TOWARDS COMMUNITY SUSTAINABILITY: HOUSING CO-OPERATIVES

AS LEARNING ORGANIZATIONS

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By

Rebecca Zagozewski

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ABSTRACT

Current trends in housing development are economically, socially and environmentally unsustainable. Co-operatives may have an advantage with respect to the sustainable development of housing and housing communities. The research focuses on the ability of housing co-operative organizations to function as learning organizations to advance goals of sustainability. Drawing on literatures focused on housing co-operatives, learning organizations, community capital and sustainability, the investigation primarily focuses on a single strategic case: a housing co-operative that actively pursues goals of sustainability. The research also includes information gathered through personal participation and observation during three years of membership in another housing co-operative. The research methods employed include observation, documentation, and personal and group interviews. The intent is to understand the extent to which housing co-operatives can be learning organizations with regards to various aspects of community sustainability. The term community sustainability encompasses issues related to the viability and longevity of the community itself, as well as the adoption and implementation of more sustainable consumption practices by community members. The use and refinement of selected criteria for organizational and social learning facilitated the investigation of the ways in which a specific housing co-operative, and housing co-operatives more generally, may function as learning organizations.

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this thesis to two of the most important people in my life. To my mother Anita, you have always shown me unconditional love, support, and an ethic of sustainability. To my daughter Emma, I love you (and you are my favorite too).

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PREFACE

Through my education and life experiences, I became engaged with issues that relate to the sustainability of our civilization. I began reducing, reusing, recycling and moderating my consumptive activities, all the while encouraging my friends and family to do the same. I realized that I could positively influence people in my social networks towards the adoption of sustainability-minded attitudes and behaviours.

In 2004 I moved into a housing co-operative. My main motivation for this move was financial; I was a new, single mother pursuing a university education. As I progressed in my studies and became more involved in my co-op as a general member, and member of the Maintenance Committee and garden group, I began to appreciate the uniqueness of co-operative housing, specifically as it relates to community sustainability. I have always been somewhat sustainability-minded; but, living within this community, I became more aware of the possibilities that co-operative housing organizations present with respect to learning about and practicing sustainability. Housing co-operatives are conducive to sustainable resource use because of their physical construction, and I saw that the social relationships that emerge from close proximity and engagement with others within the community have the potential to facilitate learning and affect personal change. I began to model behaviours such as composting, recycling, and xeroscaping as well as provide information, in response to my neighbours' requests, with regard to what I was doing. I also provided them with information even when some of them did not ask, which caused some members to resent me—a definite learning experience.

In the summer of 2005, the housing co-operative received a Green Team Grant from the provincial government. This grant is used to provide opportunities to Saskatchewan students in order that they gain training and employment experience with regard to environmental projects. These funds were used to employ me to introduce various initiatives for community sustainability into the co-operative, as well as to educate members on sustainable lifestyles. During the period of my employment, I introduced and constructed, with the help of various members, a community garden equipped with compost bins, as well as numerous rain barrels, and recycling depots for toxic materials. I interviewed several members, surveying their personal habits related to sustainability, and provided members with handouts and pamphlets with information on how they could modify their practices in order to save money and reduce their impact on the planet. I made presentations during various Annual General Meetings and General Membership Meetings during my employment with the co-operative, providing brief descriptions of conservation and recycling initiatives, what had already been done, and why it was important for members to participate in present and future initiatives.

Many of these projects met with only limited success—at least in terms of immediate changes. For example, while an initial group of members was very enthusiastic about taking part in the garden, as the summer progressed and more work was required, the group withered away to a few members. Over the period of three summers, this became a pattern. However, there were (and are) members that enjoy garden work and have persisted with various gardening initiatives. Also, after I presented posters with pictures of our over-flowing garbage containers, the volume of recyclable

materials that were improperly discarded seemed to diminish. Some members have faithfully participated (and continue to participate) in recycling programs provided by the city, while others have indicated that recycling was not a priority for them.

The Green Team grant program was successful in that I was able to use this position to advance awareness of community environmental impacts and sustainability in my housing co-operative. I was able to promote some new ways of thinking and acting that took hold to various degrees and in various ways. My experience in this program, and simply living in the co-operative, also provided me with valuable learning experiences. I found that if members were provided educational resources and approached and encouraged in a non-threatening, egalitarian way, they were more likely to adopt, and to further encourage other members to engage in practices that promote sustainability. The manner in which members are approached and introduced to ideas of community sustainability is important. No member, or anyone, for that matter, wishes to be forced into doing something that they themselves did not chose, or help chose, to do. Successful change in this realm as in others is frequently an outcome of gradual personal growth but also of negotiation, sharing, feedback, mutual support, and multiple forms of reinforcement.

In September 2006, I was elected as a member of the board of directors and also served as the liaison between the Board of Directors and the Maintenance Committee. My role as board director and liaison taught me about governance and addressing relations between members. However, my presence in this role was short-lived. In November 2007 I was married. As my husband previously owned a home, we decided that my daughter and I would live in his house rather than he relocate into our unit in the co-operative. It was a difficult decision to make. However, my resignation from the co-op would allow another potential member to have the same opportunities: access to liveable subsidized housing and to live within a close-knit and frequently supportive community. Shortly before my resignation from the co-operative, I proposed, to the General Membership at the Annual General Meeting, that the co-operative adopt an environmental resolution (See Appendix 1: Housing Co-operative Resolution). Members were presented with this resolution and voted unanimously for its adoption.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background Information

Current trends in Canadian housing development are economically, socially, and environmentally unsustainable. Economically, housing prices are high and many middle and lower income Canadians cannot afford to purchase a home (Bunting, Walks and Filion 2004), or they acquire significant debt through their use of mortgages and loans. Low-density housing and the physical structure of these buildings do not promote social contact (Friedman 2006). We tend not to know our neighbours, let alone interact with them on a regular basis. Environmentally, current trends in housing development use and waste a tremendous amount of resources for unnecessarily large houses (Roseland 2005). Further, urban and rural sprawl take over productive farmland and increases reliance on the motor vehicle (Roseland 2005).

Co-operative organizations have a strategic advantage with respect to sustainable development, as their structures, principles and networks facilitate the complex and holistic mandates inherent in developing sustainability (Gertler 2001; Gertler 2006). Co-operatives are well suited to serve as a means to advance economic, ecological and social agendas as they continually support a multiple-bottom line and retain and utilize socially embedded, patient capital (Gertler 2006). However, housing co-operatives in Canada are at a critical stage in their development. They are getting older, member needs are changing, and very few, if any, new housing co-operatives are being built (Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada 2009).

Most, if not all, housing co-operatives are supported in some way through federal, provincial, or municipal funding. By the year 2020, most of the agreements between housing co-operatives and the federal government will have ended. This means that approximately 55,000 co-operative units will no longer be subject to contractual demands from the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation; they will be on their own. This also means that housing co-operative communities will no longer be able to supply subsidies for lower-income members, nor will they have any safety net if these

communities fall into difficulty. Housing co-operatives built under provincial programs will soon follow those funded by federal programs. Consequently, housing co-operative communities need to learn how to become sustainable in the financial, physical, political, and social sense—if they have not already done so.

When discussing community sustainability, I have adapted a combination of definitions of community, sustainable community, sustainable development, and community capital proposed by Schaffer and Anundsen (1993), Bridger and Luloff (2001), the World Commission on Environment and Development (1987), and Emery and Flora (2006), respectively. I thus define community sustainability as a process that occurs when a group of people who are committed to long-term individual and group well-being, continually learns and adjusts its approach to community life in order to meet present needs while simultaneously planning for the future. The holistic approach adopted by the community takes into consideration the stocks and flow of all of its community assets including natural, social, human, cultural, built, financial, and political capitals.

A learning organization can be conceptualized as an organization that has the ability to adapt to its changing environment; it embodies a learning culture (Dyball, Brown and Keen 2007). Much media attention now focuses on issues related to sustainability, and housing co-operatives, like other organizations and communities, can potentially learn how to respond proactively to their changing environments. However, housing co-operatives may encounter economic, and other, limitations in the application of sustainability initiatives. Traditionally, housing co-operative projects are initially funded through a combination of member shares, and provincial and federal government funds. They must comply with spatial, technical and capital cost constraints. This, alongside encroaching government cutbacks to social housing, makes it difficult to construct and maintain projects that go beyond conventional models.

1.2 Statement of Purpose, Objectives, and Thesis

The importance of secure, sustainable housing cannot be understated. Because of this, it is necessary to find a means by which this vital sector of housing in Canada can maintain its ability to provide homes for numerous citizens who are otherwise not well

provided for. If not carefully planned and organized, the newfound autonomy of housing co-operative communities may have negative implications for the members themselves, as well as for affordable housing in the country. Inadequate, as well as a lack of affordable housing will only add to the current trend of persons displaced from their homes (Bryant 2003 and Pomeroy 2001). For these reasons, it is relevant to understand whether housing co-operatives, as potential learning organizations, can serve as a possible alternative to conventional models of unsustainable housing development in Canada.

This thesis investigates the ability of a housing co-operative community, specifically a Western Canadian housing co-operative, to function as a learning organization for community sustainability. Several authors (see Gertler (2006 and 2001); Stuiver, van der Ploeg and Leeuwis 2003; and Uphoff 1992) suggest that the way in which co-operative organizations are structured and operated may give them an advantage with regards to sustainable development; however these authors do not look at housing co-operatives specifically. Further, they do not address how members of housing co-operatives may embark and advance on a journey towards sustainability; nor does existing research shed any light on how housing co-operatives may be able to serve as learning organizations to advance the goals of sustainability. Current literature on learning organizations generally focuses on market-based, business organizations (see Senge 2006; Kepczyk 2004; Goh and Ryan 2002; Thomas, Sussman and Henderson 2001; and Pedlar, Burgoyne and Boydell 1997); housing co-operatives as potential learning organizations are not included in this literature. Further research is needed to address how housing co-operatives can be understood as organizations that can adapt to changing environments and respond proactively to changing environmental goals.

This study employs a social realist perspective that informs an analysis of data generated from participant observation, document analysis, individual interviews, one focus group interview, and my personal experience while living and actively participating in a housing co-operative. Based on my prior experience in housing co-ops and on my familiarity with the literature on social learning, I adapted a set of learning organization characteristics proposed by Pedlar Burgoyne and Boydell (1997) for use in this research on housing co-operatives. The research has reinforced my view that this modified set of

criteria can serve as a basis for organizational learning and change for other housing co-operatives, as well as other similar organizations whose members are embarking on the same journey.

The specific research questions of this qualitative study of a housing co-operative that is working towards community sustainability are:

- To understand whether a housing co-operative can function as a learning organization with respect to various aspects of community sustainability.
- If a housing co-operative can function as a learning organization, what are the ways and conditions that it can be considered one?

Two additional specific research objectives of this qualitative study are: to investigate the applicability and utility of a set of criteria for analysing the potential and progress of a housing co-operative as a learning organization; and to consider how a housing co-operative can use such criteria to address goals of community sustainability. Based on an exploration of the research objectives, I conclude that housing co-operatives can serve as learning organizations for community sustainability. Specifically, their unique physical and social structures may be a positive context for social learning.

1.3 Outline of the Thesis

In this chapter, the topic of research is introduced. I present the purpose, objectives, and a thesis statement that guide the study. In Chapter 2, I review literature relevant to this study. I begin with a historical description of housing co-operatives in Canada and the various federal policies and programs that have affected the development and character of housing co-operatives in Canada. Next, I discuss relevant organizations in the housing co-operative sector. An explanation of how housing co-operatives differ from other social housing organizations is included within this discussion. I also provide a brief description of co-operative principles and examine the relevant physical, social, and economic attributes of housing co-operatives.

In the second section of the literature review, I address social learning and five strands for 'successful' learning for sustainability (Dyball, Brown and Keen 2007). Sources on cognitive praxis and its relation to social movements, and on communities of practice (Wenger 2000) as conduits for organizational learning, are also introduced. I

consider Reid and Hickman's (2002) framework as an approach to understanding connections between housing associations and learning organizations. Finally, I define community sustainability in relation to a non-profit housing co-operative. I examine Emery and Flora's (2006) concept of the Community Capital Framework, which provides a way to understand holistic community development from a systems perspective. It also provides a way to conceptualize sustainability within a community context, more specifically, as it relates to housing co-operatives.

Chapter 3 outlines the methodological approach used for the study. I describe the housing co-operative that was the primary focus of this research, and the reasons it was chosen. I explain the methods used for the research itself, as well as participant recruitment procedures, data analysis processes, the investigatory approach taken, and how ethical considerations were addressed. Chapter 4 begins with participant demographics and a brief explanation of the sustainability initiatives undertaken by the housing co-operative. I then present the research findings organized according to ten learning organization criteria that were modified further from the set of characteristics used to initiate the research. This is followed by a short description of my experiences as a member of a housing co-operative which provided points of comparison and was useful to me in making sense of the case study material. The chapter concludes with summation of research findings with respect to learning organization criteria.

Chapter 5 argues that housing co-operatives can be viewed as learning organizations but, because they are unique settings in several respects, the promotion and evaluation of housing co-operatives as learning organizations call for a modified set of learning organization criteria. I identify advantages and disadvantages that housing co-operatives may have with respect to qualifying as learning organizations (as measured against the description of community sustainability outlined above). The chapter also describes how this study contributes to current knowledge on housing co-operatives, learning organizations, and housing co-operatives as learning organizations for community sustainability. As well, I address some strengths and limitations of the study, and recommend future areas of research. The chapter concludes with some final thoughts about the sustainability of housing co-operatives in general, as well as about the importance of creating sustainable processes within housing co-operative organizations.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Co-operative Housing

Housing co-operatives are collectively-owned, not-for-profit enterprises that are formally organized (CHF Canada 2009; Cole 2008). They are (more or less) democratic communities in which the general membership makes decisions on the operation of the organization. This includes the creation of policies and procedures, and the appointment of board directors. Various committees are created to implement board and general membership decisions and to manage day-to-day activities in the areas of maintenance, financial administration, social activities, and membership. Formal meetings and events, such as Annual General Meetings (AGMs), General Meetings (GMs), and committee meetings, are complemented by many kinds of relatively unstructured or unplanned social and communal activities. Therefore housing co-operatives may be considered informal as well as formal organizations. Members frequent the same common areas such as a community garden, community centre and a community playground. These social gathering places provide opportunities for members to meet other members, engage in conversation, to form various social connections, and to possibly serve as valuable resources for each other.

2.1.1 History of Co-operative Housing

The co-operative movement as we now know it in North America and Europe first emerged in Scotland under the influence of Robert Owen (Cole 2008). Owen was the manager of a large cotton mill from 1800 to 1825 and he envisioned a society where the workers were happy and healthy, and poverty was abolished. Owen established a community with sanitary housing, a school, and a store for approximately 2,000 less-fortunate citizens. In this community, corporal punishment and child labour (for children under ten years) were not allowed. Free health care, child education and evening classes for factory workers were offered. Housing was also provided for the workers. Each family was allotted two rooms and given access to a communal kitchen and dining hall.

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Profits from the workers' store were used to support the school. Owen's ethically-based campaign to correct the excesses and ill effects of industrial capitalism, however, was not adopted by other factory owners in England or Scotland (Cole 2008).

In Canada, serious interest in housing co-operatives emerged in 1910 with the visit of Henry Vivian. Vivian was an advocate for the Garden City movement, "a form of urban development that often fostered the construction of co-operative housing in the United Kingdom and North America" (MacPherson 2009: 145). The earliest effort to initiate co-operative housing in Canada was in Nova Scotia during the Great Depression (MacPherson 2009). Dr. Moses Coady and Dr. J. Tompkins (early leaders in what came to be known as the Antigonish Movement in Nova Scotia) were priests and professors at St. Francis Xavier University (Cole 2008). These two Roman Catholic priests encouraged students and community residents to join study clubs that were established across the province. These clubs met to learn about co-operative principles (see Section 2.1.2) and how they could use these principles to improve their lives and their communities. These study clubs gave rise to co-operative stores, credit unions, fishing co-operatives, and housing co-operatives across the Maritimes. Members of the study clubs were taught that the industrial revolution resulted in most ordinary people losing control of their economic lives and that co-operation was a means to regain this control. The priests taught that co-operatives are a means for democracy but also that they promote honesty and other civic virtues (Cole 2008).

One particular study club, facilitated by Tompkins, consisted of eleven male members all of whom worked in the local coal mines in and around Reserve Mines, Nova Scotia (Cole 2008). During the winter of 1936 Tompkins encouraged these men to form a co-operative building society, set aside savings each week, and develop plans for their potential homes. Mary Arnold, a housing expert from the Co-operative League of U.S.A., assisted the group. She lobbied successfully for changes to the Housing Act of Nova Scotia that would allow the group to form a corporation that could receive a loan in order to purchase supplies and land for the intended housing. The men would use their 'sweat equity'[1] to build the homes themselves. Once the homes were complete and the loans for

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[1] Sweat equity is defined as manual labor that is performed in return for a share in ownership. In this context it refers to a share in ownership of a home (Cole 2008).

supplies and land repaid, the study groups, or co-operatives, dissolved. These types of co-operatives are referred to as building co-operatives.[2] Other common co-operative housing types are continuing housing co-operatives[3] and student housing co-operatives.[4] The building co-operative model was adopted by other communities in the eastern Maritimes through the 1940s and 1950s. It is estimated that by 1960, 1,500 homes had been built by these study groups (MacPherson 2009). These housing co-operatives were designed to provide "affordable, [equitable], community-based housing" (Hanley 2001: 102).

Following the Second World War and the emergence of the baby boom, there was a shortage of housing available to Canadians in urban areas (MacPherson 2009). Young people emigrated to larger urban centres to seek employment. Problems of urbanization, namely poverty, ghettos, family breakdown, rising crime rates and deteriorating buildings, exacerbated urban pressures (MacPherson 2009). The National Housing Act of Canada of 1938 was aimed at slum clearance and supporting employment through private housing development and improvement (Cole 2008). Loans became available to housing co-operatives but only if they resulted in individually-owned homes and therefore continuing housing co-operatives were not eligible for funding under these regulations.

The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (formerly named the Central Mortgage Bank and then the Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation) was formed as a result of the National Housing Act of 1944. This act consolidated housing legislation and the federal government assumed a lead role in housing programs aimed to address post-war housing shortages across Canada. The CMHC became the national housing agency of Canada in 1946.

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[2] A building co-operative is an organization that dissolves after the loans for the houses or units have been repaid (Birchall 1997 and Cole 2008).

[3] A continuing co-operative is defined as a co-operative organization that builds a housing complex and that continues to be owned, managed and maintained democratically by the membership after the mortgage is dissolved (Birchall 1997 and Cole 2008). Buildings are collectively owned without individual equity or capital gain.

[4] The first student co-operative in Canada was Guelph Campus Co-op (Cole 2008). It began as a retail co-operative and after initial success, went on to develop other services that included student housing. Many student housing co-operatives emerged in the 1930s in response to lack of housing for students attending university. In the 1960s universities expanded rapidly and the student housing co-operative movement thrived (MacPherson 2009). Many have remained successful and continue to house hundreds of students attending university. At present, there are numerous student housing co-operatives in Ontario, as well others in Quebec, Alberta, British Columbia and Manitoba (CHF Canada 2009).

Despite loan and mortgage restrictions to continuing housing co-operatives, the co-operative movement in general gained in power and influence during the 1940s, specifically in trust and insurance companies in Saskatchewan, Quebec and Ontario. It is important to note that without the support of the co-operative financial sector, co-operative housing would not have existed in Canada at this time (Guide 1953 in Cole 2008). In 1948 the Co-operative Union of Canada (CUC) lobbied the government for the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation to amend the National Housing Act to permit continuing co-operatives to apply for the low-interest loans provided by the government to limited dividend companies. By 1958 they were successful and an amendment was made to the National Housing Act to allow continuing housing co-operatives to be eligible for default insurance on mortgage loans from private lenders (MacPherson 2009), although they still did not qualify for low-interest government-backed loans (Cole 2008).

In 1960, Willow Park Housing Co-operative, Canada's first continuing housing co-operative, was established (MacPherson 2009). "It was intended as a prototype for people interested in using co-operative strategies to develop communities that reflected different income levels, a variety of ages, and mixed ethic backgrounds" (MacPherson 2009:148). In 1966 it was completed with the financial assistance by the Co-operative Credit Society of Manitoba (Cole 2008). The federal government refused to fund the Willow Park Housing Co-operative because the individuals would not own the individual units when it was completed.

> CMHC had an early and persistent bias against the idea of collective ownership of housing and the concept of continuing co-operative housing for families. As late as 1963 a CMHC memorandum stated, 'Home is a very private thing and anything to do with one's own private affairs is best kept independent and separate from the friendly contacts with neighbors…I can't imagine anything more likely to jeopardize this kind of stability of family life than becoming involved in a venture of cooperative housing (Dennis and Fish 1972 cited in Cole 2008: 17-18).

The early successes of continuing housing co-operatives in Canada were not a result of government funding, but of grassroots organizations instigated by church members, credit union members, academics, and trade union members, as well as the co-operative financial sector. These organizations believed in the principles of co-operation and gave loans to the newly formed organizations, usually without strings attached. They trusted

that the individuals and groups would repay their loans. And they did (Cole 2008). These early groups also pioneered many of the housing co-operative innovations that are standard today including maintenance reserve funds, seniors' housing and internal subsidy.

Alexander Laidlaw and James MacDonald, who are considered the "twin fathers of the co-operative housing movement in Canada" (MacPherson 2009: 148), subscribed to, and promoted the philosophy of the Antigonish movement. During the 1960s, MacDonald was a senior official for the Canadian Labor Council (CLC) and Laidlaw became a general secretary of the Co-operative Union of Canada (CUC) (MacPherson 2009). In 1960 the Co-operative Union of Canada obtained funding from CMHC and conducted a study on the potential for developing co-operative housing for families in Canada. The *Report on Co-operative Housing* by J.F. Midmore was published in 1962 (Cole 2008). This report became the "basis for lobbying the federal government for support in the following decade" (MacPherson 2009: 151). Midmore concluded that one of the biggest difficulties in housing co-operatives was the lack of awareness of other housing co-operative programs and approaches. He recommended that all levels of government, as well as credit unions, trade unions, and other related community organizations, should promote housing co-operatives in the country. He also recommended the establishment of a national federation of housing co-operatives in order to formulate and publicize housing co-operative policies, standards and developments. The national federation would be a means of information exchange and a place to discuss difficulties, successes, trends, and future plans of housing co-operatives. The Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada (CHF Canada) was formed in 1968 as a result of a joint initiative of the CUC (now the Canadian Co-operative Association) and the CLC (CHF Canada 2009).

A Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) memorandum in 1963 stated that housing co-operatives would be entitled to the same lending rates that were then offered to the companies that built low-income housing (under Section 15 of the NHA) (Cole 2008). However, CMHC continued to reject requests from co-operative housing organizations and allowed only those projects brokered by a recognized limited dividend organization or credit union (Dennis and Fish in Cole 2008). The newly founded

Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada (CHF Canada) submitted a report to the newly created Task Force on Housing and Urban Development in 1968. The authors recommended that the co-operative model of housing be aimed at lower-middle income earners, defined as those that do not qualify for public housing yet cannot meet monthly mortgage payments without paying more than 27 percent of their income (Cole 2008). The report highlighted the current success of co-operative housing projects and suggested that co-op housing models be recognized in plans and policies for housing.

> This report strongly recommends that public housing in its present form (the construction of new highly-subsidized units to be owned by the public and occupied only by the poor) be abandoned. [The reasons included] high density, high-rise housing dictated by cost concerns; insensitive management that treats public housing tenants as welfare clients; the negative attitudes of administrators, surrounding neighborhoods and the public generally. All are aspects of the stigma inherent in a program aimed only at the poor (Selby and Wilson 1988 in Cole 2008).

Despite numerous recommendations to the federal government for the development of co-operative housing, Prime Minister Trudeau rejected these recommendations arguing that the federal government has no constitutional responsibility for housing in the country (Cole 2008). Soon after, however, Trudeau changed his mind and stated that housing was a national issue that must be addressed. In 1973, the Canadian government made amendments to the National Housing Act that encouraged the development of co-operative housing (CHF Canada 2009). From the years 1973 to 1995, the federal government and the CMHC made further amendments to the National Housing Act which altered protocols for funding and mortgages.

During the period from 1973 to 1995, several thousand co-operative homes were built under various programs. These programs include: Section 61 programs (formally Section 34.18 of the National Housing Act), Section 95 programs (formally Section 56.1 of the National Housing Act) and index-linked mortgages (ILM). Section 61 was the first federal co-operative and non-profit housing program that financed housing co-operatives built from 1973 to 1978 (Cole 2008). It encouraged mixed incomes in housing projects

and offered a 50-year mortgage at a fixed rate of eight percent. Rent-geared-to-income[5] subsidies were shared with provincial ministries of housing. The mortgages were negotiated directly with CMHC. Approximately 7,700 co-op units were built under this latter program.

The Section 95 program funded the construction of co-op units built between 1979 and 1985 (Cole 2008). This federal co-operative and non-profit housing program offered 100 percent mortgage financing through CMHC. Some 39,000 co-op units currently operate under this program (Cole 2008). Finally, the ILM program funded, and continues to fund those housing co-operatives built between 1986 and 1991. It is a type of mortgage loan in which the monthly payment goes up or down each year in accordance to the consumer price index (Cole 2008). This Federal Co-operative Housing Program provides National Housing Act-insured mortgages with 30-year terms. Under these mortgages, interest is "indexed annually at a rate two percentage points lower than the consumer price index" (Cole 2008: 144). Rent supplements are provided for up to 30 percent of units according to guidelines on eligibility. Also, CMHC required an ILM Stabilization Fund to shield their mortgage insurance before agreeing to participate in the new program. This added three percent of capital costs to the mortgage to be used to provide assistance to co-ops that ran into financial difficulties. All of these co-op mortgages were centralized under the CHF Canada rather than having individual co-operatives negotiate with their own mortgage lenders.

In early 1992 the federal government terminated funding for new co-operative housing development under its unilateral programs and at the end of 1993 the federal government withdrew from cost-shared federal/provincial housing programs. There would be no more money allocated towards new social housing programs above existing maintenance and subsidies. In 1996, the Canadian Federal Government announced that it would begin to phase out its remaining role in social housing and would devolve the administration of some co-operative housing programs to individual provinces (Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Newfoundland, Saskatchewan, Northwest Territories, Manitoba and the Yukon) and municipalities (in Ontario). The federal co-op programs pertaining to

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[5] Rent-geared-to-income (RGI) is the reduced housing charge a person with low or modest income pays based on the household's income. RGI subsidy is the difference between the co-op's full housing charge and the reduced charge the member pays. The governmental body makes up the difference (Cole 2008).

co-operative housing in British Columbia, Alberta, Ontario and Prince Edward Island remained under the control of the federal government.[6] However, some of Ontario's non-profit and co-op housing programs began the process of transfer to municipalities in 2001. After the Canadian Federal Government's announcement of devolution, CHF Canada presented the federal minister responsible for the CMHC with a proposal for an independent agency, the Agency for Co-operative Housing, which would assume responsibility for administration of these programs rather than devolve further programs to individual provinces (Cole 2008).

In May 2005, the Agency for Co-operative Housing, a non-government agency, assumed responsibility for certain default and portfolio management tasks, as stated in agreements signed with the CMHC and first proposed by CHF Canada in 1996. In 2006, the Agency became the new not-for profit administrator of the federal co-operative housing programs in British Columbia, Alberta, Ontario, and Prince Edward Island. The CMHC continues to be responsible for co-operative housing policies and programs in addition to the management of certain financial aspects of the portfolio, namely the disbursement of federal funding. Further, the CMHC monitors the Agency's activities in order to guarantee satisfactory performance. Other portfolio management activities may be transferred to the Agency in the future pending satisfactory performance on part of the Agency under the current agreement (The Agency for Co-operative Housing 2005).

Historically, co-operative housing organizations did attempt to create housing co-operatives but many were not successful until the government stepped in to provide initial subsidies (Cole 2008). The initial funding requirements for new housing developments are often difficult for middle- and lower-income persons to meet, as they sometimes lack financial resources. Government assistance is necessary for these housing co-operatives to be successful in providing lower-income people with stable housing, at least initially. However, in signing Operating Agreements with CMHC, the housing co-operative is bound to an organization that makes many decisions for them, reducing their ability to function as an autonomous community. As such, if CMHC does not approve

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[6] Quebec is the only province (of those that were asked) that would not take responsibility for the federal programs. It requested a large sum of money in order to fix the current state of the co-operative housing units and was not awarded this money. As of 2007, Quebec is the only province where all federal housing co-op programs are funded by the federal government (CHF Canada 2009).

certain changes in the functioning of the co-operative, and the co-operative continues without permission, this may risk the financial stability of the co-operative. This dependency limits the co-operative's ability to carry out innovative ideas not approved by CMHC. If the co-operative is restricted in its ability to introduce new ideas and innovations, this hinders the learning capacity of the organization.

2.1.2 Housing Co-operatives and Sector Organizations

In this section I describe the relevant housing co-operative sector organizations as they influence how housing co-operatives are managed, and how the organizations achieve their long-term objectives through the creation of policies and programs and the allocation of resources. I begin with the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) and the Agency for Co-operative Housing and move on to the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada (CHF Canada) and regional federations.

As stated earlier, the CMHC was established in 1946. This government-owned corporation was created as a means to address post-war housing shortages and has since developed into the major national institution for housing. The CMHC provides housing policy and programs, housing research, mortgage loan insurance and mortgage-backed securities (CMHC 2008) for several types of housing projects, including housing co-operatives. Although the corporation's initial focus was on public housing, it has since broadened its scope to include various forms of social housing[7] (1970s), affordable loans for home ownership (1980s), improved housing technology (1990s), and affordable and sustainable housing (2000s) (CMHC 2008).

The CMHC groups housing co-operative organizations with other social housing projects[8] and therefore housing co-operatives are subject to social housing legislation (Spackman 2009). Co-operative housing organizations can be considered a form of social housing, but are different in many ways and therefore blanket policies do not necessarily

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[7] CMHC's portfolio of social housing programs include: Co-operative Housing Programs, the Urban Native Housing Program, the Rural and Native Housing Program, the Rent Supplement Program, the Non-Profit Housing Program, and the Public Housing Program (CMHC 2008).
[8] CMHC defines social housing as "housing targeted to low-income individuals and families which receives government subsidies. There can be several types of social housing, such as housing owned by provincial or municipal governments, co-operative housing, and non-profit housing. Rents are usually less than market rates and are often geared to 25-30 percent [sic] of income" (Neumann 2009: np).

fit. First, a housing co-operative is an organization that is relatively independent from government (Spackman 2009). The organization's membership owns and operates its housing and related assets, unlike most social housing projects that are owned and operated by a third-party non-profit group or government agency. The operating agreements that bind housing co-operatives to the federal government exist only for the period of the first mortgage, as well as possible rent supplement agreements. After this time, the co-op is entirely independent of government.

Second, housing co-operatives support a mixed-income design, whereas all social housing units are aimed towards low-income persons and 100 percent of the units are subsidized, with varying levels of rental supplement (Spackman 2009 and Fairbairn 2001). Housing charges in housing co-operatives are set to no more than 95 percent of the full market value and break-even housing charges are applied. Further, members can reduce the cost of housing by participating in the maintenance and governance of the organization. Members who require subsidy are able to apply for a rental supplement.

Third, housing co-operative members alone (collectively) own their housing assets and have sole decision-making authority over them (Spackman 2009 and Fairbairn 2001). The general membership elects a board of directors, composed of members who live in the community, to govern and direct the present, and future, operation of these assets. In social housing projects, decision-making authority lies with the government or a non-profit group or board. Tenants are not able to decide the future of the housing organization.

Fourth, in a social housing situation, tenants have no assets or equity in the units themselves. In a housing co-operative, the members gain collective, shared equity as the mortgage is paid. The co-operative can borrow money against its equity to enhance or repair housing units and shared infrastructure. All equity gained is collectively owned and therefore cannot be borrowed against individually.

Housing co-operatives are a form of social housing but they are unique from other social housing organizations and communities. "The fact is they are different and they must be treated differently under law. They are independent corporations, separate from government, subject to laws like any corporation, but also possessing their own rights" (Spackman 2009: np). Most government representatives are not knowledgeable about

these differences and, as mentioned previously, the CHF Canada has successfully lobbied for an independent organization, whose employees have experience in co-operative housing, to take over administrative functions for some housing co-operatives.

The Agency for Co-operative Housing took over the administration of some federally-administered housing co-operatives in 2006. This agency's management of the federal co-op housing programs is intended to lead to more cost-effective use of federal funds, improved program outcomes, and assistance specifically related to co-operative housing (The Agency for Co-operative Housing 2009). Under the agreement the Agency is charged with monitoring operating agreements; reviewing co-op financial results; approving operating budgets, replacement-reserve plans and spending and contribution rates; performing a visual inspection of each co-op every two years; performing financial risk ratings; and assisting housing co-ops that are in financial difficulty. It is led by a chief executive officer and governed by a board of directors. The Agency has regional service centres in Toronto, Calgary and Vancouver, and a support centre in Ottawa. According to the Agency, it takes a "risk-based, data-driven and client-focused" approach to administering the programs (2009: np). It rates each housing co-op's risk and attempts to intervene early to prevent and mitigate financial difficulties. Lower-risk housing co-ops are asked to share information with other co-ops about their successes and best-practices. The Agency aims to create effective partnering within the co-op housing sector, increase the trust in program administration, and draw on the co-op housing movement's own knowledge pool.

Founded in 1968, the CHF Canada is the umbrella group for all member housing co-operatives in Canada. As stated in its 'Mission, mandate, and values', the organization unites, serves and represents Canadian housing co-operatives (CHF Canada 2009). The organization consists of a board of directors and committees, as well as staff located in six offices across Canada. Every year CHF Canada encourages delegates from member housing co-operatives to attend the Annual General Meeting (AGM) and conference. As of 2007, 2,220 housing co-operatives, with a total of 91,846 co-operative homes, are members of the Co-operative Housing Federation (CHF Canada 2009). These co-ops are found in every province and territory across Canada. Women account for 58 percent of the members of the housing co-ops enrolled in CHF, 11 percent are visible minorities, 20

percent are immigrants, 4 percent are of Aboriginal ancestry and 12 percent of households have a member who requires an accessible home (CMHC 2003 in CHF 2009). Further, about half of all co-operative households require income-tested assistance, or subsidy (CMHC 2003 in CHF 2009).

As of 2001, the CHF Canada laid the ground work for the 2020 Vision project, with beginnings in the 'Securing our Future Resolution'. In 2006, the 2020 Vision Project began. It is an educational and resource-based program designed to assist member housing co-operatives in the formation of visions and goals for the future. By 2020, the operating agreements for those housing co-operatives under the Section 95 program, as well as most of the Federal Co-op Housing Programs (ILM) are slated to end (CHF Canada 2009). Baring other policy initiatives, this means that thousands of housing co-operative organizations in Canada will no longer be receiving housing subsidies for lower-income members. They will also no longer receive operating funds nor have a 'safety net' in cases of financial difficulty. Provincially-run housing co-operatives will likely face this challenge of independence in the years following 2020. The Vision 2020 project is meant to assist housing co-operatives to prepare for this challenge.

The CHF Canada has built a 2020 toolkit of resources to assist housing co-operatives to prepare for this transition. It includes plain-language publications and workshops, and user-friendly software to help co-operatives create long-term financial plans and investment strategies (CHF Canada 2009). Another resource for housing co-operatives is the 2020 Certification. This is a set of eight standards created in order to measure and encourage the housing co-operatives to adopt sustainable development strategies that will assist in a strong future for the co-operative.[9] A housing co-operative creates a webpage and provides information on this webpage on how it is meeting the eight standards. This information is presented to the CHF Canada and, if satisfactory, the co-operative becomes certified as a designated 2020 Co-op (CHF Canada 2009).

A housing co-operative may also belong to one of the regional federations or associations that are located across Canada. These federations may serve a single city, a

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[9] The eight standards include: (1) a mission statement and a vision for its future, (2) a commitment to the values of the Canadian co-operative housing movement, (3) a capital reserve and investment plan, (4) a long-term financial plan, (5) good governance and principled leadership, (6) a comprehensive maintenance plan, (7) sound management, and (8) a commitment to environmental sustainability (CHF Canada 2009).

geographical area, or a province. Each federation differs in character and size. In general, a federation is governed by a board of directors that meets regularly. They provide "local support and services to member housing co-operatives" (CHF Canada 2009: np) that includes, but is not limited to, advocacy, advice, bulk-buying programs, management and financial services, legal and financial referrals, and a resource library.

2.1.3 Principles and Possibilities

Ideally, housing co-operatives, like other co-operative enterprises, promote equality, equity, mutual self-help, democracy, solidarity and individual responsibility (Craig 1993). They are communities that operate under the guidance of the principles set forth by the International Co-operative Alliance. These co-operative principles were initially developed during the industrial revolution by weavers in England (Cole 2008). A group of 28 weavers in Rochdale organized a co-operatively run store and returned profits to the members. Some time later they earned enough to rent further space in the building where they created a library and offered evening classes. They formulated several principles to live and work by which have become the basis of co-operative philosophy across the globe. The International Co-operative Alliance adopted these Rochdale principles in 1885. These principles have been reviewed and revised in 1937, 1966, and 1995 in order to "[modernize] the idea of co-operation, [maintain] its relevance and provide an up-to-date test of whether an organisation is qualified to call itself a co-operative" (International Co-operative Alliance 2004: np). Since September 1995, these principles include:

1. Voluntary and open membership
2. Democratic member control
3. Member economic participation
4. Autonomy and independence
5. Education, training and information
6. Co-operation among co-operatives
7. Concern for community
   (International Cooperative Information Center 1999)

All of the principles are of equal importance but the four that are most relevant to this research are 'democratic member control', 'education, training and information', 'co-operation among co-operatives' and 'concern for community' (see Appendix 2: Seven Co-operative Principles, for a more detailed description of each principle). In theory at least, co-operatives are organizations that are democratically controlled by the members who participate in decision-making, policy-making, and policy implementation. Each member is entitled to equal voting rights and the elected representatives are accountable to the membership. Each co-operative has a Board of Directors which is elected by the membership, as well as several committees that ensure the continued operation of the co-operative. The participation of members as elected directors, committee chairs, and committee members help to keep maintenance and other costs down. Every individual co-operative is collectively owned and operated. The unique ownership structure allows them to remain affordable relative to other housing options. Housing co-operative organizations only charge members the amount needed to cover repairs, costs, and reserves. When needed, the co-op's Finance Committee will recommend to the board of directors an increase in monthly unit charges amounting to no more than an additional three percent (Gilliard 2010). This increase is then included in the annual budget document and the general membership votes on it as part of the proposed budget. Sometimes market surveys are undertaken to compare the co-op's monthly unit charges with other properties in the area. According to Gilliard (2010), the co-op's monthly housing costs should be no more than 95 percent of going market rates.

Education and training of members, employees, management, directors and representatives is encouraged and supported by the co-operative in order to facilitate effective operation and development. For many co-ops, education and training are also recognized as services rendered to the membership, staff, and community. Efforts in this realm represent a form of reinvestment in the people most closely involved with the co-op, and in the future of the local economy. This can be seen as one of the dividends of co-operative membership and of co-operative organization. The co-operative can initiate education programs and workshops to provide educational opportunities for the membership and for others. Informal social networks in and around the co-op also

promote information exchange, which allows new ideas to reach various community members.

Co-operatives co-operate with other co-operatives. Co-operatives work with other co-operatives directly and through local, regional, national and international organizations. This enables a housing co-operative to better serve community members and the community as a whole through joint initiatives and shared access to resources. The more recent principle to be included among the International Co-operative Principles is 'concern for community'. "Co-operatives work for the sustainable development of the communities through policies approved by their members" (International Cooperative Information Center 1999: np). This principle emphasizes member and organizational responsibility to work towards sustainable livelihoods and sustainable resource use.

Housing co-operatives provide citizens with a place to live but they are much more than this. They are legal associations that have been formed to provide members with affordable and reliable housing, as well as equitable opportunities for membership and participation. Inequalities inherent in society, such as those related to gender, race, age, economic status, and physical ability[10], are addressed by co-operative philosophy and principles as each member of the community is valued for the skills and knowledge that they bring to the community as a whole.

Although women account for approximately 60 percent of the membership, and despite more equitable treatment, Craig (1993) found that women have sometimes been confronted by multiple barriers to participation within co-operatives. These difficulties include traditional constraints (traditional roles, values), legal discrimination (wages, personal and property rights), a lack of education and training, and lack of time (women working "double shifts" as wage earners and taking care of household responsibilities). Further, some women (as well as men and other visible minorities) may feel intimidated with the intensity of debate and discussion that occurs at some meetings. Although some women (and others) may be confronted with barriers to participation, Craig (1993) reports that an even number of men and women serve as directors in Canadian housing co-operatives.

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[10] In 1986 CHF created a committee on Special Needs Housing to address the increasing number of specialized units required for people with physical disabilities. The CMHC program provided funding so that five percent of co-op units were accessible to these persons (Cole 2008).

Co-operative housing structures have been found to reduce the sense of isolation for some women (Wasylishyn and Johnson 1998). They may also be a means to bolster health levels because of associated supportive environments[11] (Wekerle 1988). Co-operative housing may also serve as communal support for those with relatively few social supports outside the co-operative. Specifically, single mothers may benefit from opportunities of shared childcare and communal play areas as these serve to alleviate common stressors associated with raising children with little community or family assistance.

Co-operative communities can provide moral support and a sense of common identity for members. Some members may be marginalized and feel unable to access social capital because of poor social skills or cognitive abilities. The degree of proximity and ease of access to community members encourages social contact and influences friendship formation and trust building, as well as providing an opportunity for the fulfillment of social functions that would otherwise not be fulfilled (Skjaeveland, Garling and Maland 1996).

2.2 Social Learning and Learning for Sustainability

Learning is a social process that builds, expands, formulates and reformulates knowledge accumulated over time. There are many definitions of learning (see Sterling 2007, Wildemeersch 2007, Senge 2006, Hailey and James 2002, Wenger 2000, Pedlar, Burgoyne and Boydell 1997) however I have chosen a definition that best suits this thesis, as it is very broad. According to Glasser (2007):

> Learning is the process of acquiring knowledge, skills, norms, values, or understanding through experience, imitation, observation, modeling, practice, or study; by being taught; or as a result of collaboration. I also note that understanding is interpreted very broadly here to also include intuition, which may be the product of extensive study, spiritual practice, divine inspiration, or even serendipity, rather than conscious reasoning (2007: 46).

Glasser (2007) posits that all learning by individuals is social learning except when it does not include the influence of others, such as trial and error through direct personal experience.

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[11] Inasmuch as human health is a key aspect of community sustainability, this is a non-trivial contribution to sustainable development.

Glasser (2007) presents three levels of social learning. The first level is hierarchical learning, in which learning is based on inflexible, predetermined relationships between teachers and learners. The second is non-hierarchical learning in which learning is two-way, or dialogical (Sterling 2007). Each participant shares his or her experience and knowledge and each is considered an 'expert' in their own right. A third form is active social learning, or co-learning. This is based on non-hierarchical relationships and includes full participation, collaboration, trust, and shared exploration. Glasser (2007) also argues that all learning does not necessarily lead to behaviour change and that positive change will more likely occur when it is supported by a higher level of learning, namely active social learning. Active social learning supports "the critical evaluation of existing knowledge and problems, knowledge generation and penetration, and application of this new knowledge to policy, practice and everyday life" (Glasser 2007: 51).

According to Dyball, Brown and Keen (2007), there are five strands for 'successful' social learning for sustainability.[12] They are 'braided' in that they overlap and interact, yet each strand has an important independent role as well. The five strands include: *reflection, systems orientation, integration, negotiation,* and *participation* (Dyball, Brown and Keen 2007). "Social learning is a process of iterative reflection that occurs when we share our experiences, ideas and environments with others" (Dyball, Brown and Keen 2007: 183). Continuous reflection on the relationships between our knowledge, values and behaviour at the personal, interpersonal, community and societal levels leads to new understandings, which are critical to the social learning process (Dyball, Brown and Keen 2007). According to Dyball, Brown and Keen, it is at the community level that a common vision is created and priorities are identified. *Reflection* and *reflexivity* are important in social change because they help us to examine and reveal the institutional, political, theoretical and cultural contexts that affect our learning processes, values and actions (Harris and Deane 2005; Alvesson and Skoldberg 2000). Continuous reflection helps us to see what we may not normally be aware of.

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[12] It is important to understand that there is no 'recipe' for sustainability so much as it is a reflective process that emphasizes 'learning by doing' and learning based change (Tilbury 2007). This process is on-going, engaging stakeholders in the creation of vision(s) and actions, as well as the review of changes.

A second strand of social learning is *systems orientation and systems thinking*. Systems thinking can help us understand the dynamics of change by looking for patterns and processes in complex situations rather than events and end points. Within systems thinking, Jiggins and Röling (2002) emphasize the importance of experiential learning as well as active monitoring and feedback from decision outcomes and effects. An abstract system that is created must be evaluated and re-evaluated in itself as it is a product of subjective values. Participants must also expect surprise and change as the system may change unexpectedly; adaptive change is an appropriate response, as system changes are inevitable (Dyball, Brown and Keen 2007). Another concept associated with this strand is holistic systems thinking (Sterling 2007).

The third strand necessary for successful social learning for sustainability is *integration and synthesis*. The pursuit of sustainability requires that we examine holistic, integrative frameworks that present linkages and patterns, rather than simply dividing observations into a select set of elements (Dyball, Brown and Keen 2007). It is, in this sense, anti-reductionist. For integrative decision-making, participants must reconsider established ways of understanding. Further, interpretations of the way the world is may be influenced by age cohort, gender, expert group (Dyball, Brown and Keen 2007) or membership in other various social categories. Individuals and communities each have their own first-hand experiences and shared memories from which they draw their knowledge. When stakeholders come together as a group, it is important to be inclusive and respectful of what all participants have to say.

Negotiation and collaboration is a vital component to successful social learning and problem-solving (Dyball, Brown and Keen 2007 and Wildemeersch 2007). Conflict creates opportunities for learning and must be welcomed in order to create the conditions for new knowledge generation (Dyball, Brown and Keen 2007). Negotiation is required at every boundary and interconnection of systems thinking, as various stakeholders involved in the collaboration have different histories, interests, opinions and knowledge.

Fifth, *participation and engagement* creates learning partnerships for collaboration. There are many different types of participation including coercing, informing, consulting, enticing, co-creating and co-acting (Arnstein 1969). The processes

of engagement and participation from a social learning perspective can be referred to as single-, double-, and triple-loop learning.

> Single-loop learning refers to developing skills, practices and actions. This is typically within a project team. Double-loop learning facilitates the examination of underlying assumptions and models driving the different actions and behavior patterns…Triple-loop learning allows us to reflect on and change values and norms that are the foundation for our operating assumptions and actions (Dyball, Brown and Keen 2007: 189).

Multiple-loop or triple-loop learning within participatory approaches provides a more in-depth understanding of the values, power dynamics and contexts that affect the issue at hand, namely sustainable development goals. Multiple-loop learning is supported by active social learning (Glasser 2007).

The five braided strands of social learning (originally published by Earthscan in Keen *et al.* 2005).
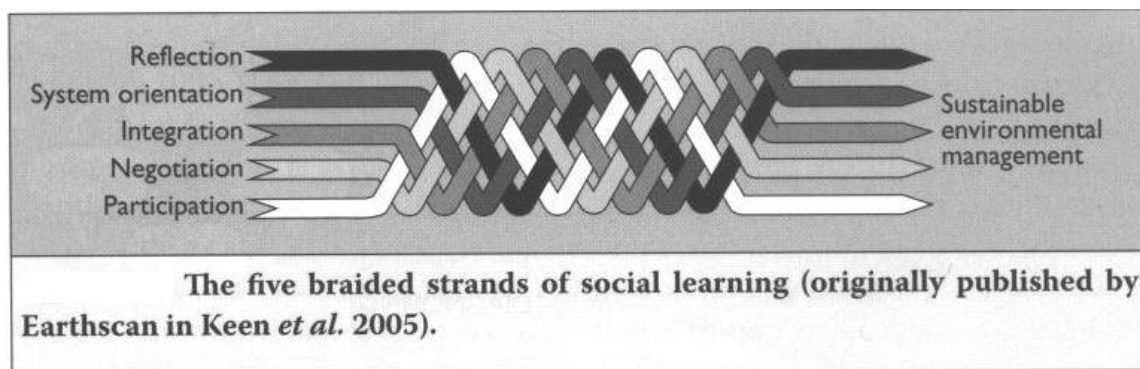
There are numerous pathways for sustainability as there are many different relationships between people and places. The pathways taken will be influenced by different knowledge matrices (Dyball, Brown and Keen 2007). It is important to acknowledge that social learning processes are never value-neutral as they are related to issues of substance and therefore generally trigger processes of power inside and outside the community (Wildemeersch 2007). However, a systems approach to community sustainability is meant to be inclusive of all community members and to be influenced by and produce networks, dependencies and relationships that lead to greater equality between social groups (Dyball, Brown and Keen 2007) (see Appendix 3: Principles of Social Learning for Sustainability). With successful social learning, previous and current understandings of jurisdictional and disciplinary boundaries can be augmented with creative new approaches to learning and action.

2.3 Cognitive Praxis and Social Movements

Cognitive praxis is "the creative role of consciousness and cognition in all human action, individual and collective" (Eyerman and Jamison 1991:3). It is a means by which theory and practice inform each other (Hassanien and Koppenburg 1995). Jamison (2001) posits that all social movements engage in cognitive praxis and he uses this concept to help explain them, and the environmental movement in particular. He states that social movements produce new knowledge and new organizational forms and principles (Jamison 2001). Hassanein and Kloppenburg (1995) describe social movements as creative engines that promote shifts in consciousness. The making and content of this new consciousness is described as cognitive praxis. Social movements are producers of innovative knowledge claims and they take action based upon these new knowledge claims.

According to Eyerman and Jamison's (1991) analysis of the environmental movement in Scandinavia, there are three dimensions of cognitive praxis: technological, cosmological, and organizational. The technological dimension is broadly interpreted to include criticisms of current mainstream technological and scientific development, as well as the kinds of alternative technologies that the environmental movement has advocated. It includes technical features but focuses even more on practical activity based on lived experience (Eyerman and Jamison 1991). In a complementary manner, Conway (2004) points to the practical and tacit forms of knowledge that are evident in social movements. Specifically, she looks at the interaction of knowledge production, social location, and identity in the study of a social justice network in Toronto. Conway concludes that "movement-based knowledge is largely tacit, practical and unsystematized. It is partial and situated, grounded in activist practice, arising from concrete engagement in social struggle, and embedded in specific times and places" (2004: 8). A multifaceted praxis fosters new practices as well as emerging theories of knowledge production (Conway 2004). Further, Conway argues that social movements, as sites of learning, include aspects of learning that are pre-cognitive, or tacit. This tacit, or practical, activity is an expression of the movement's cosmological dimension (Hassanein and Kloppenburg 1995).

The cosmological dimension is defined as the "common worldview assumptions that give a social movement its utopian mission" (Eyerman and Jamison 1991: 68). These worldview assumptions are also central to the movement's identity and provide the principle or foundation on which the movement's future developments are based, whether technological or organizational. The organizational dimension describes the vehicles by which the movement's meaning is disseminated. "All movements have a particular organizational paradigm, which means that they have both ideals and modes of organizing the production and, even more importantly perhaps, the dissemination of knowledge" (Eyerman and Jamison 1991: 69). "These spaces are the critical, local places where ideas combine with experience and a movement's cognitive praxis actually unfolds" (Hassanein and Kloppenburg 1995: 4).

Lofland (1996) claims that social movements are "insurgent realities" that challenge the status quo: how people are organized and how people live. Members of social movements critique the dominant views, create and express visions of alternatives, and then model these alternatives. Socially sanctioned ways of living and doing are therefore continually produced and reproduced. Jamison (2001) argues that the emerging ecological culture represents a synthesis of the dominant culture and the residual culture(s). Cultures, and specifically eco-minded cultures, are continually being formed and re-formed. It is a process of recombination where contradictory positions are resolved and synthesized; cultures must continuously compromise and integrate new ideas.

Social movements are processes and cannot be separated into constituent parts (Hassanein and Kloppenburg 1995). They are also transitory: the more successful a movement is, the less likely it will be a permanent organization (Jamison 2001). As the movement's ideals and ideas become adopted by a large majority of the intended population, they become a norm, or framework, and the movement is no longer needed. "We conceive of social movements as forms of cognitive praxis which are shaped by both external and internal political processes….social movements are the result of an interactional process which occurs within the boundaries of a particular society" (Eyerman and Jamison 1991: 4).

Social movements including the environmental movement have regularly served as a source of reconstituted knowledge (Jamison 2001). New knowledge moves from movement to movement and new ideas once thought of as radical become commonplace and accepted on a wide scale. However, as movements become institutionalized, they may become fragmented and lose some of their focus (Jamison 2001). It becomes difficult to retain autonomy and coherence in relation to both the dominant culture and the more residual cultural formations (Jamison 2001). According to Jamison (2001), the environmental knowledge and praxis that was emergent in the 1960s and 1970s has been institutionalized and split into different streams.[13] Different cultural traditions have influenced the ongoing transformations in politics related to the environment (Jamison 2001). Rather than remain a single voice, the environmental movement has divided into professionalized 'mainstream' organizations and voluntary local groups coalescing around specific issues.

Michael Bell (2004) believes one goal of the environmental movement is living environmentally without special effort, where eco-friendly habits are routine. Similarly, Haluza-DeLay (2008) argues that living environmentally entails an ecological habitus that is put into practice and routinized to the point where it becomes habitual and unreflexive. However, Bell also argues that there is an acute distinction between what people claim to believe and value, and how they act; this is otherwise described as an attitude/behavior split (Kraus 1995). Bell believes that the reason we find ourselves in this predicament is due to prevailing social structures. "We do not have complete choice in what we do. Our lives are socially organized, with all the constraints that this implies" (Bell 2004: 225). The ways in which our society is organized complicates and hinders our pursuit of attitude/behavior congruency. More positively, however, Bell states that it is also social organization that can be a positive influence on this split.

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[13] Jamison distinguishes between four types of green knowledge-making resulting from this split. These are community environmentalism, professional environmentalism, militant environmentalism, and personal environmentalism. Each involves a different approach to knowledge and how knowledge is produced and disseminated (Jamison 2001).

Social organization, however, also presents us with opportunities. When we as a community consider our collective attitudes and our collective behaviors – when we consider the ideal and the material implications of the current arrangement of our social and ecological lives – we have an opportunity to reconsider them as well. The social organization of our communities may be a large part of our problems, but the *social reorganization* of our communities can be a large part of the solution. We can create new social structures, new constraining influences that shape and guide our lives (Bell 2004: 225).

This said, however, successful change in our local communities (and larger communities as well) will not work unless we also have a personal commitment to change.

It's important to recognize the interaction, the dialogue, between reorganizing community and reorganizing ourselves. We are more likely to regard the environment in environmentally appropriate ways when our community life is organized to encourage such regard. But we can't simply wait around for that community reorganization to happen. We need to make it happen. Individuals are the agents of community change as much as communities are the agents of individual change (Bell 2004: 248).

2.4 Communities of Practice and Learning Organizations

Learning and knowledge are both forms of social expertise (Nicolini, Gherardi and Yanow 2003). According to Nicolini, Gherardi and Yanow (2003) knowing precedes knowledge and it is acquired through participation. Knowledge is continually produced and reproduced and negotiated in a system of ongoing practices. Therefore, knowledge is relational, rooted in contexts of interaction and "mediated by artefacts" (Nicolini, Gherardi and Yanow 2003: 3). Our identities, knowledge, stories and meanings develop out of our relationships within our communities, whatever forms these communities may take (Blantern and Belcher 1994; Wenger 2000; Bell 2004). It is these relationships that allow us to 'know'.

Nicolini, Gherardi and Yanow (2003) and Wenger (2000) look at knowing and knowledge from a practice-based perspective. "Practice is both our production of the world and the result of this process. It is always the product of specific historical conditions resulting from previous practice and transformed into present practice" (Nicolini, Gherardi and Yanow 2003: 8). For Nicolini, Gherardi and Yanow and for Wenger, knowing cannot be separated from doing; learning is not only a cognitive

activity, but a social activity. Specifically, Wenger (2000) discusses 'communities of practice' as the basic building blocks of social learning systems.

'Communities of practice' are the social 'containers' of competences that make up the system of learning (Wenger 2000). All people engage in some form of community of practice (e.g. nurses, university students, biker gang members, etc.) and it is our participation in these communities which allows us to learn. Wenger (2000) defines social learning and knowing as the ability to demonstrate competences that are defined within a community. These competences have been established over the history of the community. We can define what constitutes competence in a specific context or in a shared practice because of our participation in our communities. However, people's experiences and the standards of competence in their communities are not always congruent. There are different ways of knowing and different experiences and therefore, learning takes place when experiences and competence are in conflict. Communities of practice can negotiate competence through direct participation; one pulls the other and thus, learning takes place. These two components, our ongoing experience of the world and the socially defined competences of our communities, influence what and how we 'know'.

Similar to any organization, a community of practice has boundaries. However, unlike some other organizations, the boundaries of a community of practice are usually fluid. "They arise from different enterprises; different ways of engaging with each other; different histories, repertoires, ways of communicating, and capabilities… Shared practice by its very nature creates boundaries" (Wenger 2000: 232). These boundaries are important to systems of learning because they provide a connection between communities and they offer learning opportunities. It is at the boundaries of communities of practice that experience and competence diverge; however it is also at the boundaries that learning is maximized when experience and competence are in close tension (Wenger 2000). These boundaries can be viewed as assets or liabilities, depending on their use. Communities of practice can use them in order to create opportunities for new competences or the community can become defensive and closed in. They can be a source of separation and misunderstanding, or areas of new and unusual learning.

In order to maximize the success of interactions at various boundaries, coordination, transparency and negotiability must be considered. Coordination across boundaries aids in the effective use of actions and objects. Transparency on part of the community gives access to other communities with regard to the meanings that surround various practices. Negotiability is reflected when a community allows for two-way (or multiple) negotiations between perspectives. "Boundary processes can merely reflect relations of power among practices, in which case they are likely to reinforce the boundary rather than bridge it" (Wenger 2000: 234). According to Wenger, bridging boundaries occurs through four forms of interaction: brokering, or a member of the community who acts as a means of information exchange between communities; boundary objects, such as artefacts, discourses, or processes that support connections between different practices; boundary interactions that provide exposure to a practice by crossing other boundaries and maintaining connections and means by which prospective members can connect to the organization; and cross-disciplinary projects that combine knowledge and information from multiple communities, practices or disciplines to accomplish a task.

Another crucial source of learning occurs when new members join a community of practice. The new member brings important knowledge to the community, and the community to the individual. 'Legitimate peripheral participation' refers to a new member's involvement in a practice as they develop competence (Wenger 1999; Lave and Wenger 1991). The new member remains on the periphery of the community until he or she gains competence and respect from established members through participation and connecting with others while performing actual practices. Within a housing co-operative community, new members bring new information, knowledge and ways of doing things that may become incorporated into the established policies and procedures of the community. Over time, the organization's practices change and evolve according to the perceived needs of the community members.

Wenger's perspective highlights knowing as an outcome of social belonging and collective negotiation. Common routines, common language, communal resources and shared stories and artefacts maintain mutuality amongst community members. These collective resources and ways of being and doing comprise the social fabric of learning

and knowing. In this way, competence and identity are entwined and depend on participation within a community of practice. Progress within and of the community of practice is demonstrated by the level of learning energy, or whether the community makes learning a priority and remains open to new directions and opportunities; the depth of social capital; and the degree of self-awareness. "The three dimensions work together. Without the learning energy of those who take initiative, the community becomes stagnant. Without strong relationships of belonging, it is torn apart. And without the ability to reflect, it becomes hostage to its own history" (Wenger 2000: 230).

According to Wenger (2000) there are six areas that a community must focus on in order to maintain itself as a social learning community; or, in other words, as an organization that (re)produces and negotiates knowledge through shared participation. These are: events, to develop and sustain the community's identity; multiple forms of leadership; connectivity, in order to broker relationships between people; learning projects to deepen community commitment; membership that is organized in a way that does not dilute the community's focus; and, artefacts such as documents, websites, and symbols that are useful to the community (Wenger 2000). Development, with regards to these areas, within the community as well as participation outside of the community or organization, ensures the ability of the community to continue as a social learning system.

All organizations depend on social learning systems. They participate in and are constituted by social learning systems (Wenger 2000). The success of organizations is dependent on their capacity to organize as social learning systems themselves, as well as to engage in broader systems of learning (Wenger 2000). According to Wenger (2000) we belong to social learning systems at various levels, from local interaction to participation at the global level. These levels, or modes of belonging, include engagement, imagination, and alignment. Engagement refers to direct involvement with others, while imagination entails reflection upon our situation which allows us to orient ourselves and discover possibilities. We cannot engage with everyone in the world, nor in our communities, so to think of ourselves as part of a community entails imagination. We also align our activities with others and with their activities so that our actions and

understandings realize higher goals. This involves coordinating perspectives in a mutual process with other community members.

Each mode involves different kinds of action by community members and every social learning system includes all three modes in some combination and to different degrees. The different social structures of communities both influences and are influenced by these modes. The combination of these modes allows a community to keep a healthy balance between cognition and imagination and on-the-ground action. Learning is always a relationship between people and their social learning systems. Wenger (2000) argues that a person's identity is formed through relationships with others in their social learning systems. Wenger thus also highlights the connections between the evolution of social learning systems and personal identity transformation.

Different organizations learn in different ways. However, members of organizations typically focus on change and development within their organizations. Reid and Hickman (2002) identify three features of learning organizations. The first is the initial concept of the learning organization, developed by Pedlar, Burgoyne and Boydell (1997), in which an organization promotes the learning of its membership and consciously reconstructs itself in order to adapt and sustain a co-operative relationship with its environment. The second feature of a learning organization is described by Dale (1994; cited in Reid and Hickman 2002). Dale states that there are two sides to a learning organization: top-down and bottom-up learning. The organization adheres to policy and procedures, yet focuses on skill development and learning by individuals, all the while ensuring that this learning circulates into the organization itself. Finally, Reid and Hickman refer to a third feature of the learning organization suggested by Pedlar, Burgoyne and Boydell (1997): participative policy making and enabling structures. Enabling structures and participative policy making are important for organizational learning as they typically are preconditions for learning within an organization.

Reid and Hickman (2002) point to the ability of housing associations to become learning organizations. They apply the idea of social learning organizations to social housing organizations. They also refer to Boydell and Leary (1996), who provide a framework, representing a continuum, which can be used to examine an organization's progress towards becoming a learning organization (see Table 1).

Boydell and Leary introduce three organizational ideal types that can be used to understand learning organizations as they respond to new activities within their organization: implementing, improving, and integrating. As the organization progresses and develops new skills and capacities, the organization moves away from implementing towards integrating. The organization becomes more creative, independent and inclusive, rather than dependent and exclusive in its learning capabilities. The members begin to organize and to problem-solve as groups, rather than as individuals ordered by a higher authority. An integrative organization is characterized by more inclusive communication, which aids in more inclusive, collective participation. As an organization moves from implementing towards improving and integrating, horizontal, rather than vertical (hierarchical), relations between actors, characterize the organization. Organizational learning depends on enabling relationships and collective, organizational processes. This framework of three organizational ideal types provides a means to examine a housing organization as a type of learning organization with regards to its ability to adapt to change (Reid and Hickman 2002).

2.5 Sustainable Community Development and Community Capital

The term "community" has been conceptualized in many ways. It is a complex term that incorporates both place-based (geographical) and interest-based (sociological) concepts. Bauman (2001) believes that community implies security, confidence and trust. The word "community" simply feels good and yet we are unable to fully grasp community. Community is characterized by shared understanding (Tönnies 1963) in which understanding does not need to be sought nor explained; it precedes both agreements and disagreements; it is tacit (Bauman 2001). However, communal understanding is now an achievement. We no longer have natural agreement and, if agreement is accomplished, it is fragile, vulnerable, and always in need of defence (Bauman 2001). In the past, a true community was conceptualized as distinctive, small and self-sufficient with dense, all-inclusive communication boundaries (Bauman 2001), but with the advent of urban growth and globalization, communities have become porous because of increased communication channels and contact.

Community means security, however, communities also limit social freedoms in certain ways (Bauman 2001). Bauman argues that when we belong to a community we can count on the good will of others but that we also have to give up some autonomy. "Security and freedom are two equally precious and coveted values which could be better or worse balanced, but hardly ever fully reconciled and without friction" (Bauman 2001: 4-5). Bauman argues that there are two central tasks for community: to allocate resources equitably and to provide collective insurance against individual misfortune and incapacities. Through community, we can collectively gain control over the conditions of life under which we struggle.

Schaffer and Anundsen (1993; cited in Roseland 2005: 154), suggest that "community is a group of people who commit themselves for the long-term to their own, one another's and the group's well-being." A sustainable community continually adjusts to meet the economic and social needs of its members while simultaneously preserving the environment's supportive abilities (Bridger and Luloff 2001). Housing co-operatives can be considered communities, both in the sociological and geographical sense, because members interact frequently and in many ways, share some common space and facilities, and make decisions together regarding the operation of the co-operative. Housing co-operative communities are (generally) located in geographically bounded areas in which members care for the communally-owned property and socialize, both formally and informally.

A housing co-operative community can create a sustainability vision to assist the organization in the creation of collective goals for sustainability. It is important that this vision include specific strategies and development approaches that benefit quality of life and the local environment in order that the co-operative can meet "the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (World Commission on Environment and Development 1987: 43). This may entail measures to address economic, environmental, and social issues in order to foster a strong sense of community and build partnerships with other communities and organizations, including other co-operatives. Housing co-operatives can promote the efficient use of resources, create efficient and long-lasting infrastructure, and educate members on environmental sustainability. More specifically, a housing co-operative can improve

energy and resource efficiency, shift to clean energy, reduce waste and pollution, protect and conserve water and produce and promote consumption of healthy food. It can also provide the social context for development of new sensibilities and habits with respect to consumption, recycling, sharing and other practices that reduce individual ecological footprints.

Bridger and Luloff's (2001) definition of community sustainability is complemented by Emery and Flora's (2006) Community Capitals Framework (CCF). Employing a systems perspective, Emery and Flora suggest a comprehensive, multifaceted approach to analyzing community development initiatives. Their CCF provides a way for a community to consider its assets in terms of each form of capital, the ways in which capital is invested, and how the various capitals interact and impact each other. I use this framework to describe the ways in which housing co-operatives can use various forms of capital in order to foster sustainable actions; I also use it as a means to describe community sustainability. The CCF focuses on seven interacting arenas of community life: natural, political, human, cultural, social, financial, and built capitals (Emery and Flora 2006). All these forms of 'capital' are necessary for the sustainability of a community (Roseland 2005) but the geographical characteristics and history of each community will influence the availability of each form.

Natural capital refers to assets that exist in a particular locale (Emery and Flora 2006). This includes natural resources, weather, amenities, geographic isolation, and natural beauty. It is "any stock of natural assets that yields a flow of valuable goods and services into the future" (Roseland 2005: 5). This stock of natural assets includes non-renewable resources, renewable resources and available sinks to absorb pollution. Natural capital also shapes the cultural capital associated with the particular place (Pretty 1998 and Constanza et al., 1997).

Political capital refers to a community's access to organizations and power as well as connections to other outside resources (Flora et al. 2004). It includes a person's ability to engage, have a voice, and make decisions within the community to contribute to the well-being of the community. There are many barriers to political participation that may include community fragmentation and territorialism, as well as the inability to communicate and participate on equal terms with 'experts' and low self-esteem on part of

the participant (Speak 2000). Political capital must be an area of focus if a community wants to achieve its collective goals (Flora et al. 2004).

Human capital includes peoples' skills and abilities that may be used to develop and improve a community's resources and to access other resources outside the immediate community (Emery and Flora 2006). Human capital is a measure of education, training, experiences, and leadership skills that each individual community member holds as part of the group. The use of human capital aids in understanding, the support of personal skill development, the creation of personal identity, information accessibility, and the discovery of preferred practices. Focusing on human capital is important as it strengthens social, environmental, human, and economic capital simultaneously (Hancock 1999). Human capital is formed and strengthened both through education initiatives and through the members' experiences in and outside the community. Community involvement and security generally are prerequisites to human capital formation (Roseland 2005).

A central component of human capital, with regards to learning organizations and community development, is leadership skills. Leaders in a learning organization are values-driven, responsive, knowledge based, and are committed to their own personal learning and change (Hailey and James 2002). As well, they have the ability to inspire, a natural curiosity, and function well in an uncertain, changing environment (Hailey and James 2002). They facilitate and educate (Senge 2006) and thus promote a learning culture, sustaining the learning organization itself through this promotion (Hailey and James 2002). "They have therefore been able to combine ideals and values with analysis, technical expertise, and professionalism, while still being able to communicate a vision and motivate a range of staff, stakeholders, and beneficiaries" (Hailey and James 2002: 407). Learning leaders can draw on their own power and prestige and move the learning process forward. Hailey and James argue that "organizations, particularly in their founder phase (though not exclusively), tend to be very much moulded in the image of the leaders" (2002: 404). These leaders often play a pivotal role in the development of the organization's vision and mission.

The role of learning leaders cannot be underestimated, and successful organizations must consider the importance of leadership renewal and sustainable

leadership. Attention to leadership renewal and the sustainability of leadership will aid in the survival of the community as a learning organization but does not guarantee it. Speak (2000) argues for the need to include children early in development processes to increase their skills and confidence. When children are taught how to participate and are given the chance to be in leadership roles, their self-esteem and their ability to communicate with others increases. These opportunities for personal growth help to increase the likelihood that young people will develop social skills and attitudes that will facilitate their participation in the future. Leadership renewal is vital to the survival of the community, and of the learning organization. Children must be encouraged to participate at this developmental stage, so they will mature to have "equal rights of expression later" in life (Speak 2000: 37).

Cultural capital refers to the way that people 'know the world' and therefore, how they behave within their communities and others (Emery and Flora 2006). It also refers to their language and traditions. "Cultural capital affects whose voice is heard and abided by, who has particular influence in different areas of social life, and how influence, innovation and creativity transpire and are nurtured" (Emery and Flora 2006: 21). It is the "product of shared experience through traditions, custom, values, heritage, identity, and history" (Roseland 2005: 11) that can only be formed with time. According to Bourdieu (2001) cultural capital may be transformed to economic capital and may also be viewed as an educational qualification. An individual's culture is the most socially determined form of knowledge acquisition (Bourdieu 2001). In order for cultural capital to exist, this form of capital must involve a commitment to social capital.

Social capital refers to the connections among people and organizations (Emery and Flora 2006). It is the social 'glue' that holds people together and enables either positive or negative things to happen. It can be defined as "the relationships, networks, and norms that facilitate collective action" (OECD 2001, np). Social capital is formed through patterns of interaction, social relations, societal structures, and organizations that people build (Roseland 2005). It can also be described as networks of social relationships, or membership within a group:

> Social capital is the aggregate of the actual or potential resources that are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition – or, in other words, to membership in a group – which provides each of its members with the backing of a collectively-owned capital, a 'credential' that entitles them to credit in the various senses of the word (Bourdieu 2001: 102-103).

Social capital is characterized by social obligations and connections and may be converted to economic capital and/or institutionalized (Bourdieu 2001). Coleman (1988) posits that social capital has three forms comprised of obligations, expectations, and trustworthiness; information channels; and, norms and effective sanctions.

Building social capital is a pro-active strategy that takes time, effort and commitment on behalf of members of the community. It is different from many other types of capital in that more social capital is available with use. In other words, the more you use it, the stronger it becomes, as long as it is not abused. A group can achieve ends that would otherwise be impossible or that would cost more, economically, socially, or otherwise, if attempted individually.

Dehsi (2000) states that social capital is an enabling resource that may improve the success of other development inputs. It may, however, simultaneously facilitate and impede social action. Within a Neoliberal context, social capital may not always be a positive asset:

> [S]olidarities, alliances, groups and identities are constantly in the process of forming and transforming as they come into conflict and accommodation, develop new meanings, and respond to challenges, and as the broader structures of society develop and change. Social cleavage is as likely to be formed as cohesion as groups define their similarities in opposition to others and as social boundaries are demarcated (Jaffe and Quark 2005: 236).

Social cohesion can keep communities together but may also tear them apart. There is an assumption that social cohesion is always good and necessary, where more is better; however, contemporary society, which is increasingly based on Neoliberal political culture and institutions, creates new kinds of cohesion not characterized by social and economic embeddedness (Jaffe and Quark 2005). Rather than the traditional sense of horizontal cohesion, social capital may be characterized by vertical cohesion. Instead of social cohesion based on relationships among people who are in similar structural positions, social cohesion in its vertical form becomes more prevalent "as mobility and

opportunity become dependent on creating solidarity up or down the social ladder" (Jaffe and Quark 2005: 237). Vertical cohesion can be described as a form of relationship where some members of a group have access to power and resources, thus creating boundaries that exclude others from potential benefits. Social cohesion should therefore be used as an analytical tool, not a causal construct explaining the successful or less successful outcomes within communities (Jaffe and Quark 2005). Communities have both connections and cleavages that can either facilitate or impede various kinds of development efforts.

Emery and Flora (2006) describe two forms of social capital: bonding social capital and bridging social capital. Bonding social capital refers to the close ties that build community cohesion among family, neighbours, and community members. Social, recreational, and stewardship activities aid in the formation of bonds between participants (Klyza, Isham and Savage 2006). Bridging social capital refers to the looser ties that connect organizations and communities outside of the initial or core community (Narayan 1999; and Granovetter 1973 & 1985 cited in Emery and Flora 2006). These connections may facilitate education opportunities and communication as well as formal and informal partnerships among different groups. Bridging social capital is important when a community needs to access outside sources of knowledge and information including 'experts' and/or financial and other resources. Another category of social capital relevant to this literature review is "linking social capital" (Klyza, Isham and Savage 2006). It relates to alliances with compassionate and considerate individuals in positions of power (Klyza, Isham and Savage 2006). Alliances of this type assist groups in accessing resources that are otherwise unavailable to them. These may be formal and informal public alliances as well as formal and informal private and nonprofit alliances between different agencies and organizations (Klyza, Isham and Savage 2006).

Social capital is important in organizations or communities where social learning takes place because it can create a more positive context in which to learn. Members of housing co-operative may be more socially comfortable and willing to learn if there is an atmosphere of trust amongst (some or all) community members. They may let go of apprehensions amongst their friends, family and neighbours as opposed to in the company of strangers. Further, community cohesion may allow for learning through

informal social interaction outside of formal learning settings. Social capital may also create connections between persons with resources and those who need resources to learn, to create a learning atmosphere in a community, and to implement sustainability measures.

Financial capital refers to financial resources used to support social entrepreneurship, invest in community capacity building, and to accumulate wealth for the development of the community in the future (Lorenz 1999). It also refers to the ways communities make decisions on how they allocate resources (Roseland 2005). In order for communities to strengthen their supply of financial capital, they can invest in areas that will maximize their ability to secure economically sustainable livelihoods. Housing co-operatives can invest in technologies and resources that will ensure the longevity of their structures which may reduce the amount of money spent on upkeep and replacement. They may also invest in practices and technology that will reduce energy expenditure and promote water conservation. Further, they can maximize their use of existing resources in a sustainable manner, and replace imports. Communities 'leak' when they import goods and services that could be made onsite (Nozick 1999). For instance, a community could install solar collectors to reduce spending on non-renewable energy sources to heat water or individual units and/or indoor community spaces. This reserves economic resources for other activities.

Built capital refers to the infrastructure that supports community activities (Flora et al. 2004) and includes buildings and other infrastructure that can serve as a source of savings or future income (Roseland 2005). Sustainable built capital can assist communities in securing the physical necessities needed to ensure quality of life today as well as into the future with regard to expected changes and shocks—including changes in climate, regulatory changes, and changes in the cost of needed resources (e.g. petroleum).[14] Sustainable built capital can include eco-technologies and humanly-scaled industries that are structurally and economically tailored to the ecosystems in which they are located (Bookchin 1990). These may include technologies such as solar power; wind power; various alternative home-heating techniques; composting toilets; and straw bale,

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[14] Scientific analysis has shown that climate change will affect all areas of life on the planet which includes changes in weather patterns and impacts on health safety, ecosystems and regional and global economies (David Suzuki Foundation 2007).

mud, timber and junk (recycled and reclaimed material) buildings based in permaculture (Bang 2005). Bookchin believes that "technology… is one of the major points of contact between social values and ecological values" (1990: 188). Eco-technologies help us to see the close interconnection between nature and ourselves, allowing more sound decisions to be made with regards to resources. Housing co-operatives can increase the sustainability of their built capital by appropriate planning and design, and by investing in their housing units, communal areas, grounds and equipment.

Gutierrez (2005, cited in Emery and Flora 2006) argues that when communities invest in community capitals, a 'spiralling-up' process ensues. Emery and Flora (2006) find that increasing the stock of social capital is a desirable entry point to community development. Social capital reinforces other forms of capital. When a community invests in social capital (initially, and other capitals subsequently), other capital stocks and flows increase. The accumulation of assets, such as trust, built infrastructure, and/or technologies, influences and increases the probability of the accumulation of other assets. It is a "self-reinforcing cycle of increasing opportunity and community well-being" (Emery and Flora 2006: 23).

A community always embodies many forms of capital. However, how do members of a community ensure that the community uses its capitals in ways that promote sustainability? In order to use assets in a sustainable way, community members must learn to make decisions regarding its resources in response to changing conditions in the physical and social environment. According to Wenger (2000), a community that organizes itself as a social learning system is better able to meet the challenges of changing circumstances and to maintain its ability to 'keep-up'. In other words, to continually work towards community sustainability.

The theories discussed in this chapter point towards the importance of learning in a place-based social group. Learning is a social activity and each community is unique and therefore must understand and learn to use its own resources to create sustainable processes within the community, as well as sustainable outcomes. As the Communities of Practice and Cognitive Praxis theories argue, much of this learning is based in practice; in other words, community members learn via participation with other members of the community or organization.

The conceptual frameworks I use to explore how housing co-op members might learn are interrelated in many ways yet differ in others. The theories on learning and knowledge production, namely Social Learning, Learning for Sustainability, Cognitive Praxis and Social Movements, Communities of Practice, and Learning Organizations, describe learning and knowledge production as a social activity. The literature I draw on for Learning for Sustainability provides a framework by which a community can analyze social learning processes while Learning Organizational theory provides ideal organizational types which can be used to analyze social learning within an organization. Cognitive Praxis and Social Movement theories, as well as Community of Practice theories focus on a practice-based perspective and how individuals actually learn. They describe how new knowledge is generated and incorporated into communities or organizations through various means.

In housing co-ops, members may learn through collaborative decision-making as well as through their participation in various kinds of initiatives. They may also learn through connections and interactions across various boundaries such as those with sector organizations and other co-ops. Other ways of learning that are not necessarily practice-based occur as well; for example, members learn through observation of others' behaviours, or modeling, simply because they live close to one another and observe each other from time-to-time. Learning produces new knowledge and informs new approaches to community life, policy, and practices. Housing co-operative theory describes these organizations as democratic in nature where members participate in the operation and maintenance of the community. One of the seven co-operative principles emphasizes the importance of the education, training, and informing of members. Another principle points to the significance of co-operation among co-operatives; in other words, it argues for the importance of boundary bridging between organizations. The seventh principle is "concern for community," which emphasizes a co-op's responsibility to work towards sustainability development.

Sustainable Community Development and Community Capital theories describe the central tasks of a community: to allocate resources equitably and to provide collective insurance against individual misfortune. Emery and Flora's Community Capitals Framework provides a means of categorization by which communities, or learning

organizations, can analyze their (sustainable) development efforts. While all of these conceptual frameworks do not describe social learning in exactly the same way, I use them in a complementary fashion to explore how and under what conditions a housing co-op can be a learning organization promoting community sustainability.

As discussed above in Chapter 1, I have elaborated a working definition of community sustainability by drawing on several interrelated concepts and conceptual discussions: community (Schaffer and Anundsen 1993), sustainable community (Bridger and Luloff 2001), sustainable development (World Commission on Environment and Development 1987), and community capital (Emery and Flora 2006). With a focus more on appropriate adaptive practices than on end states, in this thesis community sustainability is defined as a process whereby a group of people who are committed to long-term individual and group well-being, continually learns and adjusts its approach to community life in order to meet present needs while simultaneously planning for the future. Members address and make decisions regarding all assets and aspects of community life including natural, social, human, cultural, built, financial, and political capitals. While the various ways that these capitals interact is obviously of interest, the main focus of this research was on environmental and social dimensions of sustainability.

As stated in Chapter 1, the aim of this study was to understand if and how a housing co-operative works as a learning organization. In what ways and under what conditions can a housing co-operative be considered a learning organization? Two subsidiary research objectives for this study were to explore the relevance of a set of learning organization criteria in analyzing a housing co-operative as a learning organization; and to investigate how a housing co-operative can use learning organization criteria as a tool to address community sustainability goals. I addressed these questions and objectives by studying a housing co-operative in a Western Canadian city that is pursuing the introduction, management, and improvement of sustainability initiatives. I aimed to understand the learning experiences of the members of this housing co-operative in order to be able to generalize from their experiences and to critique and extend the learning organization literature in a manner that would make it more relevant to co-operatives—particularly housing co-operatives.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

I have taken a qualitative approach in order to address my research questions and objectives. Qualitative inquiry often allows a researcher to gain information that is more in-depth than what can be obtained quantitatively. It can be used as an exploratory tool to better understand a subject in which knowledge is incomplete or where little is known about the subject. Or, it may be used where the researcher wants to obtain new perspectives on a well-studied phenomenon. Qualitative inquiry is used in the case of complex events and situations where rich description is needed to adequately address what the researcher is preparing to study (Mason 2002). Focusing on quantitative analysis alone may conceal basic social processes inherent in this research project as this is an area of social reality that statistics alone cannot easily measure. In order to address the research question I have relied primarily on a qualitative analysis through a case study method informed by a social realist perspective, which is discussed further below.

I seek to discover if a housing co-operative can function and be understood as a learning organization, specifically with respect to my definition of community sustainability. I compare participants' accounts of how they learn about sustainability in a housing co-operative to current literature on organizational learning. I also use my personal experience living and working in a (different) housing co-operative as an additional point of reference throughout this study. I revisit and revise Pedlar, Burgoyne and Boydell's (1997) learning organization characteristics and use these as an organizational tool to organize and report the field data from the study of a housing co-operative.

For this research, I examine a particular housing co-operative as a case study) to understand the ways in which it can be considered a learning organization. Along with Flyvbjerg (2006), I would argue that even a single case study can be a powerful tool.

> One can often generalize on the basis of a single case, and the case study may be central to scientific development via generalization as supplement or alternative to other methods. But formal generalization is overvalued as a source of scientific development, whereas "the force of example" is underestimated (Flyvbjerg 2006: 228).

I use the case to provide insight and understanding into how housing co-operatives may function as a type of learning organization and how they may serve as more sustainable communities in general. As such, I use what is described as an instrumental case study, as it "plays a supportive role, and it facilitates our understanding of something else" (Stake 2000: 437). I take the information gleaned from analysis of this case study, compare it to existing literature, and create an analytical framework that is more specifically applicable to organizational learning in housing co-operatives.

3.2 Key Criteria

In order to understand to what degree and in what manner a housing co-operative may be a learning organization, I formulated an initial set of criteria to use in evaluation. Current research does not bring together literature on learning organizations and housing co-operatives; most literature on learning organizations focuses on business-oriented organizations. Therefore, I started with Pedlar, Burgoyne and Boydell's (1997) 'A Learning Company Questionnaire' (see Appendix 4: Characteristics of the Learning Company) and adapted and reformulated these characteristics to better suit a housing co-operative. The criteria I employed include the following:

1. The existence of long and short-term plans or visions
2. A learning approach to strategy
3. Participative policy making
4. Communication (feedback loops, information systems for information from inside and outside the co-operative)
5. Formative accounting and control
6. Internal collaboration and exchange
7. Enabling structures (flexible leadership, roles, boundaries)
8. Inter-organizational learning
9. Self-development opportunities for all
10. Critical reflection and reflexive learning
11. Voluntary nature of learning
12. Diversity is acknowledged, viewed and used as an asset
13. Legitimate constraint (reasonable limitations)
                    (Adapted and expanded from Pedlar, Burgoyne and Boydell 1997)

I utilized these criteria to explore the ways and degree to which one Western Canadian housing co-operative may be a learning organization, as well as to see in what ways social learning in housing co-operatives differs from a more business-oriented organization. These criteria were not intended to be exhaustive as new themes emerged from the data; these criteria were simply a starting point for the investigation and analysis.

3.3 Case Study Strategies and Sources of Data

3.3.1 The Study Site

For this study, I looked at learning processes within a Western Canadian housing co-operative (herein referred to as the Co-op)[15] that has explicitly embraced a sustainability agenda. The Co-op was an early adopter of this orientation as its members declared sustainability as a priority at the Co-op's inception and building stages. I used intentional, or purposive, sampling and chose a housing co-operative that was explicitly committed to sustainability. Purposive sampling is used when the researcher chooses a unit for its relevance to the research question and the analytical framework that has been developed for the research (Schwandt 2001). I chose this Co-op because of previous research, newsletters, and presentations by the CHF Canada, and because of its location and relative accessibility for my field research. It publicly states its vision as "sensible and affordable housing, environmental responsibility, and a nurturing community for its members" (Co-op's website 2009). The community works towards the inclusion of sustainable initiatives into its built and social environment. My strategy was to choose a housing co-operative that is explicitly committed to sustainability and then to investigate how, as an organization, it learns or does not learn to carry its goals forward.

Housing co-operatives tend to attract what could be considered more progressive, as opposed to conservative, members of society. A progressive member may be someone who favours improvement, reform, and change to current trends in politics, the environment, or social matters. Progressive members advocate and employ liberal ideas and wish to experiment with new ways of doing things in order to create better conditions

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[15] I have not named the city in which the Co-op is located in order to protect the privacy of the Co-op and its members.

for individuals and/or all living creatures in the world. Individuals may choose to become a member of this co-operative, or others, because of progressive tendencies. They may appreciate such concepts as the ideal of democratically controlled housing and shared resources. However, members are also attracted to housing co-operatives for more prosaic and utilitarian reasons such as accessing stable, secure, and affordable housing. The Co-op, in choosing new members, may be inclined to accept those persons who are more conscious of sustainability issues and therefore more likely to participate in the Co-op's sustainability initiatives. Those who are involved with the vetting of prospective new members may be inclined to accept people who 'fit' the Co-op's mandates and values. In Chapter 4, I have further addressed how the selection and self-selection of members into the co-operative may affect the character/profile of membership.

According to current Co-op members, the particular housing co-operative that I visited was formed in 1974 with occupancy of the units beginning in 1978. Soaring prices and an acute shortage of all housing types, as a result of the baby boom and the oil boom in the early 1970s, encouraged concerned would-be Co-op members to develop an alternative housing arrangement for themselves. A group of politically active citizens believed that a housing co-operative would be an acceptable solution to the housing crisis in their area of the city. Many members had been and were involved in movements committed to social change, and they were looking for alternative living arrangements other than those which were currently available.[16]

The membership's history of political activism was, and continues to be, a perceived asset. They have committed many hours to lobbying the city council for their interests. After much deliberation on part of the Co-op, and resistance on part of the city council, the housing co-operative was given permission to choose one of a number of city-approved lots in the neighbourhood of their choice. The Co-op members requested a 60-year lease on the land rather than outright ownership because they believed it would create less resistance on part of the city council. Nevertheless, it was two and a half years between the time that the city council directed the preparation of a lease and the actual signing of the lease due to constraints imposed by members of the city council. Most

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[16] Unless otherwise stated, information about the Co-op is taken from interviews with members.

generally, some members of the council were not in favour of the housing co-operative going forward.

The Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) approved a 50-year loan for the Co-op and construction began in 1978. It is a fairly typical Canadian housing co-operative in terms of its size, and consists of numerous two-bedroom and three-bedroom units, as well as a few four-bedroom units, five-bedroom units and accessible units. In 1985, the Co-op expanded its housing capacity by several units with the 'adoption' of a separate, under-funded housing co-operative in the area herein referred to as "Expansion."

From its inception, the Co-op incorporated concepts of sustainability into the physical structures of the units and the surroundings. They preserved as many existing trees and shrubs as possible, as well as the existing foot path that was located through the grounds. Also, the buildings were built to a higher standard than was required to meet industry or government standards: for example, they opted for more insulation and thus thicker exterior walls. To pay for this increase in cost, the members voted not to install closet doors. Since the Co-op has been built, there have been many changes and upgrades to the physical structure of the units and grounds, the details of which will be discussed in Chapter 4.

The research methods I used to study this organization were participant observation, document analysis, interviews, both telephone and face-to-face, one focus group with the Member Involvement Committee, as well as interrogation of, and reflection on, my personal experiences drawn from living and working in a housing co-op. The telephone interviews were conducted with one staff member at the main office of the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada (CHF Canada) and one staff member from the Agency for Co-operative Housing (the Agency) in order to understand how these organizations support housing co-operatives in the adopting and implementation of sustainability goals. I chose these methods because the topic of this study necessitates familiarity and dialogue. It would be difficult to discover the kind of information I needed through a structured, multi-question survey. I also believe that reality is revealed and partially constructed through conversations. As a conversation evolves, new ideas surface that may not have appeared in a survey questionnaire.

I conducted field research at the Co-op for two weeks in May 2008. Before arriving at the research site, and after appropriate communication and negotiation with the Board of Directors (BOD), I distributed a letter of invitation to the membership, speaking of my familiarity with housing co-operatives and sustainable living literature, my research purpose in general, and my advanced appreciation for their participation. My intention for this memo was to encourage members to participate in my study as well as to build some initial rapport with the membership.

3.3.2 Participant Observation

The purpose of the participant-observation stage of the research was to observe the general layout of the community and to learn something about how members interact with each other and with the built environment. I wanted to familiarize myself with the community and get a 'feel' for it, and so I needed to participate in the setting 'firsthand' (Silverman 2001). Upon arrival at the research site, I met with three board directors over an informal meal and was given a tour of the Co-op and its surroundings. I examined the physical infrastructure of the buildings and social spaces by walking around the exterior of the co-operative and touring the inside of the buildings as the first step of my research. I also observed social relations between members during the semi-annual Co-op Clean-up day and in common areas in the co-op. I recorded my observations and used this note-taking as an opportunity to further reflect on the context and local conditions—both social and environmental. It was also an opportunity to begin to identify and inventory the kinds of sustainability initiatives that were in evidence (or conspicuously absent).

3.3.3 Document Analysis

A second method that I used for gathering data was the analysis of documents. The Board of Directors gave me access to the Co-op's Member Handbook, which contains policies and by-laws of the co-op; an Annual General Meeting (AGM) agenda package; articles written on the history of the Co-op; and ten issues of the Co-op's newsletter from the year 2007. Most of this documentation was obtained after some individual interviews took place as these participants were able to provide additional information for use in my research. The newsletters were sent to me prior to my visit.

Staff members of relevant housing co-op sector agencies were also able to provide websites and other documents pertaining to policy and sustainability.

3.3.4 Focus Groups

An additional method I employed to study the Co-op was the convening of a focus group. Time at the study site was fairly limited and the focus group allowed me to gather more information in a relatively short period of time. This housing co-operative does not have an office, paid staff, nor a common meeting area, such as a community centre. This was a constraint on my ability to implement this particular research method. Before I arrived at the research site, I was able to arrange for two focus groups to take place during my visit; one with the Member Involvement Committee and one with the Maintenance Committee. However, upon arrival, organizational difficulties did not permit me to meet with the Maintenance Committee. However, I was successful in my attempts to collectively interview six (female) members of the Member Involvement Committee. One of these participants also volunteered to take part in a face-to-face interview.

3.3.5 Interviews

A final method that I used was the semi-structured, interactive interview. The face-to-face interviews with Co-op members and the two telephone interviews with the two staff members of two co-op housing sector organizations were loosely organized around the 13 criteria listed in Section 3.2. Individual interviews lasted from 45 to 150 minutes. The questions used varied slightly with each Co-op member or sector organization staff member, depending on the particular participants and context. Questions that were asked during interviews included items such as the following (For a more detailed list of interview and focus group questions, see Appendix 5.):

- What are the short-term and long-term plans or goals of your co-operative that relate to sustainability?
- Are these goals revisited regularly?
- Does the co-operative or members within the co-operative experiment with new ideas?
- Do most members participate in the creation or revision of policy?

- Has there ever been an environmental initiative introduced that required policy or procedural changes in the co-operative? How was this resolved? Or was it?

- To what degree do you seek out and use information from other organizations in the community?

- In your opinion, what is it about living in a housing co-operative that may make it easier or more difficult for people to learn about sustainability, and to act on this knowledge?

I attained the required informed consent and conducted the interviews as guided conversations, utilizing a list of topics and my own knowledge with regards to issues related to housing co-operatives and sustainability initiatives. I carried out the interviews as a conversation as I had anticipated that the participant(s) may have questions for me as well. By this process, my eyes were opened to certain things that I previously had not realized nor fully understood. The interviews were the final phase of my research, as my intention was to familiarize myself with the community as much as possible, and have members familiarize themselves with me, prior to conducting these one-on-one sessions. Up to and during this process, I had hoped to create rapport within the community and have members come to trust and accept me.

Before I arrived at the research site, I sent a letter of introduction and invitation about the study to the board of directors, and with their permission, the general membership. The letter described my interest and experience in housing co-operatives, the purpose of the study, and provided a means by which to contact me if they were interested in participating. One member of the Co-op, who agreed to serve as a contact for me, assisted me with the coordination of interviews and provided contact information for members who had agreed to be approached for interviews. I emailed some potential respondents and others contacted me through email and the telephone. A number of interviews were arranged in these ways. Upon arrival at the research site, during an evening meal, I asked board members to suggest names of members who are known leaders and/or active participants in the Co-op that may be willing to meet with me. Many of the names mentioned were those members who had already come forward for an interview. Social Realism maintains that all perspectives must be researched in a social research study (Danermark et al. 2001), and so, during the duration of my stay, I also inquired about those members who were apparently less willing to participate in the

community and was successful in attaining two interviews with this sub-section of Co-op members.

During my visit, I digitally recorded 11 face-to-face interviews, involving a total of 13 participants (three men and ten women). These people were board directors or general members of the housing co-operative. My intention in interviewing board members and general members was to address power relationships that are present in housing co-operatives and, indeed, any community (development) context. I also wanted to discover the ways this community has been successful with various initiatives and in what ways the Co-op has fallen short with regards to the introduction of planned or desired/desirable changes. I was also interested to see if specific policies or procedures had an impact on the ability of the housing co-operative to function as a learning organization.

Telephone interviews were recorded with two senior staff members at two sector organizations, the Agency for Co-operative Housing and the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada. One of these respondents was female and the other male. These conversations focused on the role these organizations have played with regard to the adoption of sustainable methods in this particular co-operative, as well as others. I also inquired as to how these sector organizations support housing co-operatives that wish to incorporate more sustainability initiatives into their communities.

3.3.6 Personal Experience and Knowledge

Throughout the research and analysis processes, I have been informed by my experiences and resulting knowledge from living and actively participating in a housing co-operative. During my three-year membership, I served as a board director, Maintenance Committee member and liaison, and gardening group member. I was also employed by the co-operative for one summer, through a Green Team grant; the position focused on initiating sustainability issues, namely recycling, gardening, composting, and rain water collection. During the observation, interview, and focus group research stages, my experiences and knowledge influenced the ways in which I contributed to conversation and reflected upon members' experiences. I sometimes verbalized comparisons between my housing co-operative and the Co-op during these recorded

conversations. My experiences and knowledge also have been influential during the analysis stages of this research. In some ways, the co-op in which I had lived and worked thus served to enrich the case study of the Co-op.

3.4 Data Transformation, Coding and Analysis

The methods used to transform the field data to more useable formats were different for each of the research modalities. For the participant observation, I took field notes and recorded memos throughout the observation period. I observed the setting(s) for a period of time and then moved to a more private location to record my notes. I also took notes and memos as I sifted through and familiarized myself with the documents. During the focus groups, I took notes and memos as well as recorded the discussions verbatim via digital recorder. The individual interviews were also recorded verbatim via digital recorder and fully transcribed.

In analyzing the field data, I used comparative data analysis (Thorne 2000) to identify relationships in terms of the similar as well as different themes emerging from the organizational case study, the relevant literature, and my own housing co-op experiences. I began by comparing data sources to see if, for example, responses from particular interviews were congruent with those provided by other participants, and congruent with other sources of data. To manage this complex process, I began analysis with a small portion of data and created some initial categories. Throughout the data making process, I constantly compared and analyzed what was emerging from the study. Themes were identified in the field data as I examined the record in the light of key concepts and ideas in the social learning literature.

The field notes from the participant observation stage provided me with an understanding of the Co-op in general and allowed me to more systematically study social relationships, both formal and informal, within the Co-op and between the Co-op members and other organizations outside the immediate community. Field notes also served as a point of comparison to the documents that were reviewed, the focus groups and the individual interviews. My notes on the various documents that I reviewed helped me to understand the processes by which certain initiatives came about and also served as another source for comparison to the focus group and interview data. These documents

provided background information and were evaluated in the light of other sources of data including key ideas and arguments from the social learning literature. I also compared the responses of members who were known to participate in and co-operate with sustainable initiatives and those who did not. Throughout I was attentive to gaps between rhetorical claims and evidence with respect to actual practices.

I managed the data throughout the research process by labelling themes and topics. Pseudonyms were assigned to particular participants in order to protect their anonymity. Immersion in the systematic study of the experiences of these respondents broadened my thinking, altered my preconceptions, and provided the basis for coding and further analysis. For this reason, as well as monetary constraints, I conducted my own focus groups and interviews, and transcribed the digitally recorded field data.

Coding helps to link the data to key ideas/concepts, and ideas to the data. Patterns and meanings emerge that assist in the fracturing of data (Schwandt 2001). This process allowed me to consider the data in categories as well as in terms of the whole. Coding facilitates the analysis process in that attention can be focused on specific, significant issues and factors that reappear in the field data. Throughout the data making, data transformation and analysis processes, I used topic and descriptive coding (Morse and Richards 2002). Topic coding allows one to create categories and compare these with previous literature, theories, and other data. The use of this form of coding is both interpretive and descriptive (Morse and Richards 2002). Also, I further analyzed the categories and comparisons to create new categories and theoretical comparisons. Memoing, continual writing and reflective questioning throughout the data making process supported me in this coding process and allowed me to link the text and field notes with literature, other data, as well as emerging insights.

3.5 Research Approach

The investigatory approach I used for the study is grounded in Social Realism (Danermark et al. 2001). A social realist perspective is based on a particular understanding of ontology and focuses on the mechanisms that give rise to events. This perspective argues that reality does indeed exist, albeit not in a way directly seen or observed; we experience reality indirectly because it is mediated through theoretically

dependent facts, or, in other words, through our prior knowledge and what we believe reality to be.

There are three ontological domains within a social realist perspective (Danermark et al. 2001). The first is 'the empirical', which is defined as the data we collect from what we (in)directly experience. The second is 'the actual' which is described as events that happen whether we experience them or not. The third is 'the real'. It is defined as that which produces events in the world (also known as mechanisms). A reality exists independent of our knowledge of it. Further, it is not easily "accessible to immediate observation" (Danermark et al. 2001: 20). In other words, it is not transparent.

Our interpretations of 'true' reality are differentiated, stratified and structured. That is to say, reality includes many different and, at times, conflicting and competing interests, practices, and interpretations. "All knowledge is necessarily socially determined conceptual constructions" (Danermark et al. 2001: 17). Also, our interpretations are rarely neutral or objective. In order to be understandable, 'facts' are comprised of previous knowledge, or scientific conceptualizations. In other words, our previous knowledge of reality informs our understandings/awareness of other, new knowledge and realities. Moreover, interpretations of reality are always fallible or liable to be erroneous; however, all knowledge is not equally fallible (Danermark et al. 2001).

Theories about reality, or knowledge, are social products which are under the influence of many different social mechanisms. We do not observe these powers and mechanisms, but "experience [them] indirectly by their ability to cause – to make things happen in the world" (Danermark et al. 2001: 20). These mechanisms are located in the social structure which creates the events in society (Danermark et al. 2001). As stated earlier, every person has their own interpretation of reality, or viewpoints, and, as such, "an essential aspect of social life is the very existence of conflicts and power struggles over whose concepts will be valid and who will consequently have the power to define reality…" (Danermark et al. 2001: 29).

Knowledge and opinions are a result of experiences, social positions and relations of dominance and power, and therefore we cannot always see everything from any one position. It is because of this that all notions and interpretations of reality, whether false,

contradictory, or unreflective, must be included among the research objects. Realities are concept dependent; we all see and experience social phenomena differently. Things are what they are in part because of what they mean to different members of society.

It is impossible to adopt a purely value-neutral position in relation to one's research 'object' (Danermark et al. 2001), as each of us has our own interpretation of reality. Further, I am not a detached observer but participate in the research process. Complete objectivity is not necessary. I do, however, reflect upon the different interpretations of the participants involved as well as the theory on which my study is based and, rather than avoid bias by attempting to set aside my values, I try to be aware of how my interpretations of reality are influenced by my experiences, values and beliefs.

Every participant in my study has a different perspective on the community and of the events within the community, as they interpret situations and phenomena differently. My task is to attempt to understand each participant's interpretation and experiences in order to better reveal the mechanisms that create the events within the community.

3.6 Evaluation Criteria

The evaluation criteria that apply to my study include triangulation, reflexivity, transferability, the identification of change-making strategies, and peer reviews. Triangulation "can involve the use of multiple data sources, multiple investigators, multiple theoretical perspectives, multiple methods, or all of these. The central point of the procedure is to examine a conclusion from more than one vantage point" (Schwandt 2001: 257). To fulfill the criterion of triangulation, I verified findings through comparison between data sources. My research has a stronger claim to validity if, when my conclusions are examined from more than one position, inferences from the data remain similar in different contexts (Denzin 1994). In this way, I and others can check the integrity of my inferences (Schwandt 2001).

I also employed reflexivity to strengthen my analysis and to increase the reliability of the findings that I presented.

> The term reflexivity… refer[s] to the process of critical self-reflection on one's biases, theoretical predispositions, preferences, and so forth….[it] can also signal more than inspection of potential sources of bias and their control. It can point to the fact the inquirer is part of the setting, context, and social phenomenon he or she seeks to understand (Schwandt 2001: 224).

I was mindful and as open as possible throughout the whole research process, starting with the choices made with respect to the particular strategic case and participants, and continuing with the data gathering and the analysis that is presented. This helps me to address the possibility that I may impose a particular interpretation on the data in order to advance my own opinions and beliefs or side with particular informants' beliefs. Reflecting on the process assists me in remaining critically self-aware and open throughout the research. I purposefully attempted to address negative cases and alternative explanations within my sample. I pay particular attention to these alternative explanations. Also, discussion with my supervisor and other advisory committee members helped to ensure the minimization of bias through critical review of my methodology and reading of my thesis.

I have acknowledged my subjectivity and identified my biases to the best of my ability throughout the research process. In the write up of my research I acknowledge my personal beliefs and values that may influence aspects of the research. I have also attempted to be transparent with my presentation of research findings as well as with the participants. They know of my story and how I came to this research. I have also emphasized to them that there are no wrong answers.

Transferability, or external validity, refers to the generalizability of the research (Tobin and Begley 2004). In a case study method, the conclusions can be compared with another case. Although there may not be one single "correct" interpretation of the results (Tobin and Begley 2004), other researchers and members of housing co-operative organizations can draw from the findings of this research and apply it to other situations. This study is directed first and foremost towards individuals and groups in the co-operative housing sector who are interested in housing co-operatives as learning organizations and as vehicles for more sustainable living. It will also be of interest to civil servants who are connected in some way to the co-operative housing sector, persons working in or interested in community development, and others who have a general

interest in these areas of inquiry. The broader purpose of my research is for the reader to be able to generalize from the learning experiences of one housing co-operative that is working towards sustainability and transfer and extend organizational learning literature to other settings.

The identification of potentially useful change-making strategies was one priority in this research and can also serve as measure of its relevance and success. This study draws out the ways that housing co-operatives can work as learning organizations in the context of creating and operating housing that is more environmentally, economically, and socially sustainable. The housing co-operative utilized as the case study, other housing co-operatives, and other housing communities may be able to use my study as a resource and to use it to make positive changes in their communities.[17]

Peer reviews were also used throughout the research and writing processes. Merriam describes these as "discussions with colleagues regarding the process of study, the congruency of emerging findings with the raw data, and tentative interpretations" (2002: 31). My supervisor and other advisory committee members repeatedly read and commented on my draft thesis in order to help assure that claims with respect to findings were plausible based on the data collected. The research can be considered trustworthy because I used several triangulation strategies but also because I continually checked for data representativeness and to ensure that the data and coding categories fit, and used verbatim transcription as well as direct quotations from participants.

In order to address ethical issues inherent in my research, I have been careful to ensure that my opinions and viewpoints do not overtake or supersede the perspectives of (other) study participants, or the research findings in general. I have taken steps to ensure that my relationships within the community do not negatively affect the reliability and credibility of the research. I have purposefully sought out a range of representative informants, including some who may not be enthusiastic supporters of ecological living. As well, appropriate consent has been obtained from each interview participant, with typical assurances given regarding confidentiality and participant rights.

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[17] I will distribute a summary of the thesis to the co-operative under study in order to help facilitate these potential organizational changes.

Confidentiality at the individual level was maintained throughout the research process. I have created a letter of consent for each participant in the focus groups and interviews that binds me to treat the data as confidential. I did not anticipate any problems due to power differentials, or my potential influence in the Co-op as I have no formal role in the housing co-operative sector and no ongoing contact with the members of this co-op. To address any potential perceptions of risk, I ensured the participants that this investigation was confidential. Also, I ensured that participants were aware that they could refuse to answer specific questions that they are uncomfortable with, or withdraw from the study entirely without negative consequences.

In order to promote some level of anonymity at the community level, I have deleted some descriptive details with respect to the Co-op. However, not all such details have been removed because this would potentially detract from the reader's ability to learn from this study. Members of the larger housing co-operative sector and individuals who are familiar with the Co-op may be able to recognize the Co-op from my description of the initiatives it has undertaken. I believe that removing details about these initiatives would not do the community justice for all of the hard work members have done; moreover, these initiatives help to define the community itself and are necessarily a focus of the study. I do not believe that indirectly revealing the identity of the Co-op violates undertakings of individual confidentially; I do not reveal names or descriptions of respondents alongside descriptions of projects.

4.0 FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter I present the findings from the field research and discuss how they relate to the Co-op as a potential learning organization. I begin by providing a description of the Co-op membership. I also describe some aspects of the Co-op members that participated in the face-to-face interviews. I do not provide a description of the staff members of CHF Canada and the Agency for Co-operative Housing that were interviewed as this information does not pertain directly to the study and would more directly and immediately compromise their anonymity. Also, I did not collect detailed descriptions of the focus group participants because of time constraints. The description of Co-op members is followed by a section on the Co-op's sustainability initiatives. The chapter continues with a presentation and discussion of the final set of revised learning organization criteria that have emerged through analysis of the field data. These criteria are used to analyze how organizational learning can occur in a housing co-operative setting. The discussion includes an analysis pertaining to each criterion. Finally, I conclude with a brief discussion arising from my systematic investigation of the field data.

4.2 Participant Demographics

At the time of my visit to the Co-op, there were a total of 134 people residing within the community. The number of adult members aged 18 years or older totalled 85 and the number of dependent children 17 years and younger totalled 46. There were also three households in which a dependent child, 18 years or older, resided with members. Of the 85 adults, there were ten seniors aged 60 or older, 74 residents who were 31-59 years old, and four who were 18-30 years old. There were 18 households in which the heads of the household were married, and 13 of these households had children present. Also, there were 32 single-person households and 18 single-parent households. Seven resident

households included members who belonged to a racial or ethnic minority, i.e. were of First Nation, Liberian, Métis, Korean, or Brazilian ancestry.

I interviewed 13 Co-op residents in 11 interviews and also collected some demographic and historical details about these participants. I did not collect personal details about the additional six members who participated in focus group interviews for reasons of privacy as well as time pressure. Interview and focus group participants varied in age, gender, length of membership in the Co-op, and involvements both in the Co-op and outside the particular co-operative housing community. For reasons that will become apparent later in this chapter, I have grouped the interview participants into four categories: founding members, non-founding members, longer-term members, and shorter-term members. A founding member was defined as a member who has been part of the Co-op since its inception; he or she took part in decisions regarding the physical construction of the co-op and the creation of co-op policies. Non-founding members did not help to form the Co-op but joined after initial by-laws and policies were written. Longer-term members are those that have been members of the Co-op for five or more years. Shorter-term members are those that have been members for less than five years. These categories are not mutually exclusive and may overlap.

Of the 13 residents that I interviewed, three were founding members, eight were non-founding members, and two were boarders.[18] Among the 11 members interviewed, 10 were longer-term members and one was a shorter-term member. One of the boarders had lived in the Co-op since a very young age and resided in her parent's home. The other boarder had lived in the Co-op for three years and was taking steps to become a member.[19] Ten interviewees were female and three were male. Three participants were married with young children, three were single parents of young children, and five were single with adult children. One of the interviewees identified herself as a visible minority; the others were Caucasian.

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[18] A boarder, as defined by the Co-op Member Handbook, is a person that has not gone through a member application process but shares a unit (home) with a member. Boarders are required to participate in the activities of the Co-op (albeit less than a member) and join a committee, but are not entitled to vote.

[19] In the remainder of the thesis, I describe all these study participants as members in order to protect the privacy of the two boarders. While the boarders may not be Co-op members per se, they are members of the community.

During the interviews, I inquired about whether or not the interviewees considered themselves participating members of the Co-op. Eleven of the members described their volunteer roles within the Co-op. Two of the members declared that they were once active participators in the Co-op but had taken a more passive role as of late. One member in particular discussed how earlier in her membership she was very active. She had served on numerous committees and attended various conferences on co-operative housing but, lately, because of medical reasons, she had taken a less active role in the Co-op. Outside of the Co-op, she spent much of her time fulfilling family obligations. The other member also provided an explanation as to why he no longer actively participates in the Co-op:

> Really now, my role is that of a great many here, which could only be defined as parasite. I make no contribution. I live here…Up until about a year and a bit I was hyper, over involved. I would take on building projects, I was the [elected position] of [a key committee]; I was the [position] on the Board of Directors. So yah, I was pretty seriously involved in the place, but as I say, I've just gotten too disgusted and frustrated to be able to associate with…people who've been here forever and think things should never change.

Although he claimed to be a non-participant, this member was actually still somewhat active in a few Co-op activities as well as maintenance of his yard and surrounding area. All but three of the interview participants were currently involved in volunteer activities outside of the immediate Co-op community. The remaining three interviewees chose to spend most of their time volunteering within the Co-op. At the time of my visit, three of the study participants were board directors and five were committee chairs, a fact that reflects the high level of participation by some co-op members but also some tendency for activist members to be overrepresented in my voluntary sample.

Several participants described themselves as leading environmentally conscious lifestyles. One member in particular mentioned how her family attempts to do this: "We've just been really conscious of trying to live as simply as we can and as being aware and acting on our awareness of our environmental footprint and enjoying the benefits of that, and being socially well-connected in our community, and enjoying the benefits of that also." Four of the interviewees also spoke of their involvement in political activities outside of the Co-op, particularly those that address housing co-operatives and co-operative living, and initiatives that support community sustainability.

4.3 Sustainability Initiatives within the Co-op

This section provides an in-depth description of the major sustainability initiatives that past and present members of the Co-op have pursued, and continue to pursue. I use the term 'sustainability initiative' to describe a plan of action that incorporates, to different degrees, elements that serve positive economic, social, and environmental purposes. I do not describe all of the initiatives in detail as many are self-explanatory. Table 4.1 lists and provides a short description of notable sustainability initiatives that have taken place in the Co-op. Aside from initiatives that took place at the Co-op's inception, such as thicker walls for improved insulation and preserving the existing vegetation and shared pathways as much as possible, many other changes and improvements have been made since with an eye to improving the sustainability of the housing co-operative.

The Free Store was originally a recycling shed before the city provided a recycling and composting service to all residents. In 1979 the Co-op received a grant to build recycling sheds so the members could begin a recycling program in their community. Later, when the city adopted various recycling and composting programs, the shed was converted to the Free Store. Here, members can donate usable, unwanted items for others in the Co-op to take. Twice a year, during the semi-annual Co-op Clean-ups, these items are displayed for Co-op members and items left at the end of the day are delivered to a local charity.

Co-op Clean-ups occur once in the spring and once in the fall. Members gather to tidy the communal grounds, including removing any trash and noxious weeds. Members organize delivery of old appliances, wood, metal, batteries, etcetera to the municipal Eco-station, which is a comprehensive waste drop-off facility. Other activities that follow the cleaning include a free pizza lunch, drinks, socializing and music provided by talented and enthusiastic members.

The energy-efficient washer purchasing program is an initiative that allows members to purchase washing machines at an affordable price of only ten dollars a month. The member renting the washer is responsible for monthly payments to the Co-op and the Co-op assumes the cost of necessary maintenance and repair for the life of the appliance. These washers are more energy-efficient and save the member monthly energy

Table 4.1 Sustainability Initiatives

Initiative	Description
Free Store	Members can donate reusable items for others to take. Unwanted items are delivered to charity.
Co-op Clean-up days	Semi-annual clean-up of the co-op and Eco-Station run
Energy-efficient Washer program	Program in which members can purchase an energy-efficient washing machine for their unit with only one minimal payment a month
Bus route extension	Members of the neighborhood, including many in the Co-op, lobbied city officials to provide public transit access to their neighborhood
Upgrades to physical structure of units	Installation of low-E argon windows, low-flush toilets, high efficiency furnaces
Land Trust	A collaborative project between a number of housing co-operatives formed to secure the Co-op's land into the future
Seniors Complex	The Co-op was presently planning to build a Seniors Complex on collectively-owned property to provide adapted and energy-efficient housing to aging residents
Co-op website	A website that provides information to the general public about the Co-op and secure access for members-only so that they may communicate about Co-op issues.
Member handbook	A binder of all policies and by-laws of the Co-op that each member possesses in their home and is also available on-line.
Email system	A collective email address that provides some members with access to electronic information exchange, rather than printed documents
Timed plug-ins	Outdoor plug-ins on a 20-minute on/off cycle to reduce energy usage in the winter
Bottle/Recycling shed	Members can leave bottles, cans, batteries, and paper. Money from the recycling fund is used to fund other sustainability initiatives in the Co-op. Blue bags available here.
Equipment shed	Where members store collectively owned maintenance equipment.
Garbage/ Recycling facilities	Areas in the Co-op for the drop-off of blue bags and bags of garbage.
Blue bags	Bags given to members free of charge for recyclable and compostable items. Funded by the recycling fund.
Rain barrels	Four, 1000-litre barrels provide rain water for plants and other uses.
Dish and cloth napkin collection	Reusable dish and napkin collection for use during meetings and private functions
Bicycle Repair Day	Volunteer mechanics provide free bike repair for Co-op members and neighborhood
Energy audits	Audits on individual units provide information on energy-efficiency scores
Newsletter	A monthly newsletter where members can share and access information regarding the Co-op and of co-operative living
Smoke-free unit	The membership decided to make one unit in the Co-op a smoke-free unit as a trial

costs. They are also more water efficient than top-loading machines and the Co-op saves on its collective water bill.

The bus route extension pilot project began in September 2007. Previous to this, the city did not provide convenient transit service to this neighbourhood. Consequently, a group of concerned neighbourhood members, including some from the Co-op, lobbied the city council and local community league for an extension of bus service to their area. A one-year trial began in September 2007 and the bus route continues to serve the residents of this neighbourhood.

In recent years the Co-op has upgraded many components of the physical infrastructure of the individual units and shared facilities. The original windows have been replaced with low-E Argon gas filled windows. Members also had the option of making monthly payments for more aesthetically pleasing windows. Most of the older toilets were replaced with low-flush toilets so the Co-op could save water and water costs. The older furnaces were also removed and replaced with high-efficiency ones. Other unit upgrades include the water heaters as well as the exterior doors.

The Land Trust is a collaborative project among seven housing co-operatives in the city that is designed to secure the city-leased land into the future. At present, the Co-op's lease expires in 2038 and can be renewed for two, five-year terms. After this time the land and buildings will potentially revert to the city. The market value of this land is high as it is now considered a desirable location in the city. The Co-op's members made a request to the Co-op's regional federation to help form a committee comprised of representatives from the seven other housing co-operatives in the city. The purpose of the Land Trust is to approach the city and request that the land is sold to the housing co-operatives at a less than market value as a means of supporting the availability of affordable housing in the city.

The Seniors Complex is an initiative intended to enable the aging members of the community to stay in the community. A nine-unit apartment complex with shared community space and an office will be built on land directly adjacent to the community. This land was purchased a number of years ago from retained earnings. According to some members, it will be a "more mobility acceptable environment that will then free up townhouse units for other families." Older members will be able to stay in the community

and "age in place." The complex was slated to be built in the near future despite resistance from some Co-op members and neighbourhood residents.

The Co-op maintains a website with secure access for the membership. Here, members post pictures and items of potential interest to other members. There is also an electronic copy of the Member Handbook available for viewing (members also have a hard copy of this handbook in their units). The Member Handbook contains the formal policies, procedures and by-laws of the Co-op. The Co-op also provides a group email that members can join. Not every member has access to the Internet but this email program is a timely and efficient manner to pass information to networked members, provided they check their email accounts.

Other sustainability initiatives in which co-op members have been active but which are not administered directly by the Co-op include a children's club that focuses on air quality concerns and public awareness surrounding this issue, and a community garden that is situated on Co-op grounds. Co-op members are also participants in a wide variety of community-based organizations, public institutions, and workplaces so some of the important contributions that they make to improving sustainability occur elsewhere. Of course, they are likewise able to access ideas and resources from multiple sites which means that the Co-op and the relationships that they have there are not the only potentially important sites of learning and sharing with respect to sustainability.

4.4 Final Learning Organization Criteria and Interview Responses

In this section I describe the criteria that emerged through analysis of the field data. These criteria are also used as a tool to frame the data and have been further revised from those criteria presented previously in Chapter 3, Section 3.2. Learning organization criteria specific to a housing co-operative were not available. I created a working list by adding my knowledge of generic issues related to housing co-operatives to selected items extracted from the list provided by Pedlar, Burgoyne and Boydell (1997) (see Appendix 4: Characteristics of the Learning Company). This list was modified as new ideas and themes emerged from my analysis of the field data. My presentation and description of the criteria thus stems from analysis of the interview and focus group responses and are supplemented by findings from participant observation and from analysis of Co-op

documents. Where relevant, participants who are quoted are identified as founding, non-founding, short-term, or long-term members. The following is the final version of learning organization working criteria that I have created specifically for a housing co-operative:

A. Formal Processes and Procedures
        1. Long- and Short-term Plans or Goals
        2. Enabling Structures
        3. Formative Accounting and Control
        4. Systems of Communication and Reporting
B. Informal Processes and Participation
        5. Social Exchange
        6. Member Participation
C. Commitment to Learning and Knowledge Development
        7. A Learning Approach to Strategy
        8. Personal and Community Capacity Building
D. Functional Diversity and Autonomy
        9. Community and Member Diversity Used as an Asset
        10. Autonomy

4.4.1 Formal Processes and Procedures

The category 'formal process and procedures' includes criteria that represent aspects of governance in the housing co-operative. I have included 'long and short-term plans or goals', 'enabling structures', 'formative accounting and control' and 'systems of communication and reporting' in this section because they are the elements and operative functions that guide the formal actions of the housing co-operative.

4.4.1.1 Long- and Short-term Plans or Goals

The existence of long- and short-term plans or goals is one means by which I evaluated how housing co-operatives may function as learning organizations. The existence of long- and short-term goals may include a common vision statement as well as specific, documented goals of the Co-op that relate to working towards greater community sustainability. A vision statement clearly sets out what the organization strives to achieve in the future. Long- and short-term plans and goals describe how this vision is to be achieved.

The Co-op seems to have a vision statement; however, all interview respondents did not refer to the same statement or did not believe that the Co-op had a vision

statement at all. The community's web page states that "[Co-op] founders were inspired by a vision of sensible and affordable housing, environmental responsibility, and a nurturing community for its members. That vision lives on today" (Co-op webpage). This organization and its vision were moulded by the original Co-op members in its founding phase (Hailey and James 2002). Although the webpage indicates that the founders' vision remains true, many of the other, non-founding members, are not aware of this vision. Numerous comments by participants confirmed this. "I don't know. I've never seen [a vision statement]. Not sustainability…I don't know if they have one for sustainability." This last quote was from a long-term member of the Co-op communicating her belief that the co-operative does not have a long-term sustainability vision statement. A newer member of the Co-op stated that if there was a sustainability vision statement, it was not common knowledge. All but two participants conclude that a cohesive, documented vision statement does not exist for the Co-op. These other two participants have differing ideas on what the vision statement is.

One long-term resident and active member of the Co-op indicated that the Co-op's vision statement had not been discussed at the organizational level. She believed that the Co-op would be taking part in the CHF Canada 2020 Vision program but she did not indicate when this may occur. Another active member believed that the Environment Committee has a vision statement, but not the Co-op as a whole. He stated that the Environment Committee's vision statement is congruent with the seventh co-operative principle, 'Concern for Community'. He believed that the Environment Committee relies on this statement for guidance when the committee makes decisions.

During interviews, participants spoke of the long- and short-term goals and plans of the Co-op. Many respondents concluded that most short-term plans and goals are documented, specifically those relating to built and financial capital and expenditures, as well as longer-term, official agreements between the Co-op and various sector organizations. Others are not documented.

> Some [documented plans] are requirements from [the] CMHC, of course, in terms of things like the physical structures…Environmental sustainability? No. Financial, that's also regulated in terms of the auditor and various government agencies that require those audited statements.

Over the last few years, many of the documented plans and goals that relate to the physical structure of the Co-op have been accomplished. These goals have included the replacement of furnaces, water heaters, windows, and doors. Smaller projects lead by the Environment Committee are not documented, as the committee prefers to be "action-oriented" and spends more time carrying out projects, rather than conversing about them. Other shorter-term projects and initiatives did not come out of a statement of intent. Rather, they "simply happened." These include the front-load washer purchasing program, rain barrels and various recycling programs, to mention a few.

Other projects that are underway, including the building of the Seniors Complex and the Land Trust, were claimed as long-term goals; however, they are not formally stated as such. The Seniors Complex was represented as an opportunity to create more affordable housing as well as to allow seniors to stay and age in the community. The Land Trust was framed as a means to "anchor our stay here." One founding member mentioned that the Land Trust was discussed in the early years of the Co-op's existence and non-founding members were surprised when it was brought up again.

> The Land Trust thing is certainly a new idea as far as our membership is concerned. Not as far as ALL of our membership is concerned but ah, certainly as far as a number of the newer people because they weren't involved at the beginning so they…don't have a grasp, necessarily, of what sorts of things we envisioned early on…. New people have moved in who don't necessarily understand everything that's gone on before. With a lot of us, we've got 30 years of history of 'Oh yeah, we thought about [the Land Trust] 29 years ago. Let's do it again' sort of thing. They, of course, who have only been here in the past ten years are going 'What are you talking about?' and so that hit a bit of a brick wall.

The Land Trust is considered a long-term goal by the founding members as it was discussed upon inception; however, as reported by the member quoted above, other, newer members do not necessarily know of it because it is not formally stated as a Co-op goal. Non-founding members were somewhat resistant to the idea of a Land Trust when it was presented to them, in part because they did not share an awareness that it was one of the long-standing aspirations of founding members.

A number of Co-op members that were canvassed believed that it was not necessary that the Co-op create formal statements for every goal and plan. They believed that the culture of the Co-op encouraged an oral tradition. Three of the interview

participants, including both founding and non-founding members, believed that although there may not be a written sustainability vision statement, nor fully document goals and plans, there was a culture of sustainability in which sustainability ideals and concepts were shared, supported, and assumed. The following quotes, from three different members, discuss this matter.

> There's enough people who care very deeply about the health of our community, [the Co-op] as a smaller community, and people carry out their actions with that behind them. There's enough people that that is the general momentum of the co-op.

> I really don't know [if the Co-op has documented sustainability goals]. I just see what happens around me. And for me that's more meaningful than anything that I can read on paper!

> [Co-op] is very organic…part of the reason that it survives as well as it does, in a way, is because it's very dependent on its members and it's a written culture with an oral tradition… [Things are] written, of course, housing agreements, bylaws, etcetera, but there's a very heavy reliance on people's memories and personal initiative. So a lot of the things that have been done here in terms of sustainable activities, have been done for a number of reasons, generally because there was…an interest in sustainability without necessarily having 'The Vision Statement' out there and a re-visitation of the plan every five years…..the co-op had a very progressive viewpoint and while it may not have a 'vision statement' in terms of sustainability, its culture and practices have always been in that direction.

These participants believe that concepts of sustainability are incorporated into the actions of members without a formalized statement; instead, these members rely on an oral tradition that orients the community towards integrating sustainability goals into many aspects of collective and individual decision making.

The Co-op's initial vision statement was created by founding members upon inception of the Co-op. Although the interview respondents did not all refer to one unified sustainability vision statement, the vision statement stated on the Co-op's web page seems to be a guiding impetus behind the many initiatives and projects that are carried out in the Co-op. One purpose of a vision statement is to provide the membership with a concrete statement that can be used as a guide for future decisions. A vision statement also supports and helps define the identity of the community. A number of authors (see Dyball, Brown and Keen 2007; Tilbury 2007) state the importance of

creating a common vision at the community level that will serve as a guide to identify priorities in the community. One member of the Co-op believes that a documented vision statement may serve to educate members and encourage participation. It may help build community, as opposed to creating contention. A coherent, written statement may create common purposes for the membership and facilitate the creation of collective long- and short-term goals.

Although this housing co-operative seems to function fairly well with an 'oral culture', the lack of comprehensive, documented, long-term goals and plans sometimes creates rifts in the community. The undocumented long-term goals of founding members have not been discussed at the community level. The transmission or communication of certain important goals, for example, the establishment of a Land Trust and the development of a Seniors Complex, has seemingly failed. This is problematic as it may create animosity and resentment among members. Some members perceive themselves to be left out of decision-making. One non-founding member of the Co-op comments that "We don't know the ultimate plan." This suggests that plans have been created by some members without full collaboration and communication with the remaining members. The non-founding member quoted above believed that members are prevented from full engagement in community decision-making with regard to long- and short-term plans and goals.

The lack of a commonly recognized vision statement and undocumented long-term plans may have social and other implications for the membership. An unclear vision statement and a lack of communication of long-term goals may result in newer, non-founding members not becoming fully incorporated into the culture of the Co-op. New members may become part of the community without full knowledge of the community's future goals and plans. This may result in newer members simply joining the co-operative to access low-rental units and not being engaged in the broader developmental projects and historical culture of the Co-op. A collaborative process of creating a common vision statement and/or long- and short-term plans and goals can be a community-building exercise that stimulates and reinforces member relationships, morale, and a common bond within the community. Such a political process can positively affect social and human capitals. However, it is imprudent to assume that a vision statement which has

been created collaboratively will necessarily unite the membership in a socially-cohesive way. Some members may disagree with the semantics of the statement or the broader idea of the statement itself. Similarly, long-term goals that are written and communicated to joining members will not always be agreed upon by the entirety of the membership.

4.4.1.2 Enabling Structures

Structures must enable the members of housing co-operatives to adapt to necessary changes in the formal and political aspects of the co-operative, such as new governance strategies, policies, or changes in membership. The board, committees, and other parts of the social infrastructure are seen as unfixed and can easily be changed to meet requirements; they evolve in response to changes and experimentation. Different leadership positions are shared among members and members typically come forward to lead various committees and tasks. Policies and procedures are frequently changed after review and discussion.

Housing co-operative governance structures are composed of the general membership, committees, and a board of directors. In some cases staff members and maintenance managers may be employed to assist the co-operative in administrative and maintenance matters; in others, such as the Co-op, there are no formally employed staff members or managers. The general membership elects the board of directors; approves new by-laws, policies, budgets and annual financial statements; and, appoints an auditor. The board of directors reports to the membership. The committees advise the board of directors and the membership. Different housing co-operatives have different committees but these generally include a Finance Committee, Maintenance Committee and Membership Committee. This particular housing co-operative has a number of permanent committees which include Finance, Membership, Maintenance, Pet, Member Involvement, Environment, Newsletter, Subsidy Review, Dispute Resolution, and External Affairs.

Analysis of the Co-op's formal governance structures reveals several important characteristics and underlying logics. A first theme that is apparent is the flexibility of the structures. The Co-op's Board of Directors and committees are restructured when necessary. For instance, one participant mentioned how the Co-op was governed by

committee representatives at the time of incorporation. Members then decided it was necessary to elect a board of directors. Not long after, block representatives were introduced. Under this arrangement a block of apartments would be represented by "a block representative who would attend [board] meetings and who would also have meetings of the block" to discuss community issues within a smaller group. Later, as interest waned, the practice of electing block representatives was abandoned.

Committees have also been expanded, created and recreated when required:

[The Environment Committee] started out being called the Recycling Committee and that just was too limiting. It didn't describe the vision of what we wanted to do because now, of course, our projects are much more than just taking members' bottles down for the refund. But that's where it began, as far as I know.

The former Recycling Committee needed to change its title because its committee goals and initiatives expanded beyond merely recycling. One committee that no longer exists is the Youth Committee. According to one member, young people living in the Co-op became better at organizing themselves and a committee was no longer needed.

Co-op governance structures and practices are flexible in order to accommodate changes in member needs and in the operating environment. The Member Handbook states: "When an issue arises that requires consideration, the membership may decide to form a special committee to deal with that particular issue. This short-term, issue-oriented committee is known as an ad hoc committee." Many ad hoc committees have been formed and some have been disbanded when no longer required. Members also mentioned their ability to change committees as needed or as desired. Allowing flexibility in some aspects of committee and board structure creates opportunity for change, which can be positive or negative.

A second theme that emerged is the flexibility of leadership positions. I found that the committee chairs and those in elected board director positions continually change over time. With regard to director positions, the co-operative has adopted by-laws which ensure the flexibility of leadership positions. These by-laws govern board terms as well as what members are eligible to run for directorship. For instance, in the Co-op, terms are two years in length, and a member can serve a maximum of two consecutive terms. Any

member running for a director position must be a Member in Good Standing.[20] These by-laws allow for dedicated, experienced, knowledgeable members who know the history of the Co-op to return to leadership roles but they also create opportunities for new people to assume leadership positions and to learn this history. With regard to specific projects, people who are knowledgeable about a certain initiative, have the required skill sets, and are able to make a time commitment to the project, take on the leadership position(s). Multiple forms of leadership are required in order for a community to be maintained as a social learning community (Wenger 2000).

A third theme that emerged from analysis of the field data with respect to enabling structures is flexibility with respect to policies. I found that the Co-op is quite flexible both with respect to revising policies and procedures and with respect to the application and enforcement of many of the policies under their control. Other policies, such as financial policies, are more rigid in part because the Co-op is expected to comply with financial agreements and stipulations set by sector organizations. Policies and procedures within the Co-op's control are updated regularly and documented in their Member Handbook.

> Our membership policies have changed over the years, maintenance policies have changed over the years. Certainly those are the two committees, probably more than others, where things have changed. We actually went through and did a huge revamping of all of our policies quite a few years back now and we're about to start the same thing again.

Members also commented on how the Co-op introduces new policies and revises older policies when they no longer apply. Policy changes also take place in response to projects that require a policy change.

Policies and bylaws, although somewhat flexible, also provide consistent standards. Although there are "exceptional circumstances that trump policies," policies are relied on in times of conflict.

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[20] A Member in Good Standing is defined in the Member Handbook as a member who fulfills participation expectations, maintains his/her unit and abides by stated Maintenance policies, and meets financial commitments to the Co-op.

> We've had problems where we've had to terminate somebody's membership but it's been appealed and so it has to go to the General Meeting and it's very emotional and people take sides and it polarizes the community for a while. So it's not easy. But you know, the way I get through it, I say "Well, these are the bylaws. I'm going to talk to the lawyer." The lawyer tells us exactly what to do; we do exactly what the lawyer says. If we do that, it works out. And not everybody's going to be happy but we've done it per our bylaws and we followed them because that's all you have sometimes at the end. When some people want to go on emotion, you have to look at the board's role as to implement the bylaws and make an interpretation if there's a grey area. And hopefully be sympathetic to the member and not be punitive.

This member makes reference to the importance of policy when disagreements among the membership are of a sensitive nature. In her mind, in such situations the only workable solution is to follow the previously approved bylaws.

The flexibility of policies is important for adapting to changing circumstances. However, it is also important that policies are applied to all members in a manner that is seen to be both consistent and equitable. One longer-term member voiced a concern that policies are sometimes abused when a member, or members, desire a certain outcome, specifically when decisions relate to family members. "[Policies] are fragrantly abused when it's in the best interests of the people here who want…things to go the way they want them to go." Although it may be difficult and may result in an undesired outcome, it is usually in the best long-term interest of the entire community to abide by the policies that have been put in place, no matter who or what the decision involves. Policies and by-laws are made for a reason: to protect and serve the community as a whole. However, if the rules and policies in place are not created in a democratic and collaborative way, the problem may not be the execution of policies but the policies themselves.

The structure of the Co-op enables the members, and the organization itself, to adapt to change. Structures are mutable and can be changed to meet requirements and/or learning strategies. The ability to adapt to various changes and have these adaptations reflected in policies, procedures, roles and positions is an important precondition for learning in an organization (Pedlar, Burgoyne and Boydell 1997). Rather than merely "surviving," organizations can adapt and sustain the cooperative relationship with their environments (Pedlar, Burgoyne and Boydell 1997).

Policies and by-laws are flexible in order to adapt to changes that are deemed important by the community but they must also be consistently applied. The non-hierarchical structure of housing co-operatives creates potential for collaborative decision-making in the organization. While such policymaking processes can be time-consuming, they also allow input by any community member who is interested. The result, ideally at least, is a shared understanding of what underlies new policies, and greater buy-in that may allow for more success in implementation.

4.4.1.3 Formative Accounting and Control

Formative accounting and control can be defined as a system of accounting, budgeting and reporting that is structured to assist learning (Pedlar, Burgoyne and Boydell 1997). Finance Committee members and directors act as consultants and advisers as well as 'bean counters'. These groups are accountable to, and must promote transparency for, the general membership so that all members are given the opportunity to learn how decisions regarding the co-operative's financial capital are made and feel dually responsible for the co-operative's economic viability. All members contribute to the financial capital of the Co-op through the purchase of shares and volunteering time in the community to reduce maintenance and operating costs.

The Co-op has a well-structured financial system. There is a Treasurer position on the Board of Directors and the co-operative has a fully-functioning Finance Committee. The Co-op also hires an external bookkeeper to assist the co-operative with its financial reports. The bookkeeper provides financial reports to the Co-op every month and also provides year-end statements at the end of the fiscal year. These statements present the financial position of the Co-op at year-end and outlines what was spent during that fiscal year. The year-end statement is reviewed by an externally-hired auditor who then prepares an audited financial statement. The Finance Committee reviews the draft and the final version is distributed to the general membership prior the AGM that takes place approximately April or May of each year for discussion and approval by vote.[21] The Co-op supplies a copy of the audited financial statement to the Agency for Co-operative

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[21] This audit and the following year's auditor are voted on at each Annual General Meeting.

Housing and the auditor supplies an Annual Information Return (AIR) to the Agency for their review.[22]

The Finance Committee also formulates the operating budgets for each fiscal year. The committee members observe the trends of the previous year's operating costs and identify the financial needs for following year. Near the end of each year (September) each Co-op committee, except for the Environment Committee, makes a request for an amount of money that it anticipates will be the committee's spending requirements for the following year (equipment, supplies, etcetera).[23] The Finance Committee enters these figures into the proposed budget that the members then vote on during a formal budget meeting that usually takes place in October. In the event that the presented budget is rejected by the membership, the Finance Committee may make changes to the financial plans subject to the Agency's approval.

The Co-op has demonstrated its financial advantage with respect to collective buying power and risk reduction. Certain strategic investments, such as upgrading to energy efficient technologies and ensuring the longevity of the buildings through timely capital expenditures, may not have been possible without collective resources and purchasing. For example, when the Co-op was replacing the windows in the units, members of the Co-op who wanted to change the aesthetic quality of their windows beyond what was agreed upon by the collective, were able to borrow money from the Co-op to cover the increase in cost for these renovations. Also, an energy-efficient washer program was introduced where the member paid a few extra dollars a month to receive a collectively owned washing machine for use in their own home. Many of the residents stated that, without these programs, they would not have been able to afford such upgrades and energy efficient technologies:

> We have the collective financial resources to make things happen that people might not have had individually, like the furnaces and the low-flush toilets and the washers. Like those are all great things that come from financial collective power.

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[22] The Annual Information Report is an on-line report prepared by a housing co-operative's auditor every year and includes the audited financial statement for the year and information on the Co-op's operative functions. The Agency uses this information to assess the co-op's risk level and to monitor the co-operative's compliance with CMHC operating agreements (The Agency for Co-operative Housing 2009).

[23] The Environment Committee relies on funds raised from the recycling of certain materials donated by community members to continue and initiate environmental projects in the community. The committee members seem satisfied with the amount of funds that are raised in this way.

The ability of the Co-op to use its pooled financial capital supports assertions by Gertler (2006 and 2001), Stuiver, van der Ploeg and Leeuwis (2003), and Uphoff (1992) that co-operatives have a strategic advantage in sustainable development; in this case, it is in regard to their financial advantage. The Co-op's regional federation also assists the Co-op and other housing co-operatives with a bulk-buying program for appliances and other building and renovation supplies. The bulk-buying program allows the Co-op to save money on acquiring energy-efficient appliances that they otherwise might not be able to afford.

Another program offered within the Co-op is an internal rental subsidy program. Along with an external subsidy program provided by the federal government, lower-income members are granted an additional rental supplement to assist with housing costs from an internally run subsidy program. The Internal Subsidy program collects surcharges from the higher income households, based on income verification, and uses this to supplement the lower-income households, which is also based on income verification. The key to maintaining this program is to keep a mix of higher-, middle-, and lower-income households in the Co-op. According to one respondent, the ideal formula would be one-third of members with higher incomes, one-third with middle incomes, and one-third with lower incomes. One of the Finance Committee members reported that, "in terms of income, one third of the households probably earn less than $25,000, one third earn between $25,000 and $40,000, and another third are above $40,000."

Interview questions also addressed the Co-op's financial planning. One long-term member reported that financial plans are very controlled and monitored:

> I never worry about money here…Our Finance Committee is just right on top of everything. Nothing goes by. Nothing. You can beg and plead (laughter) and sometimes they'll say 'Oh, alright, we'll sponsor it on an ad-hoc basis, so you're not going to do it all the time but you'll do it once or so' …and those people have been on it for 30 years. Those are the people who started the co-op and all these years later, they're the ones that are keeping it going because they know what's involved…. they look into the reserves and they look into 'what did we plan for' so it's very controlled.

Although this member believes the financial system to be highly controlled and monitored, others may disagree. A few members commented on how some decisions, related to major expenditures, were made without consultation with the Finance Committee.

Another important aspect of financial planning has to do with planning for future expenditures. One long-term member discussed how founding members believed that the Co-op would not survive on short-term thinking alone. She believes that the Co-op plans far into the future.

> [We've put] money aside which meant there were people in the Co-op that had a vision that cheap housing wasn't the purpose. It had to be sustainable long-term. Those key people…some of the long-term people who have been here and some of the new people who have come in, have continued to buy into that vision that it's not just about affordability because if it's just about affordability, it's too short-term and eventually collapses. It has to be long-term and so we've been fortunate.

This quote demonstrates that members understand the importance of long-term plans in order to ensure the financial stability of the Co-op. However, another long-term member believed that the financial planning is not as long-term as it could and should be, specifically with regard to energy-efficient technologies.

> I was surprised when I moved into the co-op. I thought people would be more open-minded to such technologies and getting the best possible that will save us in the long-term rather than thinking short-term… We're a long-term organization. We should be looking at 30 years, 40 years down the road. We shouldn't be looking at the next fiscal year. And I mean, obviously you can't spend all the money this year and not have enough to do the day-to-day maintenance of the place but yah, there's been a lot of resistance to spending money even when you can show on paper that it makes sense.

This member believes that although the Co-op may have adopted longer-term plans for installing more resource-efficient technologies, these plans do not look far enough into the future. He also feels that there is resistance to longer-term financial planning and investment with regard to some resource-efficient technologies.

At first glance, the Co-op appears to demonstrate financial stability and control. Many interviewees reported a strong budgetary process and more than sufficient reserves and investments. Further evidence exists in the Co-op's ability to purchase energy-efficient technologies as well as land for further development. The Co-op accumulates

wealth for future collective development projects and thus demonstrates the strong financial capital that is crucial in working towards community sustainability (Lorenz 1999). In theory, members have ample opportunity to participate in financial decisions. They can join the Finance Committee and participate at AGMs when financial decisions are made. Whether or not they are successful in communicating their financial preferences and priorities for the Co-op is something that was not discussed in depth. However, while many members applaud the way that financial decisions are made overall, others disagree with certain outcomes. This is to be expected, as members will not always agree with every decision that is made. However, with regard to long- and short-term plans or goals, it was mentioned that some members feel left out of the planning process. This phenomenon should not continue if the Co-op desires to achieve a sustainable political process with regard to the organization's financial capital (Roseland 2005 and Lorenz 1999).

4.4.1.4 Systems of Communication and Reporting

Systems of communication and reporting represent the internal and external communication system(s) of the co-op. The systems of communication and reporting include the ways that information is made public to members of the co-operative. These systems involve feedback loops and means of contact between members and the various committees. Communication and reporting systems also include the ways in which information is shared between the housing co-operative and other sector and community organizations. This can involve various forms of information technology as well as boundary brokers (Wenger 2000). These means of communication and reporting keep members of the housing co-operative informed of goings-on in the community.

As previously stated in the discussion of enabling structures, the way in which housing co-operatives are structured allows, in theory, internal communication channels between the board, committees, and members. These communication channels help to promote transparency and connectivity between the various levels of governance in the community (Wenger 2000). Communication channels may also serve to create/reinforce social capital between members (Coleman 1988). Board directors are liaisons for the committees they represent and are given the task of reporting information to committee

members at regularly scheduled meetings. All members, as well as boarders, are expected to join a committee (baring exceptional circumstances), and so residents learn about various topics from committee membership and meeting minutes. Members who participate at AGMs and GMs communicate and receive information through discussion, meeting minutes, annual reports and audits.

Other kinds of communication channels also exist. The Co-op communicates to members through their (nearly) monthly newsletter, a group email system, and paper memos (to members without access to the internet). Informal relations between members, because of proximity and shared common space, also prove to be effective communicative tools. This phenomenon is discussed further below in reference to the fifth criterion: 'social exchange'. Another mechanism for communication, block representatives, have not been used for some time, but were once effective.

> Blocks and block reps [are] good communication tools. People are able to hear about a project/initiative, discuss it amongst their neighbors and then vote on it at the AGM. But the idea was for the Blocks, when you had things that had to be discussed and that were of major importance, instead of dropping it on people at a General Membership meeting, you would give it to the Block representatives prior to the General Membership meeting. They would hold a block meeting, which is a smaller group of people to get together and talk with one another and usually a lot of them would do it over things like brunch, Sunday afternoon tea or things like that. They'd sit and they'd discuss the things so that when they came to the General Membership meeting, they were more informed. We could take some of the trepidation out of discussions and have people then actually talking about the motion and voting on the motions.

The Co-op has since abandoned blocks and block representatives due to lack of interest, however some members mentioned that it may be useful to try this system again.

External communication channels also exist between housing co-operatives and sector organizations. This form of bridging social capital (Narayan 1999 and Granovetter 1973 and 1985) is important to access external sources of information, expertise, and other support for initiatives, projects, and policy development. According to Wenger (2000) these external communication channels are a means of bridging community boundaries. Specifically, housing co-operatives are encouraged to send a delegate to the annual CHF Canada conference to take part in educational conferences, discussions amongst other housing co-operative members, and the AGM. The CHF Canada also

sends member housing co-operatives a newsletter quarterly. Housing co-operatives are also required, as they are legally obligated according to mortgage agreements and loans, to communicate regularly with sector organizations (either CMHC or the Agency for Co-operative Housing) in regards to financial obligations. Housing co-operatives may also belong to regional housing co-operative organizations and communicate regularly with these sector organizations as well.

The Co-op is a member of such a regional organization and sends delegates to AGMs and other sector discussions. In the Co-op, there are a number of members who are directly affiliated with housing co-operative organizations through their employment. Other members are connected with other external community organizations through their employment and interests.

Communication networks and technologies allow the Co-op members to remain informed on issues arising within the Co-op as well as issues outside of the immediate community. Communication creates opportunities for learning through information exchange. It allows members, and the Co-op as a whole, to be fluent in current societal matters and affairs that directly or indirectly affect the membership.

4.4.2 Informal Processes and Participation

The criteria presented in this section represent what actually happens in the Co-op in response to the more formal structures of the housing co-operative. In other words, this section on criteria addresses the informal interactions between members in relation to the Co-op. These include 'social exchange' and 'participation dynamics'.

4.4.2.1 Social Exchange

Social exchange can be defined as the informal partnerships and relationships that create opportunities for information sharing and mutual learning. This exchange occurs in informal settings such as social events within the community, and in casual interactions between neighbours and members. Ideally, members form new relationships, as well as strengthen existing ones. This allows the membership to build social and cultural capital. However, challenges arise within the community because members live in close contact with each other and share various collective resources. Tension and disagreements will

erupt but it is nevertheless important for members to be able to speak openly and honestly with one another. Positive and open communication among members can facilitate the resolve of disagreements. It may also permit members to feel comfortable in order to approach one another for help. Open communication, as well as assistance from others, may facilitate learning and identity formation (Wenger 2000).

Two contexts for social exchange appeared to be particularly important in this organization: planned events and opportunities for informal sociality that arose due to the sharing of community spaces. First, planned community events regularly take place in the Co-op and within the broader neighbourhood. Such events include, but are not limited to, the bi-annual Co-op Clean-up, the annual neighbourhood clean-up, Earth Hour, various Salon Series[24], Spring Ceilidhs, potlucks, pancake breakfasts, and a Bike Repair Day. These planned events create opportunities for members to be involved in a personal and relaxed way, rather than in contexts associated with formal co-operative governance and maintenance. As Wenger (2000) states, these types of events can help to form a community's identity as well as to nurture the social learning environment.

During my visit to the Co-op, I was able to take part in a planned event: the bi-annual Co-op Clean-up. I arrived at the Co-op mid-morning and asked the event coordinator what I could do to help. I started with removing the stubborn and noxious weeds in various flower beds around the Co-op with one of the members. After the weeds had been removed I assisted some other members with moving the recycled sand and gravel back into the areas designated for these materials near the Co-op sheds. I also assisted the members in the sorting of recyclable, compostable, and unusable items. After a few short hours, the clean-up portion of the event had been fulfilled. Members gathered in the central area of the Co-op and began socializing in this common green space. I was able to sit and speak with more members, other than those I had interviewed, about what my research was about. The previously ordered pizza and drinks arrived and everyone ate and drank. When everyone had eaten, some of the musically talented members brought out their guitars, and played and sang for the assembled residents. This portion of the

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[24] A Salon Series is an event in which a group of interested members gather together in any particular member's unit to discuss topics or engage in activities that they consider relevant. Co-op Salon Series have focused on topics such as the history of the Co-op, including personal stories of long-term or founding members, Native Spirituality and Healing, and sing-alongs in French and in English.

event was a highlight of my visit. I saw members happily and comfortably socializing with each other, for the most part. I was glad to be a part of this event. I felt uplifted and I left the Co-op that day feeling enthusiastic and energized. Positive casual interactions in such events likely serve to strengthen the community and to foster increased participation.

The Co-op acknowledges the importance of creating opportunities for interaction outside of formal Co-op business meetings. One member speaks on how the Co-op is always finding ways to keep members involved with one another: "[There are] continuing efforts [of the Member Involvement Committee] to keep everybody involved…Social activities that bring people together, that seems to me to be constantly expanding. We're forever coming up with reasons to gather together that aren't a meeting." These informal social activities create opportunities for members to support each other and to build trusting relationships that aid in information and value sharing.

Second, the social proximity of members in a shared physical/geographical setting influences how members interact on a day-to-day basis. Housing units in housing co-operatives are typically clustered in a fairly compact geographical location. In the Co-op, the majority of the "Main units" are attached townhouses situated on approximately one city block. The other 'adopted' units are located approximately three city blocks away and are known as the "Expansion units." Members of both Main and Expansion share common green spaces, walking paths, as well as tools and maintenance equipment. The high degree of social proximity and the use of collectively owned resources reinforce social propinquity. It is almost guaranteed that members will have frequent casual encounters with each other and this creates opportunities for people to influence each other in some way. In the Co-op, some members believe that learning from one another is facilitated in this way.

One potential benefit of living in a community like a housing co-operative is that members who are not familiar with particular sustainability practices (i.e. recycling or gardening) can learn from members who are better versed in such practices. The relationships between members may also help to curb less-sustainable habits through conversations and modeling. Many interviewees spoke of how they learned from other

members about sustainability ethics and practices through informal exchange of information. The following two quotations illustrate this dynamic:

> I think living in a housing co-op, you're surrounded by people who participate in those activities and so if nothing else, you're going to learn by osmosis. [Laughter] If it sinks in, I'm not sure, but I do know, because of the sense of community, people certainly are willing to talk to one another a lot more and share ideas a lot more cause they're not just sort of sealing themselves in their little hermetically sealed houses, not knowing their neighbors and stuff like that. Everybody knows everybody.

> It's ongoing education just by knowing your neighbors and being able to ask each other without fear of, hopefully without fear of feeling stupid or looking ignorant.

Learning is most frequently a social activity (Glasser 2007; Nicolini, Gherardi and Yanow 2003; and Wenger 2000) and members absorb information from talking with one another and simply by being aware of what is going on in the community. Information is exchanged through modeling and discussions because members trust one another. Several interviewees reported that they are inspired by the values of others, specifically those persons who are committed to sustainability.

A noteworthy feature of this co-op is the geographical separation that exists between the Main and Expansion clusters of units. The Expansion units are located away from Main and members do not share in as many of the aforementioned collective resources (green space, walking paths, and maintenance equipment). These members are still involved in planned community events; however they do not necessarily participate to the same degree in the kinds of unplanned social contact that occurs between the larger number of members who live in Main. This is not to say that members living in Expansion do not interact on a regular basis. They share collective resources as well. However, during interviews, members living in Main would sometimes forget to include Expansion in their responses. When asked about this, one member stated: "Again, my mental attitude of Expansion that just came at the fore is that it's not part of this place cause they're distant." Although other members may not share this attitude, the geographical distance separating the Main units and Expansion has evidently influenced at least a few members of the Co-op. Ideally, if a community is to benefit from frequent social contact, there would not be any such geographical separation. However, for this Co-op it is a reality though the creation of planned activities for the whole Co-op

potentially helps to promote social cohesion among the members despite the physical/spatial separation.

4.4.2.2 Member Participation

This section on member participation includes the ideal types that I use to describe more formal participation that occurs within processes of decision-making and action. A housing co-operative's policies, strategy formation and actions should reflect the values of the whole group, not simply of those in positions of influence and/or authority. For this to take place, members must be willing to air differences and to work through conflicts.

In theory at least, all members are expected to participate in the operation and maintenance of the housing co-operative. The Co-op's member application form states that prospective members are chosen based on their willingness to participate in the operation of the co-operative. During an interview, one member mentioned that she hopes to incorporate criteria for participation in sustainability activities, such as recycling and conservation activities, into the application process as well.

Directors and committee chairs should facilitate communication and negotiation rather than exerting top-down control over other members. A more collaborative model of management and decision making ensures that all members have opportunities to speak and to contribute their knowledge with regard to the issues at hand. Such ideal conditions are not always a reality, however, and various participation dynamics may occur: full collaboration, non-collaboration, passive participation, and cycles of participation. These dynamics are presented in turn. I also discuss some of the drivers of participation in the Co-op as well. These dynamics and drivers are not mutually-exclusive.

During the interviews approximately half of respondents indicated that a fully consultative and collaborative form of governance occurs in the Co-op. Committees, directors and members meet regularly at the AGMs, GMs, and committee meetings, and many of the projects hinge on the creation of partnerships. One member stated that discussions in these formal settings can be intense: "The public dialogue that goes on…can get really heavy sometimes." Another member stated: "The larger the decision,

the larger the commitment, the more polarized, potentially, a community can get around it." It is for these reasons that it is important for members to feel comfortable expressing their concerns and opinions, as well as to accepting that others can have legitimate differences of opinion.

One longer-term member commented on how decision-making in the Co-op is a collaborative event:

> Any decision the Co-op makes is going to be debated from every imaginable angle. The fact that we let all people have their say means that we get lots of perspectives on the discussion about something. Some you might agree with and some you might just think are nonsense, but everybody has their say and their point of view.

Another participant stated that every member has the opportunity to speak on issues during General Membership meetings. "[Items] are brought to the meeting and everybody has a say. Everybody has a vote." These members, and others, are of the opinion that discussions on diverse topics are always allowed to take place in manner that brings forward diverse perspectives. And, although discussions may become heated, members need to be and are in fact "willing to confront those things that need to be said…and welcome the strengths that people bring."

A long-term member observed that a decision is best when made collaboratively: "Occasionally I've had to make decisions and I just suffered the consequences after the fact, but I have enough of a history [in the Co-op] to know that good decisions made badly still don't work very well for the community." This member has made decisions without the involvement of other members in the past and believes that even though he considers the decision to be correct, he also states that the ends do not justify the means. Collaborative decision-making processes are less likely to engender dissent and animosity than those which are not as democratic. Moreover, collaborative dialogue facilitates a more sustainable political process.

Participants reported that most of the members participate in the operation of the Co-op. A founding member states that the absence of administrative staff in the Co-op compels members to contribute, as the Co-op would not be able to function effectively without member contributions. As well, approximately half of respondents believe that there is a high percentage of participation in sustainability activities such as recycling and

reusing, "some because they truly believe in it or are passionate about it, and then maybe the majority, a big chunk of people, who do it because it's really easy to do it." There are numerous ways that members can recycle their unwanted materials. Organizers attempt to make it as easy as possible for all members to participate in these types of sustainability initiatives. This phenomenon is discussed further below, in the section on 'participation drivers'.

Of course, participation is uneven, and not everyone perceives that collaboration is unfolding as it should. Non-collaboration, was reported by approximately half of all interviewees. These members believed that both decision-making and action do not always occur through collaborative processes. In decision making, they believed that members in positions of authority exert control and influence in a manner that limits opportunities for all members to participate in decisions. A long-term member discussed one example:

> It happens at General Meetings where there'll be a vote on something important, like the Seniors Home, and they'll look around, and say the discussion will start going a certain way that they don't like and they'll say "Well, this needs more study!" It's tabled until the next meeting and then three meetings [later], there'll be the right mix of people that they want and they'll get it through….[they] don't want a lot of feedback on it because that's going to create delays.

This member also presented other examples of how decisions are made non-collaboratively. Another member's observation also relates to this democratic deficit:

> I genuinely think that that group of people has, what they think are the better interests of the co-op in mind, except…the way that they do it is undemocratic, right?…They've got a plan in their head. They believe what the co-op should look like 20 years from now and they're determined to have it that way.

These two quotations address examples where active social learning does not occur in the Co-op because decision making is dominated by a few who have strong preconceived notions of what is appropriate. Rather, these are examples of hierarchical learning where there are predetermined positions and the choreographing of decisions by an organized minority who are also in positions of authority (Glasser 2007).

Another participant asserted that there have been instances of unilateral decision-making that occurs without prior consultation or collaboration with the members who are involved, or should be involved, in a project or issue. The interviewee pointed out that

although a person who is driving a decision may have the best interests of the Co-op in mind, the lack of consultation leaves other members to feel resentful. This participant believes that during meetings, *all* members' concerns are not taken into account. Another interviewee reported that one particular member was "sluffed off…[when he]…would bring up things that people didn't want to hear, but he was the only one that had the backbone to bring it up sometimes." Yet another member described his feelings of resentment about being "squashed" when his right to engage in decision-making processes was limited by others. At times, some members feel restricted in their ability to fully participate in their community in ways they feel are acceptable. As a result, learning opportunities are restricted and the full utilization of the community's collective human capital is constrained.

Not all members participate to any significant degree in the operation of the Co-op. During interviews, several members reported their fears with regard to the adoption of major initiatives, especially the Seniors Complex, due to the current lack of participation. They believe that this initiative, as well as others, are excellent in theory, but they fear that the Co-op will not have the level of participation necessary to sustain these new projects along with the other operations in the Co-op. They believe that the Co-op has a fairly low level of member participation and that to increase the number of volunteer-dependent projects might place further stress on volunteers and on volunteerism within the Co-op.

Some participants also pointed to a lack of member participation in other initiatives, for example recycling. One reason offered as to why members do not participate in such initiatives is that these activities require a new way of thinking that may reflect and require significant, generational shifts in values. A shorter-term member commented that "If you're environmentally conscious you tend to be young and in the minority." Another member stated that some people do not participate because it is unfamiliar to them. "They come from a different mindset and a different upbringing and it doesn't seem important to them." Other participants believe that people are overwhelmed with information and do not know how to respond, or that they are simply lazy and/or ignorant. Additional reasons stated included that members are misinformed,

apathetic, or have other issues in their lives that take priority over these types of behaviour change.

An additional dynamic that I identified as occurring in the Co-op is passive participation. This dynamic appears to operate quite strongly in relation to some of the environmentally sustainable initiatives that were present in, or that were recently introduced into, the Co-op. Several respondents reported that some members participate in particular initiatives only because these initiatives are done for them or because a few members have made it very convenient for all others to participate as well. "Some people will participate just because it happens for them like the furnace or their low-flush toilet, so that's kind of passive participation." Another interviewee states that these initiatives were "pushed forward by a small group of members and people voted for it once they saw the sense in it… It's not going to change their lifestyle." A longer-term member provides further support for the assertion that a fair measure of passive participation occurs in the Co-op:

> [Some of] the decisions are made by a subset of people and… it still means the people end up taking the actions, but it doesn't necessarily mean that they're more sustainably-oriented than average… it might be a perceived thing more because of the mechanisms that are in place to make these things happen that aren't in place in a regular community…it doesn't necessarily mean that the individuals within the community are more sustainably oriented as much as it might appear to be.

This member believed that, although the overall effect is positive, members in the Co-op are not necessarily more "sustainably oriented" than individuals in other communities. Although a members' behaviour may change, it does not necessarily reflect or lead to deeper philosophical or attitudinal changes. According to these members, the Co-op seems "green" because those members who are dedicated to conservation lead the membership to adopt ecologically progressive alternatives and practices into their lives. Attitudinal and philosophical changes may eventually result from the continued practice of such activities combined with critical reflection, or they may not.

The cycle of participation is a further dynamic related to this criterion. Members report that not everyone participates all the time in a housing co-operative, for many different reasons. One reason suggested by a longer-term member is that members may

take a break from participation as a result of a disagreement or dispute over a particular issue:

> I think sometimes there's an issue that comes up that really upsets people and divides the community and following that there's always a time where we lose people, either for a really long time or just a short time. Kind of emotional burnout or being really angry about a decision that the community's made. And that happens too. And it cycles. Most people recover from that after a few months and find a new route to participating and some people never really recover.

This interviewee expanded on the idea of a cycle of participation, adding that it is not easy to live with a group of people and it "requires you to get over yourself sometimes." Members must find a way to move forward after difficult experiences in the community, and taking a break from participation is sometimes an effective and legitimate response. It allows one to recover from associated stress and gives one time to gain some perspective on the issue. However, it also allows a person to signal her/his displeasure and non-acquiescence in a manner that does not heighten conflict.

Another reason noted as to why participation waxes and wanes does not necessarily relate to disputes and controversy. Rather, it reflects members' availability and energy levels.

> [Some people] have been so engaged that they needed to withdraw and lick their wounds because sometimes they just have gotten burned in the process or whatever. And then there's another core group of people that just plug along. And it's interesting because some people step up to the plate, do a whole big thing and then step back down again and somebody else steps up to the plate, does a whole big bunch of work and then steps back out again. When you have a large enough community of people who are sustaining that kind of energy, it can work over time.

This member believes that some level of member non-participation is typical and can be tolerated. There will always be people who cannot or do not participate:

> There's people that are in for the short-term and they'll do minimal stuff or people who've been in a long time and feel they've paid their dues… And then people who just physically or mentally can't do anything…and so there's no pressure on those people. I mean, each community can absorb some people who can't participate.

According to this co-op member, a community is able to function at a reasonable level even though some members may not do as much as others. This perspective was shared

by several respondents who concluded that there will always be some people who do not participate but that this is nothing to worry about, as long as non-participation does not become too widespread.

The final theme that emerged from the interviews is participation drivers. I found that, broadly speaking, the things that drive participation in the Co-op can be grouped into three categories: leadership, encouragement, and organization. Leaders motivate and propel participation in the community in many ways. Interviewees mentioned that members who lead certain successful projects are often trusted members of the community. Other members feel comfortable with them and have faith in them. Also, leaders of successful projects generally have researched the topic well. Furthermore, as one focus group participant pointed out, they tend to have a personal belief in the project and to persevere:

> I think people have to go with their own idea. It's not always a place where someone can say 'I have this suggestion' and if they don't personally go with it, chances are it's not going to go anywhere. But it happens that the good projects are [introduced to the community by] someone who really feels passionate about it and then they carry it forward. And some things take a lot of work…it takes that kind of personal passion to carry some projects.

Many initiatives happen only when the person who brought the idea to the community takes responsibility for leading the project and carries it through. Leaders who are able to take a proactive, personal, and persistent—but also collaborative—approach to initiatives can make a positive contribution to a housing co-operative, as to any learning organization (Emery and Flora 2006; Senge 2006; Hailey and James 2002; and Wenger 2000).

Member encouragement also drives participation. One member noted that participation is not policed, but members are supported in a positive manner. Another stated: "I think it's the way the Co-op really encourages without judgment." There are many ways that members are encouraged to participate in Co-op events. A Member Involvement Committee exists whose primary purpose is to encourage members' involvement in community events. One member remarked on how the Member Involvement Committee contributes and promotes social sustainability in the Co-op.

> It's easy sometimes for people to come into the co-op and then just forget that…
> part of the contract is to be involved and so I'm seeing this [Member
> Involvement] committee over and over again, being innovative and coming up
> with different ways to engage people, if only at a social level, but also hopefully
> moving towards carrying some of the responsibility.

The Member Involvement Committee seeks ways to involve members and helps contribute to sustainable participation in the Co-op. Incentives and rewards are another means of encouraging members to partake in Co-op events. Events are attractive to people because they are fun, prizes are awarded, and because there is usually an 'after party' associated with Co-op events that rewards people for their participation. For example, at the by-annual Co-op Clean-up members are rewarded with pizza, various drinks, and music upon completion of the planned actions. Also, members are encouraged to attend AGMs and GMs with potluck suppers or pancake breakfasts.

The Environment Committee makes recycling unwanted items as simple as possible. One member of the Environment Committee hopes that by making things simple, it will "catch on." She also mentions how articles and announcements in the newsletter, handing out free bags for recycling, and leading by example, provide members with encouragement to recycle. The spring and fall Co-op Clean-ups and the collection of recyclables, charity items, and Eco-station items provide tangible evidence of how much material is diverted from the landfill. Making recycling simple and providing visible examples of how a person can leave a smaller footprint is fundamental. One member commented on how some people feel overwhelmed with everything that they "should" be doing and how offering no-hassle options to be more environmentally responsible helps to counter such feelings. The Co-op has (re)organized some aspects of the community in order to make implementation of certain ecological practices easier. This also supports habituation with respect to such practices, which makes it easier to behave in a more environmentally responsible manner without (much) additional mental or physical effort (Haluza-DeLay 2008, Bell 2004).

Incentives and rewards may encourage people to participate but there is also a controversial side to such measures. One participant noted that some people will only take part in certain activities because there are incentives. Obviously, a community must

decide if using incentives and thereby having more members recycle and participate in related activities is justifiable and healthy in the long run.

A third category of participation drivers can be classified under organization. The majority of members stated that events, meetings and initiatives are successful because they are well organized. Information about Co-op events is presented in flyers and emails and is given out well in advance. As well, though some members of the community are differently-abled, events and projects are organized to include assistance to members who would otherwise not be able to participate.

Participants mentioned that Co-op events and initiatives are well-organized and that this helps them to recognize and know their role in any particular event or project. One member known as the Match Maker, seeks out members to fill needed roles in the community. As she describes below, she finds that informing members exactly what duties a role entails is the best way to fill positions.

> I find job descriptions very good. It's been easy for me to fill positions because asking someone to actually write down what they require to do to get something done makes them really think about what's actually required instead of a general "We need someone to do this but we're not exactly sure what they should do" so just making things as simple as possible and writing them down in a simple way. Presenting some things in writing but also talking about it and making sure people understand.

Simple, yet detailed and specific instructions on a participatory role in the Co-op have generated positive results. These allow a member to know exactly what he or she is volunteering to do.

Different members have different interpretations of how participation works in the Co-op. Some believe that the predominant form of learning participation is hierarchical, in which inflexible, predetermined relationships exist. Others claim that co-learning (Glasser 2007) or active social learning (Dyball, Brown and Keen 2007) are more prevalent so that collaboration, trust and shared exploration characterize the learning environment. Co-op residents who believe that the learning environment is hierarchical tend not to trust all of the members. Also, they believe that some major decisions are made without prior consultation and the full collaboration of members.

4.4.3 Commitment to Learning and Knowledge Development

This section focuses on a subset of criteria that represents how Co-op members approach development initiatives and the formal and informal education and human capital (capacity) building opportunities among members of the Co-op, as well as between members of the Co-op and other organizations. Learning about community sustainability occurs at many levels and often involves various housing co-op sector and community organizations. In this section I present a 'learning approach to strategic action', which discusses the manner by which members undertake their development goals, and personal and community development.

4.4.3.1 A Learning Approach to Strategic Action

A seventh criterion that emerged from analysis of field data and scholarly sources is a learning approach to strategic action**.** Projects and new ideas are viewed as conscious experiments, and successful as well as less successful initiatives are viewed as learning opportunities. Members and directors re-visit goals and initiatives; make time to question their practices; and analyze, discuss, and learn from outcomes. Five subthemes are subsumed under this criterion: a general attitude of continuous learning, the incorporation of new ideas, critical reflection, constructive resistance, and reflexive learning.

Some members indicated that they, personally, have an attitude of continuous learning when it comes to the sustainability of the Co-op.

> I think that the notion of sustainability is something that we, the people in this part of the world, are discovering and exploring as we go along. It isn't like sustainability is just something that you discover like the shape of an atom or something, it's not a set thing. 'How can I live more sustainably?' is an ongoing question.

> In social change, you've got to start somewhere. And yah, there might be opposition or there might be resistance, but you just keep doing it. You're clear on your goals, you're clear on the outcomes you want to see without becoming self-righteous…You just do the best you can and keep doing it and lead by example.

The following quotes describe an attitude of continuous learning on part of the Co-op as a whole.

> The co-op is pretty flexible about what people are allowed to do. And that extends out into the kind of ideas the co-op is willing to experiment with. So it's a fairly progressive culture in many ways and it entertains a lot of different viewpoints. Sometimes good, sometimes not so good, but the fact that it's an open discussion, relatively speaking, is good.

> The [co-op] seems to me to be a very bold group of people in that they're always pushing ahead and growing and venturing into new ideas, like the Seniors Home project…. …but I hear about what's happened since the beginning of the co-op 'til now and I think there's been a lot of growth and changes.

Although I cannot conclude that all members share these attitudes and perspectives, either personally or with respect to the Co-op, it definitely seems that at least some members understand that sustainability is about exploration and learning (Dyball, Brown and Keen 2007; Glasser 2007; and Tilbury 2007). There is no 'recipe' for sustainability; working towards sustainability requires that each community discover their own 'path', and this entails experimentation and willingness to change (Tilbury 2007).

The second subtheme, the incorporation of new ideas, contributes to learning and allows an organization to change and to develop more sustainable ways of operation. Some of the initiatives that the Co-op has incorporated are unconventional projects that are generally not associated with housing co-operatives and so the Co-op members have had to learn as they move forward. The Co-op has adopted numerous project ideas that are meant to support the sustainability of the community such as the Land Trust, the Expansion, the Seniors Complex, member loan programs for various resource-efficient technologies, the Free Store, cyclical plug-ins, and the block system. Such projects involve inquiry, assessment, adaptation, and strategic action and thus help to advance the Co-op as a social learning community. The incorporation of new ideas and approaches can be considered as an example of the technological dimension of cognitive praxis (Eyerman and Jamison 1991); members adopt (non-mainstream) alternative technologies and practices into their personal lives and shared community space.

At its inception, the Co-op consciously initiated numerous innovations with respect to policy. Because of the novelty of what they were trying, there was not much possibility of learning directly from policy experiments in other housing co-operatives. As one member observed: "There was a lot of imagination that went into the development of policies." This participant also stated that the Co-op was one of the first

in the area and that there was little choice but to experiment with policies. However, as the Co-op matured, experimentation with really novel policies was no longer such a necessity. The Co-op is not the only housing co-operative in the area—there are others to observe and to learn from. Moreover, the Co-op has its own considerable history of policy making to draw on for lessons and guidance.

In regard to the adoption of sustainability-oriented technologies, one participant explained how the Co-op is no longer so involved in 'conscious experiments' with these products since society in general has adopted many of these practices and technologies.

> I think that we were probably [on the leading edge of change] ten years ago. I think that before the environment was on the map, it was on the map here. And people were doing what were considered cutting-edge things…but I think now that you can buy a lot of these products at hardware stores and a lot more of the general population is involved in those things, I think [the Co-op is] kind of just on a flat line. Society's kind of starting to take notice.

This participant recognized that the Co-op was pioneering in the past but, as society progressed, the members' ideas were no longer viewed as quite so new and innovative. During interviews, some members pointed out that the Co-op is no longer on the leading edge of change to the degree it once was. This can perhaps be viewed as a measure of success in that many of the Co-op's vanguard ideals and ideas have been adopted by a majority of the region's population and have become more the societal norm (Jamison 2001).

Most members did not believe that trying new ideas is too risky. However, not surprisingly, projects that involve spending a lot of money are more frequently viewed as risky. Most of the members interviewed concluded that the Co-op does take some financial risks, albeit risks that are generally smaller and manageable. Retrofitting projects are regarded as having been well-researched and carefully evaluated, particularly the upgrades of furnaces and windows. One participant pointed out that every project has a risk but he believes that taking on some risk with regard to projects is necessary in order to sustain the Co-op's built capital. Also, as discussed with respect to the previous criterion, some participants argued that there are risks associated with non-participation by members but also that there are risks that result from inaction and failure to innovate.

Critical reflection was a third subtheme (or cluster of observations) that was evident in the field data with respect to a learning approach to strategic action. Critical reflection is the process of analyzing, reconsidering or questioning experiences and outcomes within a particular context. When this learning device is used in a housing co-operative, members, committees and the board revisit their documented goals and consciously attempt to investigate more successful means of project implementation and decisions. The outcomes of these investigations are reviewed and the results are applied to current and future projects and decisions.

In the Co-op, one active member discussed how goals are continually revisited when the project(s) are underway, however after a particular project has been completed, the final outcomes of the project are not reviewed unless there are immediate concerns from members. Another active member stated that goals are not revisited upon their completion and that the idea of goal re-visitation is resisted by others. "[The re-visitation of projects] is kind of sporadic. It seems to be only when one or two or a few people get together and decide to do it. There's a lot of resistance to having it, I think, built into the structure of the co-op." It was not discussed as to why he believes there is resistance to the review of goals and subsequent actions and accomplishments. Although the Co-op itself does not have policy or procedures with respect to (post hoc) evaluation of plans and their execution, this particular member revisits some of the projects that he has taken part in, including particularly those for which he has assumed a leadership position.

According to a number of members, the Co-op relies to a great degree on an oral tradition. Without formally documented plans, it is less likely that stated goals will be revisited regularly or in a systematic way. Perhaps they are discussed among certain individuals but not necessarily through any formal process. Debate occurs in connection with major decisions taken in the community. However, it seems that it is the initiation of projects that gets discussed. Projects are not systematically revisited except in the rare cases where some key actor deems this necessary/useful.

Incorporating more systematic ways of critically reflecting upon various projects and initiatives would likely assist members in their learning processes, including those associated with initiatives taken to increase community sustainability (Dyball, Brown and Keen 2007). It would draw attention to both successful and less successful ways of

initiating and carrying out projects. It would potentially provide a means by which the community could learn about better ways of doing things. Members would discover what works best for their community and work on developing appropriate competences (Wenger 2000). Critical reflection reduces the possibility of a community becoming hostage to its own history (Wenger 2000). Moreover, armed with such knowledge, the members would be in a position to then communicate their experiences and findings to other interested organizations. Of course, it must also be acknowledged that the Co-op is largely staffed by volunteers—and there may not be time and energy for all of the systematic review, reconsideration, and rebooting that might be ideal.

A fourth theme that emerged from a close reading of the field interview transcripts is constructive resistance. Constructive resistance can be defined as positive and productive opposition offered by a member or members that improve the outcome of a particular situation. Constructive resistance is important in a group setting so that decisions regarding changes that impact the organization are not made in haste. Most generally, resistance on part of individuals or a group occurs in the context of (proposed) changes for individuals in an organization and/or the organization as a whole.

The ability to adapt to change is an important outcome of a successful learning organization (Dyball, Brown and Keen 2007; Glasser 2007; Bell 2004; Hailey and James 2002; Reid and Hickman 2002; Alvesson and Skoldberg 2000; and Wenger 2000). While the Co-op has accommodated several significant changes, study participants also described different forms of resistance to change. First, participants mentioned that some members resist making personal changes in their habits and lifestyles. One long-term member discussed her resistance to small projects that are routinely introduced in the Co-op: "There's always something new that the younger ones bring to us and say 'Wouldn't you like to do this?' 'No.' But almost every month there's something new that they want to start with the Co-op. Mind you some of them don't fly because we just say 'Forget it. I'm not doing that.'"

Members also resist larger changes. One long-term member recalled the atmosphere when the idea of a Seniors Complex was introduced to the general membership. "Not everybody was in favour of [the Seniors Complex] and some thought 'Well, why rock the boat when everything's okay? Why take on something new?'" This

participant believed that some members were uncomfortable with large changes that would affect all members of the Co-op and carry several potential risks. She noted that these members find comfort in stability as opposed to unfamiliar changes

The idea of a building a Seniors Complex with a community facility generates fears among members other than simply change itself. Other concerns, particularly financial costs and risks, also factor into member resistance to such changes.

> [The Seniors Complex and community facility] has engendered a lot of controversy in the community because the idea of building a community facility means incurring cost. Because a community facility not only costs capital costs, but operating costs which means that everybody's housing charges would have to go up. So there's some resistance in some parts of the community to the idea of building a community facility.

The development of the Seniors Complex is costly in terms of capital and operating costs. It is a large-scale project that requires participation from volunteers and a major financial investment on part of the Co-op membership. The same participant quoted above mentioned how members are less likely to agree to large-scale projects than they are to smaller projects that involve smaller capital and operating costs. Members are typically willing to "throw a bit of money at something, hoping that it'll grow into something bigger." She also reported that members are less resistant to changes when they are able to get outside funding for a particular project, rather than tie up a large proportion of the Co-op's own financial capital.

Another manifestation of resistance that was identified in an interview is resistance to change on part of non-founding members. Below, a founding member describes how he believes that non-founding members are more resistant to major changes within the Co-op than founding members because they defend arrangements that they don't have confidence can be successfully changed.

> There's an interesting phenomenon that happens and it's not just in [the Co-op] …if people don't have to work to get something and it's given to them, they tend to get quite protective of it because they don't have the confidence that they can recreate it. So it engenders a bit of a 'protectionist, conserve, don't risk what I've got now', attitude… They didn't build it, they don't have the confidence that they can build it, they're going to protect it. And the interesting thing with protecting stuff is that the more you try and freeze things by protecting it, the more you put it at risk.

This participant proposes that because the non-founding members of the Co-op did not take part in the planning and early developmental stages of the Co-op, they are less experienced with making important changes. This tends to make them more protective of the status quo and more fearful about any significant changes contemplated for the community. This member also pointed out another interesting phenomenon: the more you try to keep things the same, the more you put them at risk.

Another form of resistance was communicated in interviews with newer members. They describe general resistance from longer-term and founding members towards new leadership and new ideas from non-founding members.

> It's almost resistance to people who haven't been here since the dawn of time. That's the feeling I get…they are more resistant to new ideas because they almost see it as a threat to their little empire or whatever you want to call it. I think that that's often what the underlying problem is.

Another member also describes this pattern of resistance as motivated by an interest in maintaining control. He believes that some members knowingly present a project to the General Membership as a financial risk or other perceived risk in order to deflect member attention from the true situation. This is best understood, according to the interviewee, as an attempt to maintain control over decision-making. "[There's] a lot of perceived risk, but sometimes perceived risk is certain people's desire for control as well… There's some people who will present it as a certain kind of risk when really it's maybe something else." The use of such manipulative tactics as a means of control is highly undesirable in any setting, but especially within what is supposed to be a democratically controlled housing co-operative. This type of behaviour can reduce the Co-op's ability to learn as an organization. Furthermore, it signals a lack of respect for others and can give rise to resentment among Co-op members.

In this instance, the absence of collaboratively made decisions and collectively agreed goals led to some resistance from the non-founding members. Constructive resistance from organization members can help the group to avoid hasty decisions and to reconsider their plans and actions. However, too much resistance can stall change and the community can become stagnant. Moreover, resistance that stems from broken communication processes and feelings that one is being manipulated is not likely to be helpful to any organization.

A fifth and final subtheme that I have grouped under 'a learning approach to strategic action' is reflexive learning. Reflexive learning is changes in patterns of thinking and action that occur through an individual's or group's interpretation of various experiences and understandings. It is demonstrated when an individual or group has discovered a more successful means of accomplishing a task and applies this information to another project or task. During my visit at the Co-op, I was privy to many descriptions of successful and less successful project outcomes. Consequently, I was able to learn something about how the membership had utilized this new knowledge in the development and execution of other projects. One example noted was the door replacement project. Numerous interview participants mentioned how the Co-op members did not think that the installation of new doors might require supervision by a designated, knowledgeable member. Members were dissatisfied with the door installations and only after numerous complaints to, and conversations with, the installation company were the doors installed in a satisfactory manner. Members subsequently applied what was learned through this process towards the installation of the windows. A member was hired to supervise the window installations to ensure that they were done correctly.

Another example of reflexive learning was demonstrated when a member spoke about the introduction of rain barrels into the Co-op. She decided that it would have been helpful to provide information to members with regards to barrels and their use.

> I think it was a mystery as to why we needed [the rain barrels] and…there could have been more education around: 'Why is that rain barrel sitting over there by number 40. Who uses it? Who's it for?' So I really think there could be more education around: 'Well so that you don't turn on the hose. It's so you go get your bucket to water your garden'. And the kids all know it's a great place to fill up their water guns.

Other projects, such as the low-flush toilets encountered some problems as well. Participants explained that the Co-op received a discounted price for these toilets that appeared to be related to their quality. Members were not satisfied with the way that they worked (or, more specifically, did not work). One member noted that it "might have been a case of just not quite thorough research." Lessons were learned, however. Interview

participants noted that technologies purchased subsequently were more carefully researched and implemented.

These instances are by no means isolated examples of ways in which the Co-op demonstrates reflexive learning. Other examples include the revision of policies, procedures and by-laws in response to various kinds of changes; the re/formation of committee structures to meet new needs; and members that learn new ways of doing things on a day-to-day basis. Reflexive learning is ongoing and members routinely change and revise their views and practices according to what proves effective or ineffective. The process whereby the Co-op members reflect upon and examine the underlying assumptions that drive their actions and behaviour patterns is an example of double-loop learning (Dyball, Brown and Keen 2007). When members reflect upon and change their current norms and values to better reflect what they've learned, this can be viewed as an example of triple-loop learning (Dyball, Brown and Keen 2007).

4.4.3.2 Personal and Community Development

Personal and community development describes opportunities for learning available in the form of information, documents, projects and events that are available to all members. With the appropriate guidance and encouragement, as opposed to coercion, members can take responsibility for their personal learning and development. Personal and community development includes the encouragement and training of new community leaders. Self-development promotes autonomy for the individual, but also for the co-operative as a whole. When members are educated on various issues and learn certain skills, the community can be less reliant on the knowledge of others and skills imported from outside of the community; human capital (capacity) is increased and strengthened which, in turn, strengthens other capitals simultaneously (Hancock 1999). Connections to outside of the community must not be severed but an autonomous organization is more likely to have the means to sustain itself into the future. Two subthemes are discussed here in relation to this indictor: internal education and skill development, and inter-organizational learning.

Access to education and skill development is promoted through the Co-op newsletter, the Salon Series, the Member Handbook, other forms of formal and informal

communication with members, member participation in the operation and governance of the Co-op, and the provision of funds for members to attend conferences and workshops focusing on various housing co-operative issues. The Co-op has arranged for educational opportunities both inside and outside of the Co-op. Some of learning opportunities mentioned in the interviews included plumbing, trees and tree pruning, and tours of the City's recycling center.

The development of the Seniors Complex has itself been an ongoing and intensive learning opportunity. As one long-term member pointed, there are many learning opportunities arising from direct involvement in this development.

> The [Seniors Complex development] gives some people the chance to see what it's like to struggle to get what you want…that our neighbors aren't making it easy for us and lots of decisions have to be made… So there's been quite a bit of that which is a development experience. I think that's good and it makes people feel like they've had a say. Well, it doesn't make them, they have had a say in the outcome of the final product…. I think it is a really good learning experience for those that want to participate in it.

Openings for education and skill development are numerous for the members of a housing co-operative. A co-operative setting encourages participation in day-to-day operations which, in turn, supports active social learning (Glasser 2007). Members are able to participate in committees and on the board where they learn about board procedures as well as governance procedures more generally. Collaborating with others on a regular basis also promotes the development of communication skills and encourages personal growth of many kinds.

Leadership renewal is very important in every community (Speak 2000). New leaders must be developed to replace other leaders who have stepped down or who have left the community. The Co-op acknowledges the importance of youth education, particularly with respect to housing co-operatives. Every year the Co-op recruits community youth to participate in the local co-operative youth camp, as well as to attend the CHF Canada annual conference.

> We try to send at least one or two people to the youth camp, the [Rural Education and Development Association (REDA)]camps every year because that's one of the ways that the kids learn, obviously, is to go to stuff like that…and we've had our youth delegates [for the CHF Canada AGMs] come back just totally energized. And just loving it. Same with the REDA camps. I mean, they come back just loving it because it gives them a whole different sense—if they haven't already picked up on what the whole different sense that a co-op is.

These conference and camp learning opportunities are important to the individual participants as well as to the community as a whole.

Some youth in the Co-op are involved in housing co-operative related activities while others are more involved in other kinds of community development and sustainability activism. One respondent commented specifically on the children in the Co-op and the work that they have done. "The kids are the greatest influence. Our kids are huge green—I mean, they're probably the greenest of all of us, which is very cool. They've been winning awards…They tend to motivate the adults more than anybody else, which is as it should be!" Many of the children in the community have lead projects aimed at environmental sustainability and have been recognized for this work at the municipal level.

The second theme related to 'personal and community development' is inter-organizational learning. Inter-organizational learning here refers to learning that occurs between the Co-op and other community organizations. It happens more reliably as a result of communication practices that promote dialogue and provide meeting opportunities between different groups. Below, I discuss the learning that occurs between the Co-op and housing co-operative associations and related sector organizations, the Co-op and other housing co-operatives, and between the Co-op and other community organizations. The first housing co-operative sector relationship to be discussed is between the Co-op and the CMHC.

The CMHC provides detailed information regarding building and design projects, affordable housing, and environmental sustainability. This information is not directed towards housing co-operatives specifically but, nevertheless, could be useful to housing co-ops. The CMHC also offers grants and awards for particular housing developments, as well as extensive research on technical and socio-economic issues related to housing. Documents directly related to housing co-operatives include a limited number of reports

on examples of successful housing co-operative projects, general information on co-operative housing, information on co-operatives in crises, as well as capital replacement planning manuals and software. Only one Co-op member commented on how the CMHC directly supports the Co-op through the dissemination of research results or financial planning software. All other respondents appeared to be in general agreement with the idea that the CMHC has provided little support to the Co-op to work towards the sustainability of their community. It seems that the Co-op interacts with the CMHC on a needs-only basis as per financial contracts and obligations. It is also interesting to note that these interactions are viewed by co-opers as hierarchical in character, with the CMHC preferring to assert the regulations rather than to work collaboratively with the Co-op to achieve their ends.

The support provided by the CHF Canada was held in high esteem. The Co-op is a member of CHF Canada and sends delegates, or what some might call boundary brokers (Wenger 2000), to the annual conferences and AGMs that are held in various Canadian cities. Members are able to attend numerous workshops and lectures on a range of issues that may include governance, maintenance, finance, leadership and member involvement, diversity and, more recently, sustainability (CHF Canada 2009). The multi-day conference also allows participants to converse with delegates from other housing co-operatives in more informal settings. Participants at the CHF Canada AGMs pass resolutions which delegates bring back to the individual co-operatives where they are discussed at the board and/or general membership level.

The CHF Canada also prepares highly relevant publications and facilitates workshops, in addition to its annual conferences, on various subjects directly related to housing co-operative issues. Wenger (2000) refers to this as a form of boundary bridging involving boundary objects that support connections between practices. A newsletter is also provided to member organizations on topics directly related to housing co-operatives. "[CHF Canada] also put out their Newsbriefs where they show co-ops, what other co-ops around the country are doing in terms of innovative things and that gives one co-op an idea, you know, or the co-ops different ideas." This member clearly recognizes Newsbriefs as a resource for learning about other housing co-operatives. Another potentially helpful resource that the Co-op, at the time of the interviews, had not

yet taken advantage of is the 2020 Vision Project. This project assists member housing co-operatives to make plans for the sustainability of their communities. During an interview, one long-term active member stated that she hoped the Co-op would begin their 2020 Vision project in the near future.

The Co-op is also a member of, and actively participates with, a federation of housing co-operatives in its region. This particular association holds conferences of delegates, provides members with an informative website, and also provides information to member co-operatives through a newsletter. Networking and communication tools such as these provide learning resources for member organizations. Through their regional and national federations, member co-ops are able to learn from both the successful and less successful experiences of other housing co-operatives.

Inter-organizational learning also occurs bilaterally between the Co-op and other housing co-operatives. However, aside from the networking that occurs through housing co-operative associations and personal networks, there does not seem to be any formal means of contact and exchange between the Co-op and other housing co-operatives. Direct contact is sporadic and on a needs-only basis, as one member pointed out: "There is some exchange…but there isn't usually direct co-op to co-op communication, or I don't see it happening." Another member mentioned how the Co-op approached a specific housing co-operative for information when the Co-op was considering building an office. Yet another member mentioned that she once asked another housing co-operative about the practices of their Dispute Resolutions Committee but that this was the first time in ten years that she had done something like that. Most interview participants concluded that the Co-op does not regularly seek out information about particular practices and projects directly from other housing co-operatives. Members tend to rely on umbrella agencies such as CHF Canada and their regional federation for general and specific information about housing co-operatives.

Although the Co-op may not regularly exchange information with other housing co-operatives, it has recently joined forces with several housing co-operatives in the area to form a Land Trust. These co-operatives are working with a private company that helps plan and build sustainable communities, and which specializes in housing co-operative

development. The importance of networking and collaborating with other knowledgeable organizations was highlighted by some of the Co-op members that were interviewed:

> Engaging [community development association] to help with [the Seniors Complex] helped…because one of the disadvantages of housing co-ops is that they don't necessarily have the resources…or all the skills necessary so that's why they'll engage a consultant or a resource group to help move it forward.

In this case, the Co-op also invited a member of a partnering housing co-operative to present information on the proposed Land Trust and to explain the concept and its advantages to the Co-op's General Membership.

Many participants reported that the Co-op does not actively seek information from other housing co-operatives. However, some members of the Co-op are employed by regional community development associations that often focus on co-operative housing initiatives. Information 'filters' in from other co-operatives and organizations through the brokering activities of such individuals (Wenger 2000). "We have some people living in the co-op who work in the sector… so they sometimes will come to our meetings with that knowledge…If they didn't live here maybe we would do more…active searching." The information and knowledge that these members access typically is not from other housing co-ops directly, but is collected and sorted by an agency which is in contact with other housing co-operatives.

Another avenue by which information on sustainability issues reaches the General Membership is via members of the Co-op who are educated through their employment or personal interests. "It's almost by default though that we're connected to the outside because people themselves personally are connected to things that they care about and then they just transfer that knowledge and experience inward." As stated above, boundary brokers (Wenger 2000) such as these are one means by which the Co-op learns more about what other organizations are doing with regards to sustainability. It is also important that the Co-op provides a structure through which such information can be further shared, processed, and acted upon. The prospect that ideas will be translated into concrete actions is no doubt a source of encouragement for people engaged in such work.

Co-op members are also actively involved in the immediate neighbourhood community. The Co-op purchases a block membership in the local community league and many members attend events organized by this association. Members also participate in

the local school and some Co-op members were instrumental in the extension of the bus route to their area of the city. The lack of a central Co-op office does not seem to hinder learning opportunities and engagement with other community organizations and initiatives; however, a central office might assist the Co-op in more systematically pursuing such networking opportunities.

4.4.4 Functional Diversity and Autonomy

        Functional diversity and autonomy is a subtheme that I am using to focus attention on the various important characteristics of housing co-operative members and of the housing co-operative itself. The first criterion covered in this section addresses the diversity of individual members in terms of categories such as ethnicity, family type, skills, and interests. I also consider the degree to which this heterogeneity is harnessed as an asset for the community. The second criterion, autonomy, addresses if and how the housing co-operative as a whole is free to express its independence with respect to both internal policies and sector organization constraints. In other words, autonomy represents the degree of independence the housing co-operative has with respect to decisions that affect the community and community members in terms of potentially constraining financial agreements and contracts with sector organizations.

4.4.4.1 Community and Member Diversity used as Assets

        This criterion focuses on the level of diversity in the community and whether or not diversity is harnessed as an asset. A diverse group of members in terms of interests, skills and identities is important to a learning organization because this leads to greater opportunities for learning and development. However, different knowledges, skills, and abilities, as well as diversity in terms of age, ethnicity and gender, must be valued and respected in order to be a resource for the betterment of the community.

        The Co-op has a diverse group of members. However, the mix of ethnicities, ages and personal backgrounds, as well as the presence of single mothers, single men, single women, as well as families with children, does not necessarily make the Co-op more diverse than typical local urban neighbourhoods. It may, however, impact the formation of internal groups within the membership, with respect to the kinds of friendships and

partnerships formed, and, subsequently affect who works and learns with whom. The Co-op brings together people with many different experiences, preferences, and personalities—and brings them together in context that facilitates constructive engagement as well as respect and coexistence.

> There's a recognition that within the community there's a whole broad range of personality styles and eccentricities. And we have to be able to learn to accommodate those eccentricities because they are kind of like jewels in the rough. And the strength of this community comes from not necessarily being a homogenous group of people but a group who has learned to respect and value the very positive things that people bring to the community.

The member quoted above describes the community as very diverse in terms of "personality styles and eccentricities." He states that this type of diversity can strengthen a community. Some other study participants expressed the feeling that the Co-op is not as diverse as it could be in terms of the diversity of membership. They believe there is a lack of families with children in the community. In their view, a disproportionate number of Co-op members are single, older females, which makes the Co-op membership more homogenous, as opposed to heterogeneous.

Housing co-operative members have diverse reasons for joining such a community. One reason mentioned quite often was how housing co-ops attract different types of people. The following two quotations illustrate this quality:

> I think co-ops attract more people that are aware – environmentally aware, socially aware – than you would, say if this was a condo complex where we were each individual home owners. Just because of the nature of co-ops and the socialist bent that many of us have. And our activist backgrounds.

> Living in a housing co-op is a bit of a non-conventional lifestyle. So it tends to attract two different classes of people. People who are progressive because they like the community aspect of it and people who are conservative because they're drawn to the economic stability. That's very broad categorizations so it's not quite as clean as that… So there are times when things have been quite a bit more entrenched and other times it's quite a bit more progressive. But, it doesn't swing extremely one way or the other, it kind of just wanders around that middle line.

Taken together, the testimony of these two members suggests that housing co-operatives are attractive to members and potential members for many different reasons. More conservatively-oriented members are drawn to the prospect of an affordable and stable housing situation, among other things, and more progressively-oriented members

appreciate how housing co-operatives may be sites for socially-inclusive living and/or more environmentally-friendly lifestyles. The members of the Co-op have different sets of reasons for joining which, in turn, affects their opinions and decision-making with regards to Co-op development priorities. As the interviewee mentions in the second quotation reproduced above, decisions taken collectively by the membership thus move between being fairly conservatively oriented and more progressively oriented.

Decision-making in the Co-op often demands energy and patience from the diverse membership; however, a diverse membership can also be viewed as an asset. The Co-op members have different skills and knowledges; combined they form the Co-op's human capital (Emery and Flora 2006). Based on what I learned from interviews and participant observation, some of the members' skill sets include gardening and xeroscaping, various trades, computer technology and web design, financial planning, co-operative housing management (development and bookkeeping), energy and resource conservation, knowledge on First Nations culture, and leadership skills.

Diverse skills and knowledge are only a positive attribute if they are used. According to many interview participants and my observations, many of the skills present in the Co-op are used to its advantage. Generally, members join the committee(s) that best suite their abilities and they either offer their skills or are encouraged to take part in projects that match their skill sets.

> I think people either work in a way in a co-op where it's obvious what their skills are or by word of mouth. When people are getting to know each other, they find out who's good at what and that kind of trickles around and people will ask that person if they can do something.

> As far as I know and as far as I can see, they don't have any other Aboriginal families living in the co-op, and so they really utilize my expertise in that area, my resources in that area and so I've been invited to present just on Aboriginal culture and spirituality and philosophies, just to share with the general public, just to create more awareness around that.

The Co-op's Matchmaker also assists by seeking out individuals whom she believes can fill open positions or lead projects. The person who serves as Matchmaker is charged with being informed of what needs to be done and what positions need to be filled in the Co-op. The present Matchmaker writes job descriptions based on these requirements and then works towards filling these positions. In short, she facilitates member participation

and in identifying and meeting community needs. According to her, it is not usually a difficult task to fill leadership positions:

> I think when somebody has leadership skills the community will necessarily urge or encourage that person to take on those roles if they don't already do that themselves…. But usually I think leaders come forward just because it's their nature. They can't help it.

Another way in which members are able to express their skills and individuality is through the design of their units and yards. Through flexible regulation of home improvements, the Co-op encourages some personalization and customization of members' homes.

> The windows are a good example because rather than…the tyranny of fairness where you lower everything down to a certain standard…And fortunately there was enough people on the committee who went "Why not? Why don't we just let people do upgrade? If they want to have a different look of window that falls within the same budget category, let them pick. If they want an upgraded window, let them pay for it. Let's come up with a policy that allows them to borrow the money from the co-op"...and there's been a few other initiatives where people opted to pay for something over time as a result. The co-op has benefited because the units get enhanced. The drawback is when you have somebody who lives in the unit who wants to pay nothing extra.

When members personalize their units they are more likely to consider it their home as opposed to simply their housing. When members can customize their living space, they have a personal stake in it and are more likely to take better care of it. Moreover, as the above quotation states, the Co-op units may get enhanced in the process, which increases the value of the unit itself. The diversity of members' yards, landscaped with various plants and art, helps to make the Co-op unique and aesthetically pleasing. It is a means by which a resident, and the Co-op as a whole, can express identity and culture.

There are instances where, for various reasons, available skills are not used or not used as they could be. As was mentioned by some interviewees, not everyone's skills are known.

> If someone hides what their skill or talent is, there's no official mechanism to draw that out and we don't necessarily interview or write down people when they move in "What are you good at?" We probably informally do, in the Welcome Wagon, try to get an idea of what people like to do. But [we don't know] if they don't offer that in those informal settings.

One member suggested that the 'Who to Call' list should be updated more frequently. She also stated that the list could include contact information for persons with skill sets that go beyond maintenance and serving as director.

Another reason that members' skills may not be used is because of unresolved disagreements on whether members should be paid for hours spent assisting the Co-op with particular forms of skilled labour. One member pointed out that all members should be treated equally and not benefit financially from membership in the community.

> We don't pay members for work, so that has been a bone of contention from time to time…because part of our mandate is that members do not profit monetarily from the co-op ahead of other members. The idea is that everybody is supposed to share.

In other interviews, however, participants argued that members who serve the Co-op beyond what would be considered an 'average' level of participation (four or so hours a month) should be paid for their time and effort as any other contractor with similar skills would be paid.

> I offered my services any number of times on electrical issues. But I said "Look, if this is going to take my Saturday, my entire Saturday, I'm not giving my Saturday up, when I've already put in ten times the amount of hours this month… I'll charge a third of the going rate." No. They'd rather pay 120 bucks an hour than pay me 35 bucks an hour…. So, is that using your resources?...If you make yourself available to save the co-op money to do quality work in a place that you live, so it's in your best interests to do it well, you should be compensated. Once you've gone about your four hours, your five hours [a month], whatever, why shouldn't you be paid?

> I think that, generally, there's been a, more of a tendency to hire outside of the community, which I found really strange when I moved here…I've seen a couple of electricians on the Maintenance Committee that have volunteered their skills and then they've done more than their volunteer work for the month along with all the meetings and things they attend, and then the project comes up and you know, "Can we hire so and so for this?" And there's major resistance for this and I don't understand where it comes from. Obviously there's legal issues with regard to hiring board members for example, but we've been through all that… I don't know what it is that prevents them from using those skills… I'm really frustrated by that…And this really shocked me, being in a co-op. I mean, I thought that's the whole thing is we take all our skills and we have a pool of skills that we can draw from… a lot of people see that as a conflict of interest. I mean, they don't want to use an electrician from the co-op, or a plumber from the co-op, who has all the skills and has the legal knowledge to be able to do the work without getting in trouble, kind of thing. I think the issue was a lot of people don't want to pay members to do it and, yah, certainly a lot of the people with those special skills do a lot of volunteer work and I don't think it's fair to expect someone like an electrician to do work for free, though they do up to a certain point, right?

These members feel that there are no compelling reasons not to hire a knowledgeable and skilled worker from inside the community. However, some people fear that other members will want to be paid for every act of participation. There is a need to set standards and policies within every community. However, if both the community and the member benefit from such participation (paid work for the member and a reduced price for the Co-op as well as reinforcing skill development), it might be useful if the Co-op is able to adjust the policies which govern how, and under what conditions, skilled members can be used as volunteer or paid workers. This type of engagement has the potential to reinforce a healthy interdependence between the member and the co-operative.

During an interview, one member mentioned how living in a housing co-operative is an opportunity to better oneself. Lower housing costs and subsidized housing allows members to enrol in formal educational programs. Furthermore, involvement in the operation and governance of the co-operative also promotes self-development. Another interviewee commented on this: "I think that one of the benefits of the co-op is that it encourages people to kind of develop their skills in their daily life, not necessarily professionally."

4.4.4.2 Autonomy

Autonomy describes if and how the co-operative as a whole, as well as individual members, are able to express their independence alongside both internal and external constraints. Internal constraints are those created by the organization itself. These are the policies and by-laws the co-op can control or change. External constraints are those placed on the housing co-operative by other sector organizations. Ideally, these constraints do not impede learning opportunities, the ability to use members' diverse skills and knowledge, or the ability of the housing co-operative to pursue sustainability measures that are deemed appropriate by the community itself.

The Co-op has put in place numerous internal constraints on the actions of members and officeholders. The relevant measures include policies, procedures, rules of order, and by-laws. These are documented in the Member Handbook and assist in keeping Co-op life and operations predictable and subject to 'codes of conduct' that have been collectively designed and institutionalized. Members refer to policies in times of conflict. As mentioned above in the discussion of enabling structures, these policies and by-laws are reviewed regularly and changed as needed. Another source of internal constraint, albeit informal in nature, is from the membership and the culture of the Co-op. Members may be influenced by the informal social norms and expectations of fellow members, and act accordingly.

External constraints placed upon the Co-op include those imposed by various housing and housing co-operative sector organizations. For the Co-op, these sector organizations include the municipality in which they are located, and the federal government. With regards to municipal constraints, the Co-op leases land from the city. The members were granted a 60-year lease when the Co-op first formed. This lease will conclude by approximately 2035 and the Co-op members are uncertain whether or not the city will sell them the land at this point. The Co-op is located in a desirable location and the land is increasing in value every year. The Co-op has formed a Land Trust with other housing co-operatives in the city in an attempt to secure their land base and their communities into the distant future.

The constraints put upon the Co-op from the federal government can potentially be detrimental with regards to working towards environmental and other forms of

community/organizational sustainability; however, the Co-op has found ways around some of these constraints. The CMHC granted the Co-op a 50-year mortgage and manages the allocation of subsidies. The CMHC requires the Co-op to abide by an Operating Agreement and many financial stipulations. As mentioned in Chapter 3, housing co-operatives are grouped with social housing portfolios and treated as low-cost housing projects even though they are different from typical social housing projects. One member reiterated how the Co-op is treated much like other low-cost social housing and not as an autonomous entity:

> [The] CMHC never understood housing co-ops. We were just another housing project and they tend to look at us as low-cost housing…so they've never quite totally wrapped their minds around us, which is unfortunate.

The prerogative of the CMHC was and is to retain control over the Co-op's financial decisions. A co-operative housing organization informed the Co-op of this at the Co-op's inception.

> The people who worked with [co-operative housing organization] gave the people here a message that it is your home. "You must act responsibility. Don't trust [the] CMHC necessarily to always act in your best interests because they're not looking at it necessarily as your home. They're looking at it as social housing, affordable housing…you have contractual obligations but having said that, they're always going to leaning towards the conservative, by-the-book…" So within the culture of the community right at the outset there was this viewpoint that you can be, as long as we're responsible and we don't break the rules legally, too much, as long as we can demonstrate that we're acting responsibly, we should simply do what's right.

The Co-op was forewarned that the CMHC would not recognize the Co-op as an autonomous organization with decision-making power. Members were told that the CMHC would regard the Co-op as any other social housing project where members have little to no say over financial matters in their community.

As with other housing co-operatives under its control, the CMHC tried to restrict the way that the Co-op saved and invested its funds. The government agency does not, as one member points out, adopt a long-term strategy to financial planning.

> We're only allowed to spend money on certain things and we're not allowed to go over the average spending on certain items…As a co-op facilitating organization, those organizations should be looking not at a one- or two-year term, which they tend to do…they should be looking at 20 and 30 years cause that's how long we're going to be here, minimum. All of those structures were built in the 70s – those policies and things – and it's hard to change them. I understand, but they do create constraints for sure.

As this member pointed out, the CMHC financial policies place constraints on long-term planning and investment strategies that the Co-op might logically want to implement. Many sustainability initiatives and technologies are more costly than less sustainable ones (i.e. energy-efficient fridges, solar water heaters, energy-efficient windows). When the CMHC restricts the amount of money the Co-op is allowed to spend on such items, it restricts the Co-op from investing in resource-efficient initiatives. Other financial constraints imposed on the Co-op include seemingly trivial rules about how money is to be categorized. "[The] CMHC tends to not appreciate it when we spend money that they can't fit into their nice little categories. And they have very few categories so it's really hard to fit stuff into some of their categories."

When members were asked whether or not they received support from the CMHC with regard to sustainability initiatives, participants answered that the CMHC does not provide financial, nor any other assistance, to help defray the upfront costs of sustainability initiatives. However, although the CMHC may not provide the Co-op with financial assistance with regards to such initiatives, the corporation's website has general information on how citizens can upgrade their homes to make them more energy-efficient. Ironically, because of the stringent financial policies set by the CMHC, the Co-op would be less likely to be able to afford such initiatives.

The CMHC prescribes and restricts the ways in which the Co-op allocates its funds. However, members were prepared to work around this constraint as the following quotation illustrates:

> Well yah, previously [the] CMHC were a constraint although not that much of a constraint because obviously we would simply do things sometimes and tell them after the fact. …The Replacement Reserve is a good example. We funded the reserve and then argued with [the] CMHC that we were under funding it according to our original program but we didn't wait for their approval. We just funded it.

One member pointed out the importance of local knowledge when creating financial plans. "We know, because we're dealing with it on a day-to-day basis, what the needs are." Co-op members know what the community's needs are and, in the view of some study participants, any surplus funds belong to the members: "The surplus exists because of people's participation…even the people who are on subsidy are participating, so they contributed to the surplus through their time, so really, it's their money." Member contributions save the organization money which can be directed towards future expenditures and investments. The particular surplus referred to here was used to pay for the land on which the Seniors Complex will be built. The Co-op did not abide completely by the CMHC restrictions and is now a very successful, nearly autonomous organization (albeit receiving federal financial assistance for lower income members) that can adjust and adapt to economic, social, and physical changes internal to the community and in its external (operating) environment.

The Agency for Co-operative Housing is another important sector organization with which the Co-op interacts. The Agency was established in 2006 and is slowly taking over the duties of the CMHC with respect to some housing co-operatives in certain provinces. The Co-op is amongst these. Some its members were of the opinion that, under the new arrangement, communications and regulations will be more co-operatively-oriented and specific to housing co-operatives. This is because the people employed within the Agency for Co-operative Housing understand and are familiar with the subsector.

An Agency for Co-operative Housing staff member who was interviewed argued that housing co-operatives will be more able to invest in the financial and built capitals of their community under the Agency's direction.

> I think as long as the co-op demonstrates that what it's going to do will enhance the viability, physically or community-wise, of the organization, I would suspect that—especially with the Agency now because it's mostly co-op viewpoints as opposed to [the] CMHC which was more looking at it from the social housing perspective—I suspect that it won't be that much of an issue.

This interviewee believed that the Agency would not be as restrictive as the CMHC has been with respect to the Co-op and other housing co-operatives. However, even though the Agency has taken over regulatory responsibilities for these housing co-operatives, it

will still be difficult for these co-ops to access loans for sustainability-oriented developments. Lending agencies typically do not wish to loan the larger amounts necessary for sustainability initiatives because it involves more risk-taking on behalf of the lending agency. However, as a staff member of the Agency pointed out, this attitude must be modified in order for co-operative housing projects to have a sustainable and secure future.

> It's difficult to negotiate a loan which is going to recognize sustainability…when people don't want to give that much money up front. I think that the whole concept of that much money up front is going to have to disappear.

Lending agencies have to understand that adopting sustainability initiatives and technologies generally saves money in the long run. Therefore such agencies should be seeking ways to fund the loans necessary for these expenditures.

One final and major constraint on housing cooperatives in general relates to the agreements between the federal government and the housing co-ops. These agreements are currently slated to end between the years 2015 and 2025. This means that housing co-operatives will become independent from the federal government. They will make their own decisions with regard to financial policies but they will also lose all financial support, including housing subsidies for the lower income members, and they will have no safety net. The CHF Canada, the federation of Canadian housing co-operatives, is working diligently to assist co-ops to become more economically sustainable before their operating agreements end. As mentioned previously, they have put in place various initiatives to educate member housing co-operatives on planning for the future.

4.5 Conclusion

In this chapter I have analyzed and presented data in the form of learning organization criteria for a housing co-operative. In this closing section I revisit and draw out a number of findings and conclusions that flow from my systematic investigation and exploration. First, I point out the importance of having collectively agreed goals and visions. Second, the co-operative must be flexible in order to learn from, and for, change. Third, it is in the best interest of the membership to use the resources available to them from affiliated housing co-operative sector organizations, as well as from the members

themselves. Finally, this research reveals that housing co-operatives must be prepared to pursue greater autonomy and independence in order to pursue innovative sustainability goals that go beyond the vision of government funding agencies.

The importance of creating collectively-agreed upon goals and visions cannot be over-emphasized. All of the members of this Co-op did not come together to create the goals of the community. Instead, founding members rely on the undocumented goals that emerged in the earlier years of the Co-op. The lack of collectively agreed upon goals and documentation means that members do not have access to information on the longer-term plans that have been created; there is a failure in transmission. This phenomenon has had an affect on numerous aspects of Co-op life. I found that this transmission failure contributed to the creation of divisions, animosity, and tension within the membership and has had an effect on members' willingness to participate. This hinders the Co-op's potential to move forward as a group. Further, resistance can potentially stall necessary change. Ideally, housing co-operatives are collectively owned *and* managed and therefore, in order to move forward and adapt to changes for community sustainability, a co-op must create plans as a group. The process of creating collective goals and balancing diverse interests reinforces and is reinforced by strong, positively oriented, social capital. Further, it reinforces and helps facilitate the culture and identity of the community.

Housing co-operatives must be flexible in order to adapt to change. The Co-op's board, committees, policies and leadership positions are flexible. This allows the community to change their governance and operative structures in response to their environment. However, as mentioned previously, a lack of longer-term collectively made goals may be one factor that leads to resistance and this may have a negative impact on the ability of the Co-op to adapt in response to changes in its operating environment. Members resist and become defiant with regard to some ideas because they feel their opinions and knowledge are not valued. In turn, group decision-making may become more tedious, strenuous, and take longer because the resistant members do not trust the opinions and decisions of other members. This may result in dysfunction within the co-operative, as members fail to participate adequately and, instead opt for passivity. As noted previously, non-participation can be tolerated to some degree; however, when a

large number of members no longer participate, this can jeopardize the stability of the community itself. Members must plan and work together if they wish to promote a positive environment that enables the co-op to adapt to change.

It is generally preferable if co-op members are able to rely on, and to fully utilize, resources available to them within a co-op and through housing co-operative organizations. In regard to human capital available within the Co-op, diversity of membership potentially provides access to different skills and knowledge that can be used to the advantage of the community. With respect to skilled labour, setting standards and policies on how some of these skills can be used is important. If a member of the Co-op can provide a service that would normally be contracted out to a non-member, it is likely in the co-op's best interest to create and adapt consistent policies in order to utilize this potential service. The community can benefit from a reduced rate and commitment to quality workmanship, and the member benefits from paid work and reinforced skill development. Also, the organization is more likely to save economic capital because they need not always rely on services provided from external sources.

Interaction among members, whether formal or informal, provides potential learning opportunities and other resources. Exchange between members is beneficial as they can rely on other members within the community for small services, information and education, or, just a helping hand. Such exchanges are valuable because they can build self-worth for individuals, generate trusting relationships among members, and allow for the creation of autonomy for the co-op as a whole. As members learn to trust each other and reinforce skill development with the progress and completion of tasks, both individuals and the community build competences. This helps to create a stronger community with a healthy identity.

The Co-op has benefited from resources provided by other housing co-operative organizations: information on financial planning, sustainability initiatives, policy development, maintenance, and governance, as well as discounted rates on various products and materials. External sources of information and assistance are necessary for any organization to maintain and improve its vitality, as all essential resources cannot be found internally. These co-operative housing organizations all contribute to the ability of individual housing co-operatives to learn and advance sustainability.

Finally, it is important that housing co-operatives work towards attaining a significant level of autonomy with respect to externally imposed constraints that can impede the co-operative from functioning as a learning organization and pursuing what is in the best interest of the members. Housing co-operatives have various levels and forms of natural, political, human, cultural, social, financial, and built capital. What works for one co-operative may not work for another. However, a housing co-operative is more likely than a geographically and socially distant funding agency to be able to accurately apprehend and reflect the needs of the community. The members of the Co-op persisted in following what they believed would be the best financial and related strategies for their community, and achieved a significant measure of independence and security in so doing. Other things being equal, a more autonomous organization is more sustainable than one that is dependent on external financial and other kinds of support.

This should not be taken as an unqualified or naive endorsement of local control. There may also be times when a local (housing co-op) organization is unwilling or unable to act on the genuine collective interests of its membership. This may be due to ossification in leadership, a narrowing of vision, or capture by a minority that is faithful only to particularistic interests. Autonomy and independence are important for housing co-operatives but work best when there are good links with strong housing sector organizations that are willing to partner in effective and mutually advantageous ways. Sector organizations can provide various kinds of assistance, advice, and feedback. Co-operation among co-operatives and (relative) autonomy (from state organizations) are both long-held co-op sector principles for good reason, and both have theoretical and practical links to social learning for community sustainability.

5.0 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Overview

In Chapter 4, I examined how a housing co-operative can be a learning organization. I introduced four key dimensions of a learning organization that apply to this housing co-operative—formal process and procedures; informal processes and participation; commitment to learning and knowledge development; and functional diversity and autonomy—and formed a unique set of criteria specific to this type of organization. The concept of the learning organization is typically employed in connection with for-profit organizations. Housing co-operatives are distinct from typical for-profit organizations as assets are collectively-owned and operated for the purpose of providing housing to the members—not with the goal of generating any sort of financial surplus or profit. Also, housing co-operatives are egalitarian (non-hierarchical) by design. All members have equal democratic rights. Members live, work, *and* make decisions, in regards to the operation of the organization, together.

Based on a close reading of relevant literature and on a careful analysis of my field data, I have concluded that the housing co-operative under study qualifies as a learning organization. It would fall somewhere between the ideal types "improving" and "integrating" (Reid and Hickman 2002) (see Table 1: Types of Learning Organizations). This chapter expands on the concept of a housing co-operative as a learning organization and addresses implications that the learning organization concept may have with respect to community sustainability. In other words, this chapter is dedicated to a discussion of how housing co-operatives may function as learning organizations for community sustainability.

I believe it is important to argue that housing co-operatives can be considered a hybrid form of an organization and a community; they have strong and interacting characteristics of both. Housing co-operatives are organizations in the sense that they have formally established policies, procedures and practices. They are communities insofar as having residential characteristics; informal relationships and connections develop and are maintained as a result of propinquity and shared interests. Under certain conditions, the combination of these formal and informal characteristics creates a fertile

environment for the membership to engage in learning for community sustainability. Ideally, members are committed to the success of the housing organization and each other's well being.

In reference to the generalizability of these findings to the co-operative movement more broadly, the hybrid 'organization-community' character of housing co-operatives makes them somewhat unique as sites for social learning; in fact, the housing co-op, as an organization, could be considered an ideal prototype for organizational learning because of this hybrid of characteristics. On the other hand, more than most other kinds of organizations, co-ops of all types tend to combine aspects of both community and organization. For this reason, I would argue that findings presented here with respect to organizational learning in housing co-ops will have ready applicability to many other kinds of (consumer and producer) co-operatives.

In Chapters 1 and 2, I suggested that community sustainability could usefully be defined as a process that occurs when a group of people who are committed to long-term individual and group well-being, continually learns and adjusts its approach to community life in order to meet present needs while simultaneously planning for the future. The holistic approach adopted by the community explicitly or implicitly takes into consideration the stocks and flow of all community assets, including natural, social, human, cultural, built, financial, and political capitals. I believe that the Co-op, as an organization at the core of a residential community, has adopted such a process and is working towards community sustainability. There will always be areas in which this co-operative organization, like any other organization, could improve. Overall, however, the Co-op has been successful.

Although this study was by no means a comprehensive examination of the community's use of every form of available capital, I have alluded to some of the ways in which the community has used the various assets under its control. The community's natural capital is utilized wisely through the design and placement of buildings, aesthetically pleasing xeroscaping, and the production and use of rich soil to grow vegetables and fruit for household consumption. The Co-op was also formulating plans to use some of its land to create housing stock more appropriate for some of its older members. The Co-op's social capital is utilized and strengthened through various planned

meetings and social activities, as well as through informal relationships between members. Vertical and horizontal links with organizations and individuals outside the co-op are also fostered and pursued. As with any community, there are some divisions, for example between "founding" and "non-founding" members.

Available stocks of human capital (human capacity) are utilized in many effective ways. However, the human capacities of the residents are not necessarily used to their full potential. Some policy changes could allow the Co-op more consistent access to the skills and abilities of all of its members. The Co-op supports member education, training opportunities, and leadership training in particular. The cultural capital of the Co-op, or how members 'know the world' and behave within it (Emery and Flora 2006), is present in the artistic expressions of the community members (e.g. sculptures in various community areas as well as members' yards), regular social events, common routines, and the patterns of decision-making of the community. Cultural capital is also present in the form of the diverse understandings and knowledge networks that members from various backgrounds can draw on. Some members have suggested that the culture of the Co-op is preserved and expressed as an oral tradition. The Co-op positively uses and strengthens its cultural capital in many ways.

The Co-op uses its built capital to its advantage in that the units provide sensible-sized homes for members. Also, within these units, members meet for household and community activities. The Co-op's buildings are continuously being upgraded to include more energy efficient technologies. The financial capital of the Co-op is strong and utilized to the community's advantage. Founding members created a strong financial plan and the community can now invest in sustainable technologies and expand (e.g. to build a Seniors Complex). Finally, the Co-op's political capital is comprised of flexible but accountable social structures, access to power (internally and externally), and connections to other outside resources. However, as some members argued, decision-making processes could be improved in order to be more inclusive of all members' opinions, as well as in terms of policy adherence.

Every aspect of community capital is important in some way. While the types and levels of each capital vary in each community, the holistic use of these capitals is important to attain community sustainability. However, learning for sustainability is a

process. A community's social and political capitals are the basis on which a learning process is built. Members must be able to speak to each other and trust what is being said by others. It is important that they can be heard by others and be respected for the decisions that they make. Every member has particular skills and abilities that they can bring to the community. And every member can learn. It is the means by which they do so that is important for a sustainable learning environment.

Certain learning organization criteria are more important for a housing co-operative that is working towards community sustainability. In order to reinforce the community's social and political capitals, a community can focus on a number of key learning organization criteria. First, the process of adopting long- and short-term plans is a community-building exercise and, if done in a collaborative way, can support social capital; it aids members in getting to know each other, learning to trust each other, and forming individual and community identities. Second, various modalities of social exchange serve to build and strengthen member relations; social exchange also serves to support a healthy balance of member participation. Third, flexible but reliable enabling social structures allow the members to adapt to necessary changes in the co-operative; the social structures evolve as the organization learns. Fourth, a strong system of communication and reporting is important; in this case, it promotes dialogue between members and provides information on informal and formal communal events and issues. It promotes transparency as well as accountability between the board of directors, committees and the general membership. The final criterion that I believe is important to support sustainable political and social capitals is adopting a learning approach to strategic action. Community endeavours are viewed as learning opportunities and members approach initiatives, policy formation, and each other with open minds. Members take time to revisit goals and initiatives and discuss outcomes of such goals and initiatives.

The thesis confirms much of the social learning literature presented in Chapter 2. In particular, it supports the importance of adopting a process-oriented approach for 'successful' social learning for sustainability that includes reflection, systems orientation, integration, negotiation, and participation (Dyball, Brown and Keen 2007). The integration and operationalization of these 'strands' is key to promoting active social

learning that will lead to behaviour changes (Glasser 2007). Furthermore, this approach to decision-making supports community capacity building as well as trust-building among members.

Jamison (2001) has defined cognitive praxis as the process by which social movements create new knowledge, new organizational forms, and new principles. Social movements are creative engines that influence shifts in consciousness (Hassanein and Kloppenburg 1995). The Co-op, as one site/instance of a broader co-operative housing movement, has been a producer of innovative knowledge claims, and has adopted and acted on many of these claims that relate to community sustainability. The Co-op, as a community, has challenged the status quo to some degree. Upon the inception of the organization, the membership planned the physical community setting in a way that reinforces social contact, unlike many conventional neighbourhoods. Members of the Co-op have critiqued some of the more mainstream practices of community structure and community life. They have created and expressed visions of alternatives, and modeled these alternatives.

During the field interviews, some members suggested that the Co-op was no longer as cutting-edge as it once was; the ideas that were initially adopted by the Co-op have become commonplace or, at least, more widely accepted. This argument relates somewhat to Jamison's (2001) theory that the more successful a movement is, the less likely it will be a permanent fixture. Although some of the cutting-edge ideas and practices adopted by the co-operative have become societal norms, and the Co-op as a movement has been successful, I do not believe that the Co-op is at risk of disintegration as a community and organization. In fact, I believe that the Co-op is likely to persist as both a community and organization for some time. The Co-op continues to introduce and adopt new, innovative ideas into the community as the members continue to promote their own vision of social and environmental responsibility. For example, the membership's pursuit of the Land Trust in order to secure land for co-operative housing into the future is not a common initiative that a housing co-op would undertake. Also, the development of the Seniors Complex to allow members to "age in place" has not been a common development for this type of organization. Indeed, the Co-op, as an emergent

ecological culture has integrated and synthesized, and will likely continue integrating, dominant and residual societal norms (Jamison 2001).

This research also supports Wenger's (2000) concept of communities of practice as basic building blocks for social learning. It is within our communities that we incorporate new ideas, access and generate knowledge, build competences, and form individual and group identities. Learning is both a cognitive and a social activity (Nicolini, Gherardi, and Yanow 2003; and Wenger 2000). Individual Co-op members bridge boundaries and bring new information to the general membership by means of communication networks and social exchange. Co-op members learn from each other and build competences. If given the right conditions, community members can develop and reinforce skills and knowledge. Further, the community as a whole can function as an autonomous organization in which decisions regarding individual and community wellbeing are made collaboratively without necessarily complying with strict external sector organization constraints. Every community's members have different capacities, skills, sources of knowledge, and capitals and the membership needs to organize these resources in order to achieve their needs and goals. There is not only one way to achieve community sustainability; there is no recipe for sustainability (Tilbury 2007); and therefore, a uniform, top-down approach to community development is not suitable.

Jaffe and Quark (2005) argue that social cleavage is inherent in community organizations. The same holds true for the Co-op. Different groups within the Co-op have defined their similarities in opposition to others. As presented in Chapter 4, there are instances where some members have access to, and use, power and resources that others cannot access nor use. Wildemeersch (2007) argues that social learning processes are never value-neutral and usually prompt processes of power inside and outside the community. This is an unfortunate reality, but some of the ill-effects of these power imbalances can be corrected if members are open to discuss it.

In the remainder of this chapter, I discuss advantages of housing co-operatives as learning organizations with respect to community sustainability. Second, I present some of the disadvantages that housing co-operatives may encounter when working towards and learning community sustainability. I also discuss some of the ways this study has contributed to existing knowledge, point out the limitations of this study, and discuss

possibilities for future research. I conclude with some final thoughts on the role of housing co-operatives as learning organizations for community sustainability.

5.2 Implications for Community Sustainability

5.2.1 Advantages for Community Sustainability

Housing co-operatives have many advantages with respect to community sustainability. In this section I concentrate on those that are most relevant to this study. I discuss how housing co-operatives are built to conserve resources and maximize green space. Second, I present evidence that these organizations have the potential to build strong social capital because of the degree of social proximity and interaction that members experience with each other. I also argue that this can facilitate various forms of learning. Third, I review the advantage that housing co-operatives have with respect to collective buying power and investment in eco-oriented products and initiatives. Finally, I discuss how housing co-operatives promote self-sufficiency and autonomy for individual members and the organization as a whole.

Co-operative housing complexes are often designed to increase density, conserve land, and maximize green space. Individual units are typically attached and there are multiple units in each building. These blocks of units tend to be built "up," which further conserves space. The area of each unit is not excessive; rather, they are a modest size that reinforces a simple lifestyle. However, although the main priority in building these complexes may have been economic, as well as to promote optimal land use, the way they have been constructed reinforces sustainable infrastructure. Shared walls and multi-story buildings reduce energy requirements for heating (Friedman 2006), and also conserve building materials. Further, many housing co-operatives are equipped with a community center for members to share facilities such as laundry and meeting rooms, as well as recreational space. Often, members share equipment and yard tools through communal access to storage sheds.

Housing co-operatives have the potential to build strong social capital and this capital can be utilized in a positive way for, and by, all members. The degree of proximity of units, shared space, shared resources, and community events reinforce social contact. As a learning organization, one of the major differences between a housing co-op

and a typical for-profit business is that in a co-op, everyone works together to manage and maintain the community *and* members live close together in a shared housing complex. Members often get to know each other as neighbours and friends, and, when disagreements occur, they have a vested interest in working through them. In theory and usually in practice, members have common and shared goals, and will work together to achieve them. Four quotes from four members of the Co-op elaborate on this theme:

> I think what makes it easier [about living in a housing co-operative and learning about sustainability] is that we're all working as a team and that you have the support to do it. What you feel is the right thing to do. And that we're all kind of in it together, so when one person, you know, comes up with a brilliant idea then we're all more apt to follow suit because we're all kind of, we have common, you know, common purposes and common goals.

> One of the things that makes it easier is that you're surrounded by people that have varying levels of commitment to sustainability, environmental and otherwise, so it's easy to get inspired by them and feel encouraged to do similar things whereas if you lived in a community, you know, larger community that didn't have those values it'd be easier to get sucked into the part of you that wants the newest whatever and is not committed to sustainability and follows some other values.

> By their very structure co-ops force people to…look beyond your own immediate personal life…by virtue of the structure and the way the governance is set up, [people are] forced to expand their awareness to a point where they realize that their survival depends on the actions of their neighbor. …So I think co-ops, by their very structure, widen people's awareness horizons.

> I'd say the whole concept of working together, it's a real plus for that. And you've got more brains working on it, more energy, all of that. Group activities are good and it gets people energized.

Common goals and regular contact with other members create learning opportunities; members learn by example (through modeling) and by simply talking to each other. Collaborating through both formal and informal community channels creates awareness of sustainability goals and keeps people engaged.

> There's an ongoing awareness that occurs through the internal communication channels that we have, be they verbal communication at General Meetings, the newsletter that goes out, the minutes that go out, members are continuously exposed to the idea of 'it's a good thing to recycle' or 'it's a good thing to conserve water'...[or] 'it's a good thing to look to the future in terms of how we set aside money for future expenditures'.

> [Living in a housing co-operative] certainly makes it easier to be aware [of issues related to sustainability] because there's built-in mechanisms to deliver information that you don't have in a regular community. There's meetings, there's committees, there's social events, there's ways to get the information out.

Working towards community sustainability requires a continual flow of information and exchange of knowledge. Communication networks are vital. Housing co-operatives are frequently able to foster this type of formal and informal exchange between members. Living in a housing co-op can provide the social context for the development and reinforcement of new sensibilities and habits with respect to consumption, recycling, sharing and other practices that reduce individual, as well as organizational, ecological footprints.

Housing co-operatives also have the advantage of collective buying power and access to bulk-buying programs. Ecologically oriented building and retrofitting, and the acquisition of high-efficiency equipment and appliances sometimes involves investment in more costly technologies, when compared with the investment required for 'standard' building, technologies and supplies. Energy-efficient appliances are usually more expensive and individual home-owners typically must take on significant debt to acquire them. Housing co-operatives, however, can pool their economic capital to invest in ecologically oriented development and high-efficiency items. Members who may not have been able to afford certain investments on their own can gain access to eco-friendly technologies through the application of collective buying power.

One member who is a single mother explained that she would not have been able to afford her high-efficiency furnace, her energy-efficient water heater, nor her resource-efficient front-loading washing machine if she was living elsewhere.

> And because we're also doing bulk buys for these washers, that makes it so easy for people to join a project like that and be part of a tangible, sustainable measure, right? Instead of if it was one homeowner somewhere. Oh, and our high-efficiency furnaces. That's another one. I have an energy efficient water heater! If I was a single mom homeowner or renter, I doubt I would have any of those appliances. Any of those. It'd be out of my means. My financial means.

This member was grateful of the opportunity to live in a more sustainable way through her membership in a co-op that effectively utilizes its pooled economic capital and collective buying power.

Ecologically oriented development can be more expensive initially and, as such, may be possible only for individuals or corporations with substantial economic capital to invest. Ecologically advanced building techniques often require more initial investment than conventional housing construction and therefore maybe out of reach for low- or even middle-income households. Careful planning and decision-making with respect to the allocation of reserve funds, bulk buying programs through housing co-op sector organizations, and innovative repayment programs, can make sustainable technologies and sustainability initiatives a reality for co-op members. Also, housing co-operatives can effectively access and utilize targeted and other sources of government funding. Numerous incentives are available for Canadian households, including housing co-operatives, to access financial aid and loans to retrofit their buildings and accelerate clean energy use (Natural Resources Canada 2009; Environment Canada 2007; and CHF Canada 2007). The CMHC also offers various housing award programs and seed programs for new housing developments and energy-saving renovations (CMHC 2010). Sustainable infrastructure and technologies may require more up-front costs but the efficiencies associated with these investments contribute to long-term savings. The money saved from lowered energy costs and water use can be applied towards repayment of loans or saved for future expenditures.

Housing co-operatives have advantages over other housing communities as learning organizations for sustainability due to their enhanced ability to access and share relevant knowledge but also with respect to their ability to actually implement more sustainable technologies and practices. Housing co-ops have more scope for experimentation and innovation than typical low-income social housing communities due to their (potentially) greater autonomy and independence. In theory and, to a substantial degree in practice, housing co-operatives are controlled by their members; the membership decides on their own development objectives rather than having goals identified for them by external stakeholders or agencies.

This can be contrasted to communities or housing organizations that rely heavily on funding agencies or other regulating organizations to determine priorities and practices become dependent on these external stakeholders. Complete dependence upon an outside party limits a community's opportunities to learn and grow as an organization;

it may become stagnant. It also limits and constrains the ability of individual members to learn and grow. Members may have fewer opportunities to learn skills that can result from living and working as a community: group-decision making and consensus skills, leadership skills, budgeting, relationship building and the formation of trusting relationships, as well as other skills and knowledge that result from the discussion and follow-through of both individual and collective tasks. Further, top-down decision-making dis-empowers members because they do not feel that their concerns or opinions are important and/or considered, and this can contribute to member disengagement.

Members of a community that have the capacity to identify and prioritize their needs can make rational choices based on these needs. In addressing real needs and working out real solutions, members learn and grow as a community. While co-operatives can learn from sector organizations and develop healthy relationships with them, they must ensure that these relationships are not overly dependent. Learning and capacity development resulting from constructive and egalitarian interaction may allow housing co-operatives to become more self-sufficient. Members of housing co-operatives depend on information and education from external support systems but they can also depend on each other. Ideally, members make important decisions relating to their collective interests and projects as a group. These decision-making processes are important opportunities for members to grow and change as individuals and as a group. As members build relationships with each other, they may recognize and depend on these relationships as means of social support. They may also learn skills and information they may not have had the opportunity to acquire without these relationships. Member relationships can build individual and community competence, create and strengthen community identity, and build and reinforce community capital.

5.2.2 Disadvantages for Community Sustainability

Housing co-operatives enjoy significant advantages when it comes to working towards community sustainability but they may also face certain disadvantages and challenges in this respect. Below, I discuss issues related to the participation of members. I also examine how decision-making and the need to balance diverse interests in these types of organizations requires more time and patience on part of individual members,

and can sometimes be quite taxing and difficult. Although sometimes time-consuming, group decision making may contribute to more careful examination of options and implications of decisions, and result in better buy-in on part of the membership. It may also contribute positively to decision implementations. The final issue I discuss is how it is not always easy to work together and to live in shared spaces. Disagreements will inevitably always arise in housing co-operatives.

Housing co-operatives almost always have, and likely always will have, issues related to uneven member participation. Housing co-operatives are built on the premise that every member who is able will contribute to the operation and governance of the co-operative in some way. However, although there are norms and expectations with respect to member participation, participation is voluntary and members do not always comply with expectations. For some members, the co-operative is a social venture; something that they are proud of and work hard to keep functioning well. For others, it is simply a place to live and something to which they do not feel any particular need to contribute.

Societal and individual social factors may affect how individual housing co-op members are able to contribute and how much time they are able to commit. Members may be limited by psychological or physical factors. Other members may be restricted with regard to the amount of time available to contribute because of competing obligations related to their families, education or employment. Still others may not wish to invest their time and skills in the community because of lack of concern for the community itself, lack of education on how housing co-operatives operate, or because they may be relatively transient and feel that it would not be worth their time to invest in a community that they will soon be leaving. Inactive members are less likely to connect with the community's culture and so their passivity or opting out may be reinforced by the fact that the co-op and co-op membership do not become part of their identity.

Different housing co-operatives have different ways of addressing uneven member participation. Some members simply cannot participate at certain times due to unexpected obligations or difficulties in their lives, and this is usually accepted; the member will participate again when they can. Like many other kinds of organizations that rely on volunteer participation, housing co-operatives often experience cycles of participation. For example, certain members may get heavily involved in particular

projects and then refrain from participating for various reasons, at which point another member (or other members) will step forward to 'replace' them. For those members who are consistent non-participators, a housing co-operative's approaches may range from more coercive methods such as fines and the development of specific policies specifying expectations and sanctions for non-participation, to methods of encouragement, such as rewards and incentives. The Co-op has a "Member in Good Standing" policy as well as a "Member not in Good Standing" policy, which helps members to evaluate and 'categorize' other members who may not be participating as the Membership Committee believes they should and could. The participation of these members is usually monitored, and, in extreme cases, perpetual non-participation may lead to eviction. Housing co-operatives can experiment with innovative methods for attaining member participation. More forceful methods, however, are in tension with the principle that participation will be largely voluntary, and may create resentment among nonconforming members, which, in turn, may cause them to participate even less. This merely exacerbates the problem. Non-participation puts pressure on other members to take up the slack and it may also lead to burnout or bitterness among those who are doing more. As well, non-participation has negative implications for the development of working partnerships that can lead to social learning.

If there is a serous commitment to collaborative decision-making, it will likely take more time as it will require the balancing of diverse interests of a diverse membership. Members will have varied opinions with respect to the subject at hand and will desire to be heard. At meetings, conversations (and arguments) on one or a few topics may take up the entire time allocated for the meeting and other business items will be tabled until a later date. It can sometimes become tedious and exasperating to listen to every opinion, especially if members do not come to the meeting well prepared and well informed on the issues under discussion. Discussion can become frustrating and take more time than expected.

The decision-making process in housing co-ops may also be slowed because it is a bureaucratic process. For example, a decision made at the Maintenance Committee level will sometimes have to go to the Finance Committee for approval before it goes to the General Membership for approval. It is only after this lengthy process has been

completed—and completed successfully—that the Maintenance Committee (and others that are involved) can finally move forward with what was originally proposed. As committees are coordinated by volunteer members, and committee members themselves decide when meetings are to be held, a significant amount of time can lapse between initial conversations and final approval of proposed initiatives. As pointed out by some of the interviewees, such unhelpful delays may be largely unavoidable in a housing co-operative (though they are not necessarily fatal):

> I guess the only downside is that you have to work as a group and sometimes that's slower than some people would like. But that's inevitable. Most people who work in housing co-ops get used to that. The process is slower but you get it done.

> Well, it's just that they have to get a lot of people to come on board or they have to follow through the bureaucratic process, which at times can be very onerous.

These members describe how the process can be time-consuming and slow, but "you get it done." However, there may be external deadlines for various projects or initiatives that are out of the control of the members. For example, there may be a funding grant provided by an outside agency that the co-operative may miss out on because it took too long for the members to decide on a course of action.

Nevertheless, as the members invest time and energy in their desired collaborative and democratic model of decision-making, learning takes place and group decision making may get faster and less stressful. Members become familiar with the decision making method used, as well as each others' general philosophies and concerns, and the process can become easier and more straightforward. Investing time and energy in a socially sustainable method of decision-making contributes to a sustainable political process and is a key component of any effective learning organization.

Group decisions may also be more systematic and deliberate in a positive sense: the time spent on decision-making may lead to better decisions. Evidence from other research projects focusing on co-operative governance suggests that, although group decision-making processes may be slower and take more time, this is often offset by better buy-in on part of participants (Gertler, personal communication, 2009). After the group decision has been made, it can be implemented quite quickly and efficiently. For example, at the housing co-op that was the primary investigation site for this thesis, once

research on alternatives had been completed and members had decided to implement the front-loading washer program, a large number of washers was replaced quite quickly.

Decision-making can be rendered more difficult because members are unwilling to listen to others and to take their opinions into consideration. Sometimes members form their opinions before they even have the opportunity to listen to other information and to perspectives that differ from their own. At other times, even after listening to what other members have to say with regard to an issue, they are still not willing to compromise on their own starting position. Power differentials between members are a reality and sometimes members who take a lead role and adopt an authoritarian demeanour have to be reminded of the democratic principles of co-operatives, and of the positive results of a truly collaborative approach.

In the Co-op, the case study utilized in this thesis, there is a problem of inter-generational tension and leadership. Many interviewees mentioned a founding "group" within the housing co-operative who, a long time ago, adopted a certain vision for the future of the organization. Some other members have joined this "group" since becoming members in the co-operative. Typical characteristics of those who 'belong' to this group include: most came of age in a particular era (1960s and 1970s); many are activists and consider themselves progressive; some are professionals in the co-operative sector; and most are founding members. There are both males and females in this group, but women outnumber men. These members are strongly committed to, and identify with, the Co-op. They feel a sense of ownership, are devoted and dedicated, and feel strongly about the ways that the Co-op should be developing. The groups' ideals and ideas sometimes come into conflict with those of other members who have not belonged to the Co-op for so long.

One study participant who was not a part of this "group" commented on the tension and difficulties involved in the introduction of ideas and in decision-making:

> There's just the established ideas and trying to overcome those established ideas with an organization. The resistance to change. Those are things that, if you talked to individual homeowners, those are a little easier to overcome. But talking to a group, there's a group mentality and if a couple people decide they don't like it, there's this wave…You have to be really careful how you introduce things and that can be a real drawback.

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Although the member does not refer directly to the "group" in this piece of the conversation, he had mentioned this detail previously in the interview. It is important that many members are devoted to, and take pride in, their co-operative; however, a healthy member-based organization allows for all opinions to be expressed and to be taken into consideration. 'Pioneers' of an organization have to recognize that new generations have different experiences in different eras, and that these experiences (and associated knowledges) should be taken into account. Ideally, decisions regarding the future of the co-operative are made by the entire membership and, although founding members may have formulated plans for the future of the Co-op, the ideas of new members must be incorporated.

　　　With respect to the potential disadvantages of co-op housing structures, a final point is that it is not easy to live together in a compact and, to some degree, close-knit, community. Members share exterior walls, parking lots, green spaces, common areas, and tools, not to mention decision-making forums, social events, and the reputation of the co-op in the larger community. This creates many opportunities for disagreement. Differences in terms of expectations and priorities are commonplace. If controversy is ignored, it can lead to more serious divisions in the co-operative. Not infrequently, assumptions are made regarding the origins and elements of the controversy, gossip ensues, and members take 'sides'. The management and handling of controversy is an extremely important aspect of social sustainability in any community of place— including, perforce, any housing co-operative. Often, a housing co-operative will have a Dispute Resolutions Committee that a member, or members, can go to in the event that members are not able to come to an agreement as individuals on a particular issue. A meeting may be set up in which a mediator will facilitate communication between both parties in order to reach some mutual understanding and mutually acceptable resolution.

　　　Members must realize that all residents have a vested interest in the viability and vitality of the community and, therefore, it is in everyone's interest to create respectful relationships between themselves and others in the housing co-operative. Planned group activities and appreciation days allow members to receive thanks, and to publicly convey gratitude to others. Provided that there is an equitable sharing of accolades and

recognition, such social activities can also build trust and a sense of cohesion among the members.

5.3 Contributions to Knowledge

This research has contributed to existing knowledge on learning organizations, housing co-operatives, and community sustainability in several ways. I have extended organizational learning theory to include housing co-operatives as particularly promising sites for organizational learning. I have adapted a set of learning organization criteria that are more functional for a non-profit housing community environment, specifically co-operatives, than criteria geared towards a for-profit business environment. Involvement in either learning organization stems from different motivations on part of the individuals involved. In a for-profit business environment, the individuals are employees and are paid; in a housing co-operative, individuals are volunteers and community members have a vested interest in the betterment of the community as it is their home. Also, in a housing co-operative, there is no hierarchy of control; the general membership maintains decision-making power in the organization. Motivations can be similar theoretically however, in that all individuals benefit from a sustainable and collective approach to working together to attain the organization's goals.

The research has explored organizational learning within a housing co-operative. Many of the initiatives and projects could not have been implemented without the work and drive of a collective. Improvement in the housing co-operative community is not purely the work of individual decisions and motivations; group decisions are always made and individual learning occurs regularly through collaboration. However, in a housing co-operative, a certain degree of individual learning is passive. Some members are reluctant, passive or unenthusiastic as learning recipients and/or instigators. There is both individual and organizational learning in a housing co-operative but in some cases individuals are simply there, and benefit from actions. Also, new members move in to an established community and benefit from former and current activities. They are, in part, beneficiaries of what has been successfully, and less successfully, done in the community. Over time, learning within the community has become somewhat congealed.

Certain knowledge, as well as learning processes, have become embedded in the culture of the housing co-operative.

This research also extends an understanding of housing co-ops as sustainable communities. Co-operatives have been described as having distinct advantages for sustainable development (Gertler 2006 and 2001; Stuiver, van der Ploeg and Leeuwis 2003; Uphoff 1992). In this thesis, I addressed how housing co-operatives can be vehicles of organizational learning for community sustainability. Housing co-ops can adopt these criteria to organize themselves as learning communities for the future. I demonstrated that housing co-operatives can be sites where people are housed with a decreased ecological footprint. Members share walls, tools and green spaces. I have also confirmed that a learning environment can be supported by a community in which the members share living and working spaces. Further, I have created a new definition of community sustainability that emphasizes the importance of learning as a social group.

5.4 Study Limitations and Strengths

This research was limited in a number of areas. First, I was not able to observe committee or board meetings, nor was I able to conduct as many focus groups as I had initially planned. It was difficult to discover dates, times and locations of meetings because the Co-op does not have a main contact person nor staff member. It also does not have a central office or central meeting place. As the committee meeting dates, times, and locations are scheduled by the committee members themselves, I would have had to request personal telephone numbers for individual committee chairs. This might have raised some additional questions regarding privacy and may not have been viewed as appropriate by those who I was attempting to contact. It was unfortunate that the committee meetings that I would have liked to attend did not take place during my field research visit.

The lack of central office, meeting place, staff member and main contact also constrained my ability to schedule focus group interviews. I had initially believed that I could ask each committee for an hour or so of their time in order, for example, to convene a focus group right after a regularly scheduled committee meeting. However, one committee does not meet formally and I perceived a sense of unwillingness on part of

some of the other committees to schedule focus groups. Also, I worried that any further attempts to organize focus group meetings would be perceived as 'pushy'. Many of the members are likely committed to various groups and tasks. They volunteer their time to attend various meetings and take part in community events. I did not want to 'push' for attendance at yet another volunteer meeting. I felt that the information I was receiving through individual interviews would be sufficient for the study.

This research involved my presence in and around the homes of individuals living in a compact and close-knit community. Issues of privacy loom larger in this study than in some other kinds of research. I was worried about engendering a negative reaction. Too much pushing on my part might have led to the closing of doors—literally and figuratively. Also, the Co-op had recently been the subject of another, separate study and I did not want to contribute to any feeling that people were being over-taxed by researchers.

As with any study, spending more time at the research site would have been beneficial, specifically to conduct more observation and perhaps to gain access to some committee meetings. With more observation, I could have more fully researched individual and group experiences within the community. I may have uncovered more information about some of the conflictual issues that were revealed in some interviews with individuals. Also, I was not exposed to all members' viewpoints as I did not interview all members of the community. The way the study was structured, due to ethical reasons, may have influenced the sample in ways that were out of my control. More outgoing Co-op members may have come forward to be involved in the study, while other, more reserved members may have chosen to not participate. Each member has their own unique perception of the reality within the community (Danermark et al. 2001). However, I made a conscious effort to interview members from different relevant 'categories', which included founders, non-founders, participators, and non-participators. More time at the research site would have been valuable but I was limited by personal time constraints. Also, my funding for field research at a distance was limited.

I did not pursue interviews with staff members of the CMHC. If I had been able to do that, it would have added an important dimension to this study. It would have given me an additional opportunity to 'triangulate' by learning more about the perspectives of

an important organization involved with housing co-operatives. However, as this particular co-operative is no longer directly involved with the CMHC, I did not see it as absolutely necessary. The interview with a senior staff member of the Agency for Co-operative Housing seemed sufficient as she was able to address some of the ways that the CMHC viewed and dealt with housing co-operatives.

Another potential limitation is that during the interviews and the periods of field observation, people may have not discussed certain issues in the community that they did not want revealed. Members may have chosen not to share some information in order that particular issues remained undisclosed to the immediate housing co-operative community and/or to the wider (housing co-operative) community.

Finally, the participants and I jointly created the data set, yet during the research process, I made important decisions as to how the data would be interpreted. I was not able to check out my conclusions through any sort of follow-up consultation with the co-op members. That said, I believe that my interpretation of the data is valid. Issues were thoroughly discussed during the interviews, the analysis process was systematic and rigorous, and I paid attention to the need for careful reflection and for reflexivity (Schwandt 2001). Multiple informants raised important questions that might otherwise have remained invisible. Triangulation was accomplished by checking field interview and observation data against other sources of information, including the literature and my personal experiences in a housing co-operative. The latter also helped me to place myself in the members' situations and realities (Danermark et al. 2001).

The research is strong is many other aspects as well. My experience living in a housing co-operative for three years prior to conducting this study gave me in-depth, first-hand knowledge of the ways in which housing co-operatives operate, as well as their basic principles. This 'insider' knowledge and experience gave me a certain amount of credibility and confidence, and made interviewing housing members less onerous as they did not have to explain many of the basic concepts that we discussed. Also, I was able to use my own firsthand experience and knowledge and as a point of comparison to the experiences and knowledges of those I interviewed and observed. This background experience was also useful to me in the data analysis phase as I was familiar with the language and terminology used by informants, and with some of the kinds of issues they

were speaking to. I could do this without prejudging what I was hearing and without forcing the data to support or confirm positions that I had come to hold as working suppositions. While I was also able to contribute some of my own examples of learning experiences to the thesis, I was also able to entertain examples that were different in important ways from my own previous lived experiences.

While at the new research site, I was able to take part in an annual event: the Spring Clean-up. This was an excellent opportunity to relate to the members—and them to me. I was able to talk with several of the members while weeding, helping with garbage disposal and recycling, and taking part in the pizza feast and sing-along near the event's close. It was a valuable chance to observe members coming together to get work done and to enjoy themselves in other ways after the tasks had been completed. I felt that participation in this event assisted in the building of trust between myself and the community members. I believe my presence and participation at the Spring Clean-up contributed to the willingness of members to be forthright with me during interviews.

5.5 Recommendations for Further Research

Research on how housing co-operatives can function as learning organizations is a relatively new area of investigation. This research expands on the more traditional focus of literature on learning organizations: it applies and extends these concepts and questions to a type of organization that has little resemblance to a conventional business enterprise. All housing co-operative sector organizations, particularly housing co-operatives, could benefit from consideration of the learning organization criteria presented here. Organizations can adopt these criteria to advance the sustainability of their communities.

To further investigate the potential and record of housing co-operatives as learning organizations, one could look at this concept separately from the idea of sustainability and apply it to other areas of social life. Moreover, comparative analysis between several housing co-operatives could be beneficial for exploring the factors and dynamics that promote higher levels of performance as learning organizations. Also, it would be valuable to study a housing co-operative with a different history and demographic; in particular, one that does not have such a history of activism. The

housing co-operative that constituted my primary research site was initiated by a highly motivated group of individuals. A more in-depth study of a housing co-operative that was initiated by a government agency and/or one that depends to a greater degree on government rent subsidies would allow us to see how these factors affect the participation of members, as well as goal setting by the community itself.

5.6 Final Thoughts

Community sustainability with respect to housing co-operatives is especially important at present because of heightened public interest in developing environmentally sound living arrangements and achieving more environmentally sustainable lifestyles. Moreover, the operating agreements of many housing co-ops will soon expire. Canada has been experiencing a protracted housing crisis. Approximately 130,000 members of over 2,000 housing co-operatives may likewise find themselves without affordable and safe housing due to increases in rent, inability to repair units, or bankruptcy. Securing the economic, environmental and social stability of housing co-operatives is vital. Learning how to implement more sustainable methods with respect to the housing co-op's assets, or capitals, is vital. Housing co-operatives can be sites for enhanced social learning, and they can evidently serve as vehicles to achieve more sustainable models of consumption as well as production (of housing). These, as well as other environmental, social, and economic services rendered to members and to the wider community, are important for the sustainability of communities more generally in Canada. As sites of social learning, and as learning organizations, the most important contribution of housing co-ops (and similar arrangements) may be people with increased environmental knowledge, with the audacity to imagine different futures, and with the capacity to realize much of what they envision.

This research highlights the importance of sustainable processes, rather than just outcomes. The outcomes of any initiative or project are important but the ways in which a community accomplishes tasks (or falls short) can provide the community with a sustainable foundation on which to build for *all* future decision-making, initiatives, and social interactions. Attention to sustainable processes is not a luxury in co-ops; it is a crucial ingredient that will (positively) influence all other outcomes. The creation and

utility of learning organization criteria for housing co-operatives (or similar organizations) can increase the community's capacity to address and incorporate more sustainable ways of creating future plans, making decisions, and carrying out projects and initiatives; in short, to learn community sustainability. Members can use the learning organization criteria as a comparative tool and guide with which to reflect on the current ways that the community enacts their sustainability goals. Housing co-operatives can consciously (and sub-consciously) learn ways to improve upon management and development agendas that are either directly or indirectly related to the sustainability of the community.

Type of learning organization	Description	How learning happens	Dangers	Service users and suppliers of goods and services are …	Which stakeholders are involved
Table 1: Types of Learning Organizations					
Implementing	Learning to implement by learning the correct practice and content of rules, procedures and the 'correct' way of doing things	Achieving best practice, consistency and reliability through instruction	Not responsive to changes and inward looking, stagnation, rigidity, gets left behind, falling standards, emphasis on procedure leads to high costs	Betrayed (where an implementing organization fails to implement; satisfied, have their complaints responded to quickly	owners' (i.e. principals') and service users
Improving	Learning to improve by a process of initiative taking and systematic experimentation; emphasis on doing things better; learning and adapting in response to feedback and reflection	Continuous improvement through systematic feedback and reflection	Tampering, instability, limited improvements within existing boundaries, emphasis on economic efficiency leads to high costs elsewhere	Delighted; their feedback and suggestions are actively sought, consultation, proactive approach to redress when things go wrong	owners', service users, service suppliers, employees

| Integrating | Learning to integrate through changing the context or relationships within which the other types of learning are occurring; holistic approach - doing things better by seeing and creating new possibilities | Creatively, through dialogue focusing on systematic collaborative approaches to problem solving; organization co-creates' its environment alongside other actors | Confusion over identity, soggy compromise rather than true synthesis | Delighted, involved and committed; consultation becomes a dialogue, which extends systematically to avoid negative side effects | owners', service users, service suppliers, employees, society, environment |

Adapted from Reid and Hickman 2002

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APPENDIX 1: HOUSING CO-OPERATIVE RESOLUTION

Presented at the AGM
October 25, 2007

The Co-operative Housing Federation has adopted a resolution to encourage its members and stakeholders to pursue environmental sustainability. They acknowledge the detrimental effects of climate change and environmental pollution and encourage all co-operatives and their members to act on their concern for the environment. It is important that co-operatives make changes (even small ones) to help mitigate ill-effects on the social, economic, and environmental vitality of housing co-operative communities. It is with these recommendations that [housing co-operative] attempts to do just so.

WE RESOLVE TO:

1. Accept CHF Canada's resolution and will attempt to integrate environmentally responsible actions into policy and procedure as well as our everyday lives.

2. Be mindful of our everyday actions and responsibilities to ensure our use of natural resources does not extend beyond that of which we need in order that future generations may live as comfortably and have the same opportunities within [housing co-operative] as we have.

3. Continue to be open to learning about ways that [housing co-operative] may incorporate new ideas on sustainability.

4. Develop a sustainability vision that will incorporate both short-term and long-term goals for our co-operative.

AS A CO-OPERATIVE WE ACCEPT THE FOLLOWING MEASURES:

- to phase-in the exclusive use of 100% recycled, unbleached paper;
- the phase-out of the use of chemical pesticides, herbicides and fertilizer on co-operative property;
- the replacement of toxic cleaning solutions and painting materials with environmentally friendly alternatives;
- participation in municipal and private recycling programs for fine paper, newsprint, aluminum, cardboard, plastic and glass;
- using solar fixtures, fluorescent bulbs or LED lighting in place of incandescent lighting, in all common areas;
- during construction and renovation, the use of high-quality insulation material that will be long-lasting and will not jeopardize air quality;
- servicing furnaces at regular intervals and replacing them with high-efficiency furnaces, as the co-operative's capital reserve plan permits;
- upgrading windows with double- or triple-glazed or thermo-pane glass for better temperature control and minimized energy use, as the co-operative's capital reserve plan permits;

- buying energy-efficient appliances when replacing stoves, fridges, washers and dryers, and especially air conditioners, that are the property of the co-operative;
- replacing standard showerheads and toilets with low-flow showerheads and pressure-assist toilets or other efficient water-saving models;
- replacing the caulking along the baseboards and door and window frames of outside walls;
- recycling outmoded electronic equipment, batteries, paint and other chemicals appropriately on a co-op wide or neighborhood basis;
- preservation of existing trees where possible and the planting of additional trees

  on co-operative property;
- the continued use of rain barrels for the purposes of conserving water;
- over time, working to replace fossil fuels with alternative energy sources, where possible.

AS A CO-OPERATIVE, WE ENCOURAGE INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS AND HOUSEHOLDS TO CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING:

- compost and recycle as broadly as possible;
- produce one's own food through the use of community gardens or other means;
- the use, wherever possible, of non-disposable, non-toxic, and recyclable products;
- the use of energy-efficient lighting alternatives such as compact fluorescent light bulbs;
- conservation of energy wherever possible;
- maintain unit temperatures at a lower level in winter and a higher level in summer, where feasible;
- use rain barrels for watering purposes;
- support activities that increase the sustainability of local communities (i.e. purchase goods from local retailers);
- minimize the transit of goods and the environmental cost of fossil fuel by seeking out locally produced products;
- choose as often as possible to travel by a method less damaging to the environment, such as walking, biking, bus, or less polluting motor vehicles; and
- continue to be open to learning about ways that each member may incorporate new ideas of sustainability into their daily lives.

APPENDIX 2: SEVEN CO-OPERATIVE PRINCIPLES

1st Principle: Voluntary and Open Membership

    Co-operatives are voluntary organizations that are open to all persons willing to accept membership responsibilities without social, racial, gender, religious or political discrimination.

2nd Principle: Democratic Member Control

    Co-operatives are democratic organizations controlled by the members who participate in making decisions and setting policies. Elected representatives are accountable to the membership. Also, members have equal voting rights (one member, one vote).

3rd Principle: Member Economic Participation

    Co-operative members democratically control and contribute equitably to the capital of the co-operative. The economic benefits are returned to the members, reinvested in the co-operative, or used to provide services to the members.

4th Principle: Autonomy and Independence

    Co-operatives are autonomous, self-help organizations controlled by their members. If they enter into agreements with other organizations or raise capital from external sources, democratic control is ensured and their co-operative autonomy is maintained.

5th Principle: Education, Training and Information

    Co-operatives provide training and education for members, directors, managers, and staff in order that they can contribute effectively to the development of the co-operative. They also inform opinion leaders and the general public on the nature and benefits of co-operation.

6th Principle: Cooperative among Co-operatives

    Co-operatives serve their members most effectively and strengthen the co-operative movement by working together through local, regional, national and international structures.

7th Principle: Concern for the Community

    While focusing on member needs, co-operatives work for the sustainable development of their communities through policies accepted by their members.

APPENDIX 3: PRINCIPLES OF SOCIAL LEARNING FOR SUSTAINABILITY

1. Reflexive processes that critically consider actions, assumptions and values are integral to all social learning processes in environmental management.

2. A systemic learning approach takes account of the interrelationships and interdependencies between social and ecological systems and is essential to achieving progress towards sustainability.

3. Social learning in environmental management is a commitment to integrating ideas and actions across social boundaries, including those that divide professions, communities, cultures and ecosystems.

4. The negotiation of learning agendas and indicators of success across the whole community is essential.

5. Conflict and tensions arising from synthesizing different types of knowledge should not be avoided, but do require facilitated negotiations.

6. Social learning is participatory and adaptive, and fundamentally about a commitment to equitable decision-making on social and environmental issues.

7. Social learning in environmental management takes into account social and environmental relationships and structures, particularly those pertaining to power relations.

8. Social learning is about supporting social change processes by transforming organizations, institutions, and individual and group identities in a way that increases sustainable environmental management.

9. Social learning promotes a culture that respects and values diversity, transparency and accountability in working towards a sustainable future.

(Adapted from Dyball et al 2007)

APPENDIX 4: CHARACTERISTICS OF THE LEARNING COMPANY

1.   A learning approach to strategy

2.   Participative policy making

3.   Informating

4.   Formative accounting and control

5.   Internal exchange

6.   Reward flexibility

7.   Enabling structures

8.   Boundary workers as environmental scanners

9.   Inter-company learning

10.   A learning climate

11.   Self-development opportunities for all

(Source: Pedlar, Burgoyne, and Boydell 1997)

APPENDIX 5: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Face-to-face Interview Questions
1. Can you tell me about yourself?
2. How long have you lived in the Co-op?
3. What was your primary reason for becoming a member of this housing co-op?
4. What roles do you play in the community (within and outside the co-op)?
5. Does your co-operative have a sustainability vision? If so, what is it? Does the co-op refer to it regularly?
6. What are the short-term and long-term plans or goals of your co-operative that relate to environmental sustainability? Are these goals revisited regularly?
7. Does the co-operative experiment with new ideas? Do you believe that these experiments are risky? How often does this happen (using a scale from never to rarely, sometimes, often and always)?
8. Has there ever been a problem related to a sustainability initiative where things did not go as planned? What happened and how was this addressed?
9. Has there ever been a project that went exceptionally well? Why do you think this happened?
10. Whom or where do ideas and information about sustainable initiatives come from? For example, from general membership, board directors, or outside the immediate community?
11. To what degree do you seek out and use information from other organizations in the community (and again, using a scale from never to rarely, sometimes, often and always)?
12. To what degree does the co-op present information to other organizations about its successes and difficulties with regard to environmental initiatives?
13. Do most members participate in actions related to sustainability? How are members encouraged to do so? Are there any reasons why some members may not participate?
14. If members have problems or questions related to certain projects, how are they addressed?
15. When certain members have unique skills or knowledge in a particular area, how is this knowledge and skill utilized, or is it?
16. Has there ever been an environmental initiative introduced that required policy or procedural changes in the co-operative? How was this resolved? Or was it?
17. Are there any outside stakeholder constraints, including those of CHFC or the [housing co-operative sector organization] that limit or prevent the co-op from including sustainable projects, policies, or procedures in its operation? How are these addressed?
18. How does CHFC or the [housing co-operative sector organization] support sustainable initiatives in your community?
19. In your opinion, what is it about living in a housing co-operative that may make it easier or more difficult for people to learn about sustainability and to act on this knowledge?

20. And is there anything that you would like to add about anything that you think I've missed or that you just want to discuss further?

Focus Group Interview Questions
1. Does [co-op] have a sustainability vision? If so, what is it and can I have a copy? Do you refer to it regularly?
2. Does your organization experiment with new and different ideas? How often? Using a scale from never to always (never, rarely, sometimes, often, always). How much chance is taken with new ideas or initiatives?
3. Has there ever been a problem related to an environmental initiative where things did not go as planned? What happened and how was this addressed?
4. Has there ever been a project that went exceptionally well? Why do you think this happened?
5. When certain members have unique skills or knowledge in a particular area, how is this knowledge and skill utilized, or is it?
6. How does your co-operative learn about sustainability initiatives (memberships, personal contacts, neighbors, neighboring communities, CHFC, Alberta Housing Co-operative Association)? So, for example, can you think of a couple key things that the co-op has done and tell me how they started? Like the garden or the Seniors complex?
7. To what degree, from never, rarely, sometimes, often, always – does the _____ committee or co-op as a whole, seek out and use information from other organizations in the community or co-operative association as a whole?
8. To what degree, and again, using never, rarely, sometimes, often and always, does the co-op or your committee, present information to other organizations about your successes and difficulties with regard to environmental initiatives?
9. In your opinion, what is it about living in a housing co-operative that may make it easier or more difficult for people to learn about sustainability and to act on this knowledge?
10. And is there anything that you would like to add that you think I might have missed or that you just want to discuss further?

Interview Questions for Staff of the CHF Canada and the Agency for Co-operative Housing
1. Does your organization have a sustainability vision? If so, what is it?
2. What are the organization's long and short-term goals related to sustainability? How do these involve member housing co-operatives?
3. Are housing co-operatives encouraged to experiment with new ideas and projects for sustainability?
4. Where does CHFC learn about projects and initiatives relating to sustainability? How is this information communicated to member housing co-operatives?
5. How does your organization encourage housing co-operatives to pursue sustainability?
6. What part does your organization play when a member housing co-operative decides to incorporate elements of sustainability into its operation?

7. Has there ever been a specific goal or initiative that required flexibility in policy or procedure, specifically as it relates to your organization? What happened?

8. Are there any other outside stakeholders' interests that sometimes impede sustainable developments? Please describe an example.

9. Does your organization assist member housing co-operatives to evaluate and re-evaluate sustainability initiatives that have been incorporated into the organization? How are mistakes or new information dealt with?

10. In your opinion, what is it about living in a housing co-operative that may make it easier for people to learn about sustainability and to act on it?

11. In your opinion, what is it about living in a housing co-operative that may make it more difficult for people to learn about sustainability and to act on it?