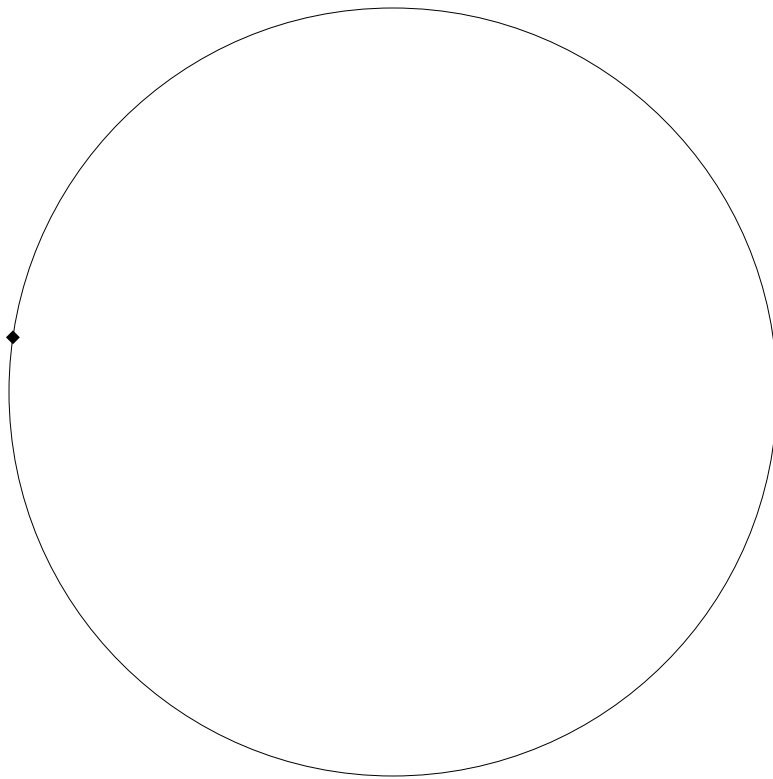




## I Want to Play Everyday

Community-building  
Governance  
Labour  
Play  
Political Economy

### Nathan Shakura

Nathan Shakura is a Toronto-based designer and alumnus of the University of Toronto (MARCH 2026). His practice is driven by the conviction that architecture is fundamentally a social act, centered on the tangible impacts of the built environment on moving communities. Interested in the intersection of materiality, adaptive reuse, and social theory, Nathan's work seeks to translate abstract ideas into tactile realities that foster positive social change. His current scholarship critically examines the potential of the commons and autogestion to transgress hegemonic systems of private property, proposing a framework of repair, reclamation, and reimagination for a more just urban future.

*Nathan lives and works in Toronto, on the traditional territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee, and the Wendat peoples, land now covered by Treaty 13. As a settler designer critiquing the enclosure of the commons, Nathan recognizes his positionality within the colonial systems of land ownership he seeks to dismantle. Nathan's relationship to this land is grounded in a commitment to unlearning the logic of land-as-commodity and relearning the ethos of stewardship and care that Indigenous peoples have practiced here for millennia.*

The historical accumulation of technology, knowledge, and wealth represents a collective inheritance produced through centuries of labour. While this material surplus suggests a technical capacity for universal autonomy and sustenance, the dominant economic paradigm reduces the land its resources as a reservoir for accumulation. In John Locke's *Second Treatise* he argues that labour acts as the justification for enclosing common resources into private property: "Whatsoever then he removes out of the state that nature hath provided... he hath mixed his labour with, and joined to it something that is his own, and thereby makes it his property."<sup>1</sup> This excerpt is central to the justifications for property. While Locke acknowledges an original common state, his theory provides the logic for its enclosure. Therefore, recovering our collectivity requires transgressing the Lockean linkage between labour and private exclusion. What alternatives exist, and how do they contribute to the de-alienation of land, autogestion, and a reaffirmation of our inherent collectivity? What does it look like if the labour is retained for use rather than exchange? By analyzing historical and contemporary models of "commoning," we can identify potential mechanisms necessary to transform exclusionary enclaves into sites of collective abundance.

The potential for this collectivity lies in the "commons." However, we must distinguish this from the Lockean view, where the common state is merely a reservoir for private appropriation.<sup>2</sup> Instead, drawing on Massimo De Angelis, we define the commons not as a stock of goods to be exchanged, but as a social system of relationships where resources are governed by the community through the labour of commoning.<sup>3</sup> This shifts our focus from land as a commodity for trade to land as a site of social relation. As Henri Lefebvre argues, the enclosure of space by private property is an "expropriation" of the community; therefore, to reclaim the commons is an act of "de-alienation," restoring the use value of the land over its exchange value.<sup>4</sup> By transgressing the hegemonic enclosure, we liberate the potential for a new structural horizon of an au-

tonomous apparatus rooted in collectivity. The sustained operation of that liberation requires continuous and creative labour, turning over the hegemonies that define the current system.

The life of a community is defined by its collectivity, and its collectivity is defined by the commons. The enclosure of the commons through private property is an alienation of the right of a community to its resources, and subsequently the inhibition of our ability to play. When we can partake in the commons together in a system of social relations not tied to extraction, the possibilities open to new horizons free from the hegemonic systems of enclosure that define our relations to land. To transgress the enclosure is to liberate, and this liberation means that we and our children can play every day. Transgression begins with the repair of the social relations that Lockean property has severed. If, as Marx argues, capital is a social force that separates workers from the means of their production, then the commons must be the force that reconnects them in the dissolution of the former society and the old "condition of existence."<sup>5</sup> This process of repair requires us to view land not as a commodity to be exchanged, but as the foundation for a "social revolution" rooted in autonomy.

This theoretical possibility takes concrete form in the *brettltdorfer* (wild settlements) of early 20th-century Vienna, where the existential necessity of the inhabitants catalyzed a direct transgression of property boundaries to establish a life rooted in mutual aid rather than ownership.<sup>6</sup> Manuela Kölke describes this movement as a "grassroots emergency project" where poor working-class families engaged in "wild land seizures," effectively transgressing the legal boundaries of state and private ownership to prioritize their right to a home. This was made necessary by the high rents and state restrictions on small scale horticulture and livestock in the city. By seizing the land, the settlers did not seek to become new proprietors in the Lockean sense, but to establish a community where access was defined by collectivity and use-value of the land rather than exchange-value of urban apartments.

1. John Locke, and C. B Macpherson, *Second Treatise of Government*. (Hackett Publishing Company Inc, 2010), 111.

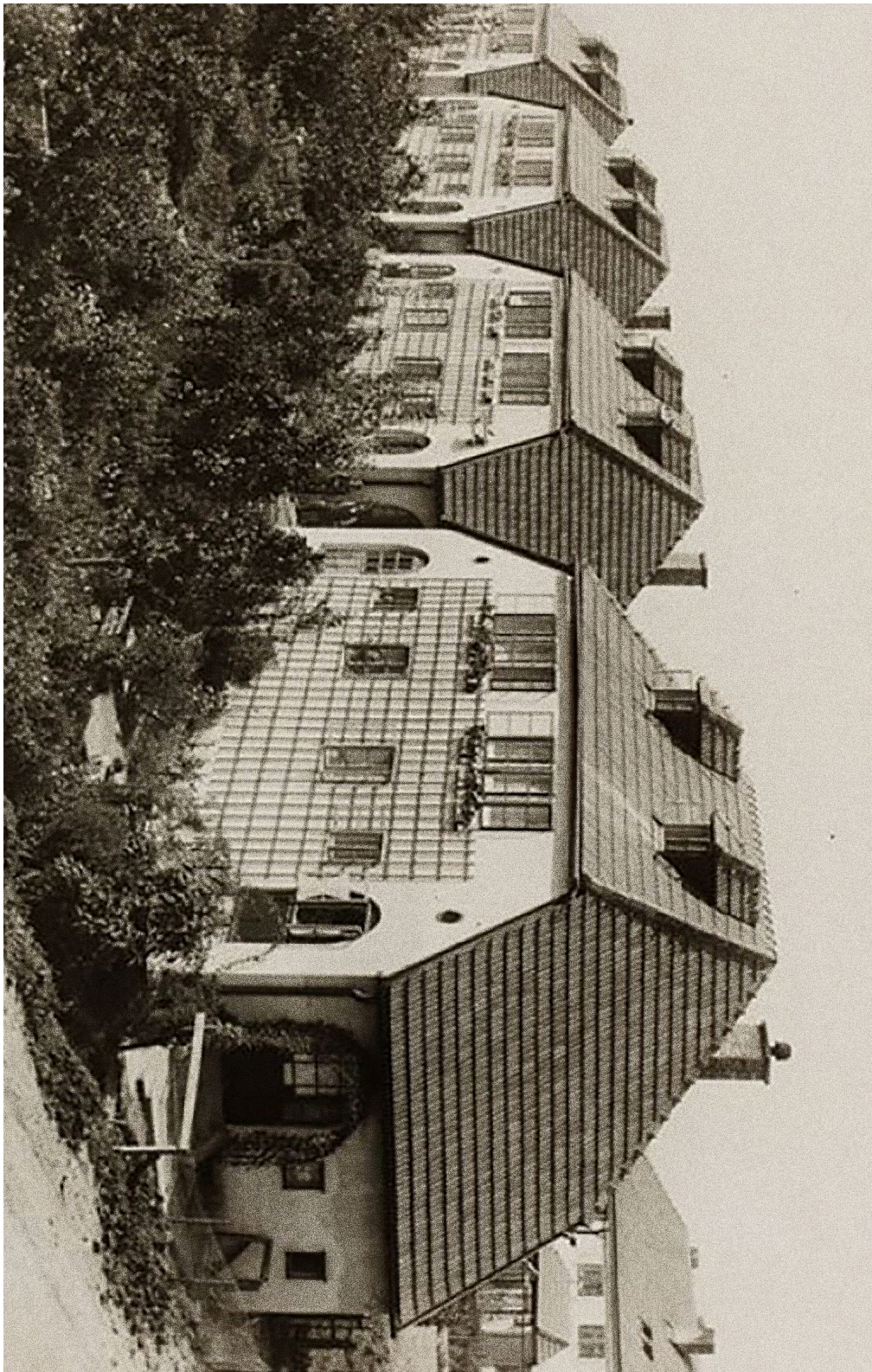
2. John Locke, and C. B Macpherson, *Second Treatise of Government*, 111.

3. Massimo De Angelis, *Omnia Sunt Communia: On the Commons and the Transformation to Post-capitalism*. (Zed Books, 2017), 34.

4. Henri Lefebvre, *Writings on Cities*, trans. & ed. Eleonore Kofman, and Elizabeth Lebas. (Blackwell Publishers, 1996), 174.

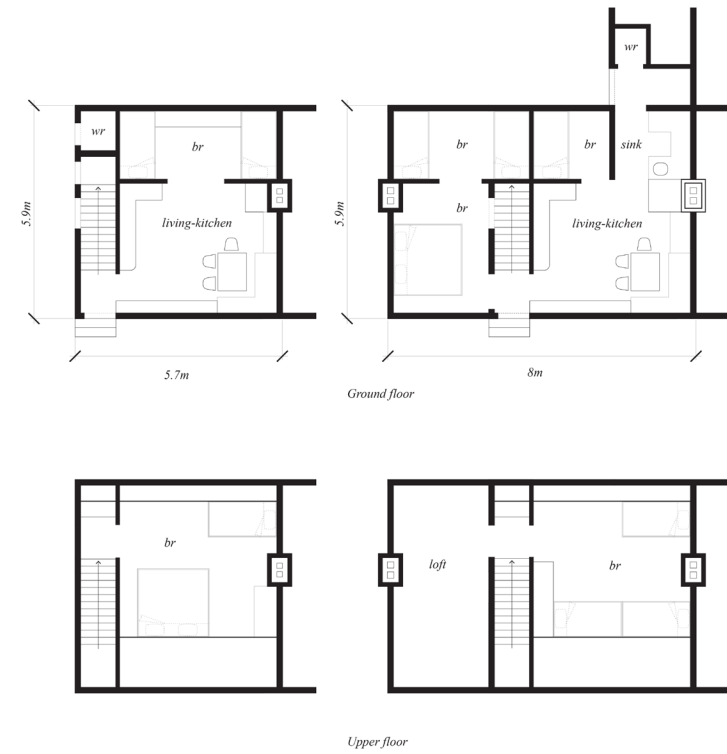
5. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*. (Pluto Press, 2017), 19.

6. Kölke, Manuela, "Life without Property: The 'Groundlessness' of Anarchist Settler Movements." In *Architecture on Common Ground - The Question of Land: Positions and Models*. Ed. Florian Hertweck (Lars Muller Publishers, 2020), 71.



*Kernhaus (Core House)*

*Fertiges Haus (Finished House)*



The architectural response to this movement was pivotal in mediating wild autonomy and organized survival. Adolf Loos, who was at the time the Chairman of the Settlement Office, is credited with the *House with One Wall*, a minimum structure with capabilities for expansion, but it was Margarete Lihotzky who radically systematized the architecture of the *siedlerhütte* (settler hut), and the *kernhaus* (core-house).<sup>7</sup> Responding to the cessation of government loans, Lihotzky designed units that could grow outward from a central core as resources became available, seen in the temporal progression of the building plans.<sup>8</sup> Her design philosophy of growing a house out from the core until the final limits of façade prioritized the “tangible organization of our everyday habits” over formal aesthetics or the “façade” of modern architectures.<sup>9</sup> This tangible organization of everyday labour aligns with our critical definition of the collective production of social relations regarding land. The development of these structures by Lihotzky serves to ratify the transgression of enclosure and generates the social system of the commons by means of autogestion. In operationalizing the progression of the settler house, Lihotzky’s architecture responds to the needs of the brettldorfer settlement (heating, cooking, garden, incremental building).

However, the history of the brettldorfer is a critical warning of the tension between autogestion and the state. While the movement successfully reclaimed land through transgression, it was ultimately co-opted by the municipal government of Red Vienna in a system of formal settlement cooperatives.<sup>10</sup> The state viewed these settlements as difficult to tax and control. This led to relocation of some communities into the state constructed “super blocks.” This neutralized the radical potential of the settlements, reintegrating inhabitants into a hierarchical system and effectively ending the experiment in our social commons.

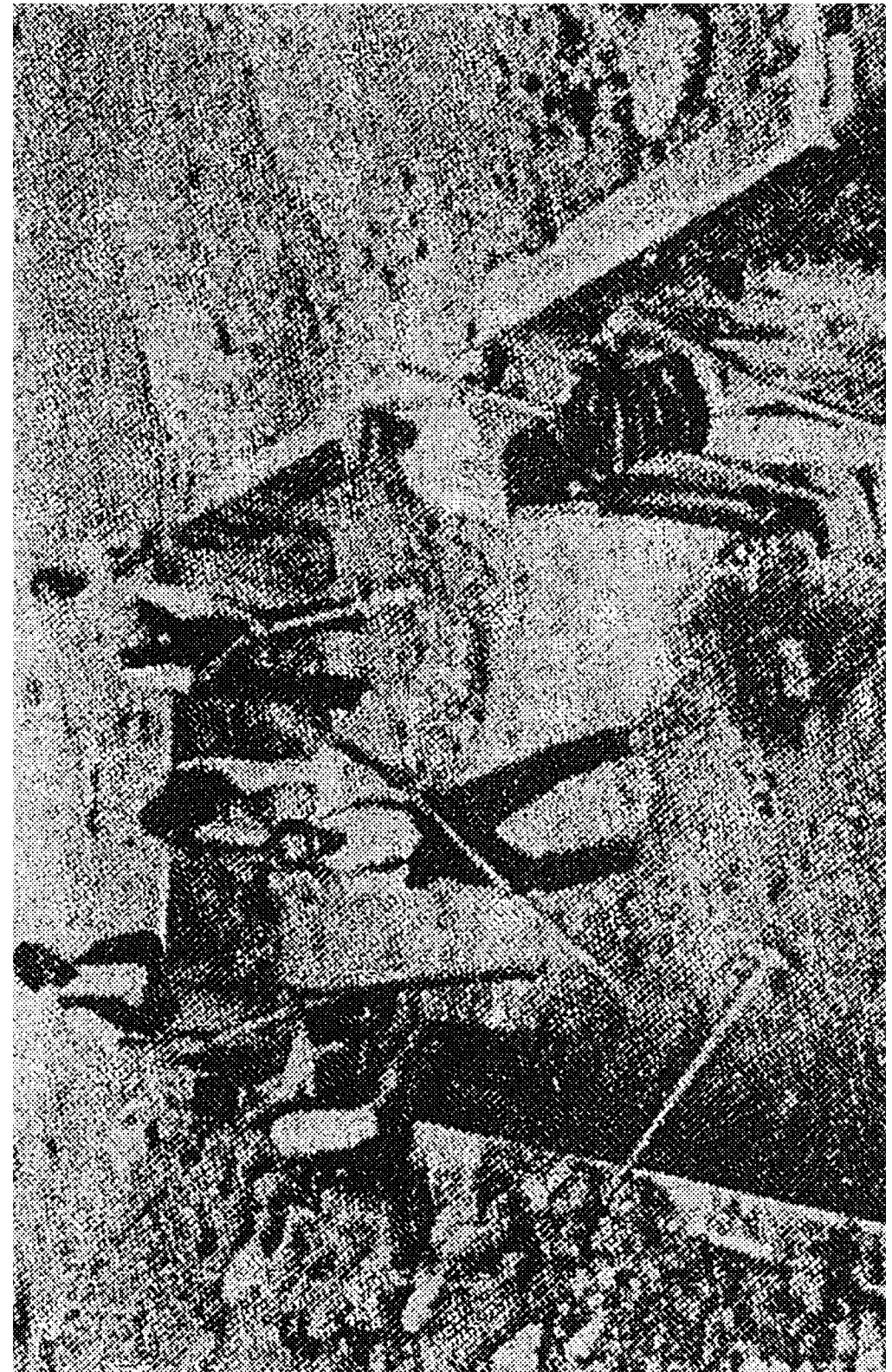
While the Vienna case study illustrates the transgression of property, the Italian network Genuino Clandestino illustrates the restitution of

7. Kölke, “Life without Property,” 73.

8. S. E. Eisterer, “On Settler Huts and Core-Houses. Margarete Lihotzky’s Contribution to Cooperative Labor in the Vienna Settlement Movement.” in *Margarete Schütte-Lihotzky. Architecture. Politics. Gender: New Perspectives on Her Life and Work*. Eds. Marcel Bois and Bernadette Reinhold. (Birkhäuser, 2023), 87.

9. Eisterer, “On Settler Huts and Core-Houses,” 79, 92.

10. Kölke, 75.





social relations through what Massimo De Angelis terms “boundary commoning.”<sup>11</sup> This case study focuses on Campi Aperti in Bologna, a network of farmers and consumers that reclaims the food system from capitalist valuation.<sup>12</sup>

11. De Angelis, 287.

12. De Angelis, 295–296.

13. De Angelis, 296.

14. De Angelis, 306.

The capitalist market reduces producers to pawns, dictated by the abstract forces of supply and demand. Campi Aperti repairs this severed relationship by establishing producers as masters of their price. In this system, prices are not set by the market but are negotiated in open assemblies of farmers and consumers. This transforms the exchange from a transaction into an internal material commons dialogue, where the goal is not profit but the reproduction of community and land. This shifts the definition of the commons from a mere resource to a social system of relationships defined by collective labour.<sup>13</sup>

Furthermore, this model scales up without centralizing power, meaning the individual farm nests within the Campi Aperti association, which in turn nests within the national Genuino Clandestino movement (macro-commons). This allows for “structural coupling” with the state—negotiating for market space or tax rates—without being co-opted. As De Angelis observes, they engage with the city council but maintain a strict red line: “Our autonomy is never under threat, otherwise we would refuse to comply.”<sup>14</sup> The autonomy of their commons is integral to the concept of the social system of their commons. This provides the potentiality to reclaim land from the cycles of capital, transforming it into a site of collective autonomy, autogestion, and the latent possibility of a foundation for dignified social revolution through the commons. While still working within the state, Genuino Clandestino generates a commons that transgresses the enclosure of their farmlands through the market.

While the Viennese settlers transgressed property through seizure and Genuino Clandestino through communal market subversion, the La Borda housing cooperative in Barcelona transgresses it through a legal workaround known as the *cesión de uso* (grant of use). Emerging from

the housing crisis of 2008, this model was championed by activist groups like Sostre Cívica to dismantle the speculative logic of the Spanish real estate market.<sup>15</sup>

The cesión de uso model fundamentally reclaims housing by severing the link between occupancy and profit. In this system, the cooperative retains collective ownership of the building, while the individual household holds only the “right to use” the dwelling. This legal structure creates a permanent barrier against speculation; inhabitants cannot sell their units on the market, nor can they profit from the appreciation of land value.<sup>16</sup>

By prioritizing use-value over exchange value, La Borda operationalizes Lefebvre’s critique of the capitalist city.<sup>17</sup> The land itself often remains municipal property (ceded to the cooperative for 75 years), creating a “public-cooperative-community” partnership that prevents the privatization of public assets while ensuring community autonomy.<sup>18</sup> This effectively removes the housing from the market, transforming it from a tradeable commodity into a stable infrastructure for living.

La Borda is not merely a legal container but a physical manifestation of autogestion through the participatory design practice that enveloped its entire process. Unlike the alienated consumer of a developer-built condo, the inhabitants of La Borda controlled the entire production process, supported by the architects’ cooperative Lacol.<sup>19</sup> Decisions regarding the architecture—such as the inclusion of shared kitchens, guest rooms, and flexible spaces—were made horizontally by the general assembly of members in conjunction with their architect.<sup>20</sup> The architecture of La Borda is therefore not a product delivered by the state or market, but an active “social system” that frames and reproduces the collective life of the community, generating the systemic commons in opposition to private property.

This inquiry asserts that to liberate the abundant potential of our collective labour from the he-

15. Diego Miralles Buil, “Housing Cooperatives In Barcelona, Between The Commons And Social Production Of Habitat: A Step Towards Housing Communalization In Barcelona?” *ACME: An International Journal for Critical Geographies* 19 (3):666-70. <https://doi.org/10.14288/acme.v19i3.2095>.

16. Miralles Buil, “Housing Cooperatives In Barcelona,” 667.

17. Lefebvre, *Writings on Cities*, 67.

18. Miralles Buil, 672.

19. Miralles Buil, 666.

20. “Lacol Architecture Cooperative,” *Lacol Arquitectura Cooperativa*, accessed January 30, 2026. <https://lacol.coop/en/proyectos/la-borda/>.





gemonic enclosure of private property, we must transgress the Lockean paradigm. The breittldorfer of Vienna demonstrate that the first step is often the physical transgression of the enclosure, seizing land through necessity. Yet, transgression alone is fragile; without a robust system of social reproduction, the “island” of autonomy risks re-absorption by the state.

21. De Angelis, 291.

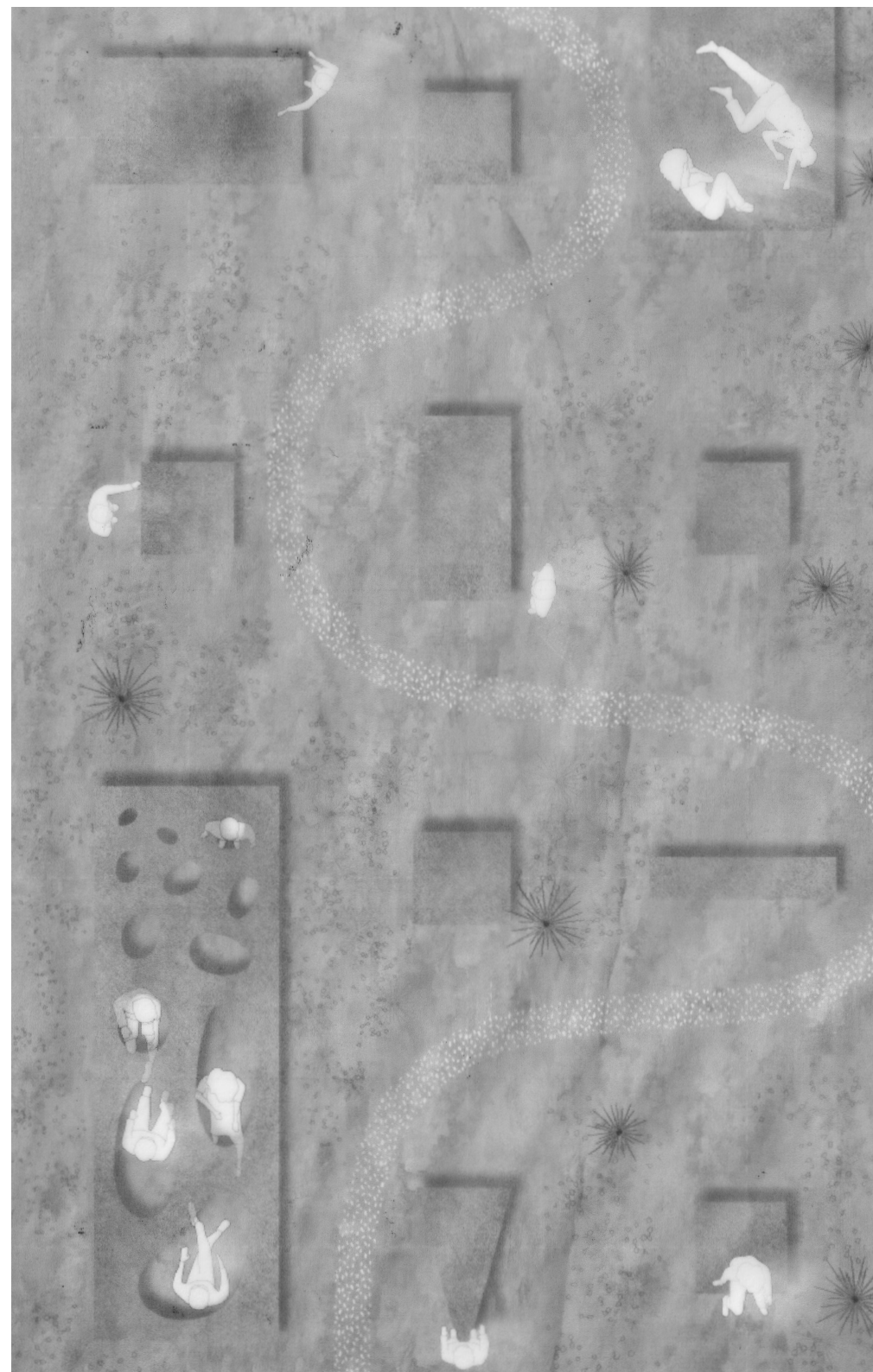
22. Lefebvre, 67.

23. Lefebvre, 66.

To sustain this liberation, we can look to Geniuno Clandestino. This network illustrates that the commons is a social system of boundary commoning that reconnects the link between production and consumption.<sup>21</sup> By transforming market relations into circuits based on trust and collaborative price-making, the community scale up the power of their commons internally. Finally, La Borda provides the architectural and legal framework to stabilize this reimagined future. Through the cesión de uso model, land is removed from speculation, prioritizing “use value” over “exchange value” and allowing the architecture itself to facilitate the “social production of habitat”.<sup>22</sup>

Synthesizing these lessons offers a blueprint for the “social revolution” posited by De Angelis. We do not need to seize state power to begin; we need to seize space (Vienna), knit it together through non-commodified trust (Bologna), and secure it through non-speculative tenure (Barcelona). In doing so, we transform the city from a site of extraction into Lefebvre’s oeuvre—a collective work of art where the surplus of social labour is not hoarded as capital, but expended in play and encounter.<sup>23</sup> To transgress the enclosure is to liberate, but to sustain that liberation requires the continuous, creative labour of commoning, of turning the “detritus” of the current system into a new, joyous horizon.

**Review by Lhanzi Gyaltan**



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