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The Engagement of Young Members in the Governance of Housing Co-operatives

Justin Ellerby and Catherine Leviten-Reid

This research explores the engagement of young members in the governance of Canadian housing co-operatives. Through in-depth interviews with young members, other housing residents, and building managers, it was found that the involvement of young members in governance was considered to be important because of the new perspectives and approaches young members brought to their co-operatives, and also to support organisational continuity. Importantly, it was also found that young members developed capabilities (such as technical skills and self-confidence) and social ties through their governance engagement. Challenges to fostering engagement were also identified, which included that the duration of youths' continued residence was sometimes uncertain or limited, that governance challenges within the co-operative generally could inhibit the engagement of members of any age, and that a lack of shared space could undermine a sense of community among members. Suggestions for facilitating involvement included fostering good governance practices generally and initiating strategies to provide formal recognition of young people's involvement in boards and committees.

Introduction

Non-profit co-operative housing is an important sub-sector of affordable housing in Canada, with more than 2,100 of these organisations serving around 250,000 Canadians (Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada, 2014). Unlike some other affordable housing forms, it both offers and requires the engagement of its member-residents in governance. Although this engagement is mandated in the legal structure of all Canadian housing co-operatives, for any given member such engagement is typically voluntary and uncompensated. Therefore, it is important for stakeholders within housing co-operatives (including staff, members at large, and directors) and associations thereof to understand how and why members engage in governance.

In recent years, the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada (CHF, the national apex organisation for housing co-operatives) has focused on the engagement of young members, which it defines as those under the age of 30. These efforts included commissioning an internal study among its member co-operatives; the resulting document states the initiative's purpose as:

ensuring that the passion, knowledge and dedication of current co-op members are shared with emerging leaders, and that the new ideas and knowledge of emerging leaders have a voice and space to grow (Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada, 2013: 1).

The present study was conducted in partnership with CHF to further explore young members' engagement in the governance of their housing co-operatives in terms of its benefit to those young members, its benefit to their co-operatives, and the means of its promotion and implementation. In doing so, this study builds on the existing body of literature on member engagement (Foroughi and McCollum, 2013; Schugurensky et al, 2006) by contributing to the less-addressed topic of young member involvement. It also contributes to current efforts within the co-operative sector more broadly to engage young members; for example, the International Co-operative Alliance's Blueprint for a Co-operative Decade argues for the need for the global co-operative sector to strengthen participation and to explore the:

mechanisms [relevant to young people] for forming and maintaining relationships, and considering whether established traditional mechanisms for participation and engagement can and need to be adapted (International Co-operative Alliance, 2013: 11).

The ICA's Youth Network also works in part to help foster the involvement of young people in co-operatives (International Co-operative Alliance Youth Network, 2014).

Literature Review

Articles and book chapters were reviewed that informed the understanding of youth engagement in co-operative governance. Given the limited extant work on this specific topic, the review included literature on all types of social economy organisations as well as different kinds of involvement therein (for example, volunteering by helping with operational tasks). Additionally, literature pertaining to predicting, encouraging and maintaining engagement and to the benefits and capabilities that accrue to individuals involved in social economy organisations was examined. In this review, the focus is primarily on youth, but also includes literature on engagement by individuals of all ages when this work pertains to housing organisations.

Engaging youth

In Canada, individuals aged 15 to 24 are more likely to volunteer than any other age group, and almost half of those in the next oldest age bracket (25 to 34) also report volunteering (Vézina and Crompton, 2012). In cross-country research, household income has been associated with youth engagement (Handy et al, 2010), as has the prevalence of school-based service learning (Camino and Zeldin, 2002; Holdsworth and Quinn, 2010) and having parents who volunteer (Andolina et al, 2003). With respect to individuals' motivations, multi-country data show that for young people, wanting to do good or being committed to an organisation's cause is their main motivator, and further that youth who wish to do good are more likely to get involved in organisations, and for greater duration, compared to those focused on self-oriented reasons (Handy et al, 2010). However, the desire to strengthen one's curriculum vitae is still an important reason why youth volunteer (Jones, 2000; Smith et al, 2010). For example, a five-country study reported that while 90% of university students who were volunteering regularly were driven in part by altruistic reasons, approximately 60% of these volunteers indicated that they also gave their time to add experience to their CV and to connect with potential employers (Smith et al, 2010). Similarly, a Canadian study found that while most youth reported that commitment to an organisation's cause was their primary motivation for volunteering, over 80% said their second reason was so they could use their "skills and experiences" (Jones, 2000: 39). Additionally, almost 60% of youth who were studying full-time indicated that they volunteered because they perceived it as increasing their chances of finding employment (Jones, 2000).

Benefits of volunteering

The literature identifies a range of benefits for those who volunteer, including greater health and well-being (Haski-Leventhal, 2009; Lum and Lightfoot, 2005; Musick and Wilson, 2003), social connections (Degli Antoni, 2009; Wollebaek and Selle, 2002), and developing skills (MacNeela, 2008; Townsend et al, 2014). With respect to youth, Krahn, Lowe and Lehmann (2002) found that Canadian high school students gained social and citizenship skills through their volunteering and "work attitudes and behaviour" (p283) such as taking initiative, being organised, and managing time. Similarly, Jones (2000) found that youth aged 15 to 24 most frequently reported strengthening interpersonal skills through their volunteer work, followed by communication skills; over half also reported gaining organisational and management-level competencies. Internationally, a cross-country study of university student volunteers found that altruistic and career-related benefits of being involved in non-profit organisations were reported to equal degrees (Smith et al, 2010). Benefits to engagement in boards of directors and committees has also been explored in the literature. Zeldin (2004) found that youth participants in these structures reported gaining governance skills such as financial planning and conflict resolution, as well as social capital; these individuals also reported a "broadening of their personal identity" (p82), wherein they saw themselves taking on other leadership positions within their organisations.

Duguid, Mündel and Schugurensky (2013) explored learning among individuals (irrespective of age) involved in the governance of housing co-operatives within the Co-operative Housing Federation of Toronto (CHFT). These individuals reported learning about self-governance, management, leadership, political efficacy (meaning one's feeling of being able to be

effective in political activity) and various technical skills. This learning took place through conferences, workshops, peer-mentoring, face-to-face interactions and experientially through the performance of their duties. Individuals emphasised the high strength of mentorship-based learning, including among peers, but especially with co-operative staff, and even more so when sustained over time. Foroughi and McCollum (2013) found similar results in their study of participatory governance in social housing located in the same city, finding that participating tenants informally learned about social housing generally, community engagement, self-confidence, and processes of participatory management itself. Additionally, in the UK, Simmons and Birchall (2007) found that 40% of individuals involved in tenant associations and 60% of individuals involved in tenant management organisations reported developing self-confidence and feeling “more in control” (p584), while Kruythoff (2008) found that residents participating in a housing association in Rotterdam, NL, learned how this structure functioned.

Promoting engagement

Relatively little research explores how the engagement of young people in voluntarism may be encouraged. Marta and Pozzi (2008) found that young people’s sustained involvement in organisations over the course of several years was supported not only by their altruistic motivations, but also by their feeling satisfied with and integrated into the organisations for which they volunteered. Zeldin (2004) found several interrelated factors which supported youth maintaining their engagement in governance positions: (a) youth feeling appreciated by others within their organisations, (b) youth having support within these organisations for their own development, and (c) youth deriving personal salience from the organisation’s purpose. Haski-Leventhal et al (2008) found that young volunteers felt compelled to remain active in an organisation when they were contributing alongside individuals their own age. In the case of engagement in housing associations, sustained engagement has been fostered by being focused on residents’ needs and interests (irrespective of age) (Foroughi, 2010). Foroughi and McCollum (2013) observe the effectiveness of having peers and staff to encourage participation among residents, but they caution that some tenants reported being uncomfortably “volun-told” to participate “because no other qualified person was willing to take on the role” (p149).

Methods

This research uses a flexible design (Robson, 2011) and was completed in partnership with CHF. In-depth interviews were conducted with research participants identified through a purposive sampling strategy (Robson, 2011). CHF staff made requests for participation among those of its member housing co-operatives which were known to feature at least some young member engagement in governance. As a first step, building managers were asked to explore if members of their co-operatives were interested in participating in the research project. If members agreed, managers were (a) asked to recruit both younger and other members who were engaged in governance (whether on their co-operative’s board or a committee) and (b) were themselves also invited by CHF to be interviewed. Two housing co-operatives that participated in the study did not employ any staff, and in these cases, it was the board of directors that was contacted directly by CHF and that identified specific members who could be interviewed. Additionally, in one of the participating co-operatives, only management and young members were recruited.

This study represents interviews gathered in 2014 from among six housing co-operatives in three Canadian provinces, and represents seven young members, seven other (non-youth) members, and four staff. Interviews lasted between 30 and 90 minutes each, and were conducted by the first author, usually by phone but sometimes by Web-based video conferencing. Each participant received a \$20 non-cash gift card. The interview guide was designed by the authors in consultation with CHF.

With respect to young members, research participants ranged in age from 25 to 30 years.

These young members had lived in their housing co-operatives for between one and 21 years. None had prior experience governing a co-operative or non-profit organisation before becoming involved in their housing. Building managers who were interviewed had held their positions for between three and 19 years. The non-youth members who participated in interviews had been living in their co-operatives for between three and 20 years, and all had served on their board of directors. These non-youth members ranged in age from 40 to 73.

Data were analysed by participant type: that is, young members, other members, and staff. For each group, transcripts were coded and organised into sub-themes and themes. Codes were labels assigned to segments of text as a way to understand and describe data (Spencer et al, 2007). Sub-themes consisted of similar codes that were grouped together, and themes consisted of similar sub-themes grouped together. Because there was significant overlap in what participants shared during the interviews, the findings from each type of participant are presented under the same five headings below.

This research was approved by the Research Ethics Board at the authors' university.

Findings

The following themes emerged from the data analysis: the importance of young member engagement in governance, strategies for engaging youth in governance, the benefits to their engagement, barriers to engagement in governance, and advice for fostering engagement.

The importance of youth engagement in governance

Youth, non-youth members, and staff were all consistent in expressing that having young people on the board is important. Youth were noted to provide “fresh ideas,” a phrasing used by most research participants. As one manager stated:

Fresh new ideas — I think that young people have so much energy and different ways of being able to see things that it's important for us to listen and see what it is that they think they can offer.

Similarly, a non-youth member stated, “You need young ideas – young fresh blood that can bring ideas to the board.” This “freshness” manifested in the use of online media to recruit new members and communicate with existing ones. As one manager expressed:

[W]e are in a time of transition, we are in the age of analog-to-digital, and they have been key players in helping us go through that transition. ... When we think about getting people involved we are still thinking about handing out paper memos and the old-fashioned ideas, but [co-operative youth] started a Facebook page for our co-op and are trying to get people sharing their email addresses.

More broadly, participants spoke about youth introducing novel social activities or events, and of youth organising existing social gatherings in new ways, such as coordinating a holiday event celebrating the co-operative's cultural diversity.

Other concrete new directions and areas of emphases that were reported during interviews included initiatives such as restructuring the work of particular committees, or introducing a food-buying club so that members had the opportunity to purchase groceries at lower cost. Distinct from innovation, there was also an element of renewal of older practices, such as re-emphasising landscaping. Relatedly, young members were found to bring energy and enthusiasm to their work, which some participants felt to be contagious in invigorating others on their respective boards and committees.

Lastly, managers and non-youth members felt that young member engagement contributes to the continuity of their co-operatives by equipping them with the knowledge and experience they will need to govern the co-operative over the course of their tenure. One older board member expressed that it is important to “have the next generation ... engaged in the co-op and keeping them strong ...”.

Strategies for engaging youth in governance

Some managers and non-youth research participants stated that they organised activities in their co-operatives which supported youth engagement in that co-operative generally. These activities, such as after-school or summer programmes (eg; providing help with homework, teaching crafts, and watching movies) often engaged youth younger than 18, and were considered to be building blocks to those young members' later governance involvement. Children and youth were also encouraged by managers to identify different activities and amenities that could be organised or made available to them, which was also seen as a way to foster engagement generally. As one manager explained:

[B]ringing [ideas] to us is important, and we need to let them know that they can come, and if you don't do that then you're not going to get the engagement with the kids.

As a non-youth member explained:

We do activities at the co-op for children, but also youth, to engage them early ...

Similarly, managers and non-youth research participants also mentioned that they were trying to creating a stronger sense of community in their organisations so that all residents in their buildings would get to know each other and be more engaged, such as through monthly group meals and family-friendly events like picnics and festivals.

Engagement in the broader co-operative sector (ie; beyond housing) included inviting youth living in the housing to attend cross-sectoral Co-operative Youth Leadership (CYL) summer camps. As an older board member related:

[W]e sponsor kids to go to CYL camp every year and [the manager] works really hard to get kids to apply. In the past we have [had] multiple people who wanted to go, so we work to get other sponsors so that everyone would have the opportunity to go if they if they want to.

Managers in particular also felt that part of their role with respect to youth engagement was to connect with young people by having informal conversations with them and by involving them in the co-operative in small, discrete ways (such as getting them to help in the office), and by encouraging youth to run for the board. One manager stated that any volunteer hours contributed by youth in her co-operative helpfully counted towards the youth's provincially-mandated volunteer placements.

When looking specifically at what youth had to say about how they got involved in the boards of their co-operatives, they often indicated that they were encouraged to do so by past directors or management, and furthermore that there were no specific skill sets or prior experiences which had motivated them to get involved in their co-operatives. For example, one participant explained:

I came in there for the first time not ever being on a board of anything, so it was scary ... I still don't think I have a lot of experience, so I would never think to nominate myself and I would never think that I am qualified ... It was the housing coordinator who nominated me.

Another participant confessed, "I really didn't realise what I was getting into". However, some indicated that if they had questions related to their work on the board, they were able to speak with a past director, a more experienced board member, or the manager.

Young members also spoke about their motivations for accepting the nominations made in support of their engagement. Several spoke about the desire to become part of a community: for example, "to meet people" and "to be involved in my new home because I was a newcomer". Some research participants also indicated that they were motivated by a curiosity to learn about how their co-operative functioned: "I was curious to see how things work. I had not sat on the board for anything else before".

Responses were somewhat nuanced among all three groups of participants with respect to whether more formal strategies should be put in place to engage young members in governance; some felt their organisation needed to be more deliberate about this, while some

felt that the co-operative ought to encourage *all* members to participate, irrespective of age. As one manager put it:

[M]y other concern [is] going out there and spending too much time to set a goal. Do we need to have two board members under 30 on the board? I think that may be limiting other potential people who are interested if we are only looking for specifics, so if we open it to everybody, hopefully we will get the younger people coming in.

Benefits to youth involvement

Research participants from all three groups spoke very directly and clearly about benefits experienced by young members. Perhaps least surprisingly, both younger and older participants observed that young members engaged in governance learned how housing co-operatives operate. As one young participant explained:

Learning about what goes into taking care of property, that's totally new to me. Understanding the life-cycle of all the things that go into a house and appliances and stuff like that, maintaining it, long-term planning, thinking about what's coming up ahead, and smart ways to lay things out.

Similarly, a manager noted:

They understand [through their involvement] how a co-op functions. It's not easy. That's what they were saying: 'Oh, we didn't know it was going to be like this,' you know, and there's a lot of things to know. Because they're learning, they're learning, and I am there as management to guide them to the right spot by providing them the proper information based on our experience as well, so that they can make decisions.

Participants also indicated that young members acquired formal and technical governance skills, such as being able to read financial statements and understanding how meetings work. Various young members reported learning:

note-taking skills, the proper procedures in making motions, reading the budgets and making financial decisions ...

As one participant shared:

I have learned a lot about accounting ... because we had a bit of a bump with our treasurer, so we've all kind of just been learning about the financial statements, so we've all gotten a lot more comfortable with that.

However, it should also be noted that some participants said that more training in governance processes would have been helpful and appreciated.

"Softer" collaborative skills were also reported, which one young member described as:

interpersonal skills, working with a group of people, learning how to communicate and to listen, and sort of navigating discussions and decision-making with people.

They also noted developing leadership skills:

It's also encouraged me to develop leadership skills, because sometimes I will now lead the meetings, and I really like that because it's taught me to practice being diplomatic, being empathetic and also literally leading the meeting and making sure everyone stays on track.

Additionally, young members indicated that engagement in governance was good for developing their employability:

[W]hen they see it on my CV, and people do ask about it, they do see some value in the experience that I have gained, so that was also a bonus.

Another young member elaborated further:

I know everyone wants to be a board member just to put it on a CV. ... At first it wasn't my case, but when you get thinking about it, it is a good thing.

Next, being on the board developed young members' self-efficacy through experience in voicing their opinions in front of others, or as one young member put it:

teaching me confidence ... [I]f I have an inclination that something might be the truth or the way to go ... then I act on it and express in a board capacity, or a decision-making capacity, or with the general members meeting. And whether or not the inclination is right, just having the confidence in putting it forward ... that's in a personal development way.

Likewise, a manager stated:

I've got a few young members who were so quiet and were kind of secluded and didn't get involved in a lot of things, and [governance engagement] gave them that opportunity. ... It gave them confidence to know that they could do something and that made a difference and it escalated after that. So they knew that they were being heard and could challenge themselves to take on more stuff, either within the co-op or outside.

Yet another young person spoke to the relative rarity of such opportunities in everyday life:

[W]e don't vote on things at work. When we have to decide something, or debate the merit of some idea or whatever, that ability to speak up a bit more, I think, is something that I've taken from sitting on the board.

Relatedly, young members' perceptions of their self-efficacy is not only based on feeling heard, but also on seeing concrete evidence of their contributions to revitalisation or change within the co-operative. One young member stated the following:

It has also been valuable because I can see that there is a place for me here and there has been a use for me here and it has not been an empty labour in putting my hands into the pot. I feel that I have had some effect. It's not like I am changing the direction of the building's planning but I think I can see some kind of effect.

As an older board member from another co-operative affirmed:

They understand what's happening and they can say, 'Yes, we know about it, we were a part of it, and we understand that we need change. We are participating in the change for the better and to bring all of our families together and integrate more into [this geographic community]'.

Lastly, developing a sense of community and developing social ties among neighbours was also noted by young members:

[P]eople are more open to talking to me in the elevator and on the phone and I get to know a lot more about people's lives. We've been able to build a greater social capital, meaning — here's an example: we have cats, and in the first year [here] we had a really hard time to get a cat-sitter ... and now we have a whole list of names who would look after our cats and we would do the same. So by virtue of being on the board and by virtue of having those events, we have been able to help our neighbours out and they have been able to help us out and a lot of the barriers have been withdrawn

Barriers to engagement

The context within each given housing co-operative emerged in the analysis of interviews with managers and young members as important to understanding barriers to young members' engagement in governance. In one co-operative, for instance, it was felt that the organisation was struggling with its governance culture in general, and so for research participants it was not surprising that young people were not involved. A similarly fundamental issue is that a co-operative's lack of shared common space may inhibit the development of a sense of community, and thus of engagement within the co-operative generally. As one manager put it:

We don't have a community space to have that ... identity, to feel connected, you know? I mean they're certainly more connected here than they would be in an apartment building, that's for sure, but there might not be as much co-op spirit here as there could have been with a community room, even just for the informal social gatherings where people bump into each other and have a place to sit and have coffee.

Other structural issues are legal rather than physical, many of which constrain the relatively shorter window of opportunity in which to engage youth. One manager indicated that in their co-operative (as is true under several provincial statutes), youth cannot even be voting members before the age of 18, let alone board members. Besides this, a co-operative's by-laws may create barriers, such as if each household within a co-operative can only be represented by one individual.

Several other of the identified barriers were related to the particular stage of a person's life-course or other personal circumstances. Some young members who were interviewed do not necessarily have long-term plans to remain in the co-operative; some were living there because it was close to their university, and would perhaps move away depending on where subsequent employment or their personal lives took them. One older board member stated that:

Some of [the co-op's young members] have to work or they attend university or college and they have to study, so it is difficult to get more youth on the board.

A manager similarly indicated that:

a lot of them don't have time. ... [I]t's not that they don't want to do it. There are quite a few who are single parents, [so] with their work schedule and their kid's schedule — because sometimes the kids have more active social life than the parents do — and I'm finding that a lot of them just don't have time to participate.

Lastly, a counterpoint to the building of young members' self-efficacy through governance engagement is that prior to such engagement, young members may feel like they don't have the capacity for the skills and responsibility necessary to getting involved. As one manager stated:

[T]hey're self-imposed barriers, you know; they don't have the confidence to do it or they think they don't have the skills. Or they think they won't be able to learn, so I would say they're self-imposed.

This lack of confidence can be reinforced by the attitudes of older members; as one manager said:

There are some of the older members who are a little more resistant just because they are set in their ways and it's hard for somebody else to take over.... They have tried things that didn't work and are not necessarily open to trying them again [even though] that was 20 years ago ...

Advice for fostering engagement

Participants felt that more could be done to foster the engagement of young members in governance. Specifically, both managers and older members consistently expressed that young members often needed to be approached directly in order to become involved. Participants advised that invitations to engage should be persistent, and should be offered to prospective volunteers from an early age. On a practical note, participants also recommended that meeting schedules ought to accommodate younger members' commitments outside of co-operative governance. They also cautioned that young members should not be approached tokenistically, but rather because the co-operative genuinely valued the contributions of young members, including those contributions engendered by the member's youth. Lastly, it was felt that co-operatives needed to do better at engaging and communicating with their membership overall.

Discussion

This study found that young members contribute fresh ideas, approaches and enthusiasm to the co-operatives in which they are engaged in governance. In turn, young members gain in self-confidence and governance skills, which corresponds very strongly to extant literature on learning through engagement in housing organisations (Duguid et al, 2013; Foughi and McCollum, 2013) and the literature on the benefits of volunteering in social economy organisations more generally (Jones, 2000; Krahn et al, 2002; Smith et al, 2010). Young members in this study also valued the social connections which they developed by serving on

boards or committees, which is also consistent with literature on involvement in associations and the development of social ties among volunteers (Degli Antoni, 2009; Zeldin, 2004).

As the learning that occurred through engagement was identified both by young members and other research participants in this study as being so strong, and because the literature shows that many youth have career-related motivations for getting involved in organisations (Jones, 2000), we propose that finding ways to communicate and capture the value of these benefits may help foster youth engagement in housing co-operatives. Unfortunately, however, these capabilities may be difficult to communicate both to young members who are thinking about becoming engaged in governance, and to others, such as prospective employers. Indeed, experiential learning (such as gaining self-confidence) can be challenging to identify and evaluate (Duguid et al, 2013). Furthermore, this study did not find that the learning of the more-concrete skills acquired through governance involvement (eg; financial literacy, deliberative processes) was accompanied by any formal means of verification, whether by the co-operatives themselves or by any provincial or national associations thereof. Assessments, certificates, awards, or documented testimonials offered by co-operatives' board, staff, or supporting associations could serve to formally communicate and validate members' governance service and learning to prospective employers and educational institutions, and thereby induce greater involvement in governance.

Importantly, the findings also suggest that youth engagement in governance is embedded within the broader culture of engagement within each housing co-operative, both within and outside of the board. This suggests that some aspects of young member engagement strategies need not be targeted towards youth at all, but rather to the overall governance practices and cultures within co-operatives. Appropriate interventions based on the shortcomings which participants identified in this regard may include (a) encouraging the active development of events, community spaces, and intra-community media (eg Facebook pages and groups) which foster social connections and convivial cultures across the co-operative as a whole, and (b) supporting good governance practices within housing co-operatives (eg inclusive meeting facilitation, board self-assessments, exit interviews). This concurs with the ICA's focus within the Blueprint for a Co-operative Decade on strengthening participation in co-operatives by promoting excellence and best practices in "communication, decision-making, meeting ... and openness" (2013: 11), as does the co-operative governance training and resources provided by CHF to its members. Relatedly, the ICA's Youth Network may serve to disseminate best practices in governance among its youth members to take back to their local associations.

The Blueprint report also advises the global co-operative sector to "[consider] whether established traditional mechanisms for participation and engagement can and need to be adapted [for younger people]" (ICA, 2013: 11-12), and indeed, some research participants in this study mentioned younger members' adoption and use of social media within housing co-operatives. However, it is noteworthy that most of the practices mentioned to support engagement (eg direct personal appeals to engage from staff, community events) were not novel or emergent, but rather could be typically associated with socially-vibrant, democratically-vigorous housing co-operatives and their governance cultures.

On a final note, the CHF's "Young Member Engagement Strategy" gives as one of its two main purposes "that the new ideas and knowledge of emerging leaders have a voice and space to grow" (Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada, 2013: 1); likewise, some research participants reported that continuity in governance was a significant motivation for supporting young members' engagement in governance. However, many young member participants stated that they planned to move out of the co-operative when they started families and needed more space, or else to pursue employment in other locales. Such mobility, common among young people, poses a major challenge to the pursuit of continuity in governance, as both extant and prospective co-operative directors may be reluctant to invest the time and energy to enculturate and train themselves or others in the governance of the co-operative if their potential length of residence within the co-operative appears limited. This suggests that beyond promoting

good governance practices and cultures in co-operatives more generally, collaboration across co-operative sectors with respect to youth engagement may be beneficial; in other words, promoting a young member's engagement in their housing co-operative could later lead to their engagement in a credit union or consumer-owned grocery store. Co-operatives from different sectors may do well to collaborate on strategies to engage young members as a way to jointly promote and foster their emerging leadership skills, and to dissuade young members from thinking that they will not have opportunities to be involved in co-operative governance after they move out of their current housing. Accordingly, additional research could be conducted in conjunction with such an initiative to explore the motivations, benefits, and barriers of engaging young members in governance across co-operative sectors, thus bolstering this potent, valued mode of community-based governance and learning.

The Authors

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