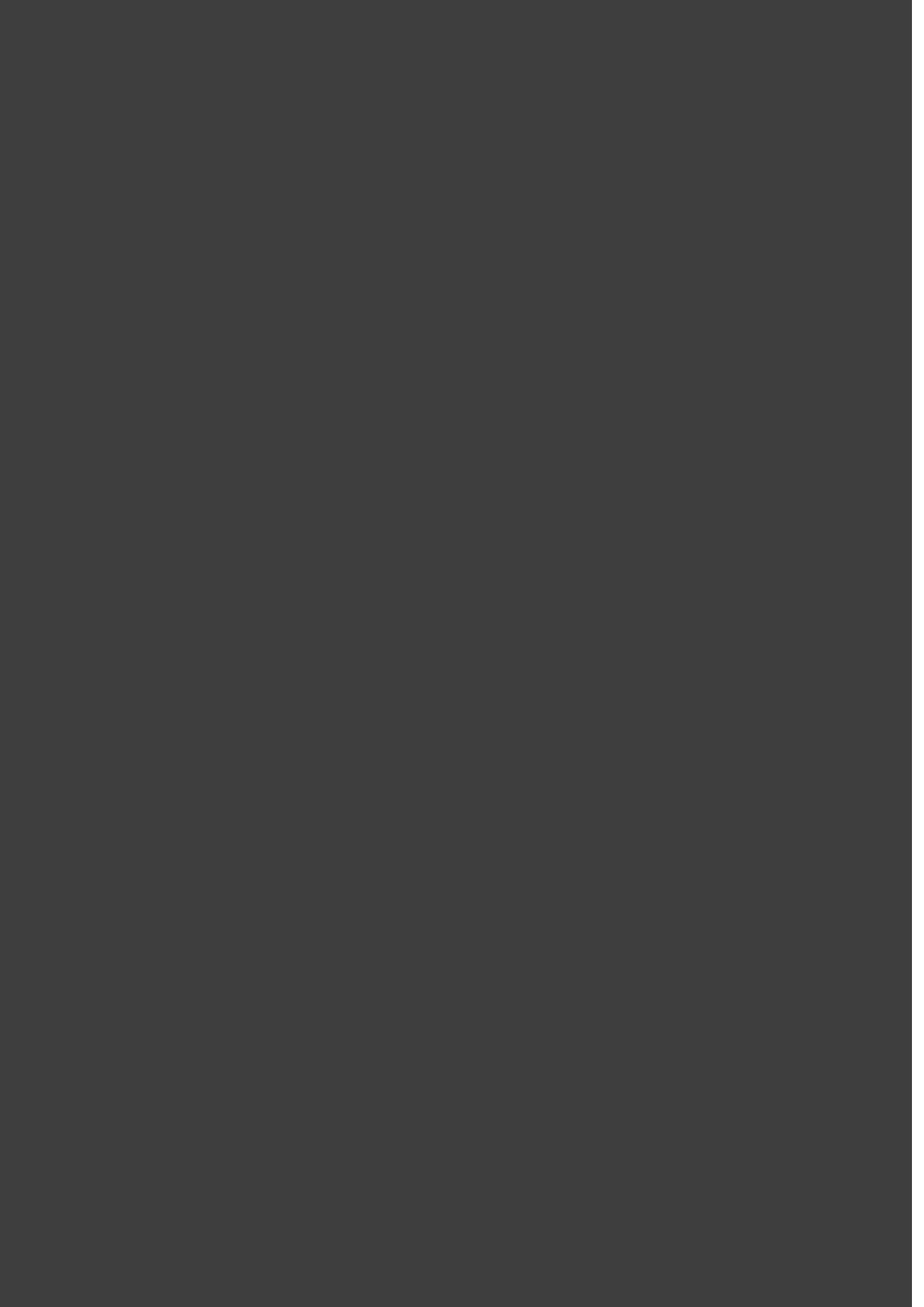


URBAN
COMMONS
SHARED
SPACES



URBAN COMMONS SHARED SPACES

A research project and report
by Commons Network &
raumlaborberlin

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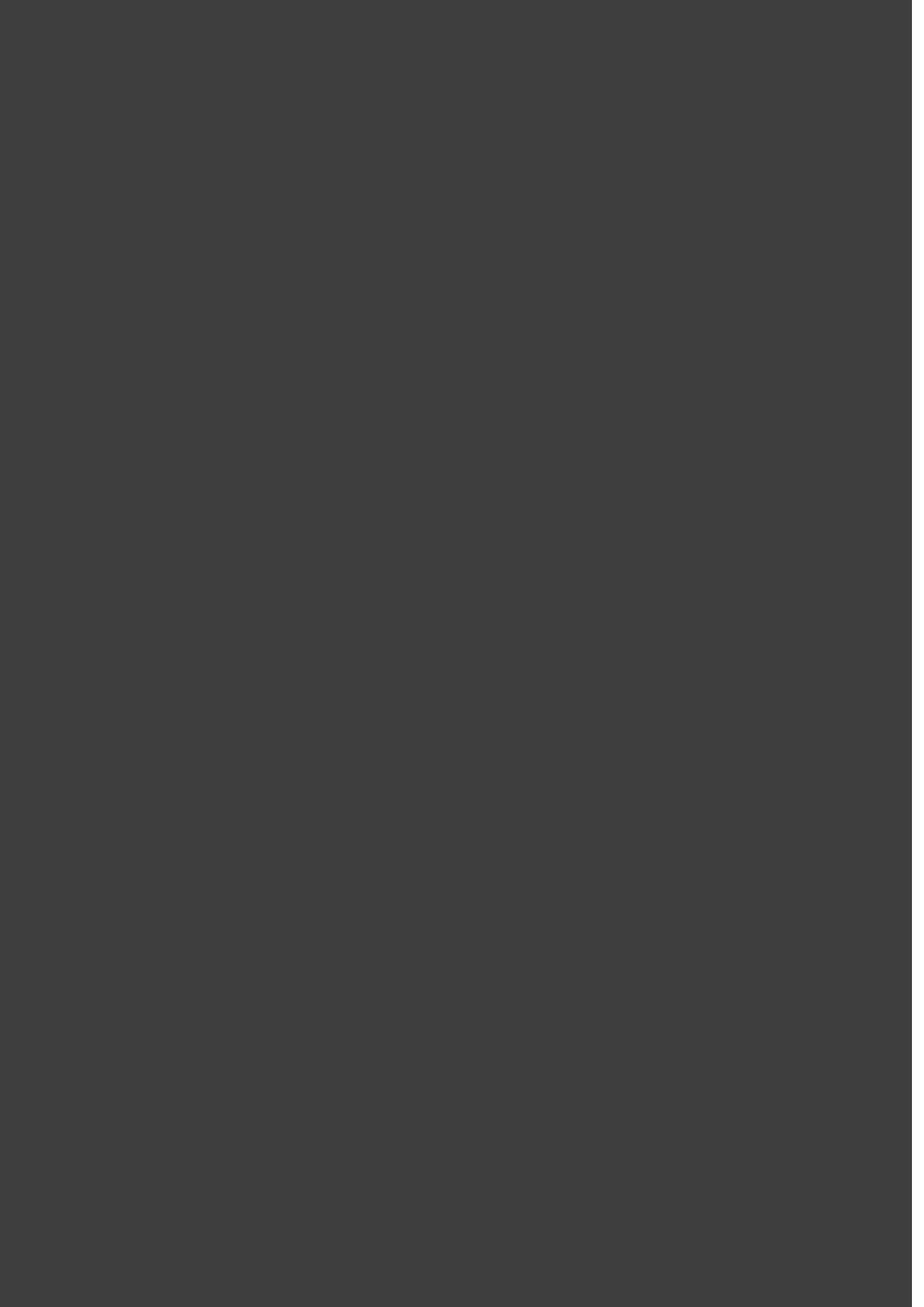


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PROLOGUE

This paper is about commons in the urban environment and is based on research done in Amsterdam and in Berlin over the last 2 years. We believe we need to actively protect and strengthen commons initiatives in European cities and build and promote a commons sector by transforming cities' institutional and policy frameworks. Commons in the city involve people managing urban resources – such as space – together through which economic and, more importantly, social value is created. It is crucial to protect that value as it sustains the very social fabric of our cities. Urban commons strengthen existing communities and bring people together into new ones, they herald the era of pro-active citizenship and encourage participatory and democratic governance.

This paper focuses on shared city space as 1) space is the number one condition for commons initiatives to flourish and 2) European urban environments have generally become more hostile to a commons-based use of space through heavy, international, market speculation on land, subsequent soaring real estate prices and the willingness of municipalities to sell off public property. Hence the task of protecting communities, active citizens and through them and their activities, the commons, is now more urgent than ever.

The next sections will explain what the commons are, why they are important and how the urban context in which they are embedded is developing (section 1), give a brief overview of the 'commons histories' and recent policy developments in Amsterdam (section 2) and Berlin (section 3), discuss our methodology and findings (section 4), and, finally, provide concrete and partly already in-use strategies and policies for

protecting and strengthening the commons sharing city spaces (section 5).

This paper is meant as an inspiration and tool for those involved or interested in the commons movement, as an urgent reminder for policymakers, as an invitation for politicians to think more concretely about the commons sector in their cities, and as the starting point for a constructive discussion about improving our cities by protecting and strengthening the commons in the urban environment.

Clearly the experiences and needs of Amsterdam and Berlin, both in North-West of Europe, do not apply to all European cities. There are vast social-economic and political differences to cities located more in the South and East. We let ourselves be inspired by policy initiatives and experiments in cities such as Barcelona, Madrid and Bologna, and list these experiments as examples and potential models for policy. We are confident that the general principles and some of the models and policy proposals presented here could be relevant for cities across Europe.

THE
COMMONS
REVIVED

One must simply always try to show that there is need for an enormous variation of skills: everyone can do something and feel valued. It is about the strengthening of the sense of self worth and of social sharing. The more people have trust in themselves, the more they are able to work within a shared society. Frauke Hehl, Allmende Kontor.

Throughout Europe we are witnessing a blossoming of self-organised, collective practices in the urban environment.¹ The merits of community and local stewardship of resources are increasingly recognized in many cities. People are taking responsibility for their immediate environments, often through social and cultural initiatives; from urban farming to ‘neighbour days’, to renewable energy coops. We see transformations of buildings, parks and sidewalks through temporary and permanent community initiatives. These collective actions matter; they create cohesion, enable people to shape the world they live in and, in turn, enhance the well-being of those involved.² Such initiatives are the commons in the city.

Commons can be defined as ‘a self-organised social system in which communities manage resources with minimal or no reliance on the market or the state’³, although in practice, commons often relate to and cooperate with private or public actors. Commons always involve an activity or practice and a degree of collectivity. In other words, commons are about having and doing together. As such, they are not a mere collection of goods and people, but a continuous and collective undertaking resulting in more than just the sum of its parts. The commons approach constitutes a new and transformative perspective on what it means to be a citizen by enabling individuals and communities to cultivate their unique capacity, participate in social life, and cooperate and communicate on matters of shared concern in their city.⁴ This perspective favours cooperation over competition and adheres to a (re)generative rather than an extractive approach, both in social and ecological terms. This ethic is gaining ground: people are claiming back their space and using it to cooperate, co-create and engage in new forms of participatory democracy in order to find solutions to all sorts of pressing urban issues and improve their cities.⁵

Examples included bookshops, children’s homes, ‘women cafes’, bike repair shops and storages, free equipment exchanges, free health care projects, hairdressers, printers and publishers, radio stations, small theatres and concert venues, cheap working space for creatives, and general public spaces (Mamadouh, 1992, see note 16).

City trends

At the same time, however, cities across Europe are facing the gentrification of their neighbourhoods accompanied by dramatic increases in rents and housing prices, as well as the ongoing privati-

zation of land and real estate.⁶ Many people feel they are losing the city as a place that is theirs with public space for them to use unconditionally. Shops and cafes in city centers often cater for affluent groups only, housing is becoming unaffordable, shared space is becoming scarce and, as a result, diversity and cohesion are lost.

Such trends have developed more in some cities than in others and municipalities have responded in different ways. While not always explicitly acknowledging the value of commons, some cities, also known as the Rebel Cities – who rebel against national authorities' regulations – have made great progress in protecting and strengthening community initiative. In Naples, for instance, buildings being unused for a significant amount of time are explicitly categorized as 'commons' and in Bologna a distinct regulation for the governance of the commons is in effect. In several large Spanish cities such as Barcelona, Madrid and La Coruna, municipalities are strengthening the voice of communities by the introduction of new channels of democratic participation. The city of Paris is using so-called 'participatory budgeting' as a way of establishing inclusive decision-making over municipal finances. In the UK we find the rediscovery of the century-old community land trusts which people are using to establish housing projects that are collectively owned and devoid of private or state control. And with Gent, Belgium has the very first 'commons city', which recognizes the commons as a category in the urban environment and has started to build a supportive and participatory infrastructure.⁷ These are just a few examples that illustrate the commons movement in European cities today.

Shared Spaces

Cities are regarded as key sites in the enhancement or struggle of the commons.⁸ This publication focuses on commons in the urban environment: citizens that collectively manage and use urban resources. Hence, such 'urban commons' can come in many shapes and forms as almost any resource can be managed as a commons, just as it can be managed privately or publicly. This includes water, energy, transport, communication, data and so on. This publication specifically focuses on city space as a commons. Hence the subtitle *Shared Spaces*. More specific, we zoomed in on *the collective use and management of buildings on the one hand and public space such as sidewalks, squares and parks on the other*.

Shared city spaces that allow for commons to thrive are crucial to a healthy and well-functioning city. They have many advantages. First and foremost, commons initiatives build existing communities, create new ones and, in turn, strengthen the social fabric of

cities. But they also contribute to a wide array of pressing social issues such as pro-active citizenship, the integration of newcomers, poverty reduction, combating loneliness and depression, fostering the cultural sector, and the efficient and sustainable use of natural resources and energy.⁹ As space is a crucial condition for community organizing, social cohesion and cultural exchange, it is important to take shared spaces into account, study and protect them.

Despite the ample benefits commons provide, very few European cities have institutional frameworks that accommodate or protect a commons sector. This results in making it unnecessarily hard to start, sustain, and govern such initiatives or processes. Moreover, the financial value created is often extracted and monetized by commercial or public entities, while the social value is lost. Urban art, social projects or community initiatives are habitually evicted from the shared spaces after having fulfilled their 'function' of making a neighbourhood more attractive and more profitable. This instrumental approach still reflects the dominant perspective on the commons among city policy-makers and administrators.

The question we asked in this research project was: can we develop ways to acknowledge and protect the social value of commons initiatives for cities, rather than conceiving of these as mere stepping-stones to gentrification, commercial value and economic growth? In other words, how would an urban institutional framework supporting the commons look like and what tools and strategies can we develop?

This dual case-study looks at practices and experiences in Amsterdam and Berlin, which are particularly relevant for three reasons. First, because both cities' histories demonstrate specific experiences with the commons in the recent and further past. Second, because Amsterdam and Berlin are experiencing heavy speculation on land, the sell-out of city space and fast-track gentrification. And third, because both cities seem to be lagging behind some Italian, Spanish and Belgian cities when it comes to explicitly protecting and strengthening the commons.

THE CASE OF AMSTERDAM

A sunlit East flank of the Rembrandtpark is the décor of the fifth edition of the Buurtcamping (neighbourhood campsite), attracting an increasingly diverse crowd coming from all of the city's ranks and positions. Young and old, black and white, Muslim and atheist, all set up their tents or lay down their mats under the adult, pondering oaks as blue-shirted volunteers make the final preparations for a collective dinner. A bunch of neighbours already sit down at one of the light-wooden picnic tables enjoying the soft warmth of the evening sun together, soon to be followed by marsh mellows and guitar music.

De Buurtcamping's mission is to strengthen communities by transforming Dutch city parks into community campsites. The campsites are organized by – staff usually consists of around 40 neighbourhood volunteers– and for residents – camping is possible only when you have a zip code belonging to the surrounding blocks. De Buurtcamping was founded in 2011.

The 'kraker' movement

In the 1970's and early 1980's Amsterdam witnessed the growth of the so-called *krakers* (squatter) movement: a mixed group of mostly young people fighting for affordable housing for the less affluent and the creative. The term '*kraken*' – a verb – was coined in this period to indicate the illegal squatting of unused, empty buildings. At the top of the movement's strength, Amsterdam hosted between five and ten thousand *krakers* divided over hundreds of empty buildings across the city's central districts.

Whereas in the early years the *kraker*'s main focus was housing, later it shifted toward a more diverse, social and cultural use of empty buildings. They provided room for a great variety of social and cultural initiatives to develop ¹¹ and in the process contributed to social cohesion in neighborhoods. Due to the increasing control of the municipality of Amsterdam over its property, the geographic scope of the movement widened in the 1990's when *krakers* took over major spaces - large buildings as well as land - in the so-called Havengebieden (port areas) located on the southern banks of city river *het IJ*.¹⁰

Historically, the role of the Amsterdam municipality regarding *krakers* has been an ambiguous one. On the one hand, it was hostile as it often protected private ownership in times of housing shortages and provided police support for evictions. On the other hand, *krakers*' cultural and social initiatives regularly received municipal funding and the movement depended on the city government for purchasing or renovating some of their beloved

11 Examples included book shops, children's homes, 'women cafes', bike repair shops and storages, free equipment exchanges, free health care projects, hairdressers, printers and publishers, radio stations, small theatres and concert venues, cheap working space for creatives, and general public spaces (Mamadouh, 1992, see note 16).

buildings.¹¹

However, the lack of recognition for the added value of communities managing space has been a common thread throughout commons history which resulted (and still results) from municipal policy that is mainly profit-driven and focuses on quantification, standard output measuring and competition.¹² Contrarily, the occupied spaces have proven to be extremely diverse, cooperative rather than competitive, and its results often unquantifiable and therefore difficult to measure uniformly.

The ‘*broedplaatsen*’ policy

At the turn of the century, the Amsterdam municipal mentality towards *krakers* changed dramatically when the so-called *broedplaatsen* (breeding grounds) policy was introduced which was set up to offer working space for ‘creatives’, a large chunk of whom were also *krakers*.¹³ This policy innovation was designed to end the ongoing *krakers*-municipality conflict about the use of unused buildings and land and was influenced by Richard Florida’s book *The Creative Class*, which stressed the important role of ‘creatives’ in upgrading neighbourhoods.¹⁴

The above described *krakers* and their occupied spaces bear much resemblance to the commons. They were, to a large extent, self-organized systems of people collectively managing resources - buildings and land. Unfortunately, the *broedplaatsen* policy did not radically change the ambiguous approach of policy-makers toward commons in the urban environment. Some recognized the added social value of *kraker* communities and took seriously their ideas about resource-sharing, collective responsibility, and community governance. The dominant interpretation of Florida’s ideas, however, has been more narrow and eventually gave way to an instrumental approach to ‘creatives’ who help to upgrade neighbourhoods, attract the economic upper classes and, hence, make these neighbourhoods more profitable. The diverse types of *broedplaatsen* one finds in Amsterdam reflect this ambiguity:

Community-focused
 Shared responsibility
 Communal space
 Active programming
 Open to neighbours
 Social value

Entrepreneur-focused
 Individual responsibility
 Private offices
 No programming
 Closed to neighbours
 Commercial value¹⁴



People preparing for De Buurtcamping 2017

III The policy would not have been there without the political will of the then Amsterdam alderman of Spatial Planning Duco Stadig who was susceptible to the idea of communities and creatives adding social, cultural and economic value.

IV It is not entirely clear what drives the development in either direction, but we can discern four factors that definitely play a role: i) the presence of a mediator such as Urban Resorts or Leegstand-soplossers Amsterdam (LOLA) who enters into contract with the real estate department of the municipality on the one hand and with the civil society groups taking initiative on the other, and facilitates the development of the *broedplaatsen*; ii) the financial resources available and, hence, the involvement of permanent coordinators, programmers, or *kwartiermakers*; iii) the physical characteristics of a building and; iv) the livelihood of a specific neighbourhood.





1

Community event at socio-cultural centre De Meevaart

2

Harvest day at the urban garden IJpleintuinen

While, initially, a group of people would run a *broedplaats* largely autonomously, over the years Bureau *Broedplaatsen* (Agency *Broedplaatsen*) has become increasingly incorporated in the city's hierarchy leading the policy to gradually shift to the right side of the continuum above.

,'Crisis' years and centralization

The financial 'crises' between 2007 and 2012 caused investment in land estate and building projects to stagnate which allowed commons in the urban environment to flourish as the 'crises' triggered a few crucial changes in policymaking.

First, on a national level, the so-called *Participatiesamenleving* (participation society) was introduced as a budget-cutting alternative to the welfare state by putting explicit emphasis on citizens' own capacity to take responsibility.^v Illustrated locally by the local policy *Actieplan Krachtwijken*¹⁴, which tried to unlock the potential of existing communities, this was the first time that citizens were perceived as a driving force in urban development leaving a more facilitative role for civil servants.¹⁵

Second, the standstill in the Amsterdam real estate and building sector led to the announcement of a city-wide *bouwstop* (building stop) in 2010 prohibiting new building projects. Thus, both the market and the state were prevented, for budgetary reasons, from being in the driver's seat of urban development which left a big window of opportunity for commons initiatives in the post-2007 period. The 2014 municipal elections, held at a point when the clouds of the 'crisis' cleared up, announced the beginning of a less commons-friendly era in which 'empty' space (i.e. space without a clear public or private user or owner) became more and more scarce and several *broedplaatsen* and other community spaces had to make way for large building projects (in for example the Cruquius area in Amsterdam East). Moreover, as land prices started to soar and pressures on urban space grew, the central government proved to be less open to cooperative forms of neighbourhood development or collective building projects in which a degree of autonomy is transferred to the community.¹⁶

In 2014, a national budget-cutting administrative law rid Dutch city boroughs of most of their decision-making powers and administrative backup (their budget went from double-digit millions to two million on average in Amsterdam), making them merely advisory or, worse, symbolic political bodies. The future for the Amsterdam commons might be more promising as the recently

v First the Wet Maatschappelijke Ondersteuning (Social Support Law; WMO) was introduced in 2007 and later the Participatiewet (Participation Law) in 2015.

elected central-left coalition has agreed on a progressive agreement which places emphasis on democratization, social cohesion and community with even a specific mention of the commons.¹⁷

Public space vs. buildings

While the *broedplaatsen* policy focuses strictly on the use of buildings, much commoning in Amsterdam also plays out in public space using the city's side-walks, streets, parks and squares. More precise, such spaces are public-access and become genuinely public when people are free to actively use them.¹⁸ Commons making temporary use of public city spaces fit in the tradition of placemaking, which concerns "the deliberate shaping of an environment to facilitate social interaction and improve a community's quality of life".¹⁹

A special case of commons in Amsterdam, in the sense that it concerns neither the use of buildings nor public space but the squatting of a large lot of unused land, is the self-built village on the *ADM area* in the Western part of the Amsterdam port, a final branch of the former *kraker* movement.^{VI} Whereas the municipality's attitude toward smaller and temporary initiatives has been relatively supportive, its stance in the *ADM* case reflects unwillingness at best as it has made little effort to protect the community from large-scale developer plans and thus failed to recognize *ADM's* added social, cultural, ecological and even scientific value.²⁰

1

Refugee cafe at LOLA LIK, former social-cultural hub in old Bijlmer prison

2

Campfire at De Buurtcamping 2017

VI The ADM (Amsterdamse Doe-Het-Zelf Maatschappij or Amsterdam Do-It-Yourself Society) community, which consists of around 125 people, has worked and grown independently of municipal support since the 1990s, and harbours a wide array of creative businesses, foundations, artists and festivals.



THE CASE OF BERLIN

As the afternoon sun crawls out over some foggy, almost translucent clouds, the wide tarmac runway of the former airport-made-public-space Tempelhofer Feld teems with people. A man in a dark blue jacket and his book occupy one of the nearby benches; a corner of the asphalt is demarcated for neighbouring youth bicycle lessons; and further down a group of film students experiment with the open space through their cameras. All seem to play with the ostensible freedom radiating from the vast lots of green and grey that adjoin the faint blue sky at the horizon.

Tempelhofer Feld is, first and foremost, a public space that is not only open to all but also usable by each member of the Berlin community. This has resulted in a vast and diverse programme of activities that connect people and improve the city by providing solutions for all kinds of social issues. Tempelhofer Feld was 'rescued' from central urban planning by the action group 100% Tempelhofer Feld in 2014.²¹

A commons history of Berlin

The squatter movement has also played a very important role in Berlin of the sixties and seventies, especially in the Kreuzberg area which remains one of the most vibrant and politically engaged neighbourhoods today. The squatter or *Hausbesetzungs* movement challenged central urban planning, which had led to the structural and large scale disuse of empty buildings while many young people needed housing. Their actions in the early eighties enjoyed wide support throughout Berlin society and beyond. The culture of *Selbstverwaltung* (self government) and collectivity was very influential and still echo in the *Freie Szene* (free scene) of Berlin today.

During the late 1980s and 1990s a great deal of the land in Berlin lay vacant too. After the fall of the Berlin wall, especially many buildings in the East were not in use and ownership often remained unclear. The squatter movement, the techno scene and many other defining traits that led to the fascination so many people feel towards Berlin, would not have been possible without this great vacancy and the city's political situation at the time.²² Indeed, the then still generous welfare system, which allowed people to dedicate their time to unpaid work, also contributed greatly to the development of communities and cultural and political initiative at the time.

The city of Berlin, however, was heavily indebted and started to sell off public property – buildings as well as land – to the highest bidder in 2002, a habit that intensified over the years. At the same time, privately owned companies started to manage public property without much eye for potential community-based use.

As of 2008, right after the global financial crisis, interest in buying real estate was low for several years, which, much like the situation in Amsterdam, presented a window of opportunity for commons in the urban environment. In Berlin it allowed, for example, for the start of the well-known and greatly successful urban agriculture initiative *Prinzessinnengarten* (Garden of the Princesses), which took on a political role and challenged dominant ideas about who owns the city and what purposes city space can serve.

As the banking sector was ‘secured’ and the economy picked up steam a few years later, the interest in buying Berlin estate re-emerged and grew fiercely to eventually escalate into heavy speculation on housing and land. As a consequence, a great deal of public property accommodating social and cultural initiative has been sold off while tenants in Berlin are increasingly spending major parts of their income – around fifty percent – on rents.²³

Over the years, many urban commons initiatives have been evicted, not being able to secure ownership of the spaces they were using. The phase of so-called *Zwischennutzung* (in-between use) of buildings and public spaces seems more or less over with only very few vacant spaces left.²⁴

Means of citizen participation

Ever since a reform of the state constitution in 2006 the conditions for the use of direct democratic means have been strengthened.²⁵ As to yet, however, politics in Berlin is still not very supportive of community initiatives and direct democratic processes while, at the same time, people demand more participation in decision-making. In Berlin more referenda have been held than in any other European city, especially since 2006 when it facilitated several significant events in Berlin’s recent political history.

Besides the well-institutionalized referendum, Berlin is lagging behind when it comes to instruments for cooperation between the formal political institutions and the civic realm. Top-down politics is still dominant in Berlin: the central senate holds most power and the boroughs are politically weak. In some areas the borough councils still enjoy autonomy, as is the case with giving out

1

Appropriated former landing strip at Tempelhofer Feld

2

Making diversity visible: Tempelhof became a place for different activities to take place





1

Allmende-Kontor community garden, which was started in the pioneer process in 2011, allmende-kontor.de

building permits. Sometimes local politicians have successfully used this as a tool to support community initiatives. Political backup, however, depends on the specific location and the level of media attention. In general, people either actively support community-based political or cultural initiatives or feel tolerant towards the changes these bring about.

2

Gececondu am Kottbusser Tor, Berlin

Recent developments regarding urban commons

Several key events took place in the 2010s, setting the tone for the political debate and shaping the expectations of Berlin citizens with respect to affordable housing and the collective stewardship of city spaces. The initiatives below vary in the way they reflect the commons, but all seem to have developed a community-based perspective on the right to city spaces.

One of these events has been the activist citizen initiative 100% Tempelhofer Feld, which was founded in 2011 and demanded to secure the open space of the former Tempelhof airfield for the public. The group worked tirelessly to prevent the senate's large-scale development plan for the area from being implemented. By the time the development plan was introduced, the 380 hectare space had been standing vacant for a long time in which many different individuals and communities had already been using the place for various activities – from urban gardening to sport activities – and now were being threatened to lose it. A city-wide referendum was held on 25 May 2014 in which 63,3% of the participants said yes to *Tempelhofer Feld's* proposal.^{vii}

Another prominent example is the 40-year battle of neighbours and activists for participation in the development of the contested Gleisdreieck territory in the borough Kreuzberg/ Schöneberg. After an extensive period of meetings, protests and lawsuits, the action group eventually succeeded to prevent the construction of a highway, an exhibition and an amusement park. In 2005 the initiative Aktionsgemeinschaft Gleisdreieck (Action Community Gleisdreieck) was finally invited to take part in the planning process of the park and present its vision, which generally deviated strongly from what the architects, the senate and Grün Berlin GmbH, the project management company, had in mind. Although the result was a compromise, the heterogeneous initiative was able to directly participate in the planning of their neighbourhood through which they were able to protect the area's social value.²⁶

A group of tenants renting from Berlin's social housing corporations organized themselves in 2012 as *Kotti and Co* to protest the increasing rents. Right in front of their homes, they occupied parts

vii To be accepted at least one quarter of the people entitled to vote had to take part. This was exceeded considerably with a voter turnout of 46,1%

of the Kottbusser Tor public square and built a protest house on it, the *Gecekondu* (Turkish for informal city/slum), which served as a place of assembly for everyone taking part in the protest and became the symbol of the ongoing conflict.

As recent as April 2018 a demonstration protesting the high rents brought together 20.000 people to the streets and received major attention. In May this year, Berlin saw a revival of political squatting as two houses in Kreuzberg and Neukölln were occupied while 5 others were announced to be occupied in a political gesture. Increasing housing needs, speculation and steep rent increases are leading to radical responses that enjoy broad support from citizen and parts of the political establishment, as did the squatter movement in the 80s.²⁷

The initiative *Stadt von Unten* (City from Below) is promoting communally owned and self-governed housing as well as “100% affordable rents” at the *Dragonerareal*, a building complex consisting of, among others, a former military base. The people involved in *Stadt von Unten* are campaigning against the planned privatization of space in the city and develop concrete alternative models that allow for and ensure sustainable housing.

In 2012 200 refugees and helping activists occupied the buildings of the Gerhardt-Hauptmann school in Kreuzberg as a response to both unaffordable housing and asylum policies. The building provided a home to up to 200 people. Several big theaters in Berlin also took part in the alliance, referred to as *My right is your right*, which helped to politicize the struggle for a right to the city and questioned the inclusiveness of national citizenship.

Despite these examples of people actively claiming their right to the city, the senate’s top down style of governing has not significantly changed.^{viii} Debt and financial interests still drive the overall city policy. In fact, by auctioning much of its property, the city of Berlin has partly lost control over its urban development. Things are, however, different across the city boroughs. The mayors of Kreuzberg-Friedrichshain, for example, have shown great courage when supporting people’s initiatives. Berlin’s green-left government coalition, which was formed in 2016, is still struggling to keep its promises and reach significant change in city policy in democratic participation and measures to protect the commons.

1

kotti & co initiative against gentrification and comodification of the city

2

kotti & co initiative against gentrification and comodification of the city

VIII In the end, the referendum about whether airspace Tempelhoferfeld should be sold to investors or remain an open place for all the different civil initiatives - for everyone really, was also about the senate’s top down style of politics in general.



OUR RESEARCH

METHODOLOGY

In spite of the commons movement gaining force, little progress is made to recognize, foster and protect the social value of the increasing number of commons initiatives that have sprung up across the European urban landscape. While some local policy makers and politicians are interested in the concept, they generally lack effective tools to facilitate a commons transition.

Although the concept of commons is not always known in both Amsterdam and Berlin circles, many community initiatives correspond to how we understand them as they emerge from the same values, needs and aspirations as commons projects across Europe and the world.

This project has aimed to compile policies and strategies to protect and strengthen commons in urban environments. To achieve this, we explored the particular needs, obstacles and frustrations of urban commons projects sharing city spaces in Amsterdam and Berlin through a series of interviewees. We developed a questionnaire and interviewed people ranging from activists for affordable housing and academics to people running a community space or garden and civil servants. Simultaneously, we explored existing and successful strategies and policies in use in other European cities and beyond.

Raumlabor and Commons Network organized a commoners workshop in the frame of *Akademie Haus der Statistik* at the “Zusammenkunft” in Berlin in the Fall of 2016.²⁸ From the collected input of the interviews and the workshop we derived a set of policy strategies and legal tools to allow for local urban commoning and protect the social value created.

The leading question informing this research has been: How can the institutional, legal and policy landscape of cities acknowledge, protect and strengthen commons initiatives? We now present ideas, policies and concepts that are concrete yet also broadly applicable.

Workshop participants include:

Jana Borkamp, Julia Förster, Anna Dankowska, Kerstin Wiehe, Michael Reiche, Leona Lynen (circular), Ulli Zedler, Jochen Becker (metrozones), Marco Claussen (Prinzessingärten), Frauke Hehl (Allmende Kontor), Ela Kagel (Supermarkt), Dr. Mary Dellenbaugh, Florian Schmidt (Initiative Stadtneudenken), Konrad Braun (Open Berlin), Laura Bruns (stadtstattstrand), Sebastian Quack (invisible playground), Caroline Rosenthal (Mietshäusersyndikat), Erika Schneider, Laura Haas, Kim von Dall'Armi

The workshop was organised by Markus Bader (raumlaborberlin), Sophie Bloemen (commons network), Till Gentzsch (Uni Witten Herdecke)

1

Workshop in the common space of "Zusammenkunft"

2

Laura Bruns of Stadtstattstrand takes notes

Amsterdam Interviewees

Emilie Kröner (LOLA Luid)
 Floor Ziegler (Noorderparkkamer; Floor Ziegler & company)
 Katusha Sol (Placemakers/Buurtcamping)
 Simcha de Haan (Fenix Broedplaats)
 Hila Rothbart (Popinn Park)
 Esther Eij (Tugela85)
 Joachim Meerkerk (Pakhuis de Zwijger; HvA)
 Simon van Dommelen (LOLA)
 Tanja Bubic (Buurtwijjs)
 Corline van Es (Open State Foundation)
 Josien Pieterse & Anne de Zeeuw (Netwerk Democratie)
 Sandra Bos (HvA)
 Maaïke Miedema (LabGov)
 Firoez Azarhoosh (De Meevaart)
 Annemarie Verschoor (Voedseltuinen IJplein)
 Jelle de Graaf (Piratenpartij)
 Jesse Jorg (WeTheCity)
 Joey Hodde (De Ceuvel)
 Jurgen Hoogendoorn (Gemeente Amsterdam)
 Mario Genovesi (Westside Sloterveer)
 Wouter Stoeken (Gemeente Amsterdam Stadsdeel Oost)
 Hans Teerds (TU Delft)
 Frans Soeterbroek (De Ruimtemaker)





1

Workshop in the
common space of
“Zusammenkunft”

Berlin Interviewees

Frauke Hehl (Allemande Kontor, Laskerwiese e.V.)
Jochen Becker, Metrozones, Kunst im Untergrund
Marco Clausen (Prinzessinnengarten)

Ela Kagel (Supermarkt)

Mary Dellenbaugh (researcher, author, consultant. ‘Urban Commons Cookbook’)

Florian Schmidt (Aterlierbeauftragter für Berlin, Initiative Haus der Statistik, Initiative Stadt Neudenken, Bauhütte Südliche Friedrichstadt, Urbanitas Berlin Barcelona)

Konrad Braun (Hidden Institute, Open Berlin)

Laura Bruns (StadtstattStrand)

Sebastian Quack (invisible playground /playful urban Commons)

Sandy Kaltenborn, (Kotti & Co)

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Workshop in the
common space of
“Zusammenkunft”

Interviews and literature review by

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STRATEGIES
& POLICIES FOR
STRENGTHENING
COMMONS
IN THE URBAN
ENVIRONMENT

The city is not an isolated entity; it is part of a region, of a country, of Europe and the world. And just as a city is embedded in its physical surroundings, the leading ideas and policies in a city are also part of a broader, dominant paradigm and logic. This logic determines what is prioritized, what is protected and what is facilitated by the state or in this case, the municipality. It is becoming clear that the current dominant logic, that of market dominance, privatization, individualism, consumerism and trickle-down economics is neither sustainable nor desirable.

We are slowly moving to a new logic of circularity, sharing, social and ecological sustainability, and community. This logic offers a greater role to the civic realm in the management of resources and the provision of services and goods. In short, it moves beyond the state – market dichotomy: there is another space, which are the commons.

In this study of commons sharing Amsterdam's and Berlin's spaces, we have focused on obstacles to and opportunities for protecting and strengthening the commons deriving from cities' institutional frameworks, regulations and policies, or lack thereof. Our guiding question has been:

How can the institutional, legal and policy landscape of cities protect and strengthen commons initiatives sharing city space?

HOW DO WE PERCEIVE THE CIVIC REALM?

Moving to Public-Civic Partnerships

In Amsterdam and Berlin civic entities are generally not recognized as key players in urban development nor viewed as competent managers of city space. While there is a lot of window-dressing regarding participation and citizen initiatives, real and, above all, structural recognition seems to be lacking. For now, at least, an instrumental approach to commons initiatives regarding city development and the management of city spaces is still prevails.

In order to protect and strengthen the commons in the urban environment, a paradigm change is needed. What does that look like?

Public-civic partnership is a broad term referring to many possible ways to move the stewardship and governance of urban resources into citizens' hands. It contrasts the default of public-private partnerships through which public goods or services often come to be privatized. We propose an overall shift towards public-civic partnerships, which has conceptual, policy and practical implications. We will briefly discuss a few key conceptual changes as to developing such partnerships before laying down concrete strategic and policy suggestions for change.

Partnership vs. subsidy

The relationship between civil servants and commoners is often perceived in terms of a subsidy provider and a subsidy receiver. This terminology, like the 'bottom-up' and 'top-down' jargon, has an effect on the way the two 'parties' relate to each other by implying a stark hierarchy. A more horizontal relationship could be developed by introducing 'partnership' as the characterization of and reference to the municipality-commoners relationship. Being equal partners in for example combating poverty or fostering social cohesion, would contribute greatly to the recognition of communities as competent managers of city space

and key players in urban development more general. It is about perceiving not only private entities as potential partners, as is done with public-private partnerships, but civic entities as well.

Structural vs. project

Commons in the urban environment are often approached by Amsterdam and Berlin civil servants or politicians through the perspective of projects, implying a clear beginning and end. In order to develop serious partnerships between commoners and the municipality, project-based thinking and practice should make way for a more feasible understanding of the urban commons-municipality relationship that fosters structural support. While support for citizen initiative in general has been slowly building among city administrators²⁹, a project-based perspective still prevails.

Goal-setter vs. contributor

Commoners who create social value through their activities are supported only when they make a contribution to the municipality's current policy priorities. Even though the formulation of these priorities can be quite broad, the hierarchy in goal-setting can prevent communities from being recognized as key players in urban development. The question should thus not be: does the work of commoners fall into a category of existing goals, but rather; does the work of commoners create social value and does it benefit the urban community. If so, it should be guiding policy-making instead of following it.

Social Value vs. Monetary Value

Creating monetary value still largely drives city development in Amsterdam as well as Berlin. Especially the municipalities' real estate and project development departments follow the logic of the market when it comes to making choices about the use of buildings, land and public space. Hence, community initiatives are assessed by their capacity to create such monetary value as opposed to social value. Given the diverse nature of the urban commons and their sought outcomes, it is not possible to 'devise' a rigid set of indicators in a top-down and one-size-fits-all 'fashion'. However, five stages in the process of social value measurement have been identified in the European Commission's 2014 GECER Report.³⁰ These yardsticks for measuring social value could inform municipality policy-making, as to giving commons the space they deserve to improve the city.

THE POLICIES

We will now present strategies & concrete policies to protect and strengthen commons in urban environments on the basis of our findings in Amsterdam and Berlin.

We have identified two levels of solutions:

Creating a commons sector: Legal norms

Legal recognition, policies and new forms of ownership.

Collaborative city: Processes and dialogue

Relationships, dialogue and bureaucracy.

Creating a commons sector: Legal norms

▪ **Recognition of Commons as category**

The concept of commons and their potential role in urban development is not yet widely known among most administrators and politicians of Amsterdam and Berlin. In order to truly recognize the commons domain it needs to be recognized as a category by policymakers and used and referred to in policy documents, legal texts and municipal notes. We would propose to develop and add 'Commons' as a legal category, through which it becomes a valid third domain - next to the public and private domains - to explore when urban development is concerned. Moreover, specific commons initiatives can be involved - just like public, semi-public and private actors - and given a role in order to address pressing local social, environmental and cultural issues.

▪ **Securing space for commons and commoning**

Whereas the Amsterdam Broedplaatsen policy temporarily secures space for 'creatives', we envision a policy with a broader scope that targets existing communities and helps to create new ones. Amsterdam and Berlin are decor to the re-invigoration of community initiative but, at the same time, witness the sell-off and disappearance of shared spaces: buildings, land or public space formerly available for collective use and governance, and affordable housing. Space is the number one condition for neighborhoods and commons initiatives to develop into strong communities. Municipalities should encourage and create policies that structurally secure buildings and public space allowing for affordable housing 'commoning': shared use, governance and eventually ownership of these spaces enabling collective activity. As such, commons should be considered by municipalities when facing choices over city space, like whether or not to privatize land,

demolish a former school or office or accept another commercial terrace on a public square.

Example: Naples' commons areas

Naples' municipal government recently passed the Resolution no. 446/2016 whose objective is: "the identification of areas of civic importance ascribed to the category of the commons". Vacant public and even private buildings – if for three times within one year the owner does not reply – are identified as "common good" and, as such, made available to community initiatives.

Example: Right to Bid

The Right to Bid, one of the so-called Community Rights of the UK, lays down the procedure by which neighbourhoods nominate buildings or public spaces as Assets of Community Value (ACV), defined as "a local building or piece of land which the community considers to be of particular value to the local community". When the owner of an ACV wants to sell or demolish the property, the local government must be informed which, in turn, must pause the process and give the community the time and opportunity to make a first 'bid': a proposal to develop and use the building or piece of land collectively.³¹

Example: Re-municipalisation: Vorkaufsrecht

Housing as a Commons. In Berlin a long-existing judicial tool has recently been reapplied to the housing market. The so-called Vorkaufsrecht constitutes the remunicipalization of housing in the city. It states that city boroughs must approve pre-sale market prices in 'areas of conservation'.

The boroughs juxtapose sales prices and rents and, if the former shows a disproportionate disconnect with the latter, hold the right to stop the sale and set a lower price. Usually public housing corporations are prioritized as buyers of the now cheaper properties. By using the Vorkaufsrecht to take houses out of the heated market, housing is remunicipalized and slows down speculation and gentrification.

▪ **Property forms accommodating the commons**

When city space – buildings, land or public space – is categorized as a commons, being neither private nor public property, who then 'owns' these spaces? From a commons point of view the answer would be the community understood in the broadest sense, including members new and old, permanent and temporary, and those who would want to use it collectively to develop initiatives that add social, cultural or ecological value to their neighbourhoods. The possibility of people 'owning and managing city space together' city space depends on the availability of adequate legal entities that accommodate commons. Such property forms would

allow people to secure buildings and public spaces for commoning in the long term and fend off market speculation and reprivatization. To do this, we suggest to explore ownership structures and propose a few directions of inquiry and inspiration.

1. Community land trusts

A community land trust (CLT) is a non-profit, community-based organization designed to ensure community stewardship of land. A CLT is a neutral and sustainable model for affordable housing and community development that was born in the United States and slowly spread to Canada and the UK over the past 40 years but was not, however, ever introduced in Germany or the Netherlands.³²

CLTs are shielded from the grievances of the market as ownership by a single person, public or private, is impossible. Instead, the land is owned collectively and individuals enter into lease agreements with the community. CLTs secure tenure for community members while at the same time maintaining affordability. Often-times, CLT boards are composed of community members allowing for direct control over city spaces.

Example: St. Clement's community land trust

After years of campaigning by the East London Community Land Trust (ELCLT), the former St. Clement's hospital in East London was redeveloped into a CLT housing project consisting of 23 family homes. With the project, the ELCLT has succeeded in detaching housing prices from the property market and, instead, established a link with local income to create affordable family homes.³³

2. Legal personhood for city space

An area rather uncharted yet worth exploring is one in which city space is not owned at all by attributing legal personhood to parks, squares or even buildings itself. This will make it impossible to own, buy, sell individually or use exclusively the city space in question. The advantage in terms of protecting commons in the urban environment is that such spaces will no longer be subject to the profit-driven grievances of private or public owners and, hence, provide a long-term fertile ground for community-based practices. This legal approach to city space assumes that communities using the building or park are fluid, with permanent and temporary members entering and exiting continuously and acquiring user rights flexibly.

Example: New Zealand's national parks and rivers

New Zealand provides an interesting example of new legal models for the commons. A former national park as well as the third largest river in the country have been granted legal personhood

after negotiations between the New Zealand government and Maori groups culminated in the Te Urewera Act 2014. The decisions were inspired by the Maori philosophy that views and treats rivers, mountains and meadows as living entities rather than property.³⁴

3. Commoning using current legal forms

Each country in Europe has its own juridical palette of ‘legal persons’, composing of, for instance, associations, foundations and cooperatives. Many have been used in different contexts to allow for city space as a commons. Given the huge diversity among commons initiatives and host countries, some might benefit more from being governed as a foundation, while others have more chance of being successful as a cooperative, while still others are organized more complexly using different legal forms and multiple layers of owners, stakeholders and participants. In other words, it is hard to find the ‘one-size-fits-all’ ownership structure that fits commons initiatives in the city in general. As a source of inspiration, therefore, let us give three examples of commons initiatives that work(ed) with different existing legal forms in order to develop.

Example: The foundation

The ‘House of the Neighborhood’ De Meevaart in the East of Amsterdam is one of the few examples in the city that has been developed specifically as a commons. De Meevaart is formally governed by the foundation called Meevaart Ontwikkel Groep (MOG), which strictly maintains a facilitative role while leaving the exploitation of and programming in the property to neighbours and citizens of the ‘Indian Neighborhood’. Despite the commons approach, ownership is still in the hands of the housing corporation De Alliantie.³⁵

In Switzerland, in contrast, the Trias Foundation takes out loans and purchases land lots including the buildings on it as to provide community groups with the necessary spaces to develop their social and cultural initiatives. It ‘separates the ownership of land and buildings’ by leasing the land to them – which is used to repay Trias’s debt – hereby granting them ownership over what is built or grown on it.³⁶

Example: The limited-liability company and the association

The Mietschauser Syndikat is a German joint venture that has been deploying different, collective ownership structures as of the early 1990s, mostly using it to prevent significant rises in housing prices and applying it to cooperative housing projects across Germany. Technically, the Syndikat uses the legal entity of Limited Liability Company to facilitate groups of people – organized as an association – wanting to buy a house together but lacking the necessary resources without starting capital. Every housing association is

veto-carrying member in the general Syndikat which makes it hard if not impossible to reprivatize.³⁷

Example: The cooperative

European cities have a long and rich history of the use cooperatives as a legal form, especially in Amsterdam. They have been used in various pockets of society such as food production and distribution, housing, youth and elderly care and even banking (not necessarily producing commons) but also, more recently, city space. The commons initiative Open Coop in the North of Amsterdam did flourish both as a collectively managed home base of a group of artists and as a central and cohesive force in its neighbourhood. The cooperative had to abandon the idea of full ownership in 2015 due to, the municipality's unwilling stance toward selling off land to 'unorganized groups'.

▪ Civic procurement

Recognizing commons both politically and legally would open the door to establishing the right of civic entities to take responsibility over their environment. Competent community groups in Amsterdam and Berlin are already performing several public tasks and services without proper recognition and corresponding funding. Whereas semi-public and private entities have built up institutional status in public service procurement (e.g. energy supply, physical and psychological healthcare, poverty reduction), the civic realm cannot yet count on such treatment and, hence, social value is easily lost. In the Netherlands, the *Informatieblad Maatschappelijk aanbesteden* (Information Sheet Civic Procurement³⁸) has been the start of a shift toward "civic procurement" of public services through the "inevitable process" of turning to flexible, social value-focused communities as opposed to bureaucratic and cost-efficiency-focused, 'professional' organizations. We suggest to legally codify civic procurement by community groups and take the first steps toward implementation on the municipal level.^{IX}

Example: Right to challenge

The Community Right to Challenge, part of the UK's Localism Act, constitutes the right for community groups to submit an expression of interest in running services of local authority and fire and rescue authorities on behalf of that authority.' Whenever people feel they can deliver the service better, more efficient, they can present their proposal to which the local authorities are obliged to listen.³⁹

Example: United Kingdom Public Services Bill

Already proposed by conservative MP Chris White in 2012, the Public Services Bill requires public authorities at the early stages of public service procurement to weigh in the economic, social

IX The right to challenge is mentioned in an amendment to the Social Support Law (Wet Maatschappelijke Ondersteuning) of 2015 and, more recently, in the 2017 official coalition agreement of the incumbent Dutch government, which, however, leaves concrete implementation to the municipalities

and environmental consequences of the contact. The law requires contractors to serve the community and emphasize social rather than commercial value. Community-based social initiatives (or the Urban commons) naturally qualify as they are rooted in community and operate on a non-profit basis.⁴⁰

Collaborative city: Processes and dialogue

The common thread of commoners who organize activities using Amsterdam's and Berlin's buildings, parks and squares, and try to collaborate with the municipality or its boroughs, is a practical one: frustration over day-to-day bureaucratic hurdles put up by the administrations that make operating unnecessarily hard. At the same time, these obstacles offer opportunities to facilitate and strengthen Urban commons on the process level.

▪ **Civil servants for the Commons**

Commoners and their initiatives would benefit much from having central points of contact within the municipality instead of having to communicate and deal with different departments and administrators, as is the situation today. These contacts should have a good overview of the sometimes intricate jungle of relevant rules and regulations, and might be granted extra autonomy in managing permits and budgets as to facilitating the work of commoners effectively.

Ideally, these positions should not be part of a single department, such as social or economic affairs, but act as an independent 'commons agency' as to fully acknowledge the holistic nature of the urban commons, which simultaneously relate to the social, economic, environmental and cultural domains.

Example: Gebiedsmakelaar Amsterdam

Here we can take the Amsterdam example of what it calls 'gebiedsmakelaars': civil servants responsible for connecting with, facilitating and keeping in touch with citizen initiatives in their neighbourhood. Although the effort to bridge the administrative world and civil society people is exemplary, the 'gebiedsmakelaars' are currently at the bottom of the municipal hierarchy and, hence, lack real power and budget necessary to be truly effective.

▪ **Budgets and funding**

A general frustration among commoners concerns funding. On the one hand, there is the problem of bureaucracy which strictly separates municipal departments, their tasks and their budgets. While, more often than not, commons projects fall in different policy categories (e.g. poverty, youth, integration, culture, healthcare, social

cohesion, sports, sustainability), city budgets are predominantly demarcated along clear departmental lines.

On the other hand, time-consuming evaluation procedures are in place in Amsterdam as well as Berlin that require commoners to invest a disproportional chunk of their time on paperwork and reporting. In the words of one interviewee: “the time I spend on the evaluation cost me half the subsidy”. While a proper application mechanism is necessary when public money is concerned, these funding structures clearly present big obstacles to commoners and their initiatives. Hence, we recommend to relieve to the largest extent possible the bureaucratic burden by i) integrating departmental budgets into a “commons” or “community” fund and ii) installing a ‘minimal paperwork evaluation’ procedure for small-scale funding.

Example: Decide Madrid and Budget Participatif Paris

Both the French and the Spanish capital have been experimenting with participatory budgeting on quite an impressive scale. In both cases, approximately 100 million euros was distributed through on-line portals where the cities’ inhabitants suggested proposals, voted on them and eventually decided how to spend the public money. Participatory budgets in both cases are no longer structured along strict departmental lines but rather concerns an integrated public fund which various initiatives and proposals can appeal to. While this provides clarity and relieves the application process of some of its heavy administrative burden, demanding evaluation procedures often remain in place.⁴¹

Example: Breda Begroot

In Breda, a small city in the South of the Netherlands, the municipality has reached a next phase in borough budgeting after a successful pilot in two of its boroughs which started in 2015. Currently, the policy is being extended and implemented in six other boroughs. Breda Begroot gives citizens transparency over borough budgets and a stake in deciding how the public money is spent by organizing events and playing the so-called ‘course card game’ which helps to flesh out concrete priorities.⁴²

▪ **Reducing regulatory burdens for commoners**

Many commoners in both Amsterdam and Berlin run into a vast regulatory web when starting an initiative. As a result, they find themselves dealing with countless rigid permit procedures, such as those regarding the temporary use of public space, the selling of food and drinks, fire security, street advertisements, and noise nuisance. Moreover, such procedures might require commoners to get into the details involved in the planned activity regarding, for example, the specific time window, number of attendees, the

format and even the outcomes. In contrast, however, commons initiatives can be open-ended and adaptive processes. An initiative, like a community art exposition or an outdoor neighbourhood market is often the start of an open process, which will be shaped by the members of the community that is created. Predefining the process and its outcomes will likely undermine the exercise. While regulation in the public domain is not redundant, the work of commoners would benefit much when regulatory burdens would be significantly mitigated and take into account the open-ended character of commons initiatives.

Example: Denmark's Burden Hunter

The Danish business sector provides an interesting source of inspiration for what 'cutting red tape', or mitigating regulatory burdens, could look like. Internationally praised for their 'smart regulation', the Danish Business Authority has managed to identify redundant obstacles for business entrepreneurs in various sectors of the economy and eliminate them. To do so, it has set up a 'cross-governmental innovation unit' called Mindlab which maps barriers and obstacles resulting from excessive state bureaucracy using mixed-methods studies of operating processes of companies.⁴³

Example: Freezones and umbrella permits in Amsterdam

Amsterdam's city boroughs are experimenting with so-called regulatory freezones. As of 2015, three freezones have been started in the city boroughs West, Nieuw-West and South which means that municipal regulations and permit requirements for all sorts of issues will be loosened for a period of two years.⁴⁴

The umbrella permit, first issued by the city borough Amsterdam North for the hugely successful commons Noorderparkkamer (a community-based social and cultural hub in the Noorderpark), was designed to eliminate regulatory burdens for individual initiatives using Noorderparkkamer's spaces. Instead, one permit has been issued comprising all activities and commoners using the space together.⁴⁵

▪ **Urban stewardship**

Urban planning and maintenance are often a centralized and exclusive process, and need to become more inclusive and decentralised. A step in this direction is the policy by the Dutch government called 'omgevings visies' (visions for the urban environment), which will be implemented between 2019 and 2021. As opposed to its prescriptive policy predecessors - 'this block will have so many houses, so many schools and so many sport fields', it is largely descriptive - 'this block will be used for housing, education and sports' - which in theory provides a nice degree of flexibility and room for initiative. However, as citizen participation is not made explicit in the law, it seems that they will play only a marginal role

– as opposed to ‘professional’ initiative – in the development of both *omgevingsvisies* and city blocks.

We suggest to make this role explicit. Examples are ‘citizen juries’, *gebiedstafels* (borough platforms) or neighbourhood budgets.⁴⁶ There are many ways to facilitate a significant role for citizens in the maintaining and caring for public spaces, buildings in their neighbourhood. In any case, the process of neighbourhood planning and urban stewardship, we argue, should be transparent, include existing and new communities at the very early stages and structurally facilitate their participation. Moreover, in order to maintain flexibility at the end of planning cycles, we suggest to develop a simple procedure for initiatives deviating from conventional urban planning based on their added social value and local connections.

Example: Bologna’s collaboration agreements

The city of Bologna developed with its “Regulation on the Collaboration between Citizens and the City for the Care and Regeneration of Urban commons” an alternative to a rigid, top down administrative approach. Collaboration among the city officials and civil initiatives is manifested through “non authoritative administrative acts”. Today about 300 different “collaboration agreements” – contracts between the Bolognese city government and citizen initiatives have been made, including, for example, a self-organized Kindergarten an urban agricultural coop.⁴⁷ The policy is not perfect, however. Despite the huge energy it elicits in Bolognese civil society and the alternative it offers to mere top down government, it fails to move away significantly from a centralized power structure with an emphasis on temporality – giving initiatives a few years to try before the next one moves in – and to a model in which public finances and decision-making shifts to local communities.⁴⁸

Example: Resolution 99 from Utrecht

The city council of the Dutch city Utrecht has, already in 2016, passed Resolution 99 which focuses on inclusive urban planning. A few points from the resolution: 1) take social value into consideration in urban development; 2) work on establishing open, inclusive planning processes from projects’ start-up phases; 3) establish a connection between the development and the use of buildings and blocks; 4) work on achieving a level-playing field for local initiatives and developers.⁴⁹

CONCLUDING REMARKS

We hope these ideas, proposals, methods and examples will be helpful for practitioners, activists and policy makers to further the development of the commons sector. Throughout Europe, we see a great and increasing interest in such community-based and democratic alternatives to the status quo. However, institutions have a crucial role in facilitating and accommodating these developments and can make or break commons practices and initiatives. It is time for cities and policy makers to take a structural approach, fully recognizing and supporting the commons sector to achieve sustainable, democratic and inclusive cities..

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43 <https://danishbusinessauthority.dk/burden-hunter-hunting-administrative-burdens-and-red-tape>

44 <https://www.amsterdam.nl/ondernemen/freezezone/>

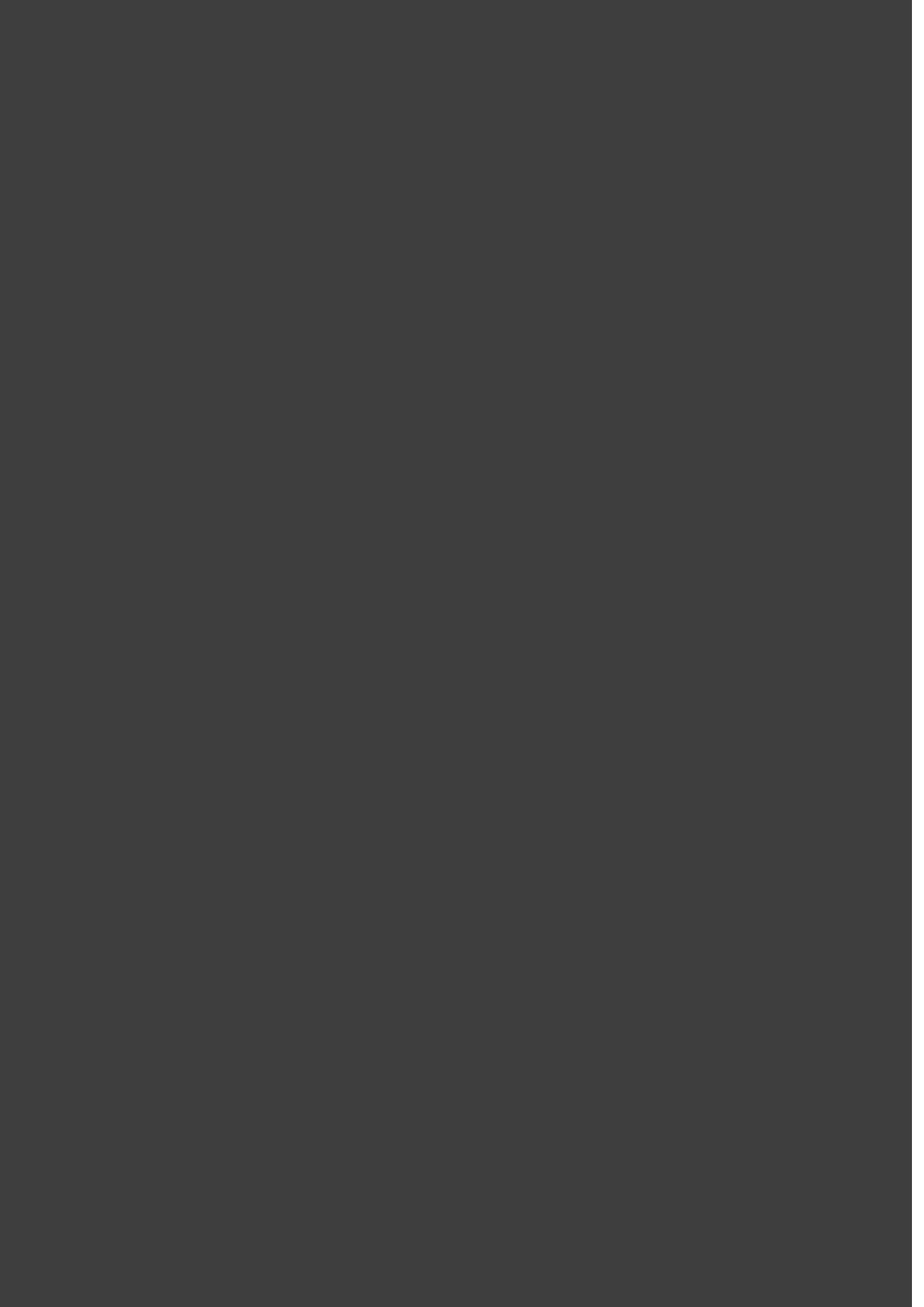
45 https://www.amsterdam.nl/publish/pages/751245/ruimte_voor_maatschappelijk_initiatief_versie_19042016.pdf

46 http://deruimtemaker.nl/wp-content/uploads/sites/14/2017/11/lisa_essay-soeterbroek_omgevingswet.pdf

47 LabGov (2014) 'Regulation on collaboration between citizens and the city for the care and regeneration of the urban commons.' Comune di Bologna.

48 <http://deruimtemaker.nl/2017/06/12/lessen-uit-bologna/#more-932>

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<https://www.commonsnetwork.org/>

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