

Policies for Commons Collaborative Economies at the European level

(Version 0.1)

Source: <http://procomuns.net/en/policy/>

The Collaborative Commons Economy: Context

Cooperation in achieving shared objectives and the provision of goods and services that meet the needs of the population and ensure a decent life is, or should be, the purpose of the economy. In this regard, the adoption of new information technologies and communication has greatly reduced transaction costs for coordination and collaboration.

If in other historical moments the reduction of these costs explains the emergence of the "traditional" firm as we know it, during the last three decades it has generated an explosion of collaborative activity mediated by Internet through new models of organization, where citizens collaborate supported by digital platforms and other cutting-edge technologies for the achievement of common goals.

The production of commons (among communities who work under the principles of participation, shared governance, mutual and collective benefit) indeed is not new. Rather it has been largely diffused in pre-capitalist societies. The 2009 Nobel Prize in Economics awarded to Elinor Ostrom for her studies on the traditional commons can be regarded as an acknowledgement of the effectiveness of this economic model. The commons refers to an economic production model managed by communities and which provides common resources that are often public in nature. It is a third model that breaks with the binomial market-state notion, formed -allegedly- by the only two organizational models able to meet the needs of the population. Although it is not new, new technologies have greatly promoted its expansion and thus the emergence of an economy of collaborative commons.

The most well-known and highly successful cases are Free Software (which dominates over proprietary software in many fields, including for example Internet servers) and Wikipedia (a global reference in free knowledge and online participation), which

demonstrated that the commons model can succeed and have more presence than traditional proprietary economic models.

Commons production is growing rapidly, expanding not only in knowledge or immaterial fields, but also in the production of hardware (such as agricultural machinery, as in the Open Source Ecology project), athenaeums of fabrication (Fablabs), accommodation (the Couchsurfing network), design services (Holon) and shared parenting groups. These cases, among many others, are models of the commons development of products, resources and services. (A directory with more than 1,500 Catalan cases of commons collaborative initiatives, as well as 400 European cases, can be found -respectively- at: <http://directori.p2pvalue.eu/> and <http://directory.p2pvalue.eu/>).

Barcelona and Catalonia have been key European regions in terms of the development of this model, generating significant creative capital and innovative capacities, and great potential for the consolidation of a robust productive sector, as well as for consolidating themselves as leading regions in the world. An example of this leadership is that the first Wikipedia page in a language other than English was the Catalan one. In 2014, a study promoted by the European Commission pointed out that three out of the ten most innovative experiences in this field emerged in Catalonia: guifi.net (a community infrastructure for wireless Internet access), the intelligent citizen kit "Smart citizen" (a device for citizens to share and control data) and Goteo.org (a leading civic microfinance platform).

Recent mapping identified hundreds of cases of initiatives only in the city of Barcelona. And in 2016, the European Commission has also given Guifi.net the award for best new generation broadband initiative in the category of innovative financing models. In addition, the collaborative commons economy has great potential as an engine for the internationalization of Barcelona, since 60% of cases have international links.

To these already proven demonstrations of model efficiency and sustainability, we can add the most recent advances in the new emerging blockchain technology (with its decentralized logic), opening new and very promising avenues for its expansion, through the future development of a collaborative commons economy.

More recently, we have seen the emergence and growth of hybrid models that adopt the same ethos and present organizational logics that are similar to the collaborative commons economic model, based on principles of collaboration, but that yet at the same time privatize other aspects and layers (that are privately owned and which do not allow

people who contribute to intervene in its governance model). This is the case of Uber and Airbnb, multinational corporations based in Silicon Valley, which behave in the style of the prevailing globalized capitalism economic model.

So far, the public debate has focused, on the one hand, on regulatory short term reactions to these platforms, and on the other hand, on the not less important issue of how to act or legislate against the tax avoidance and personal data malpractices of big digital economy players like Google, Facebook, Apple, Amazon, Yahoo, Microsoft. However, alternative models with distinct economic implications, better rights' protections and transformation potential have not reached the majority of people.

In the context of a severe economic crisis, with social inequalities reaching disproportionate levels, an extremely serious environmental crisis and political transformation, a collaborative commons economy can add its potential to a cooperative, social and solidarity economy and provide an opportunity to transform the prevailing economic system. It can operate in synergy with an economy based on small and medium enterprises and cooperatives, more committed to covering the basic needs of the majority of the population and more inclusive and democratic in the distribution of benefits. Moreover, it is based on a technology that is open and transparent, and on consumption and production models with less environmental impact. Thus, the collaborative commons economy is advantageous not only from a monetary point of view, but also with respect to other values that go beyond the global capitalist economy.

We are talking about collaborative commons economies that do not see the role of citizens-producers as an opportunity to benefit third parties or for the offshoring of profits, through digital platforms or services that convert their activity into economic value. Instead, we are talking about processes that are analogous to the principles of cooperativism and a social and solidarity economy, in addition to criteria of emancipatory governance, empowerment and positive social impact, as well as the principles of -transparently and effectively- sharing tools and knowledge online.

The change seems unstoppable, but its progressive content is contingent. The collaborative economy has been on the one hand readapted to a deepening process of economic models, driven primarily by profit and speculation (Internet as the new bubble, like real estate in the past), creating severe inequalities and loss of rights, and on the other hand, it is a reality that allowed the principles of a cooperative, social and solidarity economy to ascend and gain centrality, with a great potential for economic transformation

and innovative solutions for the problems of social exclusion and environmental sustainability.

The commons based collaborative economy also represents a different public policy model. The organizational commons models can be an inspiration for the public administrations, becoming more efficient and making better use of public resources, as well as opening new channels for participation and the activation of civil society in solving common problems and public needs, through commons-private partnerships. It is a way of moving from the prevailing privatization, in the globalization crisis cycle, to "commonification", through the involvement of citizens in the provision and production of public goods and services, without having to fall into a private logic.

In fact, the more important the collaborative economy becomes, the more it is also attracting the interest of the government, also increasing the need for public administration positioning and regulation. In this sense, this statement is a call directed to the European Commission. An intervention to define in an open and participatory way to carry out policies in the field of collaborative economy.

Because we believe that on the part of the institutions it is time to define and advance the promotion of viable alternatives for production and entrepreneurship, alternatives which meet the conditions for transparency and open resources as an engine of real progress, resilience and multiplication of opportunities.

Now is the time to join and strengthen this type of collaborative economy, ignoring another type which is appropriating its name. Now is the time because the emerging role of cities and municipalities as operating systems of change is coming together, as well as the need to advance towards shared solutions against inequalities, participation in and with the institutions, the testing of new formulas in which economic activity is understood in a holistic way and at the service of the people.

The collaborative commons economy: what are we talking about?

Guiding principles

The guiding principles of the collaborative commons economy approach, and the things we can do, therefore, in order to address the initiatives designed to promote and foster a

collaborative economy (taking into account the different actors involved in this new ecosystem of a digital and social economy) would be:

What economy?

- One that seeks to provide a service or resource that is economically sustainable, without putting profit above the purpose of service or entering into speculative dynamics.
- One that recognizes beyond monetary value through governance procedures adopted to ensure the control of value generated and / or its management by users and community members.
- One which is responsible for externalities generated, both in terms of environmental and social reproduction.
- One in line with company procedures related to the cooperative, social and solidarity economy, such as cooperative tradition and the third sector (e.g. foundations representing the community).
- What knowledge? Open knowledge through the use of free licenses or commons (such as Creative Commons licenses). One that seeks to promote access and reclaim the resources generated through public or collective ownership.

What technology?

Technology options that favor the transparency, participation and freedom of taxpayers and users. In this sense, one based on free software, open standards and if possible on decentralized architectures. Free technology is that which allows you:

- The freedom to run the program for any purpose (freedom 0).
- The freedom to see how the program works and adapt it to your needs (freedom 1). Here access to the source code is a prerequisite.
- The freedom to redistribute copies (freedom 2).
- The freedom to improve the program and distribute the improvements made so that the whole community can benefit from them (freedom 3). As on freedom 1, access to the source code is a prerequisite.

Identifying features of the collaborative commons concept

Rather than exclusive features, however, or a unique formula, which can be summarized schematically as a collaborative commons economy, projects usually have a combination of the following significant elements (with respect to the production process, relationships and resources being established):

1. Collaborative production: an open and inclusive participatory process. Digital platforms or tools that involve some kind of interactive co-creation between people, for the generation and operation of new added value services or products, allowing contribution,

sharing and peer production, freely and voluntarily (at best protecting the privacy and even anonymity of people).

2. "P2P" or peer relations: Encourage co-creation in the context of an interactive community of users and users from relations not only based on contractual, commercial or hierarchical factors, but also fostering egalitarian relations, empowerment and autonomous and / or decentralized participation.

- In terms of motivation, this means encouraging individual motivation, which may include cash (as a resource, compensation or consideration), towards collective shared values. Relationships with other people will contribute to the commons.
- In terms of the governance of the community, this means enabling decision making participatory mechanisms -whether centralized or decentralized-, enabling collaboration in the management and leadership of the project and its aims.

3. Common resources: to one degree or another, the process will generate assets collectively rather than through restrictive or exclusive access, which can be enjoyed, adapted or replicated even openly though digital licenses that often determine the degree of openness and rights in order to conduct derivative works, as well as also accessing data.

- Access: free access based on the user and service information that is generated either by use, trade, consumption and production.
- Appropriation: Sharing features, generating or reusing licenses, in order to allow derivative works to generate new economic opportunities and social capital (without causing damage).
- Details: as a result of its evolution and activity, the data generated by the projects based on the activity of the participants is unrestricted, and instead of unethical or extractive uses (operating, selling, etc.), they are available as a more common good, promoting transparency.

4. Added value: the results of the collaborative commons economy projects can combine economic or monetary value (including marketing and compensation formulas) with a positive social impact and criteria based on governance and shared value management models (such as cooperatives, associations, foundations, etc).

The features that allow projects considered part or can be adapted in this sector, also show the way for new initiatives that want mirrored, and thus promote and strengthen the commons for the benefit of society.

Although in a sense many examples of collaborative economy we call "extractive" (like Uber and Airbnb) can be considered to fulfill the first two dimensions of collaborative production, and to some extent P2P relations, when referring to the collaborative commons economy (in cases like Guifi.net, Wikipedia, drops, etc), typically reaching beyond these first two dimensions, with commons logics in terms of the resulting resources and value governance system.

Recommendations and general principles

The result of the emergence and evolution of the collaborative commons sector of the economy, and observing the conditions under which the Barcola group of organizations evolved ("Collaborative Barcelona")¹, we are proposing in this draft various policies and measures of support and promotion, to be taken in close cooperation with civil society and other stakeholders in the productivity at the European Level.

The collaborative commons economy is a model and a tendency which, as detailed below, can renew and reformulate the necessary policies to promote entrepreneurship and innovation as the engines Europe, while encouraging changes to its mode of functioning as a key agent and promoting regions to the outside world as leaders in the global context. Experiences in key cities in the field of economy or the concept of collaborative commons, as Bologna, Bristol, Seoul, Amsterdam and Quito can be examples to follow; the same as learning can be strengthened through the Barcelona model provided today.

From the Barcola group, in connection with the procomuns.net conference, and as a result of an open and parallel process of participation, we propose this set of recommendations, followed by specific measures:

General principles

- Economic policy: To support SMEs following the logic of cooperative economy, social solidarity, and those companies with production and consumption patterns which take care of the environment and which are inclusive. Adapting the methods of business and the role of the citizen as a producer in the collaborative commons economy .
- Technology policy: To support free and decentralized technologies.
- Political knowledge and innovation: To support open knowledge and ensure that innovation is funded with public funds available under free licenses.
- Public policy (public administration / public services): To encourage the creation of partnerships between public administrations and the collaborative commons economy, within the strategy to move from privatization to "commonification"

Measures and recommendations

1. Improving regulations for a collaborative commons economy

¹ <http://procomuns.net/en/about-2/barcola/>

In legal subject terms:

- To explore new legislation on legal/economic subjects beyond multinational benefit models, which put forward participatory governance, social mission and/or environmental sustainability.
- To explore the adoption and promotion of new legal subject ways ("peer cooperativism", "benefit corporation", social enterprises, etc.)
- To encourage new, and more open standards and ratios toward self-regulation: the administration would take into account that whoever uses the service would, as a proactive citizen, perform assessments thereof.

In terms of collaborative contributors to the economy:

- Contribute to finding mechanisms of regulatory standards in monetization beyond the figure of salaried employment, seeking hybrid solutions such as the cost of self-employment (where the social benefits that are normally linked to a contract may instead be linked to the person).
- Protect the figure of the "responsible citizen producer" as a new agent that generates economic and social commons, versus situations where it is penalized or banned by the pressure of "lobbies" or professional lobbyists.

In terms of technological infrastructure:

- Promote laws that encourage the reuse of technological devices, opposing planned obsolescence and other ways that prevent the maintenance, repair, expansion and upgrading of technological devices (e.g. manufacturing appliances that can be repaired without special tools, with expandable memory and with software that can be freely updated).
- Promote laws that force companies that produce smartphones and similar technology to offer decent working conditions (with appropriate safety, training, without forced or child labor, respect for regulations on work-day limits and wages, as well as trade union freedom) and transparency concerning suppliers and the conditions of extraction of minerals used (such as coltan, cobalt, tin, tungsten and gold), and not to benefit armed groups or feed wars.
- Laws to promote cloud computing services based on open source software, with policies that respect privacy and open standards, and which allow us, if we use them correctly, to regain control over our activities, our data, and communications (as well as how and with whom we interact and cooperate, with total freedom).
- Telecommunications policy based on free competition (not on the control of large multinationals) and public in its nature, so it does not duplicate private infrastructures (financed largely by public funds). The infrastructure where public

funding is involved must be open, free and neutral, and must cover the whole country, deployed with the criteria of social and territorial benefit and based on the economy for the common good. In addition, existing infrastructure, regardless of the mode of management, should allow other operators universal access.

2. Enable existing and new formulas for financing commons initiatives

- Explore sustainability and scalability models that are alternatives to startups, providing resources for new projects that promote the commons model and activate a different kind of entrepreneurship with a social impact, but also based on openness and fair labor relations.
- Stimulate pilot experiences and boost the visibility of the commons collaborative economy to promote and attract impact capital and other alternative financing mechanisms.
- Enabling different channels and ways to justify public spending for government grants or other public calls, or contributions to commons projects, as costs and investments, such as monetary or non-monetary contributions, audited or auditable.
- Create a call to fund innovative pilot projects co-financed by a match-funding model, which in turn creates a “pull” for projects with commons criteria, ultimately combining individual crowdfunding with seed funding, which multiplies each citizen input.
- In the case of alternative currencies or time banks promoted by citizens or cities, to ensure that personal contributions to collaborative commons economy projects are aided by access and differential treatment.
- Basic income not only ensures dignified living conditions, but also the ability to contribute individually to the commons project.
- Progressive taxation and combating tax evasion by large corporations.

3. Promote incubation for new projects and initiatives in the collaborative commons economy

- Create an incubator with physical and technological infrastructure designed for the commons, and facilitate access to resources for collective commons entrepreneurship, which, apart from the positive social impact, would promote viable projects that meet the criteria of openness, reusability, transparency, etc.
- Revise incubation models for innovative, current technology-based projects; to more clearly consider an alternative route to the start-up of an extractive or proprietary collaborative economy, to promote the scalability of the collaborative commons production model. To encourage projects that contemplate a sustainable medium-term perspective, and not with the sole purpose of then being acquired by a large firm.

- Articulate a call to support existing experiences or pilot initiatives to cooperate with, and to rethink key existing local collaborative commons services available in the economy with a negative or controversial impact in cities.
- The creation of collective entrepreneurship commons resources and experiences in conflict mediation to develop in this sector (informative materials, specific training, free tools, exchange of experiences, etc).
- Adapting the services of key players such as public funded business incubators so they can also be key to the promotion and support of new business initiatives commons, which will contribute to consolidate the proposed model.
- Promoting a "House of Commons" public institution linked to the following international experiences, as a space for self-organized open meetings, social networking, and support activities of the commons.

4. Adopt or reassign the use of spaces and other public infrastructures for the sector

- Enable joint management of workspaces and empty premises for work and development of collaborative commons production projects, facilitating mobility, the sharing and promotion of sector professionals and stakeholders.
- Promote pilot projects to enhance the ability of citizens to use public infrastructure, such as potential city markets for citizens to exchange goods.
- Promote policy scalability and promotion, in which the public administration provides technological and ad hoc physical infrastructure (following the model of FabLabs) in order to create spaces for production, exchange and learning.
- Encourage collaborative frameworks on underutilized resources such as computers or reusable fiber conduits.

5. Change of administrations operate internally on some fronts linked to commons

- Incorporate the prosocial evaluation of tenders and contribute to dismantling patronage networks, making it possible for commons projects to choose a public contest. Get positive points in its assessment of this fact, understood both as a commons capital (productive tools shared) and thus making better use of public money.
- Reconsider hiring -rather than proprietary- priorities for the public bodies and its activities and services of commons free licenses, in addition to the criteria of social enterprises or cooperative current (and indeed encouraging that these other criteria additionally include the commons vision).
- Perform a pilot experience in which public bodies and governments use actors or community services that function as commons companies, such as guifi.net infrastructures for digital communication.

- Encourage public administrations to adopt (and contribute to) an open technology policy, as could be the use of free software and open licenses. If you make a purchase, proprietary investment in parallel can improve commons alternatives.
- Promote the generation of official documents on economic issues with Creative Commons licenses to contain a visible explanation, without any restriction from these terms or content reuse. This horizon can generate a trend for informational materials, business plans and other publishing formats, helping to standardize practices.
- Help mapping underutilized public resources in order to support pilot projects and make them available to communities under commons access and community management.
- Build a center of knowledge and competence of commons citizens, helping them to be more self-sufficient and encourage commons co-production.
- To implement socially responsible public procurement in order to demand transparency in the supply chain of electronic equipment acquired, and independently verify that they meet the main conventions on human rights and labor during the execution of any public contract.

6. Combat malpractice and corruption in government policy in the field of technology and knowledge

- Mandatory registration of meetings and contacts with lobbyists or lobbyists representing the economic interests of large corporations in telecommunications and technology services.
- Measures against the “revolving doors” between big corporations and regulatory telecommunications bodies and the collaborative economy.
- Privacy policy interventions to ensure transparency and privacy rights in data transmission platform administrations.

7. Assist in promoting cities and neighborhoods to bring their economies and other related sectors closer

- Promote best practices and examples of digital communication and coordination between institutions and citizens with respect to the collaborative commons sector of the economy, promoting mutual trust.
- Helping to create spaces and tools that promote communication between cities, neighborhoods and districts, to provide experiences to the public commons collaborative production (to combat the current view generated by actors implementing the extractive model, disassociated from the common good).

- Supporting joint activities and enhance the visibility of this sector and the cooperative economy, social solidarity, and help create and strengthen links between both areas, simultaneously.
- Support actions to break the isolation between communities and practices, where networks like Ouishare, the Circular Economy or solidarity economy contribute to a greater extent in the sector.
- Promote dialogue with predominant collaborative corporate economy actors to try to influence the neo-liberal appropriation of collaborative practices, also adding the productive and enterprising local networks.
- Promote a network of open spaces such as FabLabs and maker spaces, educational programs, focused on repair, reutilization and economic incentives.
- Promote collaborative clusters of companies and research centers that are committed to building and sharing of code, design knowledge and under free and open licenses.

8. Expand city brands in terms of the external visibility of local initiatives

- Promoting an attractive label linked to the "City commons model": a bottom-up model designed to enrich local values (as opposed to the model imported from Silicon Valley), doing so from a commons (prosocial) and abundant approach.
- Promote organic social, non-planned obsolescence, repairable, transparent, open and free source product seals.
- Strengthen the international "commons city model" incorporating the commons experiences into the policy of cooperation and national/international alliances of City Councils.
- Strengthen and develop agreements with communities involved with the dissemination of free knowledge, such as Wikipedia, which allow improving institutions' own language and in other languages collaboratively.
- Creating a pilot for international awards for collaborative commons production experiences, which provide recognition to citizen "producers" that generate commons cities.
- Establish collaborative networks among cities and / or commons (eg, Seoul, Amsterdam, Bologna, Bristol, Barcelona) to strengthen coalitions that can promote technical solutions, to associate with other municipalities, while focusing on issues of public policy at European level.

9. Making sure investments in major technological events revert in promoting local commons

- Promoting the conferences and major events in cities to give visibility and support to the collaborative commons economy, ensuring the promotion of open technology and local commons experiences.
- Promoting "satellite" events in parallel to the major events, where commons communities and actors present alternatives in order to help achieve change.
- Redirect public funds for venture capital criteria to include cooperative economy, social solidarity, free technologies and management areas.

10. Encourage and support the research and understanding of the phenomenon to move forward

- Promoting the research on this field at the European level and improve its knowledge, in addition to producing more studies with strong empirical support and implementing open data practices and share them as a common good, allowing otherwise in-depth and prospective analysis
- Generate open access to public data on economic and social aspects, entrepreneurship, support actions, results , etc. (always respecting privacy data regulations).
- To organize working groups and other mechanisms for an in-depth reflection and develop a broad perspective on the implications and potential of the collaborative commons model. Bringing the main conclusions to the council.
- To create the conditions to generate a report on the capacity of Europe regarding the regulation and promotion of the collaborative commons economy (identifying and analyzing relevant sectoral regulations and the availability of resources), in line with the regulatory actions and policies of promotion of different countries.
- To promote the investigation on this sector, reverting its present state of disregard, moreover promoting the generation and study of data, as an open and shared common good. To promote in depth and forecast trend analysis.
- To support demographic sectorial studies by different actors and with presence in the neighborhoods, based on values linked to the model and other related fields (education, tourism, employment, leisure, etc.).