



# Commonspoly Ambassadors Guide

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## Presentation of the game

You will be provided with a presentation (powerpoint and/or keynote) and we think it's important to briefly share the context of the game before starting. This should not take more than 5 minutes and the idea is to tell the players the basic history of Commonspoly which includes:

- When and how was born - Collective workshop, 17th edition of ZEMOS98 Festival
- Its development and the fact that it's an open source fork run by ZEMOS98
- The current version (the Green Edition) and its main features.
- The involvement with CreaTures.
- An introductory comment on the Commons

You don't need to introduce the whole concept of the Commons, especially taking into account you have a short time. But it's important to say that the game was born in opposition to the values of Monopoly, and that we know that the Commons are not always a discrete and perfect option. What the game proposes (dividing between Commons, Public and Private) as a simplification for recreational and pedagogical reasons. In reality, we do have resources which are Private+Commons, or Public+Commons. We also recommend avoiding theoretical discussions. The only purpose of sharing this here is to clarify why the game is called Commonspoly and what is the connection with real life. The goal of the gameplay is...to play :)

## Gameplay: first steps

What you probably have experienced is a simplification of how the beginning should look like. We encourage you to read the whole Player's handbook because that's the best way you could solve many doubts on how to proceed. But generally speaking, after the presentation and having all the pieces and documents prepared on a big table, you should follow these steps:

- Explain the basic dynamic of the game for the Players
  - You win by turning all goods into Commons. If there is a mix of Public and Common goods, no matter how it breaks down, it's a draw. And if there is even one Private good remaining, you lose!
  - The only way to win is for all the Players to cooperate in order to liberate as many Goods as possible.
  - You have 20 rounds to use your Welfare and Legitimacy Points for the common good. This is a race against time!
  - The Speculators are the bad guys. They chase the Players around the board trying to foil their plans. (Here is where you explain that YOU will perform that role)

- One person will be the Game Master. We suggest that the Game Master play the Speculators but not perform a Player.
- Select Goods and Degree of Difficulty
 

This is detailed in the Handbook but in summary:

  - Here is where you explain that you have 4 types of goods: Urban Goods (red), Knowledge-based Goods (yellow), Health Goods (purple), Environmental Goods (green)
  - Then you need to define the initial status of each of these goods. Roll the dice 4 times, once for each type of good. The number you get will decide if it is Private, Public or Common. Make sure that you write down the number in your Game Sheet as this will help when determining the Degree of Difficulty.
    - 1–2: Private
    - 3–4: Public
    - 5–6: Common
  - If you add up all the points rolled for the 4 types of goods, the total should be between 4 and 24. This total will define the initial Degree of Difficulty:
    - Mad Max Mode: 4–10. In this mode, you can only use ONE piece for the speculator.
    - Transitional Mode: 11–17. In this mode, you can use TWO pieces for the speculators.
    - Commonsland Mode: 18–24. In this mode, you use THREE pieces for the speculators.
  - Once you have defined the type of Goods that you will have, you can indicate them on the board using the rectangular game pieces:
    - White for Private
    - Grey for Public
    - Black for Commons
  - The pink spaces on the board will always be Inalienable Common Goods and do not need to be marked.
  - The rest of the special spaces and what they mean are explained in section 3.4 (Special Spaces and Inalienable Common Goods) of the handbook. We recommend you to skip the explanation and just do it if any player is gonna land there.
- Explain the cards
  - The Global Cards (orange ones) will be read before every new round begins (apart from the first). The consequences will apply to all the Players for that round, based on what it says on the card, and will affect their Welfare Points and sometimes how they can move around the board. This is guided by the Game Master.

- If you land on a light blue space marked S you will need to take a Situation Card (blue ones). The effects of this card will only be relevant to you. Although the consequences only last one round and will affect Welfare Points and/or Legitimacy Points, they can be positive or negative, so...good luck!
- Distribute the Players

There are 8 Characters in Commonspoly. Distribute them randomly among the players and use this action to read aloud their short bio from the Player sheet. Now it's important that you explain that each Player has three types of Points:

- Skill Points. These remain the same throughout the game.
- Welfare Points. You will begin with 5 Welfare Points and the amount you have will vary throughout the game
- Legitimacy Points. You will begin with 5 Legitimacy Points and the amount you have will vary throughout the game.
- Remember! You have to give them 5 points of each!

This step should take you 10 min. Now there is something crucial. When we started organizing Commonspoly gameplays, we used to explain EVERYTHING. That is probably a mistake. As you already realized, the game is simpler than it seems. That's why we recommend you to explain how to unlock goods and how to perform the Uprising Collective Action while playing.

So, during the first round, if there is any player who is able to unlock a good, as a Game Master you could start explaining (and be patient, you will have to remind them during 3 or 4 rounds) how to convert a Good from Private to Public, from Public to Commons. The two main issues here are:

- If you act individually: You need 10 points every time you want to unlock a type of good and change its status. This is done by combining your Skill Points and Welfare Points. The amount of Welfare Points that you have will always change depending on the actions you take, but you will never lose your Skill Points. Skill Points can only be used for the type of good associated with them. It is important to keep in mind that an individual Player can unlock Goods, changing them from Private to Public and from Public to Commons. You can only transform a good directly from Private to Commons by joining forces with the rest of the Players and carrying out a Collective Uprising Action at Central Agora (Remember that if you land in a Private Good and you cannot convert it, you don't receive any point. But if it is Public, you will receive 1 Legitimacy Point and 1 Welfare Point. And if it is Common (whether converted or inalienable), you receive 2 Legitimacy Points and 2 Welfare Points.
- If you want to act collectively: You can carry out the Collective Uprising Action at Central Agora, changing all of the Goods of one type (Urban, Health, Knowledge-based

or Environmental) to Commons, regardless of whether they are Public or Private. This is what you need to do to make this happen:

- Once you have the equivalent of 10 Legitimacy Points per person you will be able to enter Central Agora.
- You need 3 players to enter Central Agora in order to be able to complete the action. Each player should enter individually by throwing the dice and getting the exact number needed to enter through one of the spaces in the four columns that give access to Central Agora. Once three players are in Central Agora, the others will automatically join them right away without having to throw the dice.
- Each player can only stay in Central Agora for a maximum of 3 rounds. For every round that you stay in Central Agora, you lose one Welfare Point. If you have no Welfare Points, you cannot stay. If you have one Welfare Point, you may only stay for one round.

As it was said: you don't need to explain the whole Collective Uprising Action at the beginning. You can check when they are about to have 10 Legit Points per person in total and recommend them to go closer to the Central.

Remember to check also in the handbook how the Speculators can block this action or to hurt individually the players. This is something you need to memorize. In general, everything is well described in the Handbook (read it!).

## Facilitation style

You are gonna perform a double role: being the Game's Master and also being the Speculator(s). The roles are quite different:

- As a Game's master, you need to explain everything which needs to be clarified (normally in advance).
- As speculator and to encourage the narrative of the game, you have to clearly perform the opposition with the players.

But an important clarification here: being a Game's Master doesn't mean HELPING the players. It basically means EXPLAINING how the game works and the possibilities they have. There are many situations (especially at the beginning) in which you probably will be explaining things (and as it was said before, you need to be patient with players till they get and memorize the dynamic).

These situations will be f.e. When they arrive in a space of a good which is Commons (and they get two Welfare and two Legitimacy points; when they want to convert a space from Private to Public (and this requires explaining again the combination of Skill Points and Welfare Points);

when they are about to perform the Collective Uprising Action; when they land in a Special Space or how the Speculator can hurt them if you catch any player. So, try to explain things with a neutral and pedagogical point of view, without influencing their decision making.

Of course this is not that easy. Because, what's the difference between explaining and advising? The point maybe is to have in mind that they need to come up with their collaboration while playing. If they make good questions which are connected to this, try to hide a bit your emotions (because it is indeed a very nice moment when they start realising that unless they cooperate they won't win!), answer the question sticking to the Master's Guide and move on.

On the contrary, it has been proven that being a Speculator can make the game really funny if you exaggerate a narrative in which you embody all the capitalistic and hiper-neoliberal discourses. This normally could be represented in various forms, but there are some repetitions:

- When you are about to roll the dice for the Speculator. You can say sentences about "I'm gonna catch you and it's gonna hurt". Or "your commie revolution is about to end".
- When you are about to decide how to hurt a player that you caught. Remember that you always need to tell in advance which of the 3 options you want to implement. This decision making (which is up to you but also depending on the situation of the game) can be used to make some jokes. You can create tension if you decide to choose the worst option for them (which is the hardest for the Speculator): sending them to the Tragedy of the Commons space.
- When they fail in their attempt to do something. If they want to reach the Central Agora or if they want to land in a certain space and they fail, you can use that to make a joke.

The moment in which this is crucial is when they are about to perform the Collective Uprising Action. Because that's when they have already realized that they need to act as a group. And you, as Speculator, can stop that at least when two of them made it and went into the Central Agora. So during that process (which can take more than one round) the tension will be high. And you can increase that tension (which is of course attached to the game!) by making comments, creating expectation every time the dice is gonna be rolled, etc.

Don't overuse the jokes because you also need to give some space to the group to do their process or to ask questions to you as Game's Master. Sometimes you could even slightly change the tone of your voice depending on the role you are performing. And if you achieve to block any of their goals as a Speculator: celebrate it. That makes everything funnier and also it encourages them to celebrate their own successes.

Remember also that you have your own strategy as a Speculator. You need to think a bit about who is more powerful in the group to hurt this player. F.E. If a player has 6 Skill Points of the Environmental ones and these Goods are Private, it's better to catch and hurt this player rather than someone who has 1 Skill Point of the green ones. Why? Because the first one only needs 4 Welfare Points to unlock Goods and the second one 9! Also, think about going around the Central Agora before they decide to go there. By doing that you will catch them less hard than if you are in any other part of the board.

Finally: think about the main goal when you are facilitating and performing the Speculator's role: we need to document how they interact as players. How they go from a more individualistic point of playing to a more cooperative; what they comment or discuss about the common goods, how they behave during the gameplay, etc.

## The purpose of Documentation

CreaTures is a project that looks into the hidden and fragmented potential of creative practices to contribute to eco-social transformations towards sustainable futures. In the case of Commonsopoly, we have identified three main areas of focus, where the impact of the game could be traced.

- 1) Whether the game resonates more with people who align with the values of the game; and/or with others, but maybe in different ways?
- 2) How people experience the key concepts of the game/resonance of the themes:
  - a) The game is a simulation of how the commons work - does it help people to reflect on commons in real life? How is that useful?
  - b) Point of the game is to stimulate cooperation (as opposed to competition in Monopoly) and create new relations that can grow beyond the context of the single game session. This can be manifested in multiple ways, for example within the game when people start from playing alone to discussing strategies together, possibly based on different strengths from their character. But it is also the theory of change that's communicated through the game: the need to work together, based on different strengths, to beat the speculators; or, on a more abstract level, the importance of collective action and social movements for societal change.
- 3) What happens after the game, what ripple effects does it create? How does it travel through conversations, experiences, etc that people have after the gameplay? What kind of relations does it foster?

None of these things are simple to document and it's really difficult to tie them to specific indicators. This is why we have combined many different methodologies that can help us compose a picture of what Commonspoly does in the world.

Here are a few tips about documenting Commonspoly gameplays.

## Before you start

In the framework of CreaTures, every participant to every activity related to the project needs to sign a consent form. Please share the [Participation Information Sheet](#) and [Privacy Notice](#) with all people participating in one of the sessions you organise.

For each session, all participants will have to sign a Participation Acknowledgement Form (PAF), or else a consent form. This is the same form that you signed ahead of our meeting, and it details how each participant wishes to have their data handled. This is particularly useful for indicating whether you can record a meeting, or if you can mention people with their names in your observation notes.

There is a consent form for each ambassador as listed in the table below. You can share the link with all meeting participants and you can use the same link for all your gameplay sessions. Both you and Cristina will receive reports of the people who have signed the form. Before the session, please make sure that everyone has signed the form, and scan all forms for individual preferences. In most cases, people consent to having their image and audio recorded, and indicate that they can be credited with their real name. In case they don't, you must respect their preferences.

To have an overview of how people respond to the PAF forms, you can create a document with the following structure:

### **Name of session**

PAF survey: *link*

Total register: *Number (eg. 10)*

Total show-up in Zoom: *Number*

PAFs collected with OK for being involved in research: *Number*

### **Signed - YES to everything (Number):**

*Name - e-mail*

### **Signed - NO to use of img / rec for research or for public dissemination (Number)**

*Name - (chosen pseudonym: <Pseudonym> ) - e-mail*

### **Not signed / No-shows (Number)**

*Name - e-mail*

**Mails for those who can be contacted:**

*List of e-mails*

<b>Name</b>	<b>Link to consent form</b>
Andrew Gryf Paterson / Oulis, Helsinki (Finland)	<a href="https://link.webpolsurveys.com/S/C7AC36BE1F805FA7">https://link.webpolsurveys.com/S/C7AC36BE1F805FA7</a>
Sandrine Crisostomo, Almancill (Portugal)	<a href="https://link.webpolsurveys.com/S/2A72EE50ED949E05">https://link.webpolsurveys.com/S/2A72EE50ED949E05</a>
Irene kalemaki, Thessaloniki (Greece)	<a href="https://link.webpolsurveys.com/S/19FC847463970A3C">https://link.webpolsurveys.com/S/19FC847463970A3C</a>
Angela María Osorio Méndez, Torino (Italy) / Maria Francesca de Tullio	<a href="https://link.webpolsurveys.com/S/507503C379F61418">https://link.webpolsurveys.com/S/507503C379F61418</a>
Rosalía Gutiérrez Hernández, Madrid (Spain)	<a href="https://link.webpolsurveys.com/S/09154C13B6BA9FD2">https://link.webpolsurveys.com/S/09154C13B6BA9FD2</a>

## Gameplay Documentation

We have come up with the following methods to document gameplay sessions.

### 1. Session recordings

If participants consent to this, you can video or audio record the session. For online gameplays this can be rather straightforward.

For colocated sessions, the setting might be more complicated when it comes to video recording, so audio recording or both could be a better option.

### 2. Pre- and Post- gameplay surveys

We have created two surveys that participants can fill in. Ahead of the game players are requested to fill in the Pre-Gameplay survey. This survey inquires some basic demographic data, political and civic engagement, familiarity of players with the Commons and Commonspoly, Monopoly and their motivation for joining a game session.

The Post-Gameplay survey inquires players' experiences, and game impact.

You can find the pre-play survey [here](#), and the post-play survey [here](#).

### 3. Game Observations

The goal of the observation is to see how players interact with each other and the game.

While observing the game, take note how people interact with or refer to:

1. Other players: do they know each other? Do they try to influence other people's decisions? Are there emergent collective actions? Eg. creating new rules, allowing a player to repeat a bad dice draw, skipping a round etc.  
How does the behavior of players evolve over time? Eg. Starting competitive/individual and then gradually start cooperate.
2. The Game: do they comment on the clarity of the props? do they comprehend the rules or ask questions?
3. The world beyond the game: do they reference their backgrounds, experiences, work etc.? Do they make connections between in-game actions / conversations etc. with real world conditions, events etc.?

Always remember to mark the date and location of the session, the names of the facilitator(s) and the players (according to their data handling preferences) and who is doing the note taking.

Here is an example from one of our pilot gameplays:

*“ Players have a lot of questions about the rules*

*R3:*

*K - D6 - goes to the River (+2L / +2W)*

*S - D5 - goes to the Park (+2L / +2W)*

*A - D2 - goes to Drinking Water (+2L / +2W)*

*L - D6 - goes to Abandoned building*

*F/S1 - D2 - situation card*

*F/S2 - D1 - blocks L - can't send her to the Tragedy of Commons*

*GC3: Education is privatised / -4 WP for everyone*

*In this round, the game picks up speed and players start to feel more comfortable with the moves. They start asking questions about the Agora. K suggests to L to move closer to the Agora, L prefers to stay at Abandoned building. K is the first to start getting the game and inviting cooperation. “*

### 4. Debriefing

At the end of the session, we reserve some time for an open, debriefing conversation.

Debriefing is the collective assessment of in-game events and the discussion with game

participants about the events' relation to the real world and is an intrinsic part of games for learning. The debriefing guide we are using is literature-based and addresses three main aspects: (i) description of the game play, situations, players' observations, (ii) relation of the game play to real-world practices, values, actions, interests, (iii) what do these mean for the real world, behaviour, and how to transform interpretation into actionable knowledge. Below you can find a few questions that you can use to scaffold the conversation. Try to not spend as much time in points 1 and 2; they are only meant to ease people out of the game flow and into the more elaborate questions. Sometimes people might repeat statements or you may be short in time. Feel free to skip questions that you feel have been covered, and proceed further.

1. Cooling down phase
  - How did you feel during the gameplay?
  - How did you experience the game?
2. Data Collection
  - What happened during the gameplay?
  - Which were the most significant moments in the progression of the game?
3. External Validity
  - How does the game reflect real world conditions?
  - Do you recognise familiar behavior patterns in the game?
4. Conclusions
  - What did you learn from the game?
  - What is missing?
5. Plan for Action
  - How do we proceed from here?
  - Who do you think should play this game?

Here again is an example from one of the pilot gameplays:

*'External Validity*

- *I imagine you all have some knowledge of the commons? How does the game reflect real world conditions?*
- *Do you recognise familiar behavior patterns in the game?*

*K: In real life it's much more difficult than in the game, but I think the game acts as a motivation to think about why we should make more of the public functions to become commons. What would it mean for me and the rest of the people around me.*

*It's a bit of an exaggeration the game, but it makes me think more*

*M: Maybe in real life it happens more difficult. But for example the cards, can lead to conversation about WHY things are happening and why things should be turned to commons.*

*A: Do you want these conversations to happen during or after the gameplay? We play quite fast, we could take time to discuss these positions during the game. There are implicit positions in the beginning of the game - would be interesting to understand why these choices were made.*

*S: interested how we might play as a family. We play Monopoly for example. I am excited about the possible conversations that can emerge. I like the cooperative game mechanics. Curious how kids would react. Competition is often seen as the only way to have fun in a game.*

*L: Turn the speculators into a separate team, so that the gameplay is about commoners vs speculators. I don't think competition in games is bad.*

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Good luck and do not hesitate to reach us through the channels we have established, preferably the Telegram group so we can share the doubts collectively. If not, email Rosalia [rosalia@zemos98.org](mailto:rosalia@zemos98.org) for logistics, Felipe [felipe@zemos98.org](mailto:felipe@zemos98.org) for facilitation and Cristina [cristina.ampatzidou@rmit.edu.au](mailto:cristina.ampatzidou@rmit.edu.au) for documentation.