

Program

Understanding the Commons: A Practical Guide

Kick-Off Workshop, Zagreb, 14–15 November 2019

Abstract: This kick-off workshop seeks to conceptualise the ways in which commoning may be used as a practice for developing programmes for the cultural and creative sector. As such, the goal is to conceive of formats that not only work through commoning but also contribute to the production of commons in the spheres of library and information services, cultural programming, and educational programming. Specifically, the workshop attempts to outline a practical guide to commoning at the intersection of the cultural sector and civil society in the course of theme-based sessions focused on a) the information commons, b) the urban commons, and c) the environmental commons.

In these sessions, we seek to combine conceptual insights from experts in the field with the actual experience of practitioners and activists, thus building a bridge between theory and practice.

14 November

Time & Session	Description	Speakers
9.00 <i>Morning Coffee</i>		
9.30 <i>Introduction</i>	Introduction to thematic areas; goal of workshop – developing cultural and knowledge formats for commoning / the commons	C. Mahnke, Athens (Goethe-Institut) D. Soudias, Athens (Goethe-Institut)
10.00 Session I: <i>Commoning 101: From Ownership to Relationship</i>	What is the commons? What is commoning? How does the commons relate to the state and the market (esp. in South East Europe)? How does it relate to public services and the creeping privatisation of goods and services? And what benefits does it bring as a form of organisation? This introductory session seeks to tackle these questions in an effort to provide common conceptual grounds for the further sessions.	S. Helfrich, Heilbronn (CSG) T. Tomašević, Zagreb (IPE)
12.00 <i>Lunch</i>		
13.00 Session II: <i>Information Commons</i>	The information commons relates to data, ideas, code, and other formal and informal types of knowledge that are collectively produced and maintained by a community (e.g. Wikipedia, OpenStreetMaps). Keywords like “Openness”, “Open Access”, “Open Source”, or	X. Koliototi (Independent)

	<p>“Open Science” have come to signify the aspiration of the information commons to be freely and openly accessible for everybody. The creative commons is often the framework within which this openness is legally guaranteed. How can we ensure openness in our knowledge-related formats? How can the process of producing such knowledge be informed by commoning practices? This session seeks to provide theoretical insights and practical answers.</p>	<p>D. Soudias, Athens (Goethe-Institut)</p>
15.00 <i>Coffee Break</i>		
15.30 <i>Reflection and Output</i>	<p>This section seeks to consider the ways in which the conceptual implications and examples of today’s sessions can be transformed into educational and other formats for the cultural sector.</p>	<p>Everybody</p>

15 November

Time & Session	Description	Speakers
9.00 <i>Morning Coffee</i>		
9.30 Session III: <i>Information Commons</i>	<p>The urban commons focuses on the fair distribution of resources and access to such things as public space, housing, and work. It aspires to self-determination and a collectively envisioned quality of life. Urban gardening, self-organised parks, and the communalisation of water provision are but a few examples. Key questions have evolved around “the right to the city”: Who has access to and control over various public, private, and common resources and services? Who has access to public space? What is it used for? And what needs do public spaces satisfy?</p>	<p>S. Stavrides, Athens (NTUA)</p> <p>I. Čukić, Belgrade (Ministry of Space)</p>
11.30 <i>Lunch</i>		
12.30 Session IV: <i>Environmental Commons</i>	<p>The environmental commons relates to resources that are usually defined by scarcity, such as water, air, forests, and biodiversity. The fact that land can be sold and that bottled water can be purchased in stores exemplifies how resources that were once held in common have become private commodities. This session deals with questions of sustainability and its relationship to commoning.</p>	<p>U. Mattei, via Skype (U Torino)</p> <p>A. Pantazis (P2P Lab)</p>

14.30 <i>Coffee Break</i>		
15.00 <i>Where Do We Go from Here? Thinking about Tools for the Commons</i>	This session provides a digital case study of the ge.Co Living Lab platform. Using this as a basis, we would like to discuss the ways in which the conceptual implications and examples of this workshop can be transformed into cooperative educational and other formats for the cultural sector. Moreover, it seeks to outline possible next steps for the 2020 Commons Regional Project at the Goethe-Institut.	A. Quarta, via Skype (U Torino) Everybody

Abstracts

Urban Commons: Rethinking and Commoning the City

Čukić, Iva

With cities now serving as sites of neoliberal exploitation, the urban space has become a space of struggle, social actions, and mobilisations focused on experiments in governance, which would ensure the radical democratisation of society in the economic and political sphere. The urban commons have thus become a concept for fundamental transformation toward a new set of spatial relations produced by commoning practices, steadily engaging in the transition towards a more just, democratic, equal, and sustainable society. In this respect, the presentation will give an overview of the current practices of urban commoning in Serbia, with a focus on civic engagement, democratic governance, and the impact on the production of urban space.

Free, Fair and Alive: The Power of the Commons

Helfrich, Silke

The commons can be considered an attitude, a practice, or a world view. Whatever understanding you prefer, it opens up new possibilities for societal change and policy making while reorienting our perceptions, our language, and our imaginary. It is widely accepted that the power of the commons can only be properly understood through commoning and its internal dynamics. The commons is not a certain type of resource, in the style of standard economics or a certain type of institution as the Ostrom framework suggests. It involves living social processes that rely on a whole set of human values and behaviours that the standard economic narrative regards as marginal. Silke Helfrich will introduce the Triad of Commoning with its three dimensions: Social Life, Provisioning through Commons, and Peer Governance, challenging prevailing categories of thought and terms that belong to a “fading era”.

Implementing Commoning Practices and Tools in the Cultural Production Field

Koliofoti, Xenia

Drawing on experiences and participation in, or collaborations with, cultural production collectives and communities (Embros Theatre, Personal Cinema collective, P2PLab Tzoumakers) and using open source programs and platforms (e.g. Goteo.org), this discussion will attempt to examine a number of questions that one can face regarding practices of commoning in the area of digital commons. What are the limitations of open source digital tools and the prospects for its use in a physical team or community? Can self-education, skill acquisition, knowledge sharing, and common goals serve as motivation and become an empowering process for the individual and the community/team? Does the creative commons in cultural production create a framework of freedom or exploitation?

Earth as Commons: Legal Predicaments

Mattei, Ugo Dr

The environmental crisis caused by global warming and the Pope's intervention with *Laudato Si'* made the global public aware of the fact that the Earth is one and should be seen as a common home. Over time, however, this global commons has been split up, with private property and public sovereignty the two fundamental building blocks of the current extractive legal order. What kind of legal organisation would be necessary to interpret the Earth as a commons?

Design Global, Manufacture Local: Towards a New Production Paradigm?

Pantazis, Alekos

Physical resources are limited, while non-material resources can be limitlessly shared as digital commons. What if sharing knowledge and designing globally and manufacturing locally could lead to sustainable and inclusive forms of production and consumption? What relations between humans and between technology and humans would such a paradigm entail? Are the myriad makerspaces around the globe the spreading "mycelium" of an emerging mode of production, and what can we do to enhance this paradigm to create truly better societies?

Libraries as Spaces of Commoning: Constructing Open Knowledge in an Age of Privatisation

Soudias, Dimitris

The emergence of "fake news" and "post-truth" discourses needs to be seen in the context of the increasing commodification of the information commons. Simultaneously, the turning of libraries toward what are dubbed "theories of change", evaluation, and "impact management" furthers an economisation and quantification of domains that were previously social, while simultaneously contributing to bureaucratic disciplinary apparatuses in the name of transparency, efficiency maximisation, and monitoring. Against this backdrop, this talk advocates (re-)conceiving the library as a space for commoning open knowledge, facilitating

the (critical) openness and commons nature of information in ways that thwart the creeping commodification of knowledge. In so doing, the library is practised by its users as a radical commons pedagogy.

The Production of Common Spaces through Urban Commoning

Stavrides, Stavros Dr

Whereas public spaces are used under the rules established by specific authorities, common spaces emerge through practices of urban commoning that rediscover democracy as praxis. The sharing between equals and the opening of the circles of sharing towards “outsiders” necessarily imply the creation of forms and rules of urban social life that can profit from differences and encourage the participatory building of shared urban worlds. Drawing on examples related to recent experiences of urban commoning in crisis-ridden cities (including Athens), this presentation will attempt to show that emerging common spaces may shape the potentialities of urban emancipation.

Commons for South East Europe

Tomašević, Tomislav

The commons is a Western concept that is becoming popular around the world as governments and markets fail in delivering goods and services in equitable, democratic, and sustainable ways or fail in the governance of major challenges like climate change. The commons as a mode of governance is about the self-governance of resources by communities of users through the institutions that they create. This lecture explores how concepts of the commons fit into historical practices of commoning in South East Europe, in particular self-governance experiments in former Yugoslavia after World War II. It also presents research results in the contemporary commons movement in the region with various commons-governance practices and the related struggle to claim resources in common from states and markets.

Tools for Generating Commons: Enhancing Solidarity in Europe

Quarta, Alessandra Dr

In several European cities, many community-driven (legal or illegal) initiatives have arisen in unused post-industrial sites, derelict buildings, neglected green areas, spaces where new collaborative economies and self-organised welfare services are emerging. Civic engagement in the regeneration of urban voids and participation in new forms of production are a constantly ramifying phenomenon. We could define these experiences as the “generative commons”, since they are based on cooperative groups of people and provide solidarity services that are able to regenerate and produce benefits for the community as a whole. The gE.CO Living Lab Project aims to create a digital platform for bringing together “generative commons” and public initiatives in Europe as well as producing a set of tools to support the development and growth of these innovative practices without compromising their participatory character and tremendous spontaneity.