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Chapter Eleven. Commoning for urban wellbeing in Majority and Minority Worlds

ABSTRACT

Urban wellbeing is an issue of global importance, as urban populations expand to incorporate more than 50 percent of the global population. Key urban challenges include crowded informal settlements in the Majority World (the Global 'South') and isolation and inequality in the Minority World (the Global 'North'). This chapter explores the potential of commoning to support and enhance urban wellbeing, through a consideration of two case studies: Kallyanpur Slum in Dhaka, Bangladesh, and an inner city urban farm in Christchurch, New Zealand. We suggest that commoning approaches evident in both cities have contributed to the wellbeing of their urban residents. We identify two key insights that commoning for urban wellbeing can provide: firstly, that wellbeing is a collective endeavour and, secondly, that the 'commons' of wellbeing extends beyond those directly involved in commoning activities to include other human and 'more-than-human' communities.

Introduction

The so-called wellbeing industry seems to have not only commercialized but individualized the concept of wellbeing, leading many scholars to be suspicious of the word (Andrews and Duff 2020; Atkinson 2020). Like 'resilience', wellbeing has become somewhat co-opted by individualist discourses and practices, and corporate programs that seek to push the responsibility of being well back on the individuals enmeshed in systems built on extractive labour practices and often deeply entrenched sexist, racist and prejudiced power relations (Atkinson et al. 2020; Kaika 2017). Yet, here we are, in the twenty-first century, participating in a book on

wellbeing as a group of academic writers. We are aware of the co-option of wellbeing yet find ourselves drawn to keep considering this concept, turning it over and examining what it can offer.

Wellbeing as a word remains deeply evocative and meaningful for many. The idea of *being* and indeed *being well* is something that continues to hold resonance in a world where cultures of productivism and ‘doing’ well (or wellness) for ourselves are widespread and prominent. In this chapter we connect concepts of wellbeing to collective practices of commoning (which we define as the collective use and care of spaces and resources both material and immaterial). We suggest that it is in the shared struggle to care ‘in community’ that a different notion of *relational* and *collective* wellbeing might emerge.

Our chapter unfolds as follows. Firstly, we unpack some of the key challenges for ‘being well’ in urban areas in the twenty-first century, in both the Majority and Minority Worlds. We then focus on two challenges that have become evident in our research projects in Bangladesh and New Zealand: the challenges of providing sanitation and early childhood services in informal settlements in Dhaka, and the challenges of youth mental health and social and environmental connection in Ōtautahi Christchurch. While the challenges in these two contexts are different, we first highlight how being well together remains a collective proposition in each of them, and second emphasize that it involves more than just human lives and wellbeing. We conclude with thoughts on commoning for global wellbeing in the twenty-first century.

Commons and wellbeing

For many people, the only thing they have heard about the commons is the idea of ‘the tragedy of the commons’, where the commons refers to non-privatized land and open access resources used by communities. This thought experiment by economist Garrett Hardin posited that herdsmen on a grassland commons would rationally add more and more animals to their herds until the grasslands were inevitably degraded and

overcrowded (Ostrom et al. 1999). He was demonstrably wrong, however. Nobel Prize winning economist, Elinor Ostrom showed through her empirical research what people involved in managing commons already know: functioning commons have rules, these rules are collectively enforced, and they are rational (Huron 2018). In sum, the only tragedy of the commons is that so many things that were once commonly accessible to groups have been privatized and their access limited only to particular individuals (Bollier 2002).

More recent commons scholars have pointed to the deep relational interconnection between commons and community (Singh 2017), and in this chapter we explore this interconnection with regards to wellbeing. Maria Mies (2014) notes that there is no commons without a community, echoing Stephen Gudeman's (2001) observation that there is no community without a commons. Mies expands with reference to traditional European commons:

The old commons were maintained by a clearly defined community where people had to do communal work in order to sustain themselves. This work was neither forced upon people nor was it a nice pastime or a luxury. It was necessary for people's survival or subsistence. Every grown up person was expected to share this necessary work. Everyone was responsible to maintain the commons as a commons. This responsibility had not to be formally enforced by laws. It was necessary to maintain the life of all. (Mies 2014: 106)

Gudeman (2001) describes how commons create and maintain community, or 'being in common', as relationships and interconnections form in and around the work of doing commons together. Gibson-Graham, Cameron and Healy (2016) propose that such 'commoning' work is what communities do to share access and benefits to resources, whether such resources are legally owned in common or not. Commoning, in their formulation, is a verb, more of a 'doing' than a 'being', a practice of 'surviving well together'. Commoning involves further collectivizing the care, use, access, benefits and responsibility for a resource, which may or may not be collectively owned.

Commoning therefore has clear wellbeing implications, not least because it is necessary in the work of caring for our non-human kin and Earth

systems during the current anthropogenic environmental crisis (Yates 2021). Wellbeing, in the context of commoning, is not about enhancing one's self through individualistic improvements to health and lifestyle. Rather, as we will go on to explore in this chapter, it is a deeply collective, 'more-than-human' striving carried out at the edge of what is known as 'survivance' (Axel, Hirsch and Therrien 2021; Vizenor 2009). For us, wellbeing describes more of a shared striving for 'a good life', a striving that can never be limited to humans alone, and certainly not to individuals. Among those striving for such wellbeing are the two urban communities that constitute our case studies. These two communities face challenges common to other communities of the Majority and Minority Worlds.

In the urban Majority World 'slum'¹ communities in Dhaka, Bangladesh, one of the key wellbeing challenges is access to sanitation in informal settlements that have limited government investment in infrastructure. Another wellbeing challenge is quality childcare, as all residents generally need to work to make a living, yet slum children face stressful discrimination in educational settings outside of the slum. In the urban Minority World communities in Christchurch, New Zealand, mental health is a significant challenge, especially for youth. Public mental health services are severely stretched, with appointments often taking many weeks to secure. Urban isolation was exacerbated in the aftermath of the 2010 and 2011 earthquakes, as there were fewer public meeting places, and also during the more recent COVID-19 pandemic, where nationwide lockdowns have disrupted young lives. In both cities, there are instances of communities not waiting for outside help but instead engaging in direct action, generating initiatives that attempt to address their challenges creatively.

Our discussion of these initiatives is based on fieldwork that examined practices of commoning and wellbeing. Fieldwork in Dhaka, Bangladesh, was carried out by Waliuzzaman in Kallyanpur slum for five months in 2018. Kallyanpur slum is located in the western part of Dhaka City with

1 We use the term 'slum' to refer to the informal settlements in Dhaka, mainly because this is the term the residents use themselves. Kallyanpur slum is a different place from Kallyanpur (the wider urban area around Kallyanpur). For further discussion on the use of this term, see Waliuzzaman (2020).

a population of 8,129, living on 13 acres of land nominally owned by the Bangladesh Ministry of Housing and Public Works (MOHPW). People living in this slum are mostly from a coastal district of Bangladesh called Bhola, and migrated to this slum after they lost their livelihood options due to the devastating floods of 1988. Since its establishment three decades ago, Kallyanpur slum has been subject to fire and evictions several times, and has a second name meaning 'burnt slum'. Waliuzzaman's fieldwork involved thirty-one semi-structured interviews with individuals from various gender, age and socio-economic backgrounds. These interviews were supplemented by participant observation and unstructured conversations with a variety of local people. Drawing on commons thinking, attention was paid to local people's aspirations and efforts to overcome wellbeing issues collectively.

Fieldwork in Christchurch was carried out by Conradson, Diprose, Dombroski and Healy in 2017 and 2018. The research team investigated the wellbeing initiative and urban youth farm 'Cultivate Christchurch', which was set up a few years after the devastating earthquakes of 2010 and 2011. The research included a period of participatory observation fieldwork by Dombroski, and a set of interviews undertaken by Dombroski, Conradson and Diprose with staff and youth interns. Healy, Diprose and Dombroski then ran two sets of workshops in 2018 to revisit, verify and extend the research findings with staff and volunteers from Cultivate. In examining the role of commoning for urban wellbeing, the therapeutic interactions of humans, non-humans and place at Cultivate were evident.

While the Majority and Minority World contexts of these two sites are very different, a similarity that emerged across our two cases was commoning, particularly efforts at managing resources and space in collective strivings towards wellbeing. In particular, we observed how the collective processes of ongoing care and maintenance that we call 'commoning' were contributing to 'being well together' among the local populations. We elaborate on two related insights from this research in the following sections.

Insight one: 'we are in this together'

For people living in Kallyanpur, there are multiple wellbeing challenges every day. One of the foremost causes of stress is the ongoing dispute between the Kallyanpur slum residents and the House Building Research Institute, a body of the MOHPW that has authority over the land on which Kallyanpur slum was established. This dispute has caused enormous stress and a sense of uncertainty for those living in the slum. This dispute has also limited the operation of various slum improvement programmes run by non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Despite the serious challenges that locals encounter on a daily basis, they have come together with innovative solutions to address some of their pressing material wellbeing concerns, in a clear demonstration of 'survivance' over 'victimry' (Vizenor 2009). For Vizenor, survivance is a concept that enables us to acknowledge the strength and agency of Indigenous peoples (in particular) in responding to oppression and devastation, where striving for something more than just survival has contributed to cultures of collective care that are not only about 'tragedy' or what he calls 'victimry' (Vizenor 2009). For us, this concept is helpful in approaching the shared work of Kallyanpur slum residents in a way that acknowledges both the extreme challenges of living in an insecure and informal settlement and the collective efforts for wellbeing made by the residents.

The lack of legal recognition from the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) has left many people in Kallyanpur slum to their own devices when it comes to urban planning. Here, as in many informal and slum communities throughout the Majority World, immediate necessity compels a collective striving to secure common wellbeing. There is no water supply, sanitation or waste collection services provided by the city authority, so the residents have sought assistance from NGOs and other donor organizations for their sanitation needs. The first toilets came in 2004 following an eviction raid, when an NGO began a programme focused on micro-credits, water and sanitation. By 2016, a total of forty community toilets had been built, which the slum community actively pursued through liaising with various NGOs. However, a further eviction drive in 2016 resulted in many

NGOs closing their infrastructure improvement programmes, leaving Kallyanpur residents to collectively deal with the challenge of maintaining the existing infrastructure.

Currently around twenty to twenty-five families use each toilet complex in Kallyanpur Slum. Each toilet complex consists of four or five individual toilets arranged with bathroom facilities and water collection points connected to tube wells. Though it is the norm for Kallyanpur residents to use only their own designated toilets, tube wells and bathroom facilities, it is not uncommon for people beyond the designated families to also access these services and facilities. Therefore, keeping the facilities clean is challenging and continuous efforts are needed to keep the toilets functional and sanitary. During fieldwork, Waliuzzaman encountered a community organizer who manages a toilet complex voluntarily. She noted that the toilets are managed by specific individuals among the families sharing those toilets, with responsibility shuffled among the various households. Decisions over the management of the toilets are made at community meetings. Borna² runs a small tea stall nearby while keeping an eye on the toilet complex. While describing her work, she explained that:

This toilet is shared by a large number of families. That means it needs to be managed. It needs to be kept clean in order for others to use. It is the individual's responsibility to keep the toilet clean, and I just make sure that they have done their job right. I also train people in how to use the toilet and keep the space clean.

Borna also informs the community immediately if there is any problem with the toilet, making it easy and quick to find the right solution. She doesn't wait for NGOs to intervene for small problems. Instead, she finds the right people who will be able to fix it. By doing this voluntarily, Borna believes that she is fulfilling her responsibility to the community. Borna also expressed the importance of having such a system in place to challenge the general image held by Mahalla people (residents from outside the slum) that the Kallyanpur slum is a dirty place:

2 For reasons of confidentiality, all interviewee names in the chapter are pseudonyms.

People think we are dirty. This slum is dirty. But this perception is not right. We do whatever we can to keep the slum neat and clean. We don't want people to see trash here and there in this slum. We already face enough ignorance from outside people.

A similar approach was taken by the Kallyanpur residents when they realized that they needed a childcare service, as most parents are actively working throughout the day. Nilufer operates the only childcare inside the slum and sees it as incredibly important for her neighbours. Nilufer explained that:

The earnings from one person is not enough to survive in this city. So if women want to work, they first need to find a way to put their children under the care of a person that they trust. My childcare allows them to focus on their work without worrying about their kids.

Many people were sceptical when Nilufer first discussed this idea of having a childcare service inside Kallyanpur. But eventually some people, especially some working women, saw value in having such a service. They collectively approached an NGO that facilitated the process of providing a safe space that could accommodate around 100 children at a time. Nilufer has been running this childcare service successfully for the past ten years for a minimal honorarium and it has become highly respected by the Kallyanpur residents. As Nilufer said:

I know each and every parent of these children. If any child is absent for a day or two, I run to their parents straightway to check if everything is okay. This is not just a place for them to keep their child's safely for a minimal charge but also a great place for their education and socialisation in a good environment.

With a growing number of children enrolled in the last couple of years, Nilufer employed an additional five women from the community to help her in running the centre. While some commentators might say sanitation and childcare provision could be provided by the state or private companies, a commons perspective on Kallyanpur emphasizes the dignified survivance of this community who are addressing discrimination and marginalization through collective care for their wellbeing.

Responding to somewhat different challenges, the urban farm Cultivate was one of many organizations that began in the aftermath of a sequence of earthquakes that rocked the city of Christchurch in 2010 and 2011. Set up on vacant urban land, the organization was conceived as an environmentally grounded social enterprise that would address the challenges of mental health, employment and social integration faced by young people in the city. The urban farm centred around an inner city site owned by a private landowner whose house was demolished after the earthquakes. The use of the site was enabled via a legal contract brokered by Life in Vacant Spaces (LIVS), a charitable trust set up to enable transitional projects in a city where 80 per cent of the central city buildings were condemned and eventually demolished. Ten years later in 2021, while many of the damaged buildings in the city centre have been rebuilt, the Cultivate site remains on a thirty day rolling contract with LIVS reliant on the ongoing support of the charity and the landowner, who continues to lease it for free. What this means is that post-quake mental health and wellbeing are understood as a collective problem that requires a contribution from the wider community.

Since its inception, Cultivate has thus been a space of collective care work. Founders Bailey and Fiona had identified and then sought to harness their compatible skills towards particular ends. Fiona is a youth worker specializing in outdoor education programmes, and Bailey is a composter and passionate food systems activist and social entrepreneur. Interviews with staff and youth interns all emphasized that relationships on site were as intentionally cultivated as the plants themselves. There was a dense network of individual relationships creating a community within the farm, and a more collective, organizational sense of community as a whole with a distinctive identity in the place of Christchurch.

In terms of the 'within farm' community, one of the youth interns articulated their understanding of becoming part of a community at Cultivate:

So to me, that is sort of community. Like community is here definitely. I've got to meet heaps of people, even out of the people that actually are doing some work, that are my co-workers and stuff.

While other interns described the care work that they contributed to the place and to each other – mirroring the care shown to them and in turn showing it to other interns and the environment around them.

This sense of shared wellbeing was secured through materials large and small, brief interactions and ongoing relationships. For example, the materiality of a common box of cereal and some milk provided by Cultivate helped make the act of one intern caring for another's physical wellbeing possible, where interns reminded each other of the importance of eating breakfast. The community formed around being cared for and caring for others was a core part of the commons forming in this urban farm. Here, the 'resource' being commoned was not just the vegetables, compost and physical sites of the farms, but the mental health and wellbeing of the people working there. For young people, the sense that 'we are in this together' helped to create a feeling of 'okayness' that potentially had been missing or diminished as a result of the difficulties of everyday life in the post-earthquake city.

One staff member articulated the Cultivate community as a group trying to listen to its constituents and cultivating the life of the collective as if it were a sentient being:

The other thing we do well is learning to function as a collective, listen to the individuals within the collective, as well as seeing and understanding what that translates to, as in the best decision to make for Cultivate, treating Cultivate like a sentient being as well, in ways, understanding that it has a life as well.

As something like a 'sentient being', Cultivate is also in relationship with other collectives and individuals outside of the farm itself. It is more than just its interns and staff, as its work encompasses the wider community that gets involved either as volunteers or just by walking past. One staff member said they regularly interacted with people calling over the fence and asking for advice about urban gardening. This person found themselves answering questions such as 'what do I do with my food waste?' and 'how can I grow silverbeet³ at home?' The visible presence of Cultivate as a site of urban commons was evident here.

3 A green winter vegetable similar to what is known as Swiss Chard in North America.

Other staff talked about how the farm was most likely used by sex workers at night (it is on the corner of a street traditionally known for sex work), or other people out at night. They know this not necessarily because of litter, but because glass bottles are added to the recycling overnight and condoms to the rubbish. The wider community see the space as one that should be respected and supported as a site of care for young people in difficult situations, as they carefully respect the site even when unobserved overnight.

Insight two – ‘we’ is bigger than us

The second insight suggested by our two case studies is the idea that community wellbeing accrues to more than just the community involved in commoning. If ‘we’ are in this together, then what we understand as ‘we’ must be bigger than the immediate ‘us’ of a commoning community. This refers to the fact that commoning activities have a broader reach than their immediate community, but also, as we will return to near the end of this section, that commoning activities involve the wellbeing and active participation of non-human entities and networks as well. In this vein, we note that the activities in Kallyanpur slum benefit not only its own residents but also the city as a whole. While slums are often imagined by city planners as some kind of aberration to the intended urban form, they are often important residential areas for essential workers (Waliuzzaman 2020). The commoning activities of the Kallyanpur slum residents, which contribute to making it a liveable and affordable community in Dhaka, extend wellbeing benefits beyond the immediate physical boundary of the settlements. Kallyanpur offers cheap, quality manufacturing and retail services such as in furniture making, refurbishment of engines, tailoring and window-frame making, largely concentrated in residential areas in the vicinity. Many local businesses benefit from exchanges with the slum. Many local residents of the wider Kallyanpur neighbourhood visit the slum to get cheap tailoring services offered by the residents. Some Kallyanpur residents raise and sell chickens, of the breed known

as 'deshi murgi' popular among Kallyanpur Mahalla residents, with customers coming from far beyond the slum.

Apart from the productive side of the slum, a wide variety of work is performed each day by residents beyond the immediate neighbourhood, as shown by interviewees who voluntarily wore GPS trackers for 24 hours (Waliuzzaman 2020). These individuals were engaged in domestic services (security guard, driver, electrician, housekeeping), manufacturing services (garment worker) and the transport sector (tractor/bus driver, terminal operator, rickshaw/van puller). Their valuable labour supports the smooth functioning of the city. The city also benefits greatly from the waste-picking activities of Kallyanpur residents, which are often devalued by outsiders.

Although there is no official data on the number of people engaged in waste picking, respondents indicated that more than 100 people actively worked as waste pickers in Kallyanpur slum. They gather materials from street piles, garbage containers, transfer points and dumps throughout the Kallyanpur, Mirpur and Gabtoli areas, the main dump point being located in Gabtoli. There are several street bins, open transfer points and open dumping areas in and around these neighbourhoods. The irregularity of waste collection by the DCC authority allows pickers to access waste in search of recyclables. The materials that are most commonly retrieved include paper, plastics and broken glass, with metal scraps being the most prized. Thus waste that has no value to the general residents of Dhaka is given value by Kallyanpur residents through their act of picking it. They have not only created a means of making a living from this waste but also helped to reduce Dhaka's environmental footprint. The waste picking also improves the public health situation of numerous residents around the Mirpur and Kallyanpur area, which would otherwise be worse due to the irregularity of waste collection on the part of the DCC.

Obviously, we cannot unproblematically celebrate all such activities, which may pit the wellbeing of Kallyanpur residents against those of wider Dhaka (who systematically continue to marginalize them). The key point here is that by working with dignity to create commoning possibilities within the slum, Kallyanpur retains a small proportion of residents that *could* actually afford to move elsewhere. Kallyanpur continues to offer a viable and affordable residential, business and commoning community

to new migrants, and important environmental and labour services to the wider city (Waliuzzaman 2020). Again, commoning demonstrates survivance over victimry in Vizenor's terms.

The urban farm Cultivate also draws from and benefits a wider community. The commoning community caring for the physical and mental wellbeing of the youth is also caring for the creatures and ecosystems of urban farm sites, the wider earthquake 'red zone' and city, and indeed, planetary wellbeing beyond Aotearoa New Zealand. In the same way, this extended 'more-than-human community' – by which we mean the wider collective of humans and non-humans, things and Earth processes that interact and make up a place – could also be understood to be caring for the wellbeing of the youth and others who are participating in commoning. Some interns were really clear about the role of the 'place' of Cultivate and the non-human entities such as the plants and trees that contributed to their wellbeing and survivance, particularly in terms of calm and peace, and mindfulness of what was happening 'now' rather than anxiety.

In what follows, we give some examples of interns connecting with this wider more-than-human collective, including outdoors, plants, the urban environment and the feelings of being cared for that are related to this. One intern described their experience of farming at one of the suburban sites as follows:

If it's a real nice sunny day and I had a job to do right down the back, I'll just, like, lie on the grass and it'll be real nice. Just peaceful.

And another two describe connecting to the land and outdoors in general:

The outdoors element of it is good. You have some sort of connection to the land and the elements. I think that's a valuable thing. I think that's probably like a key part of identity that perhaps [hasn't] been introduced to before, and this – Cultivate is an outlet for that, for finding that connection. (Participant 1)

[It's good] being in an outdoor environment. I'm not much of a city person, so it's kind of rare to see a section of plantation that's – I don't know how to put it, to be honest. It's just nice. It gives me a little bit of breathing room. (Participant 2)

Another described their preference for the job of ‘pricking out’ (that is, putting smaller seedlings into individual punnets, in preparation for subsequent transfer to the ground):

Like with seedlings, it is quite therapeutic. So instead of getting all wound up about my personal life, me focusing outside and just gardening, and like helping the seeds grow. Yeah, it’s just really nice.

Doing the care work for the non-human was itself a sort of reciprocal arrangement, where caring for the land and its inhabitants in turn enabled one to feel cared for:

I come here and I don’t feel sad. I don’t feel mad. I just feel like there’s something to be done, and I’m doing a job that’s worthwhile. In the long run, growing veggies isn’t so bad.

For some, being present to the more-than-human objects and environment at Cultivate helped to reduce their ruminations on past injustices and difficulties. One intern spoke of how such rumination or ‘zoning’ into the past was not helpful, and explained that focusing on what was in front of them was important for their mental health:

So it’s like okay, I’m going to live right now, what I’m doing right now. Sometimes I just zone into the past. So I think it’s just living for right now. Like cool, there’s a car. There’s some garlic. Like I’m here. Like nothing else matters right now.

For staff, some big picture thinking connecting the role of place and the non-human into the commoning community included thinking of the organization as a social organism with its own awareness and consciousness beyond just the humans involved:

I think of it [Cultivate] as a social organism. I give it its own awareness and consciousness ... In the simplest terms it’s a collective because it is. I can really break down that social organism concept too because it’s something that I’ve picked up in my reading. In simplest terms, it’s a collective because there’s more than one person involved ... It’s bound or interconnected with the places that we’re working from and, at the very least, the spirit of that place, as well as what begins to collect under our fingernails and make its way into us on a physical material layer as well. It’s always been a collaboration.

As researchers, it struck us how the ‘community’ that was commoning was not just a human community, but one that included all those ‘things’ mentioned here and the other ecological processes that labour with Cultivate: worms, microbes, sunshine, rain and more, all worked in reciprocal care relationships with interns, staff, plants and tools to common wellbeing. Such a more-than-human community, or hybrid collective, is a core element of caring for commons here and elsewhere (Dombroski, Healy and McKinnon 2018).

Commons insights for wellbeing thinking in the twenty-first century

In striving for a good life, a better life, human communities in both Majority and Minority Worlds work with Earth others to make the best of what can be bad situations. For even the worst of situations cannot erase the capacity for survivance. For Vizenor, survivance included collective responses to difficult times, responses that included humour and relationship strengthening for Indigenous peoples facing colonization. For the different sites of our work in Bangladesh and Aotearoa New Zealand, we have similarly noted the relational aspects of striving for wellbeing through commoning resources and care. Learning to work collectively for wellbeing is a task of critical importance for communities all over the world, and urban commoning practices provide insights into how this might happen in grounded and place-specific terms. It is in this vein that we have approached the two cases of commoning practices in urban spaces presented here, as each provides insights into some of the serious challenges of the twenty-first century.

The examples in this chapter have made it clear that wellbeing is both a collective and a more-than-human process in Majority and Minority Worlds. Our first insight was that ‘we are all in this together’: communities can and do engage in striving for common wellbeing in spaces such as Kallyanpur slum, where access to public resources are restricted, or cities

such as Christchurch, where public spaces for young people have been disrupted in the aftermath of a disaster. Further, our second insight was that ‘we’ is bigger than ‘us’: commons-based activities spill over into the wellbeing of the city, just as reciprocal interactions with the more-than-human world nourish the body and minds of cultivators in Christchurch. We should resist wellbeing narratives that focus solely on the individual. We suggest that continuing to over-emphasize the need for individual coping, adaptation and resilience can do people harm by perpetuating the illusion that we are not already with others, thereby eliding and overlooking our capacity to strive together. As Amanda Yates has argued in her chapter and elsewhere (Yates 2021), in this time of socio-ecological crisis, wellbeing *must* be at the centre of our governance thinking both in Aotearoa New Zealand and beyond. Further to this, we do not intend to equate or conflate the Majority and Minority Worlds. If we are to ‘survive well together’, the Minority World must renege hyper-individualist tendencies and invest in collective wellbeing strategies. Learning from commoning practices in the Majority World can contribute to such a project. This chapter has highlighted examples where wellbeing has been at the centre of commons-communities, as a collective task that includes both human and more-than-human communities in both Majority and Minority World places.

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