

Response of Urban Commons to the Global Crisis. Analysis from a Gender Perspective.

In the framework of the proposed theme “Crisis in Europe and gendered perspectives”

Commons, understood as commitments between individuals without the enforcement of an external authority [Ostrom, Walker and Gardner 1992], take the forms of collectives, cooperatives or community projects, by combining “multiple knowledges and ways of being” [Jeffrey et al. 2012: 1249]. Contemporary commons go beyond natural common-pool resources and physical goods, entering cities (urban commons) as well as digital space (i.e. free software movement) [Foster 2011, Bollier and Helfrich 2012]. These changes create a space for an in-depth academic analysis of commons both as a subject and an object of research. Currently commons still might be perceived as a margin of the capitalist economy order, with the banks and financial institutions in its absolute centre. Though their growing number and variety in response to the ongoing financial crisis, which recently could be visible in Greece and Cyprus, show that their role in assigning markets to social goals cannot be passed over. Their position in the economic discourse deconstructs the mainstream assumptions about an endless economic growth, competition and invisible hand of the market, showing the model of social organization based on values other than the rationality of *homo economicus*. This voice could be read and interpreted in the postmodern and post-colonial theoretical frameworks proposed by Derrida, Spivak and Bhabha [Derrida 1978, Spivak 1992, Bhabha 1994]. Since the resistance to capitalism tends to have an urban character [Castells 1983, Lefebvre 1992, 1996], this paper will focus mainly on urban commons. In this new social set-up gender, as one of actors' characteristics, should be involved on all analytical levels: resource allocation and employment, governance structures, institutional environment and embeddedness [Williamson 2000: 597, Ostrom 2009]. This need for the inclusion of gender dimension in the analysis of urban commons arises out of not only concealed women's lives and experiences that in many parts of the world more often than men depend on access to communal resources [Federici 2004], but also a demand to reveal full contributions of women and men to the economy and society. Gender relations affect planning, production, family well-being, household security and many other aspects of life [Bravo-Baumann, 2000], therefore a deeper look into implicit assumptions usually helps to avoid biases and distortions in disciplinary accounts. As a result, this paper aims to present urban commons as a subject remaining on the margin of economy, however in the time of crisis gaining power to deconstruct the center and therefore having potential for the institutional change. Even so, urban commons by proposing an alternative model of social organization ought to reflect a gender perspective in their institutional settings. That is why, the second part of this paper will focus on various ways and methods of including a gender dimension in the institutional analysis of urban commons.

Keywords: gender, commons, center, margin, institutional change