

# Tools for the Generative Commons

Practices, processes and design

Edited by Patrizia Di Monte and Verena Lenna

Purpose of this book, by describing the practices and by referring to pre-existing expertise, is to valorise and acknowledge the processes of sharing and the accumulation of knowledge and elements that through the years and the experiences of the gE.CO's partners, project after project, lead to these tools, which in their turn will hopefully generate further evolutions. The book is therefore meant to address not only practitioners and communities looking to better understand the tools and their origins, but also students and designers willing to learn about the challenges and innovations the design of these tools dealt with, to support commoning and collaborative practices more in general. The book is therefore meant to address not only practitioners and communities looking to better understand the tools and their origins, but also students and designers willing to learn about the challenges and innovations the design of these tools dealt with, to support commoning and collaborative practices more in general.

The realisation of the four toolkits was one of the objectives of the H2020 European project Generative Commons Living Lab (2019-2022). The expression generative commons was introduced to highlight the capacity of commoning practices not only to preserve existing resources but also to generate new ones. Purpose of gE.CO was precisely to empower the generative commons on several levels, based on the diverse expertise of the involved partners. The Department of Law of the University of Torino, coordinator of the project, is internationally renowned for their research and engaged projects concerning cooperative practices and commons oriented initiatives. Open Lab Athens is a non-for-profit organisation, a design initiative of researchers and practitioners who engage in spaces of "social innovation", working with social movements, social solidarity economy and commoning initiatives to conceive social and technical systems that sustain and reproduce horizontality, and radical democratic participation. Patrizia Di Monte, architect, creator in collaboration with Ignacio Grávalosof of two experimental programs, "Estonoesunsolar" and the "Temporary Use Office" pilot case, has developed experience in the implementation of urban regeneration projects, programs and policies in areas with a high level of urban and social degradation. The Community Land Trust of Brussels, as part of their empowering and innovative approach to ownership has developed a well-recognised expertise in horizontal forms of governance. This book focuses on the toolkits designed by four partners of the project to address four different though intertwined aspects of the life of the generative commons. Each toolkit is described in a dedicated section, curated by the their authors, explaining the specific methodologies and implementation processes.

Edited by Patrizia Di Monte and Verena Lenna

## Tools for the Generative Commons

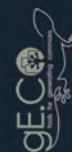
Practices, processes and design



This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under Grant agreement n° 822766

Generative Commons House  
www.generative-commons.eu

This book is licensed under a Creative Commons Licence CC BY-NC-ND 4.0



## Tools for the Generative Commons Practices, Processes, and Design

**Editors:** Patrizia Di Monte and Verena Lenna

**Authors:** Patrizia Di Monte, Yannis Efthymiou, Verena Lenna, Vily Mylona, Alessandra Quarta, Antonio Vercellone, Giannis Zgeras

**Design:** Patrizia Di Monte, Verena Lenna, Giannis Zgeras

**Cover Image:** Patrizia Di Monte

**Printer:** INO – Reproducciones, Zaragoza, Spain

**Publisher:** Generative Commons House, Saint Gilles - Sint Gillis, Belgium, 2022

**ISBN:** 978-2-9602994-0-3

**Web:** <https://generative-commons.eu>



This book is licensed under a Creative Commons Licence CC BY-NC-ND 4.0

A PDF of this book can be downloaded at: <https://generative-commons.eu>



Horizon2020  
European Union Funding  
for Research & Innovation

This publication has been realised in the framework of the Generative Commons Living Lab project. The project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No. 822766.

## Acknowledgements

This book was realised in the framework of the H2020 project Generative Commons Living Lab (2019-2022)

It is one drop in the ocean of the commons and their movement across the world and the result of the accumulation of knowledge, capacities and engagement of all the involved partners:

Università degli Studi di Torino, Newcastle University, Spazi Indecisi, Eutropian, Universitat de Barcelona, Open Lab Athens, Patrizia Di Monte, Community Land Trust Brussel-Bruxelles.

To retrace all the paths and experiences that converge in these pages would be a fascinating but impossible task.

Therefore, our recognition goes first to the multitude of collectives, community-based organisations and administrations that contributed to generating the tools and reflections presented in this book. Not only those formally involved in the gE.CO project but also those that sustained our efforts and fuelled our interest in the commons on other occasions - before or during this project.

Furthermore, we are grateful to all the citizens and individuals that participated in our activities or contributed to their organisation by sharing their curiosity or offering their support, with or without affiliation.

A special acknowledgement goes to the European Commission that allowed us to join our capacities and aspirations across Europe during three intensive years of co-creation and conversations around empowering and sustainable approaches to managing the resources of our living environments and the Planet.

We are deeply grateful to all our partners and colleagues, daily companions of this travel: without their help and passion, the gE.CO project and this book would not exist.

Last but not least, we warmly thank Alessandra Quarta, who coordinated the consortium until the birth of Ada.

The authors and editors of this book

# Table of contents

## Introduction

09	Do we need more tools?
10	gE.CO as a research and participatory design framework

## Section 01 | Temporary Use Toolkit

### Background

25	Goals
28	Methodology

### TOOL 1 - Learning from innovative best practices

34	Case studies: selection, interviews and analysis
36	Analytic method
37	Gravalosdimonte experiences, Estonoesunsolar, OUT
46	European Case Studies, Zinneke, Les Grands Voisins

### TOOL 2 - Six steps strategy to reactivate empty spaces

70	General model
76	Urban and space factors
77	Indicators

### TOOL 3 - Temporary Use Office

85	Temporary Use Office
----	----------------------

### 87 References

## Section 02 | Legal Toolkit

### Background

94	Methodology
95	Introducing the tools

### TOOL 1 - Enactments of urban commons: legal guidelines for municipalities

	<b>A</b>
103	Analysis of the regulatory framework: identification of the legal challenges
104	Public procedures in theory and praxis
106	Guidelines for municipalities and EU bottlenecks
109	Reimburses and State aid
	<b>B</b>
111	Analysis of the regulatory framework
111	Public procedures in theory and praxis

### TOOL 2 - gE.CO Legal Q&A

116	Questions
118	Answers

## Section 03 | Governance Toolkit

	<b>Background</b>	
159	Defining governance	
162	Designing processes with/for the generative commons	
163	Design methodology and phases	
169	Introducing the tools	
	<b>TOOL 1 - Mirroring</b>	
174	Overview and Purpose	
176	The conditions of governance	
178	Challenges and opportunities of coaching and the digital environment	
184	Suggested readings	
	<b>TOOL 2 - Commons and Dragons</b>	
188	Overview and purpose	
190	Role-playing for complexity	
192	Commons, dragons and the legal expertise	
198	Suggested readings	
	<b>TOOL 3 - Space Matters</b>	
202	Overview and purpose	
204	Space, rights and responsibilities	
206	Reframing competencies and design as a facilitation process	
212	Suggested readings	

## Section 04 | Participatory Toolkit

220	<b>Background</b>	
	<b>TOOL 1 - Participatory model</b>	
225	Introduction	
	Methodology	
229	Theoretical sensitivity	
235	Research approach	
	The participatory model: a strategy	
244	Initial core concepts	
247	Aspects of a strategy for participation	
254	Concluding thoughts	
257	Appendix	
	<b>TOOL 2 - Game Design Machine</b>	
263	Introduction	
267	The “Game Design Machine” methodology	
271	Conduct research and broaden your perspectives	
278	Organise your brainstorming and delve into what you want to achieve	
284	Prototype and pilot test	
289	Concluding thoughts	
	<b>TOOL3 - Collective emotional mapping</b>	
295	A guide to implement collective mapping activities	
298	Means of collective mapping	
303	Getting started	
307	Implementing collective mapping	
314	Concluding thoughts and possible limitations	
317	<b>References</b>	

## **Do we need more tools?**

The realisation of four toolkits was one of the objectives of the 2019–2022 H2020 European project Generative Commons Living Lab (gE.CO). The current proliferation of tools and platforms created in recent years to allegedly serve the commons, the citizens, the bottom-up initiatives, the co-creation of the city (and many other cooperative processes that tend to be very similar despite the large variety of names) invite us to question their efficacy. Do we need more tools and platforms? The answer is neither simple nor clear. It would be tempting to say no, because a quick search of the web easily reveals the many tools that already exist and the unavoidable similarities. Additionally, we surprisingly do not have sufficient or reliable information about the actual number of users. It is even more difficult to know if these tools and platforms are effective and ultimately manage to benefit the collectives and organisations that use them, not to mention whether they continue to be used beyond the end of the project that created them. Alternatively, it is tempting to say yes, because the processes and relations triggered and fuelled during the making of the tools, and subsequently during their use, are probably more important than the results they are meant to deliver. And while from a quantitative point of view any assessment of the performances may be disappointing, on a qualitative level, the lessons we learned through those processes about contributing to the evolution of our society are invaluable and necessary. What we experienced as partners of an EU-funded project during the process of designing the tools and implementing them in collaboration with organisations and collectives across Europe was the privilege of giving back and contributing to the ongoing movement of the commons.

The purpose of this book, by describing the practices and by referring to pre-existing expertise, is to valorise and acknowledge the processes of sharing and accumulating knowledge and elements that through the years and the experiences of the gE.CO's partners, project after project, lead to these tools. We hope that the tools will generate further evolutions in turn. This book, therefore, is meant to address not only practitioners and communities looking to better understand the tools and their origins, but also students and designers willing to learn about the challenges and innovations that led to the design of these tools, to support commoning and collaborative practices further. From a societal perspective, the narrative we provide is a testimony of the current evolution of the commoning processes and of design as the transdisciplinary practice

addressing the complex dynamics that bind communities to their environments through the sustainable utilisation of resources.

As a permanent and accessible resource, this book is also meant to complete the dissemination activities limited by the pandemic. Unfortunately, COVID-19 did not allow us to perform many of the in-person activities that would have contributed substantially to promoting and further explaining the use of the tools. To reach a larger audience, even after the end of the project, this book will be distributed to libraries, public administrations, and community centres across Europe, to sustain the generativity of the commons and future design contributions.

### **gE.CO as a research and participatory design framework**

gE.CO chose the expression generative commons to highlight the capacity of commoning practices, not only to preserve existing resources but also to generate new ones. The purpose of gE.CO was to empower the generative commons on several levels, based on the diverse expertise of the involved partners. The Department of Law of the University of Turin, coordinator of the project, is internationally renowned for its research and engaged projects concerning cooperative practices and commons-oriented initiatives. The research group in socio-economic ethics and the epistemology of social sciences of the University of Barcelona is a leading research group in socio-economic ethics and in political–institutional analysis. Open Lab Athens is a non-for-profit design initiative of researchers and practitioners who engage in spaces of “social innovation,” working with social movements, social solidarity economy, and commoning initiatives to conceive social and technical systems that sustain and reproduce horizontality, and radical democratic participation. Newcastle University provides leading experts in human–computer research, social computing, and digitally enabled models of citizen participation. Spazi Indecisi is an Italian cultural association experimenting with new processes on the issue of abandonment, specifically, its management and its relationship with citizens. Eutroplan is a research, policy, and advocacy organisation working with NGOs, community groups, municipalities, and EU institutions to develop services, policies, and organisational models within local and international ecosystems. Patrizia Di Monte—architect, and creator in collaboration with Ignacio Grávalos of two experimental programs, Estonoesunsolar and the Temporary Use Office pilot case—has

developed extensive experience in the implementation of urban regeneration projects, programmes, and policies in areas with high levels of urban and social degradation. The Community Land Trust of Brussels, as part of their empowering and innovative approach to ownership, has developed a well-recognised expertise in horizontal forms of governance.

During the first half of the project, we conceived a survey to learn about the origins, lives, and challenges of commoning initiatives across Europe, addressing both those initiated by citizens and those promoted by public administrations. This allowed us to build a database of over 250 cases and make them available through a platform for social interaction based on the FirstLife model implemented by the University of Turin<sup>1</sup>. Relying on the knowledge and network built during this first phase, we aimed the second phase at reinforcing the collaboration with the commoning initiatives at local and European levels and creating a diverse range of tools to reinforce their visibility and support their activities.

We identified a Museum<sup>2</sup> of the generative commons, a toolbox<sup>3</sup>, and four toolkits as the outputs we wanted to deliver by the end of the project. All of them would be accessible via the project’s website. This book focuses on the toolkits designed by four project partners to address four different intertwined aspects of the life of the generative commons. Each toolkit is described in a dedicated section, curated by their authors, which explains the specific methodologies and implementation processes.

The toolkit for temporary reuse of empty spaces, developed by Patrizia Di Monte, is presented in Section One. It is based on the observation of the current city planning, which presents an inherent dyschrony between the Urban Planning and the urban transformation processes, generating a wide variety of unresolved issues, as shown by the many urban voids producing scars in the urban fabric. For this instance, as architects, we have perceived the necessity of designing new tools to allow more

---

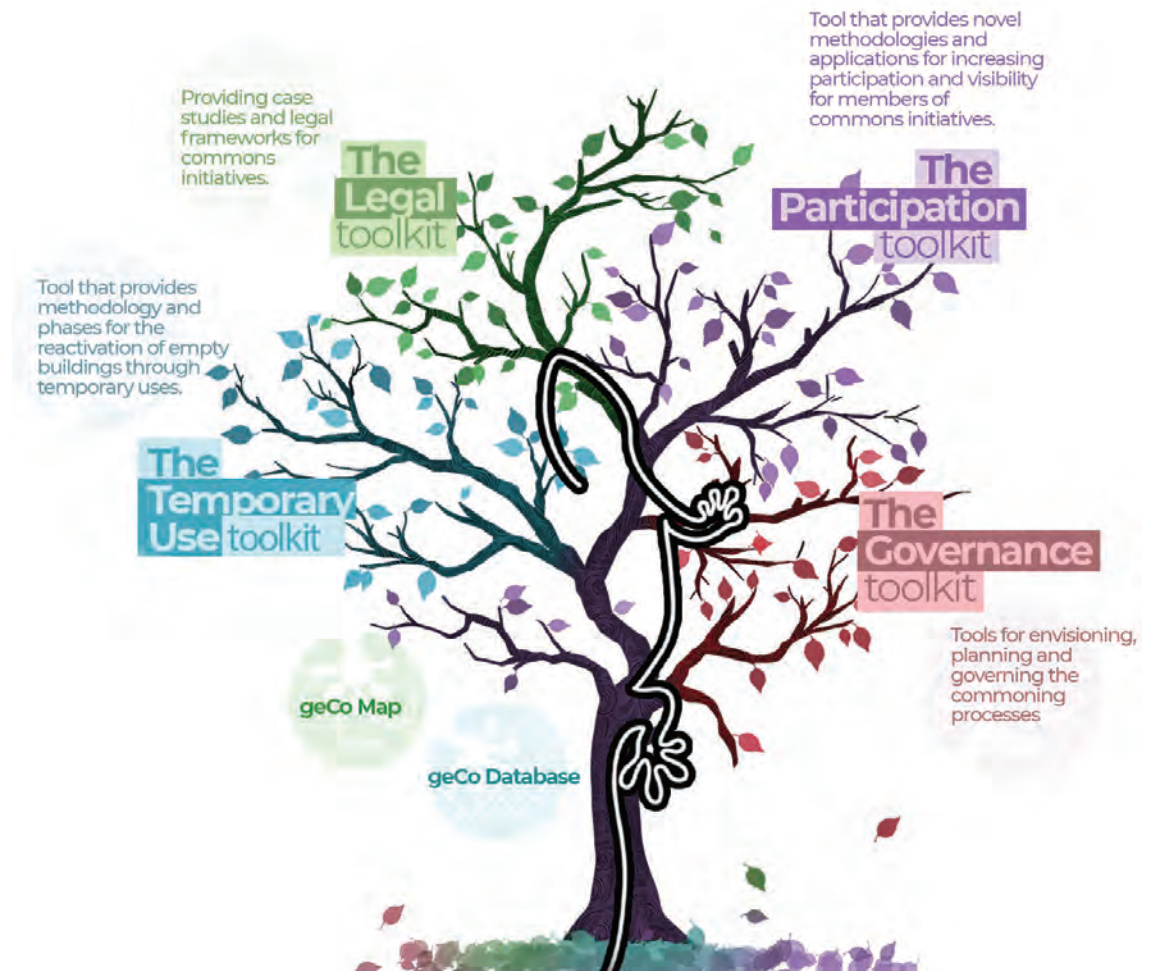
1 The results of the surveys are published and accessible on the gE.CO’s website as one of the project’s deliverables, Deliverable D3.6 – gE.CO Surveys.

2 The gE.CO Museum collects, connects and describes, through three thematic itineraries, the spread of generative commons throughout Europe, inspiring new experiences of regeneration of urban voids.

3 The gE.CO toolbox is a collection of software services that allow communities to take advantage of free to use technologies.

dynamic answers to the meanwhile. The Generative Commons project has provided the opportunity for a common research focused on the resolution of these problems. By designing a temporary re-use toolkit as part of a set of tools established by the program, we have focused in an exhaustive way on those specific aspects related to the space and its beneficial effects of urban regeneration on urban surroundings. The toolkit creates a sequence for the analysis of factors that allows assessment of all those aspects (urban, legal, constructive, environmental, economic, etc.) that condition the immersion of the building into a new life cycle.

The Temporary Use Toolkit offers a methodology that allows a global vision of all those necessary processes for the reuse of abandoned buildings, developing a deeper understanding of those aspects related to the space and assessing all the different parameters that allow the reactivation of urban voids. It will facilitate, both to Public Administrations and to citizens, flexible dynamics that will allow the activation of mechanisms to reincorporate disused spaces and vacant lands into a second cycle of life. We defined a methodology of “temporal sequencing” of the processes, divided into six blocks. This methodology will allow us to respond to the citizens demands through calls, implementing innovative models of cession of use as well as alternative forms of management. The Temporary Use Toolkit has a double ambition: on the one hand, it shows a global vision of all those factors that intervene in a process for the reuse of abandoned buildings, from the empty space- mapping process and existing citizens’ demands, to issues related to governance, legal frameworks, or the monitoring of the management. On the other hand, it affects in a more exhaustive way those specific processes of the space usage, creating a sequence of analysis of factors that would allow the assessment of all those aspects (normative, constructive, accessibility, environmental, economic, inclusivity etc.) that place conditions on the immersion of the building into a new life cycle. Finally, it offers a method for analysing significant case studies, including those for which the learning process has been extrapolated from the experience of successful temporal uses pilot cases developed by Gravalosdimonte, as well as those that have been selected as innovative European cases among community-based of citizens’ initiatives, institutionalized initiatives, and urban policies. It has been organized sequentially and scaled, comprising factors about the urban contexts, the architectural spaces, the types of initiatives, the activities implemented, the types of cession, and the management models.



The tree that gives access to the toolkits on gE.CO's web page. Photo credit: Eutopian.

The University of Turin worked on a Legal Toolkit, presented in Section Two. The legal issues related to the commons are often very complex. Indeed, the commons tend to undermine the logic at the core of the private and public law architecture, thus calling for new lenses to see and use the law in a transformative and empowering way.

In particular, gE.CO survey revealed that both communities and public administrations usually consider the legal aspects the primary hurdle when implementing an experience/policy of urban commoning.

Communities have to deal with questions such as: how to implement the organisation's governance? What are the legal options at hand? Which model of stewardship should be used (or proposed to the public counterpart) in the management of the space to respect the principles of the commons? For public administrations, the problems are symmetrically related to issues such as: how to carry out the direct attribution of the management of public goods or services to non-profit entities without the organisation of a competitive selection? How can the management of public goods or services be attributed to informal communities, namely groups of persons not incorporated in specific legal vests?

Together with the survey results, these issues have been the subject of long and comprehensive confrontation within the consortium and constituted the focus of a public debate held online on March 2021. These discussions led to an architecture of the legal toolkit composed of two different parts, mirroring the two main stakeholders it aims at reaching: communities and public administrations.

The first part is a Q&A. The Q&A is structured as a list of questions, which derives from the main questions that emerged in the gE.CO survey and a list of entries. One or more entries are indicated for each question, which crossed reading constructs the answer.

The second part of the toolkit is composed of a legal brief meant for public administrations willing to engage in projects of urban commoning. The legal brief deals with the issues mentioned above and focuses on EU law as the general framework shaping all the legal systems of the European Union concerning the issues at stake. This allowed us to design guidelines for all public administrations, independently from their country of operation. The legal toolkit will be accessible as both: an autonomous toolkit and an integration of other two toolkits: the Governance Toolkit and Temporary Uses Toolkit.

The Community Land Trust of Brussels developed the Governance Toolkit presented in Section Three. Governance is probably one of the most fluid, transversal, and crucial domains of activity that commons—as well as many other organisations—must deal with. Commoning practices suggest a holistic and ecological understanding of governance, given the symbiotic relationships binding the practices of commoners to their common pools of resources and, therefore, often to their living environments. As confirmed by gE.CO's surveys, the practices relying on those resources, including the decisional ones, must deal with very concrete aspects, such as the accessibility of spaces, whether a built or unbuilt site is the object of commoning, the number of commoners taking care of and using a given resource, the time they can dedicate, the available financial resources, and the relationship with the local communities and the public administration. All these aspects and many more have an impact on the decisional structures and systems a given commoning initiative may adopt. Particularly in the case of the commons, communities need their common pools of resources as much as those resources need someone to take care of them. Such a holistic understanding of governance, embedded and shaped by the unique conditions within which a given organisation operates, implies its high specificity. Governance systems are the result of the unique combination of capacities and needs, and spatial and contextual characteristics that allow a commoning initiative to emerge and thrive.

Given such a perspective, rather than providing ready-made models, the Governance Toolkit is meant to support commoning practices with methodologies and processes allowing a holistic exploration of the conditions within which their governance systems are supposed to operate. A coaching system called Mirroring will guide initiative creators through the process of envisioning their future and mapping the capacities and actions required to realise it. Space Matters, a spatial modelling methodology, will assist those who deal with the physical conditions of the environments where commoning practices happen, especially when these are a substantial challenge to the organisation of their activities. Commons and Dragons exploits a role-playing game's simulation capacity to explore the advantages and limitations of different governance models and to increase the awareness of rights and responsibilities related to the use and stewardship of common pools of resources.

Finally, in Section Four, Open Lab Athens presents a Toolkit for Participation that mostly applies to communities of citizens, activists in communities with intrinsic needs



that deal with discrimination issues, NGO members who work on gender equality, and activists who have an anti-sexist and anti-racist agenda. The tools in this toolkit can also be used by people who work in public initiatives and are public servants or policy makers who want to foster participation and help with community building within their area of responsibility. The toolkit was created by employing a bottom-up research approach that tries to bring people actively involved in citizen communities to the foreground. With this approach we tried to leverage emotional elevation and promote collective reflection on conflict resolution, community building, and collective empowerment. The toolkit consists of two distinctive tools plus a strategic model for participation within commons communities. The participation model tries to unify and give shape to bottom-up proposals from activists and public servants that could be employed in order to enhance the experience of participation and widen its spectrum. Game design machine is a methodological description of game creation that allows communities and interested users to construct their own ad hoc games as a means for co-creation, self-education, and conflict management. Collective emotional mapping is a methodological take on safe-space co-creation and reflection derived from work with communities that deal with discrimination and walk the thin line of exclusion.

One final note concerns the design of the website as the interface through which the toolkits are accessible to the public. While creating the different toolkits, we soon realised how the four addressed domains are in fact deeply interconnected. This realisation suggests that tools could be used in complement. We therefore decided it would be important to provide users of the gE.CO's website with an overall view of the toolkits. During the project's weekly meetings, we discussed and evaluated which image could best express the interrelationships amongst the four toolkits, and a tree emerged as an interesting option. As branches of the same tree, the four toolkits are the results of a common project, rooted in pre-existing practices and expertise and aimed at enhancing the generative commons. Each branch will enable further bifurcations, with the distinctive tools presented in the webpage of each toolkit, and with specific links suggesting other related tools or best practices. Our goal is to make the tree grow. While recognising the generative capacity of commoning initiatives, we invite users to recombine and reinvent the possibilities offered by the toolkits, thus contributing to the ongoing transformation and adaptation of the tools and technologies required for their practices.

SECTION [01]

TEMPORARY USE  
TOOLKIT

Patrizia Di Monte

## BACKGROUND

Goals

Methodology

[TOOL 1] LEARNING FROM INNOVATIVE BEST PRACTICES  
Case studies: Selection, interviews, analysis  
Analytic method  
Gravalosdimonte experience: Estonoesunsolar, OUT  
European Case Studies: Zinneke, Les Grands Voisins

[TOOL 2] SIX-STEP STRATEGY TO REACTIVATE EMPTY SPACES

General Model

Urban and Space Factors

Indicators

[TOOL 3] TEMPORARY USE OFFICE

Temporary use office

REFERENCES

# BACKGROUND

---

Goals

Methodology

The current city planning presents an inherent dyschrony between the Urban Planning and the process, producing a wide variety of unresolved issues, as shown by the many urban voids spread in the urban fabric. The consideration of temporary use involves a conversation about the need to privilege an urban ecology within cities, where resources are optimised by introducing abandoned spaces into renewed life cycles. Reusing abandoned buildings – of reconstructing and renaturalising instead of constructing and urbanising – is no longer just an option, but a necessity.

The modern, contemporary city has rediscovered the value of the unfinished. From a sociological point of view, indeterminate spaces highlight the transformative capacity of modern citizens. This is what Certeau (2007) called the 'pedestrian rhetoric', which initially did nothing more than allow citizens to reprogram their cities through logics the system did not foresee, but which ultimately allowed multiple interactions between the 'urbs' (the physical structure of the city) and the 'civitas' (the way society wants to live in it).

Similarly, this approach allows us to rebalance systems of urban space. By adopting Lefebvre's analysis, these systems can be articulated in three dimensions, the perceived space, the conceived space, and the lived space – each linked respectively to the physical, mental, and social dimensions (Lefebvre, 2013).

This classification establishes the great divergences in spatial production and underlines the abyss that is very often established between the planners and inhabitants of a city. Temporality, in this sense, allows citizens a certain appropriation and subjectivisation of space, which can no longer be considered in an abstract or imposed way.

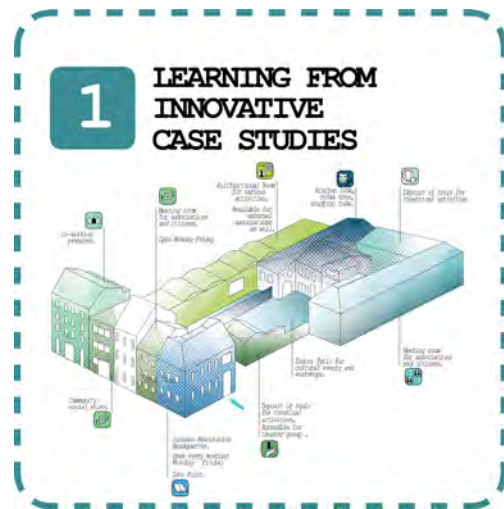
## GOALS

The temporary use toolkit (TUT) will facilitate the creation of flexible dynamics for both public administration and citizens that will allow activating mechanisms to reincorporate disused spaces into a new useful life cycle.

To this end, the following goals have been established:

- **Provide Methodologies and Techniques.** The objective of the TUT is to establish a methodology that offers a global vision for necessary processes for the temporary reuse of abandoned buildings. The toolkit will specifically develop those aspects related to abandoned spaces by assessing the different parameters that allow for their reactivation.
- **Define processes and phases related to the space reactivation.** The goal is to develop specifically those processes related to space and those circumstances necessary to assess the different parameters that allow for analysing their viability for adaptive reuse and implementation.
- **Facilitate the ordering of case studies that can stage the processes addressed.**
- **Promote Offices of Temporary Uses (OTUs).** OTUs will manage all procedures facilitating the creation of flexible dynamics between public administration and citizens to allow for activating mechanisms to reincorporate disused spaces into a new useful life cycle.

This section covers the tools offered to help understand the phenomenon of temporary uses and guide implementation processes in abandoned buildings. These tools offer a method to assess the priority of interventions in abandoned spaces according to urban, social, and environmental impacts.



The 3 tools

Three specific tools are proposed:

- **Learning from Innovative Best Practices**
- **Six-Step Strategy to Reactivate Empty Spaces**
- **OTUs**

The first tool, Learning from Innovative Best Practices, establishes an analytical method to approach case studies and create an approach sequence of urban and spatial characteristics. This method has been used and tested in the Best Practices study and can be replicated for other future studies.

The second tool, Six-Step Strategy to Reactivate Empty Spaces, proposes a methodological model, although each step constitutes a tool in itself. This strategy covers the complexity of the numerous issues inherent in abandoned buildings and aims to bring them together in phases and processes to facilitate their resolution.

These issues have been grouped into six steps: offer, demand, assignment, funds, implementation, and assessment. Each step has been divided into diffe-

rent subgroups that categorise and prioritise the networks of stakeholders and processes involved.

The issues related to the urban context and space have been studied through a series of indicators that can configure the degree of ease or difficulty in reusing a building. This model, which includes urban, geographic, property, maintenance, usability, and accessibility issues, makes it possible to identify the impact of interventions and can be used to establish the degree of intervention priority.

Finally, the third tool, OTU, proposes a management model that uses a front office to facilitate the relationship between citizens and the local administration for reactivating abandoned buildings through temporary uses. This office is considered to be of vital importance to include reactivation activities in a systematised process because, currently, many of the activities are developed through self-managed initiatives and without a clear legal framework. Therefore, they face a high degree of precariousness.

Each of these tools allows for a different approach, such as analysis, methodology, and management. These tools facilitate decision-making by both citizens and public administration. Each tool examines the problem of temporary use from a different perspective and offers an analytical and methodological guide for both citizens and the public administration.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The research process was conducted according to a sequence of stages that began with the definition of objectives, the study and analysis of successful cases, the extrapolation of a methodology, and the elaboration of a set of steps to facilitate the entry of abandoned buildings into a new life cycle.

The toolkit has a double ambition. On the one hand, it shows a global vision of all those factors that intervene in a process of reuse of abandoned buildings, from the detection of spaces and the channeling of demand, to issues related to governance, legal frameworks or the monitoring of the practices. On the other hand, it affects in a more exhaustive way those specific processes of the space, creating a sequence of analysis of factors that allow assessing all those aspects (normative, constructive, environmental, economic, etc.) that condition the immersion of the building in a new Lifecycle.

For this, a methodology has been created that is based on a temporal sequencing of the processes, divided into 6 blocks: Offer, Demand, Award, Financing, Implementation and Valuation. Despite its global nature, the methodology allows each of the sections to be used independently

These steps were arranged chronologically, and the numerous processes were thematically grouped (e.g. urban, financial, legal, and management). This guide proposes a concrete methodology to approach these processes, concentrated in six fundamental steps that relay the crucial stages for reactivating abandoned buildings. Finally, a support structure was provided that can help citizens find

their way through this immense complexity of processes. This is where the need for OTUs becomes evident.

The methodological conclusions were tested in workshops and conducted with public administration and citizens associations as a pilot project to verify the effectiveness of the tools and to introduce, if necessary, the appropriate corrections or modifications. The exploration of numerous European cases was fundamental in establishing all the possible variables to consider in the implementation of this type of use and the implementation of an analytical logic. These experiences led to the rationalisation of a guide that gathers in specific blocks the different steps.

The study of successful cases was considered to extrapolate the conditions under which temporary use introduces an abandoned building into a new life cycle. We have chosen cases in which temporary use was fundamental to reactivating spaces both outdoors (plots, vacant lands) and indoors (buildings).

TOOL 01  
LEARNING FROM  
BEST PRACTICES

---

Case studies: Selection and analysis

Analytic method

Gravalosdimonte experiences:

Estonoesunsolar, OUT

European case studies:

Zinneke, Les Grands Voisins

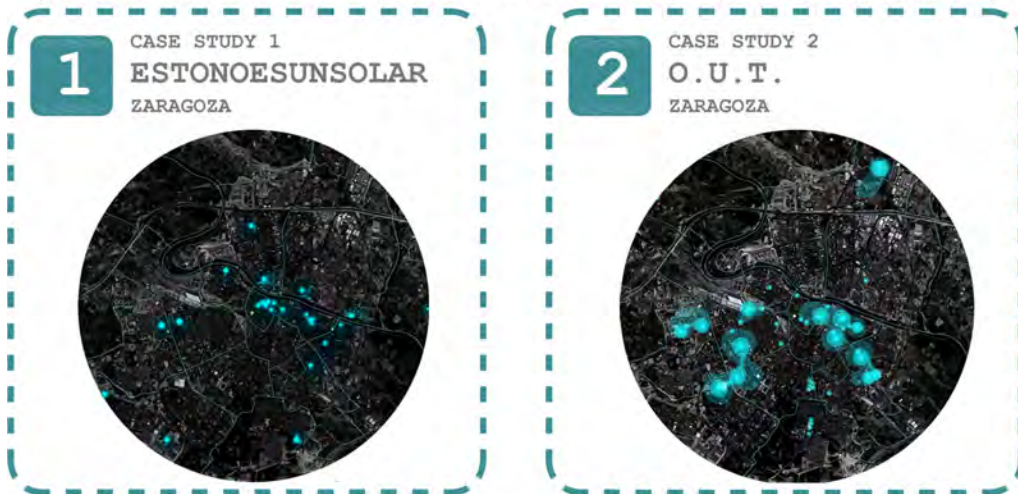


The selected cases were divided into successful professional experiences implemented in Zaragoza by Project Partner Patrizia Di Monte, with Ignacio Grávalos as co-author. Other European experiences were analysed through the gE.CO. research.

The first two cases were chosen because of the exhaustive knowledge of the author; through them, she developed a methodological process for reoccupying abandoned spaces through temporary uses, as stated in the initial grant agreement of gE.CO.

These programs include the elaboration of a specific methodology, the development and execution of projects, and further management of cultural and social activities. It introduces the Technical OTUs “Estonoesunsolar” (ThisIsNotAnEmptyPlot) for the management of temporary uses in abandoned public and private empty plots in Zaragoza from 2009 to 2012.

[THE PROCESS OF GRAVALOSDIMONTE TEMPORARY USES SUCCESS EXPERIENCES IS FLEXIBLY ADAPTABLE FOR URBAN VOIDS REACTIVATION]

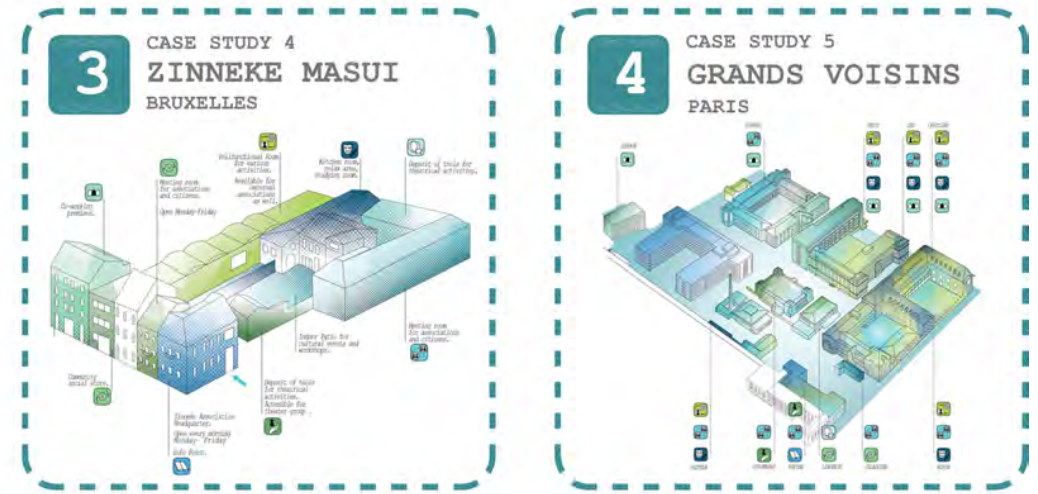


[FROM CITIZENS INITIATIVE TO INSTITUTIONALIZED INITIATIVE TO URBAN POLICY]

[FROM URBAN POLICY TO CITIZENS INITIATIVE]

Selected Gravalosdimonte best practices

The final two cases respond to the desire to confront different points of view and methodologies. The first, the Zinneke Masui (Brussels), is managed by an association in charge of developing various activities (festivals, workshops, etc.). The second, Les Grands Voisins (Paris), operates on a much larger scale, comprising several buildings and involving several associations under its management. All of them aim to not only respond to a building's abandonment but also actively participate in the urban and social regeneration of the environment.



[CITIZENS INITIATIVE]

[CITIZENS INITIATIVE + INSTITUTIONALIZED INITIATIVE]

Selected European best practice map

## CASE STUDIES: SELECTION, INTERVIEWS, AND ANALYSIS

The initial database of abandoned buildings that were reactivated through public policies or bottom-up processes comprised almost 100 cases from Italy, Spain, France, Germany, England, the Netherlands, Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Latvia, and Malta. Each was integrated into a common database in gE.CO before finally being made available on the Generative Commons map, with an open access system to facilitate consultation on the website.

A survey was prepared to systematically structure the typology and characteristics of the spaces, including their ownership, assignment models, legal forms, management, activities and services, assignment times, and financing forms. An interview was conducted among the different partners to obtain specific information on key issues and to understand the reactivation of abandoned spaces by grouping them by thematic areas.

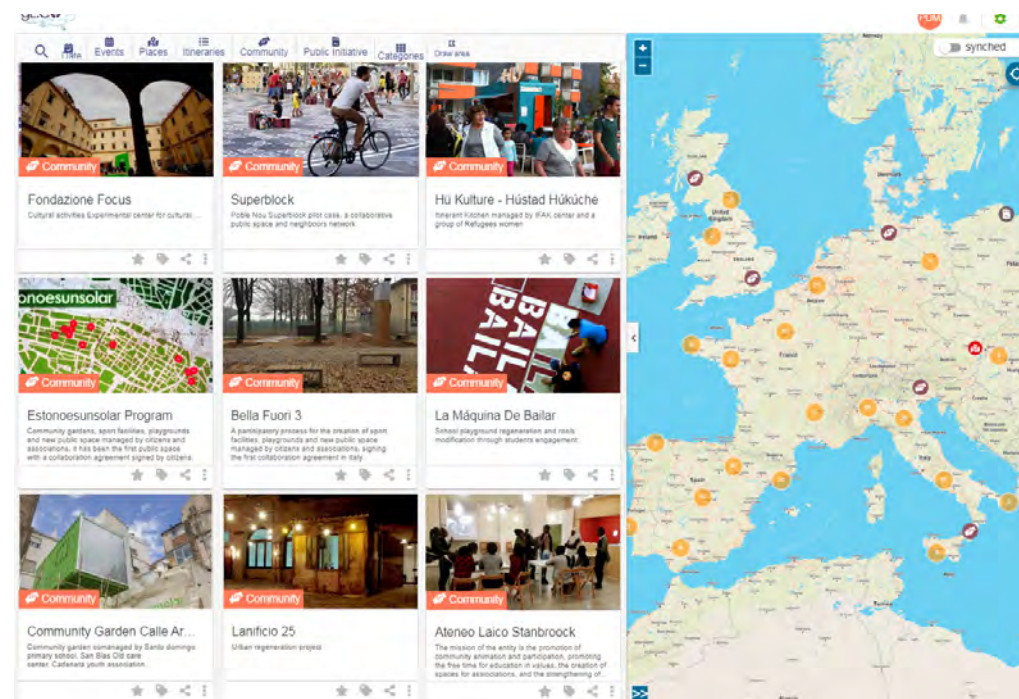


Selected European best practices map

Five themes were selected for a dipper analysis based on the following categories: (1) community of citizens; (2) community of citizens + institutionalised initiative; and (3) urban policy, evaluated and analysed in further detail.

The selection of cases was distributed across the following thematic areas:

- Culture & Arts
- Politics, Ecology
- Sport & Leisure
- Technology
- Social centre
- Welfare
- Tourism
- Employment & Enterprise
- Housing
- Education, Production.



Cases representation. Populating gE.CO. map

These, in turn, were categorized into 4 different typologies:

- Community of citizens
- Institutionalized Initiative
- Community of citizens + Institutionalized Initiative
- Urban Policy

## **ANALYTICAL METHOD**

This section addresses the first of the tools, consisting of the implementation of a learning method based on analysing innovative case studies. On the one hand, this allows for an in-depth analysis of case studies chosen for their special interest. On the other hand, this establishes a learning model for future studies in which the necessary data for their implementation and a graphic model for their communication and dissemination are collected.

The model is supported by a graphic structure to help universalise its contents through icons, infographics, or visual narratives. As McLuhan (2009) stated, the very way of representing reality transforms it. The aim here is to clarify information and make it intelligible to most of the population; this is evidenced by the frequent adoption of intuitive graphic systems by mass media.

The model comprises several sections:

- The urban situation (fabric and weft): This reflects the situation of the space within the city and specifies the type of urban fabric in which it is inserted.
- The city of 15 minutes; public services of proximity: This establishes two areas of influence that can be covered within 15 minutes for both adults and elderly individuals. The parameters reflect existing public services as well as connectivity by public transport. This approach, experimented with very recently in large cities such as Paris, participates in the Jacobsian sensibility of reactivating urban life. It is fundamental, therefore, to ensure

urban activity to charge the relational system of the neighbourhood. This, as Jacobs (2011) argues, has a direct reflection on the safety of boroughs.

- Construction features: Data such as ownership, surface area, years in disuse, architectural typology, and previous use are specified.
- Temporary uses: This reflects the type of temporary use implemented and the various activities conducted subsequently.
- Implementation processes: This explains the reactivation processes that, through narrative strategies, chronologically capture key milestones.

## **GDM SUCCESS EXPERIENCES: ESTONOESUNSOLAR, O.U.T.**

Experimental Programme **Estonoesunsolar** (Zaragoza), from citizens initiatives to institutionalised initiatives to urban policy.

It is considered the first OTU that has transformed nearly 100 urban voids into transitory public spaces through citizen engagement. It is located in the city of Zaragoza., and has been funded by Zaragoza Vivienda Municipal Society. The program has been designed and implemented by Patrizia Di Monte and Ignacio Grávalos (Gravalosdimonte architects), through an employment plan:

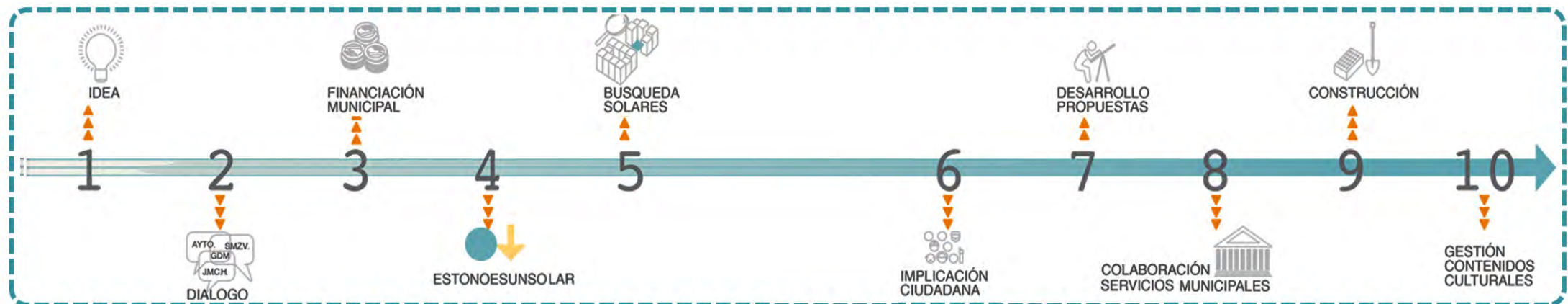
*“The empty plots and unused buildings, scattered throughout the urban fabric of cities have introduced a new variable in contemporary urbanism. These spaces represent the latent possibility of rescheduling the existing city to deal with environmental criteria of the future city. Based on this premise, we devised the urban regeneration strategy estonoesunsolar, an experimental approach to upcycle these unexplained gaps in new temporary public spaces, responding to citizen concerns. Interventions consisted of temporary use of plots, placing value on the*

suggestion of the void and the invisible. These temporary overruns consolidated allow reading frame and flexible alternative that streamlines the public space, establishing an urban code not drawn. The proposals have departed from a previous analysis, both urban and socioeconomic gaps in the 15 districts, and claimed spaces population they are intended. We conducted a strategic selection of sites, both public and private, so that would encourage citizens about certain links. There have been children's playground areas, vegetable gardens, forests, sports areas, bowls, table tennis, parks, plazas, promoting sustainable mobility and increasing the area of green areas in the city. Each plot meets a local demand. It has been ensured that all interventions were subsequently managed by various associations (children, youth, sports, seniors) or any group of citizens interested in using it. This has been implemented through 60 interventions made in 13 months, which have balanced the existing city by adding 120,000 m<sup>2</sup> of upcycled disused spaces into temporary public spaces. A wide number of spaces were drawn, based on citizen requests, which are currently underway.”<sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Ignacio Grávalos + Patrizia Di Monte  
<https://estnoesunsolar.wordpress.com/>

Estnoesunsolar map 60 temporary public spaces in 15 districts of Zaragoza  
 Ignacio Grávalos + Patrizia Di Monte



<p><b>01_the objective</b></p> <p>The program's main goal was to develop an Employment Plan, which would involve 50 workers for clearing the sites of the Historic Area. On that premise, it raised the possibility of developing a set of proposals. That raised the possibility of carrying out the objective, placed the temporary occupation of the historical area as offering a range of temporary uses for three frequently re-used buildings.</p> <p>These proposals stem from the program "Temporary uses for vacant buildings" held in 2006 within the framework of "The heart" or "la corazón" of Zaragoza, in which the same architects were able to bring together the ideas about the temporary occupation of these buildings in an "artistic" context, with different scenarios but holding the same concept.</p>	<p><b>02_the accident</b></p> <p>The proposals arise from the observation of different and numerous existing sites in the context of Zaragoza historic city centre, assumed as unoccupied space in many cases (and surprising in most of them). In some of the sites, the structure of a wall has been enough for a sudden vacuum to appear, showing good or poor maintenance, out of context, and that surprisingly open up new views. Hidden until then, it creates a new opportunity for urban spaces. There is a reading of the city with the quality of an "open weather urbanism", spontaneous in some cases, and contextualized in others. In this regard, and given that applications are developed following the idea of needs described by associations and neighbours, it is a flexible tool to start responding to specific problems.</p>	<p><b>03_the vacuum</b></p> <p>Vacuum has been put in the suggestion of emptiness, the void, the invisible and absence. These temporary openings of the plot is a dynamic tool, changing (temporary), allowing a flexible and alternative reading of the city and the public spaces. It aims for non-material and ephemeral solutions, expressing the provisional nature of its existence and creating a dynamic with their in-built environment. Vacuum is hoped to be the creator of situations and events.</p>	<p><b>04_the name</b></p> <p>From the outset it was considered essential to find a name for the interventions, which give meaning to a program without program, without a properly written, to a built site, to a rehearsal space. The program was called "estonoesunsolar" (It's-not-an-empty-site). It was desired to escape from the constraints imposed by words and their meanings, with the intention from the beginning, to propose a new look (this is not a site, this is not what it looks like, look at it with different eyes...) In short, it was an invitation to think again to imagine possible scenarios, to propose new situations and create desirable places to make a privileged place from every-day.</p>	<p><b>05_the exchange</b></p> <p>Property gives the actor. "Estonoesunsolar" responds to the needs of neighbours and gives expression to it. "Workshop makes it possible". The city proposed is owned by both public and private. The proposed uses are public. This aspect is critical because it was intended a mix of different scenarios that eventually have been headed in one direction, through complex and intricate arrangements. In addition, all interventions have been the result of citizen involvement, neighbourhood associations, etc., as well as of the involvement of Socialized Municipal Zaragoza Vivienda. All interventions are built from a previous both urban and socio-economic study analyzing the existing fabric, green spaces, etc. as well as the characteristics of each zone, the needs of each area and the population for whom they are intended.</p>	<p><b>06_the communication</b></p> <p>A blog has been created to encourage citizen participation, disseminate the information and create a public field, this being of value for communication.</p>	<p><b>07_the indeterminacy</b></p> <p>The rhythm of the plots lies in the indeterminacy that is transmitted by these plots, in the creation of an expectation (to build in a door that opens) and the ability of these spaces to create doors. That is why the interventions have a mostly neutral character that causes the excitement of unarticulated events.</p>	<p><b>08_the proposals</b></p> <p>The proposals are a response to the needs of concrete interventions. Playgrounds have been made, a public library, a bicycle lane (with some urban gardens, a garden-gym, a soccer field, a basketball court, a volleyball court, a space for learning, a space for ping pong, an indoor soccer field... all in the historical centre, playing together parking spaces on each side. Any proposal is later maintained by various associations (children, youth, sports, civic centres, senior centres and by any other citizen group willing to use them. For example, in one of the residential urban gardens, children through different educational activities, have been in charge of the population, being later visited as a botanical garden by various schools in the city.</p>	<p><b>09_the game</b></p> <p>It has been an attempt to give meaning to concepts such as fragmentation, disorder or randomness as well as creating new meanings. In this sense, a semantic game has been played, as each urban intervention is set with each of the words of the program: "heart", "eye", "sun", "vacuum", in the manner, compound sentences are created according to the needs of the intervention at any time. ("The site is the eye", "The heart is a sun" "The site is not a site" "This is not...")</p>	<p><b>10_text and symbol</b></p> <p>It has been mentioned earlier in all these sites, dotted without any particular order along the urban fabric. Each of the "eyes" or "hearts" has been created through their intentions, activities and uses, establish subtle connections between them. It was hoped to provide these markers with a common ambiguity, with some characters that were easily readable and recognizable. It was intended to name, number and identify each of the chosen sites. Each plot is labelled (in its meaning) with an identification number, which corresponds to its sequential order of performance, and for the storage and identification value of numbering the non-visible under the vacuum.</p>
<p><b>01_San Blas 94</b></p> <p>La intervención en este espacio se realizó a través de un programa participativo que incluyó la realización de talleres de diagnóstico y diseño de un espacio público, la creación de un espacio público y la realización de un espacio público. El espacio público se creó a través de un programa participativo que incluyó la realización de talleres de diagnóstico y diseño de un espacio público, la creación de un espacio público y la realización de un espacio público.</p>	<p><b>02_Las Armas 92</b></p> <p>Se creó un espacio público que se utilizó para la realización de actividades deportivas y culturales. El espacio público se creó a través de un programa participativo que incluyó la realización de talleres de diagnóstico y diseño de un espacio público, la creación de un espacio público y la realización de un espacio público.</p>	<p><b>03_Las Armas 93</b></p> <p>Con la intervención en este espacio se amplió la superficie verde del barrio, situado junto al barrio. Entre intervenciones de restauración urbana con permisos de uso de espacio público se creó un espacio público que se utilizó para la realización de actividades deportivas y culturales.</p>	<p><b>04_San Blas 95</b></p> <p>En esta ocasión, un espacio público se creó a través de un programa participativo que incluyó la realización de talleres de diagnóstico y diseño de un espacio público, la creación de un espacio público y la realización de un espacio público.</p>	<p><b>09_Casta Álvarez</b></p> <p>En este espacio se amplió la superficie deportiva que se utilizó para la realización de actividades deportivas y culturales. El espacio público se creó a través de un programa participativo que incluyó la realización de talleres de diagnóstico y diseño de un espacio público, la creación de un espacio público y la realización de un espacio público.</p>	<p><b>05_San Agustín</b></p> <p>En este caso se creó un espacio público que se utilizó para la realización de actividades deportivas y culturales. El espacio público se creó a través de un programa participativo que incluyó la realización de talleres de diagnóstico y diseño de un espacio público, la creación de un espacio público y la realización de un espacio público.</p>	<p><b>06_Plaza del Rosario</b></p> <p>Se creó un espacio público que se utilizó para la realización de actividades deportivas y culturales. El espacio público se creó a través de un programa participativo que incluyó la realización de talleres de diagnóstico y diseño de un espacio público, la creación de un espacio público y la realización de un espacio público.</p>	<p><b>10_Palafox</b></p> <p>Se ha realizado un espacio público que se utilizó para la realización de actividades deportivas y culturales. El espacio público se creó a través de un programa participativo que incluyó la realización de talleres de diagnóstico y diseño de un espacio público, la creación de un espacio público y la realización de un espacio público.</p>	<p><b>11_Coso 182</b></p> <p>Fuente de agua se creó un espacio público que se utilizó para la realización de actividades deportivas y culturales. El espacio público se creó a través de un programa participativo que incluyó la realización de talleres de diagnóstico y diseño de un espacio público, la creación de un espacio público y la realización de un espacio público.</p>	<p><b>12-13_Mayoral</b></p> <p>También se creó un espacio público que se utilizó para la realización de actividades deportivas y culturales. El espacio público se creó a través de un programa participativo que incluyó la realización de talleres de diagnóstico y diseño de un espacio público, la creación de un espacio público y la realización de un espacio público.</p>
<p><b>14_San José</b></p> <p>El espacio público se creó a través de un programa participativo que incluyó la realización de talleres de diagnóstico y diseño de un espacio público, la creación de un espacio público y la realización de un espacio público.</p>	<p><b>15_Vadorrey</b></p> <p>El espacio público se creó a través de un programa participativo que incluyó la realización de talleres de diagnóstico y diseño de un espacio público, la creación de un espacio público y la realización de un espacio público.</p>	<p><b>16_Actur</b></p> <p>El espacio público se creó a través de un programa participativo que incluyó la realización de talleres de diagnóstico y diseño de un espacio público, la creación de un espacio público y la realización de un espacio público.</p>	<p><b>17_Las Fuentes</b></p> <p>Una zona de forma triangular, en la que se creó un espacio público que se utilizó para la realización de actividades deportivas y culturales. El espacio público se creó a través de un programa participativo que incluyó la realización de talleres de diagnóstico y diseño de un espacio público, la creación de un espacio público y la realización de un espacio público.</p>	<p><b>18_Casablanca</b></p> <p>Se ha realizado un espacio público que se utilizó para la realización de actividades deportivas y culturales. El espacio público se creó a través de un programa participativo que incluyó la realización de talleres de diagnóstico y diseño de un espacio público, la creación de un espacio público y la realización de un espacio público.</p>	<p><b>19_Movera</b></p> <p>Una zona de forma triangular, en la que se creó un espacio público que se utilizó para la realización de actividades deportivas y culturales. El espacio público se creó a través de un programa participativo que incluyó la realización de talleres de diagnóstico y diseño de un espacio público, la creación de un espacio público y la realización de un espacio público.</p>	<p><b>20_Almozara</b></p> <p>Una zona de forma triangular, en la que se creó un espacio público que se utilizó para la realización de actividades deportivas y culturales. El espacio público se creó a través de un programa participativo que incluyó la realización de talleres de diagnóstico y diseño de un espacio público, la creación de un espacio público y la realización de un espacio público.</p>	<p><b>21_Oliver</b></p> <p>Un espacio público que se creó a través de un programa participativo que incluyó la realización de talleres de diagnóstico y diseño de un espacio público, la creación de un espacio público y la realización de un espacio público.</p>	<p><b>22_Casetas</b></p> <p>Una zona de forma triangular, en la que se creó un espacio público que se utilizó para la realización de actividades deportivas y culturales. El espacio público se creó a través de un programa participativo que incluyó la realización de talleres de diagnóstico y diseño de un espacio público, la creación de un espacio público y la realización de un espacio público.</p>	<p><b>23_Delicias</b></p> <p>Una zona de forma triangular, en la que se creó un espacio público que se utilizó para la realización de actividades deportivas y culturales. El espacio público se creó a través de un programa participativo que incluyó la realización de talleres de diagnóstico y diseño de un espacio público, la creación de un espacio público y la realización de un espacio público.</p>
<p><b>24_Torero</b></p> <p>Una zona de forma triangular, en la que se creó un espacio público que se utilizó para la realización de actividades deportivas y culturales. El espacio público se creó a través de un programa participativo que incluyó la realización de talleres de diagnóstico y diseño de un espacio público, la creación de un espacio público y la realización de un espacio público.</p>	<p><b>P26_Azucarera</b></p> <p>Una zona de forma triangular, en la que se creó un espacio público que se utilizó para la realización de actividades deportivas y culturales. El espacio público se creó a través de un programa participativo que incluyó la realización de talleres de diagnóstico y diseño de un espacio público, la creación de un espacio público y la realización de un espacio público.</p>	<p><b>P27_Etopia</b></p> <p>Una zona de forma triangular, en la que se creó un espacio público que se utilizó para la realización de actividades deportivas y culturales. El espacio público se creó a través de un programa participativo que incluyó la realización de talleres de diagnóstico y diseño de un espacio público, la creación de un espacio público y la realización de un espacio público.</p>	<p><b>P28_Actur Crea</b></p> <p>Una zona de forma triangular, en la que se creó un espacio público que se utilizó para la realización de actividades deportivas y culturales. El espacio público se creó a través de un programa participativo que incluyó la realización de talleres de diagnóstico y diseño de un espacio público, la creación de un espacio público y la realización de un espacio público.</p>	<p><b>P29_Casablanca</b></p> <p>Una zona de forma triangular, en la que se creó un espacio público que se utilizó para la realización de actividades deportivas y culturales. El espacio público se creó a través de un programa participativo que incluyó la realización de talleres de diagnóstico y diseño de un espacio público, la creación de un espacio público y la realización de un espacio público.</p>	<p><b>P30_Col S.Domingo</b></p> <p>Una zona de forma triangular, en la que se creó un espacio público que se utilizó para la realización de actividades deportivas y culturales. El espacio público se creó a través de un programa participativo que incluyó la realización de talleres de diagnóstico y diseño de un espacio público, la creación de un espacio público y la realización de un espacio público.</p>	<p><b>P31_Col Peñarol</b></p> <p>Una zona de forma triangular, en la que se creó un espacio público que se utilizó para la realización de actividades deportivas y culturales. El espacio público se creó a través de un programa participativo que incluyó la realización de talleres de diagnóstico y diseño de un espacio público, la creación de un espacio público y la realización de un espacio público.</p>	<p><b>P32_Supermanzana</b></p> <p>Una zona de forma triangular, en la que se creó un espacio público que se utilizó para la realización de actividades deportivas y culturales. El espacio público se creó a través de un programa participativo que incluyó la realización de talleres de diagnóstico y diseño de un espacio público, la creación de un espacio público y la realización de un espacio público.</p>	<p><b>P33_Bologna</b></p> <p>Una zona de forma triangular, en la que se creó un espacio público que se utilizó para la realización de actividades deportivas y culturales. El espacio público se creó a través de un programa participativo que incluyó la realización de talleres de diagnóstico y diseño de un espacio público, la creación de un espacio público y la realización de un espacio público.</p>	<p><b>P35_Torrellas</b></p> <p>Una zona de forma triangular, en la que se creó un espacio público que se utilizó para la realización de actividades deportivas y culturales. El espacio público se creó a través de un programa participativo que incluyó la realización de talleres de diagnóstico y diseño de un espacio público, la creación de un espacio público y la realización de un espacio público.</p>

Estonoesunsolar playcards, 60 temporary public spaces, community gardens, sport areas, playgrounds, Zaragoza. I. Grávalos + P. Di Monte

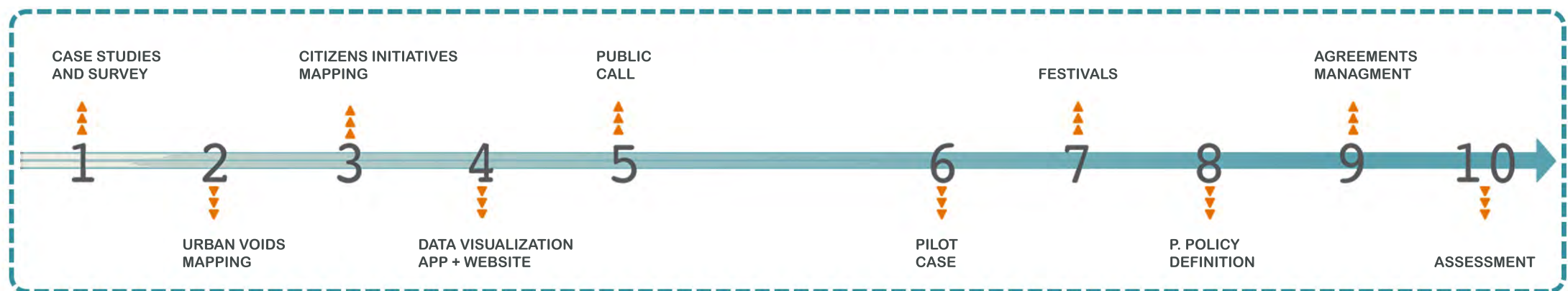
**The OUT (Oficina Usos Temporales) pilot programme (Zaragoza) from urban policy to citizens initiatives.**

This pilot programme has been developed by Patrizia Di Monte and Ignacio Grávalos proposing a methodology for the reuse of 51 abandoned buildings through temporary uses in the city of Zaragoza. It sought collaboration formulas between the local administration and citizens. In this case, we see how an urban policy sought to promote citizens' initiatives based on the principle of collaborative economy and the experimentation through the creation of an OTU.

The proposed strategy has the ambition to encourage the reprogramming of the built city with the implementation of temporary uses, with a new way of managing an existing but currently underused public heritage. It is not only about the reuse of urban spaces or places, but also about the renewal of the roles of potential users and the regeneration of the urban fabric. It is essential to consider including various unused buildings in a new life cycle, transmitting a way of understanding the current contemporary city by providing it with dynamic and flexible instruments that allow for new actions that generate productivity and social cohesion.



Oficina Usos Temporales website: mapping empty buildings and template for citizens initiatives. I. Grávalos + P. Di Monte



O.U.T. Oficina Usos Temporales 10 steps. I.Grávalos + P. Di Monte

Working with new tools that dynamise the landscape of abandonment, recycling the existing and reconsidering its metabolism must be the basis for a new way of understanding urbanism through interventions in which transformation is a value.

An innovative social and urban regeneration policy must seek new ways of re-activating unproductive spaces, which can be facilitated by the implementation of policies based on temporary uses. In order to respond to the current economic contingency (meanwhile), it is necessary to introduce variables in urban planning procedures, modify their timing and allow for the possibility of error, which can bring knowledge and growth.

# 1 HERITAGE DATA SHEET

<b>Fases</b>	<b>Degrado:</b>	<b>Cesión a precario</b>	<b>Requisitos mínimos CTE usós temporales sup &lt;500 m²</b>
● Fase 1	● b Bajo · Ready to go	● Qué uso?	● Incendios
● Fase 2	● m Medio · Instalaciones	● Quién?	● Seguridad accesibilidad
	● a Alto · Estructural	● Tiempo	● Aforo permitido
<b>Catalogación:</b>		<b>Concesión administrativa</b>	
● Bien Patrimonial		● Qué uso?	
● Bien Demanial		● Quién?	
		● Plazo 5 · 10·50 años	

1- SPAIN - ZARAGOZA  
Instituto LUIS BUÑUEL  
Address: c/ Boggiero  
Heritage Catalogue: BIC IM  
Bien Demanial  
Sup.: 490 m²  
Master Plan use: education  
Requested use: culture, education  
Funding:  
Association:  
Governance:  
Activities:  
Allowed temporary cession:



1

1- SPAIN - ZARAGOZA  
HARINERA  
Address: Avda. San José  
Heritage Catalogue: BIC IM  
Bien Demanial  
Sup.: 800 m²  
Master Plan use: production  
Requested use: culture, education  
Funding:  
Association:  
Governance:  
Activities:  
Allowed time:



2

1- SPAIN - ZARAGOZA  
Antigua Azucarera  
c/ de Las Matas  
Heritage Catalogue: BIC IM  
Bien Demanial  
Sup.:  
Master Plan use:  
Requested use:  
Funding: public  
Governance:  
Activities:  
Allowed time:



3

Local Case Studies in Saragoza. Heritage cataloging data sheet

<p>1- Antigua cine Fuencalera y patio Emplazamiento: c/ Fuencalera 7 catalogación: BIC IM Bien Demanial Conservación: accesib. segur. instal. Sup.: 318 m² cine + 225 m² patio Inversión: según uso solicitado Uso PGOU: Sistema Local (PV)ER(1.19) Especialidad: usos culturales Financiabilidad:</p>  <p>1</p>	<p>2-Taller hnos. Albareda Emplazamiento: c/ Albuá Salvador 7 catalogación: IA calificación: BI grado 3 Bien Demanial Conservación: forjados, escalera. Sup.: 745 m² Inversión: según uso solicitado Uso PGOU: Suelo Urbano consolidado. Equipamiento: EA+CC+ES-SA (PU) 5.04. Potencialidad: usos culturales Financiabilidad:</p>  <p>2</p>	<p>3-Cuartel San Agustín Emplazamiento: c/ Alonso V, 30 catalogación: IA Bien Demanial Conservación: interior e instalaciones. Sup.: 179 pl* + 435 m² patio Inversión: según uso solicitado Uso PGOU: Suelo Urbano. Planamiento: repicado U-6-2. Equipamiento 6.08 ER (PU) Potencialidad: actividades culturales</p>  <p>3</p>
<p>4-Casa Palafox (ampliación Residencia?) Emplazamiento: c/ Palafox 4 catalogación: BIC IM Bien Patrimonial Conservación: Sup.: 890 m² Inversión: 488.116 Uso PGOU: Suelo Urbano Consolidado. Zona BI grado 2 Potencialidad:</p>  <p>4</p>	<p>5-Deposito Casablanca Ant. Bombas Emplazamiento: via Hispanidad 49-47 catalogación: Bien Demanial Conservación: deterioro general. Sup.: 210 m² Inversión: 468.697 Uso PGOU: Sistema General Urbano. Equipamiento SF-CI-ER (PU) 59.11 Potencialidad: espectáculos y actividades culturales</p>  <p>5</p>	<p>6-Antiguo Colegio Tomás Alvirra Emplazamiento: c/ Numancia 2 catalogación: Bien Demanial Conservación: rehabi. escuela-Taller Zaragoza Dinamica Sup.: 138 m² Pl* + 320 m² patio (PB) Inversión: según uso solicitado Uso PGOU: Suelo Urbano Consolidado. Equipamiento Sistema Local de Equipamiento de Reserva (PU) 10.02. Potencialidad: Sub-emprendedores</p>  <p>6</p>
<p>7-Porteria Cartuja Emplazamiento: c/ San Bruno 11 catalogación: IM Bien Demanial Conservación: Bueno Estado (Rehabilitación reciente) Sup.: 980 m² Inversión: 296.504 Uso PGOU: Suelo Urbano Consolidado. Equipamiento EA (PU) 86.20 Potencialidad:</p>  <p>7</p>	<p>8-Antiguas naves Giesá Emplazamiento: Pº San Joaquín 15 catalogación: IA - B Bien .. Conservación: estado de abandono Sup.: 13.645 m² Inversión: 20.131.693 Uso PGOU: Suelo Urbano No Consolidado. Equipamiento ER (PU) 10.10. Cesión del Área de intervención 0-10-5. Potencialidad: se puede plantear un uso parcial de una parte, para evitar su deterioro.</p>  <p>8</p>	<p>9-Antigua casa de bombas Almozara Emplazamiento: Pº Echegaray Caballero catalogación: SA (PU) Bien .. Conservación: Sup.: 335 m² Inversión: 241.000 Uso: Potencialidad:</p>  <p>9</p>

"Oficina usos temporales" website. Available public heritage

## European case studies: Zinneke, Les Grands Voisins

Among the gE.CO. European cases, two examples have been selected for their different typologies and capacity for urban reactivation. In previous Gravalosdimonte cases, we determined how it was possible for a citizens' initiative to become institutionalised and subsequently transformed into an urban policy (estonoesunsolar), and how an urban policy could promote citizens initiatives (OTUs) among the gE.CO.

European cases emerge for their different casuistries: Zinneke Masui, a citizens' initiative, and Les Grands Voisins, a more complex case because of its scale (it involved a citizens' initiative being transformed into an institutionalised initiative).

In the first case, Zinneke Masui (Brussels), a sociocultural association, manages a building with several typologies of spaces articulated around a courtyard, allowing the interaction of activities between the exterior and the interior. This case deals with the different synergies that can be established from this neurological centre because it includes activities with a metropolitan character and others more linked to interactions with the nearby social fabric.

The second case, Les Grands Voisins (Paris), covers a large area of the city of more than three hectares, containing various pavilions with residential, educational, and cultural uses. The common characteristics of the spaces make it a small urban utopia in which it is possible to experiment with new forms of relationship and production based on models of social sustainability.

In both cases, alternative models of urban voids reactivation are dynamically implemented in response to the changing needs of society. They have an experimental background in the treatment of space, management models, and forms of agreements with local administration.

The analytical model aims to measure the impact of these case studies on the urban fabric while considering their immediate area of influence from a pedestrian perspective, which allows for the detection of real needs according to the services available and the demands identified. They have a will to expand themselves, and therefore their activity has the potential to form a new relationship with the surrounding context.

The implementation of temporary activities, far from constituting a fossilised reality, allows a dynamic reprogramming of a city so that it can adapt to the increasingly rapid changes of daily life. The emerging information related to this analytical method encompasses the urban dimension (its relationship with the city), the architectural condition (the characteristics of the building), the activities conducted, the involved agents, and the implementation processes.



# PROJECT ZINNEKE

Bruxelles

Renovation of a Former Press Laboratory Complex for the Sociocultural Organisation Zinneke. This project's aim is to create a space that includes the artistic-social projects of Zinneke, the organisation behind the biannual Zinneke parade, artistic education programs, wood and metal production workshops, and various spaces for testing and laboratories. It intends to provide infrastructure for the city's many small creative initiatives, generating an active social order. The project focuses on the existing qualities of buildings and the reorganisation and optimisation of their potential. The project won the Be Exemplary 2017 prize, granted by the Region of Brussels, for innovative and exemplary building projects.

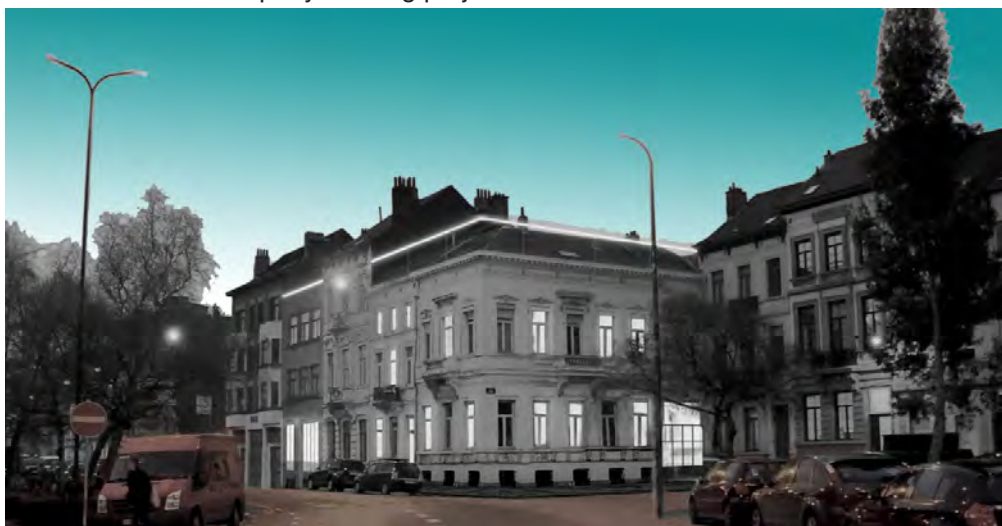
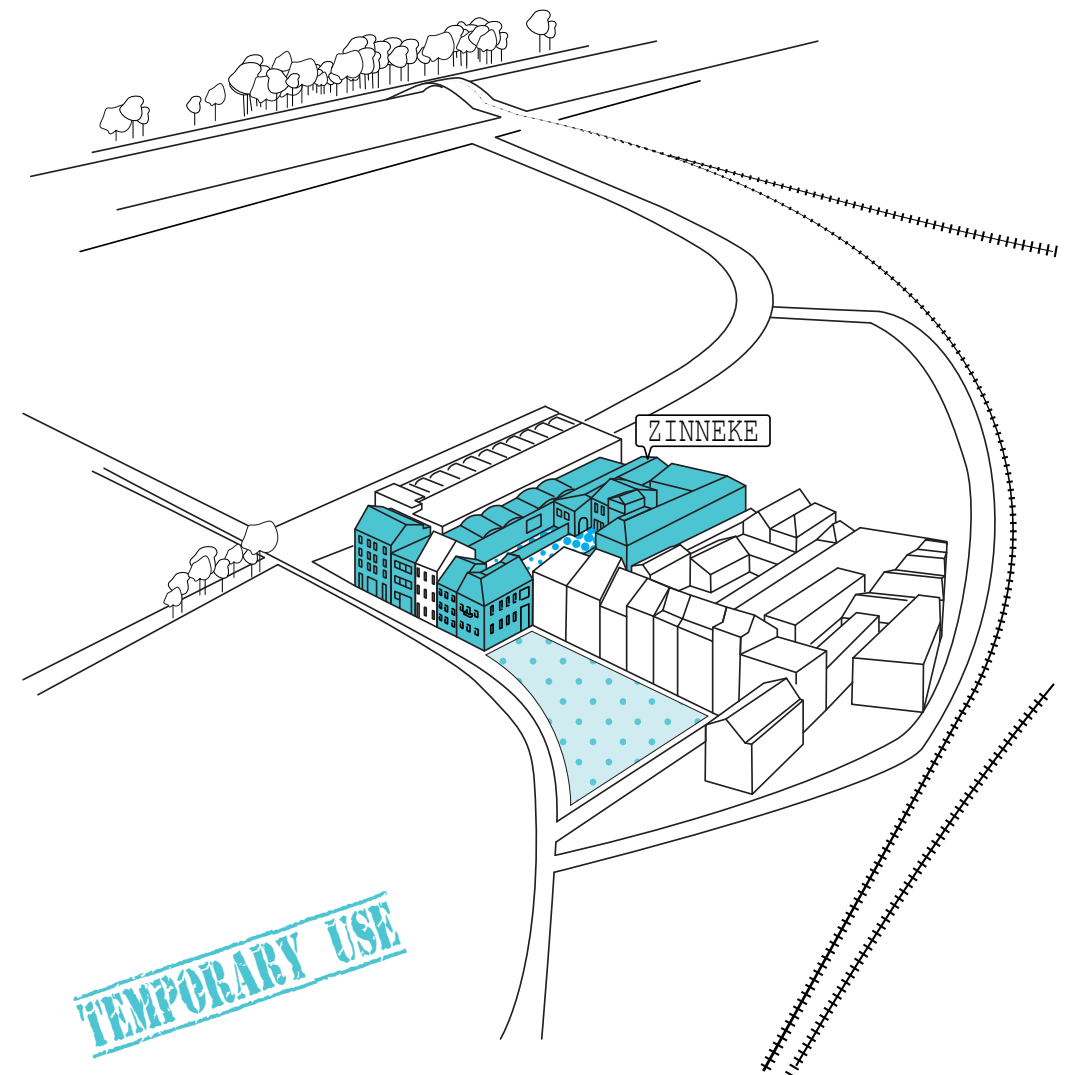


Photo credits: Zinneke



**Project MASUI,**  
 Zinneke asbl  
 Place Masui 13, Masui, Bruxelles,  
 2016-2020



Historic Center



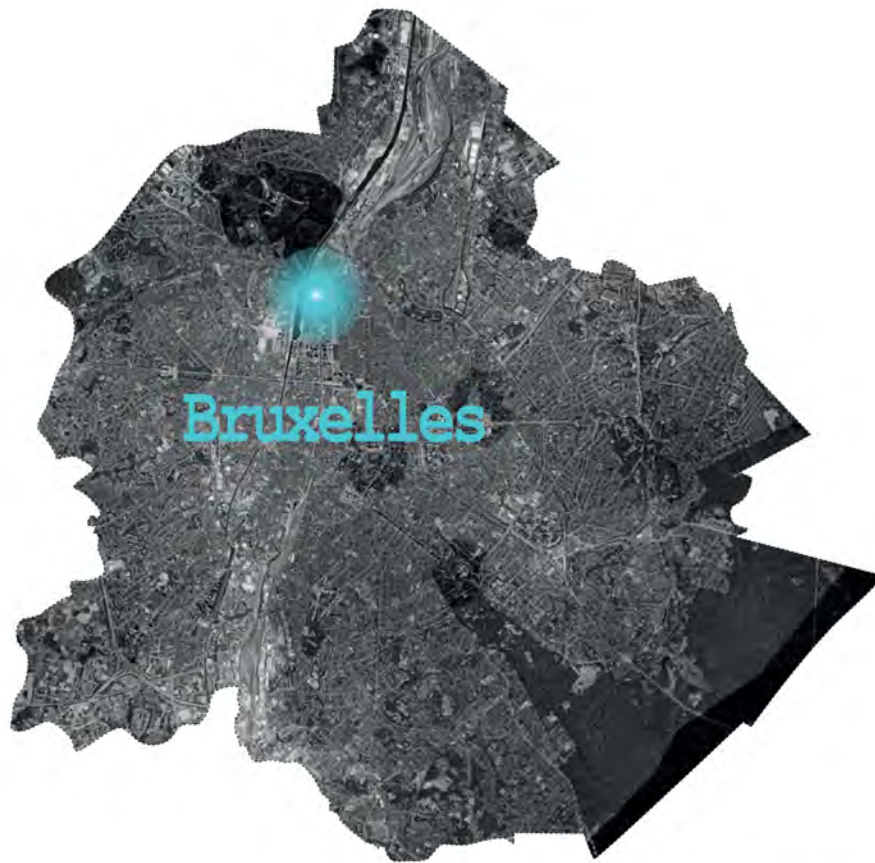
Widening



Suburban Area

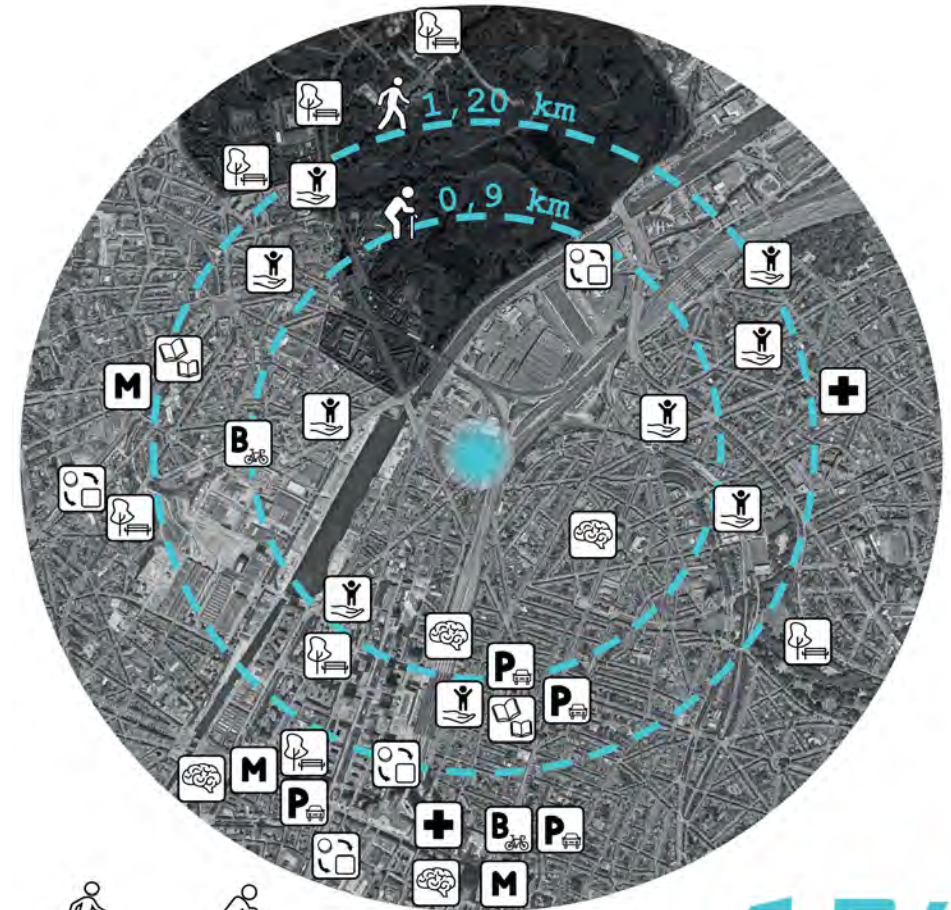



Rural Area




50° 52' 17.080" N  
 4° 21' 52.381" E









-   
Kindergarden
-   
Instruction
-   
Culture
-   
Library
-   
Park
-   
Commercial
-   
Civic Center
-   
Hospital
-   
Market
-   
Parking
-   
Bike
-   
Metro











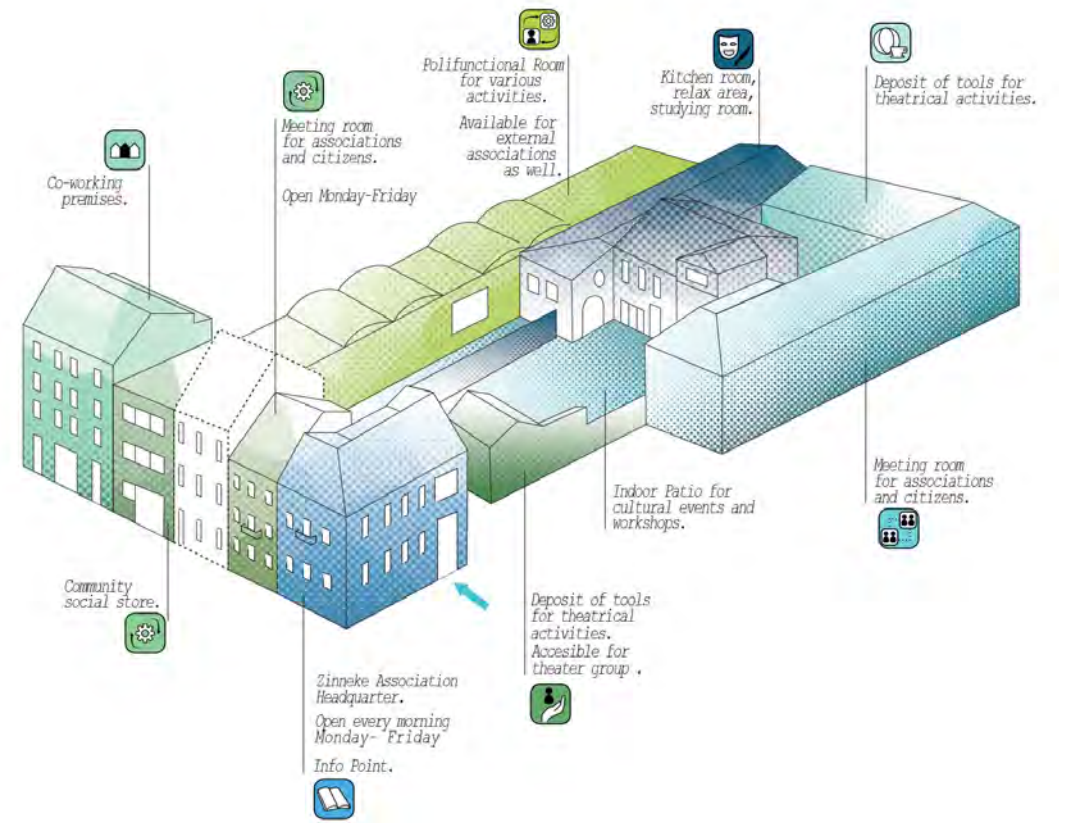
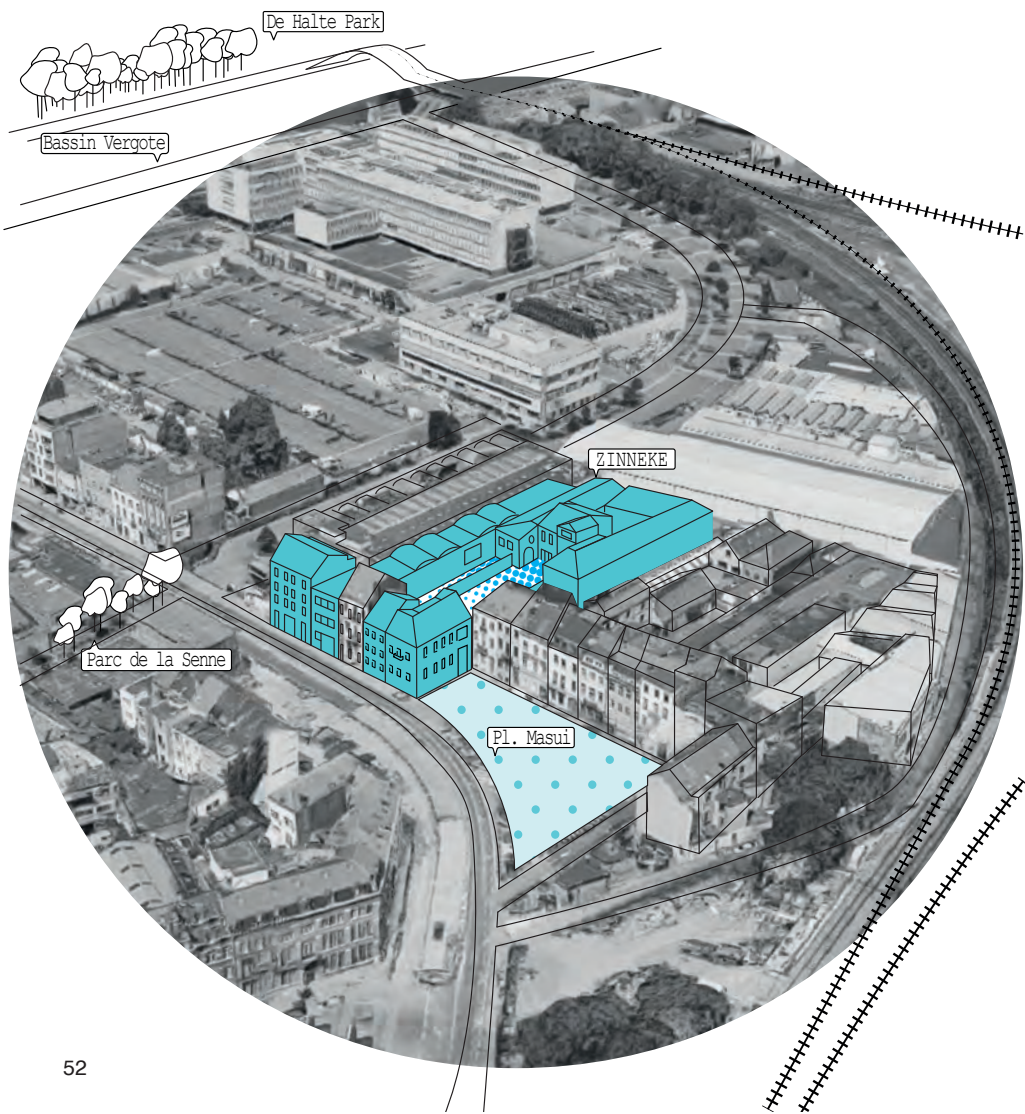
 Age 15-64  
5 km/h

 Age >65  
<5 km/h

city **15'**

<b>TYPE</b>  Vacant Building	<b>SURFACE SIZE</b>  4000 m <sup>2</sup>	<b>PROPERTY</b>  Private	<b>PREVIOUS FUNCTION</b>  Stamp Factory
<b>INACTIVITY TIME</b>  4 Years	<b>NOW</b>  Active	<b>TRANSFER</b>  Free	<b>RELEASE TIME</b>  2 Years

<b>SOCIAL CENTRE</b> 	<b>CULTURE/ARTS</b> 	<b>EDUCATION</b> 	<b>SPORT/LEISURE</b> 
<b>SOCIAL HOUSING</b> 	<b>PRODUCTION</b> 	<b>WELFARE</b> 	<b>EMPLOYMENT/ENTERPRENUERSHIP</b> 





Zinneke is a project that creates meeting spaces, collaboration and creativity. Promotes artistic and social dynamics among neighbours, associations, schools and artists from different neighbourhoods in Brussels and elsewhere.

It's a meeting place, you work constantly in new ways of initiate collective actions of solidarity.



2 million euros!  
To be able to perform works in a space of 4,000 m<sup>2</sup>.

Since 2013, with the support of the Brussels-Capital Region, we landed in Masui, a former stamp workshop. In 2014 we received financial support from the ERDF (European Regional Development Fund).



This multi-potential production facility is nothing more than a vast laboratory, a breeding ground for socio-artistic actions and the cornerstone of the collaborations that Zinneke develops with and between inhabitants, associations, artists and other social, cultural, economic and environmental actors. Actors in Brussels and beyond.

The project also is intended to be a large scale pilot project to develop infrastructure by reusing construction materials, respecting the maximum of what exists.



Zinnode is a group formed by an artistic team, several partners and between 60 and 100 neighbors who together, through a parocess of participatory creation of more than a year they developed a common artistic project that is framed in the theme of the Parade.



Every 2 years we organize The Zinneke Parade, created in the framework of Brussels 2000, European capital of culture. The participants are residents and artists who want to highlight the essentially cosmopolitan and pluralistic cultural richness of Brussels.

Thanks to the mobilisation of cultural (partner) associations, they want to build bridges between the 19 municipalities and the Brussels-Capital Region.



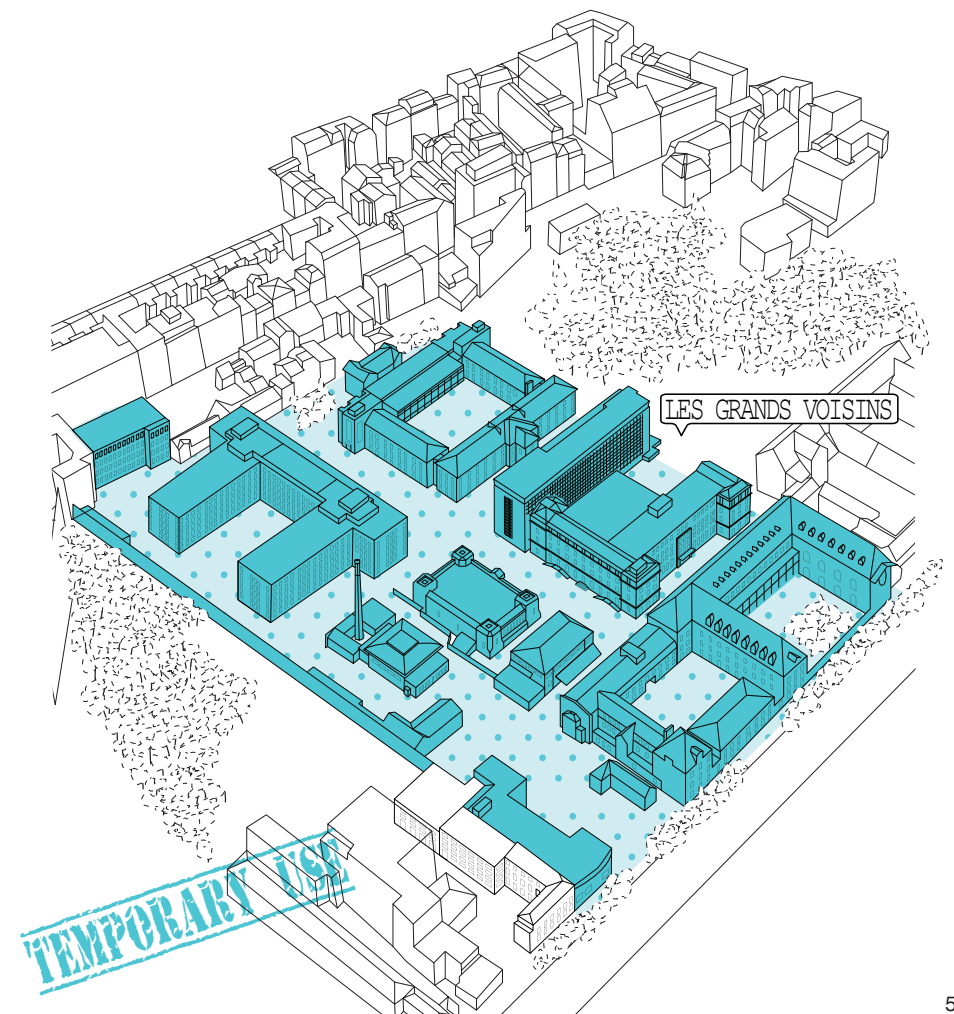
# LES GRANDS VOISINS

Paris

From 2015 to 2017, the temporary occupation of the former Saint-Vincent-de-Paul hospital allowed accommodation for 600 people in vulnerable situations and allowed 250 associations, start-ups, artisans, and artists to work in a unique environment. This experience provided everyone with access to new outdoor spaces, meeting places, and multiple shared activities. Above all, these two years allowed for the sharing of values of hospitality and generosity. Today, preparatory work for the future Saint-Vincent-de-Paul district has begun, and the Grands Voisins experience have been running until 2020.



Photo: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:H%C3%B4pital\\_Saint-Vincent-de-Paul](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:H%C3%B4pital_Saint-Vincent-de-Paul)



# Les Grands Voisins, Plateau Urbain, Aurore, Yes We Camp

14° District, Bâtiment Robin Les  
Grands Voisins, Av. Denfert Rochereau  
82, Paris, France  
2015-2020



Historic Center



Widening



Suburban Area



Rural Area



Kindergarden



Instruction



Culture



Library



Park



Commercial



Civic Center



Hospital



Market



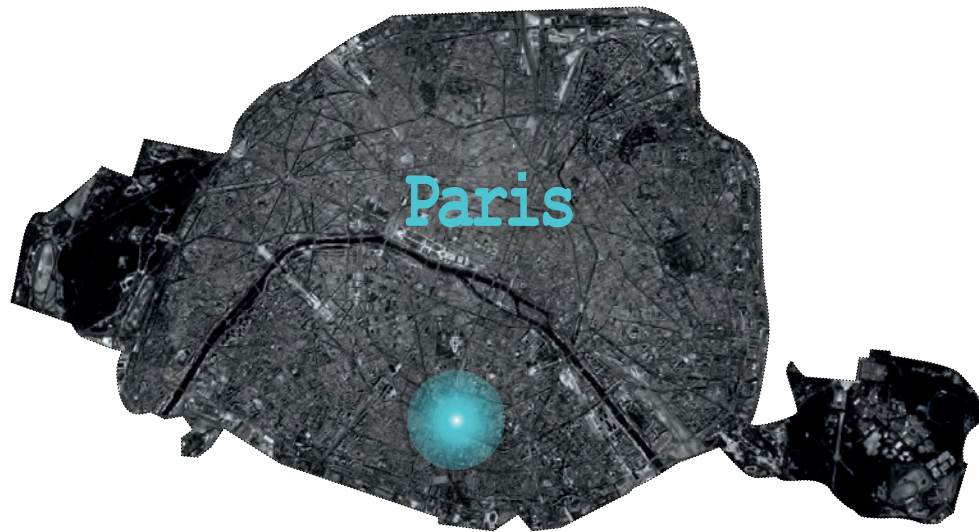
Parking



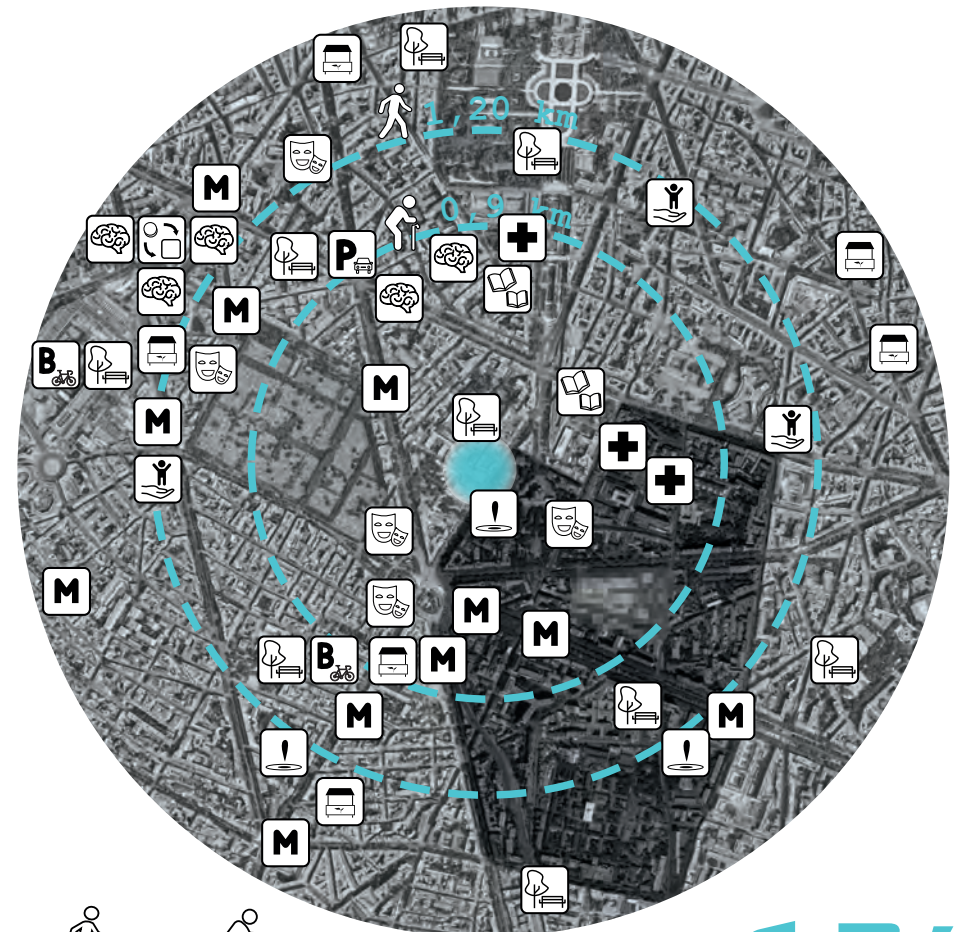
Bike



Metro











Paris











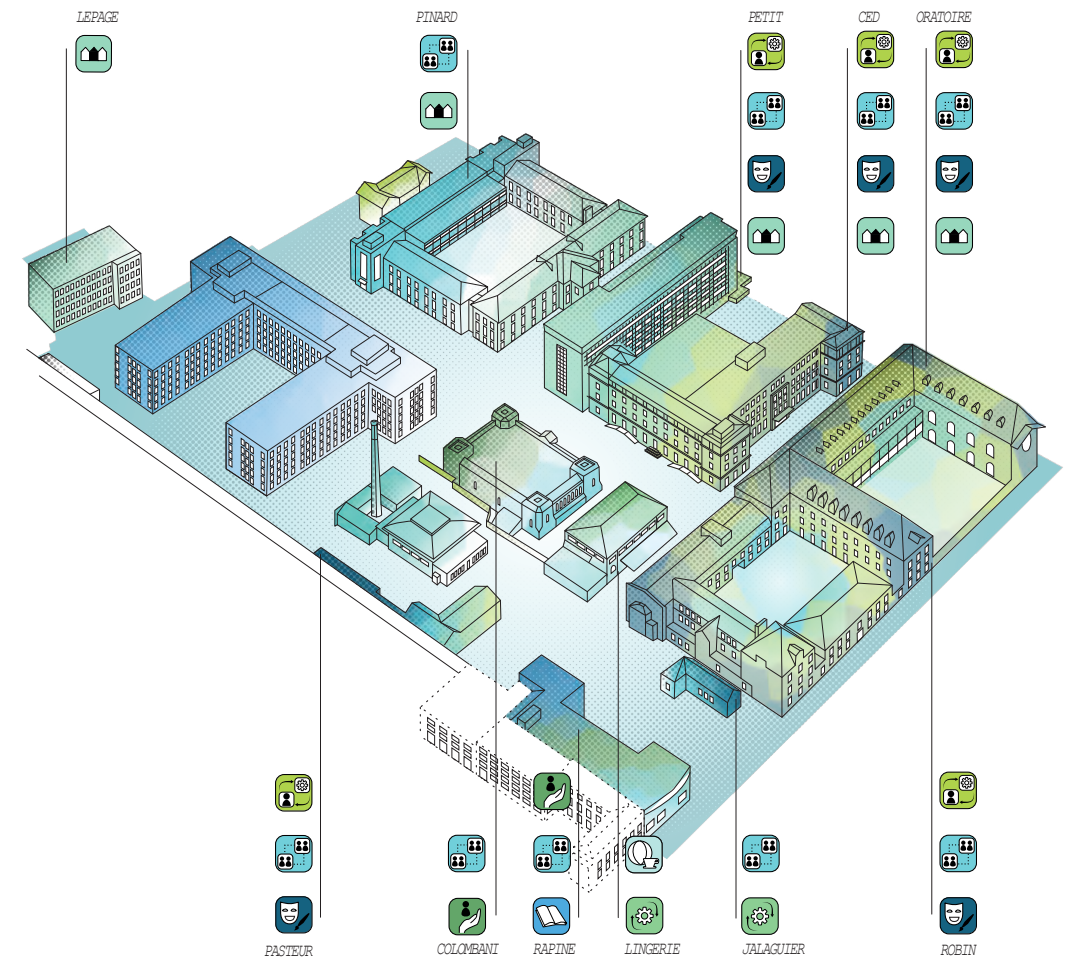
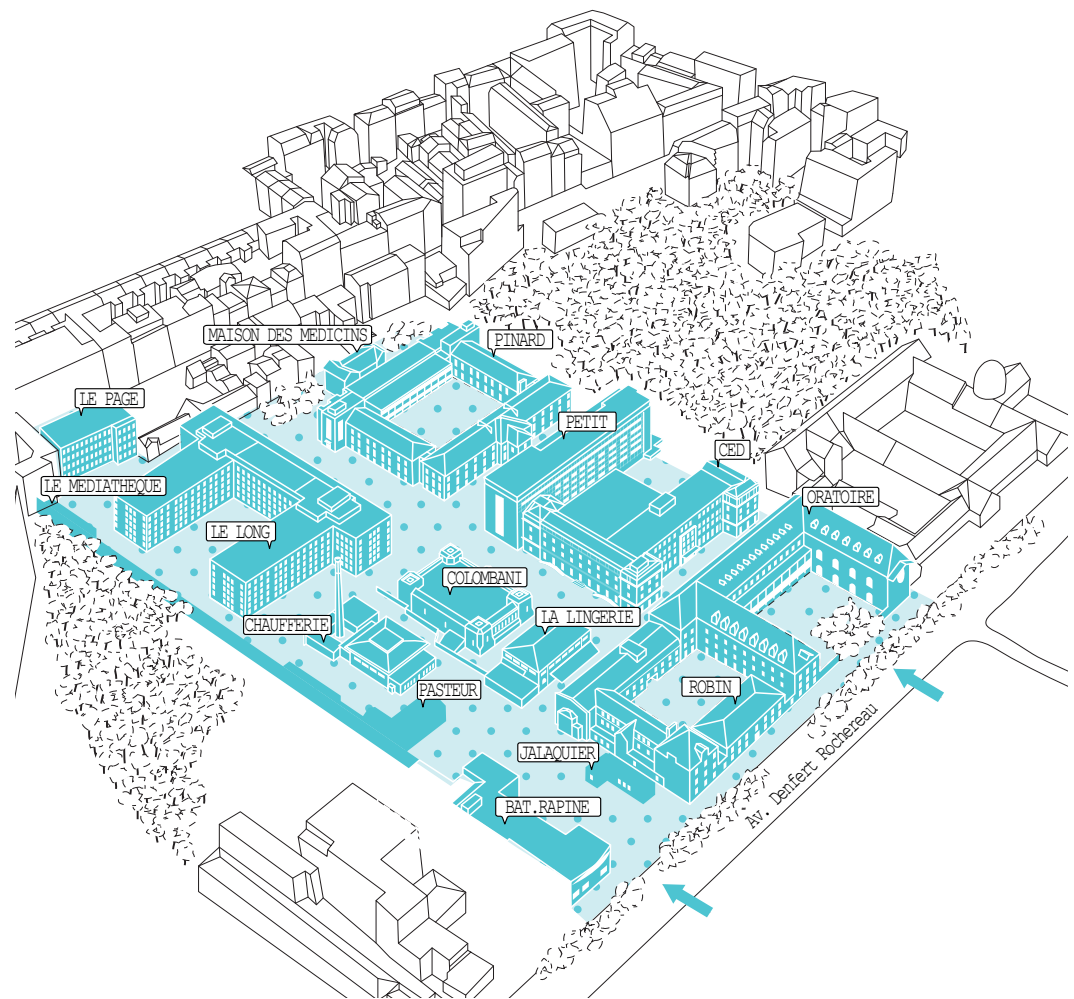
Age 15-64  
5 km/h



Age >65  
<5 km/h

<b>TYPE</b>  Buildings /Plot	<b>PROPERTY</b>  Public	<b>CESSION</b>  Free concession	<b>CATEGORY</b>  Community of citizens
<b>SURFACE SIZE</b>  3,4 ha	<b>PREVIOUS FUNCTION</b>  Hospital	<b>NOW</b>  NO Active	<b>RELEASE TIME</b>  5 Years

<b>SOCIAL CENTRE</b> 	<b>CULTURE/ARTS</b> 	<b>EDUCATION</b> 	<b>SPORT/LEISURE</b> 
<b>SOCIAL HOUSING</b> 	<b>PRODUCTION</b> 	<b>WELFARE</b> 	<b>EMPLOYMENT/ENTERPRENUERSHIP</b> 



In 2012 the association AURORE begins to occupy the unused area of the Hospital St Vincent de Paul creating emergency housing.

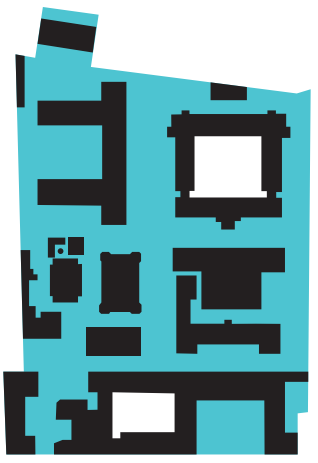
# PHASE I 2015-2017 occupation

The associations AURORE ,YES WE CAMP and the cooperative PLATEAU URBAIN collaborate for the initiative LES GRANDS VOISINS ,a new cooperative and supportive lifestyle. The activities develop on an area of about 3,4 hectares.

The area consists of pavilions that host different social, associative, entrepreneurial and cultural activities, as well as a hotel-hostel for immigrants and people in difficulty, a camping, bars and restaurants, a cinema, workshops, creative workshops and spaces for work and co-working.



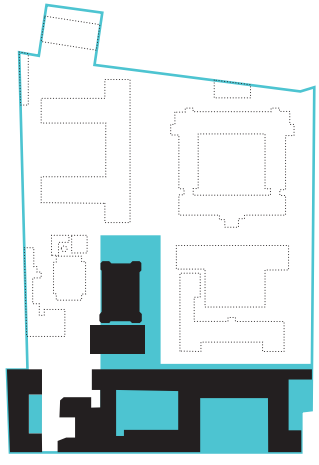
In outer space there are gardens, a bowling alley and a sauna.



20.000 m2 buildings  
15.000 m2 public spaces  
600 hosted persons  
200 organizations

# PHASE II 2018-2020 demolition cohabitation

Demolition work begins for the new eco-district. LES GRANDS VOISINS shrinks, and continues to occupy the buildings still available.



9.800 m2 buildings  
3.000 m2 public spaces  
1.800m2 of commons  
180 hosted persons  
80 organizations

## 2020 end

The initiative LES GRANDS VOISINS ends after 5 years to give way to the new project of the eco-district.

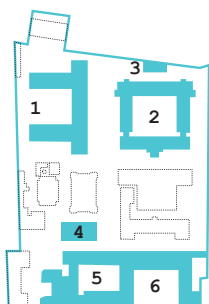




# 2020-2026 construction reactivation



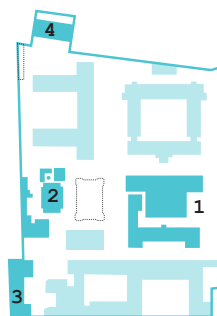
Start the construction phase of the new eco-district that maintains 60% of the built heritage.



Some of the existing buildings are being regenerated.

some buildings will be newly built.

- 1 Lelong
- 2 Pinard
- 3 Maison de medicine
- 4 Lingerie
- 5 Oratoire
- 6 Robin

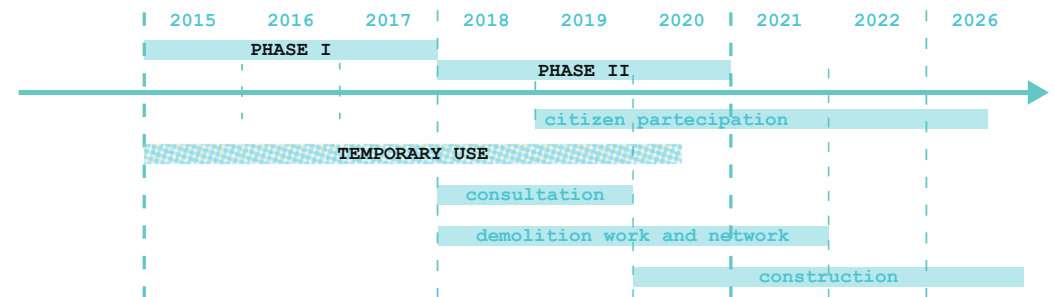


- 1 Petit
- 2 Chaufferie
- 3 Denfert
- 4 Lepage

Saint  
Vincent  
de  
Paul  
HOSPITAL

LES  
GRANDS  
VOISINS

Saint  
Vincent  
de  
Paul  
ECO-DISTRICT



TOOL 02

6 STEPS STRATEGY  
TO REACTIVATE  
EMPTY SPACES

---

General Model

Urban and Space Factors

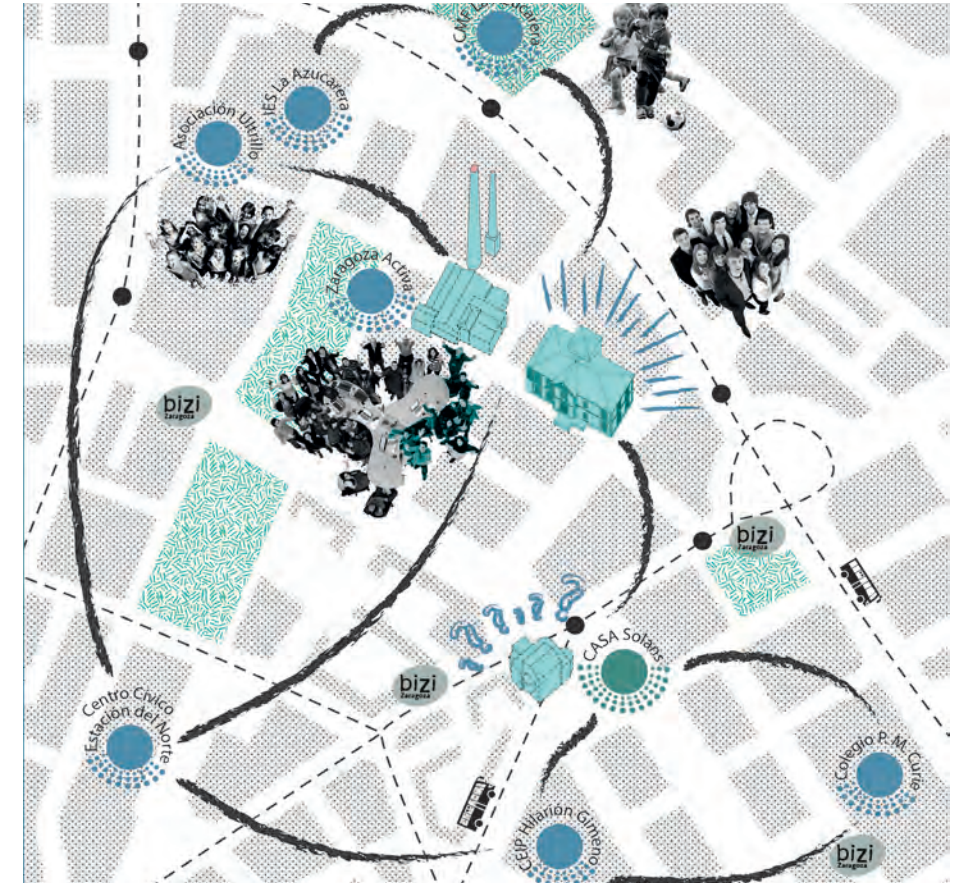
Indicators

[PHASES]	[ACTIONS]	[SUB-ACTIONS]
1 OFFER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a MAPPING</li> <li>b SPACE</li> <li>c FEASIBILITY</li> <li>d URBAN RULES</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>[Mapping urban voids digital Platform]</li> <li>[Property, Urban, Cat., Degrade]</li> <li>[Reuse Matrix, LCD, Minimum invest. SWOT]</li> <li>[Policies, Adm. Legal procedures, Uses]</li> </ul>
2 DEMAND	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a MAPPING C.I.</li> <li>b CALL</li> <li>c PARTICIPATION</li> <li>d PROJECTS</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>[Mapping citizens initiatives]</li> <li>[Demand&amp;Users&amp;Spaces]</li> <li>[Tours, Visit, Workshops]</li> <li>[Concept, Phases, Uses, Users, Evaluation]</li> </ul>
3 ASSIGNMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a AGREEMENTS</li> <li>b BUSINESS PLAN</li> <li>c BENEFITS</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>[Legal Forms, Timing]</li> <li>[Activities, Employment]</li> <li>[Social + Urban Return, Inclusion]</li> </ul>
4 FUNDS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a CALL FOR BIDS</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>[Local, National, European]</li> <li>[Sponsor, Crowdfunding, Fundraising]</li> </ul>
5 IMPLEMENTATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a P.A. AREAS</li> <li>b LOCAL A. GROUP</li> <li>c ACTIVITIES</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>[Legal permits]</li> <li>[Project execution]</li> <li>[Starting point]</li> </ul>
6 ASSESMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a ASSESMENT PLAN</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>[Control, Report, Dissemination]</li> </ul>

Six steps methodology to reactivate empty spaces. Patrizia Di Monte



Workshop of citizens initiatives mapping in Zaragoza.



Workshop of citizens initiatives mapping in Zaragoza.

This section addresses the main core of the toolkit, and will function as a broad guide for the processes necessary to reactivate abandoned spaces through temporary uses.

## GENERAL MODEL

From the study of successful cases, particularly the Gravalosdimonte OTU programme, common procedures are extrapolated and the steps that will allow for the implementation of temporary uses as a public policy are prioritised.

Many works have addressed the phenomena of temporality, but they have done so from specific perspectives. The intention of this tool is to establish a general methodology so that each of the project's specific aspects can be defined in a hierarchical structure.

This methodology identifies the necessary processes for reactivating abandoned buildings by implementing temporary uses. The processes have been established sequentially to respond to the implementation of various actions in a chronological sense. They cover various thematic issues that have been broken down for simplicity.

The methodology proposed for this tool consists of six primary sections and a series of secondary sub-sections:

### 1. OFFER:

This includes the analysis of urban and, more specifically, spatial issues that must be considered to introduce the urban void or disused building into a new life cycle. The sub-sections are as follows:

- **Mapping:** This establishes the need to have a register of disused spaces in a city, which is considered an essential tool for the management of the contemporary city. It is proposed through digital platforms that allow for rapid geolocation and its insertion in various apps that facilitate its management and interaction. Mapping has the dual purpose of constituting a register for administering and facilitating accessibility to information by any interested party.
- **Space:** This dissects those issues related to the architectural or urban space that can be controlled to guarantee the use of the space. It covers issues relating to both the urban environment and the specific building and



Co-design workshop for a public empty building reactivation in Zaragoza

proposes the systematic review of architectural, construction, installation, accessibility, and other elements to ensure the safety and proper functioning of a space.

- **Feasibility:** This establishes the size of the investment according to the state of conservation of a building and allows for considering the reactivation of the building in phases, if necessary.
- **Urban rules:** This determines any limits imposed by local regulations and explores possibilities for action through the implementation of specific temporary use regulations.

### 2. DEMAND:

This contemplates the necessary steps to establish a connection between the offered space and the possible agents interested in its activation. The sub-sections are as follows:

- **Call:** This is used as an element of connection between supply and demand. Through a call for tender, the local administration regulates the modes of relationship with potential users. It establishes the primary aspects such as the model of assignment, the time of assignment, the necessary interventions



Workshop in Zaragoza. District exploration, collecting the community memory of urban voids in Zaragoza

in the building and their economic valuations, the proposed activities, the valuation of the social return, and the control and evaluation mechanisms.

- **Mapping citizens initiatives:** This constitutes a possible independent tool for mapping citizen initiatives that require a space and enhancing the urban regeneration processes.
- **Participation:** This is formed by the set of tools that allow the local administration to disseminate and communicate the actions related to temporary uses. It includes thematic tours, visits to disused spaces, and workshops to facilitate the dissemination of these actions and encourage citizen participation. It is the starting phase for planning new uses and reactivating these disused spaces.
- **Projects:** This includes specific documentation offered by users, which responds to calls for proposals and sets out in concrete terms the activities they propose to conduct, including their methods of financing, commitments to intervene in the space, and social returns and benefits for the social fabric. It is important to underline the exogamic nature of the activity because it is fundamentally a question of public heritage, and its social vocation must always be very present. It includes both technical documentation and documentation of the activity.



“el parque colaborativo” del centro de nuevas economías. jornadas participativas



Co-design workshop for the reactivation of a public empty building in Zaragoza.  
P. Di Monte I. Grávalos

### 3. ASSIGNMENT:

- **Assignment agreements:** This includes the definition of various legal forms (free transfer, facilitated rental, etc.) in which the conditions of the activity are established. It also establishes a timeframe that constitutes a legal commitment. The maintenance and/or repair of the building is guaranteed as an element of compensation for transfer, indicating chronological milestones of obligatory compliance.
- **Business plan:** This must be established to reflect proposed activities by users and their expected impact and to evaluate their economic sustainability.
- **Benefits:** Because of its social character, inclusion actions will be highlighted, demonstrating special sensitivity to accessibility, diversity, and integration within the social fabric.

### 4. FUNDS:

- **Call for bids:** The experimental nature of this process should take advantage of all financing methods offered by local, national, and European bodies, which are currently very sensitive to these practices. It is necessary to be able to provide users with the various financial opportunities and possibilities available. Similarly, other alternative sources of self-financing such as sponsorship, crowdfunding, or fundraising should be explored.

### 5. IMPLEMENTATION:

- **Public administration areas:** Coordination among different services is needed to provide all legal permits for project implementation.
- **Local action group:** This includes the implementation phase of the activity, which is based on a specific project and its corresponding administrative permits (building permits and activity permits). Subsequently, the project execution system is addressed, including all the self-construction works that facilitate starting the activity. Finally, it includes the actual start of the activities.
- **Activities.** Follow-up of the start-up phase of ‘temporary’ activities for the new use of the common good.

## 6. ASSESSMENT:

- **Assessment plan:** This delineates the various control protocols established to ensure and verify compliance with the agreements, the business plan, the social return, and the subsequent impact measurement. Tools should be sought to weigh both quantitative and qualitative social impacts.

## URBAN AND SPACE FACTORS

Although a global vision is appropriate, a specific part of the 2nd tool has been developed to address and explore specific issues of a city and its spaces. Therefore, together with the methodological approach to the process, a second toolkit will be developed that explores in depth the urban and architectural issues that affect the implementation of temporary uses of abandoned buildings. Many meetings have been held with the City Council, the Province of Zaragoza and the Aragon Region during the development of the toolkit, along with local associations, to test the process.

The toolkit of temporary uses comprises a series of urban and architectural approaches that are considered necessary to be tested to ensure the success of the interventions. To this end, the technical issues to be considered when discussing the reopening of a disused space have been developed more specifically in these themes:

- Urban context
- Ownership and cataloguing
- Building analysis
- Financing

Each of these blocks is determined by a series of indicators that shape the overall state of the building and its viability, which will be discussed in the following section.

## INDICATORS

A series of indicators has been established to identify those factors related to physical spaces that should be considered to assess the feasibility of reuse. The indicators correspond to the following blocks:

- **URBAN CONTEXT**

**Urban fabric:** These indicators define the position of the building in relation to the surrounding urban fabric. To simplify the numerous casuistries, they have been simplified to four urban situations: historic centre, urban expansion, periphery, and rural area. These icons are accompanied by photo plans indicating their respective geographical positions to contextualise each of them in their territories.

**Public services for a city of proximity:** This indicator aims to establish two different areas of movement corresponding to the city distance covered by a young person (1.20 km) and an elderly person (0.9 km) walking for 15'. This is inspired by the '15-minute city' idea and is a conception of a way of living based on proximity and community. Key public services such as schools, kindergartens, libraries, green spaces, supermarkets, civic centres, health centres, parking facilities, bicycle interchanges, and public transport stations have been identified. These indicators are considered of vital importance because they allow for the detection of urban short circuits or deficits of essential services for citizens, and therefore the need for the proposed activities.

**In-between spaces:** These are fundamental elements. Though they belong to a building, they offer the possibility of creating a link to the urban space. These are transitional spaces between the exterior and the interior between the urban and the architectural spheres. They are pieces that have been enormously revalued after the pandemic and that give value to the expansion of the exterior or the interior activity of a building (patios, roofs, balconies, porches, etc.) as well as to spaces of relation between the exterior and the interior.

- **OWNERSHIP AND CATALOGUING**

**Classification of assets:** Assets can be domanial or patrimonial. This differentiation is fundamental because it establishes the limits of the possible transformations and cession of a property. Assets in the public domain are inalienable and unseizable; they serve a general use or public service, and their preferred use is common rather than private. The efficiency and economy in the management of assets in the public domain are paramount, so efficiency and profitability in the exploitation of these assets are fundamental.

**Heritage protection:** This indicator aims to define the degree of protection that a building has according to its environmental, architectural, and historical values. A standard categorisation has been chosen based on Spanish planning (none, environmental, architectural, or historical-artistic). Each category allows for different areas of intervention while protecting specific elements of a building.

- **BUILDING ANALYSIS**

**Essential services:** This records the existence of toilets, storage spaces, offices, and fire and smoke vents.

**Spatial typology:** This catalogues the spatial conception of a space according to the typology of its compartmentalisation (open-plan, mixed, compartmentalised, etc.) to assess its possible admissible and compatible uses. By nature, open-plan spaces admit a series of uses that would be difficult to develop in conventional premises, thus allowing the emergence of new transitory activities.

**Occupancy:** This determines the maximum capacity of a building according to the person/m<sup>2</sup> ratio established by municipal legislation. Most of this data are determined by existing fire prevention legislation.

**Accessibility:** This is considered an essential element to the enhancement of the value of a building, guaranteeing universal accessibility to all spaces. A distinction is made between 'accessible', 'practicable', and

'adaptable' spaces depending on existing architectural barriers. Additionally, it registers the existence or non-existence of a lift.

**State of conservation:** This evaluates the different construction chapters –structure, roof, walls, carpentry, and installations. Its analysis provides specific results on safety and economic viability, and it is used to determine the degree of minimum investment necessary for the start-up of a specific activity. It also makes possible the establishment of a sequence of scheduled interventions that respond to the state of the building, including environmental considerations according to the building's energy label. This assessment determines the level of conservation and the level of possible investment needed to reactivate the space.

- **FINANCING/COST REHABILITATION**

This determines the sources of funding for activities (public subsidies, private funds, mixed formulas, crowdfunding, sponsors, etc.) and, therefore, their viability.



## BUILDING INDICATORS

### HERITAGE PROTECTIVE RESTRICTION

**p** patrimonial [ ]

**d** demanial [ ]

### PROTECTION

**n** none [ ]

**e** environmental [ ]

**a** architectural [ ]

**h** historical [ ]

### INTERMEDIATE SPACES

**c** courtyard [ ]

**r** rooftop [ ]

**b** balcony [ ]

### SERVICES

**t** [TOILETS] [ ]Women [ ]Men [ ]Others [07/07]

**o** office [ ] [01/01]

**w** warehouse [ ] [02/02]

### SPACE TYPOLOGY

**d** diaphanous [ ]

**m** mixed [ ]

**c** compartmentalized [ ]

### OCCUPATION

**c** capacity [ ]persons

## VIABILITY INDEX

**l** Low - Ready to go [ ]  
[minimal investment, short times]

**m** Medium - Installations + accessibility + toilets [ ]  
[moderate investment, regulable times]

**h** High - Structural+ Install + fire prot [ ]  
[high investment, long times]

### DEGRADE STATE

**i** [TECHNICAL INSPECTION BUILD.] [ ]no [ ]yes [ ]year

**s** [STRUCTURAL] [ ]good [ ]medium [ ]insecure [22/30]

**r** [ROOF] [ ]plumb. [ ]elect. [ ]gas [ ]heat [10/15]

**w** [WALLS] [ ]good [ ]medium [ ]insecure [05/10]

**c** [CARPENTRY] [ ]good [ ]medium [ ]insecure [02/05]

**y** [SYSTEMS] [ ]plumb. [ ]elec. [ ]gas [ ]heat [03/10]

**f** [FIRE PROTECTION] [ ]no [ ]incomplete [ ]yes [08/10]

**e** [ENERGY LABEL] [ ]A [ ]B [ ]C [ ]D [ ]F [ ]G

### ACCESIBILITY

**a** [ACCESSIBLE] [ ] [00/10]

**p** [PRACTICABLE] [ ] [05/05]

**l** [LIFT] [ ] [00/05]

### INVESTMENT

**p** public [ ]

**r** private [ ]

**m** mixed [ ]

**g** grants [ ]

**c** crowdfunding [ ]

Building indicators, Viability index: degrade state, accesibility, required investment.

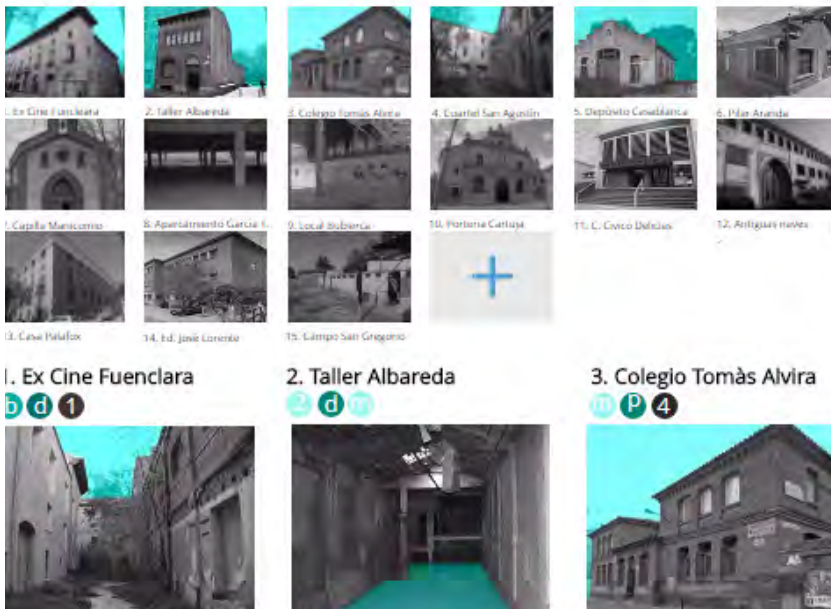
Building indicators, heritage catalogue, heritage protection degree, services and space typology

TOOL 03

TEMPORARY USE  
OFFICE

---

Temporary Use Office



## TEMPORARY USE OFFICE

The implementation of temporary uses is complex and requires a multidisciplinary vision. Municipalities often lack a ‘front-desk’ service that can sufficiently address all these requirements, resulting in a long and complex municipal process between the various departments that loses sight of the global vision.

In the same light, citizens are faced with administrative complexity – often including the initiation of lengthy processes and a lack of quick or concrete answers. The absence of a single interlocutor precipitates many of the current initiatives’ failure and creates confusion for users caught in the usual bureaucratic labyrinth. Because of this, the implementation of OTU is proposed as a European public policy.

The OTU could function as a front office and as a local, national, or European agency intermediating between citizens and the administration. It would facilitate and support the work of the different social actors. The mission of this front desk, agency, or local administrative working group would be to guide citizens through the various processes explained here, simplify and enable the adaptive reuse of abandoned spaces, misused heritage and urban voids.

OTUs will facilitate agreements between the public administration and citizens. This proposal has the potential to encourage the ‘reprogramming’ of a built city through the implementation of temporary uses – by offering a new way of managing existing but currently underused public heritages. This proposal is about not only the reuse of urban spaces but also the renewal of the roles of potential users and the regeneration of the urban fabric. It is essential to consider including various disused buildings in a new life cycle, thereby transmitting a way of understanding the current contemporary city by introducing dynamic and flexible instruments that allow for new actions that generate productivity and social cohesion.

Working with new tools that can dynamise the landscape of abandonment, recycling the existing city and reconsidering its metabolism, must be the basis for a new way of understanding urbanism through interventions in which 'transformation' is a value. An innovative social and urban regeneration policy must seek new ways of reactivating unproductive spaces.

This can be facilitated by the implementation of policies based on temporary uses. To respond to current economic contingencies, it is necessary to introduce variables in urban planning procedures, modify their timing, and allow for the possibility of error, which can bring knowledge and growth through the implementation of "temporary use offices".



## REFERENCES

### General:

- De Certeau, M. (2007). La invención de lo cotidiano. Ediciones Universidad Iberoamericana.
- Jacobs, J. (2011). Muerte y vida de las grandes Ciudades. Capitán Swing.
- Landry, Ch. (2008). The Creative City. A Toolkit for Urban Innovators. Earthscan.
- Lefebvre, H. (2013). La producción del espacio. Capitán Swing.
- McLuhan, M. (2009). Comprender los medios de comunicación: Las extensiones del ser humano. Planeta.

### Temporary uses:

- Bishop, P; William, L. (2012) The Temporary City. Routledge.
- Bürgin, M.; Cabane, P. (1999) Akupunktur für Basel: Zwischennutzung als Standortentwicklung auf dem Areal des DB\_Güterbahnhofs in Basel. Urbane Strategien Projektentwicklung Kommunikation.
- Elisei, P. TUTUR. (2014). Temporary Use as a Tool for Urban Regeneration. Urbact.
- Grávalos Lacambra, I.; Di Monte, P. (2014). "La reprogramación de la ciudad: consideraciones urbanas y sociales en torno al programa estonoesunsolar" en Ciudad y Territorio. Estudios territoriales, n. 179: 127-137.
- Haydn, F.; Temel, R.. (2006). Temporary Urban Spaces: Concepts for the Use of Urban Spaces. Birkhauser Verlag AG.
- Lyndon, M. (2012). Tactical Urbanism. Short Term Action, Long Term Change. The Street Plans Collaborative.
- Oswald, Ph.; Overmeyer, K.; Misselwitz, Ph.. (2004). Urban Catalyst. Strategies for temporary use. Dom Publishers.
- Oswald, Ph.; Overmeyer, K.; Misselwitz, P.. (2013). Urban Catalyst. The Power of temporary use. Dom Publishers.
- Overmeyer, K. (2007). Urban Pioneers. Temporary Use and Urban Development in Berlin. Jover.



### **AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY | PATRIZIA DI MONTE**

Architect by the I.U.A.V. Venice, she received a grant from the Ministry of Culture of the Italian Government for a Master and PhD studies at the UPC and the Contemporary Culture Center of Barcelona. After this stage of advanced training in Barcelona, she founded with Ignacio Grávalos *gravalosdimonte arquitectos*. They are the intellectual authors of several pilot projects, including *@estonoesunsolar* experimental program for the regeneration of urban voids imported as best practice in more than 200 cities around the world. Their projects have been distinguished by the innovative and experimental nature, promoting urban regeneration and sustainable urbanism. Their works have been published in the most relevant international cultural and architectural magazines. They are the winners, among others, of the international awards: Eurocities-Planning for people, 2011; IQU Innovazione Qualità Urbana 2010, Saie Seleccion 12 Urban Regeneration and development, Biennale Spazio Pubblico 2013 Città sociale, Winning best urban solution LLGA awards 2013: Cities Pilot the Future; research mentions XI BEAU, landscaping FAD awards 2011, Ri.U.So. awards, City to City FAD awards 2012. Their projects have been exhibited, among other institutions, at the MAXXI in Rome, the DAZ in Berlin, the NAI in Rotterdam, the Cité de l'Architecture in Paris. They have been invited to several editions of the Biennale Architettura di Venezia, developing the pilot project to stop Italian rural areas depopulation in 2018. She combines her professional activity with teaching as visiting professor at numerous European universities, workshops, international forums, and research, as a Project Partner of the Generative Commons funded by HORIZON 2020. In 2020 she has been nominated to the Loeb Fellowship of the Harvard Graduate School of Design.

SECTION [02]

# LEGAL TOOLKIT

University of Turin

## BACKGROUND

Methodology

Introducing the tools

[TOOL 1]

ENACTMENTS OF URBAN COMMONS: LEGAL GUIDELINES FOR MUNICIPALITIES

A

Analysis of the regulatory framework: identification of the legal challenges

Public procedures in theory and praxis

Guidelines for municipalities and EU bottlenecks

Reimburses and State aid

B

Analysis of the regulatory framework

Public procedures in theory and praxis

[TOOL 2]

gE.CO LEGAL Q&A

Questions

Answers

## Methodology

Regarding urban commons, the law is traditionally considered a crucial issue.

Ultimately, the management of the commons is an institutional issue because it requires submitting to a model of governance one or more goods and organising, around this latter, the management of a community and its relationship with public actors and other public and private stakeholders.

Moreover, the legal issues related to the commons are often very complex. Indeed, the commons tends to undermine the logics at the core of the architecture of both private and public law, thus calling for new lenses for seeing and using the law in a transformative and empowering way.

These aspects, which have been evident since the project's beginning, are the legal issues most common in both communities and public administration engaged in managing the commons in Europe. For a long time, the consortium has been relying on different tools to try to determine how gE.CO could support their solution.

The work began with the gE.CO survey. During the project's first phase, the consortium chose fifty-five experiences of urban commons among the 250 originally present in the gE.CO database. Those experiences, divided into communities and public policies, underwent were the subject of a series of interviews, the results of which results were presented into a long and comprehensive memo.

A primary goal of the interviews was to understand the main legal issues and questions faced by the experiences of urban commons in Europe from the perspectives of both communities and public administrations. In the project architecture, these results were intended for use (and have been used) as the basis for the work necessary for implementing the legal toolkit. Concerning the law, in the gE.Co survey the following elements have emerged:

- both communities and public administrations consider the legal aspects to be the main and most important hurdle when implementing an urban commoning experience or policy;

- for communities, the difficulty is twofold: i) how to implement the organisational governance. Which legal vest should this latter be given? What are the legal options at hand? Which are the differences among them, both advantages and disadvantages? ii) Which model of stewardship should be used (or proposed to the public counterpart) for

managing the space to respect the principles of the commons? Which institutions can we rely on? What are their differences, advantages and disadvantages?

- for public administrations, the problems were, symmetrically, related to the following issues: how to select the manager of public goods or services after a process of codesign in which public administrations and private individuals or entities work together to co-define objectives and solutions of management? How to carry out the direct attribution of the management of public goods or services to nonprofit entities without the organisation of a competitive selection? How can the management of public goods or services be attributed to informal communities, namely groups of persons not incorporated in specific legal vests?

Together with the survey results, these issues have been the subject matter of long and comprehensive confrontation within the consortium and have also constituted the focus of a public debate held online in March 2021. On this occasion, the survey results and the legal issues mentioned above were described and discussed with some of the public administrations and communities involved in the survey. Moreover, the consortium further elaborated and deliberated these results, which represented the core of the policy brief submitted in June 2020.

After this work was done, the consortium discussed these results to find a feasible and practical structure for the legal toolkit. These discussions were held regularly and took place in both meetings held in Zaragoza (in September) and Vienna (in October) and during ongoing online meetings held on Fridays specifically meant for partners involved to debate work on the toolkit.

## Introducing the tools

These discussions led to an architecture for the legal toolkit comprising two parts that mirrored the two main stakeholders it is intended to reach: communities and public administrations.

The first part of the toolkit, meant for communities wishing to implement an urban commons or already engaged in the governance of an urban commons, is a Q&A, structured as a list of questions whose formulation derives from the central questions emerging from the gE.CO survey and a list of definitions. For each question, one or more



entries are indicated, which, crossreferenced, provide the answer. The Q&A covers three main aspects:

- i) general legal questions at the cornerstone of the urban commons (what is an urban commons, what kind of legal issues it implies, etc.);
- ii) different legal institutions available for both giving a legal vest to the communities and governing the good as well as implementing a legally structured cooperation with the public administration;
- iii) possible legal hurdles that may emerge during the governance of the commons (e.g., liability for damages).

The second part of the toolkit consists of a legal brief meant for public administrations willing to engage in projects of urban commoning. The legal brief deals with the issues mentioned above and focuses on EU law, the law applicable to all member states that represents the general framework shaping all the legal systems of the European Union concerning the issues at stake. This allowed us to design guidelines useful for all public administrations independent of their country of operation.

The legal toolkit will be accessible as both an autonomous toolkit and an integration of two other toolkits, the Governance Toolkit and the Temporary Uses Toolkit. In fact, as mentioned, the issue of governance is also an institutional matter because communities facing governance must choose among different legal structures and different legal models. For this reason the Q&A will be integrated in the Governance Toolkit where it will be a fundamental part of the 'Commons and Dragons' game, functioning as the guideline for the gamified discussion between participants when players must debate their legal strategy. In fact, the final version of the Q&A also derives from a day of experimentation with the Commons and Dragon game during the 'European Night of Researchers' held in Torino on 26 September 2021.

Also, the issue of how a public administration can assign a good to a community to implement a temporary use in the logic of the commons implies that analysis of the issues mentioned above and thus guidelines for public administration involved in such processes is needed.

## TOOL 01

### ENACTMENTS OF URBAN COMMONS: LEGAL GUIDELINES FOR MUNICIPALITIES

#### A

Analysis of the regulatory framework: identification of the legal challenges

Public procedures in theory and praxis

Guidelines for municipalities and EU bottlenecks

Reimburses and State aid

#### B

Analysis of the regulatory framework

Public procedures in theory and praxis

When a municipality is faced with the enactment of urban commons (see Q&A 'urban commons' and 'commoning') many legal hurdles emerge. These legal hurdles are mostly related to the core of the structure of administrative law proper of most European legal systems. Indeed, administrative law is mostly rooted in the idea of hierarchy and competition, whereas urban commons are founded on the logic of horizontal subsidiarity, codesign, collaborative administration (see Q&A 'horizontal subsidiarity', 'codesign', 'collaborative administration'). These legal hurdles can be summarised in the following topics:

**1) Selection of the manager of public goods or services after a process of co-design** in which public administrations and private individuals or entities work together to co-define objectives and solutions of management;

**2) Direct attribution of the management of public goods or services to nonprofit entities** without the organisation of a competitive selection;

**3) Attribution of the management of public goods or services to informal communities**, namely groups of persons not incorporated in specific legal vests.

This report aims at supporting public administrations willing to promote one or more projects of urban commons, analysing the aforementioned topics in the light of EU law. EU law is in fact the law applicable to all member states, and it represents the general framework shaping all EU legal systems with respect to the issues at stake. This will allow us to design guidelines useful for all public administrations independently of their country of operation.

The analysis will rely on the following pillars.

**Analysis of the regulatory framework.** The regulatory framework will be described, and, in particular, relevant EU directives and regulations will be selected and analysed. Points of strength and weaknesses will be highlighted in relation to the forms of collaborative management.

**Public procedures in theory and praxis.** The analysis of the regulatory framework will allow summarisation of public procedures described at EU level and comparison of them with those implemented by municipalities to design collaborative forms of management.

**Guidelines for municipalities.** Guidelines will be prepared to help public administrations find possible solutions to critical issues. To facilitate the guidelines' use, they will be structured as practical recommendations.

## A

In the first part of the guidelines, the first two issues mentioned in the above will be analysed, namely i) selection of the manager of public goods or services after a process of co-design in which public administrations and private individuals or entities work together to co-define objectives and solutions of management; ii) direct attribution of the management of public goods or services to nonprofit entities without the organisation of a competitive selection.

The transformation of public neglected open areas and of public buildings that need rehabilitation is often delegated from local authorities to nonprofit entities who obtain the management of these public spaces through a direct attribution. This model of reuse and regeneration raises questions of compatibility with both the regulation of concession contracts and public procurement.

In paragraph 1.1, basic principles of public procurement will be summarised, and stages normally implemented to award contracts will be described. Paragraph 2 will show why direct attribution of public spaces to nonprofit entities can clash with the legal arrangement; paragraph 3 will highlight basic principles and the stages in the process of attribution. Finally, in paragraph 3 the issue of reimbursements and State aid will be faced.

## ANALYSIS OF THE REGULATORY FRAMEWORK: IDENTIFICATION OF THE LEGAL CHALLENGES

### Public procurement basic principles

To regulate the field of public procurement the EU has adopted three important procurement directives:

Utilities Directive 2014/25/EU;

Public Sector Directive 2014/24/EU; and

Concessions Directive 2014/23/EU.

With regards to the topic analysed in this report, Directives 2014/24/EU and 2014/23/EU will be considered.

Both directives have been introduced to harmonise the member states' national regulations in the field of procurement; nevertheless, member states can maintain or adopt substantive or procedural rules not in conflict with the EU directives.

A set of core principles inspires the EU regulation.

**Competition** operates as a principle ensuring efficient and economic procurement results. Economic operators can present their tenders communicating the price at which the goods or the services are available on the market. Competition aims to give public administrations the greatest possible choice in the provision of a certain service.

**Equal treatment and nondiscrimination** indicate two different but converging strategies to maintain equality between economic operators who shall be evaluated exclusively for the tenders they have presented; no other elements can influence the award decision of public administrations. Thus, equal treatment means objective assessment of tender prices and tender qualities. The principle of nondiscrimination adds to this consideration that economic operators' nationality is irrelevant in the common procurement market.

**Transparency** is a core principle of public procurement and, as we will show later in this report, one basic principle in the EU context that operates independently of the application of a specific legislation. It forces public administrations to advertise requirements and technical specifications relevant for the selection process as well as to adopt all means to ensure full assessment of the public action.

**Most economically advantageous tender criterion** to award contracts requires that all contracts shall be awarded by considering cost-related and non-cost-related factors.

Beyond these principles specifically operating in the field of public procurement, public administrations shall always respect a set of general principles that inspire all public actions. In addition to transparency, this list is as follows.

**Equality of treatment:** The general definition of this principle establishes that all suppliers/service providers shall be treated under the same conditions.

**Mutual recognition:** In the EU, reports and certificates issued by the authorities of any member state shall also be valid in all other EU states.

**Proportionality:** Public authorities shall establish requirements and conditions that are reasonably proportional to the object of their public action.

According to this legal framework, procedures compliant with basic principles are generally organised as follows.

**Specification stage.** Public administrations describe the requirements needed for the selection. The description shall fulfil the principle of equality and nondiscrimination so that the requirement list does not favour or eliminate particular providers. The new directive admits requirements specifically devoted to deal with social and environmental issues.

**Assessment and selection.** Tenders are evaluated according to cost-related and non-cost-related factors; technical capacity and ability to provide the good or the service shall be taken into consideration.

**Award stage.** The contract award is established according to the MEAT criterion; social and environmental requirements are included if needed.

## PUBLIC PROCEDURES IN THEORY AND PRAXIS

In general, the attribution of the management of public spaces permits achievement of one of the objects of a '**public contract**' according to Directive 2014/24/EU, and in particular the **provision of services**.

In fact, nonprofit entities organise in the public space the provision of different services—such as cultural activities, inclusive practices for migrants and other underrepresented

groups, initiatives in the field of education or training—which are generally devoted to the collectivity and are of general interest.

The nonprofit nature of the provider does not avoid the application of procurement principles and rules, given that 'economic operators should be interpreted in a broad manner so as to include any persons and/or entities which offer the execution of works, the supply of products or the provision of services on the market, irrespective of the legal form under which they have chosen to operate'<sup>1</sup>. According to the CJEU (Court of Justice of the European Union), running an economic activity within an existing or potential market is the necessary and sufficient condition to apply competition law<sup>2</sup>.

Thus, in this scenario, public administrations should manage a public action inspired by the basic principles of procurement based on a competitive and selective process for assigning the public space. However, in the last few years in the praxis of many European local public administrations, important divergences related to both principles inspiring the procedure and management of this latter can be pointed out.

Several European municipalities are organising **collaborative procedures** to attribute the management of public spaces. These procedures generally are not regulated by specific national laws; sometimes, local acts have been adopted to regulate these processes (See Q&A 'Regulation for the co-management of urban commons', 'Usò civico', 'Civic management', 'Collaboration pact').

This process is generally based on the following principles (see Q&A 'Horizontal subsidiarity' and 'Co-design').

**Cooperation:** municipalities work together with nonprofit entities without managing a selective procedure.

**Transparency:** municipalities ensure that all materials related to the co-design phase are available for the evaluation. Thus, reports are collected and shared.

**Qualitative criteria:** municipalities can highlight particular qualitative criteria for defining the process of rehabilitation of the public space employed for provision of the service.

---

1 Directive 2014/24/UE Recital 16.

2 CJEU 23 April 1991, Klaus Höfner and Fritz Elser v Macrotron GmbH, C-41/90.

All general criteria inspiring the public action as defined in paragraph 1.1 can be applied to these procedures.

The process starts with **identification of the public spaces**, which is generally promoted by the municipality; sometimes, it can result from a bottom-up identification through which citizens can point out abandoned open areas or neglected public buildings. Municipalities often organise a **co-design process** during which they involve nonprofit entities in planning the future of the space and in defining the services that can be helpful for the local community. At the end of this process, **the public space is attributed directly to the nonprofit entity** involved in the co-design process, and an agreement between the parties is signed.

#### GUIDELINES FOR MUNICIPALITIES AND EU BOTTLENECKS

The compatibility of direct attributions of the management of public spaces can be justified as follows. First, there is general argument: both the EU directives on procurement and concessions leave member states free to assess which juridical person is more able to provide a certain service between a nonprofit and a for-profit entity. Second, the legal reasoning developed by the CJEU in the decision of the ‘Spezzino’ case<sup>3</sup> represents an interesting tool for demonstrating the compatibility of direct attributions with public procurement principles.

The **‘Spezzino’ judgement** confronted the issues of exemptions to the principle of competition in the case of provision of social services. The Azienda Sanitaria Local n. 5, based in the Liguria Region (Italy), established an agreement for the provision of urgent and emergency health transport service with nonprofit associations. However, according to the claimants promoting the legal action before the Italian administrative court, this agreement was incompatible with EU law specifically regarding the principles of competition, equal treatment, and nondiscrimination. The claimants argued that the reservation of the provision of the services to nonprofit associations discriminated against entities working in the same sector but pursuing profit.

---

3 CJEU, 11 December 2014, Azienda sanitaria locale n. 5 ‘Spezzino’ and Others v San Lorenzo Soc. coop. Sociale and Croce Verde Cogema cooperativa sociale Onlus.

**A second problematic issue** related to direct attribution was represented by the fact that the service was delivered for free, given that the associations received only a reimbursement of the expenses suffered in the contract execution. The doubt of compatibility in this case derived from classification of such reimbursement as a State aid.

**The CJEU held that reservation of contracts for the provision of social services to nonprofit entities could be admitted if two conditions occur.**

First, the reservation to nonprofit entities must not modify the financial balance of the social security system and must be maintained ‘on grounds of public health, a balanced medical and hospital service open to all’ (par. 57). Second, the reservation must contribute to ‘the social purpose and the pursuit of the objectives of the good of the community and budgetary efficiency on which that system is based’ (par. 60).

**This last point shall be stressed for supporting the direct attribution of the management of public spaces to nonprofit entities.**

In case of an administrative conflict, municipalities before national courts shall be able to prove that the direct attribution contributes

- to the achievement of social purposes;
- to the pursuit of objectives for the good of the community; and
- to ensuring budgetary efficiency.

Accordingly, the legal act establishing the direct attribution shall deal with all three points; it is worth noting that to strengthen this evaluation, solidarity services managed by nonprofit entities shall not substitute for public services provided by local authorities but enrich the public offer.

Demonstration of budgetary efficiency could require significant effort, considering that this element can be difficult to assess regarding the management of public spaces. However, in this case, municipalities shall enhance the social impact and the community benefits of direct attribution to a greater extent than economic efficiency. In this sense, **it could be helpful to establish a legal framework fixing criteria for a common assessment of the social impact.**

**Municipalities are recommended** to adopt a legal act to introduce special criteria to evaluate social impact or to promote at least a regional legal framework.

Municipalities shall always fulfil the general principles governing their action, namely equality of treatment, transparency, proportionality, and mutual recognition, so that all

legal acts and procedures devoted to carrying out a direct attribution shall be correctly communicated and always available to the public. **Publication of the materials produced during the co-design procedure**, as well as **the preferential criteria according to which the choice is finalised**, is required. **Recording and reporting** shall be taken into consideration.

Thus, to summarise,

- 1) The direct attribution of the management of public spaces shall be justified in a public act stressing that this choice ensures **the achievement of social purposes, the pursuit of objectives for the good of the community, and insurance of budgetary efficiency**.
- 2) In the case of a co-design stage, all activities developed in this phase shall be documented: reports or audio registrations of the meeting are recommended. Documents and materials shall be easily accessible, so that their publication on a specific webpage is encouraged.

A last clarification shall be advanced.

In the Directive on public procurement, **articles 74–77 establish a special regime for social services** (so-called ‘light regime’), which are more lenient than the general regime. The rules introduce the possibility of reserving the right to participate in public procurement procedures to those entities defined in Art. 77, ‘Reserved contracts for certain services’, who are both nonprofit and for-profit entities responding to the hybrid definition of social enterprises. However, the special regime establishes a process of selection with its own rules about the publication of notices and its own principles of awarding the contract.

In particular, the light regime has two different sections that are dependent on the value of contracts.

In case of contracts below EUR 750.000, national authorities are entirely free to regulate and conduct tendering procedures for these same services.

Above that value, ‘EU rules require contracting authorities to comply with rules on transparency by making their intention to tender out one of these services known at EU level, before the start of the procedure, and to equally announce its conclusion and outcome through a contract award notice’.

**In the field of urban regeneration**, and especially regarding awarding contracts for the provision of educational and cultural services, community, social and personal services

furnished by youth associations<sup>4</sup>, the light regime could be interesting; however, the Directive does not establish particular rules of procedures but requires member states to introduce specific national regulations related to these general provisions.

## REIMBURSEMENTS AND STATE AID

To support the provision of these services, which are generally neighbourhood based, municipalities assign the public space for free, even if these open areas or buildings have a pecuniary value. Moreover, public administrations reimburse expenses sustained by nonprofit entities to manage the space, if correctly documented.

Reimburses can raise the issue of their compatibility with the EU regulation of state aid. According to Art. 107 TFUE, state aid is defined as ‘any aid granted by a member state or through state resources in any form whatsoever which distorts or threatens to distort competition by favouring certain undertakings or the production of certain goods [...] insofar as it affects trade between member states’.

Some notions included in this definition or deriving from it shall be clarified:

- **undertakings** are entities engaged in economic activities, regardless of their legal status. Thus, national distinctions based on the nonprofit/for-profit dichotomy are not relevant;
- **an economic activity** consists in offering goods or services on a market; and
- **the existence of a market** for offering services depends on political choices, and in particular on the way in which member states have organised these services.

For this reason, a list of economic activities is not provided in EU law, even if some clarifications are collected in Commission Notice on the notion of state aid as referred to in Article 107(1) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union.

According to this definition, nonprofit entities managing public spaces are undertakings if member states introduce a market mechanism for the corresponding services.

**The management of public spaces cannot be considered as an economic activity by showing that it is part of the essential functions of the state or it is connected with those functions by its nature, its aim and the rules to which it is subject.**

---

<sup>4</sup> These three services are mentioned in the Annex XIV of the Directive 2014/24/EU with regard to the application of the light regime.

In the abovementioned Commission Notice, a list of examples is provided; among these activities, the development and revitalisation of public land by public authorities is claimed. This latter can include an activity such as urban regeneration, considering that the management of local urban and spatial development plans represents one of the essential functions of public authorities<sup>5</sup>. Moreover, regenerating and taking care of abandoned buildings and neglected areas can be conceived as two activities apt to ensure environmental protection that is another essential public function<sup>6</sup>.

Thus, to avoid the application of state aid law, **municipalities** shall clarify in the legal act establishing the attribution of the management of public spaces **the main public function** that the activity carried out by nonprofit associations permits to ensure.

## B

In the second part of the guidelines, the third issue mentioned in the above will be analysed, namely the attribution of the management of public goods or services to informal communities, namely groups of persons not incorporated in specific legal vests.

### ANALYSIS OF THE REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

The main differences existing between informal communities and formal groups can be summarised as follows.

- **Informal communities do not adopt a formal legal structure.** Accordingly, they do not adopt formal bodies but meet up in a general assembly. The most important consequences of the lack of a formal structure are both the impossibility of distinguishing the group from its members and the lack of a legal representative who expresses the will of the group.

- **Informal communities are fluid groups,** so that membership is generally open and criteria for membership are not defined. Thus, they can change periodically in such a way that influences the group's way of working.

### PUBLIC PROCEDURES IN THEORY AND PRAXIS

In the last few years, the management of public spaces has involved **informal communities**, namely **groups of persons not adopting a juridical vest** characterised by a permanent structure such as an association, a foundation, a committee or any other juridical forms belonging to the so-called 'third sector'.

Urban regeneration practices, especially in those cases that are neighbourhood based and launched by grassroots initiatives, can foster the rise of informal groups who take care of public spaces, generally open spaces. Moreover, in many European municipalities, **experiences of illegal occupations** managed by informal groups are moving forward toward a legal arrangement, finding an original legal framework.

---

5 Commission decision of 27 March 2014 on State aid SA.36346 — Germany — GRW land development scheme for industrial and commercial use

6 Court of Justice of 18 March 1997, *Cali & Figli*, C343/95



The main problems deriving from involving informal communities in the management of public spaces are the **allocation of responsibilities** (See Q&A Responsibilities, allocation of) and **the definition of the group's representation** in the relationship with public authorities.

**a) Allocation of responsibilities**

The lack of a juridical structure that allows isolation of a juridical subject from its members implies that all members of the informal community are responsible for the group-managed activities. Thus, all members are responsible for paying debts deriving from the management of the place, including expenses for routine maintenance or community activities; similarly, all members are legally responsible for any damages suffered by visitors in the public space. This latter profile is particularly important regarding unsafe conditions.

**b) Definition of the group's representation**

Lack of legal representation can be filled in throughout the attribution of single and specific mandates related to an identified activity. Thus, representation is not permanent and established in official acts adopted by the group but is defined case by case. Moreover, in those cases in which the representative identified with a specific mandate signs a legal act implying legal consequences, all group members can decide together to remain jointly responsible.

Municipalities who want to establish contractual relationships with informal communities **are recommended** to adopt one of these two solutions:

**Solution A)** The municipality supports the group in the process of juridical formalisation, providing **specific facilities and services** for their transformation into a juridical entity before beginning any public procedure related to the management of the public space.

**Solution B)** The municipality admits the group with no change in the organisation by requiring specific cautions. In particular, public authorities can prepare a **standard minute** that the group can complete after an assembly. The minute can deal with the following issues:

- Appointment of a contact person with a specific mandate; and
- Definition and extension of the mandate.

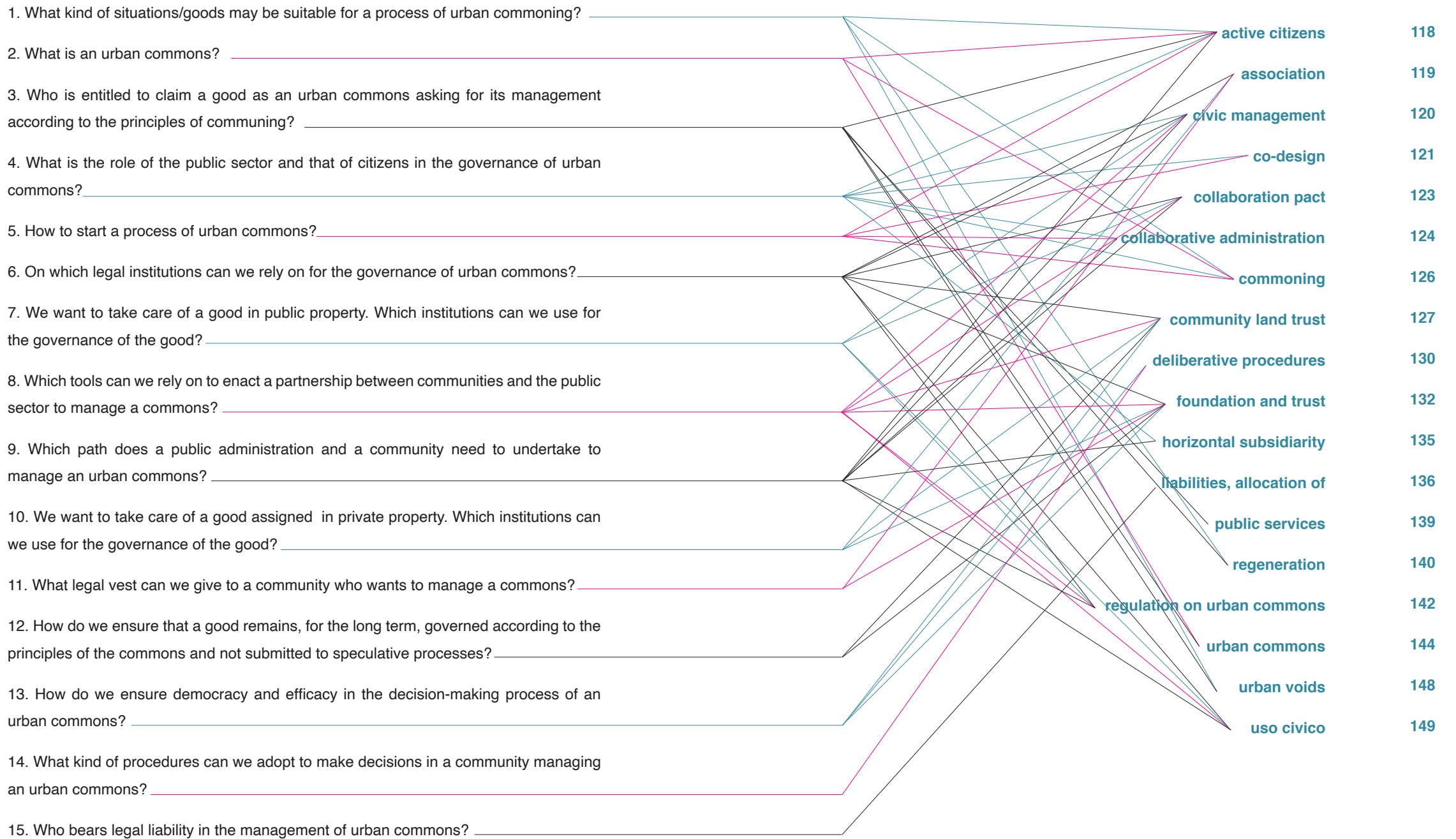
Questions  
Answers

TOOL 02

gE . CO LEGAL Q&A

**QUESTIONS**

**The web of answers**



## ANSWERS

### ACTIVE CITIZENS

Active citizens are those who take initiative to co-create, co-produce and co-manage urban commons and public services. Their practices are not for profit. Citizens take action to create, expand and reproduce social cohesion. In particular they aim to provide themselves and local communities with affordable and non-market access to goods and services. As individuals or as communities (associations as well as informal groups), they also experiment with forms of direct and bottom-up management in the public sphere, beyond traditional bureaucratic models. In this respect, active citizens are not only long-term inhabitants of a neighbourhood or of a city: even foreign people (who do not take part in local elections) and other city users (such as university students) can always become active citizens.

By taking action in such an inclusive manner, active citizens produce participative innovations in urban democracies. They cause public administrations to adopt new mentalities and approaches toward citizens' wills and expectations as well.

The increasing acknowledgement of the legal relevance of the contributions offered (as well as of the social, environmental and economic values generated) by active citizens, especially at the municipal level, is part of a broader paradigm shift. Indeed since 2016, with the adoption of the Urban Agenda in the framework of the Pact of Amsterdam, EU urban policies have been enhancing the roles of participative democracy and ecological awareness as two among the major pillars of a new urban life, based on long-term sustainability and social cohesion.

In this respect, collective actions and social practices carried out by citizens—often in an informal manner—are currently seen far differently than in the past. According to the former conception, public administrations used to challenge such activities. In some cases, they eventually could—and still can, of course—be considered relevant to criminal law by the judiciary. Nevertheless, alongside such a negative approach, a new positive view of citizens' direct initiative is arising. Local authorities are increasingly acknowledging and empowering bottom-up and cooperative attempts to improve life quality and social cohesion within neighbourhoods and cities.

In many European local contexts, innovative legal arrangements have been tested. For instance, under Italian law more than 200 municipalities adopted local regulations addressing the care and co-management of urban commons (see 'Regulation on

the co-management of urban commons'). Lacking national statutory provisions in this regard (at the state level, the first acknowledgement of practices and experimentations relevant to urban commons occurred with Art. 10 Decree Law 16 July 2020, no. 76, providing a regulation of temporary uses), local regulations have revealed a great potential by allowing thousands of citizens to take care of their neighbourhoods and cities, in the framework of innovative and legally binding quasi-contractual relationships with public authorities (see 'Collaboration pact'). In other countries similar initiatives are ongoing, among which one may note the experimentation in Barcelona (Spain), which has been promoting a comprehensive policy called 'Citizen Asset Programme'; and the major example of Ghent (Belgium), with its ambitious 'Commons Transition Plan'. Of course, other challenges are at issue throughout European urban systems. This is the case of the delicate dialectic between the emergence of and the need for protection of temporary collective uses—that is, commons-oriented relationships between citizens and urban spaces—and frequent conflicting capital-driven city developments, where the latter often exploit the use values generated in a neighbourhood by communities and transform them into exchange values to be accumulated.

The increasing centrality of active citizens in European discourses about the renovation of democracies, as well as in the everyday life of cities, is the product of a variety of factors. First, widespread structural transformations in urban systems, such as deindustrialisation and long-term demographic changes, have been the bases for the rise of issues such as the diffusion of urban voids and their externalities. Large discussions on the potential and the ambiguity of urban regeneration and tactical urbanism have arisen in such a context, leading to an increasing number of theoretical and practical contributions in such domains as law, sociology, and urbanism. Another element must be considered: the overall institutional crisis that has been characterising the current century, with huge difficulties for public budgets, as well as for the role of 'community organisers' played in the past by political parties, has produced strong incentives for the research of innovations in the methods and the tools of democracies.

### ASSOCIATION

In law, an association is a group of people who join through a common structure for a particular purpose, usually meant to be a continuing organisation. In most jurisdictions, associations amount to mandatory nonprofit organisations. This means that asso-

ciations cannot distribute profits to their members. In associations, commercial activities can be carried out; however, they cannot constitute the main tasks of the entity, and what is earned through such commercial activities must be reinvested for the scope of the association.

An association usually has legal capacity and capacity to act (i.e., it can participate to a public procurement, sign contracts, have employees). However, in most jurisdictions associations do not have legal personality; namely, those who act in the name of the association remain personally liable for debts before third parties. Some legal systems allow associations to undergo to a public procedure of recognition which may end up granting the legal personality.

The model of governance of associations is flexible and usually relies on two main organs: the assembly, which groups together all the members of the association; and the board of directors, which is elected by the assembly and bears the executive power.

Unlike what happens in the foundation, the trust and the community land trust (see 'Foundation and Trust' and 'Community Land Trust'), the association is not able to set forth a lien of a proprietary nature on the good, given that the members of the association may at any time, respecting the deliberative provisions set forth in the articles of association, decide to change its scope. However, when the constitution of such a lien is not needed, namely in those cases in which the governance of urban commons takes the form of co-management of the good between the community and the municipality, the association may be a good solution for the formalisation of the community of reference. Indeed, the constitution of an association is usually very easy, not requiring a lot of formalities (i.e., fast and cheap). Association is thus the recommended institution to formalise the community of reference in cases of collaboration pacts or temporary uses.

### CIVIC MANAGEMENT (GESTIÒN CIVICA)

The municipality of Barcelona has implemented the model of civic management to attribute the management of public spaces or the regeneration of public goods belonging to the local cultural heritage to nonprofit entities. The attribution is based on an agreement of collaboration that defines the rights and the obligations of both parties; specific rules regulate the circulation of information. The agreement creates a public–civic partnership (público-asociativo/comunitario) based on innovative social and democrat-

ic criteria that make this solution very different from traditional public–private partnership models.

The civic management is regulated by Article 34 of the 'Carta municipal de Barcelona' and by Article 12 of the 'Normas reguladoras de la participación ciudadana'. The model has been improved with the introduction of specific provisions to coordinate the civic management with public procurement and to prevent for-profit entities from getting ahead of nonprofit entities.

In 2015, a new regulation of the civic management was adopted, establishing that the civic management does not represent a public contract and, accordingly, that the basic principles of public procurement cannot be applied. The regulation establishes general principles for managing a selective process between nonprofit entities and defines criteria; moreover, direct attribution is admitted. For the latter, no general rules have been introduced, given that it depends on a case-by-case evaluation. However, a list of situations is provided in which the direct attribution can be decided.

### CO-DESIGN

Co-design can be seen as the most important methodological innovation and the major procedural tool in the field of collaborative administration and in the broader domain of the co-creation, co-production and co-management of urban commons and public services.

Where public authorities and private actors (citizens, associations, NGOs) choose co-design, an innovative and cooperative legal relationship is established. Instead of building profit-based and market-oriented contractual relationships, with co-design public administrations and private parties adopt a transparent, cooperative approach whose aims can be either the collaborative provision of public services and the co-management of commons. The parties to such contractual relationships do not pursue conflicting interests, given that public authorities do not conceive the private parties as selfish counterparties acting in the market and the private parties do not enter such contracts to make as much profit as possible.

In light of these structural elements, co-design can be seen as a set of procedures and legal arrangements that take place out of the domain of competition law. In this respect, it is worth noting that, in principle, private actors involved in co-design are not in an exclusive legal position: on the one hand, they could have to accept possible

contributions (suggestions, interventions and the like) coming from other subjects aiming at collaborating in the co-production of a public service and/or in the co-management of commons; on the other hand, they cannot extract exclusive economic utilities from the activities of public interest they carry out by virtue of a cooperative contractual relationship with a public administration.

Meaningful confirmations about the relativity of competition can be seen at the EU level, so that the competitive market cannot be regarded as the sole and basic institutional criterion in the sectors of public services and collective utilities. In fact, the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union contains two major provisions in Art. 14 and in Art. 106. According to the former, the crucial role of services of general economic interest 'in promoting social and territorial cohesion' is explicitly acknowledged. The latter is even more important, given that its second paragraph provides that 'undertakings entrusted with the operation of services of general economic interest or having the character of a revenue-producing monopoly shall be subject to the rules contained in the Treaties, in particular to the rules on competition, in so far as the application of such rules does not obstruct the performance, in law or in fact, of the particular tasks assigned to them' (see 'Public Services').

Under Italian law a number of experimentations of co-design have recently occurred. By building on a new reading of the principle of horizontal subsidiarity, revaluated in light of solidarity and social cohesion objectives (see 'Horizontal Subsidiarity'), co-design has been implemented in the Italian legal framework in two ways. On the one hand, a statutory regulation of co-planning and co-design of some social services is provided by Art. 55 Legislative Decree, no. 117 (so-called Third Sector Code). On the other hand, co-design is implemented as a process of transparent and cooperative negotiation, having a pivotal role in the law of urban commons and in the most effective experimentations in the field of the co-management of such goods. Such a systemic role of co-design has been approved by the Constitutional Court in two major judgements delivered in 2020 (judgements no. 131 and no. 255). According to the Italian Constitutional Court, co-design procedures allude to 'a path of shared administration, alternative to profit and market: 'co-planning', 'co-design' and 'partnership' (...) are steps of a complex procedure, which is expression of a new relationship between public and social-private sectors, not based on a simple *do ut des*'.

## COLLABORATION PACT

A collaboration pact is a quasi-contractual agreement between one or more public administrations and one or more active citizens. Such pacts have been increasingly acknowledged in the Italian legal framework because they are one of the major tools of the strategies of shared care and co-management of urban commons. The parties to a collaboration pact identify part of the city (e.g., a square, a park, a building) and/or an intangible good (e.g., the 'atmosphere' of a neighbourhood, the data generated by urban population) as urban commons, define the duration and the objectives of the collaborative relationship, and distribute specific tasks and possible liabilities.

According to the Italian experience, the collaboration pact can be either a bilateral or a multilateral agreement. The basic type of pact is bilateral, regardless of the number and quality of the subjects (individuals, informal groups, non-profit organisations) that constitute the 'active citizens' party to the pact. However, if the urban commons that is the object of the agreement is a private property, the private owner must enter into the pact (trilateral agreement). Likewise, if the object of the pact is relevant to the cultural and historical heritage, the relative public agency can become party to the (trilateral) agreement.

In general terms, active citizens are the main actors in a collaboration pact. The choice to take initiative, by individuating urban commons and/or by proposing a draft agreement, is usually up to the citizens (although solicitations carried out by public administrations can be possible). Moreover, active citizens are both the promoters and the first (but not sole) beneficiaries of those social practices of co-management of urban commons and co-production of public services (see 'Commoning') regulated by the collaboration pact. That said, the role of public administration is also crucial. Public managers and/or civil servants are the subjects mostly called to sign a pact on behalf of a municipality. However, sometimes the conclusion of an agreement can be decided by political bodies: for instance, the urban commons that is the object of the pact has a huge symbolic value for the imaginary of a city; or there is the need for dealing with rather complex activities proposed by active citizens. Within such a cooperative framework, public bodies can also contribute to the best execution of the pact by making various supportive commitments, such as the provision of personal protective equipment or other tools as well as the contribution to the costs of energy bills (see 'Collaborative Administration').

Because it centres on the legal status of urban commons as well as on their co-management, the collaboration pact constitutes an innovative legal relationship between public sector and private parties. In particular, such agreements are regulated and

governed by contract law, even though they are external to the domain of competition law.

Indeed, 'standard' contracts between public administrations and private parties are usually characterised by conflicting interests among the parties; by the fact that the formers provide the latter ones with exclusive legal entitlements over goods in public property; and/or by the public need for purchasing works, services and supplies from private companies active in the marketplace. In this respect, competition principles and rules (namely public and competitive procedures relevant to EU legal sources and implemented for selecting the private party to the contract) are generally welcome for these contractual relationships. On the contrary, a collaboration pact is concluded by building on converging interests to arrange forms of inclusive and collective use for urban commons and with the aim to provide urban residents with non-market access to goods and services. In this respect, the collaboration pact aims at being a generative legal infrastructure, capable of putting in place innovative public policies, of fulfilling fundamental rights of the involved citizens, and eventually of creating inclusive communities.

From a more technical point of view, these peculiarities are at the base of the procedures that bring to the signature of a collaboration pact. Negotiations between public administrations and active citizens are a public and transparent space, which whoever is interested in the future co-management of the urban commons can access and participate in (see 'Co-design'). The pact itself, conceived as a quasi-contractual agreement, cannot be traced to the principle of privity of contract. The relationship between the parties to a pact is rather characterised by its openness. For instance, citizens of the neighbourhood where the pact is executed, who have been enjoying the positive effects of the care for urban commons, can decide at any time to become active citizens and to formally enter into the pact.

## COLLABORATIVE ADMINISTRATION

Collaborative administration is an administrative pattern based on the research of cooperation and mutual trust between public authorities and citizens. The institutional choice of these actors to share resources and responsibilities is at the core of this set of practices and policies.

Collaborative administration is governed by a set of general principles, some of which can be traced to the broader domain of administrative law. This is the case of pub-

licity and transparency: according to this principle, public administrations assure to the greatest extent the public knowability of all proposals, procedures, decisions and evaluations. Moreover, transparency is strictly connected with the openness of all procedures and the principle of inclusion and access, so that citizens (individuals, associations, informal groups etc.) can get involved at any time in collaborative initiative carried out by others. Further traditional principles include equal opportunity and non-discrimination, as well as reference to trust and good faith and to adequacy and differentiation.

Other principles seem more specifically relevant to the innovative framework of collaborative administration. In this respect, this administrative pattern enhances ecological methodologies and is governed by the idea of sustainability. Other recurring principles are informality (according to which cooperative relationships between public authorities and privates should comply with bureaucratic formalities only when the latter are mandatory) and civic agency. This last principle is remarkable because it shows how the aim of collaborative administration is to foster citizens' empowerment to the greatest extent. Nevertheless, as a kind of counterbalance for the potential of some implementations of civic agency, the principle of non-subrogation is provided as well. According to such a provision, in the application of collaborative administration public authorities are prevented from giving up their duties (e.g., those concerning the organisation and provision of basic public services), such that private parties involved in collaborative projects cannot become integral substitutes for public administrations.

Of course, collaborative administration is a challenge both for administrations and for citizens. Indeed, public and private actors of urban systems usually see themselves as counterparties in the socio-economic development of cities. This approach has been capable of creating a very thorough mentality, fostering trends of institutional fragmentation and mutual scepticism and thus affecting democratic quality and effectiveness of urban governance. On the contrary, the collaborative administration paradigm gives incentives to restructure such traditional views to reach more inclusive local democracies, to provide active citizens with clearer legal acknowledgement of their proposals and actions and to find new ways to solve conflicts over the transformation of neighbourhoods and cities.

For these reasons, collaborative administration is an innovative paradigm compared with those traditional conceptions of public administration based on the hierarchical and unilateral action of public authorities. It is also different from other relational models of administration, such as the 'new public management' paradigm or those policies

that foster privatisation and liberalisation of the production and provision of public services. In this respect, the rise of urban commons as a major legal institution has provided concrete chances to conceive and implement new relationships among public administrations and private entities. Such a model presents an alternative to the institutional paradigm of market and competition law, being based on cooperation and inclusion. As the CO3 project has shown, the use of disruptive technologies can create unprecedented opportunities to enable citizens' agency and to experiment with new cooperative ways of producing and managing urban commons and public services.

### COMMONING

Commoning is the relationship between the utilities offered by commons (on the side of the objects) and the interests of each and every member of a community of reference (on the side of the subjects). This overall concept highlights that such relationships are structurally 'mutual'. Indeed, both commons and communities are not abstract entities. Some goods can be regarded as commons by virtue of the collective utilities specifically generated by some of their possible uses. Likewise, individuals can perceive themselves as part of a larger community of reference thanks to the collective use of some goods.

In this respect, commoning can be seen as that relational practice that leads simultaneously to isolation of the capability of goods to generate and offer some crucial resources, and the connection between such utilities and some fundamental rights of individuals and communities. By building on these findings, some of the major theoretical contributions on commons have been arguing that commoning should be qualified as a generative and open relationship even in the domain of law.

From such a perspective, the 'generative' element is about the capability of commoning of assuring the flourishing of communities, without endangering the sustainable reproduction of the utilities generated by the commons. In other words, collective and inclusive use of a resource can be seen as an ecological legal relationship. Through adequate arrangements in terms of governance as well as remedies, it should not end up creating the conditions for selfish overconsumption and irreversible depletion of the resource (according to Garrett Hardin, this scenario is known as the 'tragedy of the commons'). Moreover, the openness of this relationship is relevant to two practical outcomes. On the one hand, the legal construction of commons tends to refuse exclusive and identi-

ty-based conceptions of a community, although Elinor Ostrom showed with her work the importance of assessing criteria for defining the scope of a community emerging around commons (see 'Urban Commons'). On the other side, an open view of the community means that in principle each and every member should be entitled to access the commons to enjoy the utilities it offers such that for the property rights concerning commons inclusion is the basic rule and exclusion is the exception.

The importance of such a dynamic and collective conception of commoning is particularly apparent in contemporary urban contexts. In fact, in recent times huge socio-economic transformations in Western cities and the rise of issues like the one of urban voids determined a renovated modernity of urban policies. In this framework, the urban regeneration paradigm has shown its ambiguity. At a general and rhetorical level, some intensely discussed urban processes, such as gentrification, are usually presented as vehicles of social innovation, aimed at providing a city or a neighbourhood with sustainability and smartness. However, many scholars, social movements and citizens have noticed some negative side effects of this form of regeneration, namely processes of dispossession of former inhabitants, risks of growing inequalities in the areas touched by urban transformations, and cases of de facto privatisation of public space. In this sense, the enhancement of legal and social relevance of commoning means that urban commons can become relevant to the framework of regeneration. As a consequence, a new model of intervention in urban contexts—a cooperative, inclusive and solidarity-based one—becomes possible and desirable (see 'Regeneration').

### COMMUNITY LAND TRUST

In its traditional definition, the community land trust (CLT) is a nonprofit organisation whose aim is to promote access to housing for low and medium income people through the sale of property at a price below market value, and to create a participatory governance of the urban space, combining the interests of the owner with the wider needs of local communities and the territory. The structure of the CLT is based on three elements: i) the dissociation between the title of ownership of the land and the title of ownership on the improvements; ii) a strong conformation of the property rights of the homeowner; and iii) an open associative model, based on participatory mechanisms involving not only those who have rights over the assets placed in the trust but also other stakeholders.



An essential element in the creation of a CLT is the ownership of land by the nonprofit organisation. The position of the CLT in relation to the land it owns is, generally, that of trustee (see foundation and trust), who must administer it for the purposes of the trust and in the sole interest of its beneficiaries. These bonds can be created either by establishing an actual trust (see foundation and trust), thus through a deed of trust, or by relying on specific clauses contained in the bylaws and articles of association of the nonprofit corporation. These acts impose a number of further and more precise limitations on the CLT, the first of which is a lien of inalienability on the land held in trust. This allows permanent subtraction of the land from individual appropriation and from the dynamics of the market to be combined with the advantage of an instrument that removes the good from the possible mercantilist choices that could come from public administration, given the private nature of the owner.

If the CLT retains ownership of the land on a permanent basis, it will, functionally, sell the houses that stand on it. It is precisely this subjective dissociation of the title of property (ownership of the land/ownership of the improvements) that allows that mechanism of socialisation of land rent that is at the heart of the model. Such a mechanism permits the CLT to generate resources to be invested in reducing the costs of access to housing and in the redevelopment of the area. In fact, the CLT, while retaining ownership of the land, can legally intervene to shape the property interests on the improvements.

The homeowners are in fact bound to the CLT by a ground lease. The ground lease not only legally allows the inhabitants of the CLT to maintain their construction on the land belonging to the CLT but also establishes, for the owners, a series of rights and obligations towards the trust, as well as certain limits on the exercise of its property rights, which thus appear conformed in such a way as to reconcile the needs of individuals with those of the community.

The ground lease provides, in the first place, that the homeowner cannot resell the improvement at any price except the fixed price resulting from the application of the criteria contained in a specific clause (the so-called resale formula clause) and grants the CLT a purchase option. The objective of the formula is to divide the land rent among all the participants in the transaction, allowing the seller to obtain, in addition to the capital, an adequate return on their investment and, on the other hand, the buyer to buy the property at a price below the market value of the good.

The formula most commonly applied provides that the lessees cannot sell the home at a price higher than the sum of the amount they paid to purchase it, revalued

in line with inflation, and a fixed percentage (usually 25%) of the increase in value the estate had acquired between the purchase and the selling.

Both elements of the equation deserve some clarification. As regards the first, it must be said that the price at which the seller bought the good was also below its market value. This is because if one goes back through the chain of sales of a CLT home, one always comes to a first purchase in which the price had been reduced through the payment of a subsidy, usually public. Because all buyers in the chain are bound by the ground lease and therefore bound to the resale formula, normally all purchases after the first will be made at a price below the market value.

The market value of the home is not, however, completely exempted from the equation but is part of the calculation of its second term: that is, the appreciation acquired by the improvement over the time between the two sales. This variable, in fact, is obtained by subtracting the market value of the good at the time of the first purchase, revalued in line with inflation, from that estimated at the time of its sale.

However, it should be noted that both these values, of course, are determined by deducting the value of the land from the market price of the property unitarily considered (land + improvement), given that the seller has a fee simple interest in the building only whereas, as we have seen, with respect to the land, they have a mere leasehold interest for a limited time (usually ninety-nine years, renewable).

Of the plus-value thus identified, the seller is entitled to obtain only 25%, the remainder being distributed between the buyer and the CLT. The buyer is usually allocated 70%, in the form of a reduction in the purchase price, and the CLT the remaining 5%, which is used to cover the transaction management costs and, above all, is invested in the redevelopment of the area.

In this way, a virtuous circle is created, permitting the CLT to permanently subtract the properties from the speculation of the real estate market and which fosters, in the wake of a single initial investment whose surplus value is constantly distributed, a system of permanent affordable housing (the lock-in effect of the initial investment).

The ground lease then imposes on the inhabitants of the CLT obligations relating to the ordinary maintenance of the building and the care of the surrounding space. Further clauses are also designed to curb absentee ownership and to hinder the use of market mechanisms that could distort the ultimate purpose of the institution. From this last point of view, ground leases usually set rules that commit the owner to inhabit the

property personally, in a constant and stable way, and provide binding limits to the lease of the property in favour of third parties.

The legal structure of the CLT allows it to enjoy a certain economic and financial stability. First, by appropriating part of the plus-value produced by each resale, the CLT can keep its equity stable. In addition, the ground lease requires the homeowners to pay the organisation a fee, commensurate with the income and economic capacity of each inhabitant, thus ensuring the entity a concrete financial autonomy.

Part of these revenues are invested in the regeneration of the territory. In the CLT's traditional model, the governance of the territory is therefore accompanied by the need to respond to the housing crisis, as a further element that qualifies the model. This is a participatory and open form of governance, guaranteed by precise institutional mechanisms. The first consists of the open membership which characterises the non-profit entity that supervises the CLT. In fact, anyone (and not only the homeowners) can become a member and participate in the assembly of the CLT. The executive body of the organisation is the board of directors. This is usually composed, in equal measure, of representatives of the homeowners, representatives of the public interest and representatives of the inhabitants of the surrounding areas. The organs of the CLT adopt, in a democratic manner and following the procedures provided for by the organisation's bylaws, all decisions relating to the governance of the territory, such as use of space, investments, usage restrictions and cultural initiatives.

Originally invented in the US, the CLT has been transplanted into many other jurisdictions (UK, Australia, Belgium, New Zealand, Kenya, Australia) where activists, public administrations and local housing organisations have relied on their domestic law to recreate the model. The CLT is compatible with almost all civil law legal systems.

## DELIBERATIVE PROCEDURES

Deliberative procedures are those procedures governing decision-making processes in organisations. Deliberations can be structured according to different procedures, and each organisation may decide to adopt diverse procedures according to the organ involved in the decision or to the subject matter of the decision to be taken.

Such procedures often imply a trade-off between interests to be protected: most of them can indeed protect certain interests effectively while at the same times jeopardising certain others.

A first procedure often adopted in urban commons (see Urban commons) and in commoning experiences (see Commoning) is 'Consensus'. 'Consensus' provides that a decision requires unanimity among all participants. Consensus certainly bears the advantage of forcing the parties to mediation and in-depth discussions and to promote the maximum level of democracy, very important in the commons. At the same time, it may lead to gridlock where a decision cannot be taken, given that consensus cannot always be reached. Also, it may force parties to endless discussions on decisions that are often urgent in nature.

Conversely, majority implies the decision to be taken is the one that gains more votes from assembly participants. The principle of majority is quick, and it certainly guarantees that a decision is taken in due time. However, it may partially jeopardise democracy because the final decision often does not represent the result of mediation between different interests but only the expression of the 'strongest minority'. For instance, if, for the issue X, we have four possible decisions: A, B, C, D, in a situation where A gets nine votes; B, eight; C, seven and D, six, the decision taken (A) would only represent the consensus of 9/21 participants to the decision-making process.

Precisely for these reasons, i) consensus is generally largely applied in the commons but never as the only viable decision-making strategy; ii) usually in formal and informal decision-making procedures it is stated that the parties must try to find consensus, and that if consensus is not reachable, the principle of majority can be applied; and iii) the pure principle of majority, especially with reference to decisions which subject-matter is particularly important, is often corrected through strategies promoting discussion, mediation and a wider agreement among the participants.

With specific reference to point iii), these strategies may consist of i) submitting the decision to a 'qualified majority' (i.e., the decision is approved when at least 50%+1 of the voters (absolute majority) or even a higher number of voters (e.g., two-thirds or three-fifths) have voted in its favour); ii) the decision is submitted to a 'double step' procedure whereby in the first round all the proposals are voted and then the organ has to vote, again, on the two proposals that gained the most votes; and iii) the decision is submitted to a double vote so that, for example, it has to be approved by the organ twice, in two different voting procedures held on two different days: this is to ensure and promote a higher level of reflexion over the implication of the decision and the proposed solutions. All these correctives are not mutually exclusive and can be combined in very creative

matrices to reach the decision-making procedure most suitable for both the organisation and the subject of the necessary decision.

## FOUNDATION AND TRUST

The notion of foundation is common to most of the systems belonging to the Western legal tradition, where a substantial convergence is found mainly in continental jurisdictions.

The foundation can be defined as the establishment of assets earmarked for a general interest purpose as a legal person. From a technical point of view, the typical effect of the establishment of a foundation is, therefore, twofold: i) the creation of a lien of a proprietary nature on one or more assets; and ii) the elevation of the intended assets to an independent legal person.

It is precisely these aspects that make the foundation a particularly useful tool in the management of urban commons. In fact, the foundation can be used to assign, on a permanent basis, an immovable property to the collective use registered in the bylaws and in the articles of association, thus protecting it, in the long term, from the extractive pressures which might come both from the state and the market. The foundation, in most Western legal systems, also bears a certain flexibility, a flexibility that allows private autonomy to build participatory and democratic governance mechanisms.

With respect to the first aspect, a pivotal role is to be attributed to the scope set out in the bylaws and in the articles of association, as well as in any further and more precise use restrictions that such documents provide for.

Most of the legal systems provide that, whether an act is adopted by the foundation's governing bodies in breach of the bylaws or the articles of association, such act is null and void and, in the case of a breach of a use restriction clearly stated in such documents (which are usually published and registered), such nullity is enforceable against third parties.

The effects of this rule are extremely relevant for the purposes of urban commons. Let us take as an example a foundation set up to manage, as a commons, an urban property, a good which, when the articles of association of the foundation are drawn up, is declared to be used for theatrical and cultural activities. Imagine, now, that the foundation's board of directors resolves, in contravention of the purpose recorded in the articles of association and of any more precise restrictions of use included in specific

clauses of the bylaws, to sell a part of the real estate holdings to a for-profit corporation to establish a luxury shop there. In a case such as this, in most legal systems, not only would the resolution of the board of directors be considered invalid, but the contract of sale entered into with the company would be equally invalid, given that the latter would lack the necessary power of attorney (through the invalidity of the resolution authorising the transfer). The invalidity of the contract of sale would be enforceable against the company, given the manifest contrast between its object and the foundation's articles of association. The effect would be the retrocession of the good to the foundation (as well as the possible removal of disloyal directors, especially where this is expressly provided for in the articles of association).

In most legal systems, it is stated that an indefeasible element of the foundation is, in fact, precisely the scope (and therefore the usage restrictions) recorded in the bylaws and in the articles of association. The scope is not only unchangeable but also *cannot be disposed of* by the bodies of the entity. This limit must be understood both in its direct meaning (it is not possible to approve an amendment of the bylaws or of the articles of association aimed at changing the scope) and its indirect meaning (any act or resolution adopted in violation of the scope is null and void). It is, moreover, precisely this constraint that distinguishes the foundation from the association. The association is an 'organisation of people' who agree to pursue a common purpose. Precisely for that reason, the scope is at the members' disposal and they can modify it. This is not the case with the foundation, which, on the contrary, is usually defined as an *earmarked good* that becomes a legal person.

With respect to governance, the law usually provides for one single organ of the foundation: the board of directors. However, in most (although not all) jurisdictions this is considered merely a default rule, meaning that the community may, in the process of constitution of the foundation, add to the board of directors other bodies and organise its governance in variegated matrix, including, for example, an open assembly structured according to participatory and democratic mechanisms.

It is thus quite possible to imagine that the community of reference comes together in an assembly, which is characterised by those open and participatory mechanisms that ensure that anyone can take part in it and that the latter (considered as the highest deliberative instance of the entity and the holder of the power of political direction) elects the members of the board of directors, depositary of the classic executive and managerial powers.

This flexibility also makes it possible to structure the board of directors in such a way as to reflect the various stakeholders of the good and the activities that take place in it. And so, to return to our example, there is nothing to prevent a foundation, to which a property previously belonging to the municipality has been ceded so that it can be used for cultural and theatrical activities, from constituting a board of directors composed partly of representatives of the assembly, partly of representatives of the city council and partly of representatives of the local theatre association.

When the foundation is used to manage a good that was originally in public ownership, the public original owner would have to assign ownership of the good to the foundation. This means that it cannot in any way change its intention to administer it according to the criteria related to the commons (for example, by deciding to sell it on the market) through a simple administrative act. At most, the administration will be able to participate in the management of the good in the forms provided for by the foundation's articles of association and bylaws (and thus, for example, exercise its right to be represented in the executive body) and will, therefore, also be bound by the scope provided for by the acts constitutive of the legal person.

The only way for the public to regain ownership of the good is through expropriation. In such a case, however, it would be subjected to the burden of proving the requirement of public interest and would therefore be required to prove that the use it intends to make of the good is more socially desirable than that envisaged by the foundation's bylaws (and activities).

Results similar to those achievable with the foundation can be accomplished through a charitable trust, in an arrangement in which the trustee takes the form of a nonprofit organisation (e.g., an association) structured according to an open and democratic model of governance.

A trust is an institution according to which the owner of a good (settlor) gives it to another person or entity (trustee) who must keep it and use solely for the purpose, the scope, and with the limits provided for in the deed of trust (the act which originates the trust).

It is known that the trust, institution typical of common law systems, has, since the late 1990s, started to be recognised in many civil law jurisdictions as well.

## HORIZONTAL SUBSIDIARITY

Horizontal subsidiarity is an implementation of the broader principle of subsidiarity. In a traditional perspective subsidiarity has been conceived just in a vertical dimension. In this first sense, missions of public interest and administrative functions should be carried out by the institutional body that is closer to a local context and citizens, unless the intervention of a higher-level public administration is found necessary (e.g., public services must be managed and provided by municipalities, unless a specific service demands a broader organisational effort for geographic and/or economic reasons). The horizontal sense of subsidiarity is more recent, and it concerns the possible role of private actors (citizens, associations, NGOs, companies, and the like) in the public sphere. In particular, horizontal subsidiarity aims at overcoming the rather bureaucratic organisational models in the management and provision of welfare and public services by promoting private initiatives. Thus, the implementation of horizontal subsidiarity incentives comprises either privatisations (with an increasing institutional role of the market and for-profit private actors) or more complex public-private partnerships.

In the meaning just mentioned, the subsidiarity principle is not regarded as embedded in EU primary law, given that the Treaty on European Union, Art. 5 par. 3, concerns subsidiarity solely in vertical relationships between the Union and member states (see CJEU 24 October 2019, *European Federation of Public Service Unions vs. European Commission*, Case T-310/18).

Nevertheless, horizontal subsidiarity is often acknowledged in the European legal frameworks at the state and local levels. For instance, such a principle is explicitly proclaimed by Art. 118 par. 4 of the Italian constitution. According to this provision, introduced in the constitution in 2001, 'by building on the subsidiarity principle the State, Regions, Metropolitan Cities, Provinces and municipalities facilitate autonomous initiatives carried out by individual or associated citizens for the performance of activities of general interest'. In a first period, the horizontal subsidiarity principle has been read as the constitutional base for massive market-oriented policies. The Italian legislator went far beyond EU Treaties provisions (see 'Co-design'; 'Public Services') in fostering huge processes of privatisation in the welfare state and in considering competition as the major organisational criterion to be promoted and enforced in social and economic activities.

After 2010 the situation changed. A more nuanced conception of horizontal subsidiarity arose, to the extent that solidarity-based direct initiatives carried out by private entities started to be considered as such (see 'Active Citizens') and as an alternative to

competitive and profit-based forms of management of public heritage and welfare. This latter interpretation of horizontal subsidiarity has been increasingly successful in the Italian legal framework, and in its implementations it seems very close to those European policy directives aimed at promoting citizens' direct involvement in the co-management of common goods and public services as well as at fostering participative democracy and social cohesion at urban levels. Nevertheless, it is worth making a last general remark, since the growing role of privates acting not for profit cannot result in a parallel withdrawal of public administrations from their functions and their duties. In this respect a sort of 'non-substitution principle' can be envisaged to empower citizens' solidarity-based contributions in the public sphere while avoiding any shrinkage of public authorities' institutional responsibility.

#### LIABILITIES (ALLOCATION OF POSSIBLE)

While fostering active participation and sociability among citizens, the co-creation, co-production and co-management of commons and public services can present some specific issues about risk. In fact, the choice to facilitate open and public relationships between public administrations and citizens as well as among citizens means that it can be difficult to find a subject capable of effectively governing risk factors. In such situations it is arduous to find a sole and efficient risk bearer, so that in case of damages it would be problematic to apply a strict liability rule.

Public administrations and private actors have to deal with the above-mentioned elements if they want the experiments on collaborative administration and commoning to evolve into a durable institutional framework. One possible solution is to put aside the strict liability rule and follow the different fault liability rule. In this respect each subject engaged in collaborative administration (active citizens, public administrations, even occasional users) could be held liable depending on his or her fault; likewise, under a fault liability rule everyone is somehow risk bearer, so that it is possible to have no compensation for injuries that occur without the fault of the subject who is deemed to be liable. Despite this possible interpretation, Italian experimentations on collaborative administration tend to consider the citizens that take care of urban commons to be the custodians of such goods, thus applying the strict liability rule to those who are supposed to be the risk bearers in case of damages connected to commoning.

In light of the importance of promoting citizens' activation and social cohesion with reasonable legal incentives, the fault liability regime seems the preferable one. On the one hand, it is true that sometimes (e.g., when persons suffering damages do not give proof about the supposed liable's fault) injuries can lie on the victims without compensation (except for possible assurances). On the other hand, alongside such possible inconveniences it is worth noting that the lack of strict liability is per se an incentive for more active behaviours, so that the fault liability rule seems much more compatible than the strict liability rule with policies aimed at reinforcing and fostering direct participation as a major goal for local democracies.

#### NETWORK OF NEIGHBOURHOOD HOUSES (RETE DELLE CASE DEL QUARTIERE)

The Network of Neighbourhood Houses (Rete delle Case del Quartiere) is a longstanding social and institutional experimentation that has taken place in Turin (Italy) since 2007, when a first Neighbourhood House opened. The network currently consists of eight Houses operating throughout different neighbourhoods in Turin. Attempts to provide citizens with both an overall political framework and concrete administrative measures capable of enabling their direct action have been a priority for the public administration since the end of the last century. In those years, local decision makers observed successful policies carried out in Italy as well as throughout Europe and became convinced that growing participation at the very local level could be considered as means of democratic renovation and social cohesion. By building on such previous experiences, the Neighbourhood Houses project constitutes a more innovative local policy.

A Neighbourhood House aims to be a cooperative and inclusive point of reference for a part of the urban territory and for the population living there, regardless of differences in age, cultural and ethnic background, social conditions and the like. Such spaces can be considered social and cultural hubs, tending to trace diversities to a framework of social cohesion. Openness and public use are the main features of a Neighbourhood House, so that individuals and groups (associations, informal groups) can freely propose several activities and projects to be realised in a House. As a consequence, citizens tend to get increasingly involved in the collective management of the Neighbourhood House. A variety of cultural initiatives as well as mutual services takes place in a Neighbourhood House, so that these collective sites can be regarded as one among the major examples

in the domain of urban commons (see 'Urban Commons'), thus demanding articulated forms of cooperative governance.

The creation itself of a Neighbourhood House can often be a positive example of urban regeneration, with renovations and requalifications of buildings and public spaces carried out thanks to the collaborative contribution of local authorities, banking foundations, social enterprises, associations and citizens. In this respect, many Houses in the municipality of Turin are eventually located in regenerated buildings (e.g., two Houses are former public washrooms).

From 2017 to 2020 the Network of Neighbourhood Houses was part of the Co-City Urban Innovative Action project. In this context, the network was charged with the facilitation, engagement and support of citizens and communities aiming to take action for the care of urban commons. In the framework of CO3 the Network of Neighbourhood Houses has been hosting the Italian pilot site. Some disruptive technologies have been implemented in Neighbourhood Houses to ameliorate their democratic functioning and thus to make their management a very innovative experiment of commoning (see 'Commoning'). Liquid feedback has been used to boost transparency and openness in decision-making processes. Tokens (see 'Token/Tokenization') have been created and distributed as digital awards for the contributions that individuals and associations have been offering to the overall framework of the Neighbourhood House. In particular, such tokens are supposed to be the base of a digital ecosystem characterised by circularity and cooperation. A citizen remunerated with CO3 tokens for his/her contribution to the common sphere is allowed to 'spend' these tokens to access goods and services provided by the Neighbourhood House's community at large, so that exchange and sharing processes take place in innovative manners and out of a market system.

Although the COVID-19 pandemic has been a major obstacle for a large experimentation (for sanitary reasons Neighbourhood Houses have been completely closed for a long time), the development of CO3 will eventually entail meaningful insights. For instance, a compromise between the limitations required for social distancing and the initial will to foster people's *phygital* presence in the ACA has been arranged with respect to the tokens exchange mechanism. In this sense, alongside the initial system (which requires contemporary interactions between citizens and their devices through QR codes) a new method has been put in place, thus allowing citizens to exchange tokens in the Neighbourhood House ecosystem even without being co-present.

## PUBLIC SERVICES

Public services are one of the building blocks of the welfare state, given that the provision of affordable and high-quality utilities is crucial for granting effective protection of the fundamental (civil and social) rights of individuals and communities. Many activities crucial for everyday life lie at the core of the traditional concept of public service: network services such as electricity and access to water and urban services like mobility and housing, not to mention health care and personal care.

From a traditional perspective, organisation and management of public services were the mission of public administrations, so that such activities used to be traced to a clear public framework. Particularly in continental Europe, public bodies applying specific administrative rules and procedures were charged with effective implementation of the welfare state through a good provision of public services. Sometimes the responsibility for a service could be assigned to formally private companies, although even in such cases public administrations used to keep total control over companies' economic and industrial strategies.

In the last two decades of the twentieth century the emergent neoliberal paradigm shift in Western societies entailed deep consequences in the domain of public services. Rather than continually designating the whole sector of public services as the task and the responsibility of public bodies, an age of privatisations and deregulation was launched on the assumption that a competitive market was, both for administrations and for citizens, the most adequate institutional context for the management of such economic activities. In these years open competitive procedures became the basic rule to put private for-profit companies in charge of the production and provision of public services, so that market-oriented organisational criteria have become widespread even in this domain. Thus, a new regulatory role was assigned to the State because direct economic initiatives carried out by public bodies were deemed to be inefficient and bureaucratic. The major outcome of this process has been that in many European legal systems both substitutable services (e.g., personal care) and so-called natural monopolies (such as network services) have been traced to competition law and to the market as an institutional framework.

These trends have gone somehow beyond the very provisions of EU primary law, given that the Treaty on the Functioning of European Union does not proclaim such a market-oriented view in the domain of public services. According to Art. 106, par. 2 of the Treaty, the sector of services of general economic interest can be traced to the rules on

competition ‘in so far as the application of such rules does not obstruct the performance, in law or in fact, of the particular tasks assigned to them’. Moreover, Protocol no. 26 on services of general interest contains some interpretative provisions relevant to Art. 14 of the Treaty. On the one hand it proclaims that ‘the shared values of the Union in respect of services of general economic interest (...) include in particular: the essential role and the wide discretion of national, regional and local authorities in providing, commissioning and organising services of general economic interest as closely as possible to the needs of the users; (...) a high level of quality, safety and affordability, equal treatment and the promotion of universal access and of user rights’. On the other hand, it clarifies that member states keep their full competence in organising and managing non-economic services of general interest.

Although some remarks about the inefficiencies of the traditional bureaucratic models were appropriate, the market-oriented competitive legal regime of public services had some troublesome implications. Contracts between public administrations and private companies can be affected by strong information asymmetries in favour of the private parties. The public sector tends to lose competences and know-hows in the long term. Affordability of some public services is not always granted.

For these reasons, in the last years a new and more nuanced view of public services as economic and social activities arose. According to this conception every subject involved in the domain of public services—public administrations, citizens, workers, and companies—should make efforts to go beyond both bureaucratic State and competitive market to experiment with the new frontier of co-creation, co-management and co-production. While reaffirming the basic responsibilities of public authorities is important (see ‘Horizontal Subsidiarity’), this new approach to the organisation and provision of public services enhances the possibility for shared responsibilities through cooperative and no profit governance arrangements. In this respect, the management of public services could be open to the participation of different actors pursuing convergent interests and goals, with possible positive outcomes in terms of affordability, inclusion and social cohesion (see ‘Co-design’).

## REGENERATION

In urban systems, the word ‘regeneration’ (also known as ‘renewal’ or ‘redevelopment’) alludes to a set of policies, planning strategies and legal devices that have

become widespread since the end of the XXth century. Indeed, in the last 35 years many cities all around the world have been facing similar challenges resulting from structural socioeconomic trends emerging at a global level. For instance, many traditional industrial cities or even ‘company towns’ (e.g., Turin, Detroit) have been forced to deal with huge processes of deindustrialisation, capable of upsetting former urban identities and of creating large urban voids within the so-called industrial heritage (see ‘Urban voids’). Conversely, relocation of industrial productions has often been a major input for unprecedented strategies of renewal in those urban systems chosen by multinational companies to host new factories. From a second perspective, Western cities, especially in Europe, have been facing crucial issues such as that of ageing population (e.g., the current average age in Italy is 45). Broader challenges come from huge demographic trends. At a quantitative level, decreases in urban populations have not been so rare: as a consequence, in many towns parts of the urban system (public spaces, commercial buildings, dwellings) have partially or completely lost their function through underuse or even abandonment, with predictable negative externalities. At a qualitative level, migrations and increasing flows of ‘city users’ have often modified the composition of urban populations, with unprecedented complexities such as those connected to the welfare and the provision of public services, not to mention the serious problems of xenophobia and of spatial and ethnic segregations.

Urban regeneration has emerged as a major strategy to deal with such a delicate framework. In general terms, regeneration projects aim to provide specific urban sites (e.g., abandoned plants, old docks, unused public buildings) or broader neighbourhoods with a new aesthetic and functional identity. Renewals can be ‘intensive’ or rather ‘conservative’: according to the first approach, large demolitions can be carried out and followed by the construction of completely new buildings and complexes; in the latter case, the development of the project consists in more attentive restorations of buildings and urban areas (so that, for instance, whole demolitions do not occur).

Although generally associated with major policy priorities such as environmental sustainability, energy efficiency and social cohesion, as well as with the overall discourse on ‘smart cities’, urban regeneration is not neutral with respect to its possible distributive effects. Large debates about the connection between regeneration and gentrification highlight that delicate socioeconomic and legal issues can be identified beyond the rather rhetorical aspects of this topic. First, the goal of social cohesion could be put aside by the distributive impact of a regeneration initiative: for instance, long-term inhabitants

of a regenerated neighbourhood can be forced to move away because of the increasing costs of living (e.g., tenancy).

Moreover, from a legal perspective one can ask whether and to what extent public authorities keep their institutional margin of political decision on urban planning, in those cases characterised by renewal projects promoted by private developers (namely, private real estate companies) and regulated through quasi-contractual agreements between private parties and public administrations.

Apart from such critical findings, one can highlight that forms of urban regeneration based on participative cooperation and aimed at recovering and fulfilling social cohesion are an increasing reality throughout Europe. In this respect, a meaningful social dimension is becoming a pillar of the debates on regeneration, so that the role of active citizens and local communities has arisen alongside more traditional and powerful institutions (public authorities, private companies, universities). Current regeneration policies tend to facilitate people's empowerment and local communities' agency to the greatest extent. Sometimes, as in the Italian local legal framework, some experimentations eventually become a well-acknowledged model of regulation (see 'Regulations on the co-management of urban commons').

The CO3 project is a clear example of such efforts, thanks to its attempt to combine the innovative implementation of some disruptive technologies with the best practices and legal arrangements in the field of co-design and co-management of public services and urban commons.

### REGULATIONS ON THE CO-MANAGEMENT OF URBAN COMMONS

Regulations on the co-management of urban commons are local administrative acts that have become widespread in Italy since 2014, when the first regulation was adopted in the city of Bologna. These regulations have proved to be a successful legal model: they are currently in force in more than 200 Italian municipalities; they have attracted much interest at the European and comparative levels as well.

Such acts provide municipalities and public institutions, private actors (owners, companies) and active citizens with a legal framework for the fulfilment of collaborative administration (see 'Collaborative administration'). Regulations usually contain a set of definitions and principles relevant to the law of urban commons. Among these provisions it is worth noting the wide scope of the concept of active citizens—whoever can take

action, regardless of age and nationality (see 'Active citizens')—and the role of principles such as informality (in relationships concerning urban commons, rather bureaucratic formalities should be avoided, unless they are mandatory) and civic agency (one of the major aims of these innovative experimentations is to allow citizens' empowerment as much as possible).

Procedures leading to the signature of agreements between public administrations and active citizens are regulated as well. Initiative can be up to the public sector, with open calls inviting individuals, associations and informal groups to take action with respect to certain goods that the municipality supposes are (urban commons. In principle, active citizens can take initiative as well, by assessing that a part of the city (e.g., a park or an empty building) should be regarded as urban commons and by proposing a collaboration draft. To comply with the general principle of transparency, such proposals and drafts are usually published in the online channels of the public administrations.

After these first steps, open and transparent negotiations take place between the parties to the future agreement; of course, participation of every other stakeholder is welcome. Regulations contain some rules on this topic: given the principle of legality, specific provisions regard public authorities' decisions (e.g., when and whether public managers are entitled to conclude agreements, and when and whether a decision of political bodies is necessary), whereas the very negotiations are rather informal. That said, the general aim of this phase is to reach a cooperative definition of the rules and the tasks for the inclusive governance of the urban commons (see 'co-design').

Most regulations focus on a specific quasi-contractual agreement between public administrations and active citizens, namely the collaboration pact. The parties to such a pact organise the cooperative governance of urban commons by sharing responsibilities of care and management (see 'Collaboration pact'). Although collaboration pacts are very flexible legal tools, of course other institutional solutions can be possible for an effective governance of urban commons. For instance, the model of urban civic and collective uses (arising from the experimentation carried out in Naples) seems capable of providing active citizens and communities of reference with a broader margin of agency towards urban commons, so that public administrations share less responsibility in their governance. Moreover, very complex urban commons could be governed through the creation of a participatory Foundation (this tool is regulated by the recent Regulation of Turin no. 391). Such a legal entity could also become the formal owner of the urban commons,



characterising a model of property based on stewardship, inclusion and long-term collective governance in the interests of the urban environment and of future generations.

Last, regulations deal with possible difficulties in the co-management of urban commons. In this respect, there are always provisions about the allocation of possible liabilities, whereas rules about risk prevention could be better defined to avoid excessive disincentives for the actors involved in the co-management of commons (see 'Liabilities, Allocation of Possible'). Default rules fostering cooperative disputes resolution are also provided. This choice is coherent with the whole view of urban commons and of collaborative administration. It is also remarkable because it helps foster a general change in the mindset of public authorities and citizens as well as in the institutional functioning of their relationships.

**TRUST** (see 'Foundation and trust')

### **URBAN COMMONS**

The commons are one of the major institutions in contemporary legal thought and in social sciences. Although the huge number of theoretical contributions as well as practical experimentations discourage the adoption of general and stable definitions in this field, according to the influential work of an Italian commission chaired by Prof. Stefano Rodotà commons can be regarded as those corporeal and immaterial 'things capable of generating utilities which are relevant to the exercise of fundamental rights and to human flourishing'. Due to such a functional and legal relevance, commons can be considered as the objects of collective and inclusive property rights, that is legal entitlements capable of challenging the individualistic and exclusive conception of subjective rights at the core of Western legal tradition. While suggesting deeply renovated views of property as a crucial legal institution, these resources should be 'protected by the whole legal framework, even in the interests of future generations'. Each and every member of the communities of reference should be entitled to take care of commons: in this respect, a collective legal standing concerning remedies having a precautionary potential (e.g. injunctions) has been envisaged and sometimes experimented.

At a general level, a thorough understanding of commons depends on the insights offered by economic analysis of law. For instance, the idea that exclusive property rights

are the most suitable legal institution for the overall governance (enjoyment, exchange, reproduction) of scarce resources is connected to the so-called 'tragedy of commons'. According to this metaphor (which is the title of a crucial article published by G. Hardin in 1968), where a limited resource is held in common and without constraints (such as effective prerogatives of exclusion) every member of the community will tend to use such a resource in order to maximise his/her individual utilities. As a consequence, according to this view in most cases the tragic destiny of commons can be overconsumption and depletion. From another perspective, critical remarks about the development of individualistic private property have been made by highlighting the scenario called the 'tragedy of anti-commons'. According to influential researches carried out by M. Heller in the last Nineties, excessive fragmentations of individual property rights tend to prevent efficient forms of governance of a given resource, because the proliferation of exclusive legal entitlements can result in many concurrent powers of veto and in disincentives for cooperative behaviours.

Such insights allow to underline that the efficient and sustainable governance of scarce resources cannot be granted by a priori legal arrangements, based on the allocation of exclusive property rights. On the contrary, as the Nobel Prize E. Ostrom has shown in her landmark works sophisticated forms of collective governance can be compatible with the construction of limited resources as commons. In this view, the identification of some design principles (such as the clear definition of group boundaries, and the necessity that the subjects affected by some rules can take part in changing the rules) is able to lead to an efficient governance of some resources, although the institutional framework organising the life of a community is neither the market nor private property.

In the last decade urban contexts have become one of the major laboratories for the emergence of commons as a legal institution. The reasons for this process are rather intuitive. While the development and the many transformations of cities have always been about the collective dimension of human life— since cities are probably the most ancient among the complex artefacts created by human communities— unfortunately in the last fifty years urban systems have proved to be increasingly incapable of providing people with widespread social security. The increasing difficulty to grant social cohesion and a high-quality public sphere is connected to broader structural changes in Western societies as well (see 'Active Citizens'; 'Regeneration'). In this framework, the discovery (or the reevaluation) of urban commons can also be seen as a reaction to some huge processes of (explicit and soft) privatisation of public space. Many parts of a city can

assume the legal qualification of urban commons: a square, an underused garden, an abandoned building can become urban commons, so that citizens can take action and care of these goods through diverse forms of collective governance in the interest both of the community at large and of future generations.

In fact, the effective care of urban commons demands some direct activation of the members of a local community, so that citizens are brought to invest in democratic cooperation, thus reinforcing mutual trust (in the community and in public institutions) and social cohesion. Moreover, the successful governance of commons in urban systems means that collaborative relationships between public administrations and active citizens (see 'Collaboration Pact') can provide a local community at large with affordable and innovative access to shared goods and public services.

In this respect, the increasing success of several experimentations in the field of urban commons shows that another influential scholar, C.M. Rose, was right when she proposed the metaphor of the 'comedy of commons' in response to Hardin's argument. In fact, enabling the collective care and the collaborative management of commons in urban systems means that administrative policies and legal experimentations aim to foster the potential of commons in terms of sociability. Therefore, even at the urban level (and maybe mostly at this level, which is closer to the people and easier to deal with) commons can be appreciated as an institutional basis for developing inclusion and solidarity, intergenerational fairness, social cohesion and participative democracy.

## URBAN MODELLING

In urbanism, urban modelling is one of the major and most established approaches for dealing with the processes of structural transformation within urban systems. In brief, through urban modelling, decision makers can obtain simplified abstractions of a certain urban reality, so that they can build on such models to predict future trends and to arrange consequent measures in terms of urban planning and administrative policies. For instance, where urban modelling foresees the expansion of a certain neighbourhood, future needs for housing can be envisaged and localised, and investments in the sector of network services can be programmed as well. Likewise, where urban modelling highlights a trend toward the concentration of economic activities in a specific area of a city, the need for larger investments in transportation (or in other social infrastructures such as kindergartens) can be taken into account and involve that part of the urban system.

Urban modelling techniques have been evolving in their own methodologies and functioning. In a first phase, static and somehow deterministic views were dominant: these approaches could be traced to the overall traditional conceptions of urbanism, based on clear-cut functional spatialisations of urban territories, on precise (and rather simplistic) models of human rationality and on a major role of local public authorities. On the contrary, during the last decades a different awareness arose, so that dynamic views have become a widespread reality in urbanism by enhancing multifunctional conceptions of urban development, more nuanced views of the rationality at the base of human flows, and the possibility of partnerships between public administrations and private actors. Alongside these changes, technological innovations have been a major stimulus for the evolution of the entire domain of urban modelling by creating unprecedented possibilities of collecting data and elaborating predictions.

In light of such remarks, it is easy to notice that nowadays urban modelling is becoming more and more complex. This trend is connected with the ongoing complexification of urban planning and social sciences from a theoretical perspective. In contemporary urban contexts modelling is an actual challenge, since it is currently clear that cities are recursive systems characterised by mutual influences between human actions and flows and the infrastructures provided by law, urbanism, technology. Such a complexification depends on material issues as well. In fact, the growth of cities in terms of population and their increasing complexity in terms of demographic composition are at the base of major issues, such as the environmental (e.g. risk of depletion of ecological resources within an urban system) and social (e.g. growing inequalities, saturation and/or privatisation of public spaces, and the like) ones. In this respect the models need to become more sophisticated, even through the adoption of innovative legal arrangements, social methodologies and technological tools.

CO3 has been trying to deal with some of the above-mentioned challenges through the interaction between a tactical recourse to urban modelling techniques and the implementation of disruptive technologies. By building on a small scale, the basic aim in the development of CO3 has been to somehow democratise urban modelling because the use of disruptive technologies such as augmented reality and interactive democracy can make these processes more participatory. In particular, within the Paris two scenario the consortium has experimented with a particular articulation between non-professional and professional urban modelling tools with CO3 technologies. The Institut de Recherche et d'Innovation (IRI) developed *ad hoc* a Minetest server (the open version of the

Minecraft games) for centralising the different contributions made by young students with the help of their professors and local experts who advise—coordinated by IRI—within ten schools situated in Plaine Commune, the northern suburbs of Paris. The main idea was to redesign parts of their schools or of their city through the game Minetest, then export the entity created as 3D models and import them into the CO3 app. CO3 technologies, particularly the augmented reality and the geolocated social network FirstLife, have been really appreciated by both students and professors.

In this respect, the consortium has witnessed that even nonprofessional urban modelling technologies could serve as tools that can be traced to the broader domain of co-creation, co-production and co-management of urban commons and public services if well designed and integrated in both technological and social milieux.

## URBAN VOIDS

From a general perspective, one can define as urban voids all those spaces in the cities characterised by abandon, underuse and loss of a former functional identity (as well as lack of a future one). Urban voids are a major issue in contemporary urbanism because of some structural socioeconomic trends recurring in most Western urban systems. First, deindustrialisation processes have led many companies to restructure and/or relocate their businesses, thus abandoning factories and large industrial complexes. Such choices have often created gigantic urban voids and caused huge shocks for the functional equilibrium of a neighbourhood or even for a city's entire urban identity and economic stability. Moreover, demographic trends are causing many Western cities to face widespread challenges, such as ageing populations, as well as unprecedented mixes in terms of sociocultural composition and of language diversity. In some cities another outcome of demographic trends is the decrease in urban population, which can imply the creation of urban voids in the stock of residential dwellings. More recently, the COVID-19 pandemic has been the cause of the possible emergence of new urban voids, given that the rise of flexible and smart working could cause a fall in demand for offices and commercial real estate in city centres.

The issue of urban voids can be addressed from multiple perspectives. If some urban voids are not part of the built environment, a possible choice could be to leave such spaces to their spontaneous development, this policy meaning not a lack of interest but, on the contrary, the awareness of the positive environmental role of spontaneous

natural ecosystems within a broader urban context. Of course, even empty buildings, such as those of industrial heritage, pose environmental issues. For instance, a former factory can be converted into other valuable uses only after decontamination, making this element one of the key challenges in the domain of urban regeneration (see 'Regeneration').

Environmental aspects can be traced to the broader discussion on the side effects of urban voids. In this respect, it is worth noting that urban voids tend to generate negative externalities even at a social level. Empty dwellings can represent a distortion of the residential property market. They also create incentives for occupations by persons in need and thus lead to the emergence of many delicate issues related to the social treatment and to the legal regime of squatting. At large, urban voids in the built environment are often the cause of negative side effects in terms of urban quality (abandoned buildings tend to determine a fall both in economic values and in the quality of life in the involved neighbourhood) and security (unlawful and/or dangerous activities can take place in such empty buildings).

In the framework of CO3 the issue of urban voids has been addressed by foreseeing the possible interactions between disruptive technologies and the democratic decision-making process addressing the future uses of such spaces. As one of the experimental scenarios featured in the Athens pilot shows, through technological strategies combining augmented reality (see 'Augmented Reality') with gamification (see 'Gamification') citizens can be enabled to isolate specific urban voids within a certain Augmented Commoning Area, so that 'digital proposals' can be made for possible new collective uses of these abandoned pieces of neighbourhoods. The interplay between the traditional legal regime of empty buildings (on the one hand) and the possible legal acknowledgement of digital proposals made by citizens (on the other hand) is an open question; however, the emergence itself of such a topic is proof of the innovative potential of the implementation of disruptive technologies in the domains of collaborative administration.

## USO CIVICO (Civic usage)

*Uso civico* is a model of governance of urban commons, created in Italy and based on public law, which became popular after its invention and use in the framework of an important experience of urban commoning in the city of Naples: that of 'Ex Asilo Filangieri'.

The *uso civico* discussed here does not correspond, from a technical point of view, to the *uso civico* conceived by continental private law, the latter being an institution which moves integrally within the domain of private property, allowing a community access to a certain use of a good according to rules and principles of customary law.

With *this uso civico*, the ‘Neapolitan-style’ *uso civico* shares the idea of collective access but differs from a technical–legal perspective. In the Italian experience, *uso civico* is conceived as a tool of governance of common goods *in public ownership* and, in particular, municipal ownership. It provides that the community of reference of the good builds, autonomously and from the bottom up, the rules on the use of the spaces, on the deliberative and decisional procedures and on the organisation of the activities, joining them together in one document: the so-called ‘declaration of *uso civico*’.

It is therefore up to the municipality to incorporate the declaration in an administrative act (which, in the Italian experience, takes the form of a deliberation of the city council). Such a deliberation has the dual consequence of giving some form of legal effect to the declaration and, above all, of legitimising the possession of the good by the community of reference, a possession which takes shape in the forms and ways provided for in the declaration itself.

The advantages of *uso civico* are i) its flexibility; ii) its authentic bottom-up nature; and iii) from the perspective of the community, that a good portion of legal liability remains allocated to the administration.

However, *uso civico* bears also certain shortfalls, the most relevant of which is that just as the municipality can grant *uso civico*, acknowledging by its own act the declaration drawn up by the community of reference, the same municipality, as owner of the property, can at any time, and *ad nutum*, ignore it, by simply adopting an equal and contrary act. From a strictly legal point of view, therefore, *uso civico* does not protect the good from public power, which may, at its sole discretion, decide to withdraw its effects and use the good for other purposes, for example by selling it on the market for commercial use. The risk, in other words, is that *uso civico*, granted during a favourable political climate, may be revoked at the first change of political majority. Put in other words, *uso civico* lacks the legal capacity to withstand the opposing pressures that, in the long term, could come from both the state and market.

Second, *uso civico* appears to be a scarcely scalable mechanism, given that, as already mentioned, tort liability for any damage related to the use of the good remains, on a large scale, with the municipality. Except in special cases where some civil servant,

out of political passion and civic dedication, decides to take responsibility for damages, in the ordinary operations of a public entity it is difficult to expect it to maintain responsibility for the use of the good without exercising any control over it.



### **Alessandra Quarta**

Alessandra Quarta is Associate Professor of Private Law at the University of Turin and coordinator of the HH2020 Project Generative European Commons Living Lab. She is also part of the CO3 HH2020 Project. Her main research interests focus on property law, the commons, contract law and law and technology.

### **Antonio Vercellone**

Antonio Vercellone (PhD – Bocconi University) is Assistant Professor of private at the University of Turin and he is part of the Generative European Commons Living Lab Project. His main research interests are property law, the commons and family law under a queer perspective.

SECTION [03]

# GOVERNANCE TOOLKIT

Community Land Trust Brussels



Everyone designs who devises courses of action aimed at changing existing situations into preferred ones.

Herbert A. Simon, *The Sciences of the Artificial*<sup>1</sup>

Functionally, oppression is domesticating.  
To no longer be prey to its force, one must emerge from it and turn upon it.  
This can be done only by means of the praxis:  
reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it.

Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*<sup>2</sup>

---

1 Simon, H. A. (1969). *The Sciences of the Artificial*. The MIT Press.

2 Freire, P. (2017). *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (30th Anniversary ed.) Penguin Books Ltd. (Original work published 1968, *Pedagogia do Oprimido*).

## Defining governance

Defining governance was an essential step towards the realisation of the Governance Toolkit. Given the various points of view and professional fields dealing with governance, we realised from the very beginning that it would not have been possible to address the design of the toolkit without positioning gE.CO on the definition of governance, that is, without seizing on and considering the understandings of governance that emerge from the surveys conducted by gE.CO during the first half of the project.

Definitions of governance tend to be very broad. According to UNESCO, “governance has been defined to refer to structures and processes that are designed to ensure accountability, transparency, responsiveness, rule of law, stability, equity and inclusiveness, empowerment, and broad-based participation. Governance also represents the norms, values, and rules of the game through which public affairs are managed in a transparent, participatory, inclusive, and responsive manner. Governance, therefore, can be subtle and may not be easily observable. In a broad sense, governance is about the culture and institutional environment in which citizens and stakeholders interact and participate in public affairs. It is more than the organs of the government”<sup>3</sup>. In the field of urban studies, governance is meant as the act and processes of governing<sup>4</sup>. For geographers, “Urban governance is concerned with the processes through which government is organised and delivered in urban areas and the relationships between state agencies and civil society. The focus is on questions of democratic representation, power, and decision-making”<sup>5</sup>.

Commoning practices suggest a holistic and ecological understanding of governance given the symbiotic relationship binding the practices of commoners to their common pools of resources and therefore often to their living environments. Their

---

3 International Bureau of Education. (n.d.). Concept of governance. UNESCO. Retrieved 16 January, 2022, from <http://www.ibe.unesco.org/en/geqaf/technical-notes/concept-governance>.

4 Bhide, A. (2018). Changing trajectories of urban local governance. In *India's Contemporary Urban Conundrum* (pp. 172–183). Routledge India. Stoker, G. (1998). Governance as theory: Five propositions. *International Social Science Journal*, 50(155), 17–28. Kaufmann, D., Léautier, F., & Mastruzzi, M. (2005). Governance and the city: An empirical exploration into global determinants of urban performance. Policy Research Working Paper No. 3712. World Bank, Washington, DC. <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/8285>

5 Raco, M. (2009). Governance, Urban. In *International Encyclopedia of Human Geography* (pp. 622–627). Elsevier. <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-008044910-4.01089-0>



approach to the use and preservation of resources resonates with the etymology of the word governance, the Latin word *gubernare*. To govern is to manage resources and a given living environment with the purpose of serving the mission of an organisation or community. The act of governing is necessarily a relational act, binding a community to the resources they need to fulfil their needs and basic rights and to the living environment they shape through their uses and practices. Such a definition implies that there are no decisional processes to be designed or discussed without resources to be governed. If resources are needed for the fulfilment of fundamental human rights<sup>6</sup>, they must also be protected across generations to continue to fulfil those needs. Particularly in the case of the commons, communities need their common pools of resources as much as those resources need somebody to take care of them. As Elinor Ostrom demonstrated, the tragedy of the commons is not the result of commoning practices but rather of neglect and abandonment. The understanding of governance at the core of the toolkit presented in the forthcoming pages does not abstract the decisional systems from the ecologies and conditions shaping them. In this way, we intend to recognise and precisely bring to the fore the strict relationship between the rights to use and responsibility to take care of a given pool of resources that should be at the core of governing processes.

In the gE.CO framework, such a conceptualisation of governance is supported by two observations. The first is that the decisional systems and governance structures of the collectives we met during the survey phase seem to be strictly related to the nature of the resources being governed. For example, the relationship with space seems to play a relevant role. A 10.000 m<sup>2</sup> building implies organisational activities and, therefore, governance structures that are necessarily different from those concerning a 200 m<sup>2</sup> space or a vacant lot. Not to mention all those cases where the commoning practices are only temporarily set in given buildings or sites: precarious conditions have an impact on the duration of programs, the commitment of actors and individuals, and the resources mobilised to sustain them, finally trickling down to the decisional systems. Also, the availability of financial resources impacts organisational capacities: hiring employees makes possible governance choices that are very different from the case in which the collective can only rely on the voluntary contributions of its members.

---

6 This is the definition of “commons” according to jurist Stefano Rodotà. See: Commissione Rodotà—per la modifica delle norme del codice civile in materia di beni pubblici (14 giugno 2007). [https://www.giustizia.it/giustizia/it/mg\\_1\\_12\\_1.wp?contentId=SPS47617](https://www.giustizia.it/giustizia/it/mg_1_12_1.wp?contentId=SPS47617)

The second observation is that although many collectives that gE.CO surveyed declared an interest in working on their governance systems, they in fact identified other aspects of their organisation as problematic. Although this does not necessarily mean the governance of those collectives is perfectly functioning and adequate, it may suggest two things. First, collectives may be willing to address their governance systems in an attempt to improve aspects such as financial capacities, the continuity of their activities, or efficient maintenance of the building they occupy. Second, their understanding of governance may go beyond decisional structures and rules and encompass other realms of activity.

Such a holistic understanding of governance, embedded and shaped by the conditions within which a given organisation operates, implies its high specificity. Governance systems are the result of the unique combination of capacities and needs, spatial and contextual characteristics that allow a commoning initiative to emerge and thrive. This can be easily observed by looking at the surveys collected by gE.CO: although there are similarities, it is not possible to find two equal structures. This is also largely recognised in the literature. For example, Ostrom<sup>7</sup> described how governance is shaped to respond to the characteristics of a given resource, while Dardot and Laval<sup>8</sup> theorised how commons are instituted (from the latin *in-statuere*) to recognise the pre-existing conditions within which they are established and to which they respond. In addition, De Angelis and Stavrides<sup>9</sup> described the commons as being defined by three elements: the common pool of resources, the communities relying on those resources, and the process of commoning, while Federici and Caffentzis<sup>10</sup> stressed the importance of defining the commons in the historical here and now to construct an alternative society.

If the governance of the commons is such an ecologic, holistic, and site-specific construct, designing the decisional systems of a given initiative as an abstract scheme or

---

7 Ostrom, E. (1990). *Governing the commons. The evolution of institutions for collective action*. Cambridge University Press.

8 Dardot, P., Laval, C. (2014). *Commun. Essai sur la révolution au XXe siècle*. La Découverte.

9 AnArchitektur (2010). *On the Commons: A Public Interview with Massimo De Angelis and Stavros Stavrides*, e-flux journal, n. 17. <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/17/67351/on-the-commons-a-public-interview-with-massimo-de-angelis-and-stavros-stavrides/>

10 Federici, S., Caffentzis, G. (2013). *Commons Against and Beyond Capitalism*, Upping the Anti: a journal of theory and action, no 15, September 2013 (pp 83-97). <https://uppingtheanti.org/journal/article/15-commons-against-and-beyond-capitalism>

protocol, without a fine understanding of the nature of the resources and the processes to be administered or without addressing the conditions within which the initiative operates, may lead to ineffective solutions.

### **Designing processes with/for the generative commons**

Two principles guided the conceptualisation and design of the governance toolkit. The first was creating tools that serve the high specificity and holistic understanding of governance, as explained in the previous paragraph. If governance is the result of the specific combination of conditions and capacities of a given initiative, how do we support a collective in designing the most adequate form of governance? We soon realised that the answer was not providing ready-made models of decision systems or organisational structures. These may be helpful references and inspirations only once users have understood their organisation's metabolism and the conditions within which it operates. What we aimed to offer was the possibility for these collectives to explore themselves and their operational conditions. Our purpose in conceiving the toolkit was to design processes that can lead collectives to assess their capacities, envision their future, and learn about the most appropriate choices in terms of juridical and governance structures. Commoners are the actual and legitimate designers of their governance systems.

Related to the first, the second principle was developing the tools collaboratively by involving the collectives and initiatives previously contacted by gE.CO or new ones willing to work on their governance. The principle was aligned with the specific purposes of the second half of the project: to engage with local communities and popularise the use of the platform gE.CO map. While the first half of gE.CO gave the possibility to establish contact with more than 250 collectives, it was during the second half that the project was supposed to intensify the exchanges and conversations with collectives. Each partner was supposed to focus, in particular but not exclusively, on their cities' and countries' initiatives, thus shifting the focus of gE.CO from the digital environment of the gE.CO map to the physical, material context of the commons, from the horizontal mapping of case studies to the collaboration with local initiatives. Together with specific communication and dissemination activities, the very development of the toolkits was meant to introduce gE.CO at a more local level by making its contribution tangible.

The methodology for developing the Governance Toolkit was first conceived in September 2020, so it necessarily had to take into account the restrictions determined by COVID-19 and deal with their consequences. Because of the pandemic, the activities of gE.CO and the implementation of the toolkits had to be adapted to the digitalisation of social life. This brought both opportunities and limitations. Distances were erased, and it became equally feasible to meet local or distant collectives, therefore providing a richer range of possibilities for experimenting with the toolkit. Although this allowed us to reach very different contexts, it also limited the number of locally grounded activities. In addition, digital fatigue and the disruption of the commoning activities caused by restrictions greatly reduced the opportunities for interaction with the collectives, especially the smallest. Under these conditions, the Governance Toolkit was designed by involving both local and other European initiatives, as the chapters of this section will describe.

### **Design methodology and phases**

If governance is a specific and holistic artefact strictly related to the conditions within which a given collective or initiative operates, designing tools to aid the identification of the appropriate governance system questions both the role and the competencies of a designer. The designer is usually called to propose and directly design the required solution. However, in this case, the approach is rather that of providing the tools that enable communities to design autonomously. Therefore, the role of the designer is that of proposing a methodology allowing potential users to identify the best configurations for their governance system. Rather than being those who conceive a given governance system, the designer creates a pedagogical framework, making available their own expertise to trigger and structure those reflexive and envisioning processes a commoning initiative or group of actors are supposed to develop and take responsibility for. Under these conditions, their competency is therefore reframed: while not being the experts in governance systems, designers operate here as the experts of designing methodologies and processes, using their repertoire of technical skills and previous experiences to support collectives, from providing visual materials, to prototyping a given process as a whole in order to test its efficacy and possible blind spots. They are experts working with and for other experts: collectives and communities that have their specific competencies

and knowledge concerning their activities and the conditions within which they operate and which they are supposed to govern.

The prototyping phase, while allowing for testing the efficacy of the tools, gives the involved communities and collectives the opportunity to contribute to shaping them based on their needs and knowledge. Furthermore, as it will be explained, each tool is precisely conceived to be appropriated and adapted by their users to respond to their specific situations and capacities. Through such a process, everybody learns: professional designers learn from looking for references and models to create *ad hoc* tools and from the expertise and pragmatic knowledge of the involved audiences and collectives, while commoners and the involved actors learn by exploring the realm of possibilities, strategies, rights, and responsibilities disclosed by the tools.

Based on the previously mentioned principles, the design methodology was therefore shaped by the intentions of providing effective guidance and tools on the one hand, and minimally defined processes on the other, to allow their replicability and to make them easily adjustable to the needs of the commoning initiatives.

*A posteriori*, the actual unfolding of the design process, recognises four phases.

#### **First phase: analysis**

The survey analysis allowed us to identify the collectives interested in working on their governance issues. We observed that in many cases, the collectives that declared an interest in working on their governance did not identify their governance structures or decisional systems as problematic, but rather other aspects such as funding and financial issues, their relationship with the public administration, and lack of engagement of members and the community. Therefore, rather than designing tools aimed at directly shaping the decisional models of the generative commons, conceiving tools that allow collectives to autonomously reshape their governance in the framework of the ecologic and holistic angle previously described was more pertinent and helpful. In particular, we identified three main needs of the collectives willing to re-design their governance system:

- Maintaining alignment with their mission and values while redefining their future and preparing for growth
- Learning about their rights and responsibilities and exploring and assessing the most appropriate forms of governance
- Dealing with spatial conditions and their impact on governance matters

A coaching system called Mirroring, a role-playing game called Commons and Dragons, and an architectural modelling recipe called Space Matters are the tools we developed to respond to those needs, or, at least, to trigger meaningful processes.

#### **Second phase: meeting and listening**

Given the previously mentioned approach, the CLTB involved both local and other European initiatives, relying on the other gE.CO partners for meeting non-locals. The surveys addressed the topic of governance in very general terms, whereas the one-on-one conversations aimed to explore governance-related issues in more detail and understand the dynamics undermining its effectiveness. As previously mentioned, collectives and initiatives interested in governance did not necessarily mention their decisional system or internal organisation as the main challenge to their activities. The surveys revealed a more complex picture, and the individual meetings allowed us to address the conditions impeding a proper functioning of governance and the advocated direction for change. Amongst the gE.CO's collectives interested in working on governance, only two agreed to meet for a preliminary overview of their situation, and only one ultimately agreed to collaborate on testing one of the tools, going through the whole prototyping process. In addition to these, the CLTB's ongoing collaborations and network capacity allowed us to work with a Brussels-based initiative and, more recently, with an association based in the UK, neither of which were in the initial gE.CO database. In the first case, a long-term continuous collaboration started in November 2020 allowed us to develop the methodology and tool Space Matters. In the second case, the collaboration allowed us to further test Mirroring.

#### **Third phase: Designing the processes and prototyping**

Each tool was designed based on the previously mentioned concepts and the expertise of the involved CLTB staff member, Verena Lenna, under the supervision of Joaquin De Santos. After extensive research in the fields of transdisciplinary design, game design, facilitation, coaching, and participatory methodologies typical of architecture and design, elements and techniques were recombined and adapted. This first phase resulted in the delineation of the processes allowing collectives and initiatives to explore, simulate, evaluate, access, and discuss ways of governing their resources and metabolism. The design focused on creating the conditions (spatial, temporal, relational) and the dynamics that allow the collectives to perform the abovementioned

reflective and strategic operations. Subsequently, an implementation phase was required to prototype and test the effectiveness of the tool, in collaboration with the collectives that agreed to experiment with the processes.

In general, the duration of the first design phase and the testing process varied significantly depending on the tools. The implementation required solid preparation and several sessions, adapted each time to the specific circumstances and involved audiences. And unfortunately, as previously mentioned, the COVID-19 pandemic heavily affected the capacity and availability of organisations. Mirroring was designed relatively quickly, but the testing process required six sessions, each lasting from a minimum of 1 hour and 30 minutes to a maximum of 3 hours. Space Matters was developed through the previously mentioned long-term collaboration with the Brussels-based initiative, Permanent, and was tested in the framework of a workshop organised as part of a summer school called Building Beyond. Finally, after an internal simulation organised at the University of Turin, Commons and Dragons was publicly tested during the Researchers' Night as a dissemination event. Each prototyping process was a unique experience, organically developed on the grounds of evolving conditions and needs of the participants. It would have been difficult to experiment on the tools with a larger number of collectives.

The overall positive feedback received from the involved actors and collectives suggests the processes these tools will trigger and organise may prove very useful in various situations. However, the special circumstances of the implementation process should not be underestimated. To verify the effectiveness of the tools, facilitation has always been provided and organised by the CLTB and with the support of the Department of Law of the University of Turin, as far as Commons and Dragons is concerned. Facilitation is a relevant part of the processes these tools are meant to structure. The designer of the tools also played the role of the facilitator during the testing sessions, which possibly impacted on the effectiveness of the processes. Being the author of the tools, the facilitator–designer is aware of the quality to be achieved, how things should look, and how to direct the interactions accordingly.

For this reason, an interesting and crucial feedback should be that of the actors and collectives that will decide to use these tools autonomously, following the instructions provided on the dedicated pages of the gE.CO website, as the actual tools. Designing the Governance Toolkit consisted of precisely translating the desired processes as prototyped during this third phase into accessible and effective instructions.

...to tool

Translate the process you designed and prototyped in  
a set of instructions and helpful materials,  
allowing any user to replicate the process

Learn from the experience and rely upon feedback to improve the  
design of the process

Prototype the process with actual collectives, concerned actors and  
refer to real or realistic situations

Make sure criteria of inclusivity, flexibility, precision  
and depth are fulfilled

Define the role of the facilitator and the instructions  
required to support their performance

Identify key roles and how participants are  
going to be involved and interact

Use graphics to make the invisible visible

Identify sub-structures and how one step leads to the other

Break it down into meaningful phases  
and specify important milestones

Identify the general structure

Find out which kind of mechanics or process is most similar to what  
you are aiming at designing: do some research

Identify the ultimate purpose of the process you need to design

From process...

#### **Fourth phase: from process to tool**

What issues need to emerge during the processes triggered by each of the tools and how do we make sure participants will address them? How do we effectively involve the participants? How do we make sure they will develop the required knowledge or plan? How do we support the role of the facilitator? How do we provide accessible indications? How do we assure the replicability of the process under various circumstances?

To make the processes the tools are supposed to trigger accessible and replicable by any collective or initiative, we translated them into a set of instructions that allow anybody, without any specific expertise, to use them and obtain meaningful results. By referring to role-playing gaming techniques, the artistic practice of do-it and coaching systems, we conceived processes characterised by four essential qualities: inclusivity, flexibility, precision and depth. These could be considered the criteria for measuring or evaluating the effectiveness of the tools.

**Inclusivity** is achieved by the very nature of the tools, allowing an undefined number of actors, practitioners, and citizens to participate. The language of the instructions is very accessible and avoids technical jargon. Examples of interactions or fragments of the testing processes are made available to illustrate the result and the quality to be achieved. Although a facilitator, game master, or coach is always supposed to direct the process, all the participants are responsible for creating an inclusive and empowering environment, enabling the expression of diverse and even conflicting points of view. References to books, videos, and further readings are provided, encouraging curious participants to further develop their skills for a more fruitful session, but most importantly, helping them learn about the issues they wish to address by using the tools.

**Flexibility** describes the capacity of these tools to adapt to the specific needs of the initiatives willing to use them and the conditions under which they are utilised. These potential adaptations include the following: players do not have to be effective members of a given collective or initiative, missing actors can be replaced through role-playing, the tools can be used in the course of one or multiple sessions, a session can last one hour or an entire afternoon, the object of investigation and related field can be very broad or very specific, terminology and vocabulary can be adapted depending on the users, the setting can be an actual site or a fictional one, and so forth.

**Precision** describes the capacity of the tools to address, as effectively as possible, the specific questions or issues motivating a given collective or commoning initiative to use the tool. Such a capacity is the result of the combination, on the one side, of a sufficiently adaptable process, allowing users to deal with the specific conditions and characteristics of the system under examination and, on the other side, of the skilfulness of the facilitator to properly guide the process with the right questions and techniques so that participants themselves may finally identify what is accurate and meaningful for their organisation. This is why external facilitation, especially in the case of Mirroring and Space Matters, would bring about better results and an unbiased guidance process and lead to the participants seeing new perspectives.

**Depth** describes the capacity of these tools to create a reflexive environment and the conditions for a meaningful exploration of the issues that may undermine the effective governance of a given initiative. It is in fact the condition under which precision can be achieved. As in the case of precision, depth is also made possible by designing processes that leave enough room for adaptation as a result of a minimal structure, allowing users to repeat, adjust, and extend the process as needed. As in the case of precision, facilitation plays a crucial role in creating such an environment and enabling the reflective capacities of the participants.

#### **Introducing the tools**

As previously mentioned, the Governance Toolkit consists of three tools: Mirroring, Commons and Dragons, and Space Matters. Each of them is presented in a dedicated chapter. As mentioned in the introduction, the purpose of this publication is to introduce the processes and narratives that led to their realisation. Readers therefore should not expect to find the comprehensive instructions and materials which are provided on the website. For this reason, to better situate the information and contents provided in the following pages, we recommend visiting the gE.CO website, especially the Governance Toolkit page, downloading, and having a look at the instructions booklets.

Each chapter contains four parts. After having briefly defined the tool and provided an overview of the purposes, the second part introduces the main challenge addressed by each tool and explains why the chosen approach is considered particularly suitable. In

the case of Mirroring, the challenge is achieving a holistic view of the conditions allowing the growth of a given collective. Coaching is suggested as the pertinent approach for the dialogue it creates amongst visions, capacities, and results. Commons and Dragons deals with the need to test the effectiveness of a given governance configuration while learning about rights and responsibilities and legal frameworks. The simulations made possible by role-playing games allow for precise exploration of the potential and limitations of decisional systems and legal frameworks. Space Matters addresses the impact spatial conditions may have on the governance of commons. The use of architectural tools such as tridimensional models and drawings easily increases participants' spatial awareness, thus supporting the facilitation of brainstorming sessions dealing with governance and the rights and responsibilities of the involved actors.

The third part addresses the challenges and opportunities related to the design and utilisation of each tool: being an effective coach, how to effectively embed legal expertise during a session of Commons and Dragons, and the reframing of professional design as a facilitation process. Diagrams and boxes provide detailed information about the prototyping processes and describe the effectiveness of the tools in relation to the above-mentioned criteria: inclusivity, flexibility, precision, and depth.

Finally, each chapter is concluded with suggested readings, allowing readers to increase their knowledge of the themes only superficially dealt with in the chapters but whose importance will probably grow in the coming years, to support the multiplication of cooperative and horizontal forms of governance.

TOOL 01

# MIRRORING

Overview and purpose

The conditions of governance

Challenges and opportunities of coaching and the digital environment

Suggested readings

## Overview and purpose

Governance is not only about regulating the decision-making processes; it is also the totality of activities and systems that govern a given set of resources. As such, governance is a process of constant negotiation between the available capacities and the mission to be accomplished. By necessity, governance is continually evolving, to respond to changing conditions and the changing identity of the concerned actors and organisations. This means that it is not possible to design a specific governance system without revising and considering, on the one hand, the conditions within which such a system is supposed to operate and on the other hand, without having a long-term vision to focus on for the growth of the organisation.

Mirroring is a tool allowing collectives to take the time to look into their own eyes and reflect on their values, capacities and purposes as a starting point for designing an effective and sustainable development strategy and the required system of governance. The process consists of four steps: the envisioning of a desirable future for the collective in the short, medium and long run; the assessment of the capacities required to realise such a future; the design of an actionable plan making possible the achievement of the desired goals; and the identification of an accountability system providing the possibility of checking on the actual progress and results of the devised strategy. The reinterpretation of coaching techniques provided the fundamental elements to structure the process with minimal features, allowing organisations and collectives to adapt it to their specific characteristics and needs.

Fig 3.1 - A short description of the tool.

	Tool ID
<p>Definition and logo</p>	<div data-bbox="2216 145 2395 327" style="text-align: right;">  </div> <p><b>Mirroring</b></p> <p>A coaching process guiding collectives to envision their future, re-align with their values, develop their capacities as a starting point for designing an effective and sustainable growth strategy and the required system of governance.</p> <p><b>Main Steps</b></p>
<p>Imagining</p>	<p>Envisioning short, medium, and long-term futures while remaining aligned with core values and mission.</p>
<p>Assessing</p>	<p>Evaluating existing capacities and how they should be developed to sustain the realisation of the envisioned purposes.</p>
<p>Planning</p>	<p>Defining the concrete actions and strategies required to develop the previously assessed capacities towards the realisation of the envisioned purposes.</p>
<p>Monitoring</p>	<p>Defining accountability strategies allowing to measure progress and to adjust plans accordingly.</p> <p><b>Applications</b></p>
	<p>Planning and organisational activities, crisis management, growth and development, internal study, brainstorming and evaluations.</p>



## The conditions of governance

As Massimo De Angelis pointed out, commons are defined by three interweaving elements: a common pool of resources, the commoning practices allowing the preservation and reproduction of those resources and the communities involved in those practices. It could be argued that the interdependence of these elements is recognisable in any organisation; however, in the case of commons, it is crucial for their very existence. In fact, the resources being held in common are usually fundamental for the fulfilment of the basic rights and needs of the concerned communities. From the fish reserves Elinor Ostrom described to a community garden in a crowded neighbourhood, commons are always instituted and generated as an answer to existing and shared needs. This means that while the concerned communities need resources, at the same time, without commoning practices and communities taking care of them, those resources may be misused or exhausted or may disappear. The resources define the commoning practices and their communities as much as these shape resources and their availability. The weakening of one determines the exhaustion of the other and the end of the commons. The tragedy of the commons is possible precisely because of the absence of a community establishing rules and taking care of resources. That is not always necessarily the case: for privately and publicly owned and governed resources, communities making use of a given good are not necessarily those taking care of it.

The survival of the commons is therefore the result of a dynamic and delicate balance among the three mentioned elements because none of them could exist without the other two. Both internal and external conditions affect such a balance. Not only could new regulations or the lack of financial resources determine the end of the commons, but the spirit of care that needs to be at the core of commoning is a strength and a weakness; the contribution of commoners may vary depending on their availability and interest. Additionally, the resource may become inaccessible. The factors determining the very existence and emergence of a given commons are also those that may determine its end.

Urban commons are, therefore, at the same time resilient and fragile. In fact, although the flexibility of their organisation and adaptability is what allows them to survive despite difficulties and transforming circumstances, when too stretched, they may weaken and finally dissolve. For many collectives at the very initial stages of their activities or those facing a transition in the life of their organisation, exploring the conditions within

which they operate becomes an essential step to lay the groundwork for their growth and sustainably establish their governance systems.

Within this perspective, the purpose of the origin of Mirroring is to allow commons to holistically examine their potential and limitations and the interconnectedness of the different conditions vis-à-vis their challenges and objectives. Coaching offers an empowering approach on several levels. Coaching is a methodology for the development of individuals and organisations based on the assumption that the coachees have the knowledge and capacities required to answer their own questions. Defining a vision and setting goals, designing a plan to achieve them and developing the required capacities are the essential purposes of coaching. Coaching therefore is not counselling, facilitation, or technical support.

The coach does not provide expert advice and does not teach. Most of the time, the coach is somebody with no expertise in the field of activity of the coachee; the coach's role is to ask the right questions, fuelling a reflexive attitude that allows the coachees to tap into their knowledge and experience. The role of a coach is not to motivate but instead to guide coachees in identifying their possibilities and dreams. Motivated by transforming ideas into actions, coaches help achieve the desired results by developing the required skills and capacities. Although anybody could perform the role of a coach, some expertise may be useful mostly in terms of structuring the process and effectively leading the conversation.

As Figure 3.1 describes, the design of Mirroring is based on the four main steps that can be identified at the core of any coaching process: envisioning purposes and objectives, assessing the capacities to realise them, planning the concrete actions to achieve them while developing the required capacities, and defining an accountability system to monitor progress.

Based on the core values and identity of the coachees, the first step of coaching is to envision a desirable future in the short, medium or long term, depending on the specific needs of participants. This may also include envisioning the context within which the coach will operate as the bundle of conditions that may be favourable or limiting to the realisation of their objectives. Vis-à-vis the challenges and objectives the participants identify, an overall assessment of existing capacities is required to evaluate whether they could properly sustain the realisation of the envisioned plans and which potential they would need to mobilise and develop. The coach's questions guide participants in such an exploration and increase their awareness concerning their limitations and the steps they

need to take to overcome them. In an attempt to answer, coachees describe themselves and their situation to the coach as an outsider: such an exercise may allow different and perhaps conflicting narratives and points of view to emerge, shedding a different light on their conditions and possibilities. As a result of such an assessment, the participants will be able to evaluate which resources they will need and which capacities to develop as the starting point of designing a specific strategy. That is the purpose of the third step of the coaching process. Finally, the fourth step is about developing an accountability system that will allow the coachees to monitor their progress and adapt strategies to evolving conditions. Coaches may provide regular feedback to help coachees stay on track and be engaged based on the previously established agenda.

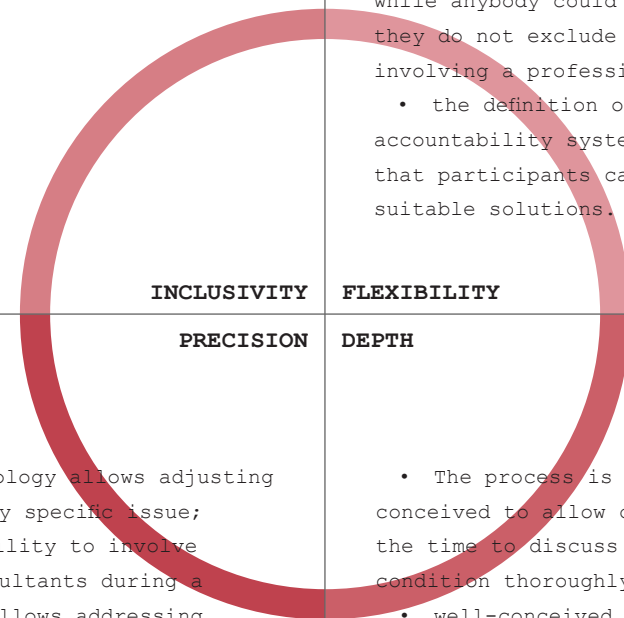
Coaching is an empowering and generative process on many levels. First, it valorises the expertise of coachees while spurring their growth in response to the unique challenges they face. Second, the role envisioning plays in triggering action is largely known: by giving the possibility to collectives to depict their ideal future, coaching stimulates proactivity and activism while strengthening agency. Furthermore, as a process aimed at providing an overall assessment of capacities and potential, necessarily, coaching leads to a holistic understanding of the variety of conditions under which commons operate and their interconnectedness. As previously mentioned, commons are the result of intertwining resources and capacities. This explains why through gE.CO's surveys, collectives declared they were interested in addressing their governance while identifying their challenges in other areas of their activities, such as funding or engagement with the local community. Perceiving governance as the government of resources, beyond their decision-making systems, they are interested in working on it from a holistic perspective rather than intervening in it as a realm separate from their financial resources or spatial needs. Acquiring a complex and overall understanding of their context and conditions, resources and potential, which is what Mirroring allows, are therefore essential for designing sustainable governance systems and for the very existence of the commons.

### Challenges and opportunities of coaching and the digital environment

Mirroring has been designed based on the literature and on the personal experience of the author in the field of coaching. An implementation phase was therefore required to test and improve the tool based on the feedback of coachees. The Athens-based

- The more numerous the points of view, the more fruitful the discussion. Mirroring should be seen as an occasion to hear the voices of any member of a given organisation and to bring to the surface hidden issues and divergent points of view;
- no specific expertise is required, and each participant will contribute based on their experience.

- The collectives can adapt the process and its focus to the specificities of their activities and organisation: it could be the whole governance system or a specific aspect; collectives could use it in a transitional moment or in the initial phase;
- in the assessment phase, participants are free to choose, propose and discuss the realms of activities and capacities that are most relevant for their functioning;
- the elements provided for facilitating the process are minimal: while anybody could act as a coach, they do not exclude the possibility of involving a professional coach;
- the definition of the accountability system is left open so that participants can identify the most suitable solutions.



- The methodology allows adjusting the focus on any specific issue;
- the possibility to involve experts or consultants during a given session allows addressing any challenge with the required technical expertise;
- a good facilitation process will allow identifying the potential and the specific mechanisms impeding the growth of a given organisation.

- The process is specifically conceived to allow collectives to take the time to discuss and analyse their condition thoroughly;
- well-conceived and zealous facilitation will allow participants to explore in-depth the topic under discussion;
- the implication of the concerned actors allows to realistically deal with the complexity of their challenges, of their interweaving rights and needs;
- the duration of the session can be variable, therefore allowing to explore topics as deeply as required.

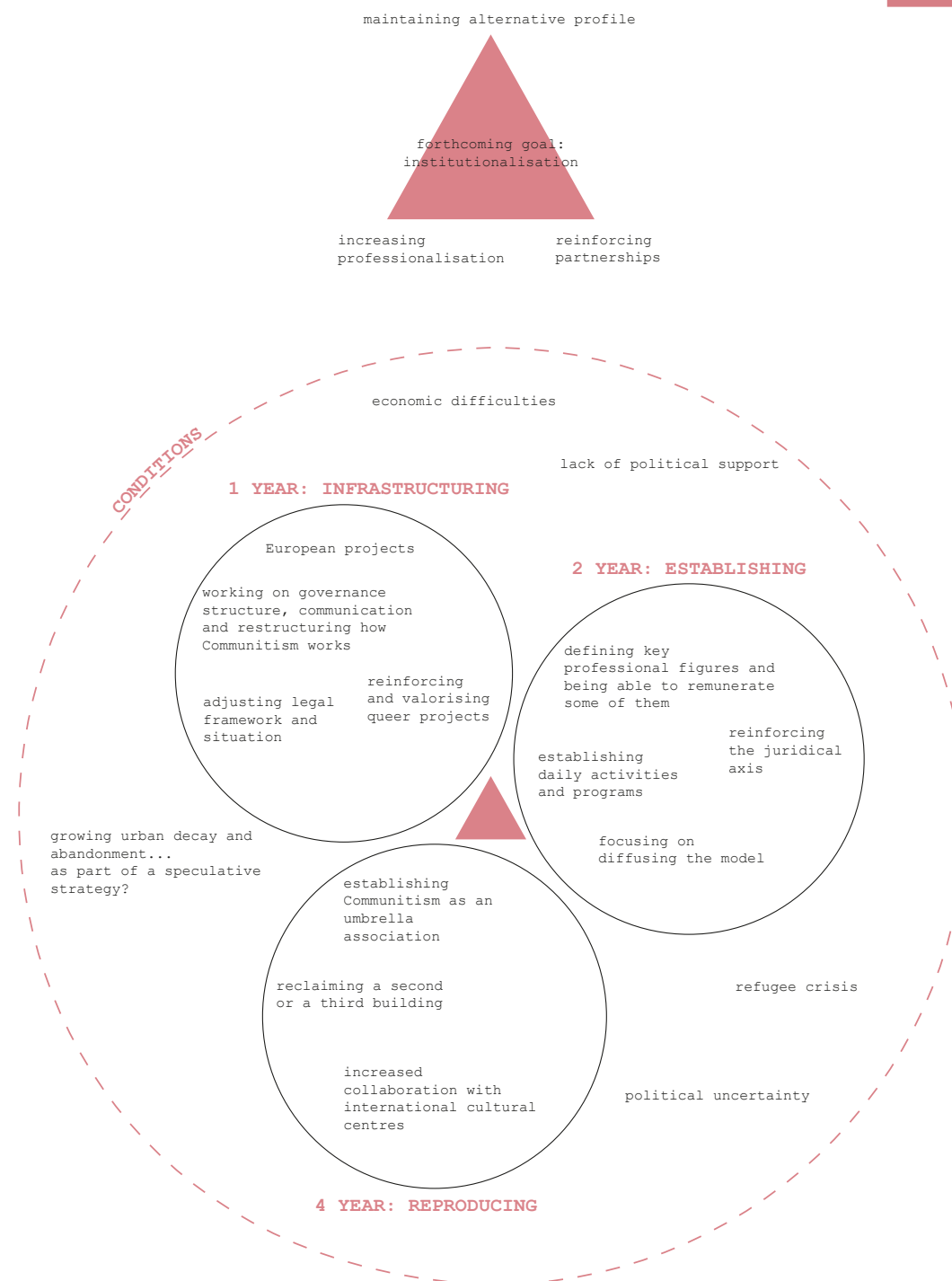


Photo credit : Chloe Barbas. Edited by Verena Lenna.

## Prototyping: Communitism and the delicate balance between experimentation and institutionalisation

When Communitism agreed to collaborate for the prototyping phase of Mirroring, the collective was in a transition phase. After a few years of very intensive activities that pushed and stretched the organisation's boundaries on many levels, a moment of reflection was needed to evaluate successes and failures, redefine and sharpen the mission, and re-shape the governance as the foundation of any further evolution. What emerged from the conversation with some of the leading members of Communitism was that while evolving towards a certain degree of institutionalisation, the organisation wanted to maintain the identity of an alternative and experimental space for cultural and artistic activities in Athens. Mirroring allowed discussing and identifying more specifically the milestones and actions required to achieve such a delicate balance.

The diagram shows some of the elements that emerged during the first phase of Mirroring while envisioning the short, medium and long term scenarios for Communitism.



collective Communitism, previously involved in the gE.CO surveys, agreed to collaborate for testing the tool<sup>1</sup>. “Communitism is an open community of creative professionals who revive abandoned or under-utilised cultural heritage buildings, transitioning them into cultural commons entrusted to and operated by active communities. Art is considered as a methodology to invite people used to acting as individuals into common practices where they can transcend to active citizenship. Through their actions, each space becomes a community that hosts projects, people and ideas”<sup>2</sup>. Box 3.1 provides more details about their conditions when the collaboration started.

The implementation process consisted of several meetings on a virtual platform. A digital board allowed collecting notes and visualising the unfolding of the process thanks to the graphic identification of different phases. Furthermore, considering the process required multiple sessions, the board also provided a visual recording and synthesis of previously emerged elements, thus allowing participants to easily recall them and continue from where they had stopped the process. A preliminary meeting allowed learning about the origins of the collective and the main turning points in its relatively short history. Delivering such a narrative offered the representatives of Communitism the opportunity to take the time to revise their path, their first reflective moment before starting the actual Mirroring process. Subsequent meetings focused on the different phases of the coaching process, as previously described and as the diagram in Figure 3.1 illustrates. At the end of the process, the feedback was positive: the collective realised that Mirroring offered them the opportunity to take the time to reflect on their future, their strengths and their challenges and helped them to prepare for the retreat they had planned during the summer with the purpose of redesigning their organisation and future objectives.

The prototyping of Mirroring highlighted two challenging but interesting aspects related to translating the coaching process into a replicable methodology that was accessible to anybody as a tool: the need to perform the whole process on a digital platform because of COVID and the coaching approach itself. Both aspects deserve some attention because they could represent a frequent condition.

---

1 More recently, we also had the chance to test the tool with the organisation Midsteeples Quarter, a community benefit society regenerating Dumfries (Scotland) town centre by redeveloping empty High Street properties to create a new neighbourhood with a mix of uses built on the principles of local prosperity and well-being. The process confirmed what we observed during our collaboration with Communitism.

2 From the webpage of the Communitism: <https://communitism.space>.

Although COVID imposed the use of a digital platform, in the future, this may become an option anytime the coach and coachees cannot physically meet. As the pandemic showed, for any organisation, this is an opportunity to continue some of their activities. At the same time, the digital environment may limit the introspective nature of the coaching process. Some types of communication that reinforce openness and give exchanges greater depth, such as body language communication or informal exchanges among participants during coffee breaks or meetings, would not be possible. Furthermore, given the long duration of some sessions, the use of a digital platform may prove uncomfortable. Nevertheless, sharing screens or using online boards to visualise notes and graphics is essential to create a common environment, anchoring the flow of thought to images and diagrams. Mirroring provides visual support that can be used physically or in a virtual environment. A heptagon—whether printed out or shared in a digital environment—will allow notes and reflections to be organised by distributing them according to different fields and themes addressed in each phase of the Mirroring process.

The second challenge concerns the coaching capacity and skills of the person who will take on the coaching role. As previously mentioned, the assumption at the core of the Mirroring process—and the Governance Toolkit in general—is that anybody can be a coach. In some cases, the personal and professional experiences of people accepting the role of coaches may give them the required qualities; in other cases, the advantageous condition may be their external point of view, which puts them in the position to make questions and listen in an unbiased way. A good coach, however, needs to do much more than this. A good coach is somebody who can identify recurring patterns and suggest them to participants when they are relevant for participants’ growth. A good coach is somebody who guides the discussion and allows meaningful interpretations to emerge, without imposing their views. A good coach is somebody who effectively triggers engagement by leveraging the core values of participants and is reliable in monitoring progress. Ideally, a good coach is somebody who has had the opportunity to work with and for several organisations or communities and therefore can build on similarities among cases and valorise the uniqueness of the case at hand. How to make sure the coach will properly guide participants through such an empowering process? Mirroring cannot professionally prepare a coach. However, for each phase of the process, specific suggestions are provided to help the coach adopt the appropriate point of view. The instruction booklet contains the basic elements for effective coaching,

but the concerned communities and participants are invited to ponder from the beginning of their exploration how far they will need to go and to consider involving an experienced facilitator or coach. Designing tools for the empowerment of concerned communities and organisations means finding the right balance between accessibility and effectiveness while recognising the added value experts and professionals may bring as part of a process in which all capacities and forms of knowledge can be valorised and collectively reframed.

### **Suggested readings**

De Angelis, M. (2017). *Omnia Sunt Communia. On the Commons and the Transformation to Postcapitalism*. Zed Books.

English, S., Manzi Sabatine J., Brownell, P. (2019). *Professional Coaching: Principles and Practice*. Springer Publishing Company.

Hargrove, R. (1999). *Masterful coaching: extraordinary results by impacting people and the way they think and work together*. Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Hites Anderson, J.L., Pyle, M. H. (2021). *Making Change. Facilitating Community Action*. Routledge.

Ostrom, E. (1990). *Governing the commons. The evolution of institutions for collective action*. Cambridge University Press.

TOOL 02  
COMMONS AND DRAGONS

Overview and purpose

Role-playing for complexity

Commons, dragons and the legal expertise


Suggested readings

## Overview and purpose

Using the approach of role-playing games, Commons and Dragons allows players to simulate commoning conditions and practices to design and test forms of governance and learn about implied rights and responsibilities, regulations and legal structures. This will enable commoners and other concerned participants to make informed assessments and choices concerning the organisation of their activities and decision-making systems.

Inspired by the famous Dungeons and Dragons game, the distinctive characteristic of Commons and Dragons is the possibility—in the hands of the players—of referring to actual situations in terms of setting and context, objectives, actors involved and legal frameworks. The aim of the game is not to win but rather to explore possibilities and solutions: the role-playing formula was chosen because of the opportunity it offers to avoid competitive logic in favour of playfulness and collaboration. Additionally, as a tool for evaluation and study, Commons and Dragons allows players to learn about and explore existing regulations and legal structures specific to the juridical context in which a given commoning initiative operates. The game master will prepare the gaming session by involving players who have legal expertise or knowledge or by collecting relevant materials required to deepen the governance-related contents and questions that will emerge while playing.

Fig 3.2 - A short description of the tool.

	Tool ID
Definition and logo	 <b>Commons and Dragons</b> <p>A role-playing game allowing collectives and interested actors to explore the advantages and disadvantages of a given governance system and to learn about their rights, responsibilities and relevant regulations.</p>
	<b>Main Steps</b>
Preparing	The game master prepares the session by creating a plot addressing the structures and systems relevant to the situation commoners and other participants are interested in exploring.
Setting	Defining the basic elements to start the game. The game master describes the setting, explains the mission and introduces the characters. The other players design their characters.
Playing and exploring	Following the plot and indications provided by the game master, players explore the issues they are interested in by simulating challenging situations and testing the possible options.
Learning	Exploiting available legal knowledge to learn about rights, responsibilities and regulations. Legal knowledge can be made accessible thanks to the participation of legal experts or in the form of consultation material.
	<b>Applications</b>
	Pedagogic activities, dissemination activities, negotiations with concerned actors, internal study, brainstorming and evaluations, decision-making processes.

## Role-playing for complexity

For many commons-oriented initiatives, the identification of efficient forms of governance can be an abstract exercise, especially in the initial phase, when it may be difficult to foresee the specific situations that will challenge existing systems. Although the personal experience and knowledge of the involved commoners may help, as previously mentioned, the initiatives of commoning are very specific, responding to the unique conditions under which they operate. Models of governance that may work under certain circumstances may not necessarily lead to the same results in different contexts. Furthermore, based on exchanges with the collectives contacted for the gE.CO's surveys and as the University of Turin confirmed, scarce understanding of responsibilities and rights and the implications of specific legal structures and laws was observed.

Therefore, the idea of using a game was to create conditions for commoners to simulate the processes and situations that would challenge their governance and juridical structures in real life. Playing, as the very act of pretending and immersing in an imagined situation with other participants is a powerful way to collectively explore scenarios and possibilities and appreciate logics and dynamics that may emerge only because of interacting with other players. Serious games were therefore considered an interesting option to allow commoning practices and initiatives to deal with the complexity and high specificity of governance systems while bringing a plethora of benefits.

To briefly mention some of those advantages may be interesting to highlight more broadly the potential of serious games in relation to commoning practices. For many years, these games have been used in a variety of fields and situations for serious purposes, mostly in an attempt to overcome the limitations of other explorative methodologies. The ultimate purpose is to test the effectiveness of a given function, approach or tool in the actual world. The distinctive characteristic of gaming is its capacity to create a fictional environment. A serious game may allow players to simulate conditions that are not immediately available in the real world but that are required to experiment a specific innovation or solution by combining realistic and fictional elements. Through the simulation, complex conditions, such as those that involve determining and challenging the governance of commoning initiatives, may be effectively addressed; unlimited variations and iterations will allow players to progressively adjust and tailor the solution or system under observation to actual circumstances. Feedback and the learning process may also be intensified under simulated conditions: the fictional element

will allow participants to see things and conceive plans from a different perspective or will accelerate processes, thus allowing players to strategically anticipate their understanding of causes and effects and functional and non-functional dynamics and choices. Finally, the playfulness and fun elements of well-designed serious games may trigger greater participation and engagement among participants, which are often difficult to achieve in the case of other explorative methodologies.

In looking for ideal game mechanics, we soon realised the purpose of our game was not to defeat other participants or win a competition. The game we needed to design must aim to trigger an explorative process while leaving participants with the possibility of proactively contributing to and simulating real-life strategies and behaviours and forms of cooperation in alignment with the values and spirit of commoning practices. For these reasons, the approach and logic of role-playing seemed ideal.

Role-playing games are a specific category of serious games that provide additional advantages to those previously mentioned. A distinctive trait of role-playing games is that participants must interpret a certain character, depending on the specific purpose and setting of the gaming session. A game master guides the unfolding of the game session by defining the setting and the main elements of the plot, but the other players have a wide margin in which to manoeuvre and make decisions on the basis of their fictional roles and profiles as well as their knowledge and experience gained in real life, thus mixing fiction and reality. Participants may therefore create challenging circumstances that commoning initiatives may have to deal with, for example, by playing the role of hostile neighbours or public administration. Or they may push interactions to precisely explore those aspects needing further in-depth knowledge, for example, the appropriateness of a given juridical structure.

Furthermore, role-playing games allow players to set up any sort of narrative: game masters can set the scene, design the plot and identify the characters as they wish, thus adapting the game to any conditions to be explored. Role-playing game sessions have no fixed duration: multiple sessions can be organised depending on the purpose. Alternatively, the game may be interrupted at any moment. At the beginning of the session, the game master proposes a mission. Still, the very process of organising and acting towards accomplishing that goal may be sufficient for players and commoners to explore the governance and legal structures in which they are interested, without necessarily realising the final objective

Additionally, the possibility of interpreting different roles allows participants



to see things from different points of view: by playing the role of a commoner, a local administrator may suddenly seize different needs or opportunities that commoning initiatives present. Alternatively, a commoner playing the role of a local administrator may suddenly understand the rationales of the origin of a given policy or regulation. The engaged attitude role-playing games require will necessarily fuel participation and intensify the learning process and collective strategic thinking.

If high specificity and complexity characterise commoning practices, serious games and role-playing in particular offer the possibility of dealing with these characteristics, allowing participants to adapt the game to actual conditions and test the most suitable forms of governance. Such an open and adaptable formula will also allow embedding legal expertise and contents, as the following paragraph explains, thus helping participants learn about their rights and responsibilities.

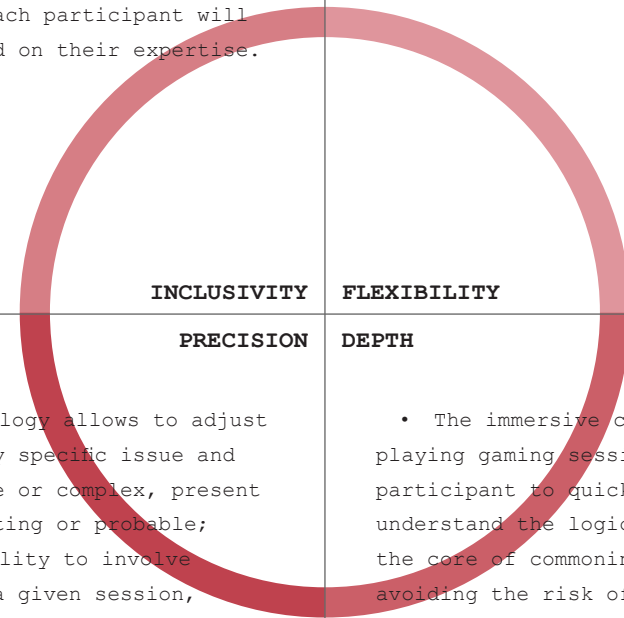
### Commons, dragons and the legal expertise

Commons and Dragons was conceived to serve any commoning initiatives willing to test the efficacy of their governance systems. A group of participants motivated by the need to answer specific and concrete questions concerning their organisation are ideally meant to use it. Given this purpose, participants may be interested in organising multiple gaming sessions using simulation to explore their rights and responsibilities concerning specific situations or to adjust their way of functioning. Typical scenarios that Commons and Dragons may allow players to explore could be organising a public event in collaboration with the local administration, occupying a vacant site or building to provide a service to the local community, preventing the realisation of a speculative project, learning about the responsibilities related to the occupation and maintenance of a given heritage building, and so on.

As its name suggests, the tool was designed based on Dungeons and Dragons, one of the most well-known role-playing games, which provided a crucial methodological reference. Whereas traditional role-playing games unfold in a completely fantastic setting and have no other purpose than to entertain participants, Commons and Dragons aims to mix reality and fiction to address concrete existing issues, to test the effectiveness of governance systems, and to increase actual knowledge and awareness of rights and responsibilities within existing and specific legal frameworks. To take this different

- There is no limit to the number of participants. Depending on the purpose of the session, one or multiple gaming groups can be organised. Ideally, however, groups should not be too large to allow all participants to contribute;
- the simulative environment allows anybody to jump in and to play any role, from teenagers to adults, from those having some minimal knowledge on the commons to those who never heard of them before;
- no specific expertise is required, and each participant will contribute based on their expertise.

- The methodology can adapt to any investigation: from specific situations participants need to deal with to their governance structures more in general; from their juridical status to the regulations of the municipality and context within which they operate;
- gaming sessions can concern both existing and fictional sites;
- users can define the duration and number of sessions based on their needs;
- users can organise gaming sessions in a digital or physical environment.



- The methodology allows to adjust the focus on any specific issue and scenario, simple or complex, present or future, existing or probable;
- the possibility to involve experts during a given session, as players or consultants, allows addressing any concrete challenge with the required technical expertise.

- The immersive capacity of a role-playing gaming session allows any participant to quickly and effectively understand the logic and values at the core of commoning practices, thus avoiding the risk of shallow and scarcely engaged participation;
- well-conceived and zealous facilitation will allow participants to explore in-depth the topic under discussion;
- the implication of the concerned actors allows to realistically deal with the complexity of their interweaving rights and needs;
- the duration of the session can be variable, therefore allowing to explore topics as deeply as required.



Photo credit: Antonio Vercellone. Edited by Verena Lenna.

## Prototyping: the virtuous circle of empowerment of role-playing games

On the occasion of the Researchers' Night, Commons and Dragons was tested by proposing two gaming sessions focusing on two existing locations of the city of Turin, previously identified by the UIA project CO-CITY (<https://www.uia-initiative.eu/en/uia-cities/turin>) as sites for potential "pacts of collaboration" between the public administration and the local citizen-based initiatives. Specific gaming sheets were prepared to allow different non-expert players to facilitate the gaming session. Given the circumstances of the Researchers' Night as an event for the general public, precisely the improvised composition of the groups of participants and the short duration of the sessions proved the potential of role-playing games. Among other aspects: players' level of engagement allowed them to quickly learn about the values, potential, and needs at the core of the commoning practices; playing roles made it possible to appreciate different perspectives; the fictional environment gave the possibility to explore solutions and test their limits. The very short simulation at Valentino's Park suggested therefore a diverse range of applications for this approach, to increase users' knowledge and agency in a virtuous circle of empowerment.

That experimentation also contributed to elaborating the final version of the Q&A as one of the tools constituting the Legal Toolkit.

### box 3.2

#### Knowledge



purpose into account, the original mechanics of Dungeons and Dragons were slightly innovated.

First, dice are a very important part of Dungeons and Dragons: dice decide the result of a given action or a conflict between two actors, thus introducing unpredictability and fun into the unfolding of the gaming session. In the case of Commons and Dragons, unpredictability may sometimes be interesting to test the flexibility of a given governance system vis-à-vis unforeseen circumstances. However, in most cases, participants will be interested in the outcomes of rational decisions and strategies, consciously formulated to test systems and the collective capacity of the group to transform and adapt for better results. Thus, dice may not be the appropriate choice because they would impede to evaluate the realistic outcomes of a non-aleatory line of action. For this reason, dice are not a central element of Commons and Dragons.

Second, the purpose of Commons and Dragons is to increase the knowledge of legal frameworks and structures within which commoning practices operate as part of their governance systems. Although this may be effectively achieved by involving participants with legal expertise, this may not always be possible. As an alternative, the tools of the gE.CO's Legal Toolkit were conceived to make legal knowledge available and easily accessible during a gaming session. Their use and exploration will be related to the specific situations and challenges the game master plans and the players' choices and strategies shape.

Commons and Dragons was tested on the European Researchers' Night (24–25 September 2021), which the University of Turin organised. The Researchers' Night is a yearly event the European Union promotes to popularise scientific research across Europe: it is, therefore, open to the general public. In Turin, the event was hosted at the botanical garden of Valentino's Park. Compared with the circumstances ideally imagined for a session of Commons and Dragons, the setting and conditions in Turin were different. This proved both helpful and limiting in terms of assessing the efficacy of the tool.

First, participants were members of the public attending the Researchers' Night. They were not necessarily interested in the topic of the commons. Although some of them were familiar with the concept, others decided to play to learn more about an alternative and allegedly more sustainable approach to the governance of resources. Interestingly, the game attracted many teenagers and children. Second, given the demonstrative and popularising purposes of the event, the gaming sessions were planned to be short to allow a greater number of people to participate. For the same reason, none of the sessions

dealt with the actual needs or issues of a specific commoning practice or collective but rather proposed some recurring and well-known issues and topics.

Given all these differences concerning the characteristics of the gaming session, it is difficult to evaluate the effectiveness of the tool in supporting a given collective in their quest for concrete answers or for testing their governance system. To understand to what extent this may happen, what sort of knowledge can be engendered through one or multiple gaming sessions, how such knowledge may contribute to the starting conditions and experiences of a collective, and much more, further testing sessions should be organised involving existing commons and addressing their specific challenges.

Another important point is the involvement of legal experts during a gaming session. The gaming sessions at Valentino's Park were organised in collaboration with the Law Department of the University of Turin, from which researchers volunteered to participate and contribute their legal expertise. The interactions concerning legal matters were meaningful and allowed effective exploration and learning of legal frameworks and systems. Unfortunately, the involvement of legal experts may not always be possible. The purpose of the Legal Toolkit, as previously mentioned, is to support the game master and other participants in exploring legal matters related to their activities. However, the presence of a jurist or anyone else having legal expertise may undoubtedly be of great help. It is highly recommended as an innovative form of consultancy and as an opportunity to reframe competencies while valorising technical expertise, as Space Matters also illustrates.

At the same time, the specific implementation conditions at Valentino's Park clearly demonstrated the pedagogical capacity of Commons and Dragons. The immersive and engaging role-playing dynamic allowed participants to quickly grasp values and rationality as well as the challenges and potential of commoning practices. Therefore, Commons and Dragons could be useful not only for the simulation environment it may offer but also to promote participants' understanding of commoning logics for pedagogic and negotiation purposes.

As for the other tools in gE.CO's Governance Toolkit, a booklet was designed to provide basic instructions for a fruitful gaming session. As one of the most well-known role-playing games, Dungeons and Dragons is explained by a large variety of books, online tutorials and gaming sessions, allowing learning about its mechanics and translating it into a form that can serve commoning initiatives. Although the amount of information explaining how role-playing works may be overwhelming, the booklet has been designed

with the purpose of simplifying and making the game information accessible to anybody while allowing them to organise a successful gaming session. For better results or more sophisticated gaming sessions, participants may further explore tutorials, books and videos that are easily accessible on the web. References are provided in the booklet.

The role of the game master is crucial for ensuring a fruitful and entertaining gaming session. The instruction booklet was therefore mostly conceived to support the game master with all relevant information. As in any role-playing user manual, suggestions are provided concerning preparing for the session, the role of the different participants and the process of role-playing, illustrated by examples of interactions. Character sheets were designed to allow players to create well-developed and credible characters. Additionally, game sheets were designed to inspire players and provide concrete suggestions on a hypothetical gaming session, from the setting to the relevant legal aspects and from the characters' profile to facilitation techniques.

### **Suggested readings**

Abt Clark. C. (1987). *Serious Games* (Lanham: University Press of America).

Freire, P. (2017). *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (30th Anniversary ed.) Penguin Books Ltd. (Original work published 1968, *Pedagogia do Oprimido*).

Grouling Cover, J. (2010). *The Creation of Narrative in Tabletop Role-Playing Games*, McFarland & Company, Jefferson.

Kolb, D.A. (1984). *Experiential Learning*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Wizards RPG Team, 2014 *Dungeons & Dragons Player's Handbook*, Wizards of the Coast, Renton.

TOOL 03

# SPACE MATTERS

Overview and purpose

Space, rights and responsibilities

Reframing competencies and design as a facilitation process

Suggested readings

## Overview and purpose

Space Matters is a methodology used to design the governance system of a commons-oriented initiative when this is strictly related to the spatial characteristics of a shared resource, built or non-built. Space Matters allows users to consider the impact of the morphology of a given site or building in defining governance, ownership systems, forms of accessibility, financial sustainability and uses. Although a single collective can use it, it is particularly beneficial in the case of multi-partner initiatives.

Space Matters uses tools that architects and designers typically prefer, such as architectural drawings and models. However, these tools should not be seen as exclusively expert tools: rather, anyone needing to improve their awareness of space and spatial implications for governance systems should be able to appropriate them. For this reason, the tools are presented and made accessible as a “do it” instruction booklet, providing step-by-step instructions for implementing the process of designing governance systems while taking space into account, from the realisation of an architectural model to the facilitation of the process. The involvement of an architect or designer is suggested to provide technical expertise throughout the process rather than deliver ready-made solutions. Therefore, the architect’s or designer’s role is reframed as part of a larger facilitating and negotiating process, allowing different forms of knowledge to converge and equally contribute to the modelling of governance systems.

Fig 3.3 - A short description of the tool.

	Tool ID
<p>Definition and logo</p>	<div data-bbox="2109 178 2372 314" data-label="Image"> </div> <p><b>Space Matters</b></p> <p>Facilitation methodology for designing a governance system when this is substantially affected by the spatial characteristics of a shared asset, built or non-built. This tool will allow discussing and negotiating functions, ownership systems, forms of accessibility, financial sustainability, and uses any time the organisation of commoning practices is affected by the morphology of a given site or building.</p> <p><b>Main Steps</b></p>
<p>Modelling</p>	<p>Realising an architectural model or printing the drawings representing the buildings and sites to govern and maintain as a common pool of resources.</p>
<p>Setting</p>	<p>Finding an appropriate space to set up a Space Matters session: a sufficiently large room with one or more tables and chairs and providing material for personal notes and brainstorming. If not all the involved actors and partners can be present, participants may play the roles of the missing actors.</p>
<p>Simulating</p>	<p>Identifying the specific spaces to share with other actors and/or neighbours. For each common and shared space, simulating and discussing who will own them, who will decide for them, which activities will be organised, and how to maintain them.</p>
<p>Iterating</p>	<p>Rearranging the initial spatial distribution according to the elements that emerged through the previous step until a combination of private, shared and common spaces that is sustainable for all the involved partners is identified.</p> <p><b>Applications</b></p>
	<p>Pedagogic activities, communication and dissemination activities, negotiations with concerned actors, internal study, brainstorming and evaluations, decision-making processes.</p>

## Space, rights and responsibilities

The relationship between commoning practices addressing the living environment and space is crucial and yet underestimated. Space is not meant here in the geographic sense but rather as the morphological configuration of the site that is managed as a commons or where commoning practices happen. Planners and urbanists study commons in a given living environment for their regeneration capacity, as a form of temporary occupation or as an expression of the right to the city; geographers study commons from the point of view of ecological or demographic dynamics; and sociologists study commons as laboratories of new solidarities or as the expression of civic engagement movements. Pragmatically, urban commons in many cases start with the physical occupation of a vacant building or neglected site. Necessarily, in these cases, the initial challenges commoners need to deal with are related to the specific morphological qualities of the site: is it accessible? Is it big enough or too large? Is it dangerous? How should the different activities be distributed? How can its maintenance or renovation be paid for? A too big heritage building may be too difficult to manage for a single organisation and may need the cooperation of several actors. At the same time, a vacant plot a community garden occupies may be too small and may therefore become exclusive. The lack of adequate, accessible or affordable spaces may lead to the end of the commons.

Furthermore, when commoning brings together several actors and plural configurations of ownership, their different rights and needs must be negotiated in relation to space so that all of them can be individually fulfilled while realising a collective endeavour. By bringing together their resources and capacities, a coalition of different actors reclaims a large-scale abandoned industrial building: this will question both the use and maintenance of shared spaces. Who is going to take responsibility? How should ownership be handled and what would be the implications in terms of accessibility? How should a commoning attitude be translated in the framework of plural forms of ownership?

When we talk about commoning initiatives that address a building, a neighbourhood, a piece of forest or any part of the living environment, space matters: first, as where those practices happen, determining accessibility options and limitations of the rights of involved actors; second as a shared resource, questioning the actual capacities of commoners to take care of it. Rights and responsibilities are distributed and realised in relation to space, thus determining the sustainability of commoning practices.

Space Matters intends to explore this relationship by allowing concerned communities to become collectively aware of the effect on governance choices of the morphologic characteristics of a given space and, vice versa, of governance systems on the morphological transformations of a site. To achieve this result, the tool combines two elements. An effective representation of space is the soul of this tool: describing the space under question in a way that is accessible and clear to all involved participants is the starting point for discussing governance-related aspects such as accessibility, uses and ownership, and responsibilities, especially when several partners are involved. The realisation of an architectural model is proposed as the most effective way to allow participants to seize the configuration of a given space. A tridimensional representation, being closer to the way space is usually experienced, will allow users to immediately understand the spatial relationships between different parts of a building or between a building and a neighbourhood. Although bidimensional representations may also be possible, the risk is that they may be more abstract or difficult to read in the case of multi-storey buildings and for participants with little experience with architectural drawings.

The second element is a facilitation process enabling participants to address relevant questions and understand how different aspects interfere and are determined by space and how to negotiate the diverse needs and expectations of involved actors. How should a common corridor or courtyard be governed? If only one actor is the owner, who should be involved in deciding its uses and maintenance? Which form of ownership can better respond to the need for sustainably managing a given asset? The facilitation process is not only intended to guide participants in exploring the complexity of these pragmatic aspects while allowing them to express their needs but also to assess their actual capacities.

As explained in the following paragraph, the realisation of the model, as well as the facilitation process, should be accessible to anybody needing and willing to address spatial aspects and their implications for the governance model. While configuring the unique governance systems that would make commoning practice sustainable, Space Matters will question the competency of all involved participants, from commoners having to reinterpret their knowledge and competency within the framework of a unique larger and hybrid cooperation, to architects and spatial experts reinterpreting design as a facilitation process.

## Reframing competencies and design as a facilitation process

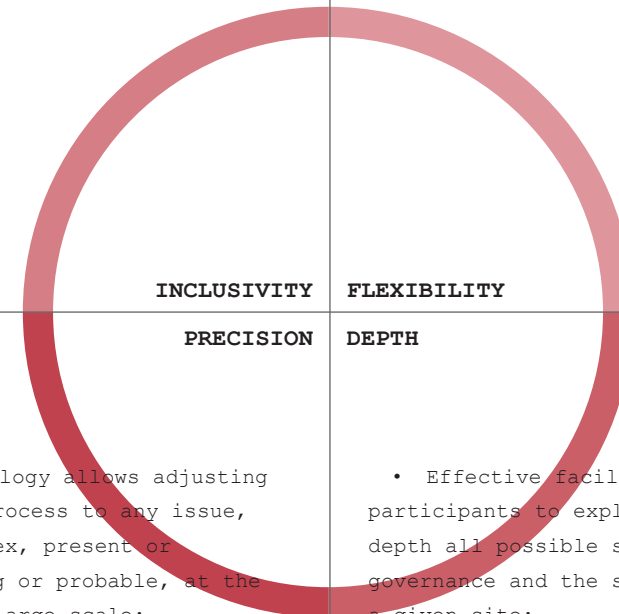
Space Matters was tested in collaboration with Permanent, a Brussels-based research initiative aimed at realising an anti-speculative real estate model combining housing and cultural and artistic production to address not only the housing needs of low-income families but also those of artists and refugees living or operating in precarious conditions. For the involved actors, Permanent means increased stability and reduced costs of facilities that can be easily shared with other partners. Especially in times of environmental issues, this may represent a promising approach to managing many underused or vacant large-scale artefacts while reducing energetic inefficiency and taking advantage of existing built assets instead of realising new ones. Additionally, in many urbanised contexts, the need for dealing with vacant buildings efficiently and flexibly may become increasingly urgent because of post-pandemic scenarios.

Permanent's partners are two artist collectives, the Community Land Trust of Brussels (CLTB) and the Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB). Level Five is a collective of artists organised to share spaces and the expenses of their ateliers in the centre of Brussels. Globe Aroma provides ateliers and spaces for artistic production to refugees and migrants willing to continue with their artistic production after arriving in Brussels. As one of the universities of the Region, VUB is involved in the project because it is interested in exploring livelier interactions between the infrastructure of an extended campus and the rest of the city. Finally, CLTB is involved to share its expertise about its land tenure system but also to push its experimentation of non-strictly residential projects further.

Permanent originally aimed to develop a model and explore the conditions of cohabitation and coexistence of otherwise concurrent social groups. In December 2020, the Brussels Capital Region announced a plan to study the renovation and reuse of the soon-to-be-dismissed fireman station in the Quartier Nord. To Permanent's partners, this seemed an invitation to imagine to occupy the station as an exercise to test ownership arrangements and cohabitation possibilities. When the summer school Building Beyond was organised in Brussels by Permanent in collaboration with ETH Zurich and Kaaitheater (9–11 September 2021), as a partner of gE.CO, the CLTB conceived and organised the workshop Space Matters. While aiming to test the Space Matters methodology, the workshop successfully helped participants become aware of the complexities deriving

- There is no limit to the number of participants. Depending on the purpose of the session, the facilitator can organise one or multiple groups;
- if some actual actors cannot be present, other participants could play their roles;
- no specific expertise is required, and each participant will contribute based on their expertise.

- The methodology can be adapted to any space or site and any level of expertise;
- instructions are provided to simplify the realisation of an architectural model. Furthermore, the model could be replaced by drawings or other forms of spatial representation;
- the duration and number of sessions can be defined based on the needs of the concerned users.



- The methodology allows adjusting the focus and process to any issue, simple or complex, present or future, existing or probable, at the small scale or large scale;
- the possibility of involving experts during a given session as facilitators, players or consultants allows addressing any concrete challenge with the required technical expertise.

- Effective facilitation will allow participants to explore and discuss in-depth all possible scenarios for the governance and the spatial occupation of a given site;
- the implication of the concerned actors allows them to realistically deal with the complexity of their interweaving rights and needs;
- the duration of the session can be variable, therefore allowing to explore topics as deeply as required.





Photo credit : Permanent Brussels. Edited by Verena Lenna.

## Prototyping: mixed-use collective infrastructures and the summer school Building Beyond, Brussels.

In the infrastructural voids created by insufficient welfare systems, as an answer to the mentioned interconnected urban challenges, we see across Europe and the world the emergence of cooperative and collective initiatives, aiming at answering at a diverse range of needs by federating resources, capacities and ideas, while creating new solidarity systems.

Permanent is a practice-based research aiming at realising in Brussels these mixed-use infrastructures, as they are often called. In such a direction, Permanent explores alternative forms of ownership and governance, legal frameworks and financial models while taking into account the specific and concrete needs of a very diverse partnership, such as affordable homes, community centres, educational facilities and artists' studios.

Working through three designated themes, Beyond Property, Beyond Type and Beyond Participation, the summer school Building Beyond: Collective Strategies for Just Cities offered a platform to reflect and learn from different experiences and practices of sharing and commoning across diverse urban settings.

The figure on the right illustrates the concerns and proposals discussed by the participants of the workshop Space Matters, organised to test the gE.CO's methodology while furthering Permanent's investigations.

### box 3.3

"As VUB we would like to have seminar spaces and to organise workshops."

"Public toilets with showers and facilities may be a good option, on the ground floor and combined with sports activities."

"We need quite an open space, so people don't feel thresholds and cannot go in there."

"We would like the City and Region to subsidise this space."

"I am representing the Neighbourhood Assembly. We did some survey in the neighbourhood, and we are concerned about having another Pompidou."

"Even though we do not own any of these spaces, we would like to have a voice in deciding what is possible and not possible to do."

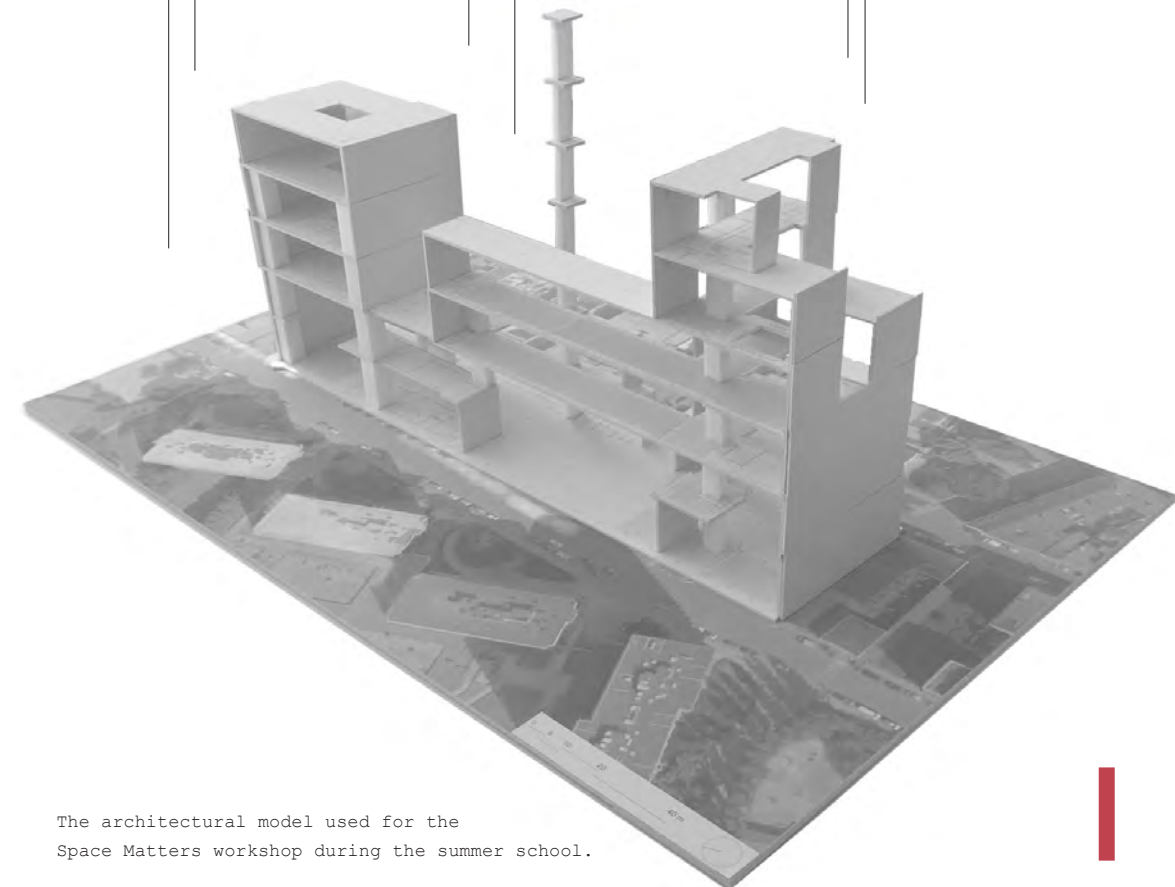
"We can create a cooperative and collectively own the ground floor."

"First of all, we need to define what space we want to occupy for these activities."

"We want to have a house, we don't care a lot about all the common spaces. We support common areas, but primarily we want a house."

"It is crucial that we have some activities in common, not only the building. And the public administration should have a role in defining that common ground, besides bringing funding."

"We are not interested in organising the activities, we don't have the mental space to take care of that."



The architectural model used for the Space Matters workshop during the summer school.

from the implications of different partners, the definition of a diverse range of needs, and the large-scale and unusual morphology of the fireman station.

The peculiar conditions under which the simulation of Space Matters happened allowed reflection on the efficacy of the methodology and on how to transform into a replicable process the lessons learned from that unique laboratory.

Two main challenges emerged that deserve to be mentioned to explain the choices made for designing an accessible and effective tool.

The first challenge is related to the involvement of spatial experts in both the realisation of the model and the facilitation process. For the summer school, architects were involved in both the realisation of the model and the facilitation process. The precision and efficacy of the model in representing space as well as the architects' awareness of spatial implications concerning the organisation of different uses and activities certainly contributed to the effectiveness of the process, allowing all participants, even those who knew nothing about the building or Permanent, to easily understand the issues at stake. Although architects are often among the initiators or the most active participants of commoning practices, their involvement cannot be taken for granted. As a methodology with the ambition to serve anybody, the tool Space Matters is presented as a "do it" instructions booklet. Inspired by the "do it" project of the curator Hans Ulrich Obrist and by the instruction works of many artists, from Yoko Ono to Sol LeWitt, Space Matters provides step-by-step instructions for setting the process of designing governance systems while taking space into account: from the realisation of an architectural model or the printing of the required drawings to the facilitation of the process.

Within this perspective, the involvement of an architect or designer is suggested as one of the possible operations: the architect's or designer's role and expertise, therefore, are not diminished or denied but rather reframed as part of a larger facilitating and negotiating process, allowing different forms of knowledge to converge and equally contribute to the modelling of governance systems. Although architectural competencies proved necessary to lead the process and participants' discussions and increase their spatial awareness, Space Matters demonstrated that any spatial decision implies the interweaving of financial, juridical and functional aspects, revealing the difficulty for an architect or designer to deal with them autonomously. Especially in the case of large-scale and plural forms of ownership that require complex forms of governance, other professionals need to be involved as part of an interdisciplinary and multilevel approach aimed at organising space and governance in a way that is pragmatically sustainable.

Pragmatism plays a crucial role and reshapes the competencies of every involved partner, actor and neighbourhood. Space Matters showed how "planners and people play interchangeable and interactive roles, so that it cannot be determined who wears the hat of the planner and who does not". Against the background of the multiplication of practices of direct democracy and the fragility and inefficiencies of the public administration, competency does not belong to just experts and intellectuals anymore. It is being redistributed and regenerated precisely by those practices.

Competency is a process, as Pier Luigi Crosta observed, situated at the core of a given project or initiative and strongly determined by the challenges at stake. It is intended to specifically respond to the project's or initiative's unique conditions. In the case of Permanent, the need to reshape, adapt and expand competencies is strongly determined and defined by the purpose of realising a specific plural ownership arrangement. Within such an arrangement, every partner will have to redefine and update their competencies to respond to the shared needs of the project and the other partners. Consider the case of Globe Aroma managing a space for the artistic activities of the inhabitants of the CLTB housing units; or the case of CLTB organising access to and taking care of the funding of public toilets for homeless people in the neighbourhood.

Being involved in such a process, the competencies of the architect are necessarily complemented and stretched by the interdisciplinarity of the exchanges. This will define the holistic point of view required to orchestrate all the juridical, financial and organisational functional aspects the project requires. Being aware of all the missing competencies and expertise the project should engender, from being a technician specialised in interior architecture or renovation, architects are called to operate as the facilitators of a sort of maieutic exercise, reshaping and regenerating their competencies and those of the involved actors simultaneously.

The other challenging aspect concerns the implication of the involved actors. Ideally, Space Matters is conceived for the members of a given existing organisation or commoning initiative willing to test their governance system and choices vis-à-vis the site they take care of or where their commoning activities happen.

In the framework of the summer school, the Space Matters workshop was open to the public, and therefore the methodology was tested with participants who had never heard about Permanent before and who learned about the involved actors and their spatial needs during the workshop. In dealing with these special circumstances, some role-playing techniques were introduced. Participants were asked to play the role of

people involved in Permanent and in the local administration as well as neighbours. On the pedagogical level, this simulation allowed participants to understand the complexity of the governance configurations, especially when dealing with horizontal and plural partnerships and large-scale spatial artefacts, for the reasons illustrated above. Simultaneously, the fact that participants were not familiar with Permanent and its operating conditions engendered new perspectives that contributed to refreshing the Brussels-based initiative with new elements derived from the specific experiences and expertise of the participants.

As previously mentioned, while Space Matters is supposed to involve the actual protagonists of a given commoning initiative, the involvement of external actors made possible by role-playing techniques may contribute to enriching the exercise with additional points of view or may be organised for pedagogical purposes aimed at increasing awareness about the spatial aspects of plural forms of governance. At the same time, the organisers of a Space Matters process should avoid involving too many external participants when circumstances are already inherently complex and the purpose is not to demonstrate but rather to design or verify an actual governance configuration. To support the facilitator's role, the Space Matters instruction booklet provides specific suggestions for implementing role-playing techniques and successfully engaging participants who, being external or occasionally involved participants, may not be motivated by existing concrete needs and questions concerning the implications of spatial choices for governance systems.

### **Suggested readings**

Bianchetti, C., Balducci, A., eds (2013). *Competenza e rappresentanza*. Donzelli Editore.

Crosta, P. (1973). *L'Urbanista di parte. Ruolo sociale del tecnico e partecipazione popolare nei processi di pianificazione urbana*. Franco Angeli.

Friedmann, J. (1993). Towards a non-Euclidean mode of planning. *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 59, pp. 482–485.

Lefebvre, H. (1992). *The Production of Space*. John Wiley and Sons Ltd. (Original work published 1974, *La production de l'espace*).

Manzini, E. (2015). *Design, When Everybody Designs. An Introduction to Design for Social Innovation*. The MIT Press.

Obrist, H. U. (2013). *Do It: The Compedium*. Independent Curators International.



### **Verena Lenna**

Verena Lenna is an architect, researcher and designer interested in the relationship between property rights, urban morphology and governance. As an activist, she co-founded the Brussels-based collective Commons Josaphat. She investigated the dynamics of inclusion and emancipation through participatory action research, art and cultural projects in Rome, Venice, Milan, Brussels, and New York. As a research fellow at the University of Turin, Department of Law, she explored the relationship between plural forms of ownership and what she calls ecological urban governance. Verena Lenna has a Ph.D. in Urbanism from Università IUAV di Venezia and in Architecture from Katholieke Universiteit Leuven.





# participatory toolkit

how can we grow together

openlab



OpenLab Athens  
is an inter-disciplinary research collective

the **Participatory toolkit** was developed by  
Yiannis Efthimiou, Giannis Zgeras & Vily Mylona



consists of:

A. the model



B. the toolkits

\*parts of this publication

\*digital  
version only





## Background

---



This part of the current publication is a collective effort of the researchers who work (or have worked) at Open Lab Athens (OLA). It is also the product of cooperation among OLA and the people who provided us with their invaluable insights and lived experiences. This intersection paved the way for the work you are currently reading.

The idea for a participatory model and its implementation through certain tools has been in our heads since the launch of generative commons (gE.CO), although the deliverable was set near the end of the project. This happened because the program's goals were aligned with the values we wanted to employ through our work in OLA. We wanted to have a bottom-up approach in our research. We tried to give our expertise and the results of our work back to the communities as something tangible that they could use to achieve their goals. We are satisfied that these positions and remarks will resonate with what you, the prospective reader, will read in the following texts.

We begin by presenting our do-it-yourself (DIY) participation model. The model includes a set of strategic and tactical aspects that communities can use to increase the participation and visibility of their members who are traditionally left on the margins. This set of recommendations, as noted above, is the result of OLA's cooperation with women and



people from LGBTQI+ communities and other initiatives from the Greek common's scene as well as with public bodies that deal with gender and social justice issues.

After the presentation of the model, we present two methodological<sup>1</sup> tools along with solid and specific implementations we believe are important and can be used to instantiate the DIY model. The first tool is Game Design Machine, a methodological take on serious game creation. Communities can use it to tackle problems, exchange perspectives, and open democratic instances of dialogue. The second tool is a new approach to collective mapping, which uses emotion to help us understand how space can be used to improve and enhanced participation and visibility. Please note that both these tools have been tested with members of various communities and activists, and feedback from various iterations of their implementation has been integrated into their final versions.

---

<sup>1</sup> You can also find the digital version of the third tool of the participation toolkit in this link (<https://generative-commons.eu/digital-tools/>) which is a list of applications and digital services. Most of these digital tools are open source, non-commercial, and cover a wide range of fields.



the **Participatory model** was developed by  
Yiannis Efthimiou

## Introduction

This part includes open access recommendations and instructions for the configuration of participatory models that explicitly promote the visibility of women and open participation of under-represented groups. Through this work, we aim to define strategies we believe would be applicable to the European level. Starting from the local point of our focus, which is Greece, we tried to think, work, and elaborate on the factors and aspects that have considered the broader European context. Our approach to this participatory model stems from our values as a research collective<sup>1</sup> that, among other things, tries to promote social justice through social innovation and consists of the following three pillars:

**Empowerment of communities** by giving them a voice. We employed a bottom-up approach to carry out our research to provide the communities with whom we worked the opportunity to express themselves and take the floor. For Open Lab Athens (OLA), this mode of conduct is crucial to work and design with communities instead of for them.

**Capacity building** means providing communities with the necessary tools and space to expand and elevate their ability to continue their everyday activities well after the research

---

<sup>1</sup> This part was written and produced by OLA with invaluable insights from Hara Kouki. For more information, please visit, <https://olathens.gr>

procedure has ended. We do not conceive of this aspect in the traditional way involving seminars or workshops but as a challenge to transform academic knowledge and research into tangible experiences of equal interaction capable of attaining social justice through social innovation.

**Community building** was fostered through the research process. Sometimes, a research project can be more than an academic product. We believe employing participatory action research (PAR) can help fabricate a plexus of relationships among people who are a part of the process. These relationships can, in turn, be the cornerstone for creating a community of researchers, different stakeholders, and acting subjects.

As a final remark, we need to point out that the COVID-19 pandemic had a crucial impact on not only our design of the data collection process but also the general approach of our key concepts. The pandemic provided a lens through which we could revisit the issue of visibility and participation in extreme conditions and, at the same time, gave us a chance to imagine and rethink ways to amplify these notions anew.

the objective

Promote visibility and participation

our approach

Participatory action research as a tool and a process for:

EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES 

CAPACITY BUILDING 

COMMUNITY BUILDING 



## Methodology

---

### Theoretical Sensitivity

Our theoretical framing tried to use several analytical tools to function in the direction of synthesizing and forming new strategies about women's visibility and participation. However, we did not want to preconceive the research process with our own ideas on what participating in a commons initiative should look like, feel, or seem. That is why we opted to go into the field following a framework of theoretical sensitivity. Theoretical sensitivity is a term Barney Glaser first coined in 1978. It refers to the notion that the researcher brings their theoretical impressions within the framework of grounded theory research.

By theoretical sensitivity, we mean we collected readings and theoretical ideas that seemed to talk about or refer to our research project but did not exactly provide concrete and formalised solutions for our research questions. The idea refers to the researcher's ability to examine and question the underlying assumptions of the area under examination, including things read, absorbed, and used in everyday thought and practice. By enhancing our theoretical sensitivity, we acknowledge that as researchers we are the sum of our knowledge and experiences and seek to account for this knowledge and these experiences throughout the research process. By following this train of thought, we believe we can become more conscious of what we do not know.

To undertake this task, we also tried to utilize what the American pragmatist philosopher Charles S. Peirce called the concept of abduction<sup>1</sup>. Abduction is a notion between deduction and induction, referring to a selective and creative process in which the researcher carefully investigates how far empirical 'facts' (or data) agree with theory or hypothesis and how far they call for modifications of it. It is about discovering new concepts, ideas, or explanations by finding surprising events that pre-existing knowledge cannot routinely explain. Thus, by abduction, the researcher goes beyond data as well as a pre-existing theory or theories. It is an innovative process because every new insight is the result of modifying and elaborating on prior knowledge or of putting old ideas together in new ways as the researcher explores and tries to explain the new data. Abduction is the source of scientific creativity.

Following the aforementioned trajectory, we built on the ideas of John Berger, Lauren and D'Ignazio, and urban studies as an academic discipline and lived experience.

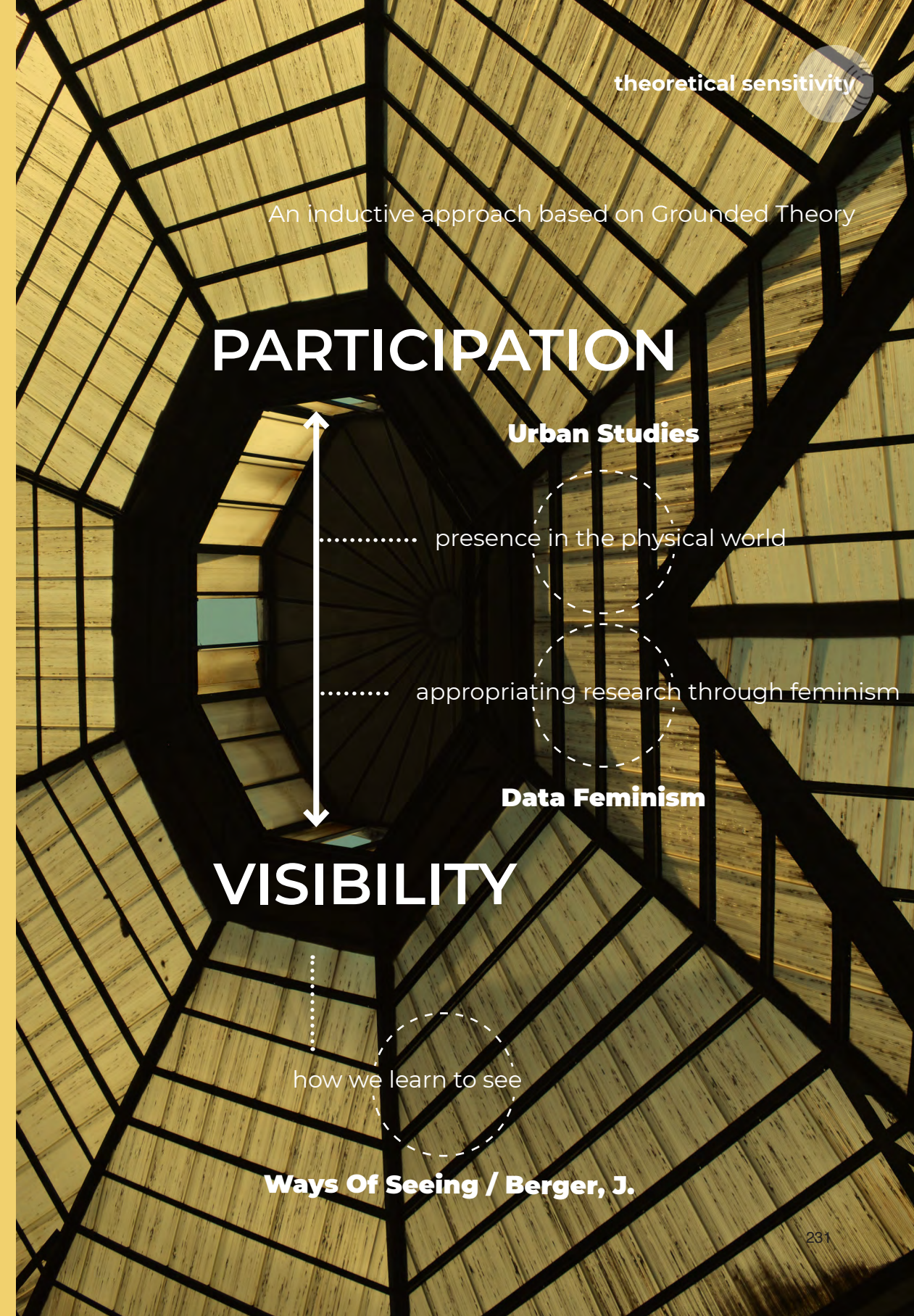
### John Berger

John Berger created a TV series called *Ways of Seeing* and published a book of the same name in 1972<sup>2</sup>. We mostly drew on his idea that women in a patriarchal and capitalist societal setting tend to internalise the 'male gaze' (i.e. how men see women) in regard to what they think about themselves. Thus, 'seeing' is defined as an action that is culturally determined and should be examined and criticised as a set of given societal practices. Berger delves into distinctions between optics and perspectives, how our private conscience resembles mechanical eyes by selecting 'what our lens chooses to focus on and what to neglect'. **Seeing is fundamental. It is not just about looking out; it is about placing oneself in relation to what one sees both physically and metaphorically. Seeing is not a neutral thing but always a way of seeing.**

Berger proposes the following: 'The way we see things is affected by what we know and what we believe. [...] We only see what we look at. **To look is an act of choice.** [...] We never look at just one thing. We are always looking at the relations between things and ourselves. [...] **The way we look at things is affected by the learned assumptions we have about that thing**' (Berger, 1997, pp. 8–11).

<sup>1</sup> Many resources are available on Peirce and his theory of abduction. An accessible presentation can be found in <http://users.uoa.gr/~psillos/Papers/11-Peirce-Abduction.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> The book can be found <http://waysofseeingwaysofseeing.com/ways-of-seeing-john-berger-5.7.pdf>



An inductive approach based on Grounded Theory

# PARTICIPATION

## Urban Studies

..... presence in the physical world

..... appropriating research through feminism

## Data Feminism

# VISIBILITY

..... how we learn to see

**Ways Of Seeing / Berger, J.**

We wanted to see how this set of actions would resonate with women from the communities we worked with. Following that line of thought, we regarded visibility and seeing as being active and as carrying agency and not something that people do passively. Berger's ideas led us to think about the essence of how we learn to reflect on the social aspects of the act of seeing. As Berger put it, **we see relations among objects not merely the objects themselves**. In this realm, based on the assumption of the increasing visibility of underrepresented groups through a set of recommendations, we should turn our focus on how we see these communities and, more important, how current societal relations and discriminations are constructed and re-produced within and around them.

### Data Feminism

We drew from Data Feminism<sup>3</sup>, a book Lauren Klein and Catherine D'Ignazio wrote, which is a prominent example of how feminist values and ideas can appropriate research. The introduction of the book is titled '**Why does data science need feminism?**' We paraphrased that title into the more general one, 'Why does research need feminism?' To answer this question, the authors proposed several principles. We selected five principles we thought fit our research questions and project better:

- **Elevate emotion and embodiment.** Value multiple forms of knowledge, including the knowledge that comes from people as living, feeling bodies in the world.
- **Rethink binaries and hierarchies.** Challenge the gender binary, along with other systems of counting and classification that perpetuate oppression.
- **Embrace pluralism.** The most complete knowledge comes from synthesizing multiple perspectives, with priority given to local, indigenous, and experiential ways of knowing.
- **Consider context.** Data or knowledge are not neutral or objective. They are the products of unequal social relations, and this context is essential for conducting accurate, ethical analysis and research.
- **Make labour visible.** All work in the world is the work of many hands. Data feminism makes this labour visible so that it can be recognized and valued.

---

<sup>3</sup> The book in digital form can be found <https://data-feminism.mitpress.mit.edu/>

We saw some familiarity between the authors' work and the communities we tried to reach. People who were part of what we call under-represented groups set up and deployed most of the projects presented in the book: women, people of colour, people belonging to LGBTQi+ and nonbinary communities, indigenous people, and women from the Global South.

One of the most important lessons we drew from the work of Lauren Klein and Catherine D'Ignazio was that intersectional feminism<sup>4</sup> and hacktivist principles should and can be used to promote accountability through reflection on one's own systemic privileges and experiences of oppression. The research process somehow becomes a tool that can have an emancipating effect on communities, and passive research subjects are turned into actors trying to improve how they work and live in the world.

### Urban Studies<sup>5</sup>

*'It is space and not time that hides consequences from us'*. (Berger, 1967)

Social events, phenomena, transformations, and dynamics are interconnected in the digital world, but at the same time, they are fragmented and it is impossible to reach their essence without acknowledging their geographical projections. Urban studies that have to do with being and living in the urban space would be a meaningful tool in our attempt to create a DIY model for inclusion. The aspects of visibility and participation are principally connected with the physical space of the city because this is the context within which the communities we worked with mostly operate. Urban space functions as the theatre of social life. In his article, 'What is a city?', Lewis Mumford stated, 'The city in its complete sense, is a geographic plexus, an economic organization, an institutional process, a theatre of social action, and an aesthetic symbol of collective unity' (Mumford, 2011). All these parameters that give meaning to the city as a social entity could be conceived as the fields where gender identities become visible or act by affecting everyday routines.

---

<sup>4</sup> Intersectional feminism (or intersectionality) is an extension of feminist thought, an analytical framework that tries to conceptualise how discrimination is based on different and multiple identities and political inclinations. Some of the factors that lead to oppression are skin colour, gender, sexual orientation, and identity.

<sup>5</sup> This part was written by Giannis Zgeras

The notion of the city as a theatrical stage could help us see through an alternative frame how **different under-represented groups take part in or are excluded from the 'urban play' and how gender identities are performed or hidden in public life.**

Our intention is to examine the way communities are living in the city space and map the characteristics of the material dimension of their difficulties in terms of visibility and participation in everyday life. It is also important to understand **how these behaviours are in constant interaction with dominant narratives and how they disrupt these narratives by creating discontinuities in how the urban space is perceived.** In this direction, 'The multiple temporalities of space are revealed as contested sites for identity and rights. It is within the everyday that a complex set of spaces, feelings of belonging, and rights to the city can emerge or be challenged' (Beebeejaun, 2017). Hence, it is crucial to **understand the functions of these everyday tactics** in the public – and private – spaces of the city or in the spaces of labour to create an assemblage of experiences and recommendations that could ideally spread and form wider strategies of inclusion with respect to diversity.

Drawing upon these notions and potentials of the city, we try to incorporate them with the common's experiences both at the local and international level. We wanted to determine what was needed to engage people in action but also what could be learned from actions already taken. Through this process, it would be important for our communities to gain a deeper understanding that 'the right to the city is far more than the individual liberty to access urban resources: it is a **right to change ourselves by changing the city.** It is, moreover, a common rather than an individual right since this transformation inevitably depends upon the exercise of a collective power to reshape the processes of urbanization. The freedom to make and remake our cities and ourselves is one of the most precious yet most neglected of our human rights' (Harvey, 2008).

## Research Approach

Qualitative approaches were implemented throughout this project, and mostly approaches that made use of PAR were adopted. At the same time, we kept in mind that the research process should create and provide space for women and those involved in the initiatives we worked with to express themselves naturally. Our research team created a roadmap of values that were described in the introduction.

We followed this approach because we needed to outline, illustrate, and reflect on ideas and notions with subtle underlying assumptions that are difficult to pin down using quantitative measures and indicators. We needed to read between the lines, to **let our 'participants' speak for themselves**, to become the medium to **transfer their values and experiences** to the foreground for this project, to **reflect on real and existing problems and difficulties** rather than create just another set of recommendations, and to reflect on these issues for ourselves (i.e. **how did we, the research team, deal with similar situations**, where did we make mistakes, where did we succeed?).

Therefore, we tried to start from the individual and then move on the collective. Of course, we could not (and neither did we want to) avoid our personal views coming to the fore as our efforts progressed. The whole research process started shortly after the gE.CO project was launched. That was because of the ample time we wanted to give ourselves and the workflow we wanted to employ<sup>6</sup>. Our workflow involved the following steps:

### One-on-One In-depth Interviews

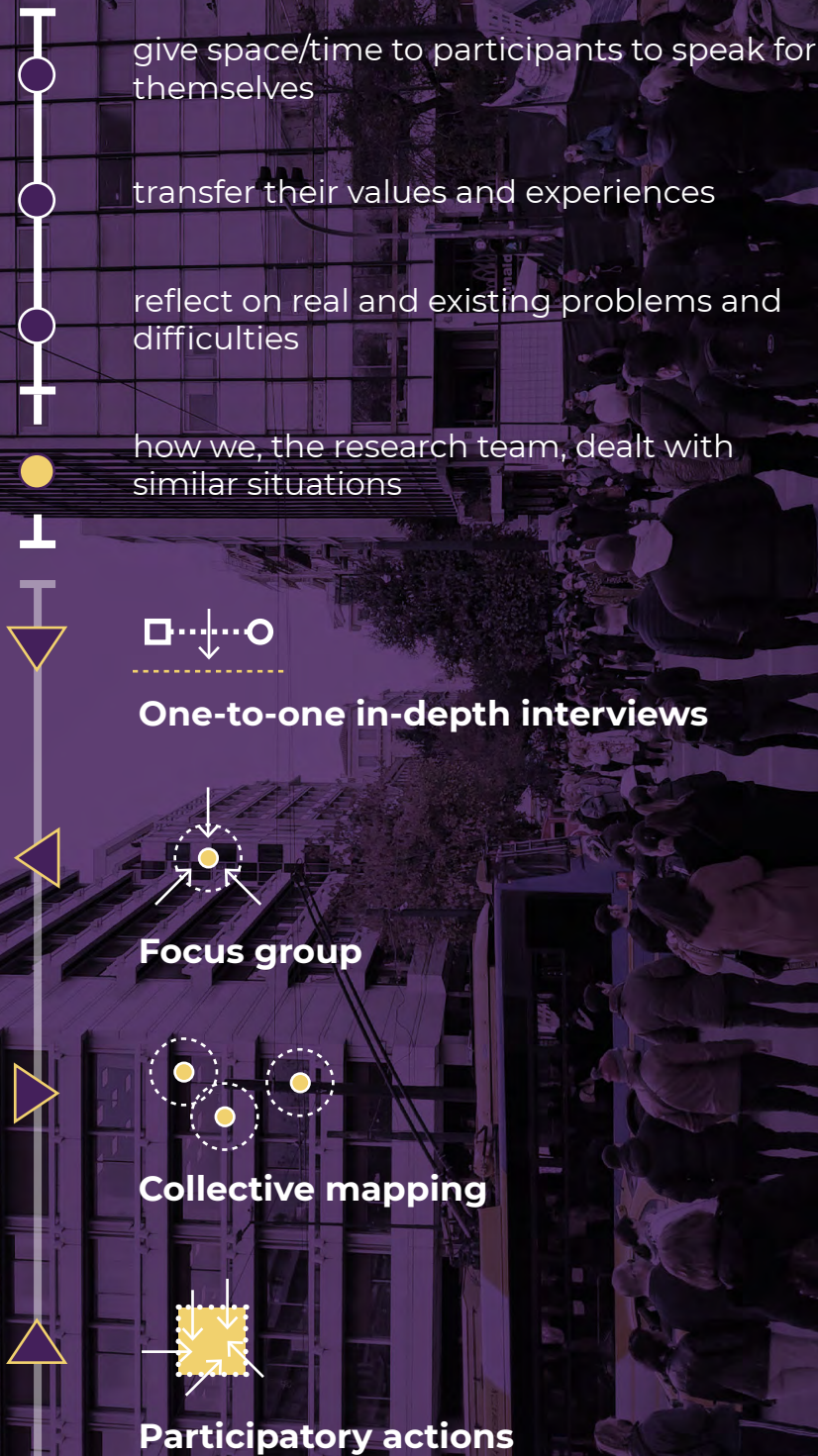
We conducted interviews with women working in diverse commons initiatives from October 2019 to April 2020. To engage with this process, we visited (pre-COVID-19) communities and talked to various women who had different backgrounds and expertise. Their common characteristics were that they had a particularly active presence in the commons scene, and in some cases, they were activists.

Apart from some standard demographic and background questions, the interviews revolved around the following issues:

**Participation:** The issue was discussed in general and then came down to gender views about what participating in a commons community feels like.

---

<sup>6</sup> As noted elsewhere in this report, the COVID-19 pandemic formatted and reshaped this approach to a substantial extent.



**Decision-making:** It was discussed through which processes and procedures decisions are made and how they as women feel about inclusion or exclusion.

**Conflict and dispute management:** It was discussed how resolution takes place and whether and how these women dealt with fatigue that resulted from stressful incidents inside their collectives.

**Recognition:** It was discussed whether they felt their work and expertise was acknowledged, and whether appropriate attention was paid to their opinions and beliefs.

**Technology:** It was discussed how new digital media and tools affected their everyday workflows. Did those means promote or inhibit all the aforementioned aspects (participation, decision-making, conflict resolution, and recognition)? Finally, did technological proliferation make things easier or more complex for them and why?

**Focus Group**

We employed the methodological tool of a focus group to provoke an open discussion among women on the topics that had emerged from our initial theoretical awareness process. Furthermore, we used the focus group as a **networking tool by bringing together women from various communities and organisations that work in the fields of technological education; gender issues; gender-based violence; and urban, art, and psychological support to young people and parents.** This focus group also worked as a theoretical tool to investigate how participation works by gathering concrete information about existing experiences. One thing we tried to accomplish was **building empathy between participants and the research team.** We also tried to create an experiential common ground. This common ground seemed to have increasing value for us. We also wanted to examine the connection between theory and everyday practices and contextualization, as well as the qualitative opinions, attitudes, practices, needs, and priorities of the women we interviewed. The outline of the focus group is presented below.

The title of the focus group was **'Women Visibility and the Promotion of Participation in General but Also During the Period of the Pandemic'**.

We prepared a discussion, the focus of which was on the following subjects:

- \_Seeing oneself and being seen: How do you think people see you because of your specific expertise? How do you see yourselves?
- \_How can we bring to the fore someone's work that is the background?
- \_What is the role of infrastructure in this procedure?



\_Emotional work and embodiment: How can they be brought to the surface?  
\_Spontaneity, transparency, accountability, and empathy: Can these ideas be incorporated in your daily experience and how?  
\_How does locality influence your work?  
\_Can feminism and intersectionality be used as a tool for empowerment and enablement?  
\_What are the levels of acceptance of your work from your community?  
The focus on the pandemic revolved around the following axes:  
\_How did the pandemic affect women's visibility and participation?  
\_How much did the pandemic shift the women's activities for the organisations they worked for and what were the factors making their job more difficult?  
\_How much did women's use of digital tools increase either to connect with beneficiaries or to raise awareness and inform the public?  
\_What were the shortcomings or opportunities of new technological media that surfaced for the respective communities?  
Finally, after the discussion, we asked a *follow-up* question in which the participants were asked to describe a story of empowerment they had experienced<sup>7</sup>.

### Collective Mapping<sup>8</sup>

Our idea of qualitative mapping tools involved the participation of underrepresented groups in the making of space as well as commons initiatives. Through this process, we tried to build a space for discussion, participation, and creation as a starting point that builds a common knowledge of the space that surrounds us. Qualitative maps provide a useful tool for responding to the complexities surrounding issues of spatial scale, boundaries, and functionality, and possible differences in definitions of the neighbourhood among individuals depending on their own characteristics (such as gender, class, ethnicity). They offer a means of not only defining neighbourhoods led by residents rather than researchers but also better understanding how neighbourhoods are perceived, used, and experienced (Alexander, 2006).

We held a workshop with five **LGBTQI+ community members to provoke discussion about how urban spaces can elevate or degrade participation**. The workshop's topic was 'Experiences and Perceptions of the City', and our goal was to construct a collective

---

<sup>7</sup> The stories the participants shared with us are presented in the Appendix

<sup>8</sup> This part was written by Vily Mylona.

map that visualized a spatially recorded field of collective memory. We began by briefly outlining the workshop's objectives and explaining the communal mapping process to the attendees. Following that, the participants introduced themselves and were invited to ask additional questions about the mapping process. While exchanging thoughts and happenings with the other participants, individuals were free to use markers and draw symbols on rice paper to identify places and zones that reflected their own experiences. We asked each person to include an aspect from their personal experience in spaces that reflected community-based activities such as LGBTQI+ rights campaigns and organizations. The participants became more engaged with the activity as a collaborative process of sharing the spatial knowledge developed. During the workshop, we used a series of questions to encourage participants to recollect zones, locations, routes, places, and anything else that they enjoy or find distressing and uncomfortable. More details on the workshop and its implementation can be found in the chapter dedicated to collective mapping.

### Participatory Actions

**a.** During the development of the project, we tried to create a network with commons communities in Athens. Apart from bringing gE.CO closer to local communities, we got involved more actively with some of them. Using our expertise in digital infrastructuring, we worked with a women's community to help them build their digital infrastructure.

The community we worked with was a network of migrant women, called Melissa, based in downtown Athens. The action involved working with the personnel of the community and helping them create an infrastructure for their internal organisation and an educational tool that would help them reach out to their beneficiaries during the COVID-19 pandemic when social distancing measures were in effect. These actions were used to deduce how these communities worked internally, what their intrinsic needs were, and how digital infrastructuring could help promote participation and visibility of work or impede these functions.

**b.** This action involved exploitation of an engagement and awareness raising tool developed for the H2020 CO3<sup>9</sup> project. The board game '12 Commons Buildings' was developed as a supportive tool to engage future users in the pilot implementation of the service 'Mapping community needs on empty buildings'. This is an augmented reality

---

<sup>9</sup> For more information on the CO3 project please visit <https://www.projectco3.eu/>

application that tries to give citizens an active role in proposing uses they feel are needed in the neighbourhoods of Athens. Our involvement in gE.CO Living Lab greatly inspired and influenced the design and development of the game. Thus, we designed a workshop in the public space of Fokionos Negri (Kypseli, Athens) during the actions of 'What do we have in common?', a one-day festival Ludd Lab and Goethe Institut of Athens organized. The workshop took place on 10 July 2021, and members of cooperatives and commons' initiatives along with citizens who responded to our open call participated.

The process of the workshop and the characteristics of the competitive role-play board game indicated the potential of a game environment to not only raise awareness and educate people about issues of urban spaces and right to the city but also generate a common ground for discussions about the visions, dreams, and difficulties of our neighbourhoods among people who were formerly strangers.



## The Participatory Model - A Strategy

---

theoretical approach  
+  
empirical reflections

core concepts

feminism

inclusiveness

empathy

patriarchy

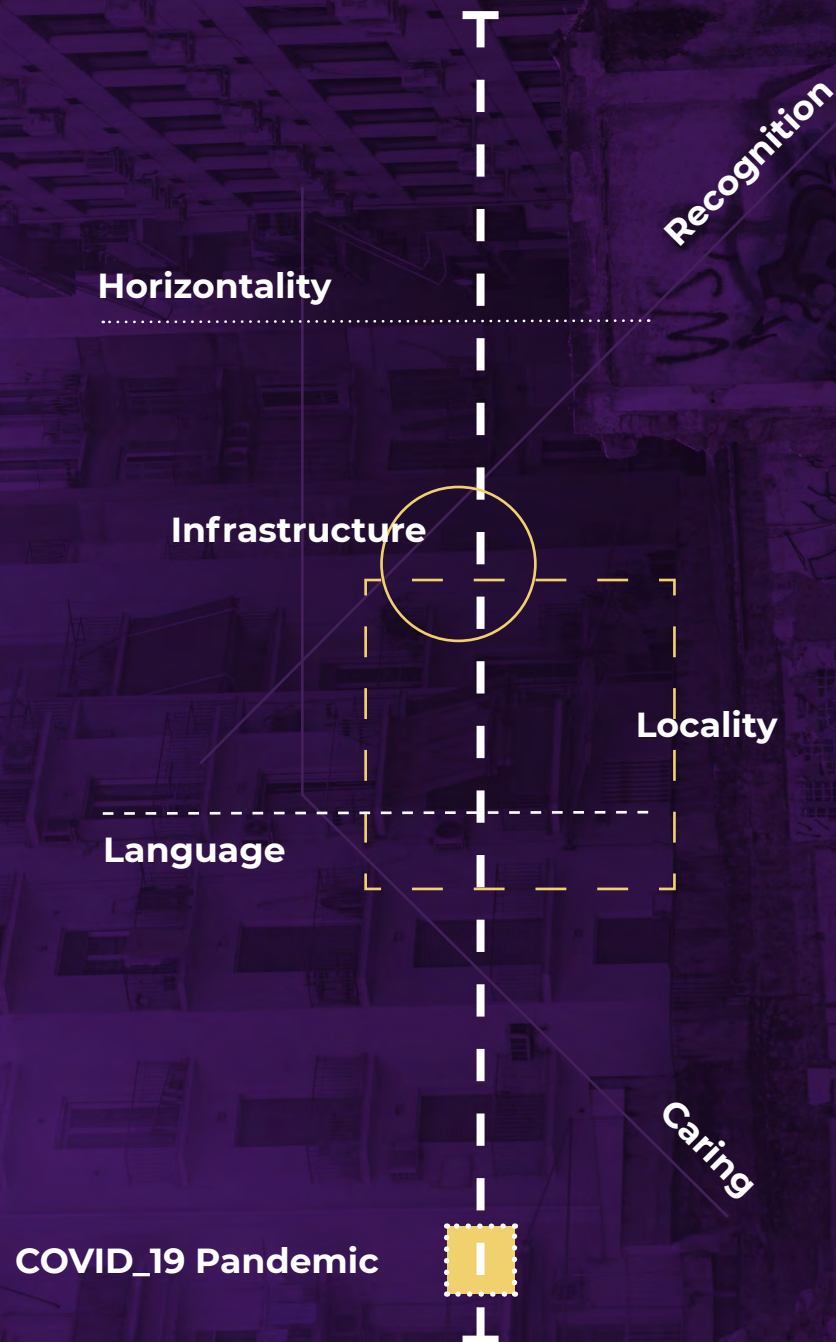


We iterated on data accumulated from the in-depth interviews, the focus group, and collective mapping. These data were then read again through the lens of the notes we had created from the participatory actions. The data used to create the strategy for the participatory model for women and under-represented groups were divided into two instances: one that captured the initial core concepts that emerged from our theoretical approach and the empirical reflections; and one that refers to the specific aspects of the participatory model – aspects to which the strategy for a holistic bottom-up approach needs to refer to increase visibility and participation within communities.

Initial Core Concepts

- \_Empathy**
- \_Inclusiveness**
- \_Feminism**
- \_Patriarchy**

These concepts surfaced from our theoretical perspective and, at the same time, from our empirical reflections. The participatory model we propose must address the first three values and acknowledge the wider context in which people are living and the social interactions that take place in that context.



COVID\_19 Pandemic

The model must consider these four general concepts: it must be empathetic; it must be open to diverse and heterogeneous cultures and groups of people; it must introduce inclusiveness as a central component; and it must rely on feminist thought to allow people who are traditionally misrepresented, underserved, and excluded to have a voice inside commons communities and beyond.

Finally, it is essential that patriarchy and capitalism be recognised and appreciated as the underlying subtext upon which contemporary discriminations take place, especially for those groups of people to which this research is referring. It is fruitful to use patriarchy – as an analytical theoretical category – to distinguish, reveal, and understand discriminations that happen based on identity, sexual orientation, and gender. Additionally, a critique on capitalist relations provides a lens through which we can distinguish discriminations based on social class, income, ethnicity, and social status and social capital.

### Aspects of a Strategy for Participation

The recommendations we propose here are intended to shape a participatory model based on the aforementioned categories. Below, we present the categories and elaborate on these with material from our data. We propose a participatory model that encompasses the following categories, which emerged from our research, as a means of increasing visibility and participation for women and other underrepresented groups (e.g. LGBTQI+).

#### Infrastructure

Infrastructure and digital tools play an important role in participation and visibility of work and other instances inside commons initiatives. The communities we worked with made extensive use of digital tools but, at the same time, acknowledged their shortcomings. More tech-skilled groups had a better and more effective penetration and outreach strategy because of their better use of digital means. Meanwhile, those who worked in public initiatives had problems with equipment and they were ponderous. They suffered from inadequate funding resources and therefore could not provide their staff with the necessary tools to continue their work.

This situation resulted in a diffused feeling of inadequacy for women working in those initiatives. In a world where digital tools are essential to perform elaborate and mundane everyday tasks, lack of access to these tools means deprivation in various circumstances. For the women we talked to, digital tools helped with communication and job seeking. On several occasions, they used crowdfunding services to address the everyday needs of communities or their respective organisations. These tools were used as a means for raising awareness. Most of these communities used social media platforms like Facebook for campaigning, and these tools gave them the ability to be constantly connected with the people they worked with.

Lack of access to such infrastructure prevents women from being able to connect with people or do their jobs properly. They feel contempt for the quality of services they provide to their organisation or community. However, attention needs to be paid to the latent side effects of the use of digital tools. For many organisations and communities, reaching out has become more depersonalised, and women cannot assess the real effects of their actions. Further, many of the women we talked to suffered from digital fatigue (i.e. exhaustion from lengthy online meetings on Zoom, which has a major effect on daily work routines).

### **Locality**

Locality is defined in several ways pertaining to relationships associated with space. How these relations foster or inhibit participation and how the social context in which a community must operate are important factors for acceptance and visibility of people involved in commons communities. For example, the women we spoke to came from various places in Greece. Some of them came from rural parts of the country and others came from cities.

All of them agreed, though from different points of view, that the homogeneity of the population makes it more difficult to accept what is different and not in line with the normative state of things. Multiculturalism, pluralism, and otherness proved to be more helpful. These traits help with diversifying the spaces in which their actions are deployed. They often came across stereotypes concerning their work and status. For example, women who worked in a community for women survivors of domestic violence told us that in their cities, they are called 'the abused women'. This is something that other women in our focus group seemed to identify with. Those who worked in safe houses for women

talked about secrecy and how important it was for their work. Secrecy can be jeopardised if the levels of cooperation and acceptance by local communities are low.

Many of these women proposed multifaceted action against stereotypes and institutional stigmatization. They argued that having a decent job and proper education is a means of empowerment for women and local communities. They noted that cooperation with academic institutes can create a fertile subtext for acceptance by creating a safer space for expression on a local level. They stressed that the success of solidarity actions (e.g. food sharing practices) mostly at the neighbourhood level equates to a strong presence of grassroots collectives, which is essential to opening bridges with local communities and creating a sound basis for dialogue between the two. These actions led to a shift in the operation of local public authorities and institutions, which became susceptible to their work and to bottom-up approaches such as co-design methodological approaches in service design and application.

### **Recognition**

Recognition and attribution of one's work and efforts are tightly connected to visibility and to how participation can be diffused and democratised. When someone's immediate circle and the larger environment in which they live and act acknowledge the work they do, they feel content and draw meaning from the acknowledgement.

'If you do what's good, you seem pretty good and nice to them'. (Social Worker)

The women felt good when they believed what they were doing had meaning and was helpful. This was realised when they had freedom to act and they had a say in decision making. In their own words, 'When you are accepted – when you are free to shape your work', you feel the satisfaction of discovery. When they felt they were able to devote time to their work, they felt safe and expressive.

Recognition for them went hand in hand with the fact that they had their voices heard. This enhanced their self-esteem. However, most of the women who took part in our research and were working in public initiatives said the major factors that diminished the level of recognition they got in their workplaces were delays in payment and contract renewals, as well as the absence of paid days of leave. These actions felt like a devaluation of their efforts and work, and they led to a constant feeling of burnout.

## Caring

Caring is something that almost all the women we talked and worked with had noticed explicitly. Caring is being acknowledged as a set of actions that are sometimes recognised as feminised. Often, it goes unnoticed to such a degree that it presents women with various consequences, such as inequalities in their pay or social status. To overcome these shortcomings, communities need to acknowledge the work being done and the care that comes with it. By doing so, caring becomes a means for enabling and not a burden. The women noted that caring and empathy open a window to dialogue and, therefore, to offering. This process can be facilitated by working in a transparent manner at all levels and practicing a mode of conduct that ensures equality and participation. This dialogue can evolve as an internal process in communities (or places of work) and as a prerequisite for the development of cooperation. Such subtle underpinnings are the elements of caring as an intervention through which field workers and activists can evolve, as one of our interviewees noted.

Caring is an action that gives away the interdependent nature of people. It has to do with caring for others, being cared for by others, and caring about oneself. Therefore, participation can be shaped in such a way that, through caring, the reflexive and relational aspects of community building become apparent and its importance is appreciated.

## Language

‘How we speak and the language we use reflect the kind of societies we live in and provides a framework, or a lens, through which we can view each other. Therefore, it is very important to re-shape language’. (Social Worker)

Many of our respondents and participants paid much attention to the importance of language. There is a fundamental difference between English, Greek<sup>1</sup>, and other European languages<sup>2</sup> in the way genders are represented. That is why most of the people we talked with were concerned about certain aspects of language use. For instance, the use of pronouns is an important differentiation. In Greek, all adjectives have gender-determined suffixes. Therefore, it is obvious most of the time that there is an inadvertent preference to use male suffixes.

---

1 The language the people we worked with primarily used.

2 Such as German and French.

When someone refers to a crowd of people comprising both women and men, they usually use male suffixes. The women we talked with noted this. They thought pronouns should always be used that reflect the precise composition of the group. By employing such a strategy for language, women and girls are given the attention they deserve and stand out instead of becoming merged under one gender category, which is usually not the female category.

The women who worked with migrant communities as a means of connection and to provide a sound basis for positively mixing cultural elements highlighted the importance of language. For them, the use of the English language – when that was feasible – was a medium to achieve just that: bridging and proximity between diverse cultural elements. Thus, in societal settings that mostly comprise people with different cultural experiences, the use of language in a proper manner is crucial for creating a layer, a net in which everyone can feel included and part of a community.

## Horizontality

Horizontality has to do with the lack of apparent hierarchies and stereotype dualisms in commons’ communities. For the people we worked with, one important aspect that inhibits equality in participation, and therefore in everyday situations, is the absence of awareness that builds upon a shortfall of proper information about issues of equality and inclusion. The importance of education in these matters is accentuated to reduce the various ways representation of under-served social groups remains unnoticed, resulting in a closure of the field of participation for them.

Being informed and educated about such problems and complications can help communities understand everyday sexism and discrimination that happens inadvertently, allowing for hierarchies and unnecessary dualisms to rise. What is important here is to create the appropriate space for everyone to be able to take part equally and democratically in the everyday decision-making processes of each community.

Although noted elsewhere, one more aspect that elevates participation and nurtures equal representation and contribution inside commons communities is the transparent manner of doing things inside a community. Being open and clear gives the opportunity to people working in the background to step forward and have their work appreciated, leading to more porous communities and institutions.

## COVID-19 Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on our research approach and affected how people went about their daily routines, how people in communities communicated with each other, and how everyday interactions took place. We tried to include the pandemic's effects on everyday life in the strategy we are proposing here as an outlier – an extreme case that has had a substantial impact on participation, visibility, proximity, and perceptions of otherness and space. Undoubtedly, the pandemic shifted significantly all the aforementioned aspects – whether positive or negative – that influenced participation. The people we worked with said the COVID-19 pandemic had both positive and negative impacts on them and their communities. They had to undergo many reconfigurations and readjustments in their daily workflows and employ innovative thinking. For instance, the women who worked in communities that dealt with domestic violence and gender equality came across contradictions, such as the fact that most of the women they served were obliged to remain at home with potential perpetrators. For these communities, spontaneity and creativity became 'compulsory', as they put it. Working from home also did not nurture proximity or the development and expansion of intimate relationships between co-workers or between staff and their beneficiaries. Such relationships are necessary for the elaboration of caring practices.

The pandemic also influenced how people thought about infrastructure, especially digital software and hardware. For instance, during the months of quarantine, fewer people visited public institutions or common's communities. This trend was the opposite of what had been experienced in the past. This shift resulted in a diffusion of interventions through mobile phones, resulting in a rise in the use of smartphones and new digital media.

In cases where physical and digital infrastructure was lacking or technological fluency was missing, all procedures and interventions were difficult to accomplish. Such a shift towards digital media presented communities with issues that might never have occurred in the past. The most prominent of these was the rise in concerns around the security and privacy of one's online presence. For many communities, such issues were totally new and mostly discouraging and restrictive.

However, there were instances where the field of actions for some communities was expanded beyond the strict geographical limits that were in effect before the pandemic broke out. For these communities, the proliferation of digital means was something that boosted their reach. Of course, we must note here that these communities were either

tech-savvy or were keen on adopting and using digital tools. For such communities, online platforms, such as Facebook and LinkedIn, and digital tools were used to raise awareness, sustain the community, or even try to build a new one.

Another side effect the people who were interviewed noted had to do with public space as a field of action. Communities that conceived public space as their preferential locus of intervention were confronted with excessive difficulties because public space was ruled out for them not only when acting and intervening but also when being outside became illegal in many circumstances. Therefore, the number of operations was considerably reduced as the area of activity (locus) was narrowed down. Hence, actions became more specific and less proliferated than before.





## Concluding Thoughts

---

In the paragraphs above, we tried to show what a participatory model for women and under-represented groups would look like after considering their thoughts, aspirations, and feelings on the subject. We employed several different methodological tools to achieve our goal. Lessons learned from this research effort also extend to other areas and realities that do not necessarily fall into the categories of participation and visibility. These lessons are also not definite and final, but have prompted more questions that pertain to the subject of commoning. The ideas that came up after analysing the data the interviewees provided us with pushed us towards more reflexive accounts on how we could conduct research and what such efforts mean in the context of everyday interactions.

### **We dwelled upon some of the following questions:**

- \_Did we manage to give voice to the people who helped us during the months of research?
- \_Did we truly shed light on the issues that were most pressing to these people and that differed substantially from the initial motivation of this research project?
- \_Did our research questions match to any degree those everyday aspects that matter most to these communities?

The most pressing question was the following: **Did we have the mental and sentimental capacity to reflect on what these women and members of LGBTQI+ communities shared with us?**

The answers to these questions are elusive and do not seem fixed. However, all these months of research provided us with the opportunity and ability to come closer to these communities and try to find our place as researchers among them. We tried to work on our tools and shift them accordingly. The participatory actions and workshops we conducted provided us with invaluable insights on the role of experience and expression from the point of view of gender and identity.

If we honestly reflect on our experience, we must admit that we partially – or did not at all – address these issues. Gaining trust among these communities is a matter of time and commitment, and in a research project, it is impossible to exclude the identity of those who conducted the research. Hence, the most important shift in our research assumptions was that while trying to form a participatory model for these communities, we realized that the crucial process is not that of ‘engaging the other’ to participate and become visible, but of ‘becoming the other’ and employing a method that minimizes the distance from others. In this realm, we acknowledge that our model could mainly have a transformative impact on those who work and interact with these communities and ideally help to create ruptures in dominant norms and beliefs.

Finally, we would like to point out that white cis men mostly (but not exclusively) ran this part of our research project. Therefore, the answer to the last question we posed will probably remain open for the most part; we cannot answer it. Despite employing feminist thought and interdisciplinary approaches that helped us see and examine gender issues through different and multiple analytical lenses by letting multiple dimensions of identity open the field of visibility, we must acknowledge that our privileges, however sceptical we may be about them, must be somehow subject to criticism. Our standpoint, one that remains to be tested daily in our everyday practices, is that we can manage, through claim and collective work, the creation and fostering of communities with specific interests that revolve around gender equality, emancipation, and empowerment by opening the possibilities of agency. Then perhaps we may change the way we see and make society by expanding and nurturing participation.



## Appendix

---

A. Stories of empowerment shared by the women who attended the focus group on visibility and participation:

**“Every time a woman takes a step further from abuse, it is an experience of empowerment** for me as it is for her as well. This is especially true when a young woman manages to leave an abusive environment with the aid of various services, while also raising awareness of the juridical system. This experience had an empowering effect on staff on a personal and a professional level, and it highlighted the possibilities that exist to **overcome social misconceptions and stereotypes**”.

“A recent, pre-pandemic, **collective experience of empowerment** that even today fills me with courage is the **self-organised action that took place in our city** at a central location, under the Chilean motto ‘The rapist is you’. That the action happened unexpectedly, without prior notice, and was followed by **feminist demonstration made me feel empowered, and it contributed to our visibility in the public space**. The comments shown on the videos of that day illustrate how annoying the action was to certain people, which made me happy”.

“As far as my story is concerned, I would like to describe **the process that led me towards empowerment**. Since 2010, I have been an active member of seminars in Greece and the EU during which experiential knowledge is gained through making/constructing and **belonging to a collective where everyone can offer their prior knowledge and experiences**. By creating new things, knowledge turns into precious experience, the dynamics of which expands my horizons, inspiring and empowering me to continue my research and to create new things that will improve people’s everyday lives. During these seminars, which combined experience and practical exercises, I enjoyed belonging in a team and tried to cooperate as best as I could. Through cooperation, a field is created within which a team can be made complete and successful. Working for a social and educational role is empowering because **you can offer things and shape them along with the community**. The experience, through interactive workshops with children, is an extremely dynamic process that expanded my horizons and led my studies and plans towards the fulfilment of their dreams.

“For me, **an experience of empowerment is to attend the monthly meetings of the Society for the Protection of Minors**, where people and institutions from Thessaloniki and the wider area of central Macedonia participate. These meetings, which focus on **monitoring and networking**, have a truly enhancing and helpful effect on me and my job”.

**B.** Information about the communities that helped us through our research process:

**The women that participated in the interviews were active in the following communities:**

- An interdisciplinary research collective with special focus on the commons, **P2P Lab**.
- A cooperative working on digital technologies, **Sociality**.
- A solidarity school which provides educational services to under-served children, **Mesopotamia**.
- A NGO for migrant women which promotes empowerment, communication and active citizenship, **Melissa Network**.
- A makerspace which promotes co-production and co-design processes in the urban landscape, **Ludd**.

**Participants invited in our focus group worked in the following groups and public initiatives:**

- **Consultancy Centre for Women - Municipality of Serres**, a public initiative that deals with violence against women and women's wellbeing in general.
- **Union of Women Association of Heraklion-Crete**, an NGO that helps women victims of domestic violence.
- **Social Hackers Academy**, a collective that works in the field of technological education for migrants, unemployed youth and women.
- **Urbana**, a Civil Non-Profit Partnership, consisting of architects, engineers, and educators which see the city as a field for promoting equality, inclusion and sustainability.
- **Guest House for Women Victims of Violence - Municipality of Kordelio-Evosmos**, a public initiative which provides shelter to women and children, victims of violence, in a classified and protected guest house.



---

A step-by-step and open-ended methodology to create a game based on a specific problem or theme that relates to the reality of a commons' initiative. Provides a process and several tangible tools to think collectively on a field of interest in order to produce new framings, representations or alternative narratives which could be capable of revealing unexplored potentials or solutions.

the **Game Design Machine** toolkit was developed by  
**Giannis Zgeras**



## Introduction

The experience of interacting with communities and 'commons' initiatives in the context of engagement with digital tools revealed a crucial aspect. The scientific discourse in the field of human computer interaction (HCI) inspires case studies that appropriate models, relations, and processes of real life to translate them in diverse digital worlds and interactions among users in more efficient ways. In most cases, this methodological trajectory is followed by innovative actions and mechanisms to help users to understand and adapt the developed tools. Our research hypothesis involves reversing this trajectory and experimenting on how these innovative approaches to engaging users with digital processes could generate new perceptions of the physical world and everyday problems. We would like to test how learned lessons and cutting-edge methodologies of HCI could be integrated as tools for **raising awareness, increasing participation, and building community** with regard to commons.

In this realm, we will take inspiration from the concept of 'gamification' and use it as a starting point for developing a tool that could generate novel socio-technical processes to support commons initiatives. The term gamification refers to 'the idea of using game design elements (such as reward and reputation systems with points, badges, levels and leaderboards) in non-game contexts to motivate and increase user activity and retention'



The board game **“12 commons Buildings”** was played by members of cooperatives and commons’ initiative along with in the public space of Fokionos Negri (Kypseli, Athens) during the actions of “What do we have in common?” (a one-day festival organized by Ludd Lab and Goethe Institut of Athens, on 10th of July 2021). The process of the workshop and the characteristics of role-play competitive board game designated the potentials of a game environment not only to raise awareness and educate about issues of urban space and right to the city, but also to generate a common ground of discussion about visions, dreams and problematics for our neighborhoods among people who were strangers to each other.



(Deterding et al., 2011). The success of this idea in various commercial use cases made it a trend that has been expanding in recent years in the fields of governance, public administration, and citizens’ participation. This basic logic of game elements creates commitment and competitiveness, accompanied by joy and entertainment, to produce data or value inside the given framework of the application or service.

For the purposes of our argument, we will delve into this playful way of translating various contexts, such as processes and interactions, by forming a fruitful, open-ended, and creative framework. In terms of commons’ initiatives, we must consider as contexts for translation the problems they are facing. Whether we are referring to a cooperative or to an informal citizens’ initiative, the key element is the reproduction of social relations of equity among the members. Therefore, these communities have the potential to collectively manage their resources to meet their needs and, more important, to address new societal challenges. Thus, the problem of sustainability and growth for these commons’ initiatives has a practical and political aspect. The practical aspect is the access to infrastructure and the possession of human, material, and economic resources, whereas the political aspect includes the relations of equal participation among members and the impact of the initiatives on the surrounding social ecology. Both aspects are in constant interconnection, although politics is mainly viewed as the essential condition of a community’s well-being at the practical level. However, would it be suitable for the aforementioned context to be conceived as a field for experimentation on game design and to become occupied by translated playful processes?


First, ‘playing is not something apart from reality, not a lesser state, or a rehearsal for becoming adult, and not an individualised deliberative choice as fixed molar structures of childhood, adulthood and development would have us believe. It problematizes the taken-for-granted by drawing upon the qualities of playing itself, as a restless desire to release new virtualities into the world through novel assemblages. By doing so it reveals development and growth to be a multitude of singular events, moments which escape representation and categorisation’ (Ryall et al., 2014, p. 139). The problematization of a structured and determinate situation through the alternate narrative of a game creates a different and open framework for critique. As Foucault mentioned in his work, ‘What is critique?’, this notion of critique generates a condition of possibility for new knowledge to

be produced and, in this regard, for other everyday practices to emerge (Foucault, 1996). Building upon this theoretical tradition, our approach to a game design toolkit for supporting commons' initiatives aims to inspire and help cooperatives, organizations of civil society, bottom-up initiatives, and public administrations **think otherwise** (Robinson, 1995) about challenges they face during their everyday routines. According to Sicart, 'two of the key characteristics of play are its appropriative nature and the creativity that ensues. Play is creative when it is taking over, or occupying, a context. Similarly, the playful attitude takes over an activity in a creative manner, even though its purpose remains unchanged. Appropriation leads to carnivalesque creativity, which might lead to a critical approach to the context, the very act of play, or the activity that is being playfully occupied' (Sicart, 2014). Following these notions, we post experimentation in game design as an opportunity for commons communities to generate new socio-technical processes through the emergence of new, more playful framings about commoning problems in terms of collective action and self-organization. In parallel, this orientation will help us rethink and discover new ways of empowering horizontality and self-expression by transforming diverse fields of interest or points of conflict into fictional environments of collective reflection and practice.



## The “Game Design Machine” Methodology

---



The way we formed the argument in the previous section brings us closer to the literature about **serious games** and their design and development. Serious games can be defined as ‘a virtual environment and a gaming experience in which the contents that we want to teach can be naturally embedded with some contextual relevance in terms of the game-playing [...]’ (Fabricatore, 2000). The educational perspective of serious games is more than useful to our concept of commons and can create interactive processes of mutual understanding and collective learning. However, it partially covers our aforementioned field of interest because it assumes a predefined educational goal and it is a structured field of knowledge that will be translated into a game environment. In terms of commons, if we want to develop framings that are open to critique and capable of creating the conditions for new life practices to emerge, we must also integrate in our design the parameter of open-ended procedures. For example, the problem of the low level of participation in the collective processes of a citizens’ initiative could easily constitute a tangible educational goal, but there is neither a universal set of recommendations nor a structured process to teach people how to participate. Therefore, our approach on a Game Design Machine will

extract elements of serious games design<sup>1</sup> and get inspiration from the notions of **design thinking and problem solving**. Thus, our proposed methodology would not necessarily lead to the creation of a fully functional game, but it would challenge commoners to take part in a process with the potential to form new representations and reveal new perspectives on their fields of interests<sup>2</sup>.

---

<sup>1</sup> For further reading, see Barbosa, A., Pereira, P., Dias, J., & Silva, F. (2014). A new methodology of design and development of serious games. *International Journal of Computer Games Technology*, 2014, 1–8. 10.1155/2014/817167;

Schrier, K. (2014). *Learning, education and games. Volume one: Curricular and design considerations* (1st ed.). ETC Press;

Marne, B., Wisdom, J., Huynh-Kim-Bang, B., & Labat, et J.-M. (2012) The six facets of serious game design: A methodology enhanced by our design pattern library. *21st Century Learning for 21st Century Skills*, 7563, 208–221.

<sup>2</sup> Read more about integration of values in games by artists and social movements in Flanagan, M., & Nissenbaum, H. (2007). A game design methodology to incorporate social activist themes. *CHI 2007 Proceedings. Politics & Activism*. San Jose, CA, USA, 181–183.



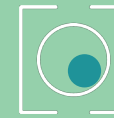


**Conduct Research and Broaden  
Your Perspectives**

---

First, the most crucial point is the defining of a reason or problem (**A.1**) that you want to address through a game environment. Clarity of wording will help you extract some general keywords that will facilitate the organization of your research on related literature (**A.2**). Any reason or problem that leads you to start creating a game for it, has limitless interconnections. Of course, it is impossible to exhaust all of them in your reading, but it would be helpful for the next steps to create an initial concrete and tangible theoretical framework. In other words, try to extract important concepts from your reading with small explanatory comments and **create a 'chaotic' diagram**. Maybe after a day of sketching ideas, you will be afraid to look at your diagram, but do not worry. It represents our collective reality. Also keep in mind that you mapped a part of this mess; that is progress. Do not delve too deeply into theory and limit your reading to prevent burnout. In the next step, search for references of related games (**A.3**). Your search will be based on the notions that emerged in the two previous steps, and you should remember to isolate elements and parameters that look helpful to your theme. In terms of elements and parameters in a game, you could include specific rules, characters, or roles; details of artwork or fun facts; the logic behind moves; and the relations created among players during the game. After the first three steps inside the Game Design Machine, you have created two pools

A.1



define the reason or problem

A.2



literature review on the theme

A.3



look for other related games

A.4



decide about the core elements of the process that you want to involve the future participants

labyrinth | dialogue | role play game | competitiveness  
strategy | collaboration | puzzle or brain-teaser

! create an initial theoretical framework

! isolate parameters which look helpful to your theme

Research and broaden your perspectives

INITIAL REASON

ENGAGEMENT OF FUTURE USERS OF DIGITAL SERVICE "MAPPING COMMUNITY ~~DATA~~ (NEEDS) ON EMPTY BUILDINGS"

PROPOSING PROCESS

- 1) AR MAPPING WITH 3D OBJECTS → SIMULATE AND ENGAGE WITH MAPPING
- 2) DISCUSSION ON ~~DISCUSSION~~ 4 DIRECT-DEMOCRACY DIGITAL PLATFORM → SIMULATE AND ENGAGE DISCUSSION AMONG DIVERSE STAKEHOLDERS

POSSIBLE USES TO PROPOSE

ON  
EMPTY BUILDINGS

AN UNEXPLOITED COMMUNITY ASSET

URBAN COMMONS

GENTRIFICATION

NEIGHBORHOOD SCALE

COMMUNITY NEEDS

TOURISTIFICATION

PROBLEMS AND OBSTACLES

DIVERSE STAKEHOLDERS

MUNICIPALITY

BUSINESSES

NGOs

CITIZENS

URBAN HISTORY FROM GRASSROOTS INITIATIVES

INFORMAL EXAMPLES

COMMUNITY BUILDING

PARTICIPATION

FORMAL EXAMPLES  
SPATIAL MANAGEMENT  
STATE BUREAUCRACY

DIFFERENT INTERESTS

SOCIAL VALUE

DECISION MAKING?

ECONOMIC VALUE

REAL ESTATE MARKET

CONFLICTS AND POWER RELATION IN THE URBAN SPACE

COMMON GROUND FOR ENCOUNTERS AND COLLABORATION

SOCIAL IMPACT

NEGOTIATION

SPATIAL AND SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC

STRATEGY

Maybe after a day of sketching ideas, you will be afraid to look at your diagram, but don't worry. It represents our collective reality and keep in mind that it's a progress that you mapped a part of this mess.

Example of a diagram during the creation of board game "12 common Buildings"

of inspiration: theoretical and practical. In the next step, connect notions of the first with characteristics of the second. This will lead you to the first decisions about the core elements of the process in which you want to involve future participants (A.4). These core elements have to do with the basic philosophy of the generated game. According to your theme, you must decide by which type of game environment your context will be occupied and appropriated. Will it be a labyrinth with argument contests, a competitive strategy role-play game, or a card game?



**Ticket to Ride** is a strategy game where players collect and play train car cards to claim train routes across the map.



**Catan** is a multiplayer board game where players take on the roles of settlers, each attempting to build and develop holdings while trading and acquiring resources.



**North Berkeley** is a fast planning & negotiation game, based on real life debate about housing at North Berkeley BART



**IMPACT: A Foresight Game** is a serious board game that teaches you to think critically and imaginatively about emerging technology and the future of society.



The two pools of inspiration. Theoretical and practical elements and their initial content combinations

# B

## Organize Your Brainstorming And Delve Into What You Want To Achieve

---

To move forward with the creation of a game, you must further organize your research. This will help you focus on what you want to achieve and, more importantly, on how your game will be developed in a practical way towards this direction. Because you have decided the basic philosophy of the game that fits better with your theme and the process you want to create, you can start development of the main structure of the game. For this reason, you should return to your literature review and mainly to the 'initial chaotic diagram' of your theoretical framework. Based on your explanatory comments for each of the concepts mapped, start analysing them through their main aspects (**B.1**). In other words, try to extract some subsidiary keywords for your concepts and create a second layer on your diagram with the elements that constitute your concepts. In this layer, you can also add some connections or minor relations between the theme's concepts and their elements (**B.2**). The whole process is probably becoming more and more chaotic, but now you also have a more detailed map of your data to help you think creatively on your theme. Thus, you are finally ready to start translating your field of interest in a game environment and to let your context be occupied and appropriated by an alternative, more playful representation.

In the beginning of your brainstorming, take some notes about this second layer of your diagram and think of some symbols or metaphors for your theme, first for the theme as a whole and second for the concepts and relations among the elements that constitute these concepts. Check your pool of elements and the parameters you have collected from your research on related games and get inspiration from how you combined them in the previous stage with your basic concepts. This process has the potential to start generating a new narrative about your theme (B.3). Some questions to dwell upon are as follows: Which is the starting point of the game and how are the players/participants taking part in the narrative? Which is the main goal or mission, how are the players relating to each other, and what are the available tools or resources to accomplish the goal/mission of the game? These are some questions to help you develop a story and the fundamentals of the gameplay based on your theme and the diagrams you created during your research. In the next step, think about and design the actual mechanism of the game (B.4). Do some more research about the design of the game objects (board, cards, checkers) and roles/characters. Imagine some forms or representations of the main aspects of your narrative. They could be abstract shapes or more descriptive sketches and images. However, you must also develop the rules of the game, which is the most crucial part. Game objects and roles create an engaging atmosphere related to your narrative, but the rules are the substantial aspect of the flow of the process. To develop them, you must rely on the diagrams you created during the previous steps and consider that the relations between your main concepts could be easily translated to regulations or instructions that will be used as guidance or obstacles for players. **The design and formation of the rules may become a creative and meaningful process because they are a smart and indirect way to integrate subjects of political and ethical interest in the game plot and create the conditions for self-reflection and/or collective reflection among the participants.** Keep in mind that in the first versions of the game, you will not have a small starting brief for the gameplay. It needs time and pilot tests for the game to become simpler. Another tip is that if some rules seem too complicated, you could adapt them as incidents that emerge during the gameplay. That way, you will have a more understandable starting brief, and the participants will have a handle on the game just by playing it. Finally, decide on the factor of luck in your game. It could be an 'ally' on many occasions, especially when you want to simulate points of conflict. The factor of luck could turn out to be decisive for outcomes and could perhaps open discussion on possible consequences.

B.1



analyze the basic concepts through their main aspects

B.2



produce a diagram of the basic elements of the concepts and the relations between them

B.3



start to develop a narrative based on your diagram



research on, think about and design the game rules

give attention to relations produced by the concepts and the forms

B.4



decide about the factor luck in the gameplay

research on, think about and design the game objects / roles

give attention to relations produced by the narrative and the rules

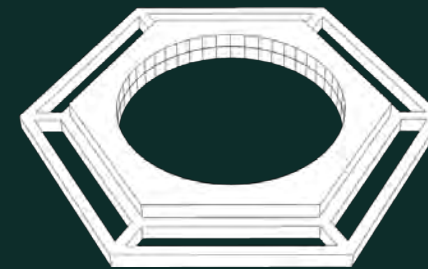


try to create a layer of alternative instances for each of your concepts and their relations

Organize your brainstorming and delve into what you want to achieve

## DIFFERENT INTERESTS

COMMON GROUND  
FOR ENCOUNTERS  
AND COLLABORATION



### COLLABORATION BASE

object that gives the opportunity to different stakeholders to discuss about possible collaboration and combine diverse uses in a building

### COLLABORATION RULE

The collaboration base could be implemented when different stakeholders achieve through negotiation to co-manage a building and combine different uses. Each team of such a synergy double (or triple depending the number of partners) the reward points of the built use. The participants are triggered to create a common ground, compromise and at the same time promote the interests of the team they are representing.



Example of concept translation into game element and rule of political speculation



## Prototype and Pilot Test

---

You are now moving from the design to the production phase. In this part, it could make things easier to have an artist, architect, or graphic designer in your team or as a consultant to help with the implementation of your idea. Access to a makerspace or fab lab could also help make the result more attractive. If not, do not be afraid of handicraft. **You can do it!** Simple geometrical shapes could represent everything in the world, even abstract theoretical ideas. You can always keep things minimal by following the philosophy of 'less is more' or taking the path of an immaterial 'mind game' that can 'construct' interesting conditions out of nothing. Thus, in this final step, you must finalize your design of the game objects in accordance with the available means of production (**C.1**). Choose the materials and the colours of the objects in a way that generates unity for elements that are related and that lets points of conflict differentiate from and be contradictory to the whole. The means of production should be chosen in a sustainable and efficient way. You must consider the available resources and the time needed for the construction of the physical instance of your game. Do not spend much time in the preparation of something that will probably need improvement or changes in the immaterial aspect of its rules.

Now you are ready to test your game with your team. Organize a pilot test (**C.2**) and be careful during the process to evaluate all the elements. It would be helpful to create



a canvas to write down every insight or observation about the narrative, the objects, the roles, the overall gameplay and its flow across time, and participants' reactions and interactions, as well as interesting stories or comments.

When the pilot is completed, you will have a clear view of how your game functions and which points could be helpful for your initiative. Do not be disappointed if things did not go the way you imagined. Make some corrections to the rules, but be careful and try to maintain a balance with the changes you decided on because it is easy to damage aspects that are operating well. Maybe you will need to produce at least two prototypes to have a process capable of addressing the challenges faced. In any case, the number of prototypes depends on the needs and the desired outcomes. **Before trying a new version, you should go back and review steps B.1–B.4 to confirm that the game is still moving in the right direction and is focused on the field of interest.** During the pilot tests, do not forget to think collectively about the name of the game, and consider a more descriptive subtitle!

## C.1



### produce the prototype

choose materials and colours

decide about means of production

! take into account the time and the resources needed for the production

! review how the different forms reflect the relations produced on your conceptual diagram

## C.2



### pilot test

evaluate: narrative, objects and roles, rules, overall gameplay

map: game flow across time, interesting stories or comments, interactions created between participants

Produce at least 2 prototypes and each time review steps b.1-4



## Final Version

Prototype and pilot test




D

## Concluding Thoughts

---

Prototyping evolution through pilot testing. "12 common buildings" from 1st to 3rd prototype

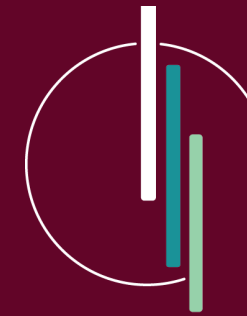


*'Like all collective cultural practices, game creation produces its own mythologies (Barthes, 2006), foundational narratives that serve to reaffirm the shared norms and values within or the origins and shared histories of its community'. (Wernind, 2021, p. 190)*

Living in a world of recurring crises, we believe it is important to re-think and empower our collective processes. The Game Design Machine is the first attempt to structure an open-ended mechanism of reflection on our everyday challenges, where digital is not the sole solution, but the reason behind the creative appropriation of novel trajectories of thought in the intersection of digital technology and social innovation. In this respect, we are also acknowledging the unexplored potential of the process through which a community attempts to reinvent minor collective narratives, to strengthen the relations among its members, and to understand deeply and diffuse members' shared values.

*'Like any other object or instrument or technology, games are political, but the true political effect of these objects takes place when we occupy them, that is, when they become instruments for political expression'. (Sicart, 2014, p. 73).*

The critical questions in this statement are how to appropriate a game and how a context could be claimed by a playful attitude and in that way become political. Through our approach, we propose a method designed to experiment on possible ways of addressing these questions. Finally, we believe political expression, participation, visibility, and commitment to a collective future will become more chaotic and evasive in the next few decades because of the growing fragmentation of social realities. Therefore, we believe it is necessary to think beyond traditional forms and norms of collective action and give more space to our imagination to reflect on the challenges the future poses to commons' initiatives.



# COLLECTIVE EMOTIONAL MAPPING

---

Builds a space for discussion, participation and creation as a starting point for common knowledge of the space that surrounds us. Draws upon individual perceptions that co-create a collective understanding of space dynamics. Requires supplies such as base-map, rice-paper and colored pencils.

the **Collective Emotional Mapping** toolkit was developed by  
Vily Mylona



## **A Guide to Implement Collective Mapping Activities**

Our idea of qualitative mapping tools involves the participation of underrepresented groups in the making of space and ‘commons’ initiatives. Through this process, we tried to build a space for discussion, participation, and creation as a starting point that builds common knowledge of the space that surrounds us. Qualitative maps are a useful tool for responding to the complexities surrounding issues of spatial scale, boundaries, and functionality, and possible differences in definitions of the neighbourhood among individuals depending on their own characteristics (e.g. gender, class, and ethnicity), by offering a means of not only defining neighbourhood led by residents rather than researchers but also better understanding how neighbourhoods are perceived, used, and experienced (Alexander, 2006). Lynch’s seminal study influenced this method. He asked urban residents to draw maps of their city from memory (Lynch, 1960). When compiled into a collective map, this information helped identify the most important elements of the urban built environment around which people structured their cognitive images of the city and subsequently influenced new theories and policies. People who are interested in studying and understanding spatial issues through collective maps are usually engaged with the specific issues themselves. For instance, in her research of queer public spaces in Philadelphia, Cieri, a queer scholar, used qualitative mapping to ‘offer some ways of



representing geographic space differently' (Cieri, 2003). Other examples of collective mapping that offers situated knowledge include the recording of public spaces on private lands created by tax breaks over the last few decades, such as Zucotti Park, where Occupy Wall Street protestors camped, and the mapping of community land trusts, cooperatives, and other commons that document the virtual world of the commons. Collective mapping is, therefore, a means of promoting participatory practices and potential social movements that aim to tackle discrimination and exclusion.

Drawing a map is a method of compiling collective accounts of what is common to a group of people who share comparable traits and experiences. Collective maps are a valuable tool for dealing with the complexity of geographic scale, borders, and functionality, as well as any variations regarding definitions. They are a part of a wider process as they

- constitute a 'means' for thought and collective participation;
- promote understanding of spatial mobility of under-represented and socially isolated groups;
- provide a way for socialization of situated knowledge and good practices;
- foster co-creation of safe spaces;
- are a tool for deep analysis of key issues of visibility and inclusion; and document the world of the commons.



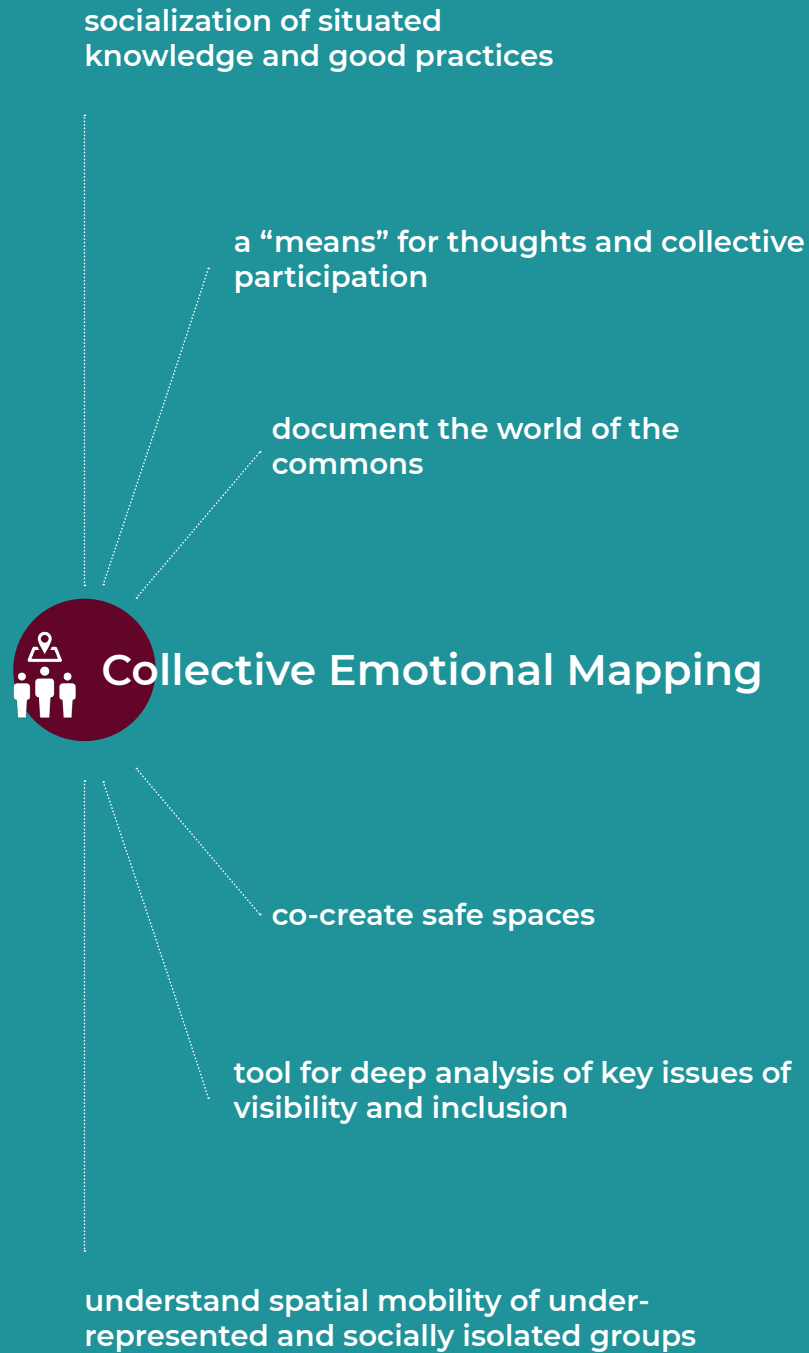
## Means of Collective Mapping

The careful selection of collective mapping means is crucial for the successful implementation of an activity and the validity of insights. The appropriate method of collective mapping depends on

- the primary topic (or research question);
- the selected territory for the mapping;
- the place where the activity will take place;
- the aim of the workshop (exclusively research purposes, part of a broader activity, engagement activities for a specific community, etc.); and
- the target groups.

After clarifying and identifying these five aspects, you will have the starting point of the process, and you will be able to design and develop an exciting and interactive workshop based on your research needs.

A pool of devices is available for almost any kind of concept. Each researcher or organisation that wishes to create a collective map activity can modify the main core of



each device based on its primary goals. Here, we describe some of the most popular and deliberated methods:

**1\_Mapping Table** – The most common method of collective mapping. The organisers explain the activity and the topics for discussion and invite the participants to illustrate their thoughts collectively on a map. Regardless of the total number of the participants, it is recommended to divide them into groups of eight people maximum to ensure everyone will have the opportunity to contribute to the discussion. The materials and supplies needed for this method are a big table placed at the centre of the room, chairs, coloured pencils, and rice paper on which the participants will draw their responses.

**2\_Multiplans** – A tool of multiple representations of a territory on the same map with the use of multiple layers. The participants are free to capture both geographical elements and/or emotions on rice papers. This method is similar to the mapping table but allows us to add different layers to investigate and combine multiple aspects of the same territory.

**3\_Mapping post or mural** – Usually an additional tool for a larger meeting or massive activity where mapping is not the main tool. It includes a sizable map placed on the wall, on which people are free to draw whatever is relevant to a certain topic while passing by.

**4\_Photographic collage** – Includes an abstract map of the city on which participants are invited to pin photographs of places accompanied with a short description and/or thought. This method depicts the city’s corners through the personal lens of its inhabitants.

**5\_Urban trips** – Includes visits on foot in the mapped territory. It is recommended to divide the participants into small groups and invite them to interact with residents, make notes, and take photographs while wandering around the city. Each participant should have a specific role during the trip. For instance, someone could interview people they meet in the neighbourhood while the others could keep notes, take pictures, observe the surroundings and/or write down feelings, colours, smells, or any other element that might draw their attention. The duration of the trip must be short, and the trip must be well organised to avoid wasting time and collecting extraneous data.





### mapping table

The organisers explain the activity and the topics for discussion and invite the participants to collectively illustrate their thoughts on the map.

1



### multiplans

Multiple representations of a territory on the same map with the use of multilayers. Capture both geographical elements and/or emotions on the main map.

2



### mapping post/mural

Additional tool to a larger meeting or massive activity. It includes a sizable map placed on the wall, on which people are free to draw whatever relevant to a certain topic while passing by.

3



### photographic collage

Includes an abstract map of the city on which the participants are invited to pin photographs of the places accompanied with a short description and/or thought.

4



### urban trips

Urban trips include visits by foot in the mapped territory. The participants are invited to interact with the locals, take notes and photographs while wander in the city.

5

B

Getting Started

The initial planning of your workshop is decisive for successful implementation. Before setting up the workshop, you should engage with your target group and initiate a dialogue to understand their expectations, the topics to be treated, and the territories your workshop will cover. These first contacts will allow you to start working on an abstract concept and guidelines, which the participants will enrich and specify later. On the day of the workshop, you should be prepared to include all participants in the activities and make sure they have understood the concept and purpose of their presence. A short presentation mentioning the aims and duration is recommended, while emphasising the potentialities of emotional mapping and explaining clearly how they will intervene freely and creatively in the visual outcomes.

Collective mapping is a process based heavily on teamwork. The participants are invited to interact, express themselves freely, and contribute to the activity by designating their personal experiences and points of view. For a successful interaction, divide the participants into groups of a maximum of eight people. The number obviously depends on how many participants are there. Before starting to draw, participants briefly introduce themselves by mentioning their names and other information they feel comfortable sharing. The working

1

### means of collective mapping

select the most relevant and efficient means of mapping based on the defined topics and territories



### preparing the workshop

analyze deeply the topics and the territories the workshop will cover



2

### introduce tasks

participants briefly introduce themselves and organizers introduce the aim and the duration of the activity



3

### working together

split participants to small groups and provide a working area with all resources and tools needed



4

### conclusive discussion

try to keep notes during the activity and initiate a conclusive discussion



Before the take off. The basic steps towards a well-planned workshop.

area should be well equipped with all the required tools and resources of the workshop (coloured pencils, markers, rice paper, etc.).

During the activity, visit all the working tables, answer questions, encourage people to participate and, most important, observe and keep notes. Your notebook will guide you to initiate a conclusive discussion and present some primary insights. Invite participants to contribute to the discussion by sharing their opinions through open discussion or questionnaires in the case of large public events.



## Implementing Collective Mapping

---

To better appreciate the implementation of this methodological tool, we held a workshop with five LGBTQI+ community members. The workshop's topic was **'Experiences and Perceptions of the City'**, and our goal was to construct a collective map that visualized a spatially recorded field of collective memory. We used the 'mapping table' device as the most appropriate means based on the topic of the workshop, the target group, and the number of attendees. We began by briefly outlining the workshop's objectives and explaining the communal mapping process to participants. Following that, the participants introduced themselves and were given the opportunity to ask additional questions about the mapping process. While exchanging thoughts and insights with the other participants, individuals were free to use markers and draw symbols on rice paper to identify places and zones that reflected their own experiences. We asked each person to include an aspect from their personal experience in a space that reflected community-based activities such as LGBTQI+ rights campaigns and organizations. Participants began to become more engaged with the activity as the collaborative process of sharing spatial knowledge developed. Throughout the workshop, we used a series of questions to encourage participants to recall zones, locations, routes, places, and anything else they enjoyed,



Map produced in the workshop with members of LGBTQI+ community on 10th October 2021

found distressing, or were uncomfortable with. The following key axes and sub-questions dominated the discussion:

### **The meaning of 'safe space'**

An introductory section where participants were encouraged to share their interpretation of 'safe space'.

### **The neighbourhood experiences**

At this point, participants were invited to assess their sense of 'safety' in their neighbourhoods using a five-point rating scale, and to mark on the map areas and zones that used to have and/or are still having an impact on their emotional state:

Where do you live?

What is the level of acceptance of your identity as a member of the LGBTQI+ community in your neighbourhood? (0/5)

How do you experience the way people from the neighbourhood see you as a member of the community?

***Was there an incident in which you felt your 'right to the city' was being questioned?***

### **The city experience**

Here, we attempted to expand our understanding of spatial representation and of how the community experienced participation. We asked the participants to start thinking from the level of their neighbourhood to the level of the city:

Which areas of the city do you visit the most often when alone? Which ones do you visit with your friends and for what reasons?

***Which are the areas of the city that you visit the least, the areas that 'bother' you?***

***For what reasons?***

Could you share with us events or experiences of acceptance that you experienced? In which areas did they unfold? What were the reactions of the people who were there and to what extent did these experiences change your perception of the city?



**G.:** "One time we visited the park in Akadimia Platonos with a group of friends. In the beginning, everything was fine until the moment when two of my male friends started kissing. At that moment, some people next to us began to attack us verbally and finally, we left the park."



**N.:** "I don't like Lycabettus Hill anymore. It used to be a place that I visited a lot because a few people went there to walk their dogs or jog. Now it is full of macho men who peel out their motorbikes."

Participants' comments about city spaces on questions related to fear and low acceptance

### The 'common' experience

All the groups of questions asked above were designed to better understand the spatial dimension of acceptance of this specific social group. In the last section, we tried to open and discuss issues of participation and inequality. The discussion revolved around the following axes:

Do you know any organizations, institutions, and/or community-based initiatives within the city that promote issues of integration and acceptance? If so, how do they affect your daily experiences in the city and in what way?

Have you lived in other cities? What was the level of acceptance you experienced there and what was the activity of the respective communities, if any?

How does locality (in relation to the space itself but also to culturally created space) change the way you participate and act in your daily life? How crucial is it for your well-being?

Finally, we asked participants to draw freely any additional information they considered important enough to share.



Participants' rating on the level of acceptance in the cities they lived



## Concluding Thoughts and Possible Limitations

---

Collective mapping offers a visualised interpretation of space, as certain individuals that constitute a community with specific characteristics or needs perceive and sense it. It can give rise to conflicts and discontinuities of space even in seemingly homogeneous safe areas. Activities of collective mapping bring together communities and could initiate public dialogues around participation, commoning, and urban transformation based on localised needs and emotional representations of lived space. It is a tool, when used properly, for communities to carry out outreach of their activities to other groups of interest and for public institutions and organisations to develop policies of inclusion and visibility.

Usually, collective mapping is an additional tool larger research projects or public debates use that encompasses and employs qualitative data. The workshop's purpose, the structure of the organised activities, and the questions asked must exist under the theoretical framework that accompanies the research at hand. The results will not be relevant if the theory aspect of the procedure is undermined. The context is essential for the development and implementation of the tool. When working with groups that feel and are misrepresented or alienated, you should be aware of the challenges they face, their boundaries, and their inherent needs. If the organiser is based outside the community, involving members of the community and getting feedback from the community is of the

utmost importance for the respectful development of the process. Collective mapping could turn into an emotional experience for participants; hence, this manual was an effort to provide some guidelines for the efficient, fruitful, inclusive, and well-organised use of this tool. However, it is not exhaustive and applicable to all use cases. Thus, the organisation and implementation should be handled with as much care and empathy as possible.

## References

### Participation model

- Alexander, C. (2006). Introduction: Mapping the issues. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 29(3), 397–410. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870600597792>
- Beebeejaun, Y. (2017). Gender, urban space, and the right to everyday life. *Journal of Urban Affairs*, 39(3), 323–334. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07352166.2016.1255526>
- Berger, J. (1997). *Ways of seeing: based on the BBC television series with John Berger; a book made (37. pr., 1. publ. 1972 by British Broadcasting Corp. and 1977 by Penguin Books)*. British Broadcasting Corp.
- Berger, J. (2003). *Selected Essays* (G. Dyer, Ed.; 1. Vintage internat. ed). Vintage Books.
- D'Ignazio, C., & Klein, L. F. (2020). *Data feminism*. The MIT Press.
- Glaser, B. G. (1978). *Theoretical sensitivity*. Mill Valley Sociology Press.
- Harvey, D. (2008). The Right to the City. *New Left Review*, 53, 23–40.
- Mumford, L. (1989). *The city in history: its origins, its transformations, and its prospects*. Harcourt, Inc.
- Psillos, S. (2011). An Explorer upon Untrodden Ground: Peirce on Abduction. In D. M. Gabbay, S. Hartmann, & J. Woods (Eds.), *Handbook of the History of Logic* (Vol. 10, pp. 117–151). North-Holland. <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-444-52936-7.50004-5>



### **Collective mapping**

- Alexander, C. (2006). Introduction: Mapping the issues. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 29(3), 397–410. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870600597792>
- Cieri, M. (2015). Between Being and Looking Queer Tourism Promotion and Lesbian Social Space in Greater Philadelphia. *ACME: An International Journal for Critical Geographies*, 2(2), 147–166. <https://www.acme-journal.org/index.php/acme/article/view/691>
- Press, T. M. (n.d.). *The Image of the City* | The MIT Press. Retrieved December 13, 2021, from <https://mitpress.mit.edu/books/image-city>

### **Game design machine**

- Foucault, M., & Geiman, K. P. (1996). What Is Critique? In J. Schmidt (Ed.), *What Is Enlightenment?: Eighteenth-Century Answers and Twentieth-Century Questions* (1st ed., pp. 382–398). University of California Press. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/j.ctt4cgf8z.31>
- Fabricatore, C. (2000) *Learning and Videogames: an Unexploited Synergy*. 2000 AECT National Convention - a recap. Secaucus, NJ: Springer Science + Business Media, Long Beach, CA
- Barbosa, A. F. S., Pereira, P. N. M., Dias, J. A. F. F., & Silva, F. G. M. (2014). A New Methodology of Design and Development of Serious Games. *International Journal of Computer Games Technology*, 2014, 1–8. <https://doi.org/10.1155/2014/817167>
- Deterding, S., Dixon, D., Khaled, R., & Nacke, L. (2011). From game design elements to gamefulness: defining “gamification.” *Proceedings of the 15th International Academic MindTrek Conference: Envisioning Future Media Environments*, 9–15. <https://doi.org/10.1145/2181037.2181040>
- Flanagan, M., & Nissenbaum, H. (2007). A game design methodology to incorporate social activist themes. *Proceedings of the SIGCHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems*, 181–190. <https://doi.org/10.1145/1240624.1240654>
- *Learning, Education and Games* (Vol. 1). (n.d.). ETC Press. Retrieved December 13, 2021, from <https://press.etc.cmu.edu/index.php/product/learning-education-and-games-volume-one-curricular-and-design-considerations/>
- Marne, B., Wisdom, J., Huynh-Kim-Bang, B., & Labat, J.-M. (2012). The Six Facets of Serious Game Design: A Methodology Enhanced by Our Design Pattern Library. In A. Ravenscroft, S. Lindstaedt, C. D. Kloos, & D. Hernández-Leo (Eds.), *21st Century*

*Learning for 21st Century Skills* (pp. 208–221). Springer. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-642-33263-0\\_17](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-642-33263-0_17)

- Robinson, K. A. (1995). *Michel Foucault: topologies of thought: thinking-otherwise between knowledge, power and self*. typescript.
- Russell, W., Ryall, E., & MacLean, M. (Eds.). (n.d.). *The Philosophy of Play as Life : Towards a Global Ethos of Management*.
- Sicart, M. (2014). *Play Matters*. MIT Press.
- Werning, S. (2021). *Making Games: The Politics and Poetics of Game Creation Tools*. MIT Press.



### **Yannis Efthymiou**

I am a researcher for Open Lab Athens. I've studied Statistics at the University of Piraeus and have an MSc in Sociology from the University of Crete. I am a Full-Stack Software Developer and have worked with various NGOs and grassroots communities in Greece. Currently, I participate in the H2020 research project "Generative European Commons Living Lab"(gE.CO Living Lab). My research interests revolve around Participatory Action Research, Research Software Development, Digital Security, Data Science, Machine Learning, Feminism and Urbanism.



### **Vily Mylona**

I am a researcher for Open Lab Athens and a 3D designer at the Disinfaux Collective. I hold a Diploma in Urban and Regional Studies from the University of Thessaly and a MSc in Urban Planning and Policy Design from the Polytechnic School of Milan. Currently, I am a PhD candidate in Architecture, National Technical University of Athens and, for the last three years, I have worked as an urban planner in several projects. My research interests focus on critical geography, participatory design and planning, migration studies, ethnography and the digital visualization of socio-spatial relations.



### **Giannis Zgeras**

I am working as a researcher for Open Lab Athens. I have studied Architecture in Democritus University of Thrace and I completed my MSc in Sociology in School of Social Sciences at University of Crete. During my studies, I have worked as a freelance graphic designer for organizations and private businesses and in several art projects. I have also been involved in a research project of the Transformable Intelligent Environment Laboratory of Technical University of Crete related to education, architecture and digital fabrication. My interests are in the fields of critical urbanism, participatory design, education, technology and the analysis of knowledge production as a result of social relations.