



# Alessandra Quarta\* and Antonio Vercellone

## Introduction

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**Abstract:** The piece introduces the special issue, framing it within the context of the European Horizon 2020 Project “Generative European Commons Living Lab”.

**Keywords:** gE.CO living lab instead, urban commons, law

As a part of the Horizon 2020 gE.CO Living Lab project, on October 2020 the University of Turin launched a multidisciplinary call for papers on the main aspects and implications of the urban commons phenomena in Europe.

gE.CO Living Lab is a project which aims at promoting and supporting formal groups or informal communities of citizens who manage fab-labs, hubs, incubators, co-creation spaces and social centres which are created in regenerated urban voids. These innovative practices are considered generative commons, because they are based on sharing and collaboration between citizens and establish new partnerships between public institutions and local communities, they set forth new models of governance of these urban spaces based on care, solidarity, inclusion, participation, economic and environmental sustainability.

These practices bear several implications.

Which legal institutions can a community rely on to implement a generative commons? Which tools should be used to ensure citizens’ participation and inclusion? Which models of governance best promote the principles at the cornerstone of the theory of the commons? How do urban commons question the institutions of public and private property? What concepts of urban regeneration and inclusion do these practices bring about? What is the impact of this phenomenon on our cities?

The call was open to scholars and researchers of all fields and candidates were asked to submit an abstract on one or more sensitive topics related to one or more issues proper to urban commons, such as:

- Urban commons and the law: practical and theoretical issues.
- Governance of urban commons: models, problems, perspectives, best practices.

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- The social and economic impact of urban commons: urban regeneration, anti-gentrification strategies, inclusion of minorities and measurement of social impact.
- Temporary uses and urban commons.
- Technology and urban commons: digital tools for the promotion and management of urban commons, failures and success.

The call for papers resulted in a great success and more than 60 abstracts were submitted for selection.

Selected contributions were then presented at the International Conference of Urban Commons, which took place at the University of Turin on the 21st and 22nd of June, 2021. During the conference, more than 50 scholars coming from different fields (urbanism, architecture, political science, law, computer studies, economics and sociology) and countries have discussed, throughout 28 presentations, the main aspects of urban commons in Europe. The discussion was organized in three sections, ideally mimicking the process of commoning, namely that process in which a group of people demands the care, direct and participatory management of a given asset, emphasizing its importance for the satisfaction of the rights of the community or for its social cohesion. The three sections – (i) from urban voids to generative commons, (ii) engagement and impact, (iii) infrastructures of urban commons – were then concluded by a round table, dedicated to some of the more interesting experiences of urban commons currently in place at the international level.

At the end of the conference, contributors were asked to submit a paper for publication.

This special issue, after a first paper giving account of the content of the entire conference in the form of a “conference report”, groups the contributions presented in the field of the law.