



On commoners' daily struggles: Carving out the when/where of commoning

Giacomo Poderi

abstract

Following recent developments in commons studies centred on commoning as a practice, this work takes special interest in commoners' lived experiences, desires, expectations, and struggles as they relate to sustaining a commitment to such practices over time. The article adopts a micropractice perspective focused on commoners' privileged vantage point to observe how multiple heterogeneous practices overlap and intersect in the mundane life of commoning and how, in turn, a necessary condition to continue commoning is to unearth ways through this nexus of practices. Empirically, the article is grounded in the analysis of twenty-five semi-structured interviews with long-term commoners recruited from three different commoning realms, and it advances the concept of *carving out the when/where of commoning*: a situated and relational type of boundary work that commoners continuously perform and reproduce when committing (or trying to commit) to commoning. As such, the article contributes to commons studies by starting to unravel commoners' everyday struggle to commit to and perform commoning.

Introduction

Becoming in common then, is a partial, transitory becoming, one which needs to be (re)performed to remain stable over time and space. (Nightingale, 2019: 15)

Within the burgeoning literature that constitutes commons studies, critical, feminist, and indigenous approaches recently emerged that created distance from early and mainstream debates on the commons. These latter studies built upon Hardin's famous essay 'The Tragedy of the Commons' and upon its misreading,¹ often confined either to discourses about design principles for governing rational agents in collective action or about property rights and approaches to market versus State resource management (Ostrom, 1990; Frischmann, Madison and Strandburg, 2014). A focus on *commoning* (Esteva, 2014; Bollier and Helfrich, 2015) as social practice brings to the fore the historical, social, and cultural traits of collective mobilization for social transformations (Linebaugh, 2009; Caffentzis and Federici, 2014; Ruivenkamp and Hilton, 2017) and also calls into question the extent to which individual and collective actions can be managed, strictly speaking, or even considered rational and conscious (Nightingale, 2011; Velicu and García-López, 2018; Poderi, 2020). According to these approaches, such collective actions are best understood as 'relational outcomes of subjectification, individual agency, emotion, and embeddedness within wider political economies' (Nightingale, 2019: 4).

As they have become central to social imaginaries and transformative politics for more sustainable and fair ways of being and acting in the world, great expectations have been placed on commons, commoning, and commoners. However, Velicu and García-López warn about the dichotomous assumptions upon which such expectations are built, as if any fundamental altruistic human value would be suppressed under neoliberal capitalism, and only under a commons paradigm could this find its full uncontested expression (2018). To homogenize, idealize, and romanticize the commons can be problematic (De Angelis, 2013), as this dismisses the serendipity, contradictions, mundanity, and everyday messiness of the labour underpinning viable alternatives that cut across individual and collective

1 According to David Harvey, the prisoner's dilemma, at the centre of which Garrett Hardin placed the commons and their 'tragedy', is a rhetorical device to defend private property and market exploitation of common resources more than it is an invitation to be genuinely concerned about the need of such resources to be collectively nurtured (Harvey, 2011).

needs, both human and non-human needs, on local and global scales (Nightingale, 2011; Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017; Federici and Linebaugh, 2018). Such idealization makes us forget that commoning is inherently exclusive, as it demands forms of engagement and commitment that people must actively enter into and continuously re-enact (Nightingale, 2011). More importantly, to idealize the commons perpetuates the belief that societal transformation, a transition towards sustainability and fairness, is *only* a matter of becoming aware of and choosing the commons for it to be fulfilled (De Angelis, 2013; Caffentzis and Federici, 2014).

In short, critical, feminist, and indigenous approaches invite and help us understand commoning as a 'continuous political struggle to perform the "within/against" of power and agency – a relational constitution of our collective selves – which faces us with the opacity (boundedness) of selves rather than a fully-formed alternative/communal subjectivity' (Velicu and García-López, 2018: 61). Motivated by the desire to better understand the mundanity, the everyday life and labour that underpin commoning practices (Huron, 2017; Federici and Linebaugh, 2018), this article aims to provide a micro-perspective of such boundedness of selves.

To do so, this work relies on a micropractice approach, which zooms in to focus on commoners as carriers of commoning (Reckwitz, 2002; Nicolini, 2009). Empirically, the arguments in this paper are built on an analysis of twenty-five semi-structured interviews with long-term commoners who attended three different realms of commoning (digital, knowledge, and urban commons). The main argument presented below emerges from iterative coding, analysis, and inductive interpretation as inspired by grounded theory's constructivist approach (Charmaz, 2006). Ultimately, this paper contributes to commons studies by articulating the concept of *carving out the when/where of commoning* as a situated and relational type of boundary work with/in? which commoners engage. The article is structured as follows: The first section provides a framing of commoning and commoners through theories of social practices and clarifies the scope of a micropractice perspective. The second section introduces the empirical context of the research by briefly describing the three fields I engaged with and summarizing my approach to gathering and analysing data. The third section elaborates on

the concept of *carving out the when/where of commoning* by building on illustrative excerpts from the interviews. The final section discusses the key points of the work and the study's limitations before presenting the concluding remarks.

Commoning as practice, commoners in a nexus of practices

Practice theories – also known as theories of social practices – started to be consolidated in the 1970s as researchers built on the works of scholars such as Bourdieu, Giddens, and Foucault, and on the influence of the late Wittgenstein (Schatzki, Knorr-Cetina and Savigny, 2001). Despite the fact that the *practice turn* affected many fields and academic areas, practice theories have found a welcoming home within organization studies, where they have been used to study formal organizations and institutions, the organization of specific work processes, and the organization of social life in broader terms (De Certeau, 1984; Schatzki, 2005; Nicolini, 2012). Over the years, the 'bandwagon of practice-based studies' (Corradi, Gherardi and Verzelloni, 2010) has intersected with several other fields and domains, such as technology and technology use (Suchman et al., 1999; Orlikowski, 2000); learning and knowing (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Brown and Duguid, 1991; Gherardi, 2000); strategy and decision-making (Jarzabkowski, 2004; Whittington, 2006); marketing, consumption, and social innovation (Shove and Pantzar, 2005; Skålén and Hackley, 2011).

The core tenet of these theories is the idea that central to whatever we might understand as *social*, or *social life*, is something called practice. These practices consist of organized sets of actions, and they link to form wider complexes, a nexus (Hui, Schatzki and Shove, 2017). It is the ambition of social practice theories to help explain and understand such a nexus. According to Reckwitz, theories of social practice represent a modern form of theorizing and framing through which people are able to explain action and social order, besides the more renowned forms of rational choice theory and norm-oriented theory of action (2002). These more well-known theories explain action by referring to individual interests, intentions, and purposes or by relying on the role of collective norms and values. Consequently, social

order can be understood either as combinations and interactions of single interests or as a normative consensus. In contrast, a practice is a 'routinised type of behaviour which consists of several elements, interconnected to one other: forms of bodily activities, forms of mental activities, "things" and their use, a background knowledge in the form of understanding, know-how, states of emotion and motivational knowledge' (Reckwitz, 2002: 249). Therefore, practice theories mediate a number of issues present in other traditions and in theoretical framing that tend to understand the social in terms of unsolvable dualisms, such as actor/system, agency/structure, body/mind, and social/material (Nicolini, 2012; Hui, Schatzki and Shove, 2017). Indeed, practice theories largely assume flat ontologies. This avoids reducing the social to any of these poles or dyads. Practice theories conceive the social as specific types of behaving and understanding (both of which have bodily and mental connotations) that manifest in particular times and places and that are carried out by diverse agents. In this frame, agents are body/minds who perform, 'carry', or 'carry out' social practices, and as carriers of practices, they are neither autonomous nor at the mercy of norms: 'they understand the world and themselves, and use know-how and motivational knowledge, according to the particular practice' (Reckwitz, 2002: 256). More importantly, as multiple practices constitute the social world, individuals, as body/minds agents, are the unique intersection of many such practices.²

Adopting practice theory to view commoning as the 'practice of pooling common resources' (Bollier and Helfrich, 2015: 102), or as 'engagement in the social practices of managing a resource for everyone's benefit' (Bollier, 2014: 16), implies a focus on the bodily and mental routines that constitute the performative dimensions of human endeavours. The defining trait of these endeavours is not only the ability to create and support fairer resource management and distribution systems, but also to create and nurture new forms of social life, of life in common (Stavrides, 2016: 3), which are

2 For instance, as shown by Gherardi, practicing entrepreneurship is also intersected by the practicing of gendered performativity. This is something that becomes increasingly clear when the practitioner is a woman situated in a heavily gender-biased context or when the focus is on the practitioner as an individual instead of on the practice as collectively performed (Gherardi, 2015).

antithetical to the dominant, exploitative, and dispossessing forms of contemporary neoliberal capitalism.

Capitalist practices continuously ‘de-socialize the common’ (Hardt and Negri, 2009) both by enclosing and dispossessing the commons and by directly or indirectly obstructing the conditions of possibility for commoning (De Angelis, 2004; Stavrides, 2016). For instance, in relation to urban spaces and urban life, several scholars have stressed that innovation-led policy frames supporting the ‘smart city’ paradigm or facilitating gentrification processes continue to thrive on top of and in spite of urban commoning practices, regardless of their form - squatting in unused buildings, creating open hacker spaces, sustaining urban gardens and social streets, or developing grassroots-driven marketplaces (Borch and Kornberger, 2015; Stavrides, 2016; Jørgensen and Makrygianni, 2020). While being oriented toward creating alternatives, and thus operating against such capitalist practices, commoning performs within/against the dominant political economy of neoliberal capitalism. By building on Velicu and García-López this is what renders the constitution of collective selves around several types of commons and commoning opaque and bounded rather than fully formed alternative/communal and autonomous subjectivities (2018).

At the concrete level of the practitioner, opacity and boundedness emerge through the serendipitous, contradictory, mundane, and messy everyday life commoners face, while committing to the commons and inhabiting a nexus of practices which do not contribute to the commons, and sometimes might also be antithetical to commoning. As reminded above, as practitioners, commoners are – or perform – something else, something more. Besides being able to identify with, conform to, and perform commoning, thus becoming practitioners and carriers of commoning, they are also carriers of practices forming the nexus they are situated in and crossed by. For instance, by being family members, partners, students, or professionals, they also carry those related practices. Through a micropractice perspective, practice theory offers a level of analysis and interpretation that is valuable in exploring commoners’ boundedness to such a nexus, as it frames committing to commoning as one of the many practices that constitute commoners’

everyday life. In the next section, I introduce empirical context of my research.

Research context and overview

From January 2018 to January 2020, I conducted a research project on the temporal sustainability of commoning. The research focused on the labour, affective, and caring dimensions of commoning and their relationship with commoners' commitment over time. It adopted an interpretive, qualitative approach grounded on ethnographic observation, semi-structured interviewing, and document research. At the centre of the empirical work were three different cases of commoning and the long-term commoners engaged therein. Ethnographic observations and document research were primarily used in an exploratory fashion to become acquainted with the recent history and local cultures of these contexts, as well as to understand the constant infrastructuring work (Poderi, 2020) that is often at the centre of these collaborative endeavours and their localized cultures (Kelty, 2008). Interviews³ probed commoners' lived experiences, desires, expectations, and struggles as they related to their engagement within those contexts over time. This article focuses primarily on commoners' told stories as they emerged during the interviews. Twenty-five long-term commoners were recruited from the three commoning contexts and interviewed between May 2018 and May 2019. At the time of the interviews, all of the participants had already been involved in their contexts for eight or more years. These contexts were: (1) a Free and Open Source Software (FOSS) project; (2) a grassroots, volunteer-based European nongovernmental organization (NGO) for the promotion and safeguard of FOSS and digital rights; and (3) a hacker space located in northern Europe. Respectively, they exemplify concrete instances of digital,

3 Interviews covered three themes: (1) commoners' interactions with other commoners and the tools for commoning; (2) the challenges and strategies characterizing the daily performative aspects of commoning; and (3) commoners' considerations or recollections on their long-term involvement in commoning. When reporting excerpts from these interviews, pseudonyms are used to preserve anonymity.

knowledge (or cultural), and urban commoning. Here, I summarize them in more detail.

(1) Commoners around the FOSS project nurtured a digital environment open to access, participation, use, and modification. In short, this context allowed people to engage with the use, development, and maintenance of software – a video game, in particular – along the principles and practices of a community-driven open-source paradigm. The FOSS project operated through volunteer-based contributions, and it was coordinated as a grassroots movement with no formal organizational structure. Active participation happened nearly exclusively online through the mediation of a complex information and communications technology (ICT) infrastructure (e.g., websites, multiplayer servers, bug trackers, forums, chat rooms, code repositories), which was also developed and maintained mostly by the commoners. There was an attempt to create an alternative to the paradigm that sees digital infrastructures, services, and content thriving behind walled gardens, black boxed as products or given for free under the privacy-invasive agreements typical of platform and surveillance capitalism (Srnicsek, 2017; Zuboff, 2019).

(2) From a political-activist orientation, commoning in the context of the NGO was aimed at counteracting corporate lobbying performed by information technology (IT) companies at local and international levels. In particular, pursuing awareness campaigns, providing training and educational activities, and offering legal guidance about the complex system of software licenses were the means through which the NGO tried to safeguard, and possibly spread, Free and Open Source Software principles and practices. The formal organization was run by less than a dozen employees and as many volunteers, and its scope was fostered by thousands of volunteers contributing from across Europe. A central role in this context was played by the formal organization itself, which set the strategy targets for campaigning and lobbying, and it provided the infrastructure, tools, and coordination support to the large base of volunteers that committed to the organization's scope. Commoning here was pursued through both online activities (e.g., participating through public discussion lists, translating documents and campaigns into several languages, and contributing to campaign and web

design or system administration) and physical presence at local fairs or public events (e.g., running booths, giving short talks, and organizing events).

(3) In a large European city where rental prices were high, where collective spaces were increasingly few, and where maker spaces were turning into business-oriented environments, the hacker space provided a relatively small physical location that people could turn to if interested in electronics, open hardware, and hacking in general. Access and use of the space was open to anyone, and anyone could become a member. The payment of a small monthly fee allowed anyone to gain independent access to the space at any time and day of the week. As much as possible, the hacker space was run with a grassroots flat structure, with no formal hierarchies or roles. The physical space was around 200 square metres made of four main working rooms and four smaller rooms for storage. Several consumable materials, tools for harnessing electronics and IT hardware (e.g., soldering tools, 3D printers, woodwork machines, and printed circuit boards tools), were available for use to the commoners who also bore the responsibility of maintaining and repairing them. A wiki-based website, several mailing lists, and social media channels were used for communication, archival, and organizational purposes.

These three contexts have a history spanning more than a decade. The FOSS project launched in 2003, the NGO was formally founded in 2001, and the hacker space began in 2009. Over the years, as in many other commoning endeavours, for diverse reasons and in different circumstances, commoners started and stopped engaging with the practice. Many have joined and left, many others remained and continued committing their time and efforts to nurture those instances of digital, urban, and knowledge commons. All three cases had enjoyed livelier times⁴ than they did at the time of the research in terms of pace of growth, the number of active participants, and the diversity or depth at which activities were pursued.⁵ Therefore, the support, training,

4 For instance, during the early years of its existence, commoners discussed often the possibility to relocate the hacker space, as they thought they would quickly outgrow the available space.

5 For instance, earlier, commoners in the NGO were able to spread large parts of their campaigns and messages in about fifteen European languages. Nowadays,

mentoring, or coordination of new commoners fell to the relatively few people who had adequate skills and knowledge. At the same time, these few had the skills and knowledge to maintain and operate the collaborative infrastructures.

The research used an inductive approach inspired by constructivist grounded theory analysis (Charmaz, 2006). This involved a series of iterative coding steps (or labelling) of interview data. All interviewees considered themselves part of these commons, although they all expressed the challenges and the concerns they faced about their current and future involvement therein. A recurring pattern emerged. Commoners kept referring to the substantial changes their engagement in commoning underwent over the years, but they also referred to the small adjustments, compromises, and strategies they devised in their daily lives to keep commoning. Out of the analysis, several labels contributed to formulate the concept of *carving out the when/where of commoning* presented below. In particular, codes such as ‘struggling to find balance’, ‘maintaining balance’, ‘limiting binding commitments’, ‘self-organizing personal life’, ‘personal involvement fluctuating over time’, ‘prioritizing contributions over personal life’, and ‘overlapping organization of work and commoning’ led to the concept’s development and understanding. The next section presents the key finding that emerged from the interviews, which will further elucidate the meaning of carving out the when/where of commoning.

Carving out the when/where of commoning

Carving out the when/where of commoning refers to commoners’ constant engagement in the daily boundary work of identification, negotiation, and appropriation of space and time for commoning. In part, such work is realized by carrying out commoning, thus appropriating such space and time

there is consistent translation of content only for the four major European languages. In the FOSS project, for many years, the continuous, frequent updates of new game content and features were considered a great cause of pride by those who committed to the project. Nowadays, new content is shared more sporadically and often consists of the extensive reuse of older materials.

concretely. However, it is also realized by identifying and negotiating such space and time in relation to the nexus of practices each commoner is in at any given moment. As situated in and relational to this nexus, each commoner engages with the boundary work in unique and evolving ways. By building on illustrative excerpts from the interviews, I articulate here how a commitment to commoning carves out the when/where of commoning and how such boundary work can be characterized by its specific bodily and mental routines. The following excerpt comes from John who has been involved in the FOSS project for over seven years with different tasks and responsibilities.

My priorities are in principle as follows: work has to happen; family has to happen; my running does not have to happen, but it is important to me, both for physical and mental reasons, so I make it happen; thus, [the FOSS project] is really only my fourth priority, and I only work on it after I have taken care of the other things. [...] After many attempts over the years, I managed to develop a routine that seems to work. I wake up much earlier than the rest of my family. So, the first hour or so of the day is my [FOSS] time. Then it's work during the day. Afternoons and evenings are usually for family and running. Nowadays, I don't do any more [game] coding in the evening because I am too tired for it by then. [...] Another thing is I have reduced my 'general' involvement significantly. These days I mark most of the discussions as read without opening them, [...] and I only answer those about which I think I know more than most of the other people, basically AI questions. (John, FOSS project, July 2018)

For John, commoning is one among four main practices he wants or needs to attend to. Being a father and a partner, being a researcher and being a body/mind, which requires care, all put John at the centre of a very specific nexus that calls for a certain balance in his engagement, namely when and how much. Over the years, he explored several ways of attending to and managing his various interests and commitments until he found a general routine he considers satisfying, despite requiring him to wake up much earlier than other family members, which became possible only after a considerable reduction of his overall involvement in the project.

The tendency to reduce, or try to reduce, their active involvement in commoning is an aspect that all commoners in the interviews linked to the needs, concerns, and circumstances that emerge at different times in their

daily lives and that call for a necessary realignment of priorities or expectations.

I confess I have spent way too much time and effort on [the FOSS project] over the years, to the detriment of several other things, my education included. I did enjoy it, though, and I think that's the challenge. When you enjoy something, you tend to want to do it more than other things. I wouldn't say finding a balance has entirely been easy for me. (Mark, FOSS project, October 2018)

Some attributed the need to reduce commitments and involvement to excessive and exhausting overcommitments in their early or previous years of commoning. For instance, Mark acknowledged his ongoing struggle for reducing his commitments in the FOSS project by linking the sacrifices made and the enjoyment, fulfilment, and purpose derived from contributing. Others reported significant changes in their private or professional lives that negatively affected their ways of commoning. They mentioned the transitions from being university students to starting their first jobs, switching jobs, acquiring new roles at work, bearing with unemployment periods, the birth of their children, the consolidation or interruption of relevant relationships, and the diagnosis of a chronic health condition. Simultaneously, they also stressed that certain activities or ways of relating to the commons were easier to preserve than others, and those were the ones they maintained to continue commoning.

Nevertheless, despite nearly everyone reporting their attempts to rationalize a distribution or management of various commitments, hobbies, and relationships that constitute their nexus of practices, they all highlighted the ephemeral nature of their achievements, if any. They were ephemeral because sometimes the achievement of balance is more imagined and hoped for than concrete and material, and because what is satisfactory one day can easily become unsatisfactory the following day, week, or month, something that Julie referred to as a constantly moving target.

So yes, it's rather tough. I don't think I already found a good balance, because I'm just trying to balance it all the time and the balance changes all the time. (Julie, NGO commons, June 2018)

The following excerpt from Julie's account further illustrates such ephemerality.

[Finding a balance] changes depending on what I'm doing. [...] When I'm translating, it's very different. In a way, translating helps me to evade myself in something else, and it helps me to make a break from work. It's very different, and it is something that I like to do. So, it really depends on what I'm volunteering for. When it resembles duty or my job, it's often really hard to do, but when it's something that is quite different from what I am doing in the other aspects of my life, then I like it more and it feels good for me. And the other part is also very depending on my day-to-day life. I'm volunteering for a long time now, and I recently had some dire events in my life, and whenever those happened, it will go either in a way or the other. Either I'm contributing a lot, a lot, a lot so I can think to anything, evade, and say that's good. Or I'm really not in the mood and feel I cannot contribute any more for several weeks or months. That may be tough, because when there are people that rely on you, you feel like you shouldn't do it. (Julie, NGO commons, June 2018)

Julie's account shows the extent to which commoning, employment responsibilities, and the unpredictability of personal life tightly intertwine, and they challenge the pursuit of the proper physical and mental conditions to contribute to the NGO's scope. In particular, the search for a balance between when and how much to engage in commoning activities is mediated by the specific commoning activities and her vocational tasks. Indeed, contributing to the NGO is experienced as a way to evade the alienation coming from her job's daily routines. This is substantially upset when health and family difficulties arise. Even the instrumental use of commoning as a way to cope with difficulties is no longer enough and is replaced by the will and need to stop and establish distance.

All commoners in the interviews reported the experience of being unable to achieve or maintain a balance among their various commitments over time and, hence, the constant search for a balance as mainly tiring, stressing, or saddening.

I'm still a paying member, but unfortunately, I only manage to pop by every now and then. [...] Earlier, I was there more than once a week, and I did a lot of volunteer work for the place. [...] At the beginning, once I've finished at work, I usually came down there. There was a lot to do, so I gladly spent many evenings down there, helping out renovating the place. Once things kind of got

settled in, there was more time to, yes, socialize, hang out, work on your own projects, [...] but unfortunately, yes, that also stopped once I got into [the other company], and I got involved with a lot of other different things. It's not that I don't want to come there. Sadly, it's just I do not manage to keep it in my daily schedule any more, so to say. (Stephan, Hacker space, December 2018)

In short, carving out the when/where of commoning does not simply resolve in the activity of time management or planning in the sense of allotting specific time slots in the day and allocating them to specific commoning activities, although some people can deal with boundary work by implementing this specific strategy. Carving out the when/where of commoning is a kind of boundary work that assumes commoners' personal, active, and constant engagement with the complexities of inhabiting, carrying out, and performing multiple practices. It shows situated and relational connotations as well as practical and emotional ones. It is situated because it is always enacted in specific moments in time of a commoners' personal life and identity development. It is relational because the way commoners engage varies accordingly to commoners' identity (e.g., professional, domestic, or social) and their role or responsibility in the commoning practice. Furthermore, it involves the practical work of organizing and handling the possible tensions, conflicts, or synergies that emerge between the engagement in commoning and the nurturing of the aspects of life not directly related to commoning. It bears emotional connotations as each commoner nurtures different emotional relationships to such boundary work, from satisfaction and fulfilment to stress and disappointment. In the next section, I reflect on this finding and highlight the limitations of the study.

Discussion

Scholars, practitioners, and activists have shown that commons are much more than material or immaterial resources coupled with sustainable collective management principles. They are means and opportunities to create languages, vocabulary, and more importantly the social relationships that can (re-)define our ways of being and acting together, which underpin the subjectivities that are alternate to those spurred by contemporary capitalism (Hardt and Negri, 2009). However, commoning also faces us with

the opaque reality of our lives, our agency, and our subjectivities, which always act within wider/specific political and socioeconomic contexts. Therefore, commoning cannot escape the contradictions, limitations, and defeats of existing within and struggling against such dominant contexts. As claimed by Butler and Athanasiou, to acknowledge, understand, and accept such reality is a necessary step to be able to move forward (2013). To frame commoners as bounded selves (Velicu and García-López, 2018) helps us not to neglect such entanglement and to foreground both the relational dimension of becoming a commoner as well as its partial and transitory nature (Singh, 2017; Nightingale, 2019). If commoning and its production of alternate subjectivities is a constant struggle 'within/against', which must not cease to be re-performed to remain stable, then the everyday labour that underpins commoning and that is sustained by commoners acquires renewed significance and should not be neglected, as stressed by several scholars (De Angelis, 2013; Huron, 2017; Federici and Linebaugh, 2018).

As the previous section highlighted, zooming in to commoners' everyday lives helps to engage with their bounded selves and to provide a more nuanced understanding of the constant political struggle of living and performing within/against the dominant context. It revealed how commoners constantly carve the conditions of possibility for commoning out of a nexus of practices that they inhabit and perform. Understanding this struggle is relevant for three reasons. First, it provides empirical evidence of how commoners perform commoning as a struggle for the identification, negotiation, and appropriation of space and times for commoning. This is transversal to the organized routines and collectively shared activities oriented towards a specific resource or social dilemma that constitute commoning as a practice: be they the collective management and operation of a space for hacking and experimenting with technology, or the distributed co-production of open software and digital content, or the organization of political action for defending and promoting open, accessible, and democratic principles of digital ownership and sovereignty. Second, in more substantial terms, it shows commoners' involvement and commitment to commoning as bounded and vulnerable to everyday life and serendipitous events. This reaffirms the partial and transitory aspects (Nightingale, 2019) of performing commoning

in practice. It acknowledges commoners' need to constantly re-perform the decision to commit to commoning, and it foregrounds the labour involved in identifying, negotiating, and appropriating the space and time for such commitments. Third, it reveals that commoners, as autonomous yet bounded selves, can actively work to pursue these spaces and times for commoning, but at the same time, such particular work can also become a relevant source of alienation from commoning itself. This poses an interesting challenge that spurs us to investigate the relationship further between the temporal sustainability of commoning, as collective practices that outlive any individuality, and the material sustainability of practising commoning for any individual commoner.

I raise here two final considerations about the scope and limitations of this paper. One limitation concerns the contexts of commoning underpinning this research and which attends to the Global North. The other relates to the zooming in approach in the analytical and interpretive part of the research and the consequent lack of a zooming out approach. As much as observed and interviewed commoners portrayed a wide variety of socioeconomic backgrounds and demographic profiles, their identity is shaped and bounded to that of European and North American people, where the hegemony of a neoliberal and capitalist society is configured rather differently than in the Global South. At the same time, commoners engaged with and committed to practices that involved volunteer-based forms of commoning. Strictly speaking, these forms did not directly contribute to their material sustenance and, therefore, made their pursuit of a professional life one of their priorities. I make no claim about their forms of commoning being corrupted or noncorrupted, nor more or less anti-capitalist than other forms of commoning (Caffentzis and Federici, 2014). Nevertheless, this aspect shall be kept in mind when considering the reach of the insights presented here. In the end, several commoners did acknowledge their condition and their ability to common as a privileged one. In what way this affected the performative aspect of the struggle for the within/against and our understanding of it is a matter for further research. Regarding the second limitation, Nicolini stresses the importance of accompanying a zooming in approach to a practice with a zooming out, in a way that the two approaches iteratively inform each other

(2009). This dialogic approach helps in appreciating how practice and practitioners mutually constitute each other in their collective and individual dimensions. This paper limited itself to a zooming in approach and focused primarily on individual struggles of the commoners as practitioners. One way to further develop the topic of sustaining commitment to commoning through a zoom out approach could, for instance, focus on the collective struggles of redistribution of tasks, commitments, and work overload among commoners, as well as collective practices of caring for each other (Poderi, 2020). Similarly, another way to zoom out on the struggles and implications of committing to commoning should also investigate the extent to which commoners' boundary work affects commoners' nexus of practices and the politics of the social relations that attend to them, beyond the sole focus on how such boundary work affects their attitude towards commoning.

Conclusions

In short, this work adopted a micropractice perspective of commoners as a privileged vantage point to observe how multiple heterogeneous practices overlap and intersect in the mundane life of commoning and how, in turn, a necessary condition to continue commoning is the continuous unearthing of ways through such a nexus. The article advanced the concept of carving out the when/where of commoning as a situated and relational type of boundary work that commoners continuously perform and reproduce when committing (or trying to commit) to commoning. As such, the article contributes to commons studies by starting to unravel the everyday struggles of commoners as bounded selves.

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acknowledgements

I would like to thank the editors and the anonymous reviewers for their valuable comments and work during the review process. Furthermore, I would like to thank Yvonne Dittrich, Joanna Saad-Sulonen, and Maria Menendez Blanco for the support and discussions which greatly advanced the early ideas behind this publication. Finally, I would like to thank all the commoners who provided their time and support during interviews and observations.

This work has been supported by the EU/H2020-MSCA-IF-2016 funding programme, under Grant n. 749353.

the author

Giacomo Poderi holds a PhD in Sociology and Social Research from the University of Trento, Italy. He currently works in the Department of Digital Design at the IT University of Copenhagen, Denmark. His research broadly revolves around the topics of digital commons and commoning and builds upon both ethnographic research and intervention-based research grounded on Participatory Design.

Email: gipo@itu.dk