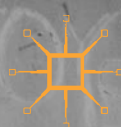


# Educational Commons

in Theory and Practice

## Global Pedagogy and Politics

Edited by  
Alexander J. Means,  
Derek R. Ford, and  
Graham B. Slater



# Educational Commons in Theory and Practice

Alexander J. Means • Derek R. Ford • Graham B. Slater  
Editors

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Global Pedagogy and Politics

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*Editors*

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# Introduction: Toward an Educational Commons

*Alexander J. Means, Derek R. Ford, and Graham B. Slater*

The present historical moment is one of profound challenges and contradictions. A consolidation of global power has emerged amid a stark fragmentation of everyday life and organized forms of resistance. New modes of alienation from community proliferate alongside an intensification of digital connectivity, while the acceleration of socio-ecologically unsustainable capitalist modernization sharply contrasts with stultifying inertia in realizing viable alternatives. Within this context, reclaiming and redefining a global commons and commonality acquire a new energy and urgency.

The idea of commons has a long history in Western and non-Western thought. Commons discourse has recently been reinvigorated and is now being debated across academic fields, including philosophy, sociology, business, political science, law, anthropology, and ecology. Commons have also become a referent in global policymaking, as is evidenced by the

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efforts of technocratic organizations like the World Bank and International Monetary Fund to imagine new strategies for saving a stagnant global capitalism from its own destructive tendencies (Caffentzis, 2010; Federici, 2009). The commons have also become a key locus of struggle and inspiration across various radical-progressive social movements, for example, in struggles over land dispossession across the global South in places like India and Brazil, as well as in parallel struggles over debt, austerity, precarity, and predatory financialization across the affluent nations of the global North (Mason, 2013; Shiva, 2016). This renewed interest and engagement with commons can be attributed largely to growing recognition of the need for creative responses to a wide array of global crises, such as rampant worldwide militarization and threat of ecological catastrophe, that threaten our collective lives and futures.

The commons are most often invoked as a direct challenge to neoliberal hegemony and the destructive expansionary drive of capitalism to commodify and therefore *enclose* what remains of the world's shared fund of natural and cultural wealth (De Angelis, 2007; Harvey, 2003). These enclosures of global commons include resources like water and land, shared institutions, such as health care and education, and knowledge formations from Indigenous languages to our collective cultural production of knowledge and affects via digital media platforms like Google and Facebook. The relentless pursuit of private accumulation without end directly targets the commons as sites for regenerating a broadly discredited neoliberal valorization machine. At the same time, the commons are now often invoked as a pragmatic and utopian referent to rethink modern political categories and to imagine alternative modernities, resistances, and futures within and against what Saskia Sassen has evocatively referred to as the "predatory formations" of global capitalism and elite financial concentration (Sassen, 2014). The commons have thus been positioned as an imaginative axis for thinking modes of collectivity and sustainable forms of translocal social organization beyond the limitations of capitalism as well as "actually existing" historical experiments in state socialism. This framing of the commons as both an analytical concept and political ideal has generated fascinating new discussions around the nature of contemporary subjectivity and collectivity as well as new formations of civil society, community, labor, value, identity, difference, exchange, imperialism, neocolonialism, and the primary issue we focus on in this volume—education.

The present global order imagines education, broadly conceived, as a static abstraction, an eternal feedback loop that subsumes subjectivity, desire, and imagination within a bounded range of *common sense*. This represents a form of *education as capture*. This can be seen in recent years in the development of an increasingly networked global education movement led by monopolistic corporations such as Pearson and transnational policymaking bodies like the OECD that advocate for the standardization, privatization, and human capitalization of educational institutions and practices across the world (Ball, 2012; Rizvi and Lingard, 2009). Education is here imagined as a private good, a commodity to be bought and sold like any other. While there is certainly no shortage of celebrations of difference and diversity, education is in fact here constructed as a shallow repetition of the same, mainly a staging ground for the production of docile workers, enthusiastic shopaholics, and debtors. The promise of the commons, and of an education worthy of its name, is precisely the opposite of this mode of capture. Rather than the pseudo-reality and monochromatic world of unending commodification constructed by neoliberal common sense, the commons are in fact rich in variation and possibility. Such an understanding moves us away from realizing education as a mode of enclosing and capturing difference and toward a dialectically and immanently rich conceptualization rooted in the commons as a pedagogical and political sphere. It must be understood that the fault lines and generative tensions of commoning and enclosing, by enabling or constraining ways of being, knowing, working, and relating, literally *teach us*. In this way, to suggest that commoning and enclosing are *pedagogical* relations is also to recognize that they are *political* relations—that is, the commons are always a divided and contested terrain. Ultimately, the dimensions of commoning and enclosing always harbor latent forms of *potentiality*. As with education itself and the inherent contingency of life in classrooms and lecture halls shared by countless students and educators, the commons can never be fully captured or enclosed. Rather, as the essays in this volume argue from various angles, the commons represent an open and unfinished question: a necessarily hopeful and conflicted condition of our global commonality and interrelation. We want to suggest in this brief introduction that just as the literature on commons pushes educational theory in new directions, understanding the commons as an educational concept yields new insights for enacting the global commons more broadly. Lastly, the final part of the introduction provides an overview of the volume's themes and chapters.



## COMMONS AND EDUCATIONAL ENCLOSURE

In response to various historical developments concerning shifting global power relations, capitalism, technology, environmental degradation, social movements, and Indigenous struggles for decolonization, scholars and activists have sought to develop more complex understandings of the commons as an analytical and emancipatory category. We suggest that what emerges from this literature is that *the commons* (plural) can be understood as encompassing the totality of shared resources including our collective institutions and the natural wealth of the planet. Simultaneously, *the common* (singular) represents a social ontology; that is, it is the communicative, affective, and relational foundation upon which commons are produced, circumscribed, and governed. Out of these conceptualizations, the commons has inspired wide ranging debate and become a key referent in a broad variety of contemporary struggles for social change including over educational privatization, commodification, student debt, and disinvestment in schools and universities.

Cesare Casarino has suggested that “the common is legion” (Casarino and Negri, 2008, p. 7). Its definition and lineage are complex and varied. We know from anthropology and Indigenous oral traditions that human societies have always, to some extent, depended on and utilized intricate commons relations to organize production, exchange, status relations, and social reproduction (Graeber, 2001; Polanyi, 1944). It was not until the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in Europe, during the transition from feudalism to capitalism, that distinctly modern historical dynamics of the commons emerged. As Marx documented in *Capital Volume I*, the enclosures of commons in feudal Europe reflected a form of primitive accumulation. This originary violence and theft was central to the development of capitalism, both in terms of capturing commonly held land for private ends, but also for separating commoners from their direct means of subsistence, which was a key disciplinary strategy for driving communities into and accepting proletarian wage labor.

Recent historical accounts by scholars such as Peter Linebaugh (2008), Maria Mies (1998), and Silvia Federici (2004) have chronicled these processes in further detail and examined how the enclosure movements immanent to capitalist modernity transformed economic, social, political, community, and gender relations. In this sense, enclosures were intimately bound to the development of class society, patriarchy, slavery, and colonialism. Similarly, David Harvey (2003) and Massimo De Angelis (2007)

have alerted us to the myriad forms of enclosure immanent to neoliberal power formations as they attempt to cannibalize public resources and natural wealth, thus making primitive accumulation an ongoing feature of capitalist modernization as opposed to a temporally and spatially bounded historical phenomena. Slavoj Žižek (2009) has suggested that these enclosures of the commons today are organized around four central forms: (1) the enclosure of the natural world and the shared substance of life; (2) the enclosure of biogenetic commons; (3) the enclosure of knowledge commons including “intellectual property” and destruction of Indigenous knowledge; and (4) the enclosure of humanity itself signified through the construction of new exclusions, hierarchies, and surplus populations.

Contemporary struggles over education are deeply emblematic of processes of enclosure within the “world ecology” of global capitalism (Moore, 2015). Currently, education is increasingly captured within the technocratic managerial rationalities and ideological platforms associated with neoliberalization (Rizvi and Lingard, 2009). On the one hand, educational enclosure takes the form of *human capitalization*, which captures educational value within a technocratic schema aimed at transforming persons into capital “stocks” for the labor market (Lazzarato, 2012). Not only does human capitalization conceal the class and racial dynamics of education and work relations, but it ideologically manages and legitimates an emerging “post-work” landscape of economic volatility, precarity, and latent threat of mass technological obsolescence (Srnicke and Williams, 2016; Weeks, 2011). Here, self-valorization through credentialism and “lifelong learning” becomes a dividing line between the deserving and undeserving, success and mere survival in the flexible “gig” economy, and/or simply becoming one of the banished, or newly redundant and disposable, whose labor no longer matters to the system at all (Bauman, 2004). On the other hand, educational enclosure takes the form of *privatization* as a means of transforming K-12 and higher educational institutions and processes into potential investment opportunities and sites for profit extraction (Newfield, 2008; Saltman, 2012). In a stagnant “real” economy confronting new limits to productive investment and expansion, the educational sector, estimated at \$600 billion dollars a year in the United States alone, has become a ripe source of potential value with hedge funds and Wall Street banks leading the way. This includes the global proliferation of for-profit K-12 schools and colleges; the broad intensification of corporate contracting for consulting, technology, online learning, and testing services; the financialization of higher education through student loans and

tuition hikes; and efforts of grant-making bodies and corporate influence to narrow and monetize university research and knowledge production. Taken together, these enclosures of the educational commons represent more than simply free market ideology run amok, but broader attempts to transform the very substance of our relationship to teaching, learning, knowledge, and to one another (De Lissovoy, 2016; Slater, 2014).

## LOCATING EDUCATION WITHIN THE DIALECTIC OF CAPITAL AND COMMONS

In contradistinction to processes of primitive accumulation and enclosure, Linebaugh (2008) has framed a fidelity to commons as a means of achieving a more expansive conception of equality and freedom than those offered by liberalism and capitalism, which attempt to maintain a firewall between economy and polity. Alternatively for Linebaugh, commons frameworks find sustenance in the Magna Carta and its longstanding subterranean and potentially subversive influence over constitutional law. “Political and legal rights,” he argues, “can only exist on an economic foundation” (p. 6). The theory of commons, in his view, “vests all property in the community and organizes labor for the common benefit of all ... both in juridical forms and in material reality” (p. 6). Linebaugh’s basic formulation of the commons as a way of thinking a new egalitarian political–economic–juridical framework tracks with a growing number of projects oriented toward rethinking theoretical categories and reigniting the radical imagination (Haiven, 2014).

Perhaps the most well known and widely discussed is Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri’s *Empire* trilogy, which has had significant impact on radical scholarship and social movements over the last two decades (Hardt and Negri, 2000, 2004, 2009). For Hardt and Negri, there are two components of the common. The first refers to the common as conceptualized in modern political economy and its accompanying critiques, and this consists of things like water, the air, soil, and so on, what Marx referred to as the “free gifts of nature.” This is the common that precedes humanity and into which humanity is born. The second aspect of the common is the result of what they call “biopolitical production”: the creative generation of social life itself, including knowledge, habits, values, languages, desires, and forms of cooperation. Taken together, Hardt and Negri formulate the common as an immanent ontology and metabolic relation that “does not position humanity separate from nature, as either its exploiter or its custodian, but focuses rather on the practices of interaction, care, and cohabitation in a common world” (Hardt and Negri, 2009, p. viii).

Hardt and Negri's conception of the common has perhaps been particularly influential because it locates the biopolitical production of the common within and against the contemporary historical development of capitalism in its neoliberal phase. They argue that the common today emerges out of changes to the organic composition of capital, or the relationship between variable capital (wages paid out for labor power) and constant capital (means of production and raw and auxiliary materials). This is a way of understanding who produces what, and under what relations and conditions that production takes place. In industrial capitalism, variable capital, by working on and transforming constant capital, produces surplus value. Here there is a strict delineation between the two forms of capital. There is a tendency in capitalist production to merge these two forms of capital, and Hardt and Negri, following the Italian autonomist Marxist tradition, locate this tendency in the section of Marx's *Grundrisse* notebooks titled (though not by Marx) the "Fragment on Machines." In these pages, Marx (1939/1993) writes that machinery, and not living labor, takes the center stage in the production process, as machinery progressively incorporates the knowledge and skill of living labor, or the "general productive forces of the social brain" (p. 694). "General social labor," Marx writes, "has become a *direct force of social production*" (p. 706). Within this analysis Marx located machinery as standing in opposition to the worker, yet Hardt and Negri contend that the boundary between workers and machines is breaking down within advanced capitalism, particularly within the circuits of global network technology and infrastructures, blurring the distinction between variable and constant capital, and leading to a reconfiguring of labor and the labor process on the basis of the "general intellect," or what Hardt and Negri refer to as the common.

This does not mean that industrial production and material goods are no longer central to capitalism, but rather that their value is increasingly dependent on the immaterial plane of the common, such as symbols, knowledge, code, desires, and cultural content. This moves typologies of labor such as service, affective, intellectual—and, we would add, educational—work from the periphery to the center of modern valorization processes. Through this transformation, production and valorization leaves the factory proper and is dispersed throughout society blurring the once fairly clear lines between leisure and work, production, and consumption. As a result, capital increasingly finds itself external to production, and instead of arranging production and disciplining producers, for Hardt and Negri, capital *expropriates* the fruits of social production on the basis of

the common. This can be seen in the way the data we collectively produce through social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Google becomes a rich source of value and new products and targeted advertising for capital. Moreover, Hardt and Negri cite the fact that neoliberalism has primarily redistributed wealth through dispossession and financialization rather than stimulating the production of new wealth.

A relatively simple observation follows from this analysis; namely, that while capitalism today is increasingly dependent on the common, there are aspects of the common that always evade capture and control. Knowledge, for instance, does not obey traditional laws of scarcity attached to material goods and natural resources, particularly in an age when knowledge can be endlessly reproduced at near zero-cost through digital reproduction. Moreover, knowledge becomes more powerful as it freely circulates and is subject to collaborative retooling and experimentation. Therefore, as capital attempts to set up systems to expropriate aspects of the common, it reduces its creative generativity. A number of writers including Hardt and Negri have zeroed in on this contradiction to argue that the common is slowly undermining capitalism, while also rendering traditional conceptions of state socialism increasingly anachronistic. For instance, Jeremy Rifkin (2014) suggests “the capitalist era is passing ... not quickly, but inevitably. A new economic paradigm—The Collaborative Commons—is rising in its wake that will transform our way of life” (p. 1). Rifkin argues that the shift from capitalism to postcapitalism is already underway due to the rise of abundant knowledge and network sharing economy platforms based on the common that challenge or evade traditional proprietary arrangements (think open source software and creative commons licensing, 3-D printing, distributed commercial platforms like Air BnB and Uber, alternative crypto-currencies like Bitcoin, and potential hyper-efficiencies created by new algorithmic and big data technologies). However, whereas Rifkin ignores the role of power and class conflict in the movement of history, Paul Mason (2016) recognizes how capital and its state formations are not likely to cede a postcapitalist future without a concerted struggle. He observes that “the main contradiction today is between the possibility of free and abundant goods and information and a system of monopolies, banks, and governments trying to keep things private, scarce and commercial. Everything comes down to struggle between the network and the hierarchy, between old forms of society molded around capitalism and new forms of society that prefigure what comes next” (p. xix).

Whether or not we buy into the idea that new forms of digital technology and centrality of knowledge are necessarily undermining, or pushing beyond capitalism, contemporary biopolitical conflicts over knowledge and valorization do indeed appear to move the question of education to the center of contemporary processes of social change. While formal education has always been implicated in the reproduction of class society and its racial and gendered hierarchies, neoliberal development has attempted to erode those elements of K–12 and higher education that have historically provided a limited, but important cultural foundation for critical thought and expansion of democratic possibility (Bowles and Gintis, 2011; Giroux, 1983). The effect has been not only to place restrictions on those forms of education conducive to achieving the progressive aims of enhancing freedom and equality, but also to capitalist valorization itself, as the social basis, creativity, and potentiality of education (i.e. the educational common in its institutional, epistemological, and ontological dimensions) is subordinated to logics of commodification and control (Means, 2011). In K–12 schooling this translates into highly scripted forms of curriculum and standardized testing that individually rank students and reduce knowledge to only what can be quantified and measured, thereby eroding what is most important for knowledge construction and various forms social and scientific understanding—that is, dialogue, collaboration, problem-solving, and experimentation. These trends are perhaps most intensively expressed in the United States through policies such as No Child Left Behind, Race to the Top, and the Common Core State Standards which are based in hierarchical systems of corporate management and instrumental rationality. In higher education there is a corresponding expansion of stultifying (but richly compensated!) bureaucratic administration, student-debt-financed state disinvestment and tuition hikes, the radical casualization of educational labor, and the gutting of liberal arts.

Each of these trends serves to place fetters on the potentiality of the educational common. While education is often invoked as a means of enhancing innovation, neoliberal systems appear implicated in deepening educational stasis and conformity. However, crucially, the educational common is not simply an institutional concept, an object of power, and/or a reflection of the contradictions of capitalism. As we have been framing it, the common is a site of social production with deep epistemological and ontological grammars that is immanent to but always exceeds such systems of capture and control. Thinking the common as social production, and thus as embodied surplus, or immanent potentiality, is therefore to recognize its inherent

educational character, which is to say its non-deterministic and constituent pedagogical dimensions. Like education itself, the common can take both oppressive and emancipatory forms. For example, the recent surge in right-wing populist movements across Europe and North America imagine a corrupted and exclusionary form of the common defined by belonging to a xenophobic and authoritarian white nationalist identity. The value of thinking the commons educationally, we suggest, is that it places emphasis on struggles over consciousness within and against such contemporary forms of enclosure and violence, particularly along the fault lines of class, race, gender, and nation. Cesare Casarino (2008) has similarly suggested that struggles over the common always turn on an axis of desire and subjectivity. He argues that we cannot simply assume that the desire to produce emancipatory senses of the common exists *a priori*. However, as Casarino points out, while capital attempts to expropriate aspects of human experience and cannot imagine a common *beyond* its own system of value, there are elements of the common (ideas, ways of being, and affects) that always remain *outside* its reach. Put differently, aspects of creativity, social relations, and imagination can never be fully enclosed. For Casarino, radical politics today entails thinking about how to enhance those aspects of the common that remain as *surplus* to capital and to state domination. We would suggest this implies a conceptualization of commons that places education as central rather than as peripheral to politics, at the same time it recognizes the pedagogical foundation of the common as potentiality.

### POLITICAL AND PEDAGOGICAL FORMATIONS

The novelty of Hardt and Negri's approach is not simply that they view the common as a modality that potentially undermines capitalism in the long run, but in their insistence on a new collective subject of social change, or what they call the multitude. Rather than positing a dialectical revolutionary theory, Hardt and Negri identify horizontal and immanent forms of autonomous cooperation that are slowly exceeding and ultimately vanquishing capitalism. For Hardt and Negri, the multitude is understood as a multiplicity of irreducible singularities which resists all transcendent foundations and representational modes of authority. The transformational potential of the common is here viewed as an exodus from both capitalism (private property) and socialism (public property) and the enactment what they refer to as "absolute democracy." While the subjects composing modern conceptions of *the people*, for example, are each considered distinct,

their differences are typically subsumed within a common national identity. The multitude has no such uniting or commanding category. Instead of a stable identity, the multitude is an affirmative ontology. In order to enact the multitude and the common, Hardt and Negri argue, we need to think beyond those forms of organization that would corrupt it, including the party, the trade union, and the mass organization. Just as the state and corporation enclose the commons, these forms of organization enclose the multitude.

While the multitude is not a traditional class category and the common is not a traditional class project in the orthodox Marxist sense, for Hardt and Negri, they are nonetheless engaged firmly from within the production process. Giorgio Agamben (1990/2007), by contrast, roots his understanding of the common solely in the communicative and linguistic activity of humans. What capitalism expropriates is not just production but, more fundamentally, communicative being as a whole. What Guy Debord saw as the society of the spectacle is, in the last instance, precisely this kind of expropriation. Within the spectacle, our “own linguistic nature comes back to us inverted,” which means that at the same time “the spectacle retains something like a positive possibility that can be used against it” (p. 80). The positive possibility is that we can experience language as such, not the ability to use language to say this or that, but pure communicability. The multitude of singularities for Agamben, then, is not united according to any predicates, identities, or conditions of belonging, but is diffused through their potentiality to experience being as such (i.e. a predicateless being). The political struggle is between this form of being—which Agamben calls “whatever being”—and the state. Thus, Agamben, like Hardt and Negri, endorses a horizontalist approach to organizing reclamation of the common.

These perspectives have been deeply influential in contemporary left thinking and have informed a wide variety of projects oriented around direct democracy from local cooperative movements, cyber-activism, to climate justice actions. Perhaps the most high-profile instantiation could be seen in the Occupy Wall Street protests that were organized on decentralized forms of consensus building and distributed decision-making. In educational theory, Tyson Lewis (2012) has drawn on Hardt and Negri and the deschooling perspectives of Ivan Illich to develop the concept of “exopedagogy” based in the immanent ontology of the common. For Lewis, exopedagogy is a “praxis of exodus” that relocates conceptions of education beyond transcendent categories of modernity and its colonial



logics. This includes thinking forms of education outside a liberal defense of public education as well as neoliberal privatism. Exopedagogy marks a new “educational commonwealth” that explodes the boundaries of the public and private property, state and capitalist command, and liberal and cosmopolitan frameworks of national and global citizenship education. He states:

... exopedagogy is a new notion of educational organization and location that moves beyond education as private property (a corporatized image of the school and the attending reduction of education to job training), public property of the state (as regulated from above by national standards), or political cosmopolitanism (where the model of the relation between the state and a rights bearing subject becomes a transcendental model for global regulation). Thus exopedagogy is an attempt to align teaching and learning with the creative and productive labor of ... the multitude and its struggle over the commonwealth. (pp. 845–846)

In a moment where educational institutions and imagination are being captured by the instrumental demands of capital, Lewis’ insistence that educational theory begin reevaluating its own concepts and assumptions in the service of imagining fundamentally different ways of thinking educational organization and pedagogy could not be more urgent. However, a central problem with exopedagogy, and with left analysis and politics based on horizontalism more broadly, is that it tends to view all forms of institutional structure and authority as necessarily oppressive and not as sites that can be harnessed and reconceived for achieving broadly progressive and emancipatory aims (Means, 2014). While non-institutional forms of decision-making may be ideal for enacting local commons where people can debate and collaborate face-to-face such as in the creation of urban gardens, community schools, and/or affordable housing and transportation, as we “scale up” problems begin to emerge. For instance, how do we imagine effectively tackling issues such as global climate change and weapons proliferation, or reimagine production, exchange, and labor for the common benefit of all without some sort of newly constructed mode of radical democratic institutional coordination?

Along these lines, David Harvey (2013) argues that the common adds another axis into political struggle without bypassing the question of existing institutions, state power, and/or civil society (i.e. that aspect of the public that cannot simply be subsumed under the rubric of the state).

Thinking more concretely about the management of the global commons and what that entails leads Harvey to argue for thinking new articulations of the horizontal and vertical in political organization. Examining the actually existing commons reveals that there are always struggles and contestations over commons. There are different commons and different political, social, and economic groups vying for power within and between them. As such, commons are not always productive and liberating, and enclosure is not always and only a destructive or alienating act. He suggests specific forms of enclosure may even be necessary to protect and produce the common, which requires the capacity of the state or some other type of vertically integrated structure. Harvey gives Amazonia as an example, noting that an act of enclosure may be necessary to protect the biodiversity and Indigenous populations therein. Access for some must be restricted in order for Indigenous life to thrive. The common, for Harvey, is thus not “a particular kind of thing, asset or even social process,” but rather “an unstable and malleable social relation between a particular self-defined social group and those aspects of its actually existing or yet-to-be-created social and/or physical environment deemed crucial to its life and livelihood” (p. 73).

Other thinkers like Chantal Mouffe (2013) and Jodi Dean (2012, 2016) have argued that the embrace of horizontalism has signaled the retreat of the left from politics altogether. Politics, for both Mouffe and Dean, is based on antagonism as well as mediation (Mouffe) or intensification (Dean) of fundamental divisions. Theorists of the common who avoid or circumvent these questions are ill equipped to directly challenge the neoliberal offensive. As Mouffe (2013) puts it:

It is not enough to organize new forms of existence of the common, outside dominant capitalist structures, as if the latter would progressively ebb away without any confrontations ... They celebrate the ‘common’ over the market, but their rejection of the ‘public’ and all the institutions linked to the state displays uncanny similarities with the neoliberal attitude. Their insistence on seeing the state as a monolithic entity instead of a complex set of relationships, dynamic and traversed by contradictions, precludes them from recognizing the multiple possibilities for struggling against the commodification of society that controlling state institutions could offer. (pp. 116–117)

Similarly, Dean critiques concepts of the multitude and biopolitical production for denying the constitutive existence of antagonism, “as if we did not speak multiple, incommensurable languages” (2012, p. 120).

The embrace of local, identity-based activist projects, she argues, have thus displaced questions of transformation onto concerns of inclusion and participation. According to Dean, while most strands of the left have withdrawn from questions of state power, capital has solidified its grasp over the state, thereby strengthening its power. Left movements therefore cannot bypass the state, because “the state won’t let them” (2016, p. 206). Ultimately, the embrace of horizontalism, Dean contends, leaves the left weak and divided, reinforcing neoliberal fragmentation and individualism. While for Mouffe the central issue raised by the common is one radical democratization via political contestations over ideology, for Dean, it is one of political organization, and she proposes a return to a communist party-form as an affective infrastructure that unites the many struggles of the oppressed into a common force that fully seizes the irreducible division that is common. In education, Derek Ford (2016) has worked to develop a praxis of communist study that assembles the dialectics of state/common, identity/difference, and inclusion/division as a constellation to be navigated pedagogically. Ford poses the communist party as an educational and political form of organization that is not the bearer of definitive knowledge, but the carrier of a desire that traverses the precarious assembling of contradictory elements of the liberatory project.

We do not wish to attempt a tidy resolution to these broader debates. Rather we see them as a series of productive tensions. One can embrace, for instance, the social ontology of the common and the deep anti-authoritarian spirit and principles articulated by Hardt and Negri as well as the expedagogical project of Tyson Lewis, while also recognizing the crucial need for political engagement and institutional organization advocated by Harvey, Mouffe, and Dean. As Noah De Lissovoy, Alexander Means, and Kenneth Saltman (2015) have argued, in relation to contemporary struggles over educational commons, one can defend public schools and universities against neoliberal enclosure, while also advocating for modalities of educational culture and imagination that exceed their historically prescribed institutional, epistemological, and ontological assumptions and limits. In recent years, there has in fact been a reinvigoration of such engagement. From Oaxaca, Montreal, Chicago, London, Santiago, to Madrid—coalitions of parents, students, educators, and activists have sought to directly challenge the intensification of privatization and austerity in education through occupations of educational spaces, educational strikes, standardized testing boycotts, and mass demonstrations against tuition hikes and ballooning student debt. A central challenge for many

educational theorists and activists has been how to reconcile the need to defend public educational institutions as a basic social good, while simultaneously trying to find new language and principles from which to reimagine them in ways that do not reproduce their historical and/or present limitations. This includes the need for developing radically sustainable and democratic eco-justice alternatives to education, pedagogy, and politics (Bowers, 1997; Martusewicz, Edmundson, and Lupinacci, 2014).

While there have been interventions across in the social sciences and humanities that have sought to pursue such questions, particularly in relation to the university, or what the Edu-factory Collective (2009) has referred to as the “social factory,” contributors to this volume largely come from the field of education itself. The traditions associated with critical pedagogy thus inform many of the discussions that follow. Importantly, these traditions do not confine education simply to schools and universities, but rather understand education more broadly as a cultural process, or what Paulo Freire, working with Brazilian peasants exiled from their communal lands, once referred to as *conscientization*, a fugitive act of “reading the word, to read the world” (Freire, 2003). For Freire, education was a site of radical love for the world and for others, a dynamic struggle for what he called “revolutionary futurity.” Similarly, Fred Moten and Stefano Harney (2004) describe such an approach to education as a “radical passion” and “collective orientation to the knowledge object as future project” (p. 102). Drawing on the black radical tradition, Harney and Moten refer to this form of education as “prophetic organization” beyond the material and ideational grammars of Eurocentrism, racism, and the colonial impulses of capitalist modernization (p. 102). The essays in this volume adhere to such a deeply humanizing conceptualization of education as a radical form of love in common, while they also look to the commons as a means of reframing and imagining possibilities for transforming our schools, universities, and collective learning in its image.

## OVERVIEW OF THE VOLUME

*Educational Commons in Theory and Practice* suggests that education and educational processes, both formal and informal, are central rather than peripheral to enacting commons within the current historical conjuncture. It is not intended as a systematic volume or statement, but rather as an invitation to thought and an offering to a broader conversation. The essays collected here explore in their own distinctive ways how conflicts