

PART **VII**

**Challenging
the Present,
Anticipating
Urban Futures**

CHAPTER 26

The Commons

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Common is the sun and the air, common should be the land.

What comes from the people should return common to the people.

Himno de los Comuneros de Castilla 1521 (Jose Luis Lopez Alvarez 1972)¹

There are things which are neither public nor private, but which concern all of us. There are forms of management that do not pertain to the State nor the Market.

La Carta de los Comunes: Para el cuidado y disfrute de lo que de todos es
(Madrilonia Collective 2011)²

The Crisis has shown for all who have eyes to see
that State and Market have certainly failed in their claim to provide
a secure reproduction of our lives (...) even in capital's heartland.
But they hold hostage the wealth generations have produced.
This pool of labor past and present is our common.

The New Enclosures (Midnight Notes Collective 2009)

INTRODUCTION

The opposition between “the public” (understood as the domain of the state) and “the private” (understood as the domain of the market and private

property) has increasingly come to be seen as exhausting the range of possibilities for managing social life. The three short quotations with which we begin (above) – from very different times and places – insist that another kind of logic and another kind of world is already possible beyond that duality. In Ugo Mattei's (2011: 2) words, "this gridlocked opposition is a product of the modernist tradition still dominant today in law and in economics." And yet, in nooks and crannies, neighborhoods and city centers, and in villages and farms in many continents, the commons as an institutional framework is re-emerging affirming that there is a means of adjudicating goods, resources, and services that does not reduce social life to either the state or the market (see Chapter 7, "Markets"). These commons are no longer seen to be limited to land, water, and air. They also include "what comes from the people" or "the wealth generations have produced," the products and results of collective and individual working in and for collective lives. Yet what are these "things" to be held in common, in juxtaposition to public or private property? Furthermore, how can this idea be applied to the fruits of labor, to goods and services? How can a commons be imagined in heavily urbanized societies?

In *Rebel Cities* (2012) David Harvey articulates a notion of the commons as a foundational practice for a politics of urban space. For Harvey the "ambience and attractiveness of a city, for example, is a collective product of its citizens. Through their daily activities and struggles, individuals and social groups create the social world of the city, and thereby create something common as a framework within which all can dwell" (2012: 74). In this view, the commons is a form of relating as well as producing based on social cooperation. For Lefebvre (2003: 116–119) "[The city] is not only a devouring activity, consumption; it becomes productive (means of production) but initially it does so by bringing together elements of production. . . . Piles of objects and products in warehouses, mounds of fruit in the marketplace, crowds, pedestrians, goods of various kinds, juxtaposed, superimposed, accumulated – this is what makes the urban urban."

As Nonini (2007) suggests, there is always a danger that any attempt to think of the commons as a singular concept over and against free-market logics or dependent on state management might be seen as utopian, validating past or marginal places, or out of touch with conventional political practices. In practice, cultural anthropology, human ecology, political ecology, and geography have thoroughly documented how various kinds of commons have long existed as viable and durable arrangements for providing for the needs of human survival and continue to do so, conceiving both historical, contemporary, and emerging assets and relations as commons. In this view, the geographic and temporal specificity of the concept of commons is crucial. As Gustavo Esteva (2012) argues in discussing communal practices in southern Mexico: "In the same way that commons is a generic term for very different forms of social existence, the immense richness of the social organizations currently existing or being created in Latin America cannot be reduced to formal categories . . . The Spanish *ejido* (the land at the edge of the villages, used in common by the peasants in the 16th century) is not identical to the British commons, to

the pre-Hispanic communal regimes, to the modern Mexican *ejido*, or to the emerging new commons.”

These proposals to re-imagine the city as a space for new commons are also emerging in current social struggles around austerity politics following the financial crisis. In the midst of current political and economic turmoil in Spain, *La Carta de los Comunes* was released in 2011 as a collectively authored manifesto inspired by the historical charters of the commons and formal laws on “*bienes comunales*” (common goods). In this quasi-fictional text (signed in 2023) Madrid is described in terms of a commons for which there is an urgent need for juridical terms to constitute a regime of common management of goods and services as well as a political structure based in *juntas comunales* (Madrilonia Collective 2011: 26–32).

In this chapter we engage these and other concepts of the commons by working through a series of keywords grounded in both scholarly debates and recent social experiments, mainly from Southern Europe. This glossary of terms includes basic notions such as commons and enclosures; new related terms such as *commoning* and *precarity*; as well as concepts such as *commonfare*, *CITYzen-ship*, and the common of the commons that are only now emerging in social movement debates and practices.

COMMONS

Until recently Anglo-American debates about the management of the commons have focused on two central and competing precepts. The first derives from Garrett Hardin’s (1968) tragedy of the commons, locating the threat to the commons in the independent actions of individuals acting in their self-interest and against their own long-term benefits. The result is the destruction of collective resources, despoliation of environments, and the enclosure or undermining of the commons. The second is organized around Elinor Ostrom’s claim that collectively managed resources currently in place are working rationally and serving individual as well as collective purposes in a variety of institutional arrangements (Ostrom 1991). In the place of “tragedy” Ostrom and her followers substitute the language of “drama” to illustrate the ways in which struggles over collective pool resources unfold and are resolved (Ostrom *et al.* 2002). Nonini and coauthors (in Nonini 2007) draw on this notion of struggles over collective pool resources to provide an anthropological engagement with natural, social, as well as intellectual and cultural commons in different contexts. From post-socialist Eastern Europe to the Brazilian Amazon, from healthcare to intellectual production to genecode mapping, they illustrate how the commons are already central aspects of the organization of social life in different places and contexts.

While these tragedy-drama traditions continue to inform key debates about the internal logics and outcomes of the management of the commons per se, a growing number of writers have begun to focus on the commons in broader terms. This resurgence of the commons debate has emerged around many sites

and locations (see the anthology edited by Bollier and Helfrich 2012). Some authors have located the historical and the ongoing attack on the commons in terms of primitive accumulation (De Angelis 2000), “plunder” (Bollier 2002; Mattei and Nader 2008), or accumulation by dispossession (Harvey 2003), conceptualizations that have resonated with social movements fighting against current processes of privatization and structural adjustments policies (see Chapter 27, “Social Movements”). For others, the demise of state-centered collectivism in a post-Soviet world gave a stimulus to neoliberal deregulation and privatization of socialist and welfare states everywhere (see Chapter 15, “Governance”). In both cases, what Harvey called accumulation by dispossession generated global booms and crises resulting in the intensification and deepening of processes of combined and uneven development, processes that have been compounded since 2001 by the widespread social dislocations wrought by “irresponsible financial exuberance,” debt-financed consumerism, the expansion of science into new areas of common property resources such as environmental services and copyrighted genomics, and new technological capacities that increase the scope and speed of socioeconomic change. As a result, structural adjustment, shock therapy, and austerity politics have fundamentally constrained the reach of public goods and, in turn, have stimulated intense debates over public goods, the commons, and rights to the city.

In his “defense of conviviality and the collective subject” Manuel Callahan (2012) has suggested that a new social paradigm is emerging in response to the unraveling crisis of what W.E.B. Du Bois called “democratic despotism.” Exemplified by the Occupy Movement and by autonomous Latin American movements (both influenced by Zapatismo), this new social paradigm is predicated on a politics of conviviality aimed at community regeneration through the mobilization of new spaces of occupation and convergence. For many, this is a spatial politics of community aimed at resisting the new enclosures and defending and redefining the commons in response to the broader crisis of post-Fordism and contemporary globalization (see Chapters 3 and 14, “Community” and “Global Systems and Globalization”).

For Slavoj Žižek four fundamental antagonisms constitute the current threat to the commons. The first three constitute “what Hardt and Negri call the ‘commons’, the shared substance of our social being” (Žižek 2010: 212–213 referring to Hardt and Negri 2009); (i) ecological catastrophe; (ii) the consequences of private property regimes, particularly evinced now in struggles over intellectual property; and (iii) the socio-ethical implications of new technoscientific developments (especially biogenetics); and (iv) the emergence of new forms of apartheid (walls, slums, enclosures) (see Chapter 16, “Policing and Security”). The first three of these affect the “practices of livability – with the generative powers of embodied life battening, hungering, eating, fearing, enjoying, sensing, resting, and playing with the generative matrices co-constituted from earth, air, water, nutrients, energies, and co-evolved creatures” (Reid and Taylor 2010: 12). These practices have their own complex temporalities and geographies, and they are anathema to the flattening and abstract logics of the market. If the market generates logics of competitive individualism and

winners and losers, “the commons are the substantive grounds of collective life” (Reid and Taylor 2010: 12), but they are a commons that are under threat from renewed forms of enclosure.

ENCLOSURE

The tensions between neoliberal market logics and the practices of livability have intensified with new rounds of global capitalist expansion, dispossession, and the enclosure of commons. For those in work, general wage levels have been driven down, while many more people have found access to waged work more difficult if not impossible. For people outside the wage relation or without formal work, the practices of livability that may have sustained (or not sustained) them have in turn been seized, and their access to common pool resources has diminished. Since many poor households depend disproportionately on such common pool resources, any reduction in access to them has had much greater impact. As a result, for many the conditions of life have become more not less precarious, giving rise to processes of differential inclusion and social geographies of uneven development, what Mike Davis (2006) has referred as a *Planet of Slums* and Etienne Balibar (2004: 133) refers to as a new “global apartheid” (see Chapters 9 and 14, “Class” and “Global Systems and Globalization”).

For Davis (2006) the enclosure of common pool resources is deepening rural poverty and it is this in turn, not mythical opportunities, that is driving much of the migration to cities and wealthier regions of the world, intensifying new forms of social division and inequality (see Chapter 28, “Futures”). The city is, literally, being re-apportioned and reconstructed in deeply divided ways. In this process, the term “new enclosures” has emerged as a rallying point among autonomous groups such as Midnight Notes Collective and global justice movements (Midnight Notes Collective 1990). By rescuing the historical episode of enclosure of the communal lands in England and recalling the origin of the Zapatista struggle as a response to the attack on the *ejidos*, land collectively used by indigenous communities in Chiapas, the logic of enclosure is updated and conceived as the continuous character of capital (De Angelis and Stavrides, in An Architektur 2010: 3).

For the development and maintenance of these new enclosures, and despite neoliberal mantras of deregulation and privatization, capital needs state intervention, governmental regulation, and policing (Federicci 2010; Harvey 2012; Mattei 2011). Despite the ideological opposition between public and private, there is a consistent state/market alliance that makes the current wave of neoliberal capitalism possible. The wave of anti- and alter-globalization protests at the turn of the millennium worked across the state–market spectrum targeting corporations, international financial institutions, and governments, tactically organizing around G8 meetings, World Trade Organization, International Monetary Fund, and World Bank summits as well as developing boycott campaigns aimed at key multinationals in an attempt to tease out these linkages. Later on, the “new enclosures” not only brought analytical clarity and a

conceptual umbrella under which sectoral struggles might find common targets, but it also provided the very mirror image of alternatives, namely the proposal of the commons as a powerful antidote to both market- and state-based solutions. For Federici (2010: 284), there is irony in the fact that it was the new enclosures that demonstrated that the commons had not vanished and that new forms of social cooperation are always being produced, including (and perhaps especially) in areas of life where none had previously existed, such as in open source, internet access, and Copyleft movements.

PRECARITY

At the heart of these processes of political economic restructuring has been a two-fold and linked transition. First, there has been an expansion of a post-Fordist economy based on services and finance. Information access, whether for control or for sharing, is critical and new kinds of struggles over the ownership of and access to information have emerged. Second, in the contemporary European conjuncture EU labor regimes have been restructured, union membership has declined, and state policies have shifted from welfare to workfare (Peck 2001).

Out of this transition emerged a wide-ranging social movement discussion about the new conditions of work and specifically around the concept of “precarity.” What in English is usually called flexible, casualized, or contingent labor was roundly denounced as precarious and exploitative. The resulting lexicon of precarity produced new ways of understanding labor and new forms of organizing across a wide range of precarious activities.³ Thus, for example, in Europe, *precariedad*, *precariete*, and *precarity* refer to both the loss of labor security associated with the welfare state, resulting in temporary, insecure, and low-paying jobs across many kinds of jobs, and to the common experiences and interests of precarious workers (for a further genealogy of the concept, see Casas-Cortés 2014). In this view:

[t]he precariat is to postfordism what proletariat was to fordism: flexible, temporary, part-time, and self-employed workers are the new social group which is required and reproduced by the neoliberal and postindustrial economic transformation. It is the critical mass that emerges from globalization, while demolished factories and neighborhoods are being substituted by offices and commercial areas. They are service workers in supermarkets and chains, cognitive workers operating in the information industry, [etc.]. Our lives become precarious because of the imperative of flexibility. (Chainworkers cited in *Precarias a la Deriva* 2004: 48, authors' translation)

Starting in the late 1990s, several unemployed movements in France reframed their demands away from job creation to the right to quality of life delinked from waged work. The resulting debates about *gratuite* opened important questions about what free money might mean and more concretely how free

access to public transport could reframe the spaces of urban life (see Chapter 8, “Cars and Transport”).

At the same time, the increasingly flexible demands of cultural and knowledge industries also targeted qualitative transformations in work and work time. These led to important debates about the dependence of such work practices on collaborative, communicative, and cognitive skills. The economic logic of this kind of knowledge economy required new valorizations of sharing, the removal of barriers to information, and hence opposition to the limits to capital imposed by the enclosures of intellectual property regimes. Cognitive capitalism thus produced potentially new cultural, digital, and informational commons. Under the call for “freedom of knowledge” copy-left practices and alternative licenses for cultural and knowledge-based goods have been rapidly mainstreamed.

As a consequence, precarity struggles have increasingly been articulated in ways that link the unemployed and the cognitariat (or knowledge workers) in complex and uneasy mobilizations and alliances. Often organized around claims to basic needs and well-being (including education, transport, housing, healthcare, freedom of knowledge, and rights to movement) such mobilizations challenge the history of linking rights and access to services with waged work (Varela 2013), suggesting instead the need for *lo público no estatal* (“public-non-state”), an open, sharable program in which the exclusive right of the state to manage is suspended (Interview with Primavera de Praga Collective 2001).

COMMONING

From an anthropological perspective, perhaps the most productive rethinking of the commons emerges as a result of efforts to take the word as a verb, “to common.” For example, in *The Magna Carta Manifesto* the historian Peter Linebaugh (2008) returns to the practice of commoning in Europe since the thirteenth century, documenting collective uses of forests to collect wood and the occupation of king’s lands to set up villages. Rather than being concessions from the sovereign, these communal practices, themselves not without conflict, were developed and maintained in an everyday way, forcing the king to accept them: “The important thing here is to stress that these rights were not ‘granted’ by the sovereign, but that already-existing common customs were rather acknowledged as *de facto* rights” (De Angelis and Stavrides 2010: 3).

David Harvey (2012: 73) insists on this refreshing conceptualization of commons as a social practice beyond legal entailments. Rather than a specific thing or asset, commons as a verb consists in an unstable and malleable social relation between people vis-à-vis social and physical aspects of the environment considered necessary to their existence:

There is, in effect, a social practice of commoning. This practice produces or establishes a social relation with a common whose uses are either exclusive to a social group or partially or fully open to all and sundry. At the heart of the practice of commoning lies the principle that the relation between the social group and

that aspect of the environment being treated as a common shall be both collective and non-commodified – off-limits to the logic of market exchange and market valuations.

Such commoning involves active participation and taking back control of decision-making processes. As Harvey (2012: 72–73) further suggests using the example of education:

The human qualities of the city emerge out of our practices in the diverse spaces of the city even as those spaces are subject to enclosure, social control, and appropriation by both private and public/state interests. . . . Public education becomes a common when social forces appropriate, protect, and enhance it for mutual benefit (three cheers for the PTA).

For Harvey the struggle to appropriate the public spaces and public goods in the city for a common purpose is always an ongoing effort to recognize how the flow of public goods underpins the qualities of the common. As neoliberal politics diminishes the financing of public goods, so it diminishes the availability of resources for the production of new kinds of commoning. This forces social groups to find other ways to support their own defense and/or production of the commons (see Figure 26.1).

“Commoning” as a practice is also highlighted within feminist autonomist thought by Silvia Federici who, in *Caliban and the Witch* (2005), pointed out how women have been at the forefront of the struggle against land enclosures in both England and the “New World” (see Chapter 10, “Gender”). For Federici (2010: 289), the understanding of “commoning” is not based only on the generalization of knowledge production, but also on the material requirements for that production and for the reproduction of everyday life:



Figure 26.1 Green Tide against cuts in public education. Source: Marea Verde Aragón, CC BY 3.0 (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/>).

Overcoming this state of oblivion is where feminist perspective teaches us to start in our reconstruction of the commons. No common is possible unless we refuse to base our life and our reproduction on the suffering of others, unless we refuse to see ourselves as separate from them. Indeed, if commoning has any meaning, it must be the production of ourselves as a common subject . . . as a quality of relations, a principle of cooperation and responsibility to each other, the forests, the seas, and the animals.

For Mattei (2011: 5, 6) and the Italian Occupy Movement a “new common sense” recognizes “that each individual’s survival depends on its relationship with others, with the community, with the environment.” This is not a political “third way” but a reworking of the logics of modernity and individualism. In Latin America, these practices within and without both the state *and* the market are seen to be a *decolonial form* of commoning, enacting and enunciating distinct logics of property and power (Reyes and Kaufman 2011). Among indigenous movements in the Andes and as it is enshrined in the Bolivian Constitution, this understanding of the commons has been organized around the notion of *buen vivir* (a sense of collective well-being rooted in the dual sense of “living well” and “living properly”) (Escobar 2010). These, and others, offer different ways to articulate understandings of the commons around a vision of working to live not living to work (Mignolo 2009: 30):

It is in this context that Evo Morales has been promoting the concept of “the good living” (*sumaj kamaña* in Quechua, *sumak kawsay* in Quichua, *allin kausaw* in Aymara or *buen vivir* in Spanish). “The good living” – or “to live in harmony” – is an alternative to “development”. While development puts life at the service of growth and accumulation, *buen vivir* places life first, with institutions at the service of life.

PRACTICES OF URBAN COMMONING

Harvey (2012: 72) insists that there is a fine line in identifying what is an urban common between what we mean by public space and public goods on the one hand and the commons on the other. Public spaces and public goods might be essential for the possibility of a commons, but the production and sustaining of a commons requires real effort and political action on the part of a people. Without such effort and action, the commons are always in danger of enclosure.

Such calls for political action to defend the common spaces of the city have reverberated around many countries and cities in the recent years. From Cairo, Athens, Tunis, Madrid to Lisbon citizen uprisings of the Arab/Mediterranean Spring generated widespread and linked waves of social unrest in North African and Southern European countries. In the case of Spain, protests self-organized largely through social media under the tag of #spanishrevolution⁴ and without the support of unions or political parties were called for the days before the general elections in May 2011 against the management of the financial crisis.



Figure 26.2 Urban encampment in Zaragoza during May 2011. Source: Acampada Zaragoza, CC BY 3.0 (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/>).

Marches in dozens of cities throughout Spain morphed into tent cities in central plazas replicating the January camp in Tahrir Square in Cairo. Beginning on the evening of May 15, 2011 protest camps began to cover the central plazas of Madrid, Barcelona, Seville, Zaragoza, Palencia, and a long list of cities and towns during days, weeks, and months (Figure 26.2). That date inaugurated the 15M movement, also called the *Indignados*,⁵ whose main organizing tactic – that of the urban encampment – was itself virally replicated in cities across Europe and North America, inspiring other Occupy and Acampada mobilizations.

Such occupations of nodal downtown avenues and central plazas recreate “cities in miniature” (Corsin and Estalella 2011; Juris 2012). The encampments exhibit a careful design of distributed areas with different functions including kitchen, legal office, medical emergency room, media room, “plazas” to run the regular assemblies as well as daycare and meditation areas. The camps are articulated via mini-streets formed by the many tents for sleeping and hosting personal belonging purposes. For example: “#Occupy Boston was an autono-

mous, self-managed city replete with its own housing, media, newspaper (*Occupy Boston Globe*), people's university, security, legal team, library, and even spaces for meditation and worship" (Juris 2012: 264; see Chapter 5, "Built Structures and Planning").

Here urban occupations open access and encourage participation, expand the number of participants, and enact collective, temporal, and precarious re-appropriations of urban spaces. They generate what anthropologists Corsin and Estalella (2011: 23) call "urban encampment as a prototype, as a form of/for political action centered on circuits of exchange (of food, building materials, wires, card-boards, digital objects); on certain do-it-yourself and artisanal kinds of collaboration, and on the provisional, open-ended and ultimately hopeful temporality of engaged action. One might argue that the frail silhouette of the original camping tent stood as a prototype for new forms of residence in the contemporary *polis*."

Inspired by Harvey's notion of re-appropriating the urban condition as a commons, Corsin and Estalella (2014a: 15) conclude that the 15M movement actually achieved the transformation of public urban space into a temporary commons, where plazas and parks became sites for the "production of relationality and consensus making . . . leading to new codes of conviviality . . . and re-imagining citizenship." This dwelling of urban public space enacts both a defensive statement against the management of the crisis as well as a propositional enactment of a different kind of politics and an alternative mode of organizing resources (see Chapter 1, "Spatialities"). When talking about Boston's Occupy tent city, Juris (2012: 268–269) points to the physicality of the practice of tenting as a struggle over space where: "the occupations challenged the transformation of social space into abstract space under the calculus of exchange value that drives neoliberal capitalism. . . . In this sense, #Occupy camps, particularly when situated near financial centers, sought to redefine urban space in ways that contrast with dominant socioeconomic orders, embody utopian movement values, and give rise to alternative forms of sociality."

In the case of the 15M movement in Spain, a vast network of local neighborhood "popular assemblies" emerged throughout 2011, with over 100 such assemblies in Madrid alone. The assemblies produced a particular experience of "neighborhood" (*barrio*) and "a new experience of relationality, which assembly-goers refer to as 'making neighbors'" (Corsin and Estalella 2014b: 1). In these contexts, the neighbor has become a model of and for political citizenship and the mechanism to ensure the "right to the city" (see Chapter 4, "Citizenship").

However, despite its ability to nurture new forms of political imagination, the very initial phase of the Occupy movements has been based on urban encampments that are temporary, functioning more as embodied evocations of the need to expand the scope of rights of access and use in public spaces. Public urban space becomes a "commons" in which anyone (at least nominally) can participate in the occupation of space and in articulating how to manage it.

SQUATTING

Squatting might be also read in this light as a more direct and permanent form of urban commoning targeting both market and state-run urban spaces. In this sense, the practice of squatting is a struggle over the ability to remove property from circuits of real-estate speculation and property development by both private and public authorities. Its contribution to the practice of commoning is its tactical irreverence towards private property, one of the main threats to the commons, especially with the growing wave of privations in which “[s]quatting is a unique form of protest activity that holds a potential of unfurling energies; it focuses action in a way that is prefigurative of another mode of organizing society and challenging a paramount institution of capitalist society: private property” (Mayer 2013: 2).

Both as an everyday practice as well as an explicit political demand, squatter movements attempt to link housing struggles over access to unused built space to broader political goals about public/private spaces. Squatting has a long history in many European countries as an alternative mode of housing as well as an activist movement to build “social centers” for community activities (Figure 26.3). This tradition is often distinct from housing rights mobilizations (though they may be linked) in that squatters directly “take” the space or building in question and then create a reality on the ground that must either be



Figure 26.3 Squatted Social Center in Barcelona. Source: “Okupa y Resiste” by Toniher (own work) CC BY-SA 3.0 (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/deed.en>) via Wikimedia Commons.

recognized as autonomous, ignored or repressed on the part of state authorities and private property owners (see Chapter 13, “Extralegality”). For example, intense debates and struggles have taken place over the recognition of squatted social centers on the part of city authorities and squatters themselves. Key social centers such as Seco or Eskalera Karakola in Madrid engaged in years-long struggles first to build common social spaces for community activities, then to defend them from evictions, and to defend the center’s assembly’s right to self-manage the space (as opposed to being absorbed into something like the “cultural department” of the city government, something which has also occurred with some other spaces). Another kind of squatting, although different from the occupation of existing buildings, is the creation of informal settlements such as the Cañada Real in Spain, one of the larger informal cities in Western Europe, with official 2012 estimates of around 10,000 inhabitants (*El País* 2013).

COMMONFARE

The practices of commoning are always articulated with changing forms of labor and work. In recognizing the relatively short period in which Fordist modes of employment and golden-age welfare state policies held sway in limited parts of the Northern world (the “*30 glorieuses*”), and in also recognizing that full and stable employment is not an achievable – or even desirable – goal, social efforts are trying to identify what would constitute flexible but not exploitative labor markets. Some of the demands emerging from the work of the Universidad Nómada in Spain⁶ are condensed in three interrelated concepts: *flexicurity*, *basic income*, and a provocative call for *commonfare*.

Originally proposed by the Danish government, flexicurity refers to efforts to simultaneously ensure flexibility and security in labor markets. For the European Commission it comprises four linked policy domains; flexible and reliable employment contracts; lifelong learning and the expectation of job change; dynamic labor markets; and social security guarantees during periods of employment disruption. Linked to basic income support and commonfare, the idea is to produce a set of condensed enunciations of the new rights and forms of struggle adequate for the twenty-first century. Inspired by the British Chartist movement, which presented a charter with new rights in the nineteenth century to the British Parliament, postulates of the old social contract currently in crisis are reviewed and new ones are proposed:

[T]hree main enunciations could make up the index of the new charter of living labor: 1) right to mobility and status of universal citizenship; 2) right to access to information and free production of knowledges; 3) right to a minimum universal income as remuneration of unpaid cooperative work as well as open possibility for self-organization of living labor. This would allow for the material basis of a new regime of production and society called *commonfare*. (Rodriguez 2003: 2)



Figure 26.4 Teatro Valle Occupato in Rome. Source: Teatro Valle Occupato, CC BY 3.0 (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/deed.en_US).

To provide a contrast with what Jamie Peck characterized as “welfare,” Rodriguez and Cedillo (2004: 12) see commonfare as a system of social rights and access to services not dependent on wages. The term commonfare points to a transformation of the welfare state, not through neoliberal policies, but towards an infrastructure able to guarantee the universal and public enjoyment of common goods, both material and immaterial ones.

This welfare of commons, or commonfare, is based on universal accessibility. Perhaps with the exception of Nordic models, many welfare systems are based on a system of services provision linked to employment, historically embodied by the figure of the male worker. While all members of society contribute in generating wealth, only those considered as waged or workers (or their dependents) are entitled to public services and provisions. For Varela (2013: 4): “All other members of a society (unemployed, dependents, foreigners, people dedicated to reproductive tasks) have had their access to welfare guaranteed only in times of abundance, as if they were simple beneficiaries of a wealth that they did not contribute to producing.”

In the midst of the current economic crisis in Southern Europe, experiments in commoning social services and cultural goods have proliferated. For example, in Rome in 2011 the Teatro Valle was occupied by its technical, administrative, and acting staff (Figure 26.4). Slated for closure or sale as part of the Italian government’s cuts to public expenditures on culture, this occupation called for open assemblies where theater workers, theater goers, and broader publics were invited to use the space and help in designing and using this prestigious institution to produce self-managed models for the provision of cultural goods.⁷ With continued social service cuts and real-estate speculation the experiment in the

theater has expanded to include a participatory process to elaborate a law on *beni commune* (common goods) that could include the recognition of ever wider domains of common cultural goods and spaces.⁸ Similarly, in northern Greece, on February 20, 2012, hospital staff at Kilkis General Hospital occupied the premises in response to cuts to the healthcare system and dissatisfaction with the response of mainstream unions. The hospital was put back into operation under the administration of a General Assembly.⁹

COMMONING PRACTICES OF CITYZENSHIP

Throughout their history, post-World War II institutions from Bretton Woods to the European Union have fostered discourses of inclusion and commonality. The EU in particular has fostered intense debate over citizenship, the right to free movement and residency rights (see Chapter 4, “Citizenship”). Indeed, issues of access, free movement, the right to search for work, and access to public education and services were central elements of claims for European integration. With enlargement, the notion of a common European space was expanded and deepened as a post-national version of Europe took on new meaning, as borders were opened and border posts removed, and as walls dividing capitalist and state socialist lives were broken down. The freedom of movement and the rights granted to citizens of EU member states within other EU member states also inspired many to consider an open European citizenship that complemented and in some cases was to transcend “national” citizenship.

Such a “borderless” inner European space has been built, in part, by the hardening of the outer border and the narrowing of access rights internally. “European” and “extra-communitarian” have thus been constructed as oppositional categories in terms of which rights are assigned. As Balibar (2004: 121) has indicated: “I take it as a crucial issue to acknowledge that, along with the development of a formal ‘European citizenship,’ a real ‘European apartheid’ has emerged.” In this sense, the possibility for a post-national European citizenship clashes with an emergent form of European apartheid.

One consequence has been that many migrant struggles in Europe have been framed in terms of “rights” conceded by the state, with a possible goal of “granting” citizenship for migrants to become “legal” or even “nationals”; full subjects of the state. This nationalization entails an ability, or right, to participate in the “European citizenship” under construction. Such “citizenship” is entirely held by state authorities (and perhaps partially by supranational authorities) from which rights are “conceded” to subjects. In contrast, Nyers (2003) has suggested the importance of *citizenship practices* as a way to move “beyond state-centric accounts of political agency” and to assess how “acts of citizenship . . . contest and reshape the traditional terms of political community, identity and practice” (Nyers 2003: 1070–1071).

Thinking in terms of citizenship practices refocuses attention on daily enactments of citizenship by migrants themselves who participate to differing degrees

in neighborhoods, schools, and local businesses, as well as protest and social demands. In this sense it is a recuperation of the original sense of the word *citizen* as inhabitants of the city. Here, the state is not understood as the one that “concedes” citizenship. Instead, citizenship is actually lived and seized by migrants as well as those interacting with them. The state may recognize, ignore, or repress the existence of these communities of citizens-in-the-making. The point is to look at how migrants are already becoming “citizens” in the practices of inhabiting and intersecting socially in the city space. Legal citizenship in this sense is not the “granting” of a new status or concession, but the recognition of already existing practices. We suggest the term *CITYzenship* as a way to frame this focus on urban commoning and as a way to recuperate the origins of the concept of citizen in a manner that moves us away from the concession of a national passport. It is the already existing “use” of the “common” space of the city and a struggle against the “enclosure” of that space to other racial, national, and ethnic groups (see Chapter 12, “Race”). In this sense, migrant struggles over access to the city space and *CITYzenship*, bring an important anti-racist dimension to the practices of “communing” compared to *citizenship* debates that focus on economic issues without taking into account how spaces, goods, and services are also meted out or limited along racialized lines.

One example of these struggles is the attempt to decriminalize the ambulatory informal markets called *top manta* in Spanish cities. These are usually organized and staffed by sub-Saharan migrants with undocumented status. Creating the spaces to set up these markets along pedestrian streets and plazas without fear of police intervention has been an important aspect of sub-Saharan African struggles to participate in public space. Young male sub-Saharan migrants are often profiled as potential ambulatory salesmen and stopped by the police, usually because of copyright laws relating to the items being sold.

Other such struggles include the *Yo Si Sanidad Universal* campaign, where the recent 2012 passage of a law limiting access of undocumented migrants to healthcare was contested by a group that sought to reaffirm the right of universal coverage. In this campaign doctors and health centers were requested to overtly or covertly disobey the law.¹⁰ Attempts have also emerged to contest police checkpoints setup in public spaces to document checks of migrants. At times these have taken the form of spontaneous protests against police conducting these checks. But these have also been manifested in debates within the Red de Apoyo a Sin Papeles de Zaragoza (an undocumented migrants’ association in Spain) to call for a meeting with local police authorities and directly discuss with them the questions of racial profiling in the same way a “legal citizen” would make a complaint to police authorities about the practices of police officers. These three examples point to efforts to ensure that spaces and services where struggles over the commons already exist (including public streets and squares, healthcare, and cultural goods) are not limited to a racial divide over who can get access to such commons.

CONCLUSION: ON THE COMMON OF THE COMMONS

We conclude with the thorny and much contested question of whether there is a common horizon, albeit impossible to reach, that binds struggles for the commons together, and if so what are the common features of such a common horizon?

One contribution to articulating this horizon is emerging from Europe-based debates and struggles. Recent European social theory has attempted to re-appropriate the term “communism” from its state-centric and its homogenizing and universalist past, rearticulating it to towards a politics of communing. This question has been posed around the conversations of Nancy, Badiou, Hardt and Negri, Žižek, Rancière, and Bosteels under the term “the idea of communism” or “new communism.”

For some, the concept of communism is too easily conflated with a statist politics of command and control that, in its desire for articulation and communalism, elides the complex diversities of economic and social practices and the multiplicity of relations and spaces that sustain them and constitute everyday life. Here, the historical forms of communism have too easily been taken for the structure of Soviet power, the party state, and a present and powerful threat that mobilizes the unruly classes. But for J.K. Gibson-Graham (1996), the impulse to communism is a commitment to reading the economy for difference rather than dominance, one that must be attentive to the articulation of multiple spatialities and subjectivities; common economic relations in their diversity, not their singularity.

Thought more broadly this is what Bosteels (2011: 236) calls the general horizon of the era and Derrida (2006) called the specter that haunts. It is not a state of affairs or an ideal reality to which reality adjusts, but “the real movement which abolishes the present state of things” (Marx and Engels 1970 [1845]: 56–57). This movement is a kind of hypothesis about the potential of social movements; that “a different collective organization is practicable, one that will eliminate the inequality of wealth and even the division of labor. The private appropriation of massive fortunes and their transmission by inheritance will disappear. The existence of a coercive state, separate from civil society, will no longer appear a necessity; a long process of reorganization based on a free association of procedures will see it withering away” (Badiou 2008: 35). For Bosteels (2005: 752) this is the need to “save the glorious dream of communism from Jacobin mystifications and Stalinist nightmares alike: [to] give it back this power of articulation: an alliance, between the liberation of work and the liberation of subjectivity,” to rescue communism from its own disrepute (Badiou 2003: 131), to produce a new communism that traces the “groundless being-in-common” (Bosteels 2005: 753).

In pointing to Gibson-Graham’s preference to multiply the forms and practices of the commons, Jodi Dean (2012: 12–16) has recently suggested the need to embrace the common of the commons. Here the horizon of the

commons provides what Gibson-Graham's alternative and diverse economies does through multiplying positionalities and offering a defense of a new collective politics.

In his defense of the common in communism, Michael Hardt (2011) suggested one way out of the tendency of these debates to recreate the very binaries they seek to overcome: diversity/hegemony; private/public; individual/collective; state/social; and so on:

We have been made so stupid that we can only recognize the world as private or public. We have become blind to the common. Communism should be defined not only by the abolition of property but also by the affirmation of the common – the affirmation of open and autonomous production of subjectivity, social relations, and the forms of life; the self-governed continuous creation of new humanity. In the most synthetic terms, what private property is to capitalism and what state property is to socialism, the common is to communism.

Placing the commons at the core of an emancipatory politics in this way challenges us to engage more broadly with the possibilities of different types of property regime, alternative systems of resource management, and other ways of making decisions about the polis we inhabit. More than ever, the need for a juridical recognition and practical enactment of the commons is among us, it is the specter that haunts.

NOTES

- 1 “Común es el sol y el viento, común ha de ser la tierra, que vuelva común al pueblo, lo que del pueblo saliera.”
- 2 “Hay cosas que no son ni públicas ni privadas, pero que a todos nos interesan. Hay formas de gestión que no son ni del Estado ni del Mercado.”
- 3 For activist references on precariousness in Europe see <http://www.precaria.org/> or <http://www.euromayday.org>.
- 4 See the real-time video of geo-positioned electronic messages among participants of the 15M movement during the days of social unrest produced by the Research Institute on Bio-computation and Complex Systems of the University of Zaragoza at <http://15m.bifi.es/index.php>.
- 5 *Indignados* (the outraged) became the media label for the movement, echoing the title of the best-selling manifesto for peaceful resistance written by French diplomat and erstwhile resistance fighter Stéphane Hessel.
- 6 See <http://www.universidadnomada.net/> as well as Rodriguez (2003), Rodriguez and Cedillo (2004).
- 7 See video and interview about the project at http://www.commonssense.it/s1/?page_id=938.
- 8 For a further description of these examples and others see “Occupy the commons: A new wave of occupations redefines citizenship and political participation in Italy, as elections fast approach.” <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2013/02/2013217115651557469.html>.
- 9 For more on the Kilkis hospital occupation please see: <http://blog.occupiedlondon.org/2012/03/05/why-we-occupied-our-hospital-an-open-letter>

- by-a-hospital-doctor-at-the-workers-run-hospital-of-kilkis. Accessed April 10, 2013.
- 10 <http://yosisanidaduniversal.net/portada.php>.

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