Call for Contributions
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Design Commons
Practices, Processes and Crossovers

Co-Editors
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Format
Edited collection of writings, from within the design field.

Pages
12-15 papers and about 60,000 - 75,000 words.

Series
DERF Springer / Design Research Foundations
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"The goal of the series is to provide a platform for publishing state of the art research on foundational issues in design and its applications in industry and society. Suitable topics range from methodological issues in design research to philosophical reflections on the specificities of design rather than actual design work or empirical cases only. The definition of design behind the series is inclusive. In terms of disciplines, it ranges from engineering to architecture. In terms of design work, it ranges from conceptual issues in design through design experiments and prototypes to evaluative studies of design and its foundations."

Thematic outline
This edited collection aims to develop the link between the commons/commoning and the design of alternative potential realities. The link between the commons and design warrants further expansion, addressing design thinking, and other possible streams currently operative in the fields of practice and theory.

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Why this publication on 'Design Commons'?
This book collects papers on the topic of *commoning in design*. The word 'commoning' derives from the wider concept of the 'commons', a term that has deep philosophical and theoretical roots, dating back to the ideas of Plato and Thomas Hobbes (cf *Leviathan* 2017). In the contemporary sense the mechanisation of commoning as operative concept provides the foundation of an 'other' socio-economic model within the public sector. Its echoing effect has led to the fusion of the concept with a variety of design domains as for example game design and game theory, spatial design and product design.

The reasons for a dedicated edition on 'design and commoning' are twofold:
1) The recent surge of renewed interest of the social conditions in design remains atheoretical. The International Journal of Design (2016) and Elizabeth Resnick's (2019) edited collection of essays both question the transformative role of the social through and within design practices. A deeper theoretical and philosophical foundation will help problematise the link between commoning and design, and in doing so define the operative theories, concepts and frameworks that impact design thinking across a series of context and conditions.

2) Design has become more ubiquitous, expanding both its domain of influence and conditions of praxis. With this expansion, design touches a variety of contested areas. Designers are continuously challenged by conflicts and edge conditions, having to mitigate between both scales of conflict and the vested interests of individuals. We find examples where the use of public corridors to dry shoes has a direct impact on fire safety regulations. The lack of accessible space for personal recreation has expelled minority groups of Hong Kong onto public bridges and infrastructures as the new social space. The tactical use of parks, earmarked for outdoor recreation, becomes the epicentre of the narcotic trade. For the digital realm, data and the city, the question of 'what is made visible' and 'seen by whom' challenge the predatory conditions of the ever-present panopticon of the social, versus the position of the private life of the individual. In terms of gamification, closely linked to the smart city paradigm, the questions explore single user application versus the networked clusters that mobilise civic participation and inclusive high-tech autonomy.

In the global climate of population increase and the prevalent reduction of financial resources the question and theorisation of shared capacities will remain part and parcel to the future of design thinking. This publication will therefore exploit the theoretical and philosophical themes related to a wider commoning 'problematique', providing designers better grounding in the networked context of the twenty first century. The explicit theorisation of design and the commons will explore the *implicit* link through each of the collected papers to show how this philosophical construct can be *explicate*d in the context of network collectives and transdisciplinary approaches that currently inform design practices.

The Commons and Commoning

In terms of Wester political philosophy, the commons concept has had a long history. It underlined Plato's solution to social order in *The Republic.* It was central to Hobbes and through him, to modern economics and public choice theory. More recently, it has reappeared in the digital domain under creative commons.

This book builds on Elinor Ostrom's original publication on the *Governing the Commons* (1990), which questioned the dominant models of managing and sharing natural as well as human-made resources. The *commons*, as a concept, builds its premise on an understanding of how natural recourses (referred to as "Common Pool Resources"), are co-shared amongst a number of individuals and groups. Moreover, the commons transect social, economic, technological, and scalar questions. The concept addresses economic aspects, on equal footing with those questions of the social, or, with questions of the technological. It embeds its functionality within *small groups (users of a kitchen or a telephone)* or in a wider domain, within the *civic (public spaces and parks)*. It is both *local (a village)* as well as *global (use of the oceans)* and can materialise in a *restricted (a house)* or *boundless (immigration)* format.

The 'commons' remains social at its core. It operates through choices and scenarios. The commons materialise where the self-interest of the individual is set against that of the collective. In a historical context, this *singular versus collective* establishes specific understandings of reciprocity amongst kin. Closer examination of social crises has shown the effectiveness of the commons in addressing moments of uncertainty as a social problem-solving model. Co-operation in food gathering, child rearing, and defence - in whatever formats - remained co-dependant of a broader collective action. As Ostrom states:

> *Collective-action problems pervade international relations, face legislators when devising public budgets, permeate public bureaucracies, and are at the core of explanations of voting, interest group formation, and citizen control of governments in a democracy.* (Ostrom 1998, 1-22)

The commons, in the more contemporary sense, has reverberated into the domains of political ecologies, and as such the very nature of political-economic approaches to territory, governance and types of economies (Ostrom 1988). With its origins in classic political philosophy, the commons has become multi-disciplinary in application. It has affected discourses around asset management, environmental ecologies, urban design, geopolitical debates on human rights, and production of knowledge. It has relied on rational choice theory, related to game theory (Ostrom, Elinor, Roy Gardner,

and James Walker (2008)) and the theory of public commodities to reformulate economic positions away from dominant economies of consumption, speculation and exchange.

For Bollier and Helfrich (2015), the structural conditions of the commons has delivered compelling patterns of engagement at three levels. First, the processes of the commons, its co-action, co-production or co-operating - either at scales of a high-rise, in an urban village deeply embedded in rural regions, in artistic communities, research settings or, related to collectives in cyberspace - remains a *universal* necessity. Second, to this effect, although the commons may be regarded as a social occurrence derived from ancient principles, it still retains a *modest appreciation* in hyper-industrial and modernised societies. Third, the commons define an *'open source' paradigm shift*. In this shift, the commons represents a repositioned world view, one that impacts both material, formal and conceptual conditions as a *process*. Fab labs, hacker spaces, jamming, the sharing economy, the reformation of the civic, types of governance, private, the public and, as such, the urban, are each reframed once placed within the domains of the commons concept.

Hardt and Negri's *Commonwealth* (2009), expands on the Marxist analysis of political-economic systems, setting the commons logics against the advantages and disadvantages of governance models, capitalism, and social movements. Sohn, Kousoulas and Bruyns' (2015) edited collections, situates Hardt and Negri's position within the specifics of public space, linking the commons to self-organised empowerment struggles. The discussion of a variety of social movements explicates how both publicness and the urban rematerialize through the self-organisation of social bodies in an attempt to expose latent possibilities within the civic and urban space in times of crisis. The work draws strongly on Stavrides' (2016), linking urban spaces to the commons in periods of urban activism.

From another angle, the commons has created balance with domains of knowledge in a data culture. Defining knowledge as a specific commons, the information paradigm has become decentralized in both its production and ownership. Intelligences, intellectual property and the civics' role are tested through digital information which has, in the conventional sense, always been closed-off and commodified. For Ostrom, irrespective of being labelled as; 'digital', 'electronic', 'information', 'virtual', 'communication', 'intellectual', or 'technological' (Ostrom 2007, p5) the information and knowledge domain speak to the sharing of a universal field where material, knowhow and data is collective by default. In this light the common-pool resources become economic as well as legal in nature, differentiating between the 'rights to' against the 'rights from' in terms of *who has access to* information and *who can derive rights from* each data set.

References to the legalities of common property (Bromley 1986, Ciriacy-Wantrup and Bishop 1975), transference of rights and the open access of knowledge, in whatever format, remain at the heart of the questions posed in the light of the knowledge-commons versus knowledge economies, materialised in the various licenses to use, distribute or make part of commercial enterprises. In respect to digital media and popular culture, a range of practices from social media to game modifying communities has long helped to destabilise the traditional idea of centralised authorship. Media texts, products and concepts such as video games are not only remixed and reconfigured, redefined and deconstructed by 'small' actors but, alternative economies and new ways of doing have emerged on the side. Everything from 'participatory media' and 'fandom' to 'piracy cultures' and 'Kickstarted' design education is in one way or another linked to a larger idea of the commons.

In parallel, the commons concomitantly expose certain drawbacks. As outlined by Hardin (1968) in what is termed the 'tragedy of the commons', the imbalance of supply and demand exponentially impacts structural as well as long term effects. Irrespective of its application in a spatial domain, in the eradication of illnesses, or in its continued advocacy of 'the public good', the complexity of balancing market driven needs and resources availability may irreversibly impact all the conditions of both common good and how various systems are brought together. Ostrom (2008) herself mechanises the praxis of design when postulating principles for governing sustainable recourses. Amongst others, design remains a necessary skill when mechanising the commons, articulating definable boundaries, determining the proportional balance between benefits and costs, collective choice arrangements, strategizing conflict resolution, minimal recognition of the right to organize nested enterprises and

even design pedagogies (Freire 2007). We are therefore left to question the 'common' thread in this conceptual field, and its specificity to the design settings. Moreover, *is design returning to new forms of foundational principles in terms of its material and social practices, and if so, through what means?*

Possible topical areas

This publication aims to draw out design positions in light of the commons in three areas of interest.

First, the position of *design*, *the commons* and *the social* requires reconsideration. The inclusion of the commons into the social realm exposes deep rifts in both the use and application of social models, social life and of being 'social'. Design's impact on the multitude of aspects generated by the social, that is to say, knowledge, language information sets and codification of social life, requires a constant reaffirmation of the praxis and practices of design. Echoing Hardt and Negri (op. cit.) the question of common rights, access and legalities derived form a specific stance on property, biopolitics and the immediate landscape, highlight design's challenged position to the address social. How can both the commons and design help communities to construct networks, markets, identities, spatial entities, plans, rules, or other governance mechanisms that help promote their longevity and resilience?

The second stream looks at the inevitable link of the *commons, design and economies* or *market systems*. This particular stream questions the commons-design linkages in terms of dependencies on the dominant and homogenized (Bollier 2015) market systems. Market exchanges in a global monoculture disregard innovation based on their ability to generate capital. The possibility of subsystems to operate in parallel to dominant systems, supress the notions of other forms of economic thinking. With design expressed as the generation of economies, the question of the commons impacts moments of transformation in specific value systems. Not only relevant to exchange economies, that form part of microeconomic thinking (Varian 1992), the relevance of the commons is traceable in gift structure (Cheal 1991), or what Einstein (2011) terms 'sacred economies', redressing socio-economic transformations. This fixation on 'real market' economic forces and goal driven processes requires to elaborate on how design facilitates or counteracts forms of entrepreneurialism, types of economic partnerships and the creation of joint visions through other forms of design strategies.

The linking of *design and the commons* is at the intersection of the design as making, and its ever-evolving relationships towards individuals, collectives and societies. Thanks to the increasing democratisation of knowledge and technologies in recent years, the Internet has been pivotal in providing a versatile and free platform for people to facilitate "Do It Yourself" or "DIY with others". Two notable areas of development which contribute to "DIY with technologies" are commons-based peer production (Bencher and Nissenbaum 2006), and digital fabrication (Gershenfeld 2012). Whether this is in the form of hacking, jamming or 'co-production' (Watson 2014, Low 2012) *Design Making* and the commons translates into questions of communication tools, products that generate bonds between people, spaces that are capable of supporting commoning, but also methods and design processes that help to generate empathic relationships between people and designers.

Design need to better articulate ways forward, in both its analytic and synthetic conditions of praxis in the context of the commons. Focusing on the question - *is design returning to new forms of foundational principles in terms of its material and social practices?* – we invite contributions that examine the role of the commons in the design field. In addition, we encourage contributions to reflect on the commons and design in terms of the role of a new design society, theoretical considerations for design models, new emergent materialities in linking the commons with design, contextually driven commons and design processes as well as a population of radical other notions.

Proposed abstracts should be 600 words in length, excluding bibliography. Abstracts should focus on how their respective links to either of the three themes, through theoretical positions, design methodologies or practices. Authors are welcome to contact editors with other possible themes before the submission of abstracts. All submissions are to follow the Chicago Manual Style, 16th edition. All papers will be double blind peer reviewed.

All abstracts / submissions are to be send to both editors dr.ir. Gerhard Bruyns (gerhard.bruyns[at]polyu.edu.hk) and dr.ir. Stavros Kousoulas (S.Kousoulas[at]tudelft.nl) on 29th February 2020.

Schedule

The publication date is set for December 2020. The following dates set out the production schedule.

29 February 2020:	Submission of 600 word abstract with references.
1 April 2020:	Notification of acceptance, editors' comments on abstracts.
Mid-June 2020:	Tentative - Editorial colloquia gathering, Cape Town, South Africa.
Mid-July 2020:	Tentative - Editorial colloquia gathering, Sydney, Australia.
1 September 2020:	Submission of Final text and peer reviewing.
15 December 2020:	Publication.

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