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Canadian Journal of Nonprofit and Social Economy Research
Revue canadienne de recherche sur les OBSL et l'économie social

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EDITORIAL / ÉDITORIAL

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Hello ANSERJ readers,

As editors for the last three years, we have been honoured to have worked on ANSERJ together and with all of you, our readers and members. However, as spring rolls into summer, it is time for the journal to renew itself and its editors. As we say goodbye, we welcome to the journal our new editors, Dr. Jorge Sousa of the University of Alberta as English-language editor and Dr. Sonia Tello-Rozas of the Université du Québec à Montréal as French-language editor. We are confident that they will fill their roles with distinction and we personally thank them both for volunteering. Welcome!

Change offers the opportunity for reflection as well. There is much that we have achieved with this journal, but also much more that we can do. We believe that we need to strengthen the involvement in ANSERJ of our national and international communities. We need to reach more deeply into the Francophone communities in Québec and Canada. We need to encourage younger scholars and practitioners to participate in the journal. Finally, we need to strengthen our financial basis to ensure not just the continuation of our journal over the next five years, but the next 50. This will be a collective effort

Chers lectrices, chers lecteurs,

Travailler avec et pour vous, chers lecteurs et lectrices, à titre d'éditeurs de la revue ANSERJ ces trois dernières années s'est avéré un plaisir et un honneur. L'arrivée de l'été annonce cependant un changement de garde. Nous tirons en effet notre révérence et accueillons M. Jorge Sousa de l'Université d'Alberta à titre d'éditeur anglophone et Mme Sonia Tello Rojas de l'Université du Québec à Montréal à titre d'éditrice francophone. Nous sommes confiants qu'ils rempliront leurs nouveaux rôles avec brio et les remercions de s'être portés volontaires. Bienvenue!

Par la même occasion, soulignons que beaucoup a été accompli par la revue, mais qu'il y a de toute évidence place à faire plus et à faire mieux. Nous pourrions ainsi renforcer la présence de nos collaborateurs internationaux, mieux mobiliser les communautés francophones du Québec et du Canada et accueillir plus de jeunes chercheur.e.s et praticien.ne.s. Il serait aussi important de consolider notre base financière afin d'assurer la pérennité de notre revue. À titre d'anciens éditeurs, nous resterons bien entendu disponibles.

and we will, as former editors, remain committed to ANSERJ and serve in what ways we can.

We hope that you enjoy this edition of the journal, which has excellent pieces on a range of topics relevant to our readers. We hope that you consider submitting articles to the journal and to participate actively in its operations. And finally, we wish you all a wonderful summer 2018!

Nous espérons que la lecture de ce dernier numéro de la revue s'avérera agréable. Vous y trouverez d'excellents articles sur des sujets de pointe. Nous vous encourageons aussi à soumettre des articles à la revue et à participer à ses initiatives. Enfin, nous vous souhaitons un excellent été 2018!

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Self-Assessment and Strategic Planning at a Small Retail Food Co-op: Using the Sustainability and Planning Scorecard Kit in a Crisis Context

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ABSTRACT

After the 2015 collapse of Co-op Atlantic, the second-tier co-operative providing services and support to retail co-operatives in Canada's Atlantic Provinces, many co-operatives contracted with Sobeys to provide services under the Foodland banner. The co-operatives' ongoing challenge is to reaffirm their place in the community and their co-operative identity, contributing to ongoing innovation around a co-operative model appropriate to these new circumstances. This article analyzes the strategic planning process undertaken by a small PEI Foodland co-operative as it defined new directions during this crisis. It also examines the co-operative's use of a collaboratively developed Sustainability and Planning Scorecard Toolkit. The toolkit was designed to help co-operatives through their self-evaluation process, while also facilitating the further steps of planning and taking action.

RÉSUMÉ

Suite au démantèlement de Coop Atlantique en 2015, la coopérative de second niveau qui offrait des services et du soutien aux coopératives de consommation dans les provinces atlantiques, plusieurs coopératives ont négocié une entente d'approvisionnement avec Sobeys, sous la bannière Foodland. Ces coopératives doivent réaffirmer leur place dans la communauté et leur distinction coopérative, et contribuer au développement d'un modèle coopératif innovant et adapté à cette nouvelle réalité. Cette recherche analyse le processus de planification stratégique ayant permis à une petite coopérative de l'Î.-P.-É. de relever ce défi dans un contexte de crise. Nous étudions aussi l'utilisation par la coopérative de l'Outil d'évaluation et de planification du développement coopératif durable, outil développé de façon collaborative. Cet outil a été conçu pour appuyer les coopératives dans une démarche d'auto-évaluation, tout en leur permettant de poursuivre les différentes étapes de conception et de mise en œuvre d'un plan stratégique.

KEYWORDS / MOTS CLÉS Strategic planning; Retail cooperative; Governance; Non-financial reporting; Cooperative difference / Coopérative de consommation rurale; Planification stratégique; Outil d'auto-evaluation de développement durable; Distinction coopérative; Gouvernance

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INTRODUCTION

The twentieth-century leaders of the Antigonish Movement, Reverend Jimmy Tompkins and Reverend Dr. Moses Coady, proposed an ambitious program to Atlantic co-operators: building a co-operative economy with local retail co-operatives at its core (Dodaro & Pluta, 2012; Sacouman, 1977). This proposition was inspired by European schools of thought such as the École de Nîmes in France, the Hamburg School in Germany, and the Manchester School in England. In Canada, at least two other co-operative thinkers proposed the same model: Victor Barbeau in Québec and Paul Hubert Casselman in Ontario (Leclerc, 1982).

Building from its roots in the Antigonish Movement, Co-op Atlantic, the second tier co-operative servicing local retail co-operatives in the Atlantic Provinces, was a driver of this plan. With its collapse in 2015, the local retail co-operatives were left to find ways to reinvent themselves, to reaffirm their place in their communities. Their commitment to local control, democracy in the economy, support of local operations, and self-help initiatives remains; however, without Co-op Atlantic, a new model of sustainability for local co-operatives must be developed.

This article analyzes one attempt to reinvent the local retail co-operative model by a small PEI co-operative: Morell Consumers Co-op. In 2015, Morell launched a strategic planning process to adapt to its changing context and to define a new direction in a crisis context. This analysis of Morell's experience contributes, first, to the understanding of the factors that impact the initiation, conduct, and completion of strategic planning, even during a period of upheaval. As part of this investigation, this article explores how and why Morell's leaders succeeded in prioritizing systematic and comprehensive self-analysis, visioning, and planning—providing stable and forward-thinking leadership for the co-operative, its staff, and members.

Second, in considering the co-operative's use of a collaboratively developed Sustainability and Planning Scorecard Toolkit (SPSK), the article assesses the usefulness of this toolkit in relation to the self-assessment process and in facilitating the move from self-analysis to planning for action.

The literature on social enterprises (including co-operatives and nonprofits) emphasizes that strategic planning is one of the basic elements of good governance. James Austin, Howard Stevenson, and Jane Wei-Skillern (2006), writing about social entrepreneurship, emphasize that the ability to remain attuned to the impacts of contextual changes in the external environment is a critical skill. Brett Fairbairn, Murray Fulton, and Dionne Pohler (2015) identify a number of governance skills required by a co-operative board, including the provision of long-term strategic guidance and the development of a right view of the future. Consultants emphasize this as well, drawing on their experience with a variety of organizations. The consultancy website Governance Matters (n.d.), which focuses on nonprofit governance, positions strategic planning as a vital part of providing direction for an organization. Canadian co-operative developers also position strategic planning as part of good governance for sustainability and adherence to the co-operative's commitments (see, for example, Hanley 2007; Savard, 2007). Carter McNamara (n.d.) adds that while strategic planning is important for increasing the ability of organizations to serve their mission, the real benefit is the process not the document. John Bryson (2011) agrees, describing environments for organizations in the public and nonprofit sector as increasingly uncertain, with heightened complexity and interconnectedness. He argues that strategic planning, while not an end in itself, catalyzes strategic thinking, acting, and learning, which are essential for resilience in such environments. In a more recent work, Bryson (2018) expands on this idea, capitalizing and building on what he describes as "a major trend in the field by explicitly blending strategic planning with leadership and ongoing management" (p. xviii), all of which contribute to effective strategic governance.

Though strategic planning is widely seen as an important component of good governance, it has not been common for co-operatives, or indeed other organizations, to engage in strategic planning during times of crisis. In contrast to customary practice, a literature is developing that builds on the idea that instead of eschewing strategic planning in times of change, organizations can increase resilience by engaging in such processes. Bryson's (2018) book on nonprofit and public sector organizations advocates for the value of ongoing strategic planning and management in times of rapid change and in complex environments. Similar claims are made in relation to co-operatives. For example, a working paper on co-operative business strategy by Murray Fulton and Julie Gibbings (2006) makes two core arguments related to the idea that resilience is improved by continuing to plan, even during times of rapid change. Their first argument is that in such circumstances the manner in which organizations create and assemble knowledge is likely to require modification. Second, ongoing flexibility and responsiveness is required.

John Vargo and Erica Seville (2011), in referring to small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in general, also find the ability to plan and take action during a crisis to be an important component of resilience. They propose bringing together the usually separate processes of crisis management and strategic planning to develop a resilient planning strategy. To do this, Vargo and Seville (2011) review literature at the juncture of crisis management and strategic planning to develop two models that can help organizations improve their ability to survive and thrive in a crisis.

Johnston Birchall's (2014) research on co-operatives—supported by Vargo & Seville's (2011) research on a range of SMEs—concludes that smallness can be an advantage. His investigations suggest that small co-operatives seem to have more effective governance than large ones, though consumer co-operatives do not do as well as worker and producer co-operatives. Governing in close relationship with members is key, and consumer co-operatives' strong dependency on non-members makes for added challenges. Research on the topic of governing for resilience in a Scottish second-tier agricultural co-operative (Simmons, Yuill, & Booth, 2015) conceptualizes resilience as referring to the ability to balance successful resistance (finding strength in a reaffirmation of the roots of the co-operative) with successful adaptation (in response to external change drivers). This is an argument in favour of strategic planning and governance as understood in the contemporary literature.

This article takes up Morell's story in the period of 2015–2016, during which it took the step of initiating and conducting strategic planning while in a crisis. The following section describes the methodology and the study model for this research. A description of the context in which Morell's planning experience took place follows. Then, a detailed analysis of Morell's planning experience is presented, followed by the summary and conclusion, which synthesizes the findings and discusses the contributions this research makes to the literature.

METHODOLOGY

This study evolved from a partnered applied research project as part of the Measuring the Co-operative Difference Research Network (MCDRN)[1] to develop and put into practice a toolkit to help retail co-operatives self-assess and plan (the SPSK). Co-op Atlantic, employees and members of local co-operative grocery stores, and academic researchers collaborated to develop a tool that would intentionally incorporate the insights of those who would be using the tool, and provide these users with an inside understanding of the logic of the tool. As Massimo Battaglia, Lara Bianchi, Marco Frey, and Emilio Passetti (2015) found in the study of an Italian retail co-operative, such participatory engagement provided the opportunity to understand how the co-operatives defined sustainability for their organizations. André Leclerc, Leslie Brown, and Elizabeth Hicks (2012) discuss the details of this development process.

The SPSK is a user-friendly tool to guide retail co-operatives through a self-assessment process in relation to their own priorities and assist in the strategic planning process. It includes the Web-based expert system referred to as the Scorecard, a users' guide, and two survey instruments useful for completing the Scorecard. The Appendix describes more fully the purpose of the SPSK, how it can be used in strategic planning, and the steps toward its completion.

One section of the Scorecard addresses the seven principles considered integral to the co-operative identity internationally, forming the building blocks to the co-operative difference (International Co-operative Alliance [ICA], 2015). Co-op Atlantic and the participating co-operatives considered these to be central to the co-operative identity, and wanted their tool to include practices for each principle (see Table 2). During the Scorecard's development, they participated in identifying what these practices should be. For a co-operative completing the Scorecard, discussion around prioritizing these practices helps clarify what the co-operative difference means to that particular co-operative. The co-operative can then take action in line with its own priorities regarding co-operative identity and the co-operative business model.

The co-operatives faced many challenges during the project to develop and implement the SPSK, including: the lengthy period of collaboration, turnover of board and staff at the participating co-operatives, limited experience with strategic planning, years of decline in an increasingly competitive environment for local food co-operatives, and, ultimately, the demise of Co-op Atlantic. By mid-2014, it was becoming clear that Co-op Atlantic was in trouble and many individual co-operatives were scrambling to find their own stable financial footing. Of the 11 co-operatives that had taken steps toward using the Scorecard, four had completed all or part of it by 2014 and were poised to move forward with implementation. It was intended that their experience would have a demonstration effect on other co-ops. However, faced with the challenges identified above, only two began to actively pursue the idea of implementing strategic planning using the SPSK, and only one of these, Morell Consumers Co-operative (Morell), completed the process.[2]

From the beginning Morell took an active role in the project to develop the Scorecard and during that process became committed to not only completing the Scorecard but also developing its very first strategic plan (Brown, Hicks, Leclerc, Jackson-Wood, & Petersen, 2015). Morell was one of the co-operatives that participated in developing and piloting the Scorecard, and it used the customer/member survey to complete the full Scorecard for its co-operative.

The researchers were aware both that Co-op Atlantic was in trouble and that Morell was nevertheless moving forward with a first strategic planning session in March of 2015. Then, despite what was happening to Co-op Atlantic, Morell decided in May 2015 to conduct an online member-customer survey (one of the tools in the SPSK) and to ask the researchers to compile the results. This survey, discussed in more detail below, made it very clear that Morell was continuing with the strategic planning process. This merited further study. When approached by the researchers in the fall of 2015, Morell agreed to allow the researchers to study its strategic planning process, despite the uncertainty and turmoil still being experienced.

As the only co-operative to complete the SPSK and follow through with conducting a strategic plan, Morell merits study for its intrinsic importance. According to Robert E. Stake (2000), an intrinsic case study "is not undertaken primarily because the case represents other cases or because it illustrates a particular trait or problem, but because, in all its particularity and ordinariness, this case itself is of interest" (p. 136). Further, both the researchers and Morell believed that other co-operatives could learn from Morell's experience, and an analysis of that experience could contribute to the literature on initiating and conducting strategic planning. The case study approach was chosen for its flexibility and ability to reflect the complexity of Morell's particular experience (Hyett, 2014; Stake, 2000).

The study investigates two aspects of the Morell experience, as shown in the study model (see Figure 1). First Morell's strategic planning process is examined: why and how the process proceeded in the midst of a crisis. Which factors, for

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example, favoured the initiation and administration of strategic planning in this co-operative? Second, the co-operative's use of the SPSK as a strategic planning tool is studied. How, for example, did the SPSK assist Morell through the self-evaluation process, while also facilitating the further steps of planning and taking action?

Figure 1: Study model
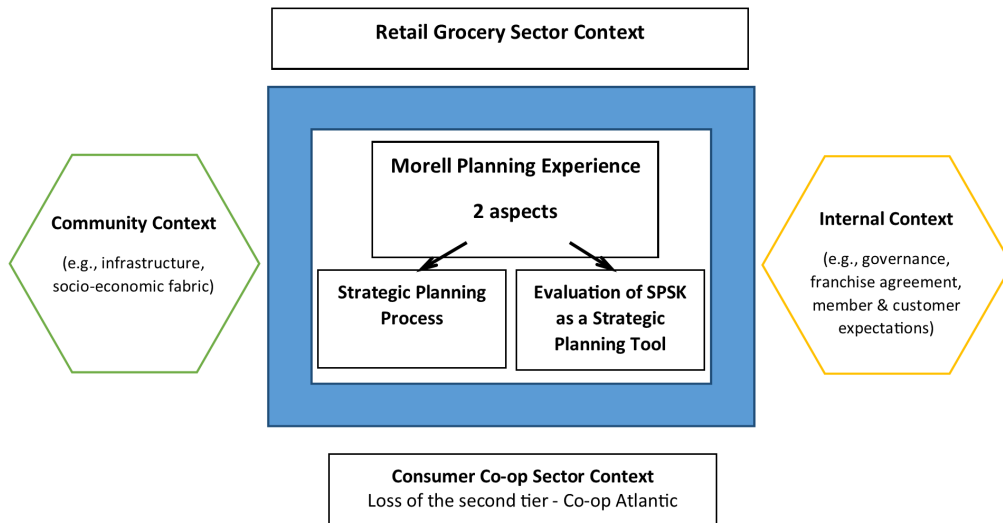
The environment in which Morell was operating is important for understanding the two aspects of Morell's planning experience. For small locally owned co-operatives the four contexts presented in the model are of particular importance. 1) The business sector in which the co-operative operates may suggest opportunities and challenges that are relevant to the co-operative's competitive environment and to its strategic planning process. 2) Small co-operatives do not generally have the internal expertise and other resources to carry out strategic planning; therefore, the extent of co-operative support, or lack thereof, from second tier co-operatives or other apex organizations can influence the decision of whether to undertake strategic planning and how to proceed. 3) As community-based organizations, small co-operatives look to their communities not only for customers, employees, and suppliers but also for participation in the governance of the co-operative as owners. Thus, the sustainability of the community and the co-operative's relationship with it impacts the co-operative's sustainability and the strategic planning process it is willing and able to undertake. 4) The internal operations of an organization at the time it undertakes self-assessment and planning activities can affect the strategic planning process, and, as an organization democratically controlled by its members/owners, co-operative governance adds another dimension to this process. These four contexts, and how they relate to Morell, are discussed more fully in the next section of this article.

To gain a more fulsome understanding of the contexts in which Morell was operating, the process followed by Morell's strategic planning, and how the SPSK was used in this process, documentary and observational evidence, and data collected from multiple sources were analyzed. In addition to documents such as newspaper articles, industry publications, academic journals, and government sources, information was garnered from notes, including records of meetings, conferences, and workshops at which participating co-operatives, including Morell, were present. Morell provided other documents and records, including minutes of board meetings, audited financial statements, and by-laws. The results from Morell's completed Scorecard were extremely useful, as were materials related to Morell's strategic planning sessions, e.g., the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) analysis from the first strategic planning session, researchers' observations at the second strategic planning session, the terms of reference for the Analysis and Integration

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Sub-committee (AISC) (i.e., the strategic planning committee), and records and reports produced by the AISC. Clarification of these materials was kindly provided by one of the board members as needed.

Since the researchers worked collaboratively with Morell during this project, first developing the SPSK, then sharing Morell's experience using the SPSK with other co-operatives, there were many occasions to meet over the years. Relationships developed based on mutual respect and trust, providing the researchers with a greater understanding of and experience with the organizational actors, generating useful insights, and access to documentation for the case study.

To ensure this case study reflects Morell's understanding, the researchers forwarded a draft of this article to a contact on the board for comments and distribution to the board of directors. She presented a summary of the article at a board of directors meeting and made the full article available.

The next section of the article discusses the four contexts depicted in the study model for Morell.

THE TRENDS THAT ARE REDEFINING THE CONTEXT

This study model identifies four important aspects of the context in which Morell operates. These impact Morell's ability to assess the future, and to identify avenues for action. As will be shown, the overall context is dynamic and complex.

Changing environment for the retail grocery sector
The retail food industry is changing rapidly. The following six trends are particularly significant for retail food stores in Atlantic Canada:

- The increasing popularity and consolidation of nation-wide and international chain stores, such as Atlantic Superstore and Walmart (Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada [AAC], 2016). As shown in Figure 2, these conglomerates have 22 stores in PEI, 14 of which are within 50 kilometres of Morell.

Figure 2: Retail Food Stores in Prince Edward Island, excluding Morell, July 2016

■ 13 Sobeys
■ 7 Superstores
■ 2 Walmarts
■ 5 Farmers Markets (fixed)
■ 10 Other
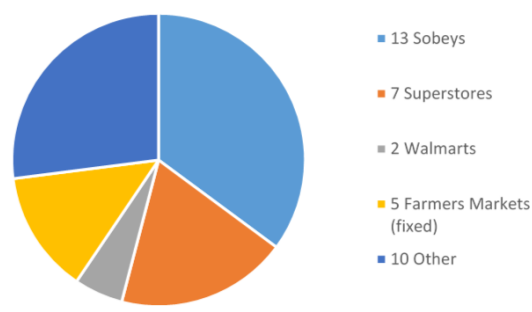
(Note: This wide range of information on Canada's retail food sector came from detailed searches in July 2016. For full details please contact the authors).

- A wider variety of services being offered by retail conglomerates to entice shoppers, e.g., bank services, clothing, pharmaceuticals, and gas (Kwong, 2015).
- Ever-evolving consumer tastes and concerns, such as health implications and food quality (AAC, 2014).
- Consumer concern about the environment and sustainability creating a market for organic and natural products (AAC, 2005).
- The growing desire of consumers to support local producers by purchasing local products (Finnamore, 2008).

- The development and application of technologies that transform the relationships of customers to stores, such as online shopping and interactive shopper support (Kwon, 2012; Liem & Doering, 2018; Lorenzsonn, 2018).

Morell's ability to respond to these trends is impacted to a significant degree by Sobeys' initiatives and decisions. However, as a locally-based co-operative, Morell has some scope for working closely with members, staying in touch with their priorities and needs in innovative ways, and working with other co-operatives, nonprofits, and businesses in the area. In their work with the Scottish Agricultural Organisations Society (SAOS), Richard Simmons, Bob Yuill, and Jim Booth (2015) find that locally rooted co-operatives may have the opportunity to cultivate deeper member relationships rather than shallow transactions. They conclude that:

> Strong, resilient and successful co-operatives are built on a clear, well-defined purpose, supported by a sound business model, which is sustained by building member loyalty, identity and commitments through delivering value to members in ways that build both economic and social capital. (p. 39)

These findings are compatible with the advice from agencies such as Agriculture and Agri-food Canada, which is anchored in the recognition of a growing need to tailor retail store offerings to local consumers. All retail food stores and co-operatives have the opportunity to respond to local trends, but small independent stores are often best suited to responding to local needs and tastes; it is possible that a recognition and promotion of the co-op difference could entice more local customers and demonstrate that co-operatives already address some of these local consumer priorities. Morell's self-assessment on co-operative identity practices, and comments made during the strategic planning session, suggest that it may be aware of this potential. Furthermore, co-operatives have a positive impact on local economies that is not necessarily recognized by their communities and that could also potentially be promoted to great effect (Lamine, 2014; Nembhard, 2014; Vieta & Lionais, 2015; Zeuli & Deller, 2007). A recent impact study of food co-operatives (Catlette, 2012), identifies a number of economic and social contributions, including the fact that "co-ops are found to have a local economic multiplier of 1.6 compared to 1.36 for a conventional grocery store (n.p.)."

Consumer co-operative sector: Loss of Co-op Atlantic
In May of 2015, the member-owners of Co-op Atlantic voted in favour of exiting the food and gas wholesale and retail business (Randall, 2015). It had been operating under different names for nearly 90 years and was owned by local retail, farmer, and other co-operatives across Atlantic Canada (Co-op Atlantic, 2018). Co-op Atlantic had offered local co-operatives a variety of services including wholesaling, training, marketing, human resources management, and so on. While the reasons for its closure are the subject of much analysis (Fairbairn, Fulton, & Pohler, 2015; Lake & Leviten-Reid, 2014; Webb, 2016), the immediate consequence was that the local retail co-operatives now needed to find another wholesaler, with very few options available.

While in the process of winding down, Co-op Atlantic facilitated negotiations on behalf of its members and corporate stores, and a deal was reached with the Sobeys group.[3] At Morell, as with the other co-operatives accepted by Sobeys, the board of directors signed its own franchise agreement. This arrangement, while reducing Morell's autonomy, allows it to continue as a locally owned co-operative under the Foodland banner, a banner used by Sobeys in Atlantic Canada for small community stores (Kucharsky, 2015). The co-operatives lost advantages relating to the ownership of their own co-operative wholesaler and support organization, but now have advantages associated with being part of a large network, including logistic chain support, advertisement, and investment commitments.

The integration of Atlantic retail co-operatives into the Canada-wide retail network continues the consolidation trend, and the number of independent food retail co-operatives continues to decline. In 2010, there were 57 in the Atlantic Provinces.

In 2014, the year before Co-op Atlantic closed, 51, and in 2016, only 45 food co-operatives were in operation. These had signed a contract with Sobeys or were working with another supplier. In addition, local co-operatives are no longer supported by a second tier co-operative in embedding the co-operative difference in their strategic planning. In this new reality, local co-operatives are likely to find it difficult to continue as a distinct form of business within the larger corporate body. As part of a range of governance initiatives, an evaluation and strategic planning tool such as SPSK, which is designed to suit the co-operative form of enterprise, can be extremely helpful.

The community context
Concern for community is one of the fundamental co-operative principles defining co-operative identity (ICA, 2016). As argued by Marcelo Vieta and Doug Lionais (2015), "cooperatives are most effective when they are both connected to larger social-justice movements and when simultaneously rooted securely to local communities" (p. 8). While co-operatives contribute to a healthy community, a healthy local community is also very important to the sustainability of local co-operatives. Such co-operatives draw on the local community for members and good governance, shoppers, employees, locally sourced products, and for allies in sustaining and building local communities. This strong two-way linkage between co-operatives and their communities underlines the importance of examining the sustainability of the community Morell has served for over 70 years. To the extent that Morell still has the autonomy and support of its members to pursue such commitments, the co-operative still has room to plan and strategize.

As of the 2011 census, the community of Morell had a population of 313, a 5.7 percent decline since 2001 (Statistics Canada, 2013) with a median age of 41, and 21 percent under 18. By 2015–2016 the population had dropped to 297 (Statistics Canada, 2016). However, the village of Morell serves nearby communities and families with a credit union and bank, a community rink, a gas, liquor, and convenience store, a library, a walk-in clinic and pharmacy, a consolidated K-8 school and regional high school, churches, and other basic services. It has an active village council and a number of nonprofit associations. In the summer, the combination of repeat summer residents and transient tourists swells the population. As in other parts of PEI, many of the long-term repeat summer residents play a vital role in island life. In 2007, PEI had 8,000 long-term summer residents (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 2007).

The three contexts noted this far—the grocery sector, the consumer co-operative sector, and the community context—clearly both restrict and expand the scope for action on the part of Morell. Morell's board and management must address the challenges of being located in a community with low expectations of population growth and a dramatically shifting and complex retail environment, while identifying and building on the strengths of the community—creating a plan that can help a dynamic co-operative keep local control in the hands of the communities it serves. Here the internal governance context is all-important. Are the co-operative's leadership and governance processes sufficient for moving forward in such circumstances?

The co-operative: Internal context of governance
As indicated in the literature review above, there is substantial evidence that the nature of the internal context, particularly that of governance, is vital in supporting the resilience of organizations that are operating in volatile environments. Governing for resilience, both proactively and adaptively, can impact long-term sustainability as a retail store that is also a co-operative. Morell has had to adapt its internal context in light of the loss of the regional co-operative network. While remaining a co-operative, the co-op board and management have had to identify areas where they could exercise agency, where there was room for manoeuvring on their own in light of the rapidly changing environment. The franchise agreement with a new primary supplier, Sobeys, opened up some opportunities and closed down others. Management and staff had to learn new systems and operations very quickly. Members and customers have had to adapt to different products and board members have been feeling their way forward in their leadership role. Together these result in significant external

pressures on Morell in its efforts to remain sustainable—to grow and develop while maintaining its co-operative identity (Brown & Winstanley, 2008).

In Morell's favour is the fact that the store's building was completely renovated in the 1990s and has been well maintained ever since. By industry standards, it is a small community store, with annual sales of less than $5 million, but this has been enough for ongoing profitability. The co-operative's substantial membership, 1,670 members in 2016, is recruited from Morell and adjacent communities' full-time and summer residents. Management, staff, and members of the board keep in contact with members and customers informally as part of their community life, and in the store itself. Face-to-face informal contacts and relationships remained central during the time of transition.

Also in Morell's favour is that the board of directors wanted to adapt its governance practices to address the challenges and strengths of the community in which Morell is located, and to respond to the restructuring and new franchise arrangements resulting from the loss of Co-op Atlantic. Most of the board members from the 2014–2015 board stayed with the co-operative up to the number of terms outlined in the by-laws. This provided Morell with continuity and experience, while also introducing new members to the board. The manager and staff also stayed with the co-operative. The continued service of volunteers and employees is a testament to their optimism about the co-operative and their vision of its future.

In summary, this exploration of the contexts identified in the study model shows that Morell has indeed been dealt a challenging hand. Morell is in a highly competitive retail market, and operates in a small rural community with an ageing population, little success in attracting new immigrants, and with little, if any, prospect for growth. While all small independent retail food stores face some of these same challenges, Morell is positioned differently in that it is a co-operative. Though the co-operative retail food sector in Atlantic Canada has been experiencing difficulties for many years resulting in a number of store closures, the collapse of Co-op Atlantic exacerbated the situation as its member co-operatives no longer have a second-tier co-op to rely on for support, and do not have the benefit of regular contact and exchange with other retail food co-operatives in the region. The internal context at the time Morell began its strategic planning process was thus one of crisis. Morell's leaders focused on what they could accomplish within their areas of control, undertook the job of understanding and responding to member expectations through this transition, and proceeded to identify and plan for adaptive and proactive initiatives into the future.

As of the spring of 2018—two years after submitting its strategic plan to the AGM—Morell is still a profitable co-operative, and is finding ways to address its various challenges.

SELF-ASSESSMENT AND STRATEGIC PLANNING

This article now turns to the detailed examination of Morell's strategic planning process—how and why it initiated and followed through with strategic planning during the tumultuous period described above. The article will also examine the co-operative's use of the SPSK, with a particular focus on the Scorecard as a tool for generating information vital to the operations and identity of the co-operative, and for producing a summary report informed by the co-operative's own priorities. What role did the SPSK play in helping Morell through the self-evaluation process and in taking the further steps of planning and taking action based on the plan?

Initiating and conducting strategic planning at Morell: A multi-year journey
Factors within and external to the development of the SPSK affected the nature and timing of Morell's planning process. These included the contextual factors elaborated above, the tool-development timeline, and factors specific to Morell itself. This section focuses on the ways that the initial decision to engage in strategic planning, and the resilience shown,

was significantly affected by Morell's experience as part of developing and implementing the Scorecard, and by its own internal dynamics.

Feedback from Morell and board meeting minutes indicate that several elements built into the design of the research project positively affected Morell's engagement and its commitment to following through. These included impetus and support from the research team and, most particularly, enthusiasm generated through contact with other co-operatives throughout the collaborative design, testing, piloting, and initial implementation phases of the Scorecard project. Supported by the board and manager, the champion (see Table 1) who emerged within Morell took full advantage of all opportunities to engage with the project and with Co-op Atlantic. Co-op Atlantic's ongoing support was especially vital at key decision points.[4] Notable too was that despite the loss of momentum from Co-op Atlantic, Morell's leaders decided to reinvigorate their commitment to strategic planning and to focus on areas where they felt they could have a positive impact on their co-operative's future.

Early on, Morell's board noted that the SPSK could help the co-operative address relevant issues. The January 2011 board minutes report that "The issue that [Morell] is having with its sales may be an ideal use for this scorecard." At this point board members expressed strong interest in testing the draft Scorecard and implementing it for the co-operative, making their opinion known at workshops and other co-operative events. When piloting the draft Scorecard, the co-operative leaders were struck by Practice #10, "The co-op board and management develop a strategic plan," and discussed this practice in some depth. They wondered what strategic planning is, what it might mean for their co-op, why the recommended benchmark was *yes*, and noted that they had to score themselves as *no*. This helped them to contextualize the messages they had been hearing as part of the MCDRN. Throughout the research project, Co-op Atlantic and the researchers promoted the SPSK as useful in strategic planning, and this came up at project meetings and conferences in which Morell was involved.

In 2014, the board decided to begin the process of creating a strategic plan and contacted Co-op Atlantic to inquire about a facilitator. The minutes indicate that by June 2014, Morell was actively planning a first strategic planning session. This was scheduled for March 2015 despite board members having heard in December of 2014 that no strategic planning facilitator would be available from Co-op Atlantic. Morell and the other co-operatives that owned Co-op Atlantic voted in May to sell the food and gas wholesale and retail business to Sobeys (Canadian Grocer Staff, 2015). Following a separate process of negotiation, the co-operatives began retailing under the Foodland banner.

In May 2015, Morell invited members and non-member customers to complete an online survey (one of the tools in the SPSK) focusing on member and customer perceptions of their relationship with the co-op.[5] The idea was to elicit feedback that could inform the strategic planning process. However, for reasons that likely included the breaking news of the transition to Foodland, and the fact that members who were summer residents had not yet arrived in PEI, only 87 member customers and two non-member customers completed the survey. While recognizing that the results could not be interpreted as representative of all members of the co-op, the board still requested that the researchers prepare a report on the results.

These initiatives were followed up with a second planning session in January 2016 after which the facilitators prepared a document that pulled together a summary of the session, including some elements of a draft strategic plan. The board agreed to set up a committee, which became the Analysis and Integration Subcommittee (AISC), to shepherd the final steps of the process. This committee was mandated to "review, analyze and integrate the results outlined in documents developed for or developed by the Board of Directors [of Morell]" (AISC, 2016). These documents included the Scorecard Summary, the 2015 Membership Survey report, SWOT findings (2015), results of a subsequent facilitated planning

session (2016), a February 2016 email from the research team, and other documents as identified by the sub-committee. The AISC submitted its report at the April 2016 board meeting where it was approved, and an implementation and tracking process was set in place.

The journey from participating in the initial piloting of the Scorecard and encountering the idea of strategic planning, through to the completion of the Scorecard and development of a plan took five-and-a-half years—punctuated by project team meetings, workshops, webinars, conferences, the closure of some sister co-operatives, an initial stab at planning, and the decline and eventual loss of Co-op Atlantic—all within a dramatically changing industry context. How can this level of resilience and commitment be explained? What might other co-operatives, especially small locally rooted ones, learn from Morell's experience?

The research literature offers guidance in considering the internal factors that allowed the Morell strategic planning process to be resilient in the face of its many external challenges. Lloyd Harris and Emmanuel Ogbonna (2006) conducted research on U.K. firms, motivated by the observation that "too little is known of the contingencies that precede the instigation of formal planning" (p. 100). They note that this is odd, given the strong consensus in the literature that firms are more likely to eschew strategic planning than to initiate it, and that the consequences of strategic planning are typically positive. Drawing on an extensive review of research on both large and small firms, Harris and Ogbonna (2006) developed ten hypotheses, all related to internal organizational factors. Their empirical study of the initiation of strategic planning by U.K. firms supported eight of these. There was no discussion of the role of boards, but instead the focus was on management, especially top management.

Peter Brews and Devavrat Purohit's (2007) multinational research on strategic planning in unstable environments also emphasizes that internal factors matter—the environmental context does not fully determine the initiation of strategic planning. They found that while planning increases as environmental instability grows, factors over which the organization has some control (i.e., planning duration and the decentralization of planning) are stronger than perceived environmental instability at explaining increases in planning.

Particularly useful for analyzing Morell's experience is the work by John Bryson and Robert C. Einsweiler (1988) and by Bryson and William Roering (1988). In identifying seven criteria that impact success in initiating and conducting strategic planning in public agencies and nonprofit organizations, their criteria emphasize the role of internal factors. Drawing on both research and experience, these authors present these as factors that cumulatively impact success in initiating and conducting strategic planning.

Bryson and his colleagues also remind us that developing a good tool is but a first step (Bryson & Einsweiler, 1988; Bryson & Roering, 1988). Certainly that point resonates with Canadian research on tools and tool use. Regarding tool use by co-operatives in particular, many advocates ruefully acknowledge that few tools are implemented to the degree anticipated, and they may not be used effectively in strategic planning (Brown et al., 2015; Christianson, 2016; Hough, 2015).

Table 1 presents the experience of Morell in initiating and conducting strategic planning in relation to each of the seven criteria mentioned above. Morell's process was characterized by all seven of the criteria identified.

Table 1: The process of initiating and conducting strategic planning—seven criteria

Criteria	Morell Experience in Relation to Each Criterion
1. Including a sponsor/stakeholder who has the power and authority to legitimize the strategic planning process.	Co-op Atlantic was a well-respected sponsor for the co-operatives involved in the project, supporting the work financially and with personnel, and declaring the Scorecard Project their International Year of Co-operatives Legacy Project. As Co-op Atlantic's own crisis deepened, support declined. Resources, such as a 2012 document on strategic planning, remained available and contributed to Morell's decision to proceed. This guide incorporated a description of the SPSK and advocated its use in the self-evaluation phase.
2. An effective champion who encourages the participants along the way, and who may in fact lead the planning process.	One board member emerged early in the collaborative project as a proactive process champion both for the completion of the Scorecard and for the initiation and conduct of strategic planning. The champion was elected to the board of Co-op Atlantic in 2014, and gained valuable knowledge, experience, and networks in this position. The champion showed initiative in obtaining advice from Co-op Atlantic and from the PEI Co-op Council.
3. A group designated with the responsibility for leading/conducting strategic planning.	Mentioned occasionally early on, strategic planning was regularly on the board agenda from 2014 on. The board was supportive, and relied heavily on the champion to lead discussion of that agenda item. Designation of responsibilities and tasks took place at board meetings. After the second planning session, the AISC took a leadership role. A board member who had previous experience with strategic planning served on the AISC.
4. A group for whom disruptions and delays do not derail the process.	The process suffered from several unanticipated delays including the loss of a Co-op Atlantic facilitator who had been providing services around strategic planning in December 2014. The champion, with several leaders from the co-operative, kept the process moving forward. Continuity (of the board members and manager) was very important. Support and encouragement from the research team also played a part, both through its relationship with the champion and by facilitating the co-operative's ongoing engagement with other co-operatives. The researchers' interventions on two occasions may have helped foster enthusiasm, most notably in the fall of 2015 (inviting Morell to participate in a case study) and in February of 2016 (inviting ideas for how to proceed).
5. Avoiding narrow and rigid understandings of what constitutes a strategic plan.	The co-operative board and management discussed the nature of strategic planning on several occasions at board meetings and at gatherings of the research project. Initial guidance from Co-op Atlantic was valuable. Having a champion willing to lead the process when Co-op Atlantic could not, meant that the co-operative exercised a high degree of autonomy. There were no externally imposed expectations, nor were there rigid views on what the plan must look like.
6. Knowing when to bring together the necessary information and people at various crucial decision junctures.	The champion again played a significant facilitating role, providing information and encouraging interested parties to come forward as needed. Members of the board stepped up, scheduling times to conduct planning, and took the vitally important step of setting up the AISC (with board and employee membership).
7. Willingness to engage in open discussion and analysis of arguments that address a range of different criteria.	Morell participants involved in completing the Scorecard engaged in wide-ranging discussions around issues and ideas that arose as they worked together to complete it. This openness continued into the strategic planning, as was apparent at the January session during which an inclusive and mutually respectful process was implemented.

Note: Adapted from Bryson & Einsweiler, 1988; and Bryson and Roering, 1988

SPSK as a tool for assessing performance on key elements of co-operative principles
As indicated above, even before the collapse of Co-op Atlantic, Morell and the other co-operatives wanted to assess themselves in relation to the ICA principles. They believed these principles to be the foundation of their co-operative identity, even before the collapse of Co-op Atlantic. It has taken on particular poignancy now that the stores have lost the key support of their regional federation and are seeking to maintain their identity as co-operatives while adjusting to being Foodland stores.

Morell evaluated itself in relation to all the practices related to the co-operative principles, giving them a high priority level. Table 2 presents the results of Morell's scores on the 29 basic practices, and all 36 associated practices.

For each of the seven co-operative principles, Table 2 shows at least one practice to celebrate, and a combined total of 17 basic and 15 associated practices. The summary also indicates one or more practices to improve upon, for four of the seven principles, six basic, and 14 associated practices. These results give Morell much to be pleased about, while also providing direction for self-improvement. Two of the seven themes identified in Morell's final strategic plan specifically address five of the six basic practices and all 14 of the associated practices identified as needing improvement.

Table 2: Assessing performance in relation to the co-operative principles

SECTION I: SEVEN CO-OP PRINCIPLES (ICA, 2015)	BASIC PRACTICES				ASSOCIATED PRACTICES			
	Total	Celebrate	Improve	(Neither)	Total	Celebrate	Improve	(Neither)
1. Open and Voluntary Membership	5	3	1	1	6	3	1	2
2. Democratic Member Control	11	4	4	3	14	5	7	2
3. Member Economic Participation	3	3	0	0	4	3	0	1
4. Autonomy and Independence	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
5. Education, Training, and Information	5	2	1	2	8	1	5	2
6. Co-operation among Co-operatives	3	3	0	0	1	0	1	0
7. Concern for Community	1	1	0	0	3	3	0	0
TOTAL # OF PRACTICES	**29**	**17**	**6**	**6**	**36**	**15**	**14**	**7**

SPSK as a self-evaluation tool contributing to a self-assessment and SWOT analysis
In preparation for Morell's first strategic planning session, one of the board members volunteered to facilitate the process. She familiarized herself with Co-op Atlantic's guide to strategic planning and prepared a presentation based on that guide (Co-op Atlantic, 2012). During this first session, the board and management, together with a few members and staff, acquainted themselves with the process of strategic planning, completed a SWOT analysis, and revisited the mission and vision of the co-operative. They also developed a preliminary list of goals and objectives. The preliminary information already entered into the Scorecard was not systematically drawn upon in that session, though some people would have remembered what had been discussed in working on that tool. Morell had access to its Scorecard information as entered online to that point, but did not complete its work on the Scorecard or receive a printed summary until later in 2015.

Since the Scorecard had been designed to be useful in pre-planning (Bryson, 2018), to provide information to feed into a SWOT-type analysis, it was investigated whether the information solicited in the Scorecard and survey could, in fact, have informed the March SWOT analysis. First, the nine strengths that Morell identified in its SWOT analysis were compared with the information provided by the SPSK. All items identified as strengths were, at least at a general level, covered by the SPSK. Interestingly, the results of the co-op's later membership survey corresponded to eight of the strengths identified in the March SWOT and challenged one of them. The surveys available in the toolkit offer one way to learn the opinions of key stakeholders, and a number of practices in the Scorecard can be assessed in relation to the findings of these surveys.

Morell's SWOT analysis identified eight weaknesses. The SPSK solicits information explicitly on practices relevant to five of the identified weaknesses and addresses the other three in general terms. The SPSK clearly provided opportunities for the co-operative to discuss and assess itself on these matters. Survey results both paralleled weaknesses in the areas identified in the SWOT, and furnished useful details about concerns from the perspective of the members responding.

Using the SPSK to identify opportunities and threats requires that a planning team combine the Scorecard information with an analysis of the external context of the particular co-operative, as identified in the study model. The AISC recognized this by declining to emphasize the SWOT analysis in its report to the board. The committee believed that the SWOT "remains a live document and should be used as a tool to enable the actions in the strategic plan." Remaining alert to shifting opportunities and threats is extremely important, especially as the SWOT was completed before the co-operative entered its new context as a Foodland store. That said, the use of the SPSK tools did help in identifying areas where the co-operative could take advantage of opportunities and demonstrated a potential to spark creative thinking about opportunities and initiatives within the power of the co-operative. The nine opportunities identified in the Morell SWOT analysis indicate an awareness of the importance of focusing on what the co-operative itself can accomplish within its own context. Significantly, the co-operative planning team listed strategic planning as one of the nine opportunities.

The seven threats mentioned in the original SWOT analysis all related in one way or another to the competitive environment both within the co-operative's surrounds and in the retail grocery sector. General lack of knowledge about co-operative values and principles and matters relating to attracting youth were also emphasized. These can be grouped into three categories that are likely to be familiar to many Canadian co-operatives: concerns about the extraordinary level of competition from supermarket chains and big box stores, challenges of communication (e.g., keeping up with social media without abandoning other communication media) and concerns about the state of the local economy. The SPSK offers co-operatives the opportunity to reflect on relevant current practices, and make changes that further their priorities. In stressing the importance of inclusive self-assessment and planning, the SPSK can help co-operatives draw on the creativity and sense of adventure among their stakeholders.

Using the SPSK to guide the transition from self-analysis to action
The work of the AISC, beginning with reviewing, analyzing, and integrating material from several sources, was central to the development of the plan and the specification of actions to be taken. First, the AISC prepared a comparison document to make sure it covered the most important areas, themes, and objectives from these various sources. This document was organized into eight thematic areas and shows that each theme drew information from the SPSK and detailed the areas for improvement linked to the appropriate theme category. Twenty-seven of the 33 "areas for improvement" identified in the Scorecard summary were included in this comparison document, which also incorporated all nine flagged items from the recommendation section of the membership survey. The AISC's final report, which became the strategic plan, identified seven goals, each with a list of objectives and proposed actions. At the April 2016 board meeting, the board not only accepted the plan, but also specified timelines and responsibilities for the actions identified and committed to re-

viewing the plan quarterly. Together with other materials reviewed by the AISC, the SPSK did indeed contribute to the transition from self-analysis to action.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In 2014–2015, a key conclusion of the Scorecard research (Co-operative Difference, n.d.) was that for small and often inexperienced co-operatives, with limited human resources, the focus during a crisis is on their own immediate survival concerns. Strategic planning, including self-evaluation, is not considered useful during a crisis but instead is seen as a future-oriented process with benefits that could only accrue in the long term.

Upon hearing that Morell was actually continuing its work, the researchers decided that this was a story that needed to be told. A case study approach offered the opportunity to study the process as it unfolded. The value of the research lies in what other co-operatives might glean from Morell's story, but not only in that. The research also contributes to two strands of the academic literature introduced earlier in this article. The first is the literature that emphasizes the need for greater understanding of the initiation and conduct of planning, especially during times of rapid change and crisis where resilience is needed. The second is the evolving literature that positions strategic planning as integral to governance in nonprofits and co-operatives, as much for the value of the process as for the action plan that results. The dominant conception of planning as a formal, linear process typically led by those with expertise is too narrow and is inappropriate for co-operatives such as Morell (Wolf & Floyd, 2013).

This article focuses on why and how Morell initiated and proceeded with strategic planning in the midst of a crisis, and on the co-operative's use of a collaboratively developed tool. The toolkit was designed to help co-operatives through their self-evaluation process, while also facilitating the further steps of planning and taking action. A key finding is that the SPSK can indeed assist co-operatives in their strategic planning, as they seek to retain and strengthen their co-operative identity. As members of Morell emphasized, the very process of completing the tool requires discussion of such matters, and helps concretize the idea of the co-operative difference. The self-assessment of its performance on the various practices helped Morell move toward goals and actions, providing a baseline against which to compare future performance, as well as encouraging the identification of benchmarks to aim for—all in relation to Morell's own priorities and self-assessments. The plan that Morell developed identifies areas for action, assigns responsibility for each action, and indicates a timeline for meeting goals.

On the other hand, despite ongoing consultations to identify barriers and remove them, it was clear that Morell and the other participating co-operatives required some instruction and support in the use of the Scorecard. It is likely that, given such support, other retail co-operatives could use this toolkit to increase the effectiveness of their planning process. During this project the researchers gave that support, and Co-op Atlantic had intended to take on that role going forward. Some of the participating co-operatives thought that peer-to-peer support would play a part as well, and Morell is still committed to that approach.

The analysis of factors that help in understanding why and how Morell initiated and proceeded with strategic planning is in part framed by the seven criteria discussed in Table 1. Meeting these criteria is indicative of the successful initiation and completion of strategic planning. This is but a first step however. Further investigation and, ideally, comparative research such as the researchers had initially planned is required to deepen knowledge in this area. In the types of co-operatives studied here, the role of sponsor, for example, is likely best understood not just in terms of authority and legitimacy but also as a mentoring and support role. Available tools and strategic planning processes must be seen as relevant to the context, perceived needs, and goals of the co-operative as understood by its leaders.

Morell still has challenges to face, as the analysis of its context reveals. There are decisions to make about next steps, beyond those identified in the strategic plan. Using strategic planning to address crises can be a creative response—especially if the plan is not slavishly followed but is reviewed and adapted regularly in light of events. Morell has built that in, calling its SWOT a living document that requires ongoing attention. As Bryson (2018) emphasizes, planning is a collective achievement, requiring personal and collective reflection and deliberation.

The model developed here highlights the fact that Morell is part of, and is impacted by, its involvement in the retail grocery industry, its location in a local community, its links to the world of co-operative organizations (severely disrupted by the loss of Co-op Atlantic), and its place as a Foodland store within the network of Sobeys' five core retail food formats. Disruptions are occurring in each of the four contexts identified in the study model, and reconfiguration is ongoing. Any plan must remain flexible and responsive, while still providing an overall guide for action.

Morell has some choice in this. Though there is a significant loss of autonomy with the move to Foodland, there are also opportunities associated with being part of that system. Morell's response to the loss of Co-op Atlantic and to the transition to a Foodland franchise can be seen as an attempt to find the balance between reaffirming itself as a co-operative and also adapting to the many changes in its environment. Sobeys' creation of a modified banner "Foodland & Participating Co-ops" in 2015 to recognize the existence of the co-operatives was but a first step. After that, it was up to individual co-operatives to decide what further steps to take. The retail co-operative managers' decision to create the Maritime Advisory Council (MAC) is promising as the council may provide a venue for a broader discussion of the co-operative difference as a matter of identity and as a differentiation strategy for the stores.

Morell will likely find itself in need of a compelling rationale for continuing to fight for sustainability as a co-operative, and for enticing members and shoppers. Why not just become a Foodland store full stop? In the face of many concerns, Morell has been able to be resilient. The co-op has taken advantage of its small size, roots in a small community, commitment to a common purpose, and the informality of interactions and discussions in this local arena. During the 2016 planning meeting, discussions proceeded from the shared premise that Morell brings value to the community and has a future there.

Decisions about the relationships to cultivate, and in which fields, will be crucial for the evolution of the co-operative nature of the organization. It is clear that the managers need to develop strategies to promote the co-operative difference. Whatever the future brings, Morell's experience indicates that even during a crisis much can be accomplished by taking self-analysis and planning seriously—not by trying to address all challenges at once but by collectively determining priorities and actions over a period of time.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ABBREVIATIONS

Analysis and Integration Subcommittee (AISC)
Community University Research Alliance (CURA)
International Co-operative Alliance (ICA)
Maritime Advisory Council (MAC)
Measuring the Co-operative Difference Research Network (MCDRN)
Small and medium enterprises (SMEs)
Strengths, weakness, opportunities, and threats (SWOT)
Sustainability and Planning Scorecard Toolkit (SPSK)

NOTES

1. For more information on the MCDRN refer to their website (Measuring the Co-op Difference, n.d.). For information on the Scorecard project in particular, see their pdf (Measuring the Co-op Difference, 2016). See, too, the archive (Measuring the Co-op Difference Research Archive, n.d.).
2. In one of these two co-operatives, the manager was a key proponent of the SPSK and the desirability of strategic planning. The co-op also used the employee survey (2014), as part of preparing for strategic planning. However, since the manager was naturally also the point person for the transition to a franchised Foodland Co-op store, the board put longer-term strategic planning on hold.
3. Although the wholesale and retail co-operatives were in many aspects the most important non-financial Canadian co-operative sector in 2011, i.e., by number of members, value of assets, sales, and number of employees (Industry Canada, 2016), they were not nationally integrated. Note that Co-op Atlantic has changed its name to The Atlantic Retail Co-operatives Federation, and "provides administrative, consultative, and representative services to retail co-operatives located in the Atlantic Provinces (Co-operative Enterprise Council, n.d.)."
4. For example, Co-op Atlantic featured the Scorecard at annual meetings, promoted the project at managers' meetings and in the co-operative media, and incorporated a page describing the Scorecard as a valuable tool in its strategic planning guide (Co-op Atlantic, 2012). The guide describes the SPSK as a tool to help co-operatives wanting to do strategic planning, emphasizing that it "will help the Co-op stores define and measure their co-op difference, as well as their community engagement and environmental impact (Appendix C)."
5. Morell did not use the employee survey, though it spent considerable time working with the Co-op Atlantic Employee Handbook. At the time of transition the employee team was preoccupied and, as well, their small numbers would have made it difficult to guarantee anonymity.
6. For a detailed description refer to Leclerc (2012). To access the on-line Scorecard (in either French or English), please contact the authors. These versions of the Scorecard have been updated to reflect the changes regarding Co-op Atlantic. Both are licensed with the creative commons (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0).
7. The benchmarks are the standards the co-operative plans to achieve. The SPSK suggests some benchmarks based on the literature and Co-op Atlantic's experience, while others are determined by the co-operative.

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APPENDIX

Sustainability and Planning Scorecard Kit (SPSK)

Many tools and frameworks have been developed to help organizations assess their non-financial sustainability performance. The most commonly used of these is the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI), while the use of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) is growing rapidly (KPMG, 2017). Though some tools have been designed for retail co-operatives (see Brown et al., 2015; Christianson, 2015; Glas, 2015; and Hough, 2015 for a discussion of some of these tools), none of these tools available at the time of this project specifically addressed the ICA Co-op Principles (ICA, 2015). Co-op Atlantic and the other partners in the collaborative research project wanted to develop a tool designed to meet their specific needs as a retail grocery store and to highlight the co-op principles.

The SPSK is a set of tools for use by retail food co-operatives wanting to self-assess in relation to their own priorities and to plan for their future (Leclerc, Brow, & Hicks, 2012). The information brochure describes the SPSK as:

> a user-friendly tool that will assist consumer co-operatives in conducting social accounting and reporting in order to obtain information for continuous improvement and strategic planning…. [It offers] a process of self-assessment that measures both their achievements and shortfalls in relation to co operative principles and the co ops' own triple bottom line priorities.

The Scorecard is intended to be an integral part of the strategic planning process. The strategic planning section of the Co-op Atlantic (2012) member-relations guide specifically mentions the SPSK as a helpful tool, and describes it fully in an appendix.

Completing the Scorecard is a deliberative process requiring co-operatives to set their own priorities and, in many cases, the benchmarks for the indicators. The information derived from the completed SPSK is useful for sustainability reporting and feeds well into the strategic planning process. The areas to celebrate and areas for improvement, together with the summary report scores, provide information for evaluating the co-op's performance for the previous period and setting goals and objectives for the next period. Specifically this information identifies the co-operative's strengths and weaknesses useful for doing a strengths, weakness, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) analysis. Further, the indicator benchmarks become the targets or standards of performance the co-operative sets for itself in its strategic plan.

The SPSK includes the Web-based expert system referred to as the Scorecard, a users' guide, and two survey instruments (an employee survey and a member/customer survey), which can be used in completing the Scorecard. The Scorecard is organized in four sections: Co-operative Principles, Economic Measures, Social Measures, and Environmental Measures.[6] While the Co-operative Principles section specifically addresses the ICA Co-op Principles, the other sections were developed with these principles in mind to reflect the co-op difference.

The steps for completing the Scorecard are shown in Figure 3. Upon completing the profile section of the Scorecard, the co-operative prioritizes each practice (e.g., desirable behaviours). The Scorecard offers some flexibility by identifying both *basic practices* (fundamental practices to be followed at a minimum) and *associated practices* (to delve into areas identified as a priority). The co-operative's self-assessment of its performance on each practice is measured by indicators. Each indicator has a benchmark (e.g., a target to strive for) and measure (e.g., the co-operative's actual performance on that indicator).[7] Some of the benchmarks provided are based on legal requirements, Co-op Atlantic policies, and the co-operative literature, while others are set by each individual co-operative. The closer the co-operative's actual performance is to the benchmark for each indicator, the higher the co-operative scores itself on the relevant practice.

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FIGURE 3: STEPS IN COMPLETING THE SUSTAINABILITY AND PLANNING SCORECARD

Once completed, the Scorecard automatically produces a summary report that includes scores for each section as well as an overall score for all sections combined. Areas to celebrate and areas for improvement are highlighted. While useful for short-term self-assessment, this information is also future oriented, as it provides a baseline set of information with which to compare future iterations.

Step 1: Complete your co-op's Profile

Step 2: Set priorities for Practices

Step 3: Set benchmarks for Indicators

Step 4: Measure your co-op's performance for each indicator (including surveying stakeholders)

Step 5: Score your co-op's performance for each practice

Step 6: Review the SPS Summary and interpret the results

Step 7: Incorporate the results in your planning and setting of priorities for the next period

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Social Housing Competencies: Expertise for a New Era

Michelle Coombs & Isaac Coplan
Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association

ASTRACT

This article outlines organizational-level competencies within the changing social housing context in Ontario. The changing context is occurring at the same time as key board members and staff are retiring. This prompts the question of how the sector can ensure excellent housing for low- and middle-income tenants into the future, while keeping in mind its social justice origins. Social constructionist, adult education, and critical theoretical traditions guided the research questions and methodology of this study, resulting in a working definition of organizational competencies. Organizational competencies have been identified through a sequential mixed methods approach. Four key competency clusters have been identified: capital asset, sectoral operational, people-oriented, and strategic. These clusters and the competencies they contain provide a model to assist organizations in meeting their social justice and business goals into the future.

RÉSUMÉ

Cet article décrit les compétences organisationnelles requises dans le domaine du logement social en Ontario dans un contexte changeant. Ce contexte change en même temps que des membres clés de conseils d'administration et des employés clés sont en train de prendre leur retraite. Ces circonstances font réfléchir sur comment le secteur pourra continuer à fournir des logements désirables aux locataires à faible ou moyen revenu tout en respectant les principes de justice sociale. Pour cette étude, les traditions de construction sociale, d'éducation pour adultes et de théorie critique ont guidé la formulation de questions de recherche et la méthodologie, avec comme résultat une définition pratique de ce que sont les compétences organisationnelles. Ces dernières ont été identifiées au moyen d'une recherche par méthodes mixtes séquentielles. Quatre regroupements de compétences clés ont été cernés : actif immobilisé, opération par secteurs, service au public, et stratégie. Ces regroupements et les compétences qu'ils privilégient peuvent servir de modèles pour aider les organisations à rencontrer leurs futurs objectifs en justice sociale et en affaires.

KEYWORDS / MOTS CLÉS Skill; Competency; Nonprofit; Social housing; Mixed methods / Habileté; Compétence; Sans but lucratif; Logement social; Méthodes mixtes

INTRODUCTION

Social housing[1] in Ontario is facing a multitude of challenges, including declining government funding, the end of operating agreements, increasing and ever-changing legislative requirements, and the subsequent modernization of the sector. This is happening at the same time that founding and long-term board and staff members are retiring. These changes lead to the overarching question of how to overcome gaps in knowledge and ensure that a new generation of board and staff members are equipped to ensure organizational success in the new environment. In turn, this leads to the definition of sector competencies, drawing from the National Learning Initiative (2003), as the knowledge, skills, abilities, and value orientation that ensure organizational success.

This article documents research into how competencies are understood in various jurisdictions and how they relate to the provision of social housing in current and future contexts. This is accomplished through a sequential mixed methods approach. This research draws on a structured literature review, surveys, a focus group, and qualitative interviews with social housing providers to address questions about social housing standards, competencies, the changing social housing context, knowledge and skill development, and organizational needs looking forward. In particular, this research pays attention to how the idea of competencies is used in response to the changing environment. Finally, it "clusters" these competencies as they are relevant in an Ontario social housing context. The goal is to develop further understanding of how competencies are understood and applied to best meet sector needs. While the research also examined sector standards, for the purposes of this article, the focus is specifically on findings about the competencies needed to ensure quality social housing in Ontario. This article begins by outlining the theoretical underpinnings used to frame this study and the way competencies are understood in the research. The social housing sector in Ontario is then contextualized. Finally, the methodology is outlined and then the findings in detail.

CONCEPTUALIZING COMPETENCIES IN THE SOCIAL HOUSING SECTOR: LEARNING AND SOCIAL CHANGE

As seen below, much academic focus on competencies is firmly situated in corporate or business environments. But no sector faces more complex challenges than the social housing sector. In addition to facing practical challenges, the sector is often seen as the solution to a broad range of social problems, such as homelessness and healthcare needs. This requires careful consideration of the theoretical and philosophical approaches to researching social housing, which, in turn, impacts research design and execution. Social constructionist, adult education, and critical theoretical traditions are drawn on in this study of competencies in the social housing sector. In addition, the idea of competency modelling is used to consider competencies within the context of nonprofit sector organizations.

Given the challenges of theorizing around workplaces that are situated in, arguably, a social justice space—the social housing sector (ONPHA & CHF, 2013)—these philosophical approaches fit for the following reasons. First, a social constructionist approach recognizes that prevalent notions of how we see the world and operate within it are not monolithic realities but are created through social interaction and discourse (Fairhurst & Grant, 2010). This means context is critical to understanding concepts such as "competencies." Therefore, over time and place, our understanding of any given concept changes. K. Peter Kuchinke and Hee-Young Han (2005) have adopted Conger and Benjamin's three-part critique of competencies. This critique is as follows:

> first, the strong tendency to view defined competencies as universal and ideal-type criteria and ignore situational contingencies and personality-based differences; second, the fact that competencies might be mutually exclusive or even contradictory; and, third, that competency frameworks stabilize behaviors that might have proven effective in the past but may not anticipate future needs. (p. 387)

A social constructionist approach provides a frame of inference into the complexities of competency research within various sectors, subsectors, and organizations. In this research, these include the nonprofit sector, the social housing sector, and local contexts themselves (that is, regional, temporal, and organizational). Social constructionist underpinnings provide more thoughtful and thorough analysis, which, in turn, permits the examination of competencies in a way that allows them to be useful in practice.

Adult education and learning has typically been positioned as social in nature and social justice–oriented (Watkins & Marsick, 2014). It has also been positioned in opposition to workplace learning such as Human Resource Development (HRD). Ronald L. Jacobs (2014) defines HRD as "the process of improving organizational performance and individual learning through the human accomplishments that result from employee development, organization development, and career development programs" (p. 14). Human Resource Development is often seen to be embedded in, and subject to, organizational power dynamics and to be an approach that reinforces the status quo (Hatcher & Bowles, 2014). This means that HRD is seen as reinforcing existing power relationships and objectives at work as opposed to meeting employee learning needs and desires. However, adult education approaches attend to the power dynamics and societal influences that shape learning in any context with an awareness that these dynamics can either facilitate or constrain agency, identity, and ability (Watkins & Marsick, 2014). Taking an adult education perspective of learning at work assists in understanding some of the tensions inherent in the nonprofit sector as they relate to the idea of competencies. Karen E. Watkins and Victoria J. Marsick (2014) suggest that adult education is "focused on broad concerns of social justice and equity along with its long term focus on practical guidelines for teaching and learning" (p. 43), whereas workplace learning via Human Resource Development is focused more on productivity and performance (2014). An adult education perspective also sheds some light on the social justice values that various stakeholders bring to the nonprofit housing sector. It considers what this means for operating in an environment that is increasingly expected to be business-oriented and entrepreneurial (Maier, Meyer, & Steinbereithner, 2016). Patricia A. Gouthro (2010), in her study of informal learning in community-based organizations in Canada, reported that adult education can provide a possible way to navigate the need to balance organizational survival with providing services. In the following pages, there is a review of the literature on competencies in the social housing sector. In conclusion, a definition of competencies to frame this study in the Ontario social housing context is presented.

Workplace competency, as a social phenomenon, is widely discussed in popular culture, business, and academia (Berdrow & Evers, 2014; Feser, Mayol, & Srinivasan, 2015; Kuchinke & Han, 2005; Stevens, 2012).[2] As noted, this article takes a critical approach to examining competencies in the nonprofit sector. While individual skills are often conflated with organizational competencies and, indeed, proved challenging to differentiate in interviews and focus group, they are distinguished in the following way: A skill is a singular ability that one employee may have and use in the execution of his or her job (Berdrow & Evers, 2014). Competencies, in contrast, are a cluster of knowledge, skills, and abilities that an organization requires in order to ensure a "transformative process combining resources and activity *inputs* into operational *processes* that result in specific competitive performance *outcomes*" (Lewis, 2003, p. 731). The strength of this definition and approach to competencies is that no one person brings a full spectrum of knowledge, skills, and abilities to the workplace. Instead, a successful workplace is the result of multiple contributors, both within and external to the organization. A critical examination of these definitions tells us that competencies are most often understood as bounded by the organizational context and are driven by the organizational business goals. In order for this form of competency framework to be transformative at a sectoral level, the development and use of competencies should come from an adult education perspective that is attentive to the power relations inherent in any organization.

To ensure that competencies are being defined in light of the Ontario social housing context and in keeping with social constructionist, adult educational, and critical theoretical perspectives, this article uses an adapted definition of compe-

tencies based on the National Learning Initiative's (2003) definition: "the knowledge, skills, abilities, intangible/tangible mindsets and behaviors … that lead to improving life in the community and the world through principled actions and professional behaviour in the voluntary sector" (p. 10). To more specifically represent the idea of competencies within the social housing sector, this definition is revised to "the knowledge, skills, abilities, and *value orientation* applied through principled actions and professional behaviour *to ensure housing excellence for low- and medium-income tenants.*" Sector competencies are made up of the knowledge, skills, abilities, and value orientation that are generally required for running social housing in the sector within the current context. Relying on the theoretical grounding outlined above, this article further suggests that competencies must be fluid enough to respond to local and subsectoral organizational needs, and the complex needs of adult learners, as well as be able to respond to temporal shifts as they occur.

Finally, the idea of competency modelling, which has been useful in the development of training and assessment centres, employee and career development initiatives, leadership development, and organizational change (Stevens, 2012), is used. Understanding competency modelling as a process that aligns a competency model with the context in question fits nicely within this research's theoretical framing as it centralizes sectoral, temporal, and organizational variables. In other words, it does not blindly promote the application of a monolithic model across settings (Stevens, 2012). Competency modelling suggests that competencies, as defined above, can be used within the social housing sector in a way that allows a comprehensive and responsive approach. The following section explores the nature of the social housing sector.

SETTING THE CONTEXT: SOCIAL HOUSING AND SOCIAL CHANGE

This section outlines a brief history of social housing in Canada and, more specifically, Ontario. It then summarizes how this history has informed some of the present challenges to the social housing sector. Finally, it concludes with why the exploration of organizational competencies, as previously defined, might be helpful in addressing the challenges that the social housing sector and those working in it face.

The first large-scale housing program in Canada emerged to house veterans returning from the Second World War (CMHC, 2011; ONPHA, 2015b). In the postwar period, social housing was expanded to include the working poor through the introduction of units meant to house low-income households (CMHC, 2011). Over the past several decades, the development of affordable housing in Ontario has taken three main forms that subsequently influenced funding and development within the social housing sector (ONPHA, 2015b). The first stage was significant provincial investment, which saw the creation of over 84,000 units between 1964 and 1975 (ONPHA, 2015b). The second stage was the increased presence of the Government of Canada in funding, which saw the creation of over 52,000 units between 1978 and 1985. The final stage began in the mid-1990s and saw the end of large-scale commitment to social housing with the subsequent devolution of social housing to municipalities in the early 2000s. The federal government halted new funding in 1993, except on reserves, and the provincial government ceased new funding in 1995 (CHRA, n.d.; Hulchanski, 2002). The federal and provincial governments reduced their large-scale investment in the construction of affordable housing, favouring the support of the private sector and the open housing market (ONPHA & CHF, 2013). Since 1993, different levels of government have offered smaller funding programs, including Investment in Affordable Housing, Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative, and the Homelessness Partnering Strategy. Newer initiatives have supported smaller-scale developments through private nonprofits, municipal nonprofits, and cooperative housing providers. These small-scale investments since the mid-1990s have led to fewer units being created across Canada. Other initiatives, meant to address housing need and homelessness, have focused on rental supplements and private sector partnerships.
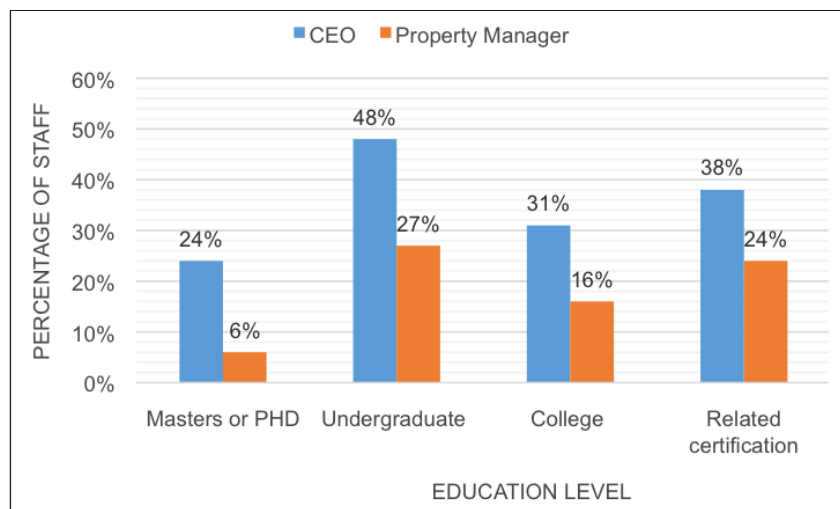
As a result of this history, funding for most of the existing affordable housing has been administered through federal or provincial operating agreements, which generally offered a combination of operating and capital funding to social housing

providers for the term of mortgages, though longer for providers whose housing is administered under the Housing Services Act. The term for operating agreements generally ranges from 30 to 40 years, and one hundred percent of these agreements expire by 2040. Aside from funding constraints, housing providers in Ontario face a number of local contextual issues that influence their operations in ways unique to the social housing sector.

The policy environment stems partly from the administrative division of Ontario into 47 service manager and District Social Services Administration Board (DSSAB) areas that were developed to administer social housing programs across the province (Ontario, 2016). Service managers/DSSABs are responsible for, among other things, distributing resources to housing providers, reporting to provincial bodies, and creating local rules for designated areas under the *Housing Services Act*, 2011. Social housing providers must be compliant with all relevant legislation, regulatory measures, and zoning requirements from three levels of government. Social housing providers contend with a range of barriers that influence their ability to effectively run and manage housing. These challenges vary depending on the location and size of the housing portfolios and the demographics of the community in which they are situated. Challenges range from difficulty in accessing skilled trades and supplies in remote communities to developing effective systems to manage large-scale, multi-site operations in major urban centres. Some communities also face changing demographics, making it harder to recruit for board of director, volunteer, and staff roles (Suttor & Bettencourt-McCarthy, 2014).

In Ontario, there are currently more than 400,000 people who live in community-based affordable housing (ONPHA, 2015a). These social housing organizations now house a range of tenants, including "victims of violence and abuse; people living with developmental disabilities, mental illness, addictions, and HIV/Aids; and the formerly homeless and hard to house" (p. 2). As federal and provincial governments move toward reducing their role in the sector, housing providers face greater pressure to adopt more business-like or "entrepreneurial practices." The second, often conflicting, pressure has to do with the increasingly complex needs of tenants living in social housing (ONPHA, 2015d). These pressures have brought to the forefront conversations about the professionalization of the housing sector, as well as about the identification of the important knowledge, skills, abilities, and value orientation necessary to ensure good-quality, affordable housing. Long-term planning in the sector is even more important with the recognition that significant turnover has begun to occur due to retirement of senior staff. In particular, 74 percent of chief executive officers (CEOs) and property managers are between the ages of 46 and 65 (The Portage Group, 2015). This has obvious implications in the consideration of competencies and future leadership of the sector.

Figure 1: Survey respondents: Level of education of lead operational staff in the Ontario social housing sector, 2015

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Understanding competencies within the context of existing educational attainment and professional certification is helpful in understanding the opportunities for learning and growth of existing and new board and staff members. While a significant portion of the leaders in the sector have a postsecondary education, only 38 percent have a certification related to their role in social housing (see Figure 1). Given the unique context of the social housing sector in Ontario, this research seeks to comprehend how the concept of competencies is currently understood and how it can be used to address the challenges the sector is facing, while keeping in mind the social purpose inherent in the sector.

METHODOLOGY

This study relies on a sequential mixed methods approach. A mixed methods approach can be defined as a research design that intentionally combines complementary approaches, including both quantitative and qualitative data collection in order to explore the research questions at hand (Brannen, 2005). A mixed methods approach is a good match for this theoretical approach and these research questions, as it allows the collection of data from a wider group from simple survey questions, which then frames the more in-depth data collection through interviews and the focus group. Data collection happened in three phases. First, international and Canadian publically available social housing sector reports pertaining to social housing standards and competencies were reviewed alongside academic literature. Competencies, as identified in this body of literature, were collected and grouped into themes. These themes formed the basis for the surveys. The second stage was the development of simple survey questions based on the identified themes. Finally, individual phone interviews were arranged with social housing staff and a focus group was set up via teleconference. These are discussed in turn below.

Social housing reports and frameworks

Canadian and U.K. social housing reports and competency frameworks publically available on the Web were reviewed against the literature to determine what standards had been identified within the sector and what competencies were identified as necessary for current and future success of social housing providers and the sector at large. Competencies identified in the reports were documented and initially clustered into five groups: strategy/strategic, people-oriented (internal and external relationships), capital asset-related, personal effectiveness, and impact-focused. These groups were used to populate the surveys and then the interview questions. Personal effectiveness competencies were identified as person level versus organizational level, which placed them outside of the definition used here and they were excluded from the research.

Surveys

Using sequential (survey) methodology, two surveys were done before entering into the interview phrase (Cresswell, 2007). This article refers only to the second survey on competencies. The data gathered from this method helped inform the interview and focus group questions (Cresswell, 2007). The surveys went out through a pre-existing e-alert tool. This method was chosen because it has an existing reach to Ontario social housing staff and board members, is economical, and has the ability to collect data easily. The e-alert's typical reach is just under 5,000 recipients. On average, 1,446 people open an e-alert when they receive it, and on average, 43 people open any given article (such as this survey).

The survey on competencies was sent out in a January 14, 2016, e-alert and was delivered to 4,897 subscribers. There were 39 unique clicks on the survey. It was sent again in a January 28, 2016, e-alert and was delivered to 4,926 subscribers. This time, it received 37 unique clicks. In total, 38 recipients completed the survey. Participants were asked two questions: "Please identify the 5 types of skills, knowledge, and values you think are most important, right now, for nonprofit housing organizations" and "Please identify the 5 types of skills, knowledge, and values you think are most important, in the future, for nonprofit housing organizations." The results are discussed below.

Individual interviews

Fifteen potential participants were chosen from the Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association (ONPHA) membership at large using a purposeful sampling approach, with eight people responding. These participants were selected purposefully to yield cases that would be "information rich" (Patton, 2002). Interviews were held with seven women and one man who run social housing in Ontario. The respondents are all chief operational leads, and their organizations range in size from 40 units to 1,400 units. Their organizations represent seven private nonprofits and one municipal nonprofit, and are located in three small, two medium, and three large communities.[3] Interviews were conducted on the phone and were recorded. Interviews were transcribed verbatim.

Focus group interview

The focus group was comprised of members of ONPHA's Local Advisory Member Committee. The committee is structured to represent a variety of communities throughout Ontario and a range of organizational focuses and tenant groups. While the group represents a "convenient sample," the committee is frequently brought complex challenges, and the focus group participants were selected based on their knowledge of the sector and connectedness with other community members. This focus group utilized a semi-structured interview format, or vertical process, via teleconference (Kirby, Greaves, & Reid, 2010). In a vertical process approach, participants are encouraged to contribute ideas to each question and are able to listen to, or build onto, other participants' ideas. Interviewers rephrased questions as necessary to keep the conversation on topic (Kirby, Greaves, & Reid, 2010).

Seven members were in attendance, representing five small and two large communities. The members ran organizations with between 50 and 560 units and represented five private nonprofit organizations and two municipal nonprofit providers. Five women and two men participated. The participants were senior staff in their organizations, with a range of titles that included executive director, CEO, general manager, administrator, manager, and property manager.

All focus group and interview participants were informed of the details of the research and signed an informed consent to participate. Interviewees were assigned pseudonyms and details have been changed slightly to protect participant anonymity.

The data from all sources was analyzed using inductive and deductive approaches. In other words, the data was first analyzed against existing categories and competencies as found in the literature and then against the two sequential surveys. At the same time, it was important to be aware of, and attentive to the possibility of other themes emerging from the data. Data analysis was iterative and occurred as follows. Each researcher reviewed the literature and identified "competencies." All of these competencies were then collected and reviewed, and similar concepts were grouped under one cluster. These competencies were used to populate the survey as detailed above. The interviews and focus group data was coded inductively and then the resulting competencies were reviewed against the survey results and the literature. The researchers met and recoded the competencies again, considering the data from all sources.

FINDINGS

The literature review resulted in 30 competencies being identified.[4] For the survey, the list was reduced to 18 (and excluded personal competencies), with the option for respondents to add other competencies. Each of the 38 respondents to the second survey typically chose four to five competencies. No new competency emerged from the survey. Participants were asked to respond to two questions: What competencies are required for today? What competencies are required for the future? Building maintenance, tenant-focused, and business competencies were the three most frequently chosen as needed for today. Building maintenance, tenant-focused, adaptability, and strategy competencies were the top four

chosen as needed for the future (see Figure 2). The interviews and focus group initially resulted in 40 competencies. Once recoded, they were further combined as reflected in Table 1.

Figure 2: Competencies required for current and future contexts in social housing as selected by 38 survey respondents
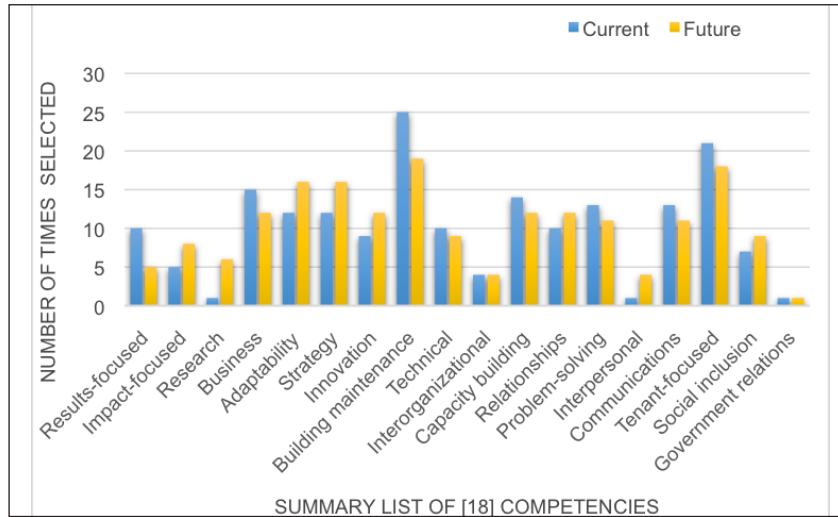
Table 1: Competency clusters

Cluster	Capital asset	Sectoral operational	People-oriented	strategic
Competencies	Building management Maintenance Safety Technical knowledge	Business Financial Legislative Rent-geared-to-income (RGI) Sectoral knowledge	Internal relationships: Tenant engagement Working together External relationships: Networking Collaboration Partnerships Service-relationships	Change management Governance: Self-governance Strategic planning Succession planning Innovation: Problem-solving Technology Values orientation: Social justice Anti-oppression

The focus group and interviews provided for a deeper exploration of competencies. They allowed competencies to be examined in the context of place and time, and permitted a more critical examination of the idea of competencies as it relates to the social justice origins of social housing (ONPHA, 2013). In particular, the interviews reinforced the study's sector-specific definition of competencies in two ways. First, the importance of "values" was manifest in the interviews and, therefore, suitable for inclusion in our definition. For instance, the focus group illustrated that values are an important part of social housing:

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> We are a faith-based organization, but not all of our staff are of the same faith. So, we see the values that we use as some of [the core pieces of our faith] … We use that as a way that we can implement service.

Second, the limits of organizational boundaries and the roles within them are not fixed. Social housing providers have been expected to address a larger scope of needs than their property management functions. The focus group identified that "you require a social worker, with legal and housing expertise. There's no way you can recruit for that level of skill in any individual. There's no university degree in the field we just talked about." While these contextual considerations were not the primary intent of this research, they pose some interesting considerations for future research and practice. They also reinforce the benefit of developing a definition of sector-specific competencies for research and practice purposes.

The literature did not always specify when a sectoral, organizational, or position/personal competency was being discussed. This lack of definitional clarity proved somewhat challenging when trying to build on identified competencies. An attempt was made to address this by summarizing the definition of competencies when speaking to interviewees. However, there are still instances where participants conflate personal competencies with organizational.

As noted above, the researchers coded the interviews and then met to review coding decisions. The interview data was then reviewed and recoded when compared to the literature and survey data. This resulted in four competency clusters: capital asset, sectoral operational, people-oriented, and strategic. These clusters are made up of related competencies that generally (via literature, surveys, and interviews) were identified as being necessary to "ensure housing excellence for low- and medium-income tenants."

The capital asset cluster included competencies that are required to manage the buildings, such as building management, maintenance, safety, and technical competencies. When talking about technical competencies, there is agreement that technical knowledge is necessary but not necessarily where this competency must reside. Mary says: "I need to know how the boiler and heating systems work. So, for me, training along those lines is very important." But regarding technical knowledge, Adrienne says: "You need to know where to go and get it when you do need it."

With respect to building management, Mary feels that this knowledge would be beneficial to all direct service housing workers: "My opinion is that if those frontline workers were trained better in all aspects of how to run a building, it would be better for the property." Maxine suggests that building management is static unless there are changes in building management systems—"in buildings … there is not much change. Unless you get a new building and new building automation systems and it's a greener building." This demonstrates the situational nature of such competencies. Mary illustrates the importance of health and safety but also that this is not universally agreed upon as a priority competency:

> Sometimes he will say, "I want to save money for the organization." The first thing I'll say is, "What is it about? You don't save money on safety. You don't save money on anything that is not a healthy thing. Anything that is health and safety, I don't care about spending on it." You do whatever it takes to fix it.

While related to building management, maintenance was identified by survey respondents as the most important competency both as a current and a future need. In contrast, this was not the case overall in the interviews; however, the number of times it was mentioned demonstrated its importance to the participants. Adrienne points out: "You really need a basic understanding of maintenance and of the buildings and how things work and what does what." This is supported by Mary, who says: "You have to know how the building runs." At the same time, there was the belief that these competencies could be learned in-house; as Finnian says: "We can teach someone how to fix something," and Mary says: "You

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have to also have someone who is committed to learning about how the building works." Again, though maintenance was identified as a competency, there was a range of perspectives regarding how it could be represented in the organization. The sectoral operational cluster included operational competencies that tied to the specificity of the sector, such as competency in business, financial, legislative, rent-geared-to-income, and sector knowledge. The specificity of the sector is a result of the values inherent in the work as well as processes that are a product of the historical development of the sector. Finnian says: "You can't teach someone how to look at the world in a way that is compatible with how we approach our work." These particular competencies only became apparent in the interviews and were not raised in the same way in the literature and surveys. Some of these competencies are more general operational competencies. They represent particular requirements that are specific to the sector. For instance, Adrienne talks about financial competencies in the context that "you're going to have to find ways of working with other providers, smaller providers … smaller ones because … funds are more limited and our options are a little more limited." Ruby talks about business and financial competencies:

> There are many nonprofits that are in the same position we're in. There was some information from [sector organization] on mortgage refinancing. We're going to look at it and see if there's something that's going to be valuable for us. We know there's going to be a shortfall, so we want to know whether there will be a benefit for us to refinance … There is a constant pressure to ensure best practices and business levels, which can be a moving target.

Adrienne talks about sector-knowledge competency being important. She says: "Who else has housing in your area that you can maybe call for help or work with on specific things." Finnian expands on how this can happen through knowledge transfer, "sitting down with me for an hour and we talk about the history of our organization, our values, our objectives, how our mission fits in with broader things like the big-picture orientation." Therefore, while knowledge of the sector was important, organizations can access and develop this knowledge in a range of ways.

Knowledge of legislation is mentioned as a sectoral operational competency. For instance, the focus group identified "knowledge of legislation, including *Housing Services Act*, *Residential Tenancies Act,*" as a competency, and Maxine says: "We have to be landlords, which means that they have to understand that we are the most heavily legislated business in Ontario, or so I've been told." Joanne expands on this:

> Whether or not you're in compliance with Ontario Regs—and that doesn't necessarily have to mean Housing Services Regs. It means all different Regs in the province related to housing, which—my gosh, anywhere from human rights all the way down to local standard bylaws. It's a changing game almost daily for any housing provider to figure those out and try their very best to ensure they're at least keeping up with changes.

Rent-geared-to-income (RGI) administration competency was mentioned, as it is a required process to administer rent subsidy in the province of Ontario. For instance, Maxine indicates that housing providers need to be "legislative experts. If you look at just the RGI legislation, what we have to do to calculate rents is quite detailed."

People-oriented competencies appear in the literature frequently as does tenant-focused competency in the survey. The interviews also touched on a people-oriented cluster that included relational engagement both inside and outside the organization. Competencies falling under this cluster are either outward facing and considered *external* or inward facing and considered *internal* to the organization. External people-oriented competencies include networking, collaboration, partnerships, and more formalized service relationships. Internal competencies include tenant engagement and working together. These relational competencies are much more fluid than distinct categorization allows. For instance, one focus group participant says of tenants: "We encourage people to help each other, because sometimes people lose their li-

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censes, their cars. We have to show people that there are other ways of doing things." Also, Adrienne says about what is important: "Those people skills … making connections with various organizations and community (organizations) where you can go for help with issues that tenants are having." Here people-oriented competencies spanned internal and external organizational spaces. Externally, there is a spectrum of relational engagement such as networking, collaboration, partnerships, and service relationships. For instance, the focus group identified that:

> we're finding that it's a lot more important to network. We've been part of advisory groups, and hubs, and we've been finding it's more important now to understand what's out there. In small communities, it's important to put a face to the name that you may see.

In many cases, collaboration—loosely defined here as working together on a common project or goal—was identified as necessary. As Adrienne says: "We do have to try to work out some cooperation with some of the others to get some work done." Mary talks more enthusiastically about working together:

> You need to meet with your peers. You can't just sit in your own little desk by yourself when you can go out there. And you hear that other people are having the same issues and are dealing with the same things. You don't have to reinvent the wheel. Someone dealt with this, so they have great suggestions.

Tenant engagement was identified as a key competency with respect to both managing difficult situations and why social housing exists in the first place. In the focus group, some of the challenges related to the former were raised: "We were dealing with all of the problems that we all have in housing that were somewhat negative: drug and alcohol addictions, prostitution, violence in our communities. It was all on top of people that we have to manage." Joanne speaks to the latter and how relations with tenants is the key part of social housing:

> In respect to your residents … without them you're not in business, so you should—you want to be respectful to them and try to create policies and standards that are workable for them and that they can achieve. Because they need to as well. They need to feel like they're part of the whole process here. They are not just being told that this is how it runs. They are being asked for input. They are being asked for what could be happening, what standards could we change or improve to make your quality of life better.

The strategic cluster represents competencies that are evident in the literature and are reflected in the survey and in the interviews. The survey, in particular, identified that certain strategic competencies are going to be even more important into the future. These are adaptability, strategy, and innovation. After the interviews, these competencies were recoded as: change management, governance, innovation, and value orientation to more closely reflect how people spoke about these competencies with respect to the sector.

The majority of interviewees identified change management as a strategically important competency. Finnian suggests:

> We also look for people to have a certain amount of resiliency and be able to adapt to changing circumstances. Cause, certainly, in the almost seventeen years I've been involved in housing … you have to be able to adapt.

Change management represented not only responding to change but also preparing for change. One focus group participant identifies that "[I] think organizations need to become aware of the changes that we face. There has to be a culture of continuous learning that needs to take place rather than leaving the learning to the future." Maxine provides an example of how change can be managed:

[I] think in that regard, really, to strengthen our sector—we're going to have a labor shortage in the future, and we need to set up those mentoring opportunities one-on-one so that new, engaged staff that are on-boarding in the organization are being mentored by more seasoned employees that have a lot of experience on the job and that can coach them in improving their skills, and being accepting of that.

At the same time, there are questions that still need answering. Such as this one posed by Ruby: "Within the next two years, we have to replace almost everything. I mean, a new roof, a new fire alarm system … What happens when we don't have any money?"

In general, interviewees focused on operational-level competencies and were not thinking about the board of directors. However, governance, which generally references board-level oversight, was raised frequently enough to be included in the list of competencies. More specifically, governance includes (board) self-governance, succession planning, and strategic planning. Maxine says: "I think as part of self-governance, you have to demonstrate initiative, organization citizenship, a positive attitude, and a sense of continued self-improvement in whatever area that might be." Joanne references the process the board goes through in managing itself with respect to membership and succession planning:

We have competencies skills that we try [to] look for. So we'll look at the existing members, through the group themselves they will look at their own strengths, and then they'll look at the overall list of strengths for the organization and seek what they're missing when we have a vacancy … [the process] plays a huge role.

Participants in the focus group also raised succession planning: "We realized early on that we need to bring people in sooner, and when someone leaves, someone can step in right away and be comfortable. That way it's part of our succession planning." The need for succession planning as a key part of organizational governance was top of mind for interviewees.

Strategic planning is generally an expected role for the board of directors and was reflected in the literature and surveys as "strategy." In the context of the interviews and focus group, it was referenced more specifically as strategic planning or the actual planning action the board must take. For instance, Ruby says:

Within the next five years, ninety percent of the nonprofit housing staff will be leaving and retiring. Lots will be leaving in the next couple of years, and this is happening already … We had a board meeting where we talked about planning for this.

Jackie says: "We selected priorities through strategic plans." Thus, in practice, knowledge of and skills in strategic planning represented a necessary organizational competency.

Innovation was identified in the literature and the survey as something that will become increasingly more important into the future. Innovation as a competency was likewise reflected in the interviews and focus group. For instance, one focus group participant suggests that moving forward, "innovation and some of the communication, collaboration, and mentorship are going to be more important." Finnian outlines the fact that competencies, while needed in the organization, might reside in certain positions. For one position, he says, "I would want someone who fits the profile more associated with risk, entrepreneurship, and innovation."

While not identified explicitly in the literature and surveys, the sub-competencies of technology and problem-solving were raised in the interviews and by focus group. The focus group indicated:

Technology is changing rapidly; the Internet of things is coming down the line and will likely shape the way buildings operate. There is a high expectation [on the part of] millennials and the younger generation: they don't want to work for organizations that don't have technology and don't utilize modern technology.

Adrienne talks about problem-solving in a couple of instances: "You have to be able to assess a situation and try to work out which direction you need to go [in dealing with people]" and "[considering past mistakes] is also an important part of the decision-making because if you don't revisit what you did … you are likely to repeat the mistakes you've made."

A final competency in the strategic cluster is social justice value orientation. While it was not raised explicitly in the literature or surveys, it did represent a critical and defining feature of how organizations and their leaders make decisions about their future. One focus group participant says: "We have values after our mission statement: love, integrity, excellence, quality, compassion, good stewardship, relationships, fun." Another says: "Values: respect, integrity, leadership, accountability, and teamwork." Finnian says: "One of the most important things is a commitment or understanding of social justice … in the work that we do." Maxine also says: "You have an understanding and commitment to the organization's mission, vision, and values and the organizational goals." For some respondents, their commitment to social justice values was inherent in their commitment to continuing to meet the needs of their community:

I see that that will be a huge challenge for our organization in the future—the changing need of our clients, making sure their units are what they need, and how best to equip staff and our residents to keep moving in a positive direction.

Several respondents identified diversity as a critical component of their social justice value orientation. This included working with diverse communities with varying needs and also having a diverse staff with a diverse skill set. Jackie says: "I think anti-oppression is one of the largest values that should be taken into account, and understanding the needs of the communities that you're serving."

DISCUSSION

In keeping with the social constructionist, adult education, and critical theoretical traditions on which this study is based, it attempts to establish a definition of competency that considers the social justice origins and contextual nature in which social housing providers work. This study does not propose essential and static competencies, which would be more in keeping with a positivist approach. Instead, it aims to examine the idea of competencies in a way that is informed by sectoral data and that can act as a starting point to examine them in situ while mapping how concepts are evolving within the changing environment and competing perspectives.

Overall, the definition of competencies with respect to the regional, temporal, and organizational needs of the sector is supported as a working definition across data sources. As noted, this definition is not meant to be monolithic but to assist in framing the organizational competencies within a model that both respects the social justice origins of the sector and takes into account the capacity of the sector to deliver on certain goals. It does not present organization values *in opposition to* business requirements; rather, it presents them as working in tandem to ensure housing excellence for low- and medium-income tenants.

While there are some commonalities in competencies across data sources, there are also some discrepancies in how they are identified and understood. Overall, there was a fair degree of alignment on the competencies clusters, with the exception of the sectoral operational cluster, which was not present in the literature. This makes sense given that the lit-

erature was international and thus represented different jurisdictions with their own contextual considerations. In contrast, the interviews provided an opportunity for leaders to talk about competencies in relation to their own organizations and regions, and in relationship to the Ontario context.

CONCLUSION

Social housing in Ontario is in the midst of a fundamental change from the programs and norms that have shaped past operations. An organizational competency-based approach provides a potential way of thinking about adult education within the sector. It also can be helpful in planning for the recruitment of the next generation of staff and board members by keeping in mind organizational competency needs. This research has taken an interdisciplinary approach, drawing on social constructionist, adult education, and critical theoretical traditions to examine the idea of competencies in Ontario's social housing sector. It has analyzed competency literature, surveys, interviews, and focus group data in order to develop a model to consider competencies as they relate to the current and future needs of social housing providers as they strive to meet the needs of low- and medium-income Ontarians.

Ultimately this study used academic and sectoral literature to define competencies as "the knowledge, skills, abilities, and value orientation applied through principled actions and professional behaviour to ensure housing excellence for low- and medium-income tenants." Via the mixed methods approach, four competency clusters were delineated. These clusters are capital asset, sectoral operational, people-oriented, and strategic, which include specific competencies as outlined in Table 1.

Through developing a competency model, this research has helped clarify where there is alignment between the literature and the local context in defining competencies, identify what competencies are considered valuable, and also highlight where competencies might be best left identified within a specific milieu. This model can provide the basis for further research on competencies both in academia and within the social housing sector.

As mentioned above, this article also stresses the importance of articulating the coexisting business and values competencies and their interrelation and coadjuvancy in ensuring a robust social housing sector. Given the provincial focus on "innovation," "modernization," and "standards," this competency structure gives the housing sector a model to use in thinking about the competencies needed to respond to new requirements without losing sight of social justice origins. Further work can occur in exploring the applicability and value of this competency model within an Ontario social housing context and beyond. Future research can also look to clearly defining these clusters and the encapsulated competencies to facilitate operationalization, human resource development, operational processes, and related adult education in the Ontario nonprofit housing sector.

NOTES

1. Either nonprofit rental or cooperative housing funded by a legally prescribed government program (although some social housing providers are now building housing with no government funding). Social housing in Ontario includes Local Housing Corporations (formerly known as Public Housing), where nearly all tenants pay on a rent-geared-to-income scale, as well as community-sponsored nonprofit housing projects, which contain a mix of market and rent-geared-to-income units (ONPHA 2015c).
2. A Google search of "workplace competency" yielded 22,300,000 results on October 26, 2016.
3. For the purposes of this research, a large community contains one million or more residents, medium contains 300,000 to one million residents, and small contains fewer than 300,000 residents.

4. There were initially many more competencies, but for the purposes of this research, where concepts were the same, these were grouped and retitled under one competency name.

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L'entrepreneur social, une catégorie émergente au Québec

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RÉSUMÉ

Cet article pose un regard critique sur la catégorie de l'entrepreneur social présente dans le paysage socioéconomique québécois contemporain. L'objectif est de comprendre comment les processus de formalisation et d'informalisation de l'État participent à la construction de cette catégorie sociale. Pour ce faire, nous établissons quatre périodicités des dynamiques d'informalisation des services sociaux de l'État depuis les années 1960. Ces dynamiques ouvrent la voie à une ambiguïté grandissante du partage des responsabilités sociales. Ce mouvement d'informalisation cependant n'est ni unidirectionnel ni unidimensionnel. Nous expliquons qu'il s'agit de changements dans des dynamiques de partage de pouvoirs entre les sphères du marché et du communautaire que tente de réguler l'État. Ceux-ci bénéficient à certains acteurs institutionnels et ouvrent la voie à une nouvelle catégorie sociale elle-même empreinte d'ambiguïté : l'entrepreneur social.

ABSTRACT

This article takes a critical look at the category of "social entrepreneur" present in the socioeconomic realm of contemporary Québec. Its objective is to understand how State processes of formalization and informalization contribute to the construction of such a social category. To that end, we describe four consecutive periods in the informalization of social services by the State since the 1960s. These four periods, as they unfold, contribute to an increasing ambiguity regarding how social responsibilities are to be shared. This process of informalization, however, is neither one-directional nor one-dimensional. In our article, we observe that it reflects fluctuations in power between market and community that the State has been trying to regulate. These fluctuations benefit certain institutional actors and pave the way for a new, somewhat ambiguous, social category, that of the social entrepreneur.

MOTS CLÉS / KEYWORDS Entrepreneur social; Processus de formalisation et d'informalisation / Social entrepreneur; Process of formalization and informalization

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Au Québec, plusieurs jeunes adultes choisissent la voie de l'entrepreneuriat social. Nous assistons depuis les cinq dernières années à un foisonnement d'initiatives destinées à la formation, au soutien financier, au mentorat et au réseautage des « entrepreneurs sociaux ». Les facultés de commerce et d'administration des universités québécoises sont nombreuses à créer des programmes destinés à développer ce type d'entrepreneuriat. Pourtant, l'entrepreneur social n'a pas d'existence juridique au Québec et se distingue difficilement d'autres types d'entrepreneurs qui œuvrent dans des entreprises classiques ou collectives.

L'objectif de cet article est d'analyser la construction de la catégorie sociale à laquelle plusieurs individus s'identifient désormais : l'entrepreneur social. Comment celui-ci est-il devenu une « figure » symbolique aussi importante ? Nous développons la thèse que l'émergence de cette catégorie sociale s'explique par les processus régulatoires de formalisation et d'informalisation dans la prestation de services sociaux de trois sphères de l'organisation sociale : l'État, le marché et le communautaire. Nous présentons ces processus en quatre périodes d'informalisation des services sociaux depuis les années 1960. Nous poursuivons ainsi le débat qui a déjà eu lieu en sciences sociales au sujet des formes de l'informel (Nélisse, Herscovici et Moulin, 1994, Boudreau, Lesemann et Martin, 2016). Nous illustrons comment la dynamique d'informalisation s'est transformée en ouvrant la voie à l'entrepreneur social. Tandis que nous discutons au début des années 1990 du passage des services offerts par l'État vers le milieu communautaire, nous observons désormais une informalisation des services offerts par l'État vers le marché qui passe parfois par cet acteur.

La catégorie de l'entrepreneur social participe dans une certaine mesure au maintien de cette ambiguïté entre le formel et l'informel. Nous verrons en effet que l'entrepreneur social n'a ni association professionnelle, ni cadre juridique, ni politiques publiques à l'intérieur desquels travailler. Il représente une forme d'hybridité entre les discours et les pratiques collectivistes de la sphère communautaire ainsi qu'entre les discours et les pratiques libérales du marché.

Cette labilité juridique, sociale et discursive assoie l'intérêt théorique et empirique d'étudier le phénomène de l'entrepreneur social. Dans cet article, nous proposons dans un premier temps de définir les notions d'informel, de formel et d'entrepreneur social. Nous montrons comment il est nécessaire de comprendre de façon généalogique la catégorie d'entrepreneur social, puisqu'aucune définition juridique ou administrative n'existe. Ce texte répond à la question suivante : comment les processus de formalisation et d'informalisation de la prestation des services sociaux de l'État ouvrent-ils la voie au phénomène de l'entrepreneur social? Ce mouvement d'informalisation est réel, mais ni unidirectionnel ni unidimensionnel. Nous expliquons qu'il s'agit de changements dans des dynamiques de partage de pouvoirs entre les sphères du marché et du communautaire que tente de réguler l'État.

FORMEL ET INFORMEL : TYPES D'ÉCHANGES, LÉGITIMITÉ ET INSTITUTIONNALISATION

Par souci de rigueur, il importe de définir ce que nous entendons par les termes « formel » et « informel ». Pour être plus précis, ces notions renvoient à trois phénomènes : 1) un type d'échanges; 2) un degré de légitimité; 3) et un processus d'institutionnalisation. Notons que ces termes désignent les pôles d'un continuum. Alors qu'il est plutôt facile d'identifier les activités qui sont formelles, plusieurs types d'échanges peuvent être informels à divers degrés. Ces adjectifs ont d'abord été utilisés par les économistes qui étudiaient l'ensemble des activités de production, de distribution et de consommation des ressources et des biens des pays du Sud. Le terme « informel » est retenu pour décrire les activités de production ou de distribution qui opèrent en marge du marché traditionnel comme la fabrication d'objets vendus dans les réseaux personnels, les marchés clandestins et les services domestiques de toutes sortes offerts en troc ou en échange d'une rémunération non déclarée. Puisque les mots « formel » et « informel » désignent des activités extrêmement hétérogènes, les théories économiques regroupent ce type d'échanges sous les catégories d'économie populaire (dans laquelle ils incluent l'économie familiale et conviviale) et d'économie populaire solidaire (Castel, 2006).

Ces théories identifiaient non seulement de façon descriptive des types d'échanges, mais elles notaient également leur valeur normative, c'est-à-dire l'acceptabilité sociale de celles-ci. En effet, le terme *informal* en anglais, duquel dérive l'utilisation du mot en français, désigne également les activités non officielles. La notion d'informalité renvoie ainsi à celle de légitimité, voire de légalité des activités (Hugon, 2014). Le fait qu'un échange soit non officiel peut entraîner un doute sur sa légitimité. Par exemple, est-il légitime que des bénévoles ayant des compétences professionnelles—comme des infirmières—puissent soigner des personnes dans le cadre de services offerts par un organisme communautaire dans un régime providentiel où les soins devraient être fournis par l'État ?

Dans le contexte de la société occidentale québécoise et de son régime politique post- providentiel, nous pouvons également dire que le continuum formel-informel renvoie au processus d'institutionnalisation. Ici, nous rejoignons les théories de la régulation qui s'intéressent à l'historicité des rapports de pouvoir et des interactions des acteurs à l'échelle mésosociale (Chanteau, Grouiez, Labrousse, Lamarche, Michel, Nieddu et Vervueil, 2016).

Nous reprendrons la définition de l'institutionnalisation de D'Amours (2001, p. 1), qui renvoie à un « processus de définition et de codification des règles, produits de compromis entre les acteurs, incluant le financement, les conditions de développement, les règles de participation, les principes de démocratisation, les formes des ententes partenariales, les politiques sociales, etc. ». Les différents instruments de politiques publiques développées au cours des années soixante comme l'assurance-maladie universelle, l'éducation publique assurée par l'État séculier, la création des Centres locaux de services communautaires (CLSC), sont autant d'exemples d'institutionnalisation de services qui étaient produits de façon formelle ou informelle par la famille, le marché et les communautés religieuses.

C'est ainsi que le débat entourant le continuum formel-informel qui avait eu lieu au sein des analyses d'économistes sur les développements des pays du Sud dans les années 1970 a été repris, au cours des années 1990, pour analyser le démantèlement de l'État-providence et le développement de ce que nous nommons aujourd'hui l'économie sociale et solidaire. Nous observons au cours de cette décennie une distillation de la production étatique de services sociaux qui sera lentement reprise au Québec par la sphère communautaire et celle du marché. Ce passage d'une sphère à l'autre s'accompagne nécessairement d'une ambiguïté au niveau de la gouvernance et ouvre la voie à de nouvelles initiatives qui partagent une ou plusieurs des caractéristiques du pôle de l'informalité que nous avons décrites : 1) des échanges qui opèrent en marge du marché traditionnel, 2) des activités dont on met en doute la légitimité, 3) et un statut n'ayant pas encore été institutionnalisé comme le démontre la non-existence juridique de l'entrepreneur social.

LA DÉFINITION DE L'ENTREPRENEUR SOCIAL ET SON INFORMALITÉ NORMATIVE

Il n'existe pas de consensus théorique autour de la définition des notions d'entrepreneuriat social et d'entrepreneur social malgré le fait qu'une large part des écrits portent justement sur le développement de repères définitionnels. Cela dit, l'entrepreneuriat social est généralement utilisé pour qualifier les initiatives dont les objectifs reposent à la fois sur l'efficacité économique et une mission sociale (Petrella et Richez-Battesti, 2014). En ce sens, le phénomène de l'entrepreneuriat social se rapproche de ce qui est connu au Québec depuis les années 1980 comme étant la nouvelle économie sociale. Ce type d'entrepreneuriat utilise une diversité de logiques marchandes et non marchandes (redistribution ou don, par exemple) pour répondre à des problèmes sociaux particuliers (D'Amours, 2006, Lévesque, 2002). Bien que l'entrepreneuriat social et l'entrepreneuriat collectif aient en commun le développement d'une mission sociale, ils se différencient fondamentalement par leur positionnement sur les modes de gouvernance, comme nous le verrons dans la section suivante.

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L'entrepreneur social est communément défini comme étant celui qui est à la base des initiatives d'entrepreneuriat social (Brouard et Larivet, 2010). Comme le souligne Lévesque (2002, p. 13), dans le contexte du Québec, le terme d'entrepreneur social n'est pas utilisé pour désigner le porteur d'un projet d'entreprise collective. L'entrepreneur social peut être un individu soucieux des intérêts collectifs sans être pour autant soumis juridiquement à une organisation collective et à son mode de gouvernance collaborative (OBNL, coopérative).

D'un point de vue théorique, la catégorie d'entrepreneur social se rapproche davantage de celle d'entrepreneur classique, notamment pour les tenants de l'école américaine de l'innovation sociale (Bacq et Janssen, 2011). La définition de cette locution nous oblige à revenir à celle du terme « entrepreneur ». Dans la pensée schumpétérienne, l'entrepreneur serait celui qui participe à la destruction d'une structure économique existante par la création d'un nouveau processus de production (Schumpeter, 2008). Il est innovateur et agent du changement. Par définition, il agit dans un univers informel— là où les règles n'existent pas encore. L'entrepreneur représente une sorte de trait d'union qui permettrait de rééquilibrer l'offre et la demande en étant celui qui, par exemple, serait « capable de satisfaire les demandeurs qui ne trouvent pas de solutions en leur proposant des biens et/ou des services provenant de marché excédentaire » (Messeghem et Sammut, 2011, p. 46).

L'entrepreneur se définit notamment par sa capacité à calculer les risques et à utiliser la rationalité instrumentale. Il se passionne pour ses projets et propose de nouvelles idées. Sa capacité d'innover le distingue du gestionnaire. Enfin, il fonctionne dans une logique du projet qui demande flexibilité, charisme et disponibilité. Il s'inscrit dans un mode d'actions et de justifications propre au *Nouvel esprit du capitalisme* qu'ont analysé Boltanski et Chiapello (1999). L'entrepreneur social partagerait les caractéristiques ci-mentionnés, mais il se distinguerait de l'entrepreneur classique par son désir de créer du changement social. Il s'inscrit ainsi dans la sphère marchande, tout en tentant d'y intégrer une logique de la sphère communautaire, celle de la solidarité collective (Fontan, 2011).

En sciences sociales, l'analyse du phénomène d'entrepreneur social est récente et lacunaire (Germak et Robinson, 2013). Pour saisir cet acteur émergent, certains chercheurs se sont intéressés aux caractéristiques des individus—leurs motivations, compétences, profils et traits psychologiques (Christopoulos et Vogl, 2014, Boluk et Mottiar, 2014, Dhesi, 2010, Four, Corbin-Charland et Lavoie, 2016). D'autres se sont penchés sur les activités menées par ces individus et les ressources mobilisées (Bacq, Ofstein, Kickul et Gundry, 2015, Partzsch et Ziegler, 2011).

Plusieurs analysent de façon critique le phénomène. Certains soupçonnent les acteurs d'avoir des intérêts « calculés » derrière leur désir de changer le monde. Pour d'autres, on questionne leur indifférence au profit alors qu'ils adoptent des attitudes, des approches et des modèles d'affaires similaires à ceux du secteur privé. Les analyses existantes témoignent des différents registres discursifs utilisés par ces acteurs pour subvenir à leur désir de changement social. Ainsi, la catégorie de l'entrepreneur social renvoie à une informalité normative et provoque une remise en question de sa légitimité.

Ce tour d'horizon des écrits scientifiques met en lumière une plurivocité conceptuelle et témoigne en quelque sorte de l'informalité qu'institue cet acteur. Cette difficulté à saisir la catégorie sociale devient plus importante lorsque nous nous intéressons à la réalité empirique des individus qui s'y identifient (Claude, 2012).

L'INFORMALITÉ INSTITUTIONNELLE DE L'ENTREPRENEUR SOCIAL

Il n'existe ni association professionnelle ni cadre juridique, ni définition par l'entremise de politiques publiques délimitant la catégorie d'entrepreneur social. Cette absence de formalisation institutionnelle laisse une plus grande liberté aux acteurs dans la manière de se définir et de se présenter.

Comme nous le mentionnions en introduction, il est difficile d'évaluer l'ampleur du phénomène de l'entrepreneur social dans le contexte du Québec, car les études sur le sujet sont peu nombreuses (Four et al., 2016, Lévesque, 2002, Riverin, 2006) et les cadres permettant de l'appréhender demeurent sous-théorisés (Bouchard, Cruz Filho, Zerdani, 2013). La reconnaissance des entrepreneurs sociaux repose ainsi sur deux principaux mécanismes : 1) l'identification des acteurs à cette pratique sociale et 2) le rôle d'organisations civiles, comme Ashoka et l'Institut du Nouveau Monde (INM). L'attribution d'un prix, d'une bourse ou d'un *fellowship* par ces organisations confère en quelque sorte une identité d'« entrepreneur social ». Toutefois, ces organisations civiles ne tiennent pas le rôle d'associations professionnelles, même si certaines sont des lieux de convergence pour les individus qui s'identifient comme « entrepreneurs sociaux ». Ainsi, selon les environnements au sein desquels ils évoluent, les individus peuvent jouer d'identités différentes, dont celle d'entrepreneur social.

La reconnaissance de la catégorie d'entrepreneurs sociaux pourrait aussi passer par la mise en œuvre de l'organisation appelée « entreprise sociale » (Brouard et al., 2010). Certains pays, tels le Royaume-Uni et l'Italie, ont créé des statuts juridiques spécifiques permettant de structurer cette catégorie (Bacq et al., 2011, Defourny, 2004, Souviron, 2011). Or au Québec, force est de constater que cette notion d'« entreprise sociale » est très peu utilisée pour parler de la structure mise en place par les entrepreneurs sociaux (Mendell, 2010, Fontan, 2011). La diversité des cadres définitionnels de même que la nature hybride de cette forme d'organisation génèrent parfois une confusion par rapport à d'autres termes employés pour décrire des pratiques similaires, comme celui d'entreprise d'économie sociale (Mendell, 2010, Fontan, 2011).

Plus encore, l'absence de statut juridique d'entrepreneur social accroît l'informalité institutionnelle des acteurs qui s'y identifient. Ni au Québec ni au Canada, il n'existe de cadre juridique permettant de circonscrire les termes « entreprise sociale » et « entrepreneur social ». L'entrepreneur social peut donc choisir d'enregistrer son projet à visée sociale sous le statut juridique d'entreprise individuelle ou collective. Dans le tableau ci-dessous, nous énumérons les différents statuts juridiques d'entreprise que peuvent choisir les entrepreneurs sociaux au Québec.

Comme le souligne Mendell (2010), les contextes institutionnels jouent un rôle significatif dans la détermination de la nature et du rôle des « entreprises sociales ». Au Québec, la loi définit le statut juridique d'une entreprise en fonction de la manière dont les personnes s'associent (Jolin, 2013). Bien que la loi n'encadre pas les objectifs—la mission—de l'entreprise, elle définit néanmoins la structure—la gouvernance—des organisations. Depuis 2013, la loi sur l'économie sociale encadre formellement ce secteur d'activités socioéconomiques. Elle définit ce qui est entendu par le vocable « entreprise d'économie sociale » et elle précise les principes qui gouvernent ces formes d'organisations.

Deux principaux éléments de la définition ne permettent pas de saisir tout à fait les pratiques de l'entrepreneur social à partir de ce cadre. Le premier porte sur la question de la redistribution des profits. Les règles interdisent la distribution des surplus générés ou du moins elles prévoient une distribution limitée de ceux-ci aux membres. Or, certains entrepreneurs sociaux, pour assurer la mission sociale, distribuent indirectement leurs excédents financiers en offrant un de leurs services gratuitement ou en créant de nouveaux programmes. Le deuxième élément porte sur les enjeux de la gouvernance. L'une des caractéristiques de l'économie sociale est qu'elle repose sur un projet qui émerge d'un collectif et dont la présence en assurerait la viabilité. Pourtant, comme le souligne Lévesque (2002), l'entrepreneur social enregistré sous le statut d'entreprise individuelle peut, lui aussi, inclure la communauté dans les processus de décisions. Le cadre de l'économie sociale ne permet donc pas de tenir compte des projets qui peuvent être portés par un entrepreneur social individuel qui s'engage pour l'intérêt collectif.

L'informalité institutionnelle du statut d'entrepreneur social amène un questionnement sur la légitimité de son caractère « social ». Comment un projet social peut-il se pérenniser s'il est porté par un seul individu? Pouvons-nous reconnaître

l'action individuelle comme étant « sociale » au même titre que l'action collective qui, elle, a marqué historiquement le développement social québécois? Ce sont exactement ces questions de principe que soulèvent les acteurs du Chantier de l'économie sociale au Québec.

TABLEAU 1 - PRINCIPAUX STATUTS JURIDIQUES DE L'ENTREPRISE AU QUÉBEC

Statuts juridiques de l'entreprise	Entreprise individuelle	Société par actions	Société en nom collectif	Coopérative	Mutuelle	Personne morale sans but lucratif
Définitions	Entreprise exploitée par une seule personne (travailleur autonome).	La société par actions est une personne morale, c'est-à-dire qu'elle est une entité distincte des personnes qui la dirigent et de celles qui en sont propriétaires. La société par actions peut avoir un ou plusieurs actionnaires.	Un regroupement de personnes (que l'on appelle les « associés ») qui ont décidé d'exercer une activité commune.	Une personne morale regroupant des personnes ou des sociétés qui ont des besoins économiques, sociaux ou culturels communs et qui, en vue de les satisfaire, s'associent pour exploiter une entreprise conformément aux règles d'action coopérative.	Une entreprise collective de prévoyance volontaire fondée sur un système d'engagements réciproques par lequel les membres d'un groupe unissent leurs efforts et, moyennant une cotisation périodique, s'assurent contre certains risques (maladies, accidents, etc.) en se garantissant les mêmes avantages et en excluant toute idée de bénéfice.	Organisme constitué à des fins sociales, éducatives ou philanthropiques et duquel les membres et les administrateurs ne retirent aucun avantage économique, ni aucun profit engendré par la tenue de certaines activités.
Redistribution des profits	Le propriétaire perçoit les revenus.	Redistribution sous la forme d'un réinvestissement dans l'entreprise ou par une répartition entre les actionnaires sous forme de dividendes.	Les associés se partagent les profits selon des pourcentages prédéterminé.	Redistribution des profits aux membres sous forme de ristournes en fonction de l'utilisation des services offerts par la coopérative.	Les profits sont réinvestis dans la mutuelle ou redistribués aux membres sous la forme de primes réduites.	Les profits reviennent à l'organisme.

Sources: Conseil canadien de la coopération et de la mutualité (2018); Registraire des entreprises du Québec (2018)

ENTRE FORMALISATION ET INFORMALISATION : UN PROCESSUS RÉGULATOIRE ENTRE L'ÉTAT, LE MARCHÉ ET LA COMMUNAUTÉ

Partant de l'hypothèse déjà formulée par d'autres chercheurs (Toulouse, 1989, Lévesque, Malo et Girard, 1999), selon laquelle il existerait une « symbiose » entre les processus entrepreneuriaux et les dynamiques socioéconomiques, nous expliquons dans cette section comment les processus de formalisation et d'informalisation de la production de certains services sociaux entre l'État, le marché et le communautaire laissent une plus grande place à l'entrepreneur social. Puisque ces processus s'établissent sur un temps long, nous avons identifié quatre périodes[1] qui caractérisent l'émergence de l'entrepreneur social. Ainsi, nous devons revenir à la création de l'État-providence au cours des années 1960 pour comprendre la formalisation de la production de certains services sociaux par l'État et pour analyser le processus d'informalisation qui s'ensuit à partir des années 1970. C'est ce dernier processus, dans un contexte de

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politiques néolibérales, qui ouvre la voie à l'émergence d'une nouvelle catégorie que représente l'entrepreneur social et à celle de nouveaux acteurs organisationnels comme Ashoka.

1960–1975 : Formalisation des services sociaux offerts par la sphère de l'État
L'arrivée au pouvoir du gouvernement libéral de Jean Lesage en 1960 pose un jalon historique pour la réorientation de l'État québécois. Nous assistons à l'avènement des principes de l'État-providence au sein de la société québécoise et, avec lui, le commencement du processus de formalisation de certains services historiquement produits par la famille, l'Église, les réseaux personnels et la sphère communautaire. Ce changement de paradigme s'opère notamment par la rupture entre l'État et l'Église catholique.

Avant les années 1960, la citoyenneté sociale était conçue et soutenue par les sphères de la famille, de la communauté— souvent la paroisse—et des réseaux personnels. Les services étaient produits et échangés la plupart du temps de manière informelle, quoique certains services d'assistance sociale étaient institutionnalisés par des communautés religieuses. À partir des années 1960, plusieurs services sociaux sont pris en charge par les différents ministères. Citons, pour exemple, la création d'outils de politiques publiques telles que le régime de l'assurance-hospitalisation (1961), le régime de l'assurance-maladie (1970), les CLSC (1972) et le régime des allocations familiales du Québec (1974).

L'État-providence est perçu comme un modèle de développement permettant d'accroître la richesse collective en offrant aux citoyens une protection sociale. C'est dans ce contexte que nous avons assisté à la naissance du mouvement communautaire autonome dans les années 1960, ainsi qu'à l'arrivée d'une nouvelle génération de coopératives dans les années 1970 (D'Amours, 2000, Favreau et Lévesque, 1996). Bien qu'il s'agisse de deux mouvements différents, ils ont tous les deux adopté un discours critique à l'égard des politiques publiques des gouvernements en place. Ils ont également développé des services alternatifs qui permettent aux citoyens d'exercer une prise en charge collective de leurs besoins. Par exemple, le mouvement communautaire a créé des garderies, des services juridiques communautaires et des cliniques médicales populaires (Deslauriers, 2014). De leur côté, les nouvelles coopératives ont développé, par exemple, des coopératives d'habitation et des coopératives alimentaires dans une volonté d'offrir des services alternatifs à ceux offerts par l'État (Lévesque et al., 1999). L'offre des services sociaux se structure ainsi principalement autour de l'État et des milieux communautaires et coopératifs.

La conjoncture des années 1960 est également favorable pour l'entrepreneuriat québécois. Le gouvernement libéral de Jean Lesage est l'un des premiers gouvernements à intervenir pour stimuler l'entrepreneuriat au sein de la population québécoise. Le nationalisme économique est une priorité, c'est pourquoi ce gouvernement travaille à l'élargissement du marché local, à la création de mécanismes de protection des entreprises québécoises, ainsi qu'au développement de nouveaux leviers financiers comme la Caisse de dépôt et placement (1965) et la Régie des rentes du Québec (1965). Les années 1960 marquent les débuts de ce que plusieurs chercheurs et praticiens nomment le « Québec Inc. ». Cette expression ne signifie pas qu'il y a une apparition soudaine d'un Québec entrepreneurial, car l'entrepreneuriat privé et collectif y existe depuis fort longtemps. Selon Toulouse (1989), l'effet de nouveauté qu'apporte le terme est plutôt celui de l'arrimage entre le projet individuel (entrepreneurial) et collectif (identité nationale). Il s'agit d'un modèle de développement économique qui a joué un rôle majeur dans l'émergence d'entreprises privées phares de la société québécoise comme Bombardier, SNC-Lavalin et Québecor.

En somme, cette période marque un passage dans le continuum formel-informel, de services produits et échangés informellement par la famille et les réseaux vers des services produits formellement par l'État et, en parallèle, par des mouvements communautaires autonomes et coopératifs. Nous assistons également à un passage de services formellement offerts par les communautés religieuses vers le milieu communautaire laïc et d'une prise en charge de la

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sphère marchande par les entrepreneurs québécois. Cette époque porte en elle les germes de l'entrepreneur social. Le contexte social dans lequel le milieu coopératif québécois des années 1960 se diversifie, jumelé à la montée du Québec Inc., encourage l'innovation et le développement d'entreprises québécoises. Il y a, dès cette époque, la valorisation des valeurs entrepreneuriales telles que définies par Schumpeter.

1976–2003 : Informalisation des sphères de l'État et du marché et formalisation de la sphère communautaire
Au cours de cette période où l'État québécois est dirigé successivement par le Parti Québécois (1976-1985), le Parti Libéral (1985-1994) et de nouveau le Parti Québécois (1994-2003), nous assistons à la montée de la mondialisation des marchés qui culmine avec la signature de l'Accord de libre-échange nord-américain. Un second changement de paradigme s'opère au milieu des années 1970 : plusieurs États délaissent le modèle de l'État-providence et changent pour des modèles influencés par le néolibéralisme comme idéologie et modèle de gouvernance. Ce changement de paradigme correspond à la fin d'une période de croissance économique. La crise du pétrole aux États-Unis en 1973 se fait sentir pendant plus d'une décennie, car elle entraîne une inflation et une hausse des taux d'intérêt qui réduisent considérablement le pouvoir d'achat des consommateurs. Au Canada, à partir de 1979 jusqu'au début des années 2000, la croissance des salaires réels moyens a stoppé (Osberg, 2007). Au Québec, à cette insécurité économique s'est ajoutée l'insécurité politique du référendum sur la souveraineté en 1980.

La montée du néolibéralisme comme mode de gouvernance positionne petit à petit les gouvernements en acteurs du marché plutôt qu'en pourvoyeurs de biens publics (Brodie, 1997). Dans ce contexte, c'est comme si la sphère du marché s'informalisait, puisque les États-nations délaissent certaines politiques économiques régulatrices. Le Canada, mais le Québec tout particulièrement, mise sur l'entreprise privée pour créer des emplois et de la richesse afin de faire face à la crise économique et au taux élevé de chômage.

Cette reformulation des liens entre l'État et le marché conduit à une redéfinition des responsabilités de l'État par rapport à la citoyenneté sociale. En effet, les déficits des finances publiques obligent l'État de se retirer de l'offre de certains services sociaux qu'il tente de reléguer—sous forme de partenariats—à la sphère communautaire. Dans ce contexte, de nouvelles organisations sociocommunautaires émergent afin de répondre aux besoins négligés par l'État dans ce contexte de crise des finances publiques (Lévesque et al., 1999). Citons par exemple l'arrivée d'entreprises d'insertion dans les années 1990 afin de répondre à la crise de l'emploi.

Pendant le processus d'informalisation et de déréglementation de certains services sociaux produits par l'État, il y a institutionnalisation et légitimation des organisations sociales. Les pratiques des groupes communautaires sont progressivement reconnues par l'État, et les organisations créées en réponse aux problèmes de l'emploi s'incorporent dans des structures de concertation locale et régionale (D'Amours, 2001). Ces organisations communautaires voient leur financement ainsi que leur partenariat s'accroître au cours de cette période.

Après le référendum de 1995, le Québec connaît un important déficit budgétaire et un taux de chômage élevé. Confronté à cette situation économique et au marché de l'emploi difficile, le premier ministre de l'époque, Jacques Parizeau, annonce la création d'un *Comité d'orientation et de concertation sur l'économie sociale*. En mars 1996 se tient la *Conférence sur le devenir social et économique du Québec* et à l'automne 1996, sous la gouverne de Lucien Bouchard, le *Sommet sur l'économie et l'emploi* réunit les acteurs québécois du développement social et économique. Cet événement a été d'une grande importance pour l'entrepreneuriat québécois, notamment pour la reconnaissance de l'économie sociale et solidaire. Autour de cette rencontre se crée le *Groupe de travail sur l'économie sociale* qui deviendra, en 1999, le *Chantier de l'économie sociale*. Le Chantier a pour mission de promouvoir l'économie sociale afin d'en faire un acteur de l'économie plurielle du Québec. Le Chantier regroupe une grande part de l'économie sociale dite « émergente », à savoir les

organisations sans but lucratif (OSBL), certains mouvements sociaux comme les syndicats, et quelques coopératives (Lévesque et Petitclerc, 2014).

Cependant, cette formalisation et cette légitimation ne sont pas sans conséquence, car s'amorce une nouvelle façon de concevoir le mode de gouvernance des services sociaux. Le partage des responsabilités entre l'État et les différents acteurs du développement social et économique change. Dans un contexte de réductions budgétaires, l'État adopte une position de partenaire avec d'autres organisations de la société civile dans la production de services sociaux. Les services envers certaines clientèles vulnérables comme les résidents de quartiers défavorisés, les jeunes défavorisés, les nouveaux immigrants sont notamment offerts par des OBNL.

Ce changement dans le mode de gouvernance entraîne une certaine ambiguïté par rapport aux rôles de chacun, notamment celui de l'État. En effet, l'État peut-il défendre les droits sociaux de ses citoyens sans s'engager directement dans la production de services? En laissant en partie à des philanthropes, des entrepreneurs et d'autres acteurs de la société civile, le rôle de soutenir les citoyens les plus vulnérables, passons-nous d'une logique de droits à une logique de charité? Pour les acteurs de l'action communautaire autonome, il y a accentuation de la vision utilitariste de l'État face aux groupes communautaires, une perte d'autonomie des organismes communautaires, et une augmentation de leur rôle de prestataire de services (Réseau québécois de l'action communautaire autonome, sd).

2003–2013 : le soutien à la culture entrepreneuriale, l'émergence de l'entrepreneuriat social
et le démantèlement des structures de concertation régionale
Au tournant des années 2000, nous constatons que l'État investit la sphère du marché afin de s'en faire un partenaire pour stimuler l'économie. Durant cette période, l'État québécois a principalement été dirigé par le Parti Libéral (2003–2012, 2014–2018), le Parti québécois ayant dirigé entre 2012 et 2014. L'une des voies retenues est celle de l'entrepreneuriat.

En 2003, l'arrivée au pouvoir du gouvernement libéral de Jean Charest marque un tournant important dans le soutien à l'entrepreneuriat québécois. Ce gouvernement constate que la relève entrepreneuriale est insuffisante pour développer l'économie de la province. Ainsi, au cours de son mandat (2003–2012), le gouvernement Charest a développé plusieurs politiques publiques : Le *Défi de l'entrepreneuriat* dans le cadre de la *Stratégie d'action jeunesse* (2009–2014) et la *Stratégie québécoise de l'entrepreneuriat* (2011). Ces politiques visaient principalement la formation d'une relève entrepreneuriale et la mise en place d'une culture entrepreneuriale.

Durant cette période, nous constatons que le discours de l'État en appelle de plus en plus à la responsabilisation individuelle par la culture entrepreneuriale. L'État souhaite offrir des outils aux citoyens pour qu'ils deviennent des citoyens engagés et productifs. La meilleure façon de changer une culture est d'éduquer ses citoyens, notamment les plus jeunes. C'est ainsi que plusieurs concours et programmes se sont développés pour soutenir l'entrepreneuriat jeunesse. Le *Défi de l'entrepreneuriat jeunesse* (2004) est un exemple phare. Il a pour but de favoriser la relève par le développement de valeurs et d'habiletés entrepreneuriales chez les jeunes. Au compte des programmes du Défi, il y a le *Concours québécois en entrepreneuriat*, nommé le *Défi OSEntreprendre!*

Émergence de la catégorie de l'entrepreneur social
Il est difficile de situer exactement dans le temps l'apparition de la catégorie d'entrepreneur social au Québec car, comme nous l'avons évoqué plus tôt, leurs projets sont similaires à ceux des organismes des milieux communautaires et de l'économie sociale. Aussi, les acteurs qui s'identifient à cette catégorie ne s'inscrivent pas dans la foulée d'un mouvement social qui nous permettrait de situer historiquement leurs discours.

Nous établissons l'émergence d'une valorisation d'entrepreneurs dits sociaux au cours des années 1990. Plusieurs organisations, comme Communauto (1994), se présentent d'abord comme des « entreprises sociales » ayant à leur tête des entrepreneurs plutôt que des organisateurs communautaires ou des professionnels des services sociaux et communautaires. Ces nouveaux acteurs défendent avant tout une démarche pragmatique qui repose sur des principes économiques pour trouver des solutions innovantes aux problèmes conjoncturels. Les problèmes abordés ne portent pas uniquement sur les besoins négligés par l'État québécois dans une perspective de développement social et local, mais aussi sur des enjeux globaux. Dans le cas de Communauto, l'entreprise propose aux citoyens un partage de voitures tout en tentant de réduire les effets de la voiture sur le réchauffement climatique et l'étalement urbain.

Dans le milieu universitaire, le terme d'entrepreneur social est utilisé au début des années 2000 pour décrire la réalité québécoise (Lévesque, 2002, Riverin, 2006). La catégorie « entrepreneur social » se cristallise au Québec en 2006 par l'attribution des premiers prix décernés à des entrepreneurs sociaux ou des *fellows* par la Fondation Ashoka. Cette fondation, établie au Canada en 2002, se présente comme un réseau international d'entrepreneurs sociaux, nommé des *fellows*. Le premier à recevoir ce prestigieux prix est le Dr Julien pour la clinique de pédiatrie sociale qu'il a fondée dans les années 1990. Il incarne alors les valeurs d'innovation propres à l'entrepreneuriat social. La même année, Sidney Ribaux, cofondateur d'Équiterre, une association écologiste fondée en 1993, est également nommé *fellow*. Il sera suivi en 2008 par la nomination de Michel Venne, fondateur de l'Institut du Nouveau Monde (INM), une organisation qui prône le débat afin de proposer de nouvelles solutions sociales. À la suite de cette nomination, l'INM deviendra un autre acteur important dans la production et la reproduction de la catégorie d'entrepreneur social par la mise sur pied du parcours *À go on change le monde* au sein de son École d'été, laquelle propose des ateliers de formation et de mentorat pour les jeunes désirant devenir entrepreneurs sociaux.

Ainsi, le processus d'informalisation de la production de services sociaux de l'État et la promotion de valeurs entrepreneuriales change la dynamique des acteurs en présence et ouvre la porte à de nouveaux interlocuteurs, comme la Fondation Ashoka et l'INM. Ces organisations soutiennent des individus qui ont démarré des organisations, mais qui ne se sont pas associés pour diverses raisons aux associations en place, telles que le mouvement communautaire autonome, le mouvement coopératif et le mouvement de l'économie sociale.

De 2014 à aujourd'hui : démantèlement des structures de concertation

Au cours de cette période historique, l'État a valorisé d'une part les valeurs marchandes et entrepreneuriales à l'échelle individuelle et, d'autre part, a démantelé des structures de concertation qui privilégient une gouvernance citoyenne. Dans le secteur jeunesse, nommons notamment le démantèlement des Forums jeunesse régionaux. Ces organisations gouvernées par et pour les jeunes offraient, elles aussi, des occasions pour développer des projets d'entrepreneuriat social selon une logique de gouvernance citoyenne. Les forums, tels que les Conférences régionales des élus et les Centres locaux de développement, ont subi le même sort que d'autres structures de gouvernance régionale qui soutiennent la participation citoyenne et qui représentent la société civile organisée.

Ces démantèlements se sont inscrits dans un contexte de mesures d'austérité budgétaire du gouvernement libéral de Philippe Couillard. L'objectif était de rendre l'appareil étatique plus efficace en réduisant notamment le rôle des citoyens, en ramenant le pouvoir vers les villes et en misant sur l'innovation sociale, en particulier celle liée aux technologies de l'information. Comme le souligne Vaillancourt (2017 : 28), cette manière de procéder pour atteindre l'équilibre budgétaire et le déficit zéro a pour corollaire l'absence d'une préoccupation à l'égard de l'entretien d'un dialogue social et de la participation des acteurs de la société civile dans la co-construction démocratique des politiques publiques. Ce cadre idéologique crée une ambiguïté dans la gouvernance des problèmes sociaux. Mais qui profite de cette ambiguïté? L'État

en profite très certainement dans un contexte de contrainte financière, mais également certains acteurs qui doivent créer leur emploi, tels les individus qui s'identifient à la catégorie d'entrepreneurs sociaux.

Ainsi, la catégorie d'entrepreneur social résulte notamment du processus d'informalisation de la prestation des services sociaux offerts par l'État et du démantèlement de structures de concertation qui accroissent l'informalisation des réseaux des individus. C'est comme si, en soutenant l'informalité juridique, en informalisant la production des services sociaux, en démantelant les organisations citoyennes, il rend très poreuses les parois entre les sphères marchande et étatique. Son devoir de stimuler l'économie québécoise rend-il légitime l'incursion de valeurs marchandes dans la gouvernance de la justice sociale?

CONCLUSION

Comment la catégorie d'entrepreneur social émerge-t-elle au Québec? C'est à cette question que nous avons voulu répondre en démontrant comment l'État a créé de l'ambiguïté dans la gouvernance des services sociaux à travers une dynamique de formalisation et d'informalisation des services offerts par le marché et la communauté. Cette gouvernance et l'appui gouvernemental au développement de l'entreprise privée conduisent à l'émergence de la catégorie de l'entrepreneur social et à des acteurs comme la Fondation Ashoka qui cristallisent cette identité.

Nous avons déterminé que la notion d'informalité s'établissait sur un continuum formel-informel et qu'elle désigne une ou plusieurs de ces situations : 1) la production de biens et de services à l'extérieur de la sphère traditionnelle, 2) la mise en doute de la légitimité voire de la légalité d'un phénomène, 3) et la désinstitutionnalisation de la production de services par une sphère de l'organisation sociale (l'État, le marché ou la communauté, la famille/les réseaux personnels).

C'est à partir de ce cadre conceptuel qu'il nous a été possible de montrer que l'entrepreneur social est un acteur institutionnellement informel, car il n'a ni association professionnelle, ni cadre juridique, ni politiques publiques à l'intérieur desquels travailler. En raison notamment de ce statut, plusieurs acteurs comme le Chantier de l'économie sociale et solidaire du Québec mettent en doute sa légitimité. Il est alors pertinent de se poser la question : à qui cette informalité profite-t-elle? Pourquoi la société crée-t-elle une telle ambiguïté?

L'informalité de la catégorie d'entrepreneur social profite d'une certaine façon à l'État qui tente de se désengager continuellement de la production de services sociaux pour des raisons de saines finances publiques depuis le milieu des années 1970. D'autre part, cette informalité profite également aux jeunes qui s'insèrent difficilement dans le marché de l'emploi malgré leur niveau d'éducation élevé. La catégorie de l'entrepreneur social répond, d'une certaine façon, à leur désir de se développer professionnellement et d'avancer leur carrière dans un marché de l'emploi qui leur offre peu de possibilités. Cette catégorie s'inscrit également dans l'histoire québécoise du développement communautaire et coopératif ainsi que du Québec Inc., et elle participe à rattraper une culture entrepreneuriale plus développée dans le reste du Canada et de l'Amérique du Nord.

Au Québec, la catégorie d'entrepreneur social représente une construction sociale sans reconnaissance de la part de la loi sur les entreprises et de l'ensemble des acteurs du Chantier de l'économie sociale. Pourtant, cette figure symbolique répond aux désirs de plusieurs d'épouser des valeurs dans lesquelles ils ont évolué : une culture populaire où sont promus le succès personnel, la performance et le charisme individuel, des valeurs que critique la sphère communautaire et que valorise la sphère marchande. Ainsi, les sphères du marché et du communautaire sont assez claires, mais que dire de celle de l'État?

Pourquoi ne reconnaît-il pas légalement l'existence d'une construction sociale à laquelle il a lui-même directement contribué, comme en témoigne notre analyse? Deuxièmement, cette informalité de la sphère étatique soulève des enjeux éthiques. Le rôle économique de l'État supplante-t-il celui de gardien de la citoyenneté sociale et politique en cultivant son ambiguïté et son informalité? Considérant le fait que la catégorie d'entrepreneur social existe, et que les individus sont toujours plus nombreux à s'y identifier (à en constater les programmes universitaires qui se développent actuellement), quel rôle peut jouer le Chantier de l'économie sociale? Laisser ces acteurs aux mains du marché et de l'État représente-t-il un gain social?

NOTE

1. Ce découpage s'inspire largement d'excellentes analyses historiques réalisées jusqu'à présent sur ces divers sujets (Bélanger et Fournier, 1987, Deslauriers, 2014, Julien 2000, Lévesque et Mendell, 1999, Lévesque 2007, Vaillancourt, 2017).

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Explaining Québec's Social Economy Turn

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ABSTRACT

Québec has been structuring and promoting a social economy sector since the mid-1990s. What explains this specificity of the Québec social model? Careful process tracing analysis reveals that the mobilization of Québec's left in the mid-1990s, followed by coalition engineering during the 1996 economy and employment summit, account for Québec's distinct trajectory. Consistent with power resource theory (PRT), at the agenda-setting stage, protagonists of Québec's social economy policies were associated with the left. Contrary to what is assumed by PRT, however, at the decision stage, the right's consent to social economy policies was not conditioned by a weak bargaining position or by a fear of antagonizing voters.

RÉSUMÉ

Le Québec appuie et structure un secteur de l'économie sociale depuis le milieu des années 1990. Comment expliquer cette spécificité du modèle social québécois? Une analyse attentive du retraçage des processus révèle que la mobilisation de la gauche québécoise au milieu des années 1990, suivie d'une coalition autour de l'économie sociale formée au moment du Sommet sur l'économie et l'emploi en 1996, expliquent la trajectoire distincte du Québec. De façon cohérente avec la théorie des ressources de pouvoir (PRT), à l'étape de la mise à l'agenda, les protagonistes des politiques visant à appuyer l'économie sociale au Québec étaient associés à la gauche. Contrairement à ce qui est supposé par la PRT, cependant, à l'étape de la prise de décision, l'appui de la droite à ces politiques ne reposait pas sur un faible rapport de force ou sur une crainte de s'aliéner les électeurs.

KEYWORDS / MOTS CLÉS : Social economy; Social policy; Québec; Power resources; Coalitions / Économie sociale; Politique sociale; Québec; Ressources de pouvoir; Coalitions

INTRODUCTION

This article highlights an overlooked distinctive feature of the Québec social model: the government institutionalization of the social economy. In the mid-to-late 1990s, the Québec welfare state took a veritable social economy turn by launching, expanding, or consolidating various networks of social economy enterprises (SEEs), delivering subsidized social services, especially in the areas of childcare, home assistance, community housing, and social insertion (Vaillancourt,

2013). No other province "adopted" the concept of the social economy to this extent (Downing & Charron, 2010). What accounts for Québec's distinct trajectory?

Surprisingly, this puzzle has received very little attention from students of the Canadian welfare state. Existing studies have sought to explain cross-provincial differences in only some of these sectors, including childcare (Haddow, 2015; Jenson, 2002) and home assistance (Jenson & Phillips, 2000; Tremblay & Vaillancourt, 2002). Also, while several studies have tangentially proposed causal explanations of Québec's distinct general social economy turn (as further discussed below), no study has really focused on doing so. This article fills this gap by investigating how Québec first came to recognize and promote the social economy sector.

The article makes two main arguments. First, consistent with power resource theory (PRT) (Esping-Andersen, 1985), it argues that it was the left that put the social economy on the Québec government's agenda in the mid-1990s. In particular, pressures from the women's movement and a major union federation, the Confédération des syndicats nationaux (CSN), led to the creation of a task force on the social economy during the 1996 economy and employment summit. Second, it argues that the concertation setting of the 1996 summit enabled a left/right coalition on the social economy. More specifically, the social economy projects proposed by the task force satisfied both the left and the right as they were thought to create jobs and address unmet social needs while infringing upon neither the public nor the private sector. Contrary to what is assumed by PRT (Korpi, 2006), the right's consent was not conditioned by a weak bargaining position or by a fear of antagonizing voters.

The remainder of this article is divided into six sections. The first clarifies the concept of the social economy and introduces Québec's social economy policies; the second outlines the main hypotheses possibly accounting for Québec's distinct trajectory; the third explicates the methodological approach employed; the fourth and main section tests the hypotheses; the fifth explores alternative explanations; the sixth concludes the article.

QUÉBEC'S SOCIAL ECONOMY POLICIES

In Québec, the "social economy" broadly refers to co-operatives, mutual societies, and nonprofits providing goods or services in the market (Groupe de travail sur l'économie sociale, 1996; Québec, 2013). Self-recognized SEEs typically also share certain ideals, such as to provide "genuinely" useful goods and services (in contrast to simply responding to the demands of a consumerist society) and to have democratic or empowering governance (Groupe de travail sur l'économie sociale, 1996; Québec, 2013). Identification to the social economy is thus highly political, and actors on the ground constantly debate and negotiate whether specific organizations satisfy the ideals of the social economy. The Québec government nonetheless estimates that there are over 7,000 social economy enterprises in the province, representing about four percent of total employment (Québec, 2015).

A strategic economic sector
In March of 1996, at the Conference on the Social and Economic Future of Québec, where social partners agreed on the short-term priorities of stimulating employment and eliminating the public deficit, the government decided to establish three task forces: one on the private sector, presided over by pharmacy magnate Jean Coutu; one on the social economy (Groupe de travail sur l'économie sociale [GTES]), presided over by Nancy Neamtan, who then represented the Coalition des organismes communautaires pour le développement de la main-d'oeuvre; and one on Montréal, presided over by André Bérard, then leading the National Bank.[1] When the GTES presented its recommendations the following October during the summit's second phase, a large consensus between community groups, unions, employers, and government officials formed around the necessity to promote the social economy (Lévesque, 2013).

This article focuses on this critical juncture. Giovanni Capoccia (2015) identifies three key steps to the study of critical junctures. First, there needs to be a "phase of political uncertainty in which different options for radical institutional change are viable" (p. 151). As emphasized below, the 1996 economy and employment summit constituted such a phase of high uncertainty and contingency, where political agents could play a decisive role. At that summit, the Québec government could have rejected the reforms proposed by the GTES, but instead decided to innovate and implement them. Second, "antecedent conditions constrain the range of limited options" (p. 151). The contingency of the 1996 summit was not absolute. Prior developments made a limited number of social economy projects politically mature. Third, the selection of the option at hand "generates a long-lasting institutional legacy" (p. 151). Two decades later, it is possible to identify the 1996 summit as such a "critical" juncture with respect to the social economy, as most of social economy reforms that it helped launch have survived to this day.

In the aftermath of the summit, sectoral social economy policies were launched to support, *inter alia,* Québec's networks of early childhood centres, community housing, training businesses, disability-friendly enterprises, and home-assistance social economy enterprises. Québec's financial support to these social economy projects increased from just under $0.2 billion in 1996–1997 to over $1 billion in 2002–2003 (Québec, 2003) and then to an annual average of $1.7 billion between 2003 and 2008 (Québec, 2008), with about 70 percent of these latter sums being channelled toward early childhood centres (Québec, 2008).

Québec also put in place a number of transversal policies (Chaves, 2002) to recognize and promote its social economy sector more broadly. First, since 1999, the Social Economy Worksite (Chantier de l'économie sociale) has been recognized, along with the much older Quebec Council of Cooperation and Mutuality (CQCM), as one of the sector's two permanent peak associations (Québec, 2013) and receives an annual governmental grant of about $600,000 (Québec, 2015).

Second, in 2002, a permanent Office of the Social Economy was created to research and advise the responsible cabinet minister on matters related to the social economy. The office has so far helped produce three social economy action plans (Québec, 2003; 2008; 2015). Provincially funded regional development bodies have similar social economy committees.

Third, legislative adjustments were made to recognize and support Québec's social economy. The provincial Cooperatives Act was amended in 1997 to allow for multi-stakeholder co-operatives (*cooperatives de solidarité*), effectively blurring the distinction between co-operatives and nonprofits, and reinforcing the social economy identity of these new organizations (Conseil québécois de la coopération et de la mutualité, 2013). Similarly, Québec's Act Respecting Assistance for the Development of Cooperatives was amended in 1997 so that nonprofit organizations were recognized as eligible to governmental economic development programs traditionally only addressed to co-operatives. The goal was to support "social economy enterprises" rather than only co-operatives (Béland, 2012). More recently, in 2013, Québec was among the first societies in the world to adopt a Social Economy Act (Chantier de l'économie sociale, 2013).

Fourth, new financial and technical assistance tools were made available to Québec's SEEs. Three publicly funded financial tools specifically targeting Québec's SEEs have been created since the mid-1990s: the Réseau d'investissement social du Québec, launched in 1997 and co-funded by employers and the Québec government; two financial products for SEEs offered by Investissement Québec since 2001[2]; and the Fiducie du Chantier de l'économie sociale, launched in 2008, and co-funded by the federal government, the Québec government and Québec labour funds. Together, these three funds now invest nearly $400 million per year in Québec's SEEs (Mendell & Zardani, 2013).

Fifth, in 1995, the Société québécoise de développement de la main-d'oeuvre established workforce committees in 29 strategic economic sectors to identify and address issues in its sectorial labour markets. In 1997, the social economy was given its own sectoral workforce committee, the Comité sectoriel de la main-d'oeuvre en économie sociale et action communautaire, which is still active today.

Sixth, in 2012, following the termination of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) funding of social economy research (see below), Québec started actively funding an organization called Territoires innovants en économie sociale et solidaire, which has a mission to strengthen the relationship between social economy organizations and researchers.

In other provinces, co-operatives, nonprofit organizations, and social enterprises obviously exist and enjoy various levels of government support (Quarter, 1992; Quarter, Mook, & Armstrong, 2018), but they are not specifically recognized or supported as "social economy enterprises" by governments (Diamantopoulos, 2011; Downing & Charron, 2010; Laforest, 2011; Vaillancourt & Thériault, 2009). In Ontario (2013), for example, what comes closest to Québec's general social economy policies is the 2013 Social Enterprise Strategy, the province's first, and so far only, action plan for social enterprises. With an envelope of $7 million, however, the plan is modest, and has not been accompanied by other "social economy" policies.

HYPOTHESES

In accounting for Québec's social economy turn, four types of explanations have been invoked. First, Québec's social economy can broadly be viewed as a response to the structural changes in the economy, and to de-industrialization and rising unemployment in particular. There is little doubt that this is true. Existing accounts of Québec's social economy turn emphasize how social economy initiatives stemmed from a preoccupation with employment (e.g., Lévesque & Petitclerc, 2008). Yet, this kind of explanation cannot explain why Québec has been the only province actively promoting the social economy, given that similar structural changes were experienced across the member countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

Second, Québec's social economy policies have largely been influenced by "social investment" ideas (e.g., Graefe, 2006). In contrast to Keynesian social policies that sought to protect citizens from the excesses of the market, active "social investment" policies seek to further equality by integrating the non-employed into the labour market (Bonoli, 2013; Hemerijk, 2013). Again, this is certainly the case. In a preparatory document published just a few days before the conference in March of 1996, the government explicitly stated the view that "the development of the social economy … constituted a promising avenue to reintegrate in a productive and socially useful way persons who are currently excluded from the labor market" (Québec, 1996, p. 43, author's translation). Yet, such an explanation cannot explain any of the specifics of the Québec case, as social investment ideas were dominant across the OECD. In fact, Jane Jenson (2017) speaks of a currently emerging policy paradigm in Europe based on the meeting of "social entrepreneurship" and "social investment."

Two other hypotheses, which are labelled in this article as "power resources" and "coalitions," can more plausibly explain Québec's distinct trajectory. They are explored in greater detail.

Power resources

In the traditional power resource theory, social policies are viewed as the result of a long-term struggle between labour, represented by unions and social democratic parties, and capital, represented by employers and conservative parties (Esping-Andersen, 1985). Although a direct allusion to power resource theory has never been made in trying to explain Québec's social economy turn, it is common to interpret this distinctive turn as the result of Québec's more powerful left compared to other provinces in the mid-1990s (e.g., Graefe, 2006). In Ontario, then-premier Mike Harris could make wel-

fare state cuts without having to make concessions to the left; in Québec, by contrast, then-premier Lucien Bouchard could only realize his zero-deficit agenda by making a number of concessions to the left, such as expanding a social economy sector (e.g., Salée, 2003).

A hypothesis stressing the power of the left is credible as Québec had a stronger left than other provinces in the mid-1990s. Indeed, compared to other provinces, Québec has had a strong left over the past few decades. Figure 1 shows that from 1945 to 2015, and especially since 1980, Québec had social democratic governments more often than most provinces, but less often than Manitoba and Saskatchewan. Figure 2 shows that Québec is the only province not to have had conservative governments since 1970 (see Pétry, 2013).

Figure 1. Number of months of social-democratic governments in Canadian provinces
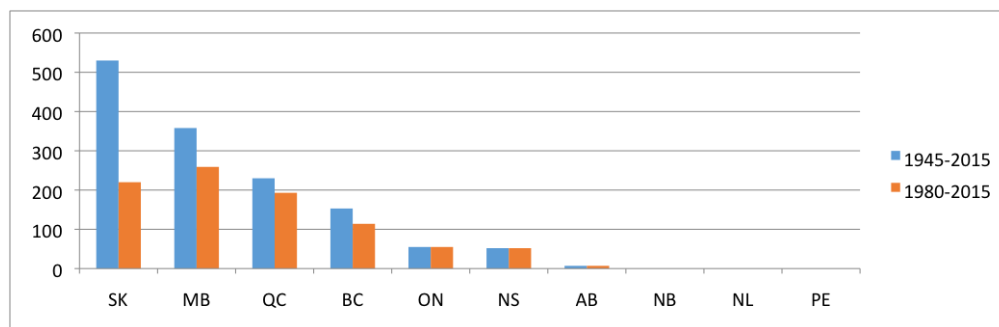
Notes: Social-democratic governments include CCF, NDP, and PQ governments. The figure makes no distinction between majority, minority, and coalition governments. The data cover the period from January 1, 1945 (April 1, 1949, in the case of Newfoundland) to December 31, 2015.

Figure 2: Number of months of conservative governments in Canadian provinces
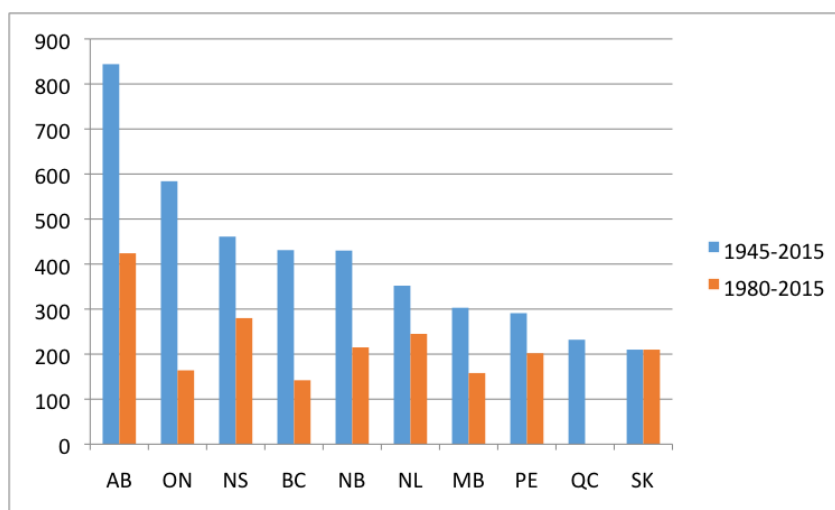

Notes: Conservative governments include governments ruled by progressive-conservative parties, social credit parties, the Union nationale, and the Saskatchewan Party. The figure makes no distinction between majority, minority, and coalition governments. The data cover the period from January 1, 1945 (April 1, 1949, in the case of NL) to December 31, 2015.

Similarly, Figure 3 shows that union density, which measures the share of workers who are unionized, and union coverage, which measures the share of unionized and non-unionized workers who are covered by a collective agreement, have been higher in Québec than in most other provinces since the mid-1970s.[3] In fact, union coverage has been higher in Québec than in any other province every year since 1997.

Figure 3: Average union density (1976–1995) and union coverage (1997–2014) rates in Canadian provinces
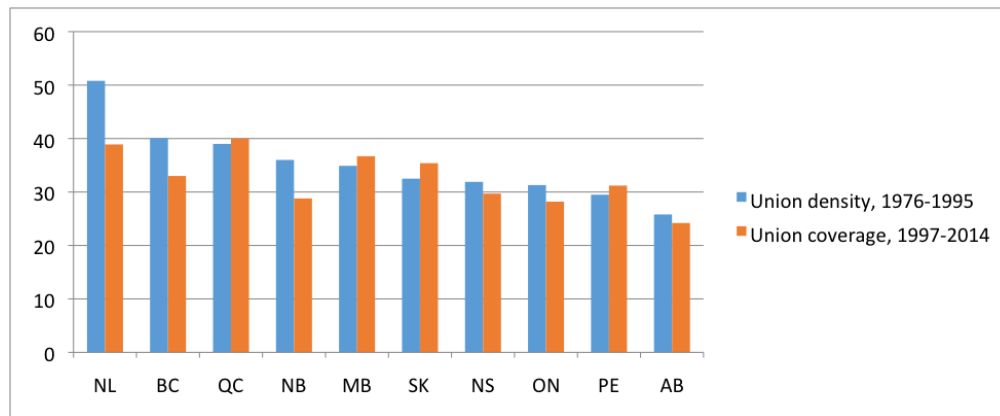
Sources: Statistics Canada, CANSIM, tables 2790025 (1976–1995) and 2820078 (1997–2014)

Québec's pro-equality civil society organizations were also particularly well organized in the wake of the 1995 Women's March Against Poverty (see Solidarité populaire Québec, 1994). Hence, representatives of several such groups, including the Québec women's federation (Fédération des femmes du Québec [FFQ]), actively participated in the 1996 economy and employment summit. As one respondent put it, "the government preferred to have us around the table than protesting on the streets." It was the first time that Québec community groups played such an active part in a broad national concerted action exercise (Comeau, Favreau, Lévesque, & Mendell, 2001). In comparison, the influence of pro-equality civil society groups in Canada outside Québec seemed weaker in the mid-1990s (Phillips, 2013).

Coalitions

The fourth possible explanation of Québec's social economy turn focuses on its distinct tradition of concerted action and left-right coalitions. In a power-based explanation, left-right agreements are possible, but they are underpinned by a particular distribution of power resources. Conservative parties, for example, may strategically consent to welfare state expansion in a context of negotiation or if they fear antagonizing voters (Korpi, 2006). Responding to this dominant power resource approach, numerous studies have argued that employers' support of social policies may in fact reflect sincere preferences rather than a weak bargaining position (Hall & Soskice, 2001; Martin & Swank, 2012).

Institutions bringing together representatives of labour and capital typically facilitate such cross-class coalitions on social policy (Häusermann, 2010). Such concerted action is more common in Québec than in other provinces (Haddow, 2015; Rigaud, Côté, Lévesque, Facal, & Bernier, 2010; Tanguay, 1984). The 1996 March conference on the social and economic future of Québec and the October economy and employment summit, in particular, constituted a setting that was conducive to coalition building (Noël, 2013) and has been argued to be instrumental in Québec's social economy turn (e.g., Lévesque, 2013).

METHODS AND DATA

Using process tracing (Goertz & Mahoney, 2012), diagnostic pieces of evidence within the Québec case are sought to

support or reject the alternative explanatory hypotheses. A wide variety of written sources are used to test the hypotheses. In addition to secondary and archival sources, including the transcripts of the 1996 October Summit, 38 semi-structured interviews are used.[4] Interviewees chiefly include Québec-based representatives of the public service, unions, employers, pro-equality community groups, and various political parties. They possess insider knowledge of various aspects of the policy process leading to Québec's social economy policies. New respondents were solicited until saturation point (Baker & Edwards, 2012). The final sample appears to be sufficiently large and diverse to satisfactorily answer the research question.

Evidence

Why is the social economy recognized and actively promoted by policy in Québec? This article argues that both the power of the left and a tradition of distinctive concerted action mattered, but at different stages of the policy process (Sabatier & Weible, 2014). More specifically, this section makes two main claims. First, the mobilization of the left was responsible for putting the social economy on the Québec governmental agenda in the mid-1990s. In other words, at the agenda-setting stage, Québec's social economy story is one of power resources. At the 1996 summit, however, both the political left and the right perceived social economy policies as aligning with their preferences. In other words, at the decision-making stage, Québec's social economy story is one of coalitions rather than of power resources.

The mobilization of the left

Before the 1995 Women's March Against Poverty, virtually no one in the government and general population was familiar with the concept of "social economy" (D'amours, 2002). Then, under the leadership of the FFQ, the Women's March Against Poverty made nine specific demands, including one to invest in "social infrastructures" or in the "social economy" (David, 1995, p. 5). To stimulate employment, the federal government had invested in a "bricks and mortar" type of infrastructure program that overwhelmingly favoured male workers; the idea was now to invest in a "proximity services" type of infrastructure program that would favour female workers. In response to this demand, Income Security Minister Jeanne Blackburn constituted a social economy committee (Comité d'orientation et de concertation sur l'économie sociale [COCES]) and promised to inject $225 million in Québec's social economy or social infrastructures (Venne, 1995)—at that point, the two expressions were used interchangeably.

The women's march, however, had a limited impact on the development of Québec's social economy. According to six respondents involved in the 1996 summit, the creation of a committee on the social economy was mostly a political response meant to save time and never became a government priority (see also Graefe, 2006). Critically, when the COCES issued its final report, the GTES had already been formed. With respect to the social economy, the key achievement of the 1995 women's march was to popularize the concept. Nancy Neamtan herself reports to have discovered this concept in the wake of the march (Lacombe, 2011). Hence, when the Bouchard government was preparing for the 1996 conference in March and thinking about an employment strategy, the social economy was an option to consider.

Evidence also suggests that the Parti Québécois (PQ) was more willing than the Quebec Liberal Party (PLQ) to recognize and support the social economy. First, Québec's willingness to explore social economy policies initially resulted from a rejection of the Liberals' income security reform. In the early 1990s, the Québec Liberals put in place a number of "workfare" programs—the best-known ones being PAIE (programme d'aide à l'intégration en emploi) and EXTRA (expérience de travail)—which gave social assistance recipients six-to-twelve-month work experiences, made possible by wage subsidies to their employers (Shragge & Deniger, 2002). The desirability of these programs was not questioned within the Liberal Party (PLQ, 1998). The PQ, in contrast, quickly dismantled them. The left resisted the Liberals' workfare programs as it sought to provide permanent, useful, and decently paid jobs to the unemployed, instead of what was perceived as dead-end work opportunities (Fournier, 2000). For many within the left, the emphasis should be less on changing the benefi-

ciaries by increasing their employability and more on adjusting the labour market itself (Noël, 1995). The promotion of the social economy sector by the government may be partly understood as a response to pressures from the left to adjust the labour market so that "real jobs" became available to those structurally excluded from the competitive labour market.

Second, before 1996, compared with the Liberals, the PQ had expressed significantly more ideological sympathy for the kinds of organizations now recognized as belonging to the social economy. In its 1976 electoral platform in particular, the PQ (1975) suggested that it wanted to move beyond capitalism toward a more co-operatives-based economy. Although such a transition was not launched in 1976, René Lévesque's PQ government extended substantial support to co-operatives by: implementing a governmental policy on the development of forestry co-operatives (1977), creating the Société de développement des coopératives (1978), putting an end to the moratorium on school-based co-operatives (1979), organizing the Co-operation Summit (1980), launching Québec's regional development co-operatives networks during the early 1980s, and supporting the development of ambulance co-operatives (Girard, 1999).

Since 1996, the centre-left PQ has also proven to be particularly committed to the social economy. PQ governments have put in place the bulk of Québec's existing social economy policies mentioned above. In contrast, the centre-right Jean Charest and Phillipe Couillard Liberals have not introduced major new social economy policies.

A look at party platforms since 1996 similarly suggests that the social economy is slightly closer to the preoccupations of the left—Parti Québécois (PQ), Québec solidaire (QS) and Option nationale (ON)—than of the right—Parti libéral du Québec (PLQ), Action démocratique du Québec (ADQ) and Coalition avenir Québec (CAQ)—and that it is especially important for the PQ. Table 1 suggests this by reporting the number of times the expression "social economy" is used in parties' electoral manifestos.[5]

Table 1. Use of the expressions "social economy" or "solidarity economy" in electoral platforms

	PQ	QS	ON	PLQ	CAQ	ADQ
2014	4	1	1	0	0	–
2012	5	1	1	0	0	–
2008	1	2	–	0	–	0
2007	3	–	–	0	–	3
2003	0	–	–	1	–	1
1998	6	–	–	0	–	0

Source: Société du patrimoine politique du Québec

Unions have also been instrumental in bringing the social economy near the top of the governmental agenda in the 1990s. In particular, according to the author's interviews with both former CSN leader Gérald Larose and former premier Lucien Bouchard, the CSN significantly contributed to the decision of establishing a social economy task force during the conference in March of 1996.

Unions, however, are not of one mind with respect to the social economy. During the October summit, the CSN, which had already conducted some research on the social economy (Aubry & Charest, 1995; Paquette, 1995) expressed con-

siderably more support than the province's other big union federation, the Fédération des travailleurs et travailleuses du Québec (FTQ), a difference that was strongly emphasized in several interviews.

In sum, in attempting to explain why Québec took a social economy turn, the importance of the left should be emphasized. In Québec, although the left is not unanimously supportive of the social economy, the impulse and the most important allies for social economy policies came from actors associated with the left: the FFQ, the Parti Québécois, and the CSN.

Coalitions

The protagonists initiating social economy policies came from the left. The right nonetheless consented to these policies. Indeed, the GTES's report, *Daring Solidarity!*, was formally approved by all the social partners attending the 1996 October summit (Secrétariat sur l'économie et l'emploi, 1996). Moreover, contrary to PRT's assumption, the right's consent was not conditioned by a weak bargaining position. In fact, unions seemed more reluctant than employers to support the GTES's report (Dufour, 2009; Pichette, 1996).

By 1996, even if the PQ was in power, it was far from clear that the right suffered from an unfavourable bargaining power. The new premier, Lucien Bouchard, was widely perceived as conservative (Mouterde, 2003), and it was clear that his main priority was to achieve a zero deficit (Québec, 1996). The context of the 1996 summit was arguably one where the power of unions and employers was relatively balanced.

As the 1996 summit was discussed extensively by the mass media in Québec, and filmed live on the Réseau de l'information (RDI), strategic considerations dominated. In particular, as one respondent emphasized: "individual employers actively participating in the Summit did not want to be publicly seen as opposing acts of solidarity. Unlike employers' associations, individual private companies can be boycotted by angry citizens-consumers." With respect to the social economy, however, there is little evidence that employers' support stemmed from a fear of consumer retaliation.

Very quickly, when the GTES was formed, unions feared that the social economy would come to infringe on the public sector (Boivin & Fortier, 1998), while employers feared "unfair competition" (Larose, 2001, p. 153) between subsidized social economy enterprises and non-subsidized for-profit businesses. As illustrated in Table 2, to achieve a consensus on the social economy, the GTES needed to allay such fears, by emphasizing that the social economy would act as a complement to the public and private sectors in a context of high unemployment and unsatisfied social needs, such as in the areas of care and training.

**Table 2. Four understandings of the social economy
and corresponding Left-Right support**

	Left support	Right support	Left-Right consensus
No substitution	Yes	Yes	Yes
Private sector substitution	Yes	No	No
Public sector substitution	No	Yes	No
Private & public sector substitution	No	No	No

For the GTES, identifying such consensual projects was a challenge, as in practice, the left hoped that social economy policies would lead to private sector substitution, while the right hoped they would lead to public sector substitution. For many actors of the left, the social economy promised an alternative to neoliberalism (Guay, 1996; Wright, 2010). Alternatively, within the right, many believed that the social economy was about limiting the growth of the welfare state. As one employer attending the summit put it: "We must avoid sending the elderly into public institutions … that would be way too costly … social economy home care is much preferable." In his popular book *Et si on s'y mettait*, Jacques Ménard (2008), the employers' representative within the GTES, applauds SEEs' hard work in a context where "welfare states tend to abandon entire areas of social services" (pp. 233–234, author's translation). During the October summit, Charles Sirois (Teleglobe, Inc.) stated that government regulation was in fact an obstacle to the development of the social economy (Secrétariat sur l'économie et l'emploi, 1996). Action démocratique du Québec (ADQ) leader Mario Dumont similarly lauded the social economy for its autonomy from the state and expressed the hope that it would stay "far from bureaucrats" (Secrétariat sur l'économie et l'emploi, 1996, pp. 83–84, author's translation).

To satisfy the left's preferences, the GTES's (1996) final report casts the social economy as a humane and democratic economy and explicitly endorses the non-substitution principle for the public sector. Social economy projects that infringed too much upon the public sector were discarded. The most controversial project concerned home help for the elderly precisely because it had the potential to replace public sector local community services centres in this area (Fournier, 2003). Similarly, allusions to Québec's existing networks of healthcare and paramedic worker co-operatives were avoided in the report. As two respondents reported, a social economy project in the area of school homework support was also discarded because "education belonged within the public sector."

The GTES's (1996) report similarly satisfied the right's preferences, as no proposed social economy project clearly threatened to infringe upon the private sector. There is simply neither documentary nor interview evidence that a particular social economy project was opposed by employers, in particular. The case of domestic workers is illustrative. This single issue spurred a huge debate within the left and countless articles and even books (Vaillancourt, Aubry, & Jetté 2003; Vaillancourt & Jetté 2009). Yet, in an interview with the author on July 15, 2014, the for spokesperson for the Conseil du patronat du Québec, Ghislain Dufour, confesses that he does not remember much about this issue: "Look, we really had other fish to fry during that summit … to take one example, unions were talking about a moratorium on lay-offs in order to stimulate the employment level! Whether domestic work for the elderly was taken care of by the state or the social economy did not really concern business." Moreover, employers did not believe in the social economy's potential to "build another economy." As André Bérard put it: "If small social economy enterprises want to grow, for all practical purposes, they will turn themselves into something quite close to traditional firms" (Robitaille, 1998, author's translation). For employers, the GTES's social economy projects seemed inoffensive.

Building a left-right coalition behind the social economy, however, involved more than mechanically identifying projects that infringed upon neither the public nor the private sector. The GTES needed to deploy superior persuasion skills to win the support of social partners. Nancy Neamtan quickly proved that she had such skills. Between the conference in March of 1996 and the October summit, she was constantly talking to government officials, union leaders, employers, and community representatives to convince them about the virtues of the social economy. Records of these countless private discussions are not available, but a story independently told to the author by Nancy Neamtan and Louise Harel and alluded to by Jean Robitaille (1997) and Denis Lessard (1996) illustrates Neamtan's ability to build bridges with employers to promote solidarity and the social economy. For the October summit, the community sector, led by Françoise David and Vivian Labrie, demanded a "zero-impoverishment clause," which required that no policy contribute to the impoverishment of the poorest fifth of the population. On the last night of the summit, between October 31 and November 1, Louise Harel called Nancy Neamtan to tell her that the government was not going to endorse the zero-impoverishment

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clause and that she was therefore seriously considering not attending the end of the summit. In the morning of November 1, Neamtan convinced the other task force leaders, Jean Coutu and André Bérard, that something had to be done. A few months earlier, in March, Bouchard (1996) made it clear that the deficit needed to be eliminated *without* increasing taxes: "Une autre tentation, serait de taxer advantage. … C'est un peu comme dire au dentiste : 'docteur, ne vous occupez pas trop de ma dent malade, mais faites-moi mal sur une de mes bonnes dents qui restent!'" Yet, for the remainder of that day Coutu and, especially, Bérard actively and successfully pushed for a new one-shot $250 million anti-poverty tax (Venne, 2015), a compromise between the status quo and an anti-impoverishment policy. Of these funds, $119 million would be raised by the employers themselves and $7.4 million would be specifically earmarked for social economy projects (Comeau et al., 2002).

In sum, a coalitional approach to social economy policies stresses left-right agreements in a context of relatively balanced distribution of power. In Québec, such an agreement was produced during the 1996 socio-economic summit through the coalition engineering of the GTES, which carefully crafted social economy projects that did not hinder the interests of employers or unions and turned the ambiguity of the social economy into a selling point.

Alternative explanations
No explanation is ever exhaustive, however. Hence additional factors certainly played a role in Québec's social economy development. Hence, there is some evidence that Québec's cultural proximity with Francophone Europe shaped its social economy policies. In particular, when the GTES had to provide a definition of the social economy, it directly borrowed the one from the Walloon Council of the Social Economy (Mendell, 2003). Different cultural ties with Europe, however, are un-likely to really explain Québec's policy divergence, as there are few obstacles to policy diffusions within federations (Kollman, Miller, & Page, 2000): if social economy policies could be diffused from France to Québec, they could certainly have diffused from Québec to the rest of the country. The fact that they failed to do so suggests that other factors are at play.

During Paul Martin's minority government (2004–2006), Ottawa seriously did attempt to "learn" from Québec. Demonstrating her role, once again, as coalition engineer, Nancy Neamtan convinced Martin (2008) of the virtues of the social economy. Impressed with what she had done in Québec, Martin wanted Ottawa to import this "best practice" and structure a pan-Canadian social economy (Martin, 2008). When Martin (2008) became prime minister, he quickly "set aside … 132 million dollars for the social economy and gave a leading Parliamentary Secretary, Eleni Bakopanos, the nod to push the envelope as far as she could" (p. 326). Eleni Bakopanos, also from Montréal, hoped to create a federal structure analogous to Québec's Social Economy Worksite and to spend the $132 million she had been made responsible for across the country. At the end, however, she was only able to spend a small fraction of that sum and most of it went to Québec. Hence, $28.5 million—later reduced to $22.8 million (Vaillancourt & Thériault, 2009)—was set aside to help launch the Fiducie du Chantier de l'économie sociale while the "other provinces didn't have the structures to manage social economy funds" (interview with Eleni Bakopanos). Another $15 million was given to SSHRC in 2004 to support partnership-oriented research on the social economy across Canada. When the Conservatives were elected in 2006, the social economy fell off the government agenda. The expression "social economy" stopped being used, no new sums were put forward for the social economy, and by 2011 the SSHRC's social economy research program was over (Jackson, 2008).

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the social economy is a blind spot in the study of Canadian politics. This study suggests that investigating social economy policy is nonetheless necessary to better understand the specificity of the Québec social model within the Canadian context.

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Québec has been structuring and promoting a "social economy" sector since the mid-1990s. No other province has institutionalized this sector to this extent. Why? The analysis demonstrates that both power resources and coalitions mattered, but that they mattered at different stages of the policy process. At the agenda-setting stage, the strength and mobilization of the left in Québec in the mid-1990s was instrumental; but at the decision stage, during the 1996 socio-economic summit, it was a carefully engineered left-right coalition that underwrote Québec's social economy policies.

Consistent with PRT, the protagonists of Québec's social economy policies were clearly associated with the left, while actors from the right functioned as consenters (Korpi, 2006). Contrary to what is usually assumed by PRT, however, the right's consent to social economy policies was not merely strategic and conditioned by a weak bargaining position. Promising to infringe upon neither the public nor the private sector, the social economy satisfied both the left and the right. This article emphasizes the skills required to engineer such a coalition.

The argument also provides a particularly remarkable example of what concertation could achieve in Québec in the mid-1990s. Québec's social economy turn was not preordained. In March of 1996, no one could have predicted the social economy policies to be announced only six months later. The 1996 summit, moreover, demonstrates the significance of recognizing community groups as social partners. It is by enlisting community groups' policy intelligence, and by giving one of their representatives the responsibility for a task force, that the summit was able to innovate in the area of the social economy (Neamtan, 1998).

Further research is required to determine whether this explanation of Québec's social economy turn also applies to Québec's sectoral social economy policies, such as in the areas of childcare or home assistance, and whether it can be generalized to other cases. There can certainly be other routes to social economy policies. In particular, the fact that the social economy concept seems especially popular in the Latin world on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean (Amin, 2009; Chaves & Demoustier, 2013), suggests forces going beyond the power of the left or concertation structures.

NOTES

1. A fourth task force on rural areas was eventually created.
2. The Programme favorisant le financement de l'entrepreneuriat collectif and the Programme de capitalisation des entreprises d'économie sociale.
3. Statistics Canada collected data on union density only until 1995 and on union coverage only since 1997.
4. All but one interview was conducted from June 24 to December 4, 2014; the remaining one was conducted in March of 2015. All but four interviews were conducted face to face. Three were conducted over the phone and one over Skype. Interviews generally lasted between 40 minutes and 2 hours. Nine persons declined or did not reply to the invitation to participate in this study. Interview notes rather than recording were used to improve rapport with respondents. Feedback from some respondents on an earlier version of this article was used to dissipate possible misunderstandings. See Appendix for details.
5. References to the social economy in these platforms are positive or neutral but never negative.

ABBREVIATIONS

ADQ, Action démocratique du Québec
CAQ, Coalition avenir Québec
CQCM, Quebec Council of Cooperation and Mutuality
COCES, Comité d'orientation et de concertation sur l'économie sociale
CSN, Confédération des syndicats nationaux
EXTRA, Expérience de travail

FFQ, Fédération des femmes du Québec

FTQ, Fédération des travailleurs et travailleuses du Québec

GTES, Groupe de travail sur l'économie sociale

OECD, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

ON: Option nationale

PAIE, Programme d'aide à l'intégration en emploi

PLQ, Quebec Liberal Party

PQ, Parti Québécois

PRT, power resource theory

QS, Québec solidaire

RDI, Réseau de l'information

SEE, social economy enterprises

SSHRC, Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council

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APPENDIX A: LIST OF INTERVIEWED RESPONDENTS (IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER)

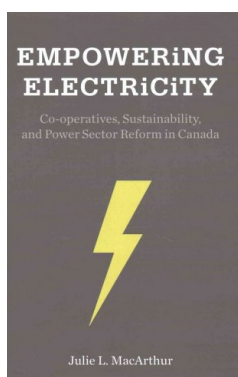| Interviewee	Main position
Eleni Bakopanos	Member of the Canadian Parliament, Liberal Party of Canada, 1993–2006; responsible for the social economy under Paul Martin's government
Claude Béland	President of the Desjardins Movement, 1987–2000
Diane Bellemare	Director of the Société québécoise de la main-d'œuvre (SQDM) in the mid-1990s
Lucien Bouchard	Quebec Premier, Parti Québécois, 1996–2001
Yvon Boudreau	Adjoint Secretary, Secretariat of the Economy and Employment Summit, 1996–1998
André Bourbeau	Quebec minister responsible for social assistance, Parti libéral du Québec, 1989–1994
Martin Caillé	Health care minister Jean Rochon's press secretary, 1996
Rosette Côté	Income security minister Jeanne Blackburn's chief of staff, 1994–1996
Jean Coutu	Founder and president of Groupe Jean Coutu
Françoise David	FFQ leader, 1994–2001
Gilles Demers	Staff, Lucien Bouchard's priorities committee
Ghislain Dufour	Director of the Conseil du patronat du Québec, 1969–1997
Joseph Facal	Member of the National Assembly, Parti Québécois, 1994–2003
Charles Guindon	Staff, Chantier économie sociale
Louise Harel	Employment Minister, Parti Québécois, 1996–1998
Vivian Labrie	Leader of a pro-equality community group, the Carrefour pastoral du monde ouvrier (CAPMO)
Bernard Landry	Quebec Finance Minister, 1996–2001, and Premier, 2001–2005, Parti Québécois
Roger Lanoue	GTES member, Vice-President of Hydro-Québec, 1991–2004
Robert Laplante	GTES member
Gérald Larose	CSN leader, 1983–1999
Pauline Marois	Quebec Prime Minister, 2012–2014
Paul Martin	Canadian Prime minister, Liberal Party of Canada, 2003–2006
Marie-Hélène Méthé	Staff, Chantier de l'économie sociale
Guy Morneau	Leader of Lucien Bouchard's Priorities committee, 1996–1998
Nancy Neamtan	Director of the GTES and the Chantier économie sociale, 1996–2015
Marie-Joséee Ouellet	Public official, Quebec's Social Economy Office
Lorraine Pagé	CEQ leader, 1988–1999
Pierre Paquette	CSN general secretary (1990–1998); Canadian Member of Parliament, Bloc Québécois, 2000–2011
Norbert Rodrigue	CSN leader, 1976–1982
Serge Roy	SFPQ leader, 1996–2001

François Saillant	Leader of a pro-equality community group, the Front d'action populaire en réaménagement urbain (FRAPRU), 1978–
Hubert Thibault	Lucien Bouchard's chief of staff
Diane Wilhelmy	Director general, Economy and Employment Summit, 1996
Five confidential respondents	

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Book Review

By Mumtaz Derya Tarhan

Empowering Electricity: Co-operatives, Sustainability, and Power Sector Reform in Canada.
By Julie L. MacArthur. Vancouver, BC: UBC Press, 2016. 259 pp. ISBN 9780774831444.

Electricity is an essential part of everyday life in Canada; therefore, access to and control over it is a significant determinant of our well-being. In this very timely book, Julie MacArthur assesses electricity co-operatives' current influence, and their future potential in democratizing ownership and control in an increasingly corporate-dominated sector.

MacArthur starts the book off with the argument that ecosystem breakdown is in a mutually rein-forcing relationship with democratic disempowerment and an economic system based on limitless growth. Together, these three threats to human and ecological well-being form what she calls the "triple crisis" (p. 5). She situates neoliberal governance at the core of this crisis for placing ever-increasing decision-making power in the hands of private corporations, which prioritize the economic bottom-line over human well-being and ecological sustainability. Situating the solution where the problem lies, MacArthur argues for the replacement of neoliberal governance by what she calls empowered participatory governance (EPG). Under the EPG framework, participatory and democratic institutions, including electricity co-operatives, are assigned by MacArthur a strong potential for building "countervailing power" in resisting ne-oliberal governance and furthering "progressive goals within broader structures of powerlessness and lack of democracy" (p. 40). In the first three chapters, MacArthur aptly reminds readers that electricity co-ops are not a panacea to the so-called "triple crisis," but instead must consciously build alliances and capacity, both at the organizational and societal levels, to simultaneously counter neoliberal governance and pave the way toward a democratized electricity sector.

In the following chapters, MacArthur applies her governance-based framework to assess power sector reform and re-structuring under neoliberalism, first as a general trend (Chapter 4) and then in the specific context of Canada (Chapter 5). For her, neoliberal governance in Canada's electricity sector manifests itself in three main ways: 1) the deregulation of electricity generation and distribution at the local, provincial, and national levels, 2) increased private ownership in elec-tricity generation and distribution, and 3) the continental integration of Canada's provincial power grids. This integrated landscape, as also recently argued by J.J. McMurtry (2017), allows for heightened competition between Canada's provinces for access to bigger and more lucrative U.S. electricity markets, while often overlooking the needs and well-being of their own inhabitants. Furthermore, the increased economic power of private corporations allows for the expansion of their influence on public policy and thereby sets a further barrier to community-owned and controlled initiatives, such as electricity co-ops (MacArthur, 2016). It is as a response to this neoliberal context of democratic disempowerment, MacArthur argues, that electricity co-operatives in Canada are increasing their presence.

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MacArthur subsequently moves to an analysis of electricity co-operatives' current activity across Canada, which is taking place in four main areas: generation, distribution, consumer, and networking. Today, she points out, co-operatives that generate electricity from renewable energy (renewable energy co-operatives or RE co-ops for short) account for almost 80 percent of all active electricity co-ops across Canada. MacArthur subsequently demonstrates that this rise in the number of RE co-ops is closely linked to supportive policies, such as Nova Scotia's Community Feed-in Tariff (COMFIT) and Ontario's Feed-in Tariff (FIT) program, which provides a set-aside capacity for RE co-ops. In her attempt to identify the factors behind the emergence of such supportive policies, she studies the impact the WindShare Co-operative and the ensuing movement-building around community energy (CE) had on the introduction of Ontario's program. Thereby, MacArthur eloquently reveals the mutually reinforcing relationship between political mobilization and policy development, underlining the importance of network- and association-building for electricity co-ops in growing their "countervailing power" for public policy intervention.

Although this increase in co-op activity is encouraging and reveals a resistance against the "triple crisis" linked to neoliberal capitalism, MacArthur reminds us that electricity co-ops continue to play a marginal role in electricity generation and distribution across Canada. She associates this with broader neoliberal governance structures that place co-operatives at a disadvantage to corporate entities in accessing financing, paid staff, procurement contracts, and project sites. Consequently, MacArthur argues, electricity co-ops in Canada often find themselves having to partner with corporate/government actors, compromising on their control of and benefits from the project, and thereby undermining their potential for furthering the EPG agenda. Again, for MacArthur, the solution lies in countering neoliberal governance through demanding public policy that prioritizes democratic and participatory organizations' further involvement in the electricity sector.

In the final chapter, MacArthur concludes that electricity co-ops in Canada successfully contribute to the democratization of electricity governance by expanding the local ownership of electricity assets, engaging members in participatory decision-making processes, and building a movement for policy change. To her disappointment, MacArthur's interviews do not reveal any explicit demand for systemic change, which she argues is a significant limitation to electricity co-ops' transformative potential and "countervailing power" (p. 194). She finishes the book by suggesting the establishment of strategic links between electricity co-ops and social movements advocating for broader systemic change.

Overall, MacArthur does an excellent job of highlighting how deeply electricity co-ops are embedded in broader governance structures, which helps her recognize their limitations under the current dominant social relations while also underscoring their transformative potential. Her call for coalition-building between co-ops and other social movements to resist and replace neoliberal governance is timely and builds on an understanding of electricity co-ops in Canada based on historical political economy. That being said, MacArthur's assessment of electricity co-ops' potential in contributing to a post-capitalist society does fall short and hence could have benefited from two additional inquiries: first, MacArthur could have investigated the *implicit* ideational and practical impacts engagement in a co-op has on its members. These impacts are the subject of an increasing number of studies in the field of social movement learning (Hall, 2009; Holst, 2002; Kilgore, 1999; Krinsky & Barket, 2009; Larraburre, Vieta, & Schugurensky, 2011) and are useful in investigating co-ops' potential in contributing to an alternative society. Second, in her interviews, MacArthur could have delved into the evolution of electricity co-ops' missions and activities as a result of interactions with governmental institutions and other co-ops and social movements. These interactions trigger organizational learning processes that often result in the co-optation or radicalization of co-ops (Baviskar, 2005; Nilsen, 2010; Scandrett, Crowther, Hemmi, Mukherjee, Shah, & Sen, 2010; Scandrett & Mukherjee, 2011) and can significantly alter their "countervailing power." Notwithstanding these oversights, MacArthur's pioneering book on electricity co-operatives is a valuable contribution to both energy policy and co-operative enterprise literatures, while having significant strategic implications for co-ops on the ground.

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