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In Search of the Urban Commons

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I Abstract

-English-
In cities we generally distinguish between public and private space. This thesis tackles the distinction between public and private property and searches for the urban commons where property is determined by collective action and thus creates a greater spatial justice. A case study analyzes the Urban Garden Project “Trädgård på spåret” in Stockholm and shows how unconventional arrangements can generate a lively place in the urban fabric. The final discussion interprets the concept of urban commons and contemplates its classification within the planning discipline.

-Svenska-
I städer skiljer vi generellt mellan offentligt och privat utrymme. Denna avhandling försöker att nyansera den enkla distinktionen mellan offentlig och privat mark och går på jakt efter de urbana allmänningar (urban commons) vilkas ägande bestäms av kollektivism och som skapar spatelli rättvisa (spatial justice). En fallstudie analyserar Urban Garden-projektet «Trädgård på Spåret» i Stockholm och visar hur okonventionella arrangemang har gett upphov till en livlig plats, som går långt utöver trädgårdens traditionella gränser. I den avslutande diskussionen tolkar vi begreppet urbana allmänningar och betraktar dess placering i planeringsämnnet.

-Deutsch-
In Städten unterscheiden wir generell zwischen öffentlichem und privatem Raum. Diese Thesis versucht die simple Unterscheidung zwischen öffentlichem und privatem Grundstück aufzubrechen und begibt sich auf die Suche nach der urbanen Allmende (urban commons) in der Eigentum durch Kollektivismus bestimmt wird und somit räumliche Gerechtigkeit (spatial justice) schafft. Eine Fallstudie analysiert das urbane Gartenprojekt „Trädgård på spåret“ in Stockholm und zeigt auf wie durch unkonventionelle Regelungen ein lebhafter Ort entstanden ist, der sich in die Stadt verwurzelt hat und weit über die Grenzen des Gärtners hinausgeht. In der abschließenden Diskussion wird der Begriff der urbanen Allmende interpretiert und dessen Einordnung in die Planungsdisziplin betrachtet.
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Stockholm, October 2013
Merle Breyer
This thesis talks about commons. A commons is an established term and is used in
the singular and plural form. A commons is always used as a noun, while the term
common is mainly used as an adjective.
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1. Introduction

In cities we mainly distinguish two forms of ownership: public property and private property. Public property is meant to be open for the use of the public while private property usually belongs to a private individual who can exclude others and who can decide how to design the personal space. In our western society many people are especially devoted to private property. According to the historian Neill Fergusson [2011] private property is one of the success features of western prosperity. In cities private property has led to the creation of suburbs, to a massive amount of parking space and recently to a global mortgage problem.

This thesis is a journey in search of urban spaces that are neither private nor public. It is both the rediscovery of the concept of the commons and the interpretation of how this concept takes place in cities.

This thesis is not a call for revolution, nor an idealistic attempt of convincing the reader of collective ownership. It is rather the effort of tackling our common and unconsidered perception of property rules. Rules that better should be followed to avoid dilemmas, chaos and uncertainties.

In a first step this study contemplates the term of the commons and reflects its diverging definitions and notions. Subsequently it approaches researchers’ and practitioners’ interpretations of urban commons. The second part is the case study “Trädgård på spåret”, an urban gardening project in Stockholm in which I became involved. The active fieldwork taught me that the garden project goes beyond gardening itself and generates an urban commons, which has much more to offer than the planner’s eye manages to recognize on the first glance.

The final discussion and conclusion bring insights from the literature review and fieldwork together and analyses the chances of urban commons for overall urban development strategies.
1.1 Aim of the Study

This thesis investigates the meaning and appearance of current/modern urban commons and in which way they generate places and activities. The subject is approached by the perspective from an urban designer, thus the interest lies in the public life that a commons can create. Urban commons are out there in our cities but so far we have trouble to recognize or classify them as a planning strategy. The aim of this master thesis is not to give a definition but rather an understanding of urban commons and to enhance the awareness of it in the discussion of strategic urban development. The research questions are thus addressed as the following:

“What are the urban commons?”

and

“What is the role of urban commons in the planning discipline?”
2. Project Design

2.1 Structure

The study includes three main parts. The first part approaches the term of the commons (Chapter 3). It gives simple definitions, as well as a personal assembled glossary and a deeper scientific interpretation of the urban commons. The second part is the investigation of the case study “Trädgård på spåret” which shows how an urban commons can look like in practice (Chapter 4). The third part (Chapter 5) brings the case study and the theoretical part together. It clarifies why the case study is considered as an urban commons and it discusses the research questions of Chapter 1.

2.2 Methodology

The research of this thesis started with a theoretical approach, conducted by a literature study and by attending a conference of the Royal Institute of Art Stockholm on the subject of “Commoning the City”. The literature review analyzes the theory about urban commons as well as existing practices.

Furthermore the subject of this thesis is investigated through a case study. A case study according to Yin [2009] is “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident”. The advantage of case studies as a research method is that it takes account of various issues and its complexities [Yin 2009].

The urban gardening project “Trädgård på spåret” in Stockholm, Sweden is the chosen case study to investigate the real-life context of the contemporary phenomenon of urban commons. Empirical material about the case study was conducted through active fieldwork and interviews.

2.2.1 Active Fieldwork

Being an active member within the gardening project gave me the possibility to explore in depth the place, program, activities and process of Trädgård på spåret. Through immersion of fieldwork, a researcher is able to experience a place intellectually, physically, emotionally, politically and intuitively [Amit 2000].

Experiencing Trädgård på spåret was a relevant research method in order to understand and grasp the value and meaning of the research subject.

The fieldwork involved several visits at Trädgård på spåret, working there, attentive listening to other members, taking pictures and considering the personal feelings and enjoyment.
2.2.2 Interviews

In order to gain more insights about the administrative process behind Trädgård på spåret (which I can not experience through fieldwork) I conducted two semi-structured interviews. On August 29th, 2013 I interviewed Philipp Olsmeyer, the initiator and main organizer of Trädgård på spåret. The interview was held in German since it is the native language of both, interviewer (me) and interviewee. On October 15th, 2013 I interviewed Christina Winberg from Stockholm’s Exploateringskontoret (Development office) who is the responsible person at the municipality for the project and who decided to give it permission. The interview was held mainly in English, but also partly in Swedish to give the interviewee the opportunity to explain answers in her native language.

2.3.3 Delimitations

Urban commons can be related to several contemporary planning themes, i.e. sustainable neighborhood communities, placemaking, neoliberal urban development or public social life. However, the theoretical framework of this thesis focuses mainly on the right to the city, spatial justice and the perception of ownership models and it sets the case study in relation to these subjects. The in-depth investigated case study delimitate the final discussion of the thesis, since it represents only one type of an urban commons (gardening project, bottom-up process). A quantitative analysis of different case studies could have broadened the evaluation and assessment of commons in the urban context.

Fig. 1 Research Design
3. Definition

What is a commons and how does it shape up in the urban context? This chapter sets definitions of a commons and presents interpretations of the idea of urban commons. In a first step I define a commons from my personal point of view and from a common understanding. I use a glossary as a tool to illustrate characteristics of the commons. The second step is approaching the commons from a scientific perspective.

A Commons

Elements and constructions that belong to nobody or rather to everybody and which offer free access to everyone represent a commons. The air we breathe, the language we speak, the ocean we swim in and Wikipedia, where we look up this term, are all examples of a commons.

“Commons refers to the cultural and natural resources accessible to all members of a society, including natural materials such as air, water, and a habitable earth. [...] A person who has a right in, or over, common land jointly with another or others is called a commoner.”

www.wikipedia.org

The classic understanding of commons deals with land that is not in hand of a certain property owner and thus can be used and harvested by everyone. Jointly used resources that are managed by a community represent a pool of commons. European agricultures in the Middle Age were mainly organized in the commons [Siefkes 2006]. Nowadays the worldwide agricultures represents fairly the opposite of common-based production, but in exchange we still find commons in our social-cultural life and our fast-growing digital culture is more and more characterized by commoning practices. The following examples should help to understand what different kind of things could be considered and defined as a commons:

Socio-cultural Commons

A simple example of a cultural commons are languages. No one owns a language, a language is taught from generation to generation, can be learnt by everyone and no one can charge us for speaking a language. Same conditions apply for traditions, manners, recipes, stories: we are producing cultural practices with the purpose of practicing them within a community, of sharing them and teaching them to our children. Art, literature or music can become a commons through extreme popularity. Creations like Shakespeare’s theatres, Tucholski’s books or Beethoven’s sinfonia are nowadays in property of the common. The work of an artist can become a cultural heritage with free access for everyone [Paysan 2012:31].
Digital Commons
The Internet itself can be described as a commons since its content is the production of many people and everyone can access it, at any time. Instead of running the danger of depletion, the Internet grows with every user and extends its contents. Since copying, sharing, spreading and editing contents is extremely easy and fast in digital spheres and since digital space is available nearly for free, the internet develops a new dynamic of commoning. In 2001 the professor of law Lawrence Lessig founded the Creative Commons (CC), which are copyright-licenses free of charge for the public. Creators of software, movies, photos, etc. can decide to which extend they give free access to their product and in which way it is allowed to edit or enhance the content. Online platforms like TED Talks use the CC license to spread ideas and scientific knowledge for free whereby not only students get access to the latest research results.

Interpreting a Commons
On April 11th the Royal Institute of Arts in Stockholm in collaboration with the Stockholm Architecture Museum held a conference on the subject of “Commoning the City”. By attending presentations from people with different backgrounds (researcher, teacher, writers, artists, etc) I listened to a broad variety of notions on the commons. The writer Dougald Hine from the U.K. explained why friendship is a commons, the artist Fritz Haeg from the USA showed how he turned his living room into a commons and Fredrik Åslund from Linköping (Sweden) presented how he runs a Café as a commons. Saki Bailey, a researcher in Human Rights, presented the following definition during a lecture at the conference:

“I am proposing, what I am calling a political definition: which is that a commons exists where there is a given community that is participating in creating, converting a resource into wealth —we can call this commoning— and governing the management of this process according to commons and common values.”
[Bailey 2013]

In the following I present a Glossary of the Commons, which shows a collection of characteristics that I consider as important in order to understand how a commons is identified and how it differs from usual economic concepts. It is an interim summary of what a commons is, since the Glossary is a product of what I learned by literature and the above mentioned conference in the early stage of these six months.
access — everyone should have the same chance to get (free) access to a commons, but it is not necessarily an unlimited access.

behaviour — human behaviour decides if a commons fails or succeeds. The management is based on trust and commitment.

collective action — is the idea behind a commons. By doing and using things together in a fair and even way, we create commons.

collaboration — a commons is based on collaboration instead of competition between users.

commitment — a commons needs the commitment of several people who bring in their engagement to sustain the commons.

commodification — turning a resource, service or idea into a commodity (to gain profit).

commons — a good that is produced to be shared or a resource which is held in common.

commoners — people who govern, manage, use and share a commons.

commoning — converting a resource into a commons, managed by a community.

community — a commons is used and managed by a community. A community of people willing to create and maintain the commons is essential to protect it from privatisation.

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custodianship — a commons needs custody of those who care about the resource and see a value in maintaining the commons.

enclosure — an enclosed resource is taken away from the common and privatized and in property of an individual.

engagement — a commons needs engaged people who are convinced by the idea of collective action and shared ownership.

flexibility — a commons should imply flexibility for the commoners, so that each can adapt his/her commitment.

free-rider — by maximizing the own gain or stealing of a commons, the free-rider represents one of the main threats or doubts behind the commons.

incentives — commons are giving other incentives than personal profit, e.g. social interaction, justice, sustainable acting or the possibility of realizing something that is not feasible as a single person.

ownership — a commons is not about owning, it is about sharing. So a commons is neither defined as private nor as public ownership. In certain cases it might be described as collective ownership.
paradigm-shift – questioning current economic (capitalistic) systems and creating new practices like e.g. shareconomy.

possession – taking or using a commons means to take something as possession, but not as property (means it cannot be sold or commercialized at will).

post-capitalistic – the idea of the commons find more and more interest in post-capitalistic discourses, which seek alternative economic systems that enable a fair and caring participation of everybody in the economy instead of a system that is focused on profit maximization. (e.g. Rebel City by Harvey).

production – commons can produce goods, knowledge or amenity values without the purpose of purchasing or selling them.

resilience – commons are discussed as a resilience strategy (e.g. Urban Gardening) since they are based on self-sustaining, local acting principles and able to react on changes.

segregation – segregation can lead to the creation of a commons (e.g. shanty towns) but a commons itself can lead to segregation if the *commoners are a too homogenous group who excludes new people.

spatial justice – questions the profound injustice given my the three-sided ownership model (individuals/family, corporate, state/institutional) and is in search for a more just distribution of space.

self-sustaining – a commons is supposed to be a self-sustaining unit since their use and users can change easily and adapt on changing circumstances.

self-governing – a commons is usually managed by a self-governing process as described by Ostrom. Instead of government control, a resource is organized and regulated by a group of commoners.

space – a resource that is everywhere but mostly scarce in the urban context, thus the commons considers how to use the scarce resource in a qualitative, just way.

time – a needed resource to manage a commons. Especially in the urban context when the commons is not a basic need to survive, rather an additional value.

tragedy – the tragedy of the commons is the theory of Garret Hardin, describing the depletion of a shared resource by individuals, acting according to each one’s self-interest.

trust – commons are based on trust between commoners. A commons means to create trust.

wealth – air, land, water, biodiversity, food, cultural practices represent the common wealth. A commons can produce additional wealth.

Wikipedia – “a collaboratively edited, multilingual, free Internet encyclopedia supported by the non-profit Wikimedia Foundation” (wikipedia.org), one of the most known and used digital commons.
3.2 Contrary Notions on the Commons

By conducting a literature review on the subject of the commons and collective action, the scientific discourse leads always back to the work of Garrett Hardin and Elinor Ostrom, who represent two different notions on the commons. These notions are described in the following to understand contrary perceptions on the subject.

The ecologist Garrett Hardin published in 1968 his famous essay “The tragedy of the commons”, in which he warns of the danger of overpopulation. He describes the behavior of herders who share an open pasture. His argument is that each rationally thinking herder will increase his number of animals to receive the direct benefit of them, even if he is aware of the danger of overgrazing. Since the delayed costs of overgrazing are borne by everyone, the herder knows that he only needs to contribute a share of the costs to repair the damage. H. Scott Gordon described this behavior in a simple way: “Wealth that is free for all is valued by none because he who is foolhardy enough to wait for its proper time of use will only find that it has been taken by another.” [Gordon 1954, p. 243]. The notion of tragedy related to a common-pool resource and human behavior includes the problematic of game theory and the Prisoner’s Dilemma [Ostrom 1990:3]. The Prisoner’s Dilemma describes the case in which individuals (prisoners) have the opportunity to cooperate in order to achieve a short time of imprisonment or to betray each other in order to assure the personal reduction of imprisonment. Both individuals have their strategy without knowing the choice of the other individual. It is therefore possible that one player chooses to betray the other in order to secure his own benefit. In this case, only the betrayer benefits particularly strong, while the other gets nothing. If both individuals choose to betray, they assure both a personal benefit, but do not achieve the optimal outcome. The idea is that selfishness is suboptimal, while the optimal solution is based on trust and hence presents the risk of betrayal.

The tragedy of the commons lies on the human behavior that is seeking to guarantee the personal profit instead of seeking the optimal common solution. An additional dilemma is the free-rider problem. Circumstances where people cannot be excluded of using a resource that others provide actuate a free-ride on the efforts of others without personal contribution (e.g.: by building a dike to protect a pasture, everyone gains the benefit of protection no matter if he or she was willing to contribute to the dike or not). Mancur Olson contemplates the issue of individual rational behavior in his book “The logic of collective action“ [1965],
stating that “rational, self-interested individuals will not act to achieve their common or group-interests”. His argument is that only groups of a limited size in which each individual is able to recognize the change that its own contribution makes, can succeed in collective action.

These theories about the prisoner’s dilemma, the free-rider problem and the tragedy and logic of rational self-interested behavior, represent the doubts and problematic aspects of commonly held resources and are main arguments for state regulation and privatization.

“The alternative of the commons is too horrifying to contemplate”
[Garrett Hardin 1968]

Elinor Ostrom takes a different notion on the commons. Her work is focusing on successful common-pool resources and the organization behind it. Her book „Governing the commons“ [1990] reconsiders Hardin’s, Gordon’s and Olson’s work, assessing their importance but also points out the problems these theories cause if they are taken for granted for any kind of resource. Instead of presuming the “remorseless tragedy”, Ostrom’s point of departure is to improve and adjust the constraining rules of a commons and to enhance the capabilities of the commoners. In the many examples she investigated (forests, fishery, water basins, etc.), she filters out the institutional diversity, looking at the monitoring and management of the common-pool resources. As a winner of the Nobel Prize of Economics in 2009, Ostrom stretches in her prize lecture the importance of learning how to deal with complex systems. Panaceas like privatization or government control are not recommended. [Ostrom 2009] Over the years her work set up design principles for institutional governing of common-pool resources, suggesting clearly defined boundaries, rules regarding the appropriation and provision, collective-choice arrangements, graduated sanctions, mechanisms of conflict resolutions, etc. Ostrom thus represents the counterpart to “The tragedy of the commons”, showing that collective action is able to succeed in managing a commons. Models like the Prisoner’s Dilemma are a dangerous metaphor according to her, if the constraints of these models are assumed to be fixed and taken as a premise for policies [Ostrom 1990:7].

“Not all users of natural resources are similarly incapable of changing their constraints”
[Elinor Ostrom 1990]
3.3 Urban Commons

By searching for scientific articles about urban commons I observed that the term is used independently. Researchers from other disciplines equate the term to public space like streets, parks and places (see [Foster] and [Tumminelli 2012]) while urban researchers tend to use it in a more cultural and political approach. The Indian geographer Vinay Gidwany defines not only public transportation and sanitation as urban commons; he also sees municipal garbage that provides livelihood for waste-pickers in India as a commons and concludes that

“The distinctive public culture of a city is perhaps the most generative yet unnoticed of urban commons.”

[Gidwandi 2011].

Definition and understanding of an urban commons can depend on the professional and cultural background. In my literature review I choose to contemplate the commons in the urban context from two broader perspectives. Firstly I address the issue of spatial justice, right to the city and ownership models to clarify why the subject matters. Secondly the urban commons are depicted from an architectural and urbanistic perspective to illustrate their appearance in practice and the professional ideal that is involved.

3.3.1 Political and Spatial Claim

The financial crisis that started in 2008 revealed dimension and impact of real estate speculations and caused a worldwide protest against capitalistic practices. David Harvey describes it as a crisis of urbanization, agreed by Edward Soja that it is an urban-generated crisis [Soja 2010:198]. Protest movements like Occupy Wall Street in Zuccotti Park, New York or Occupy Gezi at Taksim square in Istanbul brought attention to the meaning of public spaces and common property. It fueled right to the city movements and the question of who owns the city.

In 2009 the political philosophers Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri published their book “Commonwealth” in which they indicate the return to classic forms of government, exploring the capacities for collective production and self-government [Hardt, Negri 2009:xiii]. They honor the metropolis as a space of the common, of people living together, sharing resources, communicating, exchanging goods and ideas and thus the city is the “factory for the production of the common” [Hardt Negri 2009:250]. The various books, articles, blogs and magazines I have read for this work, were bringing up the “Commonwealth” again and again.
David Harvey sets an urgent call for the urban commons in his latest book “Rebel City – From the right to the city to the urban revolution”. He contemplates urbanization as the “perpetual production of an urban commons” which is produced by collective human labor [Harvey 2012:80]. The true tragedy of the commons for Harvey lies in the circumstance, that “those who create an interesting and stimulating everyday neighborhood life lose it to the predatory practices of the real estate entrepreneurs, the financiers and upper class consumers bereft of any urban social imagination” [Harvey 2012:78]. The relation between the social group and the part of environment which is treated as a common shall be collective and non-commodified. This is the heart of the practice of commoning [Harvey 2012:73]. Especially the fact that a commons runs off-limits to the logic of market exchange and market valuations distinguishes it from public goods. Even if a commons is enhancing wealth and income of a social group, it follows a completely different purpose. He mentions community gardens as an example, since the cultivated vegetables of it might get sold, but the sale is not the initial intention of founding a community garden. Harvey calls for creative ways to use the power of collective labor for the common good. Value that is produced under the control of the laborers should be kept by them [Harvey 2012:87].

Spatial justice and Ownership Models
In “Seeking Spatial Justice” [2010] Edward Soja points out that “injust geographies” are produced by the three-sided ownership model (individual/family, corporate, state/institutional) which has replaced collective ownership and common spaces almost completely. A closer look on property rights reveals the unfair access and distribution of bounded spaces that shape powerfully our everyday life. To achieve greater socio-spatial justice it is needed to take “a fresh look at the subject of public versus private space and to explore the possibilities for developing new strategies”. He does not claim that the principles of the commons are the only solution to that, but he endorses its idea a chance to succeed even on a regional, national and global scale [Soja 2010:46].
In his book “Unsettling the city” Nicolas Blomley [2004] takes a fresh look on private and public space (as claimed by Soja) by tackling the issue of property and ownership models. From his point of view the simple distinction between private and public ownership does not represent an appropriate pattern of the division of urban land. The common understanding of ownership is too much related to a settled, determined property which is usually owned by one person, which is political and legally ensured and which brings certainty, peace and prosperity. But by acknowledging only certain relations and conceptions as property, we fail to recognize that there are much more diverse possibilities of relationships between people and land. Those relationships can appear property-like but they do not fit in the restricted concept of ownership. For Blomley property depends on active “doing” instead of representing a static, pre-given entity. He takes an example from Vancouver where residents placed old bathtubs outside the own garden lot, onto municipal property, and filled them with plants. He explored people’s reaction to these garden “encroachments” and found out that most people were tolerant to the bathtub planting, “regarding it not so much as a private taking but as a communal sharing” [Blomley 2004:17]. It was also seen as “extending the care that you give your own space to the public space” as quoted by one resident. Blomley draws back to Jane Jacob’s example of residents and storeowners who keep an eye upon the street to keep it safe and by doing this, claiming the (public) space in a certain way. Jacobs praises the “complex order” while Blomley similarly emphasizes the complexity of ownership and property claims. The generally accepted form of private and public ownership is based on making boundaries, mapping it, ensuring it by laws and most important: on the acknowledgement of the non-owners [Blomley 2004:13]. But these norms of ownership “invite us to overlook or ignore other estates”. The way we conceive property, we also conceive the city. Blomley raises the question of what happens “if the moralities of property are open to various interpretations?” [Blomley 2004:23].

“The tragedy of the commons, perhaps, is less its supposed internal failures as its external invisibility.”
Nicolas Blomley 2004

Conclusion
Those who look at political and economical structures that shape our cities, accusing the unjust spatial development that comes along with it, pick up on the commons and set it in an urban context. Researchers like Harvey, Soja and Blomley do not have a definition of what an urban commons is, but they point out the reasons why commons should be back on the agenda. Urban issues of gentrification, segregation
and eviction are all related to property rules. Claiming new rules apart from private and public property is one reasonable way to challenge these issues. Commons as an alternative offer a non-commodified means of holding space.

In the next step I will analyze in which way (younger) researchers and practitioners define an urban commons and where they already found them.

3.3.2 Practical Approach
Paul Chatterton, a researcher with the focus on activism and urban social movements, mapped “hotspots” of social centers in Britain and Ireland, describing autonomous and self-organized spaces and projects. The city itself represents for him the “ultimate contemporary common”. Capturing land to build an urban common “requires the ability to control and imagine governance in new ways”. To succeed in spatial justice (as claimed by E. Soja) these new ways of governance could form a bedrock of challenging the existing capitalistic production of urban space. Practices of social relation symbolize for Chatterton “the purest expression of the kind of politics needed for greater spatial justice” [Chatterton 2010].

Tactical Urbanism
Natalia Radywyl and Che Biggs (University of Melbourne) investigated how these practices of social relation and new ways of governance were accomplished in New York City. In their article “Reclaiming the commons for urban transformation” the focus lays on the alteration of public space to an urban commons. Drawing from three examples, they illustrate the socio-economical change of space: The new car-free Times square, the creation of a “play-street” at Jackson Heights in Queens and the project 596 Acre where vacant lots in Brooklyn are mapped online to help people to get access to space. By analyzing these examples they describe how appropriation of public space generates urban commons.

The Times Square, where the NYC Department of Transport (DOT) decided to shut car traffic and transform it into a pedestrian plaza, is defined as a “top-down commons” since a public authority initiated a reconfiguration of space to create a more vibrant public place. The plan to put movable chairs on Times Square, granted a creative license to the public by which it became a stakeholder in experimental social interaction. But the square does not represent a civic commons since there is no local community participating within the reconfiguration and the benefit of it is moreover taken by tourists and surrounded businesses which have little incentive to share custodianship. In fact Radywyl and Biggs argues that “Times
Square stakeholders have missed an opportunity to create a vibrant commons” since commercial interests of certain stakeholders are too powerful.

The example of Jackson Heights shows a similar reconfiguration but with a different way of creation. In 2012 (after test runs in 2007, 2009 and 2010) the 78th street in Queens was announced to be a permanent “play street” without car traffic so that the adjacent crowded Travis Park could spill into the street. The project was realized in cooperation with the DOT but the idea and claim arose from neighborhood alliances. Driven by common interests and values, community stakeholders came together organically and the temporary exclusion of cars in the former years gave them the opportunity of experimenting with the space, defining activities and sharing expertise and most important learning how to self-organize. The play street served as a space for events and farmer market and presents a huge success in terms of civic engagement. So in this example it was the collective action of neighbors that gave the 78th street a new design and thus shows another type of an urban commons. A commons where the neighbors do the programming and the city provides financial and administrative support. Involved members of the neighborhood alliance report that a diverse range of business owner and individuals contact the alliance to hold events in the street without expecting a financial outcome, “...now that it’s their own people just do things – for free, just because they want to contribute... it’s a great service to the community” [Radywyl, Biggs 2013:6].

The third example in the paper reports on an “information commons”. The online platform 596acres.org maps public owned vacant lots in New York City and give individuals information on how to access the lots, how to call a public agency, how to form a community or how to create a food production space. It is a website that helps with the very first stages of self-organisation. Radywyl and Biggs points out that this is a significant work to normalize the process of public appropriation through a fast growing network of communities.

Concluding Radywyl’s and Bigg’s approach on the urban commons, one can see that their understanding lays on the appropriation and programming of (public) space through neighborhood communities. The key features are access and membership to turn public space into an urban commons. They advocate for a culture of “people-focused tactical urbanism”, meaning that institutions like policy-makers and designers should give communities the capacity to build and engineer their favored change of space. A community of practice that develops custodianship strengthens a commons and is based on values which “need to be explicitly identified, shared, celebrated and challenged.” [Radywyl Biggs 2013:10].
The Role of Architects

Doina Petrescu who co-founded “atelier d’architecture autogérée” (studio of self-managed architecture), a research led practice in Paris, applies Radywyl's principles of people-focused tactical urbanism as an architect. The atelier is practicing transformation of urban space through collaborative, localized endeavors. Architecture that is self-managed by its users, is the vision of Doina Petrescu and her partner Constantin Petcou [Curry Stone 2011]. Petrescu finds urban commons in urban gaps, meaning small abandoned or unused space that have resisted development speculation [Petrescu 2010:317]. 'atelier d’architecture autogérée' fills these gaps with cultural, social and environmental projects where the users are the driving force. They experiment with agriculture, markets, libraries, cafés, gardening, education, debates and so on, to develop democratic spaces. Along these projects they have the aspiration to recycle and reuse material and objects and to create a resilient space management. The role as an architect is to be initiator and agent who develops and supports a project, but the own role has to diminish progressively and be replaced by a network of users that maintains, shares and reproduces the initial idea.

The British architect Alastair Parvin has another architectural approach on the commons. He designed “WikiHouse”, an open-source construction set with the aim “to allow anyone to design, download, and ‘print’ CNC- milled houses and components, which can be assembled with minimal formal skill or training,” [wikihouse online 2013]. The construction set is shared under a Creative Commons license (see Glossary). In his TED Talk Parvin explains that his vision is the democratization of production. Solutions for infrastructure problems (green energy supply, sanitation, housing, etc.) should be developed on a low-cost, open-source, high-performance level, put together in a commons and be owned and accessible by everyone. The WikiHouse is the shift from open-source software to open-soft hardware, a freely shared blueprint that everybody can download, copy, modify and improve. Technology plays thus an important role in his approach. High-tech inventions like CNC (Computer Numerical Control) machines, better known as 3D printers, which are capable of automatically producing parts with high accuracy even for complex shapes, provide the opportunity for amateurs to build their own products. 3D printers show that modern technology can lower the thresholds of time and cost and skills, so Parvin, and that the factory of the future is everywhere.
and everyone becomes a part of the design team. This seeds the change for a “completely open-source, citizen-led urban development model”.

Parvin graduated from architecture school in 2008 at the beginning of the financial crisis, when it was hard to find a job. At that time he realized that architects are actually only designing for the richest one percent of the world’s population. His personal impetus was to turn clients from one percent to 100 percent. The first step to do so, is to step away from the mindset that architecture is about making buildings. Instead architectural design should be more focused on solving problems and creating new conditions. WikiHouse is his step towards a city that is developed by citizens and affordable to everyone.

Conclusion

New urban political structures as requested by theorists like Hardt, Negri, Harvey and Soja take already place if one looks at the described examples of New York and the work ethic formulated by architects like Doina Petrescu and Alastair Parvin. Self-government is practiced on streets and squares; creative ways to fulfill a more just distribution and access to space and property is practiced with tools like 596acres.org and WikiHouse CC.

To understand better how an urban commons works in practice, the next chapter presents an example from Stockholm. The investigated case study of “Trädgård på spåret” shows why people enjoy a dinner on old rails in a hidden part of Södermalm.
4. Case Study

In the middle of Stockholm there is a place which I personally consider as an urban commons and therefore I use it as a case study to approach, experience and describe a commons from a local perspective. This chapter presents the place “Trädgård på spåret” in form of a diary, stories, interviews and observations. It explains what the essence of this place is and why I consider it as an urban commons.

Where and what is Trädgård på spåret
Trädgård på spåret (engl. “garden on the rail”) is an urban gardening project located at Skanstull on the Södermalm island, in the central area of Stockholm. The garden lies along old, unused rails, hidden behind a park, only visible from the Eriksdal bridge. The area is accessible by a steep acclivity, bounded by the fence of the adjacent swimming pool, a construction material repository, a graffiti smeared (closed) tunnel and allotments. Before the Trädgård was created, one might have described the area as urban no man’s land. But today visitors can find there about 150 raised beds, filled with squashes, carrots, herbs, beetroots and other vegetables. In a little greenhouse new seedlings are grown. An old trailer provides a kitchen and a library and euro-pallets serve as benches and tables. It is a place where food is growing and people gather two times a week to maintain and enjoy their common urban garden.

4.1 The Creation of Trädgård på spåret
Philipp Olsmeyer, a German settled in Stockholm, had always liked the spot along the old rails of Södermalm and was interested in doing something there. Inspired by the High Line project in New York City and the “Prinzessinnengarten” in Berlin (see picture below), he had the idea of starting an urban gardening project on the rails. “There were always two parts for me. I wanted to do something with the area and I was generally interested in gardening. Especially in vegetables. Not
only planting flowers, I wanted to learn how to grow food, I wanted to extend my
knowledge about it.” An idealistic demand came along with the desire to activate the
no-man’s land. That’s how the idea for Trädgården på spåret was born.

In September 2011 Philipp contacted the municipality of Stockholm and the
district administration office by email. Couple of weeks later he got an answer from
Stockholm’s Exploateringskontoret (Development Office) with positive feedback.
They showed interest in his idea, so Philipp developed the concept further. He
contacted two friends and they started planning, decided about functions and made
a 3D visualization which helped them to communicate the project and to present
it to the public. The development office agreed on the concept and already in the
beginning of 2012 they could sign the contract for a one-year lease agreement.

Founding an “ideella förening” (non-profit association) helped to formalize the
process and eased to sign a contract since Philipp did not want to rent the area as
a private person. Nor did he ever intend to start some kind of guerilla gardening
(which one could say is another worldwide trend or phenomenon). According to
Philipp the establishment of an association made the garden project a legitimate
and formal stakeholder and was also the only format that keeps the gardening as
an idealistic project. Today the förening has over 300 members and of them ca. 30
people are actively involved. And I am one of them.

4.2 The Trädgården Today
Those who came to Trädgården på spåret (TPS) on Sunday the 15th of September for
the season’s final celebration, visited a flourishing place full of herbs and vegetables.
They found a nicely painted trailer, filled with books about gardening, farming and
cooking. They could buy fresh brewed coffee, BBQ sausages, self-made cakes and
sandwiches (with Trädgården’s grown ingredients), they sat down on euro-pallets

Fig. 9 Tackfest season’s celebration  Fig. 10 Trädgården’s sandwich
furbished up with covers and pillows. They could purchase books, t-shirts, fresh herbs and organic honey made by Trädgård’s own beehive. Children could enjoy a puppet show, grown-ups could listen to live music. Over 100 people found their way to Trädgård that day. And numerous curious gazes from the Eriksdal bridge were captured with cameras.

Trädgård på spåret has accomplished its second successful season. The number of members has doubled from 2012 to 2013. Sponsors donated the raised beds, pallets, soil, seeds and tools. Stockholm’s Development Office extended the lease agreement till 2014 for a symbolic price of 12,000sek per year for about 1000sqm land including lighting of the area. In March 2012 the construction work started. Trucks delivered raised beds and soil. In May 2012 the association began to plant seeds, taught by the help of Jean-Pierre, a fellow member and professional gardener. With an online schedule the members organized the watering of the vegetables. In August they harvested so much salad, that they had to give it away to neighbors and restaurants in the area.

The former no-man’s-land along the rails has now a stair made out of pallets, which makes the area accessible. No fence prohibits the entry or protects the plants, the Trädgård is always open for everyone. During the summer months on Sundays people can buy coffee, cake and fresh harvested food and one can ask for a guided tour through the garden. The members meet on Tuesdays to plan and organize further work. When the Swedish National Farmer Association (LRF) hold their conference in Stockholm, the farmers took a tour the Trädgård and were impressed. The Swedish national newspaper Dagens Nyheter reported about it and launched the name “Hipsterbönder” (hipsterfarmers) [DN 2012].
Call for attention, indicating the hidden Trädgård

Trädgård på spåret in May 2013, filling raised beds with soil

Trädgård på spåret in July 2013, watering and watching the food growing

Fig. 13 Photographs from Trädgård på spåret

Tuesday’s meeting
Fig. 14 Photographs from Trädgård på spåret
4.3 Co-operations & Sponsoring

Each raised bed has a “växtfadder” (plant-daddy) which can be a private person or a company that supports the bed with 500sek (private person) or 1000sek (company). Some of the raised beds are maintained by primary schools, so that young school children experience how to grow food and flowers. The nearby club “Trädgården”, which uses the vegetables and herbs for its menu, sponsors additional beds. The Stockholm’s restaurant Esperanto contacted the TPS association and suggested to organize an open-air dinner at Trädgården på spåret. On a Monday evening in August 2013 30 guests could experience a special dinner with chefs from six different restaurants. Sitting on the euro-pallets they could enjoy high-class food, made on a grill with ingredients from Trädgård itself. Hidden in the bushes one can find a pink beehive, which is maintained by Bee Urban, an eco-start-up company from Stockholm that aims at promoting bee populations in the city. Bee Urban charges for the maintenance of the hive and Trädgården sell the organic honey during events. Another cooperation exists with White Architecture, Sweden’s biggest architecture firm which has its office in the Skanstull neighborhood too. The ARQ foundation which belongs to White gave a scholarship of 65.000sek to foster the development of an urban ecosystem. Part of the scholarship involves working hours from White employees. They installed a grey-water plant behind the trailer that cleans the used water of the trailer’s kitchen.

4.4 My Personal Involvement

In May 2013 I visited Trädgården på spåret for the first time. It was actually Helen, my supervisor, who told me about it and whose friend Anna is an active member there. I went there to have a look, to ask some questions and to check if is useful as a case study for the thesis. I left as a convinced member, happy to have discovered a new place in Stockholm.

On the Sunday I directly started participating. It was the day to fill the raised beds with soil. So together with Calle, Maria and Erika we put numerous bags of soil into the wooden boxes and used the bags to cover the wood. With childish joy we shared the staple gun to attach the plastic bag on the wood. In the morning I saw the raised bed. My back was hurting but looking at the raised beds was satisfying. Going home I was happy to have spent the day outside, to do something I have never done before and to “be part” of something that I consider as something good. One week later my mother came to visit me in Stockholm. I showed her TPS and told her that I am involved there. She liked the space and noticed “Oh I see, you are more and more integrated here in Stockholm”.

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The following week I planted. The gardener Jean-Pierre explained us how to place the seed in lines with a certain distance so that each seed has enough space. I expected it to be much easier. Now I know that the tiny rucola seeds can drive you crazy.

The weeks passed, the involvement went up and down. Busyness let me forget to go there, email updates brought me back to it. In July TPS experienced emptiness like everything does in Stockholm during the summer months. But me and the other two people who came there on a Sunday in the middle of July had the luck to meet Pim the bee keeper who let us taste fresh honey.

After my own holidays in August, I started to go every week since I realized to spend time there is one of the best way to enjoy the warm late summer in Stockholm. And it had the nice benefit of bringing home fresh food! But the highlight came when Pim announced that the honey was ready and it was time to harvest. So in the beginning of September six TPS members plus two children met in the basement of a Restaurant at Stora Skuggan, a calm place behind Stockholm University. The basement is the small “factory” of Bee Urban. Pim gave us instructions and grown-ups and children were enthused in like manner to open the honeycombs and see how an endless amount of fresh honey poured over our hands. “This is so relaxing” was probably the most pronounced sentence that evening. It was one of the events that I never had imagined to experience in my life and it made me realize that the involvement at TPS offers new and unexpected opportunities.
The decision to take TPS as the main case study for this thesis had obviously the consequence that I prioritized TPS meetings on Tuesdays and Sundays during September and October and went there even if I was not in the mood to socialize or to go out. But at the same time it made clear that I will extend my membership next year and will engage myself in the following season, when TPS will not be related to a thesis project anymore.

4.5 Trädgård på spåret in the Urban Fabric

Investigating and experiencing Trädgård på spåret has shown me that Philipp’s vision in 2011 has grown to a successful and beautiful urban gardening project in Stockholm today. An idea was translated into action, an unused area got a new treatment and people got fresh organic vegetables. I do not intend to elaborate on the ecological benefits of urban gardening at this point nor want I amplify the social capital that rises out of TPS. My interest lies on the network it creates in the urban fabric and its value on a spatial scale.

If one looks down on TPS from the Eriksdal bridge one can see that the former urban no-man’s land is now a green urban jungle. Beans are growing up high; the fork that someone leaned against the raised bed is now conquered and clutched by the squash plant. The area got urban furniture made out of euro pallets. A photo that captures the scene during a sunny Sunday afternoon when the TPS members selling coffee and harvest carrots and beetroots, can appear in any planner’s presentation about placemaking, urban life or community activism. The Hipsterfarmers made the city a bit greener and created at once a vital place. The old rails are still visible, the space kept its historic charm and its local identity.

Looking at TPS from Ringvägen as a resident one can see an opportunity. “I live right here at Ringvägen and I don’t have an own garden. This is perfect for me! I want to improve the stairs here. It should become wider so that people can sit on it and it should be surrounded by flowers“ reported Carl when I met him the first time in May. TPS means having access to a garden which most of inner city residents do not have. Of course people have to share it with many other residents, but one does not have to stand in line for 15 years like it is the case if one wants to have an own garden lot in the neighboring Erikdalslunden allotments [Erikdalslunden 2013].

Fig. 16 Harvesting honey
Neither causes the shared garden a higher rent per month. The asset of TPS is the low obstacles to enter it. Once you have discovered it, you can easily be part of it. The membership is not required to work or hang out there. No fence stops people from entering. If you decide to become a member, you just fill out the form on the TPS website. You do not need to apply or to queue for it and the membership fee of 200sek per year is hardly a financial obstacle. You can engage yourself as much or as little as you want. The biggest difficulty is to find out how things work, because most members do not have a complete overview about every detail nor are they always up to date. Orientation can sometimes be a challenge. During a Tuesday planning meeting, discussing what to improve for the next season a new member mentioned:

“I want to do something here but I don’t know how. There is no information accessible, I always have to wait for someone who has a clue.”

Another issue is the physical access. People with impairments can hardly get down the stairs. In August I saw Carl with tools and pallets in his hands. When I left that day the stairs were broader and looked much more stable. A handrail is on Philipp’s wish list. But improvements take time at TPS.

Giving a garden to those who have none and revitalizing forgotten areas in the city are the obvious spatial values that TPS is giving the city. But looking at the collaborations with other institutions, one can see that TPS has developed a much broader interconnection with the city than just adding a green space. The ideal of learning and extending knowledge about cultivating vegetables connects nearby primary schools and the folk high school. TPS offers the materials and organizes lectures with a professional gardener for free. Pupils thus get the benefit of practical education. Almost every time I went to Trädgård, I met people who were investigating the place. Citizens from Malmö who want to create an urban gardening project in their city, a Ph.D student whose research subject is urban gardening, a film crew shooting a documentary about urban gardening, a radio reporter working on a report about vegetables in the city. TPS provides knowledge and experience available for free and for everyone. This is also positioned in the articles of the TPS association:

“The association should have the following three purposes:
- Carry a mobile organic garden where members can cultivate themselves,
- To disseminate knowledge about the culture, ecology and food (cultivation schools and libraries)
- To develop a sustainable strategy for the future of the area where the garden is placed.”

[Trädgård på spåret webpage]
TPS has furthermore an influence on the urban development. Philipp mentioned that the municipality gets some benefit from TPS. The Development Office earns positive attention and can present itself as a cooperative partner. And the Planning Office (Stadsbyggnadskontoret) integrates TPS in their green development strategy ("Gröna Promenadstaden").

“If you start an activity, then it can be implemented in the planning process. It already happened actually. White Architecture for instance developed a design proposal for the Skanstull area and they included flowers and gardening in their concept. As soon as you start doing something you are part of the urban development. And if there is nothing happening in an area yet, you can do whatever you want!”

Philipp Olsmeyer, Interview

Of course not everything goes as easy and smooth as it could go. Philipp talked about the problem of getting access to electricity. Technically it would be easy to get connected to the Eriksdalsbadet swimming pool, but nobody there has the authority to allow TPS to share the wires.

“No one is responsible or in charge for us and whenever we contact an institution it means for them that they have to do something in an unusual way. It is the same at the Stadsdelsförvaltning (district administration). Nobody is happy about additional work, that just doesn’t exist. And you don’t want to struggle through it each time. It takes too much time and energy. Then you just pay 15 000sek for site electricity even if it is too expensive and actually unnecessary costs.”

Another aspect that one should remark is the fact that small business activities are arising from TPS. The idealistic approach of growing organic food develops relation with the food industry. The neighboring club “Trädgården” purchases TPS vegetables, TPS purchases the services of Bee Urban and sells the honey on Sundays. The previously mentioned dinner event organized by Esperanto or the visit of a Taco food truck accompanied by a DJ, acknowledge TPS as a place and its amenity value. Those are mainly single events in form of cooperation, but they matter in terms of placemaking.

The emergence of community and its sense of social sustainability could be further elaborated. But I only intend to point at it and assess its catalytic effect on local action. The community of TPS is what enables the above-mentioned collaborations and amenities and it is the local action that has developed expertise and know-how that is valuable and accessible for the whole city.
4.6 The Tragedy of Trädgård på spåret

According to the Hardin/Gordon perspective (see Chapter 3.2), one day you will go down to TPS and discover that there are only green leaves left in the raised beds. You will find that the vegetables have been taken by free-riders. This obviously must happen since TPS does not exclude the public of using the resource.

But so far the remorseless tragedy did not happen. Why not?

A tragedy already suffered by TPS is vandalism. Not only did anonymous people spray on the trailer and destroy the painting of an artist, they also used their spray can to color pink the squash. This is the sad tragedy of vandalized vegetables.

Another tragedy occurred in September 2013, when a woman broke open the lock of the trailer to sleep in there. She brought pillows and carpets and made the place comfortable for herself and also ate the honey, which she discovered in there. The one discovering and reporting the burglary was Alexander. I see Alexander every time on my way to TPS when I go down the stairs from the Eriksdal bridge. He always sits on the same bench, usually with a can of beer in his hand and is often greeting friendly if I look at him. When Alexander discovered that someone moved in the trailer, he called Philipp to let him know about it (they exchanged telephone numbers long before).

In my opinion this is a story that needs to be told, because it teaches us something about custodianship and the urban social fabric. “The bum from the bench” – as he was in my eyes – is hardly the guy I would have expected to be part of TPS’s custody. Now he represents a personal key moment in my fieldwork.

Alexander is not the answer of why the remorseless tragedy (free-rider harvesting) has not yet happened at TPS, but he helps us to understand how and why a commons can succeed. Alexander is not actively involved in the garden work, but apparently he cares about his neighbor, so he helps protecting it.

Fig. 17 Vandalized vegetable
5. Discussion

5.1 Evaluation of Trädgård på spåret

In the previous chapter I presented the place of Trädgård på spåret and its impact on the city. In this chapter I want to elaborate why I consider TPS to be an urban commons. This requires also to discuss the contra perspective and most of all to feed back to the theoretical perspective analyzed in Chapter 3.

Common(s) Characteristics

When I started working on this thesis I decided to set up a glossary in order to get an overview about the subject and also to bring together the different characteristics and challenges that a commons touches or is confronted with. During that period I had not heard about Trädgård på spåret yet. Now, a couple of months later, as I arrive to the point of evaluating TPS and discussing its qualities of being classified as an urban commons, I turn back to the written pages and re-read my glossary and I am surprised how many characteristics of the glossary match with TPS.

First of all TPS is openly accessible, for everyone, at every time. Fences around it are there to protect the neighbors, but no gate or fence prevents people from entering TPS at day neither during night which is a form of trust in the city and its citizens. TPS is managed and maintained by engaged people who proceed through collective action, work voluntary and offer a flexible commitment. Everyone can become a member and the fact that different genders, ages, nationalities are among the 300 registered members (commoners) minimizes the danger that TPS forms a homogenous group which creates complex social boundaries (e.g. lock-in effect leading to exclusion/segregation).

In addition, TPS is a place of production. Not only food is growing there, it also produces knowledge and amenities for the common. Collaborations with institutions and companies enable that the “products” interact with the city or that new products arise (e.g. events). TPS is commoning the space (a resource) along the rails by turning it from a no-man’s land to a common garden. The commoners offer their time to create an additional value for themselves as well as for the city and keep thereby TPS in custody. The personal wealth that the members of TPS gain is the access to fresh organic food, the possibility of gardening, networking, making friends and extending knowledge. The wealth for the common is a new accessible place and accessible knowledge.

From my point of view the conditions described above are reasons which lead me to assess Trädgård på spåret as an urban commons. Important to consider at this point is how and why TPS could be developed. Trädgård på spåret started as a vision from
a single citizen (Philipp). The successful and lively High Line Project in New York City was a role model. The idea was to generate a public space and connect it with the aspect of organic food growing. TPS was never meant to be a place for Philipp himself. Nor did Philipp ever intend to keep all the vegetables for his family. The overall aim was to activate the space along the hidden rails and to create a place.

The association is registered as a non-commercial organization (ideell förening). The concept of TPS was described with three key words when it was presented to the municipality: temporarily, mobile, idealistic. And an important point for Philipp when arguing for TPS was the fact that “we don’t hurt anyone”. TPS isn't harming the space nor does it take the space away from anyone. It is simply filling an urban gap.

Public and Private Symptoms
From a very technical point of view, one can argue that TPS presents a normal case of a rental agreement between a public actor (Exploateringskontoret) and a private actor (the förening). The city owns the land, rents it out to a private association and charges money for it. To put it very simple, one can say that the land became privatized (for a limited time period). The city is doing business as usual as a landlord (under unusual rent conditions) and an association designs and programs the land. It is not easy to judge if the association should be considered as a private or a public actor. On the one hand it is a non-commercial association doing something for the common (public), but on the other hand it has no democratic legitimitation and the program of TPS arises from personal interests of its members.

The project manager Christian Winberg from Exploateringskontoret considers the area as private land:

“This land is not common. It is private. It is owned by the city. It is private property, it is ‘our’ private property and it is not open for the public. But by planning we can make it public. [...] Me and my organization (Exploateringskontoret) have the right to say: You can not be there. I can decide that TPS can be there for a certain time and I can give them a contract. But it is not open for the public!”

But by thinking in standard terms of public and private actors and property rights fixed by lease agreements, we miss -as Blomley argues- to recognize the diverse possibilities of relationships between people and land [Blomley 2004]. We would overlook the fact that TPS was created as a common space, from citizens for citizens. We would miss the fact that TPS is a personal garden for many who don’t have a private garden. We would lose sight of the fact that the unusual conditions of the lease agreement (with respect to the rent price) enabled a new network of
activities which includes education, business, placemaking and socializing. TPS was created because there was a place and an idea and not because there was an association and a (business) interest. The association is a necessary “device” that had to be created to participate in the formal process of property administration and to have a legal basis.

Besides, TPS is not a public place in classic terms like Kungsträdgården or Medborgarplatsen since the management and programming of the place is not in hand of the municipality. It is the community of TPS that decides about design and activities of the place and those decisions do not require a permission of the city. This fact matches with Radywyl’s notion on the commons in which the community should be given the capacity to build and engineer their favored change of space.

Doing business = Commodification?
As a matter of fact TPS is a place where business is performed. Only on small scale though, but with the outcome of profit. The municipality charges a fairly low rent (way below market prices) but since previously nobody leased the land, it represents additional money for the city. TPS is doing business by selling coffee, cake and some of the vegetables. For a cup of coffee TPS charges 15sek (10sek for members). This certainly exceeds the costs for coffee powder, filter, water, electricity and the coffee machine in the long run, so as a matter of fact TPS is making profit with it. Since the profit is used to maintain and improve TPS one could argue that it is a form of reimbursement for customers and the common. But what is important to take into account at this point is that making profit is not something that dismisses a commons. A commons is based on the principle of treating a resource in a non-commodified way but it does not imply that everything is given for free. In the case of TPS the common resource is the place, its amenity value and its generated knowledge. These resources are held in common and not commodified, but they do not include free coffee. Besides, unlike in a coffee bar, one is not obliged to purchase a coffee or cake if you take a seat at TPS.

Philipp states that he would not appreciate it if Trädgård på spåret shapes up to a mass planting (by which TPS would most likely lose its amenity) but he doesn’t object the idea of developing a business at TPS. It is important to consider that a resource that is needed to manage a commons is time. Philipp’s personal time of engagement sums up to more than a full day per week and this is actually too much as he says. The success of TPS and the growing interest is certainly pleasant, but causes at the same time the problem that its management requires more time. The more institutions ask for a gardening lesson and the more restaurant ask for a dinner event, the sooner the commitment of the commoners is exhausted and the money from scholarships depleted. This scenario would lead to the need of hiring someone
for the management which in turn means that TPS has to acquire returns. At that point it is up to the association in which direction they decide to continue.

From an ideologica l perspective the scenario might present a conflict, but from a pragmatic perspective I would argue that the urban commons in this case would even have the benefit of creating jobs. And as long as the space itself continues to be a place with open access where ideas and amenities are shared, TPS remains an urban commons.

TPS' spatial Justice
The relation between the environment (the space itself) and the TPS community and Stockholm citizens is non-commodified and collective as claimed by David Harvey [2012]. The association is practicing communal sharing instead of private taking [Blomley 2004] and if we take a “fresh look at the subject of public versus private space” as suggested by Šoja [2010], we might recognize or detect a new strategy in TPS for enhancing spatial justice.

To assess if TPS provides more spatial justice than a private or a public space it is helpful to compare it with its neighbors: the park and the Eriksdalslunden allotments. All three places are green spaces and laying next to each other. The park is a public space, accessible for everyone. The allotments are private space, which can be leased by everyone but offer only a limited availability. The allotment holders can design their own garden plot but it is not open to the public. Technically TPS is a private space too, but the private user (the association) decided to keep it open to the public. The difference to the public park is, that at TPS the public can design the space. It combines the free civic access like in public parks and the personal programming like in private gardens. Though the program (gardening) one has to share and practice it in collective action.

Enthusiasts of gardens and green spaces gain something from TPS, no matter if there are involved actively or just passing by the place, enjoying the view.

However, other individuals might dislike the urban gardening trend or the improvisational “do-it-yourself design”. Or the possible effect that the “Hipsterfarmers” increase the rent prices of the neighborhood, by making Södermalm even more hip and gentrifying it further. TPS activated a place and initiated a use, thus it added a value in the city for those who appreciate gardening. TPS created a “just” green space but it did not necessarily created a just space for those who have no interest that the space became open to the public (i.e. homeless people who might have resided the rails before).
5.2 Concluding Research Question

What are the Urban Commons?
The aim of this thesis was to deliver an understanding of what an urban commons is or could be. If I would attempt to bring up a definition at this point, I would probably do the mistake of setting rules, requirements and boundaries. Settings which are similar to those defining private and public property.

Understanding an urban commons may only require to set aside property rules for a moment and to recognize that there are places in cities where ownership is not of interest. Those are places where people using the space together, instead of owning it solely. No matter if the personal impetus is ideology, fun or a special need.

I would conclude that we find an urban commons, where people are doing, creating or producing something for themselves and for the common and where they can decide themselves how to do it. Property only matters in terms of legality of the action. A commons can take place on public ground as well as on private ground and transform it into common ground if we are willing to acknowledge it. If we not only relate property to administrative boundaries and laws, and instead rather to “active doing” [Blomely 2004], programming and sharing, we would allow more urban commons to take place in cities or we would simply realize that there are already many commons out there in our cities.

The role of Urban Commons in the Planning Discipline?
A planning discipline that is concerned with questions of the just city, diversity and sustainable environments, should advocate the urban commons since the discipline is able to recognize the potential and value of a commons like TPS and know how to set it in the context of global development practices as described by Susan Fainstein [“The Just City”, 2010]:

“The principal mechanisms employed by governing regimes to create growth have involved investment in infrastructure, subsidies and regulatory relief to property developers and firms, and city marketing. […] Popular strategies have included office-led development, festive retail malls, sports facilities, tourist bubbles, clustering of related industries, nurturing the creative class, and arts development […] The desirability of growth is usually assumed, while the consequences for social equity are rarely mentioned.”

Advocating the urban commons does not only mean to advocate social equity. It also means to advocate the city that is seeking engaged citizens, amenities, networks, businesses, social life and interesting places.
Christina Winberg from the Exploateringskontoret reported that the decision to allow Philipp Olsmeyer to realize Trädgård på spåret was based on an informal consultation with her division manager. Philipp and his friends came at the right time with a good idea and they stayed persistent. The two women from Exploateringskontoret liked the idea, so they gave green light. According to Christina most of such requests from citizens get rejected. Often they do not fit or the citizens asking for it do not show continuous engagement.

“To TPS I said yes, because it is easy to install and also easy to remove everything. And it is interesting. We know that many people are interested in planting and growing and I personally like it too.”

The case of TPS shows that an urban commons is dependent on the decision of the city’s authority. Another employee at Exploateringskontoret could have been not interested in the project and TPS would have never been created.
Our contemporary planning discipline (as I perceive it) aims for a more stimulating and participatory urban culture. Hence we pay more attention to forms of tactical urbanism (as claimed by Radywyl/Biggs, see chapter 3.3.2). The overall idea is (no matter if we call it pop-up urbanism, temporary intervention or guerilla urbanism) that citizens who want to improve some aspect of a community’s public life, should get the possibility to initiate a new design.

If the planning discipline (including researchers, policy-makers, designers, etc.) understands that an urban commons combines the characteristics of public space (open access) and private space (own design), we would create a stronger basis for participatory interventions. But to do so, we need to recognize that there is a “third category” beside private and public property.

If we succeed in integrating urban commons in our planning laws and planning instruments, places like Trädgård på spåret might have it easier to be initiated and to have a long-term residence perspective.
6. Concluding Thoughts

In the past six months I often had to answer the question about the subject of my master thesis. The reactions of my friends and family were already a valuable experience. First of all I had to encounter incomprehension and wonderment. Basically nobody had heard about the term “commons”, neither in the English language nor in the German language (“Allmende”). Explaining what it means resulted often in misunderstanding and sometimes in nervousness (“What about exploitation?”).

In June I attended a Ph.D seminar about the subject of civilization and there I understood why the commons are not easily explained. I was introduced to new literature e.g. Neill Ferguson’s “The West and the Rest”. According to Ferguson the “success” of western civilization is based –among other things– on private property. This taught me that the idea of private property is deeply anchored in our culture and I understood the nervous “What about exploitation and free-riders” questions slightly better.

It seems that we are not familiar with the concept of the commons, since our western culture is convinced that private property brings prosperity [Ferguson 2011]. Thus we struggle to trust and believe in custodianship of non-private ground. But Alexander’s custody gave me an example that sometimes things work off the logic or in unexpected ways. And now it is the story of Alexander which I tell when people ask me about my thesis subject. Surprise and emotion are the reactions I experienced since.

From my perspective the urban commons will gain more attention since we experience certain consumer changes in our society at the moment. The concept of sharing is no longer an idealistic approach; it rather becomes a sustainable need and an economic convenience.

We get introduced to concepts of “carsharing”, “crowdfunding”, the return of local production and the more horse meat we find in our Körthullar, the more we pay attention to these concepts. We exchange the CD collections of our parents with a Spotify account. We do so because it is cheaper and it offers us much more music. It is important for us that we can share playlists with friends easily, but owning the music is not relevant anymore.

We will probably reconsider our notion of owning and sharing products even more in the future, simply due to the fact that it is convenient and it saves money.

Rediscovering common ground in market-orientated urban development might be the next challenge for urban planners and urban governance. This thesis is the attempt to show that the challenge can have a fruitful outcome.
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VI Appendix

Semi-structured interview with Philipp Olsmeyer
29. August 2013, Stockholm
Interviewed by Merle Breyer

Merle: Wer hat Trädgård på spåret gegründet?

Philipp: Ich hab die Idee gehabt. Und dann hab ich Max mit ins Boot geholt.
Also ich hab das Exploateringskontoret angeschrieben, also ich wusste gar nicht wer dafür
verantwortlich war und dann hab ich parallel an Stadsdelsförvaltning und Stadsbyggnadskontoret
geschrieben und die haben das weitergeleitet und dann haben die sich vom Exploateringskontoret bei
mir gemeldet. Die erste mail die ich zurückbekommen habe, das hat ein bisschen gedauert. Erst hab
ich nur beschrieben in Worten und Links vom Prinzessinnengarten und der High Line geschickt und
da hab ich direkt positives Feedback vom Exploateringskontoret bekommen. Und dann ging es so
weiter. Dann habe ich das Konzept weiterausgearbeitet und dann hab ich das ok bekriegt. Dann hab
ich den Max mit reingeholt und wir haben angefangen zu zeichnen. Also sowohl einen Plan machen
für das Gelände, die Funktionen bestimmt und dann auch das erste 3D rendering gemacht, mit dem
wir dann auch viel kommuniziert haben am Anfang.

Merle: War deine Idee High Line und Prinzessinnengarten in Stockholm zu haben?

Philipp: Ja schon so. Also alles hat ja so seine eigenen Argumente die man sich da raus ziehen kann.
Also es waren immer zwei Teile. Einmal das ich gerne was mit diesem Gebiet machen wollte und
dann aber auch dass ich das schön finde mit nem Garten halt und vor allem auch mit Lebensmitteln,
also mit Gemüse. Nicht nur einfach Blumen pflanzen sondern schon auch selber lernen können wie
man anpflanzt. Auch das eigene Wissen erweitern..

Merle: Und du wolltest das auch unbedingt dort machen?

Philipp: Also da wollte ich halt eigentlich irgendetwas mit dem Platz machen, weil ich den so cool fand.
Und das fand ich das halt interessant... also das ist dann irgendwie so zusammengekommen das ich
das cool fand mit Prinzessinnengarten und High Line, das mich das interessiert hat. Und dann hab ich
gedacht, dann kann man ja auch so was machen. Ist ein gutes Projekt.

Merle: Und dann hast du die Stadt angeschrieben und gefragt wie das aussieht? Ob es möglich ist
dort was zu machen?

Philipp: Ja genau. Also erstmal beschrieben, also erstmal relativ vorsichtig, also einfach nen Text
geschrieben und dann ne Präsentation gemacht und dann ist diese Präsentation immer größer
geworden. Also erstmal für die Stadt, also fürs Exploateringskontoret, dann fürs Stadsdelsverwaltung. Und dann letztetendes auch für die Öffentlichkeit. Als wir dann an die Presse gegangen sind um halt Leute dafür zu gewinnen.

Merle: Also du hast dich erstmal an das Stadsbyggnadskontoret gewandt?

Philipp: Beides, sowohl Stadsbyggnadskontoret als auch Stadsdelsförvaltning. Also ich wusste ja nicht genau wer dafür zuständig ist.

Merle: Und die haben das dann weitergeleitet ans Exploateringskontoret?

Philipp: Die haben das weitergeleitet. Also dieses Gelände ist halt so ein bisschen Niemandsland. Also das gehörte früher mal dem Hafen und dann ist das vom Exploateringskontoret übernommen worden und die müssen das jetzt irgendwie nutzen. Also die sind verantwortlich und Eigentümer, also die Stadt Stockholm

Merle: Und die waren glücklich darüber, dass da jemand mit einem Vorschlag ankommt?

Philipp: Joaa... also happy mmh... joa... happy...mm.. Also die fanden das halt gut. Wir hatten halt solche Argumente die nicht richtig weh tun. Also es ist halt temporär, es ist mobil, was theoretisch.. also wir bauen ja nicht richtig was. Wir brauchen ja keine Baugenehmigung für irgendwas. Ja, das es ideel ist. Also mobil, temporär, ideel, das waren so die Argumente, und das es halt auch nicht weh tut. Also so liegt es halt da, keiner macht was damit. Also das einzige was die halt, also meinten die relativ am Anfang, das einzige Problem was wahrscheinlich auftritt, ist, dass den Leuten das gefallen könnte. Also einzige wovor man wohl Angst kriegt, dass man halt so eine politische Kraft kriegt wenn halt viele Leute dafür gewinnen kann.

Merle: Also war das schon ein Sorge, dass wenn alles gut läuft sie euch da nicht mehr weg kriegen?

Philipp: Joa vielleicht so. Und das ist ja auch ne Gefahr. Also zumindest hat man, also das war ja auch ein Grund warum es gut war da etwas zu machen, weil vorher halt gar nix da ist. Und wenn gar nix da ist dann überlässt man halt alles irgendwelchen Planern oder irgendwelchen ökonomischen Interessen an dem Gelände. Und wenn halt irgendeine Aktivität schafft, dann kann man das halt auch in der Planung aufnehmen. Also das ist ja jetzt sogar teilweise schon so passiert. Also bei White zum Beispiel, die ja auch einen von vier Vorschlägen gemacht haben für dieses Gebiet, da taucht dann Gärtnern, Blumen, auch schon wieder auf. Das ist schon ganz...also sobald man halt ne Aktivität schafft, dann gibt man halt..dann ist man halt drin in dieser Stadtsentwicklung. Wenn halt nix passiert, dann kann man halt machen was man will.

Merle: Und gibt es da jetzt irgendwelche Pläne, also soll da in Zukunft was mit gemacht werden? Also soll sich das noch richtig entwickeln?
Phillipp: Also es gibt ja einen großen Entwicklungsplan, also dieses Vision Söderstaden 2030. Das städtebauliche Programm was für das ganze Gebiet zwischen Gulmarsplan und södra Skanstull, also alles was, also das das halt alles näher aneinander rankommt. Und das berührt halt unser Gebiet bis zum Tunnel, aber dann auch alles zwischen den Brücken. Also wir sind ja nur ein ganz kleiner Teil davon.

Merle: Weißt du wie lange ihr ungefähr bleiben könnt?

Phillipp: Also 2014 sind wir auf jeden Fall da und für 2015 waren sie auch schon relativ zuversichtlich. Aber die legen sich ja auf nix fest. Also wir haben ja immer nur einen einjährigen Vertrag. Aber bis die da mal in die Gänge kommen was zu planen, das dauert halt auch noch. Bis die da anfangen zu bauen, das wird bestimmt noch 10 Jahre dauern. Oder 5 Jahre mindestens. So lange kann man ja noch da was machen. Und vielleicht kann es sich soweit etablieren, dass es dann auch bleiben kann. Weil man vielleicht auch eh nix besseres dafür findet. Wieso nicht?

Merle: Und wie sieht jetzt der Vertrag mit dem Exploateringskontoret aus? Immer nur für ein Jahr?

Phillipp: Ja, der verlängert sich immer nur um ein Jahr. Also wir zahlen 1200 Kronen im Jahr und das ist sowohl fürs Gelände als auch fürs Licht. Die haben ja für Beleuchtung gesorgt. Also das ist ja schon ein symbolischer Betrag, aber auf der anderen Seite haben sie halt auch gar nix dafür gekriegt vorher, das muss man ja auch sehen.

Merle: Aber kommt denn da jetzt mal Licht? Also diesen Dienstag war ja kein Licht an!


Merle: Und Wasser und Strom?


Merle: Und musstet ihr eine Versicherung abschließen?

Phillipp: Ja wir haben ja ne Versicherung. Diese Saison haben wir ne Versicherung abgeschlossen. Also sowohl für den Wagen, als auch die Geräte. Also Diebstahl und Vandalismus, aber auch wenn da irgendwas passiert auf dem Gelände, das wird auch gegenversichert sein. Wir haben auf jeden Fall jetzt ne Versicherung. Also dieses Haftpflichtversicherung.
Merle: Und wer ist jetzt der Mieter? Ist das der Verein?

Philipp: Ja. Und das war auch mit ein Grund einen Verein zu gründen. Damit man hält nix illegales da macht. Also wir wollten das ja auch nicht... also das war jetzt nicht meine Idee das man das da besetzt, also das sollte schon auch irgendwie ordentlich sein, dafür musste man halt auch irgendwie ne Form finden. Also entweder mieter man das als Privatperson, aber das wollte ich nicht. Oder man macht halt irgendwie ne ökonomische Vereinigung. Also man braucht halt irgendeine Form um das mieten zu können. Und wenn man ne ideele Form haben will, dann geht es in Schweden eigentlich nur mit dem Verein. Also in Deutschland gäbe es auch noch so etwas wie ne gemeinnützige GmbH. Und hier geht's nur mit dem Verein. Aber das ist letztenendes ja auch wieder ganz gut. Also man kriegt dadurch ja auch wieder Einnahmen durch die Mitgliedsbeiträge und man hat auch viele Leute dadurch die kostenfrei helfen und das hat schon so seinen Vorteil. Aber es wird dadurch natürlich auch etwas komplizierter, weil man muss dadurch so Styrelsemöte (board meeting) machen. Jahreshauptversammlung. Also letztes Jahr da waren wir ja nur zu dritt in dem Syrelse, also Max, Lisa und ich. Da ist man natürlich schon wesentlich dynamischer. Da kann man eigentlich... also wir waren uns ja nie uneinig über irgendetwas. Da bestimmt man einfach was und dann macht man das halt. Und jetzt sind wir halt 7 Leute und da brauch man halt immer nen Beschluss. Man muss das halt immer besprechen. Das machen wir ja nun auch.

Merle: Und wie lange hat das gedauert bis du die Genehmigung hattest?

Philipp: Also ich hatte ja die erste Mail im September 2011 geschrieben und dann hab ich vielleicht 1 Monat später, ja 2,3,4 Wochen später ne Rückantwort gekriegt und wir haben den Vertrag dann Anfang des Jahres unterschrieben. Aber im September war da schon klar das wir das machen dürfen.

Merle: Also ging das recht schnell?

Philipp: Ja. Aber das ging sicherlich auch sehr schnell für schwedische Verhältnisse. Und für die war das ja auch was Neues. Also so in der Form hat es das ja auch noch nicht gegeben.

Merle: Und kommt da auch Unterstützung von Lokalpolitikern?

Philipp: Joa, nicht spürbar. Ich weiß auch nicht wie die genau aussehen sollte. Also ich hab schon überlegt wie man das stärker angehen sollte, aber nee wir kriegen keine, wie sollte Unterstützung auch aussehen? Dann müssten wir halt irgendwas wollen und dann müssten die halt einen Beschluss dazu fassen. Also bislang haben wir alles ganz gut selber hingekriegt. Also woran man halt denken könnte ist das die uns helfen den Zugang leichter zu machen oder auch Zugang zu Strom und Wasser zu kriegen. Das könnte man halt machen. Aber das kostet auch Kraft sich da selber drum zu kümmern und mit denen zu kommunizieren und sich mit denen zu treffen. Da kann man halt... ja ist halt auch alles Zeit die man dafür verwenden muss.
Merle: Aber es ist jetzt auch nicht so, dass die euch da missbrauchen und sagen „Ach guck mal was für ein tolles Projekt“?

Philipp: Doch das hat es auch schon gegeben. Da war ein so ein Centrums Typ. Also ich kann mich dran erinnern dass es da letztes Jahr so einen Artikel gab wo ich mich auch ein bisschen drüber geärgert habe. Da hat der sich das rausgesucht und meinte das das ja alles so schwer geht und eigentlich leichter gehen müsste. Aber keine hatte vorher mit dem gesprochen und das stimmte auch einfach gar nicht.

Nee, aber das wird schon... also Stadsbyggnadskontoret die haben uns auch als Beispiel genommen für diese Gröna Promenadstaden was ja auch irgendwie so eine Zielvision die letzten Endes politisch ist. Aber es gab jetzt nicht irgendwelche Parteien die sich besonders um uns gekümmert haben.

Merle: Hast ihr jetzt einen festen Ansprechpartner bei der Stadt?

Philipp: Beim Exploateringskontoret. Und bei der Stadsförvaltning eigentlich auch.

Merle: Und sehen die euch jetzt gerne oder fühlt man sich da immer noch in so einer Bettelstellung?

Philipp: Also bei Exploateringskontoret da hat man schon so das Gefühl, also zumindest bei unserer Ansprechpartnerin, dass die auch ganz froh ist dass das halt so läuft. Ja, dass die da auch positive Aufmerksamkeit für kriegen. Und die kriegen halt auch so viel Scheiße ab. Also eigentlich sind ja die Leute immer sauer, wenn die ankommen und was mit dem Land machen wollen. Da hat man schon das Gefühl, dass sie da auch sehr froh drüber ist. Also mit der kann man ganz gut, also die ist schon sehr hilfsbereit. Aber die hat auch schon auch sehr viel zu tun, drum geht nicht immer alles ganz so schnell. Also wenn die noch etwas zackiger wäre, dann wäre es etwas einfacher.

Und sonst sind es irgendwie nicht die Personen die uns nicht gerne sehen. Also dieser Typ vom Eriksdalsbadet der da zuständig ist, der mag uns halt überhaupt nicht. Weil immer wenn wir kommen (was total selten passiert) dann wollen wir ja immer irgendwas, das ist ja klar. Dann muss er irgendwie sein Tor aufschließen damit da ein Lastwagen einfahren kann oder den haben wir halt auch gefragt ob wir da Strom anschließen können. Aber der ist halt nie glücklich wenn wir da anrufen. Der ist halt immer sauer. Also das ist halt bei Leuten so die irgendwo arbeiten. Also es ist halt keiner zuständig für uns und immer wenn man irgendwo ankommt ist es halt so das die Leute irgendwas anders machen müssen, als sie es sonst machen. Das ist halt bei der Stadsförvaltning auch so. Es gibt halt keinen der sich über Arbeit freut, das gibt es halt nicht.

Merle: Und das Schwimmbad interessiert es halt nicht was ihr da macht.

Philipp: Nee, das interessiert den halt nicht. Also mit dem kann man halt nicht so gut sprechen. Die Chefin sagt halt das ist nicht unsere Auftrag. Dann spreche ich halt mit dem Fastigehkontoret vom Eriksdalsbadet und der war auch sehr nett aber sagt halt auch das ist nicht unser politischer Auftrag.
Und so klar sind die Grenzen eben. Und der hat auch keine Zeit sich da politisch für uns einzusetzen. Da wäre es irgendwie gut, wenn das irgendwie einfacher wäre. Denn ist kein Problem den Stecker da beim Eriskdalsbadet reinzustecken. Es geht nur darum. Aber es ist nicht möglich weil es keine offizielle Regelung dafür gibt. Also der Jonas vom Eriskdalsbadet kann es nicht bestimmen, seine Chefin kann es nicht bestimmen, der fastigthsäger kann es nicht bestimmen, also man bräuchte halt für so etwas einen politischen Beschluss und das ist einfach zu.... Das ist halt... und durch so was will man sich auch nicht immer durchkämpfen. Das nimmt halt zu viel Zeit und Kraft. Dann kann man halt lieber für 15.000sek diesen Baustrom besorgen, obwohl das eigentlich unnötiges Geld ist und zu teuer. Aber ist halt so.

Merle: Gibt es denn von bestimmten Unternehmen viel Unterstützung?

Philipp: Ja wir haben ja super viel Unterstützung von dem Ralunda Gård gekriegt, von dem Erd...

Also da brauch man nur anzurufen, also das ist halt ne sehr gute Zusammenarbeit. Die Erde ist halt da und er schickt uns so viel Erde wie wir wollen. Und auch Dünger und alles mögliche. Weil er das Projekt eben mag und weil die natürlich auch ne ganz gute Aufmerksamkeit kriegen.

Merle: Und warum ist White da so auf eurer Seite?

Philipp: Das ist auch so das erste was wir mit gemacht haben. Wir haben ja ein Stipendium von der White Stiftung bekommen. ARQ heißt die. Ne Stiftung von White die so Forschungsprojekte organisiert. Von denen haben wir 65.000sek Stipendiumgeld gekriegt. Wo es darum geht ein urbanges Ökosystem zu schaffen und was man dafür braucht, also Sonnenenergie, Schmutzwasser, Wasser, also eigentlich alles... also dafür haben wir halt dieses Forschungsgeld gekriegt. Und da haben halt auch bei White Leute... also Max hat das irgendwie geleitet. Und ein Teil von dem Stipendium war halt auch das wir Unterstützung von White kriegen. Und die haben halt auch so freie Stunden die Mitarbeiter, die sie halt für bestimmte Projekte reinstecken können. Und da gab es dann welche die sich da u.a. um das Abwasser gekümmert haben. Und wir haben auch von White... växtfadder sind die auch geworden.

Max der arbeitet jetzt auch bei White und ist Lehrer an der KTH und arbeitet da zusammen mit einer die auch Partnerin bei White ist. Also es gab da schon immer irgendeinen Bezug da.

Merle: Sind da noch mehr von White die Mitglied geworden sind?

Philipp: Nee, nicht so viele. Ich dachte auch das da mehr kommen. Aber da muss man halt auch sagen, da mit diesem (Abwasser)Teich da haben die dann auch ein Stundentenportaere für gekriegt und dann haben die auch genau dieses Stunden reportaire dafür angesetzt, aber der Teig ist noch nicht richtig fertig. Also wir mussten dann schon noch selber –was ja auch ok ist- also schon noch selber Steine schleppen und was weiß ich. Naja, und da dacht ich irgendwie auch mein Gott macht es doch richtig fertig. Also ich musste dann entgegennehmen wie man die Pflanzen einsetzt und so,
und das dann weiterführen aber das ist dann halt auch schwierig das umzusetzen im Verein, also sich
darum zu kümmern dass das auch richtig fertig gemacht wird. Also jetzt kann man halt... also das
funktioniert schon so. Aber ich mein halt das das ein bisschen... also das ist schon cool dass die das
gemacht haben, aber das war halt schon so genau die Arbeitszeit die die dafür hatten. Also das war
kein ideeler Einsatz. Die haben da ja Geld für gekriegt. Und dann kommen sie auch nicht wieder. Das
finde ich halt auch so ein bisschen komisch. Also ich versteh das manchmal nicht so, aber ist halt so.

Merle: Und was ist so das schwierigste am Projekt? Was sorgt am meisten für Frust und Ärger?

Philipp: Naja, ich find halt das viel... also das schlimmste ist halt wenn man so viel diskutieren
muss. Also man muss halt immer mit Menschen umgehen, die ganze Zeit. Also das ist natürlich
schön, wenn es so entspannt ist, da zu sitzen und zu grillen, aber ich muss halt auch jeden Dienstag
da sein und das organisieren und Leuten die neu da sind Arbeit geben und sie integrieren und das
finde ich schon super schwierig. Also das ist ja auch schon besser geworden, weil da jetzt auch mehr
sind die mehr Verantwortung übernehmen, aber das finde ich schon... also für mich persönlich ist das
eigentlich das anstrengendste. Also das man halt viel diskutieren muss und das man halt immer da sein
muss für Leute und immer was organisieren muss. Also nichts geht eigentlich von selber. Also das
ist auch nicht richtig das nichts von selber geht, aber wenn man halt will das was gemacht wird muss
man eigentlich auch immer selber das antreiben. Also wenn du halt irgendwie diesen Kaffeevagen
siehst, also ich hab irgendwie nicht verstanden warum der nicht im Mai schon fertig war. Und dann
kommen irgendwie Leute, malen ein bisschen rum und dann sind sie wieder weg. Dann wartet man
dass das irgendjemand wieder aufnimmt , aber das passiert dann nicht. Dann muss man wieder ein
Treffen dazu machen und sagen Wie machen wir das jetzt weiter...
Dann beschweren sich irgendwelche die für den Garten zuständig sind, dass beim Kaffee die ja ne
neue Küche bekommen haben und dann ist der Wagen nicht fertig und ja, so ist das halt immer. Das
nervt halt. Das ist super anstrengend.


Philipp: Also das ist mindestens ein Tag pro Woche. Also mindestens. War zwar auch schon mehr.
Aber im Sommer war ich ja jetzt auch mal gar nicht da für zwei Monate. Also das ist schon viel Zeit
und das geht auch eigentlich nicht.
Das ist auch ein bisschen Schade meine Familie kommt auch nicht wirklich so...Also das hatte ich mir
irgendwie schon anders vorgestellt. Dass man halt auch was gemeinsames hat. Das es halt schön für
die Kinder ist wenn wir da so ein bisschen zusammen abhängen können, aber das ist halt auch nicht
so richtig passiert. Weil ich halt auch immer zu viel zu tun hab da und dann muss meine Frau auf die
Kinder aufpassen und dann ist halt... das ist halt irgendwie nicht entspannt wenn wir da zusammen
hingehen.

Merle: Und gibt es noch einen offenen Wunsch den du hast?
Philipp: Ja, es gibt halt immer so konkrete Sachen, also man will halt das der Wagen fertig wird, das es besser wird mit der Zugänglichkeit, also das man ein Geländer an der Treppe hat und im besten Fall auch ein Weg zwischen den Schienen. Das man da auch mit Rollstuhl und Kinderwagen herfahren kann.

Und dann halt das es alles noch besser, ordentlich und schöner wird. Also das sind halt so konkrete Sachen. Und langfristig gibt es noch Visionen oder Träume wie es sein könnte. Also das es halt wirklich eine grüne Promenade sein kann die da vom Kai durch den Tunnel bis zur anderen Seite weiter, so das es halt ein Teil des Stadtteils wird. Also so ein bisschen wie die High Line nur im kleineren Sinne. Also das es halt nicht nur Kisten sind, sondern das man auch ein ordentliches Projekt dafür macht.

Merle: Also war das so der Traum dafür?

Philipp: Nee, also man hat ja schon immer an den Tunnel gedacht und auch an das Stück danach. Da kann man ja auch ein bisschen für kämpfen und zeigen wie man sich das vorstellt.

Merle: Hast du Angst vor der Kommerzialisierung des Projektes?

Philipp: Ne, ich hab da keine Angst. Ich finde das ja o.k. Also Kommerzialisierung was auch immer das jetzt heißt. Also ich finde das immer gut wenn man eine Zusammenarbeit hat, Sponsoring usw. Ich finde das ist kein Problem. Also das müssen jetzt nicht irgendwie Plantagen werden oder so. Ich finds aber schon gut, wenn man da Business macht, also das finde ich schon o.k.