Commoning the City

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Abbreviations

ABEM	Aigües de Barcelona, Empresa Metropolitana de Gestió del Cicle Integral de l'Aigua, S.A. (Waters of Barcelona, Metropolitan company for the management of the whole water cycle).
AeV	Aigua és Vida (Water is life)
APE	Aliança contra la Pobresa Energètica (Alliance Against Energy Poverty)
Bcomú	Barcelona En Comú (Barcelona in Common)
BA	Barcelona Activa
BE	Barcelona Energía (Barcelona Energy)
BOSTID	Board on Science and Technology in International Development
CI	Citizens' Initiative
CIC	Cooperativa Integral Catalana (Catalan Integral Cooperative)
CIE	Centres d'Internament d'Estrangers (Internment Centres for Foreigners)
CiU	Convergència i Unió (Convergence and Union)
CLES	The Centre for Local Economic Strategies
CPR	Common-pool Resource
CSM	5 pillar Commons Sustainability Model
CUP	La Candidatura d'Unitat Popular (The Popular Unity Candidacy)
CWB	Community Wealth Building
ECA	European Commons Assembly
ERC	Esquerra Republicana (Republican Left)
ESF	Enginyeria sense Fronteres (Engineers without Borders)
FAVB	Federació d'Associacions Veïnals de Barcelona (Federation of Neighbourhood Associations of Barcelona)
FCF	Free Culture Forum
FESC	La Fira d'Economia Solidària de Catalunya (The Fair of Solidarity Economy of Catalonia)
FLOK	Free Libre Open Knowledge
FSMET	El Fòrum Social Mundial de les Economies Transformadores (WSFTE; World Social Forum of Transformative Economies)
GAFAM	Google, Apple, Facebook, Amazon, Microsoft
GNU	GNU's Not Unix!
GPL	GNU General Public Licence
IAD	Institutional Analysis and Development Framework
IAEN	El Instituto de Altos Estudios Nacionales (National Institute for

	Advanced Studies)
IASC	International Association for the Study of the Commons
ICV-EUiA	Iniciativa per Catalunya Verds–Esquerra Unida i Alternativa (Initiative for Catalonia Greens–United and Alternative Left)
IGOP	Institut de Govern i Polítiques Públiques (Institute for Goverment and Public Policy at the Autonomous University of Barcelona)
P2P	Peer to Peer
P2PF	Peer to Peer Foundation / The Foundation for Peer to Peer Alternatives
PAH	Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca (The Platform of People Affected by Mortgages)
PAM	Pla d'Actuació Municipal (Municipal Action Plan)
PGC	Plataforma d'entitats per a la Gestió Ciutadana (Platform of Entities for Citizen Management)
PIESS	Pla d'Impuls de l'Economia Social i Solidària 2016-2019 (Plan to Boost the Social and Solidarity Economy 2016-2019)
PP	Partido Popular (People's Party)
PSOE	Partido Socialista Obrero Español (Spanish Socialist Workers' Party)
PSC	Partit dels Socialistes de Catalunya (The Socialists' Party of Catalonia)
REAS	Red de Economía Alternativa y Solidaria (Network of Alternative and Solidarity Economy)
RIPESS	Réseau Intercontinental de Promotion de l'économie Sociale Solidaire (Intercontinental network for the promotion of the social solidarity economy)
SCEWC	The Smart Cities Expo World Congress
SGAB	Societat General d'Aigües de Barcelona (General Water Company of Barcelona)
SSC	Squatted Social Centre
SSE	Social Solidarity Economy / Social and Solidarity Economy
SENESCYT	Secretaría Nacional de Educación Superior, Ciencia, Tecnología e Innovación (National Secretariat of Higher Education, Science, Technology and Innovation)
TCIE	Tanquem els CIE (We close the Internment Centres for Foreigners)
TSJC	Tribunal Superior de Justícia de Catalunya (High Court of Catalonia)
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WSFTE	World Social Forum of Transformative Economies
XEC	La Xarxa d'Espais Comunitaris (Network of Communitarian Spaces)
XES	La Xarxa d'Economia Solidària de Catalunya (The Network of Solidarity Economy of Catalonia).

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Abstract

In 2015, the citizens' platform, Barcelona En Comú won the municipal elections in the city of Barcelona. Emerging out of Spain's anti-austerity and 15M movements, this activist led platform advanced a radically democratic political agenda. Between 2015 and 2019 they introduced a range of public policies aimed at empowering citizens through an expansion of participatory and economic democracy. This political programme included support for digital commons, urban commons and solidarity economy. Over the past three decades, the commons has featured increasingly as a subject in the political discourse of social movements. I argue that in the case of Barcelona, the commons has functioned as a bridging concept enabling political convergence among local movements. This anthropological research project set out to investigate the emergence of the commons as a political subject in the city of Barcelona. It asks a number of questions. What constitutes the social imaginary (Taylor 2004; Kelty 2008) of the commons? What does it mean to imagine and make the city as a commons (Foster and Iaione 2015)? Who imagines the city as a commons? What assemblages and networks of people, communities, activists, social movements, politicians and civic organisations make such political projects possible? What conditions of possibility, what social, institutional, historical and cultural factors lend themselves to imagining the city as a commons? The thesis explores continuities between the experience of social movements prior to 2015 and how they informed the policies and programmes of Barcelona En Comú. It considers how commoning practices have figured within movement practice and examines how apparently different social worlds, the worlds of free culture and techno-politics (digital commons), urban commons, and the solidarity economy, converged with the municipalist movement, and the political possibilities this afforded. In conclusion, I consider this convergence as part of a social movement project (Nilsen and Cox 2013), aimed at advancing a radically democratic vision of politics and economy.

Chapter 1. Introduction: A Thriving Social World

Arriving to Barcelona

In the fallout of the 2008 economic crisis, social movements against austerity mobilised in cities around the world. In Spain this manifested most prominently in the 15M movement of 2011. As Flesher Fominaya (2020) documents Spanish anti-austerity movements reframed the economic crisis as a crisis of representative democracy. Rather than a rejection of democracy, citizens demanded *Real Democracy Now*. The occupation of the squares and the participation of citizens in 15M represented a moment of popular democratic experimentation with radical democratic practices that had previously been limited to the spaces of social movements. In the discourse of autonomist social movements the commons has represented alternative forms of social organisation and collective political imaginaries. In the years that followed 15M, the popular interest in democratic experimentation found further expression in the municipalist movements that contested local elections throughout Spain in 2015. In Barcelona, the municipalist platform Barcelona En Comú (Bcomú; Barcelona in Common) led an electoral campaign to *win the city* back for its citizens. The platform was led by activists, many of whom were participating in electoral politics for the first time. In May 2015, Bcomú succeeded in winning the most seats and as the largest single political group in the council their candidate Ada Colau, an anti-eviction activist, became the first woman to hold the office of Mayor of Barcelona.

I visited Barcelona three times between 2009 and 2016 before commencing doctoral research. This chapter is a kind of ethnographic entry tale. Its purpose is to introduce the reader to the social world of the commons in Barcelona as I encountered it through my participation in the free culture movement and involvement with the P2P Foundation (P2PF). This experience was formative. It shaped my choice of research topic, my theoretical and methodological approach, my relationship with actors in the

field, and ultimately my understanding of the commons in the city of Barcelona. The literature on the commons tends to emphasise aspects of particular cases, the urban or the digital for example. What I encountered during my visits to Barcelona was that urban and the digital commons were not distinct but different aspects of the same social world, different expressions of a political culture (Flesher Fominaya 2020) with a strong emphasis on autonomy and self-organisation that was shared among activists and social movements in the city. This thesis looks at how the subject of the commons, a subject of social movement discourse and practice was adapted during this period and process of political change and how demands to reclaim the city for the common people were manifested in public policies for participatory and economic democracy.

My personal journey into the world of the commons began in 2009 when I first travelled to Barcelona to attend the Free Culture Forum (FCF). The FCF was organised by artists and activists, Simona Levi and Mayo Fuster Morell. Levi was a member of the digital rights and free culture group eXgae that later became Xnet. Fuster Morell was an activist researcher with the group Networked Politics (Transnational Institute 2007) and had been involved in the global justice movement. They along with other activists attending the event have been consistent advocates for free culture and digital rights in Barcelona and have had prominent roles in some of the events that I document later in this thesis. The forum marked my first steps into what Postill (2018) accurately describes as a "thriving social world". The gathering was bigger than I expected and included activists, hackers, artists and academics from twenty countries. It was also explicitly political in its orientation, as attendee and writer on the commons, David Bollier described -

> What was notable about the Forum was its complete independence from the three leading transnational free culture organizations – the Creative Commons (and its dormant affiliate iCommons), Wikipedia and the Free Software Foundation. Perhaps because it is European-based, the event was more frankly political and diverse than the gatherings usually hosted by

those organizations. (Though to be clear, the Barcelona Forum was building on top of the innovations of these groups, and was not averse to them or their work.) (Bollier 2009)

At that time internet piracy was in the headlines and with lobbying pressure from the entertainment industry states were introducing controversial regulations that required internet service providers to police their users and act on reports of copyright infringement. This had led to many normal internet users being sued for absurd sums of money by the entertainment industry. The expansion of state and corporate surveillance and the threat to personal privacy of internet users was the subject of lively and heated discussions. In addition to this participants collaborated to produce a *Charter for Innovation, Creativity and Access to Knowledge* (Free Culture Forum 2010). The charter was publicly endorsed by prominent digital rights advocates such as Jimmy Wales the founder of Wikipedia, along with other more infamous endorsers Wikileaks. The charter made a number of particular demands, among which were calls for fair use clauses on copyrighted cultural works as well as for the defence of net neutrality. The charter also called for the recognition and defence of an emergent free culture movement and its political ideals. The principle of political freedom was also linked with new collaborative and participatory economic models based on the concept of the commons. The "Political and Economic Implications of Free Culture" were stated in the charter:

> Free culture ("free" as in "freedom", not as "for free") opens up the possibility of new models for citizen engagement in the provision of public goods and services, based on a 'commons' approach. 'Governance of the commons' refers to negotiated rules and boundaries for managing the collective production and stewardship of, and access to, shared resources. Governance of the commons honours participation, inclusion, transparency, equal access, and long-term sustainability. We recognise the commons as a distinctive and desirable form of governance that is not necessarily linked to the state or other conventional political institutions, and demonstrates that civil society today is a potent force. (Free Culture Forum 2010)

In tandem with the forum was a festival and free cultural awards ceremony,

the Oxcars; the title a play on the Oscars. The awards took place in the Sala Apolo theatre. In addition to an entertaining evening, guests were offered Free Beer. This was an in-joke. The concept of freedom in free culture is inspired by the Free Software Movement. In answering the question "What is Free Software?" the Free Software Foundation (1996) describe the philosophy as follows:

> "Free software" means software that respects users' freedom and community. Roughly, it means that **the users have the freedom to run, copy, distribute, study, change and improve the software**. Thus, "free software" is a matter of liberty, not price. To understand the concept, you should think of "free" as in "free speech," not as in "free beer". (Free Software Foundation 1996)

Produced as part of a collaborative artistic project with the Danish group, Superflex, the recipe for the beer, like software code, was licensed with a free culture or copyleft, Creative Commons licence. If you enjoyed the beer you were free to use the recipe and to make your own, provided that novel or derivative beer recipes would be shared under a similar licence as part of a beer commons. All in all the Forum and the Oxcars were a refreshing mix of the cultural and political.

Technology has become increasingly central to everyday life in the 21st century and so too have the politics of technology with activist technologists increasingly in news headlines. Anthropologist John Postill (2018) describes this as part of a global trend, the "rise of nerd politics". He proposes that we can understand the evolution of this trend through three main periods.

> A first phase of genesis and early development (1989 to 1995) marked by the founding of the Chaos Computer Club in Berlin in 1981; a second phase of growth and consolidation (1996 to 2009) inaugurated by John Perry Barlow's Declaration of the Independence of Cyberspace in Davos in 1996; and an ongoing third phase of explosive growth (2010 onwards) in the wake of the Cablegate scandal and the Tunisian uprising of late 2010. (Postill 2018, 170-171)

For Postill these developmental phases are also characterised by subtrends,

namely "population growth, diversification and institutionalisation" (Postill 2018, 173). Reflecting on his participation in the FCF, Postill (2018) recognised that this movement was in a process of transition with a marked shift towards an explicit engagement with the worlds of both social protest and institutional politics. The engagement with institutional politics was underway at the FCF in 2009. While there I briefly met Amelia Andersdotter a member of the Swedish Pirate Party. In 2011, at the age of 24, Andersdotter became one of the youngest politicians ever to take a seat in the European Parliament. I also met Smari McCarthy, a hacker and free software activist who went on to become a founder of the Icelandic Pirate Party and was elected to the parliament in 2016. After attending the FCF I was motivated to get more active back in Ireland. In 2010, I helped start a hackerspace in my home town of Galway called 091labs. We organised regular events and some members even explored the possibility of forming a Pirate Party. I travelled with other members to hacker events such as 30C3 (the 30th Chaos Computer Congress) in Hamburg, one of the world's largest hacker events which had nine thousand people attend.

I first learned about the commons through my interest in free culture. I was a subscriber to various mailing lists and in 2008 I started doing some voluntary blogging for the Peer to Peer Foundation (P2PF). Michel Bauwens, the founder and director of the P2PF had been documenting and writing about the commons and peer to peer (P2P) on the foundation's blog and wiki since 2005. He spoke regularly about P2P and the commons as part of an emergent paradigm that presented new possibilities for organising society, politics and economy. Bauwens was an invited speaker at the FCF in 2009 where we met in person. In 2011, I invited Bauwens to a hacker event I was organising as part of the Mindfield Festival in Dublin and I organised a short lecture tour in Ireland. After some years as a volunteer I eventually worked for the foundation from 2013 to 2015. It was really through my involvement with the P2PF that I became interested in the commons as part of a broader paradigm for social change.

I returned to Barcelona for a second time in early 2014. I was there to

represent the P2PF which was a partner in a European research project called P2Pvalue. P2Pvalue investigated sustainable models of Commons-Based Peer Production (Benkler 2002). The local host for the meeting was the IGOP research team from the Autonomous University of Catalonia. The team was led by Mayo Fuster Morell, who was previously involved as a co-organiser of the Free Culture Forum events. In addition to the academic meetings I joined attendees to visit Catalan commons projects. I visited Can Batlló (Can Batlló 2021) an urban commons in the neighbourhood of Sants and travelled with the group to visit Calafou (Calafou 2022) a housing cooperative and alternative social and community project outside of Barcelona not far from the rural town of Vallbona d'Anoia. Both of these projects are located on former industrial sites and the communities organise through democratic assemblies. Calafou has a large industrial working space which is home to various community and cooperative projects. This included a hackerspace and bio-hacklab organised by anarcho-feminist punks. Commons projects in Catalonia combined collectivised space and collective knowledge production. The P2Pvalue project eventually mapped 1,300 commons oriented projects in Catalonia (Fuster Morell 2016).

In 2013, Michel Bauwens was invited to be the research director of the FLOK society project at the IAEN (El Instituto de Altos Estudios Nacionales; National Institute for Advanced Studies) in Quito, Ecuador. FLOK (Free/Libre Open Knowledge) was among a number of national research projects and part of Ecuador's national plan in pursuit of *buen vivir* or good living. The project was supported by the socialist government led by Rafael Correa through the SENESCYT (The Ministry of Knowledge and Human Talent). After my trip to Barcelona I travelled to Quito and where I stayed for four months. I was not part of the FLOK research team but assisted Bauwens with foundation related work. While there I met and spent time with many of the researchers. FLOK was directed by Spanish academic Xabier E. Barandiaran and hacktivist David Vila-Viñas. It was an ambitious project. Researchers conducted an analysis of the productive matrix of the Ecuadorian economy and developed a set of policy recommendations aimed

at advancing the country's development by way of transition to a technological and economic model inspired by the cooperative and collaborative practices of the free software and free culture movements. The research team developed a conceptual framework and a sort of road map for how a transition to a post-capitalist society might be achieved (FLOK Society 2014). Significantly it proposed a three part productive model that allied the new digital commons and the social economy with a supportive partner state (Bauwens & Kostakis 2015; Restakis 2016). Unfortunately FLOK was plagued by institutional problems stemming from conflicts within a highly politicised administration. This was cause for frustration and tensions between researchers and the management team. Despite its ambition the nine-month project was short-lived, with researchers and the management going their separate ways. It is not easy to say what lasting impact the project had in Ecuador. However, in the minds of all those involved the seeds were sown of a new model for transition to a post-capitalist society. The question then was where next? And where might such a three part alliance, of digital commons, social economy and supportive partner state be found?

With the P2PF, Bauwens continued to adapt the conceptual model developed during FLOK into a general non-region specific plan for Commons Transition (P2P Foundation 2019). In 2015, I travelled to Barcelona for a third time, with Bauwens and Stacco Troncoso another associate of the P2PF. We were invited by Enric Duran an activist, hacker and a founding member of the Cooperativa Integral Catalana (CIC; Catalan Integral Cooperative). Duran is a fascinating character, something like a modern Robin Hood. He is notorious for having "expropriated several hundred thousand euros from Spanish banks during the lead-up to the 2008 financial crisis" (Schneider 2015), money that presumably disappeared into various social movement projects. For this reason Duran is pursued by the Spanish state and lives in exile. He took an interest in the Commons Transition plan and recognised affinities with the projects of the CIC. The CIC was a network of self-organised projects and spaces spread throughout

Catalonia. It was deeply informed by the experience of Catalonia's anarchist and libertarian traditions both its history and its more contemporary expressions in the movements of squats and social centres. The CIC was explicitly anti-state and this was a critical part of the project's identity. They were critical of cooperative and solidarity economy actors whose projects they saw as dependent on government grants. Instead the CIC made extensive use of technological tools to organise autonomous networks and spaces throughout Catalonia. Members organised at local and regional levels through democratic assemblies. The goal was to develop a self-sufficient ecosystem of projects to meet all members' needs, from housing to food and social care. They advocated financial civil disobedience which included the use of community currencies and creative accounting to organise an alternative economic system through which members offered skills and traded locally produced goods from fresh vegetables and olive oil, to wine, soaps and much more (Dafermos 2017). The eco-industrial and post-capitalist community of Calafou I had visited in 2014 were a part of the CIC network. We visited Calafou and many other projects. The CIC was having a degree of success in using digital tools to coordinate and organise an alternative social and solidarity economy. These represented two of the three part commons transition model. In the context of an economic crisis with a Spanish state hostile and unresponsive to demands expressed by social movements during 15M, it was proposed that the P2PF collaborate with the CIC to develop a model for a movement led commons transition from below. In 2016, George Dafermos, a Greek researcher who had worked on FLOK and was an affiliate of the P2PF spent some months with the CIC and later published his findings in an organisational study of this post-capitalist cooperative (Dafermos 2017).

While the primary purpose of our visit was to meet with the CIC, we also met with other activists and groups. We attended a meeting with members of La Xarxa d'Economia Solidària de Catalunya (XES; The Network of Solidarity Economy of Catalonia). We also met with some activists associated with Barcelona En Comú who were busy campaigning in

municipal elections to *win the city* back for its citizens. The elections were due to take place at the end of May, our own visit to Barcelona would come to an end in mid-May and at that point nothing was certain about the outcome of the elections. Inspired by anti-austerity movements and 15M, citizens and activists had been organising municipalist candidacies, sometimes referred to as citizen's platforms, to contest local elections in towns and cities throughout Spain. The end of May saw a wave of electoral success for this municipalist movement with prominent wins in the major cities of Madrid and Barcelona. This was a historic moment as it marked a rupture from the two party system that had dominated Spanish politics since the transition to democracy. The electoral success of Barcelona En Comú on May 24th was celebrated by activists in the city. In a blog post that declared the "Commons conquer Barcelona!" Mayo Fuster Morell notes the historic irony of an anti-eviction activist and squatter, Ada Colau becoming the mayor of Barcelona and evicting politicians from city hall (Fuster Morell 2015).

Postill points out that the literature on techno-politics "demonstrates the importance of paying attention to Spain as an extraordinary laboratory of democracy, one in which nerd activism and scholarship have inter-mingled and co-evolved with the 15M movement" (Postill 2018, 12). He argues that Spanish techno-political activists have "reshaped their country's democracy by conducting numerous techno-political experiments" a track record that has been "largely concealed from the anglosphere behind a language barrier, but it is one that deserves to be better known outside Spain"(Postill 2018, 12). The experience of Spanish and Catalan activists, and the idea that the commons should constitute a critical part of a transition to a post-capitalist society informed projects such as FLOK and the P2P Foundation's Commons Transition plan. These ideas were very much in the air among Spanish free culture and techno-political activists in 2014 and 2015. The proposals of FLOK and Commons Transition, were based on an alliance of three different actors, the digital commons, social economy and partner state. Such an alliance was taking shape in Barcelona. As I argue in this

thesis the commons was a key mobilising concept which served to bridge and link these different social and political actors. This is made most explicit in the inclusion of the commons in the name of Barcelona En Comú.

The municipalist movement had opened a space of new political possibilities, but it remained to be seen what the success of Bcomú would mean for social movements in the city and how the commons would figure in this political project. Activists in Barcelona wasted no time. Within the first six months in the city council, Bcomú planned and launched a city-wide exercise in participatory democracy. In 2016, with the support of a new digital platform called Decidim, the citizens of Barcelona participated in the development of the city's municipal action plan. Among the many initiatives that contributed to the action plan was Procomuns, an event which brought together solidarity economy and collaborative economy actors to propose policies for the commons in Barcelona. Many of the actors and activists that I had come to know of through my involvement with the free culture movement and the P2P Foundation were now actively involved in leading these projects. Xabier Barandiaran one of the directors of the FLOK project would become a key figure in leading Decidim, the city's platform for participatory democracy. Francesca Bria who had been a guest speaker at the FLOK conference in Ecuador was hired as Barcelona's director of digital strategy. Mayo Fuster Morell who had long been active in the global justice and free culture movements became a key actor in advancing policies for Barcelona's commons collaborative economy. The story I have narrated here is intended to illustrate how I came to the research topic of this thesis through my personal experience as a participant in networks of free culture and techno-political activists.

The thesis set out to understand how the commons figured as part of the social imaginary of activists and social movements, and how it found expression in concrete projects for participatory and economic democracy during this period of political change following the election of Bcomú between 2015 and 2019. It considers how public policies of local government to support the commons have been informed by social and

historical context, and the experience of movements. I ask where the demand for these policies came from? What kinds of alliances of social and political actors were involved? What problems were policies responding to, or what kind of social vision were they intended to enact? Were difficulties encountered in the processes of implementation? What were the impacts of policies? These are just a few of the questions I sought answers to.

Methodology

The research was conducted between 2016 and 2021. After a brief initial visit to Barcelona in June 2017, I visited regularly and conducted 18 months of extended fieldwork between April 2018 and December 2019. I visited projects, attended events and meetings in person and online. Remote fieldwork continued throughout 2020 and concluded in January 2021. The research project was subject to ethical review and approved by the Maynooth University Research Ethics Committee. I sought and received consent for 35 interviews, which were conducted with local commons practitioners and activists.

Postill (2018, 170) suggests that an attention to both synchronic and diachronic methods is critical to researching social groups in contemporary contexts. Postill argues that the traditional anthropological methods, *synchronic* methods such as fieldwork and interviews can be supported and complemented by *diachronic* methods, that is an attention to historical and contemporary documentation (Postill 2017). The two major factors that informed my positionality within the field were my prior experience as outlined in the introductory chapter and my language ability. It is important to acknowledge that I am not a fluent Spanish or Catalan speaker. I'm Irish and English is my first spoken language. I had taken some private Spanish language classes during my time in Ecuador in 2014 and took an introductory course for a semester during the first year of my PhD. I had a basic level of Spanish when I arrived to do fieldwork in Barcelona. This inevitably shaped my fieldwork and the research process. Barcelona is a bilingual city. Early in my fieldwork I found that people would switch back

and forth between Spanish and Catalan and often in the same conversation. One or the other language would dominate in certain social spaces. While Spanish was often used at large public events, I found that Catalan was preferred at meetings of solidarity economy activists and among my initial contacts. For this reason I started taking Catalan language classes early in my fieldwork and have continued to study the language since. These studies did help me to navigate and make use of contemporary Spanish and Catalan documentation. I did not have sufficient language competency to conduct interviews in Spanish or Catalan and almost all interviews were conducted through English and with persons who were relatively comfortable speaking in English. This did affect the research process as it determined who I was able to engage in conversation and what social spaces I could participate in. I had initially planned to conduct fieldwork through participation in urban commons spaces in the city but I found myself able to participate more meaningfully in movement spaces that were multilingual or transnational in their orientation. The fieldwork and empirical chapters of the thesis reflect this and document my participation in the Barcelona commons working group within the organising process of the World Social Forum of Transformative Economies (WSFTE), a major international event planned to take place in the city.

My positionality in the field was informed by three visits to Barcelona between 2009 and 2015 through my involvement with the free culture movement and the P2P Foundation. I had the advantage of already having prior contact with commons projects and actors in the city. That said, it was not at all clear when I started fieldwork who would be my primary correspondents or what groups I would end up working with the most. When I arrived to Barcelona in 2018 for an extended period of fieldwork I was able to reach out to those prior contacts. I employed a snowball methodology and in this way my initial contacts had some influence over the direction of the research. They suggested people to speak with and sometimes facilitated meetings by making personal introductions. They also invited me to attend and participate in various events and activities. I also

reached out to people by email or through social media that I had no previous contact with. I usually spoke or met with someone once informally before conducting an interview. Sometimes those initial conversations were among the most interesting. Through this process I gradually came to focus on the activities of a particular group of practitioners and activists with whom I spent the majority of my fieldwork. These were the members of the tech cooperative FemProcomuns and commons activists participating in the process of the WSFTE.

Members of FemProcomuns and other commons and solidarity economy actors were involved in leading La Comunificadora, an incubator programme dedicated to local commons projects and supported by the city council. Members were also activists and involved in supporting collaborations between local and international commons projects as part of the Barcelona Commons axis within the process of the WSFTE. This group was ideal for this research project precisely because of the ways in which they were active at the local level at the interface between commons projects and public institutions, and active in transnational movements processes linking local commons projects with commons activists and projects internationally. In general I found most correspondents were receptive, open and willing to speak about their experience, perspective and interest in the commons. I believe that my background also had something to do with this. I have considered this research project as a kind of engaged or activist anthropology (Maeckelbergh 2009; Low and Merry 2010; Ortner 2019). While I am not from Barcelona, the people I met considered me as a fellow traveller that shared their interests. I took seriously their assertions that their practices constituted a kind of politics, ways of critiquing and contesting prevailing power structures. I was motivated to undertake this research project to advance by own critical understanding of how the commons as a political subject, to learn from the experience of Barcelona and contribute in my own way to the advancement of activist knowledge on the subject.

Some might consider engaged approaches as biased, subjective or ideological, but as Ortner (2019) points out those that do engaged research

are simply making their biases explicit. When conducting fieldwork and participant observation I was inevitably a part of the social world of participants. I maintained a critical perspective and a commitment to understanding the details of their social world. However, I do not pretend to be removed from it. Indeed, my active participation in the meetings and events of the commons working group for the WSFTE was critical to gaining the trust of research participants. In general, interviewees spoke in a personal capacity rather than as representatives of institutions or organisations. The research project documents public processes of participatory policy-making, the work of cooperative organisations and activist projects. Research participants were informed of the option to speak anonymously. However, all were comfortable speaking in a personal capacity about their experience. After agreeing to be interviewed under their own name, interviewees were reminded that they could speak off the record, which they occasionally did. In some cases I communicated with correspondents regarding particular quotations and made minor amendments with their consent. For these reasons the names of organisations and of interviewees in this thesis are real names.

In this research project I employed the methods of a multi-sited ethnography (Marcus 1995; Juris 2008). Multi-sited ethnography "moves out from the single sites and locations of conventional ethnographic research designs to examine the circulation of cultural meanings, objects, and identities in diffuse time-space" (Marcus 1995, 96). This method involved two tracking strategies. The first strategy involved following the activists, conducting participant observation by joining them at over fifty meetings and numerous other events. While the focus of the research project was geographically centred in the city of Barcelona, the events and meetings I attended were spread across changing locations throughout the city. I travelled with activists to France as they participated in the activities of European activist networks in preparation for the WSFTE. I also consider online meetings and events as field sites and I regularly conducted participant observation by remotely connecting with activists online. It is in this sense that this was a

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multi-sited ethnographic investigation. The second strategy involved tracking activist activities and discourse. Contemporary documentation was essential to this investigation. Analysis included newspaper, journalistic and scholarly articles by local activists and researchers, the reading of official government publications and reports, the collection and analysis of promotional materials from events. A substantial part of my fieldwork was spent with informants deeply engaged with the politics of technology. Anthropologist Chris Kelty has pointed out that geeks "like to tell and, more important, like to archive", creating "web pages, definitions, encyclopedia entries, dictionaries, and mini-histories" documenting their activities (Kelty 2008, 114). This makes for a "very peculiar and specific kind of fieldsite: one in which a kind of 'as-it-happens' ethnographic observation is possible not only through 'being there' in the moment but also by being there in the massive, proliferating archives of moments past" (Kelty 2008, 115).

The groups I worked with documented their activities in great detail. The documentary process and production of activist knowledge was central to their practice. I adopted digital ethnographic and research methods (Pink et al. 2016) and tracked activist communications and knowledge production through a range of publicly accessible digital media, paying attention to self-published materials on project websites, wikis, collaborative notepads (Etherpads), social media accounts, mailing lists, chat rooms, audiovisual recordings of online and in person events, and making use of Internet archival resources. These two tracking strategies were complementary, with each leading to insights that would enrich the other. For example, an attention to contemporary documentation, secondary sources and activist communications brought to my attention events both past and present that informed the direction of fieldwork and interviews. Postill, drawing on the work of Sewell, points to three temporalities that characterise processes of social change and historical transformations, these are events, trends and routines.

> The work of historian and social theorist William H. Sewell argues
> that historical transformations always display 'many different social

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processes with varying temporalities' (Sewell 2005, 273). Out of these various temporalities, he singles out three: events, trends and routines. For Sewell, events are not merely notable incidents but, rather, 'temporally concentrated sequences of actions that transform structures' (ibid., 273). By contrast, trends are those 'directional changes in social relations' that historians normally track with terms such as rise, fall, decline and proliferation (ibid., 273). Finally, routines are 'practical schemas that reproduce structures', whilst institutions are 'machines for the production and maintenance of routines' (ibid., 273). (Postill 2018, 170)

The research process began with my efforts to understand the confluence of actors participating in a process of participatory policy-making, during an event called Procomuns which took place in Barcelona in 2016. The event brought together social actors involved in commons projects and the cooperative and solidarity economy to discuss and propose public policies for the commons which were submitted to the city council as part of the participatory process for the municipal actions plan. The process was supported by a new digital platform for participatory democracy called Decidim. One of the outcomes of this process was the creation of an incubator for commons projects called La Comunificadora. The Procomuns event in 2016 represented a moment through which I could understand the various actors involved in the making of public policies for the commons, the relationships between them and the impacts and outcomes of these processes. Procomuns represented a place to start my research, but the process of convergence and collaboration between different actors had started before this and continued throughout the period of fieldwork. The significance of this convergence is recognisable not only in resulting local policy, but in the ways the practices of these different movements have informed each other and this is evidenced by concrete collaborative developments they undertook, some of which I document in this thesis. Members of the cooperative FemProcomuns also documented these processes on Teixidora, a project that uses collaborative pads as tools for the collaborative documentation of events, with notes saved and transferred to their wiki platform. This collaborative practice was also used to document

the organising of the commons working group in preparations for the WSFTE. Understanding the relationships between events, actors and projects required moving back and forth between fieldwork and the "proliferating archives of moments past" (Kelty 2008, 115). For this reason an attention to different temporalities has been critical to this research project. Through interviews and documentation I was able to reconstruct a chronology of events and to better understand the relations between actors in the field. This also informed the structure of the thesis.

Structure of the thesis

The thesis is structured into three parts and is intended to reflect at least in some degree the chronological progress of events. The first part of the thesis sets out the academic approach. The second part looks at the development of the solidarity economy and the urban commons in Barcelona prior to 2015. The third part begins with the municipalist movement in 2015 and is followed by chapters on policies for the commons. The empirical and ethnographic chapters document commons activists as they participate in both institutional and social movement processes.

The purpose of chapter one has been to introduce my personal background, to give the reader a sense of how this informed my interest in the research topic, my relationship to actors in the field, and my research methodology. Chapter two has three major sections. It reviews the literature on the commons and my theoretical approach to the research topic. It begins by asking what it means to imagine the city as a commons followed by a consideration of practice theory and its relevance for understanding institutional change. The second section examines literature on the commons with a critical appreciation of the work of Elinor Ostrom. The third section presents anthropological approaches to the commons and summarises the approach to social movements adopted in this thesis. The second part of the thesis explores the development of the solidarity economy and the urban commons in Barcelona prior to 2015. Chapter three introduces the reader to the solidarity economy and the XES, the network of

solidarity economy of Catalonia, a key actor in the revitalisation of the cooperative movement in Barcelona and Catalonia. Chapter four explores the history of urban commons in Barcelona and the links between the squatting movement and institutional demands for community self-managed social and cultural centres. Chapters three and four cover important spaces for movement organising, and participants in these networks have been successful in mobilising and achieving favourable changes in municipal policy. These networks and spaces constitute part of a thriving solidarity economy in the city. Part three of the thesis turns to examine the programmes and policies advanced by Barcelona En Comú (Bcomú) to support the commons following their electoral success in 2015. Chapter five introduces municipalism and Bcomú, the citizens' platform. Chapter six and seven look at the programmes of the city's department for citizen participation. Chapter six examines Decidim, the digital platform that supported citizen participation in the development of the municipal action plan. Chapter seven focuses on Barcelona's urban commons policy. Chapter eight marks the transition to the more ethnographically informed part of the thesis. It looks at the creation of a new city council department to support the social and solidarity economy and how in partnership with local commons actors, public policies for digital commons also known as the commons collaborative economy, were co-produced in a participatory policy-making process. In my fieldwork, I worked closely with members of a tech cooperative, FemProcomuns, who operate at the intersection of the solidarity economy and the digital commons. FemProcomuns were among a group of organisations that benefited from these policies and with public support participated in the development and delivery of a commons incubator programme, La Comunificadora. Chapter nine, Worlding the Commons, looks at the ways in which these new commons oriented approaches to economy are translated and communicated through two very different events in which local actors participated; Sharing Cities, an international event whose primary audience was mayors and public officials with an interest in policies for the sharing economy; and The World Social

Forum of Transformative Economies, an event in which local activists collaborated with international movements and networks to share experience, identify common ground, and build a political agenda. The thesis concludes in chapter ten with a reflection on the achievements of these actors and movements for the commons in Barcelona. It considers these developments as a social movement project, analysing strategic lessons for activists and social movements engaged in municipalist projects, struggles for the right to the city and in re-imagining and making the city as a commons.

Chapter 2. Theoretical Approach

What does it mean to imagine the city as a commons?

What does it mean to imagine the city as a commons? What kinds of cultural, social, political, historic factors, material and ideological, lend themselves to such imaginings, or make the possibility of imagining the city as a commons, not simply an idealistic or abstract pursuit but something tangible, such that the realisation of that imaginary is pursued through concrete projects, politics and policies, that support of a variety of commons, urban and digital. How does the idea of the commons fit with and respond to the already existing material experience and concrete needs of people and place. How does it come to figure as part of the possibilities of their social world, within their social imaginary? I adopt the term social imaginary from the work of anthropologist Chris Kelty (2008) and Charles Taylor (2004). Drawing on Anderson's *Imagined Communities* (1991), as well as Habermas (1989) and Warner (1990) on the public sphere, Taylor describes the social imaginary as follows:

> By social imaginary, I mean something much broader and deeper than the intellectual schemes people may entertain when they think about social reality in a disengaged mode. I am thinking, rather, of the ways people imagine their social existence, how they fit together with others, how things go on between them and their fellows, the expectations that are normally met, and the deeper normative notions and images that underlie these expectations. (Taylor 2004, 23)

Taylor goes on to distinguish between social imaginary and social theory. He argues that "theory is often the possession of a small minority" (2004, 23), whereas a social imaginary involves a larger group of people, and "is often not expressed in theoretical terms, but is carried in images, stories, and legends" (2004, 23). The social imaginary "is that common understanding that makes possible common practices and a widely shared sense of legitimacy" (2004, 23). A social imaginary is constituted by particular publics. It is public because it is not exclusively bound to any single

institution, rather, the objects of a social imaginary can be subject to popular debate and discussion, located in particular places and circulated through different media.

In this thesis I was interested in how the subject of the commons came to figure within the imaginary of social movements in Barcelona. While many activists take inspiration from social theory, I argue that there is more going on. Imagining the transformative possibilities of a city is also about how a city's people imagine themselves and their capacities to change it, something that is always informed by particular social experiences and histories. That city life in Barcelona could be organised in radically different ways is not beyond imagination. After all, life in the city has been radically transformed before. During the Spanish Civil War working class anarchists and socialists radically transformed many areas of social and economic life, collectively and democratically organising everything, from farms and factories, to theatres and public transport. The institutions and traditions of the working class were severely repressed after the war. Yet the courageous anti-fascist resistance of that generation and their commitment to an anti-authoritarian, radically democratic and egalitarian social vision remains a powerful legacy. The struggle to dignify that historical memory continues today and takes different forms. The manifestations of that legacy are not the subject of this thesis. While some of the people I met in the course of fieldwork referred to it, the local histories of collective action most correspondents drew upon are more recent. The tradition of neighbourhood organising with powerful movements emerging during and following Spain's transition to democracy in the 70s and 80s, the squatting movement from the 80s and 90s through to the 2000s, and most recently 15M, which saw the occupation of town and city squares across Spain in 2011. Radical and direct democratic practices and an emphasis on collective autonomy and self-organisation are very much a part of the political culture of contemporary Spanish and Catalan social movements (Flesher Fominaya 2020). The language of the commons, the histories it evokes and its use in contemporary technological domains, lends it to fit and dialogue with pre-

existing cultural and political identities and forms of association that have longer histories.

The stories of what people are capable of when they organise collectively are not only bound up with more popularly known historic events and protests, but are also embodied in institutional forms, in sites of community resistance. Those "images, stories, and legends" (Taylor 2004, 23) of collective action circulate and evolve as they are adapted to changing social and political contexts, lending legitimacy and inspiring collective projects of social change. The long cycles of social movement mobilisation are made up of spectacular moments of mobilisation and popular protest but also periods of consolidation and institutionalisation. This thesis focuses on the latter.

The City as a Commons

In recent decades the concept of the urban commons has come to inform alternative urban imaginaries. Scholars of urban studies specialising in governance, law and policy, Christian Iaione and Sheila Foster set out their vision for *The City As A Commons* in 2015 (Foster & Iaione 2015). The city as a commons is imagined as a collaborative, participatory, inclusive and humanistic alternative to technocratic visions of the smart city. In the Right to the Co-City, Iaione (2017) identifies three dominant urban visions, the "city as a market place, the smart city, the eco-city" and posits an emergent fourth, the co-city.

> The co-city paradigm understands the city as a commons which is a metaphor to describe the morphology of the city as an infrastructure that enables collective action. The co-city relies heavily upon the social paradigm of collaborating, sharing, cooperating and therefore represents a shift from the paradigm where competition is dominant. (Iaione 2017)

Iaione identifies two rights-based visions of the city inspired by the commons. Rebel cities "which prefer a conflict-based approach" and collaborative cities "which advance a governance-based vision" (Iaione 2017). Iaione's work in Italy is exemplary of the governance-based

approach. The two examples of rebel cities he presents are Naples and Barcelona. In both of these cases social movements have been instrumental in the development of policies for the commons.

The rebel city is of course a reference to the writing of David Harvey (2012), which is itself inspired and associated with Henri Lefebvre's concept of *the right to the city* (Lefebvre 1996). To claim the right to the city is not simply to make and defend claims on existing legal rights, rather it is the assertion of popular rights, of collective or social forms of legitimacy. Social struggles in defence of collective urban life are not necessarily concerned with the expansion or creation of legal rights. While Marx theorised the advance of modes of production through time, Lefebvre adapted Marx's method of dialectical materialism towards theorising the production of space. Lefebvre's right to the city is inseparable from his theorisation of urban space. For Lefebvre, the production of urban space is the product of struggles that emerge as conflicts between what he terms social space and abstract space, between the city known and lived through the collective and social experience of everyday life, and the city as the subject of hierarchical power, of planners, politicians and commercial interests. Lefebvre believed in the creative agency and capacities of ordinary people to collectively address everyday challenges, to recognise problems and find solutions. To claim the right to the city is to collectively assert the rule of use over that of exchange and this, for Lefebvre was integral to class struggle.

> Among these rights in the making features the right to the city (not to the ancient city, but to urban life, to renewed centrality, to places of encounter and exchange, to life rhythms and time uses, enabling the full and complete usage of these moments and places, etc.). The proclamation and realization of urban life as the rule of use (of exchange and encounter disengaged from exchange value) insist on the mastery of the economic (of exchange value, the market, and commodities) and consequently is inscribed within the perspectives of the revolution under the hegemony of the working class. (Lefebvre 1996, 179)

The making of the city as a commons can be enacted in many ways. From below, through social struggles led by the inhabitants and citizens of cities, or from above, from privileged civic or economic actors and public administration. It is critical to ask who gets to imagine the city as a commons? What assemblages and networks of people, communities, activists, social movements, politicians and civic organisations make such projects possible? What conditions of possibility, what social, institutional, historical and cultural factors lend themselves to imagining the city as a commons?

Bodirsky (2018) notes that the commons are an "eminently anthropological topic", however while anthropologists have played an important role in the study of traditional commons or natural resource commons, "more recent perspectives on the commons have made surprisingly few inroads into our discipline" (Bodirsky 2018). Exceptions to this can be found in the anthropological journal Focaal, in a 2013 forum on *Forging the urban commons* (Susser & Tonnelat 2013) and a 2017 thematic section *Exploring the urban commons* (Susser 2017a; 2017b). Citing examples from New York, Paris and Barcelona, Anthropologist Ida Susser has argued that "Commoning and the battle for the urban commons can be seen as global" (Susser 2017a; 2017b). Building on the work of Lefebvre (1968) and others (Purcell 2002; Stanek 2011), Susser identifies three urban commons which when brought together "set the conditions for a renewed right to the city" (Susser & Tonnelat 2013) and argues that practices of commoning could inform the development of a new political bloc (Susser 2017b; Gramsci 1971).

For Lefebvre the politics of urban space is shaped by conflicts between the interests of those who experience, know and understand the city as a thoroughly social space of everyday life and those that understand and experience the city as an abstract space, an object for economic development or urban planning. The politics of urban space is therefore inseparable from a politics of knowledge production. At the same time, resources and capacities to access, produce, share, mobilise or employ

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knowledge are highly unequal. The question then is what kinds of knowledge are privileged and prioritised in the city?

The anthropological literature tends to approach the commons from an urban perspective, a politics of space. Exemplified in the squatters movement and movements to reclaim public space. In the case of Barcelona it is clear that movement discourses on the commons are also informed by a politics of knowledge as in techno-political and free culture activism. I argue that in the case of Barcelona the urban and digital are not distinct social worlds and that the commons has figured as a bridging concept that has facilitated alliances and convergence within the municipalist movement. This thesis inquires into how transformations in the politics of knowledge production, of techno-politics, inform the transformation of urban politics, the politics of space.

Researching and writing this thesis I sought out social and anthropological theory that could make sense of the contemporary commons. This theoretical chapter is intended to contribute to bridging a dialogue between different literatures and to advancing anthropological approaches to the study of commons, its various expressions, forms and practices. The chapter is divided into three major sections that correspond with three different literatures. For Harvey (1989, 211-225) and Lefebvre, the study of emergent social practices that inform social struggles is an essential component for analysis of cities and social transformation. For this reason the first section focuses on practice theory, and considers the relationship between social practices and institutions. The second reviews the dominant institutional approach to the commons associated with the work of Elinor Ostrom. In the third section I engage with the literature on social movements. The chapter concludes by bringing elements from these three different literatures into dialogue as a means to better understand how the commons and practices of commoning come to figure as a political subject in the transformative imaginaries of social movements.

Practices and institutions

The theoretical approach adopted in this thesis follows Postill and asserts that social practices are a critical lens through which to understand the evolution of the complex social worlds. An Anthropological approach should be capable of identifying how social practices come to inform what Ostrom (1990) writing on the commons calls "The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action". Anthropologists have had a productive engagement with practice theory and developed a valuable set of conceptual and analytical tools useful for documenting and understanding practices of commoning (Ortner 1984; 2006; Bräuchler & Postill 2010).

The development of new social practices is accompanied and modified by new forms of association, contestation and institutionalisation. Postill argues that the current phase of encounter between the worlds of techno-politics and social protest has a number of sub-trends "population growth, diversification and institutionalisation" (Postill 2018, 173). This research project examines processes of institutionalisation. How then are we to understand the ways in which these social practices inform the transformation of institutions?

When we direct our attention to what Sewell calls routines, it is fitting that Postill adopts the more commonly used term "practices" (Postill 2018, 178). Sewell (2005, 273) defines routines or practices as "practical schemas that reproduce structures" and considers institutions as "machines for the production and maintenance of routines". I want to take this characterisation of institutions as machines and extend the analogy. Institutions are codified social systems, they are a kind of social technology aimed at the regulation, maintenance and reproduction of certain practices. I suggest that it is useful to also consider technological platforms as social structures and institutions. Rather than being regulated primarily by laws and regulations, social relations among Internet users are also regulated by code. In a sense code has regulatory effects, as one of the founders of Creative Commons, legal scholar Lawrence Lessig put it "Code is law"(Lessig 2000). Just as social practices inform the creation of social structures or institutions, the practices

of technologists inform the development of technological infrastructures that regulate and structure social relations in the digital age. This first section on practice theory explores the relationship between practices and institutions. It argues that institutions are produced through practices, but also that institutionalising practices is a means to protect and extend practices through time. Processes of institutionalisation can then be considered as adaptive strategies. I follow this with an illustration of examples of institutionalisation as adaptive strategies among technologists and techno-political actors.

Practice Theory

For Pink et al. (2016, 42) scholars of practice theory are interested in "human actions and the rules, structures and processes that underpin what people say and do". Practice theory encompasses a broad literature, but it is most commonly associated with the work of sociologists Pierre Bourdieu and Anthony Giddens, as well as Elizabeth Shove and Theodore Schatzki. One of the aims of practice theory has been to overcome the sociological dualism of agency and structure. Practice is where agency and structure meet. While social structures both constrain and enable human action, they are not static, they are subject to change. Social systems, including institutions are effects, recursively produced through practices. "Structures shape people's practices, but it is also people's practices that constitute (and reproduce) structures" (Sewell 1992). Practices are social in that they involve processes of learning. They involve complex repertoires of thought and action, they are not made up solely of unconscious habitual routines, nor are they simply the conscious following of norms or rules by knowledgeable actors. The kinds of knowledge embodied and expressed through practices involves both to varying degrees.

Sewell (1992) has made important contributions to practice theory in formulating a critique and synthesis of Bourdieu and Giddens. Sewell does away with Giddens' distinction between rules and resources. While things have a material existence they come to be defined as resources through

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social and cultural processes. What defines resources are social rules or norms of one sort or another. What constitutes a sacred lake to one group might be seen and treated by others simply as a material resource 'water' valued only in instrumental terms. These cultural understandings imply very different dispositions towards how persons should or should not act in the world. Many social struggles are over who has a say in how things come to be socially defined. Should housing be treated as a public good or a commodity? Should publicly funded medical and scientific research be put in the service of private profit or made a common good during a global pandemic? Movements and social struggles for commons are also about the social definition or redefinition of various things, social space, creative works or nature for example.

Sewell (1992) prefers to speak of "schemas" or "cultural schemas" rather than rules. Drawing on Bourdieu's theory of practice, there are conceptual similarities between Sewell's concept of cultural schemas and Bourdieu's habitus. Sewell's approach is intended to account for greater degrees of agency and change. Practices are inevitably informed by a variety of cultural schemas. Cultural schemas are multi-sensory frames of understanding through which experience is interpreted or made sense of. They involve different kinds of knowing or understandings which operate at different levels. These can include the deep inherited or taken for granted assumptions we hold about our social world, an affinity with everyday gestures and language, humour, metaphors and turns of phrase. These kinds of understanding can also find more formal cultural and symbolic expression in everything from art to the legislation that constitute our political institutions. Some schemas are reinforced even naturalised through processes of institutionalisation and some are more amenable to change than others but change they can and change they do. For Sewell the forms or social structures through which cultural schemas find expression, whether they are 'resources' or 'institutions', they must in some way empower, and be self-affirming or legitimating in order for the logics of those practices and schemas to be reproduced.

> If resources are effects of schemas, it is also true that schemas are
> effects of resources. If schemas are to be sustained or reproduced over time-
> and without sustained reproduction they could hardly be counted as
> structural-they must be validated by the accumulation of resources that their
> enactment engenders. Schemas not empowered or regenerated by resources
> would eventually be abandoned and forgotten, just as resources without
> cultural schemas to direct their use would eventually dissipate and decay.
> Sets of schemas and resources may properly be said to constitute structures
> only when they mutually imply and sustain each other over time. (Sewell
> 1992, 13)

In the case of free software development, the benefits of the practice of
sharing code are obvious to technologists, access to code provides a
mechanism to learn from the work of others, open code also means that
technologists do not have to constantly reinvent the wheel, they can freely
adapt and build on the work of others, it is in this sense that the practice is
self-affirming and legitimating.

When I write about institutionalisation this is not strictly with reference to
the encounter between practices and political institutions, as in a process of
political institutionalisation. Institutionalisation of practices is a process
whereby practices are established to the extent that they inform how
practitioners think about institutions in general. Practices and cultural
schemas are mobile, they migrate and move with practitioners, they are
generalizable or transposable, that is to say "they can be applied to a wide
and not fully predictable range of cases outside the context in which they are
initially learned" (Sewell 1992). This can have a critical aspect and a
creative aspect. New practices do not always easily fit with established ways
of doing things. On the one hand, practitioners could develop a critique of
established institutions informed by the logics of their practice. On the
other, practitioners might imagine and experiment with the creation of new
institutional forms. In this latter case practices come to influence and shape
the formal aspects of institutions and are codified in the organisational
mission, rules of governance or in the definition of rights and
responsibilities of constituents. This is a kind of institutional bricolage

(Douglas 1986, 66) aimed at re-organising social relations towards structurally securing and maintaining social practices and the social values which they are considered to embody through time.

Institutions are not static, they are subject to change and while they might come to represent certain values and practices, and play important roles in their reproduction, practices and institutions are neither equivalent nor bound. Postill (2018, 179) makes a useful distinction between institutionalised -established- and non-institutionalised -transient- practices. He illustrates this difference by highlighting how through repetition, routine practices can become institutionalised over time whereas practices that emerge during moments of social protest may be temporary and transient in nature, disappearing after events have passed.

Practices are not bound to institutions and so when considering their development it is important not to mistake their institutional representations as definitive. There are usually differences between what people say they are doing, what they aspire or intend to do and what they actually do. Likewise, stated values and principles of institutions can easily become empty of significance without practitioners committed to embodying those values in practice. For example, the rights hard won through social struggles of previous generations can be taken for granted and lost by present and future generations.

The articulation of practices and their formal explication in the creation or change of institutions involves elements of creativity, agency and experiment. There is as such a dynamic duality, a dialectic between agency and structure through which relations of power are configured. Processes of explication are always social, articulated in particular social, cultural and historic contexts and moments, and as such these are also dialogical processes (Taylor 1993), of sense making or figuring out (Kelty 2008, 02).

If we consider institutionalisation as, in part, a means to protect or extend practices we must also consider that practices precede the need for their formal explication (Taylor 1993). For Kelty (2008, 180) practices can exist

prior to the need for their defence. Contexts which call for the defence of practices can set the terms of argument and function as a catalyst for their formal explication. The practice of sharing software code existed before free software licences were created to protect those practices. Practices of sharing online also take many forms. A study of the free culture movement for example would only be partial if it focused on creative commons licensed works alone, ignoring the vast domains of file sharing deemed illegal 'piracy'. From a purely technical perspective there is no substantial difference in either cases, it is simply a matter of making digital copies of data. The boundaries of the kinds of sharing that are permitted are not technical but legal. The policing of online sharing is only as effective as technology permits and there are many ways to circumvent it. Vast amounts of digital culture are produced and circulated with little regard to legal norms. It would be futile to pursue copyright claims over images that take on a life of their own, that upon entering into culture circulation evolve through endless remixing as popular memes.

What is practically or technically possible and what is legally possible are different things. There are always gaps between what is materially, technically and socially possible, and what is of commercial or political interest. Capacity to realise social and technological potentials almost always rely on contingent alliances. In these gaps there is a vast array of possibilities and potentials, good and bad which constitute the social imaginaries of such moments. There is also a temporal gap between the development of new practices and the response from established powers. New practices, new ways of thinking, and new social norms about the production and circulation of knowledge and culture have also come into conflict with established commercial interests, legal norms and political institutions. Practitioners can experience these responses as a form of unjust criminalisation of an emergent culture in favour of established powers. There are differing conceptions of what is legitimate or just action. Technical, legal or political means might also be employed to instrumentalise, subsume and subordinate emergent social practices to the

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needs of commercial interests as is the case with most social media. The powerful interests of capital and state also work to criminalise file sharing and other forms of knowledge sharing.

A recent example is the blocking of the website Sci-hub in the UK where academic publishers have acquired a court order that requires Internet Service Providers to block access to the site (Maxwell 2021). Scientific research and most major academic journals have historically been subscription services, kept behind paywalls, limited to those with access to university libraries or the personal or professional means to afford it. It is often the case that even when researchers do have access to university libraries, the cost of subscriptions mean that libraries have a limited number of journals. Sci-hub is a pirate library and it does for scientific research what The Pirate Bay did for popular media and file sharing (Sci-hub 2021). It makes academic and scientific research and journals easily accessible to the general public at no cost. Is this piracy or contestation of the boundaries between commerce and commons? For free culture activists, such as Aaron Swartz, author of *The Guerilla Open Access Manifesto*, there is no equivalence between sharing knowledge and "plundering a ship and murdering its crew", "sharing isn't immoral — it's a moral imperative" (Swartz 2008).

Strategies

Postill (2018, 170) proposes three phases in the evolution of nerd politics, an early period from 1981 to 1995, a consolidation from 1996-2009 and an engagement with social protests and institutional politics from 2009 to the present. These three phases also correlate with the development of adaptive strategies by technologists aimed at defending, and extending their practices through either technical innovation or some form of institutionalisation. Strategies evolve over time and each phase has led to new forms of institutionalisation followed by an expansion and diffusion of these practical logics to broader domains. The three phases I summarise are, from Free Software to Creative Commons, from File Sharing to Piracy, and from the

Internet to the institutions. The adaptive strategies are, technical, legal and political -

- Technical means are often sufficient to protect and extend practices for example through the development of privacy focused or decentralised applications that are capable of circumventing and resisting the regulation or censorship of states. This is in many ways the preferred option for technologists.

- Legal means such as the development of copyleft, or free software licences and civic institutions to advocate and fight legal battles to protect them.

- Political protest, on or offline aimed at contesting the introduction of laws or policies, represent a more direct confrontation with states. Engaging with electoral politics, by advocacy, from within established parties or through the creation of new parties.

The brief review that follows highlights relevant historical developments with reference to the various strategies employed and processes of institutionalisation in each of the three phases.

From Free Software to Creative Commons

The introduction of a new technology, the general purpose computer, was accompanied by the emergence of new socio-technical practices, software coding and development. As well as a new class of specialists, software coders, developers and hackers. In his Anthropology of the free software movement *Two Bits*, Kelty (2008) documents the contingent historical development of the practice of sharing source code among computer engineers, hackers and geeks. The idea that software code should be openly shared enabling users to, identify bugs, patch, modify and learn from the code of others has a long history. AT&T was one of the first companies to distribute source code for the operating system UNIX, which it shipped along with the hardware it sold. From the mid-1970s it became possible to copyright software and this saw companies introduce restrictive software licences. By the 80s many companies were no longer distributing source

code preferring to distribute compiled executables of the software applications they were selling. In response to this trend software developer Richard Stallman started the GNU (GNU's Not Unix!) project in 1983 and founded the Free Software Foundation in 1995. Stallman is famous for his 'hack' of copyright (Kelty 2008, 179), creating the alternative 'copyleft' free software licence which today is known as the GNU General Public Licence (GPL). The GPL is designed to guarantee users rights to read, modify and share code provided that any modifications are also shared with the licence. The popularity of the licence and free software were a catalyst for development of the Linux operating system on which most of the world's Internet servers operate today.

The development of free software licences are often explained as a response to attempts at commercialisation, "expanding intellectual-property laws and resistance to rapacious corporations" (Kelty 2008, 180). While over the last 30 years norms of sharing among programmers have developed into a "seemingly natural practice" (Kelty 2008, 119) they are by no means such. The "ideas of sharing and of common property and its relation to freedom must always be produced through specific practices of sharing, before being defended" (Kelty 2008, 180). Contrary to the programmers adage that "information wants to be free", Kelty argues:

> sharing produces its own kind of moral and technical order, that is, 'information makes people want freedom' and how they want it is related to how that information is created and circulated (Kelty 2008, 118)

To describe these processes of creation and circulation, that characterise the social worlds of free software activists, Kelty develops the concept of recursive publics, which like Taylor's concept of public sphere (2004) involves a kind of social imaginary (Kelty 2008, 39).

> A recursive public is a public that is vitally concerned with the material and practical maintenance and modification of the technical, legal, practical, and conceptual means of its own existence as a public; it is a collective independent of other forms of constituted power and is capable of speaking to existing forms of power through the production of actually

existing alternatives. (Kelty 2008, 3)

The object around which software developer communities organise, the software they develop, is not only a discursive subject but, in the case of the internet, it can often be the very technical infrastructure, the operating systems, servers, mailing lists, web platforms on which those communities depend. Access to the code, and the technical and political arrangements that ensure that access is seen as critical to the continuity of these communities. Free software licences guarantee that access. Without open code the discursive and productive processes which bring these communities together would not be possible. For this reason, copyright issues have been central and form part of the contentious politics of geek and hacker culture (Tilly 2007; Coleman 2013). These licences protect a commons of code around which communities of developers grow, these commons continue to grow in a virtuous cycle as coders contribute to them.

As Kelty points out social practices exist prior to the need for their defence (Kelty 2008, 180). The creation of the Free Software Licence, and later the Free Software Foundation, represent two pivotal moments in a process of institutionalisation, aimed at protecting those social practices, first by means of a creative hack of copyright law and then through the creation of an institution to advocate and defend the values they represent.

Kelty says that from around 1998, "Free Software emerged from a happily subterranean and obscure existence" (2008, 1). Since then, the practices of this movement which "seem to violate economic logic and the principles of private ownership and individual autonomy" (.ibid), have come to inspire millions of people around the world and not only in the domain of software. This open approach and attitude towards the practice of sharing knowledge, was soon extended to other domains. Inspired by the Free Software movement, the Creative Commons foundation was established in 2001 and followed shortly after by the development of a suite of Creative Commons Licences published in 2002. These licences have seen worldwide adoption, across a range of domains, from culture, music and art, the open science and open access movements in academia, and support more open and

transparent government with open data. New specialised licences also continue to be developed. The Creative Commons Licence is part of what makes projects such as Wikipedia possible. For Kelty, while not necessarily being about coding, these other domains can be considered recursive publics (2008, 3) since they share similar practices. The value of the practice of sharing and contributing to these open access knowledge commons is self-evident. While a single individual might only make a small contribution of their time and knowledge, they benefit from having access to the creative work of millions.

The development of the Free Software Licence and Free Software Foundation, were in part to defend the practice of sharing code, however the licence inspired an extension of the logics of those practices to other domains, accelerated by the development of Creative Commons which was a catalyst for the broader free culture movement. This legal strategy protected and extended those practices, but it also enabled the development of new collaborative modes of peer production which build on commons of code and culture.

From File Sharing to Piracy

Gabriella Coleman's (2011, 512) distinction between geeks and hackers is useful. While the realm of coding is very much the domain of technically literate software developers and hackers, Internet culture is also shaped by the practices of digital media literate geeks. Geeks may not know how to code, but they have other skills and nevertheless find their way around platforms and share online social worlds with hackers. The free culture movement involved both. While hackers used Free Software Licences, Geeks could make use of Creative Commons Licences for multimedia creative works. But copyleft licences are only one aspect of the online culture of sharing, which can also include the file sharing of a variety of other media, including music, movies, books, games and proprietary software. The technical means which make practices of collaborative productions or peer production possible, enable sharing more generally.

With this in mind, we should consider the conflict over file sharing or 'internet piracy' and the development of new licences and institutions such as Creative Commons as two expressions of the social transformation taking place. The free culture movement encompassed both critique of established ways in which knowledge and culture are produced and circulated in society, and the creative development of alternatives. In the former hackers employ creative technical solutions and strategies that enable people to share files easily online and circumvent government and corporate surveillance, in the latter legal solutions and strategies are developed for the sharing of newly created technical and cultural works.

Today many take for granted that media such as music, movies or television series are easily available either for free on sites like Youtube or to purchase from streaming sites such as iTunes, Netflix or Amazon Prime. Prior to the arrival of the Internet, access to large and specialist music or film collections was a privilege of those living in big cities with access to libraries and universities and those who could afford to purchase from specialist retailers.

The move from analogue to digital media was a kind of liberation, cultural goods were no longer materially scarce. As an example, my use or purchase of a CD prevents the simultaneous use of that medium by another, the material medium is in itself scarce, as is the money to purchase it. This is not true in the case of a digital file, where one user's download does not prevent another from accessing the same, indeed a perfect digital copy can be reproduced infinitely with no loss in quality, virtually free of charge, or at what economists call zero marginal cost (Rifkin 2014).

My own earliest memories of the pre World Wide Web Internet are of searching for lyrics and accompanying chords learning to play the guitar. Of course, no one was asking permission to publish these online. Bandwidth on the early dial-up Internet largely limited file sharing to text and images. The introduction of broadband changed that. From 1999, Napster enabled the peer to peer (P2P) file sharing of music. It was soon followed by a range of other P2P file sharing applications such as Gnutella, eDonkey2000 and BitTorrent. These P2P file sharing applications soon ran into legal trouble

with the music, and later, the film industry.

It is true that file sharing for many is simply a convenient way to download the latest music and movies, but there is more to it than just a free for all. File sharing also enabled free access to peer curated libraries of media and culture, which for legal, monetary and geographic reasons people would not otherwise have access to. These vast digital archives include out of print or hard to find books and musical recordings, rare recordings of television series, educational documentaries, even private collections of art (UbuWeb 2021). Access to culture is a prerequisite for participation in culture.

Nevertheless, these events kicked off what has been an ongoing decades-long battle between technologists and established industries in music, film, publishing, and proprietary software. Copyright has been central to these debates, just as its modification in copyleft was central to the collaborative productive practices of technologists. The music and film industry called on governments to force internet service providers to police the otherwise private communications of their customers. This idea that under the direction of states at the behest of the music and film industries, ISPs would be required by law to implement surveillance of customers' private communications was abhorrent to the libertarian spirit of technologists and was met with resistance. Copyright accompanied by corporate and government sponsored surveillance and prosecution of internet users was by many considered a barrier to participation, an attack on an emergent culture and an unprecedented invasion of privacy.

Where platforms like Napster could be shut down, a new technology, Bittorrent offered a new means for Internet users to share online. Probably the highest profile public case was that of The Pirate Bay. What was special about The Pirate Bay is that it was led by young people who identified what they were doing as a kind of activism in defence of digital file sharing culture. Internet users and file sharers had been labelled pirates by the music and movie industries; the activists from The Pirate Bay playfully embraced the title. The Pirate Bay never hosted copyrighted works, it simply allowed Internet users to post and indexed BitTorrent files which effectively contain

links which enable internet users to connect with each other in a peer to peer network. The Pirate Bay itself could not be directly accused of infringing copyright. Though this argument did not hold up for long since they were accused of enabling illegal activities. The Pirate Bay website was also hosted on web servers in Sweden, and as such was subject to Swedish law. This complicated issues for the largely US based Music and Movie Industries who were pursuing legal actions against them. After a massive campaign of lobbying, one government after another began to block internet access to The Pirate Bay and other file sharing sites, but it was a game of whack a mole. For every domain that was blocked, ten proxy domains with mirrors of the site appeared and could be easily found through a simple web search. Even Google got in on the action and has worked with the corporate music and movie industries to remove links to file sharing sites from its search results.

Following lobbying and political pressure from the entertainment industry The Pirate Bay was raided by Swedish police in 2006. Charges were filed against the activists in 2008. They were eventually convicted in 2009 and served prison sentences. The high profile case was accompanied by social protest in support of The Pirate Bay. The websites of industry lobbying groups involved in the case were also targeted by hackers. Ten years on people continue to file share. The website along with many others is still online today and even in countries where it has been blocked it remains accessible through numerous proxy sites.

Activists from The Pirate Bay also attended and took part in the Free Culture Forum in Barcelona in 2009. The example of The Pirate Bay is intended to illustrate how geeks and technologists employ technical strategies to maintain and defend their practices of file sharing, circumventing corporate and government regulation, through the development of technologies such as BitTorrent or through the use of proxy sites. Many technologists consider the development and use of distributed and decentralised, peer to peer technologies as a means of extending and exercising their rights to privacy and personal autonomy.

From the Internet to the institutions

The online politics and struggles over file sharing linked technologists and their critiques of copyright with geeks and the broader public's concerns over privacy online. The raid on The Pirate Bay prompted supporter Rick Falkvinge to launch the Swedish Pirate Party in 2006 to campaign for copyright, patent and Internet privacy reforms. Over the following years, Pirate Parties sprang up in countries all over the world and heralded what Gerbaudo (2019) has termed the rise of the digital party. Wikileaks also launched in 2006 and in 2008 entered into the battles over online privacy, copyright and file sharing when they published a leaked discussion paper on the proposed Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement (ACTA). As Coleman notes "opposition was fierce" (2014, 89) and groups such as the Electronic Frontier Foundation, the Free Software Foundation, La Quadrature du Net, EDRI and the Pirate Parties were coming out against the trade agreement. Anonymous which started out with online and offline protests, pranks and hacks against the Church of Scientology had by 2010 turned its attention to ACTA (Coleman 2014, 89).

The third phase in the evolution of nerd politics, in which techpol activists turn to the worlds of social protest and political parties, is marked by a convergence among these actors in defence of Wikileaks following its November 2010 Cablegate release of over 250,000 US diplomatic cables (Postill 2018, 172). These events saw "this social world's rapid globalisation, enhanced visibility and media mainstreaming" (Postill 2018, 172). They were rapidly followed in 2011 by an explosion of protest and social unrest, the Arab Spring, the 15M movement and later Occupy Wall Street. Hackers and geeks, from groups such as Anonymous but also many other more localised collectives joined in these waves of demonstrations. Groups such as Telecomix provided dial up internet support to activists in Egypt and other countries when governments shut down Internet access (Madlena 2011). Members of Xnet and Hacktivistas joined in support of the 15M movements in Spain. These were without doubt turbulent and dramatic years with new events, demonstrations, hacks happening every other week,

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for a detailed review see Coleman (2014) and Postill (2018). In many ways, these events affirmed for techpol activists that they could play an important role among broader movements for social change. Their specialist knowledge and tools could be put to use in support of progressive causes, intervene in mainstream public discourse, and challenge authoritarian regimes.

15M and the Occupy movements embraced horizontalist direct democracy and organised through democratic assemblies but in the years that followed many who met in those squares began to turn their attention towards institutional politics and the creation of new political parties. Rubio-Pueyo (2017) describes what activists were calling an 'institutional assault' as being made of three parts. The first was led by techno-political activists such as Partido X. The second was the municipalist approach which was developed by movements in Barcelona, but there are examples from cities and towns across Spain. The third was the populist hypothesis led by Podemos.

In 2013, Partido X emerged from a group of activists associated with Xnet, one of the organisers of the Free Culture Forum. Partido X was directly inspired by the practices of hacker and digital culture. They saw these as means for democratic and political change and shared many features with the Pirate Parties. They were also a kind of laboratory, experimenting with new ways of organising. They even adopted technical language from the free software operating system Linux such as 'kernel' to describe their organising structure (Postill 2018, 151). Podemos was also founded in 2014 but was not associated with the techno-political movements. Both parties ran candidates in the 2014 European Elections. Partido X achieved over 100,000 votes but did not win any seats. Podemos won 5 seats in the European Parliament.

While Podemos focused on national and regional level politics, the municipalist confluence was being built in towns and cities all over Spain. Guanyem (We win) the group that would later become Bcomú was launched within a month of the European elections and went on to win the 2015

municipal elections, and make long time anti-eviction and housing activist Ada Colau the first woman to become the Mayor of Barcelona.

Since the transition to democracy Spain's political institutions have been dominated by a two party system shared between the Partido Socialista Obrero Español (PSOE; Spanish Socialist Workers' Party) and the Partido Popular (PP; People's Party). The impacts of this wave of political mobilisation were huge. For the first time in forty years a wave of new parties were governing in towns and cities across the country, with significant success by Ahora Madrid in the capital and Bcomú in Barcelona. While the municipalist movements and Podemos were not explicitly digital parties with a digital agenda, techno-political activists did get involved and have had important roles in these movements, supporting internal party democracy through the development of participatory platforms, building out platforms for citizen participation, and contributing to policies for the digital commons and collaborative economies.

In the case of Bcomú, Javier Toret and Gala Pin had both been active in the free culture movement and associated with Xnet and the 15M. Gala Pin was not only involved with digital activism but had been, along with Ada Colau, active in the squatting movement, before becoming involved in the PAH (Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca; The Platform of People Affected by Mortgages). With Bcomú, Pin became the councillor for the city centre district of Ciutat Vella and the head of the city's department for citizen participation and direct democracy. This department was responsible for supporting the city's participatory democracy programmes and the development of Decidim, the online platform supporting citizen participation. The department also led a policy in support of the development of the urban commons in the city. Also connected with the free culture movement in the city were scholar activists, Mayo Fuster Morell and Joan Subirats, both of whom are active in working with Bcomú. Fuster Morell had a substantial role in supporting the development of policies for the collaborative economy. These are just a few of the more prominent names, but many more contributed to this collective re-visioning of the city

as a commons.

These three strategies, technical, legal and political, have evolved over time. Each might arise in and through different moments of contestation, the possibilities they afford have the effect of reinforcing practices, but this also extends the logics of those practices to new domains in a process of diffusion. For some the dream of a fully decentralised Internet is a technical goal which will overcome the unjust hierarchies of market and state. Technical innovations are for many the ideal solution where the codes that structure and organise social relations are fully in the hands of the people. Some working on the development of decentralised applications consider that better, more ethical design should be enough to convince others of the merits of their work, this takes for granted the power that network effects have in keeping users on corporate platforms and the vast institutional and economic power that the major tech companies hold. The adoption of privacy and people centred applications is often a personal ethical choice rather than a popular one. The value of the ethical option is not always apparent to the majority of people until moments of public controversy over corporate abuse. Other hackers adopt those same technical tools and risk prosecution, engaging in direct action against powerful political or corporate opponents. Wikileaks and Anonymous are examples of groups that have tried to change the system through direct action, whether by providing secure means for whistle-blowers to leak information about corrupt governments and corporations, or by directly hacking into government and corporate networks to retrieve and expose wrongdoing.

Legal tools such as licences extend the logics of these recursive publics to new domains, while licences like the GPL take an ethical and political stance on issues of user freedom, there is also a proliferation of other open source licences that while perhaps functionally similar position themselves as politically neutral and business friendly. These differences are for many in these communities political differences. While 'openness' has been extended to open science, open access, open government and so on, this openness does not necessarily translate into political alliance. There are

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many knowledge commons, responding to the different character and demands of their respective domains. Licences are legal technical instruments and besides their basic agreements, people will adopt them for purposes far removed from the politics from which they were constituted.

The Commons: Key Concepts

The idea of the commons has, over the past three decades, found a place in the imaginary of social movements. I argue that the commons has acted as a bridging concept, linking the social worlds of techpol activists and broader social movements and that this is the result of a number of interacting trends. These are, the increasing centrality of technological development in modern life, the emergence of alter/anti-globalisation movements and developmentalist discourses on the commons. I begin this second part of the chapter by summarising these trends. I then review key concepts and critical contributions to the study of the commons through an analysis of the work of Elinor Ostrom and critical responses to it. This is followed by an engagement with more recent critical anthropological literature on the commons. I conclude part two by adopting proposals from Bodirsky (2018).

Converging Trends

Technologists have a practical understanding of the limits and possibilities of communication technologies. As technology becomes increasingly central to modern life, technologists are looked to as authorities on its impacts on different social worlds. It should not be surprising that technologists access the difficulties or challenges of those social worlds through the lens of their own experience and practice, that is as technical or engineering problems or as problems arising from the social organisation of knowledge, issues critical to the social world of geeks and hackers. Knowledge and access to it, is central to the productive practices of geeks and hackers. Copyleft licences such as the GPL or the Creative Commons Licence have enabled the creation of a vast digital commons to guarantee access to creative works. These licences and sharing practices have expanded beyond the world of techies and have been applied in a range of

domains. Taken together these digital commons constitute a transformation in 'property relations' (Bodirsky 2018) as they relate to access to knowledge.

Developmentalist and Alter-globalisation Discourses on the Commons

The aforementioned technological trend is paralleled by the development of two prominent discourses and literatures on the commons. Castro-Coma and Martí-Costa (2020) summarise and contrast these two approaches. The first which I term developmentalist literature can be considered as liberal in the sense that it approaches commons as a type of resource or mode of governance which effectively co-exists with states and markets. The second is Marxist, and paralleled the rise of the alter-globalisation movement, it views commons or the common (Hardt and Negri 2009) as a political subject, an object of capitalist expropriation, a site of social struggle and contestation, and oriented towards social transformation beyond capitalist social relations.

The developmentalist literature is associated with the work of Elinor Ostrom (1990) and her followers. The approach of the Ostrom school developed since the mid-1980s as a means for accessing governance and the sustainable management of certain natural resources, defined as common-pool resources. Since then these methods of analysis have found more general application, for example in the management of knowledge (Hess & Ostrom 2007) and online communities (Fuster Morell 2014).

The second literature is associated with Autonomist Marxism. For Marx, the expropriation and enclosure of common lands (Marx 1990, 877) was a pivotal historic event, the secret of primitive accumulation (Marx 1990, 873), the original sin from which capitalism was born. Primitive accumulation, the expropriation and enclosure of the commons are not singular historic events in the past (Hardt & Negri 2009, 138), but continuous features of capitalism and its violent expansion in our present. Authors associated with The Midnight Notes Collective, De Angelis (2017), Caffentzis & Federici (2014) and historian Peter Linebaugh (2014) tend to

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refer to the commons in the plural. Hardt and Negri (2009) and theorists of cognitive capitalism such as Vercellone (2018) conceptualise the common in the singular. For many of these authors the concept of the commons or the common was developed through an engagement during the 1990s with the alter-globalisation and global justice movements. The commons and its antagonist of capitalist enclosure also functioned in these discourses as bridging concepts linking the struggles of social movement in the north and south. These different literatures, developmentalist and Marxist make valuable contributions to the study and theory of the commons. They are not exclusive either. There is a growing critical discourse among those associated with the Ostrom school, such as Critical Institutionalism (Cleaver & de Koning 2015) and the CIAD Framework (Whaley 2018). Autonomist and Marxist scholars such as Caffentzis (2004), De Angelis (2017), Alfonso & Vercellone (2019) have also advanced a critical but productive engagement with the work of Ostrom.

The Common

For Marx one of the features of capitalism is the capacity of capital to organise and appropriate the power of cooperative labour. The "social productive power of labour that is developed by co-operation appears as the productive power of capital" (Marx 1990, 453). Labour power is subsumed at sites of capitalist production, the factory, for example. Hardt and Negri distinguish between formal subsumption and real subsumption. In formal subsumption pre-existing and non-capitalist productive practices are incorporated into capitalist processes of production. Real subsumption is where new productive practices are generated from within the capitalist productive process (Hardt & Negri 2009, 229). These domains are not exclusive. Novel productive practices generated internally can be appropriated and put to use outside sites of capitalist production. This can be understood as a cyclical process, whereby practical and technical innovations on the outside are appropriated, subsumed by capital, transformed in the productive process, only to again become general social

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and technical knowledge. Such practices can again be transformed outside, and the cycle continues when those innovations are again appropriated, subsumed and integrated in processes of surplus extraction and capital accumulation. What Hardt and Negri argue is that in our post-fordist era, value creation no longer takes place primarily within the confines of capitalist sites of production. Rather, in the knowledge society, the general communicative and technical capacities of society, and therefore the cooperative and productive capacities of labour have advanced to such a degree that the whole social field has become productive, production has become bio-political. Under this regime of cognitive capitalism, immaterial production, the production of knowledge, information, images, codes, affects, and social relationships has become hegemonic. It is not that the production of material goods is declining but that "their value is increasingly dependent on and subordinated to immaterial factors" (Hardt & Negri 2009, 132). The common for Hardt and Negri is the product of this expansive domain of bio-political production. The circulation and production of knowledge and affects, and the communicative capacities on which that circulation depends are central to this.

> The common appears at both ends of immaterial production, as presupposition and result. Our common knowledge is the foundation of all new production of knowledge; linguistic community is the basis of all linguistic innovation; our existing affective relationships ground all production of affects; and our common social image bank makes possible the creation of new images. All of these productions accrue to the common and in turn serve as foundation for new ones. The common, in fact, appears not only at the beginning and end of production but also in the middle, since the production processes themselves are common, collaborative, and communicative. (Hardt and Negri 2004, 160)

Biopolitical production tends "to exceed all the quantitative measurement and take common forms, which are easily shared and difficult to corral as private property" (Hardt and Negri 2009, 136-137). This represents a crisis for capital, which has taken on a rentier character. No longer productive in itself, capital has become parasitic, appropriating knowledge and affects

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from the common, from society, while at the same time capital makes exclusive claims to the value of that product through marketisation and commodification of otherwise social knowledge. This Hardt and Negri argue leads to a crisis for capital, on the one hand "the powers of the new technical composition of labor-power cannot be contained by the capitalist modes of control", indeed "capitalist control is increasingly becoming a fetter to the productivity of biopolitical labor" (Hardt and Negri 2009, 143), on the other hand, capital has become increasingly dependent on the common as a locus of extraction and appropriation.

Laval and Dardot (2019) commend Hardt and Negri's for their theorisation of the common in the singular, not simply a resource to be defended but as a dynamic and productive social force. They are also critical of the presumed spontaneous character of the common. They argue that a society based on the common will not emerge spontaneously and that it must be addressed as a political project, through the construction of institutions of the common. In the previous section on practice theory I describe processes where practices inform the creation of institutions, I consider such processes analogous in the institution and reproduction of the common. The circulation of the common (Dyer-Witheford 2006) and the circulation of struggles, of movement knowledge and practice are critical to the construction of such institutions. The circulation of the common through commoning practices does not have the same constraints as the circulation of capital. The common does not have the same regard for private property. The transgression of norms of property, through squatting or file sharing are expressions of the common that resist the structuring of social relations by capital. I appreciate the theoretical value of conceptualising the common in the singular. However, in this thesis as I study multiple projects I generally use the plural form, commons.

Ostrom and the developmentalist commons

The work of Elinor Ostrom is a key reference for scholars/researchers of the commons. While some aspects of Ostrom's approach are insightful and

useful, there is a growing critical literature. This section begins with a brief summary of the historical development of the commons as a subject of academic and research interest with a focus on the Ostrom school. I summarise key concepts, such as the tragedy of the commons, the differences between commons and open access, common-pool resources and common property regimes. It concludes with some critical responses to this approach.

The re-emergence of the commons in resource management and development

The commons paradigm has become a subject of substantial academic interest. Since its foundation in 1989, The International Association for the Study of the Commons (IASC) has become the most prominent representative body of academic researchers in the field. The IASC organises regular international conferences and is home to the *Journal of the Commons*. Elinor Ostrom was among the founders of the IASC. Fabien Locher (2013; 2016; 2018) has charted the historical development of the commons paradigm, locating its emergence among networks of researchers and the changing discourses in US development community during the 1970s and 1980s, and their impact within USAID (United States Agency for International Development). To provide some historical context I briefly summarise some of his findings. In the 1970s MIT researchers contracted by USAID to model degradation in the Sahel argued that the crisis could be explained by Hardin's Malthusian tragedy of the commons. During the same period USAID also contracted BOSTID (Board on Science and Technology in International Development). Development anthropologists, such as Michael Horowitz of BOSTID, challenged the view that the crisis was a tragedy of the commons and argued that this represented a caricature of indigenous peoples, who having developed customary forms of resource management over centuries, were the real experts on their natural environment. In the anthropologists' view, local peoples were the victims of the combined adverse impacts of climate and government interventions

supported by western development agencies which had disrupted these customary practices. The board at BOSTID had a favourable view of research on common property institutions. Anthropologists such as Horowitz, James C Scott, Robert Netting were influential in contributing to a greater awareness and advocacy within the development field for forms of community based development. After the contract with USAID expired in 1983, researchers at BOSTID turned their attention to common property resources. Following meetings with USAID, it was agreed to ensure the continued existence of the research group; to organise a large interdisciplinary conference on common property resource management; to create an international network of researchers working on the topic; and to apply for USAID funding (Locher 2018).

Following a successful funding application, the group proceeded to organise a large international conference on common property resources. These events led in 1985 to the creation of the Common Property Resource Network, the name of the network changed in 1989 to the International Association for the Study of Common Property (IASCP) and today is known as the International Association for the Study of the Commons (IASC).

Elinor Ostrom first started working on the commons during the 1960s when writing her dissertation on the management of groundwater basins in Southern California. Her research focus shifted in the 1970s when she and Vincent Ostrom established a research group, the Workshop in Political Theory and Policy Analysis at the Political Science Department of Indiana University. The focus of the research group was on institutional analysis of urban governance and policing using the tools of public choice theory. The Ostroms were successful both in their research and at sourcing funding. In the early 1980s, their focus shifted to comparative institutional analysis in international development. While they had not previously worked in the development area their experience in institutional analysis and public choice aligned with the research interests of USAID.

In 1984, the Ostroms were successful and received a grant from USAID to

lead a seminar and to develop a Handbook on Institutional Analysis and Design to aid fieldworkers. The syllabus of the seminar series included a text on the Sahel crisis. Also, during this time Elinor Ostrom had found funding to support a PhD student, William Blomquist to revisit the site of her own dissertation which she had written on commons solutions to groundwater management in the Southern California basin.

Elinor Ostrom joined the BOSTID group on common property resources in April 1985. Her experience in leading large scale research projects involving comparative analysis and in acquiring funding found her a leading role in the group. Researchers at Indiana University worked with members of the Common Property Resource Network to develop a database of books, articles and case studies on the commons from across a range of disciplines, including anthropology. The database provided for a meta-analysis of case studies. Researchers used coding techniques to transform detailed qualitative analysis into a structured database for quantitative analysis. This coding combined with the methods of institutional analysis enabled them to identify patterns in the data and to develop a hypothesis. When funding for commons research with BOSTID expired the Ostrom's workshop in Indiana became the new home for the research network, the IASCP. The findings of this research laid the groundwork for Elinor Ostrom's seminal text, published in 1990, *Governing the Commons: Institutions for Collective Action* (Ostrom 1990).

The discourse on commons spread in the development community (Locher 2018). Even the World Bank in its 1992 Development Report began to recognise the importance of forms of community management and included reference to common-property regimes (World Bank 1992, 70). Caffentzis (2004) has noted that the recognition of common-property regimes by the World Bank in the early 1990s was in the wake of a backlash against the bank's neoliberal structural adjustment programmes, which were not only undermining state power but also traditional common property arrangements in the global south. Caffentzis describes the reaction to these new enclosures as a "world-wide war for land and in defence of the

commons" (2004). These land wars took place in Central America, Africa, The Middle East and Asia. The solidarity actions of these movements were also linked with struggles over housing and land in the north. In the 1990s, these movements adopted a discourse on 'commons/enclosures' which acted as a bridging concept that "allowed different components of the anti-globalization movement to connect their struggles" (Caffentzis 2004). For Caffentzis, while there was some overlap with the concerns of the anti-globalisation movement, the academic and developmentalist commons of Ostrom and the IASC represented a more 'respectable' discourse which enabled capitalist institutions to appropriate the language of the commons (Caffentzis 2004).

The targets of Ostrom's critique

Writing in the late 1980s, Ostrom notes that "hardly a week goes by without a major news story about the threatened destruction of a valuable natural resource" (Ostrom 1990, 1). Over forty years later the ecological crisis, the destruction of the commons continues and has in many ways intensified. The targets of Ostrom's critique are clear. In the first chapter, Ostrom identifies three popular theoretical models which informed policy prescriptions for resource management at that time. Garrett Hardin's (1968) *Tragedy of the Commons*, the Prisoner's Dilemma and Mancur Olson's (1965) *Logic of Collective Action*. These three models represent collective action problems faced by individuals when trying to achieve collective benefits, in each case the free rider problem undermines the collective ability to achieve a common goal. Faced with such an empirical situation, assumed to represent a commons dilemma, researchers and policymakers agreed, intervention by an external party was "the only way" (Ostrom 1990, 13) to solve the problem. Intervention typically takes the form of either state management or state led privatisation of the common resource. Ostrom refers to this "only way" as the "panacea problem" (Ostrom and Cox 2010) where the institutional complexity of resource management arrangements are reduced to simple models or formulas that are assumed to apply

universally. The danger Ostrom warns "is that the constraints that are assumed to be fixed for the purpose of analysis are taken on faith as being fixed in empirical settings, unless external authorities change them" (Ostrom 1990, 6). Ostrom was committed to detailed empirical and theoretical analysis, and in *Governing the Commons* (1990), she shows that not only do people find solutions to collective action problems in practice, but further still, these self-organised and self-governing institutional arrangements can be more effective at managing resources than interventionist policy prescriptions that promote state intervention or privatisation. By analysing the successful management of common-pool resources (CPRs), Ostrom was able to identify design principles, summarised in the following table, which enabled them to endure over time (Ostrom 1990, 90).

Table 3.1. *Design principles illustrated by long-enduring CPR institutions*

1. **Clearly defined boundaries**
   Individuals or households who have rights to withdraw resource units from the CPR must be clearly defined, as must the boundaries of the CPR itself.

2. **Congruence between appropriation and provision rules and local conditions**
   Appropriation rules restricting time, place, technology, and/or quantity of resource units are related to local conditions and to provision rules requiring labor, material, and/or money.

3. **Collective-choice arrangements**
   Most individuals affected by the operational rules can participate in modifying the operational rules.

4. **Monitoring**
   Monitors, who actively audit CPR conditions and appropriator behavior, are accountable to the appropriators or are the appropriators.

5. **Graduated sanctions**
   Appropriators who violate operational rules are likely to be assessed graduated sanctions (depending on the seriousness and context of the offense) by other appropriators, by officials accountable to these appropriators, or by both.

6. **Conflict-resolution mechanisms**
   Appropriators and their officials have rapid access to low-cost local arenas to resolve conflicts among appropriators or between appropriators and officials.

7. **Minimal recognition of rights to organize**
   The rights of appropriators to devise their own institutions are not challenged by external governmental authorities.

For CPRs that are parts of larger systems:
8. **Nested enterprises**
   Appropriation, provision, monitoring, enforcement, conflict resolution, and governance activities are organized in multiple layers of nested enterprises.

Figure 1: Design principles (Ostrom 1990, 90)

Nobel Prize

In 2009, for "her analysis of economic governance, especially the commons", Elinor Ostrom became the first woman to be awarded the Nobel Prize in Economics. Her life's work "challenged the conventional wisdom by demonstrating how local property can be successfully managed by local commons without any regulation by central authorities or privatization" (Nobel Prize 2009). Ostrom is widely recognised for her substantial contributions to the discipline of political science (Goodin and Klingemann 2009). However, the awarding of the Nobel to a political scientist came as a

surprise to many in the economics profession. As Fine (2010) notes, she was known to few economists and had "published little in the discipline's core journals". On what basis then might her place in the discipline be recognised? For Fine the answer lies in Ostrom's approach to social science. While best known for her work on commons, Ostrom's methodological contributions to the field of economics extend beyond that. Ostrom's research methodology is highly influenced by new institutional economics and public choice theory. This approach adapts formal analytical frames and methods of the economics discipline to research in the social sciences. In Ostrom's case these methods are extended to political science and institutional analysis. In her later work (Ostrom 2005), she developed a range of tools to aid comparative policy analysis, the Institutional Analysis and Development (IAD) Framework for mapping institutional arrangements and a Grammar of Institutions for analysis of rules, norms and strategies. While these methodological tools were initially developed to aid analysis of commons institutions they are applicable to the study of institutions more generally. For Fine (2010), Ostrom's body of work is part of a broader colonisation of the social sciences by economics. The connections are not simply methodological. Ostrom and her husband Vincent were both influenced by the work of James Buchanan who along with Gordon Tullock developed public choice theory. Vincent Ostrom was president of The Public Choice Society from 1967-69, Elinor Ostrom was president from 1982-84 (Public Choice Society 2020). Buchanan, along with Friedrich Hayek, was one of the leading members of the Mont Pelerin Society which was instrumental in the development of Neoliberalism. In an interview in 2009 Ostrom's Nobel was celebrated by Peter Boettke who has written extensively on Ostrom (Roberts 2009). Boettke is a professor of economics and philosophy at George Mason University and was president of the Mont Pelerin society from 2016-2018 (Mont Pelerin 2021). In 2012, Ostrom presented on "The Future of the Commons" at the Annual Hayek Lecture at the Institute for Economic Affairs, a free market think tank in London (Ostrom 2012). There is even a free market think tank in Catalonia named in

her honour Institut Ostrom (Institut Ostrom 2020). This aspect of Ostrom is an uncomfortable truth for advocates of the commons who see themselves and their projects as forms of resistance to free market fundamentalism and Neoliberalism.

I am not arguing that Ostrom was a neoliberal, but she was not averse to their company. She was primarily an academic, deeply committed to solving the challenges of her research topic. She was opposed to panaceas, the idea that there should be a single 'only way' to solve problems related to resource management whether that be state or market interventions, and committed to empirical work, she was convinced that at times communities could find ways to self-manage resources more effectively than state and market based interventions. Her criticisms of state led interventionist policies appealed on the one hand to small state liberals opposed to government intervention, and on the other hand, her criticism of market oriented interventionism appeals to critics of privatisation and neoliberal policies.

In an interview (Korten 2020), shortly after she received the Nobel award, Ostrom emphasised how important the recognition was, not only personally but also for the many researchers she had collaborated with. Ostrom "believed teamwork was generally more effective than individual work in creating knowledge" (Wall 2017, 10). She was also an advocate of interdisciplinary collaboration. As Wall (2017) notes she described her academic work as a process of co-production that involved the active participation of communities. Ostrom's message was simple:

> No panaceas! We tend to want simple formulas. We have two main prescriptions: privatize the resource or make it state property with uniform rules. But sometimes the people who are living on the resource are in the best position to figure out how to manage it as a commons. (Korten 2020)

Ostrom's commitment to illuminating the capacity of groups to self-organise and self-manage resources in a sustainable way is to be commended. She challenged conventional wisdom and policy prescriptions that assumed the only ways to manage resources are through the state

administration or privatisation.

Key concepts

Ostrom's work is not based on historic or moral arguments. It was recognised for the Nobel in Economics in part because she challenged conventional economic thinking in its own terms, that is, she makes use of economists' tools of analysis, such as rational choice and game theory, and her arguments are framed in the language of economics. While recognising the significance of her contributions to the study of the commons, there is a growing critical literature. Some critiques have come from scholars working in the area of natural resource management who in the course of fieldwork encountered the limits of Ostrom's IAD framework and have worked to develop critical alternatives. Critical Institutional Analysis and Development (CIAD; Whaley 2018) disposes of some of the more reductive elements, of rational choice and game theory, and extends the framework to include analysis of political economy, discourse and practice. Others have identified epistemological limitations to Ostrom's approach and areas for further theoretical development (Giuliani and Vercellone 2019; Choe and Yun 2017; De Angelis 2017; Caffentzis 2004). A summary of these are:

- The absence of historical and power analysis particularly as commons relate with states and capitalism.

- A naturalistic conception of common-pool resources that considers resources as economic goods defined by intrinsic properties.

- Ostrom's methodological commitments to rational choice.

In the following section, I summarise some of Ostrom's key conceptual contributions to the study of the commons and some of the limitations identified in critical literature.

Open Access and Common-Pool Resources

According to Ostrom, much confusion relating to the analysis of commons results from a misunderstanding and misuse of terms. She went to considerable lengths to use clear concepts and to develop a shared language

among researchers (Ostrom and Hess 2010). Hardin's Tragedy of the Commons (1968) is emblematic in that it confuses commons with open access. Hardin (1998) eventually accepted criticisms and clarified that he had mischaracterized the commons by omitting from his description an important modifier of the 'unmanaged' commons.

A key distinction for Ostrom (Schlager and Ostrom 1992) and scholars of the commons is between *resource system* and *property regime* (Ciriacy-Wantrup and Bishop 1975). A resource system is typically some kind of natural resource such as waterways or forests for example. A resource system can be owned or governed through a variety of institutional arrangements or property regimes. Feeny et al. (1990) propose four types of regime, open access, private property, communal property and state property. For Ostrom terms such as "common property resource" confuse the distinction between resource system and property regime (Schlager and Ostrom 1992). For this reason, Ostrom uses the terms common-pool resource to refer to resources. *Common-pool resource institution*, *communal property* or *common property regime* are variously used in reference to the governance or property regime.

Open Access describes a property regime that nobody can be excluded from accessing, either because of the presence or absence of legal regulation or enforcement. A resource can also be effectively open access because of some intrinsic or natural feature which makes regulation of its use difficult. The open seas and the atmosphere are typical examples.

A common-pool resource can be the object of an open access regime, in which case the resource might be treated as a free for all and be at risk of overuse and exploitation. Alternatively, a common-pool resource can be the object of a private, common or state property regime. Ostrom's empirical evidence shows that contrary to conventional thinking, common-pool resources can be sustainably managed through common property regimes, thus external interventions by states or policy prescriptions that promote privatisation are not necessary.

Common-Pool Resources as Economic Goods

While the distinction between resource and regime is useful, Ostrom's approach to how she defines resources presents some limitations. For Ostrom, resources are economic goods. Elinor and her husband Vincent Ostrom (1975; 1977) drew on economist Paul Samuelson's typology of public goods and the theory of public choice. Ostrom eventually settled on the use of two variables, subtractability and excludability to distinguish between four types of goods.

Figure 2: Typology of goods. (Ostrom, V. & Ostrom, E. 1977; Ostrom 2005, 25)

		Subtractability of use (Rival/Non-Rival)	
		Low	High
Difficulty of excluding potential beneficiaries	Low	Toll Goods (Theatres, night clubs, telephone service, toll roads, cable TV, electric power, library.)	Private Goods (Bread, Shoes, Automobiles, Haircuts)
	High	Public Goods (Peace and security of a community, national defence, mosquito abatement, air pollution control, fire protection, streets, weather forecasts, public TV.)	Common-Pool Resources (Water pumped from a ground-water basin, fish taken from an ocean, crude oil extracted from an oil pool)

As critics have noted (Choe and Yun 2017; Giuliani and Vercellone 2019) this conception defines goods by certain intrinsic features, as such the category of common-pool resources is limited to goods where the difficulty of excluding beneficiaries is high and resources are highly subtractable such as fisheries, forests and water resources. Difficulties in excluding people from accessing a resource result from some presumably intrinsic natural features.

If we were to accept this strict definition of common-pool resources as a category of good it is difficult to see how it could be useful for the study of urban commons or digital commons, as Caffentzis (2004) argues "not all common property regimes involve common pool resources". This

naturalistic conception of common-pool resources as goods overlooks the extent to which resources and the appropriate domain of their use are socially defined. If we want to understand the commons as it relates to social movements and politics more generally we should be able to account for the ways in which the use of resources are socially defined, contested and legitimated.

Finally, commons in this definition are considered in economic terms. For Ostrom the purpose of collective management is the sustainable extraction of resource units as an input for production or as commodities for trade. This overlooks historic, social and cultural reasons why people might prefer to organise to meet their needs in a collective way.

Endogenous and Exogenous

> Organising appropriators for collective action regarding a CPR is
> usually an uncertain and complex undertaking. (Ostrom 1990, 33)

There are a range of variables at play when organising for collective action. Some are external and some internal. To explain why one property regime might transform into another, succeed or fail, followers of Ostrom's approach largely seek to explain these changes by reference to internal factors, that is knowledge and management. For Ostrom "lack of knowledge" about the resource system or with regard to its effective management can lead to a failed CPR.

Ostrom's design principles place emphasis on defined boundaries, rules, decision-making processes, effective monitoring, sanctions and conflict resolution. Only design principles 7 and 8 refer to external factors, the relationship with government authorities and nested institutional contexts. Other external factors are "the quantity and timing of rainfall, the temperature and amount of sunlight, the presence or absence of disease-bearing vectors, and the market prices of various inputs or final products" (Ostrom 1990, 33).

Internal factors are obviously important but such an approach risks overlooking a variety of reasons, historic, social, cultural, political or

economic, why groups may prefer to manage a resource collectively. The approach fails to account for differentials in power. The antagonisms of states, or market actors that have an interest in undermining the stability of common property regimes, or to account for commons as sites of popular resistance, either historically or today.

Homo Economicus

Ostrom's approach is intentionally general and synthetic, one of its strengths is its capacity for comparative, meta analysis of cases; this kind of quantitative analysis involves abstraction. Ostrom uses rational choice in her methodology. As a result, Ostrom's commoners are abstract individuals, appropriators, rational actors pursuing their self-interest, weighing up costs with the aim of maximising the benefits of their actions. They formulate and follow formal rules and informal norms, develop strategies, monitor and sanction some behaviours while organising to incentivise others.

Economic Anthropologist Stephen Gudeman (2001) argues that most economists and political scientists such as Ostrom, have a modernist reading of the commons which separates objects from subjects. They treat commons as if they have an objective existence, as a kind of property separate from community, they are open access resources, common goods, or common-pool resources. The communities that manage these commons are conceived as doing so for reasons of rational self-interest, but this remains a market rationality, in place of competitive market exchange, commons are governed by 'expressly stated rights' and social rules whose function is primarily to manage the efficient allocation of scarce resources. For Gudeman this "formulation represents a misunderstanding of the social sphere of value, reduces the social to self-interest, and conflates community and market through the misapplication of the language of trade." (Gudeman 2001, 27)

Gudeman is not denying that human beings are capable of being rational, calculative or self-interested, but he argues that the kinds of reasoning are different from the kind of abstract reasoning assumed and prescribed by economists. Instead, he argues that human reason is situated, always

somehow involved in a range of particular culturally, historically, material and environmentally informed practices.

For Gudeman (2001, 27) "Without a commons, there is no community; without a community, there is no commons". The two are inextricably linked, so "what happens to a commons is not a physical incident but a social event".

> Taking away the commons destroys community, and destroying a complex of relationships demolishes a commons. Likewise, denying others access to the commons denies community with them, which is exactly what the assertion of private property rights does. The so-called "tragedy of the commons" (Hardin 1968), which refers to destruction of a resource through unlimited use by individuals, is a tragedy not of a physical commons but of a human community, because of the failure of its members to treat one another as communicants and its transformation to a competitive situation. (Gudeman 2001, 27)

To conclude, Ostrom has clearly made a considerable contribution to the study of the commons. At the same time, her approach means that many factors that contribute to the success or failure of commons are overlooked. The most obvious being the different power relations between commons, market and state actors. Commons are more than resources, they involve communities. The social value and definition of resources and the identities of communities are entwined, particular and local rationalities are always socially and culturally situated. Commons or practices of commoning are not only a means for social reproduction but also for the cultivation and extension of community.

An Anthropological approach to contemporary commons

In response to debates on the commons in the 2017 themed issue of the anthropological journal Focaal, Bodirsky notes that while commons are "an eminently anthropological topic" (Bodirsky 2018, 121) and have been studied by anthropologists in relation to natural resource management, more recent perspectives from critical scholarship aligned with a politics of the commons have "made surprisingly few inroads into our discipline"

(Bodirsky 2018, 121). For Bodirsky a key challenge is how to formulate an approach that enables anthropologists to examine the relations between commons, state and capitalism in "a way that does justice to both a broadly Leftist politics of the commons and an analysis of really existing commons that might deviate from this ideal" (Bodirsky 2018, 121).

In her review, Bodirsky identifies a number of questions and grounds for debate, and makes what I consider valuable proposals for advancing an anthropological approach to the study of the contemporary politics of the commons. She considers the value of the distinction between public and common, asks whether commons are inherently anti-capitalist or not, and how commons researchers can be more attentive to the politics of difference, class, race and gender at play in the constitution of commons. Rather than develop a general definition of the commons her proposals aim to open up the particular relations between commons, state and capital for analysis. She suggests that this can be done by examining property regimes in terms of relations of production and the organisation of membership or ownership. Bodirsky's approach supports a "fine-tuned analysis of the actual relations between the commons, the market, and the state" (Bodirsky 2018, 125). These proposals inform my own theoretical approach to the study of the commons and as such in what follows I will summarise some elements of both the questions she raises and the proposals.

Bodirsky first identifies that in the literature the distinction between public and commons is at times ambiguous. She asks if commons are simply another kind of public good and if the distinction is worth maintaining. Emphasising an understanding of commons primarily as a type of resource with the state managing equitable access and distribution, this view tends to overlook the different forms of governance or property regime. Much of the critical scholarship emphasises "self-management and horizontalist decision-making in contrast to the hierarchical structures of the state" (Bodirsky 2018, 123). Common property regimes are said to have a collective or communal character, though these are not necessarily democratic in character. At the same time many cases of "actually existing

commons" (Noterman 2016) involve hybrid arrangements that involve partnerships or arrangements between a community, state or market actors. Critical scholarship displays a nuanced approach to the question of the relation between the commons and state, where engagements with the state are considered strategically valuable (De Angelis 2003, 6) or when connecting struggles over the public and commons "can reinforce each other" (Caffentzis & Federici 2014). Bodirsky asks what is gained or lost in "opening commoning—conceptually—to the state" (Bodirsky 2018, 123) and concludes that the distinction between commons and public remains critical.

Second, she asks if we should consider commons as somehow inherently anti-capitalist? Many, if not most actually existing commons are entangled in complex relationships with markets and states and their members are not necessarily motivated by politics or an opposition to capitalism (Bresnihan and Byrne 2015). It is also important as Caffentzis (2004) notes to recognise that there are commons compatible with capitalism. Indeed, a lot of business friendly open source software development is financed by private profit seeking enterprises. As such, it does not seem fitting to define commons in general as inherently anti-capitalist. Again, the organisation of production in such cases is not necessarily communal or democratic either. When commons figure as part of alternative political imaginaries, we should consider how these differences come into play. One example in which this is expressed is in the different political positions, between free software and open source with each respectively placing more or less emphasis on the ethical value of freedom and community versus business and efficiency. While, at the same time engaging in similar productive practices.

Commons and practices of commoning can also be co-opted by state and market forces, for example in cases where states cut spending on public services while at the same time promoting volunteer-led civic engagement as a means to fill the gap. Practices of commoning are often in tension with the state, they can emerge somewhat spontaneously as communities organise mutual aid in response to cuts in services and to address pressing

needs, at the same time it may not be sustainable or desirable for communities to meet those needs autonomously or without financial or professional supports from the state in the long term. I would add that it might also be useful to distinguish between community making and commoning in online communities. The peer to peer aspects of networked technologies enables geographically distributed persons to form communities online, more often than not the communicative and social production of online communities takes place on corporate social media platforms. Corporate platforms make rights claims over user generated data and are generally more interested in mining social networks and data analysis to sell to advertisers than in the welfare of communities themselves. Platforms are designed to capture and channel networked social production towards commercial ends. Commoning in online communities takes advantage of technological affordances of peer production but involves much more self-conscious efforts to secure the product of collective labours as a commons with the rights of community being central.

Third, Bodirsky suggests that there is a greater need for an attention to the politics of difference at play in commons projects. She asks, could commoning be considered as a particular kind of class politics? How might other kinds of inequalities such as those based on gender and racial inequality shape the organisation and practices of commoning? Bodirsky notes that these kinds of questions "have not been at the forefront of discussions in the critical commons literature." (Bodirsky 2018, 125)

Rather than trying to determine whether a commons is true or not, based on some ideal criteria such as whether or not they are public or common, anti-capitalist or not, Bodirsky proposals aim at unpacking the often complex and at times hybrid relations between commons, state and capital. Her proposal consists of three elements, employing the concept of property regimes, relations of production and calling for an attention to the organisation of membership or ownership.

Property Relations

Bodirsky's proposal retains a number of concepts and distinctions developed in the literature on natural resource commons. In much of the literature, as Bodirsky notes, the distinction between resource and regime is under-specified and "commons is variously applied to one or the other, or both" (Bodirsky 2018, 125). Bodirsky insists that the distinction between common-pool resource and common property regime remains useful. A common-pool resource may be subject to different property regimes (Feeny et al. 1990), of which there are four types, open access, private property, communal (common) property and state property. For Bodirsky the distinctions between property regimes present a number of analytical advantages. The conceptual distinctions enable analysis of changes in property regime as in processes of enclosure but also of how public, private and common might enter into hybrid arrangements (Feeny et al. 1990, 4; Nonini 2007, 10; Wagner 2012, 618; Turner 2017).

The Commons as social relation and commoning as practice

In the literature on the traditional commons, common-pool resources are a type of thing, an economic good defined by intrinsic features, characterised as highly rival and as being difficult to exclude beneficiaries from, for example fisheries or a fresh water basin (Ostrom 2005, 24). Bodirsky, departs from this conception of common-pool resources and draws on the work of David Harvey who defines the common not as a thing but as a social relation between a social group and its environment. Harvey also presents a conception of commoning as a social practice through which social relations are made "collective and non-commodified" (Harvey 2012, 73).

> The common is not to be construed, therefore, as a particular kind of thing, asset or even social process, but 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 deemed crucial to its life and livelihood. 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. (Harvey 2012, 73)

Bodirsky further specifies that commoning should "refer to practices that aim at a common property regime of the resource (as opposed to other possible regimes)" (Bodirsky 2018, 125). This distinction, Bodirsky (2018, 125) argues enables us to retain the language of "reclaiming the commons" (Klein 2001). I adopt this approach developed and proposed by Bodirsky, retaining the distinction between resource and property regime, an understanding of commons as a social relation and the specification of commoning as social practice.

Property Relation and Relations of Production

While distinguishing between property regimes and resources is useful, as Bodirsky points out, it does not say a lot about the particular ways in which the (re)production of commons, membership, and the distribution of labour are organised. To address this Bodirsky draws on the work of anthropologist David Nugent (1993) to consider the ways in which relations of production are constituted in contemporary commons.

Nugent adopts the Marxist concept of property relations as a means for the study of relations of production in non-capitalist societies. By contrast with modern conceptions of private property defined in terms of legal rights, Nugent conceives property as "relationships among people that are mediated by material and nonmaterial elements of culture" (1993, 341). Bodirsky argues that the strengths of this approach are that property is conceived as a variable social relation, it is informed by culture and is historically mutable and that this is "relevant for a processual understanding of the commons, including processes of co-optation and enclosure and emerging alternative property regimes" (Bodirsky 2018, 126).

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Nugent developed this approach as a means for studying social transformations and the rise of inequality among the Blackfoot following the introduction of the horse. During the 18th century traditional communal forms of hunting and associated customs gradually gave way and new social hierarchies arose around those with access or ownership of horses, and those skilled in hunting with them. The introduction of the horse, horsepower we could say, enhanced and extended human capacities and was accompanied by the development of new social practices and a transformation in social relations.

In the contemporary context, the introduction of new technology is generally understood as enhancing and extending human capacities. The development of the personal computer, for example, has been accompanied by the emergence of new technically skilled classes, new social practices, new hierarchies and led to social transformations at the global scale. New social practices of commoning are entangled in complex ways with the institutions of markets and states, so it would not be accurate to describe them generally as always and everywhere non-capitalist. While a commons is not a commodity, people can benefit financially from them, particularly in tech where they build livelihoods on the selling of expertise or services that make use of common resources of knowledge and code.

An attention to property relations considers how the distribution of access to resources or to different kinds of knowledge or skills can privilege actors participating and contributing to commons. We should expect that property relations in contemporary commons will reflect to some degree the social and cultural inequalities prevalent in the societies of which they are a part, informed by gender norms or unequal access to education or professional opportunities based on class, racial or ethnic differences. Tech for example is typically a male dominated profession. The voluntary nature of participation and contribution in online communities is generally celebrated, but it is also important to consider what factors might afford some people to participate and not others.

The question then is how, if at all, actors in these commons projects engage

with questions of inequality. Traditional commons have not been particularly egalitarian or democratic in character (Caffentzis & Federici 2014) with management arrangements privileging members based on gender for example. Contemporary commons are also incredibly diverse and often depart from the radically democratic ideals of leftist social imaginaries. This brings us to questions of ownership and membership and how the organisation or governance of a commons might include or exclude certain persons. Again I want to consider these above proposals with regard to the digital commons as it represents a useful case study for elaborating their analytical value.

Commons-Based Peer Production

Benkler (2002) coined the term Commons-Based Peer Production to distinguish between networked peer production more generally and that which is organised around the production of a commons. In particular, the term was developed to describe the productive practices of free and open source software (FOSS) developers, who by adopting FOSS licences create commons of code and knowledge.

Contemporary common property regimes have their own nuances. The distinction between resource and property regime is particularly useful when considering the digital commons and peer production. The contemporary digital commons are not constituted through a single common property regime, but a combination of regimes that bring them into hybrid relationships with private property or state property regimes.

The licence is central, it constitutes a property regime with rights clearly defined in their terms, and in doing so it defines licensed code, knowledge and culture as a type of resource. The licences define the resource and as such, resource and regime are in this case two sides of the same coin so to speak. There are many kinds of licences and use rights that constitute different commons of code and culture. For software developers and geeks choosing a licence can also be a kind of political statement. Unlike traditional commons that are bound up with clearly defined communities,

licences make digital commons relatively autonomous from any single group of producers and their means of production. Multiple actors, individuals and corporate persons can contribute and benefit from these commons without necessarily having to come together in the form of a single group and may not even identify as a community at all. The autonomy of resources from actors, and the actors from each other is one of the characteristics of this type of peer production. It is commons-based peer production because the product of this mode of production is captured and defined as a commons through the use of the licence as opposed to being the exclusive private property of any single actor.

The peer production of code and knowledge can involve multiple different regimes. For example, a state or private enterprise might use and benefit from a commons and pay developers to contribute to it. There are also non-profits and associations that adopt formal roles as stewards of digital commons. While the product is a common resource, the property regimes through which production is organised are not necessarily democratic. Generally speaking these commons can only be described as democratic, in a very limited sense, as when people describe enhanced access to resources as democratisation. This has little to do with democracy as a process through which collective decisions are made. Activists committed to realising a more democratic ideal have in recent years advanced a synthesis of digital commons and the traditional cooperative form, these are known as platform cooperatives or open cooperatives. A substantial part of the fieldwork for this thesis was spent working with activists involved in an open cooperative called FemProcomuns and this will be covered in later chapters.

There are other important differences between traditional or natural resource commons and digital common property regimes. Bodirsky notes, according to the traditional literature "common property regimes are by definition not open access" (Bodirsky 2018, 127). For Feeny et al. (1990) "Open access is the absence of well-defined property rights". Open access is a way of describing a management regime as being either weak or non-existent. In

the case of free and open source software and peer production more generally, copyleft licenced creative works are both a common-property regime and open access resource. They are open access in the sense that "access to the resource is unregulated and is free and open to everyone" (Feeny et al. 1990). These resources can be both a commons and open access because digital information can be easily copied and reproduced. One person's access and use of the information resources does not prevent others from accessing and using the same resource.

The literature on the traditional commons, considers commons primarily in terms of material and natural resources. It describes these resources as rival, in the sense that one person's use of a resource impedes the ability of another to use the same resource. Modern economics is predicated on the supposedly efficient allocation of scarce or rivalrous resources, a paradigm of scarcity. One of the major criticisms of copyright and intellectual property is that it takes a resource, such as knowledge, that can easily be made abundant and makes it artificially scarce. It is artificial because what makes it scarce are legal prohibitions against copying and reproduction, not any natural or technical barrier to doing so. Digital information certainly depends on material resources, but once produced the costs of its reproduction are marginal, approaching near zero marginal cost (Rifkin 2014). Digital information is not rival, in the sense that one person's access and use of it does not compromise the ability of others to do the same. This leads many to consider the commons as prefiguring a kind of post-scarcity economy. Bauwens gives this broad scope and argues:

> Our present-day society is based upon the absurd notion that material resources are abundant and immaterial ideas scarce. We behave as if the planet were infinite, and exploit the earth in ways that endanger the survival of the human species. On the other hand, we build artificial walls around human knowledge to impede and prevent and sharing as much as possible. (Bauwens and Lievens 2013)

Post-capitalism

Rifkin, Bauwens and others such as Paul Mason all argue that the collaborative commons is an emergent economic paradigm that represents a positive transition towards a post-capitalist economy and society (Bauwens 2005; Rifkin 2014, 7; Mason 2016; Bauwens and Ramos 2018). Arvidsson, Bauwens and Peitersen (2008) describe a current crisis of value for capitalism, where markets increasingly fail either to accurately price or capture the value of the social production that the technological revolution has unleashed. The "old value regime does not adequately recognize and reward the new value that is created" (Bauwens & Niaros 2017). The capitalist value regime is characterised as being extractive, by contrast with the generative economies based on the commons. The approach of Bauwens is similar in some ways to the theorists of cognitive capitalism such as Yann-Moulier Boutang (2011). Autonomist Marxists theorise that the whole of society has become a 'social factory' and "labour has become 'biopolitical' because work and life have fused and become indistinguishable" (Bauwens & Niaros 2017, 9). For Hardt and Negri the common represents the totality of value generated by society, though it is subsumed or subordinated to the needs of capitalism.

These various claims all figure in the social and political imaginaries of commons activists, they may seem fantastic, but they are based on analysis of existing practices. Bodirsky argues that a key challenge is to develop an anthropological approach "that does justice to both a broadly Leftist politics of the commons and an analysis of really existing commons that might deviate from this ideal" (Bodirsky 2018, 121). The anthropological literature that does engage with the commons and social movements tends to do so through a lens that focuses primarily on the politics of urban space. This is only one aspect of a politics and imaginary of the commons. The ways in which these practices and associated transformative imaginaries enter into contemporary social movements and politics involves both an attention to the urban and the digital.

Social Movements

In this chapter I began with a discussion of practice theory and the relationship between practices, resources and institutions. I then summarised key concepts related to the commons in the work of Elinor Ostrom as well as critiques, followed by more recent anthropological approaches. Here I focus on social movements. I conclude the chapter by bringing elements of these three literatures together as a means for considering the ways in which social movements engage with the subject of the commons and organise to challenge and contest hegemonic social formations.

One of the aims of this research project has been to understand developments relating to the commons in Barcelona as part of a broader social movement process. I am interested in how the commons has figured as part of the social imaginary of these movements. I argue that the language of the commons has operated as a bridging concept, it has figured as a means of making sense of diverse movement experiences, practices, and aspirations, but it has also functioned as a means for bringing different movement experiences and actors together in a shared social movement project.

When I say a movement project, this is not equivalent or limited to Bcomú, but rather I consider Bcomú as an actor, an important actor, among a diverse movement milieu, that include digital and urban commons and the social and solidarity economy. While the electoral success of Bcomú is significant, commons projects in the city existed prior to the municipalist movement. They have their own histories and identities, and their independence from political institutions and parties is an important aspect of that.

Political alliances are not a given but can be tentative and contingent. Bcomú are also a heterogeneous grouping, while some prominent members have a more radical activist background with a connection to the commons through the squatting and free culture movements, others do not share these affinities, and their conception of meaningful social and political change can be more conventionally progressive rather than radical.

The electoral success of Bcomú in 2015 represented a moment of political opportunity, which certain social movement actors in the city were ready to take advantage of. For some, this was a moment of convergence, for others the engagement with party politics and institutions was one of divergence from what had up until that point been a largely autonomist and radical social movement scene. One critical activist I spoke with described the turn towards electoral politics as having the effect of a 'brain drain' on movements, as various movement actors took up roles in or partnerships with the new council. Others expressed anxieties about the possibility of movements being compromised or achievements co-opted. It should hardly need stating that the diverse commons of Barcelona and Els Communs as Bcomú are sometimes called, are not one and the same.

Moments of social transformation involve complex and often contingent alliances and these are important dynamics to keep in mind. The politics of the social movement field in Barcelona are complex. With an attention to the longer cycles of social movement processes, in this research project I focus on just a few particular actors, events and processes as they relate to the subject of the commons. I am interested in how alternative forms of social organisation have been advanced during this period and in activists' conceptions of the ways in which hegemonic social formations are challenged and contested.

Defining Social Movements

In my fieldwork, correspondents often self-described their activities as belonging to social movements. These emic understandings -understandings from within- are illustrative of how groups see themselves and self-describe their activities in political terms, as forms of activism or as being involved in social movements. Though frequently invoked, what social movements are in these contexts is rarely defined in an explicit manner. By contrast there is a substantial academic literature on social movements in which various theoretical approaches are argued and contested. Yet academic or etic -from without- definitions of social movements do not always fit easily

with the emic, self-understandings of movements.

One reason for this is that academics and their theoretical interests can often be removed and different from those of the movements they study. There is a difference between research about movements and research with and for movements (Barker and Cox 2002). The centrality of ethnographic methods and Anthropologists' interest in emic understandings has led to the development of engaged and militant anthropological research practices that are explicitly oriented towards generating knowledge with and for movements (Juris 2008, 19; Maeckelbergh 2009, 23; Low and Merry 2010; Ortner 2019). It is also worth noting that Spanish and Catalan scholars have engaged in theorising with and for movements. Most prominently Manuel Castells (1983) but also Mayo Fuster Morell (2009), Joan Subirats and many others.

Social movements are essentially defined by conflict:

> movements develop (and argue over) a sense of 'we' which is opposed to a 'they' (the state, corporations, a powerful social group, a form of behaviour) in a conflict which is about the shape and direction of society, on a large or small scale… (Cox 2018, xii)

Understanding movements requires an attention to processes through which these forms of collective agency are constituted through networks and alliances of formal and informal relationships (Cox 2018, xii) in which individuals or organisations come together in what are essentially political projects, that is projects concerned with relations of power and their transformation. In other words projects where "emergent structures of radical needs and capacities" come into conflict with "dominant structures of entrenched needs and capacities" (Cox and Nilsen 2014, 26).

The mainstream of social movements scholarship in political science has been dominated by the work of a few US scholars, in particular the *Dynamics of Contention* approach (McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2001). Despite the academic popularity of theoretical concepts such as framing (Snow et al. 1986), political opportunity structures and contentious politics (Tarrow 1998; 2015), European scholars of social movements have found

the US approach lacking (Flesher Fominaya and Cox 2013a; 2013b).
Academic social movements theory often assumes a narrow conception of
politics seeing "capitalism and the state as a taken-for-granted framework"
(Cox and Nielsen 2014, 25). As a representative of the US scholarship, Tilly
(1999) defines social movements as "a sustained challenge to power holders
in the name of a population living under the jurisdiction of those power
holders by means of repeated public displays of that population's
worthiness, unity, numbers, and commitment" (Tilly 1999). Flesher
Fominaya (2020) has criticised this approach as state centric, in that it
defines movements along with their success and failure primarily in terms of
their ability to "effect some change in the nation-state (or supranational
institution), either through affecting some change in policy or law, gaining
access to power holders and state institutions, or managing to shift or set the
agendas of political elites, all understood as effectively posing a challenge to
power holders." (Flesher Fominaya 2020, 308). In *Democracy Reloaded,*
Flesher Fominaya (2020) argues that:

> viewing 15M as a series of discrete performances demonstrating
> worthiness, unity, numbers and commitment would reveal little about what
> enabled it to emerge, grow, and sustain itself over time against tremendous
> challenges. These challenges include a state impervious to movement
> demands, which not only refused to alter austerity policies (thereby
> increasing the movement's difficulty in maintaining a belief in the possibility
> of winning), but actively sought to criminalize protest, dissent, and poverty.
> (Flesher Fominaya 2020, 308)

Furthermore Flesher Fominaya shows that:

> social movement communities do have cohesion, are relational, are
> rooted in particular shared histories, and are held together by collective
> identity and political cultures, despite being porous, dynamic, and traversed
> by conflicts and contradictions. (Flesher Fominaya 2020, 308)

Rethinking movements (Cox and Nielsen 2014, 25) and movement
outcomes (Flesher Fominaya 2020, 308) is necessary particularly when
trying to understand movement contexts where what is being contested are

established notions of the political (Flesher Fominaya 2020, 312). It is for this reason that the experience of Spanish social movements has been described as a "political laboratory" (Flesher Fominaya 2020) and an "extraordinary laboratory of democracy" (Postill 2018, 12).

Over the past 20 years the commons has continuously figured in the discourse of Spanish social movements. Within the alter-globalisation, free culture and 15M movements the commons has been a reference for those that not only dream of other possible worlds but aim to bring those other worlds into being through prefigurative political practice (Maeckelbergh 2009). At the same time, I argue the commons has been a key bridging concept within broader social movement processes. The language of the commons has figured as a means of making sense of diverse movement experiences, practices, and aspirations, but it has also functioned as a means for bringing different movement experiences and actors together in a shared social movement project.

Social Movement Process

Nilsen and Cox's (2013) definition of social movements emphasis on skilled activities and on the extension and development of particular rationalities makes this approach fitting with the practice theoretical approach adopted in this thesis.

> Social movements are often thought of in field-specific terms, as a particular form of extra-parliamentary political activity, characterized by certain specific institutional and organisational features. In contrast, we propose a wider definition of social movements as a process in which a specific social group develops a collective project of skilled activities centred on a rationality – a particular way of making sense of and relating to the social world - that tries to change or maintain a dominant structure of entrenched needs and capacities, in part or whole. (Nilsen and Cox 2013)

Nilsen and Cox (2013) propose a set of conceptual tools for the analysis of what they call *movement-process*. They outline four moments in these *movement-process*, local rationalities, militant particularisms, campaigns

and social movement projects. These are not meant as a linear or a teleological process of stages of development but rather can be considered as different moments of potential wherein contingent elements that make up a *movement-process* can be accessed and reasons for movement success or failure better understood.

Hegemony is also never total, it has "continually to be renewed, recreated, defended, and modified. It is also continually resisted, limited, altered, challenged" (Williams 1977, 112). Hegemonic social formations must continuously adapt to counter-hegemonic movements. Anthropologists Jean and John Comaroff (1991) examine the concept of hegemony, and its relationship to culture, ideology and consciousness. They argue that Gramsci's conception of culture is of a

> shared repertoire of practices, symbols, and meanings from which hegemonic forms are cast-and, by extension, resisted. Or, in other words, it is the historically situated field of signifiers, at once material and symbolic, in which occur the dialectics of domination and resistance, the making and breaking of consensus (Jean and John Comaroff 1991, 21)

Nilsen and Cox (2013) differentiate between social movements from above and social movements from below. When dominant social groups organise to maintain and advance their social position by mobilising and directing cultural, economic and political resources to those ends these can be considered social movements from above. Cox and Nilsen's Gramscian framework begins with the distinction that Gramsci makes between "common sense" and "good sense" (Gramsci 1998, 333, 337-8).

> The 'common sense' that underpins people's everyday activity, Gramsci suggested, is an amalgamation of elements originating in the hegemonic projects of social movements from above and the contradictory logic of 'good sense' – those aspects of subaltern consciousness that indicate that 'the social group in question may indeed have its own conception of the world'. (Nilsen and Cox 2013)

Capitalism understood as an institutionalised social order maintains hegemony and generates crises at different scales and at different

institutional levels. Systemic crises affect peoples' everyday lives in different ways. The forms of resistance that emerge from everyday practices are what Foucault (1982) refers to as *Immediate Struggles*. These are immediate struggles, in the sense that crises are experienced as personal and particular and as a result those affected "do not look for the 'chief enemy', but for the immediate enemy. Nor do they expect to find a solution to their problem at a future date (that is, liberations, revolutions, end of class struggle)" (Foucault 1982).

The impacts of systemic crises can be spatially dispersed across geographic territories. For those affected this can accentuate the sense that their experience is exceptional, isolated or particular. It is not a given that people will find support, identify systemic forces as causative, de-personalise their situation or connect with social movements. Particularly if movements do not have a presence in those localities. That said, people do find ways of articulating their experience and practices of resistance.

A *local rationality* is the articulation of *good sense* in ways that they can be generalised beyond their original context. Local rationalities can take different forms, Nilsen and Cox (2013) offer some examples such as the defence of customary ways of life such as the moral economies documented by Thompson (1993) and offensive forms such as urban counter-cultural movements that organise autonomous spaces (Cox 1999).

Militant particularisms are when a *local rationality* is deployed, publicly in open confrontation, in moments of struggle where the distinctions and oppositions between "them" and "us" become increasingly clear. As these confrontations are more public there emerges in these moments possibilities for bridging and linking different struggles. Though *militant particularisms* face opposition and may not survive. When they do survive the practices, skills and imaginaries, those elements of which they are constituted can be further generalised and abstracted from the particulars of their original contexts and struggles to be applied elsewhere. Through the bridging of movements and struggles, mutual learning and cooperation, "common enemies are named; common strategies and collective identities are

developed across social and spatial boundaries" (Nilsen and Cox 2013). The transcendence from the particulars of local and immediate struggles necessitates a process of *translation* "from the concrete to the abstract" (Nilsen and Cox 2013). This abstraction makes possible transcendence from *militant particularisms* to organising *campaigns.*

Campaigns are struggles, organised and coordinated across spatial boundaries, throughout a region, a state and even across borders. Defined as "the organisation of a range of local responses to specific situations in ways that connect people across those situations, around a generalised challenge to the dominant forces which construct those situations" (Nilsen and Cox 2013). Nilsen and Cox (2013) present the struggles against dam-building projects in India as an example where campaigns headed by Narmada Bachao Andolan were organised across multiple states. For a variety of reasons, many movements can stop here. It is when the focus of movements such as these begin to develop a systemic analysis, when the object and goals of contestation, and strategies shift to challenging the social totality, aimed at transforming social structures and systems then these movements move towards the development of *Social Movement Projects.* The form of collective action taken by Social Movement Projects:

> (a) challenges to the social totality which (b) aim to control the self-production of society and (c) have or are developing the potential for the kind of hegemony - leading the skilled activity of different social groups - that would make (b) and hence (a) possible. (Nilsen and Cox 2013)

The example of a social movement project they provide is the anti-capitalist movements in the late 1990s and the early 2000s. These heterogeneous movements were very much part of a wave of global mobilisations that included the alter-globalisation movement and the World Social Forums with the slogan "Another World is Possible". Nilsen and Cox (2013) link these movements to the anti-austerity struggles across Europe which includes 15M and the Occupy movement.

The commons as a bridging concept

I have mentioned that the commons has been a key bridging concept within

social movement processes (Rakopoulos 2016). It is necessary to elaborate on what I mean by this. Within movement processes there are moments where bridging or linking of different struggles becomes possible. In which different struggles encounter and recognise in each other some degree of commonality. They may identify "common enemies" (Nilsen and Cox 2013) or find some basis for mutual learning and cooperation. In the process of coming to understand and learn from each other's struggles movements might look for a common language which while abstracted to some degree from the particulars of different struggles serves to reframe those struggles in an inclusive manner, along common grounds, making them parts of the same struggle in a sense. Finding a shared language enables different movements to work together, to coordinate and organise *campaigns* across a territory (Nilsen and Cox 2013). I argue that part of what has made the commons as an idea salient within the particular political contexts of Spanish and Catalan social movements is that it has figured within these movements as a bridging concept enabling the linking of diverse movement actors.

If we are to understand the appeal or interest in the commons in different movement contexts we need to ask why the language of the commons, and not some other terminology is adopted, for example, cooperation, mutual aid or self-organisation? It is not that different movement actors sit down and agree they all subscribe to some same abstract or normative academic definition of the commons as in Ostrom's design principles (1990). Indeed when movement actors refer to commons, they can refer to quite different contexts and practices. It is also not that the commons represents a new practice that movements adopt. Rather, it is the language of the commons that is new, as it is used sometimes to describe well established activist practices that might otherwise be referred to as mutual-aid, solidarity or as an assembly. Asking whether these practices fit some normative definition, if they are a 'real commons' misses a lot of what is happening in these movement contexts or worse, it obscures historical continuities of activist praxis.

What I refer to here as a bridging concept and how it functions is similar to what social movements scholars refer to as *frame alignment* or *frame bridging* (Snow et al. 1986; Lim 2013). Framing tends to be oriented towards communicating and engaging broader publics in a process of mobilisation. It is a process in which diverse movement actors work to articulate a clear and shared analysis or diagnosis of the issue, as well as a prognosis as to how that issue might be addressed. By contrast movements are not adopting the language of the commons as a means to appeal to the general public or political representatives with whom it has little resonance. When a group describes how they organise as a commons or their practice as commoning, they are usually referring to aspects of their internal organising practice. Rather than framing a problem or an issue and saying this is what we are opposed to, the language of the commons is affirmative, a way for movements to say this is what we are for, a commitment to democratic ways of organising that centre people's collective agency and capacities for cooperation as means for addressing needs. For these reasons, while acknowledging the similarity to frame alignment, I use the terms bridging process or bridging concept.

Susser identifies three urban commons which when brought together "set the conditions for a renewed right to the city" (Susser & Tonnelat 2013; Harvey 2012). These three urban commons are "comprised of (1) production and social reproduction, (2) collective use of public space, and (3) collective spheres of creative expression" (Susser 2017a). When considering the case of Barcelona, Susser remarks that "almost everyone I spoke with, whether in Podemos, PAH, Barcelona en Comù, or the cooperative housing movements, traced their active political engagement to 15-M" (Susser 2017b). The three urban commons that Susser identifies closely align with what Flesher Fominaya (2020, 130) identifies as the three ideational frameworks of 15M; Feminism, Autonomy, Hacker Ethics and Technopolitical Imaginary. The feminist movement contests the gendered divisions of labour, between production and social reproduction, that is the politics of care. The autonomist movement have contested the politics of

space, squatting and resisting the commodification of urban space. Hackers and free culture activists contest the commodification of our means of creative expression and communication. These are different movements, they organise around different practices and objectives, yet they are not exclusive and each has adopted the language of the commons. I argue that the salience of the commons as a political subject, at least in Spain, can in part be attributed to its serving as a bridging concept between these different movements. This is not because movements agree on a shared definition of the commons, but because the commons refers to something else, something affirmative which movements agree on, a rejection of the corrosive imposition of market logics and the commodification of social relations. For each of these movements, the commons represents a domain in which social relations are de-commodified (Harvey 2012, 73) and it is through varied practices of commoning, which includes democratic forms of deliberation that ordinary people assert their agency and recover their capacities to resist, to organise and mobilise collectively to address and meet their needs. It is in rejecting the market and state as "the only way" (Ostrom 1990) that the commons represents a radical systemic critique.

Caffentzis (2004) has argued the commons/enclosure discourse developed as a kind of bridging concepts in the context of the alter-globalisation movement, bridging dialogue and experience between movements in the global north and south.

> commons/enclosures discourse in the 1990s allowed different components of the antiglobalization movement to connect their struggles, from indigenous peoples' demand for a return not just of land, but of common land and the practices that make its use possible, to the software designers who were demanding that their creations become part of a larger human pool of communication and creativity accessible to all…(Caffentzis 2004)

Juris (2008) documented the experience of Catalan activists in the anti-globalisation and global justice movements of the late 1990s and early 2000s. Activists in the city organised through networks of physical spaces, squats and social centres but also through digital spaces, websites, mailing

lists, chat rooms. These physical and digital spaces constituted counterpublics (Olesen 2005; Warner 2002; Fraser 1990), where critical debate and social movement organising took place. Activists were not only concerned with local issues but also participated in transnational activist networks (Juris 2008). In his ethnography, Juris describes a "cultural logic of networking" (Juris 2008, 11) among activists who viewed the collaborative development of free and open source software as "a model for political organising and a potential harbinger of postcapitalist forms of economic, social, and political organization" (Juris 2008, 16-17). Flesher Fominaya (2020) argues that long established activist networks established during previous cycles of social struggle were critical to the development of 15M. There is a continuity, informed in particular by the practice of autonomist movements in Spain (Flesher Fominaya 2020). This continuity has also informed the development of the commons in Barcelona. It is important to recognise the historical relationship of these discourses and practices as part of broader movement-processes aimed at the articulation and construction of alternatives to capitalism.

Boundary Struggles and Capitalism as an institutionalised social order

Theorising commons as part of counter-hegemonic struggles requires some formulation of what is being contested. I found feminist Nancy Fraser's theorisation of capitalism (2014) useful in this regard. Fraser is critical of models of capitalist crisis that focus exclusively on monetary and economic factors. While Marx's thought offers useful conceptual resources, Fraser argues that an "expanded conception of capitalism" adequate to our times is necessary.

Rather than consider capitalism purely as an economic system, Fraser (2014) argues that the economic and non-economic are co-constitutive moments of a dynamic whole, where capitalist economy is part of a larger conception of capitalist society. Fraser considers capitalism as an institutionalised social order. Capitalism's economic front story of commodity production and market exchange are only made possible by its non-economic backstory, the

background conditions on which Capitalism depends provide its *conditions of possibility.* Capitalism's conditions of possibility rest and depend on historically instituted divisions between, (1) production and social reproduction, (2) the human and the natural, (3) economy and the polity. They are Capitalism's 'Other'. The relationship between the formal economic sphere and the non-economic is not functionalist. These divisions are not static, the non-economic realms have a character of their own. They are reservoirs of non-economic normativity with ontological grammars full of political possibility (Fraser 2014). Conflict and encounter between the economic and non-economic domains are what Fraser terms boundary struggles.

Fraser's conceptualisation of capitalism as an institutionalised social order and the contestation of that order as *boundary struggles*, provide an interesting lens for considering struggles for the commons. Shifts in property regime, acts of enclosure can be conceived as boundary struggles. Resistance to such processes may be direct such as in moments of protest, or it might take other creative forms such as in the construction of alternative institutions and forms of organisation that aim to reflect the values of those movements and protect their practices and ways of life.

Understanding capitalism as an institutionalised social order we can consider that there are varieties of capitalism, in which markets and market actors are constituted through particular legal and institutional orders, structured and regulated by states at various levels of government. Social movements from above and below experience differentials in access to institutions at different levels (Nilsen and Cox 2013). Municipal, regional, national, supranational and international institutions are removed by different degrees with channels for formal access tightly regulated. Different levels of government have different administrative competencies, which define the scope of action. For activists in municipalist movements such as Bcomú, local political institutions are a critical site of political contestation. They are considered as the level of government closest to the everyday lives of people. The competencies of local government are indeed limited. Those limitations can

be assumed, or they can be tested in practice, as they surely have been by Bcomú and social movement actors in the city. In this latter case, a practical experience of those limitations can come to inform movement practice and strategy in the longer run.

In this thesis, I document some elements and achievements of this broader social movement project as they relate to the subject of commons. This has involved expansive support for participatory democracy, the social and solidarity economy, the development of urban commons policies with some acquiring rights for decades to come, and finally policies in support of the commons collaborative economy. Any one of these areas would be a study in its own right. I aim to illustrate some of the diversity of institutional forms the commons takes in Barcelona and to show how taken together, these movements constitute an alternative economy in the city.

Theoretical Conclusion

In this chapter I began with a consideration of practice theory and in particular the relationship between practice and processes of institutionalisation. Sewell does away with the distinction between resource and rules, with the consideration that what defines resources as such are really rules of another kind, informed by what he calls cultural schemas. Harvey makes the point that Ostrom "limited her inquiry to so-called 'natural' resources such as land, forests, water, fisheries, and the like. (I say 'so-called' because all resources are technological, economic, and cultural appraisals, and therefore socially defined.)" (Harvey 2012, 71-72). Harvey argues that the commons should not be construed as a type of thing but as a social relation.

> The common is not to be construed, therefore, as a particular kind of thing, asset or even social process, but 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 deemed crucial to its life and livelihood. (Harvey 2012, 73)

Bodirsky (2018, 126), drawing on Nugent, builds on this point and argues

for a conception of property not as a thing but as "relationships among people that are mediated by material and nonmaterial elements of culture" (Nugent 1993, 341).

The social definitions of things, valued as particular kinds of property or resources, are historically and culturally variable. Qualities and values ascribed to things are very often socially prescribed and not inherent in the thing itself. In contemporary urban contexts where the capitalist mode of production is hegemonic, resources are defined as forms of property through legal norms, transformed into commodities and exchanged on markets in the pursuit of profit. These social property relations have historically been established and enforced through state and other forms of violence. They are legitimised in legal norms and maintained through regimes of power characterised by highly unequal social relations.

Contestation can emerge over the different treatment of resources, for example as mere property or commodities without regard to their social and cultural significance. Contestation can take many forms, through protest, direct action, or occupations for example, but it can also inform a political programme and policies. The state is also a site for contesting power and property relations. The question then is, where are the opportunities and what are the possibilities of contestation? In the case of the municipalist movement in Barcelona, local and municipal institutions are sites for such contestation.

As Bodirsky argues, the distinction made by Ostrom and her followers between resource and property regime remains analytically useful, as a means for understanding changes in property regime, in processes of enclosure, from common property regimes to state or private property regimes, from state to private, and so on. But it is also useful for an analysis of hybrid arrangements, as is the case in many actually existing commons. The assumption that states and markets represent the "only way" (Ostrom and Cox 2010) remains hegemonic, but as that hegemony is contested this position appears increasingly as ideology (Jean & John Comaroff 1991, 23-24).

Commoning refers to practices aimed either at the establishment or maintenance of common property regimes. While we could consider transformations in property relations towards common property regimes generally as counter-hegemonic, this does not mean that those who participate in commons projects necessarily see themselves in political terms. Practices of commoning are diverse, many are not particularly motivated by politics or an opposition to capitalism and some as we have seen are even compatible with it.

In this chapter I also presented some examples of adaptive strategies, technical, legal and political, and argued that these kinds of strategies are aimed at defending or extending practices through processes of institutionalisation. Regarding practices or routines, Sewell argues that "institutions in general might be defined as machines for the production and maintenance of routines" (Sewell 2005, 273). The relative autonomy of institutions and institutional forms from practitioners and vice versa also means that institutions can depart from the original impetus, values and practices which informed their development. While the initial creation of new institutional forms may very well be a product of counter-hegemonic struggles, institutionalisation in itself does not guarantee that practices and values will persist. There are always risks of de-politicisation or co-optation, particularly when institutions are privileged over the people that constitute them, or when abstracted as simplified models and decoupled from their contexts of origin. Institutions are expressions of practices and they can support them, but without practitioners they can become empty shells.

While processes of institutionalisation can expand and extend practices, it is easy for the two to become conflated. A politics of the commons can all too easily be limited to the politics of particular institutional forms focusing on technical issues, licences, or making a fetish of organisational processes at the expense of an attention to broader solidarities, opportunities for mobilising and political change. For these reasons the politics of practices and of institutions require renewal of political identity and social solidarity; publicly asserted through invocation of memory and history with "images,

stories, and legends" (Taylor 2004, 23) that situate them politically. Solidarities are made real when tested in moments of social crisis that demand explicit and concrete action for their renewal. Such acts are at once symbolic and material. The social legitimacy of counter-hegemonic institutions may well depend on their capacity to respond to such situations, but by doing so, such acts affirm common practice and give ground to shared social imaginaries. Understanding how such social imaginaries are constituted requires an attention to practices and institutions, but it also requires an attention to the public performance of politics and solidarity.

Chapter 3. Solidarity Economy

Introduction

In the course of my fieldwork, I came to recognise that actors associated with the solidarity economy were playing important roles informing the alternative economic vision of the municipalist movement. Following the successful election of Bcomú in the municipal elections in 2015, the First Deputy Mayor's Office of Economy, Employment, Competitiveness and Tax, created a new official position and department, El Comissionat d'Economia Cooperativa, Social i Solidària (The Commissioner for Cooperative, Social and Solidarity Economy).

The new department would be critical in leading a major change in the direction of the city's model of economic development. According to Fernández & Miró (2016) the social and solidarity economy accounts for a substantial 8% of employment and 7% of Barcelona's GDP. This economic transformation would be supported by an investment of 25 million, guided by an ambitious plan, *Pla d'Impuls de l'Economia Social i Solidària 2016-2019* (PIESS; Plan to Boost the Social and Solidarity Economy), with a range of policies, training programmes and grants. This alternative economic vision did not appear out of nowhere, it was developed over the previous decades among actors participating in local, regional, national and international networks for solidarity economy, as well as in social movement processes such as the World Social Forums.

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the reader to the solidarity economy through an explication of its historic development first at the international level and then at the regional level through La Xarxa d'Economia Solidària de Catalunya (XES; The Network of Solidarity Economy of Catalonia). The character of commons projects in Barcelona is informed by their relation with other local actors, particularly those associated with cooperativism and solidarity economy. While processes of collaboration and dialogue between solidarity economy and commons actors

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was underway in Barcelona prior to 2015, support from the municipality has helped strengthen this convergence. This will be examined in later chapters. I conclude this chapter by summarising two theoretical approaches to the solidarity economy, the first the *plural economy* of Laville (2010) followed by a political economy approach articulated by Homs (2020) and the HOSARALMO Collective (2019).

The significance of these movements will become apparent when we return to the topic in later chapters. In chapter seven on Barcelona's urban commons policy we will see how practices and tools first developed by the XES are adapted to support the urban commons. In chapter eight on the commons collaborative economy, we see the local convergence of the commons and solidarity economy in action, as commons and solidarity economy actors collaborate, in movement spaces, events and projects and in the articulation of hybrid projects that adapt and integrate elements of cooperatives and commons. In chapter nine, I document my participation in the commons axis of the World Social Forum of Transformative Economies, a transnational movement process and series of events organised by the XES in partnership with RIPESS (Réseau Intercontinental de Promotion de l'économie Sociale Solidaire; Intercontinental network for the promotion of the social solidarity economy).

Solidarity Economy: General Introduction

> Like all terms of political struggle, the definition of "solidarity economy" is widely contested. For some, it refers to a set of strategies aimed at the abolition of capitalism and the oppressive social relations that it supports and encourages; for others, it names strategies for "humanizing" the capitalist economy—seeking to supplement capitalist globalization with community-based "social safety nets." (Miller 2005)

As Miller argues, solidarity economy is a contested term. The concept of solidarity economy is adopted and mobilised in different ways in different places. Solidarity economy projects are shaped as they respond to the

particulars of their political, economic, social, cultural and environmental contexts. In some places the term is associated with radical politics and social movements, in others solidarity economy has become part of the langue of institutions. Solidarity economy gives contemporary expression to collective practices historically rooted in older traditions of associative and cooperative movements. Poirier (2014), Laville (2010a & 2010b) and Miller (2006) examine the development of solidarity economy in historical and theoretical terms.

Social Economy different traditions and approaches

The concept of solidarity economy intersects and overlaps with terms such as social economy, third sector and social enterprise. However, while solidarity economy initiatives may be part of sectors such as the social economy, not all social economy initiatives are automatically part of the solidarity economy. Likewise, while some solidarity economy initiatives may be not-for-profits or considered social enterprises, not all social enterprises or not-for-profits are part of the solidarity economy. According to Poirier (2014) and Laville (2010) these different concepts can generally be distinguished between Anglo-American and Euro-Latin American influenced approaches.

The European origins of social economy are rooted in the historic associative traditions and social struggles of the 19th century that led to a set of political compromises where organisations such as cooperatives, mutuals and associations achieved legal recognition. According to Poirier (2014), in French, Spanish and Portuguese-speaking countries, the "social" in the European conception of social economy refers to the type of ownership, stakeholders as opposed to shareholders, with one member one vote, such as in the cooperative model. This can be contrasted with a conception of social economy appearing in English-speaking countries in the 90s where "social" refers to a particular sector or type of activity, and not only ownership, for example, social and health care. Social economy in Anglophone countries is also frequently equated with the third sector which is meant to be inclusive

of everything that is not the public sector or private sector. For some the social economy is a question of legal status, for example charities or non-profits, such a definition could easily include foundations financed by big business.

The inclusion of cooperatives, associations and mutual societies makes the European concept of social economy broader than the American non-profit approach. For cooperatives, a ban on the distribution of profits, as in the case of non-profits, is not the decisive criteria. Rather, the private interests of investors or members are limited. For example, cooperatives are based on the democratic principle of one member one vote. It may be possible for individual members to invest and purchase multiple shares, however members' voting power remains equal regardless of differentials in holdings of share capital. Furthermore, cooperatives are not founded primarily as vehicles for the purpose of generating returns for investors. Investor interests are mediated through the process of democratic decision-making at the organisational level in favour of a mutual interest or shared patrimony that contributes to the common good.

At the same time, a legal definition is not sufficient to determine whether a cooperative or mutual is part of the social economy. In some countries, there is little or no cooperative education or cooperative legislation is not well-developed or supported, yet there are organisations that independently adopt and align with the cooperative principles (International Cooperative Alliance 1995). In other countries, there are cooperatives, in name only, that have little or no regard for the cooperative principles, for example where they are under government control.

Defourny Et al. (2000, 30) offer a normative definition of the social economy.

> The social economy includes all economic activities conducted by enterprises, primarily co-operatives, associations and mutual benefit societies, whose ethics convey the following principles:
>
> 1. placing service to its members or to the community ahead of profit;

2. autonomous management;

3. a democratic decision-making process;

4. the primacy of people and work over capital in the distribution of revenues.

Laville argues that with the cooperative as the point of reference, this definition of social economy excludes associations whose resources come from redistribution or whose operations are led by voluntary membership, in other words those that engage in non-market activities are marginalised.

> social economy is composed of non-capitalist enterprises operating in the market and the main indicator of their success is the volume of their market activities, thereby burying from view any questions concerning their internal functioning and non-market operations. Thus, associations whose resources largely come from redistribution and volunteers are on the border of a social economy… (Laville 2010b, 230)

These legal and sectoral approaches also leave unanswered the question of the relationship between the social economy and the broader capitalist economy as well as to political institutions and democracy. Cooperatives, mutuals and associations are important parts of the social economy, but many today do not identify with movements for systemic change and operate like any other business accepting the status quo of the capitalist market economy. It is in many ways through a recognition of this that the movement for solidarity economy emerged, as a critique of the de-politicisation of cooperativism and aiming to recover and revitalise the radical democratic spirit and solidarity with movements for social justice.

Solidarity Economy: A brief history

Poirier (2014) attributes the first known use of the term *economía solidària* (solidarity economy) as far back as 1937 to Felipe Lorda Aliaz who was a member of the anarchist syndicalist trade union in Barcelona, the Confederació Nacional del Treball (CNT; National Confederation of Labor).

The concept of solidarity economy as it is understand today emerged as a popular concept in Latin America and in France from the mid-1980s. In

France during the 1990s it was adopted and broadly promoted by REAS (Réseau de l'économie alternative et solidaire; the network of alternative and solidarity economy). While the French REAS ceased operations in 1998, the national network for solidarity economy in Spain today continues under the same name, REAS (Red de Economía Alternativa y Solidaria; Network of Alternative and Solidarity Economy).

Poirier (2014) locates the spread and adoption of the term in English-speaking countries between 2005-2007. The global spread and adoption is also closely linked with the transnational convergences of social movements participating in the alter-globalisation movements of the late 90s and early 2000s, with a number of international meetings taking place within the process of the various World Social Forums.

In March 1997, a group from French and Spanish-speaking countries met at Leuven University in Belgium and decided to organise a first international meeting. The meeting took place in September that same year in Lima, Peru and was marked by the publication of the joint Lima Declaration (Lima Declaration 1997). From its origins in the Lima Declaration the goals of this "political and social project" have been to contest the "hegemony of a development model which shows, both in the North and the South, its limits while destroying the planet and generating poverty, exclusion". For an extended extract from the declaration see Appendix 1.

In 1998, in Porto Alegre in Brazil, the Red Latino Americana De La Economía Solidaria (Latin American Solidarity Economy Network) was created during the First Latin Meeting of Solidarity Culture and Socioeconomy. It included participants from Brazil, Mexico, Argentina, Peru, Nicaragua, Bolivia, Colombia, and Spain (Miller 2006).

The workgroup of the Global Network of the Solidarity Socioeconomy (WSSE) of the Alliance for a Responsible, Plural and United World also emerged between 1998 and 1999 supported by the Foundation for the Progress of Humanity (FPH).

The first World Social Forum in 2001 marked the creation of the

Global Network of the Solidarity Socioeconomy, fostered in large part by an international working group of the Alliance for a Responsible, Plural, and United World. By the time of the 2004 World Social Forum in Mumbai, India, the Global Network had grown to include 47 national and regional solidarity economy networks from nearly every continent, representing tens of thousands of democratic grassroots economic initiatives worldwide. (Miller 2006)

At the international level, RIPESS is the lead promoter of solidarity economy today. RIPESS Intercontinental, the intercontinental network for the promotion of social solidarity economy, emerged from this series of international meetings. Starting with the meeting in Lima, then following the meeting in Quebec 2001, the network was formally named RIPESS in December 2002 (Poirier 2014). These were followed by meetings in Dakar 2005, Luxembourg 2009 and Manilla 2013 (Poirier 2014). RIPESS Intercontinental is comprised by five continental networks representing solidarity economy actors from Latin America & Caribbean (RIPESS-LAC), North America (RIPESS-NA), Africa (RAESS; African SSE Network), Asia (ASEC; Asian Solidarity Economy Council) and Europe (RIPESS-EU). It is worth noting that RIPESS Europe was founded in 2011 at a meeting in Barcelona of national and regional networks from various European countries. The XES are a founding member.

Social Economy, Solidarity Economy or Social Solidarity Economy?

According to Poirier (2014) the introduction of new terms 'social and solidarity economy' and 'social solidarity economy' (SSE) originally evolved under the influence of the Québécois network during the 2001 meeting, with the 'and' being removed at the request of Latin American participants. The combination of 'social' and 'solidarity economy' are interpreted in different ways. In some cases it can be read as an inclusive term, including both social economy and solidarity economy. This inclusive reading of social and solidarity economy has generally been adopted by governments and intergovernmental agencies such as the ILO (International Labour Organization) and the UN (United Nations). While social solidarity

economy (SSE) is used in the name of RIPESS, Poirier (2014) points out that solidarity economy is more broadly used among social movements in Latin America, Asia and in English-speaking countries. From another perspective, the combination of the social and the solidarity economy can be understood as a recognition of the importance of the associative traditions within the social economy, such as the cooperative movement, while at the same time recognising that not all entities of the social economy necessarily participate in the solidarity economy. As an international network with a diverse membership there is an ongoing process of discussion and debate among RIPESS members in relation to concepts, definitions and frameworks for the social and solidarity economy. In their *Global Vision,* RIPESS (2015) present definitions of the social economy and the solidarity economy. The social economy is essentially an economic concept and "commonly understood as a 'third sector' of the economy, complementing the 'first sector' (private/profit-oriented) and the 'second sector' (public/planned)" (RIPESS 2015). By contrast solidarity economy is a political concept that "has a systemic, transformative, post-capitalist agenda" (RIPESS 2015). RIPESS "uses the term social solidarity economy to embrace both the solidarity economy and the more radical end of the social economy" (RIPESS 2015). For extended definitions from the Global Vision document see Appendix 2.

Achievements and Challenges

The global movement for solidarity economy continues to grow. The period following the 2008 financial crisis was a turning point for the movement as it found broader mainstream recognition and made substantial political and legal gains. Poirier et al. (2018) point out that over 30 countries have either adopted or are in the process of adopting SSE legislation and policies at local, regional and national levels. At the international level SSE has been recognised by the United Nations, first by the ILO with conferences on the subject in 2009 and 2010, then following a further conference organised in 2013 by the UNRISD (United Nations Research Institute for Social

Development) with the creation of a dedicated UN task force, the UNTFSSE (United Nations Inter-agency Task Force on Social and Solidarity Economy).

The mainstreaming of solidarity economy also poses new challenges for the movement. On the one hand mainstream recognition can be beneficial, the introduction of laws, regulations, policies and supportive programmes for SSE can strengthen the position of the movement. The alignment of SSE goals with government social development agenda can present opportunities but also risks SSE being instrumentalised or being incorporated into an agenda of privatisation of social services. As SSE actors develop more integrated relations with state and market actors they may be led to adopt mainstream business and managerial practices that privilege efficiency over equity (Utting 2016). Interpretations and definitions of SSE by governmental organisations might diverge from those of actors in the movement with the risk that important features which make SSE distinct could be left out or downplayed, in particular the more political aspects such as the important emphasis SSE actors place on social and systemic transformation through democratic empowerment, collective ownership and self-management (Utting 2016). Following an introduction to the Catalan network for solidarity economy, I contrast two different theoretical approaches which explore these challenges in more detail.

La Xarxa d'Economia Solidària

Inspired by Latin American movements for solidarity economy during participation in the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre in 2001, a group of Catalan activists associated with the cooperative movement in Barcelona came together in 2002 and 2003 to create La Xarxa d'Economia Solidària de Catalunya (XES; The Network of Solidarity Economy of Catalonia). During the early twentieth century Catalonia had one of the most dynamic cooperative movements in Europe. However, the civil war and decades of suppression under the Francoist regime severely weakened the movement. Cooperative activists told me that by the time Spain transitioned to

democracy many cooperatives had lost sight of their origins among social movements and had become depoliticised and that some were even involved in corruption scandals. The creation of the XES was part of a response and an effort among cooperativists to revitalise the movement and to reconnect it with the social mission for a more democratic society and economy. Since its founding the XES has grown to have over 250 members throughout Catalonia (XES 2019).

It is important to make the distinction between the solidarity economy as a general political idea, and its articulation through the organisational and technical tools which movements use to construct it, something that was pointed out to me by a member of the XES during fieldwork. As a political idea and ideal, no single group has a monopoly on this discourse of solidarity economy. While the XES has its own definitions of solidarity economy, solidarity economy is more than the XES and not neatly bounded or defined by criteria such as membership or legal form. For example, while the XES have 250 members, the associated mapping project Pam a Pam identifies 850 initiatives and enterprises associated with the SSE throughout Catalonia (XES 2019). The XES might more usefully be considered as a set of organisational structures and tools to support the movement for solidarity economy.

The XES and its members are important actors in the solidarity economy in Catalonia and a key civil society network informing the development of public policies for the solidarity economy with Barcelona City Council which have included the commons collaborative economy. In this section I provide a summary introduction to the XES, its organisation and some of the tools it uses to promote and support the development of the SSE. Public policies for the SSE and their impacts will be accessed in the later chapter on the city council department for the promotion of SSE.

Organisational Structure
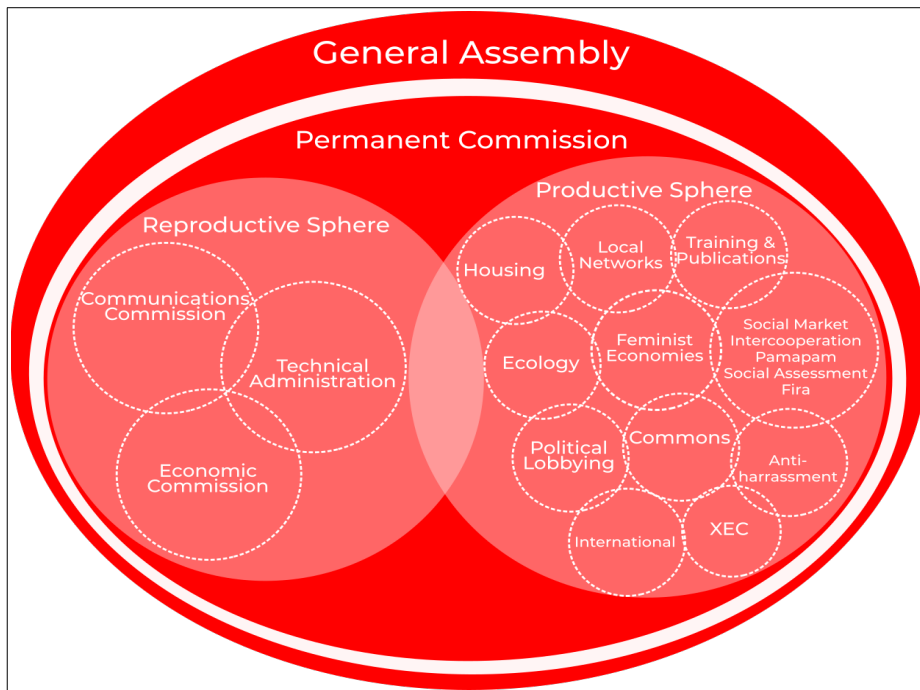
Figure 3: Organisational chart of the XES (XES 2021a) .

The XES has a horizontal organisational model and was intentionally structured to be different from hierarchically structured, sectoral and representative organisations such as the more traditional cooperative federations. The organisational model aims to balance administrative operations and volunteer activities of members. Ensuring a high degree of autonomy for members' initiatives. Reflecting the cooperative principles the XES is a member led organisation. The highest decision-making body is the *general assembly*.

The operations of the XES are coordinated in two parts or spheres, the *reproductive sphere* and the *productive sphere*. The *reproductive sphere* is focused on the administrative maintenance of organisation and the network with working groups managing and attending to the administrative, financial, technical and communications needs. Many of these tasks are managed by a paid staff.

The *productive sphere* is made up of volunteer working groups. These are generally divided between thematic or territorial working groups. Thematic

working groups bring together members from throughout Catalonia that are working on common themes, such as food and agroecology, social care and feminist economies, and cooperative development. In recent years a commons working group has been formed to foster convergence between solidarity economy actors and the commons movement, a subject I will return to in later chapters. *Territorial working groups* are volunteer groups spread throughout different localities, the villages, towns, and cities of Catalonia. These groups meet and work together at the local level. The makeup of these groups is mixed, including and responding to the different thematic interests of local member projects and organisations. Participation in both thematic and territorial groups enables members to collaborate locally, and to share knowledge and experience to strategise at regional and national levels. There are groups tasked with strategic priorities, external relationships and development of political advocacy and training programmes. There is also a care and participation group with a team of facilitators to ensure that all working groups, in both spheres, reproductive and productive, can function effectively. This group can assist with process issues and conflict mediation if necessary.

All areas and working groups coordinate with a *standing committee* made up of five people elected by the general assembly along with one representative from each of the working groups. The structure of the XES facilitates local and regional self-organisation. Member projects and organisations have a high degree of autonomy to take initiative both within the framework of the XES but also to initiate independent collaborations among members.

The XES Charter of Principles highlights key values relating to equity, work, environmental sustainability, cooperation, its non-profit status and territorial commitment. In the cooperative spirit, The XES "encourage cooperation rather than competition both inside and outside our own organisations" (XES 2017). The facilitation of effective inter-cooperation is a core organising principle and practice. To the extent possible, member projects, organisations and enterprises aim to source goods and services

from within this extended network, share knowledge and resources, and collaborate to meet their needs. This is a practical expression of solidarity and a means to support and promote the activities of the network and its members. To these ends, the XES have developed a number of concepts, practices and tools.

There are many ways and tools with which to build solidarity economies. The participatory organisational structure is of course an essential part. However, inter-cooperation is not only supported through the regular meetings and processes of the working groups. The XES has a number of tools that enable their broader membership to have an active role, including members of organisations that do not directly participate in the working groups. For example there is a regular programme of events and workshops. Most prominently the FESC (La Fira d'Economia Solidària de Catalunya; The Fair of Solidarity Economy of Catalonia), a large annual fair where members present their activities or market their produce at stalls, this is accompanied by a programme of talks, good food, live music and entertainment. The participatory and democratic organisational model, the social events, along with various tools all work together as means for supporting the solidarity economy. I will briefly present three of these tools; Mercat Social (Social Market), Balanç Social (Social Assessment) and Pam a Pam. Ricard a member of the XES described these tools during an interview:

> The way that the social market is structured in Catalonia it has some tools that help them, to be official, to be defined. For example Pam a Pam, it's a tool that makes it possible to create a mapping of social and solidarity economies, there is a tool called Balanç Social promoted by the XES that is a way to identify organisations and to identify the value that they are creating in the social market. To create data about the activity and officialise the way they are creating value. It's a way that you are officialising, structuring, constructing the alternatives, to create an alternative, to create another type of model than the rest of the society.

The Social Market

Figure 1. Social market scheme with nodes and flow

COOPERATIVE PRODUCTION OF GOODS AND SERVICES

INNOVATION

ETHICAL FINANCE
Ethical Banks, *Credit Unions*, Networks for Barter and Social Currency

SUPPORT SERVICES

FAIR TRADE
Fair Trade Shops, Point of Sale, Consumer and Service Cooperatives

DEFENSE

SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

SCALABILITY

ETHICAL & RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION
Individuals, Collectives, Organisations and Administration

DIFFUSION

Jordi Garcia (2002)

Figure 4: Diagram of Social Market. (Garcia 2002)

The exchange of goods and services among members is conceived of as a social market. This helps promote the circulation of value, supporting sustainable business and employment among solidarity economy projects and enterprises committed to social transformation. Exchanges in the social market may take place using the euro or with alternative and community currencies where accepted. XES members also work with community finance and ethical banks to fund project development. Though the social market includes commercial transactions it is not limited to monetary exchange, and can include other exchange activities of a non-commercial and non-monetary kind, such as time-banks or barter exchanges that involve the swapping of second hand goods. Members can also share knowledge, know how and where possible material resources.

Pam a Pam: Mapping the Solidarity Economy

Launched in 2012 the XES in partnership with SETEM developed a project called Pam a Pam (2020) which produces an online map of SSE actors in Catalonia and can be used for finding solidarity economy initiatives and sourcing goods and services. Initiatives that identify with the SSE and

interested in being on the map contact Pam a Pam, who have groups of volunteers in various localities called *Chinchetas* (little pins). *Chinchetas* arrange to meet and conduct interviews. Following a printed guide with a standard questionnaire and set of criteria, *chinchetas* access initiatives on various aspects for example, labour standards, democratic participation, ecological impact, gender and inclusivity and so on. Initiatives are not expected to score highly on all criteria and their experience on any given criteria can vary. With strengths in some areas and weaknesses in others, there are always experiences to share and to learn from. Through the interview process *chinchetas* decide on whether or not a project meets sufficient criteria and whether it should be recognised as part of the SSE. Initiatives do not need to be a member of the XES to be on the map, however taking the interview and being on the map is one of the steps towards membership. In this recognition of non-members as part of the SSE, Pam a Pam provides an example of the distinction between solidarity economy as a political idea and the production of solidarity economy through organisational and technical practice and tools. The Pam a Pam map of SSE actors enables members and the public to recognise and source goods and services from the solidarity economy. As of October 2019 the map had over 850 points (XES 2019).
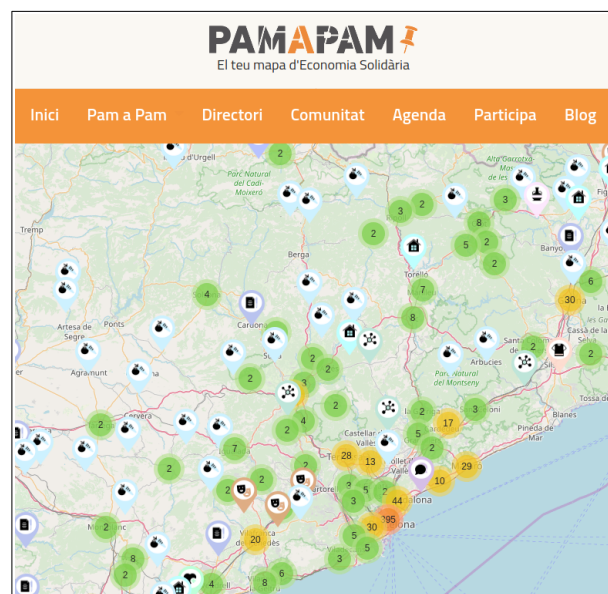
Figure 5: Pam a Pam (2020)

Balanç Social: A tool for self-assessment

Since 2007 members of the XES have taken part in a process of self-assessment using a tool called Balanç Social (Social Assessment). With a more detailed set of indicators than Pam a Pam the social assessment tool provides members a means for conducting social impact assessment. It has some similarities with the Global Reporting Index, a standard for corporate social responsibility. Over a period of three months each year the XES deliver in person presentations and trainings to support members in the self-assessment process which they complete online through the website Ensenya el Cor (XES 2020). Upon successful completion members can display a personal report as a mark of quality and as a proof of their progressive commitment to achieving social impact. The aggregate data is included in the annual report *Informe del Mercat Social* (XES 2019) and is featured on the website for the social market. The assessment also informs the overall reflexive process of the XES as working groups debate and discuss areas of need and future organisational priorities and programmatic direction. In 2019, 217 members completed the Balanç Social (XES 2019).

As it has grown, the XES has also become a vehicle for members to organise and advocate for changes in government policy at the local and regional levels. Since the electoral success of Bcomú to the city council of Barcelona in 2015 there has been a substantial programme with policy changes and public support for the solidarity economy which has contributed to an acceleration of its development in the city. We will examine these developments in more detail in the later chapter on the creation in 2015 of a city council department dedicated towards the promotion of solidarity economy.

Theoretical approaches to the Solidarity Economy

Plural Economy

Here I briefly introduce plural economy, a popular theoretical approach in research and policy for the solidarity economy developed by Laville

(2010a). I introduce this here for two reasons, on the one hand because Laville's formulation of plural economy draws on the literature of economic anthropology, but also because the language of plural economy is directly referenced in policy materials I encountered in the field, for example in the PIESS, Barcelona city council's plan to boost the social and solidarity economy.

Laville (2010a) develops a pluralistic approach to economy influenced by the work of Karl Polanyi and Marcel Mauss. In what is an important debate in the history of economic anthropology, Polanyi distinguished between formal and substantive approaches to the study of economic activity. The formal, characteristic of neoclassical economics, generally equates economy with markets. Here economy is about the efficient allocation of scarce resources, through competitive markets. The substantive conceives of economy in an expanded sense beyond market exchange, where the circulation and distribution of resources can be informed by cultural, customary and social norms and relationships, without necessarily being motivated by interest in private or personal material gain. For Laville (2010a, 77) the substantive "places the emphasis on relations between human beings and the natural environments from which they derive their means of sustenance. The substantive definition sees this interdependence as a constituent element of the economy."

Plural economy is based on the recognition of three different economic modalities: market exchange, redistribution and reciprocity. The relationship between these three can vary with different modalities dominating in different historical settings and contexts; for example, tribute and redistribution were important in feudal times with the rise of market exchange taking on greater significance in the transition to capitalism. According to Polanyi (2001) as the market economy developed historically throughout the 18th and 19th centuries it drove a process whereby economic practices, traditionally or customarily embedded in societies, were disrupted or replaced by capital intensive industry and manufacturing. Polanyi argued that this process of dis-embedding economy from society was often met by

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a double movement of resistance and rebellion. In the 19th century, resistance came in many forms, with the emergence of organised workers movements but also associative movements, such as the cooperative movement. The societal impacts and crisis generated by the pursuit of the utopian ideal of self-regulating markets or the ideology of laissez-faire were met by resistance movements that achieved substantial reforms in terms of civil and workers' rights, laying the foundations of a new social contract embodied in the welfare state. For Laville (2010b), democratic and social solidarity has been central to this process.

> Despite a drive to make the market largely autonomous and 'disembedded' from social relations, democratic solidarity also emerged in a distinctive form: public redistribution had its rules enacted through representative democracy; and reciprocity was able to unfold on the basis of the voluntary public commitments of free and equal citizens. Recognition of individual rights made possible the emergence of a solidarity that expressed social esteem as witnessed by acts of egalitarian reciprocity. This in turn fed a demand for a more abstract solidarity that contributed to widening of the scope of social rights to which public redistribution gave expression, allowing citizens to escape from dependency on traditional forms of philanthropy. In the context of a market economy, democratic solidarity thus defined itself through a combination of egalitarian reciprocity and public redistribution. The three economic principles thus endure, even though their forms and respective weight vary. (Laville 2010b, 231-232)

For Laville, solidarity economy represents a hybridity with a mix of the three economic modalities of market exchange, redistribution and reciprocity. With an emphasis on public action and social transformation, the principle of solidarity goes beyond the sectoral approach of the social economy as defined by organisational form.

Associative institutions are not only producers of goods and services for market exchange, they can also be sites of non-market economic practices, characterised by forms of redistribution or reciprocity. They can also be sites of democratic practice and collective action. They have in this sense a political and civic character, as active participants in the public sphere they

contribute to the social and common good. A plural economy framework aims to promote a greater democratisation of economy and the cultivation of a participatory civic culture. It includes diverse, non-capitalist forms of social organisation and social provision and recognises capitalist economic homogeneity as problematic. As a sociological and analytical approach, plural economy provides a useful framework from which a critique of overly legal or sectoral approaches, limited for example to the non-profit sector and social economy.

A political economy approach

Homs (2020) conducted ethnographic research with social and solidarity actors in Barcelona between 2017 and 2018, and it is among the few anthropological studies of this movement. The research was conducted following the creation of the new city council commission for cooperative, social and solidarity economy in 2015. Introducing this here, I am breaking a little with the chronological order of the thesis, however, the political economy approach Homs develops characterises some of the problems that solidarity economy activists face as they relate with political institutions and markets more generally and as such its elaboration here is of value.

Homs' ethnography examines how various social and solidarity economy actors respond to institutional discourses of entrepreneurship. Homs develops a valuable critique of how institutional support for the solidarity economy is situated within the broader political economy of European and Spanish employment policy in the fallout of the economic crisis and the impacts of austerity. In the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis, millions of people were left either unemployed or in increasingly precarious working conditions. Local, regional, national and European government agencies embraced discourses of entrepreneurship as a means to promote self-employment, this includes work activation schemes in the social economy and the promotion of social entrepreneurship (Homs 2020, 92). These policies were decades in the making. Homs cites numerous EU employment policies from the 1990s through to 2017, as well as Bogino (2015) who

identifies a high correspondence between EU and Spanish employment policies.

Homs argues that the articulation and endorsement of the social economy and social entrepreneurship is "underpinned by the neo-liberal state's disengagement from its responsibilities for public welfare" (Homs 2020, 94), and that these institutional discourses shift attention away from structural causes of unemployment and enable capital and state to externalise "the costs of the politics of austerity as governments transfer their responsibilities for safe-guarding welfare onto individuals, communities and specific sectors of labor (MacKinnon and Driscoll 2012) - including through the practices of the social economy and social entrepreneurship." (Homs 2020, 106).

Homs' interlocutors included activists from the solidarity economy, but also people from the public administration. Many "believed the ideology of entrepreneurship to be a strategy to hide the structural problems of unemployment" (Homs 2020, 97), while some "flatly refused to link their social and solidarity projects to entrepreneurship" (Homs 2020, 98), many incorporated or adapted discourses of entrepreneurship into their practice. Most interpreted institutional supports for social economy and social enterprise as 'opportunities'. Homs argues that it is only by obscuring structural factors, the massive destruction of jobs and the impacts of austerity "that people's needs can be performed as opportunities" (Homs 2020, 104).

Homs' article and correspondents show that these fields and discourses are contested among movement actors. However, for activists, these institutional opportunities are not simply economic, they are also political opportunities for the "social economy to attract greater resources, for activists to reach positions of power and for introducing social values into the conventional economy" (Homs 2020, 104).

The risk Homs recognises is that when engaging with institutions where access to resources such as government grants and supports are expanded,

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activists compromise, adopting institutional discourses for strategic purposes. Her concern is that radical political militancy and solidarity economy practices risk being "domesticated and emptied of critical political perspective" (Homs 2020, 95). Homs also reflects on "whether and to what extent initiatives from the social and solidarity economy introduce values that may configure a different or even an alternative economic logic. What is the role of inter-cooperation and competition in the so-called social market?" (Homs 2020, 95). On the one hand, the autonomy of cooperative and alternative economic initiatives is questionable when they become overly dependent on government grants or subsidies and make compromises such as adopting institutional discourses. Autonomy can be secured by other means, among these a degree of financial independence can be secured through production of goods or services for market exchange, yet this too entails risks, as consequently such activities subject cooperative and social economy initiatives to the discipline and dynamics of market competition in the capitalist economy (Homs 2020, 106-107). Radical cooperativists have long recognised that market competition exerts pressure on cooperatives to adopt competitive business practices that can conflict with their stated social values and goals. This problem becomes particularly pronounced among larger cooperatives. There are hierarchies within the social economy and discourses within the sector are shaped to a substantial degree by larger, more profitable entities. Homs highlights how among large cooperatives such as Mondragon, cooperation and its associated values are considered in terms of added value that improve market competitiveness. Major international events, such as the 2018 Global Social Economy Forum (GSEF), have also adopted this language in its theme "Values and Competitiveness, for Local, Inclusive and Sustainable Development". By contrast, members of the small cooperatives and networks with whom Homs corresponded:

> emphasized that social values are the seeds of social transformation as they imply internal practices such as recognizing collective property, redistributing surpluses and democratic decision-making within horizontal

assemblies-the main goal of which is not the reproduction of capital but the reproduction of life. (Homs 2020, 102)

Autonomy for solidarity economy actors from the state and capitalist market is pursued through a range of strategies. Among these are the practices of inter-cooperation and the fostering of a social market. Taken together, these strategies are intended to challenge the hegemony of the capitalist market. In contrast to the discourse of competitiveness among large establishment social economy actors, the practice of inter-cooperation among solidarity economy actors stands out and is understood as an alternative to competition (Homs 2020, 103). This involves the creation of networks, the pooling of resources and the promotion of exchange of goods and services among solidarity economy actors, considered as constituting a social market. Exchange in the social market is not mediated solely through euros. Alternative, social currencies, which might only circulate among solidarity economy initiatives are also promoted as a means of strengthening relations among actors. For Homs different economic logics are in "tension and conflict".

On the one hand, the hegemonic market is guided by market value; its ultimate goal is the expanded reproduction of capital. On the other hand, the logic of social reproduction seeks to extend the reproduction of life. (Homs 2020, 103)

Yet, Homs notes, many activists downplay these tensions and the power of the market to co-opt projects, with some arguing that these economies can operate in parallel, as different coexisting spheres of exchange (Bohannan 1965).

Homs is among a number of Spanish and Catalan economic anthropologists that bring a much-needed critical political economy perspective to the study of these alternative, cooperative and solidarity economies (HOSARALMO Collective 2019). They are particularly critical of academic and institutional discourses that tend to frame emergent alternative and cooperative practices as co-existing with capitalism as part of "diverse" (Gibson-Graham 2008) or "plural" economies (Laville, 2013). The political economy approach

supports a more nuanced understanding that recognises that these projects are not simply 'different' but are often articulated in opposition to hegemonic capitalist economy and "are not only opposed in their purposes, but which oppose the interests of different classes of people unequally situated and structurally confronted." (2019, 66).

The HOSARALMO Collective (2019, 66) argue that "concepts of conflict, articulation, integration and hegemony" are critical for understanding these economic practices. This enables a sensitivity to the ways in which associative practices and cooperation are not simply a resilient business formula in times of economic crisis but can be understood as forms of resistance through which people face precarity collectively (Homs 2020, 101). Homs concludes that although "some cooperatives espouse social transformation, the social economy and social entrepreneurship in their current forms do not challenge the hegemony of the capitalist economy" (Homs 2020, 107).

Homs' chapter does not fully distinguish between institutional discourses such as social economy and social entrepreneurship and the language of social movements such as solidarity economy. The social movement perspective, elaborated by Nilsen and Cox (2013), is useful in this case for distinguishing between the discourses of movements from above and movements from below, the depoliticised language of social entrepreneurship and the politicised language of the solidarity economy respectively. Homs recognises "bottom-up initiatives (Rakopoulos 2014) are articulated with top-down processes and vice versa" (Homs 2020, 97-98). Counter-hegemonic movements must continually be "renewed, recreated, defended, and modified" (Williams 1977, 112).

The discourse on solidarity economy emerged to address tendencies towards de-politicisation of associative and cooperative movements. It gave expression to the need of distinguishing practices and activities from the social economy in general and placed a value on more expressly political orientations towards systems change. The risks of co-optation and de-politicisation that Homs recognises are part of the dynamics of that field of

contestation. A political economy approach is critical to elaborating and acknowledging the structural and power dynamics that figure in the construction of movement processes and counter-hegemonic projects. What warrants further research are processes of politicisation, with an attention to moments and sites in which other aspects of political identity are invoked, mobilised and renewed, in which solidarity economy actors identify with contemporary and historic social struggles.

In the course of my fieldwork in Barcelona, the political and radical character of these movements was articulated and expressed more explicitly in particular spaces and events. For example, histories of neighbourhood struggles informed the identities of self-organised spaces, *ateneus* or urban commons. Continuities between the contemporary solidarity economy and the histories of the associative traditions and working class movements were highlighted during presentations and exhibits as part of the annual solidarity economy fair, the FESC. Transnational solidarities were affirmed and renewed during international events such as the World Social Forum of Transformative Economies. It is also in these spaces that the language of the commons is brought into dialogue, bridging older, more established discourses and traditions, with contemporary social practices of technologists and social movements.

Chapter 4. Urban Commons in Barcelona

In this chapter, I present a historical sketch of the development of urban commons in Barcelona up to 2015. Without going into the city's deeper history of working class and libertarian movements prior to or during the civil war, my aim here is to elaborate how among more recent historic social struggles, at least since Spain's transition to democracy, practices and demands for self-management have been a consistent feature among social and counter-cultural movements in the city. This more recent history has informed the development of urban commons and associated public policies which will be reviewed in chapter seven.

In their time, initiatives and movements in this chapter may not have explicitly identified with the language of the commons. Today, the commons represent a continuity of movement practice, describing what would in previous times been refferred to as *autogestió* (self-management).

The development of urban commons in Barcelona is therefore shaped by a history of demands for self-management, with origins in both radical and neighbourhood movements. I highlight the historic relation between three types of urban commons in the city of Barcelona. Illegally occupied *Okupa* or squatted social centres (SSCs), social centres that rent spaces from a private landlord, and social and cultural centres that acquire spaces through arrangements with public authorities.

I limit myself to a number of cases, for the following reasons. First, they illustrate the history and trajectory of developments associated with urban commons in the city. Second, they featured within my fieldwork and ethnography, as locations for meetings and events, or within the life experience of correspondents. Third, the experience of some of these urban commons have contributed to formative debates among social movements and informed public policies.

I highlight how the history of the neighbourhood movement of the transition, the movement of squatted social centres, and the housing

movement are inter-related. Issues around legalisation and anxieties about the risks of co-optation and institutionalisation have informed political positions and strategies for social change developed and adopted by movement actors. A number of prominent activists that later became involved with Bcomú, come from a part of this broader social and cultural movement milieu.

Debelle et al. (2018) documented 368 SSCs established in Barcelona between 1970s and 2013. While Debelle et al. (2018) focus primarily on the history of squatting in Barcelona, I adopt their periodisation of movement cycles as it is useful for illustrating these historical developments. The article is co-authored by researchers who, in addition to their scholarly work on the subject, have been active among local movements.

Debelle et al. (2018) identify five significant movement cycles:

Movement Cycle	Example	Description
(1)Emergence and Consolidation (1977–1995)	Ateneu Popular 9 Barris	Initially squatted, later legalised through an agreement with the council.
(2)Golden age (1996–2000)	Can Vies	SSC
(3)Maturity (2001–2005)	Can Masdeu	SSC
(4)Bifurcation (2006–2010)	Espai Social Magdalenes	SSC
(5)15M and Austerity (2011–2013)	Can Batlló	Arrangement with the council secured after mobilisation of neighbourhood movements that threatened to occupy the site.
	Flor De Maig	Arrangement with the council secured following an occupation of the space with assistance from activists in the squatting movement.
	Ateneu La Base	Self-managed space rented by its members. Established with the help of activists with experience from the squatting movement.

Figure 6: Self-managed social and cultural spaces

I adopt elements of this periodisation in the first part of this chapter. I consider the example of Ateneu Nou Barris as characteristic of the first

cycle of (1) *Emergence and Consolidation* (1977–1995). I briefly summarise the second and third cycles, but give more attention to those of relevance to this thesis, such as cycle (4) *Bifurcation*, and the case of Espai Social Magdalenes, which prompted debates about the use of squatting as a political tactic within the emergent housing movement. Cycle (5) 15M and austerity (2011–2013), saw the emergence of a number of new legal spaces, such as Can Batlló, Flor De Maig, Ateneu Cooperativa La Base. This period was characterised by solidarity between squatters and neighbourhood movements, as they shared tactics, joined in protest and mobilised to pressure local authorities to provide facilities. During my fieldwork in Barcelona, I visited Ateneu Nou Barris, Can Masdeu, Can Batlló, Flor De Maig, and Ateneu Cooperativa La Base on a number of occasions. I spoke with activists from some of these spaces as well as activists that had previously been involved in Espai Social Magdalenes prior to its eviction.

In the second part of this chapter the popular demand for self-managed spaces is contrasted with the public and private management of civic centres. Management arrangements based on partnerships between the city council and neighbourhood associations emerged from the mid-1990s, either as shared co-management or fully self-managed arrangements known as Gestió Cívica (Civic Management). These arrangements were conceived as promoting forms of citizen participation, however they were agreed on a case by case basis according to the demands of neighbourhood associations and were not promoted as a matter of public policy. Neighbourhood associations and movements have had an active role in the development of language and concepts that have come to inform urban commons policy after the election of Bcomú in 2015. This policy will be reviewed in chapter seven.

Urban commons are urban spaces or buildings, organised and managed collectively, by a community or movement which may identify with a particular locality, or be constituted through a cultural or socio-political project as in the case of artistic groups or counter-cultural movements. The self-management of social, cultural and economic life, is part of the popular

culture of Barcelona with historic roots in the late 19th and early 20th centuries among the radical traditions of the city's working class. Though repressed during the dictatorship, since the transition to democracy, activists and communities have sought to recover those traditions and practices. This parallels the recovery of the cooperative tradition, with the self-management of work and economic activities as part of the contemporary movement for solidarity economy. Since the transition, the demand for the self-management of social and cultural spaces has found expression in the squatting movement, the movement of social centres and through the establishment of *ateneus*. These different experiences in the city provide cases which inform the development of practice, discourse and policy relating to the urban commons.

Looking at the history of these urban commons, it is clear that they often originate as sites of contestation or purposefully political. There are illegally occupied spaces, squats and social centres for whom the act of transgressing the legal norms of property forms a critical part of their radical political identity. Other social centres rent space for their activities but also have a social and political character. Finally, there are social and cultural centres who secured properties through legal agreements with local authorities. Some of these were agreed after periods of social protest involving neighbourhood movements or used squatting as a tactic of protest.

The principle of autonomy is central to the spirit of self-management. The degree of autonomy can vary, as does the radical character of their politics. SSCs are in principle autonomous spaces. In their rejection of property rights, capitalism and the state they seek to assert in practice the power of communities and activists to self-organise, prefiguring their vision of a radically egalitarian society, organised through democratic and horizontal forms of assembly based decision-making. SSCs host a range of social and cultural activities and provide space for political organising, these activities help build relationships of solidarity with residents and neighbours. Squatters typically reject establishing formal relations with institutions of the state. This includes a rejection of state support such as grants which

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might fund social and cultural activities as this risks creating relationships of dependency and exposes projects to the possibility of co-optation. While some SSCs can and do acquire legal rights to properties, this is often controversial, as it is seen as undermining the radical autonomous political identity of these spaces. Social centres in rented buildings do not have the same kinds of problems with authorities, such as ongoing threats and interference from police. Social centres in properties leased or owned by the state can be self-managed by community associations with operating costs in part covered through government grants. As we will see, the politics of self-management are not always clear-cut and have been the subject of debate within and among social movements in the city.

Ateneus and neighbourhood movements during the transition

The resurgence of civic and neighbourhood movements was characteristic of social unrest between 1975 and 1982, during the period from the death of Franco and throughout Spain's transition to democracy. Neighbourhood movements organised around demands for collective consumption, cultural identity and political power (Castells 1983). In Barcelona there were also efforts towards the revival of counter-cultural and radical political movements associated with the anarchist and libertarian tradition (Cattaneo and Tudela 2014). One expression of this was through the establishment of *ateneus*.

Ateneus (Athenaeums) are popular social and cultural centres that have a long history in Catalonia. They played an important role in the social life of both the working class and the bourgeoisie of the early 20th century. There were as many as seventy-five established in Barcelona between 1877 and 1914 (Ealham 2010, 45). They often had a political character with bourgeois *ateneus*, much like social clubs, associated with Catalan Nationalist and Republican movements and *ateneus* in working class neighbourhoods associated with the Socialist and Anarchist movements.

Historically, libertarian inspired *ateneus* were self-managed and dedicated to empowerment of the working class through social and cultural education,

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often housing small libraries, hosting classes, workshops and cultural activities such as theatrical performances. They met genuine needs in working class communities with some larger *ateneus* providing child care services and operating cooperative stores with affordable foods (Ealham 2010, 45).

One example from the period of the transition, is Ateneu Popular Nou Barris, which Debelle et al. (2018) situate within the first cycle of *Emergence and Consolidation* (1977–1995). Nou Barris is a working class neighbourhood, bordering the Collserola mountains on the periphery of the city. Many residents in the neighbourhood are from migrant communities who came to Barcelona from other parts of Spain in search of work.

Residents first began organising in the mid-70s to improve their living conditions and led a successful campaign calling for ambulance and health care services. In 1976, having ignored residents' concerns regarding pollution and health, the government proceeded in supporting the development of an asphalt factory in the neighbourhood. In response, on January 9th 1977 over 200 residents took direct action. They overpowered security personnel and occupied the factory, dismantling machinery and equipment (Ateneu9B 2021). The factory never produced asphalt again.

 Over the following years, residents and community activists turned their attention to addressing the need for social and cultural facilities. Throughout the early 80s local groups used the vacant factory as a space from which to organise festivals and cultural events which raised awareness of the need for facilities. Taking inspiration from the tradition of self-managed libertarian *ateneus* residents debated the organisational model for the facilities and fought for self-management at a time when the council was promoting a model of civic centres directly managed by the council. Over the following years neighbours transformed the factory into a cultural centre and it was eventually legalised in 1998 (Debelle et al. 2018).

Ateneu Popular de Nou Barris continues to be active today and is a reference of community self-management in the city. While Ateneu Nou

Barris was politically motivated, Debelle et al. (2018) argue that it was not counter-cultural in the same sense as others in Europe associated with the punk scene at that time.

Squatted Social Centres and Counter Cultural Movements

The integration of the anti-francoist opposition into the parliamentary system of the local administration in the years following the transition was paralleled with a de-mobilisation and a crisis of transition era neighbourhood movements (Martínez 2013).

It is important to distinguish between squats that were primarily alternative housing arrangements and SSCs which are also social and cultural centres connected with local communities. From the mid-1980s a new generation inspired by punk movements in other parts of Europe as well as the Italian autonomist movement began to squat vacant buildings. Squats such as Colectivo Squat Barcelona and later Ateneo Libertario de Gràcia had a strong anarchist and counter-cultural identity. They hosted concerts but also adopted explicit political positions, against military conscription, fascism, patriarchy and homophobia (Debelle et al. 2018).

SSCs became important spaces for organising among new social movements. The growth of this movement continued as it found broad appeal among young people. This first cycle from 1977 to 1995, which Debelle et al. (2018, 57) refer to as a period of *Emergence and Consolidation*, saw progressive yearly growth in the number of SSCs, from 5 per year in 1977 to 15 per year by 1995.

The second cycle from 1996-2000, the *Golden Age* (Debelle et al. 2018), was marked by the introduction of a new penal code which was accompanied by increased repression, criminalisation and eviction of squatters; the movement also received greater media coverage. During this period the number of spaces increased to "an average number of 26.9 open and active SSCs per year" (Debelle et al. 2018).

The third cycle, *Maturity,* from 2001 to 2005, coincides with the rise of the anti-globalisation movement. SSCs became important nodes among broader

networks of social movements as squatters actively participated and provided space in support of organising demonstrations and social forums. This process of engagement introduced people from different movements to squatting. Anthropologist Jeff Juris (2008) observed how activists during this period were increasingly using the internet to organise and to coordinate actions through alternative media networks such as mailing lists and Indymedia. These practices of transnational networking linked local and global movements.

Can Masdeu, a SSC located on the boundary of the city where the neighbourhood of Nou Barris meets the Collserola mountains was established during this latter third cycle. In 2002, squatters resisted an attempted eviction which lasted three days. Their non-violent resistance was favourably covered in the media (Debelle et al. 2018).

Can Masdeu is an example of an ecological squat, it is located in a green and scenic area at the base of the mountains. Since the beginning it has been a centre that has promoted ecological ways of life. The many workshops and cultural events they host have helped them to develop a good relationship with neighbours in the area. This positive public image is an important factor that has enabled Can Masdeu to avoid eviction and it remains vibrant and active today.

Bifurcation and the emergence of the Housing movement

Properties in the Gothic Quarter of the central city district of Ciutat Vella are highly prized by property developers. The areas' central location is attractive for tourists. Residents have faced a continuous battle with local authorities over urban planning that has too often prioritised the interests' of hoteliers and property developers over social housing and residential amenities. One such developer was the hotel chain, Hotel Catalonia.

In 2004, Hotel Catalonia acquired a property on the street, Carrer Magdalenes-Amagós. The chain owned multiple hotels, with many in Barcelona and Ciutat Vella. At the time of purchase, residents were still living in the building. Hotel Catalonia decided not to renew tenants rental

contracts. Hotel Catalonia was granted a licence by Barcelona City Council to demolish the building in 2005. By 2006 there were four remaining rental contracts and the building was falling into disrepair. In solidarity with residents a group of 23 activists occupied the empty apartments. This marked the opening of Espai Social Magdalenes.

Magdalenes is probably best known for the role activists associated with it played in the emergence of the housing movement. Espai Social Magdalenes' aims were:

> to promote self-management, as well as promote and host initiatives that guarantee the exercise and defence of those rights that are not currently guaranteed in current policies: the right to housing, the right to the city, the right to freedom of movement of migrants, the right to political participation and the right to free access and production of culture. (Espai Social Magdalenes 2011)

Activists developed a discourse on rights that saw squatting as a tactic, instrumental for achieving broader social goals. They were also willing to enter into negotiation with public authorities when they considered such action advantageous. These were controversial positions among social movements in Barcelona. One criticism argued that engaging in negotiations would enable politicians and the media to divide the squatting movement, framing those that negotiate as 'the good' and those that don't as 'the bad' and that this could be used to legitimise further repression and police violence (Debelle et al. 2018). Disagreement on the tactical use of squatting divided the movement between those who engaged with institutions and those that did not. Thus, Debelle et al. (2018) characterise the period 2006–2010 as one of bifurcation.

Magdalenes was home to a number of collectives. Among these were Copyfight which organised free culture events, promoting file-sharing, remix culture and free software. In 2006, a group from Magdalenes met with Miloon Kothari, head of the UN rapporteur on the right to decent housing (Clavijo 2006). The collective V de Vivienda organised campaigns on the right to housing.

The squatters were eventually evicted by police in 2010. However, their campaigns and activities had a lasting impact. The movement V de Viviendas in particular is credited with reinvigorating the housing movement in Spain. Activists such as Ada Colau later became a founding member of the PAH a prominent social movement in Spain which emerged in response to the impacts of the 2008 financial crisis and austerity. Colau and others went on to form Bcomú. In 2015, they won the local elections and Colau became Mayor of Barcelona. Bcomú are an electoral coalition, but a number of its prominent activists turned politicians had long been participants among social movements as well as the squatting movement in the city. Also involved in Magdalenes, V de Vivienda, the PAH and Free Culture activism with XNet, was Gala Pin who in 2015 became councillor representing the city centre district Ciutat Vella and responsible for the city council department for citizen participation and the urban commons. Their politics was deeply informed by their activist experience and commitments.

Legal self-managed social and cultural centres post 15M

Debelle et al. (2018) characterise this fifth cycle *15M and Austerity* (2011– 2013) as one in which squatting was adopted as a tactic beyond the squatting movement. The emergence of the 15M (May 15th) movement with the occupation of squares in town and city centres throughout Spain was key as the moment created opportunities for activists to disseminate knowledge and practices among broader publics. Can Batlló and Ateneu Flor De Maig are both legal social centres supported by the city council. Their cases are paradigmatic (Debelle et al. 2018) of alliances among squatters and neighbourhood movements. Ateneu Cooperativa La Base in the neighbourhood of Poble-sec is an example of a social centre that emerged during the same period and rent their premises.

Can Batlló a factory in the neighbourhood of Sants had been left abandoned by the city council for decades despite repeated promises to community groups of redevelopment that would include social amenities. In 2011, the Sants' neighbourhood association had enough and presented local

authorities with a deadline, warning that they would squat the site if their demands were not addressed. Less than one month following 15M and the occupations of the squares and with only a few days to go before the deadline, the mayor presented the keys to the association. Can Batlló has since become a dynamic self-managed social and cultural centre in the neighbourhood. It houses a community library, a bar and performance space, climbing wall, arts spaces, print studios and sports grounds. It has also become a driver of local cooperative development with La Borda a substantial housing cooperative and Coòpolis a hub for cooperative development located close by and on-site.

Ateneu Flor De Maig has historic significance with origins in the cooperative movement of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. According to local history, at its pre-war height the Cooperativa Flor De Maig owned several properties and farms. However, following the civil war and coming under Francoist administration the properties became "the object of plunder and fraudulent administration by the new managers and its liquidation began in 1950"(Flor de Maig 2012). In 2012, squatters helped residents in the neighbourhood of Poblenou to squat one of the remaining properties. This act of civil disobedience eventually led to an agreement in 2014 by the city council to buy the building and accept its autonomous self-management by the association, similar to that which had been arranged with Can Batlló (Flor de Maig 2014).

Ateneu Cooperativa La Base also opened in 2011 in the neighbourhood of Poble-sec. La Base identifies as part of the broader movement with Can Batlló and Ateneu Flor De Maig, inspired by 15M and organising to address needs within the local community for self-managed social and cultural space. While Can Batlló and Ateneu Flor De Maig are publicly owned properties, with arrangements with local authorities, La Base rents the space for their social centre, it is in this sense that it is a cooperative, as members pay a small regular fee to cover rental and other expenses. La Base also explicitly identify as a project aimed at the recovery of practices of mutualism and solidarity, and the rebuilding of self-managed community

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infrastructures that were prevalent in the early part of 20th century Barcelona.

SSC Can Vies had been a part of the neighbourhood life of Sants for 17 years, the eviction and attempted demolition in 2014 led to nights of rioting and clashes with police. The eviction was halted and social movements organised a crowdfunding campaign in solidarity. Neighbours and activists formed a human chain and carried bricks from the attempted demolition to the city hall in protest. Can Battló also made public statements in support of Can Vies. For Debelle et al. (2018) these actions represented important expressions of solidarity between the two sectors of the squatting movement.

> The potential of two sectors of the squatting movement united: the antagonism of the okupa movement combined with mass popular discontent succeeded in bringing the eviction to a halt, while the cooperativists and the institutional sector of the squatting movement made symbolic and concrete gestures of solidarity, such as the crowdfunding initiative, where activists from both movements blended. (Debelle et al. 2018)

Citizen participation in the management of publicly owned properties

In the years following Spain's transition to democracy and throughout the 1980s, despite demands for self-management from neighbourhood movements, the city council promoted a top-down institutional model of *centres civics* (civic centres). The council's drive to develop civic centres, on the one hand provided for under-served communities, while on the other, institutionalisation had the effect of undermining valued pre-existing community led initiatives.

Belando (2015), citing Miralles (1993) notes that the opening of the first civic centre in 1982 was met with whistles of protest, that civic centres did not enjoy general social acceptance and were perceived as a triumph of a top-down model. While during the 1980s and 1990s most civic centres were under direct municipal management, the trend until recently has been one of privatisation.

Squatting and the opening of autonomous social centres by social movements in the 1990s and 2000s can be seen as an expression of the persistent popular demand for self-management and in part as a response to the consolidation of the institutional model (Fernández and Miró 2016). Examples of self-managed centres such as the aforementioned Ateneu Nou Barris are among the few social and cultural institutions that managed to maintain their character despite the imposition of the institutional model.

From 1994, the position of the city council began to change. The neighbourhood of Sants has a strong associative tradition. In response to the demands by associations such as the Secretariat d'Entitats de Sants, the city council entered into its first co-management agreement for two civic centres, the civic centre of Cotxeres de Sants and the civic centre of Casinet d'Hostafrancs (Sabaté 2015; Cotxeres-Casinet 2020). Ateneu Popular Nou Barris also reached an agreement with the council and was legalised in 1998 (Debelle et al. 2018).

There are a number of laws and regulations that make these arrangements possible that continue to be relevant for current urban commons policies. The transfer by the public administration of public facilities to private or non-profit entities is governed by the 1988 *Reglament del patrimoni dels ens locals* (Regulation of heritage by local bodies; Generalitat de Catalunya 1988). There are two different types of transfer, the *transfer of use* and the *transfer of management*. These different types of transfer have come to inform different policies with regard to the involvement of citizens in the use and management of public space and facilities.

The transfer of use applies in cases that involve community initiatives, in that projects come from the community. The transfer of management is used in cases that come from the public administration, for example where the delivery of public services is shared, as in the case of co-management. In practice this distinction is not strict, since the development and provision of public policies or services may be formed in response to the demands of community-led initiatives. In both cases, whether a community initiative or co-management arrangement, it is required that they are aligned with service

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towards the general interest or the public good.

The conceptualisation of participatory management of public facilities as a form of citizen participation was advanced and given a stronger legal basis by the inclusion of a provision for Gestió Cívica (Civic Management) in Article 34 of the 1998 *Carta Municipal de Barcelona* (Municipal Charter of Barcelona; Ajuntament de Barcelona 1998) included in Appendix 3, and Article 12 of the city's 2002 *Reguladores de la participació ciutadana* (Regulations on Citizen Participation; Ajuntament de Barcelona 2002) included in Appendix 4. *Co-management* and *civic-management* represent two models of participatory management. While these legal provisions were increasingly adopted by city districts and other city departments throughout the first decade of the 21st century, the city council lacked a consistent set of guidelines regarding their implementation.

City districts, which are responsible for the management of public properties, employed these legal provisions on a case by case basis, not as a matter of policy but reactively in response to the demands of associations and communities. Their implementation was therefore more often a matter of political will and discretion. As such participatory management and Gestió Cívica were interpreted and applied differently in various neighbourhoods and districts, as a result the city has a mix of management arrangements.

The lack of a clear policy led to frustration among some associations involved in these agreements. In the absence of any formal policy or guidelines from the council, associations depended on each other, on the knowledge gained from their collective experience to recognise shared challenges, address common needs and articulate demands. At the second Congress of Associations in 2011 the Plataforma d'entitats per a la gestió cívica (Platform of Entities for Civic Management; 2011) presented a report titled *La gestió ciutadana d'equipaments públics* (Citizen Management of Public Facilities).

The platform represented 18 entities and included some of those previously

mentioned, such as Cotxeres de Sants, Casinet d'Hostafrancs, and Ateneu Popular Nou Barris. The report included proposals intended to form a basis on which negotiations with the city council could proceed. It argued that Gestió Cívica was as yet an underdeveloped legal and regulatory framework and that this had led to different interpretations and administrative difficulties.

A new regulation for Gestió Cívica that recognised the character of associative organisations along with their particular needs and strengths was proposed in order to bring clarity to existing arrangements and to advance and strengthen the civic-management model. The report sought clarity on criteria for qualification and highlighted the need for the development of indicators to account for non-economic forms of value, such as the social impacts that civic-management arrangements generate.

The platform also argued for a recognition of the participatory character of civic-management and the values that these institutions embody. This is highlighted by a conceptual proposal to move from the managerial concept of the legal agreement, Gestió Cívica, to Gestió Ciutadana (Citizen Management) intended to embody a broader range of values.

Reflecting this in 2012 the platform changed their name to La Plataforma d'entitats per a la gestió ciutadana (PGC; Platform of Entities for Citizen Management). The concept has since been further developed as Gestió Comunitària (Communitarian Management). As a concept advanced by the associative movements, Gestió Comunitària recognises projects and communities regardless of formal legal status who organise themselves in accordance with democratic values, a commitment to participation of people within the territory in decision-making processes and an identification with the cooperative values and movements for solidarity economy (Ojeda and Urbano 2015; Font, Ojeda and Urbano 2015).

Taking into account the interest and demands from the platform, in 2012, the council established a working group to investigate and address outstanding issues. In 2013, the council published a short report titled

Conceptualització de La Gestió Cívica (Conceptualization of Civic Management) which was intended to clarify the position of local government on Gestió Cívica (Ajuntament de Barcelona 2013). This was followed in April 2015 with the publication of a set of model rules (Ajuntament de Barcelona 2015). I summarise some aspects of Gestió Cívica below.

As mentioned, the council has a mix of management arrangements for public properties and facilities. These range from direct management by the council to indirect or external management which could be by a private company or a non-profit association. For facilities that can be subject to indirect management, there are different management models. Management can be outsourced to a private entity or assigned through some form of participatory management arrangement. Here we are concerned with the latter, of which there are a number of types, Co-Gestió (Co-management) and Gestió Cívica (Civic Management). I primarily focus on Gestió Cívica as it is concerned with the full self-management of facilities.

The degree of autonomy, ranging from co-management to full self-management, can vary and depends on the capacities of associative partners. Co-management arrangements are those in which different aspects of management are shared between the council and another entity, such as a non-profit association. Full self-management, as is the case with Gestió Cívica, assumes the greatest degree of autonomy.

Gestió Cívica is formalised through what is called a *collaboration agreement.* While this involves bi-lateral obligations for both parties, the official documentation states that it should not be considered as a form of public sector contracting for the management of public space or services. Rather a collaboration agreement is an instrument for the promotion of citizen participation in the joint pursuit of activities of public interest, which can include the voluntary participation of citizens in management and decision-making processes. The pursuit of activities of public interest, such as the promotion of civic engagement and the empowerment of citizens, is a critical element of these agreements. Indeed, where they are in accord with

the public interest, such as when their organisational character involves the participation of citizens in the organisation of community activities, local associations are particularly well suited to this purpose. In the *Conceptualization of Civic Management* the council states that where the necessary criteria and conditions can be met, the council "should prioritise this form of management over any other" (Ajuntament de Barcelona 2013).

The primary criteria to qualify are that the entity be a non-profit and that it should be rooted in the territory. The agreement is not an instrument for the development of private activities of non-profit organisations. Any economic benefit must be re-invested and directed towards the objects of the agreement. The object of agreements involves facilitating citizen participation in meeting community needs. To be rooted in the territory means that the associative partner should be representative. This means that the entity should have a proven track record of collaboration with other community organisations and the involvement of local communities in its activities. The entity must also meet legal and financial criteria to be eligible for grants. Where there are multiple eligible parties, agreements are awarded through an open and competitive process. However, this is not always the case and agreements can also be awarded directly at the discretion of the administration or political representatives.

Conclusion

In the context of an economic crisis and in response to the demands of communities and associative movements, the municipal government of the 2011-2015 created a working group which published a report on the conceptualization of civic management (Ajuntament de Barcelona 2013). This provided much needed clarifications on Gestió Cívica and was followed by the development of a set of model rules for such agreements. The council during this period also led a number of other initiatives for the promotion of citizen participation. These included Pla Local, which was developed to provide temporary use of public space and facilities to community initiatives and non-profit associations, and Pla Buits, which

made vacant lots available for community activities such as urban gardens (Ajuntament de Barcelona 2012).

Here the distinction made earlier between the transfer of use and the transfer of management is significant. In the case of Pla Local and Pla Buits a transfer of use agreement is made as these are primarily concerned with community-led initiatives. Transfer of management is used in the case of Gestió Cívica which is concerned with the delivery of what are considered public services, as in cases of co-managed or self-managed civic or cultural centres.

Initiatives such as Pla Local proposed a mapping of available facilities which could be made available to associations, as well as a multi-stakeholder board to access proposals and applications for the use of such spaces. Despite these efforts, a review of these policies in 2016 found that mapping was only carried out in a few districts, and that the administration, through departments and districts continued to respond to citizen demands on a case by case basis, a process the authors characterised as exhibiting a "democratic deficit" in terms of transparency in decision-making and equality of opportunity for potential applicants (Castro, Fresnillo & Moreno 2016).

These and other issues would be addressed by the new municipal government which took on the task of bringing these various legal arrangements and policies together under a single regulatory framework in the Barcelona Urban Commons Policy. I return to these developments in the later chapters on citizen participation.

Despite various struggles, the trend over recent decades supported by the administration regarding the management of civic centres has been towards privatisation (Sánchez Belando 2015). More recent changes in policy in favour of civic-management are intended to reverse this trend.

> In 1998, of 38 Civic Centres, 8% were business management, 79% direct municipal management, 8% co-managed (City Council-Association) and 5% civic management. In 2009, of 51 centres, 52% were business management, 32% by the city council, 8% were civic management and 8%

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were co-managed. In 2014, of 51 facilities, 63% corresponded to business management, 22% were directly managed, 10% civic management, 4% co-managed and 2% were members of associations and companies. (Sánchez Belando 2015, 142)

In this chapter, I set out to illustrate how the demands of citizens and communities for self-management has a history in Barcelona that is deeply connected with neighbourhood and social movements. This is far from an exhaustive history, the cases were selected for illustrative purposes and no doubt there are many more that could be included. Demands for self-management found expression within the squatting movements, but also persisted among associative and neighbourhood movements. While different, these movements were not exclusive, they also shared moments of encounter and solidarity, for example when squatters supported neighbourhood movements in their struggles with the council for facilities. Or when neighbourhood activists showed solidarity when occupied spaces were threatened with eviction.

The histories and practices of these movements have at times informed one another. My aim in this chapter has been to trace a thread in the history of these movements and to sketch how they inform and relate with the development of policies for urban commons. In narrating these developments in this way, I risk presenting associative movements as politically radical. In reality, many that participate in neighbourhood and associative movements are more concerned with the practicalities of everyday community organising than with radical politics. There is a degree of contingency, the struggles and gains made by various movements are done so through hard work, alliance building and commitment. Nevertheless, that thread has been strong enough to hold and persists. The publications of the Federació d'Associacions Veïnals de Barcelona (FAVB; Federation of Neighbourhood Associations of Barcelona) proudly document the histories of neighbourhood struggles and histories that shape community identity and belonging (Andreu & FAVB 2010). I continue to explore how these histories inform the development of policies for the urban commons in

chapter seven.

Chapter 5. New Municipalism

Municipalism

This chapter is in two parts. The first part provides a brief overview of the varieties of municipalism drawing on Thompson (2020). The second part focuses on the experience of Bcomú. In this thesis I use the terms municipalism and new municipalism interchangeably. In asking what is new about the new municipalism, Thomspon (2020) begins with a review of the longer history of 19th and 20th century municipal socialist movements and finds that many lost their radicalism, evolving into international associations and city networks such as Eurocities and United Cities and Local Governments which focus on apolitical and technocratic endeavours. By contrast the new municipalism has emerged with a renewed radicalism and an emphasis on radical democracy.

Thompson (2020) has developed a typology which is useful for the analyses of this new municipalist trend. He proposes three ideal types, platform municipalism, autonomist municipalism and managed municipalism. The first two are bottom-up and social movement led, managed municipalism is a bit more top-down. All involve approaches to "working in, against and beyond the state"(Thomspon 2020).

Bcomú are an example of platform municipalism. For Thompson the empowerment of citizens through participatory digital platforms such as Decidim are a defining feature of platform municipalism and mark a departure from technocratic visions of the smart city. While the use of digital tools is indeed novel, it is important to situate these developments as one aspect of a much broader social movement process. Bcomú emerged through the creation of a citizen and social movement led platform rather than through established parties. It was a kind of hybrid movement-party, with a social base among local movement actors. The platform municipalism of Bcomú involved what could be described as a dual-power strategy with an emphasis on building popular counter-power and in this

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sense it displays affinities with autonomist municipalism.

Autonomist municipalism focuses on building "dual power" and "autonomous power outside of the realm of the state" (Thompson 2020). Thompson cites Cooperation Jackson, a citizen-led cooperative project in Jackson, Mississippi in the US as an example of this. Another example is the autonomous Kurdish region of Rojava in northern Syria. Despite civil war, the threat from Isis and the Turkish state, the Kurdish regions have resisted and established radically democratic and multi-ethnic confederations.

The form the revolution in Rojava has taken is inspired by the writings of Abdullah Ocalan who was in turn inspired by the writings of American radical and founder of social ecology movement Murray Bookchin. Bookchin started out as a Marxist before becoming a prominent anarchist and eventually developing the body of political theory known as social ecology.

Bookchin (2015, p.26) differentiates his communalist approach from a communitarian one. While communitarians place an emphasis on empowerment through various forms of democratic organising within communities such as cooperatives and mutual aid, communalists also engage in electoral politics at the local level.

Bookchin's (2015, p.77) Libertarian Municipalism sees participation in local elections as part of a dual power strategy through which local democratic assemblies joined in confederation of municipalities construct a counter power to the nation state. The revolution in Rojava has also catalysed a renewed interest in Bookchin's ideas. Bookchin's daughter Debbie Bookchin continues as a prominent advocate alongside a global network of activists associated with The Transnational Institute for Social Ecology (TRISE 2021).

Municipalism in Spain has its own history (Rubio-Pueyo 2017). The new municipalism, or platform municipalism of Barcelona emerged from a particular historic moment and its character is informed more by the shape

and history of local social movements than by a shared ideological adherence to any particular body of political theory such as Bookchin's (2015) social ecology and libertarian municipalism. Nevertheless, the radical democratic character of social movements, informed by Barcelona's libertarian counter-culture, has made fitting allies of these new municipalist movements.

In contrast with the radicalism of platform and autonomist municipalism Thompson cites 'The Preston model' as an example of a more moderate managed municipalism. The city of Preston in the UK has adopted an approach known as community wealth building (CLES 2021). This was originally developed by the US based Democracy Collaborative. In the UK community wealth building (CWB) is promoted by the progressive think tank The Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES). CWB is a strategy for local economic development that involves cooperatives. It was originally based on a broadly recognised successful partnership between Democracy Collaborative and the city of Cleveland in the US. CLES in partnership with the city of Preston have set out to replicate the success of the Cleveland model in the UK (CLES 2013; Democracy Collaborative 2021). Interestingly Thompson (2020) notes that CLES was formed in the 1980s by a number of left wing intellectuals involved in the Greater London Council which in some respects prefigured the politics of more recent municipalist movements. A core element of the CWB approach is the concept of anchor institutions. Anchor institutions are place-based institutions, such as local councils, hospitals, schools and universities. All of these institutions have commercial contracts and tendering processes. CWB works with institutions so that local organisations that promote democratic participation and are oriented towards social and ecological impacts are prioritised in tendering processes. In this way public institutions can be an economic anchor for the creation of locally owned and controlled cooperative economies. This has the advantage of cycling wealth and keeping jobs in the local economy.

Platform and autonomist municipalism are explicitly radical with an emphasis on social movements and creating new institutions to transform

both politics and economy. Building coalitions of social movements is no easy feat. These kinds of strategies rest on the capacities of local movements to build and sustain coalitions. Likewise, the balance of forces in a dual-power arrangement, the relations between movements and platform can be contentious. Barcelona is an example of such a 'rebel city' (Iaione 2017). Managed municipalism by contrast depends on coalitions among progressive politicians and think tanks, civic institutions and progressive interests within public sector institutions. These kinds of civic coalitions are similar to those in Iaione's co-city (2017). However, it does not have a strong emphasis on participatory democracy, and is more focused on economic democracy and cooperative local economic development. While differing in their radicalism, there are many commonalities. Ultimately these different strategies are informed by the particular politics of place and the relative capacities of civic institutions and social movements.

Barcelona En Comú

During my fieldwork I met and interviewed activists from Bcomú, participated in events and meetings. The policies in support of participatory democracy, solidarity economy and the commons are best understood within the context of this radically democratic political project. This chapter examines Bcomú, its emergence as a social movement, its radically democratic left politics and the challenges arising from electoral politics.

Figure 7: The municipal assault, a map of the state. (Rivas, Pablo 2015)

The 2015 local elections in Spain saw a wave of political change that broke the two party system that has dominated Spanish politics since the transition to democracy. The repercussions of this historic political transformation are still playing out. The 'municipalist wager' paid off and municipalist confluences came to power in the major cities of, Madrid, Barcelona, Zaragoza, Valencia as well as smaller regional cities such as Cadiz in Andalusia and A Coruña, Santiago de Compostela and Ferrol in Galicia (Observatorio Metropolitano 2014). These are just a few examples. There were municipalist candidacies throughout the country.

These movements emerged in the years following the financial crisis and the mass mobilisations in 2011 of the Indignados and 15M movement. Rubio-Pueyo (2017) argues that despite huge popular support, the movements of 2011 were not able to stop the imposition of austerity policies by the ruling Partido Popular (PP; People's Party). Reflecting the deep frustration felt among activists, in an interview with Masha Gessen, activist Gala Pin expressed:

> We have tried everything... ...We have tried civil disobedience. We have tried negotiating with banks. Nothing works. We have to join institutions in order to change the way we make policy. (Gessen 2018)

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Discussion about the possibilities of an "institutional assault" began among activist networks with three distinct approaches emerging (Rubio-Pueyo 2017). These were the techno-political approach exemplified by groups such as Partido X, the left populist strategy represented by Podemo*s*, and the municipalist confluences such as Bcomú and others. While the techno-political strategy did not achieve electoral success, elements were adopted into the other formations (Rubio-Pueyo 2017).

In Barcelona, the Partit dels Socialistes de Catalunya (PSC; The Socialists' Party of Catalonia), the Catalan wing of the Spanish socialist party (PSOE), dominated the city council for eight of the nine terms since elections first began in 1979 and were considered responsible for many of the problems the city was facing. It was only after the economic crisis, with the elections of 2011, that this dominance was challenged by another establishment party, the centre right Convergència i Unió (CiU; Convergence and Union).

Entering the institutions was not "an obvious option" as activist Mauro Castro puts it, describing this "pragmatic turn of social movements" in the city:

> The strategy of standing for public office was by no means an obvious option for local activists in Spain, particularly in Barcelona, which has a strong anarchist and autonomous tradition. Moreover, one of the major slogans of the Indignados was "they don't represent us", a statement critical just as much of representative democracy itself as of those in office at the time. (Castro 2018, 187)

Bcomú today is a political grouping that includes political parties such as ICV-EUiA, Podemos, Equo and Procés Constituent. However, the development of the municipalist confluence in Barcelona began with Guanyem Barcelona (Let's win Barcelona), the social movement led part of the group from which political parties were initially excluded. Launched in June 2014 with a manifesto calling for a 'democratic rebellion', Guanyem's statement of principles outlined their commitment to the defence of citizens' rights, the provision of decent housing, healthcare, education, affordable public services and utilities, and to supporting a transition to a socially and

environmentally fair economy. Critical to achieving all of this was the democratisation of the city's institutions. Citizen participation would, on the one hand, provide citizens with the means to be actively involved in the decisions that affect them, but it also represented a means for guaranteeing citizen oversight of public institutions seen as necessary for tackling corruption. Democratisation of political institutions would be accompanied by a democratisation of the economy. Cooperatives would be an important part of the transition to a socially and environmentally fair economy, as would support for urban commons and local initiatives with community self-management.

> Democratizing the city also means recognizing and promoting local initiatives and networks of self-managed public goods and services. From cultural and social centres to consumption cooperatives, community gardens, time banks and early childhood facilities for families. Public institutions should give these groups spaces, resources and technical support while respecting their autonomy and not instrumentalizing them. (Guanyem 2014a)

Guanyem inherited this strong emphasis on democracy from the radical social movements from which it emerged. Many of the original signatories of the manifesto were connected with social movements in the city that had participated in 15M. The list includes activists connected with movements for the digital and urban commons, as well as the solidarity economy many of whom would go on to have important roles either in the council or in advisory positions. Ada Colau, the anti-eviction activist with the PAH who would go on to become the city's mayor, is the most well known, but there are many others. Gala Pin had been with the PAH and also with Xnet and the free culture movement, she would go on to become councillor for the central district of Ciutat Vella, and working closely with another signatory, Laia Forne, they were responsible for the development of the city's policies and programmes to promote citizen participation and the urban commons. Alvaro Porro who was also active in the PAH as well as other movements, would be responsible for the new commission for the social and solidarity economy. Mayo Fuster Morell a commons scholar and free culture activist

would work closely with Porro and others to promote policies and programmes for the commons collaborative economy in the city. This is just to name a few.

The gathering of signatures was done in tandem with a process of citizens' debates and neighbourhood assemblies on a range of issues and by August the manifesto had gathered 30,000 signatures (Guanyem 2014b). These kinds of participatory processes were integral throughout the campaign with the drawing up of the electoral programme involving 5000 people (Shea Baird 2015b). With the support of citizens, Guanyem were committed to participate in the 2015 elections, but they would not do it alone and were from early on also in negotiations with a number of parties. Guanyem's code of ethics was developed in dialogue with left wing parties and adopted elements from their materials (Bcomú 2014). Negotiations, led by Guanyem, included Partido X, the CUP, ICV-EUiA, Podemos, Equo and Procés Constituent.

In the process of registering the name for elections in August 2014, it was discovered that an unassociated Catalan politician had registered the name Guanyem a few days before. In a meeting the politician requested control of the movement in exchange for the name, this was considered an attempt at sabotage. Guanyem's lawyers launched legal proceedings. Despite evidence in their favour, having used the name publicly for many months and finding the politician had registered with false information, by the end of November the Ministry of the Interior which was run at that time by the PP Party responded negatively to Guanyem's claims. Refusing to be blackmailed the group needed another name (Riveiro 2014).

The changing of the name marked an important moment in launching the confluence and electoral campaign. There were differences among some of the parties, and the final grouping was made up of Guanyem, ICV-EUiA, Podemos, Equo and Procés Constituent. It included socialists, republicans, greens and independentists. Together, in February 2015 they successfully registered as Barcelona En Comú (Barcelona in Common). This is perhaps one of the first times in recent history that the commons has come to feature

so explicitly in the name of a political party. The Catalan equivalents of the English term 'the commons' has a couple of variations, *bé comú* (common good) or *procomun/s* (common benefit/the commons). Reading the name literally, Barcelona En Comú has the everyday meaning, such as when a group share something together in common, in this case the city of Barcelona is what connects people. Activists I spoke with explained that the name also referred to the commons and that this ambiguity between the two meanings was intentional. So there are two different readings, one everyday and another which speaks to the radical aspirations of activists to reimagine the city as a commons.

The idea of being a party did not sit comfortably with many in the group whose political experience was more informed by social movement practice (Piñeiro Orge 2017). Practices that were reflected in the organisation of Guanyem and subsequently Bcomú. For these reasons activists preferred to describe Bcomú as a citizens' platform. Bcomú was an experiment, a kind of hybrid movement-party that in form and practice challenged conventions of what a political platform could be.

The confluence, joining forces as Bcomú, and having agreed a shared list, launched their campaign, contesting the city's local elections. After a year of organising and campaigning, the elections were held on May 24th, Bcomú won 11 of 41 seats, making it the largest single group in the council. Within a few days Ada Colau was declared the city's mayor. The campaign and victory were a historic success for social movements, marking a beginning for many substantial and transformative changes in the city. Bcomú went to work on the demands outlined in their shock plan (Bcomú 2015a). The feminization of politics, participatory democracy, and the commons are critical elements of their political programme and practice. What's more is that Bcomú's hybrid character as movement-party, has meant that they do not limit their politics to the local and the city, but have used their position to build solidarity, to amplify and support movements, nationally of course but also internationally, with local politics having a strong internationalist dimension.

Feminization of politics

Bcomú are an expressly feminist political platform and their electoral success has made them an international example and champion of feminist politics. As Bcomú activist Kate Shea Baird writes "The platform and its candidates, both women and men, agree that if their 'democratic revolution' isn't feminist, it won't be deserving of the name" (Shea Baird 2015a). The first woman to become mayor of Barcelona, Ada Colau is of course most prominent, but in the 2015 elections six of the eleven elected representatives were women. Women not only occupy prominent positions, they have strong and active presence throughout the various organisational branches of the platform which requires that 50 percent of coordinators are women. The feminization of politics is an active process, which members of Bcomú engage in, both in the ways they organise within the platform, and in their approach towards transforming the city's political institutions. The council created a new Department of Life Cycles, Feminisms and LGBTI "promoting gender equality across all policy areas, departments and districts" (Bcomú 2016a). The department led a programme of gender mainstreaming with supports for LGBTI and visible campaigns in the city to confront and oppose sexual discrimination and sexual violence.

Participatory Democracy

In December 2015, the city announced an ambitious participatory process for the development of the *Pla d'Actuació Municipal* (PAM; municipal action plan). Beginning in early 2016 and taking place over a number of months, the process combined the use of an online platform, Decidim, and a series of face to face meetings in the city's neighbourhoods. It was organised around five themes, good living, plural economy, good government, global justice and ecological transition. The proposals were reviewed before being put before the council plenary for final approval. In total, it involved 42,000 people and 10859 proposals were collected (Decidim 2019). Decidim is free software and some of the team of hackers and developers behind it were involved in the social movements associated

with 15M, as well as Partido X. The development of Decidim represents a substantial techno-political intervention aimed at enhancing citizen participation and changing the way political decisions are made. It has evolved to become a critical component in Bcomú's strategy to democratise the institutions. The commons also figures in Decidim's practice and discourse which describes itself as "a public-commons, free and open, digital infrastructure for participatory democracy" (Decidim 2021a). The PAM process and Decidim opened up spaces for other political proposals, most relevant to this thesis are those under the theme of plural economy, under which many proposals for the solidarity economy and the commons were made. I examine these events as well as Decidim and the actions of the department for participation in more detail in the following chapters.

The Commons

Commons are often described as forms of social organisation as distinct from market and state. What distinguishes commons is that their governance are to some degree of autonomous, or beyond market and state actors (Bollier & Helfrich 2012). Commons, particularly in urban and digital contexts are constituted as hybrid arrangements, where ownership and governance is shared among different actors state, market and collective or community. Rubio-Pueyo (2017, 21) argues that the conceptual flexibility of the commons lends itself to counter-hegemonic political possibilities, with the "opening of a political struggle oriented towards a "commoning" of the public sphere" (Rubio-Pueyo 2017). In the case of Barcelona, commons represent not so much a transfer of ownership or property rights, but rather a radical democratisation of governance that enhances the involvement of citizens in decision-making and management of public goods. This approach is best understood in context of the wider democratic project of the municipalist movement that imagines citizens as knowledgeable subjects with the capacities and competencies to be active participants in the governance of public institutions and in decision-making around the provision of public goods. This fits with what Postill (2018, 175) calls

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monitory democracy, in that citizens participating in governance can play an active role, guaranteeing that public resources are managed for the public good. Decision-making and the allocation of public resources is legitimated in this way. The expansion of citizen participation in this respect is significant and Decidim is among the tools that has supported these developments, as we will see in the subsequent chapters it has been used to support participation in a wide variety of settings, including for example in participatory processes of the new municipal energy company Barcelona Energía (Barcelona Energía 2021a). While this is innovative in its own right, the programmes of Bcomú also go further. In the following chapter on the urban commons I examine how in a number of cases citizens and community associations have been granted almost full autonomy over the management of publicly owned spaces. These are both examples of making what is public common, by inviting citizen participation and promoting citizen self-management of public spaces and resources. There is also support for the digital commons, in the programmes for the commons collaborative economy supported through the creation of a new department for the social and solidarity economy. By contrast with public-private partnerships these are public-commons partnerships (Bauwens & Kostakis 2015; Rubio-Pueyo 2017, 11).

Internationalism

The social movement elements of Bcomú have used their position vis-à-vis the council to leverage and amplify social movement goals at the international level. Bcomú have had an international commission as part of their organisational structure from early on, dedicated to communicating their political project, expressing solidarity and fostering relations with aligned movements internationally, they do this through publishing an English language blog (BComú Global 2021) and through the organisation of international events and supporting the creation of international networks. In June 2017, I attended the Fearless Cities event hosted by Barcelona (Fearless Cities 2021). This was a major coming out event for the

municipalist movement. The event was attended by 700 participants from cities around the world (Bcomú, ed. 2019). The event included activists from radical left libertarian and autonomist municipalist movements, such as Debbie Bookchin from the social ecology movement, as well as activists from Cooperation Jackson and Kurdish activists from Rojava in northern Syria. The event was a critical catalyst for the development of an international municipalist movement and was followed by the creation of a global network of fearless cities, which hosted further events, four in 2018 in New York City, Warsaw, Brussels, Valparaíso, two in 2019 in Naples, Belgrade and another online event in 2021. The events have served as platforms for networking of movements, featuring debates and discussions, sharing learning, experience and strategy for advancing radical democracy, feminist politics, and the commons.

The 2019 elections

During fieldwork, I volunteered with Bcomú and participated in the May 2019 campaign for the local elections. I encountered many of the elements mentioned above. I was among a group of international volunteers that travelled to Barcelona to show their support. The group included activists from Europe, there were a number of Americans who had worked with the Sanders campaign in 2016, as well as a large group of housing activists from South Africa inspired by the PAH. The group was coordinated by the international commission and we were named, La Brigada, a reference to the international volunteers that came to Spain to fight against fascism during the civil war. The commission organised a programme of activities for the Brigadistas. The commission itself had an international character, in addition to Spanish and Catalan members it included coordinators from Germany, Netherlands, France and the US. The Brigadistas met throughout the campaign at the Bcomú offices on Carrer Marina, which were a hive of activity at that time. The atmosphere was lively and welcoming. The feminist character of Bcomú was clear, women were not only visibly present but were at times a majority during some activities. It was also an

LGBTI friendly space. The Brigadistas participated in a range of campaign activities, painting banners, putting up posters, and handing out information at metro stations early in the mornings. Going door to door in the city's neighbourhoods we were met with mixed reactions. Some people had no interest in politics, some were supporters of the opposition, we also found enthusiastic supporters and fans of Ada Colau, young and old. We joined activists from Bcomú at the offices to watch the televised political debates and participated in campaign rallies and media events. Ada Colau also met with us, and spoke about the importance of international solidarity and thanked us for our support. The international commission also arranged a programme to visit various places in Barcelona. This was particularly striking. We were not shown the tourist sites, La Sagrada Família, or Parc Güell. We were shown another Barcelona, there was a meeting with activists from the PAH, and visits to the city's urban commons, such as Can Batlló, Flor de Maig, and Can Masdeu the ecological squat where the city meets the Collserola mountains. At each of these places La Brigada met with local activists who shared histories and stories of community struggles. There was also a lunch prepared by Diomcoop, a migrant led cooperative and part of the solidarity economy. This was the Barcelona that was celebrated. The coordinators from the commission also showed a sensitivity, highlighting the importance of respecting the independence and autonomous character of these movements and projects.

After a week of participating in campaign activities, on the day of the elections I joined members of Bcomú at Fabra i Coats in the neighbourhood of Sant Andreu for the count. The atmosphere was tense. For all our collective efforts the polls remained incredibly tight throughout the campaign. It was a long evening and in the end Bcomú lost to the centre left independentist party Esquerra Republicana (ERC; Republican Left) who had a lead of 0.6% of the vote, or 4,800 votes.

No single party had an outright majority. The days that followed were filled with discussions and debates on what formation the governing coalition would take. While devastated by the defeat Bcomú tried to put a positive

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spin on things, declaring that the people of the city had resoundingly shown their support for a left wing government. They proposed a three-way coalition between ERC, the socialist PSC and Bcomú which would have given them a strong majority. On June 7th members of Bcomú held an internal vote approving a motion that would see Ada Colau continue as mayor in such a coalition (Blanchar 2019a). Nevertheless, this was a seemingly impossible prospect as the independentist Esquerra Republicana and the anti-independence PSC were not interested in being in coalition together. In the years prior, Bcomú had struggled to mark out a middle ground between the politics of the pro and anti independence parties. While not expressly for or against Catalan independence, many members of Bcomú identified with the independentist movement and Bcomú opposed the Spanish government's response to the referendum which was violently repressed by police, saw the imprisonment of activists, and a withdrawal of regional autonomy.

ERC proposed that Bcomú would join them in a coalition with the right wing independentists Junts per Catalunya. To avoid an independentist city council, the PSC proposed a coalition with Bcomú which would accept votes from the right wing Ciutadans in order to achieve the required majority. Former French prime minister Manuel Valls' campaign with Ciutadans was expressly against the independentist movement. A coalition with the centre left parties, the PSC and the ERC was one thing, coalition or accepting votes from the right was another. This was hard politics and something of a poisoned chalice. Bcomú were faced with difficult choices if they wanted to form a government. The coalition with the PSC was agreed, and on June 15th after the council vote, Ada Colau was declared Mayor of Barcelona for a second term (Rodríguez 2019).

Results of other local elections across Spain surely also influenced the decision. The 2019 elections were a turning point for the municipalist confluences nationally. Madrid was lost to the right wing PP with the support of Ciudadanos and the far right Vox. In many cities, Zaragoza, A Coruña, Santiago de Compostela, the municipalist confluences failed to

achieve the votes required for a second term. I had kept in contact with some members of the international commission and attended a couple of their meetings in the weeks following the election. Meeting with activists it was clear they were in no mood for celebration this time around, if anything it was the opposite. The failure to win outright and the politics of the government formation had left many uneasy and frustrated. This was a moment of substantial reflection for the movement.

Challenges and reflections

Bcomú began as a social movement, its activist character shaped their approach to organising and to the institutions. It was at once a movement and a party, a kind of hybrid organisational form. As Eloísa Piñeiro Orge, an activist with Bcomú wrote "the word 'party' has negative baggage, particularly in a political culture impregnated with the recent memory of the Indignados". Many activists within Bcomú felt "uncomfortable about calling this space of political participation a 'party', and choose to use other terms, such as 'organisation', 'space', or simply 'Bcomú'." (Piñeiro Orge 2017).

Mauro Castro (2018) another activist closely engaged with the municipalist project writes that a majority of activists in Bcomú shared the idea that it was necessary "to overcome the exclusionary disjunction between state-centric politics and a politics of autonomy, and to move beyond the simplistic binary logic of the street and the state, of "inside" and "outside"." (Castro 2018). The goal was to 'seize the institutions' and also to go beyond them, "municipalism has to include the "social movement" dimension that is capable of setting up counter-power" (Castro 2018, 211). Barcelona has a strong tradition of social movements, and the democratisation of the institutions is a means of decentralising power and creating channels through which citizens can exercise power over institutional agendas and local oligarchic tendencies (Castro 2018, 211).

Castro (2018, 212) gives some examples of this dual power arrangement. Barcelona's city centre neighbourhoods suffer from rising rents and

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gentrification. Social movements in the district of Ciutat Vella worked with the council so that a council owned property could be used for the development of social housing with 160 rented properties. Neighbourhood movements also mobilised calling for the regulation of Airbnb and tourist accommodation in the city. The campaign was supported by activists within Bcomú but the public pressure from movements on other political parties was essential for getting the broader support within the council necessary to enact policies.

From the beginning, municipalism was an experiment in "learning by doing" (Roth & Stokfiszewski 2020) but not one without its challenges. In 2015, many of Bcomú's members were new to institutional politics with only two of the eleven elected officials previously holding office. There was a lack of experience in institutional politics accompanied by a learning curve for some, but part of Bcomú's political project was also about showing that politics was not only the domain of a professional political class and that ordinary citizens could hold power and effect change.

Postill makes the point that "political action always comes with what economists call 'opportunity costs'" (Postill 2018, 176). Activist and movement resources have their own practical and material limits and when they are doing one thing it may come at the expense of not being able to do others. Activists in Barcelona were also concerned that entering institutions would lead to a demobilisation among movements as activist energies were redirected towards the organisation of an electoral machine or preoccupied with institutional concerns (Castro 2018, 204). Castro argues that what happened in practice was that new leadership emerged among social movements, particularly in struggles for housing (Castro 2018, 204).

Engaging with the mechanics of institutions entails the risk of being entangled in its machinery and logics, of being drawn in and incorporated into older and established ways of working. There was a "cultural clash" as activists engaged with political institutions that "embodied a neoliberal, hierarchical, bureaucratic, media-oriented, representation-based political culture" (Roth & Stokfiszewski 2020). It was accepted that they would

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encounter the many limitations of institutional politics, yet they were determined to overcome the "institutional blockage" (Castro 2018, 211).

Institutional limitations and the pace of change frustrated activists within the council but also those active in the social movement part of the platform. It was critical to have open discussion among activists about how the institutions work and about what can and cannot be changed (Castro 2018, 209). The more politically radical agenda of the municipalist movement and its achievements could be crowded out in a public discourse shaped by the media and opposition parties, shifting attention and energy away from a focus on a transformative programme and towards other issues. The most evident case of this was in the major shift in public discourse away from addressing the impacts of austerity and the economic crisis and towards the increasing politicisation of nation and identity.

Aside from the challenges of being at once movement and party, Bcomú faced a number of institutional constraints. Each level of government, from the national, to regional and municipal have different institutional and legal competencies. There are areas of action that are simply not within the reach of municipal authorities. This was one set of limitations. Another emerged from the fact that during both terms, Bcomú have been in a minority government. This made it difficult at times to turn the ambitious political agenda generated during the electoral campaign into concrete actions. The constant need to negotiate with the opposition proved difficult. In May 2016, Bcomú formed a governing pact with four elected members of the PSC. They were still short of the 21 seat majority. The pact came to an end in November 2017, a month and a half after the referendum on Catalan independence. The referendum was accompanied by violent police repression and a government crackdown on independence activists. The PSC failed to demand the release of political prisoners or to oppose the suspension of Catalan regional autonomy imposed at the national level by the ruling PP led by Mariano Rajoy. Following an internal vote among activists, Bcomú broke with the PSC and continued as a minority government for the remainder of the term.

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There were public controversies, for which Bcomú were criticised over their handling and which were a source of tension with social movements in the city. Stobart (2018) documents a number of these. Such as the police harassment of unlicensed migrant street vendors, the strike of metro workers, or the demonstrations of residents of the district of Poblenou over the development of the superblock.

Despite a range of actions and increased municipal funding to address housing problems and evictions in the city, rents have continued to rise. This is also an area where the limitations of municipal government have been encountered. Housing is the domain of the Catalan regional government, and rent controls can only be implemented by the national government. Castro (2018, 217) argues that addressing these issues will require "a multi-scalar revolution, and a federal municipalist movement". The politics of proximity, so central to the municipalist project, are almost always bound up in politics operating at other scales. The need to act at different levels was recognised early on. The same coalition of groups formed En Comú Podem in 2015 to participate in the Catalan regional elections, and Bcomú have been aligned with Podemos at the national level.

Writing now in 2021, it is clear that Bcomú has changed a lot since it first launched its democratic revolution in 2015 but so has the political context in Catalonia and Spain. Over time, Bcomú have become more like a party and less a social movement. The 2019 elections in Spain were a turning point for the municipalist movement that called for critical self-reflection. Carlos Delclós (2019) a Barcelona based sociologist and activist writing after the election results but before a coalition agreement was announced wrote:

> Like the post-15M mobilizations that preceded the platform, Barcelona En Comú was partly an experiment in permanent campaigning and partly one in permanent organizing. As such, it faced the specific communicative challenge of balancing the *hype* of its aspirational narratives with the emancipatory *practices and relations* that unfolded from its political engagement with material reality. The gap between the two is one of disillusion, and must be cared for.

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Barcelona En Comú won with a campaign that promised to take on global capitalism, patriarchy and climate change, and promoted a radical vision of democracy and human rights. Over the last four years, however, the platform's discourse has foregrounded achievements of governance, which are more mundane and managerial in nature. (Delclós 2019)

While those achievements are to be commended, they are also "dwarfed by the scale of the social problems they reflect". Rather than radical change they "feel like what anyone should expect from an establishment social democratic party" (Delclós 2019). In the moment of disappointment following the results, can the movement that emerged from the disillusionment of the economic crisis and 15M, Delclós asks, "rekindle the radical imagination of an emancipatory municipalist politics?" (Delclós 2019).

Bcomú set out with a radically democratic political agenda, to democratise the institutions, to make them more accountable to citizens' demands and to redistribute power. Despite the limitations of institutions and challenges of electoral politics, they have made substantial achievements in this regard. Yet those achievements are rarely of interest to publics who are accustomed to an experience of politics as a series of highly mediated and mediatised events, as a domain of theatrics and spectacle.

A radical democratic politics imagines a different kind of emancipatory political subject. In this new politics "people are *subjects* and not *objects* of public matters" (Roth & Stokfiszewski 2020). They are imagined, at least potentially, as empowered agents of change. Through their policies and programmes promoting feminism, participatory democracy, the solidarity economy and the commons, Bcomú aimed to empower this kind of political subject and strengthened, already existing, radical democratic politics and practices beyond the institutions.

Chapter 6. Participation

Barcelona has a big tradition in participation culture... ...a kind of participation we had criticised - Gala Pin (Councillor for Participation 2015-2019)

Introduction

¡Democracia Real YA! (Real Democracy Now) was a key demand of the 15M movements of 2011. How would activists from these movements transform participatory processes when they entered the institutions? Citizen participation was central to the radical democratic vision activists from Bcomú had for the city. The election of Bcomú was followed by the creation of a new department for citizen participation which was responsible for the development of new regulations for citizen participation. The department was also responsible for policies for the urban commons which I will cover in the next chapter. In this chapter I introduce the digital platform Decidim; arguably the city's flagship project for the advancement of participatory democracy. I begin the chapter with a brief review of recent literature on citizen participation and the city. To contextualise more recent developments for citizen participation I consider the city council's legacy of participation prior to 2015. Decidim was key to participatory processes for the co-creation of public policies for the commons collaborative economy that set the stage for events and projects that were the subject of my fieldwork and are covered in later chapters. This chapter is intended to give the reader a general introduction to Decidim and Barcelona's policy for citizen participation. Together these expanded the possibilities for a more participatory politics. To illustrate how these new tools are supposed to work and how they were used in practice I present the case of the citizens' initiative for the remunicipalisation of water. Social movements in the city had long advocated for remunicipalisation. With activists from within these movements in the city council with Bcomú remunicipalisation was high on the agenda. Movements were quick to take advantage of the political

possibilities afforded by these new tools and policies. Despite support from within the council the process was plagued by political and legal challenges and remunicipalisation of water in Barcelona was ultimately stalled. Nevertheless the case of the citizens' initiative for remunicipalisation of water is illustrative of the challenges that movements and parties can face in their efforts to advance participatory democracy. In the course of my fieldwork I interviewed Gala Pin the councillor for participation, a software developer from Decidim and an activist from the movement for remunicipalisation of water. That said, this chapter draws largely on secondary sources.

Theorising Participation

In investigating participation, anthropologist Chris Kelty found that people tend to speak of participation in one of two modes.

> On the one hand, they make sense of participation in an enthusiastic and hopeful way, and demand that it be implemented or expanded as a solution to a very wide range of collective problems. On the other hand, they make sense of participation with a grammar of suspicion—that what is called participation is actually something else, usually a form of co-optation. (Kelty 2020, 23)

Experiences of participation are shaped by the various ways in which participation is formatted (Kelty 2020, 15). The ways in which participation is formatted depend on the kinds of actors involved and the purposes to which participation is instrumental. Participation either assumes or is intended to cultivate or reinforce certain kinds of personhood (Kelty 2020, 10). A participant is both an individual and at the same time part of a collective process, the quality of whose outcomes depend on those individuals' capacities to contribute and participate. Participatory processes and the capacity of persons to participate will also reflect inequalities predominant in the broader social contexts in which they are embedded. For participatory processes to avoid producing outcomes that reflect or reinforce those inequalities it is necessary to address them directly in the process to

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guarantee that the experience of all participants are represented in outcomes. Too often these inequalities can be taken for granted and this risks leading to situations where some participants feel taken advantage of, or exploited for some others benefit. Kelty argues that participation is usually intended to be *dyadic*, that is, it is generally thought to have beneficial effects for the individual participant and the collective entity in which they participate. In this sense it should involve a degree of reciprocity with both participant and entity sharing in the benefits. To avoid exploitative dynamics, participatory processes need to be *diarchic* (Kelty 2020).

> To make participation diarchic instead of dyadic would be to establish that the demand for participation must make the effects of participation equally powerful for both parties. Reformatting participation equitably or inclusively is not just about which types of people get to participate and how, but about this dyadic relation of different and often mutually exclusive benefits being in a relation of actual and risky contention or struggle. Any other approach will eventually end up looking like mere exploitation. (Kelty 2020, 259)

The language of participation is variously deployed by cities and companies to describe consultative and deliberative processes involving citizens. What participation means in practice can vary from top-down projects that manipulate citizens for purposes of legitimacy, to bottom-up efforts where process and decision-making power are in citizens' hands.

For a critical appraisal of what these varieties of participation can mean in practice Sherry Arnstein (1969) developed the eight step "ladder of participation". From the bottom of the ladder participation ranges from varieties of non-participation that Arnstein terms (1) *manipulation* and (2) *therapy* which are meant to educate citizens, then moving up the steps are forms of tokenism, (3) *informing*, (4) *consultation,* (5) *placation.* The upper steps of the ladder represent increases in decision-making power through expanding degrees of *citizen power*. Citizen power for Arnstein comes in three forms, (6) *partnership*, (7) *delegated control* and (8) *citizens' control. Partnership* enables citizens "to negotiate and engage in trade-offs with

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traditional powerholders" (Arnstein 1969). At the top of the ladder *delegated power* and *citizen control* see "citizens obtain the majority of decision-making seats, or full managerial power" (Arnstein 1969).

More recently in response to critiques of the smart city as technocratic and instrumental, companies and cities have reframed their initiatives as *citizen centric*, but as Cardullo and Kitchin argue what this means in practice is rarely articulated (Cardullo and Kitchin 2017). To account for more contemporary developments Cardullo and Kitchin adapt Arnstein's ladder creating a "Scaffold of Smart Citizen Participation", which includes additional categories. The category for consumerism or "choice" provides for assessment of the ways in which smart citizenship is imagined as a type of consumerism in which access to corporate and market oriented "sharing economy" platforms such as Airbnb and Uber are considered as fostering humanistic "sharing cities". With the exception of the category of *citizen power*, Cardullo and Kitchin (2017) find that "all levels of the scaffold are consistent with neoliberal citizenship". Another significant addition in Cardullo and Kitchin's (2017) scaffold is a column for "Political discourse/framing". By contrast with other levels of the scaffold, *citizen power* is framed in this category as the expression of social and political rights, deliberative democracy and commons. As Cardullo and Kitchin (2017) note, for Arnstein *citizen power* represents "the pinnacle for creating cities that reflect the desires and aspirations of citizens" but in practice this is difficult to achieve, with few successful examples and more autonomous forms of participation sustained only for a short time (Cardullo and Kitchin 2017). Nevertheless, Cardullo and Kitchin conclude that "city administrations should be seeking to shift as many of its initiatives as possible up the scaffold towards citizen engagement and citizen power" (Cardullo and Kitchin 2017).

A Tradition of Participation

Barcelona inherits a complex institutional architecture for civic participation that developed since Spain's transition to democracy (Blakeley 2005). At

that time Barcelona was considered a pioneer. The city administration was decentralised in 1984 to create 10 municipal districts, each with its own administration and president. This was followed in 1986 by legislation for the creation of mechanisms and channels for citizens' participation. This included mechanisms for public consultations that could be called by the city or by citizens; rights to make oral interventions at district plenaries; rights to information and rights to petition. There was also provision for the creation and recognition of various civic bodies for participation that were either territorial, such as those at the neighbourhood and district levels, or thematic and sectoral, such as The Women's Council or those involving unions or business representatives such as The Economic and Social Council of Barcelona. The legislation was updated again in 2002 and was followed by the creation in 2004 of The Citizens' Council of the City wherein these civic bodies are consulted and make representations to districts and city council. Today there are over 500 recognised bodies that participate (Consell de Ciutat 2021).

These fora and procedures for participation have been criticised at various times by social movements in the city. In 1986, Barcelona was nominated to host the 1992 Olympic Games. During this period substantial programmes of urban redevelopment earned the city an international reputation for what became known as the Barcelona Model. Alliances of political and economic interests in large scale and capital intensive urban developments often came into conflict with neighbourhood associations (Blanco 2009). Blakeley (2005) notes a number of campaigns during the 1990s and the 2000s that were led by the FAVB that challenged city development plans. The defeat of these campaigns gave cause for major doubts over the purpose and efficacy of institutional channels and mechanisms for participation in political decision-making.

Barcelona has a history of having its image appropriated and rebranded to serve as a model city for speculative and lucrative projects of urban redevelopment. From 2011 under the centre-right Convergència i Unió coalition led by Mayor Xavier Trias, Barcelona was to be made an

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international referent and 'poster boy' for the smart city approach (Cardullo and Kitchin 2017; Charnock, March, and Ribera-Fumaz 2019). Cardullo and Kitchin (2017) as well as Charnock, March, and Ribera-Fumaz (2019) recognise the efforts of Bcomú since 2015 to re-politicise and transform Barcelona from neoliberal smart city into a referent, movement-led rebel city. It has been one of the most substantial movement inspired efforts to give articulation to an alternative urban vision. The expansion and institutionalisation of citizen power in Barcelona was to be accomplished through ambitious projects to advance both participatory and economic democracy. Large scale city-wide participatory processes were supported by the digital platform Decidim. At the same time citizen participation was supported at the neighbourhood level through a range of policies such as those for the urban commons. The solidarity economy and the commons are also sites of participation. While these are relatively autonomous domains they are not exclusive and as we will see in later chapters they have also been complementary.

The new councillor for participation

Gala Pin is a member of Bcomú and from 2015-2019 she was elected as councillor for the city's historic central district of Ciutat Vella and was appointed the city's Councillor for Participation, a newly created position in the Àrea de Drets de Ciutadania, Participació i Transparència (Department for Citizens' Rights, Participation and Transparency).

Pin has had a fascinating activist trajectory. In the 2000s, along with Ada Colau and others, she took part in Barcelona's dynamic scene of squats and social centres, such as Miles de Viviendas and Espai Magdalenes. As part of the collective of artists, technologists and hacktivists, known as XNET, she was active in the free culture movement campaigning for internet freedom and digital rights. XNET also supported social movements during 15M in 2011. Prior to becoming active in Guanyem and Bcomú, she was involved in the PAH. Throughout these many years she was also involved in neighbourhood movements in Ciutat Vella.

Ciutat Vella is a major destination for tourists but for many decades it has also been home to lower income and migrant communities. The intensive growth of the tourist economy has had a range of negative impacts on the quality of life for residents. Public spaces are often overcrowded and this makes routines of daily life difficult for residents young and old. The interests of property developers and the proliferation of short-term holiday flats such as Airbnb drive up rents. Local shops, bars and cafés cater to tourists with higher tourist prices impacting the costs of living. Affordability threatens the fabric of low income communities and despite living in the area for generations locals are often forced to relocate to other parts of the city. As a magnet for tourists, the district also attracts its share of crime, pickpockets, prostitution and drug dealers. Taken together all of this makes Ciutat Vella one of the more politically challenging districts in the city.

Pin's affinity with the district and its neighbourhood movements made her an appropriate candidate for Bcomú. When I asked her about running for the elections, she told me how she made the decision after consulting with the women from her local neighbourhood association and of her love for the collective political project, Bcomú.

> Pin: Well, at least it was not a big decision because actually we were building up a project, and I was very enthusiastic about Barcelona En Comú and very in love with this collective project…

> Pin: I decided it after meeting with my neighbourhood association which are mostly women older than 60 years, that did not finish or didn't go to school but are emotionally and rationally very intelligent. So I asked them permission 'do I have to run or not' and they said I had to.

Pin's experience in neighbourhood movements informed her approach to participation as councillor. She shared an example, illustrating how a previous council had used the participatory process in a tokenistic manner that denied citizens any real say in decision-making.

> We were fighting against a hotel that would be built near La Palau De La Música. Actually, after that it was discovered that there was a corruption case behind it. So we were saying 'We don't want this hotel'. So the city

council, it was 2007, organised a participatory process where we could choose how the facade of the hotel would look, and we were like hmm… ...ok you have made a process but we won't join your process because we don't want to say whether you paint it in green or black. We want to discuss if the hotel has to be built there or not.

For activists in Bcomú, the city's model of participation was "a kind of participation we had criticised". Pin was not alone in leading the transformation of the city's participatory architecture. She made it clear when we spoke that the changes would not have been possible without a knowledgeable and committed team, which included activists such as Laia Forné, the developers of Decidim and many others.

The Department for Participation 2015-2019

Prior to the 2015-2019 government there was no Councillor for Participation and only a small working group for participation in the department of urbanism, with each council department engaging with participation on a case by case basis. While it is normal to expect municipalities to actively support elected representatives and provide channels for electoral and representative democratic processes, the new department was dedicated to enhancing the role of citizens and to providing municipal support for bodies and channels for participatory democracy. Thus, the role of the municipality moved from reactively responding to citizen demands to proactively supporting citizens in exercising rights to participation.

The new department did this by updating and standardising procedures and developing a common framework consistent across city council departments. The commission has three internal departments, *Democratic Research and Innovation, Citizen Participation*, and *Community Action*. The key project of the department for Democratic Research and Innovation is the digital tool Decidim (We Decide). *Citizen Participation* provided guidance for citizens on the participatory processes supported by the council. This includes guidance on the creation of Citizens' Initiatives but also support for

Patrimoni Ciutada (Citizen Management of Civic Assets), otherwise known as the Barcelona Urban Commons programme. Finally, *Community Action* provides grants to support neighbourhood and community associations. These three work together integrating and complementing established participatory mechanisms and bodies, such as those represented in the Consell de Ciutat (Citizens' Council of the City). Digital tools such as Decidim track these participatory processes through their website making them both more accessible and transparent.

While some rights for citizen participation were provided for in previous regulations, on October 6th 2017, legal and institutional norms were updated with the passing of new Regulations For Citizen Participation (Ajuntament de Barcelona 2017). To defend and protect citizens' rights to participation the 2017 regulation established three committees that act together to oversee participatory processes and guarantee that they are conducted in a legally sound and transparent manner. These are the Comissió d'Empara (Safeguards Committee), Comissió Assessora dels Processos Participatius (Participatory Process Advisory Committee) and Comissions de Seguiment (monitoring committees).

The safeguards committee is part of the aforementioned Citizens' Council of the City established in 2004. It is made up of persons independent of the municipal government and with expertise in participation. They are tasked with conflict resolution and to ensure that the participatory regulations are properly applied and that citizens' rights to participation are protected. The Advisory Committee is consultative and reports on the quality and methodology of participatory processes. Monitoring committees are established to provide technical support and guidance for each participation process.

Decidim

Decidim (We decide) is the key digital tool for supporting citizen participation in Barcelona. Support for its development is an important part of the work of the Commission for Participation and, as we will see in later

chapters, Decidim had a role as a channel through which proposals for public policies for the Commons were submitted to the city council. Here I provide a brief overview of Decidim.

A number of the software developers that contribute to Decidim are affiliated with Spain's hacker and free culture movements and like many activists associated with Bcomú they were either directly involved or inspired by 15M (Calleja López 2017). The critiques these movements had of the limits of representative political institutions coupled with the hacker philosophy of free and open source software deeply inform the design of Decidim. Xabier E. Barandiarán, director for Democratic Research and Innovation with Barcelona City Council from 2016 and responsible for Decidim was previously director of the FLOK research project at the IAEN in Ecuador from 2013-2014. FLOK developed a sectoral analysis of the Ecuadorian economy accompanied by public policy recommendations to promote the use of free software, peer production and digital commons. The project formed the basis for what the project's research director Michel Bauwens later termed a commons transition. Barandiarán represents a continuity between these different projects, both of which see free and open source software, peer production and the commons as critical elements in processes of social transformation and empowerment.

On Decidim, citizens can organise and come together through different *spaces for participation,* these are *initiatives*, *processes*, *assemblies* or *consultations.* Each of which offers a variety of components to structure and channel different phases of a participatory process*,* from organising in-person meetings or online debates to collaborative development of proposals, surveys, voting and more. Decidim is designed to complement and work with established processes and procedures for participation in the city.

Decidim has an explicit social contract (Decidim 2021b) which informs all of its technical and organisational elements with commitments to principles of free software and open content, transparency, traceability and integrity, equal opportunities, privacy with verification, democratic quality and

guarantees inclusiveness and multilayeredness. The platform's developers describe Decidim as a techno-political project as it integrates actions on three planes, *the technical, the techno-political* and *the political* (Barandiaran 2018). On *the technical* plane is Decidim's software and code. This infrastructure is built on and is itself licensed as free and open source software. Its developer community actively encourages peer to peer collaboration making it an example of commons-based peer production (Benkler 2002). *The techno-political* refers to the ways in which the architecture of the platform is designed; its design principles, its interfaces and features and the ways in which these structure political processes. For example, one element of this, Meta.Decidim provides a space for meeting online and in person where the Decidim developer community learn about, debate, discuss and co-design features for the project. *The political*, refers to how the platform integrates with the organisations that use it, the most exemplary case being the city of Barcelona (Decidim 2021c). This then defines how Decidim interfaces with the particular political institutions of the city and the kinds of participatory politics and democracy it makes possible.

The project is not only innovative in what it enables in terms of democratic participation but also in terms of its institutional arrangement, the Decidim platform is co-produced, incorporating diverse means through which both waged and volunteer contributions are integrated into collaborative production processes. Rather than public-private, Decidim's developers describe the project as an example of a public-commons partnership where public institutions, in this case the municipality of Barcelona, are active partners, financially and politically supporting a collaborative and commons based platform (Barandiaran 2018).

Like in any major project there are staff and developers that are contracted and remunerated for maintaining core aspects of the project, but because the code is free and open source this makes it possible for others to contribute or adapt the platform for their own uses. Decidim is not only used by the city of Barcelona. It has been adopted and adapted by a number of other

municipalities and cities in Catalonia, Spain and beyond. The city of Helsinki in Finland has used Decidim to pilot participatory budgeting (Omstadi 2021). In France, an organisation by the name of Open Source Politics use Decidim and offer services to support towns and cities to develop participatory projects (Open Source Politics 2021). Decidim can also be understood as an example of inter-municipal collaboration for the development and provision of digitally supported public services.

Decidim is not only used by municipalities and government institutions. It is being tried and tested by many different kinds of organisations. An instance of the platform is used by the municipal energy company Barcelona Energía (Barcelona Energía 2021a). The municipality of Barcelona also provide shared technical infrastructure, a multi-tenant installation where instances of Decidim are available for civic associations in the city such as the FAVB (2021). The platform has also been adopted by the energy cooperative Som Energía (Som Energía 2021a) and the XES (XES 2021b). The World Social Forum of Transformative Economies also used the platform (WSFTE 2021).

Decidim use their own platform for planning and organising and its development is in this sense recursive (Kelty 2008) where a community of users are involved in a reflexive process not only as users of a platform that structures their social relations but also having power to transform the way the platform structures those relations. Decidim and the developer community around it are situated as a key part of the democratic transformation taking place in the city and the platform has been used for many different processes. In 2016, in partnership with the municipal government led by Bcomú, Decidim was used for large-scale citizen participation in the development of the municipal action plan (PAM).

Commons activists took advantage of this process, developing and submitting policy proposals which were in turn acted upon by the city council. I examine this process in chapter A second large scale participatory process for city wide citizen consultation on the municipal action plan was also launched in 2020, with a budget of 75 million euro earmarked to support participation between 2020 and 2023 (Ajuntament de Barcelona

2020a). These participatory processes are widely advertised throughout the city.

Referenda and Citizens' Initiatives

The new regulation on participation was passed on the 6th of October 2017. In 2018, it faced its first major public test with the campaign calling for a referendum on the remunicipalisation of water utilities. Citizens' initiatives and referendums are two of the participatory instruments introduced in the 2017 regulation. Aigua és Vida (AeV; Water is Life), one of the leading civic platforms in the campaign for water remunicipalisation used the citizens' initiative to call for a city wide referendum on water remunicipalisation (Aigua és Vida 2021). The campaign faced numerous political and legal obstacles to holding the referendum but the case is illustrative of both the popular demand for the democratisation of water management and the challenges new participatory initiatives have faced.

Citizens' Initiatives

A Citizens' Initiative (CI) is a means by which city residents and civic groups can, through the collection of signatures, demonstrate public support and petition the city council to take action on issues of public concern. CIs can be initiated by submitting a proposal to the city council in person or online through the Decidim platform. The council then provides the group behind the CI with tools and guidance on how to inform the public and gather support. A CI can activate a number of participatory channels. These are *participatory processes*, *participatory bodies*, and *citizen consultations* (i.e., referenda). They can also propose regulations to be considered on the agenda of the municipal council. The number of signatures required for a CI varies depending on the type of the initiative and the territorial level, neighbourhood, district or city-wide. For a CI to hold a neighbourhood council it requires signatures of 1% of the population of a neighbourhood, and this could range from 25 to 450 depending on the size of the neighbourhood. A citizens' initiative at the city level requires a minimum of 15,000 signatures (Ajuntament de Barcelona 2019a) .

It is worth noting that the first successful citizens' initiative at the EU level was the 2012 Right2Water campaign titled "Water and sanitation are a human right! Water is a public good, not a commodity!" (Right2Water 2014). The campaign which succeeded in gathering over 1.6 million signatures from citizens across the EU called for the implementation of the 2010 UN resolution 64/292 recognising the human right to water and sanitation (UN General Assembly 2010). The success of this campaign at the European level bolstered national and regional water campaigns across Europe.

Referenda or Citizen Consultations

Referendums are popular votes on issues of public concern. From here on I refer to referenda as consultations or citizen consultations as this is the term used to refer to these processes in Barcelona. The regulation allows for consultations to be initiated by public authorities or by citizen groups or civic associations. For citizen groups to call on public authorities to hold a citizens' consultation first they must show a popular demand and interest which can be done by petitioning public authorities through a citizens' initiative. Spanish law does not allow for the results of consultations to be binding over public authorities. This non-binding legal status means that consultations are primarily consultative. This does not mean that consultations can have no effect. Their results are expressions of popular interest on issues of public concern and councillors and government officials can take this into account when voting and making decisions.

Social movements put remunicipalisation on the political agenda

In Spain, like many other European countries, the material and psychological burden of the financial crisis and austerity policies were disproportionately borne by the urban poor and working classes who, faced with a lack of employment and increasingly precarious working conditions struggled to meet mortgage repayments, rising rents and costs of utilities. During this time private utility companies in Catalonia routinely cut off essential utilities such as gas, electricity and water. The systemic impacts

were recognised by activists and social movements. People attending assemblies such as those of the PAH reported finding themselves forced to choose between missing rental or mortgage payments or running up debts and risk having utilities cut off. Experiences like this were a catalyst for a strategic convergence of social movements, prompting the formation in 2014 of the Aliança contra la Pobresa Energètica (APE; Alliance Against Energy Poverty). APE included, AeV, FAVB, PAH, La Xarxa per la Sobirania Energètica (XSE; The Network for Energy Sovereignty), among others (APE 2021).

At that same time in 2014 a number of activists who participated in those movements were also taking part in the creation of the citizens' platform Bcomú. Ada Colau was a founding member and public representative of the PAH; Gala Pin and others were also involved. Eloi Badia who had worked with Enginyeria sense Fronteres (ESF; Engineers without Borders), an important actor in the water campaign with AeV, was later appointed Councillor for Energy and Water. The 2015 electoral programme of Bcomú echoed the concerns of those social movements (Bcomú 2015b). Bcomú committed to tackle energy poverty and to defend citizens' right to water by transforming energy and water services in the city through the creation of public or rather municipal services, through remunicipalisation. For this reason, the electoral success of Bcomú in 2015 represented an important moment for these social movements. The campaign for water remunicipalisation has a longer history that I will summarise but before doing so, I will briefly present the case of energy remunicipalisation as a point of contrast.

Remunicipalisation of Energy: Barcelona Energía

On March 31st 2017, Barcelona City Council approved the creation of a public energy company, later named Barcelona Energía (BE; Barcelona Energy; Barcelona Energía 2021b). Barcelona Energía was created to address a range of social and ecological issues. BE is an energy distributor rather than an energy producer. This means that BE purchases energy at

wholesale rates on the energy market. Among its stated goals are a public guarantee and commitment to source energy needs for the municipality from sustainable and renewable sources; an important step in the city's green transition. BE also supports individuals, civic associations, communities and small businesses to earn revenue from generating their own energy using solar panels or wind turbines by offering them a means to sell their surplus energy to the city council. One of the arguments for the creation of BE is that, as a publicly owned distributor, BE can be subject to greater standards of public accountability and transparency than a private company. BE can also have a role in supporting public policies that respect social rights. Rather than cutting off struggling residents, BE refers them to municipal supports aimed at addressing energy poverty. BE began providing energy services on July 1st 2018 to municipal buildings, facilities and municipal companies, with an initial plan to expand the service to 20,000 households in 2019. Another novel aspect of BE is the way that it has adopted the platform Decidim as a participatory tool to include users and producers in its decision-making processes (Barcelona Energía 2021a). As a wholesale purchaser and distributor the creation of BE did not necessitate taking back public infrastructure from the management of private contractors. Along with the smaller scale of operations this made the process of energy remunicipalisation substantially less complex that in the case of water.

Remunicipalisation of Water - Legal background to the campaign

As in the case of energy, the creation of a publicly owned and accountable water utility was seen by its advocates as a means to ensure services meet the requirements of social policies and ecological standards as well as guaranteeing access for residents experiencing financial difficulties. By contrast with the case of energy, water remunicipalisation would require the council to create a publicly owned utility company that would manage the entire service from source management and water treatment to billing and customer services. This would necessitate taking under public control substantial public infrastructure whose management had been contracted to

private firms.

Despite intensive lobbying of governments for privatisation at both international and national levels, water services in most countries around the world are publicly owned and managed (March et al. 2019). Barcelona is an exception. The city has contracted the management of the water supply to private companies since 1867 (March et al. 2019). In 1882, the water supply came under the management of Société Générale des Eaux de Barcelone (The General Water Company of Barcelona). In the 1920s, under new ownership, the company name was changed and translated into Catalan, Societat General d'Aigües de Barcelona (SGAB; General Water Company of Barcelona). SGAB is today owned by the Agbar group, a subsidiary of the French multinational Suez. The city's water supply was wholly managed by SGAB until 2012 when they entered into a public-private partnership with the Area Metropolitana de Barcelona (AMB; Metropolitan Government of Barcelona) to form Aigües de Barcelona, Empresa Metropolitana de Gestió del Cicle Integral de l'Aigua, S.A. (ABEM; Waters of Barcelona, Metropolitan company for the management of the whole water cycle).

The AMB governs one of the largest metropolitan areas in Europe. It consists of 36 municipalities serving a population of over 3 million residents. Prior to the creation of ABEM in 2012 there was a clear distinction between the private management of the water supply by SGAB and the public management of sewage and sanitation by municipalities and AMB. Since 2012 the entire water supply of 23 municipalities and wastewater treatment of 36 municipalities has come under the single management of ABEM. When companies under control of Agbar are taken together, 9 out of 10 service users in the metropolitan area depend on Agbar for water (March et al. 2019).

In 2010, SGAB was taken to court by a family whose water had been cut off after they refused to pay a bill of €6500 which they were charged following a leak in the basement of their building. The court ruled in favour of the family and against SGAB. In addition, the court found that SGAB had no

legal contract with the local government (Tarín 2010). While the court's findings did not have legal effect on SGAB, according to March et al. (2019) this moment may have placed pressure on authorities to clarify the legal situation, leading in 2012 to the creation of ABEM. The apparent rush to create ABEM led to further controversy.

In 2016, the Tribunal Superior de Justícia de Catalunya (TSJC; High Court of Catalonia) cancelled the ABEM public-private contract after finding that ABEM was granted a 35 year contract without following tendering procedures required by Spanish law. The court also found irregularities in the valuation of company assets, on which the distribution of control of the company was divided with 85% going to Agbar and 15% to AMB. The TSJC ruling was significant for social movements who saw in it an opportunity to advance their demands for the remunicipalisation of water services. However Agbar filed an appeal with the Spanish Supreme Court and in November 2019 the court sided with Agbar and its contract was upheld bringing the legal process to an end (Rincón and Cordero 2019). The overturning of the ruling in 2019 was a substantial blow to social movements' hopes for remunicipalisation. Nevertheless throughout the period of these legal proceedings in preparation for a favourable outcome, activists had engaged in efforts to build public support and make the political case for remunicipalisation. It was during this period that the movement launched the citizens' initiative calling for a city-wide referendum on remunicipalisation.

Achievements of the movements

Civic organisations and networks in Barcelona such as the FAVB and ESF had denounced the private management of water in Catalonia since the early 2000s (March et al. 2019). The controversies of recent decades created space for a public debate on alternative approaches to water management and remunicipalisation. The platform AeV has been a key driver behind the campaign for remunicipalisation. Formed in 2011 (March et al. 2019), AeV "consists of more than fifty organisations working toward public,

democratic and non-commercial water management" (Planas 2017,154). It includes FAVB, ESF, and many others (Aigua és Vida 2022).

AeV have consistently campaigned, highlighting the impacts of utility cut-offs and overcharging, environmental impact, lack of government transparency and oversight of utility management and the numerous court findings and legal irregularities. AeV is also part of the APE. These movements led some successful campaigns. In 2015, the APE led a campaign which saw the Catalan regional government introduce a law banning utility cut-offs. Despite the ban, many residents were left saddled with outstanding debt and the campaign has continued to fight for its cancellation.

On the 26th of November 2016, Bcomú, and the radical left independentists, the CUP each presented motions to the plenary of the city council. Bcomú proposed a motion "opening a line of work within the framework of the city council towards the direct and integral public management of the water cycle", the CUP called for immediate remunicipalisation (Jurado 2018). Both motions were passed. A motion is aimed at establishing a position and can be used to open a line of work on a subject, but it has no legal or executive force. The passing of these motions was an expression of political support from the council for remunicipalisation. This was prior to the supreme court decision, on which the cancellation of the contract with Agbar depended. In 2017, the council commissioned the municipal company Barcelona Cicle de l'Aigua, S.A. (Barcelona Water Cycle Company) to prepare a report on the technical and legal steps necessary for remunicipalisation (Ajuntament de Barcelona 2017a).

In 2019, the city council invoked the aforementioned 2015 law established by the Catalan regional government, which obliged utility companies to request that social services assess whether a family is vulnerable or at risk before proceeding with cut-offs. Failure to comply with the legal process would see the company fined. In a public statement in September 2019, Barcelona City Council issued a warning to the energy company Endessa after it threatened to cut off residents over unpaid bills (Ajuntament de

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Barcelona 2019b). According to the statement, since the introduction of the 2015 law, over 63,000 utility cut-offs have been prevented. With nine sanctions with fines of 30,000 euro and 19 in process facing potential fines ranging from 10,000 to 100,000 euro.

Citizens' Initiative and Consultation on Water Remunicipalisation

The October 2017 Regulation on Citizen Participation (Ajuntament de Barcelona 2017b) included provisions for citizens' initiatives and referenda also known as citizen consultations. Consultations can be called by local authorities or by civic groups. However, before the council gives the go ahead for a consultation to take place civic groups first need to show sufficient public interest by collecting signatures and petitioning local authorities through a citizens' initiative.

On December 5th 2017, AeV submitted the documentation required for the city council to launch the citizen' initiative (CI). The goal of the CI was to call for a referendum on the remunicipalisation of water by May 2018. In addition to the water campaign there were two other civic groups organising citizens' initiatives. Citizens would vote on multiple issues on the same date and for this reason it was referred to as a *multi-consulta* (multiple-consultation).

Tanquem els CIE (TCIE; We close the Internment Centres for Foreigners) were campaigning to change the name of the square dedicated to slaver Antonio López to that of Idrissa Diallo a Guinean migrant who died in 2012 after only two weeks in a government detention centre. Habitem El Sant Pau called on the city council to develop inclusive social housing and to save the local gymnasium in the neighbourhood of Sant Pau (Gimnàs Social Sant Pau 2017).

Campaigns had 2 months to gather the required signatures. As a result of the extended legal controversy with Agbar, water campaigners felt that the debate in the city had shifted. It was no longer simply a question of whether water management should be public or private, but rather a question of what model of public management was needed. Activists felt that public

management in itself would not guarantee a quality service and that citizen participation and oversight of the governance of the public utility would be essential. For this reason, the question campaigners wanted to put to a referendum was "Do you want the management of water in Barcelona public and with citizen participation?" (Associació Catalana d'Enginyeria Sense Fronteres 2019). Signatures in support of the initiatives were to be submitted to the council before the end of February.

Before a single signature had been collected Agbar and other entities launched legal challenges to the initiatives and the consultation. Investigative journalists of El Crític followed these cases closely (Picazo 2018; Aznar 2021). By January 2018 the rules and procedures of the regulation for participation as it relates to consultations were facing three separate legal challenges filed with the Catalan High Court (TSJC). One from the la Cambra de Concessionaris i Empreses Vinculades al Sector Públic (The Chamber of Dealerships and Companies Linked to the Public Sector) to which Agbar are associated, from a delegation of the Spanish government and another from an obscure legal group Advocats Catalans per la Constitució (Catalan Advocates for the Constitution). In early February, Agbar launched an appeal against the city council arguing that the consultation was illegal (Picazo 2018).

During the week from Monday 12th to Sunday the 18th of February 2018, and with participation of 50 local groups, the water campaign mobilised 330 volunteers to gather signatures for the citizens' initiative in various neighbourhoods of Barcelona (Aigua és Vida 2018a). The water campaign exceeded the minimum requirement of 15,000 signatures and gathered 26,000 signatures in support of the call for a referendum. These were submitted to the council on Monday 26th of February. Despite a highly successful campaign when the citizens' initiative came before the plenary of the city council on Tuesday 10th of April every party other than Bcomú and the ERC voted against the initiatives (Aigua és Vida 2018b). This might have been expected from opposition parties CiU and PP who are opposed to remunicipalisation. However, even the radical left independentists, the CUP,

who had consistently been in favour of remunicipalisation voted against, arguing that they had already approved a motion for remunicipalisation in 2016. Within days the CUP issued a statement on their position claiming that there was a misunderstanding and lack of clarity about the procedural requirements of the participatory regulation (La Cup 2018).

Within a week, by April 16th the TCIE, ESF and FAVB, the groups behind the citizens' initiatives submitted a complaint to the safeguards committee, the commission assigned in the new participatory regulation the responsibility for the protection of citizens' rights to participation. The complaint argued that the councillors and parties who voted against the citizens' initiative had failed to comply with the requirements of the regulation for citizen participation (Aigua és Vida 2018b). This was a first test of the safeguards introduced by the new regulation.

Following a meeting on the 24th of April the safeguards commission issued a report (La Comissió D'Empara 2018). The report cites article 74.3 of the regulation for citizen participation which states:

> When the consultation comes from one of the citizen initiatives provided for in Article 8.2(f) that has collected enough valid signatures, the Municipal Council may only reject it, by simple majority, on the grounds that holding it is not adapted to the requirements of the legal system. (Ajuntament de Barcelona 2017b)

The report argued that objections to the approval of citizens' initiatives can only be made if a CI is not in compliance with the law. As such, in the case of CI the responsibilities of councillors are simply procedural. The findings of the safeguards commission were in agreement with the campaign and found that council members had violated citizens' rights to participation as outlined in the regulation which some of the same councillors had approved only six months earlier. Despite the prompt issuing of the report from the safeguards commission, the council was slow to respond and the delays prevented the consultation from taking place in May. On the 26th of October 2018 two of the three initiatives were finally approved by the plenary of the city council for the consultation (Jaumandreu 2018). However

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as city wide consultations cannot be held within six months prior or following an election and with municipal elections scheduled for May 2019 the consultation was delayed again until 2020.

The campaign for remunicipalisation has been strongly opposed by Agbar who launched advertising campaigns, legal challenges and lobbied government and political parties at municipal, regional and national levels. In November 2019, the Catalan high court ruled against the council and annulled the regulation for participation (Blanchar 2019b). The new councillor for participation Marc Serra denounced the ruling as an attack on local sovereignty and vowed to appeal (Serra 2019). Then in a further blow to the water campaign in November 2020 the Spanish supreme court ruled that Agbar's contract with the ABEM be upheld. Remunicipalisation of water in Barcelona was effectively stalled. Activists have continued to organise and support efforts for remunicipalisation throughout Catalonia. Agbar in turn has responded and has filed as many as 42 legal actions against municipalities throughout Catalonia (Picazo 2018; Aigua és Vida 2019; Aznar 2021). Legal challenges in Barcelona (Aigua és Vida 2019) not only stalled these particular initiatives and consultations, but were an attack on citizen participation in general. Legal actions against Colau and the city council continue who have been accused of fraud relating to the issuing of government grants to groups associated with the water campaign, APE, ESF and the PAH (Altimira 2022a; 2022b; Riu 2022).

The city council has also adapted to court rulings. In January 2022, the council approved updated regulations for citizen participation. The updated regulation were required by the Catalan High Court to comply with Catalan law on consultations and as a result initiatives and consultations are far more limited with higher thresholds for participation, where instead of the original 15,000 signatures, a city-wide consultation now requires 88,709 signatures and cannot be on a matter on which the council has an existing contract. The updated regulation also extends participation in new ways with provisions for participatory budgeting and deliberative assemblies (Garcia 2021; Ajuntament de Barcelona 2021b; 2022a).

Of the three initiatives that were to be put to the original consultation the goals of only one have been realised. TCIE had campaigned for the historic square dedicated to slaver Antonio López to be renamed in memory of Idrissa Diallo a Guinean migrant who died in 2012 after only two weeks in a government detention centre. The citizen consultation did not proceed but frustrated with the delays TCIE demanded the council and district of Ciutat Vella take action and in 2021 the district council agreed to rename the square to Plaça d'Idrissa Diallo (Idrissa Diallo Square; Ajuntament de Barcelona 2022b).

Conclusion

Social movements prior to 2015 had found the tokenistic forms of citizen participation deeply deficient. One way in which activists in Bcomú sought to realise the demands of 15M for real democracy was through the advancement of participatory democracy. Digital tools such as Decidim and public policies were aimed at enhancing citizen power. Yet even with Bcomú in the council and activists from associated movements in public office there remained substantial challenges to participation.

Decidim is techno-political precisely because it responds to the legal and institutional architecture of citizen participation in Barcelona. While participation can be supported and enhanced by digital tools, the forms and possibilities for participation and the tools that enable it are embedded and shaped by legal and institutional norms.

The case of the campaign for water remunicipalisation shows that even when participatory instruments such as the citizens' initiatives or referenda are non-binding in an executive sense their legitimacy has been highly contested politically and legally. The case illustrates the political tensions between dynamics of representative and participatory democracy. The ongoing legal cases launched by Agbar also show that when participatory instruments are used to challenge powerful economic interests not only the social movements and their campaigns but the participatory regulation itself became a target. These attacks aimed at undermining the very principle of

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citizens' rights to participation have had broader impacts for civic and social movements beyond the water campaign. In the later chapter on the commons collaborative economy, we will look at another example, where Decidim and the new participatory processes supported the successful co-creation of public policies for the commons collaborative economy. Before that, we return to another subject under the remit of the department for participation, the urban commons.

Chapter 7. Barcelona City Council Commons Policy

Introduction

In chapter four, I reviewed literature and outlined historical developments that have informed the evolution of urban commons in Barcelona, in particular the consistent desire for self-management among social movements, squatters and neighbourhood movements. The history of these movements suggests that while they are different, and can be more or less radical in their political orientation, these differences have also been productive, generating moments of debate, solidarity and cooperation, some of which have informed relationships between movements and the local administration. In this chapter, I focus on a particular kind of urban commons, public spaces or properties that are more or less autonomously governed by local communities through civic associations.

From 2009 a network of associations, La Plataforma d'entitats per a la gestió cívica (Platform of Entities for Civic Management), later named La Plataforma d'entitats per a la gestió ciutadana (PGC; Platform of Entities for Citizen Management) organised a campaign seeking clarity from the municipality on Gestió Cívica (Civic Management), an important legal provision that makes citizen self-management of public facilities possible. In response to the demands of the platform, in 2013 the municipal government produced a report on Gestió Cívica (Ajuntament de Barcelona 2013). This was followed in 2015 by a set of model rules. Despite this progress there was still no general policy or regulatory framework for civic management.

During that same period activists involved with self-managed spaces in the city developed the concept of Gestió Comunitària (communitarian management). Whereas the concept of Gestió Cívica refers to the particular legal arrangement with the local council, Gestió Comunitària is a political concept which describes forms of self-management that are expressly democratic in their practice, oriented towards social change, and aligned

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with the solidarity economy. Gestió Comunitària can apply to democratic and self-managed spaces that have Gestió Cívica arrangements with the council, but it can also apply to squats and social centres in rented premises. It therefore emphasises not the legal but the political character of projects (Ojeda and Urbano 2015; Font, Ojeda and Urbano 2015).

With the entry of Bcomú into local government in 2015 and the creation of a department dedicated to citizen participation, a new policy and regulatory framework for Gestió Cívica was on the table. The policy would also go beyond Gestió Cívica and promote the democratic concept of Gestió Comunitària as a model for community self-management of public spaces and services, or public-commons partnerships (Ajuntament de Barcelona. 2019c).

The programme for the territorial development of urban commons

The 2016 municipal action plan (PAM) included proposals both from the new local government and proposals crowd-sourced through the participatory process using the platform Decidim (Ajuntament de Barcelona 2020b, 2020c). Under heading *4.3.2. Desenvolupar el Comuns Urbans* (Develop the Urban Commons) the new local government made a clear commitment to "generate an administrative framework that recognizes and protects the forms of community management in the city, recognizing the diversity of management models, activities and needs" (Ajuntament de Barcelona 2016a, 183).

In 2016, the Direcció de Democràcia Activa i Descentralització (Department of Active Democracy and Decentralisation) that was responsible for citizen participation launched the *Programa per al desenvolupament territorial dels espais comuns urbans* (The programme for the territorial development of urban commons). The programme involved a process of consultation with participants of self-managed spaces, led by activists and researchers with a history of participation and engagement with social movements. From the municipality it was led by Laia Forné with research conducted by La Hidra Cooperativa (2022).

Following the process of consultation a pair of reports were published at the end of 2016. The report, *Comuns urbans : Patrimoni ciutadà : Marc conceptual i propostes de línies d'acció* (Urban Commons : Citizen Heritage : Conceptualisation and proposals for lines of action) by Castro, Fresnilo y Moreno (2016) reviewed and evaluated existing arrangements, developed a conceptual framework and proposed lines of action. This was supported by a second report by Torra Duran and Prado Pérez (2016) which provided an accompanying legal analysis.

Together these reports laid the foundation for the Programa de Patrimoni Ciutadá d'Ús i Gestió Comunitária. The council has referred to this as the Barcelona City Council Commons Policy, with a subtitle Citizen's Asset Programme and Community Management of Public Resources and Services (Ajuntament de Barcelona 2019d).

The programme sets out to promote and develop new participatory forms of institutional collaboration or co-production. Rather than public-private partnerships, these are public-community or public-common partnerships that aim to make what is public, common.

> This programme is built on the consideration that public goods and services can become the "commons" by promoting new forms of interaction between the municipal public institution and community citizens' initiatives, based in the recognition of the value and right to community management and use of public assets and services by the people. (Ajuntament de Barcelona 2019d)

The role of the administration is conceived as one of stewardship, as a caretaker or "guarantor of common goods" (Ajuntament de Barcelona 2019d). The administration has responsibility for supporting citizens in realising their rights to access and to the use of resources that ultimately belong to them. In ceding these resources for the self-management of communities, the administration recognises communities as public agents, with autonomy to determine and act for the public interest, independent of the state.

The programme marks a major change from ad hoc arrangements, made on a reactive basis without any guiding policy or regulation, to a proactive programme of supports for community management of public resources and services.

Weaving Urban Commons and Solidarity Economy

One way in which the value of this collaborative and activist lead process of consultation is evidenced is in the shift in language adopted in official documentation from an emphasis on Gestió Cívica (Civic Management) to Gestió Comunitária (Communitarian Management) a concept developed and advanced in the discourse of the social movements.

In 2015, activists held a meeting at the annual solidarity economy fair, the FESC. In attendance were activists from spaces with a range of different experiences of self-management, occupied social centres such as Can Masdeu, as well as self-managed spaces that had legal arrangements with the city council. Among the topics discussed were the strengthening of the self-management model and its part in the solidarity economy. Some participants at the event agreed to work together and in 2016 a new network was launched, La Xarxa d'Espais Comunitaris (XEC; Network of Communitarian Spaces). Members of the XEC were among the organisations and projects that participated in the consultation and informed the conceptual development of what would become the Barcelona Urban Commons Policy.

Given that some members of the XEC have civic-management arrangements with the city council, there is a degree of crossover with some members also part of the PGC. The development of the XEC is also informed by debates among activists on the concepts of civic or citizen management, these debates led to an evolution of associated concepts, from Gestió Ciutadana to Gestió Comunitària (Font, Ojeda and Urbano 2015).

As mentioned in the earlier chapter, while Gestió Cívica referred to the particular legal arrangement, members of the PGC preferred to refer to their model of management as Gestió Ciutadana emphasising the value of citizen

participation. Gestió Cívica is simply a legal arrangement. The fact that a space has such an arrangement does not mean that it has a political character or identity. Associations with a collaboration agreement in the form of Gestió Cívica can be rooted in the territory and involve some forms of citizen participation in their activities, but they are not necessarily committed to radical democratic forms of participation or aligned with broader movements for social transformation. The concept of Gestió Comunitária is more expansive, it decouples community self-management from an exclusive association with a legal form such as Gestió Cívica. When a group or project identify their organisational practices as a form of Gestió Comunitária, this means identifying with a set of social values and commitments to transformative social change.

The common factor around which members of the PGC came together was that they all had some legal arrangement with the municipal government, either co-management or Gestió Cívica. The PGC is an important network for representing the collective interests of these organisations in their engagements with the city council. However, membership is limited to groups and organisations participating in council arrangements. By contrast with the PGC, participation in council agreements is not a defining feature of membership for the XEC. Rather, membership of the XEC is defined by identification with a shared set of values outlined in the group's manifesto, which includes a strong commitment to horizontal and direct democratic participation, to social transformation and the solidarity economy (XEC 2016). As such, the XEC's membership includes projects and spaces with different legal status. The XEC also includes spaces where communities rent premises independently as well as spaces that are occupied for example the squatted social centre Can Masdeu. Activists participating in the XEC, such as Mariona from Ateneu9Barris who I spoke with in an interview, explained that when it came to issues of social change, empowerment and democracy, "we found that projects like Can Masdeu, that is a squat in Collserola, had much more to teach us than others doing citizens' management".

The PGC and the XEC both advocate for new ways of thinking about what

is public. Problematising the common identification of what is public with the state is one aspect of politics informed by the experience and discourse of social movements. There are cases, such as that of La Harmonia, where the popular demands of communities were dismissed or deemed illegitimate by district councillors. Where neighbourhood groups were expected to compete in competitive tenders against private contractors. Here the social legitimacy of neighbourhood movements comes into conflict with the political legitimacy of elected representatives. These kinds of struggles with the administration echo the criticisms of representative democracy from the movements of 15M. With chants such as *¡Democracia Real YA!* (Real Democracy Now) and *No nos representan* (They don't represent us), the 15M movement challenged conceptions that limit democracy to the politics of representative institutions. Real democracy was direct democracy practised in the streets and in the neighbourhoods. In this view, the legitimacy of projects rests first and foremost with the community of which it is a part, it is not a privilege to be granted by politicians and institutions. In an article reflecting on this experience activists wrote:

> there is no willingness on the part of the community to represent the 'people', the 'neighbourhood' or the 'neighbours.' Surely, this is one of the most important learnings of 15M for many movements. The renunciation of the representative does not, however, remove the pursuit of the community's benefit. That is to say, without wanting to represent the neighbourhood, one can work for the benefit of it, work for the common good (Font, Ojeda and Urbano 2015)

The articulation of shared values, concepts such as Gestió Comunitária, the recognition of the social value of projects and activities regardless of legal status, all of these support networking among members of the XEC and provide means for strengthening solidarity and social legitimacy of projects. In recent years, the XEC has joined the XES and created a commission dedicated to urban commons and community self-management (See Figure 3).

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Reports on the Urban Commons

The *Barcelona City Council Commons Policy* brings together and builds on elements of existing programmes and agreements. The previous municipal government of 2011-2015 made some progress. It provided clarifications and model rules for Gestió Cívica. They developed programmes such as Pla Local (Local Plan) which supported the temporary *transfer of use* of spaces. Pla Buits (Plan for vacant lots) offered a means for communities to apply for the temporary use of vacant lots, which for example could be turned into temporary recreational spaces or urban gardens. These legal arrangements and programmes were assessed as part of the *Comuns urbans* report (Castro, Fresnilo y Moreno 2016) and a range of issues were identified. The report also develops a framework aimed at addressing those issues which laid the groundwork for the *Barcelona City Council Commons Policy*.

Barcelona City Council has a decentralised administrative structure with some competencies at the district level. While the districts bring the administration closer to the neighbourhoods which they serve, coordination among districts and areas at the city level can present challenges. As mentioned in chapter four, while Gestió Cívica is based on a *transfer of management* arrangement, Pla Local is based on a *transfer of use*. As legal arrangements they are not the object of a particular policy or department. Prior to their incorporation into policies and programmes these agreements were used by different districts in partnership with different departments (or thematic areas) that would provide training, grants or funding. There was no central administrative mechanism with responsibility for oversight, no set standards or criteria to assess proposals and applications, to conduct reviews of existing arrangements, or to coordinate among the different districts and departments. The municipal government of 2011-2015 created a board to address some of the issues regarding *transfer of use* arrangements as part of the development of Pla Local. The board was responsible for accessing applications, as well as reviewing and mapping existing arrangements, however the mapping was incomplete. By contrast, Gestió Cívica was not made the object of any particular policy programme and as such no such

process reviewing arrangements was developed or undertaken.

The *Comuns urbans* report (Castro, Fresnilo and Moreno 2016) provides some summary statistics in relation to these different arrangements and programmes. It contains a list of 36 facilities under Gestió Cívica as of November 2015. This includes civic centres, community centres, youth centres, sports facilities, cultural facilities and sites of historical and architectural heritage. At the time of the report there were 6 applications pending. Since the introduction of the programme this number has increased substantially and more recent publications from the council in 2019 counts 63 facilities under civic management (Ajuntament de Barcelona 2019e). In the case of Pla Local for the period from 2013-2015 over 161 applications were received but only 45 of these were agreed, 26 of which were renewals of previous agreements. With only 19 new agreements and over 100 outstanding, the board responsible for the assessment of applications did not have capacity to respond to the demand for spaces. The Pla Buits programme which began in 2012. The report counts eleven spaces assigned from the first round of the programme, and a further five spaces assigned from the second round in 2015. At the time of writing there are a total of 14 spaces mapped on the city council website (Ajuntament de Barcelona 2021a).

There were a range of common issues. In many cases, civic associations were expected to compete, either among one another or against for profit entities for the use or management of premises. In principle, where associations are rooted in local communities and express an interest, Gestió Cívica should give them priority when local government make decisions on who will manage spaces. Decisions on assignment of spaces had historically been made on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of districts and departments and this continued to be the case despite efforts in programmes such as Pla Local. This kind of situation leads to further difficulties and inconsistencies in the handling of proposals and applications. While some agreements used similar model rules, this was not always the case, there was no standard set of criteria for the assessment of applications or for the

review of existing agreements. There was no census either of existing arrangements or of unused facilities potentially suitable for new arrangements. All of this combined with a lack of transparency and oversight of decision-making processes resulted in a general "democratic deficit" (Castro, Fresnilo y Moreno 2016) in terms of delivering equality of opportunity for potential applicants. The report concludes that the issues should be addressed by integrating these different programmes under a single regulatory framework.

The Barcelona City Council Commons Policy

The report developed a framework which has formed the basis for what has become The Barcelona City Council Commons Policy. The policy is actioned through a number of component elements summarised below.

- Citizen Assets Board
- Citizen Assets Office
- Participatory Space
- Citizen Assets Catalogue
- Community Monitor

Citizen Assets Board

The Citizen Assets Board is an internal municipal body. It is made up of representatives from various city council departments. It is responsible for promoting the development of the programme and for decision-making on proposals. Furthermore, it is tasked with developing a set of common criteria, tools and procedures that guarantee accountability and transparency in municipal actions in relation to the granting/transfer of premises and facilities. It is supported by the Department of Participation and Districts.

Citizen Assets Office

Located within the Department of Participation and Districts (Directorate of Active Democracy and Decentralization), the Citizen Assets Office is a technical support for the programme. It is tasked with advising and

coordinating with the Citizen Asset Board. It centralises the coordination with districts and departments so that all proposals go through this office.

Participatory Space

The participatory space provides a means through which representatives of all the various stakeholders taking part in the programme, such as projects and associations, can participate in the programme's governance. Organisations monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the programme and can make their voices heard on the issues that affect them. They also have a consultation role to the Citizens' Asset Board and may advise on various aspects of its operation.

Citizen Assets Catalogue

The Citizen Assets Board also promotes the development of the Citizen Assets Catalogue. The city council has committed to conducting a census of council assets and facilities which could be subject to use or management by communities and to make this list available opening the possibility for communities throughout the city to organise and make proposals regarding their use. The Citizens' Asset Catalogue is also tasked with conducting a complete census of existing arrangements.

Community Monitor

Balanç Comunitari (Community Monitor) is a tool for self-evaluation providing a means for projects to document their social impact. Balanç Comunitari is based on Balanç Social, the self-assessment tool developed by the XES. This new tool was developed with the support of the council in a process of consultation which included the XES and groups such as the XEC. At the time of writing Balanç Comunitari is supported using the same online tools as Balanç Social and is hosted by the XES. Self-assessment provides projects with a means for collective and comparative self-reflection, it is a learning tool for the self-development of projects, a means for identifying, adapting and developing initiatives so that weaknesses can be addressed and strengths consolidated. As the council reviews and renews

existing agreements Balanç Comunitari is intended to become the standard for self-assessment, replacing the kinds of monitoring reports that were previously required of spaces. It is not a tool for the administration to use to exclude initiatives that do not meet criteria.

There are some differences between Balanç Comunitari and Balanç Social. Balanç Social is usually completed by a single entity, such as a cooperative. Balanç Comunitari by contrast has two levels and can involve multiple entities or projects. The organisation level of assessment is for the space as a whole, and the project level is for the various smaller community led initiatives that are hosted by the space. The organisations and projects complete a quantitative and qualitative assessment responding to a range of questions according to the following criteria.

- **Connection with the territory** (to access to what extent activities involve different actors in the territory)

- **Social impact and return** (positive externalities, orientation towards the common good)

- **Internal democracy and participation** (access the mechanisms for decision-making and avenues for participation, as well as the openness, transparency and accountability of these processes)

- **People, processes and environmental care** (human rights, social inclusion, gender, and environmental commitments, economic self-sufficiency of the project in terms of both economic and non-economic resources.

Renewed Pacts

Many projects had agreements with the council prior to the development of the programme. These agreements were often for relatively short terms, of three to four years after which they would be subject to review. These short term agreements have been a source of frustration for associations as they placed constraints on their ability to develop any kind of longer term plans. The new programme presented an opportunity for renewed agreements more

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favourable to self-managed spaces.

One of the most emblematic examples of communitarian management is Can Batlló in the neighbourhood of Sants (Can Batlló 2021). In partnership with the new urban commons programme, Can Batlló participated in a study to measure the social impact of its self-managed model, to assess how its many volunteers led social and cultural projects and activities were contributing to community revitalization. By calculating the number of hours volunteers contribute through organising activities, it was estimated that Can Batlló contributes value to the equivalent of 1.4 million euros a year to the city. For every euro the city contributes in grants, Can Batlló generates value equivalent to four (Forné 2019). Laia Forné, an urban sociologist who had worked with the council and was instrumental in the development of the urban commons programme, declared that the study shows that community management can be more effective than the market or state (Forné 2019).

In March 2019, the city council renewed and approved a transfer agreement for the 13,000 square metre property for 30 years with an option to extend twice, each time for a further 10 years, making 50 years in total (Ajuntament de Barcelona 2019f). The duration of the agreement is unprecedented, and a first for the city. It represents a historic success for the associative movements and sets a precedent and expands the range of what is possible for other self-managed spaces throughout the city.

Conclusion

The policy simplifies the whole process through which communities apply, propose and negotiate for the use of publicly owned spaces and facilities. It has renewed and strengthened existing arrangements, building institutional legitimacy for urban commons and self-management, expanding a range of future possibilities.

There is no one ideal model of management, but the history of community management in Barcelona represents a plurality of experiences which can be drawn upon. The city supports a range of pathways, offering supports that

help communities develop their professional capacities and facilitating arrangements with different degrees of autonomy from co-management to civic management. As Sánchez Belando (2015) noted the trend from the city council in the 2000s was towards privatisation in the administration of civic centres with a small increase in the number of facilities under co-management or civic management. The new policy aims to change that trend. The increase in the number of spaces with a civic management arrangement from 36 in 2015 (Castro, Fresnilo y Moreno 2016) to 63 in 2019 is promising (Ajuntament de Barcelona 2019e). Among the most innovative aspects of this whole approach is the conceptualisation of urban commons as sites and spaces of citizen participation. These urban commons are also integrated within the social and solidarity economy. This combination of participatory democracy and economic democracy present a dynamic model of citizen led social and economic development.

Chapter 8. Commons Collaborative Economy

XES Commons Commission

It was not obvious when I first arrived to Barcelona in April 2018 to begin
fieldwork who I would end up working with. I spent the first few months
reaching out to the few contacts I had, meeting for coffee to explain my
research interests and getting a sense of the city. One of the first people I
met was Alba Hierro. I met Alba the year prior in Florence at an Inter-
mapping meeting. This was a meeting of mappers representing solidarity
and alternative economy mapping projects from all over Europe. It was
organised following a meeting of mappers at the World Social Forum in
Montreal in 2016.

Alba was in Florence as a representative of Pam a Pam, a project that maps
the social and solidarity economy in Catalonia. Pam a Pam is a joint project
of the XES and SETEM, a development NGO. I knew next to nothing about
the solidarity economy in Catalonia at the time, and I was interested to learn
more about Pam a Pam and the XES. We met at Alba's workplace, an office
on Carrer Bailèn, a few blocks from Barcelona's Arc de Triomf. Pam a Pam
and the XES are located at a shared workspace called ECOs cooperative
group. I sat with Alba outside while she took a cigarette break and after
explaining my research interests she told me that within the XES there was a
working group on the commons and invited me to sit in on their monthly
meeting the following day.

I returned the next day, when we entered I found that the office was
medium-sized, busy with people from many different organisations working
at their desks. We took the stairs down to the basement where there was a
large open space and a table for meetings. I took a seat and waited as people
arrived. I recognised two of the attendees from my previous visits to
Barcelona. Wouter Tebbens from the Free Knowledge Institute (FKI) and
Monica Garriga who I knew as a researcher who had also worked on the
P2Pvalue project where we met a few years prior. The group had been

meeting for the past year but were just approved as an official commission the previous month at the general assembly of the XES.

The formal establishment of the commission represented an important moment in this local convergence of movements, of solidarity economy and commons actors. The solidarity economy and commons movements are diverse and the working group took up the task of facilitating collaboration and exchange of ideas and practices between them. Promoting a commons perspective within the solidarity economy and vice versa.

In an article on the XES website announcing the creation of the new commission and introducing the commons, the authors point to the emphasis on self-management as a feature shared historically by the cooperative and the commons movements (XES 2018). The article cites historian of the Catalan commons, David Algarra on the historic importance of communal land practices in the region and cooperativist Ivan Miró who argues that it is no coincidence that the emergence of the associative and cooperative movements coincided historically with the decline of the rural commons. Suggesting that the customary cooperative practices of rural peasants, displaced and migrating from country to city, informed the cooperative practices of an emergent urban working class and in turn the associative and cooperative traditions. The emphasis on these historic links is important as it highlights how activists conceive their activities and the contemporary practices of the urban and digital commons as a continuation of older associative traditions of cooperation and self-management.

I attended the monthly meetings a few times. The minutes and agenda of meetings were always shared on collaborative digital notepads to which everyone could contribute from their laptops or devices. Participants discussed mapping digital commons initiatives, the adoption and promotion of free software tools within the broader solidarity economy, planned activities for upcoming events and the potential and opportunities for the development of new hybrid organisational forms that include features of cooperatives and commons. Later in this chapter, I will return to an example of this hybrid open cooperative model that developed in tandem with these

meetings, FemProcomuns.

I was interested in speaking with participants from the group more generally and in May I met with Monica for a coffee. We discussed the politics in the city. Monica told me how things had changed since 15M in 2011 and the municipal elections in 2015. That before the public debate was shaped by the economic crisis, with popular opposition mobilised against austerity and neoliberalism. This powered the municipalist wave that saw the election of Bcomú in 2015. Public discourse had since shifted substantially with the emergence of the Catalan independence movement. In October 2017, the Generalitat of Catalonia held a referendum on independence in which two million people voted, it was met by violent police repression from the Spanish state, its results were suspended by the constitutional court and prominent political and civil society leaders were jailed or went into exile.

This shift from a politics centred on questions of democracy and economy to a politics of national identity had been challenging for the new municipal government which tried to find a middle ground, neither explicitly for or against independence but supportive of the rights of citizens to have their views expressed through legal and democratic means. Regardless, the central government in Madrid has had no interest in negotiating a legal referendum. As part of an effort to defuse political tensions, the socialist government pardoned Catalan political prisoners in 2021.

We also discussed the support for the commons from the municipality. Monica along with David Gomez and Wouter Tebbens are all founding members of the cooperative FemProcomuns (We make commons). FemProcomuns hosts a number of digital commons projects. Teixidora (Weaver) a platform for collaborative documentation and connecting debates. CommonsCloud provides techno-ethical digital tools for teleworking, social communication and cloud storage. XOIC is a citizen led internet of things and smart city initiative. FemProcomuns have also developed tools and methodologies to support social and solidarity projects to become more commons oriented. The cooperative has also been a lead partner in delivering La Comunificadora, a city council incubator for the

commons collaborative economy. Support from the council for the creation of La Comunificadora was part of a response to the participatory processes for the municipal action plan it led in 2016. Monica kindly offered to meet again for a follow-up interview, however it was a few months before we found an opportunity to do so. In the meantime, I set about investigating the various bodies and participatory consultations led by the council.

It took some time to piece together an understanding of the context in which they work, but the people involved in FemProcomuns and La Comunificadora later became my primary correspondents during fieldwork. The story of how La Comunificadora came to be is as interesting as the programme itself. La Comunificadora provides insight into the emergent economic practices and models of the SSE and the commons collaborative economy. It also offers insight into the challenges and politics of socio-economic institutional change. The example will illustrate the consultation process for the collaborative economy that was led by the city council and how commons and collaborative economy actors and activists took advantage of the spaces and opportunities for economic transformation that were created by the entrance of Bcomú into the city council. Before a closer examination of La Comunificadora it is worth looking at the events and contexts that lead towards its creation.

The Commission for Solidarity Economy and Local Development

Introduction

The transformation of the socio-economic model of the city was a key part of Bcomú's shock plan (Bcomú 2015a). In July 2015, only a month after the municipal elections, Bcomú established a new position in the city administration titled El Comissionat d'Economia Cooperativa, Social i Solidària (The Commissioner for Cooperative, Social and Solidarity Economy) under the remit of the First Deputy Mayor's Office of Economy, Employment, Competitiveness and Tax. The new commission was led initially by Jordi Via Llop and from 2017 by Álvaro Porro González, both activists with a history of participation in the SSE and with social

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movements in the city.

An ambitious action plan was published in 2016. The *Pla d'Impuls de l'Economia Social i Solidària 2016-2019* (PIESS; Plan to Boost the Social and Solidarity Economy). It aimed to invest €25 million in the SSE from 2016 to 2019. Barcelona Activa (BA) the city's local economic development agency also played an important role in delivering on these plans and policies. One of the first interventions from the city council was the creation of a new department within Barcelona Activa to promote the SSE called Altres Economies (Other Economies). The was initially led by Álvaro Porro. The title of the department was later changed to socio-economic innovation.

Prior to 2015, BA followed the typical discourse and approach to local economic development, hosting events, offering training and business programmes with a focus on start-ups, encouraging entrepreneurs to develop their intellectual property to attract investors and drive growth. Since 2015, its programme has expanded to include training and development for the SSE and the commons collaborative economy. These new programmes represent a political intervention and a change in direction in the model of economic development promoted by the city. However, institutional change takes time. New programmes co-exist alongside the old. Differences and contradictions between these models are not lost on programme coordinators or administrators. La Comunificadora, the incubator for the commons collaborative economy is one of these new programmes.

Following Via's departure in July 2017, Porro was appointed to the position of Commissioner for Social Economy, Local Development and Consumption. The change in title followed the change in commissioner. The name of the department was changed again in 2019 following the municipal elections and Porro's successful reappointment as Commissioner for Social Economy, Green, Local Development and Food Policy. The name change also reflects the times and the growing sense of urgency to address climate change. Porro has long been active in the SSE and among social movements in Barcelona. He has lived at Can Masdeu, an ecological squat and social

centre previously mentioned in chapter four on urban commons. As an editor of the magazine Opcions he closely followed the development of SSE and other movements in the city. He was also active with the PAH and among the group of activists that started Bcomú.

This kind of experiential knowledge enabled Via and Porro to engage with movements, and from the beginning public policy for the SSE was co-created with stakeholders through participatory activities which included consultations, events and forums. There were over 300 meetings in two years (Chaves-Avila, Via-Llop, and Garcia-Jané 2020). These included bilateral consultations with established organisations and sectoral representatives of the SSE, such as the Federation of Worker Cooperatives, the XES and others. There were also multilateral meetings and participatory events, such as Procomuns, to consult with sectors that did not have formal representative bodies.

The comissionat's conception of SSE was through these processes expanded to include the sharing economy, or more specifically L'Economia Collaborativa Procomú (CCE; Commons Collaborative Economy). This reflected the convergence that had already been taking place in the years prior between solidarity economy and commons actors in the city, a process that has been further consolidated since 2015.

In the absence of a formal representative body for the CCE, the city council supported the creation of Barcola (Barcelona Col·laborativa) a technical working group made up of leading local CCE actors. This was initially established through an agreement between Barcelona City Council and four signatory organisations – FKI, Guifi.net, Ouishare, Dimmons UOC (Procomuns 2016a).

In 2016, together, the Comissionat and Barcola organised Procomuns, an event which brought CCE actors together. This participatory process generated 130 policy proposals for the CCE. The process involved co-design facilitation methodologies which included the use of Teixidora, it coincided with the participatory process of the municipal action plan, and

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the proposals were submitted using the platform Decidim. The Comissionat also received comments and proposals from individual citizens and associations through Decidim. I will return to Procomuns later in this chapter. Alongside these consultative and participatory processes, a series of reports and publications on the SSE were commissioned (Suriñach Padilla 2016; Fernàndez and Miró 2016). Together these informed the development of the PIESS. For a comprehensive and in-depth review of the PIESS see Chaves-Avila, Via-Llop, and Garcia-Jané (2020).

Research and Publications

The new department commissioned a number of reports and publications on solidarity economy in the city. These reports and publications reflect a depth of first-hand knowledge and experience by the authors who are actively involved in the SSE in Barcelona and Catalonia through networks such as XES. The diverse movements identified in these reports and publications are recognised as dynamic sites of social innovation that contribute to social value creation through their capacity to address inequality, promote social inclusion, ecological impact and sustainability and democratic governance. The research and assessment of the SSE and other movements in these reports informed the departmental action plan, the PIESS. The publications also served as references on SSE for civil servants in the city administration, many of whom were new to the SSE approach.

Les altres economies de la ciutat (The other economies of the city) report by Suriñach (2016) includes a summary and a matrix analysis of the relations between social movements in the city. From de-growth and agro-ecological movements, to solidarity economy, feminist economy, collaborative economy among others.

La economía social y solidària en Barcelona (The social and solidarity economy in Barcelona) by Fernández & Miró (2016) examines the cooperative, social and solidarity economy in the city of Barcelona highlighting both its historical and contemporary connection with neighbourhoods. The book includes a statistical analysis of each sector of

the SSE and the activities of initiatives in the different districts of the city. According to their research, as of 2015, the SSE accounted for 4,718 socio-economic initiatives in the city and employs 53,000 people. This represents 8% of total employment in the city of Barcelona, and an economic aggregate of €3.75 billion, more than 7% of the city's GDP (Fernández & Miró 2016).

Economies transformadores de Barcelona (Transformative Economies of Barcelona; Suriñach 2017) builds on Suriñach's previous report, going into more detail on the diverse movements that make up transformative economies in the city. Suriñach also develops a conceptual framework outlining how the social innovations and practices of these movements could be scaled and mainstreamed. Mainstreaming alternative economic practices has been a key part of the overall strategy of the commission.

The Plan to Boost the Social and Solidarity Economy

Pla d'Impuls de l'Economia Social i Solidària 2016-2019 (PIESS; Plan to Boost the Social and Solidarity Economy), was the department's action plan for the development of the social and solidarity economy. The plan argues that the development of the SSE makes an important contribution to the life of the city, particularly in addressing inequality, unemployment and the impacts of the economic crisis.

The PIESS has an expansive conception of innovation and social value creation beyond typical economic and monetary metrics. It includes a range of monetary and non-monetary economic activities. In addition to promoting the creation of local cooperatively owned business and employment the SSE framework includes community economies, commons collaborative economy, formal and informal economies, individual and collective economic activities that prioritise social and ecological needs above profit. It advocates for a plural vision of economy, similar to the plural economy of Jean Louis Laville, which I explored in the earlier chapter on solidarity economy (Hart, Laville, and Cattani 2010).

The PIESS integrates analysis and recommendations from the departments

commissioned publications as well as from reports and consultations with sectoral bodies and networks such as the XES (2015).

The two major objectives of the plan are to promote and reinforce the SSE. Reinforcement is aimed at supporting and strengthening the existing SSE, while promotion is aimed at raising the visibility and mainstreaming of the SSE as well as supporting the creation of new initiatives. These objectives were targeted through six lines of work which included 31 subsidiary actions: (1) mentoring and training, (2) funding, (3) inter-cooperation between actors, supports for (4) communications and narrative, the provision of dedicated (5) facilities and resources, (6) territorialisation and community action - development plans that respond to the specificities of neighbourhoods and districts.

Barcola and Procomuns

Early in 2016, the office of the vice mayor Gerardo Pisarello commissioned the FKI to write the report, *Smart City Barcelona Commons Report* (Wouter Tebbens 2016). Tebbens had previously worked on the P2Pvalue research project which had mapped 1,300 commons oriented projects in Catalonia (Fuster Morell 2016). The *Smart City Barcelona Commons Report* identified 300 actors in the city and through an interview process consulted with over 50 people. The report was published in May. It was in part prepared for the city's new Chief Technology and Digital Innovation Officer, Francesca Bria, who was appointed the same month (Ajuntament de Barcelona 2016d). The report's preliminary findings informed parallel consultation processes such as those with Barcola, the working group for the commons collaborative economy. Barcola (Barcelona Collaborative) had three institutional representatives. Jordi Via from the Commission for Cooperative, Social and Solidarity Economy, Álvaro Porro from Barcelona Activa's new department for other economies, and Mayo Fuster Morell from the Dimmons Commons Research Group (IN3/UOC) as lead coordinator of Barcola (DIMMONS 2021).

At the time of writing Barcola lists 53 representatives from the commons

collaborative economy and 16 institutional representatives, the majority of whom represent different city council departments. The purpose being to foster a transversal approach within the council towards the development of collaborative economy.

Mayo Fuster Morell is the leading academic expert on the commons collaborative economy in Barcelona. She is an experienced activist with a background in the global justice movement and in the free culture movement. In her academic work she has made substantial contributions to the study of digital commons and online creation communities. She led the research team of IGOP (The Institute of Government and Public Policy) as part of P2Pvalue a Horizon 2020 research project. The role of the activist scholars such as Fuster Morell, and the working collaborations and partnerships fostered with academic institutions and research groups, such as Dimmons of IN3 at UOC, have been really important to the development of the collaborative economy. The many public events they organised have provided important spaces for networking and the sharing of practical knowledge and experience among collaborative economy actors. Research on the collaborative economy has informed the organisational practice of initiatives. This has strengthened the sector and empowered actors to intervene and advocate for greater recognition and support through public policies at the local level, but also at the European and International level.

From 2015 and through 2016, the municipal government led a series of consultations. The most prominent was the participatory process for the *Pla d'Acció Municipal* (Municipal Action Plan) supported by the platform Decidim. In March 2016, Barcola held the first Procomuns event at Barcelona Activa. The 90 sessions over three days attracted 300 participants from 32 countries (Procomuns 2020). The primary aim of the event was to debate the opportunities and challenges of the collaborative economy and to develop public policy proposals which could be submitted to the council through the participatory process for the municipal action plan. A draft set of proposals was prepared in advance of the event by the Barcola working group and its members, such as the FKI who were working in parallel on the

previously mentioned Smart City Commons Report. These were presented and shared at the event.

At that same time in 2016, David Gomez and Monica Garriga had started a new project, Teixidora (The Weaver). They were commissioned to facilitate collective and collaborative note-taking for the Procomuns event and worked with Enric Senabre of Dimmons to develop a methodology for collecting policy proposals. Collaborative note-taking on digital pads is a common practice among tech activists. Teixidora (David and Monica) prepare and structure the pads so that the method of note-taking is consistent throughout sessions. A bot harvests the notes which are transferred to the Teixidora wiki. The semantic wiki platform interprets the notes and structures the data, archiving it and making it searchable. Over time, as the collection of notes from multiple events grows, the metadata makes it possible to recognise patterns, making visible and weaving together links between events, people, topics and ideas.

There were collaborative pads and notes taken for almost all the sessions during Procomuns. Any participant with a laptop or mobile device could access the pad through a web browser and contribute, sharing policy ideas and proposals as they emerged. David and Monica organised the pads and other media, photos and video from the event on Teixidora (Teixidora 2016a). The proposals were collected and transferred to a draft joint statement that had been prepared earlier (Teixidora 2016b). After a review David uploaded them to Decidim where participants and members of the public could show their support until the 9th of April (Ajuntament de Barcelona 2016b). For a detailed review of these events see (Garriga et al. 2018).
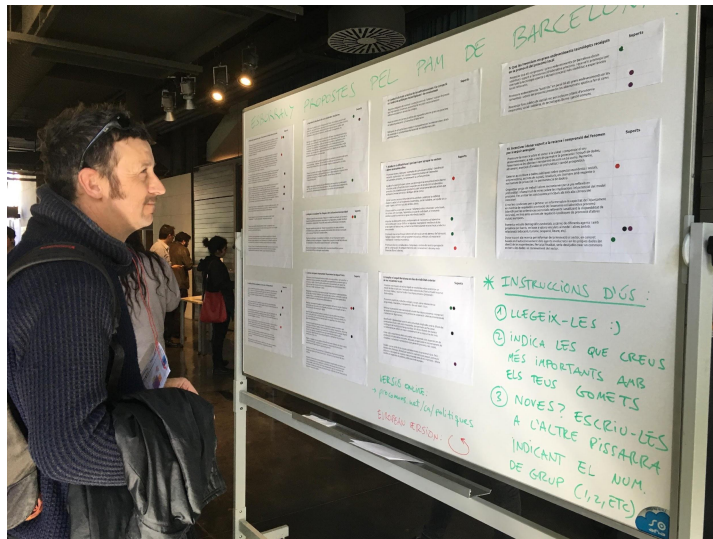
Figure 8: Participant at Procomuns event voting on proposals (Dengra 2016)

Around 120 proposals (Garriga et al. 2018) were discussed and generated over the course of the three-day event. These outcomes formed the basis for the Procomuns Declaration which was published in three languages, Spanish, Catalan and English. The local versions were sent to municipal and regional governments in Catalonia. The English language version was submitted to the European Commission to groups working on policy for the collaborative economy. The outcomes were summarised down to ten key proposals (Procomuns 2016b) which are included in Appendix 5.

A review on the Commons Transition website hailed the event as a success and declared "The Commons Collaborative Economy explodes in Barcelona" (Troncoso and Utratel 2016). The ideas of the free software and free culture movements were being taken seriously by those within the political institutions. During the event Álvaro Porro remarked "Procomuns was 'only the beginning' in what will be a long term commitment between Barcelona City Hall and civil society groups" (Troncoso and Utratel 2016).

The city council eventually accepted and acted on almost all the above proposals in some way during the 2015-2019 term. A detailed examination of each of these is beyond the scope of this research project. The consultation process, groups such as Barcola and events like Procomuns opened up a range of possibilities for commons collaborative economy

actors. In my fieldwork I followed the activities of some of those actors through their involvement in the development of the open cooperative FemProcomuns and the commons incubator La Comunificadora.

FemProcomuns

FemProcomuns (We make commons) is an example of an open cooperative, that in form and practice advances a hybrid of the cooperative organisational form and the emergent open and collaborative productive practices associated with the free culture and free software movements, developing livelihoods for its members and contributing to the commons. This places FemProcomuns at the intersection, participating in bridging the practices and discourses of two movements committed to socio-economic transformation, those associated with the commons and the solidarity economy.

The cooperative was formally constituted in December 2017 with three founding worker members. Wouter Tebbens, Monica Garriga and David Gomez. All have all been active in Barcelona's free culture and free software scenes. Over the course of a number of interviews I pieced together a little of the cooperative's history.

Wouter and Monica first met in 2013 at La Escuela de los Commons (the school of the commons; P2P Foundation Wiki 2021). David and Wouter met the same year at a wikisprint (Gutierrez 2013). As a representative of the FKI, Wouter Tebbens was a co-organiser of the Free Culture Forums and a researcher on the P2Pvalue project. Monica also worked as a researcher on P2Pvalue and with commons projects such as Goteo, the crowdfunding platform and later with the FKI on Digital Do-It-Yourself (DiDIY 2019), a European project. David Gómez Fontanills has been involved in Barcelona's art and hacktivist scenes and participated in the city's Hackmeetings (Hackstory 2021). His arts practice focused on net.art, technology and collective creation. He is a promoter of copyleft licenses and his creative practice has evolved into a cooperative practice.

The idea to start the cooperative had been brewing for some time. The

commons collaborative economy is quite dynamic. Projects have different characteristics, some operate for a limited time, while others become established and need to develop more regular organisational structures and support. It is also precarious and people move between projects and organisations. Among the different actors in the commons collaborative economy there was an emerging recognition of the need for some kind of flexible organisational and legal structure which could facilitate the development of commons projects and provide more stable employment arrangements.

The CIC (CIC 2017) and Enspiral in New Zealand (Enspiral 2021) had developed organisational models that integrated elements from the collaborative practices of the free software and free culture movements with the democratic organisational practices of the cooperative movement. These open cooperative models were important references. Sharing the same train line, Wouter and David would occasionally travel together, to and from events and meetings in Barcelona. It was on these journeys, over the course of two years that they developed their ideas for the cooperative.

In July 2016, there was a meeting of the FKI in Barcelona. Wouter took the opportunity to organise some meetings and pitch ideas. The meetings brought together people from FKI, software developers and actors from the CCE, including people from Platoniq (2021), Goteo (2021a), Coopdevs (2021), eReuse (2021), and researchers from Dimmons (2021). One of these proposals was to develop an incubator programme for the CCE. The other was to create a cooperative to support the development of commons projects.

A proposal for an incubator had also been put forward during the Procomuns event in March 2016. In response Barcelona Activa put out a call for tenders for the development of an incubator for the CCE. In September, the FKI in partnership with Platoniq and Goteo submitted a joint proposal. They were successful. The the name proposed by the group was adopted by Barcelona Activa and the first edition of La Comunificadora was launched in October 2016. I will return to La Comunificadora after

introducing FemProcomuns.

Around the same time in September, a meeting was held to discuss the development of the cooperative which would eventually become FemProcomuns.

> Monica: parallel to this, we had a first meeting to create a cooperative. We found that there was Goteo, Dimmons, people that were developers, FKI, people that were doing projects together but didn't have a structure to do it. Goteo had a lot of projects that are promoted by Goteo crowdfunding, and they don't have a structure when they come out and they said, let's make a cooperative, so we can give legal structure to the projects that we are doing. Like these ones and other projects, and Wouter had already thought about doing a cooperative long ago and David had also been thinking about doing a cooperative. In the end we were thirteen people.

By December a steering group for the cooperative's development was established. Another idea was that these projects, the incubator and the cooperative could be bootstrapped as part of an EU funded project.

> Monica: Wouter started talking about doing a European project, and we started working on dotCommons, and it was going to be like La Comunificadora. It would have incubation programmes in different cities, and an observatory.

The EU project proposed a series of iterating pilot incubator programmes in different European cities. These programmes would be supported technically by the cooperative which would provide free software tools, such as Nextcloud (2021) a cloud platform and alternative to Google Docs, and Odoo (2021) a project and enterprise management system. Best practices from these cities would be documented by an observatory which would include researchers from FKI and Dimmons. In January 2017, a first meeting was held and a working group for the EU project was established. To involve solidarity economy actors a working group was created within the XES. It was called dotCommons.

> Monica: It had these elements and us to do it, dotCommons. We looked at bringing together procomuns people, commons and social and

> solidarity economy people, and then we said let's try to do this. Let's make
> all the effort in writing the project. If we get it, we do it. If we don't get it.
> We do it too, without money.

In August 2017, the working group received news that their EU funding proposal was unsuccessful. However they were determined to continue. The dotCommons working group continued to meet and eventually it became the XES commons working group, whose meetings I attended when I first began fieldwork in 2018 and mentioned at the beginning of this chapter.

Independent from the working group, the cooperative FemProcomuns was formally constituted in December 2017. FemProcomuns has the legal form of an integral cooperative (FemProcomuns 2021). Integral cooperatives are formally known as *cooperativa mixta* (mixed cooperatives). They are legally provided for in the 2015 Catalan Law of Cooperatives (Generalitat de Catalunya 2015, 2021). They are integral in the sense that they integrate features of different cooperative types, for example they can have a variety of member types, worker members, consumer members, organisational members with each member type having different roles, responsibilities and decision-making powers within the cooperative's governance. In this sense, an integral cooperative is a type of multi-stakeholder cooperative.

The founding statutes of FemProcomuns document the balance of rights among its different member types and state the cooperative's commitment to the commons, their production, "preservation, reproduction and management" (FemProcomuns 2021a). The statutes FemProcomuns as part of a broader social project with the aim of supporting the consolidation of the commons in Catalonia around the values of self-management, sustainability and shared knowledge. Promoting the use of free and open licences and supporting a confluence between the CCE and SSE.

FemProcomuns organisational structure is intentionally designed to facilitate multiple, often quite different projects within a single legal and organisational body. It does this through what are called Grups d'Activitat Cooperativitzada (GAC; Cooperativised Activity Groups). GACs are autonomous projects within the cooperative structure, each GAC is

effectively a cooperative within a cooperative and each can have different member arrangements. There are currently four GACs in operation within FemProcomuns, these are CommonsCloud, Transitant, Teixidora, XOIC.

CommonsCloud offers and develops a range of technical services. Among these are cloud services with Nextcloud, Discourse for forums, Dolibarr an enterprise and project management platform, and Meet.Coop a teleconferencing platform. All of which are based on free and open technologies. Users of these services are consumer members of FemProcomuns. These include individuals and organisations within the SSE that are looking for ethical and privacy centred alternatives to the services of corporate tech giants. CommonsCloud is supported through inter-cooperation with other tech and solidarity economy coops, Btactic, Colectic and LliureTIC. I attended one of the CommonsCloud public events and became a user member. This enabled me to attend the cooperative's annual general meeting.

Transitant (Transitioning) conducts research and delivers a range of programmes and workshops, offering facilitation using participatory and collaborative methodologies, many of which are also used for La Comunificadora. In partnership with Labcoop, FemProcomuns delivered a programme of co-creation and co-design, supporting inter-cooperation among coops and social economy actors in the planning and development of Coòpolis (2021). I attended one of the workshops and observed the co-production process. Coòpolis is part of a network of 14 cooperative athenaeums in Catalonia. It is a cooperative enterprise incubator located as part of the complex of initiatives at Can Batlló, one of the city's emblematic urban commons. It is a major project with support from both the city council and the Catalan regional government. The PIESS included a figure of €5 million for investment in Coòpolis between 2018 and 2019 (Ajuntament de Barcelona 2016c).

Teixidora (The Weaver) was developed first by David and Monica before becoming part of FemProcomuns. Teixidora have developed a methodology for harvesting and structuring the collective knowledge produced during

events through collaborative note-taking. David and Monica carefully plan and prepare pads in advance of events. The links to these pads are then publicly shared and attendees are invited to participate in the note-taking process. The notes are then collected in the Texidora semantic wiki that functions as a searchable archive, in which evolving themes and issues from different events can be traced. Of the four GACs, I came to use and engage with Teixidora the most. David and Monica kindly invited me to join them at events to observe and participate in collaborative note-taking. As a documentary source on the events I was investigating Teixidora has been a critical reference and research tool for this thesis.

XOIC, Xarxa Oberta i Comunitària de la Internet de les Coses (Internet of Things Open Community Network), is led by FemProcomuns in collaboration with Guifi.net (Guifi 2021) and supports the local communities participating in The Things Network (XOIC 2021). First developed to provide internet in rural parts of Catalonia, Guifi.net is one of the largest community owned internet networks in Europe. The Things Network is an international network, XOIC is its Catalan branch. It promotes technological sovereignty and the ethical use of technology through the use of free and open tools in a community owned and operated internet of things, made up of networks of smart devices and sensor technologies. Among its use cases these distributed networks monitor a range of environmental data which can include, water and air quality, rainfall, atmospheric humidity.

David, Monica and Wouter work and collaborate in different capacities in each of the GACs, along with other worker and consumer members of the coop. The activities, practices and tools of the GACs complement each other. Worker and user members share the same collaborative tools, such as CommonsCloud. As well as being a central tool for Teixidora, the collaborative pads are used by different GACs. The practices of co-creation and co-design employed by Transitant also make use of these tools with notes from workshops collected on Teixidora. All of this media, workshop materials, graphics, notes, photographs and code are publicly available and

licensed with Creative Commons or free and open source software licences. This public and collaborative process of knowledge production is both a reference and a tool that supports inter-cooperation among commons and solidarity economy actors.

La Comunificadora

During my fieldwork I attended some of La Comunificadora's open sessions. In this section I consider some details of the programme. At the heart of the programme is the five pillar sustainability model for the commons which forms the conceptual basis around which the programme is developed. After a presentation of these elements I reflect on the projects that have participated in the programme and conclude with some considerations of the challenges encountered in the evolving relationship between commons, solidarity economy and public institutions.

La Comunificadora distinguishes the CCE from the corporate sharing and platform economy. The sharing economy is more popularly associated with corporate Web 2.0 social media platforms and big tech GAFAM, as well as major brands such as Airbnb and Uber. The possibilities afforded by the emergence of the internet set out very different social possibilities. On the one hand, those that valued connectedness, the open sharing of culture and knowledge, and on the other a mirror image, a society of control governed by remote AI and algorithms that monitor and direct attention to maximise ad revenue and corporate profits.

In many ways the CCE preceded the corporate sharing economy. With a wave of movements in the 2000s building on the creative possibilities offered by free software and creative commons licenses. The free culture movement emerged alongside movements for open access, open data, citizen science, hacker and maker culture. Wikipedia is an often cited example of commons-based peer production (Benkler 2002).

The practice of using copyleft licences and open technologies among the free software and the free culture movements expressed shared ethical commitments aimed at guaranteeing rights to access, share, learn, modify

and make derivatives of technical, scientific, artistic or cultural works provided those adapted works are shared in the spirit of reciprocity and returned to the commons through the use of the same or a similar licence.

The philosophy of sharing also found expression in non-commercial projects like Couch-surfing which preceded Airbnb. These projects are substantially different from the profit oriented sharing economy which is in many cases is just a technological refashioning and rebranding of extractive rentier capitalism. The hegemonic corporate model developed in large part due to venture finance and perpetuated exclusive approaches to intellectual property. Corporate lobbies have also used legal, technical and political means to advance and protect their interests and to criminalise sharing practices as forms of piracy.

There are moments and places where that model is contested. Contestation does not manifest only as popular protest. It is made possible through the concrete development of alternatives and the persistent construction of alliances that cultivate capacities for strategic and collective action and intervention within the political sphere. This is the case in Barcelona. A political opportunity was recognised and seized. It has been a catalyst not only for advancing projects, but for advancing the transformative political vision of these movements.

La Comunificadora is one component, which alongside other projects such as Decidim are expressions of alternative techno-political imaginaries. These are reflexive movements with clear political sensibilities and strategic vision. This political strategy for the commons is illustrated in the following graphic included in promotional materials for La Comunificadora based on the work of Xabier E. Barandiaran (Decidim) and modified by Wouter Tebbens (Free Knowledge Institute).
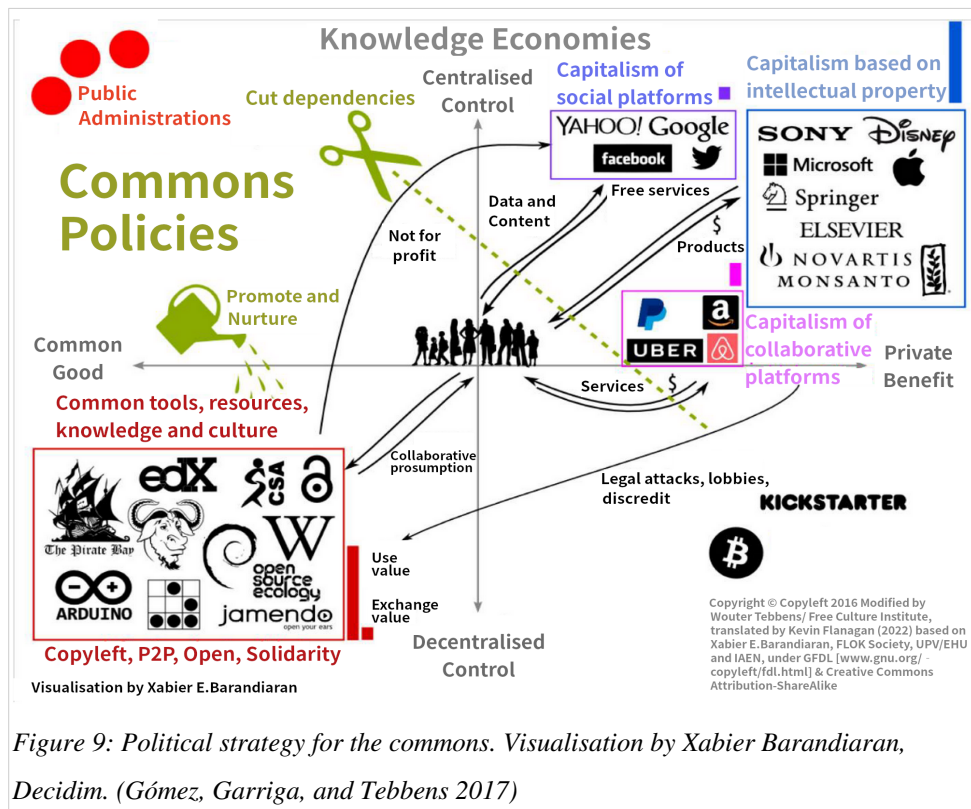
Figure 9: Political strategy for the commons. Visualisation by Xabier Barandiaran, Decidim. (Gómez, Garriga, and Tebbens 2017)

Workshop Design and Methodology

I had the opportunity to participate in a number of La Comunificadora's open sessions during its third and fourth editions. These were located on the premises of Barcelona Activa. The fourth edition was located at Barcelona Activa's newly opened InnoBA, a centre for socio-economic innovation which hosts many of the city's new programmes dedicated to the SSE. The duration of La Comunificadora programme's has varied. The third edition of La Comunificadora ran from October 2018 to April 2019 with 29 workshops. The fifth edition in 2021 was delivered online between March and June as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The workshops I attended were well-designed with a good flow between the different activities where ideas discussed and generated in one part of the process would feed into the next. A variety of co-production methodologies were used, along with agile methods popular in the world of software development.

On arrival, attendees were invited to sign in and to make a name badge. There were usually between 25 and 30 people in attendance, with a good

mix of men and women ranging in age from early 20s to 60s. The sessions were opened by representatives from Barcelona Activa followed by introduction from the programme leaders, Monica, David, Wouter of FemProcomuns and FKI and Guernica from LabCoop.

At the sessions I attended, Monica or David would take turns giving what could be described as a crash course introduction to the commons. Contrasted with market exchange and state provision of public goods, the commons were presented as a domain of community led self-management of resources. The commons were defined by three elements, (1) a community, governed by (2) a set of rules, which they establish for the management of (3) a resource. Synonyms for the commons were explained, such as *bé comunal*, *béns comuns*, and *procomú* which is derived from the Catalan *profit* (benefit) in combination with *comú* (common).

Situating La Comunificadora and the commons historically

In its published materials La Comunificadora firmly situates itself as part of the SSE, committed to social change and part of a transition to a commons economy (Gómez, Garriga, and Tebbens 2017). The programme invites "reflection on this economic model differentiated from the market model and the possibilities of transition from one to the other" (FemProcomuns 2021b).

In the opening presentation of the workshop the instructors give priority to narrating the history of the commons and situating La Comunificadora and the contemporary commons as part of a longer tradition. They begin with examples of 17th century communal resource management, such as water management at the Estany de Banyoles (Lake of Banyoles) in the north of Catalonia.
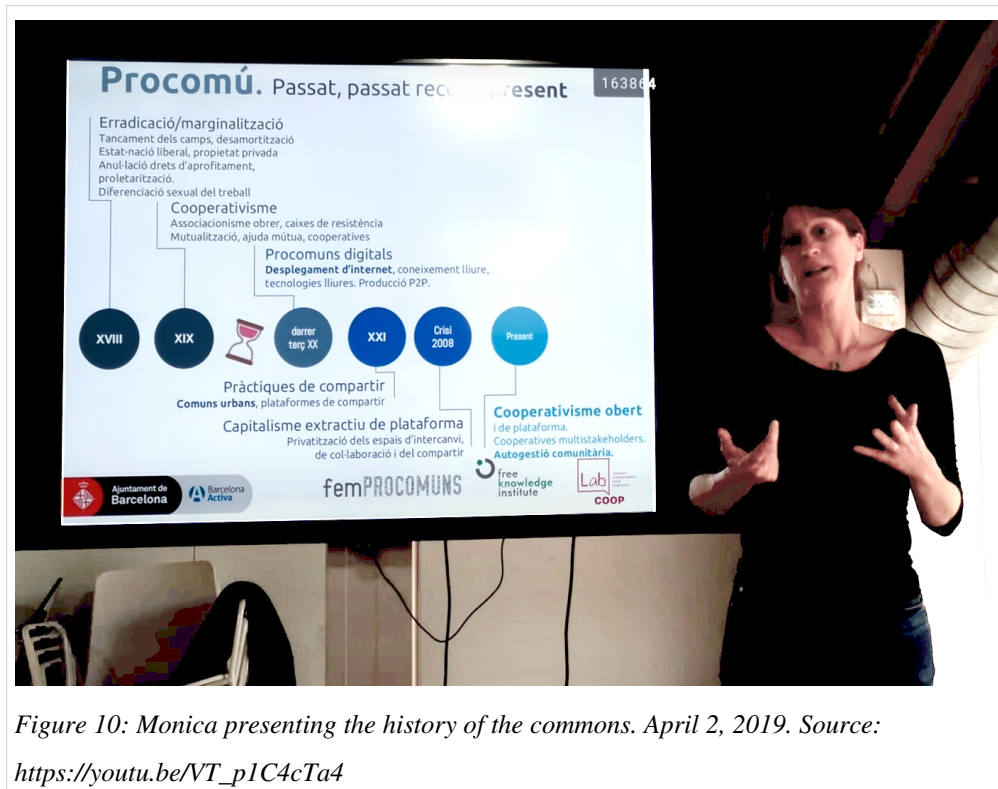
Figure 10: Monica presenting the history of the commons. April 2, 2019. Source:
https://youtu.be/VT_p1C4cTa4

In a single slide, a sweeping history of the commons is told that connects past and present. The historic process of enclosure, dispossession, the expansion of capitalist accumulation in the pre-industrial 18th century. This is followed by collective action in the 19th century in the form of working class cooperative and associationist movements. In Catalonia these movements were among the most advanced in Europe up until their suppression under the dictatorship of Franco in the 20th century.

The latter 20th century marks the re-emergence of the cooperative movement and of the commons, with the new digital commons, the urban commons alongside the work of Elinor Ostrom on natural resource commons. From this period and through to the early 21st century with the advancement of new technologies we see the rise of platform capitalism and new forms of extractivism built around data. All of this finally links with the present, with the evolution of new organisational forms such as open cooperatives that combine elements of both the cooperative and commons movements.

Airbnb, Uber, Deliveroo and Amazon are illustrative of the new forms of platform capitalism. These are accompanied by new forms of exploitation,

the use and abuse of personal data, increased precarity with the gig economy, and regulatory abuses. The case of Airbnb is emblematic; it has had negative impacts on the availability of affordable rental accommodation and is seen as a driver of gentrification.

In a conversation with David, he explained it was not hard to make the case for the commons in contrast with examples such as Airbnb which was a recognisable reference for workshop participants not simply because of its brand but because the neighbourhood demonstrations against it and the controversy over its negative impacts were extensively covered in local media. As a popular tourist destination Airbnb has had a huge impact on the availability of affordable rental accommodation in the city. The city council fined the platform and eventually introduced licensing regulations.

The five pillar Commons Sustainability Model

> Wouter: If we look at many commons models we can see very interesting alternatives going on and people don't understand why they work. How can it be that Wikipedia works or that Som Energía ends up working. In the first couple of years it was of course losing money. So this is a way to explain that, and then if you start finding out with a group of people why things can work differently when sharing knowledge and commons, then we might see ways to build our own model and get inspiration from these different use cases.

The presentations then moved on to introduce the five pillar Commons Sustainability Model (CSM). This is the guiding model at the heart of La Comunificadora. Informed by years of experience as both a practitioner and researcher Wouter began working on Open Business Models with the FKI as part of the DiDIY research project (DiDIY 2017). The model was further developed in collaboration with Monica and David, with FKI and then FemProcomuns eventually becoming the CSM (FemProcomuns 2022). The CSM has continued to develop through La Comunificadora, informed by the collaboration with SSE actors such as LabCoop (Guernica Facundo, Barbara Ortuño and Pere Ribas) and others.

At the centre of the CSM is the community and the resource that it cares for. These are supported by four outer pillars, opposite pillars are paired, so that resources and revenues are linked with modes of production while sharing policies are linked with governance. The subject of each pillar and its relation to the others are returned to repeatedly throughout the programme.
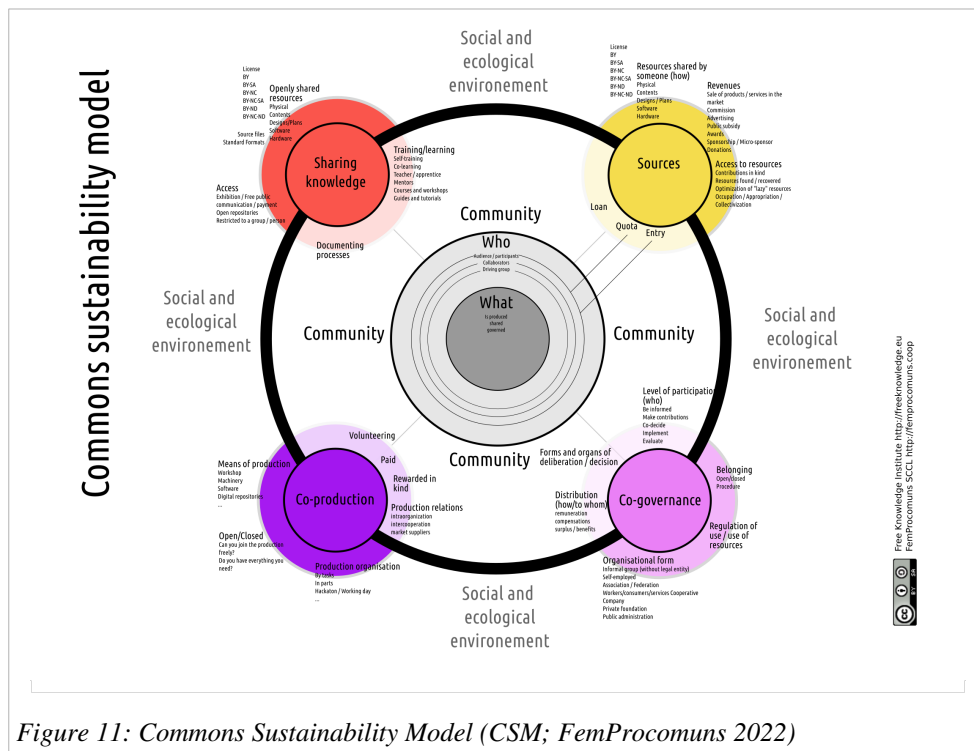
Figure 11: Commons Sustainability Model (CSM; FemProcomuns 2022)

The CSM is not a prescriptive or normative model. It is a heuristic and design tool which can be used to analyse any project or organisation. It can be used critically and applied to commercial sharing economy platforms to consider whether or not they contribute to the commons. In the programme it is used positively with each pillar posing another perspective from which to think through how to develop sustainable projects.

The CSM can be used to explore and support a variety of organisational models and goals. From community-led and cultural initiatives to cooperative enterprises and software start-ups. It sets out to show how elements from cooperative models of governance and free and open source licensing can enable greater degrees of participation in the governance of a community and resource. At the same time the model is pragmatic. It recognises that we live in economies dominated by market exchange. People

still depend on wage labour and many of the resources communities require to sustain themselves and their commons can only be acquired through market exchange. As such, projects generally have some engagement with markets or have needs to develop forms of financing. This could be donations or grants, but it could also be through the development of livelihoods that develop goods or services built around a commons. This is not an easy task; making a living rarely is.

Presented as an alternative organisational modality from market and state, the commons are often imagined as autonomous domains, but in practice that autonomy is one of degree. To understand what contributes to their sustainability and the threats and challenges commons projects face it is necessary to understand how actually existing commons and the communities that care for them constitute their relations with markets and states (Bodirsky 2018). Is it possible to develop organisational models with effective governance and livelihoods that contribute to the sustainability of commons? This is what La Comunificadora sets out to do.

In La Comunificadora's model the community is made up of different actors, defined by their degree of activity and engagement with the project. For example, there are those at the core who are most active, then active collaborating organisations, followed by occasional participants and potential participants. Actors are also considered by their degree of alignment with the mission of the project, from those deeply committed, through to those that are indifferent or possibly antagonistic to the goals of the project. The common resource could potentially be anything, as defined by the community (Harvey 2012, 73); software code, scientific or cultural knowledge, natural or material resources or a shared work or cultural space. The sustainability of a resource depends on the sustainability of the community that cares for it. The question then is what forms of governance can aid the community in achieving its goals. The CSM model present possibilities by which communities can move away from an extractive economic model to one that centres stewardship and care.

Group work

Figure 12: La Comunificadora handout 'What?'

In one of the open sessions I took part in the group work. This was set out in three stages *What? Who?* and *How?* For each stage participants were invited to take part in group exercises and to respond to questions on a graphic handout. The example handout in Figure 12 is from the first stage and begins with the question *What?* It asks participants to consider the following questions; What stage is the project at? Is it just an idea, have they developed a proposal? Is it ready to launch? Or is it already operational? Has the project been active for some time? Does it have an establised community? What is the geographic scope of the project? From the local to the global? Finally they should describe the project; What is the project about? What is it not about? What it does and what it doesn't do?

The second stage asked *Who?* Who are the people or organisations involved in the project? Who are potential allies? Finally, *How?* considers the social mission and values of the project, its governance or how people participate, how resources are shared, how is the project resourced, financed and made sustainable? Some elements of the group work stood out in sharp contrast to what one might expect from an incubator programme, in particular the

strong emphasis on collaboration and inter-cooperation.

Inter-cooperation

Figure 13: Identifying opportunities and resources for inter-cooperation

During the second *Who?* stage, a significant amount of time was dedicated to identifying potential allies and alliances and discussing the challenges and opportunities for inter-cooperation. There was a big emphasis on the benefits of cooperation over competition throughout. Participants were not only encouraged to develop their own projects but to consider how those projects relate to the broader ecosystem of the CCE and SSE. Other cooperative or collaborative economy actors are not seen as competitors but as potential allies and collaborators in building an alternative economy.

On one side of the room was a mobile display covered in sticky note papers grouped into *challenges and needs*, *opportunities and resources*, and the *scope of the project* (See Figure 11). On each note was written the name of an SSE or CCE organisation or initiative. These were also listed in collaborative pads (FemProcomuns 2021c). Participants were invited to consider what their projects shared with others, if there were areas of overlap and to reflect on whether they were reproducing something that others were already doing or if they were bringing something new or complementary that could enrich the ecosystem of existing projects and practices.

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Organisational boundaries and participation

In a typical enterprise the distinctions between employers and workers on one side and customers on the other is relatively straightforward. When it comes to cooperatives and commons projects these categories and distinctions don't always fit so easily. In cooperatives, worker members or consumer members can sometimes both participate in the governance and decision-making. Relations can be complex as participants can occupy a variety of subject positions simultaneously. Sometimes the categories of worker and consumer are not appropriate at all, when a large part of the labour that sustains a project is voluntary, or when the use of resources or consumption of goods produced are free of charge and access to them does not depend on whether a person has money. People play different roles but together this variety constitutes a kind of community.

Communities themselves are not easily defined. Participation of community members in organisations and entities shifts and changes with time. People participate in different ways and in different capacities. As people move between projects, relations of affinity are cultivated sometimes organically and sometimes intentionally, it is in this way that networks of social relations constitute another kind of resource and economies of affinity are produced.

Replicability

Another interesting feature of the programme was the emphasis on replicability. Where capitalist enterprises scale and grow through capital investment and compete for market monopolies, the practices of the CCE encourages the pooling of resources as commons which enables others to build upon and replicate projects. This feature is very much informed by the practices of the free software movement, where code is licensed with permissions that encourage users to study and learn from the work of others and to copy, cut and paste and make derivative works. This ensures that the products of contributors' labours are not exclusively bound to any single

legal entity through restrictive copyrights and intellectual property. Indeed, if for any reason a project fails, the use value is not lost and remains accessible and available as part of the knowledge commons, as a resource for other potential and future projects. Projects might also fork if founders have different ideas about the direction in which they want the project to go.

The coordinators of La Comunificadora embody these values and lead by example by licensing all the materials they develop with Creative Commons licences. David and Monica are prolific documentarians, each edition of La Comunificadora is detailed on Teixidora (2021) . All workshop materials are made available on Archive.org (La Comunificadora 2021) alongside many photographs from the workshops which are uploaded to Wikipedia (Mogams 2021). This trail of documentation is a like a living and ever evolving archive (Kelty 2008, 115).

Who were the participants?

In conversation, Wouter explained that many who attended the first edition of La Comunificadora learned about it through word of mouth. They already had some experience or engagement with either the SSE or the CCE but were looking for support to take their projects further. The editions that followed attracted participants and projects from more diverse professional backgrounds with different levels of experience. These could range from those with formal professional experience in marketing or business to participants with activist perspectives orientated towards social transformation. Some projects joined in their early ideas stage while others were more established and had already been active for a number of years. Participants also came from diverse sectors, tourism, education, arts, culture, fashion, food, mobility, energy, recycling, software developers and cooperativists.

An example from the first edition in 2016 is Katuma that provides small farmers and local food producers with an online platform for selling their produce and connecting with self-organised buying groups and box schemes (Katuma 2021). Katuma had been developing their own software platform

but during La Comunificadora they discovered the Open Food Network (OFN), an international network with similar goals. The OFN had been developing their platform using free and open source software (Open Food Network 2021). Rather than compete, following the principles of inter-cooperation and replication, Katuma adopted this existing platform. Katuma's software developers also became important contributors to the OFN . Katuma has since established itself as a cooperative and is now the local instance of the OFN in Catalonia. It is is also an example of multi-scalar governance (Vedal 2019) with users and developers of the platform participating in its operations and governance at different scales, from the local nodes of small producers and volunteer food groups, to the Katuma cooperative at the regional level and the OFN organising at the international level.

Also from 2016 were CCworld a local initiative which organises an annual Creative Commons film festival and Som Mobilitat a car sharing cooperative. 2017 included RidersXDerechos (Riders for Rights). This was a group of cycling couriers who originally came together to form a union and to take collective action against employers such as Deliveroo, Glovo and UberEats. Some members of the group went on to develop Mensakas, a cooperative alternative to the corporate platforms (Mensakas 2021a). Mensakas also participate in a transnational federation called CoopCycle (2021) that develops and maintains a shared free and open source software platform and mobile application for handling orders and deliveries (Mensakas 2021b).

Ensenya El Cor is another project that was developed during the 2017 workshops, this is the software platform developed by the XES for conducting the Balanç Social, the online social assessment tool for organisations in the solidarity economy (XES 2020). Data collected through Ensenya El Cor is used to provide an analysis of the social market that includes an aggregate assessment of the social impact and development of the SSE. 2018 featured projects such as EduCoop that provides education and training for the cooperative sector and GlocalShare, an online platform

for communities to pool and share under-utilised tools and resources (Glocalshare 2021).

Vera Vedal (2019) conducted an ethnography with participants of La Comunificadora. Vedal described how an important element of the programme was introducing participants to a new vocabulary from the SSE and CCE. Where at the beginning of the programme some participants had prejudices against cooperatives viewing them as old-fashioned, by the end of the programme views had shifted, with many changing the names of projects to integrate in some way the cooperative or SSE identity.

One of the major challenges projects face is in financing, as non-profits and cooperatives are of no interest to venture capital, many initiatives depend on public subsidies in their first few years. The short-term nature of many subsidies also poses a challenge and has impacts on hiring and planning. Some of the projects did avail of crowdfunding and Conjuntament, a match-funding programme developed by the municipality and Goteo Foundation to support the CCE (Goteo 2021b).

Vedal (2019) also contacted participants from previous editions of La Comunificadora. She found that: "Almost half of the projects of the first editions were confirmed to still be active - that is, a third of projects from the first edition (2017), and two thirds of projects from the second edition (2018)". Projects are expected to become "viable on average four to five years after launch" (Vedal 2019).

Working with the institutions

For people coming from projects with a culture of self-organisation, working with institutions can pose challenges.

> Guernica: there is the desire for what La Comunificadora wants to be and then there is what it is... the reality is that it is a Barcelona Activa project...

From a formal legal perspective La Comunificadora is the property of Barcelona Activa (BA) and the team of coordinators from FKI, FemProcomuns and Labcoop are recruited through the tender to deliver

BA's programme. While the coordinators design and deliver the programme and make efforts so that course materials are accessible online and use Creative Commons licences, contractually those materials are the property of BA. Despite coining the name, even La Comunificadora has become the property of BA. The public communications and promotion for the programme are also carefully managed by BA. The coordinators spoke positively about the team they work with at BA, but they have at times felt frustrated with the administrative culture.

BA, like many enterprise development agencies has historically followed a typical model of enterprise development that is focused on economic growth, developing profit oriented business models that are attractive for investors, with exclusive control over intellectual property rights. La Comunificadora is one in an array of programmes offered by BA that promotes the SSE and the CCE. This transformation of BA is relatively new and organisational logics and cultures are slow to change. These new programmes stand in contrast to the commercial models of enterprise development. The co-existence of old and new within the programmes of Barcelona Activa represents a kind of ideological contradiction. On the one hand BA have programmes that promote exclusive approaches to intellectual property and economic growth, and on the other there is La Comunificadora which encourages the opposite, with non-profit and cooperative models that centre communities of practice, with diverse forms of participation and the sharing of knowledge. These facts are not lost on the programme coordinators from FemProcomuns, FKI and LabCoop.

> Monica: Barcelona Activa have many other programmes, and they say, and they consider, and it's logical that La Comunificadora is one more programme, but we don't see it this way. La Comunificadora is a contradiction. While Barcelona Activa promotes social and solidarity economy, they are also doing programmes to promote startups, and they do the whole discourse, using technology to grow and to produce more and to be competitive. It's schizophrenic and La Comunificadora makes this evident.

Before her work with LabCoop and her involvement with the solidarity economy, Guernica studied and worked in the area of local economic development. During one interview she explained how the solidarity economy perspective does not fit easily with institutions.

Guernica: The point of view of classical local development is based, in Spain, but I think in the whole of Europe, in the traditional policies of how to create a labour market. How to create opportunities for people? You have a small number of tools. You need to push for supply and demand on the labour market. You need to push for economic stakeholders, to help local stakeholders, industries, local commerce etc. You need to help them. You also need to promote entrepreneurship. Plus policy for strategic planning. That's all, that's local development policies.

The point of view of SSE. First of all, economy is not only enterprises and labour. Second, you can do economy in a non-regular market, with non-regular labour. So for example, you can promote an exchange market without money and this is economy. This is SSE. But how can you promote that from public administration?

...

Guernica: Public policymakers say 'your territory should be specialised', 'What's the point of your territory?', 'Will you be techie?', 'Will you be agricultural?', 'Will you be touristic?', 'What is specific about your territory and how can you promote that and specialise in your territory?'... If you have a field specialised in one product, in apples and then comes a plague you will...

KF: lose everything.

G: Exactly

...

G:[SSE] is a more biodiverse focus of the economy. It should be small, medium, big, different actors, stakeholders, regular stakeholders but also non-regular stakeholders, formal economy, informal economy, official currency but also a local currency why not? This changes the meaning of local development policies and stresses people who are working there; the policymakers and technicians. It stresses them, because it's very difficult to

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work in this sense. For me, it has been very relevant knowledge and apprenticeship.

Guernica highlights how policymakers and administrators working on local economic development can participate in reproducing capitalist models of economy and the difficulties of introducing SSE approaches which recognise and promote diverse economic practices. Policies for the SSE can also contribute to sustaining and reproducing alternative economic practices.

A more autonomous approach?

Coming from a culture of self-organisation it was almost inevitable that the coordinators would start to ask themselves "how to communify La Comunificadora?". This was not simply in response to the institutional constraints. As Monica put it "We want La Comunificadora to be more autonomous because we are like this". For the coordinators, La Comunificadora should not only present models but also be a model for the kinds of socio-economic transformation they wish to see in the world and for this reason the coordinators want to practice what they preach. It is a reflexive part of their practice where they ask what they can do "to have a stronger commons approach".

> Monica: Again, it is a proposal that comes from the people that are developing La Comunificadora. It's because we are, it's like, walk the talk, we are helping projects to do a transition from the social and solidarity economy to a commons economy. But we are not working, in the social and solidarity economy or in the commons economy. We are working for a public institution in a tender, we'd like to work as well with a more commons approach.

Could La Comunificadora develop as another model of a public-commons partnership? The group have looked to examples from the urban commons and Decidim. While the city council's policy on urban commons is primarily focused on urban spaces, it does contain reference to the development of new kinds of public services. The coordinators suggest that in this way the programme could continue with the same level of funding

support from BA but with more autonomy over course development and promotion. If the continuity of the programme did not depend on the annual renewal of the tender it would enable the coordinators to do more long term planning. They would also have the autonomy to expand in new ways, to avail of other sources of funding and develop partnerships for example with educational and research institutions. Conversations with BA have been held with a positive response from all sides, however at the time of writing it is still unclear if these ideas will become a reality.

I asked Monica if people at BA understood some of the issues and the different philosophy behind what they were trying to do? She explained that the team of La Comunificadora do training with staff at BA to inform them about the programme, so that some do understand, but not everyone. Though institutional change may be slow, things can and do change. As David explained after four years since the introduction of the area for other economies within BA, things have changed.

> David: La Comunificadora modifies Barcelona Activa a little, and it's one of the tools of the direction. Barcelona Activa have directions and the other economies direction is a transversal direction, and they try to negotiate with people that work here for years to change things and in four years they changed it. They have.

Monica emphasised that La Comunificadora is possible because of the space that was created for programmes like this in BA by the area for other economies.

> Monica: La Comunificadora responds to the energy there, so it's not us that we are being revolutionaries. We are responding to some space that they have given to something, to create change.

La Comunificadora is one programme, a part of that broader political intervention challenging the model of economic development in the city and developing alternatives.

> Kevin: So it's changing the psychology of the institution.

> Monica: That's why we are doing this. That's why we are doing La Comunificadora. We wouldn't be doing La Comunificadora just like an

incubation programme we'd die of boredom. We are doing it because we can push things.

Conclusion

My fieldwork in Barcelona and this chapter began with my attendance at the meeting of the commons commission of the XES. I set out at that time to understand how the commons had come to be supported by the city council. The political opportunities and projects that were advanced following the 2015 municipal elections were possible because diverse networks of actors from the solidarity economy, the commons, activists and academics were able to mobilise their networks and cooperate to advance an alternative vision. This was not a single vision planned out in advance but was formed through a political process and dialogue with local actors. The Procomuns event was responding to political opportunities created by the municipalist movement who had launched a participatory process of consultation for the municipal action plan which included the use of digital tools such as Decidim. Procomuns was in turn a catalyst for further possibilities. The story of Procomuns was an obvious starting point for my research as it illustrates so well the confluence of different movement actors, their capacity to collaborate and the contingency of such political moments.

FemProcomuns are just one group and La Comunificadora is one project that emerged and responded to that moment. They are part of a broad and dynamic local and transnational movement. It is in this sense that these contemporary commons are in practice constituted and sustained not simply because of endogenous factors such as rules and governance but also because of exogenous factors, as they figure as part of broader social movement processes which constitute networks of affinity and solidarity, and have developed capacities for coordination and mobilisation that create political opportunities for the advancement of alternative economic vision, organisation and practices. Networking and the capacity to negotiate and bring different actors together for a common goal has been key. The story of FemProcomuns and La Comunificadora is also interesting because it shows

that these movements are themselves heterogeneous, the confluence of the SSE and the CCE is an ongoing and incomplete process. It is not that actors follow or adhere to some single ideology, rather affinities and movement are constituted through practical projects or not at all. It is a process of particular interest to activists working at the intersection of these movements. Commons are not simply material or informational resources, they are objects of knowledge and practice, weaved together through collaborative projects. Some more successful than others.

La Comunificadora is an exercise in the formatting of those kinds of knowledge and the pedagogic translation of practices of commoning to new domains. This pedagogy is not only about means of sustaining and reproducing institutions through the rehearsal of tried and tested rules, as in the institutional focus of Ostrom, but rather a politics of the commons that seeks to extend its logics to new domains through experiment, trial and error. This process leads to various articulations of commons projects in their relations with institutions of the state and market.

La Comunificadora is an example of a public-commons partnership but the dynamics of such partnerships continue to be negotiated as course instructors working with the institutions also seek to develop a more autonomous approach. Institutional change can take time but as David pointed out things have changed. While the tender is subject to annual review by BA there is continued interest and at the time of writing in 2021 the programme has completed its fifth edition. It will be interesting to see what the future holds for the programme and for the many projects that have taken part.

Another set of insight from this research was the development of hybrid organisational models or open cooperatives. FemProcomuns and others such as Katuma are local expressions of a transnational movement which brings the commons oriented practices of the free software and free culture movements to the world of cooperativism and the solidarity economy, and vice versa, bringing the democratic and cooperative models of organising to the world of online communities. This ongoing experimentation and the

development of these hybrid organisational forms is still a relatively new social phenomena.

Wouter from FemProcomuns and the developers from Katuma that I spoke with explained that there remain differences. Many cooperativists and solidarity economy actors are accustomed to using corporate platforms and change does not come easily. They do not always recognise free software and free culture as related to solidarity economy and easily return to using commercial and corporate tools.

Part of the promise of emerging technologies is that they offer new possibilities for projects to scale but this is not necessarily a priority for cooperatives, self-organised and community oriented projects that tend to place greater value on the quality of social relations rather than the quantity of participants or profitability in an economic sense. For example, for some food buying groups the ordering and volunteer-led preparation of local food boxes is as much a social occasion for meeting and gathering with like-minded friends as it is about the politics of transforming the broader political economy of food.

There is also a degree of scepticism toward technology. The contrast between the corporate driven hype of a feel good 'sharing economy' and the realities of surveillance capitalism (Zuboff 2018) have rightly left many suspicious about the possibilities of technology, some rejecting it outright. There are different perspectives among movement actors on the purpose and potentials of technology in supporting alternative economic practices. Actors in the commons collaborative economy such as FemProcomuns distinguish and distance themselves from corporate models and are advocates for alternatives. The possibilities of technology are the subject of an active dialogue as practices and learning are exchanged between movements.

Commons projects engage and are shaped by politics at the local level and build alliances to take advantage of the opportunities this presents. In the case of Barcelona these opportunities were made possible by the

municipalist movement. It is through these processes that they have come to engage with the institutions of the state. Networks such as the XES create space for geographically dispersed local projects to cooperate and articulate a shared political agenda at the level of the municipality in Barcelona but also at the regional level in Catalonia. This kind of mobilisation makes networks like the XES a vehicle for the translation of what Nilsen and Cox (2013) call militant particularisms into political campaigns.

The alliance of solidarity economy activists with the municipalist movement was part of a more expansive social movement project (Nilsen and Cox 2013) in which solidarity economy and the commons figure as means for challenging hegemonic articulations of economy. The convergence of the commons and the solidarity economy in this moment was a strategic move.

Commons activists participate in transnational practices of networking and collaboration with local and global dimensions. These new hybrid open cooperatives such as FemProcomuns, Katuma and Mensakas do advance distinct organisational practices that contribute and complement broader movements for social change. They participate in multi-scalar governance, sharing knowledge and code with other geographically dispersed groups in other countries through organisations and networks such as Meet.Coop, Open Food Network and CoopCycle. These networking practices enable geographically dispersed groups to quickly replicate, implement and build upon lessons learned from each other's experience. In this way local commons also contribute to a transnational commons.

Social and organisational transformation at scale in these cases is not achieved through hierarchical and vertical command economies, but through networked coordination of diverse and relatively autonomous groups and projects, collaborating to produce shared bodies of knowledge and practice. In the following chapters I look at the politics of organising in transnational movement spaces.

Chapter 9. Worlding the Commons

In our globalised world, the local is so often entangled with the global. Local movements for social change participate and organise in transnational networks. Cities, their representatives, politicians and public servants also participate in international networks. In both cases, the events and forums that bring people together represent moments of exchange, of ideas, and knowledge production. Movements build solidarity, share experience and practices as means to sustain their struggles. Politicians and public servants discuss and debate how to address commons challenges, solutions for mobility, employment, housing and so on. These worlds of activists and public officials are different but not always distinct, as activists negotiate political opportunities, engage in dialogue and participate in different kinds of events, led by the public administrations and academics. Different spaces attend to different purposes, priorities and discourses. By contrast with well resourced government and academic institutions, activist spaces are largely volunteer-led and place a high value on solidarity and on organising and realising their values through practice.

The following chapter presents two very different events in which commons activists participated. In the first, activists were invited to participate in the Sharing Cities Summit, an exclusive international, government and policy oriented event. The event represented a kind of policy activism and a political intervention into the international discourse on the sharing economy led by activist academics in partnership with the city council. The second, an activist-led series of events that took place as part of the process of the World Social Forum of Transformative Economies. Both events reveal different aspects of the social worlds of which commons activists in Barcelona inhabit as they negotiate local and trans-local opportunities for the advancement of commons projects.

These spaces of action represent different ways in which activist practice is communicated. In the case of Barcelona these events are spaces of world making, or *worlding* where the experiences of local projects and practices

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are translated, performed and projected outward in efforts that aim to engage different audiences in dialogue about possible worlds (Roy 2011; Sheppard, Leitner, and Maringanti 2013).

For McCann, Roy, and Ward (2013) "The concept of 'worlding cities' is part of a heterodox project to challenge and disrupt the established maps of global urbanism, especially those of global and world cities". As Charnock, March, and Ribera-Fumaz (2019) note, the 1992 Olympics was a critical point in the Barcelona's urban development. The city was re-imagined and re-made a model global city, and an international referent for developers and city planners that advocated the virtues of top-down urban planning. This is worlding from above. Since 2015, the city has become an international referent of another kind, a rebel city. Kitchin, Cardullo and Di Feliciantonio (2018) consider that

> Barcelona has thus sought to *re-politicize* the smart city and to shift its creation and control away from private interests and the state toward citizens and communities, civic movements and social innovation. The city's attempt to re-envisage the smart city around technological sovereignty offers a different form of smart citizenship, one that seems much more grounded in the hopes and politics of the 'right to the city' agenda.

This chapter explores events wherein Barcelona became a site from which other worlds, alternative urban imaginaries, worldings from below (Simone 2001) are posed, to confront and contest hegemonic models of urban development and some of the challenges such worlding projects entail.

Sharing Cities and The Right to the Smart City

Point one of the Procomuns Declaration called for "improving regulations for a commons collaborative economy". Point eight called for actions that "expand city brands in terms of the external visibility of local initiatives". Point nine proposed that "investments in major technological events contribute to promoting local commons" (Procomuns 2016b; See also Appendix 5). One of the ways in which these goals were acted upon was through the city's support for international events and participation in

international city networks.

In November 2018, Barcelona hosted the third international Sharing Cities Summit followed in 2019 by a Sharing Cities Action event. These events coincided with and constituted part of the Smart Cities Expo World Congress (SCEWC). The SCEWC is a major annual international event. In 2019, it attracted 24,000 visitors to the city. The programme of these events included Procomuns sessions during which local Commons Collaborative Economy (CCE) projects had the opportunity to present their work to international audiences which included elected officials and policymakers from cities around the world. These events and activities should be understood as an ambitious and strategic political intervention into the international discourse among global cities on public policy for the sharing economy. Where local examples of the CCE, some of which are documented in this thesis, are presented as part of another Barcelona Model, a democratic and citizens centred alternative to the corporate sharing economy and platform economy.

Barcelona as a business and tourist destination

Barcelona is home to a number of large convention centres and every year the city is host to major international events which attract millions of visitors. The Fira de Barcelona, just one example, has 400,000 m2 of exhibition space and is one of the largest convention centres in Europe. Its website boasts one hundred and fifty events each year, attracting 2.5 million visitors and having an economic impact valued at 4.6 billion euros (Fira de Barcelona 2020). The Fira is the venue for the annual SCEWC. Other annual events such as The Mobile World Congress regularly attracts over 100,000 visitors.

The cycle of events is part of the engine on which the hospitality sector and a substantial part of the city's economy depends. While the sector is a major employer and many depend on it for their livelihood, in recent years the impacts of tourism on the city have increasingly been a source of controversy and debate. Barcelona's success as a travel and business

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destination has come at a cost. City centre neighbourhoods have been transformed to cater to visitors, urban spaces for communities increasingly populated by tourists on weekend breaks.

City centre properties are in high demand, of interest to speculative investors as well as hoteliers and developers. Rising rents and living costs contribute to processes of gentrification which disproportionately impact low income residents. Communities have been fragmented as younger generations of families who have lived in these neighbourhoods for generations are forced out as they can no longer afford rents and the cost of living.

Airbnb, one of the world's most recognisable 'sharing economy' brands has also had its part to play. Barcelona has been one of Airbnb's largest European markets. The company was first criticised by hoteliers who argued that it represented a form of unfair competition as rooms and apartments were offered at lower prices. Catalan law prohibits the advertising of illegal activities. Since the majority of accommodation listed on Airbnb were not licensed tourist accommodation the Catalan regional government issued a first fine against Airbnb for €30,000 in 2014 (Kassam 2014). There were some demonstrations from Airbnb hosts, but popular opposition to Airbnb continued to grow. Landlords were withdrawing properties from the residential rental market, transforming apartments in residential blocks into short-term tourist lets. This was believed to be yet another factor contributing to the general rise in rents. Furthermore, the presence of tourists coming and going in residential apartment blocks was impacting the quality of life of long term residents. Indeed, during my own time in Barcelona, an angry neighbour complained suspecting that the apartment at which I was staying was illegally let on Airbnb. Kor Dwarshuis has produced a data visualisation that illustrates the spectacular growth of Airbnb in the city between 2009 and 2017 (Dwarshuis 2021).

In a 2014 article for The Guardian, Ada Colau (2014) wrote about how *Mass tourism can kill a city* and the difficulties faced by residents and politicians who try to stand up to the industry. Tackling the adverse impacts

of tourism became part of Bcomú's 2015 electoral campaign and was included in their action plan (Bcomú 2015a). They called for a moratorium on licences for the construction of new hotels until there was an audit of the sector that included citizen participation.

The new municipal government set their sights on developing a framework for greater regulation of the sector and short-term lets such as Airbnb. The council hired staff and created a new office to monitor and bring legal action against unlicensed tourist rentals and were successful in having over a thousand illegal tourist apartments removed from Airbnb (Ajuntament de Barcelona 2017c; 2017d). In November 2016, the council issued fines against Airbnb and Homeaway of €600,000 the maximum fine possible by law (Sims 2016).

In March 2017, El Pla especial urbanístic d'allotjaments turístics (PEUAT; The Special Tourist Accommodation Plan) came into effect. The plan divided the city into four areas, which were more or less impacted by tourist-use flats. The PEUAT maintains a cap on new licences in each area as required. Despite periodic meetings of all the companies in the sector, Airbnb repeatedly refused to comply with the city's requirements (Porro 2018).

Barcelona is not the only city to have been impacted by sharing economy platforms such as Airbnb, but it has been among the few to stand up to them. With little action being taken to address these issues at national levels, city governments have sought out forums to share and learn from policies and actions of others. The Sharing Cities Summit has provided an important space for city representatives to meet, discuss and debate the challenges and opportunities presented by the platform economy.

Sharing Cities

"Sharing City, Seoul" was launched in 2012 declaring the South Korean capital's commitment to becoming the world's first Sharing City. The city of Amsterdam followed in 2015 to become Europe's first Sharing City. This attracted international attention of policymakers in cities around the world

and in May 2016, Amsterdam hosted the first international Sharing Cities Summit. The idea for a Sharing Cities Alliance emerged from the debates and discussions that took place at the event. The second Sharing Cities Summit was held in New York in 2017. It was at this event that the Sharing Cities Alliance, an independent foundation, was formally launched (Sharing Cities Alliance 2021a). The third summit was hosted by Barcelona in November 2018 followed by an associated Sharing Cities Action in 2019. Both events coincided with the SCEWC. The Barcelona events brought together mayors and other officials from cities around the world. I attended both events, however here I will focus on 2018, which was the larger of the two.

The 2018 Summit was in two parts. The event opened with a City Government Encounter followed by a public Procomuns event. The summit then moved to the Fira convention centre for the SCEWC where the Sharing Cities Agora hosted the programme. Teixidora were doing collaborative note-taking and Monica invited me to assist. This gave me an opportunity to follow proceedings and to learn a little more about Teixidora in the process.

During the opening presentation of the Government Encounter, Deputy Mayor of Barcelona City Council, Gerardo Pisarello stated that there were 50 cities represented at the event with 30 Mayors and Deputy Mayors in attendance. The opening was followed by a presentation in preparation for the launch of The Sharing Cities Declaration (Sharing Cities Action 2018). The declaration outlined 10 common "principles and commitments for city sovereignty regarding the platform economy". Principle one emphasises the importance of distinguishing between platforms that are truly collaborative from those that are not, with a preference for collaborative platforms distinguished by their commitments to community participation in governance and to openness and transparency with regard to data and technology.

The declaration as a whole has a strong emphasis on the protection of citizens' rights, with principles committed to labour rights, social inclusion, environmental impact, citizens' data as a common good, the right to the city

and the urban commons. The strong emphasis placed on citizens' rights and the commons make clear that representatives from Barcelona played a leading role in its writing.

42 cities had signed the declaration at the time of the event. The declaration also committed to the creation of a Sharing Cities Action Task Force "to promote collaborative actions in regard to the challenges and opportunities posed by the platform economy" (Sharing Cities Alliance 2021b).

The presentation of the declaration was followed by a showcase of cities, The Hague, Reykjavik, Seoul and the Italian cities of Torino and Bologna. The Mayor of Bologna spoke about the city's office for civic imagination. Supported by its 2014 regulation for the care of urban commons (Comune di Bologna 2015), as of 2018 the city had established over 400 pacts that involve citizens in the care and administration of the city's common goods, from parks to public buildings and cultural facilities. The example of Bologna has since become a model for many other Italian cities that have their own citizen pacts, such as Torino and Naples.

An English language book was published to accompany the summit. *Sharing Cities: A Worldwide Cities Overview on Platform Economy Policies with a Focus on Barcelona* (2018) was edited by Mayo Fuster Morell with contributions from the Dimmons research group of the Open University of Catalonia.

The summit was covered in local and national media as well as some international media (Sharing Cities Alliance 2021c). El Periódico, El Pais and La Vanguardia led with headlines like "42 cities join forces to lobby against platforms like Uber and Airbnb" (Blanchar 2018). While this was not an entirely accurate representation of events, the recognisable names of the poster boys of the corporate sharing economy made for attention grabbing headlines. The antics of these companies and their impacts on housing and workers was of course the subject of much debate and discussion, but these were among a range of other topics, supporting entrepreneurship and innovation, data sovereignty, collaborative public

services, citizens' digital rights and social inclusion.

The Government Encounter on the first day of the summit was not a public event. After opening speeches there was time dedicated for city representatives to meet and discuss various topics and challenges in working groups. I was able to sit in on a discussion on the topic of short-term lets, with ten representatives from various cities. Many expressed complete frustration as municipal governments had few powers to effectively regulate companies, or the administrative and financial resources to challenge them in the courts. There was also frustration with inaction from national governments and the European Union. I sat and listened as Ireland was criticised for its role in facilitating Airbnb and how its lax approach to regulation was having impacts in cities across Europe.

There were also success stories from cities like San Francisco and others whose representatives offered advice and support. It was at this discussion that I met and spoke with Murray Cox. Cox is a thorn in the side of Airbnb, he developed a web scraper to harvest listing data from Airbnb's site which he made public on his own website, Inside Airbnb (2021). He uses the data to work with activists and city administrations and knows the ins and outs of the policy debates, what has worked and what has not.

With regards to Ireland, at that time the only publicly available data on Airbnb on his site was for Dublin. We kept in contact after the summit and after some discussion Murray agreed to scrape the data for Ireland as a whole and working with activists from the Irish Housing Network we produced a short report (Irish Housing Network and Inside Airbnb 2019). While the report did not get much interest from Irish media or politicians, having the data publicly available has been useful for activists and journalists (Neylon 2019). Ireland continues to have a rental and housing crisis.

There were differences of opinion among attendees and some city representatives were not impressed by the open hostility to corporate platforms. During the opening of the event deputy to the Mayor of

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Amsterdam, Udo Kock positioned himself as a moderate, while admitting cities needed to work together, the challenge as he saw it was to "find the right balance between innovation and regulation", placing emphasis on the importance of "building relationships with platforms" for the benefit of citizens rather than taking an oppositional stance. During the closing discussions at the evening's Procomuns event he also spoke about the need to "stay away from ideological debates".

> Udo Kock: In Amsterdam and in the Netherlands in general we always try to be very practical we try to stay away from ideological debates, or you know making the issue too big and that's also something that I want to share with this group and with the Sharing Cities Alliance and also sort of as my thought for next year's conference. It may be tempting to add issues to the topic of a sharing economy, it may be tempting to add the topic of social justice which is hugely important and which is under threat in many places in the world, it may be tempting to also you know talk about Commons, which is a hugely interesting topic and actually my city, the city of Amsterdam and our new government which was formed this spring we're very interested in that topic and really want to learn from Barcelona which is far ahead of the pack when it comes to thinking about commons, but I think we're so sort of over burdening this topic of sharing economy when we add all these other complicated issues. At the end of the day I think we should think about the sharing economy and platforms in simple terms as how do we make sure they comply with our rules and regulations and second how do we make sure that as much people as possible benefit from these disruptive technologies. That's the essence and let's not overburden that already very complicated issue with other also very complicated issues so let's try to keep some focus that would be my plea for next year's summit. (Ajuntament de Barcelona 2018)

The remaining days of the summit were located at the Fira convention centre as part of the programme for the massive SCEWC. The SCEWC was also an exclusive event, entrance tickets were prohibitively expensive. That said, the organising team of the Barcelona summit did support people from local projects and researchers to attend. The congress itself was a spectacle, with city and corporate exhibition stands and booths, with food, drinks and

music to attract visiting public officials and contractors to exhibits and demos of everything from European eco-friendly transport solutions to terrifying Israeli drones and dystopian Chinese city surveillance systems, all under the one roof.

Figure 14: The right to the (smart) city.

The programme of the Sharing Cities summit continued, with panel discussions and official presentations in one of the Expo's conference halls dedicated to the topic of Inclusive and Sharing Cities. I spent most of my time doing collaborative note taking with Teixidora at the Sharing Cities Agora and exhibition stand, these were located next to the city's main exhibition stand championing "The right to the (smart) city" (Fig.14).

The Agora programme had a series of talks, presentations and panel discussions that included local commons collaborative economy projects as well as guest projects from other cities. The topics at the Agora ranged from digital rights and blockchain technologies to the commons and social and solidarity economy. Some events were business or enterprise oriented but others such as those on the solidarity economy and the upcoming World Social Forum of Transformative Economies had a social change and activist

orientation. Decidim, Barcelona's flagship platform for citizen participation was part of the talk on Data and Participation. La Comunificadora presented during the Procomuns event on the first day and at the Agora. Texidora was also presented at the Agora.

The events of the summit served different purposes. While there was a certain amount of networking among the local and international projects in attendance, it was far from an activist event. Despite efforts by organisers to open the event, it was in general quite exclusive, oriented toward politicians and policy makers. The broader setting too, the SCEWE, a major corporate event also reinforced this sense of exclusivity. Commons projects were not performed as political or activist initiatives, they were models of social innovation, present for a very particular kind of public, of mayors, civil servants, city officials and the media. Projects were there to communicate another message, to show that another sharing economy was possible. That commons-based approaches could produce rich ecosystems of social innovation and that by supporting these kinds of projects cities could achieve social goals, to which government programmes are committed.

The organisers of the Barcelona event were determined to make an impression on visiting officials. The events in themselves were a political intervention, aimed at putting a commons oriented and a rights based vision at the centre of international policy debates on sharing cities, and in this respect they were a success. There was clearly an interest in this alternative vision, particularly among officials coming from cities that had experienced the negative impacts of the platform economy, with Airbnb and Uber. At the same time as my example illustrates, talk of social justice it seems was too much for some. With some representatives uncomfortable with the politicisation of the sharing economy, preferring a sanitised post-political (Swyngedouw 2007) discourse that imagines cities and their economies as politically and ideologically neutral domains shaped by consumer demand rather than by powerful economic or political interests. Sharing Cities was in certain respects an event of contradictions. It is critical to intervene and contest corporate and market oriented visions of urban development, to

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present and engage in dialogue on alternatives, however doing so in settings such as the Smart Cities Expo, on an expo stand among hundreds of corporate and country stands, it was hard not to feel that commons projects were instrumentalised, incorporated into this scene, their political character alien in its surroundings, even neutralised to a degree by the sheer scale of the postmodern spectacle of the Expo with its capacity to absorb and contain all kinds of possible worlds, dystopian cities, eco-cities, rebel cities all on sale under one roof.

Commons in movement: The World Social Forum of Transformative Economies

I first became aware of the plan to host the World Social Forum of Transformative Economies (WSFTE) in Barcelona around the time of the Sharing Cities event in November of 2018. Browsing the website I found that there was a *commons axis*, a local group coordinating on the theme of the commons. I sent an email to enquire about the event, and I was pleasantly surprised to receive a reply from Monica from FemProcomuns who it turned out was involved in the organising process.

I joined a meeting of the coordinating group in February of 2019, which took place as part of the programme of the Mobile Social Congress. Monica and David from FemProcomuns were present. Monica was the coordinator between the local commons axis and the *inter-eixos* (inter-axes) a forum in which the four local thematic groups of the forum would meet. The other thematic axes were agroecology, feminism, and solidarity economy. While the forum itself was planned for 2020, a preparatory event was being organised for April 2019 which would bring over 500 people to Barcelona.

For readers unfamiliar with the World Social Forums (WSF); the first social forum took place in Porto Alegre in Brazil in 2001. The social forums were major events in international mobilisations of alter-globalisation and global justice movements and continue to be important spaces for transnational solidarity and organising today. These events can be huge, with participants numbering in tens of thousands, some events have had more than one

hundred thousand in attendance (Boaventura de Sousa 2006, 85). After the first forum a *Charter of Principles* was prepared. The first principle of the charter states:

> The World Social Forum is an open meeting place for reflective thinking, democratic debate of ideas, formulation of proposals, free exchange of experiences and forging effective action on the part of organizations and movements of civil society that are opposed to neoliberalism and the domination of the world by capital and any form of imperialism, and are also committed to building a global society directed towards fruitful relationships among people and between humankind and the planet. (WSFTE. 2020c)

In addition to the major World Social Forum events, there are also smaller regional and thematics forums that align themselves with the principles expressed in the charter. These are intended to support continuity between local, thematic and transnational organising processes. The World Social Forum of Transformative Economies (WSFTE) was a thematic forum.

I had attended two major World Social Forum events previouly, first in Tunis in 2015 as a representative of the P2P Foundation and again in Montreal in 2016 where I was a co-organiser of the Commons Space with Frédéric Sultan from Remix the Commons and Elisabetta Cangelosi associated with Transform Europe (Flanagan 2015; 2016a; 2016b; 2017). While in Montreal I met Jason Nardi from RIPESS Europe and Silke Helfrich, a prominent German commons activist and writer. We agreed to work together to organise an inter-mapping event for the following year (Intermapping Charter 2018).

The WSFTE in Barcelona was being co-organised between the XES, REAS and RIPESS Europe with some support from the city council. Jason Nardi was now one of the lead representatives from RIPESS working with the XES in the coordination of the WSFTE. I got in touch with Jason and we met briefly before the preparatory April meeting.

As a member of the international council, Jason had been actively involved with World Social Forums for many years. He had begun to make

arrangements with the city of Barcelona to host an instance of Decidim as a tool to assist in organising the forum. I was interested to learn more about how Decidim might work when applied in this quite different context. I agreed to collaborate with Jason on Decidim and on organising a session on mapping within the programme of the forum. This provided me with an opportunity to get hands-on experience using Decidim which contributed to my understanding of the platform and the writing of the earlier chapter on the topic. I participated in the Decidim and mapping groups over the course of 2019, but I was spreading my energies thin, and I eventually stepped back and focused on working with the commons group. As such, the commons is the focus of this chapter.

Hosted on the grounds of the University of Barcelona, the April preparatory meeting was held over three days from Friday 5th to Sunday 7th 2019. There was great enthusiasm about the upcoming forum from the beginning and participants were ambitious about the programme. Where the slogan of the alter-globalisation movement was *another world is possible*, for the organisers and participants at the event the point was that this other world already exists.

> In practice, we realise that this 'another possible world' named by alterglobalisation movements already exists. From the economics perspective, it is visible in diverse transformative proposals and practices that try to transcend traditional frameworks of capitalism. These initiatives are what we call 'transformative economies'. (WSFTE 2019)

The programme of the preparatory meeting was as follows. Day one was dedicated to meetings on the four thematic axes, the commons, feminism, agroecology and solidarity economy, where each aimed to set out an agenda for their activities in the forum process. The second day was about inter-movement dialogue to foster convergence and to develop transversal transformative actions. The third day was for discussion of regional agendas, for Europe, Americas, Asia and Africa.

During the opening session of the April meeting representatives from each of the four thematic axes made brief presentations. Monica prepared and

presented a short text on behalf of the commons axis. In the opening lines of the following excerpt, she situates contemporary practices and expressions of the commons as belonging to a longer historical tradition.

> The commons include practices with a long tradition, ways of managing collectively, democratically and in a sustainable manner, resources, projects or goods. The model was an important part of the economy and tradition until the eighteenth century, when it underwent a process of enclosure and eradication, remaining on the margins. It began to resurface in the rural, urban and digital realms in the last third of the 20th century. The transformative capacity of the model lies in the synergies that we are able to generate between these three areas, and in its sustainability so as not to exhaust the resource, generate a low or no impact on the environment and create fair relationships between the actors involved. Representatives of the three areas (rural, urban and digital) will be at the international preparatory meeting of the FSMET, to see what we are able to achieve together! (FemProcomuns 2021d)

The meeting of the commons axis brought together activists from diverse projects, local and international. Among the many local projects were people from Decidim, urban commons such as Ateneu Nou Barris, Can Masdeu, and La Hidra Cooperativa who were involved in developing the city's urban commons policy. From Europe there were representatives from groups such as Remix the Commons in France and the Asilo Filangieri, an urban commons in Naples, Italy. The local coordinating group made efforts to reach out and invite participants from beyond Europe with some travelling from as far as India, Mexico and Brazil. There were squatters, people involved in indigenous land struggles, cultural workers, free software developers. The varieties of commons were well represented. The organisers had arranged for simultaneous translation during the discussions and volunteers took notes in multiple languages in collaborative pads using FemProcomuns platform (FemProcomuns 2021e).

The commons session began with introductions, followed by breakout groups discussing various challenges that activists face; the relationship between commons and institutions, how to build a more inclusive

movement at the local level, but also north-south relations, technical and legal tools and so on.

The response from participants was very positive, the organising process of the social forum was seen by activists as offering an opportunity for various networks to come together, to share experience, identify common challenges and potentially develop actions on which they could collaborate. It is not often that people from so many projects have the opportunity to meet, and lively discussions continued in a local bar afterwards, with volunteers translating so that everyone could understand and take part.

There was only one day in the programme dedicated to the thematic axes and so the group decided to meet again during lunch on the Saturday to finalise a rough agenda and proposals to prepare for the forum. It was agreed "there is energy to organise the WSF Commons stream as part of an ongoing new intergalactic commons process" (FemProcomuns 2019).

One of these proposals was to organise local commons assemblies which could link and feed into the process of the social forum. The group arranged to keep in touch after the event and continued to organise using pads, a mailing list and a Telegram channel that had over eighty participants (FemProcomuns 2020a, 2021f; Commons List 2021).

The outcome of the preparatory April meeting was particularly positive for activists in the European networks. In 2016 and 2017, commons activists had taken part in a European Commons Assembly (ECA). The ECA was an ambitious series of events to create a European level assembly of the commons, which would bring together commons activists from across Europe to coordinate on joint actions. The ECA's call for participation outlined its motives.

> We call for the provision of resources and the necessary freedom to create, manage and sustain our commons. We call upon governments, local and national, as well as European Union institutions to facilitate the defence and growth of the commons, to eliminate barriers and enclosures, to open up doors for citizen participation and to prioritize the common good in all policies. (ECA 2021)

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However, there were differences about the purpose and the process of how such an assembly should be organised. Self-organisation and horizontality are central characteristics of commons projects and there were criticisms from participants that the events had put too much of an emphasis on advocacy and engaging with political representatives and not enough on how the ECA itself would involve commons groups and projects in its organisational process. This had caused tensions among organisers and there was some uncertainty about its future direction. The social forum meeting in Barcelona brought some of those organisers and groups together. The World Social Forums have historically placed a high value on self-organisation and horizontality. Activists often struggle to realise these ideals in practice. Nevertheless, the WSFTE presented an opportunity to revisit the question of how activists would collaborate and organise at European and international levels.

Frédéric Sultan from Remix the Commons (2021) had taken part in the organising process of the ECA and attended the April meeting in Barcelona. Remix had been involved in organising commons activities within previous social forums, in Dakar in 2012 and Montreal in 2016. In 2018, Remix were part of a group that organised an event in the French city of Grenoble called the Commons Camp. The idea of Commons Camps emerged from the process of the European Commons Assembly and was aimed at fostering cooperation and solidarity among European commons projects from the bottom up. The idea of the camps was simple; groups and projects from across Europe convene in host cities, meet with local activists, visit projects, participate in workshops where they share and exchange experiences and ideas. In contrast with the process of the ECA, the organising process of the commons camps were considered a more grassroots and activist oriented approach. Remix had been awarded some funding from a philanthropic foundation, The Charles Léopold Mayer Foundation for the Progress of Humankind (FPH 2021). They were able to offer part of this to support the organising of local commons assemblies based on the model of the commons camp as part of the preparations for the forum.

The commons camp proposal took hold and over the following months, activists who had attended the meeting in April offered to co-organise and host camps in Marseille in France, Naples in Italy, with the final camp taking place during the forum itself in Barcelona. These events were not only opportunities for activists to meet and share experiences and practices, but they were also considered preparatory meetings, to identify and develop a shared thematic agenda for the main forum.

The Barcelona group continued to organise locally. I joined Monica at a number of the inter-axes meetings and also attended the meetings of the local group. While I didn't realise it at the time, in hindsight many of the local group's meetings were held in spaces that were under some form of self-management, managed by community and cultural associations and included in the city's urban commons policy. These included La Lleialtat Santsenca (Lleialtat 2021) in the neighbourhood of Sants, or Centre Cultural La Farinera in Clot (Farinera 2021). The group also organised a public meeting in October 2019 during the annual solidarity economy fair, the FESC (2021a). The FESC has been held annually at Fabra i Coats, a former factory that is now a large cultural centre (Fabra I Coats 2021). Decidim's offices and annual events were located there. Ateneu L'Harmonia is located among the buildings on the grounds of the factory (Ateneu Harmonia 2021). L'Harmonia is another space that is under community management. The use of the space was the subject of a neighbourhood struggle over a number of years. A large part of the programme of the FESC, including the commons meeting was held there. Joining the local commons organising group at these meetings highlighted the ways in which commons activists in Barcelona inhabit a particular social world, with its own social spaces, solidarity economy, cycles of events and political culture (Flesher Fominaya 2020, 308).

Organising within the forum

From the beginning of the forum organising process in April 2019, many participants felt there was a lack of clarity from the forum organisers,

regarding how decisions were being made or about what channels activists and organisations had to contribute to the organising process. These criticisms came from different networks and organisations. The original steering group of the forum, led by RIPESS Europe, the XES and REAS responded to these criticisms by organising a second preparatory meeting in July 2019, during which a much more representative body of stakeholder organisations was established.

The new Coordination Committee included about twenty international networks as well as the Barcelona confluence which included the four local thematic axes. There had also been some criticisms of the proposed format of the forum; envisioned as being organised around the thematic axis of feminism, the commons, solidarity economy and agroecology.

While the thematic axes reflected the local social movements in Barcelona, other networks and organisations felt that the categories were restrictive or exclusive and called for disbanding the whole idea of thematic axes. However, the commons group had been working well. The forum had provided a small amount of funding to each axes for a person dedicated to coordination, in our case this was Monica. There were other resources too, such as the assistance of translators during forum events but these were not always guaranteed. It was agreed at the July meeting that the forum would not be strictly organised around only these four axes, and that other proposals could be developed, rather than axes, other language was used to describe these groups, as movements or confluences.

There were other issues which are perhaps more endemic to the organisation of such a large event with a history of being radically committed to participation and self-organisation. Those involved in the social forum aim to lead a process that respects its values and legacy. At the same time organising forums involves activists with differing experience and understandings. Some have experience of previous events, but many are new to it. The forum is in principle intended as an open space in which activists can self-organise and network, and transparency, openness and participation are critical to this. This is more an ideal that organisers aspire

to rather than features inherent in a pre-defined organising process. Each forum is organised in a different place, with new and different people, involving different languages and cultures. A key challenge that organisers and activists face is pedagogic. There are lessons to be learned from the experience of previous social forums but this knowledge is largely communicated in an ad-hoc way, on the job so to speak.

The preparation of the registration process is a case in point, in which a lot of debate and discussion was needed to clarify the particular understandings of the terms and language used. For example there was some confusion over the distinction made between *activities* and *initiatives*, where the former is an event within the programme of the forum and the latter are actions that networks or organisations are leading independently, such as campaigns. While it might seem relatively straightforward, it is important to remember that many activists are organising in a second language. These kinds of communications challenges were present throughout. There were differences in knowledge and experience, as well as language ability.

Tensions also arose at various points concerning expectations and the division of roles and responsibilities between activists who were participating in a voluntary capacity and those that were employed by the forum for coordination. The forum is not just a political event, but there is also a politics that plays out in the organising process. I am not making these as points of criticism, just acknowledging that this was there and that power relations, even when organisationally necessary and legitimate, well meaning or well intentioned, formal and informal, these relations have effects on the groups and networks. Organising a forum is a massive task, done with limited resources and with a lot of moving parts and with all due respect, those that I met during fieldwork were open, honest, committed, hard working and frank about the challenges they faced.

The lack of clarity about how the commons group fit within the organisation of the forum had a definite effect on how the group related with the forum. Activists with experience of previous WSF events were accustomed to a degree of organisational discord, but it did make it difficult to communicate

the purpose and process of the forum to collaborators new to the WSF process. At times we were left waiting and wondering, not knowing which actions or activities would be supported by the organisers, activists grew frustrated and felt they could not rely on forum organisers. For these reasons activists within the commons group focused on organising their activities relatively autonomously from the forum such as the commons camp process.

Communs ça va Marseille?

The first Commons Camp took place in Marseille, and was titled Communs ça va Marseille? It took place over three days, from the 17th to the 19th of January 2020, it was held at La Maison Arménienne de la Jeunesse et de la Culture, an Armenian youth and cultural centre. There were an estimated 300 participants. Activists from all over Europe and a few from further afield attended, with a good showing from Naples and Barcelona. The Barcelona group included people active in the commons axis of the forum, there were also activists from Bcomú, some I met from the international commission and others that had worked on the development of urban commons policies in the city.

Remix the Commons and Art Factories were among the lead organisations in the planning and preparation of the event. Remix are a Francophone commons project and a couple of their colleagues from Montreal travelled to Marseille to take part and to facilitate the event.

The event was organised as a participatory process. This was not a programme of talks, workshops or lectures from experts. Instead, in each session, participants would break out into small thematic discussion groups, at the end of which they would reconvene in an assembly and present key points discussed. Facilitation methodologies like Open Space and World Cafe were used. Frédéric and others from Remix worked with Monica and David from FemProcomuns and together they developed a plan which included using collaborative pads and Teixidora for documentation. The themes for discussion were proposed in advance, their accompanying pads

were structured with various headings to guide and prompt discussions. Topics included urban commons, housing, the environment, care, knowledge, culture, technology as well as strategic discussions on public action, policy and legal tools for the commons. Each discussion was shaped by the people taking part, many focused on the challenges facing local projects with those visiting sharing what they could of their own activist experience. The event as a whole was an exchange of practices and experiences.

The commons camp was the first in a series of events that involved experimenting with multilingual dialogue and mixed media documentation. As you might expect the discussions were mostly in French but there were many volunteer translators who assisted with interpretation for international participants. Written notes were taken during each session as well as in collaborative digital pads, all of which were later collected, transcribed, translated and uploaded to Teixidora (2020). Instructions for how to use the pads were also included in French, English and Spanish.

The documentation process was a means of mapping participants, organisations and networks. In the pads, activists were encouraged to note the participants and organisations taking part or those mentioned, then to identify the challenges and opportunities of their various projects. They also took note of keywords and were asked to define or offer some answers to the question "what is the commons?" (FemProcomuns 2020b). Not everyone was accustomed to working with the pads and most preferred to work with pen and paper, photographs of these notes were taken and later transcribed to the pads and documented on Teixidora. The process of documentation was to support continuity between the different camps in the forum process. It was not documentation for documentation's sake. As someone wrote in one of the pads in preparation for the event "it is not an accumulation of archives, but about how we build collective memory, how we produce our own knowledge by documenting, how we build a culture" (FemProcomuns 2020c).

The collaborative practice of knowledge production is intimately connected

with how activists come to know one another and their field of action. Through this process activists debate and define collective challenges and in the process constitute themselves as a collective subject and a movement. The process of documentation is a practice of commoning in that it produces a shared resource, but it is also about producing a kind of public (Taylor 2004) or counter-public (Warner 2002) with a particular kind of subject, a movement actor. I eventually came to understand the process and practice of documentation was not just about creating an archival object or a record of outcomes (Kelty 2008, 115). Rather, it was a central practice through which activists organised to build transnational solidarity, and to produce and reproduce activist political culture (Flesher Fominaya 2020, 308). Not all activists in the organising group were familiar or comfortable with the practice; myself included. It took some getting used to, but from one meeting to the next we all learned something and became better transcribers and translators.

Art Factories, one of the local partners, is a network of temporary and independent arts and cultural spaces (Artfactories 2021). Marseille is a post-industrial city with many cultural spaces run by artist collectives, some that began as squats. As part of the programme on the Saturday night we visited spaces such as La Déviation, located in a former cement and lime factory cut into the mountains above the city (La Déviation 2021). On a cold Sunday morning we had a walking tour to meet with local activists and learn about urban struggles. We visited La Place Louise Michel, a small square named after the revolutionary figure and anarchist who had participated in the Paris Commune. Neighbours in the area had successfully campaigned to have disused space renovated by the council. We also met with activists from Assemblée del Plaine, a group made up of residents living in and around La Place Jean-Jaurès, the site of a controversial council led redevelopment scheme (Assemblée del Plaine 2021). The residents had waged a campaign over a number of years which included regular demonstrations and direct action. Despite all this the city ignored residents and pushed ahead with the plan. They removed significant numbers of trees

from the area as well as a sports grounds, and disrupted a space that had traditionally been a local market. Not all struggles end in success. We finished up the tour with lunch at another artist-run space in a former factory, Les 8 Pillards.

In Marseille, while there was certainly a politics, culture was also prominent. It was also culturally diverse with members of local immigrant communities, the protagonists of urban struggles participating in activities. In Barcelona the projects I encountered had a strong sense of political identity, my sense was that this politics had been critical in creating spaces for a counterculture in the city, by contrast in Marseille I had a sense that cultural space had an important role in creating space for the articulation of a politics. Either way, there were similar concerns, such as how to negotiate relationships with institutions, the city council and political parties.

A number of activists from Le Printemps Marseillais (The Marseille Spring) participated in the camp. Inspired by the successes of the municipalist movements in Spain, they spoke about how a coalition of social movements and left parties were preparing to contest local elections in June, to oust right wing parties that had governed France's second largest city for decades. Artists and cultural workers spoke of struggles over cultural space in the city. These creative and collective spaces, even if temporary, could be empowering sites of self-organisation for cultural workers and local communities. At the same time, commercial interests were taking advantage of this, with artists being instrumentalised in processes of gentrification. For communities and cultural spaces, as well as for social movements, the process of engaging with political parties and institutional politics was fraught with concerns over co-optation of the commons. In June 2020, Le Printemps Marseillais won the local elections. From the event some topics such as urban commons and the right to the city were identified as subjects of common interest among activists and a transnational working group on commons and law was formed. All in all, the commons camp in Marseille had a galvanising effect. Having met in person, activists became more actively involved in online meetings of the commons working group and in

preparations for the forum.

Pandemic

The next commons camp was to take place in Naples, Italy from April 13th-19th 2020. It would be hosted by Asilo Filangieri, an emblematic urban and cultural commons project in the city. In the interim the commons working group continued to organise online, using Telegram and pads, and throughout February they prepared to launch a crowdfunding campaign (FemProcomuns 2020d). The campaign was not simply about raising funds, it was an integral part of the overall organising process aimed at mobilising activists to participate in the forum. It required a lot of planning. The budget was calculated to cover the costs of organising and to support activists from the global south to travel to Barcelona. Goteo, the crowdfunding platform advised on how to run a successful campaign. Match-funding was also secured so that any money raised would be matched by a philanthropic fund. Activists prepared videos and promotional materials which were translated into multiple languages by volunteers. The group coordinated with other networks to confirm their interest in participating in the campaign and in a series of online events that were aimed at supporting activists in getting to know each other, their networks, projects and struggles, in advance of the forum.

The group were also following news of the outbreak of Covid-19 in Italy. The Italian government had announced a state of emergency at the end of January and imposed quarantine on a number of northern municipalities in February, but no one knew what to expect. By the end of February, the plan for the campaign was ready. It was due to launch in mid-March and would run for forty days, with its conclusion coinciding with the commons camp in Naples.

In the first weeks of March, news of the rising number of cases of Covid-19 had governments across Europe discussing whether or not to impose lockdowns to contain the spread of the virus. Spain imposed a strict national lockdown on March 14th, France followed on the 16th. With the crisis in Italy

worsening, activists in Naples had to cancel the commons camp. We were initially told the restrictions would only be for a few weeks and plans were on pause as we waited to see what would happen.

Nevertheless, the lockdowns were extended and by mid-March it was rumoured that the forum planned for June in Barcelona would not go ahead. The organising committee of the WSFTE made an official statement on this at the end of March. In the announcement the committee encouraged activists to continue their organising, but there was no clarity whether anything would happen or if the event would be rescheduled. After almost a year of organising and hundreds of hours of volunteer work, this news was hugely disappointing for the group. Activists' attentions had also turned to other immediate concerns such as the welfare of family and friends. There was a lot of uncertainty about what we could do together.

The group met again on April 8th for the first time in over a month (FemProcomuns 2020e). While the situation with the future of the forum remained uncertain, everyone agreed that the work done to date should not go to waste and that we take the time to adapt, to consider this new context and how we might continue to work together during the pandemic. The group discussed responses to the pandemic, the extremity of lockdowns, the dangers of authoritarian responses from governments, and acts of community self-organisation and mutual aid that were emerging.

Towards the end of April the organising committee of the social forum circulated an email and proposed that a virtual forum could take place with the first part in June and a second in October, coinciding with the FESC. This was followed by a meeting on April 29th with activists from the different movements and stakeholder organisations. There was a strong interest in continuing and agreement among activists to organise a virtual forum. During the meeting, Frédéric from the commons group said "the forum was and still is an opportunity to strengthen the commons movement in Europe and around the world. This process must be continued, because there are now massive attacks on the commons" (WSFTE 2020a).

The subject of basic income was gaining public interest as a solution to the unprecedented rise in unemployment across Europe. At the April meeting, a number of activists in the group proposed to organise a debate the topic. The debate took place on May 18th (WSFTE 2020b; FemProcomuns 2021g).

This was a first effort at organising an online multilingual event. It was a trial run of the practices the group would use in subsequent events. During online meetings the commons group had been developing a practice whereby multilingual members of the group would do live transcription and translation. Participants in the commons group come from many different countries and speak different languages with different levels of competency and it was important for the group that people could speak in a language they felt comfortable with. The major languages in the group were English, French, Italian, Spanish and occasionally Catalan.

English was often the most common second language but the group resisted the habit of using it by default. The idea was not to privilege one language over another and to support the inclusion of mono-lingual participants.

The pads are formatted in advance with different colours assigned to each language. It was more straightforward to keep everything on a single pad, rather than different pads for each language. It also takes a degree of competency to type and translate live, to or from a second language. The task of volunteer transcription was often shared so that when one transcriber needed a break another would step in. Navigating through text heavy documents with multiple languages on screen is not easy. The process didn't always go smoothly. So the quality and accuracy of transcriptions varied. It was a bit messy at times, but this extra effort made the discussions more accessible for mono-lingual speakers who could participate and follow the live translation in the pads. Transcription became an integral part of the groups online meetings and events and was critical to bridging dialogue between participants from different countries and linguistic backgrounds.

Common Horizons

The new reality of the pandemic with all its uncertainty had forced the group to put its plans on hold. The camp in Naples had been cancelled, but it was also becoming clear that we would not be able to go ahead with the crowdfunding campaign or the camp in Barcelona in June. The organising committee announced the virtual forum for June and there were still hopes that perhaps we could have the camp during the follow up event in October. Though as time went on this too looked less and less likely.

The commons working group continued organising through the Telegram channel and on June 8th reconvened in an online meeting. A new proposal was beginning to take shape called Common Horizons. The proposal would begin within the process of the forum between the June and October events and while yet undefined it was also being developed with a view to continued organising beyond. Rather than a series of events the idea was to develop a process that could support the development of the commons movement more broadly.

It would initially be based around three thematic chapters. The group considered that there was not enough time before the forum in June to prepare these chapters. Instead, they focused on the development of the proposal and using the June event as a means to launch it and invite other groups to participate.

The group met regularly in the run-up to the June virtual forum. On June 15th they met to discuss the budget for Common Horizons and themes for the chapters were proposed that reflected the interests and activities of movements where activists were based (FemProcomuns 2020f). These were the right to the city, urban commons, and public debt. Commons as Pluriverse was also proposed as a theme for fostering dialogue between global north and south.

On the 16th, the time and date for the forum event were agreed with a three hour online convergence planned for June 27th. Activists took on different roles in preparation for the event, some designed flyers, others helped with

the translation of communications and promotion through social networks, others organised facilitation and prepared the pads for note-taking and live translation.

On the 22nd activists discussed different visions for this new process, how it would work and how the themes would fit within it. The commons movement is heterogeneous, on the one hand bringing different movement actors together to share different experiences and getting to know one another was important. However, it was also recognised that there was a need to focus and frame the discussion in political terms of movement building, highlighting challenges, identifying and developing strategies. This emphasis on strategy would come to inform the questions for the breakout discussions during the June event.

It was proposed that a new teleconferencing platform would be used for the event. FemProcomuns had in the previous months been working with an international network of tech cooperatives on hosting an instance of Big Blue Button, an open source alternative to Zoom (Big Blue Button 2021). Together the network formed Meet.Coop and in keeping with the principles of the commons it was agreed that the commons group would use this platform for the event (Meet.Coop 2021).

The group were very conscious about using free and open source software and platforms. Meetings were also scheduled with Framadate which is just one in a range of tools from the non-profit French association Framasoft which is dedicated to providing social economy organisations with free and open source alternatives to Google and other corporate platforms (Framasoft 2021). The commons group were not the only group in the forum to use these tools. There was a clear preference for using free and open source software platforms for the coordination of the forum. For example, video from the June event was hosted on another of Framasofts' platforms, PeerTube (Transformadora 2021). This shows how the values of these different movements are aligned and solidarity is expressed in practice.

Choosing free and open source is not necessarily the easy option and it can

pose challenges as it takes time for activists and participants to adapt to using new tools and these tools do necessarily have the same features as their corporate equivalents.

Participation in the organising process of these events is in itself a learning process through which activists develop their practice. Meet.Coop is browser based and does not have the same features as Zoom for breakout rooms or for simultaneous translation. Organising a multilingual event is in itself already quite complicated. The group devised an ad-hoc solution by creating different room URLs but it took time to explain how this worked to event attendees and some participants found the process of manually muting and unmuting, and switching between browser tabs a confusing distraction overburdening an already complicated transnational process. Event participants also had to switch back and forth between browser tabs to access, contribute and follow the progress of the event on the pads. At the same time part of the challenge of doing all this is in showing that it can be done. That we can self-organise activities and use tools in ways that reflect our collective commitment to the commons.
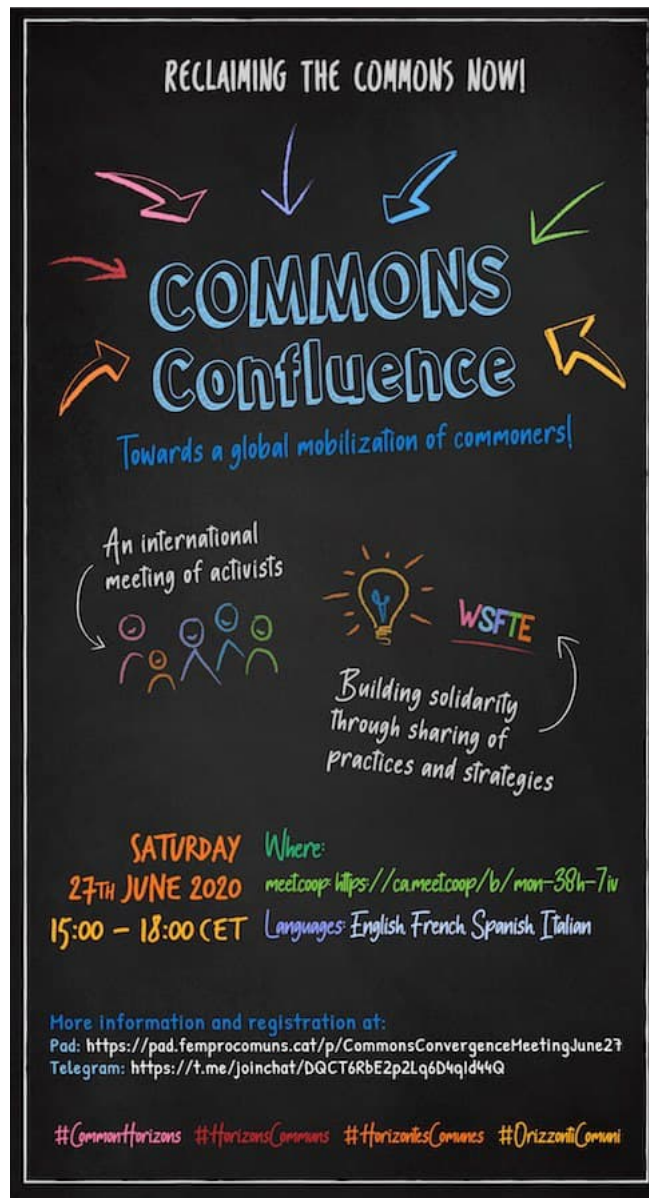
Figure 15: Flyer for the online commons confluence

Over 40 people attended the online meeting of the Commons Convergence during the June virtual forum. The event had some new faces but it also brought together many who had participated in the camp in Marseille as well as the April forum event the previous year. Common Horizons was presented as "a methodology that aims to produce collective proposals for the commons movement" and participants were invited to become involved. The group initially convened in a shared virtual room, this was a multilingual space and the organisers of the forum had hired translators to do live audio translation. The breakout discussion rooms were organised by language.

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During the initial breakout session participants responded to questions such as, "what commons do I want to defend or create?", "what practices do I want to reproduce and care for the commons?", "what strategies do I need to do this and at what scale, in my life, in my town/city, in the planet?". It was not necessary to have concrete answers to these questions or solutions to problems. The questions where prompts to start a dialogue, with thoughts and reflections documented in the pad. The various commons discussed ranged from free software tools and urban commons, to the environment and atmosphere as a commons.

Among the proposed strategies were the need for dialogue and alliances with other transformative social movements, to move beyond Eurocentric discourses and embrace north-south dialogue and decolonial perspectives, as well as engaging with anti-capitalist and feminist movements. Activists discussed the challenges of maintaining networks on a voluntary basis. One participant raised questions about connecting heterogeneous commons with different politics.

> mh: commons founded in resistance and rescue are different - in practice, in 'aesthetics', in mood, in necessity - from commons founded in liberal 'choice' (digital, cultural, whatever). Spanning diverse 'aesthetics' like these is one of the challenging things? Genuine plurality, no single style or definition or genre? Certainly, not gentrification. Fundamentally, commoning is about necessary means of subsistence & wellbeing? (FemProcomuns 2021h)

In the next round, activists summarised key ideas, topics, issues, projects, and campaigns. Some discussed commons policies and how social movements need to have impacts at different scales.

> Ana Sofía: Articulate the different demands of social movements to impact on the different administrative levels. The municipal movement has made it possible to make a difference between cities but it is necessary to think how to impact at the National, Regional, Global level!! Let's think about "Common Policies"!! (FemProcomuns 2021h)

Others highlighted projects they were currently working on.

> Frédéric : Make more visible the concrete legal and socio-political mechanisms that support commoning in different domains like with https://politiquesdescommuns.cc. (FemProcomuns 2021h)
>
> ...
>
> Ashish Kothari: Linking Commons movements with other radical alternative movements in various parts of the world, including those for justice, radical democracy, autonomy, etc through the Global Tapestry of Alternatives (https://globaltapestryofalternatives.org). (FemProcomuns 2021h)

In the context of the pandemic the question of whether a vaccine would be accessible to all was pertinent.

> One of the biggest commons issues will arise when/if science comes up with a vaccine for covid 19 - the idea of a commons of science for human health will be widely understood and called for by people around the world. (FemProcomuns 2021h)

In the following session activists were asked, what can I contribute to the Common Horizons process? Some contributions were practical such as offers to continue to assist with facilitating multilingual dialogue, or offers of legal or research support. Others suggested how the commons movement should orient itself.

> Orient not to 'values' but rather to forms of **practices**: technique, genre, language. Bcos common(ing) is **practice**. Aesthetics too ('values') is **practice** (embodied practice, a 'dance' a choreography of practice). Materialism! (FemProcomuns 2021h)
>
> I would say: because the commons result from the evolution of living things, they pay particular attention to ecology; because they accompany social transformations, they oppose fascism, racism, sexism, homophobia, patriarchy; because they are a condition for the formation of knowledge, they reject dogmatisms, obscurantisms and all forms of censorship and appropriation of knowledge. (FemProcomuns 2021h)

The comments above highlight the tensions activists recognise between liberal conceptions of the commons and more radically transformative

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perspectives and practices. These points and more were openly discussed in the closing assembly. Activists were thanked for attending and invited to join the group through the Telegram channel to participate in the continued development of the Common Horizons process. All things considered, given that activists organised the event in such a short time and in the midst of a pandemic, the event was a success. The discussions and issues that arose would continue to inform the development of Common Horizons.

Collaborative pads are a text heavy medium, I would not describe them as a visually easy medium to work with, text is coloured differently according to author, as well as being coloured for the four different languages, and this taken together with the proliferation of pads and links from every meeting can make it difficult to keep track of discussions. Using them effectively to organise takes practice, they need a certain amount of care, to structure and organise text in meaningful and useful ways. This is something that Monica and David from FemProcomuns were adept at, given they had worked with pads more than most of us.

As a group we did not have agreed protocols on how we managed the pads, it was more a case of learning by doing. The labour of care and attention to organising the pads often fell to the more experienced participants, particularly the transfer to Teixidora. This continuous process and practice of documentation was critical to the continuity to the organising process. These are not static documents, serving the simple purpose of archiving statements during events. The text in the pads reflected a process of ongoing dialogue on the planning of events but the text also structured the events.
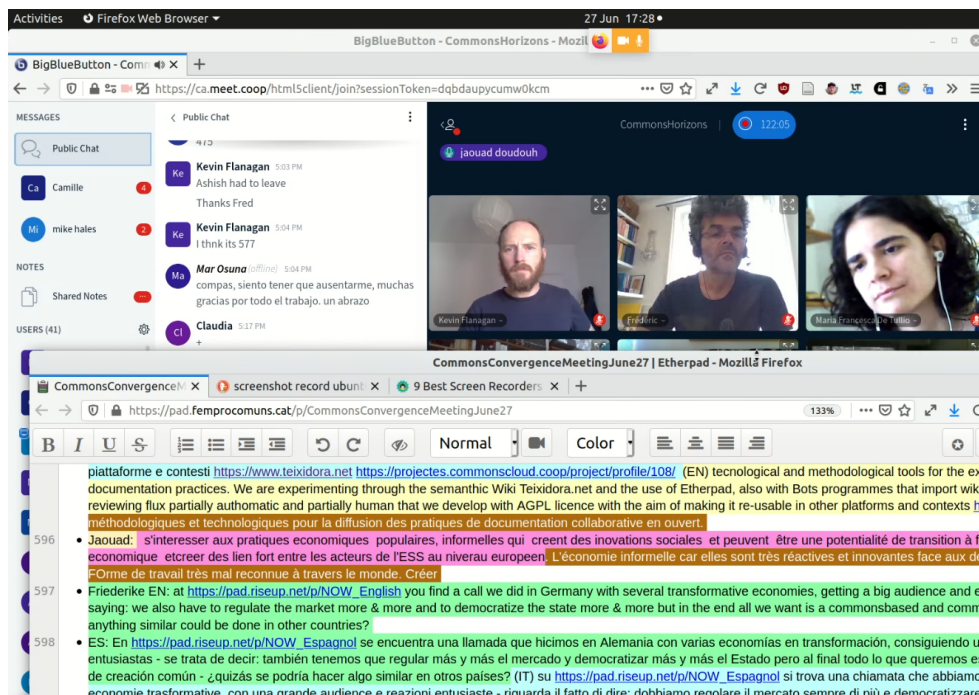
Figure 16: Screenshot from Commons Convergence. July 27, 2020. Multilingual collaborative pad and Meet.coop.

After so many of the group's plans had come apart due to the pandemic, the event had successfully mobilised the group and given activists a renewed energy. With only a few months to organise, there was a sense of urgency and they set to work with several meetings in July to define the three thematic chapters. A smaller dedicated working group was established with its own Telegram channel. Objectives and principles of design would establish common criteria for each chapter (FemProcomuns 2020g). The idea of the thematic focus is that it would support activists to go into more depth on topics over an extended period.

The discussion on the themes was ongoing with proposed session titles such as, Contextualizing and Reclaiming the Commons, The Inner Life of The Commons, Tools for Commoning. Each had a range of sub-themes (FemProcomuns 2020h). Activists also wanted to ensure continuity of discussions from the June event.

During the July meetings, in the process of elaborating on the thematic chapters, two different approaches emerged which led to a discussion of the relationship between structure and content, and a recognition of a tension between a process or facilitation oriented approach and a strategic and

political approach (FemProcomuns 2020i). The working process of the group was in itself considered as a practice of commoning. A practice that was also reflected in the facilitation of the events. The group placed a high value on being open and made a lot of efforts to support this. Everything the group did was publicly accessible in the pads, which along with the facilitation of events and meetings were multilingual. While there was a small budget the bulk of the work in preparation of these events was voluntary.

During the June event the organising group became facilitators, translators or note-takers. The events were only possible because of this mobilisation of activist labour. Being active in the organising and the labour of facilitating the event is not quite the same as being a participant, facilitators are busy coordinating with attendees and note-takers focus on transcribing. The activists that were most engaged in the organising process assumed supporting roles, enabling others, actors from the broader movement to participate.

Of course, it was not so black and white, but this division of labour did have effects. The question then was to what extent the activists in the organising group could or should inform the content of the chapters? There was a need to find a balance. The chapters needed to be structured in such a way as to be open enough for newcomers to participate in meaningful ways. At the same time, the activities of the group should also be politically and strategically relevant for the movements of which its most active contributors were a part.

To address this, in August, a set of questions were proposed and members of the working group were invited to respond, the idea was that this would help generate a clearer sense of the varied motivations, interests and priorities among activists. The questions asked about the importance of the topics, their contextual relevance, ways of working, the expected outputs from the chapters, and the local experience of activists on the relationship between commons and social movements, political actors and public institutions, and economic actors such as the SSE.

David G, contextualised the commons movement as part of a continuation of broader cycles of social movement mobilisation such the anti-globalisation movement and the movement of the squares, Occupy and 15M. A product of these cycles was their territorial expressions in the municipalist movement and the movement for the right to the city.

> David G: The commons movement is part of the continuation of the anti-globalization movement that was built during the cycle of world and regional social forums. The commons movement has been a strategic option from the social, economic, democratic and environmental points of view to build an alternative to neoliberal globalization. (FemProcomuns 2020k)

Monica emphasised the importance of identifying practices of commoning in social movements independent of political institutions.

> Monica: It is important to talk about global commons - environment, reproduction of life, shared practice, acting in common, self-management and self-government arising from joint activity, to identify these practices in social movements around the world, disassociated from public administrations of established powers. (FemProcomuns 2020k)

Frédéric highlighted an issue that had come up a number of times in conversations with activists during the forum process, that is how the commons relate with other social movements and the risk of cooptation by institutional actors.

> Frédéric: 'Contextualizing and reclaiming the commons' is an opportunity to point out that the commons movement is not a movement subordinated to any of the other social movements (SSE, Right to the City, Ecology, ...), nor can it claim to subordinate them. We have seen throughout the FSMET [WSFTE] the risk (when it is not already a *fait accompli*) of reducing the commons to a more or less subordinate economic mechanism in the social economy. We have also seen the development of the idea that the commons movement would be a subculture of the right to the city movement. In reality, these movements, that is to say, activists and practices are linked, sometimes closely. It is up to us to explain to them, to enable activists to understand what the commons bring in particular to social struggles. (FemProcomuns 2020k)

The above are just a few examples. While the themes we were discussing were a continuation of the work we had done to date, there was a sense among activists that the group were not engaging with the major crisis of the moment, the pandemic. Some proposed that we needed to engage with the threats to civil liberties posed by government responses. Others looked forward to the economic impacts.

> David G: While it is still too early to measure all the consequences of the COVID crisis19 , the collapse of the traditional economic system is likely to make it increasingly necessary to build economic and political alternatives based on the commons. (FemProcomuns 2020k)

These discussions affirmed the purpose of Common Horizons not simply as a process but as a strategic and political intervention. In the weeks that followed, the three thematic chapters were agreed.

- Chapter 1: Contextualising and reclaiming the commons – Urban Commons, Health as a Commons, Debt.
- Chapter 2: The inner life of the commons
- Chapter 3: Tools for commoning

I volunteered to help coordinate chapter one and organised regular meetings over the following months. Activists in the group collaborated on writing an abstract (FemProcomuns 2020j). In the context of the pandemic the chapter aimed to explore the relationships between commons and care.

> commoners have produced spaces of collective care, where communities conceive health and care in an expanded way: not only by providing access to medical services and equipment, but also by providing solidarity in the form of psychological support, defence against domestic violence, support in struggles for housing and income and sustaining environments for cultural production. (Common Horizons 2021)

The event would bring together "a network of artists, cultural workers, social movements, NGOs, academics and other actors to build a collective reasoning about urban commons, health as a commons" (Common Horizons 2021). The full abstract is included in Appendix 6.

Producing new knowledge and facilitating activist dialogue was a central

aim for each chapter. In July, the group had worked on a set of objectives to be achieved as a minimum structure common to all chapters (FemProcomuns 2020g). These objectives formed the basis for activist dialogues and interviews from which a number of articles were produced, these were translated and posted on the website (Common Horizons 2021). The idea was that activist dialogues and articles would foster a deeper engagement in advance of the event. Some articles are simply short personal introductions to activists and their projects, others go into more detailed movement histories, politics and philosophy.

While initial discussions of the chapter had foregrounded, contextualising and reclaiming the commons, the urban commons, the right to the city and debt, in practice the subject of health and the commons was most prominent. The broad theme was intended to allow for a diversity of experience, and it did. However, advancing a shared dialogue was not easy. Reviewing the articles and the event reveals some insights into how practices of commoning figured in these movements' re-imagining of healthcare as a commons. The dialogues and articles feature different responses to crises in care. The pandemic saw European countries declare states of emergency, but the crises in healthcare were many years in the making. The pandemic had further exposed already existing structural problems.

Almost all the projects that activists engaged with in preparation for the chapter had their origins in previous civic associations or social movements that involved campaigns and actions before the pandemic. In the town of Premià de Mar, outside of Barcelona, local residents self-organised a mutual aid network to produce and distribute masks for elderly residents. The network had previously organised families in a struggle against the closure of a local school. In the city of Grenoble in France, residents and activists from the housing movement mobilised around campaigns for a moratorium on rents and evictions. These emergency responses showed how existing networks were capable of adapting to the pandemic.

Other health related campaigns had been ongoing for some time before the pandemic. In 2019, Plataforma Cap Raval Nord Digne, a movement in

Barcelona's Raval neighbourhood, occupied the derelict church, Capella de la Misericòrdia, as part of a successful campaign that demanded a public health clinic be located on its grounds as part of a planned redevelopment. During the campaign the group organised community and social events in the space. As part of the Barcelona Creative Commons Film Festival, a screening of the film The Commons by Kevin Hansen was held and followed by a panel discussion (BCCN 2019a; 2019b).

In an interview with Frédéric, Fabienne Orsi spoke about the crisis in public healthcare in France. 2019 saw a wave of strikes and demonstrations from health care workers who argued that neoliberal reforms and funding cuts had put the public healthcare system in crisis and patients at risk. In the midst of this, Orsi was among a network of activists and collectives resisting reforms and organising a series of workshops on democratising healthcare. The workshops were a model of horizontal and democratic organising, a practice of commoning. These struggles are very much about the defence of rights and the protection and provision of public health care services.

Democratisation and participation were key to re-imagining the politics of healthcare. Le Château en santé (The house of health) in Marseille is a community health centre that through a series of participatory workshops has involved local residents, families and service users in the design and delivery of its services. In the city of Galway, in the west of Ireland, a free out of hours mental health café was set up, with peer support available from people with lived experience of mental health challenges. These more participatory and peer led models of healthcare are developed with some degree of support or in partnership with public health authorities. Perhaps one way to conceive of these is as a commoning of public health services. These democratic and participatory models aspire to transform relations of power in healthcare, they are ongoing projects, while they involve practices of commoning, not all resources are fully common, they are instead a hybrid public-common.

The commons in many of these cases mentioned so far is not primarily used with reference to a particular type of ownership, property or resource but

rather to signify processes of collective action and self-organisation. The common is an ideal which is aspired to through practices of commoning, whether or not that ideal is fully realised in the near or long term.

The Hologram is another example of a de-commodified, self-organised and peer to peer, feminist practice of healthcare. It is at once a social practice and a creative and artistic re-imagining of what healthcare can and could be. The Hologram was developed by artist Cassie Thornton and inspired by her experience of the self-organised solidarity clinics that emerged in Greece following the financial crisis.

The practice is fully autonomous from state and commercial healthcare. Instead of being a patient or client, the person receiving care is called the hologram and their well-being is supported by three peers, often friends who the hologram consults during a two-hour meeting once every three months. Each of the three peers attends to a different aspect, or a different angle of the triangle of physical health, social health, and mental and emotional health. Practised over an extended period the peers become a living record.

The hologram and their peers alternate roles, every hologram is also a peer to someone else. Interestingly, to move away from an exchange oriented mindset, the practice is intentionally non-reciprocal, the hologram does not directly reciprocate in turn as a support to their immediate peers. Instead, each peer will be a hologram with another triangle of peers. Knowledge of the practice is generated in this way and the gift of care circulates.

While normally the hologram is practised face to face, during the pandemic practitioners moved online using tools such as zoom for their meetings. Thornton is an American artist and one of her motivations for developing this model of care was the fact that access to healthcare is prohibitively expensive in the US. The cost of privatised health care leads many to avoid seeking out the care they need and people also risk going further into debt in times of personal crisis. This brings us to another common thread that linked the many experiences of healthcare as a commons in the chapter, public and personal debt.

The crisis in healthcare was years in the making, and part of a broader social crisis catalysed by the 2008 economic crisis. The record levels of public debt were the result of various government bailouts and packages that rescued *too big to fail* private banks and financial actors that had recklessly run the global economy. The bad debts of bad banks and their associated risk were bought and transferred to public balance sheets. Public debt has been the pre-eminent justification for cuts to public services, austerity measures and the imposition of neoliberal sectoral reforms that privileged privatisation and market based 'solutions' of service delivery. The political economy of debt is central to the transformation of the public sector across Europe in the decade following the economic crisis. Debt as the justification for the withdrawal of public services, has been critical in shifting the burden of care from the state to the individual. Fanny Malinen from the Unfair Debt Group also contributed to the chapter.

> Debt disciplines the indebted to act in the interests of the creditor who has the power to enforce repayments. It drains resources from other spending: for local authorities, that is vital services such as housing, education, social care, youth work and many more. This in turn leads to indebtedness being passed down to those who suffer most from austerity: when people get poorer, they need to rely on borrowing just to make ends meet. (Malinen 2021)

The pronounced impacts of this transfer are experienced by the most vulnerable in society, those that depend on access to public services and healthcare. When support services are cut and people are left waiting years to get seen and treated, it should be no surprise that in the interim the burden of care falls to friends and family. More often than not, that labour of care is gendered, making the politics of care a significant concern for feminist activists. Those with chronic or critical conditions that can't afford to wait, take on personal debt in order to get the care they need. There is also a social stigma associated with personal indebtedness, and going into debt, any kind of debt entails risks. These risks are heightened when the political economy of capitalism offers so little certainty with precarious employment

contracts increasingly the norm, even in what were once considered secure or middle class professions. Combined with ever-increasing rents and a speculative property market, planning a future has become a lot harder for many people. Is it any wonder that the economic crisis has been coupled with an increase in inequality and a crisis in mental health.

Malinen writes about the many ways in which people have self-organised, building solidarity networks among debtors and taking collective action both in the UK where she is based and in the US among groups such as the Debt Collective (2021) that organise debt strikes and to cancel all kinds of debt. She also writes about the difficulties of community organising around complex financial topics such as debt.

The labour of care can be formally supported through the provision of state led services, or in their absence fall to individuals and informal associative networks of friends and family. For many, the latter may not be an option. Communities have recognised the need to organise collectively, and to mobilise volunteer labour to intervene.

It is obvious that many forms of medical care require expert and specialist attention, and chronic and critical conditions cannot be adequately treated through informal and voluntary efforts of communities alone, but there still remains many possibilities for more democratic and participatory approaches to health care.

The provision of public healthcare has for too long been constructed as a technocratic endeavour, with professional managers having the ultimate say over the allocation of resources. Access to services is often approached as an economic rather than a political matter, a matter of rights.

The commoning of public healthcare necessitates the creation and expansion of spaces for a different politics of care. Spaces where both caregivers and receivers are recognised as stakeholders, with participation in processes of decision-making that empower communities and gives them a say in how resources are allocated.

The provision of social care is a necessarily humanistic endeavour, and the

labour of care is the critical resource on which it depends. The commoning of healthcare involves the pooling of voluntary labours as a common. The quality of that care depends on the shared knowledge and experience of caregivers and receivers. Participatory and democratic practices support the self-organisation of collective care, and empower people with personal experience of health challenges to share critical perspectives on how care is designed and delivered.

The chapter event was originally due to coincide with the second part of the social forum in October of 2020, but there were some delays. It took more time than expected to conduct the various activist dialogues and interviews and the group decided to postpone. The event was scheduled to be part of another virtual forum and took place on Wednesday 27th of January 2021 (WSF 2021). The activists who participated in the dialogues, contributing through articles and interviews, also took part in the chapter event where the various topics were presented and discussed. In addition, Edesio Fernandes an academic working with the Global Platform for the Right to the City made a short presentation on the city as a commons (Right2City 2021). Gaelle Krikorian, a social scientist, discussed her research on the challenges of producing pharmaceuticals as a commons. This was particularly pertinent. Despite huge amounts of public funding in research and investment, production of Covid-19 vaccines has been limited to the pharmaceutical giants that control patents.

What is consistent in all the contributions to the chapter and event is that people have the capacity to self-organise to address collective needs. In many cases the capacity and skills that lend themselves to doing so were developed during previous cycles of struggle in the decade following the 2008 financial crisis. The experience of this crisis also shapes and informs activist expectations. The economic impacts of the lockdowns, the millions of people out of work, forced into further debt to survive, are recognised as a further catalyst for cascading social crises. With over a decade of experience to reflect on, activists recognise and are wary of politicians rehearsing and governments preparing for further rounds of austerity and

reforms in a post-pandemic world. Knowledge, skills and practices of self-organisation for collective action and care remain critical to contestation and resistance.

Conclusion

The World Social Forum of Transformative Economies has passed. The group faced set-backs resulting from the pandemic, and adjusting to online organising also had its challenges. As a result, some of the goals set out during that first meeting in April 2020 were not realised, but they have not been forgotten either. The network of activists that came together during this period continue to collaborate and organise transnational activist-led spaces.

Activists that participated in these events came from diverse social struggles. Indigenous struggles, struggles over urban redevelopment, housing, healthcare and access to cultural space. A shared understanding or conception of the commons was not a prerequisite for participation, and exactly what the commons did mean was subject to debate. What became evident through those discussions were shared commitments to bottom-up organising, democratic practice, belief in the power of collective action, the capacities of communities and activists to self-organise and address collective needs, and a recognition of the importance of solidarity and the sharing of activist knowledge and experiences. The commons figured within these conversations as a bridging concept, a subject through which dialogue and exchange could be fostered, and commonalities between different movements made visible. The commons worked to bridge the particulars of local experiences and helped to contextualise them in systemic terms. These discussions were generally anti-authoritarian and anti-capitalist in character. Solidarities were expressed but collective action was not channelled towards identifying common enemies and building campaigns, rather the emphasis was on strengthening activist practice through the sharing of knowledge and experience.

The two events featured in this chapter, sharing cities and the social forum

are so different that to equate or compare is not particularly meaningful. The purpose of the chapter was to highlight how commons practitioners move between and inhabit different social worlds and how practices and discourses on commons can figure differently in each, as social innovation and political practice. These events involved different types of politics, one oriented towards policy and institutional actors and the other towards building solidarity and sharing experience among grassroots practitioners and activists. Both represent efforts of translation, the worlding of local practices (Simone 2001; Roy 2011; McCann, Roy, and Ward 2013; Sheppard, Leitner, and Maringanti 2013). The WSFTE was clearly more lengthy, dynamic and engaging for activists. The commons camp fostered transnational solidarity, sharing and learning from each other's struggles. As organising moved online during the Covid-19 pandemic, Activists' collaborative and documentary practices of using pads and Teixidora took on a new significance, as tools for translating and bridging dialogue and experience for transnational movement organising. The commoning of activist knowledge structured the organising process. It was recognised not simply as a proliferation of archives or records of events and activities, but as part of a process of constructing a reflexive and collective movement subject, through which collective memory was dignified, solidarities affirmed, activist political culture produced and reproduced (Flesher Fominaya 2020, 308).

Chapter 10. Conclusions: Commoning the Rebel City

Asking what it means to imagine and make the city as a commons (Foster and Iaione 2015), I set out to understand the social imaginary of the commons and the conditions of possibility that lend themselves to putting the commons on the political agenda. One of the conclusions of this thesis is that, at least in the case of Barcelona, a politics of the commons cannot be understood without consideration of how commons have figured as part of broader social movement processes. The commons are a subject of political interest because movements have made them so.

Tracing the histories and continuities between social movements and the political demands and subsequent policies for the commons, this thesis concludes that the making of the city of Barcelona as a commons is deeply rooted in the radical democratic imaginaries and aspirations of the city's social movements. In this concluding chapter, I reflect first on the challenges and limitations encountered by the municipalist movement. Then I consider how this experience can inform social movements and scholars interested in advancing alternative urbanisms and our understanding of the possibilities for urban revolution in the 21st century (Lefebvre 2011).

The world has changed since 2015. The failure of the political centre to address growing inequalities and the perpetuation of neoliberal and austerity policies in the fall out of the economic crisis has led to increasingly polarised electorates in many western countries. Spain and Catalonia are no exception. We have seen the rise of the far right, but left wing and socialist political movements have also experienced something of a revival. Prominent examples of this in the English-speaking world include the rise of democratic socialists and the presidential campaigns of Bernie Sanders in 2016 and 2020 in the US, as well as Momentum and the campaign for Jeremy Corbyn with Labour in the UK. Though these movements were unsuccessful in presidential and parliamentary campaigns at the national level there have been mixed results in other countries. In Spain the November 2019 national elections saw Unidas Podemos enter government

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for the first time in coalition with the Socialist Party. Despite the loss of municipalist candidacies in the 2019 local elections, Bcomú have continued in local government also in coalition with the Socialist party. The municipalist movement has had and continues to have a role in this international shift, giving articulation to a more radical democratic politics.

The municipalist contention that the city is a critical site for transformative politics is as relevant today as it was in 2015. While municipalist movements focus on the electoral politics of cities, as Russell (2019a) has argued, Bcomú have avoided what Purcell (2006) calls the local trap. Bcomú as a hybrid movement-party have been internationalist in their outlook throughout, using their prominent position in the city council to support and create a platform for a range of social movements. The series of Fearless Cities events launched in Barcelona in 2017 were in many ways a catalyst for what might be called a municipalist international. The 2017 event alone brought together "700 officially registered participants from six continents" (Russell 2019b). The events have fostered dialogue and alliances among different municipalist movements internationally and included activists from the Kurdish movement in Rojava, the social ecology movement and Cooperation Jackson.

Bcomú were launched into local government off of a wave of anti-austerity protests, but since 2015 public debate in Catalonia and Spain has largely shifted from the economic crisis to a politics of identity catalysed by the Catalan nationalist movement and the independence referendum. Municipalists were drawn into political debates that were predominately framed by more established parties at regional and national levels. While the economic crisis was a catalyst for the rise of anti-austerity movements followed by municipalist and left wing parties such as Unidas Podemos, the rise of Catalan nationalism has been met at the national level by a rising Spanish nationalism with its most extreme expressions in the far right party Vox. Where left wing movements emerged in response to social disparities driven by economic factors, the politics of the right has been fostered around a politics of identity. Navigating this changing political landscape

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has been a challenge for the municipalist movement. Municipalist activists pushing for change from within the institutions also encountered a range of issues, administrative and political. Activists found that on issues such as housing, water and tourism the administrative competencies of the city council were limited. The competencies of municipal government were also constrained by national policies such as the montoro law that undermined the autonomy of municipalities by placing restrictions on spending (Rubio-Pueyo 2017). The shifts in public debate to a politics of identity along with the realities and practical limitations of municipal politics had impacts with results evident in the 2019 local elections. This experience highlights the importance of strong social movements and political alliances at the metropolitan, regional or national levels of government.

Social Movement Strategies

From the beginning, Bcomú were determined to "win the city" (Bcomú 2016b). In this thesis, I argue that the municipalist movement represents a successful example of what Cox and Nilsen (2014) call a social movement project. The measure of that success is subject to debate. Movements that engage with institutional politics must at various stages weigh the possibilities of cooperation against the risks of co-optation. While what has taken place in Barcelona is not a revolution, the achievements of the municipalist movements are substantial. They are the results of long processes of building popular counter-power in the city and this should not be overlooked.

For Cox and Nilsen (2014, 186) "winning consists of society defeating the state, breaking up at least some of the existing power relations, and starting to create and substitute its own, democratically controlled, institutions in place of the old ones". I have made the case in this thesis that Bcomú and movements that took advantage of the municipalist moment have, despite challenges, made advances in this respect and through various supports for participatory democracy, solidarity economy and the commons, together they have widened and deepened the "scope and direction of collective

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skilled activity" (Cox and Nilsen 2014, 186).

The municipalist movement in Barcelona emerged from a confluence of movement actors. While social movements were careful to maintain their autonomy, the municipalist confluence involved activists from the housing movement, the feminist movement, ecological movements, neighbourhood movements, movements for solidarity economy and the commons. The need of those diverse movements to work together came from a collective recognition and a deep frustration that despite the popularity of their campaigns and ability to mobilise in protest, their demands for change and for an end to austerity were ignored by the established political parties.

It is one of the conclusions of this thesis that it was the radical democratic character of the municipalist movement in Barcelona that enabled this confluence to build a common platform and mobilise the critical mass necessary to successfully contest elections. This commitment to radical democracy also distinguishes the municipalist movement from more statist left wing political movements. The electoral success of the municipalist movement was highly contingent and far from guaranteed. What I have documented in this thesis is only a part of what these movements have achieved. With the privilege of hindsight, it is possible to reflect on what worked and also some limitations. The experience offers valuable insights for social movements and for a politics of the commons.

The municipalist platform is the organisational medium through which social movements mobilised. The capacity of social movements to maintain an influence over elected officials once in office and leverage that influence to achieve their goals of institutional change depends on the degree to which movement voices could participate in political processes. Social movements continue to mobilise through strategies of protest and campaigning. However, activists and movements can in parallel coordinate actions and make their voices heard through the assemblies and participatory structures of the municipalist platform. This is a kind of dual power strategy (Thompson 2020). The empowerment of social movements is pursued both independently through movement strategies and through institutional

strategies of the municipalist confluence. The public aspects of social movements keep public pressure on political representatives of all parties, not only elected municipalist politicians. This capacity to act both publicly and through the platform is particularly important when in a minority government as has been the case for Bcomú as it helps inform the broader public debate and in turn the political agenda necessary for building cross-party political support to reach agreements in the council.

Movements maintain their independence and retain their capacity to organise and exercise influence over political processes because they have a strong social basis in what could be called counter-institutions. In the case of Barcelona, counter-institutions such as urban commons were established prior to the creation of the municipalist confluence. These counter-institutions are organised around radically democratic norms which establish a basis for the practices of social movements and constitute spaces of civic counter-power. Terms such as counter-institution and counter-power are suggestive of a great degree of radicalism and I do not want to overstate this. Squats and social centres are indeed more explicitly political examples of counter-institutions. They are important spaces of activist organising, socialisation and pedagogy. In the chapters on urban commons I highlighted continuities between these more radical examples and the movements for community self-management. But where squats and social centres often have a countercultural character, this is not necessarily the case for community self-managed spaces. Self-managed community spaces in the city have their own identities and histories, with some more political than others. The urban commons I visited in Barcelona were generally open and welcoming community spaces with diverse communities of young and old, with programmes of cultural events which can range from children's activities, art, dance and music classes, to meetings of local residents associations. Events on topics of social and political concern also have a place in these programmes which can often host meetings of migrant, LGBT and feminist groups for example but this does not necessarily make these activist spaces. What makes these spaces sites of counter-power is that they

are popular spaces of everyday association and socialisation through which communities are made. Voluntarism and openness to democratic participation are a part of that and enable the cultivation of civic culture and community relations. Those relations of solidarity are what constitutes forms of community power and the capacity to assert and defend community interests when they are challenged. Having the resource of a self-managed space, a venue for democratic deliberation, a capacity to address collective needs, be they practical, political or cultural, is in itself deeply empowering.

In the first part of this thesis, I traced some histories of the movements that preceded the municipalist confluence. These histories illustrate some of those movement strategies in particular networking practices and the creation of counter-institutions. An ethnographic attention to activists' backgrounds shows how they learned from experience to adapt and apply their knowledge and practice in different movement spaces and campaigns. The mobility of activists enriches networks. While squats and social centres were physical spaces for networking, Juris (2008) also shows that networking practices and associated techno-politics were part of the imaginaries of Spanish and Catalan activists in the global justice movement of the 2000s. These practices, face to face and online, enabled the sharing of experience, knowledge and led to the recognition of common challenges, the creation of campaigns and of networked counter-institutions. Cooperative Integral and the XES are two examples of counter-institutions which contest hegemonic approaches to economy. These practices enabled movements to shift from what Nilsen and Cox (2013) call local rationalities to militant particularisms and campaigns. The creation of these spaces throughout the city and the capacity of movements to organise and network among them was essential in fostering radical democratic subjectivities and practices, alternative social imaginaries and a social base, which were preconditions for the municipalist movement.

In the second part of the thesis, I looked at the policies and institutional changes introduced by the municipalist movement. In these kinds of

processes, movement strategies and practices are adapted to institutional contexts and informed institutional strategies. One of the findings of this thesis points to is a continuity between movements strategies and institutional strategies. These strategies are potentially numerous. This thesis found the commons was critical in at least two sets of strategies oriented towards democratising the state and democratising the economy. In the former, participatory democracy was aimed at enhancing the capacity of citizens and movements to have a voice in political processes. In the latter, economic democracy was aimed at consolidating and enhancing the autonomy of movements through the solidarity economy and the commons.

Techno-politics has long been a feature of movement strategies. As techno-political actors adapted to the political opportunities created by the municipalist moment they gave continuity to those practices by adapting the logics of their practice to new institutional settings. Techno-political actors responded to domain specific needs of these subject areas, participatory democracy and solidarity economy with different projects, Decidim and FemProcomuns for example. While these two strategies, participatory and economic, are relatively distinct, there has been a degree of overlap and complementarity. As we have seen, there are also technical continuities between participatory and economic technical practice where cooperatives have adopted Decidim. These two strategic areas democratising the state (participation), and democratising the economy (solidarity economy and the commons) represent some of the more radically democratic elements of the municipalist programme intended to enhance the power and autonomy of citizens and social movements. In what follows I reflect on my research findings, and consider the challenges, complementarities and merits of these approaches.

Democratising the state: Participation

Policies for participatory democracy were a major part of the political programme of Bcomú and critical for the democratisation of the state at the municipal level. With regard to participation Charnock, March, and Ribera-

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Fumaz (2019) suggest that the digital transformation, led by Bcomú, "appears to accept uncritically two fundamental postulates" that democratic participation and its outcomes are intrinsically beneficial.

Decidim has been without doubt a game changer. While the technical wizardry of the platform has been a great enabler the fact that tools are available is not enough. Participation is not spontaneous or a case of if you build it they will come. It was necessary that Decidim be complemented by supportive participatory policies and regulations. Policies and digital technologies might afford certain opportunities for social change but the use of those opportunities really depends on the interests and capacities of citizens and communities. Social inequalities can impact the capacities of citizens to participate. An obvious example is that those with more free time will find it easier to participate. Participatory outcomes could reflect this and risk reinforcing already existing structural privileges of class and gender. Despite the concerns of Charnock, March, and Ribera-Fumaz (2019) it does appear that Catalan policymakers and scholars of participation are attentive to these issues and a guide on gender in participatory processes from an intersectional approach has been published (Parés Martín et al. 2020). In Barcelona extra steps were taken to ensure that participatory processes were representative and inclusive with in person events organised in neighbourhoods to support citizens in learning about the potentials and possibilities of participatory policies and digital tools.

While some activists and social movements might respond to opportunities for democratic participation with enthusiasm it is not universal and some can be sceptical. This is not without reason. Activists and social movements have limited resources and must think strategically about where they put their time and energy. Even when activists do engage, participatory processes can face other challenges. In the case of the water campaign these were twofold. First delays from within the city council and then multiple legal challenges from the water companies. Participatory policies also face threats. While it is unlikely that subsequent local governments would risk their political capital on rolling back such popular policies. Given the

possibility of politicised courts, legal challenges pose a greater threat to participatory regulations with potentially chilling effects on the rights of all citizens.

The political priorities of activists can differ from the broader population, and outcomes of participatory processes will not always align with those of progressive social movements. There are relatively benign outcomes that reflect mundane and everyday interests such as demands for public seating or bicycle lanes, nevertheless as Charnock, March, and Ribera-Fumaz (2019) point out participatory processes could potentially be used to advance "urban-entrepreneurial ends" counter to the kinds of civic citizenship they are intended to foster.

Despite these various challenges the achievements and innovations in citizen participation should not be overlooked. When I set out to write this thesis I did not consider that I would be writing about policies for citizens' participation. My interest in the commons brought the 2016 Procomuns event to my attention and it was through my efforts to understand the confluence of actors at work in this process that I came to recognise the importance of participatory tools and policies in the programme and politics of the municipalist movement. Of particular interest was tracing the complementarities between different movement and institutional strategies. Strategies for the democratisation of the state and for the democratisation of the economy, and how the commons figured in each. The participatory process for the municipal action plan in 2016 was huge and a critical moment for commons activists. Procomuns was a response to this moment of political opportunity and took advantage to co-produce and advance policies for the commons collaborative economy. This in turn led to the creation of La Comunificadora, itself a catalyst supporting the further development of a range of commons projects.

There is no doubt that Decidim as a techno-political project and platform is a subject that warrants further research in its own right. Decidim is a fascinating example of a public-commons partnership. For the many people involved in the project Decidim is not just a commons of code but the

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political and legal structure are an expression of their radical democratic commitments (Calleja López 2017). For example, creating Meta.Decidim as a space for the community of developers to organise and deliberate on the direction of the project. The political support of the municipality for Decidim has given it a basis from which in a somewhat rhizomatic way new participatory and democratic possibilities in different territories and in different contexts have been made possible. While originally developed as a tool for participatory processes for municipalities and is today used by many, it has also been adopted and adapted for different contexts such as in cooperatives and as well as being used for the World Social Forum of Transformative Economies. These are just a few examples of how the development of a commons project in the area of participatory democracy was complementary to developments in the area of economic democracy.

Democratising the economy: Solidarity Economy and Commons

Approaches to the democratisation of the economy took different forms. One of the most substantial changes documented in this thesis was the institutional support for the promotion of cooperatives and the solidarity economy, which represents an alternative to entrepreneurial and start-up based approaches to local economic development. Programmes for the commons collaborative economy such as La Comunificadora were part of that. Remunicipalisation also presented opportunities to democratise utility services. The most prominent demands for this were in the areas of energy and water. In chapter six on participation I documented the complexities of the campaign for the remunicipalisation of water which saw citizen participation as key for democratic oversight. The city council was successful in establishing a municipal energy company, Barcelona Energía, which experimented with participatory processes using Decidim (Barcelona Energía 2021a).

In a moment where there was so much political support for cooperatives it is reasonable to ask why the city council opted for the creation of a municipal energy company rather than work with existing cooperatives. Joan Subirats

is a prominent political scientist, a founding member of Bcomú, and was the City Council's Commissioner for Culture. In 2017, he spoke in an interview with Alain Ambrosi and Nancy Thede (Subirats 2017). Subirats explained that the city council was open to reconsidering its contracts with corporate service providers, for example in the areas of telecommunications. There are prominent cooperative alternatives such as Som Connexió (2022) in telecommunications and Som Energía (2021b) an energy provider. At the time of writing (27/08/2021) Som Connexió had 7,772 members. Som Energía had 40,000 members at the time of the interview. It has since grown and at the time of writing (27/08/2021) it had 73,711 members. Subirats makes the point that while the cooperative sector is strong and growing "they don't yet have the 'muscle', the capacity" to take on large contracts such as those of the city council (Subirats 2017). He argues that this highlights the need for the council to continue investing in the cooperative sector. However, investment in itself is not enough. Informed by mainstream management and business practice, larger cooperatives have had a tendency to follow the entrepreneurial trend and become de-politicised. Subirats notes the importance of politicised movements growing at the grassroots level which are challenging this trend. It is important to keep in mind that the solidarity economy as a movement distinguishes itself from the mainstream cooperative and social economy. Solidarity economy is a small but growing movement within the social economy that is vocal about the need to reconnect with the radical roots of the associative tradition for a re-politicising of the cooperative movement and a critical re-engagement with politics. This is an ongoing political project. In the years since Subirats' interview, in part thanks to the growth of networks such as the XES, grassroots voices have become more prominent within the established cooperative sector both in Barcelona and throughout Catalonia.

In December 2018, I had the opportunity to meet and speak with Alvaro Porro, the city council's commissioner responsible for the social and solidarity economy. I asked about the relationship between social movements and institutions.

I have had the impression from the beginning that at some point you need to drive change through institutions too. I don't believe in that kind of change that's happening completely outside of institutions. I also don't believe in change that is happening only within institutions. I think it is always a dialectic between the inside and the outside of the institutions.

Furthermore, I asked about the challenges and limitations he encountered. Porro acknowledged "a lot of times the limitations are inside, but a lot of times the limitations are outside, the limitations are on both sides." He echoed some of the points made by Subirats, that even when there is a will and an interest from the council in doing things in an alternative way sometimes the capacity isn't there within the movement.

We are doing a lot of things with social movements who are working with cooperatives. We need outside. We need people able to do stuff and the problem is that sometimes you don't find that. We don't have the things in some sectors that are able to do it in an alternative way. A lot of times there is a lack of muscle, a lack of preparation, a lack of scale, a lack of maturity. So a lot of times the limitations for change, it's not just that we are not able to do it, it's like outside there is not enough force for that.

Porro argued that in order to have an impact for social majorities the social and solidarity economy will need to scale up.

I am very much into all the work we can do to help scale up the SSE. It's good to have nice small projects but we need to also have big projects to create muscle in terms of financial capabilities, in terms of investment resources, in terms of consumer power. All that is necessary. Otherwise we will always be something on the corner of the system that is kind of exotic and kind of nice and we can get fulfilled in our moral and artistic expectations but not changing anything for social majorities.

Porro reflected on the changes since 2015 and the greater public recognition of the solidarity economy:

Of course it's not that we have changed the economy of the city to SSE but I think we have made it much more visible, much more into the mainstream… ...It's a big part of the common sense now, you need to do things on the SSE. Even if you are a bit conservative and you are not very

interested, you are going to have to pretend you are interested because it doesn't look good. That is what is called penetrating the common sense and I think we've done it and that's a lot. (For an extended quotation see Appendix 7)

Despite the points that Subirats and Porro both made about the limited capacity of the social and solidarity economy and the need to scale up, the impact of the changes since 2015 have been substantial. Porro describes how common sense attitudes to economy have changed. These changes have been led by a movement that has established itself as both a political and an economic actor. Since 2015, there has been a growing public recognition in Barcelona of the value of the social and solidarity economy. This recognition has been substantial enough that Porro considered even politicians with little interest in the solidarity economy have to at least pretend to take an interest. The changes have been political and economic. As Porro argues, the engine of the solidarity economy that was activated by social movements and strengthened by the support of the council would be difficult to stop even if there was a change in government and policy.

My interview with Porro was in 2018 and at that time it was uncertain whether Bcomú would continue in local government after the 2019 election. In a sense, his political intuition was confirmed during the campaign for the 2019 local elections when candidates from all parties participated for the first time in public debates on policies for the solidarity economy and for the commons collaborative economy. With the return of Bcomú to the city council following the 2019 local elections Porro has continued in his role as commissioner.

I did not expect when I started this thesis to be writing about the solidarity economy. Its significance was something that I came to understand in the research process. Part of the strength of solidarity economy is its expansive approach, which can include a broad range of organisations, projects and practices. For this reason, it intersects with many different movements and the events and activities organised through networks such as the XES act as spaces for inter-movement dialogue to take place, enabling common goals

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to be identified and projects to be developed. As such, XES is a kind of meta counter-institution that enables a shift from local rationalities to militant particularisms and campaigns (Nilsen and Cox 2013).

This research project found that the commons in Barcelona both urban and digital have strong affinities with the solidarity economy and engagement with the politics and practices of solidarity economy movement has proved to be productive for commons and solidarity economy actors alike. What the commons bring to the solidarity economy is this new horizon of possibilities and ways of thinking about how to move beyond market and state. Commons are beyond market and state conceptually (Bollier and Helfrich 2012) in the sense that they challenge us to move beyond the dichotomous, either-or thinking, that market and state are the only mechanisms by which social and ecological needs can be met. In practice, at least in contemporary urban and digital contexts, commons and commoning practices are articulated in complex ways with markets and states. Autonomy from markets and state actors is more a question of degree. The practical challenge then is to organise commons not only to sustain collective social and ecological relations, but also to advance political strategies that enhance that autonomy.

From a social movement perspective affinities, values and shared commitments certainly help, but it is important to keep in mind that the confluence between commons and solidarity economy movements is not a given, collaborations were not spontaneous, they took work. The confluence is a practical effort driven and shaped by the interests and capacities of particular actors and projects. In the case of Barcelona, this has been led by a relatively small but growing network of local actors, commons activists, cooperativists and academics. While there is a growing interest, commons approaches remain relatively niche in the extent that activists engage or identify with the solidarity economy and have some way to go before they could become anything like standard practice.

Cooperatives and many solidarity economy projects continue to use commercial and proprietary platforms. Encouraging and supporting

solidarity economy actors to use free software tools and creative commons licences is a positive step, but focusing on this alone misses out on a lot of the potential and possibilities of a commons approach. It is something like buying organic vegetables and thinking consumer choice is enough to change the agri-food industry with no consideration to the need to change existing structures and develop new models.

On the one hand, there is a need for commons projects that meet the concrete needs of solidarity economy actors. Member participation and engagement can be challenging for cooperatives but it is something that technology can support. Again, the adoption of Decidim by cooperatives such as the energy provider Som Energía as a way for promoting greater member participation provides a positive example (Som Energía 2021a). Identifying these kinds of needs will depend on continued exchange of ideas and learning between commons and solidarity economy actors. These kinds of exchanges are fostered organically and strategically, supported through movement-led and institutional actions. Events were important in this regard. Procomuns of course, but there were others such as TecnoFesc (FESC 2021b), or riders "My boss is not an algorithm" to name just a few (Mensakas 2021c). La Comunificadora is an example of a strategic institutional support that provided educational and organisational support for the creation of new commons and solidarity economy projects. The programme was also strengthened as a result of the collaboration between commons and solidarity economy actors, FemProcomuns and LabCoop. In its programme, La Comunificadora showed participants how commons approaches present new possibilities for how organisations can be structured to involve a range of different actors working collaboratively in ways that connect local and globally networked projects.

Conclusion

The word democracy is too often assumed to refer to liberal democracy. When liberal democratic regimes fail their citizens the very meaning of democracy can come into question. Rather than a rejection of democracy, in

the fallout of the economic crisis citizens in Spain demanded *Real Democracy Now*. As Flesher Fominaya (2020) documents in her ethnography of 15M, movements were successful in reframing the crisis, not simply as an economic crisis but as a crisis of representative democracy, the solution to which was not less but more democracy. The appetite for real democracy was accompanied by a great popular interest in re-imagining democracy and an openness to democratic experimentation.

The democratic experiments in the occupation of the squares during 15M had their roots in established social movement practices based on assembly democracy (Flesher Fominaya 2020). Hackers and free culture activists also found in this moment of mobilisation opportunities to explore the democratic possibilities afforded by new technologies (Postill 2018; Flesher Fominaya 2020).

The municipalist movement and Bcomú represent one avenue through which the popular interest in democratic experimentation sparked by 15M was later channelled. Frustration with the limits of assembly democracy to address issues at scale was one of the reasons techno-political activists turned to formal politics (Postill 2018, 17). Techno-political practices and imaginaries are deeply informed by the political cultures in which they are situated (Flesher Fominaya 2020). In the case of Barcelona the structure of political opportunities was shaped by alliances of diverse actors and movements of which techno-political actors were only a part. The possibilities of techno-political projects and their configurations responded to those contexts.

This thesis set out to understand how the subject of the commons figured within the imaginary of movements in Barcelona and how it was realised in practice. I considered the conditions of possibility that lent themselves to a situation in which the commons became a subject of political discourse and policy and its place in a process of institutional change.

Aspirations for egalitarian and democratic forms of life and social organisation beyond market and state are not new. Collective practices of

direct democracy, of self-organisation and cooperation have been part of the repertoire of social movements for well over a century and a means through which aspirations for radical social transformation have consistently been expressed. In the case of Barcelona the language of the commons did not signify a particularly new set of movement practices. Nor did movements share some clearly defined concept of the commons around which they agreed to mobilise. The language of the commons was salient among social movements because it functioned as a bridging concept. Despite their differences, the commons presented a language through which, the feminist movement, the hacker and free culture movement, and the movement for autonomous and self-managed spaces, could make sense of each others practices and recognise in each other shared commitments to radical and democratic social change. In each of these movements, activists resist commodification and instrumentalisation and defend their autonomy through the construction of counter-institutions. Dardot and Laval (2019) termed this instituent praxis.

One of the arguments of this thesis is that the contemporary commons should be understood, not simply as static things, a resource, a type of governance or property regime but as dynamic social relations (Harvey 2012) always informed by their social, cultural and historical situatedness. A contribution I propose is that commoning be theorised in an expansive way as an open-ended practice that is not bound to particular institutions but involves cultural logics, or schemas (Sewell 1992) that are mobile and adaptable to different contexts. An open-ended conception of commoning is necessary for the empirical study of actually existing commons as well as analysis of how, informed by experiential and situated practice, the commons or the common figure both as a practical object, and present a horizon of possibilities of yet to be realised aspirations and imaginaries.

Practices of commoning change and evolve but there are also continuities. We can trace these continuities and how they figure within alternative urban imaginaries and political projects by considering the various ways in which commoning as a type of participatory practice is formatted (Kelty 2020). An

important development in the practical realisation of supports for the commons and commoning practices in Barcelona was their conceptualisation as forms of participatory democracy most evidently in the inclusion of urban commons within the scope of the council's department for citizen participation. For Cardullo and Kitchin (2017) creating cities that reflect citizens' aspirations requires genuine forms of participation that enhance citizen power. In the case of policies for the urban commons participation was not about fostering a relationship that involved citizens in the machinery of the state but rather supporting citizens to organise autonomously and foster democratic relations among each other. Policies in Barcelona went beyond a narrow conception of participatory democracy, defined as a relationship between citizen and state, and instead were aimed at fostering democratic subjectivities in general. Citizen power was enhanced on the one hand by democratising the state but also by democratising the economy and recognising counter-institutions, solidarity economies, urban and digital commons as non-state participatory institutions that give form to democratic aspirations and strengthen civic life.

In many places movement-led strategies may not be viable as they may lack critical political capacity and face challenges in sustaining coalitions. Engaging in institutional strategies and electoral politics may not be desirable or even possible. In the absence of supports that institutional strategies afford, activists pursue other strategies. The urban commons have been central to such strategies and for good reason. Urban commons can be thought of as anchor institutions. Not only do they anchor social movements spatially and materially within the urban fabric of the city, but they also anchor them culturally and historically. The physical presence of democratic counter-institutions gives life to other urban histories linking social struggles of past and present. Social imaginaries can constrain or enable activist imagination. Urban commons are a testament to the possibilities of the social, and the radical democratic aspirations and imaginaries just below the surface of everyday urban life.

Whether engaged in movement strategies or institutional strategies the experience of Barcelona suggests, and it is the conclusion of this thesis that social movements remain critical to building popular counter-power. Movement strategies of networking and the creation of counter-institutions form the territorial basis for coalitions with the capacity to resist neoliberal and technocratic urbanisms, to assert the collective right to the city and to articulate alternative urban imaginaries from below.

Future research

One of the challenges of this thesis was its chosen frame, the city as a commons. This required research at a certain scale. The multi-sited ethnographic approach I adopted enabled me to trace relations between persons and projects and their development through time. This was fruitful in that I was able to get a sense of how the commons fit as part of a broader movement milieu. I purposely focused on policies and projects close to social movements such as urban commons and solidarity economy. There were other areas of interest such as the city's adoption of policies on technological sovereignty which I simply did not have the time to engage with.

The thesis documents a diverse range of commons practices from participatory democracy, urban commons and digital commons, as well as their intersections and complementarities with the solidarity economy and engagements with municipal politics and public institutions. It is really the intersections between these diverse actors, where they meet that is most promising for future research. Projects like Decidim are modelling the potential for inter-municipal public-commons partnerships at regional and transnational levels. At the municipal level, the recognition of urban commons as participatory institutions with public policies that support community self-management are also promising. Urban commons could also be considered as anchor institutions for solidarity economies.

Over the past two years there have also been developments in the Irish context. In 2020, a group of cooperativists came together and formed

SolidNetwork (2021), an all island network for the cooperative and solidarity economy. At the time of writing the network has 40 members sharing knowledge, experience and expertise and with a strong commitment to democratic practice and organisation in areas ranging from tech, to social care, housing and agriculture. There is also a growing interest in open and platform cooperativism with an Irish node of the Open Food Network established as a platform cooperative as well as a group of cycle couriers exploring the possibilities of a worker ownership. These projects, much like those I encountered during my time in Barcelona, are linked in transnational collaborative networks with multiple levels of governance and forms of participation through which knowledge and practice are shared and produced. In terms of future research I am keen to engage with projects in the Irish context. In particular I would like to explore further the possibilities of activist scholarship and practice to facilitate inter-movement dialogue and to organise participatory and collaborative encounters as sites for the co-production of movement knowledge, practice, and ethnographic inquiry.

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Appendix 1

Extract from Lima Declaration, July 4th, 1997 (Lima Declaration 1997).

We, citizens belonging to: grassroots, farmers, natives, women, youth organizations; employers' organizations; working communities; cooperatives, micro-enterprises associations; associations of the Church; Non Governmental Organizations; groups of environmentalists, associations of technologists; development networks; groups on social economy and a coalitions of 32 countries gathered from 1st to 4th of July 1997 in Lima, Peru are declaring:

1. We are taking into account that we are under the hegemony of a development model which shows, both in the North and the South, its limits while destroying the planet and generating poverty, exclusion, and ignores the set of human activities which are of paramount importance for the communities, representing thus a threat for the future of mankind;

And in an attempt to react to this situation, that we are committed to a process of building a solidarity-based development that questions the concept which reduces and determines the satisfaction of human needs to cut-throat competition on the market and the so-called "natural laws". The solidarity economy incorporates cooperation, collective sharing and action, while putting the human being at the centre of the economic and social development.

Solidarity economy implies at the same time an economic, political and social project which leads to a new way of doing politics while establishing various human links on the basis of consensus and citizenship actions.

Appendix 2

Extract from RIPESS Global Vision (RIPESS 2015).

5) Further Exploration of Key Concepts

RIPESS is inspired by and recognizes the importance of the concepts and approaches discussed below, while at the same time acknowledging that our understanding of each has to be deepened and discussed. This is work in progress.

Social Economy vs Solidarity Economy

The ***social economy*** ... is commonly understood as a "third sector" of the economy, complementing the "first sector" (private/profit-oriented) and the "second sector" (public/planned). The third sector includes cooperatives, mutuals, associations, and foundations (CMAFs). These entities are collectively organized and oriented around social aims that are prioritized above profits, or return to shareholders. The primary concern of CMAFs, as societies of people, is not to maximize profits, but to achieve social goals (which does not exclude making a profit, which is necessary for reinvestment). Some consider the social economy to be the third leg of capitalism, along with the public and the private sector. Thus, advocates of the social economy push for it to be accorded the same legitimacy as the public and private sectors, with a corresponding level of support in public resources and policy. Others, on the more radical end of the spectrum, view the social economy as a stepping stone towards a more fundamental transformation of the economic system.

The ***solidarity economy*** … seeks to change the whole social and economic system and puts forth a different paradigm of development that upholds solidarity economy principles. It pursues the transformation of the neoliberal capitalist economic system from one that gives primacy to maximizing private profit and blind growth, to one that puts people and planet at its core. As an alternative economic system, the solidarity economy thus includes all three sectors – private, public and the third sector.

The solidarity economy seeks to re-orient and harness the state, policies, trade, production, distribution, consumption, investment, money and finance, and ownership structures towards serving the welfare of people and the environment. What distinguishes the solidarity economy movement from many other social change and revolutionary movements of the past, is that it is pluralist in its approach - eschewing rigid blueprints and the belief in a single, correct path. The solidarity economy also values and builds on concrete practices, many of which are quite old. The solidarity economy, rather than seeking to create utopia out of thin air and theory, recognizes that there currently exists a concrete utopia, a utopia in action. It is rooted in the practices of participatory democracy and promotes a new vision of the economy, an economy that puts people at the centre of the system and values the links rather than the goods.

Thus, the solidarity economy explicitly has a systemic, transformative, post-capitalist agenda. The social economy, on the other hand, refers to a sector of the economy that may or may not be part of a transformative, postcapitalist agenda, depending on whom you're talking to.

RIPESS uses the term social solidarity economy to embrace both the solidarity economy and the more radical end of the social economy. Defining the social solidarity economy framework is a long and ongoing process. For example, Brazil's solidarity economy definition was built by SSE advocates and practitioners over many years through forums, meetings, and consultations.

Appendix 3

Extract from Municipal Charter of Barcelona 1998 (Ajuntament de Barcelona 1998).

Article 34: Non-profit citizen entities, organisations and associations may exercise municipal powers or participate, on behalf of the City Council, in the management of services or equipment owned by other public administrations. Civic management of municipal powers can be used for activities and services susceptible to indirect management, is always voluntary and non-profit and is awarded through a public tender when there are several entities or organisations with identical or similar characteristics.

Appendix 4

Article 12 of the Regulation on Citizen Participation (Ajuntament de Barcelona 2002).

The civic management of municipal facilities and services

1. Entities, foundations, organisations and non-profit citizen associations may exercise municipal powers, or participate on behalf of the City Council, in the management of services or equipment owned by other public administrations.

2. Voluntary civic management of municipal powers may be used for activities and services susceptible to indirect management, is always non-profit and is awarded through a public tender when there are several entities or organisations with identical or similar characteristics.

3. Civic management entails the obligation to allocate all the profits that may be produced to the programme or facility managed.

4. Agreement must be facilitated and promoted with the associative fabric for the management of sectorial programmes or cultural, sports and social facilities, including the possibility of co-management through the establishment of agreements, and care must be taken to guarantee universal access and the quality of services. When setting the terms of the agreement, it will be necessary to determine the conditions of the management, to specify in the application of point number 2 of this article the correct destination of the economic benefits that can be generated and to regulate the composition and the functions of the citizen monitoring commission of which the users must be part. It will also be necessary to determine at this time how to choose the members of this commission. In the terms of the Eighth Additional Provision of the Revised Text of the Public Administration Contracts Act, associations declared to be of public interest have preference in the award of contracts by the City Council, provided that their proposals are advantageous from the point of view of the objective criteria to be applied to determine the successful bidder.

Appendix 5

Summary: Procomuns statement and policies for Commons Collaborative Economies at European level (Procomuns 2016b).

1. **Improving regulations for a commons collaborative economy:** Explore new forms of legislation on legal / economic subjects, beyond multinational profit models, that promote participatory governance, a social mission and / or environmental sustainability.

2. **Promote the incubation of new projects and initiatives in the collaborative commons economy:** Create an incubator with physical and technological infrastructure designed for commons, and facilitate access to resources for collective commons entrepreneurship, which apart from the positive social impact would promote viable projects meeting the criteria of openness, reusability, transparency, etc.

3. **Promote existing formulas or enhance new ones for financing commons initiatives:** Create a call to fund innovative pilot projects co-financed by a match-funding model, which in turn creates a "pool" for projects with commons criteria, ultimately combining individual crowdfunding with seed funding, which multiplies each citizen's input.

4. **Adopting or reassigning the use of spaces and other public infrastructures for this sector:** Enable joint management of workspaces and empty premises for the work and development of collaborative commons production projects, facilitating mobility and the sharing and promotion of sector professionals and stakeholders.

5. **Change how public administrations operate internally on some fronts linked to commons:** Conduct a pilot scheme in which public bodies and governments use community actors or services as commons companies, such as guifi.net infrastructures for digital communication.

6. **Combat malpractice and corruption in government policy in the field of technology and knowledge:** Mandatory registration of meetings and contacts with lobbyists and lobbyists representing the economic interests of large telecommunications and technology services corporations.

7. **Assist in promoting cities and neighbourhoods in order to bring their economies and other related sectors closer:** To promote a network of open manufacturing spaces, such as FabLabs, makerspaces, libraries, community centres and other municipal bodies or educational programmes with municipal participation, focusing on economic recovery, reuse and stimulus.

8. **Expand city brands in terms of the external visibility of local initiatives:** Promote organic, social, repairable with no planned obsolescence, transparent, open and free source product seals.

9. **Making sure investments in major technological events contribute to promoting local commons:** Promoting conferences and major events in cities to give visibility and support to the collaborative commons economy, ensuring the promotion of open technology and local commons experiences.

10. **Encourage and support the research and understanding of this phenomenon in order to move forward:** Provide open access to public data on economic and social aspects, entrepreneurship, support actions, results, etc. (always respecting privacy regulations).

Appendix 6

Abstract for Common Horizons, Chapter 1: Contextualizing and reclaiming the commons – Urban Commons, Health as a Commons, Debt (Common Horizons 2021).

The experience of the commons have demonstrated that communities are able to manage resources in an open and collective way, protecting resources and producing collective forms of knowledge that answer to basic social needs. This is how commons communities have forged tools collectively to create social and democratic transformations. They established ways to challenge public authorities and austerity policies, which through mechanisms of debt and budgetary restrictions have depleted resources for social provision and failed to protect human rights.

We have observed multiple examples of this emerging movement: occupied factories, common cultural spaces, popular clinics and places for healthcare, markets for fair trade and small organised distribution networks… even during the outbreak of Covid-19, commoners have produced spaces of collective care, where communities conceive health and care in an expanded way: not only by providing access to medical services and equipment, but also by providing solidarity in the form of psychological support, defence against domestic violence, support in struggles for housing and income and sustaining environments for cultural production.

The Covid19 crisis has also generated restrictions on the use of public space with limitations on fundamental rights often imposed without due democratic process. The measures aimed to bring about a recovery from the crisis have increased the need for public spaces and resources to be used for social well-being. These are the very spaces and resources that the movements for urban commons and public health have been claiming for a long time. These movements oppose privatisation and financial speculation that limit democratic decision-making and prevent their use for the common good. In this context, the chapter will be a way, together with a network of artists, cultural workers, social movements, NGOs, academics and other actors – to build a collective reasoning about urban commons, health as a commons and debt both in its public and private dimensions.

Appendix 7

Extended quotation from interview with Alvaro Porro.

I think we have increased visibility for mainstream people in a significant way, that is there and it's not going to change. People now have heard and seen more about it (Solidarity Economy), of course some people have a superficial idea but it's much more than it used to be. The second thing is that visibility and social knowledge is there and that is a very big change. I don't know if you say that in English main-streaming? In spaces for debate with other economic actors, now people know the SSE should be there. The way it's thought, the economic policy, it's difficult to say that you don't have a working line on SSE. Of course it's not that we have changed the economy of the city to SSE but I think we have made it much more visible, much more into the mainstream, much more. I think we have, how you say, we have activated an engine. Of course it was already active and we have made it much stronger, and it is difficult to stop. Even if the public policies stop, there would already be some kind of inertia in terms of economic actors, not just as a political movement. That is, I don't think it's going to be easy for a new government to come and completely eradicate that. That's gonna be there. It's a big part of the common sense now, you need to do things on the SSE. Even if you are a bit conservative and you are not very interested you are going to have to pretend you are interested because it doesn't look good. That is what is called penetrating the common sense and I think we've done it and that's a lot.