



The P2P Mode of Production

An Indiano Manifesto

by the Grupo Cooperativo
de las Indias

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Level Translation

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This version was published on 2014-02-07



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1 Introduction

The current crisis, the deepest and longest in the history of capitalism, has opened a debate around the world about what appears, more clearly with each passing day, to be the simultaneous destruction of the two principal institutions of social and economic life: the State and the market. Never in living memory has the economic system been so universally questioned.

On the other hand, never before have technical capacities been so powerful, and, more importantly, so accessible to people and small organizations. In fact, never before have so many small businesses taken part in the world market. Nearly free [*gratis*] peer-to-peer communication technologies let them create the largest commercial networks in history. The emergence of free software (which, by itself, represents the largest-ever transfer of value to the economic periphery) empowered them with unexpected independence. Millions of small businesses around the world, especially in Asia, were able to coordinate among themselves this way and hone their products just as new markets were opening up to them. It's "globalization of the small." It's not a marginal phenomenon: never before have so many people around the world gotten out of poverty.

If we look closely at these tendencies, we'll find interesting

contradictions: the crisis has its origin in large-scale industries, and in fact, it's the largest of all, the financial industry, that sets off the process and keeps it going. However, the new emerging technologies are about scope, not scale: the free software industry doesn't sustain itself on big, monopolistic global businesses with global networks of commercial subsidiaries, but rather on a new "commons of free knowledge" that can be downloaded, modified and even sold by anyone. The relationships in the construction of this new commons have no central leadership or hierarchy, but rather are based on the free concurrence of projects and on relations among equals. The businesses in this industry don't win fame and income creating scarcity. They develop their reputation on innovative contributions to the commons, and their benefits are born simply of the sale of work hours.

Free software was the first industry based on a completely different system of property and production: the peer-to-peer, or P2P, mode of production. Later on, in the middle of the crisis, new tools would appear, from three-dimensional printers to industrial design methodologies, and new sectors will explore new branches of the commons.

The objective of this book is to show how the economic crisis is, in reality, the crisis of large scales, but above all, to show how we still have the opportunity to take a step towards a new mode of producing that's based on a new, cooperative way of competing, a new work ethic, and, above all, on the building of a new commons, a knowledge

commons open to all.