

THE GLOSSARY OF

COMMONING



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AN OPEN PATH OF WORDS



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**COMM
ONING**



BENI COMU



MÜŞTEREKLEŞME

MISE EN COMMUN



GEMEENGOED



PUNEREA ÎN COMUN

1

INTRO



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The commoning process: *Why a glossary?*

A Europe-wide glossary of terms related to Commoning has two main purposes. Firstly, it must help to define what we mean by the Commons, an experience which exists throughout Europe and the world, and describes a process, which David Bollier and Silke Helfrich have called Commoning.

In their book "Free, Fair and Alive: The Insurgent Power of the Commons", published in 2019, David Bollier and Silke Helfrich,[...] conceptualized commoning as a triad of three spheres:

1. Social practices,
2. Acts of provisioning,
3. Forms of peer governance.

As the authors emphasize, these three components shouldn't be understood as isolated entities, but as three integrated and interconnected spheres influencing each others' functioning. *The result of people engaging in the act of commoning is the emergence of commons: a generative and neglected social lifeform compiled of complex, adaptive, living processes that generate wealth through which people address their shared needs with minimal reliance on markets or states.*"

Secondly, this "lifeform" has to relate to public institutions, authorities on every level and finds itself in the need to negotiate, from time to time, its very existence.

This means that the myriad practical experiences of commoning must find their place in the wording of existing laws and regulations, or suggest the wording of future laws and regulations: *remembering that laws are words.*

Commoning therefore has to find its place in the wording of laws and regulations, in different languages, different legal systems and different customs.

Therefore, a glossary must perform two quite different tasks:

1. explore the philosophical implications of Commoning, including the reasons why institutions should favour it in the general interest;
2. create a semantic link between actual practices of Commoning and the possibility of their recognition by regulatory systems, enabling citizens and public authorities of good will to come to a practical understanding and find practical solutions together.

To make this possible, *we need to find how actual Commoning is currently defined in very different terminologies, which in many countries reflect a specific worldview, based on exclusive dialectics between individuals and institutions.*

Because words and processes are not static but dynamic, this glossary has been built as an open document. At the end of the project path, it will be open to new words, it is created as the base to build a shared commoning view and develop it through different commoning practices.

This is being done in three steps, corresponding to the three Joint Staff Training Events (JSTE) held respectively in Italy, Romania, The Netherlands and in Belgium.



AN OPEN GLOSSARY FOR AN OPEN PROCESS

In Italian, where the normal expression used in recent years to name Commoning in the sense of what Bollier and Silke speak of is *Beni comuni*, literally “Common Goods”, along with an entirely different, little known but much more precise expression, *Usi civici*, literally “Civic Customs”.

Actually, Beni Comuni normally has two meanings: in legal jargon, it has the technical meaning of shared property, typically a courtyard or a stairway in a condominium.

The other, less technical meaning, usually refers to what is considered the right of every human being, for example to clean water. Neither has much to do with Commoning, so the use of the term creates no end of confusion.

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Therefore, a glossary must perform two quite different tasks:

1. Explore the philosophical implications of Commoning, including the reasons why institutions should favour it in the general interest,
2. Create a semantic link between actual practices of Commoning and the possibility of their recognition by regulatory systems, enabling citizens and public authorities of good will to come to a practical understanding and find practical solutions together.

This short glossary has been created to be **open source** so it is to be considered as a commons itself that comes from a commoning process in 3 first steps and an additional fourth one in Belgium.

"Open source refers in computer science to a decentralised software development system based on the sharing of source files" (Wikipedia: https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Open_source).

Moreover "The Free Software Definition is a document written by Richard Stallman and published by the Free Software Foundation (FSF) that defines the concept of free software, i.e. software that respects the freedom of users" (font: <https://www.gnu.org/>).

Freedom is the base of this document. Due to its open nature, it is incomplete, so it can be developed.

A second pillar of this document is the language itself: "Language is the historically determined system or form through which members of a community express themselves and communicate with each other through the use of a given language, i.e. a set of written (symbols) and/or spoken (sounds) signs" (Enciclopedia Universale, in Le Garzantine, vol. 2, Garzanti Libri, 2006, p. 944).

Thanks to these 2 pillars, everybody is free and welcome to contribute to this document in order to develop the community of commoners (both institutions and citizens) contributing to the application of the commoning process to an increasing number of initiatives that affect what we share with other people: our world, our cities, our lives.

Write your contribution to commoningeurope@gmail.com.

The project will reach its conclusion in February 2023 but ideally the glossary will never be closed.



COMMON WORDS

THE ROOTS OF COMMONS IN DIFFERENT LANGUAGES*

Commoning is one of the most ancient practices of humanity, yet the term is a neologism, introduced in recent years, as far as we are able to tell, by the American historian Peter Linebaugh (The Magna Carta Manifesto Liberties and Commons for All, Peter Linebaugh, 2009). Here we briefly present the way this term is translated into the partner languages of the **Commoning Europe** project.

The commons in Turkish

The translation of the word **Commoning** suggested by our Turkish partners is **Müşterekleşme**.

The structure of the Turkish language involves a root, **Müşterek-**, followed by two suffixes, **-leş-** and **-me**.

Müşterek has the basic meaning of "common, joint" as an adjective, "partner" as a noun, and comes from the Arabic مُشْتَرِك (muştarik), from a root rich in meanings related to "association, common, society, community, sharing, partnership".

-leş- is a handy suffix which turns nouns into verbs, and renders well the idea that we are not speaking of an asset, but of a practice, something people do.

Finally, **-me** makes the verb a noun again, something like the English ending – *ing*.

The commons in Dutch/Flemish

Our Dutch/Flemish speaking partners from the Netherlands and Belgium suggested different terms:

1. As a practice, we use 'commoning' just like in English. In Dutch it could be something like 'democratisch zelfbeheer'.
2. We also use 'civic driven change' which makes it more active.
3. Gemeengoed ("Common Good") is the noun, **Meenten** can be a verb, meaning: *"Use of an undivided, common property, such as existed from the twelfth century onwards in the form of 'common lands'; Use of common resources by members of a group or society; Small-scale, utopian initiatives with a group of active participants who together form a community"*.

Source: <https://commonslab.be/blog>

Meenten opens a fascinating window, and leads us back to the English (and Latin-rooted) term of the commons. In fact, both **meenten** and **common** hark back to the Proto-Indo-European root ***mei-**, meaning *"to change, go, move"*. Calvert Watkins, in *The American Heritage' Dictionary of Indo-European Roots*, gives *"*mei-'To change, go, move; with derivatives referring to the exchange of goods and services within a society as regulated by custom or law"*.





The extraordinary list of related words includes *mad* (to change mentally for the worse); *molt*, *mutate*, *commute*, *transmute*; *mutual*; the negative prefix *mis-* as in *mistake*, *migrate* and *amoeba*.

The suffixed "o" grade form, **moi-n*, sometimes presided by the "together" prefix *ko-* gives rise to the Old English *ġemæne*, and the Latin *com-munis*, hence words like *common*, *commune*, *communism*, *excommunicate*, *municipal*, *munificent*, *remunerate* (from *munus*, "serve performed for the community").

The ancient Indo-Iranian divinity, *Mithras*, appears to have a similar etymology, from **mitram* "contract," whence **mitras* "contractual partner, friend".

The first part of *Common/Communis* is the Indo-European root **kom-* meaning "with, together", *com-*, *con-*, *co-*; *cum* in Latin, **ga-* in the Germanic languages: it is no coincidence that people attending our training events, when speaking of the Commons, suggested many words beginning with *co-* such as **CO-CREATION**, **CO-PRODUCTION** and **CO-MANAGEMENT**.

The German terms for land commons *Allmende*, *Gemeindeflur* or *Gemeindegut* (in Switzerland *Allmend*, *Allmeind* or *Allmein*), also go back to the same origin.

The commons in Italian

The term *borgo* pl. *borghi* is used in Italy, among other things to describe rural communities, especially in mountainous area, with a rich history, but which for various reasons have been largely abandoned, a phenomenon shared by many places all over Europe.

However, this also means that many people return from abroad/other parts of the country, bringing many skills with them, and a strong wish to empower their community of origin, rediscovering its roots. This is clearly to be seen for example in Romania, or in many parts of Italy (to mention only Commoning Europe partner countries).

The commoning initiatives around "borghi" are incredibly diverse. However they tend to create forms of collaboration between private and public actors, generally on the initiative of citizens; they often involve an economic aspect (typically "aware" tourism or promotion of local products), where the revenue however is largely invested in recovery of natural and historic assets.

Commoning can be very important in this case for local authorities with limited resources who need to preserve significant heritage.

*text written by Miguel Martinez.



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EVERY PATH BEGINS WITH A SINGLE STEP





JSTE ITALY- APRIL 2022

FIRST STEP

The first JSTE was held in Campi Bisenzio, in Italy, and therefore the starting point was to take a look at Italian terminology.

In Italian, the normal expression used in recent years to name Commoning in the sense of what Bollier and Silke speak of is *Beni comuni*, literally “Common Goods”, along with an entirely different, little known but much more precise expression, *Usi civici*, literally “Civic Customs”.

Actually, *Beni Comuni* normally has two other meanings, as explained above: in legal jargon, it has the technical meaning of shared property, typically a courtyard or a stairway in a condominium. The other, less technical and most common meaning refers to the right of access of every human being to certain assets, for example to clean water.

The first meaning is highly restrictive; the second refers to assets and implies public governance, while Commoning is actually a process where governance is neither private nor public.

During the meeting, Massimo Mannoni presented us with a seminal text, based on the Italian experience but with a Europe-wide focus. Massimo Mannoni worked for twenty years in the municipal administration of Livorno, and one of his main tasks was to coordinate a team working on shared governance of the commons.

Other terms for the glossary emerged in the final discussion, and were mostly submitted by non-Italian participants (Romania, Belgium and Türkiye).

Our original idea was to create a glossary with terms from different countries translated into words of at least similar meaning in English and set in alphabetical order.

However, Mannoni's contribution to the glossary follows a logical order, which would be lost were we to put the terms he uses in any other order.

Therefore, we split this step in two parts:

- 1) Urban commons: A “common” glossary for Europe, By Massimo Mannoni – LABSUS Member* : you can find the text in the appendix.
- 2) A list of words submitted at the JSTE (1st glossary). The reader will find those words, in this last release, mixed with the words that came up after the other trainings.



JSTE IN ROMANIA - SEPTEMBER 2022

SECOND STEP

The second JSTE was held in Făgăraș, in Romania, and we can consider it as a second step toward our project's goals. We started from words in Italy, we passed to the actions in Romania. From the institutions and organizations point of view, we really experienced the citizens as the center point of the commoning process. We really thanks Hanne Van Reusel (participant from Bral organization) who shared with us a small part of her doctorate thesis on the topic of commoning and we use this as an introduction of this second step and for further chapters of this release.

She starts from the notion of Commons of the commoners of Josaphat, this is a good practice from Belgium that you can find on our Commoning Europe booklet. Hanne Vam Reusel write "Everywhere in the city people come together to experiment with new ways of community living. Food teams, cohousing projects, self-managed nurseries, community land trusts, community gardens, sustainable neighborhoods, LETS-communities, energy cooperatives, groups of people that consider alternatives and work on various themes such as water management, food production, money, labor, or software. At first sight, these themes seem rather disconnected from each other, but we feel there is a connection. (...) These initiatives are developing alongside the market. They emphasize use rather than ownership, common ownership and sharing rather than individual property. They try to handle the limited resources of our planet with care, rather than assuming unlimited growth. They favor more solidarity to further polarization. They sometimes depend on the state, but develop in parallel, because they attach great importance to self-governance. Doing this they do not go against policy, but work together with it and deepen it. We see the connections. We feel the potential. We see how the contours of a new society are being drawn. For about every area of daily life people, today are working on concrete alternatives. What if we succeeded in bringing all these alternatives together? Wouldn't that strengthen our community potential to a significant extent? What if we would think together about how the city can be developed based on these principles?" (2017). Knowledge of commons practices, but –less explicitly- is informed by an extensive literature considering the topic. The way CJ presents the commons is based on this shared **theoretical reading in which the commons are in general defined as the combination of three key elements: a common resource, commoners or communities and commoning practices** (go to page 18 to go in depth).

The commons also stand for a movement. Seeing the commons and actions of commoning as a world view; The commons also stand as a political movement, which promises a transition to move away from the market- state dichotomy.

Van Reusel, H., Pak, B., & Boutsen, D. (2019). The Commons Architect. e. E: Altering Urban Architectural Design in Brussels, Double Degree Phd KULeuven/Faculteit Architectuur and Politecnico di Torino.



JSTE IN THE NETHERLANDS AND BELGIUM

NOVEMBER 2022 - JANUARY 2023


THIRD STEP


In the preparations of the Hilversum training there was a request by the members of the project to find more knowledge and theory about commoning.

And to try to discuss this knowledge around our topic. With this goal in mind we started organizing and inviting guests to our training.

We shaped those requests in a training dedicated to the main focus of what kind of activities can foster citizen activation. The outset of the training was meeting people who are working close to the Commoning topic and trying to feel the potential of this movement.

We discovered that not only a political commitment to commoning was needed but that also civilians needed to start to listen closely to each other when they organize themselves as commoners. New skills need to be learned like for example sociocratic ways of decision-making. It's interesting to see how civilians find ground for a common goal by creating value for everyone.

akers list is:

- Arjo Klamer. Professor and writer of the book Doing the right thing.
- Thomas de Groot. Member of Commons Network.
- Arnold Toppen. Advisor at KNHM foundation.
- Aernoud Olde. Energy pioneer and member of Hilversum 100 hmoners.

After the JSTE, participants asked for a step over: How is in Brussels?

We discovered the roots of commons: citizens and their simple needs.

We worked on the possibility to continue the glossary, the discover and the creation of commons. We experienced the dialogue with the European Parliament and we supported the commons in Europe in a political level. A project conclusion without an ending on the commoning topic, to foster the support and the sustainability of commons in Europe.



3

GLOSSARY



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Active citizenship

Active citizenship means that citizens use their rights and fulfil their obligations as citizens to engage with and within society and their environment. With regard to the commons, it means that citizens can actively participate in shaping, deciding and managing a shared good. The citizen can count on the government to see him or her as credible, autonomous and self-managed.

Active agents

Governments can actively call citizens to steward the commons. The government sees the active citizen as credible, autonomous and self-managed. However, it is debatable whether it is the obligation or responsibility of the citizen to steward the commons.

Added value

Public property risks losing value, both when it is neglected and when use of it is granted to private actors who deprive the general public of its right of access. Commoning, on the contrary, adds value for many reasons.

Agency

Agency can be described as “the ability of the individual to act independently of the constraining structures of society; structure is seen as the way that society is organised”.

Awan, N., Schneider, T., & Till, J. (2013). Spatial agency: Other ways of doing architecture. Routledge. In the context of the (urban) commons, agency thus can be understood as the ability of citizens -with or without papers- and communities to act in collectively taking care of a shared resource (space) in a way that provides a more sustainable and/or inclusive alternative to the way this resource (space) is currently being managed private or publicly.

Care / “labour of love”

Key terms that keep recurring in the Commoning context are care, caretaking, care & cure, caring economy, a caring space, being heard, empowerment, verbal resilience, connection & trust, and engagement, willingness to contribute. This underlines the fact that the main difference between Commoning and other forms of social organisation lies first of all in the human energy, personal involvement, “samenleving” (society as “living together”) vs. “maatschappij” (society as a formal structure, a company).

Circular economy

Even commons which have no explicit economic aspect inevitably increase opportunities of reuse and sharing among people who are constantly aware of the needs of fellow commoners. Commoning is by its nature labour intensive, requiring the work of all, an important factor in times of digitalisation, automation and outsourcing.

Community

The community we are referring to is a group of people and public and private organisations that share - by will or by necessity - significant aspects of their existence and the transformation of their trajectories of autonomy and social, economic and environmental development.





"This type of organisation takes care of its community dimension by using the potential of the relationship built among its members, aiming at the growth of ties and collaborations.

The material, spatial and environmental characteristics certainly give it form, but it is the people who give it meaning, a sense, making it a reference unit of measurement. The community is completed and exerts all its generative energy when it is not only perceived and experienced as a practical need but also and above all as a symbol and a reference for values, where there is a strong need to forge links on the basis of common interests, empathy and a propensity to believe in the same values". *Carlo Andorlini - University of Florence - School of Political and Social Sciences, Course on Design and Management of Social Interventions - Civil Economy festival 2021.*

Community engagement

Commons are of many kinds, but they usually involve a wider community, generally local, which is engaged and revitalised in many ways.

Commons Lab

A Commons Lab is an organised laboratory "which aims at providing a platform for different communities (of practice, interest, and place) to explore the commons and commoning practices through research, practice and experimentation" (Commons Lab Berlin). Working through a commoning approach, Commons Labs aim to initiate and support innovative and inspiring commons-oriented experiments (Commons Lab Antwerp). In the case of Antwerp, the Commons Lab is a socio-cultural organisation that focuses on the need to provide space for experimentation in order to foster (urban) commons. See also "experimentation".

Community Wealth Building

Community Wealth Building (CWB) is a process first developed in the US and then in the UK, based on five pillars, all of which can be related to the practice of Commoning:

- Spending: Maximising community benefits through procurement and commissioning, developing good enterprises, fair work and shorter supply chains.
- Workforce: Increasing fair work and developing local labour markets that support the wellbeing of communities.
- Land and Property: Growing social, ecological, financial and economic value that local communities gain from land and property assets.
- Inclusive Ownership: Developing more local and social enterprises which generate community wealth, including social enterprises, employee owned firms and cooperatives.
- Finance: Ensuring that flows of investment and financial institutions work for local people, communities and businesses.

Cultural interaction

Commoning is a powerful way of bringing together people of different cultural, ethnic, religious and social backgrounds, through direct personal contact based on working together.





Debate education

“Debate” is a structured process, widely used in commoning in the Netherlands, where people learn to know and respect each other, to distinguish ideas from their bearers, to judge proposals on their actual merits, in order to come to a shared decision process. An important safeguard against factionalism and “party spirit”.

Degrowth

"Growth" is the inevitable outcome of an economic system based on ever-increasing returns on financial investments (profit). The Degrowth (decroissance, decrescita) movement challenges this mechanism, pointing out the ultimately catastrophic outcome of such a system on a planet with limited resources.

This has led to a dialogue with the Commoning movement, which offers an economic model, not based on "profit" but on “covering the costs”.

Disclosure

The term enclosure refers to the privatisation of land commons, nature, plants, communication, common goods, etc. To disclose means literally ‘the action of making new or secret information known’. Disclosing means in a sense to protect, to maintain and open them up for visitors, people in a sustainable way. The disclosure of commons means opening up and sharing something that was secret or privatised, but also protection and caring of the common (De Caeter, L. (2021). Ending the Anthropocene: Essays on Activism in the Age of Collapse, excerpt from the chapter “Dis-closure of the Commons (Proposals for a New Concept)” p84- 90., nai010 publishers, Rotterdam.

Economics and the *oikos*

The commons tend to be treated as an issue of "citizen participation". However, as Commons Network director Thomas de Groot points out, Commoning is fundamentally an economic issue, a way of dealing with resources (see COMMUNITY WEALTH BUILDING). It is no coincidence that the greatest theorist of the Commons, Elinor Ostrom, received the Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences for her work.

Dutch economist Arjo Klamer (Doing the Right Thing. A Value Based Economy) stresses how economics studies tend to focus on the three-way relationship between the Individual (“rational economic actor”), the Market and the Government. Actually, Market and Government are relative newcomers, most “eco”-nomic activity has actually been the care of the “oikos”, the living space, in the parallel forms of household economy and commoning, as a way of sharing resources, entering into a sharing network without usually receiving a specific, measurable return for work, and where psychological and emotional factors are of major importance: “you can buy a house, you cannot buy a home”. Artificial intelligence, we are told, is everywhere making human labour superfluous. Yet any commoner will tell you that they experience the opposite: there is an enormous amount of CARETAKING required, indeed every Commoner will probably share the same feeling that “not enough of us are doing what they can”. This means that the commoning/labour of love is definitely needed, even though it flows along a channel which is different from that of “money”. Commoning steps out of the mainstream financial system. It seeks to cover costs rather than to make profits. Commoning makes activities accesible for all through low prices or by seeking free contributions based on the principle of "everyone according to their ability" rather than a fixed price.



Experimentation

To **experiment** according to the Merriam Webster dictionary is described as: “to **carry out** experiments : try out a new procedure, idea, or activity”. The notion of experimentation came up as an important aspect of the process of commoning. Fitting in the ambitions of the commons movement as a way to move away from the market-state dichotomy, experimentation is a crucial aspect to imagine, develop, realise and sustain (urban) commons. As the process of commoning is related to the building of social capital, the process requires an open approach to experiment and an acceptance of the right to fail. Only through this way, communities of commoners and their complex collaborations can develop innovative and novel approaches to collectively and respectfully take care of our urban environments. During the JTSE training in Făgăraş, the consortium widely discussed the complexity of maintaining the space for experimentation while respecting public requirements and norms concerning safety.

Events

Community initiatives nearly always involve what can be called - to use a “cold” terminology - “events”, such as shared meals, performances, etc.

As with for-profit activities, these may be useful for winning interest from institutions, donors and potential new members. However, moments of conviviality, “life-celebrated-together”, are an indispensable element of commoning: no community has probably ever existed without shared meals, rituals. Art historians, anthropologists and archaeologists all over the world show the enormous, central role played by this element, which deserves a far more powerful term than “event”.

Evolving and Organic

Institutions generally work on a project basis, trying to adapt the future to a plan. Commoning normally grows in a much more flexible pattern, as new people, ideas, opportunities arise, providing much-needed resilience in constantly changing times.

Generative

The EU gE.CO research project emphasises the generative nature of the (urban) commons: Commoning is described here as “a generative and open practice, capable of helping communities to thrive.” The generative aspect helps to distinguish commons from other community initiatives that collectively manage a resource (space) yet not do this in a way that helps to sustain and reproduce shared resources for future generations, nor to share them with people or beings (such as nature) that do not have a voice in other contexts.

The Făgăraş Rocks initiative can be taken as an example in which a community of (young) people in Romania are collectively taking care of opening up trails in the mountains. They do so in a way that is aimed to be respectful to nature and to help to secure funding to protect Făgăraş virgin forests for future generations. This generative aspect makes this initiative a commons in contrast to for example a development project aiming to build a hotel in the mountains that might give too easy of an access to this nature and lead it to be overexploited or used by people who have not obtained the skills and knowledge required to take care and respect nature as to preserve it for future generations.



Governance

The many ways commons are actually managed, often involving very different actors, both formally and informally.

Impact indicators

Government institutions and other actors (the media, potential private sponsors, etc.) understandably seek to grasp the actual impact of commoning.

The entire Market and Government system (see ECONOMICS AND THE OIKOS) is based on “bottom line” quantitative impact indicators.

The Commons – like the household economy – has a considerable economic and social impact, which is hard however to quantify, precisely because it escapes the quantifying atmosphere of mainstream economics.

A group of commoners keeping a publicly owned garden will certainly help the municipality save a good deal of money, not only on personnel to keep the area open to the public, but also because they will immediately notice a leaking pipe which could waste great amounts of money, or the branch of a tree damaging the roof of a neighbouring house which could cost painful legal costs.


Or they could simply point out that the community does not need a suggested, costly public work: such saved costs are real, yet almost impossible to calculate.

Commoning affords the opportunity for people who otherwise would not have known each other and would perhaps have felt profound distrust towards others, to take care together of a place. This implies a considerable positive impact on social marginalization, petty crime, ethnic/culture conflict, educational deficit, security, psychological problems, loneliness, generational separation, gentrification, creation of urban ghettos, all of which have enormous financial costs for society in general.

Initiative of citizens

Institutions tend to provide services to individuals, who in their turn delegate political representatives: Commoning adds a new (yet very old) dimension of hands-on action by citizens who literally build at least part of their world together.

Involvement and inclusiveness

Institutions and private actors, even with the best intentions, tend to truly involve only those professionally employed to act. In Commoning, those already involved tend naturally to seek to involve others, giving a feeling of including  ryone

Knowledge transfer

Finding solutions to problems together means sharing important skills.



Local currency

Wikipedia defines a “local currency” as follows:

“In economics, a local currency is a currency that can be spent in a particular geographical locality at participating organisations. [...] A local currency acts as a complementary currency to a national currency, rather than replacing it, and aims to encourage spending within a local community, especially with locally owned businesses”.

Local currencies are important as they are often the only way to give value to the real and useful work of care commoners provide for the people and places they are involved with; and are also a means of support for and connection to the broader local community.

Susan Witt writes:

“One of the crucial tasks of the new century will be to so shape our economic system so that environmental and social safeguards are built into its design... By intentionally narrowing our choices of consumer goods to those locally made, local currencies allow us to know more fully the story of items purchased, stories that include the human beings that made them and the minerals, rivers, plants, and animals that gave of their substance to form them. Such stories, formed from real life experience, work in the imagination to foster responsible consumer choices and re-establish a commitment to the community. In this sense, local currencies become a tool not only for economic development but for cultural renewal”.

Organization and definition

The concrete form taken by Commons varies from case to case: “In practice there is never a pure commons” (Thomas De Groot).

In the Netherlands, Commons are often run by a non-profit stichting or foundation, in Italy generally by an *associazione di promozione sociale*, a kind of association which can also operate in favour of its own members: this is not because of a need on the part of the Commons, it is the local government which needs to have a legally defined counterpart.

Commoning tends to occupy niches left empty: in Belgium and the Netherlands, commoners are often allowed “temporary occupation” of spaces which are changing use, an opportunity which however makes long-term planning difficult.

Process-oriented

The (urban) commons entail a practice of commoning. This practice requires a process-oriented approach in which the imagining, realisation and care-taking of the commons is of crucial importance. Linked to the concept of sustainability, the management of and stewardship of (urban) commons can only sustain when approached as a dynamic process of growth that requires a certain level of experimental freedom.

The process-oriented aspect of the (urban) commons emphasises the often overlooked shared care taking of our public spaces in our contemporary neoliberal society.

Public-Civic partnership

As sub-item in the context of shared governance. Public-private partnerships play an increasingly important role in today's political/economic scenario. The commoning movement calls for also developing public-civic partnerships. As the Toolkit for Homes of Commons puts it:

"The public-civic partnership model represents a new governance arrangement that regulates issues of power, mutual relationships and accountability. By sharing responsibilities in the management process, a new model of the structure and of public space and property management can be established. Examples of different practices show that cooperation can be initiated by both sectors, and that responsibilities are defined through clearly specified tasks, rules and legislative frameworks. The development of public-civic partnership depends on a set of ideological, legal, political and economic instruments such as: (1) political will, (2) laws, rules, decisions; (3) development strategies; (4) material support and sources of funds; (5) information access; (6) meetings and cooperation opportunities between the civil and the public sector; and (7) further education of both sectors regarding possible cooperation models".

Reciprocity

"The essential element for community life is certainly reciprocity. Reciprocity is the value that makes it possible to create quality relationships that trigger virtuous mechanisms of give and take. On the local scale, this means trying out innovative actions with the collaboration of the main players in civil society, starting with the citizens".

Giorgia Salvatori - Councilor of the Municipality of Campi Bisenzio -Circular economy festival 2021.

Right to bid

The UK "Localism Act 2011" introduced the Community Right to Bid which "allows communities and parish councils to nominate buildings or land for listing by the local authority as an asset of community value. An asset can be listed if its principal use furthers (or has recently furthered) their community's social well-being or social interests (which include cultural, sporting or recreational interests) and is likely to do so in the future. When a listed asset comes to be sold, a moratorium on the sale (of up to six months) may be invoked, providing local community groups with a better chance to raise finance, develop a business and to make a bid to buy the asset on the open market". This concept has also find wide acceptance in the Netherlands: for example, the Municipality of Amsterdam has regulated the three Buurtrechten ("neighbourhood rights"): The Right to Bid, the RIGHT TO CHALLENGE and the Right to Plan, which can be exercised on the following conditions:

The initiative responds to challenges of the neighbourhood or city.

The initiative has social value.

The initiative is rooted in the neighbourhood and supported by it.

The initiators can prove they have the know-how and experience to implement the initiative.

The initiator is a legal person.

The initiative is inclusive and accessible.

Right to challenge

Known in Dutch as *Uitdaagrecht*, the originally British notion of “Right to Challenge” has become part of the regulations of hundreds of municipalities in the Netherlands.

How does the Right to Challenge work?

Under the right to challenge, initiators (*initiatiefnemers*) can take over tasks from the municipality (or province/water board) if they think they can do it smarter, better, cheaper or differently. This "challenges" the government. Residents and civil society organisations thus get the chance to start implementing their idea.

How does it work in practice?

Initiators come up with a plan to take over existing tasks from the government and carry them out themselves. They seek support in the neighbourhood and submit their plan to the government. Example: maintaining a park, cleaning canals or managing a community centre. If the plan fits within the available finances, they take over the government task.

The right to challenge also allows initiators to 'co-produce' with the government if they think they can perform a government task smarter, better or cheaper, but need to cooperate with the government in doing so. Example: a new interpretation of provincial nature policy with the support of farmers - "Nature with the community". With the right to challenge, farmers and civil society organisations can start working on nature development themselves, making agreements on coordination and cooperation with the province.

Applying for a challenge can be done through the following steps:

1. Initiators have an idea: it can be done differently / better;
2. Initiators seek support among residents;
3. Initiators consult with municipality (decision in principle);
4. Initiators take over tasks and budgets;
5. Residents / users decide together with the municipality;
6. Initiators elaborate the proposal;

Saving

Public officials who espouse commoning often fear being accused of “missing income”: why didn't you rent out the place at market price instead of letting those people use it for free?

Commoning is actually highly beneficial, often in ways difficult to measure directly, in terms of public saving. For example, a community keeping a garden open, clean and safe for children to play in, able to immediately report any sick tree or leak in the water system, where parents help each other out with children who have disabilities, saves large amounts of money which can be invested usefully elsewhere.

Security

Security is a key issue in a society of isolated individuals, who increasingly tend to seek protection through electronic surveillance media and institutional control. Commoning implies constant community attention, mutual support and forestalling antisocial behaviour. (see stewardship, **solidarity, inclusion**).

Social redemption

The institutional model of inclusion tends to place a professional social worker on one side, a group of individuals with various difficulties on the other side. Commoning provides an alternative pattern: a community which has a positive approach easily absorbs individuals with many kinds of difficulties, also because Commoning requires many skills which are different from those appreciated in systems based on professional degrees.

Sociocracy

In the Netherlands, many commoning organisations apply “Sociocracy”, a method of governance designed by the Dutch entrepreneur Gerard Endenburg.

Organizational structure:

- Small groups are the basis of everything. Those small groups are called circles.
- Those sociocracy circles have a defined aim (= a description of what the circle is doing) and full authority in a domain (= what the circle has authority over).
- Circles will define roles, both to run itself smoothly and to “package” operations into meaningful bits. Any member will fill one or more roles.
- Linking roles connect circles to other related circles. In double-linking, two people from one circle – the delegate and the leader – are also full members of the parent circle so information can flow between the teams and their decisions align.

Stewardship

This is a key feature of Commoning: whatever people do in their own interest, they also do in the general interest and in that of the future generations.

Urban commons

The notion of urban commons is positioned in the wider understanding of the commons, yet has some specific particularities. Research on the urban commons is relatively new, and practitioners and scholars are still looking for how to obtain a better understanding and to develop them further. The urban commons are directly linked to spaces and places, but at the same time are also embedded in the broader organization of society. The “urban” thus can also be related to an urban collectivity; the city in its relational and immaterial sense. In this light, the city -as the place where all the facets of everyday life come to bare- forms an interesting and challenging scene for the (re-)emergence of the commons. More strongly connected to public space, urban commons –and the commoning processes that come inherently with them- redefine space as a process. Urban commons as spaces –processes- through which social relations are expressed and in which rules of sharing are formed. In the words of Daphne Büllsbach in “Shifting the Baselines” (European Alternatives, Büllsbach, Cillero, & Stolze, 2017, p. 16): “It is often the city, the space of social and cultural condensation, that provides the breeding ground for new ideas and formations...” [...]

More and more community-based city making initiatives are becoming recognized or labeled as urban commons. Though; the broader effects of such hands-on approaches –on their own or in their collectivity- need to be further discussed, practiced and researched. Regardless how small, practices of urban commons act at numerous levels and manifest the right to the city (Harvey, 2008). And although some practices of urban commons managed to scale out and become distributed over different geographical areas; it is clear that urban commons -like the traditional natural ones- have no one-size fits all formula available (Bader & Liesegang, 2014; Borch & Kornberger, 2015).

As concrete utopias, practices of urban commons rethink the city. As a political process, the urban commons make and reclaim urban –often public- spaces to be managed collectively and stand against neoliberal mechanisms of individualization and profit-driven agenda's. In practice, urban spaces offer laboratories for coexistence in the city and self-organization of citizens (Bader & Liesegang, 2014; Borch & Kornberger, 2015; Dellenbaugh et al., 2015; Ferguson, 2014; Shareable, 2017).

Text from doctorate Van Reusel, H., Pak, B., & Boutsen, D. (2019). The Commons Architect. e: Altering Urban Architectural Design in Brussels, Double Degree Phd KU Leuven/Faculteit Architectuur and Politecnico di Torino/DAD.

In addition, urban commons have been described as:

- “Managed by communities and based on the sharing economy, social innovation and cultural research”.
- Entailing “spaces where citizens co-produce solutions”.

“Spaces in our cities and territories identified by communities, which challenge the traditional mechanisms of public authority and the market, and provide open access while also involving in the management, most importantly, those who do not have a voice in other contexts”. Quotes from SPAZI INDECISI (2022). *gE.CO museum: Stories of Generative Urban Commons*.

Volunteering

Commoning, even when there are forms of return, is always based on voluntary contribution, though it necessarily involves reciprocity: volunteer firemen do “commoning” towards the whole community, people collecting unused medicines for a project abroad do pure “volunteering”.

Words without a specific need of definition but used in the commons field:

Citizens' rights | Collaboration | Collective resources

Commons management / Civic ownership / Co-ownership

Economic/social value

Function-oriented

Intervention

Regulatory Framework

Social security | Self-organization | Social and economic solidarity

Self-management

The right of Nature

4

EPILOGUE





EPILOGUE

The metaphor of the journey that accompanies and guides the writing of this glossary well captures the meaning of participating in an Erasmus Plus project.

When this partnership's journey began, in 2020, each of us brought a wealth of experience in the area of the commons related to own cultural, regulatory and political context. Discussions among the partners highlighted differences and accentuated the need to special connections in the countries. The first step was a shared language in order to analyze what each partner understands as Common Good.

The journey began at a time of communication difficulties due to the incidence of Covid-19 dissemination, but over time it then led partners to create links in order to facilitate exchange of good practices and constitute the richness of the baggage.

Delving into the topic of the Common Good, and the entire Commoning process, from both the local government and citizen perspectives, has allowed for broadening horizons and laying the groundwork for proposals and new paths in this area. The journey does not envisage its conclusion with the end of the project, and this is evidenced by the document delivered to the European Parliament during the last transnational meeting between partners, with which the topic is relaunched so that it is also addressed from politically privileged points of view.

Indeed, to the political sphere, understood in the highest sense of the term, pertains the theme of collaboration between people and organized groups in order to contribute concretely to the common good. This is a theme that has always been present in human history, in the past practiced by religious groups and supportive communities, then in the twentieth century by popular political parties, and today by people of different political, religious, ethnic, and cultural views who come together to give real meaning and substance to being citizens, of their country and the world.

Working together for the Common Good also means overcoming mutual prejudices and mistrusts and strengthening both the fight against more or less explicit forms of racism and xenophobia, and also intergenerational collaboration, elements these indicated as priorities in the Erasmus Plus programs.

In this sense must be read the [document to the European Parliament](#) for high-level normative intervention and together the dissemination and transferability (sustainability and exploitation) activities planned in all partner countries.



2020-1-IT02-KA204-079512

Commoning Europe *project*

ERASMUS +



The “Commoning Europe” project aimed to rediscovery the Public Good as the foundation of Europe. “Commoning” refers to initiatives concerning material or immaterial resources shared among a community of users who determine by themselves the rules on management, use, enrichment of their resource; it is also based on a set of collaborative and contributive practices. This movement is now experiencing a boom in Europe. Such initiatives are often carried out by private organizations (associations, informal communities, etc.) designated as “commoners”. Although they often emerge without elected representatives and public administrations, they must nevertheless find support and legitimacy with them to continue. A growing number of local governments are also seeking to develop approaches around the commons. The project intends to investigate different approaches to the commons at European level, in terms of relations between Commoners and Public Institutions and in relation to overcoming legal, organizational and other difficulties. For this aim, the partnership worked and prepared a booklet of the good practices concerning commoning in their respective territories and deepen 3 out of the total number with video-interviews.

Secondly, the partners attended thematic training courses/study visits to:

- Strengthen the capacities of public officials and commoners to grasp the question of the commons and build together virtuous synergies.
- Build an exchange platform between the partners to take advantage of the complementarity of their approaches, and with their European peers to develop their innovation capacity and contribute to a European deployment of the commons movement. Participants were people who were particularly interested in the topic for research reasons or because they were directly involved in the ongoing experiences. Those were the Short-term joint staff training events (in Italy, Romania, the Netherlands), were useful to allow partners to know personally and on the spot the activities in progress involving Commoning and, also, to organize an exchange of information between those who – both public administrators and officials and ordinary citizens – are directly involved in the experiences.

In those 4 trainings the Glossary was developed as an open document: each event added new words to the list and contributed to build the first Glossary of commoning language that is the base to start to talk the same language: commoners, institutions, private organizations and citizens.



PARTNERS DESCRIPTION



Biblioteca di Pace ETS

BIBLIOTECA DI PACE ETS

The association Biblioteca di Pace was born in the mid-1990s in Florence (Italy). Ever since our foundation, we have tried on the one hand to answer the request by 'natives' to know foreigners and their cultures; on the other hand, the need for foreigners to integrate into a new reality.



OPEN UP- THE NETHERLANDS

Open Up! Let Youth be Heard is a non-profit organization that seeks to connect, empower, and mobilise marginalised youth in civic life. The organisation uses debate education methodology to equip young voices with the tools to articulate their solutions for a better future.



BRAL - BELGIUM

BRAL is an urban movement striving to make Brussels more sustainable. BRAL wants to create a healthy and environmentally friendly city where people take care of each other. From mobility to urban planning, we place the people of Brussels at the heart of our work. We inform them and put their initiatives in the spotlight. We defend our common interests with the government - from the discussion table to the streets. We are critical but constructive, a bit rebellious but always nuanced.



MUNICIPIUL FĂGĂRAȘ - ROMANIA

Făgăraș municipality is a territorial-administrative unit organized and operating under the principles of decentralization, local autonomy, devolution of public services, eligibility of authorities of local public administration, legality and consultation of citizens in solving the problems of particular interest.



**T.C. ANKARA VALİLİĞİ
AİLE VE SOSYAL HİZMETLER
İL MÜDÜRLÜĞÜ**

ANKARA AİLE VE SOSYAL HİZMETLER İL MÜDÜRLÜĞÜ - TÜRKİYE

Ministry of Family and Social Services decides social policies related to family, women, children, elders and disabled people. The provincial directorates carry out social services according to these policies in Türkiye.



**COMUNE DI
CAMPI BISENZIO**

CAMPI BISENZIO MUNICIPALITY- ITALY

The municipality of Campi Bisenzio (N-W part of the Metropolitan area of Florence) stands out as a virtuous case as its territory concentrates an important stratification of civic innovation and administrative investments for sustainable and participatory urban development, supported by a strong political commitment of elected representatives and dense social capital.



5

APPENDIX



WWW.COMMONING.EU





URBAN COMMONS: A “COMMON” GLOSSARY FOR EUROPE. BY MASSIMO MANNONI – LABSUS MEMBER*

Each country has its own legal system. It follows that in each State, citizens verify which contents of their own Constitutional Charter, or of any other laws, can be of reference and support in carrying out voluntary activities, for purposes of general interest, for the protection, recovery, promotion and shared governance of common goods.

In Italy, with the amendment of Article 118, paragraph 4 of the Constitution** in 2001, the necessary conditions were created to start a "new path" that would allow citizens to propose shared agreements to public bodies for activities of general interest on the basis of the principle of mutual subsidiarity.

**Art. 118 c.4 Italian Constitution: State, Regions, Metropolitan Cities, Provinces and Municipalities favour the autonomous initiative of citizens, both single and associated, to carry out activities of general interest, on the basis of the principle of subsidiarity.

(Urban) commons:

These are those goods for which citizens take action to guarantee and improve their collective use and share with the administration the responsibility for their stewardship, shared governance or regeneration. They are those goods that, regardless of the title of ownership, are functional to the pursuit and satisfaction of the interests of the community, functional to the exercise of the rights of the person, to the exercise as recalled by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, of the human rights fundamental to individual and collective well-being, to social cohesion and to the life of future generations. Commons can be tangible, intangible and digital. Commons are recognisable in that through their stewardship, regeneration and improvement by voluntary citizens, they generate 'social capital', i.e. cultural and cognitive enrichment, tolerance, relational availability and mutual understanding. The term "urban" implies the territorial context, administered by the municipality, whose boundaries are established by law within which the agreements or "cooperation pacts" (see definition below) signed between the authority and active citizens for the care of the commons are effective.

Tangible commons are, for example: disused or under-utilised public buildings, buildings of historical and artistic value, monuments, parks, gardens, under-utilised classrooms, degraded streets and squares, unused urban areas, woods, streams, quarries and rivers, unused former industrial or craft workshops, railway tollhouses, abandoned road caretakers' houses, water or windmills, brick, coal or lime kilns as evidence of arts and crafts whose memory is in danger of being lost.





Intangible commons are, for example: cultural activities in general, for the promotion of artistic disciplines in all their manifestations, of scientific knowledge, for sustainability and environmental protection, for the promotion of values aimed at the protection of human dignity, for a culture of non-violence and for solidarity between people, for the promotion of intercultural exchanges between peoples, for the promotion of civic purposes and social utility in general, for the strengthening of relations between generations, ethnic groups, cultures, philosophies, religions.

Digital commons:

Include, for example, programmes and applications on the websites of the public administration, the computer network as a place for building knowledge, through shared governance, to encourage the free circulation and dissemination of information and communications also to overcome the digital divide that often exists between generations or for those social classes in more disadvantaged social and/or economic conditions. Think, for example, of frequencies as a common good on a par with water and the air we breathe.

Active citizens:

Active citizens are all those who live in the territory of reference (e.g. the municipality) and who carry out, or propose, initiatives for the stewardship, collaborative governance and regeneration of the commons as volunteers and therefore as individuals, spontaneously and free of charge, either as individuals or through social groups, including those not formally established, and business entities, provided that the activity does not bring direct economic benefits.

Shared governance of a common:

Governing, the act of administering, generally refers, also as it is known by almost all people, to governance by public actors (State, Region, Municipality etc.) through acts and measures (laws, ordinances, regulations, resolutions etc.).

The term "shared" presupposes that governance is the result of choices made by a common agreement between several parties, in this case between the public authority and active citizens. Thus, in this case, the public administration and active citizens find themselves acting and dealing with each other on the same "level", on equal terms, in the absence of any obligation (or debt) or condition of subordination of one to the other.

Subsidiarity:

In the Italian legal system, the principle of (horizontal) subsidiarity is laid down in Article 118 paragraph 4 of the 1948 Republican Constitution. It is based on the possibility that private citizens (both individuals and associations) directly provide stewardship of collective needs and activities of general interest in a subsidiary (not substitute) function to public bodies (State, regions, provinces, metropolitan cities, municipalities) which may however intervene with authorisations and control, planning, promotion, support and coordination activities.



Stewardship, recovery and promotion of the commons:

These are interventions designed to allow or return to the community the use, enjoyment and knowledge of common goods that are the subject of activities carried out freely and spontaneously by active citizens. The activities of recovery, stewardship and promotion will be characterised by maximum inclusiveness and integration without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. (Art.2 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights).

Regulations for stewardship of the commons:

The deed by which the bodies of public administration (State, Regions, Municipalities etc.) of each individual country recognise "the common goods or commons" and regulate the procedures and methods by which citizens can take care of, recover, promote and share the governance of the commons for purposes of general interest in favour of the community.

Collaboration proposal:

This is an expression of interest, formulated by active citizens, aimed at proposing interventions of stewardship, regeneration or shared governance of commons in a manner shared with the administration, provided that these interventions do not configure forms of replacement of essential services that must be guaranteed by the Municipality itself (or in any case by the public body of reference), according to the laws and regulations in force.

The proposal may be submitted spontaneously by citizens or expressed by them following a public notice issued by the Municipality (or other body), indicating the "common goods" that the body proposes to the "citizens" for activities, aims and objectives of general interest in favour of the community.

Collaboration pact or agreement:

The collaboration pact is the agreement by which active citizens, owners, including private ones, of common goods and public bodies define the objectives and general interest generated by the common good, establishing the initiatives and activities of stewardship, collaborative governance and regeneration. The collaboration pact is signed by individuals, either belonging to associations or members of social groups, including informal or entrepreneurial ones, as long as they do not derive any direct economic benefit from signing the agreement and from the activities carried out. It is the deed by which the competent bodies of the public administration agree with active citizens, on an equal basis, on everything that is deemed necessary to establish in order to achieve the activities and objectives set out in the actions on commons.

The pact defines in particular:

- the aims of the proposal;
- the actions or activities, of stewardship, shared governance and recovery;



- the duration of the collaboration (in relation to the type of good, the planned activities and the resources invested);
- the role of the actors involved;
- any limitations, prohibitions and indications for the protection of volunteers and third parties;
- the arrangements for drawing up the conditions and payment of the charges necessary for taking out insurance policies to protect volunteers against accidents, illness and third-party liability;
- the division of responsibilities for the activities carried out by volunteers between the public body and active citizens;
- support, if any, provided by public bodies such as: cooperation of employees, free use of facilities and buildings, payment by the body of utilities (water, electricity, gas, etc.);
- the possible provision of free use by the Public Administration of materials and tools necessary for carrying out the agreed activities;
- penalties for non-compliance with the agreed clauses;
- the manner of publicity and communication of the activities on commoning;
- the possibility of organising events or initiatives for self-financing (crowdfunding) of the activities foreseen in the pact;
- the manner of providing economic **support** for the implementation of the activities of stewardship and promotion of common goods, provided that they are not granted as consideration or return for the activities carried out, since these are spontaneous, individual and free of charge.
- ...any other condition deemed useful, appropriate or necessary;

The Commoning Office:

This is the office that must be set up to implement the regulation or, in any case, to carry out coordination functions between citizens interested in stewardship of the commons and the internal offices of the public body. The Commoning Office is the single point of reference for active citizens to provide information on the methods and procedures for the presentation of projects of shared stewardship and governance, as well as to carry out an initial investigation of the proposals presented to verify their consistency with the provisions of laws and regulations. The Commoning Office will be present in the organisational structure of the public body. Its functions and tasks may also be combined with activities already attributed to another structure.





Training:

Training is a necessary condition to promote knowledge of the new procedures that allow public administration offices and citizens to carry out activities of general interest for the care of "common goods". Training is necessary above all for the employees of public bodies because shared governance, even if implemented with reference to and in compliance with the country's legal system (laws), entails a change in the relationship between public institutions and citizens who are now on an equal footing that would otherwise not allow the same implementation of "shared" governance.

Training and information must therefore involve not only employees, but also administrators, citizens and schools, since through shared governance it is possible to create the basis for improving and revitalising the relationship with public institutions, especially on the part of the new generations.

To this end, the public body will work with school staff to promote the design of cooperation agreements containing the proposals and ideas of students of all levels.

Active citizenship schools:

In February 2021, the website of Labsus (Laboratory For Subsidiarity) stated that the Schools of Citizenship, created in Rome in recent months (and therefore before February 2021, editor's note), are a Labsus initiative with the aim of training citizens willing to commit themselves to the shared governance of the commons through pacts of collaboration.

In order to give substance to the principle laid down by the Italian Constitution in Article 118, paragraph 4 (see the previous definition "Reference Laws", footnote 1), pacts, or collaboration agreements, "have a fundamental role: not only as factors of innovation, but also, if not above all, as "catalysts of relationships", in helping people to rebuild community ties, to produce social cohesion and a sense of belonging, freeing the many energies hidden in our communities. And again: "The Citizenship Schools are aimed at high school students and teachers, inhabitants of the neighbourhoods where they take place, neighbourhood associations and committees, administrators, municipal and town hall officials and in general anyone who has already been active or wants to be active in caring for the commons or in any case wants to explore the issues of shared administration".

URL consulted on 7 April 2022 on: <https://www.labsus.org/2021/02/scuole-di-cittadinanza-per-formare-cittadini-attivi-responsabili-e-solidali/>

*Labsus, the Laboratory for subsidiarity (Italian National Association) has a clear goal, based on a certainty: people do not only hold needs but also capabilities, and it is possible that such capabilities are offered to the community to contribute finding solutions to issues of common interest, in alliance with the government. It was a support partner for Commoning Europe project.





COMMONS

The commons are described by Commons Josaphat (2017) in Brussels (good practice described in the booklet *commoning europe*, find it on [Commoning Europe.eu](http://CommoningEurope.eu)) as following: *“Everywhere in the city people come together to experiment with new ways of community living. Food teams, cohousing projects, self-managed nurseries, community land trusts, community gardens, sustainable neighborhoods, LETS-communities, energy cooperatives, groups of people that consider alternatives and work on various themes such as water management, food production, money, labor, or software.*

At first sight, these themes seem rather disconnected from each other, but we feel there is a connection. [...]

These initiatives are developing alongside the market. They emphasize use rather than ownership, common ownership and sharing rather than individual property.

They try to handle the limited resources of our planet with care, rather than assuming unlimited growth. They favor more solidarity to further polarization. They sometimes depend on the state, but develop in parallel, because they attach great importance to self-governance.

Doing this they do not go against policy, but work together with it and deepen it.

We see the connections. We feel the potential. We see how the contours of a new society are being drawn. For about every area of daily life people, today are working on concrete alternatives. What if we succeeded in bringing all these alternatives together? Wouldn't that strengthen our community potential to a significant extent? What if we would think together about how the city can be developed based on these principles?”

The notion of the commons can be understood in many ways. Many commoners prefer to stay away from a too rigid definition, yet looking at the literature and practice the concept of the commons can be described as the combination of three key elements:

(1) a common resource

that can be tangible like land, water, and food or immaterial like knowledge and clean air. These non-commodified means are our collective wealth that concern us all –including future generations- and that thus require protection and know-how.





(2) commoners or communities

that are involved in the production and reproduction of the common resources. The commons entails self-organized systems and relations that go beyond the conventional recognized public and private actors.

(3) a commoning practice

the institutions, rules that are involved in a new mode of (re)production. This underlying commons process emerges from another logic and generates (relational) values that are often taken for granted. To prevent these from being jeopardized, the generative nature of commoning takes first place. This commoning is recognized as a core element of the commons as it emphasizes their bio-political (re)production. In the words of Peter Linebaugh, “there is no commons without commoning” (Bollier, 2014, p. 19).

The commons is about a pooled resource –the what (1)- as well as about the how (3) it is taken care of and by whom (2). Commons scholar David Bollier (2014) demonstrates the integrated relations and interdependence of these three aspects of the commons.

The commons movement

In addition to this threefold definition, the commons also stands for a movement. Seeing the commons and actions of commoning as a world view; the commons also stand as a political movement, which promises a transition to move away from the market-state dichotomy.

Text from doctorate Van Reusel, H., Pak, B., & Boutsen, D. (2019). The Commons Architect. e: Altering Urban Architectural Design in Brussels, Double Degree Phd KU Leuven/Faculteit Architectuur and Politecnico di Torino/DAD.





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