

SOME PRELIMINARY NOTES FOR LONDON COMMON(S) COURSE

common(s) is a contested term and horizon. to think about a common(s) is to interrogate fundamental institutions and basic categories of human existence in the early 21st century. (nation, state, public, people, private, property, law, money, culture, nature, history just to name a few).

trusted friends have pointed out, common(s) may well be neoliberalism's plan b. this is a risk that must remain central to any consideration of the common(s) or practices of commoning.

to what degree is our notion of a common(s) and our practices of commoning able to undermine and bring the demise of capitalist norms and relations?

we know that the common(s) we are speaking of is not commensurate with capitalism, but we also know that a kind of negative common does exist within a capitalist logic. this negative common is whatever is residual, what cannot be monetized or turned into a mechanism of extraction of wealth. for capitalists, what is money-losing is what should be common.

ecological ruin, toxic waste and toxic debt can be examples of capitalism's common.

how to distinguish this general idea of a common from the common(s) we are attempting to reclaim or struggle through and for?

common(s) is not a catch all to all that is common. a gated community does not a common(s) make.

common(s) are ideas, language, seeds, air, water, the earth under our feet, the spaces and cultures we collectively produce each and every day, the forests, the seas, the trees and all that bears and gives life. indeed common(s) are the premise of life. they are the ecology of practices and complex entities which conjoin the many forms of life on the planet.

exclusion and separation, so critical to capitalist organization and functioning, are not in the logic of common(s).

common(s) are the results of collective labor, creation, research, thought, and innovation across centuries and regions.

common(s), whether material or immaterial, are degraded by the institution of property.

common(s) are without measure, precisely because the inter-dependencies between species, social groups, and forms of life cannot be priced.

common(s) implies a different temporality.

common(s) implies a temporality of reproduction less than of production.

the time of reproduction, of care, is neither slow nor fast, but it is opposed to the logic of efficiency, optimization, and profit.

common(s) infers less a particular designated space and more the inter-spaces, threshold spaces which link communities rather than becoming the limited domain of one.

common(s) in this way are interstitial zones.

common(s) are not simply about resources as some fellow commoners have attempted to consider them. the very logic of resources still remains vulnerable to the productivist, extractivist, reductively materialist ethos, which more evidently today, is all too commensurable with the neo-colonial, neo-imperial, and capitalist logic.

common(s) are not reducible to the world of things, because in essence they are more about the world of relations.

if capitalism has thrived on separating the deeds from the doings, common(s) describe the places which mend again and nurture along those relations between the things produced and the doings and doers producing.

the productivist ethos, which first separates the deed from the doing and then elevates them above the doers, and further elevates the money exchanged for those deeds above them all, (to the point that beyond any deed or doer: capitalism becomes a nearly religious belief in the necessity of money to beget more money) is more evidently bankrupt than it may have appeared to those struggling against capitalism in the 19th and 20th centuries.

all production must be conjoined to reproduction, and any economy, whether capitalist, socialist, or by any other name which does not recognize this basic insight is operating outside a logic of the common(s).

as much as common(s) is not a particular space or place, it is also not a particular entity, object, or thing.

common(s) is singular and plural because it is what links the ones with the manys.

common(s) are everywhere emerging and yet constantly being fortified against or enclosed upon.

common(s) are not a medium point between a logic of public and private as some would dream or hope it to be.

the necessity and exigency for thinking the common(s) emerges from the bankruptcy of these categories.

what once stood for people has been identified with state control. what once stood for individuals has been identified with corporate control.

common(s) also defies the logic of a state and its people, because common(s) is what undoes and traverses the logic of borders.

common(s) does not have a price and thus it is incommensurable with the logic of money.

thus, common(s) is not a category of new entrepreneurship, green economies and the like.

common(s) implicates reorientation of economics toward a perspective of degrowth, reproduction, and subsistence.

subsistence, contrary to what the imf, world bank and neo-colonial interests have proselytized is not a sign of poverty, but autonomy and self-sufficiency.

poverty under the light of common(s) is the denial of a means of reproducing life without submitting to the capitalist relations, which are inevitably, despite the equality and exchange that money promises, relations of disproportion, of submission, and servitude

a culture of the common(s) is everywhere but the existing structures of law, police, state, property, money always force, mold, and channel back the commoners into using existing logics and paths.

those logics, rationale, norms always invoke notions of sustainability, viability, pragmatism, and realism which cannot imagine something beyond the relation to state or the relation to capital.

autonomy is something immanent. and yet, as it pertains to the potentiality for communities to take the care for themselves and their environments into their own hands, autonomy remains elusive. the seemingly irreversible ecological destruction that capitalism and present modes of production are creating day by day present unchangeable realities which deny for millions any potential for autonomy.

thus struggles for common(s) are struggles through common(s) are the inventions of common(s)

the innovations of the common(s) are always inventions which destroy these logics or create paths of escape from them.

corporation, nation, state, individual, money, property, gender, race: all fictions, ascriptions, and abstractions which have had and continue to have concrete and material impacts on life. stories and fictions weave together the fabric of reality. the reality of common(s) will equally be woven together by other stories, other fictions.

common(s) is not based on the logic of an alternative. nor is it based on a logic of competition. one cannot compete with capitalism. to compete with capitalism one can only join in its logic.

the paths to common(s) are not a choice of alternate or competing paths. the paths to common(s) are infinite and they are what the multitudes create if they are not taken off of them by force and violence.

retracing and recovering these paths implies retracing our own steps and the concrete instances of force and violence in which each of us has been evicted off the paths of the common(s).