

Embassy Network Constitution V0.1

AKA The Puerto Rico Proposal

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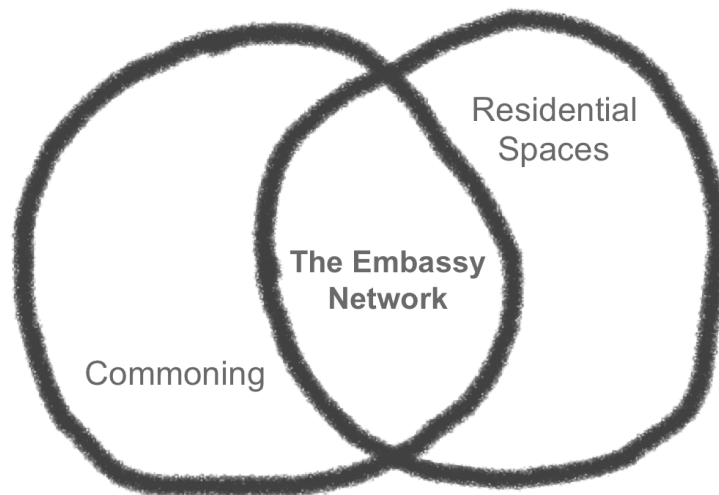
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What is the Embassy Network?

The Embassy Network is a global **collective of people and residential spaces**, who share a commitment to building commons between locations and “**commoning**” together. Our goal is to grow networks of commoning around the world. In doing so, we are designing new tools and protocols for managing resources together, rethinking social institutions, and creating the future we want to inhabit.



Core Values of the Embassy Network

We approach commoning with a set of shared values and approaches. For example, we ask each house to agree to a set of [shared agreements](#). Here are some of the approaches that we have found to be useful in working towards our goals:

- **SHARING:**
Sharing resources, sharing lessons learned, documentation, policies and so on, with other communities
- **OPEN COMMUNICATION:**
We value critical analysis and constructive feedback, transparency and communication and seek to support each other to be the best versions of ourselves. At times this will involve difficult truths, and other times finding new positive ones. We ask you to bring intention to your interactions in our community, and to give and receive with compassion.
- **ATTITUDE OF ABUNDANCE:**
An attitude of abundance. Whilst we all grew up in a world where scarcity was the norm, we are building a community of abundance through mutual aid. We aim to create abundance and value not just for ourselves but for the wider community.

- **PARTICIPATION:**

We value participation, agency and autonomy for people in the housing network and the individual houses.

- **EXPERIMENTING WITH CULTURE:**

As part of expanding and learning about the commons (and practices of commoning), we value experimentation, iteration, learning together, and implementation of lessons learned.

What is the Commons, what is Commoning?

The “**Commons**” is a term that refers to a “social system for the long-term stewardship of resources that preserves shared values and community identity”. - [Bollier](#)

- A self-organized system by which communities manage resources (both depletable and and replenishable) with minimal or no reliance on the Market or State.
- The wealth that we inherit or create together and must pass on, undiminished or enhanced, to our children. Our collective wealth includes the gifts of nature, civic infrastructure, cultural works and traditions, and knowledge.
- A sector of the economy (and life!) that generates value in ways that are often hard to measure and/or taken for granted – such as community. .

“**Commoning**” is the action of preserving and contributing to the commons. In the words of David Bollier; “There is no commons without *commoning*. There are no commons without *commoners*”. For us commoning is rooted in these principles (iterated on from thoughts from Tim Rayner):

1. **Plenitude:** We do not need to accumulate more than we possess. Together we have all that we require.
2. **Mutual benefit:** Commoning hinges on a spirit of reciprocity and justice. My gain does not need to mean your loss. Genuine human success produces mutual benefit.
3. **Transition:** Commoning is a threshold activity. To make common is to participate in an unfolding movement for social change, with positive implications for politics, economics, and the planet. Each act of commoning – be it a matter of collaborative consumption, peer-to-peer production, open space technology, or democratic assembly – is an experimental contribution towards a new social and economic paradigm ([Credit - Tim Rayner, Philosophy for Change](#)).

Please see [this](#) for more of a grounding in what the commons is :)

Examples of Commoning

We're interested in managing resources with shared agreements, while maintaining the autonomy of each location, and designing systems for access and ownership that may come from time invested or credit systems in addition to financial contributions. This means we are designing systems for managing and accessing housing that go beyond market based approaches, at the individual house level, and at the network level.

Commoning doesn't mean that you are giving over your space or resources to other people. It means choosing resources to share and collaboratively developing norms around how that sharing happens. Examples of commoning include:

- offering your space to EN members for hosting events and collaborative activities
- making rooms available for room swaps or short term guest stays
- contributing to a shared tool, clothing or media library
- sharing cars
- organizing a resident matching service for coliving houses
- exchanging accommodations for a needed service such as guest hosting or electrical work.
- Adding your hot tub/movie projector/inflatable dinghy to a list of shared resources that people in the network can book for credits.
- Offering accommodation credits to an EN member for their help in setting up collaborative governance systems at a new community residence.
- contributing to open documentation or knowledge; for example, giving talks, writing blog posts about patterns of governance and management across communities, sharing financial templates, etc.
- pooling a small fraction of financial resources

Non-requirements of Commoning

Commoning does *not* require the following:

- Making available resources to the general public or all members of the network unconditionally: commoning can be conditional on terms of use, the establishment of trust, or time and space limits.
- Financial sacrifice: Commoning does NOT mean giving something away at a loss. It means finding ways to exchange value and/or share expenses by the users of the resource.

How does the Embassy Network work?

The Embassy Network is a legal entity that acts as a convening body for the people and places of the Network. The primary engine of development is through discussion and conversation, which is carried out through online tools and offline gatherings, both formal and informal. The Network exists to serve rather than direct its members. The best explanation of this is the description of [Phyles](#).

[a phyle is..] “not a community of enterprises, nor a community of people working in some enterprises, but a community who owns democratic enterprises for ensuring everyone's well-being and provided autonomy to our most appreciated good: our common conversation as way of developing knowledge.”
- David de Ugarte

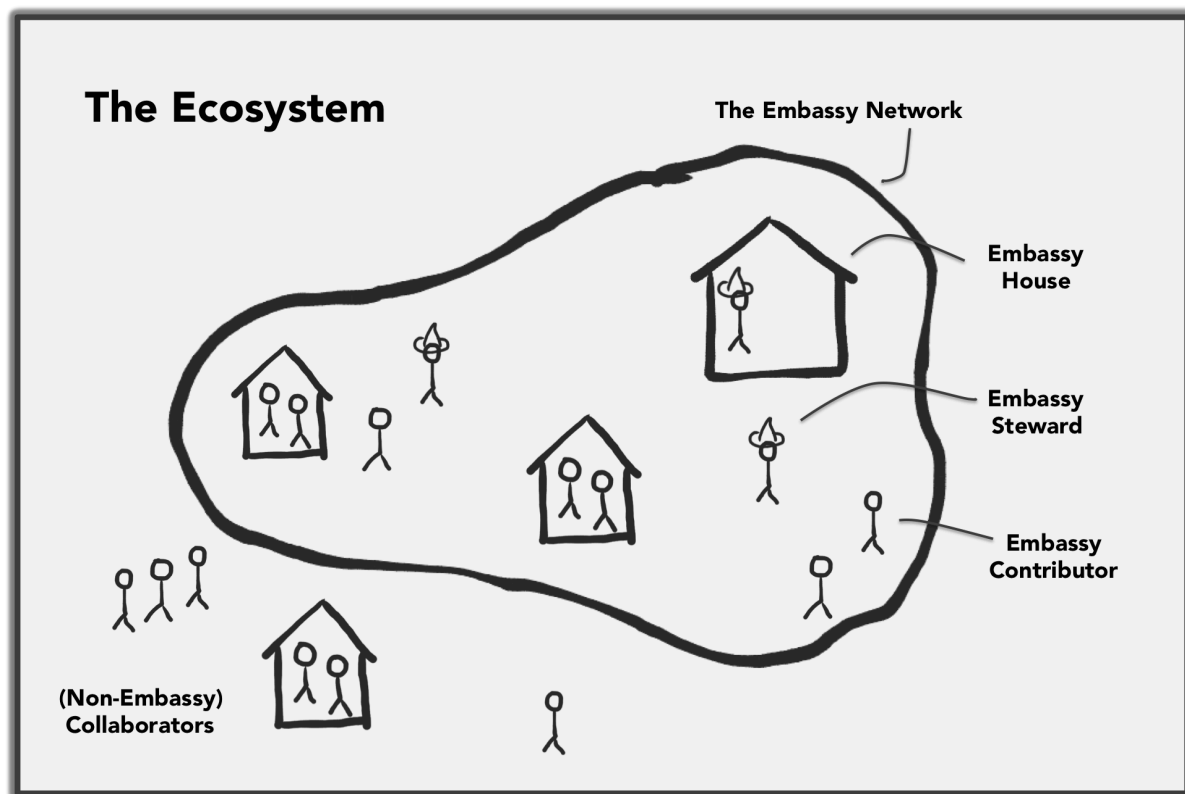
Structure and Governance

The Embassy Network is structured as a collective with a core team of **Stewards** at the center, and a broader set of **contributors** and **spaces**. Contributors may be members of a house or they may simply be contributors in their own right, and we welcome both.

Spaces and contributors come to the table with resources and ideas about commoning, about how to manage the network itself, or anything else of common interest. We discuss them as a community and when there is a specific proposal it is put to the community through our discussion and decision making platform, Loomio. The default audience for making decisions is the entire set of contributors, but certain decisions may be made by the Stewards. If a proposal is approved, the proposal is put into action. Of course it is more nuanced than this, but this is the general idea. Elinor Ostrom has written a book which outlines eight principles for [managing the commons](#) (for which she was awarded a Nobel prize) that makes for interesting reading here.

When new protocols for sharing resources are proposed, spaces and individuals can opt into trying these. **The Network is not a “decider of”, but rather a collaborative community which is an “engine of.”** The benefit of being part of the Embassy Network, is being part of a community who also wants to try new approaches to commoning, which gives us all access to more canvases for experimentation, increased mutual support, and rich learnings.

We value participatory forms of governance, and each EN space is welcome to generate it's own governance structure. This distributed network of spaces, each comprised of multiple interacting agents and technologies that serve to connect them, results in a variety of spheres of governance. Together these comprise a form of panarchy: *“an inclusive, universal system of governance in which all may participate meaningfully”*.



Cobudgeting

To facilitate projects of mutual interest and value, we also run a monthly participatory budgeting process. **Member houses participate with 1% of their monthly revenue**, and individual contributors are invited to make a monthly contribution if they would like to participate. Contributors and spaces have direct say over this money, so can choose to put it towards projects for their house only, or towards proposals for projects and services to meet outstanding needs of the broader community.

Supporting Spaces

Finally, a lot of the projects that emerge at the Network level are initiatives, whether ventures or volunteer, to support new spaces. Sometimes members of the network come together to start new spaces, work as facilitators, coaches or consultants on new spaces, or help to found new spaces by coaching them or moving there. There are also initiatives to build tools and services to meet the needs of these spaces, whether it be booking software, accounting assistance, roommate matching, or shared documentation. These projects emerge from and may be coordinated through Loomio, as well as in person socializing and scheming together.

In sum, our primary activities are:

- Discussion of and experimentation with collaborative community resource management, or commoning.
- Provision of tools and services

- Facilitating a network-wide collaborative budgeting process
- Connecting existing spaces
- Supporting and starting new spaces

Modes of participation in the Embassy Network

The Embassy Network is composed of both people and spaces. Currently, we allow for three modes of membership:

Membership Mode	How to become a member	Expectations	Turing test?
House	Agree within the house.	Contribution to the Commons Participate in cobudgeting with 1% of monthly revenue	A collection of humans who control a space
Contributor (within a House)	Automatic when your House joins	* Participation in discussions * Participation in commoning	A human who jives with our goals and values
Contributor (not in a House)	Steward initiates a EN wide loomio thread. If this goes well, invitation via loomio by a steward.	* Participation in discussions * Participation in commoning	A human who jives with our goals and values
Steward	Steward initiates a EN wide loomio thread. If this goes well, invitation via loomio by a steward.	* Expectation of a Contributor + * Acts as steward for the grand vision * Ensures day to day continuity of the organization * Legal rep of the org	A human who exudes, amplifies, refines and advances our values and goals.

More detail is provided below on each of these membership modes.

What is it to be a **Contributor** to the Embassy Network

Welcome to the Embassy Network! If you are living in an EN house, or have been invited to be part of the EN, you are now an EN contributor. This means that we hope that you will find a way to actively participate in commoning as part of our network, through both discussions and practice*.

For some examples of what commoning might look like, have a look at this list of [examples](#). Don't feel limited by this list - we'd love to hear your ideas about how you might like to take on commoning.

Getting Started

You will be invited to join our [loomio thread](#). Please introduce yourself to the group by adding to the main 'Intentions' thread by considering these three specific questions:

- What part of the Embassy Network vision speaks to your personal values and overall vision for society?
- How might you like to contribute to the commons during a certain time frame?
- How might the wider community help you put these intentions in motion, and is there any way that you'd like to support the intentions set forth by others?

Ping your assigned buddy/mentor on Slack or email

Month 1

- Familiarize yourself with existing threads and documents.
- Ask questions, reach out to individuals/stewards for a personal introduction to the EN

Month 2 - Contribute to your first Loomio thread.

Month 3 - Consider joining to cobudgeting process if you are in a position to.

For more details, examples or inspiration, see the section on [how to be an active contributor](#)!

** This outline of what it means to be an Embassy Network contributor is purposefully lightweight. We encourage participation from everyone in developing what it means to be a house in the Embassy Network. By joining us, you are by the nature of things evolving our network! Here we outline the barebones of what being a contributor means to us at this point in time.*

What is it to be a **Steward** for the Embassy Network

A steward is someone who is involved in the core processes of the EN, not just involved in their house, or houses. The role of the steward is to help maintain and facilitate the core values and greater vision of the EN. Stewards may or may not be residents of EN houses.

The process of becoming a Steward is flexible. You can approach other stewards and put forth a proposal of what you have been doing that relates to the broader picture, or stewards

may approach you and ask if you are interested in joining them. Generally, people will have been contributors before becoming Stewards.

Expectations of a Steward are greater than that of a contributor:

- A Steward will be an active and consistent participant in the discussions and decision making around the network. They can be counted on to show up.
- A Steward will spend time recruiting contributors or houses to the Embassy network and be an ambassador of the values of the network
- A Steward puts forward a specific vision for their unique contribution

What does it mean to be an Embassy Network **House**?

Embassy Network houses are keen to experiment with the sharing of resources, to adopt a posture of learning and abundance, and are in alignment with our other [core values](#). In addition, Embassy Network houses have a shared commitment to the following:

1. **Resident consent and engagement:** EN houses have many forms of governance and management but it is important that residents are consulted and able to consent to the mechanisms of resource sharing. Often this comes through community-based participatory governance of some kind.
2. **Financial transparency:** Embassy Network houses share financial reports with the network on a monthly basis.
3. **Collaborative budgeting:** Participate with 1% (or more) of revenue in a network-wide cobudgeting process.
4. **Mutual Support:** Receive access to a community of people working for your success (and vice versa)
5. **Participation:** All residents are invited to be contributors to the Network

What does this mean for you as a resident of an Embassy Network house?

Welcome to the family! This means that you are a [contributor](#). One or more people in your house will also need to be involved in financial reporting and cobudgeting participation.

Guidance on becoming an active contributor

1. **Make your introduction to loomio count:** The first thing that will happen is that you will be invited to join our [Loomio](#) community, which is where the bulk of discussions take place or are eventually documented.

Please introduce yourself to the group by posting to the thread called 'My Intentions.' We ask you to consider three specific questions (see below), so that we can get a feel for what motivates you, and also understand how we can help with your intentions. This is only a template, so feel free to modify as you like!

- A. What part of the Embassy Network vision speaks to your personal values and overall vision for society?
- B. How might you like to contribute to the commons during a certain time frame? (This can be simply setting an intention to learn about what commoning is from observing others in the EN, or to explore. We find it is helpful to articulate these intentions no matter how small, and revisit them later.)

e.g. I have just joined the EN as part of X house, and I am setting my intention for the first three months to learn about what the commons is, and the different types of commoning that are already happening in order that I can contribute something different.

e.g. I have a space / car / boat that I would like to put forward for Commoning

- C. How might the wider community help you put these intentions in motion, and is there any way that you'd like to support the intentions set forth by others?

e.g. i'd love someone to talk to me about what commoning is, i'm particularly interested in xx.

1. **Contact your assigned buddy/mentor.** You can do this a number of ways, many people do so on Slack or email, some coordinate a meeting or video chat. Let them know that you're starting to engage and any questions you have or ideas you'd like to contribute, so that you are on their radar, and they can provide context and support.
2. **Month 1.** Familiarize yourself with existing threads and documents - this is a great way to get to know the kinds of things that are happening, what the cultural values are and the approaches that people are making in attempting to manifest those values. Look to see if there anything there that stands out to you as of particular interest, or perhaps you see an angle that someone hasn't thought of, or a type of project that is sorely lacking. Ask questions as you feel inclined, either on Loomio or to your buddy.
3. **Month 2.** If you haven't already, we hope that you feel excited and able to contribute to your first Loomio thread.
4. **Month 3.** Consider joining to cobudgeting process if you are in a position to.

Additional ways to participate:

- a. Visit EN locations
- b. Host an event or cowork at an EN location
- c. Add a resource to the network
- d. Make a cobudget proposal for a project, or join an existing team
- e. Offer to document a process or interview someone
- f. Write a blog post
- g. Get involved in financial reporting for one of the Network coliving houses.

Conscious stepping back

We understand that a time may come where contributors and houses might not be actively contributing to the network. If you are finding it hard to integrate and don't feel able or willing to contribute, that is fine, there will be no judgement. Perhaps you just need a timeout or to step away - do communicate this with someone, talk to your buddy and we can take it from there. In order to be able to acknowledge this, we include the following clause:

The no lurkers clause

The one thing we ask is that you actually participate. This doesn't have to be in every thread by any means, but without any engagement, we don't get to learn from each other, and we end up with a space that feels opaque, which makes it difficult to build high trust relationships. Every 3 months we'll do a check in with anyone who hasn't contributed to any conversations in the preceding period, and after 2 periods of not participating, we'll remove access to these channels. You are welcome back at any time by contacting one of the stewards (or their future analogs)!