P2P ⋮ Foundation

Key Projects 2017-19

This document outlines our Key Projects, which operate alongside our more agile, daily communication work and outreach. Each of these projects highlights a particular area of focus, but all interrelate and feed our ongoing goals.
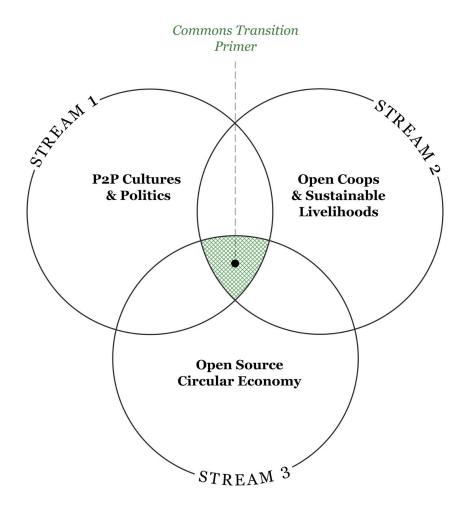
The Streams

Our projects follow three main "streams":

Stream 1: P2P Cultures and Politics. Reclaiming political voice and power via bottom-up citizen assemblies and participatory politics, in conjunction with "top-down" progressive coalitions through existing political parties.

Stream 2: **Open Coops & Sustainable Livelihoods**. Co-creating and catalyzing the alternative eco-system for open and cooperative peer production, to enable reconstruction of economic and social power around the Commons.

Stream 3: **Building the Open Source Circular Economy.** Creating synergies between cooperative peer production and sustainability, i.e. showing how a transition to the new modes of production, governance and ownership can solve the ecological and climate crises.

There are **four key projects** for 2016-17 which interrelate but each has a specific end goal and unique needs, as described below.

1. Commons Transition Primer

We believe that self-organized communities can and will change the world for the better. The movement already exists in a disaggregated way, but a sense of cohesive yet diverse identity is missing. We need **inclusive words**, **images** and **memes** to engage the attention and creativity of these communities, inspiring them to take generative action.

The Commons Transition Primer is a year-long multimedia project/campaign aimed at making the world of the Commons and P2P more understandable and attractive to commoners worldwide. This project builds on the intersection of the aforementioned streams.

The P2P Foundation has a ten-year history researching, cataloguing and advocating for the potential of P2P and Commons-based approaches to societal and consciousness change. Although perceived as the "go-to" source for information on these topics, many potential commoners and changemakers may feel alienated by some of the theoretical language and concepts employed. A Commons Transition implies developing **policies** and **tools** that create common value and facilitate open, participatory input across society, prioritizing the needs of those people and environments affected by policy decisions over market or bureaucratic considerations. But, what if these people and environments cannot **engage** with the message?

The Commons Transition Primer project will address these issues. We need to express a compelling vision of the future we want, a roadmap of how to get there, and the practical ways for others to get immediately involved.

Our plan is to produce a series of **synthesized materials** that can be easily read and shared, in both digital and print versions. These materials will draw upon our wide range of previous work, including:

- the P2P Foundation's unmatched **database** of P2P theory and community experience;
- the Commons Transition project's **policy proposals** and **stories**;
- the P2P Lab's **participatory action research**;
- the Commons Strategies Group's Deep Dive **reports**.

Specifically, a new, **visually oriented site** will be developed which will consist of static content, including a series of illustrated articles, infographics and videos explaining the value of P2P/Commons approaches to work, politics, production and culture. The articles and infographics will also be released as printed materials, **including a set of leaflets and a handbook**.

Our plan is to focus this as **a year-long** project, beginning with the writing, editing and visual design, followed by the launch of the Commons Transition Primer website and the printed materials. Two external partners have already joined us for the initial project stages.

2. Commons Transition Reloaded

In January 2015, the P2P Foundation launched a new long-term project called "Commons Transition", beginning with a website and wiki dedicated to creating a database of policy proposals and stories of "Commoners in Transition". The Commons Transition project has grown and now focuses on partnering with related Commons-oriented initiatives and on public outreach, in order to popularize and foster the development of the Commons and P2P approaches.

Commons Transition Reloaded will be a multi-year project focused on **research** and **advocacy**. One of our principal aims is to increase the credibility and influence of the P2P/Commons movement in the political sphere. By "political", here we refer not only to political representation but also to the actionable rights of all who are affected by political decisions. In-depth action research and advocacy work will be conducted, resulting in the production of a series of **sector-specific policy proposals** for relevant institutions and civil-society associations.

Our research team, led by P2P Lab, will conduct a **research phase** using participatory action research methodology. In this phase, the team will prototype, compile and select, at various scales, the best of currently existing commons-oriented political approaches. We will create **pilot projects** with commoners **on the ground** in order to assess the qualitative experiences of a new politics applied to real-world situations. The research phase will strive to ground existing transitional scenarios and visions for a commons-oriented society on **solid, empirical evidence**, as well as yielding a more rigorous scientific treatment of this topic.

The success of these plans is predicated on the creation of **attractive, accessible communication** materials. Our **advocacy phase** will distill the outputs of the research phase into non-technical, non-academic materials written and illustrated for a general readership among prefigurative communities and sympathetic political actors. The Commons Transition platform will expand its existing websites and wiki and further its communication strategies through two complementary projects:

- **The Commons Transition Network**: An association of transnational commons-oriented organizations working on similar goals.
- **Commons Transition Primer**: A multimedia advocacy and communications campaign to make the concepts of the P2P Commons movement more attractive and accessible to the general public (for more details see the project's description above).

Together, both phases will result in a set of engaging policy proposals and ideas for action, grounded in rigorous scientific procedure. The new Commons Transition plans will be presented in a dual format: Full research papers with executive summaries and illustrated general-reader versions with links and audio-visual resources.

3. Open Cooperativism and Sustainable Livelihoods

The cooperative movement and enterprises are undergoing a revival, even as some of their enduring entities falter. The revival is linked with the mainstream economy's fluctuations. After systemic crises such as in 2008, people have sought alternatives, yet many have not heard of the Commons movement, nor P2P economics. After ten years of research, advocacy work, and relationship building with grassroots commoners worldwide, the P2P Foundation now aims to extend the message to a wider **cross-sectoral** demographic capable of revolutionizing the way coops, not-for-profits, the social/solidarity and commons collaborative economies self-organize and produce.

We are creating a cultural program that explains 'open cooperativism' to a broad public, inviting them to take part in the Commons movement. A new platform will be built designed to achieve two main objectives:

- Provide **simple explanations** of the Commons and P2P Economics;
- **Mapping** all Commons and P2P market initiatives to amplify networking, openness, and best practices for the community.

For the first objective we will create **text, video and infographic** overviews of P2P/Commons economics, including new forms of licensing, contributory value accounting, and open source software tools useful for producers and consumers. We will also edit a "Handbook for the Generative Economy". The portal will index information on Open Cooperativism, helping people **find nearby goods and services** and transition toward more local consumption. It will allow Commons/P2P entrepreneurs to **seek collaborators for projects and best practices**. Creating **opportunities for meaningful work** vital to empowering those who feel abandoned in today's labor landscape.

Last, the platform could facilitate more stable **alliances** and a transnational federation of collectives working on local economies. Another potential outcome would be an **Open Coop Development Agency** to stimulate the creation of new commons-oriented market entities.

The P2P Foundation has established high level alliances for joint actions through our Commons Transition Network. We are in constant communication with a **growing network** of transnationally focused activist organizations including entities working on communication (The Rules, Shareable and Ouishare) consultancy and resources for ethical market practices (The Post Growth Institute and the Platform Cooperativism Consortium), existing ethical entrepreneurial collectives (Enspiral, Ethos, Sensorica, the Mutual Aid Network and Guerrilla Translation), communities focusing on physical production (WikiHouse, POC21), as well as established cooperative institutions and trade unions, such as the European Confederation of Industrial and Service Cooperatives, Cooperatives Europe, the International Labour Organization, the European Trade Union Institute, the International Trade Union Federation and the European Network of Cities and Regions for the Social Economy.

4. Design Global, Manufacture Local

This project is developed within Stream 3: "Building the Open Source Circular Economy". Its starting points are a problem and a nascent opportunity. The problem is the **deep environmental and economic crises** experienced worldwide, and especially in countries of the periphery and Global South. Technology diffusion and the creation of new synergetic and sustainable economic options in the areas worst hit by the crisis are arguably of paramount importance for social cohesion.

At the same time, the **convergence of the digital commons** (e.g. open knowledge, software and design) **with desktop manufacturing and automation technologies** (e.g. from 3D printing and CNC machines to low-tech tools and crafts) presents an opportunity, albeit an under-researched one. This convergence could arguably play a key role in designing sustainable models of production, such as the "design global, manufacture local" model. The latter seems to form economies of scope that promote **sustainability** and **open innovation** while celebrating new forms of human **collaboration**.

However, such claims currently rest on thin conceptual and empirical foundations. Through the lens of selected **case studies** and **participatory action research**, this project seeks to understand relevant organisational models, their evolution, and their broader political economy and policy implications. Therefore, the main aim is to provide a unique body of **empirical data** to explore and theorise upon the conditions under which digital commons successfully converges with desktop manufacturing, automation technologies and regenerative design and ecological restoration practices.

This project is divided into four steps:

1. Setting-up the **theoretical framework** through desk research and literature review;
2. Primary data gathering and in-depth analysis of selected **case studies** conducted by interviews, participant observation and review of existing data;
3. Providing an effective **narrative synthesis** based on the first two steps in order to recognise patterns across cases and communicate them to a broad audience; and
4. **Implementation and integration of the pilot** (participatory action research) in order to infuse existing grassroots communities, with the assistance of key local facilitators, with the distilled essence of our research.

The **ultimate goal** of this project is to contribute to **sustainable transitions**, formulating a groundbreaking research and action **agenda**. This will help identify techno-economic opportunities and challenges that are often fundamentally different from any our society has yet experienced. Policy makers, political scientists, ecological economists, practitioners and, especially, grassroots communities are targeted, as well as those who are interested in science, technology, ecology and society studies.

Potential and Purpose

At the P2P Foundation, our sights are set on how to lend our minds and hands to the long-term, deliberate and restorative **change in society** that we see and support worldwide. We see real life potential and progress across many sectors, and are regularly approached by active individuals and groups who want to join us in our efforts, but for that we needed a strong plan and clear goals. The projects outlined above each have many inter-related facets, and touch upon a number of key lines of action which are certain to have ripple effects. Our projects promote the further development and dissemination of commons-based peer production and its enormous potential. Most of all they depend on dependable collaboration and consistent, focused support from a diverse variety of actors. We are always available to discuss these projects and answer any questions, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

We invite you to learn more about our work at: www.p2pfoundation.net