The Public and the Common: Some Approximations of Their Contemporary Articulation

Andrea Mubi Brighenti

1. The Public and the Common as Territories

Increasingly in recent years, the issue of the common—in its various facets of the common world, the common heritage, the commons, the creative commons, and so forth—has been explored by social theorists. The bestowal of the 2009 Nobel Prize in Economics to Elinor Ostrom has contributed to a revival of attention to common-pool resources as a viable model of self-organization different from both free-market capitalism and state centralism.[1] The notion of the anthropocene, which social scientists are nowadays borrowing from geologists and ecologists, is one among many names and tags under which the issue of commonality is debated. In some radical variants, as in the texts of Antonio Negri, the common is opposed to the public and a shift *from* the public *to* the common is explicitly advocated.[2] In this text, I argue that the public and the common should not be seen as alternative dimensions of social life, much less conceptualized as a dichotomy. The epistemological puzzle I would like to venture into is precisely how to think the articulation of the two dimensions of the public and the common in a subtler and possibly more enriching way. Consequently, in the following discussion I propose to cast a spatial or,

Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own.

1. See Elinor Ostrom, *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action* (Cambridge, 1990).

2. See Judith Revel and Antonio Negri, "Inventer le commun des hommes," *Multitudes*, no. 31 (Winter 2008): 5–10; Michael Hardt and Negri, *Commonwealth* (Cambridge, Mass., 2009).

better, a *territorialist* perspective on this issue, according to which the public and the common inhere in the formation and transformation of social territorialities. More precisely, as we'll soon see, an integral notion of territories such as the one I have argued for elsewhere makes the term *social* redundant, in that every territory is nothing other than an attempt at coming to terms with what James Mark Baldwin and Pierre Janet called the *socius*, an attempt at establishing and sustaining certain social measures.[3] The specific context in which I propose to discuss the problem of the current and coming articulations of the public and the common is formed by the twin movements of, on the one hand, the urbanization of territory and, on the other, the territorialization of the city. I call them movements precisely because neither domain is ever fully accomplished but always in the making. Rather than objects, the city and the urban are better seen as unfolding, incomplete environments.

The first movement refers to the spreading of urbanization over larger geographic areas, the crisis of the classical dichotomy between urban and rural areas, and the formation of so-called urban fields and large-scale urban regions. In this context, the difference between city and countryside is increasingly reconfigured as a difference between degrees of accessibility to places that are distributed in continuous yet heterogeneous geographies. The movement of the urbanization of territory is crucially related to the fact that urban space is governed and administered—an insight that was brilliantly excavated by Michel Foucault in the late 1970s.[4] To govern a space means precisely to order its physical features so as to inscribe into it a series of devices to manage its population. In an old European centralist state like France, for instance, the process of urbanization of territory cor-

3. For an enlarged, counterintuitive notion of territory, see Andrea Mubi Brighenti, "On Territorology: Towards a General Science of Territory," *Theory, Culture and Society* 27 (Jan. 2010): 52–72 and "Mobilizing Territories, Territorializing Mobilities," *Sociologica* no. 1 (2014): 1–25.
4. See Michel Foucault, *Sécurité, territoire, population: Cours au Collège de France (1977–1978)*, ed. François Ewald, Alessandro Fontana, and Michel Senellart (Paris, 2004).

A N D R E A M U B I B R I G H E N T I teaches in the Department of Sociology at the University of Trento, Italy. His research focuses on space, power, and society. He is the author of *The Ambiguous Multiplicities: Materials, Episteme and Politics of Cluttered Social Formations* (2014) and *Visibility in Social Theory and Social Research* (2010), and editor of *Urban Interstices: The Aesthetics and the Politics of the In-between* (2013). He is founder of the independent online web journal *lo Squaderno* (www.losquaderno.professionaldreamers.net) and serves as coeditor of the journal *Etnografia e Ricerca Qualitativa*.

responds clearly to an outward movement of gradual conquest of territory by the political center, which can be traced back to at least the eighteenth century. Through such a movement, the provincial country has been increasingly brought into a constituent relation with units of measurement posited by the center. The notion of scale has been deployed by social and economic geographers to account for such territorial inscriptions. For instance, David Harvey has argued that "what appears significant or makes sense at one scale does not automatically register at another" and that, consequently, "territorialization is . . . an outcome of political struggles and decisions made in a context of technological and political-economic conditions."[5] Contemporary urbanized territory is thus sustained and supported by large-scale networked infrastructures, including transportation, telecommunications, energy, water, and waste that, as a whole, enable those fundamental local interconnections of urban life, but which typically become visible only in moments of failure or collapse. In their daily existence, invisible urban infrastructures are based on complex arrangement and crafty maintenance of their heterogeneous material components to be carried out in scattered, specialized calculation centers—so that, overall, territorial urban governance is attained piecemeal as a transscalar and transnetwork effort.[6]

The second movement, the territorialization of the city, refers to the transformation of those classical values and skills of civility, urbanity, and coexistence with diversity that, according to classic thinkers ranging from Louis Wirth, through Hannah Arendt and Erving Goffman, to Richard Sennett, define urban life.[7] I speak of transformations because, as Ash Amin remarked, "in an age of urban sprawl, multiple usage of public space and proliferation of the sites of political and cultural expression, it seems odd to expect public spaces to fulfil their traditional role as spaces of civic inculcation and political participation."[8] For Amin, this implies that the

5. David Harvey, *Spaces of Hope* (Berkeley, 2000), p. 75.
6. On the invisibility of infrastructures, see Geoffrey C. Bowker and Susan Leigh Star, *Sorting Things Out: Classification and Its Consequences* (Cambridge, Mass., 1999). For an application to urban systems, see Stephen Graham and Simon Marvin, *Splintering Urbanism: Networked Infrastructures, Technological Mobilities and the Urban Condition* (London, 2001). On the notion of calculation center, see Bruno Latour and Emilie Hermant, *Paris ville invisible* (Paris, 1998). For an interesting application to the infrastructure of metro signage, see Jérôme Denis and David Pontille, *Petite Sociologie de la signalétique: les coulisses des panneaux du métro* (Paris, 2010).
7. See Louis Wirth, "Urbanism as a Way of Life," *The American Journal of Sociology* 44 (July 1938): 1–24; Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago, 1958); Erving Goffman, *Relations in Public: Microstudies of the Public Order* (New York, 1971); and Richard Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man* (New York, 1978).
8. Ash Amin, "Collective Culture and Urban Public Space," *City* 12 (Apr. 2008): 5.

link between public space and politics is irredeemably broken. While subscribing to the same premises, my conclusions are different: indeed, the link between public space and politics remains essential to our cities. The very plethora of controversies and struggles surrounding public space amply testifies to this fact. What are being transformed are the notions of civility and urbanity, while a new culture of publicness suited to the new plural territorializations of the city is being developed in ways not yet recognized and codified. How is the new urbanity of the territorial city related to dimensions of public life and of life in common? This is what I propose to explore.

The city and the urban exist at the point of intersection between, on the one hand, a politics of aggregated populations seen as natural, *living* beings (hence, precisely, a *bio*politics) and, on the other, a structure of public experience which spans trivial everyday acts of appearing in public and more challenging practices such as joining public debate, being part of an audience, entering arenas and forums devoted to the discussion of public problems, and, finally, embodying forms of political action. For many late-nineteenth-century and early-twentieth-century writers such as Georg Simmel, Walter Benjamin, and Siegfried Kracauer among others, the shock of modern metropolitan life was directly connected to the existence of crowds literally filling the urban space.[9] Early urban theorists were attracted in particular by the large city, for indeed the sheer size of the metropolis, together with its density and rhythms, raised pressing questions about what so many strangers and their intersecting trajectories in a crowded urban public space might actually have *in common*. Simultaneously, early media theorists such as Gabriel Tarde puzzled about the production of commonality in media audiences.[10]

2. Crowds, Mediations, and Territorializations

Today, in the early twenty-first century, we face something like a return of crowds, although to recognize the novel face of these crowds we should be prepared to account for, besides traditional urban masses, nonhuman crowds of digital data, software-sorted and technologically-encoded objects. It is my contention that Elias Canetti's work on crowds makes it possible for us to think crowds beyond the individualist/holist dichotomy

9. See Georg Simmel, "The Metropolis and Mental Life," *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*, trans. and ed. Kurt H. Wolff (New York, 1964), pp. 409–24; Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, Mass., 1999); Siegfried Kracauer, *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays*, trans. and ed. Thomas Y. Levin (Cambridge, Mass., 1995). See also David Frisby, *Cityscapes of Modernity: Critical Explorations* (Cambridge, 2001), and *Le Choc des métropoles: Simmel, Kracauer, Benjamin,* ed. Stéphane Füzesséry and Philippe Simay (Paris, 2008).

10. Gabriel Tarde, *L'Opinion et la foule* (Paris, 1901).

typical of twentieth-century sociology, setting us free from the cumbersome issues of individual agency and human exceptionalism.[11] It may seem paradoxical to claim that an author who has often been reproached for being a primordialist—especially fond of Australian aboriginal people and central Asian Mongolian tribes—can be helpful in understanding the most sophisticated patterns of our hi-tech society. Yet Canetti anticipated most of the claims associated with subsequent elaborations in social theory, such as actor-network theory.[12] Canetti's conception invites us to regard the crowd not as a sum of assembled bodies but as a peculiar state of concentration, a state that entails a thriving proliferation of undifferentiated differences that are nonhierarchical and yet nonidentical. The crowd is a threshold state that cuts across various scales. It may exist not only around the individual but also inside it, and it does not necessarily concern human individuals. As illustrated by Canetti, variegated entities such as animals, money, and even the dead may form crowds.[13] I cannot help but notice how much this view is ultimately close to Tarde's dictum, "every thing is a society."[14] Crowd states, says Canetti, begin when the various congregating entities accept being touched by unknown others when they are taken within a single wave. Conditions of reduced physical distance, in turn, breed reduced resistance against reciprocal influence, and this is the reason why crowd states may entail imitative, contagious, and viral phenomena.[15]

Such a perspective is particularly suitable for grasping practices related

11. I am referring in particular to Elias Canetti, *Crowds and Power*, trans. Carol Stewart (1962; New York, 1978).

12. Actor-network theory was initially laid out in Michel Callon, "Éléments pour une sociologie de la traduction: La domestication des coquilles Saint-Jacques et des marins-pêcheurs dans la baie de Saint-Brieuc," *L'Année sociologique* 36 (1986): 169–208, and most famously developed by Bruno Latour in books such as Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge, Mass., 1993), *Petite Réflexion sur le culte moderne des dieux faitiches* (Paris, 1996), and *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory* (Oxford, 2007). The obvious mediator between Canetti and Callon-Latour is Gilles Deleuze. In turn, Tarde and late-nineteenth-century crowd theorists more generally may have exerted an influence on all these authors; see Brighenti, "Tarde, Canetti, and Deleuze on Crowds and Packs," *Journal of Classical Sociology* 10 (Nov. 2010): 291–314.

13. I have explored Canetti's elaborations in Brighenti, "Did We Really Get Rid of Commands? Thoughts on a Theme from Elias Canetti," *Law and Critique* 17 (Apr. 2006): 47–71 and compared Canetti with Foucault in "Power, Subtraction and Social Transformation: Canetti and Foucault on the Notion of Resistance," *Distinktion* 12 (Apr. 2011): 57–78.

14. Tarde, *Monadologie et sociologie* (1893), *Oeuvres de Gabriel Tarde,* ed. Eric Alliez, 2 ser. (Paris, 1999–), ser. 1, vol. 1, p. 58.

15. See Canetti, *Crowds and Power*, pp. 15–16. The image of the wave is evoked in Canetti, *The Memoirs of Elias Canetti* (New York, 1999), p. 488. Just as at the end of the nineteenth century, issues of imitation, contagion, and suggestion are once again amply debated today; see, for example, the conference organized by Christian Borch at the Copenhagen Business School, "Imitation, Contagion, Suggestion: Rethinking the Social," 28–29 May 2015.

to contemporary distributed, networked production, which have been discussed in connection to the emergence of new common goods in addition to the traditional commons typical of agricultural and pastoral premodern societies. For instance, what is currently referred to as crowdsourcing presents us with the attempt by corporate executives to exploit the economic value that is potentially generated from the actions and reactions of people online.[16] Here, value derives from areas of concentration and the thickening of activity and reactivity. Substituting employees and contractors with a crowd of dispersed, nonprofessional, and even anonymous creators, crowdsourcing companies dream of turning the work of others into their own profit. While this dream is best understood as one of the many attempts by late capitalism to prevent its incipient crisis and sustain a narrative of debt,[17] it also illuminates something about the newly emerging social morphologies. The new crowds are mediated just as modern publics and audiences were, yet they also exhibit a sense of immediacy (reactivity) and a proliferation of undifferentiated differences (thriving) that is typical of crowd affections.

Contemporary crowds thus make sense once we observe them at the intersection of the twin movements of mediation and urban territorialization. Far from being opposed to each other, the city and the media are coessential. As Kurt Iveson suggests, "the city/media opposition is particularly unhelpful for the development of critical perspectives on how different forms of urbanization and urban governance impact upon the formation of publics in and through the city."[18] The character of circulation that defines urban material mobilities cannot be dissociated from mediation, that is, from immaterial mobility. As initially defined by Régis Debray, the discipline of mediology, or the science of mediations, consists precisely of a "logistics of the operations of thought" that accounts for the transformation of ideas into actual social forces.[19]

The movement of urbanization of territory does in fact have as its prerequisite several types of mediation (for example, the building and maintenance of distribution and circulation networks), while the movement of territorialization of the city shapes an urbanity premised upon the capacity

16. A rather flat illustration of this ideology can be found, for instance, in Jeff Howe, *Crowdsourcing: Why the Power of the Crowd Is Driving the Future of Business* (New York, 2008).

17. See David Graeber, *Debt: The First 5,000 Years* (New York, 2011).

18. Kurt Iveson, "The City versus the Media? Mapping the Mobile Geographies of Public Address," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 33 (Mar. 2009): 241–42.

19. Régis Debray, *Cours de médiologie générale* (Paris, 1991), p. 14. Classically, this nexus is at the core of Marxian analysis. In France, nineteenth-century authors such Alfred Fouillée and Georges Sorel also worked intensely on a similar idea. A Spinozan influence is perhaps detectable among all these theorists.

to address certain publics, itself a possibility that relies on media, ranging from ancient cave paintings, through books and the press, to the internet. Both mediations and urban territorializations are, in other words, simultaneously sociotechnical and biopolitical; they concern physical systems and the arrangement of their materials, as well as the care for populations that initially appear as crowds and collectives capable of acting and being acted upon. In this context, publicness and commonality are two fundamental dimensions, two basic frameworks of experience we encounter in contemporary urbanized territories as well as in every attempt to construct the territorial city to come. What is interesting is that, far from being dichotomous, the public and the common do in fact occur almost at the same time and place. Yet they are not exactly the same thing—they could be better imagined as two points of view on social life, and the small difference between them is precisely what I urge is in need of conceptualization.

3. Publicness and Commonality

Following the analysis developed by Isaac Joseph, public space is defined by features such as visibility, accessibility, circulation, dispersal, fragmentation, and deterritorialization.[20]

First and most easily understandable, the public is an experience of visibility; it is the experience of being in the regard of others. Such an experience is a deeply affective one. If, on the one hand, it certainly entails the comfort of the civil peace that urbanity made possible (albeit at the price of the myriad of small rituals, so well described by Goffman, aimed at the maintenance of the "normal appearances" of a situation),[21] on the other hand, being in public can also be a severe test, capable of engendering shame and disgrace. In "Letter to His Father," Franz Kafka described the act of leaving the bathing hut where he had undressed: "What made me feel best was when you sometimes undressed first and I was able to stay behind in the hut alone and put off the disgrace of showing myself in public."[22] Visibility is hard to bear because the gazes of others are social forces that implacably affect us. Yet, as detailed by Goffman, behavior in urban public places is also crafted so that the critical thresholds between people are

20. See in particular Isaac Joseph, *Le Passant considérable: Essai sur la dispersion de l'espace public* (Paris, 1984) and *La Ville sans qualités* (La Tour d'Aigues, 1998). I have tried to systematize and expand Joseph's ideas in Brighenti, *The Publicness of Public Space: On the Public Domain* (Trento, 2010).

21. Goffman, "Normal Appearances," *Relations in Public*, pp. 238–333.

22. Franz Kafka, "Letter to His Father," trans. Eithne Wilkins and Ernst Kaiser, "*The Trial*"; "*America*"; "*The Castle; "Metamorphosis"; "In the Penal Settlement"; "The Great Wall of China*"; "*Investigations of a Dog*"; "*Letter to His Father*"; "*The Diaries, 1910–23*" (London, 1976), p. 560.

preserved. If everything goes well, everybody (literally, every *body*) is safe-guarded in a state of nonaggression and civil peace. Arendt's notion of political space is premised on a similar tenet. Obviously, episodes of con-flict and violence may arise at various levels, yet the overall framework of public interaction remains within the domain of the peaceful. In a sense, precisely thanks to its powerful affective and connective capacity, the ex-perience of being observed provides the effective bodily grounding for political association at large.

Joseph considered issues such as impaired mobility and architectonic barriers under the heading of accessibility. In my understanding, his point is not only about political correctness. The theoretical relevance of Jo-seph's analysis lies in drawing our attention to the material, bodily dimen-sion of public space, which is often neglected by public sphere theorists. The existence of "materials" that constitute public space becomes evident if we consider just the fact of circulation. Public space is circulatory insofar as it allows the deintensification of interaction, transforming focused in-teraction into an only apparently bland matter of action coordination in managing trajectories (which, under quite a few circumstances, might not be easy at all!), granting some freedom of movement to all bystanders and passersby. In public space, bodies are in movement, and their meetings constitute punctuated events that lack the thickness of interactions inside a community. This also makes it possible for public space to be open to a multiplicity of heterogeneous subjects. This same prerequisite is related to the fact that public space is a governed space; an administrative agency is in charge of taking care of public space, building its facilities and maintaining its material structures. The regulation of public space is integrally coexten-sive with the governance of its population and the possible events that concern it (public order). Such governance is essentially aggregated and statistical, in the sense that it may well fail in individual cases. Professional, highly specialized know-how is nonetheless deployed. The ancestor of this mode of producing urban knowledge is the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century so-called science of police.[23] Here the majority of foreseen and regulated uses of public space come to be physically inscribed into its material environment, in the form of, for instance, building locations that can be occupied anonymously by almost anyone but only one at a time (seats in the bus or the metro and at cafes, restaurants, and so on). But the public also entails less regulated forms of circulation—recall the many

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23. See Foucault, *Sécurité, territoire et population*. The notion of *Polizeiwissenschaft* comes from German historiography and the Cameralist school (epitomized by Johann von Justi). Foucault discusses the police as one of the embodiments of modern state reason, considering in particular Nicolas de La Mare, *Traité de la police*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1705–10).

instances of receiving and passing on to someone else, as happens with abandoned newspapers on seats in public transportation. This small example reminds us that the governance of public space is never complete, nor can it ever achieve the dream of total control once cherished by the science of police and more recently revived by hi-tech surveillance systems. Theoretically as well as practically speaking, there will always be a gap between public space and its governance.

Finally, Joseph stressed that the public entails a vector of deterritorialization, which he also described as a betrayal of primary and local belonging. His description of the urban pedestrian (the passerby as "traitor")[24] reveals how the mere fact of crossing local neighborhoods and community places in the city achieves the effect of setting these places in motion. The circulatory space of the public has a mobilizing power that proceeds by infiltration, exploding all community belonging. At the same time, public space is also constantly appropriated through acts and a series of practices that territorialize it.[25] It is precisely the tension between appropriations and resistances that define the publicness of public space. Thus, the notion of publicness—that is, the fact of being (in) public—is a singular, not a plural, phenomenon. In other words, we should say not so much that there is *a* public (for example, an audience or a group of bystanders) as much as there is *some degree of* publicness—in French, *il n'y a pas un public, il y a du public*. Once we adopt such an enlarged and integral perspective on the phenomenon of publicness, the private domain can no longer be seen as the contrary of the public. Visible or not, the private cannot exist but *in* the public. Let me also stress that the public domain so constituted—full of private bodies, private objects, and spaces—cannot be defined simply as a spatial extension. The public domain is neither a space nor a subject but a relationship and a threshold of intensity. In other words, the public domain is not to be imaged as a container of objects but as a mode or style of circulatory, dispersed, fragmentary, and resistant interaction. From this perspective, the public domain always entails a vector of forth and back, a *Fort-Da* game, an *aller et retour*. Such a reversible movement consists of a series of always contingent situational occupations and appropriations of

24.   "The traitor [*traître*] defines public space through its disequilibrium, through the incompleteness of its symbolic territories" (Joseph, *Le Passant considérable*, p. 119).

25.   I have delved into this point in Brighenti, *The Publicness of Public Space*, drawing inspiration from the works of the Swedish architectural theorist Mattias Kärrholm; see Mattias Kärrholm, "The Materiality of Territorial Production: A Conceptual Discussion of Territoriality, Materiality, and the Everyday Life of Public Space," *Space and Culture* 10 (Nov. 2007): 437–53 and *Retailising Space: Architecture, Retail and the Territorialisation of Public Space* (Farnham, 2012).

the public. It is a territory of affection defined by visibility, accessibility, and resistance.

Now, it is crucial to notice that the *mise-en-circulation* created by the public is made possible by the very fact of sharing a space. If a certain concern gets to be diffused in a public, if a certain issue, a certain idea, belief, or desire circulates and spreads, becoming a public concern, this is essentially made possible by the fact that something is already *in common*. John Dewey argued that publics form when certain issues solicit an active involvement on the part of those affected by certain announced or imagined deeds. He conceived the public as an ensemble of people affected by a shared problem. The problem of the public is what keeps it together and may reside in someone else's decision, action, or prospect of action.[26]

The public, we might say, extending Dewey, comes into existence through the *making visible* of an issue that affects a group of people, thereby turning them into a community of the affected. Consequently, just as the public corresponds to an experience of visibility, the common is located in an area of relative invisibility. In this sense, commonality forms a sort of implicit condition for the constitution of a public. If the public seems to presuppose the existence of the common, it is because we could not make anything public without some degree of commonality—at the very least, a commonality of beholders attesting that things come into existence. At the same time, though, precisely because what happens in public is visible to a multiplicity of subjects, we should also say it is publicness itself that *institutes* commonality. Such a complex double relation might perhaps be summarized by saying that, on the one hand, the common is the (invisible) element in which the public comes into existence, and on the other, publicness is what institutes all (visible) commonality.

In short, in contrast to the fragmentation that characterizes the public, the common seems to entail some kind of continuity. This can be perhaps best illustrated by imagining the public as a "foam" in the sense proposed by Peter Sloterdijk.[27] In a foam, Sloterdijk has observed, what the bubbles have in common is the very wall that sets them apart. This is literally the case if one considers, for instance, an apartment block. But even in the case of an abstract institution such as money, it is clear that its circulation is, at least ideally, what allows us to encounter each other *as* strangers—two hands join only briefly for the coin to pass from the giver to the receiver and they soon separate again.[28] In a foam, the point of contact coincides

26. John Dewey, *The Public and Its Problems: An Essay in Political Inquiry* (Athens, Ohio, 1927), pp. 15–16.

27. See Peter Sloterdijk, *Schäume*, vol. 3 of *Sphären* (Frankfurt, 2004).

28. Note the paradigmatic function of the coin in our imagination of money.

with the point of separation. Developing this theorization, the common seems to evoke another form of connection, that of atmosphere (again, a notion elaborated extensively by Sloterdijk).[29] An atmosphere is like the air that is breathed, that circulates through doors and windows—"the common air that bathes the globe," as Walt Whitman wrote.[30] Not paradoxically, then, atmosphere, which may at first seem encompassing and enveloping, always has an interstitial character to it, since its capacity to connect is intimately linked to its constant *infiltration* through barriers such as doors, walls, and other sheltering artifacts.

In his essay on Hermann Broch, Canetti describes the city as a space of respiration, a space of commonality endowed with its own peculiar rhythm.[31] Respiration is in fact a rhythmic atmosphere or the rhythmic component of every atmosphere. Just as an atmosphere can only be perceived from within, so the common qua commonality places us in a condition of inescapable interiority. Modernity, in a sense, is a long meditation on such interiority, along with a relentless romantic quest for the outside. In a different context, the anthropologist Victor Turner described what he called *communitas* as an antistructural, performative—in other words, ritual—moment, a moment of immediacy and homogeneity that precedes and stands in opposition to all forms of instituted *societas*. While *societas* segments and places people in mutually exclusive groups (making them experience exteriority vis-à-vis each other), in *communitas* all hierarchies are denied. The common *humanitas* emerges as something that keeps us together, revealing the essential and generic human bond beyond all social specifications, divisions, and exteriorities—hence, a generalized experience of interiority. According to Turner, *communitas* is a way to cope with the inevitable contradictions, asymmetries, injustices, and anomalies of social structure. However, simultaneously, "from the perspectival viewpoint of those concerned with the maintenance of 'structure', all sustained manifestations of communitas must appear as dangerous and anarchical, and have to be hedged around with prescriptions, prohibitions, and conditions."[32]

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29. See Sloterdijk, *Sphären*, 3 vols. (Frankfurt, 1998–2004); see also *Urban Interstices: The Aesthetics and the Politics of the In-between*, ed. Brighenti (Farnham, 2013), and *Architectural Atmospheres: On the Experience and Politics of Architecture*, ed. Christian Borch (Basel, 2014).

30. "This is the grass that grows wherever the land is and the water is / This the common air that bathes the globe" (Walt Whitman, "Song of Myself," *Leaves of Grass and Other Writings: Authoritative Texts, Other Poetry, and Prose Criticism*, ed. Michael Moon [New York, 2002], p. 40).

31. See Canetti, "Hermann Broch," *The Conscience of Words*, trans. Joachim Neugroschel (New York, 1979), pp. 1–13. The essay dates from 1936.

32. Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (Chicago, 1969), p. 109.

Turner's reflections on *humanitas* inherit the concerns of Durkheimian studies, particularly as developed by the inquiries into the phenomenon of the feast carried out by the members of the Collège de Sociologie in the 1930s.[33] Every instance of *communitas* carries an unsettling, revolutionary potential because it makes it impossible to deny the essential, immediate coimplication of all (an insight that, incidentally, was also taken up by Freud in *Totem and Taboo*).[34] The fact that *communitas* tends to be transitional and liminal, located in-between various more stable arrangements of *societas*, means that its commonality is of the same type as the interstitiality of atmosphere. And, as remarked above, commonality is never a given—it must be constructed.[35] However, construction is a very weak and general if not confusing word to describe the relationship commonality entertains with publicness. As stated at the outset of this essay, I seek a nondichotomous view on the articulation of the public and the common. All dichotomies, as we know, are generalizations that, ultimately, cannot be but untenable and false. Yet for the purpose of advancing our own research we are routinely constrained to introduce dichotomies, in the form of distinctions. Our only hope, then, lies in introducing dichotomies that are good enough for us to be able to overcome them as soon as possible. This is why, I suggest, we need to think commonality and its relation to publicness through a series of further insights.

4. Sharing, Measuring, and Composing the Common

One could hypothesize that the public and the common illuminate the two sides of the verb to share: to have or give a portion and to hold, possess, or use jointly with others in an undivided way.[36] In Italian, this divergence corresponds to the difference between the two verbs *dividere* and *condividere*. While the public is a matter of policies, insofar as it concerns the rules, procedures, and tactics deployed to manage a social foam, the common is first a matter of the political, insofar as it concerns the undivided atmospheric condition that forms the starting point for making a world to-

33. See *Le Collège de sociologie 1937–1939*, ed. Denis Hollier (Paris, 1979).
34. See Sigmund Freud, *Totem and Taboo: Resemblances Between the Psychic Lives of Savages and Neurotics*, trans. A. A. Brill (London, 1919). In Freud's take, the coimplication is in a crime, namely, the killing of the primal father by the confederate brothers.
35. In this respect, it is remarkable that, rather than as a given, the common always comes in the form of an invocation, an appeal, or a summoning of people and forces. Such was the case, for instance, of the simple, short, and still moving radio appeal to the French people launched by Abbé Pierre during the cold night of 1 February 1954. Grounded in the radical message of primitive Christianity, Abbé Pierre asked all believers to open the doors of their houses to the homeless, so as to save them from death by freezing.
36. See *Oxford Dictionary of English*, s. v. "share."

gether. Arendt and then Cornelius Castoriadis assigned to politics precisely this worldmaking function, while Claude Lefort defined it as "the political."[37] Examining these ideas in comparison with the most classical of social science reflections on community life, we could perhaps say that the common is a de-essentialized version of community. It reveals that what matters most is not the fact of community but the issue of community. For instance, what Giorgio Agamben named the "whatever" (*il qualunque*) is a type of not-yet-instituted community, or a community-to-come, a community outside of itself, at the door or threshold of home.[38] Here, community takes on the dimension of becoming rather than of factual being (it is impossible not to notice Gilles Deleuze's influence on Agamben). Especially in his commentary on the Tiananmen Square protests of 1989, Agamben insists on the irreducible exteriority of such "coming community" to the political state.[39] The state can only deal with identities, while the whatever amounts to a rejection of identities and the creation of a community without any affirmation of identity.

   Such a diagnosis of exteriority recalls the later description by Michael Hardt and Negri of the movement of exodus, which they trace from postcolonial studies. The social subject Hardt and Negri have identified as the multitude is one that reacts against empire—a biopolitical form of governance that knows no boundaries, suspends history, extends down to the depths of the social, and presents itself as the ultimate form of pacification—through acts of exodus and desertion.[40] Negri has insisted in various places that the cooperation among humans enacted by the multitude is necessarily "immeasurable" vis-à-vis sovereign power.[41] From the point of view of instituted power, the multitude appears as a monstrous entity that exceeds all previous political measures. Instituted, organized power cannot recognize nor accept the multitude, which appears to it as a "revolutionary monster."[42] Yet, one may ask, how does this claim sit with Negri's ongoing concern for organization? Cooperation inherently calls for organization and, after all, all revolutionary narratives harbor an organiza-

37.   Claude Lefort, *Essais sur le politique, XIXe-XXe siècles* (Paris, 2001). See also Arendt, *The Human Condition*, and Cornelius Castoriadis, *L'Institution imaginaire de la société* (Paris, 1975).

38.   Giorgio Agamben, "Qualunque," *La Comunità che viene* (Torino, 1990), pp. 3–4.

39.   See Agamben, "Tiananmen," *La Comunità che viene*, pp. 58–60.

40.   See Hardt and Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge, Mass., 2000), pp. 393–413. Sabotage, which belonged to Negri's previous theorization, is not mentioned; see Negri, *Il Dominio e il sabotaggio: Sul metodo marxista della trasformazione sociale* (Milan, 1978).

41.   Negri, *Kairòs, Alma venus, multitudo: nove lezioni impartite a me stesso* (Rome, 2000), p. 46 and "Pour une définition ontologique de la multitude," in *Politiques des multitudes: Démocratie intelligence collective et puissance de la vie à l'heure du capitalisme cognitif*, ed. Yann Moulier Boutang (Paris, 2007), p. 408.

42.   Negri, "Pour une définition ontologique de la multitude," p. 408.

tional dream.[43] Like Agamben, Negri places the multitude in a dimension of becoming and understands it as a transformative achievement; the multitude is thus better appreciated not as a matter of fact, an actual social formation, but as a project of political organization.

For the purpose of the present discussion, let us confine ourselves to the question of how to reconcile the absolute exteriority of the whatever described by Agamben and the immeasurability advocated by Negri with the condition of atmospheric interiority that is inherent in the common. From my point of view, this question is strictly related to the twin movements of urbanization of territory and territorialization of the city. Here we necessarily move beyond exegesis, since in fact Hardt and Negri's theorization of the metropolis is rather poor, and Agamben's discussion of the city does not seem to move much beyond what was already stated more boldly by his situationist sources of inspiration.

These authors conceptualize a social subject that incarnates an attempt to escape from the biopolitical dimension of control inherent in the movement of territorial urbanization. The urbanization of territory makes possible the mobility, circulation, transport, and meeting of people, objects, information, and ideas—but only, simultaneously, at the cost of governing them as aggregated populations (crowds) of humans and things. This dual phenomenon occurs through logistic organization. The urbanization of territory *inscribes* populations and their movements into a diagram of circulations, distributions, and mobilities. What in the late 1980s Agamben still referred to as the state and in the early 2000s Hardt and Negri called empire corresponds to a specific form of urban governmental inscription that logistically articulates spatial distributions and events to be progressively integrated into a grid of calculability. In a way, the notions of the whatever and the multitude seem akin to the movement I am calling the territorialization of the city, not least because the territorial city presents itself as more an ongoing aspiration than an achievement. Yet, as I have tried to show, the territorial city is a matter not only of commonality but also, crucially, of publicness.

The articulation of the public and the common, their small yet crucial difference, inherently raises questions of measure and composition that are clearly on the minds of all these theorists. Negri and Revel criticize Jean-Jacques Rousseau for having crafted a notion of the public that subtracts commonality, thus, so to speak, *stealing* the common from the pub-

43. I have explored this theme in Brighenti, "Revolution and Diavolution: What Is the Difference?" *Critical Sociology* 34 (Nov. 2008): 787–802.

lic.[44] According to Negri and Revel, Rousseau's notion of public power produces something that belongs to all but in fact belongs to nobody, that is, belongs to the state. To this and to all social contract theories, Negri and Revel oppose the image of the common as something that, being produced by all, must actually belong to all. Now, while this formulation is certainly attractive, the problematic term in it is precisely *belonging*. It has long been standard for social theory to pair belonging with community. The problem here is that a commonality of community without any degree of publicness capable of deterritorializing it always remains potentially exposed to totalizing and even totalitarian drifts. One can detect in Negri's and Revel's account of the common the shadow of community. This view still echoes the theorizations of classical sociologists Ferdinand Tönnies and Émile Durkheim. If the whatever and the multitude are born out of a stern refusal of integration, all forms of commonality do in fact constantly reproduce the thrust towards full integration of members and a corresponding incapacity to deal with publicness.

Let us consider, for instance, squatting as a type of communal living. The various forms of squatting certainly speak to a noble attempt to build commonality. Yet, if one recalls for instance certain utopian or intellectual squats of the 1970s and their claim to "unscrew the locks from the doors! / Unscrew the doors themselves from their jambs!" in order to live openly, one also already knows very well how the failure of those attempts came about.[45] Indeed, in Paris, several such squats still survive today, but they are gentrified, normalized, and, above all, well locked. This failure was basically the result of the incapacity of those middle-class squatters to live real street life. Their experience can be meaningfully contrasted with the street cultures that flourished in the same period in many urban inner cities or peripheries. Working class and lumpen street youth, including packs and bands of youngsters from migrant and immigrant backgrounds, grew up accustomed to living in public, in the streets, not because they were homeless, but because their actual living spaces consisted of deprived districts and deindustrialized, decaying urban areas. While also hinting at commonality, street socialization and a streetwise attitude are imbued with publicness.

Hardt and Negri recognize the existence of what they call "corrupt" forms of the common, among them the nation-state and the family.[46] But, contrary to what they assume, such forms cannot be identified a priori.

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44.   See Revel and Negri, "Inventer le commun des hommes."
45.   Quoted in Allen Ginsberg, *Howl and Other Poems* (San Francisco, Calif., 1956), p. 1.
46.   Hardt and Negri, *Commonwealth*, p. 160.

That would be too easy and a bit simplistic, for even a squat or a participatory budget meeting may turn out to be a corrupted form of commonality. What needs to be faced, in other words, is the phenomenon that, in a controversial but essential essay from 1952, Claude Lévi-Strauss diagnosed as the inevitability of ethnocentrism.[47] The basic ethnocentric operation is not premised upon some negative anthropology, which would accept, say, the natural racism of all humans. Rather, the inevitability of ethnocentrism refers to the constitution of a human group as the majority of itself—"*We are the just*," as Friedrich Nietzsche wrote in his *Genealogy of Morality*.[48] Consequently, Negri's postulate of an immeasurable multitude is not well placed. Every instance of commonality inherently elicits the issue of measure. On this point Negri is perhaps misled by a false equivalence between measure, order, and political conservatism. But, as Albert Camus beautifully put it, the measure is not the contrary of the human revolt; quite the contrary, it is revolt itself that generates its own measure.[49]

The relationship between commonality and measure seems, in fact, to be a manifold one. In a subtle exegesis of and reflection on Ambrogio Lorenzetti's frescos in the Public Palace in Siena (circa 1340), known as *The Allegory of Good and Bad Government*, Pierangelo Schiera has proposed to interpret Lorenzetti's frescos as the manifesto for a long-term political project (in our terms, as a foundational moment of modern urbanity) highlighting the double aspect of measure in the history of governance.[50] A measure, Schiera explains, is a unit that gives us the dimension of a thing, a problem, or a good, but it is simultaneously the act of undertaking planned change, applying our measurement. Measuring the public and the private vis-à-vis each other—that is, finding the measure that spans the individual and the communal—entails, Schiera argues, forms of "disciplining" (*disciplinamento*).[51] Discipline operates both outside and inside the individual. Outside the individual, a series of technical and legal devices constitute the policy measures. Inside the individual, the self-disciplining of civilized citizens enables them to enter political relations.

47. See Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Race Et histoire* (Paris, 1987), pp. 19–20.
48. "Now, at last, I can hear what they have been saying so often: 'We good people—*we are the just*' [Wir Gute—*wir sind die Gerechten*]—what they are demanding is not called retribution, but 'the triumph of *justice*'; what they hate is not their enemy, oh no! they hate '*injustice*', 'godlessness'" (Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality*, trans. Carol Diethe, ed. Keith Ansell-Pearson [Cambridge, 2006], p. 28).
49. See Albert Camus, *L'Homme révolté*, ed. Raymond Gay-Crosier and Maurice Weyembergh, in *Oeuvres Complètes*, ed. Jacqueline Lévi-Valensi et al., 4 vols. (Paris, 2006-08), 3:320.
50. See Pierangelo Schiera, *La Misura del ben comune* (Macerata, 2010) and *Misura* (Trento, 2011).
51. Schiera, *Misura*, p. 7.

The feeling of melancholia is, for Schiera, precisely the lack of a capacity to engage in politics. The author stresses that the pursuit of a measure of the common good—as, in the mid-fourteenth century, Lorenzetti himself called it[52]—cannot be conducted in abstraction from the series of (plural) administrative measures that implement a certain arrangement and equilibrium between public and private spaces, subjects, and interests.

From this perspective, the notion of administration assumes a central role as a tool that constructs political commonality even more than sovereignty does (or, at least, at a historical moment when nothing like modern sovereignty was yet envisaged). Administration, Schiera argues, was present before the foundation of the modern state, was fixed into certain legal and institutional forms by the state itself, and today retains the potentiality of extending beyond the form of the modern state—*in nuce*, it is the theme of global governance. Lorenzetti's fresco pictured various dimensions of governance that spanned the city and its territory (in the double dimension of urbanized territory and territorialized city). Every new measure of the common good, together with the measures to attain it, is located at a different scale of territorial association. While political sovereignty implies transcendence, administrative measures tend to be immanent in the scale of action to which they refer. Here, absolute immanence would mean pure and simple autonomy. Schiera does not say whether administration can ever hope to ultimately coincide with autonomy. However, it is important to recall that the threshold between immanence and transcendence is, in fact, the same threshold between interiority and exteriority.

The fact that the common always calls for an internal point of view on measure suggests that it could also be approached through the question of composition. In other words, how can we compose a common? In the development of a sociology of engagement, Laurent Thévenot has elaborated on this theme.[53] Thévenot identifies three "grammars of *commonality in the plural*" that enable the composition of commonality and the attainment of the first person plural—the capacity to say we.[54] The first seeks to integrate a plurality of orders of worth, the second seeks to integrate a plurality of free-willed individuals in public, and the third seeks to integrate a plurality of common affinities. Each grammar acts through com-

52. Schiera, *La Misura del ben comune*, p. 11.
53. The background theory is laid out in Laurent Thévenot, *L'Action au pluriel: sociologie des régimes d'engagement* (Paris, 2006). Here I am discussing in particular Thévenot's more recent essay, Thévenot, "Making Commonality in the Plural on the Basis of Binding Engagements," in *Social Bonds as Freedom: Revisiting the Dichotomy of the Universal and the Particular*, ed. Paul Dumouchel and Reiko Gotoh (Oxford, 2015).
54. Thévenot, "Making Commonality in the Plural on the Basis of Binding Engagements," p. 85.

munication and composition; the diverse elements are first put in a common space (communicated) so that a strategy to measure, arrange, coordinate, and compose or recompose them can be advanced. Yet while the first grammar entails a regime of bounded justification that requires generalizability and transportability from one case to another (from the particular to the universal), the second is focused on private individuals endowed with their own sets of preferences and with virtually the same status. The third grammar emphasizes affinity to certain common places that can never be distant or distanced. The third grammar, in other words, presupposes a degree of proximity and intimacy among actors. In sum, the first grammar corresponds to a regime of publicly justifiable engagement, the second to a regime of rational engagement in a plan, and the third to a regime of familiar engagement. It should be recalled that, for Thévenot, an engagement concerns the mutual arrangement of an actor and an environment. An engagement is not simply subjective; rather, it includes both how the actor relates to the environment and how the environment is set up for the actor. A whole range of engagements stretching from the familiar to the public can be identified.

At the risk of perhaps simplifying Thévenot's sophisticated analysis a bit, the common can be distinguished from both public justification and means/end efficient action. The composition of commonality entails "bringing to the fore the common place that proved to be hospitable to a plurality of affinities.[55] Also noteworthy is the fact that there is no a priori delimitation of the extent to which commonality can be stretched. In this sense, the composition of commonality through common places seems to be the most empirical and least formalized type of endeavor. Now, it is evident how this third grammar differs from the regime of justification explored by Luc Boltanski and Thévenot in the 1980s. Justification subjects actors to an axiological imperative to justify, which functions as a form of accountability connecting the individual to a larger, shared frame of meaning.[56] From a temporal point of view, its working is always double: prospective and retrospective. Prospectively, it sets the obligation to explicate one's reasons (let's call it *logon didonai*) while, retrospectively, it calls the individual to frame what he or she has done in an understandable and presentable way (if I may say, *redde rationem villicationis tuae*). The grammar of common affinities also differs markedly from planned action, which only takes into consideration individual preferences in a context of

55. Ibid., p. 95.
56. See Luc Boltanski and Thévenot, *On Justification: Economies of Worth*, trans. Catherine Porter (Princeton, N.J., 2006).

liberal individualism, all individuals being placed ideally at the same level from a perspective of civility. The two former grammars, Thévenot argues, breed forms of oppression, insofar as they force actors into formats for which they might not be equipped, so to speak. The grammar of common affinities represents a partial solution to the oppressions hidden in the first two grammars, insofar as it rejects the formalism that is inherent in them. However, Thévenot adds, the third grammar may also engender its own forms of oppression. Its Achilles' heel—which, actually, we have already detected above—is authoritarianism, which occurs when someone manages to have the common place identified with its own person.

Despite their profound and obvious differences, it seems to me that the authors I have discussed so far—Agamben, Negri, Schiera, and Thévenot—share at bottom one important idea, which I would like to retain and emphasize. For it to exist, the common must be a *composition of differences that remain different.* Commonality is different from unanimity. But, in light of our discussion above on the basic ethnocentric operation, we are never a priori assured that such a conflation will not at some point occur. A constant safeguard is called for. Especially with respect to Thévenot, the advantage of a territorial perspective on the public and the common, such as the one I am trying to develop here, lies in illuminating not simply grammatical but also material and affective conditions. *Meeting with others means making territories.* If to make a commonality we need a place in common, the point is that the conditions for such places to appear are being transformed before our eyes by the newly emerging regimes of interaction, the new urban circulations, ambiances, and atmospheres. If, as considered above, the common necessarily places us in a perspective from within, where and by which means can common environments be imagined and carved out of homogeneous communities and technological public systems?

5. Public Affects, Common Affections

Just as the urban speaks to a (bio)politics of aggregated populations, the city speaks to a structure of public experience. In turn, both dimensions inhere in the creation of a multiplicity of overlapping and interweaving (social) territories. Civility, urbanity, and coexistence with diversity have been forged within a mould, the modern public experience of metropolitan crowds. At the same time, crowds—converted and reassembled into the figure of the population—have become the elected object of urban governance and administration. We have remarked in passing on some of the characteristics of classic crowds that are revived in the contemporary new-media, information-and-communications-technology-enabled crowd formations. Crowd states

activate the imitation of desires and the contagion of beliefs. How do these affective characteristics relate to the public and the common, and what are the affections that contradistinguish them?

It is interesting to observe that progressive authors dealing with the notion of the public have spent a lot of energy criticizing narratives of urban hygiene and law-and-order ideologies depicting public space as filthy and disordered, while progressive authors dealing with the notion of the common hasten to remark that their conception is different from the everyday understanding of commonplace as trite saying. Despite their efforts, there seems to be an inescapable association between the public and the dirty on the one hand, and the common and the stupid on the other. Perhaps, I suggest, we could learn something from these inadvertent associations if we were prepared to take the dirty and the stupid as something extremely serious for social theory. Here, I beg the reader to allow me to put aside for the moment all the otherwise intriguing reflections about cultural and crosscultural perceptions and symbolic discourses on purity, contamination, idiocy, and madness.

At the most basic level, the quintessentially *dirty* nature of public toilets, public streets, money, and other public facilities descends from the fact that such facilities are touched and used by many and, more specifically, by an indefinite series of anonymous users who temporarily appropriate something that is soon after released to someone else. The twin move of appropriation and (according to the circumstances, more or less swift) release substantiates the circulatory nature of the public, whose constitutively heterogeneous formation is made possible by the fundamental accessibility of its spaces. Thus, the dirt of the public is tightly linked to its visibility. Unsurprisingly, public visibility is often scandalous and outrageous. Incidentally, this gives us a key for understanding the heated debates about homeless people and panhandlers being too visible in the streets, as well as the whole range of controversies over acceptable and unacceptable activities in public places. In turn, the production of the common requires a degree of proximity and sharing that does not sort, select, or class people (contrasting with how we are sorted, selected, and classed according to our qualifications, our competence, our salary, and so on) but rather remains open and provides multiple venues for each to settle in. In short, just as the public should not be judged on the parameter of cleanness, so the common should not be judged on the parameter of intelligence.

While cleanness and intelligence cannot be ruled out as respectable qualities for the attainment of some aims, the common is indeed premised on some trite commonplaces because it needs to leave time and ways for

the affinities among people to emerge and be fine-tuned. The common cannot be but a place, albeit a temporary meeting point. It is a territorial endeavor whose variables are conviviality, friendship, care, and hospitality—all of which require a peculiar meeting quality. Both the public and the common are forms of gathering; both are also forms of taking care, although in remarkably different frameworks. Whereas the public privileges foam formations in which people are kept together by what sets them apart, the common privileges the atmospheric condition of rhythmical (respiratory) continuity. Of course, the forms of gathering in common are changing in the context of the territorialization of the city as well as in connection with the rise of new mediated territorialities. It is perhaps a small detail, but I think it is not by chance that the word friend and the terminology of friendship are so widespread in online social networks. Incidentally, information and communications technologies do not only produce new venues of commonality but also new forms of public circulation. Left-wing intellectuals tend to cultivate a nostalgic attachment to the power of collective demonstrations in the streets. While the history of collective mobilization is undoubtedly a rich and important one, the movement of territorialization of the city, together with the dispersed nature of public space, makes it necessary to acknowledge that the territorializations of commonalities are much more plural and travel across the most diverse places. It is simply not true that public squares are dead; but certainly they are reconfigured, and a number of public and common places for meeting pop up in new locales, across new scattered geographies.

The question "Where do we meet?" will likely become a crucial political issue of the near future, since all the crucial acts involved in sharing, finding a measure, and composing commonality rest on it. Among the endless array of sociotechnical measures we are constantly subjected to in the urbanized territories we live in, it is the composition of the common, the carving out of venues for and ways to inhabit the territorial city to come, that will make it possible to find our new measures. Measures are events, in the sense that common enunciation bears with it the capacity to make things happen. As the anarchist collective Comité Invisible put it, "the commune . . . is the joy of encounter . . . what enables us to say 'we' to each other";[57] "to gather speaks to the joy of feeling a common empowerment [*puissance*]."[58] Measures are events, but events are always problematic.

This is why, on the other hand, I have stressed that we also need to tackle

57. Comité Invisible, *L'Insurrection qui vient* (Paris, 2007), p. 89. The title of this tract by the French anarchist group led by Julien Coupat deliberately echoes Agamben, *La Comunità che viene.*

58. Comité Invisible, *L'Insurrection qui vient,* p. 113.

the question of how to avoid allowing the joy of the encounter to end up producing full integration or totalization of participants. If crowd states activate imitation of desires and contagion of beliefs, the perils of mimesis and contagion become particularly evident when we consider the emergence of a central polarity of desire that leads to the implosion of the crowd. The old Platonic figure of the *mimētēs*, the artist as imitator, revives in the late nineteenth century as the *meneur*, the leader of the mob, as well as in the theatrical *Führer* which Nietzsche spots in Richard Wagner and which will provide the blueprint for twentieth-century totalitarianism.[59] Wagner's central fascist leader embodies the implosive vector that totalizes the crowd, turning the assembly into the majority of itself. To escape such pitfalls, my suggestion is that there is something to gain by seriously facing two questions and regarding them as essentially interlocked: "How to avoid the public turning into an expropriation of experience and social production?" and "How to avoid the common turning into communitarian oppression?" The reason is that both the public and the common are inherently unstable compositions. Just as the public oscillates between trust and shame, the common oscillates between friendship and oppression.

Whereas early urban theorists asked themselves what people appearing in the public domain have in common, now we also need to ask ourselves where commonality can be produced throughout the new forms and venues of publicness. Phenomena such as urban spatial segregation, stratified and differentiated freedom of mobility, and even the use of customized personal devices for representing, navigating, and experiencing urban space make any a priori assumption about shared urban space untenable.

59. The theory of the artist as imitator is elaborated in book 10 of Plato, *The Republic*, trans. and ed. Chris Emlyn–Jones and William Preddy, 2 vols. (Cambridge, Mass., 2013); for an epigone who provides a synthesis of the debate on leaders in the nineteenth century, see Pascal Rossi, *Les Suggesteurs et la foule: psychologie des meneurs, artistes, orateurs, mystiques, guerriers, criminels, ecrivains, enfants, etc.*, trans. Antoine Cundari (Paris, 1904); for his part, Friedrich Nietzsche describes Wagner as an enthusiastic theatrical "mimomaniac" and an expert seducer of the audience, in "Nietzsche contra Wagner: From the Files of a Psychologist" (1888), *"The Anti-Christ," "Ecce Homo," "Twilight of the Idols," and Other Writings*, trans. Judith Norman, ed. Aaron Ridley and Norman (Cambridge, 2005), p. 267. In "The Case of Wagner" (1888), Wagner is meant to express the spirit of modernity: "Where would [a philosopher] find a more knowledgeable guide [or, consecrated leader—*einen eingeweihteren Führer*], a more eloquent expert on the labyrinth of the modern soul?" (Nietzsche, "The Case of Wagner: A Musician's Problem," *"The Anti-Christ," "Ecce Homo," "Twilight of the Idols," and Other Writings*, pp. 233–34; Nietzsche, *Der Fall Wagner*, in *Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe,* ed. Giorgio Colli et al., 9 vols. [Berlin, 1967–], 6.3:4). I have dealt with the issue of modern leadership and imitation extensively in Brighenti, *The Ambiguous Multiplicities: Materials, Episteme and Politics of Cluttered Social Formations* (New York, 2014); see also the excellent book by Nidesh Lawtoo, *The Phantom of the Ego: Modernism and the Mimetic Unconscious* (East Lansing, Mich., 2013).

Jacques Rancière has characterized politics as the conflict that takes place on a common scene about that scene's very existence.[60] Yet the question remains to be posed about how literal such a scene is—that is, which spaces it may or may not occupy. Capitalism has always had an outward, expansionist movement. But today, an enhanced consciousness of the actual measures of the environment—that is, the realization of the finitude of the world, the depletion of its resources, and the threat to its preservation—places us in a state of interiority. This is the situation we must face. If this fact raises issues of spatial justice, it is not simply a situation in which we can just hope to apply a conception of justice *to* space but, more radically, it is one in which, as argued by Andreas Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos, we need to discover the intrinsic spatiality—I would say, territoriality—of justice, its *intrinsic* movement, and, following Jacques Derrida, its "geography of withdrawal."[61]

   If we begin to consider the public and the common as emergent properties of social encounters and their ensuing territorializations, we might develop tools for imagining the problems inherent in their articulation and composition. While we can say, borrowing Thévenot's categories, that there are different grammars to communicate and compose our plural reciprocal engagements, our present task is also one of communicating and composing pluralities across those grammars. Here, in conclusion, is also where the notion of resistance acquires—or reacquires—its importance. To take resistance seriously means to recognize that, besides competent actors, besides actors' competencies, we also have to consider the existence of incompetent actors and the incompetencies of actors. If the project of democracy has any *ubi consistam*, it is precisely that nobody should be excluded from politics due to technical incompetence alone. Taken together, and articulated through their small difference, publicness and commonality might help us to move in this direction.

60. See Jacques Rancière, *La Mésentente: politique et philosophie* (Paris, 1995), p. 49.
61. See Andreas Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos, "Spatial Justice: Law and the Geography of Withdrawal," *International Journal of Law in Context* 6 (Sept. 2010): 201–16, elaborating on Jacques Derrida, "Violence et métaphysique: Essai sur la pensée d'Emmanuel Levinas," *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale* 69 (July–Sept. 1964): 322–54 and *Politiques de l'amitié* (Paris, 1994).