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Commons-Public Partnerships

New avenues of cooperation for social-ecological transformations

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Summary

Local cooperation between civil society and the public sector is becoming increasingly important – in local transformation projects, in science, and occasionally in politics and administration. Commons-Public Partnerships (CPPs) provide a way to frame, promote and extend this collaboration. In civil society, CPPs are typically defined by the practice of commoning, where local communities exercise self-regulation based on the principles of community welfare and the common good. This discussion paper examines the theory and practice of commoning and other forms of cooperation. While focusing on the challenges of social-ecological transformation, the paper also identifies areas where CPPs can be implemented and highlights fields of tension exposed by the concept.

Decision-makers and civil servants can contribute to the success of Commons-Public Partnerships by

- Proactively initiating CPPs where commons associations already exist and matching these to local challenges of social-ecological transformation;
- Setting up research projects based on the key concepts and areas of tension outlined in the paper; and
- Establishing CPP-supporting structures, funding and further training in public institutions.

Simple language

Commons are things that belong to everyone. Because everyone contributes something, everyone gets something back. In towns and villages, many different people work together. This cooperation is co-ordinated by the local administration. There are many benefits to be gained from bringing commons associations and local administrations together. Together they can ensure that everyone has access to what they need. Both now and in the future.

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Glossary

Commons | Common goods that are managed and maintained by a living local community of self-organised people (*commoners*). See p. 12.

Commons association | A local community of commoners. A commons association is usually designed to have a flat hierarchy; it shares common values and aims to increase the common good both locally and globally. Examples include solidarity farming enterprises, neighbourhood initiatives and grassroots organisations. See p. 12.

public sector | State institutions that organise, support, and administer various aspects of life and public services. In Germany, this means the various offices, authorities and ministries of the federal, state and local governments that may enter into cooperation with commons associations. See p. 7.

Emergent institution | An institution that is newly created through the cooperative agreement of a Commons-Public Partnership. In terms of ownership, staff and budget, the public sector and the commons association hold approximate parity.

Co-governance | In general, co-governance refers to the sharing of decision-making competence, i.e. access to decision-making realms and procedures and participation in upstream decision-making processes with voting rights. Here, co-governance refers to more specific instances of cooperation in which the public sector enables constituted civil society to participate in a contractually regulated manner, within a defined framework, on an ongoing basis, and on an equal footing.

Deliberation | A form of advanced democratic practice. In framed deliberation processes, citizens come together as peers with public administrators and policy-makers. This process is used to jointly consider an issue, possible approaches, and solutions. The results of deliberative processes are usually high-quality, socially legitimate, and broadly accepted decisions.

Sufficiency | Orientation towards the measure of sufficiency (from the Latin *sufficere*). For example, a policy that aims to ensure that (basic) needs are met.

Social-ecological transformation | Changes to existing modes of society and economy towards greater justice and equality within the planetary carrying capacity.

Transformation centre | Concept for an emergent institution that brings together best practices and problem-solvers for social-ecological transformation. The concept was developed by the *Transformation Haus und Feld* initiative developed for the former Tempelhof Airport in Berlin. See p. 23.

Pattern language | A pattern language is a collection of best practices designed to solve typical problems in a particular field. It offers a uniform vocabulary and is easily accessible in terms of form and content. The term was coined by the American architect Christopher Alexander. Inspired by Alexander's pattern language for urban planning and architecture, Silke Helfrich and David Bollier developed the first pattern language for commoning. See p. 13.

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1. Introduction

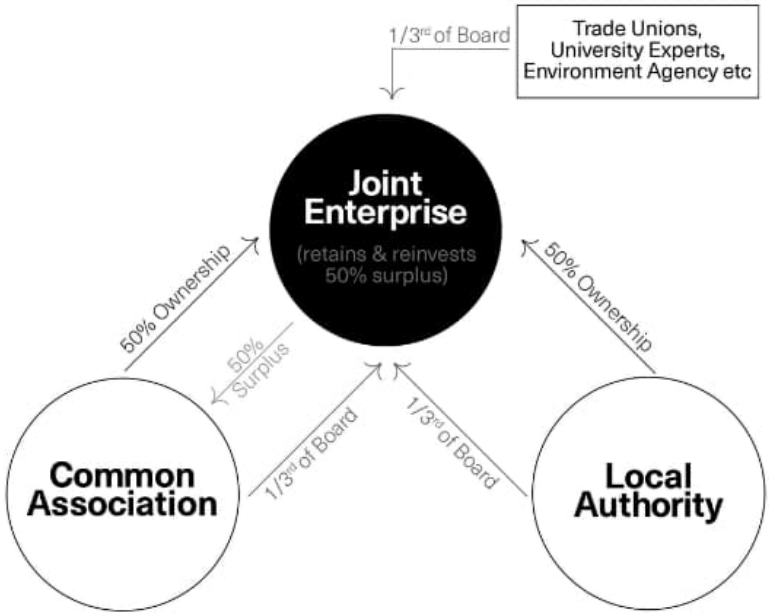
Let us begin by imagining a society that has determinedly tackled and implemented the social-ecological transformation. This would result in profound changes to our living environment. It would see the banishment of fossil fuels from our economy, politics and culture. It would entail closed material and energy cycles, and public information would be *open-by-design*. And, if we are to follow the current IPCC report, it would not only distribute wealth differently, but also define it differently. It would strengthen human rights, and be a more inclusive, more colourful, and probably happier society. But what would this environment look like in practice? How can we envisage the transformed city?

It would probably have adapted infrastructures, multifunctional spaces, car parks unsealed to make way for urban farms, photovoltaic panels everywhere, repair workshops and material stores in every neighbourhood, and art and living greenery instead of advertising on facades. Would it be a city where authorities, legislatures and ministries passed and implemented ground-breaking transformative legislation? Of course, it would! But above all, this city would reflect a society that has actively tackled its core challenges, creatively reshaped its residential districts, and worked out locally adapted solutions. It is a beautiful thing to imagine. Thinking back from the objective makes it easier to identify the steps required to make this vision reality.

So far, we are seeing only the tip of the iceberg of civil society's will to change. Not least because, due to existing structures, people can only express their desire to effect change in their leisure time. If the transformation is to depend on energetic support from civil society, civil society will need (new) forms as soon as possible that allow it to express its energy more effectively. In this discussion paper, we will present Commons-Public Partnerships as an administrative module that can further the desire of civil society to bring about transformation and integrate this into public policy. Its aim is to make interested parties aware of the concept of Commons-Public Partnerships as a form of cooperation between the public sector and commoners and to offer an introduction to the existing literature.

What are Commons-Public Partnerships?

Formally, a Commons-Public Partnership (CPP) exists when **a commons association enters into a contract or agreement with the public sector**. The parties to the agreement comprise an organised group that practices commoning and a city, municipality, or federal state. In their agreement, they jointly regulate as peers the **provision of land and resources by the public sector** and the **performance of clearly defined activities by the commons association** in a way that promotes and anchors commoning in the medium to long term. CPPs are tailored locally, contextually, and sector-specifically, and thus can take very different forms. The **cooperation agreement**, the founding document of a CPP, can give rise to completely new entities of ongoing co-governance, such as education and meeting spaces, neighbourhood centres or permanent commissions. Sometimes these **emergent institutions** are also referred to as CPPs. Commons-Public Partnerships thus formalise the cooperation between the public sector and communities and expand the classic catchment area of the "third sector" (Evers/Laville 2005, cited in Degens/Lapschieß 2021, p. 21).



Possible structure of a Public-Common Partnership according to Milburn/ Russell 2019, p. 14

Commons-Public Partnerships are far more than an abstract concept, and have already become lived practice. In order for this practice and its benefits to spread as far as possible, this paper also included experiences and lessons learned from practitioners and designers in Germany. Our aim with this paper is to contribute to making successful long-term Commons-Public Partnerships accessible as a supporting and modular building block for the various urgent tasks of the social-ecological transformation. Above all, we want to open a discussion with decision-makers and young professionals in public administration, or rather, design!

For this reason, Chapter 2 begins with an inventory of challenges and problems currently facing public administration. There is ample evidence that these can be most effectively addressed by deepening democracy and involving civil society. Chapter 3 looks at the definition and location of Commons-Public Partnerships and describes their qualitative characteristics. Chapter 4 offers a rudimentary overview of the myriad potential of Commons-Public Partnerships in the context of social-ecological transformation. Unresolved issues, areas of tension and challenges identified along the way are found in Chapter 5. Join us in exploring the cooperation between the public sector and self-organised communities as complementary forms of preserving and expanding the commons!

2. Problem analysis

The public institutions of industrialised nations worldwide face a multi-level problem in the form of current, interwoven and intensifying "polycrises" (cf. Homer-Dixon et al. 2021) involving ecological, social and economic systems:

- Their modus operandi appears to be less effective than that of successful private companies. In addition, the public sector is often plagued by a shortage of skilled staff in both new and traditional occupations.
- A trend towards commodification (cf. Hermann 2021, p. 40 ff.) has curtailed their ability to function. Digital transformation, platform giants and new technologies continually raise questions about the limits of their competences.
- Despite its omnipresence, public administration is not firmly anchored in people's everyday lives and is rarely associated with positive experiences. Its contribution to social cohesion is questioned (cf. Steinke 2022).
- Its role to date in the transformation process towards a society that lives within planetary boundaries (Steffen et al. 2015) appears reactive, passive, or even counterproductive.

At the same time, the disadvantages of profit- and growth-oriented economics are obvious. Common goods have been damaged by the "reorientation of public policy towards the state as a guarantor [of basic welfare]" (Große Kracht/Hagedorn 2021, p. 413). Property conflicts and distribution issues have been given fresh impetus by questions of basic provision, while calls for climate reparations for those affected by fossil fuel-induced damage are becoming ever more relevant worldwide.

Because public administrators and their external project partners tend to be consumed by the workload of day-to-day business and micromanagement, they lack time for strategic realignment. And there remains the (possibly irrational) fear that transformative (i.e., effective) climate protection measures could upset key elements of society. At the same time, it is precisely now that a "profound change in the national economy" is needed, involving forward-looking public investment to mobilise society (Brand/Römer 2022, p. 1 ff.). Yet, it is apparent that "the state massively underestimates its own problem-solving abilities" (Lepenies 2022) which ultimately results in "state abstention" (van Dyk/Haubner 2021, p. 113) in essential welfare issues. At the same time, populations increasingly resent "technocratic arrogance"; social movements are also revolting "against a form of administration" in which "overplanning" is the main modus operandi, manifesting in an "anti-utopian" status quo (Terkissidis 2015). A "gigantic bureaucratic apparatus [...] has been created, which forcibly imposed [outmoded] visions of society [...]" (Graeber 2017, p. 114). To counteract this, an "insourcing" of civil society into public activities is needed (van Dyk/Haubner 2021, p. 156).

In recent years, public consultation, crowdsourcing, and co-creative processes have been used as mechanisms to compensate for democratic and agility deficits in the public sector. This approach, which is still developing, has the potential to bring about a culture shift in government and policy-making. Informed interested parties and citizens' representatives have been given the opportunity to participate more directly in shaping their environment; for example, in Germany deliberative bodies such as the Citizens' Council on Climate offered participants compensation for expenses, in some cases, to enable representative participation by people of different social backgrounds and to include precarious and otherwise hidden perspectives on government and public policy. In addition, new project-related partnerships promote cooperation between citizens and local administrations.

Nevertheless, demographic and social distortions persist in co-creation processes involving the public

sector and people with local expertise and awareness of the issues. In civic engagement, the "question [...] of an increasing class-specific division of civil society into carers and creators" arises (van Dyk/Haubner, p. 120). Thus, the temporary, mostly precarious, and often informal mobilisation of underprivileged volunteers results in a "double exploitation of vulnerability and connectedness" (ibid., p. 122), "without overcoming the structural conditions of vulnerability" (ibid., p. 152). The result is a decoupling of social security and social participation (ibid., p. 158), whereby "social rights and their institutionalisation [...] stubbornly remain to be delivered" (ibid., p. 106). Society as such is actually "based on an unequal opportunity to participate in the 'common wealth'" (Loick 2016, p. 55). Researchers, activists as well as human rights organisations report an increasing split between stabilising and legitimised civic engagement and increasingly criminalised and denigrated social-ecological activism (cf. Mayer 2013, p. 163 and Bosch 2020), although these are also key components in the formation of political will and public discourse. Moreover, citizens' councils have raised questions about responsibilities and the strategic and operational implementation of decisions (see also Oppold/Renn 2022).

Paradoxically, one of the essential tasks of public administration is to devote itself to "managing its own limits" (cf. Luhmann 2021). In view of their "non-limitability", these can probably at most be defined in terms of specific challenges and actions (cf. Haude 2019). Whereas for centuries this debate took the form of an ethical-ideological discussion about welfare or the minimal state, this question has been posed anew in the early 21st century; not only does public opinion require a precise assessment of the relationship between public-private partnerships and the outsourcing of competences for the fulfilment of key services of the sovereign state, but the climate and ecological crises also confront an apparently neutral, per se under-staffed administration with almost unmanageable multi-level questions of design. In the case of Germany, there is a need for "substantial and structured participation by citizens in political projects", especially in everyday contexts and infrastructure projects (Nanz et al. 2021). Researchers are therefore arguing for new "institutions of collective management" (cf. Sinner et al. 2022).

The economist Mariana Mazzucato recently called for the formation of new partnerships that benefit "workers, communities and the environment" and place particular "focus on the relational methods" of stakeholders. An "openness to results" must be a feature of any system design as well part of its operation if it is to break free of silo thinking and be receptive to feedback (cf. Mazzucato 2020). The political scientist and philosopher Nancy Fraser posits that capitalist societies cannot continue to live with the "existing [...] separation between polity and economy" and that "alternatives must be considered for both extremes" in which "the separation between production and reproduction and between human society and non-human nature [...] are creatively redesigned" (Fraser/Jaeggi 2020, p. 237).

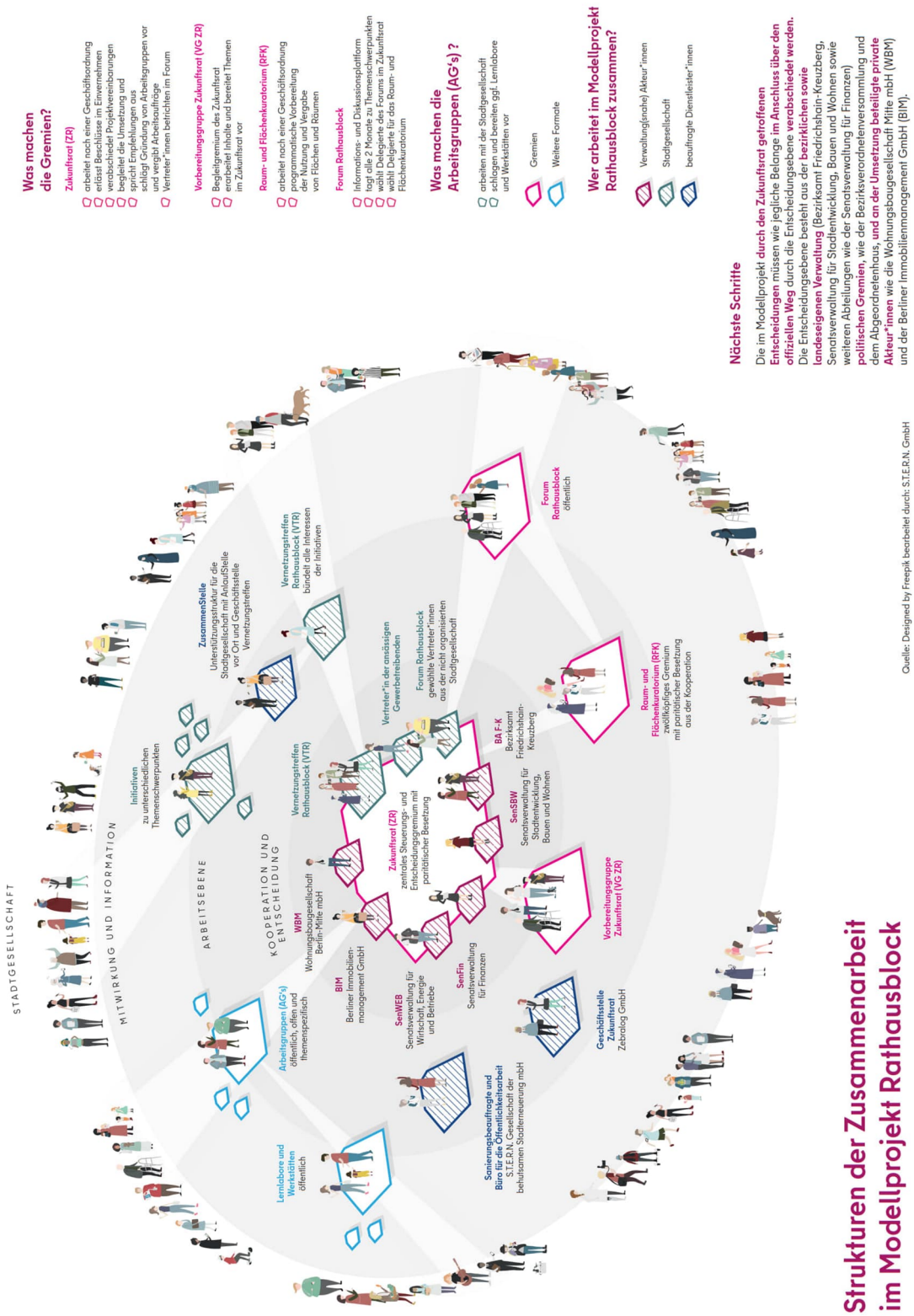
It is therefore necessary to develop and promote forms of public partnerships that can both stabilise the fulfilment of permanent services and transfer the capacity for consensual reorganisation in crisis situations into resilient structures: "This is where emancipatory perspectives on a *commonification of public services* can come into play, which [...] do not activate the resources of civil society to close gaps in services of general interest, but conversely [...] socialise the design and administration of social rights, infrastructure and services of general interest. In the context of public-common partnerships, ideas circulate that break down the established opposition of institutions and movements by focusing on a *commoning of our institutions* to enable collectively organised solidarity" (van Dyk/Haubner 2021, p. 158/159) and represent an "archetypal, novel, municipalist intervention" (Russell/Milburn/Heron 2022, p. 20). They are thus part of the dynamic for "testing a new institutionality, [...] instituting practices and constituting processes [...] around ways of perpetuating, preserving, linking, enabling, enclosing and caring" (Kubaczek/Raunig 2017, p. 8/9) with "commons as the core institution and orientation of all other social forms" (Bauwens/Kostakis/Pazaitis 2019, p. 8). As responsive open-ended management, this brings together the expansion of public activities and common goods with the responsiveness of local self-organisation. Commons-Public Partnerships are one of many possibilities for defining the framework of sustained cooperation between public institutions and organisations that promote the common good.

3. Definition, delimitation and qualitative features

It is far from uncommon for federal states and municipalities in Germany to enter into contractual relationships with non-state partners. Public service contracts governing the planning or maintenance of basic government services – for example road construction, waste disposal, or health care – are regularly awarded to private entities. This type of arrangement is known as a **Public-Private Partnership (PPP)**.

Recurring criticisms of PPPs include their lack transparency and that they go hand in hand with a commodification of common resources. Critics also point out that, in past PPPs, profits have tended to be privatised while losses, where they occur, are typically borne by public bodies and thus, ultimately, by the taxpayer (cf. Hermann 2021, p. 74). The main arguments advanced in favour of PPPs are that they bring market-based values of efficiency and cost-effectiveness to the planning and operation of public services, and that they allow public authorities to avail of specialised resources and problem-solving competences which they cannot themselves provide (cf., for example, Rufera 2009, Sack 2019). However, given the ecological and climate crises, the focus on efficiency and cost reduction may also be seen as an example of public action exacerbating the problem, since these are major structural drivers of environmental and climate damage (cf. Creutzig 2020, p. 6).

A model of public partnership that comes a lot closer to Commons-Public Partnership is the **Public-Civic Partnership (PCP)**. In this instance, public authorities involve local citizens and/or civil society organisations in matters of mutual interest by actively sharing resources or decision-making powers. This form of partnership is currently being applied in urban development; for example, the **Haus der Statistik** (former National Statistics Office of East Germany) and **Kreuzberg Rathausblock** projects in Berlin have involved the devolution of decision-making powers from the local authority to civil society on issues of district development. The city authorities, residents and other stakeholders come together in a variety of ways and test out locally adapted forms of joint decision-making. PCPs may be interpreted either as close relatives or precursors of Commons-Public Partnerships in that as they replicate aspects of CPPs in terms of core objectives and planning format, as the two above-cited examples demonstrate (see Ch. 3.1.3–3.1.4). In practice, the boundaries between CPPs and PCPs may be fluid.



Was machen die Gremien?

Zukunftsrat (ZR)
- arbeitet nach einer Geschäftsordnung
- erlässt Beschlüsse im Einvernehmen
- verabschiedet Projektvereinbarungen
- begleitet die Umsetzung und spricht Empfehlungen aus
- schlägt Gründung von Arbeitsgruppen vor und vergibt Arbeitsaufträge
- Vertreter*innen berichten im Forum

Vorbereitungsgruppe Zukunftsrat (VG ZR)
- Begleitgremium des Zukunftsrat
- erarbeitet Inhalte und bereitet Themen im Zukunftsrat vor

Raum- und Flächenkuratorium (RFK)
- arbeitet nach einer Geschäftsordnung
- programmatische Vorbereitung der Nutzung und Vergabe von Flächen und Räumen

Forum Rathausblock
- Informations- und Diskussionsplattform
- tagt alle 2 Monate zu Themenschwerpunkten
- wählt Delegierte des Forums im Zukunftsrat
- wählt Delegierte für das Raum- und Flächenkuratorium

Was machen die Arbeitsgruppen (AG's) ?

- arbeiten mit der Stadtgesellschaft schlagen und bereiten ggfl. Lernlabore und Werkstätten vor

Gremien

Weitere Formate

Wer arbeitet im Modellprojekt Rathausblock zusammen?

Verwaltung(snahe) Akteur*innen

Stadtgesellschaft

beauftragte Dienstleister*innen

Nächste Schritte

Die im Modellprojekt **durch den Zukunftsrat getroffenen Entscheidungen** müssen wie jegliche Belange **im Anschluss über den offiziellen Weg** durch die Entscheidungsebene **verabschiedet werden.** Die Entscheidungsebene besteht aus der **bezirklichen sowie landeseigenen Verwaltung** (Bezirksamt Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg, Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung, Bauen und Wohnen sowie weiteren Ableilungen wie der Senatsverwaltung für Finanzen) **politischen Gremien,** wie der Bezirksverordnetenversammlung und dem Abgeordnetenhaus, **und an der Umsetzung beteiligte private Akteur*innen** wie die Wohnungsbaugesellschaft Mitte mbH (WBM) und der Berliner Immobilienmanagement GmbH (BIM).

Quelle: Designed by Freepik bearbeitet durch: S.T.E.R.N. GmbH

Strukturen der Zusammenarbeit im Modellprojekt Rathausblock

Commons and commoning

For a long time, commons were viewed as something tragic. A communally used pasture, it was assumed, would be degraded in the medium term because none of the users would care about regeneration and protection of the pasture. This thesis was first formulated in the 19th century and was taken up in the essay "*The Tragedy of the Commons*" by the Malthusian Garrett Hardin in the 1960s, and thus become known to a wider audience. However, the assumption that commons will meet a tragic end if they are not promptly privatised turned out to be poorly researched and narrowly considered, and is no longer taken seriously in professional discourse.

A more nuanced view of commons has been the norm since the 1980s, when the American political economist Elinor Ostrom researched successful commons projects, namely associations of people who manage limited local resources as collective property in the long term and prevent resource depletion through autonomously developed measures. Her practice-focused approach broke from the abstract view that had dominated the discourse on natural resource depletion until then:

"Instead of there being a single solution to a single problem, I argue that many solutions exist to cope with many different problems. Instead of presuming that optimal institutional solutions can be designed easily and imposed at low cost by external authorities, I argue that 'getting the institutions right' is a difficult, time-consuming, conflict-invoking process. It is a process that requires reliable information about time and place variables as well as a broad repertoire of culturally acceptable rules." (Ostrom 1990, p. 14)

With this approach, Ostrom described which social practices, which rules, economies and sanctions had emerged as solutions to the various problems of collective self-management in diverse projects and cultural contexts. It was Ostrom who classified the commons as solutions "beyond the market and the state" (ibid.) – a description that is still frequently used today. Together with colleagues, she bundled recurring characteristics of commons institutions into eight design principles (ibid.). Today, a lively discourse involving practitioners, anthropologists and economists builds upon their work. The 'modern commons' consists of natural resources, produced goods, and the skills of the individuals and groups involved (see Hahnel 2021, p. 101).

Reflecting a further shift of emphasis away from the commons as administrative goods and towards social practices (i.e., the actions of self-organised communities), the term *commoning* has come into increased use since the late 2000s (cf. Euler 2018 and Helfrich/Euler 2021). Commons are created through commoning.

In order to do justice in describing the emergent multiform commons communities, the researcher and IASS alumna Silke Helfrich, who passed away last year, proposed a first draft for a pattern language of commoning in 2021 together with David

Bollier and Julia Petzold. Their wish was to locate the phenomenon and all its aspects within existing social relations and at the same time to map the three effective dimensions of living commoning – in social life, in conscious self-organisation, and in the satisfaction of needs: "In dealing with each other, in politics and economics" (Helfrich/Bollier 2019, p. 89). In this way, the pattern language serves as an inspiration for the initiation of Commons-Public Partnerships. It not only offers experience-saturated orientation for the commons community, but more importantly provides the public sector with an understanding of the processual conditions of possibility of long-term self-organisation of local resources, which lies at the heart of CPPs.

If we understand Public-Civic Partnerships as forms of cooperation between the public sector and local civil society, Commons-Public Partnerships can be seen as **cooperation between the public sector and commons-based local civil society**. What does that mean? On the commons side, the cooperation is characterised by a long-term organisation of shared values, goals, processes and spaces of trust, legitimate and autonomous sanction mechanisms, and a common understanding of boundaries. The pattern language for this is the concept of the "semi-permeable membrane" In order to counteract free-riding and appropriation, but also their own isolation, the commoners determine and reflect on solutions and processes for the admission of new commoners into the community, for the use of the common good resources, and for relations "with the outside".[1] In cooperation with the public sector, the commons association claims co-ownership of the common project, i.e. more than the often unilaterally granted and vague promise of "co-determination" and the abandonment of classical "control logic" (Große Kracht/Hagedorn 2021, p. 414).

It should be emphasised once again that the transition from PCP to CPP is fluid. Of course, every civil society organisation involved in a PCP also maintains a certain degree of self-constitution.

3.1.1 What are Commons-Public Partnerships?

Due to their fluid boundaries, it is difficult to determine the number of CPPs currently in existence. At least two CPPs exist in the UK in the field of urban development: Wards Corner in the London borough of Haringey and Union Street in Plymouth. The boxes on pages 18 and 19 describe respectively a CPP project in Germany and a project with some CPP characteristics. All of these examples show how the practice of commoning can be incorporated into local public planning and public service processes (Heron, Milburn, Russell 2021). The Wards Corner CPP in London serves the stated aim of developing the eponymous building as a community-led resource and "democratically revitalising" the surrounding area (ibid., p. 7). The focus is on relationships: the CPP creates low-threshold deliberative spaces so that, bit by bit, more self-developed and self-managed processes and structures can emerge in the neighbourhood. Keir Milburn, Kai Heron and Bertie Russell, three commons researchers working in the UK, write: "The [Wards Corner] CPP embodies the principle that community-*led* must also mean community *owned*." Thus, long-term effective cooperation between public entities and local communities cannot be based on unilaterally granted 'dialogue' alone. A structural mapping of the ownership relationships within the emergent project is needed to provide a basis for successful long-term co-governance (ibid., p. 8).

The second CPP, Union Street in Plymouth, aims to maintain and increase the well-being of local residents. Unlike Wards Corner, it operates near privately owned residential and commercial blocks. This circumstance confronts them with the challenge that an upgrading of the neighbourhood would

1 Commons associations can be clearly and unequivocally distinguished from other (regressive) autonomy and self-sufficiency tendencies such as the extreme right-wing *Reichsbürger* movement in Germany (see also section 3.1.2) due to the values, principles and practices of a non-hierarchical and semi-open commons.

set gentrification dynamics in motion and thus endanger the very community that is supposed to be protected and preserved. Therefore, a collectively managed "Land Bank" (Ltd.) was established, which buys properties on the market and organises democratic management by the local community. In this way, the proceeds from the real estate economy remain at the disposal of the local residents and the surrounding properties in Union Street are gradually withdrawn from the market, which allows for further self-sufficient growth in well-being without endangering the community (ibid., 13ff).

Milburn and Russell (2019) and Heron, Milburn and Russell (2021) identify the following defining features of the two aforementioned models of Commons-Public Partnerships:

1. *Blending of different forms of knowledge*: Technical expertise, lived experience and locally situated knowledge.
2. *Shared ownership of the emergent institution,* shared affiliation and shared peer-to-peer governance by the public sector and commons association.
3. *Shared democratic decision-making* on the distribution of additional income generated during the operation of the emergent project.
4. *Secured long-term perspective to* advance democratisation in society through commoning.
5. *Shared understanding* that a commons association does not simply exist, but must always be enabled by continuously creating spaces for self-organisation, social interaction, regeneration and decision-making.

In the following, we would like to look at three aspects of CPPs in more detail: commoning, long-term & co-ownership, and formal constitution.

3.1.2 Commoning: a qualitative approach to Commons-Public Partnerships

As explained above, commons communities are characterised by evolved forms of self-governance. The commoners develop or have forms and processes that enable them to manage their affairs in a self-determined manner, to pursue a common vision, to reflect on and modify their self-organisation, and to impose sanctions for violations of the rules. These processes are never complete, because they are also constantly reflected upon by the commoners and adapted to their living needs and contexts. Frequently, joint practice leads to agreed decisions being supplement or implemented in a different way. The following five exemplary patterns of commoning illustrate how this can be put into practice:[2]

- *Pool, cap & share:* In order to preserve the commons in the long term, commoners regulate the disposal of those resources that diminish through use. An allocation practice that decouples give & take combines three elements: gathering what is available, setting a usage cap, and sharing. Not everyone has to contribute here. They still get what they need, where possible.
- *Recognising labour & (care) work as equally worthy:* In a holistic understanding of work, care work and 'productive' work are equally valued. Both deserve diverse forms of appreciation that are not oriented towards what is sellable and at what price. Payment is not the primary means of recognition. What is crucial is that people have enough time to do what needs to be done and that they decide on the kind of recognition they want.
- *Dealing with conflicts in a way that preserves relationships:* In protected spaces, conflicts are made visible and their causes are understood. Through an attitude of respect and mutual

[2] The full Sample Card Set of Commoning can be ordered via the CommonsBlog, if available, and can also be viewed online: https://commons.blog/2020/12/11/jetzt-bestellbar-commoning-oder-wie-transformation-gelingt-eine-mustersprache/

concern, relationships can be transformed without curtailing them. In some instances, separation may be required. Complaints do not refer to specific behaviour or content. The expression of criticism goes hand in hand with personal appreciation.

- *Keep commons and commerce apart:* In commons, the careful use of money is essential to safeguard cohesion and intrinsic motivations. In this way, internal goals are placed above external ones – such as project funding criteria. It is important to resist pressure to exploit, price competition and strict reciprocity. Internal cash flows are decoupled from who generates what income and how.
- *Trading sovereignly in terms of price:* Hardly any commons exist in a market context entirely without the exchange of money. Fair trade becomes essential. For this, market prices must be ignored and all production as well as brokerage costs must be made transparent. Commoners determine prices in such a way that the needs of producers, intermediaries and consumers are reflected as well as possible.

Especially in the initial phase of new commons associations, commoners must engage in intensive processes to find common direction and practice. The 33 identified models can help them ask some of the relevant questions. However, the solutions that emerge from these processes are many and varied. Getting to know and navigating the diverse opinions and currents is indispensable for finding common ground. Gesa Hatesohl, who accompanied these processes in the Hansaforum and the B-Side in Münster, says: “social interaction ideally leads to the joint creation of something new”.

3.1.3 Formal constitution

The self-constitution of a cooperative commons association includes the creation in a legal structure. To this end, the values and goals of the community, its mandate-granting and decision-making processes, and the framework conditions of the common production and reproduction activities are made transparent both internally and externally in a constitution. Ideally, the commons association can already draw on some common practice and experience. However, it is also important to provide space for reorientation to allow for lively co-governance as well as reorientation, reflection and change.

With its formal constitution, the commons association ideally finds legal and organisational forms that do not inhibit its diverse social processes. Existing commons associations in Germany have tended to adopt conventional legal forms such as the cooperative (eG) or the registered association (e.V.). But limited liability companies (gGmbHs) and related legal forms can also offer flexible framework conditions for commons communities, depending on the project. Johann Steudle and Dr Johannes Euler of the Commons Institute are currently working on questions of commons-based organisational formation in the German-speaking world (cf. annex)

Once these framework conditions have been clarified, it is easier for commoners to outline their concrete contribution to public services and to show which public welfare, inclusion or transformational benefits can arise from their commoning when it is woven into public funding and transformation programmes. On this self-constituted basis, the commons association has the self-awareness necessary to enter into a formal, equal and long-term relationship with the public sector. Organic relationships, space for continuous self-organisation and self-orientation, and the semi-permeable membrane that develops in this way enable the association to maintain a balance between reliability on the outside and needs orientation and spontaneity on the inside. Since the commons have also developed a common understanding of their capacity limits and the limits of their willingness to cooperate in the processes of self-constitution, the initiation of a realistic successful commons-public cooperation also becomes easier from the perspective of the public sector.

If, on the other hand, these degrees of self-organisation are not yet sufficiently present when civil-society-public cooperation is agreed, this can endanger the cooperation processes and lead the individuals and groups involved into conflicts or overload situations. This happened with the Kreuzberg Rathausblock project in Berlin and is described from the perspective of the civic group *City from Below*, which was one of the first to participate (cf. Stadt von unten 2021). Their reflection reveals the

difficulties that can arise when the framework for cooperation is conceived unilaterally by a public body; i.e., when the city largely predetermines the initial framework and content.

This led to the experience on the civil society side of having to 'chase after' the processes. The political group was not prepared for this kind of work – it exceeded the remit of the voluntary initiative. The professionalisation of parts of the group eventually led to the group drifting apart, torn between the pole of grand transformative political goals and immediate cooperation with the city. "City from Below" finally began to exit the cooperation process in 2021, three years after the start of the PCP, in recognition of what had been achieved together. The document concludes with seven lessons/tips for civil society organisations entering into cooperation processes.

For public sector designers, an examination of these experiences can help to create more space, understanding and support for self-constitution and self-organisation on the part of civil society in cooperative projects and to see the common benefit in this. In the discussions of initiating cooperation projects, it is then a matter of getting to know the needs and goals of the entities involved and, on this basis, jointly shaping the institution or the emergent project and defining the parameters of further cooperation. The essential activities of civil society commons are usually summarised as the collective management of the commons, the provision of services, and the support of community-building institutions (cf. van Laerhoven/Barnes, p. 369 ff.). In the initiation process, these areas of responsibility are broken down more closely and prepared on a case-specific basis. What specific activities do commoners engage in in a CPP? Which products flow 'back' into the administration and community? Does the CPP take over entire processes/tasks or just individual process steps (e.g., budget allocation or concept development)? Moreover, how can an appropriate monitoring and evaluation process consider the necessary freedoms for commoning and public accountability in equal measure? Working on a Commons-Public Partnership canvas (see appendix, in German) can facilitate and accompany these processes.

In their 2019 *Commons Manifesto*, Bauwens, Kostakis and Pazaitis propose the model of an *open cooperative* for this purpose – an institution that is legally and statutorily oriented towards the creation of commons and shared resources. Open cooperatives are characterised by the fact that they

- Reflect negative external effects internally;
- Apply multi-stakeholder governance models;
- Contribute to the creation of digital and physical commons; and
- Are socially and politically organised with regard to global concerns, even if they act locally (Bauwens et al 2019, p. 57).

Unlike other forms of public partnerships, which are based on a mere agreement to provide services CPPs establish durable, resilient and responsive alliances for the maintenance and building of com munities, which should be taken into account by the public sector in the initiation process.

B-Side and Hansaforum | Münster, North Rhine-Westphalia

In Münster, the Hansaforum has shown how, with a handful of commons enthusiasts and adequate public funding, it is possible to develop structures and lively formats of self-organisation for a city district.

Over a period of two years, the Hansaforum generated numerous participatory events and structured processes with randomly selected residents of the Hansaviertel (Hansa district) in Münster. Among other things, they developed a local Neighbourhood Well-being Index, a catalogue of criteria for social-ecological urban development projects deemed worthy of support by the residents of Hansaviertel. The selection and implementation of the project funding was organised by the local community during a total of six Hansa Conventions using emergent governance solutions.

One year after the completion of the initial project cycle, the process of self-constitution in the Hansa district continues. Today, the Hansaforum in Münster's Hansa district can be seen as a prototype for the self-constitution of a neighbourhood, an inspiring model for city makers in the German-speaking world and beyond. The next stage is for the neighbourhood to organise itself as a commons. Now that the first steps towards self-constitution have been taken, the Hansaforum team is striving to anchor their community within a Commons-Public Partnership. This form of establishing a CPP in two stages – first model self-constitution and then anchoring within the framework of a CPP – could serve as a model for further urban development CPPs.

https://hansaforum-muenster.de/

3.1.4 Longevity

In short-term partnerships, civil society initiatives and activists often have precarious experiences – for example they are placed in competition with one another by uncertain funding, which undermines their strength, that of local collaboration and inclusion. Or they have to continuously spend time and energy on restoring their funding situation, for example by continuously writing funding applications – work that often remains uncompensated, invisible and ineffectual in the event of rejection (cf. McGrath 2012, p. 15f). This in turn strains relations within local initiatives and ties the possibility to participate in political processes to social privileges, which reinforces existing relations of injustice in society. All these circumstances make commoning (i.e. local self-organisation and responsibility) more difficult at a time when, as Simon Mertens from B-Side notes, "very large sections of the population need to be able to work 10-20 hours a week for the common good so that we have a chance of coping with the major crises of the present and future."

It was for this reason that Silke Helfrich saw the long-term prospects for survival as a condition of a CPP. She argues that a CPP must take into account the security of the commoners as well as the ownership situation of resources, real estate and land. Accordingly, in the initiation phase of a CPP, the public sector and commoners are challenged to look for suitable forms of protection for their cooperation: "For example, through a prohibition of alienation in the private interest. Or through a mechanism similar to the rental apartment-house syndicate (Mietshäuser Syndikat), an alliance of non-profit housing projects. All issues directly affecting the legal status would then have to be decided in agreement with the 'partner' – i.e., the commoners. And since there would only be two votes, this resulted in a compulsion to agree. Bonds can also be taken out in the case of heritable building rights. This

provides legal certainty for at least 99 years. Whatever is permitted under heritable building rights applies equally to commons-public partnerships" (Helfrich 2017). Furthermore, Ostrom's design principle of longevity must be applied to CPPs, which requires at a minimum the "recognition of the right of users to determine their own rules" from the public side. For the protection of the commoners, Helfrich considered models such as an "unconditional basic commons income" (ibid.). In addition to tenure and financial security for commoners, a long-term perspective also requires the structural and social reproduction and regeneration of the commons association. Tim Többe from B-Side comments: "Our project so far has been a relay race. To make the processes work, even if different people work on it in different phases, it is important to document handovers and pass on knowledge all the time. Unfortunately, consistency isn't always a matter of course." To ensure that the active participants do not overextend themselves in the long run, Max Trussat (also from B-Side) recommends a regular capacity check of all participants and to ask again and again: "What do you need and what can you offer right now?"

Of course, the partners involved on both sides need flexibility at the beginning and the possibility to coordinate their working methods, which is why it is useful to ask in the initial phase which essential processes need to be consolidated *in utero* (i.e., before the cooperation agreement comes into being, and which can be decided on later on the basis of experience). Existing public-civic partnerships can be seen as valuable pioneers and role models for consultation (cf. Heron/ Milburn/Russell 2021, p. 10).

On the part of the administration, CPPs require "lasting collective commitment" and the willingness to make corrections and improvements based on what has been learned (Rendueles 2015, p. 212). This requires an expansion of the "institutional imagination [...] [to] challenge homogenisation and demand that political deliberation respect the contingency of practical rationality" (ibid., p. 231). But what are the reasons for public administration, the state and the community to engage in this form of cooperation? The following chapter is dedicated to answering this question.

Region in Transition | Waldkappel, Hesse

The intention of the "Region in Transition" initiative is to help build structures in the Werra-Meißner district (North Hesse) that will make it possible in the long term to organise various aspects of life (housing, food, energy, mobility, etc.) in a commons-oriented way. The aim is to create spaces in which people can experience what commoning means in their everyday lives.

The starting point of the "Region in Transition" initiative was a group of young people who revived the vacant "Fuchsmühle" in Waldkappel in October 2020 and founded the initiative's first project house there. By founding a cooperative and through the action of many supportive people, the Fuchsmühle was acquired collectively.

Concrete projects that have been launched in the first two years include encounter and participation formats such as the vacancy working group (a working group composed of citizens and local politicians on the question of how the many vacant properties in the region can be revitalised), cultural offerings, solidarity-based agriculture, a food cooperative, a meadow orchard initiative, a common forest garden, and much more.

A current project that ties into the idea of the CPP is a four-year real-world laboratory on solidarity-based economic activity, implemented by the Werra-Meißner district in cooperation

with *Region im Wandel e.V.* and other actors. The aim of the laboratory is to enter a discourse on transformative forms of economic activity with various actors from local politics and civil society. An additional aim is to strengthen existing local solidarity-based economy projects and support further prototypes and long-term solidarity-based economy projects in their start-up phases.

https://fuchsmühle.org/

4. Potential benefits of CPPs

CPPs offer a flexible framework for embedding self-organising and sufficiency-based structures within the state polity. In this way, they contribute to the long-term growth of commons and anchor feedback mechanisms from local implementation in administrative processes. Thus, they have the potential to ensure both (1) stability and (2) democratic change:

1. CPPs fulfil at least ten of the twelve criteria of *deep-time organisations*, so called because they are likely to survive for a long time or pass on their culture and values (cf. Hanusch/Biermann 2020). In phases of social change, deep-time organisations strengthen social cohesion, for example by promoting and structurally anchoring democratic maturity.
2. In the context of transformation processes – be it urban development or social-ecological transformation – CPPs help to identify and implement solutions that work locally. Through the knowledge of process gained from commoning, genuine conflicts, for example over issues of use or development, are aired in a clear and targeted manner and bearing in mind local considerations. This allows those affected to effectively balance their interests. Accordingly, by incorporating commoning know-how, CPPs ensure a continuously renewed legitimacy for the change processes. They also help to ensure that any changes meet the needs of those affected.

In the following section, we delve into some potential areas of action and approaches for the development of local CPPs in the context of social-ecological transformation.

Deepened democracy through lived local practice

The case of Wards Corner shows how CPPs can contribute to creating and maintaining local spaces for deliberation. They create incentives to practice democracy, to cultivate political education and more aspects of daily life in democratic coexistence (Heron; Milburn; Russell 2021,4ff). More specifically, people experience and learn in these spaces that decisions find greater acceptance if those affected are integrated into the process in advance. In other words, the quality of jointly developed solutions improves when quiet voices are also included in the decision-making process and a wide range of concerns are taken on board constructively with the help of consensus-oriented procedures. Commons-based groups also often find ways to centre situated knowledge (experiential knowledge in the context of existing social power relations). This allows groups to work together to raise awareness of discriminatory behaviour and to create more inclusive spaces. Furthermore, CPPs can counteract the growing potential for reactionary anti-democratic appropriation and withdrawal from the socio-political decision-making process that has been observed in many places (cf. BfV 2022, p. 102 ff. and Kemper 2022). Commons-Public Partnerships can preventively counteract this decoupling of state and citizenry by giving citizens the opportunity to mediate resources on their own behalf and by representing democratically legitimised, permanent alternatives to such trends.

Commoning promotes sufficiency practices

In the context of commons and Earth system research, the consideration of global public goods (global commons) has acquired special significance. With the rapid worsening of climate impacts such as extreme weather events, increasing scarcity and distribution issues in basic services are foreseeable.

In 2019, a study by Germany's Federal Environment Agency (Hackforth et al. 2019) highlighted the many ways in which decentralised commoning can support resource conservation. According to this report, the promotion and expansion of commons in general have been embraced in many areas of social-ecological policy, including food production and economics. In fact, the proposal to expand and redevelop the commons is among the top ten policy recommendations in the degrowth literature (Fitzpatrick; Parrique; Cosme 2022, p. 5).

Enabling complex structural change processes that previously seemed out of reach for public administrations

At latest since the ratification of the Paris Agreement by the Bundestag in 2016, it has been clear within Germany that the transition to a zero-emission society within the remaining CO_2 residual budget of 1.5 or 2°C is within the remit of public services. In the national political debate, this challenge is too often equated with the energy transition, which without question comprises a large part of the task. However, with the 2018 Interim Report on 1.5°C, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change reiterated that the transformation is about rapid, far-reaching, and unprecedented changes in *all* areas of society (IPCC SPM 2018). Admittedly, not all transformation tasks can be managed centrally in a similar way to the decarbonisation of electricity generation at federal and state level. For example, due to their complexity, the agricultural or food transition, the heat, mobility, material and resource transitions, for example, can to a large extent only be organised and implemented decentrally at the municipal level. These tasks also affect the lives and habits of society much more directly, which makes the need to ensure legitimacy all the more critical. Last but not least, social-ecological transformation also entails a cultural challenge to create the necessary spirit of determination through participation and design. As a flexible administrative module, CPPs have already been shown to fulfil this function while ensuring integration of processes into existing administrative programmes.

From detailed social-ecological solutions to tangible decarbonised lifestyles

The most recent sub-report of the IPCC Report on Limiting the Climate Crisis highlighted both the need for different economies and the potential of decentralised technologies (IPCC AR6 WG3, pp. 8-27 f.). However, it is only among experts that an overall idea exists of what life in Germany could be like if these solutions were widely applied; among the public a more fragmented picture prevails. Yet many of the solutions have long been available – from urban development, urban and rural mobility, food sovereignty and the circular economy to social inclusion and dialogue. These solutions are, however, often not competitive in the marketplace due to their social-ecological sophistication and existing subsidy policies in favour of fossil- and growth-oriented corporate models. If we think, for example, of permaculture farming, combined plants for heat production and soil cultivation (PyCCS, cf. Werner et al. 2022), small businesses oriented towards the common good, repair cafés – these all exist, but are isolated in the hobby or precariously financed project sectors.

For decarbonised and climate-positive lifestyles to become more locally available, self-evident and comfortable, they must be made accessible to broad sections of society. CPPs can host these processes in the form of decentralised transformation centres in each region, fulfilling the important hinge roles of local civil society initiation, administrative planning and facilitation, and institutional connection. By making multiple cross-sector solutions and technologies accessible in one place, cross-fertilisation and combinations of solutions can occur in transformation centres. Equipped with low-threshold and free offers for the local community, these solutions can become sustainable trades, routines and eventually translate into lifestyles.

The form such a commons-public transformation centre for Berlin could take has been described in detail by the group *Transformation Haus und Feld* based on a trend-setting vision by Cléo Mieulet

(Skizzen für ein Transformationszentrum 2021). She explains: “There is no cheaper and safer electricity than the one I produce together with my neighbours, and there is no better and cheaper food than the one I produce in solidarity with my neighbours in Brandenburg – with transformation centres, neighbourhood communities are empowered to take more responsibility for their living environment. Many everyday needs can be met in the neighbourhood through networks.” According to Mieulet, a transformation centre combines the knowledge and skills of local solution owners from the different areas and sectors of social-ecological transformation. The solution owners are materially secured through the Commons Public Transformation Centre to train citizens free of charge, to develop their knowledge locally, and to combine it with problem-solving skills from other areas of transformation.

Decentralised, planned and demand-oriented transformation of the labour market

The social-ecological transformation is linked in many ways to the current and future structuring of our world of work. On the one hand, a large part of the population is dependent on extractive, climate-destroying and thus profitable economic sectors. One of the most obvious examples is the automotive industry with its almost 800,000 employees in Germany alone (BMWK, 2021). From the point of view of the employees, the survival of this industry understandably appears existentially necessary, while at the same time it is one of the most emission-intensive industries and thus ultimately also highly dangerous for those same employees (see also Kemp et al. 2022).

At the same time, the social-ecological transformation is essentially not a question of available employment, but of available labour power. The energy transition, the heat transition, the agricultural transition and the material transition present society with practical challenges that require both a high degree of professionalism in currently marginal occupational groups and a broad, decentralised structure for the availability of experts in those fields. According to a recent report by Spiegel magazine, there is a shortage of electricians, investment consultants, energy advisers, painters, and installation and repair specialists for photovoltaic systems, ventilation systems and wallboxes for the energy and heat transition. The German Sanitation, Heating and Air Conditioning Association (Zentralverband Sanitär Heizung Klima) estimates that there is a shortage of 60,000 fitters for heat pumps, while the German government speaks of a need for an additional 400,000 skilled workers by 2025 for climate protection and construction (Dettmer et al 2022, p. 12). To meet these challenges, training opportunities must now be created and in some cases new professional certifications developed. In addition, solutions need to be adapted locally and further developed across sectors.

In the medium term, the sectors and scope of our work will evolve away from manufacturing as part of the process of comprehensive decarbonisation. The vision paper entitled *Future for All* by the think tank Konzeptwerk Neue Ökonomie in Leipzig offers a sweeping vision what gainful employment may look like after these transformations have occurred: a strengthening of local services and reproductive activities, such as recycling and regional food production. Localised care work could become the single largest field of activity (Pinnow et al 2020).

As local transformation centres, CPPs can address all these challenges in a decentralised manner. By 1) locating expertise and making it accessible, 2) providing training in a timely and responsive manner, and (3) responding flexibly to the local economic and social situation, they allow society to cautiously manage the transformation of the world of work. The public framework ensures on one hand low-threshold access to this expertise and on the other administrative control so that local needs for skilled workers can be met. Through start-up consultations and start-up support, professional structures and solutions can emerge in harmony both with the needs of urban and rural communities and planetary boundaries. As commoning becomes more established as a self-organisation practice of these transformation centres, important processes for harmonisation and connected perceptions of caring and creative activities can also be initiated (cf. Zechner 2021).

A new form of local infrastructure management

The cooperation of public institutions and local people in managing commons and infrastructure and in meeting basic needs has been discussed many times. In this context, Commons-Public Partnerships can not only be integrated into everyday forms of public service, but as "basic social innovations" (Exner/Kratzwald 2021, p. 187) also reveal compatible transformation paths for structural change. In addition, they hold the potential to "de-bureaucratise" public functions (Bauwens/Kostakis 2015, p. 4). Commons-Public Partnerships can help to ensure a locally coordinated, adaptive and responsible use of water, electricity, heat and other resources of the everyday economy (cf. Foundational Economy Collective 2019 and Filippo/Jones 2022) as well as of earmarked finances (cf. participatory budgets) and labour.

Generational dialogue and activation of the localism for sustainability

The local environment provides essential conditions for the spread of sustainable lifestyles and practices (see Brocchi 2019). In the areas of housing and neighbourhood development, Commons-Public Partnerships can promote forms of local development that are matched to municipal goals and based on resident-owned property management (cf. Helfrich et al. 2021). In the future, Commons-Public Partnerships in the construction and real estate sectors might constitute an additional form of non-profit housing and a development opportunity for social housing alongside public construction via the "solidarity building industry" and cooperatives (cf. Lawson 2020). Community Land Trusts (CLTs), which manage urban properties in committee structures composed of local government, politics, residents and neighbourhoods, may represent a purely controlling form of Commons-Public Partnerships. In addition, resulting collective housing forms and co-housing could contribute to defusing urban land use conflicts through shared communal and economic spaces, which would prevent gentrification.

Vacancy management and urban development

Various concrete CPPs can be used to address 'glocal' phenomena. In urban settlements, for example, Commons-Public Partnerships with public institutions, neighbourhood management and established civil society partners can help detect and document vacant buildings (see also Nassauer/Raskin 2014) and develop concepts for re-use that are embedded in public development strategies as well as the local context. There are opportunities to link up with existing structural development approaches such as CLTs, housing associations and other cross-household solidarity models, as well as local sustainability and infrastructure projects such as citizen energy cooperatives and superblocks. In addition to municipal pre-emptive rights, Commons-Public Partnerships could thus form a public "transformation reservation" that links future neighbourhood and urban development to socially just climate protection measures. In addition, they could be a starting point for defunding and divestment strategies, social security and "reconstructions of collective responsibility" (Kim 2022), which have been much discussed since the Black Lives Matter protests against racialised police violence (McLeod 2022).

Crisis prevention and civic protection

With the hundreds of thousands of volunteers in the volunteer fire brigades and the Federal Agency for Technical Relief (THW), Germany has strong, if incomplete, role models for basic services covered by shared resources and unpaid work. The research project run by the Fraunhofer Institute entitled "Crisis Management and Resilience" (KResCo) recommends strengthening ad hoc networks and new types of exchange formats in civic protection and institutionalising "partnerships with civil society groups" (Fraunhofer Innovation 2022, p. 2). Commons-Public Partnerships might not only facilitate disaster communication in the event of damage and serve to bring together local approaches to solutions. In particular, a combination of agile and local self-help competencies with supra-regional and

specialised competencies of state institutions could contribute to an accelerated, targeted damage limitation that is integrated into the local context.

Digitisation, online platforms and transformative research

Sustainability and digitalisation are 'megatrends' of community politics. The necessary harmonisation of both leitmotifs or the embedding of technological development within social and ecological boundaries has also been promoted in large measure by civil society groups in recent years (cf. for example Höfner/Frick 2019); today's understanding of commons is closely linked to free and open-source software and hardware (Helfrich/Bollier 2014). Open source, shareable software tends to require less energy than proprietary alternatives (Gröger et al. 2018). It is therefore advisable to also examine how digitisation projects can be linked to Commons-Public Partnerships (cf. Fuchs 2018) in order to anchor existing approaches to the participation of groups creating common goods and to integrate external commons-oriented digitisation competences into public administration (see, for example, DisCO Framework, Troncoso/Utratel 2020, p. 69 f.). In the disciplines of transformative research and citizen science, it is worth looking at the extent to which CPPs may be used to initiate and transfer research results and to conceptually expand existing locations such as Germany's BMBF (federal ministry for education and research) research campuses.

Inclusion in post-migration societies

Marginalised and discriminated groups often experience state institutions and policies as a "constant attack on the commons" (Harney/Moten 2016) that delegitimise and disrupt situational constructions of community ("undercommons", ibid.). By recognising and proactively including those structures that already exist, CPPs can counteract this experience and help create discrimination-sensitive, semi-public spaces "where one feels safe to disagree" (Ólafur Elíasson, cited in Mazzucato 2022). The protection, transfer and integration of those structures into Commons-Public Partnerships could offer an important step on the path to an inclusive and diverse society by seeing and legitimising the undercommons, and expanding its impact and capacities through peer recognition. Follow-up studies could pursue this approach, for example, within the nexus of (post-)migrant experiences, refuge, and access to education and housing.

5. Conceptual issues and areas of tension

Although initial Commons-Public Partnerships have been formed and nothing stands in the way of further local pioneering projects, some conceptual questions remain, to which we must pay attention in the short and medium terms if we are to remove obstacles and to the mainstreaming of CPPs in public service in the long term, especially given the challenges of social-ecological transformation.

Building bridges in accounting

A Commons-Public Partnership involves the merging of two different administrative philosophies. As we have hopefully been able to show here, this merging can result in a productive relationship. A highly sensitive area within this cooperation is likely to be budgeting and accounting. Commoners receive public resources to the extent that they assume responsibility for providing public services. Recognising their integrative power and contribution to deepening democracy through commoning practices, it can initially be difficult to delineate the extent of that service since commoning per se contributes to public services of general value. As communities of trust, commons associations are used to cooperative forms of management, and to establishing coherent and cohesive ways to implement them. However, partnering in emergent projects or institutions requires them to quantify and formalise their processes to a certain extent.

In the initial phase of a project, two of the great strengths of commoning – its multifunctionality and the flexibility of self-organisation – encounter the challenge of schematisation and insertion into public planning routines. How can decision-making processes be quantified? How much monthly budget is needed for community care, conflict mediation and reflection? How can a certain degree of redundancy be taken into account and encouraged in a CPP? All these aspects of commoning cannot be attributed to a specific benefit, process or goal; it is the community as a whole that sustains itself and continuously creates the conditions for a successful CPP. Accordingly, this community should be recognised and promoted as a whole. If funding is too narrowly earmarked, this can also limit the flexibility of the commons association, for example where funds are left over in one place but needs arise in another, as participants from the B-Side project in Münster have testified. Making the necessary concessions to allow for financial flexibility does not mean one side must take a leap of faith. Rather, it is about both sides testing out common forms of *community accountability* and finding a balance between predictability, transparency and flexibility.

Safeguarding the commoners

Previous experience suggests that where commoners take on full-time positions launching and supervising CPPs this can lead to the re-establishment of classic project management structures. It is therefore desirable to consistently practise commoning even in the start-up phase. This means maintaining previous employment relationships and ensuring sufficient freedom for the core participants. In this context, the relationship between main and secondary employment would have to be explored in greater depth. Future studies should discuss how Commons-Public Partnerships could be linked to the testing of the Unconditional Basic Income (UBI), the four-day week and similar ideas. Likewise, possible discrimination effects due to differences in time wealth distribution should be taken into account.

Structurally enable commons associations

There are undoubtedly some commons associations in every region of Germany that are sufficiently solid and experienced in their self-organisation to enter directly into CPP initiation processes. Nevertheless, the degree of civil society self-organisation is not yet sufficient to roll out CPP on a large scale. Following decades of neoliberal policies, not only have the commons in the public sphere become scarce, but local communities have also been atomised (cf. Heron/Milburn/Russell 2021). To this day, neoliberal policies are driving individualisation, outsourcing, the economisation of social relations, self-optimisation and isolation. This makes it impossible for sustainable, resilient local commons communities to emerge. A policy that seeks to harness the power of Commons-Public Partnerships should focus primarily on overriding these drivers and countering them with measures designed to strengthen local communities, for example by establishing an unconditional basic income or promoting local self-development projects. And by recognising and enabling existing structures of mutual aid (undercommons, see above). Equipped with a basic intersectional understanding, it can thus succeed in creating the organisational basis for mainstreaming CPPs that are anchored in the full diversity of local communities.

Some social movements represent an exception to this rule. Climate justice groups, for example, have succeeded since 2015 in obtaining viable structures for their own governance. Organised locally, a network of structures can be found in every medium-sized city today that initiates community building, makes decisions, organises events and demonstrations, and engages in networking. So far, these structures have been geared towards putting pressure on politicians and administrators to implement the transformation. However, it would also be possible to place some of the responsibility for implementation on these structures. Thus, local groups of movements can function as the civil society starting point for the formation of an emergent local institution (cf. Milburn/Russell 2019).

CPPs and their costs

Finally, a legitimate question arises as to whether and to what extent the use of public funds for the maintenance of CPPs can be justified and legitimised in terms of public interest. As CPPs help to bring locally legitimate solutions to bear on core problems, they can be counted against the savings that accrue when civil society defences against policies deemed illegitimate are removed. Sascha Kullak, one of the spokespersons of the Hansaforum, highlights the processing costs that the public sector regularly incurs in lawsuits against infrastructure projects.

Moreover, if emerging CPPs pursue social-ecological goals, these can be offset against the consequential climate costs of further delaying transformative policies. Furthermore, it is to be expected that with the adaptation of subsidy policies to climate targets, money formerly spent on fossil fuel subsidies will be freed up for investment in commons and local self-governance. Moreover, in recognition of the multiple public benefits that arise from the promotion of commons more generally, a targeted taxation of those entities and processes that have so far benefited from the appropriation and overuse of commons is conceivable.

CPPs, liability and law

As stated above, commons can freely constitute themselves and enter into agreements with public institutions. Nevertheless, Commons-Public Partnerships raise questions of responsibility (liability) and formal non-profit status, which are partly cushioned by auxiliary constructions from conventional corporate forms. Their role in the “perspectives of solidarity in law” (Röhner 2021) must therefore be discussed separately with regard to transformative legal design, and in view of related discussions about “responsible ownership” or institutions of public law operated by civil society and oriented towards mission instead of profit (see also Lomfeld 2021).

Private investment in CPP and the danger of appropriation

In contrast to private – and thus to a certain extent arbitrary – compensation structures for deficient state provision (such as philanthropy), CPPs achieve "de-appropriation, [i.e.] the establishment of conditions under which exclusive appropriation [...] is no longer possible for anyone" (Loick 2016, p. 120). Here it remains to be discussed to what extent current private funding structures such as foundations can nevertheless be involved or active as co-initiators of CPPs without appropriating the emergent institution (the *embodied mission*) or the commons association. Can private foundations be used to provide initial and/or permanent funding for CPPs when public budgets are too tight or political majorities are lacking? (How) could the CPP be protected from capture? This could possibly be accompanied by financial or other support without the usual agreements on naming or logo presentation. A CPP-specific definition by the participating commoners also seems conceivable, in which all CPP participants have the greatest possible autonomy and self-definition of accountability duties.

6. Outlook

Public attention and the allocation of resources are essential for the initiation and continuation of commons projects and for their effectiveness in society (cf. Fuchs 2020, p. 307). With this paper, we have set out to provide a representative, if not comprehensive, literature review on Commons-Public Partnerships up to this point and, building on this, to expand our own understanding of the transformative potential of CPPs. Commons-Public Partnerships offer the potential to replace public-private partnerships – especially in the area of basic services – or to balance their dynamics, which may reduce the commons, and to incorporate feedback mechanisms. Above all, however, CCPs offer their own, completely new fields of application that have so far been insufficiently interwoven with the fulfilment of public tasks, understaffed, and inadequately represented or integrated. In addition, they can contribute to the dissolution of existing lines of social conflict that seem to block social-ecological development.

CPPs do not serve the purpose of dismantling the state, public administrations, or their mandates. On the contrary, CPPs can only fulfil their democratising promise if they are connected to and rooted in the local community as well as in the programmes, routines and goals of the public sector. However, it is possible that a cautious expansion and development of this form of cooperation will contribute in the medium term to transforming the existing logic of recognition, problem-solving and negotiation – both in civil society and public service.

Policy-makers and public servants can contribute to the success of Commons-Public Partnerships, acting in the interest of their institutions by

- Proactively initiating CPPs where commons associations exist and aligning these with local challenges of social-ecological transformation;
- Initiating research projects based on the conceptual questions and areas of tension outlined in this paper; and
- Establishing CPP-supporting structures as well as specific promotion and training in public institutions.

In addition to testing, researching and integrating various types of Commons-Public Partnerships, there is a need to explore how the strategic development and supervision of CPPs can be anchored within public administrations. This should include both the development of staff capacities and the integration into existing authorities or their independent institutionalisation. Prior interventions in the UK also suggest the need to create a *National Office for Commoning* at federal level *(*Milburn/Russell 2019, p. 23 f.). The design and transferability of CPPs is also likely to be a relevant task for multilateral *science diplomacy*, national and international innovation agencies, as well as international cooperation in programme design in the European Union and United Nations.

Even though commoning can contribute to resource conservation (Hackforth 2019, p. 22 f.) and is discussed as an effective means of escaping the growth paradigm (cf. Fitzpatrick/Parrique/Cosmea 2022), there is no reliable data on the exact savings potential of commoning practices. Apart from the self-evident effects of sharing resources that are not continuously used (cf. Peters/Adamou 2022), the essential, transformative contributions of Commons-Public Partnerships lie in the reconfiguration of social relations and the preservation of a community capable of action and subsistence. Parallel to this, all areas of society must be decarbonised as quickly as possible, which can be achieved primarily by shifting fossil subsidies to alternative technologies and goods that support rather than undermine human existence, minimising overconsumption, and consistently pursuing the rewilding of nature *(*see also Perino et al. 2019).

7. Researching commoning

We, the authors of this publication, see great potential in the testing and consolidation of Commons-Public Partnerships, their wide range of applications and their integrability into existing development strategies at federal and local levels. Nevertheless, the implementation of Commons-Public Partnerships should be supported by research that illuminates the goal orientation and feasibility of implementation (cf. Renn 2022) as well as by investigating mixed and transfer forms from the state, economy and population. At the level of content, CPPs can be linked to open workshops, FabLabs, transformation centres, citizen science, commons-based peer production and innovation, circular economy and sustainable technology design, as well as public and supranational infrastructure security, development cooperation, resilience research, subsistence economy and resource efficiency. It is important to examine the compatibility and cross-fertilisation of administrative practice and commoning, as well as fault lines and points of friction. In the field of social research and social work, a few studies have been conducted on the effect of "administrative thinking" on local initiatives and commons. On the other hand, the question of how commoning practices are adopted by public administrations remains largely unexplored. How are they adapted and further developed? In which administrative areas are they gaining a foothold?

Transformative accompanying research can also act as a mediating factor. One example of this is the first Law Clinic on Common-Public Partnerships in the German-speaking world, which took place in the winter semester of 2021/22 at the University of Würzburg under the direction of Prof. Dr Isabel Feichtner (2021). She developed relevant legal questions in co-creative processes with commoners and students, which were then answered approximately in the form of short expert opinions (orientation aids) specific to the project. Some of these ended up forming part of formal applications to the city. In the context of this discussion paper, a German-language conference with scholars and practitioners was held at IASS Potsdam in November 2022. The authors of this paper have also established a mailing list and are considering setting up the Commons-Public Partnership Observatory (C2PO) to collect best practices online.

As Sara Madjlessi-Roudi (2022) writes, the adoption of commons paradigms in the context of development cooperation can serve to dissolve problematised power relations of diplomacy, minimise extractivist tendencies, and contribute to reconciliation in the medium term. The predominantly German- and English-language literature reviewed for this publication contained few points of contact with indigenous and postcolonial perspectives. Further work could seek to sift through such knowledge and check for connectivity. The principles of autonomous design could serve as a starting point (see Escobar 2018, p. 184 ff.).

In addition to existing, neighbouring collaborative research centres and research institutions, it would also appear to be in the interest of numerous stakeholders to give "commoning" increased scientific and research policy attention and to use its strategic momentum to address social-ecological conflicts. In this context, the connectivity to interdisciplinary scientific branches of complexity and network research such as computational social sciences as well as related concepts such as collective intelligence and *collective management* (see also Malone/Berstein 2015 and Sinner et al. 2022) should be examined, for example in order to formalise the pattern language of commoning mathematically and to combine it with existing scientific simulation approaches such as social physics, agent-based modelling and others.

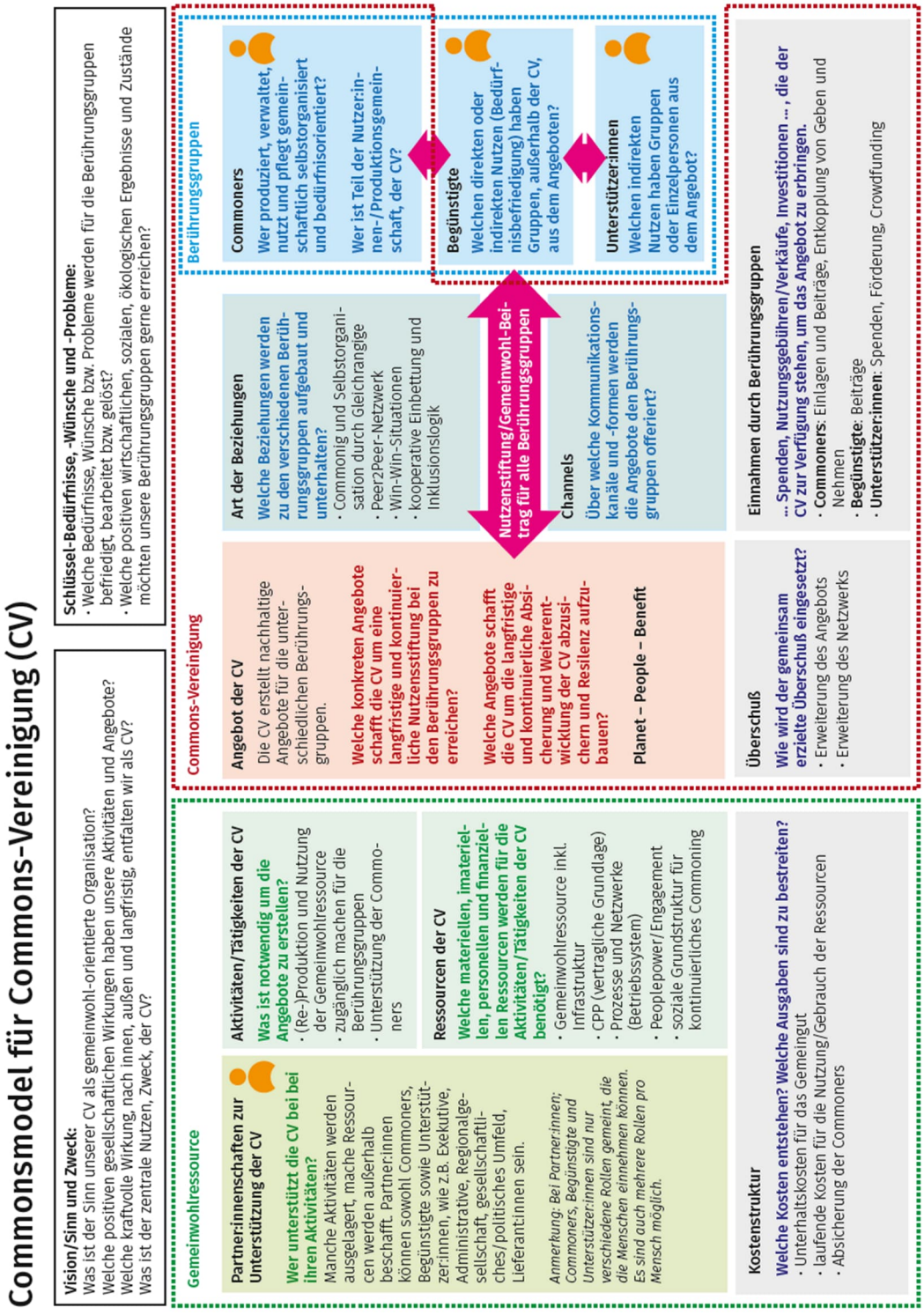
8. Appendix

8.1 Overview: How to organise commons

1. Activities	- Material - Immaterial	(Re-)production and care are recognised as of equal value and are organised in a context-appropriate way
2. Give & take	- Material - Temporal	Contributions serve the common interest without constraints and the distribution of returns is not directly linked to quid pro quos
3. Internal structure	- Decision-making - Rule (enforcement) - Conflict management	The participants align themselves as equals in diversity, assign structures and rules that promote relationships, and ensure that these are adhered to
4. Interfaces	- Environment/context - Affiliation	Semi-permeable membranes promote and protect cooperative embedding and the inclusion logic of the organisation
5. Earmarking	- Social responsibility - Protection against the compulsion to growth, exchange and property logic	Focus on satisfying the needs of the stakeholders (including the non-human environment) in a sufficient manner

Working version of the presentation "Commons-gemäß organisieren" [Taking a commons approach to organisation] *by Johann Steudle and Johannes Euler (Commons Institute)*, first held on 17.03.2022 at CoLab Bremen (CC BY 4.0)

8.2 Commons-Public Partnership Canvas



Commons Model Version 1.0 *by Christhardt Otto Landgraf under CC-BY 4.0 license***:** "The Commons Model helps your commons association make your activities, your regional embeddedness, your common good contribution and benefits tangible to the outside world."

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Judith Pape is an independent sociologist, facilitator and campaigner who works at the intersection of democracy and climate justice. She obtained her MA in Sociology from the University of Freiburg with a thesis on the discourse phenomenon of “green guilt” as a transformation-inhibiting factor in societies shaped by neoliberalism.

Since 2020, she has studied the initiation and implementation of various local social-ecological transformation processes from the perspective of civil society. With KIEZconnect, she moderates open neighbourhood meetings in Berlin, in which neighbours learn self-organisation and start social-ecological projects together. She is also active in the Transformation Haus und Feld initiative mentioned above. There she advocates for the development of a *transformation centre for all* at the former Tempelhof Airport, where the citizens of Berlin and Brandenburg can learn the necessary practical knowledge and solutions for social-ecological transformation. As a Junior Fellow at the IASS, Judith Pape is conducting research on Commons-Public Partnerships and their potential for social-ecological transformation.

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The Institute for Advanced Sustainability Studies (IASS) conducts research with the goal of identifying, advancing, and guiding transformation processes towards sustainable societies in Germany and abroad. Its research practice is transdisciplinary, transformative, and co-creative. The institute cooperates with partners in academia, political institutions, administrations, civil society, and the business community to understand sustainability challenges and generate potential solutions. A strong network of national and international partners supports the work of the institute. Among its central research topics are the energy transition, emerging technologies, climate change, air quality, systemic risks, governance and participation, and cultures of transformation. The IASS is funded by the research ministries of the Federal Government of Germany and the State of Brandenburg.

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