

CALL FOR PAPERS

EMPOWERING SYSTEMS FOR MUTUAL AID AND CARE: INSTITUTION BUILDING IN THE COMMONS SECTOR

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Abstract

The *Interdisciplinary Journal of Partnership Studies* will publish a themed issue in Fall 2021: Institution Building in the Commons Sector. The guest editors of this issue invite researchers, scholars, activists, and authors to submit original writing for publication in its Fall/Winter 2021 issue (Vol. 8 No. 2). The submission deadline is August 15, 2021.

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Recent work to include a “commons” sector alongside market, state, and household economic flows, that respects social equity and planetary boundaries (Raworth, 2017), raises important areas of dialogue with Partnership Studies. Partnerism is defined as a socio-economic system that values and rewards caring for one another, nature, and our collective future without resorting to forms of power shaped by domination (Eisler, 2008). Commons (and “commoning”) are described as a baseline of peer relationships where principles of reciprocity and intention to equitably share and care for common wealth compel self-organizing management systems (Bollier & Helfrich, 2019; Miller, 2020). In both commons economics and partnerism studies there is growing interest in building institutions—well-recognized, flexible yet enduring social forms that will assist

the work of mutual care and mutual aid. Such institution-building faces practical challenges of coordination, peer governance, and scale/iteration. This institution building and its practical methods are also challenged by residual cultural paradigms of dominance and shifting and conflicted paradigms of human place and relationship within larger natural systems (Brigham, 2017). What can new commons scholars and activists working on commons value recognition and institution building contribute to those in partnership studies who also seek a paradigm shift away from the capitalist and state-socialist institutions that rose to dominate the 20th century economic sphere?

The guest editors of this issue invite researchers, scholars, activists, and authors to submit original writing that examines **efforts to build institutions in the commons sector**. By examining commons-informed work on peer governance and creative ownership and stewardship structures, this issue seeks a broader conversation on how self-organization for mutual aid and mutual care is becoming a socially recognized and enduring part of an ecologically regenerative and socially equitable 21st century economy. **You are invited to share research and reflections on your own or others' experience in building practices of "commoning" and to consider what forms of internal coordination and governance were deployed, what outward modes of communication were used to bring social recognition to the work, and the role of cultural paradigm shifts in shaping these practices.** Both internal organization and external recognition, through reflecting and influencing relational paradigms and practices, contribute to building enduring social institutions.

Thus we invite you to explore wide-ranging questions such as, How do successful commoning institutions from indigenous, pre-capitalist, and nonmodern cultures inform experiments in 21st century commoning? What digital tools are proving useful for peer governance and coordination of mutual aid and care work? Are forms of new money or digital currencies contributing to making commons organization and governance more stable over time? How are emerging technology sectors such as renewable energy and

electrification of transportation providing opportunities for common wealth ownership strategies? Are efforts to build more local, healthy food systems finding community trust or other commons ownership strategies useful? What new (or ancient) ownership models have arisen to serve commoning activities and protect and circulate values for mutual aid workers? What diverse strategies, from legal to art-based, empower common wealth claims and make them recognizable to non-commons institutions and social actors? Does the mutualism of nature provide peer-governance design thinking for commons along the lines of biomimicry? How might Ostrom's (1990) ideas of subsidiarity extend to the natural systems in which humans are embedded to frame governance within planetary boundaries? How do nested commons governance forms learn over time, apprenticing themselves to each other and larger natural systems that form the source of their common wealth? How do forms of internal organization and external recognition place future generations in their relational design?

For commons scholars and activists, creating a recognizable, practical, and enduring commons sector in the 21st century economy is a necessary part of the solution to the destruction and inequitable distribution of the earth's common wealth enabled by 20th century capitalist and state socialist systems (Berkes, 2008; Bollier, 2016; Federici & Linebaugh, 2018; Milun, 2020). An economy that is embedded within a ceiling of planetary boundaries and a foundation of social equity needs new institutions to enable and protect the work that communities can do to care for and share with each other and all of creation (Raworth, 2017). Local community ownership and stewardship and peer governance are recurring social strategies that counteract enduring domination paradigms and the suffering they enable (Eisler & Fry, 2019). Nobel Prize economist Elinor Ostrom proposed that experimentation with commons governance—in particular creative, institution-building work around trust and reciprocity—was an essential contribution to designing common wealth economic solutions (Ostrom, 1990). In this special issue of the *Interdisciplinary Journal of Partnership Studies*, we are eager to hear from scholars and activists engaged in and studying institution building in the commons sector.

Submission Deadline for this Fall/Winter Issue is August 15, 2021.

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