DIGITAL LIFE

COLLECTIVE

ORGANIZING PRINCIPLES

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OUR ORGANIZING PRINCIPLES

Principles align and bring us closer together. Principles shape and unite us—they provide guidance through the treacherous marshes of opinions, biases & prejudices. Yet, principles are not rules, policies, or procedures. They are not here to bind or constrain.

OUR ORGANIZING PRINCIPLES

Principles are here to open up a space at the intersection of playing, learning, and working. They are here to name common ground to stand, build & grow the Collective upon. Because once we have created that space, once we have built that common ground, once we have found our dance moves, only then can we unlock the true purpose & possibilities of the Collective.

OUR ORGANIZING PRINCIPLES

If we can align on these principles, a long-awaited transformation can take shape, moving us swiftly from the "me" into the "we" domain and enabling our transformational digital capacities, ways to connect and to stay connected, and ways to tap into our newfound collective memory and intelligence.

Finally, ask yourself, what happens when we start being able to use these capacities with greater intention? What happens as we learn to co-create tools and platforms with those highest intentions designed into them?

We hope you are as inspired as we are and accept our invitation to dance.

STRIVE FOR TRANSPARENCY

Transparency is about enabling people to ask and answer questions openly, creating mutual understanding. It is about making their skills, knowledge and ideas visible and accessible to all (based on a definition by Oscar Berg). Complexity is not locked away, but in the background, giving us effective choice about what we want to see, being it an accessible overview or the full details. This fosters a working environment where people can find what they need, when they need it, without asking permission. What they see and don't see is then solely based on their own needs, activities and interests. This makes the Collective work more effectively.

FOSTER SERENDIPITOUS ENCOUNTERS

John Hagel, consultant and author, defines serendipity as "unexpected encounters that surprise and delight." Serendipitous encounters cannot be prescribed or staged, but the right conditions or techniques can be used so that we can increase the quality and the chance of these unexpected encounters. Conditions may include a positive attitude & framing about flow and opportunity, working to find what works. An open and transparent environment that encourages and rewards sharing is critical to the occurrence of serendipity.

EXPERIMENT GENEROUSLY

The Collective values experimentation, with lots of iterations and exceptions. The Collective supports and enables experimentation through "labs" and "workgroups", temporary spaces that allow participants to prototype ideas and share findings ongoingly with anybody who is interested.

USE AND SHARE

As we find and use Tech We Trust as a set of shared services to the entire Collective, we are able to communicate more effectively and develop better products (e.g. content or our own tools). For example, our team chat space brings people around the world together, and the use of a shared content publishing platform allows anyone to create and publish content for the website. This not only helps people work together better, it allows distributed learning. In this collective approach, the time and energy needed to progress along a learning curve is spread across the Collective - anyone who has learned how to use them can now help others get started (commonly referred to as See-Do-Teach or Monkey-See-Monkey-Do).

Image credit: MIT, Sarah Hensley, Valkyrie Robot

DECIDE THROUGH CONSENT

Consent implies agreement to a course of action commonly characterized by comfort with the general direction though not necessarily with all the specific details, i.e. you do not have to fully agree, but instead you are able to work toward the aims of the decision. As a participant in a consent-based process, you have the capacity to block a decision, however, no one member can block an action of the Cooperative.

DON'T TELL ANYONE WHAT TO DO

No one here has a "boss", and as members, we negotiate responsibilities with our peers. Each member is responsible for finding the right people to make decisions, and for using the right tools to do his work (see Use and Share Tech We Trust Principle). When we lead, we remember to ask what we need from each other. Even though nobody can tell anyone else what to do, responsibilities taken on are taken seriously. We may not work for any 'ONE', but we do work for each other. The Collective strives for a high degree of coordination.

DISTRIBUTE DECISION-MAKING TO

THE EDGE

The Collective relies on the ability of a person to make his or her own decisions, and we encourage making decisions that can be made without seeking permission, while taking responsibility for observing and responding to the outcomes. The "edge" is defined as those circles, groups or labs that are "closest to the action", i.e. in direct contact with clients or developers or funders. Operating this way, both power and resources are better distributed.

WORK IN INTERCONNECTED NETWORKS

There are many organizational forms out there and the Collective is focusing on two of them, namely the network and the team, avoiding excessively hierarchical structures. While networks "naturally" exist in all organizations, and do include hierarchies, we want to design the Collective with network principles in mind, e.g. that anyone can connect with anyone else, the connection can go both ways, and as projects expand, people change and reorganize based on interests and needs. Ideally, this allows communication among the various active projects within our Collective and you see what you need to when you need to, without becoming overwhelmed. A team that's gotten too large can 'nest' one part inside the main, or divide in two, like a cell.

Image credit: Serpentine Gallery Pavilion by Sou Fujimoto

ADDRESS INTERNAL CONTRADICTIONS

Keep eyes, ears and minds open to contradictions between what is said, or done, in different places or by different people in the organisation. Let them be freely and openly discussed. The process of addressing the contradictions does not guarantee resolution, but it always carries potential for learning, and therefore this should not only be open, but also be documented for later reflection. We accept conflict and contradictions as part of the way people work together, and we strive to learn from them.
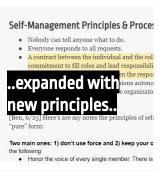
NURTURE ANTI-FRAGILITY

Coined by Nassim Taleb, anti-fragility is a property of systems that increase in capability and resilience as a result of stressors, shocks, mistakes, or failure (Wikipedia). Taleb emphasises that "anti-fragility is beyond resilience or robustness. The resilient resists shocks and stays the same; the anti-fragile gets better." The Collective sees anything we do in light of anti-fragility - are we getting better or stronger with this platform, this size, this process or this strategy? If not, let's rethink it!

Behind the Scenes Look of Creating our Principles for the Collective

It started with a conversation..

..shifted to a matrix..

..interspersed with interviews..

..paused with an interim report..

..expanded with new principles..

..contracted with fewer principles..

..expanded to more principles..

..included why we do all this..

..organized in Kumu..

..re-started with a new process..

..followed by more discussions..

..ranked in a spreadsheet..

..found some order in chaos..

..included the Collective..

..until it was all ready (kind of).