On building thresholds: In conversation with Stavros Stavrides

Sobre la construcción de umbrales: en conversación con Stavros Stavrides

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ABSTRACT

This interview with architect and activist Prof. Stavros Stavrides reflects on the concept of the *threshold* as a spatial, political, and epistemic condition for emancipation. Drawing on anthropology, political philosophy, and radical architectural practice, Stavrides articulates the threshold as an in-between space that enables encounter, commoning, and the preservation of difference without enclosure. Through analysis of Latin American social movements, feminist struggles, housing cooperatives, and indigenous forms of self-management, the conversation situates architecture within broader fields of resistance and collective imagination. The interview further addresses debates on democracy, language, and education, foregrounding porosity and inclusion versus *ghettoization* and exclusionary logics. Ultimately, the threshold is proposed as a critical tool for rethinking common space, collaboration, and architectural practice as open-ended, transformative processes rooted in shared struggle and mutual responsibility.

KEY WORDS

Commons, Thresholds, Knowledge, Activism, Democracy, Space, Collective Practices.

RESUMEN

Esta entrevista con el arquitecto y activista Prof. Stavros Stavrides reflexiona sobre el concepto del *umbral* como una condición espacial, política y epistémica para la emancipación. A partir de la antropología, la filosofía política y la práctica arquitectónica radical, Stavrides articula el umbral como un espacio intermedio que posibilita el encuentro, la construcción de lo común y la preservación de la diferencia sin clausura. Mediante el análisis de movimientos sociales latinoamericanos, luchas feministas, cooperativas de vivienda y formas indígenas de autogestión, la conversación sitúa a la arquitectura dentro de campos más amplios de resistencia e imaginación colectiva. La entrevista aborda asimismo debates sobre democracia, lenguaje y educación, poniendo en primer plano la porosidad y la inclusión frente a la *guetización* y las lógicas de exclusión. En última instancia, el umbral se propone como una herramienta crítica para repensar el espacio común, la colaboración y la práctica arquitectónica como procesos abiertos y transformadores, arraigados en la lucha compartida y la responsabilidad mutua.

PALABRAS CLAVE

Bienes comunes, umbrales, conocimiento, activismo, democracia, espacio, prácticas colectivas.

Your research addresses the emancipation of spatial practices and communal creation through, among other forms, the concept of the "threshold," which could be understood as a process, a passage, a space of listening, attention, and care.[1] Could you talk to me about the threshold? When did this idea first emerge for you, and how would you define the threshold today, in 2024?

The idea of the threshold has fascinated me for a long time, likely since the early 2000s. I came across the idea through anthropology, particularly reading about the concept of rites of passage —from one identity to another— and how societies regulate these transitions. For example, the passage from childhood to adolescence, or from adolescence to full membership in society, or through significant life events like marriages or funerals. These are all rites of passage, rituals that help shift individuals from one social status or condition to another. These transitions are central to the reproduction of society and therefore it's crucial for societies to supervise and regulate them. The threshold is the space that regulates these transitions, between one social condition and the next; within this intermediary space, there is the possibility of change, people can experience transformation.

Anthropologist Victor Turner developed this idea by suggesting that the threshold is not only essential for society but can also be a space of danger or potential disruption.[2] Turner introduced the term *liminoid* (as distinct from *liminal*) to describe this kind of transformative space, one that holds the potential for social change, empowerment, and action that extends beyond society's regulations. In this context, the threshold becomes a space of *communitas*, a place where people can form a bond and become equal. The idea of communitas —coined by Turner— has been fundamental in my own work, particularly as I have tried to understand how we might approach *otherness*. At the time, against the backdrop of dominant individualist and identitarian ideologies, I wondered: How can we approach difference without merely tolerating it? Indeed, if the idea of tolerance means "letting others be" without truly engaging with them, without forming relationships, how could we engage with otherness, respect it, and create connections, while avoiding the extremes of either assimilation or exoticism? How do we preserve differences while still fostering communication and understanding? This is precisely where the concept of the threshold became useful. It represents an intermediary space: one that both divides and unites. The threshold is neither here nor there; it is a space that could belong to anyone, and yet to no one in particular. It's a space of comparison, translation, sharing and potentiality, rather than one relying on similarity. The threshold thrives on differences, creating the conditions for encounters. These encounters do not require that both sides become the same, but they do allow for a mutual recognition of commonalities, provided both parties are open to it.

A related concept to threshold is porosity, which refers to the quality of peripheral conditions for exchange. Porosity is an attribute of space that facilitates sharing and communication without exclusion. Exploring the threshold —both theoretically and practically— has to do with engaging with otherness. This concept contains within it a theoretical core that relates to commoning, which has been a central focus of my research, that is,

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a process through which we define what is shared and how it is shared, though this "we" doesn't pre-exist the practice of commoning, but it is shaped by the process itself. If commoning involves different people agreeing on what to share and how to share it equally, then the term "threshold" becomes an essential theoretical and practical tool for understanding the qualities of common space.

Common space understood as threshold space isn't merely a place for something; it's a space that invites newcomers who are not only willing to agree to the process of sharing, but also to shape that process equally with those who are already part of it. This idea of threshold helped me define commoning as a process that isn't limited to the boundaries of a specific community—no matter how democratic it may be. Commoning should, I believe, always overflow the boundaries of any community that initiates it, to become a proliferating process that includes anyone willing to participate and co-define what is shared and how.

Thus, the threshold becomes a critical concept, not just for enabling encounters between differences, but also for creating common ground. This common ground must preserve its threshold character; otherwise, it will, sooner or later, evolve into an enclave, an isolated otherness in contrast to the outside world. In other words, if commoning confines itself within the boundaries of a particular community, even one that is democratic in essence, and accepts those boundaries as fixed, it will inevitably suffocate. It will transform into its opposite: an enclosure.

You have described how the presence of a democratic society is not sufficient, in itself, to create or maintain a threshold space. Could you tell us more about the practicalities and difficulties surrounding the construction of the threshold? I'm thinking about the necessary political, societal or cultural contexts.

Obviously, there are specific conditions under which a commoning process can start. Democracy is something we can discuss in general terms, but its true nature depends heavily on the conditions in which it is practiced. It's easy to claim something is democratic, but it's much harder to understand the actual circumstances under which democracy is performed. I would say one crucial criterion for developing a threshold as a condition for commoning is to make this democracy inclusive. What does that mean? It means that even when you establish conditions of equality, and repeatedly enact these conditions through democratic acts, there must always be space for newcomers. These newcomers should have the same agreed rights, the same equality, and the same opportunities to express their differences. In essence, this is the process of commoning itself.

A process of equality accepts multiplicity and difference. If a democracy isn't inclusive —if it isn't open to difference—, then it doesn't seek to benefit from difference. Without openness to difference, you cannot truly speak of establishing a threshold.

Brazilian anthropologist Eduardo Viveiros de Castro talks about the *irreducibility of differences*, meaning that different cultures around the world don't necessarily refer to the same "nature"—this reflects the *ontological* turn in anthropology.[3] Viveiros de Castro talks about "multinationalism" instead of "multiculturalism," suggesting that different ways of being in the world should be respected without trying to reduce them to a common understanding. I have some reservations about this idea. While I understand that Viveiros de Castro is trying to preserve the irreducibility of differences, I believe it limits the possibility of finding a common ground. I think we need to ask: how can we explore ways of encountering one another that respect differences while also creating opportunities to establish a common ground? Furthermore, this common ground, if it has the qualities of a threshold, that is, an "in-between" space—one that doesn't belong to any one person or group—we might find ways to communicate, not because we share a universal humanity or a common biology, but because we are able to express our will and engage in encounters based on equality and respect for differences.

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[3]   Eduardo Viveiros de Castro introduced the concept of "Perspectivism", based on indigenous views in Lowland South American ethnographies (*Cannibal Metaphysics*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014). It presents a worldview where humans and nonhumans are understood through multiple lenses—encompassing mythology, cosmology, war, hunting, kinship, and more—challenging Western distinctions between nature and culture. Drawing on philosophers like Leibniz, Nietzsche, and Deleuze and Guattari, Viveros de Castro developed Perspectivism to enhance our understanding of Amerindian thought and its impact on anthropology.

This is I believe different from Isabel Stengers' idea of diplomacy —a fascinating concept—, but one that sometimes seems to focus on maintaining barriers between ways of being and ways of understanding the world. Stengers speaks of diplomacy as an art of establishing agreements which is not necessarily based on the idea of sharing.[4] Diplomacy shouldn't just be about avoiding war and conflict; it should also be about creating spaces for experimentation, exploration, and the common invention of something new. These spaces might challenge the way we understand the world, but they also allow us to care for differences and accept them, even if we don't fully understand them.

This idea of connecting through differences is what I believe constitutes a threshold-creating process. Or, to put it another way, it's a bridge-building process. We meet on the bridge, yet we come from different parts of the river. The bridge doesn't belong to either side, and we may not even know the other side well. But if we understand that, on the other side, there are people who might be interested in building this bridge together, we can test the possibility. We can experiment. A threshold can be not just an idea, but also an image —one that helps us move beyond the concept of *irreducible alterity*. This, in my view, is how the question of democracy and the question of the Commons are interlinked.

Truly innovative and socially committed political experiences have been taking place in Latin America, something you also refer to in your writings. Could you tell us more about this?

I have conducted extensive research in several countries across Latin America, not as a distant observer of situations and events, but as a supporter of them. I wasn't simply interested in observing human behavior, but was deeply engaged in the same struggles, the same aspirations, the same dreams if you want. This can be defined as an effort to go beyond existing capitalist relations, which have shaped an unjust and hierarchical society.

Through this engagement, I have learned a lot from the movements in this region. My goal was to learn from the actual practices of real people doing real work, not just trying to survive but creating important new ways of living together. Surviving in an unjust and harsh world sometimes produces very meaningful forms of life. What was truly fascinating to me was how survival revealed ideas, dreams, and ways of imagining the future, things that had been well-developed in political theory, critical ideologies, and writings. This was eye-opening because it demonstrated that there is a deep, intrinsic power among people who feel oppressed, not only to resist, but to dream beyond the current state of affairs. Resistance wasn't just a reaction; it wasn't simply protesting "enough is enough." It was also a way of thinking beyond the limits of what exists.

This ability to imagine alternatives is fueled by traditions in Latin America that we don't have in many Western countries. One of the most important of these traditions is a very diverse, multiform understanding of social organization that comes from Indigenous communities. Indigenous peoples haven't just endured the burdens of colonialism; they have also managed to preserve and transform their traditions in ways that turn resistance into something constructive, into building new social bonds and new forms of collective living. A predominant example of this is the case of the Zapatistas. This wasn't just a liberation army rebelling against the inequalities of Mexico: it was also a new form of social organization emerging from a hybrid of Western Marxist and anarchist traditions with indigenous ways of thinking about equality, complementarity, and care. It involves understanding each other not as resources, but as partners. This hybridization led to a fascinating experiment in self-management, which directly influenced forms of production, gender relations, and governance. The Zapatistas' form of self-management isn't just theoretical. It was practiced on the ground, with roles being rotated so often that, at times, the rotation period was less than a month. The point of the rotation wasn't efficiency: it was educational. Educating people in democracy means understanding that democracy is not a given; it's something we produce together as we live with others. It's part of living and resisting in a harsh, unjust world.

Interestingly, the Zapatistas didn't develop an idea of autonomy reduced to the creating of new state-based entities. In contrast, the Zapatista model sought to transform society through a federation of self-managed communities. Their slogan, *Nunca más sin nosotros* [Never again without us], doesn't simply mean sharing power; it means that they are a force within society, actively changing it, not through the creation of a new state but through the transformation of social structures into networks of self-management.

This approach emphasizes connection and separation at the same time: connection through agreements and cooperative development of society, but separation in terms of preserving differences. The Zapatista communities don't have a centralized government directing decisions; instead, they come to flexible agreements on issues like education, cultivation, and justice that allow for differentiation across the Chiapas region, which is the heart of Zapatista territory. In this way, there is a network of equal communities that share experiences while respecting their differences.

I've observed similar processes in housing movements across Latin America, in Brazil, Argentina, Mexico, Uruguay, and other countries. In Uruguay, for example, housing movements have developed housing associations that remain exemplary models. In these movements, the demand for decent housing goes beyond simply the need for shelter. It's about the right to participate in shaping the conditions of how people live together.

When these movements say "It's not just about houses," they're talking about an opportunity to develop new forms of social relations, based on equality, collective responsibility, mutual care, solidarity, and participation. Here again, we see a process of emancipation emerging out of basic needs but connected to aspirations and dreams that go beyond the current reality. There are real examples of these movements achieving victories, such as the remarkable housing initiatives in Brazil, where new housing complexes have become models for cooperative living. Similarly, movements like the Uruguayan Federation of Mutual Aid Housing Cooperatives (FUCVAM) and the Movimiento de Ocupantes e Inquilinos (MOI) in Argentina demonstrate how collective efforts can transform struggles into enduring experiences of shared living. These movements are driven by demands for decent living while developing collective experiences of democratic inclusive community building.

The feminist movement in Latin America has also produced groundbreaking experiences —not just related to securing women's rights (such as the legalization of abortion)—, but signifying a new form of universalism: a collective fight against patriarchy, which, in its essence, is deeply intertwined with capitalism as well as with social relations that stem from pre-capitalist conditions. The feminist movement has succeeded in targeting the heart of exploitation and inequality: the very structure of our social organization. In this sense, the feminist movement in Latin America was a movement for humanity as a whole. It condensed a range of demands and aspirations into one powerful vision and, significantly, integrated with other struggles. The communication and collaboration between the feminist movement and indigenous and Black movements brought a new understanding of land and nature into the conversation. These issues were not merely external to the struggle—they were central to it. The feminist movement, in its Latin American context, wasn't just talking about nature in the abstract. It saw nature as the very ground through which humanity and the environment could be understood in new ways.

These are the kinds of transformative changes that are still unfolding in Latin America, changes that, still, remain largely unseen in other parts of the world, or at least in the West, where I personally live.

Twenty years ago, Paolo Virno published *When the Verb Becomes Flesh: Language and Human Nature*, a book that reflects on language and its connection to human nature and social relationships, thus addressing key issues in philosophy and politics. Given the importance of language, do you believe there is hope in "building" thresholds in the age of disinformation?

For me, Paolo Virno has been a significant source of inspiration, though he is perhaps less well-known than Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri. The three belong to the same period, with their roots in Italian activism of the 1970s. Virno's work, especially the book you mentioned, and his developments on language, are central to my thinking. One of the most inspiring ideas he presents is that individuation comes afterwards. We begin as part of a shared existence, and this applies not only to the development of the child —and here Virno borrows ideas

from thinkers like Donald Winnicott and Gilbert Simondon—, but also to how we evolve as citizens within our societies.

Individuation, however, is not the same as individualism. It's not a process of establishment and maintenance of individual identities. Rather, individuation necessarily arises from a prior, common ground. This common source is essential if we are to become individuals. Virno attributes immense importance to language as one of the first sources of this shared foundation. We acquire the ability to speak, not as isolated individuals, but because we are embedded within communities of speakers.

This process of becoming individuals is a dynamic interplay: it's about becoming part of something larger while also finding our own unique way of expressing what belongs to everyone. I've marked a passage in Virno's work where he discusses locution—the act of speech—as something that happens at the threshold between the "I" and the "non- I." The act of speaking, as Virno argues, takes place neither within a purely internal condition, nor is it merely a response to an external stimulus coming from the world or from the person we're speaking to. It is something that requires both dimensions: the self and the other and as he says it: "linguistic praxis configures an intermediary zone".[5]

The process of locution presupposes the existence of the other —something or someone external to ourselves. It is a foundational way in which we become human. We cannot become humans, or selves, without the other. This, for me, is a new approach to universalism—one that insists that individuation is based on the precondition of sharing. Sharing is at the core of our existence and the essence of political struggle. It's not about returning to an idealized state of participation, like the child in the womb of their mother. Rather, it's about reinventing that sense of shared existence.

Here, I'm moving beyond Virno's ideas, but I'm still rooted in his thinking. The concept of *commoning* offers a way out of dominant individualist ideologies. *Commoning* is based on activating capacities that are inherently human and emerge from living together. Humans are not solitary beings. From the very beginning, we are social animals. This is not an ideological stance; it's a scientific fact. We know that since prehistoric times, humans lived together and probably the well-known cave paintings are also a form of shared expression.

It's absurd to think that individualism represents the culmination of humanity. In fact, individualism is more like the fall, the destruction of humanity's potentialities. The concept of *potentiality* —which also comes from Virno— has a crucial place in Italian radical thought (for Giorgio Agamben, too[6]). But it's not just about something dormant, waiting to be activated. *Potentiality* is always more than what is activated. It's a force, a possibility that is never fully exhausted.

If we want to understand the concept of *commoning* as a way to transcend existing society, we must invent these potentialities. They are not simply waiting to be activated; they are created through action. This idea extends to the final part of your question as well: it's not just about finding alternative sources of information in the age of disinformation. It's about creating new forms of interpretation, new spaces for comparison.

Here, the idea of thresholds comes into play again. Comparison happens when adjacent areas can communicate. If borders exist between them, there is no comparison —only hostility. Without thresholds, there's no exchange, no translation, just us versus them. Whether in language, ideas, ethics, or even forms of enjoyment, we must create thresholds to allow comparison. This is not about exoticizing the "other", but about finding a common ground. Without this, comparison is meaningless —it only perpetuates or reinforces existing hostilities.

So, I believe that the possibility of going beyond the nightmare of disinformation lies in the opening of passages, in creating openings in the concrete walls that attempt to define and limit our understanding of the world. These openings allow us to see different layers beneath the surface, revealing the creation of disinformation. These passages give us the opportunity to compare different sources of information, exposing contradictions. Those who produce this information are, of course, highly skilled —but they are not infallible in their tactics.

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        [5]   Paolo Virno, *When the Word Becomes Flesh: Language and Human Nature* (Los Angeles CA: Semiotext(e), 2015), 139. See also, Paolo Virno, *Gramática de la Multitud: para un análisis de las formas de vida contemporáneas* (Buenos Aires: Colihué, 2003).

        [6]   Giorgio Agamben. "On Potentiality,", in *Potentialities: Collected Essays in Philosophy* , ed. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Redwood City CA: Stanford University Press, 1999), 177-84.

They cannot protect their narratives from challenges that come from both within and from outside. The idea of disenchantment or demystification is not adequate in explaining struggles against disinformation. One needs to be inventive enough so as to expand existing contradictions in dominant narratives and thus develop alternative interpretations within and beyond those contradictions.

I strongly believe there are opportunities here. There are cracks in the system. John Holloway urges us to find those cracks and widen them. And there are, of course, exemplary gestures that show how things can be interpreted differently. I still remember something beautiful that Susan Sontag said about the role of photographs in the media. She pointed out that during the Korean War, we had images of atrocities circulating in the media, but the world did not rise up in protest. It wasn't until images from the Vietnam War began circulating, like the famous one of a child screaming after a napalm bombing, that the power of this kind of image became apparent.

Sontag explained that the power of that image came from it being in the hands of a movement that was already developing a consciousness of the horror of war. The image itself didn't create the movement, but it amplified and deepened the discontent already present. Without this underlying movement, the images could have easily been dismissed or turned into a cynical justification: "Well, those people deserve it." This, for me, underscores a critical point: real people, real movements, and real demands are what give power to such images. It's through these movements that information and images can be wielded to challenge the dominant narratives. This is happening today, no matter how the media tries to frame it. Just look at what's happening in Palestine and how a dominant interpretation that shapes the information coming from most Western media cannot suppress or hide global protests. People everywhere are standing up because they understand the injustice. They're making their demands heard, regardless of the distorted or filtered narratives being presented to them.

The times of crisis we are living through are accompanied by a clear deterioration of language, which seems to forget the value of gerunds and their representation of human actions and processes—concepts that could be understood as part of resistance. What can architecture do to help us reclaim a more liberated form of expression? I am thinking about architecture itself, but also about education.

You are right to connect those two areas, because architecture is often understood as the creation of places—spaces with specific identities where recurring practices of inhabiting are meant to take place. Identity expression, and the ability to define spaces, are considered as the crucial role of architecture. However, it's important to see architecture not just as the creation of fixed spaces, but as a dynamic process. Architecture should be understood as an unfolding set of practices, shaped by how people inhabit spaces and by the transformations that occur in existing spatial relations.

We are constantly negotiating spatial relations. Not only are there temporal aspects —obviously—, but also spatial ones. These relate to bodies: the presence of bodies, their actions, their work, education, relaxation, love, etc. These everyday practices always involve some form of moderation, definition, and control of distances.

If architecture is to contribute to a creative process, it should empower people to define these distances for themselves, to give meaning to those distances, and, most importantly, to change them. Architecture, then, becomes an art of suggesting and helping to create spatial relations considered not as fixed, eternal, or monumental but as relations that people can develop and transform.

I often refer to a beautiful saying written on one of the walls of our school of architecture: "Architecture is a very important issue. Even architects can do it." This is a reminder that architects shouldn't be seen as the experts who should define how space is to be produced and used. This shift in perspective also changes how we should approach architectural education. For over 25 years, I have taught architectural design, not just theory. Teaching design means guiding young people to understand that design is about proposing possibilities. And in order to propose, you must understand the dynamics of spatial relations.

Take, for example, the design of a house. A house is not simply a static entity; it's a network of spatial relations, a dynamic system that evolves. These relations are open to the temporalities of life —different generations, changing seasons, different times of day— and to history itself. A well-designed space should not impose a fixed way of inhabiting it. Life will always find ways to surpass what was intended or prescribed by architects.

This is where a humble architect comes in, an architect who understands that architecture is not about creating finished products, but about being a catalyst in a process of continuous transformation. I always recall a thought by Henri Lefebvre, who spoke against one of the traditional architectural obsessions: dreaming of and designing future utopias. In his time, young architects often imagined the future through grand, idealized designs of cities, homes, and leisure spaces. But Lefebvre argued that utopias often bypass the real problems of the present. In response, he adopts the term "concrete utopias".[7] These are not utopias based on abstract ideals, but on concrete, lived experiences of transcending the limitations of existing spatial and social conditions.

Understanding architecture as a process means seeing yourself as one contributor to that process. Architects play a role, but other actors often have a more direct or crucial influence. Inhabitants, for instance, possess knowledge derived from experience—knowledge that we, as designers, can learn from. Coming from different traditions of building, inhabiting, or using space, this shared knowledge is essential to the creation of meaningful environments.

As Lefebvre put it, the "right to the city" is not just about the final product; it's also about the ongoing process of creation.[8] The city, the home, the space itself are works of art —collective artworks. Architects should act as catalysts, co-producers, or co-dreamers in this process. Architecture can offer specific knowledge and experience to the creation of shelters for life, but it's a collaborative process, not a solitary one.

I am interested by your description of the potential danger of transitioning from the 'common ground' of the threshold to the 'enclosure'. Could you suggest some key guidelines to avoid 'ghettoizing' the threshold?

The real danger, as I see it, lies in replacing the idea of commoning as a dynamic process that welcomes new-comers with a more static concept of commoning confined to the limits of a specific community. This community can easily become insular —a closed world. When we discussed about democracy, we faced the same problem: establishing democracy within the confines of a particular group, while ignoring the existence of those outside, who may not only be seen as outsiders but even as enemies of the process, is essentially a way of limiting democracy. So, the question is: How do we invite others in? How do we establish forms of encounter that encourage the openness and constant growth that should characterize commoning? I believe commoning cannot survive within the boundaries of any community, no matter how determined that community is to preserve it. If we attempt to do so, it risks becoming either a ghetto or an enclave of privilege.

In some cases, what begins as a process of sharing can devolve into something that Hardt and Negri term as "corrupt forms of the common".[9] Forms of selective sharing will eventually devolve into practices of exclusion. This exclusion produces new forms of enclosure. We've seen this in privileged spaces, such as gated communities, where sharing is presented as a form of commoning but is, in reality, an exclusionary practice. We can also find examples in racist or fascist groups which present themselves as "the chosen ones" and thus justify the exclusion of others. Here, what may appear as a form of commoning is, in fact, a process of creating divisions—separating those who "belong" from those who do not. This is the exact opposite of what commoning should be. Unfortunately, we don't have to go back to the fascist groups of the pre-war or World War II periods to find such examples. We can look around us today and observe how many practices of sharing, meant for an exclusive group, devolve into exclusion and hostility.

Some of the theories about commoning, especially those that focus on a community of commoners, risk heading in this direction. While these theories are often developed as ways to imagine a society beyond capitalism, I believe they miss a critical aspect: the necessary porous character of any community of commoners that aspires to transcend capitalist enclosures. Without *porous borders,* without accepting the potential of commoning as

[7] Henri Lefebvre. *Critique of Everyday Life, Vol. II: Foundations for a Sociology of the Everyday* (New York: Verso, 2009).

[8] Henri Lefebvre. *The Right to the City* (New York: Verso, 2009).

[9] Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Commonwealth* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 162.

a dynamic force that is inherently inclusive and attracting new participants, these communities risk becoming closed off and exclusionary. In this sense, the concept of *porosity* is crucial, and it aligns closely with the idea of the threshold.

To me, it's not enough to simply have a community of commoners. We must think carefully about the characteristics of such a community, especially if we envision commoning as a force that could lead us beyond capitalism. There are, of course, theories of commoning that don't necessarily push in this direction. I deeply respect the work of Elinor Ostrom, but her approach was not about transcending capitalism. Instead, she focused on creating more humane relations within capitalist structures, which, for me, is not the ultimate goal.

Discussions about the commons require us to take a position. We must be clear about why we engage in this conversation and what our aims are. For me, my entry into this discussion is precisely because I want to explore the possibility of creating an emancipatory society—one that moves beyond capitalism and patriarchy.

You mentioned Isabelle Stengers. My next question partly refers to her thinking. Indeed, across different, yet interconnected disciplines of our daily lives, we can identify processes related to forms of resistance— and survival—within capitalism. For instance, the concept of degrowth in economics and of Slow Science, in science, philosophy, and ecology.[10] Can we interpret the 'threshold' as a space of resistance?

Resistance plays a crucial role in developing alternative forms of living that move beyond the current conditions of capitalism. Through resistance, we don't just fight to survive within a system: we experiment with new possibilities for how we could live differently. The most obvious image of resistance is the stronghold, the place where you barricade yourself to survive against external forces. But, as we discussed earlier, the stronghold alone isn't enough, especially if we are trying to generate alternative ways of living together.

Of course, at certain points in history, the experience of the stronghold is necessary. Sometimes, communities of commoners have to barricade themselves in order to protect what they have gained and thus fight under conditions they haven't chosen. But even in those difficult moments, we must remember that this defensive stance is temporary. Our goal is not to remain in that position indefinitely, but to spread commoning, like a viral effect, connecting different initiatives of commoning.

It's important, I think, to question some of the obsessions that often accompany this struggle, especially with movements that believe they have a monopoly on what should be done. We should think of commoning more modestly, rather than equating it to a synthesis of acts or a project led by a self-appointed vanguard.

Instead, let's think of creating conditions for the *confluence* of practices. This means accepting differences and respecting the polymorphous nature of these actions. Each movement may have different priorities, and we've seen throughout history how different movements represented various forms of resistance —the workers' movement, the feminist movement, the indigenous movement—, each of which, at certain times, condensed and represented emancipatory aspirations. But we must accept that all of these movements contribute to the broader goal of societal change.

I borrowed the word *confluence* from John Holloway, who rejected the idea of composition or synthesis in favor of the idea of a confluence of movements[11]. This confluence isn't something that happens automatically. It requires those who recognize its necessity to work toward it, to reveal to others the possibility of coming together. This isn't about forcing others into alignment or telling them what to do. It's about showing the potential for convergence and respecting the unique contributions of each movement.

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[10]   Isabelle Stengers' "slow" approach to science, similar to movements like "slow food" and "slow living," critiques the rush for quick results and advocates for deceleration. This clashes with the academic-industrial ties that prioritize fast outcomes, often sacrificing scientific integrity for promotional purposes. The manifesto calls for scientists to take their time in pursuit of meaningful progress. Isabelle Stengers, *Another Science is Possible: A Manifesto for Slow Science* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2018).

[11]   John Holloway. *Crack Capitalism* (London: Pluto Press, 2010).

In some cases, certain movements are better positioned to reveal the possibilities of this confluence. The feminist movement today, for example, is key in helping us understand how patriarchy is foundational not only to capitalism, but also to other social relations based on hierarchy and inequality. In the past, similar insights have emerged from other movements: the indigenous rights movement, Black Lives Matter, or labor movements. We need every one of these movements, and we must recognize that, in certain periods, some of them are uniquely positioned to become catalysts in efforts for societal transformation. Different struggles can come together at specific historical moments because of the development of such catalysts.

In Latin America, for instance, the struggle for housing has played a central role in creating opportunities for confluence. At times, the housing movement has been more central than the workers' movement, revealing the power of demands that may not always be on the mainstream agenda but hold significant emancipatory potential.

Resistance, then, should be thought of as a confluence of resistances, different experiences of resistance that, at certain times, may seem partial or fragmented can, in other moments, converge into a powerful force for change. This aligns with my understanding of history: not as a linear progression but as a series of *turning points*—periods in which different possibilities emerge. These are critical moments in which change becomes not just possible but necessary. These moments of rupture are opportunities, but they are not inevitable. They are crossroads, where nothing is guaranteed. It's up to people to act in these moments, to activate the potentialities that emerge at these crossroads. Potentialities, however, are not just there, waiting to be activated: they need to be performed, shaped, and brought to life through collective action. As the Colombian anthropologist Arturo Escobar puts it, "another possible is possible" because we act: possibility is built on a possibility.[12]

According to Jacques Rancière, "Emancipation begins when we challenge the opposition between viewing and acting; when we understand that the self-evident facts that structure the relations between saying, seeing and doing belong to the structure of domination and subjection".[13] How would you respond to this idea using concrete cases, situations, actions and perspectives from Athens, based on the construction of the threshold?

Rancière's approach to emancipation, particularly his concept of the *emancipated spectator*, is very interesting. Rancière distances himself from the idea that there are those who live in illusion, living in mythologies, and those who have understood what reality is and aim to show it to others. This is an imaginary construction that is predominant in many movements and theoretical projections coming from the leftist and anarchist tradition, and where duty of demystification is predominant. Rancière challenges this logic, suggesting that the process of awakening isn't about simply dispelling illusions but enabling people to see beyond the present conditions, to imagine and connect to alternative possibilities.

For Rancière, art and, more broadly, the processes through which we construct forms of life aren't about debunking myths, but about enabling people to connect with their own lives and potentialities in a transformative way. The *emancipated spectators* are not passive observers, but co-producers who relate the stories they encounter to their own lived experiences. Through this connection, people transform themselves and their circumstances, not through the imposition of a single, external truth, but through the mutual discovery of new possibilities.

I would build on this by suggesting that we should replace the idea (and the corresponding duty) of "demystification" with the idea of "co-discovery." Emancipation is about discovering together, through collective, lived experience, what is hidden in our current reality and how we might reach beyond it. Experiences, after all, can never be fully described or reduced to typologies (of behavior, of pleasure, of reactions). Yet, dominant

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[12] Arturo Escobar explores political ecology, development anthropology, social movements, science, technology, and the link between design and autonomy, particularly in Colombia. Escobar's key publications include *Encountering Development* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994); *Autonomía y diseño: La realización de lo comunal* (Popayán: Universidad del Cauca. 2016); and *Otro posible es posible: Caminando hacia las transiciones desde Abya Yala/Afro/Latino-América* (Bogotá: Ediciones desde Abajo, 2018).

[13] Jacques Rancière. *The Emancipated Spectator* (New York: Verso, 2009), 13. See also, Jacques Rancière. *Le Maître ignorant: Cinq leçons sur l'émancipation intellectuelle* (Paris: Fayard, 1987).

elites —those who govern and shape consumption— work tirelessly to reduce our multifaceted experiences into simplified categories and responses, so that they can control them.

The direction of co-discovery and sharing experiences as a form of exploring potentialities is crucial to the idea of the commons. It's not simply imagining things that could happen, it's about exploring them through practice, thoughts, feelings.

One good example of co-discovery and sharing is the idea of enjoyment, as developed by Lefebvre, not just as individual pleasure but as the collective joy of experiencing something as a shared, communal act. This is why the festival, for Lefebvre, stands in contrast to the everyday, marking a point of transcendence in the reappropriating of meaningful life through shared joy. This, I believe, is the core of emancipation. True emancipation isn't about personal success or personal happiness, which are dominant ideals in neoliberal thought. It's about the collective process of discovering and co-creating joy, solidarity, and care.

Emancipation also requires a reclamation of collaboration, freeing it from capitalist command. In capitalism, collaboration has become a means of exploitation: workers are forced to cooperate in order to maximize and promote production, yet the fruits of their labor belong to someone else. What we need is a reimagining of collaboration as a form of mutual creation, not as a mechanical assembly of individual efforts, but as the creation of thresholds: spaces of contribution, exchange, and complementarity.

This is where I see the connection to Rancière's *emancipated spectator*. The process of co-creation, whether in art or in life, defies the fixed roles imposed by hierarchical societies. It demands the rotation of duties, an exchange of experiences, and a collective sentiment and commitment to the common good. This practice isn't only about shifting individual perspectives; it's about creating a social context where cooperation and equality are the foundational principles. Now, when we talk about the idea of emancipation as a collective process, it's crucial to understand that this is not simply about *individual* self-improvement or self-betterment. This is a critique of the very logic that underpins neoliberalism, and to an extent, the later works of Foucault, whose work of course I deeply respect, but he became preoccupied with the idea of "care of the self." Foucault's concept of "self-care" and "self-betterment" at the individual level has often been critiqued for aligning too closely with the logics of neoliberalism[14]. In my view, Foucault's later work, which focused on the notion that individuals must engage in the process of improving themselves, is problematic because it reinforces the ideology of individual responsibility for one's own success or failure within the capitalist system.

Emancipation, however, is not about "bettering oneself" as a personal project. It is about collective transformation. The true path to liberation lies in the creation of communal joy, the establishment of solidarity, and the reappropriation of what has been taken from us: our creativity, our capacity to work together, and our shared enjoyment of life. We need to counteract the neoliberal emphasis on *individual* happiness and instead focus on the collective experience of joy, care, and mutual aid. This is what we must reimagine and reestablish in our struggles against capitalist hegemony.

This is why the idea of "collaboration" must also be liberated from its capitalist constraints. What we need is collaboration as a shared, creative process, where the value of our collective labor is returned to the community. It's about moving from the mechanistic collaboration of labor to a collaborative effort in the full, creative sense: creating together, learning together, and sharing not just resources, but knowledge, skills, and joys.

Let me turn to a concrete example here: the sharing of knowledge. Some people have access to educational opportunities, cultural capital, and networks that others do not. This accumulated knowledge and experience isn't simply a personal asset; it's something that should be shared, redistributed. Knowledge, resources, and opportunities must be made available to those who have been excluded, who lack access to such privileges. This is a process of *communing,* of shared learning and shared responsibility.

However, it's important to note that true equality cannot be realized through simple participation. There is an obligation to actively share what has been denied to others. Otherwise, the inequalities that exist, whether due to

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[14] Foucault's concept of "self-care" in Michel Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1981–1982* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005) and "self-betterment" in Michel Foucault. "Technologies of the self". In Michel Foucault. "Technologies of the self,", in *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault*, ed. Luther H. Martin, Huck Gutman, & Patrick H. Hutton (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988), 16–49

socioeconomic status, race, gender, or geography, remain entrenched. For example, a child from a ghetto in the United States has far fewer opportunities than a child in an affluent Swedish neighborhood. The mere existence of "equality" on paper doesn't change the reality of unequal starting points. It is not enough to simply declare equality; we must dismantle the structural barriers and share the resources necessary for everyone to thrive.

Potentially emancipatory commoning is about giving (offering in an effort to destroy structured inequalities), sharing (so as to support common needs and aspirations), and redistributing what has been appropriated by the dominant elites. Through commoning, we may establish the conditions for living together in solidarity and by mutual care that is not based on individualism but on the well-being of the collective. In this sense, collaboration and solidarity are thresholds, spaces of contribution, exchange, and creation that transform both our society and our relationships with each other.

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