

From Collective to Co-operative Entrepreneurship in Canada's New Co-operatives

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Abstract

This article proposes the notion of *co-operative entrepreneurship* as a subset of social or collective entrepreneurship. It explores how co-operative entrepreneurship in Canada's new co-operatives is expressed in the motivations, processes, and outcomes of its founders' desires for social change. Drawing on social movement theory and via a mixed-methods and grounded theory methodology, we frame our findings within three overarching guiding concepts for the unfolding of co-operative entrepreneurship in Canada today: *framing and ideological development* in the founding of a co-operative, *distributed entrepreneurship* for resource mobilization, and *multivocality* for democratic decision-making and collective learning. Our research adds to current understandings of social and collective entrepreneurialism, and suggests that our approach could be replicated and extended in future research. This article should be of interest to organization, social enterprise, and co-operative studies researchers; policy makers; co-operative apex organizations; and co-operative practitioners and promoters.

Keywords

Co-operatives; social and collective entrepreneurship; social movement theory; Canada.

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Introduction

Social and collective entrepreneurship has been of increasing interest to co-operative studies and social economy researchers as of late, especially given the lingering global economic crisis and the search for more robust, community-centered, and member-owned and -controlled alternative organizational models (Birchall, 2012; Pérotin, 2012; McDonnell, Macknight, & Donnelly, 2012; Schoening, 2006; Spear, 2008, 2011; Zevi, Zanotti, Soulage, & Zelaia, 2011). One reason for the turn to co-operatives among researchers is the evidence suggesting that the collective (or social) entrepreneurialism inherent to these types of democratically managed organizations undergird their resilience during market failure or difficult economic times, as well being particularly advantageous for meeting the needs of underserved communities (McDonnell et al., 2012; Mook, Quarter, & Ryan, 2012; Novkovic, 2008; Spear, 2010; Bajo Sanchez & Roelants, 2011).

According to David Connel (1999), in an early theorization of the term, collective entrepreneurship ‘combines business risk and capital investment with the social values of collective action’ and exists ‘when collective action aims for the economic and social betterment of a locality... for the production of goods and services by an enterprise’ (p. 19). It is the combination of collective risk-taking, resource pooling, and actions rooted in social values and objectives that makes collective entrepreneurship a compelling angle from which to approach the development of new co-operative initiatives.

Researchers have been finding that collective entrepreneurship contributes to resilience in the Canadian co-operative movement, as well (Johnson, 2000; MaRS, 2015; Novkovic, 2008). This article assesses, from a mixed-methods and grounded theory perspective, the innovations and challenges of the development of new co-operatives in Canada and finds ample evidence of collective entrepreneurship in Canada's co-operative movement. This article eventually develops a more specific theoretical handle for the type of collective entrepreneurship that happens with new co-operative projects—*co-operative entrepreneurship*. Co-operative entrepreneurship merges the collective risk-taking and resource pooling of collective entrepreneurship with the organizational form of co-operatives, which, we argue, further catalyzes and guides the type of entrepreneurship that occurs through them. Moreover, our emergent theory of co-operative entrepreneurship itself draws on and contributes to the still-nascent intersection of social/collective entrepreneurship and social movement research (see Cooney, 2012; Craig, 1993; Develtere, 1994, 1996; Diamantopolous, 2012; Spear, 2010); we also found evidence in our research that new co-operatives in Canada often emerge from people engaged in broader social movements.

Research Questions and Methodology

The research for this article was guided by the following questions in order to explore various dimensions of entrepreneurship in Canada's co-operatives today:

- 1) How have co-operatives in recent years, from across Canada's provinces and territories and in different economic sectors, sought to meet their members' or communities' social, cultural, and economic needs via the co-operative model?
- 2) What advantages does the co-operative model facilitate for meeting members' social, cultural, and economic needs (i.e., why is the co-operative model chosen over other business types)?

Data Collection

Because this research is after the social interactions and experiences inherent to co-operative entrepreneurship and desired to let the data (i.e., our key informants in the co-operative movement) speak first, our research took on a grounded theory and triangulated, mixed-methods approach. As grounded theory, theoretical assessments of the data emerged from the findings, rather than predetermining the data beforehand (Aldiabat & Le Navenec, 2011; Glasser, 1982; Glasser & Strauss, 1967; Yancey Martin & Turner, 1986). Table 1 outlines the methods for data gathering, the sample used, and triangulation. All survey, interview, and focus group protocols were available in both English and French.¹

¹ All data gathering protocols are available from the authors upon request. Ethics approval was granted via the Measuring the Co-operative Difference Research Networks' key institutional partner, St. Mary's University in Halifax, Nova Scotia.

Table 1: Methods and sample

Data collection	Total	Process	Variables
Survey ²	66	Sent to over 500 co-operatives involved with CDI	Province/territory, co-operative type, economic sector, stage of development, language
Interviews ³	27	Solicited interview via survey, focus groups, CDI conference	Province/territory, co-operative type, economic sector, stage of development, language
Focus Groups ⁴	4 (15-20 participants each)	CDI conference attendees	39 different co-operatives and co-operative developers

The Canadian Co-operative Development Initiative (CDI)⁵ was a prime sample opportunity for researching new co-operative development in Canada.⁶ First, the CDI

² Via SurveyMonkey.

³ In person, via Skype, and by telephone.

⁴ Conducted at the Canadian Co-operative Development Initiative (CDI) final conference in Ottawa, Canada in January 2013.

⁵ The Co-operative Development Initiative (CDI) was a federal government program housed within the Co-operatives Secretariat in the Department of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada. The CDI was established to facilitate the strengthening and creation of new and existing co-operatives in areas of federal interest including: the knowledge economy, community capacity-building, and service delivery. **Error! Main Document Only.** Its original timeline was from 2003 to 2008. It was renewed in 2009 to 2014, but was cancelled in 2013 during the Federal Government's Deficit Reduction Action Plan. For sampling new co-operative projects in Canada we relied on samples from the CDI database of over 500 co-operative initiatives that had contacted the program between 2009 and 2013.

⁶ The findings arrived at in this study and the claims we make throughout the report are representative of the CDI dataset. Of course, not all new or developing co-operatives of this period in Canada were involved with CDI. However, the sample drawn from the CDI program provided us with a very relevant

program was national in scope, connecting with over 500 new co-operatives or, to a lesser extent, new development programs emerging from already established co-operatives from all of Canada's provinces and territories. Second, the CDI program represented all co-operative types and sizes, across most economic sectors that co-ops are found in and covered co-operatives in pre-start-up, start-up and fully operational stages of the business.

Profile of Sampled Co-operatives

The co-operatives by type in our survey sample are suggestive of the non-financial co-operatives emerging in recent years in Canada. As Figure 1 shows, our research project gathered a good sample of multi-stakeholder, consumer, producer and worker co-ops, as well as four federations and one housing co-operative.

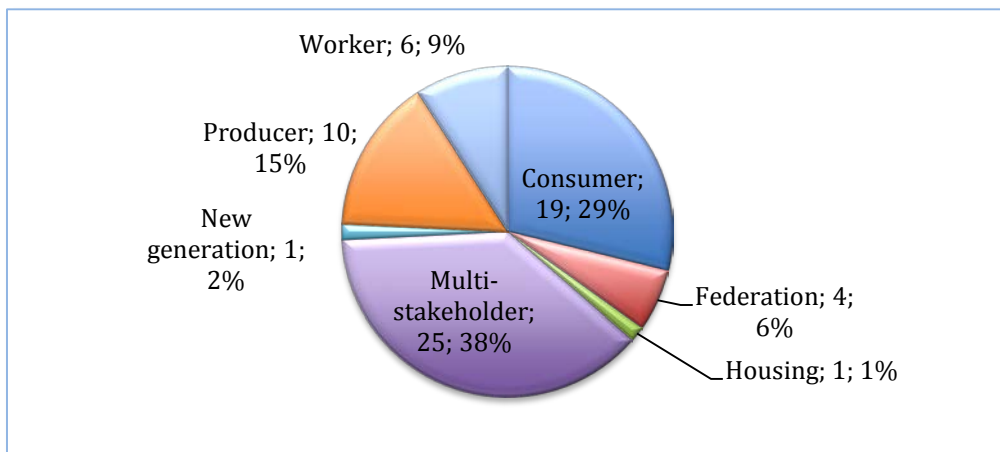


Figure 1: Co-operative types (n=66)

and contemporary dataset as an illustrative subset of new co-operatives in Canada. We were also unable to interview or survey Indigenous (i.e., First Nations, Metis, and Inuit) co-operatives, despite many attempts to make connections. Needless to say, their perspective is not captured in this article. Expanding this line of research to include a sample of new co-operatives not involved in CDI and Indigenous co-operatives would be a valued-add to this research.

The co-operatives represented in our survey sample, interview sample, and focus groups were mostly small- and medium-sized firms (SMEs). Based on membership numbers, almost half of our survey sample (46%) was made up of small co-ops (less than 100 members), while a third were medium-sized (100-500 members) and 21% large (over 500 members). Key informants from our focus group and interview samples also followed a similar membership-based size breakdown.

Finally, the research also relied on 27 in-depth interviews of new co-operatives from across Canada carried out throughout the first half of 2013. A purposive and illustrative sampling rationale was used. These co-operatives represent most provinces and regions of Canada, in diverse economic sectors, across all co-operative types, and that are meeting or will be meeting a wide assortment of socio-economic needs of members or surrounding communities.

Data Analysis

Interviews were fully transcribed and uploaded to the NVivo qualitative data research software along with researchers' notes from focus groups and survey responses. The three authors of this article began coding by using starter codes, which were developed collectively based on the research questions and an initial literature review. Subsequently, recurrent themes were identified using open coding (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). The identification of recurrent themes led to the definition of first-order codes, and the categorization of these codes into conceptual themes. First-order coding revealed that a significant group of Canada's new co-operatives were

influenced by and connected to various social movements, and demonstrated similarities with them in their development. This realization encouraged the authors to re-categorize the codes and to undertake a second-order open coding which eventually lead to the sub-themes of *motivations, processes, and outcomes*, and how the co-operative model facilitates the *resource mobilization, democratic governance, and educative and learning* needs and desires of collective entrepreneurs. Finally, researchers performed axial coding (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) in order to explore relationships between concepts and categories, where we arrived at the overarching and interconnected theoretical dimensions of (1) *framing and ideological formation*, (2) *distributed entrepreneurship*, and (3) *multivocality*.

Literature Review

Social/Collective Entrepreneurship and Co-operative Development in Canada

The Canadian co-operative movement is historically rich and diverse, taking root in the last half of the 19th century as a central organizational tool for the development of agriculture and rural communities, an alternative banking system via *caisses populaires* and credit unions, affordable insurance, consumer provisioning, and later on in the 20th century, worker co-operatives (MacPherson, 2009; Vaillancourt, 2009).

Reflecting on Canada's regional and provincial characteristics and diversity, the Canadian co-operative development literature to date has focused on: (1) best practices in co-operative development (Emmanuel & Cayo, 2007; Savard, 2007); (2) analyzing co-operative development experiences within Canada, and at times comparing the Quebec experience to other provinces (Adeler, 2009; Diamantopolous,

2011; Duguid, Tarhan, & Vieta, 2015; Girard, 2002; Heneberry & Laforest, 2011; MacPherson, 2009; Reed & McMurtry, 2009; Vaillancourt, 2009); (3) assessing the various provincial and federal legal dimensions of co-operative development (Dobrohoczki, 2012; Petrou, 2013); and (4) outlining the historical and socio-cultural underpinning of co-operative development in English Canada (MacPherson, 2009), Quebec (Vaillancourt, 2009), and among Indigenous communities (Hammond Ketilson & MacPherson, 2002; Sangputa, Vieta, & McMurtry, 2015 ; Weir, 2007; Wuttunnee, 2010). What has been less common is research into the specifics of the social or collective entrepreneurship that imbue the development of co-ops in Canada.

Our concept of co-operative entrepreneurship forms a sub-set of the broader concepts of social or collective enterprise and entrepreneurship. Social economy researchers have adopted different terms and definitions when referring to and analyzing business activities with socially driven values, objectives, and entrepreneurialism, variably termed as “social enterprises” (Borzaga & Defourny, 2001; Defourny & Nyssens, 2012; Galera & Borzaga, 2009; Kerlin, 2009; Mair & Martí, 2006); “social economy businesses” (Mook et al., 2012), “benefit corporations” (Alperovitz, 2011), and numerous other terms. What brings together these forms of social businesses are strong social missions and objectives supported in part by market activity and in part by other sources of supports, such as grants, government funding, donations, membership fees, or voluntary labour. But conceptual definitions of these types of firms, on the whole, vary, are still contested, and depend on the historical trajectory,

the preponderance and degrees of welfare state or market driven economic paradigms, and the legislative domains within national contexts.

Most broadly, two main social enterprise conceptual camps have emerged, namely the U.S. school and the European school. Often falling within what is termed “the third sector” or “civil society” (rather than the “social economy”), the U.S. school considers all innovative activities with a social purpose as socially entrepreneurial, without being too concerned with their ownership and management models; for instance, corporate social responsibility efforts are also considered to be social entrepreneurial activities (Ackerman, 1997; Bornstein, 2004; Dees, 1998). On the contrary, the European school argues that social/collective entrepreneurial activities derive from citizen-led initiatives with an explicit aim to benefit their community, and thus must involve decision-making processes that are participatory and not based on capital ownership (Borzaga & Defourny, 2001; Defourny & Nyssens, 2012). Autonomy, participatory processes, and limited profit distribution are central for the European school (Defourny & Nyssens, 2012; ICSEM Project, 2015; Spear, 2012).

The Canadian approach to social enterprise and social/collective entrepreneurship tends to fall in between these two conceptual approaches, taking into account also the external supports that these enterprises and entrepreneurs rely on (Elson & Hall, 2012 ; McMurtry et al., 2015). Quarter, Mook, & Armstrong (2009) provide an illustrative Canadian definition of social enterprise:

A social enterprise is a form of community economic development in which an organization exchanges services and good in the market as a means to realizing its social objectives or mission. In this sense it is similar to a conventional business, but it also requires external support in order to be sustainable and is established primarily to meet social purpose. (p. 107)

In the Canadian model, community economic development organizations, some non-profits, and many co-operatives that are primarily social in focus can be social enterprises.

As with other Canadian scholars (Quarter et al., 2009; McMurtry et al., 2015), we agree on the whole with the European school that the collective ownership and management structures of social enterprises are decisive in generating and sustaining their economic, social, and even environmental impacts (the so-called “triple bottom line”). As a result, studies that adopt the “heroic individual” approach of the US model will not be the subject of further analysis here (nor did we find much evidence of this in the new Canadian co-operatives we researched). Instead, our emerging concept of co-operative entrepreneurship, better reflecting the Canadian experience with co-operatives’ role in community economic development (CED), is grounded in the motivations, processes, and outcomes of collective entrepreneurship (which we found plenty of evidence for in our sample).

A Social Movement Theory of Co-operative Entrepreneurship

Social/collective entrepreneurship closely intersects with and often emerges from social movements. Co-operatives, for instance, are one type of social business that have been understood as emerging from the organizational needs of collective actions

to achieve social change (Borzaga & Fazzi, 2014; Craig, 1993; Develtere, 1994, 1996; Diamantopolous, 2012; McPherson, 2009; Spear, 2010). But social movement theory—and, in particular, theories of social movement organizations—has only recently been tapped for explaining the emergence and organizational structures of co-operatives and social enterprises (Cooney, 2012; Spear, 2010).

Spear (2010) argues that ‘social movements in civil society are closely linked to social entrepreneurial activity’ (p. 1). Social enterprises, for Spear, have conceptual and practical connections to social movement organizations; both, after all, emerge from collective action to overcome inequalities and socio-economic gaps and aim to deliver on social objectives. Spear also develops the entrepreneurial connections between social enterprise and social movements within a threefold conceptual taxonomy: (1) social entrepreneurs might themselves be deeply involved in a social movement (“insider social entrepreneurialism”), (2) inspired by social movements (“outsider social entrepreneurialism”), or (3) social entrepreneurial activities might themselves inspire new social movements to emerge (p. 6). Spear then goes on to develop a social movement theory of social entrepreneurship grounded in *ideological development* and *framing* (shared meanings and identity formations) and *resource mobilization* (the people, expertise and information, financial resources, and legitimacy needed for social organization) (p. 7). Importantly, network formation and development form an integral part of Spear’s typology that further details the interconnections between social entrepreneurship and social movements. (pp. 6-7).

Based on his study of six European co-operatives, Spear (2008) also argues that co-ops mobilize resources through '*distributed entrepreneurship*', a term he coined in order to refer to 'circles of entrepreneurial activity'. Circles of entrepreneurship connect 'the central roles played by the entrepreneurs within the organization' but link them intimately with wider groups (or circles) of 'external stakeholders sometimes quite closely and essentially involved' (p. 57). Spear notes that external support within the various overlapping circles of distributed entrepreneurship is provided in two forms: (1) formally through institutional support structures (i.e. local development agencies, supporting NGOs, etc.); and (2) informally through social capital (i.e. political support, expertise, assistance, contacts, advice by various actors including but not limited to landlords, customers, advisors, family, other businesses, etc.) (p. 55).

While our research into *co-operative entrepreneurialism* in Canada springboards from Spear's social movement approach, we propose a third guiding concept to the social movement theory of social entrepreneurship: *multivocality*. Multivocality, as Montgomery & Dacin (2010) argue, gestures to social movement organizations' initiatives that develop and operate with the participation of members possessing intersecting yet diverse cultural, social and economic backgrounds, viewpoints, and interests. The result is a multiplicity of *lenses* and *voices* that, depending on how they are managed, could either support or hinder an initiative's resource mobilization efforts and members' learning processes. Within this tension that is a reality for many social movement and also social mission-driven enterprises, as we will show later on,

multivocality refers to the organizational capacity to ‘combine...numerous voices as well as to speak to stakeholders in an accessible manner and straddle [multiple] audiences’ (p. 384). Our findings reveal that multivocality indeed plays a critical role in the development of new co-operatives in Canada.

Towards Co-operative Entrepreneurship in Canada’s New Co-operatives

This section explores in detail how collective entrepreneurship in Canada’s new co-operatives express *motivations*, *processes*, and *outcomes* driven by social change.

Drawing from social movement theory, these three sub-themes of our research, in turn, nuance our three overarching guiding concepts for the unfolding of collective entrepreneurship in Canada’s new co-ops—what we ultimately term as ‘co-operative entrepreneurship’: *framing and ideological development* in the founding of a co-operative, *distributed entrepreneurship* for resource mobilization, and *multivocality* for democratic decision-making and collective learning.

Framing and Ideological Development

Framed by community-focused objectives

Framing and ideological development involves ‘the collective interpretation of ideas and the mobilizing of followers towards the achievement of a cause’ (Montgomery & Dacin, 2012, p. 383). New co-operatives in Canada today show evidence of being framed by strong, community-focused social objectives. Responses to our survey questions point out that collectively across Canada in our sample, social care and social services, alternative health care, alternative and organic food, alternative and renewable energy, community economic development (CED), and offering

employment for marginalized communities make up a total of 62.2% of motivators for the creation of new co-ops (Figure 2). In other words, the majority of new co-operative projects emerging in Canada in recent years are primarily grounded in strong social objectives (outwardly focused to the community), rather than focused mainly on mutualistic needs and aims (inwardly focused on membership needs).⁷

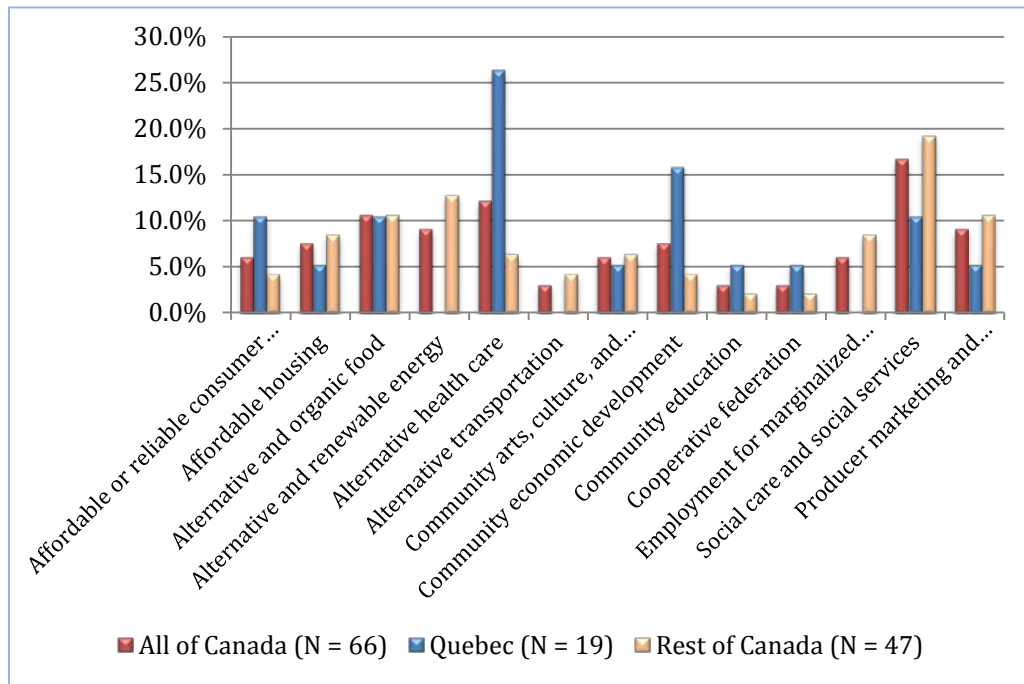


Figure 2: Socio-economic need motivating the start-up of the co-operative

The following quotes from our interviews illustrate some of the outwardly focused motivators for starting new co-operatives in Canada today:

⁷ For these two broad categories that distinguish the purpose or characteristics of co-operatives, see: Galera (2004) and Birchall (2012). Here we are not denying that most co-operatives have elements of both characteristics, but the point we wish to make is that recent co-operative development projects in Canada (at least those emerging from our CDI sample) indicate a stronger focus on the outward, social objectives that drive the co-operative project (broadly focusing on ICA principles 5-7), in addition to a co-operative's mutualistic aspects (ICA principles 1-4) (ICA, 2015).

Really making a difference in people's lives [is core to our co-operative]. [W]e are satisfying a need in our community. We are helping people access more local food every day, and we are doing this successfully and for more people all the time.

Co-ops are not the model to make money quickly. If you're looking to make a big buck, don't even bother. But if you're working for a sustainable business and a method, tool, or vehicle for meeting commonly held needs, then it will bring you returns, it can be quite stable. It's there for the long term and it's not just about you.

Our interviews also revealed that while mutualistic aspects of new co-operatives were also present, they were predominantly tinged with outwardly focused, social and community-driven elements:

A co-op is I think more independent and more geared to a business model than say a community organization. It earns money and the profit goes back to its members, which is why I am inclined to have our association be a co-operative.

Yes, there is an awareness now among the workers [as to the benefits of the co-op for members]. In the beginning it was a means to an end. Initially it was about saving jobs. As we've developed and grown the business, we've become more aware of how we can influence both staff and the community.

[We engaged in] a lot of community consultations. Many small ones.... We were invited to do a presentation on "what's co-ops partnership with society." There were about a dozen people there.... And we went up ahead and did many more community consultations, and this year there were about 150 people at the AGM, huge for an AGM.

In short, strong social and community-oriented framing of the motivations for setting up a new co-operative begins to evidence collective entrepreneurial activities in Canada's new co-operatives.

Our survey further delved into the framing motivators for starting new co-ops by inquiring into the 'activity' or 'business' of the co-operative into two areas: the broad economic sector it is situated in (Figure 3), and the goods or services that it produces or delivers (Figure 4). We synthetically grouped the economic sectors of the co-operatives in our survey sample and found that the outwardly focused motivations of Canada's new co-operatives are also reflected in their choices of business activities, and therefore the outcomes they are generating for their communities. For instance, Figure 3 shows that around 45% of surveyed co-operatives belonged to the social services, health, housing, or arts and culture sectors; all sectors of the broader social economy made up of social businesses with strong social objectives. The other co-operatives that fell into the professional services, transportation, utility, and retail food and groceries sectors, to a great degree, also situate their *raison d'être* as both benefiting members and serving broader social missions.

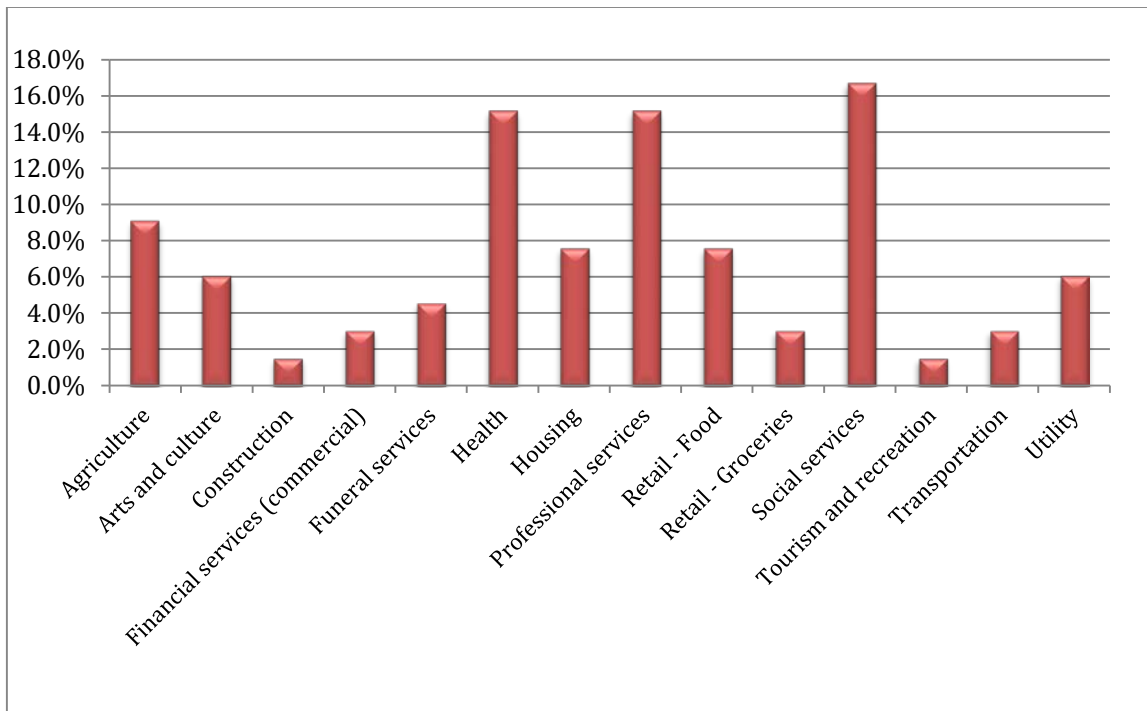


Figure 3: Economic sectors of co-operatives in survey sample (N = 66)

When we filter the motivations for starting a co-operative through the specific goods and services produced or delivered (Figure 4), we again notice the outward, socially focused direction to new co-operative development in Canada. Elsewhere, we have termed ‘social mission-driven co-operatives’ (Duguid, Tarhan, & Vieta, 2015) those that have as their primary motivations for doing businesses either: (1) working with marginalized communities, (2) supporting other social enterprises, or (3) offering services for work integration and skills upgrading to underserved groups more broadly. Our findings reveal that almost one in every five new co-operative in Canada from our sample (18.2%) belongs explicitly to this group based on their main socio-economic activity of the organization. If we also include elderly and home care co-ops and alternative health co-ops to our categorization, social enterprise co-operatives

can be said to make up 36.4% of all new co-operatives in our sample from across Canada.

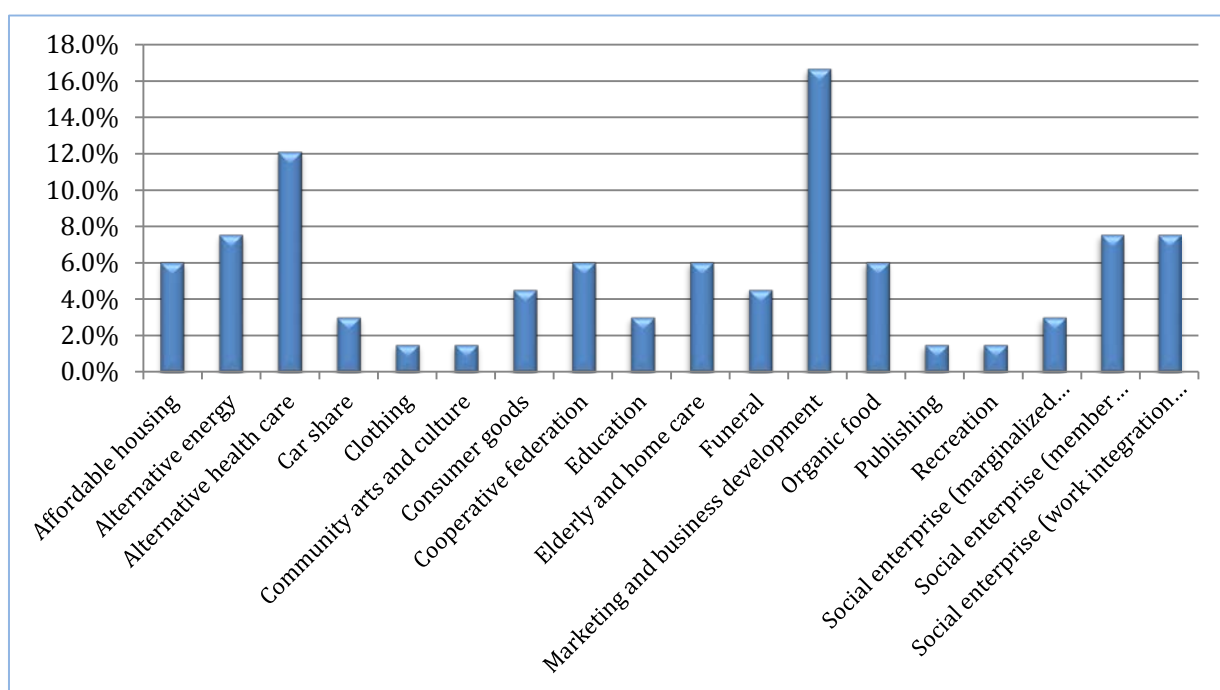


Figure 4: Goods and services produced or delivered by co-operatives in survey sample (N = 66)

A second group of co-operatives in Figure 4 with strong social or environmental missions but that are not explicitly social enterprises includes those focused on affordable housing, alternative energy, alternative health care, car sharing, community arts and culture, education, home care, organic foods, and recreation. This second group makes up a further 50% or so of co-operatives that were surveyed. The rest of the co-operatives—around 20%—have more of a market-centred or economic focus, or, as in the case of marketing and business development-centred co-operatives, a mutualistic stream mainly in the service of the co-op’s members or main stakeholders. However, rather than being solely focused on economic interests, these co-operatives

are either first or second-tier co-operatives with missions oriented towards assisting the business or organizational needs of other co-operatives or community organizations particular sectors, including but not limited to marketing, management, and governance.

Overall, the motivations of Canada's new co-operatives are expressed through their choice of business activities, which mostly aim at generating outwardly focused social outcomes rather than only serving members' needs. They are, moreover, rooted strongly in broader social movements.

Social movements and Canada's new co-operatives

As mentioned in the literature review section of this paper, collective entrepreneurship demonstrates strong ties to social movements both in theory and in practice. These ties also play a central role in framing and ideological development, during which co-operative entrepreneurs build on their embeddedness in existing social movements or other community organizations to gain legitimacy and to mobilize followers (Montgomery & Dacin, 2012, p. 377). Our study reveals that many of the co-operatives interviewed and surveyed are closely linked to, inspired by, or emerged from broader social movements or community initiatives.

For instance, our interviews with co-op founders point out that all four of the organic food co-operatives from our sample demonstrated strong ties to organic food and community agriculture movements or community organizations:

[Our] founding came out of [the coming together] of someone that came from the local health unit, concerned consumers, folks involved in the 100 mile diet movement, and some farmers who recognized that they did not have access to a reliable market to local food.

[Our market] has had a history of an incredible amount of commitment from consumers in St. John's who have wanted a co-operative. [Our co-operative is] bottom-up community driven.

[Our greatest strength is] that people really care about local food and really care about farmers. (...) But the project is really about fixing the food system that we've messed up for so long for the past 60 years, and making it right. Eat the right food from the right locations.

[Our founding] was linked to a community program in Urban Integrated Revitalization (RUI Revitalisation Urbain Intégrée) for the Place Benoît neighbourhood. A project entitled 'Quartier 21' was developed. We analyzed the needs and determined that we should create a social economy business that would create jobs for people in the neighbourhood.

In the case of a New Brunswick consumer co-operative retail market for local craft goods, the founders' common roots in a local program called 'Women Entrepreneurs' played a central role in the framing of the cause, and the entrepreneurial mobilization of its founders:

Our [producer] co-operative market emerges from out of a 'Women Entrepreneurs' program [here in the city]. A group of women...started figuring out what needed to be done [and] getting into a space... [around]...six years ago. [T]hese women...are all members now.... [The women got together to] create a co-operative to create a market.

Our interviews also show that car share co-operatives have strong ties with local environmental movements. For instance, one such co-operative in Saskatchewan received help from a citywide environmental group in conducting their initial snowball survey to assess local appetite and demand for a car-sharing project. Another car share co-operative in Manitoba framed their ideological stance around environmental issues caused by an unsustainable local transportation system:

The group that came together coalesced with people from the environmental movement. Our tagline right now is 'Bike, Walk, Bus, and Sometimes Drive' They are people who are looking at alternative to this incredible dependency on the car.... There are some parts of the city that are being developed in an insane way. We are not alone in this regard.

And founders of two alternative health and wellness co-operatives from British Columbia reveal that their founding motivations derived from the demands of the local alternative health and wellness movements:

The information [for accessible technologies for mobility challenged people] coming from vendors was very skewed towards professionals [and multinationals] and not the end consumers (...) This was identified in strategic planning session as a key problem. How to overcome this problem? The idea of a consumer co-operative was introduced.

(...) there were a couple of community members who just felt that the present health delivery service was too focused on symptoms and the medical approach, something much broader would be more appropriate, more of a focus on wellness. (...) We did some community forums and more and more people start coming and started joining and putting up the 50 bucks, and everybody was excited. From that [collective and community effort] the idea of the health co-op came up.

Overall, what Spear (2010) defined as ‘insider social entrepreneurialism’ permeates new co-operative development in Canada through co-operative founders’ strong ties to social movements or other community organizations. In turn, the co-operative model, as we address next, is viewed by founders and members as the primary way of reaching socially oriented outcomes.

Choosing the co-operative model

Co-operators from our focus groups and interviews provided revealing reasons as to why the co-operative model was chosen for their shared social objectives, touching on the ‘strengths’ of the co-operative model for community-focused and collective entrepreneurial endeavours.

The most articulated reasons that co-op founders gave us for relying on the co-op business model focused on its suitability for organizing around a common project, visions, and goals. As a new worker co-op in founder told us: ‘We chose a co-op model because...it fit the value proposition of our members’. Co-operatives are ideal, a focus group participant said, for ‘working together to achieve something.’ And another focus groups participant stated it this way: ‘We had a common goal that made sense to us, we all wanted to work towards it, and the co-op model was the best way to achieve this.’

Working together best happens via ‘member ownership,’ new Canadian co-operators told us, where members are personally invested in the business for a common goal or social good. As three focus group participants stated:

Member ownership is our co-op’s strength.

We chose the co-op model because it works, and the strength of members and volunteers for committing to a common project and even riding out economic crises is important for our co-op.

The sense of ownership, feeling like you are a part of something for the common good, this is key [to the co-operative model].

The democratic structure of co-operatives, or member participation, where members have a say in the business, was also viewed as a strength of the form. The ‘flat structure is good for member involvement,’ stated one member. The common vision, for one focus group participant, is best tackled via the teamwork facilitated by co-operatives. And co-ops were viewed as the ideal business model for maximizing participation in socially focused business endeavours, most focus groups participants agreed.

Finally, a number of our key informants also saw the co-operative form as an important organizing tool for breaking individual isolation and enabling common projects by pooling resources, which were reasons for forming a co-operative given by key informants in New Brunswick, British Columbia, Quebec, Ontario, and various

focus group participants. Indeed, pooling resources is central to collective entrepreneurial action (Spear, 2012). Resources are pooled, moreover, in ways rooted in solidarity, as was articulated in our focus groups' commonly used phrases of 'sharing values' and having 'common goals'. Pooling resources such as sharing ideas, combining members' personal contacts in order to expand social networks, collecting money, and mobilizing collaborative effort facilitate provisioning for 'community needs via mutualistic member support', said one focus group participant. Another focus group participant stated it this way regards their co-operative in Ontario: 'The co-operative model helps members break the isolation of the francophone community [in Ontario]'.

Distributed Entrepreneurship: Routes to Resource Mobilization

As pointed out in the literature review section, co-operatives benefit from what Spear (2008) calls *distributed entrepreneurship*, where the co-operative builds on the entrepreneurial efforts of members internally while receiving support from external stakeholders, informally through social capital, and formally through institutional support. In this section of our paper, we deploy Spear's framework of distributed entrepreneurship to: (1) identify the role of external support played for Canada's new co-operatives in mobilizing resources, and (2) look into the collective entrepreneurial processes that take place within these co-operatives.

External supports

The support of founders, their social networks, and external stakeholders, according to Spear (2008), can be seen as forming 'circles' of varying sizes around the co-

operative to provide it with resource mobilization support in order to activate a distributed form of entrepreneurship made up of component ‘circles of entrepreneurship’ (p. 57). Similarly, our survey responses revealed that the support of founders’ social networks and external stakeholders indeed play a crucial role for Canada’s new co-operatives in mobilizing resources during the start-up and early operational phases. As Figure 5 shows, across Canada, these circles of entrepreneurship consist of: individuals (59.5%), regional development organizations (59%), CED organizations (59.5%), financial institutions and credit unions (53%), other co-operatives (49%), and professionals (39%).

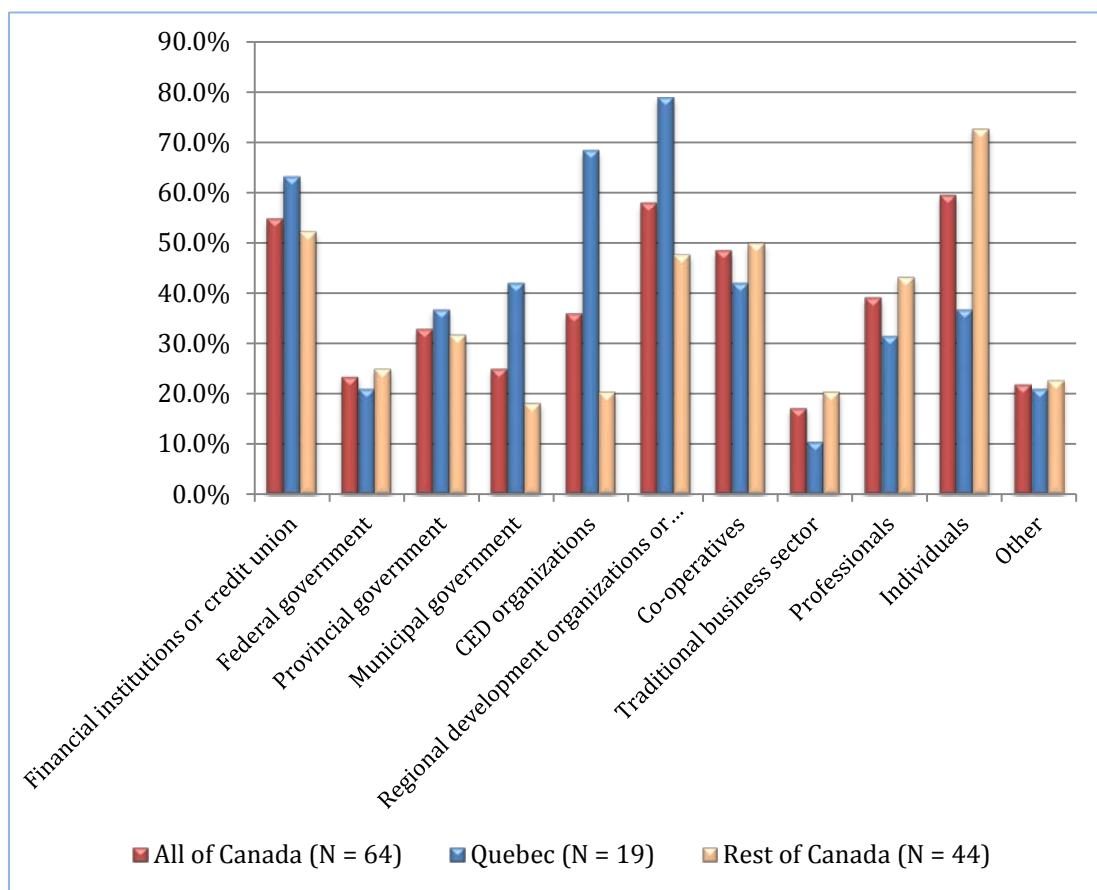


Figure 5: Supports tapped into for developing the co-operative (multiple answers)

Individuals: Members, volunteers and co-operative developers

Surveyed co-operatives identified individuals as the most common source of external support during their start-up and early operational phase, made up mostly of founders recruiting new members from their social networks, volunteers, and tapping into the resources of co-operative developers.

When we asked our survey respondents how they recruited their members, the role of personal and informal social networks of founding members, mostly via word-of-mouth, came into clear view (Figure 6). This is especially the case in the rest of Canada outside of Quebec. In Quebec, especially amongst the multistakeholder co-ops, recruitment campaigns and targeted media or social media are relied on for member recruitment.

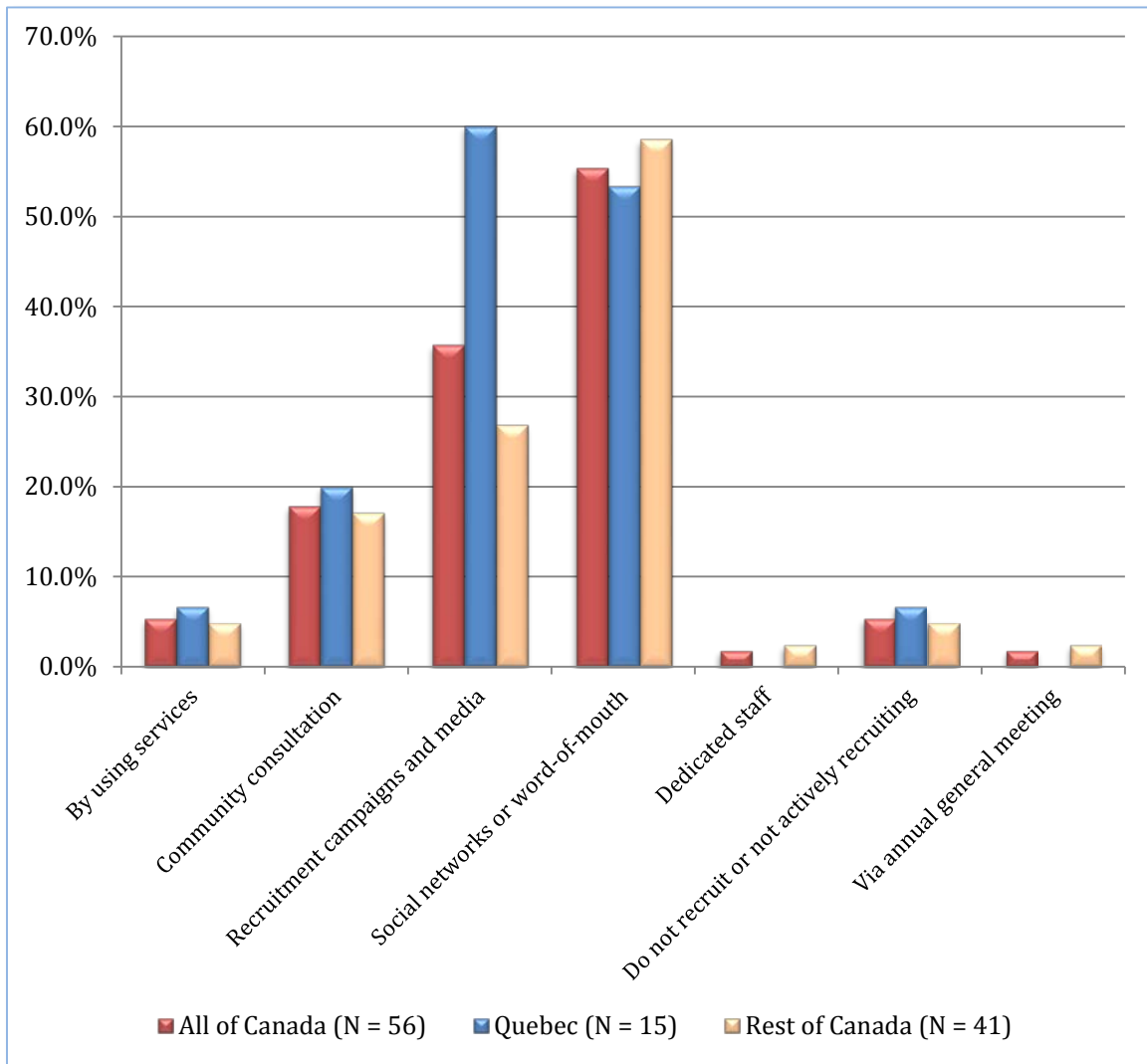


Figure 6: How members are recruited⁸

Another important source of membership recruitment, although less-relied on than social networks or recruitment campaigns, is community consultation, a strategy used to great effect in two social enterprise co-operatives from British Columbia we interviewed, an Alberta community development co-operative, and Ontario's community cinema, community café, university organic food retailer, and organic

⁸ Community consultation includes presence in community, co-op federations, associations, etc.

foods provider and retailer we also interviewed. Finally, a small number of co-ops, especially in the retail foods and consumer goods and services sectors, recruited members from their clients and users.

Volunteers are also an important source of individual supports in Canada's new co-operatives. Almost all of the co-ops we surveyed from across Canada—around 90% in sample—have volunteers and rely heavily on volunteer labour. Volunteers are key to running and sustaining new Canadian co-operatives and central to membership involvement (Duguid, 2007; Duguid, Mündel & Schugurensky 2013). But here we also noticed a paradox in volunteering, which came out strongly in our interviews: While volunteer labour sustains new co-operatives in Canada, a core and often small group of members do most of the volunteering. This, many key informants we interviewed told us, leads to burn out and is also directly related to issues with membership engagement and retention. As such, with new co-operatives in Canada, sustaining an energized, committed and rotating volunteer base that shares equally in the tasks to be done is a key area of concern with board members and other co-op leaders.

Responses to our survey revealed that the role of co-operative developers in founding new co-ops throughout Canada is also very significant, with 54% of new co-op projects having tapped into their expertise (see Figure 7). However, they are used to a much greater extent in Quebec (72% of all new co-ops there, vs. 47% in the rest of Canada). This is perhaps no surprise given the strong role in Quebec of local, second-tier co-operative development organizations CDRs in Quebec called Co-opératives de

développement régional (CDRs), and that most co-operative developers in that province are connected to or work for local CDRs (Côté, 2007, p. 97; Savard, 2007, p. 239).⁹

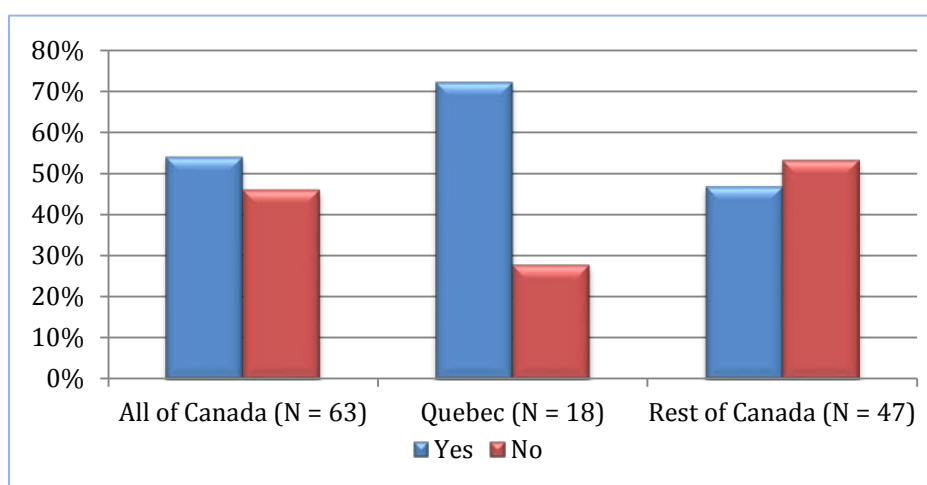


Figure 7: Whether or not founding members hired a co-operative developer

Regional and community-based development agencies

Despite playing a significant supportive role in co-operative development across Canada, the role of regional and community-based development agencies, such as CDRs, is more significant in Quebec compared to other provinces (Figure 6). The major difference in Quebec from our sample seems to be the support that provincial and municipal governments provided at the local and regional level through institutions such as Community Economic Development (CED) organizations (e.g.,

⁹ Co-opératives de développement régional (CDRs) provide legal and technical support to co-operatives during their start-up periods and ongoing monitoring support throughout their operations.

RISQ,¹⁰ CLDs,¹¹ and the province's 11 regional CDRs), and the Chantier de l'économie sociale.¹² In addition, Quebec's co-op developers and local municipalities often collaborate in order to spawn local economic development via, in no small part, new co-operatives (Côté, 2007; Savard, 2007). In the rest of Canada, on the other hand and as Figure 5 shows, 'individuals' are much more involved in co-operative development when compared to the provincially-, municipally-, and social economy-based infrastructure for co-op development in Quebec. In other words, with a lack of the same extensive provincial and local supporting organizations of Quebec, individual co-operative developers, community benefactors or champions, or groups of founders are relied on more for setting up the co-operative in the rest of Canada.

Credit unions and financial institutions

Credit unions received mixed reviews with respect to supports for emerging co-operatives. Some of our interview key informants—especially in British Columbia and Ontario—complained that they do not necessarily provide differentiated or even better service for co-ops when compared to traditional banks. But generally, credit unions tended to be used over banks and were viewed as having favourable policies and programs for starting a co-op, especially in Alberta, Manitoba, Nova Scotia, and Quebec. However, credit unions and other financial institutions are not turned to, generally, to address challenges once the co-op has started, as co-op boards rather

¹⁰ Le Réseau d'investissement social du Québec (RISQ) is a non-profit fund that provides social enterprises with start-up support; financing during various phases of organization development; and funding to obtain technical assistance.

¹¹ Centres local de développement (CLDs) are non-profit organizations mandated by the Quebec Government to support entrepreneurship at the local level. There are 120 CLDs across Quebec as of early 2015.

¹² Le chantier de l'économie sociale is the apex organization for Québec's social economy movement.

look to other funding sources, membership growth and engagement, and even maximizing revenues by improving on efficiencies once the co-op is operational.¹³ Only a handful of the co-ops interviewed managed to secure ongoing loans for operations and capitalization from credit unions. And some of the co-ops had to rely on banks to secure early loans and assistance, which means that the collateral and credit history has to be provided by the founders.

Other co-operatives

Established co-operatives are also a strong source of support for new co-op projects in Canada, with 50% of new co-ops relying on older co-ops for guidance and other forms of support (Figure 5). As well, many of our interviewed co-ops—especially with those in the organic and local food, car sharing, alternative health, community development, and arts and culture sectors—saw themselves as explicitly supporting the local community-base and engaged often with other community groups and co-operatives in local events and by sharing resources. Here, again, however, given the paucity of co-operative development supports at the provincial and local levels outside of Quebec, other co-operatives are relied on slightly more in the early stages in the rest of Canada. In Quebec, on the other hand, new co-ops rely more on CDRs (which themselves are 2nd tier co-ops), but also municipalities, and CED organizations (Figure 5).

¹³ Part of this has to do, according to our interviewees, to the lack of strong programs focusing on the ongoing capitalization needs of operating co-ops, and secondly to the general averseness of Canadian co-operators that we surveyed and interviewed to debt financing in both in Quebec and the rest of Canada.

We should also briefly note here that the major self-reported reason for the eventual failure of two co-operatives we interviewed was due to a sharp disconnection with the broader co-operative movement and the community. This, our key informants at these two co-ops told us, left them isolated when it came to consolidating the co-operative structure or when attempting to engage in or expand their business activity. This suggests that external support structures and networks with other co-operatives are crucial for a new co-operatives' long-term success and this, in turn, relies heavily on the social networks and social embeddedness they manage to nurture (Spear, 2008).

Multivocality: Collective Decision-Making and Collaborative Learning Processes

Our interviews suggest that Canadian co-operatives bring together individuals with various professional and personal backgrounds, experiences, skills, and interests. The resulting multiplicity of voices and lenses—*multivocality*—served to enrich their collective entrepreneurship through collective decision-making and collaborative learning processes. These processes in turn, our findings suggest, also helped Canada's new co-operatives in learning how and where to mobilize resources during their start-up phase within their distributed entrepreneurial activities.

Evidence for and tensions of multivocality

Our findings suggest that the diversity of experiences and perspectives within Canada's new co-operatives' membership base, combined with the collective processes inherent in the co-operative management model, yielded many collective learning experiences. The following two interviewed co-operative founders respectively from an Alberta community development co-operative and a New

Brunswick co-operative marketplace provide insight into the relationship between multivocality and collective learning:

It wasn't just professional people [that founded the co-op] but folks from all walks of life: Doctors, lawyers, accountants, trades people. Each one had their own experience. So you're getting inputs from a lot of different perspectives, and it's really interesting in hearing all of those different ideas.

[We incorporate a] "Constellation Workshop" technique, where all women collaborate in a workshop session to find common/collaborative solutions to problem at hand. Everyone writes things and place the ideas on the floor and everything in this collaborative workshop pointed to this space we are at now.

On the other hand, interview respondents reveal that diversity of perspectives within the membership base can also pose a challenge for co-operatives, especially given the deliberative character of co-operative decision-making processes:

(...) [the co-operative model] is good as a business, but can slow us down, regards decision making, decision making has to go through board and membership and so you have to be patient and sometimes the business isn't as patient with decisions as it needs to be.

Every time we get a new member...their perspective gets thrown into the mix and when we think we've decided on something then all of the sudden we're going back and re-deciding that... [T]he biggest challenge is organizing ourselves and getting everyone on the same page, the same direction and moving forward with that. We seem to get stuck on certain things a lot and it prevents us from moving forward.

Everybody wants the co-op to succeed, but we don't all agree on the means to do it.

Considering the tensions present in the testimony of our key informants, the multiplicity of voices and lenses is double-sided and not without inherent challenges. There are indeed, then, paradoxes to democratic decision-making and member diversity in democratic firms as the time it takes to consider multiple voices and perspectives, central to democratic decision-making processes, often clash with the need for quick business decisions pushed by market pressures (Atzeni & Vieta, 2014; Duguid, Tarhan, & Vieta, 2014; Malleon, 2014). As interviewees cited above point out, working out how to make effective business decisions in a timely manner while considering the multiplicity of voices and lenses of members is a key area is constantly being worked out with new co-ops in Canada. Interviewed and surveyed co-operatives often considered short-term business needs and demands as taking over from anticipating the long-term needs of the co-operative. The issue of the sustainability of the co-op regards solidifying and consolidating decision-making policies and governance eventually comes to the forefront of issues needing to be tackled by the board. This was perhaps *the* key challenge for interviewed and surveyed co-ops that had been operating for over a year¹⁴.

In the face of what are ultimately governance challenges, multivocality—the ability to combine the diverse voices of co-operative members and to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences (Montgomery & Dacin, 2010, p. 384)—seems to be a

¹⁴ Here, it should be noted that co-operative developers have been playing an important role in clarifying the governance aspect of the business, according to some of our interviewees.

deciding factor in the organizational strength, degeneration, or regeneration of co-operatives in Canada. The experiences of interviewed co-operatives demonstrate the importance of establishing sound governance structures, decision-making practices, and a clear division of labour and tasks in the early developmental stages of co-operative. For instance, the former Executive Director of a dissolved food co-operative from Quebec ties their failure to the internal culture of the co-operative:

The problem is with the members, their participation and the co-op's internal culture. People are not all the same when it comes to engagement.... The fact that they were a co-op was not enough, participation was needed. Voluntarism is important. Governance is vital.

On the other hand, the experiences of a university-based student co-operative from Ontario and a car share co-operative from Manitoba point out how the richness of internal culture of a co-operative can be expanded and nurture collective learning experiences that translate the multiplicity of voices and lenses into a strength:

The depth of knowledge and expertise in the people that came together around this co-op is incredible. And the passion, too. If someone was listening to our board meetings from the outside they would think it's a party, not a board meeting. People really feed off each other.

Yes, we've had disagreements on the board with the delayed timelines and such, but we haven't just crumbled, we have shown that we can make things happen [based on the variety of voices that come together].

Overall, experiences of Canada's new co-operatives demonstrate that multivocality is closely linked to the internal culture of collective enterprises. Co-operatives that established sound governance structures early on benefited from participatory

processes inherent to the co-operative business model. In turn, an early attendance to strong governance eventually helps to further nurture and build on resource mobilizing efforts, membership participation, and what we will later show to be a co-operative's penchant for 'associative intelligence'.

Multivocality and distributed entrepreneurship

Another impact of multivocality is on resource mobilization, our findings suggest. The expansion of the circles of supportive external actors, which increases a co-operative's potential to benefit from distributed entrepreneurship, is key to the future success of the co-op. As already presented in Figures 5 and 6, our survey findings point out the importance of social capital and social networks in founding and developing Canada's new co-operatives. Our interviews with a multistakeholder food co-operative from Quebec illustrates the ways in which diversity among membership can expand via co-operatives' social networks and assist in mobilizing resources:

(...) I nor any of the founders, had not been involved in the creation of a co-op before, although we had a little bit of knowledge about co-op development from some members with experience with producer co-ops before. But, mainly, we all brought sectoral skills in agri-food, the desire for personal autonomy, and the ability to establish contact with people and organizations.

In the case of a local marketing retail co-operative from New Brunswick, even members with competing business interests outside of the co-operative benefited from co-operating with one another through knowledge and commercial exchanges:

Certain members are in competition with each other, but they are open to share knowledge and products (they sell the other members' products). It strengthens the commercial exchanges and creates new opportunities.

In sum, our findings point out that multivocality plays a central role in mobilizing resources for co-operatives through increasing a co-operative's ability to benefit from distributed entrepreneurship. Canada's new co-operatives do benefit significantly from the support of external stakeholders and employ word-of-mouth and social networks as their primary source of outreach. In this regard, diversity among their membership base, although not without its challenges regards paradox of decision-making and time, helps these co-operatives in reaching out to potential members and supportive external stakeholders. Multivocality, then, serves as an effective tool in expanding a co-operative's circles of entrepreneurship, or a co-operative's access to the significantly valuable support of external stakeholders.

Discussion: From Collective to Co-operative Entrepreneurship in Canada

The data we collected through our interviews, survey, and focus groups reveals that the co-operative model has been purposefully identified and applied by Canadian community groups in meeting their outwardly focused social objectives. Co-operatives are also seen to break individual isolation of people with common interests and needs, enabling common, socially motivated projects by pooling resources. Indeed, pooling resources is central to collective entrepreneurial action (Spear, 2012). Resources are pooled, moreover, in ways rooted in solidarity, as was articulated in our focus groups' often used phrases of 'sharing values' and having 'common goals'. Pooling resources such as sharing ideas, members' personal contacts in order to expand social networks, start-up capital, and catalyzing collective effort facilitate provisioning for 'community needs via mutualistic member support', said one focus

group participant. Overall, our data reveal that, for Canada's new co-operatives, the co-operative model serves as a collective organizational model where individuals with shared motivations gather to develop shared meanings and identities and to mobilize resources through collective processes to generate community-oriented outcomes. In other words, the three central dimensions of collective entrepreneurship—social *motivations*, collective *processes*, and shared *outcomes*—play central roles in the development of new co-operatives in Canada. Concurrently, these three dimensions permeate and help map out for us a theory of 'co-operative entrepreneurship' and its three overarching and interconnected conceptual themes: (1) *framing and ideological formation*, (2) *distributed entrepreneurship* for resource mobilization and (3) *multivocality*.

The presence of a vibrant co-operative entrepreneurship in Canada

As we defined in the literature review section, collective entrepreneurship lies at the heart of social economy organizations and initiatives—which include co-operatives—that have strong social objectives, that service members and the community at large, and that are, to some degree, self-sustaining via the market-based provisioning of goods or services. Collective entrepreneurship is, most precisely, the combination of collective risk-taking and actions rooted in commonly shared social values and objectives focused on social change (Connel, 1999). Perhaps the main finding of this study is the strong tendency for collective entrepreneurship in the development of the Canadian co-operative movement in recent years, evidencing a subset of social/collective entrepreneurship unique to the co-operative model—co-operative entrepreneurship.

Co-operative entrepreneurship taps into the co-operative advantage for meeting social objectives via the promises of the co-operative principles (ICA, 2015). It is most in evidence with the strong, community-focused social objectives of social mission driven co-operatives. These are co-operatives that use market activity, resource pooling, and risk sharing to meet social, cultural, and economic needs that extend beyond the mutual benefit of members and impact the creation of social value for the broader community.

Co-operative entrepreneurship, as our interviews with new co-operatives that have emerged in recent years in Canada confirmed, is grounded in a strong sense of socio-economic justice, at times rooted in addressing clear socio-economic needs and with roots in broader social movements. Figures 2-4 explicitly showed these tendencies in the socio-economic needs motivating the start-up of co-ops in Canada and the goods and services produced or delivered by new co-ops.

We thus argue, as does Connell (1999), that co-operatives are the 'clearest example of collective entrepreneurship' (p. 15). Indeed, we extend this to suggest that the co-operative model itself is conducive to meeting social objectives and can be seen as the organizational or business extension of social movements. Paralleling Connell's conclusions, the evidence we draw on in this article suggests that the agreement reached by a co-operative's members around common objectives, as well as the International Co-operative Alliance's co-operative principles which all formal co-operative projects adhere to (ICA, 2015), enable and catalyze collective action within

groups, helping to bring together social capital and collective entrepreneurship to engage them in a mutually strengthening relationship (Connell, 1999, p. 15). This relationship, facilitated by the co-operative form itself, is particularly in tune with the organizational goals and needs of social movements and social change projects; co-ops are known, after all, to confer positive externalities and economic and social outcomes for communities (i.e., Galera & Borzaga, 2012; Pérotin, 2012; Erdal, 2014; Smith & Rothbaum, 2014; Zamagni, 2014).

Co-operative and Community Collaborations (ICA Principles VI and VII)¹⁵

As an extension of the co-operative entrepreneurial spirit, we found that there is healthy participation occurring between co-operatives and between co-operatives and community organizations with new Canadian co-ops; that is, there are extensive and promising co-operative-to-community and co-operative-to-co-operative collaborations occurring with new co-operatives in Canada today. Moreover, the co-operative-to-co-operative collaborations between new co-ops and between older and newer co-ops show promise for sharing experiences and extending support. Thus we can safely say that ICA principles VI—co-operatives co-operating—and VII—community engagement—are alive and well with young co-ops in Canada today. Indeed, this is not just a nice ideal to aspire to for Canada’s new co-operators, but actually lived out in many ways.

For instance, many of our interviewed co-ops—especially with those that were very explicitly social mission-driven co-operatives in the organic and local food, car

¹⁵ ICA is the International Co-operative Alliance, the global unifying body for the co-operative sector.

sharing, alternative health, community development, and arts and culture sectors—saw themselves as supporting the local community-base and engaged often with other community groups and co-operatives in local events resource sharing. One co-op-co-op collaboration that stood out was Toronto’s Big Carrot worker co-op’s Carrot Cache program, which was an important source of early funding for two food co-ops we interviewed, one in the Yukon and one in Ontario. Another example was the community theatre co-operative located in a small town in eastern Ontario, which emerged from the conversion of the theatre from a failing and privately-owned movie house to a community and multistakeholder cultural co-operative. This cultural co-op has managed to keep arts and cultural offerings alive in the town and helped other local businesses by reviving the downtown core’s economic prospects.

We should also briefly note here that the major self-reported reason for the eventual failure of three of the co-operatives we interviewed was due to a sharp disconnection with the broader co-operative movement and the community. This, our key informants at these three co-ops told us, left them isolated when it came to consolidating the co-operative structure or when attempting to engage in or expand their business activity. As such, actually living out and including ICA Principles VI and VII into the business plan, social missions, and broader organizational objectives of new Canadian co-operatives seems to be vital for their long-term success; co-ops, as with other social economy businesses, after all, rely heavily on the social networks and social embeddedness they emerge from and subsequently manage to further nurture.

The Educative Dimension of Co-operative Entrepreneurship

Our findings also confirm the role of multivocality and distributed entrepreneurship in the process of *learning about* entrepreneurship, the advantages of the co-operative model, and broader community needs. Co-operative entrepreneurship is inherently learning intensive for members, we have found. As the literature on the co-operative organizational form also shows, co-ops are intrinsically learning organizations for members (Borzaga & Depedri, 2009; Jensen, 2012; Laidlaw, 1962; MacPherson, 2002; Schoening, 2006; Webb & Cheney, 2014; Vieta, 2014). The democratic decision-making processes of co-operatives, as George Keen (1912) and Ian MacPherson (2002) have argued, have the potential to develop ‘associative intelligence’. For MacPherson, this is:

a belief that there is a special kind of knowing that emerges when people work together effectively; a conviction that people through working together could learn skills that would make collective behaviour more economically rewarding, socially beneficial and personally satisfying. (MacPherson, 2002, p. 90)

Indeed, we witnessed multiple modes of learning, mostly informal, with co-operative entrepreneurship in Canada. This was in evidence in multiple ways. From founders learning how to set up by-laws and manage a business; to sharing skills via apprenticeship practices between older and newer members; to established co-ops assisting in the start-up and business needs of newer co-ops; to co-ops organizing and participating in community events, seminars, courses, or training sessions on the co-op principles and the ins-and-outs of community issues or running a business, learning and education is key to co-operative entrepreneurship in Canada.

Thus, associational learning is integral to the co-operative model. First, since co-ops are inherently social economy businesses (Mook et al., 2012) they emerge from members having to understand, mutually discover, and learn about the myriad needs and capacities of fellow members, as well as of other stakeholders, such as customers and surrounding communities (Leadbeater, 1997; Novkovic, 2008; Quarter & Midha, 2001; Quarter et al., 2009). Second, their democratic governance structures also compel co-operatives to be closely attuned to members' needs and skills in order to ensure the long-term viability of their business (Gates, 1999; Sauser, 2009). These factors were perhaps even more marked with the worker and multistakeholder co-operatives we engaged with, where membership is tied specifically to work and members need to be deeply invested in the well-being of fellow members in order to secure the future stability of their business (Becchetti, Castriota, & Tortia, 2012; Girard, 2002; Pérotin, 2012).

Conclusion

The implications of our research could serve to further foster community-centred development models rooted in co-operatives, further articulating the co-op advantage for community development (Vieta & Lionais, 2015). We thus believe that future research that continues to bridge co-operative entrepreneurship with social movement initiatives should equally be of interest to organization and co-operative studies researchers, policy makers, co-operative apex organizations, and co-operative promoters.

The social mission-driven co-operatives that made up a large sub-set of the new Canadian co-operatives we studied have conceptual and practical connections to social movement organizations; both, emerge from collective action to overcome inequalities, socio-economic gaps, and deliver on social objectives. The co-operative entrepreneurship that tightly engrains new co-operative development in Canada closely intersects with and often emerges from out of broader social movements. The intersection of collective entrepreneurial endeavours with broader social movements is at the heart of co-operative entrepreneurship. Witnessed in our data and findings, this is also supported by the literature; co-operatives have been understood for some time as developing from out of the collective actions and demands of a [group](#) of people organized around some form of social need or desire for change.

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