



The Co-op Index: A diagnostic tool for worker co-operatives

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Developing Social Accounting Models for Social Economy
Organizations through Community-University Research Partnerships:
Lessons and Celebrations

Panel

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**Social Sciences and Humanities
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Our research interests

Co-operative organizations

- Role within the social economy
- Governance
- Co-op accounting
- Measures of performance with the focus on co-operative distinctiveness

Research interests

- **How to develop evaluation tools and measures that will aid co-operative management and governance, while highlighting their unique characteristics**

The beginnings

- CURA-Atlantic, partners in co-op research (CWCF, CMEC, CEARC, SMU)
- Collaborating with organizational psychologist Ryszard Stocki on a SE measures project

Key areas of interest that brought the project together

Participatory organizations

- Economics-ownership focus (ownership implies the right to *control*, and the *return* rights)
- Ownership of share capital does not necessarily imply control rights
- Psychological ownership is critical for participation

Key areas of interest

- Organizational psychology
 - Participation leading to action
 - Total participation; full knowledge and transparency
 - Personal initiative- action in one's own interest; in organization's interest; in the common interest – participative orientation
 - Organizational effectiveness on 3 levels (individual, organizational and societal)

Key areas of interest

Co-operative firms

- Worker co-operatives are a special case in the literature on participation
- Co-operative development and governance
- Linking co-op principles to business practice
- Conditions for a successful participatory organization lie within the co-op principles and values

Process of development of the Co-op Index

- Common interests were identified and resulted in a project proposal
- Workshop –included worker co-ops, developers, and academics to develop the Co-op Index
 - Cognitive mapping process
 - Defined elements of an ideal co-op
 - Connected with principles and values
 - Created the Co-op Index questionnaire

Process...

- ☞ Second workshop
 - Trained co-op developers to use the tool
 - Developers contributed to revisions of links with principles and values
- ☞ Presentation at CWCF AGM
- ☞ Testing stage- four co-ops completing the process at the moment

Outcomes

- ☛ Innovative tool for co-operatives:
 - Connecting P&Vs to strategy
 - Measuring perceptions and reality
 - Potential to promote co-ops based on their uniqueness
- ☛ CURA- necessary, but not sufficient for the execution of the project