Commoning Design Pedagogy – the First-Year Experience.

Olivia Hamilton

RMIT Architecture and Urban Design – Interior Design.

This paper discusses the value of engaging commoning as an innovative pedagogical approach to structure a transition into a tertiary learning environment for spatial design students. ‘Commoning pedagogy’ a term I have coined, can facilitate a sense of belonging and produce capacity and confidence in students entering tertiary design studies.

Commoning entails locating self-interest within wider interests that privilege the well-being and ecology of the community and identifies the care-taking characteristics within the individuals that maintain projects, work or spaces in common. The design studio class is particularly well placed to incorporate commoning and initiate experiences with mutuality as it is already a space dedicated to creative work with a community of learners undertaking the same project. The application of commoning pedagogy to spatial design learning is discussed through three large-scale learning projects delivered in the first two weeks of university. The projects discussed use commoning process in various ways to inform the curricula and structure the learning experience.

This research proposes that using commoning processes and values can encourage participation and the development of mutuality which brings with it a sense of belonging and investment. The pedagogical approach transforms the cohort of new spatial design students into a community and structures a transition to a tertiary learning environment that emphasizes care in the students; for each other, their creative work, and the world they will contribute to as designers.
• Author(s) Biography (200 words each):
Olivia's research practice is interested in how creative spatial practices can be developed and guided by commoning, and how, in turn, creative practice can be conducive to a proliferation of commoning. Her work explores the proposition that creative collaborative practices can bring new perspectives and capacities to commoning and in return, the social and spatial praxis of commoning provides creative practice with ways to seek, recognise and value experiences of mutuality. Olivia's PhD thesis is titled "A Commoning Creative Practice: Tending to Mutuality in Spaces of Engagement". Her ongoing research is conducted through creative spatial practice, design pedagogy and writing. In her role as coordinator of first year and associate lecture at RMIT she is interested in how innovative pedagogical approaches that draw on commoning processes and values can transform first year students’ experience. Professional practice includes working in New York as an Interior Designer for global commercial clients and as lead designer in several product design studios. In Australia she has worked as an interior designer and a furniture designer for Federation Square, as well as an interior designer in several other Melbourne architecture practices.