

The role of the City in the development of Housing Commons

Xenia Katsigianni, KU Leuven, polyxeni.katsigianni@kuleuven.be

Rihab Oubaidah, KU Leuven, rihab.oubaidah@gmail.com

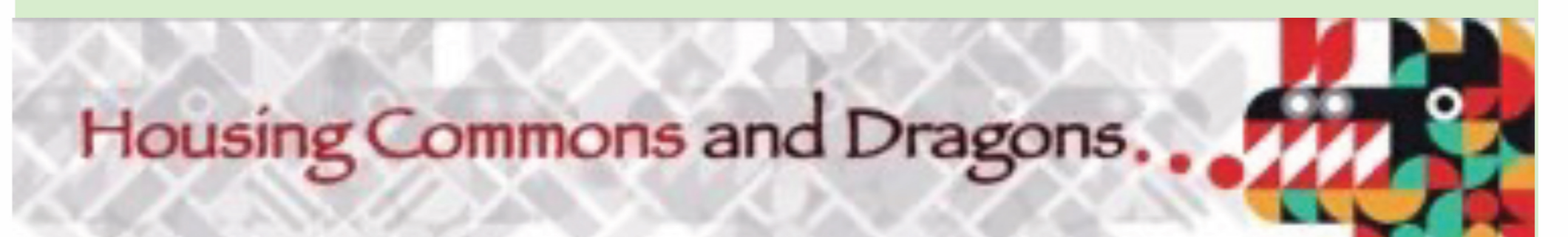
Can the State have a role in the development of Commons?

By analysing the case of the Community Land Trust in Leuven (Belgium) this study reveals the contribution and potential of state-driven commons to provide affordable housing while empowering local communities. The involvement of local authorities poses complexities in the commoning process, but at the same time the state serves as a catalyst facilitating access to land and resources, supporting democratic and collaborative governance processes and therefore building housing commons.

Research questions & Methodology

The **Community Land Trust in Leuven (CLTL)** –an ongoing not-yet-completed project run by the municipality of Leuven since 2014– stands out as an ideal case to explore the role of the state in commons governance, since it is among the very few CLT examples in Europe where **housing commons** were **initiated by the City** and not as a bottom-up initiative. A group of 20 international students and researchers in collaboration with the CLTL coordinator conducted action research in March 2023 to unfold the role of local authorities in CLTL governance and address the following questions:

The research group designed and organized the **'Housing Commons and Dragons Parley'** an open debate and role play game (the latter inspired by Verena Lenna, 2021, generative-commons.eu). Participants ranging from academics, Leuven citizens, housing developers, lawyers, architects and journalists discussed and exchanged ideas on the local needs for affordable housing, the characteristics of a future community of residents for the CLT in Leuven and the role of the City.



Participants also played the Housing Commons and Dragons game simulating a community of CLT residents. They followed real-life scenarios to identify possible "dragons", i.e. challenges in the implementation of the CLT and the resilience of the commoning process. The game also revealed characteristics of future CLTL residents contributing to the effort of the City to find the interested community that will take over the commoning process.

Is it possible that the State -instead of a community- takes over the creation of housing commons? Who defines the needs to be covered and who is included in the housing commons governance in that case?

Can Cities and States host the ontology of Commons to develop improved land and housing policies and trigger a radical shift in the management of land and resources?



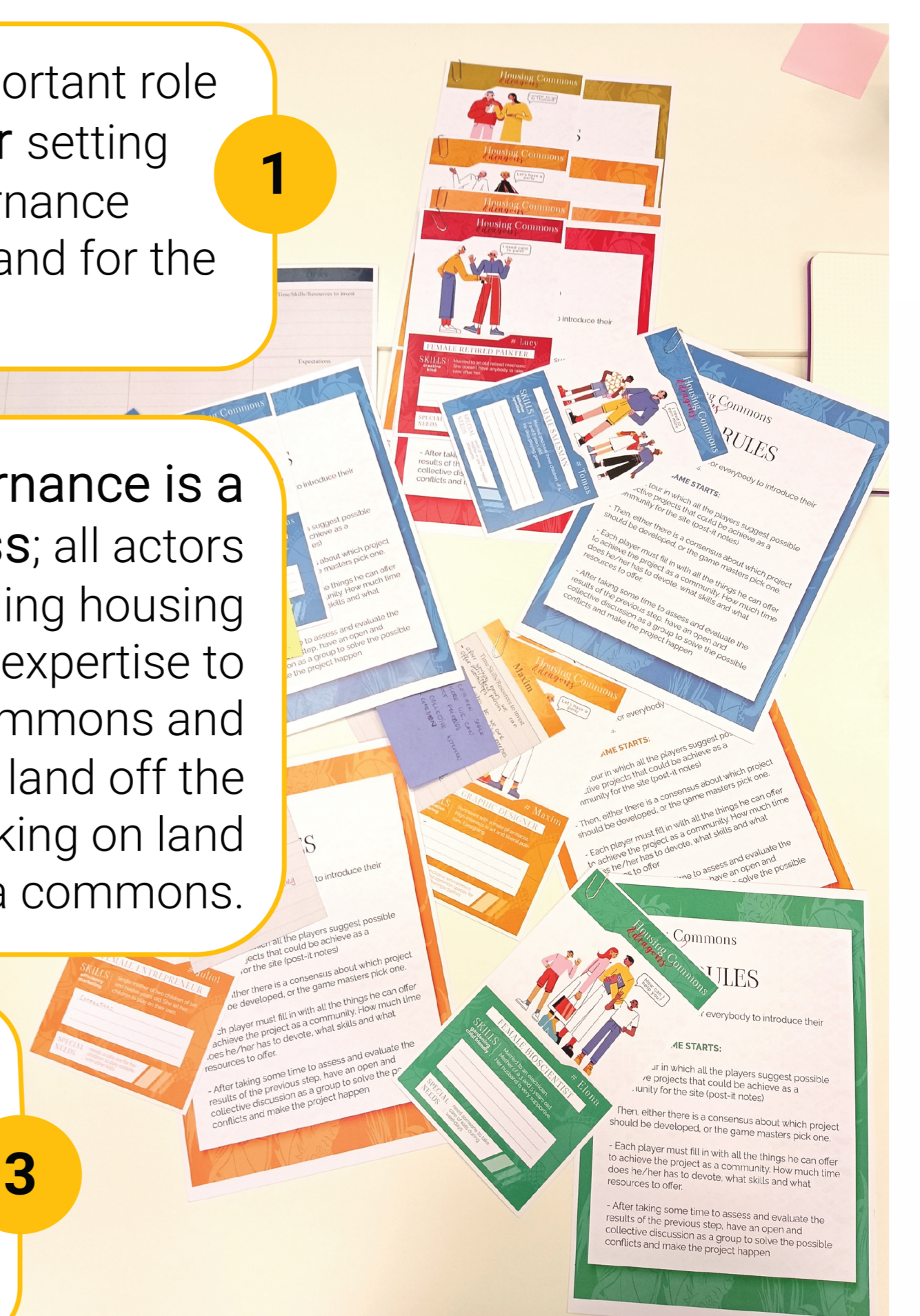
Findings



1 The state plays an important role as a **facilitative leader** setting up a collaborative governance process and providing land for the initiation of a CLT.

2 Collaborative governance is a **commoning process**; all actors involved are defining housing needs mobilizing their expertise to build knowledge commons and finding ways to take land off the market, therefore working on land as a commons.

3 There is an ongoing transformation of the City from a **leading authority** to a **commoner**, sharing equal rights with other people involved in land management. However, 'dragons' are still present in higher levels of authority.



References



Useful links

