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# Co-design of the pluriversal Commons Model Canvas

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Are you engaged in a commons-related project – past, present, or future -- or do you want to integrate commoning into a project? This workshop is a supportive space for conference participants engaged with the commons to explore how they conceptualize and communicate the commons internally and externally. The workshop will focus on critiquing and adapting the Commons Model Canvas, an adaptation of the Business Model Canvas created by the workshop organizers to validate their own commoning practices. Participants are invited to complete a Commons Model Canvas for their project, share this work with the group for discussion, and to participate in adapting the Commons Model Canvas for future use. Based on our own research through design, participants can expect: to expand their knowledge about the commons and pluriversal design, to gain insightful peer feedback on their commoning projects, and to forge a potential peer network for future collaboration.

**CCS CONCEPTS** • Networks ~ Network architectures ~ Network design principles • Social and professional topics  
~ User characteristics ~ Cultural characteristics

**Additional Keywords and Phrases:** relational commons, pluriversal design, more-than-human design, communities of flourishing

## 1 context

This workshop builds on emerging trends in design research asking how design research can both benefit from and shape commons research [1]. In particular, this workshop begins to answer some of the questions raised at the “Commoning design and designing commons” workshop for PDC’20 [2]. The three questions from this previous PD workshop that are most directly addressed in the Commons Model Canvas are:

- How can we design better infrastructures and frameworks that enable, mediate, ~~protect, and foster~~ and proliferate the emerging and increasingly complex commoning practices?

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- What new design vocabulary, principles, policies, guidelines, and practices are needed to contribute to co-designing commons? How to connect this vocabulary with the one of feminism, environmentalism, indigenous movements, and the other transformative movements populating our common world?
- What other, pre-existing commons-based practices can we learn from, Indigenous knowledge, sharing traditions?

In response to these questions and to support the PDC participants' commoning practices, the workshop organizers created the Commons Model Canvas ([Fig. 1](#)). The Commons Model Canvas has been adapted from the Business Model Canvas [\[3\]](#), a respected and widely-cited business development tool also used in applied design [\[4\]](#). The Business Model Canvas visually represents an overall business model, or business logic, on a single page. The success of the Business Model Canvas is rooted in the reframing of business modeling as a collaborative, interactive, and visual process. In our own design practice and research, we asked not only how to adapt the Business Model Canvas to support commoning but also how to support pluriversal commoning [\[5\]](#). That is, commoning practices that account for diverse cosmologies, ontologies, and epistemologies within and connected to the commoning community.

[Figure 1](#) shows the current version of the Commons Model Canvas. The objective of this Commons Model Canvas is to transform commoning frameworks, namely the Institutional Analysis and Development (IAD) framework [\[6\]](#) and the Socio-Ecological Systems (SES) framework [\[7\]](#), from scholarly, analytical frameworks into accessible, generative frameworks. To address pluriversal design, the Commons Model Canvas incorporates Indigenous wellbeing frameworks [\[8, 9\]](#) and social practice architecture [\[10, 11\]](#) in its visualized form and discourse.

[Figure 2](#) shows a draft Commons Model Canvas for Soil Trust, a commoning project implemented by one of the workshop organizers as participatory action research. Responding to the absence of household-level organic waste recovery in Hong Kong, Soil Trust is building a soil commons around recovering food scraps that brings food consumers and producers together for mutually invigorating local soils. At the bi-weekly Farm Care Mornings, households are invited to produce their bokashi bedding, tend to compost, mulch the soil, and raise the vegetables grown out of it. At their homes, households source-separate, collect, and bokashi-ferment their kitchen scraps, as well as self-document their experience. Here, the Commons Model Canvas research responds to the organizer's need to justify this fledgling, soil-building commons to insiders and outsiders, find ways to sustain its care practices, secure new funding, and tailor follow-up interventions with the insights gained. The Commons Model Canvas was developed to evaluate and stimulate the self-enabling processes involved for equipping people with agency to self-manage place-bound, pluriversal commoning. This illustrative canvas reflects a number of themes in the PDC conference, including: designing between worlds, sentipensar, and relational commons. Developing the Commons Model Canvas at this early stage remains an iterative and collaborative process. In this workshop, we wish to invite other design researchers to use this tool within their project or praxis context and co-design a revised version that responds to their experiences.

## 2 GOALS

Are you engaged in a commons-related project – past, present, or future -- or do you want to integrate commoning into a project? This workshop is a supportive space for conference participants engaged with the commons to explore how you conceptualize and communicate the commons within the community and to external audiences.

The primary workshop goal is to co-design a revised version of the Commons Model Canvas through its applied use with participants. Participants are invited to complete a Commons Model Canvas for their project, share this work with the workshop group for discussion, and participate in adapting the Commons Model Canvas for future use. Based on our own research process, participants can expect to expand their knowledge about the commons and pluriversal design, gain insightful peer feedback on their commoning projects, strengthen their sensibility for decision-making processes, and forge a potential peer network for future collaboration.

### 3 Pre-workshop activity

Participants who would like to present their Commons Model Canvas will be asked to perform schematization work prior to the workshop. Participant-presenters (presenters) will be given the Commons Model Canvas along with guidance (questions and sample answers) to complete it. Presenters need not budget more than one hour to complete their draft Commons Model Canvas; however, as this workshop will support their work, presenters may choose to spend more time on this pre-workshop activity. Presenters will submit preliminary versions of these draft Commons Model Canvases to the organizers and bring the presentable version to the workshop. In the process of completing their draft Commons Model Canvas, presenters are asked to trace their thought process, obstacles, and observations. Participants unable to draft their Commons Model Canvas are asked to complete a short questionnaire regarding their commoning work or field of application to help organizers integrate their expertise and needs into the workshop. All participants will be issued with an optional reading list, which will be particularly useful to participants who are newer to the commons field.

### 4 FORMAT AND METHODS

Derived from the workshopping or critique format, this workshop is a space for participants to share their work for feedback. This workshop is directed primarily at conference participants wishing to present their commoning projects, whether these are completed, current, planned, or envisioned. Participants who are interested in this work but do not have a commoning project to share are also welcome to attend.

The workshop is comprised of three parts: (1) introductions, (2) participant presentations and discussions, and (3) Commons Model Canvas revision. The objective of introductions is to build trust and empathy across the group, so we will use ice-breakers and a round of one-to-one breakout sessions.

The objective of participant presentations and discussions is to learn through doing how the Commons Model Canvas might change to support participants' practices. Each participant will have 10-15 minutes to present their Commons Model Canvas followed by 15-20 minutes of discussion. The discussion results will be documented in two ways in parallel: on the participants' Commons Model Canvas and on the template Commons Model Canvas. Some comments may be specific to the presenters' case, while other comments may also apply to template Commons Model Canvas. Some presenters may come to the workshop with changes they have identified based on their experience of completing the Commons Model Canvas.

<b>Knowledges</b>  What types and sources of know-how do Members draw on?  Traditional Indigenous Scientific Thinking Feeling	<b>Members</b>  Who is most involved in the commons? Who is most affected?  Member group Households Kinship groups Nonhuman species Nonhuman ecosystems	<b>Practices</b>  How do Members sustain our commons across generations?  Preparation Production Distribution Storage Care	<b>Challenges</b>  What conflicts might arise in Practices?  Shirking Cheating Stealing Destruction Competition Uncaring
<b>Assemblages</b>  What tangible and intangible inputs do Members rely on?  Materials Tools Workshops Community groups	<b>Shared Purpose</b>  Why does our commons need to exist? How will our commons benefit future generations?		<b>Customs</b>  What shared beliefs do Practices rely on to work?  Norms Rituals Rules Policies Laws

**Figure 1: Commons Model Canvas.**

Knowledges	Members	Practices	Challenges
<b>SOIL ECOLOGY</b> Chinese farmers calendar Permaculture principles Soil science <b>FARM</b> Asian Natural Farming Climate-farming methods Urban farming hacks Environmental literacy <b>HOUSEHOLDS</b> Fermentation recipe GMO blacklist Material literacy Media literacy	<b>SOIL ECOLOGY</b> Fungi and bacteria Earthworms Insects Pollinators <b>FARM</b> Tenant farmer Farm staff Co-purchasing directors CSA-Drivers Birds, buffaloes, wild boars <b>HOUSEHOLDS</b> Single households Couple households Households with children Domestic workers Coffeeshop staff	<b>SOIL ECOLOGY</b> Dig-in bokashi application Compost bokashi Multi-layer mulching Enzymatic drip irrigation <b>FARM</b> Nurture seedlings Cultivate crops Produce bedding Manage bokashi bins Facilitate harvest in lockdown <b>HOUSEHOLDS</b> Recover kitchen scraps Create enzyme catalyst Layer-collect bokashi Document process Reproduce trust	<b>SOIL ECOLOGY</b> Fertiliser overrun Chronic calcium deficiency Short-term productivism <b>FARM</b> Storage capacities Labor distribution Weather/predators mitigation <b>HOUSEHOLDS</b> Storage capacities Time commitment Trust reproduction
<b>Assemblages</b> <b>SOIL ECOLOGY</b> Biochemical science trial <b>FARM</b> Organic resources Farm Care Mornings (FMC) Public workshops/demos <b>HOUSEHOLDS</b> Whatsapp group Social media	<b>Shared Purpose</b> Explore citizen-led agriculture innovation for regenerating resources and mitigating climate change in the local food system.		<b>Customs</b> <b>SOIL ECOLOGY</b> Perpetual soil cover Non-GMO and local inputs <b>FARM</b> Short farm lease terms Reinvest proceeds Keep good rapport <b>HOUSEHOLDS</b> Aversion to waste collection Marginalized homecooking Co-curated documentation

**Figure 2: Commons Model Canvas for Soil Trust nutrients-cycling collective in Hong Kong.**

The objective of Commons Model Canvas revision is to consider how the feedback across the presenters affects the template Commons Model Canvas. Based on the comments prior and during the event, we may be able to incorporate these changes at the workshop. If the changes exceed what we can do during the workshop, the workshop organizers will continue to make changes and continue to engage participants who wish to remain involved through online collaboration platforms, text messaging group, and personal correspondence.

We have designed the workshop format to be scalable as a half-day workshop. There is a limit of eight presenters and no limit to general participants. In the unlikely event that there are more than eight presenters, we could extend to a full-day format or create two half-day workshops. In the event that we have fewer than eight participants, the workshop may conclude early or participants may agree to spend more time on each project.

This workshop will be a hybrid workshop. One organizer will be physically present at the conference in Newcastle and the other organizer will be remote due to ongoing Covid restrictions. Participants may, therefore, join for in-person or remote participation. The time of the workshop will be based on participant interest. If there is sufficient interest in disparate time zones, we are happy to run this workshop twice. To accommodate in-person participants, we will need a room with a whiteboard with capacity for 4-8 people. To keep the hybrid format simple, we have designed this workshop as an online workshop while accommodating in-person dynamics. In practice, this means that all Commons Model Canvas presentations will be shared online, and we will use Miro or Google Jamboard to support participant interaction. We will, if possible, project the template Commons Model Canvas in the room for in-person participants as revisions are made live. We expect in-person participants may use the whiteboard, and the job of organizers will be to transform this whiteboard work into a live digital shared format so remote participants can collaborate.

## 5 OUTCOMES AND OUTPUTS

There are several planned outcomes and outputs of this workshop. For participants, there are three key outcomes:

1. Presenters will gain valuable peer feedback on their commons projects that will support their ongoing research and practice.
2. All participants will deepen and widen their knowledge about the commons/commoning field and pluriversal design.
3. Participants will grow their awareness for contextual decision-making processes and inclusive governance strategies in (more-than-human) community building.

For presenters, the key output will be the Commons Model Canvas they create, share, and revise with the group. The workshop will generate several other important outcomes and outputs:

4. Revised Commons Model Canvas. The workshop will produce a revised Commons Model Canvas based on group discussion. This revised Commons Model Canvas will be made public and useable by PD scholars and practitioners.
5. Journal paper. Workshop participants are invited to co-author a journal paper if there is interest. This paper will capture their individual cases, the results of the workshop, and the revised Commons Model Canvas.
6. Cohort/Network. This workshop is offered as a seed for a potential cohort or network, based on participant interest in designing commons. There is a need for peer support among design researchers working on commons.

## 6 ORGANIZER EXPERTISE

The workshops organizers are both published scholars in design and commons, and they have previously collaborated to produce the Commons Model Canvas that will be used in this workshop.

Justin Sacks is a PhD researcher in design at Lancaster University. Justin's research focus is pluriversal commoning and the transformation of commons frameworks and concepts into design tools to support commoning. Justin is an active member of the International Association for the Study of the Commons (IASC). Justin has led several workshops exploring design tools for commoning [12, 13] and published papers to develop tools for pluriversal commoning [14, 15, 16].

Markus Wernli is a Research Assistant Professor at PolyU School of Design in Hong Kong. Markus' research focuses on communities of flourishing—the prototyping of social arrangements, that explore more regenerative, ecologically entangled ways of living, householding and designing. His ongoing research draws connections between food systems and ecosystems on social and communal level to forge healthier relationships between what we breathe, eat, expel, wear, and grow. Markus has led workshops exploring food commons [17, 18, 19, 20] and published multiple papers that articulate previous explorations in relational commons as participatory design [21, 22, 23, 24].

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