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HETEROPOLITICS

<p>HETEROPOLITICS INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP PROCEEDINGS</p>

Refiguring the Common and the Political

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Video recordings of all sessions of the conference, from 13/09/2017 till 15/09/2017, are available at <http://heteropolitics.net/index.php/2017/09/20/video-recordings-from-heteropolitics-international-workshop-13-15-September-2017/>

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Between the 13th and the 15th of September 2017, the 1st International Workshop on the ‘New Commons (ecological, labour and digital) and new participatory forms of politics’ was

held in Thessaloniki, at the premises of the Aristotle University Research and Dissemination Centre (KEDEA). The workshop attracted around 70 participants from various parts of Greece and beyond.



International Workshop on the Commons and Political Theory

13-15 SEPTEMBER 2017,
ARISTOTLE UNIVERSITY, THESSALONIKI

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Table of contents

SECTION 1

ABSTRACTS

INTRODUCTORY SESSION

1. Alexandros Kioupkiolis, ‘Introduction to the *Heteropolitics* project’ 1

SESSION 1: COMMONS AND SOLIDARITY ECONOMY: SOCIAL MOVEMENTS, ALTERNATIVE PRACTICES AND VISIONS

2. Angelos Varvarousis, ‘Crisis, Commons and Liminality: Lessons from the Greek Commoning Movement’ 2
3. Christina Sakali, ‘Commons of solidarity economy and alternative production: a typology of identities’ 3
4. George Chatzinakos, ‘Urban Experiments in Times of Crisis: The Case of Svolou’s Neighbourhood Initiative in Thessaloniki/Greece’ 4
5. Karolos Kavoulakos, ‘The alterity of Social Solidarity Economy and the role of social movements’ 7

SESSION 2: THE GOVERNANCE OF THE COMMONS

6. Silke Helfrich, (1) ‘Commoning: Towards a Deeper Understanding of the Commons’, (2) Dynamics of Self-Governance in Commons: Governing Internal Relations 8
7. Paolo Dini, ‘The Epistemology of Structural Meta-Politics in the Context of Sardex as a Laboratory of Institutional Learning’ 9
8. Dimitris Dalakoglou, ‘Infrastructures, Commons and Anthropology’ 10

WORKSHOP

9. Alekos Pantazis, ‘How to talk about the commons transition in non-expert audiences?’ 10

SESSION 3: COMMONS, STATE AND THE MARKET

10. Alexandros Pazaitis.....	11
11. Vassilis Niaros, ‘A New Model of Production for a Commons-oriented Economy: An Action Research Project in Tzoumerka’.....	11
12. George Papanikolaou, ‘How to promote a commons transition through public policy?’.....	11

SESSION 4: COMMONS THEORY & GENDER

13. Irimi Sotiropoulou, ‘Commons and private property as a patriarchal trap’.....	12
14. Giota Bampatzimopoulou, ‘Gendered Entwinements and Significations: towards an intersectional theory of the commons?’.....	12
15. Rosa Barotsi, ‘The daughter as crisis/Daughters of the crisis: Women and contemporary Greek visual media’.....	13

SESSION 5: THE POLITICAL IN THE COMMONS AND STRATEGIES FOR SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

16. Alexandros Kioupkiolis, ‘The lack of the political in the commons and a post-hegemonic strategy of social transformation’.....	14
17. Theodoris Karyotis, ‘Within, against and beyond the market: challenges of the commons as an antagonistic force’.....	15
18. Vaggelis Papadimitropoulos, ‘The Politics of the Commons: Reform or Revolt?’.....	15

SESSION 6: URBAN COMMONS, MUNICIPAL POLITICS AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT IN THE CITY

19. Christian Iaione, ‘The right to pooling in the city’.....	16
20. Charalampos Tsavdaroglou, Stasis: The Catalyst for the Circulation of Common Space. Protest camps in Athens, Istanbul and Idomeni’.....	18
21. Giuseppe Micciarelli, ‘Introduction to urban and collective civic use: the “direct management” of urban emerging commons in Naples’.....	19
22. Marcus Kip, ‘Making Architecture Common. Heritage and the Articulation of Difference’.....	19

SESSION 7: DIGITAL COMMONS, MODES OF COOPERATION AND COLLABORATIVE COMMUNITIES

23. Petros Petridis, ‘Sharing, fan labor and the logic of control in P2P networks and Massively Multiplayer Online Games’ 19
24. Natalia - Rozalia Avlona, ‘Digital commons and critical practices in hybrid spaces: the communities of Sarantaporo.gr and Exarcheia Net’ 20

SESSION 8: TOWARDS A METHODOLOGY OF THE COMMONS

25. Yiannis Pechtelidis, ‘Commoning Education in Contemporary Greece’ 20
26. Aimilia Voulvouli, ‘Ethnography and the Commons: A few notes before the field’ 20
27. Alexandros Papageorgiou, ‘Researching knowledge transfer processes in contemporary models of commoning’ 21
28. Christos Giannopoulos, ‘The Alliance of the Commons Presentation’ 22

SECTION 2

EXTENDED ABSTRACTS & PAPERS

SESSION 1: COMMONS AND SOLIDARITY ECONOMY: SOCIAL MOVEMENTS, ALTERNATIVE PRACTICES AND VISIONS

1. Christina Sakali, ‘Commons of solidarity economy and alternative production: a typology of identities’ 23
2. George Chatzinakos, ‘Urban Experiments in Times of Crisis: The Case of Svolou’s Neighbourhood Initiative in Thessaloniki/Greece’ 28

SESSION 2: THE GOVERNANCE OF THE COMMONS

3. Silke Helfrich, ‘Peer Governance in Commons’ 32

SESSION 3: COMMONS, STATE AND THE MARKET

4. Alexandros Pazaitis ‘How can the commons provide a new rationality for the firm in the information age?’ 35

SESSION 4: COMMONS THEORY & GENDER

5. Irene Sotiropoulou, ‘Commons and private property as a patriarchal trap’ 46
6. Giota Bampatzimopoulou, ‘Gendered Entwinements and Significations: Towards an Intersectional Theory of the Commons?’ 57
7. Rosa Barotsi, ‘The daughter as crisis/Daughters of the crisis: Women and contemporary Greek visual media’ 64

SESSION 5: THE POLITICAL IN THE COMMONS AND STRATEGIES FOR SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

8. Alexandros Kioupkiolis, ‘The lack of the political in the commons and a post-hegemonic strategy of social transformation’ 75
9. Theodoris Karyotis, ‘Within, against and beyond the market: challenges of the commons as an antagonistic force’ 94

SESSION 6: URBAN COMMONS, MUNICIPAL POLITICS AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT IN THE CITY

10. Charalampos Tsavdaroglou, ‘Stasis: The Catalyst for the Circulation of Common Space. Protest camps in Athens, Istanbul and Idomeni.’ 99
11. Giuseppe Micciarelli, ‘Introduction to urban and collective civic use: the “direct management” of urban emerging commons in Naples’ 117

SESSION 8: TOWARDS A METHODOLOGY OF THE COMMONS

12. Yannis Pechtelidis, ‘Commoning Education in Contemporary Greece’ 122
13. Aimilia Voulvouli, ‘Ethnography and the Commons: A few notes before the field of *Heteropolitics*’ 125
14. Christos Giovanopoulos, ‘We ally for the Commons. We hack politics. We produce without fences. What is the Commons’ Alliance’ 131

SECTION 1

ABSTRACTS

INTRODUCTORY SESSION

1. Alexandros Kiouпкиolis, 'Introduction to the *Heteropolitics* project'

PI, Assistant Professor in Contemporary Political Theory, School of Political Sciences, Aristotle University

Heteropolitics seeks to contribute to the endeavour to imagine, elaborate and expand alternative forms of politics and collective self-organization fostering inclusion, participation, sustainability and a symmetrical distribution of power. We will inquire thus into heterogeneous commons (natural, social, digital etc.) which work out feasible processes of common self-organization and institution-building that cultivate virtues of reciprocity and fairness while providing effective solutions to critical problems in the management of collective resources (Benkler & Nissenbaum 2006; Ostrom 1990; Poteete, Janssen & Ostrom 2010; Mansbridge 2010; De Angelis 2005). By studying both the theory of the commons and particular contemporary examples of commoning activity, Heteropolitics will seek to spell out the concrete ways in which various practices of the 'commons' reconstruct communal ties, meet social needs, advance democratic participation and self-governance in the economy and other fields, and offer new ideas of social, collaborative production and self-management which help us to rethink and recast egalitarian and participatory politics.

In our investigation of commons' thought and research, the aim will be to shed light on their divergent understandings of the commons, the different visions of alternative politics which arise out of these conceptions and the 'lack of the political' gaping in their midst. Existing studies of the commons have not yet adequately tackled political issues of inclusion/exclusion, complexity, scale, clashes of interest and ideology among larger groups. Consequently, they have not sufficiently dealt with the key challenges facing the construction of a broader sector of alternative formations of community, governance and economy: how to bring together and to coordinate dispersed, small-scale civic initiatives, how to relate to established social systems and power relations in the market and the state, etc.

Our approach to the commons as bearing promise for alternative forms of politics and social organization in various fields of social activity is informed by a particular understanding of the political. We follow several strands of contemporary political theory (see e.g. Rancière 1995, 2010; Connolly 1995, 2005; Butler 1990, 1993; Honig 2009; Heywood 2013; Ingram 2002), sociology (e.g. Giddens 1991; Beck 1992) and anthropology (e.g. Scott 1990; Gledhill 2000; Papataxiarchis 2014) which have decentered the political from the state and 'big-bang' politics, along three lines. They have lifted the emphasis on the political as 'institution'. They have traced the political in every act and process which exerts itself over established social forms and structures, seeking to contest them, to transform or to uphold them. And they have blurred, thus, the distinction between ordinary and extraordinary politics, conventional and unconventional, visible and invisible.

These shifts gesture towards our idea of ‘heteropolitics’ as alternative and transformative politics outside the mainstream, that is, at a distance from the state, ‘grand politics’ and their particular logics of political action and organization. The political’ pertains to social activity which deliberately intervenes in actual social relations, structures and embedded subjectivities –i.e. conventional modes of thought, understanding, evaluation, motivation, feeling, action and interaction- by resisting, challenging, transfiguring, displacing, managing or striving to preserve them. Against this broader conceptual background, we introduce the term **‘heteropolitics’** to highlight more specifically

(i) that such political activity is not primarily and exclusively focused on the formal political system;

(ii) it is not confined to revolutionary events or ‘hegemonic acts of institution.’ ‘The political’ as deliberate collective action on social structures and subjectivities can be also part of ordinary, face-to-face interactions and attempts at ‘coping’ with everyday problems;

(iii) ‘the political’ can occur on any (small, middle or large) scale of social life, in more or less institutionalized and visible social spaces across any social field. Hence, it can equally take place in informal and often obscure movements, exchanges, performances and differences of everyday life (Papataxiarchis 2014: 18-31). Such ‘low’ politics and ‘micro’-political actions may have an impact only on certain social practices and relations, or they may coalesce with others to prepare and engender large-scale antagonisms and systemic ‘macro’-changes. Finally,

(iv) we also place power relations, struggles and difference at the heart of the ‘political’, but this features both strife and action in concert, both plurality and confluence, both antagonism and consensus-seeking, both disruptions of normality and the crafting of ‘alternative normalities.’

SESSION 1: COMMONS AND SOLIDARITY ECONOMY: SOCIAL MOVEMENTS, ALTERNATIVE PRACTICES AND VISIONS

2. Angelos Varvarousis, ‘Crisis, Commons and Liminality: Lessons from the Greek Commoning Movement’

Researcher and PhD candidate at Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona

We are witnessing an exponential growth of alternative socio-economic practices in a new context where secular stagnation and perpetual economic crisis might be the new norm. Although the majority of those practices could be seen, from a specific point of view, as primarily economic, they do not seek either only to promote an alternative economic model or to relaunch a new spiral of economic growth. On the contrary, they can be contextualized within a broader movement which tries to create new forms of ‘common-wealth,’ wealth that no longer relies on more and more money and is unfolding as a diverse, inclusive and even contradictory social process, based on the guiding principles of commons and democracy.

Drawing on the emblematic case study of Greece, where such commoning projects have multiplied hand by hand with unemployment and poverty, this paper aspires to shed new light on some of the least studied aspects of the literature on commons, namely, how and why those new commons emerge and expand as well as how they deal with the dilemmas faced by their

predecessors, especially those of openness versus closure, productivity versus egalitarianism and their relationship to the state and the capitalist economy. Our core thesis is that the commoning movement in Greece benefited from a liminal state of unfixed identity, dominant in the period of the occupied indignant squares, and then blossomed as a rhizome. It now faces challenges of maturity in terms of its internal and external relations. Crisis does not constitute only the background context of this process; on the contrary, it is the central constitutive element of those new commons and it characterizes both the subjects and the respective practices of commoning in various scales.

Keywords: Commons, Liminality, Crisis, Commoning, Subjectification, Rhizome

3. Christina Sakali, ‘Commons of solidarity economy and alternative production: a typology of identities’

PhD, Economic and Political Studies, Independent Researcher

Introduction

As a result of an extremely unhelpful situation in Greece due to a long-lasting economic crisis and recession, there has been a growth of a special part of the economy, which cares for democratization of decision making, equality of relations, and social well-being among participants. This part of the economy has been establishing economic relations based on collective management and solidarity, as well as production modes based on alternative visions of work organization. Consequently, an important process underpinning both the vision and the practice of alternative economy has been the creation of commons. As a result, commons in the context of alternative economy can be considered the production means that are developed, used and managed as common resources, such as: work relations, collective capital or equipment, space or facilities, ideas and know-how, distributions channels, common funds, tools, networks and processes, ecosystems of cooperation.

Approach

These alternative forms of economy and production pursue a variety of goals, priorities, structures and directions, resulting in a richly diverse and polymorphous field with varied identities. In order to explore in depth the field of solidarity economy and alternative production, it is therefore worth exploring their identities looking into questions about the underlying creation of commons. A framework of commons can help look more deeply into the social relationships and political processes that lie beneath the generalized term of ‘alternative economy’ and encourage a more critical engagement, related to issues such as:

- The size and characteristics of the community they intend to serve, as well as the range of social needs they intend to address
- The kind and extent of alternative organization they propose, whether this refers to a vertical organisation of production, or whether this refers to a horizontal organisation within a sector, neighbourhood or area

- The degree of transformation of social relations they encourage, either work relations among members of collectives, or economic relations among partners at different production stages (producers, suppliers, customers)
- The model of governance, decision-making processes, degree of participation and underlying power dynamics in these processes
- The extent and the kind of political action, alliances and networks they engage with each other or with the wider community
- The ability to challenge the free market competitive economy, by re-appropriating resources and market shares ought to belong to the community around them.

Objective

Based on the above and other issues of alterity, commoning and capacity for social transformation, this paper will seek to construct an original typology of the varied identities of solidarity economy and alternative production, focusing on organisational, social and political aspects of these identities.

Findings

Analysis discovers a polymorphous sector with distinctive initiatives, which however share a common vision: that of a society which differentiates itself from the dominant socio-economic paradigm of the free market competition and envisions a world of equality and inclusion. Some of these efforts have gone a longer way toward envisioning alternative and more integrated modes of organization and the management of their resources as commons, others still have a long way to go or they are not interested in such a direction. The question still remains about whether alternative economy as a field or as a movement can become the driver of a wider social change and what are the conditions that can lead to that direction.

4. George Chatzinakos, ‘Urban Experiments in Times of Crisis: The Case of Svolou’s Neighbourhood Initiative in Thessaloniki/Greece’

Associate Lecturer, Post-graduate Researcher, Manchester University

This participatory action research critically engages with issues of community-building and place-making in the development of an urban experiment in the historical and commercial centre of Thessaloniki, Greece. This bottom-up neighbourhood initiative was founded in 2013 by an informal group of locals and shopkeepers. It was a period where the impact of the financial crisis had begun to unfold rapidly, not only at the retail level but also in everyday relationships. As a response, we started to discuss ways to make the neighbourhood more vibrant, creative and pleasant. With the passage of time a diverse group of people joined the Initiative. We held concerts, a parade with various active citizens’ groups of the city, place-making activities in schools and in public spaces, artistic and tactical urbanism interventions, actions to foster the collective identity of the neighbourhood (e.g. soft-branding sticker), a memory bank, solidarity actions (e.g. refugees) etc.

Influenced by respective cultural practices that take place in Barcelona, our main action is a collective dinner, which was performed for the first time in 2014. The first challenge was whether it was possible to transfer, in a sustainable way, a cultural practice from another city of the European south to Thessaloniki. Spring's Dinner has transformed the city's fabric in terms of the appropriation of public space, constituting a landmark event for a city which is directly affected by the economic crisis in all aspects (social, cultural, economic) of everyday life, and introducing a new discussion around the role of citizens in the midst of a more-than-financial crisis. This pilot urban experiment created a more fertile ground for carrying out various activities in the neighbourhood. Gradually, this enabled us to establish a new neighbourhood identity, by combining various local and socio-cultural attributes. 2016 was the most successful year attracting 5.000 people who appropriated the entire neighbourhood.

Such cultural events can be considered to be a framing of time that isolates and draws attention to a gathering of people in a specific place at a specific time. In general, such practices are distinguished by their ability to temporarily disrupt everyday order as they provide a sanctioned forum for unleashing societal tensions. Bahktin (1984) defined festivals as liminal, 'time out of time' spaces with the ability to re-frame time and space; full of possibilities for challenging social conventions and inverting society's cultural norms. Liminality represents 'a stage of being in culture almost completely at odds with the ordinary and the mundane' where social order is 'mocked, reversed, criticized, or ignored (Turner, 1992:133-147). This liminal phase potentially can contribute to dissolving mental and social boundaries, promoting diversity and social transformations; challenging accepted ways of thinking; provoking radical changes of social attitudes and the status quo (Sharpley & Stone, 2011). Cultural events therefore represent marginal, liminal zones, places outside the normal constraints of daily life, showcasing 'a liberation from the regimes of normative practices and performance codes of mundane life' (Shields, 1991:84). This is 'related to the idea of transgression of the boundaries and taboos that define social and symbolic everyday life spaces' making such transgression in a sense authorized (Picard & Robinson, 2006:11).

The event played a very important role in the change that happened in the Neighbourhood; creating a new culture; producing social links between different groups and individuals who had little previous contact, and encouraging stronger interaction. Essentially, we managed to create a dynamic and diverse network between neighbours and shopkeepers who previously didn't know each other. The latter joined forces, intending to highlight the Neighbourhood in a pilot model of social organization and cohesion, aiming to introduce more permanent activities. We observed a significant change in everyday relationships, bringing different people closer together, and breaking the initial isolation and distrust through active participation in the Initiative. After four years of experience, we noticed that social relations between residents who previously hadn't had any relationship, were enhanced, creating a new sense of social cohesion, giving greater confidence in relationships where previously people were suspicious. The Dinner provides people with an opportunity to get to know each other and to develop an interactive relationship with public space. Arguably, by getting people who live in the same area together they get to know each other better and can build trust networks. However, there is a danger that our actions can develop a kind of 'staged culture' (MacCannell, 1973). A potential commercialization of the event might lead to an alienation of the local community. Therefore, the Dinner is considered as a

means, and not the end in itself, to create a different/temporary atmosphere in a stagnant and crumbling reality.

Nowadays, our aim is to find ways to increase individual responsibility, collective sensitivity and ‘sociological imagination’ towards urban commons. We are trying to develop a network which will be able to offer its creative assets, in order to manage everyday life, so that it becomes easier to solve common problems. Arguably, such neighbourhood initiatives can create a domino effect, propelling the history of this city into a new era of participation and solidarity; challenging social conventions; strengthening social ties; and creating a new relationship with public space. In Greece, due to the lack of a permanent institutional framework, people can’t (re-)produce in a sustainable fashion actions that will respond to their individual needs and provide solutions to the collective problems of their place of residence. The aim is to create a framework that addresses or prevents social problems; or promotes the design of more sustainable/inclusive neighbourhoods; and enhances an ecological understanding which focuses on an overarching view of neighbourhood needs and desires (Chatzinakos, 2016; Aronson et al., 2007; Nelson & Baldwin, 2002). To this end, to what extent can neighbourhood initiatives present an alternative way of cities’ management and citizens’ participation in the midst of a more-than-financial crisis?

Keywords: Urban experiments; place-making; new politics of place; liminal cultures; critical event studies; action-research

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5. Karolos Kavoulakos, ‘The alterity of Social Solidarity Economy and the role of social movements’

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One of the main questions in the theoretical discussion on Social Solidarity Economy (SSE) is whether such economic practices could challenge the domination of capitalism. Two completely opposite views could be recognized in this discussion. On the one hand, structuralist approaches tend to understand SSE ventures as a part of the system. According to these approaches SSE ventures are not only unable to threaten capitalism (Amin, Cameron and Hudson 2003), but it is also possible that they offer support to the system absorbing discontent against capitalism. On the other hand, there are optimistic post-structuralist and postmodern approaches (Gibson-Graham 2006), which refuse to regard the dominance of capitalist economic forms as given and argue that the final outcome is open.

The alterity approach of SSE is located between the above mentioned two poles. For this approach, SSE is a potential threat to capitalism but at the same time raises questions regarding the degree of differentiation of SSE ventures from the dominant capitalist model. This paper will present the categories of alterity as they have been formulated in the literature (Fuller & Jonas 200, Jonas 2010, Lee 2010) and investigates the alterity of alternative exchange networks (alternative currencies, time banks and barter systems) that emerged in Greece the last decade. Case studies are based on an empirical research that was implemented in three stages with the

usage of different methodologies (discourse analysis of the published texts of the networks, questionnaires of active members of one network, and interviews with organizers of 6 time banks).

The research concludes that the alterity of alternative exchange networks under investigation is diverse, contradictory, dynamic and context depended. Their discourse and practices are radical, but almost none of them has features that belong to only one of the categories of alterity. The identity of the members of the networks is contradictory. Elements of the dominant discourse are mixed with radical or moderate reformist elements. The identity of the members of the networks and the differentiation of each network from the dominant model is dynamic and to some degree depends on the relation of the networks to the broader social and political environment. Alternative networks are not protected islands of autonomy within a general heteronomy. Maintaining their radicality depends to a certain extent on the relationship of alternative networks to social movements. The coexistence of ‘claims against the existing’ and the ‘creation of alternatives’ raises the possibility of maintaining radicality.

SESSION 2: THE GOVERNANCE OF THE COMMONS

6. Silke Helfrich, (1) ‘Commoning: Towards a Deeper Understanding of the Commons’

Co-Founder of Commons Strategies Group and Commons Institut e.V.

The notion of the Commons plays an increasingly important role in social and scientific debate, but there is little theoretical work on the social processes associated with creating a commons. Due to a widespread market-state biased framework on the one hand, and to the prevailing ‘methodological individualism’ on the other, **commoning is undertheorized**. The problem is, that it is impossible to understand the commons without understanding the multidimensional and open-ended social process of commoning. Conceptualizing it will help making evident that the scope of the commons is far beyond the management of collective resources.

As a contribution to this conceptualization, I will argue, that commoning presupposes an ontological shift, is unique in every instance (and therefore can't be modelled), sets situation specific limits, honours the role of caring for each other and for life, has the potential to foster a responsible stewardship of nature, requires emotional labour, cultivates an ethic of pluralism, yields social and legal innovation and offers a safe zone protected from capitalism. I will conclude, that the physical resources, our subjective sense of belonging to a community and thinking and feeling like commoners, our specific social practices, ethical norms, traditions, and so forth (commoning) – form an integrated whole. Thus, the Linebaughian concept – ‘There is no commons without commoning’ – can be taken a step further: there is no commoning without the commons or common pool resources. Nor is there community (or a peer network) without commoning. None of these aspects of a commons - collective resources, commoning, and the constant becoming of a commoner - precedes the other. They emerge from each other and enter the world at the same time.

(2) Dynamics of Self-Governance in Commons: Governing Internal Relations

With CSG colleague David Bollier, we are about to elaborate a framework that helps us to develop a commons vocabulary based on a relational ontology. This framework is based on the

assumption that everything can (doesn't have to) be conceptualized and enacted as a commons. Such a framework is necessarily imperfect and incomplete, if only because the realities of the human condition ultimately elude full systemization and analysis. Despite this fact, we claim, that it will allow us to see the commons through a different lens than that of a calculative rationality and a dichotomized field of categories.

The framework contains four sections:

- At the social level: The Core Dimensions of Commoning (see 1)
- At the economic level: Provisioning through Commons
- At the governance level: Dynamics of Self-Governance in Commons, which is subdivided in: Governing Internal Relations and Governing External Relations
- At the ontological level: the categories, metaphors and epistemological premises.

Each section consists of a list of basic patterns, that is, features that we can find in commons over and over again that vary widely and do not assert universal, ahistorical principles of commons. In my contribution I will introduce, conceptualize, exemplify and problematize the governance patterns with a focus on external relations we have found so far. The read as follows:

- Beat the Bounds (dealing with limits)
- Emulate & Then Federate (dealing with scale)
- Create Polycentric Democracies (dealing with conflict and democracy theory)
- Accept State Oversight & Support as Needed (addressing the relationship commons-state)

A quick overview about the patterns of internal governance can be added.

7. Paolo Dini, 'The Epistemology of Structural Meta-Politics in the Context of Sardex as a Laboratory of Institutional Learning'

Associate Professorial Research Fellow London School of Economics and Political Science

This paper explores the electronic, B2B Sardex mutual credit system established on the island of Sardinia in 2009 and currently counting 3500 members, with a 2016 transaction volume of 67m credits (1 credit = 1 Euro). The paper's motivation is to discuss the Sardex governance process from

two opposing perspectives on socio-economic action. On the one hand, it studies the conditions of trade of the circuit under which individual action may become collective political action. The setting of conditions is effected by the central credit-clearing company, Sardex S.p.A., in some cases as a reflection of conditions imposed by the state. Therefore, it is a structural, top-down part of this process. On the other hand, the paper also studies the formation of Sardex as an institution through a bottom-up social constructivist lens. In both cases, a learning process is at work, hence the emphasis on epistemology.

'The political' concerns the deliberate, i.e. conscious, choice to organise or form social relations. 'Structural' refers to the conditions under which socio-economic action can become political. In

this context, ‘epistemology’ refers to the process through which we become aware of the political meaning of our actions, with potential engendering of a commitment to individual participation in a collective endeavour. Meaning and knowledge are social constructs, and as such they are culturally-dependent.

‘Meta-politics’, therefore, refers to the explicit choices made in the process of creating such conditions in a given cultural context. The process through which the group of meta-political decision-makers is transitioning from the five Sardex founders to an assembly representing all circuit members is an important aspect of ‘institutional learning’. The political, organisational, and economic decisions are mirrored by the architecture of the transactional platform and by the process through which it is created. As part of the INTERLACE EU project Sardex S.p.A. is developing an open source, blockchain-based transactional platform for the mutual credit system. Therefore, INTERLACE overlaps with HETEROPOLITICS insofar as technological architecture can embody political and, more specifically, governance choices. In addition to socio-economic action, which is the main focus, the paper also begins to look at the commons-based vs. capital-based characteristics of Sardex, which provides a useful discriminant for the interpretation of the political choices based on the different kinds of action. For example, the paper will discuss rules of behaviour of the circuit members, many of which can be formalised within the transactional platform itself. These include meritocratic incentives to encourage trading behaviour that is beneficial to the circuit (oscillating many times per year from maximum to minimum balance, not staying still at maximum positive or maximum negative balances, etc.) and the establishment of a resilience fund to handle bankruptcies or the chronic free-riding that leads to expulsion from the circuit, etc. A communication strategy for explaining to the circuit members how the governance framework is being defined and for gathering their online feedback as the process unfolds is also an important part of the research and will form its empirical basis.

8. Dimitris Dalakoglou, ‘Infrastructures, Commons and Anthropology’

Professor of Social Anthropology, Vrije University Amsterdam

An infrastructural gap (IG) emerged after the outbreak of the crisis in 2008 and it refers to the difficulty of the state and the private sector in sustaining the level of infrastructural networks in the Western world. Yet, infrastructures comprise the realm where the state or the market materialize a great proportion of the social contract. Citizens therefore often experience IG as a challenge of the entire political paradigm. Nevertheless, as research in the country that is at the center of the current euro-crisis—Greece—records, we have novel and innovative forms of civil activity focused on the IG. Such activity, applying principles of self-organization and peer-to-peer relationships, along with practices of social solidarity and ideals of commons, attempts to address IG in innovative ways. However, such practices call for theoretical and empirical innovations as well, in order to overcome the social sciences’ traditional understandings of infrastructures. This paper seeks to initiate a framework for understanding this shift in the paradigm of infrastructures’ governance and function, along with the newly emerging infrastructural turn in socio-cultural anthropology.

WORKSHOP

9. Alekos Pantazis, ‘How to talk about the commons transition in non-expert audiences?’

Research fellow, P2P Lab, email: pantazis.al@gmail.com

Workshop Description

We often find it difficult to explain -even within social movements- what commons stands for and what the process of commoning is about. What does the principle of the commons imply in terms of the co-participation in decision-making, of resource allocation or of political issues of inclusion/ exclusion? This workshop, based on non-formal education, hacks the rules of an old game to talk about the basic concepts of commoning through experiential learning techniques for the benefit of social movements. To introduce the commons to a general audience, we propose the use of the workshop of the musical chairs game. A commons-oriented musical chairs game is the reverse of the classical capitalist musical chairs game (collaborative and community-driven vs competitive and individualistic). In the context of the former, the community is challenged to find inclusive solutions instead of pushing players out of the game and to collectively manage its resources instead of wasting them. While in the dominant form of the game, each year has less environmental ‘chairs’ and less humane ‘chairs’, commoning is a vibrant activity for the deployment of a new type of game that treats ‘chairs’ as a common good. How does a commons-oriented musical chairs game changes participant’s interpersonal relationships and what regulations can a community find to manage its common resources? With the help of two facilitators, participants will think, act, play and then reflect on the dynamics developed under different variations of the game. Direct observation and instant video recording will be used.

SESSION 3: COMMONS, STATE AND THE MARKET

10. Alexandros Pazaitis

Junior Research Fellow, Ragnar Nurkse Department of Innovation and Governance

Research Fellow, P2P Lab

(Full paper follows in Section 2)

11. Vassilis Niaros, ‘A New Model of Production for a Commons-oriented Economy: An Action Research Project in Tzoumerka’

Research Coordinator at P2P Foundation; Research Fellow at P2P Lab.

This presentation discusses emerging theory and case studies in the development of a new economic model. The model is called ‘design global, manufacture local,’ and describes the development of an open design to localized manufacturing process. We argue it represents a fundamental shift in the economic production paradigm. The main question this presentation

addresses is: What is the importance of commons, municipal politics and civic engagement for thinking and promoting socio-political transformation around the commons? We will begin by describing the model and by providing emerging theory. The presentation then moves on to two case studies, *FarmHack* and *L'Atelier Paysan*, both examples in the domain of agriculture. Through the lenses of an action research project to be held in Greece, we consider strategic pathways for supporting this avenue for human development.

12. George Papanikolaou, 'How to promote a commons transition through public policy?'

Lecturer, Harokopio University of Athens, P2P Foundation

This presentation will tentatively address three questions in relation to a commons transition and the state: first, how to bring together and to coordinate dispersed, small-scale commons-oriented initiatives and relate to established social systems and power relations in the market and the state? Second, how can we transfigure the state with its bureaucratic and sovereign rationality in order to make it 'think like a commoner'? Third, how is it possible to re-arrange the balance of power and to reign in central state governments so as to afford enough space for an effective self-governance and economy of the commons in our times?

SESSION 4: COMMONS THEORY & GENDER

13. Irimi Sotiropoulou, 'Commons and private property as a patriarchal trap'

Independent Researcher

The paper investigates the concept of commons as a western European patriarchal term constructed in antithesis to private property following the historical material conditions formed during the advance of capitalism.

I use feminist theory to understand how commons have taken over the demand for collective arrangements in late capitalism concerning both natural ecosystems and human societies. The paper examines commons in comparison to private property and its understandings within a framework where patriarchy is investigated as an economic system and capitalism is a form of patriarchy. I also examine how commons became prominent in the political discourse, exactly at the time of multi-layered changes in private property regimes under neoliberal policies.

The focus on the commons has reduced the interest in the critique of private property and in its abolition as an anti-capitalist anti-patriarchal claim of communities and social movements. Quite the opposite: Commons are a form of property and the logic of property seems to expand to the discourse about the alternatives to private property.

In other words, commons and private property are constructed in late capitalism as one more patriarchal binary of propertied 'things.' Moreover, the commons are thought of as the 'left-overs' of private property. This perception leads to prioritising private property demands and having the commoners follow the agenda of the privatisers instead of setting a non-property agenda.

It seems that the commons, as constructed till the moment, bear this acceptance of private property as the main political economic institution to define arrangements of access and control over means of production. They also represent the social understanding that property is the only way to institutionally understand our relationship to the world. The paper contributes to the commons

debate by showing that the patriarchal construction of the commons keeps them tied to private property sustaining the latter and degrading the potential of the former for social change.

Keywords: commons, patriarchy, private property, means of production, nature.

14. Giota Bampatzimopoulou, ‘Gendered Entwinements and Significations: towards an intersectional theory of the commons?’

PhD Candidate, Department of Political Sciences, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Scholar of the General Secretariat for Research and Technology (GSRT) and the Hellenic Foundation for Research and Innovation (HFRI), since August 2017

This paper combines two different feminist threads of thought, that of Silvia Federici and Judith Butler, in an effort to effectively address the need for an enriched and up-to-date articulation of the commons’ discourses. My aim is to contribute to the ongoing discussion around the subject of the commoning (the ‘commoner’) and its gendered perspectives. But, most importantly, I intend to point out that taking these factors into more serious account may lead towards an intersectional politics of the commons.

The theories of the commons highlight alternative systems or “spaces”, collectively organized by individuals who form autonomous communities. In these spaces, as struggles emerge, a new ethical or value framework (of defending and reproducing all the necessary resources) is being articulated every day. In my opinion, despite the fact that the commons’ discourses have attracted more attention in the literature, the subject in most of these discourses is being represented in a deficient manner. The commoner is usually being depicted as a non-gendered, universal, abstract subject, thus confirming an androcentric humanism that silences the (gender) difference.

On the contrary, Federici’s work certainly goes a long way further. She poses the category of gender at the centre of her analysis of the commons, by highlighting the importance of social reproduction and domestic work, as integral parts of the capitalist division of labour and class struggle. However, although the dynamic of her critique is incontestable, I will try to show that her subject -the ‘woman’- seems to be situated in a certain pre-defined position as well.

But if the commons give us the opportunity to imagine and realize certain alternatives beyond the bipolar division of the state and the market, then should not the subject who performs these alternatives be conceived beyond the established male/female dipole, too? In an attempt to further broaden our view of the commoner, I will briefly focus on the work of Judith Butler.

Butler deconstructs the gender binary and the logic of identity politics which imposes the pre-existence of identity, in a way that certain groups’ interests are being negotiated and formed, while political action is taking place. For Butler, identity should be conceived as an outcome. My aim is to show how Butler’s critique on identity politics, along with her work on gender deconstruction and performativity, can be of use to our theories and discourses of the commons, towards the adoption of more intersectional approaches and practices.

By putting emphasis on the instability, imperfection, complexity and multiplicity of the subject, we can surely enrich the commons’ discourses. In addition to that, perhaps we can even multiply the possibilities for a real ‘upheaval’: namely to act far beyond the limits of a solely economic or

class conflict and to step up for the creation of intersectional ‘safe-spaces’, that will constitute fields of struggle and points of departure for the enforcement of the commons altogether.

15. Rosa Barotsi, ‘The daughter as crisis/Daughters of the crisis: Women and contemporary Greek visual media’

Post-doc researcher, ICI Berlin Institute for Cultural Inquiry

Recent Greek fiction films have been celebrated, mostly abroad, for speaking to the socio-political situation in Greece. The crisis has put a spotlight on local cinematic production, so that films such as *Dogtooth*, *Attenberg*, *Alps*, *The sentimentalists*, *Standing aside*, *Watching*, *Miss Violence*, have been garnering attention and awards in the international festival circuit. These films have been discussed as being most often preoccupied with the family unit, both as a symptom and an allegory for society or an entire people. Whilst very often prominent or protagonistic, the female characters are almost always presented as either victims, stand-ins for a collective suffering; or as ‘active accomplices without agency’ (Kazakopoulou 2016). Whilst many of these films can make claims to giving space to women on screen, female characters very often serve merely to reaffirm the stereotypes that they might see themselves as fighting against. As these women bear the brunt of the suffering, both in real and allegorical households, their value seems to stem predominantly from their status as innocent victims unwilling or unable to fight back convincingly.

My contention is that Greek fiction films produced during the austerity years have not only fallen short of representing the collective subjects who have been pivotal in resisting, persisting, and organising, but they have failed to represent the collective subject at all, save in its embodied, individualised and sexist figure of the victimised daughter. In my presentation, I would like to juxtapose this picture with that of the flourishing world of Greek bottom-up documentary productions doing the work of reframing the narratives of crisis and documenting the struggles of community organising, as collected in the digital archive #greekdocs. Following Silvia Federici, I insist that Greek fiction films of the austerity years, whilst bringing (young) women to the center of the screen, do so by reaffirming that part of our collective consciousness in which ‘women have been designated as men’s common’ (Federici 2011), contrarily to the work done in recent guerilla documentaries that engage ‘commoning’ and struggling for justice, both in terms of mode of production and choice of subject matter.

SESSION 5: THE POLITICAL IN THE COMMONS AND STRATEGIES FOR SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

16. Alexandros Kioupkiolis, ‘The lack of the political in the commons and a post-hegemonic strategy of social transformation’

PI, Assistant Professor in Contemporary Political Theory, School of Political Sciences, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki

A central argument of *Heteropolitics* is that in the distinct currents of thought and research on the commons we encounter a certain ‘lack of the political’ gaping in their midst. Existing theories of the commons have not yet adequately tackled political issues of inclusion/exclusion, complexity, scale, clashes of interest and ideology among larger groups. Crucially, they have not sufficiently

dealt with the challenges facing the construction of a broader sector of alternative formations of community, governance and economy: how to bring together and to coordinate dispersed, small-scale civic initiatives, and how to relate to established social systems and power relations in the market and the state.

Heteropolitics makes the case that a ‘post-hegemonic’ strategy of coalition-making and collective struggle can help to address these political challenges for the expansion of the commons. ‘Post-hegemony’ is a critical notion introduced by theorists who take issue with the modern politics of hierarchical organization, representation, unification, the state and ideology: the politics of ‘hegemony’ according to A. Gramsci and E. Laclau. Post-hegemonic thinkers tend to celebrate, by contrast, contemporary social movements which appear to be horizontal, leaderless, participatory, diverse, networked and opposed to the state, global capitalism and ideological closures. The argument seeks to demonstrate that diverse figures of contemporary activism in the last two decades are indeed post-hegemonic in the sense of the prefix ‘post-’ which implies an impure, ongoing development. Constitutive elements of hegemonic politics, such as representation, concentration of power and unification, are indeed endemic to ‘horizontal’ networks and other instances of anti-hierarchical self-organization. But we then proceed to show how contemporary movements and civic initiatives transfigure the political logics of hegemony in distinct ways, opening up representation, leadership and unity to plurality and the common, outlining thus a post-hegemonic strategy of change for the commons.

17. Theodoris Karyotis, ‘Within, against and beyond the market: challenges of the commons as an antagonistic force’

Independent Researcher & Translator

The commons is a contested concept around which different schools of thought have developed. Each current of thought facilitates or precludes different political practices. E. Ostrom’s theory is of great political significance, since it offers arguments in favour of collective self-management; however, its search for ‘endogenous’ causes of success or failure of the commons prevents it from articulating a substantial critique of the dominant institutions within which they appear, i.e. the state and the market. Conversely, for autonomist Marxists, the commons are always embedded in communities of struggle, antagonistic to the permanent process of enclosure promoted by the state and the market. However, by defending ‘pure’ commons against the ‘distorted’ commons, they underestimate the ability of commons movements to confront the above institutions and challenge their logic. This presentation puts forward that in capitalist societies, where the market is the dominant mechanism of social reproduction, all commons are, inevitably, ‘hybrid’ or ‘transitional’ forms. A form of ‘structural coupling’ is necessary that allows for the coexistence –in an antagonistic relationship– of these two value creation systems, if the commons are to take root in a world dominated by capital.

18. Vaggelis Papadimitropoulos, ‘The Politics of the Commons: Reform or Revolt?’

Researcher, University of Crete, Greece

In this presentation I demonstrate a critical overview of the contemporary political theories of the Commons, classified in three main categories: 1) the liberal 2) the reformist and 3) the anti-

capitalist. Advocates of the liberal theory of the Commons take a stand in favour of the coexistence of the Commons with the state and the market. The reformists argue for the gradual adjustment of capitalism to the Commons with the aid of a partner state, while the anti-capitalists contrast both liberals and reformists by supporting the development of the commons against and beyond capitalism. I make the case that both liberal and anti-capitalist theorists miss the likelihood of technology rendering large-scale production redundant in the future, thus forcing capitalism to adjust to the Commons in the long run. The prospect, therefore, of an open cooperativism, introduced by the reformist theory, holds significant potential with respect to the future development of the Commons. For the Commons to expand and flourish, however, a global institutional reform, based on a number of trans-local and transnational principles, is sine qua non. Hence, transparency of information, distribution of value, solidarity and bottom-up self-management are the core variables of individual and collective autonomy inasmuch as they permit a community or group to formulate its values in relation to the needs and skills of its members.

SESSION 6: URBAN COMMONS, MUNICIPAL POLITICS AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT IN THE CITY

19. Christian Iaione, ‘The right to pooling in the city’

Associate professor of public law at Guglielmo Marconi University of Rome

Public law scholars¹ highlighted that the renaissance of cities and their growing importance² in the context of re-configuration of the Nation-State³ is an important historical phenomenon. In order to enrich the understanding about the process of transformation in which urban law finds itself, legal scholars need to start from the observation of concrete realities of cities,⁴ where urbanization is shaping what Eric Biber terms law in the Anthropocene.⁵ Academic contributions that identify an ‘urban paradigm’ are plural and diversified: the knowledge-based city, envisioning the city as a marketplace, the tech-based city envisioning the city as a platform, the nature-based city envisioning the city as an environment. A large body of literature related to the city has been developed to reflect on the vision of the city from an environmental standpoint, broadly speaking the eco-city approach (considering how cities can achieve a better environment through the reduction in pollution and waste generation)⁶ and the city as an ecological space,⁷ (conceiving the

¹ Jean Bernard Auby, *The Role of law in the legal status and powers of cities*, 5, *IT. J. PUB. L.*, 2 302, 305 (2013). See also Nestor Davidson, *What is urban law today?* 40 *FORDHAM URB. L. J.* 1579 (2013).

² BENJAMIN BARBER, *IF MAYORS RULED THE WORLD* (Yale University Press, 2013). See also I- M. Porras, *The city and international law: in pursuit of sustainable development*, 36 *FORDHAM URB. L. J.* 537, 538 (2009).

³ Khanna has stated that we are moving into an era where cities will matter more than states Parag Khanna, *Connectography: Mapping the future of globalization* 6 (2016). See also Patrick Les Galés and DESMOND KING, *RECONFIGURING EUROPEAN STATES IN CRISIS*, (Oxford University Press, 2017).

⁴ Jean B. Auby, *The role of law in the legal status and power of cities. Droit de la ville. An introduction* Italian 5 *J. PUB. L.* 302 (2013).

⁵ Eric Biber, *Law in the Anthropocene epoch*, UC BERKELEY PUBLIC LAW RESEARCH PAPER No. 2834037 (2016).

⁶ E. Rapoport, *Utopian Visions and Real Estate Dreams: The Eco-city Past, Present and Future* 8, *GEOGRAPHY COMPASS*, 137 (2014). See also E.J. Junior and M. M. Edward, *How Possible is Sustainable Urban Development?*

city as an ecosystem where the biophysical, social economic factors interact). This study is an effort to discuss the argument that main current paradigms lack a rights-based⁸ approach and that in order to build a comprehensive paradigm one needs to reconceive the city as a commons,⁹ or co-city.¹⁰

The concept of the Co-City situates the city as a platform for sharing and collaboration, participatory decision-making and peer-to-peer production, supported by open data and guided by principles of distributive justice. A Co-City is based on urban shared, collaborative, polycentric governance of a variety of urban resources. These include environmental, cultural, knowledge and digital goods which are co-managed through contractual or institutionalized public-private-community partnerships. Collaborative, polycentric urban governance involves different forms of resource pooling and cooperation between five possible actors—social innovators (i.e. active citizens, city makers,¹¹ digital collaboratives, urban regenerators, community gardeners, etc.), local public authorities, businesses,¹² civil society organizations, and knowledge institutions (i.e. schools, universities, cultural institutions, museums, academies, etc.). These partnerships give birth to local peer-to-peer experimental, physical, digital and institutional platforms with three main aims: fostering social innovation in urban welfare provision, spurring collaborative economies as a driver of local economic development, promoting inclusive urban development and regeneration.

The struggle of conventional law in managing the commons can be best understood if one examines how much commons are grounded and rooted in social practices and social relations,¹³ while also acknowledging that the issue of legal rights in the commons is still crucial, in particular with reference to equality concerns.¹⁴ Moreover, scholars refer to ‘commoning’ as a powerful dynamic process (which also applies in the urban context) to create social value and relation.¹⁵

An Analysis of Planners’ Perceptions about New Urbanism, Smart Growth and the Ecological City, 25 *PLANNING PRAC. & RES.*, 417, 419 (2010).

⁷S. Foster, The city as an ecological space: social capital and land use, 82 *NOTRE DAME L. REV.* 527 (2006-2007). See also J. Evans Resilience, ecology and adaptation in the experimental city, 36 *TRANS. INST. BR. GEOGR. NS.* 223, 227 (2011).

⁸H. Lefebvre, The Right to City, in *WRITINGS ON CITIES* 147 (Elenore Kofman & Elizabeth Lebas eds., trans., 1968). See also N. Brenner and C. Schmidt, The urban age in question, 38.3 *INT’L J. URB. REG. RES.* 731, 750 (2014).

⁹S. Foster and C. Iaione, The city as a commons, 34 *YALE L. & POL’Y REV.* 81 (2016). See also S. Foster, Urban Commons and collective action, 87 *NOTRE DAME L. REV.* 57, 60 (2011).

¹⁰C. Iaione, The Co-city, *THE AMERICAN JOURNAL OF ECONOMICS AND SOCIOLOGY*, (2016).

¹¹C. Iaione, The tragedy of urban roads. Calling on citizens to combat climate change, *FORDHAM URB. L.J.* (2009).

¹²Christian Iaione Local Public Entrepreneurship and Judicial Intervention in a Euro-American and Global Perspective 7 *WASH. U. GLOBAL STUD. L. REV.* 215 (2008).

¹³Étienne Le Roy, How I Have Been Conducting Research on the Commons for Thirty Years Without Knowing It, in *DAVID BOLLIER AND SILKE HELFRICH, PATTERNS OF COMMONING* (The Commons Strategies Group, 2015).

¹⁴Antoine Dolcerocca and Benjamin Coriat, Commons and the Public Domain: A Review Article and a Tentative Research Agend, 48 *REV. RADICAL POLITICAL ECON* 127– 139 (2016).

¹⁵DAVID BOLLIER AND SILKE HELFRICH AND HEINRICH BOLL FOUNDATION, *PATTERNS OF COMMONING*, published by the Common Strategies Group, (2015).

Yochai Benkler importantly has highlighted the opportunities provided by peer production as the emergence of a new form of economic production.¹⁶ A pragmatic perspective is further proposed by the legal anthropologist Etienne Le Roy, who states that ‘law is not so much what the texts say, but rather what the actors do with it.’¹⁷

This paper elaborates on the idea of the co-city as an infrastructure that enables collaboration by embedding ‘urban pooling’¹⁸ in the body of urban law and policies.

20. Charalampos Tsavdaroglou, Stasis: The Catalyst for the Circulation of Common Space. Protest camps in Athens, Istanbul and Idomeni’

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During the last years, the discussion on commons and new enclosures revolves mainly around Marxist approaches that focus on ‘accumulation by dispossession’ (Harvey, 2005) and conceptualize urban commons as a new version of the ‘right to the city’ (Mayer, 2009). At the same time, during the current rising tide of urban revolts, the protestors do not just claim back the urban space from the sovereign power, but they occupy and tend to transform it into common spaces. At this point a crucial question emerges: how can the spaces of commons circulate and go beyond class, patriarchal, racial and other power relations?

In order to establish my view I follow several critical scholars analyses (De Angelis, 2017; Caffentzis, 2010; Federici, 2011), who propose that conceptualizing the commons involves three things at the same time: common pool resource, commoning and community. Thus, the commons are not only physical, material or immaterial resources, they don’t exist per se, but they are constituted through the social process of commoning. In order to examine and deepen the notion of commoning I am inspired by the discussion on ‘stasis.’ In the last years, several scholars (Butler and Athanasiou, 2013; Douzinas, 2013; Tsilimpounidi, 2016) adopt the Greek ancient notion of stasis in order to explain social movements. Indeed, stasis is the process by which people stand, reflect upon themselves, recognize their strengths, contest and take position. On the other hand, the suppression of stasis can be understood as the response of systems of domination to the social emancipatory commoning. In this theoretical framework, I propose stasis as the catalyst for the circulation of commons.

Based on the above theoretical context this paper explores the role of the physical, social and symbolic meanings of stasis in the processes of setting up the common space. In particular, this is examined in the protest camps in the Indignados movement in Syntagma square in Athens (2011), in the Gezi park occupation in Istanbul (2013) and in the refugees’ makeshift settlement of Idomeni on the Greek-Macedonia borders (2016). Through the above cases, the main finding is

¹⁶ YOCHAI BENKLER, THE WEALTH OF NETWORKS. HOW SOCIAL PRODUCTION TRANSFORM MARKETS AND FREEDOM, (Yale University Press 2006).

¹⁷ Étienne Le Roy, How I Have Been Conducting Research on the Commons for Thirty Years Without Knowing It, in DAVID BOLLIER AND SILKE HELFRICH, PATTERNS OF COMMONING (The Commons Strategies Group, 2015).

¹⁸ Christian Iaione and Elena De Nictolis, Urban Pooling, (forthcoming in Fordham Urban Law Review 2017).

that the protestors, through stasis, are transformed into an unpredictable and misfit multitude that produces and circulates unique and porous common spaces, spaces in movement and threshold spaces.

21. Giuseppe Micciarelli, ‘Introduction to urban and collective civic use: the “direct management” of urban emerging commons in Naples’

Postdoc researcher, University of Salerno - political philosophy and philosophy of law

(Extended abstract follows in Section 2)

22. Marcus Kip, ‘Making Architecture Common. Heritage and the Articulation of Difference’

Post-Doc Researcher, Technische Universität Darmstadt

This presentation highlights the multi-dimensional character of an urban commons: the built environment. The possibility of using architecture in several ways and the various meanings that can be attached to buildings may complicate the process of making architecture common. At worst, the different usages and meanings may be contradictory, such that groups of commoners will enter into conflict. At the level of theory, I show how such a constellation challenges Elinor Ostrom's selection of case studies of common-pool resources from which she derives her well-known design principles. Urban commons require us to think commons in more contentious ways. Three case studies from an incipient research project on postwar modernist urban squares will be discussed. To explain the different histories of these squares, from complete redevelopment to preservation, I propose to look at the ways that commoning efforts were made hegemonic through particular alliances with state and market actors.

SESSION 7: DIGITAL COMMONS, MODES OF COOPERATION AND COLLABORATIVE COMMUNITIES

23. Petros Petridis, ‘Sharing, fan labor and the logic of control in P2P networks and Massively Multiplayer Online Games’

Post-Doc Researcher, University of Thessaly

This paper examines different aspects of the practices of sharing, peer ‘produsage’ and control of intellectual property in two technosocialities (Peer to Peer file sharing networks and Massively Multiplayer Online Game communities). Specifically, it focuses on three main issues that emerge through the practice of file sharing and peer cultural ‘produsage’ in the context of the aforementioned technosocialities. Firstly, it seeks to illuminate how participants in file sharing networks and MMOG communities produce knowledge, technological artifacts and open/free cultural works (applications, music, machinima, maps, images etc.), through the appropriation of copyrighted content and the performance of creative tasks. Secondly, it suggests that the practice of sharing can be manifested both as a kind of gift-giving, as well as a new form of free digital labor. Finally, it seeks to criticize the ‘rhetorics of freedom’ that are based on the dialectic between openness and closeness, by revealing the logic of control (mainly with respect to

intellectual property issues) both in closed, hierarchical and vertical technosocial systems, as well as in open, heterarchical and horizontal ones.

24. Natalia - Rozalia Avlona, ‘Digital commons and critical practices in hybrid spaces: the communities of Sarantaporo.gr and Exarcheia Net’

Lawyer / PhD Researcher @ Heteropolitics Research Programme, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki

SESSION 8: TOWARDS A METHODOLOGY OF THE COMMONS

25. Yiannis Pechtelidis, Commoning Education in Contemporary Greece’

Assistant Professor in the Sociology of Education, in the Department of Early Childhood Education, at the University of Thessaly

Yannis Pechtelidis explores an alternative option in education, pedagogy, and children’s participation in public life in contemporary, crisis-ridden Greece. He describes the everyday life of a public elementary school and a pedagogical community run by its members. In light of the new commons theory, he argues that both schools are underpinned by the commons heteropolitical ethics and logic, despite their differences. Particularly, they share a common resource, education. The ‘common’ is interpreted here as a heteropolitical process of ‘commoning’ education.

The author critically discusses the embodied subjective features and the rules that are crafted within these heteropolitical sites. He focusses especially on the intergenerational production of a hetero-political habitus of the commons within these specific pedagogical and educational groups. Moreover, he critically reflects upon the conflictual tensions running through the commons, the market and the state.

26. Aimilia Voulvouli, ‘Ethnography and the Commons: A few notes before the field’

Post-Doc Researcher, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Heteropolitics Research Project

There is a difference between what people say they do and what they actually do, wrote Malinowski in his seminal ‘Argonauts of the Western Pacific’ book in an attempt to describe his understandings of Trobrianders ‘sociologically’ - as he wrote - distinguishing them from the native ones. There is an analogy between what Malinowski had described and the task of Heteropolitics to bridge the political theory of the commons and ethnography, in an effort to grasp the complexity of commoning. In this framework, an ethnography of the commons should involve, on the one hand, the study of systems of knowledge embedded in commoning practices in order to understand, as Clifford Geertz suggested, how the lives of people are led when they are centred around particular pedagogical or creative activities, such as – according to ethnographers of the subject - commoning and, on the other hand, to study how the ethnographer’s participation in this system produces new collective knowledge and may form the basis of new political action.

27. Alexandros Papageorgiou, ‘Researching knowledge transfer processes in contemporary models of commoning’

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*The slides of this presentation are available here: <http://heteropolitics.net/>

The contemporary economic crisis brought Greece to the center of attention and gave prominence to the failures and deficiencies of the Greek state and the political system in general. As a result, numerous alliances and groupings have emerged, such as the Commons Alliance (<https://commons.gr/>) and the Hub for Social Economy, Empowerment and Innovation (<http://komvoshub.org/>) that propel the concept and practice of the commons, toward the development of viable alternatives for sustainable living and socio-political transformation. In this context, researchers and activists from abroad are increasingly present, joining collective efforts that foster the sharing of resources and knowledge among different initiatives, through meetings, workshops, assemblies, conferences and festivals. NetHood is such an organization based in Zurich, which participates in knowledge exchange and sharing processes around two key resources: housing and network infrastructures. More specifically, through the Horizon2020 project MAZI (<http://mazizone.eu>) and netCommons (<http://netcommons.eu>), NetHood is in close contact with remarkable success stories on cooperative housing in Zurich (<http://o500.org>) and community networks in Catalonia (<http://guifi.net>) and Germany (<http://freifunk.net>), among others. With the additional support of the Heteropolitics project, NetHood is in a unique position to collaborate with Alexandros Papageorgiou, a PhD candidate at the University of Thessaly, who decided to develop his thesis titled ‘Collaborative networks in Athens today: new possibilities of coexistence through inter-local knowledge transfer’ as an active member of NetHood.

More specifically, Papageorgiou is both an engaged actor (through NetHood) and a researcher (through the University of Thessaly) on two related projects that have been recently initiated in Athens with the participation of NetHood: 1) Co-Hab – a group of architects and urbanists with links to international networks of urban research and cooperative housing which promote research and practice on a cooperative housing project in Athens, through the participation in international conferences, visits with the purpose of knowledge exchange and the organization of workshops with committees of residents. 2) Exarheia Net – a wireless community network at the center of Athens that works in two directions: providing Internet connection to refugee housing projects, and establishing and supporting autonomous community wifi projects.

Both these initiatives try to promote the ownership and use of resources as commons and the creation of communities with minimum hierarchy that do not seek to make profit, but to produce resources and knowledge as commons, instead. Papageorgiou explores how the processes of knowledge transfer under study can contribute to answering research questions of the *Heteropolitics* project and thus to enriching political theory around the commons.

This paper also analyzes the selected methodological approach, and the inherent dilemmas and trade-offs resulting from the dual role of activist and researcher, which pose interesting challenges -ethical, practical and other-, but can reveal unique opportunities at the same time.

28. Christos Giannopoulos, 'The Alliance of the Commons Presentation'

Independent Researcher, Commons Alliance

Commons Alliance is a social alliance which combines politics with production. Our goal is to create a common, regular meeting point for people and collectives which deal with common goods and the social and solidarity economy, in order to strengthen existing ventures as well as to create new ones. Our intention is this meeting point to become a lasting social institution and a common domain of empowerment for active citizens, movements, and society. More information on the Alliance of the Commons is available on our website: <http://www.commonsg.org>.

SECTION 2

EXTENDED ABSTRACTS & PAPERS

SESSION 1: COMMONS AND SOLIDARITY ECONOMY: SOCIAL MOVEMENTS, ALTERNATIVE PRACTICES AND VISIONS

1. Christina Sakali, 'Commons of solidarity economy and alternative production: a typology of identities'

Introduction

As a result of an extremely unhelpful situation in Greece, due to a long-lasting economic crisis and recession, there has been a particular growth of a special part of the economy, which cares for the democratization of decision-making, equality of relations, and social well-being among participants. The flourishing of social solidarity economy (SSE) can be seen as the product of two separate but interconnected forces, namely an impulsive societal need to find answers or solutions to the multiple crises experienced, as well as the emergence of long-standing movements and communities exploring new models of economic, social and communal organization as alternatives to the mainstream hegemony of the market competitive economy (Utting et al., 2014; De Angelis, 2005, 2012, 2014; Gibson-Graham, 2008; Kawano, 2006; Sakali, 2015).

These two forces have united in the exploration and establishment of initiatives combining three broad elements:

- Economic relations based on solidarity and reciprocity,
- Production processes based on collective ownership and management of resources,
- Work organisation based on horizontal relations, equality and collective decision-making.

Consequently, an important process underpinning both the vision and the practice of solidarity economy and alternative processes of production has been the creation of commons. As a result, commons in the context of solidarity economy and alternative production can be seen as the means of production that are developed, used, managed and reproduced in common, or else as common resources managed through a collective and participatory process. They may refer to work relations, collective capital or equipment, space or facilities, ideas and know-how, distribution channels, common funds, tools, networks and processes, ecosystems of cooperation.

Approach

These alternative forms of economy and production pursue a variety of goals, priorities, structures and directions, resulting in a richly diverse and polymorphous field with varied identities. Consequently, to look at solidarity economy as a homogenous whole does not allow us to recognise the differentiations and to advance a more critical discussion in the field. Instead, we need the critical methodologies that would allow us to discern the diversity and to engage in a more critical discussion about the role and the nature of the solidarity economy and alternative production. A framework of commons would allow us to look more deeply into the social

relationships and political processes that can be found beneath the generalized term of solidarity economy. It can help us contemplate about issues of community, inclusivity, participation, ways of communication or the management and access to resources. For example, to define what we mean by community, what is the community around a common or a process of communing, how inclusive this community is, what are the resources required and developed and who has access to those resources. Respectively, issues of political processes, such as models of governance, processes and tools of decision-making, the nature of relations and equality, as well as power dynamics inherent in these processes. By contemplating about these, it is possible to achieve a reconnection of the economy with society and politics, aiming at democratization, decentralization and empowerment. If the purpose of solidarity economy is to foster an economy and a society which are more democratic and empowering to the many, a framework of commons can provide us with some answers or perhaps more importantly with the questions that should be posed, in order to make this possible. An approach of the commons can provide a more critical perspective which looks at the social and political aspects rather than focusing solely on economic aspects and performance. This means discovering the potential for social change.

Proposed methodology

This paper proposes an original critical methodology for the deconstruction of the generalised concept of solidarity economy, which is built around issues underpinning the organisation of the commons. Through this methodology, it is possible to create a typology of the varied identities of the field, and explore the potential/ or lack of, for social transformation. It is structured around the following issues or questions:

- The degree of transformation of social relations, either work relations among members of collectives, or economic relations among partners at different production stages (producers, suppliers, customers).
- The size and characteristics of the community that is being served, as well as the range of social needs that are being addressed.
- The kind and extent of alternative organization proposed, whether it refers to vertical organisation of production, or whether it refers to horizontal organisation within a sector, neighbourhood or area.
- The type of activities involved, whether they are linked to an enterprise, collective, community or wider social movement
- The relation with the dominant socio-economic paradigm as well as the kind and extent of political action, alliances and networks with each other or with the wider community.
- The model of governance, decision-making processes, the degree of meaningful participation and the power dynamics inherent in these processes.

Findings

For the exploration of the aforementioned issues, it is possible to construct three tables which reveal three facets of the identity of this field. The first two issues referring to relations as well as the community and its needs are presented in the first table and make up the social identity. The following two issues about the extent and the nature of the organization or the activities are shown in the second table, while the issues of governance and the relation with the dominant paradigm are presented in the third table representing the political identity. In the first table we see the

nature of relations between either members or among various partners, for example producers, suppliers and customers. These can be either hierarchical, based on an unequal power distribution and possible exploitation, or they can be horizontal, based on equality and reciprocity. The vertical axis represents the size and characteristics of community as well as the range of social needs that are being addressed. Here the distinction is between a restricted participation and a focus on serving the needs of their members and an open participation whereby more people are welcome to join and the focus is towards addressing the needs of the society. In each of the cells there are indicative examples of initiatives, which combine in each case a different mix of the two dimensions of the social identity.

The second table represents the organizational identity, which is summarized in the extent and the type of activities involved. In this case, we can have initiatives with either a specific focus or a wider range of activities, extending to more than one production stages, spaces and areas. Moreover, the type of activities observed may be either linked to a formal enterprise or they may refer to somehow more informal efforts, which have emerged as a result of wider movements and sustain thus close links with the communities around them.

Finally, the last table depicts the political identity as summarised in the model of governance and the relation with the dominant socio-economic paradigm. In this case, we can distinguish between cohabitation and challenge, based on whether there is a significant re-appropriation of relationships, practices and space from the capitalist forces as well as an engagement in political action to fight dominant practices. On the other hand, the model of governance can be based on either meaningful participation, inclusion, discussion and fermentation or on limited participation and information and unequal power distribution.

Conclusions

The methodology presented can be applied to individual initiatives or practices, different types of initiatives, categories, entire ecosystems, communities or movements. The construction of the tables and the analysis reveal that as we move to the bottom right of the tables, the possibility for the creation of commons and the potential for social transformation increases, through a wider participation and more integrated forms of organization, which combine social, organizational/economic and political dimensions. Collaborations, alliances and networks can also play a similar role. The more the collaboration deepens, the more possible it becomes for the commons to multiply and reproduce themselves. Culture, education, discussion and a critical perspective are important, because alliances require a common recognition of what commons involve, why they are important and how they can be achieved. Pluralism among initiatives is important, as is also discussion, fermentation and experimentation within them and collaboration among them. Since there is no initiative that has a definite answer or solution, pluralism is important in order to advance towards a society that is both more radical and democratic. A framework of the commons can enrich the study of solidarity economy and alternative production and provide a radical perspective on its conceptualisation and practice. Through the lens of the commons, the aim of solidarity economy and alternative production becomes the reappropriation of most practices, relationships and processes from the hegemony of the market, their retrieval by the communities which are being affected and involved.

In order to achieve this, we need to understand the commons as social and political processes that are communal and hence inherently dynamic, rather than as products or resources which remain

static once produced or used (Fournier, 2013). Communities, assemblies fermentation, ideas, trust and solidarity, are all part of the commoning process and may be regarded as significant common resources. This would mean that irrespective of the evolution of a movement or collective, processes and their products carry the potential to become a legacy for the creation of new forms of organization as commons, which is important for both their reproduction and further evolution (Sakali, 2016).

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2. George Chatzinakos, 'Urban Experiments in Times of Crisis: The Case of Svolou's Neighbourhood Initiative in Thessaloniki/Greece'

The topic of this paper is an ethnographic piece of action research concerned with an ongoing urban experiment (see Evans, Karvonen, & Raven, 2016) that takes place in the historical and commercial centre of Thessaloniki and critically engages with issues of community-building and place-making. By interrogating contemporary theoretical debates around human geography, sociology, cultural analysis and event management, the broad scope of this project is driven by the emerging roles of cities in global level (Barber, 2013). The research and the experiment to which it is attached is directly influenced by the 'new politics of place,' reevaluating the role of culture in urban regeneration (Amin, 2004; Oakley, 2015) and the right to the City (Harvey, 2012). It seeks to offer a wider insight into how a place might enhance its sense of community and identity, and it adds an activist perspective in the analysis of cultural participation. Through a combination of theoretical, methodological and socio-cultural perspectives, the long-term aim of the research is to investigate the extent to which bottom-up initiatives can present an alternative way to urban management and citizens' participation in the midst of a more-than-financial crisis.

The data presented here is auto-ethnographic (see Dashper, 2016) in its intention and thus reflects upon my own engagement with a 'bottom-up' neighbourhood initiative. In this respect, the data I present bears in mind the blurring of boundaries between the researcher and the researched, not least given the researcher is also an activist. The paper deals with an intervention that took place over four years and which aimed to promote the role of locality and its people, and their ability to deal with community problems and issues (Chatzinakos, 2016; Evans, 2015; Aronson, Wilson, & Akert, 2007; Nelson & Baldwin, 2002). In this context, the *locality* (a neighbourhood) is treated as a micro-sociological context in which a broader economic crisis is played out.

Svolou's Neighbourhood Initiative was founded in 2013. It was a period where the financial crisis had begun to unfold rapidly in Greek cities, not only on a retail level but as something experienced materially and sensorially in everyday encounters. As a response to this stagnation, a highly diverse group of locals, comprised by residents, shopkeepers, academics, research practitioners, activists, artists and students, influenced by a picture of a collective urban dinner that took place in Barcelona, addressed whether or not it would be possible to organise a small dinner in the neighbourhood and to thereby transfer a rooted cultural practice from another city of the European south to Thessaloniki. Key to this is the extent to which such an event previously held in Barcelona could be replicated in such a way so as not to dilute the unique nature of the local identity (Richards & Wilson, 2006).

Today, the increasing popularity of similar events and their potential influence, in turn, on the host communities have led to an increased research in their social impact all over the world (Small, 2007). My concern is with the ability of a gathering of this kind to temporarily disrupt everyday order. In older societies, surprisingly, festive rituals like the medieval carnival provided a sanctioned forum for unleashing societal tensions, a place where peasants were able to enjoy and consume the economic surplus followed by the intense labour of harvest, as well (Bakhtin, 1984; Turner & Rojek, 2001). In a world where notions of culture are becoming increasingly fragmented, cultural events have developed in response to processes of cultural pluralization,

mobility and globalization, whilst communicating something meaningful about identity, community and locality. In a variety of ways then, an event can constitute a significant aspect of the socio-economic and cultural landscape of everyday life (Bennett, Taylor, & Woodward, 2014). Accordingly, it potentially becomes a site for representing, encountering, incorporating and researching aspects of cultural difference. In this light, the first dinner was considered a way to discuss the possibility of *communitas*; to release ourselves from the ‘everyday’ life constrains; to provide the opportunity and the space for reflection on basic cultural values and norms (see Turner, 1982). It is this, and the ability of local people to work together to such an end, that my longitudinal research seeks to understand (Chatzinakos, 2015).

Apparently, this pilot urban experiment created a more fertile ground for carrying out various activities in the neighbourhood. Ultimately, during four consecutive dinners, variations on the above model took place. The concern here is with how far the dinners managed to provide the foundation for more sustainable trust networks (extrovert or introvert) that might add to an evolving but gradual process of community-building. In this sense, cultural participation can provide people with an opportunity to get to know each other and to develop a more interactive relationship with public space, connecting people to their locality over a period of time far beyond the confines of the event itself.

Various issues emerge from the above, including the role of public space, which is directly affected by the financial crisis in every aspect (social, cultural, economic) of everyday life, and by extension the role of citizens groups in the midst of a more-than-financial crisis in Greece. Indeed, currently, the dinner is considered to be a benchmark in the city, playing a very important role in the development of a new neighbourhood identity, by combining various local and socio-cultural attributes. This may provide the basis for the development of further inclusive approaches to citizen empowerment and participation, by advancing a variety of sustainable, locally based, more permanent, place-making projects that promote desirable urban change (e.g. a memory bank, a DIY urban park). Nowadays, our focus is on exploring ways that can enhance individual responsibility, collective sensitivity and ‘sociological imagination’ (Mills, 1959) towards urban commons. Arguably, the multiplication of respective neighbourhood initiatives can create a spreading domino effect, dragging the history of this city in a new era of participation and solidarity; challenging the social conventions; strengthening social ties; creating a new relationship with public space.

In overall, this paper highlights the fact that neighbourhoods can become a key player in the development of cities, but it also identifies the main limitations experienced in-practice, such as the absence of a framework that supports locally organized collective action while respecting the needs and aspirations of individual participants. In Greece, due to the lack of a permanent institutional framework, people can’t (re-)produce in a sustainable fashion realizable actions that will respond to their *individual* needs and provide solutions to the *collective* problems of their place of residence. However, the potential of such bottom-up initiatives (Richards & Palmer, 2010), I argue here, is significant and may indeed provide for the creation of a ‘unique’ city identity of the city: *one that is created by the people rather than imposed upon them*. The paper concludes by considering how realistic such an aim might be. To this end, the original contribution of this research lies in designing a tentatively transformative research approach, through which we can learn from different experiences and representations, directly derived from urban communities. This approach seeks to address or prevent social problems, and to contribute

to designing more sustainable and inclusive neighbourhoods, enhancing a broader ecological understanding which focuses on a comprehensive view of individual needs and collective desires.

Keywords

Urban experiments; place-making; new politics of place; liminal cultures; critical event studies; cultural participation; action-research.

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SESSION 2: THE GOVERNANCE OF THE COMMONS

3. Silke Helfrich, 'Peer Governance in Commons'

Contribution for the International Workshop on the Commons and Political Theory in Thessaloniki, September 16, 2017

Introduction

According to the British author George Monbiot, neoliberalism and Keynesianism share the same narrative structure, which he coins the 'restoration story':

Disorder afflicts the land, caused by powerful and nefarious forces working against the interests of humanity. The hero – who might be one person or a group of people – revolts against this disorder, fights the nefarious forces, overcomes them despite great odds and restores order.

Based on the insight that the only way to overcome a broken narrative structure is to provide another narrative structure –instead of merely changing rules or the governance framework– we suggest developing a consistent narrative of the Commons. Such a narrative should be intelligible and make sense to common people and policy makers alike, while being anchored in pluriversality. It should crosscut traditional political divisions, be firmly grounded in social practices and provide theoretical orientation for scholars and practitioners. Together with commons expert and author David Bollier, since 2016, I am working on such a commons-narrative, based on the following...

Assumptions

- ✓ The whole world is ordered in patterns (cf. Christopher Alexander 2002-2005: *The Nature of Order*, Berkeley, California).
- ✓ Patterns that enact a free, fair and sustainable future – the ultimate goal of a commons based society and economy – are already there but are not 'legible.'
- ✓ Patterns of commons and commoning are based on a relational ontology, meaning that neither the commons nor a commons polity can be framed and expressed in essentialist terms, categories and language (cf. Wesley J. Wildman. *An Introduction to Relational Ontology*, Boston University, May 15, 2006).

Methodology

- ✓ collection of outstanding international examples (Bollier/Helfrich 2012: *The Wealth of the Commons*, Amherst/MA and (2015: *Patterns of Commoning*, Amherst/MA.).
- ✓ sense-making through 'pattern-mining' and matching with theoretical concepts.

✓ testing elements of the framework on which the commons-narrative will be based upon via in-depth interviews (several reiterations).

✓ ongoing adjustment of patterns and framework through reflection and p2p discussion (several reiterations).

A new framework for Commons & Commoning

Based on the aforementioned ideas, assumptions and proceeding, Bollier and Helfrich developed a preliminary version of a commons framework that helps to bring about a commons vocabulary (not taxonomy) and is the foundation of the narrative that overcomes the ‘restoration story.’ This framework is, and will always be, imperfect and incomplete if only because the realities of the human condition ultimately elude full systemization and analysis. Despite attempts to create an ‘utopia of rules’ (David Graeber) through bureaucracy and other systems of control, human agency is always dynamic, surprising and boundary-crossing.

A symbiotic triad - the core of this framework

Commons & Commoning are complex adaptive processes that consist of a simple symbiotic triade: the social section (commoning), the institutional and organizational section (peer governance) and the economic section (provisioning through commons). Each section has multiple dimensions. It is important to understand that these sections don’t describe something different. They rather describe the same - aspects of commons & commoning just seen through a different lens depending on the section’s focus. There is, therefore, an overlap and correspondence among the dimensions (which we call patterns), they are interlinked.

Dimensions of Commoning

There is no commons without commoning: It is impossible to understand the commons without understanding the multidimensional and open-ended social process of commoning. Conceptualizing it helps to make evident that the scope of the commons is far beyond the management of collective resources. We identified 12 dimensions we consider key for thriving commoning processes.

Peer Governance in Commons

There is no commoning without Peer-Governance. Peer-Governance is an expression of self-organization. It is distinct from governing for the people (charity approach). It is also distinct from governing with the people (participation-approach). It is governing by the people (commons-approach). We identified 10 dimensions we consider key for successful peer governance.

Provisioning through Commons

Commons can be seen as a different mode of production, and commoning as a value-generating process that produces commons instead of commodities. That is: a commons approach breaks free from an economic empire because it is based on a different rationality and transaction-logic. It brings about values and value. It produces care, shelter and all kind of useable things. We identified 10 dimensions we consider key in commons based and commons creating peer production.

At a later stage **External Politics & Culture** dimensions will be added to the framework. Here we coin generic patterns to describe the political culture and the policies that make commons & commoning work, and how commons relate to the State, the Market and other commons (the scaling question).

SESSION 3: COMMONS, STATE AND THE MARKET

4. Alexandros Pazaitis ‘How can the commons provide a new rationality for the firm in the information age?’

This essay attempts to synthesize two distinct bodies of knowledge: on one hand, the long established innovation literature; and on the other hand, the recent expositions of open innovation, peer production and the commons. The aim is to re-examine some of the persistent discussions around the notion of the firm as the unit of analysis for innovative activities, in the context of the new techno-economic conditions effectuated by the revolution of Information and Communication Technologies. The main dynamics of peer production are briefly presented in relation to the commons as an alternative approach for economic governance, distinct from hierarchies and markets. Finally, a synthesized multi-level approach is sought, acknowledging the commons as an important institution for the modern economic reality and the future of the firm.

Introduction

Organizing for innovation has been one of the most intricate riddles that innovation theory and business strategy have been trying to solve. At its core, the discussion is orchestrated around the firm: a single unit of reference providing the realm of innovative activities. As a continuous subject of scholarly analysis, the notion of the firm appears quite concrete and established. However, the contours of the firm vary significantly over time and upon several technological and institutional transformations (Teece 1988; Lazonick 2006). And, in every one of these shifts, the appropriate patterns and winning strategies are sought, which will best deploy its respective sociotechnical traits. Especially at the turning point of the ICT-driven techno-economic paradigm (Perez 2002), the types of organizational patterns that will effectively harness the dynamics of the new technologies will determine its potential course.

The advance and wide diffusion of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) has surfaced unseen human capabilities for effective communication and coordination among loosely-affiliated individuals. We have witnessed the emergence of fluid networks of autonomous agents, comprising a multitude of diverse individuals and organizations that can effectively collaborate towards a common goal by pooling information and their productive capacity. Yet, economics and business literature still seem to be, by and large, agnostic to these dynamics. Recent literature has been exploring some facets of this plexus, analyzed under the broad umbrella of ‘open innovation’ (von Hippel 2005; Chesbrough 2003, 2006; Lakhani & von Hippel 2003).

However, there still hasn’t been a convincing theoretical approach integrating them in the theory of the firm. Innovation literature – to a certain extent – has been treating those elements as blindspots in the various functions and operations of the firm, without elucidating them within the innovation process per se. ICT has drastically reduced the cost of communication and distributed material capital giving agency to an increasing number of individuals to participate in innovative activities. But the increased capacity effectuated by ICT is arguably much broader than this. An expanding ecosystem of community-driven initiatives, beginning with the Free and Open Source Software (FOSS) and Wikipedia, and moving towards open hardware, open design and distributed manufacturing, may offer a glimpse to this perspective.

Beyond crowdsourcing platforms and user feedback mechanisms, these initiatives exemplify a new approach that goes past the identification of users' needs and the optimization of simple human labour to well-defined tasks. They rather introduce a new organizational model that harnesses ICT to streamline distributed knowledge production and learning towards meaningful social production (Benkler 2017). Central to this approach are the concepts of the commons (Ostrom 1990; Bollier 2014; De Angelis 2010) and peer production (Benkler 2002; 2006; Bauwens 2005). They exemplify a new modality of value creation, where autonomous individuals engage in voluntary contributions to a common goal. For this, they pool resources and their creative skills and produce shared outputs, usually universally accessible, i.e. commons. Peer production and the commons provide a new rationality in the way the ICT-enhanced capabilities can be harnessed under a new organizational form, one that subsumes command-and-control, as well as competition, under cooperation. The aim of this paper is to explore the existing innovation literature on the organization of the firm, attempting to re-examine certain dynamics through the lens of peer production and the commons. The main motivation is to couple two distinct bodies of literature insofar they can better delineate the future of the firm in a highly complex economic reality. The overall objective is to shed light on certain elements that may be closely related to a new organization paradigm for innovation and sustainability in the information age.

Demystifying the innovative firm

Following the Schumpeterian legacy, the firm has been dominating the scholarly attention as 'the most powerful engine of progress' (Schumpeter 1942: 106). Yet, in an economic world that is rapidly progressing, so are the strategic, financial and organizational arrangements supporting the innovation process (Lazonick 2006). Changes in technology, market structure and competition, themselves linked to successful innovation, demand continuous reformulation of a firm's innovative capabilities. A key determinant in this process is its organizational integration of a variety of aspects, associated with its structure, internal and external relations, and learning capacities. Schumpeter's observations have concentrated a large bundle of theoretical and empirical explorations on the link between innovation and, respectively firm size, and market structure. Yet most of the discourse has been rather inconclusive, either for methodological reasons (Cohen & Levin 1989) or simply because the developments in the intra- and inter-firm environment have rendered it outmoded (Teece 1992). In the following review, I will attempt to highlight certain aspects of these views that may gain particular significance in the context of the information age.

Firm size and market structure

The original argument underpinning the link of innovation with firm size and market structure, as attributed to Schumpeter (1942), can be summarized in three points: (a) larger scale provides better capacity to bear Research & Development (R&D) costs; (b) larger diversity and scope is more effective in absorbing failures across various technologies; and (c) greater market control enables firms to reap the rewards of innovation (Teece 1986; 1992). Firstly, the argument on R&D intensity in large firms is basically premised on in-house R&D, based on the assumption that firms have the actual capacity to engage in it, while acknowledging the contractual difficulties erected from outsourcing R&D (Teece 1988). However, the increased complexity and pluralism of actors required for contemporary R&D necessitates the involvement of external parties. Simultaneously, there are occasions on which technological breakthroughs may be more likely to occur outside an

established firm's competences and cumulative knowledge, where research collaboration drastically is a more attractive option for both new as well as incumbent firms (Teece 1988).

Furthermore, empirical evidence indicates that R&D spending and productivity is greater in large firms (Knott & Vieregger 2016). However, outliers and industry effects have a significant impact on this relation, rather than size alone (Cohen et al. 1987; Shefer & Frenkel 2005). There are also important differences in the choices of the types of R&D and the respective strategies associated with firm size (Nelson 1959; Rosen 1991; Cohen & Klepper 1996). Overall, it can be argued that large firms have a greater probability to engage in- and bear the costs of R&D. Nevertheless, there are certain areas, such as basic research, where private firms are reluctant to invest, regardless of their size, while the direct causal relation between R&D and innovation is often overstated (Mazzucato 2013). Moving on, it has been also argued that legal tools and regimes that allow for the greater appropriability of knowledge enhance the innovators' ability to benefit from innovation and encourage further investment in R&D (Teece, 1986; 1992). However, tight appropriability regimes are rather rare in modern industry, whereas there has been broadly acknowledged that patents cannot offer viable solutions to the problems they theoretically try to solve (Teece 1986; Boldrin & Levine 2013).

Furthermore, the empirical evidence concerning a positive relation between firm size and R&D investment is rather inconclusive and varies among different areas and industries (Shefer & Frenkel 2005). On the contrary, horizontal integration across the value chain, involving competitor firms, can solve many issues concerning appropriability and spillovers. This is accomplished by distributing the benefits to a greater number of firms, whilst reducing the cost and risk of R&D and commercialization, and the duplicate effort (Teece 1992). Simultaneously, there is empirical evidence that speaks for the relative advantage of small businesses which engage in networking and inter-firm alliances (Rogers 2004). It may also be argued that, in certain instances, small firms can emulate most of the functions and capacities of large enterprises through cooperative agreements, whilst they dispense with many size-related complications (Teece 1992; 1996). Regardless of the specificities of the innovative process, it is most likely that a firm would need to ensure access to certain assets and capabilities situated beyond its boundaries. In the development process of new technologies, valuable knowledge and skills lie in institutions such as universities, laboratories and functional departments of unaffiliated firms (Teece 1992; Mina et al. 2014), even independent user communities (von Hippel, 1988; Dalhander & Piezunka, 2014). Similarly, the vital role of access to complementary, specialized and co-specialized assets has been emphasized in the commercialization of innovations (Teece 1986; Gambardella & Panico 2014).

Most importantly, the firm as a unit of analysis in Schumpeter alone, but also in the subsequent analyses, remains somewhat fuzzy, with no clearly defined boundaries. A highly complex web of inter-firm agreements and alliances is often in place, affecting the business structure, strategies and innovation processes. It is thus very difficult to substantially focus the analysis on a single unit and produce useful results (Teece, 1992). Even more, in today's ever-changing corporate environment, with an expanding web of clusters and networked forms of cooperation (Porte 1990; 2000; Powell, 1996), the firm size debate seems to further diminish in relevance. A meaningful discussion over the function and outreach of the modern firm would arguably not be of any value without a deeper understanding of the inter-enterprise cooperative relationships and liaisons, particularly amongst the most innovative firms (Teece 1992). Governance and coordination innovation is a unique type of economic activity, one that has very special requirements on

information and coordination. This entails not only the coordination of intra-firm processes for product development and commercialization, but also access to complementary assets, the management of linkages with users, suppliers and competitors, as well as connections among different sets of technologies (Teece, 1992).

Economics and business textbooks have for a long time been mainly locked in two main approaches concerning the governance patterns which favour innovation. On the one hand, there is the rationality of the price system that is efficiently coordinating competitive self-interest towards optimal results, stemming from a Walrasian understanding of the economy and the prescriptions of F.A. Hayek (1945) that praise free market competition. On the other hand, the logic of managerial capitalism, introduced by the work of R.H. Coase (1937) and forwarded by O.E. Williamson (1975; 1985), focuses on the hierarchical organization of the firm serving for the reduction of transaction costs that occur in regulating contracts and information through market relations. Of course, this dichotomy cannot provide a sufficient general model for the modern economic reality. It's neither complete hierarchical monopoly nor perfect market competition that we observe in the real world as coordinating and stimulating business processes. Despite the common belief among standard textbook economics, a pure free market system - assuming that it exists - is also not adequate to foster most types of innovative processes (Teece 1992).

Similarly, high levels of vertical integration may facilitate the commercialization of innovations, but may also hinder interdependencies and the introduction of new technologies due to path dependencies (Teece 1988). Most importantly, this debate abstracts from the complex business reality in a way that other key elements are dismissed (Teece 1992). Teece (1992) notes that a variety of different types of organizational structures are simultaneously at work in successful firms.

Moreover, in many stages of development and commercialization of new technology, large hierarchies and the price system seem to undermine the conditions that affect the flow of information and time to market. By contrast, cooperation, multilateral agreements entailing pooling of resources and activities among partner organizations can offer significant advantages. This is the case of strategic alliances (Teece 1992), defined as constellations of multilateral agreements among firms. They are typically intended for the development and commercialization of new technology, but may as well constitute a new organizational form, spanning within and beyond the confines of the firm. While they can occur in various forms, strategic alliances generally entail a commitment among two or several parties to pool their resources and activities to reach a common goal. They may be in the form of joint R&D, know-how, manufacturing and marketing agreements and provide solutions to various strategic and operational levels, including access to complementary assets, users and suppliers, and the combination of enabling technologies. Such alliances exceed the narrow terms of legal structural and property arrangements. They rather operate as long-term, durable relationships based on reciprocity. It has been argued (Teece 1992; Cohen & Levin 1989) that western – especially in the United States - economists and business scholars have long failed to properly analyse such patterns of cooperation, due to a widespread preoccupation with cartel and trust practices.

The same applies to the understanding of certain aspects of the efficiency gains from the Japanese and overseas tradition. In Europe, these types of alliances have come increasingly to be integrated in businesses, spurring cooperation that is proving effective in processes of product development and commercialization (Teece 1992). This is also building upon a long tradition of pre-WWII

cooperative tradition, such as the German science-based intra-industry cooperative associations and cartels in the early 20th century (Fear 1995). In the Japanese tradition (Gerlach 1988; 1992), the parties of an alliance do not engage in market-based transactions, but are rather bound by relational types of exchange. They are motivated by participation and mutual obligation, while symbolic activities and ceremonies play an important role. Familiarity and historical bonds are the key determinants of the alliance, instead of incumbent task distribution (Teece 1992).

The introduction of strategic alliances in scholarly discussion is of course not aiming at the erosion of competition and market pluralism. However, it may serve to bring certain aspects to the forefront of the organizational theory of the firm, beyond firm size and market structure. Most importantly, in the observation of new forms of collaboration facilitated by widely diffused ICT and the internet, those types of cooperation based on non-market relations can provide a solid and reliable ground to guide further research. A vital element for grasping the innovative functions of the firm, beyond its size and structure, is its learning processes. These include the relation between tacit and codified knowledge, individual and collective capabilities and the cumulative causation of learning over time (Lazonick 2006). Learning is a highly social activity, which is tightly bound up with the uncertainty of innovation, and its cumulative and collective characteristics. Therefore, the social context of the innovative firm shapes the types of interaction and learning among its people. Teece et al (1997: 516) speak for the dynamic capabilities of the firm, concerning its ‘ability to integrate, build, and reconfigure internal and external competences to address rapidly changing environments.’ To this direction, a firm’s strategy is directed towards the most sustainable paths and courses for competence development.

Those capabilities are of a cumulative nature, as firms standardize tacit knowledge into their organizational patterns (Nelson & Winter 1982). Simultaneously, the successful organizational patterns of a firm are representative of the collective knowledge of coordination and learning in a certain social context (Kogut & Zander 1996; Lazonick 2006). This collective dimension has been further interpreted in von Hippel’s (1977; 1988; 2005) analysis of user innovation. One part of the equation is the social knowledge from the users that drives technological design, while, on the other side, lies the firm’s ability to integrate this knowledge in its capabilities to produce and commercialize new technologies (Teece 1992). There is, thus, a collective function of the firm that moves from the identification and satisfaction of needs to the co-production of socially meaningful innovations.

Von Hippel initiated the discussion over the integration of learning and technological capacities of users by addressing the innovation processes which transcend the boundaries of the firm. Recent literature has discussed the engagement of external actors who contribute to intra- or inter-firm activities, including users, suppliers, competitors, investors or other organizations (Dahlander & Piezunka 2013; Gambardella & Panico 2014; West & Bogers 2013) and the free exchange of knowledge among them (West et al. 2006; Enkel et al. 2009). Moreover, there is a rich tapestry of well-documented cases from the ecosystem of Free and Open Source Software (FOSS) (Dafermos 2012; Harhoff & Lakhani 2016; Mateos-Garcia & Steinmueller 2008; Scacchi et al. 2006; Benkler 2006; von Hippel 2016), as well as open design and open hardware (Kostakis et al. 2015; 2016; Giotitsas & Ramos 2017). Benkler (2002; 2006) discusses this phenomenon as a new modality of value creation, called (commons-based) peer production. However, he suggests that this mode of production is not all new. Rather, it has been present for the most part of the known history of

human societies. It is only now, with the new array of technological capabilities, that it has gained economic significance.

Similarly, Teece (1992) argues that in earlier periods there had not been a broader geographical dispersion of technological capacity. But global communications are now so effective that the economic distinction between local and global has been wildly eradicated. This, combined with a broad availability of a wide variety of options for inter-firm cooperation, has generated an effective reality of rapid, complex and geographically dispersed organizational forms. Benkler (2016) makes the case for a new approach in organizational theory that amalgamates a theory of knowledge production and learning with the core insights of open innovation and user innovation (von Hippel 1988; 2005) and elements from sociological research on innovation networks (Powell 1990; 1996), innovation clusters (Gilson 1999; Saxenian 2000) and the commons (Ostrom 1990; Bollier 2014). This approach is arguably very conducive to deciphering the nature of the firm in the information society. In the same way as a discussion about firm size and market structure that dismisses cooperative agreements and alliances would misinterpret the nature of the firm (Teece 1992), a discussion about knowledge production and open innovation that dismisses peer production and the commons would distort our perception of the future of the firm.

The commons and the nature of The Firm

The phenomenon of peer production has been analytically and empirically studied in relation to both hierarchies and markets. As a mode of production, it has manifested unique characteristics that allow for the successful large-scale collaboration of individuals following a diverse set of motives and social signals which respond neither to hierarchical command nor to market stimuli (Benkler, 2002). Firstly, building on Coase's transaction cost hypothesis, Benkler (2002) analysed peer production, focusing on its capacity to effectively reduce transaction costs related to contract and property. Specifically, on occasions when physical capital is distributed, as in the case of information production, peer production has significant advantages for motivating and assigning human creativity. Moreover, by pooling resources and activities among groups of individuals, there are efficiency gains in allocating a large number of potential contributions to larger clusters of resources. This drastically reduces the transaction costs related to allocating efforts, assigning roles and tasks, and monitoring the use of resources. Furthermore, focusing on the distribution of resources, Benkler (2004) identifies a distinct parcel of goods and services with certain characteristics that render them 'shareable.' Such goods possess a systematic 'excess capacity' that can be more effectively valued through the practice of social sharing rather than through the price system. For instance, in the cases of computer processors or automobiles, demand rarely meets the aggregate capacity of the supply, when these are privately owned and used as rival resources.

By contrast, distributed computing and carpooling are the respective social sharing practices that have evolved around such goods, in which loosely affiliated individuals contribute part of their capacity, leading to their more effective provisioning. Those special characteristics of shareable goods and services may suffice to deem social sharing a feasible and sustainable practice. However, those characteristics alone are neither sufficient nor necessary for sharing to take place. Rather, they constitute those conditions that give eminence to sharing among other types of social interactions (Benkler 2004). Benkler's analysis is thus seeking to recognize sharing as a productive economic function, alongside firm-based and price-based interactions. Indeed, the phenomenon of peer production has tellingly demonstrated its dynamics in relation to the other

types of production. Exemplary projects are vigorously building on the advanced capabilities of modern ICT to out-compete their hierarchical and market-based counterparts. The case of the free encyclopedia Wikipedia triumphing over the previously salient Encyclopedia Britannica, and the Apache Web Server outperforming Microsoft's web server are only few examples. Most importantly, amidst a broader value crisis in the economic and work milieu (Arvidsson et al. 2008), peer production has presented a unique force in unlocking human creativity and intrinsically motivating people to contribute to a collaborative process.

Following Benkler's contributions, peer production has arguably helped us re-imagine the commons in economic life. The commons may still remain relevant in a somewhat marginal field of scholarly and business practice, yet as the driving force behind peer production they have much broader implications. A new economic rationality is taking shape, in which intrinsic and social motivations prevail over material rewards and individual benefits. The dominance of property is challenged by common ownership regimes and commons-based governance. And, finally, the centrality of the firm in the innovation process is contested (Benkler 2017). Nevertheless, despite the rapid reduction of transaction costs and the efficiency gains from sharing capabilities, there is arguably still a huge role for the firm to play in this new economic reality. Benkler (2017: 8) argues for a virtuous function of peer production in maintaining 'coherence in the face of vanishing transaction costs.' They play this function by facilitating collaboration among diversely motivated individuals, so that they engage in some sort of persistent social relation: the future of the firm. In other words, peer production and the commons arguably present an alternative to Hayek's decentralized coordination, one that also takes context and human characteristics into account. Instead of assuming spontaneous relations of exchange which emerge out of self-interest in every field, cooperative peer production understands why people need, and in most cases prefer, to work with each other, whilst developing proper institutions to reduce the relevant friction to the minimum.

Most importantly, the strategic advantage of a firm in this form over ad-hoc, fluid networks of gig-based participants would be that it provides a more humane environment to engage the full capacities of people in a socially-meaningful interaction (Benkler 2017). It's a sort of strategy that purports to (re-)introduce reciprocity, sharing and cooperation in the very core of economic activities, elements that have been bracketed in the name of cost-effectiveness and optimization. At the turning point of the ICT-driven techno-economic paradigm, it is those types of organizational patterns which can conduce to a positive outcome for all the social groups investing in the new technologies, and will determine their future expansion. The commons may provide a viable option in the quiver of future policy design, in shaping the future of the firm and its role in a continuously complex and interconnected reality.

Synthesis: A multi-modal approach

We may argue, thus, that there are in fact three modalities of governance facilitating coordination and innovation in the firm: (a) hierarchy; (b) market exchange; and (c) the commons. Those modalities are simultaneously at work. Depending on the context, one subordinates the others. The ICT revolution has brought about a series of hitherto unseen capabilities of human coordination and communication that offer a great advantage to commons-based practices in relation to the other two modalities under certain circumstances. Yet, the commons have been broadly dismissed in economics literature as inefficient and prone to the infamous 'tragedy' (Hardin 1968). But the commons have arguably been an invisible element continuously operating in economic reality,

especially in non-market-based forms of cooperation. From cooperative agreements to strategic alliances, to peer-to-peer networks and collaborative platforms, the commons provide a more firm ground to analyze and interpret human entanglements. Numerous forms of human interaction and coordination entail some type of ‘commoning’ (Bollier 2014: 3), i.e. the capacity to contribute to, and benefit from, a shared resource.

De Angelis (2010: 955) argues that ‘what lies behind the “tragedy of the commons” is really the tragedy of the destruction of commoning through all sorts of structural adjustments.’ On this view, hierarchies and markets have been forms of ‘structural adjustment’ in the process of commoning human, intellectual and material resources, born out of historical and technological necessity. Indeed, Lazonick (2006: 32) construes the modern corporate enterprise offered by E. Penrose (1959) as ‘an organization that administers a collection of human and physical resources,’ which leads to people contributing ‘labour services to the firm, not merely as individuals, but as members of teams who engage in learning about how to make best use of the firm’s productive resources – including their own.’ On this view, the corporate commons may be perceived as an array of shared resources, imposed on a certain type of administration by a structural core driven by a certain set of motives and objectives.

The commons come to existence once certain resources have been mutualized among a number of agents that are bound by their social relationships to maintain and manage them for the common benefit. There is no commons without communing, and vice versa. There is also no commons without commoners. The dynamic of peer production is arguably moving from the periphery to the centre of economic reality, and it may eventually bring the commons to the consciousness of those who rely upon them to pursue their collective interpretation of value. In a highly complex and pluralistic economic reality, the potential of the commons turns on their creating those sorts of organizational arrangements which can incorporate a certain degree of collective dynamic capabilities among diverse agents. This would lower the costs and risks of innovation to such an extent that hierarchies and competition would become obsolete as forms of structural adjustment. In turn, this will emancipate organizational structures from their historical confinements and allow them to function as conscious manifestations of human culture, trust and socially meaningful interaction.

Keywords: the firm; innovation; organization; commons; peer production

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SESSION 4: COMMONS THEORY & GENDER

5. Irene Sotiropoulou, ‘Commons and private property as a patriarchal trap’

1. Introduction

The paper investigates commons within its historical and social context, which is capitalist patriarchy. The purpose of the paper is to critically investigate how this notion is linked to patriarchal and capitalist understandings of the economy and how it perpetuates ways of thinking and ways of practicing anticapitalist activism that are inherently reproducing core concepts and institutions of capitalism and patriarchy.

I use feminist theory and the critique of property in order to understand where the commons are situated within a complex political system that encompasses patriarchal and capitalist traits. My intention is to understand better how we ended up not discussing the abolition of private property and how indigenous groups are now blamed for anti-commons behaviour while they themselves suffer from colonial and neo-colonial destruction of their livelihoods.

The next section explains the research question of the paper. Section three presents patriarchy as a social system, and section four examines patriarchy as an economic system, with special emphasis on property and the connection of property arrangements to the commons. Commons are critically analyzed within the context of being constructed as the last resort of the poor, in section five. Section six is the concluding section, where I discuss possible ways to allow discussion and practice go beyond commons.

2. Why commons?

I have been puzzled for some years now concerning the proliferation of the notion of common((s) in both social movements and social sciences. I am not against the idea of having collective arrangements for things that we produce or things that everyone needs to have access to, like a beautiful forest. In that sense, the work, both theoretical and activist, done for the commons so far is something that needs to be recognized and praised as such.

However, it seems that the same notion of the commons does not take into account the existing inequalities that get reproduced through the commons, especially gender and class. At the same time, the commons seem to satisfy various claims and needs of the social movements in Europe and United States (or in the so-called Anglo-Saxon world), but seem awkward or out of context in other settings like Eastern Europe, the Mediterranean, and much more in countries that belong to completely different historical and cultural contexts (Akbulut 2015, Davis 2011, Peterson 2012).

Moreover, concerning the Western European movements and theorists, it is impressive to see the discussion about the commons having crowded out the discussion on private property. Compared to 19th and 20th century discussions, the abolition of property has been forgotten during the late decades of 20th century and even more in early 21st century (Bauwens & Kostakis 2014, Benkler 2006, Benkler & Nissenbaum 2006, Gibson-Graham 2006, Hardt & Negri 2009, Ostrom 1990, De Angelis 2005).

The question of putting the notion of commons into its historical, social, cultural and political economic context raises further questions: Where is the discussion about abolishing private

property? Where is the critique of commons that are established among and for privileged people at the expense of disadvantaged groups? (An example is the digital commons in a ‘disruptive’ company in Western Europe at the environmental and human expense of the workers in South Asia who assemble the hardware parts under deplorable conditions, after aggressive extraction of raw materials needed for the hardware) Who works for the commons and who reaps the benefits? What has happened with collective arrangements that defy commons and possibly private property altogether, but no one discusses about them?

3. Patriarchy as a social system

To understand what the commons are and how they function in late capitalism, I used feminist theory and the critique to patriarchy as an economic system. Moreover, I share the view that capitalism is a form of patriarchy and that capitalism is not antithetical to patriarchy, but is built around its main institutions.

We usually think of patriarchy as a social system. Major traits of a social system are the kinship arrangements (or the non-existence of kinship arrangements). In social sciences, we have four main distinctions in organizing kinship: patrilinear or patrilineal (kinship constructed around the father/son line), patrifocal (newly established households are created around the father/groom line), matrilinear or matrilineal (kinship constructed around the mother/daughter line), and matrifocal (newly established households are created around the mother/bride line).

However, one should bear in mind that families, clans, tribes, or kinship play a part only in social structure and that even the most inward-oriented communities try to keep bonds and kinship affiliations with the outer world. The other important point is that a patriarchal system can have a combination of kinship and non-kinship arrangements that can include matrifocal and matrilinear elements. This makes the understandings of patriarchy even more complicated. Nevertheless, what makes a system patriarchal is not the social elements only, but their combination with the economic elements of patriarchy that we will examine in the next section.

At this point, we need to remember that patriarchy adores creating binaries for representing the world and social activity. This is very useful for the reproduction of the patriarchal system, because simplistic understandings through binaries allow the privileged members of society to reproduce their power, their access to resources and their hierarchical position. Gender hierarchies and heteronormativity, in-clan and out-of-clan society members, up and down in the social ladder (obsession with power) and construction of violence and non-violence as an obligation, depending on which group one belongs to (subaltern groups are obliged to be nonviolent). Binaries of patriarchy are very important in relation to the commons because they determine who defines the commons and who has control over them (Scholz 2014, Strathern 1988, Peterson 1997, Henderson 1996, Lerner 1986, Fraser 2013a, 2013b, Federici 2013, Ehrenreich & English 1978, Bennholdt-Thomsen et al 1988).

4. Patriarchy as an economic system

Patriarchy is an economic system. Actually it is a very resilient, violent and totalitarian political economic system. Moreover, that capitalism is an intensified form of patriarchy becomes evident from the fact that both share the same main institutions: marriage and control of sexuality (for the subalterns), state institutions, money and private property.

I mentioned private property as the last institution, although it is anything but the last. In fact, patriarchy could not exist without private property, and private property is the institution that

makes patriarchy reproduce itself. Marriage and control of sexuality, state and money develop or function around private property.

In capitalism, this is visible, but it seems that the same happened in other forms of patriarchy. Moreover, even in types of patriarchy that they might have not been that monetized, nor that state-administered, private property was there as an institution to ensure that patriarchs had access to the resources and the political power they needed (Fraser 2013a, 2013b, Federici 2013, Ehrenreich & English 1978, Bennholdt-Thomsen et al 1988, Barker & Kuiper 2003, Eisenstein 1979).

4.1. Property

What is property? It is a very complicated institution, because it takes many forms, and only part of it is explicitly legislated, especially in capitalist societies. However, if one wanted to grasp the core of property, she could define property as the publicly assigned right to use something and exclude others from it.

Therefore, two are the essential traits of property: first, it is a public right, it is something that an entire community must decide or accept or tolerate. And second, it is a right that combines use of something by the property owner and exclusion from the use of that something for all the other people who are not owners of the propertied thing.

In other words, the property owner has exclusive rights to a thing. Those rights include the use of the thing, the harvest or the use of its benefits or the reaping of profits from that same thing, and the right to abuse or dispose or destroy the propertied thing. If the property owner has no right of abuse, destruction or disposal, then the property is not fully assigned. If the property owner has no legal right of abuse, destruction or disposal but if she/he can practically destroy or dispose her/his propertied thing, because social norms allow or expect the disposal, then we have property which is fully assigned, although it might not be fully assigned by formal law.

This distinction of formal and informal assignments of property is crucial, because in patriarchy many properties are assigned through legislation other than real estate law or through de facto norms that everyone or most people accept and enforce, even if the law says otherwise. This is the point where the arguments about the inexistence of patriarchy in western European societies emerge, while legal property over women by men has moved from marriage laws to employment law or to informal slavery arrangements, like trafficking, and to the tolerance to violence against women in general, despite of the laws that prohibit it.

What is important: in patriarchy, the propertied thing, that ‘something’ that the owner can use, harvest and abuse or dispose, is by priority the human body and nature, i.e. living creatures, in many cases very similar to the creature that an owner can be.

Well, not all human creatures are very similar according to patriarchy. The patriarchal binaries come into force when ownership and property emerge as an issue: women are supposed to be owned by men, children are supposed to be owned by fathers, black workers are supposed to be owned by the white-owned factory that imposes quasi-slavery working conditions or an entire river ecosystem is supposed to be owned by the state or by the corporation that rules the use of the water that runs through the river (Fraser 2013a, Federici 2004, Borneman 1975, Cassano 2009, Dallacosta & James 1975, Graeber 2006).

Particularly, nature in patriarchy is not only objectified and understood as existing for humans and for satisfying their own agenda for survival, artistic expression or for beauty seeking. It is also

feminized, so that it can be much easier treated the way women are treated in patriarchy: nature can be propertied by men, used, harvested, abused and then destroyed, as there is ‘plenty of nature’ to proceed with more property owners receiving what their privilege tells them to expect (Bennholdt-Thomsen et al 1986, Mies & Shiva, Von Werlhof 2007, Sotiropoulou 2017a).

4.2. Common and private property

Private property, therefore, is the property that belongs to one person or to one household or to one group of people who, as individuals, have agreed among themselves to own a thing by excluding all other people (like a corporation), and the property is passed down to their patrilineal descendants or relatives with the exclusion of other people or the community.

Within this context, I understand the distinction between common and private property as being one more patriarchal binary. In addition, common property is never common enough, either for legal or de facto reasons: a river can be regulated as a commons for the people living around or for the state that the river runs through, but not all people have access to the river or even if they have, they do not control what happens with the river, with its fish, with the water used for agricultural or industrial purposes. Even when something is deemed to be a ‘true’ commons, like the open sea or open space, the use of the commons is practically available to those who have the means to navigate through the open sea or open space and to those who use both the sea and space for disposing their garbage and technological externalities, like accidents with environmental impact. It is not a coincidence that those who are practically able to use the global commons usually belong to social groups that are white, European/Anglo-Saxon, male, middle or upper class, with ownership of capital and land (Agathangelou & Ling 2006).

Why is that? Because even if we ‘all own the open sea,’ the open sea is owned truly by those who have the means of production to travel, fish, extract oil or dispose their waste there. Means of production are owned privately in capitalism and in patriarchy. That is, private property is everywhere, even when the condition or the control of a common is under consideration.

Moreover, the common property as an institution and as an idea allows for the establishment of property over nature and bodies. It does not matter that the property is not private or that it is not private yet. Even if it remains common, it is still a property with owners and excluded people, with rights to use, harvest and abuse for some, even if those ‘some’ can be the entire humanity.

In addition, it is the ‘common’ that makes private property acceptable in the first place. It is not only that in practice (and in history) we have seen in many cases that the norms and/or legislation turned from regulating the common-proprieted bodies (human/nonhuman) to allowing or instituting the exclusive right of the patriarch to those bodies, whether human or nonhuman. The patriarch or the private owner, even if it is a patriarchal substitute like a state, has the right, once a common property comes into existence, to distribute or retain that common property, to exclude from that common property social groups or everyone whom the patriarch/patriarchal substitute does not want to have access to the (previously) common or (now) private thing, and to include to its control whomever supports patriarchal rights, like a corrupt politician who gets his share of profit for turning a blind eye to environmental destruction in his area (Mies & Shiva, Bennholdt-Thomsen et al 1988, Pateman 1988, Sugden & Punch 2014).

4.3. Property in patriarchy

Historically, beyond patriarchy, we have not found any other social and economic systems where land and humans become (common or private) property (Lerner 1986, Mayes 2005, Brosius

2004). However, one would think of patriarchy as a system with property, just for the analytical need to avoid essentialism (like saying that property and patriarchy are the same thing and cannot exist otherwise).

In patriarchy, most lands and means of production are owned by men or by patriarchal substitutes, like the state, corporations or women who serve patriarchy in all its aspects. The fact that at some point ownership might reach a person (man or woman) who is not so patriarchal as patriarchy expects them to be does not change the structure of the system as such, despite the cracks or subversive possibilities that such 'unfortunate' coincidence might create (Mayes 2005).

Moreover, private property is the default institution concerning economic sharing or economic arrangements. Despite what the discourse of the commons declares now and then, common property is not the default of a patriarchal system and even if it is at some point in history, due to historical conditions that go beyond the usual patriarchal structures, patriarchy will make sure that the common property will be patriarchalized and privatized.

Sometimes, the process of patriarchalization and privatization go hand in hand. An example is the miri system of common/state lands in the Ottoman Empire, which degenerated as time went by, and as the Empire got more and more patriarchal, militarized and capitalized (Dönmez-Atbaşı & Sotiropoulou 2017).

Therefore, privatization is a systemic trait of patriarchy. Patriarchy is not just the economic system that has private property, but the system that has private property which is aggressively expanding. Privatization expands formally, informally and through interpretation of the commons as spaces serving private property. Aggressiveness of privatization is not theoretical only: it uses all types of physical violence to be established, increased, deepened and disseminated (Sotiropoulou 2015, Demsetz 1964, Bennholdt-Thomsen et al 1988, Von Werlhof 2007).

Even in the construction of non-tangible properties over previously common goods one can see the violence that was a prerequisite for the private property to be instituted. Knowledge, especially medical knowledge, required a massive witch-hunt in Western Europe and the United States. The patenting of agricultural genetic material and biopiracy required, and still requires, colonial violence to exist. The construction of arts and culture or the production of know-how as private properties or even as common properties that need to be managed by certain managers and controlled by certain controllers required the violent exclusion or destruction of artists, communities or entire societies that produced goods, arts or entire cultures in ways that were not compatible with private property and patriarchy (Federici 2004, Mies 1998, Peterson 2003, Ehrenreich & English 1973).

4.4. Capitalist patriarchy and the commons

As has already been mentioned, commons and private property are one more patriarchal binary. This has huge implications in general, but in capitalism the implications are even more pressing or complicated.

Private property in capitalism is the institution that is more or less treated as sacred. In other words, private property in capitalist societies is deemed to be the default institution for everything that needs to be organized. It is not an institution to be doubted or reversed, much less to be criticized as totalitarian or as suppressing the majority of the population or as being the cause for environmental destruction and human inequalities.

Within this context, the commons are a political economic arrangement that expands property relationships to everything that cannot (yet) be easily individualized under capitalism. It creates a reserve of means of production that are left outside private property sharing or use-harvest-abuse arrangements, for future use. Or, they are left outside private property to allow the most powerful to privatize de facto, and without even undertaking the responsibility of the privatization, the common, as it happens with the abuse of environmental commons by the most powerful economic actors of society.

Capitalist patriarchy, on the other hand, could not exist at all without having this ‘commons’ arrangement, in order really to contain private interests from going wild and from making the patriarchal arrangement to collapse under harsh or violent competition. As it happened with the de facto common property over women in modernity, capitalist patriarchy through commons creates ‘fraternities’ that are patriarchal enough to own and use-harvest-abuse the common, but not self-destructive enough to lose the propertied thing. Destruction of the propertied thing means that not only the owner needs other things to own, but that the fraternity is over and patriarchs need to have some arrangements between them against all the rest (humans and nature) to make sure they can continue exploiting the rest as a group (a common of patriarchs). Leaving some commons to exist as such is essential for the survival of the entire patriarchal capitalist property-based economy (Pateman 1988, Peterson 1997, Ehrenreich & English 1973, Eisenstein 1979, Trenkle 2014).

5. Commons as the property of the poor

For years, I was happy to read in literature how much the commons support the survival of the poor communities or of the groups that are marginalized, deprived, or discriminated against, like women, sexual minorities, ethnic minorities, low income classes or formerly colonized and now indigenous communities (Antinori et al 1997, Baland & Francois 2005, Astuti & McGregor 2016).

However, something was not fitting in this discourse. It is true, though, that the commons are the last resort of the most disadvantaged. And I would have no problem with poor people having access to the commons to survive, because they are deprived of anything else.

The problem is that, through this discourse, the commons become a compensation to the poor for accepting the private property of the rich and the wealth transfer to the latter through private property in combination with the other patriarchal (capitalist) institutions. It is obvious that the wealthy groups can very well manage the patriarchal (capitalist) institutions to their benefit, as it seems that each patriarchal institution supports the reproduction of the rest patriarchal institutions. While this is happening at the expense of the poor, the latter are happy to have access to a forest or river that can be anytime privatized once the profit-making procedures have exhausted other natural or social sources of wealth.

In other words, the commons extend property relationships to everything that cannot (yet) be easily individualized. In that way, they create a precedent, both social and legal, over things that would be unthinkable to own in any way some years or centuries ago. Think of the sea or of the open space. Anything that it is too costly at the moment to be cut in private shares, can be commonly owned till a new arrangement is possible for technical or social reasons.

The most fundamental problem, though, of the proliferation of the discourse of the commons while private property and property in general remain undoubted, is that it educates everyone that property is the only relationship to the world: nature, things, humans, communities. It wires our

thinking to see everything through the prism of use, harvest and abuse or dispose, through the prism of control and through the prism of exclusion. If we cannot relate to something or somebody through other relationships than property, then we are not only stuck in capitalist thinking – we are stuck in patriarchal thinking, too. Patriarchy and capitalism can reproduce themselves exactly because their main institution, property, remains, unquestioned (Richardson 2010, Pateman 1988, Mayes 2005, Agathangelou & Ling 2006).

To that, one could add some more practical issues. In reality, the commons are self-defeating as a term and practice. Moreover, it has a direct class, gender and race bias that turns against the poor, the colonized, the women, the migrants and those who cannot survive outside the commons.

First, the commons are happily understood as the leftovers of private property. It seems that none or very few people who support the commons discourse have a problem with private property crowding out the commons more and more. If we construct the commons like this, then we have lost our offensive position against private property and we end up cornered by private property asking for more and more commons to privatize. There will be less and less common property and more and more people will have to cope with less and less material commons.

Second, the commons become the reserve of raw materials and means of production, plus productive land that can be used upon demand for private purposes. We have seen this in all structural adjustment programs, which have never had any problem with public property and the commons: the commons and public property were property good enough to be sold to interested buyers. Colonialism has many faces and the commons have been one of them: you cannot buy something that is not property already, you need to conquer it or let the sellers create property rights over it first. It does not matter whether the property rights initially are common rights. This can be fixed easily. What is not easily fixed is the non-proprietary thing. This requires mere violence to be turned into property, and violence is expensive.

Third, the commons have become already a means to hierarchize communities. We knew already that even before capitalism, entire communities entered fights for managing the local river or forest. In reality, war is violence over the commons, ‘yours’ claimed as ‘ours.’ Power relations emerge around the commons, and property is an institution that is bound to hierarchy, power and exclusion of the weakest/poorest/stranger. The exclusion refers to the modes of production that are based on the commons, too. The colonial communities produced their livelihoods with the colonized commons in a different way than the local people did before being colonized. The modes of production with the commons that were adopted by the local people were hierarchized as non-productive, primitive, ridiculous, conservative or even destructive.

Finally, the hierarchization of the modes of the production concerning the commons is of the utmost importance with reference to indigenous communities, i.e. formerly (and unfortunately, still) colonized peoples. There are cases where colonialism, private property and capitalism have been destroying nature for centuries. Then, when the commons discourse emerges, the local authorities (who are the political and economic successors of the colonizers) claim that the indigenous practices are not sustainable/commons-friendly anymore, because there are not enough forests or not enough hunting game for the indigenous communities to live again in their pre-colonial or semi-indigenous lifestyle. The claims never mention the reasons for the reduction of the forests, for the extinction danger of species or the causes of pollution that make the ecosystems

fragile to indigenous practices but not fragile to extractive activities or deforestation for industrial purposes (Astuti & McGregor 2016, German et al 2016).

6. Conclusion: Beyond the commons

Can we escape the commons? The question is linked to our possibility to escape private property and patriarchy, including capitalism. It might be maximalist thinking, but if we are expected to understand systemic functions of a term and practice, we should see the connections of actual political economic institutions the way they are and not the way we would like them to be.

In reality, private property and property in general are very problematic institutions and they need to become again the epicentre of anticapitalist and antipatriarchal debates and practices. At least, while theorizing, we need to dismantle the acceptance of (private) property as our only way to relate to the world, or as our only way to behave so that we can live in a complicated world where we are not supposed to expect or to be entitled to use, harvest and abuse everything around us.

As a researcher, I see a scope for research concerning theory and practices of collective arrangements that do not use property or use it in a very limited way as an institution, whether those are historical or contemporary. It would be necessary to proceed with this research and debate while having in mind that those varied practices have existed or still exist in other areas outside Western Europe and the Anglo-Saxon world where the commons discourse is produced (Brosius 2004, Dönmez-Atbaşı & Sotiropoulou 2017, Sotiropoulou 2017b).

At the end, if the commons are not critically examined in historical and social contexts that are different from the ones where they were initially created, we will not be able to see whether the notion has any relevance in other economies and societies or whether it is a capitalist euro-centric notion that needs to be put within its context.

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6. Giota Bampatzimopoulou, ‘Gendered Entwinements and Significations: Towards an Intersectional Theory of the Commons?’

Introduction

The following paper intends to contribute to the ongoing conversation concerning the necessity of correlating the commons’ discourses, the subject that participates in the commoning and the category of gender. Here and in what follows, I take into serious consideration the fact that feminist theory may provide useful tools in the conversation regarding the commons, far beyond the concept of social reproduction. Furthermore, the category of gender is widely acknowledged as a key factor in the analysis of the structures of power, the organization of social institutions and of the mechanisms of ideological control in contemporary societies (Athanasiou, 2006, pp. 106–107).

I have deliberately chosen the work of Silvia Federici because she treats the category of gender as a central one in the politics of the commons. However, there are some restrictions in the ways that women are conceived in her work. In order to take her thread of thought a step further, I will use the work of Judith Butler. Despite the fact that Butler does not examine the commons, she can give us valuable tools concerning the gendered body and the commoning. I seek to argue in favour of the necessity of enriching the commons’ discourses, at least with the gender category. Finally, I intend to experiment with the notion of intersectionality, while trying to find out the ways in which this theoretical tool might be useful for the commons’ discourses.

Sensing the commons

The paper begins by defining the commons, as a diverse body of discourses that includes multiple demands. They highlight an alternative way of viewing and constructing our social reality, beyond the bipolar division of the state and the market. By emphasizing the self-organization of the populations and the creation of communities, both the political and politics are being re-examined, in order to be reconstituted in new contexts. Many scholars and activists believe that this emerging politics is able to unite different movements with different perceptions under a common purpose, but also that it can overcome the restraints of wage struggles (An Architektur, 2010; Federici, 2011, 2012b).

An important starting point in the analysis of the commons is that they presuppose three things: resources, communities and struggles. Broadly defined, they refer to all those necessary for our social reproduction- material or immaterial- resources. But the commons only come to the fore when struggling communities are trying to preserve and enlarge them. We can also conceive of them as an administrative system, a space, where all necessary resources are being organized, within which subjects and groups are related, struggles emerge and a new ethical frame to defend and reproduce this system is being articulated. (Benkler & Nissenbaum, 2006; De Angelis, 2007, 2013; Dyer-Whitford, 2007; Federici, 2012a)

Nevertheless, the subject of the commons in most of these discourses is being represented in a deficient manner. The commoner is usually being depicted as a non-gendered, universal, abstract subject, thus confirms an androcentric humanism that silences the (gender) difference. Many feminist scholars support that this ‘“constitutive difference”, proves central for a politics that challenges both property and sovereignty in specific ways’ (Butler & Athanasiou, 2013, p. ix) and aims to overcome the ‘[...] project of domination that can sustain itself only by dividing, on a continuously renewed basis, those it intends to rule’ (Federici, 2004, p. 8)

In the light of the above, the paper will go on to discuss how the category of gender is correlated with the commons in the current bibliography. Silvia Federici's work is pivotal to this connection.

Silvia Federici: Female Commons

Federici's perspective on the commons is obviously a feminist one. She considers that the struggles for the commons, based on social cooperation, can enrich the ways in which property is being conceived. According to her view, the commons can help us rewrite the history of class struggle and unite different movements under the same umbrella (Federici, 2011). The key-word in her analysis is reproductive work- meaning the ensemble of activities by which life and labour are constituted. Domestic labour forms the basis of every economic and political system and is an extra criterion of evaluation of every model of social organization. The unpaid work of women is '[...] what keeps the world moving' (Federici, 2012a, p. 139).

Along with this, she criticizes domestic labour because of its unwaged character and she puts the emphasis on the extremely important task of denaturalizing it. (Federici, 2012a, pp. 5, 8–9) In this context, sexuality is completely attached to labour, as well. For her, 'it is always women who suffer most from the schizophrenic character of sexual relations', (Federici, 2012a, p. 24) as they are under an extra obligation to please their husband. The sphere of reproduction is being defined as the only and absolute regulator of our social life, while at the same time sexuality is being put into an exclusively heteronormative framework. (Federici, 2012a, pp. 23–27)

Moreover, Federici indicates that women, historically, have a greater need for access to common-pool resources and for that reason they are placed in the front line of the struggle against enclosures. By putting the emphasis on the witch-hunting during the period of the transition into capitalism, she reveals that the enclosures equally happened in women's bodies through the control of: feminine sexuality, reproductive capacity, but mainly, through the devaluation of the reproductive work and their social status. Thus, in parallel with the emergence of the waged proletariat, the naturalization of women's reproductive work has been imposed, as well as the radical decomposition of communal relationships. Hence, enclosures are no longer recognized on the basis of the separation of the producers from the means of production. Additionally, the subject of enclosures ceases to be non-gendered and abstract. Along with this, through an orchestrated violence from the state, 'a new model of femininity emerged: the ideal woman and spouse- passive, obedient, thrifty, of few words, always busy at work and chaste' and 'a whole world of female practices' (Federici, 2004, p. 103) have been destroyed. But, it is extremely important that at the same period women became a common that everybody used as he wished, both the state and men (Federici, 2012b, pp. 138–139).

Closer to our present time, Federici explores women's struggles, mostly in Africa and in other places. In these struggles, women strongly withstand the assaults of global organizations, in an effort to retain their means of survival. As their primary concern is the protection of their land and forests or the creation of alternative bank systems and collective kitchens, among others, they manage to collectivize their reproductive work. By doing this, they reduce the cost of reproduction and keep themselves protected from poverty and the violence of the state and men. For Federici, these struggles create a collective identity, a common interest and reciprocal bonds. In this framework, what she, finally, suggests, is the collectivization of reproductive work (Federici, 2012a, pp. 143–144). In the main, she considers the collective forms of living necessary, so that the intensity of care work can be collectively shared. Furthermore, she deems essential our

reconnection with the history of women's struggles, as this reconnection is extremely important for the reconstruction of our life as a common (Federici, 2012a, pp. 145–148).

Definitely, such a strategy may reduce women's burdens, but we cannot eliminate them. For that reason, it would be useful to take a step further and enrich our struggles with the history and the knowledge from different fields beyond reproduction. In my opinion, Federici gives the impression that she invites us to adjust to the present, tools of resistance from the past, or tools that cannot have broad application. Certainly, these practices still strengthen many women to resist and to be socially reproduced. But, in different environments, could we, exclusively, lean upon such means? In cases when the assault on our social reproduction is not so obvious or direct, how could we resist?

For Federici, the word 'women' should not be used to describe a homogeneous type of human being (Federici, 2012b, p. 10). For her, the gendered division of labour dissociates gender from its understanding 'as a purely cultural reality' (Federici, 2004, p. 14). In her work, it is demonstrated that due to the gendered division of labour '“women's history” is a class history' (Federici, 2004, p. 14). Nevertheless, woman as described by Federici has certain characteristics- she moves between housewife and worker- like the man who is always a proletarian. That way, every struggle for Federici is a class struggle. Even though woman as housewife is placed next to the man-worker, we still cannot confirm that the class position should be considered something permanent and the only source of our oppression.

Accordingly, she opens cracks in the bipolar division of state-market. She reveals their main role, historically, in the oppression of women. However, Federici cannot escape from the bipolar division between the male/worker and the female/housewife/worker. Could we argue today that all women experience the same oppression? That oppression can be found only in the field of reproduction? Can we confirm that the subject 'woman' only receives and does not exert power on multiple levels? Additionally, do not the notions of social reproduction and unpaid labour relate to other genders besides the two established ones?

The paper moves on to explore different significations of gender, in an effort to enhance the conception of the commoner.

Confrontation with different meanings of gender

I think that the work of Judith Butler can offer us useful tools. Her main concern is to examine critically the basic vocabulary of feminism and to extend the notion of gender, beyond the bipolar stereotypes that lead to new forms of hierarchies and exclusions. What she wants to indicate that the distinction between 'original' gender expressions (male/female) and those which are regarded as fake and secondary should not exist. The 'opening' of the possibilities that she undertakes could be comprehended, as she insists, by whoever '[...]has understood what it is to live in the social world as what is “impossible,” illegible, unrealizable, unreal, and illegitimate[...]' (Butler, 2002, p. viii).

With her work, she manages to put into question the distinction between sex and gender. She argues that sex is also primarily social. Furthermore, she criticizes the approaches that presuppose the '“essence” of gender' (Athanasidou, 2006, p. 97). For Butler: '[...]sex is an ideal construct which is forcibly materialized through time' (Butler, 1993, p. 1). But also: '[...] gender proves to be performative- that is, constituting the identity it is purported to be. In this sense, gender is always a doing, though not a doing by a subject who might be said to preexist the deed' (Butler,

2002, p. 33). Moreover: ‘ “Sex” is, thus, not simply what one has, or a static description of what one is: it will be one of the norms by which the ‘one’ becomes viable at all, that which qualifies a body for life within the domain of cultural intelligibility’ (Butler, 1993, p. 2).

For Butler, sex is a rule or a ‘regulatory practice’ that exerts productive power on the bodies. This practice may form and control them. In this way, sex becomes the ‘effect’ of the very process of materialization of the body. For this to happen, a necessary condition is the repetition of those norms that define what conforms to each gender. This procedure of obligatory and continual repetition to adjust yourself to the rules of your sex proves primarily that materialization is never fulfilled and that, finally, the bodies cannot fully conform to the norms. At the same time, through the process of the repetition, the hegemony of established rules could be unsettled (Butler, 2008, p. 42).

Sex as ‘**doing**’ opens up the field, and a different performance of our actions comes within the bounds of the possibility so that established forms and heteronormativity can be renegotiated (Butler, 2006) In her work, the subject ‘we’ of feminism is finally a ‘phantasmatic construction’ (Butler, 2002, p. 181) that always leaves something out. The category of the subject is radically unstable and, thus, it is necessary to reconsider the politics of the subject (Butler, 2009, pp. 184–186). The instability and the imperfection of the subject brings **contingency** to the fore. As a result, the political is conceptualized as an **event**, as the ‘performative exercise of social agonism’ (Butler & Athanasiou, 2013, p. 141) within those regulatory rules which we cannot always control, but we can at least disrupt and crack open.

Hence, the body becomes significant. It signals the procedure of gendering through performativity, namely the ‘[...] reiterative and citational practice by which discourse produces the effects that it names’ (Butler, 1993, p. 2), opening itself up to the materialization of possibilities which are defined by historical and social frameworks (Athanasiou, 2009).

Experimentations: Queering the commons?

But how are all these related to the commons? The work of Butler could help us to grasp the regulatory mechanisms that impose on us the ways/rules by which our bodies live. In the end, it seems that some bodies assume a greater importance and legitimacy from others. Therefore, if the politics of the commons seeks to influence human bodies, to make the bodies significant, these bodies should be placed at the centre. But we should recognize their multiplicity, beyond the established dualism that heteronormativity imposes.

Furthermore, the theory of performativity could be extremely useful for the political construction of commoning, the dynamic practice that gives ‘energy’ to the commons. Commoning is mostly situated into the field of (re)production. (De Angelis, 2013, p. 83) I strongly believe that by foregrounding an ‘open’ subject, such as the one that Butler considers, we could transcend another bipolar division, that between the original economic struggles in the field of production/reproduction which enforce heteronormativity, and the ‘merely cultural’ struggles in the field of sexuality that many still consider inferior (Butler, 1998).

Finally, if the commoner, as a kind of identity, is materialized by the norms imposed by established rules, and commoning may also influence this materialization, it would be a challenge for movements/communities to eliminate all those limitations that can make some bodies less important in this struggle. That way, I think that the commons could not be regarded just as a

disorder in the system, but as a real ‘trouble,’ and our struggles could overcome more frontiers and compulsions.

Trying to grasp the commons through intersectional lenses

Even if many people still believe that the communities which materialize commoning cannot erode the hegemony of neoliberalism, we should keep in mind that it is exactly the iterability of commoning that invites difference as an essential condition for the promise of the event. Can we imagine the communities of the commons as intersectional spaces, namely, as spaces where different people co-exist and difference is not considered a ‘merely cultural’ characteristic? Does it suffice to say that the commons only constitute spaces of governing effectively the resources or spaces of class struggles? In this final section, I intend to experiment with some extra tools from feminist theory that I find extremely useful, beyond the above-mentioned approaches to gender, which extend from autonomous-Marxist feminism to queer theory.

In contemporary feminist theory, one way of conceptualizing the relation between multiple systems of oppression is the concept of intersectionality. The lives of women and of commoners are highly influenced by multiple, intersecting systems of oppression. For feminist theorists who use intersectionality as a theory or methodology to study ‘real world phenomena,’ there are four main analytic benefits: simultaneity, complexity, irreducibility and inclusivity (Carastathis, 2014; May, 2015). I think we could incorporate them in the analysis of the commons and the commoner.

In a word, we should keep in mind that oppressions are experienced simultaneously. Furthermore, complexity can be found within any type of relationship or group, and we should avoid monistic approaches. Both simultaneity and complexity invite us to avoid privileging a certain category (e.g class) when we address oppressions. This is the analytic gain of irreducibility. Finally, attending to inclusivity and resisting practices which favour, among others, white solipsism, heteronormativity, elitism and ableism we can enrich the meaning of political solidarity (Carastathis, 2014).

As commoning is an active procedure by which we protect the resources but we also regenerate ourselves, we should keep in mind that as agents we are embedded in multiple systems of oppressions and inequalities. That fact urges us to appreciate the complexity that human relations include and the multiplicity of the categories by which we confer meaning on our political action. Perhaps in this way we would stop prioritizing the economic struggles over the ‘merely cultural’ and we could finally include in our analyses and practices more categories which produce inequalities even within the communities of the commons.

Concluding remarks

Since commoning is an arduous undertaking, it would be useful to add to our demands, beyond open and equal access, respect for differences and the protection of those who are more vulnerable because of their gender, race, ethnicity, sexual preference, abilities or every other exclusion they face. It is reasonable to conclude that the struggles for our open and equal access to common resources should be connected with our bodies that may suffer from simultaneous oppressions even inside the communities that prefigure a new world.

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7. Rosa Barotsi, 'The daughter as crisis/Daughters of the crisis: Women and contemporary Greek visual media'

A large number of Greek fiction films produced during the austerity years, despite receiving praise for reflecting the sociopolitical situation in the country, have not only fallen short of representing the collective subjects who have been pivotal in resisting, persisting, and organizing; they have failed to represent the collective subject at all, save in its embodied, individualized and sexist figure of the victimized daughter. In this presentation, I will juxtapose a set of films that have often been discussed under the umbrella term 'Weird Wave' with that of the flourishing world of Greek independent documentary productions, which do the work of reframing the narratives of crisis and documenting the struggles of community organizing. These are collected in the digital archive #greekdocs (Lekakis 2016). I will briefly present an example, the documentary *Solitaire ou Solidaire?* (Chryssa Tzelepi, Akis Kersanidis, Irini Karagkiozidou, Emilia Kougioumtzoglou, Kiki Moustakidou, Stavroula Poulimeni, 2016).

While I'm sure no one will be astonished at my findings that independent documentaries are better at speaking to the sociopolitical reality in Greece than traditionally-funded festival fiction films –my point will be to look at *how* both sets of films perform their meanings in ways that do not only have to do with their subject matter, but with their form, narrative structure and modes of representation. My analysis will be based on the conviction that commoning in the cinema, as in other cultural products, is not only a question of documenting commons projects but also a question of modes of production and the politics of representation.

But before I go on, I would like to refer us briefly back to some ideas that were brought up during yesterday's presentations. First, I'm thinking of Richard Day's dictum, mentioned yesterday morning, that radical social movements are 'less concerned with affecting the content of current forms of domination and exploitation than [they are] with creating alternatives to the *forms themselves*' (at least around 2005, when Day published *Gramsci is Dead*, 2005: 19). In film history and theory, the question of content (the subject matter) versus form (how this subject matter is expressed) has a long and complex history, which includes, for instance, debates on their relative value, or whether specific forms are inherently ethical or unethical, inherently progressive or conservative (Sontag 1966, Rivette 1961, Ryan 1988, etc). Certain aspects of the form/content dispute will inform my presentation today, inasmuch as many of the contemporary Greek fiction films I will be talking about have often been celebrated for their formal innovation and their political traction.

The second point I want us to recall from yesterday's program is Silke's proposition (following George Monbiot) that we should be striving for a change in the *narrative structure* we use to imagine what is possible. What I hope to show in my presentation is, in a sense, that some of us might wish to appreciate these recent fiction films for their aesthetics, or praise them for what their content allows us to imagine they were made for (in this case, a politically charged response to the Greek 'crisis', although, as I will explain, I believe this interpretation has often been a stretch, or even an outright invention). However, I will try to show that despite their efforts to be, or critics' efforts to see them as, radical in form or content, we have to recognize that the most well-travelled of Weird Wave films administer the very same narrative tropes that keep our political system's hierarchies securely in place. Specifically, I will be talking about the *topos* of the daughter, the young woman who cannot exist without patriarchal control (if she tries, she dies, or risks death or sexual abuse). The fact that so few critics and scholars have

recognized the persistence of this micro-narrative goes to show how embedded and unremarkable it still is. These – the ones we don't see – are the micro-narratives we need to change, because they are the ones through which we imagine ourselves.

The daughter figure in recent Greek fiction films

Recent Greek fiction films have been celebrated, mostly abroad, for speaking to the sociopolitical situation in Greece. The 'crisis' has put a spotlight on local cinematic production, so that films such as *Dogtooth* (Yorgos Lanthimos, 2009), *Attenberg* (Athena Rachel Tsangari, 2011), *Miss Violence* (Alexandros Avranas 2013), *The sentimentalists* (Nikos Triandafyllidis, 2014), *Standing aside, Watching* (Yorgos Servetas 2014), have been garnering attention and awards in the international festival circuit. Most of these films have been discussed as preoccupied with the family unit, both as a symptom and an allegory for society or the people. The female characters, whilst very often prominent or protagonistic, are almost always presented as either victims, stand-ins for a collective suffering, or as 'active accomplices without agency' (Kazakopoulou 2016). Whilst many of these films can make claims to giving space to women on screen, female characters very often serve merely to reaffirm the stereotypes that the films might see themselves as fighting against. As these women bear the brunt of the suffering, both in real and allegorical households, their value seems to stem predominantly from their status as innocent victims unwilling or unable to fight back convincingly. Following Silvia Federici, I insist that Greek fiction films of the austerity years, whilst bringing (young) women to the centre of the screen, do so by re-affirming that part of our collective consciousness in which 'women have been designated as men's common, a natural source of wealth and services to be as freely appropriated by them as the capitalists have appropriated the wealth of nature' (Federici 2012), contrarily to the work done in recent documentaries that engage commoning and struggling for justice, both in terms of mode of production and representation.

In the current, seventh year of austerity memoranda, Greek economy continues to fall into recession, welfare and labour protections are progressively dismantled, and inequality continues to rise. The bailout agreements between successive Greek governments and the Troika of creditors have meant a full-on assault on labour rights such as collective bargaining and arbitration, effectively recasting 'the legal framework of class struggle' (Boukalas and Müller 2015: 394) in the guise of competitiveness. The euphemistically named structural adjustments of the Memoranda were meant to increase productivity and attract investments, by unleashing a series of neoliberal reforms such as the shrinking of the public sector; the devaluation of labour power through wage and pension cuts; privatizations which would result in the integration of even the 'relatively decommodified forms of social reproduction into capitalist valorization' (TPTG 2011: 252); and the institutionalization of precarity (Federici 2016) through such measures as unemployed 'training' schemes and the Public Benefit Program that turns workers into 'beneficiaries' and denies them their labour rights.

Like other marginalized groups, women are disproportionately affected by these changes. Feminist scholars such as Amber Karanikolas, Anna Carastathis and Athena Athanasiou have all spoken about the ways in which neoliberal austerity enhances gender inequalities and entrenches conservative patriarchal conceptions of the political (effectively updating 1970s feminist scholarship on the mutual constitution of capitalism and power structures based on race and gender). Greater exploitation, longer hours, increased violence and sexual harassment,

discrimination based on pregnancy, and added pressures on the household have disproportionately affected women workers and especially care workers, who are often migrant women employed without whatever protections remain in the official economy (Karanikolas).

Women have also been at the forefront of the struggles and autonomous organizing against austerity and the ever-worsening conditions of exploitation. From Konstantina Kouneva, the famous Bulgarian-born historian, cleaner and trade unionist; to the anti-mining protesters in the Northern-Greek village of Skouries who have been resisting the Canadian company El Dorado Gold's construction site for years, despite intimidation by the police and successive governments (including that of Syriza/Anel, despite Tsipras's pre-electoral vocal support for the protesters); to the cleaners of the Ministry of Finance who in 2014-15, for more than a year, set up camp outside the Ministry after being summarily fired, and protested daily until they got their jobs back.

(As a sidenote, the case of the cleaners provided one of the most telling snapshots of the neoliberal myth of 'competitiveness.' As Maria Daskalaki and Marianna Fotaki recount, 'the then Minister of Modernization, a Harvard-educated scion of a political family and product of nepotism co-implicated in the bribe-giving affair by Siemens, Kyriakos Mitsotakis, asked the sacked cleaners to form a company and bid for a cleaning contract' (2017:143) – that is, socializing the risk for the rich while letting the most vulnerable 'compete' in the market place).

Under such circumstances, Greek cinema is garnering more attention than it has in decades, and has even been assigned its very own Wave, as it often happens when political turmoil turns the global spotlight on national production. In this context, I wish to look at what kinds of spaces women occupy in Greek film and visual cultures, especially in relation to the films that have been received by critics, academics and the public (especially abroad) as producing political allegories in the form of families that stand in for a nation or society in crisis. Stamos Metzidakis, Mark Fisher, Dimitris Papanikolaou, even Rachel Tsangari herself have made that connection (in Rose 2011). These allegories are most often based on the model of the quintessential patriarchal family, presented as an authoritarian system in which the daughters bear the brunt of the oppression and violence, and one in which they are very literally *enclosed* (I will talk more about this later). In the five following examples, I will attempt to show that, despite their formal innovations, captivating narratives and female protagonists, the films perpetuate an image of the (young) woman as victimized, childlike and incapable of effective resistance.

a) Yorgos Lanthimos's *Dogtooth* (2009) concerns an upper-middle-class family who live in a suburban villa with a beautiful garden and swimming pool. The three young adults have been raised by the patriarch – a factory owner - and his complicit but equally oppressed wife to think that the world outside the big fence at the edge of their garden is a treacherous place. For all intents and purposes, in fact, their world ends at their front door. Their environment has been adapted to this artificial reality so that any reference to objects or notions that might imply an outside are redefined and neutralised. After being sexually abused by her brother (at the request of the father), the older daughter will attempt to escape, but only in the terms prescribed by the father's absurd rules – hiding in the trunk of her father's car. We are left to wonder whether or not she makes it.

b) In Alexandros Avranas's *Miss Violence* (2013), a similarly violent patriarchal and abusive family structure, this time a lower-middle-class hard-hit by the crisis, sees the women of the family as, at the same time, protagonists, victims, and accomplices without agency (Kazakopoulou), unable to escape their victimization. When the patriarch is finally done away with, the film lets us understand that the women don't know any better than to replicate his system of home management, keeping themselves locked up just as before. As Tonia Kazakopoulou says, the end of the film 'reproduces the notion that a woman only has control over the domestic space, and no means with which to engage positively to affect the public realm' (2016: 195).

c) In *The Sentimentalists* (Nikolas Triandafyllidis, 2014), once again a patriarchal and indirectly incestuous father-daughter relationship, this time set in the ruling class, the absolute 1 per cent, sees any attempt at independence on the part of the daughter smashed by the patriarch's desire for total domination and enclosure.

d) Even in *Attenberg* (2010) (by one of the most important directors and one of the few internationally well-known women directors on the Greek scene today, Rachel Tsangari), the female protagonist, daughter to a single ailing father (who is – therefore? – presented as loving and guilt-ridden for his failure to build a better life for his daughter), allegorically condenses the inability of a generation of middle-class young adults to make the transition into independent adulthood.

e) One last indicative example: When I came across *Standing Aside, Watching*, a 2013 film by Yorgos Avranas, I was happy to find a female protagonist who didn't fall into either the category of the victim, stand-in for the suffering of a nation or a generation, or into that of an accomplice deprived of agency. In a few words (taken more or less verbatim from an article published this year [Barotsi 2017]): *Standing Aside, Watching* is the story of Antigone, a young woman from Athens who decides to move to her family's home town of Thebes, after life in the capital becomes financially unviable. The provincial Thebes, like a frontier town, is immediately framed as a desolate place full of insidious tensions and an ambiguous rule of law. Antigone is not delighted to be there, but she's determined to make it work. She applies for a job as an English tutor at the local evening school, reconnects with Eleni, an old friend, and starts dating a very young crane operator, Nikos. Soon, we discover that Eleni has been having an affair with the owner of the scrapyards where Nikos works. An abusive misogynist and manipulative boss with a criminal record, Nondas is set up as the arch-nemesis of our hero in this Greek neo-western. Eleni tries to manage her abusive relationship by drinking and shoplifting, and turns to Antigone whenever she's in trouble.

Nikos oscillates between his interest in Antigone and his loyalty to his boss, but Antigone will have none of it. There are no half measures here: she sees violence and injustice and she calls it out. Like her more famous counterpart, this Thebean Antigone is a symbol of feminist and counterhegemonic defiance. Towards the end, just as in the Sophoclean tragedy, a community made up of abusive men of power and complicit victims will appear to get the better of her. Nondas and Nikos will abduct Antigone to punish her in the way that seems most fit for them: punitive rape. But unlike the ancient Greek Antigone, she will be saved, at the very last moment, by an old romance, a man who until that point had chosen to lead a quiet life by ignoring the injustices around him and just getting along. In the film's final sequence, we hear

Antigone in voiceover, contesting, with a final message of defiance, the establishment's idea of 'progress.'

In a recent article, I spoke about how Antigone, an 'angry feminist,' seemed to emphatically propose a different model for contemporary Greek cinema, which, whilst perhaps not as fashionably Beckettian as some of the more famous 'Weird' Greek films, argued for anger and resistance in the face of injustice.

And yet, when all is said and done, even Antigone has to eventually be rescued from sexual violence by a former boyfriend. While this final turn of events does not fully undermine the power of her character, it is impossible, after this short overview, to deny the fact that in the recent Greek festival films that have attracted attention, women (in front of the camera as well as behind it) don't have as much space as it might initially seem.

'Commons theory and gender'

I want to pause here for a moment, to engage in a brief theoretical discussion of the parallel history of women and the commons. What follows, I should say, was not part of my presentation at the Heteropolitics conference. It is, rather, a comment on its reception, as well as the reception of the rest of my panel, the title of which is not unrelated to the reason for this interpolation: 'Commons theory and gender.' Between the three of us, my fellow speakers and I represented 50% of the women participants at this two-day event. And while there's no reason why it should necessarily be so, the fact that we were aggregated under the 'Gender' label did end up having the distinct feel of auxiliarity to the larger Commons theme, which is the reason everyone was there, after all.

For me, the sense of our auxiliarity was confirmed after discovering that a number of participants had expressed their confusion as to the relevance of our panel to the conference topic; or worse, their certainty that that relevance did not exist, and their consequent irritation at its inclusion.

Perhaps in part due to this surreptitious 'confusion' in the audience, one of the organizers, by form of mediation, decided to give the speakers an opportunity to justify our existence, by asking one of us to 'summarise if possible what you think is the contribution of the feminist perspective [...] in the discussion on the commons. What can it help us do that we couldn't do for instance with other resources, with other theoretical schemes or practices'.

My colleague answered the question in a collegial and sober manner, which is commendable to say the least. I am convinced the question was intended to give us the opportunity to educate those who had their doubts about the relevance of feminism to commons theory and practice. That it had to be posed, however, is frankly infuriating, although not shocking, really. That men who have spent a good part of their life researching and actively engaging in commons-based projects are unaware of the deep feminist legacy underlying commons theory is terrible enough; but even if that legacy somehow hadn't existed, and commons theory had just erupted into being from the mouths of white Marxist academics like Hardt and Negri, how could anyone who subscribes to the principles of commoning and cooperation refute the necessity of feminism for such a project?

Of course that feminist legacy very much exists. As far as I'm concerned, commons theory probably owes a greater debt to feminist thought, and especially decolonial feminist thought, than to anything else that preceded it. Or, rather: commons theory is to a large extent the

expression of decolonial feminist preoccupations that women thinkers and activists have been discussing and practicing throughout history. To not know that, and, even worse, to actively refute it, is a sad sign of the usurpation of commons theory by the male-dominated syllabus we see today.

One of the thinkers who has been most consistent in reminding us that the commons cannot be thought separately from feminism is Silvia Federici. In her words:

[To] look at the politics of the commons from a feminist perspective, where feminist refers to a standpoint shaped by the struggle against sexual discrimination and over reproductive work [...] is necessary, in my view, to better define this politics, expand a debate that so far has remained male-dominated, and clarify under what conditions the principle of the common/s can become the foundation of an anticapitalist program (2012: 391-2).

The problem with most commons theory, especially in some of its more popular iterations, such as the work of Negri and Hardt, is that they overlook the question of reproduction (400). This is not only a regrettable omission for a project that proclaims to work towards a noncapitalist, cooperative society, but also a missed opportunity. To understand that, ‘as the primary subjects of reproductive work, historically and in our time, women have depended more than men on access to communal resources, and have been most committed to their defense’ (401) is a first step towards realizing that there is an opportunity here to learn from commons that *already exist*, and have existed for a long time.

Women have been at the forefront of the struggles against land enclosures in the West; the protagonists in salvaging collective forms of life and in collectivizing reproductive labour during the anti-colonial struggle in Latin America; the creators of money commons, or ‘tontines’, in Africa in the face of the persistence of colonialism in its neoliberal attire, where they are still today the producers of 80% of the food people consume (401-4).

As Federici points out, to not account for the question of reproduction in commoning projects is to replicate the logic of capitalist accumulation. Structural dependence on ‘the free appropriation of immense areas of labor and resources’ such as unpaid domestic labour is a necessary aspect of the capitalist market, and the way in which it guarantees the reproduction of its workforce. The premise for this system of exploitation is that these immense areas of reproductive labour ‘must appear as externalities to the market’ (394). When commons theories ignore the reproductive question, they perpetuate this logic.

Backed by the work of feminist historian Dolores Hayden, Federici cautions that the question of reproduction is *not a question of identity, but one of labour*. Woman, in other words, is not an identitarian term here, but a term denoting a position in a hierarchy. Black feminists, like Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, responsible for shaping the field of intersectionality, have pointed out forcefully that one can occupy multiple positions at once, and that unless we recognize the ways in which those positions intersect we will end up erasing those whose oppressions are multiple. Intersectionality is precisely the idea that forms of oppression should not be seen as having hierarchically structured degrees of importance, but as co-existent and interlocking. As Marxist feminists like Martha Gimenez point out, rather than undermining the primacy of economic relations, being aware of the intersecting nature of forms of oppression helps to uncover the workings of economic exploitation and to expand solidarity.

The insights of ecofeminism, the entire premise of which is to think together patriarchy and the exploitation of nature, have been fundamental in pushing forward the message that the triptych capitalism-colonialism-patriarchy delineates a single system of oppression, and that we can't imagine an alternative society without an overhaul that addresses all three. Commons theory needs to acknowledge that it stands on the shoulders of feminist political ecologists and economists,¹⁹ from Vandana Shiva to Maria Mies, Veronika Benholdt-Thomsen and Cristina Carrasco, decolonial feminists like Gloria Anzaldúa, Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui and Rita Segato, feminist philosophers of science like Donna Haraway, Marxist feminists like Silvia Federici and Mariarosa Dalla Costa, and feminist labour activists like Domitila Chungara, Berta Cáceres and Máxima Acuña.

It has already been noted (Driskoll) that seminal works in the commons theory canon like Hardt and Negri's *Commonwealth* perform a veritable theory looting in their appropriation without citation of Latin American decolonial concepts such as the coloniality of power, linked with thinkers like Quijano, Dussel and Mignolo. In his turn, the latter can be accused of looting from decolonial feminist thinkers like Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, Gloria Anzaldúa and grassroots anti-colonial struggles on the grounds that they are not sufficiently theoretical, or in need of theorization and single authorship, as opposed to collective praxis.²⁰ And while I'm not the first to note the dominance of men in commons theory platforms – Hilary Wainwright, for instance, once noted that 'It's a bit strange that the Commons and P2P movements are male dominated,' adding, 'I think it is because this gendered commons, the economy of domestic labor, is completely hidden in the Commons and P2P movements, as in society in general' (<http://commonstransition.org/feminist-socialism-commons/> – I think it's time to make that claim more strongly. This is not simply a matter of recognition. If the 'struggle for the commons' is to have any chance at producing systemic shifts, it cannot be based on the reproduction of the same colonial and patriarchal gestures that it purports to battle against. The sleight of hand by which women's intellectual and activist labour becomes an externality to the struggle for the commons (ignored by it; necessary for it) needs to be addressed. We don't need another boy's club.

#greekdocs and 'Solitaire ou Solidaire?'

To get back to the subject of my original presentation:

My frustration with the persistence of the narrative trope of the defenseless daughter in Greek fiction films was compounded by the fact that the majority of our conversations as feminists working in visual media run against the impasse of modes of production: as I scanned the panorama of Greek film to investigate the space women occupy in front of, as well as behind, the camera in a time of crisis that disproportionately affects them, it occurred to me that 'making space' for women's cinema was a problem that brought together the gender imbalance amongst producers of images with the lack of voices that did not belong to one or another

¹⁹ Most speakers either mentioned or engaged with economist Elinor Ostrom's theory of the commons, and she was one of the extremely few women that people outside of the 'gender' panel discussed as an important figure in the field. Despite Ostrom's debatable politics, the close relationship of her anti-essentialist, pluricentral thought, her distrust of (male) experts and her championing of a method that promotes participation and listening and values difference (Wall, 69) with feminist thought is so obvious it goes without saying. But apparently that's the problem. Let's say it then: Commons theory would not exist without feminist thought.

²⁰ Thank you to Zairong Xiang for this insight. Also see Breny Mendoza (2016) pp. 100-121

industry (mainstream, art, festival). In that sense, the collection of documentaries on the #greekdocs archive, put together by Eleftheria Lekakis, which contains more than 50 documentaries produced since 2011, provides access and visibility to a strain of production that enacts commoning not just as a question of *content* – documenting and providing a spotlight for projects that are based on principles of solidarity, cooperation and autonomy – but also as a question of *production* – film projects that reject traditional financing through state or private funding – *distribution* – most of the documentaries are available for free viewing under creative commons licenses – and of *representation* – a focus on collectivities, and an appeal not to pathos but to solidarity.

In the words of Lekakis,

#greekdocs are regarded as radical media because of their conspicuous (non-partisan) political approach to their topics, the identities of their producers and their political economy context, and they are discussed in the context of a reorganization of social relations through solidarity and the commons (Siapera and Papadopoulou, 2016b). As Siapera and Papadopoulou (2016b) also discuss, independent documentary production (citizens, journalists, creatives) rose rapidly as cultures of self-organization, cooperation and cooperativism [Lekakis 2017]

As Siapera and Papadopoulou define them,

radical documentaries [...] inaugurate a different political economy, beyond that of commodifying contents and information, operating for social benefit rather than for profit. [...] By thematising the crisis, giving voice to those affected and to those planning a future beyond the crisis, these documentaries are part of a shift towards more collaborative models of social organization, and a movement towards the building of a social economy. Their specific role in this is found to be one of helping to restore the social body and to contribute to processes of commoning, whereby solidarity and social trust is recovered. [Siapera and Papadopoulou 2016]

In the final section of this presentation, I want to provide a brief example of one such documentary, ‘Solitaire ou Solidaire?’, made by Stavroula Poulimeni, Aimilia Kougioumtzoglou, Kiki Moustakidou, Eirini Karagiozidou, Chryssa Tzelepi, Akis Kersanidis, Theofilos Kalaitzidis (2016) through crowdfunding, is dedicated to narrating the story of the Social Clinic of Solidarity in Thessaloniki. It was set up in 2012 by health workers who had been involved in the solidarity hunger strike of 2011, in support of the 300 migrants on hunger strike in Athens and Thessaloniki. The strikers were protesting new measures that restricted free healthcare and cut them out of the national health system, in a devastating example of the entanglement of austerity neoliberalism, racism and xenophobia. But rather than filling in the gaps of an inadequate and prejudiced national health system, the Social Clinic continues to act as an activist collective fighting for reform, a struggle that the members of the collective are aware is projected towards a distant and difficult future. In the SCS, decision-making is accomplished through a general assembly, where members participate with equal say (from doctors to cleaners to patients). The SCS refuse state or private financing or sponsorship.

The film begins and ends with two scenes of collective subjects. In the opening sequence, the immigrant activists arriving at the port in order to begin the hunger strike are met with crowds gathered in solidarity. In the final sequence, scenes at Eidomeni show people protesting for

their right to cross the border and others providing support and relief. Bookended by these scenes is a film punctuated with portraits of individuals who have been using the SCS structures. These individual stories are quite a few, and their narratives are composed of the aggregation of information from the people themselves, as well as a number of other voices from the SCS and beyond. The result is therefore double: a constellation of distinct individual voices, rather than a de-individualized crowd; and yet individual voices that are invariably and constantly complemented by other voices, so that the effect is one neither of identification nor of empathy, but rather that of the creation of a collective subject, in which the mutual support and solidarity of the SCS structure is replicated through editing.

That, for me and for my field, is perhaps the most important change in narrative methodology that needs to be accomplished in visual media today – a shift to the collective subject. Initiatives such as #greekdocs are crucial in that respect. Ideas are part of the commoning process, but ideas also have a form. It is that change in form that, I think, can dis-anchor us from some of our individualist burden and help us unlearn and reshape the capitalist social division of labour in our everyday lives.

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SESSION 5: THE POLITICAL IN THE COMMONS AND STRATEGIES FOR SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

8. Alexandros Kioupiolis, 'The lack of the political in the commons and a post-hegemonic strategy of social transformation'

Introduction

A central argument of *Heteropolitics* is that in the diverse currents of thought and research on the commons we encounter a certain 'lack of the political' gaping in their midst. Existing theories of the commons have not yet adequately tackled political issues of inclusion/exclusion, power relations, antagonism, clashes of interest and ideology among larger groups. Crucially, they have not sufficiently dealt with the challenges facing the construction of a broader sector of alternative formations of community, governance and economy: how to bring together and to coordinate dispersed, small-scale civic initiatives, and how to relate to established social systems and power relations in the market and the state in order to expand the paradigm of the commons.

Heteropolitics makes the case that a 'post-hegemonic' strategy of coalition-making and collective struggle can help to address these political challenges for the growth of the commons. 'Post-hegemony' is a critical notion introduced by theorists who take issue with the modern politics of hierarchical organization, representation, unification, the state and ideology: the politics of 'hegemony' according to A. Gramsci and E. Laclau. Post-hegemonic thinkers tend to celebrate, by contrast, contemporary social movements which appear to be horizontal, leaderless, participatory, diverse, networked and opposed to the state, global capitalism and ideological closures. The argument seeks to demonstrate that multiple figures of contemporary radical democratic activism in the last two decades are still informed, or should be informed, by constitutive elements of hegemonic politics, such as representation, concentration of power and unification. However, they transfigure the political logics of hegemony in distinct ways, opening up representation, leadership and unity to plurality and the common, outlining thus a post-hegemonic strategy of change for the commons.

The lack of the political in the commons

1. E. Ostrom

Elinor Ostrom's (1990) *Governing the Commons. The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action* has been a major breakthrough and a watershed in the contemporary scholarship and understanding of the commons. The specific and seemingly limited objective of Ostrom's studies of the commons has been from the start to open up conceptual and practical-political space for the recognition of other ways of regulating natural resources used in common, beyond the state and the market, highlighting the diversity of systems and institutions of governance (see Ostrom 1990: 2-21; Ostrom 2010b). Her entire work relies on case studies and the analysis of CPR institutions in order to demonstrate that 'collective action on the commons is possible and not merely a vestigial form' (Poteete, Janssen & Ostrom 2010: 46).

Ostrom inquires into a particular kind of commons, which she designates as 'common pool resources' (CPRs): a 'natural or man-made resource system that is sufficiently large to make it costly (but not impossible) to exclude potential beneficiaries from obtaining benefits from its use' (Ostrom 1990: 30). CPRs stand out as a distinct type of 'good' in a four-fold classification, which

lists public goods, private goods and ‘toll’ or club goods. CPRs are like public goods in that it is difficult to exclude people from their use. But they are akin also to private goods, as they are subtractable, i.e. one person’s use subtracts from the good available to others (Ostrom & Hess 2011: 8-9; Ostrom 2005: 22-26). In her original research she dwells, more specifically, on CPRs which are small-scale and located in a single country, involving 50 to 15000 persons. These CPRs involve communal forests, animal husbandry in grazing areas, water management (of groundwater basins), irrigation channels and inshore fisheries.

A main object of Ostrom’s research is to account for the success of enduring CPR institutions and to explain, thus, under which conditions communal self-organization for the management of environmental resources is possible and likely. All robust CPR systems that she considers face uncertain and complex environments (e.g. erratic rainfall in irrigation systems), but the populations in their specific settings have remained more or less stable over time. The homogeneity, close ties, unity and boundedness of the relevant communities, their members’ attachment to the land and to one another, are features underlying the effective self-organization of the commons in these cases (Ostrom 1990: 88-89, 166, 185; Ostrom 2008).

Ostrom identified a set of essential conditions (‘design principles’) which help to explain the emergence self-governance institutions and their robustness over time: 1) clearly defined boundaries; 2) congruence between appropriation and provision rules and local conditions. Rules-in-use should allocate benefits in proportion to contributions of required inputs. Rules that respect proportionality are more widely accepted as equitable; 3) collective-choice arrangements. Most individuals affected by the operational rules can participate in modifying the operational rules. Self-designed rules through collective participation are considered fair by participants; 4) monitoring. Monitors, who actively audit CPR conditions and appropriator behavior, are accountable to the users or are the users; 5) graduated sanctions; 6) conflict-resolution mechanisms; 7) minimal recognition of rights to organize. The rights of appropriators to devise their own institutions are not challenged by external governmental authorities; 8) nested enterprises. In large and complex CPRs, appropriation, provision, monitoring, enforcement, conflict resolution, and governance activities are organized in multiple layers of nested enterprises, from the local/small-scale upwards to regional and national levels.

This is her answer to the ‘problem of collective action’, with which she has wrestled from the outset. Individuals are willing to commit themselves to observing common rules which they have participated in devising if they think that these rules will be effective in producing higher joint benefits and that monitoring will protect them against ‘being suckered’ (Ostrom 1990: 90). A wide range of in-depth case studies bear witness to the capacity of autonomous, grassroots collective self-organization on a footing of relative equality, freedom and reciprocity, independently of the structures of the market and the state. They demonstrate the human artistry in constituting and reconstituting the very contexts in which individuals make decisions, act and bear the consequences of their actions on an everyday basis (Ostrom 1990: 185, 216).

For the purposes of *Heteropolitics*, the thrust of Ostrom’s field studies of the commons is, precisely, that they provide empirical grounding and insights for the possibility of other ways of doing politics and organizing social life and economic sustenance, beyond both centralized, top-down state administration and profit-driven market competition. Collective co-management of environmental systems for mutual benefit is not only feasible, but it can be also more effective and fairer. Drawing on their local ecological knowledge and their ongoing interaction with their

particular environment, participants in CPRs are better equipped to tailor rules of resource use to local circumstances, sustaining thereby both the surrounding ecosystems and their livelihoods. By collectively self-devising the rules of use on a basis of relative equality, they are also more likely to meet shared standards of fairness.

The relevance of Ostrom's findings and arguments may seem, however, to be confined to the small scale and particular kinds of non-urban natural environments. Her later inroads into the 'commons of knowledge', a broad-range institutional analysis and her idea of 'polycentric governance' could allay some, at least, of these misgivings.

Knowledge commons consist of diverse forms of goods and regimes, from public libraries, academic research results and indigenous traditional knowledge to digital information, free software and cultural, creative works (Ostrom & Hess 2011: 4-15). They are marked off by a specific feature which differentiates them sharply from most environmental CPRs. Whereas the latter are 'subtractive' goods, whereby one's person's uses reduces the amount of good(s) available to others, knowledge commons are typically nonsubtractive or nonrivalrous. In effect, they are quite the opposite. The more people use them, the greater the common good through the expansion and development of knowledge. Moreover, communities around knowledge commons, such as Wikipedia, can be global, virtual and heterogeneous.

Regarding scale, a broad range of relevant contemporary research (Dowsley 2008; Carlsson & Sandström 2008; Ostrom & Andersson 2008) make the case that the non-hierarchical, direct communal self-government of vital ecosystems does not work effectively on higher and multiple scales. Accordingly, it has been argued that the valuable insights gained from the collective self-organization of small-scale economies cannot translate into solutions for large-scale problems without resort to hierarchical organization (Harvey 2012: 70). Ostrom has grappled with the question of scale by elaborating on the idea of 'polycentric governance' (Ostrom 2010a; 2010b). Polycentric governance consists in a complex combination of multiple levels and diverse types of organization drawn from the public, the private and the voluntary sector with overlapping responsibilities and capacities. It is characterised by multiple governing authorities on different scales rather than a central dominant unit (Ostrom 2008: 552). The polycentric view holds that in complex, interconnected systems of multiple interactions at different scales both the active involvement of local users in the management of resources and governments play a key role in solving CPR problems. Polycentric governance implies that 'national officials' work with local and regional officials, NGOs and local communities to achieve the best outcome.

A comprehensive and nuanced account of Ostrom's studies of the commons helps to refute facile charges of political naiveté or narrowness levelled at her work. Nevertheless, several such criticisms carry much force. Ostrom's take on the commons is marred, indeed, by an exclusionary, homogeneous idea of the community and a feeble sense of hegemonic power relations, political antagonisms and the importance of conflict in democratic politics. These limitations, together with the narrow scope of participatory government in her political vision and her accommodating disposition towards the state and the market, detract from the value of her conception of the commons for transformative democratic politics today, without, however, annulling this value. Ostrom refuses to make the commons into 'a general principle for the reorganization of society' (Dardot & Laval 2014: 155). Her narrow objectives are explicitly reduced to the recognition of institutional diversity to a fuller extent and to the proper restoration of the commons within this diversity.

More crucially, what stands in the way of an expansion of the commons from within Ostrom's frame of thought is her alleged 'naturalism' or 'resource-centered' outlook (see Dardot & Laval 2014: 155-165; Dellenbaugh et al. 2015). Her explicit thesis is that the natural attributes of different goods and resources, along with the size of the population, dictate particular modes of social and political organization. This precludes in principle a general diffusion of the commons principle of collective autonomy, confining direct collective self-government exclusively to CPRs and small, homogeneous communities (see Ostrom 2005: 22-26; Ostrom 2008).

Core constituents of the political, such as conflict, antagonism and hegemonic power relations, are not adequately noticed and addressed in Ostrom's political thought, which calls thus for further elaboration and deeper politicization. This lack of a sufficient sense of the political comes into sight in her attitude towards the capitalist markets and the state, but it concerns the importance of political conflictuality and agonism more broadly. Ostrom does not only tend to pass over in silence the past and present history of social antagonisms between the commons and 'commoners', on the one hand, and the state and corporate market forces, on the other. On a more general and theoretical level, she fails to illuminate and to come to grips with the conflicting logics which inform them. The centralizing trends and the top-down administration of modern states clash with the decentralizing drives and endeavours of grassroots communities to exercise effective self-government on the regional, municipal or lower scale and to direct political power from the bottom-up. A similar intrinsic clash marks the relation between the 'practical reason' of the commons, which tend towards mutuality and sustainability, and the profit-driven logic of the capitalist market.

Her theorization of the commons considerably conceals, then, the political as antagonism, struggle and power structures. Crucially, she fails to attend to the hegemonic formation of societies: the unequal hierarchies of command that connect the different types and scales of social activity and government, as well as the forces and structures dominating the systemic wholes in which diverse communities, social relations and actors are embedded (Dardot & Laval 2014: 156). In conclusion, Ostrom's breakthrough in the research on the commons, and the outlines that she offers of another politics of egalitarian and sustainable self-government should be broadened to disclose a richer array of possibilities for the commons today. Her account should be also enhanced with a fully-fledged agonistic-hegemonic take on the political. Finally, it should grind sharper edges through an acute sense of the conflictual tensions running through the commons, the market and the state.

2. *Digital commons*

Since the turn of the century, with the spread of new digital technologies and the Internet, a large body of thought and action has shifted attention from the 'commons of nature' to the commons of culture, information and digital networks (Benkler 2006; Bollier 2008; 2016; Bauwens 2005; 2009, 2011). This technological change has triggered the formation of new modes of production and collaboration, which have given rise to novel patterns of association and self-governance. These patterns do not only reinvent and expand the commons as a culture of co-creation and social sharing outside their traditional bounds of fisheries, forests and grazing grounds. They forge, also, new schemes of community and collective self-governance beyond the closely knit, stable and homogeneous communities of face-to-face interaction (Benkler 2006: 117-120; Bollier 2008: 2-4; Bauwens 2005).

A ‘commons analysis’ of the Internet, new digital technologies and networks helps to show that such technological innovations are entangled with legal and social innovations, drawing attention to the communities involved and their ways of self-organizing –their politics and political innovations (Benkler 2008: 19-20). Digital networking has afforded new opportunities for making and exchanging information, knowledge and culture. Spanning diverse fields, from software development to online encyclopaedias, investigative journalism and social media platforms, the new information environment enables the construction of decentralized, self-administered communities. These combine individual freedom and autonomous social collaboration, holding the promise of more democratic participation, openness, freedom, diversity and co-production without the hierarchies of the state and the market (Benkler 2006: 2; Bollier 2008: 1-20, 117; Bauwens 2005). The Internet does not only boost and diffuse creativity in the creation of culture and information. It also makes possible ‘egalitarian encounters among strangers and voluntary associations of citizens’ (Bollier 2008: 2).

The new digital commons exhibit considerable similarities with the ‘traditional’ ecological commons foregrounded by Ostrom. They make up a tripartite system which consists of a self-governing community of users and producers; a common good (from free software and music to encyclopaedias and social communication platforms); and equitable, self-legislated norms of access, use and collective self-management (Benkler 2006; Bollier 2008; Bauwens 2005; Ostrom & Hess 2011). They likewise promote a culture of decentralized collaboration, co-operative nonmarket production, sharing and common autonomy. They advance thus an alternative to both the profit-driven, competitive and centralizing practices of the market and the top-down, hierarchical command of the state. Moreover, they are similarly locked in a battlefield with the market and the state, threatened as they are by market and state forces which seek to appropriate, to control and to ‘enclose’ them through patents, copyright and trademark law, trade regulations and privatization (Bollier 2008: 2-15, 140-141; Benkler 2006: 2; Bauwens 2005; Bauwens 2011).

However, they radically depart from the historical commons of nature in politically crucial respects. The goods that they fabricate and sustain are not depletable and rivalrous (Bauwens 2005; Benkler 2006: 117). The ‘new commons’ consist of essentially nonrival cultural goods: their consumption by one person do not make them less available for consumption by others (Benkler 2006: 36). Second, their communities are internally heterogeneous, open and potentially global rather than local, homogeneous and bounded. Their networked forms of association and collaboration introduce new modes of sociality, whereby co-operation on equal terms is combined with enhanced individual autonomy and creativity (Bauwens 2005b). Hence, the contemporary networks of information and communication seem to embody and to enable the post-Heideggerian vision of a community of open, expansive and plural encounters without any fixed center or identity (Armstrong 2009).

Finally, ‘digital commoners’ argue that the networked information commons immensely expand the commons paradigm beyond its traditional, small-scale natural location in forests, land, irrigation channels and fishing grounds. They actually represent a new, emergent mode of peer-to-peer production, which is displacing the industrial mode of production and promises to install decentralized nonmarket co-operation at a central locus of contemporary economy, society and politics. They remake in their image a wild diversity of social fields, from music to business, law, education and science, remodelling them after the logic of open, plural, creative and participatory

commons (Benkler 2006: 2-3; Benkler & Nissenbaum 2006; Bollier 2008: 14-18; Bauwens 2005b).

The emergent 'sociotechnological paradigm' of commons-based peer production has spawned, at the same time, a broader radical transformation of contemporary culture, diffusing the values and the practices of the commons –sharing, free collaboration for mutual benefit, egalitarian self-organization, openness (Bauwens 2005b). According to Bollier, this amounts to a 'Great Value Shift' which has brought about a crucial shift in subjectivity (Bollier 2008: 190) by propagating, among other ideas and values, a deeply different conception of wealth as commons.

Salient theories of digital commons, in the writings of Y. Benkler, D. Bollier and M. Bauwens, outline more open and plural communities of the commons in comparison to the 'Bloomington School' of ecological commons. Moreover, the champions of the digital commons and peer production diverge to some extent from Ostrom's endeavour to carve out some space for the commons alongside a diverse range of institutional forms. They advocate a broader paradigm shift which is presumably facilitated today by the rise of the network society and new technological developments which gestate around the Internet. This opens up the horizon of a commons-based society, whereby the commons will not be confined to the margins of contemporary social formations, in small-scale communities and local ecosystems, but will occupy centre stage in economic, political and social life.

Despite such innovations and divergences from the older, Ostrom school of commons studies, the theories of the digital commons are beset, however, with similar deficiencies and lacunae in their understanding of the political. Again, they do not fully own up to the contradictions between the logics of the state, the market and the commons. Likewise, they fail to adequately grapple with the hegemonic power structures of contemporary social formations. As a result, they do not effectively ponder the conditions and the political practices through which a broad-based social movement of transformation –a counter-hegemonic bloc- can be put together under the actual circumstances of social fragmentation, exclusion, precarization and collective disempowerment.

To a certain extent, this is a technocratic vision of socio-economic change in which the expansion of a new mode of digital, networked production, legal reforms and 'social entrepreneurship', i.e. technological, legal and managerial fixes, are the fundamental basis that can spark historical transformation on a large scale. Political processes of collective dis-identification from hegemonic relations and new identification, movement-building, political struggles around, with and within the state, intense conflicts with dominant political and economic elites who profit immensely from a vastly unequal market economy in our times receive little attention and consideration.

It is evident that Benkler (2006), Bollier (2008: 12, 20) and Bauwens (2005; 2009) accord to technological developments a pivotal role in pushing historical transformation towards the commons. The irruption of new computer and digital network technologies has been the main trigger of socio-political and economic mutation. It has destabilized the established structure of markets, technologies and social practices, giving rise to a diffuse institutional battle over the physical, technical and logical (software and protocols) components of the digital networked environment (Benkler 2006: 468-469; see also Bollier 2008: 1-20; Bauwens 2005).

Yet neither Benkler nor Bollier or Bauwens are naïve believers in technological determinism. Benkler (2006) is aware that technologies are not the single determining factors as they are channeled and moulded by political objectives, social values, the historical context etc. It is the

interaction between technological-economic ‘feasibility spaces’ with social responses to them, in the form of institutional regulations and social practices, which define the prevailing structures and modes of life in a certain period. Hence, the digital technologies of networked computers can be put to different uses. There is no assurance that they will contribute to innovation, freedom and justice. This is a matter of the social choices that we will make in the coming years (Benkler 2006: 17-18, 31-34).

Bauwens envisions a new form of society, ‘based on the centrality of the commons, and within a reformed state and market’ (Bauwens 2005). A transformative practice for expanding peer production beyond the ‘immaterial sphere’, in which it was born, will not come about automatically. It calls for the development of tactics and strategy (Bauwens 2005b).

However, Bollier, Benkler and Bauwens converge on a techno-legal and economic fix when they envision the historical transition in the direction of the commons. Bauwens concludes one of his earliest accounts of a ‘Common-ist’ evolution of P2P (Bauwens 2005) with the following list of the core conditions that will enable the new commons to grow beyond the sphere of ‘immaterial’ non-rival goods in which they originated: 1) access to distributed technology (viral communicator meshworks etc.); 2) widespread availability of other forms of distributed fixed capital; 3) reliance on P2P processes for the design and conception of ‘physical production’; 4) broader distribution of financial capital (through e.g. state funding of open source development, cooperative purchase of large capital goods etc.); 5) the introduction of universal basic income. Despite allusions to ‘Common-ist’ movements, we are left completely in the dark as to how these will be built, how they will become massive, how they will overturn the ‘neoliberal dominance’ and how they will reform the state and the market (Bauwens 2005). Instead, we are provided with a list of techno-economic terms.

A technocratic outlook on the commons has prevailed from the beginning of the millennium in the digital commons literature. Technology, economic practices, the law and loose, vague references to ‘social movements’ are its main entries. Change things by producing a new model which makes the existing model obsolete, not by fighting existing reality is its motto (Bollier 2008: 294). Historical transformation is envisaged mostly not as political, rebellious and oppositional, but as incremental, immanent, i.e. arising from within actual social relations and heightened productivity, and prefigurative, i.e. transcending the old social order by projecting a new world to come (Bollier 2008: 305-310). If one removes the revolutionary flame, the idea of an immanent transformation which issues from technological and economic evolution and is attributed to rising productivity is, actually, a very classic Marxian one.

A techno-economic outlook on historical change is likely to evince little concern for the challenges of organizing broad-based socio-political movements in robust blocs and modes of collective action which could effectively counteract the power of vested private interests and state elites, and would strategically advance an alternative project of social reconstruction. Revealingly, Bollier (2008: 8) talks of an ‘emergent second superpower’ which arises from the coalescence of people around the world who affirm common values and form new public identities through online networks. He does not elaborate, however, on the essential political question: whether the organizational forms of the ‘movement’ are fitting and they can face up successfully to the other ‘superpowers’ of states and large corporations (see also Bollier 2008: 199-225). Unfortunately, apart from occasional international demonstrations and cross-national events of local resistance

(such as the 2011-2011 Indignados and Occupy movements), this ‘second superpower’ is nearly invisible in our actual world of growing ‘surplus populations’ and exclusions (Sassen 2014).

No more do we find an explanation of how collective influence could be effectively exerted on entrenched power structures, elites and hierarchies of the state beyond the limited capacities of lobbying, litigation and legal proposals or public appeals to the good will of public officers. The impotence of both technology and law in rearranging the established order of power in contemporary societies has been acknowledged by ‘digital commoners’ themselves. ‘The more I’m in this battle, the less I believe that constitutional law on its own could solve the problem’ (Lessig cited in Bollier 2008: 87; for the limits of technology see Benkler 2006: 17-18, 31-34).

The tactic of public appeals through open letters, speeches etc., which relies on the good will of incumbents, has not fared any better. The tight embrace of business interests and enclosures by state politics has also blatantly refuted time and again the naïve trust in the benevolence of present-day governments, which would be persuaded by rational arguments to assist commoners in the making of a ‘digital republic’ with a more open, democratic character (Bollier 2008: 93; Benkler 2006: 382).

An awareness that the techno-economic and legal path runs up against overwhelming obstacles has increased in recent years in the peer commons school (see e.g. Bauwens & Kostakis 2014; 2017). Hence, an increasing emphasis is being placed on the ‘partner state’, on social and political movements and on building commons counter-power on multiple levels by creating parallel institutions, such as the ‘Chambers of Commons’ and the ‘Assemblies of the Commons’ (Bauwens & Kostakis 2017: 45). However, the techno-economic and legal steps are still given priority in both thought/analysis and practice.

The strained relations of the digital commons school with profit-oriented businesses and markets shed light on the tendency to suppress the political as radical opposition and contestation. In this and other respects, Benkler, Bollier and Bauwens partake of the ‘post-political vision’ taken to task by Mouffe (2005; 2013): the fantasy that democratization can proceed without defining an adversary and that, in post-traditional societies, collective identities are not constructed in terms of we/they on account of the growth of individualism –of ‘cooperative individualism’ in the case of digital commoners. Conflicts can be pacified through dialogue and by nurturing relations of mutual tolerance among individuals with different interests and perspectives. Moreover, the post-political view typically disregards existing power relations and how they structure contemporary societies (Mouffe 2005: 48-51). However, the politics of ‘consensus at the centre’ is plainly the result of ‘the unchallenged hegemony of neoliberalism’ (Mouffe 2013: 19; emphasis added).

In effect, Benkler and Bollier sponsor the idea that wealthy corporations can reorient their business models, make profit through the use of open source software and become political allies or even business partners of the digital commoners (Benkler 2006: 471; Benkler 2011: 25-28; Bollier 2008: 15-16, 20, 229; Bauwens 2011).

3. *Anti-capitalist commons*

A distinct, third strand of contemporary theorizing about the commons has crystallized in the writings of a group of interacting authors with strong Marxist influences, a staunch anti-capitalist orientation and an aspiration to revive a ‘communist’ alternative project that breaks with the history of state socialism. This current is made up of George Caffentzis (2010; 2013), Silvia

Federici (2004; 2010; 2012), Massimo De Angelis (2005; 2010; 2012), Peter Linebaugh (2008; 2014), and Nick Dyer-Witherford (1999; 2012; 2015).

What holds the anticapitalist Marxist paradigm of the commons apart from Ostrom's Bloomington school and the digital commons current is, first, that the writings of Caffentzis, Federici, De Angelis, Dyer-Witherford and Linebaugh span the different varieties of the commons and, crucially, that they are animated by an intense awareness of the antagonisms between the commons and capital, advocating vociferously for a radically anticapitalist politics of the commons for our times. The commons are presumed to be locked up in an endless conflict with capitalism since its rise at the end of the middle ages, on account of an ongoing practice of capitalist dispossession and appropriation of the commons. 'Primitive accumulation' is held to be a constant feature of capitalist production (De Angelis 2007: 14). The commons in their diverse guises have been subject to intensified new enclosures since the onset of neoliberalism in the '70s. Hence, this body of thought is alert to the political in its power-laden and conflictual dynamics, particularly in the social battles between capital, the commons and the global poor. As distinct from Hardt and Negri, they are also conscious of the need to actively construct what is absent- a collective subject of historical transformation towards the commons. Despite all this, the anticapitalist/Marxist take on the commons is beset with deficiencies akin to those we have uncovered in the digital commons literature. Socio-economic processes and struggles are placed apart from political ones. The realm of the social is considered to be the foundation of any proper historical shift towards the expansion of emancipatory commons, as opposed to political revolutions (De Angelis 2012: 4, 10). For all its political concerns and ideas about the formation of a collective subject out of fragmented, disempowered and contradictory individuals, it has not worked out a robust figure of counter-hegemony suited to our times and the commons. Hence the need to delve into contemporary political theory.

Their starting point is that the class struggles of workers –under which they subsume not only waged and industrial labour, but a more extended group of unwaged, slave and rural labour- shape the crises of capital by intensifying its contradictions and imbalances. Hence their revolutionary power (MNC 2009: 2). Workers' revolts against capitalist exploitation and the divisions of labour combat and overturn the dominant modalities of capitalism in its different historical stages, triggering reactions on behalf of the elites and bringing about systemic transformations.

The multiple economic and political crises over the last years reveal that the state and capitalist market have managed the 'two great commons' of labour and the planet's ecosystem in a destructive manner which impedes the social reproduction of the majority. So, they commend a 'constitutional perspective' on social struggles. This would put in place collective alternatives that would secure social reproduction in terms of housing, work and income over and against the present capitalist forms. When communities can reproduce themselves collectively, they can afford to radicalize their struggles. 'Autonomist Marxism champions the autonomy of workers, their capacity to resist and find alternatives to capital. To that end, it has always focused on struggle, and working-class capacity' (Dyer-Witherford 2015: 188).

In the conditions of neoliberal dispossession and disempowerment, social reproduction, freedom, equality and justice for the vast majorities in the world can be achieved by overcoming capitalism and its state by means of 'constituent' anticapitalist struggles which generate independent life-sustaining commons for the many, enabling their reproduction here and now and underpinning

their political and other fights against capital. A large part of capital's power lies in its ability to terrorize people with the idea that they are unable to organize the production and reproduction of their livelihoods outside the circuits of the market. The political import of the commons for anticapitalists lies in their ability to demonstrate in practice that other ways of organizing social life and reproduction are not only feasible but actually existing and effective (Caffentzis 2010: 25).

The anticapitalist stream in the debate over the commons has not only centred on the opposition between capital and the commons that spans several centuries up to the new, neoliberal enclosures. It has also made the case that contemporary capitalism has sought to enlist the commons in the service of its own reproduction in order to use a cheap substitute for the shrinking welfare state and to deal with the ecological and social disasters that neoliberal greed has inflicted on the contemporary world (Caffentzis 2010; Federici 2010).

Ostrom turns out to be the 'major theorist of the capitalist use of the commons' (Caffentzis 2010: 30). This is the ideological response of pro-capitalist intellectuals and politicians. They recognize the disastrous fanaticism of a neoliberalism intent on privatizing and commodifying everything. And they advertise the possibilities and the virtues of capitalism with a human face (Caffentzis 2010: 39). Hence, the commons do not bear an intrinsic political meaning and orientation. They can be articulated in conflicting ways in political discourse and practice.

Yet, there is something profoundly anti-political in this vehement antagonistic-anticapitalist stance towards the commons. The issue is not simply the superficial hermeneutic one that Caffentzis and Federici run a brutal roughshod over the nuances of Ostrom's positions. What is troublesome is the will to eliminate ambivalences and to consign the ambiguous pluralists to the camp of capitalist forces of domination and exploitation, setting up a rigid, clear-cut and unmovable divide between capitalists and anticapitalists. The politics of counter-hegemony navigates its uncertain and arduous course amid complexity, hybridity and fluidity by enunciating a discourse which can speak to society at large, in manners that can tap into ambiguity and indeterminacy so as to refashion habitual ways of thinking and seeing things.

The anti-political animus of the 'autonomist Marxist' framing of the commons becomes more pronounced in the writings of Massimo De Angelis, which summon a conception of social revolution aligned with Marx's and juxtaposed to Lenin's. This conception does not envisage epochal change as a result of the seizure of power by political elites, through elections or insurrection. Rather, it comprehends historical transformation as a long-term process which brings about 'the actual production of another form of power, which therefore corresponds to...a change in the "economic structure of society"' (De Angelis 2012: 9). The political comes after, it is based on the social, and it has a limited capacity for transformative agency in the absence of the requisite social ground (De Angelis 2012: 4-8). What is lost from sight here is the political within the social, that is, the power relations, antagonisms and contestation which suffuse social relations, as well as the key political process of constructing/instituting social relations.

In the process of depoliticizing the social and eliding the social with commons, this stream of autonomist Marxism removes twice from commons their political edge. First, as it obscures the power asymmetries and conflicts structuring the fields of the commons, and it fails to reckon that we should politically organize them in order to inflect the manifold actual commons in particular directions of history-making. Second, as it advances an overly expansive and indefinite definition

which equates the commons with society at large –social systems, socio-material conditions of production and reproduction, even the family without qualifications (De Angelis 2012: 10-11; 2007: 243). In De Angelis' thought we reach a cul-de-sac. Whereas it feels acutely the urgency of hegemonic politics for the making of a collective subject for the commons, it forbids us to think in such terms, putting all our stakes on a 'social system' and its own development, which, however, is neither automatic nor secure. In line with these assumptions, De Angelis fails to elaborate any theory for the production of counter-hegemonic subjects and projects. Honestly enough, he owns up to this failure and the political impotence it entails: 'The explosion of the middle class...rearranges social relations...and the borders of the wage hierarchy policed by the army of prejudice, patriarchy and racism. How this explosion will be brought about, I do not know' (De Angelis 2010: 971).

Nick Dyer-Witherford (1999; 2012; 2015) has advanced, perhaps, further than any other in this paradigm of the commons towards the elaboration of a political understanding of the commons in our times. He underscores the urgent need for strategic political thought and action and he poses eminently political questions. Contemporary history is cast as an open and dark battlefield in which the ecological, social and financial crises of capital pave the way for a variety of competing political responses. Crucially, we must tackle head-on what turns out to be the political issue of the collective subject: who are 'we', how can we forge commonalities in struggle, how can we overcome the difficulties in working together so as to reinforce the weak or inexistent links between riots, wage struggles and occupations; how can we transcend the present state of precarious, segmented labour and distressed, unemployed 'surplus populations' in order to assemble an organized massive power.

His political project is called 'commonism', which is intended as a negation of centralized command economies reigned by repressive states. It is also intended as a set of high level demands in the domain of ecology, networks, and society and labour (e.g. a guaranteed global livelihood) that should be pressed on both the national and international level, providing a clear focus and a ground of convergence among diverse movements and struggles (Dyer-Witherford 2007). The 'circulation of the commons,' is a core part of this project, signaling a process of mutual enhancement and bootstrapping of the manifold commons. This adds a constructive dimension and a transformative dynamic to the 'circulation of struggles' which may interrupt any point in the 'circulation of capital' (its movement from money and commodities to more commodities and money through production for the market). The circuit of the commons should unfold not only laterally, among the multiple classes of the commons, but also vertically, among new subjectivities, autonomous assemblies (solidarity networks, coops etc.) and governmental agencies. Governments can underwrite or even initiate at a state level the creation of alternative commons networks. They can also supply the planning mechanisms and processes which are called for the ecological commons, e.g. by regulating carbon emissions, and the field of production.

Dyer-Witherford combines thus a heightened perception of political predicaments with an 'autonomist' Marxist accent on the material expansion of the commons as the primary condition and objective. Yet the lack of the political –of political thought reflecting on political strategies and ideas- becomes even more glaring here. We are served notice about the need to synthesize the diverse commons, struggles and plans, about the value of governmental agency, discursive mediations and a new alliance between grassroots movements and governments. However, Dyer-

Witherford does not come to grips with such essential challenges for the politics of the commons. On this set of political concerns, and in blatant contradiction with the recognition of their vitality, we learn precious little from the work of Dyer-Witherford, beyond the standard vague references and nodding gestures.

Post-hegemony

The foregoing review of commons theories and practices highlighted a yawning lack of strategic thinking over key political predicaments. These bear crucially on the construction of a collective subject (alliance of social forces) that will further the commons as an alternative social system and will win the game of power against its opponents in the establishment. In order to address this deficit, we will tap into the political theory of hegemony and post-hegemony and we will transfigure these theories and the related strategies so as to align them more closely with the politics and the logics of the commons. In political theory, 'hegemony' designates precisely a political process which welds together a collective subject that engages in a socio-political struggle aiming at the institution of a new social order.

The theory of hegemony has been shaped mainly by the writings of Gramsci, Laclau and Stuart Hall (Lash 2007: 56). Laclau's conceptual elaborations provide today the key reference, in cultural studies and political theory at least (Beasley-Murray 2010: 40). In Laclau's thought, hegemony articulates a contingent plurality of autonomous struggles around a 'chain of equivalence', putting together a common political front. It is the political process whereby a new social formation is put in place through an antagonistic fight between the dominant regime and an oppositional coalition of forces, or between rival political projects (Laclau 2000a: 207).

Hegemony consists, more specifically, in a dialectic between universality and particularity which necessarily involves a) chains of equivalence; b) empty signifiers; c) uneven power and d) representation (Laclau 2000a: 207).

However, any attempt to recover the logics of hegemony for assembling a new social alliance for the commons today is bound to encounter the objections of the advocates of 'post-hegemony' or the 'death' of hegemony. The latter make the case that contemporary social conditions and movements have given rise to new tropes of political organization which overcome the structures and the strictures of hegemonic politics.

Post-hegemonic accounts hold that collective democratic agency today is horizontal, i.e. non-hierarchical, networked and plural, and it undertakes prefigurative politics which enact here and now the values of a radical democracy to come. These figures of political action are said to have superseded older, hierarchical forms of agency in political parties, governments and movements. The label 'post-hegemony' can be justifiably extended to a wider spectrum of contemporary thinkers and scholars.

Critical ripostes to the post-hegemonic thesis do not deny that novel or alternative schemes of multitudinous politics have appeared at the turn of the century. They argue, rather, that hegemony and post-hegemony are not two self-standing, internally pure and fully independent poles.

A key argument of *Heteropolitics* is that in order to achieve transformative effects it is not only possible but also necessary to ally horizontal, spontaneous and 'non-representational' action with vertical, centralized and representative politics. Beyond any 'empirical' refutation of the post-hegemonic thesis in its typical guise, it seems that several dimensions of hegemonic politics should be upheld in contemporary movements which strive for the construction of autonomous

and equal associations. On the reasonable assumption that entrenched interests, plutocrats and established oligarchies will not forsake voluntarily their power, their property and their privileges, it will be necessary, first, to pursue hegemony as a divisive struggle to reconfigure the existing composition of forces and to replace it with a different power structure that will strain to minimize domination, hierarchies and exclusions.

Second, even if one envisages freer, plural and egalitarian worlds, and the struggles to realise them, in terms of multiple interlocking and conflicting assemblages, rather than as a global system or a united revolutionary front, a variable degree of hegemony as collective unity-cohesion will be still needed to avoid mutually destructive collisions and incompatibilities. This would be redundant only if social and individual differences cohered spontaneously with each other, and ruinous conflicts could be magically averted without much effort.

Third, relations of representation and the dialectics of particularity/universal, whereby a particular force takes on universal tasks and speaks in the name of the whole, will be reproduced in any association in which the will of the many does not coincide with the will of all. Such a congruence is not logically inconceivable, but it is empirically unlikely in societies of free, diverse and self-differentiating singularities where no universal reason, nature or homogeneous tradition guarantees the collective convergence of different understandings, values and pursuits in political interactions.

The argument of *Heteropolitics* is not, however, that in thinking and pursuing effective collective action to transform society around the commons we should simply re-enact hegemonic politics in Gramsci's or Laclau's version. Following the lead of contemporary democratic mobilizations and egalitarian initiatives, we should reimagine and recast hegemonic politics in forms which would, indeed, be post-hegemonic insofar as they would contest and strive to minimize hierarchies, centralization and homogeneity. When the aim is the expansion of an alternative paradigm of the commons, which is self-organized in terms of openness, diversity, creativity and equal freedom, the balance in the fuzzy, hybrid politics of contemporary collective movements should be forcefully tipped towards bottom-up, plural and collective participation in an anti-hierarchical template.

(i) *Leadership* is synonymous with hegemony. Historically, it connotes various figures of asymmetrical influence such as the top-down direction of the 'masses' by individual leaders, authoritarianism and paternalism. It is now more widely acknowledged that inequalities of power cannot be just wished away by calling a movement 'leaderless.' In various nominally non-hierarchical organizations, particular individuals or groups exert greater influence in collective decision-making on the grounds of the time and the devotion they invest, the experience they accumulate, their expert knowledge, their social capital and other unevenly shared skills and capacities (in persuasion, planning, communication etc.). Leaders initiate new practices, they mediate conflicts, they put forward plans and common visions, they motivate and integrate groups, they link up with other organizations and, in general, they assume tasks which afford them increased power in the direction of collective action (Dixon, 2014: 175-179; della Porta and Rucht, 2015: 222-229).

Contemporary collective action has addressed issues of asymmetrical power by, first, recognizing its presence and, second, by seeking to institute forms of explicit leadership which do not engender domination and contribute to the collective sharing of skills, knowledge and

responsibility. Developing ‘another leadership’ entails essentially a ‘growing attempt to be clear, conscious, and collective about leadership’ (Dixon 2014: 186; see also della Porta & Rucht 2015: 223-229). This involves an endeavour to grapple reflectively with power and command, to mitigate their authoritarian implications as far as possible, and to experiment with diverse schemes of collective ‘leadership from below’ (Dixon 2014: 175-198; Rucht 2015: 66-67).

Hence, present-day horizontalism is not a finally achieved condition in which hierarchies have been fully eradicated. It constitutes, rather, a horizon and a regulative principle for which egalitarian movements endlessly strive through critical reflection, political processes and experiments that fight domination and work to minimize or, at least, to control any concentration of power amidst their ranks. Their internal struggle against inequality is sustained through spaces of ongoing reflection in which questions of domination and influence are openly debated, and unwarranted authority gets effectively challenged. This is an ‘agonistic horizontalism’ which contrasts to Gramscian and Laclauian logics of organization entrenching centralization, top-down direction and asymmetrical power as essential structures.

(ii) *Unity, the construction of a collective identity, and the concentration of force* in order to ‘become state’ form the backbone of hegemonic politics (Laclau 2000a: 207-212, 301-303; Gramsci 1971: 152-3, 181-2, 418). Sporadic, multitudinous, dispersed initiatives and ‘disorganized’ upsurges of collective politicization can be effective in confronting specific issues, in pressing for reforms in the political system and in catalyzing long-term transformations. In recent years, however, egalitarian movements have also engaged in broader coalition-building, addressing society at large, constructing collective identities and seeking to amass enough power to alter the prevailing balance of forces. The Occupy Wall Street, the Spanish and the Greek Indignant, along with a multiplicity of anti-authoritarian groups in the U.S. and elsewhere, are again a case in point.

Present-day hybrid instances of horizontalism gesture effectively beyond hegemony insofar as they turn the scales in favour of plurality, egalitarianism and decentralization through new modes of unification and community beyond the hegemonic mould. To begin with, diversity and openness became themselves the principle of unity in horizontalist mobilizations such as the Global Justice Movement at the turn of the century and Occupy Wall Street more recently. The creation of open spaces of convergence, a pluralist, open and tolerant political culture, the network form and a spirit of pragmatism are specific ways in which diversity and openness are made to function as a principle of unity.

The crux, however, is that if hybrid movements want to fend off the prevalence of top-down hierarchies foisting uniformity, the balance must remain firmly inclined towards grassroots self-direction and the making of egalitarian alternative institutions. This is because most horizontalist initiatives and mobilizations today remain weak, tentative and dispersed, while they are confronted with entrenched state institutions and corporate or other systemic centres of power which can easily overwhelm or co-opt them (Dangl 2010; Zibechi 2010).

(iii) *Representation* lies at the core of hegemony in both Gramsci’s politics, which elevates the Party to the modern Hegemon, and Laclau’s scheme, in which ‘particularities..., without ceasing to be particularities, assume a function of universal representation. This is what is at the root of hegemonic relations’ (Laclau 2000b: 56). Hegemonic representation rests on the exercise of unequal power over others (Laclau 2000a: 208). This embrace of political representation clashes

head-on with the widespread distrust of representative politics among late modern citizens and activists (see e.g. Tormey 2015; Sitrin & Azzelini 2014). Hence, the 2011 democratic uprisings, from the Arab Spring to the Spanish Indignados, the Greek Aganaktismenoi to the Occupy Wall Street, tended to oppose political representation in general, along with party partisanship, standing hierarchies, fixed ideologies and professional politicians. Instead, they self-organized in public spaces and they initiated processes of consensual self-governance which were accessible to ordinary people (see e.g. Giovanopoulos & Mitropoulos 2011; Graeber 2012).

Hegemonic representation, the rule of political representatives in parliament and the government, conflicts also sharply with the political logic of self-governance in the commons, which is participatory, collective and egalitarian rather than directed by a small club of professional politicians who exercise sovereign power over social majorities during their term in office.

A key thesis of *Heteropolitics* is that a democracy of the commons, or a ‘common democracy’, could not be thought and enacted on the model of a community of citizens who constantly participate as a whole in collective self-management across multiple social fields and are regularly able to partly reconcile their differences. On practical grounds, such as the concerns of everyday life, and for political reasons, such as the right to abstain from politics, a variable fraction of the citizenry will normally attend regular assemblies and other fora of social self-governance. Hence, a part of the whole will be usually present in the institutions of direct, popular self-rule and will make decisions for a whole which is absent as such. In other words, a form of sovereign political representation will remain in place in most conceivable instances of an assembly-based democracy of the commons.

Moreover, under conditions of historical contingency and in the absence of a preconstituted universal reason or any other guarantor of general agreement, a partial consensus among dissenting views and desires cannot be always anticipated with certainty. This is even more the case if the singularities in the common are diverse, autonomous and self-changing. When antagonistic divisions split the body politic, a part –preferably, the majority- will again take decisions for the whole, acting thus as a sovereign political representative of the entire community, even in the exceptional circumstances when all its members are present at the moment of deliberation and decision-making.

Even the popular mobilizations in 2011-2012, which advocated for ‘real’ or ‘direct’ democracy, did not effectively break with all notions of political representation. Indeed, mobilized actors made representative claims in their appeals to non-present citizens, as illustrated by the slogan of Occupy Wall Street: ‘We are the 99%.’

However, actuality and history furnish examples of collective self-rule which map out political avenues beyond both hegemonic representation -the rule of elected oligarchies- and the perilous mirage of popular full presence. Principles and practices of a counter-hegemonic democracy, which would be egalitarian, participatory and effectively representative at the same time, can be traced out in ancient instances of limited direct democracy, in contemporary digital commons and in radical democratic mobilizations. Despite their differences, these figures can be all said to make political power common, an equally shared good accessible to all and sustainable over time. This is the core of a common democracy, i.e. an institutionalized, large-scale democratic regime which commons political representation and representative government.

According to Hanna F. Pitkin's (1972: 8-9) seminal analysis, 'representation, taken generally, means the making present in some sense of something which is nevertheless not present literally or in fact.' Political representatives stand for the subjects they represent in a variety of ways, which may range from purely symbolic, when e.g. a party leader becomes a point of identification for his party, to more active and politically consequential, when representatives speak and act on behalf of their constituents, making decisions for them (Pitkin 1972: 38-111).

Representation as 'the making present' of something which is 'not present literally or in fact' remains operative in participatory or direct democracies. What effectively distinguishes representative democracies is not merely the more extensive political role conferred on representatives but the establishment of a 'permanent and institutionalised power base' (Alford 1985: 305), which underpins the separation of political representatives from the represented and releases the former from the immediate pressures of their constituencies by providing them with securely tenured office (Alford 1985; Manin 1997: 9).

As against representative democracy, 'common' participatory democracies eliminate any standing division between the rulers and the ruled, enabling anyone who so wishes to involve themselves in political deliberation, lawmaking, administration and law enforcement regarding collective affairs. Collective self-governance becomes in principle an affair of common citizens, of anyone. As distinct from Rousseauian democracy, however, sovereign power is not exercised by the assembled demos in its unified totality. Divisions within the people and between governors and governed remain in place. The demos is never wholly present at once in any single political institution. Only an alternating fraction of the community participates normally in the various sites of self-management, as they freely choose. Political representation is not eradicated. But institutional devices such as lot, rotation in office, limited tenure, increased accountability and the casual alternation of participants in collective assemblies work against the consolidation of lasting divides between rulers and ruled, expert governors and lay people. The workings of 'common' representative governance can be witnessed in several types of the commons, including the digital commons of open source peer production, Wikipedia, and the open assemblies of the 2011 movements.

From the perspective of *Heteropolitics*, they can be seen as a massive endeavour to stage a political logic of the common in central public sites and sovereign institutions. The popular assemblies organized in public squares sought to carve out participatory spaces of collective decision-making, opening political power to all ordinary citizens and contesting the rule of money and professional political classes. Opposition to representative politics and the dominance of the markets went hand in hand with an endeavour to involve 'normal and common people' (Dhaliwal 2012: 265), striking down informal and institutional barriers to participation in the exercise of sovereign power and striving to increase 'community control' over the entire social system (Dhaliwal 2012: 266). The intent to make democratic representation common was evident also in the regulation of the practices of governance. These deliberately sought to enforce the rule of 'whoever, whenever s/he wishes' against the hegemony of leaders, elites, sovereign representatives and a homogeneous people bound to be present en masse in decisive political functions.

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9. Theodoris Karyotis, ‘Within, against and beyond the market: challenges of the commons as an antagonistic force’

Introduction

Not an academic. I come from the movements and I approach the commons from a political point of view.

Although not all grassroots social movements utilise the vocabulary of the commons in their self-description, I consider the discourse of the commons one of the most potent analytical tools to construe the activity and objectives of grassroots initiatives, demonstrate their revolutionary potential and explore their challenges and contradictions (Biopolitical field).

This presentation is an attempt at a theoretical intervention in the dialogue that unfolds within the movements of the commons, motivated by my involvement in relevant initiatives. My aim is to examine the potential of the commons for social transformation that goes beyond the horizon of the ‘crisis.’ To that end, I will examine the relationship of the commons with the dominant institution of the market, and the threats, contradictions and opportunities it generates. I am trying to contribute to a critique of movement activity, and this is why I am trying to trace the theoretical origins of this activity.

Capitalism(s) and anti-capitalism(s)

Often, the commons are presented as an ‘anti-capitalist’ or ‘post-capitalist’ transformative power that can disrupt or overcome the dominant institutions of the state and the market. An exploration of this potential of the commons would necessarily have to begin with a presentation of the different definitions of the terms ‘market’, ‘state’, ‘capitalism’, ‘power’, etc. Most importantly: Are the market and capitalism synonymous? Or, on the contrary, can non-capitalist forms of impersonal exchange exist?

I will present in turn 3 different definitions of capitalism:

1) Capitalism is a system of exchange where the law of demand and supply in a free market defines what is to be produced and at what price it is to be sold.

I will not pay attention to this definition because it is a self-definition of capitalism by its proponents, but also because there is no such thing as a ‘free market’ – it is a fiction. Indeed, Fernand Braudel (historian) argues that the rise of capitalism originates in the capacity of big entrenched interests to manipulate markets (Capitalism = anti-market). Markets are always ‘skewed.’ The issue is who ‘skews’ them and to what end.

2) An economic system where labour, land and money are commodities themselves (Polanyi). Polanyi is despised by many Marxists because his theory lends itself to social democratic solutions. However a social democratic is only one of the possible readings of Polanyi.

3) A system where commodities are produced and capital is accumulated through the appropriation of surplus value, i.e. through the exploitation of labour (Marx).

As social change, we define the transformation of social practices and institutions towards increased equality and freedom, and consequently the transformation of subjects, both collective and individual.

The issue of subjectivation and identity is very important. We have had at least two interesting presentations in this workshop, one by Kioupiolis on the need to forge common identities as part

of a bottom-up hegemonic project, another one by Varvarousis when he described how crisis and liminality break down traditional identities and foster the emergence of militant subjects.

Thus, I will concentrate on the other important issue, the relation between commons and capital.

Institutionalist School

The commons represent a contested concept, around which many different schools of thought have developed, with different conceptualizations, each of which facilitates or precludes different political practices oriented to social change.

The first approach to the commons, that of Elinor Ostrom, does not need to be described in detail since it is familiar to all of us here. Ostrom of course is particularly interested in natural resources, and how their collective management by self-instituted communities through common rules avoids the notorious ‘tragedy of the commons.’

Ostrom’s conclusions have been of enormous political significance, since they offered arguments in favour of collective coexistence and self-management, at a time when methodological individualism was on the rise.

However, with her insistence on effective ‘management,’ Ostrom fails to outline a new subjectivity, a new anthropological type; on the contrary, she argues that individual economic pursuits are best served by collective self-management. Most of Ostrom’s examples relate to collective resource management (irrigation, fishing, forestry) geared to the production of goods for the market. Collective self-management appears here as collateral to market participation, where everyone aims to maximize their individual benefit.

Ostrom perceives the commons as ‘closed’ systems and seeks the ‘endogenous’ causes of their success or failure, and thus fails to provide a meaningful critique of the dominant institutions within which the commons emerge, the state and the market. Therefore, she envisions the commons as ‘nested’ between these two institutions.

This vision, however, can lend itself to the utilization of the commons by capitalism for its own ends. From the idea of the ‘third sector’ to that of ‘big society,’ the commons are approached as welfare mechanisms to alleviate the crisis: the state provides institutional support to the commons, and in return the commons mitigate the most acute social and environmental consequences of capitalism, thus absorbing the ‘shocks’ of a system that is in a permanent crisis, while a substantial critique of the underlying causes of the crisis is totally absent.

Autonomist Marxism

This is a central critique of the second approach that I will examine here, that of the autonomist Marxists. Since current capitalist restructuring dictates the ‘externalization’ of the cost of social reproduction, the promotion of ‘domesticated’ and ‘benign’ commons alleviates capitalism’s crisis of reproduction and prevents social unrest. From this point of view, the commons are a ‘safety net’ that aims to mitigate the most extreme effects of capitalism.

A characteristic example is SYRIZA government’s approach towards the commons. Social solidarity structures and alternative economies are the cornerstone of its ‘parallel program’ of social salvation, while policies of neoliberal dispossession continue unperturbed.

A related Marxist critique focuses on the fact that, to the extent that commoning endeavours involve commodity production, the capitalist law of value penetrates the activity and imposes its logic. Workers of radical cooperatives, for example, might have equality and democracy in the

interior of the production unit; however, the market operates as an external ‘boss,’ determining what is going to be produced and how, as well as the intensity of labour and the remuneration of workers. This leads to phenomena of self-exploitation.

A very important observation.

To navigate the above criticisms, autonomist commons thinkers have often tried to differentiate between ‘anti-capitalist’ commons, on the one hand, and ‘distorted’ or ‘commodity-producing’ commons, on the other. In their perception, the commons are always embedded in communities of struggle, antagonistic to the permanent processes of enclosure promoted by the state and the market. For them, the central concept is not the common goods as resources, but commoning as a process that simultaneously produces subjects and collectives that can intervene in the biopolitical field antagonistically to the requirements of the state and the market. They thus promote a view that the commons are embryonic forms of a future liberated society, free from the institutions of both the state and the market.

However, an excessively close reading of Marx and his formulation that the law of value permeates all social relations leads some of them to conclude that the only potentially non-capitalist relationships are those that emphasize use value; thus they privilege sharing and the gift and they reject exchange. If we take this idea to its logical conclusion, most social and solidarity economy endeavours are ‘distorted’ commons, since they involve the production of commodities. They do nothing but ‘capitalize’ resources, skills, social relationships, etc. for the purpose of accumulation; even if this is an alternative form of accumulation.

Marxist ‘capitalocentrism’

This perception, that solidarity economy is the Trojan horse of capitalism, is widespread in Greece among left and libertarian movements.

So we should ask the question, can societies as complex as ours be reproduced without an impersonal system of exchange? Unfortunately, with this simplistic view, autonomist Marxists inadvertently reproduce the economism of classical Marxism. They argue that the labour–capital contradiction is the dominant contradiction that inheres in the capitalist mode of production, and they reduce all the other contradictions we are immersed in to the central one. We could mention among them uneven power relations, uneven geographic development, private property, private appropriation of the fruits of our labour, gendered and racial divisions of labour, disparities of wealth, alienation, as well as the economy’s impact on the environment and the climate. That also means that they underestimate the capacity of commoning endeavours to address and remedy these contradictions.

By concluding that the complex processes of creating new value systems that the commons represent are always subordinate to the law of value, they end up promoting what Gibson-Graham calls ‘capitalocentric thought.’ They therefore underestimate the ability of values to confront value. That is why I argue that they reproduce the economism of classical Marxism, since for the latter ‘values’ are nothing but a component of the ‘superstructure’ that merely reflects material relationships, while, for commons endeavours, values are a structural element of reality, inherent in the imaginary representation of our social life.

(De Angelis is a brilliant exception).

‘Structural coupling’ of capital and commons

Therefore, while the separation of ‘capitalist’ commons from ‘anti-capitalist’ is clearly well-founded, in societies where the market is the predominant mechanism of social reproduction, all commons are inevitably in ‘hybrid’ or ‘transitional’ forms. A particular arrangement, or ‘structural coupling’ in the terms of Massimo de Angelis, is required, that allows for the coexistence - in an antagonistic relationship - of these two systems of value creation if the commons are to ‘take root’ in a world dominated by capital.

Certainly, the requirements of the capitalist market are prone to ‘infect’ any commoning endeavours with considerations that are alien to them: profitability, cost efficiency, competitiveness, and so on. However, it is easy to overlook that the ‘infection’ can be bidirectional: ‘[The] advancement of commons implies sooner or later a collision with other social systems governing them, the challenge to existing local rules, of capitalist ways to measure and give value to social action, its value practices, and other networked structures [...]’

For this reason, it is necessary to adopt an antagonistic stance within the existing fields of dispute of the commons. This means that we cannot hope that the commons can become immaculate ‘islands of freedom’ that will bring about social change merely through enlargement or multiplication. Instead, the commons have to confront the dominant institutions, and to do so they have to come in contact with them.

Our relationship to capitalist commodities is contradictory. On the one hand, they represent our chains, our source of alienation from our world, our source of dehumanization. On the other hand, we are absolutely dependent on commodities for our reproduction. No commoning would be possible without the material substrate provided by capitalist commodities.

Is there a way for the commons to coexist with commodities without being absorbed by the capitalist logic? What form will this ‘structural coupling’ take if it is to be transformative?

Given that there is no capital or commons in a pure form, but there are always hybrid forms, the question we should ask in each case is ‘who is using whom’? Is capital using the commons for its reproduction or is it the other way around?

We can effortlessly think of examples:

- A social centre that sells drinks and uses the proceeds to maintain and expand the activities of the community that manages it.
- Socially supported agriculture, where a consumer community guarantees farmers’ income in exchange for agricultural products. It includes both an exchange of products and commoning among farmers and consumers, who collectively decide on the quality and quantity of goods.
- Fair trade, where product prices and the producers’ income is – potentially – not determined by supply and demand, but by the perceptions of producers and consumers regarding solidarity, fairness and sustainability.
- An occupied factory that, through occupation, creates a common space available to society as a whole, while at the same time using alternative product distribution networks to market its products.

- An alternative currency network where the community decides to establish different product exchange rules with a kind of money that retains its function as a unit of measure of value but not as a means of accumulation.

- To take an example from immaterial production, a software developer association that uses its revenue from the creation of websites, i.e. from the sale of products, to finance the creation of free software, i.e. common (a practice in the world of peer production is called transvestment).

All the above are attempts, precarious and incomplete, to deal with the relentless law of value of the capitalist market, and to replace it with new systems of valuing human action that derive from the world of the commons. Values against value. These ‘value struggles’ are the core of modern social struggles.

Not sufficient!

The above do not, of course, reduce the importance of the gift, free access, reciprocity or moneyless exchange, which lie at the heart of the life of the commons. Nor am I arguing that the above is sufficient to bring about social change without a continuous process of decisive resistance against enclosures and the defense of our collective rights, which we have gained through historical processes of struggle.

On the contrary, what I argue is that we should be equally cautious of approaches that consider the commons ‘islands’ of freedom, unpolluted by the dominant institutions, and of those that treat them as collective systems of resource management; but also of those that consider the commons a new ‘mode of production’ in the making, which will teleologically replace the capitalist one.

On the contrary, the commons are always embedded in antagonistic social movements, and are promoted through practices that seek to create ‘cracks’ in existing institutions, but also diffuse their discourse among society, create new common identities, awaken new, militant subjectivities, and to form a common political project through which they will actively claim power over everyday social and political life. In my opinion, not through the capture of the national government, but in the municipal field as an area of proximity and community building.

Even if capital is permanently adapting to the commoners’ attempts to subvert it, appropriating and utilizing their structures for its own needs, there is no zero-sum game between the processes of resistance and cooptation: an ‘excess’ is constantly produced, which gradually transforms social relations and prepares the ground on which future commoning endeavours will flourish.

[Marx’s law of value describes the way in which, in the capitalist market, the exchange value of products is linked to the amount of socially necessary labour time. In simple terms, it is the process by which markets self-regulate, rendering the production of one or the other product more or less profitable, and dictating the intensification of labour to maintain competitiveness. Essentially, it is the process by which the market appears to take on a life of its own, regardless of human needs or desires; hence, it is a central element in our sense of alienation within capitalism.]

SESSION 6: URBAN COMMONS, MUNICIPAL POLITICS AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT IN THE CITY

10. Charalampos Tsavdaroglou, 'Stasis: The Catalyst for the Circulation of Common Space. Protest camps in Athens, Istanbul and Idomeni.'

1. Introduction. Three ecstatic moments

At around 6 p.m. on June 17, 2013, Erdem Gunduz, a performance artist, drove to Taksim Square, near Gezi Park in Istanbul, which had been sealed off owing to the widespread anti-government protests. He walked to the center of the square and stood there silently in protest against the crackdown on demonstrations in Gezi Park. He stood, facing the Ataturk cultural centre, until 2am. It was a silent, stubborn and dignified protest against the brutality of the police response to demonstrators. Word spread quickly online; on Twitter, the hashtags #Duranadam and #standingman ran a steady stream of comments, together with some photos of the event. Hundreds of people approached the square to see for themselves. His unusual form of protest has inspired activists in Turkey and around the world to assume the same pose. He has even become a meme, as 'standing man' (*duran adam*, in Turkish) supporters uploaded their own protest photos to Facebook, Twitter and elsewhere.

The protest of the standing man was correlated with the standing 'woman in black dress' and the standing 'woman in red dress,' which have both become two of the most remarkable and effective symbols of the Gezi Park protests. On May 28th, when the 'woman in red dress,' namely Ceyda Sungur, a research assistant at Istanbul Technical University, arrived at the park, the scene was full of violence, with police attempting to disperse protesters with tear gas, pepper spray, and water cannons. Dressed in a red cotton dress and carrying a white tote bag, Sungur soon found herself nearly face-to-face with a policeman's pepper spray canister. With her stance relaxed and the face downturn, Sungur, through the photographers' lens, is the epitome of passive resistance. As onlookers cover their faces and turn away, Sungur keeps her shoulders nearly squared to the officer, whose gas mask and crouched stance seem almost comically disproportionate to his target. With a barricade of shields framing the action with ominous uniformity, she stands alone and absorbs the spray.

Equally affectionally known is the 'woman in black dress' who stood in front of an armored water canon (TOMA). The woman in the black dress is Kate Cullen, an Australian student from Sydney University who was in Istanbul on an exchange program. She witnessed days of protests in Gezi Park, but these protests were subject to violent attacks by the police using water cannons and capsicum spray. One night on her way home, not far from Gezi Park, she experienced the effects of police violence and the capsicum spray. With her eyes burning and unable to take breath she was helped by a man who pulled her into the entrance of an apartment where some LGBT individuals were taking shelter, and received the first-aid she urgently needed. She was so impressed that these people helped her without knowing her that she decided to show her appreciation by standing by the protesters. Kate's well recognized photograph was taken on June 1st morning, after a night-long protests with a group of uni friends. When she saw the foreign press corps, she knew this could be an opportunity to show the world what was happening in

Istanbul, because the Turkish media who largely supported the government, were ignoring the protests, and she immediately stood in front of the TOMA.

Kate and a group of people were chanting slogans near the German Hospital in Siraselviler, near Gezi park in front the TOMA, before the photo was taken. Kate had not thought the shot would become a symbol. 'The photograph is not about me anymore. If we think on a general scale, my action is nothing' (Hurriyet, 2013), she said. 'It's not more courageous than protesters who did the same things or more. The woman in black is not me anymore' (Ibid.) Endlessly shared on social media and replicated as a cartoon on posters and stickers, the image of the 'woman in black dress' and the 'woman in red dress' have become the leitmotifs for female protesters during days of anti-government demonstrations in Istanbul. The three emblematic 'standing' figures entered in a dialectic with the endless movement of the protestors, but also with the Sufi Whirling dervishes rotate dance, wearing gas mask amid the festive atmosphere of Gezi Park in between police attacks.

On Monday, March 14, 2016 refugees keep arriving at the Idomeni camp on Greece's northern border with Macedonia in their thousands, becoming virtual prisoners as they are prevented from moving further into Europe. They hope the current border closure might be lifted so that they can continue their journey. But freezing, wet weather conditions have turned the makeshift camp into an icy pool, making the stay in Idomeni impossible for many. Although there was a great sense of solidarity and self-organization among the refugees, the squalid conditions, combined with a shortage of food, medicine and drinking water have made the situation worse. This has triggered tensions and a generalized sense of anxiety. On Sunday March 13, it has been reported that a mysterious leaflet depicting a printed map and instructions on how to pass through the closed borders to the west of Idomeni is being shared among the refugees. Next day, unable to tolerate the conditions, about 2 000 refugees resorted to a desperate attempt to find a way around the border fence, in order to cross to Macedonia. After walking several hours in a 'march of hope,' including children, elderly and disabled people, they trudged through mud while carrying their belongings towards a river about 5 kilometers to the west of Idomeni. A multiple and transnational mobile community, a mobile common multitude, based on mutual help, solidarity and commoning tried to escape, to find an exodus, to craft and to invent a desired future beyond their traumas, their wounds, their diseases and their illusions. The refugees forded a swollen river that crosses into Macedonia, putting them closer to the sealed border as they searched for holes in a newly built barbed wire fence. In dramatic scenes, refugees held children and their belongings over their heads as they crossed thigh-deep water.

In the summer of 2011 in Athens, during the antiausterity mobilizations, protestors, the so-called *Aganaktismenoi* (Indignant), occupied for about two months the central Syntagma square in front of the parliament. During the days of the occupation, a paper appeared on a tent bearing the word 'revolution,' where the inner letters 'evol' were transformed into 'love,' in an anagrammatic and poetic way. The rotation of the letters could express the subversive character of the common space that emerged in the occupied square. Until the days of the occupation, the square had the typical features of 'enclosed' spaces. After several renewal projects, it was a sterilized place controlled by police, security guards and cameras.

However, the *Aganaktismenoi* protesters intended to transform the square into a common space of 'love' and 'revolution,' in an affective even if ephemeral way. A crucial consequence of the

emerging common space was that demarcated identities did not fit within the occupied square. The protesters' commoning, the various modes of communication and their social relations, developed a culture of coexistence in which multiple identities were troubled and questioned, as the multitude of people was constantly confronted with their political, cultural, class, racial and gender identities. In fact, it can be argued that the square became a threshold-space, as it was inhabited by the 'in-between' of the people.

At this point, it has to be noted that the first Facebook call (2011) to 'Aganaktismenoi' (2011) emphasizes the total rejection of parties' participation: 'Our initial goal is to join the movement with our kids, to meet with each other, to see friends and familiar people. The occasion is the situation which we live in. No flags, no placards, no political parties and organizations. Spontaneously. The page's administrators are not the event's creators.' In the words of Stavrou (2011: 33): 'Nobody could impose something that the multitude did not want. Neither the right nor the left. Neither they who talked in a patriotic manner; nor they who spoke for the workers (...). The multitude was holding what it wanted. The rest was discarded (...).' And as Stavrides (2011: 182) felicitously noted: 'Roles are often exposed to the transforming power of commoning. Sharing and solidarity are not developed in the squares as pre-existing values in a denominated ideology. Often they were invented in practice, faced with problems of common sharing of the space but also by the common organization of events'.

Consequently, this process had highlighted a new sociability and gave rise to new social subject, a social and plural 'we.' According to Stavrides (2011: 178), a peculiar 'we' emerged in the squares, an ambiguous 'we' gather, which could soon evaporate. 'It is a "we" of the ordinary people, (...) a "we" that demands justice and life. It is a "we", which is not named, in order to stand out, to distinguish, to raise walls' (Ibid: 178). The Athenian revol(love)utionary occupied square circulated and expanded to the streets and neighbourhoods of Athens, across the country, acquired a global character as it was inspired by and inspired, in turn, similar mobilizations in Mediterranean countries and the USA.

Drawing inspiration from the foregoing moments and in order to examine the question of composition and the modes of circulation of the common space, I propose to examine the dialectic, ecstatic and rotating relationship between 'stand' and 'movement.' Thus, I propose to dive into the deep waters of Marxian theory and to reconsider the discourse on the circulation of social struggles through the lenses of the concept of 'Stasis.' In recent years, several scholars have adopted the ancient Greek word of 'stasis' in order to analyze social movements in the era of crisis. According to Douzinas (2011: 204), 'the "Stasis Syntagma" is a gathering of bodies in space and time, who think, discuss and deal with the commons (...).' Athanasiou (in Butler and Athanasiou, 2013: 151) suggests that 'the very practice of stasis creates both a space for reflection and a space for revolt, but also an affective comportment of standing and standpoint.' Dalakoglou and Kallianos (2014: 531) claim that stasis can refer to 'non-systemic interruptions of flows and non-systemic disorders, which have anti-structural potentialities. (...) Stasis is perceived as a process that challenges the neo-liberal normality and its productive rhythms'.

Tsilimpounidi (2016: 413-414) argues, likewise, that stasis 'implies there is a productive potential to the disruption that happens when the flows of (...), capital, and trade are stopped. If capitalism is all about the circulation and mobility then a truly subversive and revolutionary act is to disrupt, to pause, or to dismantle (...) capitalism's rules. (...) Stasis is about taking a stance: it suggests the corporeal, affective and ideological positioning of the self (*stasi zois*).' Finally, according to Dikeç

(2013), ‘stasis does not merely mean inertia in a negative sense. Even if it suggests stillness, it is a disruptive stillness. Stasis means “standing up against” (...), “standing for,” and, following perhaps unsurprisingly from these two meanings, “uprising.”’ Consequently, the concept of ‘stasis’ could be the precondition of movement, and it is linked to revolt, a personal and collective stance, a standpoint and self-reflection.

In the next part of the paper, I set out the classical discourse on the circulation of capital vis-à-vis the circulation of social struggles. Then, I move forward from the circulation of social struggles to the circulation of the common and the common space. Subsequently, I examine the concept of ‘Stasis’ and, finally, I offer ‘Stasis’ as the catalyst for the circulation of the common space.

2. The circulation of capital vis-à-vis the circulation of social struggles

Till today, the circulation of capital has been examined through the famous Marx’s model: M-C-M’ (M=Money, C=Commodities, M’=M+ Δ M=Surplus-value). According to Marx (1990 [1867]: 251-252):

The complete form of this process is therefore M-C-M’, where M’=M+ Δ M, i.e. the original sum advanced plus an increment. This increment or excess over the original value I call ‘surplus value.’ The value originally advanced, therefore, not only remains intact while in circulation, but increases its magnitude, adds to itself a surplus-value, or is valorized. And this movement converts it into capital.

Subsequently, Marx (1992 [1893]), in the second volume of ‘Capital,’ considers in detail the circulation of capital, and he shows that the circuit of money capital comprises three stages. At the first stage, the capitalist buys labour power and means of production, at the second stage the production of new commodities takes place, and the third stage consists in the sale of the new commodities and the production of surplus value.

Throughout Marx’s analysis, the key point in capital circuit is that the only commodity that generates surplus value is labour power. However, in order for the money-owner to get hold of the commodity labor-power, the so-called primitive accumulation must be reproduced. That means that human beings constantly have to be separated from the means of (re)production through processes of enclosure. This is the so-called ‘secret of primitive accumulation,’ which Marx (1990 [1867]: 874-875) analyses in the 26th chapter of the first volume of ‘Capital’:

The capital-relation presupposes a complete separation between the workers and the ownership of the conditions for the realization of their labour. As soon as capitalist production stands on its own feet, it not only maintains this separation, but reproduces it on a constantly extending scale.

More specifically, according to Marx, the process of primitive accumulation concerns the procedures of usurpation of communal lands through the so-called ‘enclosures,’ which took place during the transition from feudalism to capitalism. Yet, according to Marx (1990 [1867]), the process of primitive accumulation was intended to separate the users of communal land, the commoners, from the means of production, reproduction and existence. The ex-commoners, who were violently forced to migrate to the emerging industrial cities, became proletarianized and turned into wage labor workers. This established the capital - labour relationship.

Following Marx’s analysis, during the last decades of the twentieth century, especially after the crisis of the seventies and the emergence of post-Fordism and neoliberalism, various scholars, mainly from the perspective of autonomous Marxism (Glassman, 2006; Hardt and Negri, 2000;

Midnight Notes Collective, 1990), have reconsidered the discourse on primitive accumulation. They argue that enclosures are constantly expanding and, therefore, they are not merely a pre-capitalist procedure. Autonomous Marxists recognize as 'new enclosures' a rich variety of procedures in the fields of race, gender and class, which focus on the separation of humans from their means of production, reproduction, and existence. According to them, characteristic cases of new enclosures are: human trafficking and gendered oppression, informational accumulation, land grabbing and land dispossession, Structural Adjustment Programs of IMF and WB in Latin America, Africa and recently in Europe, wars for raw materials, the debt crisis, environmental pollution and climate change, the demise of the Eastern bloc and the decline of the post war welfare state of Western European countries.

Moreover, the understanding of the permanent character of separation of the producers from the means of (re)production directed autonomous Marxists to concentrate on those emancipatory social struggles which contest the separation and reunite people with the means of (re)production. This point of view places ongoing social struggles at the center of the analysis, and it understands enclosures and the perpetuity of the so-called primitive accumulation as a response to constant social struggles and social movements.

In this perspective, autonomous Marxists argue that social struggles have the ability to interrupt the circuit of capital. According to Dyer-Witthford (2006: 2), 'each node in the circuit of capital is a potential site of conflict where the productive subjectivities capital requires may contest its imperatives.' Since the 1960s, along with labor struggles, various social struggles in the field of reproduction -ecological, gender, student and people of color struggles- brought to light a variety of movements that have the ability to block and sabotage the circulation of capital.

3. From the circulation of social struggles to the circulation of the common

The circulation of capital is not an ontological and teleological process, but it always comes into dialectical conflict with social struggles. Since the '70s and the '80s, the theorists of autonomist Marxism (Cleaver, 1992; Midnight Notes Collective, 1990; Negri, 1984[1979]) have demonstrated how the circulation of capital is also a circulation of struggles, and they criticize both Marx and orthodox Marxist literature, which focused only on the power of capital. According to Cleaver (1992: 109), Marx focuses his analysis more on capital's categories rather than on workers' struggles:

The (...) failure of Marx's writings occurred where the historical analysis of domination was not complemented by the analysis of the struggles whose mechanisms were designed to dominate. Therefore, a not inconsiderable body of his writing appears at best to be lopsidedly preoccupied with the machinations of capitalists rather than with the struggles of those workers for whom Marx was elaborating his theory.

Consequently, Cleaver (1992: 108) argues that 'a great deal of Marxian theory, (...) remains underdeveloped by forgetting to carry through two kinds of analysis: first, an inversion of class perspective (...) and second, an analysis of the struggles against domination.' Furthermore, according to Negri (1992 [1984]), Capital has served to reduce critique to economic theory. The objectification of the categories in Capital blocks action by revolutionary subjectivity and subjects the subversive capacity of the proletariat to the reorganizing and repressive intelligence of capitalist power.

In line with the above analysis, Dyer-Witthford (2006: 2) claims that 'each node in the circuit of

capital is a potential site of conflict where the productive subjectivities capital requires, may contest its imperatives. If not all, at least many of the breakdowns in capital's circulation occur because LP (labor-power) refuses to remain LP: it resists and re-appropriates.' Since the 60s, along with labour struggles, the various struggles in reproduction (ecological – gender – student, etc.) brought to light a wealth of fights and movements that have the ability to block and sabotage the circulation of capital.

The most analytical and systematic approaches that demonstrate how the circulation of struggles blocks the circulation of capital are those of Cleaver, *Reading capital politically* (Cleaver, 1979), and of Cleaver, again, in co-authorship with Peter Bell, 'Marx's Theory of Crisis as a Theory of Class Struggle' (Bell and Cleaver, 2002 [1982]). In the first study, Cleaver (1979: 76) points out that reading Capital politically is tantamount to showing 'how each category and relationship relates to and clarifies the nature of the class struggle and to show what that means for the political strategy of the working class.' In the second more detailed study, Bell and Cleaver systematically analyze the entire cycle of capital and highlight the range of insurgent interruptions possible at each phase. According to Bell and Cleaver (2002 [1982]: 22):

The separation (...) of population from the means of production required an extended 'primitive accumulation,' through which peasants were forced off their land and artisans were stripped of their tools, forcing both into the labor market - that is, to sell their labor power to capital. All of this occurs through much violent conflict and bloodshed (...). But even once the separation has been made, and capital monopolizes the means of production, the struggle continues. In the sale of labor power there is the struggle over the terms of sale (M - LP), how much money for how much work, under what conditions, and so on. And even once the sale is made the struggle continues during work itself - struggle against that work (P) by the workers, and the striving of capital to obtain the maximum amount of work. Finally, not even the disposition of the final product (C - M) runs smoothly. Rather, there is a wide variety of struggles ranging from direct working-class appropriation to struggles over international trade - what will be allowed to be sold where and at what price.

And they go on to note that

Each moment of the circuit, whether in the sphere of production (work) or in the sphere of exchange, is not only a moment of the class relation but carries in it the fundamental character of that relation, an antagonistic conflict. In this way we can see how the class relation - the class struggle - contains each of the variables: LP, M, C, MP, P as elements, or moments, of its existence.

In the same vein, De Angelis (2007: 53) argues that:

Struggles for wages affects profitability, as do the struggles for working time and rhythms (...). Investment M-C depends on profit expectations, which in turn depends on a combination of past profits, the 'cost-effectiveness' of the expected ability to extract work from workers in relation to others in another place (...). Depending on the different contexts in which the circuit of capital operates, profit expectation and investment also depend on making workers accept new restructuring and jobs cuts, the ability to make cost-effective the extraction of raw materials, the ability to increase social productivity by the building of infrastructures that might be contested by environmental groups, and so on.

Finally, according to Bell and Cleaver (2002 [1982]: 58-59), the circulation of struggles has the ability to interrupt the circulation of capital. And every potential rupture, in any phase of capital's circulation, generates crisis.

If crises for capital are evidence of its loss of control (...) over the working class, then we can also turn this relation around and see that the crises are simultaneously the eruption of working-class subjectivity that undermines capitalist control. For workers the most important thing about capitalist crisis is that it is, for the most part, the consequence of their struggles. The rupture of accumulation by struggle is a moment of conquest. It is the opening of a breach in the enemy lines in the class war. When the struggle circulates rapidly, the breach is widened and whole lines may give away. The working class widens the scope for its own organization and mobilization. The circulation of struggle to more and more sectors of the class and the widening of the space, time and resources available for organizing further struggle, strengthens the class. Even if the struggles that produce and grow out of a crisis are ultimately crushed by capital, they are still important experiences in the development of the working class as revolutionary subject.

Several autonomous Marxists, like Hardt and Negri (2009), Federici (2011) and De Angelis (2017), agree with this interpretation of the crisis. Indicatively, Midnight Notes Collective and Friends (2009: 2), focusing on the recent socio-economic crisis, argue that the crisis 'starts with the struggles billions have made across the planet against capital's exploitation and its environmental degradation of their lives,' and Holloway (2010: 196) insightfully comments that 'it is only if we think of crisis as breakthrough, as the moving of doing against-and-beyond labour, that we can open up perspectives of a different world.'

However, Dyer-Witherford (2006: 3) argues that the theory of the circulation of struggles has serious shortcomings as it 'has little to say about the long term outcome of these struggles.' He adds that 'if today the concept of circulation of struggles speaks well to the multiple voices declaring "another world is possible", to the begging question "but which world?" –or even, if one wishes to emphasize a potential diversity of arrangements, "which worlds?"-- it does not answer.'

Bell and Cleaver's essay 'Marx's Theory of Crisis As A Theory Of Class Struggle' ends by pointing out that what 'defines the working class as a revolutionary subject, is not only the negative power to abolish capital but the positive power to increasingly define its own needs, to carve out an expanding sphere of its own movement and to create a new world in the place of capitalism' (Bell and Cleaver, 2002 [1982]: 60).

At this point, Dyer-Witherford seeks to identify this 'expanding sphere,' and he is the first who fleshes out the idea of the circulation of commons. In his article 'The Circulation of the Common,' he puts forward as the basic formula of the circulation of the common the form A-C-A, in which 'A' stands for Association, 'C' stands for the Common, and 'A' stands for the new Association. However, Dyer-Witherford's formula has serious shortcomings as it separates the Association from the Common. Dyer-Witherford conceptualizes the common in the image of the capitalist commodity, and the only difference is that the common is produced collectively. Dyer-Witherford (2006: 4) cites the following as an example of the circulation of the common:

If an agricultural Association (A) on the basis of its successful cultivation of a Common banana plantation (C) joins together with other such Associations, first to place more lands under cultivation, and then to form an industrial packing plant which then provides the nucleus for

further cooperatively conducted activities, we have a circulation of commons. If the Associative organization of a publicly funded education system researches collectively created software that provides the basis for open source associations (A') we have a circulation of commons. And if these open source software is then made freely available to our initial agricultural cooperative to enable its planning activities, we have a further circulation. The circulation of the common is thus a dynamic in which commons grow, elaborate, proliferate and diversify in a movement of counter-subsumption against capital, generating the 'complex and composite' forms of communism.

However, based on Dyer-Witherford's quote, I have to draw attention to some questions which require further elucidation: What is the measure of a successful cultivation? Are the produced bananas shared or sold, entering thus capital's circulation? Who is the owner of the land, the agricultural land common land? And how does the Association protect the common land from capitalist appropriators? Where is the circulation of struggles? Where is the circulation of the common articulated with the circulation of the struggles? If a member of the Association doesn't work as much as the others, are there any penalties? How are decisions taken? Is there free access to the land? Which are the social values of the Association? How have the members of the Association addressed both the issues of gender and race? If the Association, which has collectively created software, is publicly founded, is it outside capital's circulation?

4. Different approaches to the commons and the concept of the common space

The discourse of the commons revolves mainly around two different approaches. On the one hand, there are approaches that support enclosures and understand the commons only as recourses for economic exploitation. Therefore, they seek the appropriation, privatization and commercialization of commons. On the other hand, there are approaches that support the so-called 'communism of the commons,' that is, the creation of communal-social relations through which commons are self-regulated collectively in non-commercial ways.

The approaches that support the enclosure of the commons are divided into three types: neoliberal approaches, state regulation approaches, and collective action approaches. Neoliberal approaches are based on the theory of the 'tragedy of the commons,' analyzed by Hardin (1968). In the late '60s, Hardin (1968) argued that if in a common pool resource there is free open access and lack of ownership, the users behave selfish as 'free riders' and overuse the resource up to the point of destroying it completely. So, according to these approaches, the only way to cover the cost of the use of common pool resources is to enclose and to privatize access to them (Coase 1960). State regulation approaches, like the neoliberal approaches, recognize as commons only common pool resources. They take social antagonisms into account, but they seek to compromise them by means of social contracts (Ehrenfeld, 1972; Heilbroner, 1974; Ophuls 1973). The state regulation approaches oppose privatization and argue that the state is the best guarantor of the efficient use of common pool resources (Carruthers and Stoner, 1981). Collective action approaches (Ostrom, 1990) are opposed to privatization and state control, and they seek to make capitalism compatible with commons. They argue that producers' communities are able to self-organize and achieve effective business-economic results in participatory ways. These approaches do not challenge capitalism; hence, they support the institutionalization of common pool resources by the State.

Approaches in favour of the communism of the commons separate themselves from the dichotomy private or state management of commons, and recognize in the commons characteristics that are

based primarily on social relationships. According to the approach of autonomous Marxists (De Angelis, 2017; Linebaugh, 2008; Caffentzis, 2010), commons involve three fundamental characteristics: common pool resources, commoning and communities. The people who, through commoning, constitute emancipatory communities which self-organize non-commercial modes of sharing common pool resources are called ‘commoners.’ Based on the above conceptualization of the commons, several scholars advance the concept of ‘common space’ as an unstable and malleable social relation between ‘a particular self-defined social group and those aspects of its actually existing or yet-to-be-created social and/or physical environment’ (Harvey, 2012:73), the articulation of ‘spatial practices, social relationships and forms of governance that produce and reproduce them’ (Chatterton, 2016: 5), a ‘form of place-making’ (Blomley 2008: 320), a ‘threshold’ space (Stavrides, 2014), and a new version of the Lefebvrian (1996[1968]) ‘right to the city’ (Mayer, 2009; Kapsali and Tsavdaroglou, 2016; Makrygianni and Tsavdaroglou, 2016).

In contrast to most recent approaches, Dyer-Witherford’s (2006) analysis has perceived through the form A-C-‘A’ (Association – Common – New Association) the common as a common pool resource, which is separated from the Association (or the ‘Communities’ in the autonomous Marxists’ terminology). This approach is closer, thus, to resource-based approaches, in which there is neither commoning nor class and social antagonisms, conflicts and struggles for the making, production and reproduction of commons. It seems, thus, that Dyer-Witherford’s example converges with Ostrom’s approach to collective action and it is not a pertinent conception for ‘a communism of the commons’ approach.

Therefore, a more analytical approach to the circulation of commons is required, which should examine commons and common space as a unity of common pool resources, commoning, and community, and should situate this unity within social conflicts, hence in the circulation of struggles, the circulation of capital and, generally, the circulation of every system of domination, oppression and discrimination such as state, patriarchy, nationalism, racism etc. In order to further elaborate and to extend the discussion around the composition of common space, I introduce the concept of ‘stasis’ as a theoretical, political and praxial device for the circulation of the common space.

5. The concept of Stasis

The concept of Stasis encompasses, since ancient Greek times, four main meanings: a) Stasis is the Middle between two Motions; b) Stasis is Revolt; c) Stasis is a Disease (Nosos) and Crisis – the crucial time of a disease and d) Stasis is a political-moral-rhetorical stance.

The most common meanings of Stasis are stop, station, pause and standing. It has been used in this sense since the 8th century BC in Homeric epics (Kalimtzis, 2000: 18). Heraclitus (A6, quoted in Dieter, 1959: 215) argued that stasis is synonymous with *eremia*, i.e. rest. Theophrastus describes the calmness of the air as a Stasis (Kalimtzis, 2000: 18). Plato was the first who contested the static concept of Stasis and, in the *Republic* (435c5-6), he has Socrates wonder whether it is possible for the same thing to be ‘at rest and in motion?’ Finally, Aristotle extends Plato’s approach, and he argues in *Metaphysics* (1004b29, 229b15, quoted in Dieter, 1959: 215) that Stasis forms a pair with *Kenises* (Movement). Aristotle states that Stasis is the articulation and the intermediate point (*meson*) between two movements, hence the end of the first movement and the beginning of the second. As formulated by Dieter (1959: 219), the middle Stasis is the point of

reversal, at which both the end of the prior upward motion and the beginning of the subsequent downward motion co-exist, consist or stand still together.

Most historians of ancient times construe Stasis as revolt, sedition, or rebellion against the sovereign power. Thucydides examines in detail the Stasis in Corfu in the 5th century B.C., and Xenophon and Herodotus focus on the Stasis of Miletus²¹ in the 6th century B.C. The conception of Stasis as a revolt was prevalent until the Roman times. Furthermore, Stasis as revolt has inspired poets like Alcaeus, who wrote the *Stasiotika* poems in the 6th century, and tragedies such as *Ajax*, *Oedipus at Colonus* and *Antigone* by Sophocles, Euripides' *Orestes* and *Knights* of Aristophanes have several references to Stasis. In all of them, the rebels are called 'stasiastes.' According to Thucydides in his book *Kerkiraika* (3.81-84), the main characteristics of Stasis as a revolt are the following: a) Stasis is a deviant political process; b) Stasis is accompanied by transformations in social values; c) during Stasis, familial and political friendship ties are dissolved and replaced by party associations that exist outside of the constitutional framework (Thucydides, 3.82.6); d) Stasis is caused by honor issues; e) Stasis is characterized by variability, unpredictability and violence (Thucydides, 3.82.6).

Moreover, Aristotle examines the causes and pretexts of Stasis in his fifth book of *Politics*. He points out that 'in revolutions the occasions may be trifling, but great interests are at stake' (Aristotle *Politics* Fifth Book, ch. 3, par 1). In addition, the main characteristic of Stasis as a revolt is that it concerns civil wars –internal conflicts. More specifically, Plato made a distinction between war conflicts between City-States or alliances, i.e. Persian Wars, the Peloponnesian War, the Macedonian Wars etc., and Stasis which concerns revolts within each social formation (Plat. *Resp.*, V. 470b, 470cd.ii, 401, 23 and 28). As one would expect, Stasis as revolt received severe criticism. Democritus, in the early fourth century BC, argues that 'envy is the starting point of stasis' (Diels, Vorsokr. B245 quoted in Kalimtzis, 2000: 2) and 'fratricidal stasis is an evil to each, for to both the victors and the vanquished the destruction is the same' (Diels, Vorsokr. B, 249, quoted in Kalimtzis, 2000: 2). Furthermore, in the sixth century BC, the elegiac poet Theognis, a defender of the oligarchic class, argues that Stasis expresses the 'ignobles' lust for power and gain' (in Kalimtzis, 2000:2). In addition, Solon, in the sixth century BC, states that Stasis 'brings harm to the *polis*,' hence it is a 'public evil' (Edmunds, 4.27, quoted in Kalimtzis, 2000: 3).

Stasis as *Nosos* (Disease) and *Crisis*²² concern the critical time of a disease, in which the body recovers or gets worse (Stasis – Homeostasis – Metastasis). The concept of Stasis as *Nosos* has

²¹ Miletus was one of the great Ionian centers, the birthplace of philosophy, a *polis* that founded over seventy settlements from the Black Sea to Egypt. During the sixth century, the city was divided between the laborers and the rich. Class conflict reached its high point when the rich, having suffered defeat, fled the city, leaving behind their families. The poor seized their property, rounded up their children and took them to the fields outside the city, where they had their oxen trample them to death. When the aristocrats returned to power, they took hold of their enemies and their children, and after tarring them, they set them on fire. It is not a coincidence, perhaps, that the archetypal orthonormal functional Hippodamian urban plan was invented in Miletus by Hippodamus in 479 BC, a century after the Stasis of the sixth century took place. Hippodamus divided the citizens into three classes (soldiers, artisans and 'husbandmen'), and the land, likewise, into three categories (sacred, public and private). The orthonormal division of the city was intended to optimize both functionality and the safety of the city against internal and external enemies. Since then, the Hippodamian plan is the main response of authorities to urban riots, as we can see in Haussmann's boulevards in Paris, which were the authority's urban plan in response to the revolts of 1830 and 1848.

²² As *Midnight Notes* (2009: 3) indicate, the word 'crisis' derives its meaning from its origin in medicine, 'a point in the course of disease when the patient either descends to death or returns to health.'

been examined since the 5th century BC by Hippocrates, Pythagoras and Alkmeonas. The pair Nosos-Stasis appears in Aeschylus, Euripides, Plato, Aristotle, Demosthenes, Isocrates, Lysias, and others. Plato (Cratylus, 426d) construes Stasis as ‘the decision (crisis) of being.’ Indeed, the etymological root of Stasis is the verb “ἵστημι/ἵσταμαι,” from which came the Latin verb *existo* (ex-isto). Consequently, Stasis can be interpreted as the critical time of someone’s existence-presence.

Stasis as political-moral-rhetorical stance appeared in Aeschinus and Hermagoras of Temnos, who distinguishes four types of stasis as an invention process: definitional, conjectural, translative, and qualitative. In the context of the rhetorical, particularly interesting is the connection between Stasis and ‘common places’ (*koinoi topoi*), which Aristotle (*Rhetoric*, I, 2, 1358a) defines as the most generally valid logical and linguistic forms of all of our discourse. These, according to Virno (2004: 35), constitute the skeletal structure of our discourse. They allow for the existence of every individual expression we use and they give a structure to these expressions, as well. According to Virno (2004: 37), Aristotle singles out three such ‘places,’ namely the connection between more and less, the opposition of opposites, and the category of reciprocity. Moreover, Aristotle (1222a29, 261b27) argues that every praxis presupposes a contestation (*amphisbetesis*). This means that without contestation there is no praxis. In addition, the orator Cicero (*Topica* 25, 93), in 44 BC, argues that Stasis is where (the place at which) the defense, set to meet the attack, first steps into the affray, so to speak, for the purpose of fighting back (or making a ‘retort,’ or staging a ‘come-back’).

Furthermore, an interesting use of the concept of Stasis can be found in ancient Greek tragedies. Stasis, in the form of *Stasimon*, was the song of chorus (dance) between the episodes, when the actors leave the scene and allow the audience to reflect upon the actions of the drama before the next episode or the last exodus-catharsis.

Finally, Stasis was recognized as a source of power to such an extent that Archimedes, in the 3rd century BC, claimed ‘give me a place to stand on, and I will move the Earth.’

In contrast to the wealth of the above meanings of Stasis, in the passage from the Hellenistic to the Roman period, and then to the medieval Catholic and Byzantine era, the concept of Stasis changed significantly. On the one hand, in the eastern Roman Empire and then in the Byzantine Empire, the concept of Stasis kept only the character of revolt as a marginal phenomenon, which should be always suppressed.²³ On the other hand, in medieval Western Europe, Stasis obtained a completely altered meaning. The term of Stasis was translated into Latin mainly through the simplified concept of station, stop and stability. Hence, it lost the open character of uprising, contestation, contemplation, of political-moral-rhetorical stance. Therefore, in Western medieval Catholic Europe, the concept of Stasis acquired just the opposite meaning of uprising and contestation. Stasis was transformed into State (Stato-Latin, Staates-stand German, Estado-Spanish) and *status quo* (*status quo ante*). In addition, the subjects of Stasis lost their reflective and insurrectionary character as rebels (*Stasiastes*) and were transformed into ‘*estate*,’ the dominant upper social classes. Later on, the term ‘*estate*’ was associated with big property, hence

²³ In the Eastern Roman Empire and the first centuries of Byzantine Empire, the concept of Stasis as revolt was preserved. The most famous Stases were the ‘Nika Stasis’ in Constantinople 532 AD against the emperor Justinian I, and the 391 AD Stasis in Thessaloniki against the emperor Theodosius.

with enclosures. Furthermore, over the course of centuries, Stasis was associated with the biopolitical control of populations, the ‘statistics’ (*statisticus* in Latin). Finally, in the anagrammatist form of ‘testa,’ Stasis obtained the meaning of examination, evaluation and control. Thereby, the meaning of Stasis has been totally reversed. As a result, the rebellion against the sovereign power was named ‘anti-stasis’ – resistance.

6. Reclaiming Stasis towards an ecstatic, expanding and rotating common space

Dyer-Witford’s (2006: 4) claims that ‘if the cellular form of capitalism is the commodity, the cellular form of communism is *the common*.’ In this quote, Dyer-Witford makes a serious mistake in order to support his formula for the circulation of the common as A-C-A’ (Association – Common – new Association), which corresponds to the formula of capital’s circulation M-C-M.’

His argument that ‘the cellular form of capitalism is the commodity’ is a selective reading and falsification of Marx’s thesis in the preface to the first edition of *Capital*, in which it is clearly stated that ‘for the bourgeois society, the commodity-form of the product of labour, or the value-form of the commodity, is the economic cell-form’ (Marx, 1990 [1867]: 90). According to Arthur (2004: 36), ‘or’ here is clearly not an ‘or’ of alterity but an ‘or’ of identity. Therefore, the cellular form of the bourgeois society is not only commodity but also value. Hence, the cellular form of capital is the whole formula M-C-M’,²⁴ not only ‘C’ (Commodity). This thesis becomes more clear in part Two of the first volume of *Capital*, ‘The Transformation of Money into Capital,’ in which Marx (1990[1867]: 255) demonstrates that ‘capital is money, capital is commodities.’ Consequently, if we want to look for a similar cellular form in communism, then it should be sought in the open social struggles of stasis *through* commons, and not only in commons as argued by Dyer-Witford. According to his erroneous reading of the capital’s cellular form, Witherford’s point of departure is that the common is separated from the association. On the contrary, in this paper I argue that common space contains simultaneously the community, commoning and common pool resources. Moreover, I argue that common space and stasis form a unity, one cell, against both the circulation of capital and any other heteronomy.

Therefore, in the circulation of common space and within the dialectic relations of stasis, what takes place is precisely what De Angelis (2007: 239) once felicitously argued, namely that ‘capital *generates* itself *through* enclosures, while subjects in struggle generate themselves *through* commons. Hence “revolution” is not struggling *for* commons, but *through* commons, not for dignity, but through dignity.’ The distinction between the struggle *for* commons and the struggle *through* commons is crucial for the outcome of struggles. To be part of the cellular form of communism, the common should always seek to generate struggles, emancipations and stasis, i.e. commoners ought to collectively consider, contest, take decisions, struggle, rise up against any heteronomy which seeks to usurp common space. Otherwise, if the common space is not in an

²⁴ The money is the form or the measure of values, according to Marx (1990[1867]: 188):

It is not money that renders the commodities commensurable. Quite the contrary. Because all commodities, as values, are objectified human labour, and therefore in themselves commensurable, their values can be communally measured in one and the same specific commodity, and this commodity can be converted into the common measure of their values, that is into money. Money as a measure of value is the necessary form of appearance of the measure of value which is immanent in commodities, namely labour time.

ongoing process of stasis, then anti-stasis prevails. Hence, common space degenerates and is disassembled into spaces of enclosures, into anticommuns.

Now, I can put forward my proposal. The bottomline of the discussion on stasis ought to consider the dual character of stasis, as revolt as well as State, as rebellious as well as ruling class, as contestation as well as control. Consequently, I argue that stasis has not a closed, ontological positive or negative character. Rather, as I have already shown, stasis is an open dynamic concept, which is always determined, composed and recomposed²⁵ by emancipatory processes versus processes of domination, suppression and discrimination. Consequently, stasis is a struggle and a revolt against its suppression. For the purposes of this paper, I make the distinction between ‘stasis in space’ and suppression of stasis, which I call ‘anti-stasis in space.’

On the one hand, I suggest that stasis in space constitutes a rebellion, crisis, reflection, and contestation. Furthermore, stasis is the precondition for motion, movement, change, existence and actualization. Stasis is the catalyst and the essential precondition of the crisis of space, that is, for the process through which people stand, reflect on, recognize their strengths, contest, consider and formulate a political-moral-rhetoric stance. Stasis is akin to the Zapatistas’ slogan: ‘asking is the only way that we can walk.’

Moreover, through the processes of stasis, human beings articulate, assemble, constitute and compose social-communal relations (commoning). They communicate and they become social subjects through process of subjectification. They become persons and, at the same time, they reunite themselves with the common pool resources, the means of production and reproduction while, at the same time, they articulate emancipatory political and moral values through emancipatory communication praxis. Finally, the ongoing repetition of ‘stasis in space’ constitutes the ecstatic (*ekstatikós* in Greek) space as stasis standing in, against and beyond the multiple systems of domination, suppression and discrimination. This stasis is standing outside as actual and potential otherness. In conclusion, the permanence of stasis processes constitutes the *Epanastasis in Space*, that is, the Revolution in Space, not as a utopian end-*telos* but as a continuous repetition of Stasis.

On the other hand, the suppression of stasis in space through enclosures, the distortion of commoning and the continuation of the so-called ‘primitive accumulation’ is the response of capital, patriarchy, nationalism or other heteronomies, I call it ‘antistasis in space.’ Consequently ‘antistasis’ can be understood in three ways; first, as the construction of distances (from *dis*-apart and *stance*-stasis, *apostasis* in Greek) between humans and common pool resources, means of production and reproduction; second, as the construction of distances in commoning, that is, the construction of disassembled and distorted social relations; third, as the construction of distances between humans and communities, in processes such as dispossession and migration, which in Greek language is called *metanasteusi* (μετανάστευση). *Metanasteusi* means ‘meta-stasis,’ after the stasis. Indeed, after an unsuccessful stasis, unsuccessful revolts and uprisings of the oppressed, rebels are persecuted, displaced, exiled and forced to migrate. However, spaces of enclosures are not a *telos*, i.e. a result, but they are constantly confronted and tested through new staseis. Thus,

²⁵ Stasis is akin to the space of composition or ‘compositionism’ as formulated by Franco Berardi-Bifo (2003: 1): ‘the chemical environment where culture, sexuality, disease, and desire fight and meet and mix and continuously change the landscape.’

the common spaces do not exist per se, nor do they constitute a *telos* or an *exodus*, but they compose junctions in the continuous stasis-struggle for emancipation. The common space does not exist per se (as in resource-based definitions), but it only becomes – it is making the *class*²⁶ of *commons* through an emancipatory process of stasis.

Therefore, the crucial point for the outcome of the circulation of common space is stasis. Paraphrasing Marx, stasis is the *salto mortale*²⁷ of the common space. According to the ancient meaning of stasis, it is the time of ‘crisis’ and ‘nosos,’ it is the time that the common space and its values are being tested, it is the time of decision for every relation which is subjected to enclosures, such as sexuality, gender, race, age, state, religion etc. Therefore, when the common space is entering the process of stasis, i.e. when it encounters the multiple spaces of enclosures (capital, patriarchy, nation, etc.), then a conflict, struggle and battle between stasis and antistasis take place. Depending on the outcome of the social struggle, I suggest that the following scenarios ensue. By ‘homeostasis’ I intend the conservation, preservation, protection of the existing commoning relations, hence the preservation of the status quo in communities and common pool resources. By ‘metastasis’ I mean the evolution, elaboration and extension of the common space or the enclosed space.

- *Homeostatic process.* Common space resists the onset of enclosures, but it fails to overcome the enclosures and to generate, articulate and communicate with other common spaces. This means that closed-walled-gated social relations emerge in the poisonous²⁸ form of self-enclosure and self-incarceration. Consequently, the common space fails to communicate with other potential common spaces. Consequently, it is transformed into and appears in the form of gated common space, as a ghetto or a liberated enclave.
- *Enclosure and Antistasis.* The common space is completely disassembled, both homeostasis and metastasis fail, and the process of antistasis dominates. The values and elements of common space are abstracted. Consequently, after the resolution of the process of Stasis, the common space is transformed and appears as a space of enclosures. This process generates the circulation of capital, state, patriarchy, nationalism and any other heteronomy.
- *Metastatic process.* The primary common space succeeds in overcoming the process of enclosures. Hence, it is expanded and enriched, and it communicates with other multiple common spaces. In the process of metastasis, the articulation, assemblage and emancipation of multiple common spaces take place, and the multiple emancipatory commonings, emancipatory communities are constituted, and finally multiple common pool resources are established.

²⁶ The notions that class *is making* and it does not exist *per se* is analyzed in Thompson’s (1981: 9) work on *The Making of the English Working Class*: ‘The working class did not rise like the sun at an appointed time. It was present at its own making. (...) I do not see class as a ‘structure’, nor even as a ‘category’, but as something which in fact happens (and can be shown to have happened) in human relationships.’

²⁷ As Marx states (1990[1867]: 200-1), ‘the leap taken by the value from the body of the commodity into the body of the gold is the commodity’s *salto mortale*. If the leap falls short, it is not the commodity which is defrauded but rather its owner.’

²⁸ The *Retort* collective (2005: 17), in their book *Afflicted Powers: Capital and Spectacle in a New Age of War*, offer an insightful and pervasive analysis of enclosures in the present ‘poisonous epoch.’

Therefore, on the one hand, the process of homeostasis encloses the common space and generates liberated enclaves and anticommens; on the other hand, metastasis opens the common space and aims at a communication among the multiple common spaces.

Similarly, when the space of enclosures enters the process of stasis, i.e. in the process of social struggles, then crisis and nosos ensue. Consequently, the space of enclosures is transformed either into a common space or, through homeostasis, it is maintained in the state of a space of enclosures, or, through metastasis, it expands and it deepens the enclosures. Needless to say, we can understand that the space of enclosures constitutes the cellular form of capital's circulation, i.e. value and commodity, and it likewise constitutes the cellular form of patriarchy, nationalism and any other heteronomy.

However, the above scenarios are not ideal, as usually intermediate hybrids prevail, since we participate simultaneously in conflicted parallel, diagonal and cross-common spaces and spaces of enclosures. According to De Angelis (2007: 190), 'at any given moment, both non-monetary and monetary values guide people's action, and they often do it in conflicting ways.'

Moreover, common spaces could not be closed systems of liberated and fortified enclaves or zones. It is only through openness, as passes, as thresholds (Stavrvides, 2016), that they become the vehicle and the catalyst for lasting struggles and stasis against every power relation. Consequently, stasis as struggle, rebellion, contestation, crisis, nosos, political, moral and rhetoric stance plays a double role. On the one hand, stasis has the ability to block the circulation of capital, state, patriarchy, nationalism and any other enclosed system; and, on the other hand, stasis articulates through its circulation the multiple common spaces.

In conclusion, the main argument of this paper is that the dialectic of stasis and movement constitutes the circulation of the common space; thus, it could be both an 'expanding' (Bell and Cleaver, 2002[1982]: 60) and a 'rotating' sphere, like the magical gesture reminiscent of the Peruvian 'zumbayllu' (spinning top), which involves rotation around its axis and horizontal movement. According to Zibechi (2012: 9) 'it is not enough just to move, to vacate its inherited material and symbolic place; a type of movement is also necessary that is a dance, circular, capable of piercing the epidermis of an identity that does not let itself be trapped because with each turn it reconfigures itself.'²⁹

The Athenian revol(love)utionary occupied square, the refugees' stasis and movement in the borderscape of Idomeni and the dialectic of standing people and the Sufi Whirling dervishes' rotate dance in the revolting Istanbul Gezi uprising, show that performativity, subordination, discipline, consensus, dissensus, disobedience and rebellion are constantly in conflict and confrontation in the emerging common spaces.

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²⁹ The example of 'Zumbayllu' reminds us also the pirouettes of the New Yorkers' ballerina in the Occupy Wall Street poster who, while standing on the back of the bull market, skillfully danced and spinned.

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11. Giuseppe Micciarelli, ‘Introduction to urban and collective civic use: the “direct management” of urban emerging commons in Naples’

Introduction

I will investigate the possible forms of collective governance of the commons. The starting point of this analysis is the re-use of abandoned or underutilized goods, e.g. of ‘former places’ which function as civic incubators for new practices of citizenship. Here I present the case of former places as a case study for analysing an unprecedented legal tool, the so-called ‘civic and urban use,’ as theorized in the context of a social conflict and subsequently implemented by the city of Naples and now followed by activists in many cities. The civic and collective urban use is an innovative and somewhat ‘creative’ mechanism of rulemaking from grassroots, in that it reveals a push from the bottom heading to establish new institutions (Dardot, Laval 2014). In particular, I will compare and contrast this instrument, as well as the new idea of ‘direct management’ of the so called ‘emerging commons,’ with other forms of participatory democracy and shared administration that regulate the use of public spaces.

We can start from a common situation around Europe: a great number of citizens, local communities, groups of workers, and cultural activists are mobilized in defense – often a discovery – of new kinds of urban commons: ancient buildings, former prisons, abandoned convents and barracks, brownfields and other properties in ruin raised like ghosts in metropolis affected by the crisis. Are these urban commons? To have an answer we must have a look that goes beyond the good itself. These sites were something other in their previous lives: former orphanages, ex schools, ex barracks, psychiatric hospitals, former convents, ex stations. But these places are also skeletons of an ancient development model. In other words, they were the core of some kind of social relations that, on the one hand, were the positive mirror of the public welfare system, on the other, they reflected its backwardness of control and containment of the abnormalities, of the different and above all of the weaker social classes. The social relationships produced in such public places started in the nineties as a result of the neoliberal transformation.

Think about non-places, the neologism coined by the French anthropologist Marc Augé in order to refer to anthropological spaces of transience, where human beings remain anonymous, and which do not hold enough significance to be regarded as ‘places’ (Augé 1992). There are not only these non-places. In the last years, many of these abandoned pieces of cities have been occupied by social movements or assigned to associations. We can call them ‘former places.’ In such ex places, different experiments of self-government and community management have developed. Today, a lot of people use them for social, cultural and different kinds of activity. This common use is a small precocious laboratory of democracy, which directly addresses the dilemma of commons, that is, attitudes to the cooperation as well the difficulties facing the democratic government of the things we have in common. So, to solve the ‘tragedy’ described by Garrett Hardin, we must probe much more deeply similar experiences trying to create new institutions from this sort of micro-political and social systems.

The collective and urban civic use is an innovative, replicable and sustainable model of management of the urban commons. This is a form of direct administration of public spaces, such

as abandoned historical sites, led by citizenship, without the mediation of any association or other legal entity. The most important, leading case of this political and juridical experiment is in the city of Naples, where this regulation is now recognized in several administrative acts of the city Council. From May 2012 to June 2016, at least five resolutions – which I co-wrote – have extended this kind of governance to eight spaces, covering today an area of nearly 40 thousand square meters in different parts of the city.

My approach is based on political and legal philosophy. In Italy, we see a theoretical-legal debate about commons, rather than an economist one. This legal approach is a key feature of the social movements that have arisen in defense of commons. This attitude towards the law can be described as the aim to create new legal instruments for recognizing collective action in urban regeneration process. Through the practice of self-government of theaters and other cultural and social spaces (Cirillo 2014), there has been an ‘unexpected’ turning point in comparison to the definition of common goods proposed by the first Rodotà Commission (Rodotà, Mattei 2010): the direct participation of citizens in the use and management has been claimed as a qualifying element of the legal category. This innovation is very important, because, as I will explain, the existing legal framework of urban regeneration does not help collective action. We need to increase the collective action of ever-larger groups of people, where associations, informal groups, families and single people can find home and mutualistic support together; in a way that may have the opportunity to share also projects, competences, ideas and not only physical spaces.

Asilo Filangieri is the political experience where civic use was born. It is a huge building, a former three-story convent, located right in the middle of the pulsing historical city centre of Naples. On March the 2nd, 2012, a collective of workers of art, theatre and culture occupied this building that was the headquarters of the Universal Forum of Cultures, the paradigm of a giant cultural machine made of the spoils system. Here, for first time, a new way for translating our idea of common use into a legal form was imagined. We wanted an institutional recognition of self-rule power making in the public law. We did not want to be the tenants or the owners, but citizens who had the opportunity to use the good in common. Think a public garden: anyone can enter, but at a certain time, to do certain activities and not others. The problem is that these are standard activities, they do not consider the difference of the spaces, and wider communities.

To do so we needed a new legal tool. But at the same time we tried to make it understandable and recognizable by the existing law. We then drafted a regulation inspired by the ‘Civic Uses,’ an ancient institution still in force, albeit in minority, which regulates the so-called rights to take wood, (profit of the woods), fishing and grazing on common land of small and medium-sized rural hamlets (Capone 2017). You have something similar all around Europe. This regulation has been drafted and theorized by ourselves, in a collective work, during three and half years of a specific working group of l’Asilo-www.exasilofilangieri.it, of which I am part of. Interestingly, in these cases, legal claims filed by movements are not interpreted - not only and not so much - as the classic, and even essential, fight for ‘rights,’ but as the reversal – in a democratic sense – of those spaces that the governance grants to private individuals. Here we make a creative use of the law. Theoretically, it is a regulation of use in which citizens are not only guaranteed powers of access, but also the much more important ability to define independently the basic rules of use of the structure. A feature that Elinor Ostrom defined as fundamental for a better management of the common resources (Ostrom 1990). But this change of view must also concern the definition of urban commons.

To be defended, common goods need to be recognized as such by the legal order. The legal definition proposed by the Rodotà commission, which has worked with important jurists, was very successful. In this proposal, never approved in Italian law but still influential, Commons are those goods that generate functional utility for the exercise of fundamental human rights. This definition is important, but in my opinion insufficient. My idea is that the recognition of a capacity for self-regulation must be a qualifying element of the legal category of commons (Micciarelli 2014 a, b). We must link governance to the legal category of commons. But this gives rise to a lot of juridical and theoretical problems. How can the management of a water company be similar to the self-governance of a community with an assembly? Paraphrasing a distinction in Italian jurisprudence regarding public property, I propose a legal differentiation between two types of common goods, linked with two different governance system (Micciarelli 2017). We can distinguish between 1) necessary commons and 2) emerging commons, where urban commons belong, too.

The first type, necessary commons, are some goods that are necessarily in common, such as water and other natural goods. But there are also artificial goods: think about life-saving medicine. Obviously, we are against private management of corporations. But in our fights it's more difficult to distinguish their governance from the public one. The difference is that, in the commons, we must introduce rules of traditional participatory democracy. Because they are goods related to fundamental rights on a large scale, the best you can imagine is a Porto Alegre model or similar. (Definition: Those goods - material, immaterial and digital - whose utility is considered necessarily functional to the exercise of fundamental rights. By virtue of this indissoluble link with the dignity of the person, access to them cannot be banned on the basis of economic availability: in order to reinforce these guarantees, some aspects of their management (among the more sensitive ones such as distribution and conservation) should be decided through institutional procedures that involve consultation with their users or special representatives. Individual, collective or collective rights-holders and beneficiaries should also be granted special procedural legitimacy for their protection in order to safeguard them for future generations.

Second type: there are commons which emerge as such from the use that is claimed from the bottom. We did not walk around the city and say: look at that abandoned building, it is an urban common! Not all abandoned places are perceived as commons. But it's difficult to translate this concern in a juridical way. Urban commons are emerging commons, that, is, immaterial and digital goods which, by expressing a functional utility connected to fundamental rights, are characterized by a direct and non-exclusive management of reference communities. This self-regulatory power is certified by public authorities in order to ensure the use and the collective enjoyment of goods, devoting them to the fulfilment of these rights as well as the free development of the person and the protection of future generations. So, the emerging commons definition makes it possible to link political claims with legal recognition. So, people are able to create their own institutions. Murray Boockin spoke about this very well (Boockin 2015, 1993). Departing from his point of view, we use a juridical form. We may consider these emerging commons a new public space institution. The idea of a new public use, the political process of making new democratic rules, the need for an open door system, help us to recall that democracy before the solution is still a challenge to be resolved.

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SESSION 8: TOWARDS A METHODOLOGY OF THE COMMONS

12. Yannis Pechtelidis, 'Commoning Education in Contemporary Greece'

Introduction

In contemporary crisis-ridden Greece, various social and cultural spaces have emerged in Greece aiming at a more participatory education. The focus here is on the intergenerational process of commoning education in two examples, a public elementary school (Fourfouras, The school of Nature and Colors - the children aged 6 to 12) and an independent pedagogical community (Sprogs) around early childhood, run by its members (parents, teachers, and children). A core group of two preschool teachers and around 14 parents and 10 children (aged 2,5 to 5) were fully engaged in Sprogs.

The empirical data were collected from a variety of sources such as participant observation, conversations with teachers and parents, blogs and sites of the school and the pedagogical community, various Internet posts, videos and radio broadcasts, flyers, and a teacher's autobiographical book about Fourfouras. My intention is to briefly describe rituals, practices, and mentalities produced within these alternative educational social spaces, and to provide an understanding on how alternative children's subjectivities come into being. The aim is to critically discuss both their dynamics and limitations; their similarities and differences; and subsequently, their implications for the participants and society. In light of the new commons theory (Bollier & Helfrich, 2012; Bollier, 2014; Hardt & Negri, 2012; Dardot & Laval, 2015; Ostrom, 1990), it is argued that both Sprogs and Fourfouras are informed by the commons heteropolitical (Kioupkiolis & Pechtelidis, 2017) ethics and logic, despite their differences. Particularly, they share a common resource, education. The 'common' is interpreted here (for both cases) as a heteropolitical process of 'commoning' education (Means et al., 2017). However, Sprogs is a typical or classic form of a small-scale common.

For Fourfouras, on the other hand, it is claimed that it is a different kind of commons, because the commons' ethics is developed inside a public school and in accordance to a specific official curriculum and strict state requirements. Both groups/schools have established collective ownership of education to promote the flourishing of each of their members and the community. The members of these communities, or the commoners, tend to form a web that connects all participants into a network of social co-operation and interdependence. These specific commons have limits, rules, social norms and sanctions determined by the commoners. In our cases, the children are considered commoners, because they partly influence the formation of the commoning practices and rules, mainly through their involvement in the assembly or the council. Also, they follow these rules and they are subject to the sanctions of the community they belong. From this perspective, this particular alternative logic of 'common education' is illuminated through the specific description of the non-conventional social organization of space and time of the schools of the study, and the process of politics that takes place there.

In Greece, citizenship is still considered to be the result of specific educational trajectories. They will only fully attain their social and political nature through a predefined socializing course. Focusing on what is not attained yet by the pupils neglects their actual activities in the present. In

this sense, it is vital to investigate and re-consider youth and children's views about politics, as well as their activity, and their potential for social change (Pechtelidis, 2016). Within the pedagogical settings of the study, the children are not socialized into a predetermined citizenship identity. Rather, they enact an autonomous subjectivity through their direct involvement in the assembly or the council of the group.

Considering both children and adults' participation in the assembly or the council of the group, we could point to an intergenerational agency (Mayall, 2015), which provides a base of a hybridized habitus, or, to put it differently, a mixing of new dispositions and elements of tradition. The active participation of the children in them may cause confusion about the role and participation of young children in public life. This confusion arose from the uncertainty around the nature of 'childhood' and the shift of power between children and adults.

The children's assembly and council and the children's contribution to the formulation of the rules of these communities provide evidence of such a shift. Sprogs and Fourfouras are perceived as heteropolitical because they construct alternative spaces for learning and they promote experimentation in thought and action beyond the top-down, bureaucratic structures of the state and the profit-driven market logics. These contexts seem to cultivate a specific heteropolitical habitus of the commons, which consists in the dispositions of a) direct involvement in public and collective life, b) autonomy and c) self-reliance. Considering the heteropolitical regulation of Sprogs and Fourfouras' everyday life, we could argue that they challenge both traditional and neoliberal paternalism. They are cracks in the current post-political regime, and an obstacle in the operations of neoliberal power. Also, they question the traditional discourse about children as passive, weak, defective and ignorant beings, which are lacking not only in knowledge, capabilities, and skills, but also in learning capability (Biesta, 2010).

However, further research grounded on children's views is required, because the statements advanced in this study are mostly from an adult perspective (teachers and researchers). Furthermore, the processes of commoning education are initiated mainly by the adults, despite the fact that the children have an active role in this process, which they conceptualize and enrich with their own experience and views. The children themselves cannot do so, either because of formal school constraints (in the case of the public school of Fourfouras) or of their young age (mainly in Sprogs). But children have the ability to influence and shape the process of subjectification. Also, we should take into consideration that adults' mentoring and support can function in many ways. In our cases, they try not to get involved too much and they make room for children to express themselves freely and to shape the process in their own terms.

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13. Aimilia Voulvouli, ‘Ethnography and the Commons: A few notes before the field of *Heteropolitics*’

Introduction

Heteropolitics is designed to ‘produce’ qualitative data from different countries of South Europe, namely Greece, Spain, and Italy, in order to produce new findings about innovative forms of alternative (hetero) politics (Kioupkiolis 2017). In Greece we have selected three potential case studies:

1. Sarantaporo.gr, a Non-Profit Organisation (NPO), was founded in 2013, but its members were active starting from 2010, in order to meet the need for Internet connectivity in the area. More specifically, Sarantaporo.gr designed and deployed wireless community networks in fourteen villages, which are currently interconnected under the same backbone network along with other community networks in Greece and Europe. This infrastructure, offered as a ‘commons’, is openly accessible by all and currently serving approximately 5,000 people. It is supported by the Sarantaporo.gr in collaboration with local support groups of 4-5 people in 12 villages, totalling almost 60 people who wish to be actively involved on a voluntary basis (Antoniadis et al 2015).
2. The Social Ecosystem of Karditsa constituted by 2 Civic cooperatives, 5 Agricultural cooperatives, 3 Social cooperatives, 3 Networks of family-run businesses and INGO. Through the years of cooperation among all members of the network and with local authorities, cooperation has gradually become deeper and wider and the emergence of an ‘ecosystem of collaboration’ is the result of it. The ‘ecosystem’ accelerates the establishment of new cooperatives and social enterprises, encouraging the citizens to work together (<http://www.forum-synergies.eu/article287.html>), through reviving the networked integration of cooperatives in rural Greece, building upon the historical context of cooperatives in Thessaly Plain.
3. The #5th_Highschool Squat in Exarcheia which was the first building to be squatted by refugees in Athens. There is a self-organized kitchen, and the everyday life of the project is run by its residents who are both immigrant and locals. The squat is self-organised and denounces ‘affiliations with political parties and NGOs as well as any kind of leadership. Every decision is made collectively and is being applied by running groups such as the kitchen group, cleaning group, health group, education group, creative activities group, media group and storage group’ (Exarcheia Net 2017).

The challenge of doing ethnographic fieldwork with self-organised communities such as these described above is multi-fold. Issues such as how can we ‘translate’ collective action to the outsiders? How can we be objective at the same time that we immerse ourselves and often endorse the communities we study? How can our research products set an example for future action? These are some of the issues one has to tackle with whilst in the field and afterwards. In the text that follows, I will briefly try to address these issues in an attempt to set a framework for research a few weeks before my arrival to the field of the first case-study, that is sarantaporo.gr.

Multisited and Activist Ethnography in studying The Commons

There is a difference between what people say they do and what they actually do, wrote Malinowski (2002) in his seminal ‘Argonauts of the Western Pacific’ book in an attempt to

describe his understandings of Trobrianders ‘sociologically’³⁰ - as he wrote - distinguishing them from the native ones. There is an analogy between what Malinowski had described and the task of *Heteropolitics* to fill the gaps in contemporary political theory ‘by delving into new practices of the commons and democratic self-governance in social groups and mobilizations in order to incorporate their experience into a wider system of knowledge’ (Kioupkiolis 2016: 19). This kind of effort requires an ethnographic approach; an approach that has the methodological tools to ‘capture local meanings and practices of community organization that diverge from the mainstream and from accumulated knowledge’ (Kioupkiolis et al: 22) through participant observation, immersion, thick description, in-depth interviewing. In doing this, *Heteropolitics* asks questions about the *distribution of power and resources* (horizontalism/verticalism, distributed networks), the structure of *leadership*, the practices of *social participation*, the forms of *representation* and the modes of *unification* and collective *identification*, as well as the social performances (*ibid*).

In such an attempt, it is important to distinguish between the formal outlook of a group from the informal experience of being part of that group (Voulvouli 2009). The former falls under the category of the anthropological term *etic*, knowledge and interpretation which is generalised and is considered universally true, while the later falls under the category of *emic*, knowledge and interpretations existing within a culture, determined by local indigenous categories of thought. For example, an ‘emic’ narrative is a description of behavior or a belief in terms meaningful to the actor, while an ‘etic’ narrative is a description of a behavior or belief by a social analyst or scientific observer such as an anthropologist. In the framework of *Heteropolitics*, it would be useful to distinguish between what Clifford Geertz termed ‘local knowledge’ appropriated for the purpose of our project, as a system of knowledge embedded in collective action, and the traditional anthropological notion that relates it to traditional, indigenous cultures. In this sense, doing fieldwork amongst self-organised communities that organise around common resources, requires an ethnography that involves the study of systems of knowledge embedded in commoning practices in order to understand as Clifford Geertz (1983: 163) suggested ‘how lives of people are led when they are centred around particular pedagogical or creative activities’, such as commoning.

If we consider ‘commoning’ both a pedagogical activity – in the sense that people involved in communing activities are producing knowledge (Escobar 2008; Casas-Cortés et al 2013) at the same time as they are consuming knowledge - and/or a creative activity in the sense that ‘the ‘commons’ reconstruct communal ties, meet social needs, advance democratic participation and self-governance in the economy and other fields, and offer new ideas of social, collaborative production and self-management’ (Kioupkiolis 2017: 20), our aim should be to use thick description (Geertz 1973) or political arts of listening (Coles 2005) in order to discern ‘local knowledge’, that is ‘the diversity of the ways human beings construct their lives in the act of leading them’ (Geertz 1983:16). As already mentioned above, in the context of our project ‘local knowledge’ refers to a system of knowledge embedded in commoning practices, and it is through this analytical tool that we will attempt to answer our questions and to return to the beginning of

³⁰ Malinowski defined his understandings of Trobrianders as an outsider sociological in order to distinguish them from native view. Today, in anthropology, the most commonly used distinction between these two systems of knowledge, the outsiders’ and the insiders’ is the so called *etic* and *emic*. The first refers to the ‘sociological’ understanding and the second to the native view.

this argument. As Malinowski himself claimed we will attempt a ‘sociological’ understanding of local knowledge.

To achieve that, settling in the area one wishes to conduct fieldwork in and engaging with the everyday life of one’s informants is a given. Keeping a diary is also important, not only for writing down things to remember for future reference but also to incorporate informants’ biographical data in a more coherent way than the interview text. This technique helps create an ethnographic space in which the subject of study is seen - as possible as this can be - through the eyes of the interlocutors (Voulvouli 2009). It would be misleading to claim that ethnography can be directed by a detailed research plan. It is however commonly acknowledged that ethnographic research entails four main aspects: a) long term duration; b) the study of social relations; c) holism, that is studying all aspects of social life, and d) the dialectical relationship between intimacy and estrangement (Shah 2017: 51).

Anthropologists know things by doing (Durrenberger 2009). This means that we do not collect data as much as we produce (*ibid*) data by incorporating local knowledge in our narrative, but also through self-reflexivity as we take – to a certain degree - part in the process of the production of life of the community we study. As Shah (2017: 45) very eloquently puts it: ‘participant observation is not merely a method of anthropology but is a form of production of knowledge through being and action. It makes us recognize that our theoretical conceptions of the world come from a particular historical, social, and spatial location.’ As Graeber (2009: 509) claims, ‘in ethnography, theory is properly deployed in the service of description rather than the other way around.’ Particularly for collective action, Casas-Cortés et al (2013) suggest that the ethnographer of social movements is just one participant in a system of knowledge production, and his/her participation in this system produces new collective knowledge and forms the basis of political action or praxis, i.e. the process by which theory is dialectically produced and realized in action.

This of course requires overt observation, which implies that all the participants of the study know the purposes and the identity of the researcher. In this framework, questions of objectivity arise: How could one be objective in writing about friends and especially in cases of activism, when the ethnographer supports the causes raised by his/her informants? How could you write something less in favour to the protests/initiatives of your interlocutors when these people open not only their houses but also their hearts and minds to you as an outsider? You cannot be objective, but you still can be valid and reliable in a way that only this kind of methodological involvement can offer (Singer 1995).

This opens up the door for activist ethnography, which means that we take certain commitments that lie at the root of the philosophy of the collectivity one ethnographically studies and thus participates (Routledge 2013) as an activist or else critical ethnographer who is deeply engaged with the ‘others’ he/she studies. Relevant to this is the fact that as a culturally informed subject, the individual ethnographer always carries his/her identities from which it is impossible to disengage whilst in the field. Moreover, in the case of activist anthropology, it is the pre-existing familiarity with the ‘other’ which triggers interest in conducting research among activists. The very choice of research stems from the political convictions of the ethnographer. The ethnographer is the primary tool of data production. Therefore, in the analysis of data, the activist ethnographer has to be as self-reflexive (Clifford and Marcus 1986) as possible in order to be consistent with the conclusions prompted by his/her theoretical background. Activist, engaged or militant ethnography cannot be seen separately from the historical and political contexts to which both the

ethnographer and the informants belong. After all, as Cunningham (1999: 5) claims, ‘while anthropologists are in the process of discerning globalisation as an analytical phenomenon, they may also be located in – and therefore subject to – the processes of it.’ Their existence in the field is liminal as they are neither outside the arena of inquiry nor completely inside (Casas-Cortés et al 2013).

To overcome this obstacle, we must be aware that any generalisations that come out of our study do not concern our case studies as unique cases of collective action. Social movements are defined by multiple dynamics, namely cultural, national and socio-political. At the same time, ethnographers become increasingly conscious about their power over their subjects of study (Conway 2013), especially when they come from places that are privileged as far as geopolitical and other relations of power are concerned (Marcus and Fischer 1996). This is why it is important that anthropologists, as Jack Rollwagen wrote, in order for their study to become significant, place their investigations ‘of one social form, of one neighbourhood, of one city, and/or of one region within a nation, into the context of the nation-state or a region larger than the nation-state’ (Rollwagen 1975: 4).

This point takes us to multi-sited approach, since it inevitably considers the anthropologist’s main subjects of study - the people and, in our case, collective action - as involved in a multi-leveled process produced in several different locales (local and global). Multisited ethnography, that is, ‘ethnography moved from its conventional single-site location contextualised by macro-constructions of a larger social order to multiple sites of observation and participation’ (Marcus 1995: 95) is, in loose terms, the anthropological equivalent of grounded theory. In the Glaserian form of grounded theory, everything can be used as data. Therefore, aside from participant observation, the ethnographer can benefit from social media encounters, interviews, collection of press and archival material in order to identify the verbal practices and the rhetoric used to speak about the subject of the study. In Marcus’ (1995: 108) words, the ethnographer must ‘trace the social correlates and groundings of associations that are most clearly alive in language use and print or visual media.’ By doing this, we will meet one of the main methodological aims of *Heteropolitics*, which is to produce ‘grounded theory’ (Glaser & Strauss 1967), looking into diverse schemes of civic participation, mobilization and community-building, using various sites of research.

An anthropological examination of social movements has the advantage of reminding us that every similarity hides more than one difference (Appadurai 1996: 11). Social movements are not homogeneous collectivities; they are rather what Arjun Appadurai would describe as ‘neighbourhoods’; that is, ‘social forms in which locality as a dimension - is constituted by a series of links between the sense of social immediacy, the technologies of interactivity and the relativity of contexts - is invariably realized’ (*ibid*: 178). Yet, ‘however deeply a description is embedded in the particularities of place, soil, and ritual technique, it invariably contains or implies a theory of context – a theory, in other words, of what a neighbourhood is produced from, against, in spite of, and in relation [to]’ (*ibid*: 184). In cases like the ones this project will focus on, the collective action of the ‘neighbourhoods’ of our case studies can be seen as a result of changes taking place due to global neoliberalism (Psimitis 2006). These effects can be seen in any number of social movements organised around, for example, human rights, feminism, consumers’ rights, ethnic –religious – cultural minority rights, sexual emancipation, community participation, urban action, environmental, issues and commoning practices.

Final Comments

Based on the foregoing, a possible methodological direction in the framework of *Heteropolitics* would be the translation of activist local knowledge by trying to locate the *etic* from the *emic* through engagement with multisited and engaged ethnography. Hence, the relevant theoretical categories will consist initially of concepts gathered and produced in the theoretical work of the project and in the course of our fieldwork. These will be supplemented later on with new ones which will arise from the case studies (Kioupkiolis et al 2017). Putting aside issues of objectivity that obscure rather than clarify the point of view of living social actors, by engaging in thick description our case studies will be examined as products of a culture of activism by looking into the ‘cultural repertoires that is, meaningful historical and narratives that are invoked to interpret new political struggles [...] and provide templates for future actions’ (Hess 2007: 465)

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14. Christos Giovanopoulos, ‘We ally for the Commons. We hack politics. We produce without fences. What is the Commons’ Alliance?’

A newly formed initiative.

The Commons’ Alliance was based in a very simple proposal, which however touched on many critical chords. Chords regarding issues of politics, forms of organization and a strategy for the development of Commons into a recognizable and present alternative in the public domain and in the economic sphere.

The idea was to create a big periodic event (twice or thrice a year) as a space where:

- Knowledge and practices, needs and ideas, failures and paradigmatic cases, of specific projects on the fields of Commons, Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE) and Cooperativism can be shared
- synergies for the development of specific projects could be nurtured enhancing a cross-fertilisation and capacity building process
- policies, vision and strategies for the promotion of Commons and SSE would be debated and even defined.

Such events aspire to become a reference point for collectives and individuals active, or willing to act and assist, on the proliferation of the entire (and) growing ecology of SSE and cooperative economy in Greece, through the frame of Commons.

Also, they emphasize the development of productive projects and hopefully prototyping and operational upgrading, instead of just producing discourse and doing advocacy for the Commons. Even on the issue of devising, promoting and pressurizing for Commons-friendly institutional policies and frameworks, the aim is the formation of synergies between the various actors on the field of the specific interventions (e.g. policies for water as common good). Which means to put together a project that outlines the processes for the development of participation, debate and decision making around this specific issue and not just the writing of a policy or advocacy paper, based on ‘specialists’ research.

This is an approach to and for a politics of commons which sees to consolidate social and material power and also processes of sharing power as integral to any advance of practices and policies of the commons. Something that goes beyond lobbying, protest and awareness-raising movements and tactics.

The practical aim is:

- a. Each event to result in the formation of groups for the design, testing, prototyping, development of specific projects and provide visibility of those Commons’ projects. Synergies that will be active and self-managed in the intermediate period between those public events and that will present the outcomes, good or bad, in one of the next events.
- b. With its periodic character, to create an ‘exstitution’ that keeps open the debates and sustains the development of the concept, practices and vision of the Commons. Hence, that intervenes actively in the ongoing discussion and tendencies towards social innovation, start-ups, ‘sharing economy,’ a new breed of institutionalized coops and solidarity economy, enhancing their commoning.

If you like, the challenge we face is this:

When a whole new ecology is emerging, whose character and parameters are still in the making, and which includes and fosters potentially emancipatory practices and forces, how do we intervene

in order to define the settings that will prescribe the final institutional frameworks and the larger public concepts and understanding of this ecology? In other words, what shall we do in order to create a hegemonic discourse on the fields of Commons, SSE and social innovation and alternatives?

Why this mode of action for the Commons?

- By recognising the asymmetry between political discourses and rhetoric vs. the existing power relations we attempt to move the centre of our action from protest and advocacy to the consolidation of the conditions, tools, spaces and eventually correlations of forces, that would allow the implementation of different policies through the development of different sets, practices, spaces and institutions of 'power' and of/for the commons. A need that multiplies in the context of permanent systemic crisis and occupies a key position in the quest to break the political impasse and to build viable, sustainable and convincing to larger social majorities alternatives.
- The emergence of a whole new sphere from the grassroots as a radical response to the crisis has cultivated the ground for spaces, practices, soft-infrastructures and subjectivities (both collective and individual) that contain and deploy active processes of commoning. Concrete and existing examples of social experimentation which can be constitutive of a more integrated model of politics, economic activity and social life. However, in the current moment of post-referendum governmental compliance, political disillusionment and retreat in activist morals, this emerging ecosystem is in danger of losing its ability to imagine itself as a larger, dynamic and with transformative potential movement.
- At the same time, all these years the multifarious grassroots movement of hundreds of collectives and endeavors has produced and inspired a valuable knowledge and unnoticed yet processes of commoning. Practices and knowledge that need to be codified and articulated in a coherent narrative, which renders them recognizable, shareable and useful through its translation into tools and strategies that upgrade the operational capacities of each collective/initiative etc. and of the entire ecosystem. Such aim/task responds also to the challenges raised by the neoliberal attempts for cooptation and domination, with the promotion of models (and legal frameworks of) start-up and sharing economy, according to the Silicon Valley capitalism or through outsourcing of welfare provisions to the SSE as part of the 'civil society.' So, the aim of these periodic events is to produce a framework, space and methods for the utilization and re-investment of knowledge to the immediate producers, multiplying their operational capacities and reach, and through this to expand the operating field and capacities of the whole ecosystem (while producing tangible economic examples or policies).
- By identifying the utilization of knowledge and capacity building of existing initiatives, the Alliance also attempts to experiment and to suggest a different strategy and approach to the notion of politics, both as movement and as policy making. It experiments with testing methodologies for a political culture that corresponds to the Commons and the communities of pro-users (producers and users). A politics that is inherent in the production of the material means, spaces and actual social interactions. In other words, we embark on an attempt that wants to transgress the splits between politics, social relations and economics, towards a more integrated and organic relationship between them. One that also produces a

synchronicity (albite the unevenness of the process and the entailed multiplicity of forms) and correspondence among the various level of distribution of power.

- In that sense, it is an attempt for new political subjectivities and institutions to emerge, not by emphasizing e.g. debates on the definitions of commons, but by producing examples of economic and productive sustainability (of commoning) different from the dominant models. A process that would result in the creation of common interest, common intelligence, common codes and ethos, common vision and a Commons' public sphere, while consolidating the material power to antagonize todays capitalist economic structures and political super-structures.