Cultivating the common good:
A processual perspective on the common good

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Abstract

Grand challenges such as climate change or poverty alleviation require sustained effort from multiple stakeholders toward a clearly articulated goal. Characterized by deeper complexity, uncertainty, and evaluativity, these challenges urge management scholars to engage in pragmatist minded research, especially to address shortcomings of the dominant theoretical perspective on corporate responses to grand challenges: stakeholder theory. In fact, a major pitfall of the stakeholder theory is its difficulty to deal with highly pluralist and complex environments, where stakeholders are not clearly identified or do not feel concerned. Drawing on John Dewey's work, this article seeks to further develop the notion of commoning as a specific form of inquiry which leads to the conjoint emergence of a community of plural individuals and a vision of the common good. Departing from an abstract and transcendental vision of the common good, our empirical case on the Incredible Edible movement sheds light on this processual conception of the common good.

Keywords

Pragmatism; Stakeholder theory; Commoning; Common good; Process studies

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INTRODUCTION

Grand challenges such as climate change or poverty alleviation "require coordinated and sustained effort from multiple and diverse stakeholders toward a clearly articulated problem or goal " (George et al., 2016, p. 3). Given their complexity, uncertainty and evaluativity, scholars have argued for novel research approaches relying on the philosophical tradition of American pragmatism (Ferraro et al., 2015; Martí, 2018). In fact, one of the key issue for an organizational response to grand challenges is the ability to shape a common goal within a plurality of stakeholders with multiple normative orders (Ferraro et al., 2015; George et al., 2016). Whereas stakeholder theory (Freeman, 1984), the dominant theoretical perspective on corporate responses to grand challenges, is considered as excessively naïve dealing with this plurality (Ferraro et al., 2015; Kraatz & Block, 2008), pragmatism as a problem solving philosophy views plurality as positive and is well suited to deal with multilevel actions required by our world's challenges (Farjoun et al, 2015).

Scholars have suggested that dealing with grand challenges could benefit from the creation spaces that facilitate interaction and negotiation between heterogeneous actors with different perspectives and different values (Martí, 2018). Moreover, these societal challenges require giving voice and empowering a wider range of stakeholders, such as marginalized stakeholders (Martí, 2018; Freeman et al., 2018), fringe stakeholders (Hart & Sharma, 2004). Beyond questions of power, in many situations people are not even aware of the connection between the problematic situation and their lives. Actions required to solve the problem might seem so complex and unattainable that people do not feel concerned. Holding a stake is not natural nor obvious, is a process of becoming a stakeholder (Lorino, 2021; Kerveillant, 2017).

Specifically, in dealing with common goods preservation, everybody is concerned in theory but in practice few people and organizations really feel responsible and actively participate to protect them. Research on the commons (Ostrom, 1990) has tried to identify the institutional

arrangements for an effective management of the commons by a community. However, the concept of commoning which is gaining in popularity among researchers (Linebaugh, 2008; De Angelis & Harvie, 2013; Fournier, 2013), suggests that neither resources nor communities are ex ante constituted. Instead, they are co-produced through an ongoing social process (Fournier, 2013). Scholars have called for further studies of this process, especially taking into account its embodied as well as its ethical dimensions (Mandalaki & Fotaki, 2020). We try to answer the following research question: Faced with grand challenges, how are commoning activities a promising path for collective action, fostering the emergence of a community of heterogenous actors and a vision of the common good?

Drawing on American pragmatist philosopher John Dewey this article seeks to further develop the notion of commoning as a specific form of inquiry which leads to the conjoint emergence of a community of plural individuals and a vision of the common good. John Dewey's concepts of experience and inquiry enable us to understand that community is not given, nor static, but continually rediscovered through attempts to restore meaning and actionability of troubling situations.

Departing from an abstract and transcendental vision of the common good, our empirical case on the Incredible Edible movement sheds light on this processual conception of the common good revealing its relational and embodied dimensions. We contribute to bridge business ethic literature on common good and organizational literature on commoning by proposing a pragmatist inspired, processual vision of the common good. We contribute to literature on grand challenges arguing that common good oriented changes require spaces as well as experiences which reconnect individual-community-society-nature and cultivate the common good. Departing from an antagonist conception of commoning vs private or public organizations, this research argues the possibility to build symbiotic relations between the concerned communities and those organizations.

The article is organized as follows. First, I introduce commoning is a promising alternative way to bring heterogenous actors together and engage them toward a common goal. Second, I argue that John Dewey's conception of community enables to further the concept of commoning as a process which leads to the conjoint emergence of a community and a shared vision of the

common good. Then, I describe the methodology before presenting my analysis of the Incredible Edible Movement case study. Finally, I discuss the theoretical contributions.

1. LITTERATURE REVIEW

1.1 COMMONING: A PROMISING PATH TOWARD THE CONJOINT EMERGENCE OF A COMMUNITY OF PLURAL INDIVIDUALS AND A VISION OF THE COMMON GOOD

In order to protect common goods, in particular natural resources, research on commons has developed from the founding works of Elinor Ostrom (Ostrom, 1990). Elinor Ostrom studied the institutional arrangements for a community to manage its common resources in a sustainable way. Her work demonstrated that sustainable management of the commons is possible, and a solid alternative to private or public management. Initially limited to the question of regulating access to Common Pool Resources (ground water basins, forests, fisheries), the notion of the commons was later extended to the practice of commoning, which corresponds to the processes by which a common resource and a community are co-produced (Linebaugh, 2008; De Angelis & Harvie, 2013; Fournier, 2013). Indeed, beyond the currently limited commons, many resources can be re-appropriated by a community or simply develop out of the interactions between members of these communities. Commoning is less about the question of regulating access to common resources than about the conditions that facilitate their use in common by community members (Fournier, 2013); it is not restricted to pre-existing commons, but in a promising path toward the co-production of commons and communities (ibid). While in the early works on the commons, community pre-existed to the commons, in actual works on commoning the process of community emergence is linked to commoning practices (Fournier, 2013; De Angelis & Harvie, 2013; Bollier & Helfrich, 2015; Federici, 2019). However, this process is little studied. Some researchers call for further research notably to consider the body and emotions, which seem to play an important role in the formation of the commons and the community (Mandalaki & Fotaki, 2020).

In parallel with this work on collective action, research on the common good has been developed in business ethics (Argandoña, 1998; Melé, 2009; Sison and Fontrodona, 2012, 2013; Frémeaux & Michelson, 2017; Frémeaux, 2020). The common good corresponds to the conditions allowing the flourishing of all members of a community. It differs from the general interest aiming at the satisfaction of the majority (Melé, 2009). Work on the commons does not generally deal directly with this notion. In fact, common goods do not correspond to the common goods (Albareda & Sison, 2020). However, it is implicitly accepted that the commons serve the common good (Meyer & Hudon, 2017).

Some scholars try to bridge these two literatures (Albareda & Sison, 2020). Others tend to oppose them, considering that the common good corresponds to a universal, abstract ethic, privileging reason and intellect over emotions and the body (Mandalaki & Fotaki, 2020). Commoning would thus not be truly compatible with common good ethic. As a matter of fact, as De Angelis admits the commons may be "messy, disempowering, claustrophobic, patriarchal, xenophobic and racist" (2012, p. 12). Obviously they are not always oriented toward the common good.

At this stage, commoning, community and common good are assumed to be related but we miss a strong theorical basis and empirical cases to confirm their relation and to clarify the process through which they conjointly emerge. This task seems important because commoning appears as a promising path in addressing collectively grand challenges since they are very often about common goods and they require coordination from plural stakeholders toward a shared goal (George et al., 2016). In the following section, based on the work of John Dewey, we will try to link these three dimensions: community, commoning practices and a certain conception of the common good.

1.2 Insight from John Dewey's pragmatist approach of community to further the notion of commoning

In his work, "The Public and Its Problems" (1927), Dewey analyses a worrying situation: American citizens are increasingly linked to each others by modern means of communication, the scope of activities. Yet these connections are too multiple and complex to be clearly understood and controlled. This situation of powerful yet confused and sudden

interdependences inhibits the formation of a public. Indeed, for Dewey, the public, which consists of a group of persons aware of the situation that affects them and willing to cooperate, requires to be regularly rediscovered. It is not permanently constituted. Rather, it is the result of a process of inquiry that enables citizens to develop a vision of what connects them and to identify ways to improve their lives. At a time when some intellectuals, such as Walter Lippmann, advocated handing political power to experts arguing that the public was unable to govern itself, Dewey fiercely defended only the public is capable of governing itself but that this capacity must be developed through inquiry and communication.

Dewey associates public, community and democracy. The emergence of a public corresponds to search for the great community at a large scale (national scale for instance). However this quest for living communities concerns any group which seek to develop and foster the flourishing of its members. It corresponds to the democratic ideal. In fact, for Dewey, democracy is not reduced to a political system, democracy is the ideal of harmony between the individual and the group, which Dewey also associates with the notion of community. Thus, democracy or community are never fully realized, nor definitive; they must be rediscovered and developed by searching what binds us together.

"For groups, it requires the liberation of the potentialities of the members of a group in harmony with the common interests and goods. (...) Considered as an ideal, democracy is not an alternative to other principles of association. It is the idea of the community itself. It is an ideal in the only intelligible sense of the word." (Dewey, 1927, p. 242-243)

Deeply influenced by Darwin, Dewey conceived humans as organisms in interaction or rather transaction with their environment. He relies on a relational ontology and rejects the classic dualism man/nature, individual/community, mind/body (Lorino, 2018). According to him, the human being is shaped by his environment, especially the natural environment, but he also transforms this environment. Similarly, the individual can only be formed within a community that he or she participate to develop. Individuation and community formation are therefore linked. The dualisms inherited from the history of philosophy in particular, prevent the free adjustment of the individual with is environment and his development. Only experience and free experimentation allow the individual to discover the links that connect him to his

environment, to others, to society and to try to act. In doing so, they develop a sense of responsibility (Dewey, 1916).

"[w]herever there is conjoint activity whose consequences are appreciated as good by all singular persons who take part in it, and where the realization of the good is such as to effect an energetic desire and effort to sustain it in being just because it is a good shared by all, there is in so far a community" (Dewey, 1927, p. 328)

Even if Dewey does not refer and explicitly to of the concept of common good (in the quote below he uses the notion in an ordinary sense), his thinking and his quest for democracy and for community are oriented toward the common good. In fact, democracy understood as an ideal of harmony between the individual and is very similar with the idea of the common good linking the good of the group and the good of each member.

"as a moral ideal [democracy] is thus an endeavor to unite two ideas which have often worked antagonistically; liberation of individuals on one hand and promotion of a common good on the other" (Dewey, Ethics, p. 349)

The common good does not correspond to a precise list of moral principles but rather to the search for conditions that favour the good of each individual in a particular situation. Similarly, for Dewey, the democratic ideal involves conducting inquiries to identify the particular conditions of harmony between the individual and the group in a given situation. However, Dewey proposes a more processual conception of the common good. In the light of his work, the common good can be defined as the result of a process relating to others (community development) and experiencing (commoning practices) by an individual in an attempt to develop his awareness of connections with the environment and to increase his control. Thus, the common good expands as we discover that the world is a common world but also as this common world is created. If our individual good cannot be accomplished alone, that good deepens as what connects us to others is experienced in common. Dewey is opposed to an abstract, universal, fixed conception of the common good. He also rejects dogma because such principles cannot be experienced. In his mind, values are ends in view that guide action but they must be questioned in the light of what they produce. Similarly, the common good corresponds

to this effort to unify the components of a situation, an inquiry. In doing so, not only does the individual flourishes but he also develops a common interest and will with others, a living community is formed.

Inspired by Dewey we can argue that commoning is not only, nor mainly, threatened by market forces or public organizations, but by the constant evolution of the world. Indeed, the links that connect individuals to each other and to their environment, and which need to be discovered and controlled, are evolving. Thus, the common must be regularly rediscovered and regenerated through inquiry. Therefore, the question for Dewey is not so much about the property regime as about the possibility of developing an awareness of interdependencies, a vision of the ideal situation, and the means to act.

Moreover, commoning does not necessarily serve the common good. It depends on the possibility for individuals to adjust to the group and to the environment in order to restore harmony. This process according to Dewey is an inquiry process, an experimental process. Experience for Dewey is composed of a passive dimension (having an experience, undergoing the consequences of actions) and an active dimension (carrying out an experience, trying to control the situation) (Dewey, 1916). Just doing together or deciding together does not generate a common good vision nor a community. Commoning has the potential to form a community orientated toward a vision of the common good if it does not leave aside its experiential dimension (Bollier & Helfrich, 2015) as well as its very embodied and emotional dimension (Mandalaki & Fotaki, 2020).

2. METHODS

I take a processual approach to explore the conjoint emergence of community of plural stakeholders and a vision of the common good through commoning activities. This research is based on a case study of the Incredible Edible Movement in France.

In January 2020, I joined a local Incredible Edible group in Pleurtuit (France). Afterwards, in April 2020, I joined the team that coordinates the movement in France. My participation in the

activities of the local group in Pleurtuit was spread over a period of one year, but was very low given the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown and the difficulty of organising events. My participation in the national coordination team of the movement lasted 5 months and was much more active because during that period I participated in the same way as the members of the board of directors of the movement. During this research work, my objective was to integrate myself into the ongoing inquiries and to put my skills as a researcher at the service of the movement, in particular at the service of local communities development.

2.1 RESEARCH FIELD

Created in 2008 in the English town of Todmorden, the Incredible Edible movement rapidly spread abroad, especially in France where almost 400 groups have formed. Instead of abstract information about Global Warming, what brings people together and triggers collective action is food and urban agriculture ("if you eat you're in" banner).

Incredible Edible is characterised by the desire to reappropriate public space through the urban gardening practices. The Guerrillas Garden or Permission Garden aim to produce food to be shared with everyone in public places, in order to raise awareness of ecological issues and the importance of healthy food, but also to create social links. In France, Incredible Edible (IE) initiatives have flourished, with several hundred active groups. IE corresponds to a commoning activity, the movement seeks to make food and public space a common.

2.2 DATA COLLECTION

Data was collected through participant observation within the local IE group in Pleurtuit and the national coordination team (approximately 60 hours). But also through semi-structured interviews (18 interviews) with members of 12 local groups and members of the national coordination team. I also participated in the elaboration of a national survey of local groups (69 answers, from 51 local groups) in order to understand their functioning. This survey included questions about the group's activities, projects, values and difficulties. I also collected different documents about the movement (website, Facebook account, WhatsApp exchanges with national coordination members, meeting minutes, newsletters).

2.3 DATA ANALYSIS

My analysis of the data followed an abductive approach (Tavory & Timmermans, 2014) moving between data and the emergent structure of theoretical arguments (Locke, 2001). Initially I was very influenced by the reading of John Dewey's book, 'The Public and its Problems' (Dewey, 1927), especially the idea that the Public is not stabilised but has to be rediscovered through the process of inquiry. However, my research field quite naturally led me to the literature on commons and commoning. Indeed, Dewey allowed me not to dissociate the levels of analysis (person/group/town), nor the activities from ethical questions. However, progressively I realized that his very scientific conception of inquiry did not correspond well to my field, where I observed something much less structured and more embodied. Something more related to commoning and to Dewey's notion of experience notably as it is explained in 'Democracy and Education' (1916), than to the notion of inquiry. Dewey obviously does not address the issue of the commons, nor of commoning. However, my field is clearly an initiative that is linked to these initiatives. Thus, my readings and my experiences in the field led me to progressively change my theoretical analysis grid. I chose first-order codes coming partly from the theory and partly from my empirical material. Following a first coding of my research material, I was surprised by the importance of the dimension of experimentation, the idea of improving, of finding solutions. This strongly supported the idea of relying on Dewey and the notion of experience. Moreover, contrary to the idea of commoning, which aspires to a strong autonomy with regard to both the private and public actors, this first coding brought out the idea of a symbiotic relations to be built with the other actors. Furthermore, I expected to hear a lot about the importance of gardening in the process of raising people's awareness of the common good. This was not really the case. Gardening in a private garden or a shared garden, not open to all, can actually lead to withdrawal and individualism. Therefore, this did not lead to confirming initial ideas, notably borrowed from Joëlle Zask, according to who the activity of cultivating the land naturally leads to a growing interest in the common good and produces democracy (Zask, 2016). This initial coding made it possible to link the development and growing vitality of the various groups encountered to a process of joint development of a vision of the common good, commoning practices and community.

4. RESULTS

4.1 INCREDIBLE EDIBLE, A SEED OF THE COMMON GOOD

In Todmorden, IE was born out of a situation of economic crisis. IE is a small town's collective response to take back control over its food supply, develop food autonomy, encourage solidarity and sharing, raise awareness of eating well and urban gardening. *"In Todmorden it started with a lady who put a few leeks outside her house with a "Food to share" sign and it took off. But it didn't stop there, all the people in the town started to plant vegetables everywhere, even in bathtubs, in barrels, they used everything.... In just two years the town had become almost self-sufficient in food."* (A2)

Similarly, IE groups in France were born out of a crisis situation. In the groups I interviewed this crisis is above all personal. The people who create IE groups have in common that they have gone through difficult times, burnout, bankruptcy, depression. *"I was in a phase of depression. We wanted to get a new start. We had no plans and no ecological vision, we didn't care what we ate."* (A2S)

Work is not, or not sufficiently, a place for self-expression and self-realisation. *"I used to work in a car factory. I was working on a car production line. (...) I had made a lot of proposals to my company to improve the environmental impact and it had very little impact. We were under a lot of pressure and the pace was too fast. I felt burned out."(*A7)

These people feel lonely or insufficiently connected to their neighbours. There is a desire to share, to build caring relationships. *"Before I felt apart, I didn't feel good with the people I was with because I was kind of out of place. But now I don't feel that way at all."*(A2L)

These people have lost confidence in politics, or at least they no longer really believe that politicians can respond to current issues on their own. *"Politicians boast but they don't seem to be able to put their hands on the table to say we want this and we will make it happen...."*(A9)

Most of these people are aware of the ecological crisis but they feel overwhelmed by the size of the issues and do not know what to do. There is a gap between their vision of what would be good for the planet and the concrete and accessible means to act they can think of.

The discovery of IE, often linked to the documentary film 'Demain' ('Tomorrow', a popular French film released in 2015), corresponds to a revelation: another world is possible and it is possible to participate in it. The IE idea seems to connect dimensions that are often in tension in these people's lives: the ideal and the practical, the individual and the community, caring for the environment and caring for humanity, the public and the private. *"The film 'Tomorrow' that I watched in the cinema at the beginning of 2016 was the trigger. That evening I said to my husband: 'I've found it, we must do something for the world!' I had heard about IE in this film, it seemed within my reach, simple."* (A2S)

IE is an attempt to do something, to do one's part and no longer being subjected to one's work, politics and society. IE is the hope that doing good for myself can do good for others, for society and for the planet. *"You have to tell yourself that there are things to do. I didn't want to get depressed."* (A2L).

Thus the IE experience cannot be understood without this personal dimension: through the IE experience a person rebuilds himself, reconnects to himself and to others, gains confidence in political action. Participating in IE, although it may seem a very simple and modest action, corresponds to a vital issue. IE is a kind of seed of common good in the sense that in a physical space saturated by private and public activities and organisations, in a mental space divided by various dualisms, it opens up the possibility (often illegally at first, as we will see below) of doing something for the common good. *"I feel like I've found some kind of meaning in my life, doing what I've always wanted to do. It's something I decided freely unlike other things in my life that were constraints. I feel like I've found a place among the people around me, some kind of purpose for my presence on earth."* (A4)

4.2 INCREDIBLE EDIBLE, A COMMONING EXPERIENCE

The IE experience is clearly a commoning experience that produces a common and a community.

The IE members share the idea that public space must be reappropriated. They argue that this space looks like a dead space. Public lawns and the few flowers do not produce much biologically nor socially. Even economically, they are above all cost items for the municipality and do not produce any food for the citizens. As for the personal experience of walking through them, it is often a bit dull, one does not really feel at home there. Above all, people do not feel responsible for these spaces. Their management and maintenance are the responsibility of the municipality. They are public goods that don't do that much good. *"In most cities to find a usable green space, you really have to look for it. They don't give it to you. The cities have taken over common goods. The mayor considered that we wanted to take something from him, one of his prerogatives. The city council mows the lawns, but as a citizen, the lawn is mine. It's a common good and I want to be able to do something on it without asking permission."* (A4)

By planting food for all in these spaces, by installing free access growing boxes and composters, IE members are rediscovering their potential to produce value. Biological value because these spaces become spaces that preserve and develop biodiversity. Social value because these spaces facilitate common activities and the creation of interpersonal links. Economic value because these spaces produce food to share. A personal value because members of IE collectives beautify these spaces and become attached to them by working on them. Through IE groups' activities, dead, lost spaces become living spaces again in the sense of spaces supporting the development of individuals, communities, plants and non-human species. In fact the space remains public, property regime has not changed, but it has become more common since it as been appropriated by individuals and groups. It participates in their development, it is the object of a project, of a dream and of an effort to transform it. *"This notion of the common good: the land belongs to everyone and we can share it. That's really the IE."* (A3); *"IE is about producing edible food in public space, growing food in areas where there is none. There is also the community aspect which is very important (...) IE is about reappropriating public space, creating abundance, food to share."* (N)

Beyond space, the IE members reappropriate the skills needed to cultivate the land (sowing, planting, amending the soil, knowing the characteristics of plants, etc.). *"We share a lot, there is always good advice. Gardening is not an exact science. For example, we were gardening the standard way. We were not doing permaculture at all. (...) It's also the fact that we've seen lasagna gardening and we've been able to cultivate on bad soil. We read a lot of books because there is also exchange..."* (A2F)

All these activities allow for sharing between members. The objective is not primarily to produce food but to do things together, exchange ideas and have a good time. Thus, conviviality is essential and there are many opportunities to share the crops and have a good time together.*"The IE is not what will feed us in vegetables. It's mainly about people meeting, sharing, getting to know each other, discovering what we can do with the soil"* (A3)

We find in the IE experience the three components of commoning: organizing in common, organizing of the common, organizing for the common (Fournier, 2013): respectively the co-production of a common resource and its collective governance, the establishment of communities through collective action, the collective use and consumption of what is managed in common. However, it should be noted that in theory IE is a kind of commoning opened to everyone. Anyone can participate in producing and anyone can collect the crops.

4.3 THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN INCREDIBLE EDIBLE GROUP AND THE NEED TO RELATE COMMON GOOD, COMMUNITY AND COMMONING
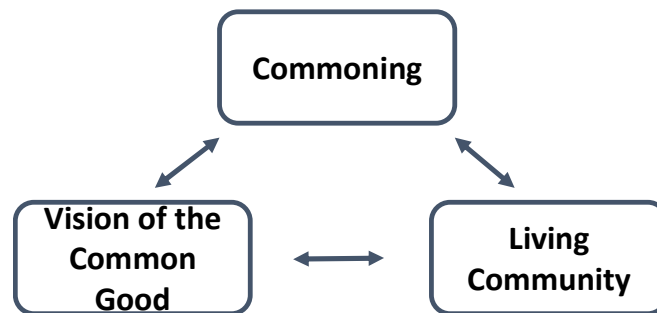
Figure - Experience based model of conjoint development of Community, Common Good and Commoning

Todmorden's original IE project clearly relates its activities of collective re-appropriation of public space and agriculture with community building, but also with a vision of the common good (although the word is not used) as it seeks to promote the good of all humans and non-humans.

However, these different dimensions are not all found in IE attempts in France. It is interesting to understand how these different dimensions are articulated and to what extent they are necessary for the development of an IE group.

We can group our different cases into three categories: growing groups, declining or endangered groups, and short-lived or non-growing IE experiences.

> _Growing groups: a joint development of commoning, a living community and a vision of the common good. (Groups A3, A4, A7, A8, A9)_

The founders of these groups have realized the power of the original Todmorden IE experience. They started with a very simple action, often without asking permission: planting a tomato plant in front of their homes, setting up a planter box in the street. This first initiative will have an important impact. It calls out to the neighbours, who have to be told what it is all about. It raises questions from the city council, which is initially suspicious. Although it is a micro-initiative, it brought the initiators into contact with many people and aroused a great deal of interest.

"One Sunday we took a tomato plant and we went to dig a hole in the lawn in front of our house with a sign. That's how we got started. In our neighbourhood people looked at us strangely at first. We explained, we said "help yourself, its food to share" (...) There was a presentation of the film "Tomorrow" organised by the town. At the end, the people from the city's sustainable development department started a discussion with the audience. Yvan got up and explained what we had done, the whole audience applauded... We realized there was something to do. (...) We started with a tomato plant but it really changed the neighbourhood." (A3)

This small first action reinforces the idea inspired by the Todmorden IE that we need to reclaim public space. A sense of rightness, a certainty of doing good, develops as the activities and the work of explaining the initiative to others progress. By taking over the public space, the members of the group see all the more clearly that it is abandoned to the management of the town hall. We do not really take care of it and we are not interested in it. But when we want to transform it, we realise that it has been taken away from us.

"(Question: what changed your way of seeing things?) Realizing that everyone can do that, that the piece of land near your home is not the town hall's piece of land, that it is also your own land, that you share with others. Yes, that's the IE. (...) The action of explaining to people and presenting to people and seeing them say 'you need an authorisation, they are not going to like it'. But no, we must do it! Why should we? Well, because it's the common good! This part of the street belongs to everyone and we all have to take care of it." (A3)

This first action gradually brings together a small group of people. They are neighbours. They are very different but they share an interest in the neighbourhood. They are not necessarily environmentally-conscious persons, nor are they all experienced in gardening, but they obviously share an interest in food. By participating, even modestly, by bringing their green waste to make compost, by taking part in workshops to sow seeds, by collecting a few herbs or vegetables, these neighbours recreate social ties. This space, which interlinked them without bringing them together, which was public without being common, becomes once again a support for doing things together, getting together, sharing vegetables but also knowledge. In doing so, a common interest and will develops, they become more responsible. They are no longer a collection of untied individuals, rather they start forming a small community. *"They*

became friends (group members), there are very friendly relationships. (...) I found a balance at this level, we have friends, people to call if we have a problem or if we want to see each other, I found somethings that I had almost forgotten. You are not alone. Having ideas and putting them into practice together is much more satisfying than when you are alone." (A4)

It is not possible to replicate the original IE experience, each group has to deal with its own neighbourhood, municipal staff, needs, green spaces and climate. For a group to grow, it cannot simply install a planter box or plant a few tomato plants, it must experiment. It has to find out what makes sense for the neighbours, to adapt to the terrain and to learn from failures in order to develop gardening techniques. This experimentation is the joy of IE activities: you are free to try things, to make mistakes.

IE is really a support to express oneself as a person and to find one's place in a group. In that sense, the IE groups that develop are living communities in which we find a form of harmony between the development of the person and the group.

These experiments allow one to evolve in one's vision of the common good: what seemed good on paper does not always work. Experimentation also allows one to discover the interdependent links between the small piece of land and its neighbours, the city, and the whole human and non-human ecosystem that is necessary to produce crops. As IE initiatives progress, members seek to take greater advantage of all these links. Their vision of the common good, by being tested, solidifies and broadens.

Strikingly, as the group grows, its ambition increases and its activities gain in impact. While IE groups often start by planting a few vegetables, continue by taking over larger areas and installing public composters, healthy groups progressively move towards food autonomy projects in urban areas. The commoning activity does not seem to be able to settle for a fixed perimeter. Being deeply experimental and oriented towards the common good, it pushes members to dare more and dream higher. In this sense, IE is truly a movement that everyone can appropriate, adapt to their needs and that has no clear end. *"We have a plan to do larger scale. Today we're raising awareness, but the idea is to try to scale up so it can really feed people."* (A3)

Healthy IE groups have managed to develop a fruitful collaboration with the town hall. At first, they are perceived as disturbing because they are unclassifiable: they are usually simple collectives and not associations at the beginning, they plant in public space without authorisation but for the common good... *"At the town hall they said "well, but ...", we immediately felt the gap between us who wanted to make things happen and the municipality who was freaked out about her responsibilities" (A3)*

However, many elected officials quickly see the interest in letting these volunteers plant and take care of the public space. Collaboration with the city's sustainable development department is quite natural. However, it takes more time to convince the city's green spaces officers. The IE initiatives encroach on their territory and perform a form of gardening that is the opposite of their values: very free, a little disorganised, oriented toward food production, using methods inspired by organic farming. Nevertheless, when collaboration is established, it is extremely fruitful. The IE groups innovate, serve as itching powder to dare to deviate from habits but also to federate citizens. Being in a sharing, open to all perspective, they do not appropriate their initiatives and try to share them, in particular with the town hall, to scale them up. The town hall, although much slower, knows how to organise these initiatives, to communicate, to identify a legal framework, and has the human and financial means to support the groups but also to help them when things go wrong. *"With the town hall it goes very well. They like what we do, because we go faster than them, they tell us 'you do it faster and then we help you'. (...) it is the speed of the city hall, it is normal it is different. We launch things for example the planter boxes and afterwards they take over on the level of the attestations. We don't have this administrative pressure, we make the project progress remaining in contact and after we put in common, we give them everything. Sometimes they tell us 'you're going a bit too fast'. We stimulate them, we tickle them, but always keeping in mind that it's not things that belong to us, so when they need it, we give it. And so it goes well."(A3)*

The IE groups that develop manage to build a symbiotic relationship with the town hall but also with other associations. They are not in a logic of competition or appropriation, but in a logic of collaboration and mutual aid. This characteristic is essential because, as we will see later, one of the reasons for the decline of a group is either poor relations with the town hall or a kind

of takeover by the town hall of the group, which is no longer a creative stimulus and which ends up being exhausted by taking on tasks that should be the responsibility of the town hall.

Declining or endangered groups: the three dimensions come into tension (groups A2, A5, A11)

The balance to be maintained between the three dimensions (commoning, common good vision, living community) is delicate. All groups experience at times an imbalance. Sometimes activities grow, new planter boxes are installed, without a lively local community to take care of them. In this case, commoning takes over the community. It puts too much of a burden on a few and they end up discouraging and no longer seeing the point of what they are doing. The common good is then no longer at all evident, because these people have the impression that they are working for others, but do not see themselves in it.

At other times, ideas flourish, group members are driven by an ideal, a certain vision of the common good, but they find themselves unable to implement it. They are not ready to really engage in common activities. In this case, the common good is not adjusted to commoning. It seems to be out of reach and can generate frustration in the group. Ideas associated with visions of the common good can also set group members against each other and threaten to divide the group. It is through collective experimentation that the group tests its vision of the common good, verifies it in action and gradually federates around it.

Some situations also illustrate a prevalence of the community dimension over the other two dimensions. The group developed around IE activities and forms a group of friends who share the same values, the same vision. This group gradually moves away from the values of openness or sharing with other actors in the city and thus turns inwards. Gradually its goal becomes less about seeking the common good or experimenting through commoning, than about being together. In this case, the community freezes. It is no longer alive, in the sense that it stops renewing itself. It can even become stifling for the individuals who make it up. This situation slows down commoning activities. It veils the vision of the common good and increases conflicts likelihood within the group.

A2, grew very rapidly in terms of membership. Projects in partnership with the city became more and more ambitious (public planter boxes, public composters, numerous events to raise awareness, collaboration for the creation of several gardens). The election of a newmayor, less favourable to the group, and the lockdown cancelled the group's ambitious projects, destroyed some of its creations and interrupted its activities. The group went through a kind of disillusionment and doubt about its ability to change mindsets in the city. This period corresponds to the outbreak of internal conflicts which contributed to destabilising the group. In this case, it seems that it was the commoning practices that first stopped and that it generated a mismatch between the group's vision of the common good, its community and the possible activities. Some members of the group choose to put their energy elsewhere, the community falls back on the core group of friends and struggles to renew itself. *"It's getting too complicated to do things, we're going to drop out. I think that what we were not aware of was the impact of a change of mayor. There are cycles, moments when things change and we have to learn to know each other again (...) Creating events gave us a boost, but just maintaining things is less inspiring. (...)"* (A2F)

A5 has also developed well (planter boxes, public composters, plots in public spaces, link with other associations and the town hall) but the group has experienced conflicts between different visions. Rather than continuing to search together, these antagonistic visions took over the commoning activity and the community. The lockdown amplified the crisis by suspending the various activities. *"The group is a bit split, not many people come anymore. It is a bit complicated to mobilise people (...) Now we're back to individualism. But it's what we've been through that brings that about, I'm convinced."* (A5)

Thus commoning, living community, vision of the common good work together to develop the groups. Some groups have experienced a phase of expansion. Unfortunately, they are in a fragile situation associated with an imbalance within the three dimensions.

Short-lived or non-growing IE experiences: absence of one of the dimensions (groups A1, A6, A10, A12)

These IE experiences do not develop. In some situations, the city council installed planter boxes in a neighbourhood without a request from the inhabitants, so there is no community, no vision

of the common good and the commoning activity do not emerge. *"In xxx (name of the city), it's the other way round: the town council thought the idea was nice (...) they said 'well, we're the ones who install the planter boxes'. (...) nobody ever took care of it because nobody knew what it was. It couldn't work."* (A6)

Some people embark on the IE adventure with an idea of the common good but no desire to associate with others, to do things together, so without community or commoning. This is the case of A6 who ends up losing the very meaning of what he does.

Some, like A10, build a planter box, plant some vegetables in it, but give up at the first difficulty. In this case, there is no vision of the meaning of this activity and therefore no motivation to maintain it, nor any attempt to share with others.

5. DISCUSSION

5.1 A PROCESSUAL VISION OF THE CONJOINT DEVELOPMENT OF COMMONING-COMMON GOOD-COMMUNITY

Researchers working on the commons defend the idea that the commons are not specific resources but rather the result of a commoning process (Linebaugh, 2008; De Angelis & Harvie, 2013; Fournier, 2013). This process, they argue, co-produces commons and a community. This aspect of the commoning process is notably referred to as "organizing of the common" (Fournier, 2013). By proposing a processual conception of the community this work relates to this literature.

The link between the commons and a community or communities has been clearly established since the work of Ostrom (1990). Hardly anyone questions the idea that there is "no commons without community" (Federici, 2019, p. 16). Yet in studies of the commons, the focus is often on the commons, and the process of community emergence is not really studied. Above all, it seems that the notion of community is obvious and that it does not need to be defined. However, there are multiple conceptions of what a community is which are more or less coherent with the idea of commoning and of a processual development. Our work proposes a vision of community based on the work of John Dewey, which corresponds to the democratic ideal of harmony

between the individual and the group. Community according to John Dewey is based on shared experiences that develop common interest and will. It is not fixed, it develops through conjoint activities, it is plural and allows the development of the individual and the group. Essentially what makes a community according to John Dewey is the collective quest to elucidate and solve the problems that affect us.

If John Dewey's notion of community is fully compatible with the idea of commoning, it brings with it the idea of the common good. A common good that is not based on a predefined and transcendent moral vision. In line with Dewey's pragmatist relational ontology and democratic ideal, we are not isolated but linked to each other and to nature, and thus our good depends on the search for harmonious relationships with the organisms that make up our environment. Therefore, this research contributes to works that relate the notions of community and commoning (Albareda & Sison, 2020 ; Meyer & Hudon, 2017), to that of the common good, bringing together the works in business ethics on the common good (Sison & Fontrodona, 2012, 2013; Frémeaux & Michelson, 2017; Frémeaux, 2020) and those in economics or organisational theory on the commons (Ostrom, 1990; De Angelis & Harvie, 2013; Fournier, 2013; Bollier & Helfrich, 2015). I argue that a vision of the common good is the result of a process of relating to others (community development) and experiencing with others (commoning) and that this in turn helps to grow the community and to direct its commoning activities. This work hence provides a theoretical model linking community-common good and commoning and tests it with our case of the Incredible Edible case.

5.2 HIGHLIGHTING THE EMBODIED, EMOTIONAL, RELATIONAL EXPERIENCE WHICH OPENS UP COMMONING

However, the Incredible Edible case goes further than simply illustrating John Dewey's thinking. Indeed, through this case we can highlight the importance of the embodied, emotional and relational dimensions of experience in the emergence of a community and a vision of the common good. Dewey rejects all dualisms. He does not oppose body and mind, emotion and reason. Yet his conception of inquiry, particularly as it is developed it in his book 'The Public and its Problems' (1927), is very rational. If the relational dimension is central since inquiry is a collective, the bodily and emotional dimensions are not really integrated. Yet commoning is

not just a form of inquiry, it is a complete experience that is very fulfilling because of its unifying power. This more personal conception of commoning is one of the contributions of this research. In particular, the notion of "seed of the common good", a seemingly marginal experience which, through its unifying potential, opens up to the common good. A sort of conversion to the idea that aiming for the common good is possible. This refers to the passive dimension of experience well explained by Dewey in 'Democracy and Education' (1916) or 'Art as Experience' (1934): having an experience. By having this experience people perceive through their senses, their bodies, that another world is possible. However, they do not yet clearly understand what is possible. It is only afterwards, by conducting an experiment, the active dimension of experience, which can be related to commoning when it is conducted by several people, that they manage to understand the possibilities offered by the situation, to raise their control of the situation and to feel more responsible.

This research contributes to the literature on commons and commoning and the ethics of the commons by supporting the embodied, emotional and relational dimensions of the process of conjoint emergence of a community, of a vision the common good and commoning (Mandalaki & Fotaki, 2020). With the notion of "seeds of common good", I suggest that entry into the commoning process is not natural nor obvious. It is not only made difficult by legal issues and property regimes, it is above all inhibited because people no longer even have the desire or the idea of the common good. Across the interviews, I have gathered many elements attesting that many people are clearly not ready for this reappropriation of their food and public space. IE initiatives seem strange, people don't understand. This case is interesting because it shows that even in a space that is relatively open, on a subject that in theory interests everyone - food - commoning is struggling to get off the ground. It is not enough to communicate, people must be provided a first experience. This is in line with the idea defended by Ignasi Martí and Pablo Fernandez (2015) in their study of a Spanish citizens' movement, according to which certain spaces and experiences of togetherness can open up new possibilities and ways of living, and lead to the emergence of new forms of organizing and alternative political values. Experiences that sow "seeds of common good" which will grow through commoning and community are similar to scaffolding as a process that enables to unlock alternatives realities or social orders initially unthinkable or not wanted because rooted in normative and social structures (Martí & Mair, 2009) but nonetheless necessary to address grand challenges (Mair et al., 2016). However,

contrary to scaffolding, through commoning the solution is not designed and concealed by experts but necessarily built together, since the emergence of community is part of the solution.

5.3 REFLECTING ON THE ORGANIZATIONAL RESPONSE TO GRAND CHALLENGE: THE NEED FOR COMMON GOOD GENERATING EXPERIENCES AND SYMBIOTIC RELATION BETWEEN ORGANIZATIONS

The actions of IE groups may seem derisory in against the scale of the issues at stake, particularly climate change. Indeed, planting a few radishes will not in itself transform agriculture or feed the planet. However, in a world dominated by private actors, especially companies, or by public actors, the IE experience, like commoning experiences, is different. In fact there is no shortage of organisations, whether private or public. What is particularly valuable in responding to these major challenges is the ability to build a common goal among plural actors, a vision of the common good. The common good as we understand it emerges out of experiences of commoning and the progressive development of a community. Clearly, if we live under the illusion that we are autonomous and independent individuals, or if we fail to understand what binds us together, organising for the common good is impossible. The common good is not given once and for all and perfectly clear, it is to be sought by experiencing what binds us and imagining possibilities to be more in harmony with each other. Therefore, this work contributes to the literature in organisational theory on grand challenges, in particular works recommending the adoption of a pragmatist approach (Ferraro et al., 2015; Farjoun et al., 2015), by arguing that the commoning experience is a pathway for the formation of a vision of a common good and the development of a community out of plural individuals. Beyond research on coordinating organisations to address these grand challenges, such as meta-organisations (Ahrne & Brunsson, 2005; Berkowitz & Dumez, 2016) or interorganizational relationships (Selsky & Parker, 2005), this work emphasises the need not to organise everything and to maintain spaces for cultivating the common good.

Moreover, the stakeholders concerned by these ecological issues are not necessarily identifiable. Becoming a stakeholder, who feels concerned and does its part, is a process that corresponds to the process leading to the formation of a public at a national level or the formation of a community at a more local level (Kerveillant, 2017). This work highlights the

importance of unlocking spaces and activities for the formation of these communities. Otherwise, public or private organisations will only take into account the already formed stakeholders. Common good will be all the more unattainable.

The literature on commoning is often quite hostile to public and private organisations, which are deemed responsible for the current societal crisis (De Angelis & Harvie, 2013). The notion of commoning is generally associated to the desire not to limit the commons to common pool resources but to extend them to resources currently managed by private or public institutions. Rather than an antagonism between the commons and the private and public domains, this research shows that a symbiotic relationship between the communities developed through commoning practices and these actors is possible and even necessary. IE groups bring to risk-averse town halls their capacity to innovate, to take risks, to mobilise citizens, to do things with very little financial need. However, IE groups would not go very far without the logistical support of town halls, their ability to structure initiatives and to communicate in order to scale them up. Symbiosis means "living together", it is a *"close and lasting association of two different organisms, which find their complementarities in their differences. The growth of one enabling the growth of the other and vice versa"* (Delannoy, 2016, p. 52). The IE groups that manage to develop manage to keep their very experimental commoning dynamics, driven by the pleasure of doing and dreaming together, while relying on the town hall but also on multiple associations or companies to increase their impact and continue developing. Establishing this type of relationship requires time to gain trust, strength of character to resist pressure, and ability to learn. It is not that simple. Some groups end up being controlled by the municipality and they lose their vitality. Those that stay the course and develop are extremely valuable to the organisations in place: by cultivating the common good they manage to fertilise the soil on which these organisations evolve.

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