



Queering urban commons: (re)negotiating space, time, labor, and power in marginal urbanities

Leandra Maria Choffat

Institute of Geography, University of Bern, Bern, Switzerland

Correspondence: Leandra Maria Choffat (leandra.choffat@unibe.ch)

Received: 10 April 2025 – Revised: 21 October 2025 – Accepted: 28 October 2025 – Published: 3 December 2025

Abstract. Urban land and housing have become increasingly unaffordable and inaccessible for many in Switzerland – especially for people negatively affected by structures of discrimination. Urban commons have long been discussed as a means to address these challenges and as possible spaces of resistance amidst capitalist relations. However, prevailing power relations within the commons are rarely addressed in these debates, including within the fields of geography and urban studies. Using participatory observations in Swiss marginal urban commons, this brief intervention examines how attending to queer perspectives and practices of organizing space, time, and labor can provide a critical lens for exploring negotiations of intersectional power dynamics within commoning. This approach also contributes to broadening discussions on the potential of commoning to foster resistance against capitalist urban relations in Switzerland and beyond.

1 Introduction

Today, even though the larger collective also consists of cis men, all the people gathering at the occupied house on the fringes of a Swiss city identify as flinta. The acronym flinta, commonly used in German-speaking contexts, stands for female, lesbian, intersex, non-binary, trans, and agender people. Some people prepare lunch, while others build cupboards and stairs. After a communal meal, we gather around a long table in the self-built community space located just outside the wonderful house the collective occupied just a few months ago. The goal of the afternoon session is to discuss the collective's feminist values and experiences of sexism within this space. Later, a meeting involving the entire collective will be held so that the cis men can engage with the points raised during today's conversations.

Even before the actual discussion about the collective's values begins, a debate arises about the dynamics of flinta people doing the labor of reporting back to cis men and educating them about feminist values and strategies for addressing sexism. How can such dynamics be altered, and what kind of meeting structures would serve this purpose? Should cis-men-only meetings reflect on how they can support the collective's feminist agenda? Would it be enough if cis men organized these meetings and created the agenda? If

they do take on this responsibility, how can these spaces remain safe enough for flintas to discuss instances of discrimination and sexism? Furthermore, how do these questions connect to broader issues about power structures and access to their collective? The conversations during the afternoon flinta meeting do not lead to definitive answers. Nonetheless, these discussions – about who performs what labor in a collective and how it impacts the comfort and safety of certain members – serve as a starting point to examine intersectional power structures, access to marginal communities, and ways of commoning.

This introductory vignette, drawn from my participatory observations, is a prism to examine how *marginal urban commons* organizing around access to urban land and housing in Switzerland can open ways for alternative forms of discussing power. Marginal urban commons are understood as relational practices in urban spaces to collectively access, maintain, and govern resources – always embedded in capitalist structures and at risk of (re)producing social and structural inequalities (Anderson and Huron, 2023). Their marginality is constituted through a variety of locations, practices, and people that are often deemed marginal, and they are conceptualized as potential sites of resistance to capitalist inequalities (Hooks, 1996; Lancione, 2016). This

close consideration of their variety in locations, practices, and people involved aims for a detailed account of their alternative forms of community-based organization and actions and more insurgent forms of commoning practices (Miraftab, 2004).

The intervention highlights queer practices and their potential to add to these alternative power negotiations. Herein, a queer lens focuses on non-cis-heteronormative practices in relation to community-building, sexual and gender identities, spatiality, and temporality. These practices and their addition to power negotiations are explored in relation not only to cis-heteropatriarchal structures but also to other systems of oppression, such as racism, classism, and ableism (Halberstam, 2005; Marocco, 2023). Applying a queer perspective to marginal urban commons opens possibilities to further explore how these spaces can negotiate and challenge intersectional inequalities and their potential as grounds for resistance to capitalist structures.

The intervention starts with a brief contextual overview of access to land and housing in Switzerland to exemplify the urgency of looking at alternative ways of urban organizing. It then situates marginal urban commons as crucial sites to examine power dynamics and practices of resistance. Building on this, I propose to include an analysis of queer practices to further examine how intersectional power relations are negotiated in marginal urban commoning. Examples drawn from my participatory observations illustrate these dynamics and serve as an entry point for further explorations of the potentials and challenges of queer commoning practices, beyond the scope of this intervention. Rather than presenting a finished research process, this intervention is an exploratory, open reflection on these themes and questions with the aspiration to develop them further.

2 Urban commons and the relevance of marginal urbanities

In Swiss cities, affordable land and housing are becoming increasingly scarce and commodified by private and public actors, thereby adding to the sustained high prices for living space (Tanner, 2022). Hence, living in an urban context in Switzerland is becoming inaccessible for many, particularly for individuals negatively affected by intersecting systems of discrimination, including racism, cis-heteronormative patriarchy, classism, and ableism. These groups tend to have severely restricted access to housing and land ownership and often experience discrimination in the rental market (Glaser, 2017). Such dynamics of structural discrimination are deeply rooted in Switzerland's capitalist system, which is intertwined with histories and ongoing mechanisms of coloniality, patriarchy, and neoliberal development.

In this context, urban commons have a history as an alternative way of collectively governing and accessing land and housing. Particularly, housing cooperatives have a long

tradition of creating access to affordable housing, still making up 3.7 % of the 5.1 % market share of non-profit housing in Switzerland. Not neglecting the importance of their role in social housing provision in Switzerland, housing cooperatives are still embedded in capitalist urban structures of privatizing land, have hurdles such as long waiting lists and close internal social ties, and are often oriented towards a middle class that can afford to buy property shares (Debrunner et al., 2020).

Critical scholars highlight commons as possible sites of resistance against new and recurrent enclosures and as spaces of non-commodified everyday relations and modes of (re)production beyond state and market (Midnight Notes Collective, 1990). Feminist research on the commons also raises the point that they are not merely isolated islands of decommodification within exploitative relations; they bear the possibility to resist the current capitalist organization of labor, everyday practices, and property relations (Eidelman and Safransky, 2021). However, with the advanced development of neoliberalism that has led to increased privatization and monetization extending to almost every aspect of our lives, commons always exist within capitalist relations and run the risk of (re)producing capitalist inequalities and exclusions. This is particularly relevant for urban contexts with high population densities, where various competing land uses and financial investments converge. As different people are affected by and benefit from these circumstances differently, urban commons risk perpetuating social inequalities within their community or creating an "outside" (Anderson and Huron, 2023; Huron, 2015). To avoid a (re)production of inequalities in the name of commoning, the analysis of these spaces must foreground an examination of systems of oppression along the lines of intersecting, socially constructed differences such as race, gender, sexuality, class, ability, citizenship, and many others, as they significantly shape individual experiences and power dynamics.

An intersectional feminist approach to the commons helps to analyze where and how power operates in ambivalent, contradictory, and simultaneous ways and how to avoid creating access and sharing of resources for an elite or (re)producing forms of marginalized others (Clement et al., 2019; Federici, 2018; Nightingale, 2019). One of the central themes of analysis within this line of research has been commoning as a process, focusing on the relational nature of everyday activities, social and human/non-human interactions, and power negotiations that commons engage in. Commoning highlights the situated processes of constantly (re)producing, (re)claiming, and (re)negotiating the commons despite and/or because of facing enormous challenges in a neoliberal capitalist environment (Gibson-Graham et al., 2016; Tola, 2025). Sato and Soto Alarcón (2019) and others emphasize the importance of community in commoning, pointing out that "community is, by definition, constituted through commoning. It is the process and site being produced through sharing a property, a practice, or a knowledge" (Sato and Soto Alarcón, 2019:38).

Community is not seen here as a gated reality but as a quality of relations and a principle of cooperation and responsibility towards one another, always subject to intersectional power dynamics. A feminist approach to urban commoning emphasizes the importance of addressing these power relations and urges us to understand the interdependencies of social, political, environmental, and economic power relations across multiple spaces and scales, with a focus on everyday practices (Sato and Soto Alarcón, 2019).

With a focus on the commons' interdependent power relations across spaces and scales, this intervention follows the call to engage in alternative genealogies of the commons (Eidelman and Safransky, 2021). It looks at marginal urban commoning as sites of analysis and the potential of these marginal spaces to produce new urbanities. Marginal urbanities are not necessarily located at the spatial outside of the urban context but might be situated in urbanity's midst, leading to a relational understanding of space beyond rigid dichotomies such as urban/non-urban or central/peripheral. An analysis of urban marginality includes capitalist urban dynamics with a focus on the particularities of the bodies, practices, and spaces that are often deemed marginal. However, defining the margins without the direct involvement of the people and spaces considered marginal unavoidably reproduces stereotypical and disempowering narratives (Lancione, 2016). This is why the proposition of Hooks (1996) to view marginality not just as a site of deprivation but rather as a nourishing space for resistance – through modes of being, ways of living, and counter-hegemonic discourse – and enacting alternatives is especially useful when examining marginal urban commons.

In this intervention, the marginality of urban commons is conceptualized across different areas – their locations, the people constituting the commons, their practices of accessing and managing land and housing, and building resistance to the dominant capitalist system. While considering the structural dynamics rendering them marginal, people's everyday practices and forms of resistance within these marginal sites are also closely considered. Illuminating the inherent variety in which grassroots mobilize collective action, Miraftab (2004) emphasizes the significance of a nuanced, intersectional understanding of community-based action as an arena of politics and agency. Her perspective urges us to include a detailed account of marginal spaces, legitimizing political participation within them and refusing to dismiss some of the more radical and insurgent forms of participation as illegitimate. Miraftab stresses the importance of taking seriously spaces that make active claims to challenge existing structures. Including this conceptualization enriches analyses of commoning at the margins by centering the practices of collective action, the agency, and the aim to strive for socially just futures that underpin these spaces. Marginal urban commons as spaces to challenge current power structures through collective action and as nourishing grounds for resistance also make them a particularly interesting site to

examine how some of these spaces do not simply exist as a reaction to the withdrawal of the welfare state. They do not fulfill the neoliberal prophecy of fully responsible citizens who are able to organize where the state fails to provide services. Instead, they critique current power structures and hold the state accountable while exploring alternative solutions (Tola, 2025).

Having established the importance of conceptualizing marginal urban commons as possible spaces for collective action and resistance, I have also shown how closely considering intersectional power dynamics within and beyond marginal urban commoning is critical if they do not want to (re)produce capitalist inequalities. Feminist literature on urban commons has certainly begun to discuss power dynamics in these spaces, but it is still underdeveloped. In the following section, I propose to bring in a discussion of queer practices as a possibility to further explore intersectional power negotiations and grassroots practices of resistance against capitalist inequalities in marginal urban commoning.

3 A queer approach to marginal urban commoning

In the following section, a queer approach is proposed to analyze power negotiations within marginal urban commoning. This approach centers queer practices in relation to space, time, and the division of labor as possibilities to open alternative ways to negotiate power. The rather recent but very vibrant field of queer urban geography explores how LGBTIQ+ people (lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, intersex, queer, and other non-normative sexual and/or gender identities) experience, shape, and move within urban spaces, the social construction of these spaces, and practices of resistance (see Bain and Sharp, 2025; Brice, 2023; Giesecking, 2020). However, a close examination of both queer perspectives and power dynamics in marginal urban commons is still underdeveloped in the academic field of geography. One possibility to further incorporate a queer approach into the analysis of marginal urban commoning is the proposition by Malatino (2020) of the notion “transing care” as a way to decenter a White, bourgeois, Eurocentric model of family and community and instead focus on the “many-gendered, radically inventive (...) webs of care” (Malatino, 2020:7). This means decentering the cis-heteronormative household and beginning from the intricately interconnected spaces and places where trans and queer care labor occurs, in this instance, marginal urban commons (Malatino, 2020). Giesecking (2023) argues that moving beyond the violence of the gender binary, which both stems from and reinforces a colonial geographical imagination, requires actively working to include queer and trans perspectives, experiences, and voices. This highlights the importance of unsettling dominant imaginaries of how communities are and should be organized, including a focus on their internal intersectional power relations.

According to Halberstam (2005), queerness refers to “non-normative logics and organizations of community, sexual identity, embodiment, and activity in space and time” (Halberstam, 2005:6). These logics and practices include a variety of experiences and perspectives significantly shaped by intersecting systems of power and oppression within urban spaces. Applying an intersectional lens to queer urbanities helps to examine the possible (re)production of power dynamics involved in queer realities and communities – not only along the lines of LGBTIQ+ experiences but of people negatively affected by various intersecting social differences such as sexuality, gender, class, race, ability, citizenship, and others (Marocco, 2023). Within the current cis-heteronormative capitalist framework, the processes of commoning are still deeply rooted in the premise of oppression and the economic exploitation of those negatively affected by structures of discrimination. (Re)-organizing these processes of space, time, and labor division along non-normative, queer logics can therefore create spaces for an intersectional anti-capitalist practice and critique (Beier, 2024).

Millner-Larsen and Butt (2018) emphasize the need to avoid separating the analysis of commoning from queer life. They argue that in times of neoliberal privatization across the globe, accompanied by enactments of racial, national, and gendered forms of violence and exclusion, the notion of the urban commons is certainly under threat but also more relevant than ever. Herein, queer life and queer organizing are a rich resource to imagine, experiment with, and enact alternative spaces for managing and resisting inequalities. Both queer organizing and grassroots politics have been significantly shaped by commoning practices and vice versa. Millner-Larsen and Butt argue that further distancing queer organizing from anti-capitalist politics risks excluding invaluable insights. In one of the few earlier efforts to conceptualize a queer politics of commoning, Jaleel (2013) states that this formulation can place social relations and processes of organization in commoning “alongside queer efforts to belong to, care for, and be dependent on others in ways that endure” (Jaleel, 2013).

Although some attention has been paid to theorizing commoning alongside queer organizing (e.g., Marocco, 2023; Muñoz, 2020; Millner-Larsen and Butt, 2018; Jaleel, 2013), such efforts remain limited in number. The specific intersection of queer practices and power negotiations within marginal urban commoning has not been thoroughly examined – particularly in relation to land and housing access. I further argue that bringing together conversations on marginal urban commoning in Switzerland with an analysis of their negotiations of power relations can provide crucial insights into strategies of rendering land and commoning more accessible and how they can work as spaces of resistance against current capitalist urbanities. An additional focus on queer practices within these spaces can illuminate what non-heteronormative imaginations and enactments of time, space, and labor division add to the commons’ poten-

tial to resist (re)producing capitalist inequalities. The following excerpts from my preliminary participatory observations serve as examples of what queer practices can add to power negotiations in marginal urban commons and to deepening discussions about these spaces.

4 Common values, flinta spaces, and collective practices: queer and marginal negotiations of power

To what extent can non-cis-heteronormative enactments of space, time, and labor division foster alternative negotiations of power and thereby add to a resistance against the (re)production of capitalist urbanity? The following participatory observations, which are part of a larger research project, exemplify how queer practices contribute to negotiations of intersectional power dynamics within marginal urban commons. Over the course of 1 year, from June 2024 to July 2025, I attended marginal urban commons’ public events and workshops, participated in their daily structures, such as communal meals and meetings, and organized spaces for exchange. With an aim for collaboration between the research participants and myself, I tried to adjust the project according to the capacities and needs of the collectives I work with, be very transparent about my role as a researcher, and simultaneously immerse myself in the everyday structures of these spaces. This adds an additional layer of finding alternative ways to negotiate power in these marginal urban commons.

One of the collectives I work with, which serves as an example for this intervention, self-organizes around access to land and housing in Switzerland.¹ The collective has occupied buildings in a peri-urban environment and negotiated a short-term interim utilization agreement with the private landowner. It consists of more than 30 members, with around 15 of them permanently living on the premises. Many of the members identify as queer. In their collaboratively drafted document on community values and guidelines, the collective explicitly formulates the goals of the collective, which include self-reflection about privileges and resisting systemic oppression, a commitment to collective life and reinvention of everyday structures, agricultural experiments beyond market systems, and establishing a connection with the inhabitants from the nearby federal asylum center. They formulate active claims to resist current power structures as a collective. The document also addresses intersectional power dynamics influencing access to the collective and its physical space. For instance, sexism and racism are addressed through concrete measures to diversify membership, while classism is tackled by adjusting individual economic contributions to meet

¹ In the interest of safeguarding the anonymity of the collective, the individuals, and the spaces involved in this research, the name, location, and specific organizational structures of the collective will not be disclosed at this point of the research process.

the collective's needs. Mental and physical (dis)abilities are also considered when discussing accessibility to the collective and the physical spaces. In terms of the internal implementation of these goals and values, the collective has introduced processes such as distributing living costs according to financial capacities and providing emergency housing for people in precarious situations. This allows people from different backgrounds to live in the collective. The collective also aims to distribute labor according to skills, interests, and abilities, resulting in different individuals performing a range of physical and care-related tasks essential for maintaining and reproducing the collective space.² These are examples of a non-(cis-hetero)normative organization of community as a possible way to closely consider different needs and resources and to rethink internal power dynamics.

Spending time with the collective, it has become apparent that the presence and practices of queer bodies play a central role in the practical implementation of the community values and guidelines. One example is mentioned in the introductory vignette. The allocation of flinta-only time slots to discuss feminist values and to address instances of sexism reflects a queer enactment of temporality. Time is organized along the needs of queer bodies and cis women to prioritize their sense of safety and to create spaces to discuss power dynamics. At the same time, this example of queer temporality raises questions about labor division within the collective, such as who bears the responsibility for doing the labor of questioning power dynamics and educating other members who tend to benefit from oppressive structures. This intersection of queer temporality with questions of labor division demonstrates that these spheres cannot be regarded as separate and are mutually dependent.

Queer spatiality is similarly significant across scales. On a bodily scale, the collective spatially organizes sleeping arrangements to ensure safety for queer bodies, such as through creating flinta-only bedrooms. One of the three main bedrooms is designated for flinta people only. This creates a safer space for flinta people to sleep on the premises and allows them to be part of the collective that lives there permanently. Members of the collective also mention that this bedroom serves as a space for flinta people to retreat from the collective when communal life becomes overwhelming or they need some time to rest. Occasionally, the room also serves as a space for flinta-only exchanges and meetings, as people already feel safe there. This example adds layers of queer practices in relation to the division of space while revisiting questions of temporality and labor division. Who does the la-

bor of ensuring the safety of queer bodies, and who invests time in creating safer spaces? Which spaces should be perceived as safe in a community environment? How can safer spaces exist alongside broader discussions of equal access to a collective? The necessity for these practices and spaces to exist makes it obvious that marginal urban commons are not free from capitalist inequalities. They are spaces deeply embedded in and affected by intersecting power structures. Following some of the collective's discussions and considering their community values, it can be said that the collective is aware of these internally present mechanisms of power and aims to find ways to work against them.

On a structural scale, the collective's marginal and queer practices temporarily challenge the linear capitalist logic of land development, which tends to render land and housing increasingly inaccessible. The land the collective stays on belongs to a private owner and has not been used or inhabited for the last couple of years. During the interim utilization contract negotiations, the private owner stated that the collective is only allowed to stay on the smaller part of the land with fewer built structures and amenities. The private landowner justified their requirement by wanting to redevelop the rest of the land, creating yet another barrier of inaccessibility in the name of capitalist development. After some discussions, the collective accepted this requirement, and both parties agreed on a short-term interim utilization contract for the smaller part of the premises. The collective will only know if it can stay on the premises for another short-term period right before the contract expires. This compromise highlights the limits of the autonomy of the collective due to property relations and the premises being owned by a private owner.

Nonetheless, during the time given to them by contract, the collective uses and inhabits the land in a decommmodified and collective way. The collective shares its space with other collectives and organizes public events. One example is the week-long, self-organized queer-feminist action days held by an external group. Attendees collectively allocated tasks and organized the program in an ad hoc manner. All meals were prepared and shared communally, and financial contributions were voluntary and scaled to individual ability. The horizontal process generated a diverse range of participant-led workshops and events, including a car repair workshop, a queer erotic writing space, forums on queer ruptures as utopian practices, and discussions about mental and physical (dis)abilities. I convened a workshop on negotiating power dynamics within queer-feminist collectives, attended by approximately 20 flinta participants, which sparked rich dialogue on inclusive decision-making strategies. The collective thus made its grounds available to queer bodies in need of a space to practice queer grassroots politics. Thereby, this marginal urban commons temporarily disrupted normative, capitalist spatial logics, and the spatial and organizational arrangement functioned as an example of queer, decommmodified space. In addition, and as stated in their goals, the collective has also established production processes that are not

²It is beyond the scope of this intervention, but nonetheless important to mention, that even if these non-cis-heteronormative ways of rethinking labor distribution largely result in people performing tasks according to skills and interests, and not preconceived gender roles, they bear the danger to reinforce certain hierarchies depending on who acquired which set of skills according to what gender roles they performed and were socialized in outside the commons.

based on market logics. They grow fruit and vegetables for the collective's own consumption, to share with people who occasionally help with farming activities and to distribute free of charge at an anti-capitalist food market in a nearby village. In this context of marginal urban commoning, it becomes evident how they strive to avoid simply fulfilling the role of fully responsible citizens, filling in where the welfare state withdraws (Tola, 2025). They establish non-(cis-hetero)normative strategies to create spaces for various forms of grassroots politics and decommmodified production systems. By (re)claiming land from profit-driven exploitation, the collective temporarily resists the increasing inaccessibility and unaffordability of urban space through the presence and practices of queer bodies.

These examples illustrate how marginal urban commoning and queer practices within them contribute to negotiations of internal intersectional power dynamics while aiming to resist the (re)production of capitalist inequalities.³ By (re)claiming and maintaining spaces through grassroots collective action, this marginal urban commoning collective challenges dominant power structures and formulates active claims to address intersectional dynamics individually and structurally. Queer practices add an essential dimension to these efforts, particularly in their spatial, temporal, and labor-related dimensions. They create spaces and times that center on the safety and practices of queer bodies and contribute to an alternative distribution of labor, while striving not to (re)produce capitalist inequalities. While capitalist spaces are profit-driven, focusing on production and development, this queer marginal space centers around mutual care, collectivities, and accessibility. Queer care also foregrounds attention to power structures determining who can receive and give care in what form and to what extent, and it should not be regarded as an equally reciprocal exchange of labor (Malatino, 2020). It thereby seeks to resist participating in a system of exploitation and commodification. Nonetheless, it also becomes evident that structural power dynamics strongly influence the distribution of labor within marginal urban commons, the importance people place on discussing these dynamics internally, and the availability of resources people have within marginal urban commons.

³In this instance, marginal urban commoning and queer practices function in a relational and co-constitutive manner. In interdependent processes between queer practices and marginal urban commoning, a set of practices is established for flinta people to feel safe, for the non-heteronormative distribution of labor to be discussed collectively, and to address other forms of social differences and capitalist inequalities in common. Queer practices are hereby a way to maintain commoning efforts and for marginal urban commoning to create the grounds for queer practices to take shape. Through commoning spaces, social relations, and processes of governance in marginal settings, non-normative practices can take up space and be established, and vice versa.

5 Conclusion

In conclusion, this intervention explores marginal urban commons in Switzerland and queer practices within them as spaces and processes with the potential to find alternative ways to negotiate power dynamics and possible grounds to resist a (re)production of capitalist inequalities. As illustrated by the above-mentioned examples from my participatory observations, the constant processes of (re)negotiating power structures through queer practices in relation to temporality, spatiality, and labor division add important layers to internal power negotiations. It is beyond the scope of this intervention to discuss these power dynamics and queer practices in depth; however, the discussion of the examples from my participant observations serves as a proposition to progress, deepen, and continue this scholarly conversation.

Flinta-only time slots, centered around flinta safety and exchange, along with alternative ways to distribute labor, space, and care, are mentioned as ways of (re)negotiating internal power dynamics. These practices aim to increase access to their collective for a variety of people negatively affected by structures of discrimination, as mentioned in their collectively formulated community values and guidelines. Simultaneously, the necessity to implement these processes reveals that marginal urban commons, with clear aims to resist various forms of oppression and create accessible spaces, are not immune to reproducing intersecting social inequalities, as they are still deeply embedded in neoliberal capitalist power dynamics.

However, the combination of marginal practices of occupying space and negotiating the right to stay, having clear collective values to challenge various forms of intersectional oppression, and establishing a non-capitalistic form of inhabiting and maintaining a space contributes to resisting current neoliberal linear and profit-driven land development. Various dimensions must be considered simultaneously and understood as co-constituting systems to counteract the (re)production of power inequalities. Efforts anchored in the lived experiences of the people subjected to these inequalities can inspire collective action and provide strategies to work through the complexity of these structures from the grassroots, be it through collectively drafted goals that address intersecting forms of oppression, creating time slots and spaces for the most vulnerable members of the collective, or utilizing their space in a queer and decommmodified way.

As mentioned above, a close consideration of both queer practices and intersectional power dynamics is still only marginally considered in the field of urban geography. However, it is demonstrated throughout this intervention that there is an urgent need to actively include queer perspectives and everyday lived experiences into the analysis of power dynamics within marginal urban commons. When thinking about ways in which theorizing the commons can be more engaged in the current urgency of politics and a decolonial praxis

of accountability, Eidelman and Safransky (2021) emphasize that we need research that “seeks to identify, fundamentally challenge, and change the status quo and to produce this work in collaboration with groups that experience the negative effects of current political, economic, and social relations” (Eidelman and Safransky, 2021:807).⁴ This highlights the importance of unsettling dominant cis-heteronormative imaginaries of care and commoning, further including a focus on the intersectional power relations within these processes and an active effort to produce knowledge in collaboration with the communities already doing this work.

Data availability. This intervention is based on the author’s participatory observations. These materials contain sensitive contextual information and cannot be shared publicly due to anonymity, confidentiality, and ethical considerations. No additional data was analysed.

Competing interests. The author has declared that there are no competing interests.

Disclaimer. Publisher’s note: Copernicus Publications remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims made in the text, published maps, institutional affiliations, or any other geographical representation in this paper. While Copernicus Publications makes every effort to include appropriate place names, the final responsibility lies with the authors. Views expressed in the text are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the publisher.

Special issue statement. This article is part of the special issue “Marginal urbanities: the hidden faces of planetary urbanization?”. It is not associated with a conference.

Acknowledgements. This research was supported by the Swiss National Science Foundation through CommonPaths (Grant Number 209446). I am grateful to the marginal urban commons for their generous collaboration, particularly Soup & Co. Many thanks to two anonymous referees, as well as to Dr. Giulia Scotto and Dr.

Mosè Cometta for coordinating this special issue. Prof. Miriam Tola, Prof. Akosua Darkwah, Dr. Deniz Ay, and Prof. Hannah Hilbrandt provided valuable editorial feedback. I am deeply thankful to Priscilla Pambana Gutto Bassett and Louisa Choffat for their continuous support throughout the writing process.

Review statement. This paper was edited by Hanna Hilbrandt and reviewed by two anonymous referees.

References

- Anderson, C. M. and Huron, A.: The Mixed Potential of Salvage Commoning: Crisis and Commoning Practices in Washington, DC and New York City, *Antipode*, 55, 1004–1023, <https://doi.org/10.1111/anti.12788>, 2023.
- Bain, A. L. and Sharp, B. W.: Hacking suburban social infrastructure: glitch subjects and queer practices of social reproduction, *Urban Geogr.*, 46, 1–27, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02723638.2025.2468071>, 2025.
- Beier, F. (Ed.): *Materialistischer Queerfeminismus: Theorien zu Geschlecht und Sexualität im Kapitalismus* (K. Hermes and M. Treperman, Transl.), 2, Unrast, ISBN 9783897713666, 2024.
- Brice, S.: Making space for a radical trans imagination: Towards a kinder, more vulnerable, geography, *Environ. Plan. D*, 41, 592–599, <https://doi.org/10.1177/02637758231187449>, 2023.
- Clement, F., Harcourt, W., Joshi, D., and Sato, C.: Feminist political ecologies of the commons and commoning, *Int. J. Commons*, 13, 1–15, <https://doi.org/10.18352/ijc.972>, 2019.
- Debrunner, G., Hengstermann, A., and Gerber, J.-D.: Die Wohnungsfrage ist eine Bodenfrage. Bodenpolitische Instrumente zur Sicherstellung des preisgünstigen Wohnraums im Bestand in Schweizer Städten, in: *Wohnungsfragen ohne Ende?! Ressourcen für eine soziale Wohnraumversorgung*, edited by: Schöning, B. and Vollmer, L., transcript, 57–76, <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783839445082-003>, 2020.
- Eidelman, T. A. and Safransky, S.: The urban commons: A keyword essay, *Urban Geogr.*, 42, 792–811, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02723638.2020.1742466>, 2021.
- Federici, S.: *Re-enchanting the world: Feminism and the politics of the commons*, PM Press/Kairos, ISBN 9781629635699, 2018.
- Gibson-Graham, J. K., Cameron, J., and Healy, S.: Commoning as a postcapitalist politics, in: *Releasing the Commons: Rethinking the futures of the commons*, 1st Edn., edited by: Amin, A. and Howell, P., Routledge, 192–212, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315673172>, 2016.
- Gieseeking, J. J.: *A queer New York: Geographies of lesbians, dykes and queers*, New York University Press, ISBN 9781479848409, 2020.
- Gieseeking, J. J.: Reflections on a cis discipline, *Environ. Plan. D*, 41, 571–591, <https://doi.org/10.1177/02637758231191656>, 2023.
- Glaser, M.: The situation of social housing in Switzerland, *Crit. Hous. Anal.*, 4, 72–80, <https://doi.org/10.13060/23362839.2017.4.1.326>, 2017.
- Halberstam, J.: *In a queer time and place: Transgender bodies, subcultural lives*, New York University Press, ISBN 9780814735855, 2005.

⁴On a methodological level, this requires tools that are power-sensitive and capable of capturing the non-linearity and non-binarity of queer everyday lived realities. These include arts-based participatory methods such as photovoice, which will be used in this research project to further examine these processes. These methods seek to challenge existing power hierarchies between researchers and research participants by involving community members in knowledge production and can facilitate an exploration of the queer perspectives and embodied experiences of marginal urbanities (Higgins, 2016; Seppälä, 2021). Visual methods can provide insights into these spaces and their practices that would otherwise remain invisible, thereby sparking conversations about queer practices and intersectional power dynamics – within the research process and marginal urban commons.

- Higgins, M.: Placing photovoice under erasure: A critical and complicit engagement with what it theoretically is (not), *Int. J. Qual. Stud. Educ.*, 29, 670–685, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09518398.2016.1145276>, 2016.
- Hooks, B.: Choosing the margin as a space of radical openness, in: *Women, Knowledge, and Reality*, 2nd Edn., edited by: Garry, A. and Pearsall, M., Routledge, 48–56, ISBN 9780415917971, 1996.
- Huron, A.: Working with strangers in saturated space: Reclaiming and maintaining the urban commons, *Antipode*, 47, 963–979, <https://doi.org/10.1111/anti.12141>, 2015.
- Jaleel, R.: A Queer Home in the Midst of a Movement? Occupy Homes, Occupy Homemaking, Columbia University Archives, <https://what-democracy-looks-like.org/a-queer-home-in-the-midst-of-a-movement-occupy-homes> (last access: 2 April 2025), 2013.
- Lancione, M.: The assemblage of life at the margins: The assemblage of contexts, subjects and politics, in: *Rethinking Life at the Margins*, Routledge, 1–41, ISBN 9781138546912, 2016.
- Malatino, H.: *Trans Care*, University of Minnesota Press, ISBN 9781452965567, 2020.
- Marocco, A.: Housing with care: Queer geographies and the right to the city of LGBTQ+ urban communities. The Co-housing Queerinale/Agapanto project (Rome), *Scienze del Territorio*, 11, 88–99, <https://doi.org/10.36253/sdt-14445>, 2023.
- Midnight Notes Collective: The new enclosures, *Autonomedia*, <https://files.libcom.org/files/mn10-new-enclosures.pdf> (last access: 5 April 2025), 1990.
- Millner-Larsen, N. and Butt, G.: Introduction: The queer commons, in: *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 24, 399–419, <https://doi.org/10.1215/10642684-6957744>, 2018.
- Miraftab, F.: Invited and invented spaces of participation: Neoliberal citizenship and feminists' expanded notion of politics, *Wagadu: A Journal of Transnational Women's & Gender Studies*, 1, 1–7, 2004.
- Muñoz, J. E.: *The sense of brown*, edited by: Chambers-Letson, J. and Nyong'o, T., Duke University Press, <https://doi.org/10.1215/9781478012566>, 2020.
- Nightingale, A. J.: Commoning for inclusion? Commons, exclusion, property and socio-natural becomings, *Int. J. Commons*, 13, 16–35, <https://doi.org/10.18352/ijc.927>, 2019.
- Sato, C. and Soto Alarcón, J. M.: Toward a postcapitalist feminist political ecology' approach to the commons and commoning, *Int. J. Commons*, 13, 1, <https://doi.org/10.18352/ijc.933>, 2019.
- Seppälä, T.: Participatory photography with women's rights activists in Nepal, in: *Arts-Based Methods for Decolonising Participatory Research*, 1st Edn., edited by: Seppälä, T., Sarantou, M., and Miettinen, S., Routledge, 81–98, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003053408-6>, 2021.
- Tanner, J.: Geschichte und Kritik des "Bodenmarktes" in der Schweiz, in: *Denknetz-Jahrbuch 2022: Boden – Wohnen – Leben: Markt, Profit und Gegenwehr im Fall nicht vermehrbare Güter*, edited by: Gurny, R., Gurzeler, A., Rutz, S., and Zwicky, P., edition 8, 13–24, ISBN 9783859904774, 2022.
- Tola, M.: Crafting and maintaining socio-ecological commons: Notes from a city of ruins, *Crit. Anthropol.*, 45, 15–24, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0308275X251315272>, 2025.