

Visiting Professors
Atelier Bow-Wow
Chair of Methods
and Analysis

Constructing the Commons
Conference TU Delft
Faculty of Architecture and
the Built Environment

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Constructing the Commons

The 'commons' are today widely and extensively discussed within different theoretical frames of reference. Historically the notion refers to natural resources that we have in common. Resources that are not individual property but available to all: air, water, earth. Nowadays, the term is used in very different ways in economic, social, and political theory, as well as within the creative industries. The project 'Constructing the Commons' is initiated by the chair of Methods and Analysis of the Faculty of Architecture and the Built Environment of the Delft University of Technology at the occasion of the visiting professorship of Momoyo Kajima and Yoshiharu Tsukamoto of the Tokyo based architectural office Atelier Bow-Wow. 'Constructing the Commons' wants to probe into the notion of commons from an architectural point of view.

First, the commons are understood as a series of concrete architectural and urban figures, which can be found in the Western and non-Western city and represent an idea of commonality. Out of this perspective the term refers to notions of the public realm. However, whereas the public realm is often thought to address the public at large in exceptional locales and moments, the commons seem to engage with smaller communities, within ordinary places and times. As well in Western as in non-Western contexts these figures of commonality seem to be increasingly absent from the contemporary ways that the city is transformed and developed. In our time of rapid development and strong differences, there seems to be a need to rethink and redraw these architectural figures of commonality.

Second, the commons are looked upon from a procedural perspective, implying the rituals, pleasures and politics of co-operation that articulate an architectural project. Increasingly there is an idea that architectural projects are not single-authored ventures, but rather complex and layered processes that depend upon multiple agencies that establish a commonality. This commonality encompasses the shared effort of designers, advisers, constructors, and owners, but

architectural projects are also the result of the commonalities of other stakeholders, like inhabitants, users and neighbors that negotiate forces into a new venture. In other words, architecture is a 'common enterprise', a public effort.

The 'Constructing the Commons' project thus reflects upon the contemporary practices of architecture and urban design by probing into the logos and praxis of the commons. As a final event of a series of different workshop, research seminars and educational projects, organized in cooperation with Atelier Bow-Wow, the conference 'Constructing the Commons' on March 3rd and 4th 2016 brings together different new perspectives. Renowned academics and designers will reflect upon the multiple challenges that the commons pose to the fields of architecture and urbanism, but also to the domains of sociology, political sciences, and philosophy. The conference wants to enrich our understanding of the commons, as architectural figure and architectural project.

Lectures

Aetzel Griffioen

Aetzel Griffioen starts his contribution with a reflection on the markedly different manner in which The Netherlands have shifted away from the commons or 'meent' in comparison with England. The Dutch land consolidations of the 20th century reveal a history of the loss of collective institutes in favour of the two pillars that are left to us now: state and market. This historico-philosophical approach serves to draw forth eight concepts on different scales of the commons. With these in hand, Griffioen will touch upon several strands of commonist thought in order to show they protect people and ecosystems against excesses of both state and market.

Aetzel Griffioen is an independent philosopher based in Rotterdam, and coordinator for 'Skillcity / Rotterdam Vakmanstad'. In this capacity he also teaches philosophy on primary schools.

10.45, March 3 (Berlage Rooms)

Arnold Reijndorp

The urban sociologist Arnold Reijndorp explores in his work the social practices of the inhabitants on the scale level of the urban neighborhood. What kind of everyday spaces can be understood as experienced by the people as 'common.' What factors affect this commonality? And how do changes in material, political and economical circumstances change the way space is used, as well as the readiness to take common ownership in local collective issues.

Arnold Reijndorp has been professor of social-economical and spatial development of new urban areas at the University of Amsterdam. He has written numerous books on urban issues, amongst which In Search of a New Public Domain (2001), which he co-authored with Maarten Hajer.

11.30, March 3 (Berlage Rooms)

Film by William H. Whyte

The film The Social Practices of Small Urban Spaces (1979) explores behavior in the urban parks, playgrounds and plaza's of New York and other cities. The film was, and is, groundbreaking in that it turns the gaze to the often forgotten figures of small common spaces and to the ignored rhythms of everyday social practices that engage with them.

13.30, March 3 (Berlage Rooms)

Jan Rothuizen

Jan Rothuizen investigates how certain activities of drawing contribute to the understanding of urban situations such as the commons, by addressing also layers of history and of use. He will explain his intentions with his well-known project of producing soft-maps of a broad range of urban and private places. He will expand these explorations with a reflection upon other drawing practices of architects, artists and graphic designers.

Jan Rothuizen is an artist living in Amsterdam. His drawings, the so-called soft-maps, are widely published and exhibited, as for instance in his book The Soft Atlas of Amsterdam (2014).

15.00, March 3 (Berlage Rooms)

Ton Schaap

Ton Schaap will extensively address the commons as a possible tool in urban planning, derived from his experiences in the Amsterdam urban developments in the last decades. The development of the city of Amsterdam has shown a broad range of scales that has been addressed. The financial crisis shifted the attention from the huge transformations and developments towards more slow and particular ways of (re)development. How do these changes affect today's assignment for the city, and how could the commons as figure and project contribute to the new directions that city is going?

Ton Schaap is working at the municipality of Amsterdam and is lector of Urban Design at the Amsterdam Academy of Architecture.

15.45, March 3 (Berlage Rooms)

Paola Viganò

In her well known designs for a wide range of urban sites, the figure of common space always plays an important role. This role can be purely strategic, as a way of immediately at the start of development is reserved and preserved for public use, until very precise design intervention in existing area's or being part of larger development. The precise quality of these spaces is astonishing. Paola Viganò will extensively discuss her experiences in urban design, explain how she, through her work, understands the value of common places, both as a design figure as well as a collective project.

Paola Viganò is urban designer, principal of the Milan based Studio Paola Viganò, and professor of Urban Design at École Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne and at the Università Iuav di Venezia.

16.45, March 3 (Berlage Rooms)

Momoyo Kaijima and Yoshiharu Tsukamoto

Momoyo Kaijima and Yoshiharu Tsukamoto, deepen the understanding of the commons as architectural figure and assignment, by making a distinction between commonalities and resources. Atelier Bow-Wow holds that our conception of the commons depends largely on the discovery, activation and reproduction of resources so that they can play a broader role for the community at large.

Momoyo Kaijima and Yoshiharu Tsukamoto are the founders of the Tokyo based office Atelier Bow-Wow, and were visiting professor at the Chair of Methods & Analysis of the Delft University of Technology, Faculty of Architecture and the Built Environment.

18.30, March 3 (Oost Serre)

Margaret Crawford

Margaret Crawford explores bottom-up practices within public space and illuminates through these practices the differentiated meanings everyday public spaces receive and hold. Her research on Los Angeles and other American cities has shown how inhabitants occupy space and adjust these to their needs and aspirations. These practices of inhabitants and their businesses depict (political) meaning to everyday spaces, and introduce an idea of commonality.

Margaret Crawford is professor of architecture at the University of Berkeley, California, and published numerous books and articles on cities and public spaces, amongst which (together with John Chase and John Kaliski) Everyday Urbanism (2000).

10.15, March 4 (Oost Serre)

Masatake Shinohara

In his lecture Masatake Shinohara will argue that commonality needs to be understood as a series of intangible atmospheres accommodating the breathing, walking and talking of people. He will develop this idea through a theoretical investigation of the socio-spatial qualities of Japanese style New Towns, which he describes as 'stasis', 'hollow' and 'paralysis'. These qualities offer an entrance to a more advanced consideration of the concept of commonality.

Masatake Shinohara is philosopher, teaching at Osaka University. He recently published the book On the Lived New Town, Philosophy of Future Space (2015).

11.15, March 4 (Oost Serre)

Richard Sennett

Richard Sennett probes into our understanding of architecture as a 'common' practice, implying the rituals, pleasures and politics of co-operation that articulate architectural projects. Architecture is a profession that by its nature always depends on working together, both within the own discipline as well as trans-disciplinary. Sennett investigates co-operation as a basic need within the human community, as well as a 'modus operandi' that propels ideas and empowers communities, neighborhoods and groups of inhabitants.

Richard Sennett is professor of sociology at New York University and the London School of Economics. He writes about cities, work, and culture, and is author of numerous books, amongst them Together (2012).

14.00, March 4 (Oost Serre)

George Baird

In his reflections upon 'public space' George Baird starts from the writings of the philosophers Hannah Arendt and Walter Benjamin and explores the tension between their concepts of action and distraction. He develops an understanding of urban figures that propel the opportunities of awareness, which means a change from the distracted perception towards the possibility of action. Baird will finish his lecture by investigating the work of Atelier Bow-Wow, and the instruments that are used within this practice to establish 'common' spaces by interviewing Momoyo Kaijima and Yoshiharu Tsukamoto.

George Baird is emeritus professor of architectural design at the University of Toronto, and writer of numerous books on architecture and public space. Amongst them Public Space: Cultural/Political Theory, Streetphotography (2011).

15.00, March 4 (Oost Serre)

Colophon

Constructing the Commons

The Project 'Constructing the Commons' is organized by the Chair of Methods and Analysis of the Faculty of Architecture and Built Environment of the Delft University of Technology and is initiated at the occasion of the visiting professorship of Momoyo Kaijima and Yoshiharu Tsukamoto of the Tokyo based architectural office Atelier Bow-Wow. The project investigates the commons from a tangible perspective, an architectural point of view, first as a series of concrete architectural and urban figures and second from a procedural perspective, implying the rituals, pleasures and politics of co-operation that articulate an architectural project.

Conference

March 3rd and 4th, 2016, a conference is organized at the Delft University of Technology addressing the histories and actualities of the commons, both as architectural figures that enables and accommodate social practices, as well as modus operandi of the architectural project.

Location

Faculty of Architecture and the Built Environment
Delft University of Technology
Julianalaan 134, 2628 BL Delft
The Netherlands

Organization

Visiting Professors Atelier Bow-Wow, Momoyo Kaijima and Yoshiharu Tsukamoto
Chair of Methods and Analysis, Tom Avermaete and Hans Teerds
With the help of Soscha Monteiro de Jesus

Registration

If you wish to attend the conference, please fill in the registration form on www.constructingthecommons.com

Contact

For more information on the project and conference 'Constructing the Commons, please visit our website: www.constructingthecommons.com or contact Hans Teerds: p.j.teerds@tudelft.nl

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