

CENTRE FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

# THE ROLE OF THE COMMONS IN THE DECLINE AND REBIRTH OF SOCIETIES

## HOW PEER TO PEER COOPERATION CAN CONTRIBUTE TO SUSTAINABILITY TRANSITIONS

Lecture by Michel Bauwens – Ghent – Monday 19<sup>th</sup> of September 2022 – 15:00-17:00

### ABSTRACT

Most people would look at the history of human civilization as an evolving relation between market and state forms, and modern political struggles have essentially been a battle for supremacy between these two institutional powers. But there is a third, forgotten institution that has played a vital role in revitalizing and regenerating societies in decline and environmental overshoot: the institution of the commons. After centuries of decline, since the last decennium of the previous millennium, the commons have made a comeback. First through the emergence of digital open source communities, then through a tenfold increase in the number of urban commons since the crisis of 2008, and more recently, through the emergence of 'cosmo-local' productive communities which combine a relocalisation of physical production with global coordination of knowledge. If the current world situation can be read as a struggle between the market-dominated model of western capitalism, and the state-dominated model of the Eurasian axis, then the cosmo-local can be seen as a commons-centric alternative, based on the creation of new global commons institutions that are linked with a smart localization of production for human need. In this lecture, we will also look at the history of how human modes of consciousness have reacted to geo-climatic challenges, and what kind of educational institutions we could re-imagine to accompany such deep changes in human perception and action.

Michel Bauwens is the founder and director of the [P2P Foundation](#) and works in collaboration with a global group of researchers on the exploration of peer production, governance, and property. Michel is also research director of CommonsTransition.org, a platform for policy development aimed toward a society of the Commons and a founding member of the Commons Strategies Group. He has (co-)published various books and reports in English, Dutch and French, such as 'Network Society and Future Scenarios for a Collaborative Economy' (with Vasilis Kostakis), and 'P2P, A Commons Manifesto' (Westminster Un. Pr. 2019). His report 'P2P Accounting for Planetary Survival' examines which shared accounting systems are needed for production within planetary boundaries. Michel currently lives in Chiang Mai, Thailand. In 2017, he has crafted a Commons Transition Plan for the city of Ghent in Belgium, after a similar project for Ecuador in 2014. He has also been an advisor to SMart.coop – a fast growing European labour mutual for autonomous workers seeking welfare reform ('commonfare') while looking into biocapacity-based, contributive accounting mechanisms – and an independent candidate for the European Parliament. Michel is presently advisor to the Co-Creation Foundation in Vienna, and to One Project, crafting a commons-centric philanthropy with the latter. Since 2021, Michel is advising a partnership of European educational institutions, coordinated by Uppsala University's Department of Education (Leif Östman) and Ghent University's Centre for Sustainable Development (Katrien Van Poeck), regarding the development of their knowledge commons strategy. It is in the context of this work towards establishing 'peer-to-peer partnerships for co-creating educational commons' that we invited Michel for a series of lectures and workshops.

### When?

Monday 19<sup>th</sup> of September 2022 – 15:00-17:00

### Where?

Ghent University - Campus UFO  
Sint-Pietersnieuwstraat 41, Gent  
Technicum Gebouw 2  
Auditorium B - Walter Soete

**Please register** before 15<sup>th</sup> of September

<https://forms.office.com/r/Tr2q7fNjCR>

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