



Approaches to urban commons: Reflections to  
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**APPROACHES TO URBAN COMMONS:  
Reflections to conceptualize integrated solid waste management with social inclusion**

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**Abstract:** Given the necessity of finding alternative solutions to overcoming the dichotomy between private and public, market and State, various authors have sought in the common's approach devices of analysis to comprehend the complexity of urban environments. This work reviews urban commons, starting from the typology of goods in economic theory and presenting some reflections on the implications that this proposition has in cities. In order to achieve this objective, the theoretical proposal of the commons is combined with the analysis of the urban problem that is solid waste management. In Bogotá's case, resources, communities, institutions, and practices that can be examined from this perspective have been identified; with the end purpose being to propose certain reflections about public policy.

**Keywords:** *Urban commons; waste pickers; social inclusion; waste management; public policy*

**JEL Codes:** A13, B55, H00, P48, Q53

**Introduction**

Given the need to find alternative solutions to overcoming the dichotomy between private and public, market and State, various authors have sought in the common's approach devices of analysis to comprehend the complexity of urban environments. Dardot and Laval (2014) argue that the study of the commons provides an integral point of view that surpasses the basic distinctions of our legal and economic conceptions between private and public goods, private and public property, and market and State. Besides goods, the reflection on the commons includes ways to manage the collective, and the communities that build and defend them.

The crises of capitalism have had a great impact on the destruction of livelihoods; social safety nets; state investment in public goods such as drinking water, education, housing, health,

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and transport; etc. For David Harvey (2012), these crises are particularly evident in cities where the threat against society's means of production and reproduction is highly visible. This situation has produced renewed interest in the conceptualization, and the political, economic, and social possibilities of the *urban commons*, considered collective practices that habitually generate the conditions that make possible the city as we know it (Borch & Kornberger, 2015). The commons is a management system with historical roots that works to manage resources through distribution and mutual support. The system has recently been rediscovered as it reconstructs a social fabric that neither the market nor the state are capable of forming (Bollier, 2011).

It is important to clarify that commons should not be understood as an adjective. The commons is addressed as a verb in terms of practices, social relations, and conflicts (Dardot & Laval, 2014).

The concept of the commons is not recent. Historian Peter Linebaugh (2014) remarks how from 16th century England, the enclosures of lands that had traditionally been used, cultivated, and inhabited by poor peasants were considered commons. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, rich peasants raised the pressure of enclosures with the purpose of increasing the productivity of the lands held by "marginal" populations. In the modern world, the movement of enclosure and slavery accompanied industrial capitalism. Through the expropriation of livelihoods, the repression of communal revolts that defended the English commons, and the expulsion of thousands of poor peasants, massive rural to urban migrations were achieved. These migrations served to obtain the labor needed for industrialization and colonization (Linebaugh, 2008).

The dynamics of the commons are rapidly diminishing in urban spaces due to the transformation of capitalist processes that erase, enclose, separate, rezone and replace public

spaces and the socio-economic activities that take place within them. The current decrease in urban commons is cause for concern because these are fundamental for a city's production, which is understood as the set of socio-economic, political and technical processes that contribute to making life possible (Cavé, 2013).

A reflexive exercise is executed by combining the theoretical proposal of the commons with the urban problem that is Integrated Solid Waste Management (ISWM). Bogotá is used as a case study<sup>2</sup>. The Colombian capital has experienced fluctuation between partial nationalization and privatization of its waste management, and has recently begun a process of inclusion of the waste picker population.

To begin with, this document reviews the concept of urban commons, based on its development from the typology of common goods in economic theory. Subsequently, basing off this information, we will analyze the theoretical proposal of the commons through the lense of ISMW with social inclusion. The case of Bogotá will be referenced from three main elements: (i) common resources, (ii) the communities, and (iii) common institutions and practices (Helfrich & Haas, 2008). Finally, we will address the “*new enclosures*” present in waste management, based on Stuart Hodgkinson's proposal on the three main acts of urban enclosure: (i) privatization, (ii) dispossession, and (iii) capitalist subjectivity (Hodkinson, 2012, p. 509).

The starting hypothesis proposes that the enclosure processes in the analysis of the ISWM, generate not only dynamics of exclusion that threaten the working conditions and subsistence of waste pickers, but also negatively affect the city's recycling rate and welfare. These enclosures

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<sup>2</sup> This document proceeds from a qualitative perspective based on work done with communities and through a dialogue of knowledges, which the research group in Socioeconomy, Institutions and Development has been developing for three years.

are motivated by the desire for benefits, increases in the extraction of income, and the control of populations and their production. Limiting community access to the common, causes a reduction in collective benefits, not only for the communities directly affected (waste pickers), but also for society in general.

### **1. Conceptual Discussion: Urban Commons**

In order to understand the development of the concept of urban commons, it is necessary to review some theoretical aspects, and identify the economic division of types of goods. From this reflection, it will be possible to understand how the commons goes beyond common goods.

#### ***Types of goods in economic theory***

Traditionally, the classification of goods and services is divided between private and public. The latter is produced in suboptimal amounts, which is why state intervention is required to better distribute these scarce resources, taking advantage of the State's monopoly on legitimate violence, which allows it to force citizens to shoulder costs (Samuelson, 1954). At the same time, public goods can be categorized into “natural” public goods, those available (such as air), and public goods provided by human action (such as health, education, national defense).

According to economic theory, public goods are characterized by non-rivalry (their use does not imply any decrease in the amount available) and non-exclusion (it is impossible to exclude anyone who wishes to use them). The problem with this type of goods is that, due to their nature, no individual is interested in bearing their costs, and there is also no possibility of excluding users. This leads to the known problem of the free-rider; that is, those individuals who benefit from the efforts of others.

Elinor Ostrom (2009) proposes the classification of four types of goods: 1) private goods (with high exclusion and high rivalry); 2) common-pool resources (with low exclusion and high rivalry); 3) toll goods (with high exclusion and low rivalry); and 4) public goods (with low exclusion and low rivalry).

The given classification should be taken as reference or as “ideal” categories, since in reality goods move in a continuum (Merino, 2015), on a scale (Cavé, 2013), in which the conditions of exclusion and rivalry are not determining. For example, the criterion of rivalry on a highway will depend on the moment of greatest congestion when it is used simultaneously. A non-rival good can become rival if a certain consumption threshold is crossed. In the case of exclusivity, the right to use is a human invention, can be transformed depending on the institutions that create goods (Obeng-Odoom, 2016).

Economic theory considers this strong distinction between public and private goods—in which the latter suffer the problem of not being able to be normally assigned by the market—an anomaly. Neoclassical theory assumes that the market can exercise the best allocation of scarce resources in a bipolar world between the market and the State. However, the provision of a good depends not only on its nature, but also on political, social, cultural, and historical factors that are forgotten by standard economic theory (Dardot & Laval, 2014).

Thus, in order to broaden the conceptual debate, it is important to distinguish what is understood as a public good and a common good. Commons refers a multiplicity of social relations that are associated, determined not by the good or the service itself, but by formal and informal social conventions, laws, and norms. These relationships can be inherited or developed collectively, passed on from generation to generation. They are initially invented, but they must be nourished, maintained, protected, and replenished, evolving in social practice. As such, they

are considered more a verb than a simple enunciative concept (Helfrich & Haas, 2008). In the case of public goods, a formal decision is required for them to be produced.

In legal terms, *res communes* is a separate category of *res publicae* that includes State-owned public property. For this reason, it is considered that common goods conform a category of property that exceeds state power (Bollier, 2014).

Another conceptual distinction is found in the notions of common resources, common property, and common-pool resources. **Common resources** are understood as the wide diversity of resources and their systems (natural, social, or cultural) inherited collectively or produced, in which citizens have a political and moral interest of control and management within their communities. **Common property** is understood as the administration of the common property of resources, not through natural laws, but through processes of organization and negotiation of the property rights of common resources. Finally, the **common-pool resources** are the products resulting from management (Hess & Ostrom, 2003).

Generally, common goods are associated with natural resources such as land since they are granted by nature. That is, they are not anyone's private property and the rights exercised over them, are fundamentally rooted in the notion of equal rights. Human beings have inalienable rights in natural resources and in resources created by work and communal effort (George, 2006). However, later analyses have expanded the spectrum of common goods, encompassing other goods beyond nature. These theoretical studies include the management system and practices of said assets, as well as the communities that manage them.

### ***More than common goods: the commons***

Recent theoretical developments address commons as a construct made up of three main parts: (a) common resources, (b) the communities that participate in the production and reproduction of common goods and services, and (c) common institutions and practices (Helfrich & Haas, 2008). This construct not only references goods, but also the “common,” considered as a particular type of institutional arrangement to govern the use and availability of resources (Benkler, 2003). Bollier (2014) considers that the commons include both tangible assets —such as forests and minerals— as well as the intangible wealth of copyrights, patents, and critical infrastructures like the Internet, government research, and cultural resources such as radio transmissions and public spaces.

Unlike private property, in the commons, no person has exclusive control over the use and disposition of a particular resource. Groups that manage resources do not perceive them as “theirs,” but accept them as their own in order to manage their access and continuous use (Helfrich & Haas, 2008). The management and control of commons is defined by a set of people through rules that can be operational, made by collective choice and constitutional (Ostrom, 2009).

Nevertheless, it is necessary to minimize the nostalgia frequently associated with the commons, and to critically investigate the processes and social relations that constitute the common. These must not be catalogued *a priori* as an opposition to power, nor to capitalism, as certain authors suggest (Bollier, 2014; Linebaugh, 2008). It is necessary to deepen the complexity of the analysis by examining the class and power relations that produce, limit, privatize, or strengthen the commons (Borch & Kornberger, 2015).



### *Urban commons*

In an urban setting, the commons include obvious public goods such as the air we breathe, parks and public spaces, transportation, public sanitation systems, and so on. But they also comprise municipal waste, wetlands, streets as arteries of movement and as places where people work, live, express their disagreements, etc. The city is then conceived as a place of production, transformation, and valuation of urban commons (Shah & Garg, 2017).

Reflections on urban commons have found a harmony with the different social movements because they allow the claim to forms of management of the collective. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri (2009) argue that common goods are dynamic and include both the product of labor and the means for their future production. This implies considering the socio-economic and cultural circumstances of communities, as well as the effectiveness of the existing formal and informal legal systems to manage and defend the social control of resources.

As a rhetorical concept, the commons has managed to engage itself in political discourse and urban thought (Helfrich & Haas, 2008). For Kohn (2004), there are good reasons to adopt the rhetoric of the commons since it is etymologically related to community and represents a strong criticism of privatization. He also makes a historical analogy to the movement of enclosures that transformed English agriculture in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Large corporations and contemporary multinationals are assimilated to the English gentlemen who enclosed and appropriated common lands for their personal enrichment.

Considering the commons as a social relationship, we will attempt a reading of the urban problem of waste management through the perspective of the common, in the case of Bogotá.

## **2. Integrated solid waste management from the perspective of the commons**

Recent studies of urban commons have analyzed a wide spectrum of topics ranging from housing projects (Chatterton, 2016), to women's bookstores (Williams, 2018), green spaces and parks (Rodgers & Mackay, 2018), the production of energy (Becker, Naumann, & Moss, 2017), aqueduct systems, and waste management (Cavé, 2014; Zapata & Zapata, 2015).

ISWM has become a growing challenge for cities, due to the significant increase in the amount and diversity of waste, and the need to control its negative impact. Lifestyle and economic and sociodemographic changes influence the patterns of consumption and the production of residues. As long as cities continue to grow, without adequate waste management, so will waste.

In 2012, Colombia had an urban population of 29,283,628, which produced 0.95 kg of daily waste per capita. By 2025 projections estimate that 44,179,000 will inhabit urban areas and will generate 1.95 kg of daily waste per capita. Within the country, the waste collection rate is 98%. Of this, 54% is disposed in garbage dumps and 46% in sanitary landfills (World Bank, 2012). Bogotá produces approximately 6,500 tons of solid waste a day, 70% of which could be recycled. However, only 10% of this waste is recovered (OSAB, 2015). The residual waste is disposed of in the Doña Juana landfill, whose lifespan is predicted to last until 2022.

### ***Waste as a common resource***

The commons refers to a management system of a resource, which in our case will be the solid waste produced by the city. From the assessment of waste through utility schemes, it is interesting to see how garbage became a precious element.

Waste is managed by communities that, in the case of recycling, have lived in conditions of vulnerability and marginality. These populations have created value for these materials through

their work. The analysis of waste allows us to understand the difference between the commons and merchandise. For the former, its value lies in the work necessary to produce it, and in that, through the recycling process, part of this work is returned to the commons through environmental (extending the useful life of landfills), as well as economic (reduction of cost by avoiding the use of raw materials) benefits. However, when valuing waste as merchandise, the worth of labor is measured as an exchange value for capital (Gidwani, 2012). From this reflection, we can understand how in the chain of recycling, the most vulnerable people, those who must wander through the city tugging or carrying their material on their shoulders, are those who work the most. However, the fruit of their labor is appropriated by warehouse owners, intermediaries, and small and big industries.

Waste that is considered as commons is a threat to conventional economics because it poses a redefinition of value (Bollier, 2011). The definition of urban commons resources is an open, contextual and, above all, political issue, a common resource exists when a community claims it as such (Castro-Coma & Martí-Costa, 2016).

### ***Waste pickers: communities that produce and reproduce the commons***

In the city, the multiplicity of actors that interact producing, consuming, and managing the commons complicates the analysis. The commons are intrinsically related to community, which requires it be strong enough and have people who want to create, maintain, and protect goods and practices. Otherwise, the commons runs the risk of falling into ruin or privatization. The uses of the commons are defined by denouncements, struggles, active processes of debate, and judicial disputes (Benjamin, 2010). Faced with the need to produce practices of the commons and alliances between actors with shared interests, dialogues, and spaces for consultation can be

attempted. However, in general, adverse positions among interest groups lead to appropriation conflicts such as those identified by Elinor Ostrom (2009).

Studies on common resources have shown that user groups can join and effectively regulate provision and use, if certain criteria are met (Ostrom, 2009). However, one of the challenges of commons management are spatial scales, as well as the number of users. In a context of strong urbanization, these characteristics make the analysis more complex.

This analytical proposal exercise focuses on waste pickers as one of the communities involved in waste management<sup>3</sup>. Although waste pickers share the exercise of their trade in precarious conditions, they are not a homogenous group. We do not claim that their relationship with waste has been built in terms of the common, but that their struggle to be part of the management, to have access to material, and to not be excluded can be understood from the theoretical proposal of the commons as a process of change and transformation of their subjectivities (Dardot & Laval, 2014).

The history of waste pickers in Colombia has been characterized by conditions of poverty, marginality, and even acts of violence such as those that occurred in 1992, when a criminal network was discovered to murder waste pickers to traffic their vital organs and use their bodies in academic practices in the medical school (ALUNA, 2011). From the denouncement of this fact, Law 511 of 1999 was issued, which established March 1st as the National Waste Picker and

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<sup>3</sup> Other actors that also participate in the management of waste are users, the residents who live around the Doña Juana landfill, public institutions such as the Special Administrative Unit for Public Services, the Superintendence of Public Services, the Commission for the Regulation of Water and Basic Sanitation, the Ministry of Housing, City and Territory, the Superintendence of Industry and Commerce, district mayoral offices and secretariats, as well as private entities such as industry, warehouse owners, small intermediaries, service operators for cleaning service (collection waste and sweeping), etc.

Recycling Day in Colombia, later institutionalized as the International Waste Picker's Day (OAB, 2014).

This symbolic reparation act served as an important precedent in the introduction of waste pickers as a productive actor (Parra, 2016). According to De Angelis (2003) the commons take many forms and history shows us that the recognition of the self-determination of the community by high-level authorities (like the State) is often gained through struggle.

### ***Institutions and practices of waste management***

The ISWM has undergone a change from final disposal or burial to seek a comprehensive and systemic vision with an emphasis on utility (Wilson, 2007). In this way, waste is no longer considered trash, undergoing a re-valuation in terms of resources, and being reintegrated into production processes as part of a cycle (Powrie & Dacombe, 2006). This cycle has not only economic effects, but also social effects, especially when vulnerable populations obtain their sustenance from this activity (Scheinberg, 2012). In environmental terms, recycling reduces the impact of pollution and the effect of the extraction of new materials.

In countries of the global south, the ISWM is carried out under schemes where public sanitation services are not guaranteed for the entire population. The recycling rates are still low, thus a large part of the potentially usable material is buried. Formal private operators coexist with a recycling population (Wilson, Velis, & Rodic, 2013).

The fight for the recognition of waste pickers' labor, as well as the change in the perspective of the ISWM, produced a significant variation in the provision of the public sanitation service. The substantial change is the inclusion of waste pickers as actors in the public cleaning service, and be remunerating for their work.

Colombia has promoted policies to regulate the recycling activity of the public sanitation service (Decree 1077 of 2015). There is also a transitory regime for the formalization of waste pickers (Decree 596 of 2016). Despite all this, however, the consolidation of an ISWM that makes recycling viable and guarantees its benefits to society is still budding. Free competition, the interests of the big enterprises and the recycling industry, as well as the changes in governments, have made difficult the social inclusion waste pickers into public policy.

### **3. Enclosures of the common: the ISWM with social inclusion in Bogotá**

For David Bollier (2011), enclosure processes have been a historical constant, made more effective today by the complicity between the State and the market. Different scholars have denounced the enclosure of the commons (Hardt & Negri, 2009; McCarthy, 2005; Obeng-Odoom, 2018; Rose, 1986; Stavrides, 2012), as a process that in the urban environment has meant an “accumulation by dispossession,” where the privatization and looting of resources are the vanguard of the permanent strategies of capitalist accumulation (Harvey, 2012). The commons are not only a matter of “management” of a resource, but also consists of an activity that is built in and through conflict (Dardot & Laval, 2014, p. 289)

Marx considered enclosures as the different methods that allowed for the accumulation of capital and labor—through the separation of the means of production from their producers—necessary for the transition to capitalism; a process known as “primitive accumulation.” However, for authors such as Stuart Hodkinson (2012), current urban enclosures encompass a much broader and multidimensional concept, by controlling the use and exchange value of the urban or social space. In this perspective, we are interested in moving beyond the urban

enclosures of space, to analyze its effects on the socioeconomic practices of communities such as waste pickers.

### ***Privatization of solid waste management***

Enclosures can be analyzed from the different ways in which the commons are neoliberalized. For instance, through the valuation based on merchandise, the physical enclosure of space, or the deregulation or the transfer of possession to entities that are private or governed by the market (Castree, 2008).

Up until the 1990s, waste management in Bogotá was the responsibility of the District Cleaning Company. Under the process of privatization and implementation of neoliberal policies, the discourse about the state inefficiency and the need to reduce its size dominates. The active participation of private companies was encouraged in accordance with the principles of the Washington Consensus. One of the first sectors to be privatized was public services.

The city's cleaning service was controlled by private operators until 2012, when Mayor Gustavo Petro denounced the mafias that were behind the business and decided to implement a Zero Waste policy (2012-2015), nationalizing sanitation services with the creation of the official company Waterways of Bogotá. This policy also proposed the inclusion of the recycling population<sup>4</sup>. The UAESP defined a scheme for the formalization and regularization of the recycler population through the Inclusion Plan. It also encases within the Integrated Waste Management Plan with the objectives to promote a change in the culture of treatment and separation of waste, regularization and formalization of recycling, dignifying the work of waste pickers and encouraging a self-sustainable business organization (Decree 548 of 2015).

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.elespectador.com/noticias/bogota/la-puja-historica-por-la-recoleccion-de-basuras-en-bogota-articulo-731756>

The inclusion of the recycling population is supported by the right to decent work and the need to be recognized for its labor. Also by the efficiency in the collection and the quality of the material (Jaligot, Wilson, Cheeseman, Shaker, & Stretz, 2016; Scheinberg, 2012).

In 2016, with the arrival of Mayor Enrique Peñalosa, a change of model was proposed to liquidate the public company Waterways of Bogotá, and to launch a new bidding process. This process could not be closed until 2018 due to the lawsuits filed by the waste picker union for exclusion and non-compliance to the judgments of the Constitutional Court. Currently sanitation services are provided by five private operators in five exclusive service areas, while more than a hundred organizations of waste pickers look for material in free competition. From the justification of the free market and its efficient allocation of resources, the profits of recycling are privatized, while risks are socialized (Bollier, 2014).

### ***Dispossession of the means of production and threats to subsistence***

The main dispossession that waste pickers can suffer is the denial of work opportunities. With the changes in terms of recognition of the labor of recycling, the process of formalization, as well as the bidding, the facts that endanger the work of waste pickers are elucidated.

First, as a result of the last bidding process, waste pickers must compete for material with the big operators of cleaning service. These private companies are responsible for collecting garbage and depositing it in the landfill. Both waste pickers and these operators are interested in having the largest amount of material, from which the tariff to be paid is calculated. However, operators do not receive a discount if they transport recyclable material, which is detrimental not only to waste pickers, but also to the communities that live around the landfill. In this system,



society pays more to maintain an inefficient final disposal system and live in an increasingly polluted environment.

Secondly, the formalization that waste pickers face from the issuance of Decree 596 of 2016 must be considered. Despite being a nascent process, the benefits of being formalized are not offset by obligations and costs. This process consists of eight phases to be completed over five years. Each phase involves an additional cost such as the hiring of professional personnel who can handle the accounting, the management of requests, complaints and claims, controlling routes with georeferencing systems, and other requirements that were designed with private operators as reference. These requirements disregard the realities of waste pickers, facing them with the possibility of being excluded from the system once again (Tovar, 2018).

### *New waste entrepreneurs*

Stuart Hodkinson (2012) defines capitalist subjectivation as a "the encapturing of people, place, space and culture within the commodifying and alienating logic of capital accumulation and the competitive, marketising logic of neoliberal rationality" (2012, 509). The process seeks to convert citizens into passive consumers through a "neoliberal governance" (Hodkinson, 2012, p.515) that turns people into entrepreneurs, self-sufficient, economically rational actors that actively support the priorities of the accumulation of capital, and that less and less frequently resist or manifest some type of objection (Dardot & Laval, 2014).

The integration of waste pickers into the public sanitation service, together with the process of formalization, has had a strong ideological burden. The ideal of being an entrepreneur has been the way to seek the legalization of their activities, incorporating them into the tax circuit (collecting taxes) and to the financial circuit to extract economic surplus (Giraldo, 2016).

The entrepreneurial mentality along with the idea of free competition, threaten the historical routes that waste pickers have traditionally covered. Those with better conditions will be able to provide a service with the criteria of quality and efficiency as established in the standard. However, 8% of recyclers have some disability, 14% are adults over 60 and 17% cannot read or write (IDEXUD, 2015).

### **Final considerations**

This document proposes the reflective exercise of connecting solid waste management with the approach of the urban commons. As Obeng-Odoom (2018) states, with greater commercialization of waste management, profit opportunities have been created for private administrators who, through the exploitation of labor, are forgetting the initial urban challenge. In the case of Bogotá, the absence of an effective waste management harms the whole of society, while the lifespan of landfills reaches its limit. The current district administration has proposed the expansion of the landfill's operation by 50 years through the acquisition of nearby land<sup>5</sup>. Unfortunately, the problem is still considered from a perspective that does not allow other analyzes, nor contemplates alternative courses of action. It is not a question of expanding the landfill, but of improving waste management to avoid the generation of waste through recycling, in which waste pickers play a fundamental role.

Broadening the analysis approach by incorporating the theoretical proposal of the commons allows for the substantiation that the management of solid waste, as well as other problems of urban commons, are not technical issues, nor only environmental issues, but rather signs of a

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.elspectador.com/noticias/bogota/relleno-dona-juana-hasta-2070-articulo-709393>

political, economic, and social struggle. From the approach of waste management as an urban common, the analysis is not limited to the resource, that is to say, waste, but rather integrates communities and their practices, considering socioeconomic relations and the possibility of involving different actors around the production and reproduction of urban life. The city is a space of production and generation of value, a great social factory in which individuals, with their daily activities and struggles, collectively build a place where they can live.

Achieving an acceptable standard of living in the city should consider the urban commons, as a resource system where excluding the various interested actors from access to benefits can be more expensive not only economically, but socially and environmentally as well (Ostrom, 2010). That is to say that the absence of a solid waste management generates greater negative externalities than if an approach tending to a zero-waste scenario. Therefore, the commons approach offers new perspectives of both analysis and political action against the constantly changing conditions of urban contexts; scenarios in which the commons are rapidly diminishing due to the transformation of capitalist processes erasing, enclosing, separating, rezoning, and replacing public spaces and the socioeconomic activities that take place there.

It is important to point out that the commons are not a third way, in the sense that it cannot replace the private and the public. To conceive such a radical path would be naive. The government should strive to ensure that the principles of responsible management of the commons are respected. Capitalists suggests possibilities for public-private alliances that in principle try to overcome inefficiency, mismanagement, corruption, and the cooptation of individual interests, but that ultimately maintain and reinforce the processes of dispossession (Harvey, 2006). Outspreading the reflection would allow for the exploration of possibilities such

as communal-state or popular public alliances, expanding what is considered as public beyond the strictly state-owned.

Moving the analysis from the commons to the urban also implies questioning property rights as the supreme value. Alternatives emerge such as co-ownership of citizenship, shared responsibility, or temporary limits on ownership. More studies are needed to examine the viability and distributive effects of the urban commons, examining their scale and interactions. Waste circulates in various scenarios and levels of community life, both local and global, not only in terms of its commercialization, but through the social struggle of waste pickers.

The urban common, its practices, and its governance can become a necessary political expression for greater justice in the city, finding creative ways to use the power of collective work for the common good (Harvey, 2011). The main objective is to identify and claim that solid waste management must ensure collective welfare, and that improving the working conditions and inclusion of waste pickers in the city's cleaning scheme not only represents a benefit for them, but also for society as a whole.

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