Since I have ten minutes, I will focus on a few principal remarks - and exclude the issues of multiculturalism and community art that Pascal has brought up and where I disagree with his definitions.

Commons, as defined by Hardin and Ostrom, is first of all a model of ownership and property (no ownership or shared ownership); from that, it follows that it entails certain forms of collaboration and governance.

In Pascal’s lecture and the “Commonism” book, I see a reversal of this logic where collaboration and governance comes first and the question of ownership (and property); or, in other words, it replaces a firmly materialist notion of the commons with a more conceptualist (or more idealist) notion of the commons.

In my view, this creates a number of questions:

* First of all, whether this form of collaboration is actually that new
* , even in the art practice - Joke van Zwaard will say more about this point.
* Secondly, whether the initiatives and practices described by Pascal aren’t actually “cooperatives”, in the most literal sense (like food co-ops, or artists’ cooperatives such as the New York Film-Makers Cooperative founded by Jonas Mekas in 1962).
* Which then, thirdly, leads to the question what the difference is between the new coinage of “commonism” and the concept of “communalism” developed by Murray Bookchin in the early 1990s (which was conversely modeled on anarcho-communist communes and cooperatives).

Curiously, many of these long-standing artists’ cooperatives subscribe to the notions of community art and multiculturalism, in stark contrast to Pascal’s thesis that these are top-down policies.

Taking these issues aside, we’re ultimately back to questions that sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies raised in 1887 with his book “Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft” in which he introduced the distinction of community versus society - which subsequently resulted in the political concept of “communitarianism”. We probably would need another symposium to make clearer differentiations between communes, communities, cooperatives and commons, and between communism, communitarianism, communalism and commonism.

However, both in the established theory and practices of the commons, I see one fundamental disagreement with what Pascal suggests: I would insist that a commons is not by definition democratic.

* Even in the examples given in Pascal’s lecture, such as Ex Exilo Filiangieri, or generally the movement of “Centri Sociali” in Italy (which, btw., grew out of autonomist anarcho-communism) you could argue that governance is often meritocratic rather than democratic.
* Which, right at this moment, is the source of major political controversy within another commons practice, Open Source/Free Software, where new codes of conducts for gender inclusivity conflict with the established meritocratic model.
* Sticking to the example of Open Source/Free Software, Linux is a textbook example of a commons that is not democratic, because its development is sponsored and thus factually steered by an industry consortium including IBM, Microsoft, Google, Intel, Huawei, AT&T, Samsung and many others.
* Elinor Ostrom addresses this in her theory of the commons where she describes a four-tier hierarchy of “authorized users”, “claimants”, “proprietors” and, on top, “owners”. (Just to clarify, she sees this hierarchy of property rights also at work in the commons.)
* Lastly, commons is an organizational form, or a system (in a cybernetic sense): In the past decades, we’ve seen much optimism that restructuring the working modes of a system would logically yield a different culture or politics. In the case of commons, not only the existence of corporate commons (such as Linux) seems to dampen this optimism. Although it sounds counter-intuitive, there are even fascist commons: such as Neonazi organic farm cooperatives in East Germany, or the fascist squat “Casa Pound” in Rome which now also acts as a political party. (Deleuze/Guattari, rhizomatic fascism)
* In art, the example of the Otto Muehl Commune is perhaps the best-known of a commune, cooperative or commons gone wrong. Art conversely offers the space to experiment with the commons, and explore what their limitations are and what can go wrong in them.