

# Materiality of Common Good Objects

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This chapter takes a commons sphere to mean the network of spaces, communities of practice, common interests, and common good objects produced through action for a collective purpose. Unlike public goods that adhere to an abstract and universal logic, common goods involve a more concrete logic situated within a particular defined collective community and location. The theoretical framework of common good used here is not communal common good where citizens are directed to put aside personal interest in favour of wider civic interest, which poses the question of who decides. The distributive common good starts with the idea that citizens belong to various interest groups and needs and where the outcome of benefit is more particular and is achieved through collective engagement and action.<sup>1</sup> In this form, common goods also seek to evade both the hegemony of the public state and private markets. This distinction has implications for the macro system in which such goods are given their value, meaning, and form of production. Miller problematizes capitalism as severing our material culture from ourselves and replacing this with an alternative material culture imposed by the hegemony of capital.<sup>2</sup> By positioning the self and its objects in the background whilst foregrounding the collaborative relations that shape them as concrete, we can enable new and plural forms of cultural and socio-political knowledge and life to emerge. It should be noted that the intention here is not to disband the private or the public; rather, the aim is to foster a new relational dimension between the three spheres where the individual and the collective positions are negotiated to inform and influence the further articulation of a commons sphere and its material system. Cultural production in the commons through art and design has the potential to act as a driver in addressing a range of pressing societal concerns including: civic apathy; active citizenship rather than passive consumerism; extreme individualism; extractive production of raw materials, and the appropriation of cultural artefacts.<sup>3</sup> My doctoral thesis found that there are close relationships between cultural resources in the commons and the concept of common good as framed in politics, economics, and

1 Waheed Hussain, 'The Common Good', in *Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, 1st ed., Stanford University, 2018.

2 Daniel Miller (ed.), *Materiality*, Duke University Press, 2005, 3.

3 Jean Baudrillard, *The System of Objects*, trans. by James Benedict, VERSO Books, 1968.

philosophy. Within these relationships, the process of producing cultural common goods is of particular importance, as it is through this process that communities build trust and gain agency within a commons network, which in turn requires the further establishment of the ‘commons sphere’. My doctoral research resulted in several methods of ‘cultural commoning’ as collective actions/doings that produced the tangible common good resources and the intangible common good of new localized political communities. It also found that the majority of material objects (art or design) produced today circulates either in the system of market or, the system of the state and there is no system for ground up community which I frame here as the sphere of commons.

Materiality and culture strongly influence each other in the production of meaning. The current literature on cultural commons focuses on heritage,<sup>4</sup> knowledge, and forms of expression embedded in Indigenous ethnic social groups.<sup>5</sup> At present there is limited knowledge about how a system of objects can be produced and circulated within a commons sphere without being an extension of public (state) and private (market) systems. My research used the theoretical framing by Baudrillard in his seminal book *System of Objects*, where he critiques the capitalist system within which objects gain value and flatten as signs, to understand how common good objects can have agency rather than becoming consumable signs.<sup>6</sup> In his book *Omnia Sunt Communia*, De Angelis introduces the commons environment for the circulation of common good and production of agency for its resources and users.<sup>7</sup> This environment has boundaries of access that sets up its primary institutional design to be permeable without discrimination. As the third space between the state and the market, the commons boundary of access is its most significant design project. It sits between the market (which prioritizes enclosures and where access is embedded in finance) and the state (whose conceptual logic is to have no enclosures at all). The commons approach to boundaries is agile, constantly in flux, responsive yet based on concrete social

4. Enrico Bertacchini, Giangiacomo Bravo, Massimo Marrelli, and Walter Santagata, ‘Cultural Commons: A New Perspective on the Production and Evolution of Cultures’, in *Cultural Commons*, Edward Elgar Publishing, 2012.

5. Charlotte Hess and Elinor Ostrom, *Understanding Knowledge as a Commons: From Theory to Practice*, MIT Press, 2007.

6. Jean Baudrillard, *The System of Objects*, trans. by James Benedict, VERSO Books, 1968.

7. Massimo De Angelis, *Omnia sunt communia: On the Commons and the Transformation to Postcapitalism*, 1st ed., Zed books Ltd, 2017.

relations. Managed by a finite community, commons' boundaries have governance that are carefully conceived to be permeable and enable relationships of trust. Thus the institutional depth of the commons resides in its social and physical boundaries,<sup>8</sup> termed by De Angelis as boundary commoning.<sup>9</sup>

There is an abundance of literature on the materiality of things in capitalism<sup>10</sup> as private goods and of their impact on public good,<sup>11</sup> but the sphere of the commons and their production outside their connection to the public or the private remains in need of further investigation and knowledge-production. This chapter uses one specific project from a commons organization I co-founded entitled 'Public Works' in a neighbourhood in East London (Bow). I initiated the project in 2014 after being asked to get involved by local residents. The methodology used for research in this chapter frames practice as doing and draws upon my case study work and projects that I have conducted. The first methodology described below articulates a place-based model of researcher in residence (Fig.1) whilst the second methodology of practice as doing articulates the production of cultural commons (Fig.2) to conceptualize a system of common good objects.

## Method – Public Living Room

The primary method to investigate the materiality of commons is grounded in artistic practice of being embedded in communities or situations in the form of a residency as an 'incidental person'.<sup>12</sup> The geographical location was in a neighbourhood in Bow, East London, where a residency space was created by myself and my architecture students. An unused gap site on the Roman Road high street in Bow was identified and the land negotiated with the landlord (Clarion Housing Association) to be used for two to three years for the purpose of research and teaching. The informal handshake agreement with the community officer meant bureaucracy did not slow down this process. The temporary architecture of the residency space

8. Gabriel Popescu, *Bordering and Ordering the Twenty-First Century*, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2011.

9. Massimo De Angelis, *Omnia sunt communia*.

10. Daniel Miller (ed.), *Materiality*, Duke University Press, 2005.

11. Raymond Geuss, *Public Goods, Private Goods*, Princeton monograph in philosophy, 2003.

12. Rycroft, Simon, 'The Artist Placement Group: an Archaeology of Impact', *Cultural Geographies*, 26: 3, 2019, 289–304.

was constructed with the help of residents and architecture students. It was later named by the residents ‘The Common Room’ and was likened to a public living room (Fig.1). It was initially created to test an open access temporary classroom that could support communities on the Roman Road high street in Bow in developing it as a common space, but by the end of the research the space became an integral part of the research method as the node where I collaborated and connected with residents and community groups.

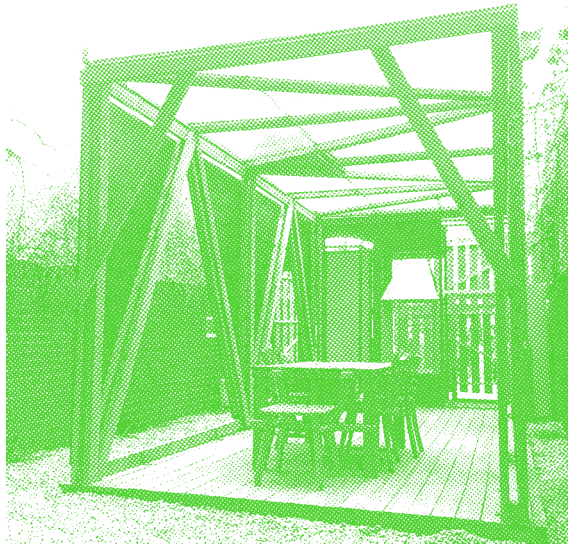


Fig.1: Method of Situating: The Common Room as Public Living Room, Bow, East London.

Lack of funds for service infrastructure such as a toilet and electricity reduced the possibility of the space being used for long hours. Although some people dropped by during teaching hours and some even joined in, this was a rarity. To fully engage with local people, funds had to be raised for specific activities that were needed/desired and some activities were offered by resident volunteers to keep the space active. At the start, my presence as resident in the Common Room involved conversations and dialogues that led to the instigation and local support for setting up a neighbourhood plan for the area<sup>13</sup> and the development of community

13. Neighbourhood planning is a legal system of bottom-up urban planning through which communities seek to shape new and existing neighbourhoods and create the neighbourhood plan that developers and local authorities need to comply with—part of the Localism Act 2008.

gardens and the community organization Edible Bow. The community organization that brought me into the project later became the main host, which ended my role as community facilitator. The activities that arose as a result of being situated in a neighbourhood and engaging with various communities and groups led to further the method and to the need for conceptualizing art and design artefacts as common goods within a commons sphere.

## Method – Commoning Practice

Whilst ‘The Common Room’ as a Public Living Room created the embedded situated method to start the research, the method described here as a commoning practice refers to the process of producing common goods. As such, it is important to expand on the definition of a common good mentioned in the introduction based on a distributive model. The common good which is aggregately conceived creates a commons environment in which all of the members of a political community are fully flourishing; it is built on the idea of wellbeing and agency,<sup>14</sup> hence on practices that produce common good through collective participation and action. Whilst Hussain describes this framing as distributive, Murphy calls it aggregative. In this form it is harder to have a singular voice that defines common good from the top or common interests determined by the most empowered. Figures 2 and 3 illustrate the method of cultural commoning described below.

The method (Fig. 2) starts with the identification of the practitioners’ intention.

- a) Intention drives the quality and logic of the final output. For example, if the intention is to create a product that is successful in the market and its indicator of success is linked to how much money it generates, then every step in the practice reflects that intent. This positions the product as primarily a private good, although it can have public and common good properties that remain secondary. Production of goods will ultimately move between the private, public, and common but the argument in this research is that understanding the primary sphere and logic for the intent is

14. Mark C. Murphy, ‘The Common Good’, *The Review of Metaphysics*, Philosophy Education Society Inc., 59: 1, September, 2005, 133–164.

important to ensure one hegemonic sphere does not co-opt the other. In producing such common goods, action has been discussed as being a key method; this includes design interventions be they events, installations, or temporary architecture.

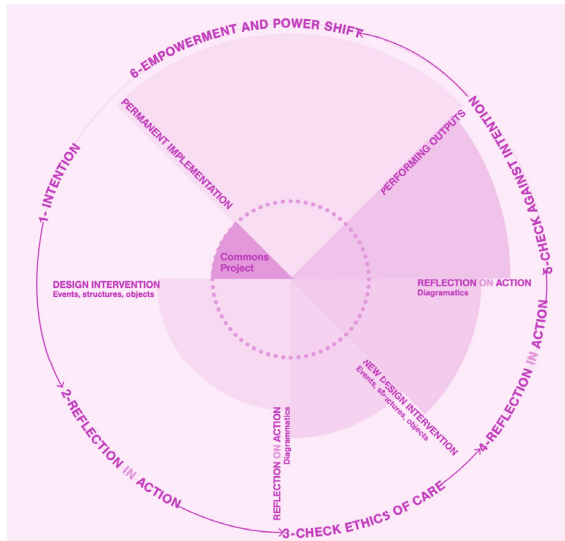


Fig.2: Method of Commoning practice: Intervention and Action.

b) Design intervention is a form of inquiry discussed by Boffi and Halse as an appropriate method ‘to investigate phenomena that are not very coherent, barely possible and almost unthinkable as they are still in the process of being conceptually and physically articulated’.<sup>15</sup> The term intervention means coming in between and interfering in an occasion to create a preferred state, enabling new forms of expression, experience, and dialogue giving rise to new problems and situations.<sup>16</sup> Interventions produce knowledge through ‘intuitive performance in the actions of everyday’.<sup>17</sup> In action, our knowing comes from the way we act and what the action produces. In other words, and as I employed throughout my research, non-rational knowing implies that we are unaware of how we know and that we act through intuitive reflective actions.<sup>18</sup>

15. Laura Boffi and Joachim Hasle, *Design Intervention as a Form of Inquiry, Design Anthropological Futures*, 1st edition, Bloomsbury Press, 2016, 89.

16. *Ibid.*, 90–105.

17. Donald Schön, *The Reflective Practitioner*, 3rd ed., Routledge, 1983, 49.

18. *Ibid.*, 54.



c) Reflection-IN-Action, theorized by Schön, offers a critical dimension whilst intervening in social contexts that are uncertain. Events that occur in action can never be fully controlled and thus as a researcher the experience and ability to respond with agility to situations becomes a skill the method enables (Fig. 3). This required skill is described by Schön as agility in uncertainty, a dialectical engagement between ideas and the material world that locates design in a changing social environment.<sup>19</sup> Repeated design interventions lead to the evolution of experiences over time, to knowledge of both successes and failures being gained, and towards new knowledge of how to respond in unpredictable situations. This tacit knowledge gained through repeated experience is why the same intention can work in one project and may fail completely in another.

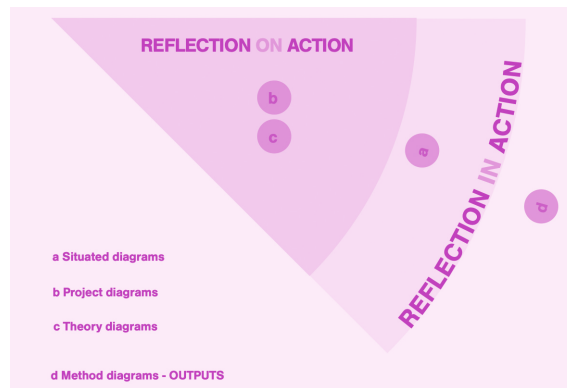


Fig.3: Method of Commoning practice: Diagrammatic Reflection on and in Action.

d) Reflection-ON-Action is based on the organization of knowledge post the interventions for reflection and analysis. This allows us to learn how to apply that knowledge further and develop the practice, deconstruct established knowledges, and reconstruct it for contemporary needs. Four different types of diagrams were used to both document and analyze the information whilst reflecting ON and IN action. Diagrams as methodology for analysis of these practices are relational and are used to visualize abstract systems, which show constantly changing relationships before they are

<sup>19</sup>. Christopher Crouch and Jane Pearce, *Doing Research in Design*, Bloomsbury Visual Arts publishing, 2019, 38.



Method diagrams were designed with a graphic designer to communicate the methodological results with audiences outside the research project. Theoretical diagrams were diagrams of scholarly material across different disciplines on the same theme and concept. Theory diagrams were created pre and post intervention and used to critique the actions on site and operated as reflective tools. This methodology aligned with the concept of design as a circular process.<sup>21</sup> Embedded in every intervention was the consideration of ethics, which used theories of relational ethics of care. In their book *Relational Ethics: The full Meaning of Respect*, Bergum and Dossetor describe ethical action as experientially and culturally embedded within forms of situated practice.<sup>22</sup> Relational ethics questions the centrality of justice with its focus on individual rights and focuses on connections between caring selves. The ethics of care has the ability to build a culture of care in how individuals treat each other in an environment. After the research was conducted, a manifesto was created to be placed in future Public Living Rooms: this manifesto sets the terms of engagement yet allows residents to add and contribute to it as the project progresses. In the project ‘The Common Room’, plural common good artefacts were produced after over twenty interventions. The methods described in sections 2 and 3 on the production of cultural and material commons required human resource in terms of time and commitment. Lack of consideration of labour practices in the commons, and falling into a naive assumption of its sustainability through free and volunteering labour, leads to the premise of a commons sphere becoming ineffective.

### Labour in Commoning

The discussions of labour in literature on the commons is thin; where it is mentioned, it advocates the production of commons through non-monetary labour. This is one of the most fundamentally flawed conceptions of the commons, as it marginalizes non-monetary labour in the global capitalist contexts and supports precarious

21. Kaustuv De Biswas, Jeremy Ham, Weixin Huang, Thomas Fischer, *Beyond Codes and Pixels, The Proceedings of the 17th International Conference on Computer Aided Architectural Design Research in Asia*, 2012, 686.

22. Vangie Bergum and John B. Dossetor, *Relational Ethics: the Full Meaning of Respect*, University Publishing Group, 2005, 34.

labour conditions. In English the word ‘labour’ is about a type of doing that is subject to external compulsion or determination.<sup>23</sup> Holloway uses the word ‘doing’ rather than labour as time spent in actions that are self-determining. The agency attached to self-determined doing is the type of work Holloway believes an empowered society requires. He sees a problem with the focus on labour and price, in that it flattens the relations of exchange to a singular quantitative value. This in turn has an effect on the quality of what we do and consequently on the agency and culture of the social context. Holloway’s attempt to use ‘doing’ as a creative act of social organizing is useful in framing labour within the commons but not so useful in that he also promotes the construction of the commons using free non waged time. The institutional conformity of management constantly tries to pacify local tensions and redirect the idea of labour towards its abstract form which is the opposite of self-determined labour.<sup>24</sup>

We are socialized by our families, schools, and universities to consider labour as an abstract variable in our drive for capital accumulation, as the only avenue for success. This universal belief is how abstract labour dominates unchallenged<sup>25</sup> and breeds inequality through the employer/employee paradigm. This socialization affects our fundamental ability to imagine and innovate alternative forms of labour. If we are not to labour under the command of capital then we should do what we see as necessary to provide the relationships of care that capitalism deems unnecessary.<sup>26</sup> This empowers and emancipates us from the abstract concept of labour as primarily a means to sustain power and capital and enables us to have choices to be ‘other’. Doing creates practices that don’t fit, its practitioners are what Holloway calls ‘misfits’ that are marginalized and are often in a position where they are expected to apologize for not fitting in which in turn creates hopelessness. To make changes it is necessary to feel valued and requires confidence and mental strength. Holloway’s dominant positioning of labour as always in the service of capital (heavily influenced by Marx) is, however, limiting within the creative field of cultural commons. With reflectivity, reflexivity, and application of the ethics of care, labour can transform

23. John Holloway, *Change the World Without Taking Power*, Pluto Press, 2010, 84.

24. *Ibid.*, 178.

25. *Ibid.*

26. *Ibid.*, 84–85.

work as an activity for the construction of common good and the commons but this requires a radical re-organization of how we labour, produce, and get rewarded for work. If one labours to produce common good rather than commodities then its use and exchange value are no longer enslaved to the paradigm of capital production; as a result, the quality of labour relationships change. This was demonstrated in a small scale in this research through commoning methods as well as by critically assessing the images and objects these produce towards social production of new spaces.

The commons occupy Holloway's cracks, where not only the definition of labour shifts from its Marxian context but also where the relations of power and forms of cultural resources (common good) are transformed. Here models of cultural practice can become a point of departure to analyze other domains where labour alienates its subjects and becomes a power independent of the labourer. Waged labour is framed within Marxist theory of abstract and concrete labour, where the abstraction is the exchange value created for the market and the concrete is its use value based on particular human need. Marx argues these cannot be separated whereas Holloway argues that there can be a complete subordination of the concrete to the abstract. This helps us to reframe self-determined labour within the commons as the production of common good within a non-commodity paradigm: 'Abstract labour involves a drive towards determination of our activity by money, whereas useful labour implies a drive towards social self-determination'.<sup>27</sup>

My concern however with the functionality of the use value of labour is that many commodities can be framed as useful. Through being localized, the commons produce common good in situated places, based on concrete social relations, conducted with care where functional need offers both political agency and emotions present in our everyday experiences. This emancipatory, relational, and caring form of labour needs to be financially rewarded and valued in societies where finance offers security. Holloway positions our refusal to subordinate our activity to an abstract concept of labour through shifting our focus away from continuous accumulation and the demand for money. This places money not as a common good but as a useful instrument in the production of common

27. John Holloway, *Crack Capitalism*, Pluto Press, 2010, 173.

good such as fees for one's labour in the production of the social. Once concrete labour is emancipated from being enslaved to the service of consumable commodities, it can be repurposed to focus on environmental and social impact. The concern within the commons with market co-option can be avoided through the practice of critical reflection and rigorous design of methods of commoning.

Determining the value of labour through its ability to generate and accumulate money has created the condition of time scarcity and time enclosure, placing obstacles in the way of concrete labour to be mobilized beyond capital. Currently self-initiated projects in the commons are not sustainable if not supported by other forms of work in the public or private sphere. With a plural, interdisciplinary approach, commons organizations can co-operate within a supportive network of practices that share projects, which enables them to take on commissions appropriate to their mission. This shift in self-determination allows organizations within the communities of practice to set up their own emancipatory processes, forms of governance, project outputs, and impacts whilst at the same time being in control of their own labour conditions. In doing so, they can shift the terms of labour from abstract to concrete. This type of labour organization requires reflectivity and critical thinking to become part of Holloway's 'doing' as an attempt to gain control over ones' work. Occupying the cracks as 'misfits' does not mean not engaging with institutions of power but having reflective-action-centric terms of engagement so that commons don't adopt the logic of the institutions of power and reproduce their rhetoric. Here the relationship between the public, the common, and the private is complex and requires constant questioning. Practices that 'misfit' are those that split open the unitary character of abstract labour towards the making or visualizing of 'cracks'.<sup>28</sup>

### **Cultural Common Goods**

In the Common Room project, cultural common goods such as the temporary architecture, activity reports, events, collective art, and the neighbourhood plan were framed as objects of local value and diverse cultural expression that offered voice to a collective and

28. Holloway, *Change the World*, 180.



individual community network. These goods can be conceptualized to construct what John Holloway calls ‘cracks’, as new forms of practice and governance within the neoliberal agenda of market hegemony.<sup>29</sup> Common goods as art, design, and architectural objects can be mobilized as tools to further production and resilience of social and political communities in neighbourhoods. They provide the basis for production of a new waged labour based on its concrete conception rather than volunteering within the sphere of community and the commons. Within the field of art/architecture and design, common goods become the physical manifestations of cultural forms that reveal plural common interests within a neighbourhood. Through the practice of commoning, cultural common goods are produced and their agency mobilized and legitimized by the collective interest and needs that created them. They circulate within systems of relational power,<sup>30</sup> exchange, and use that is managed as collective pooled resources. To ensure power flows across the material system, an intent that all actants<sup>31</sup> both human and non-human have power at one point over the life of the project becomes part of the design of the production of the commons. For example the feasibility report titled ‘Interact’ that supported ‘The Common Room’ was a common good that is freely accessible and downloadable for the local community. Yet its agency is not in its free use but in its form of production and in its content—created by local voices rather than expert ones. Locals as experts offering their plural interests were brought together in a document that illustrates collective commonalities. Here the feasibility study was not a bureaucratic tool to substantiate an already existing decision, but an action plan for the community to initiate projects from the ground up that serves the common interests of the neighbourhood as defined by the residents. The system within which the report’s content is produced (social activities), used (by residents), and circulated (locally), all have agency as they prove the value of the site beyond capital. The fact that the form of the common good was a feasibility study and familiar to the public sector meant they

29. Ibid.

30. Robert Mesle, ‘Relational Power, Personhood, and Organisation’, in Jennifer Howard-Grenville, Jennifer A. Howard-Grenville, Claus Rerup, Ann Langley, and Haridimos Tsoukas (eds.), *Organizational Routines: How they are Created, Maintained, and Changed*, Vol. 5., Oxford University Press, 2016.

31. Conceptualized by Bruno Latour in his theory of Actor network theory (ANT), an actor (actant) is something that acts or to which activity is granted by others. It implies no motivation of human individual actors nor of humans in general. An actant can literally be anything provided it is granted to be the source of action.

understood its value and mandate. The report is a common good ('crack') whose function of resisting land enclosure is in the disruption of the ordinary and the familiar (feasibility studies). In other words, each actant has an empowered role at different points in the construction and running of the commons and its continued practice. The relationships with overt power (land owner or dominant organization) in this network should never be static to become accumulative; overt power should be designed to be in a constant state of flux and new methods to map power in commons projects be required for future projects.

'The Common Room' as a temporary piece of architecture became a common good object and resource that protected the land from privatization and also supported the production of further common good resources such as feasibility studies, campaign videos, and community gardens. Commons scholars agree that cultural commons where cultural common goods circulate don't suffer from their cultural resources being depleted through their use. It is agreed that the more cultural common goods are used and circulated the more they produce value.<sup>32</sup> However, this generalized framing does not take into consideration the impact that the production and distribution of cultural resources has in complex societies and on the planet. The design of forms of commoning practice becomes a field that crosses institutional design, participatory art, citizenship, artefact design, and system design, moving away from simplistic notions of governance by consensus that can be dominated by the empowered and privileged voices. The notion of temporary architecture or design intervention as both a common good and a method becomes a constituent part of a cultural commons that can offer decentralized common ground to plural voices. These interventions were spaces of negotiation and required careful facilitation to enable multiple communities of interest to produce their own needed resources, aided by the agency of common good artefacts. Dependent on the need and the context of the neighbourhood, resources might be freely and easily available or they might need to be fought for. As such, cultural common goods formed a material infrastructure whose logic and function became synonymous with promethean disobediences. The functionality of artefacts created were judged based on what they politically

32. Charlotte Hess and Elinor Ostrom, *Understanding Knowledge as a Commons: from Theory to Practice*, MIT Press, 2011.



achieved, how they produced new ways of 'doing' as practice, critiqued labour practices, and intended to create agency for their communities. In this context, cultural common goods became actants whose relationships of agency were shared and circulated. Here the empowered humans created the non-human goods and these in turn propelled the human agency further. This raised the question of whether the duality of function and intention was a more useful frame for producing projects as 'cracks' than their function and use. The functionality of cultural common goods aligned to their intent as objects of hegemonic resistance. For example, in the case of 'The Common Room', the DIY chairs made by residents and students, the feasibility reports, the neighbourhood plan, the community groups, and the events all played their part within the network of actants (the resource pool) in fulfilling the intention to claim land for the commons. As such they become an ecosystem of common good artefacts with different forms and scales of agency. Their intent, for example, to claim land for the commons in a neoliberal city was much more complex and unknown than producing a functioning living room to inhabit. Their functionality came from their ability to work collectively as dependent things mobilized by human action to claim collective rights within neighbourhoods. Their functionality was dependent on them being relational, co-operative, and collaborative. The cultural commons can become the environment where common good systems can be imagined and their production strategized. Each cultural common good had power in its own right which, once scaled up as part of a collective network of actants, produced a pool of cultural common resources for a neighbourhood. Finding the appropriate scale for the common good network to give artefacts optimum disobedient functionality as a pool of cultural resources influences its effectiveness to produce a new system. It is important to note that the interaction between commons values and neoliberal values are full of friction even at community level. This came to the fore when it was time for me to transfer the ownership of the common goods to the community, which required rules of engagement that had not been set up during the informal collaborations of the initial research phase.

Rules of engagement that are designed on the basis of a culture of reciprocity, generosity, and respect and on a relational ethics of care can embed commons culture locally, which in a neoliberal context is in

stark contrast to one that is transactional, hierarchical, and self-interested. In other words, if rules of engagement are formulated to foreground the relational ethics of care (where all actants are in ethical care relationships with each other), then these become the social contract. Upon reflection during the latter stages of the research, it became clear that rules of engagement should be introduced early on, with relational ethics designed at the intention stage of the research method. As a result of this reflection, rules of engagement are now considered in the early stages of my ongoing practice, making the transfer of common goods into a collective pooled resource smoother and less antagonistic. Over time, this ethical position sets the culture of relationships within the network. The challenge lies in formalizing these rules in written and signed contracts (because the formality lies in contrast to the informal nature of the commoning practice).

To create objects with agency as actants, methods of production such as DIY, collage, and bricolage were found to offer less specialized and more democratic making practices whilst being relational in nature. These relational qualities started from the consideration of raw materials (whether they were re-use of surplus materials or locally found) to how such images and objects are arranged together relationally to construct the new meanings. Experimentation and experiential production whose intent is in caring relationships trump high crafts with extraordinary skills. This form of production offered time and space to reflect and think in action, with no pre-set blueprint of taste or expertise. The intention of this method of making as connecting is not the visual aesthetic of the final product but the convivial and caring relationships that the production process produces. Slow, relational modes of production and making allow for the deliberation of human emotions. The limitation of these techniques were time and scale. So far, cultural common goods have been articulated as empowered non-human objects engaged in a network of social relations that produce them. A common good such as ‘The Common Room’ was framed as a cultural resource whose occupation of land as direct action positioned it as an actant with agency. This direct action challenged the hegemonic forms of enclosure, slowed down the possibilities of privatization, and enabled new imaginaries and practice forms to be created. In that sense, any cultural artefact/resource collectively produced to address forms of injustice that

considers reciprocal relations of agency for both human and non-human actors could be framed as a common good object.

## Conclusion

This chapter tried to establish the conceptualization of a ground up commons sphere independent yet co-operative with the public (state) and the private (market). As cultural practitioners it positioned cultural common goods as components that make up pooled cultural resources. It set out methods in the production of common goods and their labour practices as self-determined and concrete. When cultural objects are mobilized through design interventions where they enable social and political agency, they are understood as cultural common goods. When these goods became part of a network of actants that are pooled to give collective agency to a community of practice, they construct the cultural resources of a cultural commons. Cultural and material resources in this research mediated the world of social relations through objects and images. My research findings show that by treating cultural resources as common goods, a system of objects can develop within the commons that focuses on care, trust, empowerment, and resilient civic commitment as its constituent parts. In general, the lack of distinctions made between the common good and the public good meant that commons cannot be developed based on their own constituent logic and identity. Furthermore, producing cultural commons that operate in a material system that considers relations of power, care, labour, and collaboration can produce new social, political, aesthetic, and power relationships. Although cultural commons can be created by any cultural practitioner, doing so as a rigorous and critical practice requires design input, especially when it came to their social contracts and governance. Because of this, I applied design thinking to conduct my research and develop by methods. This included designing forms of engagement in events, organizational design, design interventions, and systems design of learning infrastructures. I also applied design thinking to the tangible making of props, reports, structures, and furniture. The commons sphere requires many practitioners to engage and design new systems, institutions, and practices, allowing this space to offer new potentials for collaborative research and innovation.