PART ONE: PRINCIPLES, ORIENTATIONS, VALUES

Around which principles does this organization or group *orient* its processes, actions, relationships, commitments, connections, projects, and goals?

In 1992, Margaret Wheatley published a book called *Leadership and the New Science* […] Her key learnings were that:

- everything is about **relationships, critical connections**;
- **chaos** is an essential process that we need to engage;
- the **sharing of information** is fundamental […]; and
- **vision** is an invisible field that binds us together, emerging from relationships and chaos and information."

Summarized by adrienne maree brown in "Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds." (p. 43-44)

Relationships and critical connections have FORMS: these often involve role-plays such as "coworker," "boss" "wife," "farmer" etc. These all have historic, institutional, and social norms and encodings that involve the expectations, beliefs, values, habits, and traditions of different systems, persons, and groups. A relational form can be in-formed *intentionally*, or it can be left to *default.* Default forms of relationship and connection can be very valuable; we may honor traditional relationship-forms in some ways, even while other forms (and aspects of forms) have been constructed by what bell hooks calls "white supremist patriarchal capitalism," an existing paradigm interconnected with colonialism that hierarchizes, regulates, and devalues human and biotic life, and also structurally generalizes, homogenizes, overlooks or "oversees," and over-structures biotic entanglements and processes. It is difficult to 'break out' of oppressive norms and codes in order to build relationships and connections that align with intentions *otherwise*. One way to involve intentions in relational forms is to be "critical," that is, to question how and why connections (between persons, between people and land or food, etc) are formed. A newly-forming group of individuals may want to acknowledge that relationships are not going to be "by default," they may require a lot of discussion (transparency) and intentional consideration of the group's diverse values, experiences, needs, desires, expectations.

When norms, codes, and assumptions are challenged, **chaos** becomes an essential part of processes. Comfort and safety in and with chaos is both a personal responsibility and a value around which social relationships can be oriented. Chaos and order are always in tension with one another, a balance that moves and shifts. Neither is wholly "good" or "bad." The psychological and emotional health of persons working to dismantle default formations and build intentional relationships is both a part of each person's unique growth and part of what a social formation can help support and respect. Helping each other learn, teach, change, and share is chaotic, but it can also be pleasurable and stimulating, providing purpose and agency. Excitement, confusion,

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fear, concern, desperation, desire, and other emotions are a part of process, not "problems" to fix or always issues to resolve. Human beings as part of nature, as constantly changing living entanglements, are "chaotic;" chaos means unpredictability, but in physics it also means "owing to great sensitivity to small changes in conditions."

Sharing information requires COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES, both the common everyday ways of communicating and structures like meetings. Relationships, critical connections, and balanced chaos-order social formations around emotions, ideas, values, and needs are dependent on communication. In attempts to work together, individuals may form "strategic" communications that help share different kinds of information. Formations such as meetings are part of strategic communications, and so are emergent vocabularies, theories, and ways of analyzing situations (of all different kinds). Emotional states, ways of making decisions, and plans for the future all require awareness of different "kinds of information" and require different strategies to communicate about them. Agreements on communication strategies may help individuals work through personal differences to form group solidarity. Communications may also be performed across a spectrum between "chaos" and "order."

Intentional formation of relationships and critical connections, supporting personal and social growth and safety through and within chaos and orders, and developing communication strategies are the concrete and conceptual tasks of organizing. *How* and *Around Which values, ethics, beliefs, and goals* these tasks are *performed* is often called ORIENTATION. **Vision** is directional, the bodies are facing some ideas and values and turning their backs on others. "Orientation" is about focus, desire, reasoning, and planning, it is a "turning towards" movement. Vision, as an orientating practice, is a sharing of perspective, a situation of sites for sight, a location or stance from which individuals cluster together to try and see and design their own future.

ORIENTATIONS may be formalized through language into PRINCIPLES. As each organization or group works through chaos to devise its own relational forms, social agreements, communication strategies, and array of values and goals orienting action. "PRINCIPLES" are often formalized by an organization's relationship with institutional not-for-profit structures and other legal and economic requirements, but they can involve any "autonomous" (shared, communicated) array of agreed-upon values.

PRINCIPLES can help determine what courses of action to take and how to assess if things are "working out" for the individuals involved beyond purely capitalist senses of productivity, efficiency, and success. Principles may be discussed through workshops, meetings, while co-working, and through ongoing interpersonal discussion. They may be recorded in words and kept visible, transparent, and easily sharable with newly-involved persons.Outside of regular meeting structures, "vision" meetings may be held to assess how principles are in-forming orientations, relationships, and so on.

EXAMPLE PRINCIPLES AND ASSESSMENT INQUIRIES

The following pages are self-assessment and organizational assessment tools from adrienne maree brown. *Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds*. In this book, maree brown proposes PRINCIPLES of:

1) ADAPTATION
2) INTERDEPENDENCE/DECENTRALIZATION
3) NONLINEAR/ITERATIVE
4) RESILIENCE/TRANSFORMATIVE JUSTICE

The rest of the book shows why and how she and others have arrived at these four principles. A group or organization may use these four, phrase principles differently, and/or determine any number of their own. **Maree brown's assessment questions may be useful even if a group is formed, in agreement, strategic, and oriented around different principles.**

Assessment of the principle of ADAPTATION

How do I/we respond to positive changes?
How do I/we respond to negative changes?
What is my/our intention?
How do I/we do at keeping my/our intention present during changes?
With an organization/team/network, have everyone separately rate the group on this scale. Share the ratings and have a discussion on how you made your assessment, and what adaptations are needed.
Our organization/team/network is (choose one)
Too adaptive (we change for anything and lose touch with our purpose/intention).
Highly adaptive and focused.
Pretty adaptive (we could keep relaxing with and into change).
Struggling with adaptation (we get really thrown off our focus/mission when change happens).
Not adaptive (acknowledging reality is the first step).

Assessment of INTERDEPENDENCE AND DECENTRALIZATION

Who do you lean on?
Who leans on you?
(Explore the places where those lists overlap, and where they don't. How can you increase mutual relationship?)
Are all of your needs met? If yes, how? If not, why not?
Did you answer either question above as if it's all your responsibility?
If not, try it. How does that feel?
If yes, answer again as if nothing happens with you[…]"
"If you disappeared tomorrow (because aliens chose you as the ambassador from Earth to the Alliance of Evolved Planets, for instance), how would your organization respond?
Close its doors
Period of chaos and power struggle

Redistribute my work and be overwhelmed

Redistribute my work and adjust for capacity so that we're still on path

How does your answer to the question above feel?

What could you do to increase decentralized strength in your group?

Assessment of NONLINEAR/ITERATIVE

What are you practicing? (Include anything you practice/repeat in your life, things you feel positive about, things you feel negative about—from meditation to burn-out, listening to interruption, community accountability to public takedowns, exercise, escaping, etc.)

We spend our lives in unconscious practices, practices that make us deny our true selves, our true power, our collectivism. It takes three hundred repetitions for muscle memory and three thousand repetitions for embodiment.89 What do you need to practice?

What does your organization/collective/alliance practice? (Include all the things you practice in your collective work—conflict avoidance, glorifying burnout, over scheduling, mission drifting, check-ins, retreats, active listening, community accountability, etc.)

What do you need to practice?

How long does[…]"

Assessment of RESILIENCE/TRANSFORMATIVE JUSTICE

How often do you engage in personal reflection?

How often do you engage in group/movement reflection?

What are your individual resilience practices?

What are resilience practices you and your organization/group/alliance/collective do together?

Do you increase or decrease tension or dramatic moments that happen between you and loved ones (family/lovers/friends)? (If you aren't sure, ask them.)

Do you increase or decrease tension or dramatic moments that happen between you and coworkers/comrades? (If you aren't sure, ask them.)

Does your organization/group increase or decrease tension or dramatic moments that happen between y'all and partner organizations? (If you aren't sure, ask them.)

Do others ask you to mediate, or in other ways support them through conflict?

What is your first reaction to conflict? (Do you address it directly? Avoid it? Get defensive? Turn up? Other?)

How do you feel, and what do you do, when you witness:

Anger?

Joy?

Tears?

Depression?

Imbalanced power dynamics?

Have you or your organization/group ever been involved in a public fight (physical, digital, etc.)? A public takedown? What did you learn from it?

Have you or your group been practicing transformative justice? How[…]"

7 COOPERATIVE PRINCIPLES
International Co-operative Alliance

Cooperatives are also legally and ethically bound within 7 cooperative principles. Cooperatives around the world generally operate according to these same core principles and values, adopted by the International Co-operative Alliance in 1995.

1. Open and Voluntary Membership
Membership in a cooperative is open to all people who can reasonably use its services and stand willing to accept the responsibilities of membership, regardless of race, religion, gender, or economic circumstances.

2. Democratic Member Control
Cooperatives are democratic organizations controlled by their members, who actively participate in setting policies and making decisions. Representatives (directors/trustees) are elected among the membership and are accountable to them. In primary cooperatives, members have equal voting rights (one member, one vote); cooperatives at other levels are organized in a democratic manner.

3. Members' Economic Participation
Members contribute equitably to, and democratically control, the capital of their cooperative. At least part of that capital remains the common property of the cooperative. Members allocate surpluses for any or all of the following purposes: developing the cooperative; setting up reserves; benefiting members in proportion to their transactions with the cooperative; and supporting other activities approved by the membership.

4. Autonomy and Independence
Cooperatives are autonomous, self-help organizations controlled by their members. If they enter into agreements with other organizations, including governments, or raise capital from external sources, they do so on terms that ensure democratic control as well as their unique identity.

5. Education, Training, and Information
Education and training for members, elected representatives (directors/trustees), CEOs, and employees help them effectively contribute to the development of their cooperatives. Communications about the nature and benefits of cooperatives, particularly with the general public and opinion leaders, help boost cooperative understanding.

6. Cooperation Among Cooperatives
By working together through local, national, regional and international structures,

cooperatives improve services, bolster local economies, and deal more effectively with social and community needs.

7. Concern for Community
Cooperatives work for the sustainable development of their communities through policies supported by the membership.

These 7 principles freely blend legal/economic structures and ethical senses of justice and cooperation as ways of living.

PRINCIPLES, STATEMENTS, DEMANDS, AND MANIFESTOS

For more examples as a group or organization is devising their own autonomous PRINCIPLING documents, the ways others have and do express themselves can be extremely helpful.

[Combahee River Collective Statement](#)

[If Only I Had a Heart: A DisCO Manifesto](#)

[A Cooperative Manifesto by Tim Huet](#)

[The Black Panthers 10 Point Program](#)

Acts of writing, speech, and other documentation of a group or organization's motivations can both help that group keep itself accountable to itself and influence the broader world both in the present and in the future.

PART TWO: SOCIAL PROCESS AND COMMUNICATION

How do organizations and groups decide what to do and how to do it? How are principles used to orient action? How do we perform the concrete work of communicating, planning, moving together?

DECISION-MAKING FORMS

CONSENUS most generally means that everyone has to agree for a decision to be made. In order for consensus to be possible, a "quorum" must be present for the decision-making process, that is, a large percentage of the group (usually more than 2/3) must participate and agree to reach a legitimate consensus for the whole group.

VOTING is a process through which a majority opinion is found and used to rule on a decision

AUTHORIZED DECISION-MAKING is a process through which an agreed-upon leader or committee is given the (often temporary) authority to make a particular decision

These three modes of decision-making may be *combined*; for example, a person may be elected through a consensus process to make a particular decision (about which they may have more knowledge or have a higher stake in, etc), a group may reach a consensus *to vote* on a particular issue, or a committee to make a particular decision may be formed by voting in members of that committee.

These processes may be as casual or formal as is desirable to the organization or group: for many, 'consensus' simply means arguing something out until people generally agree to it. This "open" consensus however may silence and marginalize individuals (for example, those who are less outgoing) or even erase minority opinions (e.g. if everyone is generally agreeing, the one or two people who disagree may not have their concerns heard because they decide to let the more popular idea or perspective centralize itself). Thus, some formality may create safer and more egalitarian decision-making processes. The more "different" opinions and perspectives within the group are, the more formal processes may be useful. Formality can be a way of honoring and involving differences (see Autumn Brown's formal consensus process flowchart below).

Further, processes of reaching consensus, performing voting, and authorizing decision-making may be unique to each decision that needs to be made, or they may be formalized by an organization or group around different issues. For example, participatory budgeting may require an extremely formal process involving *motion-making* (see below) or *outcome break outs* (see below), while deciding what color to paint a room may be easily resolved through open conversation.

*MOTION-MAKING***:** a process through which one or more individuals makes a formal proposal to the rest of the group by stating that they "move to" do *X.* The proposal may be presented or

described to the group. It may then be seconded, thirded, and thus confirmed, or it may be 'tabled,' put up for more discussion.

***OUTCOME BREAK OUTS*:** often, we may need to think further about the possible outcomes, consequences, and affects of complex decisions. Here, the group may write down the different options, directions, or choices being discussed and break out into smaller groups of 2 or more to go over projected pros and cons of choosing that direction, choice, or option. The different groups may then present back to the full group, informing further discussion.
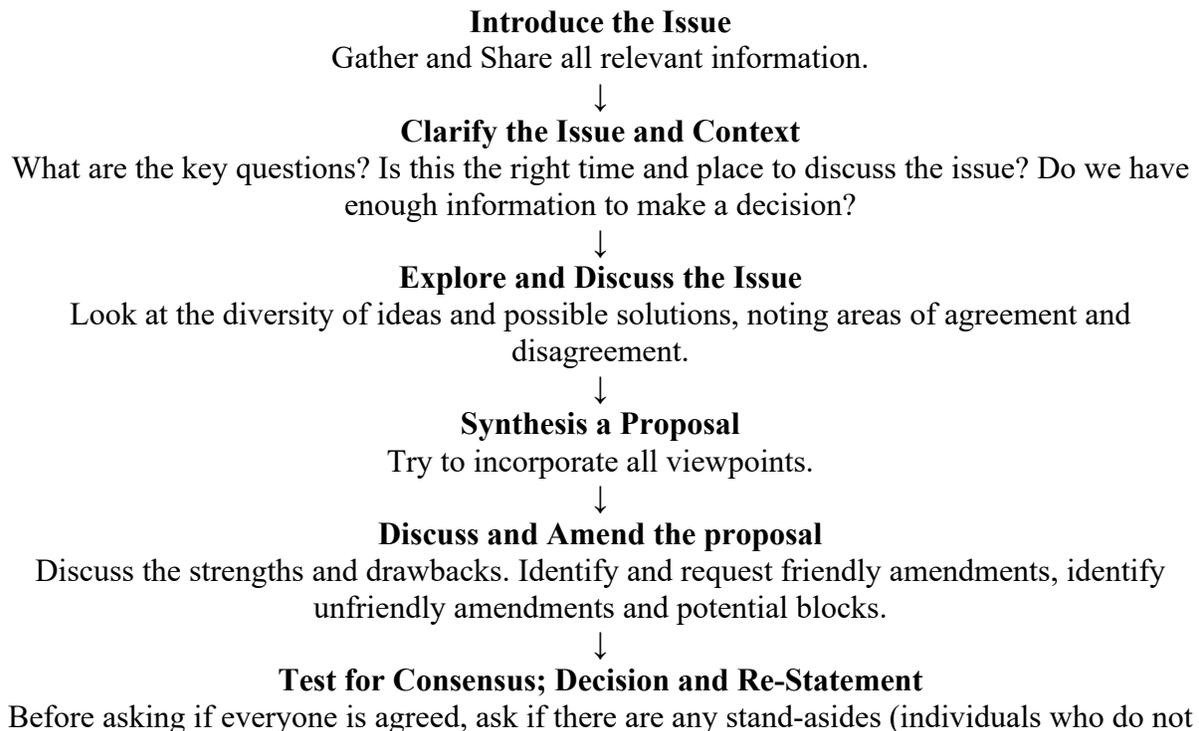

The Iambrown Consensus Process Flow Chart
Autumn Brown

Consensus Process is purposeful engagement in making decisions together in a way that is inclusive and non-hierarchical. It is a creative process which synthesizes the ideas of all members of a group towards a decision that suits the needs of the group, and the comfort level of the individual members.

Why Consensus? Decisions made by consensus are meaningful, holistic, and easier to carry forward than decisions made by voting and authoritarian decision-making processes. This is because all voices are heard in the process, and all members participating in the decision are invested in a successful outcome.

Here's how it works:

Introduce the Issue
Gather and Share all relevant information.
↓
Clarify the Issue and Context
What are the key questions? Is this the right time and place to discuss the issue? Do we have enough information to make a decision?
↓
Explore and Discuss the Issue
Look at the diversity of ideas and possible solutions, noting areas of agreement and disagreement.
↓
Synthesis a Proposal
Try to incorporate all viewpoints.
↓
Discuss and Amend the proposal
Discuss the strengths and drawbacks. Identify and request friendly amendments, identify unfriendly amendments and potential blocks.
↓
Test for Consensus; Decision and Re-Statement
Before asking if everyone is agreed, ask if there are any stand-asides (individuals who do not

fully support the decision, but will not stand in the way of it moving forward). Then ask if there are any blocks (people who feel that the decision compromises the integrity of the group in terms of its purpose, goals, and values and will prevent the decision from moving forward). If there are no blocks, ask if everyone is agreed.

↓

Implement the Decision

Once everyone is agreed, discuss how the decision will be carried forward and assign roles.

MODIFICATIONS:

For Committee: Many groups opt to develop proposals in committee. If this is the case, I recommend completing steps 1–3 with the large group, sending the issue to committee for step 4, and bringing the proposal back to the group for steps 5–7.

For Majority Decision (or voting): For some groups, coming to a complete and unified consensus is not necessarily feasible. These groups modify what it means to take decision. Consensus Minus One, for instance, means that if only one person blocks a decision, then the decision stands. In these situations, at least two people must block in order to stop a decision from moving forward. Other modifications include 90% majority rule or 2/3 majority rule.

What if there is a Block?
Consider your Options:
Ask the person blocking if he/she is willing to stand aside.
Return to discussion of the issue and develop a new proposal with the block in mind.
Leave the proposal/discussion for another time; take a break for reflection.
Accept the block and do not move forward.
Use mediation tools or an outside mediator; develop a reconciliation committee to address frequent blocking, if necessary.
Resort to other modes of decision-making, such as random choice or voting.
Consensus Process Tools
Here are a few tools that are useful in facilitating consensus process, and move the discussion forward in ways that are creative and productive.

Facilitation
Processes may work more smoothly and be more fun when one or two individuals in the group facilitate the process, and help guide the group through each stage of discussing issues, and in some cases moving towards making decisions.

Small Groups
When working with a large group, it is often useful to break down into smaller groups as a way of allowing more voices to be heard and more creative ideas to surface.

Hand Signals
In a large group, the use of hand signals can indicate one's desire to speak, acknowledge a point of information, or communicate silent agreement, among other things. This is an effective way of

easing communication and maintaining momentum without allowing for disruption or disrespect between parties.

Brainstorm/Go-Round/Popcorn
These are easy ways to get a lot of ideas out in the open relatively quickly.
In a Go-Round...the facilitator asks a question and each member of a group answers in order, without responding to one another.
In a Brainstorm...individuals can respond to and build off of each others ideas.
In a Popcorn...the facilitator asks for ideas and everyone in the group is free to respond with whatever comes to mind without any particular order.

Talking Stick
Talking Sticks are wonderful for equalizing airtime and preventing interruption. The group selects an object to represent a Talking Stick, and once someone in the group is holding it, only he/she can talk.

Active & Reflective Listening
Active & Reflective Listening involves listening carefully to what another person is saying, and repeating back to him/her what you have heard, not what you think about what you heard. The idea is to help the other person achieve more clarity about his/her feelings on a particular issue.

Fishbowl
Fishbowls operate by drawing out a few members of a group to discuss an issue, while the larger group watches from a surrounding circle

Pros & Cons
Sometimes it is extremely clarifying for a group to make a list of the Pros & Cons of a specific decision.

Straw Poll
A Straw Poll is a fake vote. It is as simple as the facilitator asking who is for a decision, and who is against it. It can be very helpful in assessing how invested a group is in a specific decision or action.

Switching Roles
During particularly heated or contentious discussions, it can be helpful and clarifying to have individuals who feel very strongly on an issue switch roles, and argue for the opposite side.

MEETING ROLES

Each meeting may need 3-4 roles, decided by who volunteers, or they be assigned at the end of each meeting for the next meeting. This can be casual, and long-term groups can generally be fair about rotating roles.

FACILITATOR: introduces the agenda, manages time, hands over the floor to guests, may provide water or snacks, etc.

NOTE TAKER: types notes for sharing with the group after the meeting. May highlight things they feel should be on the next agenda.

MODERATOR: (public or large meeting) This moderator's primary task is to "keep stack," (using HAND SIGNALS, see below, moderator should also inform the group if these will be used) that is, note who has raised their hand and how the order of speakers "stacks up." The moderator may NOT use their role to speak more frequently than others or "jump stack," they must participate just like everyone else; a moderator is not the same as a *facilitator* (a facilitator may interrupt or intervene in the stack). A moderator is helpful when there is a large group (to make sure nobody dominates the discussion) or when the discussion is likely to be contentious or involve high emotions.

HAND SIGNALS

While these signals may seem "formal" at first they will become second nature after a while and are very common across political/social justice and civic organizing. Take care to remind or inform people at the beginning of a meeting if these hand signals will be used.
Often only the first three are used but groups can adopt any combination of these or invent their own as needed.

Hand raising = would like to speak next

Hand raising with thumb out = would like to interrupt current speaker or be bumped up on "stack" to ask a question or add information (at moderator's discretion)

"twinkle" = finger waggling to show support or agreement with current speaker

"attention to group please" = index finger makes a circle to indicate the group, used when one speaker may be taking up a lot of time, ignoring others, or when emotions are heightening, politely asks speaker to pay attention to the group dynamics

"other perspectives requested" hand palm up and stretched out, often with a circular gesture = used by a speaker to indicate that they understand others may have much to add or more understanding of what they are speaking about, used by anyone to indicate subjectivity, to invite more open discussion

"shhh" finger to lips = directed at moderator and facilitator to indicate that you feel the speaker should be silenced (when the speaker is causing *harm*)

PART THREE: CO-OPERATIVES

"people before profit"

"A cooperative" is both a formal (order) for an economic structure (type of business) and a value-based social formation oriented around (often chaotic) cooperation. Social and cooperative organizing is an ancestral and ongoing strategy for resisting trade monopoly, biotic exploitation, colonialism, capitalism, and the economic and relational structures of white supremacy, cis-heteronormativity, and patriarchy. We do not invent "a cooperative" all on our own, with no historical precedence. We also do not have the time to make all of the same mistakes all over again each time we start and build a cooperative. We can learn from others, past and present. While "cooperative history" is entangled with the ongoing natures of humans as social and mutually-supportive beings who flourish in community, through desire-lead activity, and in intimate relation with one another and the other elements and entities of Earth, "a cooperative" is also a specific material arrangement that directly and intentionally intervenes in capitalist economic structures and default relationships. Cooperatives are defined as "**any autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly-owned and democratically-controlled enterprise**." Common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations may involve food, land, housing, childcare, education, technology, and any other sphere of life, or *habitus.*

ECONOMIC STRUCTURE

A great general summary of cooperative form and structure from *Collective Courage: A History of African American Cooperatives:*

"Cooperatives are classified into three major categories, depending on the relationship between the member-owners and the co-op's purpose: consumer-owned, producer-owned, or worker-owned (or some combination of the three). Consumers come together and form a buying club or cooperative retail store in order to pool their money to buy in bulk the kinds of goods and services they want, and the quality they want, at an affordable price. Consumers establish a grocery cooperative, for example, if fresh produce and natural and vegetarian foods are not supplied elsewhere or are very costly. Consumers also come together to buy electricity, financial services (as in a credit union), environmentally friendly fuels, pharmaceuticals, or child care, for example. Cooperative retail enterprises such as natural-food grocery stores and rural electric and energy cooperatives, together with credit unions, are the most common and successful examples of consumer cooperatives. Credit unions offer financial services and loans to a specific group of members (affiliated with a union, a workplace, or a church, for example) or to underserved communities, and keep financial resources circulating in the community. Housing co-ops expand home or apartment ownership to more people, addressing both financing and maintenance issues, and often build in long-term affordability.

Producers also form cooperatives to jointly purchase supplies and equipment or to jointly process and market their goods. Here again, cooperative economics facilitates the pooling of resources to supply producers or to help produce or enhance their product, to standardize procedures and prices, to increase the selling price, or to decrease the costs of distribution, advertising, and sales. Agriculture marketing and craft cooperatives are the most common form of producers' cooperatives.

Workers form cooperatives so as to jointly own and manage a business themselves, to stabilize employment, make policy, and share the profits. Worker cooperatives are often established to save a company that is being sold off, abandoned, or closed down, or to start a company that exemplifies workplace democracy and collective management. Worker-owned businesses offer economic security, income and wealth generation, and democratic economic participation to employees, as well as provide communities with meaningful and decent jobs and promote environmental sustainability." (pages 3-4)

MORE INFORMATION:

https://www.usworker.coop/home/

https://community-wealth.org/content/worker-cooperatives

https://institute.coop/news/becoming-employee-owned

https://www.co-oplaw.org/

https://www.fastcompany.com/90249347/why-the-cooperative-model-needs-to-be-at-the-heart-of-our-new-economy

https://cultivate.coop/wiki/Main_Page

https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/documents/2014/coopsegm/Schwettmann.pdf

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HISTORY

In the 18th and 19th century in central Europe many farmers and merchants were resistant to the industrial revolution. Many saw increasing mechanization of the economy (accurately) as threatening the survival of the poor, differently abled, and elderly. The first cooperative principles, the Rochdale Principles, were published in 1844. Robert Owen, who is often seen as "the grandfather of cooperatives" established a commune in New Harmony, Indiana in 1825. This community's principles included

"curing pauperism" and replacing religious morals with secular ethics of mutual aid, equity, and worker-owned means of production.

In the USA, mutual aid and cooperative organizing have gone hand-in-hand, especially before and after the Civil War as previously-enslaved people developed communal aid societies, intentional communities, and ways of self-organizing, often in collaboration with Indigenous and First Nations people (see The Red and Black Republic of Fredonia), Quakers and other organizers from the European and U.S. utopian commune movement. Women (from different cultural locations) have also been traditional cooperative organizers, establishing trade systems outside of dominant markets. Wherever capitalist markets deprive groups of people from access to goods and services—or from ability to make a living—cooperatives spring up.

Since the 1600's in the US and globally, cooperatives have been associated both with utopianism and with communism and have endured violent backlash and attack, from the Tulsa Massacre through the Vietnam War. Through the Jim Crow period, cooperative grocery stores, banks, schools, and social service organizations supported Black communities and, in the 1960's, "back to the land" and "hippie" movements also took up subsistence economic tools. In the 1990's, "food co-ops" in the USA were often rebranded as part of white middle class health-and-cultural "lifestyle movements."

Today, a vast terrain of historic cooperative projects can influence our processes, from Cuba and Mexico to Russia and Bhutan, from rural Mississippi to Minneapolis, from the pen of WEB Du Bois, to the work Grace Lee Boggs in Detroit, to the Zapatistas in Chiapas.

There is currently a "worker-ownership" and "cooperative" movement underway around the world. In the US however, there are only around 500-800 "democratic" workplaces, collectively employing around 20,000 people, according to the U.S. Federation of Worker Cooperatives.

FURTHER READING:

https://thenextsystem.org/thinking-about-a-next-system-with-w-e-b-du-bois-and-fannie-lou-hamer

https://openharvest.coop/the-legacy-of-african-american-co-ops/

https://courses.lumenlearning.com/suny-esc-culturalanthropology/chapter/economics/

https://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-020-68734-4

https://bcca.coop/files/Social_Co-ops_Social_Care.pdf

TABLE 1.1   Cooperative vs. corporation comparison

	Cooperative corporation	Unincorporated cooperative association	Corporation (C or S)	Limited liability company (LLC)	Partnership	Proprietorship	Nonprofit
Who are the owners?	Members (individuals or entities).*	Members (individuals or entities); may include both patron and investor classes.	One or more shareholders (individuals or entities). S Corp. limited to 100 shareholders.	One or more individuals who are members.	At least two individuals or entities.	Individual.	No ownership.
What are membership requirements?	Determined by bylaws. Usually one share/fee. May include other requirements.	Determined by bylaws.	One share of stock, with rights and privileges attached to it determined by the articles of incorporation, bylaws, shareholder agreement, and applicable law.	At discretion of LLC members.	At discretion of partners.	At discretion of owner.	Membership fee may be required to participate.
What is the business purpose?	To meet member needs for goods or services; earn a return on member investment.	To meet member needs for goods or services; earn a return on member investment.	To earn a return on owner investment.	To earn a return on owner investment; provide employment for members.	To provide employment for partners and a return on partners' investments.	To provide employment for owner and a return on owner's investment.	To provide services or information.
How is the business financed?	Stock/shares to members and/or outside investors; retained profits.	Stock/shares to patron and investor members; retained profits.	Sale of stock; retained profits.	LLC member investments; retained profits.	Partner investments; retained profits.	Proprietor's investment; retained profits.	Grants, individual contributions/donations, fees for services.

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TABLE 1.2 Comparison of cooperative businesses (worker co-ops) with employee stock ownership programs

	Worker co-op	ESOP	Other employee ownership mechanism
Who are the owners?	Employees; sometimes nonvoting preferred-stock owners.	One or more shareholders (individuals or entities). Some proportion of employees (can be 100% or less) through trustee; employee stock held in trust (defined contribution pension plan).	Nonemployees and employees with some stock options in partnership, sub-S Corp., nonqualified stock purchase plans, incentive stock options.
What is the business purpose?	To meet member needs for stable high-quality jobs; have control over their own work; jointly market their services; earn return on member investment. For local employee control over investment and disinvestment.	Employee trustee retirement plan; to earn a return for retirement on owner investment. Local employee control over investment and disinvestment (depending on percent employee owned).	To earn a return on owner investment and provide some profit sharing with employees.
How is the business financed?	Stock/shares to members, and/or outside investors (social investment); sometimes earn grants for social mission; retained profits/surplus. Equity capital challenges.	Sale of stock; equity investors (partnerships with private investors and/or loans to employees); retained profits. Equity capital challenges if 100% employee-owned.	Sale of stock; equity investors; retained profits.
Who votes for and serves on the board of directors?	Worker-owners (one person, one vote). Employees under democratic governance and self-determination.	Owners, managers, employees (proportion depends on the ESOP agreement and percent employee ownership) (one share, one vote). Employee governance not guaranteed and depends on percent ownership.	Based on stock ownership (one share, one vote).
Who receives the profits/surplus or net income?	Worker-owners in proportion to use (patronage) and contributed capital at time of annual distribution; preferred stockholders in proportion to investment.	Based on share of stock ownership: for employees, dividends per share retained in retirement account distributed upon exit from the company/retirement; penalty for early distribution.	Based on share of stock ownership; dividends per share.

COOPERATION AS *PRAXIS*

Tensions and debates

Cooperative organizing involves both practice and theory (economic, political, historiographic, cultural). The combination of practice and theory is often called *praxis.* Praxis involves tension between formally strategic intervention in extremely regulated economic systems of capitalism and the idealistic, affective, and embodied process of social becoming. These tensions echo conflicts between neo-liberal and radical politics, mind-body dichotomies, culture vs. nature divides, and other chasms between "inhabited life" and the ways humans analyze, discuss, describe, and design knowledges and life-formations. The following is a list of (interrelated and overlapping) questions that attempt translation between academic inquiries, political issues, and theoretical problems and social and affective questions. Responding to questions together as a group of embodied persons engages the "theory" side of matters in the *praxis* of cooperative organizing.

Who are we each, as embodied persons with experiences, emotions, needs, and beliefs, in relation to a "structure"? How do we see "the personal" and "the political" entangling? How do we see relationships between "self" and "society," between "individual" and "group"?

Which "formal strategies" e.g. budgets, bylaws, legal statuses, are necessary, and which are obstructive to ethically-oriented and affective processes? How do chaos and order cooperate?

How do leadership and authorization operate in terms of responsibility, caretaking, reparations, and organizational integrity?

How and where do our ideologies, perspectives, experiences, values, and needs overlap, and where do these diverge? When must "the whole" or "the common good" or "the organization" take precedence, and when must "the needs of one" or "the few" be heard, elevated, supported, fed into organizational concerns?

Where and how do we see differences between "equality" and "equity"?

How does theory (e.g. knowing that money is a social construction) relate with empiric reality (e.g. experiencing poverty) and then with practice (e.g. prefigurative tactics, tests and models of alternatives, distribution schemas, values)?

How can inquiries and tensions be creatively, pleasurably, socially processed? How can inquiries become methodologies?

How can we establish a baseline of solidarity, a state of trust in that we each want each other to flourish?