THEME SECTION

Commoning and publicizing
Struggles for social goods

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Abstract: Public goods have been neglected, if not outright rejected, by the anti-capitalist literature, which favors "commons." This article argues that equal attention should be given to commons and to public goods—both are essential to social reproduction. Their difference is not one of nature, but of status; it results from the way they are managed and distributed. I offer some conceptual clarifications in the literature on commons, public goods, club goods and private goods, and argue for an approach that looks at the status of goods. This opens up room for examining two ways struggles for social goods are and may be waged: commoning and publicizing. While commoning practices require organization at the community level, publicizing practices make claims on the state as a provider of public goods.

Keywords: capitalism, cities, commoning, commons, public goods, publicizing, state

In their introduction to a recent volume focused on infrastructure in the Global South, Nikhil Anand, Akhil Gupta, and Hannah Appel ask the essential questions: "To whom will resources be distributed and from whom will they be withdrawn? What will be public goods and what will be private commodities, and for whom? Which communities will be provisioned with resources for social and physical reproduction and which will not?" (2018: 2). Their use of the future tense makes sense because they explore the "promise of infrastructure" on a rather discursive level. This theme issue's articles examine these questions both historically and ethnographically in countries that share a common paradox: a strong commitment by the state to deliver social goods equally to all and the subordination of state provisioning to capitalist logics of value creation and profit-making.

While such contradictory tendencies can be found in many parts of the world, the tension is exacerbated in South Africa, Namibia, China, and Vietnam. Although their histories differ, all four countries share a common tradition of strong state interference in the economy and governing of their populations. The parties that took power after the regime change in South Africa and Namibia in 1991 and that still rule

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China and Vietnam are nominally committed to social justice principles.[1] Moreover, they seek to redress the heritage of past inequalities. In all four cases, dual provisioning regimes have long restricted social goods to a small proportion of urban residents. Under the apartheid regimes in South Africa and its Namibian colony, white urban citizens had privileged access to urban infrastructure and public services. While the new constitution enshrined civil rights for all, the parties that took power also vowed to provide social justice and universalize access to urban public goods among all city dwellers. The division between rural and urban populations in China and Vietnam, which benefited the urban minority in the collectivist era, has only recently been abolished, but the authorities had taken gradual steps to overcome inequalities in access to education, pensions, health insurance, and other benefits that derive from this dichotomy.

Yet, these inequalities have persisted and even deepened due to economic liberalization. The first three decades of reforms in China and Vietnam (1978–2006), though not as exacting as Eastern European shock therapy, saw the end of the delivery of free social goods such as housing and general state retrenchment in the distribution of social services (Ong and Zhang 2015). In South Africa and Namibia, a decade of harsh home-grown structural adjustment in the first phase of the post-apartheid era (1994–2000) disillusioned the expectations of many poor Black township dwellers. The 2008 global financial crisis triggered a turn, if not a return, to a politics of state intervention and redistribution, especially in countries with authoritarian regimes and/or developmental states (Collier et al. 2016; Parnell and Robinson 2012; Parnell and Walawege 2014). All four countries have witnessed amplified official "pro-poor" and "developmental" rhetoric, and a revival of socialist ideologies in China and Vietnam, but also in Namibia.[2]

In the face of growing social unrest, redistributive efforts mitigate economic liberalism. Yet, despite political proclamations and increased state redistribution, equality principles are not the only ones taken into consideration: they are

Figure 1. Core socialist values, Shenzhen, 2018. Photo by author.

kept in check by "trickle-down effect" ideologies and the capitalist commands of uneven development—intercity competition for attracting capital and talent and scalar reorganization that has created budgetary austerity. The pressure resulting from these contradictory commitments falls on the governments of fast-growing cities.[3] Although they profess principles of equality, the mechanisms local governments have adopted for provisioning social goods are uneven and conditional, since they embrace privatizing and clubbing logics that amount to de facto restricting access to those goods.

The articles in this theme section retrace the changing paths of provisioning social goods against the backdrop of these historical changes and paradoxical trends. Provisioning includes production, distribution, and consumption (Narotzky 2012: 78); however, in all four cases, emphasis is placed on citizens' struggles for access to social goods. These struggles comprise practices of commoning and publicizing. In this introduction, I argue that while commoning practices are a way for urban dwellers to protect public goods against their dismantlement and ensure minimal coverage of their daily needs, publicizing practices—making claims on the state as a provider of public goods—are equally crucial to people whose formal and substantial urban citizenship rights have long been denied and remain largely unavailable (I give full definitions of both terms in later sections).

Public goods are a major political issue in countries whose constitutions profess an ideology of equality that is de facto denied by high-speed capitalist urbanization. They are one type of social good. Social goods are those goods essential to social reproduction such as housing, roads and electricity, and services such as education, healthcare and welfare.

Public goods are generally provisioned by governmental entities—most often the central or local state (a municipal government). They have been largely neglected, if not outright rejected, by the anti-capitalist literature, which has made "commons," "the common," and "commoning" central to its critique.[4] Extending ongoing conversations about the urban commons in *Focaal* (Susser and Tonnelat 2013; Susser 2017), this theme section connects insights from urban, economic and political anthropology to redirect attention to public goods in urban and possibly other contexts. A focus on public goods offers insights into their actual relationship to the state and capital, which are both antagonistic and collusive (Kalb 2017: 70; Kalb and Mollona 2018: 9).

While urban public goods are drivers of capitalist accumulation, these goods also serve as the basis for the urban commons. David Harvey stresses that it takes collective action—*commoning*—on the part of urban citizens to turn a public good into an urban commons. However, what exactly the "commoning of public goods" consists of remains unclear, and the risk is fetishizing commoning as much as commons, ignoring the risks of and limits to commoning in the context of neoliberal and authoritarian state policies respectively.

Harvey also notes that commoning often entails "protecting the flow of public goods that underpin the commons' qualities" (2012: 73). I propose we call such initiatives to safeguard or enable recovery of access to public goods *publicizing*. This introduction argues that both commoning and publicizing matter in collective struggles of reproduction, that is, in defending the right to social goods that are central to people's social reproduction.

Granting equal attention to commoning and publicizing requires considering public goods along with commons. Public goods and commons are not antithetical to each other. First, both are social goods (as opposed to private goods); the difference between them is one of status. Second, there is no difference in nature between a park labeled a commons and one labeled a public good. Their differing statuses results from practices of management and distribution that make them different. Third, as stressed by French alter-economist Jean-Marie Harribey, both commons and public goods are provisioned as a result of a political decision; the differences are only the scale at which the

decision is made and the good provided (2013: 400).

Economists usually distinguish between four types of goods: public, private, club, and common-pool-resources. Economic textbooks present them in a 2×2 table according to whether their consumption is rivalrous or non-rivalrous and exclusion is feasible or non-feasible.[5] I first explain the distinction between public and club goods based on these criteria, and then show how it influenced Elinor Ostrom's approach to commons. In the course of the argument, I outline the problems with the ways economists classify goods according to their inherent nature, and argue for an approach that, instead, looks at practices that change or aim to change the status of goods. We are then in a better position to ask, as this theme section's articles do, how people may protect social goods when they are being enclosed—*commoning*—and struggle for rights to access when they are being differentially and conditionally distributed—*publicizing*.

Public and club goods

In the post-Great Depression context of the expanding interventionist state, economists Robert Musgrave (1939), followed by Paul Samuelson (1954), defined public goods as goods that, because of their intrinsic nature, are not profitable enough for market actors to produce and are therefore subject to "market failures." The most widespread definition of pure public goods is that they are neither rivals nor excludable. Non-rivalrousness, or non-subtractability, means that one person consuming the good does not diminish another person's consumption of it. Non-excludability refers to the impossibility of preventing someone's access to a good when they wish to consume it. In both these respects, public goods—the typical example Samuelson gave was a lighthouse guiding all boats navigating in the area—stand opposed to the quintessential private good, bread. The premise that public goods' intrinsic features will encourage free riding (benefiting from a collective good without paying for it) has laid the foundation for arguments supporting their provisioning by governments in what became known as the "Musgrave-Samuelson" model.[6]

However, since then, many public-sector economists have come to recognize that few goods are inherently non-rivalrous or non-excludable. Public goods do not exist per se; rather, they are social and political constructs (Ellickson 1973; Goldin 1977; Kaul 2006; Malkin and Wildavski 1991; Stiglitz 2000). Textbook paradigmatic examples of pure public goods generally can be proven wrong. Firefighting and police services are rivalrous, or subject to congestion, in the sense that protecting additional inhabitants requires hiring more firefighters and policemen, and thus an additional cost. Even in the case of national defense, exclusion is possible at the regional level—for instance, in the case of cities in the United States voting to be nuclear-weapons-free zones.[7] Conversely, bread—the prototypical "private good"—can become a matter of public concern in times of shortage, and the government can take over its distribution (Colm 1956). In the context of a pandemic, vaccines can become a "global public good" if states lift intellectual property rights allowing exclusion.

As Mary Douglas pointed out, absolutely anything can be a public good—it all depends on what decisions are made regarding whether healthcare, schools, and parks should be a public good (1989: 43). If there are no inherent features that may help draw the distinction between private and public goods, and if boundaries stem from social and political decisions, there is no way of justifying governmental intervention (and tax payments) on the basis of the nature of goods. "Economic theory can tell us about the efficiency of that choice. But it cannot make the choice for us," write Jesse Malkin and Aaron Wildavski (1991: 365). The subject matter, they conclude, has to be taken away from economics and put squarely back into political economy (1991: 373).

Locked in a difficult position, several public-sector economists have argued in favor of more

flexible definitions of public goods. These re-definitions rest on a larger criterion, that of "publicness," which de-emphasizes equality in consumption. First, "publicness" means that public goods are widely, rather than universally, accessible (Kaul and Mendoza 2003: 88). In other words, non-excludability and non-rivalry are no longer considered natural properties of public goods; even goods, for instance highways, that are partly rival (when congested) and excludable (excluding for instance those who do not possess a car) are public goods as long as they are widely available.[8] Second, "publicness" shifts attention away from consumption, toward production and distribution, which can involve a variety of actors, not necessarily public entities (Gazier and Touffut 2006; Ostrom 1997; Ostrom and Ostrom 1977; Stiglitz 2000).

In this regard "publicness" refers mainly to decision-making processes, which must be transparent, regardless of whether the decision-makers are government entities or private companies (Kaul and Mendoza 2003, see also Acheson 2006: 129). With a similar focus on publicness as a matter of principled distribution, Laura Bear and Nayanika Mathur, in a special issue on bureaucracy (2015), refer to a new range of public goods that includes, along with "the public good of fiscal austerity," "the public good of transparency." Although provisioning often conforms to abstract visions of the public or common good, such emphasis on "the public good" in the singular loses sight of consumption and of questions of access to public goods.

One branch of economics, namely, public choice theory, departed from the earlier (Musgrave-Samuelson) public goods' theories by emphasizing governmental action rather than the natural characteristics of goods. This strand applies the principles of neoclassical marginalist economics to political decision-makers. Its founder is James M. Buchanan, who, along with George Stigler and Milton Friedman at the Chicago School of Economics, is one of the main exponents of US neoliberalism (see Collier 2011). According to Buchanan, governments can decide to adjust the number of consumers to the quantity of goods they can offer depending on their available budget, and search for an optimal number of consumers for the goods according to the costs of producing them. Thus, to deliver public goods efficiently is to make them excludable. The result is what Buchanan (1965, 1999) called "club goods": public goods available only to members of restricted groups. One solution Buchanan supported was restricting entry to certain groups via zoning mechanisms, especially in large cities (see Harvey's 2009 [1973] discussion).[9]

The club goods theory has an advantage over the Musgrave-Samuelson version in that the technical properties of the goods do not play a role: rather than starting from the premise that certain goods are intrinsically accessible to all, it is governmental action that makes the difference (Buchanan 1999). This approach strongly influenced Ostrom's research on common-pool resources (CPRs). Therefore, before providing examples of such clubbing logics in China and South Africa, the next section turns to a discussion of commons and their context of emergence in relation to public and club goods.

From CPR to urban commons

Pierre Dardot and Christian Laval (2014) note that the commons are too often defined as a defensive reaction to the logic of capitalism, rather than given content, and they emphasize the added value of Elinor Ostrom's approach in this respect. Because it was awarded the Bank of Sweden (not actually the Nobel) Prize in 2009, her work is the most famous among a vast body of studies by economists and anthropologists who have highlighted processes of communal self-organization and self-governance in managing resources (Baden and Noonan 1998; Bromley and Feeny 1992; Ciriacy-Wantrup and Bishop 1975; Feeny et al. 1990; Gudeman 2001; McCay and Acheson 1987).

Vincent and Elinor Ostrom (1977) started looking at common-property resources, which Elinor Ostrom later renamed common-pool

resources (CPRs), by contrasting them with private and public goods' properties. CPRs are natural or human-made resources that are available to a group of users, for instance, pastoral or forest land ([1990] 2015: 30). CPRs share the attribute of rivalry with private goods and difficulty of exclusion with public goods (2015: 31). However, commons overcome the challenges these properties pose. Commons should not be confused with CPRs, since they are not resources; they are institutions for managing CPRs. Drawing from empirical cases, Ostrom shows that individuals engage in institution building when they perceive the benefits of creating rules and monitoring their application. Ostrom's work is therefore extremely valuable with respect to her inquiry into the practice of rulemaking.

Her work demonstrates—and is, at this point, influenced by club goods theories—that although resources such as fisheries may be intrinsically vulnerable because they are open access, i.e., non-excludable, they are made excludable by drawing boundaries. Likewise, although they are "naturally" rivalrous and therefore depletable, setting the rules regarding their usage renders them less depletable. Elinor Ostrom thereby contests the biologist Garrett Hardin's (1968) tragedy of the commons and Mancur Olson's (1965) theory of collective action, according to which users tend to be free riders who overconsume resources, situations that result in their exhaustion. She critiques these theories' prediction that individuals are incapable of coordinating the setting up of rules to prevent depletion, making state intervention or privatization unavoidable ([1990] 2015: 40, 45, 183). On the contrary, she shows that in successful commons, who gets access is neither dictated by ability to pay (the market) nor by top-down regulation (the state).

Commons prevent market and state failures in resource management by drawing boundaries that restrict and regulate access according to locally determined rules of use.[10] Small communities' mutual trust and shared information facilitate such cooperative arrangements. Ostrom's professed preference for small-scale communities renders her less attentive to the social and power relations shaping such communities (Dardot and Laval 2014: 157; Harribey 2013: 397).[11] This is also due to her main preoccupation with resource conservation rather than with issues of inequity and domination: for instance, she notes that in a Swiss mountain village, access to pastoral land is defined by a proportional-allocation rule, depending (among other factors) on the amount of meadowland farmers own ([1990] 2015: 64) and thus on unequal property relationships. In her view, commons are institutions that protect these resources and ensure their long-term sustainability.

Not only this absence of attention to social justice, but also Ostrom's insistence on the possibility of changing CPR or other goods' properties were lost in the literature on the "new commons" such as cultural, neighborhood, infrastructure, knowledge, medical, health, market and global commons. Apart from some recent attempts to clarify the concept (Huron 2017; Kip et al. 2015), much of this literature makes vague reference to the intrinsic properties of CPR, drawing a broad analogy on how they can be vulnerable to private appropriation and depletion.[12] For instance, Charlotte Hess maintains a distinction between "neighborhood commons" and public goods based on the idea that a commons "is a resource shared by a group where the resource is vulnerable to enclosure, overuse and social dilemmas. Unlike a public good, it requires management and protection in order to sustain it" (2008: 37). This reasoning is puzzling. For example, can an urban public park only be considered a commons when it is threatened to be sold to a private developer? We need to depart from the confusing notion that vulnerability to enclosure is an intrinsic feature of commons.

Others go even further in expanding the category of urban commons by turning it on its head. Christian Borch and Martin Kornberger (2015) claim that, unlike CPR turned into commons, urban commons are not rivalrous, in total contradiction with Ostrom's notion of

rivalrous CPRs. They expand the urban commons or what they term a city's "atmospherics" to include all spaces of urban sociality including shopping malls ([1990] 2015: 8–11). In cities, one person's consumption of a public park or shopping mall does not decrease the value these have for others but actually increases it, as when crowds come together for people to enjoy the presence of others or to observe what others are purchasing ([1990] 2015: 6). However, not only is the absence of rivalry in urban settings highly contestable, but overcrowdedness reduces the quality of using public transport, public space (streets and parks), and housing and schools (Harvey 2012: 74; Nonini 2017: 35). More generally, urban space is highly saturated and thus, particularly when land is used as an investment vehicle, under high pressure for competing uses (Huron 2017).

Moreover, is a busy shopping mall a commons? In stretching "urban commons" to the point where doing something in common remains the only reference to commons, Borch and Kornberger fail to distinguish capitalist market-based sociality from noncommodified sociality (Nonini 2017: 35). A more useful distinction is the one Don Nonini introduces between natural-resource commons and social commons: "social commons are organized around access by users to social resources created by specific kinds of human labor, such as caring for the sick and the elderly, educating children and maintain households" (2006: 166). Neighborhood commons, such as co-residents' mutual help in care activities, are thus distinct from both commodified private goods such as shopping malls and from public goods such as state schools.

Ironically, if we are to strictly apply economists' typologies, open access combined with non-rivalry makes "sociality" a public good rather than a CPR. Not only is "sociality" too broad to be helpful in discussing issues of access to social goods in the city, as are "the urban commons" (see Narotzky 2013), but discussions based on these typologies (i.e., on the intrinsic rivalry and excludability of goods) are also fundamentally misleading. Rather, we should

Figure 2. Ice skating at the mall in Shenzhen, 2017. Photo by author.

be looking at the properties that result from their management. Do they actually offer open access?

Therefore, a more fruitful point of departure consists of using the criteria (excludability/open access, rivalry/non-rivalry) not to categorize goods according to their inherent qualities but to identify issues that make social goods fragile. Public goods are exposed to risks of limitation of access by ability to pay (a clubbing logic) or wholesale privatization (enclosure). They also face issues linked to legal exclusion, when access is conditional upon holding citizenship rights, as well as more covert forms of social and racial exclusion.[13] Bringing public goods back into the equation and not eschewing the state's role means to document problems and tensions around the delivery of basic goods and services to city dwellers and point out the lack of publicness resulting from governmental failure and/or surrender to capitalist logics.

Commoning and publicizing

Several scholars have drawn attention to *commoning* as a verb referring to collective practices of sustaining and managing common assets (Harvey 2012; Kalb 2017; Linebaugh 2009). Commoning consists of protecting community members' collective rights of use against privatization and subordination to market logics. However, commoning should not be idealized. Linebaugh's often quoted recommendation to keep the word as a verb rather than a noun is followed by, "But this too is a trap. Capitalists and the World Bank would like us to employ commoning as a means to socialize poverty and hence to privatize wealth. The commoning of the past, our forebears' previous labor, survives as a legacy in the form of *capital* and this too must be reclaimed as part of our constitution" (2009: 279). The exclusive preoccupation with commons and commoning tends to overlook the state's failure to actually deliver public goods and is paradoxically forgetful of a critical stance that considers the shortcomings of provisioning in the context of neoliberal policies. Even more problematic is the ambiguous flirtation of the literature on the commons, its self-governing ideal with neoliberalism and its endorsement of communal self-management seen as a way of cutting public spending and offloading the costs of social reproduction (Enright and Rossi 2018; Lazzarato 2009; McShane 2010; Pithouse 2014).[14]

Community members are successful in creating a commons when they succeed in "fencing" and "patrolling" the boundaries "to ensure that no outsider appropriates" (i.e., can use the CPR) (Ostrom [1990] 2015: 203). Harvey offers the ironic provocation that rich property owners can create a commons excluding poorer city dwellers: "The ultra-rich, after all, are just as fiercely protective of their residential commons as anyone" (2012: 74). Here, he points to a clubbing logic, which differs from commoning insofar as it gives access to club goods on the basis of ability to buy property in a gated community, for instance; nevertheless, it is true that once the rich have fenced off their community, nothing prevents them from managing their shared resources (gardens, public space, schools, etc.) cooperatively, outside market logics and state intervention, as a commons. Commoning generally requires restricting use rights to members of a community. This means a commons can also amount to excluding outsiders, such as poor newcomers—for instance, migrant workers in Chinese urbanized villages, where natives used to hold use rights on their land in common and distribute income and welfare benefits among themselves (Trémon forthcoming). There is no intrinsic reason why a self-governed commons should be more egalitarian and less exclusionary than a state-provided public good.

The need for a realistic, rather than an idealistic, perspective (Kalb and Mollona 2018) based on existing empirical situations further arises when considering the entire range of occasions in which commons may be formed: for instance, when white supremacists self-fund and self-organize militias to maintain their own idea of order. This is a form of commons that challenges security as a public good provided

Figure 3. Sales bureau for new residential towers, Shenzhen, 2017. Photo by author.

by the state. More generally, "European fascism and right-wing corporatism have a long history of claiming a particular sort of commons against the rights of transnational capital and against the practices of the liberal state" (Kalb 2017: 73). To briefly rehash the argument in the first section of this introduction, public-sector economists overlook one major reason why private actors generally do not build roads where they see fit or ensure their own safety by forming militias. It is not because private provision is not optimal, but because they are generally not free to do so and should not be left free to do so.

Neglecting public goods in the literature on commons (an exception being Vinay Gidwani and Amita Baviskar [2011: 43]) occurs at the expense of acknowledging the state's (including the local state) continuing commitment to provide for public goods in many parts of the world. The anthropological literature on commons overlooks state provision for two sets of reasons. One has to do with the privileging of small-scale communities and economic anthropology's traditional focus on reciprocal exchange rather than vertical transactions (among which are tax payments and state provision). The other is the influence of the post-Marxist literature on commons and "the common," which not only ignores but also largely rejects the state's role as a potential provider, for reasons that lie in sympathy with immanentist philosophies of power (Hardt and Negri 2009) and Proudhonian anarchism (Dardot and Laval 2014).

Dardot and Laval forcefully argue for the common as a political project aimed at instating grassroots democracy in all sectors and at all levels of society as well as substituting rights of use for private ownership rights. They are careful to articulate this project with commons (in the plural) as institutions for managing resources; what they propose is a federation of locally self-governed commons. However, they remain elusive about how this articulation operates and what to do with those public goods that are generally provided on a larger scale (for instance, electricity, justice, research, and education) based on cross-subsidization and fiscal redistribution (Harribey 2013). They view the federation of commons they endorse as completely incompatible with the state form.[15] The local commons are to be co-governed on the basis of a praxis of co-obligation; the common can be aligned with the public "only if it is a non-statist public" (Dardot and Laval 2014: 276). Yet, what if residents enjoying the use of a non-state-run park, for instance, but do not have the time or willingness to devote themselves to its maintenance? (de Jongh 2021: 11).

Public goods are "commoned" when they are reclaimed for common uses against appropriation for private accumulation and conversion to exchange values, and when they are co-governed by their users according to locally defined institutional arrangements. However, efforts and struggles are often not limited to commoning; they also take the form of *publicizing*: constituting publics that make claims on the state to deliver on its promises of equality and equity. Publicizing is distinct from publishing (making something known to a wider pre-existing public). For John Dewey (1927), who argued against narrow delegative views of government, publicizing refers to democratic participatory actions of bringing a social problem into a wider arena of discussion, debate and decision-making; in the process, a public comes into being. Commoning and publicizing are not mutually exclusive; close reading of some recent writings on the commons shows that both are at stake. James Holston (2019), when writing about the Occupy movements, highlights not so much their commoning actions but their publicizing practices: their "specific methods of public debate, access to information, proposal development, and decision-making." This "turns an urban commoning into one of direct democracy" (2019: 137). However, publicizing is rarely restricted to internal communication among commoners; it generally involves claim-making with the state. Namuwongo's marginalized residents experience citizenship on the margins, in constant negotiation with the Ugandan state (Silver and McFarlane 2019). In Mexico, Maya squatters "invoke the commons" in an urban

setting where the local state has not planned any social goods delivery for migrant workers while seeking legal support from the National Torch Movement to defend their rights (Castellanos 2019). In Spain, Platform for Mortgage-Affected People activists create a temporary commons through assembly meetings and collective actions to block evictions while also fighting for the state to fulfill its role as a universal provider of welfare (García Lamarca 2015; Nuijten and de Vries 2021). Thus, mobilizations create social commons (Nonini 2006) and new civic publics (Brandtsädter 2013); at times, counter-publics (Collier et al. 2016; Warner 2002) are also constituted in the course of struggles.

Publicizing practices are crucial to people whose formal and substantial urban citizenship rights have long been denied and remain unavailable. Publicizing means raising and seeking to render legitimate issues and confront questions of state failure or inefficiency in providing public goods or issues of unequal access. This is often accomplished using the state's rhetoric of rights and obligations, and citizens—even marginalized ones—lay claims upon the state to fulfill its promises, to deliver and equalize access to public goods. While commoning is defensive and is intended to create enclaves shielded from state and market intervention, publicizing is addressed at the state level. In this theme issue's articles, publicizing involves negotiation with governments that have endorsed state capitalism while leaving some room for practices of commoning public goods: publicizing draws attention to the political practices of ordinary citizens who have little leeway to create self-governed enclaves, should they want to do this.

Clubbing logics in financially strained cities

In Southern Africa and East Asia, splintering urbanism (Graham and Marvin 2002) results from long-standing institutionalized inequalities. In racially segregated South Africa and its Namibian colony, authorities actively sought to restrict the migration of "natives" into the cities, "apart from those needed as a labor force" (Metsola this theme section). Townships were formed through the apartheid-era "forced removals" of millions of Black people from the "white" countryside and cities. The South African apartheid state (including Namibia) struck a "Faustian bargain" in which the people shunted into townships were promised water, electricity, and sanitation at very low, flat fees that were heavily state-subsidized (Hart 2013: 126). In China and Vietnam, a dual system of registration that categorizes households as either agricultural or non-agricultural has long controlled rural-to-urban migration. This was accompanied by an equally dual regime of public goods delivery, one urban, by the state; the other rural, by village collectives receiving very meager subsidies. Stark disparities resulted from this dichotomy in terms of the quality and accessibility of public goods.

Inequalities inherited from the past not only exert long-term effects, but current policies and practices also perpetuate them. Although migration to the cities has been liberalized in China since the 1980s, city infrastructure planning and resource allocation have been mostly done with little regard to migrants' needs because only the de jure urban population was considered in budgetary allocation. In recent years, *hukou* conversion (obtaining urban citizenship) has been eased, but mainly for white-collar workers (Chan 2014). In China, larger cities practice "clubbing" when they cap the yearly numbers of urban dwellers admitted to urban citizenship, and select applicants based on their contribution to the municipal budget. Points-based schemes for accessing *hukou* and public schools rest on criteria such as property ownership and educational degree. Although aimed at facilitating access to local services for migrants in the cities where they live, the schemes exclude poor migrant workers, deemed to be "low quality" (Friedman 2018; Swider 2015; Trémon 2020 and forthcoming). The privileged continue to receive more from public transfers in education, healthcare and pensions (Huang 2020; Wang

2018). In Vietnam, the efforts made to universalize welfare coverage have gone along with the marketization of health and educational services (J. Lin and Nguyen 2021).

In Vietnamese socialist cities, migrant workers and their "low culture" are blamed for the decaying privatized infrastructure, which has come to stand for the state care's unfulfilled promise—the flip side of the civilizing discourse that prevailed in the post-colonial socialist era (Schwenkel 2013, 2015). In South Africa, the urban poor's negative perception during the rent boycotts of the late apartheid era persisted into the post-apartheid period, where refusing to pay for services was stigmatized as a lack of patriotism and dubbed a "culture of non-payment" for municipal services (Beall et al. 2000; Hart 2013; von Schnitzler 2008). Although South Africa and Namibia ended state-sanctioned segregation, the colonial dual-city planning's legacy is long-lasting (Simon 1992; Freund 2007) and the planning processes continue to racially and economically separate neighborhoods (Chitekwe-Biti 2018; Müller-Friedman 2008).

Examining the fate of socialist housing estates in Vietnam across shifts in political economy from a socialist welfare state to a market socialist economy, Christina Schwenkel in this theme section highlights the residents' efforts to appropriate state property and maintain the commons to support everyday subsistence. In particular, elderly women appropriated and spontaneously transformed planned communal space into a source of livelihood and a social commons. Residents formed uncertain alliances with local government authorities to demand the right to survival in the city. Their modes of commoning and publicizing acts have brought informal practices and ways of collective organizing into the fold of official urban planning. Lalli Metsola explores the arguments and tactics through which residents of the precarious urban fringes of Windhoek, Namibia's capital, seek to entrench their presence and improve their access to public goods such as housing and basic services. Their counterarguments and tactics do not merely seek to defend a pre-existing commons, but rather carve space for alternative access arrangements. Their forms of acting and organizing go against the prevailing official logic that grounds access in the ability to pay and further embody alternative visions of a just society. However, the dual logics of propertied citizenship and relational access have the cumulative effect of reproducing the segregated city.

Everywhere, responsibilities for urban public goods have been downloaded to local governments with strained fiscal resources. Since the mid-1990s, fiscal recentralization diminished local governments' share in China's growing fiscal revenue, which was soon followed by increasing pressure to provide social goods, such as compulsory education, as part of the "harmonious society" project (Oi and Zhao 2007; Wong 2010). Consequently, local governments face budget deficits that drive them to prioritize high-income earners in *hukou* policies and incentivize private developers to provide social goods, which is a club goods model of allocation (Lee and Webster 2011). This imposed private provisioning generates conflicts and meets widespread resistance.

Local governments are driven to look for extra-budgetary resources by promoting land conversion at the city's rural fringes, generating land conveyance fees and land-leasing income (He et al. 2016; G. Lin et al. 2015). When rural villages are urbanized, former rural villagers are dispossessed of their collective use rights on their land, which the state takes over—responsibility for providing public goods is then transferred from village collectives to the local state.[16] In the southern coastal city of Fuzhou, where Jérôme Gapany has conducted research, the ambivalent and transitional position of former village leaders have provided them with some leeway to secure access to part of what used to be common burial land. The spreading military infrastructure in this city intensifies state-led urbanization. Gapany in his article examines how the native villagers, in the face of dispossession, turned their ancestor worship practice into a state-sanctioned commemoration of military heroes.

Figure 4. Redevelopment project in urban village, "to be demolished" sign in the foreground. Shenzhen, 2018. Photo by author.

In Southern Africa, the ongoing generation of inequalities and surplus populations undermine post-apartheid states' commitments. Local government has been an instrument used for introducing a new regulation mode that combines neoliberalism and redistributive policies (Jaglin 2008; James 2015). Therefore, it has also emerged as the key site of contradictions. Although the 1996 South African Constitution provisioned local governments' "equitable share" among nationally raised revenue, this share dropped sharply in the late 1990s (Hart 2013: 99). Municipalities were simultaneously starved of resources and loaded with massive new responsibilities. Service delivery protests first erupted in 1997, and have reoccurred in the heavily segregated Black townships and shack settlements.

Because of the municipalities' severe financial strain, the definition of an equitable service policy has seen a shift away from the objective of equality across the city, and toward differentiated levels of services (Jaglin 2008). This drives further inequalities likely to enhance the socio-spatial polarization inherited from apartheid (Bond 2000; Loftus 2004; McDonald and Pape 2002; Smith and Hanson 2003). Although since the early 2000s, minimal thresholds of essential services such as water and electricity have been defined, this has gone hand in hand with the corporations (public or private) in charge of provisioning starting to adopt cost recovery principles both in South Africa and Namibia.[17] These corporations tend to adopt coercive measures, such as installing prepaid water and electricity meters and linking free basic services with debt collection. In the townships, such moves represent a direct violation of the quid pro quo through which people were forcibly removed from land into the townships and are widely experienced as another round of dispossession from the most basic means of life (Hart 2013: 96).

The battles Johannesburg's authorities fought to deal with debt and impose water and electricity restrictions have been among the most ag-

gressive in South African cities and have shifted toward a policy of targeting poor individuals. Abrupt disconnections (water and electricity cutoffs) have ignited fierce protests and fed into oppositional movements known as "struggle plumbers and electricians" engaged in reconnecting their neighbors. Hanno Moegenburg's article retraces electricity's endangered status as a public good, and focuses on how civic activists form locally networked, critical counter-publics struggling to recover this status. These activists strive to substitute for the infrastructural commitment they expect from the state. While their strategic politics of peripheral entrenchment create zones of temporal autonomy from state governance, they also negotiate the terms in which essential state services are to be provided. The Soweto Electricity Crisis Committee's energy justice activists make claims that are to be understood not as against, but in close articulation with the state.

The contributions show that all classes make appeals to the state as the main guarantor of "public-ness," through either appeals to older egalitarian ideals or newer aspirational values. However, one question that remains is whether the excluded tend to create provisional material and social commons to cope with dispossession and decay, while the propertied classes have more leeway in negotiating public goods, especially when access is conditional rather than universal. If this is the case, while commoning and publicizing practices aim to equalize access to social goods, they also participate in reproducing inequalities: therefore, it is all the more important that the two forms of struggle be taken into consideration by both activists and scholars.

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Notes

1. The first two were foremostly nationalist parties inspired by Marxism-Leninism, while the latter two made Marxism-Leninism central to their doctrine.
2. In 2017, the Swapo announced an ideological shift to "socialism with a Namibian character," but this seems mostly rhetorical.
3. By 2050, the urban population is expected to reach 80 percent in China and South Africa, 70 percent in Namibia and 58 percent in Vietnam (United Nations 2018).
4. The commons serves both as an alternative language and as a descriptor for struggles against market- and state-backed capitalism (Amin and Howell 2016; Blaser and de la Cadena 2017; Bollier 2002; Borch and Kornberger 2015; Dardot and Laval 2014; Gibson-Graham et al. 2013; Gidwani and Baviskar 2011; Hardt and Negri 2009; Holston 2019; Huron 2017, 2018; Kip et al. 2015; Nonini 2006, 2017; Susser and Tonnelat 2013).
5. These tables first appeared in Musgrave and Musgrave (1973) and Ostrom and Ostrom (1977).
6. Robert Musgrave (1939) was the first to use these two criteria (Pickhardt 2006). Paul Sam-

uelson (1954) emphasized the jointness of consumption of public goods, but this criterion has been replaced by non-rivalry.

7. NuclearBan.US. "Cities and Towns." https://www.nuclearban.us/for-towncities/ (accessed 30 November 2021).
8. Collier and Way (2004) name "regimes of access" "the concrete form[s] taken by logics of distribution," which may be more or less exclusionary. I refer here to distribution as the concrete modes (influenced by abstract principles) through which social goods are distributed, and to access as the actual possibility of consuming them.
9. Urban public goods, the focus of this theme issue, are generally provided through some locational mechanism. Therefore, they spatially exclude all those who live too far away to use them—they are accessible only within certain territorial limits, and to this extent, they can be considered "club goods." This can be an issue when considering citywide urban transportation, for instance. Since the articles in this theme issue consider public goods delivered at the neighborhood scale, excludability by distance is not relevant to the discussion.
10. Ostrom cites several cases that failed because of governmental intervention opening up a CPR to outsiders, resulting in depletion. Freedom and legitimacy to make local arrangements is one of the commons' design principles ([1990] 2015: 203).
11. I quote the original French edition of Dardot and Laval's book.
12. Kip et al. identify potential commons by determining what resource is being managed, the relations between commoners, and who is included in the community of commoners (2015: 15).
13. Statistical studies on how the legal and social heterogeneity of the urban population accentuates inequalities in access to public goods (Alesina et al. 1999) are challenged by findings showing that it is more precisely the racial structure of inequality that negatively affects the outcome of welfare policies (Hero and Levy 2017) and the local provision of public goods (An et al. 2018).
14. See also Dardot and Laval's (2014) critique of Hardt and Negri's (2009) thesis, which neglects the ambiguous autonomy conceded to workers within production relations (2014: 200).
15. David Harvey also proposes a federated structure, but one akin to Murray Bookchin's ideas, with some degree of verticalism to coordinate activities, claims, and interests into a coherent opposition to capital, and to force the state "to supply more and more in the way of public goods for public purposes, along with the self-organization of whole populations to appropriate, use, and supplement those goods" (2012: 87).
16. Municipal governments often condition public goods provisioning to such former rural communities signing redevelopment projects (Trémon forthcoming).
17. On water disconnections over debt during the COVID-19 outbreak in Namibia, see Lennon 2021.

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