

REPORTS OF THE CO-CREATION POLICY EVENTS



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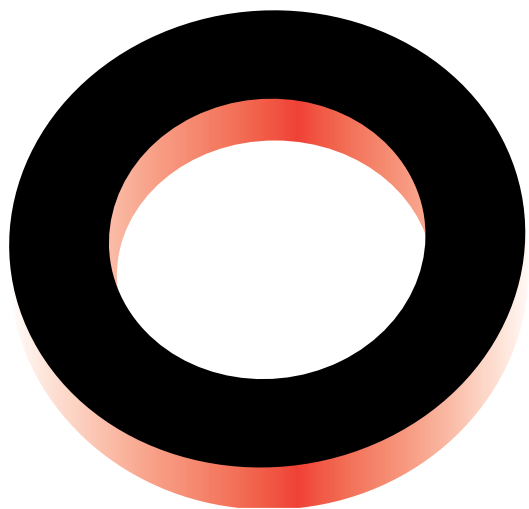


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European Cultural Foundation,
Creative Industry Košice, 2021



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Commons Sense: Let's Create a Bottom-Up European Democracy

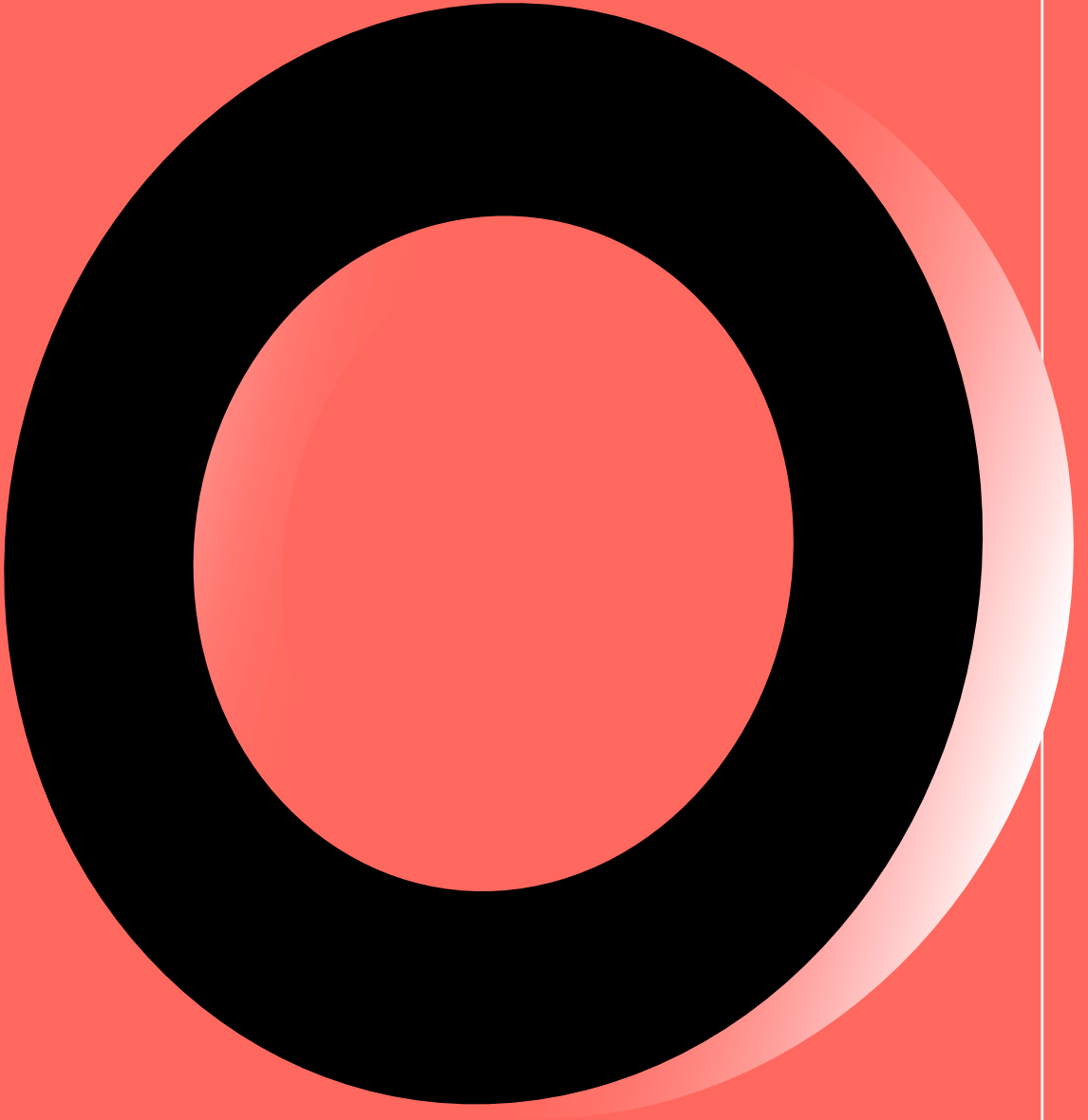
Digital Co-creation Lab

22 and 29–30 June 2020

This policy report aims to summarise the co-creation process organised by the European Cultural Foundation and the University of Antwerp – in cooperation with l'Asilo, Boekman Foundation and Trans Europe Halles – within the framework of the Cultural and Creative Spaces and Cities (CCSC) project.

The digital co-creation lab event was organised as a non-competitive hackathon. For further information on the event and its outputs, see: <https://www.spacesandcities.com/event/co-creation-lab-commons-sense-resources/>.

The authors of the report are attendees of the event that were chosen through a public call to receive a scholarship to support their participation.



Challenge 1: The Commons as Ecosystems for Culture after Covid-19

Julia Gouin, Cultural Coordinator,
and Matina Magkou, Cultural Manager
and Researcher / September 2020

INTRODUCTION

The following is a summary of notes and observations gathered during the Co-creation Lab event *Commons Sense: Let's Create a Bottom-Up European Democracy*, which took place online on 22, 29 and 30 June within the framework of the Creative Europe co-funded policy project *Cultural and Creative Spaces and Cities (CCSC)*.

The aim of the report is to gather the main points that came up during the event regarding Challenge 1: The Commons as Ecosystems for Culture after Covid-19 and to raise policy-related issues.

The report is structured as follows:

PART A/ is a reflection on the Co-creation Lab process – its strengths and limitations

PART B/ includes the nodes, needs and proposals discussed within the Challenge group.

Disclaimer: While many points and observations were largely shared among participants and are taken into consideration for this report, the following report remains subjective and may diverge from the PowerPoint presentations that summarise the outcome proposals formulated by each group.¹

¹ Team “Platforming Bakers”, comprised of Matina Magkou, Codruța Simionescu, Julia Gouin, Uta Richter and Julien Gastelo; Team “Van Gogh – Programme”, consisting of Ana Sofia Acosta Alvarado, Natalie Crue, Dries Van de Velde, Michel Jacquet, Benedetta Parenti; “Team 4”, consisting of Alice Borch, Rafael Bresciani, Marije Nie, Michael Dobbie, Jules Desgoutte.

PART A: A Reflection on the Co-creation Lab Process – Strengths and Limitations

A Welcome Initiative at a Time of Uncertainty:

- The initiative to move online and merge the policy co-creation events that were planned was very welcome. This enabled many participants to communicate despite social distancing measures being in place and within a context of uncertainty that generated many forms of anxieties.
- Several participants highlighted that the digital format enabled them to join the conversation from far away, sometimes from outside Europe.
- The online event was impressively tightly managed in terms of schedule, organisation, explanations, quality of mentoring, plurality of voices and technical aspects.
- The opportunity to exchange ideas in small groups with experienced cultural practitioners as “mentors” was a positive experience.
- This event was a good opportunity to hear directly from European institution staff responding on the spot to ideas generated across the two days. This kind of platform helps to make the processes and dialogue more transparent and accessible.

Hindrances and Limitations:

- Some participants experienced difficulties during the team-building time through the Slack platform. Despite the advantages of such a tool, it also multiplies channels and, as a consequence, divides attention.
- There were many possible crossovers between the different challenges and the questions they prompted, which often generated confusion and frustration.
- Many participants regretted the pressure to produce an outcome (a PowerPoint presentation) in such a short amount of time. Some reported that it reduced the time available for exchanges and sharpening the threads of discussions initiated and generated frustration as a result. Moreover, the words chosen by each one of us, and the meaning they carry, was often a point of discussion during our exchanges. Possibly this attention to vocabulary was reinforced by the PowerPoint outcome that was expected from participants.

Even if we cannot expect to dive into in-depth analysis and outcomes in such a large online gathering and within such a limited timeframe, there was an expectation that the proceedings would go beyond general statements and that the organisers would activate a direction to enable us to do so. The opportunity to hear from the complexity of the field and the context-specific narratives were maybe felt to be missing at times. Even if many well-intentioned ideas and concepts were expressed during those two days, they did not always have an activating force, nor did they convey the complexity of the field. Also, the language used was often largely permeated by that of academic discourse. Using theory to activate such a large group underestimated, to a certain extent, the power that localised examples have to resonate at a universal level.

PART B: Nodes, Needs and Proposals Discussed in Challenge 1

The framework for our collective brainstorming was structured around the three questions at the core of Challenge 1 (The commons as ecosystems for culture after Covid-19). Although both authors participated in #Team12, the following section tries to cover the reflections raised by all three groups that were formed within this challenge. Nevertheless, the text is still very subjective and only claims to reflect the opinions of the two authors. Additionally, the examples mentioned here come from the authors' repertoire of references.

Promoting and Recognising a Culture of Commons

Promoting a culture of commons means a culture based on rights, equal access, exchange, experimentation and participation as well as autonomy, self-organisation, new ethical principles and collaboration. One of the Challenge 1 groups also defined the rules and ethical principles for collaboration within the commons with the notions of: ecology, anti-fascism, anti-homophobia, anti-sexism, anti-racism and social justice. For commons to become self-run ecosystems for the co-imagination and co-creation of new social conditions, new paradigms are needed.

- A European-wide policy framework on commons – providing definitions, legal rights and flexibility to cover the characteristics of various organisations falling under the framework – should be adopted. This does not mean that unifying principles should be sought. A framework that allows semantic flexibility will celebrate the uniqueness and differences of cultural organisations and spaces.

The Overturned Language of Culture

Cultural organisations should not be used as service providers or in order to complement or replace social services. The pressure to provide cultural entertainment, workshops or even alternatives to schooling is felt by many within the cultural spaces. The shift towards grants that are attributed in exchange for services is well documented in Michel Simonot's book "*La Langue Retournée de la Culture*". Yet, this type of pressure is still very much in use by policymakers.

- EU schemes could contribute by allocating funds to reinforce cultural organisations in the long-run rather than by perpetuating a logic of ephemeral events that could be left at the initiative of cultural organisations and citizens rather than being structured within given funding lines and priorities.
- Funding mechanisms should allow experimentation, the establishment of relationships with communities and research periods. They should fund processes and not only outputs. The effectiveness and accountability of cultural work should be recognised and encouraged along each step of the way, from research and conceptualisation to production and distribution.

Access to EU Funding

Organisations wishing to operate on a European level are often expected to seek support from EU funding. However, this excludes small-scale organisations working at the local level from getting access to this type of funding. We should be aware that many organisations do not have the capacity to do so and lack the means (and sometimes the desire) to structure their informal networks. Funding also excludes individuals or informal groups (without a legal entity) that could also benefit from schemes that give them the opportunity to scale up their idea, grow and develop.

Furthermore, the administrative complexity of current EU grants schemes prevents local and small organisations from bene-

fitting from them. They are overwhelmed by the complexity of the application process. Many grassroots organisations never even consider getting information about the grants available given their reputation of being unmanageable by small organisations.

- We need better awareness of the assumptions underlying EU grants schemes.
- We need more accessible (from an administrative perspective) grants schemes.
- We need to enable helpdesks, or “European relays”, to assist smaller organisations to respond to calls for participations and projects on an administrative basis.
- We should also consider schemes supporting individuals and informal groups. Our colleagues from the groups in Challenge 1 came up with concrete proposals inspired by Marie-Curie Individual Fellowships or ERC-style funds.²

Cultural Organisations and Spaces

Cultural organisations operating cultural spaces are often in a precarious situation because of the dominant predatory capitalist approach to real estate and urbanism and its tendency to fix capital by accumulating ownership. These trends generate leverage and co-dependency. Although studies have been conducted into the benefits of sharing facilities,³ the issue of access to physical spaces as common resources needs to be addressed further. Tools to equip local organisations to resist real estate market pressure need to be produced and implemented. Municipalities should also enable the existence of such cultural spaces and not oppose them for the sake of financial interests.⁴

- Buildings and spaces that are used for collectives and cultural, artistic and social purposes should be made accessible in the long term for their users.

² See the PowerPoint presentations for details. <https://www.spacesandcities.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Challenge-1-TEAM10-Ana-Sofia-Acosta-Alvarado.pptx>

³ <https://hal.archives-ouvertes.fr/hal-02150096/document>

⁴ While these pages were being written, in Chania, Greece, the Rosa Nera self-managed space was raided on 5 September. Rosa Nera had stood its ground since 2004 in a building owned by the Polytechnic School of Chania. In its facilities people who worked there had created a theatre, a library and reading room, a space for presentations, a children's park, a construction workshop, a free bazaar of gifts and a communal kitchen. The local government's plan is to convert the squatted building into yet another hotel.

- An EU grant scheme could balance or bring leverage to cultural organisations that are attempting to buy their own space or gathering resources to take care of a building and thereby gain the trust of the property owner (if there is one to convince).

The European and the Local(s)

There is a prevailing impression that the EU institution is a tentacular and opaque system. The lobbying process that takes place around it has been well documented and reported by journalists and yet perhaps it has still not been reported enough. Paradoxically, funded events to promote European culture and citizenship do not necessarily tackle this growing sense of disenfranchisement. The need to multiply these events bears a resemblance to the logic of publicity: it is negatively revealing that trust is not a given and requires incentives to obtain it, which, in turn, generates even more suspicion.

- There is a need to reflect on how common resources gathered at the European level are being redistributed, how this redistribution is being decided and how the agenda is being shaped for the cultural sectors. But as Edgar Allan Poe illustrated in one of his novels, sometimes evidence is best hidden by being put on the top of a pile, a place where no one would have thought it could be so well hidden. Transparency cannot simply mean rendering every document and process public, but rather a thinking through of how to navigate efficiently between those processes, resources and information.
Workers in cultural sectors are often in a precarious position.
- Cultural organisations do not have the capacity to intervene on any other scale than their own local scene. It is important that EU institutions find a way to come to them instead of expecting local organisations to go to the EU. The issue of intermediary agencies has been reported several times in conversations; however, the message and the edge of a project proposal is often altered and lost when passing through a long chain. We cannot assume it is easy or desirable to scale up from the local to the global level or that these scales are often intertwined.
- Set up a short training programme designed to enable people with different backgrounds – beyond the ‘usual suspects’ – to gain knowledge of and experience in the European cultural

sector and learn more about its funding schemes (a five week programme with each week happening in a different place in Europe). This may help to create a new generation of more diverse European cultural organisers and even policymakers.

Opacity of the European Schemes and Attribution Mechanisms and Decision-Making

There is a need for greater flexibility in the designing of the schemes to enable more crossovers and to give better chances to projects that are working in a cross-disciplinary way or in undefined areas. We need more experimental funding schemes that can adapt to different needs and not only support ambitious large-scale projects across Europe.

- We need to watch out for the threshold effect: some schemes reinforce artificial categories and fail to represent the interdisciplinary peculiarities of some projects in the cultural sector. As an example of this, we may think of the clear division that is made between creative programmes and media programmes. This generates some difficulties for organisations that operate in the spaces which lie in between.⁵
- Developing smaller grants (less than €15,000) for cultural spaces would facilitate more experimental initiatives to be tested as pilot schemes, as a first step for further collaborations or as concrete help for an unexpected transition to be made. In the years to come, we may need to equip ourselves with recovery grants that might be needed to enable spaces to survive in times of hardship. Such grants could save cultural organisations from losing their spaces, help them to relocate, or assist them to adjust and get back on their feet in case of the loss of another national or local fund.
- European-level funding requires collaboration. However, there is a need to be cautious that we are not just generating artificial bridges for the sake of it and to make sure that the connections to reinforce the projects already being developed locally. This may be the limits of schemes such as the VAHA programme⁶: while it does aspire to connect a diversity of hybrid spaces, it may also run the risk of artificially con-

⁵ As an example of this, networks such as filmlabs or kino climates are struggling to be recognised under the current European scheme distinctions.

⁶ See <https://www.culturalfoundation.eu/library/vaha-building-commonground-for-spaces-of-public-discussion-and-dialogue>.

necting spaces that are too different to develop a long-term collaboration other than a one off exchange in work methods. At the same time, however, there is a huge potential for such a programme to leave a great footprint in the long-term at the local level since its requirement for participation is collaboration between organisations within the same city to work on an international project (providing that one of them operates a physical space).

- Develop more grants rooted in the concept of commons. A new grant scheme that shows promise in this direction is Morphradat's Self Organizations, which has recently been launched aiming to encourage inventive ways of working and collaborating. The programme offers support to projects where different arts practitioners take the initiative and join forces to define a mutual resource or interest that is important for their work and propose how to share or develop it. As the organisers of Mophradat write in their call, "Eventually, through different experiments with self-organization, the value of collective sharing and generosity amongst arts communities may show itself to be more relevant than funds and structures."

Supporting Diversity and Giving more Opportunities for Participation

We keep noticing the lack of diversity among ourselves: in the cultural sector, in academic circles and in the staff and representatives operating within EU institutions. There is a lack of diversity of backgrounds, of training, of incomes, and of much more. We need to be proactive and innovative about this without being patronising or multiplying superficial events that turn diversity into a self-congratulatory aspect.

- Ensure plurality of access and participation in European events and processes outside the traditional route of academic studies and professional careers.
- Assign a mentor to bring expertise and a fresh perspectives on local issues at the request of cultural organisations that need support on specific matters. As an example of this, "the Dispositif local d'accompagnement" (DLA) is a scheme put in place in France to help non-profit organisations to perform a self-assessment regarding their staff and their economic sustainability. This type of scheme could be experimented on further on a European scale.

- Create channels to find peers and develop forms of support or mentoring. The EU desks could work more on channelling initiatives and connecting organisations working on similar projects that could complement each other.

Conclusions

Cultural and creative spaces occupy a significant segment in the cultural ecosystem of cities around Europe. Being diverse in their genesis and forms, they have turned into laboratories of artistic experimentation and social innovation, proposing a collaborative approach to the organisation of new modes of working together. These spaces create a sense of collective creative purpose, function as collective intelligence laboratories, build communities of practice and provide numerous opportunities for interaction – attracting diverse audiences, while often contributing to wider social and civil goals in the neighbourhoods in which they operate.

The Covid-19 outbreak has brought cultural organisations and spaces into an unprecedented and unexpected disruptive process, forcing them to find alternatives for their existence and for maintaining contact with their audiences and communities. However, true to their own values and reasons for existence, they have demonstrated a great level of creativity and dedication to their communities and neighbourhoods in several ways: they have sought alternatives to their programming to continue engaging with their audiences; they have provided opportunities for connecting people-events in the digital ‘space’; they have explored ways to pay their staff and artists/collaborators engaged in running projects that have had to be cancelled and/or postponed; they have offered their spaces and energy for solidarity events; they have promoted health related messages (among others...). They are proof that, during this time of global crisis, art and culture is being provided for all – even if their own existence has been put at risk.

Most importantly, however, the health crisis has revealed long-term issues concerning the volatility and sustainability of the sector that, although raised by academics and practitioners, had long been invisible to policy-makers. An environment of

emergency short-term policy has been created.⁷ Its outcomes, however, are yet to be observed. The future of cultural spaces will definitely be different from now on. We need brave, creative and ambitious practitioners to continue re-imagining them and giving them meaning. We need more citizens to support them with their presence and engagement. We need more researchers as critical friends to observe the processes undertaken, document them and make this knowledge available for reflection both for practitioners and policymakers. We need more creative bureaucrats and policymakers to imagine the impossible and make it possible. We need more commons.

7 For more details on adopted measures, see Culture Action Europe & European Cultural Foundation. 2020. Covid-19, Solidarity and Emergency Response in Europe in Arts, Culture, Cultural Heritage and Creative Sectors. Available at: https://cultureactioneurope.org/files/2020/06/Covid_19_solidarity_paper_v03.pdf (accessed 11 September 2020).

Challenge 2: Co-creating Cultural Policies in Cities

Mateja Stanislava Rot, CEO and Founder City Says,
Urban Innovator and Peace Architect
Adrian Pleșca, Municipality of Chișinău,
Republic of Moldova
14 September 2020

Summary

Two teams reflected on the future of policy co-creation in the cultural space by answering sub-questions regarding: remuneration, overcoming silo approaches and ways in which to validate local solidarity initiatives. Both teams agreed with the unsuitability of financial remuneration when it came to policy co-creation and advocated the use of **in-kind remuneration** instead. The teams diverged in their choices of instruments to overcome silo approaches within bureaucratic systems and advocated either **mediation** or **translation**. Finally, the teams believed that **innovative participatory approaches** such as on-line co-working, developing current community infrastructure or generating tailor-made processes must be taken into consideration when drawing up cultural policies in post-Covid Europe.

Keywords

holistic, mediation, outreach, purpose & belonging, translation, tailor-made, trust, responsibility, ping-pong.

Introduction

The following policy report will attempt to provide objective and balanced insights into the results of the discussions of the second challenge during the work of the Digital Co-creation Lab. It will draw its analysis and conclusions from two of the submitted pro-

posals: those from the **Concordia team**¹ and the **Collaboration Magic team**². This introduction is followed by an overview of the answers that were provided to the challenge's sub-questions, followed by overall recommendations and conclusions.

In order to answer the challenge's main question of **how to create cultural policies in cities to foster cohesion and inclusion**, the participants answered the following sub-questions:

- ① Should remuneration (either financial or non-financial) be included in participatory processes?
- ② How can we overcome silo approaches in urban policy? Can cross-sectoral approaches, needs-based approaches, stronger mediation/facilitation work as solutions?
- ③ In what ways can local authorities recognise, validate and support local solidarity initiatives?

Analysis of the Proposals

Reflecting on the incentives to participate, the participants listed several key elements of co-creating cultural policies that must be respected, such as: “participation as a form of ownership over the projects and inclusive democratic decision-making”; “participation as a means of identifying local resources necessary for a policy's success”. Additionally, the participants saw fit to enumerate the current barriers to participation that must be addressed in order to enable truly participatory approaches. The barriers mentioned by both teams are: lack of energy & time (of participants); awareness of potential demotivation and burn-out; lack of knowledge & awareness of future participatory exercises and a “perceived lack of authority respect for individual cultural rights”.

After analysing the role and suitability of remuneration, the *Concordia team* concluded that financial remuneration is a problematic approach, because it “commercialises a social endeavour”, proves unsustainable and does not reflect a combination of engagement and purpose.

¹ Consisting of Reem Maghribi, Mariia Varnava, Adrian Pleşca, María Jesús Morillas and Lisanne Corijn. <https://www.spacesandcities.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Team-1-Challenge-2-Reem-Maghribi.pptx>.

² Consisting of Felicita Marcelli, Dries van der Velde, Michal Hladký, Ola Jakobson, Camilla Crosta and Zuzana Révészová. <https://www.spacesandcities.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Team-3-Zuzana-R%C3%A9v%C3%A9szov%C3%A1.pptx>.

The *Collaboration Magic team* also revealed sceptical views towards financial remuneration, mentioning that “we should find a different translation than money... money comes second”. This team also believes that financial remuneration will harm the “ping-pong methodology” of co-creating policies. They define this ping-pong methodology as an “ongoing bureaucratic process that bounces back and forth between levels and sectors to achieve cross-sectorial participation”.

Analysing the fitness of non-financial remuneration, both teams perceived it as a useful instrument for achieving greater results. “Identifying values, playing ping-pong and underlining mutual values for each of participants” is seen as an effective solution by the Collaboration Magic team.

The Concordia team mentions that a type of “in-kind contribution that directly support activities that enhance participation and inclusion are welcome”, adding that this kind of contributions is “more likely to promote a sense of purpose and belonging”.

These answers led us to a significant finding that is important to understand. The current common approach of civil society organisations (CSOs) and community organisations towards financial remuneration for co-creating cultural policies does not seem to fit any more. The organisations managed to adopt new financial models that rely on long-term partnerships, public trust and mutual benefits and they believe that being paid for co-creating cultural policies as a cultural activist would harm the underpinning structure rather than bringing additional benefits.

In terms of collaboration and co-creation, both teams concluded that the silo approaches must be overcome to achieve the effective co-creation of cultural policies. The Collaboration Magic team emphasised the role of ensuring translation between the authorities and participants. They defined translation as the efforts to “find an understanding between multiple stakeholders in order to act together”. They believe translation is important to avoid the risks of misunderstanding, to ensure that policy actions respond to the needs of a community. The team believes this approach will help to achieve trust, inclusion and mutual learning. They perceive translation “as a key word in the co-creation processes” and advocate for the adoption of the “ping-pong methodology” within the co-creation efforts.

On the other hand, the Concordia team believes that the process can also benefit from employing “a dedicated individual,

team or diverse task force that includes members of the different silos that would focus on facilitating inclusive community engagement”. The author also believes that institutionalising this form of cooperation would allow co-creating cultural policies to more inclusive and effective, as it would help to avoid the mistakes of past projects that did not make it onto the public agenda.

Reflecting on the last sub-question about participation in post-Covid Europe, the Concordia team emphasised the need to improve the current participatory approaches including by “developing the established community spaces as a bridging device” and “offering more holistic & inclusive activities by the existing traditional community services (libraries, theatres, gyms etc.)”. While discussing these issues, the team developed something of a cultural mantra, concluding that “infrastructure is no longer enough”, thereby drawing attention to the need to create tailored activities aiming towards inclusive community engagement at the local level.

Finally, they mentioned that innovative instruments fueling the “honest relations between CSOs/local authorities and communities” may enhance participation in the post-Covid period. These reflections led the team to suggest that organising authorities should take the following steps: “regularly organise events that bring people together as participants, not only observers”; “ensure that a community space exists & expand it when possible” and “adapt to virtual spaces to expand opportunities, particularly during times of essential isolation”.

On the other hand, the Collaboration Magic team considers that “local authorities, CSOs and communities must firstly map and identify the participants’ needs”. They also believe that “mapping could proceed from already existing networks, although the process must also include a series of co-creation labs with a broad representation of stakeholders” in order to avoid leaving out potential stakeholders and to reduce the risk of nepotism. Furthermore, they believe the local authorities must provide support to stakeholders in the following forms: “financial (when essential), already-available in-kind resources, competence support and free psychological support.” Last but not least, they believe that “facilitation by creating new forms of collaboration, visualising possibilities and fostering a new language” is crucial to the success of these efforts.

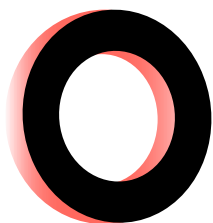
A common trend can be noticed between the two teams. Both of them believe the local authorities are not doing enough to attract stakeholders into an effective governance network. Hereby, I believe that the ineffective co-creation process proved an institution's limited openness to adopt network governance approaches, rather than proving its logistical inability to mobilise participation.

Additionally, two other teams that answered another challenge (not referred to earlier in this report) identified a clear demand for the development of new forms of being present together with others in a shared space, a space for rituals of collective intelligence and wisdom. They also advocate an increased emphasis on re-building trust and designing new types of social ecologies. The two teams drove the focus of the debate towards people and harnessing the power of community: inclusive community building through facilitation, mediation and bottom-up decision making.

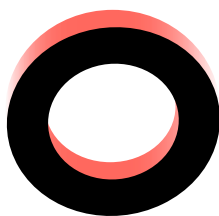
Proposals from both teams in Challenge 2 include novel collaborative co-creation processes that strive to empower communities (particularly underrepresented communities) and make sure their voices are heard. Building and facilitating a constructive dialogue between different levels and sectors has proven to be indispensable in bridging the local and international level of initiatives. Successful long-term community-based projects are to be organised and maintained by local residents in communication and negotiation with the local authorities and CSOs, and thus offer an example of how participation can shape and harness future cultural policies in cities.

Policy Recommendations

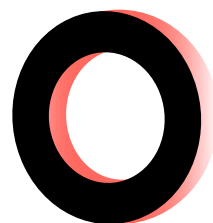
“Policy-making must evolve, the infrastructure is no longer enough” is a thought present in both teams' presentations that would easily make the spotlight of this challenges' works. Both teams agree that changes must be made in order to achieve effective, inclusive and holistic participation in cultural policies, especially in the light of the transformations brought about by Covid-19. Building upon the earlier analysis, the Concordia team came up with the following concrete proposals:



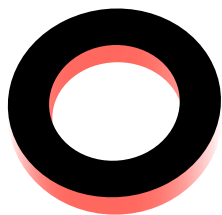
Ensure a community space exists – expand it when possible



Ensure a dedicated individual or team focuses on building inclusive community engagement



Organise events that bring people together as participants not only as observers

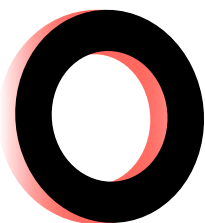


Ensure outreach is inclusive (inviting the unusual suspects)

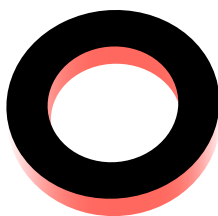


Make best use of virtual spaces to expand engagement, particularly during times of essential isolation

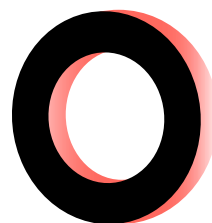
For their part, the Collaboration Magic team came up with the following proposals:



Map and identify the needs of local concern



Acknowledge the value of solidarity initiatives and support them in different ways



Apply facilitation, mediation & translation instruments

The two teams certainly based their proposals on the need to radically rethink frameworks, break from conventional forms and create meaningful spaces of encounter between the macro (local and EU) and the micro (individual and community) levels. The two teams presented a 'somewhat similar' set of keywords that highlight their proposals. In the case of the Concordia team, these terms are: **“holistic, mediation, outreach, purpose & belonging”**, whereas for the Collaboration Magic team, the terms are: **translation, tailor-made, trust, responsibility & ping-pong**.

One might notice the striking differences between two key terms that answer the main question – mediation vs translation. In this sense, the teams diverged. However, on various occasions within their presentations, the teams referred to either of the notions, leaving us with the conclusion that none of these instruments is to be avoided in order to achieve meaningful collaborative results.

Challenge 3: Building Spaces of Encounter Between Local and EU levels

Summary

The current policy report summarises the lessons learned from Challenge 3: *Building Spaces of Encounter Between Local and EU levels*, a series of proposals developed during the *Commons Sense: Let's Create a Bottom-Up European Democracy within the Cultural and Creative Spaces and Cities project*.

The proposals focus on how the “Homes of Commons” can become spaces of encounter between local and EU levels. Most of the proposals see themselves as connectors by creating: ① physical/hybrid/digital spaces of encounter; ② a zone of ‘translation’ where different ways of knowing and doing can enter into dialogue. They also emphasise the importance of creating space and time for embodied experiences, collective experimentation and real participatory processes with local communities to ensure real engagement.

Based on the proposals, there is a need to ensure the continuity and sustainability of Homes of Commons by involving existing local facilitators, offering reliable funding, interconnecting them as physical and hybrid spaces in a network and creating a direct dialogue with EU institutions.

Keywords

Empowerment, trust, continuity, commitment, change, presence, dialogue, connections, cooperation, network, green zone, ecosystem, hybrid platform, art, storytelling, sharing, negotiation, multiplicity.

Context and Issues

In the framework of the Cultural and Creative Spaces and Challenge 3: *Building Spaces of Encounter Between Local and EU Levels* presents the analysis of proposals and cluster recommendations from various teams that took part in the Co-creation Lab/Challenge 3: *Artcross, Glocal spaces, Team 2, Cooperative autonomies, The European Stargate Team, Team 7, Spiritual Commoning.*

The Co-creation Process

Building policy proposals based on participatory processes ensures not only that different actors' voices are heard, but also gives an insight into the resources, connections, existing structures and methodologies that can sustain the ideas.

The writers of this report had the opportunity to participate in the co-creation process, proposing and collaborating on ideas, discussing them with experts and presenting them to the rest of the participants. Regarding the implementation of a Co-creation Lab, the exploration of topics and the creation of teams was free and spontaneous (within the established frameworks), and left space for experimentation even though it was carried out in an online space. This offers a good practice on which to build in other similar processes.

The lab itself could have been better tailored as a two-phase event. After a first phase, overlapping topics that connected ideas could have been united to develop the proposals in more detail. This could also involve a deeper inquiry into the profile of each participant and an effort to connect them more effectively, along with their shared interests and complementary expertise. On the other hand, the heterogeneity of the proposals shows the potential held by these kinds of spaces of co-creation to design solutions.

Analysis of the Proposals

The seven different teams approached the questions based on their background and experiences and proposed different ideas and solutions. However, there are some key ideas that occurred in the majority of the proposals, as we will see below.

Bridge and dialogue

In order to empower citizens and invite them to engage with the EU institutions, **The European Stargate Team**¹ suggested that the Homes of Commons could act as a local gateway of ideas and initiatives. Interconnected Homes of Commons would then provide dedicated assistance and be able to connect best practices beyond borders.

Dialogue and commitment are thus the keywords to define the process. This will generate and support local voices that EU institutions must incorporate. Such a platform will define citizens as prominent actors in societies and city-making. Homes of Commons should also participate in boosting activism and advocacy in local communities. As a European Stargate, this gateway would connect citizens and resources.

Team 7² offers another point of view in order to bridge the gap between EU institutions and local organisations or stakeholders. In defining zones, they identify the EU functioning in a blue zone (rigid) and the local initiatives in a yellow zone (agile). The green zone of Homes of Commons must therefore act as a connector. This green zone also represents the power to make connections, creative dialogues and to be present by exploring movement, voice work and storytelling.

This green zone is a strategy, a role and a practice. It can be a part of people's jobs, activities and practices. It is all about dialogue and inclusive negotiation, and its most important limits

¹ Consisting of Bart Grugeon, Ilie Rădoi, Kathrine Richter and Asli Samadova. https://www.spacesandcities.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Challenge-3_group13-Kathrine-Richter.pptx.

² Consisting of Paula Moore, Katarina Scott, Marije Nie and Mateja Stanislava Rot.



Source: Output of the "Spiritual Commonsing Team"

are trust and time. Risks and failures are a legitimate part of development.

Arts and embodied practices are welcome in the green zone, considered as a piece of social architecture. This neutral space encourages and enables meetings with citizens and local authorities. It is a place to explore, play and experiment together. Everyone has the right to decline or say no.

The **Spiritual Commonsing**³ team proposes a more intimate, closer relationship with one another and with the public in co-creating new experiences and prototypes for Spaces of Encounter. These are European labs and spaces for citizens to discover how to engage more fully, to embody their ideas and dreams, to be inspired to listen, learn, facilitate and host for themselves. Their central idea is to rethink the EU as a more nurturing ecosystem; like a tree, with its needs, dependents and opportunities (see the illustration above).

Networking and Co-creation

Team 2⁴ proposes the creation of a European platform of facilitators. The core idea of this proposal is recognising that there are a number of similar local facilitators that function as local Homes of Commons (for example, local urban labs, colab quarter,

3 Consisting of Michael Dobbie, Sonya Armaghanyan, Evan Reinhold, Marije Nie and Mateja Stanislava Rot.

4 Consisting of Marcela Arreaga, Djamila Boulil, Diana Filimon, Carlotta Scioldo and Emmanuel Pidoux. <https://www.spacesandcities.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Challenge-3-TEAM-2.pptx-Emmanuel-Pidoux.pdf>.

citizens lab, Coboilab, Forum Apulum). They all give space to local initiatives and have a social impact. However, they are not visible enough to each other and to the EU institutions. Therefore, the platform's aim is to connect local facilitators around the EU and animate 'local ecosystems' composed of cultural managers, facilitators, policy-makers, change-makers, NGO representatives, artists, entrepreneurs and, of course, citizens.

In this model, the Homes of Commons are not only providers but partners, co-creators and connectors of ideas and people. The platform works through decentralised decision-making processes and stimulates its members to create shared challenges to be solved locally in a non-competitive way.

The **Cooperative Autonomies**⁵ team's proposal focuses on the 'peripheral landscapes' of the EU, acknowledging their limited access to EU-funded cultural programmes and the controversial impact of those projects that do not ensure a permanent presence on these territories. Peripheral means marginalised locations with limited access – these can be the outskirts of a city or a rural area.

The Homes of Commons can work as effective interfaces between the different logics of action represented by political, administrative and market-driven actors. According to a shared methodology and operative view, local actors investigate the problems related to the chosen peripheral areas and develop solutions. The proposal emphasises the importance of recognising the local knowledge and care practices that stem from an 'ecology of ways of knowing'. These are sometimes in conflict with the way in which European institutions work and the processes of guaranteeing the conditions for artists and cultural workers to stay for longer periods in the connected place. Also, they propose the use of participatory methodologies, so the relationship with people can evolve and become more intense.

5 Consisting of Daniele Pallotta, Giorgio Bacchiega, José Miguel Pereira, Kittí Baracsi and Gaia Del Giudice. https://www.spacesandcities.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Challenge-3_Cooperative-Autonomies_-Jos%C3%A9-Pereira.pptx.

Synergies Between Physical and Virtual Spaces

The local context for every city or country is obviously unique. The **Artcross**⁶ team's proposal focuses on flexible dialogue. Processes are often time-consuming and information regarding funding or opportunities is not always easily accessible to communities. Homes of Commons shall then foster a form of bottom-up communication. It could be the place for project management and policy regulation to help all those involved in this complex ecosystem. It could consist of a new intermediary hybrid platform, offering solutions and opportunities – not only an online database but a real crossroads that can support co-creation labs, artists, locals and EU to connect and allow voices to be heard.

This platform is not only oriented towards connecting the dots between locals and the EU but also between EU countries, locals and artists through a network of Homes of Commons in Europe: one big art community.

The **Glocal Spaces**⁷ team also imagines a platform, a hybrid (on- and offline) one that identifies the European commons through creative practices and stories. This platform is a space of encounters that brings back the importance of being part of public space and explores synergies between physical and virtual spaces. They emphasise the importance of being present, thus, Homes of Commons should collaborate with and support peer groups across local, regional, national and international levels.

They propose to define a network of partners that includes urban labs and umbrella organisations.

The platform connects local with global, creating intertwining hybrid spaces. They work with the concept of polyphonic space, emphasising the multifaceted character and the multiplicity of stories and practices. Therefore, they imagine a platform with clear and broadly communicated content in accessible language and format, providing spaces for discovery, digging into European history and culture, and finding unexpected connections.

6 Consisting of Ketevan Paitchadze, Mika Tbileli and Nicoloz Tbileli.

<https://www.spacesandcities.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Challenge-1-3-munduscorpus.pptx>.

7 Consisting of Jeroen Barendse, Viola Bernacchi, Mette Slot Johnsen, Cecilia Iaconelli, Marije Nie and Zane Estere. Gruntmane <https://www.spacesandcities.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Challenge-3-Viola-Bernacchi.pptx>.

Policy Recommendations

We offer a few recommendations to address the issue of building spaces of encounter between EU institutions and the local level.

To Adopt a Social Design Approach

Many EU projects lack true interaction at a local, grassroots level. They often remain unknown and sometimes inaccessible to regular citizens. Homes of Commons could represent *physical havens for creatives, artists, stakeholders and citizens*. This would help to engage citizens to participate in the cultural life (see the recent Rome Charter 2020 for details⁸) as any other specific field and issue.

In order to make EU institutions more accessible, these Homes of Commons could welcome EU representatives on a regular basis. It would appear then like a Member of the European Parliament's Committee room.

More than spaces, we could imagine new threads through social architecture. A constellation of people and stakeholders, professionals, entrepreneurs who would constitute as many bridges as possible, adopting a citizen-centred approach.

This architecture can also help to involve local communities in decision-making processes that are keen to hear suggestions, feedback, comments or ideas from citizens to build a more participatory Europe.

To Spark a Dynamic of Commitment

Most people in Europe have no sense of the direct benefit and impact of the EU on local communities. Sometimes we can observe a little understanding of the EU, its institutions, its visions and values. The EU must be made more accessible to citizens – not only through applications or programmes – but also through concrete activities and results and direct invitations to engage. It is all a matter of (individual and collective) *commitment*.

Both being present and creating spaces of physical encounter are key points, as well as the accessibility of hybrid initiatives. In these terms, the creativity of the sector offers infinite possibilities to work on this engagement. Besides the forms and

8 <https://www.2020romecharter.org/>

spaces of communication, the content should be relevant and inclusive, a goal which can be achieved by building on local knowledge and by actively involving the knowledge of marginalised communities.

All over Europe, a majority of citizens – but also cultural operators or decision-makers – do not feel so deeply concerned about belonging to Europe. Institutions ranging from local to international are often seen as remote from the field and practical day-to-day realities of life. People must have a chance to get to grips with European realities and then become advocates for Europe. *Promote European value-based community organising* regardless of local/regional/national context could be useful. Scouting local facilitators should be in charge of animating, accompanying, lighting the fuse of engagement in local ecosystems and connecting them with broader environments.

To Reapply and Reallocate Opportunities and Resources

Among partners, structures, institutions and NGOs, we can see a lack of unity, cohesion and solidarity. Also, there is often a dispersal of information (from the foundations upwards but also from the top down). We need more collaboration to boost the required transition towards a *circular economy with a re-application of resources*.

One of the most important resources, apart from information, are human resources. Through peer-to-peer learning and intermediary training, Homes of Commons can be a hub for improvement and development of initiatives. This space should consist of sharing stories, skills and experiences to create a common narrative for Europe.

The proclamation of 9 May as European Day would be a significant shift towards a more citizen-centred union, instead of the more institutionally-minded Europe Day.

To Foster Cooperation and Sharing

Of course, action is needed to foster and create interconnections. *A sense and process of cooperation*, more than collaboration, should occupy a key place. And, of course, a sense of sharing.

One method could consist of the organisation of frequent meetings (digitally or on-site) for every local stakeholder to present themselves and their local lab and situation. Also, it

is an opportunity to learn through digital (online and mobile learning, Mooc) and on-site (peer-to-peer, social learning, learning by doing), to share an ever-evolving toolbox (methods of design thinking, group facilitation techniques, design of prototypes, art of hosting approach, gamification, etc.), exchange stories, experience feedback, good practices and finally, to create Homes of Commons as a community of practice.

To Rethink Funding Policies

When it comes to European grants and funding, it would be relevant to make parts of the grant system agile for rapid change by being more adaptive and responsive.

EU institutions could create smaller funds and ‘cascade’ funding to interlink the green (intermediary zone) and yellow zones (EU institutions). The Homes of Commons as the green zone could then focus on connecting to other initiatives or projects. It must be a space to share challenges, projects and solutions with a *funding policy based on the process* more than on the outputs. It should be a space where experiments and prototypes are funded, where specific budget lines can be available for grassroots projects, where cross-financing for local initiatives is not competitive.

There is a strong need to ensure financial continuity, a state which can be achieved by ensuring the income of cultural practitioners who engage in long-term processes.

Policy Co-creation Event Ghent

**Common Ground:
Building a Foundation
for Homes of Commons
28–29 October 2020**

1 December 2020
Policy Report

Reporters:
Susana Rocha, Camilla Crosta,
Ana Sofía Acosta Alvarado



Introduction

This policy report aims to summarise the co-creation process organised by Timelab, Ghent, within the framework of the Cultural and Creative Spaces and Cities (CCSC) project. It analyses the participants' main contributions and draws policy recommendations that can help the CCSC research team to formulate a comprehensive proposition for the "Homes of Commons".

Over the course of two days, a policy co-creation event took place in a hybrid form – face-to-face at Timelab in Ghent and in digital form through the Hopin platform. The event brought together an array of experts, artists and activists of different nationalities in order to generate a collective brainstorming process that could set the foundation for a subsequent policy design process.

The concept of Homes of Commons was born from the CCSC Programme that started to take form in the June 2020 policy co-creation event "Commons Sense: Let's Create a Bottom-Up European Democracy within the Cultural and Creative Spaces and Cities project". Broadly speaking, Homes of Commons are thought of as spaces of encounter between local level commons initiatives and EU examples.

The programme involved two days of conference and collective work in small groups that enabled discussion, the exchange of ideas and the crafting of proposals that would become part of a subsequent policy proposal for Homes of Commons.

The first day of work was based on the methodology of the School of Commons developed by Timelab. The second day of work focused on constructing Homes of Commons as hybrid places of encounter and the participants were encouraged to dive into the inter-organisational and municipal level by tackling three challenges: ① Hybrid spaces for encounter; ② Peer learning ecosystem and grassroots archives; and ③ New institutions – tackling the silos approach of local administrations.

Day 1 – Organisational level of Homes of Commons

The first day of the Co-creation Lab started with a welcome and an introduction from the organisers. It was followed by an explanation of the School of Commons concept by Timelab and the seven patterns methodology that framed the co-creation session. The seven patterns of the School of Commons used in the session were *dream, identity, practice, organise, resources, impact and context*. The focus of the first day was to identify the characteristics of Homes of Commons from an organisational level.

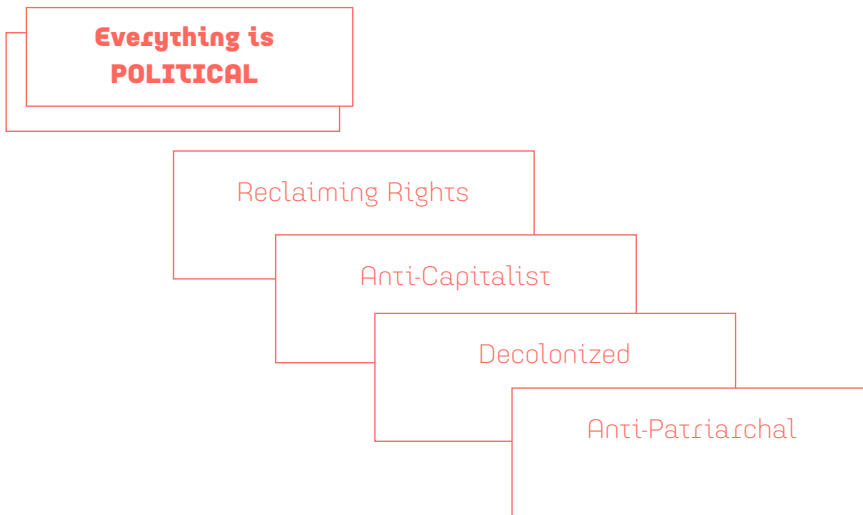
In the afternoon, the online participants gathered to discuss two of the patterns around which they had decided to develop the prototype. In the space, the physical event allowed for a more flexible (self) organisation of the group of eight participants. After they had established a connection, they decided to stay together in one group and use the afternoon to develop a prototype using three patterns.

The co-creation sessions (one on the first day and one on the second day) were combined with presentations from the organisers, the Urban Labs from the CCSC project and guest speakers. The time allotted for co-creating was sometimes limited, especially during the group sessions around the challenges on the second day.

Over the two days, the participants had the opportunity to join different co-creation groups and challenges. Although listening to the work of Urban Labs and the speakers was vital in developing a fuller understanding of the broader context of the project, it also left limited space and opportunities to go deeper into the co-creation process.

The School of Commons: Patterns and the need for a political stance

The School of Commons defines itself as a modular approach for a project development process based on a protocol of patterns. It stresses the need for a protocol for a decentralised and resilient development for sharing practical research and knowledge about commons guided by seven insights implemented through



practical research. At the same time, it arranges the tools and practices which are encountered in different commons experiences in their pattern approach.

The School of Commons offers a methodology based on a deep analysis of different commons practices to exchange knowledge and expertise about commoning and to start the transition to make an organisation, project or process more commons-based.

“The patterns are different themes defined to dive into the commons. Each pattern includes different tools so theories can transform easily into action. Different tools can suit a pattern, as for now, at least one tool is added per pattern. In the future, different tools will be added.”¹ Moreover, “the patterns focus on the key elements of changes transforming our city into enabling platforms for a sustainable, social, collaborative and circular ecosystem.”²

Accordingly, the first day of the Co-Creation Lab was focused on the organisational level of Homes of Commons and it presented the participants with the challenge of defining the characteristics of Homes of Commons that could be drawn with the pattern methodology. We acknowledge that the patterns themselves are a useful tool for grounding organisations, but we also acknowledge that they lack political content. The commons

1 <https://schoolofcommons.be/patterns/>

2 <https://schoolofcommons.be/school/>

are deeply political as they are born in opposition to enclosure movements; therefore they take a defensive stance or, since they emerge as movements aiming to obtain new rights, they have to be creative and crafty. With this perspective in mind, the Homes of Commons cannot be shaped as if they will find fertile soil in every city and every administration. They have to be conceived with the aim of reclaiming rights and with a path marked by the fight for decolonisation and against the patriarchal and capitalist system in which we live.

Europe is not homogeneous and people are aware of this fact, particularly those in the middle and lowest quintiles³ who are first-hand witnesses of the precarisation and pauperisation of their living conditions. Our current context and the accumulation of current and past crises are widening inequalities in the region. As a case in point, the current Covid-19 crisis has revealed the problem of the digital divide in Europe and has shed more light on the issue of decent housing. Therefore, the patterns cannot be innocuous; they cannot limit their organisational perspective as if every participant comes from the same background and the same material conditions. The methodology of the patterns has to be impregnated with the lessons learned from social movements, as commons are born as bottom up initiatives that try to provide answers to the many needs of society, with a particular focus on addressing the needs of those more deprived by society itself.

During the various points of discussion, some political guidelines emerged that the participants held dear, such as decolonisation, the process of depatriarchalisation and anti-capitalist initiatives. When we aim for diversity, we should start a process of questioning our privileges and securing the potential agency of those who are less privileged. It is, therefore, no surprise that these voices emerge from the peripheries of Europe and from marginalised groups.

³ One way of measuring income inequality is to rank all households by income, from lowest to highest, and then to divide all households into five groups with equal numbers of people, known as “quintiles”. This calculation allows for the measurement of the distribution of income among the five groups compared to the total. [Taken from: <https://courses.lumenlearning.com/suny-microeconomics/chapter/income-inequality-measurement-and-causes/#:~:text=One%20common%20way%20of%20measuring,groups%20compared%20to%20the%20total>].

Patterns *dream*⁴/*practice*⁵ + *organise*⁶

In the prototyping process around the patterns of *dream/practice* and *organise*, the following points emerged:

- The “immaterial elements” of dreaming and values are essential in the development of Homes of Commons. Collective dreaming is an act of care towards a place and community. Shared values are tools for developing horizontal organisations, helping the “organisation team” to choose collaboration over profit and competition. However, how can these “immaterial” elements and practices be fully integrated and accepted within policy-making processes?
- Another relevant issue is the difficulty of inclusion: to what extent is it possible to have inclusion? There is always a level of failure within inclusive practices.
- The importance that has been given to the practice of collective dreaming and values sharing is also a sign of the need to continue promoting practices, spaces and policies that support and facilitate other societal forms, which are based on dreams, values and relationships.

Reflections and recommendations

The prototyping sessions around *dream/practice* and *organise* provided the opportunity to think about forms of organisations based on shared identities, values, dreams and care, which can promote collaboration rather than competitiveness. The prototyping discussion around the pattern *dream* looked at the meaning of collective dreaming and how these dreams can be translated into impactful actions or possible futures. Collective dreaming can be unifying drivers for groups to change their realities positively and gradually. Art projects, theatre workshops and other tools, such as placemaking, have been able to instigate dreaming processes at many different levels. However, when communication with administrations is challenging and there is a lack of resources, spaces, understanding and investment from politicians, the dreams can struggle to become action and remain as frustrations.

In the discussion around the *organise* pattern, the group looked into the term ‘horizontal’ and examined some tools

4 <https://vimeo.com/471391062>

5 <https://vimeo.com/471391133>

6 <https://vimeo.com/471391296>

which can promote horizontal collaboration. Developing organisations on the basis of values, dividing work equally according to tasks rather than functions, and adopting open procedures and frameworks for collaboration are some of the tools that can help to identify horizontal collaboration. In the following reflections some of the issues of the patterns are addressed:

Collective dreaming as an act of care

The group considered the process of collective dreaming and dreaming as an act of care. With care, the group aimed to create opportunities for marginalised groups and communities to engage in a collective process of future thinking (dreams) and translate them into the spaces where decisions are made. Dreaming is a matter of social care, social value and social space.

During the conversation, the need to start thinking small emerged, as did the importance of identifying an “object of care” (a building, space) and creating a small “strategy of care” to bring citizens, politicians and institutions on board and make them dream collectively. This strategy could be an opportunity to recreate and rethink the human-physical infrastructure of the community, which is understood not only as the physical space of the community but also as the human relations that define that community. Of importance here is the need to recognise the importance of care and also to consider the possibility of a possible “cultural care officer” role that promotes cultural and social care within spaces and communities.

It was clear from the discussion that there are numerous tools and practices for dreaming, but that it is essential to identify ways of creating more flexible spaces for dreaming and diverting resources (both material and immaterial) and political will in taking these dreams forward. Developing “small strategies of care” will help to overcome some of the difficulties of translating dreams into actions. It is also necessary to rethink the value and the role of care in the process of policy-making.

Micro-macro level

In order to make these forms of organisations sustainable, the socio-political and economic context in which these organisations operate also has to change. Translating these forms of organising from the micro-level (a small village, project or organisation) to the macro-level (more significant organisations,

networks and cities) was recognised as a challenge in both discussion groups. The groups considered the micro-level to be a more comfortable environment in which values and dreams can flourish. The smaller dimensions of the micro-level can facilitate conversations, collaborations and actions and also the development of a more robust interpersonal network. For the group, these elements were seen as relevant to creating spaces and opportunities for collective dreaming. There is a need for a system that favours care, solidarity and social imagination. In this sense, the horizontal and value-based organisational level can only be fully realised if the inter-organisational level also changes. Homes of Commons will have to understand how to operate and relate to this change.

Failure of participation and a multi-layered horizontality

The ideas of participation and inclusion were also relevant to the prototyping sessions. A recommendation was made to re-think the idea of participation and to accept its “failure”. One solution could be to develop a multi-layered horizontality in which horizontal approaches can be applied to all the levels of the organisation, from the governance to projects and budget management, creating a layered participatory environment.

Finally, it could be interesting for Homes of Commons to reconfigure some of the language and the practices adopted in the organisation. During the prototyping session, attention was paid to the terms of failing and un-learning. These words do not have a positive connotation within neoliberal and capitalist discourse. Herein lies the potential to slightly subvert systems, adopting alternative languages and practices.

Pattern *resource* (online session)⁷

The pattern *resource* entails the discussion of ownership and the production of value that is not measured according to the capitalistic standards. Commons initiatives have at their disposal different resources, both material and immaterial, that can be made available for the community of reference and for society at large. It is a challenge for the communities to recognise their resources, especially immaterial ones, and to have the opportunity to share them and mutualise them. A main concern that

⁷ <https://vimeo.com/471391521>

emerged from this discussion was the importance of becoming more politicised. The patterns as presented do not seem to take into consideration the political discussions and tensions that emerged from efforts of commoning with different stakeholders.

The moderator, Ella, proposed a tool to put into practice in our discussion. She proposed opening the discussion by addressing issues that are often considered taboo in the milieu of activism, associations and grassroots initiatives, within the spaces and collectives and in their relationship with funding institutions, public administrations and the government. Some of the identified taboo topics were: ① the dynamics of volunteering that, due to the lack of resources, end up reproducing practices of self-exploitation and/or of unpaid labour, an effect which is detrimental to an organisation because it can drive the community to exhaustion or conflict; ② Abuse of law and by-laws, as many commons experiences are born in the thresholds of “alegality” and illegality; they make use of a creative use of the law to put forward their claims. This is not an easy task as they are often harassed by the holders of the law and institutionalised violence and their law enforcement mechanisms; ③ Not criticising funding institutions; many organisations do not feel free to criticise the institutions that fund them because they fear retribution either in the form of funding cuts or in bureaucratic reprisals. But this fear of speaking out gets in the way of creating an honest channel of communication that can allow feedback to travel in both ways and thus hinder growth.

In order to answer these three points, we need more access to resources. This implies more allocation of funding for the arts and culture at a European level and a simplification of the procedures to access grants (the previous Co-creation Lab had already tackled the issue of barriers that small and informal institutions face when trying to access to EU funding) and to account for the spending of these funds.

Secondly, commons experiences need support from the EU against the abuses that they might face related to their context, and an EU recognition mechanism is, therefore, key for the sound development of their activities. Thirdly, it is paramount to respect the autonomy of the commons experiences; being a grant holder should not thwart the criticism they address to the establishment. As a result, policy suggestions should be crafted holding these three principles in mind: Funding, Rec-

ognition and Autonomy. The EU and the Homes of Commons have to be allies to the commons experiences at the different local levels.

Pattern resource (physical session)

Knowledge was acknowledged as a valuable resource, and also the need to find more and new ways of making knowledge more open and shared (also at an internal level, within teams and groups). The group focused on the value of sharing knowledge resources, as well as the co-ownership inside the organisations, and how it can influence the members' behaviour and the effectiveness of each commons initiative.

The criteria used and defined to value each resource also came into the discussion, as well as alternative ways of classifying the resources by a community or group. The Homes of Commons should provide spaces in which to reflect and define the criteria on how to collectively value a resource – according to the specific needs of that group and the community in which it is created. Taking into account the value of sustainability, the driver – also revealed by the pattern – is a search for abundance instead of an assumption of scarcity; the possibility of creating new resources through relationships and the sharing of material and immaterial resources.

As a way of improving resources through relationships, suggestions included informal schools, where members of the community, for example the elderly, could have a space in which to teach and share their skills, or a connection to people or entities that work on collecting ways of doing, crafts, professions or knowledge in danger of extinction.

A place – the need for a physical infrastructure – is also important. Land and a strong network of organisations supporting organisations and people to find space is also helpful. A place where people are welcome and are able to work and materialise ideas, a physical structure that can make it easier to facilitate discussions, share and gain tools.

In terms of occupying spaces and dividing infrastructure resources, the importance of defining the criteria to form a community gathered around a place emerged as a top priority. The notion of value needs to be deepened and extended – people who contribute with great ideas but have no money to pay rent should still be welcome in the space. The group argues that these

criteria can be defined collectively and can be deeply linked to the content and vision of each collective or organisation.

The questions of property and the alternative creation of platforms for mapping and sharing resources were also defended as a priority for places like Homes of Commons. There is a need to create systems to map and make visible all of the available resources, as well platforms to make them available or accessible.

Pattern context⁸

In a broad sense the pattern *context* is presented with the premise that we are inserted in a world of predefined perspectives, but we are invited to recognise that there is a plurality of viewpoints that need to be included in every discussion, particularly when shocks can shift our course of action and train of thought. In a commons-based organisation, this is particularly important, because we try to aim at organising in the most horizontal way possible in order to include every voice in the conversation.

Adaptation is an important value promoted by the pattern *context* and in our current context of crises it has become more necessary to be aware of the flexibility that our organisations must have in order to respond to the needs and challenges that we face. We currently live in a context that is the result of the articulation of many crises – the Covid-19 crisis being the scariest of them all.

However, an awareness of the context does not necessarily entail being political, yet every crisis we currently face is political. Therefore, the pattern *context* should draw from the different social struggles in Europe in order to propose solutions to sensitive issues of society. Following the tool “Taboo” proposed in the discussion of the pattern *resource*, we tried to identify the taboo subject matters that can relate to the pattern *context*.

The two elements that emerged from this discussion were:

① The acknowledgement of the large and increasing inequalities in Europe. As we mentioned before, Europe is not homogeneous either in terms of wealth distribution or in terms of access to resources or in respect of fundamental rights. This discussion

⁸ <https://vimeo.com/471390972>

can be increasingly worrisome if we address the “peripheries”⁹ or the “south” of Europe.

② Commons experiences identify the strategic importance of being recognised by the EU in order to gain legitimisation before their local level and country level administrations and thus gain protection from the EU in the case of controversies with the local authorities.

We should recall at this point that those commons initiatives emerge from social movements and political struggles and, for that reason, can face violent opposition from traditional institutions. One of the most common risks these experiences face is the risk of eviction from a site which they might have occupied due to the space being abandoned, underused or neglected.

9 A periphery is a line that forms the boundary of an area. Usually one institutes a boundary because there are differences between two or more areas. Geographically, the European periphery is comprised of those countries on the edge of the European Union [available at: <https://www.ineteconomics.org/uploads/papers/ConventionsandEuropeanPeriphery.pdf>].

Key words inspired by the patterns

Dream/Objectives

- Dreaming is the function and the form
- Collective dreaming as an act of care
- Cultural care officer?
- Social imagination
- Translations or inclusion
- Care (anti-capitalist, decolonised and anti-patriarchal)
- Micro-macro level

Organise

- Micro-macro level
- Embed un-learning exercises
- Values – rather than profit, competition
- A multi-layered horizontality for better inclusion
- A complete integration of horizontal methodologies
- A new shared identity
- Shared governance
- Agency (shared ownership)
- Techniques to overcome power relations
- Diverse groups of people (responding to the tendency for one particular group to become dominant/close the project for others to join)
- Making sure there are enough new people: fluidity
- "Failing" as a recognised practice
- Sharing values

Resource

- Creating value outside
- Monetary value
- Mutualisation of spaces and means of production
- Ownership
- Funding
- Autonomy
- Social protection
- Pooling – sharing: material and immaterial
- Make resources visible, available and accessible
- Collectively defined criteria to value resources
- Maintaining resources
- Rights of resources to remain unused and rest

Context

- Covid-19
- Crisis
- Shocks and shifts
- Adaptation
- Flexibility
- Experimentation
- Increasing precarity
- Privilege awareness
- Context awareness

Day 2 – Inter-organisational Level of the Homes of Commons

The second day of the Co-Creation Lab presented a similar structure to the previous day. The morning began with an introduction from the Timelab team, who summarised the prototyping session around the patterns. This was followed by a conversation with the seven Urban Labs of the CCSC project around the possibility of becoming Homes of Commons. The afternoon was dedicated to an online co-creation session around the three set challenges. The sessions were divided into two parts: presentations from guest speakers and co-creation through Miro online whiteboards. In accordance with the Covid-19 measures announced by the Belgian government, the physical part of the event was merged into the online format on the second day.

Policy recommendations

Area of Interest #1: Hybrid Spaces for Encounter

Considerations

The speakers' presentations were inspiring and helpful in understanding opportunities to manage and work with spaces, and in understanding spaces and resource flexibility. However, it is necessary to make some initial considerations for Challenge 1, Hybrid Spaces for Encounter:

- For the reflections and recommendations for challenge no. 1, the speakers' presentations will be included.
- One of the main issues was the lack of time to ask questions of the speakers and to connect the presentations with the co-creation process.
- The time for the co-creation process felt limited – some technical issues made the prompt participation of the contributors difficult. The Miro board worked very well, as it was clear and well prepared. However, there was not enough time to expand on the discussions and the context around each point on the Miro board.

- Three different groups participated within the same challenge, and the reporter only took part in the discussion of Group 2. The reflections concerning Group 1 and Group 3 will analyse only their final board, whilst Group 2 will be able to integrate conversations, concepts and the final board.

The challenge

Challenge 1 set out to imagine how Homes of Commons could become “Hybrid Spaces for Encounter”. In particular, the area tried to develop different tools for the communities in order to:

- Design and manage commons in open and horizontal ways
- Work with (local) institutions to allocate a part of the municipal asset – for example, disused buildings – to cultural workers or gig and freelance workers for free or with controlled rents
- Make ‘creative use of law’, i.e. elaborate tools allowing the legal recognition of commons as informal institutions.

The first part of the session with the guest speakers’ presentations showed some approaches in managing and using common spaces with examples from Helsinki, Belgrade and Timișoara. The examples brought ideas and raised issues on how to manage resources in a flexible way or how to make spaces and resources truly “commons”. The presentations focused more on physical spaces and resources; however, it would have been interesting to also start thinking about the digital as a resource. How can these “commons-based” ways of organising be applied to the digital space? What are the examples of self-organising the digital space (what is the digital space of the Homes of Commons?)?

The presentations also included the example of a participatory tool, the *Decidim* software program,¹⁰ which has been adopted by many municipalities and which encourages citizens to participate in local political life. How can this kind of software be used in the Homes of Commons? What should be taken into consideration when adopting these tools? How can we overcome the digital divide by providing people with digital rights to access these tools?

Priorities for the Homes of Commons (the co-creation process)

In order to facilitate the co-creation process, the organisers prepared a **Miro board**, with a set of instructions. In each chal-

¹⁰ <https://decidim.org/>

lence, the groups worked together to identify the *top priorities* for Homes of Commons. The process started with a brief analysis of *exemplary practices, underrepresented ideas, desire & utopias* and finished with the choice of the three top priorities. The final section of the board was the *recycle bin*, an area where ideas and questions could be kept in mind and discussed when more time is available. The detailed outcomes of the boards can be found in Annex B.

Reflections and recommendations

A summary of the topics/issues to take into consideration in the development of Homes of Commons.

● **Digital means: democratisation + accessibility**

For the development of Homes of Commons, it is crucial to rethink the digital means and the digital infrastructures; who accesses them and who owns them. For Group 2, it was vital to rethink the process of democratisation of digital platforms and to create “**servers of commons**”. These servers will be an integral part of Homes of Commons and should be considered as a public service. They can challenge the ownership of the digital means, thereby implementing and creating more commons-based digital infrastructures. The servers can also facilitate the redistribution of resources. For Group 1, “open resource knowledge and knowledge production and sharing” are priorities for Homes of Commons and it is vital to understand how the digital means can be used to achieve these aims.

Some digital tools in exemplary practices are listed below:

- ① Digital place-making, intended as “the augmentation of physical places with location-specific digital services, products or experiences to create more attractive destinations for all”.¹¹ Digital place-making can be an opportunity to create better relationships with people and the places they inhabit.
- ② “Open Calendar” (Groups 2 and 3), which allows spaces and resources to be open and available to everyone.
- ③ Software co-created by organisations and administrators (Group 3). There was no reference here to any specific software, but the idea of a co-created software could challenge the ownership of the digital infrastructure and favour communication between groups of citizens and administrators.

11 <https://calvium.com/resources/digital-placemaking/>

Questions that needed more time (from the recycle bin):

- How do we reach those who are differently illiterate?
- How do we overcome the digital divide?
- How do we address inequalities and cultural differences/othering under the lack of proximity in connectivity?

The issue of the digital divide, the lack of access to modern information and communications technology, can hinder the participation processes of Homes of Commons. Access to digital means was a relevant topic that emerged both during the co-creation processes and the Urban Labs' presentations.

In conclusion, in order to make the Homes of Commons hybrid spaces for encounters it is essential to develop strategies of organising, managing and providing access to digital spaces in addition to providing access to physical spaces. The “servers of commons” can establish a different relationship between citizens and organisations and institutions, offering greater ownership of data and resources. In order to establish this relationship, it is also recommended to expand the issue of the digital gap in other co-creation processes, projects and research. Digital means could help manage the commons in a more inclusive and horizontal way, but it is essential to identify the role of the Homes of Commons in the process of reducing the digital gap.

● **Redefinition of the term ‘support’**

The need to redefine the concept and the modalities of **support** in its financial, legal and community terms also emerged. The sustainability (or viability) of commons-based cultural projects and organisations is connected to the process of renovating public institutions. In particular, this renovation should include the ways in which funds are structured and managed (Group 2) (particularly at the EU level), as well as how this can create opportunities and spaces that allow other forms of support such as legal advice (Group 1), knowledge exchange (Group 1) or connecting actors interested in collaborations and cooperation (Group 3). There is also a need to create a form of peer-learning (peer support) in facilitating and improving communication with administrations.

Some tools/interesting practices that were listed and which could inspire the process of redefinition include:

- ① The idea of a “gift economy” in which it is possible to offer services and goods to other members of the community without the expectation of monetary reward (Group 1).

- ② Free rent for some organisations within their first five years of operation (Group 3). This has been included as a good practice, although the possibility of free rent given by administrations or public institutions to cultural and community organisations is a tool that can help in the process of redefining the term 'support'. In addition, advocating and asking for incentives for property management and reuse that remain valid even under local political changes could be key to the survival of many spaces.
- ③ Informal networks of support. Examining how villages and small communities come together and join forces and resources (Group 1).

Questions that needed more time (from the recycle bin):

- Property issues + rent stabilised leases.
- Universal Basic Income (UBI): Although UBI was included in the desire and utopias section, it can redefine alternative paths for support and income.

● **The civic sphere and collective decision-making**

The two last aspects that emerged in the Co-Creation Lab are those of the **political and civic nature** of Homes of Commons and the importance of collective decision-making.

Group 2 identified “assemblies” (the reference models here are the popular and citizens’ assemblies in South America) and collective governance as priorities for Homes of Commons. The priority is placed on supporting the practice of communities and groups of citizens coming together daily and weekly to discuss political matters. These groups are also aware of their political and civic role. The second priority looks at systems that can promote a “third approach” to the state-market dichotomy in terms of governance.

Group 1 also included and referred to examples of governance and some examples of small projects and actions “realised by citizens as a response to the inequities, discrepancies, absurdities and abuse of historical laws/bye-laws, demands, constitutions and commands of governments”.¹² It is this civic role of the community and individuals that it is crucial to promote, support and advocate for.

Some tools/interesting practices that were listed and that could serve to inspire include:

¹² <http://www.portlandgreen.com/PGArt/sad/>

- Assembly as a tool to develop collective decision-making, direct democracy and participation in political matters.
- Art projects that promote civil “disobedience” or reconsider the civic role of citizens and spaces.
Questions that needed more time (from the recycle bin):
- How to reach a community.
- Exploring grassroots frameworks and organisations within the cultural sphere.

Area of Interest #2: Peer Learning Ecosystem & Grassroots Archives

Broaden the imagination and draw tips and inspiration for Homes of Commons

Three inspiring presentations opened the co-creation process around Challenge 2: Marieke Maertens from Timelab, Ghent (Belgium); Marcos García from Medialab Prado, Madrid (Spain); and Marcus Lampe from Lund (Sweden) introduced the method of Study Circles.

Co-creation, change and impact, continuous experimentation and IMAGINATION; bring people together and let them find their COLLECTIVE POWER. These were the practices shared by Marieke from Timelab who presented the **NEST** project: the collective temporary management of the old city library in Ghent by more than 70 initiators. The project gained the confidence of the community and entities on the collective management of infrastructures, and also permitted learning by doing and the gathering of different stakeholders.

Marcos García presented a citizens’ laboratory as a commons lab. People propose and create. The lab provides the resources: the space. The collective needs to take care of others and the environment. And the question and the need recur: how can entities trust what people can do? Marcos discussed the invisible transformation of Commons through learning communities and collective experimentation. And in places where everyone is invited to the production process. Citizens’ labs were also presented as models that can be adapted to peripheral zones. The models that work need to be replicable, and the EU needs to facilitate networks to unite these infrastructures.

The concept of Study Circles, a method from Swedish popular education, was shared by Marcus Lampe. With its origins in popular movements such as the temperance, popular education and workers’ movement, this method of organising groups

of workers and study communities includes the definition of members who are simultaneously students or teachers. And where it is possible to evaluate what is being learned in a loop, Marcus also posed a challenge: How can study communities change from public funded to autonomous formats? Adapting to digital tools could be a possible solution for a more “Do it yourself study community”.

Co-creation session: top priorities, reflections and recommendations

A group of eight people then gathered in a Hopin co-creation session. The dynamic of the group and how the session proceeded was a very intuitive process. Everybody helped each other with understanding and filling the Miro board which had been provided for the group to work on. The spaces dedicated to the pictures were shared, finding the best moment for everybody in the group to focus on writing or on the moments of presentation and reflection with the group.

This process allowed the Miro board to be filled in dynamically, with elements quickly filling the boxes of Exemplary Practices, Underrepresented Ideas, Desires and Utopias, and finally The Top Priorities for a Home of Commons. The only box that remained empty was the recycle bin, as the group decided to prioritise the remaining time with discussions about the Top Priorities. It is worth mentioning that a relatively short time was allotted for these sessions - a longer session would have provided more space for reflection and the rephrasing of the top priorities by the group, an intensive and interesting process that took up a great deal of the energy of the group. The detailed outcomes of the boards can be found in Annex B.

The group adjusted the priorities, rewrote or reformulated them when necessary, according to the discussion within the group:

Defining why Commons are important in everyday life, or at least making more people, teams, groups and organisations aware of it, was referred to as a top priority. We believe that Homes of Commons should provide spaces to ally the practice of commons with research, where participatory and hands on processes can give immediate experiences of creating value together. Artistic participatory practices are referred to as possible examples of engaging platforms.

We desire homes built on practices of “common people” that allow for the inclusion of underrepresented groups. Homes

where people can propose, create, and co-own the production process - the “do-er decides”, the group notes, but the process is left open-ended and space is provided for others to come in. Therefore, Homes of Commons should also be a place to explore, experiment and improve new ways of working together, where entities like Schools of Commons can act in order to exchange knowledge and tools and to make processes more effective and achieve a greater impact, while making sure that we are acting in a more commons-based context.

Co-creation, co-leadership and shared responsibilities in managing shared resources that are used and produced are top priorities for Homes of Commons. And, again, the question of liquidity: the allowance of a flow of new members in place, preventing groups from becoming closed to change, to new members and to adaptability. Homes of Commons should provide a place for that process of collective management that can define the impact of initiatives by bringing together collective dreams and shared visions and missions for the concrete needs of the communities in which they are inserted, and to the resources available and collectively created.

A house: although we agree that people feel better in a home, the need for a physical infrastructure is referred to as a top priority in establishing a Home of Commons. Therefore, we need platforms and procedures that can enable access to the infrastructural resources, signalling and making them accessible.

Finally, we point to the need to find a common language between commoners, or at least to provide a space in which to look for answers to the following questions: What is the importance of finding a common language? How can we create a shared language that can communicate the value of commons without codifying it and consequently making it exclusive? How can we make sure that the language we use is accessible and inclusive?

Area of Interest #3: New Institutions – Tackling the Silo Approach of Local Administrations

The main issue that Challenge 3 tries to tackle is participation and its transformative power, not only within the communities but also regarding public administrations (at its various levels). How can we enable participation at a local level that fosters real inclusion of diverse stakeholders in the decision-making processes while avoiding the different traps that a bottom-up approach can entail?

Participation can be a tricky thing to implement. First of all, the attempt to enable a participatory process requires experience and a mastery of the subject. The sole desire to implement a participatory process will not guarantee the achievement of a common goal; it can't even guarantee participation itself. "Opening" a process does not automatically guarantee access to everyone, as bureaucracy can be an unobvious barrier to face. Participation can provide many benefits for policy-making and policy implementation (and at every other step of the policy cycle), but nonetheless it can introduce some risks in the decision-making process, or it may reveal the shortcomings of an organisation or project, such as a polarisation of interests, the dominance of narrow sectoral interests, the mismanagement of conflicts and weak participation cultures.¹³

The CCSC project has observed difficulties that bottom-up participation encounters in the attempt to impact public decision-making. Some of these difficulties include: "the lack of transparency; the complexity of bureaucracy; the administrative "silos" among departments, sectors, administrations and in relation to communities; political and cultural contingencies in the local context; lack of the resources and competences to implement the outcomes of participatory processes; conflict between different territorial levels of government."¹⁴

As a result of the prototyping session,¹⁵ the group managed to identify two top priorities to be addressed as policy recommendations. Broadly, these summarise the discussion around exemplary practices, underrepresented ideas and desires and utopias: ① *Renovation of our public administration: organisation, competences and perspectives*. Renovating public administration entails the introduction of new ideas, new voices and new conversations not only into the policy process, but also into the way they are organised. This can be achieved by involving activists in policy processes, which can in turn further the sense-making of the community. There are virtuous examples in terms of how to reorganise and revitalise public administration agencies within the urban labs partners of the project and their testimonies and experiences should be taken into consideration when

13 <http://www.biodiversity.ru/coastlearn/pp-eng/risks.html#:~:text=Public%20participation%20has%20a%20lot,mismanagement%20of%20conflicts>

14 Taken from the user's guide proposed by the organisers for this co-creation event.

15 The results of the prototyping session can be found in Annex B.

crafting the Homes of Commons. ② *Protecting the commons*: maintaining its political nature and avoiding becoming monolithic (overcoming the mentality of a one size fits-all solution, for example). Since the commons are becoming more and more of a hot topic, they run the risk of being captured by capitalist practices that deplete them of their core values. Policy-makers should be aware of this danger when trying to implement a regional/communitarian policy approach and practices. The following policy suggestions are proposed by the reporter who participated in this challenge and sought to translate the top priorities identified by the group in the prototyping session into concrete policy actions:

Commons Allies Staff Exchange¹⁶ – Training programme

In order to reduce the risk of the top-down implementation of participatory processes, and to allow for bottom-up initiatives to flourish, we should aim for the top. We must provide public administrators with the training, tools and culture necessary to become allies for commons initiatives in their territories. Therefore, as a first policy recommendation for Challenge 3, we suggest the **creation of a training and exchange programme for public servants** to train them in the process of implementation of European projects that are won by different entities operating in their territory. At the same time, they should be trained to answer calls and tenders that are directed to municipalities and public administrations. This training should also entail a module on the conception, implementation and management of participatory processes, and a module on the general concept of commons.

This proposition draws its inspiration from an existing EU action, the “Research and Innovation Staff Exchange (RISE)”¹⁷. RISE is a Marie Skłodowska-Curie Action that belongs to the H2020 programme¹⁸ which funds short-term exchanges of personnel between academic, industrial and commercial organisations throughout the world. RISE aims to develop trainees’ knowledge, skills and careers, while building links between

¹⁶ The name is only an evocative suggestion; it can be changed according to the judgement of the project managers.

¹⁷ https://ec.europa.eu/research/mariecurieactions/actions/staff-exchange_en

¹⁸ https://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/grants_manual/amga/h2020-amga_en.pdf

organisations working in different sectors of the economy, including universities, research institutes and small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). If we extrapolate this initiative to the public sector and to grassroots initiatives, we would not only be tackling a cognitive void; we would be tackling inequalities at different levels. The EU devotes a significant amount of its budget to scientific research and development. If the arts and culture were held in the same esteem, access to resources would be more equitable. For the period of 2013–2020, the EU allocated an estimated €70.2 billion for the H2020 programme, whereas for the Creative Europe programme it allocated €1.46 billion. The arts and culture also have a powerful impact on society and therefore should be treated with the same respect as R & D.

Our CASE programme would be directed at public servants (including those with a more political profile), working at a municipal or local level (but not restricted to it), as well as at civil organisations and stakeholders involved in or wanting to answer calls and tenders for European projects. Just as for RISE, the actions in CASE would have to be articulated between the host institution and the officer participating in the secondment. This programme has two main components: formation and action. The component formation, which should include the topics of European projects, participatory processes and commons, should ideally be taught by the future Homes of Commons. However, in the meantime the teaching could be articulated between urban labs or other commons subjectivities and the help desks of different EU programmes.

The component action has to be articulated by the staff member participating in the secondment and the host institution of interest. Together they should draw up a statement of purpose identifying the mission behind the collaboration, placing an emphasis on the new skill expected to be acquired and how the person going on the secondment plans to implement this new knowledge in their own institution. The person going on the secondment should be from the EU or associated countries as well as partners from further afield. The exchanges between organisations in EU or associated countries must be between different sectors (for example, of public offices or civil organisations), as it will help to develop knowledge on commons experiences and public sector procedures. Thus, the programme should aim at knowledge creation on the topic of commons and grassroots

initiatives, sharing know-how and the development of skills in participatory processes and European project management. The training should welcome public administration staff of any nationality and at any career level, including staff members working in managerial, technical or administrative roles.

This action should be open to all research areas of interest for social policy but also with the commons, and the arts and culture as transversal axes. Accordingly, the grant would support the secondment of staff members (or members of civil organisations) for a period of from two months (the first month is a month of induction and the other should be the secondment itself that should last at least one month) to one year in a partner organisation. The return to their home organisation after the secondment entails a process of knowledge and experience dissemination with peers and involvement in projects and activities related to the experience gained during the secondment. With the correct impetus, public servants can become actors of change and renovation in the traditional role of public administration.

European standards, labels and certifications of collaboration

In order to confront the problem of protecting the commons, we should address three key points: funding, recognition and autonomy (as observed in the pattern *resource*). Hence, one possibility to explore would be the development of a system of standards, labels and certifications issued by the EU. It might seem counterintuitive or even oxymoronic to try to use market tools in an attempt to protect the commons and commons experiences, but the creative use of law has taught us to hack the system. Thus, the implementation of such initiatives should aim to answer the above-mentioned key points.

Access to funding is important for commons initiatives because it can be the source of sustainability of very fragile experiences. Normally it is through granting a fund that the EU starts a relationship with a commons project (already achieving the allocation of EU funding means that a project has managed to face and overcome the barriers to obtaining EU funds which small/informal organisations are confronted with – an issue that was addressed in the previous co-creation event). Therefore, access to funding must be made more accessible in order to be able to establish a nexus.

Once a relationship with the EU has been established, the EU should provide strong means of recognition of the social impact that these experiences have made in the territory. The recognition should not be tacit; it should be made explicit in a way that would be able to offer legitimisation and protection for the commons and their communities of reference. It is here that the idea of labels comes into play. The labels are symbols that indicate the compliance with a verifiable standard. In this case, a hack could be that the EU remains the issuer of the label, but not the setter of standards. We could imagine that a community of reference of a commons could self-declare their practices and modalities in a way that respects their autonomy. These labels could provide protection from the threats that commons experiences constantly face due to their informal nature. Commons experiences are often accused of illegality and other times face the risk of eviction. In such cases, a label or certification of collaboration with the EU could aid the preservation of a commons and stand in the way of a hostile public administration.

Standards, labels and certifications can differ widely, but they should share a common purpose for which the system would be put in place. For instance, public administrations could answer to the logic of accreditations on participatory processes and certifications of exemplary practices implemented in collaboration with the commons present in their territories. In order to promote this initiative, the EU could first make non-binding funding available that public administrations could access in order to develop pilot projects that would allow them to meet the standards. Standards, labels and certifications can be quite complex to implement, but the EU has vast experience in this field.¹⁹

¹⁹ An interesting case study could be the EU Ecolabel: <https://ec.europa.eu/environment/ecolabel/>

Towards the Home of Commons

Home of Commons

- an ally for local initiatives
- a mediator
- allow for real diversity and inclusion
- room for experimentation
- process (not outcome) oriented
- target inequalities
- articulation networks
- a translator
- incubator for long-term dreams
- integration of immaterial drivers

In conclusion, we believe that Homes (or Houses) of Commons should be an incubator for long-term dreams and strategies of care, to allow the immaterial drivers to be recognised and integrated in policies, practices and procedures for the development of new societal forms.

They should be a public and accessible digital and physical space, with open resources (both immaterial and material) and knowledge production. They should be a space that allows real diversity and inclusion.

They should provide spaces to connect the practice of commons and research – where everybody can experiment with commons using more hands-on approaches and understand their importance in everyday life.

They should be open to innovation and experimentation with new forms of work, focusing on the process rather than the outcomes. They should be a space where projects such as Schools of Commons can act and make processes and use tools that are more commons-based and more effective in a commons system context.

They should be the result and the activator of the community context where they have been created – an ally for local initiatives, both civic and political. They should target inequalities and confront taboos as they provide safe spaces.

They should be political and should hold high principles, including those of anti-racism, anti-fascism, anti-sexism and anti-homophobia. They should support claims for new rights and they should promote processes of depatriarchalisation.

They should be a mediator between commons initiatives, public administrations and the EU. They should be capable of facilitating the articulation of networks between these actors to further the impact of their collaboration.

Annexes

Annex A: Physical part of the event and the influence of the place in the co-creation session

Day 1 of the event was very special: recently renovated, the ground floor of the Timelab building at 34 Kogelstraat, in Ghent truly felt like a home where we were privileged to host physical participants. At the same time, we felt completely connected and involved in a common opening of the event with the more than 100 people who were with us online. If a Home of Commons aims to be a hybrid, physical and digital space of encounter, that is the experience we are having right now.

We can make people feel welcome: stick your jacket on the hanger, grab a coffee and let's see the house where, in a few short moments, we hope you can feel at home. In the ground near the big windows by the garden, we can walk along the lines of the School of Commons, recently printed in vinyl and meticulously glued to the floor with much detail and care.

Its dotted lines guide us to the patterns: *Dream, Organise, Resources, Impact, Context, Practice and Identity*. The participants can deep dive and see the videos, find out more about the patterns and start to let their imagination include them from the start of the day and the event. Seen from a distance, the School of Commons and its patterns remind us almost of a ritual or spiritual place where we can all gather together.

The afternoon brings the co-creation sessions. For the physical participants, the reality of a home already sees us sitting together around the food for lunch, tea and coffee, all of us gathered around the places where the heating is concentrated and is warmer. Enriching reflections have already started, with all the inputs of the day, and all the reflections, questions and backgrounds that each participant has brought. It felt more organic than just the opening of a co-creation group session.

The group decided to stay together in one group of nine people: in a broad circle around the big table, all the required distances and the masks still didn't stop us from feeling a sense of being one team: Bart Effelterre, Ilse Joliet, Vera Otte, Tim Vandewalle, Elisa Maupas, Filip Huyghe, Maren Duflou, Susana

Rocha and Vanessa Brazeau. According to the preferences of the participants, we decided to work on the following patterns: *Organise, Identity and Resources*.

Annex B: Day 2 – Prototyping session outcomes / Challenge 1 – Group 2

Participants in the prototyping session

- Hanna Polanowska,
- Cinthia Bodenhorst,
- Iva Čukić,
- Camilla Crosta

The different groups (1, 2, 3) listed the following priorities:

- Open-source knowledge and knowledge production and sharing
- Legal support
- Viability
- Ownership over digital means and discussion about technological infrastructure
- Assembly (as a political practice)
- Collective governance
- Changes to the structure and management of EU funding
- A physical place for those who want to initiate something to connect themselves with other initiatives
- Straightforward communication with administrations for everyone/how to do peer-learning about communication with public administrations
- Starting from a coffee together.

Exemplary practices

- Creative use of the law; “small acts of disobedience”
- Governance
- Housing co-ops
- Decolonise this place
- **MTL + collective** (art project example)
- Assembleism: on the practice of assembly in South America
- Magacin in Belgrade as an example of a self-organised space
- Digital placemaking
- Digital collaboration
- Open calendar
- Co-creating software with administrations

- No rent for five years for NGOs from the city (Poland)
- Gift economy
- Village and small communities and their ability to join forces when needed

Underrepresented ideas

- Intersectionality
- Intergenerationality
- Socialism
- Cultural equity
- Giving autonomy and freedom + space to children and minors
- Expertise and knowledge and resources
- Commons servers, democratised digital platform
- Ownership of (digital) means
- Ownership and means of cultural production
- Institutional change at the EU level
- How to reach a community
- Antidote to video-call fatigue.

Desires and utopias

- Open sourcing knowledge and knowledge production
- Rent stabilised leases
- Universal Basic Income
- Free and easily accessible education for people everywhere
- A common universal language
- Taking over the means of production
- Third approach

Recycle bin

- Brexit
- Digital divide
- Bento Society
- How do you reach those who are differently literate (culturally, technologically, financially, academically)?
- Exploring grassroots framework and organisations within the cultural sphere
- How do we address inequalities and cultural differences/othering under the lack of proximity in connectivity?
- Property issues

Challenge 2 – Group 1

Participants in the prototyping session

- Elena Lasala
- Marcos García
- Danielle Pallotta
- Marcus Lampe
- Vera Otte
- Susana Rocha
- Mieke Renders
- Francesca Sabatini

Exemplary practices

- DUMBO (Urban Metropolitan District of Bologna) – Multi-scalar commoning practice (artists – neighbourhood – municipality) and urban regeneration through temporary uses
- Centri sociali in Italy self-managed social centres (for example, La Ingobernable, Madrid)
- District Labs in Bologna working in the same way as Media Lab – commoning governance (Fran)
- Media Lab Prado was very inspiring in terms of engaging citizens (Mieke)
- Performing Arts Forum (St. Erme, France) example for liquidity in participants to avoid power relations (Vera)
- Education of the oppressed & the theatre of the oppressed (Paulo Freire, Brazil)
- The idea of agonistic democracy (Chantal Mouffe) because the need for consensus sometimes holds back the process
- Platoniq: a tool for administering a DIY Popular education platform²⁰
- Intersectionality in education
- Media Lab Prado: a good example of contemporary Study Circle

Underrepresented ideas

- Engage and learn from communities that practice informal learning methods; for example, youth cultures like hip-hop, video gaming, etc
- Redesign EU projects (building a framework for testing and prototyping)
- Support (infrastructure, tools and knowledge)
- Commoning practices develop out of necessity, meaning often in poor and excluded communities

²⁰ <http://platoniq.net/en/>

- Institutions working with the commons (Museums, Libraries...)
- Keep Western views on the articulation of thoughts around commons in mind
- Discussion about how a resource is perceived/valued from different perspectives
- Informal schools/open house
- Poor and illiterate people
- Intergenerational
- Experimentation as a form of knowledge
- Work with a “community of strangers” (Huron 2015)
- Strictly related: trial-and-error economies (Elinor Ostrom)
- A plurality of voices, heterogeneity of a group
- Let the resource rest, it also has a right
- Keep it simple in order to allow others to join or help improve
- Non-hierarchical organisation of work
- Mediation with the broader institutional context: the need for legitimacy and the prevention of political instability from harming commoning practices
- How to connect with improbable communities
- How to produce a language that is accessible to people not familiar with the commons

Desires and utopias

- More funding for testing (trial and error) within commons
- Overall well-being for people
- Developing real mechanisms of participation (real = with real implementation)
- A free and equal society
- Having spaces for encounter without only following productionist purposes
- Culture as a tool for compensating inequalities
- A non-competitive society
- Allowing people to access a variety of tangible and intangible resources (skills and capacity, housing and workspaces)
- Difference as a value – Elena
- Universal Basic Income
- An EU funded popular education. Contemporary version of Swedish system
- For people across Europe to connect and learn from each other

Top priorities

- Define why commons are important in everyday life
- A house: a physical infrastructure
- Communities
- The do-er decides, but leaves space open for others
- Keep it liquid
- Tension is good (indicating that something at stake), but also make other people able to care too
- Co-creation/co-leadership/shared responsibilities/shared resources (input + output)/shared support system
- Rules: clear and defined (for stability), flexible (for inclusion)
- Multi-level shared governance (balance between institutional representation and commoners)
- Build on practices of “common people” and for inclusion of underrepresented groups. Avoid making things too academic
- Desires to start, basic rules to begin
People’s awareness of objectives and tools
- Define impact by bringing together collective dream + needs
- + resources
- Find a common language between commoners

Challenge 3 – Group 1

Participants in the prototyping session

- Ketevan Paitchadze
- Mika Tbileli
- Ola Jacobson
- Michel Jacquet
- Alice Borchì
- Marcela Arrega
- Zuzana Révészová
- Ana Sofía Acosta Alvarado

Exemplary practices

- Creating shared agendas-visions for the future (MA)
- Make sure to identify challenges and important issues together. It’s a very important step in terms of influence (OJ)
- Rebeldia and the Municipality of the Commons (Pisa) as a new institution (A Borchì)
- Clarifying when a decision needs to be participative and bottom up and identifying when it is not needed.

- In the city of Malmö, there is a co-creation academy²¹ connected to “reimagine leadership” conference (Ola J)
- Bringing new knowledge for all – learning (MJ)
- Osservatorio dei beni comuni – the City of Naples: Activist articulated supporting group that mediates with city administrators (AS)
- Ensuring a horizontal development of commons
- Convening diverse actors to understand the context from different perspectives
- Concentrating on what needs to be achieved and building the supportive system around it (Mika)
- Identifying unifying subjects (Mika)
- Combining formats, spaces and lengths of events (Zuzana)
- Engaging different audiences with different content-events (Zuzana)
- Building communications and relations with the international art sector [Ketevan]
- Thinking of long-term and regular cooperation in co-creation with citizens (flexibility) (Zuzana)
- Understanding impact together (MA)
- Building hybrid relational spaces to co-create and build collaboration ecosystems facilitating the creation of shared visions and agendas (MJ)
- Creating a cooperative environment for sharing challenges and generating synergies between socioeconomic actors in the territory (MJ)
- Popular education spaces/programmes to engage inhabitants (AS)
- Articulation of social justice and ecology in our commons (AS)

Underrepresented ideas

- Avoid commons-washing (AS)
- The commons have limits (MA)
- Beware of the tool-fetish (AS)
- The need to initiate a depatriarchalisation process (AS)
- When does the need for facilitation end? (A Borchi)
- The commons are based on principles (MJ)
- Commons stories, narratives and language (MJ)

²¹ <https://www.malmoakademin.se/>

- How do we prevent neoliberalism from appropriating the commons? (A Borchi)
- Do commons require money to be governed for the long-term (who funds the facilitators?)? (Zuzana)
- How do you include the voice of those who do not engage? (A Borchi)
- Raising voices of community amplifying the voice through creating new tools (Mika)
- Lack of resources [Ketevan]
- Being quiet is not going to solve the issue (Mika)

Desires and utopias

- The need to be more political (AS)
- Portfolio approach: everyone working towards the same goal in their different contexts, areas and using their own knowledge (MA)
- The commons should be accessible to everyone (not a privilege) (A Borchi)
- Real shared governance. Where co-owners decide a method to make decisions for different situations (MA)
- Public administrations with a multidisciplinary office that can facilitate participatory processes (AS)
- Commons offices as commons interfaces for multi-stakeholders (MJ)
- Commons culture
- Should be shared as much as possible (MJ)
- A much greater interest in cross sectorial and multi-level co-creation/mutual learning from leading politicians at all levels (OJ)
- No artificial obstacles (Mika)
- Progress must be cherished and harvested through empowering commons (Mika)
- Creating straightforward process so that commons would have equal opportunities (Mika)
- Trust and collaboration – a positive and welcoming approach to new ideas and people (Zuzana)
- To have a community where artists have freedom and recognition (Ketevan)
- Local governance that understands the value of the work of activists without co-opting/appropriating/depoliticising it (A Borchi)

- Local government open to public ideas transparent decision-making (Mika)
- Public institutions sharing values and requirements (Mika)

Top priorities

Broadly, the discussion around the exemplary practices, under-represented ideas and desires and utopias led to the synthesis of the following points:

- Renovation of our public administration: organisation, competences and perspectives.
- Protecting the commons: maintaining its political nature and not making it a monolithic thing (a fetish, a one size fits-all).

Recycle bin

We did not have sufficient time to discuss the ideas in the recycle bin, but the participants wanted these points to be addressed in one way or another during the analysis of results of the event:

- How should we change our current system which perpetuates inequalities and deprivation?
- Small changes, big impact (Mika)
- How can we stand up to unfair positioning of resources? (Mika)
- Anti-capitalist perspective (AS)
- Obtaining funding (Ketevan)
- Ontological design (MJ)
- Agency of art (and culture) (MJ)
- What must be the foundation for facilitating development of common infrastructure (Mika)?

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