

## Public Abstract

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### An Examination of Adaptation in a Long-enduring U.S. Agricultural Marketing Cooperative

A common characteristic of enduring entities is their adaptive capability. Yet the nature and process of adaptation in a cooperatively owned enterprise where capital structure constraints, membership restrictions, diffuse objectives, plurality of interests and democratic processes are present, is not well understood.

Adapting an Analytic Narrative approach, this thesis presents a detailed narrative of the practice of adaptation to endogenous and exogenous forces by the leaders of Citrus World, Inc. ("CWI") between 1980 and 2015. Formed in 1933, CWI is a federated, single commodity agricultural marketing cooperative based in Lake Wales, Florida USA.

Applying eight selected organizational theories as a lens through which to view the CWI's evolution over that period, I consider the explanatory power of each theory and its potential for informing the future development of frameworks for the study of cooperative organizations. The theories were selected for their dynamic nature and relevance to collective organization, governance, leadership and adaptation. Six of the theories relate directly to factors which promote or impede enduring collective enterprise, one to business adaptation and one to organizational leadership.

The purpose of this exercise is to stimulate advancement toward a more comprehensive framework for study of agricultural cooperatives that may, in turn, serve to inform the practice of adaptation by cooperative agents and principles alike.