

The Commons, State Power and New Political Movements
A fishbowl-discussion
Commons Space at World Social Forum 2016
Commons Strategies Group

When? Thursday, **August 11, 2016**
12:00 to 2:00pm: lunch, mingling and 1 on 1 interviews
with Remix the Commons broadcast team
2:00 to 4:00pm: fishbowl discussion

Where? Radio Auditoire; Montréal, 5212 Boulevard St. Laurent

It is often claimed that the Commons points to a way beyond both Market and State. We claim that it mainly provides a way to **deepen democracy** – if a multitude of people and political agents stand up for it. If we want to strengthen the Commons and truly care for democracy, we need to challenge how economic and political power are being shaped, channeled and reproduced – through market forces *and* through the political apparatus. That is what commoners are doing! They take power and production into their own hands. Political parties and state institutions should support such efforts. Instead, their often-corrupt ways of „doing politics“ and their economic policies -- neoliberal, developmentalist and/or extractivist -- ignore or even criminalize the commons and commoners.

During the last decade, several political movements have challenged the forces that solidify power relationships in society: Occupy, M15, social movements in several Latin American countries, DIEM25 in Europe, the climate justice movement, digital activists including Wikileaks, the Bernie Sanders campaigners in the US, and others. Each has shown that (pressure for) change comes from below, from common people doing uncommon things, while using new technologies and ways of relating to each other. How transformative are these movements? How do they frame their work, strategies and slogans? What role do they play in the fight for the commons and what role does the commons as a discourse and political paradigm play for them? This is a fairly unexplored topic!

Let's start exploring it in a moderated **fishbowl discussion** at **Commons Space** of the **World Social Forum 2016** in Montreal/Canadá, we want to assess and openly discuss some of the achievements and aspirations of these political transformations from a commons perspective.

Organizers:

Silke Helfrich, Commons Strategies Group (Silke.Helfrich@gmx.de, moderation)
Elizabetta Cangelosi, Transform (betta.cangelosi@gmail.com, logistics)

Participants: Everybody(!) is invited to participate in this fishbowl discussion especially if belonging to one of the new political movements or active for the commons. The fishbowl methodology will be explained at the beginning. The discussion starts with inputs of international guests, 5 minutes each.

Guests:

- Elizabeth Peredo, Trenzando Ilusiones (Bolivia)
- Orsan Senalp, Networked Labour (Turkey)
- Ellen Friedman, Commons Spark Collective (USA)
- Claudia Gomez P. (SAKBE) & Gustavo Esteva (Universidad de la Tierra), Mexico
- Silke Helfrich, Commons Strategies Group (Germany)
- Elisabetta Cangelosi, Transform (Italy)
- Becky Lentz, Communication Studies, Mc Gill University (Canada)
- virtually: Mayo Fuster, IGOInet/ 15M (Spain)
- YOU!

Questions to trigger the conversation

The focus will be determined by participants!

On the notion of the commons:

- ➔ (How) Does the commons provide a strong and positive narrative to empower progressive political movements?
- ➔ Is the notion of the commons and is the practice of millions of commoners present in the discourse of these movements?
- ➔ Is there an understanding of the commons as a political framework and paradigm shift in values, rather than (only) a policy for managing resources?

On commons principles and political movements:

- ➔ What is the relationship of these movements to the commons (movement), if any?
- ➔ Are these movements acting according to commons principles and if so, how does it transform them??

On strategies:

- ➔ (How) Do new political movements rethink and reshape democracy?
- ➔ Are progressive political movements (and commoners) up to re-imagining state power as a strategy for shifting legality, resources and support for the commons?
- ➔ Do these new political movements represent a window of opportunity to widen the space for commoning -- or will their protests simply accelerate enclosures, hyper-nationalism and repression?
- ➔ ADD YOUR QUESTION!

Related events at [WSF/Commons Space](#):

Commons and Public Power: Wednesday, August 10, 9 - 11 am , Radio Auditoire
Commons as a new Political Subject: (Transform! Global Social Justice), Thursday, August 11, 9 - 11 am, UQAM Pavillon A, Local A-2580, 400 rue Sainte-Catherine Est