Chapter Three: Panarchy

The Centre for the Study of Co-operatives exists within larger-scale systems that are crucial to its longevity and success. These systems, and the interactions and linkages among them, can be understood as a *panarchy.* The two major systems that most affect the Centre are the University of Saskatchewan and the co-operative sector, with the provincial government as a distant third. The university itself operates within the larger realm of higher education in Canada, which is influenced by provincial and federal government funding, support, policies, laws, norms, and media. The co-op sector interactions include co-operative businesses (direct funders of the CSC and others), which are part of the broader economic system, co-op sector supports such as apex organizations and other similar entities, and co-operative values, such as those defined by the International Co-operative Alliance's "Statement on the Co-operative Identity."[120] Some of these larger-scale systems have been discussed tangentially in the last chapter; this chapter will examine a selection of larger panarchy interactions in more detail.

The Co-operative Sector

Sector Contributions

The health and economic well-being of each of the co-operative funders has a direct effect on the Centre for the Study of Co-operatives. Over the past thirty-five and more years, eight distinct co-operative entities have contributed to the Centre's co-op sector funding. During the origin phase, some of the donors, including Federated Co-operatives Limited

[120] See https://www.ica.coop/en/cooperatives/cooperative-identity.

(FCL) and the Co-operative College of Canada, were less economically robust than others such as the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool and Credit Union Central. Funding models that defined co-operative input to the CSC have always taken into account the economic health of the businesses, as well as their size and output in relation to the other funders, and have been adjusted accordingly. The Saskatchewan Wheat Pool and Credit Union Central were typically the largest contributors, with input from the others scaling down according to capacity. Over time, as it emerged from a period of financial restriction and instability in the 1980s, FCL's overall contribution rose, and as of the 2014–2019 agreement, it became the largest donor. Other co-op sector supporters — the Co-operative College of Canada, the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, and CUMIS — have withdrawn. In 1987, the Co-operative College became part of the new co-op apex service organization, the Canadian Co-operative Association, now renewed as Co-operatives and Mutuals Canada. As noted in Chapter One, the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool ceased to be a co-operative in 2004, re-formed as investor-owned Viterra, and revoked all funding to co-op entities, including the CSC. CUMIS also withdrew from direct funding of the Centre that same year. As its contribution was minimal, its absence was less noticeable; moreover, its contribution was split between The Co-operators and the Co-operative Trust Company, so that part did not change. From 2009 on, the funding model became more complex, with some contributing set amounts each year and others indexed to inflation via CPI increments. In 2014, Credit Union Central indicated its intention to withdraw — which it did in 2017 — leaving FCL as the largest, and only remaining, original funder.

While the Centre for the Study of Co-operatives has shown remarkable resilience in the face of changes to its co-op sector funding over the years, including surviving the withdrawal of the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, there remain factors at play within the larger picture that matter. The first question is, *why* do these co-operatives contribute funding to the CSC? They have all changed personnel over the course of the Centre's existence; it's impossible to expect that the original impe-

tus for university curriculum intervention, co-operative research, or personal relationships would remain the same. They have all faced their own internal struggles. One of the most common concerns, cited by both co-op literature and multiple interviews for this history project, is that co-ops have a difficult time, overall, operating as co-operatives or thinking co-operatively. Within regulatory and education milieux that are more familiar with investor-owned businesses and operate within a consumer-oriented transactional economy, the obvious question becomes, what direct benefit does the Centre for the Study of Co-operatives provide to each of its funders?

The nature of a changing relationship might best be exemplified by Credit Union Central (CUC). As one of the original funders, CUC had a long relationship with the Centre, but in 2017, it withdrew. Why? For Credit Union Central, the obvious benefits were no longer as visible. Myrna Hewitt, who represented the credit unions on the board, saw it as a three-pronged problem. In the first place, credit unions both provincially and nationally have invested in internal training as well as supporting university degree programs with a credit union focus. These avenues supersede any of the graduate or research training earned by University of Saskatchewan students through the CSC, which has either been more limited and sporadic, or focused on co-operatives and the larger social economy in general instead of credit unions in particular. Second, after early leader Norm Bromberger and his successor Bill Turner left the Centre's board, Myrna Hewitt wondered if the credit union representatives on the board were perhaps less strong and persuasive, less able to encourage researchers to concentrate on credit union issues. Certainly, less research has been focused on credit unions than on other kinds of co-operatives, such as retail or producer organizations. Finally, by 2014, there was a much larger transactional issue: "The CU just didn't see the connection — what value they were getting for their money; they didn't feel it anymore," Hewitt noted.[121] That

[121] Interview with Myrna Hewitt, 5 February 2018.

value-for-money transactional relationship is directly at odds with the long game promoted by the founding co-operators, but it is a reality of today's business world and cannot be overlooked.

The leaders of the Centre's founding co-operatives were friends and colleagues; mutual respect is evident in board minutes, correspondence, and other documents viewed for this project. But as co-operatives grow and change, their relationship to other co-ops sometimes changes as well. The CSC relies, in large part, on a continued level of mutual respect *among* its funding co-operatives, which come to the table as a group to support the Centre. Should those relationships, or those between the funding co-ops and the university or the provincial government, change or become antagonistic, there is risk to the CSC. As discussed in Chapter One, the renegotiation around the second five-year contract brought co-operative heft to bear on the university; their relationship, the co-ops pointed out, went far beyond the measly amount of money the university contributed to the Centre. The university, looking at all of its projects, capitulated.

One of the most important relationships is between the Centre and Federated Co-operatives Limited (FCL), and by extension, the Co-operative Retailing System (CRS), the individual retail co-ops that are its member-owners. Throughout its thirty-five-year history, Centre faculty and graduate students have produced extensive research about the CRS, FCL, and subsidiaries, including PhD dissertations, numerous MA theses, three published history books, a major research project on rural and Indigenous co-op development, countless policy papers and keynote speeches, and a multitude of smaller projects. The relationship is strong and productive, but detractors exist. Observers have cynically called the CSC the Centre for Federated

Studies.[122] As a result, the close relationship between FCL and the Centre could be a limiting factor in drawing co-operative support from other sources.

Because FCL and Credit Union Central are second-tier co-operatives, there has always been a gap between the Centre for the Study of Co-operatives and co-op people on the ground. The Centre may have a good working relationship or projects on the go with the second-tier co-ops, but that doesn't mean that it interacts effectively with the Biggar Credit Union, the Duperow Co-op, or other first-line co-operatives. Moreover, for much of its existence before today's digital age, the Centre relied heavily on board members to communicate back to their co-ops (and by extension, their co-operative owners at the community level) about the Centre's activities, research results, and new findings. Frankly, that reliance was generally misplaced, and on-the-ground co-ops had little to no idea that the Centre existed, much less that it might have something helpful to offer.[123]

On the other hand, the Centre has built a national and international reputation on stellar research, wide-ranging interests, faculty depth, and excellent publications. The Centre's interdisciplinary approach and its close working connections with real co-operatives were also major draws.[124] For those reasons, in 2014, an international funder — CHS Inc. — joined the co-op ranks on the new five-year agreement and participated in the process that changed the Centre's governance and teaching roles. CHS helped finance the foundational work that created the new Graduate Certificate in the Social Economy and Co-operatives, which was offered through the Centre's new administrative home in the Johnson Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy. There is a distinct difference, long-time

[122] During interviews with Canadian co-operative developers during the Co-operative Innovation Project, at least three interviewees pointed out the strength of the relationship between FCL and the CSC, and one produced the moniker. I refrain from naming the source.
[123] Interview with Lou Hammond Ketilson, 4 December 2017.
[124] Interview with William Nelson, 29 November 2017.

co-op advocate William Nelson explained to me in an interview, between corporate *philanthropy* and corporate *investment*. If a co-op or other funder views its relationship with the Centre as one of philanthropy or transaction for service, then the relationship is at risk. But sustainability rises if the relationship is regarded as one of investment — of recognizing the value in maintaining a major research, teaching, and publication centre that has the capacity to operate as a hub to other, smaller players such as research chairs or underfunded apex groups.[125]

The CSC has been a leader in the creation of a distinct international body of work now known as co-operative studies. With journals, a large and connected on-line presence, and under the auspices of the International Co-operative Alliance (ICA), co-op studies have a place within both the co-operative and academic lexicon around the globe. It is now possible to chart an academic learning path that draws extensively and intensively from a worldwide group of co-op studies experts. Reflecting the original multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary makeup of co-operative studies, that path can be accessed from multiple starting points: economics, law, history, sociology, environment, business, and many others. The question becomes, is co-op studies now strong enough as an interdisciplinary conglomeration of associated researchers to grow organically, without co-op financial support and intervention? Or would it collapse and disappear without active research centres to promote its growth?

Other Sector Relationships

For the Centre for the Study of Co-operatives, relationships with other sector organizations are both supportive and competitive. Support comes through mutual connections and sharing of information, interaction at conferences, on-the-ground co-op development support, and shared research goals, including partnerships for large projects. Competition is based

[125]Ibid.

on the limited number of large co-operatives in Canada that are in a financial position to support centres, institutions, and apex organizations. Over time, these groups have included the Co-operative College of Canada, the Canadian Co-operative Association, Co-operatives and Mutuals Canada, provincial apex organizations such as the Saskatchewan Co-operative Association, and by extension, the ICA. Of course, the Centre for the Study of Co-operatives at the University of Saskatchewan has a significantly different mandate and goal than advocacy umbrella organizations or co-op development groups. Most often, the CSC works in partnership with these groups on specific research or curriculum projects, creating symbiotic learning and leveraging knowledge.

A secondary broad group of co-op sector relationships includes other co-operative research entities embedded within higher education. Again, these associations embody both mutual support and competition for limited funding. Examples include: various chairs based within other institutions such as the University of Winnipeg; other research centres such as Ian MacPherson's short-lived BC Institute for Co-operative Studies in Victoria; currently robust programs such as IRECUS at the Université de Sherbrooke and the International Centre for Co-operative Management at St. Mary's University in Halifax; and some institutions that offer co-operative content, often alongside community economic development. As Lou Hammond Ketilson noted, "We all have the same co-op funders — provincial associations, national associations. St. Mary's had been out fundraising; Ian started his research centre and wanted funding. There was a new centre being created in Manitoba, which FCL found challenging. The more that we succeeded in our mandate, the more the co-ops were being asked to fund those growth activities."[126] Yet, as with the co-op apex organizations, the CSC has developed critical working relationships with many of these entities, co-producing new research and sharing projects.

[126] Interview with Lou Hammond Ketilson, 4 December 2017.

The Centre's publishing function, embedded within its communications mandate, provides co-operative researchers and educators around the world with a reliable, sophisticated, and accessible publishing vehicle well known throughout North America and internationally. While success in these areas indicates the health and interest in learning about co-operatives and conducting new research, it is important to recognize that all funders have financial limitations. On the other hand, what is more important to the co-op sector — having a small number of well-funded, large, active centres for co-operative research and education, or a larger number of smaller centres with limited people, scope, mandate, or time? As noted in this history, a smaller centre may not have the staff capacity to support larger, longer, or more in-depth projects, including consulting projects for co-operatives. There is danger in spreading too thin.

Co-op sector funding for the Centre has and will in the future rely on two major variables: willingness on the part of the sector to continue CSC support, and the ability of the CSC to differentiate its work and impact. Original board member Vern Leland, discussing the Centre's future during our interview, noted that the CSC must have a clear focus and role. At the beginning, the Saskatchewan co-operatives that put up the money simply wanted co-op knowledge brought into the provincial university curriculum. Over time, though, it became clear that the Centre was leading critical research that helped to define and clarify the difference between co-operative businesses and other types of enterprises on a much larger scale, with national and international impact. "That knowledge would disappear," he said, "if the Centre wasn't there."[127]

Certainly, the CSC is known more for its research than its teaching, although graduates across the board have been more than satisfied with their training. Other centres, such as St. Mary's, have made a point of noting the critical importance of the Centre's research output: "Tom Webb of St. Mary's Univer-

[127] Interview with Vern Leland, 20 January 2018.

sity in Halifax has commented that while their business school can launch a co-op management program, it can't be done without the research carried out by our Centre. Research is complementary and fundamental to the needs of co-operatives for development and for innovation."[128] Trying to balance research with teaching has always been a central problem for the Centre. While Saskatchewan-based funders might look for co-operatives in the university curriculum, others might consider the Centre's research output to be its greatest contribution to the sector. The issue, then, is whether Saskatchewan or even western-Canadian-based funders are willing to support these larger goals. The Centre for the Study of Co-operatives most certainly cannot rest on its laurels. With multiple competing centres, chairs, and associations looking for funding, the co-op sector is itself a landscape of change.

Co-operative Principles

A fascinating aspect of co-ops is that they not only exist within the larger corporate environment, but they also operate according to a self-defined a set of principles. These principles, while not prescriptive, offer a means of recognizing what is "co-operative." Researched and defined by the ICA, the seven principles are:

- voluntary and open membership
- democratic member control
- member economic participation
- autonomy and independence
- education, training, and information
- co-operation among co-operatives
- concern for community[129]

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[128] "Director's Report," Centre for the Study of Co-operatives *Annual Report*, 2002–2003.
[129] See https://www.ica.coop/en/cooperatives/cooperative-identity.

While not set in stone (the principles evolve over time, and not all apply in all situations), they provide an internal "code" by which co-operatives can speak to one another. Embedded in strategic documents, the interviews I conducted, and in annual and board reports, co-operators tend to use a shorthand: principle five, for example, references education, broadly conceived. The principles also provide researchers with specific areas of focus. Member ownership, democratic control, and member participation have each offered ample scope to study issues of governance, decision making, and strategy in co-operative theory. And much of the work produced by the Centre for the Study of Co-operatives on the connection between co-ops and community has led to a higher understanding of the seventh principle, concern for community.

In terms of its support from the co-op community, the fifth principle (education, training, and information) has proven to be the most important in the Centre's operations, though co-operation among co-operatives and concern for community are also part of the impetus behind its funding and direction. From its origins, the CSC was created to be a leader in education, training, and information; financial support could be viewed as a "checkmark" in a funding co-operative's appropriate principle box. Such a mentality, however, misunderstands the critical role of the Centre in building and disseminating so much of the body of co-operative knowledge that is used by co-op educators around the world. It also changes the relationship between funder and CSC from one of partnership and shared vision to one of transaction and obligation. A transaction approach introduces brittleness and a sense of exchange — money paid for services rendered — a perspective that turns co-op funders into customers and co-op educational organizations, not just the CSC, into service providers. A viewpoint like this hurts all players, basically asking co-operative educational programs to become identical, like grocery stores competing for customers using price, product lists, marketing lines, and gimmicks. A transactional relationship forces co-op education to compete instead of differentiate, a risky race with constantly moving finish lines.

If the Centre for the Study of Co-operatives is viewed as an example of co-operative principle five in action, it's important to make sure that its activities somehow match or support the principle. The ICA defines principle five as follows:

Co-operatives provide education and training for their members, elected representatives, managers, and employees so they can contribute effectively to the development of their co-operatives. They inform the general public — particularly young people and opinion leaders — about the nature and benefits of co-operation.[130]

In this definition, all of the onus is on co-operative entities to educate and train their own members and staff about co-ops, and to inform (not educate) the general public about co-operatives. This makes education both internal and external to a co-operative. Larger co-operatives generally have internal training and education programs, especially for staff and leadership. These programs have sometimes used the research information and/or the living expertise of the Centre's faculty and staff, but for the most part, they are specific to the company and its culture. A few Canadian co-operatives support staff or leaders to take formalized undergraduate or master's-level courses in co-op theory or community development, such as those taught at IRECUS in Sherbrooke and St. Mary's Sobey School of Business in Halifax, or the Graduate Certificate in the Social Economy and Co-operatives at the School of Public Policy in Saskatoon, but these initiatives have not replaced internal co-operative education and training.

Yet, the problem of "informing" the broader general public about co-operatives has consistently been the more difficult of the two parts of principle five. As noted, public education was a large part of the impetus that led the original funders to create the CSC as a means of inserting co-operative knowledge into university-level courses. At the time in Saskatchewan, there was extensive knowledge of co-operatives at the government

[130] Ibid.

level, although policy and law research were significant issues in the Centre's original mandate. The Centre's communication function, also part of its core activities, responded to the need to reach a wider public audience, including government and policymakers, to explain the benefits of co-operative ownership and provide them with new insights into co-op business practices. However, the function of *informing* is difficult to quantify or measure. Should that be gauged in terms of knowledge about co-operatives? And whose responsibility is it to inform the wider public about co-ops? Co-operatives themselves, co-op apex groups such as provincial or national organizations, or research and education centres? The answer, of course, is all of them, but creating co-ordinated outreach, education, and marketing efforts that combine the energy and vitality of these groups has proven difficult. In many cases, the co-op sector is a victim of duplication, not acceleration, of these endeavours.

Principle five, as outlined by the ICA, does not specifically include the word *research.* While some might be content to assume that research is part of "education and training," the absence of the word is disconcerting. The assumption could be that there is enough existing information about co-operatives, and principle five is simply a function of training, educating, and informing more people about co-op ownership and values. Such an assumption is, of course, absurd. Co-operatives themselves are constantly changing, creating new versions of the co-op form, conforming to legal regulations in different countries around the world, or working to establish new parameters and laws. Co-operatives are dynamic and thus require constant study if researchers and others are to remain adequately informed.

Even within a single co-operative, self-reflection and growth demands investigation through research. Some of the larger co-operatives worldwide have internal research departments whose function is generally two-fold. *Technical research*, which is related to economic performance measures, makes up the largest portion, but *research related to social per-*

formance is gaining importance. For a co-operative, social performance includes sustainability, community relationships, and supporting other co-ops, matters addressed in principles six and seven. Social performance also involves attention to co-operative institutional success, such as growing membership, increasing member engagement, and supporting co-op governance.

There is a strong connection between co-operatives and research in western Canada. The Co-operative Union of Saskatchewan, a forerunner to today's Saskatchewan Co-operative Association, had an active research committee that aimed to identify and collate internal research activities within large credit unions and co-ops as well as the provincial Department of Co-operation and Co-operative Development. A report issued in 1964 revealed that the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool and FCL both had internal research directors and analysts, and both would, in addition, contract or otherwise support university research on a project-by-project or general basis — often via the Centre for Community Studies at the University of Saskatchewan, where Leo Kristjanson held a position. Credit unions and co-operative insurance agencies would outsource such work on a piecemeal basis as required, usually to a university. The provincial co-op development department had a more robust research component that would investigate both economic and social questions for co-ops.[131] Clearly, in addition to the origin story that brought these same groups together in 1980 to discuss the creation of the CSC, the major western Canadian co-operatives understood and supported the need for, and value of, research. In a way, the history of the Centre for the Study of Co-operatives can be traced back to the Co-operative Union of Saskatchewan and its research committee.

Although the co-operative movement is underpinned by formalized principles, there are those within the sector who

[131] Co-operative Union of Saskatchewan. "Report — For Research Committee," 1964. In Research Committee Papers, vertical file, Co-operative College of Canada files, Centre for the Study of Co-operatives files.

are *practical* adopters of co-operative ownership and others who support co-ops for *ideological* reasons. While in most cases this split is neither visible nor important, ideological support tends to be less critical of the downsides of co-operative ownership and more willing to overlook or even ignore the practical realities of whether or not a co-op is the right ownership model for a particular business or entity. Ideology often drives conversations around politics and the dominance of capitalism, characterizing co-ops and their supporters as anti-capitalist. Nonetheless, ideology remains important. Researchers have clearly shown that it plays a central role within larger movements where co-operatives grow or are specifically mentored.[132]

A related issue within the broader co-op movement is a marketing technique to brand co-operatives as more environmentally sustainable than capitalistic ownership models. While sustainable environmental practices and green energy initiatives are important, even essential, in a world facing climate change, the question becomes, is it necessary to eschew fossil fuels in order to be a true co-operative? That push might go too far. Some of Canada's largest co-operative businesses — the gas energy co-ops in Alberta, for example, or Federated Co-operatives Limited, which owns the Co-op Refinery in Regina and produces petroleum — use the co-op model as a way to gain leverage and fairness in the oil industry.[133] What, then, is a co-operative? Is it simply an ownership model for a business or entity, or do co-operatives have direct moral imperatives? As noted, research has shown that ideology is an important aspect of the larger co-operative sector, underpinning much new growth, movement, and change. At the university level, where

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[132] See, for example, the work of Mitch Diamantopoulos, including "Breaking Out of Co-operation's 'Iron Cage': From Movement Degeneration to Building a Developmental Movement," *Annals of Public and Cooperative Economics* 83, no. 2 (June 2012): 199–214. https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.1467-8292.2012.00461.x.

[133] A heated bear-pit discussion on this issue erupted at the annual Canadian Association for Studies in Co-operation Conference in Ottawa, Ontario, in 2015. Personal experience of the author.

research must stand on its merits and be ready for close scrutiny, what is the place of ideology? As in the broader co-op sector, some researchers have a more practical viewpoint, while others embrace an ideological perspective. Both have produced excellent research, provocative arguments, and implemented critical discussions in many directions. We need all perspectives in our efforts to grow the co-operative conversation.

Today's co-operative sector, through its national and international connections, is a site of constant learning and exchange, bringing knowledge and new ideas from one place and introducing them in another. Education is not about the past; it is about the future. Leo Kristjanson, who spearheaded the creation of the Centre for the Study of Co-operatives, once argued: "Co-operative education should be education for living in the society of today and tomorrow and not for living in the society of yesterday."[134] The ICA has a robust research arm with its own leaders, who advocate and support co-operative research and bring together researchers in multiple events around the world each year. Centres such as the CSC, whose roots go beyond education to include research, act as a bridge and conduit for new ideas, helping co-operatives to learn different ways of organizing, governing, and growing. Research work is integral to principle five, responsible for building and constantly renewing the body of knowledge used to provide the education, training, and information functions it addresses. It may be time to consider revisiting the fifth principle, expanding it from an education function to one that encompasses the creation of new knowledge.

[134] Leo Kristjanson, "Some Thoughts on Research for Co-operatives," paper presented to the Institute of Co-operative Education, Saskatoon, 21–25 June 1965. Research Committee Papers, vertical file, Co-operative College of Canada, Centre for the Study of Co-operatives files.

The University Sector

The Centre for the Study of Co-operatives also operates within the larger University of Saskatchewan panarchy, which is itself part of the Canadian, North American, and world university landscape. The University of Saskatchewan was founded in 1907 as a provincially based university located in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. Similar in many ways to the land grant universities of the United States, it was the only university in the province (albeit with a separate campus in Regina) until 1974, when that campus officially became the University of Regina. The University of Saskatchewan is a medical-doctoral university, with colleges of medicine, nursing, pharmacy and nutrition, veterinary medicine, dentistry, law, education, engineering, agriculture, kinesiology, commerce (now Edwards School of Business), arts and science, and graduate studies and research, to award doctorates. Funding is a mix of provincial taxation support, tuition, and land rental, with a new focus on growing endowments.

Because the Centre for the Study of Co-operatives was funded initially from outside the university (the provincial government gave 40 percent, the co-operative sector, 60 percent), university in-kind commitment was limited. Over time, though, the university has become the Centre's largest financial supporter, contributing well over 50 percent of its operating budget. This inevitably meant that the Centre transitioned its focus to make sure it was meeting the university's expectations around research, teaching, and service. At the individual level, a typical tenured appointment expects faculty time allocation to be 40 percent research, 40 percent teaching, and 20 percent service. A change in position, such as appointment as department head, assistant or associate dean of a college, provost, or other administrative post, would shift those expectations, lowering research and teaching responsibilities and raising the service component. While reducing research output is acceptable from the university point of view — for a limited period of time — the co-op sector partners didn't share that same

perspective or timeline. Their five-year funding commitments carried expectations of ongoing research and results geared towards supporting issues of concern for co-operatives, outcomes that they could report back to individual co-op boards as measures of the CSC's usefulness and success. Aligning university and co-operative timelines was often a major challenge. Affinity Credit Union affiliate Myrna Hewitt and CSC faculty Lou Hammond Ketilson once described the relationship as trying to drive a wagon with two horses hitched to the traces: when one horse is moving, the other is stock still; when the first is stopped, the second is moving.[135] Pulling together, at the same time, was a result to be celebrated.

Other norms of university faculty careers were also occasionally a mismatch for the Centre. Administrative appointments typically do not happen until a person achieves tenure and increased rank, at least to the associate level. Early career researchers, who need to publish books or a number of peer-reviewed articles to attain tenure, are not usually asked to take on senior appointments, including directorships. None of the Centre's full-time faculty could assume the director's position until they had been awarded tenure and promotion within their home department, a factor that limited director searches to outside the university or the CSC until its faculty were well established. According to faculty union stipulations, tenured faculty are eligible for sabbatical, research, or administrative leave to compensate for service work given to the university or to underwrite longer trips for research projects. Sabbatical leave was a double-edged sword for the Centre and its co-op funders. Leaves could indeed facilitate new research work or connections — a positive benefit — but they might also reduce the Centre's research output or function for that period of time. And if a director was due for sabbatical leave, someone had to become interim director. Continuity was maintained by the

[135] Description of university–co-operative research, Lou Hammond Ketilson and Myrna Hewitt, Canadian Association for Studies in Co-operation Conference, Ottawa, 2015.

general practice of other Centre faculty members temporarily stepping into the role.

In Canada, as noted above, universities compete for research funding via the federal government's arms-length research councils. Winning grant funds from these prestigious and competitive pots marks a huge measure of success for the university, the department or centre, and for the faculty members who design and write the grant application and research program. Undertaking the research improves productivity back up the chain, including drawing in new graduate students. Securing these grants also improves both the Centre's visibility and respectability within the university, which, in turn, may help cement the university's financial and other commitments to the Centre. How did these measurements play out in the co-op world? One interviewee commented, "Academics measure things in a really weird way." Large grants produce copious outputs, but that's just a matter of counting. "All they want to talk about is all the papers that they've published. Six papers using the same research. As a practitioner, I don't care about that. What did you learn from that? What use is that research to me or the co-op sector?"[136] While this adverse perspective may not be the norm across the sector, its bluntness induces respect.

But as universities in Canada have grown, both in size and in number, during the Centre's thirty-five-year existence, the ability to win significant external grants and awards has shrunk. In response, the CSC has moved back towards securing large research grants through relationships with the co-op sector; an example is the Co-operative Innovation Project funded by FCL. This move may signal a change within the Centre to focus its extensive research capacity more clearly on the co-op sector. On the other hand, this may not be consistent with university research values of autonomy and tri-council grant success. If the Centre's external funding does not help the univer-

[136] Interview with Myrna Hewitt, 5 February 2018.

sity raise itself in the rankings, the university may cease to financially or otherwise support its activities.

The number of university-trained researchers has grown exponentially compared to those available when the Centre was building its faculty complement. While the CSC attracted researchers of enormous talent who built successful research and publishing careers, the ground has since shifted. Canadian and international universities have developed advanced training, and more people hold Master's and PhDs than universities can absorb as tenure-track appointments; the oft-cited number is that only one in five PhDs will garner a tenure-track position. The result is a large pool of intellectual and research capital for smart, forward-thinking companies to employ. Writer Brenda Brouwer pointed out that PhDs are "skilled communicators, problem solvers, critical thinkers and lifelong learners who are highly motivated, comfortable with uncertainty and ambiguity and are increasingly globally connected."[137] With exceptional research and communication skills, they present a new and different body of talent; in other words, businesses no longer need to ask universities to conduct thorough, methodologically sound research to produce new information, perspectives, and ideas. As the landscape of co-operative research and education across Canada changes, it is highly probable that more non-university-employed PhDs will be involved.

Like traditional fields such as medicine, history, or economics, co-operative studies now has a strong, well-respected, worldwide academic base and has trained exceptional researchers and practitioners. The Centre's contribution to this growth is immeasurable. It has also been a leader in the evolution of the discipline from its early focus on questions internal to co-ops to issues the sector as a whole must address and consider. In raising the profile of co-operative research and creating strong global connections, the Centre has strengthened the

[137] Brenda Brouwer, "Canada needs more PhDs," *University Affairs*, 7 March 2016. https://www.universityaffairs.ca/opinion/in-my-opinion/canada-needs-more-phds/ accessed 3 April 2018.

international status of the University of Saskatchewan, potentially reinforcing university support for its continuation and renewal.

The Provincial Government

Funding from the provincial government is a major benefit, but also has significant limitations, as the economic health of the university rises and falls with the economy of the province. This type of support, particularly for specific projects, also fluctuates with the political climate. The origins of the Centre for the Study of Co-operatives fall firmly within provincial government history.

The Co-operative Organization Branch was part of the Department of Agriculture from 1913 to 1944, when it was reformed into its own unit, the Department of Co-operatives and Co-operative Development. In 1955, the provincial government — then the left-wing Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF, later NDP) — created a Royal Commission on Agriculture and Rural Life. Chaired by W.B. Baker, then director of the School of Agriculture on campus, the commission chastised the university for not being of service to the people of Saskatchewan, and recommended that the university create a bureau, institute, or centre whose focus was applied research dedicated to Saskatchewan communities. This led to the founding, in 1957, of the Centre for Community Studies, with Baker as its director.[138] Leo Kristjanson came to the University of Saskatchewan to serve as a member of this centre's faculty. Baker and Kristjanson, along with the rest of the team, undertook both internally funded and contract research on a case-by-case basis, reinforcing the connection between the university and its community partners. The co-op sector in Saskatchewan was a regular patron of these services, and the Department of Co-

[138] Michael Hayden, Seeking a Balance: University of Saskatchewan 1907–1982 (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1983), 230–32.

operation and Co-operative Development also worked closely with the centre, including on the provincial co-op research committee. However, the centre was de-funded by the Liberal government of Ross Thatcher in 1966. Perceived as too left-wing and political in its motivations and supports, it was an obvious target for funding cuts.

The Centre for the Study of Co-operatives, built by Leo Kristjanson in part on the model used for the Centre for Community Studies, was similarly subject to funding changes relating to the political flavour of the provincial government. The Department of Co-operation and Co-operative Development remained in full activity from 1944 through the early 1980s, and took part in the original discussions around creating the Centre. It also funded 40 percent of the initial five years of CSC operations, with the money flowing through its operating budget, beginning in 1982 in the dying days of Allan Blakeney's NDP government. CSC funding from the department ended in 1987, the same year it was dissolved and subsumed into Tourism, Small Business and Co-operatives.[139] With the left-wing NDP taking power once again in 1991 under Premier Roy Romanow, co-operative development shifted from its strange collaboration with tourism to a new base within the larger category of economic development. In 1994, the Government of Saskatchewan recommitted itself to financial support for the Centre as part of the 1994–1999 operating agreement. The signing authority was the Minister of Economic Development.

In 1997, the responsibility for co-ops moved to the new Department of Economic and Co-operative Development, a change that was reflected in the Centre's next five-year renewal. But once again, internal shuffling came into play, and in 2002, that ministry was subsumed into the Department of Industry and Resources. Co-operatives no longer held space in

[139] The institutional history that traces co-operative responsibility within the provincial government can be found in the Saskatchewan Archives index fonds. Provincial archivists are responsible for the province's institutional government history and have developed finding aids for each of the entities discussed in this section. Find them online at http://www.saskarchives.com/collection.

the title or name. Nonetheless, the Minister of Industry and Resources was a signatory to the Centre's 2004–2009 operating agreement. In 2007, the Saskatchewan Party came into power, and in 2008, established a new entity — Enterprise Saskatchewan — which replaced the former Department of Industry and Resources. Enterprise Saskatchewan signed the Centre's 2009–2014 agreement, but since 2014, the provincial government has withdrawn from direct support.

Reflection: Panarchy and Resilience

The simplest aspect of resilience is longevity, and the Centre has been connected with the university for more than thirty-five years, an anchor point for the Diefenbaker Building. Longevity creates a sense of familiarity and the possibility of institutional recognition and support for continuity. Through its faculty and staff, the Centre has built a national and international reputation that Brett Fairbairn characterizes as "*very high*, with a very positive impression, perhaps even unrealistic." There are a number of co-operative research centres around the world but none, in his perspective, are as interdisciplinary as the Centre. Between its outstanding research record and commitment to publishing, the CSC has developed a stellar presence on the co-operative stage.

But longevity is not the only defining feature of resilience for the Centre. Its adaptive capacity to changes within the co-operative, university, and government sectors has been remarkable. With only eight distinct co-op funders over its lifetime — the majority with a home base in Saskatchewan (with western Canadian or pan-Canadian mandates) — the Centre for the Study of Co-operatives has punched far above its weight, bringing western Canadian co-operatives to the attention of the world. Centre scholars, fellows, and staff have co-created new knowledge with a host of other co-operative entities, from local co-op enterprises to apex organizations to international research centres. The Centre's publishing expertise has served as a major leveraging point for co-op knowledge.

Both practical and ideologically driven research has grown the conversation about co-operatives — their place, their impact, and their future. The Centre has successfully incorporated university-defined standards of excellence, from individual faculty publications to Centre multi- and interdisciplinary success; it is a model for community relationships and has an exemplary record of tri-council and other university research funding. By multiple measures, the Centre has achieved a standard of success that lends power to its resilience, building a reserve of experience and knowledge, and maintaining a level of expertise that garners an international reputation.

But there are indications of stress. Sector contributions have dropped while the university's have risen. At what point should the CSC be viewed as a university-focused entity? Is there a trade-off between academic achievement and success as defined by co-operatives, or are they the same measures? Some co-ops have increased their financial support — indicating approval — while others have anaemically maintained, declined, or stopped. What effect will this have on other co-ops? Will they continue to fund the CSC, based on long-standing practices and an impressive record, or will they drop their contribution in favour of institutions elsewhere? Will other national or international co-operatives now be more interested in coming on board as Centre funders and supporters, following the path of CHS Inc.?

Viewing the CSC through the lens of the co-operative principles, what is the role of research and publishing in the broader mandate of co-op education? That connection must be made clear in the minds of funders, both the co-op sector and the university. For co-operatives, does the mandate outlined in principle five (education, training, and information) hold enough scope for the importance of research as a major facet of these activities? Will principle five be used as a measurement of success for the CSC, and will its research impact, publishing, and curriculum be enough to satisfy that principle? For the university, has the field of co-operative studies grown enough to justify continuing its financial support through a period of

faculty renewal and change? Will the Centre's success, alongside numerous national and international scholarly advancements in the study of co-operatives, be enough to persuade the university to continue its relationship? Or has the growth of co-op studies outstripped the need for special incubating centres? These are questions that deserve reflection.

The changes to co-op development both within the Government of Saskatchewan and reflected in its commitment to the Centre reveal the evolving significance of co-operatives within the larger economy and society. At first, co-operatives and co-op development were part of the Department of Agriculture. Following the election of the socialist CCF government in 1944, however, co-ops got their own department that continued operations for forty-three years, including through elections that brought other ideologies into power. Changes since 1987 have included a stronger connection to small business, then a direct relationship to economic development, industry and resources, and enterprise in general. It is worthwhile to consider how those changes have affected the perception of co-operatives, acknowledging, at the same time, that the role of co-ops in the economy deserves greater attention. Considered solely under the perspective of the economy, co-operatives vie for space alongside other more well-known forms of business practices, particularly the investor-owned corporate model. If co-ops are viewed only as a business model, they could be forgotten as vehicles for social or community development, beyond the realm of industry and enterprise. If some of the Centre's research interests focus on the role of co-operatives as agents of community development and social change, how does that fit with a limited government perspective that regards co-operatives merely as part of economic development and industrial innovation?

Consider, also, the role of institutional memory. The Government of Saskatchewan has been a sponsor for twenty-five of the thirty-five years of the Centre's operation, although the signatories themselves have changed; each of the five agreements was from a different ministry or department. So while

there was continuity amongst the other signatories, the government lacked that direct institutional memory. What effect has internal change and reorganization had on the strength of the government's relationship to the Centre for the Study of Co-operatives? After all, personal relationships and linkages among individual actors were certainly key to the Centre's origins. If those relationships are in a state of constant flux, they could become brittle and snap.

The networks within which the Centre operates closely reflect the three major groups of signatories invested in its initial creation and its ongoing lifecycle: the University of Saskatchewan, the co-operative sector, and the provincial government. While interactions with the government have ebbed and flowed through structural or leadership changes, there are ways forward that may rebuild those connections. The government has traditionally shown interest in research and consulting work, which might create opportunities for collaboration and shared policy development. While it might seem logical to double down on economics and build back those linkages to industry and innovation, there is a role for co-operatives in social and community development, areas of increased provincial and public concern. In any case, it's clear that the Centre for the Study of Co-operatives operates with great resilience with or without the financial support of the provincial government.

Over time, the Centre has become more closely aligned with the university and the co-operative sector. It serves as a major information hub for the international co-op sector and draws force and energy from both national and international relationships, strengthening knowledge and innovative ideas and bringing them back to Saskatchewan. However, the co-ops that sustain the CSC must, in turn, value the relationships, knowledge, information, and connections in order to continue their support into the future. The Centre has a strong profile within the University of Saskatchewan, particularly through national grant funding, its robust sector relationships and community engagement, and the institutional service provided

by faculty to the broader university community. The Centre's flexibility and resilience have been built on the close collaboration with these two major areas of influence. With such strengths in mind, it's time to turn our attention to the systems of decision making and governance at the heart of these interactions.

Interlude Three: Research

In its thirty-five-year history, the Centre for the Study of Co-operatives has been an international powerhouse of research and publishing on co-operatives. Creating an overview of the Centre's research and publication output is no easy task. With multiple faculty members and staff publishing both via CSC publishing vehicles and through academic channels such as books, book chapters, and journal articles outside the CSC, even creating a list is a daunting prospect. Which articles are "co-operative" enough in their content to be included? And what about all the other Centre outputs: annual reports, newsletters, newspaper articles, videos, manuals, research reports, policy papers, public history exhibitions, and legal opinions, let alone new vehicles such as websites, blogs, and social media? Some Centre publications were written by non-CSC faculty or co-op sector people. How should those be counted? Numerous students have also produced theses, dissertations, papers, and posters with co-op content, some of which the Centre has published, while others are sitting on shelves gathering dust. To catalogue and analyze this enormous research output is a project in itself and beyond the scope of this history.

Some comments around research will nevertheless be useful. The ability to come together as a cohort of researchers meant that, over time, Centre Fellows have grown within their own research practices. Initial training in quantitative and/or qualitative research techniques has broadened and deepened. The deliberate work to build interdisciplinarity has meant that Centre research projects routinely bridge disciplinary divides to create broader, stronger perspectives and tackle difficult

issues. CSC Fellows and staff have consistently been at the forefront of major national and international research projects, leading students and researchers through multi-site projects with numerous moving parts.

One way to think about Centre research leadership is to look a CSC Fellow titles, which indicate areas of expertise.

Murray Fulton	**Centre Fellow in Co-operatives and Public Policy; CRS Chair in Co-operative Governance**
Lou Hammond Ketilson	Fellow in Co-operative Management
Michael Gertler	Fellow in Community and Co-operative Development
Brett Fairbairn	Fellow in Co-operative History and Governance
Isobel Findlay	Fellow in Co-operatives, Diversity, and Sustainable Development
Eric Micheels	Fellow in Agribusiness Co-operatives
Abdullah Mamun	Fellow in Credit Union Finance
Marc-André Pigeon	Strategic Research Fellow in Co-operatives
Kostas Karantininis	Fellow in International Co-operatives
Dionne Pohler	Fellow in Co-operative Strategy and Governance

Figure 11: From Centre for the Study of Co-operatives website, September 2018.
Note that this list includes active faculty, retired active faculty, and Fellows at other institutions who retain ties to the CSC.

The CSC website at www.usaskstudies.coop lists both research outputs and publications accessible in PDF format, but the website, while extensive, is not comprehensive. Early outputs or items published in journals or books are not accessible. But readers will find some overall themes and areas of research and publication depth. The Centre has been particularly strong in the following areas:

- Indigenous co-operatives
- agricultural co-op issues including New Generation Co-ops
- community economic and co-operative development
- co-operative education
- issues related to governance and co-operative membership
- co-operative management and strategy
- co-operative history
- issues related to social economy and social cohesion

Early research output was strong in co-operative law, but since the departure of Chris Axworthy and Dan Ish, this area lacks a champion. Although much of the CSC's research output is broadly applicable and useful to credit unions, its research depth on specific credit union issues has been sporadic — at times intense and productive, at other times, absent.

In its strategic plan for 2016–2021, the Centre will concentrate on four major themes going forward: co-operative governance, co-operative development, rural and agricultural communities, and Indigenous co-operation.