PRINCIPLES FOR A COOPERATIVE TECHNOPOLITICS

A Report by

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Introduction

At the turn of the twentieth century, two radical intellectuals wrote odes to cooperation. In 1902, Russian revolutionary Peter Kropotkin published his now-classic *Mutual Aid.* The book intervened in evolutionary debates begun in the late nineteenth century. Countering the most pessimistic Darwinian interpreters, Kropotkin claimed that cooperation—not competition—enabled evolution in human and animal "societies." [1] Only a few years later, W.E.B. Du Bois led a study documenting "mutual aid" among African Americans. Commissioned for an Atlanta University conference on the economic "crisis" facing African American communities in the United States, the study rejected capitalist models in favor of vernacular cooperative traditions already centuries-old. [2] Du Bois and Kropotkin authored their manifestos in a decade marked by rapid industrialization and acute civilizational discourse. While refusing "development" imperatives in the Western imperial mold, they made clear cooperation was a concept fit for a changing world. However far back it could be traced, twentieth-century mutual aid aligned with a collective drive to innovate. Kropotkin argued that mutual aid, as in all things, had proven "much more advantageous than mutual struggle" in the quest for "industrial progress." [3] Du Bois similarly envisioned a cooperative alternative to emergent industrial development. The question was not whether the practices they described belonged in the modern era, but how to protect cooperative ways amid "competitive" capitalism. As cooperatives joined in a global movement, advocates mapped out industrial futures built on cooperative designs.

This essay considers the potential for platform cooperatives by returning to an older question: What is the relationship between cooperatives and technology? As what scholars call the "modern cooperative movement" took shape, workers recognized that those who owned technologies—like other means of production—also held power. Where capitalists wielded technology to increase productivity and make labor cheap, cooperators used it to preserve their autonomy and their time. Yet cooperative thought also refused technological determinism. Across the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, cooperatives evolved within anti-colonial and anti-capitalist currents that resisted modernization, technological or otherwise. Advocates like Du Bois and Kropotkin contested the linear stages used to justify colonial domination and capitalist expansion. Cooperators saw inspiration for the world they wanted in preindustrial societies, as well as cooperative factories. Even as cooperators declared their ambitions to replace industrial manufacturing with cooperative varieties, cooperative thought looked skeptically at reigning ideals of "progress." Then as now, a subterranean techno-skepticism wove through cooperative thought. In this essay, I revisit historical entanglements between technology and cooperation to ask what a platform cooperativism grounded in this critical tradition might look like.

The cooperative movement itself began in a struggle with technology. Though cooperatives have many roots, scholars and practitioners most often follow their origins to industrial England. The story recurs like a mantra: in 1844, a group of precariously employed textile weavers pooled their savings to open a cooperative store in the city of Rochdale, England. The so-called "Rochdale Pioneers" were not the first to try cooperation, but their then-unprecedented success brought them international attention. Begun as a modest storefront on Toad Lane, the Rochdale cooperative quickly expanded from retail into manufacturing; by 1855, they had opened their own wholesale supplier. Scholars attribute the Pioneers' fame to socialist journalist George Jacob Holyoake, who chronicled their story in a book called *Self-Help By the People*. In the 1850s and 1860s, his writing traveled over continents through a newly-international labor press. As the century wore on, workers experimenting with cooperatives far beyond England turned to the Rochdale model. Historians now recognize the Rochdale moment as a catalyst for the global cooperative movement. Today, many cooperative organizations route their own histories by reference to the Pioneers and 1844. [4]

Details of the Rochdale story have carried through the centuries. Holyoake's influential book cast the Pioneers as the movement's "founding fathers." [5] However many tributaries shaped the cooperative *idea*, the "cooperative movement" became a concept linked to a time and a place. While scholars and cooperators have criticized the outsized significance attached to the movement's "foundational myth," attempts to challenge its symbolic monopoly can obscure what made it unique. [6] Unlike the diverse cooperative practices identified as precursors to cooperative economies, the nineteenth-century cooperative signaled a rare and radical departure from an otherwise total capitalist transformation. The story of the "pioneers" framed the cooperative as a novel invention. In the Rochdale tradition, cooperation is not traditional, universal, or animal; it is innovative, modern, and new.

I begin with this context because it matters to us now that this *specific* story became the foundation for the global cooperative movement. In setting a path for cooperation in the modern world, the Rochdale story pushed other cooperative practices aside. Cooperative scholars have long pointed out that the Rochdale model was only one among many—the Rochdale "myth" obscured cooperative principles already in practice elsewhere in Europe, Asia, Africa, Latin America, and even in England itself. The process by which the Rochdale lineage took over the global cooperative imagination is a profound historical development. Yet challenging Eurocentric movement histories requires recognizing and accounting for the fact "that European models have been dominant in the rise and spread of cooperation." [7] While cooperative roots run much wider and longer than Rochdale, the story itself remains a unifying reference for the cooperative movement globally. [8]

How did so many cooperative traditions coalesce into one? For cooperative historians, the reason for Rochdale's impact is largely methodological. Though cooperative structures were already taking shape in England and elsewhere in the early nineteenth century, none experienced the growth the Rochdale Society achieved in its first decades of life. Reliant on capital generated from already-vulnerable workers, cooperatives fell to similar financial problems, such as overextending credit. Where nearby cooperatives associated with reformers like Robert Owen and William King had all but collapsed in the 1830s, (including a store in Rochdale itself), the Pioneers managed to both endure and expand. For all the romance attached to their originality, the Pioneers' actual contributions were overwhelmingly technical. [10] Historian Mary Hilson notes the Rochdale model's power "was based above all on its success and the co-operative institutions which it spawned." More than any other, the Rochdale method inspired an international "prototype" for cooperatives everywhere. [11] What would become the "Rochdale principles" promised a universal guide to the Pioneers' success.

The Rochdale Compromise

Lost in the Rochdale lore is a more sobering reason for its dominance. While the new cooperative method refused for-profit business and the owner-worker hierarchy, it also reflected a concession. As legal scholar Tara Mulqueen details, cooperative incorporation aligned with state-led efforts to control the popular rebellions sweeping English manufacturing towns. At a time when labor mobilizations raged across the British empire, legislators and reformers saw in the cooperative a move toward respectability—and importantly, legality. To poor and working people, cooperatives held out a path toward economic autonomy; to elites, they redirected militant energies into a form more compatible with capitalist logic. The English cooperative thus was born, Mulqueen writes, "already part of the system to which it would be an alternative." [12] What gave the weavers "pioneer" status was their capacity to reappropriate financial tools normally mobilized at workers' expense (namely, debt and interest). In giving the cooperative its modern shape, the Rochdale template drew the contours of both its potential and its limits.

The fraught realities behind the Rochdale story hold lessons for a cooperative technopolitics. The cooperative arrived in the transition from one world of "work" to another. Cooperatives flourished most in countries undergoing "modernization." [13] In northern England, the nineteenth century marked the culmination of a centuries-long capitalist overhaul that relocated the means to survival from local production and autonomous work to wage labor and consumer society. The Rochdale saga unfolded against the drama of

industrialization. People in places like Rochdale were actors in a local history that foretold a global transition. In the writings of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, the textile districts of northern England harbored horrors of an impending world. In the Rochdale story, cooperatives originate not only within the rise of capitalism, but in the epicenter of the industrial revolution.

It was not coincidental that the Pioneers were weavers. The British textile industry linked slavery and colonization in the New World to expropriation and the rise of wage labor in England. In relocating their work lives from home to factory, the "once-proud" weavers had seen their wages decline from 30 shillings to 4 or 5 shillings weekly. In this sense, historian Johnston Birchall argues "it is not surprising that is was in Rochdale (a town which specialized in woolen weaving) that a solution emerged which was to open up a new possibility for people the world over—co-operation." [14] The Rochdale story resonated, in part, because they were weavers. Industrial manufacturing had eroded textile workers' livelihoods, forcing formerly autonomous people into new regimes of hours, discipline, and pay. Like other skilled craftsmen, workers in Rochdale were struggling not only with capitalist employers, but also with machines.

The cooperative compromise Rochdale signaled is visible in its lead-up. Struggles against mechanization continued a fight for the commons. Historian Peter Linebaugh notes machine-breaking joined diverse tactics in the fight to defend the life-sustaining commons from "enclosure"—the mechanism that laid the way for private property (and so for capitalist development). In Lancashire county, where Rochdale sits, the Luddites had staged their most active assaults against the British textile industry only a couple of decades before the Pioneers opened their store. [15] Luddites pledged to destroy "machinery hurtful to commoning." [16] In the 1830s, the Chartist movement carried this energy forward; Chartists enlisted cooperatives in the fight to protect "artisanal values." [17] In England, the Chartist mobilization reinvigorated the cooperative movement. Many Rochdale Pioneers themselves identified as Chartists. [18]

The cooperative was another attempt to retain economic autonomy lost through dispossession of land and tools. Across the nineteenth century, the cooperative movement's expansion followed industrialization. Cooperatives first accelerated in Europe and the United States where mechanization imperiled workers who made their income in the craft trades. In 1836, the National Trades Union recommended cooperatives as a "permanent solution to strikes and the dilution of craft skills." Cooperatives sought not only to defend imperiled workers against newly-precarious employment, but also to protect their "artisanal ideology." [19] The cooperative movement sketched an alternative path for technological

development. By the 1880s, farmers and industrial workers spread across the labor, Populist, and cooperative movements traced collaborative visions for an industrial democracy built on a "cooperative commonwealth."[20] Cooperatives joined an assault against industrial working conditions, and for the dignity of local production. Whatever tools cooperators chose, the cooperative attack on capitalism contained a technological critique.

Modernizing Cooperatives

Reading the movement's origins through a technological lens points to the dilemma of cooperation in its modern form. As the movement grew, the English archetype increasingly defined what the "cooperative" idea would mean in the capitalist era: legally incorporated and market-based. Rochdale generated a methodological revolution. In the 1860s, when cooperatives spread across the industrializing world as never before, Rochdale "rules" became known best practices among cooperators. As cooperative organizations turned more definitively to consumer cooperation at the turn of the twentieth century, the Rochdale principles underwent another renaissance. The International Cooperative Alliance (ICA) endorsed the Rochdale model as the basis for movement-building not only in the consumer field, but also in production, housing, and agriculture. A self-identified consumers' cooperative movement mobilized and became the anchor for national and international cooperative organizing. Drawing inspiration from the Pioneers' expansion, the Rochdale principles became the dominant template for both local cooperative societies and an imagined cooperative world.

The newly-adopted Rochdale principles were more than a set of ideals picked up by an already-active cooperative movement; they were drivers for movement-building. The cooperative principles connected people organizing cooperatives in vastly different geographies, some far removed from any other movement activity. Cooperatives taught them to new members. Local stores repeated the Pioneers' story in their own promotional materials. In 1931, the original store on Toad Lane reopened as a museum, becoming a site of cooperative pilgrimage.[21] By 1937, the ICA had formalized the Rochdale principles as the globally-recognized "cooperative principles."[22] In the process, cooperative practices that had existed almost everywhere in some shape or form gave way to the "cooperative principles"—a set of institutional guidelines mediated by organizations centralized at national and global levels. Cooperators inherited the Rochdale story along with its accompanying method, two parts that together lent coherence to an idea that had taken (and still takes) many forms.

The universalism that now attends to Rochdale erases this specificity. The Pioneers signaled not so much the *invention* of cooperation, but instead the promise for a cooperative economy built in and against industrial capitalism. Strategies like surplus-sharing and democratic governance were not new ideas in 1844; nor was cooperative ownership. While the scrappy Toad Lane store has become an iconic image in the cooperative movement, what made the Pioneers famous was their ability to grow beyond it. In retaining capitalism's institutional infrastructure, the modern cooperative also adopted its material base. The Pioneers themselves operated almost a hundred power looms, once a symbol for the weavers' lost livelihoods. [23] The Rochdale principles laid plans for a wholly cooperative society: industrialization, but cooperative.

Looked at another way, the Rochdale Pioneers became the movement's "founding fathers" not despite their geopolitical uniqueness, but because of it. The racial, national, and class status the Rochdale Pioneers shared enabled them to adopt a strategic position unavailable to those expropriated and exploited elsewhere. Despite its radical associations, the cooperative could be read to endorse the growing industrial economy. British rulers identified English workers as aspirational capitalist subjects and trainable entrepreneurs. The Rochdale store itself manifested working-class desires to participate in global markets and reap the benefits of colonial trade. (Holyoake celebrated that in the Rochdale store, even "poor men" could afford the "purest sugar" and the "best tea." [24]) However oppositional, the legally-incorporated cooperative did not fundamentally question the private property regime or the growing commodity trade; it replicated them.

In and Against the Market

In creating an alternative within the market, the cooperative movement developed along a broader industrial trajectory. Folded into state projects, cooperatives advanced the goals of their sponsoring empires. Cooperatives embedded in conventional markets internalized their colonial and national hierarchies. Where the Rochdale store advanced English consumer demands for colonial exports, cooperatives in North America helped European migrants establish themselves as upwardly mobile workers in industrial societies. In settler colonies like Canada and the United States, cooperative businesses helped settlers displace Indigenous economies. [25] Despite notable integration efforts by organizations like the Knights of Labor, white workers also used cooperatives for protectionist attempts to safeguard their advantages in a highly racialized labor regime. [26] As political economist Jessica Gordon Nembhard documents, African American cooperatives regularly endured violence, murder, sabotage, and other racist attacks. The structuring hierarchies already implicated in capitalism meant the cooperative forms that thrived were often those least threatening to ideologies of individualism, private property, and market participation. Unequal power *within* the cooperative movement shaped its material and political arc. Even cooperatives committed to anti-capitalism and anti-racism evolved, by necessity, through mainstream markets.

Then and since, the contradiction captured in the cooperative's modern origins and codified in the Rochdale principles has fragmented the movement politically. Just as cooperators today struggle with their unusual location in *and* against conventional markets, scholars have wavered about how to classify cooperatives. Labor historians debate whether English cooperatives carried forward working-class militancy, or conveyed a turn to reformism. Yet the radicalism-versus-reform frame quickly loses its utility in narrating cooperative history. Once diffused across countries, cooperatives took many different forms. Modern cooperatives confused the distinction between top-down and bottom-up. In the US alone, the Rochdale principles received endorsements from both the New Deal government and the Young Negroes Cooperative League, an avowedly "militant" force whose leaders envisioned cooperatives as a path toward the dissolution of the state. [29] The takeaway from cooperative history is that there is no inherent connection between the cooperative form and its politics. [30]

And yet, the struggle to claim the cooperative movement has not played out on equal ground. The concession embedded in the modern cooperative favored a politics friendliest to the status quo. As early as the 1920s, the cooperative movement had split between two general camps: a social democratic vision that viewed cooperation as a "'third pillar' of the

socialist labor movement," and "co-operativism," a perspective that prioritized "commercial activities" and advocated that the movement "remain strictly neutral in its politics." The crude division between business and movement wings inevitably marginalized the "movement" side. Moreover, debates internal to the ICA obscured the most repressed cooperative forces, as dominant delegations excluded cooperators at the bottom of racial and colonial hierarchies, who often struggled outside the waged workforce leading the European labor movement. Across the twentieth century, politically "neutral" cooperative organizations more readily partnered with governments to push cooperative development in directions least threatening to the global capitalist order. [31] After World War II, the US government conscripted cooperatives in Cold War anti-communism, promoting cooperatives as examples of "free enterprise" in international development. [32] For people advancing more radical articulations of cooperation, the fight for cooperatives has been a fight to protect the movement from its own depoliticization.

For the living cooperative movement, history holds a complicated lesson: the movement's mainstream success has disconnected cooperatives from their reason for being. Professionalizing the cooperative sector hardened the distinction between the incorporated "cooperative" and the illicit, informal, and otherwise oppositional traditions that have long powered cooperative organizing. As a consequence, some cooperative advocates actively endorse the movement's retreat from its status as a movement. Calls to de-emphasize the movement's anti-capitalist and socialist dimensions characterize the very forces that built it as liabilities. Such positions misread the original purpose of "political neutrality," a cooperative principle conceived to distance cooperatives from the state and preserve their ethic of mutual aid. [33] While questions of strategy and practicality have always been at the heart of cooperative politics, the notion that a broadly apolitical stance will protect the movement contradicts cooperative history. In reality, the pressure globalization exerts on cooperative businesses means those that succeed in the mainstream often do so precisely by abandoning their cooperative function, a process cooperators term "demutualization." [34]

Platform Capitalism and the Cooperative Dilemma

Platform cooperativism belongs to this complicated legacy. As Melissa Hoover writes, platform cooperatives represent simultaneously a "social movement" and a "market intervention." [35] Far into the reign of wage labor, technology is again emerging under corporations who deny basic labor rights, let alone worker ownership. Despite two centuries since the modern cooperative took form, the conflicts between cooperation and technology then and now are familiar. While platform cooperatives seek to reclaim digital tools (not

destroy them), their emergence reveals the problem technology presents wherever it develops with and through capitalist markets. Even when automation does not threaten livelihoods directly, technology developed outside workers' control tends to make their lives harder, rather than easier. [36] Platform cooperatives take on corporations that rely on huge labor reserves while saving the workers themselves no labor. In the mainstream platform economy, worker exploitation is a default, not least because in countries like the US and UK, companies refuse the responsibilities normally assumed (if not fulfilled) by employers who designate their workers as "independent" contractors. For the companies doing the "innovating," the capacity to exploit only grows, as people are pushed into ever more precarious "gig" labor. [37]

Yet the digital economy is not so much a new mode as capitalism in all its familiar patterns. What scholars call "platform capitalism" both replicates the extractive patterns in capitalism generally and intensifies them. [38] While some celebrate a "second machine age" full of possibility, critics see old miseries remade with the rise of a "digital peasantry." [39] Big Tech makes its wealth by skimming tiny amounts from countless, repeatable transactions. In this sense, "digital and finance were made for each other," media theorist Douglas Rushkoff points out—both rely on speculative investment, market expansion, and shrinking or offshoring human labor. [40] In the digital economy, labor is far from the only way value is siphoned from its source. Those not extracted for their labor directly are monetized for their data and time, feeding the advertising profits that are the "unacknowledged lifeblood of the digital economy." [41] Platform capitalism is "the same old industrialism being practiced with powerful new digital tools." [42]

The parallels between the digital and industrial "revolutions" lend power to calls for a new cooperative technological era, but they also hold warnings. Just as the Rochdale store joined up with industrial capitalism, platform cooperatives enter an economy they cannot control or contain. Misperceptions that the digital economy has surpassed the old industrialism hide its ongoing reliance on land and resources. However intangible the online world *feels*, its foundation remains industrial. The marketing revenues that fuel "free" platforms like Facebook send money through the same market for cheap consumer goods produced through the same colonial circuits. Computers and smartphones themselves run on materials with notorious labor and environmental implications. [43] Scholar Marina Otero Verzier invokes the term "data mourning" to describe the damage that comes with ever-expanding data storage needs. [44] Moving things online does not counteract capitalist "growth" imperatives, Otero argues, but instead conceals a "data-driven society founded on extractivism and consumerism." [45] Cooperatives are not responsible for these architectures, but they operate within their constraints.

How platform cooperatives proceed will determine the extent to which they strengthen these extractive circuits, or loosen them. Reckoning with cooperation in the digital age necessitates moving away from accepting cooperative principles as transhistorical virtues. Cooperatives do not rescue people from platform capitalism; they help cooperators survive it. We need to remember not just *what* the principles contain, but *why*. Since their adoption by global cooperative institutions, the principles have fulfilled two primary functions: to protect cooperative integrity, and to ensure viable businesses. This second function— ensuring cooperatives can compete in a dominant capitalist market—blunts the utopian imaginary the movement has long carried with it. While many cooperators understand the principles as a kind of manifesto, in truth, they are closer to a technical guide.

The principles capture a threshold: a delicate balance between the movement's political and financial demands. For generations, cooperators have grasped for language to reconcile these sometimes-contradictory functions. As cooperative institutions formalized the cooperative principles, they noted these competing purposes. Some cooperative leaders distinguished between Rochdale "principles" and "methods." Where the "principles" defined cooperative governance and ownership, the "methods" outlined practices meant to serve those definitional features. Such principles then included guidelines such as cash sales and market prices, as well as commitments to education and federation (or "cooperation among cooperatives"). [46] When the Cooperative League of the USA (CLUSA) formed in 1916, it prioritized the first key "principles" as the basis for membership: 1) one member, one vote 2) limited interest on dividend and investment returns, and 3) patronage dividends. [47] These three criteria determined whether a business belonged to the movement or not. For example, as the Rochdale principles spread in the United States, the "one member, one vote" rule issued a corrective against corporate proposals to extend workers shares while preserving the hierarchy between owners and workers. Democratic control distinguished "true" cooperatives from "employee ownership" schemes attempting to undercut labor agitation while refusing the real democracy cooperators demanded. [48]

Even in the movement's early years, organizers recognized that defining cooperatives empirically would not be enough. CLUSA continued to teach the secondary "methods," including now-familiar principles like education. Leaders warned that cooperatives who did not follow all the Rochdale principles would fail, no matter how cooperatively their own businesses were run. The principles outlined linkages between local cooperatives and the necessarily collective struggle to build out the infrastructure for a large-scale cooperative economy. A cooperative store that did not educate its community in the movement's history and purpose risked creating a passive membership interested in financial savings, but ready to abandon their cooperative once cheaper alternatives emerged. Similarly, cooperatives

operating in isolation from others held back federation, the processes that could sustain cooperatives in competitive capitalist markets (for example, by pooling collective resources and forging economic connections between co-ops in different sectors). Cooperative principles, however enumerated, meant to work holistically.

Over the course of the twentieth century, cooperative institutions contemplated new ways to bridge the theory-practice nexus. The ICA's original list designated some principles as "essential" and others as "desirable." The contested relationship between practices inside and across cooperatives remained an ongoing question. In response to dissatisfaction, in 1995 the ICA supplemented the "cooperative principles" with a list of "cooperative values," including "self-help, democracy, equality, equity and solidarity." Cooperative scholar Ian Macpherson notes the cooperative values accompanied a move within the ICA to articulate a cohesive "Cooperative Identity." In his reflections on the 1995 revisions, Macpherson observes that the shift sought to curb a "tendency to see the Principles as a set of organizational injunctions rather than as an integral part of a coherent philosophy." In this spirit, he encourages cooperators to consider the principles "as active catalysts and not just as regulatory maxims." [49]

Still today, cooperative principles embody a fragile balance between the dominant capitalist economy and another one yet-to-be-made. Well-known to cooperative scholars and developers, this possibility-and-compromise structures the cooperative principles and illuminates the challenges all cooperatives inherit. In a movement that has always been heterogeneous, the cooperative principles provide common ground, a site for both unity and debate. While lists have varied over time, the competing tasks assigned to the principles have stayed a central challenge. How can cooperatives survive in a capitalist economy, and yet remain cooperative? Radical as they are in contrast with conventional business, the principles embed the tensions cooperatives encounter wherever they compete with capitalist firms. The cooperative principles impose coherence on a mission built on contradiction. Despite internal disagreements and subsequent revisions, the ICA principles have survived remarkably unchanged:

Voluntary and Open Membership

Democratic Member Control

Member Economic Participation

Education, Training, and Information

Cooperation among Cooperatives.

Concern for Community. [50]

The long-running tensions between cooperation and technology offer a framework for thinking through cooperative principles in another capitalist era. While the dilemma platform cooperatives face are not new, cooperatives operating on digital terrain can struggle to maintain cooperative structures while competing with unprecedented monopolies, navigating fraught technologies, and maneuvering within government partnerships often necessary for their existence. How can cooperative principles function in co-ops that transcend the place-based geographies that have traditionally supported their growth? How might cooperatives operate in digital space without replicating the exploitation that makes possible the dominant platform economy?

Principles for Cooperatives in and Beyond the Digital Age

I close here with some propositions informed by the movement's past. In keeping with cooperative tradition, my themes take inspiration not only from the ICA guidelines, but also from named and unnamed principles that have arisen from cooperative movements, past and present. The "new cooperativism" invites a much-needed move to repoliticize cooperatives. [51] Collaborative efforts to rewrite and expand cooperative principles echo desires for cooperatives to integrate with allied struggles. Calls for new principles reflect attempts both to extend movement traditions, and correct for past failures. [52] Elaborations on the principles by movement-based organizations, such as the Solidarity Economy Principles and the Southern Grassroots Economies Project, remind cooperators that cooperatives are strongest when they do not act alone. [53]

Support Cooperative Finance

As elsewhere in the cooperative economy, the biggest challenge cooperative principles bring to platform cooperation revolves around the need for capital itself. Cooperatives possess the rare quality of being, by design, unattractive investment prospects to those outside them. Restrictions on profits and voting dissuade external funders who gain limited money or power from investing. Moreover, as sociologist Marisol Sandoval notes, "the more radical a co-op's resistance against market logics and competition, the more challenging

it will be for the co-op to generate income." In other words, adherence to cooperative principles itself makes co-ops vulnerable. [54] The principles therefore encourage cooperatives to fund themselves.

Together with member economic participation, the notion of cooperative autonomy has worked to prevent cooperatives from being compromised by financial supporters. Historically, these principles have worked to defend cooperatives from precisely the sources that emerge more often in discussions about funding platform co-ops: government, and private investors (namely, venture capital). While most cooperatives struggle for capital, platform co-ops face intensified pressure as they compete with Big Tech hegemons that thrive on venture funding. In order to be viable, cooperatives often require looking beyond their immediate memberships. Securing external funding can be fraught, threatening the twin pillars of cooperative finance, that members both own and run the business.

As platform cooperatives struggle for funds, they can partner with cooperators who are already building alternatives to government and philanthropic financing. Community investment structures already operate elsewhere in the cooperative economy. Organizations such as the Cooperative Fund of the Northeast, Seed Commons, the Sustainable Economies Law Center (SELC), and Boston Ujima Project have been creating cooperative finance systems that allow people and institutions to invest in cooperative businesses directly, often in the places where they live. SELC even runs an online community that helps people move their retirement savings into cooperatives and the broader solidarity economy. [55] Community finance models open pathways for people to voluntarily join in building cooperative economies, with fewer threats to cooperative autonomy.

Scrutinize Government Partnerships

Though states share responsibility with corporations in creating the dominant platform sector, governments can help co-ops compete on this wildly unequal ground. Urban studies scholar Stacey Sutton notes that government support for cooperatives at the municipal level is a relatively new feature in the post-2008 cooperative resurgence. "Cooperative cities" facilitate co-op development through "enabling environments" that revise the anti-cooperative default built into taxes, zoning, land use, and business incentives. [56] Local and regional governments support cooperatives not only with money, but also through preferential public procurement practices, legal and technical infrastructure, and business development. In the platform economy, governments have supported cooperative development where traditional methods face limits, especially in the critical early years. Local policy can further facilitate cooperatives by democratizing data and internet services.

(For example, the Barcelona City Council added platform co-ops to its commitment to "technological sovereignty," including enforcing public ownership of data. [57]) Though not without risk, government aid holds the potential to keep cooperative alternatives alive in heavily monopolized markets, and facilitate cooperative autonomy long term. [58]

Yet cooperatives must approach the state with suspicion. While cooperatives grew up with and through socialist visions for collectively-owned industries, capitalist states that support cooperatives often do so precisely because they imply a private alternative to public ("socialist") programs. [59] Platform co-ops must be especially vigilant—the platform economy has already proven itself an engine for privatization. The "gig economy" relies on "legal loopholes, well-funded lobbying efforts, and publicity campaigns" to enable its monopolistic hold." [60] Austerity empowers the platform sector. Tech monopolies like Uber thrive where public infrastructure leaves voids. [61] Against this regulatory chaos, states often need to intervene for co-ops to compete at all.

To preserve the movement's integrity, cooperatives can pursue partnerships that support public provisioning. [62] But joining cooperatives with government services should not mean abandoning demands to transform public infrastructures. Marisol Sandoval urges platform cooperatives to advocate "structural reforms" that render people less vulnerable to the "gig" economy's predations, such as universal healthcare and living wages. [63] Astra Taylor similarly advises that "centralized public options need to be on the table along with decentralized cooperative or commons-based ones." [64] Despite arguments that cooperatives stay out of politics, these ideas are old in the movement; cooperative organizers endorsed wider labor reforms, such as the 8-hour workday. [65] A cooperative agenda in solidarity with economic justice for all requires thinking with and beyond cooperatives.

Practice Solidarity

Although the principle of "open membership" has rightly been remembered as a cooperative commitment to racial and gender inclusion, historically it also applied to divisions between workers. Through the twentieth century, cooperative leaders struggled to overcome perceived competition between producers and consumers, often framed as conflicts between farmers and industrial workers. In contrast with unions organized by vocation, cooperatives carried the potential to bring producers and consumers into a single economic entity. Platform cooperatives have a special opportunity to revive this long-elusive cooperative goal: bridging sectors conventional markets put at odds with one another.

Where geographic and social distance have historically separated people on opposite ends of exchange, digital cooperatives have a unique capacity to bring multiple parties into membership on shared platforms from the beginning. [66]

Strengthening collaborations between cooperatives and organized labor is key to this solidarity. Though long organized in tandem, the relationship between the labor and cooperative movements has often been a tense one. Hostility toward cooperatives among trade unions reflects a concern that cooperatives embody a retreat from class struggle.[67] Selective promotion of cooperatives least connected to working-class movements has weakened connections between labor and cooperation. Platform cooperatives can overcome attempts to alienate the cooperative and labor movements from each other by leveraging a resurgent union-cooperative model. India's Self Employed Women's Association offers one template for a union-cooperative "hybrid." Despite their historical tensions, Trebor Scholz notes the shared industrial origins of labor unions and cooperatives "point toward a synergetic destiny in the digital economy of the twenty-first." [68]

Refuse the Sell-Out Model

The most profound difference between cooperatives and conventional corporations has been the motivation for their existence. Since the nineteenth century, the cooperative movement has echoed the socialist call for "production for use." The ICA thus defines the cooperative as an "autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs." [69] This premise puts any cooperative business at odds with the general platform economy. The overriding logic of platform capitalism is not to build for longevity, but rather to "exit": the mark of "success" for a digital entrepreneur is not to build a sustainable business, but rather to sell it. [70] While cooperatives by nature resist this rationale, platform economies intensify market pressures already working against cooperatives. Platform co-ops risk replicating the "disruption"-mentality that pervades their venture-laden peers. [71] Start-up demands favor founders with the time, money, and energy to start something from scratch. These obstacles make the platform economy especially resistant to cooperatives organized by poor people to meet their immediate needs. [72] Co-ops built in digital economies face a (by now familiar) "contradiction": as cooperatives challenge corporate platforms, they also "strengthen entrepreneurialism and commercialization." [73]

Platform businesses can harness existing practices to preserve this cooperative function. Cooperative advocate and lawyer Janelle Orsi notes that co-ops have "in-built protections"

against the profit-seeking rampant elsewhere, as they reward the activities that create value, rather than capital invested (for example, purchases in a consumer cooperative, or hours worked in a worker cooperative). More importantly, members can prevent the cooperative from being sold—for example, by giving veto power to an outside organization, or limiting profit members stand to gain in the event of a sale. [74] Together with unionization, such measures built into bylaws can allow such cooperatives to expand cooperatively. As Orsi advises, what is powerful about platform cooperatives is their innately member-driven nature: "platforms are us." [75] By insisting on "need" over profit, platform cooperatives can grow at the scale digital space enables without ceding their purpose.

Build Against Extraction

The continuities between industrial and digital architectures mean platform cooperatives inherit the extractive agendas these markets entail. Throughout the twentieth century, cooperatives built economies around commodities now recognized as central drivers of climate change, such as industrial agriculture and oil. Cooperative economies, like socialist ones, have countered capitalism without challenging its reliance on fossil fuels. [76] As a recent study notes, cooperatives on their own "do not necessarily dispute the imperative of economic growth as they are induced to compete in a largely capitalist market." [77] This is true especially where cooperatives manage to actually succeed in a the mainstream marketplace, such as Mondragon, the world's largest industrial cooperative. The authors note, "conventional cooperativism such as Mondragon's emphasizes distributive justice for members and communities yet does not question the continuous accumulation of capital and its destructive implications." [78] For cooperatives to challenge capitalist "growthism," they must question the extractivism behind the for-profit economy that remains the movement's target. [79t]

A cooperative technopolitics can help detach the movement from these harmful patterns. In his study into the often-submerged tradition of "Luddism" in working-class struggle, media scholar Gavin Mueller points to the affinity between technological criticism and degrowth economics. Resistance to mechanization protested a "producerist" culture, he writes: "Workers encountered mechanization as both the extension of toil and the imposition of an entire worldview that valorized it." [80] Mueller thus calls for a "decelerationist politics: a politics of slowing down change, undermining technological progress, and limiting capital's rapacity, while developing organization and cultivating militancy."[81] Cooperatives are well-positioned to take part in this degrowth agenda. Platform cooperatives must revive the movement's long-held critique of waste and overproduction. Because they are not constrained by profit-maximizing imperatives, co-ops have room to do things differently.

[82] Cooperatives like Katuma, a virtual farmers' market, and the Open Food Network are leveraging digital platforms to enable direct purchases between local agricultural producers and consumers. [83] Co-ops can use these technologies to counter globalized platform economies that further isolate people who buy and use things from the people who make them. A greener "cooperative" world already exists beyond the market. People share homes, cars, tools, and food in traditions of mutual aid. How might platform co-ops support them?

Conclusion

Enlivening the cooperative movement *as a movement* asks us to recommit to the principle long believed to be its heart: education. Cooperatives begin in study. For generations, this education has included cooperative history. [84] The movement's long arc shows us that a "digital" sensibility already exists in the cooperative tradition. Just as platform capitalism remakes the "old" (though not past) industrialism, platform co-ops have a deep historical repertoire to draw from. The "digital," Douglas Rushkoff reminds us, "refers first and foremost to the fingers—the digits—through which human beings create value," and thus "hearkens back in time, not just ahead, to a time when people were not disconnected from the value they created, and when the world was not simply a set of resources to be extracted by corporations." [85] The digital economy presents both a challenge and an opening. As platforms multiply the exchanges and extractions that take place online, they also create pathways for cooperativization. The platform economy holds out the potential not only to strengthen "traditional" cooperatives and bolster worker cooperatives, but also to create new cooperative models for data ownership, digital commons, and multi-stakeholder co-ops. Platform cooperativism extends the struggle for technological autonomy. While digital platforms may be new, a cooperative technopolitics is already in the movement's roots for us to find.

References

1   Gregg Mitman, *State of Nature: Ecology, Community, and American Social Thought*, 1900-1950 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 66–67.

2   W. E. B. Du Bois, *Economic Co-Operation Among Negro Americans,* 12 (Atlanta: The Atlanta University Press, 1907), sec. "Resolutions of the Conference."

3   Peter Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution* (St. Louis: Dialectics, 2013), 178.

4   John K. Walton summarizes that the Pioneers specifically have been "regarded as the originators of modern co-operation…usually represented as the founders of the most successful and geographically wide-ranging version of the Co-operative movement" in John K. Walton, "Revisiting the Rochdale Pioneers," Labour History Review 80, no. 3 (2015): 215; for varying accounts of the Rochdale model in the cooperative movement's origins, see Richard C. Williams, *The Cooperative Movement: Globalization from Below* (Aldershot, Hampshire, England ; Burlington, VT: Routledge, 2007), Introduction; John Curl, *For All the People: Uncovering the Hidden History of Cooperation, Cooperative Movements, and Communalism in America,* 1st edition (Oakland: PM Press, 2009), 56; Hilson, Neunsinger, and Patmore, *A Global History of Consumer Co-Operation Since 1850,* Introduction.

5   Hilson, Neunsinger, and Patmore, A Global History of Consumer Co-Operation, 62.

6   The language of the "foundational myth" is common among cooperative historians. For examples, see: Mary Hilson, "A Consumers' International? The International Cooperative Alliance and Cooperative Internationalism, 1918–1939: A Nordic Perspective," *International Review of Social History 56*, no. 2 (May 6, 2011): 210; John K. Walton, "Revisiting the Rochdale Pioneers," Labour History Review 80, no. 3 (2015): 235.

7   Hilson, Neunsinger, and Patmore, *A Global History of Consumer Co-Operation*, 7.

8   Studies that explore cooperative economies beyond the Rochdale lineage include Jessica Gordon Nembhard, *Collective Courage: A History of African American Cooperative Economic Thought and Practice,* 1st edition (University Park: Penn State University Press, 2014); Hilson, Neunsinger, and Patmore, A Global History of Consumer Co-Operation; Curl, For All the People.

9   Johnston Birchall, *The International Co-Operative Movement* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), 5–6.

10   For example, both Johnston Birchall and John Curl characterize the "patronage dividend" as the most significant Rochdale innovation. Curl, For All the People, 57; Birchall, *The International Co-Operative Movement,* 5.

11   Hilson, Neunsinger, and Patmore, *A Global History of Consumer Co-Operation*, 52; 59.

12   "Tara Mulqueen, "History, Alterity and Obligation: Toward a Genealogy of the Co-Operative," in *Law, Obligation, Community*, 1st ed. (Routledge, 2018), 122.

13   Birchall, *The International Co-Operative Movement*, 11.

14   Birchall, 3.

15   Linebaugh notes the greatest Luddite resistance took place in Lancashire in the years 1811-1812. Peter Linebaugh, S*top, Thief!: The Commons, Enclosures, and Resistance* (Oakland: PM Press, 2014), 79.

16   Linebaugh, 85.

17   While the movement's central demand—the People's Charter—made claims on political power, historian Dorothy Thompson argues Chartism reflected a struggle over the terms of technological change. Chartism "represented both the defense of certain existing values and proposals for change which were not the same as those of the political economists." Dorothy Thompson, The Chartists: Popular Politics in the Industrial Revolution, 1st American (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 112.

18   Walton identifies at least nine Rochdale founding members as Chartists. Walton, "Revisiting the Rochdale Pioneers," 242.

19   Steve Leikin, *The Practical Utopians: American Workers and the Cooperative Movement in the Gilded Age,* Illustrated edition (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2005), 2–6.

20   Scholars have detailed how visions for a cooperative alternative to industrial development formed across these movements in the late nineteenth century. See, for example, Steven Leikin's description of "republicanized labor" in Leikin, 33; Political theorist Alex Gourevitch on the "radical, labor republican tradition" in Alex Gourevitch, *From Slavery to the Cooperative Commonwealth: Labor and Republican Liberty in the Nineteenth Century* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 6; Nembhard, Collective Courage, chap. 2.

21   Hilson, Neunsinger, and Patmore, *A Global History of Consumer Co-Operation*, 17.

22   Birchall notes that "the Rochdale principles had been taken for granted as common guidelines for all types of co-op" since 1844, but the ICA only formally accepted the seven principles at the 1937 Congress. Birchall, The International Co-Operative Movement, 58.

23   George Jacob Holyoake, *Self-Help By the People: The History of Co-Operation in Rochdale* (the Society of Equitable Pioneers) Pt. 1, 1844-1857, Sixth (London Book Store, 1867), 37.

24   Holyoake, 39.

25   Sengupta Ushnish, "Indigenous Cooperatives in Canada: The Complex Relationship Between Cooperatives, Community Economic Development, Colonization, and Culture," *The Journal of Entrepreneurial and Organizational Diversity* 4, no. 1 (2015): 135–38.

26   For example, Leikin describes the formation of a cooperative in response to the hiring of Chinese workers in a Massachusetts shoe factory. Leikin, *The Practical Utopians*, xiv–xv; For the Canadian context, see Jo-Anne Lee, Brian Smallshaw, and Ana Maria Peredo, "Rethinking Co-Operatives: Japanese-Canadian Fishing Co-Operatives," Community Development Journal 52, no. 4 (n.d.): 540–57; On the significance of interracialism in the Knights of Labor, see Gordon Nembhard, *Collective Courage*, chap. 2.

27   Gordon Nembhard, *Collective Courage*, 27–29.

28   An overview of these debates can be found in Walton, "Revisiting the Rochdale Pioneers," 222–26.

29   Hunt, *Dreaming the Present: Time, Aesthetics, and the Black Cooperative Movement* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2022), 100–102.

30   "Co-operativism" was particularly associated with French cooperative theorist Charles Gide. Hilson, Neunsinger, and Patmore, *A Global History of Consumer Co-Operation*, 21.

31   For a valuable discussion of these dynamics, see Carl Ratner, "Neoliberal Co-Optation of Leading Co-Op Organiza-

tions, and a Socialist Counter-Politics of Cooperation," *Monthly Review,* 2015.

32   Nicole Sackley, "Selling Cooperative Capitalism Abroad: The US Cooperative Movement and International Development During the Cold War," in *Diplomacy and Capitalism: The Political Economy of U.S. Foreign Relations* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2022), 135–36.

33   Holyoake notes that including people from all political affiliations allowed the Rochdale coalition to act without "waiting for government action." Holyoake, *Self-Help By the People*, 9; The limits of a "strict interpretation" of political neutrality played out in debates in the 1920s, as some ICA members opposed taking a stance against fascist governments in Europe. Hilson, Neunsinger, and Patmore, A Global History of Consumer Co-Operation, 22.

34   George Cheney et al., *Cooperatives at Work, The Future of Work* (Emerald Publishing Limited, 2023), 28.

35   Melissa Hoover "What We Mean When We Say 'Cooperative'" in Trebor Scholz and Nathan Schneider, eds., *Ours to Hack and to Own: The Rise of Platform Cooperativism, A New Vision for the Future of Work and a Fairer Internet* (New York: OR Books, 2017), chap. 17.

36   Economic historian Aaron Benanav shows that precarious work is not the result of automation technologies, but rather economic stagnation. Aaron Benanav, *Automation and the Future of Work* (London; New York: Verso, 2020), 11.

37   For a useful overview, see "Bodies on the Line," *Dissent Magazine* (blog), accessed October 5, 2023, https://www.dissentmagazine.org/article/bodies-on-the-line/.

38   Cooperative analyses of "platform capitalism" can be found in Part 2 in Scholz and Schneider, *Ours to Hack and to Own,* 34.

39   Benanav, *Automation and the Future of Work,* 1–6.

40   *The End of the Billionaire Mindset: A Celebration with Douglas Rushkoff | SXSW 2023*, 2023, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3ryB_gjz0us.

41   Astra Taylor, *The People's Platform: Taking Back Power and Culture in the Digital Age* (Toronto: Random House Canada, 2014), 8.

42   Douglas Rushkoff, "Renaissance Now," in *Ours to Hack and to Own: The Rise of Platform Cooperativism, A New Vision For the Future of Work and a Fairer Internet*, ed. Trebor Scholz and Nathan Schneider (New York: OR Books, 2017), 36.

43   Taylor particularly points to lithium and coltan mining. Taylor, *The People's Platform: Taking Back Power and Culture in the Digital Age,* 178; On labor and resource exploitation in the smartphone supply chain, see "The Rate of Exploitation: The Case of the iPhone," Notebook 2 (Tricontinental: Institute for Social Research, September 22, 2019).

44   *Marina Otero Verzier-Data Mourning*, 2023, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vbFPaNBNB-M.

45   Otero observes: "We were sold a cloud and ended up with a solid, resource-and-energy hungry box." Marina Otero Verzier, "Death by Data: Resource-and-energy-hungry Boxes," *Architectural Review* (blog), October 25, 2022, https://www.architectural-review.com/essays/death-by-data-resource-and-energy-hungry-boxes.

46   How to Start and Run a Co-Operative Store on the Rochdale Plan (The Co-operative League of America, 1920), 7–8; Holyoake, *Self-Help By the People*, 10.

47   "Letter to St. Xavier College," n.d., Box 1, Fol. M, Cooperative League of the U.S.A. Records, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library.

48   Historian Julia Ott notes that because employee stock ownership programs (ESOPs) increased workers' dependence on employers and often accompanied anti-union measures (such as "open" shops and company unions), the labor movement regarded employee ownership in general with "extreme suspicion." Julia Ott, "What Was the Great Bull Market? Value, Valuation, and Financial History," in *American Capitalism* (New York Chichester, West Sussex: Columbia University Press, 2018), 72–74.

49   "Speech Introducing the Co-operative Identity Statement to the 1995 Manchester Congress of the ICA" in Ian Macpherson, *One Path to Co-Operative Studies: A Selection of Papers and Presentations* (British Columbia Institute for Co-operative Studies, 2007), 206–10.

50   For detailed explanation, see "Cooperative Identity, Values and Principles," ICA, accessed October 5, 2023, https://www.ica.coop/en/cooperatives/cooperative-identity.

51   The phrase "New Cooperativism" has been used to refer to a "movement of movements." Cheney et al., *Cooperatives at Work,* 102.

52   For example, the newest ICA principle, "Concern for Community" has been described in part as a means to address the movement's shortcomings on environmental sustainability and engagement with local communities. Cooperative organizations have also proposed an 8th principle devoted to "diversity, equity, and inclusion." "Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Talks," accessed February 23, 2024, https://deitalks.com/.

53   "Solidarity Economy Principles and Practices," *Solidarity Economy Principles*, accessed January 15, 2024, https://solidarityeconomyprinciples.org/; "Southern Grassroots Economies Project Values and Principles of Cooperation | Grassroots Economic Organizing," accessed January 15, 2024, https://geo.coop/story/southern-grassroots-economies-project-values-and-principles-cooperation.

54   Sandoval elaborates that "if a co-op has strict ethical rules about what clients to work for, about not accepting investment capital, about not using any advertising as a source of income or wanting to use open commons licenses, economic success will be harder to achieve." Marisol Sandoval, "Entrepreneurial Activism? Platform Cooperativism Between Subversion and Co-Optation," Critical Sociology 46, no. 6 (2020): 808.

55   "The Next Egg," *The Next Egg*, accessed October 5, 2023, https://www.thenextegg.org/.

56   While focusing on US case studies, Sutton notes such developments also draw on international models. Stacey A. Sutton, "Cooperative Cities: Municipal Support for Worker Cooperatives in the United States," *Journal of Urban Affairs 41*, no. 8 (2019): 1084.

57   Trebor Scholz et al., "Policies for Cooperative Ownership in the Digital Economy" (Platform Cooperativism Consortium & Berggruen Institute, n.d.), 29–33.

58   Scholars observe that government-sponsored co-op development tends to be top-down. For example, Sutton notes that Cleveland's Evergreen cooperative failed to generate many worker-owners due to its creation to serve anchor institutions rather than community needs. Sutton, "Cooperative Cities," 1090.

59   Yet another reason to mistrust attempts to disavow the movement's affiliations with anarchism and socialism.

60   Scholz et al., "Policies for Cooperative Ownership in the Digital Economy," 8–12.

61   Media scholar Siva Vaidhyanathan calls this "public failure." Taylor, The People's Platform: Taking Back Power and Culture in the Digital Age, 220.

62   For example, in New York City, the ride-hailing platform Drivers' Cooperative receives business from the city's Access-A-Ride paratransit service. R. Trebor Scholz, *Own This!: How Platform Cooperatives Help Workers Build a Democratic*

Internet (Verso, 2023), 194.

63   Sandoval, "Entrepreneurial Activism? Platform Cooperativism Between Subversion and Co-Optation," 813–14.

64   Astra Taylor, "Non-Cooperativism" in *Ours to Hack and to Owen: The Rise of Platform Cooperativism, A New Vision for the Future of Work and a Fairer Internet,* ed. Trebor Scholz and Nathan Schneider (New York: OR Books, 2017), 293.

65   Bernard E. Harcourt, *Cooperation: A Political, Economic, and Social Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2023), 75.

66   Italian social cooperatives incorporate "multi-stakeholder" cooperatives that include workers, consumers, and producers. Scholz, *Own This!*, 92.

67   Moreover, Sandoval notes that in the platform economy, where organized labor is already weak, cooperatives can "undermine the possibility of workplace politics regulated through trade unions." Sandoval, "Entrepreneurial Activism? Platform Cooperativism Between Subversion and Co-Optation," 811.

68   Scholz, *Own This!,* 127–32.

69   "Cooperative Identity, Values & Principles."

70   Douglas Rushkoff, *Throwing Rocks at the Google Bus: How Growth Became the Enemy of Prosperity* (New York: Portfolio/Penguin, 2016), 7.

71   As a 2019 on the "capital conundrum" observes, the speculative nature of VC firms makes their structure particularly incompatible with platform co-ops. Simon Borkin, "Platform Co-Operatives: Solving the Capital Conundrum" (Nesta & Co-operatives UK, February 2019).

72   For example, sociologist Juliet Schor finds race and gender inequalities persist in platform cooperatives. Juliet Schor, "Old Exclusion in Emergent Spaces" (New York: OR Books, 2017), 38–42.

73   Sandoval, "Entrepreneurial Activism? Platform Cooperativism Between Subversion and Co-Optation," 806.

74   Janelle Orsi, "Three Essential Building Blocks for Platform Cooperatives," in *Ours to Hack and to Owen: The Rise of Platform Cooperativism, A New Vision for the Future of Work and a Fairer Internet* (New York: OR Books, 2017), 118–19.

75   "Three Essential Building Blocks for Platform Cooperatives" in Scholz and Schneider, *Ours to Hack and to Own*, chap. 15.

76   Historian Dipesh Chakrabarty notes that capitalist and socialist societies, in general, have exhibited "no principled difference in their use of fossil fuel." Dipesh Chakrabarty, "The Climate of History: Four Theses," Critical Inquiry 35, no. 2 (2009): 217.

77   Cheney et al., *Cooperatives at Work*, 162.

78   Cheney et al., 158.

79   While the 7th principle names "sustainability" in general, "environmental sustainability" is only one among several types it describes. As Steven Glynn and Fiona Nicholls point out, ICA guidance has consistently prioritized "economic" sustainability in its own language. "Sustainability and Principle 7 – Is It Enough?," *Co-Operative News* (blog), December 14, 2015, https://www.thenews.coop/100249/sector/community/sustainability-principle-7-enough/.
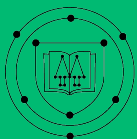
80   Gavin Mueller, *Breaking Things at Work: The Luddites Were Right About Why You Hate Your Job* (New York: Verso, 2021), 25.

81   Mueller, 127.

82   For example, ICDE fellow Akkanut Wantanasombut organized a platform delivery service that runs plastic-free. "A Thai Multi-Stakeholder Platform Co-Op for Plastic-Free Food Delivery," *Platform Cooperativism Consortium,* May 25, 2023, https://platform.coop/blog/a-thai-multi-stakeholder-platform-coop/.

83   Scholz et al., "Policies for Cooperative Ownership in the Digital Economy," 32.

84   To take the US case, CLUSA initially described itself as primarily an educational organization. Jessica Gordon Nembhard notes that "almost every" African American cooperative began in a study group of some kind. Gordon Nembhard, *Collective Courage*, 85.

85   "Renaissance Now" in Scholz and Schneider, *Ours to Hack and to Own*, chap. 6.