields (1999, p. 164) describes lived space in terms of performing ‘possible spatializations’ expressed ‘against the norms of a prevailing order’. Personal expressions can be found in graffiti tagging, carving a declaration of love on public infrastructure, or in infusing one’s dwelling with memory through images and photographs. Living space collectively unfolds through performance, festival, protest; through the volatile yet effervescent moments where an imagined space is communally expressed. We find this, suggests Carp (2008, p. 136), in “street demonstrations that become, momentarily, the desired future”.

Against this backdrop, the following, critical question can be put forward: “on the one hand, you argued that so-called spaces of representation emerge as an effect of human beings’ actions, namely when the latter endow a sense of meaning upon a spatial substrate. On the other hand, you also argued that spaces of representation ‘speak for themselves’, that they ‘are alive’, as Lefebvre (1991b) would have it. Therefore, should we construe spaces of representation as ‘a passive object’ infused with meaning or, by contrast, should we construe them as an active, primordial subject, one which radiates meaning by itself?”. I will take the answering of this question as an opportunity to further clarify the exact difference between representations of space and spaces of representation.

Within the former field, the field of representations of space, we encounter, I contend, a division between a (passive) object and an (active) subject. The spatial substrate in its concrete existence resorts to the former, the abstract representation thereof resorts to the latter. The representation, then, unidirectionally expresses how space *should* be: one might think of the zoning document, of the urban development policy (verbal or written) or of the architectural render for marketing purposes. This picture changes in the field of spaces of representation, in *lived* space⁴. This field encapsulates how space *could* be. Even though the very expression of ‘spaces of representation’ implies a subject position for the spatial substrate, my contention is otherwise. Namely, in the field of spaces of representation, the spatial substrate comes to figure as *both* the ‘object one tweaks’ as well as the ‘subject that speaks’. What we encounter in this realm is an *immediate* ‘being with and in’ space. ‘Immediate’, for our interaction with the latter is not mediated through reductive duplication, as found in the image, the render, the written word. Through such immediate ‘being with and in’ space, one interprets rather than determines. ‘Interpretation-by-the-many’ outlaws ‘determination-by-the-one’ (this ‘one’ would be the planner in Lefebvre).

Which evokes, finally, yet another question. The following point can also be rightfully objected: “you argued earlier that the field of representations of space emerges from mental conception. Thus, one could contrast representations of space and spaces of representation in terms of conceived space and lived space, respectively. This implies a distinction between, say, *thinking* and *being*: a mental and a more bodily activity. But if, as you argued before, lived space involves a recursive loop between physical

space, the interpretation thereof and an endowment of meaning thereupon, couldn't we then say that lived space *also* involves mental conception and mental abstraction?" My answer to the foregoing question would be: yes, albeit with a considerate difference between two forms of mental activity: a *reductive* and an *additive* one. In the sphere of representations of space, we encounter reductive conception. This operation always departs from a spatial substrate in its concrete existence and ends with a stripped version thereof. In order to do so, the act of representing space has to resort to what I would want to call a preestablished narrative system: codes, numbers, colors: a preexisting language *to represent with*. For example, an urban area which can be seen, smelled, felt and heard resorts (reduces) to a circumscribed color in a zoning document, or the many possibilities of a not-yet-existing urban future resort (reduce) to a succession of words in a political discourse. However, to engage in the field of lived space proceeds through 'additive' mental activity: a thinking, one might say in Castoriadian fashion, *ex nihilo*. We now encounter a form of conception that, instead of a preestablished narrative system, mentally valorizes a feeling, an emotion or a 'sense' which cannot be captured in words. Thus, spaces of representation can both be interpreted (Van Gogh's depiction of Saint-Rémy) and expressed (Occupy Wall Street as a prime example), but what unites both varieties is that they unfold in ways hitherto unexplored.

The Dynamic

We may, hence, think of the triad as an ensemble of three social forces that in different ways impact upon different sorts of spaces. Lefebvre's framework is mainly built around the distinction between 'abstract space' and 'differential space'; the former is a 'product', the latter 'a work'. This merits a pause. Lefebvre (1991b, pp. 70–73) contends:

“[...] Whereas a *work* has something irreplaceable and unique about it, a *product* can be reproduced exactly, and is in fact the result of repetitive acts and gestures (...). If we define works as unique, original and primordial, as occupying a space yet associated with a particular time, a time of maturity between rise and decline, then Venice can only be described as work”

Let us first focus on ‘abstract space’, the ‘product’, the serial production of space. Abstract space is the space generated through Bollier’s (2015) Market/State, called the Municipality/Market in these pages. The result: ‘space-as-product’. If we are to posit ‘the product’ as repetitive and serial, then Sennett’s (2018, p. 11) assertion gains significance when he states that “as a plane lands, you may not be able to tell Beijing apart from New York”. Abstract space thrives explicitly and exclusively on one of the triad’s elements: representations of space. In this vein, the notion of ‘the production of space’ takes on a new meaning. Even though physically materialized *a posteriori* by contractors and building companies, the primordial productive operation in abstract space is conception, the act of ‘thinking’ space, or: the reductive abstraction of what is concrete. This can be explained as follows. On the concrete level, we find space as fully lived: urbanites, buildings, a city’s ‘vibe’, urban scenes, everyday life. On the abstract level, we find what abstraction etymologically stands for: to ‘carry off’, to ‘drag away’, a meaning which Lefebvre interpreted more as to select a particular trait out of a more complex reality. Abstraction in Lefebvrian terms thus relates to the reductive isolation of one specific feature, as seen in the following operations: the reduction of the many, possible futures of a city quartier to the blueprint of a redevelopment plan, or the reduction of urbanites’ tastes and building abilities to specified building regulations, both technical and aesthetic. In abstract space, writes Lefebvre (1991b, p. 366), things are “paradoxically united yet disunited, joined yet detached from one another, at once torn apart and squeezed together”.

Yet, how is the production of abstract space facilitated? Abstract space thrives for Lefebvre on a societal segment setting out professionally to create what he calls a ‘spatial consensus’: “abstract space, the space of the bourgeoisie and of capitalism, bound up as it is with exchange, depends on consensus more than any space before it” (Lefebvre, 1991b, p. 57). Here we encounter once again the ones I have previously termed as the ‘protagonists of representation’: urban planners, architects, but also political leaders and entrepreneurs. One by one, these experts, proficient in abstraction, are put forward by Lefebvre (1991b, p. 317) as “the ones who rob reality of meaning by dressing it in an ideological garb”. Representations of space, hence, are never innocent from the Lefebvrian vantage point. They require a level of acceptance, a built-in consensual mechanism. I would want to specify further such

spatial consensus in terms of a ‘fixed matching between classification and behavior’ – a term to be returned to in Part III’s case studies. As we roam through spaces classified as ‘public’ or ‘private’, through spaces made for work, leisure, transport, and so forth, our behaviors, gestures, even our thoughts change accordingly. Why? If we are to follow Lefebvre’s narrative, it is because one specific feature, a *function*, has been abstracted, hence isolated, from many others and has subsequently been posited as the only ‘true’ or ‘effective’ one. The function being highlighted most prominently in the world of abstract space, as might be expected from the Lefebvrian standpoint, is the function of consumption, the function of profit. Here we encounter abstract space, space as a *product*, in its full meaning. Abstracting space means to fetishize space, it means to ‘veil’ or hide the underlying productive process that brought it to life. Like the commodities we find on the shelf, space-as-product implies that “all traces of productive activity are so far as possible erased (...)” (Lefebvre, 1991b, p. 212).

Abstract space necessitates what Lefebvre calls the ‘city-as-spectacle’. It is here where we encounter an additional crossroads between abstract space and representations of space. In order to ‘veil’ the unequal power relations when it comes to the production of space, as well as the uneven and deleterious effects it has *in* space, the ‘city-as-spectacle’ reigns supreme; showing Lefebvre’s involvement with the Situationists and his sympathy for Debord’s (1967) *Society of the Spectacle*. Through mass media, signs in the public realm and advertisement, the city becomes a spectacle where “the visual gains the upper hand over the other senses” (Lefebvre, 1991b, p. 286). According to Lefebvre, contemporary capitalism thrives on depictions through which space is represented as ‘always becoming’, hence, as always open for the next ‘surgery’ in order to make it subject to industrial command (Lefebvre, 1991b; Madden, 2012). Therefore, I personally interpret Lefebvre’s abstract space as a ‘paradoxical unity’: it thrives on the one hand on reductive representations of space, expressing how space *should be*; but it thrives, *also*, on the city-as-spectacle, namely, on an acknowledgement that space could *always be otherwise*. The closest I could get to proving the former statement during my reading of Lefebvre is the following excerpt: “we find incoherence under the banner of coherence, a cohesion grounded in scission and disjointedness, fluctuation and the ephemeral masquerading as stability” (Lefebvre, 1991b, pp. 308–309).

Clinging on abstract space, however, is this ever-nagging counter-weight: differential space. Differential space constitutes the common ground upon which those who inhabit the city may commence to participate in political life without discrimination. This is not something which is ‘granted’ through citizenship, but something that is self-erected through ‘being in place’. Lefebvre’s differentialist project was not about difference-as-particularity, but about *différence*, ‘the right to resist/struggle’, the right to *be* different (Dikeç, 2011, p. 76). As will now be shown, differential space is where Lefebvre’s analysis ends, where my enquiry begins. ‘The production of space’, in the differential realm, means to bring it back to the level of the concrete, the ephemeral. Even though Lefebvre (1970a, 1970b, 1991b) sketches the contours of differential space only in preliminary fashion, it is possible to distill a number of differential traits. Differential space, first, privileges use rather than exchange value and encounter rather than functional separation. Beyond a ‘cityism’ centered around an administrative core surrounded by zones of commerce, leisure and living, Lefebvre imagines an urban space where urbanites join and disjoin, as ‘fleeting atoms’, according to the desires or needs of the moment. Differential space, one might say, resists the unidirectionality of representation the city-as-product is subject to. Rather, it constitutes a multi-, even *trans*functional space where “groups take control of spaces for expressive actions and constructions, which are soon destroyed” (Lefebvre, 1970b, pp. 130–131). Constant’s New Babylon, a project with which Lefebvre was closely involved, comes close to the idea, albeit in experimental fashion. Differential space, second, is a ‘coming’ space, one ‘on the horizon’. Even though Lefebvre points to a number of real-life differential spaces (Brazil’s favelas, Paris during the student revolts of 1969), the idea resorts mainly to a post-capitalist *coming of age*, an “everyday life open to myriad possibilities” (Lefebvre, 1991b, pp. 422–423). Differential space, finally, emerges out of the contradictions of abstract space. More precisely, differential space is only possible because in abstract space, urban land and private property are periodically abandoned as they no longer serve the interests of capital. This was seen when students and activists took over the wholesale produce markets of Paris, ‘Les Halles Centrales’, and transformed them into a space of play rather than of work, a ludic, “permanent festival” (Lefebvre, 1991b, p. 167). Unfortunately, Lefebvre’s differentialist project (1970a), set out in *Le Manifeste Différentialiste*, has remained untranslated.

The Mobilization

As argued before, the spatial triad constitutes this study's 'guiding principle' in order to uncover the production of common space. As such, I am interested in how the urban practitioners engaged in my case studies mobilize these three force fields during their continued projects of space-commoning. In 'constant conversation' with the De Angelean elements (common good, community, commoning), the triad's three force fields will continue to be of explanatory value during the remainder of the study. However, before I lay bare how I 'access' these three force fields methodologically in the next Chapter, the construct (of the spatial triad) itself has to be tweaked in a twofold manner. In the following paragraphs, I take Lefebvre's suggestions as an invitation to arrive at a triad that is useful for scholarly research.

First, I will explicitly *rename* the three constituent elements of the triad. This relates to Lefebvre's 'woolly' formulation of the triad's three spheres. Representations of space as well as spaces of representation seem to figure in the triad *as things*, namely as visual, verbal or written projections in the context of the former, and as spaces endowed with a sense of multiple meaning in the context of the latter. Spatial practice, then, emerges not as a 'thing', but as a 'process': a process of putting space to use, be it for survival, societal reproduction or capitalist growth. Yet, in order to better designate the triad's fields, I will now resort, respectively and for the remainder of our journey, to the expressions of *representation* (formerly known as representations of space), *configuration* (formerly known as spatial practice), and *signification* (formerly known as spaces of representation): altogether the three 'force fields' of the triad. These three force fields leave behind any distinction between 'thing and process' but imply merely 'a mode of doing'. This is a linguistic, pragmatic operation in order to be able to point, without much confusion, to each of the three elements under consideration. Hence: within the field of representation, I ask: how do commoners 'think' common space? Within the field of configuration, I ask: how do commoners 'build' common space? And in the field of signification, I ask: how do commoners 'live' common space? In the following chapter, it will be explained how this triad of representation, configuration and signification will be 'accessed' on a methodological level. But for now, a second 'tweaking' of Lefebvre's groundwork is needed to come forward.

Second, I will put Lefebvre's presupposed actors and corresponding dynamic, inherent in the triad, *temporarily in suspense*. With this, the following is meant. Lefebvre has a strict 'division of labour' in mind, one dispersed throughout the triad. In the field of what I call *representation* (the thinking of space), Lefebvre posits architects, planners and other professionals active in spatial production through 'the Mind, the Intellect' (Lefebvre, 1970b, p. 28). "As a form of representation", Lefebvre (1970b, pp. 158–159) complained, "urbanism is nothing more than an ideology that claims to be either 'art' or 'technology' or 'science'". Engineers, urban designers, artists 'with a scientific bent' and, more generally, every administrator working in the name of the 'urban-state-market-society'⁵ (Lefebvre, 2004, p. 16) is brought up as taking exclusive ownership of what we may call 'the means of spatial production': the drawing table, the 3D design program, bricks and mortar, urban land. In the field of *signification* (the interpreting or living of space), by contrast, Lefebvre places 'the user', the everyday urban inhabitant, De Certeau's (1984) 'common (wo)man'. We equally encounter the artist here, not the one with a 'scientific', but the one with an 'imaginative' bent. Lefebvre thinks of those artists doing 'nothing more than describe', hence, those refraining from unidirectional representation⁶.

Now, the differing forces of these two groups – the protagonists of representation and the mere 'user' – collide, meet, clash in the third force field, the force field of *configuration*. Lefebvre abstains from determining a specified actor in the force field of configuration, but he is adamant to state that it is in the realm of the effective, physical production of urban space (configuration) where ideology (representation) and lived experience (signification) clash into each other. It resorts to a struggle, in fact, where 'professionals' and 'laymen' compete to lay their hands on the means of spatial production. As has been repetitively shown, Lefebvre puts forward representations as the culprits for Municipality/Market-dominated urban development schemes. Abstract space 'colonizes', 'reduces', 'negates', 'weighs heavily on' differential spatial production, that is: on the production of common space. Once more, the protagonists of representation do not escape from Lefebvre's gaze: "only after this nearly complete reduction of the everyday do they return to the scale of lived experience (...). They have shifted from lived experience to the abstract, projecting this abstraction back onto the lived (...)" (Lefebvre, 1970b, pp. 182–183).

Now, even though this dispersion of actors throughout the triad constitutes a tremendously useful construct in order to interpret and critique the perils of capital-led urban development schemes, I continue to contend that this theoretical constellation, when investigating the production of common space, should be temporarily put in suspense. More specifically, this means that for the cases that are to be discussed in the remainder of the study, I do *not presuppose* that my interviewees would necessarily resort to one or the other force field. I deem it a valuable exercise to withstand the tendency to seek in the empirical realm what one already supposes to know. A methodological trap would be to approach interview subjects according to their presupposed role in the triad. One could, for example, locate Santiago Cirugeda, main architect of Recetas Urbanas, at the level of representation. It is he, after all, who preconceives the projects, both socially and spatially. One could, furthermore, see Recetas Urbanas' team of builders as a set of 'configurators'. And one could, finally, posit the users of Recetas Urbanas' interventions as the ones 'living' their works, interpreting them through bodily presence. To do so, however, would be a mistake. Could it be that the users of Cirugeda's work are also engaged in the forming of representations? Vice versa, could it be that Cirugeda does not 'design' at all but commences to build right away? Essentially: I leave open the possibility that my interviewees might be active in all of the three force fields. As will be learnt later on, planners and municipal representatives may and often will, indeed, steer and dominate the course of a commoning endeavour. By contrast, it will also be seen how the force field of representation may constitute 'a leverage' in the hands of activists and commoners. Finally, I will even argue that if commoning is to become a counter-hegemonic project, it cannot do so *without* the field of representation.

Thus, to keep in mind, is this: appearing before us will be three projects of space-commoning whereby commoners, activists, artists, politicians, planners and designers collectively configure a set of common goods, but are also captured in a constant, conflictual interplay between representation and signification. To be clear, too: representation and signification do not collide, respectively, with the elements of community and commoning; rather, representation and signification may both impact upon these elements. Namely, community may be reduced to unilinear representation, or be kept open 'by the many'. Dito when it comes to commoning: it may be reduced to a vast framework, or kept in flux.

Why the Triad?

All that remains before us, now, is to answer the following question: *why* would one choose for Lefebvre's spatial triad as a methodological device? The spatial triad can be posited within an array of theories on the production of space. Therefore, answering the aforementioned question allows one to look 'over the fence' that by now has already been pulled up. Three reasons can be spelled out in this connection.

Expressing a first reason for the choice of Lefebvre's spatial triad requires me to situate the author against the background of the 'post-modern' view on (the production of) space (Amin & Thrift, 2002; Dear, 1986; Soja, 2011). It is safe to assert that Lefebvre is the single most important catalyst for the fundamental insight that spaces should not be understood as passive, empty containers of things and people, but constitute a dialectically produced embodiment of social relations. Space, hence, is not fixed, given, or apolitical; rather, it is constantly changing, always subject to competing interests. In the words of Soja (2010, p. 19), spaces are "filled with material and imagined forces that affect events and experiences, forces that can hurt or help us in nearly everything we do". But before explaining *why* the post-modern view has taken me all the way *back* to Lefebvre, it will be necessary to shortly divulge the work of two authors occupying a preliminary role within it.

A first author that can be situated in the post-modern view on space is Edward Soja (2010; 1996, 2011). Much in line with Lefebvre's critique on representation and the 'city-as-spectacle', Soja (2011, p. 246) argued that urban inequalities (racial, gender, class, and so forth) have been "obscured from view, imaginatively mystified in an environment more specialized in the production of encompassing mystifications (...)". An antidote thereto is located by Soja in what he calls Thirdspaces (a concept highly similar to Lefebvre's 'lived space' or *espace vécu*, taking place in spaces of representation). Thirdspaces can be seen as spaces of deviance and resistance to an existing order, as a "constantly shifting and changing milieu of ideas, events, appearances, and meanings" (Soja, 1996, p. 2). One might think of a squatter scene, of Italy's socio-cultural centers, but in fact, every spatial substrate may always be turned into a Thirdspace for resistance: a street, a classroom, a mosque. As Lefebvre (1991b) would say: "il y a toujours l'Autre", "there is always an-Other view".

A second author that can be situated within the post-modern view on the production of space is Doreen Massey (1992, 2005). Like Lefebvre and later on Soja, Massey criticizes a veiling of the power geometries through which space is produced. She speaks in this regard of a ‘spatial fetishization’, a pure focus on form rather than on content. This, Massey (2005, p. 59) argues, would hide from view that space is composed by a ‘multiplicity of trajectories’. Trajectories may be inanimate objects such as wood and stone but may equally encompass the animate world of social groups, attitudes and ideologies. Massey derives from such multiplicity of trajectories that space is always becoming, and therefore, too, the site *par excellence* for political action to unfold. Massey (2005, p. 12) argues: “conceptualizing space as open, multiple, and relational, unfinished and always becoming, is a prerequisite for history to be open and thus a prerequisite, too, for the possibility of politics”. Closures of space – closing borders, expressing an attachment to place – discourage the always-changing collision of multiple trajectories and thus cancel out the possibility for a politics of space to emerge.

I digressed to the post-modern view for the following reason: what unites the post-modern view on the production of space is *anti-representation*. Given the fact that space constitutes a medium and instrument in the battle between the opposing forces of representation and everyday life, the post-modern strand expresses, in Lefebvrian fashion, a vast critique on representation. It critiques, namely, the ‘fetishizing’ of power-inequalities through representational constructs. As Soja (2011, p. 125) argued, “spatiality is reduced to a mental construct alone (...), an ideational process in which the ‘image’ of reality takes epistemological precedence over the tangible substance and appearance of the real world”. The locus for resistance, then, would be located in a presupposed ‘authentic’ existence where it is a meticulous, everyday use rather than representation and ideation that reigns supreme. Loci of resistance are those spaces and places where one escapes vast and unilinear determination, spaces of non-representation. We find this in Soja’s ‘Thirdspaces’, in Lefebvre’s ‘differential space’ or in Amin & Thrift’s (2002, p. 26) demand to reimagine the urban as continuous novelty, as always becoming; to use the words of Webb (2017, p. 78), we find it in ‘a glorification of unruliness and unpredictability’.

Now, the ethos of ‘resistance through non-representation’ remains a question to me. The hypothesis that I will explore is that if we want to spatially embed a respect for ‘lived space’ (Lefebvre,

1991b), a respect for ‘open space’ (Massey, 2005), a respect for ‘difference, complexity, strangeness’ (Sennett, 1996, p. 26), then, maybe, representations of space might be needed as well. Returning to representation is nothing other than to explore the possibility that space-commoning, indeed, might be counter-hegemonic: an ideology in and on itself (Dockx & Gielen, 2018). Lefebvre, of course, has been the catalyst for the post-modern view, but at least, his construct of the triad included the force field of representation to begin with.

A second reason is that Lefebvre *does* make room for resistance against imposed spatialization (which he shares, indeed, with the post-modernists). By doing so, Lefebvre sets himself off against additional theories of spatialization that discard, I would argue, all opposition against oppression altogether. Foucault (1995), for instance, turned to architecture and built, physical structures as forms of ‘technology’ for governmental coercion and social control. Physical space is put forward as embodying the power to canalize bodily movement: ‘docile’ bodies emerge, the Panopticon as a case in point. Rabinow (1982, 1995), in similar vein, laid bare the spatialization of power and control by showing how French colonists in Morocco technically and aesthetically used architecture and urban planning to project upon the colonized a sense of cultural superiority: an equation of ‘norms and forms’ through what he calls a ‘techno-cosmopolitanism’⁷. These writers, I propose, operate paradoxically. On the one hand, they illustrate how something (in their case: power and control) may be ingrained in physical space and how such inscription resonates in the life of he or she who moves through that space. On the other hand, they seem not to address the lived experience of the individual, nor the resistances from groups and individuals that might emerge *vis-à-vis* such spatialized forms of social control. Lefebvre’s account, by contrast, brings in ‘people’, ‘actors’, or in the context of this study: the commoner. How Lefebvre assigns actors and groups to the triad’s force fields, and the consequences thereof for my analysis, has been extensively substantiated earlier.

A final reason for Lefebvre’s spatial triad resides in its open, volatile character. On the one hand, one might ask: “isn’t it strange that Lefebvre, as a fierce criticist of reduction, presents to the reader an abstract model in order to theorize the production of space? He has a disdain for representation, so why does he himself *re*-presents spatial production through a threefold construct?”. These objections should

be countered, I propose, with my interpretation of the triad as an ‘invitation’, rather than a final blueprint, for research. Lefebvre announced that we would encounter the triad in *The Production of Space* ‘over and over again’, which we did not. More so, we were confronted with Lefebvre’s ambivalent descriptions of the triad’s constituent components as well as with a vaguely expressed ‘differential space on the horizon’. I interpret these volatilities not as a speculative, Lefebvrian *nonchalance*, but as an opening, a demand on Lefebvre’s part for further enquiry. As Schmid et al. (2014, p. 4) argue:

“How can this theory be mobilized for fruitful applications in many different fields of urban research and practice? The challenge today is to do empirical research with this theory: to use it, to make sense of it, to realize it and to develop it beyond the formulation of its author (...). This means fully appropriating his work, enriching and deploying it in constant interaction with specific empirical studies to bring it into a dialogue with other approaches and eventually to develop new concepts and research perspectives”.

The intent of this enquiry is exactly this, namely: to deploy the triad ‘in constant interaction’ with the ‘theory and empirical reality’ (Schmid et al., 2014) of common space. Qua theory, the spatial triad will be mobilized in interaction with the Ostrom-theoretical and the Radical-theoretical approach as explained in Chapter One. Qua empirical reality, the spatial triad will be mobilized in interaction with three common space endeavors, namely: The Public Land Grab, a London-based experiment whereby commoners seek to find alternatives *vis-à-vis* capital-led city-making and speculation; Pension Almonde, an occupation of urban vacancy in order to shelter ‘urban nomads’ in Rotterdam; and Montaña Verde, an outdoor laboratory for the cultivation of plants and vegetables on the De Coninck Square, Antwerp. In so doing, I aspire not to canonize the spatial triad, but to excavate it.

Notes

¹ The work most referenced to in these pages will be Lefebvre's *The Production of Space*. Whilst published in 1974, I use and refer to the edition of 1991(b). All references to Lefebvre's works will be done according to the editions in which I read them.

² This was shown in Merrifield's (2006) introduction to Lefebvre and constitutes a disappointing and sobering fact to a young researcher moved by Lefebvre's work.

³ In Notebook V within 'The Chapter on Capital'.

⁴ At a first glance, non-determinative representations of space, thus mere 'duplications' without normativity, exist as well, the map as a prime example. But here, too, the 'should be' character sneaks in. The world map as we know it today is currently being critiqued in terms of 'colonial distortion' (see e.g. Monmonier, 2018). The critique implies that the Mercator projection exaggerates imperialist power, giving larger sizes to Europe and North-America. This misrepresentation entails a sense of superiority etched into our subconsciousness from the outset of geographical learning.

⁵ A notion which can be equated with the Municipality/Market as put forward in Part I.

⁶ A recurring example of the 'scientific' artist – one could say: the artist expressing how space *should* be – is Le Corbusier. Examples of 'descriptive' artists, whereby Lefebvre refers those artists exploring how space *could* be, can be found in Constant (designer of 'New Babylon') and Bofill (designer of 'City in the Space').

⁷ An author in this line of research that *does* bring in the actor is Holston (1989). Holston examined the state-sponsored architecture and master planning of Brasilia as a form of political domination through which daily life is colonized by state intervention. He highlighted bottom-up resistances such as daily street life, illegal peripheries, favelas, and so forth.

Chapter 4. Methodological Approach

Data Corpus & Selection

It is of pivotal importance to choose cases with care and respect for the purposes of the study. Therefore, I now wish to spend time on why and how the three master cases have been selected. I pre-developed a ‘twofold conditional framework’ that would eventually render a case suitable, or not, for selection. The two components of this framework are: (1) the condition that the cases should be grouped homogeneously under one overarching factor, which is their *explicit* intent to work with the concept of common space; and (2) the condition that there should be, in tandem, a *variability* throughout the selected cases, which will be explained below, qua Oppositional and Symbiotic Commoning. Concerning the first principle: whether a case would explicitly work with the concept and theory of common space has always been assessed during an introductory, trust-building interview, which will not be further discussed in these lines. In the following paragraphs, yet, I weave the second principle (intra-case variability) throughout each of the three cases in order to pre-announce their form and content.

Ad interim: as argued in Chapter 2, I *uncoupled* the content of the Ostrom-theoretical and the Radical-theoretical approach from the two, overarching forms of commoning: Symbiotic and Oppositional. In other words, I am interested in how the urban practitioners under scrutiny produce common space within different ‘modalities of engagement’ with the Municipality/Market (Oppositional, Symbiotic). In this vein, it is important to reiterate that whether Ostrom’s elements (‘bounded’ community, instituted commoning) lead to Symbiotic Commoning is a question, not an assumption. Likewise, whether the Radical-theoretical elements (community ‘in movement’, instituent commoning) lead to Oppositional Commoning is a question, not an assumption.

This study’s three master cases are each spearheaded by a cultural organization that is active on the border between art, activism, spatial production and community organizing. Overall, these organizations’ main rationale collides with this study’s subtitle: the ‘cultural production of common space’. For each of these three organizations (the specifics of which will appear in Part III), one corresponding case (commoning endeavour) will now be introduced.

The first case will be The Public Land Grab, executed by the London-based collective ‘Public Works’. One should conceive of The Public Land Grab as this study’s ‘Oppositional case’. In the case of The Public Land Grab, one could speak of an emergence ‘from below’, a ‘grassroots genesis’ outside of the Municipality/Market. The impetus of this case is not to work with, but against capital-led urban development actors. The case constitutes a ‘live’ research project whereby Public Works, together with a series of citizen initiatives, sets out to discover the socio-spatial procedures that might counter capital-led urban development and its corresponding inequalities. As is anticipated on its web page: “as we increasingly rely on developers for the creation of our cities, what we question is if residents can build the capacity to develop without developers and use regeneration as an opportunity to level social inequalities rather than extenuate them”. The point of departure for this case lies at the illegal occupation of a deserted and derelict piece of urban land owned by Lambeth Council (a Borough of London). This was done by one grassroots initiative in particular, the Loughborough Junction Action Group (LJAG). Out of this act later followed a neighborhood-wide network of commoning including a community garden, a Coop Café and, more recently, an incubator for local employment (LJ Works). When selecting the case, I deemed its oppositional, grassroots-genesis a valuable indicator to discover whether the case would remain independent from the Municipality/Market, would commence to collaborate with it, or would continue to oppose it.

The second case will be Pension Almonde, executed by the Rotterdam-based collective ‘City in the Making’. When it comes to the second principle of selection, the inter-case variability, Pension Almonde can be seen as this study’s ‘Hybrid’ case. Whilst the first case could be seen expectedly as the Oppositional case, Pension Almonde could be seen expectedly as an Oppositional/Symbiotic one. On the one hand, an Oppositional undercurrent could be detected in City in the Making’s anti-market guiding principles: “to take infrastructure out of the market and secure it against speculation; make it livable and affordable; through collective ownership; with commons free of rent; economically, socially and ecologically sustainable; self-organized; through a self-obtained investment fund; brutally and on our own”. On the other hand, City in the Making’s occupations come forth from an ‘agreement’ between the collective itself and a Municipality/Market-related actor: the housing association Havensteder. The

pact of collaboration implies that when Havensteder disposes of empty housing infrastructure in Rotterdam-North, City in the Making will be allowed to unroll a commoning project within it. The latest addition to this way of working is Pension Almonde. The eponymous Almonde street, property of Havensteder, will be demolished in its entirety. Until that moment, as the street lays empty, City in the Making receives a *carte blanche* to instigate a space-commoning endeavour within it: Pension Almonde.

The third case is Montaña Verde, by the Seville-based collective Recetas Urbanas (yet the project unfolded in Antwerp). When it comes to the second principle of selection, Montaña Verde can be seen as this study’s Symbiotic case¹. Being an urban-artistic intervention, Montaña Verde was planned and preconceived by a series of Antwerp’s municipal institutions (the City and District of Antwerp, its Green Department as well as the Middelheim Museum) for which the Spanish collective Recetas Urbanas was asked to execute it. In the run-up to the start of the intervention (winter and spring of 2018), these partners have deliberated and discussed in close consultation with Recetas Urbanas where, how and with whom the project would take place. My expectation, hence, was to be immersed in a ‘partnership arrangement’ between these actors: a ‘co-governance’ of a public space (the De Coninck Square) that would temporarily be transformed into a locus of space-commoning.

Figure 9. Organization, Unit of Analysis, City, Selection

COLLECTIVE	UNIT	CITY	SELECTION
LJAG + Public Works	The Public Land Grab	London	Oppositional
City in the Making	Pension Almonde	Rotterdam	Hybrid
Recetas Urbanas	Montaña Verde	Antwerp	Symbiotic

In tandem with doing in-depth, long-term, qualitative research within The Public Land Grab, Pension Almonde and Montaña Verde, I also continued between 2017 and 2019 to perform an ensemble of 21 additional interviews with urban practitioners that are not part of these three aforementioned master cases. Thus, next to the data of the three master cases, this study also disposes of interview data derived from Todo por la Praxis, Madrid; Raumlabor, Berlin; Wim Cuyvers, Ghent; Alive Architecture, Brussels; Atelier d'Architecture Autogérée, Paris; DANT², Paris; Endeavor, Antwerp; Fatkoehl Architekten, Berlin; Ecosystema Urbano, Madrid; Zuloark, Madrid; StudioBASAR, Bucharest; Embros, Athens; Commons Alliance, Athens; Intermediae, Madrid; and Prinzessinnengarten, Berlin. Interviewed, in this regard, have been urban practitioners who find themselves on the border between art, activism and city-making. These activists and designers are thus primarily active in the field, rather than behind the drawing table. Nevertheless, in each interview, the intent has been to ask respondents how they deploy the force fields of representation, configuration and signification for the production of common space, as well as to discover the socio-spatial tactics that might be derived therefrom. During the analysis of the three master cases in Chapters 5, 6 and 7, the discussion will logically be based on the data adhering to the master cases only. In Chapter 8 on the Taxonomy of Tactics, however, the data of the here-mentioned additional interviews will be mobilized as well. Appendix II contains an overview of all interviewees and their corresponding organizations that were part of the study. Appendix III shows all cases, collectives and locations of commoning.

Data Collection

In what follows, I will discuss the process of data collection within the three master cases. Data collection within the three master cases is based on what Yin (2014, p. 118) calls 'multiple sources of evidence'. The first source of evidence constituted interview data. A first step, to borrow a metaphor from Howard Becker (1982, p. xi), was to plot a 'cast of characters', that is: a list of all the people involved in the case under scrutiny. The list ranged from (commons-based) architects and designers, over policy representatives and municipal urban planners, to community members and on-site

participants. For each in-depth study, it was my explicit intent to keep the ‘cast of characters’ as broad as possible. Interviews were saved with a recording device and transcribed ad verbatim. One group interview, finally, has enriched the process of data collection. On October 15th 2019, a focus group took place at the Public Land Grab – including 10 local residents and community activists.

The first, introductory interview of each case study was always carried out with one of the project’s main participants. It is safe to assert that these interviewees would serve, later on, as my ‘key informants’: they would be the ones putting me into contact with additional interviewees, opening doors to the higher echelons of urban planning, arranging a group interview on the grounds of the Loughborough Farm, or enthusing the participants of their project to discuss the vocabulary of the commons with the author. The introductory interview was specifically designed to gain a general understanding of the project at hand. Subsequent interviews sought to delve deeper into the project’s everyday spatial production. Yet, what united the questionnaires was again the appearance of the spatial triad. Interviewees were asked how they would mobilize representation, configuration and signification for the production of common space; and which socio-spatial tactics might be derived therefrom. For an example of an ‘on the spot’ questionnaire, see Appendix I.

As previously announced, three additional ‘sources of evidence’ were linked to the triad’s force fields. Within the sphere of representation (how do urban practitioners *think* common space?), firstly, we find documentation, or better: representations of space themselves. To give just one example per project: with regard to Montaña Verde, a representation of space can be found in a preliminary sketch (of the future arch) by Recetas Urbanas, a sketch which was ‘captured’ by the Middelheim Museum as a communicational device to promote the project; with regard to Pension Almonde, a representation of space can be seen in a public letter from the Deputy for Building, Living, Energy Transition and the Built Environment to the Mayor and his Deputies, in which he stipulates the social and spatial specifics of the New Zoho area, the latter being the redevelopment zone in which Pension Almonde would unfold; and with regard to the Public Land Grab, representations of space can be found in the Localism Act³, in a cabinet decision stipulating the specifics of LJ Works⁴, or in the Loughborough Junction’s master plan⁵. A full list of studied documents can be found in Appendix IV.

Within the sphere of configuration (how do urban practitioners *build* common space?), secondly, we find participant observation. Here I would step forward not as an ‘external’ document analyst, but as an actual participant in the actions being studied. I built with Recetas Urbanas an a-legal wooden meditation cabin in the mountains near Barcelona; the co-author for the article on Montaña Verde (my colleague dr. Hanka Otte) head over to the De Coninck Square to saw wood and erect the arch; in London, I find myself shoveling mud, pulling weeds and watering plants at the Loughborough Farm; in Rotterdam, I participated in public symposia and more generally in the project’s own research team (‘Team Search’) in order to discover, with City in the Making, how to knead the raw material of a vacant street into a home for urban nomads and into a hub for socio-artistic experimentation.

Within the sphere of signification (how do urban practitioners *live* common space?), finally, I employed what Yin (2014) calls ‘direct observation’ or what I would want to call ‘personal presence’. Here, the focus was not an ‘doing’, but on ‘being with’. My aim was to be part of the lifeworld of the commoner, to discover how he or she experiences life-in-common. How does the commoner interpret the project he or she is part of? What does it mean to him or her? How is common space quotidianly lived? Examples include the following personal presences: observing on Antwerp’s De Coninck Square how and by whom Montaña Verde was used; attending the annual meeting of the Loughborough Junction Action Group; doing a week-long stay-over at Pension Almonde, enabling me to speak ‘off the job’ with a variety of residents; and joining the many ‘Soup Tuesdays’, also at Pension Almonde. ‘Personal presence’, thus, is the realm of the informal talk, the ‘on-the-street encounter’. An advantage of personal presence is the researcher’s ability to observe and experience actions and events in real-time. Yet, a pivotal disadvantage has to be mentioned, namely *selectivity*: the fact that one cannot observe everything. This was countered by devising topic lists that would include questions to be discussed during each session of personal presence, such as: the internal rules devised for governing the commons; the political dimensions of the project; the criticism or support from the broader neighborhood seeping into the project, and so forth. Immediately after each engagement, as the experience remained freshly engrained in the mind of the researcher, observations were synthesized and written down in field notes. This can be seen in Appendix V.

As such, Lefebvre's spatial triad now constitutes both 'that which is scrutinized' as well as 'that which is *used* to scrutinize'. In other words, the nature of the triad is twofold. On the one hand, it constitutes the aforementioned guiding 'principle' in order to discover, on a meta-level, how urban practitioners 'play with', combine, connect and disconnect the De Angelean elements. Appearing before us will be three projects of space-commoning whereby commoners, activists, artists, politicians, planners and designers collectively configure a set of common goods, but are also captured in a constant, conflictual interplay between representation and signification. On the other hand, the spatial triad also constitutes a semantic device, a threefold 'lens' through which one may 'access' the empirical substance of commoning, namely: through representations themselves, through participatory observation during building moments, and through personal presences during the direct 'experience' of common space.

Validity & Reliability

The aforementioned multiple sources of evidence contribute to a first element augmenting the quality of case study research, namely: 'construct validity'. Construct validity means to have identified multiple measures for the same phenomenon – in my case: the production of common space. We could conceive of these sources as 'converging lines of inquiry' (Yin, 2014) whereby, as in navigation, multiple vectors intersect at a given point, the central concept. A second contribution to construct validity can be found in having the case study report reviewed by key informants. This requirement, too, has been considered. The study on Montaña Verde has been sent to the representatives of the Middelheim Museum for review and feedback. The data collection for and the writing of this study happened in collaboration with my key informant himself: Tom Dobson, a commoner, architect, activist and local resident near the Loughborough Junction, South London.

I will end the section on data collection by pointing to a second element augmenting the quality of case study research: 'reliability'. Two methodological procedures contribute to this study's reliability, the first of which is the construction of a case study database. To build a case study database means to compile all collected data in retrievable form. The database exists solely in the digital realm and distinguishes between the master cases and the ensemble of additional interviews. The latter stream is

further broken down in separate files: data on Raumlabor, data on Montaña Verde, data on Pension Almonde and data on the Public Land Grab. For each project, then, the database is home to the audio files of the interviews (dated and in chronological order); the corresponding transcriptions of the interviews; field notes regarding the layers of participant observation and personal presence; a compilation of related documents: representations of space; photographic material; and video material (for example lectures given by project participants). A codification of the case study database can be found in Appendix VI.

A second methodological tactic for reliability is the construction of a traceable ‘chain of evidence’. The principle of a chain of evidence is to allow an external observer to follow the flow of events from initial research questions to final case study conclusions, and back. Yin (2014, pp. 127–128) defines four principles for a reliable chain of evidence. First, the report (the texts posited in Part III) should adequately cite or footnote the sources from which statements have been derived. Hence, each suggestion or statement will be connected to its corresponding document, to a particular interviewee, to a particular moment of participant observation or to an instance of personal presence. Sources, second, should contain the actual evidence upon inspection. Therefore, in all data sources, key phrases, words and passages have been marked⁶. Third, data sources should be consistent with the case study protocol, the latter being a predefined plan for study (units of analysis, time spans, characters to interview). In this vein, it should be mentioned that a case study protocol was developed, albeit one under permanent change due to circumstances beyond the researcher’s control. One case study dropped out, which meant that a replacement had to be sought. Also, when the process of data collection on City in the Making was already initiated – the project under consideration, at that time, being an occupied house in Rotterdam-North – Pension Almonde received a green light; a project with more relevance for the purposes of this study. Thus, here too, the unit of analysis shifted from one project to another. Unaltered in the protocol, however, was the stipulation of mobilizing the spatial triad and its corresponding methods to study the cases under consideration. Unaltered, too, has been the link between the protocol and the initial research question throughout the entire process, which constitutes the fourth element of the chain of evidence.

Data Analysis

With regard to data analysis, Braun & Clarke's (2006, 2012; 2013) 'thematic analysis' will constitute the main procedure. Thematic analysis enables one to identify patterns (to be labelled as 'themes' below) within the body of data. As such, one is able to organize and describe the data in detail, but also to take the analysis further through a personal interpretation of the themes that emerged (Boyatzis, 1998). I deem such operation a valuable one, for a recurring critique on qualitative data analysis is the supposed absence of a clear and concise process that leads the reader 'from beginning to end'. In other words, the steps undertaken from transcript to conclusion could depend arbitrarily on the intentions of the researcher. Braun & Clarke, however, provide transparency in the analytic realm. More precisely, this enquiry will follow a slightly adapted version of Braun & Clarke's six-phase guide for thematic analysis, including: 1) becoming familiar with the data, 2) generating initial codes, 3) searching for themes, 4) reviewing themes, 5) defining themes and 6) writing up.

A first step in the process of data analysis is familiarization. Familiarization means to immerse oneself in the data by reading, and rereading, the available material. I got to know the data in detail by going back and forth between the interview transcripts – my primary source of information – and other materials (when referred to them by the interviewees) such as field observations or media content regarding the projects under scrutiny. This phase implied not only to absorb the 'surface meaning' (Braun & Clarke, 2012, p. 60) of the text, but also to engage already in critical reflection. As such, a stream of unpolished ideas emerged. Early 'operations for the production of common space' would see the light of day, then disappear again. Various combinations, also, between representation, configuration and signification were explored, but without attachment to outcome.

A second step is generating 'initial codes'. A code, in general terms, is a label that identifies a feature of the data as being potentially relevant to answering the research question. Codes were applied not only (though mainly) to the interview transcripts, but also to field notes, to passages in documental representations (master plans, cabinet decisions, public letters between policy actors) and to online media content relevant to the project and collective the interviewee was involved in. Some codes would consolidate a few words, a sentence or a number of sentences, others might include an entire answer to

an interview question. Some parts of the text were not coded at all. Yet what unites the codes is their potential contribution to the question at hand, namely to discover how common space is quotidianly produced. Two types of codes emerged from the process: descriptive codes and interpretative codes. Descriptive codes, first, are the ones that stay close to the interviewee's wording. An example of a descriptive code would be: 'Permanent temporality (the vacancy model)'. These words were used by an interviewee within *City in the Making*, in order to explain that a possible operation for the production of common space would be to move nomadically throughout the city while temporarily occupying vacant infrastructure when available. Interpretative codes, second, invoke the researcher's conceptual or theoretical framework. An example of an interpretative code would be: 'Organic to planned'. This code was used to capture the recurring insight that the implementation of Ostromian design principles may stiffen commoners' agility to act in various institutional contexts (private housing market, policy sphere, and so forth).

The third step of thematic analysis is 'searching for themes'. A theme, like a code, "captures something important about the data in relation to the research question" (Braun & Clarke, 2012, p. 63). A theme, more importantly, represents a *patterned* response throughout the data. The goal of this step is to identify topics around which codes with a similar content cluster: it means to join those codes with unifying features. If the codes were the bricks of a house, then themes were its walls. An emergent theme within the study of *The Public Land Grab* would be: 'Creating and Measuring Value'. This theme is an aggregation of a number of maneuvers the project's participants would engage in (whereby each maneuver has its own code) in order to reach social support.

I wish, however, to add one tweaking to Braun & Clarke's prescription. This adaptation relates to the notion of 'patterned response'. Braun & Clarke (2012, p. 69) maintain that a theme is worthy of consideration when *multiple* codes cluster around a similar topic. In other words: a *quantitative condition* seems to be required for *qualitative relevance*. On the one hand, most of the themes identified emerged through the unification of multiple hence recurring codes; on the other hand, my contention is that one sentence or even a few words expressed by an interviewee, words that would never recur again, may deserve to be promoted to an accepted theme. To give just one example: one respondent from the

Pension Almonde study ended her interview by referring to ‘doing nothing’ as the most potent maneuver for the production of common space: “just sort of observe how things grow (...), this is probably the most political thing you can do”. Whilst such idea was expressed exclusively by this interviewee, at only one juncture, it turned out to be a pivotal theme for further analysis.

The fourth phase implies to review potential themes. This phase is essentially about ‘quality checking’ the topics that emerged. Questions to be asked in this realm are, for example, ‘is this effectively a theme, or is it just a code?’ Or: ‘does this theme tell me something about my research question?’ Against the background of these questions, it should be mentioned that the volatile nature of the data collection did not allow for a linear process leading from codes to themes. A fuzzy way of coding/theming was adopted, one whereby existing themes could degenerate into codes again, whereby codes could be replaced from one theme to another, or whereby new code combinations could proffer additional themes. With regard to The Public Grab, one theme encapsulated the procedures *contributing* to the production of common space, whilst another theme encompassed frictions and struggles *obstructing* the production of common space. The first theme was further developed in the subthemes of ‘organization’, ‘occupation’, ‘legislation’, ‘creating and measuring value’, ‘visible action and building trust’ and ‘having a vision’. Then, each of these subthemes encompassed a number of codes; for example, in the subtheme of ‘having a vision’, we find: ‘doing a bid together’, ‘engaging in a masterplan’ and ‘spatial projections’.

Steps 5 and 6, taken together, imply the definition of themes and the writing of the report. According to Braun & Clarke (2012, p. 67), the relation between these operations is ‘slightly blurry’, and it has been no different for the writing of this study. At this point, final decisions were made with regard to the names of the codes and themes, their content and their interrelations. During these last phases, it was also decided which of the themes would make it to the final analysis, a process depending on the decisions of the researcher who at this juncture should be guided by one question only: to what extent does this theme contribute to answering the research question at hand?

Coda

Two questions remain to be answered. First: what do I wish to achieve with the methodological framework as laid out earlier? Second: what are the lacunae within the framework? I will start with taking ‘a look back’ in order to express three shortcomings traversing the model.

A first issue relates to interview subjects, the interviewees. I have earlier alluded to each case study’s corresponding ‘cast of characters’. In this vein, it deserves to be mentioned that these casts cannot be considered as ‘one-on-one’ replications. By contrast, it should be borne in mind that considerable differences exist with regard to how many interviewees adhere to each case study, as well as to the roles these interviewees play in their project. For the Montaña Verde study, 12 in-depth interviews took place, mainly with two groups: the architects and activists gravitating around *Recetas Urbanas* on the one hand, and the curators, freelancers and decision-makers connected to the City of Antwerp on the other. This means that no planned, in-depth interviews with the arch’s everyday users took place (the latter were assessed through ‘personal presence’ which allowed to set up, on the spot, spontaneous, unstructured interviews). At Pension Almonde, then, 11 in-depth interviews took place, once again mainly with the architects and activists working at City in the Making but also with the Pension’s quotidian inhabitants. Various sessions of personal presence (ranging from Soup Tuesdays to public presentations and, qua duration, from one afternoon to one week) enabled me to pre-plan additional in-depth interviews with the project’s users and inhabitants. However, contrary to the Montaña Verde study, only one public official entered the study, and this via an in-depth interview conducted by a colleague from the aforementioned ‘Team Search’. The most balanced ratio between those working at the level of policy, architects, activists and actual commoners was reached during the work on The Public Land Grab. The study includes 8 in-depth interviews, some of them conducted with those working in the higher echelons of the planning profession (such as at the Greater London Authority, the GLA), some of them conducted with architects (connected to Public Works), some of them conducted with community activists (from the Loughborough Junction Action Group, LJAG), some of them conducted with policy executors (such as Lambeth Council’s regeneration officer), and one of them conducted with a group of ten commoners active at the Loughborough Farm (in the format

of a group interview). In all: whilst within each case study my goal was to reach a balanced cast of interview characters, the final division depended nevertheless on pragmatic factors such as the interviewees' willingness to engage in the research and access to institutionalized contexts (Greater London Authority, Havensteder, City of Antwerp, and so forth). Notwithstanding the considerable variability of interview subjects, it was possible to end each case study in a state of what we may call 'informative satisfaction'. Hence, no interview subjects were turned to when no additional information with regard to the initial research question emerged.

A second issue relates to in-depth interviewing in general: bias through *reflexivity*. Reflexivity implies a subtle, circular influence between researcher and interviewee, whereby the researcher's perspective influences the interviewee's responses, but those responses also and unknowingly influence the researcher's line of inquiry (Malterud, 2001, pp. 483–488). Especially in a study seeking to discover alternatives to capital-led forms of urban development, the value-laden interview lurks around the corner. Interview data, yet, may equally be determined by the mood or ideological orientation of those involved in the conversation, or by the location where the interview is conducted. Reflexivity is specifically apparent in a project such as the one explained here, one where researcher and interviewee 'are on the same side'. Whilst reflexivity cannot be overcome, all one can do is to be sensitive to it.

A third and final issue relates to generalizability. This study, however, does not allow for such operation. Qua form, this study brings together three instances of space-commoning. Qua content, however, vast differences emerge. Assembled in this work are a neighborhood-wide commoning network emerging out of a community farm (The Public Land Grab); a temporary occupation in deserted housing infrastructure (Pension Almonde); and urban-artistic intervention (Montaña Verde). Such variety of content does not allow, I propose, internal generalization. Namely, it would be a problematic decision to apply the findings from Montaña Verde to Pension Almonde, and vice versa. Neither does such variety of content allow external generalization. We could apply the Pension Almonde findings to other instances of temporary occupation, *yet only* when the conceptual connection with common space would remain intact. In all, the condition of intra-case variability comes with a downside: non-generalization.

Yet, I also want to acknowledge the value and validity of the methods I chose to engage in. I would want to argue that whilst internal and external generalization cannot come forward from this study, the data and concepts that are studied *will* give way to sociologically valid and meaningful results. One might wonder whether generalization in social science could ever be possible, given the fact that the reality one is studying is never ‘outside’ of oneself as a researcher. Rather, we are part of it, we are *in* the same reality we are to study. Not only socially, as a member of society, but also, in my case, as a researcher that continues to contribute, theoretically and practically, to the cases’ common cause.

What, then, is the purpose of this enquiry? I locate this work of study within Weber’s lineage and heritage of *verstehen*. Qua *verstehen*, it is the task of the social researcher to understand subjective meanings underwriting any motivated behavior of individuals (Swedberg & Agevall, 2016), in my case: the commoner’s production of common space. In other words, it is an ‘adequate understanding’, rather than a positivistic outcome of cause and effect, that I strive for. Yet, how may one develop an adequate understanding of space-commoning which is sensitive to the life worlds of one’s respondents while being (as researcher) ‘theoretically loaded’ and informed? Coining at this juncture Blumer’s (1954) idea of the ‘sensitizing concept’ will enable me to answer this question, will get me out of the trap of non-generalization, and will allow me to reiterate the procedures I will be engaging in for the remainder of this study.

In the article *What is Wrong with Social Theory*, Blumer (1954, p. 147) makes a distinction between ‘sensitizing’ and ‘definitive’ concepts. A definitive concept refers precisely to “what is common to a class of objects, by the aid of a clear definition in terms of attributes or fixed bench marks”. By contrast, a sensitizing concept, such as space-commoning,

“[...] lacks such specification of attributes or bench marks and consequently it does not enable the user to move directly to the instance and its relevant content. Instead it gives the user a general sense of reference and guidance in approaching empirical instances. Whereas definitive concepts provide prescriptions of what to see, sensitizing concepts merely suggest directions along which to look (...). Instead, they rest on a general sense of what is relevant”.

As will have become sufficiently clear by now, the sensitizing concept that underwrites this study is the one of common space, or: space-commoning. I put forward space-commoning as well as its ‘sub-sensitizing-concepts’ of the common good (CPR and means), the community (bounded or ‘in movement’) and commoning (instituted and instituent) *not* as something which can easily and correctly be ‘seen’ or grasped in the world before us, but as a ‘guiding light’ in the distance, a light which throughout this study will start to shine brighter and brighter (hence, which will become more specified in terms of Symbiotic and Oppositional Commoning). This is exactly what Blumer had in mind with the notion of the sensitizing concept. He argued: “through empirical research of empirical instances, sensitizing concepts become gradually definite”. Finally, we get out of the trap of non-generalizability. Notwithstanding their ‘separateness’ in terms of a community farm, a vacancy occupation and an art intervention, it is their shared existence as cases of space-commoning which renders the three cases a vastly united ensemble, one united by the sensitizing concept of space-commoning. Blumer would agree; likewise, he argued that one could study a sensitizing concept as ‘assimilation’ “in a Jewish rabbi from Poland or a peasant from Mexico”.

Notes

¹ I am obliged to state that this case has not been one that explicitly invoked the terms of ‘commons’, ‘common space’ or ‘commoning’. Why, then, select this case? As argued below, space-commoning is firmly engrained in the specifics of the project itself, and more so, in the everyday impetus of its leading collective, Recetas Urbanas. Reasons of selection have also been more pragmatic: this project unfolded in the author’s home city, rendering a close and sustained monitoring of the project possible. As such, the project became a ‘shared case’ studied by the Culture Commons Quest Office. Finally, the project’s close involvement with the Antwerp-based ‘Commons Lab’ meant for the author a valid sign that the project would be informed by commoners and their ideas around the subject.

² DANT stands for ‘design, architecture, nouvelles technologies’.

³ The Localism Act is an ‘Act of Government’ in England and facilitates the devolution of decision-making power from the central government to individuals and communities. As argued in the Cabinet Decision (2010), the Localism Act “will promote decentralization and democratic engagement (...) by giving new powers to local councils, communities, neighborhoods and individuals”.

⁴ LJ Works is a co-working hub in Loughborough Junction, South London, which followed from the Public Land Grab project.

⁵ In 2013, the Loughborough Junction Action Group (LJAG), together with the London Borough of Lambeth produced the 'Loughborough Junction Plan'. Commissioned were the firms Hawkins\Brown, DTZ and Fluid, to create a masterplan for the area and to detect 'redevelopment opportunities'.

⁶ This can and has been done through the 'coding' and 'nodding' functions in NVivo.

PART III. SHAPESHIFTING

It is a worthwhile effort to outline again some of the claims that have been made. This study's overall question is: how is common space produced in an Oppositional context, in a Symbiotic context, as well as in a Hybrid context? Before going to research aims two and three – the Taxonomy of Tactics and an exploration of properly political commoning – the first aim will now take centre stage: to present a detailed description of on-site space-commoning through the lens of the three master cases. As outlined before, London's The Public Land Grab constitutes this study's Oppositional case, Rotterdam's Pension Almonde constitutes the Hybrid case, and Antwerp's Montaña Verde constitutes the Symbiotic case. The goal before us will now be to uncover whether and how the Ostrom-theoretical and the Radical-theoretical elements (qua common good, community and commoning) are mobilized within these different modalities of engagement (to recapitulate: Symbiotic Commoning implies a consensual 'collaboration with' the Municipality/Market, Oppositional Commoning implies 'critically rethinking it').

Chapter 5. The Public Land Grab, London: From Illegal Claiming to the Web of Growth

“A common is more like compost. It locks up messy layers of things, which together create something quite beautiful. But it needs time to sit and develop”.

Tom Dobson, Public Works

Foreword: Howard's Demand

2019 has been a year marked with several ‘back and forths’ between Antwerp and a city that seems, at first glance, to constitute the exact opposite of what common space might entail, the City of London. Two years earlier, I was brought to London to interview historian Peter Linebaugh, a talk concluded in the shadow of Battersea Power Station – once a coal-fired power fabric, subsequently the cover of Pink Floyd's *Animals*, today a regenerative asset in the hands of Ernst & Young, developing the site to include residential units, restaurants, bars and office spaces. In that particular interview, Linebaugh touched

upon two issues that are, I propose, at the heart of this study. A first point is to acknowledge the intrinsic relation between ‘creativity, criminality and commoning’. The triplet will take centre stage in the paragraphs below; a triplet, furthermore, encapsulated in the following poem (‘an ancient wisdom’) quoted by Linebaugh (Volont, 2018, p. 320) during the conversation: “the law locks up the man or woman, who steals the goose from off the common, but lets the greater villain loose, who steals the common from off the goose”. A second element can be found in Linebaugh’s contrast between what he calls ‘incarceration’ and ‘excarceration’. As such, he goes into dialogue with Foucault’s focus, for example in *Discipline & Punish*, on the restricting powers embodied in physical space – incarceration in the Panopticon as a case in point – and seeks to shift attention to the story of *escape*: “the fundamental story of human freedom is escape from confinement, not ‘being in’ confinement”. The distinction between in- and excarceration can easily be translated to the distinction between enclosure and commoning engrained in this work. It is my contention that the story of enclosure – be it through the encroachments on the commoner’s means of subsistence as described by Marx at the end of *Capital*’s Volume One, be it through privatizations in the setting of the city as described by Hodkinson (2012a) in *The New Urban Enclosures* – is urgent, yet *known*. Against this backdrop, my mission is to work against the grain, to lay bare the tactics for ‘common space’, rather than the strategies for ‘commodity space’, or: to highlight the ‘excarcerated’ commoner rather than the incarcerated consumer. With this duality in mind, London, and by extension the UK, constitute a research context that is utterly ambivalent. The UK, one might ponder, is known to have hosted the feudal, originary commons as touched upon in the General Introduction, but at the same time, the UK exemplifies a history of what Marx (1867/2013, p. 513) calls the ‘English methods’, including the “spoliation of the church’s property, the fraudulent alienation of state domains, the robbery of the common lands, the usurpation of feudal and clan property”. The duality lingers on in London, a city comprising both capital and commons: the financial City on the one hand, and a case of commons on the other, namely ‘The Public Land Grab’.

The Public Land Grab is located in Lambeth, South London. Those travelling down south start their journey at London Saint Pancras International, cross the River Thames with a view of Tate Modern in front, the Financial City on the left, penetrate the highly developed, highly built residential areas of

Walwort and Elmington Estate, in order to finally arrive at the ‘Loughborough Junction’, a railway crossroads connecting North and South, East and West. Here, the aesthetic changes. In the shade of a car dump one proceeds underneath the railway tracks in order to finally arrive at Loughborough Road. The area around the Loughborough Junction, as argued by a project participant, may be captured “by all of the typical things, poverty, crime, violence. But at the same time, because there is a lack of state involvement, you get an awful lot of community action. So, there’s cracks in the system where interesting ideas can appear. There are amazing things happening”.

Through the project of The Public Land Grab, residents around the Loughborough Junction explore alternatives to Municipality/Market-led urban development schemes. An interconnected web of citizen groups and citizen initiatives currently tests whether it can build the capacity to ‘develop without developers’ and use this as an opportunity to address local inequalities, unemployment as a prominent case in point. The project unfolds in conjunction with the local authority of Lambeth Council, with grassroots and community organizations, with a London-based activist architecture collective (Public Works) and with local volunteers and researchers. “Land Grab”, argues a participant, “is what developers do. They buy up land, then they hold the land hostage until it has a certain level of value. And then, when it’s beneficial to them, they start developing it and selling it off”. The Public Land Grab sets out to replicate such operation, albeit from the grassroots, “by saying that we want to become the developers, by putting our own claim to the land”.

Two explicit ‘frustrations’ have instigated the project. A first one, as is argued by the public land grabbers, can be found in municipal governments’ obsession with growth¹, “whilst architects just make it look pretty”, the public land grabbers maintain. It will be seen how The Public Land Grab actively struggles against what Harvey (1982) calls ‘the secondary circuit capital’. The latter concept captures how the physical city may function as a ‘spatial piggy bank’: soil, bricks and mortar ‘holding hostage’ sections of the city until the time of selling and profiting has arrived. One could indeed argue that urban land embodies the ‘city version’ of Ostrom’s notion of the CPR, an ‘open’ and ‘rival’ asset that can go either way: it can be commoned, it can be enclosed. A project participant argues in this regard that urban land

“[...] is the most valuable resource we have. No one is making any more land. So, in a system where London is densifying and constantly growing, land will continue to become more valuable. The purpose of selling it off for short term funding relief is insane. Even if you look in terms of pure capitalism, it is crazy. It means that later down the line, you lose that valuable resource. For us, it’s about finding ways of how you can retain it outside of market systems”.

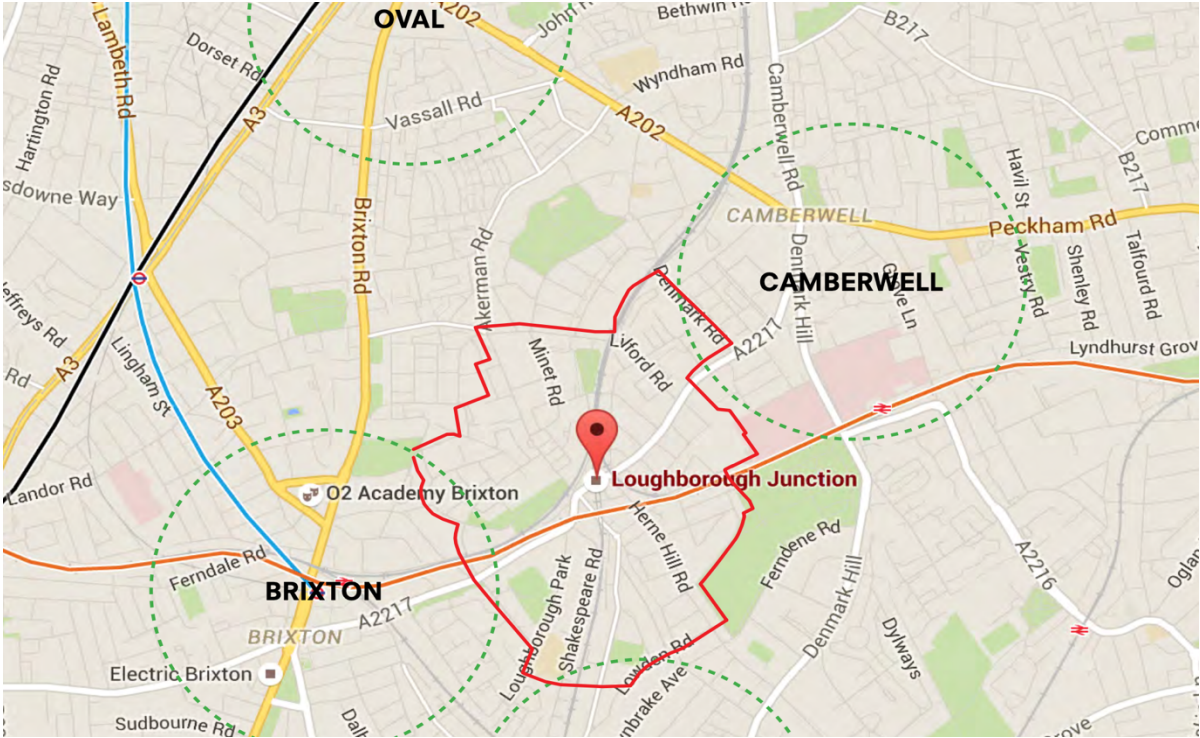
A second frustration is found in the co-optation of a key tool for the grassroots, namely: the *temporary* use of urban infrastructure. Whilst the activists of City in the Making will be seen to roam Rotterdam through nomadic occupations, the public land grabbers will show an unbridled will ‘to take root’, to remain firmly and permanently embedded in the locality of the Loughborough Junction. Hence, The Public Land Grab’s *raison d’être*: to channel back the value – be it social, be it monetary – to the commoner. I would argue that this resonates the arguments put forward by Ebenezer Howard (1965) in *Garden Cities of To-Morrow*. Howard showed that the intrinsic worth of city space does not necessarily belong to soil or bricks and mortar, but germinates from the density of people and energies unfolding within. He asked how urbanites could recapture the value that they themselves had created, rather than letting it flow to those who exclusively and formally owned property, a process which he assessed in terms of ‘unearned increment’. The (public) land grabbers, too, demand that the value inherent in urban space would flow back to those who effectively created the value in the first place.

This case study will be structured as follows. First, I will be able to derive four consecutive procedures for the production of common space at The Public Land Grab: the occupation of land, the use of legislation, the creation of value and the joint development of a future vision. Then, I will return to the last two procedures in order to lay bare the ‘frictions’ undermining a sustainable common space to take root. In the afterword, finally, I lay bare how The Public Land Grab eventually became entrapped in a ‘web of growth’ itself. Two solutions will be explored against the background of this web of growth: the ‘horizontal replication’ of commoning endeavors as well as their ‘being forgotten’. This case study has been developed thanks to and in collaboration with commoner, architect and community activist Tom Dobson (Public Works); therefore, the tone of writing will be ‘us’ and ‘we’.

Figure 10. The Loughborough Junction



Figure 11. The Loughborough Junction in Lambeth Council



Occupy Land

A first procedure constitutes the configuration of a common good: the occupation of land. In this vein, The Public Land Grab starts with a configurative act of the Loughborough Junction Action Group (LJAG). LJAG is a volunteer-led charity that, following the suspected homophobic murder of a young man in 2008, sets out to improve a neighborhood “neglected for too long”². LJAG’s impetus is one of building a socially cohesive civic society through tweaking the space around the Loughborough Junction. It has a record of involving local volunteers through for example community planting days and adding locally produced visual art in the public realm. It was in 2013 when LJAG added one more project to its set of spatial adaptations: the occupation of what is now known as the Loughborough Farm. As argued before, ‘configuration’ evolves around use value rather than monetary exchange. This was exactly the rationale behind the occupation: to bring back into use a Council-owned plot which had been derelict since the 1950s. As it lay cleared yet underused, LJAG occupied and filled the land with growing bags in 2013, without formal permission. The Farm currently functions as a food growing project where local volunteers mingle to grow vegetables and socialize. The commoners collect the harvest and share it equally; a hint, we propose, towards a common good as an ‘urban CPR’.

Two elements have favored the occupation. First, LJAG *did* have the informal support of a local Councilor. Therefore, whilst LJAG never got a written license to occupy the land, the project could still be defended at the policy level in case of a ‘commons-Council-conflict’. A second element relates to the form of the occupation, namely that of a community garden. As one of the architects involved in the project explains: “We have used the garden as a tactic to get hold of land. It’s innocent and difficult for a Council to say no to. We are in such a more powerful position. It’s a big political statement for a Council to remove us”.

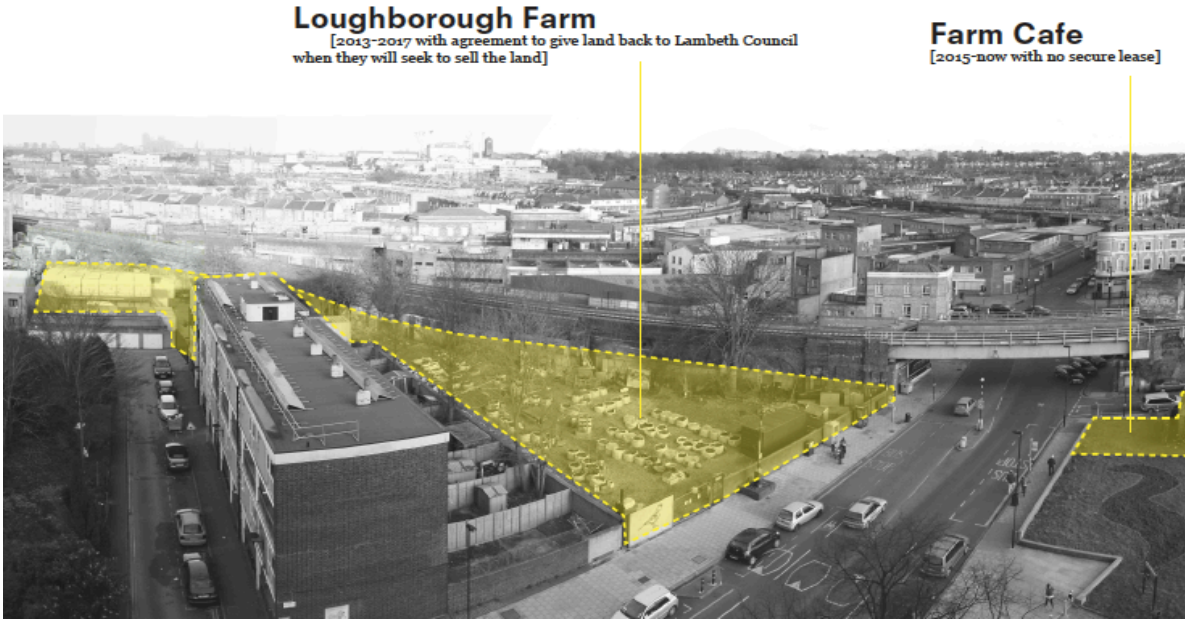
As we detect citizens taking over from their Council the governance of abandoned urban land, we may assert that LJAG has embarked indeed on an Ostrom-theoretically informed approach to space-commoning. There is no difficulty of recognizing, so far, a ‘collective governance’ (Iaione, 2016) as commoner-farmers collaborate to till the land but also to define up front the Farm’s everyday rules with regard to sharing, use and maintenance. These instituted, informal and formerly unspoken guidelines

are currently being written down as a ‘service level agreement’³ but can also be considered as a manifesto on the part of the commoners. The rules, in fact, constitute a means to ‘draw a line in the sand’ against the encroaching forces that seek to commodify the goods and values present in the Farm. Whilst such ‘encroaching forces’ will take centre stage below, it is worth the effort to highlight at this juncture the Farm’s principles, still in development at the time of writing. “The Loughborough Farm”, one reads,

“[...] empowers the community to create a greener, healthier, more resilient neighborhood. A not-for-profit welcoming growing space for the community. The governing of the space must remain in the hands of the farm community and allow for collaborative decision making. We work collectively growing plants, ideas and people from our diverse community. The farm is an inclusive food growing project that supports the health and wellbeing of individuals, the community and the land. We value the ethics of Permaculture, Earth care, Fare-share and People Care”.

Two additional principles shine a light on the Ostrom-informed character of the Farm’s initial occupation. First, there is the presence of a ‘pooling economy’, as in the Farm Café – a coop – the Farm’s produce is served to generate financial flow so that the project can sustain itself. Second, there is the presence of what was called in Part I ‘minimal recognition of rights to organize’ (Ostrom, 1990, p. 90), namely: the mere acknowledgement, by external authorities, of citizens’ self-organization. What I want to take from this is that if one aspires to self-invent and self-develop one’s common space ‘underground’ and in oppositional manner, the Ostrom-theoretical element of the ‘minimal rights to organize’ may be needed. A commoner argued in this regard: “LJAG speaks to the Council in a proper way. It packages stuff that other people are doing underground in a way that the Council can swallow. And then it allows them to get on with it. To be messier than the Council would allow them to be”. The latter principle is also apparent in the Farm: after the occupation, Lambeth Council agreed in 2013 for a ‘meanwhile use’ until further development⁴.

Figure 12. Location of the Loughborough Farm (image by Tom Dobson, Public Works)



(Ab)Use Legislation

Of pivotal importance in this particular case study, furthermore, is the UK’s 2011 Localism Act. The Localism Act is an Act of Parliament that implies the devolution of decision-making powers from the government to communities and individuals. The initial statement of the Cabinet Office⁵ (2010) declared that the Act “will promote decentralization and democratic engagement (...) by giving new powers to local councils, communities, neighborhoods and individuals”. One of the sectors affected by the Act is the sphere of urban planning. The Act affirms the neighborhood as the primordial locus for planning and service delivery through the constitution of what is called a Neighborhood Forum (Bailey & Pill, 2011). The construct of a Neighborhood Forum gives citizens the opportunity to develop a shared vision for their area through the proposition of a Neighborhood Plan. As such, citizens may present to Local Planning Authorities a vision – a representation of space – of how they want their area to develop in ways that meet local needs (Bailey, 2017). It is at this juncture where the principle of ‘minimal recognition of rights to organize’ – also labelled by Iaione (2016) as ‘the enabling state’ – gains more significance.

The resonance of the Act around the Junction was, however, an ambivalent one. “We were criticizing the legislation as cynical”, argues a Forum member, “but when you look into it, it was creative from a moment of weakness within the government, them trying to find any excuse to outsource responsibilities”. A creative use in this regard relates to residents’ engagement in the *form*, rather than the content, of the Forum. Whilst the Loughborough Junction Neighborhood Forum effectively saw the light of day – including residents, Councilors, private businesses and LJAG trustees – the Forum deliberately *refrained* from proposing a Neighborhood Plan⁶. The Forum, rather, was mobilized more broadly as a ‘training in democracy’. As Purcell (2013:323) indicates in his work on ‘spatial democracy’ in the urban public realm, citizens “need to practice how to speak and listen to others on an equal footing in an effort to engage seriously with different understandings”. In this vein, the Neighborhood Forum constitutes a vehicle through which LJAG receives feedback from local residents, but also one through which local residents, maintains a member, “acquire a place at the table through productive agonism”. A Forum member explains furthermore:

“The interesting thing isn’t the output, it’s the process, and the organization that’s the powerful thing. The good thing with this legislation, was that it, in terms of urban agency, specifically created an organizational structure that allowed people to have a planning conversation. If you set up a charity, you wouldn’t necessarily be respected to have the right to discuss planning issues. But this kind of opened up a place at the table”.

Hence, rather than to accept the invitation of providing a *representation* through a Neighborhood Plan, it is seen how the Neighborhood Forum directs its energy more to the field of configuration. “It allows people”, continues the latter interviewee, “to think on an urban scale”. In this vein, the Forum opened the door for Forum participants to have an opinion and flex their agency. This started in small steps with the Forum endorsing, for instance, the illegal Farm occupation. Subsequently, as the Forum, and in turn also LJAG, grew in confidence, this led to more bold engagements with Lambeth Council. It challenged Lambeth in oppositional manner regarding a series of regeneration proposals, among them: the Council-

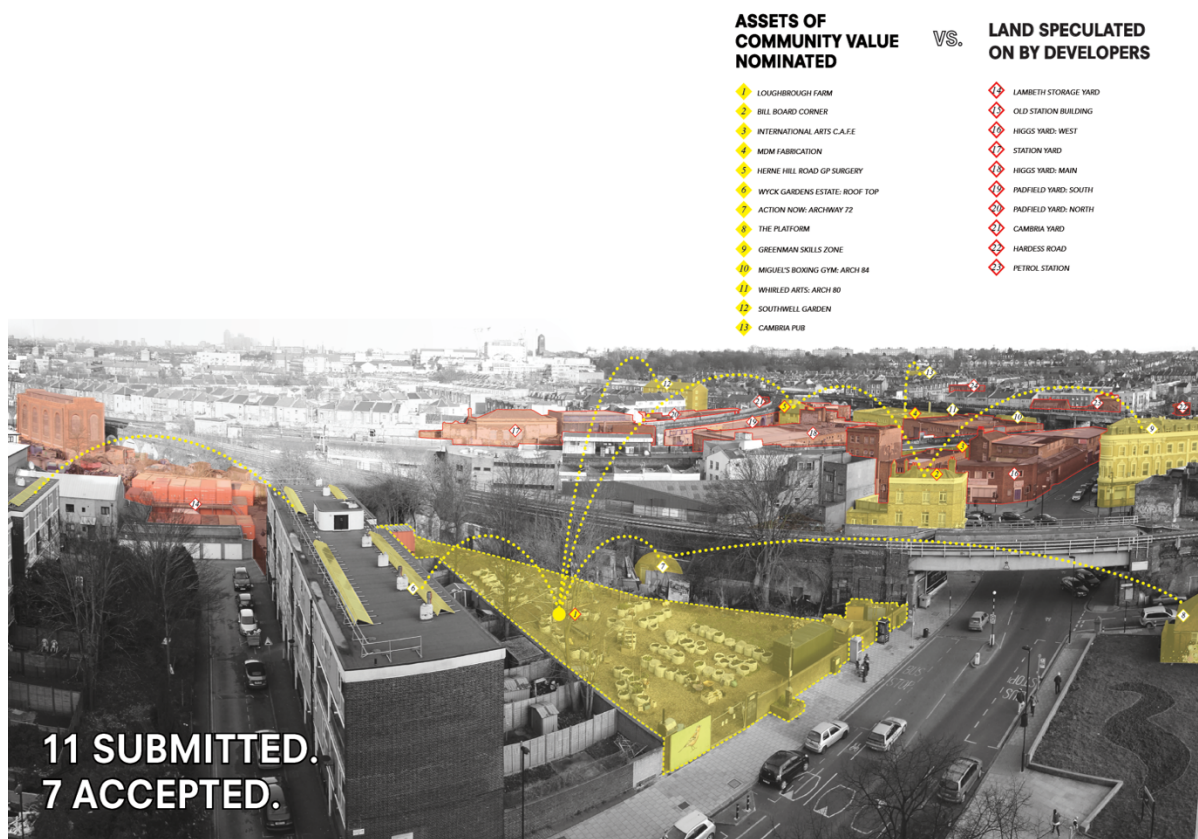
repositioning of the Marcus Lipton Youth Center⁷ as well as the Council-proposed selling to private developers of the Grove Adventure Playground⁸. In turn, LJAG has taken it upon itself to re-open the playground, stepping in where the Municipality/Market retreats. As such, the Forum constitutes what the participants call an ‘agonistic’ space through which they challenge the reign of representation with the act of configuration. In other words: a realm where they challenge the Council’s future *thinking* with a *doing* on the ground.

A second expression of the Forum’s non-participation in the realm of representation becomes particularly manifest within the force field of *signification*, that is: the imbuement upon space of multiple symbolic meanings. It can be found more precisely in the Forum’s nomination of a number of ‘Assets of Community Value’ (ACVs). The Localism Act offers Neighborhood Fora the ability to register buildings or land as an ‘asset’ of special, symbolic value to the local area. The Neighborhood Forum nominated together with LJAG a total of 11 ACVs out of which 7 were accepted by Lambeth Council. Among them: a pub, a boxing gym, a skate park, but also and more significantly, the Loughborough Farm and its adjacent Farm Café coop. When the formal owner of an asset intends to sell, the nominating group acquires a six-month time concession to raise money and bid for it instead. Even though cases are rare where communities are able to bid against the market, the tool of the ACV allows commoners to oppose, disrupt or delay market-led developments being carried out around the Loughborough Junction. As such, the Loughborough Farm currently enjoys augmented protection against the private developments its rising land value tends to attract. Speculators approach from the peripheries and are seen to put pressure on non-profit-oriented endeavors such as the Loughborough Farm⁹.

To conclude: on the one hand, we may interpret the Localism Act as a piece of legislation that clearly corresponds to an Ostrom-theoretical commoning elements: it embodies in itself the ‘minimal recognition of rights to organize’, it encapsulates the (as seen later: post-political) ‘enabling state’. On the other hand, we propose, the public land grabbers ‘bent over’ the Localism Act in the direction of Oppositional Commoning: as a tool to create dissensus, rather than a consensual partnership arrangement, *vis-à-vis* the Municipality/Market. The Act was seized, as is explained by a project participant,

“[...] to become the developers ourselves. That was interesting, because we presented that to the Council, and they... They were a bit taken back by the scale of thinking. They recognized that perhaps that wasn't a level we were going to achieve. It created a point to negotiate from. Instead of saying 'we want the Farm', it meant 'we want the neighborhood'”.

Figure 13. Visual Overview of Selected ACVs (image by Tom Dobson, Public Works)



Show Value

A third step has been the act of publicly showcasing social as opposed to monetary value. The mechanics of this procedure can be posited as a *representation* of how the commoner quodidially *configures* the common goods. More precisely, participants will be seen to *re-present* their 'on the ground' spatial practices in order to inscribe upon the Farm a vast, unequivocal meaning. This act was a reaction,

namely, against Lambeth Council who a few years into the project expressed an interest in taking the land back as the Farm started to create augmented land value. Against this precedent, volunteers at the Farm set out to document their volunteer hours going into the project. Through a registry keeping track of who works when, it was calculated that the Farm generates 5,340¹⁰ voluntary hours on a yearly basis. Simultaneously, the project's participants discovered that Lambeth Council explicitly values the wider benefits of a volunteer hour at a rate of £ 10,55¹¹. They were thus able to calculate that the Farm's annual social value equals £ 56.337. The latter figure, furthermore, could consequently be contrasted to the land's intrinsic value of approximately £ 500.000. Even though the Farm's annual social value is considerably less than the land value, the volunteers mobilized the calculation as a leverage *vis-à-vis* Lambeth Council. If, for example, Lambeth would sell the land, the yield equals half a million Pounds. On the other hand, if the Council would allow the land to be tilled for twenty years onwards, its added social value (1.2 million Pounds) will eventually surpass its exchange value. "As such", argues a volunteer, "you force them to retain the asset". To return to the introduction of this paragraph, it becomes clear how the *doing* of space-commoning, the action in the field, is *represented*, hence conceived in numeric form, in order to project upon the Farm a unidirectional meaning. It states, after all, not only what the Farm *is*, but also what it *should be*: not to be sold.

We want to end this section by indicating to that the former procedure thrives on what Michel de Certeau (1984, p. 117) would label as "a proper, distinct location" ('un propre'). The London-based architecture collective Public Works has been involved in The Public Land Grab from the very beginning. One of the collective's key questions is how to convey to Lambeth Council the quotidian actions unfolding on the Farm's terrain. In this regard, Public Works put amidst the Farm a greenhouse – a physically rooted base camp, one might say – the function of which relates to agonistic debate with Lambeth rather than to horticulture. This point, the fact that commoning endeavors necessitate a physically rooted embedding if they are ever to oppose their institutional environment, will be returning time and again in the remainder of this study, most tangibly under the tactic of 'Zoning a Proper', to be presented in the Taxonomy of Tactics. "Whenever we are discussing the future of the Farm", explains a member in this regard,

“[...] we’d always go to the Council, far removed from what’s happening here. We wanted to get a space where we could say ‘last time we went to your office, now you come to ours’. It removes professional barriers, it brings in personal capacity for the Councilors as they have to engage on a personal level”.

Figure 14. Opposing Speculation (image by Tom Dobson, Public Works)

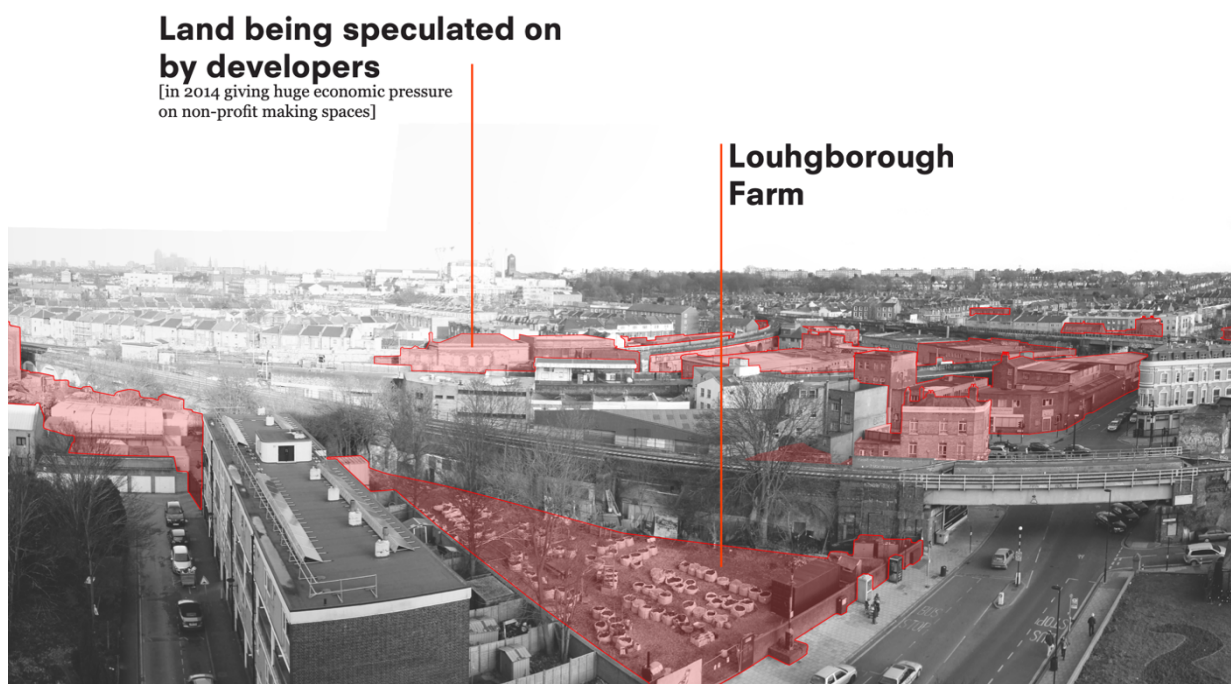
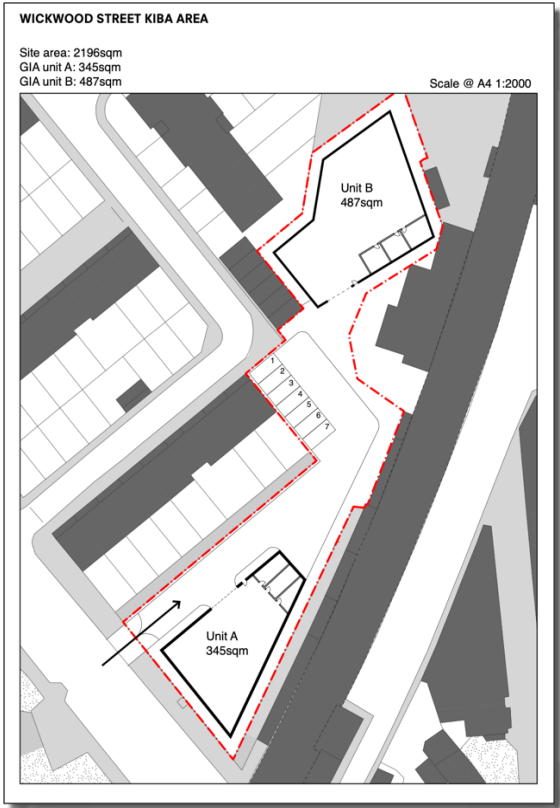


Figure 15. The Calculation of Value (image by Tom Dobson, Public Works)



LAND VALUE ESTIMATION

SITE AREA = 2196 SQM

USEABLE AREA = 832 SQM
without residents complaining of over development

1SQM of INDUSTRIAL LAND = £600

832 SQM of INDUSTRIAL LAND = APPROX. £500,000

SO.... AFTER 10 YEARS WE COULD BUY THE SITE?

Have Vision

The last sequence in the process has been the joint definition of a future vision. We would want to highlight at this juncture how the project’s participants set out to valorize the potentiality of one force field in particular: representation. To be more precise: a variety of local organizations – a ‘Steering group’, including representatives from the Farm, LJAG, the Loughborough Estate Management Board (LEMB)¹² and the Marcus Lipton Youth Centre – reached out to Lambeth Council in order to communally apply for additional funding from the Greater London Authority’s (GLA) Regeneration Fund. The aforementioned organizations communally developed a written and visual representation; a future projection of how they’d envision the area around Loughborough Junction – with the Farm as the epicenter – to evolve in future times. One of the bid writers explained how providing the Council with a ‘representation of space’ could equally be of tactical value. “We were thinking very much into the future”, explained the bid writer,

“[...] and using that as a means to negotiate the here and now. Speaking to the Council and showing them a vision is quite powerful. For them, having a vision means paying an urban designer £ 50,000 to develop a series of proposals and they know it will take two years. So, when someone comes to them with a vision, and they want to counter that vision, they have to go through a longer process (...). We were already an organization and we were almost asking the Council if they wanted to join us, rather than the other way around. And a lot of it was pretense, to some extent. It was just trying to formulate a façade of ‘we are in control of this’”.

The bid turned out to be successful. In 2016, £ 1,644,388 was secured from the Regeneration Fund from the GLA. The newly acquired funds allowed the realization of an addition to the Farm, entitled ‘LJ Works’ (‘Loughborough Junction Works’). The proposal would take place on an unused plot adjacent to the Farm. LJ Works is an enterprise hub offering affordable workspace targeting local businesses at the early stages of development. By offering textile workshops, studio spaces and kitchen space for food businesses, it is aimed to create and safeguard jobs in the Loughborough Junction area. Meanwhile Space (an enterprise enabling the temporary use of vacant urban space) and Mission Kitchen (an organization providing support for food businesses to unfold) will steer the project’s everyday development. In tandem, Lambeth Council foresaw a 25-year lease for the land and the new project it now entails. The overall impetus is citizen-led, economic self-organization. As workspace occupants pay a monthly rent, one part of the profits will be channeled back to Lambeth with the majority being reinvested in the project and in local training schemes. After an initial period of seven years, the Steering Group will take over the governance of LJ Works from Lambeth Council. One could thus say that we are clearly encountering the Ostrom-theoretical elements of the common-good-as-CPR, a more bounded, rooted community, and an ‘instituted’ form of commoning whereby it would be Lambeth Council that sets the terms up front.

However, underneath this layer of Ostrom-informed commoning, we come to see how it is ‘pulled open’, made variable again by Radical-theoretical elements: ‘Creatio’. We come to see how space-commoning negates a ‘fixed matching between *classification* and *behaviour*’. Spaces classified

as ‘public’, the street as a prime example, proffer behaviors legally classified: users are allowed to perform X and Y whilst maintenance is carried out by competent authorities. In common space, such matching ceases to exist. The Loughborough Farm/LJ Works ecosystem seeks to resist an *a priori* determination of what is possible, and what is not. It is envisioned as a terrain through which residents explore skills, ideas and visions, without ‘being determined’. One resident, for example, seized the opportunity to develop his interest in energy and currently tests whether LJ Works could survive on biogas produced by anaerobic digestion¹³. Another participant synthesizes the idea: “no one is telling people how they should act within it. It allows people to bring their own ideas, project themselves into it, so that they become more self-empowered (...). It helps them to flourish, to explore, you know, while a lot of times in their lives they are told they can’t do stuff”. The land grabbers’ intent is *not* to stably institute a collaboration with Lambeth. The goal lies at change, reinvention, at a constant rephrasing of what one is doing, with whom, and through which regulative framework. In this regard, the Steering Group gains significance. Just as was shown with regard to the Neighborhood Forum, the *form* rather than the output of the Steering Group is mobilized in order to institute friction rather a symbiosis: ‘a training in democracy’. As such, the Steering group entails a meeting between hierarchically organized (the Council), horizontally organized (the Farm) and market-oriented (Meanwhile Space) groups, generating an “agonism needed for the project to be successful”. We encounter once more the transposition of an Ostrom-informed project towards the more radical end of commoning: “it’s a means of sharing the resource as equally as possible between the users. And it’s not clean. And I think that’s the purpose or the governance of it, that it’s not clean, that there is a constant need for negotiation, which kind of constantly reinterprets and rethinks the arrangement (...). The aim is the process, to some extent, rather than reaching the end goal. And a constant working towards something that will never be reached. But that’s the fun. The conflict is something not to be avoided. There is inherently a conflict. And the point of these spaces is to negotiate them, rather than to avoid them”.

Indeed, as can be read in Figure 19, “the struggle for democracy needs a horizon to aim for”. To ‘have a vision’, constituted the fourth tactic at the Loughborough Farm. But as an activist argued just before: it’s not clean. Following now, therefore, are these tactics’ pitfalls.

Figure 16. Envisioning LJ Works (image by Tom Dobson, Public Works)

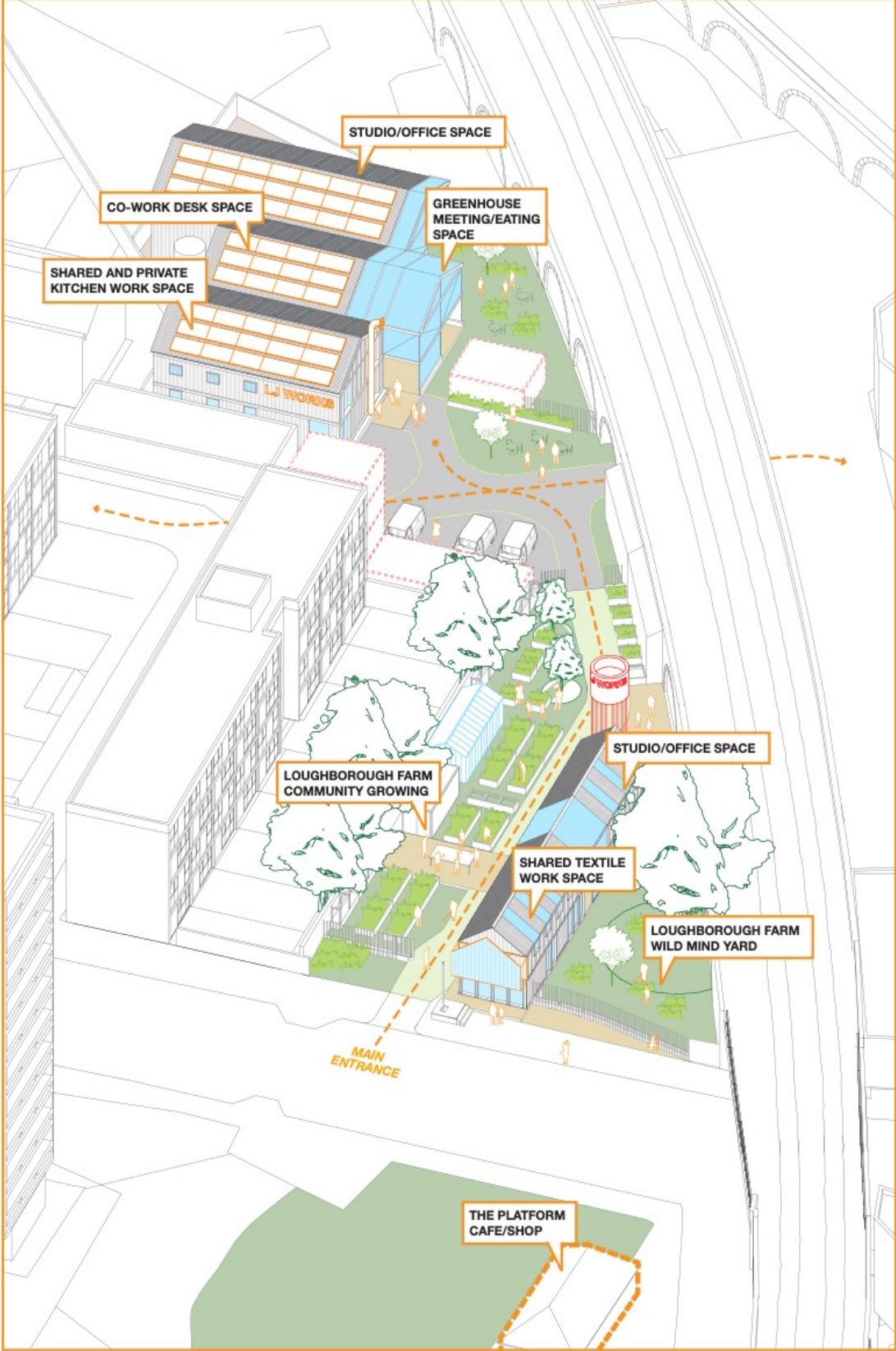


Figure 17. Envisioning LJ Works (image by Tom Dobson, Public Works)



Figure 18. LJ Works under Construction



Figure 19. Envisioning a Neighborhood (image by Tom Dobson, Public Works)

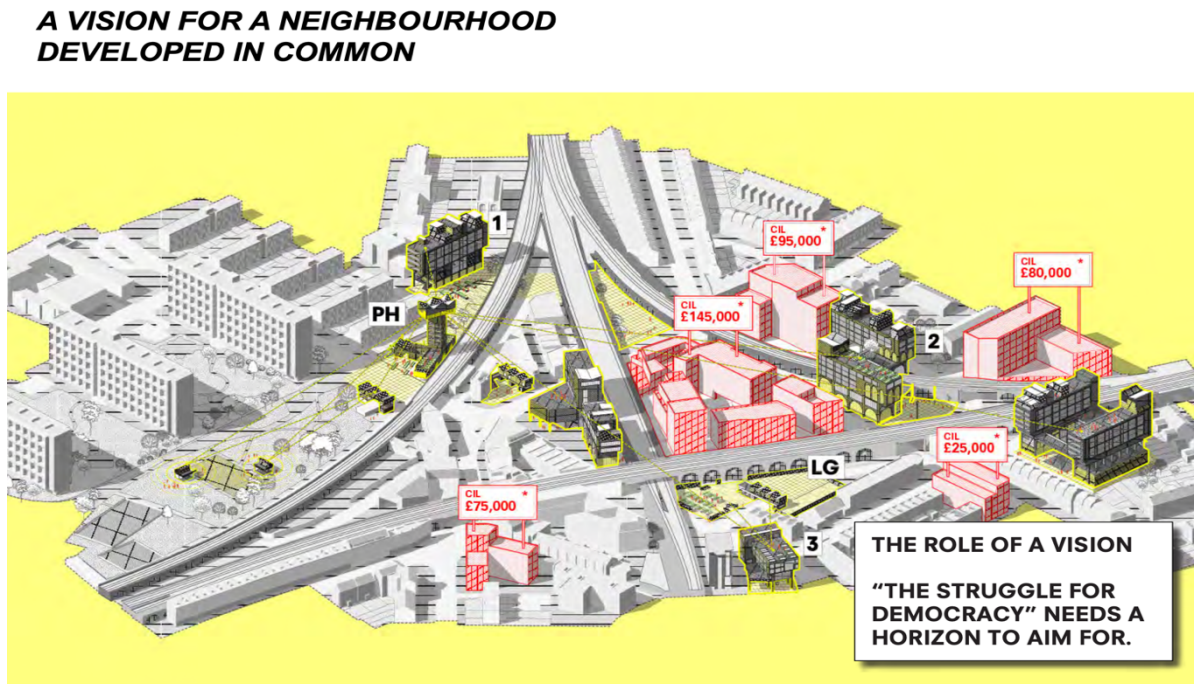


Figure 20. Taking over the Area (image by Tom Dobson, Public Works)

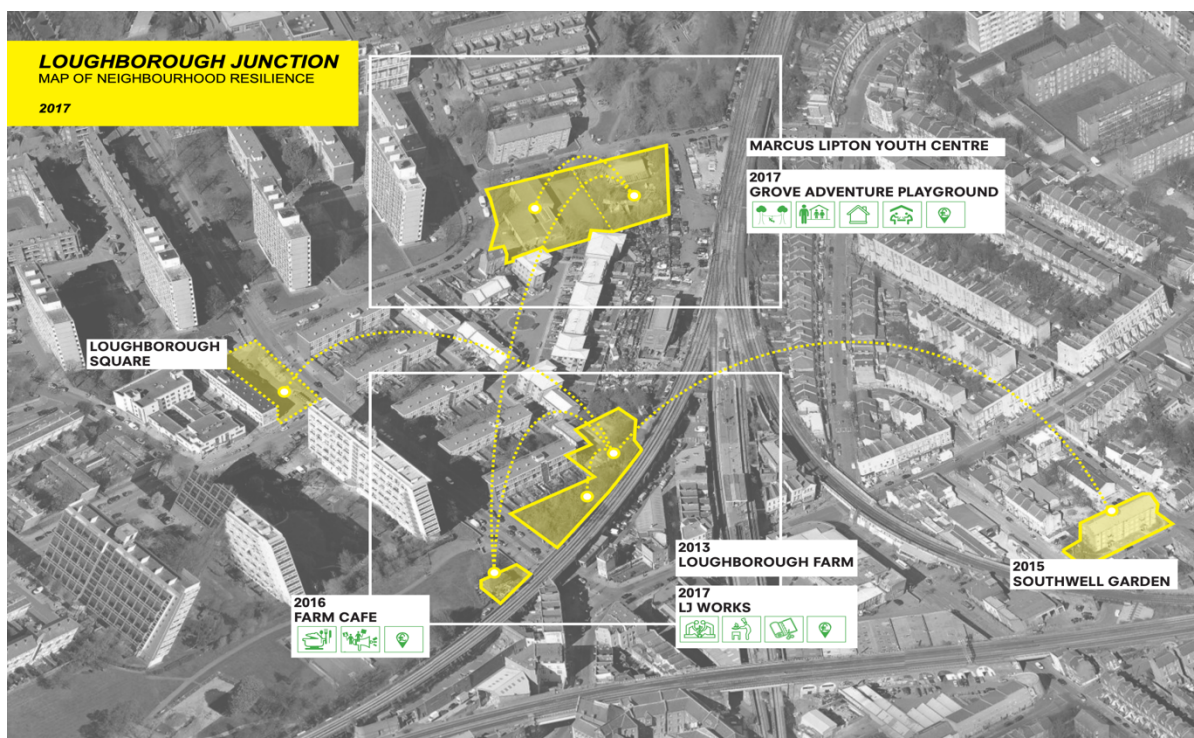


Figure 21. Developing an Anaerobic Digester (image by Tom Dobson, Public Works)



The Representation of Value

We now wish to put forward two groups of frictions curtailing the production of common space; frictions to be dealt with, I argue, if the act of space-commoning is to unfold sustainably. Under ‘Show Value’, we witnessed how the public land grabbers set out to re-present their ‘on the ground’ spatial practices, in order to inscribe upon the Farm an unilinear vision, rather than a monetary value. In the paragraphs that follow, I will lay bare three ‘undermining’ frictions related to such endeavour. A first friction unfolds at the crossroads between the commons and Lambeth Council; a second friction emerges between the commons and the market; a third friction, finally, emerges between the commons and the wider neighborhood.

With regard to the friction between the commons and Lambeth Council, we saw earlier how LJAG sets out to put a numerical value on its own reconfigurative acts: sowing, tilling, maintaining, harvesting, and so forth. It does so by keeping track of volunteer hours by a ticking system at the entrance of the Farm. It also does so by storing harvest data online, in a system called The Harvest-o-meter. Based on weight, the system converts the Farm’s produce into a monetary value and into a related number of meals produced. As such, activities at the Farm can be showcased, *re-presented* as it were, to existing

and potential funders, Lambeth Council among them. It is a successful procedure, on the one hand, as it was able to attract Council support and a successful funding application. It is also an ambivalent procedure, on the other hand, as on different occasions during in-depth interviews I detected how this operation of ‘evidencing’ undermines sustainable commoning to unfold. As an LJAG member noticed, the permanent need for evidence ‘wears out’ the commoner, it undermines the intrinsic sociality through which the commons tend to evolve: “it’s the thing that kills the project”. “It feels”, expressed a Farm participant and LJAG trustee, “as if you are bitten by the hand that feeds you”. It was also framed by a local activist as a ‘catch-22’: “it’s the Council trying to formalize commoning, to some extent. When demonstrating social value, you engage with the antithesis, it starts to institutionalize”. One may argue at this juncture that Lefebvre’s disdain for the field of representation seems to be a justified one. To *re-present* in abstract, reduced, numeric form, feared Lefebvre (1991b, p. 51) strips spaces of spontaneity and symbolic content: “lived experience is crushed, vanquished by what is ‘conceived of’”.

A second friction emerges between the Farm and the sphere of the market. Stavrides (2015) has put forward ‘comparability’ and ‘translation’ as the ‘motor force’ of expanding commoning. He argues: “if comparability is based on the necessary and constitutive recognition of differences, translatability creates the ground for negotiations between differences without reducing them to a common denominator”. It is however at the level of comparison and translation between different subject positions, more precisely between Meanwhile Space – the organization responsible for the allocation of working units to local businesses – and the commoners of the Farm where friction is seen to emerge. In that respect, we may label Meanwhile Space’s *conatus* (its intrinsic tendency, its goal) as a *linear* one: it seeks to build profit through the reconfiguration of vacant urban infrastructure for young businesses to occupy and experiment. And, as argues a regeneration officer mediating in the project: “they [Meanwhile Space] are aware of all the costs that it takes. They know how much it costs every time somebody uses a toilet. Their thinking of the Farm apparently is quite like a cost. And they are offsetting it against what the Farm will produce”. In this vein, a Meanwhile Space member similarly argues: “I can empathize that for them [The Farm], it feels like we have so little buy-in and yet make all the money”. “But”, she proceeds,

[...] they will use water, a lot of it, probably, the project pays for. And electricity. And also cleaning costs of the shared areas of toilets and stairwells. The way our model works is that tenants pay rent, and then they pay service charges, and then they are responsible for their own business rates. So, effectively, the Farm will pay zero rent for the next twenty years. I am fairly sure it will be almost nothing because it's some kind of community land, but in terms of service charge, there needs to be a contribution to that.

By contrast: even though the Farm also engages in the world of the number – counting the volunteer hours, measuring the harvest – it is safe to assert that its *conatus* is a *circular* rather than a linear one. Its goal is neither growth nor profit. Its goal, rather, lies within itself: its goal is the satisfaction of needs – to grow food, to train in democracy – and the construct of the 'the number' is the mere means for the satisfaction of those needs. This is, in se, what De Angelis (2017b, p. 201) seeks to convey through the idea of *commoning*, namely: “the life activity through which common wealth is reproduced, extended and comes to serve as the basis for a new cycle of commons (re)production, and through which social relations among commoners – including the rules of a governance system – are constituted and reproduced”. As was equally expressed by a volunteering commoner-farmer: “it's more about people coming together and sharing experience, rather than having an end goal. It's not just the outcome, or production, or anything (...)”. Against this backdrop, two conversations are currently ongoing between Meanwhile Space and the Loughborough Farm. Discussion unfolds, first, around a ‘service charge’ the Farm is expected to pay to Meanwhile Space for the use of LJ Works’ utilities (water, toilets). Second, and vice versa, discussion unfolds around whether Meanwhile Space should pay a landscaping fee to the Farm for the maintenance of the broader LJ Works area; “after having said that's what we do”, argues a Farm member. Detected in these discussions is indeed a diverging conception of: value.

What we are seeing in this regard is that Meanwhile seeks to hegemonically impose that the ‘common denominator’ (Stavrides, 2014) should be an economic one. A Farm member explained in this regard: “they [Meanwhile Space] need us to value ourselves in their terms. They are struggling to value us in our terms. They are making us quantify everything as a number”. Another member continued: “I

think we are speaking somehow different languages in terms of value”. Thus, on the one hand, we detect Meanwhile Space seeking in LJ Works a matching between *classification* and *behaviour*. Qua classification: a mere business case, a potentially profitable asset. Qua behaviour: a strict division of roles regarding who pays what to whom. On the other hand, we detect the Farm’s DNA, a mentality focused, as described by a commoner, on “trust-based situations where you don’t expect exact and equal exchange, but where there is a kind of reciprocity or faith”. However, I am also eager to argue that these diverging visions between ‘here, the commons’ and ‘there, the market’ proffer a fertile ground for the ‘recognition and negotiation of differences’ (Stavrides, 2015). Seen in this regard is seen how the very imposition of a (presupposed economic) denominator constitutes an opportunity to engage in the ‘motor force’ of the commons: debate, discussion, dissensus.

A third and final friction emerges at the crossroads of the commons and the wider neighborhood around the Loughborough Junction. Even though this study did not allow to distill representatively a certain ‘sense of threat’ among the broader community around the Junction, it is worthwhile to refer to an article published in local media, entitled: “Cash-guzzling LJ Works invites ‘thinkers, creatives, entrepreneurs and artists’ to Loughborough Junction, south London”. The article argues that “for fans of gentrification buzzword bingo, there’s a full house in store at Loughborough Junction, with a new hoarding pumping out a suite of on-trend words. We have to say we have no idea what a ‘thinker’ is (as opposed to a ‘non-thinker’), but we’re not the only people to find all this rather redolent of Pop Brixton, the hipster-luring loss-making disaster down the road”. The passage, to clarify, reacted against LJ Works’ public communication: “LJ Works is for thinkers, chefs, textile designers, creatives, food growers, makers, entrepreneurs, artists, locals. LJ Works”.

Some remarks are called for in this connection. Pop Brixton, mentioned in the article and laying a kilometer or so down the road, compares to LJ Works as it has equally turned disused urban land into a space for local businesses to unfold. The difference, however, resides in use. Absent at Pop Brixton is the logic of citizen empowerment. Even though at LJ Works there is also a logic of profit to be detected, as Meanwhile Space charges its tenants and as those tenants set out to grow, the project’s aspirations go further than profit alone. As shown before, the Loughborough Farm/LJ Works totality seeks to proffer

a common ground for residents to explore ideas (such as testing closed loop cycles for energy), to train in democracy (as in the Forum), to engage in agonism (such as in the Steering Group) and to develop a pooling economy (such as through the symbiosis with the Farm). On the surface, both Pop Brixton and LJ Works may appear to be similar cases, which creates ample room for a mistaken identity. It is only through a deeper understanding of both projects that subtle yet crucial differences become apparent. The case of a mistaken identity, we contend, offers a valuable insight into how a common space is understood from the outside. The criticism, first, is driven by the connection to Lambeth Council. As an institutional body, Lambeth Council naturally draws a skeptical eye from critical citizens. Second, it can be discovered that to those who are not directly part of the commons, the typology of space is unrecognizable. It is not a public space and hence, to anyone who has not been introduced to a commons-based mode of stewardship, it must be a ‘private space’. Remaining, then, is indeed a recurring ‘fixed matching between classification and behavior’, a matching which drives the assumption that the underlying motive of the project must be profit. A challenge to be dealt with by the Junction’s space-commoners, therefore, may be found in seeking connections with their neighborhood, specifically with those residents *not* involved in any of the local organs (LJAG, the Neighborhood Forum, the Steering Group) in order to showcase the balance between the project’s social value on the one hand and its monetary value on the other.

The Representation of Vision

Within Lefebvre’s spatial triad, the force field of representation is invariably put forward as *the* culprit for the marketization and staticization of urban space. By reducing the three- to the two-dimensional, hence by giving primordial value to abstract visualization as opposed to concrete experience, “planners, urbanists, and social engineers” undertake a “devastating conquest of the lived by the conceived” (Lefebvre, 1980, p. 10, 1991b, p. 38). However, in the preceding pages, I have shown how the force field of representation may be mobilized by the grassroots as well. This was seen most visibly in the form of ‘the number’: the counting of volunteer hours, the logging of the harvest, and the subsequent dissemination of those figures as a leverage to gain legitimacy. In the following, final section, I turn to

a specific form of representation: the representation of a ‘future vision’. Stavrides (2019, p. 13) labels such operation as ‘thinking-in-images’¹⁴. Thinking-in-images constitutes a pivotal tool for those struggling to give a spatial expression to the ethos of the commons. It entails, more precisely, the power to construct ‘representations of social life’ and using those representations to project ‘a possible-world-in-the-making’. One may put forward the writing of the funding application as an instance of thinking-in-images. Residents and organizations involved in the writing of the bid (the aforementioned Steering Group) envisioned in the document a number of rearrangements for their socio-spatial environment to take place. Some of them are economic, such as “helping to tackle the loss of employment space in the Borough”; others relate to community, such as the wish “to improve community cohesion and relationships between community organizations through collaborative working”; still others are spatial in kind, namely to “facilitate the future provision of a new route to Loughborough Junction Rail Station”. However, such representational exercise comes accompanied with a number of underminings exerted by the force field of representation.

As additional funding from the GLA was won, Lambeth Council secured local residents’ ‘thinking-in-images exercise’ with a 25-year lease for the land. However, there is the concern ‘on the ground’ that such permanence and stability may curtail the motivations for commoning to continue. The immanent risk of the Council taking back the land, argues a project participant, gave people “the purpose to come and fight for it”, as in the days of the unlicensed, illegal occupation. With the effacement of the project’s precarity in mind¹⁵, the participant continues to ponder what might happen when the project becomes stably secured, arguing:

“Until now what has made it very successful is the fact that it has always been on this edge of like ‘the Council will take it back at some point’. So, when you become stably funded, or not funded but stable, does that take away some of that purpose? I think the kind of fragility or the precarity of the Farm is what’s generated so much interest in users. When something becomes secure, and stable, maybe not financially but as a space, that limits the need for the kind of the constant commoning, somehow”.

An additional friction coming forth from the thinking-in-images exercise relates to the following question: “whose vision does one – the commoner – feed into?”. After all, not only the residents around the Junction engage in the expression of socio-spatial aspirations. The Council, too, and the GLA have a future image to set sail for. On the one hand, there exists an alignment of vision between the public land grabbers and the GLA. A first match in this context relates to *equity*. The visioning of LJ Works is consistent, as explains a funder at the GLA, with the latter’s aim to “pull up the places that are identified as suffering from the ongoing economic success of the places right next to them”. A second element relates to *community*. In this context, the funder at the GLA maintained: “what was also strong, was that the vision had strong partners on the community side [the Steering Group], which many projects don’t. Many projects leave that to the paid consultant”. A final match relates to the act of visioning itself. The land grabbers expressed in the bid a number of aspirations for the wider area. Therefore, the application was taken in by the GLA “as a seed to wider things”.

On the other hand, such alignment of aspirations for the Loughborough Junction does not seem to mimic Lambeth Council’s future vision for the area. The area of the Loughborough Junction is designated as what is called, in UK planning terms, a KIBA: a Key Industrial Building Area. “Strategically keeping industry in that area is something that we would want”, argues the planner at the GLA. LJ Works aligns well with the designation, as it provides low-cost work spaces in order to create jobs around the crafts that are manifest in the area (food, repair, metal). However, the planner continues, “they [Lambeth Council] are releasing sites in Loughborough Junction for large-scale housing which goes against the intention of why we were funding this”. In this vein, at the time of writing, a number of Municipality/Market-led planning consents are being considered that, according to the planner, “really undermine what this project [LJ Works] is aiming to do”. It is a wider yet regrettable trend, concludes the planner, as local authorities sell off urban land for housing whilst not protecting it for employment. Pivotal examples in this regard concern the aforementioned Marcus Lipton Youth Centre and the Grove Adventure Playground. Both are part of the wider ‘commons ecosystem’¹⁶ the land grabbers have developed in the area; but both are also part of a number of consultation reports by Lambeth, wherein it is stated that “both will have to be replaced in a more appropriate and beneficial

manner, should any development come forward on this site”. Conversely, the GLA’s leverage was “to fund a project that was acting as an exemplar to define policy”, a target seemingly not reached. In all, whilst the funding bid constituted a communal vision, shared by the grassroots and the policy level of Lambeth, feelings on the terrain have shifted. During a group interview at the Farm, asked about the commons’ relation to the local government, an LJAG and Farm member expressed the following concern:

“They haven’t really given the project the attention it deserves. It’s right on the periphery. It’s not Waterloo. It’s not the Vauxhall opportunity area. It’s not Brixton. It’s not nice middle-class Hern Hill. It still gets forgotten. And they are going to build houses at huge density, over the station, which they would never put in Hern Hill. So, again, they forget us, and they really would prefer we weren’t here”

One may detect, hence, increasingly divergent representations of a future vision, among the Farm and the GLA on the hand, Lambeth Council on the other. The planner at GLA maintained in a similar manner:

“There is a slight risk that some, especially local, authorities are going through their list of assets that they want to be rid of. It’s a convenient way for some municipalities to lessen their liabilities. Some of these assets need public sector, a sort of insurance if you like. Like the assurance of the long-term custodianship, because they are not economically viable, they have got big costs involved. Some community groups are slightly being taken advantage of”.

Yet, once more, we would want to argue that such *divergence* of future visions may constitutes precisely the fertile ground upon which Oppositional Commoning could blossom. The divergence of visions proffers an opportunity for the space-commoner to critically engage with visions contradicting the inherent logic of the commons. A final example can be coined in this connection. One of the public land

grabbers, a volunteer from the aforementioned Grove Adventure Playground, has excavated, in the form of a personally written yet publicly diffused study document, all of Lambeth's consultations (of urban design teams), future visualizations and planning propositions with regard to the privatization of the Grove Adventure Playground and redevelopment of the Marcus Lipton Youth Centre. A personal audit, one might say, or a work of 'thinking-in-images' to use the words of Stavrides. The volunteer laid bare a contrast between Lambeth's future vision for the sites as opposed to the community's aspirations. According to Lambeth, as is read in the document, the local community deems the playground 'a problem, poorly used and poorly managed', with one section 'questioning its relevance altogether'¹⁷. But the land grabbers' overall vision, by contrast, does not seem to collide with the former proposition. In a letter sent to Lambeth Council, local residents, represented by the Neighborhood Forum, conveyed that the Council's masterplan "is no more than a blueprint for Lambeth to sell the sites it owns as quickly as possible and to give developers a free reign to build homes with little regard for their design and affordability or the needs of the local Loughborough Junction community". Hence, as the conversation continues, the power of Oppositional Commoning takes center stage.

Afterword: The Web of Growth

'Occupy land', 'use legislation', 'show value' and 'have vision': in this case report, we distilled four consecutive procedures for the production of common space. Drawing no hard borders in the tools which should and should not be used, The Public Land Grab relies on yet subverts the methods of capital-led urban development, a production scheme which commons usually denounce rather than embrace. In order to effectuate such intent, The Land Grab's commoners bring a varied skill set to the scene, one ranging from farming over bid writing to critically engaging with public officials. Such diversity of skills and tools can be expected to be present in any commoning endeavour, yet the key shift can be found in the project's attempt to compete with the Municipality/Market on economic terms: it turns the Municipality/Market against itself through Oppositional Commoning. Indeed, one could certainly object that this case is a Symbiotic rather than an Oppositional one, for it works together with Lambeth Council and various other institutional environments such as the Greater London Authority and Meanwhile

Space in order to jointly institute a commons ecosystem. However, as has been recursively shown throughout this report, the ever-lingering impetus of The Public Land Grab's commoners is to proffer friction, dissensus and agonism with the Municipality/Market and to take the development of common space upon themselves. I am therefore inclined to continue to consider The Public Land Grab as an Oppositional instance.

Subverting, however, 'the tactics used by developers' is not without side effects. One overarching contradiction can be put forward, a contradiction which perhaps fundamentally undermines the act of commoning itself, namely: the contradiction of growth. Growth, first, constitutes the essence of the capital-led urban development system. On the one hand, the evolution from the illegally claimed Loughborough Farm into LJ Works can be seen as a subversion of 'market logic', namely as an attempt to grow to a 'defensible' scale for when either Lambeth Council or a private developer would mobilize market forces against the project and the land it occupies. On the other hand, it is safe to assert that the land has become problematically entangled in its own 'web of growth'. On different occasions, the side effects of the growth narrative took centre stage: the growth in numbers (the volunteer hours, the harvest) was seen to undermine the participants' intrinsic motivation and spontaneity; the growth in size was seen to proffer a rather rigid and economic 'back-and-forth' between the Farm and Meanwhile Space; the growth in visibility proffered a comparison in local media with the 'disaster down the road', Pop Brixton; and the growth in funds, finally, was seen to proffer an unexpected 'divergence of vision' between the space-commoners and the representatives of Lambeth Council.

The web of growth, second, proffers a pitfall, the 'commons fix': the process whereby the commons step in where the state (the municipality, in our case) retreats. In the words of De Angelis (2013, p. 605): "capital needs the commons, or at least specific, domesticated versions of them. It needs a *commons fix* (...). Since neoliberalism is not about to give up its management of the world, it will likely have to ask the commons to help manage the devastation it creates". As was already implied through the words of the planner at the GLA – "some community groups are slightly being taken advantage of". Through optimist glasses, it is seen how The Public Land Grab ignited a 'knock-on effect' throughout the area around the Junction. Whilst the endeavour started with the illegal Farm

occupation, the neighborhood is now home to a broader, interactive commons network including the Farm Café coop, the Grove Adventure Playground, the Marcus Lipton Youth Centre, LJ Works, and so forth. Through pessimist glasses, by contrast, one may recognize therein a ‘freezing of’ or even ‘a contribution to’ these infrastructures’ speculative market value – a process, as shown before, which has not gone unnoticed in the eyes of Lambeth but is countered by the commoners themselves.

The question then becomes: how does the commoner get out of the impasse? By way of ending the piece, we shortly explore two ‘ways out’ of the web of growth problematic. A first one is the act of ‘horizontal scaling’, hence: a growing in number, rather than a growing in size. As the commons are inherently built on trust-based relationships, it may be crucial that they remain at a scale where trust and reciprocity can be harbored. This should not be considered as a weakness, but as a strength, we assume. The translocal variability and uniqueness of the commons is exactly what differentiates the commons from the market’s intrinsic *conatus* of growth. In this, I side with De Angelis (2017b, p. 386) who states that a valuable operation for the commons is to create as much ‘complexity’ (that is: a uniqueness in each instance) as possible, hence, “to overload state and capital systems with the movement’s variety”. The more complexity created – thus, the more uniqueness in the thinking, doing and being of scattered commoning projects – the less ability for the Municipality/Market to intervene and co-opt the commons. The commons could grow with each new commoning endeavour learning from others, reinventing and renegotiating the rules in each instance. Such horizontal scaling has already been rolled out locally throughout Lambeth – yet mostly in the vicinity of the Loughborough Junction – where a web of interconnected and mutually reliant commoning projects, ranging from food growing to children’s services, has spread out. Then, translocal replication, or the transferal of knowledge between localities, is less evident, less organic, but possible nevertheless. Iaione’s (2016) idea of ‘tech justice’ may play a role to support emerging commons in need of assistance. Mutual knowledge transfer, both on- and offline, is becoming more regular and is becoming more successful. Examples can be found the Peer-2-Peer Foundation’s ‘Wiki’, an online knowledge database for all topics commons-related; in Zuloark’s ‘Intelligencias Colectivas’ database which pools citizen-invented building techniques from all over the

world; or in ‘Spatial Agency’, an online database as well, one allowing commoners to retrieve past and present tactics for the production of common space.

Which brings us to a second and final ‘way out’ of the web of growth problematic: ‘being forgotten’. The potential of being forgotten was discussed in a group interview with Farm volunteers where the default position amongst the group was that the project needed *more* attention from the local government. One volunteer, however, projected the opposite perspective. Is there any merit in being forgotten, in ‘dwelling in the cracks’? It is safe to assert that the Farm’s land *being forgotten* was indeed the critical factor that allowed the seeds of the project to germinate. It was only afterwards, when the Farm took up its occupation in 2013 and asked for formal permission, thus when the common space became visible, that the Council announced it would aim to develop the land further in 2017. As was shown in this report, the commons’ sudden visibility opened up a four-year time window, one with successes, but also one with struggles. Should the commons, as the participant in the group interview suggested, remain invisible? After all, one might argue, an invisible common space escapes the threat of representation: everything it does, says or thinks is in and for itself. Invisible, autonomous commoning is *presence rather than re-presentation* as there is no pressure to represent oneself – through a vision or a number – towards a perceiving, outside party.

The data presented in these pages, however, lead us to contend otherwise. If commoning is to be mobilized to address our current environmental, economic, social and spatial injustices, they have to be and remain *visible*, both to the wider society and to emerging commons elsewhere. And with becoming visible, we do not strictly point to the fact that the commoner can be ‘seen’ by the wider society, but to the act, as Srnicek and Williams (2016) would demand, of “building a broad counter-hegemony”. After all, we argue, there is a certain *contradiction* in remaining *invisible*. The act of remaining hidden expresses an ethos of ‘anti’: opposition against the state and the market. But if one is to effectively *oppose* these latter spheres, remaining hidden will only reproduce them, leave them untouched¹⁸. By contrast, what this study has clearly shown, is that opposition in commoning may effectively unfold by becoming *visible*, by building a counter-hegemony not ‘outside’ but within (and from there: against) the institutions that make up the Municipality/Market. The act of commoning, then,

does not unfold exclusively around the sharing of goods; rather, the sharing of goods *in itself* constitutes a springboard, a springboard to dissensus rather than to a partnership arrangement (consensus) with the Municipality/Market, to experimentation and empowerment rather than to a mere ‘commons fix’. The following citation by one of the public land grabbers exemplifies the contention:

“We have now taken over the land and we are running the playground, and we are starting the same process again. It’s just that idea that, once you have proved capacity in one thing, people’s mind opens, it stops being like a limit. I guess, it’s trying to test at what point citizens, on what scale citizens can engage. Normally people don’t even think about taking over land. People kind of clean up around the site of Council projects. So, once you start to un-restrict on what level you can engage... Like, now we are going to the playground, we are proposing that we build it as a community. Now, the next thing is happening with the park, so we are just in the process of taking over the park next door”.

Notes

¹ “Growth for the sake of growth is the ideology of the cancer cell”, Edward Abbey (1991) wrote.

² As explained on LJAG’s website under the ‘About Us’ section. Retrieved at <http://loughboroughjunction.org/about>

³ A Service Level Agreement is a type of contract that consolidates arrangements between suppliers and buyers of a product. Yet, in the case of the Farm, the SLA relates more to the commoners’ values and visions, rather than to their produce.

⁴ Out of unstructured interviews and informal engagements with the project’s participants, it could be derived that this operation allowed Lambeth Council to safeguard the option for an unspecified future development that ‘satisfied the city planners who are focused on representations of space’. Imaginations of Farm volunteers, in this vein, fear that housing proposals will come forward from Lambeth Council. Such proposals generally dominate the options for any ‘underused’ plot of land in an urban area.

⁵ Retrieved from <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201012/cmselect/cmcomloc/547/54704.htm>

⁶ The Neighborhood Forum was set up by LJAG as a separate group. The intention was to look at wider planning issues beyond the ones of LJAG and to have a different and more inclusive composition. It should also be mentioned that when a Forum finalizes a Neighborhood Plan, the Forum ceases to exist.

⁷ The Marcus Lipton Youth Centre is a youth club near the Loughborough Farm, hosting sports, events and education and, as will be seen later in the main text, is also a member of the Steering Group for the LJ Works project. It deserves to be mentioned that on 21 February 2019, the 23-year-old Glendon Spence was stabbed to death in the centre. As Ciaran Thapar argues in *The Guardian*: “places like Marcus Lipton are increasingly rare, yet increasingly important ways of fighting back against societal failure (...). Youth services, education and policing budgets have been slashed, and more pupils are being permanently excluded from their schools. In parts of neighboring Brixton, hidden behind the deceptive, glitzy sheen of gentrification, the impact of these forces is at its most brutal”.

⁸ The playground started with the threat of redevelopment but was reopened by the Loughborough Junction Action Group and a group of local volunteers. The playground is also part of the Steering Group and can be seen, just like the Marcus Lipton Youth Centre, as part of the boarder commons ecosystem around Loughborough Junction.

⁹ I was told how private developers (‘men in suits’) have knocked on the doors of the Farm, in order to see how much it was worth, and whether it could be bought.

¹⁰ The Loughborough Farm runs volunteering sessions on Tuesday and Saturdays from 1pm until 4pm. Volunteers sign into the session and are expected to spend 2 hours volunteering on average.

¹¹ This value is based on the London Living Wage. Lambeth Council bases the value of one volunteer hour on the tangential benefits that it brings to the area in which the volunteering is carried out.

¹² LEMB is a board which manages a nearby social housing estate on behalf of the Council.

¹³ Anaerobic digestion is a process through which microorganisms produce energy by breaking down biodegradable material. If successful, the digester could provide LJ Works with energy created directly from the Farm’s compost.

¹⁴ Stavrides borrows the concept from Benjamin. For an excavation of the idea see Weigel (1996).

¹⁵ As stated on page 30 of the GLA funding application, the money would “ensure the long-term future of the Farm”, “protect the job of the part-time paid project coordinator” and “ensure the positive externalities arising from the activities of the volunteers”. Even though this support is welcomed by the Farm, the precarity of the project may be the very thing that gives the Farm its ‘life force’ and gives the commoners a sense of purpose to participate.

¹⁶ Whilst the project started with the illegal Farm occupation, the neighborhood is now home to a broader network of commons including the Farm Café coop, the Grove Adventure Playground, the Marcus Lipton Youth Centre, LJ Works, and so forth. Between these instances, there is an exchange of information, time, energy and materials.

¹⁷ As explained in a personal study provided by a volunteer.

¹⁸ Later in this study, this will be called the ‘Multitudinal Flaw’.

Chapter 6. Pension Almonde, Rotterdam: The Devastating Conquest

“That is the scary thing about a commons. Sometimes you get the feeling that in this kind of projects, an abstract utopianism resurfaces. A specified vision of what something is”.

Rolf Engelen, *City in the Making*

Foreword: Dérive in Rotterdam

The legacy of earlier utopian-urbanistic thinkers lingers on, it seems, in the commoning endeavours discussed in this work of study. Howard’s demand to restore (social and monetary) value among the people that have created that value was seen to resonate through the intrinsic motivations of The Public Land Grab’s commoning community. A similar reverberation emerges between the central case of this chapter – Pension Almonde, carried out by City in the Making in Rotterdam – and the concept of ludic spatial production as developed by Constant. Like Howard, Constant explored the preconditions for a more just and equitable urban condition in the face of expanding industrialization. Unlike Howard, who had sought refuge in the elaboration of a static blueprint specifying the optimal size, lay-out and population of his Garden City¹, Constant expressed a desire for a city perpetually in flux: Magma. For Constant, Howard’s idea constituted nothing more than a mere reproduction of the dominating, capitalist form of urban development. “The so-called ‘garden-city movement’”, Constant wrote in *New Urbanism*, “was based on the assumption that industrial production could be raised if workers were given improved housing and living conditions. The prerequisites for the movement's success – the wish to be near to nature, a love of work, the closeness of family ties – are no longer valid today. Garden Cities are therefore obsolete before they are even finished”². A new city, one going beyond Howard’s presupposed needs of nature, work and nuclear family life, would see the light of day.

With his New Babylon project, Constant prototyped (through sketches, models and texts) the traits that are at the heart of this chapter’s central case. Constant imagined how technological

advancement would pave the way for a society infused with “a surplus of energy available for activities other than work”. In this society, recreation makes way for creation and, for “the creation of a new way of life, of a new environment”³. Such ‘surplus of energy’, I found, equally engrains the project of Pension Almonde. However, it should immediately be added that the energetic surplus described in these pages emerged from economic decline, rather than from economic advancement. To be more precise, the 2008 credit crisis, hitting the Dutch housing market at its hardest around 2010, put a halt to Havensteder’s ‘demolition and development’ operations in Rotterdam-North. Havensteder, as shown under ‘Data Corpus’, is a housing association that owns, sells and lets social housing infrastructure⁴. The credit crisis meant that the market value of Havensteder’s stock plummeted and that, simultaneously, a growing supply of vacant infrastructure – ‘toxic assets’ – presented itself for grassroots appropriation⁵. To this should also be added that during the crisis, activists and creatives – to this day still the core of City in the Making – lost much of their jobs and assignments, proffering “a surplus amount of energy” to reconfigure empty lots to communal use.

A second trait is the transformation of the energetic surplus into ‘playful’ spatial production. Whilst the functionality-oriented urban developer would statically divide the city into sections for work, sections for leisure and sections for housing, all connected by lanes where the car reigns supreme, Constant longed for a city-making under ‘continuous construction’⁶, a city-making never petrifying into final form or function. To this end, he’d envision the collective ownership of urban land and bricks and mortar, the availability of which would proffer “play, invention, and the creation of a new way of life. Utilitarian norms such as those that apply in the functional city must yield to the norm of creativity”⁷. In this vein, City in the Making appropriates vacant buildings as a spatial substrate from which “unconventional forms and combinations of living and working” may blossom. Whilst the upper floors are configured as spaces for living, sleeping and working, it is on the ground floors – the commons – where play begins. Street level sections of appropriated buildings are opened up for collective use, not only for the inhabitants of the building itself, but also for the wider neighborhood. Commoners are seen to chemically craft self-made laundry detergent, to build a shared bread oven, to show Debord movies in an improvised cinema. Throughout Rotterdam-North, several of such commons have emerged on

walking distance from each other, generating a situation of exchange (of goods, ideas and services) within the area. One could say that instead of functionally dispersing the aforementioned needs of work, leisure, housing and transport throughout the city, City in the Making layers them upon one another.

A third and final Constantian element is found in experimentation as the basis of knowledge. “Experiment”, Constant wrote, “is not only an instrument of knowledge, it is the very condition of knowledge in a period when our needs no longer correspond to the cultural conditions which should provide an outlet for them”⁸. Whether it involves the installation of an open kitchen, the building of a joint wood workshop or the sheltering of the homeless, commoners at City in the Making move away from ‘imposed’ needs while defining their own. Solutions, as will be seen, are autonomously sought in ‘sharing’ (the commons) rather than in ‘having’ (the Municipality/Market). But more importantly, City in the Making ‘captures’ its spatial experiments; it consolidates them through the registering of fixed knowledge and new ideas. Through manifestos, newspapers, artistic projects and literary texts, to be touched upon below, the organization launches its accumulated experiences upon the Municipality/Market and into the wider society. With varying degrees of success, it transforms the commons from a shared resource into a means through which the conditions for an urban development based on play rather than profit may be discovered. “The nature of the social environment will depend on the way in which the newly released energy is put to use”, predicted Constant correctly⁹.

Therefore, I would want to frame the endeavours of City in the Making as a ‘planned *dérive* in Rotterdam’, the latter idea being the Situationist method of ‘wander’ throughout the city in order to discover new places, meet new people, ignite new experiences. The last halt, so far, on City in the Making’s ‘*dérive* in Rotterdam’ is Pension Almonde, a project encompassing the entire Almonde Street. For reasons related to the worsening condition of its foundations and façades, the street’s fifty-two adjacent living units are soon to be demolished. As present inhabitants move out, the Almonde Street, formally owned by Havensteder, is transformed into a common space including shared facilities (childcare, kitchen, laundry, room for debate and encounter), including living units for short stay, and including shelters for socio-cultural and artistic organizations. The diverse subjects City in the Making shelters will be called throughout this study: urban nomads.

As equally seen in the report preceding this chapter, the case study on Pension Almonde likewise started with an exploratory interview, namely with Ana Džokić and Marc Neelen to be more precise, architects within and initiators of City in the Making. 2019, then, has been the timeframe through which Pension Almonde has been brought into analysis. I am willing to propose that it was here, at Pension Almonde, where the reworked spatial triad, presented in Part II, has been deployed to its fullest possible extent. 11 in-depth interviews have been performed with a cast of characters including activists, architects, artists and residents. Within the force field of representation, a document analysis has been projected upon the City of Rotterdam's programmatic ambitions¹⁰, but also on internal reports¹¹, grant applications¹² and promotional documents issued by City in the Making¹³. In the force field of configuration, sessions of participatory observation have been carried out, but it should be mentioned right away that at Pension Almonde, there is nothing to be built: the infrastructure is already there. Nevertheless, I observed and participated in several other 'configurational' events, such as brainstorming sessions¹⁴ and informational gatherings¹⁵ organized by City in the Making. I also observed and contributed to three of the organization's discussion panels extending well into 2020: one concerning the notion of the urban nomad¹⁶, one concerning the quest for available city space (for commoning), and one concerning the concept of the commons. Lived space, finally, was experienced through a week of 'personal presence' in the Pension itself, a week of merely 'being in place'. Several participations, finally, in Pension Almonde's weekly Soup Tuesdays are also relevant in this connection.

For the analysis that is to come, we are in Rotterdam-North, the 'Zoho area' to be more precise. The voyage from past to present of Rotterdam-North is a turbulent one. To start with, a booming, port-related centre, and an informal, slum-like periphery might be said to characterize the Rotterdam of the mid-19th century. Outbreaks of cholera brought to attention the necessity of enhanced sanitation. Against this backdrop, what is now known as the 'singels' – artificially installed waterlines draining and cleaning the area – further made the northern, swampy lands attractable to settle in. Subsequently, the blossoming of the area was partly nullified, in conjunction with the rest of the city, during World War II. The 'fire line' – the strip demarcating the reach of the bombardments – cut like a knife through the area, proffering today a mix of 19th century housing and novel, public and private developments. Hence, after the War,

the northern section of the city presented an open, empty field where businesses could settle; one may think of small industries such as car repair and steel construction, a presence still firmly engrained at the time of writing. With regard to the area's housing stock, it is safe to assert that by the 1970s, a plethora of private property owners – 'slum landlords' – owned and rented out the majority of the stock in poor conditions. However, the reign of the landlords was countered through piecemeal arrangements by the municipality itself. Dwelling by dwelling, the City of Rotterdam bought out the active landlords in order to subsequently hand over the social housing stock to yet another party: the housing associations, Havensteder among them. A final halting-place in the journey of Rotterdam-North has been encountered earlier: the credit crisis. Whilst in everyday conditions Havensteder sets out to tweak, repair and renew its housing stock, the crisis was seen to disrupt and halt such operation. Sections of the stock got stalled, remained empty, or declined into disrepair. However, apart from the commoner, an additional party is regularly asked to step in where the Municipality/Market fails: the creative, the nomad. Havensteder's strategy to cope with the crisis, a strategy of 'slow urbanism', meant to attract artistic and creative undertakings to the area – those generally content with weakened infrastructure – generating today a mix of industrial, creative and digital entrepreneurship in the 'Zoho area' (the Zomerhofkwartier, part of the northern section and home to Pension Almonde). Today, as the effects of the crisis have resorted to the past, Zoho is in turmoil again. The commons-capital-dialectic is speeding up, and the role of Pension Almonde therein traverse the current chapter.

Future Projections, Instant Commons

Representations of space, as was laid out extensively in Part II, are considered in this enquiry as conceptual depictions – sprouting in the realm of the mind – of how space should be; they denote a 'not yet'. In that sense, representations invariably entail a reductive moment: a reduction with as its starting point the many possible futures, forms and functions a spatial substrate may latch onto, and with as its terminus the representation itself. In short, whether they materialize as verbal discourse, as written output or as visual depiction, representations entail a movement from the concrete and the multiple to the abstract and the singular. This implies that representations tend to oppose the present moment: they

normatively predict, they indicate what is to come. Against this backdrop, I would want to name such form of forward-looking representation as the ‘future projection’. One should be aware that representations may point in the other direction as well, namely by re-presenting how space once was; a ‘not anymore’. But in the context of this study, it is their ‘not yet’ variant, the future projection, that will take centre stage.

Two such future projections can be pointed to, projections necessitating an act of configuration in order to materialize themselves. A first projection relates to Havensteder’s future vision and can simply be described as follows: to have a full stock of housing infrastructure. This ‘full house’ projection can be seen as a reaction against the effects the formerly mentioned credit crisis had on Havensteder’s spatial practice. During and shortly after the crisis, a number of buildings within Havensteder’s northern stock necessitated renovation in order to reach sufficient quality to let. Renovating, demolishing or boarding up these buildings, however, would present to Havensteder a considerable financial loss due to diminishing real estate prices and a relatedly declining investment budget. By means of solving the impasse, Havensteder reached an agreement with City in the Making, an agreement whereby the latter partner would take over the governance of “those toxic assets”: “it’s exactly this trash that we’re interested in”, states a founder of City in the Making. The temporary occupation of two buildings in Rotterdam’s Pieter de Raad Street, initiated for a period of ten years, constituted therefore in 2012 the first encounter between City in the Making and Havensteder. Havensteder calculated the loss of having within its stock an empty building for a period of ten years, a budget which would then be offered to City in the Making to occupy and reconfigure the building with a *carte blanche*. Vacant infrastructure, hence, is at odds with Havensteder’s stated aim of having no empty stock: “to board up a street because the tenants left”, argues one of Havensteder’s project leaders, “makes nobody happy. It proffers a tedious appearance. We want to keep it livable for as long as possible, that is the value for which we aim”. Havensteder investigates, in this regard, “whether it can develop a strategy out of these experiments”¹⁷.

In the years that followed, City in the Making was able to lay hands on seven additional buildings throughout Rotterdam-North. Yet, with each consecutive building, the organization witnessed how its allotted timespans declined to five years, four years, three years, even up to two. One of the

collective's architects explains how periods of crisis proffer extended timespans for temporary occupation to unfold: "it seems that the crisis is over, so hurray. But for us it's certainly not hurray, because we strive on the crisis. At least during the crisis, real estate prices were low". This presents to us a modified form, so to say, of the first future projection. To have a full stock remains a primordial Havensteder ambition, but the *raison d'être* has shifted nowadays. As the effects of the crisis fade away – as budgets grow and as prices rise – the commons-capital dialectic is speeding up again. In this regard, Havensteder has restarted to tweak, repair and renew sections of its stock, implying that on a regular basis, original tenants will have to leave their habitat¹⁸. The mechanism would eventually culminate in the Pension Almonde project, the latest addition of City in the Making's series of occupations in Havensteder's empty stock. The time span, here, has been reduced to an absolute minimum of one year and a half. An activist of City in the Making explains:

"Havensteder said to us: 'five years ago, we had a problem, and you were the solution. Today, yet, this problem has ceased to exist, so your solution doesn't serve us anymore'. So, we asked, 'what is your current problem then?'. Precisely the Almonde Street, that is their new problem. They defined a policy which states that buildings cannot remain empty. But they don't know how to solve that problem in periods of transition. For that, we have a possible solution".

The critical analyst will point to yet another 'commons fix'. Capital cannot survive, De Angelis (2007, 2010, 2017b) states, without the social systems that renew labour power and capital in non-commodified ways¹⁹. As 'toxic assets' are seen to pop up like scattered dots, a whirlwind of 'neoliberal devastation' may be said to have hit Rotterdam-North; a damage for which the commons are called upon and which "capital will have to promote somehow" (De Angelis, 2012, p. 184). In this vein, one could construe the occupational practice of City in the Making as a low-budget 'cure' in times of crisis. After all, through the credit crisis, investments stalled, dwellings remained unoccupied, façades got boarded up. In the first Chapter's Ostromian terms, Havensteder steps forward as 'resource provider', whilst City in the Making is seen to step in as 'resource appropriator'; the former owns, the latter is entitled to mere use.

But my contention is the following: notwithstanding the pertinence of the former objection, there remain, at Pension Almonde, opportunities for commoning to unfold. As we have seen during the case study on The Public Land Grab, commons that initially arise as a mere, shared resource – be it through the Localism Act asking the commoner to take over planning responsibilities, be it through Havensteder asking the commoner to fulfil the ‘full house’ projection – can be transformed into a means for political action. To quote a City in the making activist: “this was a dilemma we were very well aware of. After long discussions we decided to go, but on our own terms only. We will still be encapsulated, but it will give us the opportunity to demonstrate the alternative”. Systems can indeed be changed from within, I will preliminarily assume, and if City in the Making has chosen the route of Havensteder’s full house discourse, then it should, and will, be asked which procedures can be deducted therefrom, a task to be taken up in the following sections.

I finally want to consider a second future projection, albeit one that links only indirectly to the project of Pension Almonde. It is within the Zoho area – as shown in the foreword, a northern, inner-city, estate characterized by social housing, retail and creative industries – where the Almonde Street awaits its demolition. The area is described in local real estate press as “diverse, creative, and with a raw edge”²⁰. Earlier an impoverished area where enterprises arrived in search of low rent, Zoho is subject today to a number of programmatic ambitions. Rotterdam’s ‘Housing Vision’²¹, first, envisages “a more attractive housing milieu” which answers to the “increasing housing demands of families with a medium or higher income, social climbers and young potentials”. In tandem, the Dutch Housing Law²² obliges housing associations, such as Havensteder, to peel off their non-housing, commercial infrastructure. Taken together, these vectors render the concept of the ‘Municipality/Market’ particularly tangible: the City of Rotterdam and Havensteder have put the Zoho area up for sale²³. Thirty-five developers, out of which the combination of Leyten-SteBru emerged as winner, have stood in line to render Zoho an “attractive, inner-city neighborhood, where Rotterdam’s character and the identity of the place receive a new life through varied living, working and recreation functions”²⁴. In the last instance, the Almonde Street was added to the tender; as such, it became part of an urban area sold in its entirety ‘as asset’ on the real estate market.

How are we to make sense of this future projection? Havensteder assures that there is no direct link between the displacement of the initial inhabitants and the decision to add the street to the tender – a decision based on ‘market consultation’. Hence, technical problems with the street’s foundations and façades continue to constitute the main impetus for the street’s demolition and renewal²⁵. With these premises in mind, I would want to argue that there is indeed no causality (say, ‘co-optation’) between the commons and the Municipality/Market, that is, between Pension Almonde and the Zoho redevelopment scheme. After all, the commons will perish altogether with the infrastructure of the street, and the commons were initiated before the street was up for sale. But whilst there may be no causality, there still remains a correlation. As was seen in Chapter 2 with the Campo de Cebada, as was seen in Chapter 5 with LJ Works, and as is now seen with Pension Almonde, space-commoning seems to unfold where redevelopment strikes. The question whether the commons ignite redevelopment, or whether redevelopment ignites the commons, falls outside the scope of this study, but it continues to constitute a recurring, conflictual relationship. A relation, I would argue, which can only be explicitly mentioned rather than pragmatically solved. But as argued before, the commons-Municipality/Market-relationship may bear possibilities. Commoning in gentrifying environments can be used as a leverage, not only within but also *vis-à-vis* the Municipality/Market; it can be seized as an opportunity to shift the act of space-commoning from a mere ‘management of resources’ to a critical political endeavour. In this, I side with Lefebvre (1970b, pp. 130–132, 1991b, pp. 381–383) and assume merit in his conviction that the dominion of apparatuses of power is never total, that even in the most unpromising conditions, counter-spaces may continue to emerge. The procedures City in the Making mobilizes in such regard are shown in the following section.

This is the appropriate juncture to reiterate that Pension Almonde constitutes this study’s ‘hybrid’ case: there are signals to be discovered of Symbiotic Commoning, given the project’s close collaboration with the housing association Havensteder. But there are, too, signals to be discovered of Oppositional Commoning, given the project’s stated of aims opposing speculation, taking buildings out of the market and (at least, the possibility of) opposing gentrificatory tendencies ‘from within’. In the following sections, it will therefore be my task to discover whether a balance between these two variants

of commoning emerges, or whether we move in one specific direction. More so, given the fact that Symbiotic and Oppositional Commoning have been uncoupled from the Ostrom-theoretical and the Radical-theoretical approach respectively, it will also be asked which of these theories' constituent elements contribute to the form of commoning that will be seen to emerge.

Figure 22. Pension Almonde



Figure 23. Dérive in Rotterdam-North (Commoned Buildings by City in the Making)

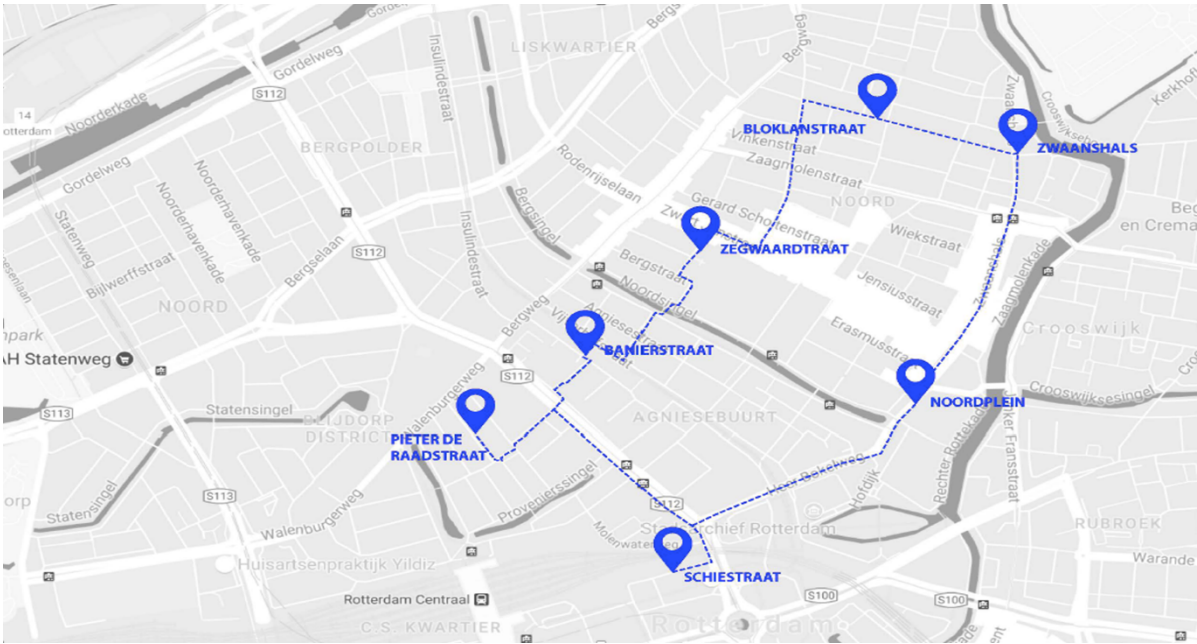


Figure 24. On the other Side of the Street: Havensteder



Figure 25. Redevelopment Plans for the Zoho Area



Sheltering & Assembling

The Almonde Street meant for City in the Making more than an infrastructure temporarily occupied, more than an ‘urban CPR’. Through a self-organized act of configuration, City in the Making set out to transform the street as a laboratory through which to test and explore its own, political principles: “to take infrastructure out of the market; make it livable and affordable; through collective ownership; with commons free of rent; economically, socially and ecologically sustainable; democratically organized; self-organized; through a self-obtained investment fund; brutally and on our own”²⁶. At Pension Almonde, two acts will now be turned to: the first one relates to the element of community (‘sheltering’), the second one to the element of commoning (‘assembling’). For now, it can be announced that both acts will be elaborated at Almonde in line with the Radical-theoretical approach.

With regard to ‘sheltering’, first, the process at hand is one of providing a roof for whom City in the Making terms ‘the urban nomad’. In this vein, the collective sets out to provide common spaces where those falling through the cracks of the social housing allocation system can live and work. The organization’s strategy is one in defense of urbanites not addressed by Havensteder, those unable to rent or buy their own property. The commoning community at Pension Almonde refrains from taxonomization in certain subgroups and, vice versa, from any shared, fixed identity. Flowing in and out of the Pension, one finds a multitude of commoners, a group as diverse as couch surfers, the homeless, sans papiers, expats, mere guests, students, people between relationships, people between jobs, people between homes, artists active in design, architecture, fashion and the visual arts, but also those sticking to a nomadic existence out of conviction; ‘free minds’, one might say, choosing not to spend a considerable amount of their income to permanent housing. The gender division is 50/50 while age-wise, commoners are mainly in their 20s and 30s. Around 60 commoners have occupied the street for longer than one month, out of which one-third comes from abroad. In order to generate a financial flow that can be inserted back into the project, some rooms can also be rented for short stay. In this connection, 100 passers-by have, at the time of writing, stayed for less than one month.

The street’s ground floors, furthermore, altogether labelled as ‘the plinth’, were made available to a plethora of socio-cultural organizations. City in the Making specifically seeks to shelter initiatives

that following the 2008 credit crisis have been “orphaned by the closure of many community centers” and therefore are unable to pay for rent. Woodstone Kugelblitz, for instance, is an anarchist copy shop ran by an anonymous artists’ collective; Motherdock is a non-profit initiative that enables mothers and fathers to combine co-working with self-organized childcare; Taalent010 takes on the societal position of vulnerable women through language education and talent development; Al Khema constitutes a place of encounter between Syrian and Dutch citizens; the Bio Bulk Bende is a food cooperative that buys and distributes organic food and organizes vegan dinners. Centrally located amidst the plinth, finally, there is the general meeting room, providing commoners with a place for discussion and encounter as well as with a kitchen. It is here where the aforementioned Soup Tuesdays take place. As the Covid-19 hit the Netherlands as from March 2020, the exchange network and care-giving organizations described in these pages were seen to instigate a resilient companion to the more individual life style the crisis demanded. Keju Kitchen, for example, a small café sheltered in the plinth, started to engage in food delivery among the street and among the neighborhood.

With regard to ‘assembling’, second, we arrive at the field of commoning itself, in the realm of effectively governing the common good at hand (assembling is derived from ‘assembly’ and relates to commoners’ discussive acts). In Part I, I already made a distinction between instituted and instituent forms of commoning. On the instituted side, when it comes to the invention of a common space, the impetus for an endeavour of commoning generally emerges outside of the mind of the commoner, for instance in the realm of policy. Qua regulative framework, relatedly, space-commoning unfolds along the lines of a pre-instituted, vast regulative framework. Instituent commoning, yet, differs along these two strands: it finds its *raison d’être* in the mind of the commoner (Creatio) and remains open for a constantly changing set of rules (Magma). One could also express the difference as follows: on the instituted side, rules are first defined and commoning happens next; on the instituent side, commoning happens first, an act for which the rules will *a posteriori* be (re)defined. Even though mainly discussed in Ostrom’s work on environmental CPRs, the instituted variant is by no means absent from current-day space-commoning. We find instituted governance principles, for example, in the slipstream of the Bologna Regulation where a ‘pact of collaboration’ between the commoner and the administration sets

the terms for how the commoning is to proceed (Bianchi, 2018). We also find instituted rules at LJ Works, London, where preestablished principles consolidate the desired profile of temporary occupants, the rules of use, the rents to be paid and the tasks to be carried out by the commoners of the Loughborough Farm. City in the Making, however, cautiously settles at the instituent side of the commoning continuum. Only one rule takes centre stage: the commons can be used but cannot be claimed. In order to avoid a tragedy of the commons, they should always, after use, be given back in a state better than before, that is: “free of objects, smells, litter and/or as yet unknown obstacles”²⁷. An activist at City in the Making argues in this regard: “we have always made the commons by organically letting things happen (...). No rules, just experimenting with how far we get (...) There are informal rules, but they are nowhere formalized”. Hence, if the commoner can organize autonomously, the collective will refrain from rule-making concerning the commons’ purpose, use, spatial characteristics and governance principles. And even though at Pension Almonde time shortens (two year) and space extends (an entire street), the philosophy of organicity is carried on. More precisely, at the Pension, a system of ‘sociocracy’ is adhered to. The system implies that autonomous ‘circles’ crystalize around topics that seem to require attention or a set of rules: finance, subsidies, how to run the central meeting room, and so forth. For example, the circles of ‘property’, ‘Pension’, ‘commons’ and ‘community’ are clustered together within the larger circle of ‘building management’. Circles come and go, as do the commoners that chose to act within. Decision-making is based on consensus, a process starting from elaborate rounds of discussion, followed by the formulation of a proposal to be voted on, a call for consensus, an identification of concerns and a reformulation of the proposal until each participant is happy to live with the decision. Hierarchic structures and an adage of ‘unanimity’ are deliberately avoided. Hence, instituent governing proceeds on the basis of Stavrides’ three elements of commoning: comparability (the bringing into contact of different positions, talents, views); translatability (no one’s narrative is allowed to dominate); and the non-accumulation of power (no hierarchy, one vote per commoner). Consensus, as such, becomes a continual practice, to use the words of Stavrides (2013b, p. 42), “which takes different shapes and does not have to reach a final and definitive stage”.

It is safe to assert that we have encountered two elements generally traversing the Radical-theoretical approach. Qua community (sheltering), we encountered no vast and closed, but an open and variable ‘community in movement’. Qua commoning (assembling), we encountered commoning’s instituent variant, whereby the commoner lets the regulative framework emerge ‘out of practice’. I derive from this first encounter with Pension Almonde at least a ‘hint’ of Oppositional Commoning. With the Pension, City in the Making aspires to ‘criticize’ (the housing allocation system) and to ‘rethink’ (Havensteder’s way of working). The intention is “the making visible of an idea, a potency, an urgency”. In order to put the potency of space-commoning on Havensteder’s agenda, City in the Making issues the intention to distill from the experiment a “future-resilient manual for a nomadic urban pension”: an action plan from which Havensteder could deduct how to redevelop its stock in less devastating, less dispossessive and less gentrificatory ways.

Figure 26. A Communal Kitchen in the Central Meeting Room



Sheltering & Assembling, Reprise

I will now reiterate the procedures of ‘sheltering’ and ‘assembling’. More precisely, it will be shown how their existence in terms of a ‘community in movement’ and ‘instituent commoning’ will shift to a more bounded community and ‘instituted commoning’. From there on out, it will be argued that it is Symbiotic, rather than Oppositional Commoning in which this hybrid case will find its terminus.

Qua sheltering, it was proclaimed earlier how this undertaking tended to point in the direction of a ‘community in movement’. Pension Almonde took centre stage as a common good characterized by a ‘porous’ threshold. Those falling between the cracks of the housing allocation system, those orphaned by the reign of the credit crisis, and those being dispossessed of their prior habitat were seen to constitute a variable and shifting community of commoners, the amalgamation of which proffered a twofold effect, one horizontal, one vertical: to connect the street with the wider Zoho neighborhood and to project upon Havensteder the voices, visions, needs and ideas of people on the move, of the urban nomad. However, the act of sheltering equally couples to an Ostrom-based commoning principle: selection. In order to compose the Pension’s population, participants are drawn from an already existing, informal network gravitating around City in the Making. One of the project’s working groups selects participants based on the presupposed contribution they might deliver. Scrutinized ‘at the doorstep’, hence, is a participant’s or organization’s willingness to engage in the common endeavour that is Pension Almonde: to engage in sociocratic working groups, to co-organize events, and so forth. One of the organization’s founders explains that, therefore, a considerate group drops out already from the beginning: “not everyone has the will, energy or interest to engage in this sort of governance”. Another activist likewise argued that

“[...] you cannot just walk in and participate, you have to be aware of these values, of the general aim, and your personal relationship to the commons. If it is not there, then it is way too loose, you don’t have focus, and you cannot build up something. That is why I think it is always exclusive, which doesn’t mean that it is inaccessible, but you need to upload the commons, in a way”.

What we are seeing, hence, is the emergence of Ostrom's first design principle, the installation of boundaries to counter the threat of free-riding. From one perspective, one may argue together with the activist cited above that a certain selection at the doorstep of the commons is always necessary. After all, if the commoner is to resurrect effectively against profit-led forms of spatial production – New Zoho as a case in point – then the monitoring of shared values, shared goals and an explicitly stated 'common cause' may prove to be a pivotal condition for commoning to unfold. I may be allowed to return to a point predicted in Chapter 2, the fact that qua 'community', a space-commoning endeavour may be open and closed at the same time. In case of the Campo de Cebada, I argued: "one might therefore suspect that in order to keep a commoning community open 'for some' (commoners), it will have to be closed 'for others' (capitalists)". This point was agreed upon by the activists with whom I spoke; one activist argued in this regard: "it is exclusive because you have a common cause, and many people do not tune in with that common cause. Some people can be added to it, but they should relate to the cause in one way or the other. And that's why it can never exist for everybody. It is exclusive, by definition".

Qua assembling, second, it was argued earlier how this undertaking, too, took form as would be propagated by the Radical-theoretical approach. Pension Almonde took centre stage as the latest background against which City in the Making continues its instituent model of governance, the practice whereby rules follow from commoning, rather than that rules dictate commoning up front. In the 'sociocratic' model of decision-making, the Pension's everyday governance unfolded along the lines of Stavrides' principles of comparability, translatability and the non-accumulation of power; as such the idea of reaching consensus for the governance of the commons emerged as a continuous practice. However, the act of assembling, too, couples to a number of Ostrom-informed principles at Pension Almonde. The short time span as well as the extended spatial range of the Pension are seen to necessitate a more instituted approach to commoning. Even though it has to be mentioned that this is still a work in progress at the time of writing, activists at City in the Making currently explore whether a set of consolidated manuals, formats, rules and regulations may be set up in order to be replicated at future occupations of vacant infrastructure. Moreover, resonating the Ostromian stance on governance, there are calls that "a system or procedure for conflict solving must be in place, such that the goal is resolving

the conflict and making peace and certainly not splitting up and/or expulsion”. A communication manager, also, has been appointed in order to coordinate the needs and concerns of the project’s participants. In conjunction with Ostrom’s (2012, p. 27) statement that socially cohesive communities are less likely to invite free-riding, the mission of the communication manager is to generate relationships “which ensure more sharing and social control”. The ‘movement to’ instituted commoning at Pension Almonde is rightly captured by one of the organization’s founders. He argues:

“Although personally I have always found that City in the Making is among other things also an experiment in radical freedom, and that chaos and/or frustration and/or laziness and/or indecision are all very much part of this freedom, I must admit that even for me the need for rules and procedures is slowly coming (...). The idea of City in the Making must become both scalable and repeatable. Otherwise it will make no political impact in the long run. And this calls for a sort of manual, in the form of formats, rules and regulations for governance as well as consensus about the nature of our meetings and if necessary our rules”.

It is now safe to assert that we have encountered two elements generally traversing the Ostrom-theoretical approach. Qua community (sheltering), we encountered a sense of social closure. In other words, we saw emerging a more closed, bounded, spatially rooted community (on the move, indeed, but invariably ‘connected’ to Rotterdam-North). Qua commoning (assembling), we crossed commoning’s instituted variant, the movement whereby the commoner’s organization and regulative framework are erected up front, tending to solidify into final form. Following from this, I will derive that it is Symbiotic Commoning that might be said to emerge. The process unfolding can be described as follows: through commoning at Pension Almonde, one presents – ‘delivers’ – to Havensteder a social grouping to whom the organization may recursively turn when struggling with future vacancy and dispossession (the urban nomad, those on the move) as well as the knowledge and procedures through which this turn may be facilitated (the regulative scripts and frameworks for future occupations). City in the Making and Havensteder step forward ‘as partner’ in order to jointly tackle the former’s problem of vacancy.

On Representation: The Requirement of Resistance

It is now time to bring the spatial triad back into the analysis. Two topics are worthy to unpack at the current juncture: the relationship of the spatial triad with the theoretical approaches to space-commoning, as well as the question of how the force fields may be mobilized within the sphere of Oppositional Commoning.

At this point in the analysis, the use of the spatial triad in order to uncover the production of common space shows once more its utility (a thread to be developed further in the remainder of this work). We may cautiously argue that the force field of representation is one that links closely to how the Ostrom-theoretical approach envisions space-commoning. Conversely, we might cautiously state that the force field of signification roams the Radical-theoretical approach. As theoretically exposed in Chapter 3, the field of signification entails a recursive loop of imbuing multiple meanings upon a spatial substrate, rendering that very same spatial substrate interpretable in various ways. Rather than an unequivocal determination of space, signification comprises an ‘interpretation-by-the-many’. At Pension Almonde, this can be seen preliminary in the variable, changeable, volatile community ‘in movement’ of urban nomads, an ensemble brought together in a sociocratic governance structure through which everyday life at the Pension could be subjected to changing ideas and interpretations. The force field of representation, by contrast, entails a ‘reductive moment’: a transition from a variability of meanings, functions and possible futures to a singular one. I have called this earlier: a ‘determination-by-the-one’ (this ‘one’ can of course be a collective as well). The residue of the reductive moment, the ‘abstraction’ so to say, is then projected back onto space (‘onto the lived’) in its concrete existence. At the Pension, there is again no difficulty of recognizing this operation. Qua community, notwithstanding its volatile dimension, the urban nomad is put subject to representation. The existence of this ‘persona’ is researched and codified in various ways. It appears, first, within *City in the Making*’s communication channels (for instance towards Havensteder)²⁸ as the ‘City in the Making community’, a community having its proper locus in Rotterdam-North. The everyday sociality of the urban nomad, moreover, is put forward as a researchable subject from which knowledge may be detracted in order to be presented to Havensteder. ‘Vacancy Prose’, for instance, is a residency for writers who are asked to sketch a

literary portrait of tenants moving out. The ‘Documentation Working Group’, finally, aims to make Almonde “open-source and accessible and understandable” to everyone with an interest in urban commons and temporary occupation. The overall goal is to hold a magnifying glass over Almonde’s nomads in order to “co-construct the city’s agenda”. Qua commoning, it can be perceived in the movement from a form of commoning which has no rules in advance – at least, rules emerge only when needed – to the development of an internal manual and an external (towards Havensteder) ‘replicable model’ which will state in advance how future vacancy occupations are to be rolled out and organized. These constructs are still developed by ‘the many’, yet they determine the spatial substrate, stating how it *should be*.

Connected to the aforementioned remarks should be the following, pivotal question: why is it that out of these representation-oriented acts (that are applied to the elements of community and commoning) still emerges Symbiotic Commoning, rather than Oppositional Commoning? The question becomes all the more relevant when shifting our gaze, for one moment, back to the previous study of The Public Land Grab. There, it was seen how representational operations – I am thinking particularly of what I called the ‘representation of value’ (the construct of the number) and the ‘representation of vision’ (the funding bid) – gave way to space-commoning’s Oppositional variant. How is this possible? My answer will be this one: at Pension Almonde, *representational operations have no opponent*. The representations produced at Pension Almonde, I will maintain, develop in conjunction or ‘partnership’ with Havensteder. Whilst at The Public Land Grab, the representations that were used had precisely the aim of countering the Municipality/Market – Lambeth Council and private developers – Pension Almonde’s representations are ‘given, delivered’ to Havensteder. This, I argue, is not without consequence. I now would want to lay bare three commons-crippling effects following from the use of representation without ‘other’.

A first effect relates to community: it emerges from the representational operation whereby one puts a ‘magnifying glass’ over the commoning community – the urban nomad – in order to present to Havensteder a ‘future-resilient manual for a nomadic urban pension’. In this form of representation, we encounter the ‘reduction of lived experience’ – the insights, life worlds and interpretations of the street’s

past and present inhabitants – into written form. This is the point where *City in the Making* seems to assimilate, as explained in the foreword, Constant’s New Babylon approach, the point where experiment “becomes the very condition of knowledge”²⁹. However, it is a Janus-faced condition, a lineage which may go in two, opposite ways. Constant stated that “utilitarian norms such as those that apply in the functional city must yield to the norm of creativity”³⁰. It will, yet, depend on the statements made in the manual whether the commoner will retain a sense of self-determined play and invention for the production of common space or, vice versa, whether such creativity will yield to the norm of functionality. For now, at least, the following indication can be made. The ‘representation of commoning in written format’ that is presented to Havensteder can become a commons-tackling affair, namely when the knowledge compiled turns *itself* into a ‘CPR’, into a common-pool resource distilled from ‘the many’ (Pension Almonde’s commoners) but utilized by ‘the one’ (Havensteder). One of the street’s inhabitants expresses his concerns in this regard. He asks: “to what extent do these individual ideas become part of the collective idea, and to what extent does the collective idea becomes dominant? Oftentimes, the individual idea disappears in the representation. There is a tension, and that tension is unhealthy”. Such tension, the respondent continues, seems to obstruct commoning’s Oppositional variant to unfold:

“One could say that *City in the Making* sees this as a research endeavour from which it can distill information. But then I think: we’re not talking about the commons. You could ask: what is the common good here? Is it enclosed among the people who are formulating the representation, the research question? To what extent are these people part of the commons? Or is it just a form of data gathering? That may well be the case, but then the common good lies there”.

Ad interim: can one effectively construct, compile, put together a commoning community from scratch? Six months into the process, *City in the Making*’s activists noticed that the organizations inhabiting the plinth would rather mobilize their infrastructure for personal, private goals. “In the beginning”, argues one activist, “we would dispense the buildings and every organization would get a key of the front door.

Consequently, however, we immediately lost the commons, the spirit of the place. The agency disappeared behind the front door”. At unease with the fact that the doors of Almonde seemed to be regularly locked, a new rule was instituted, namely: when an organization gets assigned a house, it gets a back room which can be locked, and a front room, which imperatively must remain common: “you can program it, but another can do so too”. Similar signals were heard during moments of personal presence, for example when one inhabitant of the plinth noticed that “the door remains closed all too often. People [from the neighborhood] tend not to cross the threshold to see what’s going on behind the doors”. To this could be added one of the early ideas of City in the Making’s activists, namely, the composition of the ‘Almonde Board’. This board was intended to become a deliberative body which would represent the street and engage in its day-to-day governance. But this, the activists reckoned, was “a step too far” for the commoners present, an ambition too naïve to be fully realized. Could one, indeed, synthesize and represent a community *ex nihilo* and expect it to govern its common goods smoothly and willingly? One of the street’s inhabitants argued in this regard that “it seems to be artificially introduced. Suddenly, you know, there is this board (...) while I think most people that are coming in are probably just looking for a temporary place to land”³¹.

A final effect emerges from the representational operation whereby one consolidates the act of commoning in rules and regulations, in an Ostromian ‘script’ to be rolled out at future occupations. What unites the first and the second form of representation is that a movement is made from lived experience to written abstraction, a movement to be projected *back* “onto the level of the lived” (Lefebvre cited in Gregory, 1994, p. 404). It is arguable that both Havensteder’s model (for future vacancy) and City in the Making’s script (for future commoning) may hollow out the ‘volatility’ of commoning at Pension Almonde. This point is similar to the one presented in the context of the Public Land Grab. There, too, it was seen how the demand for representation (weight of the harvest, volunteer hours) is “that which kills the project”. Likewise, one of the street’s inhabitants argued that commoning “[...] is a highly inefficient sort of process. It doesn’t follow these steps, like ‘first we do this, and then this, first we move people in, and then people get to know each other, and then’, you know...’. It is almost impossible to follow a set of procedures. Because that is the antithesis of a commoning process”.

In all: encountered in the preceding remarks has been a movement to representation – representing community, representing commoning – which coupled to the emergence of Symbiotic Commoning, commoning *with* the Municipality/Market. The contention that I am putting forward is that these representations have no ‘significant other’ (and therefore bring about Symbiotic Commoning). Rather, they come forward from an adage of ‘we are all in this together’: the commoner, City in the Making, *and* Havensteder. When representation lacks the ‘requirement of resistance’ but is utilized as a force field to make the project more ‘efficient’, commoning may become prone to instrumentalization and solidification, which in turn may undermine and extinguish the drive of the commoner altogether³². As Stavrides (2015, p. 16) argued, it is precisely the dimension of *inefficiency* – discussion, conflict and volatility in self-governance – where the empowering substance of commoning may be found. This, to end with, will be an important point to keep in mind during the remainder of our endeavour: if commoning is to become an Oppositional endeavour, and more so, if we aspire Oppositional Commoning to have political traction, then the force field of representation (namely, a reduction from mere variability to unequivocal determination) will play a pivotal part, under the important condition that there is an opponent to direct it to. This will be worked out in detail in Chapters 10 and 11.

Afterword: Doing Nothing

Within the multiple forms of commoning available, each and every commoning organization will make its own choices of how to act, will determine its own ‘closeness to’ or ‘distance from’ the Municipality/Market. City in the Making teaches us that there are tremendous opportunities to change a system from within, but in so doing takes a more pragmatic stance. As argues one of the collective’s activists: “you can never win against the big bucks. But once you acknowledge the force field, you can create these in-between spaces. Havensteder is still our partner, we treat each other with respect”. During the same, double in-depth interview, another activist likewise contended: “yes, I think we are accommodating them [Havensteder] with a direct issue, a problem of maintenance, socially and physically of this street, but it also gives us the opportunity to put our foot in the door and talk about a bigger agenda. This has given us a lot of opportunities”.

The narrative developed so far, has been the following. It was seen, first, how the force field of representation – in its forward-looking modality of the ‘future projection’ – instigated the endeavour at Pension Almonde (directly in the form of the ‘full house’ vision, indirectly in the form of the ‘New Zoho’ vision). Following therefrom, it was highlighted how City in the Making was turned to in order to occupy and appropriate ‘the latest CPR on the block’, the Almonde Street. But rather than getting stuck at the level of configuration (hammering out walls to create a communal kitchen, marking the street as ‘meent’, making furniture available for past inhabitants), the overall goal of City in the Making appeared to be one of signification. Pension Almonde appeared as a space of presence rather than of representation, one that is ‘alive’ and ‘speaks’ (Lefebvre, 1991b, p. 44). Upon the street’s physicality were inscribed the viewpoints and life worlds of a multiplicity of actors: artists, sans papiers, expats, digital nomads, socio-cultural organizations. However, in order to continually make this impetus possible, representational operations appeared on the horizon: regulative manuals, replicable models. Contrary to The Public Land Grab, these operations seemed to instigate a Symbiotic effect: they have no opponent, only a partner, Havensteder that is. This, I argued extensively, may undermine the act of space-commoning. The realm of representation continues to appear on the horizon as the force field which both ‘cures and cripples’ the commons. Representation, hence, as life giver and grave digger.

How, then, could the force field of representation be mobilized as a sphere that could turn Symbiotic back into Oppositional Commoning? In order to answer this question, it is needed to explicitly make the following statements. I will refrain from digressing to the theme of the ‘properly political’ production of common space at this juncture. After all, this subject will be taken up in Chapters 10 and 11. For now, however, I do want to indicate one basic premise that is needed in order for the commoner to act politically: the requirement of an ‘other’, an opponent, an antagonist party. Notwithstanding their different angles on ‘the political’ and ‘politics’, this is what Mouffe (2013) calls ‘radical negativity’ and Rancière (2015) a ‘politics that defines itself against’. This, thus runs my argument, is absent at Pension Almonde. Therefore, I finally want to propose an exit out of the impasse, a pathway through which the field of representation at Pension Almonde may regain such ‘requirement of resistance’ and thus contribute to commoning’s Oppositional variant.

To use representation in order to engage in Oppositional Commoning does not necessarily imply the ‘cancelling’ of the relationship with Havensteder. As argued before: commoning may ‘oppose from within’; this became apparent from The Public Land Grab. It is the *content*, however, of the relationship that might reinstall an oppositional undercurrent in the substrate of Pension Almonde. The moment *par excellence* in order to bend over the partnership arrangement into one of ‘friction’ is found once more in the aforementioned ‘manual for the future occupation of vacancy’. Even though still under development at the time of writing, I would want to point to the importance of the manual’s twofold, future nature. On the one hand, the manual may easily constitute, qua community to turn to and qua procedures to invoke, a De Angelean (2013) ‘commons fix’. The urban nomad would then reappear as an identifiable, circumscribed group, a group with a social placement (as ‘user’, as ‘solution’) as well as with a spatial placement (Rotterdam’s northern periphery, and more precisely, the loci where vacancy strikes). On the other hand, the manual may constitute an opportunity to instigate Oppositional Commoning at Pension Almonde at the moment when it commences to problematize the very relationship between Havensteder and the urban nomad. Such operation would entail that the statements made in the manual not only evolve around how vacancy is to be quotidianly ‘governed’, where and by whom, but around the very questionability of vacancy occupation (and its replacement with space-commoning) *itself*. In other words, at stake is the question whether the manual will merely ‘add’ the voice of the urban nomad to the perceptual coordinates of Havensteder, or whether the manual will also endow upon the urban nomad a sense of agency to speak about the functioning and power relations of vacancy management *per se*. As such, the representational operation of distilling the aforementioned ‘replicable manual’ gains significance again. Instead of striving towards a ‘replicable, upscaleable’ model for vacancy management, City in the Making’s activists might include in the manual what has not been learned; a tendency, moreover, that at the time of writing has been initiated. One of the project’s resident-activists argues that if Pension Almonde constitutes a site of research, “then a new knowledge has to be produced, and that happens through exploring the gaps and where it’s not working, and why”. Against this backdrop, a member of the project’s independent research team formulated in City in the Making’s internal newspaper a number of what she calls ‘uneasy questions’, such as: “how do we

research ‘the commons’ when a community is being displaced as we are researching it? Who is part of the community of Pension Almonde? Why is Pension Almonde interesting and even desirable for a housing association like Havensteder? What role could organizations like City in the Making have in the political city planning game being played at a higher level?”.

One issue, however, that will return in the remainder of this study, is that in order to transmit the commoner’s representations to the Municipality/Market, one needs a stable, physical infrastructure. This was already seen at The Public Land Grab, where a greenhouse – a physically rooted ‘base camp’, so to say – was erected in order to engage in an agonistic approach *vis-à-vis* Lambeth Council. One may therefore argue that City in the Making’s nomadism undermines its envisioned political potency to take root. After all, the aforementioned, shortening time spans for each occupation – time spans becoming ever-shorter the further the credit crisis disappears in the background – relate to Havensteder’s primordial economic interest of renovating its stock as fast as possible. Hence, it can be said that when a commoning project is ‘destined to move’ even before a community of commoners could ever formulate its future visions, Oppositional Commoning will face considerable difficulties to take root³³.

To bring it to a point: representations of space may lose their oppositional thrust when an opposing party disappears from sight. One might therefore preliminarily state that the force field of representation will play an important role when seeking to exert, as the commoners at Pension Almonde aspire, ‘political impact’. Whilst this question will reappear later on, an early, prospective answer will now be coined in order to end the analysis. This answer was given by a temporary occupant of the Almonde Street – an urban nomad – who argued that: “the most political thing that you can do

“[...] is to do nothing. Just to observe. Don’t fill it in with projects and things. Just observe it. Mark out areas and observe how things grow. These expectations, you know, that are coming from the city, from the housing association, from whatever sort of partners and actors and stakeholders that are participating in this process, are predicated on this expectation of ‘what are you going to do?’ And inactivity is this impossibility. This is interesting for me. If there are like these external expectations, of filling things in and making things happen, I mean, is this really a commons?”

Notes

¹ For Howard, the ideal city would house 32.000 inhabitants on 6.000 acres. Radial boulevards would be 37 meters wide. Garden Cities were envisioned to become self-sufficient when reaching full population. In that case, different cities would be clustered and connected ‘as satellites’ to a central city consisting of 58.000 dwellers (Howard, 1965; Pinder, 2006).

² Constant Nieuwenhuys, *New Urbanism*, 1966. Derived from Fondation Constant, via <https://stichtingconstant.nl/publication>.

³ *Ibid.* 2, p. 1.

⁴ Many dwellings in The Netherlands are owned by housing associations. These are municipal, quasi-commercial associations that provide accommodation for the elderly, the disabled or people with low welfare. Whilst the government sets the rules, the housing associations are responsible for building, letting, maintaining and selling. Havensteder owns about 45.000 living units in Rotterdam-North.

⁵ Even though the ‘core team’ of City in the Making left (at the time of the crisis) their save jobs in order to take up, rather than to flee from, the precarious occupation of activist architect.

⁶ Constant Nieuwenhuys, *Another City for Another Life*, 1959. Derived from Fondation Constant, via <https://stichtingconstant.nl/publication>.

⁷ *Ibid.* 2, p. 1.

⁸ Constant Nieuwenhuys, *Our Own Desires Build the Revolution*, 1949. Derived from Fondation Constant, via <https://stichtingconstant.nl/publication>.

⁹ *Ibid.* 2, p. 1.

¹⁰ For example, the “Woonvisie Rotterdam: Koers naar 2030, Agenda tot 2020”, available at <https://www.rotterdam.nl/wonen-leven/woonvisie/>. Also relevant is the letter by the Deputy for Building, Living and Energy Transition in the Built Environment to the Board of the Mayor and his Deputies of November 23rd, 2018.

¹¹ For example, the internal papers ‘On the Nature and Governance of Our Commons’, ‘Proposals for Provisional Procedures and Decision-Making Rules for City in the Making Meetings’ and ‘On Conflict Solving and Sanctions’, written by City in the Making’s activists.

¹² For example, the grant application for CityLab010, an organization that funds and stimulates “the energy of city dreamers”.

¹³ For example, its internal newspaper ‘De Stoker’.

¹⁴ For example, the brainstorming session on 09/07/2019, during which it was discussed how a system of governance could be instituted within City in the Making.

¹⁵ For example, giving a presentation and participating in discussions during City in the Making’s ‘Landdag’ (Landing Day) (26/06/2018), an annual gathering of inhabitants, artists and activists. Another example is observation and participation at the opening of Pension Almonde, 05/03/2019.

¹⁶ The concept of the urban nomad should be attributed to ‘Crimson’, a Dutch group of historians and urbanists. The concept is presented in its publication *A City of Comings and Goings* (Pronkhorst, 2019).

¹⁷ As argued in the City in the Making’s discussion panel on urban nomads, organized on 24/03/2019.

¹⁸ As occurs regularly in the Netherlands, the foundations and façades of the Almonde Street are slowly sinking away in what was formerly swamp land.

¹⁹ The commons highlighted in this report can indeed be seen to contribute to the reproduction of both labour power and capital. Qua labour power, it is of pivotal importance to refer to the Dutch ‘WMO - Wet Maatschappelijke Ondersteuning’ (‘Law for Societal Support’, 2006), a legal device which marketizes social care. The WMO puts care ‘in tenders’, organizes it through supply and demand, and thus requires individuals and organizations to have a legal personality. This means that informal care takers and care givers fall through the cracks of the system. Against this backdrop, City in the Making wants to ignite a neighborhood-wide system of informal care (laundry, kitchens, childcare, food distribution, and so forth). Furthermore, commoning can also be seen to contribute to the reproduction of capital itself. As City in the Making occupies Havensteder’s vacant assets, it ‘secures’ these buildings’ exchange value until they become marketable again.

²⁰ As stated in the online press release “The City of Rotterdam and Havensteder Start Procedure for Zoho Quartier”. Retrieved from <https://fakton.com/nl/nieuws/gemeente-rotterdam-en-havensteder-starten-verkoopprocedure-voor-zomerhofkwartier>.

²¹ The full title of the document is ‘Housing Vision Rotterdam: Course to 2030, Agenda to 2020’. Available at <https://www.rotterdam.nl/wonen-leven/woonvisie/DEFINITIEF-Woonvisie-Rotterdam-2030-dd-raad-15-december-2016.pdf>.

²² For a brief synthesis, see <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/onderwerpen/woningcorporaties/activiteiten-woningcorporaties>.

²³ A third partner in the process of the sale has been the citizen initiative ‘Zoho Citizens’. The initiative envisions New Zoho as ‘experimental, involved, mixed, sustainable and connected’. Retrieved from <https://www.zohorotterdam.nl/>.

²⁴ As stated in the Resilient Rotterdam program. Retrieved from <https://www.resilientrotterdam.nl/news/gemeente-rotterdam-en-havensteder-starten-verkoopprocedure-voor-zomerhofkwartier>.

²⁵ As argued in the article ‘Ondernemers Vrezen Uitholling bij Verkoop Zomerhof Kwartier’. Retrieved via <https://versbeton.nl/2018/11/ondernemers-vrezen-utholling-bij-verkoop-zomerhofkwartier/>. It should also be mentioned that I have not been able to discover what ‘market consultation’ effectively means within Havensteder’s discourse.

²⁶ Retrieved from <https://www.pension-almonde.nl/over-pension-almonde/>.

²⁷ Derived from mail exchanges between activists at City in the Making regarding the topic of internal governance, 03/05/2019.

²⁸ For example, in the article entitled ‘Urban Nomads and Misfits, Who are They?’, published in City in the Making’s internal newspaper called De Stoker.

²⁹ Ibid. 7, p. 1.

³⁰ Ibid. 2, p. 1.

³¹ Almost two years after the initiation of Pension Almonde, it should be mentioned that the Almonde Board functions more smoothly, without the interference of City in the Making. One could thus argue that it takes at least one year to generate and activate a commoning community from scratch.

³² But, as is argued by a key activist, one could also construe City in the Making and Havensteder as ‘one joint party’, a collective agent opposed by yet another adversary, the City of Rotterdam. The latter, after all, complicates the activities of housing associations given the fact that the legally allowed number of social housing units must decrease.

³³ On the other hand, it should be mentioned that City in the Making itself sets out to put its ‘foot to the ground’ and is currently in search of a stably rooted infrastructure in order to continue its cause; a quest, however, lost so far against the unbridled forces of the real estate market.

Chapter 7. Montaña Verde, Antwerp: Spatializing the Commons in the City-as-Oeuvre (With dr. Hanka Otte)

“An intelligent society is a society where you are free to have a decision, wrong or not, black or white, you have the right to provide a solution, different from my solution”.

Santiago Cirugeda, *Recetas Urbanas*)

Foreword: A Differential Endeavour

Upon rooting his analyses in the material conditions of French, post-War city life, Lefebvre did not refrain from utopian thinking. Imbued in his contributions one finds a critique on ‘abstract space’ – the-city-as-product – as well as an idealist longing for ‘differential space’ – the-city-as-work. Differential space, Lefebvre (1970b, p. 130) wrote in *The Urban Revolution*, is “multifunctional, polyvalent, transfunctional, with an incessant turnover of functions” and emerges where “groups take control of spaces for expressive actions and constructions”. Differential space, Lefebvre hoped, would constitute urbanites’ collective work, their spatial *oeuvre*. Against the image of the city as a clay-like substance, modelled in the hands – or better, through the analytic minds – of the protagonists of representation, Lefebvre, friend of Constant, imagined a *ludic* city. Differential space, hence, would be based on urbanites’ free play and imagination. Lefebvre longed for a city where inhabitants could tweak, repair or construct from scratch sections of the city to suit their needs, as they’d see fit. In this vein, the right to engage in differential spatial production would be based on residence, rather than on formal citizenship: it would not be an *a priori* inscribed right in a legislative body, but it would come forth from the urbanite’s ‘being in place’, from mere inhabitance (‘habiter’). An analogy with pre-Magna Carta commoning, a custom *preceding* the legislative moment, gains significance here.

The architect could play a pioneering role in the production of differential space. A certain breed of architects, Lefebvre (1996, p. 173) suspected, would be able to inscribe ‘the ludic’ in urban space through so-called ‘structures of enchantment’. But only on one condition: if it were to contribute to the

city-as-oeuvre, the act of doing architecture would have to retreat from its focus on representation and configuration, and invoke the sphere of signification; it would have to consider the needs, desires and life trajectories of the *usager*. “Architecture on its own”, Lefebvre argued, “cannot create neither restrict possibilities. Architecture as art [representation] and technique [configuration] also needs an orientation [signification]”. One instance of differential spatial production can be found in the Parisian ‘Bistro-Club’, discussed by Lefebvre (1962) in his article *Bistro-Club: Noyeau de Vie Sociale*. The Bistro-Club was a cultural centre designed to combat social segregation, the design of which was presented at the 1961 Salon des Arts Ménagers¹. The Club was configured so that movable walls could facilitate various activities such as theater, sports, cinema, encounter, dancing, photography, and the like. Glass walls were expected to create an openness, a Stavridian ‘porous perimeter’, between the Club and its surroundings. Lefebvre lauded² the endeavour of the Bistro-Club, describing it as a nucleus of social life: “a kernel of multiple activities” and “an effort to overcome analytical functionalism, which separates and projects on the grounds all functions of urban life by dividing them”; the Bistro-club, for Lefebvre, was nothing other than ‘differential space’.

As argued in Chapter 3, Lefebvre’s differential project has remained untranslated to Anglo-Saxon scholarship; a gap this study seeks to fill by putting to the test the concept of common space as a potentially viable alternative to ‘abstract’ spatial production. My interest, hence, lies with those urban practitioners who actively set out to produce the ‘city-as-oeuvre’, those seeking to configure, as Lefebvre had it, “multifunctional, polyvalent, transfunctional” urban interventions where “groups can take control of spaces or expressive actions”. It is needless to say that my enthusiasm was tickled when the Montaña Verde project landed on Antwerp’s De Coninck Square. As argued before, Montaña Verde is this study’s ‘anti-case’ qua selection³. More precisely, with the arrival of the project, it was to be witnessed from closeby how a common space would be envisioned and developed not from the grassroots, neither from a collaboration between the grassroots and the Municipality/Market, but ‘from above’, seeing the light of day in the ranks of municipality itself. My preliminary hypothesis was therefore that Montaña Verde would exemplify a case of Symbiotic Commoning. Given the fact that this study was co-developed with colleague Hanka Otte, the tone of writing will be ‘us’ and ‘we’.

In the context of the arts festival ‘Antwerp Baroque 2018’, the Middelheim Museum initiated a public exhibition under the denominator of ‘Experience Traps’. To this end, the museum invited sixteen artists from various countries to reinterpret the baroque aesthetic in contemporary form. This resulted in a number of installations inside, but also outside Middelheim’s sculpture park in the south of the city. Throughout the endeavour, the Museum collaborated with Antwerp’s Green Department, a municipal authority responsible for the production and maintenance of the city’s green space. Montaña Verde’s status as a ‘Box of Pandora’ became evidently clear the moment Recetas Urbanas entered the picture, the Sevillian activist architecture collective extensively highlighted under ‘First Encounters’. Recetas Urbanas, I may add, works in the name of the-city-as-oeuvre. The collective sets out to produce multifunctional, polyvalent interventions that carry the signature of Lefebvre’s *usager*, the urban inhabitant. As Santiago Cirugeda from Recetas Urbanas once argued in the first-ever interview for this dissertation, “the architect, when occupying a public building, must be open to all the people, all the citizens. If you don’t do that, you are the same as those who keep it cut off from the public”. As the Museum, the Green Department and the residents of the Amandus-Atheneum neighborhood (home of the De Coninck Square) jointly engaged in Montaña Verde, I felt the project might resemble the Bistro-Club: a ‘kernel of multiple activities’ where the life trajectories of various social groups could be inscribed in city space. After all, under its roof, the wooden arch was intended as a space for workshops, sports, debate, culture, encounter. On its roof, the idea was to constitute a laboratory for the cultivation of plants and vegetables. Once realized, its governance was transferred to local residents who were expected to govern the installation as a commons: disseminating vegetables, watering plants and devising protocols for collective management.

Montaña Verde’s conception took place from April 2017 until February 2018. As from March until the first of June 2018, Recetas Urbanas worked on-site through a participatory building process with in-house, professional builders as well as with residents, students and local activists. Thereafter, the work was exhibited and used until September 2018. During these phases, the case study on Montaña Verde has been a collaborative project between my colleague Hanka Otte, post-doc scholar in cultural policy studies, and myself. During these phases, we were given access to written and verbal

communication between the parties involved in which the purpose, intended use and evaluation of Montaña Verde was discussed. As for the phases of building and exhibition, dr. Otte's efforts have provided this study with eleven additional interviews and corresponding transcripts. Whilst my role concerned the provision of a methodological-theoretical framework, the deliverance of two interviews/transcriptions with Recetas Urbanas and the writing of the report, dr. Otte's contribution entailed the contacting of this case study's 'cast of characters'. As such, interviewees ranged from grassroots activists to curators at the Middelheim Museum, and from architects and builders gravitating around Recetas Urbanas to policy executives at the higher echelons of the Antwerp city administration. Participatory observation, moreover, was performed at meetings between the aforementioned parties during which the forms and time spans of civil involvement were proposed. A series of building weeks organized by Recetas Urbanas, also, enabled on-site sessions of participation and observation. Being on-site outside of building periods, finally, generated the opportunity to organize unstructured interviews with local residents from around the De Coninck Square. This enabled us to assess the latter's experience of being involved in or having to witness from afar the production of Montaña Verde.

In the Middelheim Museums' accompanying text for the Experience Traps exhibition, Herman & Boons (2018) argue how from the 16th century onwards the aristocracy set out to mobilize the work of artists and architects in order to create the 'baroque garden' in a twofold manner. On the one hand, there is the *exclusive* baroque garden: a status symbol, an adventure park *avant la lettre*, a place for the aristocracy to mingle under the auspices of artificial grottos, *trompe-l'oeils* and fountains designed to auditorily imitate the sound of singing birds. On the other hand, towards the end of the 16th century, one detects the emergence of another, *inclusive* variant: the botanical garden. Here, the focus is on sharing: a sharing of the medicinal properties of plants and herbicidal knowledge, a sharing that would go beyond the class of the aristocracy and be open to the whole of the populace⁴. With this precedent in mind, I would want to equate the existence of the exclusive aristocrat garden and the inclusive botanical one with Ostrom's socio-spatial *closure* and Stavrides's *porosity* of borders respectively. A rift between closure and openness, between an asset in the hands of a few and a joint intervention made by the many, will be seen to traverse the production of common space at Montaña Verde.

A (Un)Common Future Projection

The time span during which Montaña Verde was conceived, and by whom, plays an important part. The initial idea for the project had arisen as early as 2015, when Belgian, visual artist Anne-Mie van Kerckhoven, commissioned by the City of Antwerp, had realized the flower carpet ‘Flower Power’ in Antwerp’s Central Market Square for a period of nine days. After the event, as it befits an Ostromian common-pool resource, the carpet’s flowers were disseminated throughout the visiting public. The massive appeal of this work to media, tourists and residents encouraged former Council member Philip Heylen to publicly state that Antwerp “need not wait another 23 years before showing off the next flower carpet”⁵. His statement, we would want to argue, is an example of a representation of space, a preconceived plan stemming from the “frame of reference of the observer” (Harvey, 2006, p. 122), and in this case, one that fits in with the marketing strategy of the city as a tourist attraction. It constituted, also, a projection that fitted seamlessly with an event simultaneously financed by Tourism Flanders: Antwerp Baroque 2018 – an event under which Experience Traps would see the light of day.

We alluded earlier to how the force field of representation entails a ‘one-way’, determinative expression of how space *should* be. With this precedent in mind, it is possible to lay bare the representations present at both the Green Department and the Middelheim Museum. Interviews with the director and staff members of the Green Department revealed that the institution’s future vision was to have a number of supposedly ‘gray areas’ of the city made green by the people of Antwerp themselves. The department, after all, had realized that the mere diffusion of flowers would not necessarily sensitize Antwerp’s populace with regard to the production of urban green space. In all, envisioned was an involvement of the citizenry that would last, unlike ‘Flower Power’, more than just nine days.

Because of the so-called excellent collaboration with the Middelheim Museum in 2015 for the organization of the Flower Power carpet, the Green Department set out to recontact the museum in order to explore the possibilities of another joint venture. This is also the moment at which the representation present at the Middelheim Museum is revealed. Although it attracts many visitors every year, the museum’s public is deemed not representative of Antwerp’s population. As explained by the Museum’s director, cases are known whereby art works from within the inner city had to be brought back to the

museum's open-air exhibition park for reasons of vandalism. In this context, the Middelheim Museum is seen to struggle with the question of how to make public art more accessible, but also more comprehensible, for a broader audience, both inside as well as outside its own public park. In all, the dilemma posed to the institution is whether bottom-up, widely understood and communally created works are also the "artistically interesting" ones. With these questions in mind, the Middelheim Museum bundled forces with the time and energy, as well as with the budget, of the Green Department in order to explore whether a work of urban public art could be created *with* the citizen, yet *without* losing artistic quality. In so doing, said the museum director, the institute envisions the inner city as a museum domain: 'the-city-as-oeuvre'.

As stated by Middelheim's curators Herman & Boons (2018, p. 91), the goal of Montaña Verde is to explore together with Antwerp's citizenry whether the communal production of urban green space "could contribute to the quality of the city". After all, one reads furthermore, "if the neighborhood does not embrace this green romance, then the De Coninck Square will remain gray". The future visions coming forth from the Middelheim Museum and the Green Department were codified in yet another representation of space. Pertinent in this regard is the decree of the Antwerp city government of 2 February 2018. At this juncture we encounter for the first time an indication of the commons, more precisely a pivotal trait from within the Ostrom-theoretical approach to common space. The decree, we argue, forefronts Ostrom's final design principle which entails the 'minimal recognition of rights organize' by higher-order authorities, or in the words of Iaione (2016): 'the enabling state'. The former document states that the municipal partners envision

"[...] an organically growing artwork that gives back this small part of the city to its residents and which grows as a function of the wishes and the input of its residents and users".

In the spring of 2017, furthermore, a third partner enters the picture. The Middelheim Museum was inspired by a lecture given by Recetas Urbanas during the symposium 'Artistic Constitutions of the Common City', organized at the University of Antwerp. Recetas Urbanas presented themselves as a

collective that moves the act of spatial production from the institutional level to that of the citizen. Our contention in this regard is that Recetas Urbanas' overall way of working resorts to what in these pages is called Oppositional Commoning. Oftentimes working in what it calls 'a-legality', the collective *claims* space, rather than to ask for its deployment. In so doing, direct confrontation rather than pragmatic engagement with municipal governments⁶ runs through the collective's veins. Recetas Urbanas posits the space-commoner as "an active subject capable of engaging with the authorities and disputing their power as a conscious and proactive purposeful citizen" (Bonet, 2017, p. 166). Or as Santiago Cirugeda declared during an interview on the De Coninck Square⁷: "we provide citizens with spaces where the municipality fails. We set up new rules of play, giving citizens the possibility to build their own schools, health centers, squares and areas".

However, whereas the collective pursues independent commissions for most of its projects, on this occasion it accepted a formal invitation and funding coming from the aforementioned municipal institutions: the Middelheim Museum and the Green Department. In October 2017, Recetas Urbanas came forward with its own 'on-demand' representation of space, an expression of how, according to the collective, Antwerp's city space should evolve. Encountered in the expression will be the production of common space not as a goal in itself, but as a *means*; a means of entering into critical dialogue with institutions responsible for spatial production. In the following statement, Montaña Verde is envisioned, we propose, as a citizen-led appropriation of urban space, one extending beyond the mere management of a common pool resource:

"The challenge for cities is to bring extremely different people to live in and share the same environment and to design this environment for all. Obviously, there will be some left behind. Because they are too different, not 'adapted' or integrated', sick or lost... they are considered as the 'bad weed' of urban life. Yet, everyone has a right to the city, to participate in city life and the city's development. If we want to rethink how we build and live in our cities, it is crucial to include those who are excluded now. Let's use this moment to grow social links as much as green; to re-introduce bad weed and wild weed, by changing the way we look at them".

Recetas Urbanas on-demand ‘bad weed’ representation did eventually not survive the discussions with the Middelheim Museum and the Green Department during the preparatory phase of the project. The social approach by Recetas Urbanas did, however, contribute to deciding upon the location where the work was to be built. The Green Department had selected a number of locations considered ‘gray’ and in need of greenification, locations visited by the parties concerned. Eventually, the De Coninck Square was chosen: a square centrally located and easy to reach for tourists (an interest of the city government), but also a square with a great cultural and social variety of residents (an interest of Recetas Urbanas).

Nevertheless, it is our contention that the preparatory phase of Montaña Verde was dominated by the force field of representation, a force field mobilized by the project’s municipal institutions, among them: the City of Antwerp, anticipating a new flower carpet “for which one needn’t wait another 23 years”; the Green Department, hoping to see ‘the gray city’ become green again through citizen-led projects; and the Middelheim Museum, wanting to approach the city as an oeuvre, the inner-centre as a museum domain. These municipal aspirations have been engrained Article 3.1 of the contract between Recetas Urbanas and the city, a representation of space in which it was determined that the collective is expected to deliver “a qualitative artwork that meets the intentions and expectations of the Middelheim Museum and the Green Department of the City of Antwerp”. Yet, it was a projection without a corresponding reality ‘on the ground’: a simulacrum, one may argue, which meant that there was no link with what was at stake locally or what wishes lived there. Whereas the aforementioned municipal partners had ample time to jointly arrive at an ‘agreed’ future vision of the De Coninck Square, Lefebvre’s *usager*, those urbanites living and working in the square’s surrounding area, would only be involved in the last instance.

In Part II, it was shown how in Lefebvre’s triad, there appears a certain violence – an intrinsically *reductive* modus operandi – in the force field of representation. In a late passage in the *Production of Space*, Lefebvre (1991b, pp. 285–287) returns to this topic in terms of ‘the geometric formant’, implying “the reduction of three-dimensional realities to two dimensions (for example a ‘plan’, a blank sheet of paper, something drawn on that paper, a map or any kind of graphic representation or projection)”. He then couples the former term immediately and subsequently to ‘the

optical formant', the process whereby the visual "gains the upper hand over the other senses", a Debordian spectacularization, one might say⁸. As suggested in Part II, the realm of the image may indeed constitute a tool in the hands of the protagonists of representation who, the geometric and optical formants on their side, are institutionally embedded to define what space *is*, or indeed, how it ought to be. We are adamant to recognize Lefebvre's geometric and optical formants in the preparatory phase of Montaña Verde. More precisely, whereas the bad weed metaphor did not survive the discussions of the municipal partners, Recetas Urbanas' preliminary sketch of the installation did – a sketch which played a constant and decisive role for the further development and implementation of the installation. It was, early-on, taken over by the Communication Department of the Middelheim Museum as a promotional device for the project, for example in the invitation (directed to the residents of the Amandus-Atheneum neighborhood) to attend an informational meeting about the project. Although those present at this meeting did participate in thinking about the design,⁹ the preliminary sketch remained in place. As can be seen in Figures 29 and 30, the final existence of Montaña Verde largely collides with its former, abstract conception.

Figure 29. Sketch of Montaña Verde

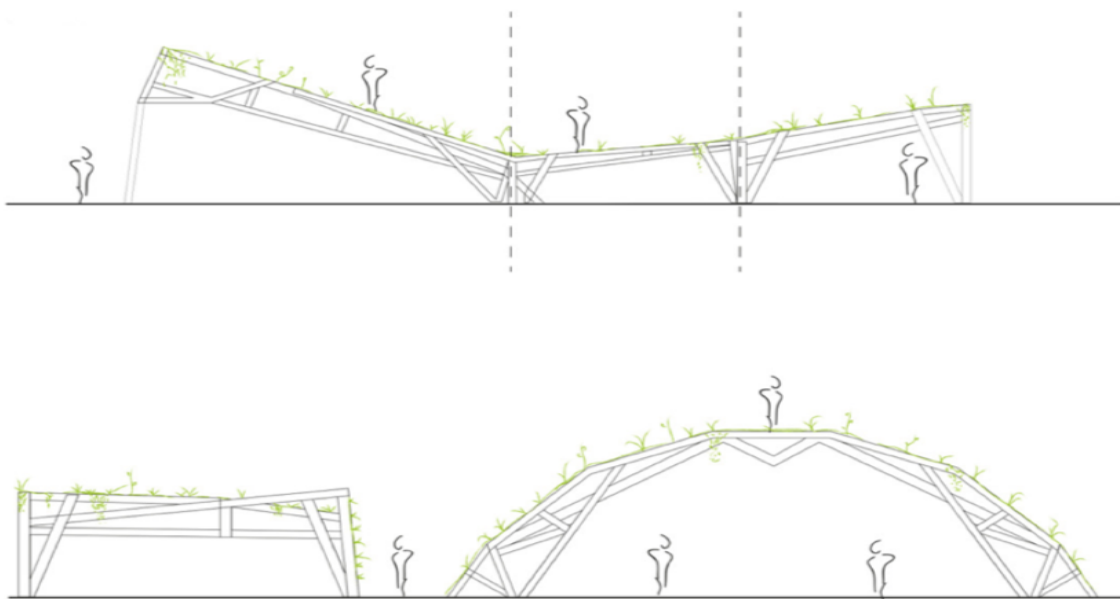


Figure 30. Montaña Verde



Conflicts in Spatial Practice

As put forward in Chapter 4, the case of Montaña Verde constitutes this study's Symbiotic case, given its intention "to realize a work that gives back this small part of the city to its residents and which grows as a function of the wishes and the input of its residents and users". As such, whereas Bauwens & Kostakis (2015) speak of the 'partner state', one could recognize in this instance the variant of the 'partner municipality', presenting an 'outstretched hand' to the project participants in order to jointly greenify and musealize the De Coninck Square. It was, however, during Recetas Urbanas' work on-site that not a symbiosis but rather a conflictual relationship commenced to emerge between Recetas Urbanas on the one hand and the municipal partners on the other. Before asking whether these conflicts have effectively steered the case in an Oppositional direction, they shall first be laid bare.

A first conflict can be traced back to Recetas Urbanas' approach to *commoning*. Recetas Urbanas' practice in the field was one of *instituent* commoning, more so: one of re-invention, of constant change (Creatio, Magma). Detected on-site was a configurative practice in constant flux. In this vein, Recetas Urbanas' configuration on the square was not determined by the dictates of the clock but by the

wishes of the moment, by what Cirugeda described as an organic method of ‘informal relationships’. The rhythm of life around the De Coninck Square determined for Recetas Urbanas when and how the work would be done. This meant that the configuration of Montaña Verde did not take place at set times, that changes in the plans were regularly implemented, and that it could be suddenly decided not to work at certain days, even though volunteers from the Netherlands were scheduled to come in and help out¹⁰. However, Recetas Urbanas’ organic, ‘cyclical’, volatile rhythm was seen to clash with a more linear, namely *instituted*, time conception adhered to by the municipal institutions. By contrast, the director and staff of the Green Department, as well as Montaña Verde’s production assistant and coordinator, professed to stick to a planned way of working, during regular hours, unerringly checked with the Financial Department of the City of Antwerp. One freelancer, acting as a liaison between Recetas Urbanas and the institutional field, expressed the conflict as follows: “the Financial Department needs weeks to approve any document. But then he [Cirugeda] decided that he wanted something completely different. It was a very problematic combination. The City wants everything documented and approved by three committees if someone wants to have three screws. Santi and his people kept changing the design while they were already building it and would spend more money than the budget allowed for”. On one occasion, finally, local police obliged the crew of Recetas Urbanas to end a feast it was having to celebrate the conclusion of one of the building phases; an event exemplifying again the contrast between Recetas’ Urbanas organic and the City’s representational approach to commoning.

A second conflict can be traced back to Recetas Urbanas’ approach to *community*. Recetas Urbanas, on the one hand, is invariably in search of what Rancière (2004a, p. 7) calls the ‘supernumerary’ part: those unheard, those unseen within the perceptual coordinates of the City, the Museum and the Green Department. As such, the collective aims to connect with ‘the invisible groups’ rather than with the formal ones. The accompanying message is that most already existing citizen initiatives are Western-white, a presence which befogs the less visible, less institutionalized groups that equally want to be heard. As argued by Cirugeda: “the fight isn’t my fight, it’s for the neighborhood (...). They need to talk with the government, not with me”. Now, by way of countering the aforementioned collaborative rigidity between Recetas Urbanas and the City, the Middelheim Museum

hired an additional freelancer whose job it was to effectively involve the Amandus-Atheneum neighborhood in the project. The freelancer, however, could in the eyes of Recetas Urbanas not meet the collective's demand of effectively representing the Square's active yet hidden communities. Even though experienced as a process facilitator in the so-called 'Antwerp Commons Lab' and living himself in the neighborhood, Recetas Urbanas countered that the freelancer represented precisely the legally embedded, Western-white, institutionalized initiatives and as such failed to connect with the invisible groups, with 'those without part' (Ranci re, 2015, p. 35). The fact that the freelancer was chosen *for* Cirugeda (by the Museum), rather than that the choice would be in Cirugeda's hands, amplified the struggle. The freelancer's 'triple hat' of commoner, neighborhood inhabitant and freelancer intrinsically complicated his role. He saw it, namely, as a problem to invest his private time in the project in addition to his time as a professional, because this could have a negative effect on his income as a freelancer. Against this backdrop, he described his role as follows: "I have learned to make very clear arrangements with my clients: 'this is what you can expect from us, no more and no less'. It's such a shame having to announce halfway through a project that your time is up". By contrast, whilst Recetas Urbanas seemed to accept that the institutional actors would retreat from the project when outside of their official working hours, this was not so easily understood from this second freelancer; an actor seen to be solely representing the 'visible' groups, and this through 'institutionally remunerated' working time.

Eventually, Monta a Verde's configuration was seen to be 'imposed' by the municipal partners engaged in the project as well as from two organs expected to represent the visions and ideas of the inhabitants of the Amandus-Atheneum neighborhood. The 'Permeke City Library' insisted that the square should be emptied on time in order to make room for a book market; 'Neighborhood Sports Antwerp' insisted that the sculpture should also be available as a sports attribute; The Green Department demanded herbs and fruits "that were grown in the Baroque era for their nutritious or healing qualities" (Herman & Boons, 2018, p. 91). All this, we conclude, meant that Monta a Verde's 'magmatic' existence, as Recetas Urbanas would want it, tended to solidify into a preconceived design that was coupled to a matching functionality; a design conceived outside the mind of the commoner, but in the institutional-representational realm.

Fiction & Distance

Given the aforementioned conflicts, the following question becomes eminent: why, then, could one state that Montaña Verde remained in the field of non-critical, non-oppositional, hence Symbiotic Commoning? In order to answer the question, we turn to the factors of ‘fiction’ and ‘distance’.

A first issue relates to what we want to call the *fictionalization* of the project, which can be explained as follows. During the process, informal interviews on the Square laid bare that the local project participants started to mobilize the initiated commoning process as a ‘vehicle’ to express additional demands to the municipal government. “We would, for instance, close off this street, have no more cars here”, argued a local inhabitant. Creating a safe playground for children, too, emerged as a related interest of the residents. We argue, however, that these additional demands have been approached as a local, circumscribed ‘fiction’ by the municipal instances, a fiction emerging outside of the ‘more real’ interests and intents developed within municipal echelons. This point becomes particularly tangible when taking a look at the panels depicted in Figure 31, where we read: “*at the initiative of the Middelheim Museum, the Green Department and the City of Antwerp*, the Spanish collective Recetas Urbanas is working on the construction of a green sculpture on this square” (italics added). As such, it becomes clear who the primordial actors and what the primordial interests in the process would be: the project would align with the interests of the municipal instances (citizen-led greenification, the creation of an inner-city museum domain) whilst the demands of the neighborhood would resort to distant ‘noise’ rather than ‘voice’ (Rancière, 2015). As Otte (2020) argues: “the information panels were drafted in such a way that it became immediately clear that the project was one of the City of Antwerp (...). The project would adhere to the logic of public space [rendering a playground or a traffic-free square impossible], the city’s design and branding to begin with [engrained in the panels]”. It was, furthermore, argued by the Green Department that the sociality and physicality of a place, whether it is a serene park or a crowded square, never influences the Department’s way of working. The institution guards a certain emotional distance to the places it works upon, and the De Coninck Square was, in this case, also ‘just’ a working place. In this vein, the same Green Department officer has been surprised “by the unspoken political implications of such a project”.

A second issue relates to the distance between Recetas Urbanas and the Square; a distance both geographical and cultural. One may argue that commoning organizations such as Recetas Urbanas, when descending into an ‘other’ community beyond their own, will inevitably encounter the problem of ‘lack of knowledge’: about existing networks, about hidden communities. “It’s not my problem, it’s the problem of the community (...). I’m not from here, I’m from Seville”, Cirugeda argued. In this regard, it should on the one hand be mentioned that Recetas Urbanas effectively set out to bring into vision, as argued before, the invisible groups hidden beneath the urban tissue around the Square. One such effort could be found in Cirugeda’s active indulgence – continued personal presence, informal conversations with locals, the active quest for less visible groups – within the life on and around the Square. On the other hand, at an information meeting which was intended to recruit participants, half of those present were professionally involved with either the neighborhood or the project¹¹. Of the 95 people who enlisted to help build Montaña Verde, eventually 25 volunteers from the neighborhood participated, and of these latter participants, only five individuals contributed to the project for more than four days, our data show. The eventual non-participation of those that were enrolled for these meetings gave way to a sense of irritation in the ranks of Recetas Urbanas. At the end of the project, at a moment when difficulties were encountered to get the used wood and materials distributed among Antwerp-based citizen initiatives, Recetas Urbanas’ cultural and geographical distance has been tangibly captured in the following of Cirugeda’s remarks: “in Seville, people would stand in line for it. Of course, I don’t want to spend more time in a city that is not mine, where really the problem is that people are very, very comfortable”.

Finally, hence, Montaña Verde resorted qua ‘common goods’, ‘community’ and ‘commoning’ to the crux of the Ostrom-theoretical approach. To begin with, Montaña Verde was accepted by those urbanites living near the Square as an Ostromian CPR: a shared good that contributes to the livelihood of its users. Some of Ostrom’s design principles became evident, on-site. A list was made of which residents would participate in the initial goal of Montaña Verde, namely: to become a laboratory for the collaborative cultivation and distribution of plants and vegetables. In this regard, commoners defined a set of rules among themselves: fixed watering days, permanent watering teams and clearly defined

watering procedures saw the light of day. Also, a system was established so that users could guarantee the supervision of the installation and report any irregularities to the official agencies¹². Encountered here, too, is Ostrom's design principle of monitoring and sanctioning. A publicly displayed list informed commoners and passers-by which actors had fulfilled their watering 'duty' and which ones did not: an anti-free-riding mechanism. In short: Ostrom-commoning unfolds at Montaña Verde, or: a relationship between a common good and a set of commoners without further political aspirations. These principles, then, converged in a Symbiotic modality of engagement between the commoner and the city. Referring to the 'recognizing' role of the local government, Commons Lab Antwerp described the process as follows in one of its documents disseminated among the commoners: "all this is made possible thanks to the intensive support by the Green Department of the City of Antwerp. They provide all the material needed, coach and support the local residents, provide a contact point and step in in cases of emergency. They teach the residents to independently and collectively manage the green as a common good".

To round up, we want to state that despite the here-presented conflicts, Montaña Verde constitutes a project that has remained in the Symbiotic, rather than in the Oppositional realm. Whilst Recetas Urbanas' main manner of working – as a 'catalyst of friction' – consists in bringing on-site commoners into critical contact with municipal governments, the 'fiction of' and 'distance to' Montaña Verde extinguished the project's Oppositional drive altogether. To this, finally, the following should be added: the mere presence of conflict does not necessarily equate with Oppositional Commoning. Whilst in the preceding paragraphs a series of diverging interests has taken centre stage (between Recetas Urbanas and the city, between the residents and the city), we come to see how these diverging interests remain *within* the consensually agreed-upon stance that the municipal partners would remain the primordial determinants of Montaña Verde's production. As such, Recetas Urbanas' DNA as a 'catalyst to counter' such consensus, has in fact been withheld from emerging. Otte (2020), in similar vein, argues that the project has been home to a multitude of conflicts, albeit conflicts that could not give way to a properly 'agonistic' function of space-commoning. The city-induced conversion from the 'bad weed' proposal to a project concerning citizen-led greenification, we argue finally, exemplifies precisely how Montaña Verde switched from a *potentially* Oppositional to a Symbiotic endeavour.

Figure 31. Information Panels at Montaña Verde



Figure 32. Montaña Verde, Demarcated



Afterword: Beyond the Usufruct

As a recurring theme, hence, we have encountered the growing importance of the force field of representation. One might state the following: if one is ever to embark on Oppositional Commoning, it might be needed to engage in a reductive moment oneself: to reduce an ‘interpretation-by-the-many’ towards a ‘determination-by-the-one’ (this ‘one’ might be a collectivity, as for example The Public Land Grab’s Steering Group). But as was argued in the context of Pension Almonde, in order to be *able* to transmit one’s representations to an adversarial party, one needs (apart from this party’s presence) a physical locale *and* a sufficient time span to be able to do so. One needs, in other words, ‘time and space’. These premises were absent at Pension Almonde, but these premises were absent at Montaña Verde, too. The commoner was not given the time and the space to self-develop one’s common cause as well as the procedures through which to elaborate it. The ‘needs’ which would bring Montaña Verde to life, as well the time spans in which the endeavour was to be unrolled, were heteronomously imposed onto the commoner; two factors that, in addition to the aforementioned ‘secluded worlds’, may be put forward as having extinguished the possibility of Oppositional Commoning altogether. We shall now turn to the detrimental effects of these two impositions.

Even though Montaña Verde was framed as a work of art that would grow “as a function of the wishes and the input of its residents and users”, the commoners’ needs (‘wishes’, ‘input’) have at no point throughout the process been assessed by the municipal partners. We aspire to tease out the consequences of such heteronomous imposition. When a definition of needs (co-creation, green space) has its genesis *outside* of the commons, we argue, it is particularly difficult to proffer the much-needed reciprocity holding the act of space-commoning together. Montaña Verde proffered a situation where ‘civic’ actors (the City, the District, the Museum and the Green Department) were monetarily rewarded to spatialize the commons, whilst ‘civil’ actors (citizens, residents, volunteers) were expected to engage in the logic of the gift. In other instances of Recetas Urbanas’ repertoire of interventions, needs emerge from *within* the commoning community, and the process of commoning is seen to answer to those needs. Whether it is a playground for children, an *ateneu* for squatters, an illegal phoneline to parts elsewhere in the world or a shipping container facilitating the work of artists’ collectives, needs are defined among

the commoners themselves, implying that the latter play a decisive role in the conception, configuration and eventual use of the common good. Therefore, what we found to be lacking in this case of ‘policy-induced’ commoning was, in fact, *a commons* as a *cum munus*, which requires an etymological digression.

According to Benveniste (2016), the Latin term *munus* comprises in Indo-European languages a twofold nature: it designates firstly the idea of a gift, but at the same time it also refers to a social phenomenon: a particular type of performance and counter-performance derived from a position of status. Now, if we are to transpose this twofold nature to the Latin term of *commune*, we come to see how *commune*/community latches onto the idea of an obligatory reciprocity related to the exercise of public responsibilities. Following Dardot & Laval (2019, p. 10), who leave the aspect of ‘a position of status behind’, *commoning* points to “co-obligation for all those engaged in the same activity”. Commoning can effectively unfold when co-obligation, hence reciprocity, emerges out of a ‘doing together’ – the taking care of the common good – rather than out of a preconstituted co-belonging. In the case of Montaña Verde, however, there was no shared need, no ‘doing together’, and consequently, no possibility of reciprocity and co-obligation to emerge. Such mechanism has been highlighted earlier, namely during the case study on The Public Land Grab, London. In that regard, it was seen how it was precisely the commoner’s precarious need – to preserve urban land from speculation, to perform short-chain urban agriculture – that held the project sustainably together and created mutual grounds of obligation and reciprocity. More so, it was equally seen that when such need would be taken away – for example when commoning becomes stably funded and legally protected – that the commoner’s intrinsic motivation to engage in commoning tends to dissolve. In the latter instance, one may argue, one encounters a situation of *immunitas*: a protection against outside danger, albeit a protection that is coupled to a lessening of the need to engage in reciprocal care.

Secondly, with the notion of a heteronomous imposition of time, we contend that the temporal qualities of the commoning endeavour have equally been defined *outside* of the commons. Montaña Verde was performed within an explicitly predefined time span of seven months. As has been reiteratively shown before, it were the eleven months that preceded the phases of design and use that

played a determinative part in the process. It were these phases, more precisely, during which a set of institutional representations of space took centre stage (greenification, inner-city co-creation); representations that would subsequently infuse the further curve of the project, eventually mobilizing the act of configuration to realize themselves. Such imposition of time, we argue, constitutes another antidote to commoning. A particularity, namely, of both the Ostrom-theoretical as well as the Radical-theoretical approach is that commoning requires time to grow, that is, to grow organically. Those working within the tradition of the former approach (Hess, 2008; Iaione, 2016; O'Brien, 2012; Radywyl & Biggs, 2013) showcase and investigate commoning endeavors that have grown over decades and centuries¹³. But equally those working within the latter approach (Dardot & Laval, 2019; Harvey, 2013; Stavrides, 2013b) emphasize 'the time to fail and learn' as a pivotal precondition. At Montaña Verde, a more organic time curve was simply not foreseen.

Before us, then, appears a *usufruct of space and time*. Usufruct, shown in Part I, refers to a person's or a party's right to use a thing possessed (by another person or party), the right to use it directly but without alteration. The Montaña Verde endeavour showed how space (the physicality of the De Coninck Square) and time (the predefined time span, but also the linear 'state time' adhered to by the municipal partners) constituted a form of *public property*; assets, one might say, 'possessed' by public instances yet open to a certain 'right of use' from below (Recetas Urbanas, commoners, neighborhood inhabitants). When a given party (private or public) acquires property rights over a plot of urban land (such as the De Coninck Square), this party retains extensive control over what the land will eventually become. Such property right regime entails that the land and the life, the space and the time, of the surrounding parties need not to be considered. Property 'here' strips itself from responsibility for property 'over there'. In the words of Purcell (2014, p. 149): a private property regime separates urban land "from the surrounding community of users, and it abstracts the land from its role in the web of urban social connections". One may conclude in this regard that the aforementioned usufruct of space and time – whereby the municipal instances retained control over the commons – has inhibited the emergence of horizontal liaisons, namely between the square and the wider neighborhood, but also vertical liaisons, namely between the field of the commoner and the field of the municipal actors.

How could we get beyond the usufruct? A first idea to be highlighted towards policy-induced forms of space-commoning can be found in what Lijster, Otte & Gielen (2018, p. 46) call an ‘inductive policy’. An inductive policy can be spoken of when a municipal government creates the conditions for grassroots commoning initiatives to unfold, not as an *a priori* regulator, but as an *a posteriori* ‘recognizer’. Such an inductive policy, the authors argue furthermore,

“[...] is by its very nature bottom-up, meaning that artists and other cultural actors make their own rules and can design their own logistical and financial structures. Cultural governance would then be no more than ‘inductive’, which means that it can only reject or confirm the legality of the regulations that cultural actors have already developed for themselves”.

One example of inductive policy-making could be found in the formerly described scene of Italian social centers. Social centers, today loci for socio-cultural production, oftentimes saw the light of day in illegality, for example as a squat, and were only later legally recognized by their corresponding local governments as an accepted party in the cultural policy field. Two points, however, should be mentioned in this connection. First, an inductive policy runs the risk of dilapidating into what Lefebvre once called an ‘ideology of participation’¹⁴, the process whereby engaged citizens “sink back in tranquil passivity” once their own rules have been recognized at the top. It is conceivable, we argue, that once a community of commoners has projected onto the level of policy a new use for an abandoned building, a new functionality for a deserted square, or a novel idea for a post-industrial heritage site, petrification may occur. What was once a ‘need’ of urbanites having enough free time, resources and skills to engage in non-remunerated commoning (‘the visible groups’, as Cirugeda would say) has now been satisfied, has found its dissolution in the object of the common good. This was again seen during the Public Land Grab, where precisely the *securization* of the project tended to extinguish the commoner’s energetic surplus to continue the quest. Second, an inductive policy preserves the presumption that the legitimacy of a commoning endeavour should invariably be checked, acknowledged or discarded at a locus *outside* of the commons, a process through which the primordial position of the Municipality/Market lingers on.

We want to end this Chapter by indicating that we deem the construct of the ‘usufruct’ – the use of another party’s property – itself a worthwhile catalyst for Oppositional Commoning to emerge, even though this might seem counter-intuitive. The very idea of a *heteronomous* imposition (of space and time) implies the coming into contact of opposite elements: owner and user. And as has been extensively argued in the preceding Chapters, it is effectively this – the collision of differing parties, the ‘requirement of resistance’ – which is needed for Oppositional Commoning to occur. At Pension Almonde, this requirement was extinguished since the owner (Havensteder) was effectively ‘in’ the commons, a situation which made the adage ‘we are all in this together’ particularly palpable. At Montaña Verde, too, this requirement was extinguished; but here, rather, owner and user acted in what might be called ‘secluded worlds’. We encountered, after all, a ‘fictionalization’ of the project by the municipal instances and a ‘distance’, both geographical and cultural, of Recetas Urbanas to the Square. At the Public Land Grab, however, the very fact of the opposition between user and owner was taken up as the catalyst for Oppositional Commoning. Commoners at The Public Land Grab were seen not to denying the differing power relations between themselves and their opponent (as in Pension Almonde), and neither did they seek to work separately from the power structures that dominate them (as in Montaña Verde). Rather, the public land grabbers sought themselves to build a counter-commoning-project *vis-à-vis* the Municipality/Market as well as the stage through which to organize it. Hence, given the fact that we see the very existence of public and private property not to dissolve soon, we may preliminary argue that the very presence of property and therefore also of ‘usufruct’ may instigate, rather than extinguish, commoning’s Oppositional variant. This study’s Epilogue (‘Toward a Political Production of Common Space’) will focus extensively on this suggestion.

Notes

¹ The SAM, Salon des Arts Ménagers (also known as the Household Arts Show), was an annual exhibition in Paris concerning furniture, home and interior design and appliances. The salon was first held in 1923 and eventually dissolved in 1983.

² The interpretation, however, of the Situationist International sounded otherwise. The aesthetic of the transparent walls is argued to constitute one more expression of the society of the spectacle. “Totally reified man”, one reads, “has his place in the show-window as a desirable image of reification” (quotes in Stanek, 2011).

³ Currently, there is a growing number of municipal authorities and regional governments that is starting to experiment with the concept of the commons. The City of Ghent’s Commons Transition Plan is a case in point. The latter example, through which the city frames itself as the ‘commons city of the future’, entails a systemic co-creation of the urban commonwealth between the policy sphere on the one hand and citizen initiatives on the other. Retrieved via <https://stad.gent/nl/over-gent-en-het-stadsbestuur/nieuws-evenementen/een-commons-transitie-plan-voor-gent>.

⁴ Lefebvre (1996, p. 173) likewise laid bare how the gardens, parks and landscapes in and around Tuscan Renaissance cities were part of the fine arts as well as from an urban society based on encounters among the populace.

⁵ Accessed on 24 July 2019 via https://m.nieuwsblad.be/cnt/DMF20150614_01730025?isnemo=true.

⁶ In this report, I will mainly use the expression of ‘municipality’ rather than ‘Municipality/Market’. Apart from the De Coninck Square being a tourist attraction during the Experience Traps exhibition, economic interests are generally absent in this project.

⁷ From the promotional video ‘Recetas Urbanas Creates Green Sculpture Montaña Verde in Antwerp’. Retrieved via <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KS-2EliFJHA&t=85s>.

⁸ In *The Production of Space*, Lefebvre (1991b, p. 287) points to a third formant contributing to abstract space, namely the ‘phallic formant’: the spatial expression of “force, male fertility, masculine violence”, a symbolization of “the brutality of political power, of the means of constraint: police, army, bureaucracy”.

⁹ Participatory observation, Community Center ‘De Buurt’, 7 March 2018.

¹⁰ Participatory observation, De Coninck Square, 16 May 2018.

¹¹ Participatory observation, Community Center ‘De Buurt’, 7 March 2018.

¹² Communication Commons Lab Antwerp, ‘Protocol: Watering Green Mountain’.

¹³ The work of Ostrom, even though not entirely directed to common city space, has been most explicit in this regard, pointing for example to commoning endeavours in the Swiss Alps where design principles can be traced back as far as the 13th century.

¹⁴ As stated in Lefebvre’s (1968) *Le Droit à la Ville*, quoted and translated in Purcell (2014, p. 105).

PART IV. THE CULTURAL PRODUCTION OF COMMON SPACE

Whereas the previous Part embodied three commoning case studies, we now switch from an in-depth lens to a more breath-oriented one. This final Part will be composed by the following elements. First, a Taxonomy of Tactics will be presented. Upon the data that were mobilized during the three master cases will now be added the aforementioned ensemble of additional interviews with urban practitioners (cfr. Chapter 4). Subsequently, a series of conclusions will be drawn through three 'theses': on commoning in Oppositional and Symbiotic contexts; on commoners' engagement with institutions; as well as on the overarching role of the force fields. In a final instance – during the Excursus (Chapter 10) and the Epilogue (Chapter 11) – these conclusions will be mobilized as a 'give-back' to the field of urban commoning, namely by answering a question that throughout the preparation of this work has explicitly emerged: what would a 'properly political' production of common space entail?

Chapter 8. The Taxonomy of Tactics

Foreword

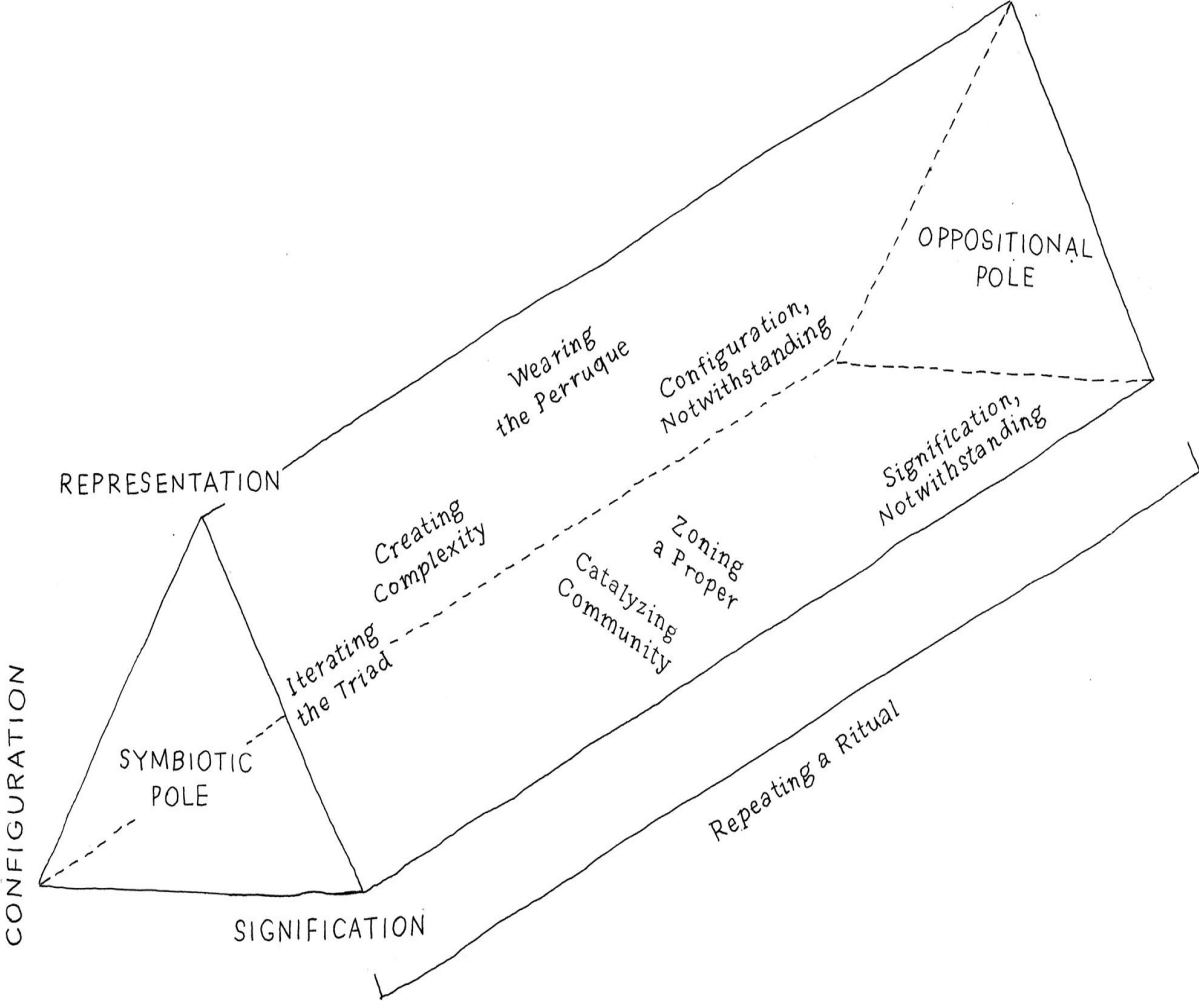
In this Chapter, data shall be mobilized in order to construct a Taxonomy of Tactics for the Production of Common Space. The Taxonomy will constitute a crossing of two dynamics: the Lefebvrian triad of representation, configuration and signification¹ and the continuum between Symbiotic and Oppositional Commoning. It is needed to shortly specify what is exactly meant, in this study, with the notion of a 'tactic'. Speaking of tactics, one is obliged to return to De Certeau's (1984) well-known groundwork. Famously, De Certeau distinguished between 'tactics' on the one hand, 'strategies' on the other. "I call a strategy", De Certeau (1984, p. xix) argues, "the calculus of force relationships which becomes possible when a subject of will and power can be isolated from an environment". Strategies count on 'a proper' (*le propre*): they involve a 'mastery of place' through circumscription and delineation from a supposedly hostile environment. One may think of the foundation of 'autonomous places' as seen in the physicality of the corporation or the research institute. Tactics, by contrast, are defined negatively. "I call a tactic", De Certeau continues, "a calculus which cannot count on a proper (...). The place of a

tactic belongs to the other”. Tactics, hence, are deployed by the subjugated. They are defensive and opportunistic, they are ‘trickery’: meticulously navigating throughout the city, the poetic use of language, adding a graffiti tag to a bench. Whilst strategies involve rationality, long-term planning and a connection to place, tactics involve opportunism, short-term emergence and the meticulous use of the strategist’s place. A tactic, De Certeau (1984, 37) wrote, is an ‘art of the weak’.

With this distinction in mind, it is important to state that my interpretation of a tactic does not entirely collide with De Certeau’s. In the context of this work, a tactic constitutes merely and generally ‘a mode of doing’. The tactics to be presented in the taxonomy, it will be seen, sometimes embrace a more tactical nature, at other times a more strategical one. Sometimes they resort to punctual, guerrilla-like or short-term acts; at other times they unfold through rational decision-making, long-term planning, and even the deliberate constitution of a ‘proper’ place in the city. In all, what in this study is meant by ‘tactic’ goes beyond De Certeau’s classical distinction between ‘top-down’ and ‘bottom-up’, ‘scientific rationality’ and ‘momentary invention’. A tactic is merely a mode of doing deployed by urban practitioners during their spatial expression of the concept of the commons.

The taxonomy constitutes a theory-driven rather than a data-driven inductive construct. Events, situations and interview quotes will be mobilized, albeit in an illustrative manner. This work can be situated within Weber’s heritage of *verstehen* and its corresponding act of defining *ideal types*: artificial types of behavior that indicate how people *could* or *would* act, against which later forms of behavior may be tested and compared. The tactics to be presented in the taxonomy can thus be seen as ideal types, paving the way for future paths of empirical testing. In this regard, it is Becker (1982, p. xi) who turns our attention to the twofold role of sociological enquiry: not only to answer questions, but also to “make us aware of things we hadn’t thought of, to suggest theoretical possibilities”. On the ‘researcher side’, future works on the production of common space may take these tactics as an object of further enquiry, focusing on how the temporary nature that often haunts these cases may be bended over in a more sustainable one. On the ‘activist side’, those effectively producing spaces of togetherness may experiment with or discard the taxonomy’s tactics in the variable contexts they are active in: the grassroots, civil society, municipal policy.

Figure 33. The Taxonomy of Tactics for the Production of Common Space



Iterating the Triad

The following sections will take us on a journey throughout ‘the Taxonomy of Tactics for the Production of Common Space’. The first tactic to be highlighted goes by the name of ‘Iterating the Triad’. As is visually expressed in Figure 33, this tactic sets in motion a threefold, upper axis that pierces the taxonomy from left to right (together with ‘Creating Complexity’ and ‘Wearing the Perruque’). Two issues unite these three tactics grouped within this upper axis. First, they rely on a subsequent invocation of all three of the force fields: initially starting from signification, passing over into representation, in

order to finally halt at configuration. Second, these three tactics will be seen to be led primarily, from beginning to end, by one specific breed of urban practitioner, that is, the figure of the ‘commons-informed’ architect². When moving more in the direction of the Oppositional pole of the commoning continuum, two aspects will be subject to change. First, the tactics’ envisioned friction with the Municipality/Market will be seen to increase; second, the tactics’ mobilization of the force field of representation will gradually become more explicit.

“Value what is there, nurture what is possible, define what is missing”³. These are the words of the London-based collective ‘muf’, a statement capturing precisely this tactic’s iterative movement throughout the spatial triad. The force field first valorized within this tactic is the one of signification; the identification, one might say, of the *genius loci*, the spirit of a place. In this vein, the architect – armed with the concept of the commons and a package of funding granted by the Municipality/Market – seeks to excavate the desires and opinions nested within the community he or she works with. Central questions in this regard are: how is a certain locale quotidianly lived? Who are the stakeholders involved? What could be improved in terms of physical space? Are there invisible groups to be found, those *not* engaged in the production of space?” Many means are at the architect’s disposal: surveying, publicly deliberating (when *Recetas Urbanas* landed on the De Coninck Square) or informally submerging oneself in the territory that is to be ‘commoned’. An example in this regard is muf’s project ‘Small Open Spaces that are Not Parks’ for the Borough of Newham. The intent was to pinpoint hidden, forgotten or underused spaces that still felt as ‘public’. Muf’s local engagement revealed sites such as a cinema foyer, an alley visited by girls only or a strip of pavement in front of a local shop. Connected thereto is a second phase, namely, the representation of such excavatory activity in visual or written format (‘the future projection’). In this regard, muf translated its excavatory phase, the ‘street knowledge’ it found, into a verbal and visual proposal directed at the Borough of Newham, suggesting future schemes of development (Petrescu, 2010). Jorge Toledo, too, architect within the Madrid-based collective *Ecosistema Urbano*, argued in this connection that “when you just speak [to local communities], it can be like a pointless wandering of conversation. But when you have something graphical, you can translate a conversation into a practical input. A map, or something more abstract,

helps you think in a more organized way”. Finally, after the inevitably reductive transition from a multiplicity of visions and ideas ‘on the ground’ (signification, how space *could* be) to the uniformity of the text and the image (representation, how space *should* be), the phase of configuration, of ‘doing in common’, may begin to unfold under the auspices of the leading architect’s coordinative expertise. Jorge Toledo captures the iteration well: “our work can only be made better”, he argues

“[...] if we understand the real situated knowledge and desires and problems and issues and the culture of the people in one place, with which we complement or contrast our own views. It’s a way of making our proposals better, to make them more corresponding to the reality. How do we learn more about this place than by just looking at numbers, data, and so on? How do we dive into the culture, into the dweller’s point of view (...)? That’s the way we can listen to the environment, to the city, to the context, and then we propose something that connects with it”.

I would want to end the tactic of ‘Iterating the Triad’ with the following proof: Parckfarm, Brussels. In 2014, the Parckfarm project transformed a railway bed between the Brussels-district of Laken and Molenbeek into an epicenter of citizen-led spatial production: urban agriculture, performance, debate, communal cooking in the outdoors. The project came forth from ‘Parckdesign 2014’, a festival concerning urban green space led by the Brussels Institute for the Environment. The architecture collectives of Taktyk and Alive Architecture stepped forward to transform a forgotten piece of urban land into a locus of commoning. In a first instance, these collectives would delve into the citizen initiatives already present around the site (animal farms, vegetable gardens) in order, as argues an architect at Alive architecture, to “nurture what was possible”. Urbanites were subsequently brought together in discussion groups and debate evenings to determine the further unfoldment of the project, “to define what was missing”. Amidst the artificial green strip in the center of the city would finally emerge what is now known as Parckfarm, including: a wood oven, communally built and open for use; a pasture where sheep can graze; an ensemble of urban gardens; an ecological toilet transforming human feces into compost; and ‘the Farmhouse’, a greenhouse, constituting Parckfarm’s epicenter where

urbanites can meet, cook, dine, debate and perform. All interventions emerged on the initiative of those dwelling in the vicinity of the project⁴. But with these premises in mind, one may ask: why is it that ‘Iterating the Triad’ sits most closely to the Symbiotic pole of the commoning continuum? In order to answer this question, I would want to highlight the following passage from Lefebvre’s *The Production of Space*:

“[...] one occasionally hears talk of a ‘pathology of space’, of ‘ailing neighborhoods’ and so on. This kind of phraseology makes it easy for people who use it – architects, urbanists, planners – to suggest the idea that they are in effect ‘doctors of space’. This is to promote the spread of some particularly mystifying notions, and especially the idea that the modern city is a product not of the capitalist or neocapitalist system, but rather of some putative ‘sickness’ of society” (Lefebvre, 1991b, p. 99).

During the instances where I have detected the tactic, the iteration of signification, representation and configuration appears indeed as a ‘fix and cure’ program for what we might call ‘common-space-as-CPR’. Common space, then, emerges as a common-pool resource requiring the commoner’s concerted efforts – ‘synthesized’ by the architect, protagonist of representation – to be saved from depletion. Amidst the iteration, it resorts to a passive spatial substrate, a clay to be tweaked and moulded. In London, we saw Public Works leading the way in order to synthesize the land grabbers’ aspirations into a funding bid directed at the GLA, an authority primarily aiming, as quoted before, “to pull up the places that are suffering from the ongoing economic success of the places right next to them”. Similar signals come from Rotterdam and Antwerp, where the significative, representative and configurative skills of City in the Making and Recetas Urbanas were respectively looked upon in order to revive empty housing infrastructure and a ‘reputative’ square. With regard to Parckfarm, too, one detects how the railway bed in which the project rests will be regenerated as a park stretching from Brussels’ canal to the centre of Laken. Invariably, I encountered the current tactic as being marked by a consensual, symbiotic partnership arrangement between the Municipality/Market on the one hand and groups of urban

practitioners (architects, activists, artists, citizen initiatives, commoners) on the other. The latter, then, step forward as ‘physicians of space’, a mind-set which may ultimately avoid rather than confront the underlying systems of spatial organization that produce the morbidity, sickness or depletion of those territories in need of a De Angelean commons-fix. Yet, one should equally be aware of the tactical value such operation might retain. While excavating ‘what is there’ and defining ‘what is missing’, the commoner’s configuration may gradually evolve into a strategical base camp, a territory from where the commoner’s agenda may begin to be critically projected upon the one of the Municipality/Market. Such was effectively the case with Parckfarm, when it was announced in 2014 that the project would be able to take root beyond the temporal constraints of Parckdesign 2014; an existence continued to this day.

Figure 34. Parckfarm, Brussels (Wikimedia Commons)



Figure 35. Parckfarm: Commoning in a Train Bed (Wikimedia Commons)



Creating Complexity

We now continue our threefold, upper axis with a second variant, the tactic of ‘Creating Complexity’. Once more, we encounter a subsequent invocation of the force fields of signification, representation and configuration. Once more, we encounter the commons-informed architect exchanging the drawing table for on-site action. But while moving forward, two issues will be subject to change. Namely, the level of frictional, rather than symbiotic, engagement with the Municipality/Market will be seen to increase, and in so doing, the reliance on the force field of representation will become more explicit.

Whilst the previous tactic of ‘Iterating the Triad’ has already cleared the dust on how the force fields of signification (‘valuing what is there’) and configuration (‘nurturing what is possible’) may be invoked, I now would like to focus primarily on the force field of representation (‘defining what is missing’). The essence of the tactic of ‘Creating Complexity’ lies in its ambivalent relationship, one might say, with the latter force field. To be more precise, the current tactic entails a balancing act

between the force fields of representation and signification. To be even more precise, the current tactic entails the projection of what I want to call a ‘significant representation’, that is: an ambiguous, multivalent one, a representation with multiple meanings. Now, the latter idea, at first sight, constitutes a contradiction if we are to consider the descriptions of representation and signification as put forward in Chapter 3. In that chapter, representations were highlighted as reductive catalysts distilling a single meaning, function or future out of multiple modalities. Representations, we saw, proffer the *abstract* production of space: ‘abstrahere’ means to ‘carry off’, to ‘drag away’, a meaning which Lefebvre interpreted more as ‘to select and isolate something’ out of a more complex reality. The force field of signification, by contrast, was seen to evolve around a multiplicity of meanings: beyond the projection thereupon of any single truth or goal, the spatial substrate appears ‘alive’, remains open for interpretation (Lefebvre, 1991b). Could these force fields – ‘interpretation-by-the-many’ and ‘determination-by-the-one’ be reconciled?

A reading of ‘Creating Complexity’ follows from the Antwerp-based collective ‘Endeavour’. Endeavour generally sets out to inscribe the voice of the citizen within Municipality/Market-led development schemes. As was equally seen under ‘Iterating the Triad’, the collective invariably ignites its projects of citizen engagement within the force field of signification: a capturing of *the genius loci*. How could citizen initiatives’ preferences be inscribed within the regeneration plans for Antwerp’s dry-docks? What are the needs and interests of shopkeepers in the context of the renewal of one of Brussel’s major axes? In this vein, several tools are at the collective’s disposal: individual interviews, workshops, debate evenings, informal talks. The impetus of this initial operation is “to centralize local knowledge, individual stories”. In so doing, Endeavour takes on a critical stance *vis-à-vis* what is generally understood as ‘citizen participation in urban design’, namely, the process whereby a *predetermined* group of stakeholders is merely ‘consulted’ rather than actively inscribed within the production of space. Intending to compose autonomously a cast of interlocutors – the unheard and unaccounted for, Endeavour seeks to surpass the Municipality/Market regarding which actors to include in the process of urban development and design. “Who do we think that is the lost voice?”, an Endeavour member queries⁵.

Doing so proffers tactical value, I would want to contend. Endeavour's intrinsic intent is to create, as the collective calls it, 'complexity'. In sociological terms, complexity constitutes a loaded term, but for now, suffice it to say that in the vocabulary of Endeavour, complexity entails the putting into dialogue of urbanite's narratives, ideas, needs and desires *without* – importantly – succumbing to a 'representative logic'; without framing, *vis-à-vis* the Municipality/Market, a supposedly shared or final, 'reductive' vision emerging from the level of the grassroots. The municipal governments consulting Endeavour intend to know what grows on their soil (qua residents' visions) and whether their representations of space (master plans, safety plans, regeneration plans) should be tweaked in accordance. But against this backdrop, Endeavour refrains from projecting upon the Municipality/Market any clear-cut, unambiguous recommendation, but seeks instead to present a more volatile, ambivalent, variable form of representation. Whether it entails a manifesto text, a visual exhibition of local initiatives to which municipal officials are invited, or a four-meter-wide drawing highlighting the various opinions of Antwerpian urbanites, Endeavour crafts, without distilling a single narrative, *representations that continue to bear in themselves the traces of signification*. As such, the 'significant representation' appears on the horizon: a representation *kept open*, one carrying with it multiple meanings, various voices. It is the active inscription, one might say, of *presence* within the force field of representation. As such, argues Endeavour, "you produce a common space by creating your own rules. The conscious creation of complexity proffers the situation where we are the sole party that still sees the forest for the trees, which puts us in a strong position". It was Massimo De Angelis (2017b, p. 386) who, in *Omnia Sunt Communia*, detected a similar tactic. De Angelis, too, speaks in terms of 'complexity', the process whereby the commoner overloads "state and capital systems with the movement's variety". As such, De Angelis calls to arms the continual creation, legal or a-legal, of a pool of commons-based knowledges and experiences which refrains from being synthesized into any clear-cut manual of how the act of commoning is to be performed. One might thus make the following, final statement: the more complexity created – thus, the more uniqueness that is proffered in the thinking, doing and being of commoning projects – the less ability for the Municipality/Market to co-opt the commons.

Yet, when it comes to the instances where I have been able to get a glimpse of ‘Creating Complexity’, one remains stuck at the Symbiotic pole of the commoning continuum. Notwithstanding the more agonistic stance Endeavour (and the citizen-commoners it works with) takes on *vis-à-vis* the Municipality/Market, the spaces it ‘commons’ continue to appear *as CPR*, that is: as passive, tweakable substances which, in order to avoid a tragedy of the commons, shall be made more ‘safe’ (as with the collective’s Handelstraat project, Antwerp), more ‘sane’ (as with the collective’s brownfield redevelopment projects) or more ‘museal’ (as with the collective’s dry-docks project, Antwerp). Here lurks, I would argue, space-commoning’s co-optive moment, another De Angelean ‘commons fix’. On the one hand, the mobilization of what I called earlier the ‘significant representation’ puts the commoner in a strong position *vis-à-vis* the Municipality/Market. After all, a variety of visions is less prone to be laid aside (by the Municipality/Market) than a single, unequivocal one. On the other hand, the very same construct of the significant representation equally puts the Municipality/Market in a position to invoke the adage “it is what the people wanted”. Commoning, as such, may turn into an instrument for the Municipality/Market to gain legitimacy with and through its citizens. As such, a Janus-faced partnership arrangement seems to emerge between the Municipality/Market and the commoner. Endeavour acknowledges such stance itself: “sometimes we have come up against a brick wall. We created complexity, we brought multiple voices around the table, but decisions were made at another one. This meant that we were creating a sort of naïve, parallel space”.

Wearing the Perruque

The third and final tactic of the threefold, upper axis is ‘Wearing the Perruque’. For a third and last time, we encounter an invocation of the triad’s three fields: signification, representation and configuration. In a first phase, ‘Wearing the Perruque’ emerges through an excavation of the needs, visions and ideas locally present among the ‘commoners-to-be’; it takes hold of a pool of energy waiting to blossom into joint action, like a caterpillar finally lifting off as a butterfly. A member of the Atelier d’Architecture Autogérée argues in this regard: “in that sort of engagement, we identify existing organizations and discrete communities around existing projects that we are putting together and work with them”. Finally,

Wearing the Perruque's end point (albeit an intermediary one, because here the commoning *begins*) is the building of a 'base camp': a rooted, physical intervention from where the engagement with the Municipality/Market will linger on. In between, we find the field of representation.

We may immediately project forward the crux of the current tactic: 'Wearing the Perruque' implies the *representation* of 'the time spent commoning' into numerical values and into deliberative organs. Ad interim: it was De Certeau (1984, p. 25) who put forward *la perruque* ('the wig') as the performance of an employee's personal, desire-driven activities during work time. La perruque, hence, means to disguise personal time as 'work for an employer'. Writing a love letter on company time, for instance, or 'borrowing' a piece of wood from the workplace to configure an armature at home. "The worker who indulges in la perruque", De Certeau argued, "actually diverts time (...) from the factory for work that is free, creative, and precisely not directed toward profit". De Certeau's *perruque*, in other words, implies the prioritization of one's autonomously defined desires *within* an institutional context, hence, within a sphere where output is quantified (the numerical values) and where organization is hierarchically schematized (the deliberative organs). Such is precisely what will emerge from the following discussion. 'Wearing the Perruque' entails the commoner who follows 'creative', non-profit oriented desires *while making it seem* as something quantifiable, something more rigid. One disguises commoning as 'company time' performed for the Municipality/Market; an operation that, precisely because of its representative language, can be interpreted by the Municipality/Market on its own terms. A citation coined in Chapter 5 should certainly be reiterated. A commoner at The Public Land Grab pointed to how the Loughborough Junction Action Group "speaks to the Council in a proper way. It packages stuff that other people are doing underground in a way that the Council can swallow. And then it allows them to get on with it. To be messier than the Council would allow them to be". But one might ask: is it really a disguise, when the commoner's efforts are explicitly presented, 'on a plate', to those in power? On one side, it is not; after all, commoning is highly visibilized. But the 'disguising' element is found in the less visible, almost hidden agenda the commoner pursues: to proffer a more frictional, dissensual relationship with the commons' environment, the Municipality/Market.

Several foregoing acts, derived from the master cases, can be pointed to; tactical performances clustering together in the aggregate level of ‘Wearing the Perruque’. First, we stumble upon what I described, in the case study on The Public Land Grab, as the ‘showcasing of value’, that is: the representation of a commoning endeavour in retrievable, numerical format. In that vein, commoners were seen to capture the effects of their efforts through representative values: one might think of the counting of the volunteer hours and the weighing of the harvest at the Loughborough Farm. These ‘facts and figures’ could then be used as a leverage *vis-à-vis* the Municipality/Market, for example to defend the legitimacy of the project or to acquire additional funding. During several of its (legal) projects, Recetas Urbanas, too, keeps track of the volunteer hours that were performed and of the costs of the materials that were mobilized. These figures, then, are used to ‘push’ municipal governments to provide additional funds, to allow a project to remain in place, or merely to gain, again, legitimacy in the eyes of the Municipality/Market.

When I encountered signals of the tactic of ‘Wearing the Perruque’, the tactic appeared to be primarily invoked by the commoner in order to step forward as a critical interlocutor *vis-à-vis* the Municipality/Market, rather than as a ‘co-executor’ of the latter’s policy. Such explains the tactic’s location on the more Oppositional side of the commoning continuum, a location to be explained in the remainder of this section. But first, an additional example will be coined in order to guide the discussion at hand.

We are in Paris, in the northwestern suburb of Colombes and with the Atelier d’Architecture Autogérée’s project ‘R-Urban’. With R-Urban, the Atelier explores whether commoners can take matters into their own hands in order to tackle the threat of ecological degradation present within the urban commonwealth. By providing grassroots initiatives with a physical locale where they can continue to exist, R-Urban seeks to proffer an alternative model of urban living through the instigation of a dispersed yet internally collaborative, citizen-led network. The core of the project should be conceived of in terms of three ‘civic hubs’ with complementary functions through which commoners may support each other. The Agrocité, first, evolves around agriculture and includes an urban farm, community gardens and self-made devices for the production of energy. The Recyclab, second, focuses on recycling

and provides commoners with equipment to turn green waste into a common good, namely, into materials useable for ecoconstruction. The (ecologically constructed) Ecohab, finally, constitutes a hub for housing which equally includes community spaces for cultural and artistic production, repairs and social encounters. Rather than a demarcated territory, R-Urban constitutes a fluid, dispersed network of goods and people throughout the urban tissue. It proffers, one might say, a ‘parallel reality’: beyond what the Municipality/Market has on offer, the commoner (helped by the Atelier) takes it upon him or herself to claim the resources needed (water, electricity, food, shelter) in order to survive in a *quartier défavorisé* as Colombes. We could contend, so far, that this instance resembles one aspect seemingly present within ‘Iterating the Triad’ and ‘Creating Complexity’. After all, we reencounter the figure of the ‘commons-based architect’, armed with a budget and the concept of the commons, who descends from behind the drawing table into the field, into the commons. But the difference, at R-Urban, lies in the fact that those schooled in the architectural craft – the Atelier d’Architecture Autogérée – merely seek to ‘catalyze’ commoning, to facilitate its preconditions and, once in place, to retreat under the adage “from here on out, you [the commoner] should be able to continue without us”. Another difference is that the terms are less set by the Municipality/Market. As was argued by a commoner on-site, a pivotal topic during the assemblies taking place at the Agrocité is the commoner-led institution of the rules of use (how to use the kitchen, how to use the gardens) and how to become ‘more independent’ from the Atelier itself.

But as indicated before, ‘Wearing the Perruque’ is a tactic strongly valorizing the force field of *representation*. In what follows, I will point to two forms of representation. A first form entails the representation of what the commoning community *does*. I already referred to the public land grabbers’ ‘hours worked’, ‘kilos harvested’ or ‘euros symbolically invested’. A similar impetus takes centre stage at R-Urban: “it’s important to quantify such new set of values”, one learns. How much water has been recycled? How much electricity has been produced? How much carbon emission has been reduced? – the answers to these questions capture, through numerical value, the commoner’s spatial practice, the effect of his or her moulding and crafting of the common goods (the rainwater, the green waste, and so forth). Hence, it is seen how an act of *abstraction* constitutes a highly tactical tool: out of the many

possible interpretations, one chooses to quantify and highlight ecological impact. Such ‘doing in common’ has been valorized, furthermore, “to speak with those in power about the necessity of such a process”, as argues an Atelier member, but also to negotiate with other municipalities to extend the network on their terrain, and to convince the neighboring district of Gennevilliers to provide the project with a new lease for the Agrocité hub (to be explained below).

A second form entails the representation of what the commoning community *is*; of the claims, ideas and interpretations roaming through common space, the space of R-Urban. In a first instance, at R-Urban, working groups were seen to sprout around specific devices: the garden group, the poultry group, the compost group. This enables, argues an Atelier member, a ‘training process’ so that commoners “have the occasion to think and to learn about new governance”. Furthermore, over time, a higher-level representative formation was envisioned in order to formalize the aforementioned capsules. Three years into the process, a representative association was legally inscribed through which R-Urban’s commoning community could take charge of the project’s governance, now having the knowledge and the experience to do so. One could say that this is the moment at which the architecturally schooled urban practitioner, who has put to work the constituent parts of ‘the common good’ (the hubs, the water, the waste, the energy), ‘the commoners’ (the working groups, the higher-level association) and ‘the commoning’ (the organizing, the governing) retreats. An Atelier member explains: “you need to have all the ingredients in order to have such a format functioning. We started with formats that are less heavy, because many people are part of civic organizations that are quite light, and then little by little, they can learn the rules of being a commoner and how to become cooperative”. A ‘best-case scenario’ would have entailed to institute such representative organ over time so that the hubs could exchange knowledge, information and skills amongst each other but also with ‘R-Urbans’⁶ elsewhere.

However, as one of the members of Endeavour indicated earlier, sometimes, the ‘making or breaking’ of a commoning project may be decided upon “at another table”, in the blink of an eye. Such was exactly the fate projected upon R-Urban. After a change of municipal government in Colombes, one reshuffling the spectrum from left to right, the project was dismissed and the land was taken back by the municipality of Colombes in order for a parking lot to take its place. Notwithstanding R-Urban’s

representative efforts, on February 20th, 2017, the district of Colombes sent in a bailiff, a police force and a (de)construction crew in order to dismantle the Agrocité. In a final stage, R-Urban's efforts teach us how the force field of representation may prove to be of pivotal importance to generate Oppositional, rather than Symbiotic Commoning. Such is precisely the aim pointed to by the Atelier, namely, to proffer 'a common imagination' and in so doing to create "a sort of political consciousness, [so that] they [commoners at R-Urban] become political subjects. They realize that doing such type of activities involves them more actively in the city and that the spaces that we were claiming are sometimes taken back by the city". Hence, what the R-Urban case teaches us, is the following: in times of perceived opposition between the commons and their environment of the Municipality/Market, the force field of representation becomes particularly important: the commoner will have to take a stance, adhere to a vision or project an unambiguous message in order to effectively mobilize commoning as an Oppositional cause. Representative bodies, the representation of what one 'does' and 'is' through visual and numerical constructs, as well as the presence of a 'common imagination', a shared ideology, will play a pivotal part in the process if commoning is ever to achieve counter-hegemonic traction.

In announcement of the tactic of 'Zoning a Proper', there is one important issue to be developed further from the current tactic, namely: in order to be able to engage in Oppositional Commoning, the commoner requires a proper locus, un *propre* (De Certeau, 1984). The current tactic of 'Wearing the Perruque' teaches us, too, how important a sustainably rooted 'base camp' may prove to be: a physical substrate from where to generate friction, dissent with the Municipality/Market, from where to launch and project one's representations of space *upon it*. In other words, the commoner will benefit from a physically rooted 'locale' where the logics of the commons and the Municipality/Market may collide at specified times. Against this backdrop, one could conceive of the Agrocité as the locus *par excellence* for the development of Oppositional Commoning; or, to use the words of Dikeç (2005), as a 'polemical commonplace' where the data retrieved (representation of what one does) and the formations built (representation of what one is or aspires to be) are put face-to-face with those active in the higher echelons of municipal power. If the space-commoner is to mobilize the force field of representation effectively and turn it into a tool of political action, he or she simultaneously requires a locally rooted

place to do so; he or she needs to claim, as Hartman (2002) would argue, one's 'right to stay put'. One should keep in mind that institutional politics firmly dispose of such physical locales: the houses of Parliament on a national level, town houses and administrative centers on a municipal level. Why not transpose such 'physicality of confrontation' to the realm of the commons? Why not set out to physically produce 'town houses for the commons'? These considerations oblige me to conclude that if the commoner seeks oppositional thrust, the more mobile tactics, such as seen for example in the 'nomadic pension', may prove to be less robust. I return extensively to these points in Chapters 10 and 11.

Figure 36. The Agrocité (Front), Paris



Figure 37. The Agrocité (Back), Paris



Figure 38. Representing R-Urban

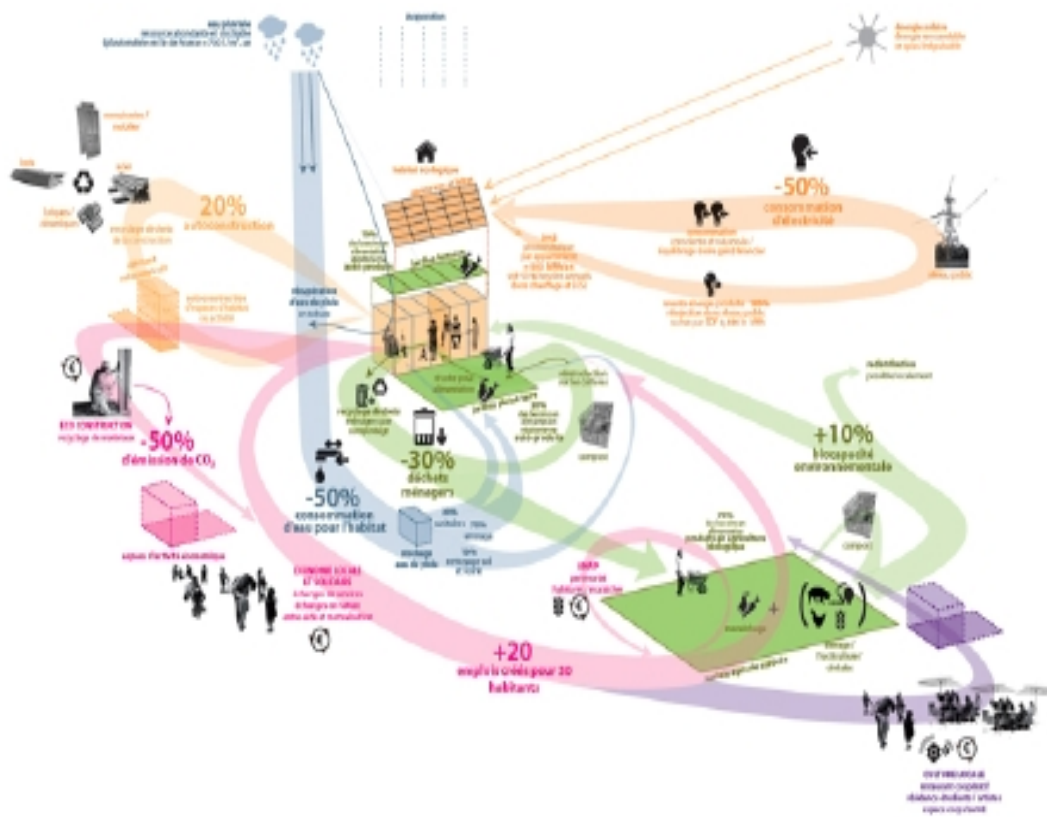
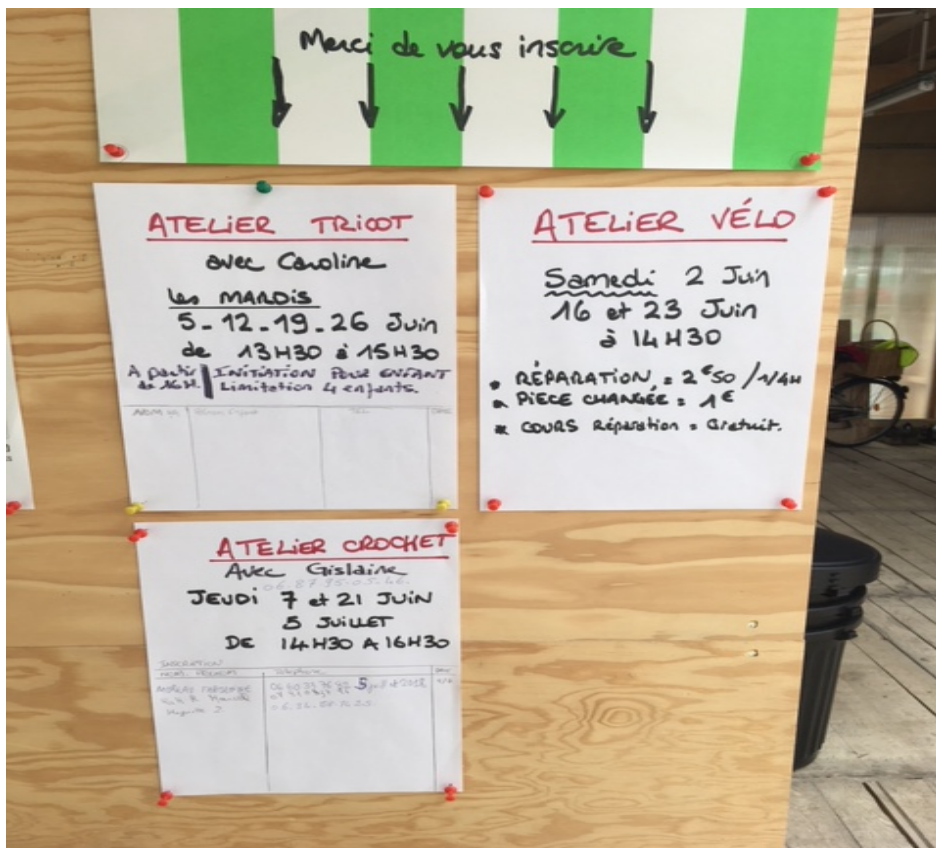


Figure 39. The Gardens



Figure 40. Communication at Agrocité



Repeating a Ritual

This work of study is the result of three years of continuous interviewing and on-the-spot engagements with urban practitioners, both within the three master cases and beyond. These punctuated engagements of support ranged from building an a-legal meditation house in the hills near Barcelona with Recetas Urbanas, to cutting peppers for a group of refugees at Raumlabor's Coop Campus⁷; from contributing to discussion panels on urban nomadism with City in the Making, to shoveling mud and fertilizing soil at the Loughborough Farm. Emerging therefrom is the notification that the art of space-commoning is inherently tied to a set of recurring acts, unfolding at specified times: the ritual. If there is any constant throughout the diverse approaches to common space studied in this work, it is the strengthening of human bonds through repeated, ad-hoc acts of festivity. "Rituals", Sennett (2012) wrote in *Together*, "establish powerful social bonds, and have proved tools which human societies use to balance cooperation and competition"; it is the cooperative aspect that will be most prominent in the current section. Two issues can be pointed to in this regard. Firstly, rituals in common space do not distinguish between spectator and celebrant. Rather, these rituals constitute 'ephemeral moments' whereby the structures of everyday urban life – public space and private space, production and consumption – are temporarily put in suspense. Secondly, it is safe to assert that the tactic of 'Repeating a Ritual' firmly embodies the ever-present 'communal feast': the act of jointly cooking and eating, coupled to the sociality of the shared drink afterwards. 'The Kitchen', therefore, could seamlessly figure as another nomination for this tactic. As can be seen in the taxonomy itself, I do not assign the tactic of 'Repeating a Ritual' to any pole of the commoning continuum: it is derived from (and further applicable within) a wide variety of commoning endeavours. Before I turn to this tactic's embedding within the spatial triad, a number of examples will be coined.

Pension Almonde's Soup Tuesdays, recursively turned to in Chapter 6, are a first instance. Given the fact that Pension Almonde houses 52 living units – each of which is asked to curate the soup once a year – commoners at the Pension participate in a joint and free dinner once a week, every week. Important during these Tuesdays, rather than the quality and quantity of the food served, is a mere 'being together', an exchange of energy, information and support, oftentimes transitioning into presentations

or debates on current issues (governance, for instance) within the Pension's endeavour. *Recetas Urbanas*, too, attaches importance to the feast. The collective generally ends each building phase of its interventions with a communal drink among the volunteers, activists, students and architects involved. As seen in Chapter 7, one such gathering at Montaña Verde unsettled the aforementioned 'fixed matching between classification and behaviour' on Antwerp's De Coninck Square to such extent that the ritual was dismantled by local police. Furthermore, a similar signal comes from Berlin. Amidst the Prinzessinnengarten – an urban-void-become-community-garden – stands 'die Laube', a jointly built, wooden structure housing the Neighborhood Academy (also known as the Commons Evening School). The configuration of die Laube was concluded with the German tradition of 'the Richtfest', the moment whereby one expresses gratitude to those involved in the construction work. One bottle clashes against the structure so that it will stand, others are opened to ignite the festivity. A final example comes from Raumlabor. Its 'Kitchen Monument' is a mobile, inflatable balloon that, literally, brings the kitchen into the city, as seen in Figure 41. On any given location, the monument can be bloated in order to erect a 'safe space' for the ritual of commoning to unfold. One may argue that, as such, the Kitchen Monument blurs through its transparent canvas the distinctions between private and public life, between work and leisure, triggering a dialogue 'between inside and outside'⁸. On public squares, underneath tram line passage ways or in urban parks, Raumlabor's Kitchen Monument has constituted, hence, a device to temporarily insert a festive kernel within the monofunctionality of the urban public realm.

When looking at the triad, the tactic of 'Repeating a Ritual' strongly resorts to the force field of signification. One does not build (configuration); one does not design or hierarchically organize (representation); rather, one 'pauses', one takes a break to temporarily indulge in a moment of *presence* rather than representation. With the tactic of 'Repeating a Ritual', we come across the intrinsic meaning that was attributed to the force field of signification as laid out in Chapter 4. There, it was described as follows: "what we encounter in this realm is an *immediate* 'being with and in' the spaces in which we dwell or through which we move. 'Immediate', for our interaction with the latter is not mediated through reductive duplication, as found in the image, the render, the written word. Through such immediate 'being with and in' space, one interprets rather than determines. 'Interpretation-by-the-many' outlaws

‘determination-by-the-one’”. In the field of signification, hence, a spatial substrate commences to have multiple meanings and may be interpreted in myriad ways. Such constitutes the crux of the ritual: to resignify a given spatial substrate; or as Lefebvre (1991b, p. 39) would assert: to overlay “physical space, making symbolic use of its objects” so that it becomes ‘alive’, so that it ‘speaks’. ‘Repeating a Ritual’ entails to imbue upon the physicality of a tram bridge (as in the Kitchen Monument), of a square (as in Recetas Urbanas’s celebration) or of an empty housing stock (as in Pension Almonde) the additive meaning of human togetherness. And even though the current tactic may be said to traverse the entire commoning spectrum, it is safe to assert that it invariably expresses a certain criticality *vis-à-vis* the Municipality/Market. By punctually inscribing an intrinsically *reproductive* affair (cooking, eating, bonding) within a *productive* urban tissue, ‘Repeating a Ritual’ highlights that the use thereof needn’t always be a profit-led endeavour. It brings the *oikos* into the *polis*, and in so doing, expresses how space *could* be (otherwise).

Figure 41. Raumlabor’s Kitchen Monument (photo by Raumlabor)



Catalyzing Community

In a first instance, we went through the ‘threefold upper axis’, the one consisting of three tactics mobilizing the triad’s force fields altogether (albeit with an increasing appeal on representation). Thereafter, we encountered the intermediary tactic of ‘Repeating a Ritual’, an act strongly mobilizing the force field of signification. Now, with the tactic of ‘Catalyzing Community’ (and subsequently ‘Zoning a Proper’) we arrive in a new, central field of the taxonomy. Two issues characterize this new region. First, both tactics within this field will make use of configuration and signification; second, the centrality of the region implies that the aggregate level of these two tactics has been informed by both variants of the commoning continuum that traverses this work. Qua further application, this implies that these two tactics ‘can go both ways’: on the one hand, they may be prone to be consensually enrolled within the Municipality/Market’s urban development agenda, while on the other hand, they may constitute the social (the current tactic) or the spatial (the following tactic) precondition for Oppositional Commoning to unfold.

‘Catalyzing Community’, is this: the tweaking of a spatial substrate in order to let a ‘commoning community’ emerge. In the context of ‘Catalyzing Community’, the urban practitioner seeks to incite commoning communities *from scratch* by mobilizing already-existing-but-not-yet-consolidated social tissues present within the urban commonwealth. Several acts have already passed in review, acts converging within the aggregate level of the current tactic. The instance where the intent to catalyze a commoning community has been most apparent, is Pension Almonde’s ‘sheltering operation’ for the figure of the urban nomad. In the corresponding case study, we recursively encountered City in the Making’s explicit intent to create a commoning community from scratch by bringing a selection of mobile dwellers and socio-cultural organizations, formerly unknown to each other, together. We also saw how Recetas Urbanas attempted, through a joint building process, to ‘communify’ the people living in the vicinity of the De Coninck Square and, from there on out, to give them a voice, with varying levels of success, concerning the square’s further spatial development.

The operation of ‘Catalyzing Community’ becomes highly visible through the Atelier’s first project (2000), Ecobox. Ecobox began with the construction of a temporary urban garden in an unused

railway lot in the La Chapelle area of northern Paris. When the first version of Ecobox was forced to leave the lot, the project extended spatially and temporally through a series of wooden, mobile furniture modules: a kitchen, a play module, a media lab, a library, a rainwater collector and a joinery. The goal of these mobile, ‘roaming’ spatial substrates was exactly to cluster a network of commoners around them, like a magnet moving over a plate of iron sawdust. As the emergence of for example a ‘gardening group’ and a ‘kitchen group’ shows, moveable modules may constitute the final catalyst needed to unlock the oftentimes hidden potentiality for a commoning community to emerge. An Atelier member argues in this regard: “in order for it to become a community, you need a common project. It needs to perceive itself as a community by ways of doing. This community doesn’t pre-exist, it’s borne in time, it kind of emerges. We hope to design these infrastructures to initiate a dynamic”.

Yet, I announced earlier that the act of catalyzing a commoning community would be followed by signification: ‘interpretation-by-the-many’. In this context, the field of space-commoning teaches us that commoning communities tend to be mobilized *as a vehicle for critical reflection*: the exchange of knowledge *about* common space, *in* common space. Encountered in this work is an abundance of ‘on-the-spot assemblages’, namely, sessions of knowledge exchange whereby the viewpoints expressed need not necessarily to transcend into a blueprint for future action. A first instance can be found at Zuloark, a Spanish activist architecture collective based in Madrid. One of the collective’s working lines is the ‘Urban Parliament’. The main intent in this regard is to organize parliamentary sessions (in the slipstream of architecture meetings, bi- and triennials, exhibitions) in order to stir up opinions “about the city from the citizen’s point of view”. In so doing, Zuloark will effectively build a hemispheric construction in order to incite exchanges about the discussants’ current urban condition. It is attempted to bring a diverse cast of characters to the parliament, ranging from politicians to activists, bearing in mind that it is not a final consensus that is worked towards⁹. Out of the parliament’s dissensive sessions, Zuloark distills the Declaration of Urban Rights, a non-fixed, ever-changing manifest “made by infinite inputs” listing the urbanite’s desires in the form of an open database. Another example is the aforementioned, Berlin-based ‘Neighborhood Academy’ (the ‘Commons Evening School’), a weekly get-together in the shadow of die Laube. The school constitutes an open platform for knowledge sharing

around concepts such as the commons, self-organization and ecological transition. As such, the catalyzed commoning community, in and on itself, constitutes ‘a living archive’ mobilized to protect the Kreuzberg area, where the school takes root, from gentrification.

I announced earlier that the taxonomy’s central tactics may ‘go both ways’: on the one hand, they may be prone to be consensually enrolled within the Municipality/Market’s development agenda, on the other hand, they may proffer a pivotal precondition for Oppositional Commoning to unfold. Multiple examples of an ‘ex nihilo catalyzed community’ engaging in Oppositional Commoning have already passed in review. A first example can be found at the R-Urban community, as explained under the previous tactic of ‘Wearing a Perruque’. An Atelier member tells us how “the mayor was articulating this in the Municipal Council. She spoke about participatory democracy not being the real democracy in which those not elected were to decide about what goes on, and that it’s not something the city can control”¹⁰. As R-Urban’s eviction and legal case have shown, the catalyzed community proved valuable to oppose the moment of eviction and to create, to use the words of the Atelier, ‘a political consciousness’ among the commoners; a consciousness not necessarily to ‘co-govern’ *with* the Municipality/Market, but to rethink the commoner’s very relation thereto. A moment of Catalyzing Community from the viewpoint of Oppositional Commoning could also be detected in Recetas Urbanas’s attempt to ‘visibilize the invisible groups’, albeit that through the circumstance of the ‘secluded worlds’, this operation could not fully unfold.

By contrast, we have recursively seen how an ‘ex nihilo catalyzed community’ may be pushed ‘back into’ Symbiotic Commoning as well. The catalyzed community of ‘urban nomads’ at Pension Almonde, notwithstanding its nomadism and volatility, was given a ‘fixed place’ in the coordinates of Havensteder as the ‘community-to-turn-to’ when struggling with additional cases of vacancy. At The Public Land Grab, too, the movement to Symbiotic Commoning has lurked around the corner. It is simultaneously telling that, as a planner at the GLA made clear, it was precisely the presence of a self-instigated community that triggered the decision to fund. A decision that, importantly, further abdicated the responsibility to proffer employment and well-being on the shoulders of the Loughborough Junction’s commoning community.

Figure 42. Inside the Prinzessinnengarten, Berlin



Figure 43. Building Community at Prinzessinnengarten



Zoning a Proper

The second tactic within the central region of the taxonomy is ‘Zoning a Proper’. In fact, one could interpret ‘Zoning a Proper’ as the inverse version of the previous tactic of ‘Catalyzing Community’. Whilst ‘Catalyzing Community’ implies the mobilization of a spatial substrate in order to instigate a community, ‘Zoning a Proper’ implies the mobilization of a community in order to physically inscribe an area (or building) of space-commoning in the urban tissue. Sometimes, in order to effectively arrive at the production of common space, the commoner seems obliged to engage in an act of demarcation *vis-à-vis* the enclosing tendencies of the Municipality/Market, by saying: ‘until here, and no further’. It was De Certeau (1984, p. 89) who put forward ‘un propre’ as a building or territory that isolates ‘a subject of will and power’ from its environment. Whilst De Certeau has in mind research institutions or profit-oriented corporations, one may easily replace such ‘subject of will and power’ with the figure of the commoner; one may think of a sign board, stating: “beyond this point, you are in common space”.

A proper, I will maintain, may latch onto two forms. A first form is the one of a ‘base camp’: the erection of a physically rooted locale from which an endeavour of space-commoning and a community of commoners may blossom. This point has already been discussed under ‘Wearing the Perruque’, where it was stated that a pivotal precondition for the latter tactic may be found in the constitution of a physical locale where the commoner may present to the Municipality/Market – through numerical values, deliberative organs – ‘who one is’ and ‘what one does’. Another instance appeared in Chapter 5. During the study of The Public Land Grab, it was seen how commoners benefitted from ‘a physically rooted base camp’ amidst their Loughborough Farm, that is: a greenhouse from where discussions with Lambeth’s Councilors could unfold on the commoner’s grounds. In all, it is my contention that a proper, immobile building is of highly tactical value. As these examples show, a proper locus may not only constitute a safe space for the commoner, but also a spatial substrate through which the Municipality/Market may be put to the test, through which it may be obliged to publicly state how much of a commoning experiment it is willing to allow, or not.

But I equally would want to zoom in on a second, more territorial version of the current tactic. The second version of ‘Zoning a Proper’ is that of an extended, urban territory. ‘The proper’, then,

evolves into what Kärholm (2007, p. 441) names a ‘territorial tactic’: “a personal relationship between the territory and the person or group who mark it as theirs”. Both forms of this tactic, one might argue, are highly interrelated. One should not forget that the project of The Public Land Grab started first with the illegal claiming of a central base camp (the Farm), after which it spread out to a neighborhood-wide network (including the Grove Adventure Playground, the Marcus Lipton Youth Centre and the Farm Café Coop). The project of The Public Land Grab, I contend, has been most explicit in zoning its ‘proper’, the area around the Loughborough Junction, against the influx of mobile capital. Qua configuration, the commoners at The Public Land Grab were seen to claim a piece of derelict land, to fence it, to ‘mark it as theirs’, as well as to build themselves not only a central greenhouse but also to self-organize a playground, a youth centre, a coop café, the totality of which proffers a sort of ‘urban zone of commoning’. Qua signification, the aforementioned zone was restored to ‘ambiguity’; in other words: it was put subject to an ‘interpretation-by-the-many’. The land grabbers were seen to nominate Assets of Community Value, being physical locales of symbolic value to the area, which proffered augmented protection against the private developments attracted by the Loughborough Farm’s rising land value. The public land grabbers also used the Loughborough Farm and LJ Works as an ecosystem where commoners could experiment, by trial and error, with political action (in the Steering Group), with self-organization (at LJ Works) or with the development of their visions and ideas for the common space to evolve in (one might think of the commoner trying to make the Farm self-sufficient by developing an anaerobic digester).

Two additional constituents of the current cluster may be brought forward. One may, first, recall R-Urban, an endeavour seeking to claim and protect urban land. As an Atelier member argues: “one needs to seize land opportunities where we can build things forever, where change can be initiated, tested, learned and practiced”. A recurring tenet, moreover, is commoners’ efforts to bring not only buildings and infrastructures, but also entire sections of the city into communal ownership. In Berlin, for example, activists within the aforementioned Neighborhood Academy currently explore whether it is possible to bring the land of the Kreuzberg Borough under the communal ownership of a ‘trust’ which would consist of residents, municipal officials and activists. This would be done in order to protect the

area against the influx of private capital and gentrification development. As argues a Prinzessinnengarten activist: “we see the potential of a legal structure to allow us to secure places and take them out of the market, but also don’t leave them just to a political control”. Closer to home, the Brussels-based collective ‘Permanent’ engages in a similar endeavour. Permanent, too, experiments with communal ownership in order to proffer ‘anti-speculative property’: sustainably affordable infrastructure for living and cultural production. Once more, the adage ‘until here, and no further’ takes centre stage¹¹.

One may be sure that this tactic will raise a few eyebrows. One will rightfully object to this tactic: wouldn’t the active bordering of a ‘proper zone of commoning’ *reproduce* what Stavrides (2015, p. 10) calls ‘the enclave city’, a city consisting of “self-contained worlds in which specific forms of spatial ordering prevail”, with some living in ‘fortified citadels’, others in ‘doubtful security’, and still others in ‘sanitized zones’? Wouldn’t the ‘zoning of a proper’ bring into life the ‘commons-version’ of a gated community? Moreover, how does one choose who is part of ‘the proper’ and who is not? Does ‘the proper’ emerge along class lines? Along ethnic, gender, or ideological lines? Does it mean that urbanites have to remain where they are? That they have no right be mobile, both spatially and socially? Quite the contrary. This research project emerged out of an interest in pushing *forward* Stavrides’s (2015) idea of ‘threshold space’ and Sennett’s (2018) research line of the ‘open city’. I share with these authors a (normative) willingness to put to analytic scrutiny the preconditions for a city ‘beyond the enclave’, a city that is open to newcomers, one with fuzzy boundaries, a city open to commoner-instigated modifications, or to use the words of Sennett (1970): a city thriving on *disorder*, one where the encounter with otherness allows the urbanite to transit into adulthood. Notions such as ‘zoning’, ‘a proper’, ‘territory’, and so forth, have indeed something conservationist and conservative about them. But let me be clear: the driving impetus of this study remains the exploration of commoning’s Oppositional variant, its contribution to the withering away of borders, both social and spatial.

However, if we are to set the first steps in that direction, it will be needed for the commoner, in a first instance, to reclaim land, to ‘zone’ an expanding proper from within. I am willing to contend that this is precisely the reason why our urban commonwealth continues to be privatized, enclosed,

commodified; namely: because all too often, urban space is equated with a spatial substrate that is supposedly 'open for use' to *both* the commoner and the developer. When this happens, namely, when there is in fact no dispute about the differing power relations between these two spheres, the possibility for Oppositional Commoning is set to extinguish. This has been seen during the case study on Pension Almonde: the commoner and Havensteder were discovered to act on a supposed equal footing, cancelling out the possibility for Oppositional Commoning to emerge (notwithstanding the project's ambition "to have political impact in the long run"). It is my contention that at this juncture a pivotal question must be asked: could it be that the Ostromian tactic of socio-spatial closure might have more Oppositional traction than formerly expected? A glance at The Public Land Grab may present a cautious 'yes' to this question. Commoners were seen to 'border socially': beyond the demarcation lines of class and ideology, the general tenet was one of 'commoners *vis-à-vis* the Municipality/Market' (consisting of Lambeth Council and the development firms seeking to transform parts of the project into private housing). Commoners were equally seen to 'border spatially': by nominating Assets of Community Value, by bringing multiple sections under self-organization, and most generally, by continually attempting to expand their commoning network throughout the region of the Loughborough Junction, the commoners set out to circumscribe their 'proper zone' against the private developments that continue to threaten it.

Still, a series of problems remains present within the tactic of 'Zoning a Proper'. First, one might object that commoning efforts that are effectively able to 'zone their proper' will only emerge in those places and areas where there is already enough social capital and 'free, unremunerated time' available in order to set commoning on its rails. Such can clearly be seen at The Public Land Grab, the proliferation of which is based on the multiple years of experience of the Loughborough Junction Action Group (LJAG). Second, how does one choose who is part of the proper and who is not? This issue might lead to a city consisting of 'commons enclaves', eventually proffering uneven opportunities for urbanites and commoners living in other parts of the city. Third, how does one make sure that those engaged in 'zoning their proper' continue to oppose the *same* adversary? It is imaginable that the tactic of 'Zoning a Proper' quickly shifts to exclusions among ethnic, gender, age or ideological lines as well (or any

other possible line of demarcation). Finally, it seems safe to assert that ‘Zoning a Proper’ against private development may constitute a cause *a priori* lost. As such, it is readily conceivable how the struggle may be won in advance by the most well-funded party, capital-wise that is. At The Public Land Grab, for instance, when a private developer issues the intent to privatize an Asset of Community Value, commoners enjoy a ‘Right to Bid’: they get a six-month time concession to raise funds themselves and bid for it instead. Encountered, hence, is the reproduction of a market mechanism and an announcement, in advance, of which party will eventually be able to buy.

Notwithstanding the former remarks, one might suspect that in order to safeguard the urban commonwealth from closure and tragedy, a moment of ‘uncommonness’ may be needed. Blaser & Cadena (2017, p. 185), in this regard, speak of the ‘uncommons’: a notion which “disrupts the idea of the world as shared ground”, a ground which would be invariably ‘open’ to exploitation and commodification. “Uncommoning”, the authors argue, “might be crucial for giving shape to solid commons”. If I may be allowed to speculate broadly and potentially naively, one might argue that in order to install a ‘positive’ moment of commoning in the city, a first, ‘negative’ moment will be needed, a moment of uncommonness. If we are to open up the city ‘from within’, making it a sustainable habitat without discrimination in class, gender, ethnicity, or any other line of demarcation, a moment of closure, namely to those conceiving it in commodifying terms, might be unavoidable.

Configuration, Notwithstanding

As both the current tactic (‘Configuration, Notwithstanding’) and the following one (‘Signification, Notwithstanding’) rub against the Oppositional pole, we arrive in the final field of the taxonomy of tactics. Rather than engaging in a ‘partnership arrangement’ with the Municipality/Market, these last two tactics transpose the gravitational centre of the production of common space to the level of the commoner. Whereas the current tactic evolves around the *ex nihilo* construction of physical spaces within the urban tissue, the following one evolves around the imbueing of novel and multiple meanings upon already existing spatial substrates.

The crux of ‘Configuration, Notwithstanding’ can be expressed as follows: it entails a production of space whereby the space-commoner puts the determinants normally and primarily directing the course of a commoning endeavour (funds, grants, policy, legality) ‘between brackets’, but chooses instead to give a spatial expression to the concept of the commons *from scratch*; hence, in a way unaffected by the potentially limiting factors existing ‘outside of the commons’. Lefebvre (2014, p. 4) described these latter determinants in terms of the ‘far order’. Hence, one might say that the current tactic suspends or isolates ‘the far order’; as Lefebvre had it: “this isolation is the only way forward toward clear thinking, the only way to avoid the incessant repetition of the idea that there is nothing to be done, nothing to be thought, because everything is ‘blocked’, because ‘capitalism’ rules and co-opts everything”. By isolating the far order, the commoner presents a new set of connections between the ‘what’, ‘why’, ‘where’ and ‘how’ of the production of common space. Where will we build? What will we build? For whom will we build? What is the *raison d’être* of our building? By answering oneself such questions, the commoner mobilizing the current tactic produces what within the coordinates of the Municipality/Market is unidentifiable, unclassifiable, difficult to interpret within any preexisting classificatory grid. Therefore, ‘Configuration, Notwithstanding’ thrives on what in Chapter 1 was described as Castoriadis’s (1998) *Creatio ex Nihilo*: it is a form of commoning that literally invents itself. Now, it was formerly argued that *Creatio ex Nihilo* differs from creation *with* or *in* nothing. This means that there may be precedents to the creational act, but that the creational act is not essentially caused by it. So too, the commoner going to work with the current tactic will be affected by pre-existing conditions, but ‘notwithstanding’, will bring to life a novel configuration of common space, from scratch. As the now-following contributions will show, commoners going to work with this tactic proceed under the adage of “act first, explain later”¹².

We encountered ‘Configuration, Notwithstanding’ before. The illegal claiming of the land of the Loughborough Farm could be seen as a form of commoning ‘ex nihilo’. It implied the active tweaking of a spatial substrate, notwithstanding it being in ownership of municipal authorities. A more elaborate instance can now be coined through the work of *Recetas Urbanas*. This instance evolves around *Recetas Urbanas*’s self-built meeting place for a community of squatters and activists in Sant

Boi, Barcelona. In 2017, the municipal government of Sant Boi had foreclosed the squatters' *ateneu* – a public meeting room for the facilitation of debates, deliberation and social encounter – which was previously located in a nearby textile factory. But together with Recetas Urbanas, acting upon these actors' "right to live, organize and discuss with each other", a new *ateneu* was built overnight, in the middle of the town's central square, directly facing the town's representative-political town hall. The construction, importantly, was erected while no official permission was given in advance. A few days after the foundations of the intervention were put in place, the mayor obliged the collective to dismantle the project, but after a period of negotiation between the local administration, Recetas Urbanas and the squatters, the mayor eventually allowed the *ateneu* to be finished and remain in place. After all, forbidding the construction might have led to negative electoral outcomes for the mayor and the City Council. Recetas Urbanas knowingly initiated the construction without any formal agreement and with the explicit goal – and firm expectation – that the mayor would eventually decide to legalize the intervention. During a field visit to the site, a Recetas Urbanas member said: "it was about changing the position and the opinion of the city. Now we have a license and are permitted to proceed". We encounter, namely, the now very explicit construction of what I called earlier 'a town house for the commons', a 'polemical commonplace' (Dikeç) to engage into dialogue with a municipal government.

The tactical value of 'Configuration, Notwithstanding', is this: bending legitimacy into legality. De Angelis (2017a, p. 231) wrote that "legitimacy is the first resource that must be generated and accumulated by the practice of commoning". Pagano (2013, p. 340), likewise, argued that "where the normative acceptability and legality of a [commons-based] action diverge, it is the law, and not the activity, that is likely to change". Such is exactly the progression found in this tactic, namely: to start out from an action that is *de jure* illegal yet 'legitimate' (deemed valid by those directly affected by it), in order to project such legitimacy upwards to those active in the sphere of (municipal) representation. Hence: into legality. It means not to seek the label of legality in an *a priori* existing legal framework, but to craft it *ex nihilo*, to verify it in practice. This form of legitimization – one might say: 'created at the bottom, consolidated at the top' – was seen when commoners at The Public Land Grab illegally claimed a piece of unused Council land, not knowing whether such act would be followed by penalty or

legalization. “The *legitimacy* of the land makes way for the *legality* of the printed word”, wrote Bollier (2015). Another example can be found in Italy’s scene of ‘self-managed social centers’. Many of these (Ex-Asilo Filangieri in Naples, Leoncavallo in Milan) started out illegally through the claiming of unused urban infrastructure but, after acquiring enough legitimacy from the community in which they’d be embedded, achieved permanence, legal recognition and municipal support. Recetas Urbanas has crafted a term for this progression: ‘induced legality’. As Cirugeda explains: “we never wait for the governments. We never involve with them in the same vein. We prefer to be outside. Self-organization means that you never wait to hear from another what you must do”.

Figure 44. Ateneu for a Community of Squatters, Central Square of Sant Boi, Barcelona



Figure 45. The Ateneu under Construction



Signification, Notwithstanding

Whilst the previous tactic was seen to evolve around the force field of configuration, the current and last one will take hold of the field of signification. Whilst the former implied the erection ‘notwithstanding’ of a formerly non-existent physical space, the current tactic implies the appropriation ‘notwithstanding’ of an already existing one by putting it subject an ‘interpretation-by-the-many’.

As laid out before, what unites this last field of the taxonomy is that the determinants normally directing the course of a commoning endeavour – funding, policy, legality – are put between brackets, isolated. Rather, the commoner will claim or erect a common space *ex nihilo*, take matters in one’s own hands. With this premise in mind, it is safe to assert that the ‘from scratch character’ that inhabits this field of the taxonomy necessitates a great deal of: improvisation. Sennett (2018, pp. 24–25), in this regard, laid bare how improvisation has long been at the heart of the production of space. He turns, for

instance, to Joseph Bazalgette, the 19th-century civil engineer who modelled and implemented London's sewer system. Bazalgette and his team, Sennett narrates, was "not practicing an exact science. They did not apply established principles to particular cases, there were no general policies that dictated best practices". Rather, they "guessed, and discovered by accident, not knowing in advance the knock-on effects of their technical inventions". As I indicated earlier: 'act first, explain later'.

A friendliness to improvisation has passed in review at multiple junctures. It was encountered during Recetas Urbanas's overnight erection of an *ateneu*, directly facing Sant Boi's town hall. It was also encountered during Endeavour's attempt to buy, in collaboration with an ensemble of Antwerp-based artists, activists, citizen initiatives and architects, the city's police tower when it became available on the real-estate market. In this case, it was not expected at all that the purchase could be won against the market – which it didn't. Rather, the quest was one of improvisation, the consequences of which were expected to crystalize at a later point in time (an Endeavour member described it as "the creation of our own policy, a learning process"). Improvisation, finally, was equally mentioned by the activists at City in the Making. The activists knew well in advance that on the one hand Pension Almonde could become a case of 'shooting oneself in the foot' (the short time span, the contribution to gentrification), but that on the other hand valuable lessons could be distilled out of the experiment.

But let us return to the essence of 'Signification, Notwithstanding': the coupling of an already existing spatial substrate to a multiplicity of meanings and interpretations, the coupling of a spatial substrate to an 'interpretation-by-the-many'. I intend to highlight and strengthen this characterization through the lens of a 'micro case study' that I undertook. The case evolves around the occupation of the Embros theatre, Athens, performed by the Mavili collective¹³. 'Embros' is a theatre building in the Athenian Psyrri neighborhood, a building which by 2011 had been disused for five years. Embros appears immediately, qua common good, not only as a shared resource nested within the field of cultural production, but also as a *means* mobilized to express a disagreement with what we could now call the 'State/Market'. Namely, in November 2011, the Mavili collective, consisting of performance artists and scholars, occupied the building in order to criticize the Greek government's unwillingness to provide a framework and infrastructure for the fields of culture and art – a dallying related to the 2010-2011 Greek

debt crisis (Argyropoulou, 2012; Argyropoulou & Hypatia, 2019). Mavili's intent was to improvisationally 'revive' the theatre, to 'let it speak', in Lefebvre's terms. Relying entirely on solidarity and non-monetary exchange between participants, the collective stated: "we aim to re-activate and re-occupy this space temporarily through our own means, and propose an alternative model of collective management (...). For the next eleven days, Mavili Collective will reconstitute Embros as a public space for exchange, research, debate, meeting and re-thinking"¹⁴. Hence, 'interpretation-by-the-many'. During the occupation, scholars and artists but also students, activists and immigrant groups would present work or project their desired uses upon the spatial substrate the theater had by then become. "It wasn't belonging to someone", explained a Mavili member, "and in that sense, no one was telling us like 'here is how we do things'". The program (lectures, performances, debates) would be daily updated during the occupation. One of the occupants continues: we created "the conditions and let it free. We were never controlling. We were organizing whatever needed to be organized and then it was happening by itself". Taking these premises together, we reencounter the crux of the current tactic. 'Notwithstanding' monetary funding (none) or legal allowance (absent), Mavili's resignification of the Embros theatre can be interpreted as a putting between brackets of any potentially limiting factors when seeking to imbue a variability of meaning upon the chosen substrate. To put in the words of the occupiers¹⁵: "rather than serving a function in a pre-existing space, for these twelve days in Athens' time of crisis, cultural workers sought to intervene in the dominant production of space and create the conditions for an alternate modality of spatial production, which challenged existent societal imaginaries of cultural praxis". Finally, just as was seen during the configurative version of this tactic, legitimacy welled up (was 'induced', so to say) from the grassroots to the higher levels of the city and the state. During the months following the occupation, social and political support arrived from the surrounding neighborhood and from the city's art scene. Beyond the level of the city, on the national level, the State seemed to accept, or at least not to oppose, the occupation.

I now want to turn to the final phase of the Embros case, a termination needing to be highlighted in order to explain two highly interrelated issues that are at the heart of the taxonomy's final field. The first issue applies to both the 'Notwithstanding' tactics. One year after the initial occupation, a new

Greek government projected forward a continued privatization of public goods, among them the so-called self-organized ‘spaces of illegality’, with Embros on the list. In this vein, the ‘Public Properties Company’, a state-owned corporation imbued with the mission of privatizing and managing public assets, demanded that Mavili would evacuate the theatre¹⁶. From this, a first issue follows: the legitimacy the commoner builds up within the two ‘notwithstanding’ tactics is never total, neither constant. What Recetas Urbanas calls ‘induced legality’ has to be continually proven, over and over again. In other words: the significative load of the substrate one appropriates requires to be meticulously taken care of. Such is, to continue, precisely what followed: through an actively built-up support by citizen initiatives, artistic collectives and political organizations, the Mavili collective managed to negate the decision to privatize.

The second issue applies most particularly to the second ‘Notwithstanding’ tactic. What happened at Embros, shortly after the decision to privatize was diverted, paves the way to making the argument. A weekly, open assembly was put in place through which one can glimpse the normative stance towards the elements of ‘community’ and ‘commoning’ within the Radical-theoretical approach. Envisioned was an always open decision-making organ (an assembly) as well as an internal organization whereby anyone could use the space and perform or rehearse within it. Time constraints for deliberation were rejected, organizational rules construed as hegemonic. Qua community, hence, appears one that in the words of Stavrides (2013b, p. 49) could be captured by a ‘porosity of borders’. Qua commoning, we encounter the instituent variant, perpetual flux. In the words of a Mavili member: “we said: don’t settle a modus operandi, let’s not become stable, an institution, let’s keep changing our ways of operating”. The effects, yet, have been deleterious. The governance of Embros, eventually, was seen to be ‘hi-jacked’ by one group that took over the theatre. As argued by a Mavili member, the assembly resorted to “a field of manipulation controlled by experts”. After a series of violent assemblies, the Mavili collective retreated from the project, dragging with it other artists and cultural workers.

Here we come to the crux of the second issue: if one is to engage in effective Oppositional Commoning, the ‘significative’ undercurrent that traverses the normative elements within the Radical-theoretical approach will at some point necessitate a moment of reduction, namely, necessitate

representation: who belongs to the common cause? What is our *modus operandi*? One might argue that the Mavili collective's expulsion out of its own occupation might be related to its intent to keep an 'interpretation-by-the-many' always 'many', always variable, while refraining to momentarily reduce it to 'the one' (this 'one', again, can be a collectivity). Through permanent change and an unsettled *modus operandi*, it seems impossible for the commoner to exert Oppositional potency during the production of common space. As the hi-jacking of the theatre shows, some groups *will* exert their power over others. The following statement of a Mavili member is telling in this regard: "first we had a certain kind of openness with other collectives, then it became a wide openness, then it became collective openness, and then it became chaos".

Figure 46. The Embros Theatre, Athens (Wikimedia Commons)



Notes

¹ Hence, the horizontal axis should not be equated with the dyad between the Ostrom-theoretical and the Radical-theoretical approach.

² But, as argued extensively in the General Introduction, this study does not distinguish between ‘architects’ and ‘non-architects’. I look primarily at the figure of the ‘urban practitioner’, those working on the border between activism, art, architecture, design and community organizing.

³ As explained in the document ‘Making Space in Dalston’, written for the London Borough of Hackney, 2009. Retrieved from https://issuu.com/mufarchitectureartllp/docs/making_space_big.

⁴ De Caeter perceives of Parckfarm as “an exercise in globalization, superdiversity and ecological transition”, “a true urban commons”. Retrieved from the article “Parckfarm, Nieuw Volkspark als Concrete Utopie” (“Parckfarm: New Urban Park as Concrete Utopia”) via from <https://www.bruzz.be/opinie/parckfarm-nieuw-volkspark-als-concrete-utopie-2014-12-10>.

⁵ The answer, he continues, will depend on “personal and political choices”.

⁶ There are multiple R-Urban projects throughout Europe, R-Urban London among them.

⁷ The Coop Campus (carried out together with the socio-cultural organization S27 - Kunst & Building social centre) is a common space located at the fringe of the Neukölln Borough and on a former cemetery, next to the former Tempelhof airfield. The project unfolds with and for refugees and includes a school, a wood workshop, an urban garden and a kitchen.

⁸ Retrieved from <https://miesarch.com/work/1182>.

⁹ Three main questions invariably steer the discussion in the Urban Parliaments: which elements would you want to protect in the city? Which elements would you want to see disappear? What would you want to add to your city?

¹⁰ As Rancière (1992, p. 62) argues: subjectivation is always “a demonstration, and a demonstration always supposes an other, even if that other refuses evidence or argument”.

¹¹ Permanent sets out from its experiences in Brussels’s northern quartier, where it was previously based. The northern region is currently and rapidly gentrifying through private capital and through the planned regeneration of informal and artistic spatial uses. This can be seen in the fact that a number of cultural and artistic organizations that occupied the WTC Towers and Allee du Kaai are currently on the move due to the arrival of foreign capital buying up these infrastructures. Permanent is one of those nomadic organizations but is exploring today what a more sustainable solution would entail.

¹² In this sense, the work of Recetas Urbanas touches closely on Lefebvre’s (1996) concept of the “right to the city”. Lefebvre’s right to the city idea meant that citizens should have rights of decision and rights of use in public space, not because of the legal inscription of property rights, but because of mere inhabitation and everyday use.

¹³ The following paragraphs are based on an in-depth interview with an Athenian activist playing a primary role in the occupation (Gigi Argyropoulou) and on one session of participatory observation during an open assembly at the Embros theatre (15/04/2018).

¹⁴ Derived from one of the occupants' online memo, entitled "Critical Performance Spaces: Participation and Anti-Austerity Protests in Athens". Retrieved from https://parturbs.com/anthology/critical_performance_spaces.

¹⁵ Also derived from one of the Mavili occupants' online memo, entitled "Critical Performance Spaces: Participation and Anti-Austerity Protests in Athens". Retrieved from https://parturbs.com/anthology/critical_performance_spaces.

¹⁶ The following quote, distilled from a letter this corporation directed at the Mavili collective, indicates how the commons may be privatized 'in the name of the common good'. The letter stated: "we are particularly sensitive to the requests from groups, collectives and citizens of the city. However, our company has to privatize buildings according to the common interest of the citizens and set a date for the evacuation of the space by the police". This is equally derived from one of the occupants' online memo entitled "Critical Performance Spaces: Participation and Anti-Austerity Protests in Athens". Retrieved from https://parturbs.com/anthology/critical_performance_spaces.

Chapter 9. Conclusive Theses on the Production of Common Space

These One: On the Mutual Reinforcement

Our itinerary so far has been a cumulative one. We started in Chapter 1 with a discussion of how the Ostrom-theoretical and the Radical-theoretical approach differ when it comes to the three De Angelean elements of the ‘common good’, ‘community’ and ‘commoning’. Whilst *on paper* these approaches advocate Symbiotic and Oppositional Commoning respectively, Chapter 2 evolved around the *uncoupling* of these overarching modalities from their theoretical bases. Whether the elements present within the Ostrom-approach would lead to Symbiotic Commoning now became ‘a question, rather than a premise’; ditto with regard to the relationship between the Radical-theoretical approach and Oppositional Commoning. Subsequently, given the fact that De Angelis’s scheme allows to uncover *what* commoners do with ‘common goods’, ‘community’ and ‘commoning’, but not *how* they do it, a more structured guiding framework was found in Lefebvre’s ‘spatial triad’: the force fields of representation, configuration and signification allowed to highlight on a meta-analytical level the production of common space. From this operation onwards, we were first able to witness a series of commoning procedures which, subsequently, gave rise to eight aggregate clusters, eight ideal types of tactics that were altogether captured in Chapter 8’s Taxonomy of Tactics. In other words: we were able to lay bare the production of common space ‘in practice’, but we were also able to pinpoint eight ideal types through which common space *may* be produced in future commoning endeavors.

The time has now come to draw a number of conclusions. One might remember that in Chapter 4, two conditions were put forward with regard to case selection: (1) the condition that the cases should issue an explicit intent to work with the concept of common space; (2) the condition that there should be a *variability throughout* the selected cases (one Oppositional, one Symbiotic, one Hybrid). This threefold, conditional structure will now allow us to bring forward three ‘cross-case’, conclusive theses on the production of common space. Each of the cases will be coupled back to the theories that have passed in review, most importantly Lefebvre’s theory of the production of space as well as the dual approach to commoning (the Ostrom approach, the radical approach).

The first These confirms the hypothesis that it was necessary to uncouple the theoretical approaches from what they advocate qua ‘modality of engagement’. It will be expressed as follows:

“Both the Ostrom-theoretical and the Radical-theoretical approach should be seen as existing separately from their normative predictions (which I called: ‘modalities of engagement’) of Symbiotic and Oppositional Commoning, respectively. Commoners acting in Oppositional Commoning make use of *both* approaches, while the same goes for commoners active in the Symbiotic variant. On a meta-level, this means that both forms of commoning (Oppositional, Symbiotic) necessitate a ‘mutual reinforcement’ between the force field of representation and the force field of signification”.

In order to further elaborate on These One, a reinvocation of Lefebvre’s spatial triad will be of explanatory value. I would want to stress at the current crossroads that the invocation of the triad in order to uncover the intricacies of the production of common space has been a worthwhile endeavour. Namely, the spatial triad has allowed us to scrutinize the production of common space on a meta-level. Rather than to recognize in a ‘reality out there’ the commoners’ shared goods, their community and their commoning principles, the spatial triad allowed us to bring into vision *how* commoners would be ‘relating to’ these elements, how they would be dealing with them. In other words, the triad helped us to highlight the nature, rather than the content, of the De Angelean elements. As such, the triad allowed us to see that within the Ostrom-theoretical approach, the elements of the common good, community and commoning – notwithstanding the innumerable ways in which they might be elaborated in different endeavors – have an undercurrent of ‘representation’ about them. As argued in Chapter 3, the force field of representation entails *reduction*, which is precisely what happens in the Ostromian realm. Commoners mobilizing the Ostrom-theoretical elements distill out of many possibilities what their common good (or ‘proper’) is, who forms part of a common cause and what their regulative framework entails up front. So too has the triad allowed us to uncover that within the Radical-theoretical approach the elements of the common good, community and commoning have a sense of signification about them.

Signification, as explained earlier as well, puts the commoner on equal footing with the spatial substrate, it is a 'being with and in' space; a being, more so, that keeps possibilities open: an 'interpretation-by-the-many'. Commoners mobilizing the Radical-theoretical approach refrain from distilling out of many possibilities a single or stable community, neither a single or stable framework of rules. Signification is more changeable, more fluid, just like the radical approach's community in movement and instituent commoning. With these premises in mind, I am now able to highlight further the statement that the forms of commoning (Symbiotic and Oppositional) described in this study can be given credence by the use of elements of *both* theoretical approaches, meaning that on a meta-level, they necessitate a 'to-and-fro' between the force fields of representation and signification.

The first case was The Public Land Grab, London. Qua case selection, the project was presented as this study's Oppositional Case: "these tactics are as much spatial propositions as a redesign of the relationship between public, council, developer and city". But whilst being an Oppositional case, I may now state in hindsight that it was to rely mainly on *Ostrom-theoretical elements*. Qua common good, one may think of LJAG's initiatory claiming of the farm land, an act of 'a marking it as theirs'. But circumscription was seen to go further than the Farm alone. Qua community, The Land Grab implied an explicit focus on the area clustering around the Loughborough Junction. One cannot speak in this regard of any physically deployed bordering, but the land grabbers *are* explicit when it comes to *whom* their endeavour is rolled out for: the commoning populace around the Junction, and more specifically those sections struck by unemployment and lessening opportunities for social encounter (given Lambeth's attempts to privatize the Grove Adventure Playground and to redevelop/reposition the Marcus Lipton Youth Centre). Qua commoning, the endeavour has been an 'instituted' one under the auspices of the 'enabling state' (Iaione, 2016). Brought to life by the Localism Act, commoners at The Public Land Grab were seen to set up a 'Neighborhood Forum' and to nominate a series of 'Assets of Community Value'. If we were to invoke the taxonomy, one might say that The Public Land Grab has substantially contributed to the tactics of 'Zoning a Proper' (protecting the Juncture against speculation) and 'Catalyzing Community' (bringing together an already-existing-but not-yet-consolidated social tissue in a common cause).

But the former remarks constitute only half of the analysis. To it, the following should be added: whilst The Public Land Grab mainly invoked Ostrom-theoretical elements, it did so only as a ‘springboard to’ elements from within the Radical-theoretical approach. Qua common good, the claiming and fencing of the Farm has been a precondition to restore the land to ambiguity, to render it a locus where a ‘fixed matching between classification and behaviour’ would cease to exist, but where commoners could engage in political action (Steering Group, Neighborhood Forum), self-organization (urban farming) and experimentation (developing an anaerobic digester): *Creatio*. Qua community, the land grabbers’ explicit focus on a ‘relationship to place’ has implied a reshuffling of the community’s taxonomic existence: beyond the lines of class, ideology or ethnicity, the dividing line now became ‘commoners *vis-à-vis* private developers’. This reiterates a point made in Chapter 2, namely that a commoning community can be inclusive-exclusive, about which I stated: “one might suspect that in order to keep a commoning community open ‘for some’ (commoners), it will have to be closed ‘for others’ (capitalists)”. Qua commoning, the addition of LJ Works proffered a continued conversation between the commoners engaged in the Farm and Meanwhile Space, a discussion whereby two visions – one economic, one reciprocal – were seen to collide and, in the absence of a common denominator, necessitated a perpetual process of ‘translating’ and ‘comparing’ one paradigm to the other.

What we are seeing at The Public Land Grab is the valorization of representation – the creation of a ‘solid, stable ground on which to stand’ by defining what the common good, the community and the commoning principles *are* – only in order to explore how the latter could always *be otherwise* (signification). The project’s foundation on the Localism Act is most pertinent in this regard. The commoners at The Public Land Grab did not mobilize the latter construct to merely ‘take over’ planning and development responsibilities from the state. Namely, the demand of generating representations of space (the Neighborhood Plan) was explicitly *refused*. Only the Neighborhood Forum was installed, and this by way of instigating a ‘needed’, constant agonism *vis-à-vis* Lambeth. However, when needed, the Forum’s variability of visions (‘interpretation-by-the-many’) would be reduced to a representational vision (‘determination-by-the-one’), for example when codifying, in images and public documents, Lambeth’s ‘hidden’ attempts to privatize sections of the Junction’s commoning network.

The second case was Pension Almonde, Rotterdam. This case, too, underwrites the these that a certain ‘modality of engagement’ need not necessarily to be connected with one or the other theoretical approach, but may emerge through a combination of Ostrom-theoretical *and* Radical-elements. Qua case selection, the Almonde endeavour was presented as this study’s ‘hybrid’ case, but was later on reframed towards a Symbiotic one. We encountered a rapprochement between the commoner and the Municipality/Market embodied in Havensteder; two parties engaged in a ‘collaborative governance of the commons’ that is Pension Almonde. But whilst being a Symbiotic case, I may now state in hindsight that it was to rely mainly on *Radical-theoretical elements*. Qua community, the case worked actively around the political subjectivation of ‘the urban nomad’. City in the Making sought to ‘communitify’ a multitudinal ensemble that, once established and sheltered, would remain open to the inflow of newcomers and would remain non-demarcated by identitarian principles. As a project participant writes: “there emerges a community on the basis of living with each other, not on the basis of social or economic status”¹. Qua commoning, finally, the case issued commoning’s variant that tends to ‘invents itself’ and keeps changing itself (Creatio, Magma). One might think of the commoners’ intent to let ‘rules emerge from practice’ and of the sociocratic governance structure, respectively.

Again, however, the former remarks constitute only half of the analysis. To it, the following should be added: whilst The Public Land Grab mainly invoked Radical-theoretical elements, it was forced to balance, control or ‘check’ them through Ostrom-theoretical elements. First: the active instigation of the urban nomad’s community in movement may well constitute a Radical-theoretically informed principle, but we equally saw how at the doorstep of the commons there appeared an Ostromian ‘threshold of selection’: only those nomads within City in the Making’s network, namely, those actors and organizations deemed willing and suitable to contribute to the joint governing of the Pension (making rules, cooking soup, organizing activities), would be allowed entrance in the project. Second, it was recursively seen, due to Pension Almonde’s short time span and extensive spatial range, how City in the Making’s organic, unplanned, instituent way of working would gradually be replaced by an instituted one: “although I have always found that City in the Making is an experiment in radical freedom, I must admit that even for me the need for rules and procedures is slowly coming (...)”.

Before us, again, appears this ‘mutual reinforcement’ between the force field of representation and the force field of signification. In order to continue a ‘being with and in space’ (signification) in collaboration with a variable community ‘in movement’ and through self-inventing and shifting commoning principles, one needs representation’s reductive moment. In order to be able to continue such ‘interpretation-by-the-many’, one needs at certain moments this ‘stable, solid ground’ on which to stand. Whilst *The Public Land Grab* (Oppositional) started out from this solid ground, it used the latter to ‘pull it back open’, to make it variable again. Vice versa, whilst *City in the Making* (Symbiotic) started out from variability and organicity – from a magmatic ground, one might say in Castoriadian fashion – it encountered a moment of reduction: it tended to solidify, to replace instituent with instituted commoning. This moment, I argued, took place because of Havensteder’s primordial economic interest, eventually rendering this hybrid case a Symbiotic one. Nevertheless, like a lung that breathes, space-commoning endeavours, whether Oppositional or Symbiotic, may be expected to shift constantly, throughout time, ‘to-and-fro’ the elements from the two theoretical approaches, and thus also between the force fields of representation and signification.

These Two: On the Municipality/Market

The third case study, *Montaña Verde* in Antwerp, has not appeared during *These One* for the argument could be made most palpably based on what cases one and two have taught us. However, the case of *Montaña Verde* will appear to play an important part during the elaboration of *These Two*. We shall now continue in the direction of Oppositional Commoning, more precisely when it comes to this variant’s relationship to institutions. The second conclusive statement can therefore be expressed as follows:

“A connection *with* the Municipality/Market does not necessarily entail the presence of Symbiotic Commoning. Oppositional Commoning, too, will benefit from a connection with the Municipality/Market, rather than from a ‘desertion’”. Without the presence of an institutional interlocutor, Oppositional Commoning will not be able to unfold”.

This is the appropriate juncture to define what I would want to call the ‘Multitudinal Flaw’². A tenet generally present within the Radical-theoretical approach is that an ethos of constant variability would render the act of commoning an Oppositional undertaking. The ‘common-good-as-means’, the community ‘in movement’ and instituent commoning would constitute an oppositional framework, a political imaginary *standing in opposition* to the state and the market. This way of thinking, for instance, traverses De Angelis’s (2017b, p. 386) idea of overloading “state and capital systems with the movement’s variety” whereby the uniqueness and ungraspableness of the Radical-theoretical principles would allow the commoner to fiercely oppose the Municipality/Market before arriving in a post-capitalist world. However, already in Chapter 1, I put forward the suspicion that the Radical-theoretical principles would come to be at odds with themselves. My suspicion would be that the formerly described ethos of variability would allow the commoner to ‘desert’ an adversarial sphere, but not to oppose it. One may self-organize, one may engage in Castoriadis’s *Creatio from scratch*, but the question remains, however, whether this may effectively constitute a counter-hegemonic project. The Multitudinal Flaw, hence, entails in itself a conflation of ‘desertion’ and ‘opposition’. Still steered, yet, by a willingness to further develop the radical approach, my ‘correction’ would be: if the principles of the Radical-theoretical approach are to have any Oppositional thrust, then a ‘connection with’, rather than a ‘desertion of’ the Municipality/Market will be needed³. The fact that all cases have been selected according to a varying relation with municipal institutions enables us to shed light on this correction.

The first case of the Public Land Grab – the Oppositional case – is immediately the case that is most suitable in order to make the point. It was seen how a case that initially had no connection whatsoever with the Municipality/Market of Lambeth Council sought *itself* to bridge the distance. An ‘engagement with’, rather than a ‘withdrawal from’, was seen to take centre stage, and this on the initiative of the commoners themselves. As indicated in *These One*, these commoners’ engagement with the Municipality/Market proffered a ‘stable, solid ground’ for their common cause: asking from Councilors to ‘endorse’ the illegal claiming of the land; mobilizing the premises set out by the Localism Act; engaging with Lambeth Council in a funding application for the GLA. But whilst these former examples could immediately wake the suspicion of a consensual ‘commons fix’ or of Symbiotic

Commoning, a pivotal point should be added: commoners at the Public Land Grab *used* the initiated relationship with the Municipality/Market as a platform for friction and quarrel, rather than for a ‘co-governance’ (with Lambeth Council) of the commons. Through various channels – the Steering Group, the Forum, the greenhouse (‘the proper’) – the commoners’ relation with Lambeth Council was put continually under critical scrutiny. These organs were, more specifically, instigated in order to generate “an agonism needed for the project to be successful”. Through them, Lambeth’s efforts of privatization, private developers’ speculative activity, and Meanwhile Space’s ‘economic paradigms’ could be debated and opposed. One may thus state: even though it might seem self-explanatory, Oppositional Commoning cannot take root without: an opponent.

Even though, as the These goes, “a connection with the Municipality/Market does not necessarily entail the presence of Symbiotic Commoning”, it can still be the case. This is where the second project – the hybrid case – comes into the analysis: Pension Almonde. Here too, a connection was made ‘with’ the Municipality/Market, namely: Havensteder. The difference with The Public Land Grab, yet, lies in the very *kind of connection* that is made with the Municipality/Market. Whilst commoners at The Public Land Grab pursue an agonistic, frictional approach *vis-à-vis* their institutional environment, commoners at Pension Almonde opt for a deliberative, consensual one; which is the reason why in the final analysis the case shifted from a hybrid to a Symbiotic one. In line with These Two, we learn two things: in a first instance, Oppositional Commoning cannot unfold without a connection the commons’ institutional environment; in a second instance, for Oppositional Commoning to unfold, the commons’ connection to such institutional environment will evolve not about the content but about the very *form* of the relationship itself. As seen in the Public Land Grab, the connection with Lambeth was perpetually reformulated, retaught and criticized.

The final case of Montaña Verde constitutes yet another contribution to the point made in These Two. In the case of Montaña Verde we saw once more emerging, like stated in These One, ‘a solid, stable ground on which to stand’ (the provision of financial and material resources), a ground from which Oppositional Commoning *could* have emerged. But the picture emerging out of Montaña Verde was one of ‘secluded worlds’: on the one hand the municipal partners, on the other hand Recetas Urbanas

and the commoners and activists gravitating around it. *Recetas Urbanas* aspired explicitly to bring the citizenry and the municipality into oppositional, critical contact, but the connection ‘with’ the Municipality/Market was simply never made. On one side resided the municipal partners’ linear, statist, instituted way of working; on the other side emerged *Recetas Urbanas*’s organic, fluid, instituent one. Given the fact that these two spheres could not effectively *entangle*, Oppositional Commoning has been withheld from taking root.

Therefore, as my data have shown: Oppositional Commoning necessitates a connection ‘with’ the commons’ institutional environment; more so, it necessitates a critical, dissensual connection through which the very relation itself becomes the object of critical thought. I want to reiterate that this is not a self-explanatory statement. One could indeed say that the idea of Oppositional Commoning holds in itself the premise that it needs: an opponent. Whilst this is true, one should also consider the following. The point made in these paragraphs is that the intrinsic nature of the Radical-theoretical elements – self-invention, reinvention, constant flux – is not necessarily oppositional, even though ‘opposition’ (against the state and the market) is the very crux of the radical approach. Therefore: the ethos of variability so present within the Radical-theoretical approach will allow mere desertion, but not opposition, I propose. If it aspires to have any Oppositional traction, commoning requires an entanglement *with* the commons’ institutional environment.

Now that we know that Oppositional Commoning benefits an oscillation between representation and signification (These One) and that Oppositional Commoning requires a connection, albeit a dissensual one, with institutions (These Two), we might propose that this moment of connection is also the moment *par excellence* to make the reductive leap from ‘interpretation-by-the many’ to ‘determination-by-the-one’. It is in critical interaction with institutional interlocutors where the commoner may present a ‘future image’ to set sail for. The representational exercises undertaken by the commoners at The Public Land Grab gain pertinence here: codifying Lambeth’s privatizing attempts, sketching out a future vision, mobilizing the construct of the number. This point of the ‘to-and-fro’ between representation and signification, as well as its Oppositional undercurrent, will be taken up extensively in this study’s Epilogue: ‘Towards a Political Production of Common Space’.

These Three: On the Fraught Relationship

The third and final These will build further exclusively on Lefebvre's spatial triad. Before I conclusively discuss the force fields one by one, the final These can be expressed as follows:

“Whether a case proceeds in Oppositional, Symbiotic or Hybrid commoning, each of the triad's force fields may ‘make or break’ a commoning endeavour. In other words, each force field may tactically be invoked by commoners on-site, but may equally imply the commoner's entrapment in a downward spiral. The commoner, hence, maintains a ‘fraught relationship’ with the triad”.

We may commence with representation. Two undermining dimensions seem immediately to traverse the current force field. A first one can be seen in the formerly explained idea of the ‘future projection’. The future projection points to a ‘not yet’: how space *should* evolve in future times. With this in mind, we may generally state that a recurring theme throughout the case studies has been the ‘instrumentalized inscription’ within the Municipality/Market's future projections. At The Public Land Grab, commoners' efforts were mobilized by the Greater London Authority in order “to pull up the places that are identified as suffering from the ongoing economic success of the places right next to them”. At Pension Almonde, the project was seen to be coupled to Havensteder's projection that in the coming thirty years, more of its stock would have to be renovated, meaning that more of its populace would have to be displaced. At Montaña Verde, commoners contributed to the Green Department's and the Museum's future projections of valuing the inner-city as a ‘green’ and ‘museal’ domain respectively.

This does not mean, however, that space-commoning need necessarily to devolve into a ‘commons fix’. The field of representation may be mobilized as a counter-image, as a *counter*-future-projection. Such ‘strengthening representation’ is found in Stavrides's (2019, pp. 10–11) idea of ‘thinking-through-space’. In this vein, I am pointing to representations as a ‘shared ethos’, a ‘common cause’ or a ‘communal image’ of the future a commoning community aspires to struggle for. The Public Land Grab was seen ‘to think’ most actively ‘through space’. It engaged in the representation of a ‘common threat’ (unemployment, gentrification of the surrounding Boroughs) that was subsequently

linked to a ‘common cause’ (protecting land from speculation, self-organizing employment). In the final case study, Montaña Verde, one cannot point to the representational glue of a shared vision; yet, this absence is precisely what proves the importance thereof. As was laid bare in the corresponding case study, the common ‘threat and cause’ were represented *externally*, hence, heteronomously imposed by the municipal actors steering the project. In the absence of a process of ‘thinking-through-space’, we may derive, commoning may latch onto no other meaning than the mere sharing of common-pool resources.

A second interplay between an ‘undermining and an underwriting’ dimension of this force field comes forth from ‘representation as self-conception’. As an LJAG member noticed, the need for evidencing (*vis-à-vis* the Municipality/Market) undermines the intrinsic sociality through which the commons tend to evolve: “it’s the thing that kills the project”. We encounter, hence, a ‘catch-22’: “when demonstrating social value”, argued another London-activist, “you engage with the antithesis, it starts to institutionalize”. An inhabitant of the Almonde Street argued in very similar regard: “it is almost impossible to follow a set of procedures. Because that is the antithesis of a commoning process”⁴. Whether self-sought or ‘on demand’ by the Municipality/Market, ‘representation as self-conception’ – translating oneself to the realm of the number, the rule, the script to be rolled out – weighs down on the space-commoner. In other words: the recurring act of representation may cripple the commoner’s energetic surplus.

But here, too, this undermining dimension may be bent over in an underwriting one. Especially under the tactic of “Wearing the Perruque”, it was seen how various forms of self-conceptive representations could push a commoning endeavour forward. Representations of everyday actions (hours spent, kilos harvested) could be tactically ‘dressed’ or disguised as work for an ‘employer’, in the employers’ terms (that is, the Municipality/Market). But the representational act in itself was seen to have other aims as well: to gain additional resources, financial support, or to ‘induce’ legitimacy from the ground-up. Such twofold nature of representation has been illustrated most tellingly by the public land grabbers: they projected a representation (the funding bid) upon the GLA, but subsequently used the gained funds to consciously put in place an Oppositional relation with Lambeth Council.

A final statement may hence be made about the force field of representation. Namely: the field of representation cannot be thought separately from the field of signification; a statement which reproves These One. When in common space a representation becomes too stable, too abstract, for too long, the commoner will want to ‘pull it open again’, to restore it to ambiguity: to ‘interpretation-by-the-many’. Notwithstanding representation’s underwiring dimension, signification will sooner or later ‘pull on the sleeve’ of representation. But the movement doesn’t stop there. As the preceding conclusions have shown, when signification becomes too variable, too fluid, for too long, the commoner will have to reduce, to restore it to determination. I will return to this interplay under the force field of signification as well. But I will turn, first, to the field of configuration.

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One may ask at the current juncture: where has the force field of configuration been? Why has it disappeared out of sight, when the focus has been mainly on representation and signification? We shall now, therefore, continue with the undermining and underwriting dimension of the field of configuration. The link, too, with representation and signification will appear at the section’s end.

When seeking to express the way in which this force field may weaken a commoning endeavour, a notion introduced earlier resurfaces: *usus fructus*, the right to use a spatial substrate possessed by another party, be that latter party a municipal government (Lambeth Council, the City and District of Antwerp), be it a semi-public real estate organization (Havensteder). Notwithstanding the fact that the commoning initiatives described in this work received a ‘configurative *carte blanche*’ from the Municipality/Market, this should be seen in relative manner. Whilst space-commoners enjoy the liberty to decide upon the *what* of their configurational acts – an urban farm in London, a shelter for urban nomads in Rotterdam, a green arch in Antwerp – the Municipality remains in a primordial position of deciding *where* a common space project may unfold. It literally puts the commoner *in place*. Ad interim, I would want to coin a citation from a Havensteder member, expressed during a thematic meeting between Havensteder and City in the Making on the theme of potential locations for future commoning

projects. In this vein, the Havensteder member argued that the only remaining place for such undertaking would be “second- or third-hand business parks in the port, where one can put containers”. A similar signal appears in Antwerp. Even though Recetas Urbanas could decide itself where to instigate its project, the collective had to choose out of a pre-established list composed by the municipal instances, a list of places in need of ‘greenification’ and ‘co-creation’. One may thus conclude that the commoner’s inability to autonomously define ‘where’ to unroll one’s configurational acts couples to the Municipality/Market’s ability to enroll these acts in its future projections of proffering employment and wellbeing (London), reviving vacancy (Rotterdam) or greenifying the inner-city (Antwerp).

But the field of configuration, even when ‘put in place’, has an underwriting dimension as well. It was seen throughout the three case studies, and during the tactic of ‘Zoning a Proper’, how not only a ‘proper zone’ but also a ‘proper and physically rooted base camp’ constitutes a powerful, commons-enhancing dimension of the force field of configuration. One should think in this regard of The Public Land Grab’s greenhouse (‘the basecamp’) around which a neighborhood-wide network of commoning developed; of the discussion room in the plinth of the Almonde Street; or of Montaña Verde’s function as a spatial medium through which to instigate, with varying levels of success, a critical engagement between the project’s participants and the municipal institutions. As such, the commoner does not necessarily enter the role of ‘a consultant’ on the floor of the Municipality/Market, but vice versa, may invite the latter on his or her ‘common ground’. When thinking this line through, the conclusion emerges that taking in a place or zone in the city, even when it is an assigned one, constitutes the first and foremost precondition for Oppositional Commoning to unfold (a thread to be developed further in the Epilogue). One might thus suspect: being on the move (as is Pension Almonde) *dissolves* Oppositional Commoning altogether.

An important conclusion, finally, can be drawn from this third These, with regard to Lefebvre’s spatial triad. As explained in Chapter 3, Lefebvre’s field of configuration – to use his original wordings: ‘spatial practice’ – is always the externalization or ‘material result’ of the continual combat between representations of space (in this work: representation) and lived space (in this work: signification). The ongoing dialectic between these two forces will eventually result in actual, physical space. One should

not forget that Lefebvre assigned specific actors to these fields: in the field of representation roam planners and engineers, architects and politicians. In the field of lived space roam ‘users and inhabitants’. Between these groups and their intrinsic way of producing space (as ‘product’ and as ‘work’, respectively), there is said to be a constant struggle: between imposition and meticulous use, between conceived space and lived space. Then, the Lefebvrian terminus is that representations dominate, impose their weight on physical space, rendering our cities a commodified edifice, locating in it the sole goal of exchange value. But at this point, the operation undertaken in Chapter 3, namely to *detach* the spatial triad from any assigned actors, is yielding its results. Now, Lefebvre’s internal dynamic of the triad can be reshuffled, put forward in a novel, fresh manner. Namely, my contention is that rather than only being an externalization of the dialectic between representation and signification, configuration is the first and foremost *condition* – something which needs to be in place, literally – in order to put the aforementioned oscillation between representation (taking an unequivocal stance) and signification (exploring multiple meanings) in motion. It is, contra Lefebvre, *not* the case that representations would constitute the exclusive domain of their protagonists (planners, engineers, and so forth). The commoner, too, may use the field of representation in order for commoning to become an oppositional project. But in order to do so, one needs a physically rooted locale, a base camp: one needs *configuration*. Whilst Recetas Urbanas’s earlier-presented *ateneu* constitutes a clear example of the latter statement, it is the Epilogue that will take this reasoning to its end.

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We finally embark upon the dual dimension of the force field of signification. I shall start first with this force field’s underwriting dimension. In conclusion, the underwriting dimension of the field of signification can be expressed as what I will call a ‘pre-political experimentation’. As was laid bare in Chapter 3, the intrinsic nature of this force field lies in a ‘being with and in’ space. Space does figure in this field as *both* the ‘object one tweaks’ as well as the ‘subject that speaks’. It is a companion, a physical-material reality one is *with and in*: multiple meanings are endowed upon it, it can be interpreted

in various ways. Signification, in other words, restores space to an ‘ambiguity’ from which – proving again this force field’s relationship with the Radical-theoretical elements – invention and reinvention may blossom. Castoriadis’s (1998, p. 388) *Creatio* enters the picture here: “to make arise as an image something which does not exist and has never existed”. The force field of signification opens the valve for a new way of thinking and, relatedly, for novel invention. Signification constitutes the precondition through which the commoner commences to *think and invent* ‘beyond what already exists’. Through the thrust of signification, common space becomes a playground for articulation and experimentation, for a hitherto unexplored way of thinking and acting ‘beyond’ the classical dyad of ‘public and private space’. I want to turn to a single yet highly pertinent example; an instance which I will call: ‘the example of the nails’. A chance passerby in the Loughborough Farm was seen to say: “it is dangerous here, there are nails on the floor”. To which the commoners replied: “then pick them up. This is a *common* space, not a public space. Services of cleaning and maintenance, provided by the state, do not apply here. You are not restrained in this space by the determinations of the private-public divide”. As one makes the transition from reductive (representation) to additive thinking, the field of signification unchains the commoner’s imagination and tendency to self-invention and experimentation. One may think of the commoner, described in the corresponding case-study, who found in the Public Land Grab a blank sheet on which to inscribe his long-desired project of developing, with various degrees of success, an anaerobic digester to make the Farm a self-sustaining endeavour. In all, the mere variability of meaning brought about by the force field of signification replaces ‘being determined’ by ‘instituting oneself’.

It is needed to stress that this underwriting dimension constitutes a *pre-political* one. Both in literature and in practice, the restoration of space to ambiguity (from the assemblies at Embros to the digester in London) is all too often seen as a ‘political’ act. “Practices of this kind”, Stavrides (2015, p. 10) wrote, “lead to collective experiences that reclaim the city as a potentially liberating environment and reshape crucial questions that characterize emancipatory politics (...) The city becomes not only the setting but also the means to collectively experiment with possible alternative forms of social organization”. I will announce that during the following two, last Chapters, this ‘means to collectively

experiment' is only the 'way to' a political production of common space. The field of representation will appear as the final catalyst needed to make the transition complete.

When seeking to express, finally, the undermining dimension of the force field, we encounter again the former statement that "representation and signification cannot be thought separately". At multiple junctures, the preceding analyses have taught us that constant ambiguity, perpetual equivocality, must at some point be reduced (representation). Whilst I argued earlier that at one moment signification will 'pull on the sleeve' of representation when a representational construct becomes too stable, too abstract, for too long, so too will representation 'pull on the sleeve' of signification when it becomes too variable, too fluid, for too long. The undermining dimension of signification, therefore, may be found in its ephemerality, its short-livedness, like a sudden flame that is extinguished. No citation marks the degenerative tendency of signification better than the following expressions. The now-turned-to quote by an activist closely involved in the occupation of Athens' Embros theatre (under the tactic of 'Signification, Notwithstanding') punctually shows how difficult it may be for the commoner to remain standing in a world of ambiguity. She argued: "there were conflicts at all levels, it's very difficult to sustain. It sounds quite exciting to say 'well, yeah, let's keep an agonistic approach to have a healthy, democratic process', but at the same time it's very difficult to have continual conflicts, and sometimes, you know, an organization gets exhausted and disappears". Another Athenian activist, well-experienced in the world of commoning assemblies, expressed a similar view: "the inefficiency, it gets tiring, this very strict loyalism to direct democracy. It can last only as long as this initial momentum of enthusiasm".

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In a remarkable footnote, Rob Shields (1999, p. 99), one of the first of Lefebvre's interpreters, points out that Lefebvre's spatial triad is a conceptual consequence of the latter's early interest in theological studies, particularly regarding the work of Joachim de Flore, a 12th century Sicilian mystic. De Flore can be linked to positing the conflictual unity between the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. Lefebvre translated this trinity into his three paradigms of the rule of law, perceptual experience and spiritual

activity, a trinity which can be recognized to this day in the force fields representation, configuration and signification, respectively. I consider this a highly pertinent liaison. The commoner, one might analogously state, proceeds under the heavy weight of the Cross, continually burdened by the immense task of balancing out the irreconcilability of its three constituent parts. But whilst the Cross is a symbol of pain and suffering (the undermining dimensions), it is also the symbol of resurrection, of new life (the underwriting dimensions). Such has been seen over and over again during our journey: when meticulously navigated, the commoner is able to transform the triad from an obstructing yoke to a productive, meta-analytical tool. The production of common space, hence, proceeds through a constant entanglement and disentanglement among material and immaterial elements: representations (images, visions, collective thoughts), configurations (bricks and mortar, wood, city squares, deserted buildings), significations (additive thoughts, self-inventions), common goods (as a resource, as means, or both), communities (bounded, in movement, or both) and commoning principles (in flux, instituted, or both). The continuous ‘play’ with all these elements, the possible outcomes of which are numerous, is what I call: Shapeshifting.

Notes

¹ Retrieved from project participant Daphne Koenders’ online essay “Searching the Space for Cooperative Living in Rotterdam, at <https://www.stadindemaak.nl/op-zoek-naar-de-ruimte-voor-cooperatief-wonen-en-leven-in-rotterdam/#more-1574>

² I label this as the ‘Multitudinal Flaw’ for Hardt & Negri’s (2009) concept of the ‘Multitude’ encapsulates precisely this: constant change and variability. The Multitude is a plural, non-synthetic subject which refrains from any taxonomization. It is mobile, immanent, fluid, and consists of ‘singularities rather than identities’. Hardt & Negri’s idea of the Multitude is subject to a flaw, I would argue: it embodies a conflation of *desertion* and *opposition*. Namely, it is expected that the self-organization of the Multitude would lead to the ‘withering away’ of the state and the market (called ‘Empire’).

³ These Two can simultaneously be used to shed light on Chapter One’s distinction between *instituted* and *instituent* forms of commoning. Shown with the second these, one may argue, is that one form of commoning need not necessarily to exclude the other. There exists indeed an often-overlooked, intermediate zone between the field of commoning on the one hand and municipal institutions on the other. These two realms may inform and reinforce each other. Huybrechts et al. (2017) use the notion of ‘institutioning’ in order to capture such reciprocal relation. Commoning as a practice of oppositional critique may in

this vein create new institutions or frame institutional processes. This reminds me of the following, rather paradoxical situation:
in order to establish a Constitution, a group of people needs first of all to act in an un-constitutional way to do so.

⁴ It should be mentioned that we are looking at three cases that interact intensively with the Municipality/Market, an interlocutor to present these representations 'to'. One may therefore wonder to what extent the field of representation would have a crippling effect on a commoning endeavour that works fully autonomously through self-organization.

Chapter 10. Excursus: Commoning between Politics and the End of Dispute

The Impetus

One might ask: why would this study, at this point, merit from a conclusive focus on the ‘properly political’ production of common space? It is important to clearly state the following: the goal so far has been to bring into vision the theoretical approaches to space-commoning, to test these approaches through the lens of Lefebvre’s theory of the production of space, and from there, to arrive at a series of tactics in a manner both descriptive and critical. Whilst for the author the theme of the ‘political’ production of common space has been a recurring tenet during the theoretical preparation for this work, it has deliberately been left out of the analysis until the current juncture, in order not to push the course of the study in a direction beyond its own, hitherto mentioned questions and intent. I am now willing to add three reasons why a final consideration of the relation between space-commoning and political action is justified.

A first reason is theoretical in kind and evolves around the following premise: it is safe to assert that the authors inhabiting the Radical-theoretical approach conceive of commoning as not merely an act of sharing resources, but as a truly *political* project. Stavrides (2015, p. 11), for instance, argues that “in the prospect of re-appropriating the city, common spaces are the spatial nodes through which the metropolis once again becomes the site of politics, if by politics we mean an open process through which the dominant forms of living together are questioned and potentially transformed”. For Chatterton (2010, p. 627), too, space-commoning implies the formation of new ‘political imaginaries’ and ‘political vocabularies’ against oppression, hierarchy and exploitation in the urban public realm. Hardt & Negri (2009, p. ix), on their part, see commoning as a project that “cuts diagonally across these false solutions – neither private nor public, neither capitalist nor socialist – and opens a new space for politics”. Whilst I share in sympathy for the Radical-theoretical approach and its intention to render commoning a political project, what these authors omit to specify is where the ‘properly political’ substance of commoning may be found. What does it mean, hence, ‘to space-common politically’? What does a properly political production of common space entail?

A second reason is both theoretical and conceptual in kind. At multiple junctures throughout the foregoing analysis, one might have asked: is Oppositional Commoning the ‘properly political’ variant within the commoning spectrum? Is Symbiotic Commoning, therefore, an a-political endeavour? The fact that it has been argued recursively that Oppositional Commoning requires an opponent with whom one engages in an agonistic, dissensual manner, justifies this question all the more. But what complicates the question, is this: we have extensively seen that Oppositional Commoning embodies in itself elements from *both* the Radical-theoretical and the Ostrom-theoretical approach. The same can be said about Symbiotic Commoning; this modality of engagement, too, embodies elements that are present in both the theoretical streams. Could we therefore say that in the presumably a-political approach initiated by Ostrom there is a political potency to be found? It is these kinds of questions that this Chapter will seek to address.

A third and final reason is discursive in kind. It relates to the fact, simply, that the notion of ‘politics’ and ‘acting politically’ permeates the vocabulary of the cases scrutinized within this enquiry. A commoner at The Public Land Grab argued not to leave one’s “politics at the door, as if things can’t be changed”. And indeed, a quote recurring at multiple points during this study has been the one by a commoner at Pension Almonde, who argued: “the idea of City in the Making must become scalable and repeatable. Otherwise it will make no political impact in the long run”¹. To finish the point, we may look at the following quotes, distilled from the ensemble of additional interviews: “commons are political, they are not neutral”; “[commoners] get a sort of political consciousness, and then they become political subjects”; “I try to define commons as a political project”; “we wanted to make a new space where we can experiment with political action and cultural production”. Given the above-mentioned political interest of the urban practitioners I interviewed throughout the journey, and given the recurring theme of the commoner’s relationship to the Municipality/Market, I consider the following pages as my ‘give-back’ to those quotidianly engaged in the struggle of space-commoning. The final task, hence, will consist in exploring what a properly political production of common space might entail. This Chapter will weave these insights through the cases that have passed in review. The final Chapter projects ‘a look forward’ through the work of the Berlin-based commoning collective Raumlabor.

Excursus I: The Beginning of Politics

In parallel with the now-nascent body of analyses on space-commoning stands a long-established body of scholarship of ‘post-foundational thought’ (Marchart, 2007). The latter stream evolves around the premise that any instituted societal order is invariably contingent. Any social order that arises from a series of hierarchizations between classes, genders, ideologies and so forth, is never total, never saturated. There is always an ‘absent ground’: the void and voice of those excluded and marginalized from the established order. It is in this encounter, namely between ‘society-as-instituted’ and the disruptive conception thereof, where society’s properly political condition is to be found (Marchart, 2007). Society in a ‘post-political condition’, by contrast, implies a ‘reduction of politics to policy’. It entails a form of governance whereby inequalities running through society are disavowed, where struggles for an alternative and contingent future are set aside (to be touched upon in more detail, below). In the slipstream of these developments has emerged a stream of accounts seeking to apply the dyad of politics and post-politics to matters of regional, municipal and urban planning and governance (Allmendinger & Haughton, 2012; Lahiji, 2014; Metzger et al., 2014; Oosterlynck & Swyngedouw, 2010; Swyngedouw, 2014). Lacking, however, is an application of the framework to the field of space-commoning, even though the first links have been indicated in the works of Bianchi (2018), Hollender (2016) and Webb (2017). The goal of the following analysis will be to push forward this initiated liaison. Rather than conveying the full range of post-foundational thought, my intention is to tease out specifically which elements may contribute to a ‘political production of common space’. An author that has explored the cross-reference between politics and commons most explicitly is Dan Webb (2017), the work of whom will be my guiding angle. Additionally, I will also forefront Webb’s main source, the work Mouffe (1999, 2013), as well as the source which Webb’s fails to acknowledge, the work of Rancière (2004a, 2015).

When referring to a properly political register of commoning, Webb (2017, p. 38) first and foremost points to “a willingness to engage in and employ power in one’s collective interests; to recognize and name enemies; to avow political conflict and one’s own desire to exert power in such a way that one determines the power relations of society”.

Resonating in these remarks is the work of Chantal Mouffe (2001; 1999, 2005, 2013). Mouffe's approach evolves around the postulate that we cannot think society 'beyond' differences and their corresponding power relations. Rather, society is traversed by an ineradicable dimension of antagonism – 'radical negativity' – between collective identities struggling to objectivate *their* desired order. Internally and externally, human societies are always marked by differing passions, by different conceptions of the good life, by different views of liberty and equality, which makes human existence inherently political. Therefore, political struggle between societal clusters is always concerned with the counter-positioning of an 'us' *vis-à-vis* a 'them'. Mouffe (2013, p. 17) states that one should renounce the illusion that it would be possible to live outside of power relations: "frontiers need to be drawn and the moment of closure must be faced. This frontier (...) is constituted on the basis of a particular we/they and for that very reason must be recognized as something contingent and open to contestation". Rather than seeking a social constellation 'beyond' the inequalities that may traverse any social ensemble, Mouffe envisions a political existence, termed 'agonistic pluralism', that is based on encounter and debate between opposing parties. Against this backdrop, Mouffe (1999, p. 755) seeks to make the 'us/them discrimination' compatible with pluralist democracy. In so doing, she envisions a public sphere where an 'antagonism between enemies' is replaced by an 'agonism between adversaries'. Adversaries recognize the legitimacy of the other to defend a position, but continue to confront each other to seize power.

An 'us' seeking to impose its desired hegemony on the contingency of society, Mouffe is adamant to state, takes form and credence through what she calls a 'chain of equivalence' (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985, p. 144; Mouffe, 2013). A chain of equivalence emerges when dispersed groups, each concerned with their own, local and context-specific situation, concertedly oppose a shared, common adversary. Whilst different groups in the chain of equivalence may each have their own distinct relation to an existing hegemony, and whilst their experience and interests are irreducible to each other, allied groups can nevertheless seek a transformation of existing power relations in joint manner. A tangible example of the chain of equivalence can be found in the anti-globalization movement of the late 1990s, finding its expression most palpably in the 1999 Seattle protests. In this vein, various groups formed a

chain of equivalence: labor unions, environmentalists, human rights activists from China, and so forth. Relatedly, concerns varied: the outsourcing of jobs, the preservation of nature, the Tibet occupation, the list goes on. Despite these particularities qua concerns and demands, the groups involved expressed a shared opposition against the hegemony of global capitalism. Finally, the chain of equivalence reaches for Mouffe (2007, p. 5) *into* the realm of political institutions: parliaments, governments, think tanks: “radical democratic politics calls for the articulation of different levels of struggles so as to create a chain of equivalence among them. For the ‘war of position’ to be successful, linkage with traditional forms of political intervention like parties and trade-unions cannot be avoided”.

Webb decides explicitly to put aside the work of Rancière, and he does so for two reasons. First, the author disagrees with Rancière that politics would be a *momentary* matter: something which may erupt at one moment and may retreat at the next. In this vein, Webb (2017, p. 40) moves explicitly in the direction of Mouffe when he argues that politics “is always present, if not always acknowledged and articulated”. Webb’s emphasis, after all, lies in politics’ linkage to the quest for hegemony through the counter-positioning against an adversarial party; an antagonistic dimension which he sees, as does Mouffe, to ineradicably render human existence political. However, when outlining a properly political production of common space, politics as a *moment* rather than as an ‘intrinsic quality of existence’ will come to the fore, necessitating at this juncture to sidestep to the work of Rancière as well.

Rancière (1992, 2004b, 2004a, 2015) distinguishes first and foremost between ‘police’ and politics’ which, in essence, are two different ways of counting the social whole, the latter being labelled as the ‘partitioning of the sensible’. The partitioning of the sensible refers to the seemingly natural division of the social edifice in a series of constituent parts that are hearable, visible, perceptible; in all: parts that are ‘voice’, rather than ‘noise’. “It reveals”, Rancière (2004b, p. 8) clarifies, “who can have a share in what is common to the community based on what they do and on the time and space in which this activity is performed”. The partitioning of the sensible, hence, simultaneously includes and excludes; it conjures upon us an implicit law stating who is entitled to speak up, where, when, and why, and who does not. Now, Rancière’s distinction between ‘police’ and ‘politics’ essentially refers to two different ways of ‘counting’ the partitioning of the sensible.

From the viewpoint of police, society is seen as “an ensemble of well-defined parts, places and functions (...)” (Rancière, 2004a, p. 6). Police, in this vein, entails the active reproduction of society-as-instituted while connecting places with groups, their names and their function. Two logics, intertwined, become evident in order to characterize the organizational principle of police: a ‘logic of identification’ as well as a logic of ‘the proper’ (Dikeç, 2005, p. 173). The former implies a ‘true’ identification of the parts of a whole, the constituent groups that make up the community that is to be governed; the latter requires that each part or group be properly placed. The task of police, then, is to designate and anchor each part in its proper place within the whole. This ‘whole’, the sum of the identified and properly placed parts (hence: saturation), can consist of interest groups (renters and owners), communities (inner city and peripheral dwellers) or spatial actors (those responsible for maintenance and those engaged in mere use); the list is endless. Under the adage ‘move along, there’s nothing to see here!’ (Rancière, 2015, p. 37), police tolerates the partitioning of the sensible, as long as its constituent parts are identifiable and properly placed. For example, privately owned spaces are designed for work (the office, the factory) and reproduction (the home), tasks to be carried out at certain times; public space is configured as a locus for encounter and peaceful mingling, not for the resurrection against injustice. This means that what is generally understood as ‘politics’ – the institutional organization of power, organized via parliamentary procedures through which recognized parties assemble, debate and decide – also falls, in Rancière’s account, under the signifier of police².

Politics, by contrast, implies not a collision of interests, but the very quarrel over the counting of the social itself. Politics seeks to shatter a pre-existing partitioning of the sensible by making visible, hearable and perceptible “those without part” (Rancière, 2015, p. 35). Politics, therefore, is literally *dis-sensual*, it “makes understood as discourse what was once only heard as noise”, it introduces previously uncounted objects and subjects (Rancière, 1999, p. 30, 2004b, p. 7). Against police, politics entails the very refutation of the partitioning’s given assumptions, of the seemingly natural intertwining of the logics of ‘identification’ and ‘the proper’. One might think of Recetas Urbanas’s sudden erection of an *ateneu* on the town square of Sant Boi, or of the Occupy Movement’s urban struggles (Swyngedouw, 2011) unsettling any fixed matching between the logics of the ‘proper’ and ‘identification’.

‘The political’, then, is reserved by Rancière as the moment in which these two logics meet and collide. Here lies the crux of the contrast with Mouffe: whilst for Mouffe human societies ‘are’ political for the very reason of ontological antagonism, for Rancière they can only ‘become’, at certain eruptive moments, political. “There are always forms of power, but that does not mean that there is always politics”, Rancière (2004a, p. 8) wrote. Politics, in Rancière, is a precarious, punctual given. The question remains, then, through which mechanism Rancière’s ‘political moment’ might come into existence. Rancière is clear in this regard: the political moment is grounded in the notion of equality. As seen before, the partition of the sensible – the distribution of names and places and functions – necessarily brings with it a series of inequalities: whilst in space X a certain group may be seen as ‘voice’, in other spaces it may resort to ‘noise’. As Dikeç (2005, p. 174) writes: “work must be performed in certain times; public spaces are designed for the mingling of peaceful souls and not for the protestors of injustice, and so on”. As such, Rancière plays with the word *tordre*, to bend: police ‘bends’ the social into an unequal dispersion of roles and positions, each associated with modes of speaking and doing. However, the political moment erupts when this order, *le tort*, is broken under the supposition of the equality of “anyone and everyone” (Rancière, 1999, p. 35) as a legitimate interlocutor in the governing of community. “The political”, Rancière (1999, 33) continues relatedly, “only happens by means of a principle that does not belong to it: equality (...). Equality is not a given that politics then presses into service (...). It is a mere assumption that needs to be discerned within the practices implementing it”.

A second of Webb’s issues with Rancière is the former’s use of the notion of ‘inclusion’. Rancière’s model emphasizes politics as a demand of an unheard party (noise) to be heard (voice). In Mouffean manner, Webb (2017, p. 40) misses in Rancière “the recognition that exclusion is a fundamental and indispensable strategy for properly political action”. What Webb himself forgets, however, is that Rancière’s idea of an unheard party claiming its voice within the partitioning of the sensible entails much more than a mere process of ‘inclusion’. A community politically subjectivating itself through a demand for inclusion in the social whole, in Rancière, is something other than claiming one’s part and parcel within an already existing partitioning of the sensible (for example: consumers, employers, ‘a region’ claiming its rights in institutional politics). Doing so, after all, would be an act of

‘police’: a perpetuation rather than a *reshuffling* of the partitioning of the sensible. Thus, a political subject is not simply a group that becomes aware of itself or is allowed to suddenly impose its weight on society. Rather, to redefine the partitioning of the sensible requires the party demanding inclusion to remain unidentifiable, namely: to label itself through the use of a ‘misnomer’ – a sort of ‘impossible name’ that is initially uninterpretable, ungraspable by police³ (otherwise the subjectivating party would be prone to be reinserted all too easily, ‘to fade away’, in the partitioning of the sensible). As Rancière (1999, p. 36) argues: “any subjectivation is disidentification”. The party that will demand inclusion is not *a priori* knowable, not necessarily legally quantifiable (rendering once more Mouffe’s institutional approach problematic). A politically subjectivating community is what Rancière (2004a, p. 6) calls a ‘supernumerary part’ which exists “over and above the sum of a population’s parts”. In order, finally, to be included in the partitioning as an accepted interlocutor, this misnomer will suspend it *by taking its place*: it will step forward as a ‘stand-in’ for the whole, a stand-in destabilizing the seemingly ‘natural’ functioning of the partitioning. In the afterword to Rancière’s (2004b, p. 66) *The Politics of Aesthetics*, Žižek captures such double process of speaking for the whole and disidentification as follows: “we – the ‘nothing’, not counted in the order – are the people, we are All against others who stand only for their particular, privileged interests”. Denominators coined earlier in the realm of the radical variant of space-commoning capture this well: The 99%, The Anonymous, The Indignados, and equally relevant at the time of writing: the Yellow Vest Movement and I Can’t Breathe.

In the direction of Rancière, too, a critical remark can be launched. As Laclau (2005, p. 247) argues, Rancière seems to identify the possibility of politics too much with the possibility of Left, *emancipatory* politics. By contrast, it could be readily conceivable that the uncounted might construct their re-partitioning of the sensible in ways that are reactionary or generally incompatible with what Rancière or the Left in general would identify with. It seems not to be the case, as Rancière implies, that politics is always Left, police always Right. Nevertheless, in order to outline a political production of common space in the next, final Chapter, the work of Rancière will be valued precisely for its dual dimension of positing politics as a momentary matter evolving around a ‘redistribution of’, rather than the mere ‘inclusion in’, the partitioning of the sensible.

Excursus II: The End of Dispute

We can now continue with the ‘post-political’ approach to the production of urban space. Webb makes a distinction between a political and ‘ethical’ approach to space-commoning. However, the notion of ‘post-politics’ conveys the subject matter better than does the ethical one, for it might be argued that politics is always driven to a certain extent by ethics, and vice versa. Nevertheless, what will be called in these lines the post-political approach “means to assert a false social unity, informed by a fetishized normative relationship to inclusivity and consensus-based political processes” (Webb, 2017, p. 38). The difference dividing the post-political from the political approach, hence, can be found in how one normatively relates to power. Traversing the post-political approach is a refrainment from recognizing a constitutive ‘outside’ – a nameable, identifiable adversary – coupled to a moral imperative for dialogue ‘on equal footing’. It thrives, hence, on a fear of Webb’s (2017) main precondition of properly political urban organizing: exclusion.

Post-politics entails the foreclosure of a political space of disagreement. So-called ‘politics’ in a post-political condition is reduced to the technical management of society. As Žižek (2008, p. 40) argues, the post-politician “claims to leave behind old ideological struggles and instead focus(es) on expert management and administration”. Elsewhere, Žižek (2009, p. 204) argues that post-politics “mobilizes the vast apparatus of experts, social workers and so on, to reduce the overall demand (complaints) of a particular group to just *this* demand, with its particular content”. Post-politics does not necessarily imply that there is no debate about topics to be tackled. Paradoxically, under the adage of ‘we are all in this together’, the post-political condition thrives on discussion about issues of governance (how will we revive the urban commons? How will we tackle climate change?) while at the same time the very functioning of society is pushed beyond the possibility of critique (Diken, 2009). Post-political society, hence, is saturated: the population equals the sum of its parts, and there is no room for a ‘supernumerary’ one. Therefore, in Rancièrian terms, post-politics is nothing other than a reduction of ‘politics’ to ‘police’, the very annulment of *repartitioning* the sensible. To put it in the words of Rancièrè (2015, p. 42), post-political governance implies “the reduction of the political community to the relations between the interests and aspirations of these different parts”.

Swyngedouw (2005, 2009, 2014) has most vividly been engaged in an application of the post-political condition to questions of urban governance. His idea of ‘governance-beyond-the-state arrangements’ implies the transformation of politics into a form of governance whereby traditional political institutions (nation-states, but also municipal governments) commence to collaborate with non-governmental organizations and civil society stakeholders. In this form of governance, too, there is room for deliberation and debate, but not for dissent about the functioning of the partitioning itself. “Not only is the political arena evacuated of radical dissent, critique and fundamental conflict, but the parameters of democratic governing itself are being shifted (...) in which traditional disciplinary society is transfigured into a society of control through disembedded networks of governance”. As Swyngedouw has in mind the various networked associations between political bodies (such as the EU), civil society and private market actors (such as urban development corporations), the case of Pension Almonde and the Localism Act (Public Land Grab) might be seen, as argued later, as post-political ‘governance-beyond-the-state-arrangements’. Swyngedouw (2005, pp. 1999–2001) argues that ‘governance-beyond-the-state-arrangements’ remain plagued by a number of issues that escape clear articulation: how is it decided who may participate in associations between civil society and political structures? How may participants be held accountable? Which societal groups do these arrangements represent? Where do they derive their legitimacy from?

One might therefore agree that post-politics couples to the end of dispute: power differentials are set aside while the desire to live outside or ‘beyond’ power relations reigns supreme. ‘We constitutes ‘all’, an equation which, as Mouffe would argue, cancels out any determination of an ‘us’ standing in contradistinction to a ‘them’. Webb (2017, p. 46) shares such sentiment and argues: “by recognizing that properly political action always includes constitutive exclusions of those marked as adversaries or enemies (...), actors acknowledge the need to exert power; a willingness to concede their complicity in and desire for unequal power relations”. Now, given post-politics’ annulment of power differentials, it should be mentioned that a number of authors seeking a ‘properly political’ societal existence have in fact flirted with an intrinsically post-political alternative. Swyngedouw (2010, p. 303) for instance, holds that the communist hypothesis “is still a good one” and plays with the image of an entirely horizontal,

decentralized society where people engage “in the production of collective institutions for the democratic management of the commons”. Žižek (2011) and Badiou (2008), too, envision a moment of societal overturning, leading to a communist constellation in which antagonisms would wither away, where politics becomes dispensable. One may however agree with Van Puymbroeck & Oosterlynck (2014, p. 91) who argue that these visions would lead “to the post-political society par excellence”. I will therefore continue with the insights of Webb, Mouffe and Rancière, insights through which the proliferation of a political production of common space evolves not about a withering away of power relations, but around an agonism between them.

Catalyzing Community, Revisited

Before mobilizing the work of Mouffe and Rancière in order to explore a ‘properly political’ production of common space in the Epilogue, another task lies before us. The hitherto described conceptual cluster on politics proper enables us to delve deeper into two tactics that were deliberately placed in the very middle of the taxonomy: ‘Catalyzing Community’ and ‘Zoning a Proper’. It was already announced in the taxonomy that these two tactics may on the one hand bear in themselves a potency for Oppositional Commoning, while on the other hand they may resort to a consensual ‘commons fix’ within the workings of the Municipality/Market. Now, with the former excursions in mind, one may rephrase this as follows: these two tactics may on the one hand bear in themselves a potency for *political* commoning, while on the other hand they may resort to a consensual ‘commons fix’ within the workings of *police*. After all, police thrives on a twofold logic: a ‘logic of identification’ (to which I connect Catalyzing Community) and a ‘logic of the proper’ (to which I connect Zoning a Proper). I wish to explore these tactics’ double nature in the current (Catalyzing Community, Revisited) and following (Zoning a Proper, Revisited) section. Nevertheless, one might rightfully object that it is a problematic operation to separate ‘the social’ and ‘the spatial’, hence, to disentangle to the ‘making of community’ and the ‘claiming of place’. After all, the logic of identification and the logic of the proper are *both and simultaneously* part of police. However, for the clarity of the arguments, and in order to build further on the vocabulary used in the context of each of the two tactics, they shall be discussed separately.

It was argued in the Taxonomy of Tactics that the active creation of a ‘commoning community’ could constitute a pivotal precondition for Oppositional commoning to emerge. Under the tactic of ‘Catalyzing Community’, namely, several such instances took centre stage. One may think, first and foremost, of City in the Making’s active efforts to ‘build’, from scratch, a commoning community by bringing together at Pension Almonde a selection of mobile dwellers and socio-cultural organizations, formerly unknown to each other. Furthermore, one commoner at the Atelier d’Architecture Autogérée issued a similar intent of community-making, arguing about the Agrocité community: “in order for it to become a community, you need a common project. It needs to perceive itself as a community by ways of doing. This community doesn’t pre-exist, it’s borne in time, it kind of emerges”. One may think, finally, of how commoning organizations such as Zuloark (Madrid) and Common Grounds (Berlin) mobilize urban communities in the form of what I called earlier ‘a vehicle for critical reflection’, namely, as a social grouping specifically designed to develop critical knowledge and future tactics for bringing urban land into common ownership. Now, at first glance, one might argue that these commoning communities issue ‘political potency’ because they emerge from scratch and therefore exist ‘over and above’ the partition of the sensible. In other words, as they are auto-erected, they may withstand an *a priori* inscription, an ‘identification’, within the working of police. Left untouched in the taxonomy, however, has been the question of closure. We should ask, therefore: once auto-erected, what may the notions of closure and openness mean for a commoning community aspiring to politicize itself?

To begin with, one might be seduced to state that Ostrom’s conception of community – clearly defined boundaries – constitutes a pivotal precondition for commoners aspiring to reach political traction. After all, Ostrom’s first design principle comes close to Mouffe’s (2013, p. 17) predicament that, in order for proper politics to emerge, “frontiers need to be drawn and the moment of closure must be faced”. As such, Mouffe argues that ‘exclusion’ invariably constitutes an ontological reality of properly political organizing. Collective actors formulate a ‘them’ in the process of formulating a ‘we’, forming part of the political process altogether. Webb (2017, p. 143-144) takes such point seriously. He argues that for space-commoning to be politically potent, “an identifiable community must be present (...)”. Webb (2017, p. 145) continues furthermore: “it is much easier to challenge radical redevelopment

in neighborhoods conceived of as *terra populi*, and much more difficult when seen to be *terra nullius*". The Public Land Grab's expanding concentric circle exemplifies precisely Webb's statement. This project inscribes in the urban tissue what I would call a *terra communis*: common urban soil for which a vastly defined corresponding community sets out to define the principles of governance and the paths of politicization.

However, an 'identifiable', bounded commoning community may equally be 'pushed back', or 'fade away' (Rancière, 2004), within a non-political position. Once subject to police's logic of identification, it may get assigned a specified part and parcel within police's partition of the sensible. One may think in this regard of City in the Making's community, temporarily present in Pension Almonde. As seen before, the Pension Almonde community constitutes a bounded one, a community with explicitly defined entry and exit principles. However, even though this community emerged 'from scratch' by City in the Making, it equally appeared as the 'turn-to' community within the perceptual gaze of Havensteder, more precisely when the latter would dispose of the problem of vacancy and would be in search of an identifiable social grouping to 'cure' the issue. While closure may constitute a valuable tactic for the politicization of a commoning community, its very boundedness may equally open the valve for instrumentalization within the register of police.

With the bounded community's potential for both politics and police in mind, we may now shift our attention to the Radical-theoretical approach. In the radical realm, we encounter the 'community in movement': a community 'recreating' and 'reinventing' itself continuously. Stavrides (2013b, p. 47) argues: "newcomers thus remake the community as they open it to the transformative power of equalitarian inclusion". In this way of thinking, such intended openness is precisely what makes the community political, as Stavrides (2015, p. 11) argues furthermore: "in the prospect of re-appropriating the city, common spaces are the spatial nodes through which the metropolis once again becomes the site of politics, if by politics we mean an open process through which the dominant forms of living together are questioned and potentially transformed". As has been seen earlier, openness may indeed be of pivotal importance for a commoning community to thrive. When the commoner needn't anymore to engage in the act of encountering newcomers in the community, and when the commoner needn't anymore to

experiment with new and changing principles, the binding substance of the commoning endeavour may well be extinguished. This, for instance, was seen in the Public Land Grab, where the consolidation of the project for a period of 25 years through a lease, implying a clear definition of participating actors and commoning procedures, lessened the commoners' *élan vital* to step forward and communally struggle for an alternative future.

But here too, I will argue, an extinction of political potency may make itself known. As seen before, the 'community in movement' is invariably 'open to newcomers', leading Stavrides to state that the commoners within it find themselves in a 'threshold condition'. In other words, the community in movement is 'neither this, nor that', it is 'betwixt and between' (Stavrides, 2015; Turner, 1997) and is therefore resistant to solidification into final form. Through such liminal existence, the commoner may indeed escape the classificatory gaze of police, but it seems particularly problematic to effectively oppose it. Webb (2017, p. 44), issuing a critique on the community in movement's normative approach to openness, asks in this regard: "what happens when there is no longer any recognition of a constitutive outside?", and continues: "there exists a sometimes explicitly and other times implicitly overstated normative emphasis on openness and inclusion. Such an emphasis is symptomatic of a desire to live outside power relations; to avoid promoting a politics that possesses the very essence of the political: 'us versus them' dualisms" (Webb, 2017, p. 47). In all, my reading of the Radical-theoretical approach's conception of community lays bare a desire for a social unity devoid of distinctions and power relations which, as shown before, constitutes precisely the core of the post-political condition. I have previously described this problem in terms of the 'Multitudinal Flaw' – as such questioning whether one could pursue a properly political production of common space through non-representation, namely, through a community that would be in permanent flux.

How, then, could we get out of the impasse? Once erected, what may the notions of closure and openness mean for a commoning community aspiring to politicize itself? Could these principles, after all, be mutually entangled? My contention, will be this: openness and closure needn't be mutually exclusive. In order to explain and specify this point, I will now invite the reader to consider the following three citations.

“It's always exclusive. A commons must be exclusive in order to function properly. Some people are not part of it. This doesn't mean that we exclude people with less power, with less status. By contrast, through commoning you can create an exclusivity for less powerful people, reversed exclusivity as it were, by asking: what do we think is valuable? What do we think is true? How do we organize? But also: who is part of it?” (Endeavour)

“The border of a commons could always be negotiated: what is the boundary? Who is in and who is out? There could be a low threshold, everybody who takes care is in, and everybody who doesn't is out. So, it needs to be negotiated. I think, if it's really exclusive and it's not open to everybody, then it's not a commons anymore”. (The Public Land Grab)

“It [commoning] is exclusive because you have a common cause, and many people do not tune in with that common cause. Some people can be added to it, but they should relate to the cause in one way or the other. And that's why it can never exist for everybody. It is exclusive, by definition”. (Pension Almonde)

The here-positated citations, one may argue, allow us to state that closure and openness qua community needn't be mutually exclusive. In order for a commoning community to reach political potency, it may oscillate, through time, between openness and closure. In this vein, Parkin (1974) makes a distinction between 'closure as exclusion' and 'closure as solidarism'. The 'as exclusion' variant entails the process of actively excluding outsiders in order to gain group advantages; the gated community as a case in point. The 'solidarism variant', by contrast, constitutes a strategy adopted by less advantaged, dominated communities to retain the resources which others are monopolizing. Massey (2005, p. 59), who generally argues 'pro openness' as a prerequisite for politics to emerge, contends that in emancipatory cases, closure might be justified. She makes her argument tangible by pointing to the European Left supporting, on the one hand, the Deni people of the Amazonia, enclosing their communities from the outside world in order to protect their way of life, but simultaneously condemning, on the other hand, European

nationalists who advocate a curb on immigration. Massey's response is that every situation demands its own contextual analysis of the power geometries that are at play. The decision falls on the part of the activist to engage in the appropriate action based on power differentials. According to Massey (2005, p. 165), negotiated closures can be just as legitimate as a normative stance to a community's openness: "the question cannot be whether demarcation (boundary building) is simply good or bad. Perhaps Hamburg should indeed open up, while the Deni are allowed their protective borderland".

Now, given the fact that community closures constitute precisely what the partition of the sensible thrives on, a final question becomes prevalent: how may social closure proffer a properly political existence of a commoning community? It is Rancière who solves the issue for us. As seen before, the 'properly political' constitutes for Rancière only a *momentary* matter. The properly political moment emerges when a politically subjectivating community steps forward by putting in suspense the partition of the sensible, namely, by temporarily dissolving the various divisions and *accounts* existing within it. Steered by the supposition of equality (of 'anyone and everyone' to be *counted* in the partition), the properly political moment implies a social grouping stepping forward as an aforementioned stand-in for the whole; this is the moment at which the partition of the sensible as a division in bounded parts is momentarily put on hold, momentarily dissolves. Tangible examples may be found in phrases such as 'the 99%' in our own time; 'We are all Children of Immigrants' during the 2002 protests against Le Pen's National Front (Dikeç, 2005); and 'We are all German Jews', issued by Rancière's (1992, p. 61) generation of protest which in 1961 stood up against the police-led attacks against Algerians in Paris. As Rancière (1999, p. 40) argues: "during the political moment, one connects and disconnects different areas, regions, identities, functions, and capacities existing in the configuration of a given experience (...), however *fragile and fleeting* such inscription may be" (italics added). The emphasis is indeed on the fragile and fleeting nature of the ultimate moment of openness. Indeed: the verification of equality is momentary, ephemeral, and in this regard, Rancière is not reluctant to state that after the disruptive moment, closure shall return, a new police order shall make itself known.

Yet, this is the essential point: closure is precisely what is needed in order to prepare for the disruptive, political moment of openness to emerge again. One discovers thus in Rancière a succession

of closure and openness, a succession of the partitioning's saturation and its sheer contingency. In this succession there may be a return to the default position of the police order; but, Rancière (1999, p. 31) maintains, "one kind of police may be infinitely preferable to another". Just as a mass demonstration assessing the equality of 'anyone and everyone' – for example, the marches of the 99% – may require a bounded community in order to prepare for such political disruption, so too have we encountered in this study how a moment of 'uncommonness' (Blaser & Cadena, 2017), hence of social closure, is needed in order to momentarily open up the commons during political moments. Even though the following example did not unfold on the scale of a mass mobilization, one may think of The Public Land Grab's illegal occupation of urban land in order to instigate what is now known as the Loughborough Farm. This 'fleeting moment' of the claiming, the moment at which the division between Lambeth Council ('voice') and the commoner (the part without part) was put in suspense, required indeed the bounded community of LJAG in order to let this happen. A return to the order of police may subsequently be detected, given the fact that Lambeth Council, as described in Chapter 5, mobilizes (instrumentalizes) the now-running Farm and its adjacent LJ Works hub in order to realize its policy intent of creating local employment. Yet, with Rancière, one might say that the new order, even though it is one of police, is 'infinitely preferable' than the previous one. To round up: 'uncommoning' might be crucial for a solid production of common space. Or, as a Pension Almonde member argued: "every common has its boundaries, in space and time. And that also includes inclusivity and exclusivity. You think it is opposed to each other, but it is always there".

Zoning a Proper, Revisited

It was argued in the Taxonomy of Tactics that a continued occupation of *physical* spaces could constitute a pivotal precondition for Oppositional commoning to emerge. Under the tactic of 'Zoning a Proper', several such instances took centre stage. One might think, first, of what I called the erection of a 'base camp': the greenhouse amidst the Loughborough Farm, the Agrocité of the Atelier d'Architecture Autogérée, the *ateneu* for a community of squatters by Recetas Urbanas in Sant Boi. In these examples, we come to see how commoners auto-erect a physically rooted 'stage' for political disagreement in

opposition to Lambeth Council, the municipality of Colombes or the one of Sant Boi. One might think, second, of the elaboration of an urban-physical *zone* of commoning. This implies, to use the words of Kärholm (2007, p. 441), the establishment of a personal relationship between a “territory and the person or group who mark it as theirs”. The Public Land Grab has been most active in this regard. By nominating urban infrastructures as Assets of Community Value, and by taking over the management of the Grove Adventure Playground and the Marcus Lipton Youth Centre, the land grab’s commoners ‘zone’ their common urban soil as an expanding, concentric circle around the nodal point of the Loughborough Farm. Finally, as seen in the aforementioned examples of the Prinzessinnengarten (Berlin) and Permanent (Brussels), the bringing into communal ownership of entire sections of the city (through the legal construct of the Community Land Trust) constitutes a growing and recurring tactic in the field of contemporary space-commoning.

Now, I am not alone in assuming merit in the ‘physical base camp’ or the ‘physical proper zone’ as a precondition for the politicization of commoning. Margaret Kohn (2016), for instance, builds further on Habermas’ account of the public sphere (cfr. Chapter 2) in order to demonstrate how spatially located, physical places (saloons, coffee houses) were required for a particular type of politics (deliberative democracy) to emerge. Now, as argued in Chapter 2, Habermas’s account may be said to paint too rosy a picture of the public sphere; after all, it does not consider the exclusion of oppressed groups from the public sphere and as such lacks to acknowledge the existence of non-liberal, non-bourgeois public spheres (Fraser, 1990). But, Kohn argues furthermore, it *does* show how specific, physical places can serve as a microcosm for political action – be they ‘bourgeois’ or ‘radical’ in nature – to blossom.

However, with Rancière’s premises in mind, we may turn the former picture around in its entirety. The erection of a physical base camp or the rolling out of a physical zone of commoning may indeed be reinscribed within the logic of police. “The police”, argued Rancière (1999, p. 29), “(...) sees that those bodies *are assigned by name to a particular place and task*” (italics added). In this vein, we come to see how social groups may only be allowed to make themselves heard within the partition of the sensible by being ‘properly placed’ in a certain locale. Now, with ‘properly placed’, Rancière refers first and foremost to one’s metaphorical place within the grid of society, but he also makes the link with

effective physical places per se. In order to frame this problematic, Rancière (1999, p. 36) turns to the subjectivity of ‘the worker’. The subject of the worker has indeed been assigned and allowed ‘a part’ within the partition of the sensible *based on* a physical place: the factory. In the conception of police, the subjectivity of the worker is allowed to make itself heard because of its proper (physical) placement: workers might initiate a dispute over the length of the working day, the duration of the pause or the height of the salary. Yet such quarrels, Rancière reasons, merely constitute particular and place-specific interests, rather than a verification of the ‘equality of speaking beings’ in general (Rancière, 1999, p. 38) (for example, labour as a social function which might take place outside the factory and by actors other than the factory worker alone). A similar picture has emerged in this study. In London, commoners were seen to engage in a ‘productive agonism’ with Lambeth Council over how LJ Works should function and whom it should serve. Yet, commoners are allowed to exert these utterances *based only on* their proper physical placement, namely, ‘because they are assigned to a particular place and task’ (the organization of employment at the Farm and in LJ Works) by Lambeth Council. Escaping the quarrel, however, is the root cause of unemployment as well as the ‘equality of speaking beings’ to make validated claims about it. Similarly, in Rotterdam, commoners engage in a discussion with Havensteder about the ‘how’ and the ‘where’ of vacancy occupations. Yet, commoners are allowed to exert these utterances *based only on* their proper physical placement by Havensteder. Escaping the quarrel, again, is the ‘why’ of urban vacancy as well as the equality of the commoner to make validated claims about it. In all, the erection of a physical place may be said to reproduce *one’s part* within police’s partition of the sensible, allowing commoners to speak up based only on their proper physical placement rather than on their status as equal beings endowed with the capacity of speech.

One might, therefore, argue that in order to carry forward a properly political production of common space, an *uncoupling from* rather than an *affirmation of* a physical place might be necessary. As Rancière (1999, p. 36) argues: any political subjectification is *disidentification*, a removal of the naturalness of a place, the opening up of a subject space where anyone can be counted since it is the space where those of no account are counted (...). While Rancière speaks again of place in metaphorical manner, we can conceive of it in physical manner as well. By literally ‘stepping out of

place', one puts in suspense one's assigned part within the police's partition of the sensible. One disconnects from one's proper physical placement. A palpable example turned to in the context of this work may be found in Raumlabor's Kitchen Monument: a nomadic, inflatable structure providing a roof for the activity of commoning. Without any proper placement or timing, the Kitchen Monument escapes an 'assignment to a particular place and task' and may be mobilized anywhere, by anyone, for a variety of functions ranging from activist deliberation to the production of art and culture. Recetas Urbanas, too, may be said to actively struggle against proper physical placement. Many of this collective's interventions – ranging from a phone line to parts elsewhere in the world for disadvantaged communities to illegally built meeting rooms and playgrounds – are designed to remain hidden and invisible from the perceptual coordinates of municipal governments and market actors.

Nevertheless, it remains difficult to find examples and cases of commoning that are *willingly* nomadic in order to politicize themselves. The aforementioned Prinzessinnengarten, the Public Land Grab and Brussel's' Permanent: these cases all seek to find a stable and physical place in order to instigate a properly political production of common space. More so: even a nomadic existence of common space might entail the very inscription in the register of police. This has become particularly tangible in the case of Pension Almonde, where it appeared that the 'proper place' of the commoner would reside in Havensteder's vacant and temporary urban infrastructure that is known to 'roam' throughout Rotterdam-North. It may come as no surprise, therefore, that City in the Making, the host of Pension Almonde, is itself in search of a stable and physical locale in order to roll out its envisioned 'political impact'.

From this, I want to derive a prelude for this study's further and final unfoldment. As seen before, for Rancière, the 'properly political' constitutes a momentary matter, a disruptive moment through which the equality of 'anyone and everyone' is verified in practice. In this regard, what I would want to argue, is this: whilst the instigation of a physical place of commoning may indeed downplay the political thrust of a commoning endeavour, it may nevertheless serve as the spatial substrate for the development of commoning as a counter-hegemonic project. The physical place may, as such, serve as the material soil upon which Mouffe's vision on the political – the continued elaboration of a counter-

hegemony – may be deployed. It is only so, one might suspect, that Rancière’s properly political moment may disruptively and momentarily emerge. The *disidentification* from place in metaphorical sense (hence, from one’s assigned part in the partition of the sensible) may require the very presence of place in the physical sense. To put it in the words of Dikeç (2005, p. 181), the Rancièrian moment requires that commoners “constitute themselves spatially, open new discursive spaces of political debate, transform the (proper) space of circulation into a space of parade, or transform the (proper) space of work into a space in which a political capacity can be demonstrated, rather than simply succeeding into pre-given structures when the Time comes”. The entanglement between a physical place of commoning and the temporary disruption of the partition of the sensible shall now be explored in the following, final Chapter.

Notes

¹ Italics added.

² But contra Rancière, one might contend that what happens in or around a parliament must not necessarily resort to what he calls ‘police’. Oftentimes, protests take place symbolically in or around a parliament. A most palpable example of where ‘politics happens *in* police’ would be the setting on fire of a parliament.

³ Rancière (1992) coins the example of the proletariat, for the first time used by the 19th century, French revolutionary leader Blanqui. The latter’s proposition of the subject of the proletariat could not be interpreted by the administrative system at the time as a ‘tangible’ class or profession.

Chapter 11. Epilogue: Towards a Political Production of Common Space

“In actual spaces people can experience the future and the means to reach it. Space, when it becomes enmeshed in prefigurative politics, is both experienced and potential, an actual materiality of arrangements and a dynamic construction of possible human relations which unfold in the present. Space as potential is more like a testing ground for the future: through real-time experiments parts of the future are brought to the present”

(Stavrides, 2019, p. 24).

The Triad in Unison

Whilst the previous chapter (Excursus) engaged in a ‘look back’ to theories and cases of commoning through the lens of (post-)politics, the current chapter (Epilogue) proposes a ‘look forward’. I ask: what *would* a properly political production of common space look like? I emphasize the word ‘would’, for I draw out the contours of what I deem a future, possibly ‘ideal’ and politically potent spatialization of the concept of the commons. Given my interviewee’s interest in having political potency, this final part is explicitly directed to those quotidianly engaged in the struggle for a more just and equitable urban future. The Chapter will be built up according to the *combined* use of the triad’s fields: configuration in order to claim urban land (under the heading ‘Occupy’), signification in order to explore its use (under the heading ‘Signify’), representation in order to proffer political potency (under the heading ‘Hegemonize’). Hence: ‘the triad in unison’.

The discussion will be guided by the case of Raumlabor. Raumlabor is a Berlin-based, activist architecture collective that since 2015 has discovered the concept of the commons and its spatial derivative of common space. Raumlabor’s ‘Kitchen Monument’, for instance, appeared under the tactic of ‘Repeating a Ritual’. Raumlabor has been initially included within the ensemble of additional interviews. However, not one, but four interviews were conducted with the collective. Yet, due to the

geographical dispersion and temporary nature of its interventions, it was not possible to delve as deeply into the collective as was done with the central cases of Part III. Raumlabor, hence, falls somewhere between being a ‘master’ case and an ‘additional’ case. Its tactics of spatial production, however, are of a suggesting nature when seeking to outline a properly political production of common space.

In what follows, the insights from both Mouffe and Rancière will guide the discussion, even though to each of these authors a critical remark may be launched. For Mouffe, a vibrant democracy entails the continuous opposition of hegemonic projects in parliamentary and extra-parliamentary institutions. However, it seems impossible to imagine a political constellation in which *constant* agonism could continually be unfolding. Mouzelis (1992), for instance, has in this regard objected how Mouffe overemphasizes the dream of constant flux and dissent. With regard to Rancière, an opposite picture emerges. Namely: whilst in Mouffe it is difficult to imagine a *constant* politics, in Rancière it is difficult to imagine how politics could be reduced to *only* the disruptive equalitarian moment. As seen before, Rancière argues that ‘the political’ constitutes not an ontology (as if society, or common space, *is* always political), but a momentary matter: it is a collision (between police and the ‘part with no part’) which may erupt at one given moment, retreat at the next. However, one may assert that Rancière overemphasizes the insurgent moment of political subjectivation. Using the words of Temenos (2017), this critique could rightfully be called the ‘all or nothing aspect of the properly political act’. Whilst several authors (Bassett, 2014; Swyngedouw, 2011) have used Rancière’s conceptual lens to describe disruptive moments of equality such as the Occupy events, it may nevertheless be said that a Rancièrian conception of politics reduces it to ‘the rare, heroic act’ (Di Felicianantonio & O’Callaghan, 2020).

What I am willing to derive from the examples that are to follow will nevertheless be based on an interplay between the insights of both Mouffe and Rancière. Whilst ‘properly political commoning’ may constitute a *momentary* matter, it will be seen to require the *continued* effort of commoning as counter-hegemony building. In so doing, finally, the core of this study, the spatial triad, will reenter the analysis. Our journey will lead us from the self-instigation of a physical ‘stage’ (‘Configuration’), via pre-political deliberation (‘Signify’), to the development of a shared counter-representation among a chain of equivalence (‘Hegemonize’).

Occupy

A first step in the direction of the properly political production of common space, will be this: the physical occupation of urban land. I propose, hence, that space-commoning's politicization necessarily starts from the force field of configuration. One may immediately think of how the Loughborough Junction Action Group illegally appropriated a derelict piece of Lambeth's land. Growing bags were brought in, a fence was erected and a padlock was installed in order to secure the appropriated strip against the further intrusion of speculative activity. In all, the initiatory act of occupation can be equated with the earlier tactic of 'Zoning a Proper': "the establishment of a personal relationship between the territory and the person or group who mark it as theirs" (Kärrholm, 2007, p. 441).

The reason why I tend to foresee political potency in the configuration of a 'proper' piece of urban land relates to the 'underwriting' and the 'undermining' dimension of this exact force field, as put forward in Chapter 9, These Three. Namely, this double dimension was described in terms of 'usus fructus'. Throughout the three case studies, I have mainly focused on usus fructus's undermining dimension. When the commoner *uses* common space, it means that the space is regulated by an external, heteronomous party (Lambeth Council, Havensteder, the City of Antwerp). This also means, we saw, that the commoning process itself may be instrumentalized as a 'commons fix' figuring within the external party's future policy projections. However, by way of politicizing the production of common space, usus fructus's 'underwriting' dimension becomes particularly valuable. Usus fructus is politically potent, I contend, because it opens the valve for the institution of 'common property'.

Common property enjoys legal existence, for example through the legal personae of housing cooperations, community land trusts, and so forth. But, as Staeheli & Mitchell (2007, p. 109) rightfully argue, this brings us back to a 'collective private property' that is spearheaded, again, by a private entity. It is for that very reason that I am more interested in common property as a quality of *use*. Streets, parks and squares, public spaces in general, can be seen as common property (Kohn, 2016). Whilst they may be legally owned by public or private entities, the owners cannot fully enclose their asset and evict its users, precisely for the fact that these spaces have traditionally been open to joint and customary use (Webb, 2017, p. 137). A similar mechanism was at work at 'Woodward's', pointed to in Chapter 2.

There (Vancouver, Canada), a private developer was seen to encounter difficulties when aiming to redevelop the Woodward's community store into private housing. Under the adage "Woodward's belongs to us, not to Kassem Aghtai" (the developer), the surrounding community continued to use (by erecting tent cities) and beautify the store (by painting its windows) even after it was deserted and waiting to be redeveloped (Blomley, 2008). The commoners, eventually, gained political traction and were able to project their desires (social housing, community facilities) into the redevelopment plans. Hence: *usus fructus* creates use rights, and use rights are legally embedded. Regardless of whether a spatial substrate is owned by a municipal government or by a private entity, the mere act of 'being in place' accrues use rights to commoners and makes it ever-more difficult for the owner to expel them.

Whilst I argued earlier that the power relations between owner and user during *usus fructus* may be unevenly distributed capital-wise, I propose that it is *time*-wise where the commoning community may find its advantage. One may think of the practice of 'adverse possession': a person or group without legal title to a piece of property may acquire legal ownership of that piece after continued use or occupation when a private owner does not exercise its right to recover the property for a significant period of time. In their work *Common*, Dardot & Laval (2019, p. 278) label such process as the "sheer force of practical repetition"; the process whereby a 'continued doing in common' becomes custom, and whereby custom becomes rule. Commoning, indeed, precedes the codificational moment: it can be instituted in practice. Whilst the land of the Loughborough Farm continues to be owned by Lambeth Council, the land being granted a 'community use' for a period of up to 25 years (after which it is predicted that the community might become the owner) signals, once more, the commoner's advantage in terms of *time*.

Ad-interim: one may contend that that 'property lawbreaking' may prove to be of pivotal importance within the first, configurational phase. Property lawbreaking may unsettle the basic distinction between private and public property and may shed light on the possibility of common ownership. This operation occurred and reoccurred throughout the study that now lies behind us. We encountered it during both the 'Notwithstanding' tactics: *Recetas Urbanas* erecting an *ateneu* overnight, the Mavili collective claiming the Embros theatre for the purpose of cultural production and, again, the

a-legal claiming of the Loughborough Farm. Peñalver & Katyal have scrutinized property lawbreaking as a significant form of spatial activism. Property lawbreaking may communicate into the wider society structural injustices and inequalities by making alternative forms of property more palpable. Consequently, violators of property laws are generally seen as less culpable than those engaging in other unlawful activities. Hence, the authors conclude that: “lawbreaking acquires a unique communicative power to reimagine our relationships with the material world and with each other and to provide an informal forum for airing conflicts over resources between owners and non-owners, *which the law can eventually shift to accommodate*” (emphasis added).

But in order for Oppositional commoning to have political traction, the claiming of urban land need not necessarily be conducted in an a-legal manner. As announced earlier, the work of Berlin-based collective Raumlabor will show the way forward. We find ourselves in the Berlin Borough of Neukölln, with the project called ‘JuniPark’ (2014, Figure 47). Deliberately located near the now-deserted Tempelhof airfield – the symbol of Neukölln’s gentrification tendency – Raumlabor erected a scaffolding structure that according to the desires of the participants could be reconfigured into a meeting place, a stage, a watchtower over the area, a cooking platform, and the like. The onset for JuniPark had been a survey that laid bare the non-affordability of housing for youngsters in Berlin. JuniPark itself, then, was a month-long festival that aimed to translate the results of the survey through configuring a space for panel discussions, workshops and performances. At the end of JuniPark, these visions were translated into a charter that was aimed to be presented to the municipal government of Berlin. Apart from discussions, panels and performances, the urbanites from the surrounding neighborhood were invited to come in, to cook and eat and drink, in order to strengthen the bond of community (‘us’) against the further influx of private, capital-led developments in the borough (‘them’). One may consider JuniPark as the first variant within the tactic of ‘Zoning a Proper’: the erection of a central ‘base camp’.

JuniPark, however, figured as the catalyst for an additional project: the Coop Campus (2015), which brings us to the second dimension of the tactic of ‘Zoning a Proper’: the circumscription of a proper territory, a demarcated ‘zone’ of commoning. With the Coop Campus, the temporary nature of

JuniPark was now exchanged for a long-term one. Whilst the cases studied in this work have as their environment ‘the market’ or ‘the municipality’, Raumlabor now started to engage with a particular partner: The Protestant Church. In addition to the punctual spot where JuniPark stood, Raumlabor could now get hold of an extensive strip of land, once more directly facing the deserted Tempelhof airfield. The land embodies a former cemetery owned by the Church that is currently in the phase of redevelopment towards social housing and refugee housing. In tandem with the Church as a strategic partner, the Coop Campus constitutes a project ‘with and for’ refugees, including a kitchen, a wood workshop, a language school and an urban garden. As I discovered during two visits to the site, a pivotal configurational tactic within the Coop Campus can be found in the greenhouse (Figure 48). Since the land is still registered as a cemetery, the erection of a greenhouse constitutes the only intervention that is allowed within planning law. The greenhouse, hence, is a ‘Trojan Horse’: rather than having a curatorial function, it constitutes a strategic vantage point from where the future of this strip of land can be discussed and rolled out. In the words of the Raumlaborians, it is a spatial substrate where ‘gaps’ in urban development schemes can be detected, where ‘research into the possible’ is conducted, and where ‘urban transformation processes are discussed’. Urban land, hence, is literally claimed ‘from within’.

With Raumlabor’s first interlude in mind, we are now in a position to distill from it the precedent for a ‘political moment’ in the act of space-commoning, which brings us back to Rancière. According to Rancière, notwithstanding their opposite nature, politics and police act ‘upon’ each other; they are highly entangled. After all, politics is only possible by way of reshuffling the pre-ordering of police; it is possible not ‘despite’, but ‘because of’ police. As Rancière (1999, pp. 30, 33) maintains, politics “acts in the places and with the words *that are common to both* [emphasis added], even if it means reshaping those places and changing the status of those words”; politics comprises a “series of actions that reconfigure the space where parties, parts, or lack of any parts have been defined”. Against this backdrop, the claiming of urban land constitutes a political ‘moment’ in that it acts ‘upon’ and ‘because of’ police’s partitioning of the sensible. The claiming of urban land, the physicality of which is ‘common to both’ owner and claimer, embodies in itself the collision between two different ways of counting the socio-spatial. The commoner asks: what if we were to ‘count’ the city not as being devised in sections

suitable for public development, for private development, for industrial development and so forth, but ‘over and above it’ (Rancière, 2004a), as an urban commonwealth, as a zone of urban common property from which we shall not be pushed away? Once the claiming is final, the political moment retreats to the background, but the commoner is now literally, ‘in place’. After all, as Blomley argues, the owner (police) enjoys a ‘right to exclude’, but the claimer (politics) enjoys a right ‘not to be excluded’ (Blomley, 2007b, 2008).

I am willing to admit that these notions – antagonism, property, the claiming of land – are quasi-diametrically at odds with the normative view on space-commoning as an open, inclusive and perpetually adaptable process. It has become a truism that the concept of ‘property’ is loaded with a sense of ‘anti-commons’; the concept constitutes, one might say, the very opposite of commoning *per se*. However, one should be equally willing to recognize that the abolition of the concept of property – something which Hardt & Negri (2009) dreamingly locate in their idea of the ‘biopolitical metropolis’ – will not be finalized in the near future. Therefore, I will continue to maintain, as was first indicated in the tactic of ‘Zoning a Proper’, that the claiming of a physical section or locale within the urban tissue constitutes the first and foremost precondition for the commoner aspiring to exert political potency¹.

Figure 47. JuniPark (Berlin, Neukölln) (Photo by Raumlabor)



Figure 48. The Coop Campus' Green House, Berlin, Neukölln



Signify

Once the common land will be claimed, the question becomes: what will we do with it, through which regulative framework, and with whom? I will forward the following projection: upon the inauguration phase of claiming common property (configuration) shall subsequently be layered the force field of signification. Hence, I foresee an accumulation rather than a succession of the force fields. Once configuration is in place, signification will be added to it, setting in motion a relation of mutual reinforcement between the fields. Before this mutual reinforcement will be discussed, a short and final digression to the content of the force field of signification will be necessary. I have earlier put forward the force field of signification as an immediate 'being with and in space'. Whilst the force field of representation expresses how space *should* be or what it *is*, the force field of signification evolves around how space *could* be; a distinction I attempted to clarify, respectively, in terms of 'determination-by-the-one' and 'interpretation-by-the-many'. The field of signification, in all, is about keeping the meaning of a common space open and multiple, endowing it with various visions without wanting to reduce these visions to a definite, final, overarching one.

Here again, the work of Raumlabor will guide the discussion. One of the collective's thematic working lines adheres to the following impetus: to sow the urban soil with self-organized 'research hubs'. A first expression thereof is the Raumlabor University: a nomadic research workshop entailing open discussions about and within cities that are subject to rapid industrial change. As such, Raumlabor has organized workshops and fieldtrips in the cities of Witten and Hattingen in the Ruhr-Region, an area currently struggling with giving novel meaning to post-industrial heritage sites. Likewise, the collective has organized visits to and debates about the Parisian 'Petite Ceinture', a deserted, inner-city railway bedding waiting to be regenerated by the municipal government. The Raumlabor University has also discovered as a research subject 'the kitchen as a site of commoning' – captured earlier under 'Repeating a Ritual' – for which it took the earlier discussed Agrocité by the Atelier d'Architecture Autogérée as a case in point. As such, the *city becomes a campus*: urban soil and infrastructure come to figure as both the subject and object of an 'interpretation-by-the-many'. Such impetus becomes more tangible in Raumlabor's project of the Floating University, seen in Figures 49 to 53. Built floatingly on the rainwater retention basin of the former Tempelhof airfield, the Floating University comprises a place for extra-institutional exchange and debate among 'students of the city' – activists, community members, artists, commoners. The scaffolding structure includes an auditorium, a laboratory and a kitchen for the ritual of the communal meal. At the Floating University, a similar tactic as in the Coop Campus resurfaces: according to Berlin's zoning plan, the only allowed activity on this strip of land is 'scientific research' (into the soil, water, and so forth). The questions that are researched are very much the same as those roaming The Public Land Grab, Pension Almonde or Montaña Verde: how can cities cope with the shortage of resources, superdiversity and hyper-accelerated development? Which future tools do we need to live and work in a resource-efficient manner? Participants can discuss and problematize the changes the city of Berlin is undergoing and may propose a new, future vision with minds such as Bruno Latour or Jeanne Van Heeswijck as interlocutor. Against the backdrop of such endeavour, a Raumlabor member expressed the following signal: "let's not just differentiate between a theory of a better world and a practice of an everyday life, but let's try to bring these together (...). These situations activate people in their environment, they start to take care and responsibility".

One may wonder: why is this important? Why mention these spatial expressions of the commons? When returning to the ‘underwriting’ dimension of the force field as expressed in Chapter 9, it became clear that signification’s existence as ‘interpretation-by-the-many’ sets in motion what I called a ‘pre-political experimentation’. It is precisely through keeping the meaning, function or future of a given spatial substrate variable – ‘interpreted-by-the-many’ – that fixed matchings between classification and behavior are put in suspense. Signification, in other words, restores common space to ‘ambiguity’, it restores common space to a blank sheet upon which invention and reinvention may blossom (proving once more this force field’s relationship with the Radical-theoretical approach). It becomes a playground for Castoriadis’s ‘Magma’: this ever-flowing substance borrowing up from the depths of the human imagination. The commoner creates, makes “arise as an image something which does not exist and has never existed” (1998, p. 388). Hence, the force field of signification opens the valve for new ways of thinking: it becomes a playground for creation and experimentation ‘beyond’ the classical dyad of the free market and government provision.

The aforementioned ‘example of the nails’ is worth repeating. A chance passerby in the Loughborough Farm was seen to say: “it is dangerous here, there are nails on the floor”. To which the commoners replied: “then pick them up. This is a *common* space, not a public space. Services of cleaning and maintenance, provided by the state, do not apply here. You are not restrained in this space by the determinations of the private-public divide”. One may also think of the one commoner who found in the project a place to unfold his idea of developing, with varying degrees of success, an anaerobic digester in order to make the Farm self-sustaining. To bring it to a point, the mere variability of meaning brought about by the force field of signification replaces ‘being determined’ by ‘instituting oneself’. As we make the transition from reductive (representation) to additive thinking, the field of signification unchains the commoner’s imagination and in so doing effectuates what Castoriadis called an ‘imaginary constitution’ (of common space). Speculating on the here-positing ‘example of the nails’, a commoner at the Public Land Grab argued likewise that a restoration of space to signification, to ambiguity, “opens people’s minds once you start to unrestrict on what level you can engage. Normally people don’t even think about taking over land”.

A final, tangible proposition of restoring urban land to ‘signification’ as ‘interpretation-by-the-many’ has been made earlier in this study. As announced in its corresponding master case, a return would be made to a pivotal citation of one of Pension Almonde’s inhabitants. “The most political thing that you can do”, argued the interlocutor,

“[...] is to do nothing. Just to observe. Don’t fill it in with projects and things. Just observe it. Mark out areas and observe how things grow. These expectations, you know, that are coming from the city, from the housing association, from whatever sort of partners and actors and stakeholders that are participating in this process, are predicated on this expectation of ‘what are you going to do?’ And inactivity is this impossibility. This is interesting for me. If there are like these external expectations, of filling things in and making things happen, I mean, is this really a commons?”.

One might indeed say that ‘doing things together’, with ‘the city’, with ‘the housing association’ or with ‘whatever sort of partners and actors and stakeholders’, might immediately push a common space into the register of ‘police’. It would become ‘one of many’ functionalized parts within the saturated ensemble of the partition of the sensible; or as Dikeç (2005, p. 176) would say: a common space that is ‘identified’ and ‘properly placed’. However, by keeping the meaning of a common space variable and multiple, by ‘watching how everything grows’, one endows it with a lingering potentiality, without letting it pass over into actuality, without exhausting it². After all, a multivalent space, a space that finds itself in a state of liminality escapes, to put in the words of Lefebvre (1991b, pp. 391–392), the “forces that aspire to dominate and control”, the forces that seek to ‘classify’, ‘arrange’, and ‘inventory’ (hence: instrumentalization by the Municipality/Market). The Almonde commoner confirms: there are these ‘expectations of what are you going to do’, whereby ‘inactivity is this impossibility’.

Thus, we have seen *three* ways of pre-political signification: be it through mobilizing ‘the city as a campus’, be it through positing common space as a ‘blank sheet’ on which ‘magmatic’ invention may blossom, or be it through ‘doing nothing’, the political moment becomes a permanent possibility.

Figure 49. The Floating University, Berlin



Figure 50. The Rainwater Retention Basin



Figure 51. The Floating University under Construction



Figure 52. The Inside of the Floating University



Figure 53. Path Towards the Floating University



Hegemonize

Hence, to repeat Rancière: no common space is properly political in itself. By contrast, we might say that a common space may only *become* properly political at set times; namely, at the moment when the logics of police (the ‘wronging’ or distortion of equality through the partition of the sensible) and politics (the supposition of equality by reshuffling the partition of the sensible) collide. “For politics to occur”, Rancière (1999, p. 32) wrote, “there must be a meeting point between police logic and egalitarian logic”. However, a pivotal caveat should be added to Rancière’s thesis. For the properly political moment to emerge, one *requires* the continuous precedent of hegemony-building. In crude terms: the momentariness of Rancière *needs* the continuousness of Mouffe. What the cases and spaces in this study have shown, if anything, is their function as a spatial substrate for the development of commoning as a continuous counter-hegemonic undertaking. The foregoing quote of our interlocutor at Pension Almonde may thus be tweaked: “the most political thing that you can do” is not really to ‘do nothing’ with a commoned space, but rather to valorize it as a substrate where what Dockx & Gielen (2018) have called ‘commonism’ can be developed.

In terms of the triad, one might thus argue that properly political space-commoning may emerge when distinct demands and ideas, ‘interpretation-by-the-many’, remain ‘many’ but, in tandem, also form a ‘determination-by-the-one’, namely: a collective representation. In this regard, the work of Raumlabor teaches us that the fields of representation and signification needn’t necessarily be mutually exclusive. Raumlabor’s erection of self-organized hubs for research into a more just urban condition can be seen as nodal points where the various, constituent parts of what Laclau and Mouffe (1985) have called a ‘chain of equivalence’ (cfr. *supra*) come together. Differing concerns and demands converge in the spatial substrate of for example the Coop Campus: youngsters, struggling to find affordable housing in a gentrifying Neukölln; scholars, testing the political nature of Raumlabor’s interventions; community gardeners, searching for ways to set up short-circuit supply chains; migrant newcomers, seeking a place to halt and survive. The same might be said about the in-depth cases that have passed in review. At Pension Almonde, a chain of artists, students, activists and urbanites collides, respectively in need of spaces for cultural production, short-term living, tactical deliberation and social encounter. Notwithstanding these diverging concerns, these separate groups (interpretation-by-the-many) concertedly oppose (determination-by-the-one) the common adversary of Rotterdam’s real estate market, a ‘common adversary’ gradually filtering out those falling between the cracks of the housing allocation system. The same might be said, too, about The Public Land Grab. There, a chain of environmentalists, employment-seekers and neighborhood activists equally converges (interpretation-by-the-many) in order to jointly oppose (determination-by-the-one) the common adversary of Lambeth Council and its intent to redevelop sections of the Junction into private housing. Stavrides (2019, pp. 10-11), too, argued that shared representations (not necessarily images, but also ‘shared forms of thinking’) constitute an important lever for common space’s politicization. “Representations”, he argues, “may become emblematic condensations of exemplary practices contributing, thus, to the corroboration of existing dispositions”. At this point, we thus reencounter a point made in *These One*: representations, rather than invariably undermining a commoning endeavour, may play a pivotal part in allowing its politicization. The alternative, one might contend, is what Srnicek & Williams (2016, p. 11) call a ‘folk politics’: valuing “withdrawal or exit, rather than building a broad counter-hegemony”.

It is however safe to assert that common spaces, the ones coupling the here-described ‘tandem’ between ‘interpretation-by-the-many’ and ‘determination-by-the-one’, may still run the risk of being reinserted within police’s partition of the sensible. Whilst in the Coop Campus, for instance, the counter-hegemonic project of bettering migrants’ lives takes centre stage, it also keeps the value of the Church’s urban land in place for later redevelopment. Whilst in the Floating University the counter-hegemonic project of sustainable city-building blossoms, it also revitalizes a neglected section of an already gentrifying Neukölln. Whilst at LJ Works the counter-hegemonic project of anti-speculative development emerges, it simultaneously presents to Lambeth Council the possibility to strip itself from proffering employment and local well-being. And whilst at Pension Almonde the counter-hegemonic project of communal forms of living and working is put to the test, it also ‘cures’ Havensteder’s recurring tenet of vacant housing infrastructure. Hence, to reiterate a point made by Žižek (2009, p. 204), space-commoners’ counter-hegemonic demands may easily be reduced “to just *this* demand, with its particular content”. In other words, commoners’ demands may be ‘pushed back’ into a local, particular context (for example: the occupation of vacancy in Rotterdam-North) and as such be withheld from taking on a more universal nature (for example: the dispossession of renters as a root cause of vacancy). This is why Raumlabor’s ‘sowing of the urban soil’ with hubs for research, I contend, constitutes a valuable tactic for the politicization of common space. The Floating University, namely, *discharges* itself from instrumentality for it focuses solely and merely on the development of a shared representation through research into counter-hegemony building. Out of such Mouffean ‘groundwork’, then, the Rancièrian properly political moment is allowed to emerge.

We may finally turn to some examples by shifting our gaze to the studies that have passed in review. One such political moment emerged when a demolition company hammered into Pension Almonde in order to erase the street while at the same time the Pension’s commoners organized a critical theatre play *in* the open-laying façades (the ‘Slopera’, which is a Dutch combination of ‘demolition’ and ‘opera’). But this moment was only possible through a continuous, preparatory phase of continued deliberation within the sociocratic governance system, research into the concept of the commons, practices of defining one’s common cause and practices of ‘closure as solidarism’ (cfr. Parkin). A similar

signal appears from Paris. A political moment emerged, as described in the Taxonomy, during the police-led (meant here as the state apparatus) deconstruction of the Agrocité. The mass mobilization opposing this demolition, yet, has only been possible due to the Atelier d'Architecture Autogérée's continued counter-hegemony building via the consolidation of citizen initiatives in larger deliberative organs, the setting up of urban networks around community agriculture as well as research into the commons and their legal embedding. At the Public Land Grab, finally, the properly political moment arose when Lambeth Council issued the intent to privatize the Grove Adventure Playground, being part of the project's concentric circle of common spaces around the Loughborough Juncture. Commoners' mobilization against the privatization, yet, could only be effectuated through the continued effort of critical research into the Localism Act and the setting up of deliberative bodies in order to counter Lambeth Council through 'a productive agonism'.

During these moments, one encounters an *inequality* of force and power, yet in se, these moments also constitute the momentary verification, 'in practice', of the commoner's equality as an accepted interlocutor in the process of spatial production. In the words of Rancière (1999, 33), equality appears during these moments as "a mere assumption that needs to be discerned within the practices implementing it". But, to recapitulate, my contention is that Rancière's 'momentariness' (of the disruptive, egalitarian moment) *requires* Mouffe's 'continuousness' (of building, through chains of equivalence, a counter-hegemonic project). Whilst Rancière does not construe the disruptive moment of equality as coming forth from pre-defined strategies, the cases scrutinized in this work might be placed within a broader stream of research that *does* argue that the properly political moment may only emerge by being steered, supported and enabled by active strategizing, by the use of physical infrastructure and by the building of community (García-Lamarca, 2017; Temenos, 2017). What Rancière may be said to forget is that for the properly political moment to emerge, an *everyday politics* might be necessary – Temenos speaks of an 'everyday proper politics'. This study's space-commoners are involved in the building of what we might call a 'fertile ground' upon which the general workings of police can be critiqued and subverted. Or to use the words of Dikeç (2005), they themselves set the scene of a "polemical common space where a wrong can be addressed and equality demonstrated".

It is time to wrap up. I would want to end with the following question: once materialized, which elements may contribute to the further (future) politicization of space-commoning? Rancière would launch a critical, even skeptical, answer to such question. Rancière's (2009, p. 75) stance would be that the form (in our case: the spatial characteristics), nor the content (in our case: the topics tackled) of common spaces could effectively *cause* a political subjectivation to take root; the relation, he would state, is 'aleatory' and cannot be calculated. But I want to take another route. Rather than to presuppose that common spaces would be autonomous entities disposing of an inner agentic force of politicization – the 'talisman complex' (Rockhill, 2018) – we should look at common spaces' 'social politicity', namely, at the *life led* by them, once erected. Given the fact that a thesis has its limits in space and time, I will end with a speculative look towards the future in order to answer the question stated above.

A first element of future politicization relates to the commoner's 'rationale': one's motivation to engage in commoning. I deem this a particularly important point on which the following example may shed a final light. At the time of writing, we are living in times of Covid-19. During the beginning of the crisis, various sorts of commoning saw the light of day: knitting masks, food distribution, going outdoors together. During the later stages of the crisis, however, several of these initiatives continued to exist, but started to charge a monetary fee (as such excluding people with limited means as well as diverting attention from the structural causes of the crisis). This example beautifully shows that the rationale for engaging oneself in an act of commoning is not always related to the creation of another world, let alone to the politicization of one's common cause. There exists a pivotal difference between commoning as the mere sharing of resources on the one hand, and commoning as a counter-hegemonic act on the other. Both forms can go together, of course, but it should be stated that the first form alone – the mere sharing of resources – may continue to strip commoning from its political potency.

A second element is found in the relation between the cultural production of common space and policy-making. As this study has recursively shown, common spaces may all too easily be invoked by the realm of municipal governance as a 'fix' (De Angelis, 2013) for the wounds of profit-driven urban development. But as this study has *also* argued (These Two), it is expected that politically potent commoning shall depend from an 'engagement with', rather than from 'a desertion of' municipal

institutions (on the condition that the engagement takes the form of a productive agonism). Taking these two strands together, it is my contention that the future politicization of commoning can be strengthened by what Lijster, Otte & Gielen (2018) have called an ‘inductive policy for the commons’: a policy, indeed, but one that creates the conditions for commoning and grassroots initiatives to unfold. An inductive policy does not proceed as an *a priori* regulator, but as an *a posteriori* ‘recognizer’, meaning that commoners may make their own rules and devise their own organizational principles. Therefore, policy agents working inductively “can only reject or confirm the legality of the regulations that cultural actors have already developed for themselves”. In so doing, inductive municipal institutions may become part of Mouffe’s ‘chain of equivalence’ whereby a commoning endeavour continues to consist of individual commoners, artists, activists, instituted organizations, all the way up to municipal, regional or national institutions of policy-making.

A third and final element for the further politicization of space-commoning is a more equal dispersion of financial support for commoning initiatives. I remain behind with the feeling that commoning has more chances to emerge in those places and areas where urbanites dispose *already* of enough time, financial resources and social capital to engage themselves in an unremunerated cultural production of common space. The political subjectivation of those engaged in The Public Land Grab, in this vein, seemed only to be possible given the pre-existence of LJAG, an initiative carrying with it a history of building social ties around the Loughborough Junction, of developing political capital and cumulating juridical knowledge. Hence: could there ever emerge politically potent commoning in less advantaged urban areas, in places characterized by less social and cultural capital? Likewise, we are seeing today the emergence of municipality-led funding programs for which urban areas commence to compete with each other. A tangible example comes once again from London and is called the ‘London Borough of Culture’. In a promotional video message, Sadiq Khan, Mayor of London, states: “now is the time for your borough to step up, to celebrate its creativity, its collaboration and its character. Be awarded the title of London Borough of Culture, and show London just how inspiring your borough can be”³. As such, we come to see how the support for citizens wishing to unite themselves around a common good such as culture or urban space resorts to a ‘winner-takes-all’ format (Mould, 2018).

Therefore: the rationale of hegemonic action, an inductive policy for the commons, and a more equal distribution of supportive resources – these are the lines I propose for the further politicization of commoning in urban space. One may rightfully state that these elements constitute ‘imaginary’ pathways. Likewise, one might object that this work of study has been of an imaginative, suggestive, speculative nature. This is so because I do not take the imagination lightly. Rather than being home to mere fantasy, it is in the imagination where the foundations for a more just world can be laid. To initiate such process – namely to tickle the commoner’s imagination and in so doing to ignite the ‘imaginary constitution’ of common space (Castoriadis, 1998; Levitas, 2013) – has been the all-encompassing rationale of this work.

Notes

¹ Harvey (1995), for instance, has been adamant that the securization of local places – ‘militant particularism’ – constitutes a pivotal act in defense against capitalist urban development.

² I am aware that at this juncture – the instauration of possibility in space, restoring space to ambiguity – I have reached, yet not excavated, a body of scholarship evolving around the notion of ‘potentiality’ or ‘potenza’, most notably crafted by the conglomerate of Agamben (2014), Virno (2009) and Negri (1999). A full consideration of this research line falls outside the scope of this epilogue but will be taken up in my future work.

³ Quoted in Mould 2018, pp. 1489-150.

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Appendices

Appendix I. Example of an ‘On the Spot’ Questionnaire

The following questionnaire was used during an interview in Antwerp with Alex Axinte and Cristi Borcan from studioBASAR on 02/04/2019.

Intro

- I always start with the same question. Sociologist Manuel Castells argued that every form of civil action starts out from a certain emotion, a certain dissatisfaction with a present situation. Would such statement be applicable to the origination of studioBASAR when looking at the current conditions of urban development?
- Can you describe to me the general vision and ideas present within studioBASAR?
- How do you interpret the notion of public space? And how do you interpret the notion of common space? Where lies the difference between the two, according to you?

Body

- Can you give a general overview of the tactics studioBASAR deploys for the production of common space?
- In your text ‘Searching for the In-Between City’, you write that you tactically try to generate spaces that are inclusive, flexible and reversible. Can you expand on these notions?
- In a some of your projects, such as ‘Tei Community Centre’, ‘My Place Behind the Flats’ and ‘Re:start’, you attempt to get in touch with local communities, and from there on out, to create common spaces from the bottom-up. Can you give me some more information concerning that way of working?

- I interpret your work as fluctuating around the following tactic: to first study lived space ('Trailer for Research and Activation', 'Parc du Cirque', etc.), subsequently to make formal models, in order to finally actualize social space. Would you agree?
- Can you describe a typical 'studioBASAR design process' from beginning to end?
- How does Bucharest's 'in-between status' influence your work?
- You used the notion of 'rhythm' in the project around Ciprian Porumbescu, and you mentioned it in *The Social (Re)production of Architecture* as well. Can you expand upon how your projects relate to notions such as rhythm and time?
- A number of your actions ('Trailer for Research and Activation', 'The '89 Box') is inspired on the Situationist idea of the 'moment'. Can you tell me something more about that? What are your tactics to produce these 'situations'?
- With regard to the project 'Central Public Space', changes were made by 'revising the instruments of top-down projects'. Namely: testing, accumulation, consolidation. Can you explain this in more detail?
- You mention 'ephemerality' as being a problem for some interventions. Can you explain this?

Outro

- Looking to your practice as an experimental, action-based way of spatial production, what are the factors that obstruct you the most? For example: laws and regulations, the imperatives of the free market, anything that comes to mind.
- In a perfect world, what would be the factors that could enhance your way of doing architecture? This, too, can entail different issues, for example: changes in the law, more funding, anything that comes to mind.

Appendix II. Overview of Interviewees

Name	Organization
Torange Khonsari	Public Works
Andreas Lang	Public Works
Tom Dobson (x 2)	Public Works
Anthea Masey	Loughborough Junction Action Group
Ross Wear	Borough of Lambeth
Sonia Baralic	Borough of Lambeth
Matthew Turner	Greater London Authority
Loughborough Farmers	Loughborough Farm
Alison Minto	Meanwhile Space
Ana Džokić	City in the Making
Marc Neelen	City in the Making
Piet Vollaard (x 3)	City in the Making
Melle Smets (x 2)	City in the Making
Erik Jutte (x 2)	City in the Making
Daan Den Houter	City in the Making
Rolf Engelen	City in the Making
Michelle Teran	City in the Making
Sara Weyns	Middelheim Museum
Ian Cooman	Middelheim Museum
Pieter Boons	Middelheim Museum
Koen Wynants	Antwerp Commons Lab
Jan Spanenburg	Collaborator Montaña Verde (local)
Lotte Schiltz	Collaborator Montaña Verde (freelancer)

Jochem van den Eynde	Fundament 2060
Michel Zaalblok	Sudisobe VZW
Hans De Beule	City of Antwerp
Karel Olbrechts	City of Antwerp
Eva Naessens	City Permeke City Library
Santiago Cirugeda	Recetas Urbanas
Jon Garbizu	Todo por la Praxis
Gloria G. Durán	Intermediae
Wim Cuyvers	Wim Cuyvers
Jan Liesegang	Raumlabor
Christof Mayer	Raumlabor
Markus Bader (x 2)	Raumlabor
Doina Petrescu (x 2)	Atelier d'Architecture Autogérée (aaa)
Petra Pferdenges	Alive Architecture
Christos Giovanopoulos	Commons Alliance
Gigi Argyropoulou	Mavili Collective
Marco Clausen	Prinzessinnengarten / Nomadic Green
Florian Koehl	Fatkoehl Architekten
Martin Schwegmann	Actors of Urban Change
Paul Emilieu	DANT
Seppe De Blust	Endeavour
Jorge Toledo	Ecosistema Urbano
Alex Axinte	StudioBASAR
Cristi Borcan	StudioBASAR
David Berkvens	Zuloark

Appendix III. Overview of Cases Discussed

Case	Collective	Location
The Public Land Grab	Public Works + LJAG	London
Pension Almonde	City in the Making	Rotterdam
Montaña Verde	Recetas Urbanas	Antwerp
Ateneu Sant Boi	Recetas Urbanas	San Boi
Agrocité	aaa	Paris
Ecobox	aaa	Paris
Urban Parliament	Zuloark	Nomadic
Prinzessinnengarten	Nomadic Green	Berlin
Parckfarm	Alive Architecture	Brussels
Embros Theatre	Mavili Collective	Athens
Kitchen Monument	Raumlabor	Berlin
JuniPark	Raumlabor	Berlin
Floating University	Raumlabor	Berlin

Appendix IV. Full List of Studied Documents

Master Case One. The Public Land Grab, London: Tactics and Frictions in Common Space

- Public document: London Regeneration Fund Application Form
- Public document: “Cabinet Member Delegated Decision on LJ Works” (<https://moderngov.lambeth.gov.uk/documents/s101300/LJ%20Works%20Leases%20CMDR.pdf>).
- Public document: Loughborough Junction Master Plan “Working Together to Realize Local Aspirations”. (<https://www.lambeth.gov.uk/housing-and-regeneration/regeneration/loughborough-junction-masterplan>).
- Public document: “Cash-Guzzling LJ Works Invites ‘Thinkers, Creatives, Entrepreneurs and Artists’ to Loughborough Junction, South London” (<http://www.brixtonbuzz.com/2018/10/cash-guzzling-lj-works-invites-thinkers-creatives-entrepreneurs-and-artists-to-loughborough-junction-south-london/>).
- Internal communication: letter from the Loughborough Junction Neighborhood Planning Forum to Councilor Lib Peck concerning the consolation on the Loughborough Junction Master Plan (10/10/2016).
- Internal communication: letter from the Loughborough Junction Action Group to Councilor Jack Hopkins concerning the redevelopment of the Grove Adventure Playground and the Marcus Lipton Youth Centre (08/04/2019).
- Internal communication: document crafted by an LJAG member listing the subsequent decisions and opinions of Lambeth Council with regard to the redevelopment of the Grove Adventure Playground and the Marcus Lipton Youth Centre.

Master Case Two. Pension Almonde, Rotterdam: The Devastating Conquest

- Public document: ‘Destination Plan Agniesebuurt’, issued by the City of Rotterdam, Department Spatial Planning, Units Destination Plans (<http://docplayer.nl/61919035-Agniesebuurt-bestemmingsplan.html>).
- Public document: Letter from the Deputy for Building, Living and Energy Transition in the Built Environment to the Board of the Mayor and his Deputies (23/11/2018).
- Public document: Zoho Citizens Manifesto, issued by the Zoho Citizen Initiative (<https://zohorotterdam.nl/zohocitizens/>).
- Public Document: “Woonvisie Rotterdam. Koers naar 2030, Agenda tot 2020” (“Housing Vision Rotterdam. Course to 2030, Agenda to 2020”). Issued by the City of Rotterdam” (<https://www.rotterdam.nl/wonen-leven/woonvisie/DEFINITIEF-Woonvisie-Rotterdam-2030-dd-raad-15-december-2016.pdf>).
- Public document: “Rotterdammers Zetten Zich in voor Nieuwe Toekomst Zomerhofkwartier” (“Rotterdam Citizens Commit to a New Future for the Zoho Area”) (<https://www.openrotterdam.nl/rotterdammers-zetten-zich-in-voor-nieuwe-toekomst-zomerhofkwartier/content/item?1107734#:~:text=Rotterdammers%20zetten%20zich%20in%20voor%20nieuwe%20toekomst%20ZomerhofkwartieGepubliceerd%3A%20Woensdag%2007&text=Het%20Zomerhofkwartier%20wordt%20weer%20nieuw,plek%20voor%20ondernemers%20en%20horeca>).
- Public document: “Ondernemers Vrezen Uitholling bij Verkoop Zomerhofkwartier” (“Entrepreneurs Fear Sale of the Zoho Area”) (<https://versbeton.nl/2018/11/ondernemers-vrezen-utholling-bij-verkoop-zomerhofkwartier/>).
- Public document: “Stadslab Hofbogen. Ontwikkelingsstrategieën voor Burgergestuurde gebiedsontwikkeling in Rotterdam” (“Urban Laboratory Hofbogen. Strategies for Citizen-led Urban development in Rotterdam”) (<https://www.gebiedsontwikkeling.nu/artikelen/stadslab->

hofbogen-ontwikkelstrategie%C3%ABn-voor-burger-gestuurde-gebiedsontwikkeling-rotterdam/).

- Public document: “Zoho Rotterdam. Van Blinde Vlek naar Hotspot” (“Zoho Rotterdam: From Blind Spot to Hotspot”) (<https://www.gebiedsontwikkeling.nu/artikelen/zoho-rotterdam-van-blinde-vlek-naar-hotspot/>).
- Public document: “Gemeente Rotterdam en Havensteder Starten Verklooprocedure voor Zomerhofkwartier” (“City of Rotterdam and Havensteder Start Sales Procedure for Zoiho Area”) (<https://fakton.com/nl/nieuws/gemeente-rotterdam-en-havensteder-starten-verklooprocedure-voor-zomerhofkwartier>).
- Internal communication: draft of a City in the Making booklet or ‘manual’ setting the rules for future occupations.
- Internal communication: internal paper entitled “On the Nature and Governance of our Commons”.
- Internal communication: internal paper entitled “Proposals for Provisional Procedures and Decision-Making Rules for City in the Making Meetings”.
- Internal communication: internal paper entitled “On Conflict Solving and Sanctions”.
- Internal communication: mail traffic among City in the Making’s activists on the topic of governance within Pension Almonde (May 2019).
- Internal communication: mail traffic among City in the Making’s activists on the topic of sociocratic decision-making structures (May 2019).
- Internal communication: City in the Making’s grant application for further funding at Pension Almonde, directed at CityLav010 (July 2019).
- Internal communication: mail traffic among City in the Making’s activists on the topic of the appointment of a communication manager for Pension Almonde (September 2019).

Master Case Three. Montaña Verde, Antwerp: Spatializing the Commons in the City-as-Oeuvre

- Public document: catalogue for the exhibition of Experience Traps (Laura Herman & Pieter Boons, 2018)
https://www.middelheimmuseum.be/sites/middelheim/files/Literatuurlijst_Experience_Traps_0.pdf).
- Public document: “Stad Deelt 90.000 Bloemen uit Tijdens Oogstfeest Bloementapijt” (“City Distributed 90.000 Flowers during Harvest of Flower Carpet”)
(https://www.gva.be/cnt/dmf20150614_01730025/stad-deelt-90-000-bloemen-uit-tijdens-oogstfeest-bloementapijt).
- Internal communication: Audience Research Middelheim Museum (Department of Culture, Youth and Media of the Flemish Government, 2018).
- Internal communication: formal contract between Kunstenstad VZW Recetas Urbanas (22/03/2018).
- Internal communication: sketch for Montaña Verde (entitled: ‘proposal for artwork needed within the Experience Traps exhibition), proposed by Recetas Urbanas and sent to the Middelheim Museum on 02/10/2017.
- Internal communication: list of volunteers engaged in construction work shared by Recetas Urbanas on 26/01/2019.

Appendix V. Observations During a Session of Personal Presence (Example)

- I met this guy who is the husband of a woman who uses one of the houses for three things: first, a bakery (which also has an online shop), but also a co-working space for mothers who can then put their children in an on-site kindergarten.
- They started this project because they want the street to be alive more. The guy said: “it should start to live more, the doors remain locked”.
- He says that it is clear that people often issue some sort of prudent interest from the street, but then don’t dare to cross the threshold and go inside, so there is not much of an interaction between the buildings itself in the form of Pension Almonde and the wider neighborhood.
- He also said that the Huiskamer (the central living room for debate and cooking) is actually intended as a commons, but is not used as such. He said: “there happens not much more than only the Soup Tuesdays”.
- He relates this to material adaptations. He says: “there is this big sign of Huiskamer, but nobody uses it”. He states that a possible solution could be execute through a number of material interventions, such as putting some benches outside, leaving the door open, but also by appointing somebody who governs everything. Another reason why people don’t go inside is that it is actually just a regular house as seen from the outside.
- He also wants to use the Huiskamer for more interaction between the occupants (“to make it more multiculti”). Because, even internally the people don’t seem to know each other. He knows that a few houses further down the street, there is the sand/desert project, but that’s all he knows about it. He didn’t know Rolf or his project of the Monastery. So, he wants more interaction in the Huiskamer by presenting projects to each other on Tuesday, a karaoke night on Friday, and so on.
- He sees it as a good opportunity to mingle people, he is delighted to hear an Australian accent, to meet writers, people from Belgium, from everywhere.





- After the 18 months, he hopes to be able to find a new place, but normally they can continue their activity of the bakery, which also has an online shop. He suspects that probably the date of the demolition will be later than expected.
- He describes the neighborhood as a place where things happen more behind the doors in comparison to the south of the city, but also as the place where artists and creative people are, with a lot of nationalities. This is the place, also, where most subsidies for artistic creation end up.
- However, the neighborhood is undergoing transformation. One example is the demolition of Pension Almonde, another is the transformation of the big building across the street where the Office for Metropolitan Architecture sits, into a hotel. Also, for those being located under the train bridges – sports, art, culture, restaurants, bike repairers, and so forth – their rent has gone up times ten. They went to court, and lost. Because the judge argued that it is market conform to raise the price in this manner, keeping the evolution of the neighborhood in mind. According to him this will bring in new “posh people” and create an inequitable situation and much vacancy.

Appendix VI. Codification of Case Study Database (Snippets)





→ 1/ Audio Practitioners & Users

-  01/ Santi I_11/02/2017.m4a
-  02/ Jon_04/04/2017.m4a
-  03/ Gloria_05/04/2017.m4a
-  04/ Wim_28/01/2018.mp3





→ 2/ Transcriptions

-  01/ Santi I_11/02/2017
-  02/ Jon 04/04/2017
-  03/ Gloria_05/04/2017
-  04/ Wim_28/01/2018

→ 3/ Observations

-  01/ Agrocité I_08/06/2018
-  02/ Prinzessinnengarten_13/07/2018
-  03/ Agrocité II_22/08/2018
-  04/ Neighborhood Academy_10/09/2018

→ 4/ Documents

-  Article Neighborhood Academy.pdf
-  Clausen on Urban Agriculture.pdf
-  DANT presentation.pdf
-  Interview Marco Clausen.pdf

→ 5/ Photos

→ 6/ Videos

Appendix VII. Summary in English

This dissertation – *Shapeshifting: The Cultural Production of Common Space* – evolves around the following question: through which tactics do urban activists give a spatial expression to the concept of the commons? In other words: how is ‘common space’ produced within the current conditions of urban development? The concept of the commons and its spatial derivative of common space currently permeate the vocabulary of activists, community organizers and architects alike, all seeking a more just and equitable urban condition. In this vein, common space refers to space made ‘by, not for’ people: it differs from public space as commoners define their own regulative framework; it differs from private space as commoning constitutes a collective endeavour.

Part I theoretically evolves around the concept of common space. Common space has been studied through two streams of thought. On the one hand, those working in the slipstream of Ostrom (1990), the ‘Ostrom-theoretical approach’, have been concerned with investigating the preconditions for the citizen-led management of shared resources in the setting of the city (Foster, 2013; Iaione, 2016). On the other hand, a series of post-Marxist scholars, the ‘Radical-theoretical approach’, has posited the concept as a political imaginary in opposition to the state and the market (De Angelis, 2017b; Stavrides, 2016). In order to structurally contrast these two approaches, they are discussed and compared along De Angelis’s (2010) three elements of the commons: the ‘common good’, ‘community’ and ‘commoning’. The part ends by applying these elements to a pilot case study: the *Campo de Cebada* (Madrid).

Part II focuses on the ‘production’ aspect of the equation. Henri Lefebvre’s (1991b) theory of the production of space is first presented and thereafter reformulated in order to make it workable for empirical scrutiny. More specifically, the construct of the spatial triad is brought forward as a threefold lens through which to uncover how space-commoners relate to the aforementioned elements of the common good, community and commoning. Taking a distance from Lefebvre’s vocabulary, the triad is reworked to an ensemble of three ‘force fields’, consisting of ‘representation’ (space as *thought*), ‘configuration’ (space as *built*) and ‘signification’ (space as *lived*). The Part ends with an overview of the data corpus, data selection and data analysis.

Making use of in-depth interviews, document analysis, participatory observation and ‘personal presence’, Part III continues with three in-depth case studies on the cultural production of common space. ‘The Public Land Grab’ (London) is a community farm through which commoners set out to subvert the tactics used by private developers in order to protect their neighborhood from gentrification. ‘Pension Almonde’ (Rotterdam) entails the transformation of vacant housing infrastructure into a common space for sheltering ‘urban nomads’. Montaña Verde (Antwerp) is an urban-artistic intervention for the cultivation of plants and vegetables in the urban public realm.

Part IV, with the help of additional interview data, clusters eight *ideal types of tactics* within the tailpiece of the study: the ‘Taxonomy of Tactics for the Production of Common Space’. From this point onwards, three conclusive theses with regard to the production of common space emerge. ‘These One’ argues that commoning’s two forms – Symbiotic and Oppositional Commoning – do *not* collide with the Ostrom-theoretical and the Radical-theoretical approach. Symbiotic commoners invoke the predicaments of *both* theoretical approaches, as do the ones active in Oppositional Commoning. Qua spatial triad, this means that commoners oscillate between the force fields of representation and signification. ‘These Two’ argues that Oppositional Commoning need not necessarily to imply a ‘desertion’ from politico-economic institutions. ‘These Three’, finally, lays bare that each of the triad’s force fields may ‘underwrite’ (make) but may evenly ‘undermine’ (break) commoning endeavours.

The study ends with an Excursus and an Epilogue regarding the relation between commoning and political action. It asks: what would a properly political production of common space entail? Mobilizing the work of Webb, Mouffe and Rancière, the study ends with a consideration of the Berlin-based collective of Raumlabor. Based on this collective’s production of common space, the final argument, will be this one: whilst ‘properly political commoning’ may constitute a *momentary* matter, it also requires the *continued* effort of counter-hegemony building. As such, finally, the core of this study, the spatial triad, reenters the analysis. Namely, a properly political production of common space will be seen to depend on the self-instigation of a physical ‘stage’ of dissent (configuration), on pre-political deliberation (signification), and on the development of a shared counter-representation among a ‘chain of equivalence’ (representation).

Appendix VIII. Summary in Dutch

Dit werk – Bedenken, Bouwen, Betekenen: De Culturele Productie van de Gemene Ruimte – behandelt de volgende vraag: middels welke tactieken geven stedelijke activisten een ruimtelijke uitdrukking aan de idee van de commons? Anders geformuleerd: hoe wordt de ‘gemene ruimte’ geproduceerd binnen het huidige landschap van stedelijke ontwikkeling? De idee van de commons (gemeengoed) en de daaraan verbonden notie van de ‘gemene ruimte’ nestelt zich vandaag in het vocabularium van activisten, gemeenschapsorganisatoren en architecten, steevast op zoek naar een meer rechtvaardige en sociale, stedelijke toekomst. We kunnen de gemene ruimte definiëren als een ruimte gemaakt ‘door, niet voor’ de stedeling. De gemene ruimte verschilt van de publieke ruimte aangezien commoners autonoom hun principes bepalen; ze verschilt tevens van de private ruimte vanwege haar collectieve karakter.

Deel I behandelt de gemene ruimte vanuit een theoretisch perspectief. Tot dusver werd het concept door twee corpussen belicht. De volgelingen van Ostrom (1990), enerzijds, onderzochten de mogelijkheidsvoorwaarden voor een duurzaam beheer van gedeelde goederen in stedelijke context (Foster, 2013; Iaione, 2016). Anderzijds poneren post-Marxistische denkers de gemene ruimte als een politiek imaginarium in oppositie tot de staat en de markt (De Angelis, 2017b; Stavrides, 2016). Beide benaderingen worden gecontrasteerd naargelang De Angelis’s (2010) drie kernelementen van de commons: *wat* er gedeeld wordt (common good), *wie* er deelt (community), en *hoe* men deelt (commoning). Het deel sluit af met een piloot-casestudie aangaande het *Campo de Cebada*, Madrid.

Deel II focust op de notie van ‘productie’. Zodoende wordt Henri Lefebvre’s (1991b) theorie over de productie van de ruimte gepresenteerd en geherformuleerd teneinde ze werkbaar te maken voor empirisch onderzoek. Lefebvre ’s theoretisch construct van de ‘ruimtelijke triade’ wordt voorgesteld als een drievoudige lens waarmee onderzocht kan worden hoe commoners zich verhouden tot de voornoemde elementen van het ‘common good’, ‘community’ en ‘commoning’. Voorbij de bewoordingen van Lefebvre wordt de triade herwerkt naar een drievoudig perspectief bestaande uit ‘representatie’ (de ruimte *denken*), ‘configuratie’ (de ruimte *bouwen*) en ‘significatie’ (de ruimte *interpreteren*). Het deel eindigt met een overzicht van het data corpus, -selectie en -analyse.

Middels diepte-interviews, document analyse, participerende observatie en persoonlijke betrokkenheid worden drie mastercases belicht. ‘The Public Land Grab’ (London) begon als stadsboederij maar breidde uit naar een commoning netwerk dat zich verzet tegen gentrificatie en private ontwikkeling. ‘Pension Almonde’ (Rotterdam) beduidt de tijdelijke bezetting van stedelijke leegstand middels het bieden van onderdak aan ‘stadsnomaden’. Montaña Verde (Antwerpen) is een artistieke interventie in de publieke ruimte met betrekking tot het gezamenlijke beheer van groen.

Deel IV, met behulp van bijkomende interview data, clustert acht ideaal types van tactieken in het centrale construct van deze studie: de ‘Taxonomie voor de Productie van de Gemene Ruimte’. Van hieruit worden drie synthetiserende stellingen naar voren gebracht. ‘These Eén’ argumenteert dat de twee vormen van commoning – Symbiotisch en Oppositioneel – *niet* samenvallen met voornoemde theoretische benaderingen. Symbiotische commoners, zo leren we, maken gebruik van wat er *zowel* in Ostrom als in de post-Marxistische theorieën bepleit wordt. Hetzelfde geldt voor zij die actief zijn in de Oppositionele variant. Op het gebied van de ruimtelijke triade betekent dit dat commoners oscilleren tussen representatie en significantie. ‘These Twee’ bepaalt dat de Oppositionele variant niet noodzakelijkerwijs het loutere ‘verlaten’ van politiek-economische instituties hoeft in te houden. ‘These Drie’, ten slotte, laat zien dat alle drie de componenten van de triade een commoning project kunnen onderschrijven, maar evenzeer kunnen ondermijnen.

De studie eindigt met een Excursus en een Epiloog over de relatie tussen de gemene ruimte en politieke actie. Er wordt onderzocht wat een ‘politiek potente’ productie van de gemene ruimte zou kunnen inhouden. Tegelijk bouwend op het werk van Webb, Mouffe en Rancière eindigt de studie met een beschouwing van het Berlijnse commoning collectief Raumlabor. Gebaseerd op Raumlabor's productie van de gemene ruimte wordt finaal het volgende argument gemaakt: terwijl een politiek potente productie van de gemene ruimte een *momentane* aangelegenheid blijkt te zijn, heeft zij desalniettemin een *voortgezette* basis van hegemonie-ontwikkeling. Zodoende wordt Lefebvre's triade wederom gevaloriseerd. Finaal wordt namelijk beschreven hoe een politieke productie van de gemene ruimte voortkomt uit de autonome bouw van een ‘podium’ voor dissensus (configuratie), prepolitieke deliberatie (significantie), en de ontwikkeling van een gedeelde counter-hegemonie (representatie).