

# Co-creation and the Commons in Culture-led Urban Development

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## Abstract

Culture and creativity offer new perspectives for urban communication and decision making in municipal local governments. This paper presents a preliminary state of play in the mind map of commoning and commons transition in the city of Košice. It is discussing the commons philosophy with the specific focus on urban commons, cultural commons and digital commons. The examples of L'Asilo and Naples are brought as case studies to visualize the recent applications of commons on municipal level. The case of Košice is described from the position of a researcher and a project manager, implying the convoking method that suggest the formulation of research questions together with the field representatives and stakeholders. Common pool resources, therefore, the goods that are commonly taken care of, and generating for everybody, have natural (material) and immaterial forms. The digitalization and growth in technology enable the immaterial commons to become a serious intellectual challenge in understanding their potential impact and use. The demands for democratising policies call for inclusive negotiations with all involved stakeholders. Applying the perspective of commons and co-creation on digital and innovation hubs in culturally affluent city of Košice helps us understand the chain of demands for economic and political development in the regional growth in terms of employment, infrastructure and finance. However, applying the commons methodology and convoking dialogue has pointed to some serious misrepresentation of social sphere and citizens' perspective in cultural planning, that took creative business from market level only. Sustaining the urban commons in Košice means also giving the re-generative power to culture, allowing the initial philosophy of the European Capital of Culture follow its central theme of post-industrial regeneration and enable different kinds of relationship to reign in the cultural sphere. The planning of the strategy for culture in the following period should, therefore, enable the participants to raise their voice and formulate the vision together. The implementation would also need to reconsider the managerial approach in local municipality, to be able to take the voices of the participants actively and listen to the advice before taking serious decisions.

## **Points for Practitioners**

- Urban commons are visible in most of the contemporary cities, they are usually negotiations of civil activists in urban environment that demand responsibility to take the use of urban spaces and use them to generate value with social and economic benefits for those involved – the commoners;
- Commons strategies are growing in European Union to be able to use the structures of negotiations in the manner that is including those touched with the policies;
- Commons are allowing people to count with generative value instead of market value, and therefore sustain the cultural commons that often find themselves in precarious positions. Such arrangement can help cultural policies to support lively cultural environment with great social impact;
- The commons approach can help to overcome the legitimacy crisis of public spending;
- Examples of commons integrated on the municipal level are multiplying around Europe, the most famous cases are Napoli, for its recognition of the “common goods”, adapting the rules defined by the commoners in the municipal agreement;
- Another iconic case is Barcelona, for development of participation all urban spheres, with the focus on digital participation;
- Košice is planning a participatory cultural strategy, focused on the co-creation element and defining the conceptual base to assess generative power of culture added to the urban ecosystems;
- Participatory governance is opening infrastructures of co-creation to those, who want and need to be involved;
- The participation needs to be planned with regard to competencies and powers, as well as the accountability of the involved stakeholders.

## **Keywords**

Commons, cities, cultural policy, generative value, co-creation

# 1 Introduction

This paper presents a participatory research framework, that includes the culture into commons transition on local municipality governance. The focus is the logic of commons framework and its implications on the legislation that communing practices are bringing through their implementation. To present the commons approach in the municipality level, contemporary discourse on policy co-creation and co-design is used to create parallels and practical implications on the case studies.

The aim of this paper is to provide the researchers and practitioners with the bridge between the independent and innovative grassroots social forms and the public sector on a municipal level. In this paper, the connection between the idea of commons, and the idea of policy co-creation and co-design will be introduced. Elinor Ostrom's theory that was symbolically confirmed by the Nobel prize in 2009 has since gained attention of cross-disciplinary academia. The application of commons philosophy has been spread to the cultural sphere and mainly the discussions in the digital sphere. This paper discusses the economic, legal, and public policy frameworks of commons on local policy participatory case studies.

Firstly the commons theory is introduced with the focus on governance (Lam 2011), with detailed introduction on the commons mechanism in governance structure, applied by the theoretical framework on policy co-creation and participation (Baibarac, Petrescu, and Langley 2019; Osborne, Radnor, and Strokosch 2016; Voorberg, Bekkers, Timeus, et al. 2017; Voorberg, Bekkers, and Tummers 2015). The special focus is on cultural commons, in order to introduce the case study on cultural practices that enable to intertwine the creativity and cultural policy with municipal policy innovation (Dockx and Gielen 2018).

Infrastructure in the cultural sphere will be discussed on two cases – the Ex Asilo Filangieri in Napoli as a case of participatory democracy governance pronounced after the occupation, later accepted by the municipality of Napoli as a unique legal form. The second example is the participatory model of Barcelona and its commons'-based digital citizen participation innovation. These two cases will create a framework of the observation of Košice, these cases are also chosen as the prototypes of commons application on the local level, heavily cited in commons theory (Kostakis and Bauwens 2014). These two case studies will create a framework of potential commons application and co-design transition for the inspiration for Košice. The relevance of policy application for cultural sphere consist in the post-European Capital of Culture development. The commons ideas on cultural elements will be looked at from the perspective of infusing the local governments with ideas to support the generative cultural practices, forward the democratic appeal and bring decision-making in more participatory manner to the citizens and provide collaborative and co-creative working and learning environment.

## Classical Commons Theory

The discussion that Hardin (Hardin 1968) started with the famous article on “The Tragedy of Commons” was based on the assumption that rational beings would drain the potential source of profit that was exposed for common use. His Science article was based on the metaphor of the herders who tend to maximize the profit by interfering with one another and, therefore, competing for the common resource, which is then, very limited. But as Lam (Lam 2011) sums up, there are many other possibilities of behaviour that could result from the situation as described by Hardin. Moreover, empirical evidence shows that the governance of the commons is based on overcoming the image of “neoclassical rational man” with drafting the chain of interactions of deliberative discussions and decision making based on self-created norms and structures. An easy example would be digital negotiation of copy-left, creative commons, or other infrastructural modes of conduct in case of intellectual digital goods. Individuals and collectives are not discouraged to make deals together and collaborate on the management of common pool resources (the term brought by Ostrom (Ostrom 1990)), as Lam further argues (Lam 2011).

Ostrom (Ostrom 1990) discusses an array of metaphors that contemporary economic, social, and political discourses use to describe the current social realities. Their impact and performative power on social relations, though, is rarely discussed. The powerful models, that shape our decisions and create the “tradition of thought” with impressive consequences, is the reason think through and deconstruct as Ostrom did. Then, e.g. “privatization becomes the only solution” (Ostrom 1990) for communication and decision-making faults, seen as the only possible outcome for potential disruptions. However, the fact that social and political innovations are only dependent on restricted numbers of conservative metaphors is creating a great path dependency. Institutional framework for relationships in Ostrom's proposal is suggesting to have (Lam 2011):

1	<i>clearly defined boundaries</i>
2	<i>congruence between rules and physical conditions</i>
3	<i>collective choice arrangements</i>
4	<i>monitoring</i>
5	<i>graduated sanctions</i>
6	<i>conflict-resolution mechanisms</i>
7	<i>minimal recognition of rights to organize</i>
8	<i>multiple level of nested enterprises</i>

Figure 1- Ostrom - Institutional Analysis and Development IAD Design Framework

The design of the economic relations proposed by Ostrom was followed by the development of peer-to-peer approach. The ideas of cognitive capitalism build on sharing of knowledge and digital information, sustaining the communities by collaboration (Bauwens and Niaros n.d.). “P2P specifically designates those processes that aim to increase the most widespread participation by equipotential participants“ (Bauwens 2005).

### **Cultural Commons**

Pascal Gielen returns the Marxian logic of base and superstructure by stating that culture is the base of society. It means that the way we speak and deal with problems, the very notion of societal institutions like bureaucracy, economy and others, are culture. That is why the need to take culture seriously is identified in the commons theory. The cultural commons are those common resources that members of the society co-create and use, just like the language, symbol systems etc<sup>1</sup> (Gielen 2005). Gielen argues for overcoming the simplicism of economic rationality in economic industrial relations. The complexity of human production needs different systems of assessment and reward of what is valuable – without the necessity to enter the market competition (Ibid).

The outcome of cultural commons can vary. In the more narrow sense, “Artistic commoning entails the co-creation of any kind of aesthetic commonality, ranging from the co-production of an exhibition by a curator and several fine artists to the joint production and performance of a new piece by a theatre collective, to the kind of relational or participatory art that very much engages audience members” writes Laermans (Dockx and Gielen 2018).

### **Urban and Digital Commons**

Urban commons can be understood mainly under two categories – as shared spacial areas with common negotiated governance structures, as well as the innovations in infrastructure of urban goods in other than spacial forms, often with elements of social movements (Borch and Kornberger 2016)the urban commons results from people using, consuming, appropriating the city“ (Borch and Kornberger 2016). Following the discussion on cultural commons, e.g. precarity of workers in culture and civil society has led the initiatives all around the world to think about the potential alternative on re-arrangement and negotiations about the change in the management of common pool resources. Cities became the main playground for innovation, as their municipalities have been dealing with the redistribution of the goods that could take on the direction of common pool resources. Urban commons are defined as the social products of communities that are shared and can be applied in negotiations of the participatory manner in cases of public spaces and the lieux the memoires (Jens Kimmel, Sophie Bloemen, and Till Gentsch 2018).

Shared ownership of the land becomes the most important feature of the urban commons in contemporary discussions. It is the way of negotiation and rule-making, that the movements in the cities try to overcome the reduction of market value in dealing with real estates (Borch and Kornberger 2016). The researchers compare the abandoned industrial sites with wilderness and nature, that is common responsibility. Public and collective spaces bring quality of life and urban solidarity to the citizens (Foster and Iaione 2015) and the understanding of what to do with urban common goods. Urban commons approach is a potential innovation for the situations, where the urban public spending does not find enough legitimization (Borch and Kornberger 2016). The urban, therefore, offers many opportunities to apply the shift in economic, and political relations in governance.

Contemporary societies, with the age digitalization, the discussion on cultural commons gained even more possibilities of applicability. Digital commons use free software and free culture to be published online and accessible for the use. There are iconic cultural examples of the commons, like the website *Monoskop*<sup>2</sup> established by Dušan Barok. This movement has also a potential for applicability in the urban environment and commons (Vercellone and Bria 2015) . The free software movement uses free codes to replicate and develop solutions in vast fields of use. Some of the digital commons use blockchain technology to verify the value and

1 GIELEN, Pascal. Cultural Commons. Lecture. April 4th, 2019.

2 Monoskop.org

can use tokens for exchange (common coin, cultural currency)<sup>3</sup>. Wikipedia is, of course, the best example of commons in both digital and cultural aspect.

### **Co-Creation in Public Administration**

From the point of view of contemporary reforms in public administration, the co-creation as a culture of governance becomes more and more attractive model (Voorberg, Bekkers, Timeus, et al. 2017). The model of participatory and P2P exchange that is known in commons can be also translated to the mechanisms of democracy and decision-making. Voorberg et al. (Ibid) emphasize the notion of learning and experience in public policy creation that suggests the comparison to Gielen and the value of culture that lies in sharing and exchange of the common. Furthermore, the co-creation in policies is understood as social innovation (Voorberg, Bekkers, Flemig, et al. 2017) where the users become co-creators and emancipate in relation to their social and urban environment. The co-creation functions as a connecting tool for the stakeholders and creating more efficient communities and networks for social innovation (Stenvall and Virtanen 2014). In the context of local policy creation, it was concluded by Voorberg et al. The policy making process can be improved by changes that lead to more co-creation and therefore tackle the contemporary urban issues – inclusion of impoverished neighborhoods, and distribution of governance to those, who do not have direct access to participate in the creation of these policies (Baibarac et al. 2019; Voorberg et al. 2015)

The co-production allows the identification of common values and distribution of these values in other than market mechanisms (Osborne et al. 2016). The cases often represent urban regeneration (Baibarac et al. 2019; Rossi 2004; Voorberg et al. 2015) or in the application of open data as a platform to co-create urban policies (Toots et al. 2017).

### **Methodology**

The presented study focuses on two cases and the epistemological map of the possible policy application of the commons on a municipal level. The application is to be designed within the framework of the project on a case of Košice being an urban lab in the Cultural and Creative Spaces and Cities<sup>4</sup> project, that is funded by Creative Europe and its aim is to bring examples of sustainable urban development and commons based local governance that builds on understanding of the generative function of culture in urban environments. The researchers use the convoking method (Khasnabish and Haiven 2012), to support the generation of potential solutions and research design with the research field and their stakeholders together.

The presented paper is built on comparison of two separate cases that illustrate the methodology of interference of commons approach to municipal level governance as indicators of potential inspiration of this approach to practitioners and the model creation for policy application. The mechanism of application on the policy level is created in the means of speculative policy design (Forlano and Mathew 2014). The case of Košice is therefore presented with the project-related stakeholder interviews and discussions.

The selected cases represent the co-design application not only as a practice, but also as pioneers in theoretical development and advocacy in commons application. These two cases have also been selected to stand for two distant applications of urban commons – on one hand relying once on physical space that discusses the ownership as discussed by Low (Löw 2016), on the other hand using the contemporary digital practice.

#### ***The case of L'Asilo***

A group of cultural activists has occupied the abandoned site – a classicist building in the centre of Napoli (Dockx and Gielen 2018). They belonged to a stronger and bigger movement in Italian society that has found themselves in precarious work conditions and impossibility to negotiate their social rights because of peculiar working structures in the cultural field. In Napoli, the freshly renovated cultural space was left abandoned – owned by the city. Therefore, the group declared the necessity to engage with local policy making (Berlusconian in the Napoli municipality) (Ibid). The Italian context provided this case with two precedent notions, the voting on water as common goods, and the Rodota Commission, that ruled the recognition of immaterial labor and the “common goods” (Ibid). Beginning with the occupied theater in Rome – La Valle, the new policy applications emerged with the follow up of a Rodota Commission. Rodota Commission was a body implementing the

3 BAUWENS, Michel. Commons Transition. Lecture. April 4<sup>th</sup>, 2019.

4 Cultural and Creative Spaces and Cities

commons in the reforms of the Italian civil code (Bailey, Farrell, and Mattei 2014). The consequences of the imagination of the commons transformed into establishment of the constituency of common goods (WIKI n.d.).

It was followed by legal changes in the municipal arrangement also thanks to the mayor, who recognized commons and became very open in their application. The activists in the L'Asilo cultural center have become those to be first to try to manifest the management of the commons on municipal level, by drafting in co-creation the "Declaration of Urban and Civic and Collective Use" (Dockx and Gielen 2018). The case of Napoli continues to be an example of participatory democracy experiment. As Giuliana Ciancio describes, the place with the artistic production in its core helps to sustain the emotional experience of the public (Ibid). By using the emotional infrastructure, it helps to provide the sense of belonging and democratic community that takes care of the premises as much as of the rules and processes, as much as of the people as a community in solidarity being involved. The legal state of L'Asilo is recognized publicly as the commons, without the subcontracting of lease or ownership transfer to the commoners.

### ***The case of Barcelona***

Catalonia has also been very active in spreading the commons before the official recognition from the municipal level. It has strong hacker community that has been developing software solutions based on sharing knowledge. Therefore, the creative milieu was at hand for support of the innovation in social policies on the municipal level. Platform economy actors are being now involved, as the city is facing the challenge of precarity. It is the conceptualization of P2P logic in information exchange, that forms the mindset for collaboration. The support on the municipal level lead to the creation of "BarCola", the collaborative network to foster interaction between diverse actors on the municipal level.

Supporting the thinking of commons in the knowledge-based economy is essential, from the point of view of current civil servants in Barcelona<sup>5</sup>. Turning the logic from intellectual property and protection to commons and sharing as the base for cognitive capitalism. Barcelona Digital City is using digital commons to support citizens in decision making, participation and information in variety of spheres, like social rights, trying to overcome the digital divide<sup>6</sup>. The Barcelona case is famous for flipping the logic of the smart city, which is criticized for its top-down approach to more inclusive, participatory level formed from bottom-up initiatives. Its digitalization programme uses agile project management to respond actively to contemporary problems and challenges (Perng n.d.).

The conceptualization of the digital as the common good was conducted by Rodota also on the level of civil code preparations. Rodota also discussed the electronic democracy and the myth of a "living-room democracy" that does not seem to come to action today despite the technological possibilities (Goujon et al. 2007).

As visible in Barcelona, it is the mechanism of patient negotiations, and institutionalization with large political support that enables the participation to become the driving force to change the policy models and bring innovation not only for the few, but also overcome the digital divide and influence everyday problems, including unpopular topics like social care.

### ***The case of Košice***

The European Capital of Culture in 2013, Košice has earned a lot of attention in the transition of its cultural policy to more creative economy concept. Having large investment in cultural infrastructure, as well as capacity building for cultural operators and creative individuals, creative industries became one of the potential forces to support the post-industrial de-growth in economy and population (Borseková, Vaňová, and Vitálišová 2017). The IT sector is also very strong in the city, currently employing the same number of employees as the steel industry, once the only pillar of cities's employment. The IT companies are formed in cluster called IT Valley.

The post ECoC sustainability phase is over. The infrastructure has been questioned during last local elections. Does it serve its purpose, or would a different use be more efficient? What is the role of creativity in the city, and how to make culture beneficial for the citizens even more? Those are the questions that now stand before the necessity to create a strategy that would provide answers and plans for the following period. Precarity is a common problem in creative professions (Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2011). Market economy can suppress the generative creative potential, and disable growth and collaboration, because of high competition for the distribution of market value. Generative potential and inclusive elements of culture, that have been lying in the heart of the ECoC project with the SPOTs integrative centers in the suburbs, should also be understood and supported in the cultural policy (Hudec et al. 2015). Several stakeholders identified the need to update the strategy<sup>7</sup>.

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5 Decidim Barcelona

6 Digital Commons for Social Inclusion.

7 The group called "Ten Commandments for the Culture in Kosice" raised the demand before the elections in 2018.

### **Challenges of Governance**

As it is clear that there is a potential for many challenges to appear, one of them is the management philosophy in the public administration environment, using examples from the participatory governance (Laloux 2014). The sense of decision making and the necessity to take advice in order to overcome the inefficiency of incentives directing in contradictory manner is a challenge for many organizations. Aligning those, who own, and those who produce, ideally on one level, would increase the benefit for all. Therefore, the new managerial approach should take into consideration the analysis of the priorities of individuals with the diversity of their backgrounds.

The question of co-creation and co-design can be understood as the tools to organize policies on participatory bases in order to regard the commons. From the point of view of Ostrom (Ostrom 1990) there is a need to set the negotiation and conflict-resolution as the bases for reaching the multiple-nested enterprises. Such “enterprises” can be understood as the governance mechanisms of the urban commons, institutional arrangements of local policies governing over physical and digital structures, using the tools to allow the equal access and direct negotiation with sustainable social environment.

### **Conclusion**

This paper is a brief overview of a conceptual framework of commons applied on municipal policy. Yet, it offers an overview and the paradigm shift to accept the discussion and co-creation as a natural process in the governance model. The theoretical part introduced the connection between the commons theory of Ostrom (1990), contextualized in governance studies by Lam (2011), with contemporary literature on policy co-creation and co-design (Baibarac et al. 2019; Voorberg, Bekkers, Flemig, et al. 2017; Voorberg, Bekkers, Timeus, et al. 2017; Voorberg et al. 2015). This paper discussed the question of urban commons and digital commons as innovations in infrastructural social arrangements on local level. Urban commons are gradually developing as active-citizens’ strategies to decide upon the public spaces and regeneration of physical infrastructures with “natural” manner – like abandoned buildings or post-industrial urban remains. This approach offers a wide range of consequences – revives the social lives, gives opportunity to negotiate the rules of conduct and therefore accountability rules for the users, gives opportunities for generative cultural practices, provides collaborative environment and minimizes extractive powers of market based relationships.

The cases of L’Asilo and Barcelona show potential application of commons and communing on the municipal level. Cultural activities are at the heart. Košice is a case that does not have similar historical background but is believed to infuse its cultural policy with commons principle for more inclusive, participatory and integrative elements. Those can only be gained by opening the process to wider public, to define the rules that culture will follow in the near future.

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