



## **Commons Transition Plan for the City of Sydney Sydney Commons Lab**

**Version 1 August 2019**

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### References

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## **Acknowledgements**

In accordance with Bauwens and Onzia's (2017) recognition that 'the success of the individual genius depends on the collective ability to create a fertile ground,' we wish to acknowledge the many players that were pivotal to the 'non-linear' emergence of this Plan.

The New Economy Network Australia, which formed in 2016, and Mercury Cooperative, have played key roles in connecting commons actors and in inspiring commons initiatives in recent years. The Sharing Map Sydney (n.d.) initiated a general mapping exercise in early 2018 with the aim of locating key local stakeholders and projects that could be working towards 'commons' objectives. Additionally, the Sydney launch of the book 'Sharing Cities: Activating the Urban Commons' (Shareable, 2018) occurred in early 2018, which brought together numerous commons-oriented actors across the City of Sydney.

Following on from these occurrences, a series of 'Commons' events were organised in late 2018, centred around Michel Bauwens thought-provoking work, and organised by social change consultants InCollaboration, and supported by the UTS Centre for Business and Social Innovation, Mercury Co-op and Start Some Good (InCollaboration, 2018).

Following on from these 'Commons' events, Councillor Jess Scully organised a Roundtable and invited event participants, interested academics and City of Sydney staff to discuss the progression of commons initiatives in Sydney. The interest from the Roundtable encouraged InCollaboration to progress a Sydney Commons Lab (SCL), which aims to support and promote commons initiatives by developing working models for policies, inspiring new initiatives and linking both with shared ideas, resources and energy (InCollaboration, n.d.).

InCollaboration took on the role of lead catalysing organisation for the SCL whilst collaborating with numerous commons-oriented organisations, including Sydney Policy Lab - Sydney University, University of NSW - Faculty of Law, University of Technology Sydney - Centre for Business and Social Innovation, The Sharing Tree, Sharing Map, New Economy Network Australia, Foodlab Sydney, P2P Foundation, Social Surplus, Mercury Coop, The Grove, Incubator Coop, Pre-Power, StartSomeGood, Shelter NSW, Urban Apostles and Co:Lab4.

The Sydney Commons Transition Plan is a foundational focus for the SCL. The Plan has been developed in dialogue with SCL members and co-authored by Jodie Hampson, Inka Santala, Monique Potts, Tirrania Suhood and Bronwen Morgan, with research assistance from Deborah Hartstein and Shavin Wijeyaratne. Work on the Plan has benefited from the support of the Allens Hub for Technology, Law and Innovation. It has also benefited by cooperating with the "Sharing Cities" research project, a continuing PhD research project exploring communal sharing as a form of 'commoning' within the City of Sydney. The findings of the "Sharing Cities" research project will further contribute to this ongoing Plan in the near future.

Finally, we are grateful for the generosity and contribution of numerous local and international commoners, including those listed in the references section, and the many that have remained anonymous.

## Executive Summary

On a planet facing rapid environmental destruction and in societies confronting constant social and economic challenges, cities can factor significantly into both problems and solutions. With small governments and localised interests, cities are capable of moving faster and more creatively than nations – but they are also the level at which social and economic challenges can take root and spread. The City of Sydney has observed these kinds of problems – food insecurity; income inequality; a lack of community; disempowerment among residents – in its own research (including Sustainable Sydney 2050 planning endeavours).

This document outlines the Sydney Commons Lab’s (SCL) ‘Sydney Commons Transition Plan’ as one possible path toward change. ‘Commons’ initiatives (defined in Part 2) are aimed at overcoming pressing modern challenges by providing an alternative to the motives and structures of a global market that often prioritises profit over social and environmental well-being. A profit and competition-based system disenfranchises people from their natural urge to cooperate with one another for meeting everyday needs; which is a necessary prerequisite for long-term sustainable change. As an alternative, this Plan looks beyond the mainstream market economy, promoting the study and support of changes that can improve social cohesion and connection; empower residents and communities; incentivise new and innovative projects; maintain and improve inclusivity and access to resources; and ensure that all of this is done in a sustainable way.

In the plan, opportunities and potential benefits for the City of Sydney are identified under three main headings:

1. **Social** – including neighbourhood and community cohesion, inclusion and connection; improving community members’ individual skills and confidence; developing community resilience and autonomy; turning passive ‘consumers’ into ‘contributors’;
2. **Environmental** – including the sharing and maximising utility of resources and food; and developing community level ‘stewardship’ norms for managing resources and associated environmental benefit;
3. **Economic** – including local economy benefits (new regenerative business models and approaches to creating meaningful livelihoods); economic resilience; and peer-to-peer arrangements for reduced-cost goods and services.

The Plan draws on multiple resources as well as original empirical research in developing its recommendations and principles. Part 3 of this empirical research identifies and examines, via documentary resource analysis and interviews, four existing Sydney based commons-oriented initiatives as ‘prototypes’ for further exploration. These prototypes – looking at food, energy and other community resource-sharing activities – identify the areas of need and the immense potential and benefit of such initiatives. By recognising and examining these prototypes, the potential for amplifying their positive impacts through a concerted and supported commons movement is evident.

In Part 4, commons-oriented initiatives across the City of Sydney are examined more broadly, through an online questionnaire and interviews. This examination identifies numerous themes for commons-oriented initiatives, including a disconnection from ‘traditional’ sources of funding, such as government and venture capital; difficulties in competing within profit-driven markets; the lack of a developed ‘commons-oriented sector’ ecosystem; a disconnection between levels of government on commons issues; and a lack of community awareness regarding the role of local government in enabling commons-oriented initiatives and a broader commons movement.



Discussed in detail in the Plan, this support for commons-oriented initiatives might include assisting organisational financial viability, and participant livelihood needs, and their ability to function within a competition-oriented market; logistical assistance, like providing space and infrastructure, recognising the initiatives' contributory and collaborative character; and policy/regulation efforts. The international case studies identified in Part 6 further demonstrates this support in practice, by highlighting the concrete approaches local government have taken in support of the commons in Seoul, Bologna and Barcelona. Additional research asked broader questions from an international perspective, including interviews with international commons leaders and policy-makers and case-studies of commons-oriented initiatives, infrastructure and policy in cities in Europe and Asia.

From this empirical and original research, five strategy directions and eight specific policy developments (see Part 5) are recommended for inclusion in the Sustainable Sydney 2050 plan. These strategy directions and policy recommendations will also assist in directing the activities of the SCL.

**Recommended Strategy Directions:**

1. *Create a coherent policy framework to support the growth of a commons ecosystem*
2. *Prioritise commons-oriented projects and localised community wealth building*
3. *Open public resources*
4. *Act as a broker between established organisations and the grassroots*
5. *Collaborate with other councils to advocate for change*

**Policy Recommendations:**

1. *Advocate for non-commercial finance loans*
2. *Offer a suite of commons-oriented capacity building workshops*
3. *Create an inventory of civic assets for use and make underutilized spaces available*
4. *Enable communal sharing, including education programs*
5. *Provide technical support and research funding*
6. *Provide entrepreneurship support and participative tools*
7. *Support two specific commons-oriented pilot projects*
8. *Support the development of a commons network.*

## **Part 1: Introduction**

### **A Commons Vision for the City of Sydney:**

The commons is a story of reclamation, restoration and personal and collective empowerment, within a context of major challenges. This context includes a problem so immense, uncertain and complex, it threatens the loss of what we truly value. Global warming will result in dwindling biodiversity, fisheries and dying rivers and forests; the poverty of billions; joblessness and despair for many; hopelessness for our youth; and the suffering of those dispossessed of land and livelihood. The commons rejects the ‘normalised’ competition-based exploitative global market, where profit is prioritised over life, and puts forward a new story of solidarity through a growing global movement of innovative grassroots collaborations.

Gorenflo (2018: 39) frames the challenge and opportunity for the City of Sydney, as a city centre, perfectly, where he states:

“Cities are simultaneously leading us toward and away from the brink of extinction. They are rising faster than nations to meet global challenges like climate change – at the same time they are the key drivers of such systemic problems. We live in a new age of cities, the cradles of civilizations and arguably our species’ most important and durable social innovation.... We must decide together what kind of cities we want to live in and what kind of people we want to become...How can we turn cities from impersonal engines of destruction into intimate communities of transformation?”

As a commercial centre and global metropolitan city, Sydney is brimming with potential wealth. However, due to a highly transient urban population and constantly rising living expenses, it is also a city marked by various economic and social challenges. These challenges include a lack of community feel and trust between residents, rising inequalities, food insecurity and housing affordability issues.

According to the Sydney-based ‘Sharing Cities’<sup>1</sup> research, some of the priority issues include:

1. How to support social cohesion and create a sense of connection in a rapidly changing and transient urban community?
2. How to empower city residents to become active and develop new skills to create more capable and resourceful local communities?
3. How to incentivise community projects in a risk averse and highly regulated environment?
4. How to make sure the city remains inclusive to all city residents?

Supporting and enabling community-led initiatives assists in addressing some of these challenges, in bringing about more opportunities for shared management of land, food systems and other resources for greater fairness, equity, equality and to address our environmental crises.

Currently, the Community Wellbeing Indicators Report (2016) shows an increase in income inequality and food insecurity amongst Sydney residents. Also the sense of community seems to be deteriorating as more and more people feel that they cannot trust their neighbours or fellow community members, despite the willingness to help

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<sup>1</sup> 1. The ‘Sharing Cities: new strategies for communal sharing’ is an ongoing PhD research project conducted by Inka Santala from the University of Wollongong. The research explores community-

others having actually increased. Residents increasingly feel they do not have enough opportunities to participate in local activities, whilst the number of actively engaged citizens keeps decreasing at the same time. Dissatisfaction with democracy, together with feelings of disempowerment and a sense of disconnection from the city's decision-making processes, show there is much to improve in terms of building social capital and connection within the city.

Early findings from the Sustainable Sydney 2050 community engagement process stress residents' desire for a supportive and inclusive urban community that enables participatory decision-making (Astrolabe Group, 2019). These findings demonstrate the growing need for local government to collaborate with community in the co-creation of solutions for the common good. Moreover, residents expressed a need to foster creative practices and experiments in public spaces. These initial Sustainable Sydney 2050 consultation sentiments were perfectly summarised in the following statement:

“A future community that is socially connected and embraces a way of living that is about sharing of spaces, resources and knowledge was an ideal that many were excited about and was important for the future city.” (Astrolabe Group, 2019: 16)

The commons is not new – the commons is as old as the human race, with social collaboration rooted in custom and history. We have much to learn from our Aboriginal ancestors as ‘custodians of the land’ where social relationships are based on principles of reciprocity and mutual respect. Work such as Dr Emma Lee’s brings these strengths into the modern context, where cultural assets such as kinship and reciprocity are forging new ways for developing shared futures (Lee, 2019). In the mainstream market, however, the commons as a social practice has long lived in the margins of our culture. It is growing as “the impulse to cooperate and share is arguably hard-wired into the human species as the basis for our evolutionary success” (Bollier, 2010). This is in contrast to an astounding vision that positions the individual as predominantly self interested and driven to maximise his/her material wealth through the market regardless of the social or environmental costs (Bollier, 2010).

In accordance with this community-led strengths based vision, a group of local advocates and researchers are working together, as the Sydney Commons Lab, to contribute to more citizen-centric urban development as well as sustainable and socially just alternatives within the current economic system. One of these contributions is the development of a Sydney Commons Transition Plan (‘the Plan’).

## **Part 2: Commons Transition Plan Foundations**

### **A) Aims of the Plan:**

Whilst the initial phase of the plan is viewed as a ‘conversation-starter,’ the longer-term aims of this ongoing piece of work are to:

- Work as a discussion paper that draws attention to the growing ‘commons’ social movement and its implications at the local level;
- Research and identify the needs and challenges of community and citizen led initiatives;
- Propose a collaborative strategy with active stakeholders, including local government, business, educational institutions and civic society groups, to support these initiatives in a coordinated way;
- Frame a long-term collaborative strategy for building capacity and resourcing for commons-based and regenerative local economies in line with Sustainable Sydney 2050 plans, and;
- Act as a practical toolkit, proposing concrete strategy directions and policy frameworks for local government as it considers pathways to sustainable Sydney in 2050.

The Plan provides a foundation for further identifying and exploring the commons ecosystem in Sydney, highlighting some of the most progressive local commons-oriented prototype case studies. The plan will also recommend potential opportunities for supporting and expanding the commons ecosystem, including strategy directions for local government. The findings draw from feedback gathered directly from 25 commons-oriented initiatives across the City of Sydney, as well as an overview of key international examples of ‘pro-commons’ infrastructure developed at local government level.

While the findings presented in the Plan will assist the Sydney Commons Lab in their planning endeavours, it is also hoped that the Plan will assist Sydney City administration in recognising the value and potential of common-oriented initiatives, and in identifying ways in which these initiatives could be further enabled and supported.

### **B) What are the Commons?**

In defining the commons, we will start by recognising that in the City of Sydney context, the commons movement is in its early stages, and as such, we recognise that it would be counter-productive to provide rigid commons definitions or criteria for identifying commons-oriented initiatives.

We see the commons as part of a broader movement and dialogue that encompasses sharing cities, co-production, the solidarity economy and a large and diverse scope of other endeavours, all with the objective of contributing to sustainability and collective wealth.

These endeavours capture a ‘spirit’ within uncertain boundaries, and the commons adds to this broader movement by providing a political economy perspective. The commons consists of three main elements:

- 1) A particular community;
- 2) A particular resource, and;
- 3) The rules and negotiations the community develops to collectively manage it (with special regard for equitable access, use and sustainability) (Bollier, 2010).



Monbiot (2019) expands on the commons as a method of democratic local participatory organising:

“A common can't be sold, it can't be given away, and its benefits are shared equally among the members of the community.

Representative democracy should be tempered by participatory democracy so that we can refine our political choices, and that choice should be exercised as much as possible at the local level. If something can be decided locally, it shouldn't be determined nationally. And I call all this the politics of belonging.”

Other important elements for ‘commons’ development include:

- Cross-sector partnerships across business, government and civic society;
- Whole systems thinking and ecosystem building, and;
- Place-based approaches that are decentralised, but networked and can be replicated elsewhere.

Moreover, this plan is based on the following commons-oriented principles:

- Open accessibility and solidarity;
- Shared prosperity over private ownership;
- Productive activity and practical community developed solutions;
- Restoration over transaction;
- Local control and global cooperation, and;
- Participatory over representative democracy.

The commons, similar to the social enterprise model, advances community benefit by focusing on an economic, social and/or environmental mission. However, the commons differ to the traditional social enterprise model by advancing ‘value creation’ through cooperation. This cooperation involves the pooling or mutualisation of resources, where resource access is prioritised over ownership, and a ‘contributory’ culture where individuals are no longer a producer or consumer or a passive recipient of government services, but an active agent in contributing to society.

Commons-oriented initiatives are in contrast to traditional scholarly and public representations of the ‘sharing economy’, which is often positioned as technological and capital-centric, including data-driven ‘smart’ cities. In contrast, commons-oriented initiatives encourage State-Private-Community collaborative partnerships in the management of resources.

As a component of these shared resource management partnerships, and in support of greater local prosperity and stability, commons advocates emphasise the need for increased community ownership over capital and resources, including current public and private arrangements. This may occur across a number of governance forms, including cooperatives, employee-owned companies, social enterprise, land trusts, municipal enterprise, community development financial institutions, community banks etc (Democracy Collaborative, 2019). It is recognised that a hybrid of formal and informal arrangements currently exist in the exploration of the commons and this plan aims to emphasise and learn from these diverse scenarios.

Commons-oriented initiatives can contribute to a:

- **Generative economy**, where commoners can make a living by supporting the commons through peer to peer production value creation involving open, voluntary contributions and “massive mutual

coordination” (Michel Bauwens, in Berkman Klein Center for Internet and Society, 2016)

- **Social infrastructure**, where highly accessible and inclusive co-production activities embedded into the fabric of everyday life builds participation and collaboration as the ‘norm’.

This plan draws on the experiments and successes of numerous commons-oriented activities across Sydney, including both generative economy and social infrastructure focused initiatives. The four prototypes (see Part 3) discussed in the plan include the Inner West Tool Library (Equipment), Crop Swap Sydney (Food), Food Lab Sydney (Food and Employment) and Pingala Cooperative (Energy).

These prototypes assist in demonstrating what may be possible on a broader scale if the commons were better supported legally and administratively. The international case studies in Part 6 further reveal how commons supportive legal and administrative tools are helping to re-organise neighbourhoods into inspiring and exciting places to live, where community is mobilised and systematised in regards to its natural sources of peer-to-peer learning. The road to our joined prosperous future is not just via wind turbines and solar panels, but through the reclamation and restoration of how we relate to one another and depend on one each-other for our livelihood, our health, our security and our habitats. Growing commons initiatives increases communities working together, the sharing of resources and new possibilities for shared ownership and increased local wealth.

### **C) Potential Impacts of the Commons:**

A growing body of research is now available from cities across Europe, the United States and the United Kingdom where commons-oriented initiatives are contributing to the social and economic capital of the cities and surrounding districts (Co-Cities, n.d.; P2P Foundation, 2018). This research has studied the distributive justice potential of partnerships between defined classes of actors (‘social innovators (ie. active citizens, city makers, community gardeners etc), public authorities, businesses, civil society organisations, and knowledge institutions (ie. schools, universities, cultural institutions)’); specific outcomes have included ‘social innovation in urban welfare provision, spurring collaborative economies ..., [and] promoting inclusive urban regeneration of blighted areas’ (P2P Foundation, 2018). Additionally, commons-oriented initiatives, as well as the decentralisation and localisation of economic activity and resource exchange characterising these initiatives, are increasing the resilience of these cities, including their ability to adapt to significant economic downturns (100 Resilient Cities, 2019).

Forming an important methodological resource, the ‘Co-Cities Index’ has been developed as an evaluation and measurement tool to enable cities to measure the impact of the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as well as the New Urban Agenda and the European Urban Agenda in cities around the world. Using this index, cities and administrators can start to measure and compare the implementation of collaborative community-based projects and the outcomes of sustainable urban development (P2P Foundation, 2018).

Drawing on this international research and commoning practice in other global cities, the following potential benefits and opportunities have been identified as most relevant to the City of Sydney:

#### **Social**

- Bringing together neighbourhoods and community to create a sense of belonging and connection resulting in improved social inclusion and wellbeing

- Engaging community in projects to improve their local environment. For example, looking after a local park or creating a park on unused land, improving the amenities and aesthetics of the local town centre shopping area
- Building skills, capacity and confidence of community members to organise and undertake work required
- Developing a greater sense of autonomy through the experience of self-organising and building community capacity to respond to crises
- Shifting sense of agency from being a ‘consumer’ of local services to being a ‘contributor’
- Building transnational and transglobal networks of practitioners, entrepreneurs and institutions learning and sharing best practice in commons-based activities. For example, models of temporary use, peer to peer energy networks and local waste management.

### **Environmental**

- Sharing resources, for example in food coops or peer-to-peer energy networks, to save resources and reduce waste
- Increasing awareness of the shared responsibility of citizens, and developing a sense of ‘common stewarding’, for the upkeep and maintenance of parks and common areas has been found to improve the overall care for the environment
- Reducing food miles and supply chains through locally based resource production and exchange eg. food cooperatives
- Mutualising the use of physical resources, services and projects helps expand services and products at a much lower ecological (thermodynamic) cost.

### **Economic**

- Building stronger local economy and keeping money and resources within local communities
- Increasing economic resilience due to localisation and the decentralisation of services and resources provision
- Reducing cost of service and resource provision through local peer to peer networks
- Stimulating more ‘generative’ market forms and integrating values such as sustainability and knowledge sharing
- Mutualisation of infrastructure and a more inclusive distribution of economic value
- Providing local jobs for local people, addressing issues of unemployment and underemployment.

## **D) Research Overview:**

The following outlines the methodologies, the findings of which are found in section 5. As part of the research for the Plan, the authors utilised a range of research methodologies, including:

- Online questionnaires with local commons-oriented initiatives;
- Interviews with local commons-oriented initiatives;
- Case studies of international commons infrastructure and policy, and;
- Interviews with international commons-oriented thought leaders.

The Plan is based on a participatory action research (PAR) approach, involving:

- participants and researchers are working together to understand the challenges and propose solutions;

- a social change approach that promotes democracy (contributory, rather than representative democracy in this case) and confronts inequality, and;
- an ongoing process of research, action, reflection and imaginative inquiry.

Moreover, the PAR approach complements the exploratory nature of commons-oriented initiatives, in their critical enquiry of the mainstream economic system and associated assumptions and hypotheses. Additionally, the PAR approach advocates for hypotheses being ‘well-grounded, over time, from deep and engaged involvement in the field being studied’ and ‘it aims to be active co-research, by and for those to be helped’ (Wadsworth, 1998). In accordance with the PAR approach, this Plan involves ongoing co-created works.

In terms of engagement, the SCL, as a group of local commons advocates and researchers, acted as the key decision-making mechanism for the development of the Plan, meeting on a fortnightly basis throughout the process. Moreover, anchoring the Plan to the varying commons initiatives and actors within this group allowed us to:

- i) take advantage of the commons networks and knowledge of the group for increased engagement with the Plan, and;
- ii) enable the inclusion of the more informal ‘peer to peer’ commons discourse occurring amongst and through the Sydney Commons Lab network.

The work began with identifying existing commons-oriented initiatives, by utilising existing resources and analysing publicly available online databases such as the Sharing Map Sydney (The Sharing Map, n.d.) and SHARECITY100 Database (Sharecity, n.d.). Through these existing resources, a project contact database was collated and represented initiatives were contacted to both i) introduce the Plan and ii) request their participation either via online questionnaire or phone interview.

The aim of the questionnaire (see Appendices) and interview was to understand the organisation, its objectives, the governance, its practices around decision-making, resource identification and distribution and to explore their challenges, successes and any needs (particularly in relation to their relationship with Council). In addition, participants often sent through additional hard-copy or online information, such as evaluation reports, video footage, promotional material and other resources in support of their initiative. From this collated database, there was a 35% response rate, with 25 commons-oriented initiatives engaged in the plan (including 15 participating via online questionnaire and the remainder via phone interview). With the intention of furthering the development of the commons ecosystem, the anonymized data collected through the plan is available as a digital commons. In accordance with this level of engagement, this plan aims to offer an open-ended qualitative overview of the commons-oriented ecosystem in the City of Sydney, rather than suggest any systemic trends.

In accordance with the SCL’s aim of show-casing the potential of commons-oriented initiatives, four commons prototypes were selected for more in-depth exploration throughout the Plan. In selecting prototypes, the SCL was keen for representation across different sectors and in relation to both the generative economy and social infrastructure aspects of commoning. Each prototype initiative participated through a semi-structured phone interview, followed by further desk-top analysis of each initiative.

A comparative overview of the commons in an international context was carried out through both desk-top research and interviews. The Commons Transition Plan for the City of Ghent, in particular, was foundational for comparative purposes.



Three international case studies for demonstrating commons-oriented Council legal, regulatory and social infrastructure were also selected, including Bologna, Seoul and Barcelona. These case-studies were developed through desk-top research. The international context was also contributed to through three interviews with commons-oriented thought leaders, including:

- Karl Filip Coenegrachts, Founder and Director citiesofpeople.com.
- Thomas de Groot, Urban Policies and European Campaigns Lead, The Commons Network, Amsterdam.
- Mauricio O'Brien, Goteo, Co-Director Fundacion Goteo, Asturias Spain.

In addition to these various primary and secondary research endeavours, a comparative overview with commons actors and projects in a local, national and international context was conducted. Moreover, continuous liaison with the appropriate representatives from the City of Sydney Council occurred in support of public policy directions for enabling and empowering commons-oriented initiatives.

This initial phase of the Plan occurred from May to August 2019, with the aim of providing a foundational report and potential opportunities for incorporation into the Sustainable Sydney 2050 planning endeavours.

As per the PAR methodology outlined, the Plan will be updated on an ongoing basis, with the objective of incorporating the outcomes of an expanding and deepening engagement with a diversity of commons-oriented initiatives both locally and internationally; whilst finding opportunities for enhancing the policy, legislative and regulatory infrastructure for further enabling these initiatives.

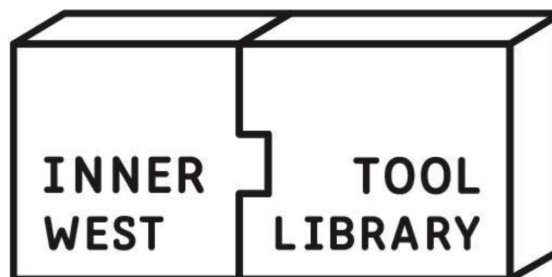
### Part 3: Existing Sydney Commons Prototypes:

The *Sharing Cities: Activating the Urban Commons* work (Shareable, 2018) demonstrates a plethora of commons work occurring internationally and across multiple sectors, including Housing, Food, Mobility, Work, Energy, Land, Waste, Water, Technology, Finance and Governance. The breadth of collaborative commons-oriented work outlined is inspiring, and the Plan intends on beginning a similar conversation within the local Sydney context.

In accordance with the SCL's aim of show-casing the potential of commons-oriented initiatives, four commons prototypes were selected across different sectors, including food, energy and other community-resource sharing initiatives. Each prototype initiative participated through a semi-structured interview, followed by further desk-top analysis of each initiative.

The plan focuses on four prototypes - including the Inner West Tool Library, Sydney Crop Swap, Food Lab Sydney, Pingala Cooperative - as community based commons-oriented contributions addressing food insecurity, unemployment, community disconnection, waste, monopolised wealth and the energy crisis.

#### Equipment: Sharing Case Study<sup>2</sup>



‘A community group for your community’

*“Yes we have the tools, but we have so much more! Think of us as a ‘library of things!’”*

- Inner West Tool Library (2019).

#### 1. Problem

After taking a course in outdoor furniture-building, the founder of Inner West Tool Library (IWTL) realised that while basic skills were relatively easy to learn, and recycled materials for building were readily available, to purchase the necessary tools for home projects is prohibitively expensive – especially for one-time use items (Tanner, 2019). IWTL was inspired by other tool libraries around the world and the lack of other similar organisations in inner Sydney (Inner West Tool Library, 2019a).

#### 2. Solution

IWTL is a ‘volunteer run not for profit community project, providing the inner west community access to a wide variety of tools and other useful resources’ (Inner West Tool Library, 2019b). It has a space in the basement of the Petersham Bowling Club, open Saturday mornings, for picking up and returning tools and other items. Its inventory of over 200 items were predominantly donated, with approximately five items grant supported. Items include power tools, cleaning, maintenance and gardening tools, hand

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<sup>2</sup> All information, unless otherwise referenced, was sourced from a phone interview between Jodie Hampson (interviewer) and Amy Croucher, IWTL Founder, on the 6th May 2019.

tools and miscellaneous ‘useful things’. Items can be borrowed for one week at a time. IWTL volunteers inspect and maintain items as they are returned and while they are stored.

Members pay annual fees (\$75/year for adults; \$50/year for concessions), which are used to maintain the library and acquire new items. Membership applications (including liability waivers) and item reservations are all completed online (Inner West Tool Library, 2018).

### **3. Internal sharing ecosystem**

IWTL is a completely volunteer-run not-for-profit, with a board of 5. As a small initiative, it benefits from the personal relationships between founders, volunteers and members: ‘people connect with who you are in the real world and what you are about, and in the process naturally share what they know about the equipment ... (so sharing knowledge and risk reduction is a natural part of the process).’ Personal relationships build trust, which facilitates sharing – and actually caring for the items shared. Finally, the particular local community is amenable to sharing initiatives: ‘it hasn’t been a hard sell in the Inner West. They just get this stuff ...’

IWTL was initially funded by a small Council grant and a few thousand dollars of founding members’ personal contributions. It also received a \$1000 grant from the Awesome Foundation (a US-based worldwide initiative, with autonomous local chapters, which provides ‘\$1000 grants, no strings attached, to projects and their creators’). It now also collects membership fees. Finally, the space at Petersham Bowling Club is currently rent-free, because the organisations have a ‘similar sustainability focus’ and the arrangement is mutually beneficial – the IWTL brings ‘community engagement and participation’ to the Club.

### **4. Partners**

IWTL has important local partnerships with the Petersham Bowling Club, Reverse Garbage, and Arncliffe Fix It Sisters Shed. IWTL is in communication with similar projects in Brunswick and TOOLO in the Blue Mountains, but no formal link exists between the projects and there is no over-arching ‘tool library’ network or framework. IWTL is completely volunteer run and “we are getting a lot more volunteer support now that we have a physical space.”

### **5. Impacts**

After six months of operations, IWTL has over 100 members. “The social aspect is important. Every weekend people are having a chat. We want more stories from people; this type of impact is hard to measure. One of the benefits of these smaller community type initiatives is that people connect with who you are in the real world and what you are about and in the process, naturally share what they know about the equipment and what you intend on using it for (so sharing knowledge and risk reduction is a natural part of the process).”

In terms of economic and environmental benefits, IWTL estimates that after six months of opening, more than 400 loans have taken place, saving members average of \$400 savings per borrowing member (\$32,000 in total). Additionally, IWTL estimate they have saved a potential 1.5 tonnes of landfill by avoiding the need for members to buy new tools and by ‘sharing things we already have’.

### **6. Challenges**

IWTL faced some coordination and start-up problems, related to the type of project and its organisation. For example, finding an appropriate space was difficult, and IWTL’s current space at the Bowling Club is a two-car garage, so it will likely soon outgrow the space given its storage needs. IWTL would also like to ‘upskill volunteers to use tools’ and to run workshops, and the current space isn’t large enough or suitable for workshops. This is something IWTL might seek Council support with (whether the space or volunteer training itself). It would also benefit from board/management training; ‘capacity-building support, rather than financial assistance.’

### **7. Future vision**

IWTL would like to expand (in size and function) and run workshops for tool-use. IWTL would also like to eventually have a paid position ('Perhaps just five hours a week to begin with') and, aside from membership fees, would like to obtain grants and/or corporate sponsorship to make that possible.

### **8. Additional resources**

<http://innerwesttoolibrary.com.au>

<https://www.instagram.com/iwtoollibrary/>

<https://www.facebook.com/iwtoollibrary/>

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2019/apr/24/library-of-things-borrowing-scheme-conquer-world>

<https://brunswicktoollibrary.org/php/index.php>

<http://toolo.com.au/>

Food: Sharing Case Study

# **CROP SWAP AUSTRALIA**

<sup>3</sup>

'Building local community, reducing food waste and eating better, for less.'

- Laurie Green, Crop Swap Founder

## **1. Problem**

Crop Swap's founder, who lives with her family 12km from Sydney's CBD, has always enjoyed urban gardening, but noticed that growing food in small spaces 'often results in too many plants, limited variety or surplus produce' (In the Cove, 2015). A garden growing 'too much of a good thing' can lead to food waste (Cottee, 2018).

## **2. Solution**

Crop Swap 'facilitates the swapping of homegrown produce, seeds and edible plants through local, cashless markets.' It also maintains a website, including planting guides and videos, and organises workshops and other events. Via its Facebook page and regular in-person 'swaps', Crop Swap provides a setting for backyard growers to swap their 'excess produce, plants or seeds anytime, and often instantly.' Swaps are arranged by local community Crop Swap groups (of which there are now 27 Australia-wide and one in Vancouver), which are self-governed and assisted and connected by the Crop Swap network.

Crop Swap Sydney holds monthly swaps with around 30-60 attendees. Participants are diverse across age and culture; including many young families interested in communal living and more cross-generational connections and many 'older single women concerned about the future' also attend.

## **3. Internal sharing ecosystem**

Crop Swap Sydney began as an informal Facebook group, which then expanded to additional national groups under the Crop Swap Australia banner. Participants begin engaging online, sharing garden advice etc, and some remain engaging online and others progress to attending a Crop Swap event. To join the group, participants must accept the Terms and Conditions statement through the Facebook page. "To join, you need to be local. Being place based is really important to us in encouraging real relationships. We have access to a large network of local individuals and businesses with a common sustainable interest. The Crop Swap Australia network currently has an audience of approximately 50k across various platforms."

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<sup>3</sup> All information, unless otherwise referenced, was sourced from a phone interview between Jodie Hampson (interviewer ) Laurie Green, Crop Swap Founder, on the 6th May 2019.



It is an informal ‘not-for-profit’ entity and ‘no money changes hands,’ which assists in minimising risks. The group doesn’t need a large operational budget: it has free access to the spaces used for swaps; its founder does the marketing; and free online networks are used for most sharing and coordinating within the group. Any financial needs are met through the paid workshops and other events it runs. Additional funding would however allow additional resources to be offered, such as a more formal seed library and seed saving supplies. The varieties grown within Crop Swap groups are often unusual and difficult to source as growers prefer those that are not grown commercially, therefore seed saving and sharing is integral to local diversity. Additional funding could also be used to help to prevent volunteer fatigue as the communities grow, and the time spent monitoring and managing these increases.

#### **4. Partners**

Crop Swap Sydney’s monthly swaps are run in partnership with Pocket City Farms. Other events have been organised in collaboration with local councils and a range of other partner groups, including local community gardens, food rescue and sharing initiatives, and small scale commercial growers. “At its core Crop Swap is informed by the sustainable living movement, promoting permaculture practices and adopting principles of a share economy.”

#### **5. Impacts**

The most measurable impact comes from the exchange system itself. Crop Swap’s founder in 2017 described how it provides her family ‘access to fantastic food, allows us to learn through a local network, and saves us approximately \$2,500 a year on food bills’ (Munro, 2017). Swapping allows participants to avoid waste, try new produce, and connect with others – all things contributing to a ‘sustainable diet’ (Juchov, 2017; Dennien, 2019). “Through the groups, individuals are able to build ongoing food loops, relationships, knowledge and expand their networks within their local area. There are many stories of people developing bonds that originated through Crop Swap such as childcare. There is true value in being able to offer something that has been fostered and grown, in exchange for an item that has similarly required investment from another.”

#### **6. Challenges**

The Crop Swap system relies on the initiative and enthusiasm of individual members, which has involved a balance between exploratory and managerial skills. “We are dealing with individuals and an interpretive share economy where there can sometimes be discrepancies in the perceived value of items, because of the effort that it has taken to produce them. But overall the idea of sharing and swapping is very well received and accepted as it is a very simple one. Four years on we have established a strong set of rules and feel confident that this is the way that works for the majority.” Crop Swap wants to “advocate for a culture of excess that is there for the taking; but there is a broader culture of value comparisons and differences.” For example, some participants ascribe higher value to items like honey and preserves, and will hold them back from a swap in order to negotiate a better deal. Cultural differences can further contribute to these different understandings and expectations around swapping and value. “It’s about managing these expectations and what is happening a lot now is people know this may be the case and negotiate a community swap prior to the event for these types of goods.”

#### **7. Future vision**

The sustainability focus of Crop Swap is really important and the associated values must align with any commercial enterprise opportunities. The group have looked at online technology options, however everyone is already on Facebook and Meetup and this encourages immediate interaction. Crop Swap plans on expanding on its sustainable living workshop delivery component with/for other groups and entities, including local councils.

#### **8. Additional resources**

<https://www.cropswap.sydney/>  
<https://www.cropswap.sydney/terms-and-conditions/>

<https://www.cropswap.sydney/collaborate/>  
<https://www.facebook.com/cropswapaustralia>  
<https://www.instagram.com/cropswapaustralia/>  
<http://www.pocketcityfarms.com.au>

Energy: Sharing Case Study<sup>4\*</sup>



‘Pingala makes energy that puts communities first.’

*“Together we can transform the old energy system and replace it with new energy that is clean, cheap and fair”*

- Pingala

### **1. Problem**

Pingala believes that the ‘old energy system is broken and unfair’. It hopes to help move consumers and communities away from ‘big energy’ and toward ‘fairer energy’.

### **2. Solution**

Pingala is a solar co-operative – ‘a citizen-led energy movement, working for a fast and fair transition to clean energy.’ Its aim is to ‘build, own and operate community-owned solar farms in Australia, with the support of member-shareholders who will become part owners in the projects.’ It does this by raising money from member-shareholders ‘to fund the solar farm installations on the rooftops of businesses and organisations’; the business organisation then pays for the energy produced and leases the technology, and any surplus income is distributed to members.

Pingala ‘manages a portfolio of clean energy investments for the benefit of its member-shareholders.’ Its campaigns have allowed organisations to run on clean energy while repaying community shareholders as members of the Pingala co-op. Its projects so far have included financing solar energy for breweries, Indigenous and women’s and children’s community groups, and a Buddhist centre. Other household energy projects are also being developed. Pingala is also active in lobbying and advocating for alternative energy sources and energy policy.

### **3. Internal sharing ecosystem**

As a co-operative, Pingala is owned, controlled and used by its members; its main purpose is to benefit members. Members’ rights and liabilities, and the co-op’s activities, principles and procedures are set out in its legally-binding Rules. Members can exercise a degree of control over the co-op’s activities by requisitioning meetings, and a quorum of at least 20 members must be present at any meeting for any proposed business transaction to go ahead.

Pingala’s board and committee are volunteer-based, and it has 10 volunteers. The Pingala Association, a not-for-profit organisation provides the backbone of Cooperative affairs, outlined in a Service Agreement between the two entities, but they still think of themselves as the one Pingala ecosystem. There are 160 shareholder-members.

### **4. Partners**

Pingala’s work has sometimes involved a degree of coordination with other clean energy groups. For example, its 4 Pines brewery project was possible via an arrangement with ClearSky Solar Investments: ClearSky set up a trust for community members to invest in

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<sup>4\*</sup> All information, unless otherwise referenced, was sourced from a phone interview between Jodie Hampson (interviewer) and April Crawford-Smith, Pingala Convenor, on the 4th June 2019.

the brewery's solar technology, however it was limited to 20 total investors. Pingala then became the principal investor in the ClearSky trust, setting out to raise 75% of the total capital needed by selling \$250 share packets to Pingala members – allowing a far larger community of investors than the ClearSky trust structure would have alone. Pingala also works with Councils, smaller community groups, consults to groups wanting to build their strategy and work on new models. Pingala is happy to offer it's help and support where possible, but also growing it's competencies by getting paid is a fantastic result for a small but experienced organisation.

### **5. Impacts**

Pingala's projects have, by financing solar panels for businesses, allowed communities (and other supporting investors) to 'collectively own and operate their own local renewable energy, creating jobs, keeping business local, and sharing opportunities' amid a broader transition to renewable energy.

Pingala's main focus is environmental benefits, but social and financial benefits for members and communities are also important. For example, its first project – providing solar panels for Young Henry's Brewery – has allowed the brewery to avoid 'around 127 tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions every year' (Sinclair, 2018). That project saw \$17500 worth of shares made available to 54 investors in 'the space of just nine minutes' (QCOSS, 2018; Cooper, 2016). As another financial example, Pingala's 4 Pines Brewery project aims to pay dividends to shareholders of between 5% and 8% per annum. This project partnership with ClearSky solar investment involved a strong alignment of values; their mission was 'empowering our local communities to benefit not just environmentally, but also economically, from the production of clean energy and this project is a real win-win' (Whitting, 2019).

### **6. Challenges**

One of the biggest challenges for getting projects up quickly are the existing rules and regulations and the government's focus on 'big energy'. More than 50 community solar projects are up and running across Australia, with more than \$24 million invested by individuals. In comparison, Scotland has more than 500 community energy projects, while Germany has 880 energy cooperatives (Bainbridge, 2017). Of the Australian experience, Pingala volunteer Tom Nockolds has described an 'oversupply of investors and an undersupply of community energy projects.' To that end, Pingala have already identified 30 more potential locations for future projects (Bainbridge, 2017).

### **7. Future vision**

Pingala's ultimate aim is to have a role in a broader transition to renewable energy, for homes, businesses and community groups. Aside from its individual projects, Pingala's aims (in its Rules) include to be a 'model for cooperative, inclusive and successful community driven projects', to create 'new energy business models', and to be active in 'researching, producing and disseminating information and engaging the local community on a regular basis to promote renewable energy generation and energy efficiency.'

### **8. Additional resources**

<https://pingala.org.au>

<https://www.facebook.com/PingalaSydney/>

Pingala's Rules and Disclosure Statement are here: <https://pingala.org.au/co-op-members/>

<https://pingala.org.au/4-pines-project/>

Food: Sharing Case Study<sup>5\*</sup>

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<sup>5\*</sup> All information, unless otherwise referenced, was sourced from an interview with Dr Luke Craven, Chief Investigator FoodLab Sydney, on the 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2019.

*“For us, food’s more than just food – it’s a tangible, joyful, creative way to promote more healthy, just, resilient communities”*

- Devita Davison, Executive Director of FoodLab Detroit, at the launch of FoodLab Sydney (University of Sydney, 2019)

*“Our vision is to increase everyone’s access to healthy and affordable food by enabling all residents to dictate the terms of their inclusion in our rapidly growing city through voice and participation”*

- Dr Alana Mann, Sydney Environment Institute (Spence, 2019)

### **1. Problem**

Research conducted in 2015 by the City of Sydney Council found high, and growing, levels of food insecurity among local residents. In their surveys, 8.5% of respondents said that at some point in the past year they had ‘run out of food and could not afford to buy more’ (City of Sydney, 2016). FoodLab is particularly concerned with systemic causes of this problem, such as social exclusion, income poverty, and rising inequality (Rennick, 2018).

### **2. Solution**

FoodLab Sydney is a food business incubator and training program. The broader aim is to strengthen social connection and community resilience amongst incubator participants, which creates a broader sustainable food production ecosystem in urban spaces, linking workers, producers, and manufacturers with other actors in the local food industry. The incubator involves between 10 and 16 participants per cohort, with twice-yearly intakes. Participants complete a ten-week course providing formal TAFE NSW qualifications in kitchen operations, including food preparation and handling, food safety, and other commercial kitchen skills. This is followed by ten weeks of FoodLab Sydney business skills and entrepreneurship training, covering business strategy, finance, organisational development, supply chain transparency, sustainability, human resources, marketing, and branding. This component also includes participation in workshops, business development activities, and individual mentorship. TAFE NSW fees are approximately \$1000; however, fee subsidies may be available for eligible students, and FoodLab Sydney’s program is otherwise free for participants (FoodLab Sydney, 2018).

### **3. Internal sharing ecosystem**

The program operates under a flexible fairly standard partnership agreement. Three FoodLab Sydney researchers lead, obtain direction and support from a management committee, (comprising six people from TAFE, FoodLab Sydney, and the City of Sydney Council) and a community advisory board. The community advisory board is a separate entity from the formal management committee, comprised of 12 participants from Sydney food and social welfare organisations, and is key to recruitment, networking and course development.

Funding consists of a \$40,000 annual grant from the City of Sydney Council over a three year period, an Australian Research Linkages grant, and TAFE NSW support.

Social enterprise and other alternative business models are emphasised in the second week of the business component of the course. And, after the course ends, participants remain connected to each other (including in an established ‘Members Discussion Group’) and to FoodLab Sydney coordinators, mentors, and resources, post-program. This is a manifestation of FoodLab Sydney’s aims where “we are very intentional about ensuring the Foodlab Sydney course is really collaborative. We put a lot of thought into how to facilitate this and we are very mindful of group dynamics. The Detroit model



ensures this by facilitating skill-shares for instance. The result is a great atmosphere where people talk honestly about their business challenges and they genuinely share skills.”

#### **4. Partners**

FoodLab Sydney is a five-way partnership with the University of Sydney (and its Sydney Environment Institute), the University of NSW (Canberra), the City of Sydney Council, TAFE NSW and FoodLab Detroit. Participants are also referred via Wesley Mission, Global Sisters, Settlement Services International (Ignite Biz Coach Program), and Redlink. In reference to the broader sector partnerships, “the good will we have in the food movement is a very important resource that needs to be recognised.”

#### **5. Challenges**

“Whilst recognising that partnerships are key to the model, ongoing relationship building across numerous key stakeholder groups can be very time consuming. It has taken us four years to get to this point!” Additionally, the various funding streams involve diverse requirements. For example, the City of Sydney places emphasis on targeting participants from within their local government boundaries, which can pose a challenge. The Council’s grant cannot be rolled over to consecutive financial years, and its budgeting and procurement processes are not perfectly aligned with the requirements of Australian Research Council (ARC) Linkage funding. For example, the Linkage grant places a heavier emphasis on research over operations in comparison to the Council grant. “We also have regulatory requirements around certifiable curriculum components that we need to meet, which has proven a steep learning curve given FoodLab Sydney is an entirely new model for Australia.”

While FoodLab Sydney would like to become a self-funded not-for-profit entity in future, it is difficult to fundraise as a university initiative, and attempts to establish a not-for-profit establishment is a very different model than the universities’ usual focus on commercialisation. FoodLab Detroit’s program benefits from a Michigan state start-up funding program. “The FoodLab Detroit program shows how important partnerships are. They also have a great start-up funding ecosystem with the Michigan fair food fund (which involves a range of investors that provide slow money loans for food businesses; you can obtain a \$20k micro loan that isn’t commercial). Unfortunately, we don’t have this type of support in Australia.”

Within the Australian context, the FoodLab Sydney project exists within a competitive funding context where “there are some big players within the food security sector and we are the new kid on the block.” Still, FoodLab Sydney is beginning to seek additional community grant support.

#### **6. Future vision**

FoodLab Sydney envisages creating a ‘food hub’ with dedicated kitchen, office, coworking and garden spaces. It would like to map and continue to support Sydney’s alternative food ecosystem. It would also like to extend the program beyond the City of Sydney area by providing scholarships to assist with transport costs for non-locals – and possibly help set up satellite programs outside of Sydney, replicating the model throughout Australia.

#### **7. Additional resources**

<https://foodlabsydney.com>

<https://unsw.adfa.edu.au/what-foodlab-sydney>

<http://sydney.edu.au/environment-institute/research/food-systems/foodlab-sydney/>

<https://foodlabdetroit.com/>

<https://twitter.com/foodlabsydney>

<https://www.facebook.com/sydneyfoodlab/>

## **Part 4: The City of Sydney Commons Ecosystem Analysis**

This section presents the general findings identified through phase one of our research. As mentioned in the research overview section (Part 2D), the findings are based on the input of twenty-five Sydney based commons-oriented initiatives that participated in the Plan, either via online questionnaire or interview.

### **A) Organisational Financial Viability**

In tackling the larger modern day systemic challenges, including climate change and environmental and social challenges, commons-oriented initiatives are necessarily exploratory and diverse in their formal and informal 'governance' arrangements. As such, they often don't fit traditional government funding expectations, and, without the sole profit focused motive of traditional business models, they struggle to access venture capital. All participants face the same balancing act of generating enough support to cover their costs, whilst growing their activities.

A concern for financial viability over the longer term was a common issue across the commons-oriented initiatives. A minority were in receipt of government funding, with the majority dependent on a mixture of other resourcing sources, including:

- crowdfunding
- membership fees
- volunteering
- personal investment
- business services, including consultancy and/or workshop delivery.

There has been much written about the potential of crowdfunding as a new funding method for 'common good' oriented ventures, where citizens as 'investors', contribute to open, inclusive, and democratized product and service development. The reality is; however, crowdfunding takes a lot of resources and participants utilising this funding stream mainly do so to fill urgent gaps in operational funding or for a specific project or cause, rather than as a regular source of funding in support of a sustainable business model. As an alternative, Goteo, discussed in section 6D, advocate for a matchfunding approach to crowdfunding, where commons oriented projects are co-funded by citizens and institutions in the generation of new dynamics of cooperation.

Membership fees are a more reliable source of income amongst participants, across a diversity of governance structures, including cooperatives, informal networks and not for profits. However, the reliance on a mixture of funding sources and the challenges of competing with the mainstream market, is evident in one participants' statement:

"We used to mainly rely on membership fees but are having to crowd-fund at the moment due to new places selling similar items; it is getting much more difficult to compete with these bigger businesses. We are also having to run monthly bake sales to get by."

A renewable energy cooperative, Pingala however, are in a different situation where "There's definitely an oversupply of investors and an undersupply of community energy projects" (Bainbridge, 2017). Pingala have already identified 30 more potential locations for future projects; however, they are limited by government rules and regulations that often hinder community energy projects.

A tension was evident in wanting to move initiatives from volunteer based assistance to paid employment, which was seen as crucial to longer term sustainability.

A tension was evident in wanting to move initiatives from volunteer-based assistance to paid employment, which was seen as crucial to longer term sustainability. The pressure for not-for-profit organisations to commercialise and bring in market structures is also widely discussed in scholarly literature (see for example, Maier, Meyer and Steinbereithner, 2016; Martin, Upham & Budd, 2015).

Cooperatives have a much stronger network in terms of supporting each-other through the creation of 'community loyalty schemes' across cooperatives and in terms of access to skilled volunteers. In expanding the sustainability outcomes of cooperatives, whilst staying competitive in the broader market, there is an opportunity for cooperatives to engage with more diverse forms of governance in pursuit of the common good; however, the challenges of adhering to cooperative values whilst creating broader partnerships beyond the cooperative sector is recognised.

A few initiatives began with personal finances to begin and one initiative utilises a venue based on personal investment (which combines personal accommodation and project working space). A minority of initiatives currently offer consultancy services and many envisage workshops/training and consultancy as a future add on service to assist longer - term sustainability. There is an opportunity for these commons-oriented initiatives to collaborate in the development and offering of a suite of sustainability oriented consultancy services and programs in increasing networking, efficiencies, innovative ideas and in sharing the risks.

## **B) Levelling the Playing Field**

The growth of these commons-oriented initiatives is based on an understanding that the costs of pushing people apart, as characterized by our current market-driven relationships, are unsustainable economically, socially and environmentally. Moreover, these initiatives come with an understanding that the market is failing to meet community needs as they cannot be profitably met by business. As such, many of the initiatives identify as not being financially sustainable, as evident in the following participant's statement:

“We currently aren't financially sustainable. Most of our work is done voluntarily as housing development is a very price conscious industry. We do it because there is a dire need here but a gap in the market around valuing this work.”

In further demonstration of the competitive disadvantage of these commons-oriented projects in comparison to traditional business models, the majority of participants identified 'education' as a key part of their initiative and objective as an organization. This function, however, is often taken on in addition to their core business and for free, as mentioned by a food distributor interviewed:

“Customer service for us entails education and we can't wait to be able to have an actual budget for this. We don't exist to make profits for individual needs, we exist to generate profits for change, for the greater good. We want to change Perception. Perception that currently adds to waste of incredible amounts of top quality produce, merely due to appearance.”

This exploratory behaviour-change-focused model is transforming how people think about food production and driving further engagement between customers and local suppliers, with the nature of the transaction becoming more nuanced. It is less about selling more produce than it is about using information transparency to build trust, engagement, and in the process, strong community loyalty. This is further demonstrated by the participant, who stated:

“It is really important with us to have a conversation with farmers, to incorporate their efficiencies, to come up with a fair price for their produce. We then communicate this with our membership in a very transparent way. In this way we have a great impact on local economic development that is beyond the supply and demand market forces (which are often wrong and don’t incorporate natural seasonality aspects).”

This particular initiative, which prefers to remain anonymous, has over 500 members with a very strong core of 300 purchasing on a regular basis over the last several years. This initiative invests a lot in its cooperative form of management, often going against more mainstream ‘convenience’ practices, including for example:

- Leaving your own esky out for the delivery of cold produce (and allowing access to your neighbour if you are not home)
- Accepting non perfect produce (in comparison to mainstream produce)
- Agreeing on using local produce based on seasonality
- Providing your own packaging for produce.

The creation of these generative commons-oriented initiatives requires a plethora of contributory activities that are not valued by the mainstream market; and in order for these initiatives to continue doing well by doing good, special facilitation is required in the development of a more level playing field.

### **C) Diverse Value Forms**

These commons-oriented initiatives often emphasise a ‘contributory’ character, where members are involved in acts of contributing to the initiative itself and profits exist for the purpose of sustaining the initiative. This also differs from a ‘voluntary non-profit’ logic, where the initiative does not work ‘for’ but ‘with’ community.

For example, Lentil as Anything, a social enterprise restaurant that prioritises people over profit, publicly states on its website:

“We have no set prices. Everyone is welcome to come for a meal and contribute in any way they can. Some people volunteer their time in the kitchen or on the floor, others leave a financial donation in one of the contribution boxes. All leave with the feeling that they are part of an inclusive community.” (Lentil as Anything, n.d.)

In further exploring this contributory theme, Co-founder Joshua Vial from the social enterprise, Enspiral, states:

“The cooperative ownership model of one share per person with a consent decision making process for governance is one of the core things that has worked for us at Enspiral. I've witnessed over 50 people go through the experience of 'earning' their ownership share at Enspiral and it's one of my favourite organising forms.” (P2P Foundation, 2017)

In expanding on this ‘contributory’ character, Michel Bauwens and Vasilis Niaros, peer-to-peer researchers and theorists, acknowledge the importance of diverse ‘value’ forms, extending beyond money and incorporating sharing resources such as skills, community currencies, equipment, knowledge, time, open data etc. (Bauwens and Niaros, 2017). This ‘new value regime’ was evident across the participating commons-oriented initiatives.

This new ‘value regime’; however, doesn’t come without tensions as evident in the Crop Swap case study. Crop Swap ‘advocate for a culture of excess that is there for the taking’. However, it is difficult to overcome the broader culture of value comparisons and

differences attached to produce. In addition to this ‘value’ challenge is the tension around the area of inclusion and differing cultural understandings. As evident in the Crop Swap case study, cultural differences can create different understandings about ‘value’ and lead to swaps involving ‘negotiating deals’ rather than sharing surplus. As Michel Bauwens and Yurek Onzia (2017) warn: “the commons are not a utopia, nor are they perfect” and we need to be aware of the potential for the “commons to be stewarded by more privileged strata of the population” when a social equality and inclusion lens is not present. Crop Swap are successfully navigating these tensions, which involves continuous negotiation and management, enabling the pooling and mutualisation of home grown produce, items, ideas and knowledge.

In providing alternatives to mainstream business and society, Caroline Shenaz Hossein’s work in the ‘Black Social Economy’ is extremely significant in “[o]pening up the way we tell stories and going to hard-to-reach institutions to find the thousands of racialized people who participate and work in the third sector” (Hossein, 2019: 17). Hossein sees this as necessary to rethinking economics as we know it and in “nam[ing] the wrongs carried out in business and society that excluded groups want to remake livelihoods and they do so through solidarity and cooperation” (Hossein, 2019: 4).

This plan requires much more in depth engagement, in order to understand the generative commons-oriented initiatives and lived experience of those predominantly excluded from the mainstream market.

#### **D) A Commons Ecosystem**

A common theme across participants was their lack of awareness of a generative ‘commons-oriented’ sector or existence as a collective phenomenon. As such, the City of Sydney commons-oriented ecosystem remains a ‘relatively new’ sector in comparison to other cities globally, such as Barcelona and Bologna (see Part 6). A strong active civil society is evident, however the main connection remains within specific sectors, such as the food-based cooperative movement, and there is a lack of infrastructure to link these initiatives as a commons movement. The New Economy Network of Australia (NENA), is active in connecting these commons-oriented initiatives, with the following objective expressed on its web-site:

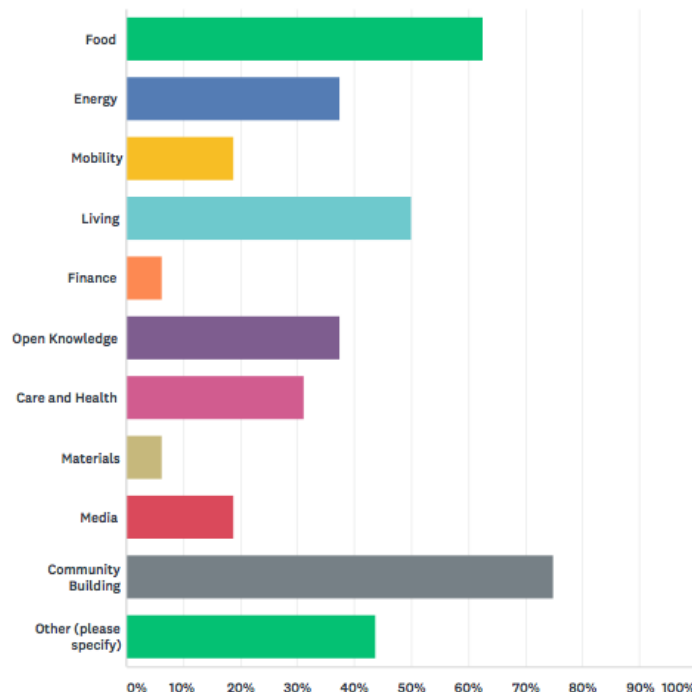
“The New Economy Network Australia (NENA) is a network of individuals and organisations working to transform Australia’s economic system so that achieving ecological health and social justice are the foundational principles and primary objectives of the economic system.” (New Economy Network Australia, n.d.)

Moreover, other actors such as the Incubator Coop, play an extremely important role in the development and support of emerging commons-oriented initiatives and infrastructure. Incubator Co-op allows projects that are pre-formation to go through Forming, Organising and Funding stages with assistance by members to do this pre-formation work. Incubator Co-op helps both local and online communities form the enterprises with democratic control and 7 coop principles at their centre. On a broader ecosystems level, the Sydney Commons Lab (SCL) is developing a citizen and multi-sector network to progress the commons and sharing initiatives in Sydney, while linking with other commons and related initiatives across Australia and globally. Taking an ecosystem and capacity-building approach, SCL aims to connect people and organisations for increased commons capacity, innovation, collective leadership and the acceleration of positive change. The SCL is currently in its formation stage, and the Commons Transition Plan findings will assist in defining its future direction.

In terms of representation, there is great potential for the development of a commons-oriented generative economy with the support of collective infrastructure and policy. The potential of the commons-based economy, including high tech initiatives, is evident in CCIA’s 2017 Fair Use economy research where it represents 16% of the United States’ GDP, incorporating 18 million workers (Computer & Communications Industry Association, 2017). In further demonstrating the potential of the commons-oriented generative economy, Vasilis Kostakis, longtime member of the P2P Foundation and now based at Tallinn University of Technology, has a four year European Starting Grant of over a million euro to carry out research on the ways in which networked micro-factories are giving rise to new open-source forms of production in the realm of design and manufacturing, particularly their implications for sustainability and democratisation.

In contribution to a generative commons economy, Bauwens and Onzia (2017) cite the potential for open source ‘maker’ industries and the alternative energy sector. As evident in Figure 1, we note the lack of representation in the Plan across the sectors of transport, materials and finance and recommend further investigation into specific prototype projects across these sectors. In addition, Mercury Cooperative emphasise the great potential for ‘community buyout schemes,’ where community control and ownership of integral infrastructure has great potential for reclaiming the commons, from hospitals to fuel stations (Montgomery, 2006). Rather than extractive wealth building that is focused on the corporate bottom line, a thriving local economy requires local ownership where the control and economic advantages of that ownership are put to work locally in the building of community wealth. In addition to local ownership; community wealth building requires an intentional strategy that aims to build long-term relationships based on mutual support, where an active and participatory tight-knit network of local businesses and community members is essential (Democracy Collaborative, 2019).

Figure 1. SCTP Participant Sector Representation



### E) Personal Livelihood

Similar to Bauwens and Onzia’s (2017) research in Ghent, a key finding of our inquiry is the need to find ways for those contributing to the commons to have a possibility of making a living from it, rather than volunteering their time. Moreover, a tension between the longer-

term financial sustainability of the organisation and the personal livelihood needs of the individuals involved with the organisation was often evident. Throughout our consultations, it became clear that several initiatives have struggled, and some have even dissolved, due to the conflicting choice between personal livelihood and the organisation's continuation. The human drive for this important regenerative work, enriching of community and resources is there. However, the challenge is that the need for this regenerative work is created by and also neglected by the current market and, as such, it is a challenge to make a meaningful livelihood within that same market.

Traditionally, a lot of this regenerative work is done voluntarily and individuals are left to their own devices in terms of personal livelihood, which can be isolating and lead to 'volunteer burnout' amidst the tensions of 'working for capital' as already outlined. A minority of participants have some paid employment within the commons-oriented initiative; however, the majority of participants were involved in paid employment elsewhere in order to meet personal livelihood needs. Moreover, the 'volunteerism' contribution far outweighs the small number of paid employment opportunities across the commons-oriented initiatives.

A key theme evident in such discussions were the tensions around the individual versus the collective. People frequently 'gift' their commons work to the collective, including their time and their skills. Some people in the commons networks have indicated that their contributions are often overlooked, and in these instances the individual can feel devalued. Some activities such as care-labour, researching, relationship-building and networking may not be easily valued or recognised as contributing to deliverables that contribute to an income (as the traditional method of valuing a persons' endeavours in the mainstream market).

One of the participating initiatives is focused on this commons-oriented livelihood issue, as evident in their statement:

"We are interested in finding new ways to work and collaborate in the new economy and to explore models of shared livelihood while working on social change projects."

At a recent event on livelihood, held by a local innovation collective and commons organisation, The Grove, one of the key outcomes was an expressed desire for participants to be able to do more 'work that matters' to them. This is a valuable initiative for, and in service to the broader community, using the skills and experience participants have developed, while still being able to generate income in order to afford to live in Sydney. With the precariousness of traditional forms of employment in the mainstream market, and the associated insecurity, there is a growing interest in exploring commons work as a more sustainable means to livelihood.

Enspirial is an interesting example in regards to the commons-oriented livelihood situation. Enspirial is a social enterprise network working internationally, take an innovative approach to inspiring and enabling 'meaningful livelihoods' that aim to change the world. Some of the successes of the model are based on its diverse 'formal' organisational arrangements, commitment to cooperative principles and 'livelihood pod' structure, as Co-Founder Joshual Vial explains:

"I think the sole purpose of a Livelihood Pod is to create livelihoods for its members. In this way you can consider a Livelihood Pod a for profit cooperative and we use other commercial vehicles to focus our for purpose work ... I've found that there is something qualitatively different about a team that is committed to the well being of individual team members above and beyond the success of any one product or line of business." (P2P Foundation, 2017)

## **F) Partnerships**

### **Market-Commons Relationships:**

The issue of maintaining independence from current market and government forces was also a common theme, as evident in the following participant's statement: "For our longevity, our goal is to remain over 70% self-funded to ensure we are not reliant on any tied income streams." This participant has been quite successful in obtaining funds through partnerships with the business community, with the assistance of a catalyst organization Creative Partnerships Australia as evident in the following statement:

"In 2014, we received \$75k matched funding from the private sector and Creative Partnerships Australia. This created the first employed roles for the organization, with its main purpose to grow and maximize operations. From this seed investment, we now employ seven full-time equivalent staff and generate a revenue base exceeding \$1 million (2018); with 73% of this self-generated."

This connection with the business community was fairly rare, with the majority of participants confirming their detachment to the business community. A misalignment of values was often discussed as the reasoning for a lack of connection with the business community. There is an opportunity for commons-oriented initiatives to forge stronger partnerships with the small business community and participating businesses, in turn, demonstrate their care about the future of their community and their own long term sustainability.

Participants also discussed the potential for becoming victims of their own success, and the need to protect themselves from being overtaken by 'for profit' dominant motives, and as such, they have had to be very selective about partnerships, income streams and also had to reject potentially profitable project streams, in pursuit of their broader sharing and 'common-good' oriented visions. The risk of co-optation has also been noted by international studies looking at innovative commons-oriented projects (Thompson, 2018; Caffentzis & Federici, 2014).

### **Technology-Commons Relationships:**

This is particularly relevant in the platform technology space, where there is immense potential for extractive models masquerading as the commons, obsessed with scaling rather than creating generative and enriching value. This 'start-up' focus on scaling contrasts with commons-oriented initiatives, where the focus is on local solutions that can be adapted and replicated in other geographic locations.

On the ground, there is a limit on commons-oriented initiatives' capacities to compete with larger initiatives that have immense resources to invest in platform technology to 'scale' operations. Additionally, once commons-oriented initiatives achieve a level of success, the temptation to be co-opted by these more platform economy 'for profit' focused initiatives is a frequent threat. We also became aware through our consultations that these cumulative threats to commons-oriented initiatives, including the above mentioned conflicts with 'start-up culture', often result in their closure, and therefore their absence from this analysis.

While on the issue of technology, there is the need to both emphasise and further explore the potential of the digital commons, where there is both immense opportunity and also a risk of digital access increasing the inequity and inequality divide. One participant frequently publicly apologizes to customers for the state of their current platform technology, identifying how expensive it is to develop and how the bigger companies have so much more to invest into their platform technology. Another discussed how



there was a split in the organization around the development of an online application connected to their operations; as it was more profit focused and not in alignment with their values. That application development has progressed separate to the original initiative, where the founding groups' ideas and branding were taken by a commercial application venture.

Participants have outlined a tendency for extraction with 'collectively produced' assets occurring when traditional business models use intellectual property and individual ownership frameworks for managing these existing commons-oriented initiatives. As such, there is a need for further exploration of commons licensing models and the platform cooperative movement in alleviating some of these tensions. Bauwens and Onzia (2017: 51) advocate for experimentation with a new type of licence, namely "copyfair" that enables knowledge as commons with commercialization dependent on a form of reciprocity with the commons. Platform cooperativism has been positioned as a better model for the sharing economy in bringing together the democratic governance and rules of formal cooperatives and the tools of digital platforms. It is claimed that platform cooperatives, as a co-ownership model, will ensure more equitably produced and distributed ownership and value and fairer working conditions for workers. In supporting these initiatives, we need to meet agreed upon principles, including the importance of geographically bounded initiatives, to ensure they aren't co-opted by commercial interests and a 'business as usual' approach (ie. the Silicon Valley version of the sharing economy).

### **Academic-Commons Relationships:**

In addition to private sector partnerships, whilst there are strong contributions from individual academics in the field, more structured partnerships between commons-oriented initiatives and academic institutions were often absent. The most notable structured partnerships with academia were evident in the Food Lab Sydney case study and the "New Economy Network of Australia" (NENA) initiative. NENA, as a cross-sectoral over-arching framework, has a lot of potential in progressing the institutional infrastructure for ensuring academia are consistently involved in generative commons-oriented projects. The Food Lab Sydney is a great academic-community partnership, as well as a great example of a generative commons economy initiative, which aims to provide training and support for local residents to start careers and small businesses in food.

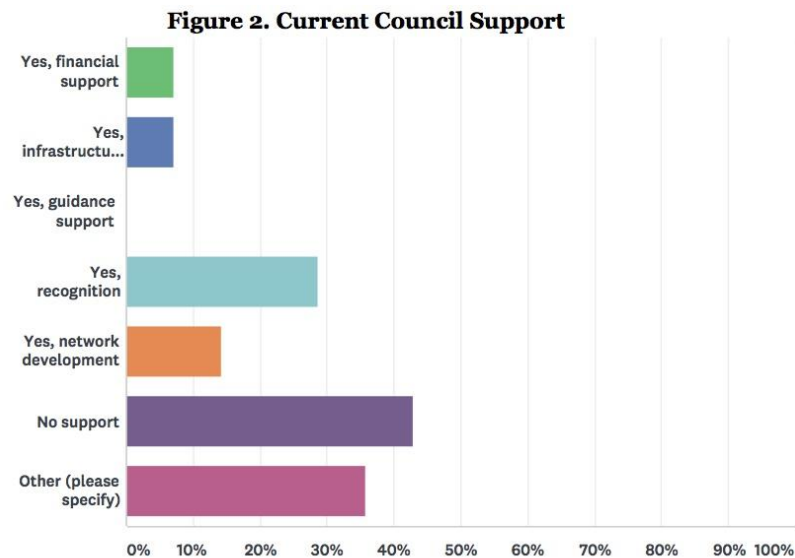
Bauwens and Onzia (2017: 84) emphasise the specific role required of knowledge institutions in support of the commons and the need to discuss deeper relationships between academia and the commons. The potential to build action research partnerships between universities and commons initiatives can be seen in the work being carried out in Dimmons partnership between the Universitat Oberta de Catalunya (Barcelona) and the local government. Another valuable model can be in Commons based knowledge organisations such as the Commons Network in Amsterdam which hosts a fellowship program for higher degree research fellows on an ongoing basis.

In August 2019, the Participatory Geographies Research Group and the Urban Geography Research Group of the Royal Geographical Society hosted a network of researchers, activists, practitioners and policymakers exploring *Experimental Recipes for a Radical Municipalism*, with the aim of transforming urban-economic governance in resistance to growing inequalities, democratic deficits and social injustice. The network discussed contemporary experiments in UK, USA, Australia, Argentina, Germany, Italy, Spain, and Greece.

Furthermore, there is immense potential within the Community Economies Research Network, co-founded by Australian academic Katherine Gibson, which is an international network of researchers, activists, artists and others who are interested in building more ethical economic and ecological relationships. Its members work frequently across community-business-academic boundaries.

**Local Government-Commons Relationships:**

Generally, the participants’ frequently identified the good will of the City of Sydney Council, identifying a diversity of current Council roles, including official and/or indirect roles, as evident in Figure 2.



Participant awareness of the good will of the City of Sydney is evident in the following statement:

“The City of Sydney is a world leader in dealing with our sector. We have a great partnership and there is mutual trust. We don't think the Council should be supporting us - there is good separation in support of our independence. They trust us to do our job and there is absolutely joint decision making with Council.”

“They are really great. The discussions we have been having with both Councilors and Staff have been super progressive and aligned with our values for creating equitable and inclusive cities. The City is not the problem....the State is.”

The challenge with other levels of government is further evident in the following participant’s statement:

“The biggest issue is other levels of government - the regulatory, legislative and policy context is often a hindrance. Government are now attempting to make policy in this space; however, they are on the back foot and causing more problems. We have gone from sprawling to density without any planning and driven by developers sole profit motive.”

Whilst this initial phase of the Plan focused on the common-Local Government context as the priority, due to Local Government’s close proximity to and involvement with grassroots collaborations, it is recommended that State and Federal government roles’ in enabling commons-oriented initiatives are further explored and developed. Again, this

further exploration will incorporate an examination of the ‘poly-governance’ model demonstrated in other geographical contexts and how it relates to Australian government at all levels.

The concept of ‘poly-governance’ is outlined in the Co-Cities Open Book and is being trialled in many cities in Italy in partnership with LabGov.

“A Co-City is based on urban, shared, collaborative, polycentric governance...which are co-managed through contractual or institutionalised public-private-community partnerships.

Once we start conceiving of a city as an infrastructure on which public, private, knowledge, civic and social sectors (what we describe as the ‘quintuple helix’) can collaborate and collectively govern urban resources... we start to understand the potential of implementing the Co-Cities model” (Labgov.city, 2018).

In addition to the challenges with other levels of government, there was confusion amongst participants regarding Council’s potential role in relation to their initiative and the broader commons-oriented ecosystem. Many questioned the relevance of Council and were unaware of the services and programs in support of their initiative, as evident in the following statements:

“I haven’t had any experience with Council – what do they do? “

“The council seems very focused on supporting small business; however, for community based and led initiatives it's hard to see where it would fit to approach the council for support.”

More specifically in regards to Council, the majority of participants felt there needs to be more emphasis on ‘genuine partnerships’ as current arrangements are often based on Council control and an associated distrust of civil society. Some participants’ experiences demonstrated this scenario clearly:

“Great staff, but it is a hierarchical culture and that stops us working together. A partnership approach would be much better where we are on the same side and co-delivering on objectives.”

Another participant described a scenario where a community-founded initiative, that had a strong and engaged membership base, was sidelined by government planning processes. Moreover, a decision for direct Council control of the initiative for an initial ten years was made. While there are sometimes background pressures such as legal constraints that can drive such approaches, this seemed to be a pronounced example of privileging technical support, centralised budgetary approaches and arms-length relationships over community engagement, inclusive communication, deep partnerships and decentralised resource-sharing.

When this happens, there is a risk of ongoing loss when community good-will is not supported by a genuine social-government partnership approach. This is supported by international research, where it was stated in relation to the Ghent Commons Transition Plan experience (Part 6) “one of the biggest challenges is changing the mindset of civil servants to see that the city is just one stakeholder or actor in society and needs to act as a partner in the network.” International experiences further demonstrate the possibilities for working in closer partnership with commons-oriented initiatives, as demonstrated by the Bologna, Barcelona and Seoul case-studies (see Part 6). Bologna, for example, demonstrates what policy endorsed government-social partnerships can achieve – where the “care and regeneration of the urban commons” regulation assists in

giving citizens direct power to develop proposals for the joint management of urban resources. This has resulted in dozens of projects being initiated where “the citizenry initiates and proposes, the city enables and supports.” (P2P Foundation, n.d.). The benefits of a poly-governance model, in enabling genuine partnerships, has also been outlined elsewhere in this Plan.

Another frequent request for Council was a more consistent application of community engagement and public participation approaches across the varying functions of Council. Whilst Council has a range of public participation policies and frameworks, they may need more practical guidance for their staff to effectively conduct public participation activities. In accordance with this sentiment, the majority of participants see a networking and commons ecosystem-building role as the priority for Council, as evident in the following participant statements:

“Help our farmers network for genuine collaboration building.”

“We need resources and systems for keeping citizens engaged for citizen led initiatives.”

“We need networking these initiatives into local community (including business) in a more proactive way.”

Council’s regulations and their inflexibility often hinder commons-oriented initiatives. Participants were aware of the fragmentation within the Council administration, where there is a difference in support across the various units of Council and between the political and bureaucratic. This is evident in the following participant statements’:

“Council is extraordinarily bureaucratic and has a very negative attitude to the use of volunteers. For example, our community garden was prevented from building their own flower beds.”

“I think community input is often lost in translation at the policy level. We engage both politically and bureaucratically - there is a collaborative vision with elected reps but not always with the staff.”

Land and space scarcity was another common theme, with the majority of participants stating that assistance with space is necessary for their organizational viability and a significant portion also stating that if they do not find space in the very near future they would cease to operate. A generative commons-oriented initiatives ‘land and venue bank’ would assist here (see Part 5). This is a similar finding to the Ghent Commons Transition Plan, where, in response, the sites earmarked by council for potential development in 20-30 years were made available for temporary use by commons initiatives (see Part 6).

One participant’s statement identifies the challenges around obtaining land in Sydney:

“It was a constant challenge of trying to get money and pay for transitioning this to a fully viable community run initiative. We weren’t able to make it as we couldn’t secure the site, we needed the land to get to funding. Westpac were keen to provide funding once we had a location.”

Moreover, there is potential for the pooling and mutualisation of Council resources more broadly in support of sharing oriented initiatives (see Part 5).

## Part 5: Preliminary General Findings for the City of Sydney Council

As outlined in Part 2, the aim of this plan is to work as a discussion paper, drawing attention to the growing number of commons-oriented initiatives in the City of Sydney and their potential implications regarding the local community at large. Additionally, the plan provides a practical toolkit, proposing concrete strategy directions and policy frameworks for the local government towards 2050. In this section, we draw together the results of our research and propose some general findings and concrete recommendations for the local government moving forward. These recommendations are based on the six recurrent themes (see Figure 3) identified throughout the City of Sydney Commons Ecosystem Analysis (Part 4).

Figure 3. City of Sydney Commons Ecosystem Analysis Themes



As our initial consultations demonstrate, commons-oriented initiatives provide a valuable service to the local community, not only in terms of providing a service or produce, but offering residents education, creating social connections and increasing community resourcefulness to tackle the city's social and sustainability challenges. Yet, many of the commons-oriented initiatives and work remains largely ignored by the mainstream market. As such, there is a need for the local government to better support these commons-oriented initiatives.

A clear need exists for local government to help connect these commons-oriented projects in the development of a more coherent sector. Currently, the majority of commons-oriented initiatives are working in silos with immense barriers to remaining viable within a competitive and profit-oriented market. With strategic support in the early stages, commons-oriented initiatives are more likely to thrive and become self-sustaining over the longer-term. The plan suggests there is potential for local government to work in closer collaboration with commons-oriented initiatives, opening up public resources for communal use and/or providing more resources for commons-oriented projects. In progressing the commons in Sydney, we note the City of Ghent experience (see Part 6) and suggestion to 'invite an open conversation on how commons want to work with the city and allow them to self organise.' We also acknowledge the importance of independent civic based institutions for 'creating space for an open and open dialogue between the city council, city employees and the commons' (see Part 6).

We acknowledge that the Australian context differs in comparison to the European context, particularly in regards to power dynamics and legislative bases for influencing policy development and planning. Yet, as we have demonstrated through the Plan, there

are many possibilities for the City of Sydney to enable and support the growth of these commons-oriented initiatives for shared benefit. As a financially thriving and well-respected local government, the City of Sydney has the resources and capacity to really harness this potential, to create a ‘commons’ agenda and establish clear working guidelines. Thus, the following strategy and policy directions are recommended for inclusion in Council’s Sustainable Sydney 2050 plan:

## **A) Strategy directions**

### **1) Create a coherent policy framework to support the growth of a ‘commons’ ecosystem**

The local government could work in collaboration with the SCL to review existing regulations and create a coherent policy framework to promote a more inclusive generative local economy and social infrastructure across each domain. This includes the development of a commons standard and minimum requirements and the investigation of:

- a poly-governance model for developing the Sydney commons ecosystem. A poly-governance model would involve key foundational stakeholders including local government, educational institutions, civil society groups and representatives of commons organisations (including the SCL in this case)
- the co-cities index for measuring contributions towards co-governance, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the New Urban Agenda.

### **2) Prioritise commons-oriented projects and localised community wealth building**

When distributing resources and funding, the city could prioritise commons-oriented projects that focus on community wealth building, equitable access to resources and that foster social inclusion, such as neighbourhood wide tool libraries or community-run food cooperatives. This would be endorsed through intentional community wealth building strategies, social procurement policies and would include the development of criteria for defining commons-oriented projects.

### **3) Open public resources**

There is potential for the pooling and mutualisation of Council resources more broadly in support of commons-oriented projects, for example by offering underutilized spaces and assets for community groups in need. This may also include hosting and coordinating events and training in local libraries and council facilities.

### **4) Act as a broker between established organisations and the grassroots**

The local government could work as a broker between the larger organisations (across the sectors) and grassroots projects, enabling commons-oriented initiatives to secure funding and support, whilst ensuring that the power stays within the community and that the initiatives remain inclusive and accessible to all city residents.

### **5) Collaborate with other councils to advocate for change**

The City of Sydney could collaborate with other local councils, to increase communication, exchange and coordination of action between cities, and for leveraging systemic change in other levels of government.

## **B) Policy framework - Recommendations**

1. Advocate for non-commercial finance loans, which could include matching civic crowd-funding, no interest micro-loans, alternative community currencies, the use of local pools of capital such as personal and institutional bank deposits and superannuation for local community wealth building.
2. Offer a suite of commons-oriented capacity building workshops including a focus on crowd-funding, commons-oriented organising forms, commons licencing, platform cooperatives and innovative livelihood practices.
3. Create an inventory of civic assets and offer underutilized spaces and assets to commons-oriented groups for free.
4. Enable communal sharing that encourages reuse, borrowing and swapping, repair and maintenance of goods – together with education that promotes buying less and smarter.
5. Provide support in terms of data, resources and funding to research projects that assess the organisation and impacts of commons-oriented initiatives in the city.
6. Provide a commons entrepreneurship support program, participative and sharing tools, funding and other promotion tools.
7. Support two specific commons-oriented pilot projects, including one generative economy and one social infrastructure building focused initiative, in order to develop the communities' understanding of the commons as a practice.
8. Support the development of a commons network for keeping the sector connected and informed. This could include holding an annual Sydney City Commons Summit to celebrate the successes, highlight the challenges and innovations and establish Sydney as a commons hub and destination for exploring collaborations with other LGA's.

## **Part 6: The International Commons Movement and Ecosystem**

### **Overview:**

The international commons movement has been growing and developing over the past several years and is increasingly merging with a networked cities movement such as Sharing Cities and Co-Cities movements.

Each country and region will develop commons networks based on their individual social, political, cultural and economic context. For example in Barcelona and Catalunya in Spain the approach is heavily influenced by a strong history of social and solidarity economics whereas in Amsterdam the context of environmental and sustainability action is a strong formative influence on the commons network formation and functioning. Similarly in the United States, the Detroit and Preston project rely on a model of strong anchor educational institutions.

The Sydney Commons Lab and City of Sydney are in the enviable position of being able to learn from and connect with these international thought leaders and networks to help inform the model that might be piloted in our own context. This will be informed not only by international case studies and interviews as outlined below but by the original research undertaken as part of this transition plan to apply these ideas to the unique Australian and local context.

### **A) Case Study: Bologna**

#### **Background**

At the heart of policy in Bologna is the belief that citizen initiatives and collaboration are phenomena that have historically been under utilised. With that in mind, government regulation and support is seen as the infrastructure for adding value to Bologna through realisation of the potential of citizen initiatives and collaboration. Thus far, the Bologna government has entered in over 180 formal contracts on collaboration with citizen groups that concretely detail the scope of specific projects and the responsibilities of all parties involved. They are classed as 1. Living together (collaborative services), 2. Growing together (co-ventures) and 3. Working together (co-production).

#### **Legal and Administrative Framework**

Recognising that their base legal frameworks made it illegal for citizens to maintain or improve commons spaces, Bologna adopted the Regulation on Collaboration Between Citizens and the City for the Care and Regeneration of Urban Commons. This has performed a crucial ancillary role as the legislative infrastructure for the “city as a commons” projects.

In developing the framework, organisations, innovators and citizens experimented with the co-management of designated greenspaces and abandoned buildings. Learnings from those projects informed the final regulation. Central to this is “collaboration pacts” which concretely defines the commons covered by regulation and the stakeholders involved. Individuals, groups, communities and non-profit organisations can sign them. It promotes citizen action in 1. Social innovation, 2. Collaborative services, 3. Urban creativity, 4. Digital innovation and 5. Collaborative tools and practices that lead to urban communing.

#### **Sharing Enterprises/Social Innovation Support (and some brief project examples)**

Social Street is a community organised project that connects individual neighbourhoods through Facebook groups to encourages active participation in the neighbour upkeep,



social interaction and sharing initiatives. Bologna's new regulation allowed them to reclaim abandoned advertising boards to promote community interaction.

Human Ecosystem Relazioni is a Bologna funded project that allows city data owned by social media platforms to be converted and used by city officials, researchers and the community. It enables the identification of behavioural trends and prevailing opinions amongst citizens that can be used to improve infrastructure and create further policy around citizen's opinion. This model has been taken up in São Paulo, Brazil, and New Haven, United States.

### **Policy Resources**

<http://comune.bologna.it/media/files/bolognaregulation.pdf>

<http://labgov.city/commonspress/bologna-regulation-on-public-collaboration-for-urban-commons/>

<http://co-bologna.it/>

<https://www.he-r.it/>

## **B) Case Study: Barcelona**

### **Background**

The commons movement in Barcelona came as a response to the real estate speculation and tourism booms that left many locals displaced. Barcelona is constantly developing policy proposals aimed at encouraging the collaborative economy. This is being done primarily through 'Procomuns', a forum for the co-creation of policy through debate and discussion. Additionally, the Barcelona City Council has formed 'BarCola', a group comprised of Council officials and representatives of 20 enterprises within Barcelona's commons collaborative sector. Together they provide public policy recommendations based around the challenges in industry.

### **Legal and Administrative Framework**

Despite policy formulation, Barcelona City Council has limited legal power to directly regulate areas like housing and impose more stringent labour laws on businesses than those that exist at a national level. Despite this, the Council has been creative in pushing for laws that give them the power to indirectly regulate housing, while also limiting the companies they do business with to ones that agree to pay a living wage relative to the real cost of living in Barcelona. They have also been the most effective council to date in regulating illegal vacation apartments listed on Airbnb.

In 2016 they passed a law that allowed the city to expropriate bank-owned homes for four to seven years to help with the affordable housing shortage. This was allowable in cases where banks were leaving them empty for extended periods of time while waiting for property prices to rise. Fines were also imposed on banks engaged in this practice.

In response to the saturation of vacation listings and the lack of long-term affordable rentals for locals, the Council created a requirement for all vacation apartment hosts to apply for licenses, subsequently rejecting them in areas too saturated with tourists. Further they were able to obtain an agreement to allow the Council access to data on all the listings on Airbnb, enabling easier detection and enforcement against those flouting regulation.

### **Sharing Enterprises/Social Innovation Support (and some brief project examples)**

decidim.barcelona is a participatory democracy project that greatly increases the capacity of citizens to participate in the improvement of Barcelona. The digital platform is mobile-first and allows citizens to submit proposals. Further it also advertises face to

face meetings where project planning is discussed. People can also receive updates and view the minutes of these meetings through the platform.

Som Energia Coop is a non-profit renewable energy co-operative that resells energy purchased from the market, allowing Barcelona's citizens to use affordably priced, eco-friendly energy sources. This model already operates successfully in Northern European countries like the United Kingdom, Netherlands, Belgium and Denmark.

### **Policy Resources**

<https://www.citylab.com/equity/2018/04/barcelona-is-taking-over-repossessed-homes/558239/>

<https://www.citylab.com/life/2018/06/barcelona-finds-a-way-to-control-its-airbnb-market/562187/>

[https://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/participaciociudadana/sites/default/files/documents/barcelona\\_city\\_council\\_commons\\_policy\\_citizen\\_assets\\_programme.pdf](https://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/participaciociudadana/sites/default/files/documents/barcelona_city_council_commons_policy_citizen_assets_programme.pdf)

## **C) Case Study: Seoul**

### **Background**

Seoul launched its Sharing City Seoul Project in 2012, coupled with a plan to support projects that would promote sharing amongst its citizens. The project is seen as a social innovation initiative with the primary goals of creating new economic opportunities, solidifying citizen relationships and reducing waste. The project has a strong utilitarian focus, with emphasis on the ability to achieve more, while using fewer resources. For example, broadening the availability of spaces like city hall during the week to increase the public utility of existing infrastructure.

### **Legal and Administrative Framework**

Seoul created its sharing promotion rules framework to underlie all its initiatives related to developing the sharing economy. The sharing promotion rules provide general principles for sharing public resources, stipulates the organisations and enterprises that will share resources, provides administrative and financial support to them, while also providing guidelines on the formation of a sharing promotion committee.

### **Sharing Enterprises/Social Innovation Support (and some brief project examples)**

The sharing promotion committee is comprised of academics, lawyers, media figures, non-profit private organisations, research institutes as well as council figures responsible for economic, transportation and innovation affairs. The committee creates policy, advises on how laws are operating in practice and reviews how support is being delivered to sharing organisations and enterprises.

- e-Poomasi is a platform on which people can barter for goods or services without money which has been used by thousands of citizens.
- The Open Data Plaza is an initiative that released 1,300 government data sets to the public for use in business and civil society.
- To address the housing shortage a program was created to match young people with seniors who have rooms in their homes going unused.
- Numerous lending libraries have been established around Seoul that allow people to borrow books, rent tools and have repairs performed.
- 1,992 wireless access points have been set up in marketplaces, parks and government offices.

## **Policy Resources**

<http://legal.seoul.go.kr/legal/english/front/page/law.html?pAct=lawView&pPromNo=1191>

## **D) International Interviews (interviewer Monique Potts)**

### **Interview 1: Former Chief Strategy Officer City of Ghent**

Coenegrachts, Karl Filip (2019, 1 August). Personal interview.

Founder and Director citiesofpeople.com

karlphilip@citiesofpeople.com

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/karlphilip/>

## **Background**

Karl Phillip was employed by the City of Ghent from 2001 until 2019. While in his most substantial recent role as Chief Strategy Officer for the city he initiated and led the Ghent Commons Transition Plan in partnership with Michel Bauwens from the Peer 2 Peer Foundation (P2P). The City of Ghent is one of 600 municipalities in Belgium, which has seven (plus) levels of governmental all with the same status or authority.

The City of Ghent has approximately 248,00 residents from diverse social and cultural backgrounds. It has developed a strong reputation for its progressive participatory and social engagement initiatives, the most recent of which is the Ghent Commons Transition Plan 2018. Other progressive initiatives which may be of interest and relevance to Sydney include the following:

- The Participatory Policy Unit which saw each of Ghent's 25 neighbourhoods resourced with an embedded communications and coordination city staff member, to liaise directly between the city and the local residents. Neighbourhood level plans, ideas and strategy were fed into the city wide strategic plan.
- The Living Streets project which enables residents to nominate 3 months of the year where their street can be blocked off to become a common living area.
- The complementary currency Toreke which successfully built community cohesion and generative economy for Turkish and Moroccan migrant communities.
- Ghent Living Labs which was set up as a partnership with education and business under the climate transition umbrella.
- Ghent Crowdfunding Platform to fund for climate adaptation projects.

## **Key Insights for Sydney Commons**

- City attempts to establish an 'Assembly of Commons' was challenging as different commons groups had their own competitive engagement with the city eg. Car sharing groups. What was more successful was to invite an open conversation on how commons groups want to work with the city and allow them to self organise.
- Having Michel Bauwens come in as an independent party to draft the Commons transition plan created space for an honest and open dialogue

between the city council, city employees and commons that could not have happened if the city had created the report.

- One of the biggest challenges is changing the mindset of civil servants to see that the city is just one stakeholder or actor in society and needs to act as a partner in this network.
- Through dialogue between civil servants/politicians and the commons stakeholders, the focus shifted from the commons seeking project funding from the city to identifying space as being one of the biggest challenges that the city was able to support the commons with. The city has many sites earmarked for potential development in 20 or 30 years which were able to made available on a temporary basis for commons initiatives based on some simple regulations.
- A 'pioneer fund' was set up to give citizen and community led initiatives a small grant (2,500 Euro) to get started and a space to work from.
- Initial work of the commons transition plan involved a scan or mapping of commons initiatives which identified 550 groups or initiatives. These were then grouped into 8 key domains (eg. Food, housing, energy) and meetings were held with representatives from each of these domains which included commons groups, academics and civil servants responsible for these domains. A separate strategy was developed for each of these domains as part of the transition plan.
- It's crucial to have a legal expert on board in the city legal team that has a solutions focused approach to engaging with commons initiatives and organisations.
- In terms of funding for a group to coordinate and support commons based initiatives, consider private or semi-private (philanthropic funding) as this will be more sustainable longer term. Another option is to partner with a more established civil society group that already has income streams and can support and auspice the setup of the group. Livelihood is the biggest challenge for this work.
- Start with pilot that includes a number of domains (eg. housing, mobility, social inclusion) and consider having one more public/higher profile and a few others that can be developed in a more organic way with less pressure.
- Recommend engaging with Sharing Cities network and Urbact championed by Christian Iaione (see separate interview).
- Look at Australian City Deals initiative as potential support for commons in Sydney this involves all 3 levels of government supporting strategic city based initiatives.



Living Streets Project Credit: Arijs, Gert (2018)

## **Resources**

<https://blog.p2pfoundation.net/a-look-at-ghents-policy-participation-unit/2018/11/03>

<http://www.sharingcitiesaction.net/>

<https://urbact.eu/>

<https://stad.gent/ghent-international/living-streets>

<http://www.goethe.de/ins/cz/prj/fup/en14317360.htm#targetText=The%20Toreke%20%2D%20which%20means%20little,for%20Employment%20and%20Social%20Econom%20Y>

<https://stad.gent/smartcity/ghent-living-lab>

<https://climate-adapt.eea.europa.eu/metadata/case-studies/ghent-crowdfunding-platform-realising-climate-change-adaptation-through-urban-greening>

## **Interview 2: Commons Network, Amsterdam**

de Groot, Thomas (2019, 19<sup>th</sup> August) Video interview

Urban Policies and European Campaigns Lead

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## **Background**

The Commons Network is a civil society organisation that works with activists, thinkers, pioneers and policy makers to tell stories, build networks and propose policies to support commoners and defend the commons throughout Europe. It began 5 years ago when the

founders, who were working on European policy on copyright and intellectual property in Brussels, realised the need for a broader platform for representing and advocating for public and common ownership and tangible and intangible common goods and services. Since then the organisation has grown to have 5 staff, fellows and interns and volunteers working on a range of issues including knowledge commons, digital commons and sector-based commons strategy and policy in food, energy, housing, care services, energy, finance and more. They have identified 3 main strategies; telling stories to build new narratives around the commons, working with policy makers and building networks for the commons.

In the last municipality elections in Amsterdam, the concept of 'fearless cities' and the 'commons' were included in the mandate of government. The City of Amsterdam engage the Commons Network for one day a week to provide advice, liaison and advocacy in engaging with commons organisations and networks. Their most recent collaborations have included 6 position papers for the commons in key sectors of food, research on relevant international models and frameworks, building a network of citizen ambassadors for individual neighbourhoods.

The current projects include a digital mapping project for commons in Amsterdam, ongoing consulting with City of Amsterdam on commons initiatives and building a European Commons network. The European Commons Network aims to provide a platform and network to bring together commons networks and cities across Europe to feed into and influence broader European Union policy frameworks and strategy development. They have held three European Commons Network meetups as annual 3 day events at different locations in Europe.

### **Key Insights for Sydney Commons**

- Focus on particular initiatives to grow understanding of the commons as a practice rather than talk about 'the commons', don't get too hung up on the language. For example starting cooperatives, democratising decision making in communities/neighbourhoods, building local economic resilience.
- There is a lot of interest in post free-market, post capitalist economy strategies and they get a lot of approaches for consulting. The work is mainly with government and independent organisations.
- They have found it valuable to be an independent civic organisation and are funded by independent philanthropic and civic organisations primarily, such as Open Society Foundation.
- They work on an 80/20 rule for staff, 80% work on autonomous projects, 20% services projects eg consulting to local government.
- They don't support commons initiatives to start up, but want to provide support services eg legal and financial advice, still building capacity to do this.
- They are mapping commons organisations in Amsterdam and aim to build a platform and network where Dutch commons organisations can support each other.
- Part of their goal is to collect stories from commons organisations around the country and Europe and share them with the network and more broadly to the public.
- They developed their key focus and strategy through a series of workshop sessions, where they identified their key audiences, agreed on what they do and don't do as an organisation.



- Latest focus in work with City of Amsterdam is advice, analysis and strategies for building thriving local neighbourhoods based around regenerative local economies.
- Have developed a fellows program with universities for HDR researchers.
- Advice for Sydney in starting out is to hold some strategy days to get very clear on what the main activities and audiences are. Develop a legal entity asap in order to apply for funds. Attract inspiring people from Europe to visit!

## **Resources**

<http://commonsnetwork.org/>

### **Interview 3: Goteo crowdfunding platform, Asturias Spain**

Mauricio O'Brien (2019, 30<sup>th</sup> August) Skype interview

Co-Director Fundacion Goteo

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<https://en.goteo.org/>

## **Background**

Goteo is an open network for crowdfunding, collaborations and training, supporting the commons and social innovation. Founded from Platoniq.net as a means to provide matched crowdfunding it has supported over 16 matchfunding programs since 2013 which allow government and public entities to match financial contributions of the public or community for social innovation projects.

Based in Asturias Spain Goteo is a self-funded, not for profit fin tech startup dedicated to supporting and growing the commons through providing open source and open data resources. It acts as a platform for supporting the financing of commons movement in Spain and now in partnership with European Union, cities across Europe and an initiative in Japan.

Goteo have worked with matchfunding over a range of scales from local municipalities, cities (eg Barcelona City Hall), regions, universities and private funders. The first matchfunding initiative was in 2013 with NESTA and they have since hosted over 16 match funding initiatives, with anything from 3-24 projects each. The Goteo Foundation has been developing into a broader platform cooperative to support participatory policy development and participatory democracy.

Matchfunding involves public or private organisations contributing a matched amount of funding to the community through a 'campaign' style call out for ideas from the public. The progress of projects can be tracked through the online tools including feedback from funders on how projects meet criteria, funds contributed from public or community and selection decision making processes. There is usually a call out for projects on a particular area of social need (eg. belonging, housing) with an initial event followed by a period of time for members of the public to respond with projects and solutions.

As a demonstration of the success of their work, the Goteo Foundation has been invited by the European Union to research and propose a framework for using matchfunding to allocate funds and improve transparency in the distribution of funds from the EU for local member state projects. This includes research on legal frameworks for how decision making on funding and project priorities can be made by communities via a digital platform, with the aim of building trust and transparency in democratic processes.



### **Key Insights for Sydney Commons**

- Suggest starting with a pilot for a first matchfunding project to focus on one area; for example, a specific Sustainability Development Goal and call out for projects. Have a specific focus and budget (eg budget of \$12,00) to matchfund 3-4 projects.
- Allow for long lead time for first implementation to secure a legal and regulatory framework and ensure transparency and accountability.
- Research has shown the outcomes and success of matchfunding campaigns are generally much higher than crowdfunding campaigns due to shared responsibility and accountability.
- Generally allow for a two month period for open call out for projects after initial launch event.
- Need an agreed communication plan to run alongside matchfunding campaign.

### **Resources**

<https://blog.p2pfoundation.net/matchfunding-social-entrepreneurship-and-the-commons-collaborative-economy-in-barcelona/2018/03/09>

<https://pro.europeana.eu/post/goteo-and-the-case-for-match-funding>

<http://platoniq.net/en/decide/p/2/crowdvocacy-plataformas-digitales-de-participacion-politica-y-crowdfunding-civico-juntan-fuerzas/>

<https://www.mdpi.com/2413-8851/2/3/61>

[https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=2434615](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2434615)

<http://fundacion.goteo.org/blog/matchfunding-crowdfunding-bajo-el-principio-de-corresponsabilidad?lang=en>

## **Part 7: Conclusion**

As the City of Sydney confronts a myriad of contemporary challenges, both global and local in scale, it also faces exciting new opportunities to re-imagine the social and economic structures that shape its communities and to re-orient the city, and its inhabitants, toward a sustainable future. This Transition Plan has provided an insight into how commons initiatives can develop community cohesion, inclusion and resilience and re-configure economic practices and norms, with waste-minimisation, environmental consciousness, and equality taking primacy over profit. By examining four existing Sydney commons-oriented initiatives as prototypes, the Plan has generated key guidance for the development of further support and policy structures to further enable and amplify commons-oriented initiatives. Council has a direct role here: a flourishing commons movement will require not only resourcing, but also logistical and technical support, space, and regulatory recognition – all within a long-term vision that recognises (and addresses) the current structural impediments to these initiatives. The Plan also examined how commons movements have been fostered elsewhere, in cities with perhaps different local concerns and demographic issues but with clear potential for addressing modern day challenges, such as global warming. In those studies, we saw how local government initiative feeds and feeds off the commons movement - and how these successes have manifested in many forms, across sectors, to build diverse, resilient, and inspired communities.

As part of forging a commons-oriented path for the City of Sydney, the Plan synthesises these varied findings into a number of recommended strategy directions and policies for Council, reproduced below. With so much existing potential already taking root in the City, and with so many sources of international inspiration, an active commons-oriented local government will have serious potential to make meaningful, lasting change.

### **Recommended Strategy Directions for Sustainable Sydney 2050:**

1. *Create a coherent policy framework to support the growth of a 'commons' ecosystem*
2. *Prioritise commons-oriented projects and localised community wealth building*
3. *Open public resources*
4. *Act as a broker between established organisations and the grassroots*
5. *Collaborate with other councils to advocate for change*

### **Policy Recommendations for Sustainable Sydney 2050:**

1. *Advocate for non-commercial finance loans*
2. *Offer a suite of commons-oriented capacity building workshops*
3. *Create an inventory of civic assets for use and make underutilized spaces available*
4. *Enable communal sharing, including education programs*
5. *Provide technical support and research funding*
6. *Provide entrepreneurship support and participative tools*
7. *Support two specific commons-oriented pilot projects*
8. *Support the development of a commons network.*

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**International Interviews (interviewer Monique Potts)**

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