

Deliverable 4.4

Tools and models to governing generative commons

Project Full title	Generative European Commons Living Lab
Project Acronym	gE.CO Living Lab
Grant Agreement No.	822766
Coordinator	University of Turin
Project start date and duration	February 2019 - January 2022
Project website	https://generative-commons.eu
Deliverable Nr.	4.4
Deliverable date	November 30, 2021
Work Package No	WP4
Work Package Title	gE.CO DIY package
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Status:	Final (F)
Dissemination level:	Public



Versioning and contribution history

Version	Date	Comment	Authors
v.01	November 2020	Based on the analysis of the surveys core concepts are proposed and discussed with partners	CLTB
v.02	February 2021	Based on the surveys, collectives interested in governance are contacted. Methodology updated accordingly	CLTB , OLA, UB, Patrizia Di Monte, UNITO
V03	March 2021	Design of the processes the tools are supposed to trigger	CLTB - UNITO
v.04	April- May 2021	Overall architecture for the toolkits and other outputs of the project, as an interface for the website, proposed and discussed with partners. Friday meetings.	Spazi Indecisi, UNITO, Patrizia di Monte, Open Lab Athens, CLTB
v.05	June-July 2021	Based on the ongoing implementation of the tools, the structure of the deliverable and contents to be addressed are defined.	CLTB - UNITO
v.06	September 2021	Final implementation sessions. Assessment of the processes for deliverable and beginning elaboration of the tools for the website	CLTB, UNITO
v.07	October-November 2021	Alignment of tools format with website requirements for accessibility, clarity, effective communication. Website restructuring to valorise toolkits and other outputs	CLTB, UNITO, Eutropian
v.08	November 2021	Final editing deliverable, tools uploaded on the website.	CLTB, UNITO, Eutropian



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0 Introduction

0.1 This document

The current proliferation of tools and platforms allegedly created to serve the commons, the citizens, bottom-up initiatives, the co-creation of the city and many other processes that tend to be very similar despite the large variety of names, should question their efficacy. Do we need more tools and platforms? The answer cannot be sharp and clear. It would be tempting to say no, because a quick research on the web would easily reveal the many that are already there and the unavoidable similarities. In addition to that, we do not have reliable or sufficient information about the actual number of users. Even more difficult to know if these tools and platforms are finally effective and manage to do something for the collectives and organisations that use them. On the other hand, it would be tempting to say yes, because the processes and relations triggered and fuelled in the making of the tools and subsequently during their use, are probably more important than the results they are supposed to deliver. And while from a quantitative point of view, any assessment of the performances may be disappointing, on a qualitative level, what we learn through those processes, as human beings called to contribute to the evolution of our society, is invaluable and necessary.

What we experienced as partners of the a EU funded project in the process of designing the tools and implementing them in collaboration with organisations and collectives across Europe is the privilege of giving back and contributing. While the toolkit we developed could be largely improved and may need to be assessed



under different circumstances -as we shall explain in our conclusion- , in these pages, we will explain the primary reflections and concepts that guided us in designing the governance tools. The first step has been positioning as far as the definition of governance is concerned. Such a definition shaped the core of the toolkit. We soon realised that the process of design starts with the identification and qualification of the processes the tools are supposed to trigger and guide. The very tool, what the collectives will find on the gE.CO website, is the result of translating those processes into accessible instructions and operations. We identified three main needs and unsolved issues of the collectives concerning governance:

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

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

0.2 Defining governance

An essential step towards the realisation of the toolkit has been defining governance. Given the variety of approaches and professional fields dealing with governance, from the very beginning, we realised it would not have been possible to address the design of the tools without positioning gE.CO concerning the definition of governance. This means without considering the understanding of governance emerging from the surveys of the collectives involved by gE.CO during the first half of the project.

The definitions of governance tend to be very broad and to refer to “structures and processes that are designed to ensure accountability, transparency, responsiveness, the rule of law, stability, equity and inclusiveness, empowerment, and broad-based participation. Governance also represents the norms, values and rules of the game through which public affairs are managed in a manner that is transparent, participatory, inclusive and responsive”. In the field of urban studies governance is meant as the act and the processes of government¹. For geographers, "Urban governance is concerned with the processes through which government is organised and delivered in urban areas and the relationships between state agencies and civil society. The focus is on questions of democratic representation, power, and decision-making"².

We suggest in fact a more holistic understanding of governance that refers to the etymology of the word governance, from the latin *gubernare*, to govern. To govern is a transitive verb: to manage resources with the purpose of serving the mission of an organisation or community. Therefore, the act of governing is a relational act between a community and the resources they need to fulfil their needs and basic rights. The definition of governance we propose to adopt suggests that there are no decisional processes to be designed or discussed without resources to be governed. This implies that if on the one hand some resources may be needed for the

¹ Bhidé, Amita, Changing trajectories of urban local governance, India International Centre Quarterly -Vol. 43, No. 3/4, The Contemporary Urban Conundrum (WINTER 2016–SPRING 2017. Stoker, Gerry. 1998. Governance as theory, International Social Science Journal, 1998; 50: 17–28.

Kaufmann, Daniel; Léautier, Frannie; Mastruzzi, Massimo. 2005. Governance and the City : An Empirical Exploration into Global Determinants of Urban Performance. Policy Research Working Paper; No. 3712. World Bank, Washington, DC. © World Bank. <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/8285> License: CC BY 3.0 IGO."

² International Encyclopedia of Human Geography, 2009, pp 622-627.



fulfilment of fundamental human rights³, on the other hand they also must be protected across generations to continue to fulfil those needs. By not making abstraction of the decisional processes as something unrelated from the object of those decisions, we intend to recognise and to bring to the foreground the strict relationship between rights and responsibilities that should be at the core of governing processes.

Such a definition of the word governance, in the framework of gE.CO is supported by two observations. The first is that in fact, the characteristics of a certain decisional system and governance structure seem to be necessarily related to the nature of the resources being governed. The relationship with space for example seems to play a relevant role. A building that is 10.000 sqm implies organisational activities and, therefore, governance structures that are necessarily different from those concerning a 200 sqm space or a vacant lot. Not to mention all those cases in which the commoning practices are only temporarily set in given buildings or sites. Similarly, the availability of financial resources impacts organisational capacities: hiring employees makes possible organisational choices that are very different from the case in which the collective can only rely on the voluntary contributions of its members.

The second observation is that although many collectives of gE.CO's database are interested in working on their governance systems; they suggest other aspects as problematic in their organisation. While this is not a direct correlation, it may suggest two things: on the one hand, collectives may be willing to address their governance systems in the attempt to improve aspects such as financial capacities or the continuity of their activities; on the other hand it is possible they their definition of governance goes indeed beyond the decisional structures and rules.

Besides being a very holistic understanding of governance, as a process shaped by a variety of aspects, the governance of generative commons is also very specific. It is the result of the unique combination of capacities and needs, spatial and contextual conditions allowing a commoning initiative to emerge and thrive. While this can be easily observed by looking at the surveys collected by gE.CO, it is in fact also recognised in the literature. From Ostrom, who described how governance responds to the ecologic needs and the conditions of a given resource, to Dardot and Laval⁴ who theorised how commons need to be instituted; from De Angelis and Stavrides⁵, who described the commons as being defined by three elements: the common pool of resources, the communities relying on those resources, and the process of commoning; to the contribution of the feminist school of thought⁶.

If governance is such a holistic and site-specific construct, designing a governance system simply by approaching the set of decisional systems of a given initiative, without considering the nature of the resources and the processes to be administered, may lead to ineffective solutions.

³ this is the definition of commons according to Rodotà. Commissione Rodotà - per la modifica delle norme del codice civile in materia di beni pubblici (14 giugno 2007) . https://www.giustizia.it/giustizia/it/mg_1_12_1.wp?contentId=SPS47617

⁴ Pierre Dardot, Christian Laval, 2014, *Commun. Essai sur la révolution au xxe siècle*. Paris, La Découverte

⁵ AnArchitektur, 2010, On the Commons: A Public Interview with Massimo De Angelis and Stavros Stavrides, e-flux journal, n. 17

⁶ Floriane Clement, Wendy Jane Harcourt, Deepa Joshi and Chizu Sato International Journal of the Commons, Feminist political ecologies of the commons and commoning, Vol. 13, No. 1 (2019), pp. 1-15 (15 pages)



1 Designing the toolkit

1.1 Conceptualisation

Two concepts are at the core of the conceptualisation and design of the governance toolkit. The first is that of creating tools serving the high specificity and holistic understanding of governance, explained in the previous section. If governance is the result of the specific combination of conditions and capacities of a given initiative, how to support a collective in designing the most adequate form of governance? We soon realised that the answer was not providing ready-made models of decisional systems or organisational structures. These may be helpful references and inspirations only once users have discovered their organisation's metabolism and the conditions within which it operates is. What we aimed to offer was the possibility for these collectives to explore themselves and their situations. Our purpose in conceiving the toolkit has been about designing the processes that could lead collectives to investigate their condition, assess their capacities, envision their future, learn about the most appropriate choices in terms of juridical and governance structures.

The second concept is developing the tools by involving the collectives and initiatives contacted by gECO or new ones and based on their needs.

Beyond its participatory implications, such a concept is in fact aligned with the specific purposes of the second half of gE.CO: to develop the toolkits while engaging with local communities and popularise and facilitate the platform First Life. While the first half of gE.CO gave the possibility to establish contact with more than 250 collectives, it was during the second half that the project was supposed to intensify the exchanges and conversations with collectives. Each partner was supposed to focus in particular -though not exclusively- on the initiatives of their cities and countries, thus shifting the focus of gE.CO from the digital environment of FirstLife to the physical, material context of the commons, from the horizontal mapping of case studies to more specific support, provided to local initiatives. Together with specific communication and dissemination activities, the development of the tools was also meant to introduce gE.CO a more local level.

The methodology for the toolkit was conceived in September 2020, so it necessarily had to take into account the restrictions determined by Covid. As a result of the Covid, the activities had to be adapted to the digitalisation of social life. Distances were erased and it became equally feasible to meet local or distant collectives. While this allowed to reach very different contexts, on the other hand, it impeded to develop a territorially grounded relationship with local collectives due to both restrictions and to the digital fatigue of collectives. As we shall explain, the governance toolkit was designed by involving both regional and other European initiatives.

1.2 Phases and design methodology

Within the above described framework, the methodology consisted of the following phases and operations:

- Analysis.
- Meeting and listening.
- Designing the processes and testing
- From process to tool

Analysis

The study of the surveys allowed to identify the collectives interested in working on their governance issues. We observed that in many cases, the collectives who declared to be interested in working on their governance, in



fact, did not identify their governance structures or decisional systems as problematic, but rather funding and financial issues; their relationship with the public administration; the lack of engagement of members and community, and other aspects. Therefore, rather than designing tools aiming at directly shaping the decisional models of the generative commons, it looked more pertinent and helpful to conceive tools allowing collectives to reshape their governance from a holistic point of view, as it will be better explained in the following section.

Meeting and listening

Given the previously mentioned approach, the CLTB involved both local and other European initiatives, relying on the partners for meeting new ones. While the Surveys addressed the topic of governance in very general terms, these meetings aimed to explore governance-related issues more in detail and the dynamics undermining it. As previously mentioned, collectives and initiatives interested in governance did not necessarily mention their decisional system or internal organisation as the main challenge for their activities. The surveys revealed a more complex picture, and the meetings allowed us to understand the conditions impeding a proper functioning of governance and the advocated direction for change. On 12 collectives of the gECO database interested in working on governance, we contacted 6, thanks to the partners' facilitation. Only two accepted to meet for a preliminary overview of their situation and only one accepted to test one of the tools. In addition to these, CLTB ongoing collaborations and network capacity allowed to work with a Brussels based initiative and, more recently, with an association based in the UK. In the first case, a long-term continuous collaboration started in November 2020 and allowed the methodology and tool Space Matters to develop. In the second case, the partnership is ongoing and focuses on using the tools Mirroring and Space Matters.

Covid heavily affected the availability of organisations and collectives. Not only their overall activity and capacity have been weakened by the restrictions, reducing their absolute availability. Digital fatigue caused many collectives to reduce to a minimum the use of digital platforms.

Designing the processes and testing

Each tool has been designed based on the previously mentioned concepts and on the expertise of the involved CLTB staff members, namely Verena Lenna, under the supervision of Joaquin De Santos. After extensive research in the fields of transdisciplinary design, game design, facilitation, coaching and communication, participatory methodologies typical of architecture and design, elements and techniques have been recombined and adapted. This first phase resulted in the design of processes. The purpose was in fact to provide a methodology allowing collectives and initiatives to explore, simulate, evaluate, access, discuss ways of governing their resources and their metabolism. Therefore, the design focused on creating the conditions -spatial, temporal, relational - allowing the collectives to perform the above mentioned operations.

The duration of this first design phase and of the testing process varied significantly depending on the tools. Mirroring was designed relatively quickly, but the testing process required at least four sessions, each lasting from a minimum of 1 hour and 30 minutes to a maximum of 3 hours. Space Matters was developed as the result of the previously mentioned long term collaboration with the Brussels based initiative Permanent The tool was tested in the framework of a workshop organised as part of a Summer School Building Beyond (see §2.3). Finally, after an internal simulation organised at the University of Torino, Commons and Dragons was publicly tested on the occasion of the Researcher's Night in Torino as a dissemination event.

The overall positive feedback received from the involved actors and collectives suggests the processes these tools will trigger and organise may prove very useful. However, the special circumstances of facilitation during the implementation process should not be underestimated. In order to directly verify the effectiveness of the tools, facilitation has always been provided and organised by the CLTB -specifically by Verena Lenna and with the support of the Department of Law of the University of Torino as far as Commons and Dragons is concerned.



Facilitation is a relevant part of the processes these tools are meant to trigger. As the designer of these tools also played the role of the facilitator during the testing sessions, possibly this impacted the quality of the process and its effectiveness. Being author of the tools, the designer is aware of the quality of the process and the results to achieve and how to direct the interactions accordingly.

For this reason it would be therefore crucial to obtain feedback by all the actors and collectives that will decide to test these tools on their own, based on the instructions provided on the dedicated pages of gE.CO website, as the actual tool. Designing the tools of the governance toolkit consisted precisely in translating the desired processes into accessible and effective instructions.

From process to tool.

What issues need to emerge during the process and how to make sure participants will address them? How to effectively involve the participants? How to make sure they develop the required knowledge or plan? How to support the role of the facilitator? How to provide accessible indications?

In order to make the processes the tools are supposed to trigger accessible and replicable by any collective or initiative, we translated them in a set of instructions allowing anybody without any specific expertise to engage and obtain meaningful results. The reference to role-playing, the artistic practice of do-it and to coaching techniques allowed to implement four relevant characteristics : inclusivity, flexibility/adaptability, precision and depth. These could be considered as the criteria for measuring or evaluating the effectiveness of the tools.

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

Flexibility describes the capacity of these tools to adapt to the specific needs of the initiatives willing to use them and the conditions under which they are utilised. For example: players could be or not effective members of a given collective or initiative; the tools can be used in the course of one or multiple sessions; a session can last one hour or a entire afternoon; the object of investigation and related field can be very broad or very specific; terminology and vocabulary can be adapted depending on the users. And so forth.

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

Depth describes the capacity of these tools to create the conditions for a meaningful exploration of the issues that may undermine the effective governance of a given initiative. It is in fact the condition under



which precision can be achieved. As in the case of precision, also depth is made possible by designing processes that leave enough room for exploration: as a result of a minimal design and of the possibility to repeat, adjust and extend the process as needed. As in the case of precision, facilitation plays a crucial role in enabling the reflective capacities of the participants.

2. The tools

While being different the tools provided by this toolkit share the characteristic of respecting and valorising the specificity of commoning processes, by enabling collectives and initiatives navigating and understanding their specific conditions, thus processing information that will be at the core of designing their governance architecture.

For each tool the rationale purpose and definition will be described. The observations collected during the implementation process will be reported referring to the criteria of flexibility, precision and depth mentioned above. This will explain the choices made for the realisation of the tools. A conclusive paragraph will collect feedbacks received from the participants and possibilities of improvement.

2.1 Mirroring

Overview and Purpose

As mentioned before, governance is not only about regulating the decisional processes. It is the totality of activities and systems allowing to govern a given set of resources. As such, governance is a process of continuous negotiation between the available capacities and the mission to be accomplished. Necessarily governance is continuously evolving, responding to changing conditions and the changing identity of the concerned actors and organisations.

Working as a mirror, Mirroring allows collectives to take the time to reflect on their values, capacities and purposes as a starting point for designing an effective and sustainable strategy. The process is comprised of three steps: the envisioning of a desirable future for the collective in the short, medium and long run; the assessment of current and future capacities; the design of an actionable plan making possible the achievement of the desired goals. The reinterpretation of coaching techniques structures the process with minimal elements while allowing organisations and collectives to adapt it to their characteristics and needs.

Rationale and concept

Urban commons are at the same time fragile and resilient. In fact, while their flexibility is what allows them to survive and to adapt, when too stretched, their organisation and capacity weaken and dissolve. It is a delicate balance between intensity of the activity and the conditions allowing that intensity, between the practices of commoning and the availability of human and non-human resources that are the result and make those practices possible. This tool was created in the attempt to support all those collectives that at a given moment in the life of their organisation need to deal with their fragility or their unpreparedness vis à vis the challenges of the context within which they operate or the ambitious objectives they set for themselves. The fragility of a collective, meant either as incapacity to cope or as need to prepare for growth and new challenges, may initially concern a specific competency of that organisation. Still, it will affect all the other realms and activities. That is possibly the reason why many collectives of the gE.CO database expressed interest in addressing their governance while denouncing their issues in other areas of their activity, such as funding or the engagement of the local community. Perceiving



governance as a transversal system, they would work on it to intervene at a more radical and structural level, which is the only way to address fragility: not by intervening on separate realms, but rather operating holistically. It is within such a perspective that this tool has been conceived. The purpose was to design a process that could support collectives in a transitional or critical moment by allowing them to reshape their governance holistically for their growth and transformation.

To conceive this tool, personal coaching techniques have been adopted. The role of a coach is not that of motivating but instead of helping the person or organisation achieve the desired result by developing the required skills and capacities. The role envisioning plays in triggering action is largely known. Mirroring guides the collectives towards their desired future by asking them in the first place to question themselves, their values and capacities and to evolve coherently. The process is organised in four moments: after envisioning their short, medium and long term future, commoners are asked to identify the main areas of activity for the functioning of their organisation. After assessing them, they will have to make an action plan to develop those areas so that their desired goals could be realised. The final step is identifying an accountability system that will allow making sure that progress is being made.

Implementation process

For the implementation of this tool we worked with the Athens based collective Communitism. Communitism is an open community of creative professionals that revives abandoned or under-utilized cultural heritage buildings transitioning them into cultural commons entrusted and operated by active communities. Art is considered as a methodology to invite people used to acting as individuals into common practices to transcend into active citizenship. Through their actions, each space becomes a community that hosts projects, people and ideas.

More recently we also had the chance to test the tool with the organisation Midsteeples Quarter, a community benefit society bringing new life into Dumfries (Scotland) town centre by redeveloping empty High Street properties to create a new neighbourhood with a mix of uses built on principles of local prosperity and well being. While in this case the process is not yet concluded some helpful elements already emerged, confirming what we observed during our collaboration with Communitism.

Taking the time of realigning with the core mission and value, envisioning next objectives and of reflecting on what needs to change is vital for an organisation. What Mirroring allows doing is to take the time to go through such a process. The duration not being predetermined, the facilitator will have to guide the session by creating and maintaining the pace and atmosphere most suitable to the collective's needs. We observed that collectives usually appreciate the possibility Mirroring provides to reflect on their situation, goals and capacities. This is demonstrated by the fact that they typically ask to have additional sessions, rather than trying to fit a given part of their process within a predefined amount of time. The tool proves, therefore, effective in creating the conditions for meeting the criteria of **depth and precision**. By allowing collectives to thoroughly discuss and analyse their condition, Mirroring makes it possible to frame and determine the causes of any given issue, thus enabling the identification of appropriate answers and solutions. **Inclusivity** is not only possible but in fact encouraged by Mirroring. The more numerous the points of view, the more fruitful the discussion will be. This is something collectives also realise pretty early in the process, confirming what above mentioned about the quality of the process itself and its capacity to bring to the surface hidden issues and divergent points of view, allowing to address them.

Finally, in the case of Mirroring, **flexibility** and adaptability means, for the collectives, having the possibility to adapt the contents and issues being treated to the specificities of their activities and organisation: in the assessment phase participants are free to choose the realms of activities and capacities that are most relevant for their functioning. In general, the elements allowing to organise the facilitation of the process are really minimal: while guiding the process, they are conceived to perfectly fit the needs and characteristics of the initiatives interested in using it.



As in the case of the other tools, the facilitator plays an essential role in the Mirroring process. While any member of an organisation can decide to perform the task, the point of view of an external facilitator would be more beneficial by being detached and neutral vis à vis the issues being treated. In addition to that, an external facilitator would require the participants to fully clarify their positions for somebody who has no previous knowledge. This exercise of reformulating for an external audience may capture new nuances and points of view, sometimes helpful to unblock a certain negotiation or stuck discussion.

From process to tool

As in the case of the other tools, a booklet of instructions describes the four phases of the process. Additional materials available on the website will enable the facilitator to graphically organise the elements emerging during the discussion, thus allowing participants to share a common visual representation of their thoughts.

Given the importance of the facilitation part, the instructions provide additional guidance and suggestions on this aspect. Further references on facilitation and coaching models are also offered for those interested in improving, continuing and /or repeating the experience.

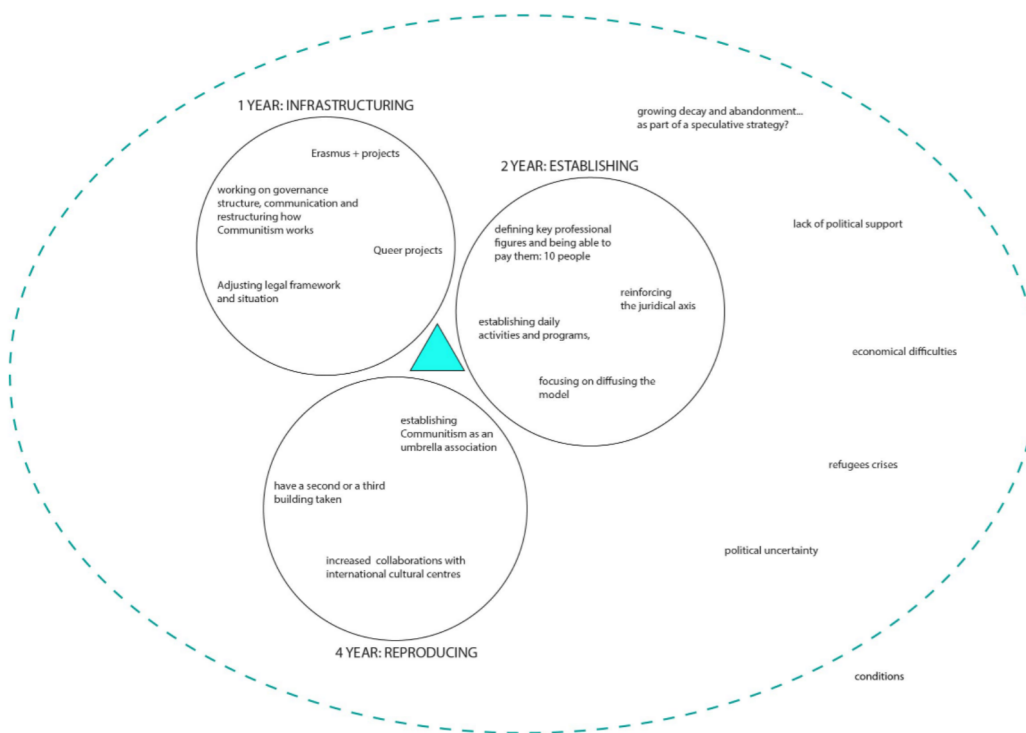


Fig 1. A diagram of the envisioning process with Communism



2.2 Commons and dragons

Overview and purpose

Using the logic of role-playing games, Commons and Dragons (CD) allows players to simulate commoning situations to configure and test forms of governance, regulations, laws and legal structures. This will enable participants to make informed evaluations and choices in their actual practices.

Inspired by the famous Dungeons and Dragons, the distinctive characteristic of CD is the possibility - in the hands of the players - to refer to real situations in terms of setting, objectives of the game sessions, actors involved. The aim of the game is not to win but to explore possibilities and solutions: the role-playing formula was also chosen because of the opportunity it offers of avoiding competitive logic in favour of playfulness and collaboration. In addition, intending to use the game as a tool for evaluation and study, CD allows learning about and exploring existing regulations and legislative instruments specific to the juridical context in which you are playing. It will be up to the Game Master to prepare the necessary materials to deepen the contents that will emerge during the session, in the form of links to relevant websites or involving players with legal knowledge. In particular, in its Italian version, CD enhances and completes a legal glossary developed by the Department of Law of the University of Turin, within the project CO3: Digital Disruptive Technologies to Co-create, Co-produce and Co-manage Open Public Services along with Citizens (H2020 GA 822615). For other European countries, specific links and materials are suggested on the tool's dedicated webpage.

Rationale and concept

Together with our partner Unito, based on our experiences and on the conversations with the collectives contacted by gE.CO, we realised what commoning initiatives often miss, especially at the beginning, is a good understanding of their responsibilities and rights as far as juridical structures and legal frameworks are concerned; and an effective approach in defining the most appropriate governance structures. Therefore, the idea for using a game was to create the conditions for commoners to simulate the processes and situations that would challenge their governance and juridical systems in real life. Playing as the very act of pretending and immersing in an imagined situation with other participants is a powerful way for collectively exploring scenarios and possibilities and appreciating logics and dynamics that may emerge only as a result of the interaction with the other players. In fact, games have been utilised in many fields for many years for strategic purposes, precisely for their simulation capacities.

Looking for the ideal game mechanics, we soon realised the purpose of our game was not that of collecting points or winning. The game we needed to design was more about triggering a process while leaving the participants the possibility to define their mission. Also, in the spirit of commoning practices, our game should have enabled participants to ally, collaborate, operate and strategise their actions as if they were in real life. For these reasons, the approach and logic of roleplaying seemed to be perfect for a number of reasons. Firstly, roleplaying allows the game master to set the scene, design the plot, and identify the characters, providing the desired flexibility to adapt to the actual conditions the game needs to explore. Roleplaying sessions have no fixed duration and multiple sessions can be organised depending on the purpose. Also, while at the beginning of the session a mission will be described by the Game Master, the very process of organising and acting towards the accomplishment of that goal may be sufficient for the players and commoners to explore the dynamics and test the governance and legal structures they are interested in. And finally, the participants are called to contribute proactively, thus having the chance to ally with other players and test strategies and approaches that could work in real life as well.



Typical situations that CD may allow to explore could be the organisation of a public event in collaborations with the local administration, the occupation of a vacant garden, the organisation of some service for the local community while reclaiming a vacant site.

A juridical glossary completes the game's mechanics, thus allowing participants to learn about existing laws and juridical structures. As previously mentioned, the glossary will be realised based on the one realised by the Department of Law of the University of Turin, within the project CO3: Digital Disruptive Technologies to Co-create, Co-produce and Co-manage Open Public Services along with Citizens (H2020 GA 822615). The glossary will be modified to address urban commons and related needs specifically. By providing the glossary, CD means to enable any commoner or actor interested in the commons to learn about juridical and legal aspects. However, during the session, the presence of somebody being familiar with these topics may significantly contribute to the explorations the game aims to trigger.

Implementation process

The tool was tested on the occasion of the Researchers Night organised by Unito in Torino, (24-25 September). The gaming session was hosted in the botanical garden of Valentino's park.

Compared with the circumstances ideally imagined for a session of CD, the setting and conditions in Torino were different and for this very reason at the same time, helpful and limiting in terms of assessing the efficacy of the tool.

Instead of being organised for a collective or a commoning initiative based on specific needs, the session was organised to allow the general public to learn about the commons and familiarise with the logic and dynamics of commoning processes. While this could in fact be an alternative way to use the tool, proving the **flexibility** of CD it is not the original purpose and although a mission and a plot were proposed at the beginning of the session, the participants were not as involved as a commoner would be in addressing a concrete and real issue. In addition to that, given the context, visitors were joining for an average of 15-20 minutes, not a sufficient amount of time to concretely address governance and juridical issues.

For all these reasons, it would be difficult to say that the session allowed to test the **game's precision** in thoroughly exploring governance and juridical models concerning a specific goal.

On the other hand, concerning the **depth** of the process, the tool proved to be perfectly effective in allowing participants to immerse in the dynamics of the commoning processes and learn about their logic. In fact, if this proved effective for a very mixed public, mostly not prepared on the topic, and involved for a short amount of time, it is safe to assume it will work very well also for commoners willing to role-play to test their governance structures. The **inclusivity** of CD has been largely proved in Torino, precisely thanks to the special circumstances: from teenagers to adults, from those having some minimal knowledge on the commons to those who never heard the word before, a variety of participants was able to actively contribute during the gaming session while learning about commoning processes.

From process to tool

Referring to Dungeons and Dragons has been particularly useful to design the tool, which is the set of materials available on the website and allows interested communities and collectives to play. A booklet of instructions will allow participants to understand how roleplaying works and will guide the Game Master -the director of the game session- to prepare an effective and engaging game. As in any roleplaying user manual, suggestions are provided concerning the preparation of the session, the role of the different participants and the very process of roleplaying, illustrated by examples of interactions. Character sheets have been designed to allow players to create well developed and credible characters. Game sheets are made available to provide hints and inspiration. Further references to other roleplaying games are also offered in the booklet of instructions for those interested in improving, continuing and /or repeating the experience for educational or practical reasons.





Fig.2 A moment from the Session of Commons and Dragons in Turin, at Valentino's Botanical Garden

2.3 Space Matters

Overview and purpose

Space Matters (SM) is a tool allowing the designing of the governance system of a commons-oriented initiative when this is strictly related to the spatial characteristics of a shared asset, built or non-built. Any time the organisation of the commoning practices is affected by the morphology of a given site or building, this tool will allow taking that into account in defining functions, ownership systems, forms of accessibility, financial sustainability and uses. SM can be used both by a single collective and by multi-partner initiatives. In the second case, it will allow discussing not only uses and accessibility but also ownership configurations and the sustainability of the financial capacities of the partnership.

SM make use of tools typically used by architects and designers, such as architectural drawings and models. However, the concept at the core of SM is that these should not be seen as devices requiring exclusive technical expertise, but rather they should be increasingly appropriated by anyone needing to improve their awareness of space and spatial implications on governance systems. For this reason, the tool is presented and made accessible as a “do it” instruction booklet. Inspired by the “do it” project of the curator Hans Ulrich Obrist and by the instruction works of many artists, from Yoko Ono to Sol LeWitt, SM provides the step-by-step instructions for setting the process of designing governance systems while relating to a given space: from the realisation of an architectural model or the printing of the required drawings to the facilitation of the process.

Within this perspective, the involvement of an architect or designer is nevertheless suggested as one of the possible operations. The purpose would be to provide technical expertise throughout the process, rather than of



guiding or delivering solutions. Therefore, their role is reframed as part of a larger facilitating and negotiating process, allowing different forms of knowledge to converge and equally contribute to the modelling of governance systems.

Rationale and Concept

The relationship of common practices with space -not with a place, not with the site- is crucial and yet very much underestimated. Planners and urbanists study urban commons for their regeneration capacity or as forms of temporary occupation, another expression of the right to the city; geographers from the point of view of larger economic and demographics; sociologists as laboratories of new solidarities or civic engagement. On the other hand, urban commons in many cases start with the physical occupation of a vacant building or neglected site. Necessarily, the first challenge a group of commoners needs to deal with is related to a specific space's qualities: is it accessible? Is it big enough or too big? Is it dangerous? How to organise the different activities? How to pay for it?

In relation to the characteristics of a given space, the capacities of a given collective to take care of it can be evaluated. A too big heritage building may be too demanding for a single organisation: in that case, plural configurations of ownership and /or management may be required. On the other hand, a vacant plot occupied for community garden activities may be too small and therefore become exclusive. For many commoners, the lack of accessible or affordable spaces for their actions may be crucial. In other words, as long as we talk about urban commons and initiatives that need a space to perform their activities, space matters.

This tool explores this relationship by allowing concerned communities to become collectively aware of the impact on the governance of the morphologic characteristics of a given space. To achieve this result, the tool combines two elements. The representation of space is the soul of this tool: representing space in a way that is accessible and clear for all involved participants is a fundamental condition to discuss governance related aspects, such as accessibility, ownership in case several partners are involved and their responsibilities. The realisation of an architectural model is proposed as the best way to do it. Bidimensional representations may be more abstract, especially when the space under discussion has multiple floors.

The other element is a facilitation process enabling participants to realise how different aspects interfere and are determined by space and to negotiate the diverse needs and expectations of involved actors. To achieve this result, a SM session should involve the actors concerned by the occupation of a given building or site. When this is not possible, an alternative may be asking participants to play their roles.

While the realisation of an architectural model or the facilitation of the process may be considered as something requiring technical expertise, SM provides the instructions allowing anybody to make both. The contribution of an architect or designer is therefore reframed as helpful and certainly beneficial and complementary to the different forms of knowledge SM is supposed to trigger and recombine. While it is not pertinent to address this topic in this document, an implicit result of SM is questioning and redefining the competencies of all the involved actors and participants.

Implementation process

SM was tested on the occasion of the Summer School Building beyond, organised in Brussels by Permanent in collaboration with ETH Zurich and Kaaitheater (9-11 September 2021).

Permanent is a research initiative aiming at realising an anti speculative real estate project combining housing and cultural and artistic production, to address not only the housing needs of low-income families, but also those of artists and refugees living or operating in precarious conditions. For the involved actors, Permanent means





Fig 3. The workshop Space Matters , in the framework of the Summer School building beyond in Brussels.

increased stability and diminishing the costs of facilities that could be easily shared with other partners. Especially in times of environmental issues, this may in fact, represent a promising approach to manage many underused or vacant large scale artefacts while reducing energetic inefficiency and taking advantage of existing built assets instead of realising new ones. Not to mention in many urbanised contexts, the need of efficiently and flexibly dealing with vacant assets may become increasingly urgent as a result of post-pandemic scenarios.

Partners of Permanent are two collectives of artists, Level 5 and Globe Aroma, the CLT of Brussels and the Vrije Universiteit Brussel. More than aiming at the occupation or transformation of specific site or building, Permanent originally aims at developing a model and exploring conditions of cohabitation and coexistence of otherwise concurrent social groups. In December 2020 the Region announced the will to study the renovation and reuse of the soon to be dismissed fireman station in the Quartier Nord,. This suggested the possibility to imagine the occupation of the station to begin testing ownership arrangements and cohabitation possibilities.

The workshop. Space Matters aimed at designing -or at least beginning to discuss- the governance of Permanent by addressing the specific spatial characteristics of the building of the firemen station.

Inclusivity precision and depth were successfully achieved with the realisation of a 1,80 m long architectural model of the building that allowed a good number of participants -around 15, distributed into two teams- to develop a spatial competency thus effectively involving them in envisioning and brainstorming about possible forms of governance, especially concerning common and shared spaces. How to control the accessibility? How to organise the coordination of the different activities during different moments of the day? Who would be the owner of a co-working space open to the neighbourhood? Who will decide about the opening hours? How to manage and how to cover the expenses related to the use of a space open to the neighbourhood? These and many others were the questions that emerged during the discussion with the workshop participants, some of whom were for the first time involved in the development of Permanent. The pragmatic quality of the questions proves that participants were effectively enabled to appreciate the interweaving of spatial aspects and governance. This session of SM managed to demonstrate that any spatial decision implies interweaving of financial, juridical, functional aspects, especially in the case of large scale and plural forms of ownership that require complex forms of governance. Concerning **flexibility**, other occasions would be required, allowing to



test the quality and results of the process when architects are not implied neither in the realisation of the model, nor in the facilitation of the session

From process to tool

As mentioned above, in order to make the organisation of a SM as accessible as possible, the booklet of instructions of SM has been conceived by referring to the do-it concept. By questioning the inaccessibility of technical expertise, such a concept makes room to the possibility of multiple interpretations of the same instruction or recipe. What is being valued, once again, is the process more than the final result. However, in the framework of SM, the competence of architects and designers is not denied or diminished but reframed as part of a larger and diverse bundle of competencies. In addition to the basic instructions to organise an SM session, additional instructions are provided to support the facilitation process and realise an architectural model without any specific expertise.

Conclusion

The realisation of these tools, from the first brainstorming concerning the communities to address to the design of the instruction booklets available on the website, including the very process of writing the text of this deliverable, as a chance to reflect on the process, assess the results and imagine possible improvements, took more or less one year. It involved an intensive, long term collaboration with one local and two non-local collectives. And a specific interdisciplinary collaboration with Unito for the development of one of the tools.

Based on the feedback we received, it is possible to state that the process has been fulfilling for all involved actors, communities and partners.

To conclude this document, we shall mention a few elements, pointing at possible ways of improving and completing the tools, as perhaps the starting point for imagining a continuation of this project.

Post-production assessment As for many projects whose aim is to deliver tools, platforms, policies, the outputs are provided at the end of the project, leaving no time for assessing, improving and making sure the tools are correctly used and circulated. In the case of gE.CO, funding a post-production assessment phase would give the possibility of receiving the feedback of the collectives who will use one of these tools without the assistance of gE.CO partners.

Facilitation support. A recurring element at the core of the functioning of the above presented tools is the facilitation of the process. While these tools aim at giving the greatest autonomy to the commons and other initiatives willing to use the tools, the possibility of asking for the support of the partners who developed the tools should not be excluded. While at the moment, these post-production collaborations cannot be funded within the framework of a given project, alternative solutions could be found. While benefiting the organisations, this would ensure EU their investments in producing tools and platforms will be valorised adequately in the long term. Special agencies or front offices could be set up to deal with these requests while ensuring citizens and organisations chose the most appropriate tools and platforms.





www.generative-commons.eu gE.CO Living Lab is an exchange platform for formal groups or informal communities of citizens who manage fab-lab, hubs, incubators, co-creation spaces, social centres created in regenerated urban voids

Digitalisation of the tools and toolkits: as discussed with New Castle University, gE.CO toolkit do not necessarily imply an intensive use of digital technologies, while gE.CO also developed digital tools. A few brainstorming sessions with the different partners seem to reveal that the potential for enriching the processes of the toolkits with digital options may lead to meaningful results, especially in a post-Covid society—a continuation of gE.CO may perhaps focus on these opportunities.



This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 822766