

Editorial

In this first *Journal* for 2020, we start with a thought-provoking paper from Mitch Diamantopoulos who discusses the contradictions in Canadian co-operation. He starts by tracing the start of the co-operative movement from a European perspective to its adoption (or not) in settler communities in Canada. To support his exploration, Diamantopoulos draws on the concept of diffusion of innovation developed by Rogers (2003), which is pertinent since his initial studies focused, in part, on rural communities and developing nations and his later work recognised the complexities of innovation-development-adoption as a social process. For Rogers, diffusion is part of a specific type of communication, and some will be familiar with some of the ideal types linked to the rate of adoption if not the five stages in the innovation-decision process (p. 169). The latter includes knowledge of an innovation, persuasion (favourable or unfavourable attitude towards the innovation); decision (adopt/reject); implementation and confirmation (a reinforcing attempt). The ideal types are innovators, early adopters, early majority, sceptics, and laggards (pp. 282-285).

Diamantopoulos really starts to highlight the complexities in innovation transfer and alludes to MacLennan's 1945 political novel (recently republished in 2018) to reference the struggle between English- and French-Canadian identities (Protestant Ontario and Catholic Québec). This duality, the author suggests, became a defining feature of early Canadian co-operation although its spread was mainly along segregated lines. Further, that this context helps to explain the features of co-operation in Québec — strong solidarity movement, labour co-operatives, financial co-operatives for example, but also created barriers that kept innovation and development at the level of the province. Additionally, settlers were also slow to learn from and include the experience of indigenous communities. The sheer size of the country was another contributing factor confining early co-operation to European settlements, contributing to delayed diffusion of co-operative models.

While there were consumer and worker co-operatives, Diamantopoulos identifies the dairy co-operatives (crossing the border from the United States) as pivotal in providing more general exposure to co-operatives. Despite the delays, as we know today the diversity of mutual forms has flourished across Canada, but it was not without problems echoed in more recent troubles such as a Prairies-wide boycott of co-operative stores and gas stations (p. 9). Still, Diamantopoulos points to increasing movement away from fragmentation and celebrates the movement's popular appeal with "over half of Canadians belonging to at least one co-operative" (p. 15).

Our second paper from Sokoli and Doluschitz also recounts a distinct historical political background in the revival of co-operativism and the experience of rural and farm co-operatives in Albania, as a post-communist country. The authors point to the many obstacles to co-operative development including the legacy of communist co-operatives and they rightly point to the need to understand earlier movements to set the context for farm co-operatives (p. 20) and farmers' willingness to co-operate. As such, they provide useful background and profile information on the agricultural sector in Albania. There is also need for further sensitivity so, for example, the word "co-operative" was not directly referred to in interviews and workshops with over 200 farmers because of the "negative perception and image created based on the past" (p. 21).

The case study outlined by the authors is Myzeqeja farm established in 1999 and which since 2005 has been part of a Dutch livestock and development project, providing cows as well as training. Since 2014, the farmers registered as an Organisational of Reciprocal Collaboration (a co-operative by a different and more acceptable nomenclature and taking account of co-operative principles). The research found general levels of trust between farmers, and the majority of those involved in Myzeqeja farm are already seeing the benefits from their co-operation, including better prices for products.

Significantly, the authors also point to the success of the Heifer project in its longer-term approach and continued support, compared to other mainstream and short-term project funds. The direct assistance offered to families, they feel, has supported the revitalisation of farm associations and the transition, albeit slowly taking hold, is making good progress.

The short paper included in this issue picks up on the recurring theme of co-operative values and principles. The authors look at possible points of fracture that have or could raise questions and discussion around applicability and variation of implementation of the principles as guidelines and co-operative identity. The “points of fracture” are presented as sparks for further discussion.

We complete this issue with three book reviews covering the history of the Detroit Printing Co-op through interviews with key participants; the life of Margaret Llewelyn Davies; and the history of co-operatives in the Asian Pacific.

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References

MacLennan, H. (2018). *Two Solitudes*. McGill-Queens University Press
Rogers, E. M. (2003). *Diffusion of innovation* (5th ed.). Free Press