Co-X
What is all this co-x stuff and why do we care?
[and how does it relate to utopias - real and imagined]

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Practical session

[not about weltanschauung - at least directly]
How we live & how we work together
Loneliness 2x as deadly as obesity*

Meaningful work

* https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/oct/14/age-of-loneliness-killing-us
What’s not working?

“Classic” suggestions are

• Disconnected or disempowered
• Dramatic inequalities in wealth and power
• Alienation from work
• Cultural contradictions: seek well-being but promote competition, individualism, greed etc ...
• Destroying the planet: individualistic models do not handle collective action problems well (externalities)
Utopias - real and imagined
The Collective Strikes Back
What does it mean?
Terms

• Cooperatives
• Collectives
• Collaborative
• Coliving
  • Intentional communities
• Coworking
• Communes / communitarian
ROCHDALE PIONEERS
SOCIETY
Registered Office
Cooperative

Co-operatives are based on the values of self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity and solidarity. In the tradition of their founders, co-operative members believe in the ethical values of honesty, openness, social responsibility and caring for others.

1. Voluntary and Open Membership

Co-operatives are voluntary organisations, open to all persons able to use their services and willing to accept the responsibilities of membership, without gender, social, racial, political or religious discrimination.

2. Democratic Member Control

Co-operatives are democratic organisations controlled by their members, who actively participate in setting their policies and making decisions. Men and women serving as elected representatives are accountable to the membership. In primary co-operatives members have equal voting rights (one member, one vote) and co-operatives at other levels are also organised in a democratic manner.

3. Member Economic Participation

Members contribute equitably to, and democratically control, the capital of their co-operative. At least part of that capital is usually the common property of the co-operative. Members usually receive limited compensation, if any, on capital subscribed as a condition of membership. Members allocate surpluses for any or all of the following purposes: developing their co-operative, possibly by setting up reserves, part of which at least would be indivisible; benefiting members in proportion to their transactions with the co-operative; and supporting other activities approved by the membership.

4. Autonomy and Independence

Co-operatives are autonomous, self-help organisations controlled by their members. If they enter into agreements with other organisations, including governments, or raise capital from external sources, they do so on terms that ensure democratic control by their members and maintain their co-operative autonomy.
What does it mean?

Coop

Democratic Equity

Democratic Control
A co-op is a group of people that gets together to organise collectively for their mutual benefit. Work, housing, services, pubs and social centres can all be co-operatively owned and managed.

Homes without landlords
Work without bosses
Society without exploitation

Co-operatives are based on the values of self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity and solidarity. In the tradition of their founders, co-operative members believe in the ethical values of honesty, open bookkeeping, and mutual support. They believe that a co-op can be a sustainable alternative to profit-driven capitalism.

1. Co-op membership is open and voluntary.

2. Co-ops are controlled only by their members, who each have equal control.

3. All members have a fair stake in the co-op. Investment does not give control and gives only a small return.

4. Co-ops are autonomous and independent self-help organisations.

5. We educate and train members so they can contribute to the co-op. We also inform the public about the benefits of co-operation.

6. Co-operation among co-ops benefits members and the wider co-op movement.
Producer vs Consumer Coops

- Worker coops
  - “no bosses”
- Housing coops
  - “no landlord” (?)
Employee Owned

- Employee ownership - when does this become meaningful

- Amount

- Equality of distribution (e.g. Facebook not that interesting)
Kibbutz
Why Co-...?
Why Co?

- Economies of scale - in purchasing (Rochdale pioneers) or production...
- Relatedness
  - Community and connection
  - Beliefs, Purpose
- Fairness
  - Equity
  - Control / decision-making
- Security
  - Insurance
  - Support
- Richer labour / richer life
What are the challenges?
Two big ones

1. Incentives
   How do you reward differential effort or productivity?
   How do you handle “shirking” - both detection and management
   Collective action problems & tragedy of the commons - no-one does the washing up

2. Preference Alignment
   We may want different levels of tidiness?
   How much risk should we take on in our business?
Individualism

1. Incentives
   Incentives are “sharp”

2. Self-expression
   Play the music I want when I want ...
Co vs Ind

Collective to work: invest in relatedness and communication

Benefits ...

Culture

Religiosity ...
Platform Coops
Platforms

- Digital platforms are increasingly ubiquitous
  - “Marketplaces”: e.g. eBay, AirBnB, Uber, Spotify etc
  - Software itself: e.g. OS like Windows
- Digital platforms tend to monopoly or oligopoly
- Platform owners can then extract “rents” from both sides — “ripping” off consumers and suppliers
Platform Coops

• Still not entirely sure what these are … but my best guess is: “Cooperative ownership of a digital (online?) platform”

• Coop model: platform owned by participants
  • But which participants? Suppliers or users or both?

• Incentive issues
  • Who puts up the fixed costs?

• Open vs coops
  • Open is an implicit coop of all users - everyone has free access!
  • Problem of free-riding though
Housing Coops

- £500k, £500k to buy new pk. 25k for mortgage. 25k for repairs. £50k = profit
  - autonomy - no principal / agent problem
  - no vacancies
- Very efficient
- Very low default rates
Worker Coops

- What are the advantages
Next Questions
Questions

• Why did coops fail
  • What the attributes of successful coops housing or worker
• Are there statistics on performance of coops
• Discussing communes vs coops
• Cultural aspects
Appendix
Examples
Stats
All the other random ideas

• Employee ownership - when does this become meaningful

• Amount

• Equality of distribution (e.g. Facebook not that interesting)