

Co-operative Socialism: Theory and Practice

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The Fair World Project –

>> For equality and ecology, peace, justice and co-operation >>

*** A Fair, Safe and Peaceful world ***

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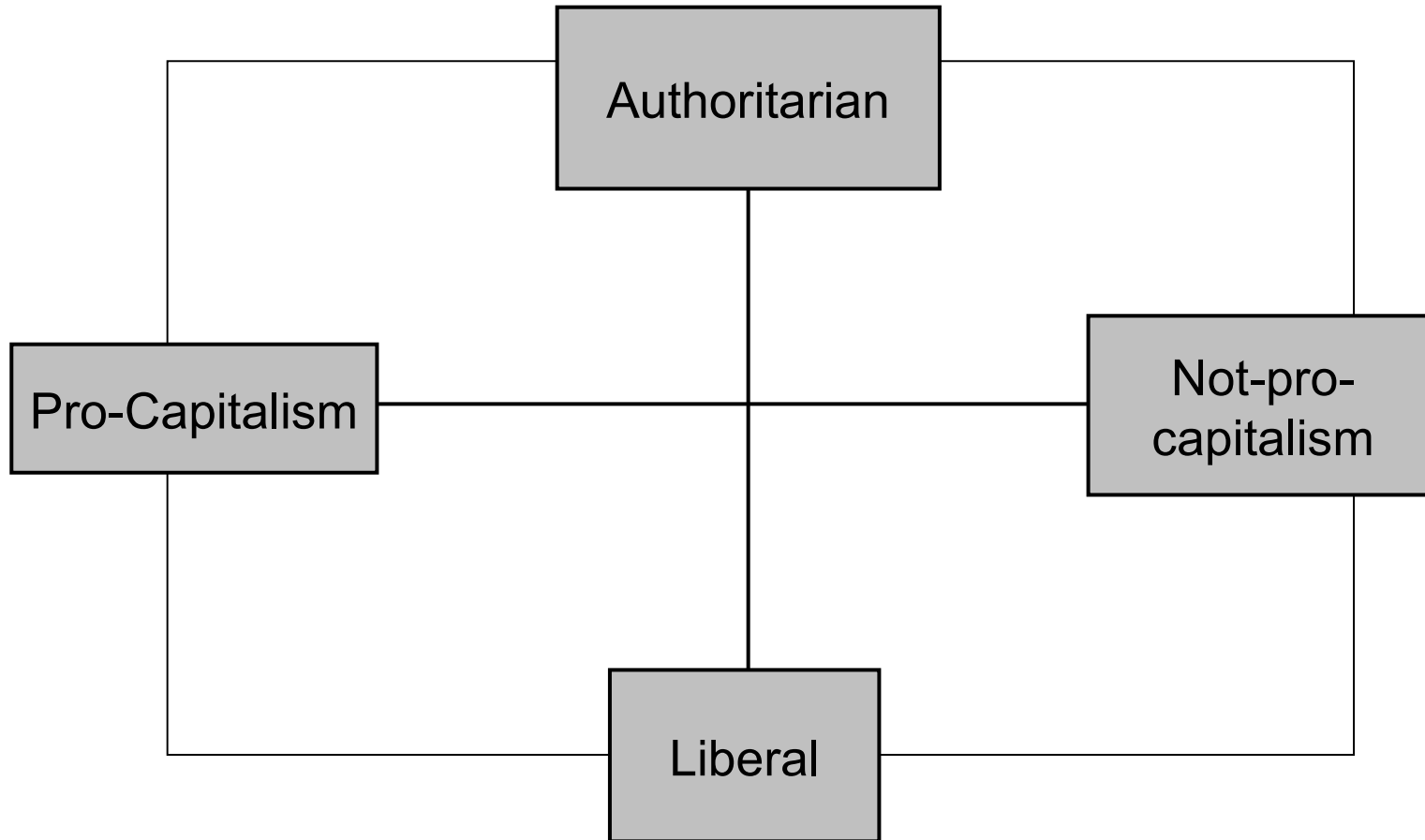
- **Synopsis**

Consideration of a two dimensional political map (with Pro-capitalism/Not-capitalism on one axis, and with Authoritarian/Liberal on the other) suggests:

Co-operative Socialism: Summary

- 1) That the 'Liberal/Not-capitalist' quadrant is undergoing a renaissance of theory and action,
- 2) By consequence, actual examples of a liberal, decentralized socialism (perhaps called 'Co-operative Socialism') become apparent,
- 3) It is therefore suggested that an evolving ethical values and principles structure (The Statement on the Co-operative Identity from the International Co-operative Alliance) can form a suitable basis for ensuring that such corporate activities (organised as appropriate co-operatives) remain true to the socialist, not-capitalist aims of social equality and ecological care.
- 4) A 'Sunflower Co-operative Corporate Model' has been designed with these ends in mind: such non-hierarchical co-operatives are proposed as corporate structures to ensure that social equality and ecological care are sustainably self-delivered

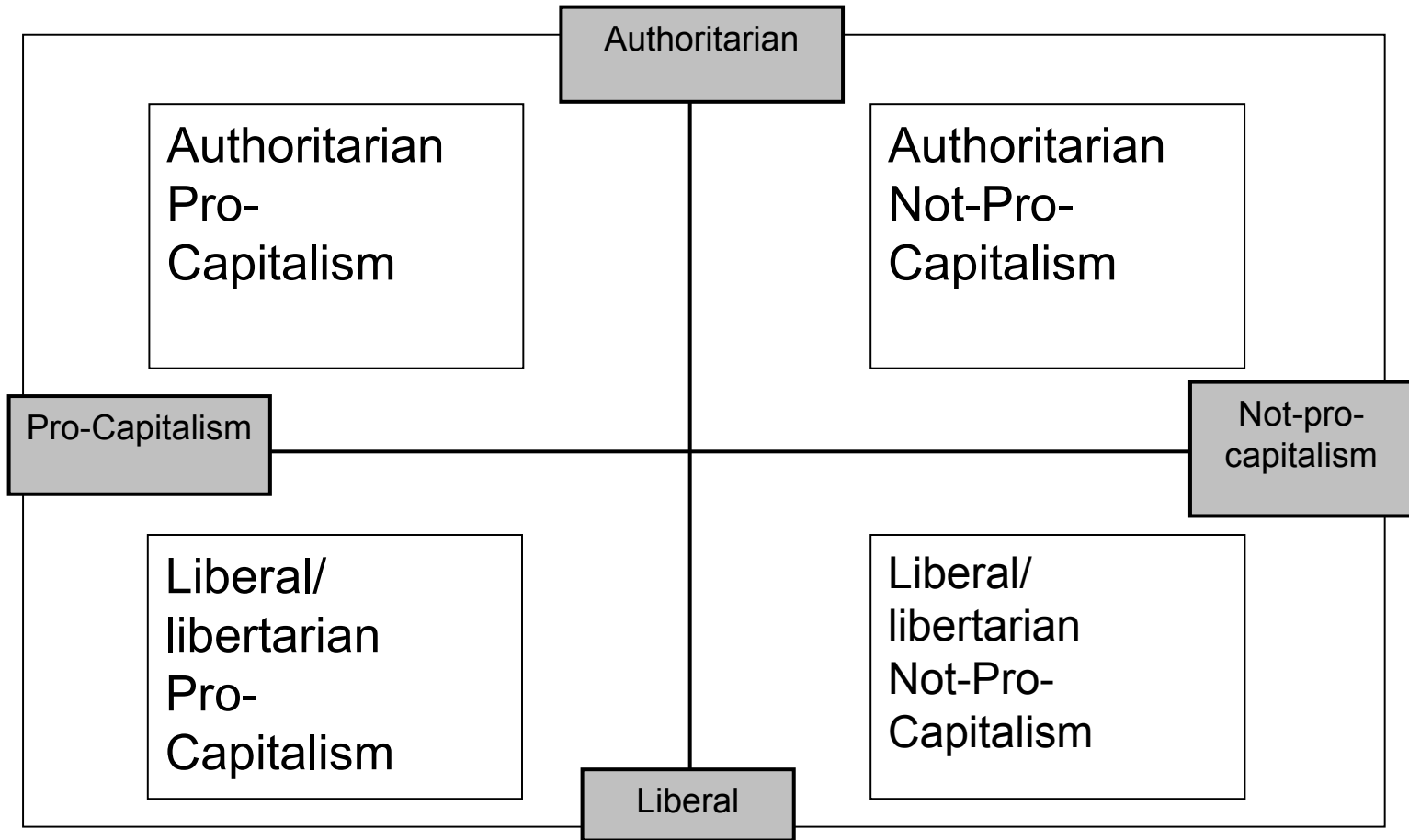
A two-dimensional political map



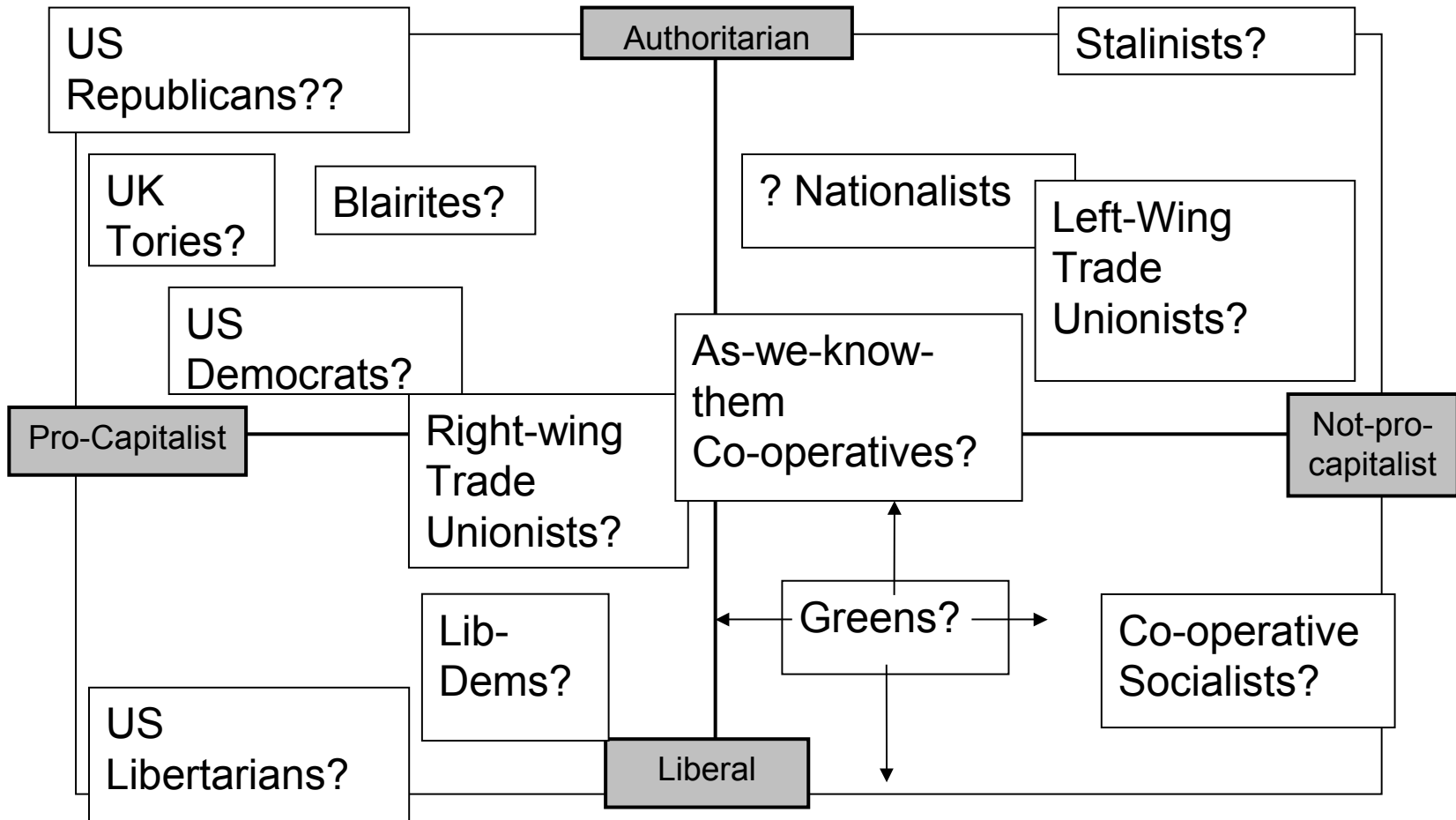
(See *nonviolent action* Issue 46 September 2003 p7)

Also: www.politicalcompass.org and www.environics.net)

Four political quadrants



Suggested Party-political locations



Locating Co-operative Socialism: 'Where to look – Theory' Part 1a

- *Capitalism:*
 - the private ownership of the means of production/existence, and their use for private profit
- *So:*
 - Capitalism uses five interlocking mechanisms (to impoverish people & trash the planet):
 - Theft / ownership;
 - Rent, Interest, Dividends;
 - Unequal pay for work.

Locating Co-operative Socialism: 'Where to look – Theory' Part 1b

Theft / Ownership of:	Delivers income as:
Land	Rent (along with sales of raw materials, food and energy)
Money	Interest (and returned principle)
Knowledge	Dividends (on share-holding in Companies which own machinery and process know-how: <i>ie</i> 'hardware' and 'software'/'Intellectual Property')

Locating Co-operative Socialism: 'Where to look – Theory' Part 2a

- *It is proposed that:*

For the replacement of capitalism to occur, a complete set of integrated and holistic activities is necessary if we are to contest all five* of these pernicious mechanisms.

- *Recall:*

Capitalism uses five interlocking mechanisms* to impoverish people and trash the planet:

*Theft; Rent; Interest; Dividends; Unequal pay for work.

Locating Co-operative Socialism: 'Where to look – Practice' Part 1

- *From the fore-going theory and analysis:*

A Seven-point Action Plan has been designed

- to replace the five interlocking mechanisms of capitalism.

At each Action Point, examples are given

- these start to illustrate contemporary activity operating at that level.

- *Recall:*

Capitalism uses five interlocking mechanisms

Theft; Rent; Interest; Dividends; Unequal pay for work.

Co-operative Socialism - A Seven Point Action Plan

1) 'Co-operation not Coercion'

Convert competitive, market-based businesses into workplace co-operatives, and remodel monopoly activities as stakeholder co-operatives: each one having responsible stewardship of land and knowledge resources, with each co-op demonstrably working according to the Seven Co-operative Principles of The International Co-operative Alliance,

2) 'Predistribution not Redistribution'

Distribute the created wealth from these workplace co-ops through nationally collected, co-operative corporate taxation, distributed into local, democratically-controlled, Community Banks and, so, make money and credit available for responsible wealth creation and community development,

Co-operative Socialism - A Seven Point Action Plan (continuation)

3) 'Global stewardship for needs not private resources for profits'

Maximise public service provision (health, life-long education, libraries, transport and so on) on a co-operative, free-at-the-point-of-use basis, thus only retaining money as a mechanism for access to discretionary purchases,

4) 'Fair, guaranteed incomes for all'

Introduce guaranteed fair income for all, within upper and lower limits, and with elements of automatic Citizens' Income, and, so, do away with the need for direct and indirect personal taxation,

Co-operative Socialism - A Seven Point Action Plan (continued)

- 5) *'Banking as public service - not as global warfare'*
Abolish money-lending and credit-creation for profit: operate banking as a community co-operative public service (see point two above),
- 6) *'End global exploitation through financial speculation'*
Reintroduce international exchange controls, a Tobin Tax, etc, as necessary,
- 7) *'All our sisters are our brothers: and all our brothers are our sisters'*
Make capital grants (not loans) to developing countries.

Co-operative Socialism - A Seven Point Action Plan: Some Current Examples

1) 'Co-operation not Coercion'

(Current examples: 'The Big Idea', 'Just Us' Fair Trade and Ethical Worker Co-op, 'Daily Bread' equal pay worker co-op, Scott Bader Commonwealth, John Lewis Partnership, Royal National Lifeboat Institution)

2) 'Predistribution not Redistribution'

(Current examples: Co-operative Action grant and loan fund, JAK Banks, Time Banks, LETS schemes)

3) 'Global stewardship for needs not private resources for profits'

(Current examples: Public Libraries, Lowick Co-operative School, New Lanark Co-operative Education activity)

4) 'Fair, guaranteed incomes for all'

(Current examples: Basis Income lobbying, Food not Bombs – Food activism)

Co-operative Socialism - A Seven Point Action Plan: Some Current Examples

- 5) *'Banking as public service - not as global warfare'*
(Current examples: Campaign for Interest-free Money, Christian Council for Monetary Justice, Forum for Stable Currencies, Early Day Motions, Committee on Monetary and Economic reform, Sovereignty Movement)

- 6) *'End global exploitation through financial speculation'*
(Current examples: ATTAC, War on Want, Post-Autistic Economics)

- 7) *'All our sisters are our brothers: and all our brothers are our sisters'*
(Current examples: Jubilee 2000, Jubilee Debt Coalition, Tsunami responses, Social Forum Movement, Halifax Co-operative Forum)

Locating Co-operative Socialism: 'Where to look – Theory' Part 2b

Statement on the Co-operative Identity

The International Co-operative Alliance

(Manchester, UK 1995)

Definition:

A co-operative is an 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

ICA Statement on the Co-operative Identity - Values

Values

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.

ICA Statement on the Co-operative Identity – Principles

The co-operative principles are guidelines by which co-operatives put their values into practice.

1st Principle: Voluntary and Open Membership

. . . are voluntary organisations, open to all . . . willing to accept the responsibilities of membership, without . . . discrimination.

2nd Principle: Democratic Member Control

Co-operatives are democratic organisations controlled by their members . . .

3rd Principle: Member Economic Participation

. . . Members usually receive limited compensation, if any, on capital subscribed . . .

Members allocate surpluses . . . : developing their co-operative . . . ;
benefiting members in proportion to their transactions . . . ;
supporting other activities approved by the membership.

Continued

ICA Statement on the Co-operative Identity – Principles (continued)

4th Principle: Autonomy and Independence

Co-operatives are autonomous, self-help organisations controlled by their members. If they enter to agreements . . . they do so on terms that ensure democratic control by their members and maintain their co-operative autonomy.

5th Principle: Education, Training and Information

Co-operatives provide education and training for their members, elected representatives, managers, and employees . . . They inform the general public - particularly young people and opinion leaders - about the nature and benefits of co-operation.

6th Principle: Co-operation among Co-operatives

Co-operatives serve their members most effectively and strengthen the co-operative movement by working together through local, national, regional and international structures.

7th Principle: Concern for Community

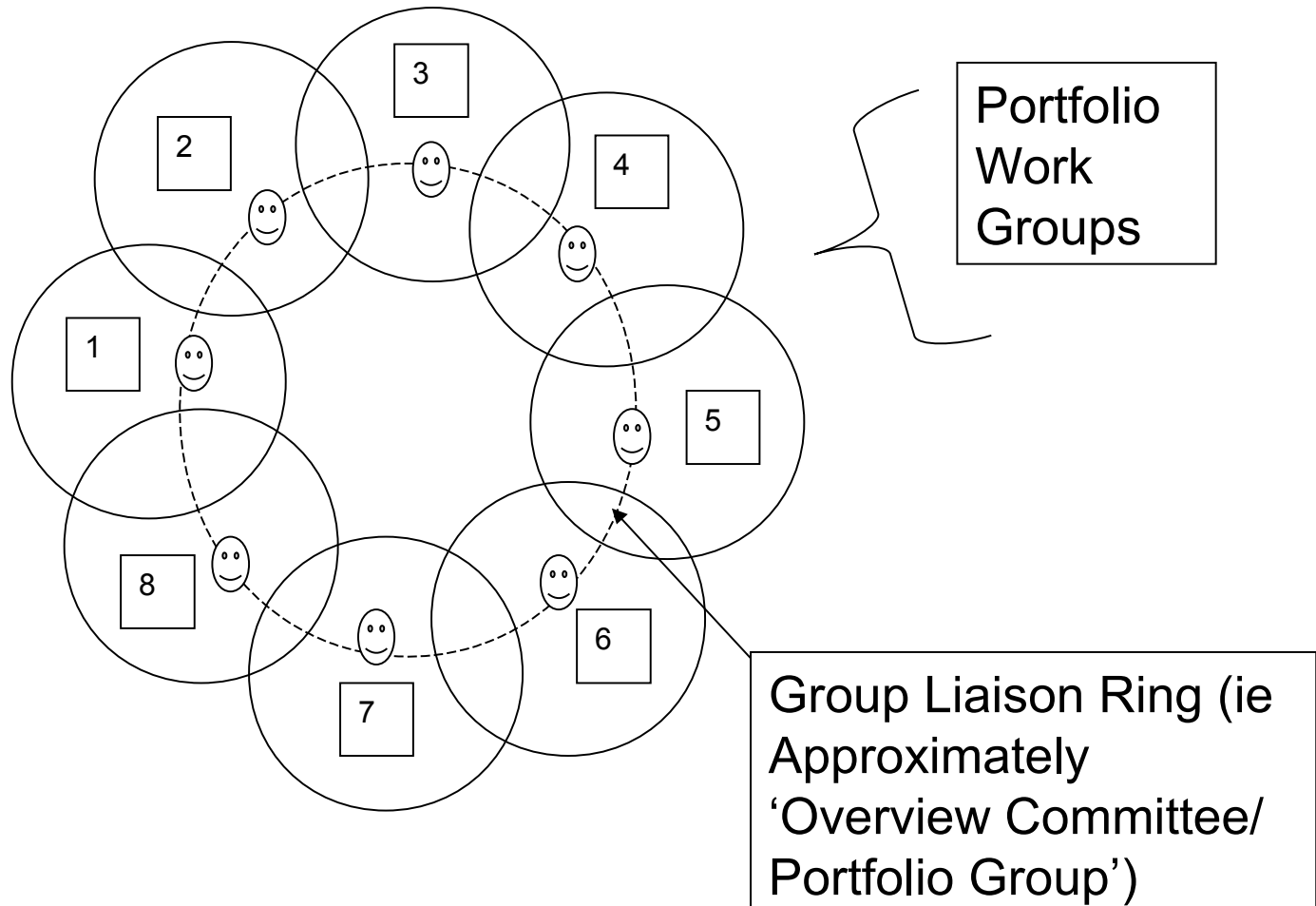
Co-operatives work for the sustainable development of their communities through policies approved by their members.

Locating Co-operative Socialism:
'Where to look – Practice' Part 2

'Sunflower Co-operative' Group Working Structure

- *A suggested non-hierarchical corporate working structure: incorporating co-operative values and principles, and aimed at preventing both 'within-corporate' and 'outwith-corporate' anti-social and anti-ecologic violence, and achieving the group's self-identified aims and objectives*

'Sunflower Co-operative' Group Working Structure



Co-operative Corporates

(Internal) Self-governance Overview

- Fractal like, the ICA Values and Principles can form a co-operative (*socialist!*) distinctiveness,
- *Provided:*
 - All Co-operatives produce, internally for open assessment, and externally for public review,
 - their own ‘Annual Co-operative Audits’,
 - to demonstrate their fidelity to these ICA Co-operative Values and Principles.

Co-operative Socialism

A Final Self-governance Overview

However:

Use of the ICA Values and Principles as guides to good practice and good governance must face up to two dangers:

1) Cherry picking the Values and Principles that are most amenable to our own, human ambitious natures, and, in consequence, avoiding those that are most valuable to us as co-operative socialists, and,

2) The danger of centralisation and hierarchy emerging unnoticed.

I'm strongly of the view, therefore, that: a) terms of working be time limited, and b) with re-engagement with any work portfolio being seen as Project Based, rather than Career Based.