

Not Gay As In Happy, But Queer As in Fuck You

An examination into how subaltern counterpublics contribute to understanding social change towards commons management.

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Lund University Centre for
Sustainability Studies



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Abstract

Optimal management of the commons to ensure sustainability relies on community management. Despite widespread knowledge of this, conventional wisdom is locked into how much the state should regulate the market. Free market ideology, defined as neoliberalism, promotes a culture of extreme competition and individualism which stand in contrast to the needed cultures of participation and inclusion for commons management. In this way, pervasive cultures of neoliberalism undermine society's ability to address sustainability issues. Extensive scholarship on commons management has proven it to be a feasible alternative of governance, but the state is yet to consider the alternative. This thesis explores the practices of community who have experienced oppression to determine how they organise in the face of a hostile socio-political context. Framing the queer community play parties as a case of subaltern counterpublic demonstrates the influence these spaces have on creating social change. Using *tendencies for inclusion* as a framework obtained through research, I was able to demonstrate the ways the queer party would ensure inclusion through discursive exchange. Results illustrated that meeting the needs of the community means ensuring participation by creating inclusive social structures. This case study presents valuable insights for sustainability issues in two ways. On the one hand, these spaces promote cultures that push back against the neoliberal influence. While on the other, the spaces create substantive measures of participation and inclusion, principles called for in commons management.

Keywords: commons management, queer, subaltern counterpublics, social change, tragedy of the commons, play party.

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My research took place on the land of the Gadigal people of the Eora nation and on the land of Wurundjeri people of the Kulin nation. I acknowledge that this land is stolen land that was never ceded and that the Aboriginal people are the traditional and rightful custodians of the land.

She is. The sister. Everybody would want.

Heaps of thanks to my best mate who has provided me with unflinching moral support and relentless soundboarding, your friendship has been the buoy I never knew I wanted. One million thank yous, Moo.

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1. Introduction

“Financial meltdown, environmental disaster and even the rise of Donald Trump – neoliberalism has played its part in them all.” (George Monbiot, 2016).

“The systems we have to navigate, co-opt and bend are designed without us in mind. They are designed to be difficult for us, to create barriers. We push through them, together. Our skillset to do it, carved out of our own experiences as queer kids, queer teens, queer adults in our own historical and family contexts, is evolved.” (Gala Vanting; sex worker, writer, educator, and activist, 2017)

Conventional understanding of how the state should govern is split between ‘more regulation’ or ‘more market’ approaches. Proponents of the more market approach rose in popularity during the 1970s in response to slowing economies, citing neoliberal economic reform as the way forward (Harvey, 2005). Hardin’s *“Tragedy of the Commons”* (1968) resonated with policy makers and emboldened the neoliberal transformation making it the most dominant Western¹ political ideology of today (Harvey, 2005; Nixon, 2012). Protecting services, land and resources from free-riders was solved through privatisation (Hardin, 1968). Free market logic was so influential its extension influenced meaningful changes across social, cultural and ecological aspects of society. Neoliberals advocated for the shrinkage of government through marketisation of public services and programs, which has coincided with increasing structural inequality (Chomsky, 1999; Klein, 2014). Furthermore, environmental issues are addressed using economic rationality, consequently resulting in increasing resource depletion and ecosystem destruction (Daly, Cobb & Cobb, 1994; Plumwood, 2003; Jackson, 2009).

The pervasiveness of the neoliberal project is unlikely to be solved at a single level, emboldening the call for an alternative beyond the market/state binary (Bollier, 2014; Klein, 2014; Monbiot, 2017). The hybrid of market/state/commons approach is considered in various sustainability literature yet states have failed to seriously consider it (Hale, 2010 Fischer et al, 2012; Monbiot, 2017). When considering social change in the context of sustainability science and the commons, very little research has been conducted on current queer communities who cultivate their own cultures that counter that of Western society.

¹ Western society: Those countries that are mostly marked by European settlement and refer to a common heritage of political and economic systems, ethics, norms, traditions that have some origin or association with Europe.

It stands to reason that a culture widely condemned for inequality and oppression (Brown, 2003; Peterson, 2011; Davis; 2013) will prompt marginalised communities to gather in the fringes and foster their own ways of living. This thesis aims to investigate how a community with a critical perspective has created spaces to develop structures and tools most appropriate for their needs. Can this unique perspective cultivate radically resistant ways of living conducive for transitions towards commons management?

In this thesis, I refer to my examination of two play parties² in Australia, entering into an inquiry of what the queer experience might offer sustainability science. One key issue investigated in this thesis is how the queer community forcibly resist problematic cultures in their practices. I examine how their practices contribute to sustainability science. I restrict my focus to cultures within the West and this thesis takes a critical approach towards this culture.

1.1 Significance of Research

Given the lack of research on the queer community and their practices in a sustainability science context, this thesis will take the form of an exploration of a queer practice, namely queer play parties. Greta Gaard (1997) calls for a push towards Queer Ecofeminism, seeking to unveil the creative ways in which these communities organise, a valuable thing when searching for ways to dismantle oppressive structures. Casting a sustainability science lens upon a radical practice of a marginalized community with a history of social struggle may present interesting perspectives to offer on issues that concern sustainability science, such as commons management.

Furthermore, the fact that I identify as part of this community situates me as a sustainability scientist in a novel way. Not only do I have unique access to the social networks but I sympathise with their experience allowing me to investigate the queer experience in an authentic manner, minimising co-option. Using an exploratory approach, I seek to investigate what can be learnt as a queer sustainability scientist and gleaned for sustainability science.

² Play parties I refer to here are adult sex parties where practitioners engages in sex or sexual activities such as BDSM.

1.2 Research Questions

This inquiry will be split into two parts, a theoretical and empirical in order to answer the overarching research question ***how can a queer play party, understood as a subaltern counterpublic, contribute to understanding social change towards commons management?***

The theoretical discussion will be used to answer the first sub research question; ***how can queer play parties be understood in terms of both a commons and a subaltern counterpublic?*** This section will set the stage to answer the second research question; ***how do the queer play parties achieve the core values for commons management, inclusivity and participation?***

2. Theory

Drawing on theory I will explain the problem this thesis addresses, I will present an alternative and finally the space through which the alternative can occur. I will then introduce the community I examine, the queer community, and how they can be framed first as a subaltern counterpublic and then as a commons. By doing so, I will be able to answer the first sub-research question ***how can queer play parties be understood in terms of both a commons and a subaltern counterpublic?***

2.1 Problem: Neoliberal Critique

Since the 1970s the idea of the commons has emerged globally as a key issue in theoretical and political terms (Ostrom, 1990; Ostrom, Burger, Field, Norgaard, & Policansky, 1999; Mansfield 2004; Harvey, 2011; Bollier, 2014). This ascension has coincided with the violent force of neoliberal reforms across the western world. In this section I will discuss the rise of neoliberalism, its relationship with the commons and the environmental, social and political consequences.

The 1970s slowing growth of Western economies began to mount pressure on how governments acted (Harvey, 2005). The intervention of state regulation, or Keynesian economics, was blamed for the slowing economies, emboldening leaders like Thatcher and Reagan to reach for alternatives (Harvey, 2005; Dardot & Laval, 2013). Deploying markets to handle the job of the state was argued to be the most effective way of satisfying people's needs and so policy began to reflect that (Dumenil & Levy, 2004). Selling off public services to be managed by private interests was the answer to a slowing economy, a radicalization of capitalism itself, opening up new realms for capital to exploit (Dardot &

Laval, 2013). Thatcher embraced the doctrine, rolling out aggressive market fundamentalism insisting, *“there is no alternative”* (Harvey, 2005).

These circumstances contributed to the appeal behind the Tragedy of the Commons logic (Harvey, 2005). Simply put, the Tragedy of the Commons is the notion that a resource ungoverned by individual property rights would likely result in spoiled or depletion of the resource as individual users act independently from others according to their own self-interest, forgoing the long term interests of the group (Hardin, 1968). Hardin believed that perverse incentives motivate humans to actively maximise their personal utility, selfishly, and will do so to the detriment of the resource they reap the benefits from (Hardin, 1968; Dardot & Laval, 2013). The tragedy lay in individual’s rationally calculating circumstances according to self-interest and assumed no communication occurred between actors in these circumstances (Dardot & Laval, 2013). Hardin advocated for privatization of land as the best solution to ensure the sustainability of a resource, a narrative that vindicated a neoliberal rescue (Hardt & Negri, 2009). Hardin’s theory was continually used to justify seizure of land under a neoliberal charge (Harvey, 2011; Dardot & Laval, 2013). The sale of private land enabled the delivery of common land, previously owned by governments, into the hands of private interests creating new avenues of capital and wealth (Harvey, 2005). As Harvey argues *“the main substantive achievement of neoliberalisation (...) has been to redistribute, rather than generate, wealth and income”* (Harvey, 2005, p159). Dumenil & Levy (2004) go even further and say that after thirty years of Keynesianism, neoliberalism was introduced with the main purpose to restore wealth and power back to the economic elites.

The new doctrine became more strident through its evolution searching for new markets to expand into (Monbiot, 2017). This had disastrous effects on the environment, giving way to a new type of extractivism seen in cases of land grabbing and mining (Fast, 2016). Ironically, the same ideology was used to justify mobilising markets to address environmental problems (Bakker, 2007). As environmental problems arose, the neoliberal doctrine had the answers; framed as market environmentalism, the approach aims to build upon Hardin’s self-maximising philosophy (Goldman 2005; Bakker, 2007). The rationale being, if society treated environmental goods as economic goods, efficient allocation would be promised through the mechanism of pricing (Anderson & Leal, 2002; Bakker, 2007). Critical research on market environmentalism names this approach the ‘neoliberalisation of nature’ and drawing the analysis of oxymoron: infinite economic growth on a finite planet (Mansfield 2002; McCarthy 2004; McCarthy and Prudham 2004; Perrault 2006; Klein, 2014; Tulloch & Neilson, 2014). This approach has not

economised the environment in the way it promised to. In fact, aforementioned extractivism and market led land management has resulted in the acceleration of ecological destruction (Eckersley, 1993; Daly, Cobb and Cobb, 1994; Escobar, 2015), constituting this culture as one that is unsustainable (Kagan, 2012).

The self-maximising principle had widespread impacts at a social level too. Neoliberal proponents proposed that human well-being can be best advanced through free market economics (Hayek, 1944). Liberating the market from government regulation would mobilize the inner entrepreneur in actors, inspired by the self-maximising principle (Harvey, 2005). Individuals compete against each other on a market platform to maximise profit, this framed as the ultimate freedom (Brown, 2003). Capital has the ability to organise and shape human behaviour and relations; the norm of competition transforming every social relation to be subject to profit (Dardot & Laval, 2013; Monbiot, 2017). In a neoliberal society, there is no need for collectivism or cooperation, both are characterised as irrational and against human nature (Dardot & Laval, 2013; Monbiot, 2017). On a broader scale, those who use public services or receive welfare are considered free riders vindicating the sale of public services and influencing social catastrophe of unemployment, poverty and exclusion (Gallie, Paugam, & Jacobs, 2003).

“As the domain of the state is reduced” (Monbiot, 2017, p.73) so too, is the state’s ability to take meaningful action (Bollier, 2014; Klein, 2014; Monbiot, 2017). One must look beyond the market and the state to reckon with this problem. Civil society is the realm in which resistance is taking place, where social movements organise and where communities find new of ways of survival (Klein, 2014; Monbiot, 2017). Before I go into the transformational power of civil society, I will elaborate on an ideological and pragmatic alternative to organising society, the commons.

2.2 Commons as an Alternative

The commons as a realm of governance is a dimension of society that has historically failed to be considered (Monbiot, 2017). Patterns of resource use have intensified alongside the ascension of neoliberalism calling into question the ability of the market to correct societal problems (Harvey, 2011; Klein, 2014; Monbiot, 2017). As I have outlined above, state led intervention and democracy have been undermined by neoliberal forces, (Chomsky, 1999) calling into question the state’s ability to correct societal problems. One alternative is to introduce the dimension of the commons, aimed to spread

responsibility of resource management beyond the market and the state and towards the community level (Ostrom, 1990; Monbiot, 2017).

Scholarly literature on alternative resource management has steadily increased since Ostrom's landmark book *Governing the Commons* in 1990. The Nobel Prize winning research proved that communities self organise and cooperate to ensure sustainable use of natural resources (Ostrom, 1990). In Hardin's articulation of the tragedy, it was the individual's utility maximisation that laid at the heart of the problem (Hardin, 1968). Perverse incentives motivated humans to act according to their own self-interest, maximising their personal gain consequently to the detriment of the resource (Hardin, 1968). Empirical findings thoroughly debunked this self-maximising myth, proving humans are incredibly capable of cooperation (Appell, 1993; Ostrom et al., 1999). Not only can communities organise around a common resource, but, in many cases, this can be the most optimal way to ensure long term sustainability of a resource (Ostrom, 1990; Ostrom et al., 1999; Harvey, 2011; Dardot & Laval, 2013). Building from this extensive scholarship, movements across the world have come to recognise the potential of this new alternative as a vital response to current social, political and ecological crises (Ostrom & Hess 2007; Bollier, 2014; Klein 2014; Monbiot, 2017). The commons paradigm represents a practical alternative social order of self-help and collective gain (Bollier, 2014).

The power of the commons is best articulated by Bollier, "*the imaginary of the commons helps extricate us from this morass*" (Bollier, 2014, p.187). The morass he speaks of is the neoliberal project, which has failed to provide the promises of prosperity and development for all (Rodik, 2017). In turn, through its promotion of competition and intense individualisation, social capabilities of cooperation and participation have eroded away (Ostrom & Hess, 2007). Table 1 compares the beliefs between the commons paradigm and the for-profit paradigm. The commons responds to instrumentalisation and erosion of community with problem solving power of cooperation (Bollier, 2014). Proponents of commons management hold great promise for the humanizing mechanism to push back against flailing and dysfunctional governments by presenting feasible alternatives through practical examples illustrated everyday (Ostrom 1999; Bollier, 2014; Monbiot, 2017).

Professor Elinor Ostrom describes the criteria for something to constitute a commons as simple as "*a shared understanding about the allocation of scarce use rights*" (Quoted in Bollier, 2014, p32). When a community are faced with a problem, the community will come together to negotiate the best solution,

without the need for markets or governments involvement (Caffenzis & Federici, 2014). Using their knowledge of the resource they will negotiate a vision collectively to overcome the problem (Bollier, 2014). Strategies to address new arising problems are developed through negotiation, experimentation and innovation (Ostrom, 1990; Bollier, 2014).

Table 1: Adapted from Bollier, 2014. Table of comparison of core beliefs between the for-profit paradigm and the commons paradigm.

	For-Profit Paradigm	Commons Paradigm
Resources	Scarcity is given or created (through barriers and exclusion)	For rivalrous resources, there is enough for all through sharing. For non-rivalrous resources there is abundance.
	Strategy: 'efficient' allocation of resource	Strategy: strengthening social relations is decisive for assuring fair shares and sustainable use
Idea of Individual	Individuals maximise benefits for themselves	Humans are primarily cooperative social beings
Governance		
Decision-making	Hierarchical, top-down, command and control	horizontal, decentralised, bottom up, self-organised, monitoring and adjustment of resource use
Social-relationship		
Power Relations	Centralised and monopoly	decentralised and collaborative
Property Relations	Exclusive private property "I can do what I want with what is mine"	Collectively used possession "I am co-responsible for what I co-use"
Access to non-rival resources (ideas, code)	Limited access; scarcity is artificially created through law and technology	Unlimited access; open access is the default norm
Use rights	Granted by owner (or not). Focus is on individual rights	Co-decided by co-producing users. Focus on fairness, access for all
Social Practice	Prevail at the expense of others: competition dominates	Commoning: cooperation dominates
Knowledge Production	Corporate ideology/and values integrated into education and knowledge production	Peer-to-peer, networking and collaborative allows diversity of viewpoints
	Knowledge regarded as scarce asset to be bought and sold	Knowledge regarded as plentiful resource for the common good of society

The sustainability of the resource depends on all users cooperation to ensure no one takes all the benefits without the corresponding responsibilities (Ostrom, 1990). To ensure this the community develop collective-choice rules, norms and enforceable sanctions (Ostrom, 2009). Ensuring all actors participate and are included in the process of organising encourages buy-in, promoting a sense of ownership and accountability for the resource (Ostrom, 2009; Bollier, 2014). Commoning³ for a commons is found at a variety of scales; it could be on a small scale such as a fridge serving a family, it

³ Commoning is the act of a community coming together to to organise around a resource (Bollier, 2014)

could be community level such as libraries and parks, and it could be on a global level such as the internet or the Pacific ocean (Ostrom & Hess, 2007).

Ostrom & Hess (2007) found that commoning occurs in cases beyond natural resources and extended their research to include cases of cultural and knowledge commons. If the commons is so broad, what is the red thread? Bollier defines a commons more accurately as *“paradigms that combine a distinct community with a set of social practices, values and norms that are used to manage a resource”* (Bollier, 2014 p.29). Therefore, the type of resource, tangible or otherwise is unimportant, rather the success of a commons relies on its cultural practices which embody core values of: *“participation, cooperation, inclusiveness, fairness, bottom-up innovation, accountability”* (Bollier, 2014, p183).

“Expanding the commons can act as a counterweight to the atomising, alienating forces” (Monbiot, 2017, p172), of the neoliberal culture. It can be seen as a feasible political strategy through the mobilization of community knowledge and creativity, its provides solutions to practical problems by recasting humans as cooperative and inclusive, results in a *“self-directed leadership (which) can elicit much more energy and imagination than centrally directed initiatives can”* (Bollier, 2014 p.77).

Best articulated by Caffentzis and Federici (2014, pi102):

“One of the challenges we face today is connecting the struggle over the public with those for the construction of the common, so that they can reinforce each other. This is more than an ideological imperative. What we call ‘the public’ is actually wealth that we have produced and we must re-appropriate it.”

In order to successfully utilise the power of the commons, society must struggle for the commons, taking it back from the hands of capitalism and neoliberalism (Caffentzis & Federici, 2014). This struggle must take place within the realm of the state. I mentioned earlier that resistance is occurring in civil society, an arena in which Putnam (1995) argues can positively and productively influence governments to better reflect the needs of the society they represent. As outlined above, the commons provides a *“set of productive social circuits”* (Bollier, 2014, p.30), that enable sharing of experiences and knowledge, strengthening norms and trust (Overland, 2018). These are the exact virtues that Putnam (1995) argues can create constructive relationships between society and the state, ensuring better governance.

A variety of core values ensure the sustainability of a resource. Within a successfully managed commons, participation is essential (Ostrom et al., 1999; Bollier, 2014; Overland, 2018). Increased participation results in richness of information available, and a diversity of users makes for a more robust approach to problem-solving (Bollier, 2014). Participation also encourages buy-in by resource users, promoting a sense of ownership and thus accountability for the resource (Bollier, 2014; Ostrom, 2009). For the purposes of this thesis, I concentrate on the core principles of participation and inclusivity within the commons.

2.3 Introducing the Civil society and Public sphere

Well known western social theorists have explored the influence of civil society in shaping the bourgeois liberal society since its ascension in the 18th century. These theorists were Hume, Hegel, Marx, but it was Gramsci who made a distinction of three crucial elements within the various articulations (Fleming, 2000; Murphy, 2001). The first is the dimension of the cultural and symbolic, and the role in shaping values, action-oriented norms, and meaning (Murphy, 2001). Not only are practices or beliefs cultivated and exchanged between individuals, but these are also spaces of social contestation, where identities are explored, ethical values negotiated and alliances forged (Fleming, 2000). Creativity within civil society makes up the second dimension. Unofficial networks, initiatives, social movements, are separated from the official associations and government institutions and offer opportunities to create new concerns and projects fostering new values and beliefs (Fleming, 2000). The third and final dimension is the Habermasian concept of the public sphere. The public sphere has been characterised as a self-organized arena in which civil debate takes place, *“this arena is conceptually distinct from the state; it is a site for the production and circulation of discourses that can in principle be critical of the state.”* (Fraser, p111, 1992). The public sphere is where political deliberation takes place, accepted through a communicative paradigm (Fraser, 1992). This discursive arena enables groups to discuss political matters where the group reaches a common judgement on these matters (Hauser, 1999). Ideally, actors engage equally on relevant political topics allowing for consensus to be reached, where the *“state authority was publicly monitored through informed and critical debate”* (Habermas 1962; Hauser 1999).

For Habermas the public sphere is where people come together in equal status, engage in critique of the state and translate their individual experiences into public awareness (Dueland, 2010). The ideal public sphere can create a defensive wall against instrumentalization of the state and the economy, illustrated in figure 1 (Fleming, 2000). The state is a field of struggle, sensitive to the values and beliefs debated in

these arenas, making these arenas key in establishing conditions necessary for an egalitarian democratic society (Habermas, 1972; Fraser, 1992). Similarly, Cunningham (1992) points out that the end goal within democracies should be striving toward a participatory democracy, where a vibrant public sphere is a space that spurs society toward this goal, ensuring full participation. However, inclusion of multiple groups into the public sphere has only succeeded through struggle (Travers, 2003).

2.4 Subaltern Counterpublics

Despite the valuable contribution of public sphere and civil society theory has offered critical theory, feminists have found some highly problematic contradictions that will help situate my case study in this body of research. Fraser contends that the public sphere results in an exclusive public sphere, favouring the bourgeoisie, reinforcing structural disadvantage within a cultural arena, or public sphere (Fraser, 1992). Habermas (1962), calls for a bottom-up approach establishing values and beliefs, necessary preconditions for a strong liberal democracy, through a singular comprehensive public sphere. Fraser contends that accommodating a plurality of competing publics will promote participation parity making it a step toward a stronger democracy (Fraser, 1992). Similarly, Overland (2018) claims the coexistence of variety of public actors allowed to freely express their views, can increase the brainpower of a society, pushing back against the systemizing force of the state and market (figure 1). The higher the variety of actors within a state increases brain power, 'its memory becomes more comprehensive and multifaceted, the various actors can perform quality control on each other's ideas and arguments, and it is more difficult to repress challenging thoughts.' (Overland, 2018 p.4). With this in mind, feminists (Felski, 1989) argue that marginalized groups do organise and create their own alternative publics, in much the same way as the public sphere, known as subaltern counterpublics (Fraser, 1992). These spaces solve the problem of the exclusive bourgeois public sphere, proving the variety and multiplicity of counterpublics helping to expand discursive space (Fraser, 1992). Exclusion does occur in the form of bracketing away from society, the inclusion discussed is what occurs within these spaces, in the interests of creating equal conditions for discussion (Felski, 1989; Fraser, 1992; McCann, 2011).

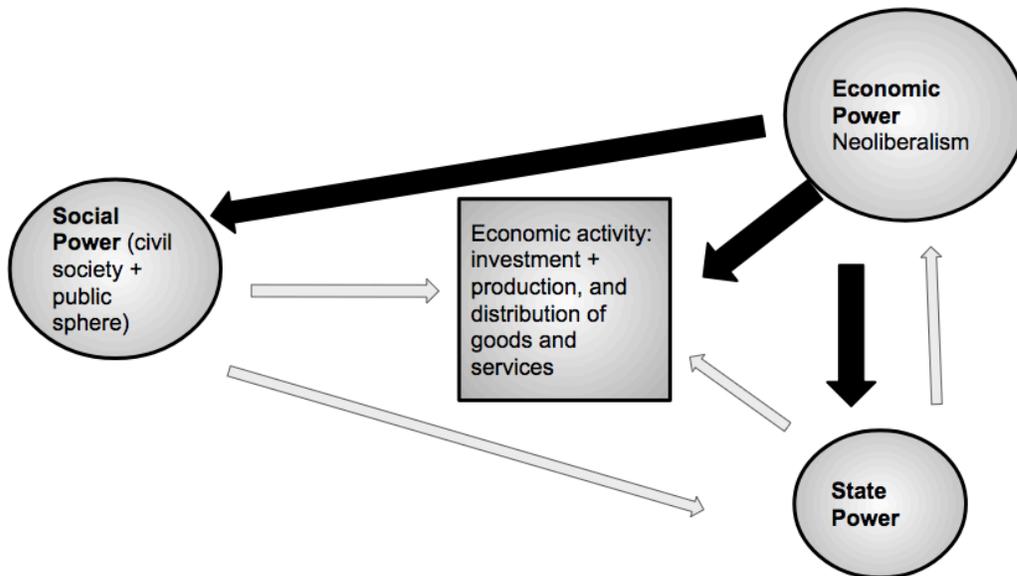


Figure 1: This configuration demonstrates the relationship between social, state and economic powers in a neoliberal state. Black arrows indicate a stronger power, meaning that social and state power are subordinated to economic power in control over economic activity. The reconstruction of the public sphere will strengthen the state’s power to push back against the penetrative force of the economic power. Source: (Hahnel & Wright, 2016) (Own figure).

The understanding of these spaces differ from the traditional public sphere in that the goal is to both legitimize and communicate lived realities while also contesting mainstream public spheres in an effort to respond to these realities (Felski, 1989; Fraser, 1992; Asen and Brouwer 2001). These groups seek out these spaces to withdraw from discrimination, injustice and violence in dominant publics. Here, the invention of new language helps reimagine needs and identities of the participants to balance, although not eliminate completely, the extent of the injustice experience by these groups in official public spheres (Fraser, 1992; Jackson and Welles, 2016). Recognising the intimate link between power and language, in this spaces new language is created to address, push-back and replace power structures expressed through language in society (Travers, 2003). Fraser (1992) notes they are both “spaces of withdrawal and regroupment” and “bases and training grounds for agitational activities directed toward wider publics” (Fraser 1992, p. 124). The dynamic between these two functions Fraser argues is a dialectic, compounding upon the transformatory potential that the public sphere has, amplifying it into emancipatory potential (Fraser, 1992; Ferrarese, 2015).

It is important to remember that transformation is open to interpretation and dependent on agents within the counterpublic, their values, beliefs and so on. Remembering Fraser’s comment that “*I do not mean to suggest that all subaltern counterpublics are always necessarily virtuous*”, Traver’s reminds us to

remain committed to critical reflexivity in the context of publics because *“the construction of the public is ongoing and will always and necessarily be imperfect”* (Travers, p.12, 2003).

The process of social change available through the creation of these subaltern counterpublics can influence the state to address the issues of powerful cultures. The public sphere and subaltern counterpublics see that the state is the mechanism through which social change comes about, and they are a tool to influence the state (Fraser, 1992; Habermas, 1972).

As I explained earlier in the commons section, ensuring the full inclusion of those with an interest in a resource is critical to effective commons management. Similarly, inclusion and participation are important components of social change seeking to dismantle power structures and create a more equitable society (Travers, 2003).

2.4 Queer and the Queer Community

Queer has come to mean many different things over time, its evolution reflecting the journey of the community over the last few decades. The term ‘Queer’ was originally a slur against LGBT community, reclaimed nowadays as an umbrella term to describe non-normative sexualities and gender (Halley, 1993). As described in the *Queers Reads This* manifesto, the term queer *“is a sly and ironic weapon we can steal from a homophobe’s hands and use it against him”* (anon, 1990). Reclamation was designed not just to seek out acceptance but to forge a path of identity to loudly assert their human rights of safety and humanity (Rand, 2014), hence the militant tone of the title of this thesis *“Not Gay as in happy, but Queer as in fuck you...”*. In no uncertain terms, this title rejects the lure of adhering to a respectable type of queerness, a blunting down of identity to satisfy societal norms (Warner, 2002; Joshi, 2012).

Queer is a flexible term not only used to describe those belonging to the LGBT community, although some queers definitely identify with one or more the letters in the acronym. More importantly it is increasingly being used to describe an anti-heteronormative politics (Rand, 2014).

In an anecdote by Raechel Tiffe (Goltz et al., 2015, p.9), her queer identity and understanding was informed in spaces of *“collective knowledge-construction”*, she learned what queer was from other punks and queers at her university. Many use the idea of queer to position themselves in the social structures of the world and, as Tiffe highlights, their understanding of queer is community informed.

In the words of one of the interview participants, being queer can mean:

“...being non-heteronormative, anti-oppressive where possible and intersectional in that mindset. It is about sexuality for me. (...) resisting labels of who you’re attracted to and keeping an expansiveness around that. It is about gender for me. The way you relate to yourself and not being binary or constricted by heteronormativity.”

Another of my interview participants described their queer identity as follows:

“Queerness to me is radical inclusivity. I believe that it's about rejecting any privilege you may have under the heteronormative patriarchy rejecting any, possibly, privilege you have under capitalism. (...) essentially taking the tenets of the heteronormative patriarchy and finding a positive experience around forming a positive set of ethics.... Taking the things we don't have as tiny fraught cogs in capitalism and having a solid set of ethics from being othered.”

Halley (quoted in Sumara & Davis, 1999). calls being queer a rejection of the “heterosexual bribe”,

“that is, the cultural rewards afforded those whose public performances of self are contained within that narrow band of behaviors considered proper to a heterosexual identity.”

I understand queer as a self-identifying notion, a deflection of binarisms allowing the community of individuals to construct identities along lines more flexible without becoming arbitrary (Sedgwick, 1990). I take it to be used not only as a sexuality or gender identity but also a political persuasion tending toward radical politics. Drawing from all of the above expressions of what queer is for this thesis, I take the queer community to be understood broadly as those brought together by a rejection and subversion of dominant norms of gender and sexuality.

In the last decade the LGBTQ community have made significant political and social gains in the western world (Thoreson, 2018). However, pathologisation (Foucault, 1985) of homosexual behaviour has imprinted a legacy of homophobia in today’s society (Britton, 1990). Moreover, despite recent changes to marriage laws across the western world, instituted bans on same-sex marriage continue to legitimise homophobia and have a lasting influence on workplace discrimination (Hatzenbuehler, McLaughlin, Keyes & Hasin, 2010). Familial isolation, violence and homophobia experienced by the queer community increases cases of suicide and heavily impacts their wellbeing (Weeks, 1995; Hubbard, 2000;

Hatzenbuehler, McLaughlin and Xuan, 2012). This institutional discrimination results in what Berlant and Warner argue is,

“a constellation of practices that everywhere disperses heterosexual privilege as a tacit but central organizing index of social membership” (2002, p.195).

At the same time, the LGBTQ community are over represented in studies of consensual non monogamy (Hauptert, Gesselman, Moors, Fisher, & Garcia, 2017), are more likely to engage in BDSM⁴ and gender nonconformity (Barker, 2005).

The prevalence of radical practices could occur for two reasons. The stigmatization of homosexuality results in deprivation of social connection in and out of the home (Brownlee, 2015), increasing the stakes of connection for individuals part of the queer community. Community bonds are strengthened through trust and belonging (Brownlee, 2015) and amplified by the low numbers of people who identify as queer/LGBT (Grulich et al., 2003; Gates, 2014; Richters et al., 2014).

These communities of people drawn together by similar experiences can result in, what Tiffe outlined above, *“collective knowledge-sharing”* (Goltz et al., 2015). In other words, recruitment of politics can explain a proliferation of politics throughout the community. Secondly, BDSM and non-monogamy challenge norms of heteronormativity, norms that have caused alienation (Barker, 2005). In this way, the social violation of queer bodies and their human rights incline queer people to violate social norms, in terms of relationships and gender expression (Rand, 2014).

These two bodies of research reflect the homophobia faced by the queer community and the radical practices they then engage in demonstrate the creative ways in which they liberate themselves from the circumstances which enslave them.

2.5 Queer Play Parties

“Your gloved hand in my cunt and breath on my neck, we were relocating intimacies out of the bedroom and into public space. As we engaged in this political practice I was juicing down your sleeve.” (Stardust, 2014).

⁴ BDSM: Stands for Bondage/discipline Sado/masochistic and refers to the wide variety of sexual and erotic practices that include role playing, dominant/submissive and other interpersonal dynamics.

To describe what a queer play party is I draw from Robin Bauer's (2014) research into dyke⁵ and queer BDSM intimacies, with help from one episode of the podcast Secret Feminist Agenda (2018), hosted by Hannah McGregor who interviews Carly Boyle on dyke oriented queer play parties, and also from Weiss's (2011) research into BDSM sexuality.

Queer play parties are a social space that is created for the queer community to communicate, share experiences and knowledge, engage in BDSM, sex and other various kinds of kinky activities of play (Weiss, 2011; Bauer, 2014). Not all queer play parties engage in BDSM, however many of the BDSM etiquette is imported from this community into queer play party spaces (Weiss, 2011; Bauer, 2014).

In similar way to how 'play' is understood in a playground sandbox, this space is governed by a set of rules, it has boundaries and has a beginning middle and end (Mcgregor, 2018). Here practitioners get to experience an alternate reality, exploring their boundaries with a set of social norms and sanctions available to fall back on should a boundary be crossed (Weiss, 2011; Bauer, 2014; McGregor, 2018). These norms and language include explicit terms of negotiation, consent, verbalised boundaries, distinguishing this play from violence (Bauer, 2014). A slogan that became popular in the BDSM community to guide these practices of negotiation is safe, sane and consensual (SSC), (Stein, 2002; Bauer, 2014).

When people decide to 'play' they will negotiate what those involved in the scene⁶ enjoy, who will play the dominant/submissive role, what their boundaries are and what the safe word is for when boundaries are crossed or a threshold is reached (Bauer, 2014). In these negotiations it is good practice to also negotiate aftercare, which is taking care of each other once the play scene/activity is over, and comes in the form of soothing, dialogue and processing the scene (Weiss, 2006). As Boyle states "*we don't stop being responsible for each other after sex*" (McGregor, 2018).

Often whole play parties have an agreed upon safe word, which is not something obvious like *stop*, *don't* or *no*, as these words can often be used in roleplaying that gives the illusion of non-consent (Weiss, 2011; Bauer, 2014). A universal safe word at parties means that not only do the people in the scene

⁵ Dyke was originally a derogatory term for a lesbian reclaimed by the community.

⁶ A scene is a BDSM activity or encounter involving one or more people; it may or may not involve sexual activity.

know when a boundary has been overstepped, but the whole room does. Boyle (Mcgregor, 2018) says that these are not utopias and things do go wrong, but

“if you have negotiated things really clearly, and particularly if you have negotiated them in a public space and that things that are happening in public space it can be a lot easier to know when boundaries have been crossed and to talk about”.

As an added safety net it is common for parties to have dungeon monitors who ensure the play taking place is safe, sane and consensual, house rules are followed and respected (Taormino, 2012). Most queer play parties have an onboarding process to invite new practitioners into the space (Mcgregor, 2018). This usually looks like one person in the community bringing along a friend who has been vouched for. This protects the safety and sanctity of the space to ensure that overall the culture is upheld and new practitioners can learn the culture from an experienced group. That said, this process makes it very difficult for these spaces to be available to people who do not have the privilege of certain social networks and has resulted in some parties being quite homogenous, or lots of white practitioners (Mitchell, 2015; Mcgregor, 2018).

What is it about queer people conducting sex parties that is relevant when examining how to step towards more sustainable world making?

I have established above that queer people experience marginalisation in society pushing them into the fringes where they tend to embrace radical practices such as non-monogamy (Hauptert, Gesselman, Moors, Fisher, & Garcia, 2017), gender non-conformity and BDSM. Warner (2002) and Rand (2004) both argue that the LGBTQ movement was initially built upon stigmatization of the non-normative sex they were having, claims that were used in the HIV crisis as vindication (Smit et al., 2012). Queer politics is borne from the type of sex that queer people have (McCann, 2011; Rand, 2014).

Public or semi-public sex has been part of queer community for a long time, be it sex in parks, otherwise known as cruising⁷ or sex in a dungeon (Dulak, 2005; Bauer, 2014). This comes from the stigmatization of queer sex prompting queer people to find hidden public spaces they could do their lascivious acts away from authorities, but also in a place where people who wanted to find them could get access to them (Dulak, 2005). On top of this, to draw from the great feminist rally cry *“the personal is political”* *“the*

⁷ Originally a dutch word, cruising is the practice of searching for a sex partner in a public place, usually a park.

private is public" (Hanisch, 1970). For queer people, sex has a long history of being pathologized and demonised, bringing their sex lives out of the bedroom and into a public space is an act of reclamation and liberation (Foucault, 1985; Warner, 2002; Rand, 2014). In the words of a prominent Australia political figure, Zahra Stardust commenting on queer play parties *"Here we are—a direct threat to marriage, monogamy and the nuclear family—making up for the deficiencies of the state."* (Stardust, 2014). From this perspective, Queer play parties are a nexus, where politics, resistance, exploration of gender, sexuality and desire all melt together. This is the practical expression of resistance.

This examination aims to reveal the practical ways in which a community overcomes this marginalization and stigmatization, resisting oppressive cultures through community building practices.

2.6 Queer Play Parties as A Subaltern Counterpublic Under Neoliberalism

"...and that visibility which makes us most vulnerable is that which also is the source of our greatest strength" Audre Lorde

Here I will pull the above sections together to justify that queer play parties framed as subaltern counterpublic who cultivate norms conducive for commons. I will demonstrate that rape culture is an expression of instrumentalization of some sexual relations in a neoliberal cultural context. Within this climate the queer play parties develop counter-structures in their arenas which serve to push back against this instrumentalization through strategies similar to those called for in effective commons management.

As is widely accepted amongst contemporary critical theorists, neoliberalism upholds disparate power relations, concentrating capital to 1% of the population in society and exploiting the vulnerable (Chomsky, 1999; Butler 2003). The same system necessitates and promotes power over bodies that can be exploited for wage labour (Marx, 1887), but also incarcerated and killed serving political and economic agendas of powerful states (Davis, 1999). Seeing that human bodies are less valued in the pursuit for profit, another manifestation of this is exemplified when men accused of sexual assault are rarely held accountable (Rosman, 2018). The sentiment of unchecked power is echoed in Chomsky's seminal book, *Profit over People* (1999) reinforcing the notion that in a system that values the pursuit for profit above all else, there is a failure to account for indiscretions such as abuses of power which in turn

serve to naturalize them. This argument can explain the pervasiveness of sexual assault found amongst men in powerful positions. As Keltner (2017) argues “*contexts of unchecked power make society vulnerable, and complicit in, the abuse of power*”. It follows then that the extensive epidemic of the #metoo⁸ campaign has illustrated that these cases of assault are not an unlucky happenstance for some, indeed, it is the rule (Mahdawi, 2016; Beck, 2018; Rosman, 2018). Profit at any cost has resulted in an excess of economic power, leading to an excess of cultural power, creating the conditions for rape culture, an instrument that guides action. Rape culture is a lack of understanding on consent and gives men a sense of entitlement to women’s bodies (Mahdawi, 2016; Beck, 2018; Rosman, 2018).

The ‘gays and lesbians’ were part of the subordinated social groups who inspired Fraser’s subaltern counterpublic theory (Fraser, 1992, p67). Within a neoliberal context queer play parties act as a subaltern counterpublic by enabling this community to ignore and contest the conventional norms of rape culture. Through consent making, strict norms of open dialogue and negotiation, enthusiastic consent is the default (Weiss, 2011; Bauer, 2014). This is contrasted against mainstream society, where consent is an afterthought, a bonus (Mahdawi, 2016; Beck, 2018; Rosman, 2018). This consent language overcomes the traditional barriers of communications laid out by rape culture. The language acknowledges and celebrates constructive interactions between the participants.

Queer play parties reflect a subaltern counterpublic platform that pushes back against rape culture. This resistance occurs through substantive measures, a cultivation of norms conducive for commoning: inclusion and participation. Seeing that the case of a queer play party as a subaltern counterpublic empowers the counter-cultures created within these spaces to contest broader problematic cultures in society and replace them with productive norms suitable for commons management.

Understanding queer play parties as a subaltern counterpublic as engaging in non-normative modes of political practices, one can also perceive the relationship between the state, dominant publics and other counterpublics (McCann, 2011). When these spaces elevate norms conducive for commons management, these spaces hold great value in influencing the state to consider the commons.

⁸ #metoo is an international movement against sexual harassment and assault.

2.7 Queer Play Parties as a Commons

“In this way, small changes — commons by commons — can have big cumulative effects on the whole system.” David Bollier, 2014.

Justifying queer play parties as a subaltern counterpublic partially answers the first research question. In this section I will demonstrate how the queer play party can be framed as a commons, thus completing the answer to the first research question.

To draw a comparisons between the queer play party and the Tragedy of the Commons I will use the notion of perverse incentives as a metaphor. This is not a perfect reflection of how perverse incentives work in the Tragedy of the Commons, however it is a valuable tool when elucidating the queer internal regulatory system and why this occurs.

Individuals in the Tragedy of the Commons experience perverse incentives of exceeding the carrying capacity in order to gain all the benefits while everybody else faces the consequences (Hardin, 1968). In the case of sexual relations in a neoliberal society, there is a perverse incentive to act in a manner of self-maximization and not face consequences. The action of instrumentalisation of sexual relations is brought about because we, as humans, are framed this way. Individuals in the Tragedy of the Commons are characterised as self-maximising, (Harvey, 2005) which motivates privatisation as the best solution (Hardin, 1986). Neoliberalism uses the same characterisation of human behaviour (Gershon, 2011), rationalising rape culture. In Queer play parties and commons management human behaviour is recast as cooperative, stimulating individuals to organise their own internal regulatory systems. To refer back to the subaltern counterpublic, these spaces are used to push back against instrumentalisation, reminding us of the transformative potential, and how this can occur through commons practices.

The internal regulatory system is outlined below to demonstrate how the queer play parties organise by using norms, collective choice rules and graduated sanctions.

Norms

The norms created in these spaces, as outlined in the section on Queer Play Parties, have a keen vested interest in honest and open dialogue around consent and practices. The norms are guided by a underlying philosophy of safe, sane and consensual (Stein, 1990; Bauer, 2014), which guides

practitioners along acceptable and safe practices. A culture of 'calling in' encourages people to give feedback to individuals who exhibit oppressive behaviour (Ferguson, 2015). Gender and sexuality in these spaces are not assumed and there is a commitment to unlearn dominant cultures such as Eurocentric beauty standards. In one of the parties practitioners were encouraged to come with the attitude 'high possibility, low expectation'. This helps to manage expectations in a sexually charged space.

Collective Choice Rules

The norms above indicates the kind of tacit culture included within these spaces. In order to uphold this culture, there are rules around consent and rules created to ensure the queerness of the space is maintained. As collective choice rules are tailored and unique to every different commons, I will use some common rules found in my field work that were consistent across the two parties. The traffic light system was a tool to negotiate consent during play, where 'green' means yes, 'yellow' means slow down or you are approaching my limits and 'red' means stop whatever is happening right now. As pointed out above, most play parties have a party safe word, and the safe word was *Red* for both of the parties I attended. Both parties ensure the norms of not assuming gender is upheld by using gender neutral language and to ask for people's pronouns. Both parties had very different onboarding processes, but both were motivated by the need to ensure new participants would uphold the culture.

Graduated Sanctions

The threat of not following the rules is enforced by the possibility of being asked to leave the space and depending on the level of transgression, a discussion may take place on whether that person can return (Weiss, 2011; Bauer, 2014). If the individual makes a mistake they can be expected to be 'called in', given the opportunity to learn and adjust their behaviour. Should they overstep that boundary again, they can be expected to be asked to leave.

The public nature of the space in which these activities take place also have a social pressure element which serves as a form of monitoring and sanctioning. Party safe words signify when a boundary has been crossed, embedding a community element of responsibility to that person (Mcgregor, 2018). Essentially, this culture, reinforced by dungeon monitors and community accountability, regulates perverse incentives and behaviour.

Therefore it can be seen how a queer play party can be framed as a commons. By organising around a social resource they have developed a system of regulation. This system is upheld by norms, collective choice rules and sanctions, creating a space where all can participate and reap the benefits equally without destroying the social resource. As a result, queer play parties as a commons reflect same values of inclusivity, participation, accountability and cooperation as found in other types of commons.

Having already demonstrated the way in which queer play parties operate as a subaltern counterpublic, these spaces also exhibit similar values and organisational structure of a commons, answering my first research question: *how can queer play parties be understood in terms of both a commons and a subaltern counterpublic?*

3. Data and Analysis

In this section I will use my empirical data to answer the second research question *how do queer play parties achieve the core values of commons management, inclusivity and participation?*

3.1 Epistemology and Methodology

Epistemologically I will use be using Harding's feminist standpoint theory as the guide. The central claim of Standpoint theory is that those who have unprivileged social positions gain epistemic advantage (Rolin, 2009). That is, marginalized positions in society are likely to garner perspectives that are "*less partial and less distorted*" (Harding, 1991, p.121). A standpoint determines how a certain group socially construct the world and how this perspective shapes their principles according to how they are judged (Harding 1991). That is not to say that all marginalized groups share the same experiences and perspectives, various oppressions intersect, inform and shape different experiences for individuals.

To justify using a marginalized groups practices as valuable in sustainability science, I will introduce ecofeminist work and its relation with sustainability science. In the same way that standpoint theory investigates phenomena through a lens of power relations, ecofeminism understands the same structures that oppress the marginalized through gender, race, sexuality, class are also the same structures that exploit nature (Gaard, 1997; Shiva 1990; Spretnak, 1990). It then follows that when investigating solutions to sustainability problems, and in an effort to holistically address injustice issues, investigating the practices of a community who have an epistemic advantage will inevitably provide

valuable insight. Likewise, investigating the practical measures of overcoming oppression also satisfies sustainability science's quest for "*constructive input from various communities of knowledge*" (Lang et al, 2011). While this research might be a small community and small case in point, nevertheless as Lang et al (2011) assert the need for "*knowledge production beyond problem analysis, as goals, norms and visions need to provide guidance for transition and intervention strategies*". This sentiment also justifies investigation into commons as these are cases where a collective operationalise organisational structures to manage a resource.

3.1.1. Qualitative Methodology

This methodology is useful when engaging in scientific enquiry like this thesis. Investigation into the unprivileged perspective justifies both the choosing of the queer community and framing their practices as a subaltern counterpublic. Subaltern counterpublics work here as the transformative mechanism through which these perspectives can influence the state.

3.2 Research Design

In terms of my research design, I allowed standpoint theory to guide me methodologically. As outlined in Hesse-Biber (2017) I chose a case study for my investigation to achieve a meaningful and deeper understanding of the culture within these spaces. As my investigation is interested in a transformation of society my approach is critical toward traditional knowledge (Hesse-Biber, 2017). This is an understudied community, justifying a qualitative approach to "*unearth data grounded in the lived experiences of those individuals who are oppressed*" (Hesse-biber, 2017). By investigating the queer communities practices I have elevated the knowledges of subjugated people, in line with my epistemology. The lack of study in this field and very little study that has taken place around play parties means there is no normative approach to researching these practices. This guided me toward an exploratory qualitative approach. In line with investigating the core values of commons management, I will use the *tendencies for inclusion* (Burbules & Rice, 1991) as a framework for my data analysis.

Taking a qualitative approach I used a purposeful sampling method, in which "*individuals [were selected] because they have experienced the central phenomenon*" (Creswell, 2017, p217). I chose a case study of queer play parties where I would conduct my examination. Through a call out for interviewees (see Appendix 1) I found two separate individuals who had over a year experience in organising their queer play parties and they were happy to take part in my investigation. As my research question for the

empirical side of this thesis required me to investigate the culture within these spaces, the best way to do this was to gather data directly from the community and the spaces in which this culture is created (Hesse-Biber, 2017). This led me to conduct in-depth interviews with the two organisers, a facebook analysis, a document analysis of the online document, I observed the onboarding process and I observed participants at the parties I attended.

Interviews were semi-structured with three parts (see Appendix 2)

- 1) personal: relating to how they identify and some background
- 2) logistics: who is invited, what happens, conflict resolution
- 3) values and culture created

I performed an analysis on the facebook group interactions leading up to events, as well as day-to-day interactions, taking note of discussions that took place and of the articles circulated. One of the play parties had an online document that explained logistics, consent rules, queer language, play party etiquette, unlearning oppressive behaviour and sexually transmitted infection etiquette. I performed a document analysis on this.

I attended both parties as a declared researcher, observer and participant. I recorded my personal impressions after each party via voice memo. Due to the nature of the activities that take place in these spaces it was really important that the privacy of each party was maintained. This is the intention behind limited details provided on the parties. On top of this I have anonymised each interview participants names to *participant N* and *participant A*. My data analysis draws from all of the above data (see Appendix 3).

3.2.1 Data site: Down Under

Data collection took place in Australia during February and March of 2018. One party took place in Sydney and one in Melbourne. The queer community is well established and active in these two cities.

3.2.2 Queer Play Party 1

The onboarding process took place in three parts. First step was to fill out an expression of interest form online, where newcomers were asked about their pronouns, their experience at queer play parties and contact details for the safer spaces and consent discussion. The second part was to read the online

document (outlined above). The third step was a video interview before the upcoming party. Here, the host would ask if the newcomer had read the online document and if they had any questions about it. The host would ensure that they understood all the different parts of the document and would ask them what kind of experience they have in using gender-neutral language. If the newcomer had very little experience then the host would offer to role play and practice the use of neutral language.

On the night that I attended, there were about 25-30 other people there. The age ranged from early 20s to 30s, with mostly white individuals, with a small number of people of colour present. It took place in the private apartment of the host. At the beginning of the party the host would remind the group that there was plenty of protection, such as condoms and dental dams, available throughout the space. There was a reminder of consent language and to get tested for sexually transmitted infections. The group then introduced themselves, giving a quick overview of how they are feeling and what kind of play they are up for.

3.2.3 Queer Play Party 2

This party was substantially larger than the first one. It took place in the host's private home, but the space was well equipped with dungeon furniture and BDSM apparatus. The theme was Pony play, which saw attendees dressed in bridles, saddles, farriers, latex pony outfits and as handlers. The party had about 60-80 guests in the space and was largely constituted of an age range spanning from early 20s all the way up to people over 60. The party was mostly white, again with a small number of people of colour. The party took place from 10pm-4am on a Saturday night. At about midnight there was a pony parade that created a really fun, easy going atmosphere. After the parade there was a performance by the host and their performance partner. These two events served as an effective icebreaker for the night's activities.

To remain consistent with my epistemology and good research (Hesse-Biber, 2017) practice I situate my findings and my interview participants' responses in regard to structural power relations in order to *"enable the critically engaged reader to assess the investments that these knowledges carry with them"* (Bauer, 2014, p.10). My interview questions, access to participants, my manner when conducting interviews, my research, my interpretations of the data, are all informed by my position as a white, queer, able-bodied, Australian, female from a middle-class background. As I have said, while my standpoint gives me unique access and sympathies to the knowledge I am seeking, it also carries inherent bias in this body of research.

This research does not reflect every single queer play party, drawing a universal truth from the findings. These parties provide two separate experiences as a case in point and can tell us a lot about a situation but it is not all encompassing. Therefore, each perspective is partial and specific, in a feminist-centric way, no one knowledge is neutral, partial or detached (Rolin, 2009).

3.3 Analysis

3.3.1 Communicative Virtues Framework

Feminists call on public spaces to provide the inclusivity that liberal democratic public theorists (Habermas, 1962) assign to the imaginary universal public sphere (Fraser, 1990). This is echoed by Travers (2003) who claims that in order to be genuinely inclusive space, more people need to participate in all their diversity. Inclusivity is centred around forming dialogue that promotes acceptance of a multiplicity of perspectives by intending to construct community and inclusive public space (Hoover and Howard, 1995). In a similar manner, inclusion and participation is critical in effective commons management (Pagdee, Kim & Daugherty, 2006; Persha, Agrawal & Chhatre, 2011). Ensuring participation within a commons means there is a higher incentive to uphold a particular culture and ensures that the commons management reflects the needs and preferences of those it serves (Ostrom, 1999).

To be clear, inclusion and participation is called for *within* these spaces, rather than seeking to include everyone within broader society into these spaces. Subaltern counterpublics are characterised by withdrawing from society, empowering those within the spaces to participate in all their diversity (Fraser, 1990; Warner, 2002).

I use the *tendencies for inclusion* as a framework for my analysis. Using this framework is an unconventional approach in sustainability science endeavors, but as Suddaby so eloquently puts it: “*new discoveries are always the result of high-risk expeditions into unknown territory*” (2006, p.633).

The red thread that my research revealed was that inclusion and participation are core principles in commons management, subaltern counterpublics and queer play parties. The framework suits my analysis as it seeks to illuminate discursive actions that can help push forward necessary skills for participation and inclusion (Burbules & Rice, 1991). Communicative virtues was a point discussed in the article “*Feminist Counterpublics for Feminist Cyberspaces*” (Travers, 2003). Communicative virtues comes

from another article called *“Dialogue Across Difference”* (Burbules & Rice, 1991). These virtues suit a framework for my data because they are in themselves not intended to push forward an agenda, they should rather be seen as dispositions or virtues to be striving for when creating an open and serious discussion (Burbules & Rice, 1991). Travers explains that the communicative virtues are *“characteristics that are useful to researchers and activists to emphasize the ongoing nature of creating great inclusivity”* (Travers, 2003). A commons, a subaltern counterpublic and a queer play party all share discursive exchange as a core mechanism to achieve their goals. The three seek to include voices which have traditionally been marginalised by creating inclusive organisational structures the increase the chance of more voices to participate. Therefore it stands to reason to use a framework of communicative virtues to test the quality of communication.

These indicators are as follows:

Table 2: Adapted from Burbules & Rice 1991. Indicators of tendencies for inclusivity used as a framework for analysis.

Tolerance	Inclination to admit that one may be mistaken
Patience	Ability to interpret or translate one’s own concerns in a way that makes them comprehensible to others
Self-imposition of restraint in order that others may ‘ have a turn’ to speak	Willingness to Listen
Respect for Differences	Disposition to express oneself honestly and sincerely

These virtues foster a fair exchange between those engaged in dialogue, seeking to engage a generous and sympathetic regard for differences of perspective and how other express themselves (Burbules & Rice, 1991).

3.4 Case Study Analysis + Results

“Aftercare is my favourite kink” - Overheard at play party 1.

Drawing from all forms of data outlined above, below I outline relevant quotes under a heading of the indicator. I point to the culture created by the hosts, the surrounding community and also the individual

behaviour exemplified by the host. To be clear, I refer to the interview participants as either 'host' or 'interviewee N' or 'interviewee A'. The practitioners are the individuals who attended the play parties.

3.4.1 Tolerance and Respect for Differences

I collapsed both tolerance and respect for differences as these indicators closely reflect each other. Tolerance is expressed through a respect for difference of opinions, behaviour, or circumstance, as defined by the oxford dictionary (tolerance, n.d). I found that the hosts themselves would exhibit tolerance in various ways.

One example of tolerance was found when discussing how to set the tone of not assuming gender.

"If you're talking to someone you can check in with that person what their pronoun is. In the video chat, I ask do you have much experience when referring to people neutrally, and usually they're pretty honest and (might say) I know it's important but no I don't. I'm like cool let's quickly role play, and practice it because I think practice makes perfect."

This shows tolerance for people who are not well versed in queer politics/queer language and offering a learning opportunity for them.

Sexually transmitted infections (STI) result in an increase in risk when engaging in 'play' and could be seen to be legitimate justification for exclusion. However, in one of the parties on the facebook event and in the online document there was a section on STIs. There was a commitment to ensuring all had a space there and placing trust in the individual to ensure safe play while also encouraging a de-stigmatisation of STIs:

"If you have an STI (sexually transmitted infection) you do not have to tell hosts, we do not keep paperwork. It is an honour system, lets work to keep each other safe. This is also a no judgement space. "

In both cases interviewee N and A would use inclusive and sensitive language throughout the interviews, but also spoke at length about not making any assumptions about identity. For example one of the participants mentioned this when discussing how one of the dungeon monitor's identifies:

"She uses the word disabled, I tend to use the word differently abled."

Inclusive language was consistently used to ensure the space created was for a diversity of practitioners, actively not leaving anyone out and thus neutralising the power of language.

iiinterviewee N discussed an instance where they had to determine the identity of one certain person at a party. Recognising that they may 'pass', or present as a female using normative determinations, but recognising the fluidity of identity and giving that person the space to determine their own identity without impressing upon them certain stereotypes:

"I've had to totally get my groove on someone may pass as a certain gender expression, they may pass as an Oestrogen based body but they may be essentially using and subverting privilege they have as an Oestrogen based body passing person as a sex worker and then using it to promulgate their own queer ethic. So that person is a they, or that person is a Boi, not a B O I, or something else, or that person is their own entity. So I've just decided to ask each individual (how they identify)"

In this case, the interviewee completely avoided the word female, finding a creative expression to talk about another's gender.

Overcoming conflict is a key part of commons management. With each different commons or queer play party come different sanctions. When discussing sanctions, one participant spoke about how a practitioner was found video recording a play scene which broke a clear rule in the party. This is the interviewee's explanation of how they dealt with it:

"So I took them to the cafe and had a chat with them because you know I believe we should manifest the best ethics we can all the time. I see that a person who has been put as a community builder then maybe it's my responsibility to confront that person directly."

Here, the interviewee is talking about the ethic of radical inclusivity we had discussed earlier in the interview. In this case, the person who overstepped the boundary was granted the space to talk and given the opportunity to express their perspective. In this way, differences are communicated and both are given the chance to come to agreement on these boundaries, thus facilitating a constructive interaction (Travers, 2003). It was clear they disrupted the sanctity of the space and the interviewee expressed tolerance and patience through this process.

One of my questions was in what ways do the interviewees create a more inclusive environment online and at the party. In the play party document for one of the parties there is a section on body positivity, practitioners are encouraged to unlearn Eurocentric, normative beauty standards.

On asking the play party community what kind of theme or scenes they would like at the next party:

“Why I mentioned that is because that particular playstyle is not something that I’m really into. it’s not something I’m really versed in. But there’s a strong desire for it, many people seem to want to do that.”

This demonstrates the commitment to respect what the collective would like to do in these spaces despite the theme or activity not being the style host enjoys.

3.4.2 Patience

Ensuring the culture is upheld was important to both interviewees. Maintaining culture requires educating newcomers and current practitioners on sometimes the same issues, over and over, demonstrating a tolerance in the face of delay or repetition.

Both spoke of an onboarding process with one of the parties going through a video interview with newcomers. On talking about the onboarding process:

“we have a 20-30 min video chat to go through the document to expand on things in the document that they might not fully get. I will check and test to see if they understand the document, its not a pop quiz, but just to ensure they understand everything. I set the tone. “

“I ask if people have many friends who are trans and if they have hung out with trans people before. And if not I create a space where they can ask any silly questions or any embarrassing questions about how to refer to peoples bodies or whatever it is, because I’m happy to do that as a party host because there’s often a lot of rhetoric around ‘ya can’t ask that question’”

Both these quotes demonstrate the patience that this interviewee has for new people who might not know much about queer politics and play parties. This interviewee identifies as non-binary, meaning they may be asked some inappropriate and hurtful questions, but nevertheless they exhibit patience to provide this space.

In Play Party 2, one practitioner who identifies as dominant⁹ is severely allergic to cats. To ensure the space the party is held in is cat-hair free the organizers ensure there is not a single cat hair in the place. This is a time consuming job but it protects that persons right to fully participate without worrying about their allergies. The willingness to extend this patience is caring and compassionate.

3.4.3 Willingness to Listen

When considering communication, the willingness to listen plays a key role in negotiating a play scene. Furthermore, a willingness to listen can aid individuals to feel comfortable to come forward when they don't feel included, thus increasing the chance for people to participate in all their diversity.

On discussing how they can create a more inclusive environment online and in the space:

“So I chatted to someone who identifies as fat and I asked them what helped them on their journey toward accepting themselves as fat, and she was like well, seeing more media and things like the last Archer shoot (A magazine I am associated with). So yeh, that’s something I might change coming up.”

Here, interviewee A is recognising that others have valuable knowledge and input to offer the space in order to make it more inclusive.

In the play party document there is a whole section stipulating that the party is a consent-focused party. A number of rules are created around dialogue, providing language such as “only act on enthusiastic consent” which is “yes” not “maybe...”. Again, there is also encouragement to say no, and people who hear “no” are encouraged to say “thank you” in a way to celebrate others asserting their boundaries. This consent-making dialogue ensures there are clear mechanisms for people to listen, explicitly outlining social cues to follow.

Accepting feedback can be seen as a form of listening and demonstrates a willingness to learn from this.

When discussing how the culture and ideas for the parties are created:

“I use the event page to give me feedback about you know what they want to do and how they want to do it.”

⁹ Dominant refers to someone on the giving end of any form of BDSM.

When discussing how the party began, interviewee N discussed the people they believed were important to include because they had knowledge that they lacked. They believed that these relationships play an important role in sustaining the community and this process ensured many people had input.

3.4.4 Inclination to admit that one may be mistaken

I take this indicator not only as a way in which an individual might be mistaken, but recognising their role in contributing to problems within society. Recognising the role they play and the privilege they benefit from upholds the standpoint theory argument of situating themselves within the power structures of society (Harding, 1990). Checking your privilege is a community act. This type of consciousness reflects the notion that knowledge can be an empowering force (Collins, 2000), and unlearning problematic tropes that isolate others from full participation in all their diversity is key to this space. For example, interviewee N speaks about *'rejecting any privilege I may have under capitalism'*. They then qualify this by saying that, actually, they do benefit from this privilege everyday because it is hard to completely reject it, showing an awareness of their position and that some privilege is difficult to reject.

Further interviewee N called themselves on stereotyping:

"Sorry Im totally just dropping profiles here, like this person is a straight swinger, against my hope for a radical inclusivity but the language that I'm using right now let's just basically put that out there. "

"If I see people who I know are solid players I know them empirically as being solid players, playing with people I don't know, I will actually go up and check in with them to see if that was cool, was that actually ok? Because you know, you can't help but profile people"

This demonstrates their awareness of stereotyping, its harms and its intractable nature. Interviewee N knows the best we can do is be aware of human's tendency to profile and stereotype, interrogate it and ensure they seek new input from others who have a better understanding of the information.

Interviewee A discussed criticisms they've received in feedback:

"Other critiques of the party are that it's pretty white, it's pretty thin, so yeh, these are the things that we need to figure out how to change to make it more accessible to diverse people. Because we're not doing that right now."

Taking on feedback and adjusting accordingly shows a self-reflexiveness admitting that the party has blind spots that they wish to address. Additionally, the fact that this space is a place in which practitioners are calling out the various ways in which they see certain identities left out and how the space is not upholding the culture they have set out to do raises the standards of the overall culture, constantly questioning how better to create a more inclusive space. This is also an instance of a culture that satisfies the indicator of an *ability to interpret or translating ones concerns that makes them comprehensible to others* and also *disposition to express oneself honestly and sincerely*.

3.4.5 Self-imposition of restraint in order that others may 'have a turn' to speak

In a similar way to how listening is embedded in the consent rules of each party, so too is ensuring space is available for people to take turns in dialogue exchange. For example, in the play party document of play party 1, it is discussed to only act on enthusiastic consent, rather than interpreting a maybe as a yes. By the same token, negotiating consent through tools such as traffic lights and safe words means that there is a formalised script to fall back on when situations go wrong. This allows everyone to be on the same page, bringing in community accountability to the space. In other words, when something goes wrong people have a script to follow, taking their turn, and the people involved have the restraint to listen and then follow that script.

In terms of play party 1, the video interview that occurs before newcomers attend the upcoming party is another formalised occasion for restraint and giving people space to speak. This interview serves many purposes, but in this case it builds a rapport between the host and the newcomer, giving that newcomer space to air any grievances, anxieties or silly questions. This can help the newcomer to feel more comfortable to talk about problems should they arise during the play party.

3.4.6 Ability to interpret or translate one's own concerns in a way that makes them comprehensible to others

I take this indicator as a way in which to articulate and use the correct language so that the message may be understood as it is intended to.

In the play party document, practitioners are told to feel supported through giving and receiving feedback when they use oppressive language or behaviour. This occurs through calling in as opposed to being called out. Being called in differs from call out culture, which is the phenomena of expressing rage

over microaggressions and other oppressive behaviour (Ferguson, 2015). Calling in addresses the problem, provides replacements, and seeks to gently provide a learning opportunity conducive for social justice (Ferguson, 2015). This example demonstrates how the culture within this space seeks to overcome the natural emotional response to oppressive behaviour, and encourage people to gently address the issue so all can feel included. This increases the chance of concerns being comprehensible to others.

Leading by example, interviewee A articulately expresses their own personal politics, sexuality and gender:

“Being queer to me means being non-heteronormative, it means being anti-oppressive where possible and intersectional in that mindset, it’s about sexuality for me so its about resisting labels of who you’re attracted to and keeping like an expansiveness around that.”

This kind of demonstrative fluidity and language can have flow on effects to the rest of the group, encouraging others to follow suit.

In a facebook post interviewee A made a post about their recent sexual health check up:

Friendly reminder to get tested! If you do it this week, it’s a comfy amount of time to get your results back (& even get treated in some cases!) before the party on the 18th it’s recommended every 3 months or so, especially if you’re attending parties like this — let’s keep each other safe♥ I really mean it - getting tested is an act of community, not just self health”.

Below this post was a number of comments by play party practitioners who spoke openly about their experiences at the clinics. They shared knowledge on how well the doctors knew about same-sex sex, trans bodies, what STIs are currently common, which clinics and doctors were trans* and queer friendly. One post spoke about how they have educated their doctor to adjust their language to be inclusive language rather than using presumptive or stereotypical language.

This example demonstrates a case in which they ask play party practitioners to do something for the community, articulated in a friendly manner. The response was really positive with many people normalising something (STI check ups) that can feel shameful due to heavy stigmatization (Foster & Byers, 2013), particularly for the queer community (Smit et al., 2012). Furthermore, in the instance of

educating the doctor, this is a perfect example of how subaltern counterpublics “disseminate one's discourse into ever widening arenas” (Fraser, 1990, p.67).

3.4.7 Disposition to express oneself honestly and sincerely

I take this indicator as the way in which people overcome social expectations in an effort to express themselves genuinely. There is a number of ways in which this is promoted in the play parties. First is demonstrated through the consent language created, pushing back against societal norms of rape culture by creating constructive alternatives to negotiate play.

Another expression of this is found in the play party document. In the section on ‘*this is a body positive party*’ there is the following comment:

“The is a safer space and by entering we all agree to do our best to unlearn oppressive behaviour, and be willing to be given feedback. If any problematic behaviour or microaggressions are occurring, people are always welcome to let a host know during or after the party. Party guests should also feel supported in giving feedback to or ‘calling in’ other guests.”

This illustrates the awareness that oppressive behaviour is present in all of us and we must take intentional steps to unlearn it. Giving feedback and calling in helps one unlearn when these transgressions take place. This high standard of language promotes a safer space, as distinguished from a safe space, recognising that nowhere is safe from oppressive tropes. The culture aims to minimise the harm as much as possible, thus maximising inclusion.

4. Discussion

Queer play parties as a Subaltern counterpublic serve two purposes to influence the state to pursue commons as an alternative. Firstly, the subaltern counterpublics is a certain type of process of social change which can create conditions to destabilise the dominant culture. While, at the same time, working as a form of commons, this community pragmatically provides feasible alternatives. This case proves the power of a community coordinating and imagining creative new paths of organising, in a hostile socio-political climate.

4.1 Limitations of Data Collection

This is not a monolithic assessment of the whole queer community's practices. I only investigated two parties in Australia. The small amount that I could find could be because of sex-on-premises laws in Australia, because of the controversial nature of these types of events or, as one of my participants pointed out, the need to protect the space and the party. A more comprehensive study may have found more parties and have included investigation into play parties across differing contexts.

It is also important for me to emphasize that I identify as queer with an interest in play parties, making me inclined towards idealizing the queer community and these practices. On top of this, the fact that I have a standpoint situated in line with this community, replicating this study by someone outside of the standpoint would likely yield different results. This means that while I have unique access, it also means it can restrict the ability for this knowledge to be passed on beyond people with similar standpoints. Efforts in taking this study further would benefit from discussions surrounding allyship.

Furthermore, it is important to keep in mind that the queer community, as any community, suffer from fragmentations by lines of privilege, rights and visibility. Despite the emphasis on intersectional politics by both hosts, it was evident that these spaces were mainly for white people, enforcing culturally what people of colour experience in society.

4.1.1 *What can be taken from this examination?*

Using the commons paradigm shows these queer play parties have flourished with the same ethic of participation and inclusion among the members of the commons community.

As Fraser herself argues, subaltern counterpublics can 'expose the limits of the specific form of democracy we enjoy in contemporary capitalist societies' (Fraser, 1990, p77). Subaltern counterpublics reveals the problems of instrumentalization of sexual relations, and by elevating consent cultures society can push back against the limits. Queer play parties provide examples of how to do this, through capacities of inclusion and participation.

In order to answer the second research sub question of ***how do the queer play parties achieve the core values of commons management, inclusivity and participation***, I will consider firstly why the queer

community have such a strong tendency towards inclusivity and participation and then consider how this is achieved.

4.1.2 Why do the Queer community have such a strong tendency toward inclusion and thus participation?

As discussed in the theory section of this thesis, the queer community have experienced subordination through state and market supported exclusion in society; the very reason why these spaces are created is to ensure all are welcome. These are spaces of regrouping and catharsis from the harms of neoliberal state. They provide strict rules for social exchanges aimed to minimise harm between practitioners and puts accountability for the harm caused in the hands of the community. The rules and norms create clear boundaries where they can explore their identities and desires without the burden of harmful social norms. Participation is ensured through sanctioning those who choose to take the benefits but not the corresponding responsibilities, otherwise known as free-riders.

There is difficulty getting into the space, however I see this as a discerning process rather than totally exclusionary. This space seeks to keep out harmful dominant cultures, those that are invited in, are individuals committed to unlearning oppressive behaviour. Allowing anyone into these spaces would fundamentally reduce the community's ability to participate fully. In the same way that a natural resource commons might be delineated through geographic boundaries, a queer play party delineates those who have been brought into the space. Once in the space their norms, rules and sanctions ensure they can participate fully.

4.1.3 How is participation and inclusion achieved?

As Burbules & Rice (1991) state: *"There is a fundamental shift in worldview between regarding difference as a problem, a threat, a nuisance, or an insurmountable barrier, and viewing difference — any difference — as an opportunity, as a challenge to our abilities to communicate and understand."* (p.413). The play parties have embraced this challenge, seeking to confront beauty standards and harmful social norms to ensure a safer space is held for diverse participants. This culture influences people's behaviour and drives forward an awareness and comfort for learning, engagement and exploration. The construction of consent language and gender inclusive language laid out in the online document, and developed through the onboarding process, coupled with their safe, sane, consensual type of play builds the inclusive foundation.

These spaces not only enable people to explore sexual fantasies in a hedonistic manner, the skills created promote cooperation and sanction exclusivity. Buy-in of participants is obvious at these two parties, a commitment to differences, one central tenet of public sphere (Travers, 2003). Participants knew I was in the space as a researcher and spoke at length about the integrity of the space, the importance of the community there and how much joy it brought them.

Building these mechanisms of language and consent-making, pushes forward a consistent culture in a society where people default to gender norms or expectations. At these queer play parties the culture compels individuals to communicate empowering them to rule in or rule out whatever they want.

4.2 Commons Management, the Environment and Next Steps

Both Hardin and Ostrom's work proved that individuals adopt strategies for natural resource management that lead to consequences for themselves and the environment surrounding them (Hardin, 1968; Ostrom, 1990). This thesis discussed the divergence of how the actors behave in the eyes of Hardin and Ostrom. In Hardin's eye, individuals behave in a self-maximising manner, requiring governance external to the community surrounding the resource. The preference of governance comes via the market, accelerating resource depletion and ecological destruction. On the other hand, Ostrom's research (Ostrom, 1990; Ostrom et al., 1999, Ostrom, 2009) proved that individuals organise collectively to ensure the sustainability of the resource, without requiring external governance. Sustainability of the resource is achieved through internal regulatory structures of norms, rules and sanctions promoting buy-in and accountability from the community. Including all relevant actors who have a stake in the sustainability of a resource serves two purposes. Firstly, the actors are able to share their knowledge thus enriching the overall understanding of the resource. Secondly, their participation reduces the chances of them becoming free-riders. Ensuring participation means creating inclusive social structures, allowing individuals to participate in all their diversity and that the needs of the community are being met.

Avenues for next steps beyond this research might be to consider testing the *tendencies for inclusivity* in a commons management context as a type of heuristic tool. These might be useful in participatory governance projects or community focused projects. In addition, this research can inspire further

research into the queer community's practices in the context of disruption of convention of normativity, as embodied experiences of disruption occur in the queer community on a daily basis.

5. Conclusion

I began this thesis by problematising neoliberalism and discussing the commons as alternative mode of governance. I demonstrated how the self-maximising principle and the Tragedy of the Commons endorsed the neoliberal project, justifying privatisation and redefined social relations through the norm of competition. Consequently this led to profound ecological loss, social deficits and erosion of the power of the state.

I drew from extensive research debunking the self-maximising principle proving that humans are, in fact, capable of cooperation. Communities use their cooperative tendencies to build norms, rules and sanctions. Research has proven that this type of internal social regulation optimises the sustainability of a resource.

Due to the fact that the state has yet to realise this potential of commons management, social change must take place. I introduced civic society and the public sphere as a platform for social change, where values and beliefs can be deliberated. The state is sensitive to the values and beliefs deliberated in this arena creating the dynamic conducive for social change.

The queer community presented an interesting case to investigate due to their unique perspective under an oppressive socio-political context. I looked at the case of the queer play party as my empirical data, demonstrating how this is a case of a subaltern counterpublic and I framed it as a commons. Framing the queer community play parties as a case of subaltern counterpublic demonstrated the influence these spaces have on creating social change. I demonstrated the norms, rules and sanctions developed within these spaces allowing me to demonstrate how this community uphold two key principles required for commons management, inclusivity and participation.

This examination of the practical mechanisms of these discursive exchanges has proven insightful for commons management. It has shown that first and foremost, a culture built around inclusivity allows those participants within these commons to participate in all their diversity. This, in the context of

commons management, is highly valuable as inclusivity ensures 'stable regimes for managing shared resources in fair ways for the benefit of participating commoners' (Bollier, 2014).

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7. Appendices

7.1 Appendix 1: Call for interviewees

Invitation to be interviewed

Seeking interview participants for Master's Thesis in Sydney & Melbourne

My name is Georgia and I am currently working on my Master's thesis in Environmental Studies and Sustainability Science, in Sydney and Melbourne. The topic I have chosen to investigate is *how can queer practices inform sustainable world-making?*

Overview of my research:

Scientists warn that we are crashing through the planet's ecological boundaries at a frightening pace (Rockström et al., 2009). Despite having all the knowledge indicating the need to stop burning fossil fuels and extracting resources, we are incapable of acting on this knowledge (Kagan, 2011). This failure to act is a result of the culture of unsustainability (Kagan, 2011) driven by neo-liberalism, an ideology that fosters intense individualism, competition and a paradigm of simplicity (Nicolescu, 2002). These values have eroded our ability to collectively work toward organizing society in a way that is more harmonious with the earth, and each other. Thinkers have started to develop a new narrative, known as the Politics of Belonging (Monbiot, 2017), a culture that argues for the revival of community.

Values required for a transition to a Politics of Belonging are demonstrated in western communities and I have chosen the queer community as my focal point. I believe that the queer community, for various reasons, embodies the characteristics required for a more sustainable world. I have chosen to focus on queer practices to demonstrate how communities can embrace complexity and achieve outcomes together, whilst increasing their connection and communicative rationale serving to counteract the neo-liberal values our current system upholds.

This is where you come in. I believe that the queer experience leads to a unique set of skills that are compatible with the Politics of Belonging. I want to interview those who identify as queer and who engage in practices such as organizing queer play parties and queer family making. I'm particularly

interested in consent-making and the process of coming to agreement collectively in order to achieve an outcome together.

Are you interested in being interviewed for this project? Any issues surrounding anonymity I am happy to discuss with you to ensure you are comfortable. As part of qualitative research I will need to record the interview but I will remove sensitive details when transcribing the interview, all participants will have access to my thesis once complete before it is published online through the university's website.

I will begin my interviews in February and I'm aiming to finish up by **March 20th, 2018**.

7.2 Appendix 2: Interview guide

These were used as a guide, but I allowed the conversation to flow organically.

General Questions

How do you identify?

What does being queer mean to you?

Events – logistics, practical info

Tell me about the events you organize for the queer community.

How many/how long have you organized these events?

How many people would participate in these events?

How do you find your participants? Is there a vetting process?

Values & Philosophy

Why do you organize these events?

(Want to get out of them some kind of resistance to mainstream here, by making sense of their own identity. Exploring radical stuff in a safe space they've created themselves with a collective.)

Do you believe these spaces are valuable? In what ways?

What kinds of rules do you lay out in order to achieve the desired outcome of the event/party?

What do you do when someone oversteps boundaries or breaks rules?

What is your philosophy when approaching organizing these events?

How has your experience of growing up queer informed this philosophy?

What sets queer sex parties apart from straight sex parties?

Do you seek feedback with the participants?

What difficulties do you face when organizing these parties? How do you overcome difficulties in the organisation of play parties?

7.3 Appendix 3: Data used for play parties

Play Party 1	Play Party 2
Interview with participant A	Interview with participant N
Onboarding process - 1. expression of interest form 2. Video interview	Onboarding process - Discussion during interview (accepted as sympathetic outsider)
Access to online document	Attended to one play party
Attended to one play party	Voice recorded impressions after party
Voice recorded impressions after party	Added to facebook groups/events
Added to facebook group/events	