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**THE DIALECTS OF ENCLOSURE AND COMMONING IN THE POLITICAL
ECONOMY OF LAND TENURE PATTERNS IN FLANDERS –
A LEGAL-INSTITUTIONALIST APPROACH**

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Commons, social spaces in which land use rights are shared, are mushrooming as a topic in socio-spatial analysis. This recent interest originates from two interconnected socio-spatial phenomena. Firstly, we witness continued enclosure, rendering commons commensurable and making them more easily governable by state administrations and exchangeable through market mechanisms. Secondly, we see the awakening of a transnational commons movement striving towards protection of existing commons and the creation of new ones. This movement struggles to find solid ground in territories all over the world. The state of the art in commons studies explains both, by referring to the commons-hostile features built into the (pro-market) land use patterns in the territories of nation states. Notwithstanding these, an early development of concrete territorial commons can be observed. These findings lead to a novel research question: how are the dynamics of enclosure and the commons movement formed by and reforming land use patterns? To understand how a territory offers opportunities and constraints for both commons and enclosures, we need to analyze how land use rights are produced and allocated and how they overlap into complex land use patterns. To investigate the political economy of land tenure patterns as well as their linkages to dynamic power relations, this project develops a legal-institutional approach enriching the mainstream commons debate with theories on land governance. Selected emblematic moments of land reform in Flanders, a region in which a highly hybrid land tenure system has emerged in the past two centuries, will serve as a case in point.

Keywords: legal