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Commoning By Design

Exploring commoning approaches for multispecies stakeholder cooperation in systemic design

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ABSTRACT This workshop builds on previous work that explores a commoning approach for systemic design, and specifically, how Ostrom's eight Core Design principles (CDPs) could support relational design activities not only through alignment but by surfacing a plurality of voices and holding space for negotiating conflicting planetary stakeholder needs, motivations, and objectives. We will begin the workshop by inviting design practitioners and researchers to reflect on their experiences of how (or if) current design practices create conditions for improved multispecies stakeholder cooperation. We will continue to explore Ostrom's CPDs in depth including some research hypotheses on how they could help designers as a design heuristic for improved collaboration and more intentional group cooperation (Schaeper, 2022). The workshop references recent research conducted by the workshop facilitators in UK healthcare quality improvement and the service design context where the theories of the commons and their applicability to co-design and transitioning existing systems from being dysfunctional to being regenerative were explored (Robert et al., 2021 and Schaeper, Kothari, Hamilton, 2022). The outcomes of the workshop will include reflections on current systemic design approaches and a proposed set of design tools that could help designers who wish to practice systemic design through the lens of an alternative economic perspective based on equity, inclusion, and participation.

KEYWORDS: systemic design, commoning by design, commons, relational design, redesign design, cooperation by design, collaboration, equity, inclusion, multispecies design

RSD TOPIC(S): Economics & Organizations, Policy & Governance, Society & Culture, Sociotechnical Systems

Redesigning design based on the commons

Design is said to play an important role in the transition to a sustainable world, providing participatory processes to empower key stakeholders and giving them agency to effectuate change (Design Council, 2021). At the same time, many of the challenges we are facing, have been described as a failure of design (Escobar, 2017) and a failure to design for multispecies (Metcalf, 2015) urging designers to 'redesign design' (Akama et al. 2019). Research shows that having to reconsider the very ways stakeholders collaborate, design, and navigate towards creating sustainable change (Irwin, 2015) requires a much deeper understanding of relationality within design practice (Akama, Light, Kamihira, 2020; Escobar, 2017). In response, scholars have turned towards the social practice of the commons (i.e. Akomolafe, 2016; Bollier, 2019; Botero et al. 2020). The commons can be understood as deeply collaborative arrangements for value production based on participatory principles (Bauwens et al., 2018) that resonate well with system and co-design. At the heart lies the idea that collaborative management of common resources is possible for economic and environmental sustainability if relationships and community can unfold as a form of living organisation based on cooperative behaviours and enacted through a set of core design principles (Ostrom, 1990, see figure 1).

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1. **Clearly defined boundaries**
Individuals or households who have rights to withdraw resource units from the CPR must be clearly defined, as must the boundaries of the CPR itself.
 2. **Congruence between appropriation and provision rules and local conditions**
Appropriation rules restricting time, place, technology, and/or quantity of resource units are related to local conditions and to provision rules requiring labor, material, and/or money.
 3. **Collective-choice arrangements**
Most individuals affected by the operational rules can participate in modifying the operational rules.
 4. **Monitoring**
Monitors, who actively audit CPR conditions and appropriator behavior, are accountable to the appropriators or are the appropriators.
 5. **Graduated sanctions**
Appropriators who violate operational rules are likely to be assessed graduated sanctions (depending on the seriousness and context of the offense) by other appropriators, by officials accountable to these appropriators, or by both.
 6. **Conflict-resolution mechanisms**
Appropriators and their officials have rapid access to low-cost local arenas to resolve conflicts among appropriators or between appropriators and officials.
 7. **Minimal recognition of rights to organize**
The rights of appropriators to devise their own institutions are not challenged by external governmental authorities.
- For CPRs that are parts of larger systems:*
8. **Nested enterprises**
Appropriation, provision, monitoring, enforcement, conflict resolution, and governance activities are organized in multiple layers of nested enterprises.

Figure 1 Ostrom's core design principles (CDPs) exhibited by long enduring Common-Pool-Resource (CPR) institutions (Ostrom, 1990, p.90)

Commoning to stay relational

Recent work has highlighted the potential of using Ostrom's core design principles (CDPs) for improved co-design and service design practices (Robert and Schaeper, 2020; Robert et al., 2021, Schaeper, Kothari, Hamilton, 2022). This is because the CDPs address questions such as how to define purpose, create belonging and establish working boundaries in a group of stakeholders with varying needs including how to negotiate fair access, use and distribution of costs and benefits. Importantly though, the principles aim at the key factors necessary to establish and maintain successful

collaboration in equitable, inclusive, and effective ways and to normalise collaborative ways of working within wider systems (Williams, Lindenfalk, Robert, 2022).

Although Ostrom’s principles have been identified as belonging to different stages of the co-design process (Robert et al., 2021) they have also been found to be underrepresented in current systemic design practices (Schaeper, Kothari, Hamilton, 2022). Consequently, a set of design starter questions based on Ostrom’s principles has been developed to be adopted by systemic design practitioners as a framework for guiding strategic aspects of co-design and sustaining cooperation (Schaeper, Kothari, Hamilton, 2022).

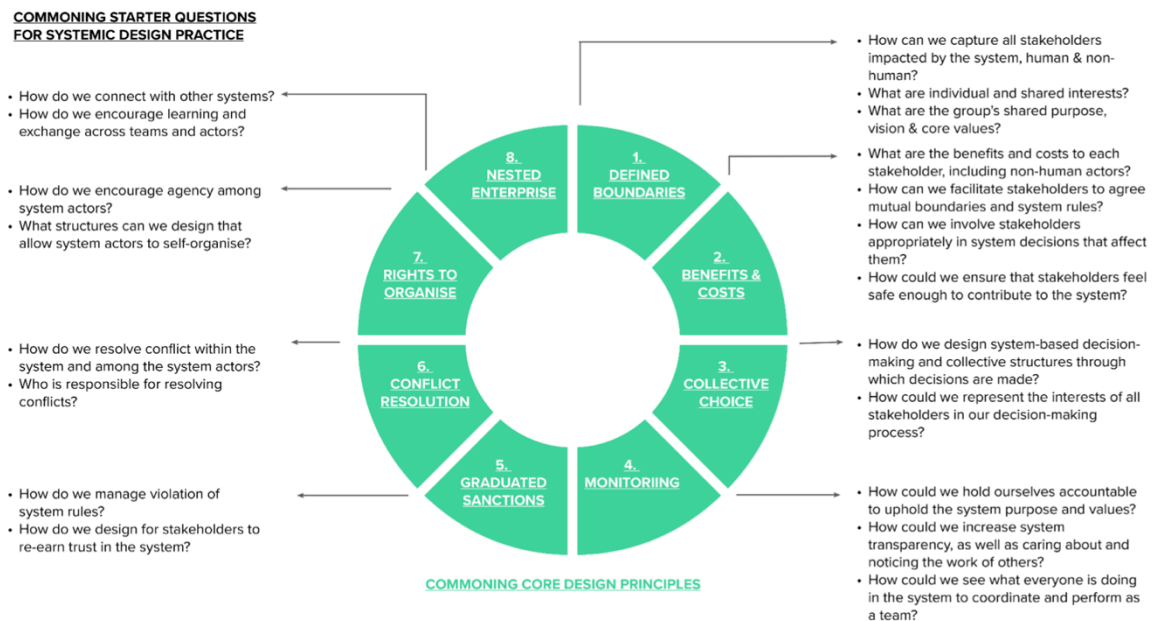


Figure 2 Commoning starter questions for systemic design practice (Schaeper, Kothari, Hamilton, 2022),, p.16)

Using Ostrom’s CDPs as a design heuristic has been put forward by the workshop organisers to allow systemic designers to facilitate the shift from designing systems as outcomes to focus on designing collaboration as systemic conditions (Schaeper, Kothari, Hamilton, 2022). It is this hypothesis that we aim to examine further and practically test and develop together with the workshop participants.

The RDS11 workshop

Given the renewed interest in the commons and the RSD11 topics 'economics & organizations' and specific areas focusing on planetary health and methods, the workshop intends to explore how systemic design practices could practically make use of, incorporate, and expand the economic theory of the commons through design practice and its inherent concepts. We will build on idea of the commons as presented in a recent paper at the Design Research Society conference (Schaeper, Kothari, Hamilton, 2022) and elaborate on a RDS11 presentation, where the authors make a case for the need to redesign design by bringing *commoning* to the fore as a form of designing for systems while holding space for systemic relations to unfold.

Workshop format

120 minutes | online | no of participants 20-25 max | using Zoom & Miro

Workshop objectives & outputs

The workshop will adopt a co-creation approach where participants will work with the organizers to reflect on systemic design practices and activities that support or threaten multispecies stakeholder cooperation. Together, we will test and enhance co-design tools based on Ostrom's work and the theory of the commons. Key objectives of the workshop are to:

1. Reflect and better understand how current systemic design practices plan and design for sustained cooperation and collaborative group working
2. Introduce the theories of the commons including Ostrom's core design principles (CPDs) for collaborative group working to the systemic design community
3. Explore how the CPDs might be incorporated into systemic design practice and what benefits could be gained, including ideas for tools that support cooperative infrastructures for multispecies stakeholder groups

RSD11 SUBMISSION FOR REVIEW

We envisage a range of workshop outputs which will be shared with attendees. These will include reflections on the facilitators' hypothesis on 'Commoning by Design' and an initial set of design tools relating to the CDP design starter questions. The outputs will aim to stimulate further research at the intersection of the commons and systemic design.

Workshop agenda in summary

ARRIVE 10 min - Welcome and introduction (Full group)

(Quick warm-up exercise 'What systemic design challenge involving multiple planetary stakeholders including non-humans, would you like to work on?' welcome and recap of workshop aims and objectives)

REFLECT 20 min – Lack of cooperation: a design failure? (Break up rooms, teams of 3-5 people)

(Discussing participants experiences of co-design, designing for cooperation and current shortcomings in design practice especially in the context of failing to design for multispecies and planetary stakeholder needs)

UNDERSTAND 15 min – Ostrom's CDPs & the commons (Full group)

(Sharing the underlying theory of the commons, as well as Ostrom's CPDs and the facilitators' hypothesis 'Commoning by Design')

EXPLORE 30 min – Exploring tools for 'Commoning by Design' (Break up rooms, teams of 3-5 people)

(Brainstorm and ideate ideas for tools and design activities to be used against the design starter questions for each layer of the design process – Explore, Define & Do)

SHARE & CLOSE 35 min – Sharing 'Commoning by Design' tools & final reflections (Full group)

(Each group shares their top two ideas. Organisers facilitate a reflection on the starter questions, the potential of the CDPs and current systemic design practices to close)

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