



ica

REVIEW OF INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION

VOLUME 99 N° 1/2006

ICA Committee on Co-operative Research (ICACCR)

A thematic committee of the International Co-operative Alliance, the ICA Committee on Co-operative Research is made up of a network of individual researchers from over twenty countries in Europe, Asia and America.

The Committee acts as a bridge between academic research and the co-operative world and aims to strengthen activities and make the work of researchers more visible.

International Research Conferences are held every two years where possible in conjunction with ICA global meetings (General Assembly and/or Congress) and Regional Research Conferences are held regularly and where possible in conjunction with ICA Regional Assemblies.

Selected papers from each conference will be published yearly in the Review of International Co-operation.

Opinions expressed in this publication are not necessarily those of the leadership and management of the ICA.

Contents may be reprinted without permission, but citation of source is requested and three copies of the publication concerned should be sent to ICA Review, 15, route des Morillons, 1218 Grand-Saconnex, Geneva, Switzerland.

Review of International Co-operation

Vol. 99 No 1/2006

Editors: **Olive McCarthy**
Ian MacPherson

Contents

Editorial: by <i>Olive McCarthy and Ian MacPherson</i>	3
Forward: by <i>Ian MacPherson</i>	7
Co-operatives and Community Culture by <i>Madhav Madane</i>	12
Globalization and the British Columbia Co-operative Movement: A Long View by <i>Joy Emmanuel, Ian MacPherson and Erik Martin</i>	20
Artists' co-operatives and their potential to contribute to the development of the visual arts sector in Ireland by <i>Noreen Byrne, Bridget Carroll and Michael Ward</i>	29
Creating a non profit network of producers for the development of local culture and tourism: the case of the wine roads of Northern Greece by <i>Simeon Karafolas</i>	36
Putting Co-operative Principles into Practice: Lessons Learned from Canada's North by <i>Isobel Findlay</i>	44
The impact of community co-operatives on shopping behaviour in rural communities in Scotland by <i>Eric Calderwood and Keri Davies</i>	53
Staying Competitive and Preserving Community Identity: The Case of Tsuruoka Co-op, Japan by <i>Akira Kurimoto</i>	62
The Role of Co-operatives in Developing and Sustaining Local and Regional Communities - A Success Story: Female Headed Households' Co-operative Societies in Bam by <i>Aliasghar Maghsoudi</i>	70
Co-operatives and community culture: The role of the media by <i>Sanjay Kumar Verma</i>	77
Teaching of co-operation through the web by <i>Pekka Hytinkoski</i>	83

Editorial



This issue of the Review contains a cross-section of papers from the XXI International Co-operative Research Conference, hosted by the Centre for Co-operative Studies, University College Cork, Ireland in August 2005. Being Europe's Capital of Culture 2005, Cork was a fitting location within which to examine the conference theme, *'The Contribution of Co-operatives to Community Culture'*. Participants at the conference came from 26 countries and presented 48 papers. The 10 papers selected for this issue attempt to reflect the diversity in range and type of co-operatives which impact on community culture, as well as the varied interpretations of what culture means for communities, and more particularly, co-operatives.

The first two papers explore the contribution of a wide range of co-operatives to culture. Madhav Madane's paper documents the extraordinary range of activities of different types of co-operatives in different countries

which support whole communities and build a community culture. He also emphasises the essential role of women in co-operatives throughout the world.

The next six papers focus on particular co-operatives or types of co-operative which have community and cultural impacts and which have helped to organise their members more effectively. Noreen Byrne, Bridget Carroll and Michael Ward explore the existing and potential role of co-operatives within the visual arts sector in Ireland. Artists co-operatives have brought like-minded artists together to raise finance and improve market exposure. In particular, through collective and collaborative work, innovation among the artists is facilitated in a way which might never be possible if the artists worked alone. Simeon Karafolas examines the regeneration of vineyards and wine tourism in Greece, which includes the involvement of wine-producer co-operatives. The so-

called 'wine roads' of Northern Greece have led to unique co-operation between wine producers and restaurants, hotels and tourist agencies to promote local tourism and to preserve and develop local culture and heritage. Isobel Findlay's paper builds on research into aboriginal co-operatives in Northern Canada. Her paper is a thought-provoking piece, which discusses the 'extraordinary things being achieved by ordinary people' through co-operative enterprise. For the Inuit community, co-operatives have become multi-purpose organisations, preserving local crafts, providing retail services, developing tourism, building the socio-economic structure, and much more, without losing sight of the importance of local ownership. The Inuit co-operative story is inspirational. Eric Calderwood and Keri Davies examine the current position of community retail co-operatives in remote communities of rural Scotland. For most of these communities, the co-operative is the only shop in the community and usually serves as the main focal point for the residents. These co-operatives face a range of challenges, common to many co-operatives worldwide, not least of which is retaining their co-operative identity. Moving to Japan, Akira Kurimoto explores linkages between co-operatives and the community and describes the range of activities in which consumer co-operatives engage in order to serve the needs of their communities. He focuses in on the case of Tsuruoka Co-op, which has effectively responded to consumer concerns about food safety. In the last of these six papers, Aliasghar

Maghsoudi discusses the relevance of co-operatives to communities in crisis. He examines the establishment of 3 co-operatives for female-headed households in the aftermath of the devastating earthquake which affected Bam, Iran in 2003. These co-operatives have enabled women to take control of their lives by providing training and creating employment. Aliasghar discusses why the co-operative approach was the most effective way to organise the women and demonstrates that community development, which is similar in its values to co-operatives, is best achieved through co-operative organisation.

The final two papers consider the importance of co-operative media and co-operative education respectively. Sanjay Verma highlights the failure of conventional media to communicate the co-operative message or to draw attention to co-operative endeavour. He stresses the importance to co-operatives of developing their own media forms to build a positive image and brand awareness, with specific reference to India. The sentiments in this paper will surely resonate with co-operators throughout the world. Pekka Hytinkoski looks at the use of the worldwide web in teaching people about co-operatives. The Ruralia Institute at the University of Helsinki has an online education project coordinating the co-operative studies university network project in Finland. Pekka is well-positioned to comment on the benefits and pitfalls of on-line education and he makes a number of valuable observations and recommendations for all those who engage in or

are planning to engage in on-line education.

We hope you enjoy reading the papers we have selected for this edition. These represent less than a quarter of the papers presented but give a flavour for the kinds of co-operative research being conducted and the discourse and debate that took place at the conference. Finally, we would like to thank Patricia Sullivan-Vaucher and Yohanan Stryjan for their very valuable contribution and time commitment in helping to organise the conference in Cork and Garry Cronan for his enormous help in bringing this issue to completion.

Ian MacPherson and
Olive McCarthy

Foreward

Co-operative Studies – Changes, Accomplishments and Challenges

by Ian MacPherson*

For those interested in the study of co-operatives and Co-operative Studies in general, the last fifteen to twenty years have witnessed a remarkable development in the field,



* *Ian MacPherson is Director and founder of the British Columbia Institute for Co-operative Studies at the University of Victoria. His research has been largely on the history of the co-operative movement, particularly in Canada. Dr. MacPherson has served on boards of co-operatives for twenty-five years at the provincial, national and international levels. He was the founding President of the Canadian Co-operative Association. He chaired the process and wrote the documents by which the international co-operative movement revised their basic principles at the Manchester Congress of the International Co-operative Alliance in 1995. He is the first recipient of the Canadian Co-operative Achievement Award (2001). In 2005, the International Co-operative Alliance (ICA) presented Professor MacPherson with the Rochdale Pioneer Award, the highest award in the international movement. Ian is currently the chair of the ICA Committee on Co-operative Research.*

in large part because of the work of the International Co-operative Alliance's International Research Committee. We owe much to Sven Akë Bööck for his determination and vision in the 1980s and to Lars Marcus and Bruce Thordarson, respectively the President and Executive Director of the ICA at the time, for their strong support.

As one looks over these years, there are arguably three aspects that particularly stand out: the expansion of participation in the field around the world; the reaching out for new ways to understand the co-operative experience; and the struggles to create the sustaining infrastructure that would assure the field's continuing growth. *The expansion of the field* has been remarkable. We now have regular

meetings in Europe, Asia, Latin America¹ and North America. We now know, based on the numbers of people attending these and other related research events, that there are about 400 researchers around the world seriously interested in the field. A particularly promising aspect of this growth has been the marked increase in the numbers of young people – from universities and co-operatives – attending our meetings. There has been a significant improvement in the quality of the research that is being reported, in terms of both the depth and variety of methodologies they demonstrate. Those of us who have been involved for a while have much fuller bookshelves devoted to co-operative subjects; even more dramatically, we have access to a rapidly expanding corpus of work through our computers.

This increased activity has meant an expansion of contacts among Co-operative Studies researchers around the world, facilitated by the Internet and fuelled by a growing number of international linkages in many research projects. We have moved far away from the isolated circumstances many of us knew a couple of decades ago. For all of this we are indebted to many people and perhaps it is time to pay our respect to them. We should mark the contributions of, among others, people such as Roger Spear, Akira Kurimoto, Yohanan Stryjan, Mirta Vuotto, Sigismundo Bialorskorski Neto, and Madhav Madane, people who have worked diligently to establish and improve our meetings. It is important to thank the band of

researchers, like Hans Munkner, Rita Rhodes, Johnston Birchall and Yair Levi, for their continuous and unstinting participation in those meetings. We are also very much in debt to the support we have received from the International Co-operative Alliance, in the last few years especially the interest of the President, Ivano Barberini and the Executive Director, Iain Macdonald, as well as the support and leadership provided by Patricia Vaucher and Garry Cronan. Given the vitality of regional meetings and the abundance of contributions to our international gatherings, there is no reason to expect that this trend will weaken; indeed, every reason to think that it will intensify. Research begets research. The growing band of younger scholars promises a “golden age” for co-operative research in the future – if their interest can be sustained. Given the growth globally, it is a certainty that we will soon be able to commence the kind of comparative research that will make the field even richer and its contributions even more important. The research needs of the co-operative movement are vast and unending; at its heart, the movement is (and should be) essentially about the applications of sound knowledge and effective practice within frameworks provided by co-operative values and principles. It is an approach that requires the mutual validation of theory by practice – and the reverse. Perhaps most significantly, the issues addressed in Co-operative Studies have important widespread applications in the world today. Even more than in the past, there is immense

scope for co-operatives amid the opportunities and problems arising from an increasingly more integrated world. If much has been accomplished in recent years, there is much for researchers still to do.

The reaching out for new ways to understand the co-operative experience has taken many forms. One of the most welcome, of course, has been the growing impact of researchers outside the North Atlantic world, especially in Asia and Latin America. In some instances, this is just the result of the work in those regions becoming better known, but it is also a consequence of an extension in the research being undertaken and an expansion in the number of researchers. As a result, we are gaining a deeper understanding of the roles of culture, varying political traditions, and different business approaches within co-operative enterprise and in co-operative thought. It is a welcome deepening of our understanding from only a little while ago, a profound enrichment of our international understandings.

We can also see a “reaching out” to include more sophisticated examinations from different perspectives. There has been a significant increase in analyses from the point of view of Business Studies, Environmental Studies, Economics, and Development Studies. There has been some expansion from the perspective of Gender Studies; there is a need for much more. One could also hope for more studies from the perspective of political theory, especially concerning theoretical roles of the state, and there is still a noticeable weakness in the area

of intellectual history and Philosophy. Recently, there has been a growing literature from the perspective of young people and the start of a discussion over the relationship between co-operatives and peace, a promising leap into the world of Peace Studies. More prominently, in several countries, there has been an opening to the world of the Social Economy, a dialogue that had been resisted – on both sides – for a long time.

Such expanding views and relationships offer the benefits of increasingly sophisticated analyses. They also open the way for more extensive treatment within the academy, ultimately meaning growth in the extent and ways that co-operatives are addressed in teaching programmes in many disciplines. They mean a growing number of graduate theses in a wide range of disciplines and increased attention in conferences concerned with general topics and not just with Co-operative Studies.

This increased interest, of course, raises some challenges. The core of Co-operative Studies, despite all that has happened in recent years, remains rather fragile. The long history of the movement suggests a weakness in withstanding the intellectual and ideological challenges of other ideological perspectives; there have always been dangers of being absorbed by the values and priorities of for-profit enterprise or government programmes – that was why there was something of an identity crisis at the end of the twentieth century, though in reality the identity issue emerged decades earlier. To hold its own,

therefore, the co-operative approach requires continuing and deeper research, more theoretical discussions and institutional support.

In short, those of us engaged in Co-operative Studies need to pay more attention to the development of a *sustaining infrastructure* for the field's further development. Successful research fields typically demonstrate a number of attributes: strong networks of researchers, successful records within research funding competitions, strong and recognized publication activities, institutional support within universities and other institutions, an easily accessible corpus of published work, and good employment possibilities for interested graduate students – as well as stability for the academic and other institutes that pursue Co-operative Studies.

When one compares the Co-operative Studies experience against this list, the judgements are decidedly "mixed". The networks are certainly stronger than ever and growing. There is a good recent record of Co-operative Studies researchers competing effectively for funds and, in the process, demonstrating the importance of co-operatives and, indirectly at least, the possibilities of Co-operative Studies. We need to think more about how to publish the results of our work – in disciplinary and interdisciplinary journals, in the public press, on the Web, as well as in books. Far too much of what is done is merely reported at our conferences and not widely circulated...most of it in fact is not available to others

beyond our numbers. Perhaps we should think of some co-operative ways to address this problem, to work together in creating more and increasingly more sophisticated publication avenues and distribution systems. We need to use the Web much more effectively to collect, promote and make more easily available the work we do. It is a huge resource for our purposes, a way to overcome the limitations on what we do imposed by the ways in which knowledge has been organized over the last 200 years.

All of these elements are crucial to creating some stability for individuals and research centres/institutes devoted to Co-operative Studies. In fact, there is a "catch-22" relationship: without strong research elements, it is difficult to create such centres; without such centres it is difficult to create the infrastructure to sustain the research activities. The last twenty years have witnessed the coming and going of many research programmes, the ending of very successful beginnings simply because an individual retired. I suspect, too, that many of us in the field know of very promising graduate students who made the understandable decision to pursue other interests more likely to secure appointments and employment. The result is that the field lurches about, in fits and starts, leading to much relearning, repetition and relapses. There are, of course, no easy answers to this problem, but there are some obvious things that can be emphasized, most of them involving us co-operating even more with each other. We can all work together to identify

better what is being done by all of us – and by the many we do not even yet know about. This will continue to make the growing case for the importance of the field. We can all work together to make more readily available the work that has been done, especially through the Web. We can partner even more in the pursuit of research funding, particularly across international borders. We can collaborate in the development of more publication outlets. We can work much more effectively across – as well as within – the frameworks of specific universities: it will be, as it is now, the very rare university that will be able to sustain a critical mass of Co-operative Studies specialists to make a significant contribution. There are untold possibilities – and advantages – in creating strong relationships among groups of researchers in sev-

eral universities and within co-operatives. We need to do that much more regularly and creatively, though given the competition typical in universities and the powerful institutional holds they exert, that will not be easy. We can work more effectively with co-operative organisations and within the ICA to develop obviously valuable research agendas....without sacrificing the autonomy and independence required for good research. We can address more regularly and systematically the meaning, methodologies, responsibilities and agenda of our field.

Now isn't that a rather strange and surprising conclusion? The best answers to our challenges and for the further development of the field of Co-operative Studies may well be found through more co-operative effort.

Notes

¹ In North America, the researchers (university, independent and from co-operatives) meet in annual gatherings of the Association of Co-operative Educators, the Canadian Association for Studies in Co-operation and a subgroup of the Agricultural Economists, mostly from the United States.

Co-operatives and Community Culture

by Madhav Madane*

Background

Community has formed the basis of human society for many ages. In known history, communities, whether clans, tribes, nomads or any kind of habitat, have evolved their own code of conduct to deal with each other and laid down certain standards for group behaviour during farming, hunting festivals and conflicts with other communities. As these communities began to settle in their permanent habitat, the self-regulatory codes gradually took the shape of community rules binding on all their members. These rules became the basis of community culture which underwent the process of refinement over the centuries.



As communities progressed all over the globe, the process of sophistication continued until certain traits of civilized life began to emerge. These became visible through arts, literature, philosophy, rule of law and justice, respect for human dignity, music and festivals. The traditions of civilized life became manifest in major civilizations. Prominent among them were the Greek Civilization, the Indus Valley Civilization, the Nile Valley Civilization and the Roman Civilization in the West and the Confucius led Chinese Civilization in the East which influenced the entire Orient. These civilizations helped evolve the now universally known and recognized values as the basis of our civil society. They perfected the values which hold their ground to this day. For

* *Madhav Viswanath Madane has a Masters in History and Economics and Law. He has extensive experience with FAO and the United Nations having been Senior Advisor for FAO in Afghanistan and then Rome. Madane has worked for the ICA in the Regional Office in New Delhi and has been published several times in the Review of International Co-operation. His writings include "Agricultural Cooperative in South Korea – The Unitary approach".*

example, the Vedic Society which was the base of Indus Valley Civilization, had formulated codes on Democracy, Supremacy of the Law, Equality and Social Status, Freedom, of Worship, Glory of Knowledge, Defence of Honour and Liberty, Open and Lively Society, Welfare State and Legal National Identity.

During the Middle Ages, two major factors were responsible for pushing long cherished human values into the background: the emergence of major religions and the lust for conquests leading to major wars among nations between followers of different faiths. The concepts of co-operative and community

When co-operatives emerged against the background of the Industrial Revolution, the dominant factor behind the efforts was exploitation of one class by the other. There was a change of way of life from a subsistence economy society to a society in which a few prospered at the cost of others and currency became the major factor for evaluation of social status of the individual. Logically, money became the major instrument in the pursuit of happiness in the aftermath of the Industrial Revolution.

Robert Owen was the first to talk of cooperative communities and the creation of a conducive environment to build the character of the people. His efforts at New Lanark to convert the capitalist society into a 'New Moral World' was an attempt to create self-governing communities. Owen must be given credit for introducing the concept of building up community

culture which could help build human dignity. However, despite his life-long efforts, the Utopian concept proved to be difficult to put into a workable proposition. Dr. William King brought the co-operative concept to a more realistic level and came nearer to putting it into practice, not forgetting the ultimate goal of co-operative effort being human happiness. In the first issue of Co-operator, published on 1st May 1928, the slogan on top of the title read, "Knowledge and Union are Power: Power, directed by Knowledge, is Happiness: Happiness is the end of Creation." Thus, these two Pioneers had before them the vision to safeguard the culture of the co-operative community they were attempting to create. The Rochdale Pioneers too, who translated the co-operative concept into a practical and workable society, did not limit their activities to trading, but right from the beginning gave equal importance to educational, social and moral aspects of the members and their families.

In Germany, Friedrich Wilhelm Raiffeisen, who worked tirelessly to form credit societies had, from the beginning, the larger interests of the community, namely the moral and social upliftment of the people, at heart. In his biography, Franz Braumann writes, "In Raiffeisen's view, however, the ultimate aim of the Society should be much more far-reaching, an opinion he expressed in point 2 of the statutes: "In the view of the Society, to improve physical well-being will have a correspondingly beneficial effect on moral welfare.

Accordingly, its resources must be used to the best possible advantage to achieve the former end and take every opportunity to widen every activity." No doubt, the co-operative concept was recognized as something much wider and comprehensive than economic welfare of the community they were set to serve." Raiffeisen also believed that "The financial help to be granted to the people must be combined with their enlightenment."

Co-operative thinkers and practicing co-operators to this day have not lost sight of the Welfare Concept of the community for which they were working. Their contribution in enriching community culture is visible in many forms and in varying degrees. Prof. A.F.Laidlaw, presenting his paper on Cooperatives in the Year 2000 at the ICA Congress in Moscow, had stated, "Various attempts have been made to improve the present formulation (of co-operative principles) and it is hoped that efforts will continue until the basic moral and ideological pillars of the co-operative system have been set in place."

Introducing the Co-operative Identity Statement to the 1995 Manchester Congress of the ICA, Prof. Ian MacPherson stated, "The last Principle refers to the traditional co-operative concern for community. At the Monday meeting, after reviewing submissions on this Principle, the Board agreed upon a slight change of working and recommends to you the statement 'co-operatives work for the sustainable development of their communities through policies approved by their members.' This

Principle implies a commitment to sustainable human development and thus nicely blends with the report on 'co-operatives and sustainable human development'. In fact, the two reports make good companions.'

Present day practices

Co-operatives the world over have contributed and are still contributing to the enrichment of community culture through a variety of services. They serve the community in one form or another through schemes and programmes suited to local conditions. From the Women's Guilds in the West to the HAN groups and Co-operative Housewives Associations in the East, women have been at the forefront in organizing services for better health, greater education, social welfare, and cultural and educational activities for co-operative members and their families. While the Women's Guilds in consumer societies have helped a great deal in retaining the interest and support of women in co-operatives, they have also provided leadership in management and have represented their societies in regional, national and international meetings.

Farm Guidance and Better Living

A unique feature of agricultural co-operatives in Japan is the Farm Guidance and Better living Activities. Farm Guidance is provided by experts employed by the co-operatives. Their most important activity is to help farm households to increase

their income from small-size holdings. This is done through careful planning in production as well as in planning the utilization of farm income. While planning, the member's farm size, the available manpower, educational expenses for children, social events such as marriages, and the health care requirements of the entire family, and other such needs, are taken into account. After assessing the total needs and the available land and resources, the farm plan is prepared and put into practice. This helps the farm households in maintaining a balance in the domestic budget and also meet the social and cultural needs of the family.

The Better Living activities are designed for the entire community in the village. They include health care services, medical check-ups, wedding venues and facilities to hold festivals and community meetings. The co-operatives have become a meeting place for members of the community. Consumer guidance is also provided through product information, cooking demonstrations and teaching and information on flower arrangement and arts and crafts. Any activity that can enrich the living conditions of the members and their families is undertaken by the society.

In consumer cooperatives in Japan, the HAN groups, which are organized around each co-operative, and the housewives associations, have product testing laboratories to advise members on the usefulness and the harmful effects of tested products. These activities also include product labeling as well as the authenticating

labels and advertisements. Hence, consumer guidance is very effectively carried out.

In South Korea also, women's associations in agricultural co-operatives play a very important part in strengthening co-operative activities. The multi-purpose societies in Korea have every kind of member-related activity from credit, marketing, banking, insurance, savings, farm guidance, cultural events and health services. In many of these activities, women groups in each co-operative play a supportive role to enhance co-operative image among the rural community.

The most significant part of co-operative activity in the Orient is that the co-operatives deal with almost all the requirements of the farm households and urban members of the consumer co-operatives. A case study conducted by students of the ICA-Japan Management Training Programme revealed that in a small town of 16,486 people, the Mikkabi-cho Agricultural Co-operative Society achieved remarkable success through collective effort in cultivating and developing a popular brand of oranges called Mikka-chan. Due to the mishandling of funds by the President and the Board of Directors, the Society almost went into bankruptcy for a short period. But due to the sheer grit and determination of the members, employees and the community, it recovered and regained its former solvent position. Contributions flowed in from all members of the society and the community. This support was due to the very useful services provided

by the society to the community, where it had become a symbol of a successful enterprise for the people. The multi-purpose type of co-operatives, common in the Orient, have not only strengthened the socio-economic fibre of their communities, but have also helped improve their living standards which enable the community members lead a much more happy and healthy life than during the pre-co-operative days.

Agents of change

Some of the co-operatives in India, especially those in the processing sector, have been instrumental in transforming entire townships and surrounding villages into healthy co-operative communities. For example, several case studies have revealed that the sugar co-operatives have created roads, water management systems, irrigation canals, started health centres and hospitals, opened schools and colleges and provided facilities for social events, gyms, organized training facilities for music and other fine arts and even organized an orchestra of their own. Co-operatives have helped get better returns for sugarcane growing farmers and have provided employment to people working in all of the above activities, thereby creating a new paradigm in co-operative development.

Another co-operative, which has made 'AMUL' a leading milk producing organization in the world, was started as a modest milk processing plant. Today, it leads the country in fresh milk processing and distribution and the AMUL brand products, such

as butter, cheese, milk powder, ice cream and several other items have become a household name in India. The most important aspect of this co-operative is that it has transformed the small town of Anand, and surrounding villages, into a co-operative hub. Women also play a leading role in this co-operative, in animal care, milking and bringing the milk to the nearest milk collection centre. The supporting unit producing by-products, feed and veterinary services has provided employment to a large number of people. The farm households, which used to cash income once or twice a year after the harvests, are now receiving cash daily after delivering the milk to the collection centres. This has resulted in better living standards. The facilities for education from primary to university level are located nearby, within reach of all members of the community. A study on the awareness of and attitudes of members to milk co-operatives revealed that, "The fair play in trade and the various input services can, thus, be said to be the major motivational force that prompted milk producers to join co-operative societies operating in their areas." Aboveall, the Government has located the National Dairy Development Board office and the Rural Management Research Institute at Anand. The AMUL pattern has been followed all over the country and co-operative dairies have come into existence in most of the States. This has also led to the 'White Revolution' in the country. The main power behind AMUL, Dr. V. Kurien has said:

“The basic philosophy of the Anand pattern is to combine India’s greatest asset, the power of its people, with professional management, in a vertically integrated co-operative structure that establishes a direct linkage between those who produce the milk and those who consume it (either as milk or milk products). This structure transfers to the producer the largest share of the consumer’s rupee (money), creating the incentive to improve production. It supports production by exposing farmers to modernity. By placing the farmer in command, as owner of the co-operative, it involves him in the process of development. The democratic form of the co-operatives provides an underpinning for democracy in the country through a foundation of democratic institutions right down to the village level.”

Paisa Fund Cooperative – A Cradle to Grave Concept

In the southern part of the State of Maharashtra, a local teacher started a credit co-operative by collecting from each member just a Penny a Day as a contribution. Every month this contribution was credited to the member’s account as a deposit. Later, a part of the amount was transferred into the member’s share. The Society took care of the expenses of the birth of a child in the member’s household, the antenatal and post-natal care, education of the children, marriages, medical expenses, old-age pension and finally the funeral expenses for members of the households. This concept of Cradle to Grave worked beautifully

and, in the process, the Society also increased its financial and manpower strength day by day. Today, the Paisa Fund Society is a financially sound Co-operative Bank serving the people in the town and the surrounding villages.

Micro Level Coop Network in Bangladesh

Pioneered by the Comilla Academy, the Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development initiated co-operative activities by collecting small savings from rural community members and provided small loans for fishing, sheep rearing and even owning and operating cycle rikshas. Earlier, these rikshas were pulled by humans as was the tradition in that part of the undivided India. This activity freed the poor families from the clutches of money-lenders and improved the educational and living standards of the rural households. The Academy now conducts adult education courses and runs formal education institutions. It also provides health-care facilities to rural families. Experts visiting the Academy to study the activities have marvelled at the transformation that has taken place in the area.

The Comprehensive Approach in China

In China, the former Communes have been replaced by Credit and Marketing Co-operatives which are multi-purpose in character. They operate small to medium scale enterprises to transform raw material pro-

duced in the area into finished or semi-finished products. For example, in the cotton growing areas, the co-operative has ginning and pressing units as well as spinning mills and weaving facilities to prepare the cloth for the market. This integrated style of operating saves transportation costs of the raw material to terminal markets, adds value to the semi-processed or finished product, and provides employment to local residents in the area, and speeds up the process of recycling of funds for agricultural activities. Most of the daily necessities and consumer durables are sold in the co-operative shops operated by the society. This approach generates considerable amount of savings in the rural households and strengthens the financial position of the society and also improves the living standards of the members.

The role of women

In many parts of the world, and Asia in particular, women have formed their own co-operatives. These are established by women board members and their employees, but the services and commodities marketed by them are available to all sections of the society. In India alone, there are more than eight thousand women's co-operatives formed for credit, preparation of handicrafts, weaving, animal rearing, poultry, preparation of condiments and other popular food items, and such other items. They are generally successful as women function better as a group. Such societies are very common in Thailand, Indonesia, Bangladesh and the

Philippines. One more aspect worth noting is that women managers in co-operatives of all types function more efficiently than men. This was noticed in a study of co-operatives in Thailand where over seventy percent of the managers of rural cooperatives were women.

Another very important factor worth noting is that, in India, women have formed their own co-operative banks. They are managed exclusively by women board members and employees and the majority of them are successful co-operatives. In Maharashtra alone, there are more than forty such banks and, in the country, nearly two hundred. One such bank in Pune has been rated as the most successful bank in the study by an independent agency.

Education and training

Since the days of the Rochdale Pioneers, education of members and training of employees are the most important activities of co-operatives everywhere. Almost in every country, there are educational, training and management institutions catering for the needs of co-operatives. Co-operatives have become the cradles for leadership development and for greater roles in other democratic institutions. India has one National Co-operative Management Institute, Regional Management Institutes in each State and co-operative training schools or centres in each district. Besides these, there are mobile training units conducting training programmes in the village co-operatives. The Committee on Co-operation (India), set up in 1965,

had observed, "The strength of the co-operative movement depends on the existence of a vast and enlightened membership and without promotion of education an enlightened membership does not become a reality." In addition, rural training institutions, colleges and universities have co-operative training programmes, some of which lead to undergraduate degrees, postgraduate degrees and doctorates. These students later play important roles in the enlightenment of the aver-

age co-operative worker, making them better co-operators and agents for transforming society. In his foreword to a book by Dr. Mauritz Bonow, Nils Thedin, the well-known Swedish co-operator has said, "The co-operative movement can become an important means in the fight against poverty and underdevelopment, in the struggle for a new economic order of the world. For the heirs of the Rochdale pioneers in all countries this should be a challenge."

References

- Birchall J. (1994) Co-op: The people's business. Manchester University Press.
- Bonow M. International Co-operation for Self-reliance. Stockholm: Swedish Cooperative Centre.
- Braumann F. A man conquers poverty – The Story of Friedrich Wilhelm Raiffeisen Madison, Wisconsin: Credit Union National Association, Inc.
- Co-operative Perspective. Journal of Vaikunth Mehta National Institute of Co-operative Management, Pune. India
- Heredia R. (1970) The AMUL India Story. New Delhi: Tata McGraw-Hill Publishing Company Limited.
- MacPherson I. (2005) Sorting out: A Selection of Papers and Presentations 1995-2005. University of Victoria, Canada: BCICS
- COOPERATIVE PERSPECTIVE. Journal of Vaikunth Mehta National Institute of Co-operative Management, Pune. India
- Madane M.V. Agricultural Co-operatives in Japan. New Delhi: International Cooperative Alliance, Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific.
- Madane M.V. Agricultural Co-operatives in South Korean. New Delhi: International Cooperative Alliance, Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific.
- Taimni K.K. Co-operatives in Asia. International Labour Organization.
- Weeraman P.E. Indian Co-operative Laws vis-à-vis Co-operative Principles. New Delhi: International Cooperative Alliance, Regional Office for Asia and the Far East.

Globalization and the British Columbia Co-operative Movement: A Long View

by

Joy Emmanuel, Ian MacPherson and Erik Martin*
British Columbia Institute for Co-operative Studies
University of Victoria, Victoria, Canada



How people use co-operative strategies and structures when confronted with global economic, social and political changes is an interesting and complex topic. British Columbia is a case in point, and it is not a story that began only a few years ago when the globalisation theme became particularly fashionable.

* Joy Emmanuel B.A., B.Ed., M.A. Before joining BCICS in 2005, Joy taught Sociology part-time at St Mary's, University in Halifax, N.S. for 13 years and conducted community oriented research. In 1998, she founded Quantum Research and Consulting. Joy was a founding member of the Nova Scotia Branch of the Canadian Center for Policy Alternatives. She has undertaken training in adult education and

holds certificates in Educational Design and Transformational Leadership. In all her work, Joy's primary interest is to contribute to a more just, caring and sustainable world.

Joy's main projects at BCICS include: *Best Practices in Co-op Development*, *B.C. Co-operatives in the New Economy*, and *Co-operatives and the Pursuit of Peace*.

* Erik Martin is a researcher and writer for the BC Institute for Co-operative Studies and a Master's history student at the University of Victoria. In his undergraduate work, Erik studied the evolution of co-operative movements in BC and he is currently studying the social history of radical political movements in the province. Erik is also a researcher and co-host for BCICS' radio program 'Each for All: The Co-operative Connection.'

How people embrace co-operative approaches can be seen as an underlying dimension in the relationships between Aboriginal peoples and the Europeans who came by sea and overland starting some two centuries ago. From Aboriginal perspectives, as indeed arguably from those of all peoples, co-operative strategies are essential for survival, as important as tendencies towards competition. One does not have to resort to the patronizing simplicities of the "splendid savage" myths of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries or to the sentimentality of Margaret Mead to acknowledge that most Aboriginal peoples have employed co-operative approaches throughout their history. They did so to secure dependable supplies of food and clothing, to participate in the ceremonies central to their cultures,¹ and to engage in trade with neighbouring clans and peoples. They typically worked in groups and relied on kin networks to ensure survival and achieve "plenty", as they understood that concept: hunting for whales, deer and caribou, operating fishing weirs on rivers and streams, carrying out trade on the interior plateaus and along the coast...the pre-contact era witnessed many examples of co-operative practices and strategies.

It can be argued that these co-operative endeavours were enhanced as the fur trade developed: with its emphases on volume and quality and its requirements for more contact and collaboration among peoples, both Native and European. Co-operative practices and preferences persisted after the emerging dominance of the

modern state and the subjugation of Aboriginal peoples, reflected in Aboriginal solidarity within existing bands and nations, the persistent inter-connections of communal life, the continuation of the common ownership of land, and the emphasis on consensus forms of decision-making; however, they were also weakened by the advent of political structures imposed by colonial government dominance and even more by economic marginalisation as the market economy - as practiced by Eurocentric societies - took hold.²

The first mingling of local co-operative strategies and changing global relationships, therefore, produced a mixed heritage that still affects Aboriginal peoples today. The lingering traditions of mutuality and concern over consensus affect ways in which Aboriginal peoples both evaluate and react to the circumstances of contemporary changes: how they maintain their customary informal co-operative strategies through band, kin and community networks, yet look somewhat suspiciously on formal co-operative enterprise as just another form of foreign control.³

The blurring of co-operative possibilities was a consequence of the first wave of international interventions that started in British Columbia some two centuries ago. In some ways, that blurring characterizes many of the informal and formal co-operative responses to global changes that subsequently occurred.

For more than two centuries, the west coast of Canada has been an important part of the "hinterland" of the

Empire, most obviously as a source of wealth from: timber, minerals and sea products for the European powers, then as the "west beyond the west"⁴ for Canadians, even for many Americans, as well as for a remarkable mixture of peoples from Europe, Asia and Latin America. The region's development has been cyclical, its land tenure system (Aboriginal land claims ?) never fully resolved throughout the province, its economic development significantly affected by most of the great staple economies of Canadian history - agriculture, mining, forestry, and fishing. In the "rush for spoils" that often seems to characterize this kind of development in BC, there have been many classic situations in which organized co-operation - in the form of registered co-operatives incorporated under specific co-operative legislation - could prosper, as it has in many similar situations around the world.

One of the first significant stirrings of formal co-operative endeavour can be found in the early urban areas where working class groups, carrying understandings of consumer co-operation in their cultural baggage, created a long string of consumer co-operatives. These co-ops can be seen in large part as a response to international capitalist development; a defiant, typically localized response to the high cost of often poorly prepared food, a defence of working class purchasing power, and a dimension of working class culture. These early co-operative efforts can also be seen as a reaction to the exploitation of producers and the harsh management practices in the

retail trades. Thus, beginning as early as the 1860s,⁵ British Columbians started discussing co-operatives, though the first consumer co-ops did not appear until the turn of the century. In considering the possibilities and the benefits of consumer co-operation, they drew particularly on the experiences of the British movement but they also drew on precedents set in Italy and France. These pioneering co-operative ventures were found most commonly in the mining districts of Vancouver Island and especially the Kootenays, in South-western British Columbia.⁶

During its early decades, the consumer movement in BC also reflected the class and ideological perspectives of its European forebears, perspectives that questioned many of the assumptions of emerging global capitalism and sought to structure economic change more in the interests of working class people. It was also a perspective that people struggled to maintain amid difficult circumstances and despite problems in local co-operatives brought on by weak leadership and inadequate resources. Bucking international trends through local action was not easy in the formative years of co-operative development in BC - or afterward.

Agricultural co-operatives, the other second important wave of co-operative activity in the region, also began in the later nineteenth century and gathered momentum - indeed, gathered far more momentum than the consumer movement - in the early years of the following century. They were strongest among the producers

of apples, soft fruits and vegetables, particularly in the Okanagan Valley but also in the Kootenays and on Vancouver Island.⁷ They became useful, even essential, organisations for more than seventy years for the province's milk producers, notably in the Fraser Valley and on Vancouver Island. While the procurement of supplies and inputs was important in all these organisations, a more important consideration was how they could relate to markets at home, but more especially outside the region and even across the sea in the United Kingdom. The result was a series of marketing co-operatives that contributed significantly to rural well being until being "demutualized" - in keeping with some global trends - in the 1980s and 1990s. While the dairy co-ops demutualized, many of the co-operatives in the fruit and vegetable industry have continued to survive down to the present day and new co-ops for agricultural production have been formed.

The third wave of co-operative development, associated with the emergence of credit unions, began in the 1930s as part of a developing international interest in the possibilities of community-based co-operative banking. The BC movement borrowed extensively and directly from experiments in Central and Eastern Canada and from the American experience; indirectly, they also drew significantly from the European community banking movement, especially the Raiffeisen system. Beginning among groups of co-operative enthusiasts, public servants, educators, commu-

nity activists, unions, labourers and religious groups, the BC movement expanded steadily, becoming one of Canada's (indeed, one of the world's) most dynamic provincial or state movements. During its formative years, the provincial credit union movement developed largely because it met needs the existing banking industry did not meet, especially for lower income people. As the movement grew, it prospered because of entrepreneurial leadership, a capacity for innovation, and a reputation for strengthening communities, often in the face of regional, national and international changes.⁸ The British Columbia movement, in fact, became important in the international credit union movement because of its successful community-based credit unions and the international contributions of such leaders as Rod Glen from Nanaimo.⁹

During the 1960s and 1970s, the provincial movement reflected other trends that can be placed in global perspectives. The consumer movement, similar to what one could find in other parts of the "developed" world, was divided as new co-operators, most of them young, sought for better food quality than industrial agriculture and production methods were providing. With others, notably in the United States, they pioneered in the development of the organic food industry, the first BC development in this field actually started in the 1950s when the Vancouver Island Organic co-op was incorporated in the Cowichan Valley.¹⁰ They also experimented with democratic forms of

management in the creation of some eighty new community-based co-operatives dependent to a considerable extent on volunteer labour.¹¹

This interest in management issues was strongly associated with the emergence of worker co-operatives, often embracing people interested inorganic food production and distribution; this made British Columbia a significant location for the worker co-operative movement. Still other co-operative enthusiasts reacted to international consumer trends by forming "service fee" or "direct charge" co-operatives in which overhead was paid essentially through weekly or monthly fees, goods were sold at a very low mark-up, choice was limited, and very little was spent on advertising. For a period through the seventies and early eighties, this experiment was regarded as a major international innovation, attracting visitors from many parts of the world, including Ralph Nader, one of the age's great consumer advocate.

British Columbia was also the home of many experiments in community building. From the late 1950s onward, many people in North America were becoming disenchanted with the way in which modern urban culture was developing, with its emphasis on suburbia and ignoring of the plight of the poor. Many, too, protested the Viet Nam war, leading to a large exodus from the United States into British Columbia, particularly to the Kootenays, the major cities, and the islands along the coast. They created intentional communities typically based on common property, thereby

reviving traditions of communalism that had been evident in provincial settlement patterns since the turn of the century. Some people joined groups in the formation of co-operative housing, most commonly in the major cities, especially after 1972 when a federal government initiative made it possible to form communities of mixed income groups (an attempt to upgrade the housing stock for peoples with low income and to avoid the ghettos of the poor then becoming increasingly evident in many parts of the industrial world). The co-operative housing sector, in fact, became one of the most dynamic parts of the provincial co-operative movement, one that affected the movement far beyond what its numbers might suggest through its idealism and by promoting awareness of international trends and problems.¹² Some of the housing advocates also played significant roles in the creation of the worker co-operative movement, borrowing heavily from previous experiments and traditions in the United States and Europe.

It can be argued, therefore, that the co-operative movement in British Columbia must be seen within an international perspective as well as within the more commonly emphasized frameworks of local needs and activism. There has always been an international dimension to the movement's development in the province, both in terms of providing insights, models, information and (sometimes) support, but even more importantly in defining purposes and creating community-based solutions. That pattern persists to the present day.

Since the mid-nineties, British Columbia has seen the growth of new forms of co-operatives. The co-ops that have developed during this time frame differ in several important ways from the generation of co-operatives that preceded them. They often have a smaller membership base (between 5 and 15 members). They tend to connect a plurality of different community groups through a "multi-stakeholder" form of membership or because they engage in activities that cross a variety of sectors within the community. They tend to operate in what could be called niche areas (ecotourism, the arts, transportation, or employment for people with disabilities). In short, while the goals and activities of these new co-operatives are extremely diverse, their emergence can often be connected to some form of expression related to community sustainability. This indicates an ongoing commitment shown by previous waves of co-operators related to concern over how communities are impacted by macro scale changes.

Today, this broader theme of "community sustainability" can be broken down into four main dimensions: 1) the preservation of social services and programmes, 2) new forms of community economic development and control, 3) environmental responsibility, and 4) the preservation of community culture and well-being. It can be viewed as a grassroots response to changing social and economic conditions associated with the forces of globalization, neo-liberal economic policies (such as privatization, deregulation, and downsizing) that have

been prevalent in British Columbia and throughout Canada since the decade of the 1980s, and the corresponding effects that these processes and policies have had on local communities. Below, we explore each of these four dimensions.

Since the late 1980s, social programmes have been drastically cut in Canada at both the federal and provincial level. This has translated into a loss of services in many rural and small communities, as well as an increase in fees and a growing insecurity around the ability to ensure long-term services. In light of these macro-level changes, there has been a significant growth in the numbers of social or service co-ops in BC. For example, in both the Kootenay region and on southern Vancouver Island co-operatives have developed around the provision of a range of health services. In 2002, the Nelson Community First Health Co-op was formed in response to the removal of vital health services and the erosion of the community voice regarding local services.¹³ Similar conditions contributed to the establishment of the Sooke Child, Youth and Family Centre in 2004 by the Queen Alexandra Foundation for Children in partnership with Sooke Cooperative Association of Service Agencies (CASA).¹⁴ Both of these co-ops have a diverse member structure: Community First incorporates individuals and community organisations, Sooke CASA brings together multiple community organisations and is itself a member of a regional organization. Both co-operatives seek to address a

wide range of health issues faced by people in assisted living and for children, youth, the elderly and families, as well as provide health education. While co-operatives have always been a means for meeting the economic needs of members, new co-ops can be viewed as a response to the concern for creating viable local economies, reclaiming a measure of economic control, and creating employment for groups affected by either the loss of government services or the downturn of a resource economy. Some new co-ops, which could also be viewed as social co-ops, reflect an effort toward job creation addressing the loss of government programmes and support for people with disabilities. In the Okanagan region, in Nelson and in the Peace area of BC, there have been efforts to establish such multi-stakeholder co-ops. Often these have been organised around a worker co-op model that provides skills training and economic profit to the members and their community, as well as fostering the development of democratic modes of production and management.

On both Malcolm Island and Cortes Island, (small islands off the east coast of Vancouver Island) and in the Cowichan region on Vancouver Island, residents have worked hard to establish community fishery co-operatives in an effort to re-build a failing local resource economy and address the unemployment associated with the collapse of this industry. The emergence of small agriculture and forestry co-ops is also reflective of this trend. Other co-ops have developed in these communities in an effort to

diversify the local economy; for example, Wild Island Food Co-op, on Malcolm Island runs a small bakery and café and may expand into food processing of local products.

The province also hosts at least a dozen new community development co-operatives that help to promote community oriented growth strategies.¹⁵ These are broad based coalitions that bring together financial, human and social capital to encourage community development.

Intertwined with the motivation to meet economic needs is a growing tendency toward environmental responsibility. This trend within cooperative development can be viewed as part of a larger shift in environmental consciousness away from dependence on a resource economy motivated by profits over livelihoods and an effort by communities to ensure local control of resources in the face of globalization and economic policies that support "economies of scale." The growth of eco-tourism and recreation co-ops is an example of this trend. At least eight of these co-ops have emerged since 1994. These co-ops offer stimulating outdoor adventure activities at the same time as providing ecological and cultural experiences. Here we also note the growth of Community Forestry Co-ops in places such as Harrop Procter near Nelson, the Cowichan Valley and on Denman Island. These co-ops seek to protect local watersheds and forestry resources while providing long term employment. Co-ops have also grown up around related forestry products. Other types of small, envi-

ronmentally oriented co-ops include: a bottled water co-op, recycling co-ops, food co-ops, organic farming co-ops, and transportation co-ops.

The fourth dimension to how new co-operatives are responding to challenges of community sustainability amid global change can be seen in the growth of co-ops emphasizing the preservation of community culture and well-being. Co-op radio stations in Vancouver and Nelson are two examples of new co-operatives strengthening the voice of local culture and promoting community identity. The mandate of the Vancouver Co-op is to create a "voice for the voiceless"¹⁶, while one member in Nelson described their co-op as being an indispensable tool for the dissemination of the community's cultural knowledge.¹⁷ Artisan co-ops, television co-ops, and schools for the Arts and Media are other examples of grassroots efforts to preserve and promote local culture.

While macro-level social forces are affecting many BC communities, our research indicates that people feel a strong commitment to developing and supporting co-operatives as a method to support and sustain their

local economy, help create employment, provide services and opportunities for younger members of the community and plant seeds of hope for the future.

How people use co-operative strategies and structures to confront global economic, social, and political changes is not a new story but it is one with new twists and turns as each generation of co-operators embraces the challenge of globalization and the particular circumstances of their day. The relationship is in key ways reciprocal, involving external pressures of economic, political and social forces but also internal expressions of entrepreneurial and innovative responses by people in communities. The underlying concern for "community resilience" is also common, though perhaps more explicitly stated now than in the past. In any event - more than is commonly understood within and without the movement - the obverse side of this local concern for co-operation arises from a deep response to global change. It is one of the creative tensions that provides the co-operative movement with its strength and creativity, one that needs to be understood and appreciated more.

Notes

- ¹ On the West coast, the most remarkable ceremony that manifested communal and sharing dimensions - as well as status considerations - was the potlatch, a feast based typically on salmon or seal meat, in which gifts were exchanged and in which hosting families distributed much of their wealth in return for the recognition that they would receive and the reciprocal feasts from other families when they possessed an abundance of wealth.
- ² For considerations of how the encroachment of European influences altered work in BC Aboriginal societies, see Robin Fisher, *Contact and Conflict: Indian-*

European Relations in British Columbia, 1774-1890 (Vancouver: University of British Columbia, 1992).

- 3 Aboriginal peoples in British Columbia have been slow to adopt formal co-operative structures to meet their economic and social needs. One of the issues that Ian MacPherson has encountered in discussion with First Nations leaders about the possibility of forming co-operatives is that they do not readily see them as extensions of their economic and social systems but as structures imposed from outside. There are, however, some promising beginnings for co-operatives involving primarily among First Nations women in Vancouver and Victoria.
- 4 Jean Barman, *The West beyond the West: A History of British Columbia* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996).
- 5 Victoria Colonist, May 1862.
- 6 They were located in Nanaimo, Fernie, Revelstoke, Hillcrest, Rossland and Natal.
- 7 By the mid-1920s, the co-ops were marketing close to 80% of the Okanagan apple crop. (Ian MacPherson, *Each for All: A History of the Co-operative Movement in English-Canada, 1900-1945* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1939) 104.
- 8 Credit Unions of BC, <<http://www.peoplebeforeprofits.ca/about/>> (accessed Sept 7, 2006).
- 9 Glen was a dynamic leader in the provincial movement. Within credit union circles he helped spark the reformulation of the international activities of the North American credit union movement that led to the formation of the World Council of Credit Unions in 1970. In the 1970s, he was the driving force behind the creation of the service fee consumer co-operatives discussed below.
- 10 See case study, *The Galleria*, British Columbia Institute for Co-operative Studies <http://bcics.uvic.ca/galleria/bc.php?group=6&tourtype=1&story=40>
- 11 See Ian MacPherson, *Co-operation, Conflict and Consensus: B.C. Central and the Credit union Movement to 1994* (Vancouver: B.C. Central Credit Union, 1995), pp. 194-196.
- 12 See Ian MacPherson, *Co-operation, Conflict and Consensus: B.C. Central and the Credit union Movement to 1994* (Vancouver: B.C. Central Credit Union, 1995), p. 178.
- 13 Community First Health Co-op, <http://www.healthco-op.ca/pages/co-op_history.html> (August 9, 2006).
- 14 Western Communities Organisations Regionally Collaborating for Action (ORCA), <<http://orcasociety.com/frontend/content/view/39/72>> (August 9, 2006).
- 15 British Columbia Co-operative Association, "Co-op Online Directory" <<http://www.bcca.coop/onlinedir/search.htm>> (August 9, 2006).
- 16 Vancouver Co-operative Radio, <<http://www.coopradio.org/about/index.html>> (August 11, 2006).
- 17 BCICS, Case Studies, "Kootenay Co-op Radio".

Artists' co-operatives and their potential to contribute to the development of the visual arts sector in Ireland

by Noreen Byrne, Bridget Carroll and Michael Ward*



Introduction

There has been almost no discussion within the literature of the role or contribution of co-operatives to culture or creative industries, such as the visual arts, music, crafts, traditional arts, publishing and writing and so on. This paper explores the potential of artists' co-operatives to contribute to the development of the visual arts in Ireland.

* Noreen Byrne is a Lecturer at the Department of Food Business & Development and a researcher at the Centre for Co-operative Studies, UCC, Ireland. Email: n.byrne@ucc.ie.

* Bridget Carroll is a Lecturer at the Department of Food Business and Development and a researcher at the Centre for Co-operative Studies, UCC, Ireland. Email: b.carroll@ucc.ie

* Dr. Michael Ward is Head of the Department of Food Business and Development and Director of the Centre for Co-operative Studies, UCC, Ireland. Email: michael.ward@ucc.ie

Visual arts in Ireland - a context

While the Arts Council¹ (2002) states that the Irish visual arts sector has grown in scale and importance and that its infrastructure has improved, a number of artists' and arts organisations' issues have been highlighted in recent reportsⁱⁱⁱ. They are grouped as follows:

- The need to improve the working conditions of artists in terms of income and studio space;
- The need to expand the market for visual art and also to develop the business skills of the artists; and
- The need to facilitate and encourage greater innovation.

With such a push towards greater self-reliance, it could be assumed that a natural point of discussion would be the potential of artist-run initiatives as part of the solution. However, in any of the reports mentioned earlier there is only limited and cursory discussion of such initiatives.

What does the literature have to say about Artists' Co-operatives?

Artists' co-ops arose in the 1970s as a response to artists' dissatisfaction with public museums and commercial galleries, in terms of access and lack of control over their work (Jeffri, 1980:86). Sharon [1979:4] highlights that artists managing their own exposure is "one of the significant changes in the social organisation of art since the middle of the 19th century". These artists' co-operatives are also very important in terms of innovation, in that artist-led organisations can act as "radical incubators for the art of the future" and are to the "visual arts what research laboratories are to science" (Zanasi et al (2000:E1). They are also often "five to ten years ahead of commercial galleries in terms of style and technique" (Joy, 2000: 91).

In Ireland, there are only a small number of co-operatively run galleries but there are a significant number of artist-run studios. However, exact

numbers are not available. As Kaple et al (1996) assert, this serious lack of basic statistical data hampers the development and hinders the research of these organisations.

Method of Study

Seven artist-run organisations were studied. However, we could only locate one registered as a co-operative. Other artist-run organisations operate as co-operatives, in that they are controlled by their members with a democratic decision-making structure, but are not formally registered as co-operatives for a variety of reasons. (For details of the organisations studied, see Table 1 below.)

To elicit the view of arts administrators in Ireland, an online survey was sent to 33 Local Authority Arts Officers, with a 27% return rate. Representatives from the Irish and Northern Ireland Arts Council were also interviewed.

Table 1: Details of the organisations studied

Organisations	Nature	Location	No. of years in operation	No. of members	Paid-Staff*
Blue Umbrella Gallery	Gallery	Kerry, Rural Town	<1 year	9	No
Crow Gallery	Gallery	Dublin City	1 year	7	No
Limerick Printmakers	Studios & Gallery	Limerick City	6 years	30	Yes
Leinster Printmakers Studio	Studio	Kildare, Rural Village	7 years	38	No
Cork Artists Collective	Studio	Cork City	22 years	10	No
Backwater Artists Group	Studio	Cork City	16 years	27	Yes
Clones Artists Co-operative	Network	Monaghan, Rural Town	3 years	29	No

* The board of directors in all of the organisations consists of member-artists.

Findings

As pointed out earlier, some of the key issues with regard to the development of the visual arts in Ireland are the need to increase artist income and the provision of studio space; the need to develop the market for visual art and improve the business skills of artists and; the need for greater innovation. We will examine each of these issues separately in relation to our studied artist-run organisations.

Artist Income and Studio Space

Many of the members of the studied organisations are emerging artists and thus find it hard to gain exposure in public museums or commercial galleries. All the organisations studied provide opportunities for public exposure of their members' work with three having full-time public gallery space. Such exposure helps to establish the emerging artist and, of course, also presents the opportunity for sale of their work, thereby having the potential to contribute to the current and future income of the artist. The majority of the artist-run organisations studied also provide access to equipment and studio space at very low rents. In the case of the two printing studios, the artists had to previously travel some distance to avail of equipment, thereby increasing their costs. Some of the organisations also put particular focus on helping and training their members in the writing of funding proposals. This increases the artists' chances of successfully sourcing funding.

Development of the market for art and the development of business skills of artists

To expand the small market that exists for the visual arts in Ireland, a greater focus on audience development, enhanced strategic marketing and greater exposure for Irish artists abroad are required.

The printmaking studios are greatly contributing to audience development through their regular public and schools-based workshops. Compared to the commercial galleries, the artist-run galleries are unique in that it is possible to meet the artists and sometimes view them at work. This direct link between the artist and the public surely makes a greater and more fundamental contribution to audience development than would be the case in a commercial gallery.

Some of the studios and galleries have substantial mailing lists, which are used to advertise openings and so on. The printing studios have also developed a 'friends scheme' to encourage audience loyalty and sponsorship. However, promotion in the organisations studied tends to be carried out on a very ad-hoc basis, mainly due to the lack of a designated budget for promotion and limited skills in this area. Many of the organisations also take part in international exchanges. This creates international linkages and may also help to promote the work of the member artists to foreign curators and art dealers.

While the organisations do not directly train their members in business skills, such skills are gained

through setting up the business, involvement on the board and through participation in the operation of the organisation. One key witness from the Arts Council indicated that artists who have gone through some of the better artist-run organisations can make 'excellent administrators'.

Facilitation of innovation among artists

The drive to produce new or experimental work did not appear to be the main driving force behind the setting up of the artist-run organisations in this study. The primary force in all cases appeared to be the provision of space. However, once these organisations have secured that space, the production of new and experimental work does appear to be an important part of their remit.

Being collective in nature these artist-run organisations have the potential to contribute naturally to innovation. Senge (1990) cites Heisenberg, a scientist who states that many of the theories of the great scientists (Pauli, Einstein, Bohr and others) arose out of collective thinking through the medium of conversations. Thus, artist-run organisations, which facilitate collaborative working, or even just collectively working in a space, should facilitate greater innovation and more experimental work than may be the case if the artists were working individually and in isolation from each other.

According to Sharon (1979:16), another factor crucial to the development of innovative work is artists engaging in systematic critique of

each other's work. Such a curatorial policy would appear to be of an ad-hoc nature in the organisations studied. One Arts Officer pointed this out as a weakness of artist-run organisations in that they tend to "*lack a clear curatorial policy, where policy tends to be driven by members' needs rather than audience or art form development needs*".

Summary Note

The artist-run organisations studied make a very real contribution in the areas of artists' income, provision of studio space, audience development and innovation. However, with a stronger curatorial policy, better marketing skills and increased support, these organisations could make a far greater contribution.

Viability of the artist-run organisations

With regard to viability, member commitment, security of income and workspace are three key issues.

Sharon (1979) highlights member motivation as a key factor for the success or failure of artist-run organisations - in other words, are members only interested in the organisation as a first step in a traditional artist's career or are they interested in the development of a real alternative? Most of the key witnesses highlighted that there were mixed-motivations among the members, where half see the co-op as a first step in a traditional career and half are interested in developing a real alternative to the established art world. However, one key witness from a gallery stated that the

members are "not limiting themselves to the co-op gallery". This may indicate the potential for members to act as 'free-riders'. A related issue highlighted by the key witness from the Arts Council is that the administrative burden of running the organisation may be left to a few key individuals, whose "focus can shift from making or exhibiting to building maintenance and organisational survival". This key witness from the Arts Council indicated that this can also cause a degree of tension, when the founding members neglect their own art in developing an organisation which facilitates the development of other members' artistic careers.

The organisations are designing themselves for greater member commitment, by rotating board positions, holding member meetings, encouraging voluntary participation and by providing practical benefits to the members. However, this may all be in vain if the established art world continues to view the artists' co-operative as just a 'stepping stone' to the established galleries, thereby seriously eroding member commitment.

With regard to funding, the printmaking studios appear to have learned from each other, where both were successful in sourcing funding from the local enterprise board. This highlights the advantage of encouraging networking between artist-run organisations. Both studios stated that their local Enterprise Boards were very supportive of their ventures. The Arts Council appears to be less supportive in the start-up stages of development. The Arts Councils points out that it

has very limited resources with a huge demand and would appear to prefer consolidation of the current spaces rather than the development of new spaces.

In terms of income, three organisations have received regular funding from the Arts Council. Other sources of income are - membership fees, public workshops and studio rental. The printmaking studios also run a 'Friends Scheme'^{iv}. Both studios indicated that they were happy with the success of this scheme and that it did attract a certain amount of income. As galleries or open studios do not charge an entrance fee, it is difficult to generate income. One of the galleries indicated that they are currently considering the options of setting up a coffee shop or subletting space so as to increase income for the gallery.

In terms of their workspace, all the buildings are of a good standard, particularly the galleries which are attractive and professional spaces. A key issue in terms of viability is the security of workspace tenancy. There is diversity in terms of landlords and tenancy term. However, those organisations which have the local authority, the community or a philanthropist as their landlords are more fortunate in that rents are much lower than when the landlord is private.

With regard to designing themselves for long term sustainability, the overriding observation we would make is that these organisations are, out of necessity, very much focused on short-term survival. They have to constantly budget, work towards generating income and sourcing funding.

The issue of income is the primary concern, thereby leaving less time for issues such as carving out an organisational niche and development of member commitment. In the early stages, other forms of co-operatives, such as credit unions, contacted each other for advice on issues that arose. These artists' co-ops have no such network or source of advice or support. If those early credit union volunteers were as isolated as the artists running these organisations, they may well have abandoned the idea of setting up the co-op. Therefore, we believe that the artist-run organisations in this study are making significant efforts to increase sustainability but that it is difficult.

Conclusion and discussion

This study highlights to us the valiant nature of these organisations - trying to carve out a place for themselves in a very rigid art world, and all on a tiny budget. These organisations are of great value to the artists in terms of helping them to establish themselves, building their income, providing studio space, building their management and business skills, reducing their isolation and providing the opportunity to develop their own creativity and innovation. While there would appear

to be quite a few artist-run organisations operating in Ireland, they gain very little acknowledgement for their contribution to the visual arts. While most people are aware of the larger institutions and the commercial galleries in cities and towns, very few are aware of the artist-run organisations operating in the shadows of the others. This is a shame as the latter may often be where the real pulse of the visual arts lies.

To ensure that these organisations develop themselves onto a sustainable foothold, they need a *support infrastructure*. And while *financial support* is required, there are other supports equally as important, such as *mentoring*; *networking* between artist-run organisations in a variety of art forms; building *resource data* on these organisations and greater *acknowledgement* of their existence and contribution.

Creative industries and cultural clusters are relatively new areas of interest for research and urban policy. And while these areas would appear to be a natural home for co-operative development, with no co-operative sector involvement, co-operatives will probably play a limited role either in creative clusters research, related policy or in practical developments.

References

- Annabel Jackson Associates (1998). *Research into the Support for the Individual Artist*, Final report to the Arts Council of Ireland and The Arts Council of Northern Ireland.
- Everitt A. (2000a). 'The Creative Imperative: A report on Support for the Individual Artist in Ireland'. For the Arts Council and the Arts Council of Northern Ireland.
- Everitt A (2000b). 'Towards the Third Arts Plan: Assessment of the needs of the arts in Ireland'
- Joy, A. (2000). 'Art, Works of Art, and the Discourse of Fine Art: between art worlds and art markets'. *Research in Consumer Behavior*, Vol. 9, pp 71-102.
- Jeffri, J (1980). *The Emerging Arts: Management Survival and Growth*. Praeger Special Studies.
- Kaple, D.A., Morris, L., Rivkin-Fish, Z., and P. DiMaggio (1996). *Data on Arts Organisations: a review and needs assessment, with design implications*. Centre for arts and Cultural Policy Studies, Princeton.
- Senge P. M. (1990). *The Fifth Discipline: The art and practice of the learning organisation*. Century Business, London.
- Sharon, B. (1979). 'Artist-Run Galleries - A Contemporary Institutional Change in the Visual Arts'. *Qualitative Sociology*, Vol. 2, Issue 1, pg. 3-26.
- Zanasi, L., Busby, C., Irvin, S., and M. Taggart (2000). *Developing the Art Scene*. Final report prepared for Yukon Arts Centre, Canada.

Notes

- ¹ The arts council is an autonomous body established to stimulate public interest in and promote the knowledge, appreciation and practice of the arts. It is the Irish State's principal instrument of arts funding and an advisory body to Government on arts matters.
- ² Annabel Jackson Associates, 1998; Everitt, 2000a, 2000b
- ³ A sponsorship scheme - where sponsors pay a certain amount every year. In return, they receive a box set of prints and a special discount for any work purchased through the studio/gallery. Social occasions are also organised.

Creating a non profit network of producers for the development of local culture and tourism: the case of the wine roads of Northern Greece

by Simeon Karafolas*

In recent years, non-profit associations have made significant efforts in regional development, based on historical, cultural, tourist, and gastronomic attractions. In Greece, "The Association of Wine Producers of the Macedonian Vineyard" (EN.O.A.M.), a non-profit civic company, created a network of wine producers to develop local tourism and culture in the regions of Macedonia and later of Northern Greece. The association also co-operated with restaurants, hotels, and the tourist office. The association participated in two financing programs: the Thessalonica European Capital of Culture programme 1997 and, more importantly, the LEADER II program, from which it received significant amounts of finance to



invest in wine tourism. Investments focused on the recreation of wine factories and vineyards in order to offer the possibility of visits by tourists, and to promote and publicise the wine roads and local culture.

The creation of the Greek wine roads

Economic difficulties, even serious economic crises in several regions in Europe, necessitated economic restructuring efforts. This necessity appeared much more significantly in rural regions. This was particularly true of Greece over the last number of decades, and particularly in the regions of Macedonia, where a sig-

* *Simeon Karafolas, Associate professor, Technological Educational Institute of Western Macedonia, Department of Financial Applications, Director of the department. Koila Kozanis 50100, Greece. Email. skarafolas@yahoo.gr. Tel. + 30 24610 40161, Fax. + 30 24610 39682*

nificant number of industries, especially textile, became bankrupt or moved to other countries, especially in the Balkan region, in order to take advantage of low labor costs. The consequence has been growing unemployment in rural areas. At the same time, a growth in prosperity in urban areas has led to a greater interest in rural tourism. Wine tourism is one of the main forms of rural tourism. It can be defined as visitation to vineyards, wineries, wine festivals and wine shows. Wine tasting and the beauty of grape-wine regions, are the main attractions to visitors (Hall & Mitchell, 2000; Hall, 1996). Wine tourism introduced various initiatives including, as in the case of Italy, measures related to environmental-protection, the development of Wine Routes, the Open Cellars, and the Cities of Wine (Hall & Mitchell, 2000).

In 1993, the Association of Wine Producers of the Vineyards of Macedonia, (EN.O.A.M.) with the trade name "Wine Roads of Macedonia" was created as a non-profit, non-stock corporation. The scope of the association has been the promotion and improvement of the image of the region's wines, the development and exploitation of the vineyard and the promotion and development of the cultural heritage of the vineyard and the wine (Liatsis, 2001). 15 wine producers created this non-profit corporation. By the end of the 1990s, nine new producers joined the Association while four old members withdrew. During this period, two wine cooperatives joined the association. On August 2003, the Association changed its name and became the Association of Wine Producers of the Vineyards of Northern Greece because of its geographic extension to

Table 1: Wine production units and co-operating members by wine route at end of 2005*

Wine route of	Region	Vineyards-wine factories	Co-operating members
Naousa	Central Macedonia	7	7
Halkidiki	Central Macedonia	5	6
Thessalonica	Central Macedonia	4	9
Pella	Central Macedonia	4	2
Lakes	West Macedonia	4	7
Dionysos	East Macedonia	3	1
Ipiros	Epirus	2	
Olympian Gods	Thessaly	1	
	Total	30	32

Source: Wine Roads (2005) and author's calculations

* Some wine producers have several production units

Epirus and Thessaly. Wine roads have been developed through 8 different wine routes covering Northern Greece by distinguishing the different variety of wine but also the historical and cultural particularities of these regions, table 1.

By the end of 2005, the association had 24 wine producing members. Most of these producers are in the region of Central Macedonia and particularly on the wine route of Naousa (see Table 1).

Among the members, three are wine co-operatives:

- VAENI, Naousa, a wine co-operative in the district of Naousa, Central Macedonia
- E.A.S. Amyntaion, a union of agricultural co-operatives with wine production as their principal activity in the district of Amyntaion, West Macedonia
- EASI Vineyard of Zitsa, a union of agricultural co-operatives with wine production as their principal activity, in the district of Ioannina, Epirus.

Wine Roads have an additional 32 co-operating members. These are professionals involved in restaurants, hotels, tourist agents, and in the foods and beverages industry. Most of them are owners of restaurants and hotels and their activities are based in the region of Central Macedonia covering the wine routes of Thessalonica, Naousa and Halkidiki (see Table 1). Wine roads have some particular goals, which are:

- To build up the image of the wines of the Vineyards of Northern Greece and promote them in Greece and

abroad. This initiative has a dual purpose: on the one hand, inform the Greek population about wine, the various categories of wine and the wine production process; on the other, to organize global action for the effective promotion of Greek wine, in Greece and abroad.

- To develop and exploit the vineyards of Northern Greece and the natural environment of the participant regions for tourism purposes.
- To support Greece's cultural heritage, focusing primarily on grape growing and wine production, and on local cultural activities.
- To participate in the formulation of general rules governing the relationships between growers, winemakers and wine merchants, with a view to optimising co-operation, serving the consumer and improving the quality of both products and services.

In order to achieve these goals specific actions have been planned and developed through the Wine Roads of Northern Greece (Wine Roads 2005):

- Development of tourist trails through the Vineyards of Northern Greece, indicating all points of cultural and tourist interest, such as vineyards, wineries, archaeological and historical sites, spots of natural beauty, etc.
- Training of people in wine-related occupations, such as restaurant owners, hotelkeepers, waiters, special guides, etc.
- Participation in international organizations with similar or related objectives.
- Organization of gastronomic and

cultural events and conferences, aimed at familiarizing Greek and foreign visitors with the rich wine and gastronomic tradition and the cultural elements associated with it, through selected dining venues, interdisciplinary meetings and cultural activities.

- Participation in international trade fairs in Greece and abroad.
- Furthermore the development of activities promoting the tourism products of the wine roads.

The financing of Greek wine roads

The interest expressed by national and European authorities to alternative tourism, based on local or regional potentialities, has been reflected in the financing of appropriate activities. Two main financial programs financed the wine roads through the Association of Wine Producers of the Vineyards of Macedonia (EN.O.A.M.). EN.O.A.M. first participated in the Organization of Cultural Capital of Thessalonica (O.C.C.T.) 1997, as Thessalonica was the Cultural Capital of Europe in 1997. This participation facilitated the Association's existence during the period 1994 to 1997. EN.O.A.M. enrolled the biggest part of its operating and promotional cost to programs related to the Thessalonica Capital of Culture programme. The total budget financed by O.C.C.T. reached €528,247 (Liatsis, 2001).

The LEADER II program has, however, been the main source of finance for the wine roads. LEADER (Liaisons Entre Actions de Développement de l'

Economie Rurale) expresses the strategy of the European Union for the development of the rural economy (LEADER II, 1995). Three LEADER programs have been launched by the European Union: LEADER 1, LEADER II and LEADER +.

The LEADER program is based on the active participation of the local population, companies, associations, cooperatives and local authorities. Several authors refer to the LEADER program through regional or national experiences; see, for example, Perez (2000), Barke and Newton (1997) for Spanish experiences, Storey (1999) and Scott (2004) for Irish cases, Buller (2000) and Ray (1998) for French cases, Osti (2000) for Italy. In the Greek case, rural tourism (based on small hotels and restoration of old houses) has been the most popular measure of the LEADER II program with 1,068 projects (of a total of 3,177 projects) were related to rural tourism; the second most popular measure was the development of agricultural products with 741 financed projects (Ministry of Agriculture of Greece, 2003).

The main goal of the participation of wine roads in the LEADER II initiative has been to finance small agricultural activities and to develop the tourism potential of the vineyards regions. Within the LEADER II program, five measures have been proposed:

1. Technical support that includes the operating costs of EN.O.A.M. and actions related to information for the local population.
2. Professional training of wine pro-

ducers and other participant members of the wine roads. This training is related to issues of promoting tourism based on traditional arts and local culture.

3. Reinforcement of agri-tourism by transforming the wine factories to places which are attractive and friendly to visitors and where seminars on wine, local products and local gastronomy can be given.
4. Exploitation of agricultural production by supporting the production processes of wine and other agricultural products.
5. Preservation of the cultural heritage by promoting monuments worth seeing, creating pathways, supporting cultural events in districts participating in the wine roads, international conferences and international wine competitions.
6. International co-operation within the European Wine Roads and other international agricultural development organizations for the transfer of know-how and the

development of actions with common targets.

Members of wine roads and their co-operating members, as well as local communities, have been the beneficiaries of LEADER II financial support, to the tune of €3,587,702 (See Table 2). Public financing (provided by the European Union and the Greek State) for most of actions reached 60% of the total proposed budget while for operating costs it covered 100% of the proposed expenses. Table 2 shows the distribution of the total budget for the various categories of financing. The most significant category is agri-tourism which received 65% of the total budget.

Three main categories of proposals are distinguished, in relation to their targets. "Investments in wine factories" received 69.4% of the total financing, while publicity and operating expenses of EN.O.A.M. received 17.2% and 13.4% respectively. The aim of these investments was to transform the wine factories into attractive tourist

Table 2: LEADER II program financing of wine roads in Greece: number of financed proposals and total budget in €, by measure

Measure	Number of proposals	Total budget	Part on total budget (%)
Agri-tourism	31	2,332,055	65
Technical support	5	504,286	14.1
Developing agricultural products	6	407,852	11.4
Preservation of the cultural heritage	6	283,608	7.9
Professional training	1	47,789	1.3
International co-operation	1	12,112	0.3
Total	50	3,587,702	100

Source: EN.O.A.M. (2005) and author's calculations

Table 3: LEADER II program financing to wine roads in Greece: proposals and total budget in €, by district

District	Wine route of	Proposals	Total Budget	Part in total (%)
Naousa	Naousa	11	768,140	21.4
Thessalonica	Thessalonica	3	319,003	8.9
Amyntaio	Lakes	4	304,623	8.5
Ossa Lagada	Thessalonica	2	201,029	5.6
Larisa	Olympian Gods	2	196,625	5.5
Halkidiki*	Halkidiki	2	186,117	5.2
Rapsani	Halkidiki	2	169,803	4.7
Drama	Dionysos	2	148,584	4.1
Giannitsa	Pella	2	114,454	3.2
Goumenisa	Pella	1	88,775	2.5
Maroneia	Halkidiki	1	84,199	2.3
Kozani	Lakes	2	79,864	2.3
Subtotal			2,661,216	74.2
<i>EN.O.A.M.</i>			<i>926.486</i>	<i>25,8</i>
Total			3.587.702	100,0

Source: Idem table 5

* Prefecture

destinations. To achieve this goal, significant investments in the infrastructure for the reception of visitors were made. Most of the financed actions concern all the participant members and they are characterized as common actions. Nevertheless within this program it appears quite clearly that some members, EN.O.A.M. excluded, have been much more active and some districts benefited more than others. Some members had no individual participation, missing out on investment through this program. The district of Naousa received the bigger part of investments: 21.4% of the total, with 11 proposals granted funding (See Table 3).

Among the participants, EN.O.A.M. was the most important, with 13 proposals receiving funding worth 25.8% of the total budget for the wine roads. All expenses were publicly financed. Among the members who have their own individual financial participation, three categories can be distinguished: those who have a significant proportion of the total budget, from 9.9% to 7.7%; those with between 6.1% and 5.5%; and finally, the majority, who have less than 3.5% of total budget each. These investments permitted 17 members of EN.O.A.M. to create an organized system for the reception of visitors. Furthermore, members and the local community

benefited from the promotion and publicity offered through the wine roads and, particularly, the cultural events organized on the wine routes. The results of a questionnaire administered to participant members showed that improving publicity and promotion is the most beneficial result for most of the members (Liatsis, 2001).

Conclusions

The non-profit association, EN.O.A.M., has created a means through which wine producers can develop wine

tourism and through which Greece's cultural heritage can be supported. It has brought together 24 wine producers, including 3 wine co-operatives and 32 co-operating companies. EN.O.A.M. and some of its individual members have successfully gained significant funding for their activities, mostly through the LEADER II program. Through the actions of EN.O.A.M, wine factories and vineyards have been regenerated and tourism has been boosted through the promotion and publicity of the wine roads and the promotion of local culture.

References

1. Barke, M. and M. Newton (1997). "The EU Leader initiative and endogenous rural development: the application of the program in two rural areas of Andalusia, Southern Spain", *Journal of Rural Studies*, No 3, pp. 319-341
2. Buller, H. (2000). "Re-creating rural territories: Leader in France", *Sociologia Ruralis*, 2, pp. 190-199
3. EN.O.A.M. (2005). Letter to author
4. Hall, C.M. (1996). "Wine tourism in New Zealand" in Proceedings of Tourism Down Under II: *A Tourism Research conference* (pp. 109-119). Dunedin: University of Otago
5. Hall, C. M. and R. Mitchell (2000). "Wine tourism in the Mediterranean: a tool for restructuring and development". *Thunderbird Inter-national Business Review*, vol. 42 (4), pp. 445-465.
6. LEADER II (1995). "LEADER II, development of disadvantaged rural areas of the European Union". LEADER II Community Measures, Rural Europe
7. Liatsis, D. (2001), *EN.O.A.M.: Study of analysis of economic and technical data for the evolution of EN.O.A.M. and its contribution to the evolution of the sector*, Non published (in Greek)
8. Ministry of Agriculture of Greece, Community Initiative LEADER II (2003). Letter to author.
9. Osti, G. (2000). Leader and partnerships: the case of Italy, *Sociologia Ruralis*, 2, pp. 172-180
10. P.A.S.E.G.E.S. (2005). Letter to author

11. Perez, J. (2000). "The leader program and the rise of rural development in Spain", *Sociologia Ruralis*, 2, pp. 200-207
12. Ray, C. (1998). "Territory, structures and interpretation: two case studies of the European Union's leader I program", *Journal of Rural Studies*, no 1, pp. 79-87
13. Scott, M. (2004). "Building institutional capacity in rural Northern Ireland: the role of partnership governance in the Leader II program", *Journal of Rural Studies*, no 20, pp. 49-59
14. Storey, D. (1999). "Issues of integration, participation and empowerment in rural development: the case of LEADER in the Republic of Ireland", *Journal of Rural Studies*, no 3, pp. 307-315
15. Wine roads (2005). <http://www.wineroads.gr>

Putting Co-operative Principles into Practice: Lessons Learned from Canada's North¹

by Isobel Findlay*

Abstract

In sharing the stories of Arctic Co-operatives Limited and Koomiut Co-operative Association in Nunavut, this essay explores what co-operative principles and a co-operative model



* *Dr. Isobel M. Findlay is an Associate Professor, Department of Management and Marketing, College of Commerce, and Research Scholar with the Centre for the Study of Co-operatives, University of Saskatchewan, Canada. Along with a team of researchers led by Brett Fairbairn and funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC), she has just completed research for the project Co-operative Membership and Globalization: Creating Social Cohesion through Market Relations. With principal investigator Lou Hammond Ketilson, she is beginning a five-year research project funded by SSHRC on Linking, Learning, Leveraging: Social Enterprises, Knowledgeable Economies, and Sustainable Communities. She teaches courses in business communications, co-operative studies, business and community, and law and culture.*

can mean for Aboriginal community economic development, for social and cultural life, for economic security and sustainability, and what Aboriginal initiatives in remote communities can mean for the future of co-operatives and for Canada's understanding of globalization, individual and collective identities, and social cohesion. In particular, the essay strives for the productive convergence of community knowledge and academic theory, the specific histories and geographies of communities, the power of contexts and the contexts of needs.

Introduction

Although the "true North strong and free" is a key part of the Canadian national imaginary and Inuit art has

for many come to symbolize Canadian identity, that North is a place that Canadians do not know or understand as well as they might. While many Canadians view the North as a marginal and desolate place of ice and snow, for those who live on the land, the North can be a place of power and prosperity; of rich reserves of wildlife and natural resources; of culture, community, and breathtaking beauty. So profound is the relationship to the land that one Inuk has described it as “my life; *nuna* [the land] is my body” (RCAP, 1996,1: 491).

Although the territory of Nunavut is vast—more than a million square kilometers or one fifth of Canada’s land mass—the Inuit population is small (55,700 in 53 communities), yet represents 85 percent of the territory’s population and a powerful force for change. In a short 45-year period, the Inuit have moved from a nomadic lifestyle to settled communities, from igloos to iPods (Toman, 2006). Not only have the people survived oppressive government policies, but they have also faced forced relocations, negotiated incursions of multinational interests since the 1960s and 1970s, endured presumptions about a vast emptiness ideal for military testing, worked for environmental protection and sustainable development, promoted peace, and secured comprehensive land agreements and self-government in a remarkably short period of time (RCAP, 1996, 1: 230-33; 454-66).

They have achieved so much by “rechannelling the frequently intru-

sive hand” of the Qallunaat or non-Inuit (RCAP, 1996, 4: 402) and forging new alliances representing a unified northern perspective while preserving indigenous knowledge: for example, the national Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (“Inuit are united in Canada”) incorporated in 1972 and committed to a politics of change and to the promotion of Inuit language and culture. Since the 1960s co-operatives have played a key role supported by various federated structures including the International Co-operative Alliance and Arctic Co-operatives Limited (ACL). To those immersed in mainstream messages about Canadian confederation and dicta about progress and the inevitabilities of a globalizing economic logic, ACL and Koomiut Co-operative Association Limited offer an appropriate caution that the Inuit story is far from a belated report on belatedness, the Indigenous echo of the nineteenth-century industrial underclass. Owned and controlled by 33 co-operatives in Nunavut and the Northwest Territories, ACL is an Aboriginal success story and one of the largest co-op federations in Canada, one that would make the top 500 publicly traded companies while contributing to the physical infrastructure and social capital of communities². In 2005, in addition to reporting total revenue for member co-operatives was \$130 million, consolidated net savings increased to \$5.4 million, and \$3.7 million in patronage refunds to member co-operatives, ACL presented to the federal Standing Committee on Aboriginal

Peoples and worked proactively with the Government of Nunavut to develop a new Language Act (ACL/ACDF, 2005: 3-7).

Aboriginal peoples in Canada's North "have achieved the most in terms of political influence and institutions appropriate to their cultures and needs", combining traditions with a mixed economy and economic and political development with environmental stewardship (RCAP, 1996, 1: 230-33). We can all learn from the example of "a founding people" of Canada whose story is not simply "an early chapter of Canadian history": "Our history is . . . about dealing with change as well as the causes and consequences of change forced on us through colonialism; and . . . about how we as a culture are able to live in balance with the natural world" (ITK, 2005).

Resisting Globalizing Logics

Caught up in complex renegotiations of pressures from the state, the market, and the media—from traditional and modern models, from local communities and the environment itself—communities in the North today are challenged to assess the opportunities and challenges of globalizing processes as apparently anonymous and impersonal as ever: "The principal actors in the [globalizing] drama are 'terms of trade,' 'market demands,' 'competitive pressures,' 'productivity,' or 'efficiency requirements,' all covering up or explicitly denying any connections with the intentions, will, decisions, and actions of real humans with names and

addresses" (Bauman, 2004: 40). And those strategically anonymous forces constructing rather than bridging gaps and waging a "merciless war . . . against the age-old traditions of communal solidarity" (Rahnema & Bawtree, 1997: x) are felt most keenly by Indigenous communities. Yet Inuit reinvigorate community by practising the seven Co-op principles, as they have "for generations", according to Bill Lyall who appeals to the "extraordinary things" accomplished by "[o]rdinary people in communities across the Arctic." Lyall's story is guided not by an exclusionary Western binary logic but an inclusive perspective: "Through our Co-operatives we have laid the foundation for future generations of Inuit, Dene, and Métis to participate in a meaningful way in the economies and social affairs of our communities, our territory, and our country." (Cited in ACL/ACDF, 2005: 3).³

In co-operative principles, the Inuit found something "very close" to their own "sharing culture" (ACL, 2005). Co-operative enterprises interrupting the privileges and priorities of centre-periphery relations have been a means of ending practices that waste, neglect, or discard rich resources of people and knowledge (Bauman, 2004) and responding to change that has been ever-present in the Arctic since the European explorers 'discovered' some of this vast territory (Martin Frobisher in 1577 and William Baffin in 1616) and John Franklin and John Simpson arrived in the nineteenth century. Of course, as is clear in advertisements of Inns North (the

ACL member-owned network of twenty hotels in the North), the explorers had reason to winter in the Arctic: the parties! Recycling colonial language and presumption as humorous, savvy hospitality, Inns North proudly invites people to learn from Inuit expert knowledge: "Discover the real Arctic with us. . . . Let us introduce you to our local colour. We know the North and we're delighted to share our knowledge with you."

Rewriting to Reright Inuit Realities

The caution that "research is probably one of the dirtiest words in the indigenous world's vocabulary" (Smith, 1999: 1) recalls the destructive practices of colonial research by fragmented social sciences focused on 'problems' to be resolved by 'disinterested' experts monitoring and measuring marginalized populations. The uncoupling of thought and knowledge from spiritual, ecological, and social relationships was but one version of the violence done to Aboriginal peoples in Canada. A cognitive terra nullius, as it were, reduced different epistemological, spiritual, territorial, and other orders to caricature or empty shells in favour of colonial calculation or caprice. According to dominant thinking, Aboriginal peoples needed to develop to catch up with the mainstream. Since poverty was the problem of individuals, government policy was directed at business development, education and training, and building social capital for more efficient economic participation. In the current

wave of globalization, state intervention is itself on the increase while simultaneously characterized as a problem in the way of development. It is against this history that Inuit assert their self-determination: "This is a story that we must begin to tell for ourselves." A strong sense of purpose guides the historical storytelling and remapping of the territory: "To be of value, our history must be used to instruct our young and to inform all of us about who we are as Inuit in today's world. We do not want our history to confine us to the past" (ITK, 2005). So the lessons here teach about the shifting relations between centre and periphery, about the vitality of identities that resist definition and dictation from above, and about the mainstream as a homogenizing force and the margins as a haven of value where "personal and collective responsibilities" are linked to "responsibility to Creation, including the other beings that are part of Creation" (RCAP, 4: 399).

Koomiut Co-operative Association Limited, Kugaaruk, NU

Early co-operatives in the North, including Koomiut Co-operative, established in 1966 in what was Pelly Bay, built on traditional ways—arts and crafts, fur, and fisheries—while diversifying to become multi-purpose co-operatives serviced by other co-operatives (from Canadian Arctic Producers on) offering marketing expertise, consolidating buying power, and providing accounting,

auditing, development, management, and other supports. In this way, they were better able to meet consumer needs in retail stores, enhance employment by operating hotels and developing tourism, get involved in freight, fuel, construction, postal outlets, real estate, cable, and the Internet, and build the socio-economic infrastructure in the interests of engaged and cohesive communities. Named for Sir Henry Pelly, a nineteenth-century governor of the Hudson's Bay Company, Pelly Bay developed around a Roman Catholic Oblate mission founded in 1935. In the 1960s, as a result of government interest in protecting northern sovereignty and a bureaucratic investment in facilitating the administration of government largesse, a permanent settlement was established and Pelly Bay became the first hamlet incorporated in the Central Arctic, though it was also the last to receive permanent housing ending the nomadic life, though not the traditional hunting and fishing or the traditional knowledge (*qaujimajatuqangit*) of its people. Renaming Pelly Bay Kugaaruk, the Inuit or Netsilingmiut (people of the seal) insist on their special relationship to the land. Similarly, individuals retrieved identities obscured by government identity numbers (Kulchyski, 2005, p. 83).

What is remarkable in the story of Koomiut Co-operative is the imbrication and interrelationship of traditions and practices that produce cohesion through cooperation and the recognition of interdependence as both necessity and value. Instead of

scorning (as some have done) Inuit claims to have invented co-operatives (a claim we encountered more than once) and rehearsing Eurocentric narratives of origins and originality, of individual and exclusive property regimes, it is important to respect this testimony to co-operation within and across Inuit communities. Inuit neither defer to nor deny the inventive capacities of others whether missionary or government who promoted co-operatives: "Well before the co-operative . . . the people were working together out on the land. That's called co-operative. So I think from that they learned and I guess some people from outside saw that and maybe they thought of starting co-operatives 'cause people work together most of the time," suggested one member. Similarly, it is important to consider what Inuit have done with co-operatives, how they have used their autonomy, their critical capacities to interrogate their own and invasive modes of being and acting, to re-imagine co-operatives to serve their own socio-economic, cultural, and political aspirations (Coleman, 2004: 11-13).

Koomiut Co-operative is "much more than a business," as one member put it. According to one board member, other Aboriginal communities should form co-operatives because the co-operative "is their own. You have your own control of it, your membership is your own people, and . . . it's your own, your own, your own business." Members, manager, and "a very young board of directors" take pride in "helping the community to better their lives or be a better com-

munity.” Co-op membership is almost synonymous with community membership (members represent close to 99 percent of the population of 700) and the co-op pension for members from the age of fifty-five is but one sign of a life-long connection to the co-operative.

Inuit autonomy and critical relation to the dominant is a result of successive waves of globalization met by identities that have never been strictly related to one geographic locale but have always been connected to the seasonal grounds of the traditional economy as well as more profoundly tied to a land indivisible from the human bodies (“nuna is my body”) charged with its protection and stewardship. Although local resources and relationships rebuilt around common experiences are a critical part of the story, the local is not imagined as separate from the global, or free from power inequalities. Nor are claims of globalization’s obliteration of boundaries of nation and state compelling. To ignore the tools of democratic participation and the power of sovereignty to spurn neo-colonial infractions is to submit to the ideology of globalism and advance globalization (Halperin & Laxer, 2003). For members of Koomiut Co-operative “having a voice” is a key part of the meaning of membership in a community where “the majority would rather stay. Home is home and they feel more safe here.”

To the extent that the spirit of co-operation is strong in the community, members fear competition and are aware that it threatens that spirit of

co-operation. Social cohesion is both guarded and expressed in the commitment to co-operative values that are widely understood as Inuit values—and in successive rebuffs of the Northern store. One member insisted, “We said ‘no.’ We don’t want Northern and that Northern guy was saying you get everything what you want but we said ‘no,’ we want to help the co-op, we want to help the people.” Although the vote conducted by the hamlet in April 2006 was closer than usual, some ascribed the closeness to fatigue and exasperation with the persistent efforts by the Northern and their failure to respect community decisions. In responding to the competition, pride of ownership, independent decision-making, employment opportunities, leadership training, a sustaining federated network, and co-operative values that are Inuit values and a vital tool of community development are every bit as important as the annual dividend cheque—something neither Northern nor Wal-Mart shoppers can ever hope for!

Conclusions

What the Inuit co-operative story offers is a complicating, cautionary, imaginative, inspiring, yet practical encounter with the blind spots of the global which replicate only too accurately the presumptions of the colonial. Patterns of elite ignorance and inattentiveness pose questions about how we define success and how it can be measured outside the hierarchies that still subordinate sustainability to growth and public goods to priva-

tized interests. To reduce Inuit cooperation to a product of privation or a mark of the pre-modern is as foolish as to characterize massive economic activity in co-ops around the world as outmoded or interim stages on the way to "modernity" as elites choose to understand that term and seek to impose their understanding on everyone for their own benefit. Inuit stories stress capacities involved in multiple encounters and adjustments in face of opportunity and imposition and acknowledge the benefits of multiple belonging and the need to renew and reform an overarching version of cohesion within the entity of the nation. Despite a painful experience of colonial incursions, Inuit commitment to Canada is clear in the naming of their national organization Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami and its logo of a white maple leaf surrounded by four Inuit (representing the four regions). Inuit survival in the North is not a curiosity but a fact that has particular reasons. Reversing the flow of learning from North to South within the country, we might achieve new forms of sustainability by rethinking scarcity (and plenty) and therefore revisiting our apparently inevitable addiction to growth and choice. Cohesion is often a euphemism for coercion, but the examples of the Inuit show both the coercive force of cir-

cumstances and government policy and resistance as relatedness and cooperation. Inuit refuse to change except in ways they had done for centuries in the region which is only seen as a permanent white, immutable monolith by those who have never been there and who find it therefore easy to reduce their histories and all their relations to a single moment in a frozen continent frozen in time. So this is not a story about Frobisher and Franklin and missionaries, but about now and about a people's capacity to make the best of colonial and other intrusions, to maintain traditional ways and reconstruct relationships, to retell their rich histories, and to adopt and adapt what will best serve their needs. "Despite all of our natural obstacles," says Bill Lyall, "we have worked together with one voice, and have built a very impressive network of community owned and controlled enterprises. They have become a model for Aboriginal development in Canada." And working co-operatively has "the goal of prosperity for our wonderful country, and in particular, Canada's Arctic" (ACL/ACDF, 2005: 3).

References

- Arctic Co-operatives Limited (ACL). (2005). Website., "History," retrieved August 8, from http://www.arcticco-op.com/about_acl.html?list=0004--
- Arctic Co-operatives Limited/Arctic Co-operative Development Fund (ACL/ACDF). (2005). Annual Reports. (Winnipeg).
- Bauman, Z. (2004). *Wasted Lives: Modernity and Its Outcasts*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1998). *Acts of Resistance: Against the Tyranny of the Market*. Trans. R. Nice. New York: New Press.
- Coleman, W. D. (2004). "Globalization and Co-operatives." In *Co-operative Membership and Globalization: New Directions in Research and Practice*, ed. B. Fairbairn & N. Russell. Saskatoon: Centre for the Study of Co-operatives, University of Saskatchewan.
- Halperin, S. & Laxer, G. (2003). "Effective Resistance to Corporate Globalization," in *Global Civil Society and Its Limits*. Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 1-21.
- Hammond Ketilson, L. & MacPherson, I. (2001). *A Report on Aboriginal Co-operatives in Canada: Current Situation and Potential for Growth*. Saskatoon: Centre for the Study of Co-operatives, University of Saskatchewan.
- Inns North. (2006). Advertisement. *Above & Beyond: Canada's Arctic Journal* March/April, p. 55.
- Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK) website. (2005). "Our 5000 Year Heritage," retrieved August 8, from <http://www.itk.ca/500-year-heritage/index.php>.
- Kulchyski, P. (2005). *Like the Sound of a Drum: Aboriginal Cultural Politics in Denedeh and Nunavut*. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press.
- Mitchell, M. (1996). *From Talking Chiefs to a Native Corporate Elite: The Birth of Class and nationalism among Canadian Inuit*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.
- Rahnema, M. & Bawtree, V. (1997). *The Post-Development Reader*. London and New Jersey: Zed Books.
- Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP). (1996). Final Report. Volume 1: *Looking Forward, Looking Back*. Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services Canada.
- RCAP. (1996). Final Report. Volume 4: *Perspectives and Realities*. Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services Canada.
- Smith, J. (2004). "The Involvement of Inuit Women in the Formation of Arctic Co-operatives," retrieved March 26, 2006, from http://web.uvic.ca/bcics/research/studnets/arctic_co-ops.htm.
- Smith, L. T. (1999). *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*. London: Zed Books, 1999.

Toman, S. (2006). "iPods vs. iGloos: The iPod revolution has taken root in the Arctic. Will it spell the end of traditional Inuit music?" *Uphere: Canadian North's In-Flight Magazine* April, pp. 49-62.

Notes

- ¹ This essay is based on research conducted with Wanda Wuttunee of the University of Manitoba in Nunavut (and the Northwest Territories) with the support of Koomiut Co-operative, Great Bear Co-operative, Arctic Co-operatives Ltd., Nunavut Research Institute, Aurora Research Institute, as well as funding support from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada for the project Co-operative Membership and Globalization: Creating Social Cohesion through Market Relations (principal investigator Brett Fairbairn). Some of the arguments here were presented in papers delivered at 2005 meetings of the Canadian Association for Studies in Co-operation and the International Co-operative Alliance Research Conference, Cork, Ireland.
- ² For a fuller account of Aboriginal co-operatives in Canada, see Hammond Ketilson and MacPherson, 2001. On the particular role of Inuit women, see Smith, 2004.
- ³ Kulchyski, 2005 makes similar claims about what Inuit and Dene in the Canadian North can teach us about political democracy, resisting and stretching the terms that govern Canadian lives, although he does not discuss the specific role of co-operatives. While Mitchell, 1996 discusses the role of co-operatives, she does so in the context of the presumptions and problematics of Western social science supplemented by tentative and speculative reconstructions ("it can be assumed" and "it is Impossible to determine" at pp. 103-04 ff) that take little account of the powers, agency, and resistance of Inuit peoples.

The Impact of Community Co-operatives on Shopping Behaviour in Rural Communities in Scotland

by Eric Calderwood and Keri Davies*

Introduction

This paper looks at the current position of the community retail co-operative sector in rural Scotland. It is an interesting and currently topical area of research as the Scottish Executive recently established a new agency, that will further promote co-operatives as a mechanism for increasing economic opportunities for all on a socially and environmentally sustainable basis.



The Role of Community Run Shops in Rural Areas

Small shops in rural areas suffer from many problems, including:

- competition from multiple retailers, higher costs and poor wages (Smith and Sparks, 1997; Shetland Islands Council, 2004);
- catchment areas that although often large geographically contain comparatively small populations, particularly as some areas are still suffering from out-migration and a rise in the number of temporary island inhabitants (second-home owners) (Byrom et al, 2001; McEachern and Warnaby, 2005);
- generally, those consumers who depend most on the village shop are those with the lowest spending power (that is, the aged, the poor, the infirm and the immobile) (Smith and Sparks, 1997; Broadbridge and Calderwood, 2002);
- supply difficulties that lead to prob-

* Eric Calderwood is a retail consultant and an occasional researcher at the Institute for Retail Studies, University of Stirling, Stirling, Scotland, United Kingdom.

* Dr Keri Davies is a Senior Lecturer in the Institute for Retail Studies, University of Stirling, Stirling, Scotland, United Kingdom.

lems for food availability and choice in the stores, leading to restricted range of products, particularly for fruit and vegetables (Skerratt, 1999, p.543);

- a lack of training opportunities and support for small shopkeepers (Kirby, 1981).

In the light of these studies, community co-operatives and social enterprises have been suggested as one way that rural communities can both ensure local retail provision and take back some economic power (Kurimoto, 2005). Describing the Canadian experience, Winnington-Ingram (2003) uses the definition of a community co-op as "people coming together to help themselves," acting on opportunities to gain unity and self-reliance. Thus, the establishment of community retail cooperatives is seen as a bottom-up approach with the local communities reaching local goals through their own mutual and collective efforts. Also, Lorendahl et al (1996) argued that local co-operatives keep capital circulating in the local market, from the purchases made by local consumers, those made directly by tourists and those made by other businesses such as bed and breakfast establishments.

However, Hogeland (2005) was worried that small cooperatives might not be able to resist the "new supply chain ideas and relationships in supplier-consumer networks" where supply chain power is used for the capture of resources which can be transferred to other parts of the chain. There is a clear tension here as community run shops (whether in urban or rural

areas) tend to be small and locally-based and are therefore ill-equipped to deal with competition from larger retailers unless they retain the solid support of their members and the local community (Fullerton, 1992). This is not to suggest however that they can't receive support from larger co-operatives or social enterprises. Thus, Fairbairn argues that it is "important that consumer co-ops have strong centrals, centrals that provide support for locals in purchasing, in management systems, in training. This not only makes efficiencies for locals; it promotes good management, and it means the locals can't get picked off, one by one, when they sooner or later make mistakes" (Fairbairn, 2004, p.7).

In order to better understand the Scottish experience, we can look at two very different experiences in neighbouring countries: the Republic of Ireland and England. Since the late 1950s the Irish government has been trying to promote economic self-sufficiency in the western parts of the country in order to slow or halt further out-migration and also as a mechanism for supporting the local Gaelic-speaking communities. A number of community co-operatives were established in the 'Gaeltacht' region, most of which undertook a range of activities including some forms of retailing. The aim was to ensure that the co-operatives would have sufficient income to reinvest in the business and that they would not be over-reliant on any one area of trading (Briscoe et al, 2000).

England, on the other hand, has had a very different experience. Shepherd

(2005) reported that there were around 150 community run village shops operating as social enterprises in England in 2005, two-thirds of which had been set up since 2000. Withers (2005) suggests that this growth can be attributed to the active support of the Plunkett Foundation and the network of advisors established by VIRSA (the Village Retail Services Association). The average annual turnover for these community stores in England in 2005 was £145,000 (Shepherd, 2005); this compares to an average annual turnover for UK independent convenience stores of £277,000 (IGD, 2005).

Community Retail Co-operatives in Scotland

Faced with the sorts of rural problems outlined above, including declining retail provision, in November 1977 the Highlands and Islands Development Board launched an experimental scheme in the Western Isles of Scotland to encourage the formation and development of multi-functional community co-operatives, based on the model of the Gaeltacht community co-operatives (Gordon, 2001, p.14). By 1984, there were 19 co-operatives trading, providing 55 full-time and around 200 part-time, seasonal or outworker jobs, with community co-operative membership of about 3,000, total local capital subscription of over £0.25 million, and turnover of approximately £2.5 million. Initially, these ventures were more than just retailers and several of the enterprises included fish farming, craft work and knitting, with the hope

that the more profitable activities could subsidise weaker activities which were nevertheless felt to be providing a useful local service. However, changes in local economic conditions and the difficulties of exercising effective management control over a wide range of activities have meant that the pattern has changed in recent years (Gordon, 2001). Whilst many of the original enterprises are still trading, some were less successful and soon closed down or have been sold back into the private sector; nonetheless, several new community co-operatives have started operating in recent years.

Gordon found that by the year 2000, management committees were having increasing difficulty in recruiting new members, leading to more control passing to the managers. In at least one instance, he felt that, although successful, the enterprise retained little of the original community co-operative ethos. "However, this underlines the need (reiterated by other co-ops) for every co-operative to be run... as a viable and profitable business; without that, they are unable to fulfil any aims, economic or social" (Gordon, 2001, p.35 - emphasis in original). Part of the problem may also be traced back to the local communities which have tended to forget the original crisis that brought their shops into being and now tend to take them for granted, leading to more outshopping.

Unlike the position in England, the Co-operative Group has been actively supporting community co-ops in Scotland since their inception and this

relationship has been a vital part of strengthening the performance of the Scottish shops. Despite this relationship, in the late 1990s there were some problems with deliveries and also concerns about maintaining the range of goods for the smaller stores. In order to improve the links, in 2001 a Development Group was established after a series of joint meetings of the community retailers organised by the Co-operative Group. Then, in 2005 the Community Retailing Network Ltd was established with the aims of, first, creating a supportive network to improve the long term commercial health of and financial sustainability of community co-operative enterprises involved in retailing; and, second, the active encouragement and development of new community co-operative enterprises.

The Current Position of the Scottish Community Retail Co-operatives

In mid-2005, when this research was undertaken, there were just ten community run shops in Scotland, six of which have been trading for twenty-five years or more, and only two have been trading for fewer than three years. Nine of the ten stores are located on the fringes of Scotland; eight are part of island communities. The bond with their local communities is assisted by their relative remoteness.

In order to understand the current position of the Scottish community retail co-operatives, research is being undertaken into the co-operatives and

their customers. This paper reports on an initial stage of the work in which store managers and directors were interviewed to discover their views of the role and strengths/ weaknesses of their co-operatives. From this survey it is clear that, like the English community enterprises, Scottish community retailers are generally the only shop in the community and also provide a focal point for other community activities. However, unlike the English enterprises, the surviving Scottish enterprises are generally co-operatives, generally have a larger than average turnover, have less dependence upon volunteers, are geographically more remote and, having been around for longer, can demonstrate greater progress towards a sustainable trading model. They are generally also corporate members of the Co-operative Group; they have a turnover sufficient to justify distribution support from the Co-operative Retail Trading Group (CRTG); and they are often the largest local employer in the area.

Despite their relative isolation, these enterprises have continued to develop over the last 25 years and have adopted a mixed merchandising approach to their retailing. Whilst they have reduced the non-retail functions that they carry out, they still offer combinations of a food store, post office, petrol filling station, milk deliveries, solid fuel, crafts and non-food. Many co-operatives also arrange a prescription (medicine) pick-up service, co-ordinate booking systems for community events, provide tourist information and sell per-

mits for fishing and golf. In 2005, the co-operatives employed an average of 2 full-time employees (both Eday and Eid had no full-time employees) and 6 part-timers (some of whom are seasonal workers).

The stores tend to reflect the local community very closely, and the store managers viewed both the co-operative members and local residents in general as comprising their key target markets. Whilst most of the stores are open for more than fifty hours a week, the smallest (Papay) is only open for twenty-two hours a week. Reflecting local custom, half of the stores do not open at all on Sundays.

A high degree of local support is evident from the share of local spending that the community co-ops are achieving. For such small communities, the Co-ops take a very high share of available spend; only one store had an average annual turnover of less than £100,000 per annum and the average was around £400,000 per annum, considerably higher than the average

turnover for independent convenience stores in the UK reported above. All but one of the co-operatives responded that both turnover and profit had increased over the previous three years.

As was noted above, rural retailers sometimes use different measures of success to their larger competitors. For example, an independent private retailer may be attracted to the 'lifestyle' accompanying running a rural shop (that is, before they actually appreciate the reality of retail). By comparison, first and foremost for the managers of the existing community co-operatives was the retention of a shop and adding to the overall vibrancy of the community. Only after community ownership and control and the creation of local jobs did the store managers then rate making a profit (Table 1). Not surprisingly, the Directors of the co-operatives scored profitability higher but they did not significantly alter the priority sequence.

Table 1: Measures of success used by the Community Retail Co-operative Managers

Measure	Score*
Retaining a shop within the community	1.0
Adding vibrancy to the community	1.4
Community ownership and control	1.4
Creation/ retention of local jobs	1.5
Financial profitability and viability	1.7
Improved availability of fresh foods	1.8
Improved access and availability of services	2.0
Local residents can learn/ develop skills and abilities	2.8

* Average score on a 1-5 scale, where 1 = very important and 5 = very unimportant

Like small rural retailers in general, community co-operatives suffer from the dilemma of wanting to train but not being able to find suitable courses. Constraints such as the limited staff available, as well as the cost of travel and the training courses themselves, contribute to the difficulties of releasing staff for training. Further, it is also difficult for small enterprises to correctly identify and prioritise training needs, such as Health & Safety training.

The survey of managers also highlighted the importance of the links to the wider co-operative movement represented by the Community Retailing Network. These benefits are as follows. First, it has improved communications with the Co-operative Group and between the community co-operatives themselves. The community co-ops have gained access to key Co-op Group staff and a network of 'buddy stores' has been established to help answer common questions. The Co-operative Group has gained increased awareness of the role and needs of the community co-ops. Second, it provides improved access for the community co-operatives to the CRTG, allowing them to develop their product ranges, including, for example, Fairtrade items and more non foods. Importantly, many of the managers reported much improved availability of fresh foods, including fruit and vegetables, which may potentially have a significant effect on diet and on satisfaction levels in some of these remote communities. Third, as it is also delivering to Co-operative Group stores in Western and Northern Scotland, the CRTG has

also been able to offer greater flexibility on the size of orders and on the number of deliveries made each week. For smaller or unplanned purchases, many of the co-operatives have also been able to hold a Community Discount Card, which gives them a 10% discount on the retail price for purchases made in Co-operative Group supermarkets. Finally, it is an opportunity for the community co-operatives to compare and 'benchmark' their operations against similar small stores. In this way, becoming part of the larger movement can help to reduce any sense of isolation felt not just by the members but also by the Managers and Directors.

The Future for the Scottish Community Retail Co-operatives

The materials collected for this study show that there is still a future for community retail co-operatives in rural areas. The stores studied here remain at the heart of their communities and fulfil a number of different needs for residents and visitors. However, there does seem to be a suggestion that there are two different types of stores hiding under the community banner. Figure 1 shows that these types of store share a common set of characteristics, some of which relate to their co-operative or social enterprise roots and some which may just be a function of their rural location. The more common form in Scotland is the 'General Store' which is remote from its nearest competitor,

covers a range of product categories, has relatively high turnover and takes a high share of local spending. This description covers many of the longer established Scottish stores and shows some evidence that the store is being taken for granted by many customers and even members. There are lower levels of participation in meetings and customers often don't realise that the store is a local co-operative.

The 'Convenience Store' form is less common in Scotland but may predominate among the English village stores run as social enterprises. They are located much closer to competitors and have lower turnover levels, being used primarily for small items and distress purchases. But they also have higher levels of usage by members and high levels of democratic activity and awareness. This may be related to their location but is more probably a function of their more

recent establishment, meaning that the local residents are more aware of the need to retain the shop and that local committee members are perhaps still more likely to be active in promoting the store. Lower sales mean that they are less able to take advantage of the purchasing power of the wider co-operative movement.

What this survey shows therefore is the balancing act that community retail co-operatives will need to perform in the years ahead. The larger retail operations have demonstrated that they are a sustainable model for the more remote locations and the extra support now being provided by the wider co-operative movement is helping to improve their operations and the service that they provide to their communities. But this very appearance of permanence makes it more difficult for them to get across their co-operative difference and to

Figure 1: Can we characterize a community retailer in Scotland?



encourage local participation in the business. On the other hand, the effort that has gone into establishing the smaller stores that lie close to competition is reflected in more apparent local community support. But doubts have to be raised about their sustainability because of their greater

reliance on volunteer staff and the inability to achieve better trading terms. If these enterprises are to be around in twenty years time then either they have to increase their size and buying power or new mechanisms need to be put in place to better support them.

References

- Briscoe, R., McCarthy, O. and Ward, M. (2000) 'Ireland's Community Co-operatives', in Briscoe, R. & Ward M. *The Cooperatives of Ireland*. Cork: Centre for Co-operative Studies, University College Cork
- Broadbridge, A. and Calderwood, E. (2002) 'Rural grocery shoppers: do their attitudes reflect their actions?' *International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management*, 30 (8): 394-406.
- Byrom, J., Medway, D. and Warnaby, G. (2001) *Strategic Alternatives for Small Retail Businesses in Rural Areas: Evidence from the Southern Western Isles of Scotland*. Manchester Metropolitan University Business School, Working Paper 01/05, March.
- Fairbairn, B. (2004) *Cohesion, Consumerism and Co-operatives. Looking Ahead for the Co-operative Retailing System*. Center for the Study of Co-operatives, University of Saskatchewan.
- Fullerton, M. (ed)(1992) *What Happened to the Berkeley Co-op? A Collection of Opinions*. The Center for Co-operatives, University of California, Davis.
- Gordon, M.J. (2001) *Voyages of discovery: the contribution of the community co-operatives of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland to the development of the social economy*. Unpublished MA Thesis, University of Middlesex.
- Hogeland, J. (2005) 'New Generation Co-op, Limited Liability Corporation, Value-Added, Demutualized: What is Still "Cooperative" about American Agricultural Cooperatives?' Paper presented to *The Contribution of Cooperatives to Community Culture*, XXI International Co-operatives Research Conference, Cork Ireland, August 11-14.
- Institute of Grocery Distribution (2005) *Convenience Retailing Report 2005*. Watford: IGD.
- Kirby, D.A. (1981) *Aid for Village Shops: A Consideration of the Forms of Aid and Scope for Aid in Britain*. Workshop paper URPI S3. Unit for Retail Planning Information: Reading.

- Kurimoto, A. (2005) 'How Consumer Co-ops Compete by Preserving Community Identity: Case of Tsuruoka Co-op,' Paper presented to *The Contribution of Cooperatives to Community Culture*, XXI International Co-operatives Research Conference, Cork Ireland, August 11-14.
- Lorendahl, B. (1996) 'New Cooperatives and Local Development: A Study of Six Cases in Jämtland, Sweden, *Journal of Rural Studies*, 12 (2): 143-150.
- McEachern, M.G. and Warnaby, G. (2005) 'Food shopping behaviour in Scotland: the influence of relative rurality,' *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 30 (2): 189-201.
- Shepherd, J. (2005) 'Where Do Community Owned Shops Work?' Paper presented to the *Fifth National Rural Social Enterprises Conference*, Melton Mowbray, 24th & 25th November.
- Shetland Islands Council (2004) *Report No. DV038-F: Rural Shops in Shetland*. Executive Committee Agenda Item No. 14, 11th May.
- Skerratt, S. (1999) 'Food availability and choice in rural Scotland: the impact of "place,"' *British Food Journal*, 101 (7): 537-544.
- Smith, A. and Sparks, L. (1997) *Retailing and Small Shops*. Development Department Research Programme Research Findings No. 40. Edinburgh: Scottish Office.
- Winnington-Ingram, P. (2003) 'Community Co-operatives: A Revolutionary Model of Rural Community Revitalisation,' *Journal of Co-operative Studies*, 36 (1): 14-21.
- Withers, G. (2005) 'VIRSA: A new movement is born,' Paper presented to the *Fifth National Rural Social Enterprises Conference*, Melton Mowbray, 24th & 25th November.

Staying Competitive and Preserving Community Identity: The Case of Tsuruoka Co-op, Japan

by Akira Kurimoto, CCIJ

Introduction

Consumer co-ops are facing increasing competition in every corner of the world. Although principally they strive to compete with other retailers by offering better goods and services, they also aim to compete by demon-



* Akira KURIMOTO is Chief Research Officer for the Consumers' Co-operative Institute in Japan and up to 2005 was Chairperson of the ICA Research Committee. Previously Manager of the International Department of the Japanese Consumer Co-operative Union and Executive Director of Japan Society for Co-operative Studies. Kurimoto has been published in many ICA Reviews and his main writings include:

JCCU's History in its first 25 Years, JCCU, Tokyo, 1977 (Japanese). Perspectives on Consumer Co-operatives in the Industrialized Countries, Minerva Shobo, Kyoto, 1987 (Japanese), Japan's Consumer Co-operative Movement: A Comparative Review, Robert Owen and the World of Co-operation, Tokyo, 1992. Again Learning of Success and Failure of Consumer Co-ops in Europe and North America, ed. Co-op Publishing Co., Tokyo, 1997 (Japanese).

strating social and cultural values. Staying competitive has meant streamlining business through consolidation into larger units, while closing unprofitable smaller units. In order to compete, co-ops are also constantly facing the dilemma of sourcing from central buying over local sources. In this process, there is a tendency for co-ops to lose their traditional ties with their communities. This is especially true for co-ops in large cities, which are losing their community roots in both economic and social dimensions. Co-ops in Japan have made strenuous efforts to enhance their community base through supporting local producers and manufacturers and addressing problems such as environmental degradation and insufficient social welfare services. In this respect, Tsuruoka Co-op stands as a model of

how a co-op maintains community involvement in local communities within the rural areas where the population is ever decreasing. Tsuruoka Co-op, located on the rice plains north of Tokyo, holds the legacies of first creating Han groups and organizing consumer-collective action against oil cartels. It has also successfully developed a Sanchoku system of purchasing directly from local producers and has developed a co-operative network for health and welfare in the community, thus contributing to the local economy and society.

This paper gives a brief account of the relationship between co-operatives and the communities in which they exist. It describes consumer co-operatives' endeavors to enhance their community base and it presents the case of Tsuruoka Co-op, examining its relations with local producers (Sanchoku) and its efforts in local networking to provide health and welfare services. Finally, it offers suggestions on how to improve shortcomings in these initiatives.

Linkage between Co-operatives and Communities

A co-operative is an association of persons united voluntarily to meet common economic, social and cultural needs and aspirations through jointly owned enterprises. As such, it is a functional organization to provide mutual benefit for its members. Formation of co-ops is based on members' common needs such as marketing and supply for farmers, safe and quality products for consumers, decent employment for workers, fair

banking and insurance for users, and affordable housing. For the most part, co-ops are organized by single stakeholders to serve their specific needs. There are some exceptions such as the Italian social co-operatives organized by multi stakeholders including disadvantaged persons and volunteers, or the Japanese multi-purpose agricultural co-ops which served farmers from the cradle to the grave.

Community is an ambiguous term. Here a local community refers to all the people, with their different needs and characteristics, living in a particular geographic area. The community may have dominant characteristics, be it religious or ethnic, but it cannot exclude persons with differences. It is a public sphere open to everyone, and should be all-inclusive or universal in nature. Each community has specific problems/needs, be it those derived from dense or sparse populations, environmental degradation, insufficient security, shortage of education, shortage of health and welfare services, lack of employment, or access to finance and housing. The public sector alone does not have the resources to tackle problems such as these due to a lack of funds, growing criticism of bureaucracy and the inability to cater for specific needs. So the wider involvement of the private sector, both corporate and non-profit, is necessary and advisable.

Consequently, we are now witnessing co-operatives and non-profits drastically increasing their involvement in health and social care, job creation and work integration, and the regeneration of devastated areas, where

services are often outsourced or financed by government. In the future, co-operatives are expected to play an even greater role in helping to solve these problems in communities. At the same time, they are obliged to increase their competence in the face of competition from other providers of goods/services and demonstrate transparency and accountability in dealing with public money.

How to establish linkages between co-operatives and the community is a problem that has been debated for generations. Co-operatives are born in communities, but when they grow the linkages tend to become indirect with few exceptions. On one hand, community co-operatives were created in remote areas to directly cater to the needs of the community. In the Scottish highlands and islands, for instance, co-ops supply lifeline goods/services such as food, petrol and postal services. In many cases, co-ops are connected with or subsidized by local authorities since they serve the entire population in those areas. On the other hand, Laidlaw (1980) insisted on building co-operative communities by clustering various services of different co-ops in urban areas. Although he praised the Japanese rural multi-purpose co-operative model, it is not realistic to form such a community of co-operative services in the contemporary competitive world. Co-operative involvement in every aspect of life in a community in fact, has been shown to mean the loss of independence, as is the cases of the Kolkhoz and the People's Commune, which became a

part of the etatiste regime and failed as either co-operatives or communities. The Mondragon Corporation and the Kibbutz movement are a few exceptional cases of successful co-operative communities (Melnik, 1985). The ICA's newly formulated Co-operative Principles include 'Concern for Community', which encourages co-operatives to work for sustainable development of their communities through policies approved by their members.

Consumer Co-operatives' Endeavours to Enhance the Community Base

Since the 1960s, the driving force behind the expansion of consumer co-operatives in Japan has been the active participation of housewives. These women joined co-ops out of their deep concern about the widespread use of food additives and the wish to buy unadulterated food that was sourced from reliable local producers. Furthermore, women members were also concerned with hyperinflation and environmental degradation. To cope with these problems, they created or joined co-ops and organized themselves into neighborhood groups called Han, consisting of 5-6 members that functioned not only as joint-buying groups for safe food, but also served as the main channel of communication within the co-op. These members also volunteered to serve on district committees and they formed various study groups to address community issues such as environmental protection, local wel-

fare, child rearing and education. As such, consumer co-ops were able to maintain strong community ties and cultivated a sense of community among members. However intensive competition has led to mergers among co-ops, which has meant larger organizations with mainly larger stores and less direct involvement through its members in the community. Furthermore, since more and more women have started working and young people want an individualistic lifestyle it has become increasingly difficult to maintain Han groups in large cities. Consequently, traditional joint buying through Han groups is now being replaced by home delivery services to individual members. This is especially true in the greater Tokyo area. In this regard, there is a growing concern that co-ops might become detached from their communities.

One way in which co-ops are staying involved in their communities is by delivering community care services through members' voluntary activities or through co-ops' welfare business. Within more than 70 co-ops, members have organized themselves into mutual help groups, which provide care for members, with a small remuneration being paid to care-providing members. Members also organize community salons, meals on wheels and luncheon parties to provide companionship for the elderly. Furthermore, members provide invaluable services such as mapping out obstacles in the community for the disabled and presenting proposals for barrier-free community development

to local authorities. In addition, nearly 50 co-ops operate welfare services including home care provision and rental/sales of medical/care equipment, while 12 co-ops also operate daycare centers or nursing homes. Recently an increased number of co-ops have organized 'drop-in centers' for mothers and children in an effort to attract new young members. Some co-ops also are assisting nonprofits and volunteer groups in the communities by awarding grants.

Co-ops are also making efforts to establish collaborative partnerships with local authorities. Most co-ops are represented on local government advisory councils, mainly in the fields of consumer protection or food safety, while some co-ops have developed partnerships in such fields as social welfare or environmental protection while accepting very limited grants or loans from local authorities (JCCU, 2004). When the great earthquake hit Kobe in 1995, Co-op Kobe supplied the city of Kobe with food and many of the most needed goods and helped the municipal authorities distribute those items quickly. Collaboration such as this with local authorities has increased so that now 37 prefectures (out of 47) and 254 municipalities (out of 2,350) have agreements with co-ops.

Historical Background of Tsuruoka Co-op

Tsuruoka Co-op in Yamagata Prefecture was founded as a 'local worker-oriented co-op' by trade unionists in 1955 to provide inexpen-

sive daily necessities.¹ It did not, however, follow precedence and in 1956 developed the innovative concept of Han groups. Originally, the idea of Han groups was initiated by co-op employees to disseminate knowledge on self-service shops among the membership. Groups of 5 to 10 members held meetings at members' homes. The discussions that evolved within Han groups proved to be an effective channel of communication and the co-op decided to adopt Han as a basic organizational unit.

Tsuruoka Co-op made steady growth by increasing membership and merging smaller societies. In 1979 it renamed itself Kyoritsusha Co-op and in 1983 introduced a federative model by which 6 regions in the prefecture had their own boards and audit committees, (although, for legal purposes one board existed) to encourage local initiative. When the tenth region joined in 2005, Tsuruoka Co-op's total membership was 111,000 or 29% of households in the operating area.

Sanchoku Links Local Producers to Consumers

The Sanchoku business model of direct transactions between producers and consumers has shown itself to be an extremely important method to encourage local initiative in the community.² Sanchoku was first developed by co-ops to respond to consumer anxiety about food safety when chemicals were unduly used on farms. Co-ops made contracts with trustworthy farmers specifying production standards including which, if any, chemicals were allowed, and in

this way, they also bypassed traditional wholesale markets. Sanchoku was developed as an alternative channel bringing producers and consumers together and in doing so both groups' needs were met. As such, co-ops have nourished long-term relationships with specific producer groups and agricultural co-ops (Ohki, 2005).

Securing farmers and sources for the Sanchoku system depends on the location and size of co-op societies. If co-ops are located in megalopolises like Tokyo, it is impossible to source locally. It is also unrealistic for a large co-op to rely on a limited number of sources, as they need to diversify in order to ensure supply and hedge the risks of poor harvests. In contrast, if co-ops are located in agricultural regions where farming plays an important role in the local economy, they tend to source from local producers. The idea of *Chisan Chisho* or 'locally consume what is locally grown' has special appeal to the bulk of consumers living in the proximity of production areas.

Tsuruoka Co-op had a long tradition of Sanchoku. It is located in a rich agricultural region renowned for its rice, cherries and pears, which are marketed throughout Japan. The co-op not only pioneered the development of its own Sanchoku products, but also introduced this high quality produce to other consumer co-ops, thus helping producers to expand their markets. Tsuruoka Co-op also helped to increase markets for locally caught fish, which was previously not sold outside of the region. The co-op

developed green tourism, whereby urban dwellers can have the rustic experience of life on a farm. Tsuruoka Co-op is active in the 'slow food' movement to promote traditional food and 'food education' especially for children. In 2004, the co-op adopted a new Sanchoku Standard with special emphasis on equal partnership as well as quality assurance backed by traceability.

Inter-cooperation to Develop Community Based Health and Welfare

In Japan, there is a growing need for health and social services for the elderly in the rapidly ageing society. In particular, health promotion, medical care and long-term care have not been well coordinated in communities for institutional and functional reasons (Kurimoto, 2003). This situation has made it difficult for seniors to access optimal services and has caused a negative phenomenon called 'social hospitalization', whereby patients stay in hospital after their treatment is complete because home care is not available.

Under these circumstances, Tsuruoka Co-op has worked to improve the situation by co-coordinating services through collaboration among co-operatives. First in 1965, the co-op raised funds to establish Shonai Medical Co-op.³ Then in 1995, the two co-ops together raised funds to establish a social welfare corporation named 'Niji-no-kai' (Rainbow Club) to provide healthcare services for the elderly. A senior citizens' co-op was

created in 1996, which now offers home help and day care services. These four co-operatives formed a liaison committee in 1998 to plan and implement joint action towards establishing a co-operative long-term care business to serve local residents. In 2001, these organizations built an integrated care center to accommodate all of the following services under one roof: day care/short stay facility and home help station offered by a medical co-op; equipment rentals and members' mutual help groups' secretariat offered by a consumer co-op; and a home help station and catering center offered by the senior citizen's co-op. This arrangement has facilitated better coordination among service providers while users have the benefit of one-stop shopping (Hino, 2004). 'Niji' (Rainbow) was created as an SME co-op in 2004 with the mandate to build communities through inter-cooperation. The co-op plans to provide such services as the operation of senior citizen homes, catering and personal care, and the development of the *Chisan Chisho* system. As an initial undertaking, it established a sheltered house for the elderly that offers rehabilitation services and is staffed with nurses and care workers. It is located adjacent to the co-operative hospital, which can provide full medical and professional support.

Thus, close collaboration has enabled co-ops and associated organizations to provide all the services envisaged by the Long-term Care Insurance Law of Japan. They have sought to build a local community where residents can lead a healthy and secure life through

a network that provides health promotion, medical care and long-term care. Since consumers and medical co-ops together boost a membership of 70% of all households in Tsuruoka city, they are having a visible impact on the community.

Concluding Remarks

In many ways Tsuruoka Co-op (Kyoritsusha) has demonstrated strong community identity through close collaboration among different co-operatives. But its representation in and partnership with local governments is still very limited. It has weak collaboration with the emerging non-profit sector that is involved in a wide range of partnerships with local authorities. There is no liaison committee of consumer organizations, although the co-op has championed various consumer campaigns. There

is a need, therefore, for widened collaboration with local authorities and other civic organizations in order to help build a viable community.

Despite the fact that women do the bulk of the work at the grass-roots level, women are rarely seen in co-operative leadership and management positions. Co-ops have not successfully promoted and recruited young members, while non-profits are attracting young, educated women. It is often said that rural women manage most domestic affairs, but prefer to take a back seat on the official scene, but it seems co-ops are missing opportunities by not recognizing and utilizing the skills of women. If Tsuruoka Co-op would recognize this weakness and solve the aforementioned problem, it would present a viable model of community regeneration through co-operatives.

References

- Hino, S. (2004) 'Reliable Community Network for health and welfare', *Citizen's Creating Safety Net for Life*, Nihon Hyoronsha, Tokyo
- JCCU, (2004) *Survey of Activities of Prefectural Consumer Co-operative Unions*, Tokyo
- Kurimoto, A. (2003) 'Co-operation in Health and Social Care: Its Role in Building Communities', *Social Capital in Asian Sustainable Development Management*, New York: Nova Science Publishers.
- Laidlaw, A. F. (1980) *Co-operatives in the Year 2000*, ICA Studies and Reports No.15, London: International Co-operative Alliance.
- Melnyk, G.R. (1985) *The Search for Community: From Utopia to a Co-operative Society*, Montreal: Black Rose Books
- Ohki, S. (2005) 'Product Policy of Consumer Co-ops', *Search for Contemporary Consumer Co-op Studies*, Tokyo: Co-op Publishing Co.

Notes

- ¹ In the 1950s 'local worker-oriented co-ops' were set up by local trade union councils. They recruited membership by simply registering union members without knowledge of how to run a co-op. As they built stores in local towns, where no modern retailers existed, they had commercial success for a relatively short period which triggered the small retailer's anti-co-op campaigns. Many co-ops soon lost momentum and disappeared due to poor management and lack of loyal membership in the wake of the supermarket revolution in the early 1960s.
- ² There is no clear-cut definition of Sanchoku, but the JCCU adopted the following set of loose principles: identification of producers, production methods disclosed, and a means for exchange between producers and consumers.
- ³ Shonai Medical Co-op now operates 2 hospitals, 4 clinics, 6 social service facilities and 1 medical fitness center.

The Role of Co-operatives in Developing and Sustaining Local and Regional Communities

A Success Story: Female Headed Households' Co-operative Societies in Bam

by Aliasghar Maghsoudi

Introduction

There is no doubt that co-operatives play an effective role in developing and sustaining local communities, not only in providing local services and meeting local needs but also in providing local employment. They also play an important role in economic capacity-building in terms of skills development, business development, mentoring, and employment. The catastrophic earthquake in Bam, which wiped out many families and businesses, provided a great opportunity for the co-operative sector in Iran to prove the effectiveness of co-operative principles and values, even in crisis.



Co-operation between a Czech non-governmental organization named "People In Need"¹ and "Kerman Province's Directing General of Co-operatives" allowed for the unique establishment of 3 co-operative societies for Female Headed Households (FHH) in Bam. A few weeks after the earthquake, 147 women who had lost their relatives were gathered and supported by "People In Need". They were taught different skills dealing with local handicrafts. Negotiations between these two governmental and non-governmental organizations led to the choice of a co-operative society

* *Aliasghar Maghsoudi is a PhD student at Mumbai University and Chair of the Research Department of Kerman Province's Directing General of Co-operatives, Iran.*

as the best legal framework within which to organize the women. Three co-operative societies were formed. Kerman Province's Directing General of Co-operatives held training courses to teach the members co-operative principles, values, laws and other subjects dealing with co-operative management and marketing. Holding general assemblies to discuss and decide about the general policies and bylaws, and electing the members of the board of directors and the inspectors were the other steps taken to establish the three co-operative societies.

This paper is divided into four parts. In the first part, the main characteristics of Iran will be briefly examined, with a focus on its co-operative sector. In the second part, a theoretical background will be presented, exploring the role of co-operatives in developing and sustaining local communities. In the third part, the whole process of establishing co-operative societies for female headed households in Bam will be discussed. In the fourth part, an analysis of the reasons for choosing the co-operative society as the best structure will be carried out, together with a reflection on the social, cultural, psychological and economical outputs of the process.

Iran at a glance

Covering an area of more than 1.6 million square kilometers, Iran is located in the southern half of the northern temperate zone. Iran has terrestrial borders with Turkmenistan, Caspian Sea, Azerbaijan and Armenia in the north, Afghanistan and Pakistan in the east, the Persian Gulf and the Sea

of Oman in the south, and Iraq and Turkey in the west. Iran has 28 Provinces, 128 town-ships and 724 districts. According to the latest census, the population of Iran is about 70 million, with a relatively young age profile. The rate of literacy is 80% and about 20 million people are currently studying in schools and universities. According to Iran's Constitutional Law, Iran's economy is categorized into three sectors: Governmental; Private; and Co-operative. The co-operative sector's economic activities are laid down in both the Constitutional Law and in Iran's Economic Law of 1991. The first co-operative society was established in 1935. The main fields of activity of co-operative in Iran include: Agriculture, Mining, Handcrafts, Transport, Housing, Health, Horticulture, Communications, Water Supply, Credit, and Care services.

Community development and co-operatives

Community Development is a process which seeks to enable individuals and communities to evolve and change in line with their own needs and objectives. It is guided by principles of:

- 1- Participation
- 2- Collective action
- 3- Empowerment
- 4- Sharing
- 5- Enabling
- 6- Equality

The key purpose of community development is to work with communities experiencing disadvantage, enabling them collectively to identify needs and rights, clarify objectives and take

action to meet them within a democratic framework which respects the needs and rights of others. Community development could be applied to a range of different kinds of communities, such as rural, urban, ethnic, and so on.

There are some important points which should be considered for starting a project aiming at community development:

1. The process should begin with recognition of the need to start with the community as a focal point, providing mechanisms to enhance the development of local leadership and control.
2. The essential success factor is local control in the definition of needs, solutions, and evaluation.
3. Community-based planning is fundamental to this approach.
4. The notion of partnership is a central feature, and collaborative approaches to problem solving are necessary as a prerequisite to strong partnerships.

The definition, the communities to which the concept "community development" could be applied, and the above mentioned important points, lead us to focus on the following key subjects as the guidelines in a project aimed at community development: Recognizing needs; Community as a focal point; Development of local leadership; Community-based planning; Notion of partnership; and Collaborative approaches.

The guiding principles of community development and cooperative values

prove to be quite similar. The process of developing and sustaining a co-operative involves, in miniature, the processes of developing and sustaining community spirit, identity, and social organization. Co-operatives have been most successful when they have arisen out of grassroots efforts to meet the needs of a community. This grassroots orientation is a reflection of local people taking the initiative to understand the problems which they face and to develop solutions.

The Case

The catastrophic earthquake in Bam led to the establishment of 3 co-operative societies for female headed households in the area. The different phases of the process were as follows:

1- Gathering statistics of Female Headed Households (FHH) in Bam

Approximately 2,500 Female Headed Households (FHH) FHH in Bam and surrounding villages demonstrated the following characteristics:

- 65% widowed during the earthquake, 15% before, 5% divorced
- 10% with disabled husband, 5% living with old parents or just the mother
- 70% needed psychological help for insomnia, depression, nervousness, and anxiety
- 70% taking care of children under 18
- 20% have previous experience with small enterprising

2- Research about the living conditions of FHHs and their psychosocial stabilization and support

Because of very difficult circumstance after the earthquake, People In Need

(PIN) started to work with a psychologist and a social worker directly in the field. More than 500 women from different zones of Bam were visited and interviewed in order to get more information about their family situation.

3- Reconstruction of health and education facilities: 3 schools, 1 clinic

4- Establishment of children and teenagers' protection and education centers

5- Holding training courses for women to teach them new skills and to give them stability through work

Directly after the research, PIN, with the co-operation of Kerman's State Welfare Organization started 3 training courses - pottery making, ball making, and traditional handicrafts.

6- Micro funding support for women

Along with establishing the training courses, PIN also has been focusing on the FHHs who had a small business before the earthquake and had the desire to start again. Thirty women were helped and were given donations of basic equipment such as machines for sewing, ovens for baking bread and hairdressing equipment.

7- Establishing the FHH Co-operatives

As over 120 women were trained in the warehouses and had shown a keen interest not only to be trained but also to work in groups, it was necessary to find a formal, legal framework to organize them. The process of establishing the formal co-operatives took place over four phases:

- *Holding very detailed and well organized meetings with Bam's department of co-operatives*

All of the appropriate information about the potential of co-operative societies as the legal structure to organize the women was provided. After some time, PIN was persuaded that the co-operative society was the best option.

- *Familiarising the women with co-operatives*

The specialist from Kerman Province's Directing General of Co-operatives held a three-day seminar to make the women familiar with co-operative principles and values as well as co-operative laws, bylaws and the other official formalities.

- *Holding general assemblies*

The general assembly was held to approve the co-operative bylaws and to elect the board of directors for each co-operative.

Registration of the co-operative societies

The board of directors submitted the necessary documents to Bam's department of co-operatives to register the co-operatives.

Now, fortunately, the process of registering 3 Co-operatives - including pottery making with 18 members, ball making with 23 members, and traditional handicraft making with 50 members - is complete.

The Challenges

The established co-operatives have faced and have tried to solve a number of problems including:

- *Financial problems*

As the women headed their own households and faced economic problems of their own, they couldn't afford to pay for shares in the co-operative. The problem was solved with the help

of the co-operative office, by decreasing the amount of money which was legally necessary to be paid to register the co-operative.

- Training

As the women were very eager to start up their co-operative but had low levels of business experience and knowledge, they needed further systematic education. Besides the actual pottery, ball making and handicrafts, practical training was strongly needed to train them in accounting, marketing, finance, sales, law, and computer skills. Kerman Province's Directing General of Co-operatives held some related courses to help solve the problem.

- Raw materials

As quite a large quantity of raw material was needed, such as kaolin for pottery, leather for balls, palm leaves for handicrafts, and much more, the co-operatives needed to be able to negotiate for a good price. Kerman Province's Directing General of Co-operatives has been involved in negotiations to solve the problem.

Marketing

A permanent market in each area of production such as volleyballs, footballs, pottery, handicrafts was needed. So, the co-operatives need help to contact the different trade partners, institutions, sport organizations etc. Kerman Province's Directing General of Co-operatives held a session with the organizations which need the products to encourage them to form buying contracts. The organizations have agreed to contracts but efforts by the boards are needed to maintain these contracts.

Analysis

The reasons for choosing a co-operative society as the best legal framework revolve around two main points - the circumstances after the earthquake, and the approach taken towards development.

The ruling circumstances after the earthquake were:

- Hopelessness
- Depression
- Devastating socio-economic, political, psychological and gender impacts
- Proportional equality in economic conditions

These circumstances resulted in common needs and led to the emergence of some common feelings, including sympathy, voluntarism, and social cohesion. The emerging circumstances, feelings and needs allowed some values similar to co-operative values to flourish. Reviewing the definition of co-operatives and their values would be useful for the analysis at this point.

According to the ICA, a co-operative is an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly-owned and democratically-controlled enterprise. Co-operatives are based on the values of self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity and solidarity. In the tradition of their founders, co-operative members believe in the ethical values of honesty, openness, social responsibility and caring for others. So, the emergence of the feelings which empowered the values, similar to the

above mentioned ones, created a good opportunity for the cooperative sector to gather the people in groups to establish economic enterprises to meet their needs. Regarding the critical circumstances, co-operative societies have the characteristics that can be adapted to the people's social, psychological and economic conditions. The other main reason to choose cooperative society as the best option to lead to community development was the approach towards development. The capability-oriented approach is one of the most popular approaches to development, presented by Sen (1999). In his book, "Development as Freedom", inspired by Aristotle, Sen states that self-respect and self-regard, and not wealth, should be the ultimate goals of human existence and, to meet these goals, we should avoid deprivation and respect freedom. According to Sen, some instrumental freedoms should be regarded in development and people should enjoy political freedom, economic facilities, social opportunities, transparency and supporting systems.

The earthquake in Bam created an opportunity for the people to experience an atmosphere providing economic facilities, social opportunities and supporting systems. So, it was a good chance to use the tools that lead to community development. Perhaps, it is worth reiterating that what needs to be recognized is that the strong degree of social cohesion that often exists in communities affected by many forms of crisis can provide a unique opportunity to re-build and develop those communities. It is also

apparent that deep-seated cultural change only occurs when people believe that their existing social structures are in crisis. The similarity between co-operative values and the guiding principles of community development is a very important factor in demonstrating the effective role of co-operative societies in community development.

So, regarding the critical conditions in which co-operative values flourish, and respecting the guiding principles of community development, the Bam FHH project started co-operatively which, fortunately led to the establishment of co-operative societies with the membership of the women who are skilled in both producing the goods and democratically administering their own co-operatives.

The outputs

The main outputs of the process could be categorized into four fields:

- Social outputs

- Avoiding immigration
- Avoiding emerging social disorder
- Strengthening social cohesion
- Reviving social values

- Cultural outputs

Preserving native culture through producing products which are rooted in the native culture

- Psychological outputs

Mental recovery of the affected women and their families

- Economic outputs

Establishment of the economic enterprises.

In addition to the above mentioned

outputs, there are some more general outputs:

- mutual cooperation between governmental and non-governmental organizations
- introducing the legal framework of co-operative societies as one of the best options to be used to organize the people who will be supported by the

NGOs in the affected areas. By doing so, the NGOs can, on the one hand, arrange their activities in a defined process with a specific outcome and on the other hand, the supported people will be able to administer their own enterprises within an acceptable legal framework.

References

Sen, A. (1999) *Development as Freedom*, New York: Anchor Books

Notes

- ¹ People in Need (PIN) is a Czech Republic based, non profit, non-governmental organization founded in 1992. Since its establishment, People in Need has provided more than \$55 million in relief, rehabilitation and other assistance to 32 countries around the world.

Co-operatives and Community Culture: The Role of the Media

by Sanjay Kumar Verma*

Introduction

In today's era, when the rapid pace of globalisation has led to the predominance of a commercial culture, it is imperative to explore how community culture can be preserved and strengthened through effective communication. The identity of the co-operative sector can only be strengthened when the concerns and aspirations of the community are well-expressed. Membership-based organizations are best suited to strengthen community culture. In this respect, they need to develop their own communication media, which are devoid of commercial considerations, and which can sustain the local community in an effective manner. This paper will discuss the role of co-operatives, with specific emphasis on community media, while making some reference to India which has a vibrant co-operative movement and where co-operatives have immense potential to contribute to community culture.



Co-operatives and Community Culture

It is generally agreed that co-operatives, being community-based organizations, have to work towards developing the communities in which they operate. The ICA's 7th Principle 'Concern For Community' is built upon this consideration. Co-operative principles and values enable the building up of a democratic culture, which is rooted in ethical and socially responsible policies. Strategically speaking, co-operatives are better placed than other organizations to contribute to community culture because they do not jettison traditional co-operative values in the pursuit of commercial objectives. Co-operatives, being embedded in the communities in which they operate, try to ensure that the business reflects the needs of the community, rather

* Sanjay Kumar Verma, Jr. Editor,
National Co-operative Union of India,
Delhi. E-mail : www.ncui.net

than manipulating the community for commercial interests. Community is an end as well as a means for co-operatives. Increased solidarity with the community strengthens the community, which no doubt creates a culture that is well-grounded in community ethos.

Communicating the co-operative difference

Co-operatives the world over, being involved in almost all areas of socio-economic activities, are no doubt contributing a lot to community development, and are creating a culture of their own which reflects the desires and aspirations of the community. However, a dispassionate analysis of the scenario clearly shows that co-operatives have not been able to strengthen community culture fully as they have not been able to connect the communities through a medium which understands the voice of the people. This means that, due to weak communication policies, they have not been able to show their distinctiveness, as compared to other organizations, in developing and sustaining local communities.

The strategic advantages which co-operatives enjoy can be fully utilized only if they have strong communication strategies which reflect the uniqueness of their culture to the non-co-operative world. Grass-roots culture that does not have strong communications channels, can often be weak. The community culture of co-operatives must have an impact on other cultures. The 'commercial culture' must be forced to recognise the

significance of community culture. The conventional corporations must also re-evaluate their policies of social responsibility by taking into account the practice of co-operatives. However, this can only materialise if co-operatives devise their own communication strategies which are not dependent on other forms of commercial communication channels.

Effective communication strengthens the social dynamism of any sector. It must be admitted that co-operatives lag in this respect. Due to weak communication strategies, they have not been able to vigorously advocate that they are the only institutions which can truly strengthen the community culture. Similarly, benefits to co-operatives of being market-orientated have not been enjoyed as much as they might.

Empowerment and Community

The importance of the concept of empowerment in the case of membership-based organizations, such as co-operatives, is immense. Co-operatives are considered strong vehicles for empowerment. Co-operatives, by empowering people, have helped reduce or eliminate poverty, sustain employment, enrich social standards, and provide employment. Within the community, co-operatives empower the marginalized sections of society by improving the effectiveness of their intervention in the market economy. Creating an empowering community culture is one of the greatest contributions made by co-operatives when compared to non-co-operative

organizations. This gives co-operatives a competitive edge, which if communicated effectively to a wider audience, can play an important role in image-building for co-operatives. That this is grossly neglected is clearly visible if one reviews co-operative trends the world over.

Media-The Solution

The communication strategies of co-operatives have yet to realize the immense potential of the media. The strong catalytic role of the media in preserving the democratic culture of grass-root institutions, is a fact which is well recognized. However, the bias of the media towards commercialization is a reality which cannot be brushed aside. The media are not using their power to end cultural subversion in society. The media, which could have played a pioneering role in vividly portraying the cultural vibrancy of community-based organizations and thus strengthening their roots, has somehow become oblivious to its own strong developmental role in society. By highlighting stories of empowerment of people in co-operatives, the media could act as a strong force for social change, assuming that the effects of development at the grass-roots levels are adequately covered. Mainstream media, consisting of print, electronic and radio, act as a strong catalyst for enhancing the image of any organization, as it portrays the popular mood of the masses. Internal media has an important place in the internal communication strategies of any organization. Internal publications and journals have an impor-

tant role in enhancing the image of an organization by communicating strongly with the stakeholders within the sector.

The co-operative sector, despite having significant achievements and landmarks, is still struggling to establish strong links with mainstream media. The co-operative sector as a whole does not have a comprehensive or unified mainstream media policy, as a result of which co-operatives at all levels suffer from poor or bad publicity, except perhaps those co-operatives which are well off and in a position to devote more resources for publicity. The internal co-operative media, such as sectoral publications related to various fields of co-operatives does not always have a professional approach to highlighting the internal dynamics and achievements of the co-operative sector at the grass-roots levels. Stories which emphasise the triumph of co-operatives are negligible.

The above scenario clearly indicates that the co-operative sector needs to explore other avenues of communication so as to highlight its inherent strengths, instead of relying on external media. Is the co-operative sector capable of coming up with an alternative form of media which can better understand its needs and highlight community culture in an effective manner?

Community Media and Co-operatives Communication trends worldwide clearly indicate that community media in more recent times has emerged as a strong alternative to the mainstream media, which is purely

driven by commercial considerations. Social objectives are the cornerstone of community media. Community media empowers people rather than treating them as passive consumers. It nurtures local knowledge rather than replacing it with standard solutions. Ownership and control of community media is rooted in the communities in which it serves. Community media has due regard for human rights, social justice, environment and sustainable approaches to development. Community media has strong cultural overtones, as it is an effective medium to strengthen the culture of grass-root institutions.

Community media is the best alternative to connect rural communities and it offers a means of public participation and of defending cultural diversity. Community media, through news and views, provides a strong platform for the active involvement of all sections of poorer communities and for the dissemination of community messages related to the field of development, culture, entertainment, etc. The main channels of community media are as follows: community radio, video collectives, popular theatre, local television channels, etc.

Co-operatives are organizations which are deeply embedded in the communities in which they serve. Co-operatives provide a strong democratic medium to empower people. Community media and co-operatives work on the same principle of empowerment. If empowerment is a strong common denominator for both of them, then a strong case exists for both of them exploring avenues to

work together. The mainstream media's coverage of issues is often dictated by political and commercial considerations. A bias towards political and sensational issues is definitely witnessed. The mainstream media treats people as passive consumers. Especially at the grass-root levels, this tendency is very noticeable. Often, co-operatives do not fit into the strategic considerations of mainstream media. Community media set up by/for co-operatives will have some, if not all, of the following advantages:

- Community media will provide co-operatives with a strong grassroots communication medium which will not only give them a constant feedback mechanism but will be useful for them in reviewing their operational strategies at the grass roots level.
- The poor and downtrodden which form the major constituency of co-operatives in some countries, will have a strong medium to ventilate their grievances, as it is generally felt that the benefits of liberalization have not percolated to the lowest strata of society.
- Social dynamism in the co-operative sector and its ability to weld communities together can be best exemplified by community media which can highlight the role of co-operatives as a strong mechanism for social change. The beneficiaries of co-operative development, many of which are in rural areas, are the best reporters to describe their own socio-economic transformation. They need a medium of communication which understands their

needs and community media is ideally suited. Similarly, members also need a communication channel which can establish strong bonds within their communities, and which can sensitize them to the realities on the ground.

- Community media will strengthen the cultural base of co-operatives as it can provide a platform for full participation of all sections of society. Fostering of open discussion and debate is also facilitated by community media. Co-operatives in the times to come will have several opportunities to prove themselves in various areas of socio-economic activities. This can materialize only if their democratic base and cultural roots are strengthened.

Community Media and Indian Co-operatives

Indian co-operatives have strong community linkages due to their democratic ethos and the cultural tolerance in the country. The members of the co-operatives have strong attachment to the community. However, despite being the world's largest co-operative movement, the co-operatives' contribution to community culture is not being sufficiently strengthened due to their dependency on mainstream media, and lack of efforts to build up indigenous forms of media, which can more effectively present the Indian co-operative community relationships. Unfortunately, the Indian mainstream press tends to highlight stories of co-operative failure. There is an immense scope for community media ventures to suc-

ceed in India if co-operatives promote the importance of community media, and provide adequate training to help the poor and downtrodden sections of society to start community media ventures. Lack of education, skills, infrastructure, etc., are the stumbling blocks in the starting of community ventures. But the huge network and reach of the co-operative organisations present strong opportunities to remove these impediments. The role of community media in strengthening the community culture of Indian co-operatives can be a strong model for other countries to emulate.

Future Vision

The co-operative organizations, both business and promotional, should think of starting community radio as an effective medium for communication. The contents of the programmes may include community and cultural messages, educational programmes for development including aspects of health, environment, gender, and culturally relevant programmes. Community publications with a focus on community culture consisting of news and views may also be a good strategy adopted by the co-operative organizations. Local television channels which can relate to the psyche of rural communities can also be used as powerful modes of communication. Field functionaries may be involved in these type of ventures so that people in rural areas understand the significance of starting community media ventures. The field functionaries must be provided with adequate training in the field of community

media, its concept, methodology and implementation strategies. Research projects in the field of community media in the co-operative sector should be encouraged.

Transparency should be the prime consideration before devising community media initiatives in the co-operative sector. Unless freedom of expression and operational ownership are provided to the communities, any serious headway cannot be made in terms of assessing the full impact of community media on the co-operative. Effective lobbying must be done with the government so that policy initiatives which encourage or promote community media by co-operatives are undertaken.

Conclusion

There is immense scope for community media to flourish in the co-operative sector at a time when the mainstream media has failed to disseminate the messages of co-operative development in an effective manner. The co-operative brand, which symbolizes its culture, can best be developed by community media. Image building is the dominant need for the co-operative sector today. Community media is a strong vehicle for this. A visionary and farsighted approach by co-operatives at all levels is necessary to give practical shape to the concept of community media.

The Teaching of Co-operation through the Web

by Pekka Hytinkoski*

About the teaching of co-operation
The teaching of co-operation has a long history and education has always been seen as an important part of co-operative thinking. A lot has been written internationally on co-operation and co-operative research is getting more versatile all the time. However, research on the teaching and training of co-operation has remained narrower. This has, without doubt, made the work of the teachers and instructors of co-operation more difficult. The teaching task of co-operation has become more and more challenging. How can co-operation best be taught now that "the new forms of co-operation, as well as the changes of the traditional business area of co-operation, are connected in



sociological dialogue to the themes of civil society, the third sector, social economy, local economy, partnership, social capital and entrepreneurship and anthropocentric activity" (Laurinkari 2004, 148)?

In today's information society, the contents of teaching have to be linked to the reality surrounding us. The advantage in the teaching of co-operation is that this, according to Laurinkari's (2004) point of view, is built into co-operation. Information society demands the application and questioning of the information learned. Like other training, the teaching of co-operation also has to offer these possibilities and have the courage to scrutinize the contents of its teaching critically, while also being in dialogue with experts and students about the working and applicability of the contents.

* *The author (M.Sc. - edu.) of this article is interested in the combination of adult education and e-learning. Hytinkoski worked in the Jyväskylä open university in teams of education and adult education in 2002-2003. From 2004 he has worked as a specialist in network-based education in the University of Helsinki Ruralia institute in Mikkeli. He is responsible for the planning and carrying out of the e-learning in the Co-op Studies university network in Finland.*

E-learning or learning through the web?

Computer-aided instruction (CAI) has been an area of study since the 1960s and 1970s. Early studies clarified how different teaching and questionnaire programs affect the learning of students. Later, the studies of CAI were collected into different meta-studies, and according to these the effect of computers/programs on learning has been statistically clearly positive (Edwards *et al*, 1975; Khaili & Shashaani 1994). In the 1980s, this so-called instructional technology thinking, which emphasizes CAI, met with a lot of resistance and was criticized especially for its perspectives and ways of teaching, which were biased and emphasized an overly behavioristic human concept (Sinko & Lehtinen 1998).

Online education (or web-based education/network-based education, e-learning) has been strongly on the rise especially in the latter half of the 1990s, but only in recent years has the interest of the researchers of e-learning shifted from technology towards the elements that promote and prevent the meaningfulness of e-learning and especially towards the possibilities of learning in groups and the construction of knowledge. In practice, this has led to research publications introducing different results and lists of the features of meaningful e-learning or pedagogic usability (Nielsen 1993; Jonassen 1995; Nevgi & Tirri 2003). According to David Jonassen *et al.* (1999), meaningful learning is active, constructive, intentional, and authentic, and involves a co-operative

process. This is a much-used ("modern") definition of the concept of "meaningful learning".¹

Online education has concentrated too much on transmitting information and too little attention has been paid to the forming of a social group, the processes of participation or the development of a learning culture suitable for an adult learner. Meaningful learning is active and conscious, and its measure is the individual's ability to solve (alone or with others) new problems creatively with the help of existing and new information. A meaningful (e-)learning environment consists of interesting and real problems and tasks, the possibility to present one's own views and the common construction of knowledge, which is realized in an eager group of students and when the group is perceived as safe. Versatile and personal web tutoring can be both a consciously chosen pedagogic solution supporting study and a central selling point of online education.

Approaching web-realism

Huge sums of money have been invested in the development and research of e-learning in proportion to Gross Domestic Product world-wide, but especially in Finland, where the Ministry of Education gave almost half a billion euros for the development of online education during 1995-1999 and 2000-2004. Online education has been developed and studied, and such high aims have been set that they cannot be reached - neither in Finland nor internationally. So far, we have faith in the future because of renewed

investment, new technology and pedagogic research. With these, the concrete and realistic aims have been pushed further and new pilots started. I believe, however, that soon this will change and the e-learning-hype will - at least partly - become an easy target for criticism, much like behaviorism in the 1970s and computer-aided instruction in the 1980s. And the time of glorified e-learning will be over and the time of 'web-realism' will have arrived.

The biggest problem is that pedagogic planning and the main principles of adult education have been forgotten while teachers have been trying to keep up with forever-progressing technology. The meaningful and authentic learning of students has been neglected for the sake of developing multimedia presentations and searching for funding, while university allowances are being cut at the same time. Often, the time of the producers of online education is wasted on assuring the financiers and the administrators in universities that the online education being provided is first rate and efficient, and not enough time is being used to guarantee a sufficient level of resources and producing good quality learning through the web. It is an indisputable fact that a high quality web course demands more resources, both in terms of skills and time, than a high quality traditional classroom-based course. With online education, many obstacles to distance learning can be overcome, but it is not a means of saving money or cutting the budget.

Elements of successful web courses

are: managing both the structure and content of the course, and maintaining a continuous high standard of experienced teaching and tutoring. Common discussion on the course website is useful and informative if it is clearly instructed and supervised, and most importantly, motivated as best as possible.

Successful online education in cooperation is the result of an active and sufficiently competent team. The different pieces or parts of a web course can be ordered from "subcontractors", but still the best result will be achieved by involving different skilled persons actively in the planning and production process. Web courses and more extensive e-learning projects always have to have one person tasked with the main responsibility for the course. This person, then, has to be supported by a small team committed to the project. The person responsible and the team are needed because these few persons have to have a total view of the e-learning arrangements. I stress sufficient resources because often, fancy www-pages, good-looking learning materials and a few multimedia clips are prepared for a web course. Then, the course is run by using certain basic tasks and routines, without changing the original teaching concept too much. Routines and certain operational modes are emphasised because all this is usually taken care of by only one or two persons, on a part-time basis, in addition to all their other tasks. And when concepts and operational modes are emphasised, rather than teaching and learning, then

learning becomes little more than simply receiving and storing information from outside. Then, is then good old behaviorism behind the much-advertised quality of e-learning afterall?

Finnish researcher Yrjö Engeström (1981, 12-13) has pointed out that "a person's meaningful learning is an active and conscious activity, with which s/he tries to solve problems and achieve better control over his/her environment and tasks. Learning is about selecting, adapting, interpreting and applying information. Learning is not simply receiving and storing. The measure of successful learning is the individual's skill to solve new problems creatively and effectively taking advantage of the principles s/he has learned. The measure of learning is not just repeating ready information".

We are, unfortunately, far from this in today's mediocre online education. Strangely, Ausubel (1968) and Engeström's (1981) points of view dating decades back are very topical when reading today's Finnish literature on e-learning, even more pertinent than the celebrated theses of today's good e-learning. They are close to the situational learning concept, which emphasises both the context of learning and the interaction and discussion of the learners and the teacher (Nevgi & Tirri 2001, 119). Classical meaningful learning approaches the themes of situation cognition (Ausubel 1968; Engeström 1981). One of its basic ideas is that a person's intelligent activity is always context-bound. Learning cannot thus be separated from the contexts in

which it has been learned and used (Hakkarainen, Lonka & Lipponen 2000:114). The theoretical and practical Finnish research of e-learning in recent years is very strongly based on Jonassen's (1995:60-63) list of the criteria of meaningful e-learning (e.g. Tella et al, 2004). As a summary we could point out that first, it is interesting how the pedagogic thinking characteristic of adult education suits and is close to the central theories of today's web pedagogy. The second, and perhaps even more notable point, is how, for instance, Engeström, in the citing above, expresses something that is too often forgotten in today's e-learning: a person's meaningful learning is an active and conscious activity, with which s/he tries to solve problems and achieve a better control over his/her environment and tasks - not just simply receiving, storing and repeating ready information. For this and the above-mentioned reasons, I believe that e-learning will face big problems and justifiable criticism in the near future.

From web-realism to the successful use of online education

Today, online education is already quite a familiar and widely used method of teaching. A lot has been written on the pedagogy of e-learning and it is still being studied. Co-op Studies will continue as the online education project of the University of Helsinki Ruralia Institute in Mikkeli. Our original small team has grown stronger along the way and now we coordinate the Co-op Studies university network project. In addition to the

University of Helsinki, three other Finnish universities are taking part: the University of Kuopio, the Lappeenranta University of Technology and the Helsinki School of Economics. There will still be new partners joining the university network in the Spring of 2006. Our teaching is carried out through the web. We also use classroom lecturing, in which we strongly emphasize the use of information and communication technology.

The Co-op Studies team at the moment does not have large resources or a lot of staff, but on the other hand, this may have been useful for us also. We cannot afford a fancy visual style or the use of versatile multimedia, nor do we have the skills for this. We have been able to develop both of these little by little in two years, but our real objectives have been elsewhere. We have invested all our resources into linking the contents of our web courses to both the society around us and the student's former knowledge, interests, aims and his/her immediate surroundings. These things we have tried to take into account in both the planning of the web courses and the active tutoring of them. Our web tutoring activates discussion, encourages critical

inspection of the contents, guides and supports - so the web tutor is intensely present and taking different roles in the progressing of the course. In both the planning of web courses and web tutoring our role is "adult educator-like".

The web tutor has an important role also from the perspective of community studying. Common studying, not to mention the common construction of knowledge, does not happen by itself in the web and "free discussion" is a different matter to critical dialogue about the content of the course. Through the study of the community, the contents of the courses can be linked to different students' advanced information and environments. On the other hand, together we can also progress case-study approaches, applying theory to the students' everyday environment.

All this may sound very theoretical and very far from practice. But I really believe that there is no better practice than good theory. First you have to figure out what you want and what is your and your team's and your web course's pedagogical point of view. Your pedagogical point of views and theories should be a good start for planning your online education.

References

- Ausubel, D. P. 1968. Educational Psychology: A cognitive view. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc.
- Edwards, J., Norton, S., Taylor, S., Weiss, M. & Dusseldorp, R. 1975. How effective is CAI? A review of the research. *Research in Review* 33. 147-153.
- Engeström, Y. 1981. Mielekäs oppiminen ja opetus. Valtion koulutuskeskuksen julkaisusarja B nro 17. 4. painoksen muuttama lisäpainos. Helsinki: Valtion painatuskeskus 1984.

- Hakkarainen, K., Lonka, K. & Lipponen, L. 2001. Tutkiva oppiminen - älykkään toiminnan rajat ja niiden ylittäminen. Helsinki: Werner Söderström osakeyhtiö,
- Himanen, P. 2000. The Hacker Ethic - and the Spirit of the Information Age. WSOY. New York, N.Y. 10171: Random House.
- Jonanssen, D.1995. Supporting communities of learning with technology: a vision for integrating technology with learning in schools. Educational Technology 1995, 35 (4), 60-63.
- Jonassen, D.H., Peck, K.L., & Wilson, B.G. (1999) Learning with technology. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill Publishing.
- Khaili, A. & Shashaani, L. 1994. The effectiveness of computer applications: a meta-analysis. Journal of Research on Computing in Education 27, 48-61.
- Laurinkari, J. 2004. Osuustoiminta - Utopiasta kansainvälisen yrittämisen muodoksi. Kuopio: Suomen Graafiset Palvelut Oy.
- Nevgi, A. & Tirri, K. 2001. Oppimista edistävät ja estävät tekijät verkko-opiskelussa. Teoksessa P. Sallila & P. Kalli (edit.) Verkot ja teknologia aikuisopiskelun tukena. Aikuiskasvatuksen 42. vuosikirja. Kansanvalistusseura ja Aikuiskasvatuksen tutkimusseura. Jyväskylä: Gummerus Kirjapaino Oy. 117-151.
- Nevgi, A. & Tirri, K. 2003. Hyvää verkko-opetusta etsimässä. Turku: Painosalama Oy.
- Nielsen, J. 1993. Usability Engineering. San Diego: Academic Press.
- Ruokamo, H & Pohjolainen, S. 1999. Etäopetus multimediaverkossa (ETÄKAMU) - tavoitetutkimus. Teoksessa H. Ruokamo & S. Pohjolainen (edit.) Etäopetus multimedia - Kansallisen multimediaohjelman ETÄKAMU-hanke. Sipoo: Paino-Center Oy. 1-38.
- Tella, S., Rajala, R., Ruokamo, H., Tissari, V., Vaattovaara, V. & Vahtivuori, S. 2004. HelLa-projekti - Helsingin ja Lapin yliopistojen tieto- ja viestintäteknikan opetuskäytön tutkimus- ja kehittämisprojekti 2001-2003.
- Sinko, S. & Lehtinen, E. 1998. Bitit ja pedagogiikka. Juva: Atena.

Notes

- ¹ Meaningful learning had already been defined the same way in the area of adult education, the difference being that it pays more attention to the special features of the learning of adults. According to the research of adult education, studying has to be useful and challenging to the student (the "classical" definition of meaningful learning) (Ausubel 1968; Engeström 1981).

Editorial and administrative office:

International Co-operative Alliance

**15, route des Morillons, CH-1218 Grand-Saconnex, Geneva
Switzerland**

Tel: (41-22) 929 88 88; Fax: (41-22) 798 41 22

E-mail: ica@ica.coop

The Review of International Co-operation is also available in Spanish from Intercoop Editoria Cooperative Ltda., Moreno 1733/41, 1093 Buenos Aires, Argentina

