Held in common: science fiction and collective spaces

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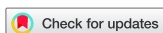# Held in common: science fiction and collective spaces

The world is on fire, and our walls do not shelter us. As an architect confronted by the crises of architectural futures, I turn to the spaces of science fiction (sf), those who imagine alongside us. Like Bodhisattva Chattopadhyay I find critical companions in sf CoFutures, these narratives 'of solidarities for possible futures'. This article is impelled by one such fiction, Alexis Pauline Gumbs' *M-Archive* (2018), to address architecture's complicity in injustice and iniquity, and is guided by sf narratives that depict alternative futures of common space, from Harry Josephine Giles' *Deep Wheel Orcadia* (2021), M.E. O'Brien and Eman Abdelhadi's *Everything for Everyone* (2022), Starhawk's *The Fifth Sacred Thing* (1994), to Becky Chamber's *Record of a Spaceborn Few* (2018). These imagined worlds are held alongside spatial theory, architectural practice, and acts of collaborative making to consider the commons as a site of collective possibility. In 2023, these fictions were shared in two public workshops, written onto pieces of fabric alongside scholarly works and personal experiences, which were then combined to create a patchwork quilt. This quilt is both source and method for this article, an act of collective making used to explore the commons as place and practice. Similarly, each of the article's four sections draws together fiction, making, theory, and practice to address interlinked aspects of the commons, from acts of commoning, common land, commoner, to commonwealth. Throughout, it extols the possibility of sf as a site of collective action, potent and present, through which we might imagine and construct architectural CoFutures.

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Common space

> there came a time when they couldn't distinguish between themselves and the walls […] they were the walls. they became the projected image the walls sent out to earn their right to exist […] so when everything imploded it was not the breaking bones and the lost flesh that shocked them. everyone knows the human body is fragile. what shocked them was how fast a wall can fall.[1]

I am responsible for more than my share of walls. As an architect, I have dreamed them, drawn them, and overseen their construction in concrete and

sweat. It is often hard to untangle the practice of architecture from the building of walls. As a profession, we are dependent upon them. But the world is on fire, and our walls do not shelter us.

This existential crisis requires me to radically reconsider what architecture could be. Such change cannot be faced alone, and so I urge those of us involved in the spatial disciplines to turn to science fiction (sf) and draw strength from those who imagine alongside us.[2] These writers also practice the construction of new worlds through imagined spaces, creating settings that structure narrative possibility. While many works of sf replicate ideologies of colonialism and linear narratives of progress,[3] I draw critical strength from those fictions which 'rebuild the narrative of solidarities for possible futures, seizing control from the closed futures of disaster capitalism'[4] The work of imagining and realising these 'CoFutures' as defined by Bodhisattva Chattopadhyay requires engagement with an expanded field of sf which holds open complex futurisms of solidarity,[5] offering what Taryne Jade Taylor describes as a 'more collaborative, collective way of being in the world'.[6]

Confronted by my own architectural responsibility, both for the walls I have built and the futures under construction, I determinedly allow my practice to be reshaped by the worlds of sf. Throughout this article, I am remade by *M-Archive: After the End of the World*, a novel by Alexis Pauline Gumbs comprising short prose-poems that model these CoFutures of complex futurity and solidarity. Gumbs describes this as a 'speculative documentary' written 'in collaboration with the survivors, the far-into-the-future witnesses to the realities we are making possible or impossible with our present apocalypse'.[7] As an architect-reader, the extract which opens this article is a powerful depiction of how architecture walls us in, how it is complicit in making some realities possible or impossible. It requires me to recognise architectural practice as a tool, which constructs both property and property relations, requiring inhabitants to dedicate their lives to earning the right to shelter. These literal walls come to metaphorically constrain the sense of self of both architect and inhabitant.[8] Through *M-Archive*, I confront my own foreclosure of futures, these imagined walls which delineate the edges of possibility. But this text also offers me the hope that, having been made, these walls can be unmade, and I am challenged to imagine what architecture might be after these walls have fallen. Perhaps architecture can be what it could have been, the practice of imagining, making, and constructing without enclosure.

In the introduction to *M-Archive*, Gumbs calls to the reader to 'let this text be alive, as you are alive',[9] which is to say, always in progress. I am a work in progress, and the work of unbuilding requires me to unlearn my own education, which focused on a canon of white European male architects and framed them as the makers of the built world. I must unpick the patterns of thinking which allowed that to be taught as true, as well as the seemingly intractable relationship between architecture and the violence of entrenched hierarchies of power and the iniquities of property ownership. I am not alone in undertaking this work. As Doina Petrescu and Kim Trogal argue, 'architecture needs to reinvent itself, to revise its value systems, its means and definitions, its vocabulary of practice'.[10] In this, I am indebted to the works of queer theory and Black

feminist scholarship which appear throughout this paper which have taught me to look beyond the canon and beyond architecture for spaces of solidarity that resist enclosure.

I write this from my home in East London on the edge of Epping Forest where, Samia Khatun tells me, I can find the oak which framed John Locke's conception of private property.[11] Locke argued that, if a tree can be transformed into timber, made into a product by acts of human labour, so land can be transformed into property. Indeed, the concept of 'the tragedy of the commons' argues that land *should* be enclosed as property, where commons are unmanaged and thus vulnerable to exploitation.[12] But Locke's oak still stands; it remains intricately entwined in the network of the forest and resolutely unconverted into product, and I find that commons persist and resist. The Urban Commons Research Collective suggests that commons might provide a model for collective ways of being as 'the basis of coalitions of differences that resist fragmentation and emphasise kinship and interdependence';[13] they are transformational infrastructures for 'troubling troubled times'.[14] While Torange Khonsari argues that commons can serve to 'construct the cracks, towards new imagined ways of doing', operating as a form of spatial inquiry on the threshold of social imagination that is 'barely possible and almost unthinkable'.[15] So, I turn to those works of sf which explore the ideas of commons as place and practice, which manifest the almost unthinkable in order to imagine futures of collective interrelation.

This article is arranged in four interrelated sections: 'acts of commoning', 'common land', 'commoner', and 'commonwealth', each addressing an interlinked aspect of the commons, and a concluding section entitled 'held in common'.[16] Each section opens with an extract from *M-Archive* not only as a depiction of this aspect but also as a means of approach, a way to radically reframe my own entrenched patterns of thought about architectural practice.[17] This is placed alongside architectural projects which enact these aspects of commons, and fictional work which imagines collective ways of being, including Harry Josephine Giles' *Deep Wheel Orcadia*, M. E. O'Brien and Eman Abdelhadi's *Everything for Everyone: An Oral History of the New York Commune 2052–2072*, Starhawk's *The Fifth Sacred Thing*, and Becky Chamber's *Record of a Spaceborn Few*.

I consider the imaginary worlds of sf as already extant sites that can be held in common by multiple readers. Sf's status as 'low' or popular fiction renders these imaginary worlds equally available to those within the built environment disciplines as those beyond them, spanning disciplinary and professional boundaries. They contain other-worldly elsewheres designed to estrange their readers and encourage critical reflection on the given world.[18] It is in these fictions that I find future worlds which stretch out beyond enclosure, models for these all too urgent acts of revolution. Following Jane Rendell's conception of interdisciplinary practice, the worlds of sf can offer a 'place between disciplines',[19] acknowledging the interdisciplinary nature of commoning discourse and creating space to critically consider the social, material, and aesthetic aspects of the commons. By reading fictional works, architectural practices, and theory together in this paper, I attempt to address how commons might be both imagined and enacted.

Figure 1.
Two people kneel on picnic blankets strewn with paperback novels and point at small squares of gingham and tartan cloth onto which have been written quotes and comments: 'making private common', 'small actions accumulate', and 'still in a state of change', 'Held in Common: Held on the Common', public workshop, 2 June 2023, photographed by David Roberts

But just as I cannot address the commons through one discipline, I cannot contemplate it alone. So, each section of this article also includes descriptions and quotes from two workshops I ran as part of this research. These are written in italics, and they serve as enacted interjections that direct or divert my research process. They are a small practice of commoning which informs my thinking, meaning that, while the commons are the subject of this paper, acts of commoning are also integrated into its methodology. With the participants' permission, I draw on this work as a collective source of insight I could never have hoped to develop alone, together establishing a collective 'we' that is used throughout this text, formed through these acts of collaborative making (Fig. 1).
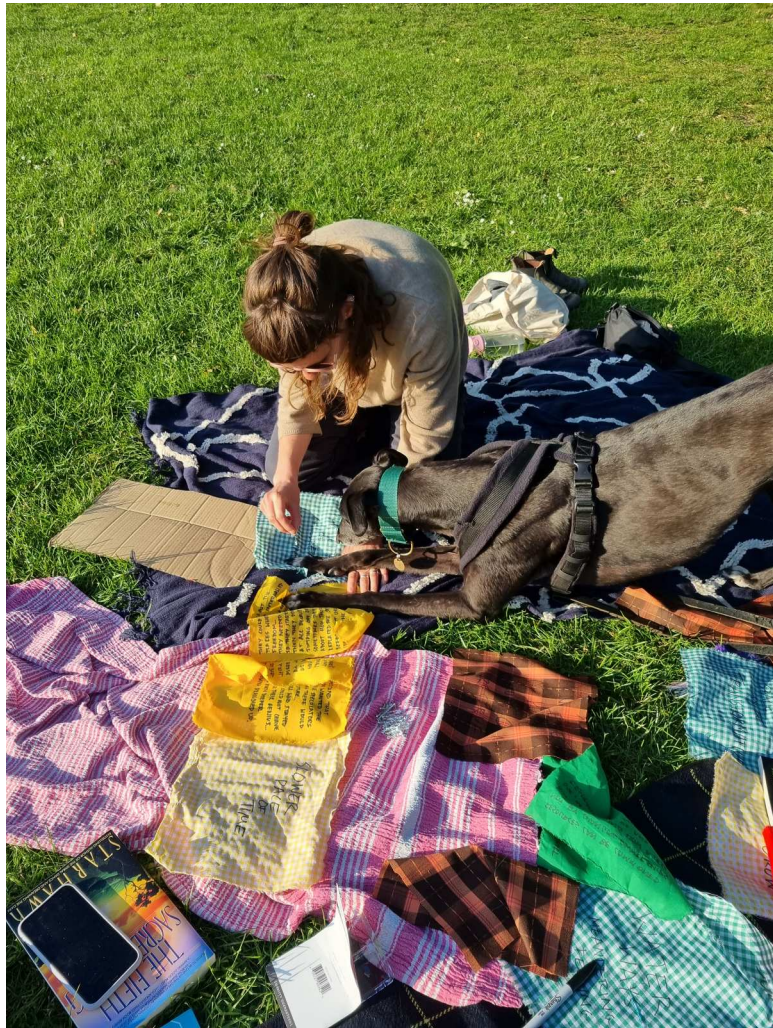
The first one-off workshop was held outdoors on Well Street Common, an area of common land in East London. The workshop was part of the London

Festival of Architecture 2023; while it was free to attend and open to the public, it attracted a group with an interest in common spaces or an interest in speculative fiction, including architects, architectural lecturers, and members of community groups. I determinedly placed my nascent research in the hands of participants with the intention that we hold this resource of research as knowledge in common.[20] I invited reflection and discussion of extracts of fiction and architectural and spatial theory, and asked individuals to add their own experiences and insights, writing each memory or extract onto a square of fabric. We then composed these into a physical patchwork quilt, pinning pieces together to create connections between fragments in a makeshift expression of shared relation. In doing so, we also created a common space between us, held together by deeply personal understandings and experiences, enacted through our mutual composition of shared material.

I subsequently took this patchwork quilt with me to 'Un/Building the Future: The Country and the City in the Anthropocene'. I ran a second one-off workshop as part of my keynote talk, which shared developing research and reflections from the first workshop.[21] I laid out the patchwork across the lecture theatre along with blank squares and invited participants to add further stories, quotes, and references during and after the lecture as a live reflection on this work. This conference brought together academics from a broad range of disciplines alongside urban practitioners and activists, whose work was concerned with spatial imaginaries and ecological crisis. Running this workshop within a conference, albeit one without a fee, constrained access to those who were comfortable within institutional spaces, but offered a counterpoint to the public workshop. While the first workshop primarily prompted recollection of personal lived experience, the academic context of this second workshop prompted citations and critical reflection through multiple overlapping disciplines. As we modified and extended this patchwork, we shared our understandings of common space drawn from the specific fields and practices with which we were familiar, valuing these alongside lived experiences, enacting the construction of common space through this small act of spatial design practice.

The words of Gumbs challenge me to imagine an architectural practice which is more than the wall, or which could exist after these walls have fallen; these workshops provided me with a place to start. They were spatially located and resulted in a patchwork which delineates a physical shared space of collective thought while remaining resolutely un-bounded, able to be extended, unpicked, reconfigured, and remade. But I still struggle to envisage built space without the boundary mechanisms like walls, which inherently enclose. I gratefully turn to Jack Halberstam's work on 'unbuilding', which considers trans* bodies as 'fleshly blueprints for the unbuilding of binary understandings'.[22] Halberstam develops this understanding through Gordon Matta-Clark's acts of cutting into architectural space, which 'resists mastery, refuses to build, and finds other ways to alter the environments we move through, where we live and die',[23] existing on and beyond the threshold of structural impossibility. Through this reading, I am able to tangibly grasp the possibility of unbuilding walls, not as a singular act of demolition, but as the creative

Figure 2.
A dog is lying on a picnic blanket with its paw resting on a small square of gingham cloth that a person is safety-pinning to another square, in the process of creating a makeshift patchwork, 'Held in Common: Held on the Common', public workshop, 2 June 2023, photographed by David Roberts

opening of 'multiple escape routes from the systems that mark and claim bodies and spaces'.[24] This resonates with Stavros Stavrides' conceptualisation of common space as a threshold, a resolute challenge to further exclusion, breaking the delineating edges which might hold us apart and 'opening the boundaries'.[25] Fred Moten and Stefano Harney contend that boundary walls of ownership and control, of distinction and definition, are built as a defence against the radical possibility of the common. For them, commons are that which has not been enclosed, that permeates and exists beyond the bounded space or moment, 'beyond and beneath — before and before — enclosure'.[26] Through this process of reading, reflection, and collective remaking, I am driven to unbuild the walls of ownership and control which define my role as an architect, to hold open spaces of possibility.

Acts of commoning

> the space is woven. multicoloured bright patterns lovingly threaded together. when you touch them, you know that each piece was woven by someone who believed in this quilted moment. this soft vibrant welcoming space […] you can feel their presence as you put the fabric on your hands. as you begin weaving now.[27]

While one prose-poem in *M-Archive* challenges me to tear down architecture's walls, another offers this vibrant vision of space 'lovingly threaded together', resisting enclosure with intentional inter-relation. This extract does not depict a common space, but an act of commoning, and such acts are continually present in both the content and construction of *M-Archive*. Throughout, Gumbs addresses the continuing violence of the transatlantic slave trade as a 'relationship which persists'[28] and navigates the presence of these 'compelled crossings' by constructing intentional crossings and meeting points between this work and other texts, studding the novel with further readings and composing each prose-poem in direct reference to a quote from *Pedagogies of Crossing* by M. Jacqui Alexander.[29] Just as commons are a resistance to enclosure, this novel actively resists the violence of ownership, holding itself open through wilful acts of inter-relation.

As an architect, the image of space 'woven by someone who believed' resonates with my understanding of architecture as a utopian profession, each project founded on the belief that it will remake the world in some small way. While blueprint utopianism might present this as the exceptional product of individual vision, this extract and the references to other texts threaded through *M-Archive* reorient me towards the relationships created by acts of handover, where an incomplete project still laden with aspirational intent is placed in the hands of another. It asks me to unpick any lingering conception of architecture as a building-product or singular object, and to attend to the myriad ways in which the built is always under construction. Here, I can recognise the architectural project as ongoing, re-patterned through the acts of inhabitation, maintenance, and use. Through this text, I am inspired to understand both architecture and commons as more than a physical space and see them as an ongoing practice.

Massimo de Angelis identifies three key features of a commons: a community of commoners, a commonwealth which is the source of resources, and, most critically, the process of commoning. Commoning is the act that continually establishes and enacts the commons, '(re)producing resources and commoners, and in turn (re)producing the commons at new levels and in new forms'.[30] As Peter Linebaugh describes, 'the commons is an activity' best expressed as a verb rather than as a noun.[31] It is an act of mutual constitution and recognition that is continually remade, a coming together and inter-relation between individuals, human and non-human, animate and inanimate (Fig. 2).

We tentatively introduce ourselves, spreading out our blankets on the grass. Over the sounds of an early Friday evening, the beers being opened and shouts of welcome, we read extracts from M-Archive aloud to one another. Perhaps woven space is not the right analogy for these acts of gathering. I look to the overlapping edges of our picnic blankets, temporarily patchworked together. Rather than the pristine possibilities of new spools of thread, patchwork grapples with the frayed edges of the world as it is. It refashions and gives new purpose, holding the potential to transform. Over the next hour, we explore ideas of the commons through the construction of a patchwork cloth made of fabric squares, each holding a fragment of text. I carry this with me to Warwick, where someone writes on a blank square of fabric about the transgression of warp and weft: '[…] writing the spiral of life across the multiplying edges and intersections of a made mesh means a building out rather than a building in with what is on a frayed margin'. How much is it possible to change the pattern, to remake what has been handed over?

The Power Station project, enacted by Hilary Powell and Dan Edelstyn, and the residents of thirty homes in Waltham Forest, who constitute The Powerful Community Benefit Society and Optimistic Foundation CIC, explores the possibilities of transgression and repurposing within the constraints of the suburban street.[32] They are working to install solar panels on the rooftops of their homes, networked together so that they operate as a local power station. By collectivising the infrastructure of power generation and its distribution, they hope to directly address issues of energy inequality, confront energy poverty, and address the escalating cost of living amidst climate emergency. This model of commoning is founded on the premise of mutual need and geographic co-location, tangible relationships through physical networks of connection. The panels are purchased as a group with funds raised from community events; this is an act of commoning that creates a group of commoners to share the commonwealth of power generated.

As I consider this project alongside the woven space of practice described by *M-Archive* and the patchwork of the workshop, I understand this spatial project as a tangible manifestation of these threads of connection between people and places. Here, the labours of care that are already present within the built fabric of each individual home, the legacies of maintenance and modification, are intentionally extended to generate new possibilities of community care which surpass the property line limitations of individual ownership. Each home is 'lovingly threaded together' through an act of mutual constitution, through the act of commoning.

A group of children runs past us, buoyant with liberation from the school week. As we sit amidst the distinct groups of families and friends, we question who is involved in the acts of commoning, and what holds us apart. Someone speaks about their work in a community garden, and joy shapes their words as they discuss the agency of each member and the revelation of intergenerational community. The garden is always in progress, always being intentionally remade by all those who choose to work on it, and by the wider networks of life of which it is a part. In Warwick, I collect up the patchwork squares that

*are spread across tabletops and draped over the backs of chairs. Many remain
blank, but some people have chosen to write on new squares of fabric or to pin
pieces together, to take what was the product of one place and render it
ongoing. One patchwork square reflects on intention and process and asks:
'Are we unsatisfied? Yes, if that means we are never finished. If our pleasure
consists in moving, being moved, endlessly. Always in motion: openness is
never spent nor sated.'*

Harry Josephine Giles' *Deep Wheel Orcadia* also addresses collective becom-
ing through the multiple voices of a community located on an isolated space
station.[33] It is a series of prose-poems composed both in the Orkney dialect
of this station and in English translation, and the slippages, cadence, and
tones powerfully express each character's own voice as an act of self-narration.
It tells the story of a deliberately isolated location selected so that those who live
there might 'choose a different way of choosing' to practice ways of being
together that might otherwise be lost.[34] They find themselves now grappling
with questions of tradition, compelled to discuss: 'The changes. What hasn't
changed. What should. What might. What must. What will.'[35] The world of
Deep Wheel Orcadia is not a commons, but as each character refashions
their role in relationship to those around them, it offers an image of community
as continually reconstituted through the conscious work of individual
members. It critically reflects on the complex implications of the extractive pro-
cesses which sustain them, and as it begins to recognise the agency of the
otherworldly other, it hints at a future reframing of resource which cannot
deny mutual impact. Similar conflicts of tradition and transformation are
present in architectural practice. This fiction directly addresses the complexities
of architecture as an industry mired in extractivism, where survival now necessi-
tates the rapid transformation of habitual patterns of behaviour, including dis-
mantling livelihoods, and where the resistance exerted by vested interests can
seem insurmountable. But, in its narration of multiple voices, this fiction
reminds me that any community is the product of its individual members,
and collective action can grow from these potent acts of mutual recognition.
This is not the realisation of common space, not yet, but perhaps it is a way
to begin acts of commoning.

In response, I turn my attention away from singular projects that might serve
as models and allow myself to be drawn to works such as the 'Architecture is
Climate' project by the MOULD research collective, which expresses architec-
ture's ongoing entanglement with climate breakdown and presents multiple
'paths to other ways of doing architecture' through spatial acts of mutual con-
stitution.[36] As the 'Spaces of Commoning' research project argues, commons
are 'not yet made but always in the making', and spaces of commoning are a
'set of spatial relations produced by practices that arise from coming
together'.[37] The radical potential of such continual becoming is addressed
through conceptions of queer commoning, which, as José Esteban Muñoz
details, is a 'means without end'.[38] As Nadja Millner-Larsen and Gavin Butt
celebrate, queer commoning is 'not only about envisioning new models of
public, collective, or common ownership [… but] also, importantly, about trans-

forming the modes of social reproduction on which such mechanisms depend'.[39] Through this framing, I am able to glimpse acts of commoning which do not simply sustain the commons they create; instead, they create the possibility for further future transformation, without end. These works demand that I reject ideas of architecture-as-product, which serve to manifest and re-produce existing social inequities, and instead attend to architecture-as-process, continually open to transformation as it is made and unmade by many hands.

Common land

> no part of anywhere was free. something had to be done, but what could they do when everything had a price [...] so they stole themselves, which was a break with everything, which was the most illegal act since the law that made them property, and they had to re-rhythm everything, re-tune bass in their chests, and immediately and perpetually they gave themselves away, the selves they had to give, the reclaimed flesh and bones and skin.[40]

No part of anywhere is free. This is what the logic of land ownership tells me, that there is no space outside, no place or person without edges which are clearly delineated and defined in terms of property control. While acts of commoning are not spatially contingent, the work of architecture is all too tethered to the power and politics of land. This extract from *M-Archive* depicts a future which is already a lived present; both an extrapolation and a description of racial capitalism as the generation of wealth based on the extraction of ground, of culture, and of lives. I am familiar with the fury I feel when confronted by spatial iniquity present in the seizure of land; both the overt theft of place and the more subtle machinations of land value that displace communities. My own simmering objection to land ownership which derives profit by denying need is intertwined with the growing concern in architectural practice for the more-than-financial costs of construction and the impacts on places and lives that extend out into the future. In the way it addresses freedom, cost, and property, this extract expresses the complex interrelation of multiple practices of ownership. It challenges me to recognise that, as long as place is property and everything has a price, then there is no part of anywhere that is free.

My understanding of the commons before this project was founded on histories of enclosure in the UK, where common land available for shared use was transferred into private ownership. These practices were extended in the logic of colonisation where land inhabited by Indigenous communities was deemed terra nullius, land belonging to no-one, available to be seized and occupied. The pervasive and irredeemable violence of these acts overwhelms me in ways which make alternatives hard to discern. But political philosophers George Caffentzis and Silvia Federici remind me that, when speaking of commons, 'we do not speak only of small-scale experiments'.[41] Rather, the commons include large-scale organisation of communities which span conti-

Figure 3.
The summer evening shadow of a bicycle falls across the grass of Well Street Common, alongside an array of gingham and tartan cloth squares which are laid out in an open-ended patchwork of interconnected thoughts, quotes, and extracts from fiction, 'Held in Common: Held on the Common', public workshop, 2 June 2023, photographed by David Roberts

nents, and systems of organisation which still persist in wilful resistance to the encroachment and attack of capitalism.

While we introduce ourselves, other after-work groups arrive in Well Street Common, each carefully spreading out their blankets, spacing themselves between those who are already here. We regard the span of grass which surrounds us and begin to discuss the legal ownership of land and ownership enacted through practice (Fig. 3). I think about those public spaces which are selectively inaccessible based on income, race, or intent. One person discusses the painful exclusions of gendered space and what might be possible in its place. We recount stories of getting ready together in shared bathrooms, preparing for parties in safe spaces of personal transformation, and write these onto a fabric square. There are smiles of recognition from those who have felt this frisson of collective delight and power through practice. It is a fleeting and transitory joy, domestic and easily dismissed, but, as we make the patchwork, we resolutely pin this square to one that contains a quote from Caffentzis and Federici, 'we do not speak only of small-scale experiments'.[42] During the conference in Warwick, someone extends this part of the patchwork with a new square onto which they have written the lyrics to a post-war Lebanese song. As I read across these squares, the patchwork now extols the virtue of

small acts of collective trust, reclaiming the space of moments which 'rise from under the rubble like an almond's rose in spring'.

There are projects, like *The Atlas of Ownership*, which document the rights and responsibilities within different property models to consider where power over place is vested and how. It identifies alternatives to individual or corporate ownership, like Community Land Trusts (CLTs), which allow communities to own property and buy back the land they live on.[43] This model was used by residents of Granby in Liverpool, who established themselves as a CLT to resist iniquitous social cleansing. This area was initially threatened with demolition through the Housing Market Renewal Initiative and, subsequent developer-led displacement. When a commercial tender stalled, the residents were able to step in as a CLT to access funding and government support, which had been withheld from them as either individuals or informal community. They worked with the architecture practice Assemble, who won the Turner Prize for the outcome of this collaboration, to gradually gain ownership of ten homes and transforming one into a community winter garden, a built manifestation of this transfer of power.[44]

When I consider this project through the workshop discussion on ownership, it thrums with the power of reclaimed space, a vital act of resistance against the financial pressure of private land ownership. It offers the hope that community occupation can be established on firm legal ground, able to resist changes in governmental policy and rising land value which threaten temporary use projects. It is more than a small-scale experiment. But the extract from *M-Archive* lingers and reminds me that this project is predicated on an ability to buy a place in the world; it has not yet broken free from systems of land ownership. As J.K Gibson-Graham, Jenny Cameron, and Stephen Healy argue, common land should not be another form of property where freedom is purchased, existing as enclaves of hope within pervasive capitalism. Instead, they call for an anti-capitalocentic approach which is not predicated on purchase, noting that 'resources can be commoned not by changing ownership but by changing how access, use, benefit, care and responsibility occur'.[45]

It is Friday evening and around us drinks are opened, and speaker systems emerge with waves of pulsing bass and up-tempo pop. Someone in our group recounts an experience of walking through a garden and hearing multiple families singing. It was unclear what had caused this joyful synchronous expression, but the presence of these overlapping communities of voice moved them deeply. They tell us how this changed the garden, claiming it in ways that were multiple and coexistent. They write about the awareness of others on a patchwork square and pin it to a Caffentzis and Federici quote calling us to 'put our lives in common'. After the conference, I find a square with a quote from Mrs Dalloway which seems similarly redolent with intimate connection to place entirely distinct from ownership, 'she being part, she was positive, of the trees at home; of the house there, ugly, rambling, all to bits and pieces as it was; part of the people she had never met […]'.

This co-existent multiplicity is present in M. E. O'Brien and Eman Abdelhadi's *Everything for Everyone,* which is written as a series of fictional oral history

interviews with individuals who each recount their place within an ongoing revolution.[46] It presents an array of voices including those involved in sex work, gestational labour, ecological restoration, the liberation of the levant, and the communisation of space. These individuals have each worked to occupy space in differing ways: reclaiming educational buildings, repurposing factories, or restructuring homes to support extended networks of kinship. This is not a collection of stories about design and construction, which remakes space to a fixed plan, or about projects that serve a lucky few amidst the ongoing violence of capitalism. Rather, these stories recount acts of commoning in the re-purposing of spaces which already exist to provide what has always been needed, including acts of seizure, occupation, and temporary construction on undeveloped land. It presents these re-makings of space as a collective and collaborative effort to build inclusion, 'it was like the new world belonged to her too, it wouldn't leave her behind'.[47] Notions of private property and land ownership are resolutely rejected as the land is held in common and relationships to space are established through community in patterns of care.

By bringing together these fictions, workshops, and architectural practices, I find myself better able to understand common space both as an active resistance to ownership and as an alternative which rejects the financial framing of space altogether. I draw hope from built examples of common land which work within the cracks of existing systems like R-Urban, which occupied space ceded by the council in Colomb for cooperative gardens and workshops,[48] and from those like the Zapatista movement of Indigenous Mexicans who actively reject capitalism's foundational premise.[49] As Caffentzis and Federici argue, we do not need to enter into the logic of land ownership in order to transgress it. Their ideal of an anti-capitalist commons would exist beyond and outside financial valuing, to truly 'put our lives in common'.[50] Through these works, I am driven to be dissatisfied with the restructuring of ownership where common land is simply another form of property and am compelled to look for spaces beyond transaction, remade by the act of commoning.

Commoners

> you have to understand that this is after no one wanted the land. when erstwhile speculators had ceased believing there would be a profitable future […] by the end, the ones who stayed were the ones who could not leave. they stayed. with all their genius […] their roots grew even deeper and their knowing branched up […][51]

I turn to this extract from *M-Archive* to understand common land as an alternative beyond ownership, to inhabit the horizon of possibility. It posits a future when land is no longer profitable and uses this imagined future to ask what would remain once commercial land value is stripped away. In this extract, all that remains are those who could not leave, those who are rooted in place.

Figure 4.
A small section of the patchwork is rumpled where it is laid out on the grass or bunched up where it is held together by safety pins, and, while shadows obscure much of the text, some is legible, including 'blurring edges of community identity', 'slower pace of time', and 'connection with earth', 'Held in Common: Held on the Common', public workshop, 2 June 2023, photographed by David Roberts

But through the creation of common land, they are transformed into commoners, the interrelations between people and place grow through acts of commoning, and this rooted entanglement is recast as a source of mutual flourishing.

This metaphorical and literal intertwining of lives forces me to recognise the contrived divisions that haunt my architectural education. My notebooks are filled with precedents which celebrate individual human exceptionalism, failing to recognise the labours of those who built and maintained, the wider

communities whose lives were reshaped, or the inter-relation with more-than-human networks. But of course, there is no work which is not co-creation, and following *M-Archive* I must make a conscious effort to recognise my fellow commoners in all their forms. Gibson-Graham, Cameron, and Healy argue that the idea of resource and commoner must be radically reframed, stating: 'The commoner, is no longer (and perhaps never was) a person or a category.'[52] For them, the more-than-human has always been 'entangled as part of the community that commons'.[53] As Anna Tsing notes, when we expand our mutual recognition to include the non-human, we must also stretch our conception of the commons to recognise the 'latent commons' of other beings. These are mutualist, effervescent and entangled but are also 'here and now, amidst the trouble'.[54] As such, they are not idealised models for radical redemption, but, as Tsing argues, if we practice the arts of noticing they can be 'sites in which to seek allies' from within the 'mess of existing worlds-in-the-making'.[55]

Long shadows of trees spread across the grass, and I pull on my jumper to ward off the slight chill. We read this quote from M-Archive and someone reflects on processes of growth and decay, where the built has been subsumed by other forms of life. We speculate on the possibilities of an architecture which does not hold other forms of life at bay, imagining 'a labyrinth of pulsating walls'. At the conference, I am handed a square which quotes signage at a wetland preserve, describing the Common Eider as 'weighing as much as a house-brick'.[56] We laugh about this incongruous comparison, and I think about how this blunt equivalence of living and built conceals the realities of interconnection.

These considerations of the more-than-human as fellow commoners run counter to prevalent understandings of biodiversity as a resource. Projects like the Svalbard Global Seed Vault, the 'doomsday vault' sunk into the Norwegian permafrost, attempt to preserve biodiversity as a common resource for humanity.[57] But this vault has already been breached by meltwater, and I am reminded that walls will not save us. The UK pavilion at Expo 2010 known as the 'Seed Cathedral' designed by Thomas Heatherwick is constructed from 60,000 fibre optic rods, each containing a seed. It speaks to human viewers about the multiplicity of life but does so by encasing each seed in plastic. They may be held in common, but they cannot grow. As an alternative to these projects which seek to encase and enclose, there are those like the Navdanya community seed banks which maintain their stores by being planted each year in a continual act of co-creation between the human and more-than-human.[58]

These community seedbanks are part of a wider response to biological patenting practices, most notably in the case of the US company RiceTec patenting 'Basmati' rice grains in 1997. As well as being an act of biopiracy appropriating traditional knowledge for profit, these patents are founded on a rapacious claiming of more-than-human life as a product able to be owned by a single corporation.[59] The Navdanya community seed banks make use of the hard won right to these seeds as a collective resource, but I remain wary

where the relationship of ownership persists, of land or of other forms of life. Following *M-Archive* and our workshop discussions, I seek out projects which recognise more-than-human life as fellow commoners. In 2017, the Whanganui River was granted personhood by the New Zealand government in recognition of its existence as a living being.[60] This legal act grants the river the same rights as a person in a powerful attempt to recognise and respect more-than-human agency. Yet, it also speaks to the failure of legal systems which require us to recognise a river as a person because they see no other way to hold the value of life.

One person has brought a dog and they stand to walk with them, moving together. As they circle us, they talk about the ways their life is entangled with the life of this dog, the plants on their kitchen shelves, and the food gardens they tend. They describe how touching the soil creates a connection with the earth, something more than physical. It makes tangible 'a slower pace of time'. We link this reflection to the quote from Gibson-Graham, Cameron, and Healy that we are 'entangled as part of the community that commons', and discuss how we might cultivate the knowledge of how to grow together. When I come to gather up the patchwork, I notice that the pins have caught on the grass beneath, and the once living remnants of this place travel with me along with these stories (Fig. 4).

These questions of more than human agency, advocacy, and recognition are directly addressed in Starhawk's *The Fifth Sacred Thing*.[61] Amidst an ongoing ecological catastrophe, the inhabitants of San Francisco have radically restructured their society in a radical and ongoing act of commoning, abolishing private property and reclaiming the city as common land. The roads have been dug up and the space has been used for planting fruit trees, with water running through swales to feed the collective gardens. It is an ecotopia of steadfast non-violence and radical acceptance, which offers its potential oppressors a place at the table. The recognition of more-than-human mutual responsibility is made visible in their community discussions, which draw on Indigenous governance practices. These include spokespeople who express the needs of specific more-than-human entities, a speaker for the water, for the soil, for the plants, and for the animals and birds. In doing so, it attempts to give these beings and elements voice, albeit limited by the constraints of human interpretation and understanding. It is a model counter to the human exceptionalism which directs most architectural practice. Here, more-than-human beings are recognised as fellow commoners who co-create and share in the abundance of the common.

As I consider these fictions, workshop discussions, legal and built responses to non-human life, I am compelled to recognise a broader community of commoners. As an architect, this asks me to undertake a radical expansion of responsibility. My architectural education trained me to respond to the needs of the commissioning client, a relationship reinforced in practice by contractual obligation. I designed for imagined users but often failed to consider the needs of wider communities, of those who maintain and clean, or those who would inherit these spaces in the future. Through these fictions, I am made aware of
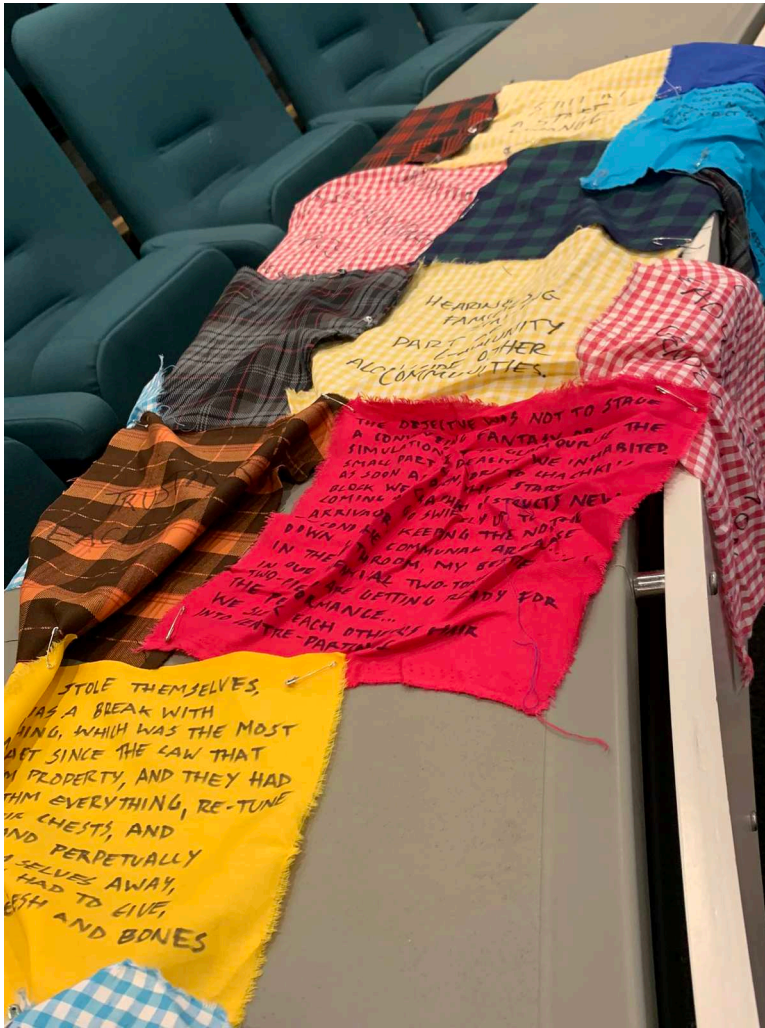
Figure 5.
A lecture theatre in Warwick
University with a curved row of
seating and a long desk onto which
has been draped a section of the
patchwork, its frayed hems and
bunched up fabric overspilling the
clean edge of the desk, 'Held in
Common: Science Fiction and
Collective Space', conference
workshop, 16 June 2023,
photographed by Nora Castle

the similarly bounded limits of responsibility that extend to more-than-human
life. The 2021 update of the RIBA Code of Conduct requires that members
'consider' the environmental impact of projects, 'promote' sustainable prac-
tices, and undertake 'reasonable endeavours' in building design.[62] I compare
this standard of behaviour to these fictions and legal actions that recognise
more-than-human needs and mutual responsibility, and I despair of the dis-
parity. But I draw strength from those whose work joyfully surpasses these
insufficient standards, like the DisOrdinary Architecture Project, which con-
siders the rich differences of biodiversity and neuro-divergence as a creative
force for design, or the Floating ~~University~~ Berlin, a self-described natureculture
learning site, whose programs and structures explore the relationships between

people and the more-than-human world.[63] I draw hope from *M-Archive* that I can learn by letting my roots grow deeper, by developing an attentiveness to common land beyond financial value, and by making a conscious effort to recognise my fellow commoners in all their forms (Fig. 5).

Commonwealth

> so basement is not a thing we really study like how you study it. or say basement is not a place where we put things we want to keep and ignore. but in some houses, and you only know if you should know, deep in the house is a place of blood and transformation, shells and seeds and knowing […][64]

As I grapple with my expanded responsibility to my fellow commoners, this extract from *M-Archive* asks that I also consider my responsibility to that which we share, the resources which are our commonwealth. As architects, we can no longer justify the cost — in all the ways that are more than capital — of building new, so we must reorient our practice around the acts of reclamation and reuse. The already built is our architectural commonwealth. But buildings are more than a sum of their parts, and this extract helps me distinguish between preserving construction materials for reuse and maintaining their collective potential as a place. It is the difference between storing an object to 'keep and ignore', and sustaining the use that brought it life. Following *M-Archive*, I look for the acts of keeping that are also acts of transformation, refashioning the material of the past into new possibility.

This imperative, to maintain not only the material of the past but its radical potential, is powerfully delineated by social justice scholar Max Haiven in his discussion of 'commoning memory'. He argues that, as much as the labours of the past already shape the present, it is also possible to 'draw on the subdued and subterranean hopes and dreams of the past, of past generations and struggles', allowing the 'utopian flash' of each radical event to be a living presence within the present.[65] Haiven calls for a recognition of responsibility to the past as a commons and to attend to the commonwealth of memory.

We begin to lay out the fabric squares alongside our blankets, to assemble memory, imagination, and desire into one patchwork. At first, we politely defer to the group as we find a place for each square, but as the patches link together, our sense of ownership dissolves. We pick up squares we have not written, reshuffling thoughts and placing them in new combinations. One person's memory now leads to the voice of another, co-located to be read as a complex assemblage. It is a vibrant but haphazard work; there are gaps where the grass sticks through, overlapping pieces, and mis-aligned edges. Its structural logics are too subjective to unpick. We stand in a circle discussing and discovering the arrangements of pieces. It has become a shared space that we have made between us.

These careful acts of collective holding stand in stark contrast to the Southwark Council announcement in 2000 that it would demolish the Aylesbury Estate. In its place, the council proposed 4,200 new homes, of which less

than 40% would be for social rent, meaning that more than 800 socially rented homes would not be replaced.[66] It is a staggering loss, and this stark metric does not even begin to address the loss of materials and embedded labour of demolition and rebuilding, or the incalculable loss of home where lives are uprooted and communities dispersed. Despite years of protest, legal action, and occupations, the blocks are now empty. One of the last residents on her floor, Aysen Dennis, documented and exhibited the 'Fight4Aylesbury', transforming her flat into a celebration of resistance.[67] Photographs, newspaper articles, posters, and flyers were displayed, and the material impact of the stories they contained was tangibly present in the home that they fought to save. This was a transformative act, a radical opening of private domestic space, remade into a resource of collective memory and action. It maintains and structures narratives of home in resistance to their violent destruction, celebrating and serving those who fought for this place, and all those engaged in similar struggles. By creating a commonwealth of both building and struggle, this installation asked critical questions about the public nature of social housing, the dismantling of a welfare state, and the overt suppression of residents' agency.

This is an act of commoning performed in the face of disenfranchisement and displacement, refashioning this private space as common space through radical practice, and transforming these materials into a commonwealth to support and recognise an already extant community of commoners. The voices gathered are not rendered less potent by the acts of collection and curation; rather, their combined presence grants them collective power. I feel quiet echoes of this during the patchwork workshops, where shared space is constructed through collective storytelling. But through *M-Archive*, I come to understand this as a space which holds the seeds of future transformation, preserving more than the material and sustaining the radical potential of this struggle.[68]

Only a few people remain in the lecture theatre, and they help gather the final squares of patchwork (Fig. 5). I am now nine weeks pregnant and, as voices fade in the corridors outside, my exhaustion swells. I am handed a square on which someone has written: 'Salvage is not mending or weaving, it is repurposing and appropriating. Salvage is what happens when storytelling breaks down.'[69] I think about the act of construction underway within me, the repurposing of the materials of my body, appropriated to serve new ends. I cannot yet comprehend this transformation in the story I tell of myself. I leaf through the stack of squares before me, and I am asked: 'What lies ahead? Reimagining the world. Only that.'[70]

Such possibilities of remaking the materials of the world are carefully considered by the inhabitants of the Exodan Fleet in Becky Chamber's *Record of a Spaceborn Few*.[71] Within the closed loop of a spaceship on which generations live and die, the issue of material afterlives must be carefully attended to. There are sensitive rituals to convert the remains of the dead into fertiliser to nourish the gardens, and the bodily understanding of mutual care is deeply treasured. Here, there is simply no space for sentimental keeping, so

everything is understood as material held in common that has taken temporary form. Obsolete objects are remade without remorse, and any associated collective memory is carefully distinguished from the significant object. Everything is made from the legacy of what it once was; the relic has no place, but everything is an artefact. It is an approach to conservation which considers non-living materials as both a resource and an integral part of the commons, in a malleable and continually reconstructed network of mutual interdependence. This text serves as a jarring contrast to the waste of the construction industry and the failures of financial models of value, which advocate demolition and new build over strategies of reuse. It suggests alternative ways of valuing non-living materials, of celebrating that which can be repurposed including the intangible wealth of accumulated knowledge, and of finding delight in this necessity. This is a commonwealth in perpetual transformation, nothing simply kept, nothing allowed to be ignored.

Through these architectural works, installations, and fictions, I am driven to look past my own inclination to focus on material resources and tangible built forms, to also consider the ephemeral or intangible as commonwealth. I delight in the work of architects like Lacaton and Vassal whose renovation projects not only preserve the physical built fabric but, by ensuring that social housing residents are not dispossessed, cherish the commonwealth of experience and social purpose,[72] or RESOLVE Collective's project, 'Them's the Breaks', which proposed to open up the spaces and resources of the Barbican to generate collaborations, curricula, and collective celebrations, culminating in the opportunity for visitors to 'bagsy' physical exhibition materials for reuse.[73] As delineated by Hardt and Negri, a commonwealth includes 'the air, the water, the fruits of the soil' but also the 'knowledges, languages, codes, information, affects' necessary for social reproduction, through which we can enact 'practices of interaction, care, and cohabitation in a common world'.[74] Once again, the scope of my responsibility expands, and I must not only consider the material resources of construction, which is a foundational obligation of any architect working in a climate emergency but also the intangible commonwealths of knowledge held in memory and ongoing experience. But this is an obligation which I bear gladly. I have dedicated so much of myself to the work of sharing the utopian possibilities which shimmer in the worlds of fiction, I am already jubilantly beholden to the radical potency of stories. I cling to the hope that such attentiveness applied to all forms of spatial knowledge might foster practices of care and cohabitation. To echo Gumbs, it is through shells and seeds and knowing that space can be transformed.

Held in common

they could not resellout the places where they had internalised freedom […] they needed bigger and bigger spaces, so they started to meet outside, and then they didn't need classrooms at all because the practices were jumping off everywhere […] sometimes they stopped and marvelled about how thoroughly they had replaced the story that was there before […][75]

In developing this work, I have sought out practices, stories, and ways of think-ing which address collective ways of being in the world through the commons. It is a selfish act, driven by my desire to engage with architecture despite its complicity in structuralised inequality, systemic injustice, and climate cata-strophe. While the practices I have found grant me fresh hope by demonstrat-ing what is already possible, it is in the worlds of sf that these glimmers of radical action extend to a future world unbuilt and remade. As this extract from *M-Archive* describes, they offer visions of a time when the scale of trans-formation surpasses the scope of the built, when our collective re-telling has replaced the story which was there before.

For those gathered at Well Street Common and Un/Building the Future, these fictions offered a glimpse into alternative social structures made manifest. They provided a common ground from which we were able to reflect on our own experiences, which could then be valued as reflections on the situated and sub-jective experience of space. Fictional and lived worlds were placed next to one

Figure 6.
Four squares of gingham cloth from the patchwork onto which have been written in black marker pen: a spiralling meditation, a quote from Luce Irigaray, a fragment of song in Arabic, and a drawing of a Common Eider duck, 'Held in Common: Science Fiction and Collective Space', conference workshop, 16 June 2023, photographed by the author

another on fragments of cloth, granting memory and imagination the same potency, equally able to transform the present (Fig. 6).[76]

The patchwork itself became a polyvocal collective voice, establishing the 'we' of this text as a community constructed by commoning this wealth of words. The worlds of sf, in their most wondrous moments, can create these communities based on utopian ways of thinking and being together, what Raphael Kabo describes as a 'commons of fellow readers, finessing and shaping their utopian imaginaries'.[77] In his reflections on temporal commoning, Muñoz notes that the radical potential of the common lies not only in the present or in the past events which inspire action, but as a fragmentary glimpse into a not-here, a not-yet. For Kabo, this understanding 'blurs past and future, transforms and organises bodies, and reveals glimmers of anticipatory utopias'.[78] In this small act of coming together and making, we become a prefigurative enactment of the texts we choose to hold between us, the stories of collective belonging we choose to tell.[79]

This act of sharing prompted both joy and longing, and individuals spoke and wrote movingly about their unmet desires for intergenerational community, freedom from gender-based violence, or the absence of loneliness. As Walidah Imarisha attests, writing new worlds into being serves to dismantle the limits of possibility and unshackle the imagination.[80] By articulating these visionary desires, we were compelled to consider the work of bringing them into being, and the structural and systemic transformations required to unbuild the world.

For those working within the spatial disciplines, who struggle alongside me to envisage possibilities that are not founded on building a way out, I offer the comfort that architecture is not defined by enclosure. It is a lived practice continually made and remade, re-storied through our collective inhabitation. As Gumbs writes, 'We are words made flesh. But we make words. So we can make ourselves anew.'[81]

I have made myself anew. These workshops ran during the volatile early weeks of my pregnancy as my body radically transformed to serve a new purpose, a physical rearranging of organs accompanied by the remixing of my chemical self. I grew a steadily expanding common space within myself as all that had been mine alone was rewritten as a mutual resource shared with this welcome stranger. Now I write while she sleeps in the next room, but my body still feels thick with the thrum of interrelation. These feelings are startling in their intensity, but they are not entirely unfamiliar. Rather, I recognise the undercurrents of care from cherished instances in my practice and teaching, moments where the desire for architecture to serve as a powerful point of connection and affecting method of mutual support was fleetingly realised. I turn to Gumbs again and find this echoed in her writing on revolutionary mothering which recognises that 'many people do the labour of mothering who would never even dream of identifying as mothers, even though they do the daily intergenerational care work of making a hostile world an affirming space for another person who is growing […] transforming the world through our desire for each other and another way to be'.[82]

I have found glimpses of 'affirming space' in the fictions and practices discussed here, constructed through labours of care to directly address the hostilities of the world which would otherwise be reinscribed by architectural practice. As continual acts of commoning, they resist the fixity that transforms place into product and remain open to transformation. As common spaces, they reject ideas of ownership and suggest alternatives to the financial framing of space. As communities of commoners, they recognise the needs of more-than-human networks, extending the scope of architectural responsibility. As models of the collective use of commonwealth, they reframe the idea of resource to value the intangible and to hold histories and hopes of people and place as atemporal glimpses into a not-yet.

In these bleary-eyed days of new motherhood, I am told to sleep when baby sleeps, but I find myself compelled to write, opened once more to radical possibility by her newness in the world.[83] It is an impulse tinged with urgency to share what I have found in sf CoFutures with others in the spatial disciplines so that we might critically consider the ongoing futures brought into being through our work, and to ask what stories we tell and what worlds we hold open. Through Gumbs' writing, I have found new depths of resolve to transform the world through desire for another way to be, and I ache to unbuild architectural practice and research until I no longer need to seek out these spaces to learn in and from because these practices are everywhere. I hear her waking in the next room. I stop and marvel at how a story can be changed.

Acknowledgements

Disclosure statement

Notes and references

1. Alexis Pauline Gumbs, *M Archive: After the End of the World* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018), p. 144. The original text does not use sentence case capitalisation and this has been reflected in quotations from this book throughout.

2. This article follows Donna Haraway's expansive framing of sf as 'science fiction, science fact, science fantasy, speculative feminism, speculative fabulation, string figures […]'; see Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016), p. 2.

3. The emergence of Western science fiction is intractably intertwined with ontologies of technoscience and empire; see John Rieder, *Colonialism and the Emergence of Science Fiction* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2013). As noted by Nalo Hopkinson, '[O]ne of the most familiar memes of science fiction is that of going to foreign countries and colonising the natives […] for many of us, that's not a thrilling adventure story; it's non-fiction.' See Nalo Hopkinson, 'Introduction', in *So Long Been Dreaming: Postcolonial Science Fiction & Fantasy*, ed. by Uppinder Mehan and Nalo Hopkinson (Vancouver: arsenal pulp press, 2004), p. 7.

4. Bodhisattva Chattopadhyay, 'The Pandemic That Was Always Here, and Afterward: From Futures to Cofutures', *Science Fiction Studies*, 47.3 (2020), 338–40 (p. 339).

5. Bodhisattva Chattopadhyay, 'Manifestos of Futurisms', *Foundation*, 50.139 (2021), 8–23.

6. Taryne Jade Taylor, 'Introduction to CoFuturisms', in *The Routledge Handbook of CoFuturisms*, ed. by Taryne Jade Taylor, Isiah Lavender III, Grace L. Dillon, Bodhisattva Chattopadhyay (New York, NY: Routledge, 2023).

7. Gumbs, *M Archive*, p. xi.

8. As argued by Valentin Bourdon, engagement in commoning necessitates a significant restructuring of architectural thought, noting that 'the involvement of architecture in the definition of property relations continues to hinder the mobilisation of an architectural thought on the commons'. See Valentin Bourdon, 'Introducing the Architectural Values of the Commons', *The Journal of Architecture*, 28.1 (2023), 31–49 (p. 42).

9. Gumbs, *M Archive*, p. xii.

10. Doina Petrescu and Kim Trogal, 'The Social (Re)Production of Architecture in "Crisis Riddled" Times', in *The Social (Re)Production of Architecture: Politics, Values and Actions in Contemporary Practice*, ed. by Doina Petrescu and Kim Trogal (Oxford and New York, NY: Routledge, 2017), pp. 1–15 (p. 2).

11. Samia Khatun, 'Amy's Salt: Some Thoughts', 11 June 2024, personal correspondence.

12. Garrett Hardin who coined the phrase, 'tragedy of the commons', has clarified that he was referring to unmanaged common space treated with disregard, but this term is still used to argue against collective models of governance and in favour of privatisation, while vital planetary commons such as the earth's atmosphere are treated with the 'same sort of disregard as Hardin's pasture was treated'. See J. K. Gibson-Graham, Jenny Cameron, and Stephen Healy, 'Commoning as a Postcapitalist Politics', in *Releasing the Commons: Rethinking the Futures of the Commons*, ed. by Ash Amin and Philip Howell (London: Routledge, 2016), pp. 192–212 (p. 192).

13. Urban Commons Research Collective and Gabu Heindl, Eleni Katrini, Julia Udall, l'Asilo Assembly, Association for Accessibility in Art, in Everyday Life, in Minds, Atelier d'Architecture Autogérée, Imaginary Famagusta, and La Foresta, *Urban Commons Handbook* (Barcelona: dpr-barcelona, 2022), p. 22.

14. Lauren Berlant, 'The Commons: Infrastructures for Troubling Times*', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 34.3 (2016), 393–419.

15. Torange Khonsari, 'A New Model for Spatial Practice: Commoning', presented as part of the 'New Models Lecture Series', AA School of Architecture, 2022 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qp0R91symwk> [accessed 26 July 2023].

16. This is based on the three key features of a commons identified by Massimo de Angelis: a community of commoners, a commonwealth, and the process of commoning, with the addition of common land to address the specifically spatial aspects of a commons. See Massimo De Angelis, *Omnia Sunt Communia*: *On the Commons and the Transformation to Postcapitalism* (London: Zed Books, 2017).

17. Amy Butt, '"Endless Forms, Vistas and Hues": Why Architects Should Read Science Fiction', *Arq: Architectural Research Quarterly*, 22.2 (2018), 151–60.

18. For reflections on the reflective reading practices of sf and the qualities of cognitive estrangement, see Kathleen L. Spencer, '"The Red Sun Is High, the Blue Low": Towards a Stylistic Description of Science Fiction', *Science Fiction Studies*, 10.1 (1983), 35–49; and Darko Suvin, *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction: On the Poetics and History of a Literary Genre* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1979).

19. Jane Rendell, 'Architectural Research and Disciplinarity', *Arq: Architectural Research Quarterly*, 8.2 (2004), 141–7 (p. 145).

20. Amy Butt, 'Held in Common, Held on the Common', presentation at the London Festival of Architecture, Well Street Common, 2023.

21. Amy Butt, 'Held in Common: Science Fiction and Collective Space', presentation at the conference, 'Un/Building the Future: The Country and The City in the Anthropocene', University of Warwick, 2023.

22. Jack Halberstam, 'Unbuilding Gender', *Places Journal* (October 2018), p. 4.

23. Ibid., p. 12.

24. Ibid., p. 7.

25. Stavros Stavrides, *Common Space: The City as Commons* (London: Zed Books, 2016), p. 3.

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27. Gumbs, *M Archive*, p. 167.

28. Ibid., p. xi.

29. M. Jacqui Alexander, *Pedagogies of Crossing: Meditations on Feminism, Sexual Politics, Memory, and the Sacred* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006).

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35. Ibid.

36. MOULD research collective, 'Architecture Is Climate' <https://architectureisclimate.net/> [accessed 14 February 2025].

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38. José Esteban Muñoz, 'Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity', in *Cruising Utopia* (New York, NY and London: New York University Press, 2019), p. 91, citing Giorgio

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39. Nadja Millner-Larsen and Gavin Butt, 'Introduction: The Queer Commons', *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 24.4 (2018), 399–419 (p. 409).

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41. George Caffentzis and Silvia Federici, 'Commons Against and Beyond Capitalism', *Community Development Journal*, 49.S1 (2014), i92–105 (p. i94).

42. Caffentzis and Federici, 'Commons Against and Beyond Capitalism', p. i94.

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50. Ibid., p. i103.

51. Gumbs, *M Archive*, p. 36.

52. Gibson-Graham, Cameron, and Healy, 'Commoning as a Postcapitalist Politics', p. 207.

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54. Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2017), p. 255.

55. Ibid.

56. This square of patchwork was signed and is credited to Drew Thornton.

57. 'The "Doomsday" Vault Where the World's Seeds Are Kept Safe', *TIME.Com* <https://time.com/doomsday-vault/> [accessed 17 July 2023].

58. Vandana Shiva, *Reclaiming the Commons: Biodiversity, Indigenous Wisdom, and the Rights of Mother Earth* (Santa Fe, CA, and London: Synergetic Press, 2020).

59. Ibid., pp. 156–71.

60. This was made possible by the knowledge and worldview of the Māori, and recognises Te Awa Tupua as 'an indivisible and living whole comprising the Whanganui River from the mountains to the sea, incorporating its tributaries and all its physical and metaphysical elements'. See New Zealand Legislation, Parliamentary Counsel Office, 'Te Awa Tupua (Whanganui River Claims Settlement) Act 2017', 2017, p. 14.

61. Starhawk, *The Fifth Sacred Thing* (London: Bantham, 1994).

62. Royal Institute of British Architects, 'RIBA: Code of Professional Conduct', 1 April 2021, p. 16. I am indebted to the work of David Roberts for articulating this issue. See David Roberts, 'Reflect Critically and Act Fearlessly: A Survey of Ethical Codes, Guidance and Access in Built Environment Practice', Bartlett Ethics Commission, London, 2018 <https://www.practisingethics.org/s/Built-Environment-Codes-Review_Roberts.pdf> [accessed 29 October 2024].

63. See The DisOrdinary Architecture Project <https://disordinaryarchitecture.co.uk> [accessed 11 March 2025]; and Floating (…) Berlin <https://floating-berlin.org/> [accessed 11 March 2025].

64. Gumbs, *M Archive*, p. 180.

65. Max Haiven, 'Are Your Children Old Enough to Learn about May '68? Recalling the Radical Event, Refracting Utopia, and Commoning Memory', *Cultural Critique*, 78 (2011), 60–87 (p. 68).

66. 'Fighting for Their Homes: The Battle for Aylesbury Estate', *openDemocracy* <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/aylesbury-estate-exhibition-demolition-southwark-council-regeneration/> [accessed 26 July 2023].

67. Aysen Dennis and Fight4Aylesbury campaign group, *Fight4Aylesbury*, April 2023.

68. Since writing this, Aysen has been relocated and the estate demolition is underway. However, in 2024, she won a judicial review against the local authority and housing provider for misuse of planning law. She successfully argued that significant changes were made to the wording of the estate redevelopment planning permission as non-material amendments after it had been approved, denying residents and the public the chance to review and respond.

69. This square of patchwork is credited to Megen de Bruin Molé, citing the work of Caitlin DeSilvey, *Curated Decay: Heritage beyond Saving* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2017).

70. Arundhati Roy, *AZADI: Freedom. Fascism. Fiction.* (London: Penguin UK, 2020), p. 4.

71. Becky Chambers, *Record of a Spaceborn Few* (London: Hachette UK, 2018).

72. Andrew Ayers, 'Retrospective: Lacaton & Vassal', *The Architectural Review*, 2019 <https://www.architectural-review.com/buildings/housing/retrospective-lacaton-vassal> [accessed 11 March 2025].

73. In an act of radical solidarity, RESOLVE collective cancelled this programme of work following a series of hostile encounters and an incident of anti-Palestinian censorship at Barbican.

74. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Commonwealth* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), p. viii.

75. Gumbs, *M Archive*, pp. 93–4.

76. This is with reference to Tom Moylan's work on utopian literature, which finds its importance 'in the very act of imagining'; see Tom Moylan, *Demand the Impossible: Science Fiction and the Utopian Imagination* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2014), p. 139.

77. Raphael Kabo, *Utopia Beyond Capitalism in Contemporary Literature: A Commons Poetics* (London and New York, NY: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2023), p. 3.

78. Kabo, p. 136.

79. This thinking is indebted to the work of the Beyond Gender Research Collective, see: Beyond Gender Research Collective, 'Collective Close Reading: Queer SF and the Methodology of the Many', in *The Routledge Companion to Gender and Science Fiction*, ed. by Lisa Yaszek, Sonja Fritzsche, Keren Omry, and Wendy Gay Pearson (Oxford and New York, NY: Routledge, 2023), pp. 41—8.

80. Walidah Imarisha, 'Introduction', in *Octavia's Brood: Science Fiction Stories from Social Justice Movements*, ed. by adrienne maree brown and Walidah Imarisha (Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2015), pp. 3–5.

81. Alexis Pauline Gumbs, *Dub: Finding Ceremony* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2020), p. xi.

82. Alexis Pauline Gumbs, 'Introduction', in *Revolutionary Mothering: Love on the Front Lines*, ed. by Alexis Pauline Gumbs, China Martens, and Mai'a Williams (Binghamton, NY: PM Press, 2016), p. 116.

83. This framing of newness is indebted to Peter Stebbings-Stone and Katie McGregor Stone, 'Strange Children: Childhood, Utopianism, Science Fiction' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Birkbeck, University of London, 2021).