

Capitalist Formations of Enclosure: Space and the Extinction of the Commons

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Abstract: Despite their theoretical and political potential, recent debates on enclosure usually lack an effective consideration of how space is mobilized in the process of dispossession. This article connects the analysis of enclosure's general spatial rationality to a range of illustrations of its particular formations and procedures. Enclosure is understood as one of capitalism's "universal territorial equivalents", a polymorphous technique with variegated expressions in time but also with a consistent logic that uses the spatial erosion of the commons to subsume non-commodified, self-managed social spaces. In response to the ever-changing nature of commoning, successive regimes of enclosure reshape the morphologies of deprivation and their articulation to other state and market apparatuses in order to meet shifting strategies of capital accumulation and social reproduction. Through a spatially nuanced account of these phenomena, I outline a tentative genealogy of enclosure formations that allows tracking diverse geographies of dispossession across different scales and regulatory contexts in various historical stages of capitalist development.

Resumen: A pesar de su potencial teórico y político, los recientes debates sobre el "enclosure" prestan una atención insuficiente a la articulación espacial de los procesos de desposesión. Este artículo conecta el análisis de la racionalidad espacial general del "enclosure" a un abanico de ilustraciones de sus diversas formaciones y procedimientos. El "enclosure" se presenta como uno de los "equivalentes territoriales" del capitalismo, una técnica polimorfa con distintas manifestaciones a lo largo del tiempo pero dotada de una lógica consistente que emplea la erosión espacial del común para subsumir espacios sociales autónomos. En respuesta a la cambiante naturaleza de los comunes, sucesivos regímenes de "enclosure" reconfiguran las morfologías del despojo y su articulación a otros aparatos estatales y de mercado con el fin de satisfacer nuevas estrategias de acumulación de capital y reproducción social. Empleando una descripción atenta a los aspectos espaciales de estos fenómenos, se traza una genealogía tentativa de las formaciones de "enclosure" que permite explorar las geografías de la desposesión en distintas escalas y contextos regulatorios, y en etapas sucesivas de desarrollo capitalista.

Keywords: enclosure, commons, dispossession, abstract space, territorial equivalent, capitalist mode of territorialization

Palabras Clave: enclosure, comunes, desposesión, espacio abstracto, equivalente territorial, modo de territorialización capitalista

Introduction: Spatializing Enclosure

Recent radical theory has reframed capitalist expansion and resistance to it as a double movement of "enclosure" and "commoning" (eg De Angelis 2007; Hardt and Negri 2009; Linebaugh 2014; McCarthy 2005; Midnight Notes 2010). These categories are now part of the conceptual toolkit of critical endeavors to understand

contemporary capitalism and to imagine possible strategies to overcome it. Re-appropriated from their traditional link to social history, they help us delve into the present conjuncture, either with reference to the forms of deprivation buttressing neoliberalization in a time of prolonged economic and regulatory crisis or in relation to counter-strategies to construct new modes of autonomy and communism. Critical geography has contributed to this debate with arguments that unveil enclosure's central role in the ongoing restructuring of extant sociospatial formations and envision a potential path to change the world by deploying new spaces of commoning (eg Blomley 2008; Chatterton 2010; Hodkinson 2012; Jeffrey et al. 2012; Vasudevan et al. 2008; Watts 2010). These interventions put forward not only a new path of critical inquiry with profound theoretical implications, but also and more importantly they provide a platform for a different framing of a coming anti-capitalist politics.

Yet, in unearthing the controversy about enclosure from the archive and by opening it to a wider horizon of meaning, this debate often incurs in a conceptual overstretch which could lead to a premature shipwreck in the waters of metaphor.¹ Despite its potential to spark a new political imagination, the notion of "enclosure" is often used nebulously as a synonym for "privatization" (Holloway 2010:29); "commodification", "marketization", or "separation" from non-market conditions of production and social reproduction (De Angelis 2007); "primitive accumulation" and "accumulation by dispossession" (Harvey 2003:148, 158, 184); or "exclusion" (Runge and Defrancesco 2006), amongst others. Critical geography and urban theory should play an essential role here, for this conceptual ambiguity is the result of an insufficient elucidation of enclosure's spatiality. The aforementioned equations of enclosure with diverse forms of deprivation are inspired by radical reconstructions of the classic predation of common land in pre-industrial England; however, the new contributions might be losing the historians' sensitivity to the spatial valence and territorial articulation of dispossession (eg Hammond and Hammond 1912; Thompson 1991; Turner 1984). In order to develop and strengthen our analyses we need a more thorough theoretical inquiry into the spatial mechanisms of dispossession: What techniques are involved in the process? How do they operate and change in time? Under what political-economic and regulatory regimes? What are their morphologies? Current debates are using the seemingly overarching umbrella of enclosure to blend phenomena where space is the key vehicle of dispossession with others in which it is a mere container of such process, and still others with no spatial implications whatsoever. To avoid imprecision, I suggest that we use the notion of "enclosure" to designate capitalism's mobilization of diverse configurations and significations of space to deprive people of what they create in common. While this theoretical refinement is not to police the boundaries of the term, we need to overcome a lack of conceptual specificity that might hinder our understanding of the spatial politics of dispossession and prevent the emergence of a proper antagonistic response. Moreover, in addition to this spatial vagueness, recent contributions show a certain indetermination as regards periodization—the discussion ranging from those who tend to identify a *re*-emergence of enclosure as an aspect of post-1970s economic restructuring (eg Harvey 2003; Vasudevan et al. 2008) to those who read enclosure

as a permanent feature of capitalist accumulation (De Angelis 2007; Midnight Notes 2010)—and can be indefinite about enclosure’s collateral or strategic nature and the role of the state thereof. As I will argue below, a closer scrutiny of the spatial articulations of dispossession can help palliate these inconsistencies and address its historical, operational and regulatory contours.

This article theorizes enclosure as a prominent territorial feature in the *longue durée* of the capitalist mode of production of space. As was the case with markets or wages, enclosure predated capitalism but acquired a structural regulatory role in the advent, consolidation and subsequent development of the new sociospatial formation. This process is better grasped if we use a broad, long-term historical-geographical perspective.² Enclosure is articulated in time through ad hoc strategies that render it unstable and contradictory. However, if we want to exploit these incongruities theoretically and politically we must reveal the structural coherence behind them. In that sense, enclosure can be defined as a process of erosion and seizure of the commons by spatial means. Against the ever-blooming variegation of communal regimes, enclosure’s logic operates as a “universal territorial equivalent”, a spatial rationality that (1) sustains a movement of spatial abstraction and commodification by subsuming non-capitalist social spaces under the value practices of capital; (2) orchestrates the diverse spatialities involved in the dispossession of material and immaterial, social, cultural and affective commons; (3) articulates interventions in the spheres of production, social reproduction and social ordering through a strategic domination of space; and (4) functions across a range of different scales and time periods, adopting different forms under historically specific regulatory regimes. Enclosure constitutes a key step in the homogenization of space, ie the tendency to normalize space under a unitary political-economic rationale identified by Lefebvre (1978:308–309, 1986:vii; see also Mels 2014) as a first moment in the capitalist production of space, prior to subsequent fragmentation and hierarchization. Before enclosure, practices of commoning shape space on a local, use-value-oriented basis, generating a spatiality of difference. By invoking the figure of a “universal territorial equivalent” I denote a logic mobilizing abstraction to make the widest possible scope of those diverse social spaces commensurable so they become more easily governable and exchangeable. “Territorial equivalence” refers here to a strategic operational and regulatory rationality that allows maneuvering across heterogeneous types and manifestations of space, rendering them legible for state administration and market mechanisms.

At all events, in order to understand enclosure’s condition as a general spatial rationality we need to analyze its distinctive, contextually specific modulations in particular scenarios. Enclosure works as a polymorphous technique throughout history, better grasped as a set of variegated regulatory procedures as complex and diversified as the uneven geography of dispossession they shape. It articulates territorial practices of social ordering to other apparatuses and institutions—markets, legalities, police, design and so forth. A range of different protocols and morphological schemes are deployed in this process—from a creative-destructive effect to a purely devastating force, from colonial land usurpation and the encroachment of the global commons, to planning and architectural enclosures, to bodily acts of spatial alienation. Therefore I refer to diverse historical “regimes

of enclosure” to denote their assorted technical configurations in successive stages of capitalism. The discussion below uses a series of examples from particular formations of enclosure to illustrate both its presence and unitary logic in different time periods and the specificity of its conjunctural inflections. The material is organized in several scalar “cuts” which allow illuminating the interaction between territorial and scalar effects of enclosure, even though, as explained below, any single act of enclosure characteristically influences—or even re-hierarchizes—diverse interrelated scales.

Blending a comprehensive historical-geographical and theoretical viewpoint with a fine-tuned account of the spatial subtleties of specific practices of enclosure is not only *analytically* important but also, and especially, *politically* necessary. If space constitutes a key mediation in certain modes of dispossession, critical spatial theory can help commoners identify and resist particular procedures thereof by analyzing the operational specificity of territorial techniques of enclosure and framing them in broader political-economic contexts. At a time when the commons is not less but more crucial to underpin precarious livelihoods (Pickles 2006), and capitalism hinges upon the seizure of collective wealth to overcome intensified crises of accumulation (Hardt and Negri 2009), the idea of a common grievance can ignite new alliances across the sites of endangered social reproduction. Perhaps capitalist abstract space has an upside: by aligning social damage it lays the foundations for a united political response. A proper critique of territorial equivalents, that is, can re-signify “equivalential chains” around the shared experience of a seized commons (Laclau 2005:74–77): the commensurability of dispossessed social spaces may feed political antagonism, triggering practices of translation between equally wronged sites of enclosure, connecting networks of resistance against the usurpation of local and global commons, and also, from a historical perspective, linking present tribulations to a longer narrative of past deprivation. My intervention, however, represents just a preliminary and tentative excavation of an endeavor demanding further exploration.

Theorizing Enclosure Formations: Territorial Homogenization and the Erosion of the Commons

Some of the remarks above require deeper theoretical elaboration. As mentioned, though enclosure is linked to the extension of markets, private property and commodification, it is more than a mere synonym for these phenomena. The classic experience of English parliamentary enclosure saw the emergence of a territorial rationality whose goals went beyond the appropriation of material goods and resources to embrace wider projects of social order (Sevilla-Buitrago 2012). In this sense, enclosure can be understood as a process of spatially orchestrated dispossession, aimed at dismantling autonomous, collectively produced and managed forms of common wealth and value regimes. Its spatiality is complex. Not only is enclosure set in a particular site and pursues the creative destruction of certain social spaces, but it also mobilizes a range of spatial procedures to do so, working as both a means and an outcome of space restructuring.

The spatialities of enclosure and the commons are inextricably linked. The commons is constituted through place-making processes (Blomley 2008:320) that create a mosaic of subaltern geographies at different scales, the fruit of communities working on themselves and breeding autonomy along the way (Chatterton 2010:901; Linebaugh 2014:13–20). Raymond Williams (1975:107) described it as a breathing-space for “a marginal day-to-day independence”, but the historic common land he had in mind was indeed more than that. By re-working the environment the community shaped itself as a sociomaterial entity through collective institutions, shared territorial practices and languages. The spatial foundation of the commons is therefore grounded in two ontological moments: a process of objectification—Marx’s (1965:67–69; 1975:327–329) *Vergegenständlichung*—whereby human beings appropriate their milieu through labor and in so doing create socio-environmental assemblages they can call their own; and the formation of autonomy as the capacity “to make one’s own laws, knowing that one is doing so”, defining “a type of being that reflectively gives to itself the laws of its being” (Castoriadis 1991:164; see also Pickerill and Chatterton 2006).

Going beyond common land and common-pool resources, recent contributions suggest a more far-reaching perspective in approaching these communal regimes. From this viewpoint the commons is pervasive in social life—not only a given natural element, but also any form of social organization or wealth produced independently from or on the margins of capital (Hardt and Negri 2009:117): the fruits of human labor and creativity such as “ideas, information, images, knowledges, code, languages, social relationships, affects and the like” (Hardt 2010:134–135). There are passive, defensive commons but also belligerent ones, inexhaustible realms of collective autonomy being constantly produced in a continuous return of repressed forms of communal organization (De Angelis 2010). The exuberance of the commons is, according to some accounts, the very basis of late capitalism’s capacity to endure ongoing systemic crises for, today, accumulation tends to rely on the expropriation of communally produced value to thrive. Actually, this trend is far from new. The consolidation of capitalism has historically hinged upon the dispossession of the commons.³ Beyond the mere seizure of material resources or means of production, dispossession encompasses any form of deprivation of autonomous capacities for self-valorization,⁴ the restructuring of existence around heteronomous value regimes and the subsumption of life forms under market practices (De Angelis 2007). Enclosure appears when these processes of dispossession are achieved by spatial means, when space is mobilized to separate the commoners from the territorial basis of their autonomy; it erodes the sociomaterial links that allow a particular community to produce itself as a work of its own. In that sense, it is a mode of “spatial alienation”, akin to Hannah Arendt’s (1998:254–255) all-encompassing notion of “world alienation”, the process whereby certain social groups and individuals are deprived of “their place in the world”.

Enclosure intervenes in the spheres of production and social reproduction, and here not only in the realm of consumption but also regarding social ordering and processes of subjectification (Jeffrey et al. 2012; Vasudevan et al. 2008:1642–1643). While the link to production and accumulation is obvious in the enclosure of

common land and other material resources, more attention needs to be paid to the concomitant articulation of enclosure to underlying strategies of proletarianization and labor precaritization, market expansion, the disciplining of social conflict and social normalization. Of course these dynamics do not usually respond to a preconceived, fully articulated plan. By invoking the idea of a “general spatial rationality” inherent in enclosure I refer not to an all-encompassing agenda but to an intrinsic logic of accumulation processes that orients practices in a particular direction so that a map of procedural regularities and effects emerges out of a set of variegated territorial agencies. Enclosure operates as a comprehensive, coordinated effort only at a conjunctural level. In the *longue durée* it is better understood as the contour resulting from a number of diffuse, discrete practices and representations; but one that, nevertheless, presents a consistent governmental and regulatory structure. This structure is halfway between Foucault’s (1977, 1978) notion of *dispositif* and Althusser’s (2014) *appareil*. On the one hand enclosure operates as a constellation of loosely linked procedures that become temporally condensed around particular governmental conflicts and are transformed and reassembled as these conflicts evolve. On the other hand let us not forget that enclosure is fundamentally an ingredient of hegemonic projects aimed at the subjugation of antagonistic social spaces; that dispossession and displacement are usually not an unintended damage of enclosure but a strategic goal, functional to class hegemony at many levels; and that, even if the state is not absolutely indispensable, the most far-reaching and neatly strategic enclosure campaigns in history involve extra-economic force and state institutions, discourses and knowledges as essential tools to tame spaces of communal resistance.

The analysis of enclosure also has to address its morphological diversity. Just as any other territorial practice, enclosure relies on the distribution and regulation of limits and codes that underpin state- or market-based normalizations of social space. This boundary-making practice is not static; it undergoes continuous transformations. There are evolving enclosure regimes with particular material typologies, embedded in a historical dialectic whereby capital dismantles preexisting demarcations and creates a new system of boundaries, subsequently reworked again and again (Harvey 2001:246–247). The technical nature of these boundaries is highly variable in time. Part of the recent literature on the topic presents a fixation on walling which is somewhat misleading, for not all the spatial attacks on communality require walls, and not all walling practices are connected to the extinction of the commons.⁵ A wider perspective on the historical typology of boundaries mobilized by enclosure helps us understand how they work in relation to particular governmental strategies. There is a range of spatial and technical solutions including physical and virtual boundaries, locked borders, porous membranes and zones of flow respectively aimed at closing, regulating or releasing particular processes (Mezzadra and Neilson 2013:3). These mechanisms may pursue exclusive or inclusive goals, the displacement or the fixation of a population to territory and so forth. The point for research, as we will see, is to determine the political-economic conditions that trigger each of these particular formations of enclosure, the techniques they mobilize and how they seize pre-existing commons.

In the discussion below I present enclosure as a process of de- and re-territorialization with variegated scalar effects in time. Enclosure's work of subsumption is deployed through practices of *territory* whereby state and market rationalities penetrate—and create—diverse *scales* that in turn recast and regulate production and social reproduction in a particular fashion. The notion of territory constitutes perhaps the most relevant conceptual bridge to enclosure's spatialities; its political valence provides an immediate linkage between space and power, emphasizing the centrality of both strategy and state intervention to this nexus (Gottmann 1973). Territory is conceived here as a practice of horizontal structuration that governs and regulates space through a system of boundaries—both material and immaterial—and according to a strategy of domination and control over resources and population aimed at securing the hegemony of a social group to the detriment of the autonomy of others (Raffestin 1980; Sack 1986). Elden (2013) suggests that territory is better understood as a political technology incorporating not only political-economic and strategic aspects but also legal and technical instances. This viewpoint resonates with the conception of enclosure as a territorial practice involving amongst other procedures the measurement, allocation, design and legal regulation of space. However, my approach differs from part of the literature in that I understand territory beyond the nation-state and the national scale, as an effect we can attribute to diverse agencies and trace across a range of scales from the planet to the body. Several principles support this approach. Scholars maintain that (a) territory is a shifting concept, subject to constant evolution and re-structuration in diverse regulatory and political-economic contexts, and undergoing a process of fluidification since the mid-twentieth century (Gottmann 1973:122, 126–127); and (b) that even when the nation-state remains the key actor mobilizing territory, its practices increasingly rely on complementary agencies and use techniques scattered across a range of scales (Weizman 2007). If territory is the quintessential articulation of space and power and we consider Foucault's (1978) account of the latter as a fluid percolating the whole social formation, then we cannot identify territory with only one of its agencies and scales. But, even within a state-centric perspective, the move beyond national scale is necessary, for the ongoing disassembling and reassembling of statehood across different scales demand that we pay attention to the diverse levels and realms of social life under its influence through successive stages of capitalist accumulation (Brenner 2004).

The narrative that follows is organized by means of several scalar “cuts” to illustrate the significance of scale to enclosure's diverse territorial techniques. Of course by slicing the scalar extent of space I do not pretend that scales are impermeable or predetermined, since they are always intertwined, overdetermined and opened to contestation and transformation (Brenner 2009). Indeed their interrelation with territorial practices such as enclosure allows grasping the process of vertical structuration as it unfolds. Any procedure of enclosure usually impacts on several interrelated scales. In fact, as will be seen, enclosure is not only influenced by and distributed across several scales. It is a rescaling agent itself, a technique that reorganizes sociospatial hierarchies and produces new scales and scalar configurations by subsuming the commons in broader value chains.

Planetary Land Grabs: The Dispossession of Common Resources at the Margins of Capitalism

Our first probe leads to the outer frontier of capitalism, where enclosure reworks the boundaries between antagonistic economic regimes to ease the system's expansion. As an inaugural moment opening up peripheral spaces to capitalist value regimes, this formation can frequently be identified as an *ex novo* enclosure—an original subsumption in the capitalist logic, later deepened by successive waves of *ongoing* enclosure (Sevilla-Buitrago 2013). This *ex novo* moment usually operates on large scales—from the regional to the global—and pursues the dispossession of material commons, typically land and other resources which are key to the reproduction of livelihoods out of the market but also strategic to the consolidation and survival of capitalism. Hence at this level enclosure presents its simpler but also its more painful inflection: the crude separation of communities from basic means of subsistence and autonomy, often through a “profound remaking of the socio-ecological universe of agrarian societies” (Makki 2014:80). Either in a deliberate or collateral fashion, these enclosure formations combine effects in the spheres of production and social reproduction.

Although large-scale land dispossession predated capitalism, new features emerged in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries that had been previously deployed only in a rudimentary form: amongst others, a more methodical reliance on legal frameworks that legitimized dispossession and a systematic deployment of new techniques of survey, representation and land apportionment (Alden Wily 2012; Marx 1976:885). This shift was underpinned by—and in turn fed—the consolidation of modern states as territorial agencies fostering a new rationale of abstraction and calculation (Elden 2007), contributing to intensify land commodification and to dilute its traditional cultural significance. The path towards spatial homogenization was open.

English parliamentary enclosure is a paradigmatic example of this set of formations, a template for a whole historical regime of enclosure (Sevilla-Buitrago 2012). Following centuries of piecemeal, locally negotiated enclosure bound by moral economies—which preserved part of the commons for its role in sustaining social order in the parish—the parliamentary form of enclosure mobilized state power to reterritorialize the countryside, removing the remnants of common land and communal institutions (Turner 1984). Several concomitant transformations were at play in this process: amongst others, land use intensification; the forcible extension of market economy and the wage relation as a result of the removal of communal usufructs; the penetration and expansion of urban capital in the countryside; and the adoption of a new normative framework transferring negotiations from parish institutions to the parliament. During the eighteenth century parliamentary acts superseded other forms of enclosure, especially in regions whose territorial organization—field systems, property structure, proportion of common land, etc—proved more resistant to marketization (Homans 1969). In short, parliamentary enclosure rationalized the spatial fabric in order to erode difference and normalize territorial regulations so they became readable for both the state and capital—a new apparatus of calculation, simplification, sovereignty and coercion that would be replicated elsewhere afterwards.

This experience also illustrates the scalar agency of enclosure. The intervention in particular regions fueled the creation of new national grain and labor markets and “relocat[ed] England ... within a much larger circle of the world map” (Said 1994:83) as an international trade hegemon. But enclosure also had a considerable impact on household organization—linking rural cottages to urban flows of capital within putting-out networks of industrial domestic work—and on communal bonds and the way they shaped rural subjectivity—fostering the detachment of the individual from the community (Neeson 1993). In the first half of the nineteenth century the passing of general enclosure acts reinforced its availability as a territorial common denominator within a homogeneous national regulatory framework. During this period, enclosure was increasingly used in the creation of new transportation infrastructures and many emerging industrial agglomerations resorted to it to implement urban development in the city fringes (Kain et al. 2004:7). More importantly, the rationale and technical background of enclosure were mobilized in contemporary colonial campaigns to reconfigure extant territorial formations overseas. The dispossession of English commoners was the template for the usurpation of indigenous land in the colonies (Linebaugh and Rediker 2000:44; Thompson 1991:170, 173–174). However, the globalization of enclosure involved major departures from previous regimes: first, the state was even more actively present as issues of sovereignty and military force, and the necessity for big-scale schemes became crucial in the imperialist quest; second, the uneven geography of colonization and the shifting international division of labor downgraded the role of social reproduction in the periphery, rendering proletarianization a collateral, not a strategic aspect of the process (Guha 1992:172). The trend, of course, was not limited to Britain. All European Great Powers were somehow involved, for instance in the chain of land rushes in Africa, facilitating the dissemination of private capital in the continent to the detriment of native cultures (Alden Wily 2012).

Far from remitting, this process has intensified on a global scale in the latest wave of land grabs which, depending on context, work either as *ex novo* enclosures or as new rounds of dispossession in previously enclosed areas. Borras et al. (2012:851) define current land grabbing as:

the capturing of control of relatively vast tracts of land and other natural resources through a variety of mechanisms ... that involve large-scale capital that often shifts resource use orientation into extractive character ... as capital’s response to the convergence of food, energy and financial crises, climate change mitigation imperatives, and demands from newer hubs of global capital.

Identified as the latest spatial fix of a crisis-prone system (McMichael 2012:684), the global land grab involves the penetration of corporate investors—usually governments and firms, sovereign wealth funds and investment banks—in foreign countries in Africa (Makki 2014), Asia (Hsing 2010:181ff.; Levien 2012), Latin America (Borras et al. 2012) and the former Soviet Eurasia (Visser and Spoor 2011). The role of these countries’ states as facilitators is key to the process, ranging from the implementation of investment-friendly legal and fiscal frameworks, to active involvement through expropriation and eminent domain, to the building of support infrastructure and other projects. As was the case with English enclosures,

the state's blending of regulatory simplification, sovereignty and coercion eases the entry of capital in strange territories that usually lack preexisting formal land rights or include abundant forms of communal tenure (Borras et al. 2012:858). However, the institutional implications are fundamentally different from previous formations of enclosure, for global South states usually mobilize their sovereignty to create schemes that actually undermine it, by surrendering normative and economic prerogatives to land investors.

As was the case in the past, commoners, squatters in traditionally vacant public land and expropriated smallholders or those outcompeted by big operators are the direct victims of land grabs. But in these new experiences "accumulation by displacement" is not matched with a parallel process of proletarianization, for post-enclosure activities are usually non-labor absorbing and many countries present a very slow pace of industrial development (Araghi 2009; Li 2010). However, while the dispossession of great masses of the global peasantry may exceed the strategy behind land grabs, social (under)reproduction and these new pools of surplus populations are still functional to a further restructuring of the international division of labor, as illustrated by the recruitment of foreign indentured workers to cultivate grabbed land (Li 2011). Finally, as was the case with English enclosure, the recent wave of land grabs is not only associated to the subsumption of natural and rural regions under the influence of urban centers, but also has a direct impact on urban agglomerations themselves as their legal and managerial procedures are used in the creation of special economic zones, high-class housing developments, tourism complexes and infrastructural networks (Levien 2012).

Taming the Street Commons: Urban Enclosure and the Normalization of Publicity

Lower scales of analysis reveal the inadequacy of conventional depictions of enclosure as a mere dispossession of material resources. Undoubtedly, processes of commodification and privatization of space abound at the city and neighborhood levels (eg Hodkinson 2012), let alone crude acts of physical enclosure such as gated communities and other fortified enclaves. Yet, the most far-reaching attacks on the commons at this scale mobilize the production and regulation of publicity—not its extinction—as a key instrument to create new urban orders and dismantle collectively appropriated spaces (Sevilla-Buitrago 2014). From the planning of residential milieux to the regulation of a spatial economy of collective pleasures, the city and the neighborhood have been quintessential scales for the enclosure of social reproduction since the onset of nineteenth century urban reform. However, recent decades present an increasing prominence of direct accumulation strategies as urban systems undergo their own particular crisis of social reproduction. As was the case with bigger scales, enclosure formations emerge at the local level as a state apparatus consolidating previous, scattered private initiatives, develop into a wide-ranging system of governmental regulation, and finally adopt practices of mixed governance in recent stages of capitalist development.

Urban space constitutes a factory for the production of social and cultural commons, "its source ... and the receptacle into which it flows" (Hardt and Negri

2009:154; see also Linebaugh 2014:24–40; Vasudevan 2014). Lefebvre (1986:89–91) portrayed the pre-capitalist city as an “*oeuvre*”, the result of collective appropriations of space. Despite its idealized character, Lefebvre’s depiction is relevant as an account of the everyday spatial practices that assembled pre- and early industrial urban worlds, where users endowed places with meaning through a spontaneous co-production of public space. Capitalist urbanization has gradually alienated the popular classes from this form of appropriation in several concomitant ways. Industrialization and mass migration triggered a major wave of displacement and uprootedness, eroding traditional place-attachments and their communal logics (Lembcke 1991). The valence of the urban as a collective work was, however, reproduced through novel practices of commoning as the newly arrived to booming industrial centers managed to rework the urban fabric to their own interest, turning it into a commons amidst a hostile context. The streets were fundamental economic devices for “those who ... literally ‘pick[ed] up’ their living in [them]” (Mayhew 1851:3): a workplace, a means of production and “a ready market” whose “avails [were] carried home as the earnings of honest labor” by “makers of something out of nothing”.⁶ The ways to make ends meet were “so multifarious” that the bourgeois mind was “baffled in its attempts to reduce them to scientific order” (Mayhew 1851:3). The elite were not only puzzled by informal street economies, but also appalled by the (im)moral contours of working class socialization in public space, and terrified by the intensification of riots and political unrest (Scobey 1992). While not without contradictions, these social and political commons hinged upon community networks and neighborhood solidarity, in turn underpinned by collective appropriations of space.

The response came in the form of a state-driven effort to understand, codify, tame and normalize public space by eradicating subaltern control thereof (Baldwin 1999; Daunton 1983:266ff). Urban reform used space to “improve” and “civilize” the poorer classes according to elite behavioral codes (Ladd 1990:2; Upton 2008:7). In doing so, it unleashed a new enclosure archipelago. Parks were perhaps the most notorious example of early attempts to project bourgeois decorum onto public space (Bedarida and Sutcliffe 1980:385), especially in the US where figures such as Frederick Law Olmsted campaigned for a concerted state crusade to create “places ... for re-unions” (Olmsted 1854): inclusive, “democratic” landscaped areas that would “weaken the dangerous inclinations [of the] lawless classes of the city” (Olmsted 1971:96). The first generation of interventions followed the pioneer Central Park in its attempt to produce not only a place, but a whole regime of state-monitored practices and deportments around it. Parks were meant to work as enclosures by neutralizing the street commoning not only on their grounds, but beyond, instilling visitors with new codes of behavior that would irradiate change to “the city as a whole” (Olmsted 1971:66). The scheme proved futile in most cases. The street commons waded their way into the heart of parks. During the Progressive Era, a new generation of initiatives would reinforce the disciplinary aspects in small, more manageable parks and playgrounds located in the midst of working class neighborhoods (Bachin 2004:127–168).

Indoor leisure became another important field for the regulation of behavior. From the seventeenth century on popular festivities and expressions of collective joy had been frequently harried from the street (Stallybrass and White 1986:176),

but during the nineteenth century legislation and police surveillance also fell upon private locales. There, an already enclosed festival spirit was rapidly developing into a new commons of working class solidarity, promiscuity and unruly delight—the killing of carnival politicized the tavern and the popular theater. German cities provide an interesting example of state attempts to suffocate popular amusements through a resignification of space as they shifted from one form of commoning to another in response to repressive regulation. At a time when the ban on socialist organizations was channeling discontent into amusement spaces and entrepreneurs complained about the unproductivity of hungover workers, the local state required the presence of policemen in popular theaters and limited the opening hours and number of taverns in working class neighborhoods (Glovka Spencer 1990). When theaters and taverns were transformed into *Tingel-Tangel* locales and co-op proletarian *Schnapskasinos*, new ordinances were passed to close them. Beyond working class neighborhoods, building and activity regulation was also used in more inclusive venues such as music halls, where “street” women rubbed shoulders with middle- and upper-class sporting men. Here reformers strived to produce passive, orderly audiences out of an undifferentiated mass of rowdy spectators that used culture as lubrication for social interaction (Jerram 2011:177–185).

This trend, along with the zoning-induced disappearance of productive spaces and other activities, recast the neighborhood at the lowest possible threshold of sociability (Lefebvre 1986:365). Urban reform fused the improvement of dwelling conditions in working class districts with the removal of their popular content (Polasky 2010:41–75; Varga 2013:152–163). Gradually, the material misery of the slum was substituted with the social misery of the planned development (Lefebvre 1996:178). The process implied a profound redistribution of centrality—understood as the co-presence of multiplicity and autonomous appropriations of space—in the urban structure, removing the conditions of possibility for a popular commoning of the street. The disappearance of complementary activities in working class neighborhoods and their peripheralization ran parallel to the hatching of new consumer palaces in city cores—department stores, movie palaces, and so forth—and downtown tertiarization. Later, under state aegis, the new avant-garde model settlements and the dull offspring of satellite units and new towns reinforced the uneven redistribution of urban centrality. In Germany, even trade union housing cooperatives built their most outstanding developments for the middle class (Meyer 1980), tinging daily life with a shade of dim boredom. Corrupting their right to centrality, the new *Angestellten* (white-collar workers) would escape at night into the downtown lights, pursuing a “world ... cleansed ... of the dust of everyday existence” (Kracauer 1998:93). With the deepened erasure of the neighborhood commons after World War II, the urban was ready for a heteronomous recoding in the framework of mass-consumption societies of the spectacle—the *Neue Sachlichkeit* led into the city rendered as a system of objects.

Urban dispossession has been reproduced in cruder forms in recent decades under the banner of gentrification. In the previous section I referred to regional-to-global formations of enclosure as the “extensive” frontier of capitalism. Gentrification shows how capitalism also creates inner frontiers by reworking its spatial fabric at the urban level (Smith 1996). The complexity of urban enclosure

is palpable in these processes. While the critique of gentrification usually focuses on the displacement of neighbors, it could be argued that what is at stake is not only the eviction from particular spaces, but also the deprivation of certain spatial skills, the ability to use space to reimagine the neighborhood by producing new common worlds. Since the mid-nineteenth century, urban reform and modern planning had strived to repress and discipline the people's creativeness and capacity to re-common the industrial city in order to eke out a living. In 1968, immediately after Lefebvre portrayed the eclipse of the city as a creative work of popular appropriation, students and workers in Western countries took to the streets in a chain of revolts vindicating the revolutionary valence of imagination. However, this very creative potential has been turned into a vector of monitored urban change under post-modern urbanism's neoliberal governmentalities. In its connection to gentrification, the rise of so-called creative urbanism gestures towards the subsumption of spatial creativity as an engine for urban restructuring and capital accumulation.

Finally, along with the enclosure of creativity as a common skill, postmodern urbanism extends the scope of enclosure by subsuming urban identity—branded as a touristic or real estate asset in the form of authenticity or multicultural hybridity—and appropriation itself—through institutionally orchestrated participatory urbanism or the monitoring of the urban commons by middle class urbanites (Newman 2013)—as generators of exchange value. Despite the emphasis on difference and uniqueness, the overall outcome of these approaches—routinely articulated through standardized policy (Peck 2005:752)—is usually a further homogenization of urban worlds.

Household Enclosures: The Implosion/Explosion of Domesticity

It is only with great caution that we can take our exploration to lower-scale formations of enclosure. Home provides an especially ticklish example. Its identification with a building-level scale is controversial.⁷ Tinged with the immediacy of everyday practices and ideologies of dwelling, domestic territories may look stable today, but their limits have been historically fluid. Home spatialities have been relentlessly reworked and show a particularly complicated genealogy. Capitalism has used them as a battlefield to regulate its own boundaries with the household mode of production, rescaling homes to achieve specific articulations of urban and bodily levels of social production and reproduction. Initially, capital relied on the crutches of this “informal” mode of production as an auxiliary support to guarantee basic needs of the working class, getting rid of them, throwing them away and turning home into a new frontier of accumulation once social order was secured from its molecular core. This process was partially deployed through a gradual subsumption of communal forms of household organization which were spatially insulated, preserved, consumed or destroyed in successive rounds of enclosure. As described below, the creative destruction of regimes of domesticity produced the implosion and subsequent explosion of home across the city. Throughout this process, the household has been reassembled at different scales in successive historical periods; indeed, domestic geographies can be understood as a historically variable scalar effect of particular formations of enclosure.

The equation of home with the private residence followed an intricate path in the Western world. Capitalist domesticity developed unevenly and along class lines, following a similar logic to the one Foucault (1978:121–124) identified in the emergence of the *dispositif* of sexuality. The bourgeoisie opened the path in the late seventeenth century, followed by an inchoate middle class in the early nineteenth century (Lukacs 1970:624–625). Only later, with the emergence of hygienic and social conflicts, would the scheme be enforced on the lower orders through an enclosure of working class housing. But before these episodes, production requirements and the social interaction of extended families made the abode—or a part thereof—a public place. Concomitantly, many household functions spread beyond the private plot into the city streets. The inner spaces of the medieval house were poorly differentiated, multi-purpose chambers where familiar and strange bodies could mingle in a series of activities, from business and everyday chores to feasts and intimate rituals (Rybczynski 1987:25–28). From the seventeenth century on, the home underwent a profound transformation. A new social and economic division of space segregated residence and workplace, and novel forms of subjectification through spatial isolation proliferated in a number of institutions (Foucault 1977; Mumford 1946:114). Articulating a political economy and a political anatomy of space, bourgeois domesticity mirrored these broader shifts along two axes: from without, the household experience was secluded from the urban realm as a private sphere, incorporating a new gender division of space that linked home to women and public space to men; from within, it was articulated to the production of new identities and corporealities through the subdivision in specialized rooms.

The dissemination of this scheme beyond elite domiciles was slow and required strong regulatory efforts. The lower classes were relatively unaffected until the mid-nineteenth century. The radical commoning of urban space described in the previous section was in fact a by-product of new dwelling conditions. In popular districts the divide between private and public realms was porous. The gradual removal of the urban commons from public space turned the home into a last-recourse breathing space away from the increasingly surveyed streets. The enclosure of extended homes in the private residence and the rescaling of the functional unit of social reproduction from the community down to the nuclear family generated the family commons as a response. Home's duality as prison and haven (McDowell 1999:88–89) would mirror this double movement of enclosure and commoning.

Females held sway over this household commons. At a time when the doctrine of separated spheres conferred new implications to the notion of “public women” (Upton 2008:316–317), their residential enclosure eclipsed the collective skills underpinning their previous reinvention of the popular community (Stansell 1987). Women, however, managed to reproduce that vital force indoors, preserving a realm of domestic production, cooperative arrangements, care and affect away from markets. During the first half of the twentieth century—except under war conditions—states protected the consolidation of this defensive type of commoning as a crucial crutch of the Fordist regime of social reproduction (Kessler-Harris 2003). Lefebvre's (1986:269) allusion to the recasting of home as a residual outlet for sociospatial appropriation away from outdoor dominated space gestures precisely towards the besieged and increasingly encroached character of this new commons, showing

that not all communal expressions are ideal nor do they mature under conditions of their own choosing.

The domestic commons developed within a convoluted context. Women had to face social workers' and, later, architects' attempts to impose a regime of "correct" domesticity, designed to discipline the users' capacity to shape their environment. Experiments in model homes, the architectural avant-garde and later the first social housing programs had an essential role in this effort to implement a Taylorized dwelling (Frederick 1919). The search for "the lowest possible threshold of tolerability" (Lefebvre 1986:364) in new forms of residence had a popular slogan in Weimar Germany: *Existenzminimum*, a novel code to deploy a disciplined bodily choreography in the functionalist home.⁸ These tests would serve as a template after World War II, when the widespread suburbanization of working and middle class housing normalized insulated domesticities. With the household stabilized as a basic unit of social order, it could be transformed into a new niche for accumulation, triggering a further erosion of the domestic commons. Now states moved into the background as markets took the lead debilitating the commons not by crude discipline but through liberal seductions. The equipment of residences with postwar mass-consumption devices reterritorialized home geographies, eclipsing some aspects of women's control of the household and forms of family interaction and cooperation (Hayden 2000:26; 2003: 128–153; Jerram 2011:232).

In recent decades this shift of enclosure regimes has pursued a deepened commodification beyond the material basis of domesticity. Harvey (2009:256) has suggested that "[i]f capitalism only made material things, our houses would not be able to hold them". In the context of new experience economies domesticity is increasingly assembled around services provided by markets (Murtola 2014). Indeed, contemporary dwelling and living conditions in global urban agglomerations reconfigure the traditional spatiality of homes through the geography of access to these markets. The rise of one-person households, the growing mobility of populations in global labor markets, increasingly hectic daily schedules and the reduction of apartments' floor area contribute to rendering the residence a mere cell for physical restoration, while some functions of social reproduction, personal identity and emotion previously attached to family commons abandon the domicile, start circulating across the city and lose their communal attributes. After a long Victorian-cum-Fordist implosion, domesticity explodes and becomes re-urbanized as its fragments are scattered across the metropolis. Both processes are versions of a single dynamic of erosion of communality that mobilizes different formations of enclosure. Compared with the disciplinary, state-driven production of a reformed household, the new "outsourced" domesticity ebbs and flows with market trends as particular aspects thereof become embedded in a commodity system. Its morphology is paradoxical. Just as capital destroys the limits it created at an earlier stage, so this "weak" form of dispossession perforates previously insulated assemblages of social reproduction.

With their fragmented spatial basis and their fractured regimes of affect, the emerging post-familial landscapes remain suspended between these two formations of household enclosure and their contradictory structures of feeling. The phenomenon appears with different intensities across the global North, but is especially remarkable in large East Asian metropolitan areas. Tokyo is a paradigmatic

case, with a modern tradition in the marketization of domestic experiences since the late 1970s, when commercial venues started providing services and renting spaces by the hour as an extension of private residence (Hageneder 2000). “Manga-kissa” stores—cafés offering a large number of small cubicles used by customers to read comics, play computer games, eat, sleep, etc; karaoke boxes—isolated parlors rented by groups of friends to sing and drink; or love hotels—targeted at couples looking for sexual intercourse away from home—have become popular substitutes for living-room, bedroom or working spaces. Tokyo was also known for “oddities” that are now emerging elsewhere: places where you can rent a pet and a room to play with it, fake partners or parents hired by time slots, co-sleeping venues where a professional cuddler will tap your back, stare at you or caress your head depending on the type of service one pays for, and so forth (see Jauregui 2012).⁹ These phenomena, together with more standard experiences such as “third place” sociality in specialty coffee brands (Bookman 2014), show how commodified “servicescapes” are reworking the geography of domesticity to the detriment of extant forms of household commoning.

Conclusions

It is not only the lack of space that prevents me from taking the analysis down to the scale of the body. No doubt, the body is a crucial battlefield of capitalism, both an accumulation strategy (Harvey 2000:97–116) and a space for the production of social order and subjectivity (Foucault 1977, 1978). It is the object of a series of dispossessions throughout history, intensified recently in a wide range of bodily forms of alienation and commodification: from labor to affect power, from the corporeal image and reproductive capacities to sex and sexuality, organs and the genome (Scheper-Hughes and Wacquant 2002). These and many other bodily aspects and functions are regulated, exploited, sold or trafficked, often violently, either on a state-enshrined or illegal basis. However, it remains unclear in what sense these procedures can be regarded as cases of enclosure. To do so, it would be necessary to elucidate how bodies can be understood as a commons, a theoretical challenge beyond the capacity of this article. Some recent contributions conceptualize the body as a social construct and its materiality as a collective product (Butler 1993). Moreover, history provides examples of projects that conceived the body as a source of communal labor or pleasure. Yet, the isolated character of these initiatives and their utopian constitution suggest that the communal valence of the body is more a political horizon than a past condition removed by enclosure.

In this article I have emphasized the need for a more rigorous, spatially nuanced analysis of enclosure, stressing that (1) the use of space to dispossess and erode the commons constitutes a general, recurring feature of the capitalist mode of territorialization; and that (2) the spatialities of particular enclosure formations vary in time, depending on historical-geographical conjuncture and the developmental path of the territory in which they operate. Theoretically, enclosure can be read as one of capitalism’s universal territorial equivalents—a means to subsume and homogenize diverse non-commodified, self-managed social spaces under capitalist value-regimes and social orders. Historically, this overall character has crystallized in a series

of contextually specific formations of enclosure. Further scrutiny is needed in order to establish an in-depth typology, but in light of the illustrations above a series of tentative arguments can be raised to orient subsequent research. Enclosure regimes can be analyzed at least at the following three levels:

- (a) *Orchestration of strategies of accumulation and/or regulation of social reproduction*: Enclosure's maneuvers tend to combine strategies of production and social reproduction, though specific patterns differ both geographically and historically. When particular enclosure formations privilege one sphere over the other they do not simply disregard the latter but often incorporate it as a function of the main operational urge. More integral schemes blending both approaches are easier to find in large-scale interventions in core capitalist territories and during early stages of capitalism in a particular region. Current spatial divisions of labor complicate this scheme. The seizure of communality and the crisis of social reproduction in the global South—but also in Western deindustrialized regions and global cities' hyperghettos—generate growing masses of surplus populations whose proletarianization remains problematic.
- (b) *Enclosure's articulation to state apparatuses and/or market institutions*: Enclosure usually appears as a spatial mediation of state procedures and market strategies, making it difficult to isolate simple causal relations between them. However, *ex novo* formations of enclosure in early phases of capitalist development rely more consistently upon state apparatuses to open resistant non-capitalist social spaces. The nature of the commons under seizure conditions enclosure's interrelation with those apparatuses: material commons—land, resources and the like—require legal mobilizations of enclosure to re-spatialize codes of possession and property; social commons—eg collective appropriations of public space—necessitate police deployments of enclosure to discipline spatial behavior, and so forth.
- (c) *Enclosure's morphologies*: Enclosure adopts diverse materialities and morphologies that vary through different stages of capitalist development. An evolutionary trend can be identified whereby more rigid and static forms of boundary-making and social discipline in *ex novo* enclosures are gradually refined and loosened as markets preponderate over states in regulatory arrangements. Following a growing fluidification of territory, certain contemporary regimes take on more elastic approaches whereby the subsumption of commons proliferating in already enclosed social spaces is achieved through a volatilization of pre-existing boundaries. The techniques involved—topographical survey, land apportionment, architectural design, land use regulation, etc—and the operational scale are also fundamental conditions for the development of particular morphologies of enclosure. However, not only are scales a contextual factor of enclosure's fabric, but they are also reshaped and re-hierarchized under its influence.

The comprehension of these spatialities and procedures should provide current efforts to fight the advancement of enclosure with valuable hints to organize resistance on a spatial basis. Although, as we have seen, the commons usually

reemerges in new constellations in the wake of dispossession, it can adopt increasingly meager, residual forms under conditions of recurrent and intensified general enclosure. Hence the need for conceptual tools that reveal the latter's substance and techniques. The analysis I have suggested can help develop a counter-theory of commoning, fusing the spatialities of material and immaterial commons, common labor, imaginations and affects to subvert the architecture of territorial abstraction and scalar segregation that enclosure contributes to erect. Such a project, however, requires much deeper exploration, of which this article is just a preliminary probe.

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Endnotes

- ¹ See Hall's (2012) discussion of a similar problem with the notion of "primitive accumulation", a term frequently (but improperly) used as a synonym for enclosure.
- ² See Guldi and Armitage (2014) for a defense of the political potential of *longue durée* narratives.
- ³ For example, in *Capital Marx* (1976:1054) already presents entrepreneurs usurping forms of collective organization and turning them against workers themselves.
- ⁴ Negri (1991:162) refers to self-valorization as the power to organize social labor and assign value to a specific realm of practice.
- ⁵ For example, classic English enclosure did not necessarily entail the creation of fences and hedges—moreover, the preexisting "open" fields were the result of a refined system of virtual and physical boundaries.
- ⁶ NYC police magistrate John Wyman in the early 1830s, quoted in Stansell (1987:50).
- ⁷ For example, see the Marston (2000)–Brenner (2001) debate about the conceptualization of the household as a scale, a place, or both.
- ⁸ In 1929 Walter Gropius (1980:98) had defined *Existenzminimum* as "the elementary minimum of space, air, light and heat required by man [*sic*] in order ... to fully develop his life functions without experiencing restrictions due to his dwelling".
- ⁹ I owe Esaú Acosta the notion of "outsourced" domesticity and the information about Tokyo.

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