

Right to the city – reclaiming the commons

In the context of this work, right to the city is about reclaiming the commons. Rights to urban commons have been under threat and enclosures have occurred due to land speculation and due to commons becoming subjected to market forces. Different proposals for relationships between ownership and usage rights of urbanity are discussed in the paper; furthermore, I will postulate the right to urban recreation areas. I will conclude that usage rights of the commons have to be recognized as a primary measure of value of urban, public space. In so doing, I will operate under the Common and the Economy heading.

Rest of my paper is more philosophical in nature. I will have a closer look of the concepts of the Right to the City and the commons. Right to the city is both a political program declaration and a research concept. I will have a closer look on definitions of urban rights, both in academic papers and in NGO driven declarations. Those proposed in the NGO driven declarations are the more detailed but they are aimed as recommendations for practical implementation; on the other hand, those by scholars are presented as ideals. Here, a proposal for a Lefebvrian transduction from ideals to implementation is needed and attempted; for this purpose, I will present a how-to-read for his conception.

I will maintain that Right to the City is:

- an urban application of citizenship rights
- an urban human rights programme
- a definition of relationships and processes

A wide notion of commons, including social and cultural commons, is at the core of the Right to the City. Essential about commons is not ownership but usage rights. Commons are an antithesis to the ubiquitous commercialization of urbanity. I will discuss some proposals to maintain, manage, reclaim or enclose the commons. Furthermore, I will present a few examples to illustrate these proposals.

I will postulate that the cry for reclaiming the urban commons is about the Lefebvrian rights to the city, including rights to the centrality, right to social life, right to access to and definition of production of space, right to environs (habitat and to inhabit), right to full usage of moments and places and right to appropriation (usage rights, as opposite to private property).

As David Harvey calls for re-birth of urban commons, and to him, this requires mobilization for recognizing derivative rights, they perhaps have to be placed ahead of the previously recognized basic rights. This has implications to what includes to the Right to the City declaration, to define commoning as the most general and fundamental of urban rights.