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Contemporary Commoning Newsletter #1

Investigating the role of art and design in creating spaces for public action

Contemporary Commoning is a two year research project investigating the many ways in which ‘commoning’ can contribute to new forms of public space, in the physical as well as the digital realm, and new spaces for public action. This research takes the potential contribution of design and art in these processes of ‘commoning’ as the main point of departure. The research is a collaboration between the Gerrit Rietveld Academie, Sandberg Institute, Waag – Technology and Society, University of Amsterdam’s Center for Urban Studies, Casco Art Institute and Studio René Boer. The research project is grounded in Amsterdam’s Zeeburgereiland, an island on the city’s eastern fringes currently being developed, and will result in a toolkit of ‘recipes for the commons’. René Boer gives us an insight into the process of Contemporary Commoning via his biannual Newsletters.

15 May, 2020

Hello,

When we kicked off the ‘contemporary commoning’ project in the last days of February, we planned to start working together in the new work space on Amsterdam’s Zeeburgereiland soon after. The corona crisis, however, quickly escalated in the weeks that followed, isolating the individual researchers in their homes.

The researchers have been using this period to delve into more detail into the island’s history, stumbling on proof of the island’s both military and hippie past, and to further develop the central ideas and approaches of each work package. Ektor Ntourakos, intern at ARIAS, started to develop a detailed mapping of all kinds of (public) spaces on the island, pointing out the possibilities for common interventions.

Recently, the researchers started sharing and discussing their ideas in zoomspace. Among the many interesting observations it was pointed out how computer renderings of buildings on Zeeburgereiland (but also elsewhere) always seem to imagine the Dutch climate as a Mediterranean one. Shouldn’t we use the often rough local weather conditions as a starting point for outdoor commoning? And what is the role of rituals and death in a neighborhood that is promoted as a celebration of life?

As the corona situation slowly improves in Amsterdam, we’re also hoping to start meeting up in real life soon and make the work space on the island our base for further explorations. More soon!

Best wishes, also on behalf of Jeroen Boomgaard,
René Boer

This project is made possible through the support of [NWO](#), [BPD bouwfonds](#) and [Nautilus](#).

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1. [Contemporary Commoning](#)
2. [Contemporary Commoning – Introducing the Researchers](#)