

## **Proposal for the commons as a constructive political paradigm for Europe**

Many people are engaged in commons-based alternative practices as part of the struggle for ecological, social and cultural transition within their communities. In these fields, the commons approach offers a new vocabulary for collective action and social justice. It opens up ways of reshaping processes for governance of resources by communities themselves. Commons-based practices respect values of sharing and cooperation, equity and diversity, transparency and sustainability.

All these communities, small or large, whatever resources they take care of – be they digital commons, knowledge, public spaces, cultures, natural resources, water, forests or oceans, etc. – share common perspectives and values, and an ethic of justice for a democratic, safe and sustainable future.

*The idea of commons is growing in our collective imaginary, but remains underrepresented in political terms. It is time to jointly act to reinvigorate local, national, and European politics on the basis of these values.*

In this context, 28 activists from 15 European countries met for 3 days in Villarceaux, France in May 2016 to develop a collective agenda for the commons. Since then, a process of shared visions and strategies for the commons in Europe has continued to grow. All the participants are committed to the development of a European Commons Assembly: a flexible but unified alliance of diverse activists, mobilized across issues to impact politics.

### **European Commons Assembly: A coalition for solidarity and commons-based politics**

European Commons Assembly is an ongoing process that facilitates pluralistic debate regarding the strategy and agenda for a fundamentally united political vision. It supports activists' continued engagement in concrete, collaborative and bottom-up actions and campaigns in Europe, and ultimately helps to build a flourishing European political civil society movement for the commons.

In Villarceaux, three main objectives were defined:

- Increase visibility of the commons (a civil and social practice) in European public discourse and media
- Bring the advent of creative institutions and political alternatives from the local to the European level
- Contribute and articulate several joint demands for the commons

Participants also drafted a “Call”, an open manifesto articulating this commons ethic to the public and inviting them to join the European Commons Assembly process as part of the struggle for social justice. Contributors actively circulate information and experiences through this network and participate on an open, non-hierarchical coordination platform. Tools include a horizontal discussion list and openly accessible pads, or collaborative writing tools. Each week, new individuals introduce themselves into this commons community. Current projects include further development of the communications tools,

including a dedicated website, and coordination for a meeting of commoners at the European Parliament in Brussels in November. This meeting will bring the commons and its participatory form concretely into the European political sphere.

## **November 16, 2016: first European Commons Assembly in Brussels**

On November 16, 2016, the European Commons Assembly will convene in Brussels. With the EP Intergroup on Common Goods and Public Services, a professionally facilitated "un-conference" on the commons will be co-organized in Parliament, while other self-directed commons activities and local assemblies will take place throughout the day, around the city, across Europe, and online.

Rather than a conventional speech-driven event, the meeting in parliament will welcome roughly 150 commoners to contribute to a bottom-up participatory agenda that will make alternatives visible at the European level. Concrete proposals are already being developed, including a collective reflection on what the commons approach can bring to institutional design in the wake of Brexit and the Greek crisis, as well as a session on open cooperativism.

An honest and democratic representation of Europe today is crucial, and so the events will ensure gender-balanced group of participants, across geography and political affiliations. A preliminary list of invitees has begun to take shape, and five members of parliament (MEPs) from four countries are committed as official hosts with more anticipated to join. An agenda for the day's events is open for contributions online, and weekly coordination calls take place among a growing number of commons activists across Europe.

Mobilization for the commons continues outside the event itself; European Commons Assembly will be present at the Commons Space of the World Social Forum in Montreal in August, forging links with broader movements. In France on the 23rd of September, activists will gather in Paris to continue developing this shared agenda for the commons. And preparations for a press conference and communications campaign are currently in progress.

## **Engagement and Support**

Organizations involved: Commons Network, P2P Foundation, Remix the Commons, Goteo, Krytyka Polityczna, Ecovillage Network, Zemos98, LABSUS, Les Têtes de l'Art Oberliht, European Alternatives, AAA – Atelier d'architecture autogérée, R-URBAN, AITEC, Commons Festival Athens, Commons Institute, Commons Josaphat, GEN-Europe, Institute for Political Ecology, Institute for Solidarity Economics, TimeBank, Wikimedia, Communia, Platoniq, Creative Commons Portugal

A coalition of MEPs will financially support the travel and accommodation for 100 people. Fifty have been confirmed so far.

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