

Report from FSCONS & co.

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maxigas et al.

FSCONS, a “Free Society Conference and Nordic Summit” started in 2007 and appeared to be very much alive, gathering around 150 practitioners, activists and advocates mostly from Scandinavian countries. All of us were impressed by the good mix of people and topics, the kindness and trust we received from the organisers and attendants, and the level of the conversations at the meeting. It happened at the Humanities faculty of Göteborg University where there was ample space, good drinks like Club Mate and a bit too clean architectural environment. All in all we felt that the manifesto was put into practice:

FSCONS exists to provide a meeting place where subjects covering society, culture and technology can be discussed and brought to life in peer discussions, without being confined to each particular subject area. It should provide both the physical and virtual space where people, organisations and governments, with interest in the three subject areas can meet in a participatory and constructive dialogue. The unique combination of topics creates a platform where cross-pollination between the areas can occur, and where new co-operations and thoughts can emerge which allows the participants to find new inspiration even from areas outside of their own.

We had three primary missions (in order of appearance):

1. Announce the new issue of the online Journal of Peer Production (#5: Shared Machine Shops)
2. Release the Book of Peer Production, an anthology of articles from the journal, mostly authored by FSCONS speakers
3. Present the Peer Production Track at FSCONS

Announcement and Release

We did a short plug for the new issue and the anthology, with a projector showing the website, a table full of freshly printed “books” and free-as-in-beer cocktails offered to the audience. We were missing Sara Trochetti who could not join us as

planned, and decided to invest the budget thus left over in marketing, i.e. booze. Pictures should come soon. There were around 50 people at this point. The reception was followed by a Kurbeats [1](#) concert and maxigas did some real time visual synthesis with Ibniz [2](#) to provide a backdrop.

On Saturday we mostly followed the excellent Commons track organised by Douglas Hine [3](#), manned a Peer Production table selling the anthology and prepared for the presentations. Sunday was the day for the Peer Production track, where in the words of Johan “we managed to capture and hold the attention of a substantial part of the audience during the day”. He screened the documentary “The Lucas Plan: The birth of alternative technology” [4](#) which was unearthed and republished by Adrian Smith [5](#). Maxigas gave a funny rant on the backwardness of hackers as a source of political agency in the face of technological determinism, entitled “The Luddite Aspects of Hackerdom: How to Build Time Machines to Alter the Course of History” [6](#), well received by practitioners and theorists alike, with the phrase “it is forks all the way down” describing the history of the Maemo platform making rounds on Twitter.

Kevin Flanagan from the P2P Foundation followed with “Cooperation and the Commons: Challenges and opportunities for an Open Cooperative movement”, [7](#) giving a thorough overview of the peer production practices landscape with an emphasis on cooperatives. This tied in well with the next presentation, “Building a Society of the Commons in Ecuador: A look at FLOK Society Project’s experiences with the bottom-up development of public policies for a Society of the Commons” by George Dafermos who is currently working on the FLOK issue for JoPP. [8](#) Both presentations incited many questions and various aspects of peer production and the Ecuadorian context were clarified.

Between the two latter presentations we listened with great excitement to the keynote by Leigh Honeywell, “Models We Use to Change the World”, where she talked about the establishment of feminist hackerspaces, recommending Sophie Toupin’s excellent article in the latest issue of JoPP. Overall, we thought that she promoted “managing the revolution”, an approach rooted in the worst aspects of modern instrumental rationality where – as Douglas Hine put it earlier – your collaborators are seen as a resource to be calculated with, rather than as potential friends that you could build affective commons-based social relations with. But then she also highlighted the key role of emotional labour in organisations and the gendered distribution of it, which is crucial to bring into the conversation around the infrastructures of peer production.

Finally, Johan Söderberg talked about the political economics of DMT in “Novelty against sovereignty: The case of DIY drug extraction”, analysing how grassroots innovation around “legal highs” is recuperated by the state and capital – particularly the European Union and big pharma. The idea that circumventors are circumvented through the dynamics and discourse of innovation puzzled some. The conference closed with a series of short lightning talks where maxigas called on the audience to Scan All The Books [10](#) and described the digitalisation workflow of digital public librarians in Calafou.

All in all, we felt that this weekend was a big step in establishing the Journal of Peer Production as a visible forum for the critical discussion of peer production phenomena for scholars, activists and practitioners alike. We have to follow up on (a.) our discussions around the FLOK Society issue, which are not included in this report, with putting the anthology online (b.) and (c.) on how and the ideas about making it easier to produce paper versions of the journal in the future, and (d.) how to render systematic the presence of JoPP at hacker conferences, for instance, by setting up a list over the places that have been visited by us and where we will be going next.

We'd like to thank everybody who contributed to the process or simply waited patiently for the next issue to come out...

ps: and now, I am off to present and promote the Book of Peer Production at the Free Culture Forum in Barcelona! [11](#) :)
