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EDITORIAL / ÉDITORIAL

The Social Economy in Times of Growing Meso- and Macro-Level Collaboration and Cooperation / L'économie sociale à l'ère d'une collaboration et d'une coopération croissantes aux niveaux méso et macro

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Welcome to the Fall/Winter issue of the *Canadian Journal of Nonprofit and Social Economy Research*! We are excited to bring you a thought-provoking collection of articles emerging out of changing societal contexts resulting from pandemics, sociopolitical divisions, inequities, and climate change. We hope these articles inspire ongoing conversations on the implications of these changes for research, work, and community life.

Setting the stage for this issue was a previous editorial in the journal, written as restrictions due to COVID-19 were starting to lessen:

Bienvenue au numéro d'automne / hiver de la *Revue canadienne de recherche sur les OSBL et l'économie sociale*. Nous sommes ravis de vous présenter un recueil d'articles qui offrent une réflexion autour des contextes sociaux modifiés par les pandémies, les divisions sociopolitiques, les inégalités et le changement climatique. Nous espérons que ces articles inspireront maintes conversations sur les implications de ces changements pour la recherche, le travail et la vie communautaire.

Un éditorial paru précédemment dans la revue, écrit alors que les restrictions dues à la COVID-19 commençaient à s'atténuer, a préparé le terrain pour ce numéro :

Now that we are "opening," we can also wonder what comes next for social economy and non-profit organizations. The notion of innovation has taken on an enhanced sense of urgency to support greater social interactions and foster functional organizational change. Most notably, the pandemic has served to remind us of the importance and value of collaboration and cooperation. Indeed, together, we will need to seek out new ways of preparing for and responding to future challenges and to the new risks associated with the social, economic, and environmental transformations that have been forced upon us. (Sousa & Alberio, 2020, p. 4)

The articles in this issue continue to address these challenges. A common thread connecting many of the articles in this issue is the increased manifestation of meso- and macro-level collaboration and cooperation and solutions to address complex problems. The research articles and the *Research Note* bring to light this rise in intra- and inter-sector work.

RESEARCH ARTICLES AND RESEARCH NOTE

In the first research article, "Coopérer avec méfiance : le système coopératif des bergers entre innovation sociale et développement rural" ("Cooperate with suspicion: the cooperative system of shepherds between social innovation and rural development"), **Domenica Farinella** examines how agricultural cooperation emerges through a case study of shepherds on a rural Mediterranean island: Sardinia (Italy). According to the author, in a rapidly changing socioeconomic and market context, agricultural cooperatives are becoming "aggre-

D'autre part, alors que nous sommes en train de « rouvrir », nous nous devons de nous questionner sur les impacts de cette crise structurelle sur l'économie sociale et les organismes à but non lucratif. Durant la crise, la notion d'innovation a pris un caractère d'urgence accru dans le but de soutenir les interactions sociales afin de favoriser un changement organisationnel et social efficace. La pandémie nous a notamment rappelé l'importance et la valeur de la collaboration et de la coopération. Ensemble, nous devrons en effet trouver de nouvelles réponses aux défis à venir ainsi qu'aux nouveaux risques associés aux transformations sociales, économiques et environnementales. (Sousa & Alberio, 2020, p. 4)

Les articles de ce numéro continuent d'aborder ces défis. Un fil conducteur reliant de nombreux articles de ce numéro est en fait la manifestation accrue de la collaboration, de la coopération et de la formulation de solutions tant aux niveaux méso que macro pour résoudre des problèmes complexes. Les articles et la *Note de recherche* mettent en lumière cette montée en puissance du travail intra et intersectoriel.

ARTICLES ET NOTE DE RECHERCHE

Dans le premier article de recherche, « Coopérer avec méfiance : le système coopératif des bergers entre innovation sociale et développement rural », **Domenica Farinella** examine comment la coopération agricole peut croître. L'auteure le fait au moyen d'une étude de cas sur les bergers d'une île rurale méditerranéenne, la Sardaigne (Italie). Selon l'auteure, dans un contexte socio-économique et de marché en fort changement, les coopératives agricoles deviennent « des agrégateurs de relations et de ressources potentiellement proactives pour le territoire, capables de générer de l'innovation sociale » (page 14).

gators of potentially proactive relationships and resources for the territory, capable of generating social innovation" (page 14). At the same time, the author warns us about easy automatisms, since cooperatives also experience several important constraints. Starting from these constraints in the specific case of shepherds in Sardinia, the author assesses what the chances are for these cooperatives to influence the processes of rural development and to generate social innovations. Moreover, what kinds of innovations could emerge?

Next, **Emma Squires, Sean Markey, and Ryan Gibson** explore place-based philanthropy in rural development through environmental community-based organizations (CBOs) working at the local level to address community needs through research and monitoring, policy and advocacy, and community programming. In "Place-based environmental philanthropy: The role of community-based organizations in the Skeena watershed," the authors note a shift towards more integrated and collaborative responses to development issues, and make recommendations for philanthropic actors to help broaden their impact.

In "How are nonprofit workers doing? Investigating the personal and professional impact of COVID-19," **Kerry Kuenzi, Marlene Walk** and **Amanda Stewart** explore how nonprofit workers changed the way they think about their current and future work as a result of the challenges experienced due to COVID-19. They focus on two questions, "1) What are the changes that nonprofit workers have experienced during the pandemic? and 2) What is the impact of those changes on how nonprofit workers think about their work and commitment to the sector?" (page 52).

Cependant, l'auteure nous met en garde contre des partis pris faciles, car les coopératives subissent aussi plusieurs contraintes. Vu ces contraintes dans le cas spécifique des bergers ovins en Sardaigne, quelles sont les chances qu'une coopérative puisse influencer les processus de développement rural et générer des innovations sociales? D'autre part, quels sont les types d'innovation qui pourraient se développer?

Emma Squires, Sean Markey, et Ryan Gibson quant à ils explore le rôle de la philanthropie territoriale dans le développement rural. Ils le font par l'examen d'organisations environnementales qui travaillent au niveau local pour répondre aux besoins de la communauté par la recherche et le suivi, la politique et le plaidoyer, et la programmation communautaire. Dans « La philanthropie territoriale environnementale : le rôle d'organisations communautaires dans le bassin-versant de la Skeena », les auteures remarquent une évolution vers des réponses aux problèmes de développement qui sont plus intégrées et collaboratives, et font des recommandations adressées en premier lieu aux acteurs philanthropiques pour les aider à augmenter la portée de leurs actions.

Dans « Comment les travailleurs du secteur à but non lucratif se portent-ils? Évaluer l'impact personnel et professionnel de la COVID-19 », **Kerry Kuenzi, Marlene Walk** et **Amanda Stewart** explorent la manière dont les travailleurs des OSBL ont changé leur façon de penser à l'égard de leur travail actuel et futur à la suite des défis qu'ils ont rencontrés en raison de la COVID-19. Les auteures se concentrent sur deux questions principales: 1) Quels sont les changements que les travailleurs des OSBL ont connus pendant la pandémie? et 2) Quel est l'impact de ces changements sur la façon dont ceux-ci envisagent leur travail et leur engagement envers le secteur? (page 52).

The next article, "On the front lines: nonprofits in the homeless-serving sector during the COVID-19 pandemic" by **Catherine Leviten-Reid, Jeff Karabanow, Kaitrin Doll, Jean Hughes** and **Haorui Wu,** adds to conceptual and qualitative pandemic-related research with a qualitative study of staff and volunteers working in nonprofit, homeless-serving organizations during COVID-19. In their data analysis of interviews asking participants about their experiences from the beginning of the pandemic, the researchers uncovered three themes: 1) organizational impacts and responses, 2) leadership, advocacy, and collaboration, and 3) the role of these organizations in responding to community needs. In contrast to findings from earlier studies on emergency management and homeless organizations conducted in Australia, England and the US, the respondents in this study noted that communications and relationships with state actors and other nonprofits improved.

In the final research article, "Balancing consistency and flexibility: challenges and opportunities in conducting a cross-country longitudinal study with youth participants in work-integration social enterprises," **Lindsay Simpson, Annie Luk, Peter Hall, Marcelo Vieta** and **Andrea Chan** provide important insights into conducting longitudinal research with youth participants across geographies. Their five-year research project documented the experiences of participants just before they started a work-integration social enterprise (WISE) employment and skills training program and for several years following. For research teams devising such studies, the lessons on recruitment, retention, research methods and logistics will be helpful.

L'article suivant, « En première ligne : les OSBL du secteur d'aide aux sans-abris durant la pandémie de la COVID-19 » par **Catherine Leviten-Reid, Jeff Karabanow, Kaitrin Doll, Jean Hughes** et **Haorui Wu**, ajoute aux études conceptuelles et qualitatives liées à la pandémie une étude qualitative autour des expériences du personnel et des bénévoles travaillant dans certains OSBL venant en aide aux sans-abris pendant la COVID-19. Dans leur analyse de données provenant d'entretiens où les auteurs ont demandé aux participants de partager leur vécu à partir du début de la pandémie, les chercheurs ont relevé trois éléments principaux : 1) les impacts et les réponses organisationnelles, 2) le leadership, le plaidoyer et la collaboration, et 3) le rôle joué par ces organisations pour répondre aux besoins de la communauté. Contrairement aux conclusions d'autres études antérieures menées en Australie, en Angleterre et aux États-Unis sur les organismes de gestion des urgences et d'aide aux sans-abris, les auteurs ont remarqué que les communications et les relations avec les représentants de l'État et les autres OSBL s'étaient améliorées.

Dans le dernier article, « Maintenir un équilibre entre cohérence et flexibilité : les défis et les occasions survenus lors d'une étude longitudinale pancanadienne de jeunes participants dans des entreprises sociales d'insertion par le travail », **Lindsay Simpson, Annie Luk, Peter Hall, Marcelo Vieta** et **Andrea Chan** partagent des leçons importantes apprises lors d'une recherche longitudinale sur de jeunes participants de diverses régions du Canada. Le projet de recherche des coauteurs, d'une durée de cinq ans, a permis à ceux-ci de documenter les expériences des participants juste avant qu'ils ne commencent un programme d'emploi et de formation professionnelle dans une entreprise sociale d'insertion et pendant plusieurs années par la suite. Pour les équipes de recherche qui conçoivent de telles

In the *Research Note*, "Les tiers-lieux : une option pour la reconfiguration des rapports travail-communauté?" ("Third places: An option for reconfiguring work-community relationships?"), **Bernard Pecqueur** and **Juan-Luis Klein** rethink the link between workplace and mobility, and the value of "third places," defined as "reference points for community life that favor broader and more creative exchanges at the local level and thus help to maintain sociability" (page 100). As the authors state in their conclusions, third places can thus become, despite some clear limits and constraints, an opportunity to regain lost territoriality and to give a real place to sociability within the analysis of economic spaces.

PERSPECTIVES FOR THE FIELD

An adjacent theme to broad-based collaboration is the role of digitalization in enabling meso- and macro-level collaboration and cooperation. Digitalization, or digital innovation, involves the conversion of information into a digital format. These innovations can be "sustaining," allowing operational aspects of an institution to run more efficiently, or "disruptive," dramatically changing the way we do things (Christensen, 2000). Cloud computing, which allows organizations to access the same data from multiple locations, is one example that encompasses both types of innovation.

Previous articles in this journal have addressed issues of shared platforms for small nonprofit organizations and platform cooperativism. While many organizations share administrative functions over shared platforms,

études, les leçons sur le recrutement, la rétention, les méthodes de recherche et la logistique s'avéreront utiles.

Dans la *Note de recherche* intitulée « Les tiers-lieux : une option pour la reconfiguration des rapports travail-communauté? », **Bernard Pecqueur** et **Juan-Luis Klein** repensent le lien entre travail et mobilité, ainsi que la valeur des « tiers-lieux », qu'ils définissent comme étant des « points d'ancrage de la vie communautaire qui favorisent des échanges plus approfondis et plus créatifs au niveau local, permettant ainsi d'entretenir la sociabilité » (page 100). Comme les auteurs le remarquent dans leur conclusion, les tiers-lieux, malgré des limites et contraintes évidentes, peuvent offrir l'occasion de récupérer une territorialité perdue et d'accorder une véritable place à la sociabilité dans l'analyse des espaces économiques.

PERSPECTIVES POUR LE TERRAIN

Un thème voisin de la collaboration à grande échelle est le rôle de la numérisation dans la mise en place d'une collaboration et d'une coopération accrues aux niveaux méso et macro. La numérisation, ou l'innovation numérique, implique la conversion d'informations dans un format numérique. Ces innovations peuvent être « durables », permettant aux aspects opérationnels d'une institution de fonctionner plus efficacement, ou « perturbatrices », changeant radicalement la façon dont une institution remplit ses fonctions (Christensen, 2000). L'infonuagique (*cloud computing*), qui permet aux organisations d'accéder aux mêmes données à partir de plusieurs endroits, est un exemple d'une technologie qui représente les deux types d'innovation.

Précédemment dans cette revue, certains articles ont abordé les questions de la plateforme partagée pour les petites OSBL et du coopérativisme de plateformes. Dans un contexte où de nombreuses organisations partagent des fonctions

Dart et al. (2019) noted the emergence of shared platforms as a tool for community development. De Broves (2022) wrote about "platform cooperativism" as an emancipatory alternative to "platform capitalism," noting the importance of algorithmic transparency.

Other authors have taken "a Polanyian framing of the platform economy" comparing the latter to the idea of a Polanyian "great transformation" (Grabher, G., & König, 2020). Kenney and Zysman (2016) consider whether the platform economy will transform our economic and social life, resulting in a redistribution of wealth and power at a global level.

The concept of distributed ledgers such as in blockchain technology is another potential disrupter. It has "initiat[ed] a scholarly curiosity to understand what is possible and what is to be concerned about when it comes to the potential impact of blockchain technology on society" (Al-Saqaf and Seidler, 2017, p. 1). This innovation makes possible new levels of collaboration as well as better accountability and transparency with fewer opportunities for fraud.

This context raises new questions to consider. For instance, how can this technology be used to achieve macro-level change? In what ways will it modify the way we think about life? What are new opportunities for coordination? How will power dynamics change? What are the redistributive potentials? What might be some unintended effects of these changes? The three *Perspectives* pieces provide interesting insights on some of these questions from different viewpoints.

administratives sur des plateformes partagées, Dart et al. (2019) ont noté l'émergence de plateformes partagées comme outils de développement communautaire. Par surcroît, de Broves (2022), tout en soulignant l'importance de la transparence algorithmique, a écrit sur le « coopérativisme de plateforme » comme alternative émancipatrice au « capitalisme de plateforme ».

D'autres auteurs se sont intéressés au « cadrage polanyien de l'économie de plateforme » en comparant cette économie à l'idée d'une « grande transformation » polanyienne (Grabher, G., & König, 2020). Kenney et Zysman (2016) se demandent par exemple si l'économie de plateforme transformera notre vie économique et sociale en entraînant une redistribution de la richesse et du pouvoir au niveau mondial.

Le concept de registre distribué tels qu'illustré par les chaînes de blocs est un autre perturbateur potentiel. Il s'agit d'un concept qui a « initié une curiosité savante pour comprendre ce qui est possible et ce qui est à craindre en ce qui concerne l'impact potentiel de la technologie de la chaîne de blocs sur la société » (Al-Saqaf et Seidler, 2017, p. 1). Le registre distribué est une innovation qui rend possible des niveaux de collaboration inédits ainsi qu'une meilleure responsabilisation et une plus grande transparence avec moins de possibilités de fraude.

Cette technologie soulève plusieurs questions pertinentes. Par exemple, comment peut-on utiliser le registre distribué pour réaliser des changements au niveau macro? De quelle manière modifiera-t-il notre façon de concevoir la vie? Quelles nouvelles possibilités de coordination offre-t-il? Comment la dynamique du pouvoir changera-t-elle en général? Quels en sont les potentiels de redistribution? Quels pourraient être des effets inattendus de ces changements? À partir de points de vue différents, les trois articles de *Perspectives* apportent un éclairage intéressant sur certaines de ces questions.

The first *Perspectives* piece, "Common approach to impact measurement: Four community-driven flexible standards for more interoperable impact data" by **Katherine Ruff, Valerie Adriaanse, Alicia Richins** and **Garth Yule,** takes on the challenge of developing an approach to impact measurement that allows data to be aggregated and shared without requiring organizations to adopt uniform metrics. The co-authors present four flexible standards.

Second, "Digitalization of social impact for social economy organizations" by **Laura Berardi** and **Diego Valentinetti** reviews the accounting literature on the theoretical and empirical studies of social impact measurement, assessment, and reporting. In particular, the co-authors consider the application of tools such as artificial intelligence, blockchains, big data, and digital platforms in the accountability and transparency of social economy organization work.

Our last *Perspectives* piece is "Mixed methods for complex programmes: The use of the DOME model for the evaluation of public-private partnerships against educational poverty in Italy," by **Gabriele Tomei**. Tomei introduces a new methodological tool for impact assessment called *Developmental Outcome Monitoring and Evaluation* or *DOME*. The model is being used by nonprofit organizations in Italy to measure the impact of programs that address educational poverty among children.

As always, many thanks to all our contributors, reviewers, and readers. We hope that you enjoy this issue and that you will contribute your own work in the future!

Le premier article de notre rubrique *Perspectives*, « Une approche commune pour mesurer l'impact : quatre critères communautaires flexibles pour obtenir des données d'impact plus interopérables » par **Katherine Ruff, Valerie Adriaanse, Alicia Richins** et **Garth Yule**, relève le défi de développer une approche pour mesurer l'impact d'un système où l'on peut agréger et partager des données sans exiger des organisations qu'elles adoptent des mesures uniformes. Les coauteurs présentent quatre normes flexibles.

Deuxièmement, « La numérisation de l'impact social pour les organisations d'économie sociale » de **Laura Berardi** et **Diego Valentinetti** passe en revue la littérature comptable sur les études théoriques et empiriques de la mesure, de l'évaluation et de la présentation d'impacts sociaux. En particulier, les coauteurs examinent l'application d'outils tels que l'intelligence artificielle, les chaînes de blocs, les mégadonnées et les plateformes numériques dans la responsabilisation et la transparence du travail effectué par les organismes de l'économie sociale.

Notre dernier article de cette rubrique est « Méthodes mixtes pour les programmes complexes : l'utilisation du modèle DOME pour évaluer les partenariats public-privé s'adressant à la pauvreté éducative en Italie », écrit par **Gabriele Tomei**. Pour effectuer des études d'impact, Tomei présente un nouvel outil méthodologique appelé « Developmental Outcome Monitoring and Evaluation » (DOME), c'est-à-dire « surveillance et évaluation des résultats du développement ». Certains OSBL en Italie utilisent déjà ce modèle pour mesurer l'impact de programmes de lutte contre la pauvreté éducative des enfants.

Pour terminer, nous tenons à remercier tous nos collaborateurs et collaboratrices, évaluateurs et évaluatrices, et lecteurs et lectrices. Nous espérons que vous apprécierez ce numéro et que vous contribuerez vos propres articles à notre revue dans un futur proche!

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Coopérer avec méfiance : le système coopératif des bergers entre innovation sociale et développement rural

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ABSTRACT

In the current debate, social innovation is a useful policy tool to strengthen rural development and oppose marginalization in rural areas. In this context, it is necessary to enhance the social function of agriculture as a producer of values that are out of the market and rooted in the territory. The agricultural cooperative can be a vector of social innovation and rural development in marginal areas, as a hybrid organization that, while existing within a market and profit-making context, operates according to a logic of social utility, oriented towards supporting its members and local communities. However, this process is not an automatic one. How and why does agricultural cooperation emerge and endure in a territory? What is the role of trust and past cooperative arrangements (path dependency)? How does the agricultural cooperative innovate and what are its limits? This article aims to answer these questions on the basis of a case study, the cooperative system of shepherds on a rural Mediterranean island.

RÉSUMÉ

Dans le débat actuel, l'innovation sociale est analysée comme un outil politique utile pour renforcer le développement rural et contrecarrer la marginalisation dans les zones rurales. Dans ce contexte, il est nécessaire de valoriser la fonction sociale de l'agriculture en tant que productrice de valeurs hors marché et ancrées dans le territoire. La coopérative agricole peut être un vecteur d'innovation sociale et de développement rural dans les zones marginales en tant qu'organisation hybride qui, tout en s'inscrivant dans un contexte de marché et de profit, fonctionne selon une logique d'utilité sociale, orientée vers le soutien de ses membres et des communautés locales. Toutefois, il ne s'agit pas d'un processus automatique. Comment et pourquoi la coopération agricole émerge-t-elle et perdure-t-elle sur un territoire? Quel est le rôle de la confiance? Dans quelle mesure les structures coopératives actuelles subissent-elles la dépendance au chemin emprunté? Comment les coopératives agricoles innovent-t-elles et quelles sont leurs limites? Cet article vise à répondre à ces questions à partir d'une étude de cas : le système coopératif de bergers sur une île rurale méditerranéenne.

Keywords / Mots clés : shepherds, agricultural cooperative, rural development, social innovation, Sardinia / bergers, coopérative agricole, développement rural, innovation sociale, Sardaigne

INTRODUCTION : INNOVATION SOCIALE, DÉVELOPPEMENT RURAL ET COOPÉRATION AGRICOLE

Malgré une population rurale mondiale toujours importante (United Nations, 2021; EC, 2021), il y a une croissante marginalisation de la ruralité, le résultat de plusieurs phénomènes connexes : effacement démographique et vieillissement, crise économique, pauvreté et exclusion sociale (OECE, 2006; Bertolini, Montanari, Peragine, 2008), recul des services et manque de maîtrise des dépenses publiques, et compétition croissante entre les territoires découlant de la mondialisation néolibérale (Moulaert, 2000; Bock, 2016). L'innovation sociale visant à renforcer le développement rural est apparue comme un outil au service des politiques publiques pour contrecarrer cette marginalisation (Moulaert, 2000; Moulaert, Nussbaumer, 2008; Bock, 2016; Neumeier, 2012; 2017; Petruzzella, Brunori et Antonelli, 2017; Kluvanova et al., 2021; Alberio et Soubioru, 2021).

Dans les politiques, l'innovation sociale, par rapport à l'innovation technologique, favoriserait le *bien-être* et la cohésion sociale par la mobilisation et l'autonomisation des communautés locales, le renforcement des réseaux coopératifs et la production de biens collectifs locaux. L'innovation sociale est définie de manière prescriptive comme une activité qui « répond simultanément à des besoins sociaux et crée de nouvelles relations sociales ou collaborations entre des organisations publiques, de la société civile ou des entreprises privées, bénéficiant ainsi à la société et renforçant sa capacité d'action » (EU, 2021). Celle-ci peut devenir une « nouvelle panacée » (Bock, 2016), avec cependant plusieurs risques. Le premier risque est d'hypostasier les « communautés locales », imaginées comme une entité territoriale homogène. Au contraire, il s'agit de « communautés dont les membres partagent un espace territorial commun comme base d'opérations pour les activités quotidiennes » (Parsons, 1966, p. 97). Ces communautés fonctionnent comme des arènes dans lesquelles les acteurs et les groupes sont fragmentés et en compétition selon des lignes de stratification sociale et de pouvoir. Il est également problématique d'imaginer l'autonomisation (qui dépend des capacités des personnes impliquées) comme le résultat linéaire d'un processus participatif dans lequel il suffit de « s'engager » localement. L'accent mis sur l'amélioration des relations par l'innovation sociale et technologique est excessif, car il se fonde sur l'idée erronée selon laquelle le partage des ressources produit toujours des effets positifs et la technologie favorise toujours la création et le maintien de réseaux. Ce point de vue sous-estime la dimension politique et pratique du processus de construction et d'animation des réseaux. De plus, il y a un risque de pousser la reconfiguration des zones rurales en paysages post-ruraux et post-agricoles de haute technologie (tels que les « paysages énergétiques ruraux »), où la dimension rurale n'a plus de spécificité et où l'agriculture devient superflue.

En revanche la marginalisation des zones rurales est liée aux transformations de l'agriculture, qui est son pendant productif (Hervieu et Purseigle, 2013). L'agriculture paysanne était une activité économique *encastrée* dans le territoire (Polanyi, 1958) et contribuait à la reproduction des communautés locales, créant des externalités positives et des biens collectifs locaux (Van der Ploeg, 2013). La modernisation agricole a déterritorialisé l'agriculture, la réduisant à une activité de production d'aliments bon marché. L'intensification, la spécialisation monoculturale, la standardisation des procédures et la dépendance à l'égard de la technologie et des sciences de la nature ont entraîné la pollution et la banalisation du paysage, la perte de la biodiversité agroécologique et cul-

turelle, la dévalorisation des savoirs paysans et l'exode rural (Nori et Farinella, 2020). Les agriculteurs sont devenus dépendants du marché, tant en amont (pour l'achat des intrants agricoles) qu'en aval (pour la vente de produits agricoles de plus en plus banalisés et volatils), voyant ainsi leurs marges bénéficiaires s'éroder (Nori et Farinella, 2020). Le pouvoir oligopolistique croissant des multinationales de l'alimentation et de la grande distribution a accentué ces phénomènes (Howard, 2016). Il en découle une intensive exploitation des terres et de la main-d'œuvre qui débouche sur une dégradation socioenvironnementale parfois irréversible (Moore, 2010), ainsi que sur la désactivation (Van der Ploeg, 2008) de fermes dans les milieux plus marginaux et fragiles où elles étaient au cœur des communautés rurales.

Pour inverser la dynamique de la marginalisation rurale, il faut dépasser la logique de l'agriculture capitaliste et valoriser sa dimension « sociale » ou « multifonctionnelle », essentielle dans les stratégies de développement rural (Van der Ploeg et al., 2000; Van der Ploeg et Mardsen, 2008). La multifonctionnalité désigne la capacité de l'agriculture à produire des biens et services non marchands, dont certains sont des externalités positives telles que des biens collectifs locaux, des ressources relationnelles (réseaux, capital social, confiance, coopération, etc.) et environnementales (paysage, santé, biodiversité, etc.) (Van Huylenbroeck et Durand, 2003; Wilson, 2007). Comme l'ont noté Bock (2016) et Neumier (2012), le développement rural, en visant à l'autonomisation des communautés locales, implique toujours des pratiques d'innovation sociale; celles-ci établissent de nouvelles connexions et synergies territoriales fondées sur « des processus d'apprentissage collectif, de coordination et de communication entre différents acteurs dans des équipes, des réseaux et d'autres moyens de coopération » (Neumier, 2012, p. 59).

Il est également important d'observer l'innovation sociale dans le secteur agroalimentaire. Peut-elle encourager l'émergence de chaînes de valeur agricole territorialisées, plus durables et équitables du point de vue social et environnemental, malgré les fluctuations du marché (Parrilla-Gonzalez e Ortega-Alonso, 2021, p. 120)? Peut-elle favoriser « l'autonomisation des agriculteurs et l'amélioration de leurs conditions sociales, économiques et de travail » (Parrilla-Gonzalez e Ortega-Alonso, 2021, p. 120)?

Dans cette optique, les coopératives agricoles constituent un terrain d'observation privilégié (Alberio et Soubioru, 2021; Parrilla-Gonzalez e Ortega-Alonso, 2021; Mhembwe & Dube, 2017; Alavoine-Mornas & Madelrieux, 2015; Ortiz-Miranda, Moreno-Pérez et Moragues-Faus, 2009).

Les coopératives agricoles sont des organisations hybrides qui, tout en s'inscrivant dans un contexte de marché et de profit, fonctionnent selon une logique d'utilité sociale orientée au soutien de leurs membres, en leur garantissant une juste rémunération pour leur production. Ces coopératives ont également des objectifs territoriaux : renforcer l'économie et l'emploi local, contribuer aux coûts de services que les membres seuls ne seraient pas en mesure de payer, et fonctionner comme des biens collectifs. Malgré la diversité des parcours, un trait est commun à l'émergence des systèmes de coopération agricole : l'agrégation comme moyen d'autonomisation des fermiers et des communautés rurales auxquelles ils appartiennent, pour contrer le pouvoir des grands groupes économiques et favoriser la redistribution socio-territoriale. Surtout dans les zones rurales marginales, les coopératives accomplissent une fonction sociale dans les trajectoires de dévelop-

pement rural, tout en soutenant l'économie locale et la cohésion sociale : « Les actions entreprises par les coopératives sont des biens collectifs dans le sens où elles profitent à l'ensemble de la société rurale grâce à leur effet multiplicateur sur les agriculteurs et les autres activités locales » (Parrilla-González et Ortega-Alonso, 2021 : 130).

Cette dimension axiologique fait des coopératives agricoles des agrégateurs de relations et de ressources potentiellement proactives pour le territoire, capables de générer de l'innovation sociale. Celle-ci n'en est pas une conséquence automatique, car les coopératives sont soumises à des poussées centripètes et centrifuges qui menacent leur existence. D'une part, la volonté de coopérer et la confiance (des conditions préalables à la coopération) peuvent être minées de l'intérieur lorsque les membres adoptent un comportement opportuniste, provoquant ce que Hardin (1968) a appelé la tragédie des biens communs. À ce titre, il devient intéressant d'analyser la capacité de la structure coopérative à contenir le parasitisme et l'opportunisme. D'autre part, les coopératives peuvent être consommées de l'extérieur lorsque la compétition avec les entreprises s'avère inégale, en raison de la plus grande rigidité institutionnelle des premières qui doivent protéger leurs membres, quand bien même une rationalité purement économique dirait le contraire. Lors des turbulences du marché, les valeurs d'efficacité économique et celles de redistribution sociale qui coexistent dans une coopérative peuvent entrer en collision et générer une situation de désavantage, qui peut même être fatale pour sa survie. Quand et comment cela se passe-t-il? Quelles sont les stratégies pour faire face à de telles situations?

Par ailleurs, la manière dont le dispositif institutionnel coopératif se dessine, ses trajectoires de développement et d'innovation, sont dépendantes du chemin emprunté (North, 1990), c'est-à-dire de la dynamique de coopération accumulée au fil du temps (Beltran Tapia, 2012). Sans cela, l'activation des relations et le moteur technologique comme vecteurs d'innovation restent des boîtes vides. En partant de ces contraintes, quelles sont les chances qu'a une coopérative d'influencer les processus de développement rural et de générer des innovations sociales? De quel type d'innovation s'agit-il? Ces questions seront explorées à travers une étude de cas : le système des coopératives de bergers dans une zone rurale méditerranéenne, l'île de Sardaigne.

MÉTHODOLOGIE ET ÉTUDE DE CAS

Cet article présente les résultats d'une recherche de presque dix ans sur le pastoralisme sarde et sa filière ovine laitière. Des méthodes mixtes ont été utilisées pour atteindre trois objectifs de recherche distincts. Le premier vise la reconstruction historiographique du pastoralisme sarde, mêlant littérature historique, anthropologique et sociologique. Le deuxième comprend une analyse socioéconomique diachronique du secteur, en triangulant les données qualitatives et quantitatives des principales sources institutionnelles, notamment ISTAT, EUROSTAT, INEA, ICE, ISMEA, CLAL, le Consortium de protection du Pecorino Romano AOP, la Région de la Sardaigne et les chambres de commerce. Le troisième est un travail de terrain avec des entretiens qualitatifs et des observations ethnographiques dans différents milieux : les exploitations ovines, les coopératives laitières, les fêtes paysannes et les réunions conviviales des bergers, d'autres événements tels que les foires pour bêtes, les réunions syndicales, et les grèves pour le prix du lait, et la participation à des groupes WhatsApp et Facebook. Plus de 80 témoignages de bergers et de leurs travailleurs ont été recueillis, ainsi que des entretiens avec des acteurs privilégiés (fonctionnaires, représentants

d'associations professionnelles, entrepreneurs, etc.). Les premiers entretiens ont été collectés à la fin de 2012. La plupart des entretiens et des observations ethnographiques ont été réalisés en 2016-2017. Entre 2013 et 2015 et à partir de 2018, à presque chaque année, de petites périodes de recherche sur le terrain ont été effectuées, au cours desquelles d'autres entretiens et notes de terrain ont été collectés, complémentés par de nombreuses conversations téléphoniques et la consultation des médias sociaux. Plus de la moitié des entretiens avec les bergers ont été réalisés avec des membres de coopératives, y compris de simples membres et des membres ayant des rôles de gestion (présidents, vice-présidents ou membres du conseil d'administration). Pour ce sous-échantillon spécifique, le schéma d'entretien comprenait aussi un approfondissement sur l'histoire de la coopérative. La plupart des extraits d'entretiens de cet article proviennent de ce sous-échantillon, bien que des considérations générales soient tirées de l'ensemble des entretiens et des notes de terrain.

La Sardaigne est une île rurale caractérisée par des facteurs de marginalisation tels qu'une faible densité de population, un effacement démographique, une fragile structure économique et d'emploi et des infrastructures et des services médiocres. Le secteur laitier ovin représente une importante spécialisation économique, avec plus de 13 000 exploitations d'élevage et 46 % du cheptel ovin italien qui produit 68 % du lait de brebis italien et 16 % de celui de l'UE-27 (Istat, Eurostat). La moitié du lait est destinée à fabriquer le Pecorino Romano (appellation d'origine protégée ou AOP), un fromage industriel de brebis, bon marché, qui est la troisième AOP de fromage la plus exportée en Italie. La Sardaigne produit 95 % du Pecorino Romano italien qui est exporté dans le marché historique des États-Unis ou dans la grande distribution (nationale et étrangère). La fabrication industrielle du Pecorino Romano est arrivée en Sardaigne au début du XXe siècle, grâce à des entrepreneurs italiens attirés par la disponibilité du lait de brebis. Cette industrie a stimulé l'expansion de l'élevage de moutons, mais a accru la dépendance des bergers, qui sont devenus des fournisseurs de lait pour un système industriel réalisant un fromage à bas coût et sujet à la volatilité des prix. Ce point est très important pour comprendre l'origine des coopératives mais aussi leurs difficultés relatives au développement rural et aux capacités d'innovation sociale. D'un côté, le mouvement coopératif est né précisément pour contrer les industriels et obtenir un prix du lait plus juste. De l'autre, comme on le verra, les coopératives sont bloquées dans la chaîne industrielle du Pecorino Romano. Cette situation requiert un équilibre difficile entre les contraintes économiques déterminées par la concurrence et les buts d'utilité sociale et territoriale pour lesquels les coopératives ont été créées.

On peut estimer qu'il y a environ 30 entreprises industrielles de transformation du fromage et 36 coopératives d'éleveurs de brebis (y compris les coopératives laitières et les coopératives de collecte du lait), un consortium de coopératives, et un grand nombre de laiteries rurales à petite échelle dans les fermes. Une vingtaine sur les 36 sont des laiteries coopératives, les cinq plus grandes comptant entre 600 et 800 membres, les plus petites entre 200 et 300. Quant aux coopératives de collecte de lait, elles peuvent s'associer aux coopératives laitières (intégration verticale) ou vendre du lait à des entreprises industrielles. Leur dimension est variable : les plus grandes comptent près de 200 membres, mais il existe aussi des microgroupes de moins de 20 affiliés. Il y a également des coopératives mixtes (opérant dans l'élevage et l'agriculture) et des coopératives

foncières communales, dans lesquelles les éleveurs se regroupent pour exploiter collectivement des pâturages ou pour mener d'autres cultures. Ces coopératives font partie des laiteries coopératives. Il faut y ajouter trois organisations de producteurs (OP) et une organisation interprofessionnelle (OI). Parallèlement à l'intégration verticale, il y a des relations de coopération horizontale entre les coopératives elles-mêmes et entre les coopératives et les entreprises : dans un équilibre délicat et instable entre coopération et concurrence sur le marché local, les coopératives et les entreprises créent de petits réseaux de réciprocité mutuelle en partageant une partie de la transformation du fromage ou en collaborant à certaines étapes de la transformation.

Ce système coopératif—dense et comparable à celui de régions italiennes telles que la Toscane et l'Émilie-Romagne (Porcheddu, 2004) qui, selon les études, ont un degré étendu de civilité et de capital social (Putnam et al., 1993)—réfute le stéréotype culturaliste selon lequel la Sardaigne (et le sud de l'Italie), soit « culturellement arriérée », enfermée dans un famillisme amoral ou exclusif (Banfield, 1958; Pinna, 1971) qui empêcherait le développement (Barbagli et Santoro, 2004). La coopération a beau être forte, elle est constamment menacée par un environnement de haute compétition et une méfiance envers le système coopératif en raison de ses échecs : 70 % des coopératives sont nées entre les années 1950-1970, mais seulement 45 % d'entre elles ont survécu jusqu'à aujourd'hui (Porcheddu, 2004). Comment et pourquoi la coopération émerge-t-elle et survit-elle? La coopération réussit-elle à innover et de quelle manière? Quelles sont ses limites dans sa capacité à produire de l'innovation sociale? Quel est le rôle de la composante institutionnelle (c'est-à-dire la manière dont les formes de coopération se sont installées au fil du temps) dans cette dynamique? Ce sont les questions auxquelles il faut répondre.

RÉSULTATS : DE LA COOPÉRATION INFORMELLE AU SYSTÈME DE COOPÉRATIVES

Le système coopératif tire ses origines du modèle agropastoral traditionnel (Meloni, 1984), en reproduisant ses qualités et ses défauts. La littérature a souvent souligné le caractère individualiste et sauvage du berger sarde, forgé par la solitude de la transhumance et l'incertitude de la nature (Pigliaru, 1975). En réalité, historiquement, le berger a développé une « connaissance profonde de l'utilisation sociale de la terre » grâce à la nécessité de construire des relations de collaboration entre bergers et avec d'autres individus (par exemple, les agriculteurs et propriétaires terriens qui lui louaient des pâturages, les artisans qui lui vendaient des outils et lui achetaient des peaux et de la laine, et les marchands qui lui achetaient son fromage) (Angioni, 1989, p. 73). La coopération informelle mais réglementée constituait la base de l'organisation institutionnelle des relations de production (Angioni, 1974; Maxia, 2005; Arlacchi, 2007) et était motivée par deux besoins complémentaires.

Le premier besoin était d'assurer la reproduction sociale de la communauté agropastorale dans un contexte de ressources limitées et de conflits entre agriculture et pastoralisme; il fallait donc des dispositifs réglementaires partagés pour l'accès aux terres communes, sanctionnant les conflits et l'opportunisme (Le Lannou, 1941; Meloni, 1984; 1996). Le deuxième était d'atténuer, par l'agrégation, les risques et les incertitudes du métier de berger; déjà à l'époque moderne, différents contrats de collaboration économique entre bergers existaient, par exemple la *soccida* (Ortu, 1981), ou le contrat *a cumpanzos*, une association de troupeaux (Meloni, 1984). L'agrégation était temporaire (pas plus d'un an), réunissait différents groupes familiaux et amicaux, et était motivée par

la nécessité de constituer des troupeaux d'au moins 200 à 300 moutons, afin de rendre les opérations de pâturage plus efficaces, de partager les lourdes tâches quotidiennes de la traite et de la fabrication de fromage, et de mieux faire face aux difficultés de la transhumance. L'agrégation augmentait aussi leur pouvoir de négociation tant avec les propriétaires terriens qu'avec les commerçants. Au début du XXe siècle, les « groupes de bergers » se sont répandus, des sociétés de fait formées par un petit nombre de bergers qui, uniquement pour la durée de la saison laitière, transportaient leur lait dans une bergerie ou un bâtiment loué pour fabriquer du fromage. Certaines coopératives laitières sont l'institutionnalisation de précédents groupes de bergers (Olla, 1969; Ruju, 2011).

Il s'agissait d'une « coopération par contrainte », dictée par une condition de besoin, et donc temporaire, destinée à cesser lorsque le besoin disparaissait (par exemple, au retour au village après la transhumance). À la base, il y avait une relation instrumentale et économique qui se transformait en convenance sociale : les contrats impliquaient des échanges de services, mais consacraient aussi des alliances entre les individus et entre leurs familles (Meloni, 1984). On s'accordait sur une « mutualité » d'urgence qui avait pour condition une durée provisoire (Pinna, 1971) et qui servait à renforcer la confiance interpersonnelle basée sur l'appartenance (au même village, au même réseau). Ces éléments se retrouvent encore dans le système coopératif : les premières coopératives sont nées par nécessité, comme une solidarité défensive pour s'opposer au pouvoir écrasant de l'industrie laitière :

> Cette [coopérative] est née en 1963 ... de la nécessité d'une alternative au monde industriel ... . [Déjà] à l'époque ... , les industriels ... avaient le monopole. La coopérative est née à juste titre comme une alternative aux industriels, c'était le besoin! Mon père m'a raconté qu'ils trayaient à deux heures et demie du matin ... , puis livraient le lait sur les grandes routes ... avec un cheval et une charrette, à quatre heures du matin ... . Le chauffeur qui collectait le lait les voyait arriver et ne s'arrêtait pas! ... Il voulait faire comprendre que les industriels n'avaient pas besoin du lait, pour baisser le prix! (Président, coopérative laitière A, Sud-Sardaigne, 04-02-2017)

Les coopératives sont nées « sous le même clocher » (Gentili, 1954), constituées entre bergers d'un même village, unis par l'appartenance culturelle et des réseaux interpersonnels de confiance. La transition vers la confiance institutionnelle ou systémique (Giddens, 1990), c'est-à-dire la confiance générale dans le système coopératif, reste problématique. Les coopératives éprouvent des difficultés à mettre en place des mécanismes de confiance institutionnelle, tant lorsqu'elles élargissent leur base sociale au-delà du village d'origine que lorsqu'elles doivent établir des relations interorganisationnelles avec d'autres coopératives afin de planifier des actions intégrées d'aménagement de la filière laitière. Le résultat est une coopération précaire ou, en un oxymore, une *coopération méfiante* qui n'arrive pas à s'institutionnaliser, malgré le profond enracinement du système coopératif. Cette méfiance est expliquée de manière stéréotypée, en rappelant un supposé caractère « individualiste » des Sardes :

> C'est difficile de s'unir! ... Ils ne s'unissent pas, les Sardes! Ils sont comme ça! ... Chacun de son côté! (Vice-président, coopérative de collecte A, Centre-Sardaigne, 11-2012)

De plus, l'émergence des coopératives laitières n'est pas un phénomène spontané (Porcheddu, 2004), mais le résultat d'une poussée par le bas, comme réponse défensive au monopole des industriels, et par le haut, comme effet *top-down* des lois et des financements publics (Vargas-Cetina, 2011). La poussée par le bas a commencé au début du XXe siècle, lorsque des entrepreneurs italiens sont arrivés pour démarrer la fabrication industrielle du Pecorino Romano, qui a transformé les bergers en fournisseurs de lait. Rapidement, les industriels ont créé un trust appelé « Società Romana per il Formaggio Pecorino » qui a réduit le prix du lait à 20 cents. Après des grèves durement réprimées, les bergers ont fondé les coopératives laitières (Di Felice, 2011; Ruju, 2011). La première a été la coopérative Bortigali en 1907, qui existe toujours.

À partir des années 1950, la pression d'en haut s'intensifie à travers des lois et des financements publics dédiés à la création de coopérative laitières, comme la L.R. 47/50 (aides financières en partie non remboursables), la L.N. 588/1962 (Plan de relance économique de la Sardaigne) et la L.R. 44/1976 (Réforme agropastorale). Ces lois soutenaient un projet d'« ingénierie sociale » (Porcheddu, 2004) qui attribuait aux coopératives d'importantes fonctions sociales : améliorer les niveaux de production grâce à des économies d'échelle, encourager la sédentarisation des bergers et la construction d'exploitations modernes, stimuler la socialisation et repousser la criminalité qui, selon une commission parlementaire créée à l'époque, était imputable à la structure transhumante du pastoralisme, qui avait favorisé l'isolement et le sous-développement économique (Medici, 1972).

Les financements publics ont conditionné la manière dont le système coopératif a été structuré, étant donné que les trois quarts des fonds propres des coopératives sont constitués de capital non remboursable (Porcheddu, 2004). Les aides destinées à la construction de fromageries ont stimulé l'intégration verticale des coopératives de collecte en coopératives laitières. Les coopératives se spécialisent principalement dans la production du Pecorino Romano par suite d'un isomorphisme à la fois coercitif et mimétique (Di Maggio et Powell, 1983). D'une part, le législateur poussait les coopératives laitières à réaliser des économies d'échelle et le Pecorino Romano était, par rapport au volume de lait transformé et à la demande internationale, le seul fromage de brebis qui se prêtait à cette approche. D'autre part, les coopératives ont imité les entreprises les plus performantes du secteur :

> Les coopératives se sont concentrées beaucoup plus sur la phase de production que sur la commercialisation et la valorisation du produit. La tendance est donc de produire principalement, avec, disons, des pourcentages presque bulgares, le fromage Pecorino Romano mono-produit … parce que jusqu'à présent le revenu a été produit avec ce produit phare, qui, même s'il est vieux et toujours le même, est celui qui a jusqu'à présent mieux rémunéré le travail du berger … . En pourcentage, nous avons 90 % de Pecorino Romano et 10 % de diversification … et les coopératives de Sardaigne sont toutes plus ou moins comme ça. Pourquoi? Parce que, structurellement, on n'a pas été capable d'avoir une vision à long terme! Je gagne de l'argent aujourd'hui avec le Pecorino Romano et je continue à le faire! (Employé, coopérative laitière B, Nord-Sardaigne, 10-2018)

Les coopératives se spécialisent dans la production fromagère sans investir dans des stratégies de vente et de marketing, en raison de l'effet combiné de deux facteurs : des financements publics disponibles uniquement pour la construction d'installations de production et le transfert du modèle

de gestion de l'exploitation ovine aux coopératives. De même que les bergers transformaient le fromage directement à la ferme pour le vendre aux commerçants et aux intermédiaires, les coopératives laitières produisent le Pecorino Romano en tant que sous-traitants d'autres entreprises industrielles, intermédiaires et exportatrices, sans aucun contact avec le consommateur final.

Le paradoxe est que les coopératives transforment plus de 50 % du lait et fabriquent plus de 90 % du Pecorino Romano produit en Sardaigne, mais n'exercent aucune influence sur la dynamique des prix, perpétuant ainsi la dépendance à l'égard des industriels que l'agrégation était censée combattre.

Ce phénomène est aggravé par la montée de la grande distribution qui alimente des relations opaques et une concurrence extrême entre les coopératives. En période de crise des prix, due à une surproduction de Pecorino Romano (réelle ou supposée), cette compétition dégénère en phénomènes de parasitisme et d'opportunisme. Voici comment un président raconte le début de la grave crise des prix de 2016–2017 :

> Il y a beaucoup de spéculations. Et puis … c'est nous qui faisons le plus de dégâts … . En octobre 2015, les premiers signes [de baisse de prix] sont arrivés à la foire de Cologne … . Nous avons commencé à nous réunir à la première à la mi-décembre, toutes les coopératives, et nous avons dit, « Voyons si nous pouvons garder le prix [du Pecorino Romano], … , gardons tous 8,50 € le kilo. » … Je peux te dire … , fait confirmé, nous sortons de la réunion que nous avons établi qu'en dessous de 8,50 €/kg personne ne vend et que tout le monde garde ses clients, les appels téléphoniques [aux acheteurs] ont commencé dans l'escalier : … « Nous avons décidé de ne pas vendre en dessous de 8,50, mais si ça vous intéresse je vous le donne à 8,40! » … Un de mes acheteurs de confiance m'a dit … « Tes collègues proposent 0,20 € de moins que ce que vous aviez convenu. … Je vais te montrer la facture! » … Lorsque nous [les coopératives] nous sommes rencontrés … , j'ai dû dire … , « Je n'aime pas que vous me meniez en bateau! Nous avons fixé 8,50 et une coopérative ici … a vendu à X à 8,29! ». … Tout vient du fait que nous ne sommes pas unis entre nous. Il y a vingt, vingt-deux coopératives et vingt-deux présidents. (Président, coopérative laitière A, Nord-Sardaigne, 09-2016)

Il en résulte une méfiance institutionnelle qui compromet la possibilité d'intégration verticale de la chaîne d'approvisionnement dont les coopératives auraient besoin pour réguler les prix du lait :

> Notre problème est … celui d'avoir trop de producteurs; je dis « trop » parce que nous sommes trop nombreux, parce que notre chiffre d'affaires peut être géré par une seule entreprise! … Il est difficile de transformer les producteurs de lait en organisations qui vont sur le marché de manière organisée et univoque ou même qui y vont ensemble, ce n'est pas dans nos têtes! … Nous sommes restés des bergers! Nous sommes restés des bergers! Quelle tête est une tête individualiste et elle est mal conciliée avec la coopération, la construction d'un intérêt commun! Nous avons une spécialité où, en fait, nous sommes les monopolistes. … Vous imaginez ce qu'on peut faire sur le marché! Tout ce qu'il veut et au lieu de cela, nous ne parvenons pas à utiliser cette opportunité parce que nous sommes si [individualistes]! (Président, coopérative laitière C, Nord-Sardaigne, 04-2020)

DISCUSSION : LA COOPÉRATIVE COMME OUTIL D'INNOVATION SOCIALE ET DE PRODUCTION DE BIENS COLLECTIFS LOCAUX

Nous avons souligné que le système coopératif est conditionné dans son développement par certaines dépendances au chemin emprunté : (i) l'institutionnalisation d'un modèle de coopération « conditionnelle » et d'urgence qui peine à stabiliser une confiance institutionnelle; (ii) les poussées d'isomorphisme coercitif et mimétique qui enferment les coopératives dans la chaîne d'approvisionnement du Pecorino Romano, produit hypermarchandisé au prix très volatil, qui les expose souvent aux crises du marché face auxquelles, cependant, elles font preuve d'une forte résilience. En dépit de cette situation, les coopératives sont cruciales tant pour la production de biens collectifs locaux (Crouch et al., 2001) et de services non marchands (Parliament et al., 1990) que pour les pratiques d'innovation sociale.

Dans la littérature, les « biens collectifs locaux » sont tous ces facteurs, directs et indirects, qui augmentent la compétitivité du système territorial et contribuent ainsi à en renforcer sa cohésion sociale (Crouch et al., 2001). Un premier bien collectif consiste à atténuer la subordination des bergers aux entreprises industrielles, en leur assurant un réseau de sécurité à la fois individuel et collectif. Sur le plan individuel, les coopératives laitières libèrent le berger du mécanisme de l'acompte, une avance monétaire des industriels pour financer les éleveurs pendant la période de tarissement (de la mi-été à la mi-décembre), lorsque les brebis (gestantes et sans lait) ne sont qu'un coût. Cet emprunt est une avance sur les futures ventes de lait qui piège le berger aux prix fixés par l'industriel. L'adhésion à la coopérative rompt cette chaîne : bien que la coopérative n'avance pas de frais, le mode de paiement du lait (une avance pendant la saison de production et un solde plus tard, à la fin du budget annuel de la coopérative) aide le berger à planifier ses activités et à couvrir les mois où il n'y a pas de revenu.

Au niveau collectif, malgré leur position subordonnée dans la chaîne d'approvisionnement du Pecorino Romano, les coopératives constituent un filet de sécurité pendant les crises, lorsque les industries diminuent leurs achats de lait et peuvent même interrompre la transformation. Les coopératives, en raison de leur logique d'utilité sociale, continuent à collecter le lait des membres et à le transformer, même si ce n'est pas rentable. Paradoxalement, les effets de cette solidarité mutuelle, inspirée par l'urgence, peuvent générer une spirale des prix à la baisse à long terme :

> Au bout du compte, nous devons tous vendre. … On peut sauter une semaine, deux semaines, voire un mois. Et à la fin, ce n'est pas comme si je pouvais m'asseoir et regarder! Mais si entretemps le prix de 8,50 €/kg est tombé à 8 €, je dois vendre à 8 € et qu'avons-nous obtenu? Nous avons baissé le prix à 0,50 € pour tout le monde. Vous avez vendu votre quantité, j'ai continué à vendre la mienne, mais à un prix inférieur! Et puis, ce que beaucoup de gens ne réalisent pas, c'est que si j'ai 10 000 quintaux en stock et qu'aujourd'hui, par exemple, je vends à 6 €/kg, chaque centime que je perds vaut 6 millions d'euros! … Et donc tout le monde! Et pourquoi? Nous avons perdu de l'argent … et puis à la fin nous fermons nos comptes et payons moins nos membres! … Mais, je le répète, dans certaines discussions il y a quelque président qui dit : « J'ai trois mois de retard dans le paiement du lait et je dois vendre. » … Donc on ne sait même pas quoi lui dire! (Président, coopérative laitière A, Nord-Sardaigne, 09-2016)

Les crises du marché montrent la possibilité de tensions entre les intérêts sociaux et économiques d'une coopérative, jusqu'à son implosion si les engagements sociaux deviennent si onéreux qu'ils compromettent la stabilité financière et sociale de la coopérative.

Ce sont souvent les membres-bergers mêmes qui, en adoptant un comportement de parasitisme vis-à-vis de la coopérative, provoquent des situations de crise. En effet, en période de croissance du marché et du prix du fromage, ils prévoient pour la saison suivante des augmentations de la production laitière (en agrandissant le troupeau ou en produisant plus de lait par brebis), en pensant à court terme et de manière opportuniste que leur coopérative absorbera toujours le lait supplémentaire. Afin de limiter ces abus, les coopératives ont établi des plafonds pour les quantités de lait à collecter auprès des membres. Cependant, une certaine flexibilité demeure, car la coopérative a été créée pour soutenir les bergers. Cette dimension éthique a été importante pendant la pandémie, lorsque les coopératives ont collecté le lait d'éleveurs non-membres qui le transformaient habituellement de manière artisanale à la ferme et le vendaient dans des circuits courts, bloqués par le verrouillage :

> Cette année, nous allons produire 90 % [de Pecorino Romano]. … Considérant qu'il fallait aider un peu tout le monde, … les mini-fromageries se sont arrêtées à cause de la situation [pandémique] … . Il y avait la crise et l'un aidait l'autre, on s'aidait un peu. (Président, coopérative laitière C, Nord-Sardaigne, 04-2020)

La même intégration verticale entre les coopératives reflète une solidarité mutualiste, les grandes coopératives laitières compensant pour les plus petites qui ont dû interrompre la fabrication du fromage en raison de difficultés économiques :

> La coopérative a été fondée en 1956 par un groupe de bergers … . Pratiquement tous étaient nos parents! … Ça a commencé comme ça, avec mille difficultés! … Seul le Romano était fabriqué à l'époque. … La coopérative est née pour … contrer le monopole des industriels, qui déjà à l'époque étaient ceux qui commandaient le marché. … Depuis 2001, la crise se fait encore plus sentir. … Nous avons dû arrêter la transformation et nous sommes entrés dans la coopérative laitière XX. (Président, coopérative de collecte B, Centre-Sardaigne, 11-2012)

Une ambivalence se dégage ici : malgré ces difficultés, dans les zones rurales où elles sont installées, ces coopératives jouent un rôle de connecteur du tissu économique et social, surtout pendant les crises du marché, car elles soutiennent les exploitations pastorales et leurs familles, le cœur productif de ces communautés rurales. Les coopératives constituent un réseau de réciprocité collective socialement reconnu sur lequel on peut s'appuyer. Les entretiens avec les bergers membres révèlent que, malgré tout, la coopérative est perçue comme un agrégateur d'identité collective dans la région et comme « une maison commune ». Par exemple, de nombreux bergers racontent fièrement qu'ils ne consomment que du fromage de leur coopérative, acheté directement au magasin de la ferme; il est courant aussi d'y prendre gratuitement du lactosérum et d'autres restes de lait pour les donner à leurs cochons, parce que la coopérative est comme une grande famille dont ils font partie. En plus, les entretiens avec les bergers membres de longue date montrent souvent que la décision de rester dans la coopérative est le résultat d'un « choix » conscient qui a

été « hérité » de père en fils et s'est renforcé au fil du temps; toutefois, cela ne dispense pas d'être méfiant, surtout lors de périodes économiques difficiles.

Le départ de membres peut constituer un risque (Henriksen, Hviid et Sharp, 2012), surtout dans un contexte où il n'y a pas d'accords sur la rémunération du lait et où chaque opérateur peut payer le prix qu'il veut. On peut alors assister à la diffusion d'abus de marché et de désinformation qui alimente un climat de méfiance institutionnelle par rapport à la coopération : la comparaison entre les prix payés par les coopératives et les entreprises industrielles est utilisée pour alimenter un climat de méfiance à l'égard du système coopératif. Voilà un exemple de phrase récurrente et sté-réotypée :

> Les coopératives vont toutes mal … . Elles payent moins bien que les industriels! Bien pire! … On voit qu'ils ont volé! (Vice-président, coopérative de collecte C qui vend son lait à une entreprise industrielle, Centre-Sardaigne, 11-2012)

En réalité, il est incorrect de comparer le prix offert par une entreprise industrielle (qui varie d'un mois à l'autre) avec le prix offert au même moment par une coopérative, qui n'est qu'une avance sur un prix final qui sera payé l'année suivante, à la fin du budget annuel :

> Je vais vous lire un passage de ce contrat signé par un groupe de bergers … avec un grand industriel laitier sarde, où un prix est fixé et où il est dit ensuite : « Si le prix du marché est différent, les conditions suivantes s'appliqueront. » … Quel est le prix du marché? De quel prix on parle? En restant dans le vague, les bergers n'ont aucune garantie! … Par ailleurs, lorsqu'il est parfois fait référence aux coopératives laitières … , il ne faut pas commettre l'erreur de comparer les pommes de terre aux tomates! Parce que l'industriel fixe un prix fini, il dit : « Je vous donne 60 centimes d'ici la fin de la campagne ». La laiterie sociale, étant une coopérative des bergers, donne un acompte, mais le solde sera versé … dans les premiers mois de l'année suivante, lorsque le budget de la coopérative sera bouclé. Les industriels rusent en comparant leur prix fini avec l'acompte, ils vous disent « les coopé-ratives paient autant que nous ». Non! Ce sont deux choses complètement différentes, c'est une tromperie et elle doit être dénoncée! (Syndicaliste, réunion sur le prix du lait, Sud-Sardaigne, 01-2017)

Pour décourager la désadhésion qui risque d'éroder leur base sociale, les coopératives ont mis au point plusieurs mécanismes, notamment des mesures dissuasives de sortie (par exemple des pé-nalités pour abandon non motivé), des stratégies de capitalisation, et la fourniture de services qui rendent la participation attractive et génèrent des externalités positives. Les stratégies de capita-lisation consistent à déposer chaque année une petite part (frais de participation) du solde final dans la coopérative pour renforcer sa base financière et soutenir ses investissements :

> Les frais de participation sont de l'oxygène pour la coopérative : quand on présente à la banque un bilan bien capitalisé … , il est plus facile d'être financé; en plus, on peut aussi utiliser l'argent s'il arrive des événements imprévus! … L'année dernière, lorsque nous avons clôturé le budget, nous avons payé comme prix final du lait 1,28 € par litre … , un bon prix pour le berger, car cela lui donnait la possibilité de capitaliser aussi! … Nous avons donc proposé à l'assemblée de garder quatre centimes sur 1,28 € dans la coopérative pour

capitaliser … . Cet argent sera la liquidation de chaque membre lorsqu'il terminera sa carrière … et prendra sa retraite. … C'est-à-dire que l'argent reste dans la coopérative, même s'il n'est pas immobile parce que nous l'utilisons! … [Quitter la coopérative] doit être justifié … , sinon il faut payer une caution; les raisons valables sont : soit on prend sa retraite, soit on crève [*rires*] … [ou] on vend les moutons et on n'a plus d'activité, sinon il faut payer 2 000 €! … Ce n'est pas comme si je pouvais te garder attaché à vie. Mais tu vois qu'il existe aussi une pénalité que tu dois payer! Nous avons toujours décidé cela lors de l'assemblée des membres! (Président, coopérative laitière A, Sud-Sardaigne, 04-02-2017)

Les stratégies de capitalisation sont apparues pour répondre à un problème classique des coopératives, la sous-capitalisation, qui se traduit par une faible solidité financière et une possibilité réduite d'obtenir des prêts bancaires. Parallèlement, des systèmes de financement de pair à pair sont développés, par lesquels les membres d'une coopérative avancent le capital pour des investissements :

La nôtre est l'une des premières coopératives à le faire et a aujourd'hui un niveau de capitalisation de plus de 5 millions … , ce qui ne se retrouve même pas dans les entreprises privées! En outre, nous avons créé un système d'autofinancement dans lequel les membres investissent dans l'entreprise sous la forme d'un prêt social, réglementé par la loi 59 de 1992 … ; ils disposent d'un livret au porteur et reçoivent une rémunération à la fin de l'année dans le cadre mutualiste de l'activité de la coopérative. (Président, coopérative laitière C, Nord-Sardaigne, 04-2020)

Un domaine dans lequel certaines coopératives stimulent les innovations sociales est l'introduction de systèmes de contrôle de la qualité du lait, qui encouragent les bergers à améliorer la gestion de leurs exploitations (Alavoine-Mornas et Mandelrieux, 2015), avec des répercussions positives à plusieurs niveaux : progrès du bien-être animal, adoption de pratiques agricoles plus durables sur le plan environnemental, et amélioration de la qualité des aliments :

Nous avons des règles strictes. … Il n'est pas possible qu'un membre arrive avec un lait qui n'est pas bon. … D'abord le pH … , l'acidité du lait doit être super contrôlée! (…) Et puis ici on a … un laboratoire d'analyse. … Il y a deux responsables d'ARA [Association régionale d'éleveurs] à tour de rôle, plus le laitier, ils font les analyses tout de suite. Si on a un doute, je ne sais pas… Qu'on a mélangé le lait de chèvre avec celui de brebis! … L'utilisation d'antibiotiques est interdite. … Nous en avons déjà attrapé trois ou quatre et ils ont reçu une amende de 6 000 €. Personne n'est épargné! … Le lait est contrôlé, il est tracé! … Nous payons les techniciens régionaux… mais nous avons la qualité et la garantie du produit … Nous avons également deux vétérinaires et deux agronomes qui effectuent les contrôles.

Question : Quand avez-vous introduit ce système?

Il y a une vingtaine d'années. Nous nous améliorons d'année en année. Nous voulions aussi que les vétérinaires contrôlent les médicaments donnés aux agriculteurs. … Il a fallu du temps pour éduquer les gens parce qu'en mars, quand le pâturage changeait, ils donnaient [aux brebis] un traitement [antibiotique] pour vermifuger. … Ces choses-là n'existent plus ici! Si par hasard quelqu'un devient fou et les refait, il en paie les conséquences. …

> Cette année, nous en avons attrapé deux ou trois, l'année dernière, trois autres. Puis, len-
> tement, les gens apprennent … . Les règles sont là et je suis là pour les faire respecter.
> Comme un père de famille qui met les règles dans sa maison. (Président, coopérative lai-
> tière B, Centre-Sardaigne, 10-16)

En plus, ces innovations dans le contrôle de qualité du lait mènent à des stratégies de diversifica-
tion des produits basée sur la qualité, dans lesquels différents types de lait sont valorisés pour
produire des spécialités destinées à des marchés de niche. Il s'agit de stratégies de multifonction-
nalité agricole qui vont dans le sens d'un certain approfondissement (Van der Ploeg et Roep, 2003).
Quelques coopératives ont également initié des stratégies d'élargissement : de la production
d'énergie renouvelable à la possibilité donnée aux membres d'utiliser gratuitement les déchets
de transformation (notamment le lactosérum) pour nourrir les porcs.

Les externalités positives sont générées par l'ancrage territorial des coopératives, qui fournissent
des services à leurs membres et aux communautés locales. Par exemple, certaines coopératives
garantissent un service de collecte du lait par l'intermédiaire de centres de collecte territoriaux et
d'un système de camionnettes dotées de réservoirs réfrigérés. Cette approche permet de réduire
les frais de transport (l'un des plus gros postes du budget des éleveurs), d'amortir les coûts plus
élevés de la collecte du lait dans les exploitations situées dans des zones difficiles d'accès, et de
générer une inclusion sociale pour ces fermes risquant d'être désactivées. Cette collecte solidaire
du lait joue un rôle de cohésion territoriale, conserve du territoire, et soutient l'emploi. Il suffit de
mentionner ici qu'être chauffeur pour une coopérative est un emploi très recherché.

> Nous faisons la collecte avec nos propres véhicules, nous avons dix citernes qui roulent
> tous les jours, achetées, nous n'avons pas de sous-traitants pour la collecte du lait. …
> Gérer dix citernes n'est pas facile, mais nous arrivons à mieux maîtriser les coûts de cette
> manière, avec nos propres employés et nos propres camions : nous avons un coût moyen
> de 2,7-2,8 centimes par litre pour la collecte, contre 4-4,5 centimes par litre + TVA de-
> mandés par les sous-traitants … , sans négliger cette partie de soutien de l'emploi dans
> le territoire. La coopération, c'est aussi ça! … Là où il y a des fermes structurées, nous al-
> lons ferme par ferme et nous collectons leur lait. … Là où les exploitations sont plus mor-
> celées, nous avons des centres de collecte… Nous en avons une quinzaine … . Nous les
> mettons en place nous-mêmes, en louant des locaux ou en utilisant ceux d'un membre.
> Il y a les raccordements à l'électricité et à l'eau : le coût moyen des centres est de 1,7 cen-
> time par litre… Donc il peut y en avoir un qui coûte deux centimes et demi, mais il y en a
> un qui coûte un centime par litre de lait. (Président, coopérative laitière B, Sud-Sardaigne,
> 21-02-2017)

Les coopératives offrent des biens et des services qui seraient coûteux ou plus difficiles à acheter
par les membres eux-mêmes, engendrant ainsi un avantage compétitif qui produit des effets ter-
ritoriaux. Les types et la quantité de services varient d'une coopérative à l'autre; ces services, qui
ont une véritable fonction de promotion sociale, peuvent inclure : la vente conjointe d'agneaux à
l'abattoir, l'achat collectif d'aliments pour animaux et de semences, la fourniture de services vété-
rinaires, le partage d'équipements agricoles, et la participation aux activités culturelles locales :

> Nous vendons collectivement les agneaux des membres … . Notre acheteur est X. Nous avons une relation depuis 25 ans … , nous parvenons à obtenir un prix légèrement supérieur à la moyenne! … Ensuite, nous avons loué des locaux ici dans le cadre d'un accord avec une société pharmaceutique, et les membres qui ont besoin de médicaments vétérinaires peuvent les obtenir ici aux frais de la coopérative et les déduire du paiement de leur lait. (Président, coopérative laitière B, Sud-Sardaigne, 21-02-2017)

> Nous achetons du maïs, de l'orge, de l'avoine, des pois, des haricots, puis d'autres sous-produits, de la pulpe de betterave… Tout en vrac, nous le ramenons ici et l'ensachons nous-mêmes et les membres viennent le retirer. … Nous offrons tous les services aux membres! … Tout de A à Z! … Ici, même les matériaux sont contrôlés du premier au dernier grain. (Président, coopérative laitière B, Centre-Sardaigne, 10-16)

Une telle pratique engendre des conséquences en cascade. Par exemple, la fourniture coopérative de semences, de fourrage et d'aliments pour animaux augmente le contrôle de la chaîne d'approvisionnement, le bien-être animal et la qualité du lait. La coopération devient un jeu à somme positive (Granovetter, 1985) et les bergers sont conscients des objectifs et des avantages qu'ils n'auraient pas pu atteindre seuls. Le cas de la coopérative de bergers qui gère des terres communales, raconté dans l'extrait suivant, exemplifie ce fait :

> Je suis le président de la coopérative X qui gère deux terrains dans la municipalité de XX. … Ils font 2 600 hectares et nous sommes une coopérative de 45 membres. … Nous avons des moutons et des chèvres. … Nous versons le lait que nous produisons … dans la coopérative laitière de XX. … [Pour une partie] des terres, nous faisons une allocation individuelle. … Cette année c'était … même pas 40 hectares chacun… Nous les répartissons pour pouvoir faire la demande de financement de la PAC. … Et puis nous avons … 260 hectares de la coopérative … . En outre … , nous avons aussi un vignoble de huit hectares et nous le travaillons avec tous les membres, avec des jours fixes. … Nous livrons les raisins que le vignoble produit à la cave XX. … Ensuite, l'argent que nous recevons de la cave est utilisé pour acheter du diesel ou des pneus pour les tracteurs. Lorsqu'un véhicule tombe en panne, nous mettons cet argent à contribution! … [En tant que coopérative] nous avons 120 hectares pour faire du fourrage … , nous avons 120 hectares de prairies irriguées que nous transformons ensuite en foin et que nous partageons entre nous. … [Avec la coopérative] nous avons cinq tracteurs, un bulldozer et un tracteur à chenilles pour labourer le vignoble que nous utilisons aussi à l'extérieur pour faire d'autres travaux. Nous payons deux travailleurs … [mais nous travaillons aussi] : cette année nous avons fixé 200 heures chacun. Chaque membre doit faire 200 heures! Si vous ne les faites pas, il y a des pénalités, vous avez des amendes! Vous manquez 10 heures, on vous donne 30 bottes de foin en moins. … C'est une toute petite réalité. On ne devient pas riche, … mais au moins on ne va pas mendier! (Président, coopérative de bergers responsable des terrains municipaux, Centre-Sardaigne, 10-16)

Lorsque les coopératives produisent des biens collectifs locaux, comme dans ces cas, elles risquent aussi d'engendrer le parasitisme et l'opportunisme qui peuvent consumer la confiance qui a été construite :

> Nous avons essayé … d'acheter des semences et des engrais, mais ça ne marche pas parce que nous sommes tellement [individualistes]. Nous devons dire la vérité! Par exemple, nous concluons le contrat avec X qui nous donne un prix, tu vas avec ce prix chez Y : « Ah je te le donne aussi! » « Bien sûr qu'il te le donne à ce prix-là! » Mais si tu ne lui avais pas dit le prix que la coopérative avait obtenu, le vendeur ne te l'aurait pas donné à ce prix! … Cette année-là, l'engrais a été déversé directement dans la coopérative… Tu sais combien il en restait? Parce que vous avez commandé dix quintaux, il en a commandé vingt, puis il en a pris quinze, et vous en avez pris huit au lieu de dix, et le reste est resté là. Tu te moques de moi? Ce n'est pas une façon de se comporter! (Président, coopérative laitière A, Sud-Sardaigne, 04-02-2017)

Afin de limiter le parasitisme et d'avoir un impact sur le développement rural, les coopératives déploient des formes d'intégration verticale et horizontale pour construire des chaînes d'approvisionnement plus territorialisées impliquant des opérateurs locaux, de ceux qui produisent des semences ou des aliments pour animaux à ceux qui travaillent dans les secteurs de la restauration ou du tourisme. Le but est de générer des marchés imbriqués (*nested markets)* (Polman et al., 2010; Osti et Carrosio, 2020) et des chaînes d'approvisionnement certifiées et transparentes qui sont au cœur des processus de développement rural endogène. En outre, les possibilités de financement et les synergies avec les universités et les instituts de recherche sont importantes dans ces processus et favorisent l'innovation technologique :

> [Nous expérimentons] un Pecorino Romano de montagne, qui provient … d'un lait classé de montagne. Nous avons fait un … projet expérimental. Nous avons la chance d'être situés dans une zone montagneuse, car l'une des caractéristiques est l'emplacement … de la laitière coopérative. Nous avons ensuite identifié quelques soixante-dix exploitations membres qui devaient répondre aux exigences non seulement du territoire, être dans la montagne, mais aussi de l'alimentation : l'intégration des aliments en dehors du territoire ne pouvait pas dépasser 40 %. À ce stade, nous avons dû déclasser une vingtaine de fermes. Cependant, le travail s'est très bien passé. Nous avons construit une cartographie du territoire … , en identifiant les exploitations … , le type d'alimentation. … L'étape suivante, très expérimentale, engage de jeunes universitaires qui … ont créé un système de contrôle de la chaîne de blocs (*blockchain*) à appliquer aux moutons. … Avec le contrôle de toute la chaîne d'approvisionnement … , il s'agit d'un projet que le Plan de développement régional a financé à l'organisme régional de recherche de X … . Les exploitations de montagne n'ont pas un niveau de production laitière très élevé, mais elles ont suffisamment de pâturages disponibles … pour ne pas avoir à recourir excessivement à des aliments extérieurs … . [Ceux-ci] peuvent être utilisés, mais seulement s'ils sont certifiés comme provenant de notre zone de montagne d'origine. J'ai trouvé une entreprise qui le fait, mais nous n'avons pas encore entamé la discussion, car elle doit certifier la chaîne d'approvisionnement. Pour l'instant, nous nous sommes arrêtés aux entreprises qui n'ont pas plus de 40 % d'intégration alimentaire. L'étape suivante consistera à trouver [sur le terrain] une alimentation complémentaire. … [L'idée est] d'atteindre le résultat commercial qui nous différencie sur le marché. (Président, coopérative laitière C, Nord-Sardaigne, 04-2020)

CONCLUSIONS : SUGGESTIONS ET RECOMMANDATIONS

Quelles suggestions et recommandations tirées de cette étude de cas peuvent être utiles pour soutenir la coopération agricole en tant que pratique d'innovation sociale et de développement rural dans des contextes marginalisés?

Une première observation concerne le fait que les arrangements actuels dépendent de la qualité des arrangements précédents (Donolo, 2001). Le système coopératif manifeste une dépendance au chemin emprunté, reproduisant certaines caractéristiques de la coopération informelle du modèle agropastoral traditionnel. En tant que telles, les structures coopératives peinent à institutionnaliser des mécanismes de confiance systémiques qui serviraient à promouvoir des stratégies de coordination interorganisationnelle et à gouverner les processus de marché en promouvant des stratégies de développement rural endogènes.

Malgré la présence de dispositifs au niveau interorganisationnel (tels que les organisations de producteurs ou l'organisme interprofessionnel), on échoue dans la construction d'espaces de légitimité pour concentrer l'agrégation interinstitutionnelle. Il faut renforcer cette pratique en élaborant des réglementations intelligentes se concentrant « sur les processus d'apprentissage pour modifier les préférences des acteurs » (Donolo, 2001, p. 31). Il faut aussi encourager la création d'effets de réseau et d'interdépendance et l'introduction de systèmes d'information adéquats pour rendre l'information transparente en faisant diminuer les asymétries et les abus du marché. La littérature (Forestier et Mauget, 2000; Filippi, Frey et Mauget, 2008) a souligné que dans le secteur coopératif agricole, il y a eu une intégration verticale supra-territoriale dans laquelle les coopératives ont été absorbées par les grandes multinationales de l'alimentation, ce qui a augmenté la volatilité des prix. Pour contrer ces dérives, on doit encourager des formes d'intégration (tant verticale qu'horizontale) qui renforcent l'enracinement territorial de la chaîne d'approvisionnement et de ses entreprises.

Les coopératives sont le résultat de poussées isomorphiques qui les ont enfermées dans une position de dépendance dans la chaîne d'approvisionnement extrêmement banalisée. L'analyse montre que ces organisations « hybrides » fonctionnent en concurrence sur le marché, mais avec une proportion de leur valeur basée sur l'utilité sociale. Stark (2009) suggère que la caractéristique de ces organisations hétérogènes est la cohabitation de systèmes de valeurs et de principes d'évaluation concurrents, voire conflictuels, qui, tout en coexistant, génèrent l'innovation par leur « dissonance créative ». En présence d'un marché local hyperconcurrentiel, les deux logiques peuvent provoquer un court-circuit : la nécessité de protéger ses membres peut mettre en péril la survie de la coopérative, l'exposant à l'opportunisme et au parasitisme. Cela renforce un contexte de dysrégulation institutionnelle et de méfiance systémique (Donolo, 2001) qui érode les biens publics locaux, y compris la viabilité de l'option coopérative, qui sont à la base d'un marché qui fonctionne bien et qui résultent d'un équilibre délicat entre coopération et concurrence. Il est important de ne pas dépasser le seuil critique d'intensité concurrentielle au-delà duquel les avantages individuels sont inférieurs à l'inconvénient collectif qu'est l'exclusion des « vaincus » du marché (Zamagni, 2017, p. 3).

En effet, la subalternité des coopératives dans la chaîne d'approvisionnement hypermarchandisée du Pecorino Romano est apparue comme un obstacle limitant leurs possibilités d'innovation sociale

et de promotion du développement rural : les coopératives semblent piégées « dans un modèle productiviste et un paradigme de "marché compétitif" qui donnent la primauté aux aspects économiques de la coopération » (Fonte et Cucco, 2017, p. 300), déprimant les composantes potentiellement transformatrices liées à l'économie sociale qui sous-tendent le modèle coopératif.

Les coopératives favorisent néanmoins de nombreux biens collectifs locaux qui vont soutenir des pratiques d'innovation sociale. Par exemple, l'introduction de systèmes de contrôle du lait ou l'achat collectif de semences et d'aliments pour animaux ont contribué à l'amélioration des fermes, au bien-être des animaux, à une meilleure qualité des aliments, et à des pratiques agricoles plus durables. D'autre part, un service généralisé de collecte du lait diminue les coûts des exploitations, contribue au niveau d'emploi dans le territoire, augmente l'enracinement territorial, et inclut les agriculteurs des zones marginales, augmentant ainsi la cohésion sociale. En outre, les stratégies de capitalisation renforcent la solidité financière de la coopérative et lui permettent d'offrir des services aux membres tels que : l'achat collectif d'intrants pour la production, les services vétérinaires, le partage des machines et des outils, et le lancement d'expériences pour les innovations de produits et de processus qui ouvrent de nouveaux marchés imbriqués, fondamentaux dans les stratégies de développement rural visant à mobiliser les ressources endogènes.

Cependant, la fonction sociale la plus importante de la coopérative est d'agir comme un filet de sécurité sociale, en supportant les risques de la volatilité des marchés, surtout en période de crise. Cette fonction est décisive pour la survie économique et sociale des communautés rurales où l'emploi dans le pastoralisme et la filière laitière soutient les revenus des familles.

Petruzzella et al. (2017, pp. 18-19) soulignent la capacité des pratiques d'innovation sociale à répondre aux besoins sociaux, qui peuvent être de trois types : sociaux-sociaux (services à la personne, légalité, etc.); socioéconomiques (visant à atténuer les situations qui portent atteinte au bien-être, comme la volatilité des prix ou le chômage); socioécologiques (visant à avoir un impact sur les défis environnementaux, comme l'épuisement des ressources, la pollution, le changement climatique). Les coopératives sardes répondent à certains besoins socioéconomiques, mais les besoins sociaux-sociaux et socioécologiques restent encore inassouvis. Il faut donc augmenter le degré de sensibilisation et d'explicitation de ces nouvelles valeurs.

Les coopératives n'ont pas le même degré d'innovation sociale, mais elles fonctionnent toujours comme des catalyseurs d'identité et de relations denses dans les territoires qui renforcent la reconnaissance mutuelle et la réciprocité. Les coopératives parviennent tout de même à rassembler les bergers, ce qui constitue un point de départ important. Le renforcement de ces dynamiques est décisif dans les processus de développement rural.

L'innovation sociale est une approche génératrice de ressources, mais elle a besoin elle-même de ressources de différentes natures, y compris économiques. Dans ce cas, le financement public a soutenu le système coopératif, mais sa rigidité et sa standardisation ont fini par enfermer celui-ci dans un modèle de production spécifique. Afin de surmonter ce risque, il est nécessaire de co-concevoir des financements « habilitants » et flexibles, capables d'accompagner l'innovation sociale et technologique selon une lecture multidimensionnelle des besoins spécifiques des différentes coopératives.

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Place-Based Environmental Philanthropy: The Role of Community-Based Organizations in the Skeena Watershed

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the role of place-based philanthropy in rural community development through a case study of the Skeena watershed. The Skeena is an ecologically significant region in Northwest British Columbia that is confronting the complex and layered forces of change being experienced by many rural regions in Canada. Through qualitative interviews and document analyses, the article illustrates how a robust ecosystem of environmental community-based organizations (CBOs), funded by philanthropic capital, is extending beyond traditional environmental advocacy to fill important structural gaps in community development. Though pressed by capacity issues, the sector is shifting towards highly integrated and collaborative responses to development pressures and is charting alternative pathways for development in the region. The complexity and scope of pressures in the Skeena offer insights for other rural regions and the dynamic potential and challenges associated with place-based philanthropy in community and regional development processes.

RÉSUMÉ

Cet article se base sur une étude de cas du bassin-versant de la Skeena pour explorer le rôle joué par la philanthropie territoriale dans le développement communautaire rural. La Skeena est une région du Nord-Ouest de la Colombie-Britannique qui est importante d'un point de vue écologique. Elle doit faire face aux mêmes forces de changement complexes et multidimensionnelles que subissent plusieurs autres régions rurales au Canada. Cet article a recours à des entretiens qualitatifs et des analyses de documents pour illustrer comment un écosystème robuste d'organismes communautaires environnementaux, financé par le capital philanthropique, est en train d'évoluer au-delà du simple plaidoyer environnemental traditionnel pour combler d'importantes lacunes structurelles en développement communautaire. Ce secteur, bien qu'il doive composer avec des problèmes de capacité insuffisante, est en train de répondre aux pressions exercées par le développement de manière hautement intégrée et collaborative, et d'explorer des options alternatives pour développer la région. Au bout du compte, la complexité et l'étendue des pressions dans la Skeena offrent matière à réflexion pour d'autres régions rurales et un modèle pour le potentiel et les défis relatifs à la philanthropie territoriale dans les processus de développement communautaire et rural.

INTRODUCTION

Rural regions across Canada are experiencing a convergence of multiple crises, from infrastructure deficits and ageing populations to global challenges with local implications such as climate change, economic restructuring, and biodiversity loss. These overlapping challenges leave rural governments with ever-expanding mandates yet limited resources to address them. Researchers have identified the inherent complexity of rural resilience that requires moving beyond conventional development and governance approaches to implement bold and innovative solutions (Chirisa & Nel, 2021; Fazey, Carmen, Rao-Williams, Fraser, Murray, Cox, Scott, Hodgson, Tabor, Robeson, Searle, Lyon, Kenter, & Murray, 2017; Parkes et al., 2019). The literature repeatedly shows that conventional, top-down interventions and piecemeal supports from senior governments fail to produce successful and lasting outcomes, and can even generate counterproductive results (Gilbert, 2018). Instead, bottom-up or place-based approaches to community development have been recognized as essential for building rural resilience (OECD, 2020).

Place-based development embraces the notion that local people and organizations are best equipped to understand local problems, and centres the natural, human, and physical assets that make communities and regions unique (Layton, 2016; Markey, Breen, Vodden, & Daniels, 2015). Although rural local governments are often keen to exert greater levels of control over their own development, they frequently struggle to bridge the planning-to-implementation gap due to jurisdictional barriers and human and financial capacity constraints (Sorensen, 2016; Ryser, Halseth, Markey, & Young, 2022). Strategic partnerships with other place-based actors, such as community-based organizations (CBOs), may help to overcome these capacity constraints while maintaining local control (Markey, Halseth, & Manson, 2012).

As actors within the philanthropic sector, CBOs include non-profit, non-governmental, or charitable organizations that operate at a local level and work to address community needs. CBOs' distinct characteristics—including their local knowledge, trust, and relationships—uniquely position them to support place-based development. Community-based organizations are increasingly being recognized as a source of local capacity and a promising partner in rural resilience-building efforts (Gilbert, 2018; Ryser & Halseth, 2014; United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, 2012). However, there is a lack of research on the role of CBOs as locally based philanthropic actors, and even greater gaps associated with the role of philanthropy in rural development (Williamson, Luke, & Furneaux, 2021; Pill, 2017). Most data on the philanthropic sector lacks a rural lens, hindering awareness and understanding of the role of philanthropy in rural communities. Practitioners and researchers alike have made calls for documented evidence of the sector's role in rural community development (Barr, 2020; Glennie, 2019; Hall, Gibson, Markey, & Weeden, 2020). Williamson et al. (2021) identify a third research gap relating to the intersection of philanthropy and the environment: "There is a wide and rich field for future research on place-based giving. Environmental giving is a particular form of place-based giving involving different understandings of location" (p. 1145). These

understandings of location, while still place-based, may be characterized by natural boundaries, such as those defined by climate, biodiversity, or topography, rather than institutional boundaries.

The purpose of this research is to contribute to filling these knowledge gaps through a case study on environmental CBOs in the Skeena watershed ("the Skeena"), a region in Northwest British Columbia (B.C.). Home to approximately 60,000 people, the Skeena has several population centres ranging from 5,000 to 13,000 people, and numerous smaller towns and villages. It encompasses the traditional, unceded territories of the Tsimshian, Gitxsan, Wet'suwet'en, Carrier Sekani, Ned'u'ten, Takla and Tahltan peoples (Skeena Watershed Conservation Coalition, SkeenaWild Conservation Trust, & Bulkley Valley Centre for Natural Resources Research and Management, 2013).

The Skeena is currently confronting many of the same challenges as other rural places. As a region that is richly endowed with natural assets, it has experienced a long-standing tension between natural resource extraction and ecological conservation. While it is among the most biologically diverse watersheds in Canada and most productive salmon watersheds in the world, it is also a globally significant region for natural resource extraction (Pacific Salmon Foundation, 2015; SkeenaWild Conservation Trust, 2019). These divergent forces have sparked international attention and an influx of philanthropic funding for CBOs in the Skeena with an environmental mandate. In the following pages, we explore the role that these CBOs play in the Skeena through the lens of rural development. The objectives of documenting this case study are to address research gaps and to highlight opportunities to advance place-based rural development in other jurisdictions, specifically contributing to what has become an international discourse surrounding issues associated with place-based philanthropy. The following sections present a literature review, provide further details about the methods used in this study and the Skeena case context, and present the findings and discussion.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Rural restructuring

Most definitions of "rural" include reference to areas with low density populations and/or long distances to larger urban centres (Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation, 2021). These features exist along a continuum and encompass a wide variety of places, geographies, climates, and cultures. In the Canadian context, du Plessis et al. (2002) present the concept of "degrees of rurality," which accommodates various interpretations of rural and allows for community identification as rural, even though certain communities may exceed specific population, distance, or density parameters. The case region in this article is "predominantly rural" given its northern and remote location from a major metropolitan influence zone, although two of the population centres exceeded the 10,000-person ceiling attributed to formal definitions of "rural" and "small town" (Beshiri & Bollman, 2001).

Despite the diversity of rural regions, many rural communities have experienced similar patterns of development, triggered by a combination of macro-level forces and ideological shifts since the 1950s. Examining these patterns is crucial to understanding the contexts that continue to shape rural places today and help to situate the growing importance of rural philanthropic organizations. Beginning in the post-World War II era, rural regions across B.C. (echoing national trends) were recognized by the provincial government as sites of significant natural resource wealth. Large scale investments were made in rural infrastructure, while thousands of Indigenous Peoples were dis-

placed from their traditional territories to make way for mega-projects such as mines, mills, and dams (Gunn & McIvor, 2021; Halseth & Ryser, 2017). A deep dependency on natural resource extraction was woven into the fabrics of rural communities.

A second phase of rural development emerged in the 1980s, associated with the rise of neoliberalism that rapidly rolled-back government and corporate investment (Douglas, 2005). Rural communities came to be treated as "resource banks" from which value was extracted and not adequately reinvested to sustain core infrastructure and services. As senior governments retreated from rural places, infrastructure deficits grew and fewer services were provisioned (Gadsby & Samson, 2016; Gibson & Barrett, 2018; Speer, 2019).

We characterize the current era of rural development, roughly beginning in the aftermath of the 2008/09 financial crisis, as a period of "reactionary incoherence." In this phase, rural policy approaches are disorganized in nature, lacking in regional knowledge and vision, and subject to competing and divergent objectives, yet do draw policy and program attention to address infrastructure deficits (Markey, Halseth, Ryser, Argent, & Boron, 2019). Within the state of incoherence, however, the possibility does exist to better direct rural investments. As globalization, international supply chains, and the mobility of information and capital have led to widespread homogenization of landscapes and cultures, they have also sparked a cultural renaissance that engenders an appreciation for all that makes a place unique (Cairncross, 1997; Douglas, 2005). This centering of "place" has become a central theme in contemporary community development, heightening the role of local actors such as CBOs to co-construct interventions that align with the assets and aspirations of place (Baldacchino et al., 2015). Place-based strategies build on a community's natural, physical, and human assets and centre them in community development and decision-making. Rural and remote communities tend to cultivate particularly strong senses of place, and place-based approaches have been widely recognized as essential to rural resilience (Douglas, 2005; Gadsby & Samson, 2016; Markey et al., 2012; OECD Regional Development Ministerial, 2019).

Situating place-based and environmental philanthropy
A subset of the philanthropic sector, CBOs are associated with many names, including place-based philanthropy, social infrastructure, and community philanthropy, signalling their emergent positionality in the discourse on rural development (Doan, 2019).

As natural resource extraction and industrial development gained prominence in rural communities in B.C., so too did environmental advocacy and conservation organizations (largely funded by philanthropic dollars). These organizations grew to become an influential sector with the power to influence land use and forest management practices in B.C. (Affolderbach, 2011). Recent decades have seen what has been coined a "professionalization" of environmental organizations, as well as an evolution of relationship dynamics between environmental and Indigenous groups (Affolderbach, 2011; Davis, 2009; Hague, 2019). However, existing literature on the environmental philanthropy sector predominantly focuses on large environmental foundations that operate on provincial, national, or international scales. Scholarship investigating the role of community-based environmental organizations is scarce, despite the growing body of literature concentrating on the importance of place in grantmaking (Williamson et al., 2021).

Though place-based philanthropic organizations vary in size, missions, and mandates, they often share a strong understanding of local contexts, a propensity towards long-term and holistic thinking, and a strong network of relationships within their communities (Gilbert, 2018). Both purpose-driven and deeply committed to place, place-based philanthropy exists to create lasting change in the communities it serves. The European Foundation Centre describes place-based philanthropy as, "the act of individual citizens and local institutions contributing money or goods, along with their time and skills, to promote the well-being of local people and the improvement of the community in which they live and/or work" (European Foundation Centre, 2004, p. 5). However, place-based philanthropy may also blend local assets and capacity with external sources of financial capital. This grounding of external capital in local knowledge and relationships gives the sector an "intrinsic advantage" over purely external sources of financing (Glennie, 2019).

In response to the social, political, and economic restructuring that has taken place in rural communities in recent decades, the role of place-based philanthropy has been heightened (Gibson & Barrett, 2018). As senior government support withdrew and local government capacity declined, the philanthropic sector grew to fill the gaps and has since become a vital contributor to rural communities (Ryser & Halseth, 2014). Today, there are over 18,000 rural charities across Canada, from local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to community foundations, voluntary groups and societies (Halseth et al., 2019). Rural communities tend to attract a higher proportion of philanthropic organizations: in recent years, 43 percent of all community foundations and 22 percent of all charities were based in rural areas, despite being home to less than 20 percent of the population (Gibson et al., 2014; Gibson & Barrett, 2018).

Community-based organizations, as manifestations of the philanthropic sector, may be uniquely positioned to contribute to lasting, structural change at the local level (Johnson, 2018; Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors, 2019). The sector possesses unique strengths, including its freedom from short-term electoral cycles that allows for longer-term strategies and planning, its long history of operating with limited resources and often innovating to fulfill mandates, and its flexibility and agility with less red tape and compliance requirements than government equivalents (Dodgson & Gann, 2020). Given these advantages, CBOs have stepped in to fill the gaps left by government withdrawal from rural places, and the sector has accrued noteworthy social capital and financial assets that are anchored in local communities (Hodgeson & Pond, 2018). For overstretched rural governments, collaborating with CBOs may assist in bridging the planning-to-implementation gap by utilizing and augmenting the local asset pool (Connelly, Markey, & Roseland, 2009). However, a lack of understanding and awareness of the sector in rural communities often impedes such strategic engagements. As Pill (2017) warns, in addition to the perspective and potential of widening the range of governance organizations to enlist greater levels of capacity to address complex problems, we must also be mindful that CBOs picking up the slack left by state actors may place unreasonable demands on local capacity, lead to more variable and unequal service delivery, and further enable the neoliberalist agenda of privatization and a reduced state.

Methods and case context

This research is part of a multi-year, national research project examining how place-based philanthropy is being used as a mechanism for rural revitalization and renewal. This case study contributes

to further understanding of the authors' core research topic, with a lens of place-based natural assets and environmental resilience. This methodology includes a series of 22 key informant interviews with philanthropic funders and thought leaders from across Canada, which were used to identify trends, opportunities, and challenges in the philanthropic landscape and identify case study regions for further investigation. Criteria for case region selection included (a) non-metropolitan area as defined by Statistics Canada, (b) an active philanthropic sector, as evidenced by philanthropic indicators such as endowment values and organization tenure, and (c) representation from diverse provinces and regions across Canada. Using a combination of the above criteria, the Skeena watershed in Northwest British Columbia was selected as the case region for this study.

The case study is primarily based on qualitative data that captures the perceptions, knowledge, and beliefs of individual participants. As such, it is subject to the biases, opinions, and motivations of participants. Interview questions were designed to probe perceptions of trends, challenges, and opportunities faced by environmental CBOs, and to explore the roles of CBOs in the Skeena. Participants were asked to describe the role that CBOs play, for example, in community development, reconciliation, and local climate action, as well as how each of these broader trends have or continue to shape the landscape and contexts that CBOs operate within. Other characteristics of the sector, such as the extent and nature of collaboration among CBOs and with Indigenous communities and municipal and regional governments, were also explored through focused questions. Semi-structured interviews were held with 19 individuals, including, (a) individuals who are actively involved with CBOs in the region, (b) elected officials and government staff from regional, provincial, and federal governments, and (c) individuals from Indigenous-led organizations and governments. All interviews were conducted remotely and ranged from 35 to 70 minutes in length. Data analysis was conducted using NVivo software, in accordance with a pre-prepared codebook, which allowed for coding of the data by both question and theme (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006).

As noted, the Skeena region is home to approximately 60,000 people. The primary population centres within the watershed are Terrace (population 13,663) and Smithers (5,351); smaller communities include Kitwanga, Hazelton, Kispiox, Houston, and Dease Lake (SkeenaWild Conservation Trust, 2019; Statistics Canada, 2017) (see Figure 1). The City of Prince Rupert (population 12,220) is situated just outside of the watershed itself but borders the Skeena River estuary, a critical component of the watershed. Municipalities in the Skeena watershed have a significantly higher proportion of Indigenous Peoples than the provincial average of 5 percent. In Smithers and Terrace, respectively, approximately 14 percent and 22 percent of residents identify as Indigenous (City of Terrace, 2018; Town of Smithers, 2019).

The development dynamics and tensions present in the Skeena provide evidence of three broader themes in rural development. First, the impact of 30 years of rural withdrawal by senior governments, combined with limited policy capacity to orient towards a new development pathway presents considerable challenges for the region. Boom-and-bust economic cycles continue to fail to adequately return benefits to rural regions (Aalhus, Fumerton, & Oke, 2018; Parkes et al., 2019; Reschny, Brisbois, Parkes, & Harder, 2017). Even during periods of economic "boom," significant amounts of resource wealth leaves rural communities and flows to urban centres. In the Skeena, recent years have seen a boom of industrial development, including one of the largest energy in-

vestments in the history of Canada and major projects worth over $150 billion (representing 60% of all major industrial projects being built or proposed across B.C.) (Northwest BC Resource Benefits Alliance, 2019; LNG Canada, 2018). Despite this boom, the region faces a $600 million infrastructure deficit (Northwest BC Resource Benefits Alliance, 2019).

Second, the natural capital of rural regions provides critical ecosystem services—including carbon sequestration, food production, sustaining biodiversity—that "travel" great distances to benefit rural and urban citizens alike and provide opportunities for recreation. However, the cumulative impacts of resource extraction are contributing to ecological decline and degrading the capacity of rural regions to provide ecosystem services (Allred, Smith, Twidwell, Haggerty, Running, Naugle, & Fuhlendorf, 2015; Robertson, Schuster, Mitchell, Cameron, Jacob, Preston, Neupane, Vickers, & McMillan, 2018). At

Figure 1: Skeena watershed, showing the location of major tributaries and communities (Walters, Lichatowich, Peterman, & Reynolds, 2008)

present, a large proportion of Canada's critically important ecosystem service hotspots (54–66%) overlap with current and planned resource extraction activities (Mitchell, Schuster, Jacob, Hanna, Dallaire, Raudsepp-Hearne, Bennett, Lehner, & Chan, 2021). Sectors such as forestry, mining, and oil and gas extraction are central to many resource-based economies but have all been recognized as having a major impact on biodiversity (Gayton, 2007). The Skeena has experienced these consequences of resource extraction, with cumulative impacts degrading the region's forests, water quality, and fish habitat (Skeena Watershed Conservation Coalition et al., 2013). The natural environment throughout the Skeena is also increasingly being recognized as an important pillar for local economic development, particularly through nature-based tourism. In the Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako (a district within the Skeena), annual visitor expenditures increased by 25 percent between 2008 and 2015, contributing nearly $60 million to the region (Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako, 2017). Guided fishing tourism in the Lower Skeena increased nearly 60 percent from 2013 to 2016, and the Skeena's wild salmon fishery has been valued at nearly $110 million annually (Edinger & Britten, n.d.; Swainson, 2009).

Third, climate change will continue to exacerbate many of the challenges outlined above, with significant and disproportionate effects predicted in rural communities (BC Climate Action Secretariat, 2019; Wall & Marzall, 2006). Increased prevalence of wildfires due to climate change has been iden-

tified as a threat to the health and safety of forest-adjacent and forest-dependent communities across Canada (Kipp, Cunsolo, Vodden, King, Manners, & Harper, 2019). This increased prevalence of wild-fires, along with more intense precipitation and extreme heat, are being experienced in the Skeena (City of Terrace, 2018; Swainson, 2009). Like other rural regions, some characteristics of the Skeena, such as demographics, remoteness, and under-resourced social and physical infrastructure may increase community vulnerability to climate change (Kipp et al., 2019). The case for rapid rural transitions is growing in urgency, yet communities in the Skeena "are vastly unprepared to support what may come about in the immediate future" (Northwest BC Resource Benefits Alliance, 2019, p. 2).

FINDINGS

Our research focused on 13 different environmental CBOs in the Skeena with a primarily environmental mandate. Their work spans three distinct categories that relate to community development: research and monitoring, policy and advocacy, and community programming. Some CBOs conduct work across multiple categories. The sector has widely diversified sources of funding, including grants from larger philanthropic foundations, corporate donors, government, fee for service work, sales revenues, social enterprises, individual donors, and interest-generating endowments. Of the CBOs identified, 77 percent (10) have charitable status, and nearly 50 percent are based in the town of Smithers. The findings are presented below with a thematic focus on place-based dynamics, the role of environmental philanthropy, and the CBOs' primary areas of impact.

Place-based dynamics

A universal theme across interviews was a deeply rooted connection to place held by all participants, from CBO staff to government representatives. For example, numerous participants spoke of how salmon are a unifying force that receive broad support across the region, and as such, are at the heart of many conservation efforts in the Skeena. Multiple CBOs work on Skeena salmon conservation, including through salmon research, monitoring, and sustainable fisheries, often in partnership with local First Nations.

The strong sense of place and community in the Skeena is mirrored by a general suspicion of outside interests and prioritization of local values. Several people spoke of a lack of trust in organizations not based in the region, regardless of the organization's intentions or mandate. Stories were shared of outsiders, including large Environmental Non-Government Organizations (ENGOs), who "blundered in" without the context or understanding of what it is like to live in a tight-knit community, which limited their ability to engage in meaningful work. Participants spoke of the trust held in locally based organizations, which is shaped by relationships with people in the community and the inherent understanding these organizations have of local contexts. Participants frequently noted the importance of relationships in moving work forward.

The wide degree of collaboration both among CBOs and between CBOs and First Nations is a defining feature of the sector in the Skeena. Many participants noted the benefits of collaboration and coalition-building, including the efficiencies achieved from combining efforts and pooling resources, and the benefits of avoiding duplicative work. Having "strength in numbers" was noted as being particularly important when advocating for policy changes at the provincial or federal levels. However, collaborations between CBOs and local governments were found to be minimal and was

noted as an opportunity by several participants. The select organizations that did reference collaborations with local governments cited those partnerships as critical to getting meaningful projects off the ground. Several participants cited early examples of governments, both First Nations and settler governments alike, working closely with CBOs. For example, some CBOs have conducted pilots and provided proof of concepts, such as in sustainable and regenerative local food projects, that can subsequently inform policy changes. Other CBOs generate data, such as local ecosystem valuations, that can inform decision-making for First Nations or local governments.

Role of CBOs

Participants broadly felt that CBOs have played, and continue to play, a critical role in the region. The roles expressed by participants can be categorized into the following areas: 1) filling gaps left by government, 2) blending external capital with local capacity, and 3) promoting dialogue and accountability.

First, when asked to reflect on the relationships between governments and the local environmental philanthropy sector, many participants spoke of the impacts of government withdrawal in the region and the offloading of government responsibilities to the philanthropic sector. It was felt that the demand for resource extraction in the Skeena has not been coupled with sufficient government resources to monitor and evaluate environmental impacts. Several participants responded with notable frustration and disappointment when speaking of the abdication of government from environmental research, monitoring, and management. One participant also commented on the burden that this places on local First Nations to respond to and assess a high number of industrial proposals for projects in their territories: "Part of the challenge is that government agencies that are responsible for resource management have been severely gutted over the last several decades and just lack capacity" (Research participant #13).

It was clear that CBOs are contributing significantly to filling this gap. Several CBOs in the region have research-related mandates, with some also feeding data directly into government systems. One participant from an Indigenous-led organization spoke of the role CBO research plays in informing Indigenous governance and territory management strategies. However, having CBOs take on such responsibilities also creates tension. Some participants, both from inside and outside of the environmental sector, saw environmental research and monitoring as a role that should inherently be filled by the government in the long-term. Another participant noted how this role needs to evolve as local First Nations continue to build internal capacity and assert their rights in governing their traditional territories:

> As First Nations continue to build more capacity to have their own in-house biologists or wildlife experts, water experts, all of that expertise is growing in our region, and so we rely less and less on those organizations [CBOs]. But they definitely are partners in a lot of different work that we do. (Research participant #6)

Several participants from outside of the sector expressed concern over CBOs conducting scientific research due to their environmental priorities and the potential for bias to be embedded in the results. However, two participants who work for different research-based CBOs in the region reflected on their intentional efforts to avoid advocacy-based work, ensuring that they presented scientific

facts. Both participants noted their success in avoiding perceptions of bias and having their research leveraged by governments, industry, and environmental groups.

Second, of the 13 environmental CBOs, ten operated as a registered charity for at least a one-year period between 2016 and 2020. Based on publicly available financial reporting, these ten CBOs with charitable status collectively reported revenues of nearly $10 million over the same five-year period. This figure is a conservative estimate of the sector's impact; it does not account for CBOs that are not actively registered charities, nor does it account for the operating revenues of at least two CBOs prior to receiving charitable status. Additionally, two of the CBOs are local satellite offices of larger provincial or national charities; these organizations do not provide a regional funding break-down, making it difficult to quantify their impact in the Skeena. As such, the actual five-year reve-nues of all CBOs operating in the region are likely much larger and represent a significant inflow of capital to the regional economy. Most organizations reported receiving a large proportion of their funding from sources external to the region. This funding is blended with local human capital and further supports capacity building in the region. One participant commented on their organization's intentional efforts in capacity building through hiring and training local people and running skill-building programming.

The international attention and exposure that the Skeena has received was thought to have con-tributed to cultivating a strong sector of CBOs and improving access to funding and supports from larger national and international organizations. It was also recognized as an increasing driver of di-rect funding to local First Nations.

Finally, CBOs in the Skeena were noted as playing a key role as the conveners and facilitators of important discussions about regional development. According to participants, these organizations play this role by hosting events, conferences, and seminars, and providing the public with different perspectives and information—referred to by one participant as "the other side of the story." Participants noted that CBOs can also act as translators, communicating information and science in lay language in a way that is digestible and accessible to the public. One participant referred to this as "information democracy," which is a core pillar of their organization's values. This public dia-logue and knowledge dissemination was seen as critical in holding industry and government ac-countable and promoting transparency: "[CBOs] are pretty crucial for encouraging critical thinking and dialogue around what's happening in the region" (Research participant #18).

Areas of Impact
Although environmental protection and conservation has historically been the primary focus of the local environmental sector, the work of many environmental philanthropic organizations in the Skeena is increasingly stretching beyond causes that are purely "environmental" in nature. Many organizations in the region not only have a strong understanding of the interconnectedness between environmental, social, and economic issues, but they are also actively incorporating this systems lens into their programming and initiatives. Three areas of impact stand out from the research.

First, several CBOs have dedicated substantial time, funding, and energy to advocating for change in policies and management practices that affect the integrity of the environment. The areas of ad-

vocacy were predominantly focused on fisheries and other extractive industries such as mining and forestry. Multiple participants involved in this advocacy and policy reform work noted their tight-knit collaboration in the work with other local organizations.

Second, participants from CBOs noted that most of their work was done in partnership with local First Nations, with several organizations noting that they had Indigenous staff or board members. Numerous participants felt that environmental philanthropy fosters opportunities for direct, tactical collaboration between settler and Indigenous Peoples and creates opportunities for relationship-building and partnership. This was broadly seen as supporting "reconciliation" efforts in the region: "[The sector] provides funding for First Nations and non-First Nations people to work together, which I think goes a long way in addressing reconciliation" (Research participant #8).

CBOs are supplementing the capacity of local First Nations in territorial management, for example, through ecological monitoring and research. However, this is a delicate balance: over-involvement can also hinder Indigenous capacity-building by maintaining control and power structures outside of Indigenous organizations. Several participants underscored the importance of CBOs reflecting on the space they take up, as well as the frequent disparity between the intent and the impact of engagements with Indigenous peoples. While there was strong interest among CBOs in decolonizing organizational processes and practices, efforts to do so remain limited to several individuals. Finding the capacity and resources to support decolonization and reconciliation efforts was cited as a barrier by several organizations. For instance, multiple organizations noted their difficulties in accessing funding to support relationship-building with First Nations:

> We had environmental groups that were sort of acting as the middleman between philanthropic foundations and First Nations. And that really limited capacity building for First Nations, that limited the relationships that could be built. And so, a lot of my work has been trying to actually work more directly between First Nations and philanthropic foundations. (Research participant #6)

Third, the lack of local benefits from industrial resource extraction was also a point of concern—many participants noted how industrial projects tended to create mostly temporary jobs that are filled by a transient workforce, rather than long-term, stable jobs that are available to locals. CBOs were noted as a powerful force in the region that can have significant influence over economic development decisions. However, there has been a concerted effort and a recent shift among CBOs away from reacting to industrial development and proactively towards demonstrating sustainable development. This has manifested through the support and funding of local initiatives such as sustainable Indigenous-led fisheries, regenerative agriculture social enterprises, and business innovation programs and projects. One organization also convened a local Community Economic Development Committee to promote the social, economic, and cultural health of the area.

Participants frequently noted the sector's direct impact of job creation and recirculation of wealth in the local economy and CBOs were seen as a source of long-term, stable jobs. From 2016 to 2020, CBOs that were registered charities accounted for 59 annual full-time and part-time positions and spent nearly $7 million compensating those employees and paying for professional services:

"There's been stable jobs associated with environmental management, stewardship, conservation for years. And they probably outweigh, because they're more long term, they're more durable than these promised industry jobs" (Research participant #6).

DISCUSSION
Structural role of CBOs in place-based development
Community-based organizations in the Skeena region are advancing community development in multiple ways. First, they are addressing and responding to senior government withdrawal and the resulting rural government capacity bottlenecks that have pervaded rural communities across the country (Douglas, 2005; FCM, 2012). The retreat of government in the Skeena is consistent with broader trends of rural restructuring in Canada (Ryser et al., 2022). In the wake of this withdrawal, CBOs are filling gaps and roles that traditionally would fall under government purview, including conducting environmental research and monitoring, collaborating with First Nations on sustainable resource management initiatives, convening public discussions on environmental management, and making policy recommendations. This allocation of roles offers some benefits, including freedom from short-term electoral cycles that allows for longer-term orientation and greater flexibility due to less red tape and compliance requirements than government equivalents (Dodgson & Gann, 2020). However, it also comes with challenges. Research participants from outside of the sector were quick to raise concerns about the government's lack of participation or collaboration in these initiatives, including the potential for bias to be embedded in the work led by CBOs, and the sector's dependency on external philanthropic funding to conduct this work.

Second, CBOs are advancing place-based development by conducting their work with a distinctively place-based lens. The sector's work centres around promoting, understanding, and preserving the unique natural assets of the Skeena. In this way, CBOs are contributing to a process of reframing community development around the assets that already exist in the region (Mathie, Cameron, & Gibson, 2017). The sector's rootedness in the community and unwavering commitment to local priorities provides it with an intrinsic advantage over external actors (Gilbert, 2018; Layton, 2016).

Third, the work of CBOs is directly reducing the barriers to place-based development, which may better position local governments to pursue place-based approaches in the future. The sector has accrued considerable local capacity, which the literature has shown to be a key barrier to place-based development (Gibson & Barrett, 2018; Markey et al., 2015). Community-based organizations are providing examples of approaches to development rooted in local assets and proof of concept initiatives that can guide governments both in the Skeena and elsewhere. They also produce considerable locally relevant research and data, a lack of which in rural communities has been documented to hinder the uptake of place-based approaches (Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation, 2019). Multiple CBOs in the region have a primary mandate of monitoring and conducting environmental research and generating data that is used to inform regional decision-making. A portion of this research relates to understanding the impacts of climate change at a local level, which is helping to ground this complex, global issue into regional contexts, and supports community understanding and dialogue about resilience.

To scale its impact, it is critical for the sector to engage government in its work (United Nations Office for Partnerships, 2019). At present, however, the sector remains underrecognized and un-

derutilized by local governments. This is likely driven by several factors, including the limited capacity at the local government level to develop relationships and create such opportunities. The politicization of environmentalism in the region and the fault lines that have developed around industrial projects may also be contributing to a strategy of avoidance by local governments. Participants from various levels of governments attributed their lack of partnerships with CBOs in the region to their requirement of remaining "neutral," particularly in reference to relations between environmental groups and industry. While conventional definitions of collaboration may require collaborators to be more closely aligned in terms of values, newer theories embrace the notion of plurality, or "attending to multiple diverse wholes," and suggest that conflict and complexity should instead be embraced and centred in co-creation (Kahane, 2017).

Interestingly, one of the most effective strategies for engaging government is something that CBOs in the Skeena are already doing: leading by example (United Nations Office for Partnerships, 2019). Numerous participants in this research commented on their organization's strategic shift from "opposing" industrial development to "proposing" sustainable resource management through scalable initiatives and proof of concepts. Accordingly, by continuing to demonstrate success, governments will eventually take note of the value that is being created by CBOs in the region. In an era of limited capacity, expanding mandates, and increasingly complex and overlapping challenges facing rural governments, there is a significant opportunity for local governments to synergize with existing local assets to support place-based development.

Change in the philanthropic sector

The nature of the work being advanced by philanthropic actors in the Skeena, both CBOs and funders alike, provides tangible evidence of significant change across the broader philanthropic sector. As the environmental philanthropy sector in Canada has undergone a period of "professionalization" in recent decades, so too have the organizations in the Skeena transitioned to being more sophisticated and influential actors in the community addressing complex issues of structural significance to the region (Affolderbach, 2011). The global philanthropic sector has also been documented to be shifting towards systems-change approaches to address complex and interconnected issues in society (Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors, 2019; Rural Development Institute, 2011). There is a growing acknowledgement that environmental philanthropy must continue to move beyond the siloed paradigm in which it has operated in the past, and link climate and conservation work with economic, health, and social justice priorities (Phillips & Wyatt, 2021). A reckoning of the interconnectedness of priorities is well underway in the Skeena, so much so that the characterization of "environmental" may no longer be accurate for some organizations that have moved well beyond purely environmental objectives. Considerations of political, economic, social, and environmental priorities are increasingly being embedded in the work of environmental groups, which marks a significant evolution from past approaches in B.C., where ENGOs narrowly focused on environmental issues and dismissed the intersections of "race, class, gender and sexuality ... as 'social' issues" (Braun, 2002). For example, CBOs in the Skeena are co-creating sustainable fisheries with local First Nations and launching regenerative agriculture projects, both of which offer a host of co-benefits to the community that stretch well beyond environmental outcomes.

Another area of significant change amongst philanthropic actors in the Skeena region concerns collaboration and coalition-building between the environmental philanthropy sector and First Nations. This process has been ongoing for several decades and has created substantial opportunities for the building and deepening of relationships between settler and Indigenous communities. Partnerships with First Nations were recognized by most CBOs as imperative, and the sector is in a state of rapid transition with regards to how such partnerships are perceived and pursued. This transition is inherently complex, and CBOs continue to learn and evolve through a process of trial and error.

As issues of racism and social equity have been thrust into the mainstream spotlight in recent years, the philanthropic sector is reckoning with racism and increasing considerations of racial equity in its work (Buteau & Orensten, 2020). For settler-run CBOs that are committed to working with Indigenous partners, there is an opportunity to embed decolonization efforts into organizational culture, strategies, and processes. Currently, efforts to decolonize the work of CBOs in the Skeena are piecemeal and tend to be reliant on select individual employees, rather than organizations themselves, which is consistent with findings on the broader philanthropic sector (Hague, 2019). As First Nations build their internal capacity and increasingly reclaim their rightful roles in territorial management and governance, CBOs will also be required to evolve. This includes consideration of how the power held by CBOs can be transferred or shared with Indigenous-led organizations. Engaging paid experts to navigate the complexities and nuances of this shift may prove highly valuable for organizations and was noted as an opportunity for CBOs in the Skeena.

Perhaps the most effective way for philanthropic funders to support reconciliation is through directly funding Indigenous-led initiatives, including the revitalization of Indigenous laws and governance structures (Atleo & Boron, 2022). Yet, there remains significant room for improvement in Canada with regards to directing philanthropic funding to Indigenous-led organizations. Foundations providing philanthropic funding to the Skeena may be on the leading-edge of this change; a review of grants awarded by MakeWay (formerly Tides Canada) to recipients based in the Skeena between 2018 and 2021 shows that 36 percent more funding was allocated directly to First Nations ($1.3M) than to environmental groups ($863K), (MakeWay, 2022). As this trend continues, it will be critical to allocate funding not only to band councils but also hereditary leadership groups and other Indigenous-run organizations as funding recipients.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) states that reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians "also requires reconciliation with the natural world. If human beings resolve problems between themselves but continue to destroy the natural world, then reconciliation remains incomplete" (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015). From this perspective, there is undoubtably a significant opportunity for the environmental philanthropy sector to contribute to advancing reconciliation, by promoting a long-overdue societal shift in how we interact with the natural world. The Skeena would be an excellent region to conduct further research on this topic.

CONCLUSION

This case study provides evidence to support assertions that the philanthropic sector, through community-based organizations, can serve as a strategic partner in place-based development. The philanthropic sector is increasingly orienting towards systems-level change and holistic responses—an approach that is crucial to tackling today's complex and interconnected issues. However, limited awareness and understanding of the sector's role is hindering support that could help to accelerate regional transitions. There are also legitimate concerns regarding the resilience of relying upon non-state actors dependent upon variable sources of philanthropic funding.

This case study also offers several key takeaways for philanthropic actors to help broaden their impact. It provides further evidence to support the transfer of power to local organizations. It highlights the importance of rethinking funding strategies to reflect this new philanthropic paradigm, such as increasing multi-year and operational funding, and funding more innovative projects that can contribute to lasting systems change. Finally, the Skeena case reinforces the need for further research on the role of CBOs in rural development, and for improved data collection and reporting with a rural lens to monitor the sector's impact.

The complexity and scope of overlapping pressures in the Skeena offer a glimpse into the challenging landscapes that rural regions are presently navigating. As rural regions continue to grapple with infrastructure deficits, government capacity challenges, and economic, political, and climate transitions, building resilience to these and other shocks requires rethinking philanthropic roles and development strategies.

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How Are Nonprofit Workers Doing?
Exploring the Personal and Professional
Impact of COVID-19

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ABSTRACT

COVID-19 has presented unprecedented challenges to the nonprofit sector, and while evidence is accruing about its impact on nonprofit finances and operations, less is known about how nonprofit workers are faring. With so many organizations in the increasingly professionalized nonprofit sector reliant upon their paid staff, this study assesses how COVID-19 has changed the way nonprofit workers think about their current and future work. We use a survey of nonprofit workers who have a nonprofit graduate degree to describe pandemic-related work changes and to explore the impact of these changes on their commitment to the sector. Our findings reveal that nonprofit workers are nuanced in how they approach their work and commitment to the sector. We distill our findings considerate of how future research should endeavor to unpack the degree to which workers' personal and professional circumstances affect how they think about their work in the sector.

RÉSUMÉ

La COVID-19 a présenté des défis sans précédent au secteur à but non lucratif. Les données s'accumulent sur l'impact de la pandémie sur les finances et les opérations des organismes sans but lucratif (OSBL), mais on en sait moins sur l'état des travailleurs dans ce milieu. Dans cet article, on reconnaît que, dans ce secteur qui se professionnalise de plus en plus, de nombreuses organisations dépendent de leur personnel rémunéré. C'est pourquoi cette étude évalue comment la COVID-19 a transformé la manière dont les travailleurs des OSBL perçoivent leur travail actuel et futur. On utilise un sondage sur les travailleurs des OSBL ayant un diplôme d'études supérieures pour décrire les changements au travail relatifs à la pandémie et pour explorer l'impact de ces changements sur l'engagement de ces travailleurs à l'égard du secteur. Nos résultats montrent que les travailleurs des OSBL sont nuancés dans la manière dont ils envisagent leur travail et leur engagement envers

le secteur. Nous examinons nos résultats en considérant comment des recherches futures pourraient tenir compte de l'impact des circonstances personnelles et professionnelles des travailleurs sur leur manière de percevoir leur travail dans le secteur.

Keywords / Mots clés : COVID-19, nonprofit finances, nonprofit operations, nonprofit workers / COVID-19, finances des OSBL, opérations des OSBL, travailleurs des OSBL

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic struck the nonprofit sector with a protracted need to manage two dueling priorities, "service and survival" (Moore cited in Kulish, 2020). Evidence is accruing that the pandemic has tested the "resilient sector" (Salamon, 2012) in unprecedented and unsettling ways, but much of what has been documented about COVID-19's effects has focused on the organizational level, with limited attention to the individualized impact on nonprofit workers (for example, see Kuenzi, Stewart, & Walk, 2021a; National Council of Nonprofits, 2021; Word & Gahre, 2020). Since many mission-related activities that nonprofits provide depend on workers (Mesch, 2010; Walk, Schinnenburg, & Handy, 2014), this descriptive study documents the pandemic's professional and personal impact on the sector's workers. Prior research indicates that how nonprofit workers think about their work and commitment to the sector is complex, affected by extenuating circumstances, and may change over time (see Walk, Stewart, & Kuenzi, 2021 for an overview of nonprofit sector commitment research). In light of this complex rationale for sector commitment, we are concerned that COVID-19 may prove to be a "critical incident" (Bright, Pryor, & Harpham, 2005) to how nonprofit workers view their work and commitment to the sector since the "pandemic is a highly disruptive and extraordinary event" (Akkermans, Richardson, & Kraimer, 2020, p. 1).

For this study, we draw upon a sample of graduate alumni with degrees in nonprofit management or philanthropic studies. Students choosing a nonprofit graduate degree are expressing a professional interest to work in the sector. Yet, alumni of these programs made that choice prior to the pandemic, making them an interesting source for understanding how the pandemic affected perspectives of nonprofit workers and careers. To explore their perspectives, we investigate two questions: 1) What are the changes that nonprofit workers have experienced during the pandemic? and 2) What is the impact of those changes on how nonprofit workers think about their work and commitment to the sector? We use a descriptive research approach to answer the first question by unpacking personal and professional changes encountered due to COVID-19. To answer the second research question, we explore the relationship between those changes and nonprofit sector commitment. This article proceeds with a brief overview of the literature that informs the study's approach, a description of the methods, reporting of the findings, and discussion of their implications for what we know about the pandemic's effects on nonprofit workers, as well as suggestions for future research from this study.

BACKGROUND

Nonprofit organizations step in and provide needed services during times of crisis (Simo & Bies, 2007). As COVID-19 spread globally starting in spring 2020, nonprofits assumed a multitude of

response roles, but the pandemic's extended duration and universal reach was unprecedented, prompting stress and uncertainty for nonprofits and their workers. For example, during the 2008 economic crisis, data from the Bureau of Labor statistics show that nonprofit employment increased (DePillis, 2016) while the current pandemic has not only caused nonprofits to make staffing changes but also programmatic and operational changes (such as social distancing, remote work, etc.) that were not required during previous external shocks (Akingbola, 2020; Akingbola, Brunt, Baluch, & Cunningham, 2021). Further, many state and local sectors have documented the pandemic's impact on nonprofit operations and services, and prior commentary has made the link between COVID-19, workforce changes, and the capacity of nonprofits to serve their missions. Yet the studies that investigate the impact of COVID-19 on nonprofit workers have limited their findings to human resource policy changes with scant attention to the perspectives of workers who are the target of these changes (Kuenzi et al., 2021a). An individual's experience and perception of their work environment may impact organizational level outcomes such as absenteeism (de Reuver, Van de Voorde, & Kilroy, 2021) or intentions to stay with the organization (Alfes, Shantz, Truss, & Soane, 2013). Pandemic-related organizational changes are made against the backdrop of prolonged personal turmoil due to the pandemic, and how workers perceive these changes could affect how they think about their careers, their work within their organizations, and more broadly, their commitment to the nonprofit sector. In the following, we draw on prior research to justify this need to inquire directly with nonprofit workers about COVID-19's impact and discuss what others are uncovering about COVID-19's personal and professional impacts that informs the focus of this study.

NONPROFIT WORK: CHOICE AND COMMITMENT

Weisbrod's (1988) theory of managerial sorting instructs that workers choose their sector of employment based on their motivations, preferences, and goals. We know some workers choose nonprofit work based on intrinsic motivations such as a mission-commitment or expression of values (Johnson & Ng, 2016; Tschirhart, Reed, Freeman, & Anker, 2008). Moreover, nonprofit career routes are documented (Stewart & Kuenzi, 2018; Norris-Tirrell, Rinella, & Pham, 2018; Suarez, 2010), and many of these workers start to work in the sector or confirm their career intentions by seeking the specialized training of a nonprofit education graduate degree (Kuenzi, Stewart, & Walk, 2020).

Whereas they are mostly aligned, sector choice and sector commitment are not the same (Kuenzi, Walk, & Stewart, 2021b). Prior research has found low compensation (AbouAssi, McGinnis Johnson, & Holt, 2021; Johnson & Ng, 2016; Walk et al., 2021), limited professional development opportunities (Linscott, 2011), and the financial burden of higher education (Berkshire, 2012; Kuenzi et al., 2021b) disrupt the initial choice to work in the nonprofit sector from being a sustained commitment. Moreover, Kuenzi, Walk, and Stewart (2021b) found that nonprofit sector commitment changes over time, indicating that commitments may change in the face of new circumstances, such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

Organizations are "managing challenging and unprecedented demands" (Worley & Jules, 2020, p. 279) due to COVID-19. For the nonprofit sector, finances and programmatic offerings have been affected by the pandemic, and the ripple effects of these changes extend to the nonprofit workforce. This list of changes is long and includes mandated working from home, altered work schedules,

new role expectations, programmatic changes, furloughs, and even layoffs. Pre-pandemic workforce vulnerabilities in the nonprofit sector, such as underinvestment in leadership development (Landles-Cobb, Kramer, & Milkway, 2015) and inadequate compensation of employees (Kim & Charbonneau, 2020; Ng & McGinnis Johnson, 2019), further complicates how nonprofit workers may perceive changes brought on by the pandemic and think about their future in the sector. Yet, nonprofit workers are essential to a thriving sector, and understanding what engenders, as well as detracts from, their commitment to the sector in the wake of COVID-19 is important to the sector's resiliency.

COVID-19 IMPACT: PROFESSIONAL AND PERSONAL

This workforce generation has not experienced organizational changes to the degree triggered by COVID-19 (Schwarz & Bouckenooghe, 2020), which has resulted in stress for these workers (Kniffin et al., 2021). Essentially, workers need support to navigate these changes. To effectively provide that support, those who fulfill human resource functions as well as those who seek to understand workforce dynamics need to consider the "vantage point of the living, breathing individuals" (Toffler, 1970 as cited in Schwarz & Stensaker, 2020, p. 262) who are experiencing these changes.

Moreover, the precautions related to COVID-19 have drastically altered personal and professional environments, and with shifts to working from home, a worker's organizational and professional identities coincided, if not collided or conflicted, with their personal identity (Ashforth, 2020). Shifts from the workplace to work-from-home may change how people think about their work (Hoff, 2021), and organizational changes may affect how workers identify with their organization or their occupation (Ashforth, 2020; Hennekam, Ladge, & Powell, 2021; Ranganathan, 2021). Work routines that were a settled matter pre-pandemic have since been altered, and how workers relate to their work has drastically been disrupted as work modalities and even the nature of work has changed. The prolonged nature of the pandemic has also potentially impacted workers' ability to sense-make, as fatigue has set in from the constant adaptations and foreboding uncertainty (Stephens et al., 2020). Sense-making refers to "a socially constructed process in which individuals interact with their environment and with others to create meaning and enable action" (Christianson & Barton, 2020, p. 1). Sense-making is about making sense of what is right in front of you in the here and now, but also how people engage with planning about their future. Given how the pandemic has changed these "interactions" of work and personal, we pose that it is not a matter of *if*, but *how* the pandemic is altering the ways in which nonprofit workers reflect on their current and future work in the sector.

Evidence is compiling that the pandemic's impact is disparate among populations (Kniffin et al., 2021; Muzio & Doh, 2021). For example, women have reported experiencing disproportionate parenting-related stress due to disruptions in childcare and school arrangements (Calarco, Anderson, Meanwell, & Knopf, 2020; Munir, 2020; Muzio & Doh, 2021; Viswanath & Mullins, 2020). Women and minorities are also more likely to be frontline workers (Munir, 2020; Muzio & Doh, 2021; Viswanath & Mullins, 2020) and experience more trouble connecting and speaking up in a virtual environment (Milliken et al., 2020). Women accounted for 80 percent of the people who exited the workforce during the pandemic (Ellinggrud & Segel, 2021), with the ratio of women working falling below 57 percent for the first time since 1988 (Gogoi, 2020). Younger generations of the workforce

also have fewer years of accrued experience to draw upon in navigating their pandemic experience (Kniffin et al., 2021). Though this is an exploratory study, these findings from outside the nonprofit sector lead us to expect that the experience of nonprofit workers and their reflections on how COVID-19 impacts how they think about their work and commitment to the nonprofit sector may vary according to their personal and professional profile.

METHOD

This study uses survey data from nonprofit workers to explore two related questions: 1) What are the changes those nonprofit workers have experienced during the pandemic? and 2) What is the impact of those changes on how nonprofit U.S. workers think about their work and commitment to the sector?

The sample was drawn from alumni of nonprofit graduate degree programs (i.e., nonprofit management and philanthropic studies). Through the choice of their graduate degree, these alumni have demonstrated selection into and initial commitment to the nonprofit sector (Kuenzi et al., 2020). Those graduates are not only committed to serving in the sector but, as a result of this training, qualified with the competencies and skills needed for management roles (Mesch, 2010; Tierney, 2006).

The sample was drawn through seven universities offering nonprofit graduate degrees across different locations (Midwest [3], Southwest [2], Northwest [1], Mid-Atlantic [1]) and with different affiliations (NACC [2], NASPAA [1], both [4]). In total, 1,567 alumni were invited to participate via email; 234 of those emails were bounce backs (mostly university-affiliated email addresses that no longer worked) and 420 responses were returned (32% response rate).[1] Two universities provided us with lists of alumni and we fielded the survey to their email addresses directly. Five universities sent out the link to the survey through their internal alumni lists. To further increase the response rate, we provided individuals with a $5 incentive gift card to Starbucks; all invited alumni received two follow-up emails after the initial invitation to participate. Data collection took place during October 2020.

As our research questions pertain to those working in the nonprofit sector, we excluded those respondents who worked in public and for-profit organizations (i.e., all respondents who were not working in the nonprofit sector on March 1, 2020) resulting in a sample of 243 used in this article. We selected March 1, 2020, as the start date of the pandemic providing a good indication for the employment status before pandemic-related changes were implemented. Shortly after this date, states announced stay-at-home-orders (Curley & Federman, 2020).

Sampling from nonprofit education alumni is advantageous for a few reasons: 1) sampling directly through nonprofits would likely yield biased responses (e.g., those organizations with radical changes to their workforce might not share the survey request with employees) and thus unlikely to reach employees beyond the executive listed on the 990 form; 2) this approach reaches individuals who were laid off or are furloughed; 3) creates spread of respondents geographically as well as across a variety of nonprofit mission areas; and 4) since education is held constant and alumni have committed to nonprofit work by their education choice, this inquiry can evaluate if other factors manifest or disrupt professional intentions. We acknowledge that nonprofit graduate alumni are not a representative sample of the nonprofit workforce, but given this generation of nonprofit workers is growing in

size (Mirabella, Hoffman, Teo, & McDonald, 2019) and is appreciated for their professional skills (Mesch, 2010), the sampling approach is appropriate for the research study's intent.

The survey predominantly contained questions targeted to collect information about the workers and their experience during the pandemic. We focused on questions capturing employment information (e.g., employment status), workplace-related changes (furloughs, lay-offs, employer changes, changes in pay/benefits, changes in programming), changes in work responsibilities (impact on work hours, number of tasks, work impact), and the impact of the pandemic on childcare (for those caring for children). We also assessed the change in nonprofit sector commitment using the item "Have the experiences of COVID-19 changed the way you think about work in the nonprofit sector?" with response options ranging from 1 = definitely not to 5 = definitely yes. Demographic information consisted of age (in years), gender (male, female, another gender identity, prefer not to answer), number of children, marital status (single, married/domestic partner, divorced/separated, widowed, other, prefer not to answer), and race/ethnicity (American Indiana/Alaska Native, Asian, Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino, Native Hawaiian/other Pacific Islander, White, other, prefer not to answer).

Data analysis includes univariate and bivariate analyses and a multivariate regression analysis predicting change in nonprofit sector commitment.

RESULTS

Table 1 presents descriptive characteristics. Our sample predominantly consists of white (79%), female (79%), married (65%) nonprofit workers without children (71%). Of those having children (29%), the number of children ranged from 1 to 4. Those numbers compare well with other studies (Faulk, Kim, Derrick-Mills, Boris, Tomasko, Hakizimana, Chen, Kim, & Nath, 2021; Independent Sector, 2022), where findings indicate that women (66–68%) and white individuals (78%) tend to be overrepresented.

Table 1: Descriptive characteristics

Gender	Marital Status
78.75% were female 20% were male 1.25% were other	28.99% were single 64.71% were married 6.30% were other
Age 36 years old on average (23-72)	**Children** 70.66% had no children 13.64% had 1 child 10.33% had 2 children 4.96% had 3 children 0.41% had 4 children
Race/Ethnicity 78.66% were white 7.11% were Black or African American 6.69% were Hispanic or Latino 7.53% were other	

Notes: N = 243. Numbers are rounded to the nearest decimal point resulting in some categories not totaling 100%.

Most of the alumni were employed full-time (86.31%) as of March 1, 2020. Of those employed, 88.64 percent started to work from home more once the pandemic started. Generally, a larger share

of workers had their pay (13.55%) or benefits (13.02%) cut due to COVID-19-related employment changes, but some had been laid off (4.61%) or furloughed (5.14%).

We conducted bivariate analysis exploring the relationship between COVID-19-related employment changes and demographics. No difference was found between COVID-19-related employment changes and marital status, gender, race/ethnicity, and age ($p > .05$), but there were statistically significant differences between those with children and those without on two aspects: 1) benefits were cut for fewer workers with children ($\chi^2 = 3.94$, $p = .047$), and 2) more workers with children were furloughed ($\chi^2 = 5.78$, $p = .016$) as compared to those without children.

We also explored the cumulative impact of those employment-related changes. We find that a majority (69.64%) had experienced one change, followed by 15.62 percent who experienced two changes, 5.8 percent experiencing three changes, and .98 percent experiencing four changes. Eight percent have not experienced any of those changes. No relationship was found between the number of changes and demographic characteristics.

The survey also inquired about other organizational changes due to COVID-19. Most of the organizations changed how volunteers are engaged (81.81%), while a majority left jobs vacancies unfilled (64.77%). Other frequently identified changes were hiring freezes (48.88%), reduced work hours (46.74%), and laying off employees (40.22%). Please note, the overall sample size for this question is smaller as this was an additional, optional question ($N = 187$).

The survey also inquired about changes in work responsibility due to the pandemic (see Figure 1). Generally, workers note that their flexibility in work scheduling (69.42%), the number of tasks in their jobs (63.22%), and the impact of work on others (50.83%) has decreased. For most their weekly work hours (54.17%) and the quality of information about their job has stayed the same (60.33%).

Figure 1: Change in work responsibilities
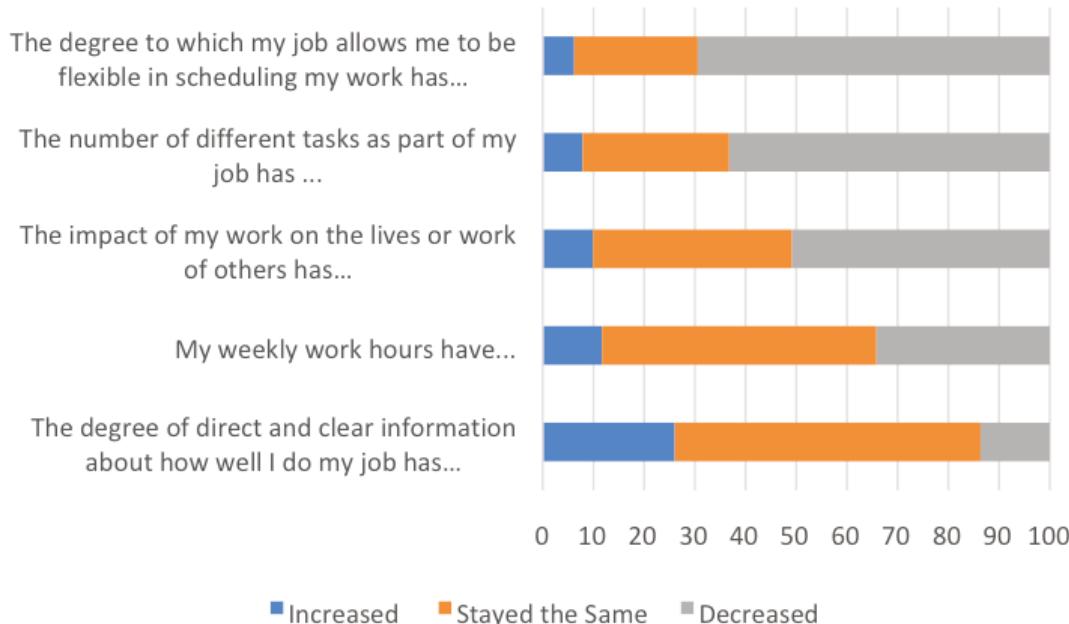
Bivariate analysis of the individual work responsibility changes and demographic characteristics indicates no differences with regards to children, gender, and race/ethnicity. Some differences with regards to age and marital status emerged. Older workers reported an increase in weekly work hours ($M = 40.25$), number of different tasks ($M = 44.95$), and the impact of the work on others ($M = 41.91$, see Table 2). Married workers reported a larger share (74.51%) of decreased flexibility in scheduling as compared to single alumni (65.22%, $\chi^2 = 15.19$, p = .004).

Table 2: Differences between work-related responsibilities and age

Variable	Increased	Stayed same	Decreased	Test statistic
	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	
Impact of work on others	41.91 (15.52)	35.48 (9.52)	35.63 (8.44)	F(236) = 4.27, p = .015
Number of tasks	44.95 (15.65)	34.76 (8.75)	35.67 (8.86)	F(236) = 9.02, p = .0002
Weekly hours	40.25 (14.91)	35.14 (9.02)	36.37 (8.70)	F(234) = 3.14, p = .045

Changes to work can be disruptive; we therefore explored the cumulative changes (both increases and decreases in work responsibilities) and compared them to those who reported no changes. Findings show that only 12 percent reported no changes to their work responsibilities, indicating that 88 percent of nonprofit workers experienced changes to their work (see Figure 2). Whereas only 4 percent experienced changes in all five areas, 10 percent experienced changes in four, 20 percent changes in three, and 30 percent changes in two areas.

Figure 2: Number of changes in work responsibilities (both decreases and increases, in percent)
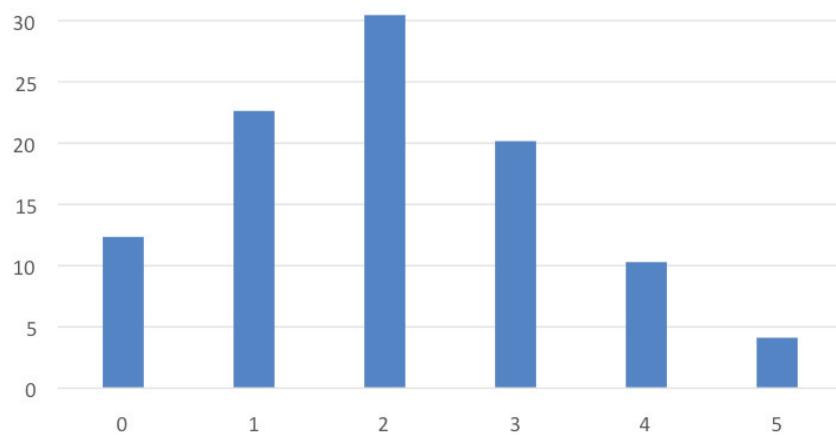
Respondents were asked if the experiences of COVID-19 changed the way they think about work in the nonprofit sector. A large share indicated this was definitely not (33.5%) and probably not (31%) the case, 19.8 percent were neutral, 13.6 percent answered probably yes, and 2.1 percent definitely yes. Although self-reported, a combined 15 percent of our sample reported an impact of the pandemic on their sector commitment. This number is notable considering research indicating that lack of sector commitment is related to leaving the sector (Walk et al., 2021).

We therefore conducted an ordinary least square regression analysis exploring the relationship between demographic characteristics, COVID-19-related employment changes, and changes in work-related responsibilities on the impact of the pandemic on alumni nonprofit sector commitment (see Table 3). Model 1 contains demographic characteristic, Model 2 adds COVID-19-related employment changes, and Model 3 adds changes in work-related responsibilities.

Table 3: Impact of pandemic on nonprofit sector commitment

VARIABLES	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Demographic characteristics			
Age	0.016*	0.020*	0.017*
	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.008)
Children (1=yes)	0.211	0.140	0.233
	(0.175)	(0.186)	(0.188)
Marital status (single is reference category)			
Married	-0.673****	-0.571**	-0.559**
	(0.185)	(0.193)	(0.193)
Other	-0.503	-0.486	-0.403
	(0.342)	(0.381)	(0.383)
Gender (male is reference category)			
Female	-0.108	-0.278	-0.328*
	(0.177)	(0.183)	(0.184)
Other	0.892	0.850	0.863
	(0.649)	(0.630)	(0.640)
Race/Ethnicity (white is reference category)			
Black/African American	-0.229	-0.354	-0.377
	(0.282)	(0.282)	(0.281)
Hispanic/Latino	-0.310	-0.372	-0.369
	(0.298)	(0.323)	(0.329)
Other	-0.144	-0.363	-0.290
	(0.278)	(0.290)	(0.294)
COVID-19-related employment changes			
Laid off		0.247	-0.004
		(0.466)	(0.478)
Furloughed		0.063	0.016
		(0.376)	(0.375)
Pay cut		-0.541*	-0.658**
		(0.247)	(0.253)
Benefit cut		-0.171	-0.162
		(0.243)	(0.242)
Work from home more		-0.053	-0.027
		(0.245)	(0.260)

Table 3 (continued)

VARIABLES	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Changes in work responsibilities			
Weekly work hours			0.054
			(0.142)
Number of tasks			0.094
			(0.133)
Impact of work on others			0.276*
			(0.125)
Flexible scheduling			0.138
			(0.143)
Clear information			-0.021
			(0.121)
Constant	2.126****	2.166****	1.488*
	(0.313)	(0.395)	(0.584)
Observations	236	206	205
R^2	0.071	0.123	0.160

*Notes:* Standard errors in parentheses. **** $p < 0.001$, ***$p < .001$, **$p < .01$, * $p < 0.05$

A one-year increase in age is related to a .016 ($p=.037$; Model 2: .02, $p=.015$ and Model 3: .017. $p=.044$) increased likelihood of stating the pandemic impacted nonprofit sector commitment. This coefficient is consistently statistically significant across models. Those married have a decreased likelihood of reporting their sector commitment has changed when compared to single workers across models (Model 1: -.67, $p<.0001$; Model 2: -.57, $p=.003$; Model 3: .56, $p=.004$). When adding the COVID-19-related employment changes, findings indicate that workers who reported their pay being cut during the pandemic had a reduced likelihood to report that their sector commitment has changed (Model 2: -.54, $p=.03$, Model 3: -.66, $p=.01$). Put differently, and a notable finding, employees who saw their pay cut are less likely than those whose pay stayed the same to report a change in sector commitment. We discuss this finding below. In Model 3, we added the changes in work responsibilities (see Figure 1). One of the five variables was significant. Workers who felt their work had a decreased impact on others were more likely to report changes in sector commitment (.28, $p=.028$).

Of the respondents who had children ($N=71$, 29.34%), 82.86 percent reported disruptions in childcare between March 2020 and October 2020. Parents of older children (high-school and beyond) were less likely to report disruptions to childcare than parents of younger children ($\chi^2=8.75$, $p=.003$). Figure 3 provides more nuanced information about the kinds of disruptions parents experienced. Most of the children were home from school (96.49%), workers juggled childcare with a partner (82.46%), and many workers asked their employers for flexibility in work scheduling (61.11%) because of disruptions. A smaller number homeschooled their children (25.49%) or asked their employer to reduce work hours (10.91%). The smaller share of employees who asked their employer to reduce work hours can be further contextualized by a question about the impact of

childcare disruptions on work hours (e.g., "Since the start of the pandemic [mid-March], how have any changes to your childcare arrangement impacted your working hours?"), with 49.12 percent indicating working similar hours with myself or household member providing in-home childcare, 17.54 percent indicated working similar hours with a different day care provider, 12.28 percent worked reduced hours, and 1.75 percent no longer worked due to disruptions in childcare. About a fifth (19.3%) indicated they were impacted in other ways with an open response option, which suggested participants experienced different impacts on childcare earlier in the pandemic vs. later (e.g., childcare facilities/schools closed initially, virtual attendance, transition back to in-person later, reduced work hours initially, transitioned back to full-time later).

Figure 3: Disruptions to childcare
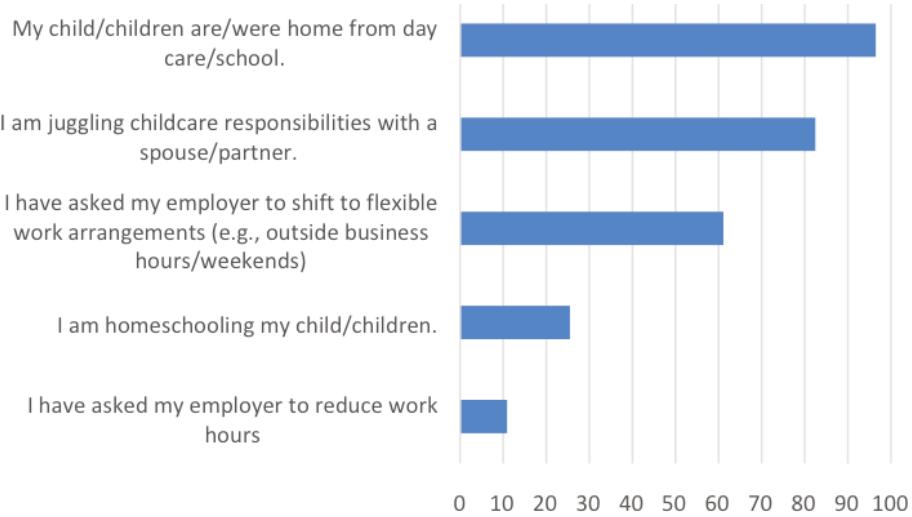
DISCUSSION

This article documents worker perspectives on changes to nonprofit work due to COVID-19. Survey responses provide insights about how COVID-19 has altered nonprofit work, revealing differences according to the worker's personal and professional profiles. Responses provide insights about the enduring nature of nonprofit sector commitment, but the burden of the pandemic has not been felt evenly across all workers. In the following, we discuss our findings and draw upon them to propose suggestions for future research.

First, many workers report tangible changes in how and when they do their jobs due to the pandemic, but nearly two-thirds reported no changes in their commitment to the nonprofit sector. Although prior research has documented that nonprofit sector commitment can change due to extenuating factors and in light of expectations that COVID-19 would shift commitment, we question if factors of nonprofit work revealed by the pandemic such as community needs and general inequalities helped sustain rather than disrupt sector commitment. Yet 15 percent of the respondents say their commitment to the nonprofit sector has changed—that is one in seven respondents—and we know that the pandemic did prompt commitment disruptions for some.[2] Given blurring sector boundaries and the protracted impact of the pandemic, we suggest future research revisit the pandemic's effect on commitment to understand what predicts changes in sector commitment for some workers, but not others.

Next, responses reveal unexpected relationships with the worker's personal and professional profile. Contrary to other findings and commentary about COVID-19's impact, we found no relationship according to gender and race/ethnicity demographics and sector commitment. Our findings offer cautious hope that the inequalities found elsewhere might not be perpetuated in the nonprofit work-place. Perhaps the sector's values create a vigilance or motivations might play a safeguard that buffer worker experiences in facing changes. We caution though that this finding perhaps reflects our study's limitations and sample, which we discuss below. Regardless, we suggest future research stay alert for the possible relationship of disparities that are perpetuated in nonprofit workplaces and among nonprofit workers due to pandemic-related organizational changes.

We did find though that age, marital status as well as contextual factors related to the pandemic impacted alumni sector commitment. Contrary to what we expected about accrued experience giv-ing more reference for sensemaking, this finding gives consideration that workers with more career experience may have been more rooted in a pre-pandemic "normal" and disruptions to that normal put them more ill-at-ease than workers with fewer years in terms of age and work experience. Age might also be correlated with level of work experience so these older workers might also have been behind the scenes, contributing to or responsible for change decisions. Thus, their different vantage points might make them more vulnerable to shifting thinking about their career in the nonprofit sec-tor. With millennials constituting most of the workforce (Fry, 2018), future research should stay at-tentive to generational differences among nonprofit workers, particularly to disentangle COVID-19's impact on career plans and transition intentions. The finding that married workers report a lower likelihood of the pandemic impacting how they view nonprofit work compared to single workers is interesting. The mechanism here, however, remains unclear. One potential explanation that future research should further investigate is that married individuals may have an additional safety net, be it through additional income or health care benefits, which would indicate that employment-re-lated changes can be buffered more easily. Our findings on pay and commitment align with earlier work indicating that the relationship between pay and commitment is complex and not clear cut (Kuenzi et al., 2021b). Nonprofit workers have long been found to be motivated by doing good and having an impact (Tschirhart et al., 2008). Our findings indicate that once this aspect of their work is altered, there may be consequences for how they see their work in the sector.

Our findings report on a nonprofit sector operating with a changed work environment and worker experience due to the pandemic. Nearly 70 percent of workers experienced at least one COVID-19-related employment change, and 53.5 percent reported three or more changes, while 88 percent of workers reported at least one change in work responsibilities. Even if workers were not experi-encing much of a personal impact due to COVID-19, witnessing, even being impacted by such pro-fessional changes likely contributed to personal anxiety and uncertainty, especially given the shifts to work from home. Moreover, these changes in work responsibilities indicate that the nature of work has changed and with so many in the sector seeing their work as a calling (Walk et al., 2020), how they continue to assess and reflect on their work might impact their commitment to the sector. The quantitative nature of our data prevents us from fully understanding the underlying mechanism and individual sensemaking of nonprofit workers impacted by changes in their work. Future qual-itative research could help explicate how nonprofit workers experience and make sense of multiple changes to their work.

Our findings also emphasize the burden nonprofit workers were juggling with child and work responsibilities. The findings describe that for many their nonprofit workplace was a steady anchor with limited changes to benefits, which might engender loyalty to workplaces in the long-run. We also wonder if for those with children in their care who were furloughed, these dual disruptions could be particularly unsettling. Again, we see an opportunity to engage these workers to understand how the professional and personal tolls of COVID-19 intersect, understanding how these role transitions and even conflicts contribute to their career outlook, particularly as this tension become a memory rather than a day-in-day-out struggle.

With so many nonprofits aspiring to be professionalized but without inhouse human resource management functions (Guo, Brown, Ashcraft, Yoshioka, & Dong, 2011), we question where these nonprofit workplaces and workers go from here as the pandemic's impact wanes and organizations consider how to shift to post-pandemic operations. The sector has been critiqued for "indiscriminately adopting" (Rojas, 2000, p. 101) practices from the for-profit sector implying that nonprofit organizational practices and change may be undertaken in a careless manner. We pose the need to continue to monitor these COVID-19-related changes, questioning whether it is not so much these changes that disrupt commitment to particular organizations and the broader sector, but rather that their undoing will challenge worker commitment. We also know prior literature has considered organizational resilience following natural disasters in terms of organizational performance and finances (for an example, see Lin & Wang, 2016), and we see this as opportunity to also understand nonprofit resilience from a human resource perspective.

LIMITATION AND CONCLUSIONS

As descriptive research, the findings reported herein are valuable for the directions of future research they point us to investigate, rather than for their conclusive merit. With the fluid and constant changing nature of the pandemic, the questions posed in this research are worth asking of both a broader sample and at a later point in time as workers and organizations experience new means of navigating and coping with the effects of COVID-19. We also acknowledge that our sample of nonprofit graduate alumni presents some limitations, but for the aforementioned reasons, we see them as an appropriate group for first insights into worker experiences and COVID-19 impacts given their expressed commitment to the sector by choice of their degree. We encourage research that follows to sample workers using other criteria. With the data sourced from one point in time, future research should endeavor to triangulate information to overcome common source bias. As exploratory research, findings yielded unexpected relationships between work responsibilities and sector commitment changes, and we encourage future research to probe if sector commitment is more stable than expected or changes in commitment are not easy to capture when personal and professional circumstances are intersected as is the case with COVID-19. For example, interviews with nonprofit workers might be insightful about the nature of the changes brought on by the pandemic, and how workers reflect on their current and future work in the sector.

Our research adds a worker's perspective to the evidence already compiled that nonprofits were heavily burdened by the pandemic, and the findings describe workers as professionally and personally burdened. This research demonstrates the merit and necessity in inquiring directly to nonprofit workers to understand more fully how COVID-19 has impacted nonprofit work, workplaces, and

workers. Future research must be sensitive to this impact and its implications for the nonprofit work-force. We see an urgent need to add to what we know about nonprofit work and sector commitment considering COVID-19 and offer suggestions for future research so that our understanding of nonprofit workforce dynamics and worker commitment can be updated to account for the pandemic.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

NOTES

- Response rates across schools (excluding bounce backs) varied from 24–59 percent.
- A comparison of sector commitment from respondents in the public and for-profit was conducted post-hoc with no significant differences found.

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On the Front Lines: Nonprofits in the Homeless-Serving Sector During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the experiences of the nonprofit, homeless-serving sector during the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. Qualitative interviews were conducted with staff and volunteers from frontline organizations in the two largest communities in Nova Scotia, Canada. Participants reported much strain on their organizations' human resources, but also the ability to adjust service delivery mechanisms quickly in order to continue offering supports. Most reported greater in-kind contributions from businesses and community members as well as more funding from the federal government in particular, albeit with administrative burdens and defined timelines. Nonprofits played a leadership role in developing responses to serve the needs of those experiencing homelessness, including developing comfort centres, installing portable toilets in downtown locations, and moving those without housing into hotels. They also advocated to government for state-level responses to those without housing, including calls to invest in new units and enhance funding for frontline service providers. At the same time, nonprofits reported working across sectors, noting better communication and relationships with state actors as well as other nonprofit organizations as a result of their COVID-19 response.

RÉSUMÉ

Dans cet article, nous examinons les expériences d'organismes sans but lucratif (OSBL) qui ont offert des services aux sans-abris durant la première vague de la COVID-19. Pour ce faire, nous avons mené des entrevues qualitatives auprès des employés et des bénévoles des services de première ligne dans les deux plus grandes collectivités de la Nouvelle-Écosse au Canada. Les personnes rencontrées ont souligné la pression considérable exercée sur les ressources humaines, mais aussi leur capacité d'ajuster rapidement leurs prestations de services pour continuer de fournir

leur appui. La plupart d'entre elles ont indiqué avoir reçu davantage de soutien en nature de la part du secteur privé et de la communauté ainsi que plus de financement du gouvernement fédéral, accompagné cependant de fardeaux administratifs et d'échéances serrées. D'autre part, les OSBL du secteur ont fait figure de chefs de file dans l'élaboration de mesures pour répondre aux besoins des sans-abris, y compris l'aménagement d'aires de confort, l'installation de toilettes portatives au centre-ville, et l'aménagement de personnes sans logement dans des hôtels. En outre, les OSBL ont demandé que le gouvernement intervienne pour loger les sans-abris en investissant dans de nouveaux logements et en augmentant les salaires des fournisseurs de services de première ligne. En même temps, les OSBL du secteur ont indiqué que, à la suite de leur réponse à la COVID-19, ils ont pu mener des actions intersectorielles avec les acteurs gouvernementaux et d'autres OSBL et améliorer leurs communications et leurs relations avec ceux-ci.

Keywords / Mots clés : homeless-serving organizations, COVID-19 pandemic, Nova Scotia, disasters / organismes d'aide aux sans-abris, pandémie de la COVID-19, Nouvelle-Écosse, désastres

INTRODUCTION

Around the world, the tremendous social and economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have brought the vital work of human service nonprofits to the fore (Dayson, Baker, Rees, Bennett, Patmore, Turner, et al., 2021; Deitrick, Tinkler, Young, Meschen, Strawser, Funderburk, et al., 2020). Front-line service organizations have provided emergency food, crisis housing, health and well-being supports, and financial and employment assistance to low-income households, among other vital services (Deitrick et al., 2020). Not surprisingly, however, the pandemic has also placed new constraints and challenges on a sector already overburdened with a chronic lack of funding and high demand for services given the continued roll-back of the welfare state (Finchum-Mason, Husted, Gugerty, & Barnhart, 2020; Turpin, Shier, & Handy, 2021).

The purpose of this article is to examine the pandemic experiences and responses of nonprofit organizations with a particular focus on the homeless-serving sector. This research uses interview data gathered from nonprofit stakeholders in the two largest municipalities in Nova Scotia, Canada, during the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. This article examines internal impacts of the pandemic on these organizations (as they pertain to human and financial resources as well as service provision), and the actions, leadership, and collaboration of these voluntary-sector organizations in responding, including *vis-à-vis* government, to the needs of those who are among the most vulnerable in these two Atlantic Canadian communities, namely Halifax Regional Municipality and Cape Breton Regional Municipality. Contributions to the literature include an emphasis on the homeless sector rather than focusing on nonprofit organizations more broadly, which is important given the extreme marginalization of those without housing and the critical role of agencies that respond to them, and an emphasis on a region of the country underrepresented in social economy studies. Additionally, this article offers qualitative findings, complementing much pandemic-related research on the sector that is either conceptual (such as Akingbola, 2020; McMullin & Raggo, 2020) or survey-based (for example, Lasby, 2020).

BACKGROUND

This literature review is divided into two sections. The first section focuses on the general problems and opportunities experienced by the nonprofit sector during the pandemic, emphasizing those organizations offering human-centered services to low-income households in this synthesis. The second section reviews research specifically on nonprofits serving individuals experiencing homelessness, during the COVID-19 pandemic and other disasters, such as wildfires or floods. This article focuses on empirical studies rather than conceptual and reflection papers (such as Akingbola, 2020; McMullin & Raggo, 2020) to present this work in applied research. Technical reports are also included, given the current and emergent nature of the pandemic at the time of writing.

Research conducted to date on the challenges faced by human service nonprofits shows remarkably consistent findings. Many of these organizations faced increased demands on their services for reasons, including major job loss among local residents and social isolation of marginalized individuals in their catchment areas (Lasby, 2020; Ontario Nonprofit Network & l'Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario, 2021; Deitrick et al., 2020). Beyond expanding caseloads and the greater complexity of client needs, new pressures and expectations from government were also placed on the sector in order to help prevent the spread of COVID-19, such as providing services related to testing (Finchum-Mason et al., 2020). At the same time, staff were required to adjust service delivery mechanisms; examples from the literature include transitioning to contactless supports, such as checking in with vulnerable clients over the phone, and shifting to online programming, such as in the delivery of self-employment training and health services (Deitrick et al., 2020; Finchum-Mason et al., 2020; Loomis, 2020).

Human resources were also severely affected within these organizations, and for many reasons. The literature documents heightened workplace anxiety and stress brought about by factors including needing to work longer hours, for those organizations facing expanding demands, as well as shifts to working at home (Dayson et al., 2021). New financial strains were also placed on nonprofits, creating job instability for staff, including a reduction in employment hours and lay-offs (Deitrick et al., 2020). For example, a Canadian survey found that 37 percent of social service agencies laid off staff in the early weeks of the pandemic despite increased need for services, while 28 percent reported reductions in work hours of staff, with more anticipated (Lasby, 2021). Personnel in these organizations also experienced unclear and rapidly changing information on pandemic management and COVID-19 impacts on personal health. In addition, the pandemic resulted in a decline in volunteers, which also burdened paid staff (Finchum-Mason et al., 2020).

Another consistent and important finding is that the financial health of these organizations was also impacted, with many reporting that revenues declined due to the cancellation of fundraising events and fee-for-service activities (Mumford & Greene, 2020). Indeed, Canadian survey data show that 63 percent of human service organizations reported a decline in revenue since the onset of the pandemic (Lasby, 2020), with similar findings reported in more localized studies: health and human service organizations in Washington state reported their service-based revenues declined by 58 percent (Finchum-Mason et al., 2020) and 63 percent of San Diego nonprofits reported declining donations (Deitrick et al., 2020). The literature on challenges and opportunities also identified urgent needs of these organizations, particularly those operating in the United States, including an ongoing need for personal protective equipment (PPE), mental health supports for workers, financial

resources to pay for staff, assistance to adopt and use new technologies to facilitate new modes of service delivery to clients, and greater flexibility on the part of funding agencies regarding reporting and how funds may be spent on both operational and programmatic items (Deitrick et al., 2020; Finchum-Mason et al., 2020).

Interestingly, while the literature reports much overall strain, findings reveal opportunities that emerged for these organizations during the pandemic as well, such as unplanned time that became available to learn about and adopt online delivery of employment and budgeting courses to low-income households (Loomis, 2020), and the development of novel fundraising practices and new relationships with foundations (Mumford & Greene, 2020). Emerging collaborations with different stakeholders, including among nonprofits and with government (Deitrick et al., 2020; Finchum-Mason et al., 2020), were also reported.

Some literature looks at nonprofit experiences and responses specifically as they work with individuals experiencing homelessness during disasters. This literature finds that those assisted by these organizations have tremendous needs that staff work to meet when disaster strikes (Pixley, Henry, DeYoung, & Settembrino, 2021). Moreover, demand for support increases in the face of pandemics and other crises (Osborn, Every, & Richardson, 2019; Shi, Jang, Keyes, & Dicke, 2020). Disasters impose not just greater but new demands on these organizations and introduce new staffing and financial challenges as well (Osborn et al., 2019), while specialized supplies are needed to effectively respond to emergencies. These include emergency packs and PPE, and alternative alert systems to reach clients (such as sirens) (Osborn et al., 2019).

Organizations that work with those experiencing homelessness also adapt quickly to new contexts and constraints. Examples include, in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, expanding hours of service to reduce the number of clients waiting for assistance at one time, expanding individual spaces in shelters to adhere to social distancing guidelines, and moving those experiencing homelessness to hotels (Dayson et al., 2021; Pixley et al., 2021; Shi et al., 2020). Those working to re-house homeless veterans were found to not only be adaptable but heroic in the context of 2017–2018 California wildfires, conducting daily checks on clients in their transitional housing and insisting they evacuate (Gin, Balut, Der-Martirosian, & Dobalian, 2021).

Despite the general understanding that nonprofit organizations play a vital role in filling gaps in the social safety net, possess flexibility and adaptability in response to changing circumstances, and have staff who are intimately aware of the lived experiences of those living in poverty (and thus are knowledgeable about appropriate types of disaster responses, such as appropriate channels of communication) (Sundareswaran, Ghazzawi, & O'Sullivan, 2015; Vickery, 2017), findings typically report problems with respect to how these nonprofits work with government in disaster planning and response. In a study of 10 homelessness organizations from across the United States, participants expressed frustration in dealing with government-based emergency management staff, reporting a lack of coordination and integration with homeless-serving organizations (Pixley et al., 2021). This lack of involvement in planning was also reported in case study research in Colorado (Vickery, 2017), as well as in a mixed-methods study conducted across Australia (Osborn et al., 2019). In addition, nonprofit stakeholders have been required to resort to advocacy to spur government action and to ensure that the needs of homeless communities are not forgotten (Pixley et al.,

2021; see also Vickery, 2017). In a related vein, interviews with representatives from nine organizations in England and Wales reveal that service providers were more responsive than government to the pandemic needs of low-income, marginalized individuals and families (some of whom were housed and some who were not) (Dayson et al., 2021).

RESEARCH SITE

This research took place in the two largest communities in the province of Nova Scotia, located in Eastern Canada: Cape Breton Regional Municipality (CBRM, population of 96,000) and Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM, population of 460,274). These communities are within the ancestral and unceded lands of the Mi'kmaq Peoples. The CBRM is a de-industrial and aging community, which, until recently, has experienced significant population and economic decline (Murray & Campbell, 2022), while HRM, the provincial capital, is the province's centre of wealth, growth, and decision-making. Both communities have significant problems with homelessness: in the CBRM, a period-prevalence count, conducted due to concerns that much homelessness is hidden in the region, enumerated 325 individuals (Roy, Leviten-Reid, Digou, Gyorfi, MacQueen, & Gotell, 2022). In HRM, a one-day count identified 586 individuals (Jonsson, Gagnon, Lecker, & Oliver, 2022), with encampment evictions in the city garnering recent national attention (McMillan, 2021; Woodford, 2021). In both communities, those without housing are disproportionately Indigenous. In CBRM, about half of those counted are male and half are female, while in HRM, 65 percent are male, 33 percent are female, and 2 percent are gender non-conforming. In the CBRM, the largest age group of those without housing consists of individuals between the ages of 16 and 29, while in HRM, the average age of those counted is 42. In both communities, many of those without housing are experiencing addiction and mental illness. The need for affordable housing is so dire across the province that a recent report calls for over 33,000 affordable public or nonprofit/co-operative housing units to be created over the next decade (Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives—Nova Scotia, 2021).

METHODS

Data were collected between February and April 2021 via in-depth, semi-structured interviews, and once approval to proceed was obtained from the Research Ethics Boards at the authors' institutions. A purposive sampling strategy was used, deliberately seeking interviews with stakeholders involved in the homeless-serving sector. One member of the research team interviewed stakeholders belonging to two groups that convened in each municipality in response to the needs of those experiencing homelessness during the pandemic, most of whom were working in the nonprofit sector directly as service providers, with an additional participant working as a community developer. Participants (*n* = 16) included staff and directors from emergency shelters, organizations providing affordable housing and housing supports, harm-reduction organizations, and other front-line agencies supporting low-income individuals such as emergency food providers. One-on-one interviews were conducted by phone or through video conferencing. They typically lasted between 45 and 60 minutes and were transcribed verbatim. No incentives were offered. The consent form was emailed to participants, and then reviewed as a first step before interview questions were asked.

Participants were asked about their experiences and work from the beginning of the pandemic in March 2020 to the time they were interviewed in the winter or early spring of 2021. Topics included

questions about the role played by the organization during the pandemic, impacts and adjustments to services and to the organization at large, impacts on those experiencing homelessness, and collaborations with partners. These interviews were part of a larger study on disaster preparedness and homelessness in these two Nova Scotian communities. Interviews conducted with those experiencing homelessness, government staff, and elected officials were excluded from the analysis given that the focus of this study was on the experiences and responses of the nonprofit sector specifically.

Data were analyzed in Word using thematic analysis (Robson & McCartan, 2016). The first author coded the transcripts and then grouped these codes into categories and then larger themes. Data analysis was an iterative process, meaning that transcripts were re-read and codes, categories, and themes were revised based on discussions with all other authors and team members' potentially different interpretations of the data. For example, sample codes under the sub-theme of service adjustments included "started phone outreach," "closed drop-in and provided services at the door," and "went virtual." Sample codes under the sub-theme of human resources included "lost staff," "worked 24/7," "uncertainty," and "stressful period."

FINDINGS
Three themes emerged in the data analysis: 1) organizational impacts and responses, 2) leadership, advocacy, and collaboration, and 3) the role of these organizations in responding to community needs.

Organizational impacts and responses
Human resources
Research participants spoke at length about the impact of the pandemic on the human resources they had available to do their work. Notably, organizations relying on volunteers indicated that they lost many of these unpaid workers who were concerned with the unknown health implications of the virus during the early days of the pandemic. As one individual stated:

> What really hurt us were the older volunteers that we had left. They didn't want to come back because they were in lockdown. We kind of got hurt on that end too, so we started out with two to three people here, that's it. And we are used to having ten to eleven here … The volunteer base is way down.

Nonprofits also lost paid staff who were concerned about the impact of the pandemic on themselves or family members, which placed a tremendous burden on those who remained on the job:

> I'll say that in my career it was the hardest time. We lost, we had over 100 employees and we lost 34 staff in four days. And that was because some people had compromised health, some people lived with people with compromised health and some people said, "I'm not doing this." And that left those of us left behind to carry a horrible load.

Participants in this study reported working double shifts, and/or long stretches without days off.

Beyond reduced paid and unpaid staff, and also with respect to human resources, participants widely noted that the pandemic placed significant stressors on their workers. In part, this was related to the uncertainty of the pandemic, and not understanding its consequences or the protective steps and equipment necessary to keep them safe; words such as "stress" and "anxiety" were com-

monly used by research participants. As one person noted:

> There was a lot of upheaval, a lot of stress for staff and clients and a lot of uncertainty, a lot of difficulty in obtaining PPE supplies, and just understanding the rules, which seemed to be changing daily at that time around what precautions we should be taking and how to deal with testing and cases. So, it was the first six weeks of the pandemic where we were in full 24/7 mode, working from home for a lot of it, and it was a stressful period for sure.

Beyond the impact of uncertainty, the pandemic also placed heavy social, emotional, and psychological burdens on staff because they described feeling, especially at the outset of the health disaster, that they were unable to serve and respond to clients as they would have liked. For example, one participant stated the following: "[it] makes you feel like you're missing something, it makes you feel like you're able to give about 80% for some folks when you used to be able to give a good 97.5%." Another participant expressed the following: "So for the [staff], the first month was just overwhelming guilt because we just abandoned a bunch of people basically." Many participants also explained these feelings in the context of the extreme and dire circumstances of those without housing in these two communities (such as high poverty and a dearth of affordable rental housing) and the reality that the world, including public spaces such as libraries and coffee shops where people could use the washroom and escape the elements for short periods of time, was shut down.

Several participants reported that their organizations struggled to get necessary supports in place in order to aid their staff's work. Those identified were physical, namely PPE, but also included financial compensation (such as bonus pay) and public recognition for their front-line efforts. For example, one participant noted that:

> And we weren't kind of getting the same, you know, some of the same benefits the formal health workers were getting … at least some of them were getting increases in their wages, and they were getting all that kind of public praise, and these guys are all kind of slogging away, really, without any of that kind of public acknowledgement of this work.

Another participant indicated the following:

> One struggle we had is making sure that shelter workers had proper personal protective equipment and that kind of thing. That was something that was left out of the plans especially at the beginning when there were mask shortages … our shelter providers are very, very vulnerable because they're not considered health workers, when in reality, they are.

Service adjustments
Despite staffing shortages, almost all of the nonprofit organizations interviewed reported being able to make fairly quick adjustments to at least some of their day-to-day offerings, allowing them to make available at least partial services to their clients. This included transforming an in-person meal program to take out, offering supports to tenants and to those requiring health services by telephone (or video) instead of through in-person visits, and offering needle exchange services at the door of an agency, rather than by having clients drop in. It also included making changes to shelter spaces following public health guidelines; for example, in one case beds were spaced as

well as modified into "snugs" which provided partial walls to distance clients, while in another, a former shelter space was re-opened so that some clients staying in the newer shelter could move to this older facility and stay in their own rooms.

Participants indicated, however, that these adaptations were only partial solutions to their service delivery, and relatedly, that they worked for some but not all clients; for example, in one community in which data were collected, it was noted that changes in shelters meant they were required to reduce the number of beds offered to those experiencing homelessness by several dozen, while another noted that not allowing clients inside their centre meant that they were not able to access the informal peer support they were used to obtaining when they dropped in. Those offering health-care services noted that clients without access to telecommunications were unable to make appointments at all. Still another participant reported the following when they had to switch from congregate eating to take out meals: "We never closed, and we are still open seven days a week, 365 days a year. That is something we never stopped. We found a way to feed people, but it is unorthodox the way we were doing it, but I am hoping someday that it is going to come back."

Revenue and fundraising
Overall, research participants reported that they received significant community and business contributions during the pandemic period covered during interviews. While one participant noted that in-kind contributions of goods such as phones and clothing declined, and another reported that planned, face-to-face fundraising events had to be canceled, participants typically reported that they received much cash and in-kind support during the pandemic, and often indicated they received more than during non-pandemic times. One nonprofit reported taking on the role of broker during the first few months of the state of emergency, since they fielded numerous requests to assist organizations in this sector:

> A lot of organizations came to us and said, you know, 'We've got a workforce or resources sitting idle at this point. Is there a way we can put them to work for the issues that you deal with?' We've had a company ... they've got trucks that were sitting idle. And they've done deliveries for us, moved some apartments.

Hotel owners also reached out to nonprofits to explore the idea of providing temporary housing to clients. Beyond support from businesses, participants also reported that community members made significant contributions as well: "Cape Bretoners really stepped up ... it has been up this year in fundraising." Related to new resources, those interviewed also spoke about more people becoming aware of homelessness and poverty: "COVID has really opened up the floodgates in terms of public receptivity to some of these issues. It's opened up a lot of funding opportunities for issues."

Obtaining funds from government was described with less consistency and success by research participants. On the one hand, they often noted that greater financial resources were available federally to support their work. On the other, participants reported, in one of the two communities in particular (but not exclusively), that contributions from lower levels of government were slow to arrive or were not obtained. As one participant stated "I would say that the speed at which government moves is not aligned with the emergencies that the homeless population usually face. So, if something like a pandemic when everything shut down in a day, it just takes too long to get ap-

provals for money to be spent." Another explained that work required to make their space safe (and so keep their doors open) was not funded by a lower level of government, despite their request for financial assistance, and so they used funds raised through the private sector instead.

When resources did become available, regardless of level of government, participants also commonly spoke about the bureaucratic processes in place, such as heavy administrative burdens, requirements to wait for a particular start date to spend funds, and obligations to spend all monies within a given period, regardless of the uncertain nature of the pandemic and the critical needs of individuals experiencing homelessness.

The need to apply for different sources of funding to be adequately resourced was also mentioned. One participant stated the following:

> I think a big thing is that [name of community organization] figures out funding through all kinds of places and we are constantly still often needing to ask for funding for different things and figure out where we get this and that from. That is always a challenge … I guess that is a lesson, that it is hard to get all these extra things that you might need during a pandemic and need to figure out how to do that more smoothly.

Leadership, advocacy and collaboration
Leadership
In addition to remaining focused on but adjusting services they had already been providing, data show that nonprofit organizations were involved in developing new responses and services based on the needs of those experiencing homelessness during the pandemic. This included making PPE available to clients who were without on a drop-in basis, placing portable toilets outside of downtown locations in one of the municipalities studied (in the context of lack of access to washrooms during the immediate lockdown period), developing "comfort sites," which offered those on the margins places to do laundry, take a shower, get something to drink, and escape the elements temporarily during the day, and making cigarettes available to clients to mitigate the negative health consequences of using discarded ones. An additional major, but short-lived, initiative in one municipality involved moving those experiencing homelessness into hotel rooms, while a managed alcohol initiative was also implemented in this same community.

Participants offered descriptive details of these new initiatives during interviews, but additionally, transcripts reveal their leadership role in the development of these in relation to government actors. For example, one participant noted the following: "As far as any kind of really strong emergency response from the province, I didn't feel very confident. If it wasn't for the groups like ours, the community groups that were stepping up to coordinate efforts." Another participant highlighted their key role in implementing a managed alcohol program, as a second example, since they felt those with substance use disorders were at risk of being left out of government responses. The leadership role played by the nonprofit sector was particularly emphasized in interviews in one of the two study sites but was not unique to it.

Beyond their roles as leaders, nonprofit participants also noted tensions with government in the development and implementation of state-level responses. Although some nonprofits temporarily moved their clients into hotels, the province opted to use pop-up shelters as a way to compensate

for the pandemic-related reduction in shelter beds in the homeless-serving system, even though participants from the nonprofit sector in the study encouraged them to do otherwise. For example, one individual recalled the following: "'They should be in hotels,' I would say, and others would say [that] as well. But, you know, the province would be like, 'We can't do this ... So there's no more discussion about moving people into hotels.'" Nonprofit participants in this study described these sites as being poorly staffed, and as having poor communication with other organizations serving individuals experiencing homelessness (with respect to where they were located and whether or not they had spaces available). In addition, workers in these pop-up shelters were paid higher wages, which contributed to the loss of staff in the nonprofit, homeless-serving sector as they chose to transition to these pop-up sites.

Advocacy
Research participants from the nonprofit sector also explained that they worked as advocates during the pandemic. Interview data show that this took three forms. One was advocating to government regarding the public sector's responses to the pandemic as it related to those experiencing homelessness. For example, one participant stated the following:

> I think our group [of nonprofits] was very strong in advocating around particular pieces ... like saying "we cannot bring somebody back [to our organization] who's positive. We have to have space somewhere else. And it shouldn't then be on us to be looking after someone. That's a health issue. Public health needs to be more involved in this." So that we kind of were able to mobilize the strength of what we thought we had expertise in, and also to push government to be there as well.

Participants used language such as "constantly pushing" and "approaching" government regarding new ways to respond to those without housing during the pandemic, as well as to obtain PPE. This was sometimes successful and sometimes not; for example, a concern regarding setting up accessible testing and eventual vaccination locations was not addressed: "Access to testing was the problem, we couldn't get a response, much response, to ... get some kind of testing for them that's easy and accessible ... but it doesn't seem that it's a priority because we've brought it forward many, many times." Second, participants also spoke about advocating for funding, particularly at the municipal level. Lastly, nonprofits engaged in advocacy, usually through media channels, by building "public awareness" of the challenges experienced by those on the margins during the pandemic.

Cross- and inter-sector collaboration and communication
Despite the leadership of the nonprofit sector in providing responses, the tensions they experienced with government and their engagement in advocacy, research participants interviewed also spoke of collaborations that occurred and continued as the pandemic prolonged. More specifically, in both communities, multi-stakeholder COVID-19 roundtables were formed and met frequently (and at the beginning of the pandemic, urgently) to discuss strategies for responding to the needs of those without housing and to troubleshoot. These roundtables included government staff and, in one community, elected officials, with government staff varying in terms of the department they represented (including Mental Health and Addictions of Nova Scotia Health, Community Services and Housing) and their level of seniority. Workers from Public Health were able to join these groups and provide information on their interventions and supports (including the development

of a phone line and eventual isolation support for those without housing who had, or were exposed to, COVID-19). In one community, government staff from one department were able to begin playing a 'backbone' type supporting role on the local COVID-19 group, facilitating meetings and taking notes. Nonprofit participants spoke about these relationships positively; for example, one participant noted that "I think our working relationships with the staff of [government department] is much better," while others talked about stronger communication with state-level actors. Relatedly, some research participants noted there was a willingness to discuss new types of interventions and ideas. For example:

> Our funders, I think, are in a more desperate place where they're willing to do more, or at least be open to conversation at the thought of doing more. Whether they actually move forward with those things is yet to be determined. But I think definitely the silver lining is that the pandemic has brought forth to the people who are policy makers the issues that we've been advocating for for so long.

Those interviewed also spoke about sector-specific collaborations developing and improving as well. Participants indicated they worked with other nonprofits on identifying common issues they and their clients were facing, about issuing joint statements to the public and media (which one participant described as "history making"), and improved communication across nonprofits. As one participant noted "We also made this public statement … and we had agreements on what our messages were going to be and we got 40 other organizations from across the province to be involved with our public awareness efforts." They also spoke about coordinating services: "I think in some ways COVID maybe strengthened community connections because we were all kind of forced to come together to support the folks that were living on the margins."

Nonprofits and community needs

During interviews, some participants spoke about the general role played by nonprofits in responding to the needs of those in deep poverty, as well as the challenges they face in doing so. As one participant stated, in speaking about the role of nonprofits in responding to this sub-population of Nova Scotians on a daily basis but also during emergencies:

> It really came through [that] our community is dependent upon these nonprofit, basically, community organizations, to freaking deal with these really big problems in community. Our publicly funded organizations that we think or assume that, when it's really an emergency, would be there to handle it are not … We've either got to really ask our government to smarten up or wake up or appreciate the role of our community organizations managing crises because they're the ones that do it.

Another participant noted that, "You know, we just have a habit of downloading these types of problems and the kind of outcomes of our actions on the nonprofit sector and expecting it to just kind of pick up the pieces every time."

In addition, participants spoke of the nonprofit sector being overloaded in terms of its responsibilities for meeting such needs, using descriptors such as being "taxed, and it can't take much more" and

"always operating in crisis mode." Some participants also spoke about chronic underfunding. As one participant stated:

> You know, I think it's important that society in general kind of come to the appreciation for what the nonprofit sector does on a daily basis, and start to try and resource it accordingly. And that means that the staff contingent at any given nonprofit shouldn't be working 50 hours a week just to get the basics done.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In terms of internal organizational experiences during the pandemic, results overlap to a significant degree with what has been documented in studies conducted in other parts of the world. This is certainly true with respect to effects of the pandemic on staff, which extant work has identified as resulting in an increase in work hours for those who remain employed as well as creating stressful work environments (for example, Dayson et al., 2021; Finchum-Mason et al., 2020; Lasby, 2021). It is important to note that this is situated in a context of existing employment precarity in the non-profit sector in Canada (Atlantic Provinces Economic Council, 2020; Thériault & Vaillancourt, 2021). This research adds a qualitative dimension to the causes of the stress experienced as well, which, in this study, was not only due to uncertainty and being overworked, but because staff felt unable to adequately assist their clients and respond to their urgent needs. Similar to other studies, it was also found that nonprofits showed an ability to adapt their service delivery (Dayson et al., 2021; Pixley et al., 2020), although this was not without consequences for their clients given that it resulted in different modes of, and thus reduced, access.

What is unique in this study, as far as internal experiences, is the financial and in-kind resources that became available; unlike much data that points to diminished support from non-governmental sources in particular (for example, Deitrick et al., 2020; Lasby, 2021), nearly every organization interviewed noted that there was a significant increase in contributions, including from government, as well as businesses and community members. Why this occurred is unclear: in part, government intervention has been interpreted as a means to prevent COVID-19 from spreading to the general public (Parsell, Clarke, & Kuskoff, 2020), while it has also been noted that the pandemic also exposed the extent to which there is homelessness in our communities and provided an opportunity for others to see and reflect on the consequences of not having a place to live (Marks & Toye, 2020). What is not known, however, is whether these contributions have been sustained or have waned as the pandemic persists, and the longer-term consequences of the pandemic on the resources available to this sector are important to examine. In addition, despite increased availability of federal funds in particular, the government support received still carried with it administrative burdens that were present in non-pandemic times, and that have consistently been identified by nonprofit sector researchers and those bodies working to strengthen it as needing to be changed (Scott, 2003; Special Senate Committee on the Charitable Sector, 2019). It is especially surprising, perhaps, that funding had time limits during which it needed to be spent, given that the pandemic was an emergent and poorly understood disaster that, at the time of this writing, communities and nonprofit organizations are still struggling to navigate. This is similar to project and contract-based funding during non-pandemic times, which is disbursed with requirements that it be spent over defined and typically short periods, which researchers and practitioners have noted is very much counter to "on-

the-ground" reality, client needs, and community development (McKenzie, 2020; Thériault & Vaillancourt, 2021).

As far as external responses, results are in many ways consistent with what has been documented about the role of the nonprofit sector, and in particular the leadership role this sector plays in providing emergency responses (Dayson et al., 2021; Vickery, 2017), shedding light on a particular Canadian jurisdiction to do so. Scholars have written about lack of government responsiveness to disasters such as flooding and hurricanes, sometimes using the term government failure to explain their findings (Rivera & Nickels, 2014). This study identified several ways the nonprofit sector took the lead and took on a distinctive and important role *vis-à-vis* the state. In part, nonprofits focused on providing essential needs to individuals experiencing homelessness, needs which were not met when the state of emergency was initially declared and most everything shut down. Second, nonprofits took leadership in protecting people from COVID-19 by, for example, moving people in the early days of the pandemic into hotels, providing cigarettes to smokers, and providing masks. In many ways, the nonprofit sector, with its intimate knowledge of client communities, was agile enough to pivot quickly to provide much needed support to those left behind. Beyond these leadership roles, the nonprofit sector also worked hard to advocate to government, sometimes successfully and sometimes not, on what the public sector needed to do in order to help protect those experiencing homelessness from COVID-19.

Unlike some research on the homeless-serving sector and disasters, this work also draws attention to a degree of collaboration and improved relationships between nonprofits and government, at least during the interview period. So, while there were significant gaps and shortcomings with government responses from the perspective of nonprofit participants, the two groups were not entirely working in silos, and participants did note that government implemented some interventions (such as providing pop-up shelters and isolation support) and that they were involved in the community roundtables. This was not problem free, with the use of hotels versus government-created pop-up shelters in one community serving as one example from the findings reported earlier, and the slow movement of municipal funds occurring in the second serving as another. It would be important to do follow up research to examine, as the pandemic continues and in the post-COVID era, if the relationships that were established and developed are maintained and to what degree. Additionally, given that some of the participants described the overburdened nature of the human services nonprofit sector in the province, it would be important to examine whether these collaborations result in better funding for organizations, and if the entrenched issues mentioned during interviews and which are very much present in Nova Scotia (such as a severe lack of affordable housing and high poverty; Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives—Nova Scotia, 2020) are more meaningfully and systemically addressed through these enhanced relationships and communication.

This work has some limitations. Although this study is related to the COVID-19 pandemic, it covers what we now understand to be only the first wave. Indeed, the authors could not have anticipated the duration of the pandemic when this project began, therefore, this research does not cover, for example, nonprofit organizations and the roll-out of vaccinations to marginalized individuals, the implementation of proof of vaccination policies, and the distribution of rapid testing kits, among other topics. Further, participants were interviewed in one Canadian province only. However, this

research also has strengths. First, many participants expressed gratitude and appreciation for being asked to participate and reflect on their experiences, even though they were also experiencing fatigue as a result of the pandemic, and excerpts from interviews are included to contribute to internal validity as well. Second, although this study focuses on only one region of the country, results concur with existing and emerging findings on human services nonprofits, homeless-serving organizations, and the pandemic from other international jurisdictions, thus contributing to the external validity of the results. Further, this research adds rich, qualitative findings to this body of literature, much of which is quantitative.

Finally, several critical recommendations can be made in terms of the supports required for the human services nonprofit sector to do its work during disasters such as the COVID-19 pandemic, but far beyond. In relation to staffing, participants requested that those in the sector be recognized as vital, front-line workers and be given recognition, adequate compensation (including bonus pay), and safe workspaces, including access to PPE. The exhaustion and stress they reported also signaled the need for better working conditions, which would assist with staffing levels and retention, as well as mental health supports. Note that investments in this sector are required not only during emergencies, but on a permanent basis given the vital role these organizations play in providing basic needs and the extent to which they require government support. Regarding resources, government funds also need to be available unequivocally and timely to nonprofits providing emergency responses, and the administration of these needs to be redesigned so it is less burdensome and more open-ended with respect to timelines for spending. Further, long-term backbone support to the COVID roundtable groups would be a recommended strategy to maintain relationships across sectors over time. Over the long term, greater investments in poverty reduction and affordable housing are also key, and this would not only reduce the daily demands placed on nonprofit organizations but reduce the number of Nova Scotians requiring emergency assistance from these nonprofit providers when the next disaster strikes.

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Balancing Consistency and Flexibility: Challenges and Opportunities in Conducting a Cross-Country Longitudinal Study with Youth Participants in Work-Integration Social Enterprises

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ABSTRACT

Longitudinal studies conducted within the social economy have the potential to provide useful insights by tracing participant experiences and illuminating long-term outcomes of program interventions. However, longitudinal studies are challenging, not only due to retention of participants, but also when a longitudinal study covers a broad geographic area. The authors collaborated in a five-year pan-Canadian longitudinal study following youth participants in work-integration social enterprise (WISE) training programs. This article traces the experiences of study teams in Ontario and Greater Vancouver, providing accounts of the approaches and challenges encountered when working in geographically and socio-economically diverse locales over time with youth participants facing social marginalization. This article highlights three aspects of data collection—recruitment, retention, and research methods and logistics—offering insights into how each team devised its own strategies to fit with local circumstances while maintaining consistency across research sites.

RÉSUMÉ

Des études longitudinales ayant l'économie sociale comme cadre peuvent fournir des données utiles en répertoriant les expériences de participants à divers programmes et en illuminant les effets à long terme d'interventions dans ces programmes. Cependant, les études longitudinales ne sont pas faciles à effectuer, non seulement en ce qui a trait à la rétention de participants, mais aussi en ce qui a trait aux vastes étendues géographiques qu'elles peuvent couvrir. Les auteurs ont soulevé ce défi en collaborant à une étude longitudinale pancanadienne de cinq ans qui a consisté à suivre des jeunes participant à des programmes de formation offerts par des entreprises sociales d'insertion par le travail (ESIT). Cet article examine les expériences d'équipes de recherche en Ontario et dans le Grand Vancouver, fournissant un compte rendu des approches et défis relatifs à leur travail dans la durée auprès de jeunes participants confrontés à la marginalisation sociale

dans des contextes d'une grande diversité géographique et socioéconomique. En guise de conclusion, cet article souligne trois aspects de la collecte de données—à savoir les méthodes et la logistique pertinentes pour le recrutement, la rétention et la recherche—et offre un aperçu de la manière dont chaque équipe a développé ses propres stratégies adaptées aux circonstances locales en s'efforçant de maintenir une certaine cohérence d'un site de recherche à l'autre.

Keywords / Mots clés: Longitudinal studies; work-integration social enterprises (WISE); youth participants / Étude longitudinale; entreprises sociales d'insertion par le travail (ESIT); jeunes participants

INTRODUCTION

In spring 2017, research teams from Vancouver, Winnipeg, Toronto, Montréal, and Halifax launched a five-year longitudinal, pan-Canadian study of youth who received employment and skills training from work-integration social enterprises (WISEs). The objective of this collaborative undertaking was to use longitudinal data—both quantitative and qualitative—to investigate any long-term difference WISEs make to the youths' labour market participation as well as their personal, social, and economic wellbeing. This complex project was designed as a follow-up to an earlier research project. This previous set of case studies on WISEs (most of which operated in the Toronto area) found that while participants saw marked improvement in their social capital, emotional wellbeing, and human capital through their involvement in social enterprises, generally participants found much smaller gains in their financial situation (Quarter, Ryan, & Chan, 2015). However, many of the WISEs in this study worked with disabled persons on long-term government support for living expenses, drug coverage, and other benefits, which limited their earning potentials. To see if the benefits for participants at WISE training programs could be generalized more broadly and to focus on participants who are likely to have intention to transition to full time employment (directly or via further schooling), the current longitudinal study was designed with an expanded geographic scope covering different provinces and a specific focus on youth.

Longitudinal studies are methodologically difficult to conduct. They are often time consuming, unable to accommodate changing social, political, or economic context, and can fail to produce a robust data set due to high participant attrition. In addition to those complications, this study had challenges associated with the precarious existence of WISEs due to funding insecurity and the social and economic barriers faced by the target youth participants (Calabrese Barton & Tan, 2018; Decker, Dail Marshall, Emerson, Kalamar, Covarrubias, Astone, Wang, Gao, Mashimbye, Delany-Moretlwe, Acharya, Olumide, Ojengbede, Blum, & Sonenstein, 2014; Irizarry & Brown, 2014). Another methodological challenge in this study was the broad geographic scope. The multiple locations for this study across Canada meant that accommodations were needed for regional variations in labour markets, provincial funding of employment development programs, as well as local differences in social and cultural norms and practices within the social economy.

As far as methodology was concerned, the balance between consistency and flexibility was a concern from the onset of the project: the consistency needed in data collection across locations and

over time to ensure the researchers' ability to aggregate the data for analysis in order to present a national picture of the participants' experiences and the flexibility to respond to local circumstances knowing that there would not be a one-size-fits-all methodological approach. Therefore, the regional research teams continuously shared and learned from experiences in each other's data collection efforts resulting in ongoing adjustments of research methods, strategies, and tools. As the study rolled out, the research teams from across the country had to deal with numerous data collection challenges almost right from the start, including recruiting eligible participants, figuring how to compensate the participants, and ensuring accurate contact information for future follow-ups and participant retention. While some of the challenges stemmed from the longstanding difficulties facing youth and WISEs, there were also logistical headaches that nonetheless demanded considerable attention from researchers. In addition, the unanticipated and lasting challenge of the COVID-19 global pandemic started bringing about significant public health, social, and economic disruptions in Canada about halfway through the longitudinal study in March 2020. As a result, further modifications had to be implemented to continue with the final follow-up years of data collection.

This article is focused on the data collection experiences of two of the research teams in our study—the Ontario and the Vancouver teams. Even though both teams were working with the same participant demographics, the two teams had divergent experiences throughout data collection because of their specific local circumstances. On one hand, the Ontario team's experiences remained close to how the research project had been initially envisioned offering an opportunity to examine the difficulties in conducting longitudinal studies in general. Although the Ontario team ran into challenges recruiting participants initially, the larger population and the higher number of WISEs in Ontario enabled the team to still recruit enough participants using the original methodology, albeit taking more time. On the other hand, the Vancouver team had to make significant adjustments due to the lack of WISEs willing or able to participate. As a result, the two teams provide a contrast against how to maintain consistency and coherence for a longitudinal study that spans a vast country like Canada.

The objective of this article is to draw upon the data collection experiences and learnings of two of the regional research teams involved in this study to provide future researchers with insights into the methodological challenges and responding solutions for longitudinal studies covering multiple locations. This article documents the experiences the Ontario and Vancouver research teams as they encountered methodological issues prior to the onset of the pandemic and also the reflections on researchers' experiences during the pandemic (up until early 2022). These experiences highlight the challenges of long-term research where researchers must contend with not only a high level of inherent individual, spatial, and organizational variability over time, but also unexpected events that threaten to upend the research premise. The comparative account of the two teams highlights the importance of ongoing dialogue and collaboration to maintain the integrity of the longitudinal study combining quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews and observations. From this experience thus far, the researchers advocate that a balance between flexibility and consistency be deliberately incorporated into the design of multisite longitudinal studies inevitably faced with myriad challenges and complications such as the ones discussed in this article. This ambitious project is the first to examine the long-term outcomes of youth-centered WISE programs across Canada

and through reflecting upon the experiences of two research teams; this article aims to offer insights for future researchers who may conduct similar projects.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Cross-sectional research has shown that WISEs can have a positive effect with respect to building human capital (work skills) and social capital. However, cross-sectional studies rely on the assumption that individuals share similar experiences on a statistical basis. They do not reveal how individuals have changed over time. Longitudinal studies are no small undertaking and while longitudinal studies conducted within the social economy can provide useful insights into the significance of WISE training programs, conducting these studies presents considerable challenges (Menard, 1991). Although longitudinal studies can minimize the need for large-scale samples to control for cross-sectional differences, they still need a large enough initial sample, along with rigorous retention strategies, to ensure that the subsequent samples remain representative of the study population despite the expected and likely self-selective attrition of participants over time. For an integrated study like this one, regional research teams also had to ensure an ability to aggregate and analyze our data from all the different sites while simultaneously, needing flexibility in recruitment and retention, adjusting to the unique situations in multiple sites. Canada is a geographically vast country with many regional differences in terms of legislation, political culture, and the economic and social conditions that shape the contemporary social economy landscape (Elson, Hall, & Wamucii, 2016; McMurtry & Brouard, 2015). In addition to balancing consistency and flexibility in recruitment and retention, measures were put in place to ensure that youth participants could access the research instruments or tools (e.g., online surveys require access to the internet as well as an electronic smartphone or a computer) (Ribisl, Walton, Mowbray, Luke, Davidson, & Bootsmiller, 1996). The following section reviews the different strategies discussed in research literature covering participant recruitment and retention as well as research instruments for longitudinal studies over multiple sites with marginalized participants.

Recruitment

One of the considerations for recruitment in a study such as this is pre-inclusion attrition, which occurs when certain participants may have been unintentionally excluded from the baseline despite researchers' best efforts to design an inclusive and accessible study (Flick, 1988). In longitudinal studies, such exclusion could be exacerbated through repeated measurements, thereby further reducing the data's statistical representativeness (Flick, 1988; Knight, Fast, Debeck, Shoveller, & Small, 2017). For studies such as this involving participants facing barriers and marginalization, the focus on participants with higher-risk experiences can end up excluding those at lower risk resulting in over-reporting social "problems." For instance, a study of young people's experiences in Vancouver's inner-city drug scene illustrates the effect of pre-inclusion attrition (Knight et al., 2017). The initial sample recruited by Knight et al. (2017) consisted of a disproportionally higher number of youth participants living in high-risk circumstances because the recruitment approach did not reach youth less entrenched within Vancouver's inner-city drug scene. Consequently, the study was unable to accurately provide the full spectrum of experiences felt by youth at various levels of entrenchment within Vancouver's drug scene (Knight et al., 2017). Pre-inclusion attrition can also have the opposite effect where more settled youth participants who have access to technology or

are capable of remaining active in the program may have higher representation in the sample, thereby minimizing or falsely inflating the impact of the WISEs upon its youth. Ultimately, for research studies working with participants dealing with marginalization, the collection of a non-exclusionary baseline sample is contingent upon multiple factors. Avoiding pre-inclusion attrition can be addressed through varied recruitment efforts such as on-site visits or online (e.g., email invitations) which make the project accessible to participants. This can be further supported by a mixed-methods design that offers multiple ways for participants to partake in the study (e.g., surveys, interviews, and walkalongs). In addition, especially for historically over-researched communities such as Vancouver's Downtown Eastside (DTES), creating a motivating project with long-term benefits for the community going beyond individual compensation and policy reports is essential and was a value echoed by many youth participants (Linden, Mar, Werker, Jang, & Krausx, 2012; Wright, Allen, & Devine, 1995).

Retention

After recruitment, participant retention and attrition are specific concerns during longitudinal studies, especially for studies working with transient communities. High attrition rates during a longitudinal study could lead to insufficient and/or inadequate data points for statistical analysis and ultimately distortions in the measurements of change in participants (Roche, Clery, Carter, Dora-Laskey, Walton, Ngo, & Cunningham, 2018). Of particular concern in retention over a long timeframe is non-random post-inclusion attrition, which occurs when initial participants with certain characteristics drop out, such as those facing high mobility or social barriers (Dubow, Aber, Betancourt, Cummings, & Rowell Huesmann, 2017; Flick, 1988; Howard, Krause, & Orlinsky, 1986). Post-inclusion attrition reduces external validity when those dropping out of the study are disproportionally affected by external factors such as poverty, substance abuse, and mental health issues. If post-inclusion attrition is biased against only certain participants, researchers could be misguided by interpreting the results incorrectly and the statistical analysis would fail to accurately attribute the differences found in the variables to the intervention or to the differential participant dropout (Cook & Campbell, 1979; Flick, 1998).

To maintain the overall representativeness of the sample over time, researchers use regimented follow-up protocols (Roche et al., 2018; Wright et al., 1995). In a two-year study measuring the prevalence of substance use and violent injury among participants aged 14–24 who sought emergency care, Roche et al. (2018) used anchor points to stay in contact with the participants. In a study of 670 participants who were experiencing homelessness and substance abuse in three-month intervals, Wright et al. (1995) also used anchor points as part of data collection. The anchor points were defined as verifiable channels of contact to reach participants, including phone numbers, email addresses, physical addresses, alternative methods of contact, and contact information of family members or significant others. The researchers in both studies verified contact information with participants within 24–48 hours after the initial recruitment intake. Over the rest of the study timeframe, the researchers regularly contacted the participants through various channels between follow-ups.

In the event that no communication channels and points of contact are viable, researchers can contact participants via alternative methods such as home visits, leaving letters at local shelters/soup

kitchens where the participants are known to frequent, sending handwritten notes, and reaching out to listed family members or significant others (Roche et al., 2018). In the two-year study by Roche et al. (2018), the researchers report that their intense and rigorous procedure produced impressive follow-up rates of 85, 84, 84, and 85 percent at 6-, 12-, 18-, and 24-month intervals, respectively. While clearly effective, these follow-up procedures require substantial time and financial resources and can potentially make participants feel under surveillance.

Data collection procedures and processes
In any research study, choices about data collection procedures and processes both enable and limit who participates. For example, when participants have limited or inconsistent access to cellular services, landlines, and/or data/internet plans, research tools only accessible in these forms (e.g., online questionnaires and e-transfer payments) would make it difficult for participants to continue their involvement in the study regardless of their intentions. A variety of data collection procedures and instruments can help minimize the exclusion of participants who may lack access to communication technologies. Using a variety of different access points (e.g., on-site/off-site, in-person/over the phone, online/paper survey) can better accommodate the diverse needs of a study population (Dubow et al., 2017). Likewise, for studies that prioritize quantitative data collection, the addition of qualitative data collection measures such as interviews and field observations allow participants choices in how they engage and partake in the research (Dubow et al., 2017).

Overall methodology for the longitudinal study
This 5-year longitudinal study on youth participants who had partaken in WISE training programs was based on a mixed-methods design using survey questionnaires supplemented by qualitative data collected through semi-structured and ethnographic interviews as well as in-situ observations. The data collection spanned four years from 2018 to 2022, which included a baseline (BL) survey collection (2018–19) and was followed by three subsequent years of annual follow-up surveying. Funding of the study, which was provided by Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC; for the Ontario team) and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC; for the rest of the regional research teams including Vancouver), involved a 5-year research grant which allowed for a 3-year follow-up timeframe. The 3-year follow-up period provided researchers with enough time pre- and post-data collection to conduct piloting and prepping as well as reserving time at the end for data analysis and reporting. This section provides an overview of the methodology for the longitudinal study which serves as the basis for the discussion in the next section on the specific experiences of the Ontario and the Vancouver teams.

This study sought to recruit youth participants aged 17–35 who had recently received or were receiving workplace training from WISEs at the time of BL. Initially, the age parameters were set to be 18–30, but at the request of some participating WISEs, which were more flexible with their age eligibility criterion for programming, the age range was expanded to 17–35 to be inclusive to all their training participants. Since the aim was to maintain a sufficiently large sample size of participants for three years (many of whom typically had sporadic involvement with the WISEs), it was necessary to have a robust sample of BL participants in preparation for the anticipated attrition over the follow-up timeframe, which could result in statistically irrelevant sample sizes (Lankenau, Sanders, Hathazi, & Jackson Bloom, 2010; Roche et al., 2018; Wright et al., 1995).

Baseline collection began in the early months of 2018, with the first surveys completed by youths who met the selection criteria, i.e., 17–35 years old and current participants or recent graduates of a WISE program. In each of the three years thereafter, researchers followed up with the participants from BL (some of whom remained as WISE participants and others not) using an annual survey tracking changes in their participation in the labour market as well as their personal, social, and economic life circumstances. To specifically assess the social benefits of the WISE programs for the youth participants, researchers measured individual participants' perceptions of wellbeing using a tool called the Asset Matrix, which asked participants to indicate any changes to their wellbeing from before entering the training program to the time when the participants completed each of the surveys. The matrix measures an individual's assets or strengths using 35 items, which are divided into five asset categories: financial, personal, access to services, physical and mental, friends and family. This Asset Matrix was adapted from the Sustainable Livelihoods model produced for international development work by the UK Department for International Development. This is a simplistic yet holistic approach to understanding the complex causations of poverty and provided researchers a way to understand and measure program outcomes through multiple aspects of the participants' wellbeing (Chambers & Conway, 1992).

The study was also supplemented with qualitative data collected during each annual follow-up cycle using in-depth interviews with an approximately 10% subset of the participants who were randomly selected. The interviews would provide further nuances of the participants' situations and details on how their circumstances might have changed since their participation in the WISE programs. This survey-interview combination was repeated each year with participants to collect multi-year data to examine changes that the participants would experience after taking part of training programs at WISEs.

Experiences of the Ontario and Vancouver teams
As an integrated study across multiple locations, it was intended to follow the overall methodology for the longitudinal study across the regional research teams, including using the same research instruments supporting data aggregation and analysis later on. At the same time, allowances were needed for differences in recruitment and data collection approaches in response to local circumstances. For instance, as will be discussed in this section, the Vancouver team struggled to achieve a large enough sample for BL and therefore, due to concerns of participant attrition, the team shifted its data collection efforts to conducting interviews with every participant. The Ontario team with a sufficiently robust BL sample followed the initial goal of interviewing only a 10 percent subset of their participants. Such experiences and adjustments undertaken by the regional research teams highlight the need for flexibility within recruitment and data collection activities over time in accordance with local situations.

Figure 1 presents the timelines for BL collection carried out by the Ontario and the Vancouver teams and the two subsequent years of follow-up surveying. The two teams proceeded with data collection in deliberately staggered timelines, allowing the Ontario team to first test the data collection approaches, which were then adopted and adapted with any necessary adjustments by the Vancouver team. This section outlines the recruitment, retention, and research logistics experiences by the Ontario and Vancouver teams.

Figure 1. Timelines for BL collection
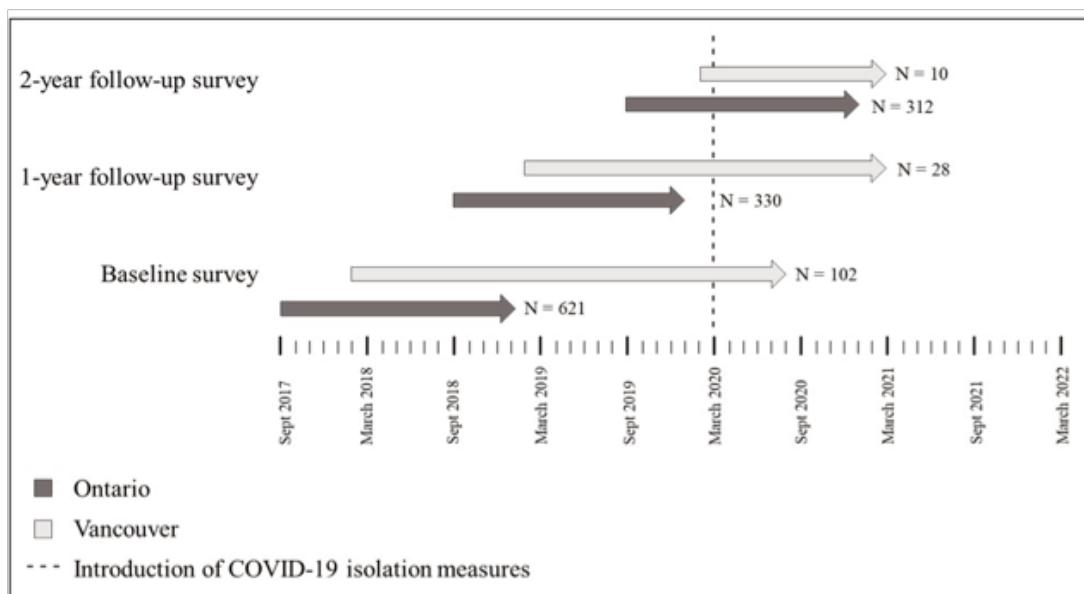
During the design stage of the study in 2017, both teams recruited local WISEs to participate in the study. The WISEs in this study varied greatly in terms of their programs training objectives, target youth populations, and modes of instruction delivery, but they all shared the same objective of preparing program participants for future long-term employment. For instance, some WISE programs use a formal classroom-based approach to teach computer and software skills such as how to operate Microsoft Office Suite or email etiquette. Other WISE programs use informal instruction such as group drop-in sessions to teach life skills such as goal setting, work-place norms, résumé and application writing, job searching and interview preparation, financial budgeting, managing addiction, nutrition, personal grooming/hygiene, and certification training (including serving alcohol, first aid, and food handling).

Using the Canadian National Social Enterprise Sector Survey and their own knowledge of local programs, the regional research teams created a roster of WISE programs that met the inclusion criteria to recruit WISE programs for the study. For instance, the Vancouver team used two eligibility criteria to recruit WISEs for the study: 1) the WISE needed to provide training for at-risk youth for workforce integration; and 2) the WISE needed to operate within Vancouver's urban centre. Despite the straightforward criteria, the Vancouver team's experience of recruiting participating WISEs turned out to be difficult and tumultuous. The team's request was consistently refused by staff at multiple WISEs. The basis of their refusal primarily stemmed from a feeling that their organizations, programs, and clients had been over-researched in the Metro Vancouver area. Others cited lack of program fit into the overall study, specifically around age and foreseen client disinterest. Further complicating the situation was the fact that some of the WISEs that had previously agreed to be part of the study were forced to drop out because of program closure resulting from funding insecurity. To a lesser degree, the Ontario team had a similar recruitment experience but was able to recruit additional WISEs as replacements. The dropout of the initial WISEs was also problematic because the research teams had consulted with the original participating WISEs for the research design. However, such consultations could only be ad-hoc with the WISEs that were later recruited.

Trying to recruit WISEs without being able to offer them the opportunity to contribute to the research design may have exacerbated the difficulty in the recruitment efforts.

This plethora of challenges caught both teams in Ontario and Vancouver unprepared despite awareness of the precarious funding circumstances of WISEs. Through scouring their networks, both teams worked to identify new organizations that would potentially have eligible participants for the study. The Ontario team managed to replace the WISEs that had dropped out and ended up working with three of WISEs. The Vancouver team was able to secure one replacement organization, which unfortunately did not yield many participants. Ultimately, the Vancouver team settled for working with only two of the original seven organizations that had joined the study. Having a much smaller pool to recruit participants from, the Vancouver team recognized early on that recruitment and retention were going to be ongoing challenges throughout the study. The resulting discrepancy in BL and follow-up survey collection between the Ontario and Vancouver teams is presented in Figure 1.

Once the teams had settled with the partner WISEs, our next task was to recruit youth participants. Relying heavily on the advice of partner organization staff, each team implemented their own recruitment practices to cater to specific organization needs emphasizing the importance for local flexibility. While the WISEs in Ontario actively assisted in the recruitment by allowing time in their training program for completing the survey and talking about the importance of the research project, the WISEs working with the Vancouver team could only offer space access. This means that the Vancouver team needed to directly recruit the participants. As a result, the Vancouver team relied on two distinct recruitment strategies to accommodate the differences in the WISEs' objectives and their clients. One was a passive recruitment method where program staff posted flyers in their offices and forwarded an email invitation to potential participants to complete the survey online. The other—slightly more active—involved hosting onsite recruitment sessions every 3–4 months where the research team would meet potential youth participants in-person. The specific scheduling of these recruitment sessions matched the busiest times of operation at the organization, such as its Youth Action Committee (YAC) meetings, the issuance of social assistance cheques, and the end of the workday. Further incentive for youth included the offering of pizza and soda by the researchers. During BL collection, attendance at these sessions ranged from the highest attendance of 11 to the lowest of two. In response to low recruitment during 2018, the Vancouver team extended its BL recruitment throughout 2019 into the second year of the study. This not only allowed the Vancouver team to continue recruiting BL participants, but the team was also able to follow up in-person with the youth participants to complete a one-year follow-up survey and/or update their contact information.

While the Ontario team had little trouble reaching the desired number of youth participants within the project timeframe for BL, the Vancouver team continued to struggle mainly because of the low and inconsistent number of participants at their two partner programs. One of the two programs the Vancouver team worked with used a revolving intake with no formal attendance or participation requirement. This flexible approach was specifically designed to serve youth facing severe barriers, many of whom were street entrenched and/or homeless. Conversely, the other program the Vancouver team worked with resembled a more conventional WISE training program supporting

youth who were transitioning out of care to prepare for workforce integration. The second program in Vancouver was similar to those working with the Ontario team, where participants attended formalized classroom training. This structured setup supported the researchers' ability to consistently meet the participants face-to-face, whereas the flexible environment required the researchers to employ a mixed approach to recruitment.

Retention
The task of retaining the youth participants in this study over the course of three follow-up years was an anticipated challenge as part and parcel of longitudinal research design. Using contact information collected in the BL survey, the Ontario team started their follow-up procedures with an online survey six months after BL in the summer of 2018, whereas the Vancouver team only started following-up with participants one year after 2019 due to different project funding arrangements. As soon as the follow-up efforts started, both teams ran into issues where contact information was incorrect or no longer valid. Another issue was less than perfectly legible handwriting from the paper version of the BL survey (e.g., misspellings of names or email addresses). Although additional anchor or contact points were collected in the BL survey, following the strategy of Wright et al. (2018), they were only useful if they were legible, and a small portion of Ontario's BL participants were never re-contacted for this reason.

Each month, the Ontario team initiated the follow-up cycle for the participants with an invitation to the online survey by email. Following the email, the team contacted the participants by phone which turned out to be effective in getting the participants to complete the survey. Although the retention rate over BL at six-months was only approximately 50 percent (considerably lower than the planned 75 percent), the one-year survey achieved a 92 percent retention rate over the six-month survey. From this, the Ontario team surmised that the consistency of the follow-up process established the project in the minds of the participants and gave extra motivation for the participants to continue (Roche et al., 2018; Wright et al., 1995). Consequently, the larger sample recruited consistently every month allowed the Ontario team to establish a regular follow-up cycle and approach to enhance retention.

Because of the lower-than-planned retention at six-months in Ontario, the Vancouver team initiated a check-in procedure with BL participants to ensure up-to-date contact information. For the participants in Vancouver, email was the preferred method and the six-month contact rates ranged between 35 and 50 percent, which may be attributable to instability with communication channels, a challenge faced by marginalized youth. For example, one participant said that she did not have an active phone number or data plan, but she could connect to Wi-Fi making email the preferred, albeit inconsistent, means of communication.

Research methods and logistics
While both teams collected quantitative and qualitative data, the two teams deployed different approaches to maximize the accessibility of the study for participants. The Ontario team opted for paper BL surveys administered in person during the training sessions conducted at the partner organizations. The paper survey was convenient because it eliminated the need for computers and email addresses ahead of time to send the survey link. The in-person format also allowed for a more active recruitment effort and immediate cash or gift-card payment upon completion of the

survey, which reduced the administrative burden for the research team and for the partner organizations. Similarly, the Vancouver team used both a paper and online format and regularly visited the WISEs to raise awareness of the study.

During the follow-up stages, the Ontario team switched to an online format for the survey because of the unwieldy scope of inviting a mobile and disperse participant pool to join in-person survey sessions at a single site (which turned out to be prescient in that the pandemic would have required the project to pivot online regardless). If the follow-up survey would take about 20–30 minutes to complete, there was little incentive for the participants who may have to travel for an hour to the single site to participate. The extra time required would also make the compensation for participation much less attractive. In addition to the follow-up surveys, the Ontario team also used interviews to supplement the large quantitative dataset by reaching out to approximately 10 percent of those who completed the follow-up surveys. The questions covered further in-depth discussion on how the participants' experiences had evolved since the training programs.

Given the low participant numbers, the Vancouver team shifted to refocus on qualitative data collection while maintaining integrity to the initial study design involving multi-phase quantitative and qualitative, sequential, and concurrent data collection. The Vancouver team conducted repeated ethnographic interviews and observational interactions with as many of the small sample of participants as possible. Ethnographic interviews complemented the survey data and allowed the research team to examine aspects outside of closed-ended survey questions, ultimately shaping a deeper, more complex understanding of the participants' lives. The team used open-ended questions to offer participants the opportunity to speak candidly about topics not captured in the survey, including past work and life experiences, future goals, and social relationships. This additional data regarding the impact of the training programs created narratives of what the participants were learning from both their experiences in the training programs and their subsequent efforts at workforce integration. Narrative portraiture is constructed from the standpoint of researchers, but the process can be transparent and methodological (through the use of thematically coding the data) and result in an authentic representation of the participant. Narrative portraiture is the stories behind the numbers and where hidden areas of participants lives—the internal thoughts and rationales—are found (Dixon, Chapman, & Hill, 2005). Going beyond descriptive analysis, participant portraits will enable the Vancouver team to examine data at the micro level and provide insight into the complexities and the often-overlooked contextual subtleties of participants lives. Coordinating data from ethnographic interviews and surveys collected over multiple years, the Vancouver team can create participant portraits that dive deep into the subjects' lives and utilize material that eludes the scope other forms of analysis (Stake, 1995; Smyth & McInerney, 2013).

However, an approach such as this is not without its critics and Yin (1984) points to three weaknesses:

1. Researcher views may influence the findings if a rigours analysis is not conducted.
2. Generalization is not possible if the sample size is too small.
3. Produces large amounts of descriptive data that is difficult to organize and manage.

To some extent, the researchers' experiences throughout the years of this study point to some of these critics, but it is understood that these vignettes are not generalizable. Instead, they can be used to contextually support and give voice to the youths' unique experiences and appreciate how participation in WISE programs is entangled in multiple aspects of a participant's life. Qualitative data is sometimes devalued when compared to quantitative data's generalizability; however, participant portraits rich in contextual description have their own inherent and unique value to contribute to the data set. Through following structured protocols to create participant portraits combined with statistically relevant findings sourced from surveys, the researchers will be capable of contributing unique insight regarding the impact of select WISE programs in Vancouver, Canada. Rather than aiming to generate statistic representativeness, the Vancouver team's inclusion of qualitative data aided in saturating the data collection with case profiles and experiences (Small, 2009).

Prior to the pandemic, walkalongs also allowed Vancouver researchers to observe the everyday lived experiences and social interactions of youth participants within the context of their work environment. It was especially appropriate for the participants of a WISE program that involved performing sweep services for the City of Vancouver and Coastal Health Services. The Vancouver team piloted one walkalong in the Fall of 2019; although the experiences of one key informant were not representative of all participants, the walkalong provided valuable insights for the study. In this instance, the researcher used pre-set discussion topics and walked along with the participant during their work shift. During the walkalong, the researcher also collected fieldnotes that were later reviewed, revised, and thoroughly detailed. Some preliminary findings from this initial walkalong highlighted the significance of ownership of knowledge and skill, and the ability to practice skills and behaviours. This example suggests that walkalongs could serve as a valuable tool to investigate embodied experiences of youth participants and their feelings mediated by external conditions, thus supporting researchers' understanding of the effects of the training programs and holistic-based insight into the participants' lives. Despite the benefits of the walkalongs, the Vancouver team had to address the potential surveillance concern that might cause anxiety among the participants. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the team had been conducting BL recruitment and follow-up surveys on-site. Knowing that site visits and the physical presence of researchers in the participants' environment could deter them from accessing the space and services, the Vancouver team mitigated the effect of the seemingly "overbearing researcher" through moderated on-site visitation and consistent scheduling with program staff. When working with marginalized communities over an extended period of time, this seemingly minor factor must be considered (especially within WISE using the harm reduction model) so they remain safe spaces accessible to youth. Unfortunately, due to time constraints and pandemic-related university research protocols, the Vancouver team was unable to resume additional qualitative data collection activities such as walkalongs for the remainder of the study (Carpiano, 2009; Skov, Lykke, & Jantzen, 2018).

While a seemingly purely logistical component in a research study, the mechanics of participant compensation was an important element of research planning and should be addressed early on, especially in a study spanning multiple years, sites, and forms of data collection (Kubicek & Robles, 2016). Within this study, the logistics around paying compensation to participants unexpectedly required significant consideration for both research teams. Consulting with partner organizations, the teams first decided an appropriate compensation amount and then developed the compensation

type/form primarily taking into consideration how the survey was completed (in-person or online) and the banking accessibility of youth. In Vancouver, the amount of compensation for a survey, interview, or walkalong was $20, which was consistent with expectations of both university research ethics and the youth (many of whom frequently participated in social research studies and had expectations regarding study compensation). Upon advice from WISE staff, instead of cash payment, Vancouver initially offered a selection of gift cards to businesses such as London Drugs, Subway, and Tim Hortons. The reasoning for this was threefold. Firstly, staffers cautioned against cash payments and advocated for gift cards as the gift cards could contribute to grocery or other basic needs. Secondly, banking services and features such as e-transfers were unlikely to be universally accessible to the youth participants and therefore would not provide an equitable means for compensation. Thirdly, WISEs encouraged us to provide participants an opportunity of choice since members of marginalized communities accessing social services often had many aspects of their lives dictated to them. However, after a few months into the study, the Vancouver team realized this compensation practice was unsustainable and lacking practicality. Firstly, certain gift cards were more popular than others leaving the research team unable to consistently offer a standard selection. Secondly, participants who completed surveys online had no means to choose—there was not a survey question in this regard that necessitated the researchers to choose for the participant. By the second year of the study, the Vancouver team decided to only offer $20 London Drugs gift cards for renumeration, which was still well received by participants as this store sells a wide range of commodities, including food and personal care products, as well as was noted by a couple of participants, "we can get smokes there."

The Ontario team also consulted with the partner organizations to determine an appropriate renumeration amount. Staffers noted that the youth often received survey invitations from university and community researchers and that there was a general sense of survey fatigue among those in WISE programs. Ultimately, the Ontario team settled on a starting compensation rate of $40, which was increased to $60 as a result of the steep drop-off in response rate during the first follow-up survey. While the Vancouver team continued using gift cards, the program staff in Ontario recognized the participants' preference for cash and advised the Ontario team to switch to all cash for the BL surveys, which were completed in-person and e-transfers for the follow-up surveys that were completed online. However, the preference for cash/e-transfer presented a challenge for the university administrative process. The researchers needed to use their own funds to pay the participants first and then submit claims for expenses, which created an unexpected (and perhaps unreasonable) burden on individual researchers. Towards the end of the study, the Ontario team started working to amend this with the university's research office via cash advances drawn against future research fund installments.

DISCUSSION

Since late 2021, as the project started to wrap up its final follow-up surveys, we reflected on our accounts of the Ontario and Vancouver experiences in terms of data collection. We identify three research design and methodological considerations for similar studies in the future. These insights have contributed to the progression of the study and aided in maintaining integrity to the study's original objective—which was to establish a nation wide understanding of the long-term impacts of WISE employment training programs upon youth in Canada.

The precarious situation facing research participants, in this case youth and WISEs, challenges research design

The precarity we observed as experienced by both WISEs and youth participants involved in the employment opportunities training programs speaks to the larger context of the challenges facing the sector and the population. It is important to balance the need to incorporate stories of youth and WISEs into policy discussion with how data collection also adds to the burden and the stress felt by the research participants. Flexibility in collaborating with research participants is especially important for partner organizations dealing with chronic understaffing. Researchers must seek and listen to the advice of the partner organizations and respect their expertise in the field. The benefits of participating in research also need to surpass the vague notion of contributing to the future greater good and include material support in reciprocity (e.g., meaningful payments for the efforts of partner organizations and participants even though it is unlikely that the monetary compensation comes close to adequately compensating the time and effort of the program staff and participants). For future studies, it is suggested that multiple research teams include planning for different scenarios that may surface for different teams. The exercise of scenario planning could help researchers identify the core elements that should not be changed and also those that could be adjusted. In this study, the core element was the survey questionnaire to track changes over time while we could be flexible with the interview component. Early discussions on such methodological issues could reduce the pressure to respond to changes and adjust hastily.

Even the best laid plans need to include flexibility and creativity in response to unexpected global events as well as site-specific socio-cultural, political, and economic conditions while managing divergence in datasets.

The researchers' experience in this study shows that it is impossible to foresee what could happen over the years in a longitudinal study. Not only did researchers need to adjust the methodology to accommodate site-specific circumstances since the beginning of the study, but the global pandemic also brought forth the question of whether they could continue to study the impacts of WISEs on the labour market and on the youth participants. While maintaining consistency among some core elements is important to preserve the integrity of an overall study design (in this case the use of the same survey questionnaire), how exactly to gather the data needs to be flexible to specific sites, especially when the participants responded to the pandemic differently in different locations. For instance, the Vancouver team's reliance on supplemental qualitative data helped to offset the disadvantages of a small sample of participants in Vancouver while offering new areas of investigation. The ethnographic data collected by the Vancouver team are expected to provide insight into different participants' experiences, further informing the quantitative data set. Even though public health measures during the pandemic forced the Vancouver team to suspend walkalongs, the team was able to pivot in-person ethnographic interviews to phone and zoom interviews.

From the experiences of our two regional research teams implementing supplementary qualitative data collection methods, we continue to advocate for a flexible methodological approach to support the viability of long-term data collection instead of forgoing the opportunity to examine impacts over time for the purpose of maintaining a rigid quantitative data structure. Our experiences indicate that creative approaches to accommodate the unique local situations do not compromise the con-

sistency in the overall study design. In this sense, consistency does not necessarily mean rigid uniformity across project sites. Through a variety of research tools such as surveys, in-depth interviews, and walkalongs using various media (i.e., on-site/off-site, in-person/phone/online), we are managing to encourage engaging participation and create the opportunity for a rich portrait of the participants' experiences (Dubow et al., 2017). Again, advice and insights from partner organizations are critical in ensuring success in reaching and retaining participants. For instance, the Vancouver team worked in close collaboration with one of their two primary participating organizations to ensure the study best accommodated participants. Thankfully, pandemics do not happen in any great frequency. That said, unexpected events could still happen and the long timespan of longitudinal studies makes the likelihood of something happening high. Therefore, in case anything unexpected leads to abrupt stoppage, we suggest future researchers prepare for alternative data collection instruments (such as online) and approaches.

Logistics, although rarely discussed as part of methodology, have a considerable impact on longitudinal study design and data collection.
Practicality is always a consideration in conducting research, and in longitudinal studies such as ours, logistics take on a different level of complexity when data collection approaches have to be repeated for hundreds of participants over several years. Again, the logistics for recruiting and retaining participants for both locations in our study were the result of our discussions with staff and youth participants of the partner organizations. We were surprised how much effort was needed to navigate the administrative processes at the universities where our teams work. During the pandemic, our own lives and routines were also uprooted adding further complications to the already complex study. While these processes may not be apparent to participants, researchers need to understand how their individual institutions operate before committing to any specific logistical procedures. We hope that by sharing details of our logistical challenges in this article, researchers may be better prepared in their future studies. From our experiences, logistics should not be afterthoughts. Also, logistics are not just ethical approvals. Future researchers should spend time and effort to investigate the specific procedures of their institutions to ensure that research study proceeds smoothly and does not get held up because of unplanned logistical steps.

CONCLUSION
This article shows that with a flexible approach, the inclusive nature of mixed methodology within a longitudinal study covering a large geographical area is adaptable within various global, social, and cultural contexts. As this multi-site, longitudinal research project continues through a global pandemic, researchers advocate for using mixed methodologies responding to local circumstances and changing environments. The flexibility needed to incorporate different approaches within this study has not only avoided jeopardizing the overall consistency and integrity of the data collection, but it has also supported the generation of a rich dataset that accommodates site-specific institutional, organizational, social, and economic variations.

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Les tiers-lieux : une option pour la reconfiguration des rapports travail-communauté?

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ABSTRACT

This text addresses one of the terms applied to describe spaces of experimentation, namely third place. This concept refers to new places that connect the functions of working, living, and socializing. These three functions had been separated by capitalism under a Fordist mode of regulation. However, since the 2000s, various space-based initiatives have reunited them. In this context, third places represent reference points for community life that favor broader and more creative exchanges at the local level and thus help to maintain sociability, especially in the post-COVID-19 era. Third places offer the opportunity to rethink the link between the workplace and mobility, to review spatial planning practices, and to re-examine the relationship between the local and the global.

RÉSUMÉ

Dans cet article, nous nous penchons sur l'un des termes qui prévalent pour désigner des lieux d'expérimentation, à savoir celui de tiers-lieu. Cette notion désigne de nouveaux lieux intermédiaires entre travailler, vivre au quotidien, et socialiser. Ces trois fonctions, que le capitalisme sous la régulation fordiste a eu tendance à séparer, sont rapprochées par diverses modalités d'action qui ont cours depuis les années 2000. Dans ce cadre, les tiers-lieux représentent des points d'ancrage de la vie communautaire qui favorisent des échanges plus approfondis et plus créatifs au niveau local, permettant ainsi d'entretenir la sociabilité, notamment dans le contexte de l'après COVID-19. Les tiers-lieux offrent l'occasion de repenser les lieux de travail et les mobilités, de revoir les approches envers l'aménagement des territoires et de réétudier la relation entre le local et le global.

Keywords / Mots clés : third places, innovation, space, work, socialization, community / tiers-lieux, innovation, territoire, travail, socialisation, communauté

INTRODUCTION

Cet article a pour objectif d'identifier des modalités d'action qui offrent aux acteurs locaux et communautaires des capacités leur permettant de s'inscrire dans les transitions imposées par la crise sociétale que traversent les sociétés occidentales, transitions qui nécessitent l'exploration de nou-

velles options relatives au rapport de la société au territoire. Diverses formules de reconfiguration d'acteurs permettant d'innover dans le rapport au territoire, tant à l'échelle locale que régionale, ont été mises en œuvre un peu partout dans le monde (pour une liste de sites Web pertinents, voir à la fin de cet article). Ces expériences sont des creusets de pratiques collaboratives qui contribuent notamment à redessiner la territorialité collective dans des territoires urbains, périurbains et ruraux. Elles mobilisent des organisations formelles et informelles qui interagissent entre elles ainsi qu'avec le tissu économique, spatial et socioculturel local, dans le but de générer une dynamique d'innovation systémique et ouverte (Klein et Pecqueur, 2020).

Dans cet article, nous nous penchons sur l'un des termes qui prévalent pour désigner des lieux d'expérimentation, à savoir celui de tiers-lieu. Cette notion désigne de nouveaux lieux intermédiaires entre travailler, vivre au quotidien, et socialiser. Ces trois fonctions, que le capitalisme sous la régulation fordiste a eu tendance à séparer, sont rapprochées par diverses modalités d'action qui ont cours depuis les années 2000. Dans ce cadre, les tiers-lieux représentent des points d'ancrage de la vie communautaire qui favorisent des échanges plus approfondis et plus créatifs au niveau local, permettant ainsi d'entretenir la sociabilité. Les tiers-lieux offrent l'occasion de repenser les lieux de travail et les mobilités, de revoir les approches envers l'aménagement des territoires et de réétudier la relation contradictoire entre proximité et globalité. C'est sur ces questions que porte ce texte.

LES TIERS-LIEUX : DES ESPACES D'INNOVATION OUVERTE?

Bien qu'il n'y ait pas de définition commune à toutes les expériences relevant des tiers-lieux, il existe quelques référents conceptuels partagés auxquels elles se rattachent. Un de ces référents, probablement le plus important, est celui de l'innovation ouverte. À l'origine, cette expression s'appliquait à des expériences lors desquelles des entreprises pouvaient intégrer des idées, connaissances, manières de faire et technologies développées par d'autres organisations ainsi que par des utilisateurs de leurs produits ou services. L'idée était que les entreprises et organisations puissent bénéficier de nouveaux apports de connaissances ou d'expertise leur permettant d'augmenter la valeur de l'offre, de diminuer les coûts de développement de produits, de raccourcir le temps de commercialisation et d'optimiser les gains.

Cependant, telle qu'elle est actuellement mobilisée dans le cadre de nombreuses expériences, la notion d'innovation ouverte dépasse le cadre de l'entreprise. En effet, l'innovation ouverte est affirmée comme un principe qui, en rendant l'organisation perméable aux dynamiques des milieux où elle évolue, permet le partage des capacités créatrices de la collectivité et favorise une plus grande participation citoyenne. Petit à petit dans plusieurs territoires, on est en train d'établir sous plusieurs formes des laboratoires d'innovation ouverte où l'on expérimente de nouveaux dispositifs de collaboration entre technologie et acteurs socioéconomiques afin de résoudre des problèmes éprouvés par les citoyens. Cet article se propose d'explorer la problématique des tiers-lieux comme élément pivot de l'innovation ouverte, ceux-ci posant les bases d'une restructuration des lieux de travail à travers la triple fonction de production, habitation et communication.

UNE NOUVELLE GÉOGRAPHIE DU TRAVAIL

Le dernier rapport publié par le Laboratoire sur les inégalités mondiales montre que les change-

ments qui se sont succédé dans le système capitaliste depuis la fin des années 1990 en matière de création de richesse et de valorisation du capital ont intensifié les inégalités économiques et sociales et créé de nouvelles fractures socioéconomiques au sein des sociétés (Chancel et al., 2022). Ces changements, qui vont de l'économie de plateformes aux cryptomonnaies, modifient les modes de production, de distribution et de consommation. Dans l'ensemble, ils s'inscrivent dans la généralisation du numérique, dans l'accélération des applications de l'intelligence artificielle, et dans la quatrième révolution industrielle. Il s'agit d'une transformation fondamentale du capitalisme qui place les acteurs sociaux, économiques et politiques dans une situation de transition, au point que certains auteurs parlent de société post-capitaliste (Bauwens, 2015).

Dans cette société dite post-capitaliste, la formule typique de reproduction élargie du capital, largement expliquée par Karl Marx, dans laquelle le capital était utilisé pour payer la main-d'œuvre à un prix inférieur à sa capacité de production de valeur afin de maximiser la plus-value, est soumise, d'une part, à des formules de valorisation spéculatives et, d'autre part, aux diverses formes que prend l'économie dite collaborative. La production de plus-value par le travail n'est pas éliminée, mais elle est minimisée, et le grand capital s'en approprie le gain par des processus de transfert au moyen de chaînes de valeur qui profitent aux donneurs d'ordre, et ce dans un contexte de mondialisation intense, de fractionnement de ces chaînes de valeur, et d'exacerbation de la division du travail. Cette transformation a des effets importants sur les rapports fonctionnels entre les différents détenteurs de capitaux, les différents types d'entreprises et les travailleurs. Elle a en outre un effet sur la géographie des diverses facettes de l'économie ainsi que sur les interrelations socio-spatiales.

Pour les géographes économiques de l'époque du capitalisme industriel (Weber, 1929), la localisation optimale des entreprises était celle qui permettait de diminuer les coûts de revient de la production afin de maximiser le profit réalisé. Cette localisation optimale se situait à l'intérieur d'un triangle virtuel constitué par les lieux de production, les lieux de transformation et les lieux de consommation (c'est-à-dire le marché). Cette stratégie d'optimisation avait d'autre part un effet sur l'interrelation entre trois autres types de lieux, à savoir : le lieu de l'exercice du travail (dans le capitalisme industriel, l'usine); le lieu de résidence du travailleur (lieu d'intimité individuel); et le tiers-lieu qui est à la fois un lieu d'échanges interpersonnels et de travail.

Dans le capitalisme émergent du XIXᵉ siècle, la fabrique rapprochait du lieu de production le domicile du travailleur et le marché de consommation. Les liens entre ces fonctions étaient étroits. D'une part, l'essentiel du salaire versé au travailleur retournait à la fabrique par l'intermédiaire des magasins intégrés à l'entreprise, surtout en milieu rural (Murard et Zylberman, 1976). D'autre part, dans les lieux domiciliaires prenait place la reproduction de la force de travail des salariés appuyée par le travail non rémunéré de la famille, notamment celui des femmes, ce qui permettait au capital de réduire les salaires et d'augmenter les profits. Ainsi, dans ce contexte, les trois points (intimité du travailleur, travail et sociabilité) étaient interreliés, voire confondus. C'était le cas des cités ouvrières ou encore des grandes exploitations agricoles où l'ouvrier restait rivé à son lieu de travail. Celui-ci vivait souvent dans l'exploitation agricole même—qu'on pourrait, en adoptant une perspective plus critique, qualifier de phalanstère fouriériste ou de familistère du socialisme utopique (Rioux, 1989).

C'est sous le capitalisme industriel fordiste qu'est induite la séparation radicale entre le lieu de travail et le lieu de résidence (Coriat, 1979). Pour ce qui est de la socialisation, elle se pratique aussi hors de l'entreprise, notamment dans les associations et les syndicats. Le sociologue J. Frémontier (1971) décrit l'usine Renault à Billancourt, emblème du fordisme triomphant à proximité de Paris, comme étant une « forteresse ouvrière » où l'on pénétrait par un pont-levis (!) qui, une fois relevé, isolait les travailleurs dans l'espace-temps du travail salarié avant de les renvoyer à leur résidence et leurs lieux de sociabilité une fois la journée de travail terminée. Dès lors, le travail s'exerçait dans l'espace de production, soit l'atelier ou l'usine, de façon dissociée de l'espace de l'intimité, lequel s'assimilait au lieu de résidence et était compris comme l'espace de « récupération de la force pour travailler » selon la terminologie marxiste, bien que, comme nous l'avons vu, la reproduction de la force de travail dépendait du travail domestique non rémunéré ce qui, par dépossession (Harvey, 2004), contribuait à l'augmentation de la plus-value. Il demeure que cet espace privé prenait tout son sens en se distinguant de l'espace de la production où les travailleurs (dans leur grande majorité) étaient soumis au contrat salarial.

Durant la période de crise du fordisme des années 1970, le fordisme strict a été modifié et la séparation entre travail et vie intime et sociale a évolué au rythme des méthodes de décomposition du travail à la chaîne, de la mise en place de filières productives intégrées verticalement de plus en plus mondialisées et de l'« enrichissement des tâches » (Durand, 1974) dans un premier temps, mais plus encore avec la généralisation de la sous-traitance, qui a favorisé la responsabilisation du salarié encouragé à se mettre « à son compte » et à créer sa propre activité en tant que sous-traitant. On en revient donc, dans le cas des petites et moyennes entreprises sous-traitantes, à une nouvelle interpénétration de l'espace du travail salarié, du domicile, et de l'espace de sociabilité. Ce rapprochement se traduit par un envahissement toujours plus grand de l'espace de l'intimité par celui du travail salarié (Barthélémy et Cette, 2017).

Pendant cette même période, la crise du fordisme a fait ressurgir la figure du « District industriel » marshallien tel qu'illustré par le cas de la « Troisième Italie » (Becattini, Bellandi et De Propris, 2011), ainsi que par celui des grappes industrielles en Californie (Porter, 2009), des milieux innovateurs (Maillat 1984), et des « Learning Regions » (Cooke et Schienstock 2000). On peut interpréter ces formes d'organisation industrielle comme marquant l'émergence de petites structures dont la culture remet en cause l'organisation taylorienne de l'entreprise et l'inexorabilité de la concentration du capital. Mais il s'agit aussi et peut-être surtout de l'avènement d'une dimension sociable dans les rapports réputés froids et rationnels entre agents économiques. En ce sens, l'analyse des systèmes productifs locaux de différents types préfigure les mutations de la géographie des lieux du travail (Pecqueur 2010). Depuis le début des années 2000, les formules de remplacement du salariat par l'auto-entrepreneuriat (Uber et dérivés, Airbnb, autopartage, etc.) accentuent paradoxalement la dépendance du travailleur envers son donneur d'ordre. Dans ces cas, qui ne concernent qu'une partie des travailleurs, l'espace de sociabilité se déplace à nouveau vers l'espace de résidence.

Une enquête récente (Cabras et Mount, 2017) analyse le lien entre la présence des *pubs* dans la campagne irlandaise et la revitalisation du tissu économique. Elle montre en effet que la fermeture des *pubs* prive souvent beaucoup de communautés rurales du seul espace dont elles disposent

pour effectuer des rencontres, transiger des affaires et chercher des solutions au chômage. Très clairement évoquée dans l'enquête, la notion de capital social à construire ou à reconstruire constitue un élément d'analyse fort, notamment dans les milieux ruraux peu denses ou encore dans les quartiers urbains victimes de la crise postfordiste.

Enfin, plus récemment, la crise sanitaire mondiale de la COVID-19, avec le renvoi d'une partie importante des travailleurs, surtout dans le domaine des services, vers le télétravail, procède d'une rupture à l'égard des tendances touchant les espaces du travail et de sociabilité décrites précédemment. L'espace du travail vient se superposer à l'espace de l'intimité dans un unique lieu, c'est-à-dire le domicile. La crise climatique et la décarbonisation nécessaire de l'activité de déplacement viennent ajouter des variables complexes par rapport à la mobilité. Face à ces évolutions, la contestation du télétravail qui isole le travailleur dans son domicile fait apparaître un besoin de sociabilité et d'espaces de travail qui soient détachés de l'espace intime, c'est-à-dire de la résidence, et concourt à faire reconsidérer les avantages de lieux de travail distincts. C'est dans ce contexte que la proposition d'Oldenburg (1999) concernant la notion de tiers-lieu, considérée jusqu'alors comme marginale, trouve une nouvelle pertinence. Le tiers-lieu est un « entre deux » par rapport à la résidence et le lieu de production, à la visée de l'entreprise et celle de l'aménagement, et à l'innovation technologique et l'innovation sociale (Klein et Harrisson, 2007). Il est le lieu de dialogue pour les acteurs, de la constitution de nouveaux espaces communautaires (Levy, 2013), et de la révélation des ressources spécifiques des territoires.

QUELS ENJEUX POUR LES TIERS-LIEUX?

Le concept de tiers-lieu désigne un espace qui ne correspond ni au lieu de travail ni à la résidence et qui favorise la socialisation (Oldenburg, 1999). Depuis quelques années, on voit se multiplier des expériences s'en rapprochant tant en milieu urbain qu'en milieu rural dans des champs très variés tels que le cotravail, les loisirs, la santé, les bibliothèques, les fab labs, etc. (Yuen et Johnson, 2017; Alidoust, Bosman et Holden, 2019; Tremblay et Krauss, 2019). Mais c'est la contrainte du télétravail introduite par la pandémie de la COVID-19 en 2020 qui a fait que le tiers-lieu soit devenu une option face au télétravail à domicile et au travail en présentiel dans l'entreprise ou au bureau, favorisant ainsi un nouvel équilibre entre les fonctions de travailler, de vivre chez soi et de se rencontrer. Ce virage présente une dimension territoriale par laquelle de nombreux urbains redécouvrent les bénéfices de la résidence à l'écart des milieux fortement urbanisés, ce qui interpelle l'aménagement du territoire et risque de générer de nouveaux différends en milieu rural. Ce virage présente aussi une forte dimension sociale, car ce ne sont pas toutes les fonctions ni tous les travailleurs qui peuvent s'y inscrire.

Or, le tiers-lieu peut devenir un outil stratégique pour déterminer et révéler les ressources potentielles du territoire à valoriser au moyen de projets pour attirer les populations dans la perspective de l'économie résidentielle (Davezies, 2008, Talandier 2018). Inventer de nouvelles modalités territoriales qui s'inscrivent dans la restructuration des relations de la collectivité au territoire, dans la mise en œuvre de nouveaux rapports entre les différents acteurs socioéconomiques et dans la création de nouvelles occasions de sociabilité citoyenne sont autant de possibilités offertes par l'approche du tiers-lieu. Des enjeux associés à la collaboration entre les institutions publiques, les

entreprises, les associations et les collectivités territoriales pour l'insertion sociale pourraient aussi être soulevés.

À titre d'illustration, on peut présenter le cas de l'initiative « La Jolie Colo » mise en œuvre dans le village d'Autrans, dans le massif du Vercors en France. Cette expérience, qui s'affiche comme tiers-lieu, est à la fois un projet d'interface entre des entreprises et un lieu de vie et une combinaison des trois types d'espace tels que définis ci-dessus : celui de la production, celui de l'intimité et celui de la sociabilité.

<p align="center">**Le tiers-lieu « La Jolie Colo »**</p>

Autrans, massif du Vercors, Isère, France

La Jolie Colo est le nom d'un tiers-lieu installé au cœur du Vercors sur le site de l'ancienne colonie de vacances d'Écharlière. Cette expérience compte 1 000 m² d'ateliers de fabrication, de bureaux et d'espaces collaboratifs, deux hectares de terrains dédiés à l'agriculture biologique, un marché bio hebdomadaire, une salle de création pour artistes résidents, des salles de conférence, de tournage, etc. Elle comprend aussi trois édifices à logement en habitat groupé. Situé à 35 minutes de Grenoble, le lieu est facile d'accès et dispose d'un grand stationnement permettant l'accueil du public lors d'événements ouverts à tous et à toutes. Ce lieu emblématique a été racheté par un collectif de manière à permettre à une vingtaine d'artisans et artistes de s'installer dans des locaux professionnels. Le bâtiment accueille une douzaine d'entreprises qui emploient trente personnes dans des domaines culturels et créatifs, telles des maquettistes, des fabricants d'instruments de musique, des artistes, une architecte, un photographe, mais aussi un comptable, une agricultrice biologique, etc.

Ces entreprises s'insèrent pleinement dans une stratégie globale. En premier lieu, on est en présence d'une dynamique citoyenne d'initiative associative où les fondateurs ont choisi de rassembler en un même lieu l'espace de l'intimité (en effet, trois d'entre eux y vivent), l'espace de la production des différentes activités, et l'espace de la sociabilité (c'est-à-dire les espaces collaboratifs que sont la salle technique et le fab lab). En second lieu, le fab lab a pu financer les machines mises en commun à travers une action de financement participatif qui a mobilisé un vaste réseau de citoyens sympathisants. On est donc en présence d'une initiative menée à travers une dynamique associative en relation avec les pouvoirs publics locaux et qui s'affiche comme tiers-lieu.

Source : https://www.lajoliecolo.fr

Renouveler les modèles de travail

Dans cette section, nous sélectionnerons les enjeux qui nous semblent les plus importants dans une perspective territoriale. Le premier enjeu consiste à trouver un nouvel équilibre entre le bien-être des salariés et la productivité. L'espace de cotravail permet d'améliorer les conditions de travail du salarié tout en garantissant une sécurité des informations produites et une capacité de réunion distincte des autres activités du tiers-lieu. Il permet également de replacer le télétravail dans un

contexte souvent plus adéquat et sécuritaire que le domicile du salarié. D'autre part, au-delà de ce service aux grandes entreprises, le tiers-lieu participe à la reconquête économique d'espaces délaissés par les activités industrielles et aux efforts de réindustrialisation des milieux ruraux en stimulant la création d'entreprises. On retrouve ainsi des fonctions d'aide à la création d'entreprises qui existent déjà depuis longtemps (pépinières, couveuses, incubateurs, etc.). Enfin, le tiers-lieu peut devenir le lieu stratégique de mobilisation des ressources potentielles du territoire à valoriser dans un projet de développement. Ces ressources (produits de qualité, préservation du patrimoine et tourisme, par exemple) peuvent se combiner dans une « offre de site ».

Réaménager le territoire

L'enjeu de l'aménagement est une composante des politiques publiques. Le tiers-lieu intervient dans l'épineuse question des mobilités, notamment pour ce qui est de l'espace périurbain et des migrations pendulaires. De plus, la transition écologique au niveau local passe par des projets qui peuvent être conçus au sein des tiers-lieux. Chaque bassin d'emploi devrait être doté d'une structure de type tiers-lieu comme outil de redistribution des activités économiques sur le territoire et de retour à une masse critique par la redensification des espaces ruraux. Enfin, le tiers-lieu peut jouer, en milieu rural notamment, un rôle de « reconquête » économique, au moyen d'une activité qui redéfinit le rapport ville-campagne, de l'activité industrielle perdue (Charmes, 2019).

Combiner l'innovation sociale et l'innovation technologique

Les tiers-lieux peuvent aussi être considérés comme des laboratoires d'innovation ouverte, si l'on veut bien admettre que deux types d'innovation peuvent y concourir : l'innovation technologique et l'innovation sociale. L'innovation technologique naît souvent dans de petites structures mais dans des milieux urbains denses où se concentrent les laboratoires, les universités et les entreprises innovantes. Il reste cependant un enjeu crucial, celui de la diffusion et de l'appropriation de cette innovation par les citoyens. C'est le rôle d'un « fab lab » au sein d'un tiers-lieu, de permettre à des artisans, des petites entreprises ou à des écoles d'avoir accès, par exemple, à des imprimantes 3D ou à d'autres nouveautés technologiques pour les intégrer dans leurs pratiques professionnelles au quotidien. Plus largement, le tiers-lieu peut contribuer à la réduction de la fracture numérique.

L'innovation sociale, quant à elle, ne s'expérimente pas en laboratoire, mais dans les pratiques de concertation et de croisement d'idées qu'un tiers-lieu peut faciliter. Inventer de nouvelles modalités de travail, établir de nouveaux rapports entre producteur et consommateur, et trouver des moyens de formation citoyenne renouvelée sont autant de possibilités liées à l'innovation sociale. L'innovation sociale territorialement ancrée, quant à elle, soulève diverses possibilités, y compris l'invention de nouvelles modalités territoriales qui s'inscrivent dans une restructuration des rapports de la collectivité au territoire, la mise en œuvre de nouveaux rapports entre les différents acteurs socioéconomiques, et la création de nouvelles occasions de sociabilité citoyenne, entre autres (Klein, 2014).

Fédérer des initiatives économiques et sociales citoyennes

Plusieurs enjeux territoriaux pourraient être déclinés dans cette perspective, comme la configuration de nouveaux arrangements entre les institutions publiques, les entreprises, les centres d'éducation supérieure, les associations et les collectivités territoriales pour l'insertion sociale, notamment en milieu rural peu dense. L'idée force est la reconquête des territoires et de la place

de l'usager, y compris le citoyen, pour inventer des projets de vie commune, tout en redéfinissant les liens avec la collectivité aux échelles nationale et internationale.

Beaucoup d'autres enjeux pourraient encore être déclinés, comme la collaboration entre les entreprises et les collectivités territoriales pour l'insertion sociale ou la question des déserts sanitaires en milieux ruraux peu denses. L'idée force est la reconquête des territoires et la prise de parole par les citoyens. Les tiers-lieux ne résolvent pas tous les problèmes, mais ils peuvent refédérer les populations autour de leur collectivité locale pour inventer des projets de vie commune.

La parole citoyenne est au cœur des mutations émergentes. Récemment, Jo Spiegel (2021), élu local et militant associatif, a développé la notion d'écosystème démocratique qui comprend notamment un lieu dédié aux pratiques démocratiques, un droit d'interpellation par les citoyens de chaque séquence d'un projet de développement, et enfin un conseil participatif dans lequel les acteurs volontaires et tirés au sort (syndicats, entrepreneurs, associations, collectivités locales) peuvent débattre de projets divers. Ces dispositions ont leur part d'utopie mais elles témoignent d'une créativité très forte pour réinventer la pratique de la démocratie.

CONCLUSION

Le contexte des économies considérées comme « avancées » semble propice à l'utilisation du tiers-lieu comme outil de développement. Il s'agit d'un espace ouvert et hybride, entre le domicile et le travail, ayant pour objectif de faciliter la rencontre entre des acteurs hétérogènes, et particulièrement adapté aux actions des instances territoriales qui cherchent à promouvoir de nouvelles dynamiques économiques et sociales. Pensées au départ par le premier concepteur de cette approche pour reformer la vie urbaine et pour y favoriser la socialisation (Oldenburg, 1999), les expériences de tiers-lieux se sont diffusées partout dans le monde et peuvent prendre des formes très variées. Depuis quelques années, on voit se multiplier les tiers-lieux en milieu rural et périurbain où les moyens de raffermir le tissu économique local sont plus faibles mais les besoins tout aussi importants.

Le phénomène des tiers-lieux s'amplifie numériquement. L'espace de cotravail permet à des travailleurs salariés, notamment ceux œuvrant dans de grandes entreprises, de trouver un compromis entre le télétravail à domicile et le travail en présentiel dans l'entreprise. Dans ce cas, les tiers-lieux doivent offrir des espaces individualisés et communaux qui soient sécuritaires. Quant au « fab lab » ou atelier de fabrication, il s'agit d'un espace ouvert dans lequel des citoyens bricoleurs peuvent se rencontrer, partager leurs techniques et créer eux-mêmes des objets. Cette dernière fonction concourt à l'appropriation de nouvelles technologies (par exemple, l'usage d'imprimantes 3D et d'outils numériques par les citoyens). Enfin, les espaces de rencontre permettent l'interconnexion des PME et des PMI et l'élaboration de réseaux productifs locaux.

Dans tous les cas, les tiers-lieux peuvent favoriser la conciliation du travail, du domicile et du lieu de rencontre selon des perspectives qui contribuent au bien commun en autant que le leadership qui est à leur base soit partagé. En revanche, ils peuvent tout aussi bien engendrer des formes d'ubérisation du travail et de responsabilisation par les travailleurs devenus « autonomes » de l'ensemble du fardeau que comporte la mise au travail, ce qui, par un processus de « dépossession » (Harvey, 2004), permettrait d'accroître la valorisation du grand capital.

Les réarrangements des trois espaces abordés apparaissent comme une manifestation des mutations du système productif et comme un marqueur à signal faible des crises climatiques et sanitaires que le monde éprouve actuellement. Une nouvelle configuration des liens entre les trois lieux exprime le besoin de reterritorialisation sous des formes non encore stabilisées mais déjà bien présentes. Cette tendance corrobore la thèse de Françoise Choay (2011) selon laquelle les économies avancées se sont éloignées du terroir. Le besoin se fait pressant de passer, selon son expression, d'un *espace de connexion* à un *espace de contact*—en un mot, de retrouver la territorialité perdue et de redonner une vraie place à la socialisation au sein de l'analyse des espaces économiques.

SITES WEB

Pour la distribution des espaces de cotravail, voir le site https://www.coworker.com/map
Pour les Hackerspaces, voir https://wiki.hackerspaces.org/List_of_Hacker_Spaces
Pour les fab labs, voir https://www.fablabs.io/labs/map
Pour les Makerspaces, voir https://www.nexpcb.com/blog/the-list-of-makerspaces
Pour les Living Labs, voir https://enoll.org/

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Common Approach to Impact Measurement: Four Community-Driven Flexible Standards for More Interoperable Impact Data

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ABSTRACT

Common Approach to Impact Measurement (Common Approach) is a set of four flexible impact measurement standards designed to empower charities, nonprofits, coops, social purpose businesses (collectively referred to as social purpose organizations or SPOs), and those they serve to identify which impacts are most meaningful. These standards are not designed to make measurement more rigorous or more accurate; rather, they make measurement more useful and interoperable, and, eventually, more attuned to the priorities of those impacted.

RÉSUMÉ

L'approche commune pour mesurer l'impact (Common Approach) comporte quatre critères flexibles de mesure d'impact conçus pour autonomiser les organismes de bienfaisance, les organismes sans but lucratif, les coopératives, et les entreprises ayant une mission sociale (désignés collectivement sous le nom d'organismes à vocation sociale ou OVS) et ceux qu'ils servent afin d'identifier les impacts les plus significatifs. Ces critères ne sont pas conçus de manière à rendre les mesures plus rigoureuses ou précises; ils rendent plutôt les mesures plus utiles et interopérables et, finalement, plus sensibles aux priorités des personnes concernées.

Keywords / Mots clés : impact measurement, standards, social purpose organizations / mesure d'impact, critères, organismes à vocation sociale

INTRODUCTION

The central problem Common Approach seeks to solve is how impact data can be aggregated and shared without requiring all charities, nonprofits, and social purpose businesses to adopt uniform metrics. Solving this problem is important. It will allow charities, nonprofits, and social purpose businesses to focus their efforts on the measures of impact that are most relevant to them and those they serve rather than aligning their measures with funder priorities, investors' measures,

and collective impact initiatives. Common Approach envisions a social innovation and social finance ecosystem where each social purpose organization measures what is most relevant. Common Approach's four flexible standards are designed to enable the data interoperability required for sharing and aggregating relevant measures.

Prior research and theory: Why we do what we do and why we think it will work
Flexible standards may seem like a paradox, but most widely adopted standards are flexible. As Timmermans and Epstein (2010) note in their review of standard setting, "a recurring surprising finding is that loose standards with great adaptability may work better than rigidly defined standards…The trick in standardization appears to be to find a balance between flexibility and rigidity" (p. 81). Many people are surprised to learn that accounting standards are an example of a flexible standard (Cole, Branson, & Breesch, 2012; Mennicken & Power, 2015). Research argues that flexible accounting standards are more informative (Hann, Lu, & Subramanyam, 2007) and comparable (Dye & Verracchia, 1995; Merino & Coe, 1978) than rigidly uniform ones. It is not just that flexibility is good, it is that total uniformity is harmful. Uniform indicators undermine the organization's autonomy to measure what matters (Baur & Schmitz, 2012). Uniform indicators undermine stakeholders' ability to articulate impact in their own terms (Gray et al., 1997; Brown & Dillard, 2015). Uniformity can thwart innovation (Campbell, 2002). Flexible standards, it turns out, are better for both the organizations and their funders.

Social impact measurement, however, remains polarized between flexible approaches that emphasize tailored indicators and uniform approaches that seek to create shared indicators. The advantage of tailored indicators is relevance to context. Indicators that are designed to reflect context allow for better organizational learning and innovation. Today, most organizations use these flexible approaches. The challenge is that bespoke indicators make it difficult to communicate impacts at a network and portfolio level. The challenge of communicating impact at network and portfolio levels has been addressed by creating very uniform standardized indicators. Examples include indicator banks (Wadia & Parkinson, 2011), as well as the Urban Institute's Outcomes Project, the United Nation Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Global Indicator Framework, IRIS+, and Global Reporting Initiative and Collective Impact initiatives (Kania & Kramer, 2011).

Common Approach is developing a middle ground that solves this polarization.

The Common Approach: Four community-driven standards
The Common Approach consists of four standards: the Common Framework, the Common Impact Data Standard, the Common Foundations, and the Common Form. The first standard, the Common Framework, allows for an organization to choose the measures it finds to be the most meaningful, and its funders, collaborators, and networks can aggregate those measures. It works by aggregating indicators that are similar but not identical. A framework is difficult to create and sustain when indicators are shared using documents, spreadsheets, and PDFs. To accomplish the aggregation of dissimilar indicators, it is necessary to have the impact data (outcomes and indicators) as well as data about the data (method, date collected, source data, stakeholders, location etc.). That is the role of the Common Impact Data Standard.

The Common Impact Data Standard is a data ontology, or a structure, for organizing impact data. The standard makes it easy for software to share impact data, including all the related data (method, stakeholders, etc). Social purpose organizations (SPOs) implement this standard by using aligned software. The Common Impact Data Standard does not require SPOs to collect more data. It simply provides a structured way to record data that organizations already have—assuming their impact measurement practices meet the minimum criteria of the Common Foundations.

The Common Foundations outline the five essential practices that are common to many impact measurement tools and frameworks and based well established prior work (Social Impact Investment Task Force, 2014; Common Approach, 2021). They are designed to be a minimum standard. Rather than defining gold-standard or excellent impact measurement, Common Foundations are a relatively low bar that must be cleared. The purpose is to give social purpose organizations freedom to choose the tools and frameworks. Any tool or framework that includes these five practices meets the Common Foundations: 1) describe the intended change, 2) use performance measures, 3) collect useful information, 4) gauge performance and impact, and 5) communicate and use results. Any organization that is doing these practices has the impact data to begin using the Common Impact Data Standard and the Common Framework.

The Common Form represents basic data about the social purpose organization such as the name of the organization and the organization's identifying number (business ID or tax number), address, size, and location. This information must be collected and shared alongside the impact data for two reasons: it helps to identify the organization that is sharing the data and it provides contextual details to support analysis of the data.

Standards are communities, not documents

Common Approach believes that standards are communities, not documents. That means the quality of a standard is defined more by the qualities of the community of users than by the quality of the technical specifications. Every standard is in constant need of refining and updating. Standards remain relevant when they have an engaged community of users committed to ongoing refinement. Common Approach focuses on building that community and governance processes.

The Common Approach is still very much a learning experiment. It began as an idea in 2017, emerging from community-based consultations held by Ontario's Social Enterprise Impact Measurement Task Force (2017). It was funded as a project of Carleton University in 2018 as a coalition of community partners. In 2021, Common Approach became its own entity with a community-connected board of directors and committees of community members to guide the standards forward. The work is intentionally slow, in order to build community and trust.

What do we know, what do we not know?

The Common Approach standards have been tested individually and in simulations. However, much like how a telephone is only useful if the people you want to talk to also have a telephone, the Common Approach is only useful if the organizations one wishes to share impact data with have also adopted the Common Approach standards. In October 2022, Common Approach launched the Pathfinder Pilot, which will test all four standards within three networks of social purpose organizations that wish to share and aggregate their impact data without adopting uniform measures.

The Common Framework has previously been tested using indicators articulated by SPOs. These studies demonstrated how a Common Framework might have been created with those indicators (Common Approach, 2019; 2022a). Because the studies were based only on impact data (indicators) but did not use the Common Impact Data Standard (none of the associated data), the study lacked insight into the degree of similarity among dissimilar indicators, which means the usefulness of the resulting framework could not be assessed.

The Common Impact Data Standard has been implemented by six impact measurement software. This tells us that the data standard can be adapted to the backend of existing impact measurement software. Combined, these six software have over 2000 users. This means that 2000 SPOs are using the Common Impact Data Standard, although many do not even know it. Fox and Ruff (2021) showed that the Common Impact Data Standard allowed impact measurement to be represented digitally in a way that facilitated the development of a Common Framework. A subsequent study based on published impact reports showed that the Common Impact Data Standard is able to represent most of the content in the reports. It could represent outcomes, metrics and indicators, descriptions of those served, and location. It could not represent descriptions of the problem. Findings from that study have led to the development of version 2.1 (Common Approach, 2022b), which, at the time of writing, is under public review.

The Common Foundations has been tested through interviews with those who have completed the Common Foundations self-assessment and analysis of their self-assessments.[1] To date, 161 SPOs have taken the self-assessment. Of these, 48 answered "yes" to all questions, indicating that they meet the minimum essential practices (on average, SPOs answer "yes" to 74 percent of the questions). These interviews, along with community input, led to revisions resulting in version 2 of the Common Foundations.

What are the expected outcomes?
Common Approach strives to enable a new kind of impact data interoperability that replaces the need for uniform measures. Doing so will help to create a social innovation and social finance sector that prioritizes the impact measurement needs of social purpose organizations over the needs of funders without disregarding fund-level and network-level measures. If achieved, decision-making by policymakers, foundations, and investors will be driven by metrics that are grounded in community priorities. This means they are able to better reflect the voices and priorities of the people and ecosystems that grantmakers and social finance seek to serve. This shift in power to the social purpose organization, and those they serve, is crucial to enabling a more equitable, sustainable world.

NOTE
1. The Common Foundations self-assessment is available at https://www.commonapproach.org/foundations-self-assessment/

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Digitalization of Social Impact for Social Economy Organizations

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ABSTRACT

Social impact accounting is a significant issue for social economy organizations (SEOs), such as associations, foundations, social enterprises, social cooperatives, and other nonprofit organizations that aim to be transparent and accountable. The academic accounting literature addresses theoretical and empirical contributions on the methods and tools of measurement, assessment, and reporting of social impact. However, there are few contributions on the emerging topic of the digitalization of the social impact accounting process. Preliminary research analyses consider digital tools such as distributed ledgers including blockchain, big data, artificial intelligence, and the Internet of Things as innovations that allow SEOs to be more accountable and transparent with their social impacts and value created. The increased attention to these technologies opens the way for new and multidisciplinary research questions on this topic.

RÉSUMÉ

La comptabilité de l'impact social est une question importante pour les organisations de l'économie sociale (OES) telles que les associations, les fondations, les entreprises sociales, les coopératives sociales et d'autres organismes sans but lucratif qui visent à être transparents et responsables. La littérature comptable académique traite déjà des contributions théoriques et empiriques aux méthodes et outils de mesure, d'évaluation et de compte rendu de l'impact social. Cependant, il existe peu de contributions sur le récent sujet de la numérisation de la comptabilité sociale. Des analyses de recherche préliminaires considèrent les outils numériques tels que les registres distribués, les chaînes de blocs, les mégadonnées, l'intelligence artificielle et l'Internet des objets comme étant des innovations permettant aux OES d'être plus responsables et transparentes par rapport à leurs impacts sociaux et à la valeur qu'elles créent. L'attention accrue portée à ces technologies ouvre la voie à de nouvelles questions de recherche multidisciplinaires sur ce sujet.

Keywords / Mots clés : social impact, social economy, artificial intelligence, blockchain, big data / impact social, économie sociale, intelligence artificielle, chaîne de blocs, mégadonnées

INTRODUCTION

The European Small and Medium-sized Enterprises Executive Agency identifies technology categories such as distributed ledger technology (DLT)—including blockchain, big data, Internet of Things (IoT), and artificial intelligence (AI)—as "key enablers" in the social economy in the next 15 years (Gagliardi, Psarra, Wintjes et al., 2020, p. 143). Digital innovation (or digitalization) is an opportunity for social economy organizations (SEOs) to improve their accountability, transparency, and impact. Social economy organizations are organizations "that prioritize social economy objectives over their economic ones" (Mook, Whitman, Quarter, & Armstrong, 2015, p. 3). Non-financial information must be measured, evaluated, and reported using tools that are useful for improving the capabilities of these organizations to pursue social purposes in a sustainable way. This article introduces these technologies, outlines how digital tools could support SEOs, and then identifies issues that could be analyzed in further research studies.

EXAMPLES OF DIGITAL INNOVATION

Distributed ledger technology, including blockchain, is "a system of electronic records that enables independent entities to establish a consensus around a shared 'ledger'—without relying on a central coordinator to provide the authoritative version of the records. They are used to collect, store, and transfer valuable records securely." (Gagliardi et al., 2020, p. 12). In the social economy, DLT and blockchain are applied mostly in field actions in "support of mass migration, social energy, community banking, finance and distributed democratic management" (Gagliardi et al., p. 12). Therefore, blockchain could positively affect citizen philanthropy and social entrepreneurship at large (Jain & Simha, 2018), charitable and nonprofit organizations such as charity shops (Elsden, Symons, Bunduchi, Speed, & Vines, 2019; Howson, 2021), social projects (Al-Saqaf & Seidler, 2017), humanitarian operations management (Hunt, Narayanan, & Zhuang, 2022), volunteer service (Zhou, Wu, & Zhou, 2017), social impact (Seyedsayamdost & Vanderwal, 2020), and the achievement of sustainable goals, i.e., fighting and breaking poverty, reducing financial exclusion in the global south (Kshetri, 2017a, 2017b), and achieving the other UN 2030 sustainable development goals (Parmentola, Petrillo, Tutore, & De Felice, 2021; Tomlinson, Boberg, Cranefield, Johnstone, Luczak-Roesch, Patterson, & Kapoor, 2021; de Villiers, Kuruppu, & Dissanayake, 2021). Several benefits stem from blockchain operational principles (i.e., decentralization, transparency, equality, and accountability) ensuring that all participants are treated equally and are not abused by a central or more powerful element. Another benefit based on the autonomous and decentralized nature of blockchain is the financial inclusion of people on a global scale (Galen, Brand, Boucherle et al., 2018). There is also widespread interest in exploring the potential of blockchain as an efficient donation tracking system for charitable purposes (Avdoshin & Pesotskaya, 2021; Saleh, Avdoshin, & Dzhonov, 2019; Shaheen, Hamed, Zaghloul et al., 2021; Singh, Rajak, Mistry, & Raut, 2020; Sirisha, Agarwal, Monde, Yadav, & Hande, 2019).

Big data is defined as "voluminous amounts of structured and unstructured data. The potential value of big data is unlocked only when leveraged to drive decision-making, through data management and analytics. Big Data Analytics refers to techniques used to analyze and acquire intelligence from big data" (Gagliardi et al., 2020, p. 12). Interestingly, big data are recognized as a valuable resource to quantify the social context and to measure the impact of the actions implemented (Gibin

& Maturo, 2020). However, one of the major burdens of using big data for social problems is the lack of adequate data governance standards (Desouza & Smith, 2014). Challenging and critical issues about big data include privacy and security for most of the social economy field of activities, e.g., healthcare, social assistance, education. Also, big data could be considered a positive innovation for the nonprofit sector at large, e.g., from the data feminism perspective (Sandberg, Hand, & Russo, 2022), and for social impact (Lytras & Visvizi, 2019) and social impact assessment (Sherren, Parkins, Smit, Holmlund, & Chen, 2017).

Artificial intelligence "refers to the computational, inferential, and learning ability of digital tools (machines) to process, interpret and act upon data and information like humans. Expectations regarding the successful application of AI to the social economy are only just forming" (Gagliardi et al., 2020, p. 13). For instance, the use of chatbots—that is software that simulates human-like conversations with users via text messages—seems to positively influence individual morality in charitable giving, thus suggesting a practical intervention for nonprofit organization managers (Zhou, Fei, He, & Yang, 2022). Similarly, Baek, Bakpayev, Yoon, and Kim (2022) found that smiling AI agents "that look like humans rather than like robots" can increase charitable giving. Other areas of nonprofit management can benefit from AI, including crowdsourcing and online donation management (Jha & Bansal, 2022).

The Internet of things is:

> The virtual and physical environment wherein sensors and actuators blend seamlessly with the environment, and the information is shared across platforms to develop a common operating picture. It is enabled by wireless sensor technologies all around us. Such technological infrastructure may reveal particularly valuable for the social economy, for example, remote sensors and un-manned monitoring may be used in a host of situations from traffic control to environmental monitoring. Moreover, in an ageing society, house-technologies are exceptionally valuable to help independent living. (Gagliardi et al., 2020, p. 12)

de Villiers et al. (2021) clarify that it is possible to measure progress towards the UN 2030 sustainable development goals through IoT and blockchain technology.

DIGITAL INNOVATION FOR SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY

One of the most important effects that digital tools and innovations can have on SEOs is to make them more transparent and accountable. Moreover, if an organization improves its accountability through digitalization, it builds trust with key stakeholder groups, i.e., beneficiaries, partners, donors.

Kuruppu, Dissanayake, and de Villiers (2022) argue that blockchain (and triple-entry accounting) can: increase transparency, auditability, and openness; reduce the administrative burden of manually compiling, verifying, and reporting information; liberate resources and engage with more stakeholder groups, such as beneficiaries and partners; and provide a platform to integrate feedback and engage with less powerful stakeholders. Farooq, Khan, and Abid (2020) propose a blockchain-based charity management platform that aims to provide a transparent, secure, auditable, and efficient system by using crypto wallets and smart contracts, two core elements of blockchain architecture. Another solution is the Karma project, a blockchain-based charity platform designed

to increase the transparency and accountability of donation funds (Renat, Peresichansky, Belenov, & Barger, 2021). These effects should amplify the positive outcomes and the social impact of non-governmental organization initiatives, projects, and operations.

FURTHER APPLICATIONS, COSTS, AND CHALLENGES FOR THE SOCIAL ECONOMY AND SOCIAL IMPACT

Further research on this topic could analyze empirical evidence (case studies and statistical data) of the effects of DLT (including blockchain), big data, AI, and IoT on the operations, management, and accountability of SEOs, as well as their impact on the beneficiaries and partners and on society at large.

The European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) Report (Guerini, 2019) highlights blockchain applications of great interest to the social economy, including: tracing donations and fundraising; improving the governance of SEOs (secure and traceable consultation and voting, facilitating members' participation, etc.); authenticating activities carried out at a distance by SEOs; certificating skills (ensuring the security of qualifications and diplomas in digital format); making intellectual property rights and copyright clearer and more certain (establishing smart contracts for the transfer of content); offering secure telemedicine and e-care system; and making agricultural products fully traceable and identifiable (preventing fraud and counterfeiting) (Gagliardi et al., 2020, p. 131).

At the same time, there are "challenges" that generally apply to the use of DLT (including blockchain), such as "ensuring the quality of the right information; solving accountability and governance of algorithms; complying with data protection rules; and solving the energy and environmental costs (Blockchain suffers from high-energy and memory use)" (Gagliardi et al., 2020, p. 132). Furthermore, some limitations that hinder the purportedly neutrality of blockchain should be recognized. Both the digital and knowledge divide are likely to favour certain cultures and countries, because resourcefulness such as high bandwidth, storage, and processing capacities are often unavailable in many developing countries. In addition, Ballard (2020) warns that charities might avoid cryptocurrency-based donations because of high environmental costs.

Artificial intelligence offers several "opportunities" for society at large (i.e., enabling human self-realization, enhancing human agency, increasing societal capability, and cultivating social cohesion), but it has corresponding "risks" (i.e., devaluing human skills, removing human responsibility, reducing human control, eroding human self-determination) (Floridi, Cowls, Beltrametti et al., 2018, p. 691). Since the social economy is engaged in serving collective ends and distributed governance, it could play a key role in directing technological change towards AI and other digital innovations that creates value for organizations and people and reduces the risk of extracting value and abusing human rights.

Regarding the application and opportunities of big data and IoT, the EU Executive Agency for SMEs reveals that "they have not been frequently mentioned as 'key' to the organization of the social economy" (Gagliardi et al., p. 128). Indeed, big data are usually integrated into other advanced technologies. Big data "are increasingly embedded in activities related to local communities, they may be used to promote the commons as a viable alternative to market-based transaction systems and data sovereignty awareness; match-making applications are increasingly used to source competencies on the labor market" (Gagliardi et al., pp. 86–87).

IoT applications "are increasingly used to collect data from remote sensors to provide unmanned (or supervised) monitoring services" (Gagliardi et al., p. 86). For the social economy, IoT "changes social relationships among people and objects. Applications in this framework are characterized by a social and ethical perspective when retrieving personal data and simulating persons' or communities' behaviors" (Gagliardi et al., pp. 124–125).

Finally, digital innovation can be analyzed in different ways, including examining its effects on:

- the social economy at large;
- the organizations that prioritize social economy objectives (SEOs);
- their initiatives, projects, and operations;
- the social impact and value created; and
- the accountability process developed by the SEOs engaging beneficiaries, partners, donors, and other stakeholders.

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Mixed Methods for Complex Programmes: The Use of the DOME Model for the Evaluation of Public-Private Partnerships Against Educational Poverty in Italy

Gabriele Tomei, University of Pisa

ABSTRACT

In recent years, for the first time in Italy, impact evaluation has been requested as a standard for social projects implemented by public–private partnerships and, more specifically, a condition for them to be financed through the national educational poverty reduction program. This article presents and discusses the Developmental Outcome Monitoring and Evaluation (DOME) model, a mixed and participatory method for the impact assessment of complex and innovative educational poverty reduction programs.

RESUMÉ

Depuis quelques années, pour la première fois en Italie, on exige une évaluation des répercussions comme norme pour les projets sociaux instaurés par les partenariats public-privé et, plus spécifiquement, comme condition pour le financement de ces projets par le programme national éducatif pour la réduction de la pauvreté. Cet article présente et discute le modèle « Developmental Outcome Monitoring and Evaluation » (DOME), c'est-à-dire « surveillance et évaluation des résultats du développement ». Il s'agit d'une méthode mixte et participative pour évaluer l'impact de programmes complexes et innovateurs de réduction de la pauvreté éducative.

Keywords / Mots clés : Developmental Outcome Monitoring and Evaluation (DOME), educational poverty, impact evaluation, public-private partnership, social program / Developmental Outcome Monitoring and Evaluation (DOME) ou surveillance et évaluation des résultats de développement, pauvreté éducative, évaluation des répercussions, partenariat public-privé, programme social

Traditionally, the impact assessment of a program separates the program's success (i.e., what works) from the analysis of how and why the program works. The first consideration relates to attributional designs based on causal imputation models of net effects to the program (Campbell, 1969; Rubin, 1974, 2005). The second consideration relates to designs aimed at a procedural understanding of the contribution that the program actions can offer to the generation of results (Mayne, 2017; Stern, Stame, Mayne, Forss, Davies, & Befani, 2012).

Each of these two methodological approaches have constraints and limitations, meaning neither can fully explore the impact dimensions of a program. For this reason, impact assessment approaches have evolved to integrate several methodologies (Weiss, 1998; Pawson & Tilley, 1997). Some interesting contributions include the possibility of combining the counterfactual approach and the theory-based approach to give empirical force to theoretical modelling and to assign a causal logic to the mediation and moderation mechanisms underlying the programs (Leeuw, 2012; Peck, 2020).

In Italy, impact evaluation has recently become the standard for public–private social projects and has even become a condition for financing by the national program to combat educational poverty.

Child poverty is a complex phenomenon that has lifelong impacts. Structural inequalities faced by children experiencing poverty include living in isolation from urban centres and the services they offer; lack of social educational supports; lack of incentives to attend school consistently; few opportunities to participate in sports activities, trips, and cultural events such as exhibitions, concerts, or shows. The lack of this articulated set of opportunities—on which the development of basic skills and abilities and psychological and relational experiences depend—is what has been defined for some years as "educational poverty" (Save the Children, 2014).

In Italy, unified interventions exist to combat educational poverty; however, these interventions are often fragmented based on funding eligibility. The first and the most significative of such initiatives is the Contrast Fund for Educational Poverty, established in 2016 by the Italian Government, the Foundations of Banking Origin system, and the Forum del Terzo Settore (Forum of the Third Sector), and entrusted to the management of the social enterprise ConIBambini.

To date, the fund has financed 355 localized initiatives administered by public–private partnerships (networks of schools, local authorities, associations, social enterprises), committing about €600 million to the issue. The management of these projects is generally entrusted to the territories themselves, whereas the fund plays a supportive role (financial, organizational, and technical) to promote a new generation of "educating communities" (Tomei & Galligani, 2020) or "territorial educational agreements" (FDD, 2022). The goal of the fund is to complement the territories' measures to combat the material and monetary deprivation faced by families, and to offer significant experiences and opportunities to children experiencing social exclusion and poverty.

The strategies used within the different projects are particularly complex since they mobilize many actors that move at different institutional and contextual levels and according to different normative or organizational frameworks. For all these reasons, the impact assessment of projects against educational poverty in Italy is a valuable case study for the experimentation of innovative methodologies.

Where to evaluate these projects, all the different actors need to monitor their own strategic actions (Giddens, 1990). If the partners involved do not develop this "reflective" skill or reflex, it will be difficult for them to grasp the strategies that emerge through complex dynamics (Mintzberg, 2007), to perceive what is happening during the intervention, identify what is working (or not) and understand whether the actions of the project are having the desired impact (Koleros & Mayne, 2019), and to integrate the results of the evaluation in their renewed strategic commitment.

The VOIS (Valutazione degli Outcome e dell'Impatto Sociale) research team at the University of Pisa created the Developmental Outcome Monitoring and Evaluation (DOME) model, a mixed and participatory method for the impact assessment of complex and innovative educational poverty reduction programs (Tomei, forthcoming). The DOME model is structured around four pillars inspired by the research design of developmental evaluation (Patton, 1994; 2011).

Figure 1. DOME model
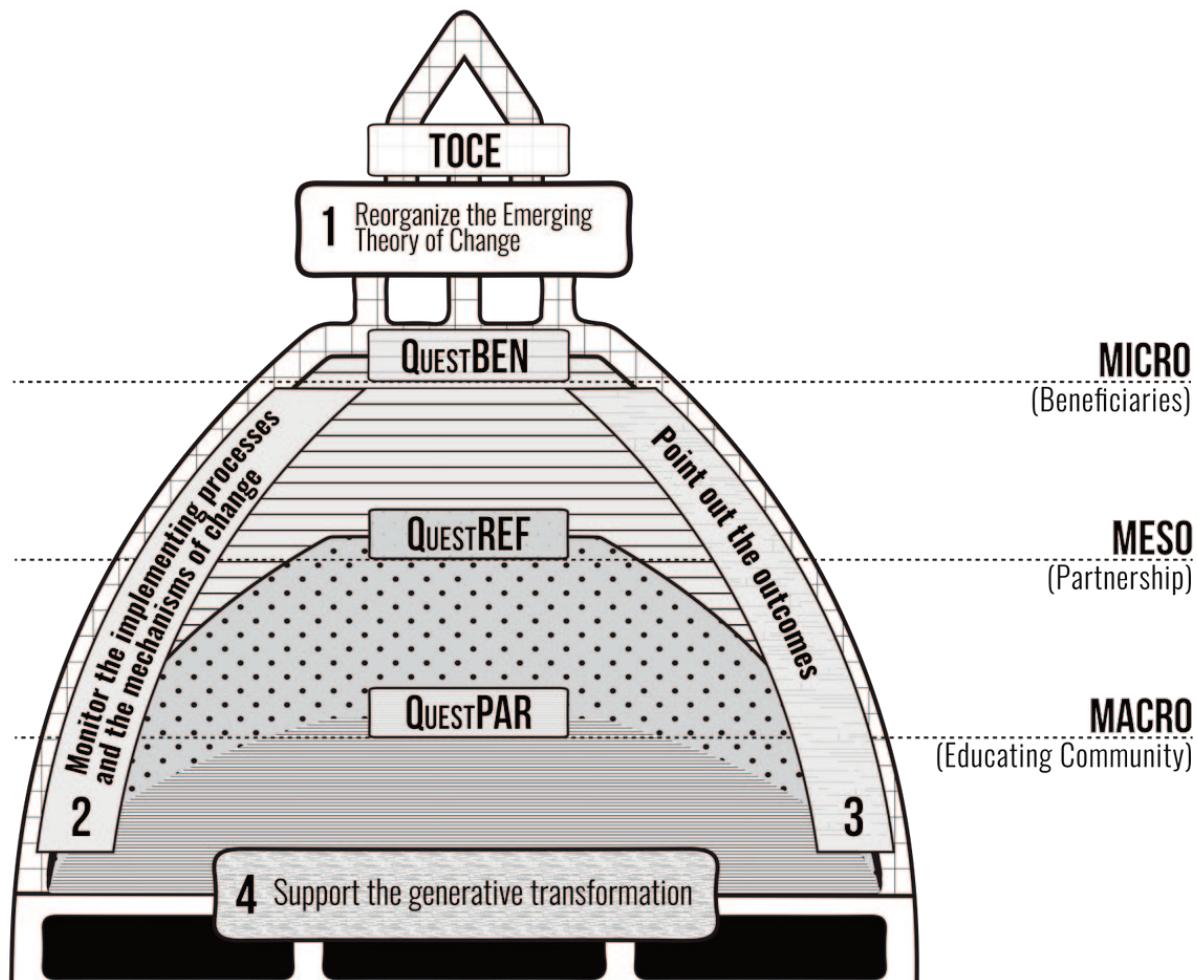
The four pillars are the foundation (pillar 4), the supporting walls (pillars 2 and 3), and the capstone (pillar 1). The "materials" or tools specific to each pillar are what "holds" the dome in place, similar to Brunelleschi's dome in Florence. The "dome" metaphor helps illustrate the role of the of the pillars within the assessment process.

- The first pillar of the DOME model, "Reorganizing the Emerging Theory of Change," corresponds with the research activities that link the actions, results, outcomes, and impacts, which are at the centre of the subsequent research observations. This pillar is based on the Theory of Emerging Change (TOCE), which "supports" the whole methodological framework of the assessment (Galligani, 2019).

- The second pillar of the DOME model, "Exploring the Mechanisms of Change," represents the underlying mechanisms that explain individual and organizational changes caused by the project and/or by more general changes on the external (institutional and socio-economic) context. Three different mixed method tools allow for the exploration of the changes taking place at the educational community level (QuestREF, i.e., participative process monitoring), at the partnership level (QuestPAR, i.e., interorganizational social network analysis), and at the beneficiaries' level (QuestBEN, i.e., counterfactual evaluation of the effects of the program on beneficiaries).
- The third pillar, "Giving evidence to the outcomes," aims to conceptualize and analyze the causal links and the mechanisms of change (using narrative strategies, i.e., outcome harvesting) to uncover a reliable theoretical representation of the mechanisms generating an impact.
- The fourth and final pillar, "Supporting generative transformation," promotes the (public) utilization of the evaluation results (Patton, 2011).

CONCLUSION

Currently, the DOME model is used by the VOIS team at the University of Pisa to assess the impact of 30 different projects, aimed at the reduction of educational poverty. These projects are led by nonprofit organizations and implemented at local and regional levels through public–private partnerships.

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