

Taking Root:

The Story of Marmot Inc., and its Lessons on the Dynamics of Worker Cooperatives

By: Carey Stokes



What Is A Worker Cooperative?

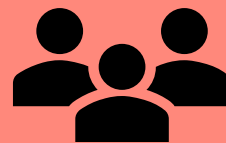
A private business that is democratically owned and operated by, and for, its employee members who all hold an equal share in the enterprise



Democratic
Workplace



Equality



Pathway for
Marginalized
Groups

Research Questions

1 Why do worker cooperatives form?

2 What makes them successful and resilient?

3 What challenges do they face? Why do they fail?



Photo by Caitlin Bailey, USFS

Marmot Inc.

- Countercultural Pacific Northwest trails and forestry worker cooperative
- Existed from 1976 to 1983
- Approximately 55 members
- Worked in Washington, Oregon, California, Idaho, and Montana
- Strived for 50:50 gender hiring, radical equality
- Focus on environmental sustainability
- PNW Counter Cultural Forestry Worker Co-ops relatively under researched



'Marmot' at work

Methodology

Case Study Approach

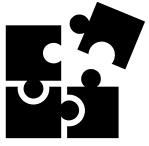
- Difficulty in doing quantitative analysis for cooperatives
- Need to gain individual perspectives in a cooperative
- Fully developed example to analyze



Analysis of company records stored in collections at the University of Washington Harry Bridges Center for Labor Studies



Personal interviews of 7 former members of Marmot



Formation



Circumstances

- Increased demand for reforestation work
- Bad Forestry Contractors
- 1970s Social and Economic Turmoil
- Rise of the New Left



Desire for Change



Familiarity and Existing Networks



Capital, Resources, and Incentives

INCORPORATED UNDER THE LAWS OF

No 39

WASHINGTON

Shares ONE

MARMOT INC

[Redacted Name]

is the owner of

ONE

Shares of the Capital Stock of

MARMOT INC

transferable only on the books of the Corporation by the holder hereof in person or by Attorney upon surrender of this Certificate properly endorsed.

In Witness Whereof, the said Corporation has caused this Certificate to be signed by its duly authorized officers and to be sealed with the Seal of the Corporation this 31st day of DECEMBER A.D. 19 81

Kreshan Treasurer

SHARES

\$10 EACH



THIS CERTIFIES THAT



An official share of Marmot Inc.



Success and Resilience

- Growth and Adaptability
- Organizational Structure
- Networking
- Goals
- Communication
- Community Engagement

Marmot Inc.

- Payment Structure
- "Basis of Unity"
- Consensus
Decision Making
and Collectivism
- Company Identity



Challenges and Failure

Marmot Inc.

Challenges

- Individual vs Group
- Communication
- Revenue
- Internal conflicts
- External Issues

Failure

- Moving On
- Changing Market Conditions
- End of New Left in the 1980s

Acknowledgments

- Dr. Bernadette Jungblut and Dr. Kevin Archer for their mentorship and support
- The CWU Office of Undergraduate Research for their Fall 2023 Grant that allowed me to conduct this research
- The DHC for this research opportunity
- The HSRB at CWU for their guidance and review
- The University of Washington Collections for allowing me to analyze Marmot's records
- All former Marmots for their information and support

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