




Diagnosing Contradictions of/through Co-operation

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- **Parent to child: "Be independent!"**
 - **Photographer to subject: "Be spontaneous!"**
 - **"They would vote correctly if they'd been better educated!"**
 - **Solve? Reframe? Accept?**



Overview

**Quick intro to topic and to
Cheney & Stohl, 2001**

**“Quality Circle” time!
Experience? “Solution”?
Explanation for newbies?**

**(Sub “member” for
“worker” as you like)**

Why participation?

- **Market-driven:**
 - **Efficiency / productivity**
 - **Off-loading from management**
- **Worker-driven:**
 - **Welfare**
 - **Fundamental right with inherent value**



What kind of contradictions?

- **Just pragmatic ones today...**
- **(Some inherent, some particular)**
- **Tensions (“threading the needle”)**
- **Paradoxes/ironies (“fingertraps”)**
- **Often not just simple “failures,” but unharmonious “successes”**



Why contradictions?

- **Double-dutying of meaning and expectations (e.g; “democracy,” self-efficacy)**
- **Functionally broadened range of interactions**
- **[Participation (esp. meta-) is relatively unpracticed]**
- **[It’s hard getting what “you” want!]**



What do we do?

- **Blame others or self**
- **Neglect/ignore**

OR...

- **Reframe**
- **Synthesize**
- **Exit/succession/spinoff**
- **Adapt**
- **Accept**

Cheney and Stohl, 2001:

- **“Add-on” WP (e.g; TQM-style programs)**
- **Fundamentally participative orgs (e.g; Mondragón)**

Definition of WP

- *“...structures and processes designed to... enable employees to **identify** with organizational goals and to **collaborate**... in activities that exceed minimum coordination efforts **normally expected**.”*
- **“Shop-floor” / technical**
- **“Managerial” / e.g; hiring-and-firing**
- **Governance / policy and strategy**




Contradictions of...

Structure (“architecture,” “a substitute for communication”)

Agency ((self-)“efficacy”)

Identity (“membership, loyalty, and similarity”)

Power (“locus, nature, and specific exercise”)



Responsibility: Submitting to the will of the group in order to remain a part of decision-making

- “[WP] is rooted in the idea that [each] individual [worker] can make a [unique] difference,... [yet] the individual, to count as present, must be part of a group...”
- **But accountability often focused on individuals, not the group**
- **Especially hard on “second violins”**

Autonomy: “[S]urrendering individual agency for that of the collective”

- **“[Usually] it is an individual’s role rather than the individual as a whole that is contained within... the organization... [Many co-ops] are directed toward... total inclusion of the individual, and the individual initiate may be attracted to the organization precisely for this reason.**

Over time, however, such absorption of the self may infringe on individual efficacy—especially the possibility for the member to alter the very organizational structure to which he or she adheres.”

Control: "locus, nature, and specific exercise"

- **"...`a kilo of responsibility for an ounce of say."**
- **No bosses, yet many (constant surveillance) (e.g; plywood co-ops)**
- **Org can become an aggregate of individuals**
 - **Increased costs/loss of discretion, tolerances, privacy**

Representation: “Becoming co-opted”

- **E.g; “[W]hen labor thinks like management and forgets about workers’ interests yet still insists its own role is distinct.”**
- **[Not all bad... can make for enriched/tempered dissent]**
- **[E.g; Newfound appreciation for group through representation to others]**
- **[Also: “You can’t say that about our co-op; only we can!”]**

Punctuation: “Short-cutting the democratic process” in order to save it

- **(1) Ineffective or unfamiliar process feels awkward.**
- **(2) Ends-focused members get frustrated and resist.**
- **(3) Repeat (1), or else maybe risk the “tyranny of structurelessness.”**
- **Workers most keen to participate may be the most likely to bypass processes of participation**



Adaptation: Preserving the co-op by adapting it so much that the original org is no longer preserved

"[MCC mgmt], including two of the three surviving founders, invoked ideas of participation 'in the daily work'" needing to replace org'l democracy



Adaptation v.2:
(Maximal) inclusion through
bureaucracy


Tyranny of consensus

Especially "alternative" orgs

How else do we learn to
"co-operate" in groups?


Formalization: “Institutionalizing democracy such that [essential] spontaneity is gone”

- ***“We must have a structure, or who knows where we’ll go.”***
- **Group meeting rooms wallpapered with “rules for developing ideas, codes of conduct for what to value, signed contracts for respecting differences, and regulations for conflict resolution.”**
- **Informal discussion displaced, e.g; to in-group griping sessions.**
- **[E.g; “Crit/self-crit” as perfunctory confessional, strategic planning sessions]**



Compatibility: Instituting more participation with less-participative persons/cultures, while maintaining that participation is self-actualizing

- **Occurs under:**
 - **Heterogeneity**
 - **Esp. Turnover**
 - **Variability over time**
- **... while meeting legit underserved needs**
- **Leading a parched horse not just to drink, but to become a hippo**



Sociality: WP as an ironic limit on other forms of participation (e.g., in family and community)

- **Ironic b/c of hopes for:**
 - **(1) spillover**
 - **(2) well-rounded self-actualization**
- **E.g.; Levi's, Mondragon, plywood co-ops, Abrams' caution**



Co-operation: incentivizing non-co-operation within co-operative groups

- **“Giving ‘carrots’ for some of the very behaviors that make collaboration difficult”**
 - **Who are the “leaders” and “achievers”?**
 - **In Mondragon: pay-for-performance vs. social solidarity**



Leadership: Waiting for a charismatic leader to inspire, create, and maintain democracy

- **“Although leading self-directed teams may seem like an oxymoron, much of the literature emphasizes [its] importance...”**
- **“[Older Mondragon workers wished] to initiate participation from their places in the organization and to hope for a new charismatic leader to inspire them.”**