Toward a postcapitalist feminist political ecology’ approach to commoning

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Chizu Sato
Sociology of Consumption and Households, Wageningen University, Netherlands

Jozelin María Soto Alarcón
Instituto de Ciencias Económico Administrativas (ICEA), Universidad Autónoma del Estado de Hidalgo, Mexico
Why commoning?

• Necessity for changing the dominant mode/capitalist mode of production
• Yearning for a new world, culture, postcapitalist society, degrowth

• **Commoning** as a strategy for surviving well together in place
• What feminist political ecology (FPE) can offer?
Feminist perspectives on commons & commoning

**Ecofeminism**
- Shiva, Mies
  - Cared
  - Use & access democratically managed

  "No commons without a community"
  (Mies, 2014, i109)

**Autonomist Marxist ecofeminism**
- Federici
  - **Commoning** social reproduction as a strategy for creating an alternative to private capitalism & central planning

**Feminist environmentalism**
- Common property or common-pool resource
- How use & access negotiated
Postcapitalist, community economies perspective on commons & commoning

- Read property for difference
- Commons not as a thing/a resource, but as an activity (Linebaugh, 2008) – commoning

*Commons as “a process – commoning – that is applicable to any form of property, whether private, or state-owned, or open access”*  
(Gibson-Graham, Cameron & Healy, 2016, p. 193)
Feminist perspectives on commons & commoning

Ecofeminism
- Shiva, Mies
Autonomist Marxist Feminists
- Federici, Della Costa
  - *Commodification* –
    - decommonization –
    - primitive accumulation

private property as “the main pillar of capitalism”
(Mies, 2014, p. I112)

Feminist environmentalism
  - Property rights

Feminist political ecology
  - *Commodification*
## Ways of commoning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Commoning</th>
<th>Access</th>
<th>Use</th>
<th>Benefit</th>
<th>Care</th>
<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>Ownership</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>enclosed</td>
<td>Narrow</td>
<td>Restricted by owner</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>Performed by owner or</td>
<td>Assumed by</td>
<td>Private individual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>commons or creating new commons</td>
<td>Maintaining</td>
<td>Managed by a community</td>
<td>Widely distributed to a community and beyond</td>
<td>employee</td>
<td>owner</td>
<td>Private collective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>resources</td>
<td>Unrestricted</td>
<td>Open and unregulated</td>
<td>Finders keepers</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>State</td>
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<td>Private individual</td>
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Gibson-Graham et al. (2016, p. 197)

“communities are constituted through the process of commoning”

“a commoning-community” is constituted through the process of negotiating access, use, benefit, care and responsibility

(Gibson-Graham et al., 2016, p. 196)
What can FPE learn from existing feminist and community economies approaches to commoning?

(Feminist political ecology)

(Autonomist Marxist)
eco-feminism

Postcapitalist, community economies
A commoning-community in the Daboxtha valley

Milpa Maguey Tierno de la Mujer
(Sweet Milpa of Women)

Milpa Maguey Cooperative’ members with community authorities
Biophysical agricultural commons

- Agave production
- Organic production, cleaning plots
- Reforestation

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<tr>
<td>Cooperative members, their family, native species of plants, insects</td>
<td>Rules negotiated by cooperative members' family and cooperative members (plot allocation, organic methods)</td>
<td>Cooperative members, their family, community members, and future generations</td>
<td>Cooperative members, their family, community members</td>
<td>Cooperative members, their family, and state</td>
<td>Individually owned private (land, seeds) but also includes Collectively owned private (e.g., land, water), Open access (e.g., insects)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Knowledge commons

• Indigenous ecological knowledge
• Scientific and technical knowledge
• Engage in everyday, continuous observations, experiments
• Sharing knowledge with
  • school age children/future generation & community members

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<td>Cooperative members, children, community members, NGOs, the university</td>
<td>Managed by a community</td>
<td>Cooperative, their family members, and beyond</td>
<td>Cooperative members, paid employees of local state institutions, children, community members</td>
<td>Cooperative, local state institutions</td>
<td>Collectively owned private – inter-generations, community and Alternative private – cooperative Private (HHs), State</td>
</tr>
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© Diego P. Valero – photo
Cultural commons

• Language – values
  • Home, school & church

• Food heritage – recipe

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<td>Elderly women, Cooperative members, their family &amp; friends</td>
<td>Negotiated by elderly women and the cooperative</td>
<td>Cooperative members, their family, community members, and future generations, distant consumers</td>
<td>Cooperative members</td>
<td>Cooperative members</td>
<td>Collectively owned private – inter-generations, community and alternative private – cooperative</td>
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• Traditional crafts

Granddaughter of a Milpa Maguey member supporting the agave production process
Social commons

• Cooperative
• On-site childcare
• The money commons (financial system)
• The assembly (political system)
• Intercommunity water system

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<td>8 communities</td>
<td>Strict rules set, managed by 8 communities through the assembly</td>
<td>8 community members</td>
<td>Community members (households, private businesses) through faena</td>
<td>The assembly – shared by 8 communities</td>
<td>Alternative private – collectively owned by 8 communities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
MM’s interactions with different types of property & commons

Open-access property
- Climate change vulnerability
- World Wide Web for business
- Training from public institutions
- Legal permits
- Occasional funding
- Indigenous ecological knowledge
- Social festivities
- Maintenance of community services: health center, schools, roads
- Cooperative members teaching and promoting agave handling in the local school
- Water supply from intercommunity system
- Purchasing inputs locally
- Production & sale of Agave syrup

State-owned property

Collectively owned private property
- Agave handling and reforestation
- Family members’ support in the field labour
- Agave production in the family plots

Individually owned private property
- Agave syrup production
- Services used during the process
- Agave syrup sales

Adopted from Gibson-Graham et al., 2013
A postcapitalist feminist political ecology’s approach to commoning

Gendered, place-based practices & politics

A multi-species commoning-community

- produced through everyday commoning practices among humans & nonhumans in an assemblage
- enabled by different commoning practices that cut across different types of property, different types of commons
- commoning practices – interdependent

- Articulating a vast set of disarticulated practices in place – connect them with a language of difference (property, intersectionality)
Commoning as a strategy for surviving well together in place

The cooperative members

- Part of a “reappropriation, reconstruction, reinvention” (Escobar & Harcourt, 2005, p. 2; Harcourt, 2016) of a multi-species commoning-community

If we can begin to see commoning practices as prevalent and viable, we may be encouraged here and now to actively build upon them to transform our everyday life.
Thanks for your attention

Contacts:
Chizu Sato
chizu.sato@wur.nl

Jozelin María Soto Alarcón
jmsoto@uaeh.edu.mx