Commons Transition Plan for the City of Ghent

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Photo: Driemasterpark. Credit: Rosemie Callewaert

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Part 1: Introduction

1.1 The aim of this research

The commons is a way to describe shared, material or immaterial property that is stewarded, protected or produced by a community – in an urban context often by citizens' collectives – and managed according to the rules and standards of that community.

It is fundamentally distinct from state bodies – government, city, state – but also from market actors. The commons is independent of, but of course still holds relationships to, the government and the market.

For the City of Ghent, the central question of this research and participation project was: how can a city respond to this and what are the implications of this for city policy? The goal was to come up with a synthesised Commons Transition Plan that describes the possibilities for optimal public interventions while also offering answers to the question of what Ghent's many commoners and commons projects expect from the city.

The intention of this assignment is therefore to investigate the possibility of a potentially new political, facilitative and regulatory relationship between the local government of Ghent and its citizens so as to facilitate the further development of the commons.

With this work we have tried to find out what kinds of institutionalisation we could come up with in order to handle the commons well. This means essentially a shift from a top-down approach and old organisational principles such as 'command and control', towards a new way of thinking and an approach as a 'partner city', in which the city facilitates and supports projects. Of course, sometimes the city must also regulate projects, in the role of a more facilitative government.

1.2 Structure of this report

Part 1 of this report is a general introduction to the commons which serves to explain why the commons are important in the context of urban development.

In Part 2 we look at the global context in which the revival of the commons is taking place, but most of all at the reality of the urban commons in a number of other European cities, which may possibly serve as a benchmark for the city of Ghent.

Part 3 concerns our findings in Ghent itself.

Finally, in Part 4, you will find our recommendations to the city council.

At the end of this study you will find a series of appendices, including an English-language overview of the commons in European cities, written by the Greek urbanist Vasilis Niaros, who was a Timelab resident during the period of our research. The authors of the report, Michel Bauwens and Yurek Onzia, are responsible for parts 1 and 4. Vasilis Niaros wrote the comparative study autonomously, in English.

1.3. What are the commons?

The commons, originally called *meent* in Dutch,[1] are communal goods and services, both material and immaterial, which are in principle neither the property of public authorities such as the city or the state, nor the private property of individuals or corporations. In this study we use the definition of

[1] Bram Stessel writes: "A *meent* or *mient* is a term that was once used to describe an undivided communal pasture, usually as part of a *gemeynt* or *marke*. These were particularly common on sandy soils. (Notice the parallel with *gemeente* [the Dutch word for municipality or borough]). Depending on the region and the fertility of the soil, the *meent* would at a certain point be divided up among beneficiaries. The nineteenth-century *markewetten* [*marke* laws] were responsible for a large-scale division."
(http://www.mo.be/zeronaut/allerbeste-overheid-maak-van-landbouwgrond-een-common)

the commons researcher David Bollier[2], who – building on the work of the American Nobel Prize winner Elinor Ostrom[3] – defines the commons based on three elements:

1. The commons are 'common property', created, stewarded or protected by a certain community; in the context of a city these are usually 'citizens' collectives'.
2. The commons are not therefore a 'natural' phenomenon, not simply something that belongs to and is accessible to all, but something that depends on human decisions and activities, on the activity which David Bollier and other authors refer to as 'commoning'.
3. This 'common property' is managed according to the norms and rules of the community, in relation to the government and the market, but mostly autonomously. In this context, the forms of management and ownership are fundamentally different from those of the market or the state.

The commons are thus defined by the following three criteria: 1) an object of collaboration, 2) an activity carried out by people, and 3) a form of management and ownership.

Such a simple definition demands a little further clarification, however:

- there are many hybrid forms, but the main thing to note is how this form of ownership is implemented in the broader context of the reinforcement of a 'commons ecology'. For a first example, take CSA farms, which can often be owned by the individual farmers themselves (making this a form of private ownership, not commons) but which are clearly co-managed in consultation with the consumer community (consumer food co-ops, 'pick-your-own' customers, etc.). A second example is the City of Ghent's Temporary Use programme,

[2] Think Like a Commoner. A Short Introduction to the Life of the Commons by David Bollier. New Society, 2014 ; http://www.newsociety.com/Books/T/Think-Like-a-Commoner

[3] Governing The Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action. By Ostrom, Elinor. Cambridge University Press, 1990

whereby the city makes land or space available for projects and citizens' initiatives, which are then strongly managed by the participants themselves. In the 'Community Land Trust' model that can also be found in Ghent– in which the land is separated and removed from the market –, this land is sometimes owned by the city, but is then placed under the CLT statute.

The method of analysis used by the think tank Oikos[4] in an earlier study on the evolution of citizens' initiatives and collectives in Ghent is useful here. In this method, initiatives are placed in a state-citizen-market triangle. The citizens' collectives in the Oikos study are very much in favour of the second element of the commons definition: communities stewarding the commons. If at least two elements of our reasonably strict definition are present, then such forms can certainly be treated and described as commons-orientated. In this work we use the same nomenclature as Filip De Rynck, who has already published a study on the relationship between such initiatives and the government.[5]

- The commons are not a utopia, nor are they perfect. Just like other kinds of human practices, they have pros and cons. Commons can be more or less open in nature. Commons can be stewarded by more privileged strata of the population, and can create tension in the area of inclusion; commons can be stewarded by ethnic and/or cultural minorities, and closed to outsiders; commons can be problematic in many different ways, such as in the case of a 'design commons', that enable people to work together to make weapons themselves using

[4] Burgercollectieven in kaart gebracht. Van Fleur Noy & Dirk Holemans. Oikos, 2016

http://www.coopkracht.org/images/phocadownload/burgercollectieven%20in%20kaart%20gebracht%20-%20fleur%20noy%20%20dirk%20holemans.pdf

[5] De commons: zelfregulerend of afhankelijk? Een analyse van arrangementen. Van Filip De Rynck, Evelien Depauw en Raf Pauly. Oikos, 2017

https://www.middenveldinnovatie.be/sites/default/files/2017-04/Oikos%2081_03%20transitie_De%20Rynck%20Depauw%20Pauly.pdf

3D printers.[6] In this study, therefore, we also use a number of evaluation criteria in order to be able to assess commons on an ethical basis – more specifically on the basis of their relationship with environmental sustainability, social equality and inclusion, which are central concerns in this work.

In addition to the more strict and 'pure' commons definition used by David Bollier, we can certainly place commons in a broader context.

- According to a number of anthropologists, economists and historians, there are about four main methods of distributing goods and services in society: 1) the market, which operates under the price mechanism, 2) state redistribution by means of taxes and public investment; 3) the method of reciprocity, i.e. the bartering economy as practised in tribal civilisations and 4) pooling or mutualisation. The commons corresponds with the fourth manner of managing and distributing goods and services, by means of pooling. Or to put it another way: 'having together'.

- Following a more political approach, the commons can also be seen as a more collective approach to society and economics; in this context, the literature uses the words 'common' in English and '*commun*' in French. In this sense a commons approach stands for a fundamentally different view of humanity. Here salvation is not expected from 'rational individuals' who are placed in competition with each other, but much more from people working together,[7] from connecting and from collective solutions, i.e. what Tine De Moor calls 'homo cooperans'.[8] Here the commons represent forms of individual,

[6] For example: http://defensedistributed.com/

[7] Correspondent and Ghent commoner Anne Snick writes: "*Is this not the central characteristic of all 'commons'? The realisation that if we strive for the common good we will also benefit from it ourselves, and the conscious choice to prioritise this as a goal/value (i.e. collaborating instead of competing). All the other characteristics (who owns or manages what, etc.) are secondary to this. I can be the owner of the drill, but as long as I don't use it as a means of production to enrich myself in competition with others, but rather use it to enhance the well-being of the community – and therefore of myself – then what we are talking about is a commons or commoning.*

[8] Study by Tine De Moor: Homo cooperans. Institutions for collective action and the compassionate society, http://www.collective-action.info/sites/default/files/webmaster/_PUB_Homo-cooperans_EN.pdf

relational and collective autonomy and cooperation, both in relation to the state's mechanism and in relation to market mechanisms.

Frame 1: the 8 rules of the commons according to Elinor Ostrom

Analysing the design of long-enduring Common Property Regimes institutions, Elinor Ostrom (1990) identified 8 design principles which are prerequisites for a stable arrangement:

1. Clearly defined boundaries
2. Congruence between appropriation and provision rules and local conditions
3. Collective-choice arrangements allowing for the participation of most of the appropriators in the decision making process
4. Effective monitoring by monitors who are part of or accountable to the appropriators
5. Graduated sanctions for appropriators who do not respect community rules
6. Conflict-resolution mechanisms which are cheap and easy of access
7. Minimal recognition of rights to organize (e.g., by the government)
8. In case of larger CPRs: Organisation in the form of multiple layers of nested enterprises, with small, local CPRs at their bases.

Common property regimes typically function at a local level to prevent the overexploitation of a resource system from which fringe units can be extracted. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Common_Property_Resource)

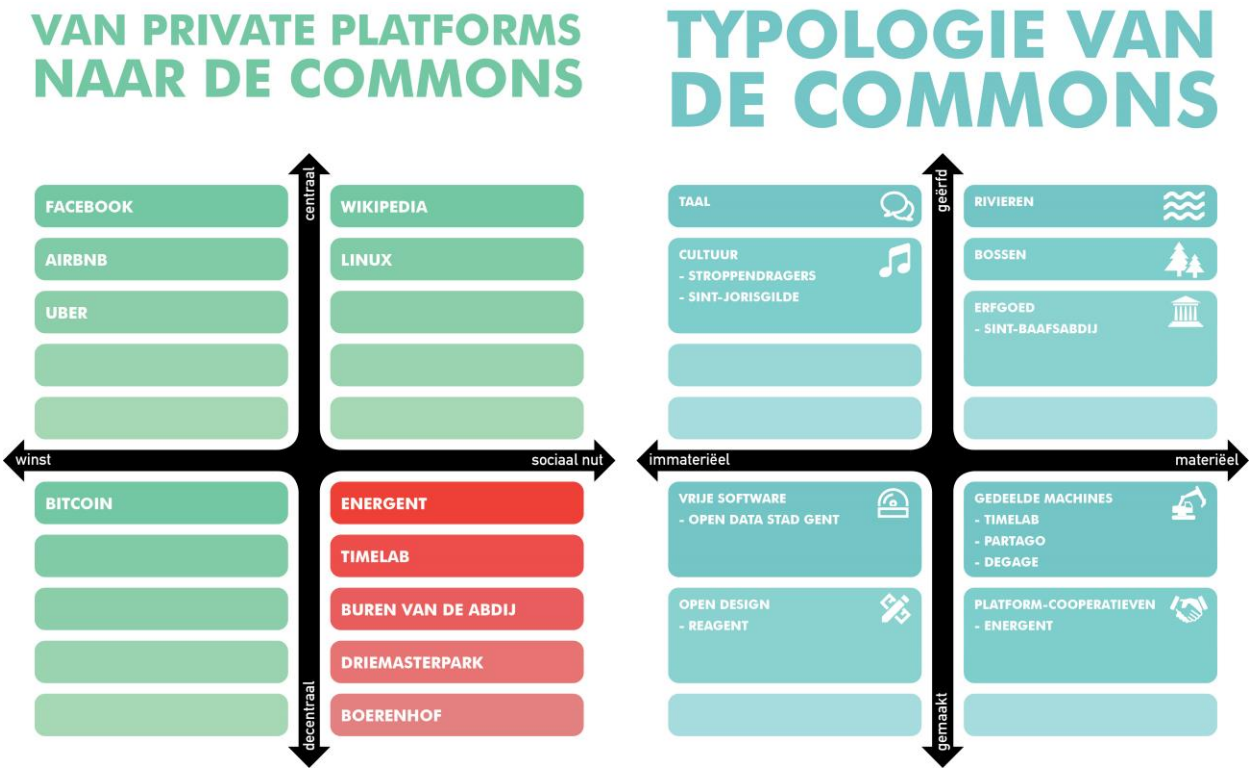
An update by the German Silke Helfrich, together with the American David Bollier and the Belgian Michel Bauwens, co-founder of the Commons Strategy Group, can be found here: https://wiki.p2pfoundation.net/Eight_Points_of_Reference_for_Commoning

Further reading: https://wiki.p2pfoundation.net/Logic_of_the_Market_versus_the_Logic_of_the_Commons

1.4. Typology of the commons

There is a wide variety of commons, depending on the nature of the common property. The next quadrant illustrates four fundamental types of commons, depending on the nature of the ‘object’ of collaboration.

Graphic 1: Quadrant, a typology of the commons



Credit: Wim Reygaert for VOS

The vertical axis shows the polarity between immaterial and material commons. Immaterial commons are things like knowledge, software, design, etc. Material commons are things like woods, rivers and parks, but also factories and machines. Of course this is only a polarisation of the reality, because immaterial commons are always anchored in material infrastructure, while material commons are represented in knowledge. And yet the distinction is important: knowledge is a ‘non-rivalising’ property, because through sharing it partly gains in value itself, whereas material

goods are ‘rivalising’, i.e. scarce. What is important to note here, however, is that the change from a status of private property to a commons function can allow for a very strong response to the relative scarcity of a material good.[9] By granting ‘access’ to the function of a property, independently of exclusively private ownership, scarcity is avoided. Hence the strong relationship between the mutualising or ‘pooling’ of a function or good, and the dramatic reduction of material pressure on nature.

The horizontal axis shows the polarity between potential common property that we inherit and common property that we produce ourselves.

This combination results in four quadrants:

- In quadrant 1, top-left, we find the immaterial commons that we inherit, such as language and culture.

- In quadrant 2, bottom-left, we find the material commons that we inherit – woods, rivers and irrigation channels – and that we will hand down to the generations that come after us.

- In quadrant 3, top-right, we find the immaterial commons that we consciously produce and protect ourselves via commons licenses: here we’re talking about free software (Linux), shared designs (open design, e.g. for Arduino and Wikispeed), and of course the sharing of general and specialised knowledge (Wikipedia).

- In quadrant 4, bottom-right, we find material commons that we consciously produce ourselves: shared housing, machines and workspaces.

In this study we will mainly be discussing quadrants 3 and 4, the material and immaterial commons that we now produce together with all

[9] According to Anne Snick: “It is precisely the scarcity of the material commons that forces us to place the function of things back above the possession of them; if function can be viewed as a common, the ‘reach’ of the commons becomes much greater.”

commoners in the Ghent area, with priority given to local initiatives that are specifically focused on the reinforcement of the urban fabric.

A second important typology concerns the relationship of the commons with market mechanisms and various forms of governance.

The vertical axis concerns the polarity between centralised and more hierarchical management; it concerns a global scale in comparison with distributed networks without centralised management, and it also concerns the more local scale.

The horizontal axis shows the economical functionality of projects with a certain commons focus. Do the commons exist in the context of the maximising of profit, or do they strive for a social objective or impact, whereby the economic aspect is subordinate to these social objectives?

This gives us another four quadrants:

1. top-right: profit maximising networks allowing for peer-to-peer relationships, with respect to both social relations (Facebook) and the market (Uber, Airbnb), but managed in an hierarchical and centralised way so as to support the private owners of the platform (which, of course, does not mean that these services do not effect any social benefits). These systems are not true commons and are wrongly called a sharing economy, since they usually concern purely commercial relationships. Strictly speaking there are no commons here that are managed by a community or have the common good as their goal, without strongly contextualising them within the platform’s private logic.

2. bottom-right: distributed networks focused on profit maximisation In these networks, commons serve, like the ‘open source’ code of Bitcoin and Blockchain, for example, to stimulate distributed markets. The management seeks to be decentralised, but within market mechanisms,

while market players are concentrated over the course of time, but without owning the platform itself.

3. Bottom-left: commons-orientated local initiatives that have global connections but strive to realise a local goal, generally also social and sustainability goals, and in principle do not aim to have private profit (the profit serves to realise the social objective).

4. Top-left: here we have global commons with a globally ‘distributed object of collaboration’ and with global management structures, and generally global objectives. Well-known examples include the Linux software and Wikipedia.

This commons-orientated study therefore almost exclusively focuses on the two forms in the right quadrants of this figure, and particularly on the local commons-orientated initiatives in the Ghent area. The top-left quadrant will be discussed insofar as global projects have an influence on the local situation and the left quadrants will be discussed insofar as commons-orientated alternatives exist for them. Platform cooperatives for example, where the platform itself is viewed as a commons, are an alternative for the private platforms without such a commons.

Graphic 2: The commons and the market

The Logic of the Market versus the Logic of the Commons

	Market	Commons
Focus	What can I sell?Exchange value	What do we need?Use value
Core beliefs	Scarcity	Plenty
	Homo oeconomicus	Homo cooperans
	It's about resources (allocation).	It's about us.
Governance	Market-State	Polycentric / Peer-to-Peer Governance
Decision making	hierarchical	horizontal
	Command (Power, Law, Violence)	Consensus, Free Cooperation, self-organization
Social relationships	Centralization of power (monopoly)	Decentralization of power(autonomy)
	Property	Possession
Access to rival resources	Limited by boundaries & rules defined by owner	Limited by boundaries & rules defined by usergroups
Access to nonrival resources	Made scarce (to ensure profitability)	Open access (to ensure social equity)

Credit: Silke Helfrich, P2P Foundation

1.5. The commons as a challenge for market and government

Just like older forms of mutualisation, the new commons as its roots in civil society, but this new layer of citizens' initiatives presents itself explicitly as such. They reject both an evolution towards the semi-public domain, as well as towards market organisations, but also the exclusive professionalisation of the old civil society. The new urban commons are much more characterised by a culture of horizontality, free contribution

(and, by extension, free ‘non-contribution’), and a drive towards individual and collective autonomy.

The revival of the commons is first and foremost a challenge for the dominant view of citizens and society in the current societal model, and for the almost exclusive vision based on the division between market and state. The commons invite political and social movements as well as market and government players to evolve from a binary world view towards a triarchical world view, in which problems and solutions are seen as a specific kind of connection between market, government and commons. So, instead of leadership and management coming from the government or the market, instead of public-private partnerships, we should also look at public-social partnerships (i.e. public-commons partnerships) and public-social-private partnerships.

1.5.1 The commons as a governmental challenge

For the government, and the political world that directs the government within a democratic system, the commons also represent an additional challenge since they constitute a new claim with regard to the exercise of power. When a group of citizens claims or establishes a commons, with or without government ‘permission’, this is a claim that questions the traditional forms of representative democracy. Just like classical civil society – first as an expression of the workers’ movement, and later with regard to the broader social, cultural and identity problems following the 1960s – the commons are an invitation to further develop a ‘democracy+’, a new kind of mixture of representative and more direct forms of democracy. The self-managing of commons through citizens’ collectives is an extension of democratic forms to new domains, including market functions previously managed on a purely private level. In Flanders, the new Oosterweel Agreement (the so-called ‘Oosterweel Light’) is a consequence of such a common(s) claim. Citizens refused to see spatial planning and mobility issues as something that could be regulated exclusively by representative politics and by the private interests of companies. In a city like Ghent, the

revival of the commons represents both a challenge and an opportunity to reinvent and enrich politics, taking into account specific challenges such as inclusion, sustainability, equal opportunities, etc.

We will, of course, come back to this discussion later, but here are some questions to keep in mind already: are there new institutional forms that can integrate these new claims into a reformed social, political and economic system? Can we move from a representative democracy with participation to more extensive forms that recognise the 'right to initiate' of civil society and its claims to commons?

Can we really evolve into a 'partner city' that supports and guides these commons initiatives?

The specific challenge for the government and the democratic system is to establish the right way of working together – including by means of new institutional channels and forms of the rule of law – so as to connect the representative logic of the democracy 'of all' (and the deepening of this through participation and deliberation) with the specific 'contributory' logic of the commons and citizens' initiatives.

After all, the latter are not 'representative', but instead point to a new logic of 'contributions', while the management and decision-making mechanisms (governance) very often have that 'contributory' character. It is the contribution to a common project, in the co-production process, that provides the 'voice' here. By way of example, a commons-orientated park such as the Driemasterpark[10] in Meulestede-Wondelgem is not only supported by the government or private interests, but nor is supported only by those living around the park; it is supported by all those who *contribute* to the park.[11] In this study, we will make proposals for an experimental

[10] See https://wiki.commons.gent/wiki/Driemasterpark

[11] John Vandaele describes the contributory logic of the Buren van de Abdij ('the Neighbours of the Abbey') as follows, in Oikos 62 of 03/2012: "Flexibility and adaptability are hallmarks of de Buren: becoming a member is as simple as providing your email address. You are then invited to meetings and **you then decide yourself how much you want to do** for de Buren." URL: https://wiki.commons.gent/wiki/Buren_van_de_Abdij

approach to the connection between the representative and contributory mechanisms.

Finally, as mentioned above, the commons also represent a challenge with respect to social inclusion and inequality between citizens. A new role of the government could be to become a meta-regulator of the commons, in such a way that the potential of every citizen and inhabitant can be stimulated. It is important to mention that in this study we refer to ‘citizens’, but give it a broader meaning, i.e. by this we mean all residents of Ghent. The need to adapt government practices to the commons also has an important legal aspect. After the French Revolution, the commons largely disappeared from the law books and from legislative thinking. Regulations evolve in the context of the social demands of powers of opposition (the workers’ movement up to the 1980s, for example), and over the last few decades have taken place in a context of deregulation. The self-management of actors seeking profit maximisation remains fundamentally problematic, however, and therefore a great deal of regulation is based on mistrust of the private individual in his capacity as a citizen and in relation to companies. But commons practices, including the generative economy, are based on a fundamentally different attitude, namely that of the creation of shared goods and services in a context of general interest. As such, there is, in our opinion, certainly room for reflection on how regulation can relate specifically to commons activities. Hence also in part 4 we look at the importance of setting up a legal service that can deal with commons regulation.

1.5.2 The commons as a market challenge

The commons also pose a challenge for market players with a private profit motive. First and foremost, as we will see in the findings on the local situation in Ghent, the commons dynamic creates a new kind of company, which is generative[12] with respect to the commons and the citizens' collectives. If the city of Ghent creates a 'temporary use' offering,[13] i.e. makes land and buildings available to citizens' initiatives, and these initiatives then generate commons, this can often also lead to new businesses. The commons therefore also imply an aspect of employment, in which the creation of work can be very significant. See for example the potential of 1 million school meals per year in Ghent's city schools alone.

The challenge is therefore to invent and support market forms that reinforce the commons rather than weaken them. That not only 'capture' value, but also reinvest in the commons and the commons communities. BAST, which renovates worker's houses in Ghent, is a nice example of such a type of company.[14]

The immaterial commons, based on the sharing of knowledge, represent a special case, being at odds with the usual privatisation of knowledge through intellectual property. An essential problem here is the relationship between the regulations and the government's cooperation with the traditional private profit economy and its problems of 'externalities'[15] on the one hand, and the common, often socio-ecological companies (which are

[12] Majorie Kelly explains: "The generative economy is not a legal exercise but the embodiment of an emerging value system. Companies in the generative economy are built around values; the John Lewis Partnership's core value is fairness, while Organic Valley's core values are sustainability and community. Generative values become enduring through the social architecture of ownership. The generative economy is built on a foundation of stakeholder ownership designed to generate and preserve real wealth—resources held and shared by our communities and the ecosystems we live in. These enterprises don't have absentee ownership shares trading in a casino economy, but ownership held in human hands." (http://www.yesmagazine.org/issues/9-strategies-to-end-corporate-rule/can-there-be-201cgood201d-corporations?)

[13] More info can be found at https://wiki.commons.gent/wiki/Tijdelijke_Invullingen_van_Publieke_Ruimte_-_Stad_Gent

[14] See http://www.bast.coop/nl/over-bast

[15] More specifically, we are referring to the negative externalities, i.e. uncompensated external costs or damages incurred by third parties, that arise as a result of an economic activity. This damage can be both social and ecological.

much more focused on integrating these externalities into their economic models) on the other hand.
Both sectors need to move towards a socio-ecological transition, and this cannot, of course, be done in the same way.

In terms of market forms, the commons stimulate new 'generative' market forms that pay more attention to integrating values such as sustainability, knowledge sharing, the mutualisation of infrastructure and a more inclusive distribution of economic value. Coopkracht[16] and Febecoop have already forged a new path, and have organised seminars in which cooperatives are seen as an ideal form of ownership and management by which to manage commons.

This is something that has already been put into practice in Ghent by EnerGent, the cooperative for renewable energy. Internationally, a movement has developed around platform cooperativeism[17], whereby the platforms used to facilitate 'distributed' markets are regarded as commons (and not private property) and take the form of a cooperative. International examples include Stocksy United, a platform for photographers with royalty-free stock photos, and FairMondo, a global, ethical online marketplace owned by local users as an alternative to eBay, etc. In Flanders, and certainly also in Ghent, we can therefore observe a movement in this direction. Social entrepreneurship, impact investors, ethical investors, community currencies and crowdfunding are also potential means of supporting commons.

[16] On 8 September 2016, Coopkracht kick-started the year's theme of "The power of cooperatives for the management of commons", in Vooruit, Ghent, see http://www.coopkracht.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=535:de-kracht-van-cooeperaties-voor-het-beheer-van-commons&catid=1:nieuwsberichten&Itemid=177

[17] See Platform Cooperativism Consortium, https://wiki.p2pfoundation.net/Platform_Cooperativism_Consortium

1.5.3 The commons as a challenge for civil society

The commons are also **a clear challenge for traditional civil society.** The commons bring with them new forms of coordination and management, which are much more based on informal contributions, voluntary action and much more horizontal management practices, which are also critical with respect to exclusive forms of professionalisation and 'managerialism', without rejecting them completely.

However, in Ghent, where, according to the survey we carried out, the majority of citizens' collectives do not count themselves as part of (traditional) civil society, we can also see that civic society organisations, old and new, do indeed play a facilitating, supportive and infrastructural role. Consider, for example, the crucial role and the share of the Samenlevingsopbouw organisation in many Ghent-based initiatives, and certainly in, for example, De Site, a temporary use project with a sustainable character, in the highly diverse Rabot neighbourhood.[18] Just as we can observe the need for a more supportive and facilitative government, we can also observe the need for a more supportive and facilitative civil society. In Ghent, this evolution and transformation is already underway, see our conclusions on this in part 3.

[18] Another example is the KVLV, one of the largest women's movements in Flanders, which has made 'the giving economy' the central theme of its operations since 2014.

1.6 Contributive logic versus representative logic, volunteer logic and market logic

The commons have their own social logic. Essentially it's about citizens contributing to building something together, in other words: making contributions to the commons.

The contributory logic is fundamentally different from a democratically representative logic, as with a contributory logic a citizen's voice and influence are acquired by through the act of contributing itself. The commons do not represent a power-free model, but one in which 'reputation' is accrued by neither representation nor financial strength. Nor is contributive logic the same as a voluntary non-profit logic. Although there are voluntary contributions and a common social objective (the object of the cooperation) the activities are not necessarily non-profit-making. Any resulting profitable activities only serve as a means to maintain the organisation and thus sustain the commons activity – which is the ultimate goal – in the long term. Civil society organisations that support the infrastructure of the cooperation and the projects themselves play a facilitating role, but not a commanding role.

This makes the commons-orientated projects fundamentally different from the government (representative logic), the classical market (private-profit logic) and classical civil society (non-profit logic). They therefore also call for new approaches, in particular with regard to the following areas of tension:

- Representative versus contributive logic
- Profit logic versus non-profit logic
- Voluntary logic versus contributive logic

1.7 The economic and social potential of the commons

Let us formulate the above challenges as positive challenges with potential, as opportunities for a stronger and more prosperous but also more sustainable Ghent.

Why could the government be able to support the commons?

1. The commons for ecological transition

2. The commons for local employment and opportunities for meaningful employment

3. The commons for strengthening democracy and participation

1.7.1 The commons are essential for ecological transition

Strengthening both the material and immaterial commons is an essential means of combating the systemic ecological crisis (relative depletion of resources, climate threat, declining biodiversity) that we are facing worldwide.

Mutualising the use of physical resources, services and products can have a profound effect, simultaneously expanding services and products, but at a much lower ecological (thermodynamic) cost.[19]

This encompasses:

- The support of bicycle sharing, cargo-bike networks, car sharing, commons workshops (co-working spaces, maker spaces, fablabs) and public transport.

[19] See the study: Peer to Peer and the Commons: a path towards transition. A matter, energy and thermodynamic perspective. Céline Piques and Xavier Rizos. P2P Foundation, 2017. Available on request. More info: https://wiki.p2pfoundation.net/Thermodynamic_Efficiencies_of_Peer_Production

- The support of a circular economy at the city level, where the circulation of information concerning the production chain is an essential part of the success of a faster transition to this model. The participation of Ghent actors and the government in the development of an ‘open-source circular economy’ is essential here.

- The local subsidiarity of short production chains can also be accelerated through the common model. We will already be able to see this in the development of short chains in urban-focused agriculture, but this model can also be applied to other services and products.

As shown above, immaterial commons are an essential part of material production chains.

Immaterial commons are therefore essential:

- for speeding up ecological innovation and circumventing the inhibitory factor of intellectual property.

- the open-sourcing of production chains is essential in accelerating the coordination of production in a circular economy.

- open platforms are essential in achieving greater coordination between supply and demand, and the ability to reuse unused services and products.

1.7.2 The commons for locally meaningful work

Common knowledge and coordination platforms are a key element for reorganising and promoting shorter production and consumption chains that can create jobs. Open platforms are an essential part of new participatory ecosystems around which a transition economy can be organised.

As mentioned earlier, a vision such as that of 'school meals as a commons'[20] (e. g. Lunch with LEF[21], with ingredients that are Local, Ecological and Fair), can bring back employment opportunities in and around Ghent, more specifically in shorter food chains. The vision of, and the decision to go for, 100% healthy and non-toxic food can create a lot of employment in Ghent's bioregion. One single temporary use project, DOK in the old docklands of Ghent, has already generated at least 6 small companies.[22]

Open and cooperative renewable energy models are also essential for the energy transition and have already proven their usefulness in German energy policy, referred to as the *Energiewende*. Today, more jobs can be created through renewable energy than through the fossil industry.

The 'maker city' model with commons, which is not very present in Ghent at the moment (apart from in a prototype phase), also offers possibilities to re-localise material production. Here we emphasize the need for Ghent to profile itself specifically around the creation and support of production that

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[20] "The school meal as commons" was an event organised on 22/3/2017 by Wervel vzw about Lunch with LEF, with speakers Michel Bauwens, Rogier de Langhe and Councillor Tine Heyse.

URL = http://belmundo.org/activiteit/de-schoolmaaltijd-als-commons/

[21] http://www.lunchmetlef.be/

[22] Companies that started out at DOK and subsequently went on to lead a lives of their own (via Liesbeth Vlerick): **Le Petit Botanique - http://lepetitbotanique.be ; Urban Smart Farm/Smart Farmers - http://www.urbansmartfarm.be ; Jaagbaar - www.jaagbaar.be ; Black Dragon kombucha brewery - https://www.blackdragonkombucha.com** (soon starting their own production in partnership with a beer brewery) **; Topocopy -** topocopy.org **; Refu Interim** - http://www.refuinterim.be/nl

goes hand in hand with open design, whereby technical-scientific knowledge is considered a commons.

Graphic 3: the cosmo-local model compared to the classical model

	Traditional manufacturing enterprise	**Distributed manufacturing enterprise (neo-liberal global factory)**	**Cosmo-localization**
IP / knowledge sharing regime	Held by one company	Held by one company or consortium (e.g. Apple)	Shared under open or CC or Peer Production license etc.
Location of manufacturing	A single or local manufacturing center	Global factory, wherever the product can be most cheaply and effectively produced, elements of product can be produced	Globally distributed networks of localized manufacturing, depending on take up and use of global design commons
Transport and trade	Product sent from local manufacturing centers to other places	Parts move across many countries and once assembled are shipped for trade	Requires development of localized production ecosystems for complex manufacturing, Micro-manufacturing clusters
Enterprise model	Publically Listed Corp., Family Owned Corp., Nationalized Corp.	Corporation or consortium with complex supply and distribution ecosystem	Open value network model,[3] Platform Cooperatives, Maker Spaces, Phyles / Trans-national collectives

Credit: P2P Foundation

1.7.3 Commons for strengthening democracy and participation

Every day, political events attest to the fact that our democratic system is going through difficult times. We presently have democratic processes in the political system (whether or not flawed) but not in the sphere of production. The commons, also in its cooperative form for the management of businesses, have an atmosphere that is precisely defined by the management “according to the norms and culture of the community” itself. In other words, the commons are the ideal form for broadening the support base of self-government and democracy, while the new forms of interaction between government and commons also offer enormous opportunities for the development of new models based on a model of a so-called ‘representative democracy +’.

The commons systems are first and foremost open systems. The positive consequence of open systems is that everyone 'may' participate. For example, everyone can participate in policymaking by submitting project proposals for Ghent's new 'Citizens' Budget'. The negative aspect of this is that not everyone 'can' participate. This therefore implies an active role for the government and civil society in order to strengthen the participatory capacity of the population. The logic of the activities surrounding De Site in the Rabot neighbourhood shows that both the engaged civil society organisations (Samenlevingsopbouw and others) and the civil servants involved know this very well and pay attention to it in that specific context.

1.8 A new political and economic structural framework around generativity

In our opinion, the analysis so far calls for a new vision of the political, economic and social practices of administrations and governments.

1. The recognition of the generativity and productivity of civil society. Citizens and their commons-orientated activities create value, and in particular a more diverse value pattern with an important social and ecological return on investment.[23] This must also be recognised as such by the political and administrative structure and by economic actors.
2. The government can play an important role in this as director, facilitator and meta-regulator. The city and its territorial entities are the 'common' of the commons. The government can think and act systematically – no longer on the basis of binary choices, market mechanism or government mechanism, or a combination of the two – but at least on the basis of a triarchical decision: government *and* market *and* the productive, commons-orientated civil society. The

[23] Social Return on Investment (SROI) is a method for measuring and communicating this broader-than-economic concept of value',
http://www.scotregen.co.uk/pdf.pl?file=surf/news/Scotregen_46_web.pdf , p. 5-7

question can and must always be: what can the government do to support the generativity of this civil society? The government and the city increasingly see themselves as a partner who does not work ‘for’ but ‘with’ civil society. The systematisation of such an insight is a long-term exercise, which the city of Ghent is already occupied with in many different ways, but must continue to work on, including in the field of internal culture.

3. The commons generate a new economic sector, driven by a new kind of entrepreneur who acts generously with respect to the ecological and social commons. These new economic actors integrate many more negative externalities into their models, create higher social and environmental returns (and thus also positive externalities), but struggle within in a political economy that has historically accepted negative externalities and sees them as a cost to society. Since this new ‘generativity’ is essential for climate transition, however, and because of other social and ecological motives, the commons-orientated generative companies deserve special facilitation, and at least a level playing field. Of course, the traditional commercial companies also have a generative capacity, which also needs to be strengthened. The challenge for our society is that of moving towards an economic model of ‘doing well by doing good’.

A productive civil commons-orientated society, coupled with a generative economy and an active partner city, is therefore the underlying logic of the proposals in Part 4.

1.9 Methodology of this exploratory study

The purpose of this assignment is to investigate a potentially new political, facilitative and regulatory relationship between the local government in Ghent and its citizens in order to enable the further development of the commons.

In order to carry out this task, we conducted in-depth discussions with local actors:

- Systematic meetings with various urban services involved with commons (see appendix below)
- Systematic meetings and interviews with the local Ghent commons actors (see appendix)
- A written survey of the local Ghent commons actors and projects (see appendix)
- Several commons talks/workshops on certain themes, hosted at the premises of Timelab in Ghent (see appendix)
- The assessment of existing initiatives via a Wiki (http://wiki.gent.commons)
- A comparative overview of urban commons in other European cities, in order to place Ghent in a broader international context. This study, which is added here as a separate appendix in English, was carried out by the Greek urbanist Vasilis Niaros.

The purpose of the survey is to:

1) get a better picture of the commons in Ghent;

2) gauge the expectations of Ghent commoners with regard to the government; and to

3) investigate the economic aspects of the commons initiatives in Ghent.

Please note: this research project cannot claim to be exhaustive. In particular, it has proved impossible within the time frame of 3 months to gain (satisfactory) insight in/access to the ethnic and cultural minority groups, which also have commons practices and sometimes take them from their country of origin, but often through informal networks that are not so readily or so quickly accessible.

Part 2: The global context: from ‘urban commons’ to ‘the city as a commons’.

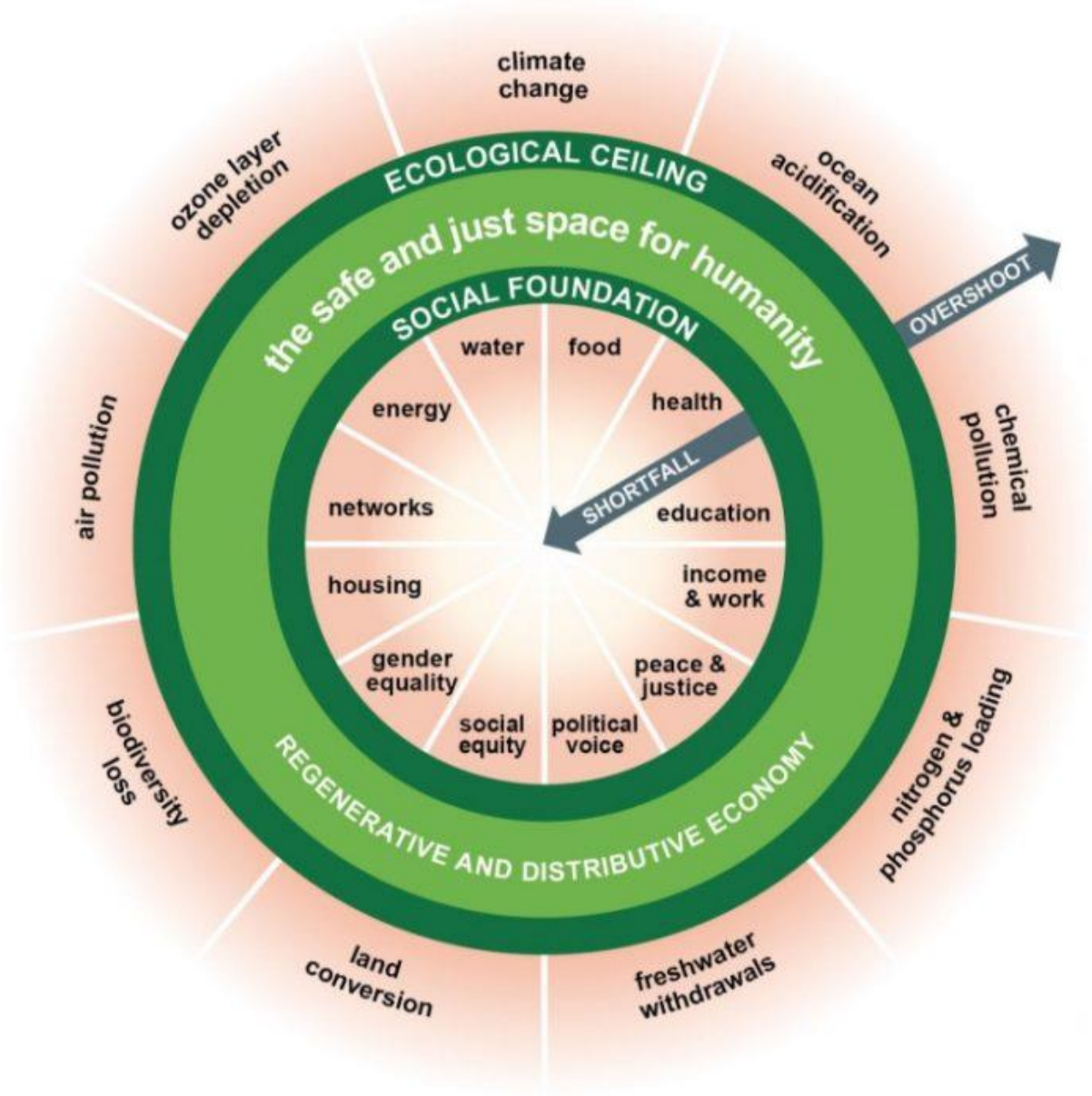
2.1. A socio-ecological framework for the transition

For an essential framework of a new commons-orientated city policy, Kate Raworth of Oxford University, with her ‘doughnut’ graphic (which can be found in her book *Doughnut Economics: Seven Ways to Think Like a 21st-Century Economist*), offers perhaps the best summary of the new reality following the increased awareness of climate-protection requirements, coupled with the risks of a further deviation from the current model. In the outer ring, Raworth places the need for a circular economy within the context of the limits of what the planet can support, but also clearly includes the ‘social’ needs in the second ring.

The key question is then: ‘Can the planet, and the city within its own bioregion, create an economic framework that can respect the limits of material growth and still create maximum well-being for its inhabitants?’

Ghent has already demonstrated through initiatives such as Gent Klimaatstad (‘Ghent Climate City’) that it is very aware of this transition problem and seeks to take the lead.

Graphic 4: Kate Raworth's Doughnut Economics



Credit: Kate Raworth

2.2 The new role of cities

The recently departed political scientist and author Benjamin Barber (known for his best-seller *If Mayors Ruled the World*), and other analysts such as Canadian urbanist Richard Florida and British town planner Charles Landry, (known for his book *The Creative City: A Toolkit for Urban Innovators* and the Creative Cities report for the City of Ghent) have already reminded us of the new role of the city, not only as a local institutional element, but as a new global actor and a suitable model for global governance.

This vision stems from a global crisis of the democratic model and the need to better respond to transnational challenges. Nation and state are no longer able to sufficiently regulate transnational capital and the transnational economy, and the inter-state model has long shown its limitations. Hence the revived interest in the role of cities and their bioregional environments, as agents of social, economic and institutional change and as a possible structure for transnational forms of governance.

Our Commons Transition Plan is therefore based on two assumptions:

1) The city as an institutional entity, the commons-orientated citizens' initiatives *and* the vast majority of its inhabitants are no longer merely local actors. All aspects of the life of the city have been thoroughly networked internationally. Even taking into account the current fragmentation – in which it is perfectly possible that a permaculture initiative in the east of the city may communicate little with a similar initiative in the west of the city – both projects are closely linked to global permacultural knowledge flows, communities and even coalitions. Residents, organisations, commons initiatives and institutions are networked and form part of transnational and translocal networks, which jointly influence socio-economic change worldwide. Today, more and more citizens are part of these translocal

knowledge networks ('global open design communities'), of transnational institutions and of transnational entrepreneurial networks. The latter may still form a minority, but, like commons-orientated citizens' initiatives, they are making rapid progress.

2) Cities could be more aware of their collaborations. A number of cities are already working together on climate issues and on regulating Uber, for example, but we want to go further in this report and advocate international coalitions of cities as a true institutions for translocal and global cooperation, and more specifically with regard to the mutualisation of the infrastructures needed for the further development of commons-orientated models. For example, it is not really efficient to develop 13 different software systems to do essentially the same thing,[24] and only in the field urban-focused short chain economy, for example. Cities can thus do much more to speed up the necessary transition by assuming the role of a 'transnational partner state'.

2.3. From urban commons to the 'city as commons'

The revival of the commons has reached the point where it has become unquestionably global phenomenon. A number of interesting studies have already been devoted to it.

Homo Cooperans', the study by Professor Tine De Moor (Utrecht University), showed an exponential growth in the number of citizens' initiatives for collective action and cooperatives in the Netherlands, since 2005. This was also confirmed to be the case in Flanders with the study by think tank Oikos, which recorded a tenfold growth over 10 years, although this acceleration started later in Flanders, in 2009. Other studies, such as that of Spanish sociologist Manuel Castells regarding the situation in Catalonia (which can be found his book *Aftermath – The Cultures of Economic Crisis*, 2012), also confirm that this is a reality in Europe.

[24] Jason Nardi, of the Italian Solidarity Economy (RIPESS), told us that in that sector alone in Italy there are 13 programs for ordering food boxes through CSA systems.

In a study of 40 urban commons worldwide,[25] a collaboration between the Italian LabGov (Laboratory for the Governance of the Commons) and the P2P Foundation, set up by Michel Bauwens, the urban commons were defined, in function of the new institutionalisation of these practices, as follows:

"The concept of the urban commons situates the city as a platform for sharing and collaboration, participatory decision-making, peer-to-peer production supported by open data and guided by principles of distributive justice. A co-city is based on urban co-governance which implies shared, collaborative, polycentric governance of the urban commons and in which environmental, cultural, knowledge and digital urban resources are co-managed through contractual or institutionalized public-private-community partnerships.
Collaborative, polycentric urban governance involves different forms of resource pooling and cooperation between five possible actors—social innovators (i.e. active citizens, city makers, digital collaboratives, urban regenerators, community gardeners, etc.), public authorities, businesses, civil society organizations, and knowledge institutions (i.e. schools, universities, cultural institutions, museums, academies, etc.). These partnerships give birth to local peer-to-peer experimental, physical, digital and institutional platforms."

What becomes clear from reading this definition and the associated case studies is that there is already an evolution from merely observing the existence of urban commons in a city, towards the institutional evolution of a number of cities to become 'cities as commons', which Italian Professor Christian Iaione (Rome University, also Director of LabGov and one of the spiritual fathers of 'The Bologna Regulation for the Care and Regeneration

[25] The 1st Co-cities report on the Urban (Commons) Transitions. Towards a Co-City: From the Urban Commons to the City as a Commons. By Christian Iaione, Michel Bauwens, Sheila Foster et al. LabGov & P2P Foundation, 2017 (officially unpublished as yet*, available online upon request); Summary via https://wiki.p2pfoundation.net/Co-Cities_Report_on_the_Urban_Commons_Transitions*

of Urban Commons') [26] and Professor Sheila Foster (Fordham University, New York), call 'co-cities', [27] and which Michel Bauwens refers to alternatively as 'partner cities'.

Five actors play a role in this institutionalisation: the city itself, the entrepreneurs, the social partners, the knowledge institutes such as universities and research centres and, last but not least, the contributing citizens' initiatives themselves, referred to in the report as 'social innovators'.

In this study we are therefore also specifically looking for a concrete institutional framework.

On the basis of the above-mentioned 40 detailed case studies, 20 from northern countries and 20 from southern countries, we have already been able to draw a number of conclusions:

1) Cooperation between governments and citizens' initiatives is quite problematic almost everywhere.
2) In general, the initiatives are evolving towards a socio-ecological and economic framework. Or the reproduction of the initiatives and their participants remains a problematic issue and is a priority for the participants. Commoners want to be able to live from their contributions, but it remains very difficult to achieve that.
3) Cities with an advanced common policy are certainly to be found in more prosperous countries in particular. See the comparative report by Vasilis Niaros for more details. The people of Ghent can certainly learn from this, with a view to a further evolution of the local surroundings.

[26] Bologna Regulation for the Care and Regeneration of Urban Commons; Regulation at http://www.comune.bologna.it/media/files/bolognaregulation.pdf ; context via https://wiki.p2pfoundation.net/Bologna_Regulation_for_the_Care_and_Regeneration_of_Urban_Commons

[27] The concept of co-city **"implies shared, collaborative, polycentric governance of the urban commons", see** http://www.collaborative.city/

As indicated above, as part of this study, we were able to enlist an additional researcher, the Greek urbanist Vasilis Niaros, for a small comparative study of different models in European cities, thanks to a collaboration between Timelab – which provided the funding – and the P2P Lab of the P2P Foundation. As previously mentioned, this study is attached as a separate appendix to this report and is written in English.

The study describes the following experiences:

1. Bologna, located in the prosperous northern Italian province of Emilia-Romagna, and with a long tradition of supporting SMEs and cooperative networks, has made an explicit turn towards becoming a commons city, and is known for the introduction of a regulation that includes a 'Right to Initiate' (the 'Bologna Regulation for the Care and Regeneration of Urban Commons' mentioned above, which has already been adopted by 140 other Italian cities) that goes beyond the Dutch model of the 'Right to Challenge'[28] (adopted by 70 Dutch municipalities). This Bologna regulation for the promotion of autonomous initiatives by citizens, who can 'claim' commons in the city, offers a particularly interesting model and should certainly be viewed by other cities, including Ghent. The Bologna regulations are a good example of how the management philosophy of a real partner city can be put into practice.

2. Barcelona – a city where, after the last elections, a commons-orientated coalition came into power as a culmination of the major social mobilisations of 2011 (including the 15 May Movement, among

[28] Non-profit organisation De Wakkere Burger: "A large number of Dutch municipalities now give residents and organisations the 'right to challenge'", explains Thijs Harmsen, coordinator of the Right to Challenge network. "The 'Right to Challenge' was launched in the Netherlands in 2014. At that time there were initiatives in 20-30 municipalities. Today we estimate that there are around 70 municipalities with the right to challenge." Although it does have a different name in a number of places: neighbourhood rights, residents' right ..." (https://www.dewakkereburger.be/nl/artikel/283/right-to-challenge-lessen-uit-nederland): more info and critique can be found at https://wiki.commons.gent/wiki/Recht_op_Uitdaging

others) – has created specific urban institutions to develop a commons-orientated economy, collaborates with a knowledge coalition of experts with a focus on commons (BarCola[29]) as well as with new communication platforms for autonomous citizens with a commons identity (Procomuns), and is already experimenting with more in-depth forms of citizen participation (Decidim.barcelona). The city has both an open source plan, a Municipal Action Plan relating to the commons-based collaborative economy, which it specifically recognises and for which it has an internal structure, and an ambitious Impetus Plan[30] to support with an investment plan the many facets of the social and solidarity economy, including the commons.

3. The British town of Frome, like Saillans in France, is an example of a more radical political experience, because the citizens' initiatives there have created political coalitions (Independents for Frome[31]) that have almost completely replaced the traditional political parties. The Frome model is called 'Flatpack Democracy'[32], based on the ideas of Peter Macfadyen, and is seeking expansion. In Grenoble, not included in this study, the political coalition has explicitly defined itself as a 'partner' of civil society. This policy of partnership is perhaps a prerequisite for achieving a mature vision of a partner city that no longer works for, but *with* civil society.

4. A final case study concerns the *Assemblée des Communs*[33] in Rijsel (Lille), which has been active since 2015, and actively gives a voice

[29] "BarCola - Node on collaboration economics and area-based peer production in Barcelona" **http://procomuns.net/en/about-2/barcola/**; works with city actors Social and solidarity-based economy and proximity Commission (Barcelona City Council) – Jordi Via; Department of other economies and proximity Barcelona Activa – Alvaro Porroro.

[30] The Impetus Plan for the Social and Solidarity Economy in Barcelona 2016 – 2019. Ajuntament de Barcelona. Economia Cooperativa, Social y Solidaria y Consum, 2017

[31] John Harris, "On 7 May, after four years in power, the Independents for Frome (or IfF) group took all 17 seats on Frome's town council, with vote-shares as high as 70%, and support from people who cast their other votes for the main political parties." (https://medium.com/dark-mountain/how-flatpack-democracy-beat-the-old-parties-in-the-people-s-republic-of-frome-efa0a1e70cc1); the Ghent equivalent is the Stadsgreep group.

[32] Audio interview with participants in 3 parts via https://wiki.p2pfoundation.net/Flatpack_Democracy_Civic_Politics_Revolution_in_Frome

[33] See https://wiki.p2pfoundation.net/Assembl%C3%A9e_des_communs

to the social philosophy of the city's commons. It is comparable to Procumuns.net in Barcelona, but has a much more permanent operation and more in-depth proposals for institutional adaptation. These experiences give us a deeper insight into possible autonomous institutions that are supported by civil society and commons-orientated citizens' initiatives.

In our study and proposals we also refer to examples and models that were not included in the international study by Vasilis Niaros:

The model of the anchor institutions: the Cleveland and Preston model: The model of the anchor institutions[34] is also referred to as the 'Cleveland'[35] (US) or 'Preston'[36] (GB) model. This is a cooperative-inspired model based on the purchasing power of public and other anchor institutions, which can be used as a means of re-localising the economy based on cooperative models that create jobs. Projects such as 'Lunch with LEF' illustrate how this could be applied in Ghent.[37]

The scaling up of bottom-up initiatives in Lambeth Council (London, GB): what is interesting about this project in Lambeth, near London, is that here specific thought is being given to scaling up the many commons and citizens' initiatives, with a view to bolstering the resilience of the city. This is done using a strong central incubator.[38]

[34] "Anchor institutions are non-profit institutions that once established tend not to move location. Emerging trends related to globalisation – such as the decline of manufacturing, the rise of the service sector, and a mounting government fiscal crisis – suggest the growing importance of anchor institutions to local economies. Indeed, in many places, these anchor institutions have surpassed traditional manufacturing corporations to become their region's leading employers." (http://community-wealth.org/strategies/panel/anchors/index.html)

[35] See: The Cleveland Model: How Evergreen Cooperatives are Building Community Wealth, http://community-wealth.org/content/cleveland-model-how-evergreen-cooperatives-are-building-community-wealth

[36] "**Co-operative Activity in Preston". A Report written for Preston City Council by the Psychosocial Research Unit, University of Central Lancashire.** http://clok.uclan.ac.uk/14526/1/Co-operative%20activity%20PrestonREPORT%20copy.pdf

[37] Info on the calculation of this potential can be obtained from Benny Van de Velde van Wervel <benny@wervel.be>

[38] For more info, see the report: https://wiki.commons.gent/wiki/Participatory_City

The Dienst Beleidsparticipatie (‘Policy Participation Service’) writes:

“*The Civic Systems Lab studied participative initiatives in the UK over the course of six years. They assessed the added societal value and also identified the various obstacles to participation. They brought all this information together in the concept of ‘participatory neighbourhoods’. The final part of the study was a twelve-month pilot project called ‘Open Works’ in the West Norwood district of London (2014/2015). The complete study can be found on the project’s website. The concept is that an ecosystem of a large number of participatory neighbourhood projects can bring about tangible and sustainable changes, both for the neighbourhood and its inhabitants. Over the next five years, this model will be scaled up to a neighbourhood/district with 200,000 inhabitants (Lambeth). “Over 5 years, Participatory City will transform this place into a demonstration neighbourhood that will become a model for well-being, sustainability and equality*.”

2.4. The context in Flemish cities

Two in-depth preliminary studies have examined the citizens’ initiatives in Flanders which show an explicit commons-orientated approach.

The first study, ‘Assessing Citizens’ Collectives’ by Fleur Noy and Dirk Holemans, studied and inventoried 480 citizens’ initiatives across 10 sectors.

A second study, ‘The Commons: self-regulating or dependent? An analysis of arrangements’ by Filip De Rynck, Evelien Depauw and Raf Pauly goes into more detail with respect to the commons-orientated arrangements between citizens’ initiatives and the government.

The study by De Rynck confirms the problem of the relationship between government and commons, but we would still like to note that Ghent finds itself in a pioneering role, and that the situation is more positive than in other Flemish cities and regions. We summarise the findings below, in the

authors' words. It should be noted that this concerns the situation throughout Flanders, not specifically that of Ghent. But it does give a good indication of the tension between commons-orientated initiatives and government.

Filip De Rynck and co. summarised the results of the Oikos study as follows:

"Virtually all collectives described themselves as citizens' initiatives and expressed their independence from the market and the government. *The majority had been achieved without government involvement and almost 80% indicated that they could exist without government support. However, they often have to deal with the regulatory authorities, which can have a strong influence on certain preconditions, which these collectives have to take into account lest their development be impeded.* **In general, the collectives seem rather disappointed by the government:** *'We are politely tolerated' or 'The civil service is rather negative towards our initiative'. The transition groups are an exception: not only do they seek more cooperation from local government, but some of them experience the cooperation as very pleasant: 'There was support in different areas. It was give and take.'*[39] (Oikos, 3/2016)."

A more detailed quotation from the study can be found in the text below.

Frame 2: Oikos study on the relationship between commons-orientated initiatives and the government

Oikos explains in more detail:

"In particular, cooperatives – where members contribute money themselves

[39] https://www.middenveldinnovatie.be/sites/default/files/2017-04/Oikos%2081_03%20transitie_De%20Rynck%20Depauw%20Pauly.pdf

through shares – operate independently of the government. One of these cooperatives states that civil servants are more likely to act as controllers than advisors and sees this as a missed opportunity to show that 'entrepreneurs and government can be partners in the creation of wealth and well-being'.

Co-housing and electric-car-sharing collectives are dependent on the (local) government with respect to the preconditions of their collectives. Co-housing initiatives require building permits and the driving of electric cars is contingent on the government providing charging stations, parking spaces and the relevant deregulation. These collectives are therefore dependent on the support of the government when it comes to technical aspects. They consult often more with officials in the initial phase than in later stages. Projects that focus on the daytime activities and living space for young adults with disabilities do, however, work more closely with the government. For example, the personal care budgets of the residents have to cover the staff payroll. These are financed by the government. Initiatives that are active on municipal property also work more in consultation with officials and – needless to say – cannot exist without the approval of the local government.

Most LETS groups are very keen to maintain their independence from the (local) government. It is striking that a number of transition groups do seek out contact with municipalities, however: 'financially (subsidies) and purely with regard to energy (opportunities to invest in renewable energy) as well as regarding regulation...'

A similar trend, albeit to a lesser extent, is evidenced by the following statements: 'We consult with the municipal council about what services we offer' (32% completely disagree, 21% disagree, 16% agree, 12% completely agree) and 'the municipal council has actively supported the development of our initiative (32% completely disagree, 21% disagree, 16% agree, 12% completely agree). This reinforces the impression that the collectives have little connection with the (local) government.

However, this is not always of their own choosing. Various collectives indicate that they are disappointed with the attitude of local administrators. The most dissatisfied appear to be representatives of 'more unique' initiatives without an umbrella organisation (as opposed to LETS groups, Transition Groups, Co-housing and CSA). For these collectives, recognition

and support from local authorities seems less of an obvious route. So they answer: ‘At best we are politely tolerated’ and ‘the civil service is rather negative towards our initiative’.

“Still, not all initiatives have been disappointed by local government. Some of them, including the transition groups again, experience the collaboration as very pleasant.

One of the co-housing initiatives summarises the whole picture rather strikingly:

We sometimes felt that they could have been a little more flexible, or that they didn’t always realise how their decisions seriously impeded the project, but on the other hand, we received support in various areas. It was give and take”

The Oikos study also describes the relationship of these commons-orientated initiatives with the business community:

“Most initiatives indicate that they feel disconnected from business because the activities they undertake are very different from the offering of established market players. For example, more than half of the collectives do not feel that established companies see them as competitors. The initiatives that do feel they are regarded as competitors also seem to have more similarities with the traditional market. For example, car sharing initiatives overlap with the traditional car rental market. A single initiative has the feeling that it is not being taken seriously or is unable to compete financially against the existing market offering.
Overall, most collectives do not see themselves as competitors of companies focused within the same sector. When asked how they would describe themselves in relation to traditional companies, none of the collectives answered ‘in competition’. They see their collective as an addition or innovation with respect to the existing offer. A few even dare to call their initiative revolutionary. This does not mean, however, that the collectives do not consider contact with established companies to be

important at all. 40 percent of the collectives say that they value a good relationship with the business community."[40]

The findings of the study by De Rynck and co. are particularly interesting, as they highlight the continuing role of civil society and the active role played by civil servants, city politicians and the public authorities:

"From detailed analyses, it appeared that subsidised professional civil society (e. g.: Samenlevingsopbouw) performed important intermediary functions, which were indispensable for the success of temporary use projects. They fulfilled these functions not only with government funds, but sometimes also at the express request of, and with additional funding from, the city government, sometimes they used these funds to support initiatives who had not requested support from them. In other cases, the nature of the relationship with the government changes over the course of the process, and periods of antagonism alternate with periods of partnership. ***In no case****, at least not in the case of these temporary use projects,* ***was there any withdrawal on the part of the authorities****. For example, while the city government allowed a group of citizens to manage the park or neighbourhood green themselves, rather than having this done by its own groundskeeping staff, this was accompanied by investments in support, which more than compensated for the so-called savings. It was also accompanied by frustration among the city's groundskeepers whose professional pride was hurt. Ultimately the government is made up of people who also have emotions."* [41]

40 http://www.coopkracht.org/images/phocadownload/burgercollectieven%20in%20kaart%20gebracht%20-%20fleur%20noy%20%20dirk%20holemans.pdf

41 https://www.middenveldinnovatie.be/sites/default/files/2017-04/Oikos%2081_03%20transitie_De%20Rynck%20Depauw%20Pauly.pdf

Part 3: Analysis of the commons-orientated citizens' initiatives in Ghent and the role of the city

3.1 Preliminary general findings

Before we start with our descriptive and analytical section based on the mapping and interaction with the citizens' initiatives of Ghent, I feel it would be useful to sketch a picture of my general personal findings after a three-month stay in the city of Ghent:

1. The citizens of Ghent are very active, the city having a large number of commons-orientated citizens' initiatives, characterized by exponential growth. During this research project we were met with a lot of enthusiasm and support. The concept of the commons itself was very easily accepted and was not controversial. The city of Ghent is therefore already seeded with a commons-orientated mentality, which paves the way to a sustainable society and even an economy.

Nevertheless:

1) there is still a great deal of fragmentation and a lack of cooperation in this new field as a whole;

2) there is still relatively little meta-thinking about the commons as a new political, social and economic issue;

3) in many cases, the commons-orientated initiatives are supported by active citizens with significant educational and social capital; and

4) superdiversity is therefore not always immediately visible in the more well-known commons projects. The commons arising from migration are separate, often existing as family or tribal networks, and are largely invisible or inaccessible to the mainstream. Superdiversity is certainly

present in the commons, but it could not be included in the conceptual and methodical framework of this study.[42]

Of course, there are also exceptions for all these 'issues', i.e. projects that do perform well in these areas. In terms of superdiversity, however, there is a strong commitment from both the government and the commons projects to work on this, and the diversity in the proposals from the citizens' budget does indeed show progress in this area.

2. The city of Ghent has a very active civil society, both established and new, that actively and generously contributes to commons-orientated projects and initiatives. In every sector,[43] we find strong civil society organisations that support the infrastructure of the commons, and which in turn, to a greater or lesser extent, are supported by the government.

One criticism is that there is still too little awareness that the commons are not only a tool for the socially disadvantaged strata of the population, but also a dynamic and economically functional sector, which is essential for the future of society and the economy. These days the commons-based economy can be high-tech and, it has been calculated that it represents one sixth of the United States' GNP, accounting for 17 million workers.[44]

In other words: the commons economy as a social economy is only one part and should not be confused with the whole. The commons should also be deployed in key sectors, including leading technology sectors.

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[42] Organisations such as Samenlevingsopbouw may be well placed to undertake more long-term and in-depth studies on this subject.

[43] Here are the organisations that support commons-orientated initiatives in the food chain, for example: https://stad.gent/over-gent-en-het-stadsbestuur/nieuws-evenementen/een-commons-transitie-plan-voor-gent

[44] "Fair use-related industry "value added" to the U.S. economy averaged $2.4 trillion, approximately 17 percent of total U.S. current dollar GDP – roughly one-sixth of the economy. The fair use economy is vast, employing 17 million people – approximately one in eight U.S. workers – and generates a payroll averaging $1.2 trillion in 2008-2009, compared to $895 billion in 2002." Source: **Fair Use in the U.S. Economy. Computer & Communications Industry Association, 2011 ;** http://cdn.ccianet.org/wp-content/uploads/library/CCIA-FairUseintheUSEconomy-2011.pdf

3. As a government, the city of Ghent already has a relatively strong supportive and facilitating role. As someone who has been visiting commons projects for 10 years, and has been in dialogue with governments, I can confirm that Ghent has a fairly unique administrative culture. The level of engaged officials is very high and the relative political stability gives the board the opportunity to adopt a specific vision, implement it and act strategically. Many citizens' initiatives are supported – either officially or indirectly – in different ways, from the subsidising of civil society organisations through to the participation of civil servants in their individual capacity as citizens. As such, Ghent has an exceptionally high level of human capital to deploy with respect to the further development of the commons. Ghent is ready to take new and more ambitious steps.

Nevertheless, this half-full glass is also half-empty. There are still complaints of too much control and distrust and that the city still wants to 'do too much itself', the regulations for commons initiatives are often not adapted to changing circumstances and put a significant brake on the development of such initiatives in certain sectors, such as housing, for example.[45] Too often, the internal organisation in the city administration remains fragmented, so that a number of initiatives and improvements end up failing to receive unanimous support,[46] despite the good will being present. As such, there is certainly work to be done in giving active commoners a voice in the city's transition policy. The limitations inherent in the current dominant models (soil speculation, for example), remain a structural obstacle to tackling certain fundamental problems, such as land

[45] Regulatory problems that make it collective living difficult, a report from 2011: **"**Samenhuizen in België: waar staan we, waar gaan we? Gemeenschappelijk wonen: knelpunten en sporen naar oplossingen, stand van zaken en behoeften." ('Co-housing in Belgium: where are we and where are we headed? Communal living: issues and the paths to solutions, the current situation and needs.') Samenhuizen vzw, 2011. http://www.samenhuizen.net/sib/ ; an update in 2017: https://wiki.commons.gent/wiki/Juridische_en_Stedenbouwkundige_Knelpunten_voor_het_Samenhuizen_in_de_Stad_Gent

[46] Labland writes the following, for example: Role/attitude of the city in relation to bottom-up initiatives. Often inclined to control everything, limiting rather than facilitating. Many different services that have little or no knowledge of each other's work and points of view. So requires a great deal of energy to gather all required information with the relevant services." From: https://wiki.commons.gent/wiki/Juridische_en_Stedenbouwkundige_Knelpunten_voor_het_Samenhuizen_in_de_Stad_Gent

and space scarcity.[47] For this reason, the structural commons that can make a real difference – namely those of land, work and money – cannot be pushed through.

4. Although Ghent has a number of commons-orientated generative companies, as well as segments of social, solidarity-based and cooperative economic sectors, the generative economy in Ghent seems still to be weak insofar as we have been able to ascertain, certainly in comparison with cities such as Barcelona (see for example the Fab City project[48] and the Impetus Plan for the Social and Solidarity Economy 2016-2019), [49] but also in the context of Ghent's own history.

We believe that there is a real need for a shift in policy here. Ghent, for example, has elements of a potentially promising 'maker industry', but these are mainly in the prototype stage,[50] and where they do exist, their commons elements are weak. As such, it cannot be said that there is currently a strong commons-orientated maker industry in Ghent, by which we mean: a makers industry that works with an 'open design' commons. A 'commonisation' of the manufacturing industry would mean the support of both collective physical infrastructure (already somewhat present through the political support of co-working spaces, fab labs and industrial estates), but also a commons of technical and scientific knowledge. The integration of commons, sustainability and 'fairness' is still in its infancy.

Existing incubators, such as the digital research and innovation centre i-Minds, are perceived by many commoners as holding back the

[47] Of course, this structural problem is not under the control of the city and its government. However, this does not mean that progress cannot be made at the city level.

[48] Barcelona has launched a Fab City project (with fablabs and already 5 'ateeneo de fabricacion' on things like book printing and brewing, in various neighbourhoods) to restore the production centres in the heart of the city. The plan is to open fab labs in all districts of the city, and, ultimately, in each neighbourhood, to enable the local production of almost all kinds of goods, the repair and reuse of old appliances, and the upcycling of waste. The aim is for the fab labs to become problem-solving centres that can help local production of energy and food. The goal is to evolve from a linear PITO consumption model (products in, trash out) to a substantially self-sustaining DIDO model (data in, data out) that shares information worldwide and uses local materials and expertise for production.

[49] "The Impetus Plan for the Social and Solidarity Economy in Barcelona offers a transformative socio-economic vision of the urban reality and aims to contribute towards reducing social territorial inequalities, while promoting an economy at the service of people and of social justice. It comprises a diagnosis, the development process and the set of actions desired to be carried out in the city over the coming years."

[50] By this we also mean 'experimental', not ready for mass production.

development of commons initiatives, due to their very active policy of privatising and protecting knowledge through intellectual property. The shift towards cooperation, which can be present internally as a kind of 'entrepreneurial commons', is not being translated into a general support for the commons economy. De Startersfabriek ('The Start-up Factory'), which recently came into operation, may provide an opportunity to initiate commons-orientated practices there too. However, we would like to emphasise the need to recognise the specific logic of the commons economy and how it differs from the 'classical' and often private-profit-orientated start-up philosophy.

In our recommendations, therefore, we will certainly argue for an Impetus Plan for the generative economy in Ghent, and for the support of a knowledge commons to support that economy. Ghent still has far too few incubators that can help specifically the neglected generative economy to move forward.
We believe that it is essential to take more steps towards the integration of the various elements of a generative economy: namely, the commons as a mutualisation of knowledge and infrastructure; sustainability, living within the limits of the planet's capacity to support us; and solidarity, a more appropriate distribution of jointly-created prosperity. Ghent needs an open circular economy and a productive maker industry that can create local employment.

5. The UGent, which contributes so much to the social and economic life of the city and is very much committed to sustainability,[51] is as an institution hardly present in the communal citizens' initiatives and the generative economy, despite the presence of strong and committed scientists who support the commons in their capacity as individual citizens. The UGent has a strong Centre for Sustainable Development as well as motivated

[51] Overview of the initiatives via https://wiki.commons.gent/wiki/Category:UGent

advocates and students in the field of sustainability[52] who support autonomous initiatives. However, from certain circles within the university, people from the city as well as from the Ghent commons actors on the ground, we were told that cooperation is sometimes very difficult. According to various interviewees, 'citizen science' and open knowledge initiatives are faced with a lack of support, and sometimes even with opposition. In this context, we ourselves advocate experimentation with a new type of licence, called 'copyfair',[53] in which knowledge remains a commons, but commercialisation is made dependent on some form of reciprocity with the commons.

In addition to partnerships with the private sector in relation to spin-off research projects, more attention should certainly be paid to similar partnerships with commons-orientated civil society initiatives. To give an example, there have been strong individual contributions from academics such as Filip De Rynck, Tine De Moor (University of Utrecht, but active in Ghent), Raf Pauly, Rogier De Langhe, Koen Schoors, Pascal Debruyne and Thomas Block, who can play a very important role in the evolution of this mentality. Since the public pays for the public universities with their tax money, it seems logical that the knowledge produced should also be made more readily available to society as a whole, i.e. to all citizens and entrepreneurs, and not only by means of the open publication obligation, in which UGent has played a pioneering role. The Faculty of Architecture of the Sint-Lucas Campus of KU Leuven in Ghent has, under the guidance of Roeland Dudal, initiated a strongly commons-orientated project – 'Gedeelde Stad' (Shared City) – during their SPRINGweek17, which engaged hundreds of architecture students.[54] Another example is the INDIGO project,[55] with Pieter Van den Broeck (Architecture Department, KU Leuven) among others studying the national commons in Flanders.

[52] The Sustainability Office, the UGent Transition Network, the cooperation with the Centre for Sustainable Development, the Sustainability Committee.
[53] Info via http://wiki.p2pfoundation.net/CopyFair_License
[54] See https://wiki.commons.gent/wiki/Gedeelde_Stad
[55] More info at https://wiki.commons.gent/wiki/Indigo

Our interviews suggest that the universities of applied sciences in Ghent are doing better in terms of commons-orientation and are looking for more access to and connections with citizens' initiatives. During the consultation process we were approached by various colleges[56] that are interested in commons projects and possibly in planning a follow-up project based on the findings of our Commons Transition Plan.

In summary: a great deal more work is still required with respect to the integration of knowledge institutions into a commons infrastructure. A specific and well-developed project to involve knowledge institutions in strengthening the commons would be very useful and should be made a priority, we feel. Here we would point to the models in Italy, where knowledge institutes are systematically involved in collaborative and commons-orientated urban projects. In Ghent, the FoTRISS project is trying to achieve this.

6. Ghent's government structure has a highly enabling and social character, with a great deal of attention paid to inclusion and diversity, and in this context it could be said to be exemplary. We are thinking in particular of the integrated approach and policy applied in the Rabot neighbourhood[57], the district[58] and social directors, and the Brede School ('Broad School') initiative, which all build bridges with minority groups. This structure can already be said to be commons-friendly and commons-supportive, but could possibly take a more conscious approach to the realities of the commons, by giving more systematic support to the collective infrastructure. The systematic policy and approach of the Temporary Use initiative[59] has a very clear stimulating effect and can even be described as exemplary, but the steps to be taken after this 'period of temporary use' are certainly also an important point of attention: what

[56] Jo Lefevere, for example, a teacher at Artevelde University College, is interested in a follow-up project for the Bachelor's programme, focusing on the theme: 'Urban narratives of the commons of Ghent - In search of the meaning, strategies, methodology and social organisation used during the activity of commoning'. (see appendix)

[57] See https://wiki.commons.gent/wiki/Category:Rabot

[58] District directors: https://wiki.commons.gent/wiki/Wijkregisseurs_-_Stad_Gent

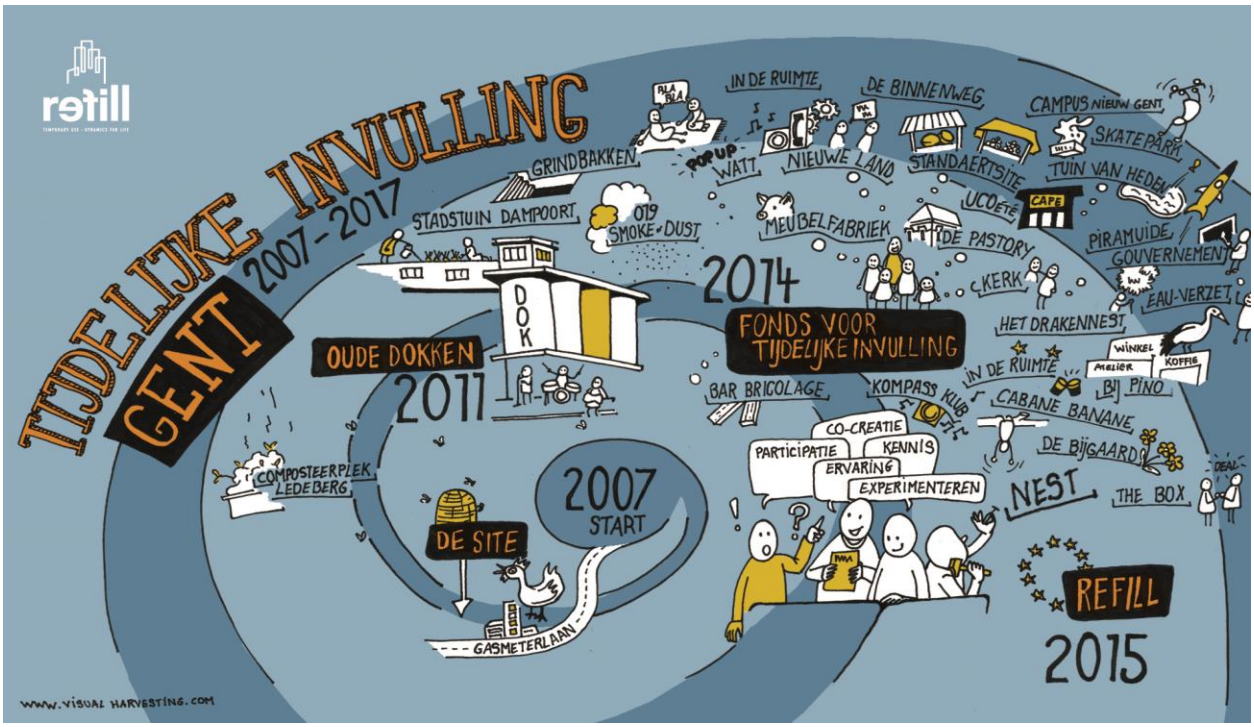
[59] Background and list via https://wiki.commons.gent/wiki/Tijdelijke_Invullingen_van_Publieke_Ruimte_-_Stad_Gent

happens afterwards, in a more structural and sustainable sense, with all the energy generated there? Is it possible, for example, to create a more permanent nomadic infrastructure that allows initiatives to 'keep going around' on the temporary-use carousel? Despite all these efforts, there remains a remarkable gap between residents who, on the one hand, have lived in Belgium for several generations and who have a higher educational and social capital and, on the other, newer residents with a migrant background. The participation of these groups generally seems inadequate, including in the open commons-orientated citizens' initiatives, with a few exceptions such as De Gentse Lente.[60] We have been informed that the Citizens' Budget has succeeded in attracting such initiatives and projects.

Despite the exemplary aspects of the commons support in Ghent, this support remains very fragmented in practice. The time is now ripe for a certain streamlining of the relationship between the government and the commons. In our proposals, we will certainly focus on the need to develop a new institutional infrastructure, the seed of which is already present, but which can be further strengthened and expanded.

[60] In the magazine MO* we find: " 'De Gentse Lente' is a movement of young and diverse artists, activists, academics and civil society organisations from Ghent who seek to innovate with respect to their thinking and actions around diversity. Making use of the various platforms and actions in the public space, De Gentse Lente movement wants, in the first instance, to make way for the autonomous development of different Ghent artists. Not so much by engaging them in projects but by making room for their own projects, development and empowerment. In this sense, De Gentse Lente is a grass-roots movement that wants to work towards an inclusive society based on binding cultural practices. As such, De Gentse Lente uses cultural events to make social statements and stands as a movement for a radical anti-racist and anti-paternalistic vision". Source: http://www.mo.be/artikel/gent-geeft-kleur-aan-de-lente

Graphic 5: Overview of Temporary Use 2007-2017



Credit: via Emma Tytgadt

7. The pioneering commons initiatives in Ghent are of a particularly high level. Although the commons are a collective phenomenon, the role of these pioneers and driving forces remains essential. Although these people contribute enormously to social capital, and other forms of prosperity and welfare, better support for these key figures could do a lot to further expand the commons. This could be done, for example, by means of a transition income – a concept we would like to see examined by the Economy Service (Dienst Economie) – for people who are active in sectors that require extra attention or where rapid progression is needed. This is not a matter of favouring or privileging certain individuals to the detriment of the collective, but of the kind of support that can create time and energy for the further development of commons infrastructure and initiatives. This recognition can also take place post facto, i. e. by supporting those who have shown very clearly their commitment and the use of their expertise.[61]

[61] Belgian-German economist Christian Arnsperger discusses the advantages of an Economic Transition Income: "The ETI would not only help those wishing to move in sustainable directions, but would also reduce the stigma of welfare for the poor. This stigma would be reduced even further if ETI payments were used by educated young people -- and, more generally, by those who gave up jobs in the mainstream economy -- to build sustainable ways of

The commons economy in Ghent itself is also fairly fragmented, so it's not a case of a government monopoly. Charles Landry said his in report on the creative economy for the city of Ghent ('The Creative Cities Index: Ghent') that Ghent was 'open', but not 'cosmopolitan'. We share this view. Ghent's commons-orientated initiatives could certainly learn more from commons projects outside Ghent and it would be a positive step to set up sustainable partnerships with them.

The integration of the Ghent commons in more global knowledge flows still seems inadequate. But the reverse process also holds many possibilities. The existing Ghent commons and the supporting policy of the city as it now stands already have an exemplary function from which the outside world can learn a great deal. We do not rule out the possibility that Ghent may attract a specific kind of visitor, those who would come to look specifically at what is happening in Ghent, which can also contribute to the prestige of the city as a whole and validate its pioneering role to the outside world. **Ghent was once the city of the guilds and historically the forerunner of the cooperative economy, and today all the ingredients are present for Ghent to become a city recognised and admired for its commons projects.** In this regard we see the possibility, for example, of an open 'Ghent, Commons City' quality label or 'brand', jointly managed with the Ghent commoners and commons projects, which could serve to encourage visits to the city, specifically aimed at contacts with such projects. We are also aware of other city councils that have shown a strong interest in visiting the city of Ghent in order to further study the existing commons approach. For example, the Geneva city council has informed us through Jean Rossaud of the Quartiers Collaboratifs project, that it is interested in what is going on in Ghent.

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life. Creative people could be among the first to use ETI payments as they explore new avenues of living sustainably, but so could those who wanted to try traditional ways that are difficult to uphold now, especially in intentional communities formed around shared values. An additional benefit of the ETI, however, would be its contribution to keeping the overall economy in balance while maintaining a stable labour market-- which is essential for a smooth transition. This could be done by altering the amount of ETI payments, much as a central bank adjusts interest rates. If, for example, more workers were needed in the mainstream economy, the ETI payments could be reduced enough to draw those marginally involved in the sustainable economy back into the mainstream economy." Source: http://eco-transitions.blogspot.com/2011/05/what-transition-part-4-renewing_17.html

8. Ghent already has a number of well-known experiments with community currencies (Torekes and Pluimen) mainly intended to promote inclusion in relatively disadvantaged neighbourhoods. But Ghent also has exceptional expertise in this field, with the Muntuit innovation platform and network, among others. Ghent is therefore ready to take further steps in this area, and could consider supporting one or more projects with a broader ambition. An initiative to support Ghent's small and medium-sized enterprises and the SME economy in general – such as the B2B initiative Sardex in Sardinia (Sardex.net), which is expanding throughout Italy as a result of its success – could also be very interesting and necessary in Ghent.

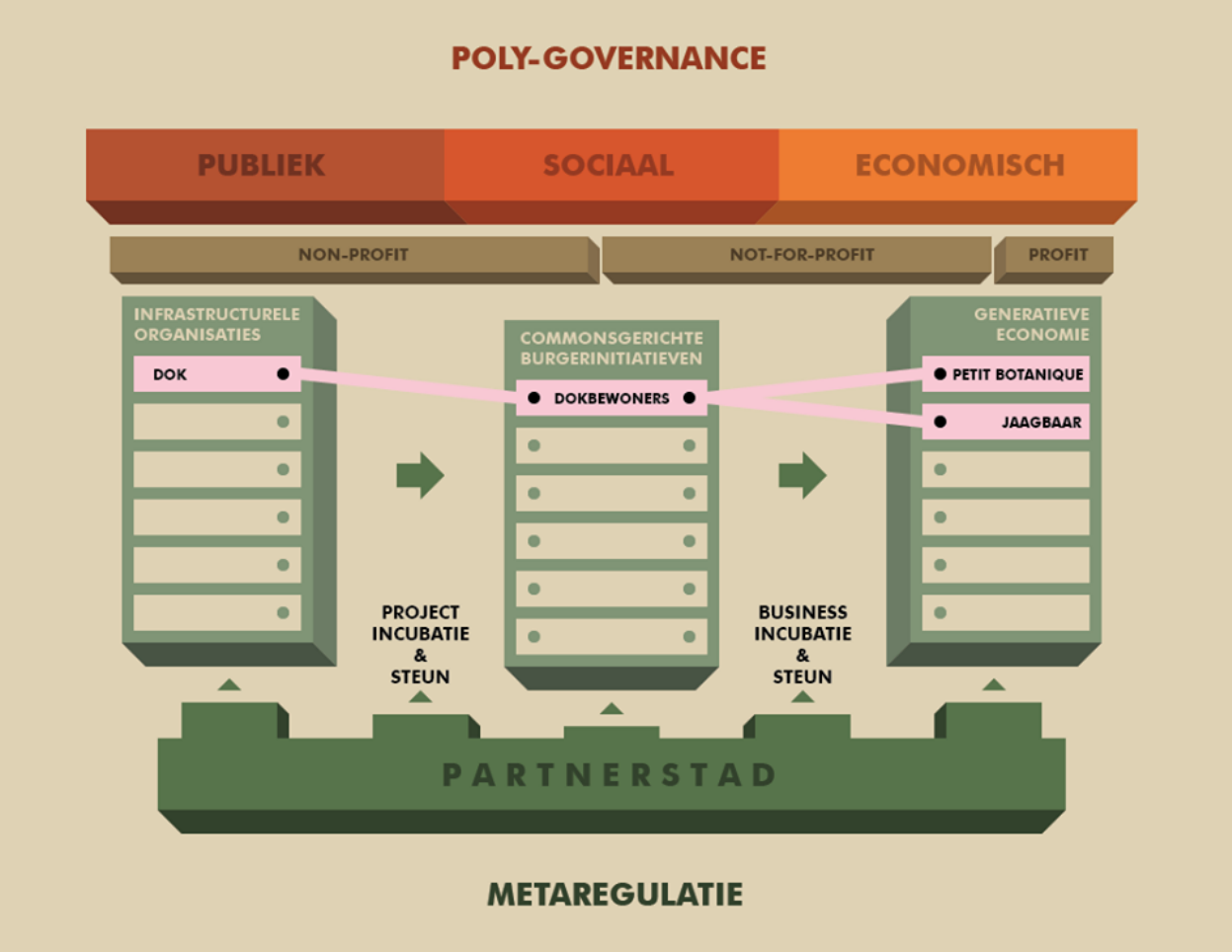
As well as this B2B initiative, there seems to be a need for project that can reach citizens directly and strengthen the local economy. Ghent has already taken very positive and important steps towards innovative financing models, such as crowdfunding.gent and especially the successful Ghent Citizens' Budget.[62] This can certainly be built upon further. The 'matchfunding' that is already being applied through crowdfunding.gent can be linked to broader 'cloudfunding', first and foremost by the ethical financial sector (FairFin, ethical, solidarity-based and cooperative capital), but also by the more traditional civic financial sector (philanthropy, etc.), coupled with crowdfunding, this is sometimes referred to as' cloudfunding'.[63] An initiative linking the city, ethical investors and the cooperative, social and solidarity-based economic sector in a more structural way with support for commons projects seems essential here.

3.2 The structure of the commons economy in Ghent

[62] The project is, of course, ongoing, but we were generally given positive feedback in our discussions with commoners.

[63] "Targets not just individuals, but the totality of civil society for finding capital", pioneered by Goteo, http://goteo.org/service/resources

Graphic 6: Polygovernance model



Credit: Wim Reygaert for VOS

The first graphic illustrates the underlying structure of commons-orientated initiatives and the commons economy, which we see emerging in a similar way in the different sectors.

The middle column is the commons initiatives themselves, for example the DOK residents or ‘Rabot op je Bord’ (‘Rabot on your plate’). These are initiatives that are open to contributions and volunteers, but which may also employ workers who are paid through community currencies, for example.

Most of these initiatives are not entirely autonomous, however. They need infrastructure, support and guidance, sometimes even the prompt or encouragement to establish them. So we see that it is usually organisations

– the pre-existing and new civil society organisations – that enable and support commons projects and infrastructures. In the case of ‘Rabot op je Bord’, for example, the Samenlevingsopbouw organisation plays an important role.
This is the domain of the commons-supportive infrastructural organisations. Over time, commons projects also feel the need for such forms of organisation and tend to set up new organisations themselves.

If projects seek to be resilient in the long term, we usually see the creation of generative businesses, founded and led by participants who have the motivation to occupy themselves with the expansion of the commons in the longer term and to generate the necessary resources for this without relying solely on volunteers or public support. These more economically-orientated initiatives try to integrate goals such as sustainability and solidarity into their operations, and also try to take a more conscious approach to the creation of ‘positive externalities’ for the commons and for society. Negative externalities become an integral part of their economic strategies and business models. This is the domain of the generative economy.

What is clear from our own research (and from earlier studies by Professor Filip De Rynck et al. and Dirk Holemans et al.) is that there is a strong commitment at all these levels to the different sectors of government administration, from systemic support to ad hoc commitment of civil servants in their capacity as committed citizens. This is the horizontal bar under the three domains of the commons themselves. In the wiki of our research project we have specifically identified projects that are linked in one way or another to the city’s initiative.[64]

This graphic shows how we can proceed so as to provide more adequate support to the commons-orientated sector.

[64] See https://wiki.commons.gent/wiki/Category:Initiatief_Stad_Gent

The commons can certainly count on the support of civil society, large and small businesses. We place this at the top of our graphic as support that comes through the public-social-private arenas.

With the understanding of this underlying structure, it also becomes clearer where and when the government can intervene and provide support.

The government can therefore:

1. support the infrastructural organisations directly or indirectly;
2. be active in the space between these organisations and the commons initiatives, e.g. by means of incubators;
3. provide direct support to the commons initiatives themselves;
4. be active in the space between the commons initiatives themselves and the generative economy that can result from them, e.g. by means of incubators;
5. support generative businesses directly;
6. act as an ecosystemic regulator and support this whole field;
7. the latter can be done specifically by directing the mobilisation of public-commons-private commons-supportive initiatives, and even providing a permanent infrastructure for this purpose. In a directing role, the government can, for example, facilitate crowdfunding, employ matchfunding, and even go one step further by means of ‘cloud funding’, i. e. ensuring that private capital can also play a role in this.

This last point is what we want to illustrate with the top bar; this is the structure that is missing. The transition we are proposing here is one towards ‘polygovernance’, which according to both the American Nobel Prize winner Elinor Ostrom (study of the classical commons) and the Italian LabGov (study of the current urban commons) is *the* defining approach for the management of commons projects.

What is still missing today is the commons version of public-private partnerships, and in particular public-social and public-social-market partnerships.[65] We will come back to this in our proposals section.

[65] For expertise in this regard, see Geert Sturtewagen van Schakel, Centre for Co-Creation (http://www.cocreeer.be)

Part 4: Recommendations and proposals for Ghent as a partner city

This part contains our proposals for turning Ghent into a ‘Commons City of the Future’. In this section we take a pragmatic approach. Which seeds of transition are already in place in Ghent that could serve as a basis for bolstering the city’s commons-orientation? Which weak points can be overcome by specific interventions, which can sometimes find inspiration in the successful practices of other cities?

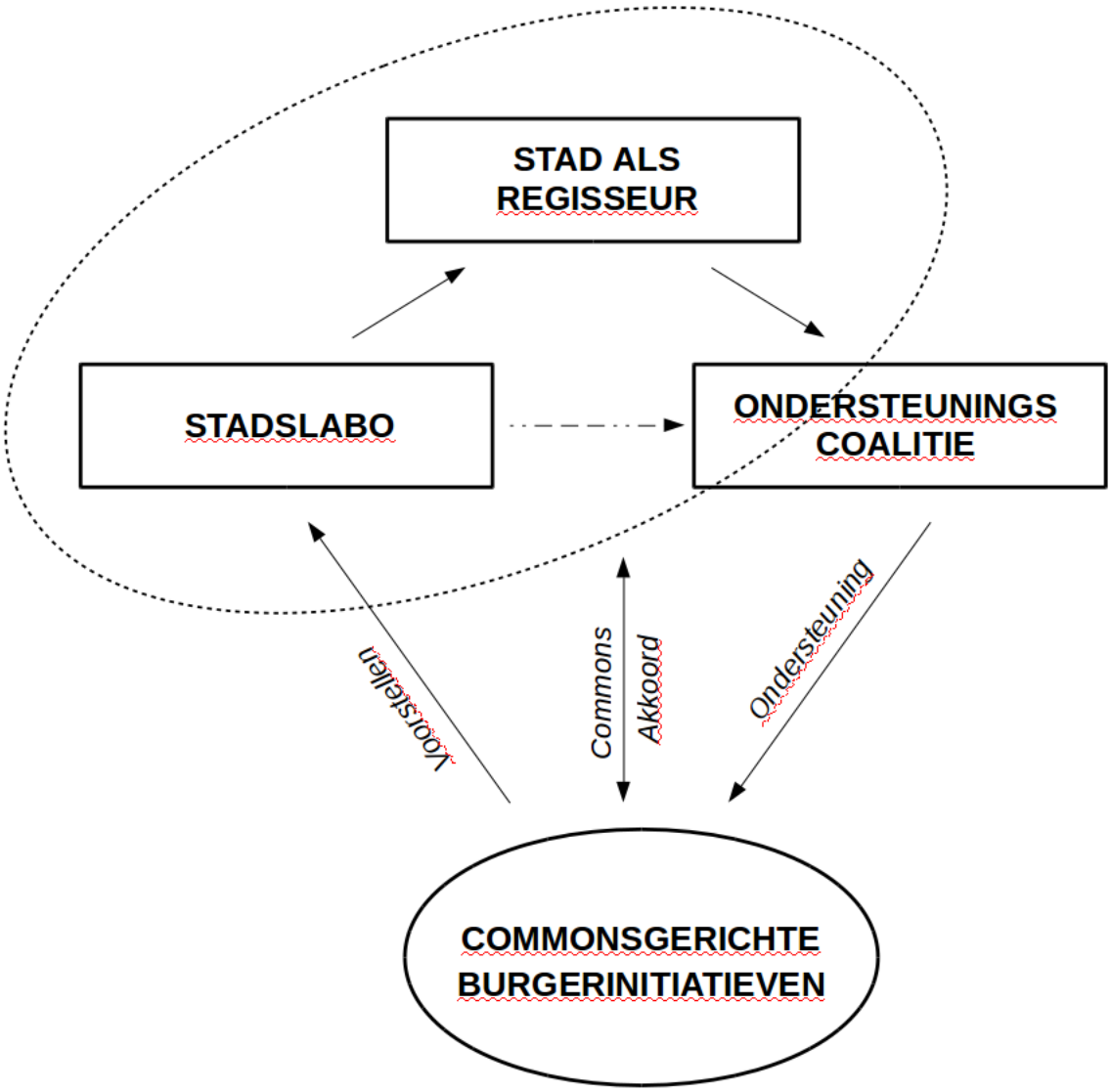
What is important to bear in mind when reading these proposals is that they are not intended to be implemented unilaterally by the city. It is precisely the dialogue and co-creation with the active Ghent commoners – those who are already working on the successful transition to sustainability in the city – that is essential in setting up these new processes and institutions. The seeds of transition described below already exist and offer potential for great progress, but our interviews have shown that they are not always experienced as 100% positive by these commoners, precisely because of (the feeling of) a lack of participation.

4.1 General proposals for Ghent as a partner city

The logic of the proposals that follow is neither to create the perfect common infrastructure, nor is it enough to solve the tough challenges that humanity faces today. It is instead based on the current power dynamics and the possibilities in Ghent, taking into account the seeds that are already present and practised but which stand to be further strengthened. It is therefore an attempt to create structures and processes so that commoners find it easier to engage with the government, and so that the government can respond in a transparent way to the issues experienced by the commons initiatives and, if so desired, provide better support in this regard.

4.1.1 Proposal for a general institutional framework for Ghent as a partner city

Graphic 7: The proposed transition structure in Ghent



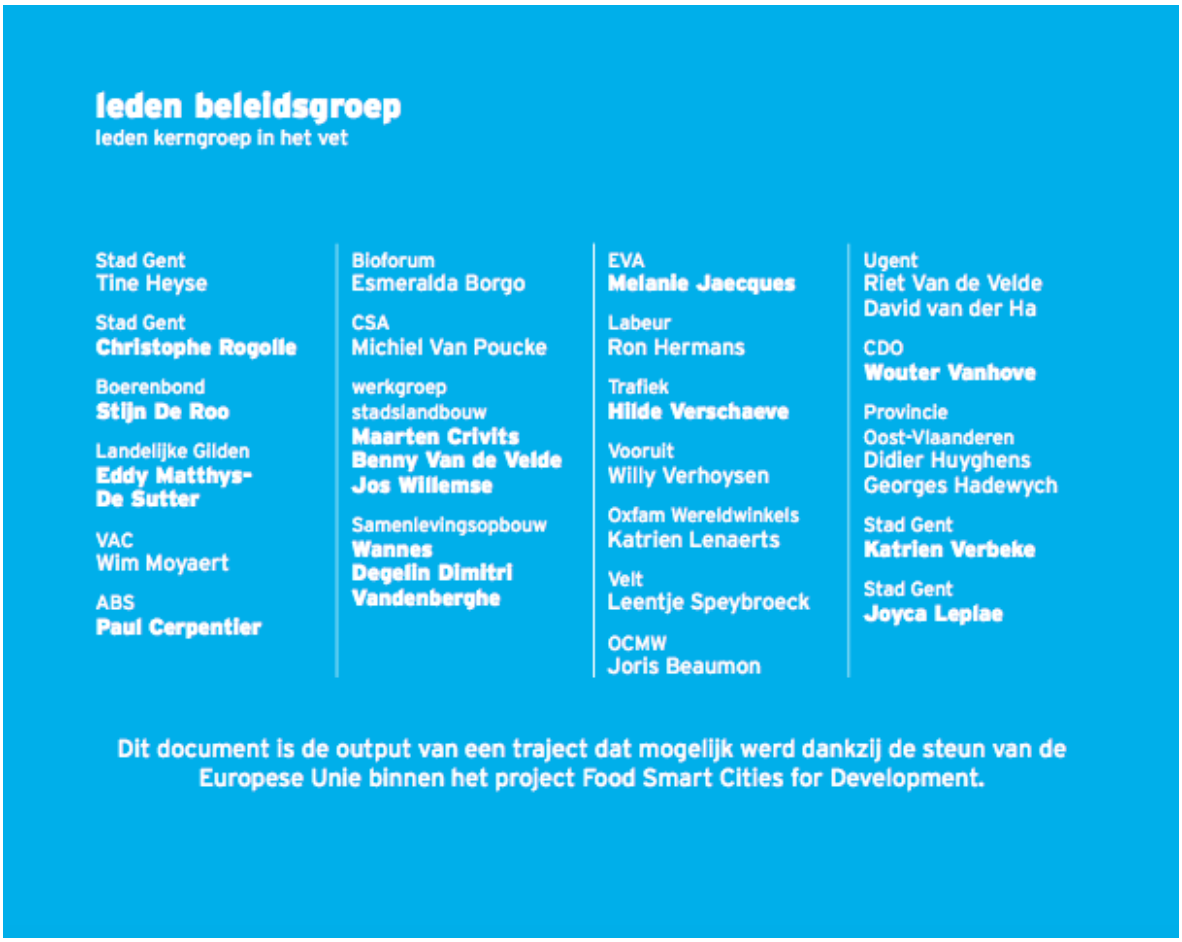
Credit: Vasilis Niaros, P2P Foundation

Ghent is not starting from scratch; it has already developed a very strong basis for stimulating a transition to commons economic models.

Here we are referring in particular to the model that already exists with respect to the transition to urban-orientated ecological agriculture.

In the current model, Ghent has an initiative in the context of Gent Klimaatstad (‘Ghent, Climate City’), i.e. Gent en Garde, which is shaping the city’s food strategy and also actively endorsing the transition requirements. This initiative has also been implemented by a policy group (sometimes referred to as Food Council) with the aim of realising this strategy and putting it into practice. This policy group consists of various external stakeholders (including Bioforum, CSA, Trafiek, Velt, Boerenbond, EVA, Landelijke Gilden, and representatives of Stadslandbouw, the working group on urban agriculture – see graphic below) this policy group is chaired by the appointed councillor Tine Heyse.

Graphic 8: structure of the Gent en Garde policy group



Credit: screenshot from the book 'Stad Gent' (City of Ghent)

This is what we call the 'representative body'[66] of the sector, because it contains key figures who represent the established structures, and who are not necessarily willing or able to negotiate on an equal footing with the new players in the common economy. Hence the need for a second body, a contributory body, in this case the Werkgroup Stadslandbouw (Working Group for Urban Agriculture), which stands on its own, gives input to the policy group Gent en Garde (in which it is also represented) and where the

[66] The members are not elected, but chosen taking into account their representation and influence in society.

expertise of civil society can be used in a more 'power-free'[67] way. This independent working group is an alliance of various urban agriculture projects, urban agriculture experts and enthusiasts, including Nathalie Snauwaert (of 't Spilvarken), Benny Van de Velde (organic farmer and team member of Wervel vzw) and Joksie Biesemans (of Groenten uit Gent among other groups). This open contributive body can enter into dialogue with the representative body and with the city authorities on a permanent basis. This is, of course, an area of tension, but democracy also means giving a place to possible differences of opinion in a constructive manner. The key to success lies in the dialogue between the contributive and representative organ.

The question then arises as to how the influence of civil society can be strengthened.

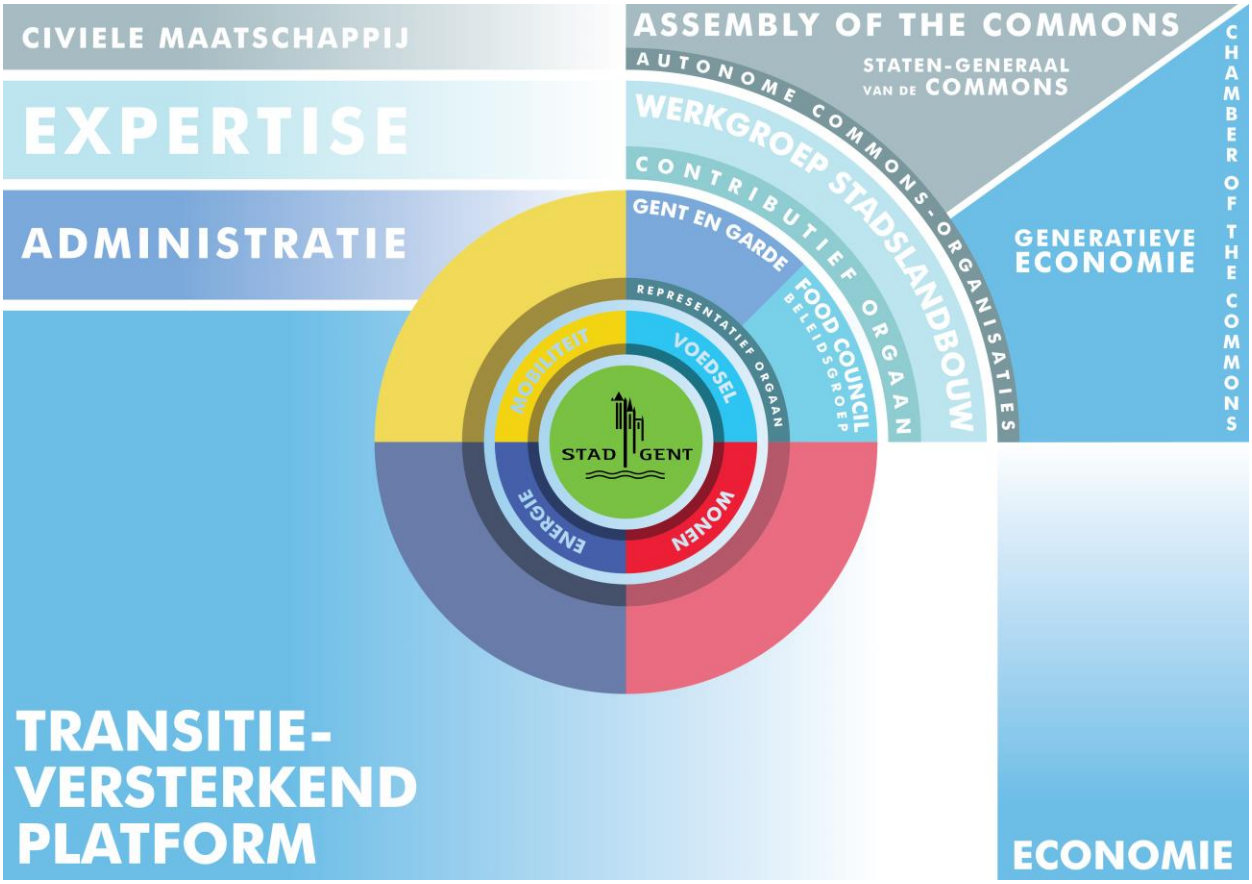
In this context, we therefore propose that civil society itself take the initiative to set up a States General of the Commons (for each sector as well as an overarching entity) called the 'Assembly of the Commons'[68] and a Chamber of the Commons, as the voice of the generative economy. In the States General one speaks as a citizen concerned about the commons and common property; in the Chamber one speaks as an entrepreneur concerned with the resilience of the commons economy, and this difference in perspective justifies the two separate institutions. By striving in this way for more voice[69] and influence, the contributive organ is strengthened in its dialogue with the city and the representative organ. In any case, this remains a field of tension, but in this way it will become transparent and ecosystemic.

[67] This term was used by Thomas Block of the UGent in a conversation about the Centre for Sustainable Development and how the enthusiasm and good will of students and researchers should then be translated into political processes to enable the Ugent's institutions to steer effective change.
[68] More info on the concept at https://wiki.p2pfoundation.net/Assembly_of_the_Commons; plenty of information regarding experiences in France, http://wiki.lescommuns.org/wiki/Accueil
[69] Here we are referring to the concept of voice in: Albert O. Hirschman. 1970. *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty: Responses to Decline in Firms, Organizations, and States.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

What we are proposing is that this seed form, which already functions quite well in Ghent, be taken as a general structure for the entire approach to transition. And thus to replicate this in other sectors such as mobility, energy, housing, etc. In this way Ghent gains a clear structure and transparent processes by which to accelerate the transition to a sustainable society and economy. However, this would require a thorough discussion between the political representatives, the representative forces in the policy group and the contributive citizens, in order to strengthen the Gent en Garde process and make it run even better so that it can strengthen its exemplary function.

Thanks to the generalisation of these institutions and processes, the city and the government are permanently nourished by the proposals and social innovations coming from the commons-orientated initiatives. The second aspect below concerns the implementation of the recommendations.

Graphic 9: Sustainability Empowerment Platform model



Credit: Wim Reygaert for VOS

4.1.2. Proposal for a general institutional framework for public-civil (public-commons) cooperation

Public-private agreements and institutions are not suitable for the commons-orientated sector. The alternative to this is public-civil (public-commons) agreements and processes (enriched with the generative economic actors and the generative aspects of the classical economy), whereby public, social and private partners can act together and mobilise resources.[70]

[70] Here we refer in particular to the Italian experiments with commons-orientated collaborative management (co-cities such as Co-Bologna, Co-Mantova, Co-Palermo, etc.) and specifically to the management model of the **Quintuple Helix or Commons-Based Urban Governance;**https://wiki.p2pfoundation.net/Quintuple_Helix_of_Commons-Based_Urban_Governance; the five

Overview:

1. Ghent has a Commons Citylab that can support new experimental commons-orientated initiatives and help existing projects, as well as scale up solutions and help spread them widely.
2. Ghent has a sector-orientated poly-governance structure with representatives of government, civil society and the generative and classical market players.
3. Ghent has regulations for realising commons agreements.

4.1.2.1. Establishing a Commons Citylab

Our proposal is that the city, as the 'director' of the commons-orientated society and economy, should have a model that is flexible and diverse but at the same time still allows for coordination.

Following the model of the Italian cities (co-cities),[71] we propose that Ghent should have a Commons Citylab, which can support experiments, draw up and support commons agreements, and also mobilize support.

This citylab is capable of mobilising resources by means of so-called 'support coalitions.

4.1.2.2. 'Three-in-one' support coalitions

The transition councils play an active role in mobilising support for the Sustainability Empowerment Platforms described in 4.1:

The supportive infrastructure looks like this:

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stakeholders here are: 1) the government 2) the market players (Chamber of Commerce), 3) the knowledge organisations; 4) civil society and 5) the commons representatives.

[71] The most recent project is in Turin, see: https://www.labgov.it/2017/03/30/5901/

- 1) representatives of the city and the government
- 2) representatives of the supporting civil society, i.e. both civil society infrastructural organisations as well as
- 3) the knowledge institutions such as universities and colleges[72]
- 4) Representatives of the generative economy and of the players in the classical economy who want to move towards a generative practice
- 5) Representatives of the commons-orientated initiatives themselves

The model of the Sustainability Empowerment Platforms, i.e. the commons-orientated transition areas, can serve to implement such a support structure for specific projects.

4.1.2.3. Commons regulations and agreements

Commons regulations recognise the ‘Right of Initiative’ for commons-orientated projects and regulate city support, or through the above-mentioned support coalitions via commons agreements.

The model we are advocating here is the model of the regulations in the northern-Italian city of Bologna, and in particular the Bologna Regulation for the Care and Regeneration of the Urban Commons.[73] This regulation allows for a ‘Right of Initiative’ from the commons communities, followed by an evaluation procedure and a ‘Common Accord’ in which the city agrees on what kind of support it can provide and, in doing so, can mobilise the support coalitions.

It is in our opinion superior to the ‘Right to Challenge’ that is customary in the Netherlands, because that model is based on a negative stance towards the government. The ‘Right of Initiative’, on the other hand, is a positive right that is not aimed at replacing public services, but which in

[72] See the RRI model for generative knowledge production, championed by Anne Snick in Ghent.
[73] The English version of 2013/2014, written by LabGov, is the official version: http://www.comune.bologna.it/media/files/bolognaregulation.pdf ; zie ook https://wiki.p2pfoundation.net/Bologna_Regulation_for_the_Care_and_Regeneration_of_Urban_Commons

itself bears the values of ‘care’ and ‘improvement’ and also recognises the right of initiative of citizens.

4.1.3. The need for a public-social service to provide legal support for common projects

One of the main obstacles to the further development of commons-orientated initiatives is inadequate regulation,[74] the lack of knowledge and legal counsel concerning the possibilities, limitations and solutions, and a process to adapt this regulation where necessary. See for example the recent memo from Labland,[75] the experimental space for building and living, concerning the regulations on more collective forms of living, which also cites obstacles specific to Ghent.

In California, the exemplary Sustainability Economics Law Center[76] operates under the leadership of Janelle Orsi, and in France there is the informal Sharelex. These are both independent initiatives. What we are proposing is a public-social service comprising at least two lawyers. A first lawyer is directly appointed by the city (possibly in combination with two lawyers from UGent?) and knows how to communicate well with city services. The second lawyer, whose main motivation is to legally facilitate and support the commons-orientated initiatives, is nominated by these initiatives.

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[74] This 2011 report describes regulatory problems with more collective forms of housing: **“Co-housing in Belgium: where are we and where are we headed? Communal living: issues and the paths to solutions, the current situation and needs.” Samenhuizen vzw, 2011.** URL = http://www.samenhuizen.net/sib/

[75] Note: Labland – summary of legal and urban planning issues. Authors: Eva De Meyst, Lukas Vanelderen, Steven Vromman.
https://wiki.commons.gent/wiki/Juridische_en_Stedenbouwkundige_Knelpunten_voor_het_Samenhuizen_in_de_Stad_Gent

[76] Mission: “SELC cultivates a new legal landscape that supports community resilience and grassroots economic empowerment. We provide essential legal tools so communities everywhere can develop their own sustainable sources of food, housing, energy, jobs, and other vital aspects of a thriving community.” Source: http://www.sustainableeconomieslawcenter.org/

4.1.4. A permanent facilitative infrastructure for incubation and support

4.1.4.1 Establishment of a physical incubator infrastructure

In Ghent, traditional start-ups can count on a red carpet from the supporting institutions and incubators, from start-ups to scale-ups. This is not the case for the commons-orientated generative economy. A well-functioning body such as De Sociale InnovatieFabriek (‘The Social Innovation Factory’) can be found in Brussels. There is therefore certainly a need for a specific incubator/centre for the generative economy in Ghent:

1) This incubator would provide information regarding alternative legal structures for the company type, i.e. cooperation (in partnership with Febecoop and Coopkracht), the social and solidarity-based economy.
2) This incubator could also provide information in connection with licences for shared knowledge, and advice on how to obtain appropriate forms of support and investment; this incubator also would offer knowledge with regard to the mutualisation of infrastructure (shared buildings, communal machinery, etc.).
3) This centre would also serve as a training centre with regard to generative economic models, possibly in partnership with UGent and the universities of applied sciences in Ghent.
4) This centre is connected to the knowledge flows surrounding sustainability and the circular economy.

In other words, this incubator is specifically aimed at supporting entrepreneurs who combine sustainability, fairness and commons-orientated models. The already-mentioned, ambitious Impetus Plan in Barcelona shows how such an ambitious approach and policy can be implemented, with specific attention to what they call the ‘commons-based collaborative economy’.

Not that traditional incubators such as iMinds/IMEC are by design **not suitable** for supporting these specific forms of commons-orientated entrepreneurship, due to the cultural difference with business strategies

aimed at privatising knowledge (and therefore any possible commons). Nevertheless, once this culture has been acquired in Ghent through the new incubator(s), a mixture may be possible at a later stage, provided that the commons-orientated activity remains independent.[77] De Startersfabriek ('The Start-up Factory') could perhaps provide an initial impetus for this, for example by making a certain percentage of its projects commons projects.

However, we would like to emphasise that the whole logic of the commons-orientated economy and generative entrepreneurs is different from that of the traditional start-ups.[78] The classical economy revolves around economies of scale, and the venture capital model consists of scaling up as quickly as possible and capturing market share in order to achieve network effects. But this scaling up often also means leaving their place of origin. The commons economy, on the other hand, revolves around 'economies of scope', i.e. global productive and technical communities that continuously share and refine knowledge and then produce locally and 'distributively'. As such, 'scale-ups' are to traditional start-ups what 'scope-ups' are to the commons economy.

In the Participatory City project of Lambeth Council mentioned above, a project runs from a top incubator, specifically aimed at scaling up citizens' projects, through to a powerful social infrastructure that can strengthen the city's resonance. In our opinion, this points to a generative social function rather than specifically to the stimulation of a specific generative economy. The pairing of general project incubation with economic incubation may require more in-depth consideration.

The Dienst Beleidsparticipatie (Policy Participation Service) has already considered the Lambeth model and what Ghent could learn from it.[79]

[77] A possible mode is given by Atemis, the French institute for the functional and cooperative economy.

[78] An example of such a process can be found in Barcelona: "***La Comunificadora*** *is an innovative Commons Startup Support Programme in Barcelona. Fifteen projects took part in the three-month programme (November 2016 - January 2017) exploring the viability of a commons collaborative economy, looking at its social impact and seeking to establish fair relationships among agents*." (http://freeknowledge.eu/lacomunificadora)

[79] https://wiki.commons.gent/wiki/Participatory_City

4.1.4.2 Facilitating generative capital flows: a bank for the commons

At present, there are facilities for traditional start-ups, but also to a limited extent for the social/cooperative/solidarity-based economy. In both cases, however, specific forms of financial security are being sought, which create specific problems for commons-orientated projects. Indeed, even ethical funds and institutions such as Triodos Bank generally expect privatised intellectual property to be produced as collateral for loans and investments. Support-seeking projects based on shared knowledge, such as free software and open design, will face additional difficulties as a result of this. The creation of specific funds to take this into account is therefore a priority. In our view, this might be best achieved through a specific dialogue with ethical financial capital, possibly facilitated by FairFin.

In a number of countries, such as the United States, there has been a strong movement towards public banks, particularly city banks, along the lines of the very successful Bank of Nebraska (which operates at the state level), a state, which has, certainly in part due to this initiative, helped to respond most resiliently to the 2008 crisis. In this model, the city's revenues are placed in a publicly-managed bank, which can then finance local projects itself.[80]

To cite a recent article:

"*Across the country, community activists, mayors, city council members, and more are waking up to the power and the promise of public banks. Such banks are established and controlled by cities or states, rather than private interests. They collect deposits from government entities—from school districts, from city tax receipts, from state infrastructure funds—and use that money to issue loans and support public priorities. They are led by independent professionals but accountable to elected officials*."

[80] "**From Seattle to Santa Fe, cities are at the center of a movement to create publicly owned banks." Source: https://www.thenation.com/article/what-if-people-owned-the-banks-instead-of-wall-street/**

In our opinion, the city could also consider setting up a local bank of the commons, forming an alliance with ethical and other sources of generative finance and with a public-social-ethical capital management model. In the meantime, a fund for commons projects is essential; the specific role of such a fund is to facilitate investment in projects that effectively create 'common assets', both material and immaterial. Ghent has already gained great experience through crowdfunding.gent, which applies matchfunding, and through the Citizens' Budget. We therefore suggest a broadening of this to incorporate what the open network Goteo (goteo.org) calls 'cloudfunding', whereby the capacity of projects to obtain support from civil society is strengthened with an approach to organised civil society and ethical funds.

4.1.4.3 From Temporary Use to permanent commons by means of a commons registration mechanism and land bank

Commons are shared goods and services that represent 'value' in many different ways. A frequently heard complaint from commoners and citizens' initiatives on the ground concerns the lack of space and land, with, for example, the sale of a number of OCMW properties by the city considered to be very problematic. Hence the demand for a commons registration mechanism and a land bank, with a special role for empty religious buildings and land, which could be put to more active use as commons,[81] in harmony with their original function. A good example of this is the 596 Acres project in New York,[82] explicitly supported by the city through a Real Estate Investment Cooperative.[83]

[81] A good example of proposals with respect to churches by citizens – who are generally not happy with the economic/commercial function of these churches (see http://www.christophepeeters.gent/projecten/gentse-kerken) are the proposals for the St. Macharius Church, which are seeking to be more in line with the movement for shelters. Info via **Jan Vandemeulebroeke** de.wolk@gmail.com

[82] 596 Acres **= "building online tools neighbours can use to clear hurdles to community land access. The tools turn city data into information about particular pieces of land and connect people to one another.** http://596acres.org/

[83] **"REIC leverages patient crowdfunding—small investments by a large number of people over time—to turn vacant municipal properties into sustainable community resources".** http://nycreic.com/

4.1.4.4 Open data

Ghent already has an active and exemplary city policy in connection with support for open data (see for example https://gent.buurtmonitor.be), which is not always sufficiently known to the general public. But the link between open data collections and the generative economy could perhaps be further strengthened. A large and enlightening communication campaign surrounding open data could strengthen the use of these data streams.

4.1.5 Supporting platform cooperativism as the commons of the sharing economy

The so-called ‘sharing economy’ is also represented in Ghent, but not always in the ideal forms. Specific platforms can create negative externalities such as Uber’s effect on the income level of its drivers, Airbnb’s gentrification effects, and the general development of highly precarious forms of employment and work (see for example Deliveroo). Meanwhile, a strong counter-movement has emerged that supports more generative models.

Platform cooperatives are platforms where people can rent things and services to each other, while the platforms themselves are a commons, i.e. legal property of the workers, the users or, better still, the different stakeholders. In Flanders, active coops of this kind include Febecoop and Coopkracht, among others. A city like Ghent has every interest in supporting platforms that do not further weaken the social fabric and social protection mechanisms, and this can be made possible by supporting such platform cooperatives. A healthy sharing economy is not a luxury, neither

socially speaking nor ecologically. A commons incubator, including the previously mentioned De Startersfabriek, can play a specific role here in supporting the creation and development of platform cooperatives.

Ghent could, for example, in the context of ‘mobility as a commons’, support applications that simultaneously benefit both taxis and new forms of mobility, and could also steer generative incubators and different forms of support in this direction. A specific commitment on the part of the Dienst Economie (Economy Service), in cooperation with institutions from the cooperative economy, seems essential to us in this regard.

4.1.6 ‘Ghent, commons city of the future’ as an open ‘brand’ for urban development

The commons are not only a reality but a story, and, what’s more, a story that has increasing appeal. The fact that Ghent was the first city in the world to specifically request a Commons Transition Plan, and ask how a government should position itself in relation to commons-orientated citizens’ initiatives, is in itself an innovative step. Our research has shown that both citizens’ initiatives and government facilitation are already above average in Ghent. This approach therefore also represents an innovation and fits in perfectly with a number of new values that play an important role in society. We have already received applications from city councils and commons groups (Lille, Brussels, Rotterdam, Geneva, among others) who want to visit Ghent specifically for this reason. Thousands of commons organisations across the globe organise congresses and conferences on a regular basis, and Ghent can perfectly position itself here as an ideal commons city. Do note that we are not talking here about city marketing and advertising that can be misunderstood as an appropriation of the work of the many citizens’ initiatives, but rather an objective and transparent disclosure of what is actually happening and about initiatives that strengthen this identity. We are also thinking here of a **facilitative and overarching service within the city** that reinforces the link between the

commons and the city,[84] so that the perception corresponds to the new reality, and more people from outside the city communicate with the Ghent population, the active citizens and the civil servants with regard to the new problem.
An annual CommonsFest, a Creative Commons Film Festival (already very successful in Barcelona), open and citizen science events and open data hackathons are among possible initiatives that could be strengthened. A documentary, following the example of Ghent in Motion, but which this time specifically portrays the commons initiatives, could also be very interesting and is also recommended.

4.1.7 Creating a multi-city coalition for the pooling of knowledge and infrastructure

Despite the growth of political movements and parties that seek to strengthen the nation-state, the nation-state finds itself today in a structurally weakened position. Taking action to promote transition through the city is a possible alternative.

In this line of thinking, a city is not only a local phenomenon, but also forms part of a new chain in a new form of transnational governance: the coalition of cities. For example, cities alone are weak in the face of the new monopolies in the digital economy (such as Uber and Airbnb), but by forming a coalition together they could be much stronger.

But this is also a pragmatic proposal: as citizens and new entrepreneurs – with or without the support of the city – take initiatives such as setting up platform cooperatives to protect and strengthen local value streams, there is also the risk of a major fragmentation of the commons infrastructure. The city, as part of a coalition of cities, can provide important support in the mutualisation of the commons' shared infrastructure. For example, by supporting software platforms for the development of software for car

[84] and provides an overview of the various city services and the much-needed coordination – a recurring criticism on the ground was that one particular city service will give the green light and accompanying support, while another service sometimes rejects the same project or initiative.

sharing, community currencies, bicycle sharing and short-chain ordering of food boxes.

Sharing knowledge regarding the commons approach in different cities is also an essential part of this. The crucial question is: what regulations and controls work in supporting commons-orientated initiatives and in curtailing the 'negative externalities' of the new digital monopolies? A strong example of such a coalition is the coalition of 16 world cities that signed the Barcelona Pledge, to use the FabCity model to relocalise half of the production of food and products by 2054.

4.1.8 The value of the market and the value of the commons: the need for new 'integrated' metrics and value assessments with regard to social and environmental impact.

Commons-orientated initiatives and new 'generative' entrepreneurs develop models that can create a lot of social and ecological value, but also produce specific economic challenges for themselves since they integrate costs that are passed on by others to citizens and government. A purely financial assessment of these projects is therefore often detrimental to such projects.
Ghent has already incorporated sustainability criteria in its procurement policy, but we believe that the time is ripe to investigate more specifically whether new metrics can play a role in this.[85] A specific research project by the Dienst Economie (Economy Service) or the Dienst Strategische Coördinatie (Strategic Coordination Service) is advisable.

[85] See for example the development of the 'common good economy accounting system' in Austria, https://wiki.p2pfoundation.net/Economy_for_the_Common_Good : Christian Felber, its founder, writes: "Economic success should be measured according to a company's contribution to the common good. Businesses should be rewarded for practices that improve their compliance to human rights, social justice, and environmental protection. This should be done by measuring their contribution with a so called common good balance sheet (already used by 400 ethical businesses in Europe), which looks at how a business's activities advance or harm human dignity, solidarity, justice, ecological sustainability, and democracy through evaluating whether products and services satisfy human needs, whether companies' working conditions are humane, the production processes are environmentally-friendly, etc. It then informs consumers, employees, business partners, and government agencies of the companies' social and environmental performance (relative to its business-related activities)." (http://www.greeneuropeanjournal.eu/collaboration-is-just-a-strategy-overcoming-the-limits-of-commons/)

4.1.9 Strengthening the ‘voice’ of the commons: organisation of the States General of the Commons (Assembly of the Commons and Chamber of the Commons)

In our structural proposals, we have referred to the need to give a stronger voice to the citizens who develop and protect the commons in Ghent, in order to also strengthen the influence of the contributive bodies. We call this the States General of the Commons and more specifically the Assembly of the Commons, which unites active citizens, and the Chamber of the Commons, which represents the voice of the new generative entrepreneurs (i.e. social entrepreneurs, cooperative/solidarity-based entrepreneurs, commons entrepreneurs). This is of course not a task for the government, but the Ghent city authorities can – as discussed during a conversation with the mayor Daniël Termont regarding these proposals – welcome and support this process and specifically invite the active citizens to take this step. The city needs such a voice.

4.1.10 The ‘call for commons’

In traditional tenders, entrepreneurs are placed in competition with each other, with value for money being the main factor. From the point of view of ‘knowledge as a commons’, however, this represents an enormous waste of human ability and capital. Consider the architect agencies who miss out on a tender: all their acquired knowledge goes to waste. Things can be different: it is perfectly possible for a complementarity to exist, whereby co-creative knowledge production can lead to better insights. The alternative of the ‘call for commons’ means that a tender takes into account the capacity to mobilise initiators and coalitions of initiators.

The procedure followed in connection with the Temporary Use project NEST is a good example of this. Within less than a month, various Ghent-based citizens’ initiatives and commoners succeeded in developing a complementary proposal and organising a contributive accounting system,

whereby the most committed and open projects pay relatively less rent to compensate for their greater commitment to the collective project. We propose that this kind of procedure be used and applied more widely.

4.2. Specific proposals for pilot projects in the commons economy

4.2.1 Establishing a pilot project focusing on employment

The relative de-industrialisation of Western countries has now reached a level that is creating major political and social instability, with the classical globalisation model producing a particularly large number of negative ecological externalities. It is perfectly possible, however, without questioning the freedom of trade, to use the commons-economical model to promote local employment. An experiment along these lines is therefore worthwhile and would also send out a strong signal and, if successful, offer an important lesson for the further development of this type of initiative. We are thinking, for example, of the potential of the one million school meals served in Ghent's public schools. Copenhagen and Scotland, with its 'social procurement', have already shown this to be possible. With the Lunch with LEF project, Ghent has a coalition of commons-oriented citizens' initiatives that are closely linked to the bioregion and the short-chain food supply. Significant expansion of this model could already send out a strong signal. It would strengthen the short chain around Ghent, promote an ecological transport infrastructure and create jobs for all those who would have to cook more locally as a result.

4.2.2 Anchor institutions project to strengthen the city's social and environmental procurement policy

Following on from the successful experiments and policies of the Cleveland model (US) and the Preston model (UK), it would be an important step to

mobilise anchor institutions in a communal and strengthened local procurement policy. Anchor institutions are public and semi-public institutions that are present everywhere, and are also essential in poor neighbourhoods to services, the economy and employment, especially schools, hospitals, universities. A coordinated procurement policy that takes into account sustainability and other transition criteria (such as that of the city of Ghent) could play a significant role in creating local employment, and can also strengthen local and generative entrepreneurs.[86]

4.2.3 'Circular Finance' pilot project

This experiment involves finding innovative financing techniques for the development of the commons-orientated generative economy.

The inspiration for this is the financing model of Linux – a well-known exponent of free software (and thus of the commons-orientated economy) – by IBM and other companies. Some fifteen years ago, IBM decided to develop its internal software infrastructure largely via Linux, expecting to thus avoid up to 90% of its internal investments. But it also decided at the same time to reinvest 10-15% of the saved costs in Linux. With this, IBM co-created a 'virtuous circle' for the financing and development of the software commons. Terre de Liens, a coalition of organisations that unites organic farmers in France – and the French counterpart of the Flemish De Landgenoten, who recently won the grand prize in the 'Radical Innovators' competition hosted by De Sociale InnovatieFabriek ('Social Innovation Factory') and Radio 1 – has carried out a detailed study on the pollution

[86] "Developed through extensive research and in-depth interviews conducted with more than 75 leaders of anchor institutions, national non-profit organizations, federal agencies, and community organizations, The Anchor Dashboard identifies twelve critical areas where anchor institutions can play an effective role. Additionally, it develops illustrative indicators that: 1) provide a baseline to assess conditions in the community; and 2) evaluate institutional effort—e.g., dollars spent, procurement shifted, people hired, policies and accountability procedures in place. Our hope is that The Anchor Dashboard will be a valuable mechanism to help the field more clearly focus on what it means for a hospital or university to pursue an anchor institution mission. By outlining best practices in economic development, community building, education, health, safety, and the environment, along with potential mechanisms to track progress using already available data, we intend that this publication move the conversation from "programs" to "institutional impact"—and, especially, on how anchor institutions can conduct themselves to deliver crucial, and measurable, benefits for low-income children, families, and communities." (http://community-wealth.org/indicators#measure)

costs of water, whereby a similar effect proves possible.[87] The more the number of organic farmers increases and spreads, the more the cost of water pollution is dramatically reduced and a virtuous circle can be created there too.

If such a pilot project can be set up and proves successful, tremendous new opportunities will open up for financing the socio-ecological transition, which will reduce public expenditure, which can be used differently (with less focus on the costs of negative externalities of the economy, and more focus on positive externalities). In the case of the application of the above-mentioned model of Terre de Liens, 30% more jobs can also be created in the Ghent bioregion.

The subsidisation allotted to parents who use washable diapers[88] shows that the Ghent government is already open to this principle.

4.2.4 Pilot project: 'Ghent as a real maker city'

As we indicated in Part 3, there are a number of makers' initiatives in Ghent, but there are no initiatives that are specifically commons-orientated and integrated in open design networks.
There is therefore a clear need to support ateliers that specifically focus on open design. We also think it is worthwhile and necessary for Ghent to

[87] L'agriculture biologique : Pour une gestion préventive de la qualité de l'eau et le maintien d'une activité agricole dynamique sur les territoires. Un outil efficace et économe pour protéger les ressources en eau. Authors: FNAB - ITAB - GABNOR - FRAB Champagne Ardenne avec la contributionde Bio de Provence, du SEDARB et de la CGAB. URL = http://www.penser-bio.fr/IMG/pdf/eau_et_bio.pdf

[88] Between the time of birth and potty-training, a new-baby produces an average of 1 ton of diaper waste.
Ivago (hypothetically) invoices the city of Ghent €250 per ton of waste collected. The city offers a €100 subsidy to citizens who purchase washable diapers, a net saving for the city of €150. Part of this will go to the salary costs of processing the subsidy applications, but there will still be money left over. Source: email via Joris Wouters, Foresight department of Digipolis.

become a pioneer in the field of this new industrial model. We therefore propose that the city set up a pilot project, where physical production is effectively carried out through the new model. One possibility could be, for example, the self-production of a number of cars for the municipal fleet through the EDIT project (EDIT produces the world's first modular, open and self-driving white-label car). There are of course other possibilities, but it is important for the city to position itself as a leader in this new creative economy. In this way, Ghent could become very attractive in the long term as a Mecca of the maker economy. A pilot project is necessary to start and accelerate the process.

4.2.2.5 Monetary experiment for the 'real' economy

Ghent is already active in the field of community currencies, such as the Torekes in the Rabot neighbourhood and the Pluimen in Ledeberg. Both projects have a strong social impact and are strongly focused on the objectives of the social economy. But the city also has a unique knowledge centre with respect to community currencies through the Flemish innovation platform Muntuit (with its registered office in Ghent and former UGent researcher Sander Van Parijs as coordinator). Meanwhile, the WIR in Switzerland and, most recently, Sardex in Sardinia, have proved that B2B credit systems (a commons of mutualised credit between entrepreneurs, by means of their own currency) have a noticeably positive impact on the local economy. Ghent is certainly ready to take a new step towards a local currency for the 'normal' economy. After the B2B coin, the development of local currencies, which also involve citizens and consumers, could then be looked into further.[89] After all, B2B coins work mainly for entrepreneurs.

4.3. Other sectoral proposals

[89] See also the very recent example from Spain; http://www.shareable.net/blog/how-one-city-in-spain-launched-a-local-currency

4.3.1 Proposals centred on the culture of the commons (the Commons Festival and more)

The coalition surrounding NEST and Vooruit's City & Transition team have expressed great interest in co-organising a Commons Festival, which brings all the commons actors together in a unifying and festive way. This event could have a strong international appeal. A possible date that has already been put forward as being feasible is the end of October. This could also be the date for organising the earlier mentioned States General of the Commons in Ghent.

4.3.2 Strengthening the role of knowledge institutes

As we mentioned in Part 3, UGent is very active on sustainability, but as an institution it is relatively absent from commons-orientated citizens' initiatives. In our institutional proposals relating to the new public-social support coalitions for the commons economy, there is a specific role to be played by knowledge institutions, the conditions for which urgently need to be strengthened. A dialogue specifically with UGent institutions aimed at strengthening its ties with the commons in Ghent seems necessary. As mentioned above, this can be done in specific dialogue with commons-orientated researchers such as Thomas Block, Filip De Rynck, Raf Pauly, Pascal Debruyne and Rogier De Langhe. A number of Ghent's universities of applied sciences (including Artevelde University College and the Sint-Lucas Campus of KULeuven) are also clear candidates with whom to discuss a deeper relationship with the commons.

4.3.3. A new role for Ghent librarians in connection with commons mapping

As part of this research project, a wiki was also created to offer a cartography of the Ghent commons, see http://wiki.commons.gent. There could be an important new role for people involved in Ghent's public libraries to become co-creators for the maintenance and further updating of the project in a public-social structure. The Open Data services of the city of Ghent also had many suggestions to improve the work and the cartography. Of course, it would be optimal to

further involve citizens in keeping track of and updating this important source in order to be able to follow the evolution of the commons in Ghent.

5. Conclusion

The British musician and producer Brian Eno once wrote: "*Scenius* stands for the intelligence and the intuition of a whole cultural scene. It is the communal form of the concept of the genius. Individuals immersed in a productive scenes will blossom and produce their best work. When buoyed by scenes, you act like genius. Your like-minded peers, and the entire environment inspire you."[90]

In other words: the success of the individual genius depends on the collective ability to create a fertile ground. This is what we have tried to do with this research and report. In dialogue with dozens of independent,

[90] Source: http://www.synthtopia.com/content/2009/07/09/brian-eno-on-genius-and-scenius/

committed and creative Ghent commoners, we asked what they expected from the city, so as to facilitate all citizens to work together on the necessary sustainability transition and resilience. As a city, Ghent is already inspiring others with its current approach, but what is required to promote the blossoming of even more creative flowers in the city? With this report, we have tried to sketch a picture of an institutional framework in which Ghent citizens and city actors could cooperate optimally, on the road to a more commons-orientated society.

P.S.: Lola and Lisa, the pigs of Driemasterpark, who are cared for by the local residents of Meulestede-Wondelgem, are emblematic of the tension that permeates the commons, which are revitalising the city and bringing nature back to the city, and the caution of the civil servants, who originally held a certain distrust of the current and future capacity of the citizens to take good care of the animals. Nevertheless, the experiment was made possible following a dialogue between the city services and the citizens. Lola and Lisa have long wiggly tails, a sign of lack of stress and a caring environment.

Photo: Lola the pig. Credit: Rosemie Callewaert

Frame texts

Frame: Oikos study on the relationship between commons-orientated initiatives and the government

Oikos explains in more detail:

“In particular, cooperatives – where members contribute money themselves through shares – operate independently of the government. One of these cooperatives states that civil servants are more likely to act as controllers than advisors and sees this as a missed opportunity to show that

‘entrepreneurs and government can be partners in the creation of wealth and well-being’.

Co-housing and electric-car-sharing collectives are dependent on the (local) government with respect to the preconditions of their collectives. Co-housing initiatives require building permits and the driving of electric cars is contingent on the government providing charging stations, parking spaces and the relevant deregulation. These collectives are therefore dependent on the support of the government when it comes to technical aspects. They consult often more with officials in the initial phase than in later stages. Projects that focus on the daytime activities and living space for young adults with disabilities do, however, work more closely with the government. For example, the personal care budgets of the residents have to cover the staff payroll. These are financed by the government. Initiatives that are active on municipal property also work more in consultation with officials and – needless to say – cannot exist without the approval of the local government.

Most LETS groups are very keen to maintain their independence from the (local) government. It is striking that a number of transition groups do seek out contact with municipalities, however: ‘financially (subsidies) and purely with regard to energy (opportunities to invest in renewable energy) as well as regarding regulation...’

A similar trend, albeit to a lesser extent, is evidenced by the following statements: ‘We consult with the municipal council about what services we offer’ (32% completely disagree, 21% disagree, 16% agree, 12% completely agree) and ‘the municipal council has actively supported the development of our initiative (32% completely disagree, 21% disagree, 16% agree, 12% completely agree). This reinforces the impression that the collectives have little connection with the (local) government.

However, this is not always of their own choosing. Various collectives indicate that they are disappointed with the attitude of local administrators. The most dissatisfied appear to be representatives of ‘more unique’

initiatives without an umbrella organisation (as opposed to LETS groups, Transition Groups, Co-housing and CSA). For these collectives, recognition and support from local authorities seems less of an obvious route. So they answer: ‘At best we are politely tolerated’ and ‘the civil service is rather negative towards our initiative’.

“Still, not all initiatives have been disappointed by local government. Some of them, including the transition groups again, experience the collaboration as very pleasant.

One of the co-housing initiatives summarises the whole picture rather strikingly:

We sometimes felt that they could have been a little more flexible, or that they didn’t always realise how their decisions seriously impeded the project, but on the other hand, we received support in various areas. It was give and take.’

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Appendices

1) Lessons from Urban Commons in the Global North

Some conclusions from 'The 1st Co-Cities report on the Urban (Commons) Transitions' (Bauwens M., Foster S. & Iaione C. et al (2017). The 1st Co-cities report on the Urban (Commons) Transitions. Towards a Co-City: From the Urban Commons to the City as a Commons. LabGov & P2P Foundation.)

Urban Commons Projects in the Global North

1. The existence of sophisticated urban commons policies through 'partner city' approaches

One of the conclusions from comparing commons project in the Global North and those of the Global South, is that a number of cities in western/northern cities have taken sophisticated turns towards participatory, sharing and commons-oriented policies. Apart from the well-known Bologna Regulation for the Care and Regeneration of the Urban Commons, not covered amongst the case studies in this report, are the examples of Seoul, centred on the creation of a citizen-led sharing economy, those of Milan, oriented towards embedding start-ups in the communities through collaborative spaces, Athens, where the mayor and vice-mayor directly support the programs, and Barcelona, with a 'common-good' inspired political coalition, which has nominated officials in charge of a 'commons-based collaborative economy'. Edinburgh has an official 'cooperative policy' with already 17 community-led cooperatives created in this framework. Naples, not covered here, as a Commissioner for the Commons. These public policies are complex arrays of regulations and institutions with financial and other forms of support, with multi-year orientations, multi-stakeholder governance, and leading to a flowering of civic and cooperative initiatives. Also of import, and cited explicitly by Dirk Holemans of Oikos for the experiences in Ghent, Belgium, is a change from

framework-based competition for funding (still very much practiced by Milan for example), to more long-term co-production of public services and policies, that are open-ended since they depend on the collaboration with, and input from, citizens.

2. In-depth and long-term integrative strategies of grassroots urban commoners

Just as surprising perhaps, is the sophistication of integrated citizen-coalitions that operate in cities where there is little or no support from city officials. These projects are equally multi-year, multi-stakeholder, and integrative. The key example here is the city of Lille in Northern France, which has created an Assembly of the Commons (linked to 9 other similar initiatives in other French cities). They rely on ‘open source third spaces’ such as collaborative run coworking and makerspaces, to work on collaborative cultures (Mutualab/Coroutine in Lille, the Footscray makerspace in Melbourne, etc.), and they pay strong attention to constantly reworked social codes and social charters, which define their inner governance but also their relations with external third parties such as government and business, in order not to be co-opted or captured by them. Lille is exemplary in that regard and its Assembly has developed sophisticated social charters to deal with these interactions. In Melbourne, the commoners have politicized even more through the creation of an Australian-wide Commons Transition Coalition. The Mutual Aid Network of Madison, Wisconsin is connected to 16 other cities and has developed sophisticated combinations of exchange and support mechanisms.

3. Combining social and ecological sustainability

The Footscray makerspace works in particular with migrant and refugee populations in poor neighbourhoods in western Melbourne, and links it to waste and upcycling. The waste management project in Malmo, Sweden, similarly is focused on integrating its migrant population. The M.A.N. of Madison, WI’s first project is creating a food cooperative for a food desert area in the city’s poorest neighbourhood. Oikos in Ghent is a social-

ecological ‘think and do thank’, which similarly looks for projects which simultaneously solve these two aspects of urban reality. The Emergent Structures project in Savannah, Georgia is especially focused on the re-use of construction and demolition waste. The insight on which these projects are based is that ecological issues disproportionally affect the poor but that solving them also creates economic and social opportunities in terms of creating local economies, jobs, skills and income.

4. The tension between horizontalist expectations and institutional governance

Quite a few projects are struggling to adapt the ‘right’ governance model, somewhere in between horizontalist aspirations and ‘vertical’ needs for institutionalization, especially those that explicitly function without much public support. The most sophisticated attempts are probably by the Assembly of the Commons in Lille which has developed an array of social charters. Jose Ramos in his report on Melbourne initiatives mentions the difficulties in cooperative governance, and Anna Seravalli of Malmo reports explicity that they had to abandon user-based governance because it self-reinforced cultural exclusion mechanisms (geeks attracting other geeks instead of a more diverse population). Most projects are moving to poly-centric governance models as already described by Elinor Ostrom. Whether bottom-up or top-down, all projects include fairly radical participatory processes as a matter of course, which points to a deep cultural shift which includes public officials.

5. The Commons as a tool for economic development

The Edinburgh city council wants to stimulate a vibrant ‘cooperative economy’; Seoul and Milan are focused on the creation of a ‘sharing’ and/or collaborative economy. Barcelona-based Fab City has the ambitious aim of relocalized 50% of food and industrial production back in the city and

its bioregions, within 50 years, centred around the creation of fabrication labs; the Evergreen Cooperative model of Cleveland, Ohio aims to use the purchasing power of ‘anchor institutions’ such as hospitals and universities, to create a thriving local economy based on local coops in the disadvantaged inner city itself and has been successful in already creating a number of them in food and laundry services. The project in Savannah is an ambitious attempt to create an economy around the recycling of construction and demolition waste. 596 Acres in NYC is moving from public spaces to the creation of locally run commercial zones through Real Estates Investment Cooperatives, and the Santaporo wireless commons aim to move towards helping local farmers accessing agricultural information that is vital for their economic function.

The common aspect of these examples is that the commons/sharing/collaboration is not just seen as a ‘nice thing to do’, but seen as vital to the creation of a new and vibrant local economy that works for all inhabitants.

2) The Commons Finance Canvas by Stephen Hinton

Info about the Commons Finance Canvas **http://canvas.avbp.net**and the PDF **https://stephenhintondotorg.files.wordpress.com/2016/12/overview_canvas.pdf**

More explanation about the workshop '**COMMONS FINANCE CANVAS: Towards a concrete commons economy'**:

*** Date**

Friday 5 May from 10 am to 4pm at Timelab.

*** Description**

Can commons projects and workers live from their efforts, and if so, how? Are there opportunities to create meaningful and sustainable work through a commons economy that can strengthen the local economy in these challenging times?

To explore this, we invite you, through the Commons Finance Canvas methodology, to explore with us in a more systematic way how your projects could look today and tomorrow.

*** Overview of the day**

Part 1: Introduction and framing

- Short introduction and framing regarding the 'commons economy' by Michel Bauwens
- Introduction to the Commons Finance Canvas by Stephen Hinton (over Skype)
- Presentation of the projects, with an emphasis on their economic

aspects

Part 2: Working with the Commons Finance Canvas

We apply the World Cafe methodology. We divide the attendees into different tables, each of which examines the different aspects of the Commons Finance Canvas.

A) Presentation phase: there is 1 project to explain the specific experience and situation surrounding each step.

B) Final phase: What are the shared lessons (sustainable work, regulations, obstacles and opportunities) from the workshop? Are there specific questions and suggestions about city policy?

3) Comparative international research and international context by Vasilis Niaros: ‘Towards a Commons-oriented City – An overview of developments in Europe’

Vasilis Niaros, Greek urbanist and international collaborator in Michel Bauwens’ P2P Foundation, was resident in Timelab for the duration of our research project and carried out comparative research into a number of international commons cities (Barcelona, Bologna and Frome) in order to position Ghent’s experiences in a broader international context.

This English-language study, entitled ‘Towards a Commons-oriented City – An overview of developments in Europe’, has helped us to refine our own analysis and is included as a separate appendix.

4) Possible follow-up projects

A) Thomas Block, Centre for Sustainable Development, UGent:

“What I think has a lot of potential is a dynamic transdisciplinary setting where urban sustainability issues can be approached from different perspectives, where the complexity of sustainability issues is recognised (i.e. no division and reduction of the issue to something that is ‘manageable’) and where transition thinking is central (a present desire for change). Not a straight-forward combination, but still a fascinating, and even necessary one.

Which is why we want to do all we can to create an Urban Academy (on ‘wicked’ socio-ecologic issues in Ghent).” See also the Wiki:

An idea is being developed within Ghent University to create a transdisciplinary setting where research, education and services come together around urban sustainability issues in the city of Ghent. Uncertainty regarding scientific facts, the presence of different normative positions, and

(consequently) the lack of correct answers are acknowledged, without falling into paralysing relativism.

The urban issues facing the city of Ghent are collectivity issues and ideally require a co-creative answer. The co-production of relevant knowledge is central to the Urban Academy. Policymakers, civil society groups, citizens' cooperatives, businesses, teachers and students work together to find out how best to formulate a problem and how to create solutions. Experiments will be organised around 'urban living labs', multiperspectivism, shifting roles of (ex-)students, teachers and civil actors, the publicising of issues, external educational spaces, student-driven learning, etc.'.

An Urban Academy could certainly take the Commons Transition Plan as one of the starting points. 'Commons' can then become the first yearly theme (2018-2019), for example, or indeed structure thinking on an ongoing basis. In concrete terms, researchers and other urban actors can jointly tackle one or more specific issues in transdisciplinary action research; students in the new subject 'Sustainable Cities' can delve deeper into specific Ghent cases through group work and master's projects; in the meantime, the Wiki can be kept alive and current (especially if the Urban Academy gets a kind of 'studio or atelier leader'); seminars and workshops can be organised to strengthen, refine or indeed broaden the social debate; etc.

And of course, knowing that the Urban Academy does not only have an academic component, but is rather a place where politicians and other policymakers, teachers and students, civil society groups and citizens, businesses and institutions, etc. think together about problem definitions, framing, solutions, strategies, experimentation, upscaling, etc.

So, co-creation and co-production."

B) Jo Lefevere, Teacher, BA Social Work, Artevelde University College:

“The emphasis is on the process of commoning, because this is mainly where the sense-making processes and the capacities of social workers lie. It is an in-depth analysis of the social constructions in commoning activities: the strategy used, the methodology followed to arrive at solidarity and support, the methodology in decision-making processes, the significance of leadership issues.

A group of 12 students can make 12 case studies provided that they are not for large-scale initiatives. Larger initiatives would be studied in groups.”

Proposal for Bachelor project:

Working title: *Urban narratives of the commons of Ghent. In search of the meaning, strategies, methodology and social organization used during the activity of commoning.*

“For this research project we use the definition by David Bollier, who updated the definition of Nobel Prize Winner Elinor Ostrom: ‘Commons are shared resources that are produced and maintained by a user community, according to their own rules and norms. This means a commons is defined by 3 aspects: 1) shared resource, 2) the activity of commoning, 3) rules and norms that must at least be partially autonomous from the public and private sector.’”

Access: Dutch and English speaking students

Working language for plenary sessions: English
Working language in small groups or professional area: Dutch (or English for the international students) Readings: a lot of information is translated in many languages - most literature is available in English. Written paper: for foreign students in English, for Dutch speaking students in Dutch.

C) Roeland Dudal, lecturer at KU Leuven, Faculty of Architecture, Sint-Lucas Ghent, initiator of the project SHARED CITY/THE CITY*THE DETAIL during SPRINGweek 17:

I will propose to the Sint-Lucas School of Architecture (possibly also in conjunction with LabLand) that they use the Commons Transition Plan for several design studios in the coming years. This way, the contacts in the commoners' network can also be kept in the loop.

Perhaps I will also have a Design Studio in the first semester at Sint-Lucas Gent. I might go with the students to NEST to work further on 'living and the commons' (based on the results of SPRINGweek17).

Yes, in fact, we'll do it. No need to make things complicated all the time ;-)"

Opening statement for 'GEDEELDE STAD' (SHARED CITY) during SPRINGweek17:

Dear student,

From 15 March 2017, the internationally respected peer-to-peer expert Michel Bauwens will lead a three-month research and participation project in Ghent on 'the commons city of the future'.

The Sint-Lucas Ghent campuses can't afford not to be a part of this. Architecture shapes the city of the future. Design creates the social spaces we share.

We would like to warmly welcome Michel Bauwens and his research team to Ghent. We would like to share our creativity to inspire, research, participate and debate on this important societal issue.

But what might that entail, a 'commons city'? How do you design space for 'common property'?

Michel Bauwens writes: The term 'commons' or 'common good' refers to goods that are managed by the community of producers, users and citizens who are affected by, or benefit from them. Commons as a new form of organisation is exemplified by a variety of initiatives based around

production and consumption with the idea of achieving a more sustainable society.

The quality of the city as a whole is determined by the quality of its smallest components. The private space and the public space. The home and the shared workplace. The city 'as a commons city of the future' is a city where people live and share. This space, for this future, will be made up of all the spaces we share. Places to live and places to share.

These will also be the foundation for a sustainable society.
Only if we can have a space to share aside from the space we own, can we do more with less space, and only then will living in the city be affordable and valuable. Full of value. Productive.

A place to live is a place of residence and consumption. A parcel of value. A property that is our own.

A shared space between two homes is a place of activity and production. A plot that yields something. A place with more value. A common good.

The design of the city of tomorrow has to be sustainable. Sustainability means sharing.
Sharing space. Sharing energy. Sharing materials. Sharing knowledge. Sharing pleasure.

SPRINGweek is sharing.
SPRINGweek is sustainable.
SPRINGweek is great.

STATEMENT

*SHARED CITY/THE CITY * THE DETAIL*
SPRINGweek 2017

The workers' housing of Ghent reinvented.

Living and sharing in the city.

— living 4m — sharing 4m —
An endless street.

A-B-A-B-A

A. Design a home that's 4 m wide.
B. Design a shared space that's 4 m wide.

Or a Rondo.

A-B-A-C-A-B-A

A. Design a home that's 4 m wide.
B. Design a 4 m wide space that can be worked in.
B. Design a 4 m wide space that can also be lived in.

Each team designs A.
In each home lives a family+: a family with three children; a couple with one parent or a dependant; a single mother with a student.

The shared space between the homes is a co-productive space. B or C. Or D.
Each team designs together with their neighbours the co-productive space. Give and take. Make public.

In the shared space something is made, something is thought up or offered. A product or a service. A product-service. Every activity, product or service should only be found once in the street. Be resourceful.

The designs will be developed into maquettes.
On a scale of 1:10. 4m = 40 cm.

The endless street will grow in the hallway.

152 teams. 152 homes.
144 shared spaces.

All together a street of 296 x 4 m.
1184 m of street = 118.4 m of hallway.

D) Matthias Lievens, Centre for Ethics, Social and Political Philosophy (OE), KU Leuven:

“A number of research groups from several Flemish universities are building a research consortium with the ambition to continue working on the Commons Transition Plan/final report by Michel Bauwens and Yurek Onzia. The consortium will also include numerous commons groups, civil society organisations and public and private actors. In a participatory process, they will help formulate the research questions, participate in the research process and think together about the concrete implications and valorisation of the findings. The research project will be submitted to the Fund for Scientific Research (FWO) within the framework of the Strategic Basic Research Programme. The ambition of the project is not only to make a scientific study of processes of commoning in Ghent, but above all to investigate the implications of the transition to the ‘commons city’ for processes of democratic participation, citizenship, diversity and justice.

The following are already confirmed:

- Oases, Department of Sociology, University of Antwerp
- Department of Geography and Tourism, Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences, KU Leuven
- RIPPLE (Research in Political Philosophy Leuven), Higher Institute of Philosophy, KU Leuven

A fourth and possibly fifth academic partner may need to be added, but I think we should sit on that consideration for the moment, until the process

of reflection and discussion on the exact focus of the project is at a more advanced stage, so that we can assemble the right expertise.”

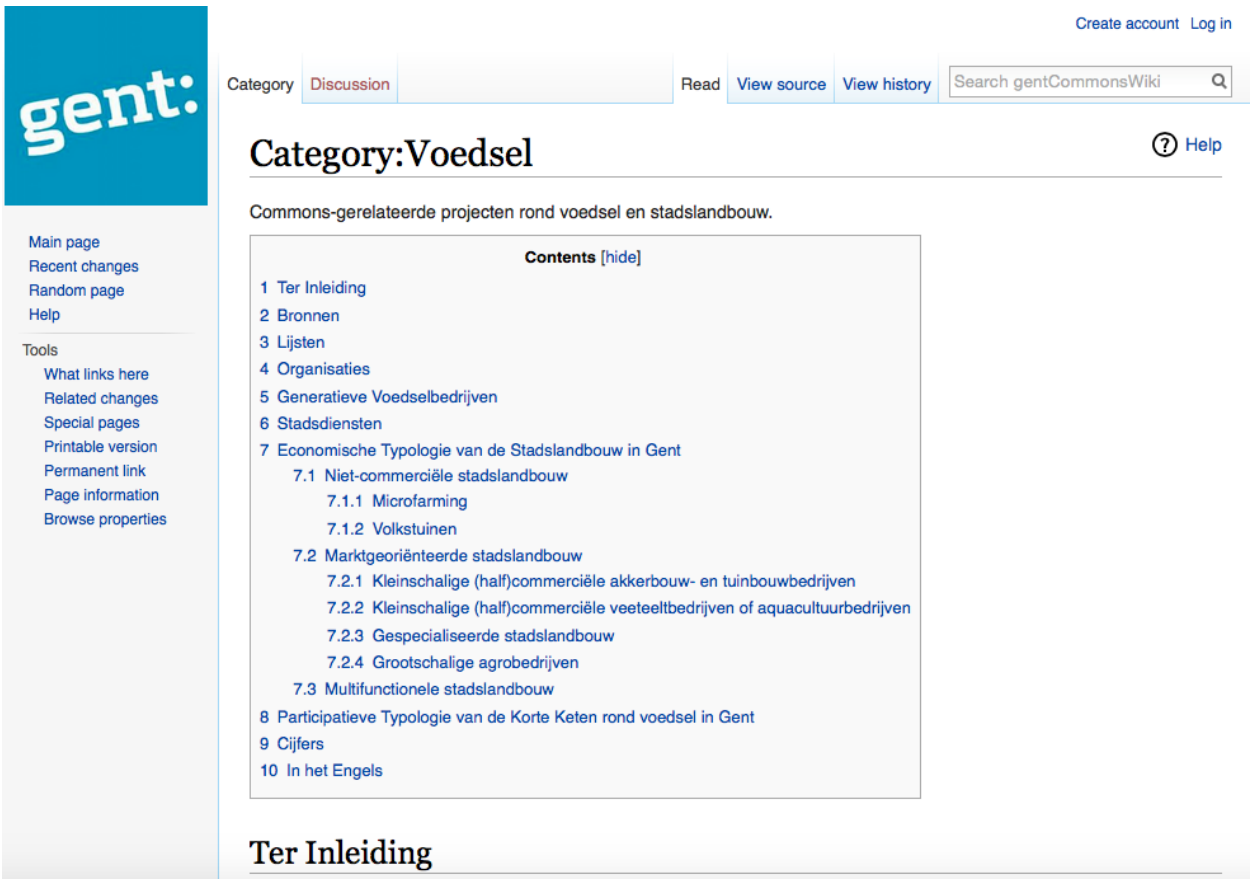
5) Mapping

The mapping of our research project is being done via an open wiki, with the main page **https://wiki.commons.gent/**

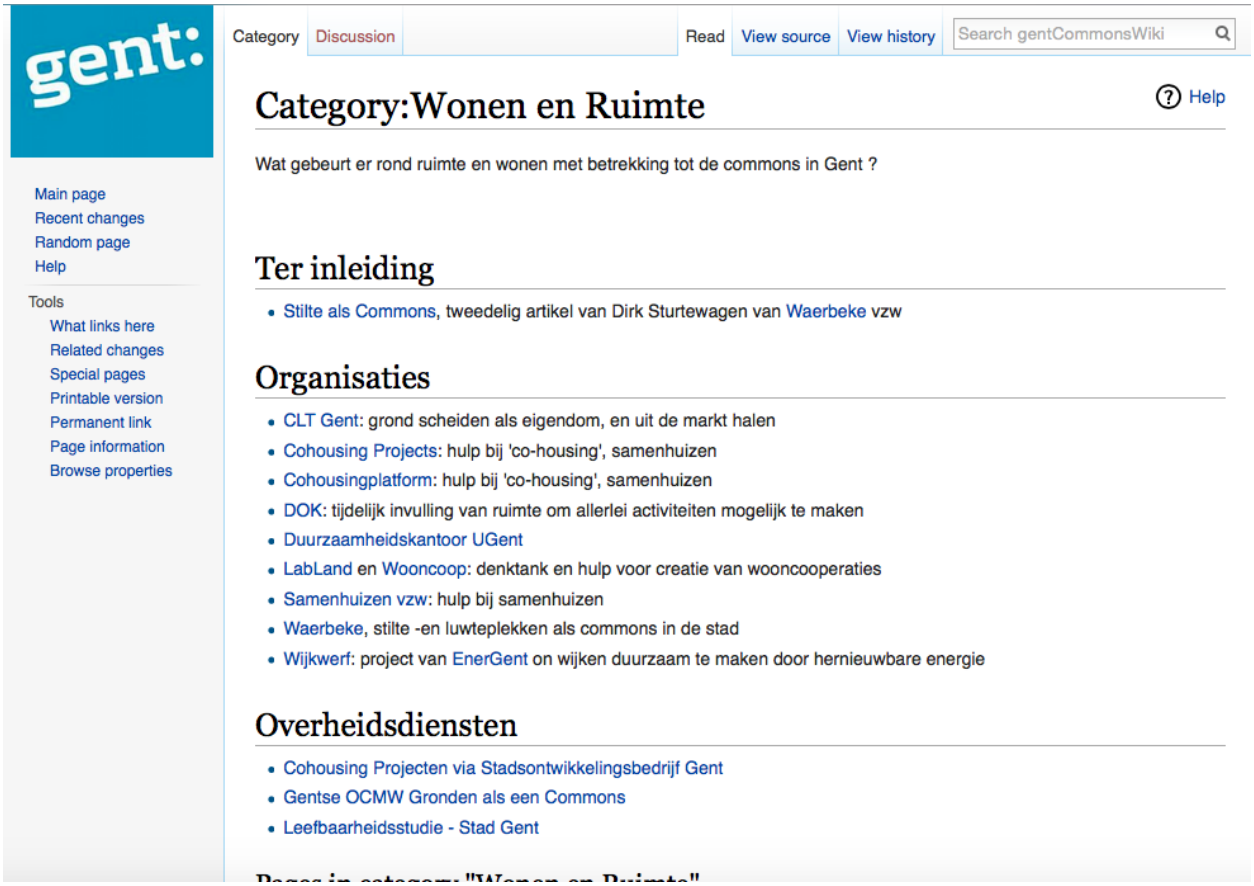
This page presents the research project (in the left column), the commons activities per sector and per district (in the middle column) – indexed by type (companies, organisations) – and additional material (in the right column).

At this point the wiki has approximately 500 project profiles, see 'All Pages'. **https://wiki.commons.gent/w/index.php?title=Special:AllPages&hideredirects=1**

A number of specific sectors have been elaborated on in more detail, with overview pages, see for example the category ‘Voedsel & Stadslandbouw’ (‘Food & Urban Agriculture’):
https://wiki.commons.gent/wiki/Category:Voedsel



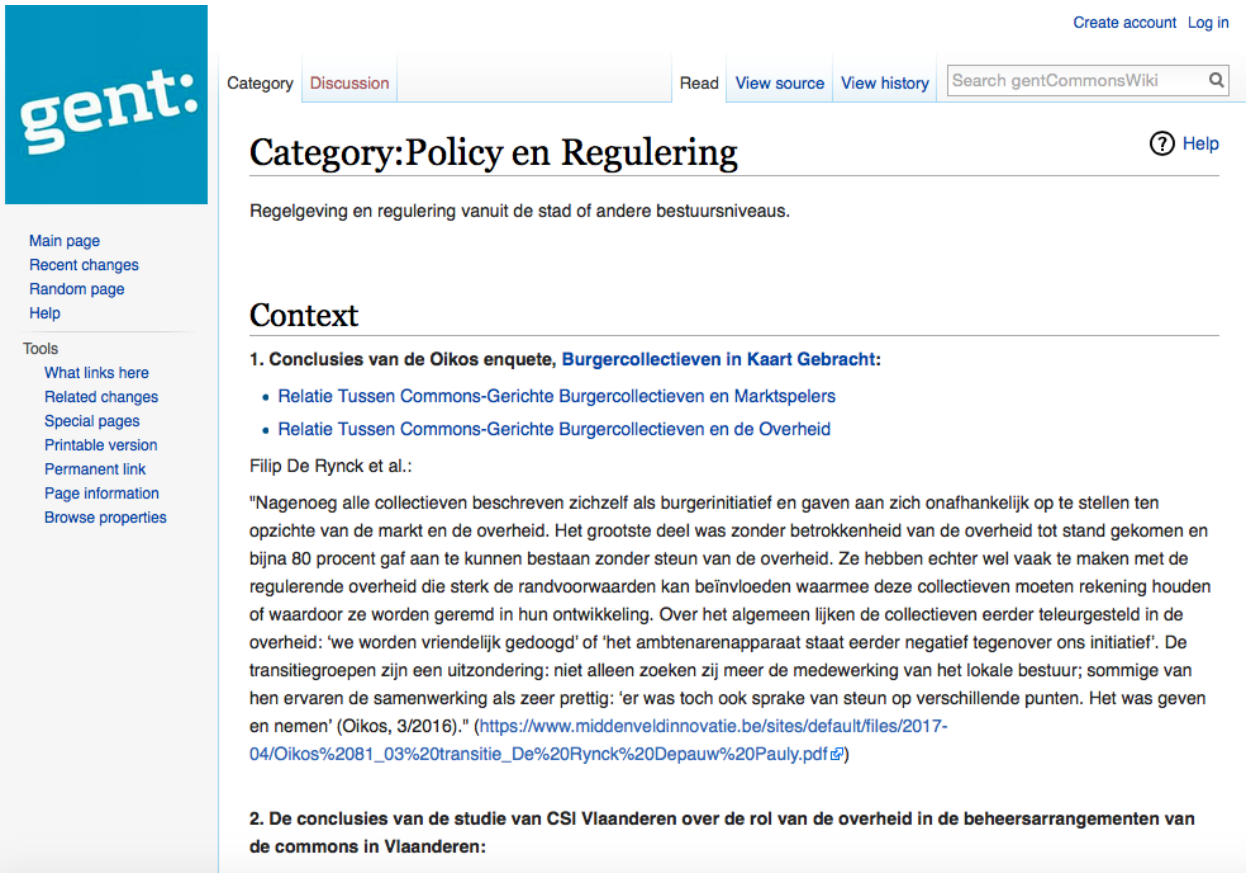
Another example is the section on ‘Wonen & Ruimte’ (‘Living & Space’), see:
https://wiki.commons.gent/wiki/Category:Wonen_en_Ruimte



There are also a number of sections regarding the city’s approach/policy, such as:

- City services that are involved with the commons:
https://wiki.commons.gent/wiki/Category:Stads_en_Overheidsdiensten

- Policy and Regulation, see:
https://wiki.commons.gent/wiki/Category:Policy_en_Regulering



- Initiatives that are to a greater or lesser extent related to city support, see:
https://wiki.commons.gent/wiki/Category:Initiatief_Stad_Gent

6) Activities with the Ghent commons actors: individual interviews

Since the start of our research project, we have also simultaneously been conducting a lot of individual interviews with people who are involved in Ghent's commons or commons-related projects, and with people who have affinity with it in one way or another or do research about it, with a view to gaining more qualitative insights.

The following is a selection from the list of our meetings over the past three months:

- John Vandaele (EnerGent/Gent Zonnestad/Buren van de Abdij)
- Nathalie Snauwaert (Het Spilvarken)
- Gene Van Gampelaere, of the new course: Network Economy at West-Flanders University College
- Karel Lootens (Wooncoop/Dégage)
- Gerbrand Nootens (Dégage/Wooncoop)
- Steven Vromman and Eva De Meyst (Labland)
- Matthias Lievens, commons researcher at KU Leuven, possible follow-up project and continued research through SBO project
- Evi Swinnen (Timelab)
- Dries Geysels (Lab van Troje/Leefstraten) (+ visit)
- Liesbeth Vlerick, DOK
- Thomas Blondeel (SMart) (+ visit)
- Geert Heyneman (city ecologist, Heynsquared/Ginderella)
- Ruud Van de Velde (Team Coordinator, Brede School Ghent)
- Jo Lefevere (Teacher, Artevelde University College)
- Rogier De Langhe (commons researcher, Professor at UGent)
- Dirk Sturtewagen and Carine De Wilde (shelters in Gent)
- Winnie Poncelet (ReaGent/Ekoli)
- Ludwig Henry (Mij Pak Je Niet In/Samentuinen DOK)
- Natan Hertogen amd Trui Maes (Community Land Trust/ Samenlevingsopbouw)

- Koen Schoors (Professor of Economics, UGent)
- Steven Vanderbeke (Maaket - manufacturing industry in Ghent)
- Gerard Hautekeur (author of the book ‘Cohousing tot Volkstuintjes’, EPO)
- Sarah Van Liefferinge (Flatpack Democracy)
- Joris Rombaut and Lieven Rombaut, Meulestee Markt (+ visit)
- Yves Bruers (doctor, preliminary discussion on ‘Health as a commons’/project ‘Gent Blue Zone’)
- Joost Bianchi, thesis ‘Mobility in Ledeberg’ (TU Delft)

Roeland Dudal (teacher in the Department of Architecture at Sint-Lucas Ghent Campus, KUL/Architecture Workroom in connection with the student project on the commons + a possible follow-up project) & delegation of students (+ visit)

- Dirk Holemans (commons researcher, Oikos)
- Joksie Biesemans (GROEnTEN uit Gent, Buurderij DOK)
- Pascal Debruyne, Driemasterpark (+ visit)
- Yves De Weerdt, VITO
- Sofie Deberdt, Samenhuizen vzw (for East and West Flanders)
- Jef Geldof, farmer’s markets/ViaduKaduk
- Simon Luyts, thesis ‘Energy cooperatives/REScoops’, with cases including EnerGent (KU Leuven/University of Stockholm)
- Geert Sturtewagen (agricultural engineer, preliminary discussion on the project ‘Care and spirituality & de commons’)
- Peter Bosmans, Febecoop
- Pieter Baert and Lieven De Coninck, Zwerfgoed vzw
- Bernadette Van de Catsije, Boerenhof (+ visit)
- Sander Van Parijs, Muntuit/City collective GURBS
- Jamila Channouf, Mehdi Marechal and Ahmed El Bachiri, De Gentse Lente + Astrid Vanackere, In-Gent
- Raf Verbeke, Sint-Amandsberg farmer’s market
- Katriina Kilpi (Commons & Nature and Health)
- Marieke De Munck, artistic director for City & Transition, Vooruit Cultural Centre and organiser of Blauwdruk / City & Transition series + team (+ visit)
- Raimi Möller, Timelab/Gent M

- An Van Damme & Annette Kuhk, De Landgenoten
- Jeroen Watté en Patrick De Ceuster, Wervel vzw/Lunch met LEF (+ visit)
- Dominique Nalpas, Régis Ursini and Verena Lenna, Commons Josaphat Brussels
- Maia Dereva, Christian Mahieu, Christian Dupuy, Simon Sarazzin and Julien Lecaille, Assemblée des Communs, Rijsel
- Dries Van Ransbeeck, Open Knowledge Belgium
- Cathérine Willems, Future Footwear Foundation/KASK HoGent
- Jef Seghers and Wiebe Moerman, De Koer (+ visit)
- Rien Bauwens, Jaagbaar
- Filip De Rynck, Raf Pauly and Rogier De Langhe, commons researchers UGent
- Marie-Claire Van de Velde, advisor to Vice Rector, UGent
- Dieter Cuypers, Buurzame Stroom
- Inez Louwagie, Netwerk Bewust Verbruiken
- Lieven d'Hondt, Wij Delen/Peerby/Op Wielekes/Timelab
- Danielle van Zuijlen, Pilootco, (Tondelier/Rabot) (+ visit)
- Lut Vael and Dimitri Vandenberghe, Samenlevingsopbouw
- Agnes Pauwels, Genster
- Frank Bombeke, cooperative De Landgenoten/GentBlogt
- Heleen De Smet and Mart Vermeersch, Co-Vibes (project 'The Young Vibes')
- Geert Vandermeersche, Timelab/UGent (culture and education)
- Pieter Van den Broeck, KU Leuven, INDIGO project and country as commons
- Benny Van de Velde, organic farmer, Gent en Garde/Workgroup on urban agriculture
- Yasmine Bayoudth ('Education as Commons')
- Julie Vermassen, intern for Netwerk bewust Verbruiken, student at Hogeschool Gent
- Thomas Block, Centre for Sustainable Development/Think and do tank on Transition, UGent

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89 individuals

7) Meetings and conversations with the various city services involved in the commons

- First meeting of the guidance group, Ghent City Hall - presentation of the various steps + framing research, 22 March, 2017

- Meeting regarding the communication related to our research project ‘Ghent as a Commons City of the Future’, with Annelore Raman and Tom Broeks, AC Portus, 24 March, 2017

- Meeting with Foresight Cel of Digipolis, with Martine Delannoy, Joris Wauters and Pieter-Jan Pauwels, AC Portus, 3 April, 2017

- Meeting with Policy Participation Service with Marc Verheirstraeten, AC Portus, April 3, 2017

- Meeting with the Economy Service, with Annemie De Tremmerie, Matthias Van Wyngaerden, Saskia Westerduin (Ministry of Makers) and Adinda Baro, AC Portus, 3 April, 2017

- Meeting with Data and Information Service, with Bart Rousseau and Thimo Thoeye, AC Portus, 3 April, 2017

- Meeting with Els De Leeuw - Director of the Economy Service, Ghent City Hall, 11 April, 2017

- Meeting with Ruud Van Velde - Education Service, Team Coordinator of Brede School Ghent, Ghent City Hall, 11 April, 2017

- Interview with Mayor Daniël Termont, councillor Tine Heyse and councillor Christophe Peeters, Ghent City Hall, 13 April 2017

- Meeting with Stefan Van Hove (Director of the Meeting and Connecting Service) and Bieke Dobbelaere (Welfare and Equal Opportunities Service), AC Portus, Wednesday 18 April, 2017

- Meeting with Emma Tytgadt (Refill Project, Temporary Use), AC Portus, Wednesday 18 April, 2017

- Meeting with Jorn Verbeeck (Director of the Environment and Climate Service), Katrien Verbeke and Sofie Van Moeffaert, AC Portus, Wednesday 18 April, 2017

- Meeting following cooperation between Ghent and New York – Sharing Cities Sumit, with Karl-Filip Coenegrachts, Annelore Raman and Brecht Lootens (Matthias De Clercq Cabinet), AC Portus, 20 April, 2017

- Meeting with Tom Broeks and Thimo Thoeye, discussion of the possibilities for visualization of the mapping, AC Portus, April 26, 2017

- Consultation with guidance group, Ghent City Hall – presentation Wiki + state of affairs regarding research, 16 May 2017

- Meeting with Bram Ghyoot (Culture Service) & team, Ghent City Hall, May 16, 2017

- Meeting with Mieke Schauvliege (Director of the Green Service), in connection with citizens' initiatives regarding the management of public space, Ghent City Hall, 16 May 2017

- Meeting with Els Lecompte (Director of the Policy Participation Service) and the district directors of Ghent, AC Portus, 23 May 2017

- Meeting with Mayor Daniël Termont and team & Karl-Filip Coenegrachts and Annelore Raman (Strategic Coordination Service), Ghent City Hall, Tuesday 30 May 2017

- Consultation with guidance group, presentation of preliminary conclusions of the Commons Transition Plan, Ghent Town Hall, Friday 2 June 2017

- Meeting with Mario Matthys (project leader of 'Ghent 3D team', in relation to development of 3D city game together with citizens), Ghent City Hall, Friday 2 June 2017

- Presentation of the Commons Transition Plan to the city council management team, Ghent City Hall, Friday 9 June 2017

- Lecture on the Commons Transition Plan at open co-creation and meeting place De Koer vzw (Brugse Poort), Sunday 11 June 2017

- Press conference on the Commons Transition Plan for press and public, NEST, KIP Chamber, Monday 12 June 2017

- Meeting with city team Smart Cities and Co-creation under management of Els Lecompte, Head of Policy Participation Service, and Karl-Filip Coenegracht, coordinator for Strategic Coordination Service & learning network Het Nieuwe Stadmaken – Cities in

Transition, Pakhuis De Zwijger (Amsterdam), Gioventu Aperitivo, Dampoortstraat, Thursday 15 June 2017

- In-depth discussion evening for Ghent citizens and commoners about COMMONS TRANSITION PLAN, hostel MACHARIUS, Thursday 15 June 2017 – interview and moderation by John Vandaele (MO* magazine)

8) Qualitative survey based on the questionnaire

After the first distribution of a qualitative questionnaire to more than 110 unique respondents and their projects, some 70 respondents returned a completed list, which is a particularly successful percentage for such an extensive and in-depth survey.

This survey revealed a number of interesting trends, as reflected in the automatic report of these answers.

See also:

link to the questionnaire: **https://timelab.typeform.com/to/cKn7gl**

9) Activities with the Ghent commons actors: Commonstalks @ Timelab

In addition to the questionnaire, our commonstalks/workshops – organised in partnership with TIMELAB with representatives from commons initiatives for each sector – also make up part of our qualitative survey.

Small reports were made for most of the workshops, which were also published on our project blog, see: http://www.commons.gent/

1 - Commonstalk ‘Will Ruddick - Community currencies and the commons’ – 22 MARCH 2017

http://www.commons.gent/single-post/2017/03/30/Will-Ruddick-toont-aan-hoe-community-munten-bijdragen-tot-een-grotere-gelijkheid-tussen-de-leden

2 - Commonstalk ‘How inclusive are the commons, actually?’ – 31 MARCH 2017

http://www.commons.gent/single-post/2017/04/01/Hoe-inclusief-zijn-commons-eigenlijk

3 - Commonstalk ‘Food provision in the city & commons’ – 14 APRIL 2017

http://www.commons.gent/single-post/2017/04/21/Voedselvoorziening-als-commons

4 - Commonstalk ‘Living & Architecture’ – 21 APRIL 2017

5 - Commonstalk ‘Education & Un-learning’ – 28 APRIL 2017

6 - Commonstalk ‘Health & the Commons’ – 3
MAY 2017

7 - Workshop ‘Commons Finance Canvas – an economic and financial model for the commons’ – 5 MAY 2017

8 - Commonstalk ‘Art & (Un)Commons’ – 14 MAY 2017
(MSK)

10) Ghent commoner of the day

Under the name ‘Ghent commoner of the day’, we also producer a series of short videos with some of Ghent’s commons actors. You can view a number of examples via the link below.

See:

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC3lSAL7UYB02zUKaBulT7tQ

11) Interviews with the mayor and councillors

We also carried out a number of interviews with representatives of the City of Ghent.

See:

- Video-interview with Mayor DANIËL TERMONT on ‘GHENT AS A COMMONS CITY OF THE FUTURE’:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AxS7PeQNVeo

- Video-interview with councillor TINE HEYSE (appointed for Environment, Climate, Energy and North-South) on ‘GHENT AS A COMMONS CITY OF THE FUTURE’:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=me8We4MNVA8&feature=youtu.be

- Video-interview with councillor CHRISTOPHE PEETERS (appointed for Finances, Festivities, Civil Society and Innovation) on ‘GHENT AS A COMMONS CITY OF THE FUTURE’:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tWMK0p6gsUQ

12) Facebook group ‘GENT ALS COMMONSSTAD VAN DE TOEKOMST’

At the start of our research project on 15 MARCH 2017, we created a Facebook group called ‘Gent als Commonsstad van de Toekomst’ (‘Ghent as a Commons City of the Future’) to create a community and encourage interaction around our research, and to share information, news, activities, announcements and inspiration.

This group sees a lot of traffic and enjoys a lot of interest from the commoners and involved citizens both inside and outside of Ghent, and currently has more than 1,280 members.

See: **https://www.facebook.com/groups/377840999264970/?fref=ts**