THE GLOSSARY OF

COMMONING

*

COMMONING
first release
EUROPE

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*PUNEREA ÎN COMUN

COMMONING

1. INTRO
The commoning process:
Why a glossary?

A Europe-wide glossary of terms related to Commoning has two main purposes.
Firstly, it must help to define what we mean by the Commons, an experience which exists throughout Europe and the world, and describes a process, which David Bollier and Silke Helfrich have called Commoning.
In their book "Free, Fair and Alive: The Insurgent Power of the Commons", published in 2019, David Bollier and Silke Helfrich,[…] conceptualized commoning as a triad of three spheres:
  1. Social practices,
  2. Acts of provisioning,
  3. Forms of peer governance.

As the authors emphasize, these three components shouldn't be understood as isolated entities, but as three integrated and interconnected spheres influencing each others' functioning. The result of people engaging in the act of commoning is the emergence of commons: a generative and neglected social lifeform compiled of complex, adaptive, living processes that generate wealth through which people address their shared needs with minimal reliance on markets or states."
Secondly, this "lifeform" has to relate to public institutions, authorities on every level and finds itself in the need to negotiate, from time to time, its very existence.
This means that the myriad practical experiences of commoning must find their place in the wording of existing laws and regulations, or suggest the wording of future laws and regulations: *remembering that laws are words.*

Commoning therefore has to find its place in the wording of laws and regulations, in different languages, different legal systems and different customs.
Therefore, a glossary must perform two quite different tasks:
1.   explore the philosophical implications of Commoning, including the reasons why institutions should favour it in the general interest;
2.   create a semantic link between actual practices of Commoning and the possibility of their recognition by regulatory systems, enabling citizens and public authorities of good will to come to a practical understanding and find practical solutions together.

To make this possible, we need to find how actual Commoning is currently defined in very different terminologies, which in many countries reflect a specific worldview, based on exclusive dialectics between individuals and institutions.
Because words and processes are not static but dynamic, this glossary has been built as an open document. At the end of the project path, it will be open to new words, it is created as the base to build a shared commoning view and develop it through different commoning practices.
This is being done in three steps, corresponding to the three Joint Staff Training Events (JSTE) held respectively in Italy, Romania and the Netherlands.

2. EVERY PATH BEGINS WITH A SINGLE STEP

AN OPEN GLOSSARY FOR AN OPEN PROCESS

In Italian, where the normal expression used in recent years to name Commoning in the sense of what Bollier and Silke speak of is *Beni comuni*, literally "Common Goods", along with an entirely different, little known but much more precise expression, Usi civici, literally "Civic Customs".

Actually, Beni Comuni normally has two meanings: in legal jargon, it has the technical meaning of shared property, typically a courtyard or a stairway in a condominium.

The other, less technical meaning, usually refers to what is considered the right of every human being, for example to clean water. Neither has much to do with Commoning, so the use of the term creates no end of confusion.

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Therefore, a glossary must perform two quite different tasks:

1.   Explore the philosophical implications of Commoning, including the reasons why institutions should favour it in the general interest,

2.   Create a semantic link between actual practices of Commoning and the possibility of their recognition by regulatory systems, enabling citizens and public authorities of good will to come to a practical understanding and find practical solutions together.

This short glossary has been created to be open source so it is to be considered as a commons itself that comes from a commoning process in 3 first steps.

"Open source refers in computer science to a decentralised software development system based on the sharing of source files" (Wikipedia: https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Open_source).

Moreover "The Free Software Definition is a document written by Richard Stallman and published by the Free Software Foundation (FSF) that defines the concept of free software, i.e. software that respects the freedom of users" (font: https://www.gnu.org/).

Freedom is the base of this document which, due to its "open" nature, it is incomplete, so it can be developed.

A second pillar of this document is the language itself: "Language is the historically determined system or form through which members of a community express themselves and communicate with each other through the use of a given language, i.e. a set of written (symbols) and/or spoken (sounds) signs" (Enciclopedia Universale, in Le Garzantine, vol. 2 (Fre-Pig), Garzanti Libri, 2006, p. 944).

Thanks to these 2 pillars, everybody is free and welcome to contribute to this document in order to develop the community of commoners (both institutions and citizens) contributing to the application of the commoning process to an increasing number of initiatives that affect what we share with other people: our world, our cities, our lives.

Write your contribution to commoningeurope@gmail.com .

The project will reach its conclusion in February 2023 but ideally the glossary will never be closed.

STEP ONE

JSTE IN ITALY - APRIL 2022

GENERAL FRAME

The first JSTE was held in Campi Bisenzio, in Italy, and therefore the starting point was to take a look at Italian terminology.

In Italian, the normal expression used in recent years to name Commoning in the sense of what Bollier and Silke speak of is *Beni comuni*, literally "Common Goods", along with an entirely different, little known but much more precise expression, *Usi civici,* literally "Civic Customs".

Actually, *Beni Comuni* normally has two other meanings, as explaining above: in legal jargon, it has the technical meaning of shared property, typically a courtyard or a stairway in a condominium.

The other, less technical and most common meaning refers to the right of access of every human being to certain assets, for example to clean water.

The first meaning is highly restrictive; the second refers to assets and implies public governance, while Commoning is actually a process where governance is neither private nor public.

During the meeting, Massimo Mannoni presented us with a seminal text, based on the Italian experience but with a Europe-wide focus.

Massimo Mannoni worked for twenty years in the municipal administration of Livorno, and one of his main tasks was to coordinate a team working on shared governance of the commons.

Other terms for the glossary emerged in the final discussion, and were mostly submitted by non-Italian participants (Romania, Belgium and Turkey).

Our original idea was to create a glossary with terms from different countries translated into words of at least similar meaning in English and set in alphabetical order.

However, Mannoni's contribution to the glossary follows a logical order, which would be lost were we to put the terms he uses in any other order.

Therefore, we split this step in two parts:

1) Urban commons: A "common" glossary for Europe, By Massimo Mannoni –   LABSUS Member*
2) A list of words submitted at the JSTE (1st glossary).

URBAN COMMONS: A "COMMON" GLOSSARY FOR EUROPE.
BY MASSIMO MANNONI – LABSUS MEMBER*

Reference laws:

Each country has its own legal system. It follows that in each State, citizens verify which contents of their own Constitutional Charter, or of any other laws, can be of reference and support in carrying out voluntary activities, for purposes of general interest, for the protection, recovery, promotion and shared governance of common goods.

In Italy, with the amendment of Article 118, paragraph 4 of the Constitution* in 2001, the necessary conditions were created to start a "new path" that would allow citizens to propose shared agreements to public bodies for activities of general interest on the basis of the principle of mutual subsidiarity.

*Art. 118 c.4 Italian Constitution: State, Regions, Metropolitan Cities, Provinces and Municipalities favour the autonomous initiative of citizens, both single and associated, to carry out activities of general interest, on the basis of the principle of subsidiarity).

(Urban) commons:

These are those goods for which citizens take action to guarantee and improve their collective use and share with the administration the responsibility for their stewardship, shared governance or regeneration. They are those goods that, regardless of the title of ownership, are functional to the pursuit and satisfaction of the interests of the community, functional to the exercise of the rights of the person, to the exercise as recalled by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, of the human rights fundamental   to individual and collective well-being, to social cohesion and to the life of future generations. Commons can be tangible, intangible and digital. Commons are recognisable in that through their stewardship, regeneration and improvement by voluntary citizens, they generate 'social capital', i.e. cultural and cognitive enrichment, tolerance, relational availability and mutual understanding. The term "urban" implies the territorial context, administered by the municipality, whose boundaries are established by law within which the agreements or "cooperation pacts" (see definition below) signed between the authority and active citizens for the care of the commons are effective.

Tangible commons are, for example: disused or under-utilised public buildings, buildings of historical and artistic value, monuments, parks, gardens, under-utilised classrooms, degraded streets and squares, unused urban areas, woods, streams, quarries and rivers, unused former industrial or craft workshops, railway tollhouses, abandoned road caretakers' houses, water or windmills, brick, coal or lime kilns as evidence of arts and crafts whose memory is in danger of being lost.

Intangible commons are, for example: cultural activities in general, for the promotion of artistic disciplines in all their manifestations, of scientific knowledge, for sustainability and environmental protection, for the promotion of values aimed at the protection of human dignity, for a culture of non-violence and for solidarity between people, for the promotion of intercultural exchanges between peoples, for the promotion of civic purposes and social utility in general, for the strengthening of relations between generations, ethnic groups, cultures, philosophies, religions.

Digital commons:

Include, for example, programmes and applications on the websites of the public administration, the computer network as a place for building knowledge, through shared governance, to encourage the free circulation and dissemination of information and communications

also to overcome the digital divide that often exists between generations or for those social classes in more disadvantaged social and/or economic conditions.
Think, for example, of frequencies as a common good on a par with water and the air we breathe.

Active citizens:

Active citizens are all those who live in the territory of reference (e.g. the municipality) and who carry out, or propose, initiatives for the stewardship, collaborative governance and regeneration of the commons as volunteers and therefore as individuals, spontaneously and free of charge, either as individuals or through social groups, including those not formally established, and business entities, provided that the activity does not bring direct economic benefits.

Shared governance of common:

Government, the act of administering, generally refers, also as it is known by almost all people, to governance by public actors (State, Region, Municipality etc.) through acts and measures (laws, ordinances, regulations, resolutions etc.).
The term "shared" presupposes that governance is the result of choices made by common agreement between several parties, in this case between the public authority and active citizens. Thus, in this case, the public administration and active citizens find themselves acting and dealing with each other on the same "level", on equal terms, in the absence of any obligation (or debt) or condition of subordination of one to the other.

Subsidiarity:

In the Italian legal system, the principle of (horizontal) subsidiarity is laid down in Article 118 paragraph 4 of the 1948 Republican Constitution. It is based on the possibility that private citizens (both individuals and associations) directly provide stewardship of collective needs and activities of general interest in a subsidiary (not substitute) function to public bodies (State, regions, provinces, metropolitan cities, municipalities) which may however intervene with authorisations and control, planning, promotion, support and coordination activities.

Stewardship, recovery and promotion of the commons:

These are interventions designed to allow or return to the community the use, enjoyment and knowledge of common goods that are the subject of activities carried out freely and spontaneously by active citizens. The activities of recovery, stewardship and promotion will be characterised by maximum inclusiveness and integration without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. (Art.2 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights).

Regulations for stewardship of the commons:

The deed by which the bodies of public administration (State, Regions, Municipalities etc.) of each individual country recognise "the common goods or commons" and regulate the procedures and methods by which citizens can take care of, recover, promote and share the governance of the commons for purposes of general interest in favour of the community.

Collaboration proposal:

This is an expression of interest, formulated by active citizens, aimed at proposing interventions of stewardship, regeneration or shared governance of commons in a manner shared with the administration, provided that these interventions do not configure forms of replacement of essential services that must be guaranteed by the Municipality itself (or in any case by the public body of reference), according to the laws and regulations in force.

The proposal may be submitted spontaneously by citizens or expressed by them following a public notice issued by the Municipality (or other body), indicating the "common goods" that the body proposes to the "citizens" for activities, aims and objectives of general interest in favour of the community.

Collaboration pact or agreement:

The collaboration pact is the agreement by which active citizens, owners, including private ones, of common goods and public bodies define the objectives and general interest generated by the common good, establishing the initiatives and activities of stewardship, collaborative governance and regeneration. The collaboration pact is signed by individuals, either belonging to associations or members of social groups, including informal or entrepreneurial ones, as long as they do not derive any direct economic benefit from signing the agreement and from the activities carried out. It is the deed by which the competent bodies of the public administration agree with active citizens, on an "equal" basis, on everything that is deemed necessary to establish in order to achieve the activities and objectives set out in the actions on commons.

The pact defines in particular:

- the aims of the proposal;
- the actions or activities, of stewardship, shared governance and recovery;
- the duration of the collaboration (in relation to the type of good, the planned activities and the resources invested);
- the role of the actors involved;
- any limitations, prohibitions and indications for the protection of volunteers and third parties;
- the arrangements for drawing up the conditions and payment of the charges necessary for taking out insurance policies to protect volunteers against accidents, illness and third-party liability;
- the division of responsibilities for the activities carried out by volunteers between the public body and active citizens;

- support, if any, provided by public bodies such as: cooperation of employees, free use of facilities and buildings, payment by the body of utilities (water, electricity, gas, etc.);
- the possible provision of free use by the Public Administration of materials and tools necessary for carrying out the agreed activities;
- penalties for non-compliance with the agreed clauses;
- the manner of publicity and communication of the activities on commoning;
- the possibility of organising events or initiatives for self-financing (crowdfunding) of the activities foreseen in the pact;
- the manner of providing economic support for the implementation of the activities of stewardship and promotion of common goods, provided that they are not granted as consideration or return for the activities carried out, since these are spontaneous, individual and free of charge.
- ...any other condition deemed useful, appropriate or necessary;

The Commoning Office

This is the office that must be set up to implement the regulation or, in any case, to carry out coordination functions between citizens interested in stewardship of the commons and the internal offices of the public body. The Commoning Office is the single point of reference for active citizens to provide information on the methods and procedures for the presentation of projects of shared stewardship and governance, as well as to carry out an initial investigation of the proposals presented to verify their consistency with the provisions of laws and regulations. The Commoning Office will be present in the organisational structure of the public body. Its functions and tasks may also be combined with activities already attributed to another structure.

Training

Training is a necessary condition to promote knowledge of the new procedures that allow public administration offices and citizens to carry out activities of general interest for the care of "common goods". Training is necessary above all for the employees of public bodies because shared governance, even if implemented with reference to and in compliance with the country's legal system (laws), entails a change in the relationship between public institutions and citizens who are now on an equal footing that would otherwise not allow the same implementation of "shared" governance.

Training and information must therefore involve not only employees, but also administrators, citizens and schools, since through shared governance it is possible to create the basis for improving and revitalising the relationship with public institutions, especially on the part of the new generations.

To this end, the public body will work with school staff to promote the design of cooperation agreements containing the proposals and ideas of students of all levels.

Active citizenship schools:

In February 2021, the website of Labsus (Laboratory For Subsidiarity) stated that the Schools of Citizenship, created in Rome in recent months (and therefore before February 2021, editor's note), are a Labsus initiative with the aim of training citizens willing to commit themselves to the shared governance of the commons through pacts of collaboration.

In order to give substance to the principle laid down by the Italian Constitution in Article 118, paragraph 4 (see the previous definition "Reference Laws", footnote 1), pacts, or collaboration agreements, "have a fundamental role: not only as factors of innovation, but also, if not above all, as "catalysts of relationships", in helping people to rebuild community ties, to produce social cohesion and a sense of belonging, freeing the many energies hidden in our communities. And again: "The Citizenship Schools are aimed at high school students and teachers, inhabitants of the neighbourhoods where they take place, neighbourhood associations and committees, administrators, municipal and town hall officials and in general anyone who has already been active or wants to be active in caring for the commons or in any case wants to explore the issues of shared administration."

URL consulted on 7 April 2022 on: https://www.labsus.org/2021/02/scuole-di-cittadinanza-per-formare-cittadini-attivi-responsabili-e-solidali/

*Labsus, the Laboratory for subsidiarity (Italian National Association) has a clear goal, based on a certainty: people do not only hold needs but also capabilities, and it is possible that such capabilities are offered to the community to contribute finding solutions to issues of common interest, in alliance with the government. It was a support partner for commoning europe project.

GLOSSARY

At the end of the JSTE in Campi Bisenzio, participants were invited to freely express terms they associated with the concept of Commoning. Many are self-evident (such as "collaboration"), however the team drawing up this glossary has added comments to some.

Added value
Public property risks losing value, both when it is neglected and when use of it is granted to private actors who deprive the general public of its right of access. Commoning, on the contrary, adds value for many reasons.

Circular economy
Even commons which have no explicit economic aspect inevitably increase opportunities of reuse and sharing among people who are constantly aware of the needs of fellow commoners. Commoning is by its nature labour intensive, requiring the work of all, an important factor in times of digitalisation, automation and outsourcing.

Citizens' rights | Collaboration | Collective resources

Community
The community we are referring to is a group of people and public and private organisations that share - by will or by necessity - significant aspects of their existence and the transformation of their trajectories of autonomy and social, economic and environmental development.
This type of organisation takes care of its community dimension by using the potential of the relationship built among its members, aiming at the growth of ties and collaborations.
The material, spatial and environmental characteristics certainly give it form, but it is the people who give it meaning, a sense, making it a reference unit of measurement. The community is completed and exerts all its generative energy when it is not only perceived and experienced as a practical need but also and above all as a symbol and a reference for values, where there is a strong need to forge links on the basis of common interests, empathy and a propensity to believe in the same values.
Carlo Andorlini - University of Florence - School of Political and Social Sciences, Course on Design and Management of Social Interventions - Civil Economy festival 2021.

Community engagement
Commons are of many kinds, but they usually involve a wider community, generally local, which is engaged and revitalised in many ways.

Cultural interaction
Commoning is a powerful way of bringing together people of different cultural, ethnic, religious and social backgrounds, through direct personal contact based on working together.

Economic/social value

Evolving and Organic
Institutions generally work on a project basis, trying to adapt the future to a plan. Commoning normally grows in a much more flexible pattern, as new people, ideas, opportunities arise, providing much-needed resilience in constantly changing times.

Function-oriented

Governance
The many ways commons are actually managed, often involving very different actors, both formally and informally.

Initiative of citizens
Institutions tend to provide services to individuals, who in their turn delegate political representatives: Commoning adds a new (yet very old) dimension of hands-on action by citizens who literally build at least part of their world together.

Intervention

Involvement and inclusiveness
Institutions and private actors, even with the best intentions, tend to truly involve only those professionally employed to act. In Commoning, those already involved tend naturally to seek to involve others, giving everyone a feeling of inclusion.

Knowledge transfer
Finding solutions to problems together means sharing important skills.

Reciprocity
The essential element for community life is certainly reciprocity. Reciprocity is the value that makes it possible to create quality relationships that trigger virtuous mechanisms of give and take. On the local scale, this means trying out innovative actions with the collaboration of the main players in civil society, starting with the citizens.
Giorgia Salvatori - Councilor of the Municipality of Campi Bisenzio -Circular economy festival 2021.

Regulatory Framework

Saving
Public officials who espouse commoning often fear being accused of "missing income": why didn't you rent out the place at market price instead of letting those people use it for free?.
Commoning is actually highly beneficial, often in ways difficult to measure directly, in terms of public saving. For example, a community keeping a garden open, clean and safe for children to play in, able to immediately report any sick tree or leak in the water system, where parents help each other out with children who have disabilities, saves large amounts of money which can be invested usefully elsewhere.

Security
Security is a key issue in a society of isolated individuals, who increasingly tend to seek protection through electronic surveillance media and institutional control. Commoning implies constant community attention, mutual support and forestalling antisocial behaviour. (see stewardship, solidarity, inclusion).

Social security | Self-organization | Social and economic solidarity

Social redemption

The institutional model of inclusion tends to place a professional social worker on one side, a group of individuals with various difficulties on the other side. Commoning provides an alternative pattern: a community which has a positive approach easily absorbs individuals with many kinds of difficulties, also because Commoning requires many skills which are different from those appreciated in systems based on professional degrees.

Stewardship

This is a key feature of Commoning: whatever people do in their own interest, they also do in the general interest and in that of the future generations.

Volunteering

Commoning, even when there are forms of return, is always based on voluntary contribution, though it necessarily involves reciprocity: volunteer firemen do "commoning" towards the whole community, people collecting unused medicines for a project abroad do pure "volunteering".

Commoning Europe *project*

ERASMUS +

The "Commoning Europe" project aimed to rediscovery the Public Good as the foundation of Europe. "Commoning" refers to initiatives concerning material or immaterial resources shared among a community of users who determine by themselves the rules on management, use, enrichment of their resource; it is also based on a set of collaborative and contributive practices. This movement is now experiencing a boom in Europe. Such initiatives are often carried out by private organizations (associations, informal communities, etc.) designated as "commoners". Although they often emerge without elected representatives and public administrations, they must nevertheless find support and legitimacy with them to continue. A growing number of local governments are also seeking to develop approaches around the commons. The project intends to investigate different approaches to the commons at European level, in terms of relations between Commoners and Public Institutions and in relation to overcoming legal, organizational and other difficulties. For this aim the partnership worked and prepared a booklet of the good practices concerning commoning in their respective territories and deepen 3 out of the total number with video-interviews.
 Secondly the partners attended thematic training courses/study visits to:
– Strengthen the capacities of public officials and commoners to grasp the question of the commons and build together virtuous synergies.
– Build an exchange platform between the partners to take advantage of the complementarity of their approaches, and with their European peers to develop their innovation capacity and contribute to a European deployment of the commons movement. Participants were people who were particularly interested in the topic for research reasons or because they were directly involved in the ongoing experiences. Those three Short-term joint staff training events (in Italy, Romania, the Netherlands), were useful to allow partners to know personally and on the spot the activities in progress involving Commoning and, also, to organize an exchange of information between those who – both public administrators and officials and ordinary citizens – are directly involved in the experiences.

In those 3 trainings the Glossary was developed as an open document: each event added new words to the list and contributed to build the first Glossary of commoning languege that is the base to start to talk the same language: commoners, institutions, private organizations and citizens.

PARTNERS

BIBLIOTECA DI PACE ETS

The association Biblioteca di Pace was born in the mid-1990s in Florence (Italy). Ever since our foundation, we have tried on the one hand to answer the request by 'natives' to know foreigners and their cultures; on the other hand, the need for foreigners to integrate into a new reality.

OPEN UP- THE NETHERLANDS

Open Up! Let Youth be Heard is a non-profit that seeks to connect, empower, and mobilise marginalised youth in civic life. The organisation uses debate education methodology to equip young voices with the tools to articulate their solutions for a better future.

BRAL - BELGIUM

BRAL is a city movement striving to make Brussels sustainable. As an urban non-governmental movement BRAL is a network in which inhabitants, action groups, professional field workers and experts meet to study urban challenges, debate them and formulate solutions.

MUNICIPIUL FĂGĂRAŞ - ROMANIA

Fagaras municipality is a territorial-administrative unit organized and operating under the principles of decentralization, local autonomy, devolution of public services, eligibility of authorities of local public administration, legality and consultation of citizens in solving the problems of particular interest.

ANKARA AILE VE SOSYAL HIZMETLER İL MÜDÜRLÜĞÜ - TÜRKIYE

Ministry of Family and Social Services decides social policies related to family, women, children, elders and disabled people. The provincial directorates carry out social services according to these policies in Türkiye.

CAMPI BISENZIO MUNICIPALITY- ITALY

The municipality of Campi Bisenzio (N-W part of the Metropolitan area of Florence) stands out as a virtuous case as its territory concentrates an important stratification of civic innovation and administrative investments for sustainable and participatory urban development, supported by a strong political commitment of elected representatives and dense social capital.

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