

Expectations in social.coop

Posted in Matt Cropp's 'Purpose' thread [<https://www.loomio.org/d/0RHZmGUB/the-purpose-of-social-coop->]

mike hales (@mikeh8) : 11sep2018

Opening this thread, Matt wrote . .

*unless we can define a clear answer to the why? of social.coop,
it'll be difficult to chart a viable path from here*

Being bugged by this 'why?' question (and some 'what?' questions), a short while back I relaunched the editorial subgroup to explore it. That's now very much overtaken by the present crisis. FWIW, as a recent joiner, I've written a summary of my past and present expectations of the 'why?' in social.coop. It's more complex than I thought it was, and there seems to be an A list (things I naively expected) and a B list (things I naively didn't expect). These turned out to be lengthy, so I've attached them as a document.

From these lists, I conclude . .

On diversity . .

I seem to believe that diversity can be dealt with purposefully and concretely around ****shared work**** . . if there's an agreed core of 'what we're doing here, together' - an A list. But attempting to deal with 'diversity' among a collection of folks who just walk in off the street and want to give voice, without acknowledged common purpose, is fated to circle and float, and will be subject to the pathological splitting/dependency/projection dynamics of an un-oriented 'basic assumptions' group (Tavistock Institute/Bion group-relations insights)?

I suppose I'm also saying . . if somebody's A-list is stuff on my B list, that looks like another community to me . . another instance? With brotherly/sisterly relations between us (and overlapping fediversal participation, for sure) but not doing the same core work. Some folks will want to be core in one, and some in another. Some will lurk in one or both? Maybe Mastodon is a machine-for-lurking?

When I joined social.coop, no-one drew my attention to anything like an A-list.

On lurking and working . .

Whatever the A list of social.coop turns out to be, active tooters could do more to intentionally mobilise diverse voices and resources in cultivating A-list agendas? Even so, lurkers will be lurkers.

Seems to me, it really does need to be clearer, day by day, who is putting time in, ****actually doing the work**** of handling the traffic and transactions and infrastructure in the community? It's taken me several months - and a crisis - to begin to see this at all clearly. In the end it all comes down to time/labour? And then, to the forms of accountability that are workable, for those (chronically extended?) volunteer labourers, towards lurkers of various kinds. This will include people reluctant to ****speak**** for any of several good reasons, and people reluctant to ****work**** (in this particular collective) for any equally good reason.

Michele (now sadly left social.coop) started a thread for weekly reporting by sub-group coordinators. Seems to me this is basic machinery for making the work visible and accountable. Nobody adopted it apart from Michele and me. The tool's there to be used. There's no way we're all going to join and keep up with every subgroup in Loomio.

Whatever group I joined, I would expect to ****contribute first**** to whatever it is that group is doing, and put challenges on colleagues (including stretching the A-list) only when I was a recognised contributor and had a sense of ****what resources and difficulties**** others - notably the volunteer infrastructure-builders - were working with. This is not the yoghurt aisle at the supermarket, where every commodity-shopper gets their needs met, and it's statutory, on the label. It's a place of harvest, where each gets a share of what's been sown and grown, depending on fortune, labour, vision.

Appendix - Expectations in social.coop

An A-list and a B-list for a recently joined member

@mike_hales

Appended to a comment 11sep2018 in <<https://www.loomio.org/d/0RHZmGUB/the-purpose-of-social-coop->>

A I expected . .

- **Coop principles** to be explored - in practice and in related discussion. How can a piece of web space be operated by a distributed collective of people according to coop principles? (Some of this occurring in Mastodon. Mainly in depth, in Loomio. Backed up in the chat space).
- **Coop practice** - news and updates on things happening out-there, especially startup issues and *infrastructure issues* - eg platform cooperativism. (Mainly occurring in Mastodon.)
- **Shop talk among makers** - food growing, code hacking, protocol development, making and cultivating of other kinds . . related to particular material sectors of cooperative production.
- **Economy and community** - Reflections on alliances, strategies and capabilities in counter-capitalist, pro-planet community and economic development. Especially includes **facilitation**/community learning. Principles and practices in . . the solidarity economy, P2P-commons, transition towns, etc. (Occurring right across all the spaces - Mastodon, Loomio, the chat space - eg the reading group.)
- **Associationist/federationist** politics - A primary orientation to traditions of 'lower Left' [<http://birdsbeforethestorm.net/2016/10/lower-leftism-expanding-upon-the-political-map/>] political activism in the economic and cultural sphere.
*I'm not saying 'anarcho' and 'socialist' bcos entrenched labels trigger all sorts of sectarian animosity (why?) and folks may dig in behind tribal identities. I'm bringing very 'soft' expectations here; I identify as a libertarian socialist myself, for a lifetime, but wouldn't push it. I expected to see association. I expected to see federation. I expected to see a 'transverse' sensibility at work, across established divisions - both ways. Every 'position' has a history, and every individual to an extent, right or wrong, is **stuck** in that history, and should be met where they are.*
- **Politics of platforming** - Ongoing shared learning around strategy and possibility in the economic and cultural sphere, related to the *radical re-infrastructureing* of global and local activist practice in P2P commons. I expected to encounter not just a current Mastodon instance, but potentially all sorts of links with

- developments in an ecology of platforms/open-apps/fediversal ventures/bits of free-web architecture.
- **Levelled playing field** - some tech hacker stuff, consistent with collective responsibility for hosting a stable and possibly locally-evolving instance of Mastodon. But basically a field in which open-code geeks, coop-activist platform users and community development facilitators are mutually respectful and mutually-aware partners in learning.
 - **Chat, gossip, unsolicited sharing** - some of this, between folks, as friends and enthusiasts, on the margin of the core engagements above. Not wall-to-wall gossip, not dumping of trouble on the airwaves.
 - Something asynchronous - **a wiki?** a **Loomio group?** - that would furnish some resources to help a member become more *familiar with the landscape* and more capable of *contributing* to the community's maintenance and development. Maybe, identifying some *structures, processes, intentions, rules, threads*.
 - If I found myself in real trouble or really stuck . . maybe even a set of **duty volunteers** with access to sanctions, remedies or guidance.
 - A **stable platform**, resilient and adequately resourced, under further development to some degree (eg UI).

When I sat down to write this list, I didn't expect it to be so complex! This is quite a big ask?

The B-list is more difficult.

B Naively (?) I didn't expect to . .

- . . find social.coop to be as **young** as it is, and as under-prepared or under-resourced as it seems to be, for uncontrolled growth in membership, or inconsistent expectations and habits among members.
- . . find social.coop to be as **opaque** as it is as a *project* (for a latecomer, with limited time to commit to participation in multiple dialogues - in Loomio, in the chat space). I guess I expected there to be more 'on the page' in some asynchronous medium; more maps and signposts.
- . . defer to or adopt norms of **git culture**. I'm a culture hacker not a code hacker. So I acknowledge and respect the culture - it's a step in human evolution . . but regard it as one among many, to be sensitively hybridised, or run in parallel and bridged across to. The future is a pluriverse, and a commons is not a codebase?
- . . **be marginalised** with regard to my sincere engagement, seeking to make contributions in any of the aspects of the community in Part A, whether knowledgeable or enquiring.

- . . . **blast just anything** 360 degrees to just anybody. Or collect Followers, go viral or have to put heavy filters on the traffic. I've stayed off mainstream commercial social media and (naively?) didn't expect such behaviours to cause trouble here.

- Find **healing** here, or to find safety **institutionalised**, as a substitute for *bringing safety with me*.

As a person dealing, lifelong, with my own marginalities, at this stage in my life I take responsibility for getting therapy, guidance and mutual recognition, and for building resilience and an inner 'home', in other communities and traditions that are equipped for the deep work of the heart. In my case it turns out to be communities of the dhamma tradition that I turn to.

Although we may laudably aspire to it in social.coop, not just any community can be a place of healing and deep cultivation of the heart . . . this is special work, I feel, done in special places.

I did not expect any internet gathering of the clans or cultural marketplace to do this work for me. Rather, I expected to **bring** that kind of capability with me, as *my own resource* of safety and refuge, to this particular interesting, solidarity-oriented, patch of social media territory.

*Maybe this is an **A-list item in disguise**. Perhaps I naively expected everybody to be doing this? I regard social media as the Wild West, and feel that it would be absurd for any of us to pretend that anyone is safe and settled here. A compassionate orientation to vulnerabilities is required in all directions . . . a criterion for membership?*

- . . . **make general demands** on this community for recognition and action, regarding any *other* politics I might advocate or participate in, beyond the A-list . . . gender. social justice. anti-fascist. neuro-deviant (neuro-defiant?). safety and protection in public spaces. Etc. First, because I would expect these to emerge out of the shared commitments in the A list, as practical aspects of **doing** that stuff. And second, if my personal A list included stuff on this B list, I would want to be in some other group as my core group, in which these were A-list concerns, more skillfully oriented-to . . . some *other* (Mastodon?) community, where I might feel closer to the core and less marginal with regard to my particular marginalities.

*Whatever group I joined, I would expect to contribute first to whatever it is that group is doing, and put challenges on colleagues only when I was a recognised contributor and had a sense of what resources and difficulties others were working with. Maybe this too is an **A-list item in disguise**?*