Exploring the role of participation in worker co-ops’ ecological sustainability

(a work in progress)
Research Question

How does being a highly-participative workplace offer and/or inhibit “green” practices?
- Work... there's no way around it, I'm told

- Ecological sustainability... ditto

...Do they mix well? Well...
Green Worker Co-ops

Fairtrade: Equal Exchange, Just Us!, La Siembra

Residential Build/Design: Energreen, Build With Prospect, South Mountain Co.

Agriculture: Open Tech Collaborative, Worker-Owned Vertical Farm Co-op

Housecleaning: WAGES, MANOS, Dahlia Green Cleaning, (and MANY more)

Grocery: Rainbow Grocery, SUMA Wholefoods (UK)

Oh, and the incubator Green Worker Cooperatives!
Pretty Green WC's:

Red Rabbit Bakery, Inkworks Press, Alvarado St. Bakery, Union Cab, Republic Windows and Doors, Collective Copies

Aren’t WC’s, but are worker-owned and -participative, and have some pretty green practices:

King Arthur Flour
Scott Bader Company
“Participation” as volitional involvement in:
- policy-setting,
- decision-making, and
- discretionary workplace behaviors

“Green”: usefully useless
I am NOT asking...

- whether WCs are greener than non-WCs in reality

- green-WC overlap would skew this comparison, anyway

- even if so, doesn’t mean that WC-ness -> greenness
I am NOT asking...

- whether the WC model inherently lends itself to greening
  - probably doesn’t
- can(should?) only represent the values of workers (collectively and individually, whatever those are)
- “best practices”
So who do we draw on?

[Paraphrases]

- No one knows how to do sustainability.

- We tried and gave up... it’s too complex, and so now we focus on withstanding harm.
Lit Review

- lots of points of information available, but few directly comparable WCs

- discussed in relation to my evolving concept map
Wow, what a tangled web!

How does being a highly-participative workplace offer and/or inhibit “green” practices?
Key Questions

- Can “green-ness” be considered an indicator of flows of knowledge, decision-making, and ethical engagements throughout a firm generally, or is it a very unique outcome?
- Does being green require a healthier co-op culture?
Thanks!

Questions/Answers?