

Social Justice Centre
Concordia University
March 18, 2022

Space commoning as an emancipatory political project

Stavros Stavrides
School of Architecture
National Technical University of Athens

Urban potentiality?

- The city is a **space of possibilities**, a space, that is, which is exposed to challenges and acts of dissident interpretation.
- “[T]he urban remains in a state of dispersed and alienated actuality, as kernel and *virtuality* (Lefebvre 1996 : 148)
- To reactivate the emancipatory potentialities of city life we need to connect again with the virtuality of the city.

Reclaiming the city?

- **Commoning** is about complex and historically specific processes through which societies or groups define **what is to be shared by their members and how**.
- Reclaiming the right to the city means **reclaiming the city as commons**, that is, reclaiming the **power of collective creativity: reclaiming the *city-as-oeuvre***.
- In the process of challenging established common worlds, **space is being activated as a source of social potentialities**.

Common space

- **Common space is both an explicit scope of urban commoning and one of its most important shaping factors.**
- **Common space expresses the power commoning has to create new forms of living-in-common.**



What common space is not

- Common space is not **private space** (although private family spaces may become part of it)
- Common space is not **public space**, if by public we mean state-managed or, in general, managed by a certain **authority** (although lots of space commoning experiences start from appropriating existing public spaces).

The emergence of common spaces through urban commoning

- In **everyday survival initiatives**: common space as a means to augment and share available resources and to activate collective inventiveness
- During **anti-neoliberal struggles**: common space as a form of organization and a means to express collective demands
- In initiatives that explicitly depend **upon practices of collective self-management**: common space as a form of exemplary organized everydayness

Emancipatory potentialities of space commoning

Sources of such potentialities may be:

- The **re-appropriation of public space** – “insurgent public spaces” (Hou 2010). Sharing practices transform existing distinctions between public and private city space.
- **Urban Communities** of commoners
- Collective performances of **self-government** and “territorialities of resistance” (Stavrides 2016, 2019).

**Re-appropriating public space –
producing common space**



Occupied
Navarinou Park
(2009- today):
an experiment in
self-managed
common space creation











The Gezi park
urban struggle
(Istanbul 2013)







Athens
Syntagma square
occupation
(2011)





Festive bodies in solidarity







Taking care of
common space
as a form of
direct
democracy



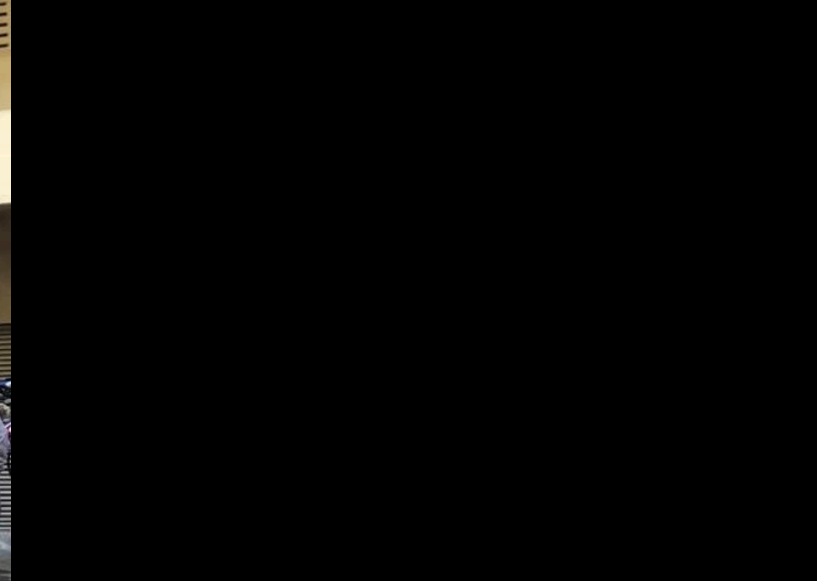
Open urban communities of commoners

Community and the common

- The common is **not “a particular kind of thing”** but **“an unstable and malleable social relation ...”**(Harvey 2012: 73).
- ***Comunalidad* (commonality):** **“the juxtaposition of commons and polity”** but also **“a collection of practices formed as creative adaptations of old traditions to resist old and new colonialisms, and a mental space, a horizon of intelligibility: how you see and experience the world as a We”**. (Esteva 2012).

Re-inventing community through commoning

- Practices of **collaboration** and collective experiences of **mutual help** create self-managed common spaces.
- Communities and collectivities **make** those spaces **happen by shaping their uses** and the corresponding **rules of use** in the process of inhabiting them.
- The emancipatory potentialities of space commoning open communities to **newcomers** and to **networks of commoning collaboration**.



Self-managed
refugee support center
in Athens
(occupied City Plaza Hotel)







Drawing by Serdar, living in City Plaza
Donation account: Platóns Allieggyia e.V., Munich
IBAN: DE07 7015 0000 1004 7894 81, BIC: 55810315

Autonomous neighborhood La Polvorilla
in Acapatzingo (Mexico city)
Los Panchos movement











Cooperativa La Toma
(Rosario, Argentina)





CENTRO SOCIAL Y POLITICO
PERONISMO REVOLUCIONARIO









CENTRO SOCIAL Y POLITICO
PERMANENTE REVOLUCIONARIO

La Tierra
Calle 101
Calle 102

Napoli *Beni Comuni* (common goods)





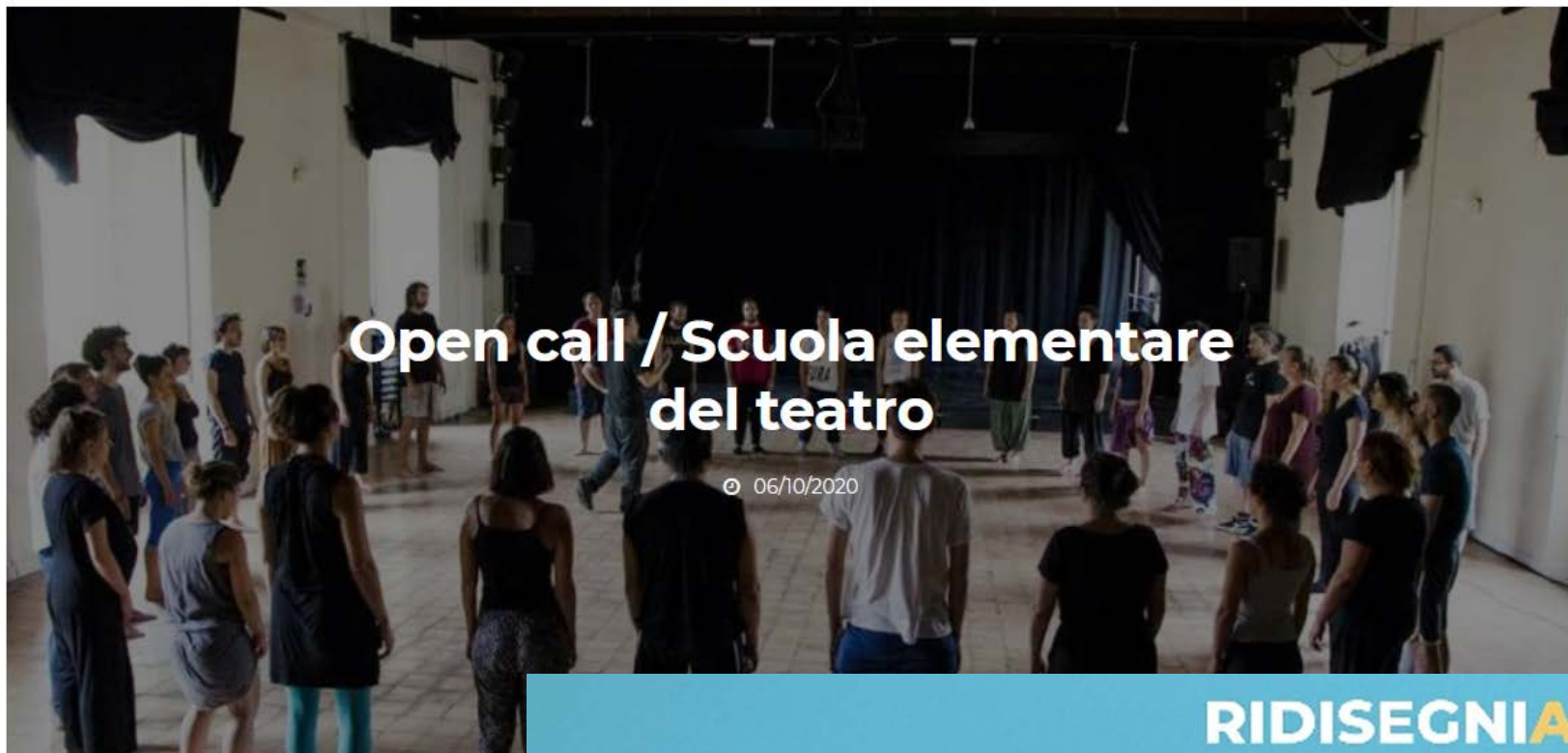
Ex Asilo Filangieri

TEATRO









RIDISEGNIAMO INSIEME LA CITTÀ



Prima Assemblea Pubblica di
PROSSIMA NAPOLI

URBANISTICA / RIGENERAZIONI / PARTECIPAZIONE / CULTURA E ISTRUZIONE

1 Luglio 2021

Cortile di Santa Chiara ore 18:30

Lido Pola (Bagnoli)





STOP

BANCA FORTITÀ

SPIAGGIA PER

88% possiede un'imbarcazione
88% possiede un costume da bagno







Scugnizzo Liberato – Laboratory of mutual help





LOVE

LEGRIDAS
NONI TICCIA
dal 1980








@NOSEEP

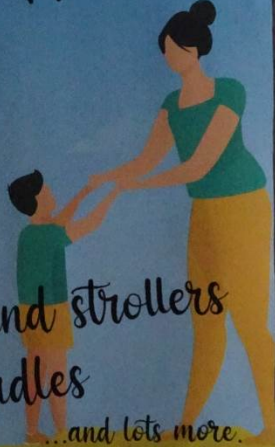


Need help to get things for your kids?

La Bottega di AMMÀ

is our parent support centre where we collect and distribute items for children between 0 and 12 years of age.
We can give you the following things for free:

-  Disposable nappies
 -  Baby Food
 -  Clothes
 -  Toys
 -  Books
 -  Pushchairs and strollers
 -  Cots and cradles
- ...and lots more.



We're at:
Scugnizzo Liberato
Salita Pontecorvo 16

You can call us at:
3295710124/ 3932423362

We're open: Tuesdays & Wednesdays - 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.
(Other days or times possible by appointment)







**Common space created through
collective performances of self-government**

The Oaxaca Commune (Mexico 2006)









Oventic , Chiapas (Mexico)



Zapatista
autonomous
territory
(Mexico)



Urgencias ★







AUTONOMIA
ZONE

- To serve others, not to serve oneself
- To represent, not replace
- To construct, not destroy
- To obey, not lead
- To propose, not impose
- To convince, not defeat
- To work from below, not seek to rise



7 Principios Zapatistas

- *Servir y no servirse**
- *Representar y no suplantar**
- *Construir y no destruir**
- *Obedecer y no mandar**
- *Proponer y no imponer**
- *Convencer y no vencer**
- *Bajar y no subir**



http://www.zapatista.ezln.org.mx

The potentialities of urban commoning

- **Possible spaces** (understood as imagined arrangements or as specific possible sites) may become the means of both envisioning and testing new forms of social organization.
- Emancipatory politics: “**Trial by space**” (Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 416)
- Emancipatory commoning directly challenges the accumulation of power and develops collective forms of land (urban and rural) use.