

## **PUT YOUR EFFORT WHERE YOUR HEART IS: VALUES-BASED ACCOUNTABILITY**

In DisCOs, production is guided not by profit but by social and environmental priorities.

Most companies and indeed many cooperatives, orient their production toward profit and meeting market demands. In DisCOs, production is explicitly guided by need, including social and environmental priorities. This orientation towards positive outcomes is the heart of a DisCO's values. The needs-based priorities defined by the cooperative are embedded in each DisCO's legal statutes, as well as the technologies and cultural practices that let DisCOs assess and reflect on the outcomes of their effort.

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**Guerrilla Media Collective's** Goals and Values inform their practices and are codified in their legal statutes as a non-profit, socially oriented cooperative.

**Cooperation Jackson's** principles include self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity and solidarity, as well as honesty, openness, social responsibility and caring for others.



Disco Principle  
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## BUILDING WHOLE-COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE



DisCO extends decision making and ownership to all contributors whether present in all value chains or affected by the coop's actions.

Cooperatives are traditionally geared towards bringing democracy to the workplace. But their economic activity has knock-on effects throughout broader chains of production and consumption. Rather than restricting democratic principles to one organization, DisCOs extend rights of ownership and decision making powers to all those affected by a DisCO's activities. Inspired by the multi-constituent social care co-ops in Quebec, Canada and Emilia Romagna, Italy, DisCOs place measurable value on the distinctive contributions of a defined community that can include workers, neighboring communities, suppliers, clients, those who perform reproductive and affective labor, financial backers, etc.

**DisCO.Coop** has several layers of membership: **Casual** members perform pro-bono contributions with no strings attached. Those wanting to become **Committed** go through a **dating phase** where they progressively accrue higher levels of decision making power and compensation while learning to build trust within the collective.

**Multi-Talented Makerspace** is open to everybody (casual relationship). Members can either be **active** (approved by the board and with voting rights), or **supporting** (give feedback to the board and receive perks).



Disco Principle  
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## ACTIVE CREATORS OF COMMONS

New digital (code, design, documentation and best practices) and physical (productive and deliberation spaces, machinery) commons are created through various types of work.



Typical market enterprises permit the exploitation of shared wealth, such as land, natural resources or human knowledge. According to mainstream economics, businesses are drivers of a process of enclosure, whereby resources are turned into commodities and relationships into services. DisCOs reverse this trend by actively generating decommodified, open-access resources. These commons can be digital (e.g., code, design, documentation, legal protocols and best practices) or physical (e.g., productive infrastructure, deliberation spaces, machinery).

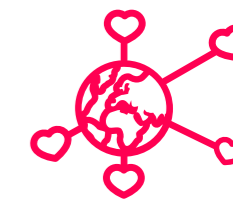
**Laneras** give free workshops on the recuperation of merino wool harvesting traditions in Western Spain. They are also open sourcing low-tech machinery for weaving and looming. Laneras works to revive sustainable practices, spinning traditions and the use of local raw materials to prevent their loss, and to revitalize the community and territory, protect local land and social bonds and support biological biodiversity and rural development.

**Guerrilla Media Collective** creates open knowledge repositories of the work they produce, e.g., [pro-bono translations](#) and illustrations, shared on the web under a [Peer Production License](#), which benefits coops while discouraging extraction.<sup>38</sup> The collective itself documents its practices in [its wiki](#) to share with other DisCOs.



Disco Principle  
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## REBALANCING THE SCALE: RETHINKING GLOBAL/LOCAL ECONOMICS



Physical production is kept local while knowledge, resources and values are shared globally with other DisCOs.

Corporations extract resources as if they were infinitely abundant, while restricting immaterial flows of knowledge, usually reproducible at marginal cost, through intellectual property laws and patents. Conversely, DisCOs support and provide a business model for the Design Global, Manufacture Local<sup>39</sup> template. Here, physical production is kept local and needs-based, while knowledge, resources and value flows<sup>40</sup> are shared at the global level with like-minded initiatives to create a political and cultural counterpower to the prevailing corporate/capitalist economy. This also requires directing attention toward exclusionary social practices and the willful invisibility of environmental impacts, which are habituated responses carried over from mainstream techno-cultures into peer production communities. DisCOs foster explicit attention to environmental justice and the various forms that enclosure can take, in the so-called new industrial revolution.

**DisCO.coop** is crewed by the DisCONAUTES. We're spread among various locations in Spain (Andalusia, Basque Country, Catalonia, Extremadura, Madrid); in Athens, Berlin, London in the EU; in Washington State and rural Wisconsin in the US; and in Mexico City. We all do activist work on the ground, and our work in the DisCO Project is designed to be replicated and developed transnationally.<sup>41</sup>

**Multi-Talented Makerspace** uses locally sourced materials to produce world standard products. They also work with the Fablab and Makerspace networks worldwide to exchange best practices and learnings, applying them on the ground in Zimbabwe and sharing the knowledge with their immediate community.



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## CARE WORK IS THE CORE

DisCOs are living entities reflecting the values of its members which need care and attention to maintain their health and the well-being of the persons working there.



Care and affective work are essential in DisCOs and are supported through established mutual support structures. These can include a rotating list of designated mentors<sup>42</sup> and support “buddies”<sup>43</sup> in a roster where each person both gives and receives support within the group. In this way we establish a peer-to-peer mentorship, which is horizontal and reciprocal. Emphasis is placed upon openly expressing observations and criticisms about the workings of the group and also sharing individual and collective aspirations, preoccupations and humor. This makes space for stronger interpersonal bonds and better trust-based communication, employing healthier and more emancipatory conflict-resolution tools. Beyond individual members, DisCOs extend the notion of care work towards the collective as an entity represented by the upkeep of its goals and values. This empowers individuals to undertake, or at least understand, what would usually be considered bureaucratic or administrative work. This work is often channeled to either a highly-paid upper management class, or a low-paid assistant function, both acting in the interest of the capitalist class. Upkeep of any DisCO’s social mission is the responsibility of working circles or self-organized teams which collectively manage specific needs (e.g., building community, following leads for livelihood work, evaluating potential co-op members) to ensure that the DisCO is healthy and able to fulfill its values ongoing.

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**Guerrilla Media Collective** is explicitly feminist in its orientation. Members’ emotional well being is [prioritized daily](#). Work is organized [around these needs](#), not in spite of them. Every member has a dedicated [mutual support buddy](#) and the collective is [cared for](#) through various circles dedicated to community, sustainability, outside peers and more.

Care work is closely tied to **Laneras’** own origins, worldview and development. Their project has an ecofeminist nature which prioritizes care towards oneself, others and the environment. Community support networks are essential to their mission and the relationships that members form are strongly grounded in trust, mutual support and interdependence.



Disco Principle  
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## REIMAGINING THE ORIGIN AND FLOWS OF VALUE

Three types of value — market value, commons-creating value, and care work value — are tracked through complementary metrics.

In the capitalist marketplace, production is determined hierarchically and is exclusively oriented toward profit, while value is measured through opaque mechanisms and financial instruments.<sup>44</sup> Further, the value only becomes manifest through market exchange. Everything else is externalized, omitted from the value equation. In DisCOs, production is communal and value measurement aims to be transparent. Three types of value are highlighted and rewarded:

**Livelihood Work:** productive market value (the DisCO's goods and services are paid for);

**Love Work:** productive pro-bono value (the commons created through self-selected volunteer work); and

**Care Work:** reproductive work value (towards the collective and among its members, see above).

All are tracked through complementary value metrics that apply to all DisCO members. Recognizing different types of value influences functions including payments, work priorities and certain key decisions. This recognition gives visibility and empowerment to *other* values left out by the market nexus. Tracking and revealing the often invisible, even dismissed, strands of value-producing labor is structurally different from purely quantifying work. By having the ability to track flows of value produced for both the internal operations and also for external exchanges between clients and the DisCO members, we can hack the neoliberal labor classification, hence value exploitation. Seeing, naming and tracking the value of Love and Care work lets us reclaim these contributions with the same level of respect afforded to the provision of goods and services.

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**DisCO.coop** organizes its own Valueflows around a [Worker Self-directed Non Profit](#) fork<sup>45</sup> of the DisCO governance model.<sup>46</sup> In this model (DisCO.NP) **Livelihood Work** is composed of funded/specific project deliverables. **Lovework** comprises unfunded DisCO development work, including some partnerships and DisCO LABS. **Care Work** is the reproductive work needed to keep the machine running and its humans happy.<sup>47</sup>

**Cooperation Jackson** is working towards fully recognizing care work and repositioning it to reflect the value of worker-cooperatives in building a solidarity economy. This includes caring for marginalised community members, as well as taking special care of those who need more help. Care work in cooperation are at the core.

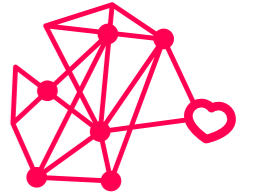
Cooperatives worldwide have a combined turnover of US\$3 trillion, which is similar to the aggregate market capitalization of Silicon Valley's greatest players (Microsoft, Amazon, Google, Apple and Facebook).<sup>48</sup> Unfortunately, this economic power is dispersed, with many coops only nominally acknowledging the sixth cooperative principle, cooperation among cooperatives. Unlike networks, which may or may not share common goals, federations are held together by shared commitments



Disco Principle  
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## PRIMED FOR FEDERATION

DisCOs replicate through a standard federation protocol that allows critical mass without regimenting all parts.



and power is equitably distributed among all nodes. Federations also provide viable alternatives to the dangers of scaling, where a worldview is simply extended from a center of power and forces everything in its path to conform to its values.

DisCOs are distributed and differentiated structures that replicate themselves through a standard federation protocol.<sup>49</sup> This allows federations of DisCOs to achieve critical mass without regimenting all parts. The modularity of DisCO Value Tracking allows DisCOs to mutualize economic power (as well as shared, non-monetary resources) for greater impact. Every node retains the levels of trust, mutual support and well-being that only small groups can achieve, while still achieving a larger collective impact by being part of broader economic networks. The long-term goal is to make cooperatives transcend their status as a form of economic alternative and instead, become a collective economic counterpower.

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**Multi-Talented Makerspace** makes sure the ideas, inventions and information that are generated within the DisCO are accessible to anyone who might want to use them. Following an open source approach, and licensing information and ideas under the universal law of commons, Multi-Talented Makerspace is part of other global and regional networks such as the [makerspace movement](#), the [Nook network](#), [connected Sahara](#), etc.

**Cooperation Jackson** reinvests most of their surpluses in the Jackson and Kush Districts (the contiguously Afrikan counties of western Mississippi). Surpluses are used to support new jobs and community development (through the use of social funds) and a social security system based on mutual solidarity and responsibility. They also help support cooperation with other institutions, advancing the cause of workers in Mississippi and collaborative efforts towards developing a transformative culture in Mississippi that can be readapted in other cultural contexts.

Complementary to the 7 principles, DisCOs also introduce [11 key values](#) which, taken together, provide the framework to tackle the present challenges posed by the Covid crisis. Based on our experience, DisCOs are:

**Balanced in culture and structure:** Striking a balance between the off-chain (human) and on-chain (technological) dimensions.

**Inclusive, relatable and educational:** Prioritizing accessibility and ongoing self-development and mutual support.

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<sup>49</sup> See our section on the [Federation Protocol](#).