



# WORKER OWNED COOPERATIVES

Do you ever feel like your boss is making arbitrary top-down decisions about your life?

In a worker owned cooperative, the employees collectively own the company and make democratic decisions about all aspects of the enterprise, including wages and other benefits. In these workplaces, there are no bosses making decisions about your life without your input.

A company makes profits when the income it brings in by selling goods or services is greater than the cost of the labor and resources used to cre-

ate those goods or services. Profit is sometimes called "Surplus Labor Value" because it is made from paying labor, the workers, less in wages and benefits than the value of what they are doing while at work. In a capitalist firm, an owner, CEO, or board of directors makes all the decisions about what happens with this surplus labor value. In a worker owned cooperative, the worker-owners control their own surplus value. This means they are the ones that get to collectively decide what to do with the profits. This usually takes the form of splitting them up and returning them to themselves in the form of an annual or semi-annual profit share, or re-investing them in the company in different ways.

Working conditions in worker owned cooperatives are generally better than in

hierarchical capitalist businesses. When workers get to decide, they often pay themselves above minimum wage, give themselves good benefits, and create safe work environments. Many worker-owned cooperatives also choose to share some of their surplus value with other worker-owned firms, by way of start up loans, support for regional networks of worker cooperatives, or by supporting general public education about the benefits of worker-owned companies.

All of these decisions go against the logic of the market and what we are told about how business must be conducted in our world. For more information on worker owned cooperatives, see:

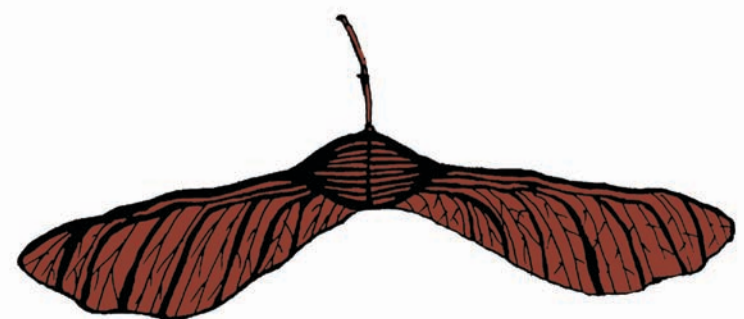
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The Samaras Project is a creative exploration of the many alternative economic systems and forms of exchange that exist side by side with capitalism. While capitalism's goal is the accumulation of profits, these other economies aim toward sustainability and fulfilling human needs. The Samaras Project also works closely with the Anti-Advertising Agency.

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The above illustration is based on a photograph of worker-owners from Rainbow Grocery in San Francisco. Source photo: Steve Lambert. Illustration: Josh MacPhee



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