

Feminist Commons

Decoloniality, Intersectionality and the Commons

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Abstract

My thesis is a call for the need of an intersectional awareness in the field of *the commons*, or *the common* or *commoning*. For that reason, I focus on a rather undertheorized subfield, the feminist commons because I deem that it promotes a more intersectional perspective than the male dominated commons. My main effort concentrates to argue for the potentialities of an intersection between the commons and (feminist) decolonial project. Notions such as coloniality of power, the principle of intersectionality and the ethos of decoloniality help me to build my argument step by step. The thesis does not provide answers rather it poses questions and tries to open space for a fruitful experimentation.

Keywords:

feminist commons, the commons, common, commoning, decoloniality, intersectionality, decolonial ethos, decolonial feminist commons

Acknowledgments

I chose to participate in the specific master's programme in the most challenging period of my whole life. I was looking for a re-starting, for answers, for a space of experimentation, for new epistemological tools. Certainly, I found most of the things I was looking for.

Additionally, I found some comrades -people with similar feelings and thoughts, but I had, also, the opportunity to meet teachers willing to accompany and encourage me, to help me make dreams. I am truly grateful for all those beautiful people I met.

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To the unknown examiner: thank you in advance!

As always.... every single word is dedicated to *Fotini & Thanasis*. ♥♥

“In the end, we have only each other, the commonwealth we still have to claim back, and a life of convivial commoning.” (de Angelis 2017, p. 26 my emphasis)

And if not....

Nothing ends...by the time we are still alive...

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION.....	5
THE COMMONS.....	7
DECOLONIAL OPTIONS FOR THE COMMONS.....	8
A. COLONIALITY OF POWER AS A STEP TO AVOID ECONOMIC REDUCTIONISM	10
B. THE PRINCIPLE OF INTERSECTIONALITY.....	14
C. THE ETHOS OF DECOLONIALITY AGAINST KNOWLEDGE COLONIALISM	17
FEMINIST COMMONS: COMMONING, INTERSECTIONALITY AND BEYOND. 20	
A. FEMINIST COMMONS AND POLITICAL ECONOMY	21
B. FEMINIST COMMONS AND NATURE	24
C. QUEER COMMONS, POSTHUMANISM AND BEYOND.....	27
FEMINIST DECOLONIAL OPTIONS FOR THE COMMONS. COMMONER AS A DECOLONIAL/FEMINIST FIGURATION.....	28
CONCLUDING REMARKS.....	32
REFERENCES.....	34

Introduction

It has become a truism, luckily for many, to claim that ours are times of continual structural crises that permeate our full existence, leaving traces in our bodies, making us vulnerable and helpless, but also making us get angry and protest, imagine, demand, create a better world in the here and now. Haraway, (2004, p. 63) eloquently, describes how she writes theory “*in a foreign, allotopic place- the womb of a pregnant monster*”. For many, usually gathered across the left political spectrum, Haraway’s monster is known as “neoliberal capitalism”. And against this monster, a set of local and global struggles along with diverse theories from different disciplines and epistemes have flourished. Some of them, even not defined as such, are profoundly anti-capitalist, some others preserve the spirit of capitalism by attributing to it a more humane face.

The set of theories, that this paper is dedicated to, is known as *the commons*, or *the common* or *commoning*. For the scope of this introduction it is enough to state that the above theories are inspired by the continual struggles of communities all over the world and try to capture the numerous ways that movements, in real-life situations, reclaim access to resources material or immaterial e.g. the struggle of residents of Cochabamba in Bolivia to protect their access to water, the continual struggle of Zapatistas in Mexico to preserve indigenous land, the bene-commune movement in Italy or practices that promote urban gardening, collective kitchens, reclamation of public spaces, squatting movements, solidarity initiatives movements that reclaim the “power” to return at the hands of the people like the Occupy Movement, or the municipalist movement in Spain and elsewhere, and unlimited others praxes of resistance all over the globe. Obviously, the commons/common/commoning discourses cut diagonally environmental movements, political movements, the global justice movement and initiatives that try to reclaim the dignity for those at the bottom of social hierarchy. In general, commons, as an amalgam of activist praxis and theory or else as a discourse promotes self-organization and adopts a more critical stance against the state and the market. The commons could also be conceived as processes that re-signify politics that is performed by ordinary people in everyday interactions and not by expert politicians. It is all the things people do in their neighborhood, their town, their country or in alliance with others to other countries to change their everyday reality that is imposed by those that have the power, under the principle of direct democracy, co-participation and mutual sharing.

With much of this work still ahead, in this paper, I will focus on a rather undertheorized subfield- the feminist commons. I choose the feminist commons because, for me, this subfield promotes a more *intersectional perspective* than the male dominated commons. Moreover, there is, still, a lack of a holistic exploration of the diverse feminist approaches. Due to space limitations I intend, in the first section to briefly clarify some terms that are basic in the field of “commons studies”. In the next section I will experiment with the decolonial depository of thought. By doing this I want to propose some *decolonial options* that could reinvigorate the field of commons. Here I, specifically, address the issue of “coloniality of power” which is a useful research tool that avoids economic reductionism. Moreover, in this section I come to grips with the principle of intersectionality. I reckon that the principle of intersectionality is essential for discussing broader alliances and maybe for a collective subject. For me, another necessary point that should be negotiated in the field of the commons is the ethos of decoloniality that helps us to avoid knowledge colonialism. Using a “decolonial ethos”, inevitably, leads on to disclosing my own positionality, my own locus of enunciation. In general, decolonial scholars and many feminists consider the issue of positionality as a requisite for writing theory.

After this rather unusual interconnection between the commons and decolonial project, I will reflect upon some of the most popular understandings of the feminist commons. Here, I will isolate some of the most important interventions that feminist theory makes in the field of the commons. Firstly, I examine some approaches from the field of political economy. Secondly, I discuss feminist approaches that focus on nature. Finally, I refer to more recent approaches about queer commons, and posthuman approaches. The last section is a space for experimentation and open questions, or points for further research. Decolonial scholars argue that what we need is not only a historical critique of the present, but also specific plans for the future. For that reason, my last section is not a space to provide a new theory of the commons or to offer final answers. I only aspire to signal the need for a (feminist) decolonial stance that promotes the principle of intersectionality more profoundly. I think that feminist decolonial thought is the most suitable for a deep reflection upon abstract universality, the fixation of the subject, economic reductionism and knowledge colonialism that predominate in the field of the commons. In the last section I will experiment with the notion of figuration that is a tool considered helpful by many feminist scholars for imagining a future not yet here. Finally, I offer some concluding remarks for my research.

The commons

In this section, I will clarify some terms that will be used in this text and more broadly are used in the field of “commons studies”. (Dardot & Laval 2014, p. 19) To do so, I follow Dardot (2018, p. 21–22) because I find the way he clarifies the terms helpful for someone outside the field. In general, the word common can be used as an adjective: to define/describe a noun/nouns. That way, we have common things such as air, water, sea or common language. These “things” are common by nature, thus, in no circumstances should they be appropriated or should anyone’s access to them be limited. *Common things* do not have an owner, as they are common to all. A second use of the adjective common is when it is attached to the word *good*. The term *common good* is heavily used in political philosophy to describe a norm, or rule to which a political community adheres. As such, it has a profound political sense. On the other hand, the term *common goods*, in the plural is used by economists to distinguish goods. Economists classify goods as private, public, and common and that might be excludable or non-excludable, rivalrous or non-rivalrous, club goods etc. and they can be understood based on their consumption. (2018, p. 18–22)

Moreover, the word common can be used as a noun (I also use the word as a noun in what follows). In this case it does not signify the things/goods/resources of economic theory. A *commons* is an institutional arrangement or a set of rules and principles established by a community so as to be self-governed. Here, the emphasis is put on the collective arrangement, namely the activity, and not on the type of goods or things. Dardot further acknowledges that any instituted commons should be conceived as a *good* in an ethical and political sense. The commons should not be attached to ownership, as “use prevails over ownership” and “once it is instituted, a commons is inalienable and inappropriable”. (2018, p. 22) A commons then is the term that actually describes the “active link” that is generated among different types of resources (material or immaterial) like for example a waterfall, a forest, a theatre, a square or whatever and the collectivity that advocates energetically the preservation, maintenance and the care of the resources. This “active link” namely the continual activity of the collectivity is an inherent characteristic of the commons.(2018, p. 22)

For Dardot, *self-governance* or *democratic governance* is a prerequisite for the commons and the activity described above is, a democratic one. And exactly this is the principal of *the common*, in the singular. For Dardot, the etymology of the word *common* traces its origins back

to the Latin word “cum-munus” that signify the co-obligation to co-participate in public affairs, and exactly this should be the essence of democracy. Contemporary movements such as the Occupy movement, the 15-M or the Indignados, and the movements in Gezi Park, Istanbul raised their voice to protest against the present political and economic system and to demand “real democracy”. During the encampments the participants managed to establish a commons that was tied to the principle of the common or democracy. (Dardot 2018) The specific movements are almost a standard reference especially to those theorists who examine urban spaces or the political possibilities of the commons. (Dardot & Laval 2014; Hardt & Negri 2012; Kioupiolis 2019; Stavrides 2018, p. 209–235)

The aforementioned *activity* is also named by many scholars as *commoning*. The form of gerund emphasizes the action, the process of governing, preserving, multiplying the commons. As De Angelis (2017, p. 121) puts it “commoning is *doing* in common”. From an autonomist Marxist perspective, commoning is social doing namely it is social labour. Inside this framework, modes of production, distribution and governance of the commons predominate. It is about establishing non-hierarchical relations and expressing diverse values. That way, commoners as the social force that produces a common goal is articulated through “common decision making, networking, application to task and projects, and coordination among them.” (2017, p. 121–123) For De Angelis, a commons system is reproduced exactly by labour and interaction, by the activity of commoning. He describes commoning as the process that brings together or (re)produce what each collectivity considers as the commonwealth along with “the bodies, the affective and social relations” that are parts of the community. All these, namely collectivity/community, commonwealth, bodies, affective relations constitute the commons for De Angelis. (2017, p. 122)

Decolonial options for the commons

We are all now in the situation of the global coloniality, which affects not only the colonized and the subaltern but also, increasingly, the people in the Global North and in the semi-periphery, who used to think that colonialism was not their problem and now discover that their lives are becoming increasingly dispensable within the architecture of the global coloniality. This is a unifying drive for [...] theorists and activists *to build alter-global alliances and intersectional coalitions for the future struggles for a different world marked by a genuine interest in a far-away other and, eventually, a world where no one would be an other anymore, where there will be other economic options than neoliberal global capitalism, other ways of thinking*

than Western, and other ways of communicating with nature than exploitation.”
(Tlostanova 2019, p. 174 my emphasis)

Still today some scholars present the commons as a *new way* of thinking and acting, worldwide or as “new stories that orient us towards a brighter future”. (de Groot & Bloemen 2019, p. 9) But, such a persistence hides the fact that in some localities of the Global South, people had already developed “alternative” ways of political and economic existence as a local tradition long before the 1990s.¹ Gagyí, for example express the view that for researchers already working on peripheral regions the present global crisis and its effects on Global North make apparent “*something that has long constituted the reality of most of humanity, but has only recently reached the top layers of global society*”. (Gagyí 2019 my emphasis)

In the same vein, Tlostanova claims that *now we are all* in the situation of global coloniality and the people of the Global North are affected as well. In line with Tlostanova, the argument I put forward in this paper is that if we want to “*build alter-global alliances and intersectional coalitions for the future struggles for a different world*” through the commons, a western construction and an everyday struggle for a different world, and *an other* relationality, a decolonial reorientation is essential. For that reason, in this chapter, I want to discuss the potentialities that arise by bringing together these two transdisciplinary fields of thought. In my view, a feminist decolonial option opens up the path for the “principle of intersectionality”(Tlostanova 2010, p. 41) to enter the field of the commons. On the other hand, this combination might be useful for the decolonial project, as well. Escobar (2007) is of the view that three areas are still undertheorized by modernity/coloniality research group: gender, nature/environment and new economic imaginaries. My contribution could be seen as an effort to cross these areas simultaneously.

My purpose, in this section, is to adumbrate some of the basic lines of arguments of the decolonial project, and the ways these might be useful to commons discourses. I do not intend to present a new decolonial theory of the commons, rather I want to propose some points for a future discussion especially among Western European, male scholars. Before moving on, Mignolo’s (2009) article is a useful starting point to see where *the commons* and *the communal* are discussed together. Yet, he additionally stresses their inherent differences and their distinctiveness as modes of social organizations, something that is rarely discussed in the field

¹ Mignolo, for example, elaborates upon the notion of the communal in non-Western localities. (Mignolo 2009)

of commons. According to Mignolo, the communal promoted by indigenous nations in Bolivia and Ecuador might sound like European communism or socialism but it is not. Mignolo (2009) takes the view that “the idea of ‘the common’ is part of the imaginary of European history. Yet the communal is an-other story: it cannot be easily subsumed by the common, the commune or communism”. The social organization of the communal has its origins back, prior to Incas and Aztecs civilizations, and in the experiences of Incas and Aztecs under Spanish colonialism. For Mignolo it is important to clarify that the communal is not a “leftwing project (in the European sense), but [...] a decolonial one”. (Mignolo 2009) This means, that they are “distinct” types of social organization and not the same. But it becomes apparent that the distinctiveness of this type of organization is not new, quite the opposite. It seems like alternative modes of organization are synchronic to human history in all territories of the globe. For Mignolo we should envision the alternatives in a pluri-versal mode of thinking instead of the European universal way. Mignolo defines *pluriversality* as the

“entanglement of several cosmologies connected today in a power differential [...] the logic of coloniality covered up by the rhetorical narrative of modernity. Pluriverse [is] a world entangled through and by the colonial matrix of power.”(Mignolo n.d.)

On this account, I find useful scholars to mention the distinctiveness of each locality and avoid subsuming the communal into the Western European framework of the commons. In what follows I will try to deal with the opposite, namely, to borrow tools from the decolonial project that I consider that offer useful insights to the commons.

a. Coloniality of power as a step to avoid economic reductionism

Decolonial project offers useful ways to experiment with pluriversalism. The starting point for decolonial project is the “coloniality of power” or else the “colonial matrix of power”. Anibal Quijano (2000) put flesh on the bones of this idea. The colonial matrix of power is nothing more than the hidden mentality, the extra quality of the global power that was established to the colonies during the “discovery” of the Americas by Western Christian states- the colonizers and paved the way to what is termed as globalization. Furthermore, Quijano describes the coloniality of power as a power structure based on two main pillars: the subjectivity that through race become a prominent feature to classify people; and the capitalist system that engenders the control of labour and the augmentation of exploitation. That way the coloniality of power:

“manifests itself through the formation of race (racism), the control of labor (capitalism), the control of subjectivity (including gender) and the control of knowledge production (or a Western monopoly of knowledge)” (Tlostanova 2010, p. 20)

What Quijano and other scholars from modernity/coloniality research program want to stress is the importance of the whole colonial matrix of power. For example, Marxist scholarship, a legacy for Western system of thought, promotes arguments that categorize the conditions of oppression as primary and secondary. Usually, the primary issues are attached to the sphere of the economy, and these are the first to be resolved in our struggle to change the world, while the secondary issues are considered as “merely cultural” and magically will be resolved after the destruction of capitalism. (Butler 1998) Scholars such as Brown, emphasizes that neoliberalism establishes the market model to the whole society and economics become the master of everything in every aspect of social, cultural, political life. (Brown 2018) Nonetheless, as Butler & Athanasiou (2013, p. 40–41) argue

the production of dispensable and disposable populations (echoing the ‘surplus population’ in Marx’s formulation) has everything to do with questions of racism, sexism, homophobia, heteronormativity, ableism, and familialism, all those questions that have been historically discounted as irrelevant to “real” politics. The capitalism of our times has everything to do with the biopolitics of social Darwinism- with all its implications of race, gender, sexuality, class, and ability - inherent in neoliberal governmentality.

Decolonial scholars, from their side consider issues such as race, gender, sexuality, ability etc., of great importance even if these concepts are usually attached to substructure according to Marxist theory. Grosfoguel, for example, describes capitalist modernity/coloniality, by avoiding a strict emphasis on the economy. He argues that, from a Eurocentric point of view the capitalist world system is

primarily an economic system that determines the behavior of the major social actors by the economic logic of making profits as manifested in the extraction of surplus value and the ceaseless accumulation of capital at a world-scale [...]the concept of capitalism implied in this perspective privileges economic relations over other social relations [...] class analysis and economic structural transformations are privileged over other power relations. (Grosfoguel 2011)

But on the other hand, Grosfoguel, without denying the existence of capitalism, raises an “epistemic question” from a different locus of enunciation, as a way to “shift the location from which these paradigms are thinking”, that of an Indigenous woman in the Americas. From this different locus of enunciation capitalism is not only an economic system that combines capital, labor, commodities etc. but rather it is an

“entangled package [...] a broader and wider entangled power structure that an economic reductionist perspective of the world-system is unable to account for.” (2011 my emphasis)

Succinctly put, for decolonial theorists a shift in focus from the conceptualization of the present world-system as something *more than an economic system* is more than necessary. Instead, they provide a robust explanation of the ways that the world-system is a “historical-structural heterogenous totality” as the colonial power matrix defines our whole existence in all its multifarious dimensions (sexuality, authority, subjectivity, labor).² Grosfoguel, further, conceptualizes the *coloniality of power*

as an entanglement or [...] intersectionality of multiple and heterogeneous global hierarchies (‘heterarchies’) of sexual, political, epistemic, economic, spiritual, linguistic and racial forms of domination and exploitation where the racial/ethnic hierarchy of the European/non-European divide transversally reconfigures all of the other global power structures [...] *contrary to the Eurocentric perspective, race, gender, sexuality, spirituality and epistemology are not additive elements to the economic and political structures of the capitalist world-system, but an integral, entangled and constitutive part of the broad entangled ‘package’ called the European modern/colonial capitalist/patriarchal world-system.* (Grosfoguel 2011 my emphasis)

Simply put, to decolonize a field of thought or a practice, means to unravel the coloniality of power, the hidden structure of power that permeates all the spheres of our life and its entanglements. The use of decolonial tools in the field of the commons deflects attention from

² Quijano analyzes how the model of global Eurocentered capitalist power is organized and structured in relations of domination, exploitation and conflict while social actors try to control four basic arenas of human existence: sex, labor, collective authority, subjectivity/ intersubjectivity. This Eurocentered capitalist power is developed around two axes: the coloniality of power that classifies the populations of the planet based on race and this classification permits all the aspects of our social existence and modernity.(Quijano 2007) Maria Lugones (Lugones 2008) starting from Quijano’s approach on colonial matrix of power argues that colonialism also imposed specific gender systems in colonized populations.

conceptualizing the commons as just an alternative mode of production, meaning mostly an economic imaginary, to a conceptualization as an alternative “broad entangled package” to the modern/colonial capitalist/patriarchal world-system. That means that the pillar of subjectivity should not remain untouched. In my opinion, commons are not only an alternative politics against capitalism, but we should conceive them as being against the whole colonial matrix of power. That means that activists and scholars should tackle issues of “race, gender, sexuality, spirituality and epistemology” not as “additive elements to the economic and political structures of the capitalist world-system, but [as] integral, entangled and constitutive part of the broad entangled ‘package’ ” (Grosfoguel 2011) and by doing this we open up space to the principle of intersectionality and to more broad alliances.

It is important to mention here that Quijano’s approach about the coloniality of power was criticized by decolonial feminist scholars like Lugones. She argued that Quijano’s approach conceals biological determinism, presuppose sexual dimorphism and naturalize heteronormativity. Lugones proposed instead the term coloniality of gender. For Lugones “gender” arrived at indigenous societies along with European invaders. Her point is that “gender” is a colonial construct like race that was imposed on indigenous populations and the “systemic sexual violence [is] the dark side of modern/colonial gender system”. (Mendoza 2016) In her work Lugones co-examine two distinct analytical frameworks: on the one hand the work on gender, race and colonization based on Third World Women of Color feminists and critical race theorists that expand the potentialities of intersectionality, and on the other hand Quijano’s framework of coloniality of power, so as to examine what she calls the modern/colonial gender system. (Lugones 2008)

Generally put, decolonial feminisms are preoccupied with gender, race and ethnicity but also, among other things, patriarchy and heteropatriarchal norms. (Walsh 2018, p. 39–42) Decolonial feminisms have as their aim to dismantle the

Western rationality and hegemonic discourse of white, Eurocentered feminism and the unitary category of woman” and to “name, situate, and articulate the pluri-and interspersals of feminisms, understood as spheres not of unification (or universalization) but of pluralism, plurality, and possible interrelation. As such, decolonial feminisms disrupt and transgress the white feminist universal as they pursue insurgencies, standpoints, and propositions of decoloniality and decolonization. (Walsh 2018, p. 39)

Decolonial feminisms trace their origin in Third World and women of color feminisms, along with anti-imperial struggles and have as their main drive to criticize and destabilize the essentialist “we” of white feminism and other movements. But what distinguish them from others that offer a similar critique, for example poststructural feminists is that decolonial theorists start their critique from *altering the epistemic tools* they use as a necessary step to offer completely different knowledge. (Mendoza 2016; Tlostanova 2010, p. 31–60)

b. The principle of intersectionality

According to Mignolo, (2013) decoloniality “goes hand in hand” with *border epistemology* and *delinking*. As he states, delinking is a process promoted in Bandung Conference where 29 countries from Asia and Africa discussed ways for a future away from capitalism and communism and notions that derives from European modernity. (2013, p. 133) At this point it is crucial to mention Hardt (2001) a prominent scholar of the common that considers the Bandung Conference as a “distant offspring” of the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, but he makes the very valid point that Bandung Conference was a meeting for very few leaders, in contrast to the multitude that held the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre. On the other hand, he acknowledges the racial dimension of this Conference that was absent from Porto Alegre. I agree with the “spirit” of delinking, but I want to imagine this process as a bottom-up strategy and not the opposite.

Decoloniality demands a double move as it calls for cutting the bonds, delinking with Eurocentric system of thought and simultaneously calls for creating links with other ways of life, of thinking, of acting that “have been disqualified by Christian theology since Renaissance and which continue expanding through secular philosophy and the sciences”. (Mignolo 2013, p. 133) Decoloniality could only be possible if we think and act from a different angle from the position of border epistemology. For Mignolo border epistemology has as its starting point the *anthropoi* (ἄνθρωποι) or the *other* “who do not want to submit to humanitas, but at the same time cannot avoid it”. (2013, p. 131–132) Border epistemology starts from the site of inferiority, uses languages that cannot be heard clear and loud in public, starts as an effort to delink from all the options that are presented as the only available and viable.

The arduous undertaking of deconstructing Eurocentrism piece by piece a specific way of producing knowledge linked to modernity/coloniality and attached to progress, development and salvation demands one to be in a decolonial state of mind, to put oneself at the border. As Tlostanova describes “[d]ecolonization thus becomes an intellectual and existential and not just a political or social process”. (Tlostanova 2010, p. 21) That means that modernity/coloniality is a state of mind, as well that we must decolonize. Still, it is not enough to criticize someone for being Eurocentric if we don’t simultaneously redefine our own epistemological tools. In addition, decolonial theorizing is deeply attached to action, meaning a continual struggle to dismantle the modern/colonial world- system.

Obviously, as we have to dismantle more than one fields, intersectionality becomes a basic principle. In Mendoza’s view intersectionality goes beyond of unveiling the hidden dimensions of women of color oppression that is exposed by scrutinizing the homogenized “we” that predominated the white feminism and malestream critical race theory. Intersectionality “illuminated ties between *epistemic location and knowledge production*, and offered analytic strategies that *linked the material, the discursive and the structural*” (Mendoza 2016, p. 106 my emphasis)

The term intersectionality is a highly explored and contested concept for feminist scholars. In the field of the commons the term is *explicitly* used by scholars in the field of feminist political ecology such as Nightingale and in queer commons. Bilge (2010) describes intersectionality as one of the most promising terms in feminist theorizing that tries to capture the differences and the complexities or one of the four principal perspectives on the third wave of feminism. For Bilge intersectionality is a transdisciplinary theory that aims to unravel the complexities of social identities and inequalities and simultaneously to capture the multiple dynamics that define the social reality.

Of equal importance is that there is an array of articles that criticize progressive movements such as the Occupy, or Indignados that among others has an undisputed centrality in commons’ discourses. Especially some feminists offer a critique that is not discussed in commons literature. Bilge (2013) for example states that the Occupy Movement despite its claims of inclusiveness, a failure in intersectional political awareness was more than obvious. This

intersectional political awareness might be useful in building political alliances and developing strategies that aim to dismantle the multiple oppressions we face.

As a point of reference of what might be conceived as the “principle of intersectionality” is the definition of Brah & Phoenix (2004, p. 76)

“we regard the concept of ‘intersectionality’ as signifying the complex, irreducible, varied, and variable, effects which ensue when multiple axis of differentiation-economic, political, cultural, psychic, subjective, and experiential-intersect in historically specific contexts. The concept emphasized that different dimensions of social life cannot be separated out into discrete and pure strands.”

In my opinion intersectionality as a different sensibility is important for the commons. Brought together this polyvalence of discourses provokes the “exploration” and experimentation around the multiplicity of social and psychic life. What tools each one of us will find to adjust the principle of intersectionality in the commons is something that depends on our own positionality. For Davis, (2014, p. 19) intersectionality “has been heralded as a perfect helpmeet for investigating anything”. I consider intersectionality more than necessary for the field of the commons because it might open paths to negotiate the ways difference is presented, not only in a structural-macro level, but simultaneously at the micro-level of everyday interactions. By adjusting the principle of intersectionality to the field of the commons researchers can highlight, firstly, the importance of an intersectional gender/sex along with other categorizations such as race, sexual preference, ability, etc. In addition, the principle of intersectionality could enrich the ways of building alliances and enhancing political solidarity in commoning practices.

On the other hand, for Kioupkiolis (2019, 2018), there is a profound omission in the “major” theories of the commons described as the “lack of the political”, as political issues of inclusion/exclusion, hegemony/subordination are not being addressed effectively, along with an awkwardness concerning ways that could promote the construction of a counter-hegemonic block of dispersed commons’ communities. In my opinion not only, there is a “lack of the political” but also there is a lack of epistemological tools to explore the pluriverse of the commons. By adjusting the principle of intersectionality and decoloniality in the commons, perhaps we might surpass the lack of the political, and the lack of epistemological tools as

decoloniality open *an other* epistemological spectrum than the one offered by liberals and Marxists, and that way we can interrogate the historical present and imagine a different future.

c. The ethos of decoloniality against knowledge colonialism

The decolonial project calls us to conceive that there are many other epistemological positions away from dominant Western systems of thought, that are influenced by colonial matrix of power. Further, modernity, a Western concept, has two facets. Modernity is impossible without the capitalist world system, on the other hand there is an inherent “irrational colonial-imperial side generating coloniality of power, of thinking and of being”. (Tlostanova 2010, p. 20) This “irrational colonial-imperial side” is still hidden. The aim of decolonial theorists is twofold as they seek to unravel the colonial matrix of power historically but also to build options for the future. The main opposition of decolonial project to modern thinking is the negation of abstract universalism that is usually promoted by Christian, Liberal and Marxist “cosmotheories” proposing instead *pluriversalism*. I find that the options that are proposed by decolonial scholars open space to deconstruct the universalism (2010, p. 20) that predominates in commons theories either as the classist framework of Marxists, or the abstract and genderless universalism of liberals.

Additionally, decolonial theorists consider the “specific ethos of decoloniality” as a matter of great importance. For Tlostanova (2010, p. 27) this ethos is distinct from “an abstract declarative ethics of giving rights back to the wretched of the Earth” it is more “a *link* of the ethical moment with the *self-positioning* of decolonial humanists”. Tlostanova goes on to stress that this self-positioning is “a critical assessment of oneself as a scholar, an activist, and a human being”. Decolonial ethos highlights the need for an *active and constant link* between the scholars and the movements. This link is generated when the scholar becomes an activist and an insider of the movements, a “true activist”. The decolonial ethos is attached to *pluritopic hermeneutic*, another important concept in decolonial project.

A pluritopic hermeneutics is the opposite of zero-point epistemology. In pluritopic hermeneutics the position of the understanding subject is scrutinized, and multiple knowledges come into a dialogue in a way that question first the way knowledge is produced while trying to change the world. Moreover, the sources to acquire knowledge in a pluritopic “model” are multiple and not only defined by academic disciplines and universities for example everyday

people, non-western cosmologies, social movements etc. and for that reason I feel that decolonial option can open new paths in theorizing the commons. (Tlostanova 2010, p. 23–24)

Taking some lines to explain my own positionality is like delineating the borders, the constraints, the privileges that define me as a writer. Concurrently, my main argument stems from my “locus” of enunciation. Commons’ discourses as elaborated mainly by Western male scholars somehow “produce a myth about a Truthful universal knowledge” that hides the ethnic/racial/gender/sexual epistemic locations of the speaking subjects. And here as epistemic subjects I conceive both the researchers that study the commons and build theories, but most importantly those that struggle outside universities every day. What is more important is that the commons in its popular guises while are a subaltern perspective, a grassroots politics, still cannot escape from epistemically dominant positions. What I mean is that in a great extent commons insist on a Eurocentric point of view that treats capitalist world-system, the main and usually the only “opponent”, as primarily an economic system by using the “master’s tools”. But what we need is a *pluriversal critique* that will be able to dismantle the universal that predominates in the field in its multiple guises.

In step with the above I will try to offer a brief “critical assessment” of myself and the types of links I have developed with commons’ movements in my locale but most importantly with academia. hooks (1994, p. 59) is a helpful starting point for my case when she says that:

“I came to theory because I was hurting—the pain within me was so intense that I could not go on living. I came to theory desperate, wanting to comprehend—to grasp what was happening around and within me. Most importantly, I wanted to make the hurt go away. I saw in theory then a location for healing.”

The above quote expresses my relationship with theory. In addition, my doing and writing cannot escape my intersectional subject positions. I find myself, simultaneously, in multiple other spaces and that makes me have the “ambivalent feeling of belonging and not-belonging at the same time” or else makes me feel the “unease sense” of disidentification of not being able to feel that I do or do not belong in academia and elsewhere. (Lykke 2014, p. 30–33, 44–45) I do not feel either like a “pure” scholar-to be or like a “pure” activist. Officially, pull toward Gender Studies started in LiU, but connection to the field of commons have started, some years

before while studying at Aristotle University.³ And, I am still in a “commons mood”. In a period that the country I live, Greece is still facing a severe debt crisis, me as many others are looking for answers, so as to make “the hurt go away”. Commons became for me a feasible alternative to emergent problems of my reality. I came closer to active movements in my hometown the last years initially for research purposes, but my connection and action is still ongoing. I, also, sense myself as being always in a spiral of asymmetrical powers that I cannot escape. I will not pretend that I will offer objective knowledge, to be honest I do not want to do so. On the contrary, what I write is “partial” and absolute situated and a set of privileges and constraints should be acknowledged.

I am a white, quasi-European, well-educated woman, part of the majority of the population in my country. As a Greek, I have another “mysterious” in-between feeling. (Tlostanova, Thapar-Björkert & Koobak 2016) Geopolitically, Greece is one of the borders of Europe near to Asia and Africa. My country is a glorious member of European Union but sometimes some of us the Greeks, have a feeling of disidentification, and we don’t know if we are Balkans or Europeans if our culture and consciousness is Occidental or Oriental. My country is also known as a member of P.I.G.S (Portugal, Italy, Greece, Spain) one of the black sheep of EU that cannot self-discipline to strict economic rules promoted by Brussels. And more, there also many constraints that shape me as a “thinking body”, I am a woman in a country where gender equality is still a dream, I am middle-aged, and my economic status is in an extremely fluid condition, like my country’s budget. The knowledge that I will generate in this paper is formed by all these intersectional positions and many others not mentioned here. The way I interpret things is embodied, partial and influenced by my experiences and by other people that I am related to in multiple ways. I do not pretend that I can offer a “view from above”, on the contrary, “I am arguing for the view from a body, always a complex, contradictory, structuring and structured body [...] from nowhere, from simplicity [...] the god trick is forbidden” (Haraway 1988, p. 589) in this paper.

But, why do I recall all these in a paper about feminist commons? What I want to avoid, as far as I can, is what, Santiago Castro- Gómez calls the “point zero” and is explained by Grosfoguel as a specific:

³ My first engagement with the commons was in my previous thesis under the title *The political in the commons* in the master’s program Political Theory and Philosophy, Department of Political Sciences, Aristotle University.(Bampatzimopoulou 2016)

“point of view that hides and conceals itself as being beyond a particular point of view, that is, the point of view that represents itself as being without a point of view. It is this “god-eye view” that always hides its local and particular perspective under an abstract universalism.” (Grosfoguel 2011)

Reading more carefully Grosfoguel (2011) I use the above epistemological claim to determine the “locus of enunciation” my specific geo-political and body-political location first as the author and then as a speaking subject. On the other hand, Tlostanova (2010, p. 23) characterizes as “the hubris of zero point” the substitution in modern epistemology of God from Reason but still the observer is missing. Decolonial ethos delineates the limit that reveals the observer but also is a promise not to disqualify those that you observe.

Feminist commons: commoning, intersectionality and beyond

There is still a dearth of research in the field of feminist commons, that means that the richness of feminist theories is still to a large extent unaddressed in the field of commons. My intention in this section is to indicate some points that the feminist commons offers to the field in general. First, I must acknowledge that is impossible to study extensively all the feminist approaches, in a short paper like this one. The field of the commons, more general, is a transdisciplinary and interdisciplinary field without a doubt, perhaps for that reason it is difficult to find a thorough discussion about feminist commons.

In what follows I will try to open a space for exploring the potentialities of feminist theorizing in the field of the commons. In such an effort I cannot escape my own positionality and my own academic background. While I briefly present some strands of feminist commons, I will try to argue about the necessity of a feminist theorizing in the field of the commons for multiple reasons that will be explained step by step in order to have more intersectional approaches able to incite broader political alliances that might open new horizons to grassroots politics of the 21st century.

In general, feminists in the field of “commons studies” promote different visions for social change impelled from below. In feminist theorizing, I see new opportunities for a radical shift that may generate new possibilities for commoning. What I mean is that feminists in the field invite us to change our perspective and see things that is not discussed thoroughly by mainstream theories, invite us to see hidden “truths” that are misrecognized. Generally

speaking, some theorists argue that women historically are in the forefront of the struggles that reclaim the commons. (Linebaugh 2014, p. 10, 17, 24; Federici 2019; Mies & Bennholdt-Thomsen 2001; Mies 2014; Federici 2009)

a. Feminist Commons and Political Economy

As already mentioned, political economy until now is the basic premise of the commons. In the anti-capitalist strand, in general, Federici's approach is a standard reference for many scholars. Her approach put at the centre of resistance the sphere of reproduction. She offers a brilliant critique not only against capitalism but also against Marx and Marxists for the omission of the sphere of reproduction from their theories. If one wants to deeply understand Federici's work should reflect upon social reproduction theory. Social Reproduction Theory (SRT) was elaborated by many socialist and Marxist feminists and still is one of the mainstream threads of feminist theorizing. The basic premise of SRT is that human labour is what "moves" society as a whole and is inspired by Marxian theorizing. For capitalism, what counts more is the productive labor for the market that is considered as the ultimate "work". But on the other side of the spectrum, as Marxists feminists insist there are familial, or communitarian work necessary for reproducing the worker and in a more general sense his labor power. For Marxist feminists through labour we do not only produce commodities but also people that are integral parts of "the systemic totality of capitalism" and exactly this hidden part- the invisible labor- is the aim of their research. (Bhattacharya 2017, p. 2) For feminists in this strand, labour do not only create economic values but is attached to emotions, attitudes, behaviors, responsibilities and relationships that are of tremendous importance for the maintenance of life itself. That way, the meaning of labour goes beyond the perceptions of economists and it becomes an activity that "creates all the things, practices, people, relations and ideas constituting the wider social totality". (Ferguson 2016, p. 48)

For Federici, (2019, p. 1–8) the final goal of our struggles against capitalism is the collectivization of our everyday life. Moreover, in every opportunity, she warns us about the danger of co-optation of the commons from capitalists. (2019, p. 89–92) For her, in our struggle against capitalism activities such as reproductive commons or commons of care, urban community gardening, squatting is of great importance and an essential step to re-appropriate what capitalism took from us. (2019, p. 109–113)

Federici is inspired by the “great common” of Standing Rock where indigenous women while protecting their land and water organized collective kitchens, schools and supported the movement. Moreover, of great importance is the Occupy Movement’s encampments where commoning activities was the heart of the movement. She argues that even some of the activities of the movements might fade through time they leave traces even not visible. The camp in Standing Rock provided a space that formed connections with the struggles of indigenous people. The commoning of reproductive activities in Occupy Movement was a resignification of the ways

“politics is done in ways that were once typical of feminist organizations. The need for a politics that refuses to separate the time of political organizing from that of reproduction [...]”(2019, p. 5)

For Federici reproduction goes beyond the fulfillment of material needs (e.g. housing, food preparation, childrearing, sex, procreation) and it is attached to “the reproduction of our collective memory and the cultural symbols that give meaning to our life and nourish our struggles”. But she wants to avoid a naturalistic conception of femininity and stresses that the reorganization of reproductive work is not a matter of identity but rather a matter of labour. For her, women should lead the collectivization of reproductive work. (Federici 2019, p. 112–113) Admittedly, she highlights the necessity to join the struggle of indigenous people (2019, p. 5, 112–113) but the voices of the indigenous people are translated into a European Marxist framework in her work. She, also, describes, how women, historically, became men’s common in her book *Caliban and the Witch* (Federici 2009). On the other hand, even if she acknowledges the importance of race, and sexuality she mostly insists on a classist framework of analysis. Finally, in her work a bipolar division between the male worker and the female housewife is dominant. (Bampatzimopoulou 2018)

Reid & Taylor (2010) from their side provide a different framework of analysis that combine feminist ecological economics with sociology and politics. In their work, commons is conceived as a “dynamic articulation of modes of reproduction, production and social and ecological reproduction that [they] call Life Round”. (2010, p. 15) Their approach is a critique to US mainstream political discourses that denies the existence of commons. They want to avoid static conceptualizations of the commons as *mere natural resources* and are concerned to develop a “feminist, materialist, political ecology that emphasizes dynamic, interactive processes of human and nonhuman production and reproduction.” (2010, p. 20) They provide

a feminist materialist understanding of the commons that are the “substantive grounds of social and ecological reproduction” They approach commons under “a post-dualist understanding of the connections between commons, state, modes of (re)production, and public sphere”. (2010, p. 22) Their ecological feminism gives a different meaning to political economy: as mode of production that is articulated with mode of reproduction and mode of social and ecological reproduction for which the commons are essential. Commons further is discerned to:

“ecological commons as the web of interdependencies in material processes of human and nonhuman life; the civic commons are those social webs of everyday practices through which people engage with and tend the commons. The civic commons [...] as the forces of social and ecological reproduction (that is, a particular historical conjunction of the social and ecological reproduction).” (2010, p. 25)

Additionally, for them public space is of extreme importance as it is about the space with political, cultural and social dimensions where the social and ecological order is reproduced. That way they want to highlight the “co-constitutive flows between public space, economy and ecology” away from dualisms and separation imposed by capitalism and liberalism. As they state in their “model” the civic, the public and economic space do not collapse into each other rather are distinct spaces. Further, in an effort to avoid a “strong social constructionism” they do not conceive that the human enclose nature. (2010, p. 25–26)

In a such a framework, Reid & Taylor propose the concept of “eco-class” a specific positionality in systems of power and authority inside an economic and ecological framework that is attached to structures of imperialism, racism, sexism and spatial domination. (2010, p. 15) It is about an eco-social position that tries to capture the economic element of class, with the materiality of ecological processes. *Body-place commons* captures the interrelations between cultural meanings and social beings always situated. It is about lived practices of embodied people in specific spaces a set of interdependencies that support the civic and ecological commons. The way they conceptualize the civic, public, and economic space as distinct is a bit problematic. Even if they want to break the “hyper-separation and dualisms that liberalism and capitalism have created between economy, nature, polity and society”. (2010, p. 10–14, 26)

In the field of political economy of great importance is the work of Gibson-Graham and Community Economies Research Network (n.d.) as they offer a renewed approach. Their work is inspired by feminist theories and the struggles of the second wave feminist movements. Based on the notion of phallogocentrism they offer a rigorous critique against capitalism, but most

importantly against anti-capitalist left. They use queer theory and manage to offer a de-essentialized way of conceiving capitalism. Their main argument is that multiple other ways of economic relations are hidden at the bottom of the iceberg. Capitalism is just the top of the iceberg. For Gibson-Graham even the left cannot escape capitalocentrism. Besides this in her work she offers a renewed conceptualization of class as unstable as in our every day we might have multiple class positions. (Gibson-Graham 2006b, 2006a)

Inside this “school of thought”, commons is one of the pillars of community economies.(Gibson-Graham, Cameron & Healy 2013, p. 125–158; Gibson-Graham 2006a, p. 95–97, 187–192) In a more recent article Gibson-Graham, Cameron & Healy (2018) present commoning as a postcapitalist politics for the Anthropocene. Initially, they provide us with a critique to predominant theories of the commons. Then they declare that the capitalocentric framework of the commons limits the potentialities to develop a politics for the Anthropocene. The authors criticize the insistent framework of conceiving the commons as a thing always associated to public or open access property of any type. Thirdly, they take side to determine that they prefer a procedural understanding of commoning that could be applied to any type of ownership/property private, state-owned or open access. By examining the commoning of atmosphere they want to promote an understanding of commoning as assemblages among social movements, technological advances, institutional arrangements and non-human others. As is already pictured they do not escape the economic framework even if they “queer” the notion of ownership. Additionally, in my view, the “assembling” of social movements with state actors needs a more critical interrogation.

b. Feminist Commons and Nature

Eco-feminism even if it is not a unitary field of thought it has become a valuable source of inspiration for commoners all over the world. Nightingale refers to ecofeminists of ‘70s and ‘80’s as the “originators of the environment and gender debate” that made important contributions despite the critiques. Ecofeminism puts at the centre of discussion the way social relations influence and penetrate the environmental domain. In a way, the oppression of women and the exploitation of nature derive from the same “logic” that is attached to capitalism, to science and to colonialism. In addition, ecofeminists support the view that women and men do not have the same knowledge for the environment. That way women’s knowledge should be put at the front stage while we are trying to find ways to protect the environment. Ecofeminist

theorizing starts from a critique to Enlightenment and specifically to Cartesian thinking that nurtured a specific scientific paradigm. Ecofeminists criticize the analytical separation of environment from society and the establishment of binaries such as rational-emotional, mind-body, men-women, culture-nature etc. In addition, cartesian thinking have situated women in one specific position in these binaries i.e. emotion, body, and nature. This second argument have led to a “split” in ecofeminist thought. On one hand there are ecofeminists that support the view that that women are closer to nature, due to their role as mothers and they investigate the ways that women use to protect environment. The work of Vandana Shiva is attached to this position. On the other side, for some ecofeminists the binary thinking should be rejected in its totality and they tend to use a historical materialist framework. (Nightingale 2020, p. 4)

Maria Mies and Vandana Shiva offer us an extended discussion of what ecofeminism is. As they state ecofeminism is a “new term for an ancient wisdom” (Mies & Shiva 2014, p. 13) that its origins are traced to feminist, peace and ecology movements. This movement struggles against ecological disaster of our times. Two words characterize ecofeminist movement: *connectedness* and *wholeness* of theory and practice. Mies and Shiva describe the movement by using the term “we” considering themselves as part of this movement and also as representatives of it:

We are a woman-identified movement and we believe we have a special work to do in these imperilled times. We see the devastation of the earth and her beings by the corporate warriors, and the threat of nuclear annihilation by the military warriors, as feminist concerns. It is the same masculinist mentality which would deny us our right to our own bodies and our own sexuality, and which depends on multiple systems of dominance and state power to have its way. (Mies & Shiva 2014, p. 14)

Ecofeminism is a movement that have as a principle to establish connections, wherever capitalist patriarchy and science that is accused for gender bias and as “patriarchal, anti-nature and colonial” have established disconnection and separation from the living whole. The ways technology affects women and other creatures are a central topic. Ecofeminists “understand that the liberation of women cannot be achieved in isolation, but only as part of a larger struggle for the preservation of life on this planet”. (Mies & Shiva 2014, p. 16)

Vandana Shiva’s spiritual ecofeminism is a strong critique against postmodern feminist constructivism. (Lykke 1997, p. 15–21) On the other hand, Mies developed in the mid ‘70s the

subsistence perspective along with von Werlhof and Bennholdt-Thomsen. As she states it's not about a new economic model but rather "a new orientation, a new way of looking at the economy". The subsistence perspective is the opposite of commodity production and focus not only in economy but also in society, culture and history and other areas. The main goal under this perspective becomes the satisfaction of human needs but not through money and the productions of goods. One of Mies' concerns is housework and more general the sphere of reproduction. (Mies 2005) Although ecofeminists offer a strong critique against capitalism, I find their emphasis in attributing a specific nature to women too far from reality.

Political Ecology is, also, a fruitful source for the commons. Political Ecology is a subfield of Geography that focus on nature and the ways it is interrelated with social and political issues such as "poverty, social justice, the politics of environmental degradation and conservation, the neoliberalisation of nature and ongoing rounds of accumulation, enclosure and dispossession". (Elmhirst 2011, p. 129) Feminist Political Ecology (FPE) is a term referring to the specific subfield of Political Ecology and connect gender with development studies. This approach flourished in the '90s while feminists wanted to grasp how gender is entangled with the natural environment and with the "natural resource-based livelihoods". FPE not only focus on issues of politics and power but most importantly feminist scholars put at the centre of discussion issues of inequality, along with a reconsideration of community and the household and how nature and gender, body and subject's formations are interconnected. Furthermore, the masculine way of knowledge production is under scrutiny and that way epistemological issues unsettle this heterogeneous field of thought. For FPE the social and ecological transformation has as its epicenter women and other marginalized groups and commoning is examined as a means of transforming the lives of subordinated groups. (Elmhirst 2015)

Undoubtedly, it is true to say that commoning is an important keyword of FPE along with the notion of intersectionality in a "human/earth others axis". (Lykke 2009) Butler's theorizations of power and performativity, along with subject as doing are also one important depository of theories that political ecologists use. (Velicu & García-López 2018; García López, Velicu & D'Alisa 2017; Clement et al. 2019; Nightingale 2014, 2019) Put simply, what FPE offers to commons studies is a perspective that examines "socio-nature transformations and, how these transformations, when viewed through a feminist intersectional lens, can expose issues of inequality, power and privilege" (Clement et al. 2019, p. 8) In WEGO website (WEGOitn n.d.) there is a compendious list of the main FPE's topics that include: intersectionality,

performativity, decolonizing knowledge, commoning, the everyday and interconnections across different scales along with situated knowledge.

At this point, it is useful to take a closer look at some important scholars of the field to gain a deeper understanding. Nightingale throughout her work seeks to reveal the importance of nature in the production of gendered bodies. Difference and everyday interactions are inextricably co-produced. Bodies, spaces and an intersecting exercise of power within socio-natural environments are a laboratory of subjectivities. (Nightingale 2011b, p. 153) Nightingale uses the theoretical framework of Butler to conceptualize subjectivity. For her, difference is a product of everyday practices. Her anti-essentialist approach offers a type of subjectivity influenced by “multiple dimensions of power within the same acts” (Nightingale 2011b, p. 155) For Nightingale, commoning is a set of performances embedded in contingent relations that produce subjectivities but also inclusions and exclusions and power. Rationality is substituted by ir-rationality that guides commoners. (Nightingale 2019, 2011a) That way, commoning is a performative process deeply intersectional:

“social relations of difference such as gender, race, ethnicity, caste, age, disability among others entwine together to shape how individuals experience power”. (Nightingale 2019, p. 18)

c. Queer Commons, Posthumanism and beyond....

Another fruitful tendency on the field of the commons is queer commons that open more space to the principle of intersectionality. I take as my starting point the issue of the *Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* where the term queer commons is explicitly stated and elaborated by many different scholars and activists. Here queer activism and queer life are set at the front stage and constitute a “rich resource for imagining, experimenting with, and enacting the improvisational infrastructures necessary for managing the unevenness of contemporary existence”. (Millner-Larsen & Butt 2018, p. 400) Queer Commons are an effort to bring sexuality studies in the field of the commons, an entrance more than important for multiple reasons, but also it is about an intersection between political economy and cultural studies. (Millner-Larsen & Butt 2018)

The above literature review of course is not an exhaustive one. Rather for me it is the beginning of a broader future research that traverse multiple academic disciplines and everyday praxes. There are also some approaches that converge commons’ trajectory with *more than human* world. Tola (Tola 2015) in her article argues about the need to “shift [...] our modes of thinking the relationship between humans and the earth, one in which the earth is no longer the source

of raw materials and the background for human action but that which enables us to feel, think and act.” She is inspired by the work of scholars such as Rosi Braidotti and Elizabeth Grosz on sexual difference and the body in a way that promotes a rethinking of nature, life and the powers of earth to offer “the ecology of the commons as a matter of composition involving disparate existents.” (Tola 2015)

Weber (2018) from her side elaborates upon posthuman commons opening up a vitalist materialist horizon that include all forms of life along with affective and immaterial relations. She is inspired from Braidotti’s approach on ethics and relationality, and interdependence between human and non-human. Weber wants to dismantle the human as “ruler of the earthly commons” and put at the frontline posthuman commons that reveal the multiple types of relations that pre-exist commoning even if not seen. Posthuman commons becomes a place of multiple entangled intersections between “the material and immaterial, the organic and the technological” and simultaneously exposes how western humanism dominate all kind of relations.(Weber 2018, p. 84)

Feminist decolonial options for the commons. Commoner as a decolonial/feminist figuration.

As I said before here I do not intent to build a solid theory of decolonial commons, rather I tried to discern some useful tools, that can help me to examine some aspects of the vast field of the commons/the common/commoning. Kiouпкиolis (2019) for example posed the question: how it could be possible, through the commons, to constitute a “collective subject” able to constitute a counter-hegemonic block that might change the present situation. To be clear, my point is not that such a “strategy” is not useful. I suggest that this vision presupposes multilevel transversal dialogues not only between different movements, but also between academia and activism. Succinctly put, each conversation about the “collective subject” presupposes a careful examination of the internal relations of the movements but also transversal dialogues between different movements and different theories. The transdisciplinarity of the commons is more than obvious, what we need is to start thinking outside rigid disciplines and build theories away from the zero point epistemology. For me feminist commons as presented in the previous section is a good starting point. Furthermore, what is necessary is the acknowledgement of the colonial matrix of power and of the unavoidable pluriversality that it engenders. If we do not focus on the effects that the colonial matrix of power impose on our everyday life we cannot

surpass all the fetters that keep us away from a “collective we” able to resist and perhaps change the present modern/colonial capitalist/patriarchal world-system.

Bilge (2013, p. 410–411) poses some interesting questions in her article about the ways intersectionality is adapted by “disciplinary” feminism. I found the specific questions posed by Bilge in her article of great importance. As commons is, also, a theory, a practice and a tool to examine the everyday struggles of people all over the world I advance scholars and myself to keep in mind to crosscheck: what this “*particular tool does for [...] subordinated groups in the local context*”. This also presupposes to situate ourselves in comparison with the subordinate group that we examine. Another important question to ask is “*are these groups and individuals empowered in some way by the availability of this tool? Or, are they disempowered because the new tool is introduced in ways that erase their own thoughts and activism and their own political standpoint shaped by multiple power differentials?*” To do so a pluritopic theory/hermeneutics is more than necessary and urgent.

Another important point I want to highlight by borrowing the words of Mignolo is that it might be better if we do not conceive commons as “a new universal that presents itself as the right one that supersedes all the previous and existing ones, but as *an option*”. (Mignolo 2013, p. 130) How such a reconceptualization might be possible? Mignolo (2013, p. 131) argues that “[b]y presenting itself as an option, the decolonial opens up a way of thinking that delinks from chronologies of new epistemes and new paradigms. [...] Epistemes and paradigms are not alien to decolonial thinking. They cannot be but are no longer the point of reference and of epistemic legitimacy.”

And if the communal is promoted “as another option next to capitalism and communism” (Mignolo 2013, p. 131) from decolonial theorists, I want to stress the importance of theorizing the common as an option by using a decolonial approach as a way to reveal coloniality of power. But this theorization might start from a different point, from other paradigms.

In my view, the feminist commons should not only be attached to women especially when the specific signifier is conceived as a unified category, without acknowledging the differences between women. The necessity of the re-evaluation of the subject of feminism have already been stressed by women of color feminists and poststructuralist feminists years before. Each approach I chose to present negotiates different themes with diverse ways and include not only human beings. It is really important that they reframe the conversation not only by putting, for

example, the sphere of reproduction, or sexuality, or intersectionality or ir-rationality within the discussions of the commons, but they, also, provide the base to argue that the ways one can theorize the alternative politics of the commons is open-ended.

For me, it is also important, instead of looking the picture of the commons from above, to start looking it from the bottom. In our efforts to understand and change the world it is not only important to understand how neoliberal capitalism function in connection to state and market. It is equally and sometimes even more important to understand how neoliberal capitalism affects the bottom. Such an effort, namely the change of perspective demands, firstly, situated knowledge that means an extensive account of who “we”, the speaking subjects, are, and further demands responsibility. This situated knowledge also, means that our theorizations should not be conceived as a grand narrative, a solution to all the problems. If it is certain that “we” who fight against neoliberal capitalism are different, then the theoretical tools we use should grasp this difference before, during, after the fight and while designing, materializing, communities of commons. The destabilization of the “we” of the commoners along with the epistemological tools we use to examine this “we” is a focal point so for feminists as for decolonial theorists, but, still, it is not for commons scholars.

Easily one can accuse me of appropriating decolonial theory to use it in a western epistemological framework. Surely, this was not my intention, rather the opposite. What I wanted to stress is that for me there is an urgent need for the “disciplinary” commons: the enrichment of the epistemological tools that are used to explore different praxes in multiple localities. That way we might open our ears, our eyes and our heart and speak the languages that everyday people speak in the field. Do they try to abolish capitalism? Do they try to promote a new way of production or just to make end meets? It is important to listen to the commoners.

The term *commoner* is the term used in the field of the commons to describe the subject that participate in the commoning. The term names all those that try to build in the here and now a different world. Hardt- Negri call us to understand the term as the way we understand other professions as the bak-er, the weav-er, the mill-er. In the same way the common-er is the common people, namely the ordinary people that establish the commons under the democratic principle of the common. (Hardt & Negri 2012, p. 131–132) At this point, the term *feminist figuration* might be a useful tool to experiment and imagine the commoner. As decolonial option besides the critique, demands the imagination of a future to come, I chose as a thinking

technology the term feminist figuration for this purpose. According to Lykke's (2010, p. 205–206) definition a feminist figuration is:

“[a]n alternative-affirmative-feminist subjectivity, articulated in a figurative form. A figuration is located in-between fact and fiction. It should be understood both as a vision that the individual female feminist subject is in the process of making real, and as a critique of the here-and-now situation [...] figurations take into account thought, emotions, imagination and bodies.”

I choose to conceive the commoner as a critical figure “a kind of deconstructive device, which subvert cherished notions and dichotomies of the modern world without closing the critical discourse in one counter-truth” (Lykke 1997, p. 10) Against the dominant theories in the field of the commons that criticize the homo economicus and put forward the homo socialis or the homo politicus as a steer universalized persona I want to imagine the commoner in real life situations as a real anthropos (άνθρωπος) with passions and defects. How easy is for someone to escape its ontological status and act according to the principles of the commons? How easily can we all escape from our intersectional positions and be part of a collective “we” without always fighting with ourselves and others for power and domination? How easily can we all accept the difference and acknowledge our privileges? How often do we ask the “other question?” Matsuda proposes as a way to gain a deep understanding of the multiple forms of subordination to use the method that she calls as “ask the other question”:

“When I see something that looks racist, I ask, ‘Where is the patriarchy in this?’ When I see something that looks sexist, I ask, ‘Where is the heterosexism in this?’ When I see something that looks homophobic, I ask, ‘Where are the class interests in this?’ Working in coalition forces us to *look for both the obvious and non-obvious relationships of domination*, helping us to realize that no form of subordination ever stands alone.”(Matsuda 1991, p. 1189 my emphasis)

So, if the commons is a question about the viability of capitalism and a search for alternatives what about asking the “other question” as we struggle to build and preserve communities of the commons? For me, at first, we have to answer these questions if we want to discuss about a collective “we”. And not only in theory but mainly we must work upon these questions inside the communities of the commons. For that reason, I prefer to imagine the commoner as a figuration, as a subject-*in the process*.

Concluding remarks

I still remember my feelings and my thoughts the first time I read articles about the commons. Initially, I found at these discourses a place for myself as in general it is about a politics for everyday people and not professional politicians, or only party members or professional activists. After entering deeper and deeper in the field I started to question some things and to interrogate the ways these discourses promote change. Later, I also had a rather more “painful” memory from a conference here in Greece about the commons, where I was part of a feminist panel. During the break, we (the feminists) learned that some of the other speakers (mostly men) questioned the necessity of feminisms in commons’ discourses and more specifically the relation of our panel with the specific conference.⁴ (Barotsi 2018) For me this is an example of “epistemic coloniality” (Tlostanova, Thapar-Björkert & Koobak 2016) as our work didn’t conform with male-oriented theories of the field, that were popular in Greek male academics and for that reason couldn’t be accepted by some Greek gurus of the “disciplinary commons”. Anyway, I do not have any resentment, rather I was shocked because I thought that in an “alternative field” like the commons there was no need to answer questions about the necessity of feminisms. Perhaps, I was too innocent back then. For me, undoubtedly feminisms are necessary except if there is someone who can argue that in a *relational politics* like the commons there is no power relations to be tackled. Somehow these memories still exist in this paper.

Moreover, the choice of the tools I used in this paper was not an easy one. For me, this was the very first time that I use decolonial tools. For that reason, I tried to present the basic pillars of a decolonial approach for the commons. In the first section, based on Dardot I presented the terms commons, common, commoning that most of the time confuse the readers. In the second section my main effort was to map avenues for a further research by explaining the necessity of the colonial matrix of power, the principle of intersectionality and the decolonial ethos in the field of the commons. The section of the feminist commons was an indicative analysis in order to present some of the feminist approaches, rarely discussed together. My contribution only aspires to highlight the need for a more *pluri-versal* toolbox in the field of the commons.

⁴ Barotsi Rosa one of the speakers of that feminist panel, describes eloquently the reception of this panel by other speakers in Conference Proceedings. (Barotsi 2018)

At the end, as Millner-Larsen & Butt (2018, p. 402) propose by following José Esteban Muñoz let's see the commons "as an ideality 'not yet here', as a horizon". I believe that the ways we choose to theorize and realize this ideality and the tools we use during this ongoing struggle define all of us that participate in the efforts to escape from the belly of the pregnant monster either as scholars or as activists.

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