

**ONE BAD BOARD AWAY FROM BANKRUPTCY:
HOUSING CO-OPERATIVES, SELF-MANAGEMENT, AND THE
LANDLORD–TENANT RELATIONSHIP**

by

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Abstract

This thesis explores the development of the natural condition of co-operation into a large, apolitical movement and the effects of reshaping working-class people into co-operators. Semi-structured interviews, content analysis, and a limited autoethnography through a community-based action research paradigm, as well as a genealogical method, are used. A working-class analysis is applied throughout.

In Ontario, residents of housing co-operatives are not considered tenants, following a history of legislation, legal precedents, and lobbying efforts by the co-op housing federations. This fact is manifested through the use of language, the shaping of co-op resident subjectivities, legal protections for residents, and the shunning of traditional tenant organizing direct action tactics to fight evictions and harassment.

Six residents from five large-scale housing co-ops in Ontario participated in this research. Their experiences are compared and contrasted to the experiences of eight residents from seven housing co-ops in the Milton-Parc neighbourhood of Montreal. All 12 housing co-ops were created through state funding programs according to co-op corporation legislation. Residents of the Ontario co-ops expressed having few options when facing issues with their board of directors and staff. Residents are held responsible for the self-management of their housing project yet are encouraged to hire management staff. The Milton-Parc co-ops are small to medium-scale, they formed as a result of years of community organizing to save their neighbourhood from demolition, tenant participation is mandatory, there are no hired staff, and evictions are a lot less common. This research determines the landlord-tenant relationship is reproduced in all housing co-ops but is reshaped in order to circumvent class conflict. As such, traditional tenant organizing direct action tactics should be employed against co-op boards of directors and staff.

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List of Abbreviations

CHASEO:	Co-operative Housing Association of Eastern Ontario
CHF-BC:	Co-operative Housing Federation of BC
CHF-C:	Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada
CHF-T:	Co-operative Housing Federation of Toronto
CMHC:	Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation
CMP:	Communauté Milton-Parc
CQCH:	Confédération québécoise des coopératives d'habitation
FECHIMM:	Fédération des coopératives d'habitation intermunicipale du Montréal métropolitain
LTB:	Landlord and Tenant Board
MPCC:	Milton-Parc Citizens' Committee
NHA:	National Housing Act
ODSP:	Ontario Disability Support Program
OWN:	Older Women's Network
RGI:	Rent-Geared-to-Income
RTA:	Residential Tenancies Act

Chapter 1

Introduction

I don't know who came up with the ominous saying, "Co-ops are only one bad board away from bankruptcy," but growing up in housing co-ops, I heard it enough times that it has stuck with me. This not only had to do with the fact our co-op regularly fluctuated from dysfunctional infighting to total managerial collapse, but also because this aphorism meant different things depending on who said it and who it was directed toward. During a board of directors meeting, for example, it could be said by one resident to another to express frustration over a board's decision. In a resident's letter to Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) or a Member of Provincial Parliament it could be a last-ditch call for oversight and external intervention. In turn, a politician could say it to a resident as a paternalistic lesson on the "rights and responsibilities" of living in a housing co-op.

Revisiting "one bad board away from bankruptcy" now, I see how it perfectly captures the duality that exists in mainstream, state-sponsored housing co-ops and frames the success of these co-ops in economic terms, turning tenant control into a consumer issue. If a particular housing co-op is struggling financially or socially, the individual residents are held responsible for the management of a large financial asset and reminded of the privilege of getting to participate in a hyperlocal democracy. From this democratic perspective, "one member, one vote" is the tool that empowers them to affect change in their immediate living environment. In reality, individual residents who raise their voices might be subject to abuse by staff or their neighbours, or even face the threat of eviction.

By placing the burden of housing security on the residents, the government is able to say, “The board consists of members elected through a democratic process. If you have a problem in your co-op, vote on it. If it doesn’t work, maybe a co-op’s not for you.” The residents, meanwhile, look to the government and say, “The board of directors and the property manager have too much power. The residents are powerless to change anything through our votes. Our co-op was set up specifically through government funding programs to provide low-rent housing and alleviate the burden of government to provide public housing. It is your responsibility to maintain our housing security.”

If the responsibility for running a housing co-op is placed on the shoulders of its residents, while their boards and staff ultimately act as landlords, then how much control over their own lives do the residents really have? At the same time, by framing this duality solely as taking place in the realm of shifting responsibilities, the bigger picture gets lost. Translating this duality to a working-class perspective, which recognizes evictions, collecting rent at a profit, and private property as implements of capitalism and colonialism, the reproduction of class relationships becomes clear. This is where this thesis aims to situate itself.

1.1 Research Question

This thesis explores the capacity of working-class people to achieve self-determination through living in government-funded co-operative housing in Canada. Therefore, the central research question for this thesis is:

- To what extent do the working-class residents of housing co-ops have control and self-determination over the means of producing their own housing?

To answer this question, I will attempt to identify the historical factors that have shaped housing co-ops in Canada and the co-op movement more broadly, the concerns and experiences of residents, and the political terrain of co-ops by diving into the following sub-questions:

- What has been the role of the Canadian state on co-op housing?
- To what extent are state-sponsored housing co-ops decentralized, resident-led housing projects, and how might they be considered just another form of social housing?
- How are residents of housing co-ops different from tenants? To what extent do co-ops differ from regular landlords?
- What are the lived experiences of housing co-op residents? How do residents' experiences differ between housing co-ops of different scales and with different histories?
- What action can residents of housing co-ops take to improve their day-to-day lives and relieve the pressure on working-class people?

To tackle these questions, I undertook community-based action research from a working-class perspective by utilizing a discursive genealogy of the co-op movement, a limited autoethnography, content analysis, and semi-structured interviews.

1.2 Why Does This Research Matter?

This work is relevant in light of the lack of security of tenure and disempowerment faced by some residents of housing co-ops in Canada (Mossing & Salter, 2009; Schlemmer, 2009). This is counter to the official narrative from the state that housing co-ops, over other forms of housing, promote “a greater degree of security of tenure” and reflect “key quality of life indicators such as an improved sense of community, improved relations with friends and neighbours and increased social supports” (CMHC, 2003). I follow previous academic research which aims to explore the implications of the Canadian state’s “evaluation of cooperative housing projects by abstract [efficiency] criteria applied to all producers of assisted housing” (Chouinard 1990, 1443).

Even though this thesis highlights the problems in co-ops, it is also meant to lend theoretical and practical support to the idea that working-class people are capable of self-determination and controlling the means of producing their own housing. Although it remains to be seen if this is possible in a capitalist society.

This research will also contribute to the general discourse on housing in Canada. Co-ops provide housing for around 250,000 people across the country, many of who have low incomes or live on social assistance. By developing a deeper understanding of housing co-ops, hopefully security of tenure can be improved, and decent, working-class housing can be developed and protected.

This thesis also aims to contribute the co-op movement at large through a critical analysis of the movement’s mainstream historical narrative, its current politics, and its shortcomings.

1.3 Research With, Not On, People

The community-based research component of this thesis was an attempt to get the perspective of residents of housing co-ops and to examine how the issues raised above have played out on the ground for what has now been a full generation, since most housing co-ops were developed from the 1970s onward. Even though most of the participants have lived in co-ops for decades, those who are relatively newer to their co-op have a unique perspective of joining a well-established community. This is valuable experience that should be shared.

Despite that I am a relative insider, building relationships and trust was a long haul, especially with people who have faced abuse of power by staff and boards, were tired of working against the tide of non-participation in their co-op and constant dismissal by politicians and sector professionals, or have frequent requests from researchers coming down to “study” them, such as is the case with the Milton-Parc co-ops.

My research took me between Ottawa, Toronto and Montreal on a regular basis. A total of 14 residents from four different housing co-ops in Toronto, one co-op in Ottawa—the co-op I lived in for 21 years—and seven different co-ops in Montreal—all part of the Communauté Milton-Parc (CMP)—participated in the research presented in this thesis. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with all participants, and group interviews occurred on three occasions. The interviews were recorded and transcribed, and research ethics protocols were followed.

The 12 co-ops represented were all created through federal and provincial housing co-op funding programs. This is important because there is a stark contrast in the scale and level of participation between the co-ops in Ontario and those in Milton-Parc. The

Milton-Parc co-ops, which were financed by CMHC from their formation in the late 1970s, have far greater levels of resident participation and are much smaller than any of the represented co-ops in Ontario. This thesis explores what the factors are that have allowed the Milton-Parc co-ops to maintain their relative autonomy compared to the Ontario co-ops and if their higher levels of participation have in fact resulted in security of tenure for residents.

1.4 Theoretical Positioning

This thesis examines how class relationships, self-determination and mutual aid play out in state-sponsored co-op housing. To do this, I engage with the politics of recognition as they pertain to the demands of low-income people for control over their housing.

The Canadian state has been shown to use recognition in its advance of capitalism and colonialism. Glen Coulthard (2014) describes a shift from the colonialism of genocidal exclusion and assimilation through land dispossession, refusing rights to Indigenous women, resettlements and residential schools, to a colonialism of conciliation through recognition and accommodation in the form of land claims and self-governance. This shift was a reaction to the Indigenous anticolonial activism of the 1960s and 70s. I will argue that during this period, conciliation was a technique the Canadian state became deft at executing through its use on a variety of oppressed groups, including the poor. The politics of recognition have been used by the Canadian state as “strategic ‘domestication’” (Coulthard 2007, 451; 2014, 67) of the initially transformative demands of Indigenous groups.

The late 1960s and early 1970s was a period of intense political engagement, organization and resistance to a system founded on authority, patriarchy, accumulation and colonialism. This resistance was quickly followed by massive government campaigns of deregulation, corporatism, rights and recognition.

During this period, there was a concerted effort to “modernize” cities in the form of razing, a reproduction of colonialism. In Montreal, for example, the “urban renewal” and “destruction in the name of progress” mandate of Montreal mayor Jean Drapeau (Helman 1987, 24, 107) initiated a movement toward “deforestation” of its old-growth communities (Gabeline et al. 1975, 12). The areas surrounding the city centre were targeted by property developers and city officials as sites supposedly in need of redevelopment. This included the city’s Milton-Parc neighbourhood, where tenants organized for years to defend their homes from demolition to make way for the “city of tomorrow.” Co-op housing was adopted by the Milton-Parc Citizens’ Committee (MPCC) as a transformative approach to combat this modernist trend, just as it was in cities across Canada.

Co-ops were brought to the table by vocal individuals in their neighbourhood who had a grand vision to give primarily poor and low-income people the ability to self-manage issues pertaining to their living environment while impeding speculation and capital gains (Helman 1987, 109). It was during the 1970s that co-op housing seemingly shifted from a politicized and transformative tool to a neutralized third sector, situating itself somewhere outside the private and public spheres (Laycock 1987, 31). With the creation of the first federal co-op housing funding program in 1973, the state surprisingly shifted its policies in favour of “community-based, non-profit housing” (House 1976, 54).

Coulthard describes three watershed events during the same decade that signaled the incorporation of Indigenous self-determination into policies of recognition and reconciliation. These events occurred during this same period of emergent neoliberalism and involved the federal government scrapping the 1969 White Paper, which proposed the erasure of any distinction between Native and non-Native Canadians, acknowledgement of Native land rights by the Supreme Court of Canada in 1973, and unprecedented media coverage of resistance to resource development projects in the North during the oil crisis of the early 70s (Coulthard 2014, 4-6).

This reshaping of transformative movements also occurred in other fields. Anthropologist David Graeber describes this in relation to technology: “a profound shift, beginning in the 1970s, from investment in technologies associated with the possibility of alternative futures to investment in technologies that furthered labour discipline and social control” (Graeber 2016, 120).

I argue the state’s investment and promotion of co-op housing, as with other policies and technologies, furthered the discipline and social control of working-class people. One of the results of this investment was the bureaucratization of self-run housing due to an abstraction from social justice to consumer rights (Chouinard 1990). This is a commonly attributed trait of neoliberalism and was responsible for manipulating subjectivities in the class relationship while that relationship is maintained. Specifically, for housing co-ops, it is the reshaping of the traditional landlord–tenant relationship.

Previous research has argued that the co-op movement has been open to co-optation because of its basis in abstracts, like participation and co-operation, and its apolitical bent (Kasmir 2016; Ratner 2015). Apoliticism has been the condition that has

either allowed the mainstream co-op movement to flourish or has fully debased it, depending on your position, and “apolitical” co-ops have exhibited a striking ability to appeal to politicians of all stripes (Laycock 1987, 41). There are visible clues that show how the state really perceives housing co-ops and why they would get all party support.

Figure 1, the Housing Continuum, presents CMHC’s linear view of housing. Housing co-ops, supported through government programs, fall squarely in the subsidized housing block. CMHC’s perspective and indeed their mandate is to regard “market homeownership housing” as the pinnacle of housing. Housing co-ops, according to the state, were never meant to threaten the stability and sanctity of private homeownership.

Housing Continuum

Emergency Shelters	Transitional Housing	Supportive Housing	Subsidized Housing	Market Rental Housing	Market Homeownership Housing
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Figure 1: CMHC's Housing Continuum

Source: CMHC. ‘About Affordable Housing in Canada’. https://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/inpr/afhoce/afhoce_021.cfm

1.5 Personal Positioning

I grew up in housing co-ops in Ottawa. During my first few years, my family lived in an apartment in Daly Co-op. We then moved to a townhouse at Fairlea Park Housing Co-op. I believe it is important to situate myself within this thesis for three reasons.

I conducted research with people who may have been or were currently (as of the time when the interview took place) subject to a deeply personal and high-stakes form of

stress—one caused by a looming threat of eviction, of losing one’s home, and fearing imminent homelessness. It is not easy to relate to somebody who’s lived in this state unless you have experienced it yourself. My family’s later experience in Fairlea Park reflected this state. My mom would spend hours helping neighbours fight evictions, only to constantly worry about being evicted herself, as co-ops can evict individual members rather than households. If she was evicted, she would be separated from her family and would end up homeless because she had no income.

Secondly, many co-op residents are reliant on a subsidy and pay rent-geared-to-income (RGI). Our family was on RGI as our income primarily came from the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP). Lived experience provides an understanding of how subsidies are calculated and miscalculated and the anxiety that develops when a co-op board or property manager threatens to withhold somebody’s subsidy. The ability to withhold somebody’s subsidy is akin to having power over their tenancy.

Thirdly, there are many day-to-day experiences particular to life in a housing co-op. Despite co-ops being promoted as “mixed-income communities” the reality is they are generally sites of concentrated poverty. I can relate to research that explores the “positive aspects of public housing and the benefits of living in ‘concentrated’ low-income communities” where tenants “enjoyed a strong sense of community ... engaged in mutual assistance and material exchange; watched over each other’s children and homes; and felt a sense of unity from ‘being in the same boat’, which helped them cope with external stigma and prejudice” (August 2014, 1320). While co-ops have come to act as another form of social housing, they are home to people with varying incomes. Many people are there simply for the cheap rent, either because they can’t anything else or they

are using the opportunity to save up to buy a house. Also particular to a housing co-op, there are social and psychological intricacies of managing a multi-million-dollar housing project with your neighbours.

I felt a lot of stigma growing up in a co-op and this shaped my perceptions. As a kid, I knew something was different about living in a co-op, but I mostly attributed it to being part of a project of concentrated poverty, rather than being part of an intentional, co-operative community. My parents have a co-op meeting this evening. That's because we're lucky enough not to live in public housing, and they have to put in the extra work to keep our community going. The neighbours are yelling at kids for throwing pebbles. Oh, that's because people on welfare have nothing better to do. There's a summer festival in the park. Well that's just a charity event because the politicians, the cops and Loblaws want to pat themselves on the back while watching us poor kids wolf down hot dogs. It took a while before I developed a broader understanding of what a housing co-op means.

These years in co-ops were formative and eventually led to a personal awareness of the broader co-op movement and its politics. I noticed co-ops regularly appeared in political and social justice literature as practical alternatives to the mainstream, competitive modes of organization. Co-ops were touted as alternatives that subverted capitalism and even colonialism. It was no longer just poverty that shaped my identity. I could finally turn to the co-op and see a whole part of me shaped by a foundation of solidarity, mutual aid and the possibility for self-determination. Yet my lived experience was still of our co-op's failure to achieve this. In an attempt to tackle some of these issues, I enrolled in the graduate diploma in journalism program at Concordia University.

Through my work as a freelance journalist I wrote about the ubiquity of these issues in co-ops, but it was still difficult to affect any concrete change. I ultimately decided on the academic route, structured around community-based action research, which I believe provided the best opportunity to investigate these issues more thoroughly while producing some actionable insights. Through my own lived experience and with networks between co-op residents pre-established from my journalism days, I was able to start my MA with a clear project in mind and as an “insider.”

1.6 Chapter Outline

Chapter 2 details the methodology employed in this thesis. Autoethnography, semi-structured and group interviews were organized through a participatory action research framework. Content analysis of locally-produced materials by the MPCC and the co-op housing federations between 1968–2018 was also employed. Feminist insider-outsider theory and Indigenous methodologies guided my actions on the ground as well as my responsibilities following the completion of this thesis. This chapter discusses how I first connected with co-op residents, our collaborations and outcomes over the course of the research phase, and our expected continuation of collaborative efforts.

Chapter 3 consists of a genealogy of co-operative housing. It does not aim to find an alternate “origin” to co-op housing. Instead, it seeks to trace how the meaning and politics of co-op housing have shifted throughout history, leading to the current state of co-op housing in Canada. The co-op movement is well documented, and its history has been strongly reinforced over decades of trying to build a “third sector” economy (CHF-T 1984; Chouinard 1990, 1442; Heneberry & Laforest 2011; Heskin & Leavitt 1995; House 1976; Laycock 1987). Linearizing history is effective at centering a movement

around a clear locus, but it also subjugates other discursive elements at play. It's for this reason that Chapter 3 presents a genealogy of the co-op movement.

Chapter 4 presents of the theoretical portion of this thesis. It connects the genealogy of co-op housing to theories of “new” and “old” co-ops, participation, the politics of recognition, the neoliberal reshaping of working-class subjectivities, and co-optation.

Chapter 5 presents the community-based research as a conversation between participants and critical analysis of their contributions.

Finally, Chapter 6 concludes by providing a list of 10 lessons learned and 10 recommendations and actionable insights.

1.7 A Note to the Reader

It has been a challenging task to try and write for two distinct audiences, co-op residents and a graduate supervisory committee, in one paper, and I take responsibility for any awkwardness or fogginess of voice occurring at any point throughout. Rather than attempt to write for both audiences at the same time, it makes more sense, to me at least, to switch voice from time to time and identify at the outset which chapters might be of more interest to each audience. This is after all an academic thesis and must adhere to certain standards, so certain chapters might not be written in the plainest language possible.

My hope is that this research can, above all else, be useful to people actually living in housing co-ops, especially those who may feel disempowered in their own co-op. It would be great if residents could find within these pages concrete solutions to problems they might be facing in their co-op, although it's become clear to me over the

years that many of the larger issues in housing co-ops are systemic and are therefore unlikely to be resolved at the individual co-op level. Instead, direct action can be taken with neighbours to address day-to-day problems long the same line as tenant organizing tactics.

Nevertheless, Chapter 6, the conclusion, provides a list of 10 lessons learned and 10 recommendations for how to tackle some of the issues raised throughout this thesis, specifically fighting eviction and abuse in housing co-ops. In order to tackle the structural issues of housing co-ops, it is recommended to take a working-class perspective and to view housing co-ops as no different than any other landlord. Members are tenants, housing charge is rent, and the board and staff are the landlord. The recommendations are not concerned with scrutinizing individual co-ops or offering advice on say, how to run better meetings, for example. This type of recommendation can cause harm as it places the blame squarely on the shoulders of co-op tenants. It creates the impression that a tenant's lack of managerial skills, for example, is the source of their co-op's problems. What is more constructive is providing recommendations that connect the dots between common experiences in co-ops and how tenants in other forms of housing have traditionally fought landlords.

I also believe co-op tenants can get a sense of solidarity from the lived-experiences of other residents from various co-ops presented as conversations in Chapter 5, the community-based research portion. The tenants who have shared their experiences for this research all live in co-ops created through similar government funding programs. Hopefully, something can be gained from identifying similarities and divergences between housing co-ops.

Chapter 3 consists of what is called a “genealogy.” This is essentially a door-opening tool used to deviate from the mainstream history of the co-op movement and co-op housing. This chapter will be of interest to those who are curious about the broader co-op movement or those who wish to contextualize the current state of co-op housing.

Chapters 2 and 4, on the methodology and theory, are the most academia-oriented sections and might only be of interest to a small number of readers.

Finally, I encourage readers to take what they can from this thesis to advance their fight for social justice. This thesis is intended to be structured in a way that allows readers to extract with ease whatever parts they find most useful to address their own co-op questions, whatever those may be.

Chapter 2

Methodology

For this thesis, I have employed a limited autoethnography, semi-structured one-on-one and group interviews, and content analysis of local publications and materials produced by the Milton-Parc Citizens' Committee and the Canadian co-op housing federations from 1968 to the present. I approached this research from a community-based action research framework as a relative insider to housing co-ops (but acknowledging I am an outsider to all but one of the co-ops represented), and undertook a class analysis, with class understood not as an identity but a structural position.

My expectation for this research was that it would act as a sort of continuation of a longstanding critical investigation into the politics of co-op housing, fuelled by common issues raised by co-op housing residents. These issues pertained to a perceived lack of oversight by the state as well as seemingly few options for interventions by the state to resolve disputes. One way residents have described this problem is “having nowhere to turn for help.”

The ubiquity of these issues was remarkable, as they were raised by residents I had known for a long time, including my parents and residents whom I didn't know but spoke out in a way that was documented and publicly available on the internet. Many of these issues had also been raised or at least touched on in books, journal articles and academic theses. There was clearly a power imbalance at play, between Boards of Directors, staff and the general membership. Boards generally received unquestioned support, or at the very least deference, from the institutions which residents were looking to as mediators and overseers.

My methodology, then, was shaped according to a personal commitment to work towards some form of social justice, particularly by building power among residents who felt they had nowhere to turn; who, despite repeatedly writing their local politicians, taking their co-op through court and administrative tribunals, and debating at committee and general membership meetings, could not break from the oppression they experienced in their own co-op. I approached this from a very personal perspective because my parents went through it.

I began by approaching this research as a complement to the journalistic approach I had previously taken. My initial connection with a number of co-op housing residents was as a “reporter.” Bringing this research into the academic sphere would allow dedicated time to be spent building more relationships and would also provide perceived institutional legitimacy.

I initially set out to do this research based around these established connections. The limitations of these connections were apparent, however. They were neither geographically nor demographically far-reaching. My network could not be considered broad, although there was potential to expand. I was primarily in contact with people in Southern Ontario and Ottawa. My contacts were few (there are over 44,000 co-op housing units in Ontario), but we had maintained regular communication and our relationships were established by the time I started this research.

The years spent in this graduate program were always meant to be part of a process of collective action alongside co-op housing tenants, working together to overcome false divisions and advance our class interests. This collective action involves building power among co-op housing residents by recognizing their position as working-

class people who, simply by living in non-profit, co-operative housing, are already in a position to challenge to some degree the dominant, exploitative housing market, where land is used as capital and landlords reap profits by renting out roofs over tenants' heads. It involves recognizing that the apparent privileges afforded to residents of housing co-ops extend beyond cheap rent—there is a responsibility to act politically.

This thesis is meant to be “a highly political activity” inspired by indigenous research methodologies (Smith 199, 140). While I do not wish to necessarily try and reorient the politics of individual residents in co-ops, I do wish to politicize co-op housing; that is, to break free from the bureaucratic and professionalized notion that co-ops are “apolitical.”

2.1 Situating Myself:

Although far from being comprehensive, particularly in terms of tackling how urban housing continually reproduces colonialism on Turtle Island, the research contained in this thesis can be taken as a standalone compilation of insights from people who have lived in housing co-ops, accompanied by some investigative work into the co-op housing movement. Technically, it is the result of a project outlined in my original MA proposal and approved by the General Research Ethics Board at Queen's. For me, though, it has always been something very personal and part of longstanding research-action.

My father, Bryan Hawley, was involved in the development of Daly Housing Co-operative in Ottawa. It was the first fully accessible, “entirely barrier-free” building in Canada, when it opened in Fall 1983. It has 88 units and has always provided housing for “both able-bodied and mobility-impaired” people (Cooper & Rodman 1992, 298).

In the early 80s, Bryan had connected with a group of disabled people in Ottawa, including Joyce Robbins, who wanted to take advantage of government funding to build a fully accessible building and a mixed community, where all rooms, amenities and features in the building would be accessible by all (Ottawa Citizen 1990). Bryan took on the role as a hired professional, having completed an MA in geography at Wilfrid Laurier University in 1979. He had also briefly lived in a housing co-op, Mountain View, in Port Moody, British Columbia after completing his MA. As a hired professional, it was a given that he would not be moving into the new co-op.

His responsibilities in the development of Daly Co-op primarily related to the design of the building and the units. He was researching accessible building features and imagining how they could be integrated together. But he also had a personal commitment to the project, as his mother had become a quadriplegic after a bicycle accident in England. Unfortunately, she died less than a year before Daly Co-op opened. A plaque was put up in the lobby of the building commemorating three individuals who passed away before it was opened, including his mother.

In late summer 1982, my mother, Bette Morris, with her five-year-old daughter and pregnant with my brother, moved from London, Ontario to Ottawa where her foster mother from back in Montreal was currently living. Bette expected to spend only two weeks at her foster mother's apartment while she looked for her own place, but it turned into two months. She found an apartment in Vanier, a working-class neighbourhood, where she stayed for a year. During this period, a social worker recommended that she apply to a soon-to-be-completed building that would offer big apartments, close proximity to stores and schools, lower rents and a supportive environment for a single

mother. Bette was accepted to Daly Co-op and was speaking with Bryan over the phone about the design of her new apartment. She moved into a three-bedroom apartment once the building opened, about six months after my brother was born.

My brother, sister and mother all remember Daly Co-op with fondness. My mom says it was a new experience for her as she had never really had any connections with disabled people before. When she walked into her first co-op meeting, she thought she was in the wrong room because there were so many people in wheelchairs. But soon enough, a community started forming in the building and her neighbours were helping take care of her two kids. Eventually, she and Bryan started dating.

My parents married in 1985, at which point Bryan moved into Bette's Daly Co-op apartment. Bryan experienced a health crisis in 1986, undergoing major surgery and spending nine months in hospital. I was born in 1988, and in 1990 we moved into a three-bedroom townhouse in Fairlea Park Housing Co-op. With my family's source of income coming from the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP), we were allowed to pay a subsidized housing charge (the term housing co-ops use for rent). We upsized to a four-bedroom a few years later and then downsized in 2010 to another three-bedroom.

There were many good memories over the years in Fairlea Park. But there was a great deal of frustration and trauma. From about 2009, a new property manager took over and ruled the co-op with an iron fist. There were many struggles and my parents eventually took the co-op to the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario in 2011. The ordeals with the co-op caused serious mental health issues which compounded my dad's continued major medical crises. To this day, my mom still speaks about the PTSD she suffers. My parents finally moved out of the co-op in 2015.

All of that said, I feel like I am a product of co-op housing. It provided my mom, a single mother in a new city, with a secure and supportive home to raise her young daughter and newborn son while she worked to pay the bills, and where she could develop a sense of community with her neighbours. Co-op housing brought my parents together. It allowed my family to live in a townhouse at a subsidized rent, even if my parents felt they were often targeted for being on a subsidy. One example was when we were told to downsize after my brother moved out. There is an occupancy bylaw which states the maximum number of rooms has to be equal to or less than the number of people in the family unit, but it only applied to tenants on subsidy. Those paying market rent were never told to downsize, despite being technically over-housed for years.

I have never been an official member of a housing co-op myself, but I was raised in that environment and can speak to both the benefits and problems we went through in our co-op. When I began digging into the history of co-ops and what other residents were saying, I was surprised to find some of our same concerns had been raised by residents elsewhere in Canada. And although none of my family currently lives in a co-op, I remain in communication, in large part facilitated by this academic research, with residents of co-ops.

2.2 Methodological Positioning:

My expectation for this research was that it would facilitate further discussion among a select group of housing co-op residents. Discussion among residents happens all the time, at board of directors' meetings, federation meetings, in laundry rooms, or around kitchen tables, and this is what helps form the discourse and shape the experience of living in co-op housing.

By situating myself within this research as a product of housing co-ops and having figuratively built an identity as co-op progeny, I automatically employ autoethnography. This, along with my “epiphany” of the reproduction of class structures in co-ops, has influenced which issues I have chosen to address for this research. I argue my methodology is a limited autoethnography, however, because I rely heavily on participant interviews and genealogy (which I discuss further in Chapter 3), I avoid an aesthetic, narrative form, and I recognize that autoethnography can advance recognition politics by placing subjective, identity-forming experiences front and centre. I also feared autoethnography can work to justify “the performativity of subjugated knowledges (what we are calling pain narratives)” (Tuck & Yang 2014, 230) by being “assimilationist [in its] pursuit of legitimacy in the form of the patriarch’s blessing and family values” particularly when used by academics playing the role of literary artist and failing “to attend to specific artistic traditions and controversies” (Gingrich-Philbrook 2005, 298, 308, 310). I didn’t want to advance pain narratives by being performative and aesthetic about my personal positioning, nor is my story the primary focus of this research.

With that in mind, I still believe in the value of autoethnography and its seeming alignment with indigenous methodologies in treating research as a political act. Ellis, Adams, and Bochner reflect on this: “Indigenous/native ethnographies ... develop from colonized or economically subordinated people, and are used to address and disrupt power in research” (Ellis et al., 2011). This is reiterated by Whitinui: “indigenous autoethnography seeks to resist the more dominant ideologies by deconstructing and reconstructing various historical accounts” (Whitinui 2014, 465). Finally, I saw my realization, which emerged from personal experience, of co-ops as capitalist tools to

reshape political consciousness (discussed in Chapter 5) in the epiphanic description of autoethnography: “When researchers do autoethnography, they retrospectively and selectively write about epiphanies that stem from, or are made possible by, being part of a culture” (Ellis et al. 2011).

Although an ethnography of sorts, or a strict attempt to document and analyze the day-to-day experiences of life in housing co-ops, would also be a revealing and valuable approach, it wasn't what I set out to do. Although my thesis does accomplish this to a certain degree, its restricted account of regular life is overshadowed by the centrality of my research on conflict and problems in co-ops, inspired by my own experience. Nevertheless, I could have perhaps come to this conclusion anyway through an ethnography like Kasmir did with Mondragón: “I undertook (like many ethnographers) to study the cooperatives from the ‘bottom up.’ This undertaking yielded surprising results. I found that the cooperatives looked quite different from this perspective than the literature had led me to believe: There was considerable discontent among co-op workers” (Kasmir 1996, 17).

Since this research is meant to address power imbalances in co-ops through conversations with residents, I consciously avoided contacting co-ops directly in an effort to bypass boards and staff. Methodologies from much of the preceding academic participant-based research on housing co-ops in Canada have relied heavily on going through boards or staff to connect with residents (Cooper & Rodman, 1992, 12-13; Spronk 1982, 18; Yasmeen 1991, 9) or simply made no distinction between managers and residents at all (Archer 2016; Cochrane 2006; Guenther 2006).

Following Serge (2013), who conducted a critical analysis of the state-initiated Benny Farm co-operative housing development in Montreal, my research attempts to challenge the mainstream narrative of housing co-ops, “which is being written from the perspective of the ‘winners.’ My goal has been to look at what was done from the standpoint of the ‘loser’” (Serge 2013, 6). The contradictions in housing co-ops, based in the historical and political positionings of the “winners,” are revealed by taking a good, hard look at both the negative experiences of residents and being unafraid to open up a critical dialog.

Of the two academic studies—both PhD theses—on Milton-Parc (Archer 2016; Cousineau 1980), the researchers not only came in as outsiders to Milton-Parc but neither identified as having ever lived in a co-op. Archer acknowledged their experience working in the housing sector and as a community development policy advisor, and importantly identified one key bias. Coming from the non-profit sector, Archer had preconceived notions of democracy and participation as an observer: “I had witnessed, and promoted, the power of such participation, without having had the opportunity to unpick the difficulties and tensions from a removed position” (Archer 2016, 83). No mention was made of the importance of getting in touch with residents directly and eschewing the powerful gatekeepers who are the boards or staff.

Boards and staff may have their own biases and interests and, if possible, should be initially avoided if coming in as an outsider (Johnston 1999, 40-41; Stauch 1997, 7). This is especially important in the larger co-ops, more prevalent in Ontario, where the managerial class is more firmly entrenched due to the bureaucratization that comes with larger operations and the low levels of participation among the general membership.

Boards and staff can also be reluctant to respond to external research requests. This could be because of a lack of time and resources, disappointment with past researcher accountability or a lack of perceived value to the co-op itself. Approaching residents directly would again supersede any authority of the board to block my requests from reaching residents or “filter” my intentions (Stauch 1997, 7).

Janet Louise Wack’s thesis (1998), on a topic very similar to this thesis, titled *Co-operative Democracy versus Professional Managerial Bureaucracy: A Case Study of a Housing Co-operative Facing External Management*, identified the essentiality of being an “insider.” Wack case studied the co-op she lived in, Evangeline Courts Housing Co-operative (ECHC) in Nova Scotia, a co-op “initially started by a group of sole parent women with common life circumstances, experiences, and needs” (Wack 1998, v). In this instance, being an insider was crucial to her analysis. Established friendships, intimate knowledge, and a great deal of reflexivity, especially important in an environment as personal as a home and a community of single mothers, created the conditions for finely-tuned insight.

“Although this method can be time consuming, or it could be hard to get access to a site or information, these were not problems for me. I had complete access to the site and any paper-type information and permission, even encouragement to carry on the research. I was a member; I had held various board positions in the past; and I was a part of a particular subgroup of ECHC who worked with others (informally) through the struggle as neighbours, co-operators, and women. There was trust, empathy, and openness between the members of ECHC and myself, but not so much between myself and some of those interviewed such as the Property Management Service providers or CMHC” (Wack 1998, 27-28).

Writing from the perspective of an insider is only possible with established trust and openness. But openness doesn't mean the researcher must be inclusive. In fact, as Wack alludes to, exclusivity is important in building trust and deepening friendships by choosing a side. "Freedom is the capacity to make friends and enemies (Montgomery & bergman 2017, 122) and identifying our common enemies can help researchers become insiders. Identifying the conflict that emerges from oppositional relationships in housing co-ops is important to maintaining friendships and building solidarity.

Wack also discusses two previous academic theses on her co-op (Nadasdi 1988; Seebold 1992). Both Nadasdi and Seebold were also insiders, being residents and importantly, women, of that intentional co-op and both conducted participant-based research on participation and democratic association. Nadasdi recommended "the shattering of barriers between the 'public' work place and the 'private home environments" (Nadasdi 1988, 97). She ended optimistically on the question of co-ops: "Through women's focus on the principles and ideals of collectives and co-operative housing for sole-female parents, we can create a better world for ourselves. ... Such dreams we have for a utopian socialism must become praxis" (Ibid., 94). Seebold, on the other hand, came to a much starker conclusion: "We did not come to ECHC knowing how to work together; we were not taught how to build our community; and we do not, as a result, co-operate. ... I pretend I believe we are co-operating. I am not the only member pretending all is well; it is just a defense mechanism to protect us from our bitter reality" (Seebold 1992, 51 & 105). Wack explains why they came to different conclusions: "At the time of Nadasdi's study (1983), members had been freshly trained, were full of ideals and optimism, and had had few real crisis [sic] to deal with like lack of funds,

deteriorating buildings, vacant units, and other financially related problems” (Wack 1998, 57).

2.3 Working-Class Analysis

Despite the importance of being an insider, this positioning will not always produce an analysis based on power and class. In her PhD thesis on the Shefford housing co-op in downtown Ottawa, Marika Morris (2010) examines how to build social capital across various lines of division, such as mental health, ability, race, gender, and sexuality. While these are noble divisions to overcome, Morris also includes class in this list (Ibid., 182). She writes from an autoethnographic point of view, sharing her experiences of having lived in the co-op for 19 years, while negating a class analysis of the politics of housing co-ops. She states: “The Marxist-influenced model is a male-oriented adversarial one—us versus them—based on class struggle. It is based on the assumption that any person's primary identification is with their class, which is also assumed to be fixed rather than fluid” (Morris 2010, 191).

While Morris is an insider, I do not follow this positioning. The idea that class is fluid is not wrong. But it is wrong to think of it as a shifting identity category. This fluidity signifies a change in the class relationship. A shift from working class to capitalist means one now has the ability to use capital to accumulate profit. It's not about the change in one's earnings, it's about the use of those earnings in relation to others.

Morris also identifies working class as having identifiable characteristics, such as “mannerisms” (Morris 2010, 288). This type of division is dangerous by viewing class as a set of identity criteria, again failing to see class as a relationship. I have personally seen

how this division plays out in housing co-ops, which are intentionally “mixed-income communities.” Rather than building solidarity on a foundation of understanding our shared interests, people in my co-op were easily divided along false lines. In fact, this extended beyond our co-op into the broader neighbourhood. Market-rent-paying tenants looked down on social housing tenants, market-rent-paying co-op members looked down on subsidized members, while homeowners looked down on all of us. This is a generalization, but it definitely existed, and is discussed by a research participant in Chapter 5. Although my family was on subsidy as our source of income was ODSP, I felt as though my father had “middle class values” from his upbringing which he imparted on me and created divisions between other subsidized members. Therefore, it was important in my research that I expunge these false lines of division that had formed. A working-class analysis is crucial to help undo these divisions among tenants from different forms of housing, in line with Sharryn Kasmir’s research into “how the cooperative experience has generated a division between cooperators and those who work in regular factories” in the Mondragón worker co-ops in the Basque Country (Kasmir 1996, 12). While co-ops may be seen as a more “privileged” form of social housing, recognizing how they reproduce the landlord–tenant relationship can only be done through a class analysis.

Although I disagree with Morris’ take on class as an identity category, it remains critical to overcome the divisions in the working-class itself and there are many other planes of oppression to navigate. This is particularly important with a topic such as housing and land, which are deeply intertwined with colonialism, and was an important consideration while developing relationships and formulating actions aimed at building

power among co-op tenants, without further entrenching colonialism and divisions among the working class.

Another participant-based thesis on housing co-ops (Cochrane 2006), analyzed the 51-unit Brooksford Place Housing Co-op in Abbotsford, British Columbia, “in light of the decline in applicants, changing community demographics, and lack of member participation” from an insider perspective, yet dismissed any notion of class conflict. At the time, Cochrane had been a resident of the co-op for eight years and on the board for the previous three. She writes that “leaders and managers fulfil fundamentally different functions [yet] this does not mean that leadership and management are opposed to each other, for that implies conflict” (Ibid., 14). From the author’s perspective, co-op housing emerged in BC after it experienced a housing boom in the 1980s and “middle-class people had no hope of owning their own homes” (Ibid., 3). This unwittingly supports the argument that the “founding of cooperatives ... imposed middle-class values” on working-class people (Kasmir 1996, 12), creating an unacknowledged class conflict from the outset.

In the book *The Myth of Mondragón*, a critical analysis of the working-class politics in the massive industrial worker co-op, Kasmir emphasized the importance of excluding managers to maintain friendships. Placing managers alongside workers ignores the class relationships that exist in co-ops, which, in housing co-ops, are arguably more apparent when managers are paid, and residents are not.

“My daily interaction and friendships with workers convinced me of the necessity to present their views on cooperativism. Workers’ feelings and experiences are often at odds with those of managers, yet managers’ points of view are those that are reported in the popular and scholarly literature. Moreover, workers express frustration about

claims that cooperatives are classless institutions when, from their point of view, class differences are obvious” (Kasmir 1996, 11).

A working-class perspective, Kasmir writes, is necessary to overcome the “myth making” that occurs when research on co-ops “relies primarily on managers and public-relations personnel as informants.” To try and counter a large body of discourse on co-ops from a professional, managerial, “winners” perspective, I follow Kasmir’s lead by analyzing discourse perpetuated by the managers of the co-op housing movement—federations, boards, and staff—through a working-class lens, and drawing directly on the experiences of working-class people, in this case residents instead of workers, and on “materials written by working-class organizations” (Kasmir 1996, 11). The latter was particularly relevant for the Milton-Parc housing co-ops in Montreal, for which I had access to the archives of the neighbourhood’s struggle, and I could see first-hand the materials produced by working class residents who wanted to form housing co-ops.

2.4 How It Played Out

As somebody who came from co-op housing but didn’t currently live in a co-op nor was ever officially a “member” of one, I was aware I could be an insider to some and an outsider to others. Nevertheless, I took an insider approach and focused on the importance of building relationships, in line with indigenous research which recognizes that “complexities of an insider research approach can be mediated by building support structures” (Smith 1999, 139). In the following sections, I will describe in detail how individuals came to participate in this research.

2.4.1 Building on Connections in Ontario

I first contacted Sharon Danley, who lives in the Older Women's Network (OWN) Co-op, by email in November 2013 while I was a student in the Graduate Diploma in Journalism program at Concordia University. I had enrolled in this program primarily as an attempt to address broader issues in co-ops stemming from tribulations my parents were facing in Fairlea Park. Conflict with their co-op had arguably culminated over the previous few years and they had spent most of 2012 and 2013 bringing a case before the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario against Fairlea Park.

The story I was working on for a class assignment, which was later published on rabble.ca on January 16, 2014, was about a bill passed by the Ontario Legislature in September 2013 and lobbied for heavily by the Ontario branch of the Co-operative Housing Federation (CHF). It amended both the Co-operative Corporations Act and the Residential Tenancies Act (RTA) and opened up the Landlord and Tenant Board (LTB) for the first time in its history to housing co-ops. Prior to this law, evictions from co-ops in Ontario proceeded as follows:

- The co-op board votes to evict a member;
- If the member appeals, then it goes to vote among the general membership;
- If the general membership votes to uphold the eviction and the member still wants to fight the eviction, the case would then go to court.

The law, drafted by CHF and passed unanimously by all parties, now allows for co-ops to apply to the LTB to evict members instead of going through the courts. The law states: "Co-op members cannot file applications with the LTB. Co-op members must bring their concerns to the co-op's board of directors using the co-op's internal dispute resolution process" (www.sjto.gov.on.ca/lrb/non-profit-co-op-evictions). CHF argued that

this would speed up the process and greatly reduce legal fees for co-ops and that there was no need for co-op members to have access themselves to the LTB.

Sharon had provided a deputation for this bill, along with a number of other people, to the Ontario Legislature on September 11, 2013. I found a record of these deputations online and was subsequently able to get in touch with her. I contacted her instead of the others for a few reasons. One, her deputation was very comprehensive, critical, and clear; she avoided getting too much into the weeds, which often happens with people who are personally going through issues with their co-op. Two, she was one of the five actual co-op residents who spoke and one of only four deputations who were critical of it; who was in support of the bill versus who wanted it to be reconsidered was, in my mind, very significant. Three, she had a public presence and her own website, which meant finding her contact information was easy.

Of the five co-op residents who gave deputations, the two who wanted the bill passed quickly also held managerial roles in their co-op or with the federations.

- Nicole Waldron, a 19-year member of Atahualpa Co-op in Toronto, and an executive board member of CHF-T and CHF supported the bill.
- Tracy Geddes, an executive board member of the Golden Horseshoe Co-operative Housing Federation, paid manager of Applegrove Co-operative Homes in Hamilton and a resident-member of Halam Park co-op in Hamilton, spoke in favour of the bill.

The other three residents, including Sharon, were strongly opposed to this bill. The only legal clinic or housing justice group present strongly recommended the bill be amended to protect co-op residents:

- Ken Demerling, who didn't mention which co-op he lived in (I found out later, when he participated in a group discussion, that he lives in City Park Co-op in Toronto, one of the largest in Canada at 774 units), spoke against the bill.
- Another member, Ken Hummel, from Athol Green Co-op in Whitby, who also runs the blog Co-operative Housing Information Exchange (www.cooperativeone.blogspot.com), spoke against the bill.
- Kenn Hale, from the Advocacy Centre for Tenants Ontario (ACTO), “a community legal clinic with the mandate to advocate for justice in housing” spoke in favour of opening up the LTB to co-ops but said the bill “needs to be changed in a few places to accomplish its purpose.” The bill should be used to strengthen the RTA, rather than expose more people to the failures of landlord and tenant law in Ontario, he argued.

The remaining five deputations came strictly from paid managers of co-ops and people with the federations.

- Dale Reagan, the managing directors at the Ontario branch of CHF, and Harvey Cooper, their manager of government relations (i.e. head lobbyist), spoke in favour of the bill. It was their organization which had been the primary instigator of the bill.
- Kathy Dimassi, paid staff for Halam Park Co-op in Hamilton, wanted the bill to be passed quickly.
- Michelle Bainbridge, paid manager at Blue Heron Co-op in Ottawa, spoke and supported the bill.

- Tanya Taylor-Caron, paid manager at Phoenix Housing Co-op, said she hoped that “with the passing of Bill 14, the process will be easier for us and for the members involved.”
- Carine Nind, president of the Central Ontario Co-operative Housing Federation and paid manager of Willowside Co-op in Kitchener, spoke in favour of the bill.
- Judith Collins from the Co-operative Housing Federation of Toronto supported the bill. (Ontario Legislature 2013).

The fact that the three non-federation-affiliated residents and the legal clinic representative were the only ones critical of the bill, while the paid, professional staff fully supported its passing raised red flags.

Needless to say, the bill was passed unanimously and unchanged. Co-ops can now take their members to the LTB to face adjudicators who are trained by co-op housing professionals. Yet, as Kenn Hale from ACTO said, co-op members who “suffer from disrepair, harassment and interference with the enjoyment of their premises in the same way that tenants do [cannot] seek remedies at the board ... Why should co-op members be prohibited from addressing those problems at the board?” (Ontario Legislature 2013).

I stayed in contact with Sharon over the years and put her in touch with my mother, as they are close in age and had both faced similar problems in their co-ops. Sharon’s non-stop organizing around co-ops kept me inspired to continue.

In May 2016, Sharon and some other residents formed a short-lived group called the Cooperative Housing Alliance which was mainly active on Facebook and through an email list. I was included in this group as a researcher who was soon to be starting a master’s degree. By September 2016, the group had fallen apart due to interpersonal

conflict, but I was able to remain in contact with some of them who later agreed to participate in this research.

Sharon organized a meeting with Liberal MP Adam Vaughan on August 29, 2016 (a week prior to the start of my MA) to discuss the problems residents face in co-ops. At this meeting, I was introduced to Vicki Trueman, who lives in Windmill Line Co-op and would later participate in a group interview.

On September 30, 2016, Sharon, Vicki and I attended the Toronto Housing Summit, a government event with city councillors, mayors, provincial and federal politicians, and Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation employees. The summit may have been uneventful, but it was important as it served as another opportunity to develop a relationship between us.

With the same group, I joined a conference call Sharon organized with Toronto city councillor Ana Bailão on October 12, 2016 and went to a town hall meeting held by MP Adam Vaughan on October 13, 2016 at Alexandra Park Community Center in Toronto.

Sharon eventually suggested I record a video interview with her as a means to spread awareness and recruit participants. It was uploaded to her YouTube channel *Co-op Housing, Toronto* in November 2017 and resulted in a few more connections made with residents. We later livestreamed a conversation between the two of us to her Facebook group of the same name and decided to form a website called *Co-op Homes Action Network* (see Section 3.5).

2.4.2 Meshing with Milton-Parc:

Among the books on co-op housing sitting on the shelf in the Queen's library, there is only one that chronicles the on-the-ground organizing that led to the formation of housing co-ops. Not only was it the only book on this topic, but the events therein took place in Montreal, a city I used to live in and only two hours by train from Kingston.

That book, *The Milton-Park Affair* by Claire Helman (1987), is a narrative journalistic account of "Canada's largest citizen-developer confrontation" (according to the book's subtitle). I had also remembered that I had heard of the Milton-Parc co-ops back when my mother emailed me in 2014 to share an interview uploaded to YouTube with Dimitri Roussopoulos and Lucia Kowaluk, two active co-op members in Milton-Parc.

After reading Helman's book, I found it remarkable that there was no mention of any of the co-op housing federations, either in Quebec or in the rest of Canada, other than a brief mention of "The Federation of Housing Co-operatives" on page 124, which is a mistitling of CHF. This piqued my interest, as these federations have been the main initiator of the large-scale housing co-ops in the rest of Canada.

It became apparent there were unconventional ways to reach out to residents of Milton-Parc, rather than go through boards and staff, which was important for my methodology. Dimitri Roussopoulos, one of the main figures in Helman's book, was the easiest to track down. I contacted him in January 2017 through the website of his publishing company, Black Rose Books. I did try finding contact information for Lucia Kowaluk online, but was not successful. I would later be put in touch with her through Dimitri.

At our first meeting a few weeks later, Dimitri mentioned 2018 was a significant year for Milton-Parc. It was the 50th anniversary of the Milton-Parc Citizens' Committee (MPCC), the neighbourhood group that started the organizing campaign to save their neighbourhood, and the 30th anniversary of the Communauté Milton-Parc (CMP), the conglomeration of the 15 housing co-ops, six non-profit housing associations, and some commercial properties collectively taken off the market through a unique "condominium for social purposes" land trust structure. Dimitri also mentioned he had given talks around the world on Milton-Parc, but nobody from Milton-Parc had spoken about their project in Canada outside of Quebec.

After getting an initial feel for Milton-Parc from this encounter, I decided to take on organizing an event around Milton-Parc in Toronto. I asked the manager of the CMP, who also lives in one of the Milton-Parc co-ops, to put out an open call for anybody from the Milton-Parc co-ops who might be interested in giving a talk in Toronto. I didn't hear back from anybody else, so I took that as a sign that organizing a talk with Dimitri would be appropriate.

The event happened on May 30, 2017 and coincided with the Canadian Association for Studies in Co-operation conference which was taking place in Toronto as part of Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences, the annual national gathering of academics. In partnership with the Centre for Learning, Social Economy & Work at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto, Queen's University, the Cultural Studies department at Queen's, and the Society for Socialist Studies, I was able to raise enough money to cover travel and accommodation for

Dimitri. The talk was intimate but well-attended and there were several older people there who had known Dimitri for decades.

I also organized a talk at Queen's on April 4 of that same year where Dimitri spoke on authoritarianism in Turkey. Later in the summer, I reviewed, Dimitri's book *The Rise of Cities* (2017) for the Canadian Journal of Sociology. Although these were not directly concerned with co-op housing, they were another step in building the relationship and trust which allowed me to enter into the Milton-Parc space for this research.

By the start of the second year of my MA, in the fall of 2017, I had agreed to help Dimitri put together a book on Milton-Parc, to be published by Black Rose Books. The concept was that it would be a follow-up to Helman's book and would emphasize the mechanism by which the urban land was taken off the market and Milton-Parc's social, political, and economic significance. We had discussed what the book would look like and the importance of having it coincide with the anniversary celebrations planned for fall 2018. It was a daunting task, but I had committed to it.

In early September 2017, Dimitri suggested I take his place in going to a conference in Oakland, California, on community land trusts in October. A grant had been awarded for his co-op, Co-op Milton-Parc, to send a representative to the conference. This is relevant because I had been in touch for a number of months with a group of Canadian urban land trust groups through my connections with Milton-Parc and I had reached out to a member of non-profit land trust group in Toronto, Claire-Helene Heese-Boutin, who I met at the conference and was also a co-op housing member. Claire agreed to participate in an interview.

Dimitri had arranged for me to speak with Lucia Kowaluk, his life partner and a very active figure in Milton-Parc and Montreal, who had fallen ill and was in the Centre hospitalier de l'Université de Montréal. Lucia agreed to participate in this research, and we had a wonderful discussion in her hospital room. Sadly, Lucia passed away on February 1, 2019.

Through Dimitri, I also met Nathan McDonnell. Nathan lives in one of the non-profit housing associations in Milton-Parc, works for Black Rose Books, and is an active member of the MPCC. In November 2017, Nathan suggested I join him one evening in tending to a food pick-up point for a community-supported agriculture program. Standing with him outside on a neighbourhood street corner while neighbours picked up their baskets of potatoes and onions turned out to be another effective way at meshing with the community, and I met some co-op residents who agreed to participate. Nathan also connected me with co-op residents Alanna Down and Daniel Trudeau. In January 2018, I attended a workshop Nathan and the MPCC had organized for an exhibit at the *Écomusée du fier monde* in Montreal. There I met Helen, a long-time resident of a Milton-Parc co-op and active member of the MPCC who agreed to participate in this research.

Although I relied primarily on relationship to emerge organically and to allow the opportunity for potential interviews to emerge naturally, I did make use of one rather standard recruitment strategy. In November 2017, I asked the CMP if they could include a call-out for research participants in their upcoming newsletter. Jason and Marie-Claude responded, and we set up interviews. Marie-Claude then connected me with Kate and Will who lived together in another Milton-Parc co-op.

In December 2017, Dimitri had looped me into the conversation with staff at the Canadian Centre for Architecture (CCA), where archives from the Milton-Parc struggle from 1968 to about 1990 are kept. This allowed me to tap into a huge and valuable resource. My first visit was on January 31, 2018 and I returned many times, frequently joined by John Goedike, who was a working-class teen from the neighbourhood when the battle started in the late 1960s and an early member of the Milton-Parc Citizens' Committee.

An exhibition at the CCA was being planned as part of the anniversary celebrations. This provided me with the opportunity to spend a great deal of time digging through the archives. Dimitri, John and I worked with CCA staff to thematize the exhibit and select which archival materials should be displayed. The exhibition opened in September 2018.

Over the last year, the book I was working on with Dimitri took shape as a compilation. Part original contributions from a variety of authors, part guidebook for organizing and confronting real estate developers, and part platform for the rich trove of materials from the archives, the book was released in January 2019.

2.4.3 Back to Fairlea:

The three residents from Fairlea Park who participated in discussions were all people I had known for years. They had all worked with my parents in the co-op and are people I trust. Reconnecting with residents from my old co-op has been extremely meaningful for me, especially in light of all the new connections from Toronto and Montreal. I have since moved back to the Herongate neighbourhood where Fairlea Park is located and over the last year have been organizing with my neighbours to fight

gentrification and defend our neighbourhood from demolition. Everything I have learned and continue to learn about co-ops and particularly the Milton-Parc struggle have been put to use in the Herongate struggle.

2.5 Methodological Gaps

Significant gaps in the diversity of research participants were recognized, some of which I would like to address. Perhaps the most significant is the gap of racial diversity. All but one of the participants in my research were white, and while racism is rampant in rental housing, it is largely unexplored in housing co-ops. Another gap, which I attempted to address, was the consideration of life circumstances and hardships. This includes single mothers, who also experience frequent harassment in rental housing. This is evidenced in the following quote from Margaret Little's PhD thesis: "Another single mother said she distrusts Co-ops. 'Some co-ops keep track of how much make-up you wear, or give you a hard time because you can't attend the [general members] meetings. I've seen those Attila the Hun Board of Directors who discuss your sex life at their Board meetings'" (Little 1994, 426–427). Although one research participant touched on her experience in a similar situation, I had to be mindful that co-ops can act as triggers for people who have dealt with sexual and racial harassment and left it to participants to raise these experiences if they so wished. Confronting these issues directly would be a welcomed approach.

Another gap in this research concerns the built form and physical geography of the actual housing co-ops. This is an important element in the formation of subjectivities, as previous research has shown (Ley 1993; Cooper & Rodman 1992), but unfortunately, I didn't have the capacity to touch on this in this thesis.

Another important gap in my research is highlighted by the contrasting conclusions by Nadasdi and Seebold described earlier: the age of the co-ops and how long the participants have lived there. Although I don't analyze the effects of these conditions, I acknowledged the co-ops represented in this research have all been up and running for decades. The Older Women's Network (OWN) co-op was the most recent, purpose-built in 1995. Most of the participants had lived in co-ops for decades but a few were relatively new to co-op living but had nevertheless entered well-established organizations and spoke of learning a lot from seasoned members. Therefore, unseasoned eagerness from residents was not an overwhelming issue and did not skew my research, as perhaps it did in Nadasdi's (1988).

2.6 Final Thoughts on Methodology:

Undertaking this research was an attempt to address the issue of housing co-op residents "having nowhere to turn." This particular concern comes from a very personal place, as it is something my parents and like-minded neighbours had been trying to address for years. While my parents lived into the Fairlea Park Housing Co-op, they were active members. They served on the co-op's board and committees, organized neighbourhood events, and conducted maintenance inspections, among other things. But, for as long as I can remember, there was always interpersonal conflict between residents and class conflict between residents and managers, be they board members or paid staff.

The most effective and authentic way to work effectively with people is to build relationships and recognize your shared interests. My methodology reflected this, by relying heavily on preestablished relationships and spending time developing comradeship with a few individuals rather than aiming for a broad sample by dropping in

as a researcher and evading the time commitment we would have to make to build relationships.

Finally, an important disclosure should be made—I never received any payment for any of the work I've done with co-op residents for this research, including the book. Logistically, my chosen methodology was reliant on travel between Kingston, Montreal, Toronto, and Ottawa. The frequency and flexibility of my traveling would most likely not have been possible without the availability of a discount passenger train pass and guaranteed funding from Queen's University.

Chapter 3

Genealogy

Co-op housing in Canada is large: about 250,000 (CHF-C 2018) people live in 92,526 incorporated co-ops across the country (see Table 1)¹. Housing co-ops that receive or have received financial subsidies from the federal or provincial governments fall under the social housing portfolio of Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC). Co-op housing accounts for 15% of this portfolio, which in total comprises over 613,500 social housing units across the country (CMHC 2011, 128). Social housing is defined by CMHC as “housing subsidized by governments (often developed in collaboration with the private and public not-for-profit sector) that is made available to those who would otherwise be unable to afford to live in suitable and adequate housing in the private market” (CMHC 2011, 127).

Table 1: Average number of units per housing co-op by region

Region	Number of Co-ops	Number of Units	Average Number of units per co-op
British Columbia	275	15,784	57
Prairies	129	6,734	52
Ontario	551	44,181	80
Quebec	1,130	22,501	20
Atlantic Provinces	122	3,164	26
Yukon, NWT and Nunavut	5	162	32
Total	2,212	92,526	42

¹ Data for these tables comes from email correspondence with CHF-C.

Within this one specific form of tenure, there is a vast array of typologies. Co-ops can be new builds or conversions, they can be multi-floor houses or studio apartments in a high-rise, and they can be made up of a few friends or thousands of strangers. Upon closer inspection of the co-op housing landscape, this variation is clearly apparent in the numbers between regions. The two most populous provinces occupy one end each of what I'll call the "scale of co-op housing centralization" (see Table 2).

Ontario has 551 housing co-ops, with an average of 80 units per co-op. Quebec, at the other end of the scale, has over twice as many co-ops but less than half as many units, with an average of only 20 units per co-op.² These two provinces, which account for 61.5% of the entire population of Canada, account for 72% of the total number of co-op units across the country.

Finally, 92% of co-ops in Ontario belong to the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada (CHF-C), the sector's national lobby group. According to CHF-C, no individual housing co-ops in Quebec belong directly to CHF-C; instead they may be affiliated through their regional associations' membership in CHF-C. For example, if a co-op in Montreal is a member of the Fédération des Coopératives d'Habitation Intermunicipale du Montréal Métropolitain (FECHIMM), it is indirectly a member of CHF-C, because FECHIMM is a member of CHF-C.

Table 2: Average rate of membership in CHF-C by region

Region	Number of CHF Canada members	Membership Rate
British Columbia	197	71.64%
Prairies	82	63.57%
Ontario	508	92.20%

² This fact still holds even while the biggest co-op in Canada is in Quebec. Co-opérative d'habitation Village Cloverdale in Pierrefonds is comprised of 866 units and 58 buildings.

Quebec	N/A	N/A
Atlantic Provinces	110	90.16%
Yukon, NWT and Nunavut	5	100.00%
Total	902	83.51%

These statistics raise a number of questions: How did co-op housing come to occupy a substantial part of Canada’s social housing landscape? Why is there such a large difference in the size of co-ops between the two largest provinces? How did this form of tenure become known as “co-operative housing” in the first place? What are the factors that have allowed the current state of co-op housing to emerge? How has the movement developed? To try and find some answers, it is useful to turn to the historical record.

Rather than try and parse out a linear history of co-op housing, which could easily result in a rehashing of official narratives, I employ a genealogical analysis “which reconstructs a whole network of alliances, communications, and points of support” (Foucault 2009, 117). Genealogy is a “move away from history as such ... that offers new narratives with new kinds of social, political, and economic relations in mind” (Day 2005, 46). It allows for an orientation towards a direction where it “acknowledges itself to be simultaneously using and abusing the historical tradition out of which it emerges” (Day 2000, 17). Taking a genealogical approach, however, warrants a clear delimitation of my scope, because “abandoning the search for origins leaves one facing a potentially infinite field” (Day 2005, 91), especially when previous attempts to assay the co-op movement have acknowledged the difficulty in defining a movement around a universal, “automatic” (Craig 1993, 11) operation such as cooperation.

Therefore, I will not dwell on exploring co-operation on a metaphysical level, other than to quote two loud voices. Karl Marx wrote in *Capital Volume I* that the power

that “excites emulation between individuals and raises their animal spirits ... is due to co-operation itself. When the labourer co-operates systematically with others, he strips off the fetters of his individuality, and develops the capabilities of his species” (Marx 1887, 230). Echoing this elemental statement, Peter Kropotkin, in *Mutual Aid*, gave strong evidence that co-operation should be seen as a driving force of life and “a law of Nature and a factor of evolution” rather than “to admit a pitiless inner war for life within each species, and to see in that war a condition of progress” (Kropotkin 1902).

3.1 Delimiting the Movement

The limit I have set out here is to explore co-op housing as it exists in its current institutionalized, bureaucratized and regulated form by orienting my search in the historical record around the narrative, or the “one voice,” generated by the mainstream co-op housing movement in Canada. In other words, I am searching, through the discourse around co-ops, for patterns, signs and tracks from the past which have shaped co-ops today.

In order to identify these patterns, signs and tracks, my search is grounded in contemporary research on co-ops, including what I call critical co-op studies (Chouinard 1990; Errasti 2015; Kasmir 2016; Mossing & Salter 2009; Ratner, 2015; Schlemmer 2009). My personal experience and observations in this sector also help me identify currents in contemporary co-op housing. I refer to the “sector” here because, as I describe in this chapter, the co-op movement revolves around this formalized structure. First, though, I need to define what constitutes the mainstream co-op housing narrative.

The discourse around co-op housing in Canada cannot be attributed to one book, one group or one leader. It emerges from board meetings, federation conferences, and

“plain language” educational materials³, just as it does through community gardens, encounters in the park, botched subsidy calculations, and eviction notices. It varies between people and over time, but it is carried by every individual who has ever had any amount of interaction with co-op housing. This sentiment is shared by Ian MacPherson, one of this country’s most recognized co-operators, who wrote, “The “movement” has a life beyond institutions, often stretching deeply into cultural, community, kinship, and class relationships. The movement is not easily measured. This is a challenge for historians” (MacPherson 2008, 3). This also speaks to the degree to which our housing, or lack thereof, shapes us on a deeply personal level.

However, the reality is that mainstream co-op housing is a state-administered sector and thus must be presented as a cohesive body with one voice so it can lobby the government for funding, enabling it to survive.

What is this one voice? A good place to start is with CMHC, which concerns itself solely with incorporated non-profit co-ops that have received federal or provincial funding (CMHC 2003, 3). In its first major co-op programs evaluation (1992), CMHC provides an outline of the “Structure of the Canadian Co-operative Housing Movement” based on a May 1988 communiqué from the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada:

“The co-operative housing movement in Canada is multi-tiered. It comprises a national organisation of housing co-operatives, local, regional and provincial organisations which develop new co-operatives and provide services to existing ones, associations of people employed by co-operatives, and housing co-operatives themselves. Members of the national association join directly, or indirectly through membership in another organisation. In

³ The Plain Language series of guide books was published by the Co-op Housing Bookstore, “a joint project of the Co-operative Housing Federation of Toronto and the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada.”

general, the movement is founded on democratic principles, so each member enjoys one vote in the co-operative in which they live” (CMHC 1992, 2).

CMHC recognizes the movement as being definitively structured around CHF-C and the regional federations despite noting that a “number of co-operatives funded under the NHA [National Housing Act] are not affiliated with the Co-operative Housing Federation and operate outside this formal structure” (Ibid.). Whatever the co-op’s reason for non-affiliation—either they’re more autonomous or isolationist—CMHC sees them as separate from the movement.

To an extent, CMHC is correct. In the foreword to the book *Under construction: A History of Co-operative Housing in Canada* (Cole 2008), the executive director of CHF-C writes that the story of the lobby, or CHF-C, is the story of the “movement and all [emphasis added] of its voices” (Ibid., ix). Before the federal government got involved with housing co-ops on a national level, CHF-C, then called the Co-operative Housing Foundation, was created as the voice of the movement. It was borne not from grassroots organizing, but from the top of the broader Canadian co-op and labour movements. Executives from the Co-operative Union of Canada and the Canadian Labour Congress came together in 1968 in the interest of delegating the labour movement’s housing concerns to a specialized body (Ibid., 49). In *Under Construction*, a former executive director of CHF-C acknowledges the federation’s intent to craft a monolithic voice:

“There is a theory in co-operative housing circles that you don’t start with a national organization. In our case proponents of the co-operative movement were convinced that a concerted effort at the national level was needed to promote co-operative housing and to get the government to assist in bringing it about. They created the Co-operative Housing Foundation when Willow Park was the only continuing housing co-op for families in the country. CHF

served as a catalyst for co-operative housing development in Canada and accounts in no small part for the movement's success in growing to its present size." (Ibid., 50)

Since then, CHF-C has become extremely effective as a lobby group, often receiving all-party support (Hawley 2014), and at maintaining its image as the representative voice of not only the movement, but of the hundreds of thousands of residents of co-ops across the country. But with any movement that grows to the size where it becomes removed from the people it claims to represent, let alone with one that was formed from the top, counter voices will struggle to be heard. People inside the sector remain free to draw upon housing co-op discourse and may derive their own meaning and expectations from the movement. Housing co-ops, as an important part of the greater co-op movement and the struggle for housing rights, carry a legacy of political theory and practice and must reckon with how this history has shaped them and to what degree they are accountable to it.

Before getting into well-established narratives of the co-op movement, I want to first acknowledge that this thesis does not attempt to challenge the Western monopolization of the concept of co-operation, which coincides with the last 200 years of European hegemony (Dussel 2002, 221). Even a postmodern critique of modern co-operation would be inadequate in challenging its European and North American foundations. While "a respect for other cultures in terms of their incommensurability, difference, and autonomy" (Ibid., 233) might emerge from this analysis, postmodernity "is not sufficiently aware of the "positivity" of these cultures, which have been excluded by the colonial process of early modernity (1492–1789), and by the "enlightened" industrial globalization of mature modernity (1789–1989)" (Ibid.). My analysis of the co-

op movement will certainly be lacking in many regards, but with the limitations laid out above, it should be clear what aspects of co-operativism I will be analyzing and which will be left for another time.

Finally, co-operation as a way of being and living together has existed on Turtle Island well before Europeans introduced their movement. Whichever “father of co-operation” and his respective organizational model is iconized, the reality is co-operation cannot be reduced to a social movement, which by definition is a reaction, an “attempt to bring about or resist change ... or to create an entirely new order” (Craig 1993, 19). Although the co-operative movement, arguably, eventually generated its own positivity “in the form of various editions of the co-operative commonwealth concept, it was essentially a reaction to the economic and social problems confronting urban workers and small farmers” (MacPherson 1979, 3).

Rather, co-operation, like utopia, is immanent (Coté, Day & de Peuter 2007, 329). It is found in the “accountability to the people ... life as a community, the achievement of consensual decision making and participation in all levels of politics processes ... and in the questions concerning self, peoplehood, and nationhood ... clustered around the issue of membership in the community” of Kahnawà:ke (Simpson 2014, 44). It is also found in “the Nishnaabeg systems ... including story or theory, language learning, ceremony, hunting, fishing, ricing, sugar making, medicine making, politics, and governance” (Simpson 2017, 19). It is immanent because according to Leanne Betasamosake Simpson’s account of Nishnaabewin, “how we live, how we organize, how we engage in the world—the process—not only frames the outcome, it is the transformation” (Ibid.).

3.2 Identifying the Mainstream Narratives

To restate an earlier point, identifying how a movement emerged necessitates the identification of the established narratives responsible for shaping the movement into what it looks like now. In the case of Canadian co-op housing, these narratives are derived from discourse around housing rights, the labour movement and the international co-op movement. Through the use of genealogical analysis, these narratives become trail markers, while the forest around the markers remains open to explore.

The *Nature of Co-operation* by John G. Craig (1993) provides a detailed genealogy of the co-op movement. More than a linear history of the movement, the book discusses the development of a natural condition, co-operation, into a social movement that is present in virtually every form of social organization (Ibid., 11), including capitalism and socialism. In fact, as part of its free-market liberal restructuring through perestroika and glasnost, the Soviet Union passed the “Law on Cooperatives” in 1988. Craig writes the development of co-operation into a bona fide social movement, through “contractual” as opposed to informal or “traditional” co-operation (Ibid., 14), comes with certain baggage:

“The emergence of elites and the development of monolithic organizations are of great concern in many egalitarian movements, and they are a source of theoretical problems in the development of a sociology of co-operation ... Some radical and aggressive members may seek more change and more purity in form; others may be more conservative and content with the achievements already made or in-progress. The movement may survive such internal conflict, but eventually, having run its course, it will come to an end ... The extent of the movement’s apparent achievements is often disillusioning to idealists; but in many cases, these individuals may underestimate the progress that has been made” (Ibid., 22).

In *Mutual Aid*, Kropotkin presents a genealogy of the practice of individuals working together for communal benefit, yet he barely touches on co-operation as a movement. What he does write concerns precisely what Craig warned of: that a single-voiced movement creates internal conflict. Kropotkin's analysis is not that flattering, although he ends on a somewhat optimistic note:

“Co-operation, especially in Britain, is often described as “joint-stock individualism”; and such as it is now, it undoubtedly tends to breed a co-operative egotism, not only towards the community at large, but also among the co-operators themselves. It is, nevertheless, certain that at its origin the movement had an essentially mutual-aid character. Even now, its most ardent promoters are persuaded that co-operation leads mankind to a higher harmonic stage of economical relations, and it is not possible to stay in some of the strongholds of co-operation in the North without realizing that the great number of the rank and file hold the same opinion. Most of them would lose interest in the movement if that faith were gone; and it must be owned that within the last few years broader ideals of general welfare and of the producers' solidarity have begun to be current among the co-operators. There is undoubtedly now a tendency towards establishing better relations between the owners of the co-operative workshops and the workers” (Kropotkin 1902).

Many histories of the co-op movement place its origins in the early Nineteenth-century with one utopian thinker in particular: cotton industrialist Robert Owen (Apland & Axworthy 1988, 55; Birchall 1997, 4; Craig 1993, 25; Day 2005, 38; Hands 2016, 24; MacPherson 1979, 4; Ranis 2016, 8; Ratner 2013, 61). Owen is at once called “the father of British Socialism,” “the founder of co-operation and secularism” and one of “the fathers of Co-operation” (Butt 1071, 9). What should become apparent from this section, however, is that Owen “was not the first of the modern Socialist theorists ... but one of the last 18th-century rationalists ... setting out from New Lanark to claim the

Chairmanship of the Board of Directors of the Industrial Revolution” (Thompson 1963, 784). Despite this, Owen’s legacy has profoundly shaped the mainstream co-op movement.

3.3 The Utopian Retreat from Politics

Owen’s New View of Society was built around housing the poor in “Villages of Co-operation” (Thompson 1963, 782) where the workers of his mills would be able to live harmoniously and in healthy communities. Apart from a few examples of isolated British worker co-operatives dating back to the 1760s (Birchall 1997, 4; Fairbairn 1994, 6), the co-op movement started with the question of housing.

However, Owen’s co-operative village was not run by the workers themselves. Rather, it was the opposite: the village was a way to control the workers. E.P. Thompson, in *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963), describes how Owen’s perception of workers as unruly shaped his writing and his practice. Workers were in need of education and training so they would become attentive, efficient and orderly. His planned milling societies would essentially act as workhouses, where the poor would be given the conditions necessary to “become “useful”, “industrious”, “rational”, self-disciplined, and temperate” (Ibid., 782). Owen was a “model paternalist mill-owner and self-made man who canvassed the royalty, courtiers and governments of Europe with his philanthropic proposals” (Ibid., 780). The structure of his villages even echoed Bentham’s panopticon by discouraging “immorality ... through the introduction of a fining system; and discipline and honesty increased through the setting up of a ‘silent monitor’, or work-performance indicator, beside each factory-hand” (Butt 1971, 24). This institutionalized control did not go unnoticed at the time, and a contemporary of Owen, William Cobbett,

called the villages “Parallelograms of Paupers” (Tawney 1964, 36). All things considered, Owen’s village was simply “an unusually large business unit for the day, requiring a range of management and production-control techniques beyond the needs of the owner of the small mill in a town” (Ibid., 16).

It is ironic that although Owen “was indispensable to the evolution of a working-class consciousness” (Butt 1971, 14), he, himself, did not hold one. The “notion of working-class advance, by its own self-activity towards its own goals, was alien to Owen even though he was drawn, between 1829 and 1834, into exactly this kind of movement ... Next to ‘benevolent’ the words most commonly encountered in early Owenite writings are ‘provided for them’” (Thompson 1963, 781). He “reiterated invocations to brotherly love between masters and men” and predicted a “revolution of the human mind directed solely by truth, by charity, and by kindness,” (Tawney 1964, 38-39). His skirting of class antagonisms was more than polite apoliticism—it was consent for the continuation of oppression by the elite. In one example, only two weeks after the Pentrich uprising of 1817, for which the government hanged three insurgents, Owen complimented prime minister Lord Sidmouth’s “mild and amiable” disposition (Thompson 1964, 782).

In the 1820s, Henry Hetherington, a radical publisher and working-class organizer, became a follower of Owen’s co-operative vision. However, by 1831, he began an open debate, through his weekly newspaper *Poor Man’s Guardian*, criticizing Owen’s reluctance to engage in substantial political agitation. Owen did not fight to abolish the class system, Hetherington claimed. Instead he looked to the ruling and moneyed elite to improve working class conditions.

“Mr Owen is generally esteemed, and without doubt is, a kind-hearted man—benevolently disposed to do his utmost

to better the condition of mankind; but he exhibits a strange perversity of mind in expecting to realise his political millennium before working men are placed on equal footing with the other classes of the community with regards to political rights ... he entertains an absurd idea, that with the aid of a plundering aristocracy, he shall be able to establish Co-operative principles” (Hetherington, Henry. 14 Jan 1832. Poor Man’s Guardian. As cited in Butt 1971, 11)

By all accounts, Owen was simply naive. But the radicals of his time were unforgiving. They denounced his “comforting system” and his belief in the salvation of patronage. He was mocked for gaining approval from the ruling elite for ideas like co-operation and “Universal Benevolence” (Thompson 1964, 784) which were as old as anything. These ideas, through Owen’s appropriation, were “forced to take refuge and to lie snug for twenty years in the New Lanark mills, with the connivance of the worthy proprietor” (Ibid.). Some of his detractors understood co-operative discourse could not be conceived as new⁴ nor contained by one monolithic voice:

Does not Mr. Owen know that the same scheme, the same principles, the same philosophy ... of virtue and happiness, were rife in the year 1793, were noised abroad then, were spoken on the house-tops, were whispered in secret, were published in quarto and duodecimo, in political treatises, in plays, poems, songs and romances—made their way to the bar, crept into the church, ascended the rostrum, thinned the classes of the universities ... that these "New Views of Society" got into the hearts of poets and the brains of metaphysicians, took possession of the fancies of boys and women, and turned the heads of almost the whole kingdom (Ibid.)

While Owen himself might have been oblivious to the appropriative, panoptical and paternalistic qualities of his villages, the ruling elite certainly wasn’t. It saw in

⁴ See sections on “New vs. Old” in Chapters 4 and 5.

Owen's proposals a way to turn the poor into efficient economic contributors while quashing any revolutionary tendencies. Owen was "assisted by numerous, mostly middle-class leaders motivated by religious convictions, general reform sympathies, and fear of more radical movements" (MacPherson 1979, 3).

Another figure considered a "father of co-operation" is Charles Fourier. Although celebrated for his contributions to egalitarian thought, notably feminism, his co-op vision shared many of the same characteristics as Owen's.

Fourier's phalansteries—his version of co-operative villages—as described in *The Theory of the Four Movements* (1808/1996), were to be highly communal and ensure absolute equality between men and women. They allowed for private property and were autonomous from state control and subsidy (Lichtheim 1969, 34). However, Fourier's utopian communities would not be realized by the poor through any revolutionary means, which would "disturb the established order" (Fourier 1971, 66), but "from some wealthy philanthropist who might be persuaded to adopt and propagate his system" (Lichtheim 1969, 34). The phalansteries would not abolish wealth inequality (Naubauer 2013, 41) but would instead be mixed income communities, where "there must be differences of fortune ranging from abject poverty to the possession of 'hundreds of millions'" (Day 2005, 105). With all of this in mind, Fourier might best be described as "the ancestor of all those forms of socialism which seek to combine a minimum of public regulation with a maximum of individual freedom" (Lichtheim 1969, 34) or, through a more contemporary lens, "an authoritarian communitarian capitalist" (Day 2005, 106).

Both Owen and Fourier's proposals and experiments centred around the prerequisite that wealthy philanthropists, when witness to the decrepit conditions of the

poor, were to be the initiators of planned, utopian communities. This humanitarian approach was in no small part responsible for associating socialism with philanthropy (Lichtheim 1969, 36). The utopians did not provide “a radical cooperative alternative” and it was not the later co-op movement that “renounced political opposition to capitalism, agreed to coexist with capitalism . . . and adopted free market, commodity social relations—purged of greedy, speculative, exploitive capitalist features—as the basis of cooperation” as Carl Ratner (2013, 60) argues. Capitalist and hierarchical features existed in the earliest co-op experiments: “Nineteenth-century advocates of cooperatives, such as Fourier and Owen, were called utopian by their critics not because cooperative business ventures were tenuous nor because cooperatives could not be made to turn a profit; rather, what made them utopian was their retreat from politics and, thus, the whole questions of power” (Kasmir 1996, 20).

Luckily, Owen and Fourier did not represent the entirety of the early co-op movement, and it is important to identify others credited with birthing the co-op movement.

With the moral justification and cross-class support for co-ops in place, it was only a matter of time before the familiar corporate structure of modern co-ops emerged. Although there were many co-ops prior, the first lasting co-op project is attributed to the Rochdale Pioneers. Their goals “were pure Owenism,” but the step-by-step method came from “the plan outlined in the 1820s by co-operative leader and theorist Dr. William King of Brighton” (Fairbairn 1994, 6).

William King, a physician and close friend of Lady Byron—ex-wife of the famous poet and Baron of Rochdale, Lord Byron—is one character “whose right to be

regarded as a father of the modern co-operative movement is indisputable (Mercer 1922, xi) due to the “practical advice given in his magazine *The Co-operator* ... [as to] how by opening shops Owen’s supporters could use surpluses to save towards their own emancipation” (Birchall 1997, 4). He might be “the most significant” of the early co-op influencers (Hands 2016, 24), yet there is very little written about him. What is known is King’s co-operativism, like Owen’s, was “without the political antagonism towards the upper classes” (Corina 1994, 170). King’s magazine gave practical advice on how to form co-ops, but it was done under the auspices of an elite group that believed it knew what was best for workers: “Dr and Mrs King ... and close-knit networks of aristocratic relatives, friends and allies formed the nucleus of an astonishing mixture of Co-operative enthusiasts” (Ibid., 172).

Although the history of the co-op movement has crystallized through certain repeated narratives, recent research (Kaswan 2014; Kelly 2015; Lane forthcoming; Ranis 2016) suggests the co-op movement might benefit from reorienting itself around the more radical praxes of two other Owenites: William Thompson and Anna Wheeler.

Thompson, whose insight into the expropriation of labour from labourers was quoted by Marx in *Capital*, and Wheeler, a radical feminist, held direct lines of communication with Owen but advocated for a much more political form of co-operation. Thompson “constituted the ‘major challenger to [Robert] Owen’s leadership” (Lane 2010, 21) and “by 1832 Thompson was preferred over Owen to lead the movement by a majority of the membership ... [as] Thompson’s co-operative vision was far more democratic than Owen’s” (Kelly 2015, 21). Thompson “believed that workers needed to opt out of the competition and ally together to promote their collective interests, since if

workers competed against each other they were only sustaining the system that oppresses them” (Ranis 2015, 9-11).

3.4 The Co-op Question

In spite of how hard some of the early proponents of co-ops tried to maintain the movement’s apoliticism, some co-ops represented worker control and thus class struggle. There has been a lot written about Marx’s attitude towards co-ops, from his belief, on the one hand, that worker co-ops “are incapable of creating the massive increase in productive capacity that would make socialism and communism possible, and capitalism obsolete” (Graham 2015, 95) and, on the other, of the “potentiality he saw in working people’s abilities to not only run the Parisian factories but the very centers of French political, administrative and military power” (Ranis 2016, 8). However Marx’s opinion of co-ops fluctuated moment to moment, it was clear he thought co-ops should not remain “the efforts of private workmen” but should be structured, as the Canadian housing co-op movement has done, with “the assistance of the state” (Graham 2015, 64), from the national level down: “co-operative labour ought to be developed to national dimensions, and, consequently, to be fostered by national means” (Marx 1864). This statement on co-ops, a direct challenge to Proudhonism and anarchism, was made in the inaugural address to the First International. “Thus,” Robert Graham writes in his account of the gathering, it was over the co-op question that “the seeds of the conflict in the International between Marx, the Proudhonists, and later, the anarchists, were planted by Marx himself in the Inaugural Address” (Graham 2015, 64).

The co-op question wasn’t settled at the First International for either the anarchists or the socialists and over the years co-ops have been, contradictorily, put on

pedestals as transformative and shot down as strategies of cooptation. In one example of the former, early anarchist Mikhail Bakunin, writing in 1866, claimed co-ops could spell the end for nations:

“Working men’s co-operative associations are a new development in history; we are witnessing their birth at this moment, and can only imagine but not determine the vast expansion they will undoubtedly undergo and the new political and social conditions to which they will give rise. It is possible, indeed highly probably, that eventually ... they will provide the whole of human society with a new constitution, no longer divided into nations but into different industrial groupings, and organized according to the requirements not of politics but of production” (Bakunin 1973, 69-70).

In a 1996 lecture to architects, anarchist Colin Ward argued the solution to the problems of the complex bureaucratization associated with modernist residential towers common in North America and Europe “is to develop systems of dweller control through the various forms of housing co-operatives” (Ward 2011, 177). However, in the 1973 book *Anarchy in Action*, Ward acknowledges how housing co-ops, although examples of “direct action” (Ward 1996, 27), inevitably get co-opted by the state. When the severe shortage of housing for British soldiers returning home culminated in the mass squats of 1946, Colin Ward, then in his early 20s, came up with the four stages “common to all examples of popular direct action in housing in a non-revolutionary situation,” with the final step being to quell any further uprising:

1. Initiation: the individual action or decision that begins the campaign, the spark that starts the blaze
2. Consolidation: when the movement spreads sufficiently to constitute a threat to property rights and becomes big enough to avoid being snuffed out by the authorities

3. Success: when the authorities have to concede to the movement what it has won
4. Official action: usually undertaken unwillingly to placate the popular demand, or to incorporate it in the status quo” (Ibid., 70-71)

3.5 A Roundup of Recent Housing Co-op Tenant Initiatives in Ontario:

In this section I provide a discussion of some actions, that have been taken by co-op tenants in Ontario, over approximately the last five years, to address problems in housing co-ops. It will become apparent that, while a great amount of time and effort has been put into solving problems, most of these initiatives have failed to reach their stated objectives. It is also interesting to note that they have mostly revolved around the same approach, which is to vent frustrations, educate, and provide resources to other tenants in co-ops.

Prior to and during this research project, efforts have been made by tenants of co-ops in Ontario to organize, independent of co-op boards, staff, and the federations, specifically to address tenant concerns. The last five years have seen a lot of activity, facilitated by the proliferation of social media and a significant bill passed in the Ontario legislature in September 2013, which opened up the Landlord and Tenant Board for the first time to co-op management, but not to co-op tenants. This was done with the intent, I would argue, to optimize the eviction process as a way of disciplining tenants.

These groups and initiatives sought to act as alternatives to the dominant co-op bodies (boards and federations) that have been created by co-op housing tenants in Ontario. While the majority are either inactive or primarily exist on the internet, they represent the independent organizing efforts of tenants seeking to improve conditions in housing co-ops. These efforts have primarily focused on resource sharing, venting tenant

frustrations, and trying to understand the complicated structure of the co-op housing sector.

Co-op Housing Reform Group was formed in early 2015 by members of Fairlea Park Housing Co-op in Ottawa as an attempt at independent tenant organizing. The organization was short-lived. A website, chrg.ca, was created in April 2015 but closed by that August (<https://web.archive.org/web/20150801105436/http://chrg.ca/>). Its mission statement, which is included in full as Appendix A, describes the group as:

“A grass-roots movement dedicated to reforming non-profit co-operative housing in Ontario and eventually, Canada. CHRГ is an autonomous consensus-driven co-operative collective of housing co-op individual members. CHRГ is not affiliated with, nor receives any funding from, any local, regional, provincial, or federal organisation, private business, or political party.”

Co-operative Housing Information Exchange is a blog created by a co-op tenant from Whitby, “that has a mandate to share free information about co-ops, social/community housing, and resources in Canada, United States of America, United Kingdom, and other countries. CHIE helps put together all the pieces of the puzzle about non-profit co-op housing in Canada, so you can gain a better perspective” (cooperativeone.blogspot.com).

Co-op Housing Member Information is another blog created as a commentary and resource base, described as “a group of diverse housing co-op member/residents sharing little known information with others who may be experiencing difficulties in their homes. This blog’s purpose is to provide this rarely shared information for you that we’ve been researching for years” (coophousingmemberinfo.wordpress.com).

Movement for Affordable Co-operative Housing its initial meeting in February 2018 at Oak Street co-op in Toronto, where tenants used the opportunity to discuss their frustrations with co-ops. It was noted during the meeting that although the organizers had ties to CHF-T, MACH was to be led directly by co-op tenants. MACH was noted to be a reincarnation of a more formal and less independent group, Alliance for Affordable Co-operative Housing, that formed in August 2008. AACH itself emerged from the Subsidy Crisis Action Group, which was created by residents of Windmill Line Co-op in Toronto in 2004. AACH sought to bring “together co-op members and staff from across Canada to work for the restoration and continuation of rent-gear-to-income subsidies. AACH lobbies governments at all levels to fulfill their responsibilities to low-income Canadians by fully funding existing subsidy programs and developing new forms of subsidy to replace operating agreements as they expire”

(web.archive.org/web/20150204205759/http://aach.ca/about-us/).

Coop Housing Members Association is a Facebook group with 56 members (as of April 2019). Its mandate is seemingly the most radical of all these initiatives: “This group started because there are no serious associations for members of coops or tenants of government subsidized housing. Direct Action is our preferred method of operation in combination with formal processes such as legal actions and formal complaints. As well it is our intention to form alliances with other tenant associations and to lobby for better legal protection of our housing rights. We believe that funding from the government and funding agencies disempowers members and destroys autonomy of the group”

(www.facebook.com/groups/20082993008).

Co-op Housing Toronto, a Facebook group with 120 members (as of April 2019), was created in March 2014. It is the most active of all the initiatives listed here. It is a platform to share news and general comments on co-op housing. Its description is: “Feeling herded rather than “heard”? Express your concerns, solutions and ideas on how to make the co-op housing mandate work for everyone” (www.facebook.com/groups/coophousingtor).

Co-op Housing, Toronto, a YouTube channel, was created in February 2014 as “an introduction to educate, problem solve and enlighten Co-op member/residents about the law and their rights and ideas to return us to the original concept of healthy community living in co-ops.” It features interviews with co-op tenants and videos of confrontations with staff. It also features a series titled *Paperbag Confessionals* in which tenants wear a paper bag over their head, to protect against reprisal, and speak openly about their negative experiences in co-ops. As a direct result of my MA research project, I was asked by the moderator of this channel to participate in two videos (www.youtube.com/channel/UCz2JnMU-j2xefLOfOWFcc4Q).

Co-op Homes Action Network emerged as a direct result of this research project. During a meeting with two research participants, we decided to create a new group which would act as a platform for co-op tenants to organize. The name was chosen carefully to reflect an orientation toward action, alignment with solidarity networks, the personal affect of home, and to avoid the connotation of “housing stock.” In July 2017, I purchased the domain and designed the website. CHAN “exists to connect housing co-op residents with each other and to provide the resources needed to protect ourselves and our neighbours from unfair boards of directors and property managers. Co-op residents may

not have the same rights as tenants, but we do have the ability to organize and take back control of our co-ops! It's time co-ops return to being co-operative and resident-run!"

(coophomesaction.ca).

3.6 Housing Co-ops Now

Confusion arises in the co-op movement over politically-determinative key concepts, in particular decolonialism and anti-capitalism. These concepts may be encouraged in certain individual co-ops but are in no way foundational to the movement as a whole. Instead, the foundational concepts are abstract and apolitical, and have allowed firms which contribute to capitalist and colonial practices to fall under the banner of a "co-op." The problem lies in the co-optation of the movement and the reality that the "left, however, seems to communicate in abstracts, which creates rather than solves problems at the local level. People do not want abstract terms, they want concrete solutions" (Utratel 2017, 202).

Co-op housing is ostensibly synonymous with tenant-led housing, to the extent that two main narratives can be identified. The first is found in the working-class struggle for housing free from the oppression of landlords, private, public, or non-profit. This is the story of co-ops formed from tenants' rights movements and squats in response to discrimination, slum conditions and displacement (Helman 1987; Saillant 2018; Ward 1990, 121). The other is found in groups coming together based on shared identities to create prefigurations of communal living and mutual aid. Although this captures unique housing co-ops formed from the free-love and drug culture of the 60s and 70s, such as the notorious Rochdale College in Toronto (Henderson 2011), most are not very radical and revolve primarily around self-help housing.

The overlap between these two narratives immediately becomes apparent, though. Seniors co-ops tackle isolation; single mother co-ops create space for mutual aid and free from the threat of domestic abuse or landlord assault (Nadasdi 1988; Seebold 1992; Wack 1998); Black co-ops create space for “solidarity and cultural/racial loyalty” (Gordon Nembhard 2014, 217).

There are two other, perhaps less obvious, foundational narratives to co-op housing. One is a form of interventionist humanitarianism by the economic elite. The conviction that through improving working-class conditions, there would be “no reason for animosity between man and man” (Butt 1971, 23) was central in shaping industrialist Robert Owen’s vision for a planned town for his workers, which, as discussed earlier, later formed the basis of the co-op movement as it exists today.

The last narrative that has shaped co-op housing is also the hardest to pin down. This is the legislated co-optation and the recognition of the poor through the provision of self-managed housing. Just as the first two narratives—struggle and self-help—complement each other with the benefit of protecting marginalized people and building solidarity, the notion of “strategic ‘domestication’” (Coulthard 2007, 451) by the state aligns itself very well with Owen’s “political quietism” (Tawney 1964, 39) and the belief in rationality, order and the “grand design” above everything—including free will (Butt 1971, 22).

In the following chapter, I will analyze how these narratives are tied to the current state of co-op housing in Canada, despite how theorists have dichotomized co-ops into new vs. old.

Chapter 4

Theoretical Positioning

4.1 ‘New’ Cooperatives, New Age Co-operativism, and The New Cooperativism

There is a common stream in some of the literature on co-ops which identifies an emergence of a new form of co-operative. Without referencing each other, three of the most explicit accounts (Lévesque 1990; Craig 1993; Vieta 2010) describe the “new co-ops” as follows:

“The ‘new cooperatives’ made their appearance in most of the Western countries by the end of the 1960s. ... Supported by the working classes, in alliance with what has been called the ‘new petite bourgeoisie,’ ... these projects shared the same objectives as the new social movements, namely to foster lifestyles which would be markedly different from those dictated by a productivist society; other objectives were autonomy and self-management, a reaction against the bureaucratic interventions of the state and big business” (Lévesque 1990, 121).

“[New age co-operativism] has grown out of the protest movements of the 1960s and the resource crises dramatized by oil embargoes in the 1970s, and the more recent ecology movement of the 1980s and 90s. ... The good society envisaged by new age co-operativism would replace monolithic organizations with small life-oriented organizations. ... The new culture must be concerned with the process of living, emphasizing self-development, helping others and developing satisfying lifestyles that conserve resources” (Craig 1993, 64).

“By the late 1960s, thinking around cooperativism merged with broader social and economic demands for self-determination and workers’ control around the concept of autogestión (self-management). ... of life itself by recuperating production and reproduction from the ideologies and practices of possessive individualism, productivism, and consumerism. ... We might call these experiments *the new cooperativism*” (Vieta 2010, 2).

The new co-ops are based around self-determination, encompassing all aspects of life. They are prefigurative, with a view towards a society separate from capitalism. From this view, they can even be extended to decolonization, the undoing of settler colonialism, and the abolition of exploitation and the dispossession of bodies and land as described below. The new co-operativism “is as much about rupture as about newness” (Vieta 2010, 4).

However, even when they are attempting to be prefigurative projects, co-ops also exist as a reaction to capitalism. “A cooperative enterprise follows a dual—and ambiguous—rationale. On the one hand, it is reacting to the effects of capitalism and, on the other, it is functionally adapting to a new organization of production and its attendant changes. ... [it] can only sustain itself if it is competitive with other types of enterprises” (Lévesque 1990, 108). This notion of the “newness” of co-ops, insofar as they only exist alongside capitalism, is also reflected by other authors. “The idea of cooperation ... was a distinctly modern phenomenon.... It was a response to the increasing commodification of a formerly subsistence-based economy” (Kohn, 2003, 74).

As discussed in the Genealogy chapter, the co-op structure formed from a movement, a reaction to capitalism. It was initially a philanthropic endeavour to address conditions of life under early industrialization. But, as Leanne Betasamosake Simpson writes: “‘Fixing’” the ‘social ills’ without addressing the politics of land and body dispossession serves only to reinforce settler colonialism, because it doesn’t stop the system that causes the harm in the first place. It also creates the opportunity for neoliberalism to benevolently provide just enough ill-conceived programming and

‘funding’ to keep us in a constant state of crisis, which inevitably they market as our fault” (Simpson 2017, 42).

The fact that co-ops never existed immanently in their own right and have only existed to the extent that they operate within and against the capitalist mode of production, means that co-ops cannot exist without capitalism. Whereas Simpson identifies “the dismantling of global capitalism as inseparable from the struggle for Indigenous sovereignty, self-determination, and nationhood” (Simpson 2017, 67), the dismantling of capitalism (and with it all forms of landlords and rent) would mean the (housing) co-op as an entity would also disappear.

Can co-op housing, and co-ops generally, be reoriented around a radical and transformative core, following Simpson’s practice of the “taking back of resurgence from the realm of neoliberalism and reclaiming its revolutionary potential, that is, its potential to offer robust, ethical, and sustainable alternatives to settler colonialism” (Simpson 2017, 50)?

What the new cooperativism is trying to do is go beyond the need to be “formally constituted” (Vieta 2010, 3) and thus aim for social organization in its own right. Taking this position respects co-operation as a fundamental capability of life. No longer are co-ops limited to being reactions to capitalism or to address social ills, “the new cooperativism embraces, more broadly, innumerable forms of collective economic practices and social values that are rooted in, as Kropotkin wrote over a century ago ‘mutual aid amongst ourselves’” (Ibid.). It involves “a whole new way of looking at the world [through an] evolving ideology” (Craig 1993, 64). In pursuit of a multi-issue co-operative order, it forms an “alternative *co-operative project* ... [which does] not

undermine the autonomy of the local co-op and democratic control by the membership” (Lévesque 190, 122). This was embodied by the Milton-Parc Citizens’ Committee in the late 1960s and early 70s through their vision for their Montreal neighbourhood, discussed later in this thesis.

However, autonomy and the desire for co-operative, non-antagonistic relations between the classes would soon be incorporated into the federal government’s 1976 blueprint for a neoliberal order, also discussed later. Writing about co-ops in Quebec, Lévesque (1990) argues the dominant view among economists is that co-ops, “as enterprises like any other ... exhibit the same tendencies towards concentration and centralization ... in which the role of the entrepreneur is played collectively by modest-income social groups” (Lévesque 1990, 107). Here, Lévesque touches on the ability of co-ops to reshape the traditional class relationship, such as between landlord and tenant in regard to housing. This will be explored further in Chapter 4.

Lévesque explains the “old” co-ops in Quebec were developed through heavy intervention by the Quebec state, and “guided by economic policy based either on economic nationalism or neo-liberalism” (Ibid., 110). Neoliberalism is used here in a very broad sense to describe co-ops that had “become highly institutionalized and whose development is governed by the logic of business rather than that of associations” (Ibid., 109). This definition reflects the amorphous, “polysemic” (Ganti 2014, 91) usage of neoliberalism, which is more strongly associated with post-1970 co-ops, but the entrepreneurial logic behind all co-ops breaks down notions of old vs. new.

Co-ops in Quebec were historically an implement of capitalist and colonial expansion. They were a means for the province to carve its own economic path distinct

from the federal government, known as the Quiet Revolution. This is most evident with the Desjardins Movement credit union. Early on, the Catholic church promoted the development of co-ops across the province—its chaplains helped ensure funding of housing co-ops by joining credit unions and small business associations (Vienney et al. 1985, 132). Around 1968, with the creation of the *Fédération des coopératives d'habitation*, called Coop-Habitat, the church's role waned, and the Quebec state began an intense period of technocracy and centralization around housing co-ops, to the point where Coop-Habitat rapidly became a “rental agency” with hopes that renters would become enamoured with the co-op model (Vienney et al. 1985, 173).

Replicating the new vs. old paradigm, George Melnyk, a Canadian co-op researcher, categorizes co-ops based on their functional orientation: liberal democratic, Marxist, socialist, and communalist. The prevailing co-op form in Canada is liberal democratic, which Melnyk says represents the right wing of the co-op movement; the Russian kolkhoz collective farms were Marxist; the Israeli Kibbutz is socialist; and communes are characterized as small-scale, leader-oriented, intentional, isolationist and utopian. The Canadian, liberal democratic co-ops are prone to centralization, entrenching of the managerial class, and taming of ideological fervour (Melnyk 1985).

In reality, contemporary state-sponsored housing co-ops are an amalgam of the new and the old. They are liberal democratic, socialist, and countercultural all at once. Instead of dividing co-ops along these “identity” categories, I argue that housing co-ops simply reproduce class structure and colonialism by reshaping the landlord–tenant relationship.

4.2 Recognition, Transformation and Parity of Participation

The sharp distinction between the different streams of co-ops—state-led vs. utopian—as “old” vs. “new” glosses over the rich history of pre-1970s co-operative self-determination projects, particularly among African Americans. “Working immanently within a tradition—working deconstructively or genealogically, for example—means paying attention not only to breaks and ruptures, but to the ways in which one form emerges out of another, the ways in which ‘the new’ never entirely displaces ‘the old’” (Day 2005, 94). This point was touched on at the Canadian Association for Studies in Co-operation’s 2017 conference, when discussion around the “new co-operativism” was challenged by academic Jessica Gordon Nembhard, who argued the “new” prefix ignores the huge social progress made by subaltern groups by utilizing the co-op model.

The African American co-ops of the early 20th century and prior are a testament to this. Decades before the social movements of the 1960s, “the African American Cooperative Movement was a silent partner in the long civil rights movement” (Gordon Nembhard 2017, 171). For example, in 1934, the Brick Rural Life School in Brick, North Carolina, offered a co-op development education program for families who lived on the property. They would learn farming techniques and co-op economics. In 1936, they started a credit union; in 1938, a co-op store was opened; and in 1939 developed a health program. “By the late 1940s more than 75% of the families had at least one member connected with one of the co-ops” (Gordon Nembhard 2006, 47).

African American co-ops continued to develop and in 1967, the Federation of Southern Cooperatives was established, “uniting one-hundred farmer's cooperatives, marketing co-ops, and credit unions from across the South.” Now called the Federation of

Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund, it continues “to support land-based economic development for low-income communities through cooperative development and saving of Black-owned land” (Gordon Nembhard 2006, 48).

Gordon Nembhard’s research, anthologized in the book *Collective Courage: A History of African American Cooperative Economic Thought and Practice* (2014), is a testament to the importance of “working immanently within a tradition.” Rather than differentiate between old and new, Gordon Nembhard classifies co-ops based on their catalytic genesis. Three different models of co-op development are identified: self-initiated, charismatic leader, and agency-initiated (Gordon Nembhard 2006, 44–45). Self-initiated co-ops result from a group of like-minded people coming together to advance their interests; Mondragón, founded by the priest José María Arizmendiarieta Madariaga, is an example of the charismatic leader model; and agency-initiated describes when “a private or government agency pulls together a group of people, trains them, provides management in the initial launch, and slowly turns the business over to the owner/members” (Gordon Nembhard 2006, 45).

More recently, Cooperation Jackson has emerged as a radical endeavour of self-initiated economic and decolonial transformation. Its specific goals are the following:

1. To place the ownership and control over the primary means of production directly in the hands of the Black working class of Jackson;
2. To build and advance the development of the ecologically regenerative forces of production in Jackson, Mississippi;
3. To democratically transform the political economy of the city of Jackson, the state of Mississippi, and the southeastern region; and

4. To advance the aims and objectives of the Jackson-Kush Plan, which are to attain self-determination for people of African descent and the radical, democratic transformation of the state of Mississippi (which we see as a prelude to the radical decolonization and transformation of the United States itself) (Akuno 2017, 3–4).

These goals of “economic democracy and eco-socialist transformation” are best accomplished by taking the “participatory, bottom-up democratic route ... through worker self-organization, the guiding structures of cooperatives and systems of mutual aid and communal solidarity, and the democratic ownership, control, and deployment of the ecologically friendly and labor liberating technologies of the fourth industrial revolution ... the Cyber-Physical Revolution” (Akuno 2017, 7, 13).

The sum total of Black co-operative projects across the U.S. was and continues to be transformative, addressing “market failure and racial discrimination” through “livelihoods, land ownership, home ownership, savings opportunities, and other mechanisms for economic independence” (Gordon Nembhard 2017, 179).

Transformative strategies, such as Cooperation Jackson, come about only once parity of participation is achieved and all members of society can participate fully without any obstacles, according to theorist Nancy Fraser. Class—the institutionalization of economic mechanisms—and status—the institutionalized patterns of cultural value—work in tandem to deny people, respectively, of “the means and opportunities [and] recognition ... they need in order to participate on a par with others in a social life” (Fraser & Honneth 2003, 49). Participatory parity is achieved through redistribution to address class, in tandem with recognition to level out status hierarchy.

Treating redistribution and recognition as mutually exclusive, according to Fraser, has “unintended effects” (Ibid., 64). For example, welfare as a form of redistribution results in “misrepresentation” by concocting status hierarchies, such as “welfare mother” vs. “wage earner.” Conversely, advancing women’s status by suppressing pornography as redress for recognition, Fraser explains, can negatively impact a sex worker’s financial situation. What then, “can remedy injustices of status and class simultaneously?” Fraser asks (Ibid., 72).

This is achieved through transformation, which seeks remedies “through restructuring the underlying generative framework” (Ibid., 74). Applied to status hierarchies, transformative strategies would abolish strict binaries, for example black/white and gay/straight, and the divisions these create. Transformative strategies allow redistribution to occur without creating the judgmental classifications, for example of hard-worker vs. welfare bum. “Far from generating backlash misrecognition, then, they tend to promote solidarity” (Ibid., 77).

Welfare and understanding “distributional injustices ... as the institutional expression of social disrespect” (Ibid., 114) inherently accept the condition of poverty through recognition of the poor. The difficulty with saying co-ops are a form of recognition of the working class, is that “low-income” or “poor” or even “working class” are not identities, or using Nancy Fraser’s terminology, statuses. It is a relationship. Although recognition theorists like Charles Taylor argue that identities are formed through relationships, “through ‘dialogue with others, in agreement or struggle with their recognition of us” (Taylor 1991, 45-46, quoted in Coulthard 2014, 29), identity remains something that is bestowed upon individuals and groups by “a dominant group or entity

[and] prefigures its failure to significantly modify, let alone transcend, the breadth of power at play in colonial relationships” (Coulthard 2014, 30-31). While I am not saying proletarianization, such as the process of becoming tenants or “members” of a housing co-op, is on all fronts the same as colonization, co-ops do reflect a “vision of self-government [which] involves an attempt ‘to delegate parliamentary authority’” (Day 2006, 86). The goal is not to reproduce state authority on a smaller scale. In fact, the goal of the working class is precisely the abolition of class. What other "culture" fights for its identity to no longer exist?

“It is a positive identity based on the very thing that we hate: the fact that we’re forced into wage labor. Politics built on this identity (like all identity politics) are inherently conservative. A pathetic moral superiority and resentment take the place of an ability to change our situation ... We want to stop being working class” (prole.info 2012, 57-59).

With the emphasis on participation, Co-ops across the country, and around the world, supposedly created the opportunity to develop a “third sector” (CHF-T 1982, 5), which arguably acted as a euphemism for what are also called private-public partnerships (P3).

Anarchist writer Colin Ward alludes to how the co-optation of the notion of participation and cooperation has led to the proliferation of P3s. In the book *Talking Houses* (1990), he writes, “[The] governments of both Britain and the United States, with their ideology of the New Right [i.e. neoliberalism], when they talk about the cities at all, talk in terms of ‘partnership’ of business and government. They do not speak of ‘participation’ of ordinary citizens” (Ward 1990, 126).

Ward remarks that talk of participation led to the emergence of a particular type of social movement in the 1960s. “There grew up a new 1960s ideology of ‘participation’ which was populist, socialist, and to a small but important extent, rediscovery, by people who had never heard of anarchism, of anarchist values” (Ward 1990, 126). Ward refers to Sherry Arnstein’s well-known Ladder of Participation, and says: “Naturally, the anarchist aim is the very top rung of Arnstein’s Ladder, that of Full Citizen Control. It’s something worth aiming at, whatever kind of society we live in. We may not win the economic battles, but we can sometimes win the environmental battles!” Realistically, however, application of a state or sector-initiated program of participation falls on the bottom rung of Arnstein’s Ladder: manipulation.

“Tenant ‘consultation’ and tenant ‘participation’ are so obviously designed as a means of manipulating tenants in the interests of housing management, that it is no wonder that nobody takes them seriously. They are the shadow, rather than the substance, of tenant control, and the tenants themselves, knowing that real power lies elsewhere, are not fooled. If anything, these token gestures, because they are not taken seriously, merely discredit the idea that people are capable of managing their own environment” (Ward 1974, 75).

As the Canadian co-op housing federations solidified themselves as a powerful lobby, participation became a form of recognition of poor people rather than a means for working-class emancipation. This is visible in federation documents over decades that revealed their propensity for large, economy of scale co-ops and professionalization such as *Member Participation* (1988) *Beyond Participation* (1990), and *The End of Participation* (Armstrong & Gazzard 2008). This is discussed further in sections 4.4 and 5.2.

4.3 Reshaping Working-Class Subjectivities

The importance of home in shaping the self cannot be understated. Living in a working-class household in a working-class neighbourhood forms our perceptions and our interactions with the world, even if class is frequently unacknowledged at the household level. Non-profit organizations and governments talk about low-income people and poverty. Class is left to the realm of labour, which has been historically invisible in the home. “Domestic labour,” in turn, is further intensified by race and gender (Davis 2011, 133). bell hooks describes the formative significance of a working-class upbringing, even when the focus was on money not class, in her book *Where We Stand: Class Matters*: “Money was necessary and important. Everybody talked about money, nobody talked about class. ... While class was never talked about in our household, the importance of work—of working hard—was praised. ... To know ourselves fully we had to find our place in the world of work, and that, ultimately, meant confronting race and class” (hooks 2000, 22–23). Marxist geographer David Harvey echoes this:

“The social dynamics of the workplace are not the same as those in the living space. On the latter terrain, distinctions based on gender, race, ethnicity, religion, and culture are frequently more deeply etched into the social fabric, while issues of social reproduction play a more prominent, even dominant role in the shaping of political subjectivities and consciousness” (Harvey 2012a, 133).

Considering that home plays such a formative role, it is important to consider how it has been used to maintain class structures by shaping political consciousness. In this section, I analyze how the Canadian state utilized co-ops as a tool to further entrench capitalism. Housing co-ops reshaped the landlord–tenant class relationship into an outlet

for consumers' individual freedom under the guidance of the free market. I will argue that this was done through what is commonly described as neoliberalism.

The only problem with viewing neoliberalism as a unique form of capitalism that reshapes subjectivities and establishes new social relations is that the notion of neoliberalism itself decouples the masking and quelling of class conflict under capitalism in general, when the reshaping, masking, and quelling of class consciousness is in fact a constitutive element of capitalism. Capitalism has always tried to hide itself, especially to the exploited. In this way, neoliberalism is itself a “neoliberal” term. I initially wanted to avoid bringing “neoliberalism” into the picture for this very reason. But it turns out to be quite useful from a historical perspective in analyzing how these phenomena relate to housing co-ops, in particular “the production of selves and subjectivities ... formed or refashioned in alignment with values of individualism, entrepreneurialism, and market competition” (Ganti 2014, 91, 94).

From their earliest days, co-ops have been attempts at building “apolitical” or “politically-neutral” associations comprised of working-class people, managers, and capitalists in an effort to quell class conflict. This was no doubt an attempt at reshaping subjectivities, made clear by the fact that the early “villages of co-operation” were actually small authoritarian regimes, where the chaotic lower classes could be managed according to bourgeois ideals (see Chapter 3).

However, the main difference that marks the neoliberal period that began in the 1970s from other periods of capitalism is the United States' creation of a capital flow vacuum straight into Wall Street which swept over the world (Varoufakis 2015, 22). With a massive amount of wealth concentrated in the hands of a few, the capitalist class as a

whole is far outnumbered by the exploited. Although there are many social movements that challenge the dominant order, the biggest threat clearly remains class conflict based on numbers alone. With this global economic restructuring came management techniques that ensured workers would be satiated (i.e. “listened to”) enough to not revolt.

“When profits began to fall in the mid-1970s, capitalists sought new markets, labor contracts, and forms of industrial organization. ... Many corporations ... are introducing labor-management co-operation schemes, including quality circles, the team concept, employee-ownership programs, and participatory management. Proponents of these schemes favor cooperative labor-management relations” (Kasmir 1996, 3).

“[An] experiment conducted in a Rouen metallurgy firm from 1974 onwards, consisting in the abolition of assembly-line work ... in order to 'afford everyone greater autonomy'; ... [the] establishment of 'assembly units' at Peugeot from 1973, accompanied by a 'modification of hierarchical structures in order to reduce the number of levels of command and enhance workshop autonomy' ... affected the very structure of firms and, in particular, had the effect of dismantling ... the set of collectives on which critical bodies, particularly the unions, were based” (Boltanski & Chiapello 2007, 190, 191–192).

Neoliberalism is also contemporarily defined as the process of weakening the state institutions of capitalist accumulation, reshaping this into “flexible accumulation.” It is “a mode of governance that embraces the idea of the self-regulating free market, with its associated values of competition and self-interest, as the model for effective and efficient government” (Ganti 2014, 91). By 1973, the “rigidity” of traditional capitalist accumulation, which was restricted by a reliance on industrial production, resource extraction, and labour contracts, could no longer contain “the inherent contradictions of capitalism” (Arrighi 2010, 3).

However, rather than seeing the handing off of businesses, housing corporations, banks, and other bodies that developed into co-ops to the free market as a neoliberal tactic, the breed of co-operativism that emerged from the new social movements of the 1960s and 70s was seen as a victory for autonomy and self-determination, made possible by new participatory schemes. “Since the middle of the 1970s, social regulation and the state's desire to disengage itself from the social realm, have shaped intervention in the 'new' cooperatives. This latter period marked a turning point in state intervention regarding cooperatives” (Lévesque 1990, 100).

The 1970s was an incredibly significant decade for this process. “Since 1973, ... there has been a systematic and international promotion of cooperation—this is a new and notable phenomenon” (Kasmir 1996, 4). That same year the “Mondragón cooperatives were presented to an international audience” for the first time (Ibid., 2). The oil embargo in fall of 1973, and the resulting economic crisis marked by plummeting profits, production decreases, stagnant wages, and increased costs of living, was actually preceded by the bursting of the global property market bubble in spring ‘73. “Real Estate Investment Trust Assets in the US grew from \$2 billion in 1969 to \$20 billion in 1973 and ... commercial bank mortgage loans increased from \$66.7 billion to \$113.6 billion over the same period” (Harvey 2012b, 4–5). Yanis Varoufakis also remarks on the economic significance of that year:

“[From] 1973 onwards, something spectacular happened in the United States. In a country that prided itself on the fact that, at least since the 1850s, real wages had risen steadily, thus giving every generation of workers the hope that their children would be better off than they were, real wages stagnated. To this day, they have not even recovered their 1973 real purchasing power ... [yet] US corporate domestic

profits rose and rose and rose” (Varoufakis 2015, 104–105).

In England from 1919 to 1973, the state played a large interventionist role in housing, through “a vigorous programme of council [i.e. public] housebuilding” (Clapham & Kintrea 1995, 266). There was a sharp change in UK policy when, “at the Liberal Assembly in 1973 a resolution urging tenant control was passed by a large majority” (Ward 1974, 44) leading to the “main period of support for cooperatives in Liverpool [which] came between 1973 and 1983” (Clapham & Kintrea 1995, 266).

Here in Canada, the federal government passed the first comprehensive co-op housing funding program in 1973 under section 61 of the National Housing Act (NHA). Similar to how “the land-claims process constitutes a crucial vehicle for the ‘domestication’ of Indigenous claims to nationhood” (Coulthard 2014, 67), co-operation, acting as a kind of recognition of working-class people, serves as a vehicle to mask the divide between the classes without actually resolving class conflict. Case in point, in that same year, the Supreme Court of Canada’s Calder decision resulted in the “partial recognition of Aboriginal ‘title’” (Coulthard 2014, 5).

In a revealing government of Canada working paper published in 1976 titled *The Way Ahead*, the emergent trend of neoliberalism is referred to as “the post-control period.” The report analyzed the government’s response in dealing with the “disturbing features of the post-war growth period [including] disquiet ... over the ability to manage the economy with traditional policies alone” (Government of Canada 2011, 362). This disquiet became apparent through the mass mobilization of the late 1960s and early 1970s. The paper reveals the government had become particularly concerned “that rapidly rising expectations with respect to future levels of inflation posed grave threats to

the stability of the Canadian economic and social system” (Ibid., 356). The state would address these concerns through “a continued pursuit of liberal ideals, consistent with fiscal responsibility, and continued and reinforced reliance on the market economy. Strategies required to give effect to those principles entail a search for policies that will improve the workings of the market system” (Ibid.) One of those strategies would be to develop co-operatives.

The working paper promoted the tenets of neoliberalism: decentralization and “new directions in which labour–management relations can continue to evolve through the post-control period, becoming more cooperative and less adversarial” (Ibid., 384), reflecting Kasmir’s account of the restructuring of labour–management relations in the Mondragón co-ops. The paper even went so far as to recommend “Mechanisms to encourage the further development of cooperatives and voluntary organizations” (Ibid., 387). Here, the state’s ideological position on the congruity between co-ops and capitalism becomes absolutely clear.

Working-class struggles over the means of producing aspects of our lives, including housing, were now perfectly justified to suit the Canadian state’s own objectives. “By capturing ideals of individual freedom and turning them against the interventionist and regulatory practices of the state, capitalist class interests could hope to protect and even restore their position. Neoliberalism was well suited to this task” (Harvey 2005, 42).

What the federal government implemented in 1973 with the NHA, the Quebec government had done years prior. In the 1960s, Quebec started promoting collectively-owned housing projects where residents were at once owners and renters (Vienney et al.

1985, 135). This mirrored the earlier support of co-ops by the Catholic church in Quebec as a tactic to smother the communist passions flaring up in shabby rental housing. Rather than venting class frustrations through communism, the renting masses could turn to evangelical co-ops, at once providing a vehicle for self-help and indoctrination by the state and church (Ibid., 132–133), serving “the purpose of the state rather than in the idea of cooperation” (Ibid., 165).

What “the neoliberal project, [as a] complex web of practices and institutions that have the effect of perpetuating and multiplying various forms of interlocking oppression” does, in fact, is “allow ‘populations’ to be divided and managed, and our daily lives to be more intensely immersed in capitalist accumulation and rational-bureaucratic control” (Day 2005, 6). Leanne Betasamosake Simpson identifies the co-optive, “subtle, yet powerful forces of neoliberalism demobilizing movements of all sorts and pulling Indigenous peoples into state-controlled processes to a greater degree.” She calls for a “critical need for Indigenous organizing and mobilization more now” under a federal liberal program of reconciliation, than under Stephen Harper and his overtly right-wing agenda (Simpson 2017, 47). The same can be said for periods of blatant support for co-ops, in 1973 and today. For example, on the question of co-ops during Saskatchewan’s 1986 election, the provincial Liberal party stated, “The enabling legislation for co-ops was a Liberal initiative. Co-operative effort is the centre theme of Liberal thought; the freedom of the individual to choose, with the protection to make that choice” (Laycock 1987, 235).

Perhaps, given what has been presented so far in this thesis, co-ops were never actually co-opted by the state or by overwhelming market forces, because from the

beginning they were used to suppress class conflict and maintain order according to the interests of the bourgeoisie. Rather, working-class individuals were co-opted by co-ops. Co-ops had always been “statist” in the sense that they have been used by the state to advance capitalist interests. However, like in all reformist movements to capitalism, people undoubtedly still use the co-op form knowing it is limited and full of contradictions.

4.4 Self-Management of Capital

In this section, I argue the promotion of co-ops as a tool to reshape political consciousness, mask the “disquiet” of class conflict, and advance the “workings of the market system” has had major implications. This arises when abstract concepts like participation and co-operation become the primary objectives of an initially transformative demand. These abstractions are then easily co-opted into consumer and economic paradigms and decoupled from the politics of transformation. This is what the mainstream co-op housing movement, i.e. the co-operative housing federations, has done in order to sustain itself as a permanent, economically viable sector.

“Cooperative leaders challenged their exclusion from permanent funding programmes by mobilizing their efforts around issues of housing affordability, profiteering at the expense of consumers, general consumer 'rights', and a stated commitment to creating an alternative 'third-sector' society based on cooperative rather than capitalist or socialist social relations. ... Because consumers are defined in abstraction from people's material positions in capitalist relations of production, this view [of the power of the co-op movement as a third sector] is unlikely to increase objective or subjective class capacities for collective resistance to marginalization within the capitalist housing market and state” (Chouinard 1990, 1442).

Once funding from the state was guaranteed in 1973, the federations in Ontario were primarily concerned with developing new co-ops and creating sector jobs. This was done according to capitalist criteria, such as the economy of scale, not “socialist social relations” which explains why the Ontario co-ops are on average twice as big as co-ops in Quebec. From their early publications, the federations made clear that in the larger co-ops, self-management would also involve the hiring of staff, and the landlord–tenant relationship would be hidden and reshaped to be less “adversarial,” in line with the 1976 government working paper:

“Depending on the size of the co-op, there may also be paid office staff, such as an administrative assistant” (CHF-T 1984).

“Except in very small co-ops, staff are a necessary addition to the organizational structure, but little attention has been paid to defining and improving the relationship between the co-op and its employees” (Ibid. 1986, 2).

“Large co-ops can and do hire staff who make some decisions” (Ibid. 1990, 5).

“In small or unstaffed co-ops there often are enough tasks for everyone. But in a large co-op, especially in an apartment building, many tasks are impossible for individual members, or are too complex to organize” (Ibid. 1990, 58).

When co-op housing is referred to as an “alternative” form of housing, it usually has two different meanings. One is simply as a housing provider that uses an alternative management structure. The other meaning refers to an economic alternative to market housing, where co-ops are considered “decommodified” housing (Chouinard 1990). I’ll admit, when I first took notice of the term, I thought it perfectly captured an apogeeic form of housing. And perhaps it still does capture that. The end goal remains to decommodify

everything: land, production and housing. But housing co-ops do not achieve this, even through the most clever, non-profit schemes out there. The usage of decommodified housing is an example of the surprising power of co-optation.

Simply because it's non-profit housing or rented below market, doesn't mean it's not commodified. Everything in the process to make that house was commodified, from the stolen land to the construction workers' labour. Nobody would ever say a thrift store sells decommodified clothing. Removing profit at the source of provision doesn't erase its exploitative lifecycle, let alone the fact that rent is still collected, and evictions are inherent to the “fiscal responsibility” of the operations.

“A house is more than four walls and a roof. From its design and production to the way it is sold, used, resold and eventually demolished, it is crisscrossed by conflict. From the construction site to the neighborhood, impersonal economic forces and very personal conflicts grow out of each other. Concrete, rebar, wood and nails. Frustration, anger, resentment and despair. Individual tragedies reflect a larger social tragedy” (prole.info 2012, 7).

In *Red Skin, White Masks*, Coulthard (2014) describes the techniques used by the state to “decouple” (Coulthard 2014, 52) the cultural claims of the Dene Nation of Northwestern Turtle Island from the wholly transformative visions these cultural claims were inherently a part of. Canada’s policy of violently removing Indigenous peoples from their land through forced displacements and genocide was replaced with polished, but equally dispossessive, state programs. Dispossession is “the meta-dominating force” that defines the Indigenous relationship to the dominant order enforced by the Canadian state (Simpson 2017, 48).

This decoupling of transformative claims occurs through language as much as through strategies of recognition. Referring to co-ops as decommodified housing

decouples this anti-capitalist term from its transformative intent. As Park writes in the zine *Abolish Rent: For a Communist Tenants' Movement* (2018):

“Many of the specific demands under the heading “decommodify housing” are referred to as such because the slogan sounds anti-capitalist—though the demands may not be. There’s nothing inherently anti-capitalist about a social landlord. For the demand for social housing to be anti-capitalist in practice and not just in ideology, it must deal with the capitalist problems that persist for social housing” (Park 2018).

When housing is labelled as decommodified, this almost always refers to the non-profit provision of housing, such as public housing or co-ops, or management structures that impede speculation, such as a community land trust or 99-year lease from the state. Yet, housing, or any commodity, cannot be undone at one conveniently chosen step from a whole series of processes. Labelling it as such is more than just a denial of the labour of others. It is a co-optation, a reshaping of how people see themselves in this process. It creates the impression of two separate planes: either operating within market housing, where one is simply either paying rent to a landlord or is using that property as capital, or magically being “outside” of that relationship. In actual fact, those who think they are on the “outside” have been decoupled from the radicality of the meaning of decommodifying housing and land.

Chapter 5

Community-Based Research

*“The early efforts of poor people to improve their own housing conditions failed to expand for lack of capital. Investors, then as now, found easier ways to get rich than by financing working-class housing. This is where the Victorian philanthropists moved in, satisfied with a ‘modest return’ on their capital.”– Colin Ward, *Tenants Take Over* (1974)*

Opening Statement

This chapter mirrors the themes of the previous chapter. Under each theme, I will compare and analyze perspectives of eight research participants from seven Milton-Parc housing co-ops and six participants from five Ontario co-ops. This will be supplemented with content analysis from local documents from 1968 to 2018, in particular pertaining to the genesis of these 12 housing co-ops and co-op legislation.

This chapter is meant for the widest possible audience and to serve as a reference for co-op housing tenants, so it is written in relatively plain language. Although it is lengthy, the conversational tone of the multiple voices hopefully allows for this chapter to be approached informally. Analysis is found at the beginning of each section, which is followed by excerpts from semi-structured interviews, first from Milton-Parc research participants and then Ontario research participants.

The participants, including their respective housing co-op and date of the recorded interview, are listed below.

Participants and Dates of Interview

Milton-Parc

- **Alanna Dow**, Co-op Les Tourelles (November 16, 2017)

- **Lucia Kowaluk**, Co-op Milton-Park (November 18, 2017)
- **Jason Cohen**, Co-op Du Chez Soi (November 17, 2017)
- **Martin Croteau**, Co-op Concerto (January 19, 2018)
- **Marie-Claude Tardie**, Co-op Petite Hutchison (January 22, 2018)
- **Helen Angelopoulos**, La Tour des Alentours (February 2, 2018)
- **Kate Hortop & Will Peters**, Co-op Alliance (February 11, 2018)

Toronto

- **Claire-Helene Heese-Boutin**, Dufferin Grove Co-op (September 8, 2017)
- **Vicki Trueman**, Windmill Line Co-op (November 10, 2017)
- **Sharon Danley**, Older Women’s Network (OWN) Co-op (November 10, 2017; February 10, 2018)
- **Ken Demerling**, City Park Co-op (February 10, 2018)

Ottawa

- **Peter Stockdale**, Fairlea Park Co-op (November 18, 2017)
- **Clarke Christy**, Fairlea Park Co-op (November 26, 2017)

5.1 New vs. Old: A Brief History of the Milton-Parc and Ontario Co-ops

The Milton-Parc co-operative project fits the “new co-operative” paradigm, described in Chapter 4, quite well, while also reflecting the legacy of the “old” co-ops. In 1968, a year marked by global unrest, residents of a working-class, inner-city neighbourhood of Montreal formed the Milton-Parc Citizens’ Committee (MPCC) to organize and defend their neighbourhood. Word had quickly spread of a developer’s plan to demolish large swaths of their neighbourhood in the name of “slum clearance.” The company, Concordia Estates, formed by two former members of the Quebec Labor Progressive Party (an offshoot of the Communist Party of Canada) who turned to real estate development after Khrushchev's denouncement of Stalin in 1956, had bought up 96% of a 25-acre area east of McGill University (Helman 1987, 25) from 1958 to 1968.

Concordia Estates, with the full support of Mayor Jean Drapeau's autocratic administration, was planning to build what was fashionable at the time: a huge, modernist, mixed-use "city of tomorrow." By clearing the neighbourhood of its predominantly working-class, European immigrant population through abject neglect and demovictions, Concordia Estates could ensure a clean slate for its desired clientele who could afford to rent the newly-constructed luxury apartments.

The University Settlement, a social service community centre formed through the reformist settlement movement and located on St. Urbain Street, acted as a locus for social workers, leftists, and neighbourhood residents to gather and organize. Although it wasn't a co-op, the University Settlement played a similar role to the Italian co-operative coffee houses and bars of the early 20th century which provided a "sheltered space for communication and camaraderie [to] facilitate new solidaristic and egalitarian forms of interaction" among the working-class. The territorial familiarity of these social centres and the "hospitality intrinsic to a 'neighbourhood circle'" allowed for proletariat propaganda to spread organically (Kohn, 2003, 65-69).

It was at the University Settlement where the MPCC took shape. The group's rootedness at the neighbourhood level enabled it to take control of the public narrative on anything concerning the developer's plans. Proliferating the spaces and opportunities for encounters, including door knocking, engaging neighbourhood youth in political action at the Settlement, regular meetings, flyers, and even a community newspaper, *The Bulldozer* (later renamed *The Community Press*), meant the MPCC could overcome the "urban renewal" propaganda being put out by their capitalist opponents.

Concordia Estates had major financial backing from the massive philanthropic organization the Ford Foundation, which at the time was funding gentrification schemes across the continent. In a piece from the October 17, 1969 issue of the *Free Press*, the MPCC wrote:

“The Concordia bosses would probably like to be thought of as progressive, liberal-minded men. But the facts of economic control speak differently. The Ford Foundation is a major contributor to the exploitation of black people in American ghettos, and to strategic research that helps the United States enslave the nations of Asia and Africa to its own economic interests. Never has a ‘charitable’ institution been founded on such all-consuming greed” (Hawley 2019, 26)

The piece continued to dissect the web of interconnected interests which posed a direct threat to the residents of Milton-Parc: shell companies, politicians, universities conducting “social research” for Concordia Estates, and the huge financial institutions.

From 1968 to 1970, the MPCC’s strategy mainly consisted of attempting to negotiate with both Concordia Estates and government and sway them with convincing arguments. But its organizing tactics were still very much rooted in the neighbourhood, from organizing a street festival to conducting a census early on in August 1968. From this census, the MPCC formulated its “three major goals”:

1. To develop a counter-proposition to the Concordia plan which would favour rehabilitation of the majority of homes.
2. To develop essential community services, such as daycare centres, co-operatives, etc.

3. To protect tenants against abuse and injustice from Concordia such as poor maintenance of the properties and delays in major repairs. (Ibid., 19)

From early in its existence, members of the group had ambitions of a “co-operative project” for the neighbourhood. By January 1970, the MPCC had formally incorporated as a non-profit. This was done for “the legal possibility of buying and administering houses on a non-profit basis for the benefit of low-income residents of the area” (Ibid., 22).

In pursuit of this co-operative way of life, the MPCC’s subcommittees covered various components of urban life, including a community health clinic, a food co-op, daycare, and they had planned for a co-op laundromat. These neighbourhood-based services further encouraged the opportunities for encounter and politicization into the everyday life of residents. This is visible in a photo of the community health clinic from the February 1971 issue of *Bulldozer*, where a STOP CONCORDIA sign hangs on the wall behind a child getting a checkup.

While non-profit ownership of the housing was a goal set out in the early days, it wasn’t until the mid-1970s that the Milton-Parc organizers seriously began planning for co-op housing. Playing in their favour were economic and political factors, from the 1973 oil crisis to the Montreal Olympics megadebt to the Parti Québécois taking power in 1976, as well as a shift of focus to the heritage qualities of the neighbourhood pushed by committed support from architect and Bronfman heiress Phyllis Lambert. Concordia Estates folded and the properties were sold to a single buyer, a “wealthy Montreal pawnbroker and real estate bargain-hunter” who bought the properties from the developer for \$4.5-million and kept them until

CMHC was ready to purchase them for a “modest return” of \$5.5-million (Helman 1987, 108). This buyer held the properties until Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) was ready, and they were then transferred to a series of non-profit organizations, and eventually to the newly-formed housing co-ops. A technical resource group (GRT in French) was formed, consisting of lawyers, architects, social workers, accountants, and other professionals, to help work out the corporate structures of the housing associations and train residents in managing housing. The first four (of ten) items in the Milton-Parc Action Plan, mentioned in Chapter 2, were:

1. No original resident would be forced out for economic reasons;
2. The properties would be owned and administered on a non-profit basis;
3. Ultimate control of the community would be in the hands of the residents;
4. Small groups would be formed to own and administer the properties.

In order to form these small co-ops, of which there are now 15 in Milton-Parc, the neighbours largely relied on affinity, knocking on friends’ doors and educating each other on co-ops.

The Milton-Parc co-ops embodied the “new” prefigurative social movement co-operativism of the late 1960s and 1970s, with an emphasis on social values and human-scale enterprises. However, they still carried some of the legacy of the centralized “old” co-ops, as they were ultimately developed through the hiring of

professionals and philanthropic intervention, and finally came to fruition through major government funding programs.

The Ontario co-ops, on the other hand, fit almost entirely into the “old” co-op paradigm: large, top-down, and centralized. They were all created by the co-op housing lobby (the federations) or non-profit corporations as a direct response to federal and provincial funding programs. In Toronto, Dufferin Grove was established by federation staff in 1973, the year the federal government introduced its first co-op housing funding program. Windmill Line was formed in the early 1980s as part of the city of Toronto’s St. Lawrence Neighbourhood redevelopment project (Cole 2008, 120). The massive City Park complex was all rental until the Co-op Housing Federation of Toronto bought it for \$59-million (Stefaniuk 1989). The Older Women’s Network developed an apartment building from scratch through provincial funding introduced by the NDP government, although it didn’t open until 1997, after being stalled by Mike Harris’ conservative government.

In Ottawa, Fairlea Park co-op was developed in two phases. The first phase was initiated in 1985 by the local lobby group, the Ottawa Federation of Housing Co-operatives, using federal funding. This consisted of 60 townhouses. Eight months after the co-op opened, the federation announced it would add an additional 33 units (The Citizen 1985; 1986; 1987). Clarke, a founding member of Fairlea Park, described how the lobby group held a neighbourhood meeting to find tenants who were interested in joining the project, yet had very little say in what the co-op would look like. Peter, who joined the co-op in 1988, also recalled the federations controlling the decisions of the co-op since the early days.

5.1.1 Milton-Parc

Alanna: We actually got this co-op started. [My partner] and I moved in downstairs in fall of '79. The first meeting to kick off the co-op was in the living room downstairs on moving boxes, in the fall of that year. This co-op actually signed everything legally in 1980, the following spring. There were people who left because they weren't interested in being part of a co-op, so there were a few vacancies within the whole neighbourhood. There were people interested in staying. My neighbour, for example, had seen their homes destroyed across the street for the Phase 1 of the LaCité [complex], and they had been rehoused on this side of the street. There were a lot of them like that who were staying put. They were wary at first of the co-op, but we managed to convince them along with other people on the GRT that it would be a good thing.

Josh: Do you know why they were wary?

Alanna: It's just a totally different thing. Some of them were older and they had sort of capitalist backgrounds. Like this lady who lived next door, her husband owned a restaurant. They just weren't sure it would work. They were worried about the competencies of their fellow members. Could they really handle all the financial implications, the budget, budgeting, all that sort of thing? People were in agreement that it would be unwieldy to have one huge co-op. Ours is the ideal situation, where we're contiguous. They looked at buildings where people knew each other better

and got along. There are some weird situations, where like Co-op Sainte-Famille has some buildings on Sainte-Famille but a couple on Jeanne-Mance as well. I'm not certain how that came about, but it could just be relationships between people, neighbours. Certainly, it's easier to manage when you have a smaller [co-op]. Here, for example, we have 26 units. Which to me is just about perfect. Some co-ops are a little larger and some are smaller. It's just about the right size, I'd say. It ranges from people who are on their own, to families with kids and senior citizens, like myself and my neighbour next door.

Lucia: Our house is huge. You know it because we fill it. But we give back a lot. There have been a number of projects that wanted to copy Milton-Parc and were not able to. Didn't get the support at the City. Well, because it's just too good a deal.

Having this good housing allows people to take jobs which are low paid and socially useful. I'd say there are probably more people like that than not. A lot of that comes from the selection committee. In my co-op, the last two families we've chosen have been people with very, very good values. Very good social values.

It can bring out the best in people. On the whole, the people in my co-op, for example, and I think in others, take advantage of the fact that they're living in good housing and so they have some responsibility to give back. A recent family that we took, the husband now works at the

legal clinic at Pointe-St-Charles. Really good guy. Then there's another guy who was finishing his PhD thesis but now that he's finished it, he's talking about what he can do in the community. It allows people to blossom. I would be interested in a survey to see who's who and what's what.

Kate: I was a tenant [non-member in my co-op] and then ----- said, "There's a place available, you should apply because according to our bylaws, we have to do internal selection first before we do external and because you live here, you fall into the category of internal and there's nobody else applying, it would automatically be yours." I was like, "Yeah, sure why not?" I did really like my neighbours, I liked the apartments, I was pregnant, and it just made a lot of sense. I may not have had a lot of co-operative experience but I definitely...

Will: She has the spirit.

Kate: The spirit of...

Will: Community.

Kate: I would rather pay with my work than pay with my money because it's more meaningful and things grow when you work that way instead of just throwing money at something.

Marie-Claude: If there are too many people it's harder to manage.

My friends who live in co-ops are all people in sociology or political science or artists, so I'd say most of them who are in the neighbourhood are militants. I'm aware of certain things that go on.

I felt very supported in everything I do. Here it's a really nice co-op. Honestly, I think it's one of the best on the level of human relationships. I've heard very good things about my co-op from other members from other co-ops. The people here are sensible, human, are there to support people. There really aren't any problems. I'm starting to feel like it's my home. I feel secure. I like the neighbourhood here. I like the feeling that I'm two steps from downtown without really feeling like it, being right next to Mont-Royal. I feel like each of my neighbours is here to help me if I need something, I feel like we're really a community, that I'm part of a community and that I'm working with them in a housing project. I feel that generally the people have goodwill towards each other here. People take care for each other. They want others to be well. We have a backyard that we share and this summer we're going to have more work on the garden in the back that we're going to ameliorate. We do 5 à 7 about one evening per month. We go outside, people bring snacks, wine, we drink beer outside together. That's helped me meet a lot of people. I often see my neighbour when he comes home, we see each other. It's cool. I'm happy. I'm really lucky to have arrived here. They've always accepted me well here.

5.1.2 Ontario

Clarke: CHASEO [Co-operative Housing Association of Eastern Ontario] were the people who approached us. [We] found out that it was CHASEO

that would do the development. There was a meeting called about people interested in redeveloping the neighbourhood. I had worked at the Archives of Canada and actually had handled the papers of one of the original co-op founders who was taught by the Jesuits and helped the coal miners build their own homes. At the same time this came up and I thought, “You know, I’m a little bit of a socialist and I don’t have much respect for realtors, all they tend to do [is make] money by turning property over. Is this socially how we want the world to work?” Then I went to the meeting and I just spoke up.

The first 63 units was [the] only consulting work that CHASEO could do that year. For the following they talked us into adding another [33], making it 93, which I thought was a little bit big to handle. In fact, I thought 60 was big enough. You got the economy of scale. This little co-op here next to this little co-op, we can do things like common maintenance and common stuff. OK, that’s good, that’s good thinking. But no.

Peter: All I really know is that the impetus for putting the second phase for the co-op came from CHASEO and the co-op developer who worked for CHASEO, who was keen to develop more co-op housing ... and here was a co-op that was only two years old, and there was extra space from the City, so hey, why not fill that space up with more co-op.

5.2 Parity of Participation vs. ‘The End of Participation’

By January 1971, the MPCC had determined its “fundamental principle ... is that of citizen participation in all aspects of decision-making which affect them.”

The goal of the MPCC, it appears, was not necessarily to abolish the class system. Their propaganda and analyses of the threat facing their neighbourhood were hinged on class struggle, which they believed could ultimately be resolved with full participation and self-determination. This aligns with “parity of participation” as being the goal of social justice, described in Chapter 4. In this paradigm, full participation entails wealth redistribution accompanied by full recognition of all identity groups and can only come about through transformation.

Milton-Parc residents, from the beginning of their collective efforts, were employing a transformative strategy of redistribution, by fighting economic displacement and envisioning low rents through housing co-ops, and recognition, by acknowledging how structurally-discriminated groups are overwhelmingly the targets of urban renewal.

In the following statement from the April 1971 issue of *Bulldozer*, the MPCC identified the groups who made up the working class in their neighbourhood:

“If we cannot stop Concordia, the people who live in Milton-Park will have to leave. A community will be destroyed. And, people like them—immigrant, French-Canadian, low-income, and families—will not replace them. But the rich, unmarried or childless, the passing student, the professional on his way to the suburbs, will climb up to his bachelor high-rise apartment and look down on what used to be a neighbourhood.”

The MPCC's transformative vision was contingent on achieving participatory parity through redistribution and recognition at the neighbourhood level. A policy of redistribution is still in effect through section 8.3.3 of the Communauté Milton-Parc's Declaration of Co-ownership, which states all co-ops must accept people according to three income brackets (receiving social assistance, low income, and moderate income). However, while this policy is one of the founding principles of the Milton-Parc project, research participants acknowledged that participation was the main objective. It was brought up several times that although this redistributive policy is important, it is ultimately a difficult mandate to follow because it impacts the participatory nature of the co-ops.

Of note is the fact that all members of the Milton-Parc co-ops must serve on committees. This in complete contrast with the Ontario co-ops, where committees are either non-existent, token, or only involve the participation of a few members.

The fact that research participants noted participation as crucial to the co-ops in Milton-Parc explains why the lack of participation was one of their biggest concerns. Lack of participation was noted as a reason for initiating the eviction process.

Finally, and of crucial importance, a research participant from one of the Ontario co-ops identified a publication released by the Co-op Housing Federation of Canada in 2008 called *The End of Participation*. It argues that members should be concerned with advancing abstract notions such as the "'ethical contract' with the co-op" "rather than doing everyday chores and taking on work that should be done by paid professionals" (Armstrong & Gazzard 2008a). One of the authors,

Thom Armstrong, the executive director of CHF-BC, is also the executive director of COHO Management Services Society, “Canada's largest and most successful co-operative housing management company” according to the company’s LinkedIn page. Armstrong is also the author of a CHF-T guidebook published in 2000 titled *Conflict of Interest*. This book, nowhere to be found except through Library and Archives Canada, focuses on conflict of interest among members: “Directors must put the interests of the co-op before their personal interests. They are the trustees of the co-op.”

Further research uncovered that the federations had been challenging the concept of participation for at least 20 years prior to *The End of Participation*. In a clear but often disregarded example of conflict of interest, a piece on member participation in the newsletter *Federation Findings: A Co-op Management Memo* from 1988 broaches the debate over compulsory participation by stating that CoAction, the association of co-op staff, “asked the Federation to remove from its sample by-laws all reference to penalties for non-participation.” The document goes on to justify non-participation based on the development of large, centralized purpose-built housing co-ops initiated by the federations themselves: “while members' work may have created significant savings in some of the early, small, "rehab" co-ops, this is no longer true for the large co-ops which we have today. The large savings come from government subsidies to all units, and from the non-profit aspect of the co-ops. Any savings from members' participation are quite small.” These facts speak to the deep frustration with perceived conflicts of interest of federations expressed by research participants from Ontario.

This 1988 document also features a cartoon of co-op members queueing in front of a punched card machine, surrounded by surveillance cameras and devious-looking spy characters (one is peering out of a sewer). The caption reads: “I have a feeling we’re being watched.” The suggestion is that policing of compulsory participation breeds resentment and infighting: “Complaints are made at members’ meetings. The co-op is divided between “them” (lazy) and “us” (the good guys). Members start threatening other members with sanctions. So the requirement for participation divides and destroys the community rather than uniting it.”

Ironically, surveillance of members, policing, and threats of eviction being used as compliance were focused on heavily by research participants from Ontario, where co-ops have little to no participation and are managed by paid staff.

Although Milton-Parc research participants acknowledged that there are some “lazy” members, and the formation of cliques and interpersonal conflicts emerging over issues around participation, they did not once bring up the option of abolishing compulsory participation. Rather, levels of participation were discussed in terms of how often to meet and what types of decisions should be made at general assemblies.

5.2.1 Milton-Parc

Lucia: If I could summarize what I’m saying, I would say that there needs to be written down, at the very beginning, in the bylaws, the absolutely essential commitment to democratic values.

Josh: So, the process.

Lucia: The process, yes.

Josh: Whatever the result is from that process, as long as its democratically-run.

Lucia: Yes.

Josh: Participation is key to that?

Lucia: Yes.

Lucia: People do come out of the woodwork. I mean, there are good people around. For one thing, it's fun. I think there are individuals in our society who just love doing this kind of thing and it gives them the opportunity. But then there are dozens who do fuck all.

I remember in the years that we were founding this whole project, there was an individual who was part of the GRT, who had and has in his life a real commitment to democratic functioning and did a superb job of pulling things together for quite a few years. He's still around. He's a true believer. He doesn't live in the area. He never did. Bob Cohen is his name.

It's no wonder [my partner] Dimitri goes around the world bragging about Milton-Parc. It's quite unique.

The board cannot make the decision of spending. In fact, there was a special meeting the other evening and Dimitri went to it. It involved the expenditure of up to five or six thousand dollars, to fix the front facade. There was a meeting just on that issue. Now people could say, nah who wants to go out on Monday night. But people know, if they don't go, it might be voted down and nobody wanted it to be voted down. There's

that rule. The other thing is that all minutes of committee meetings, boring as they are, have to be distributed in both languages, to everybody.

The co-ops that are functioning badly are lazy. Not only are they lazy, they have little cliques. They have allowed little power cliques to form and that's always a mistake.

Martin: There are some people who are very, very involved. That's why it's interesting to talk about the diversity here. These are people on social assistance but who are generous volunteers. They give a lot of time. Yes, we are a lot of members, but everybody is involved. I find our size is a good size of co-op. Bigger is not necessarily better.

We have all kinds of people, all types of personalities: Anglophones, Francophones, well-educated people, people with little education, people who have a good job. I find it's a good mix and that makes it interesting. The sharing and involvement are interesting. There are members who are getting older, who are not able to be that involved, but we still have enough members who are involved so there's not that much of an impact if there are some members who aren't as involved.

Marie-Claude: I'm on the secretary committee. It consists of writing communiques, archiving of documents. They proposed it to me. How it works, when you have a co-op that's looking for somebody, they look at where their needs are in their co-op. They were looking for somebody for the

secretariat committee and it worked well because I'm a student in communication and literature. It works very well.

I believe at this moment people participate pretty well. We don't have a huge amount of work, I find.

Jason: I have been very active, most of the time on maintenance committee and I've been the head of the maintenance committee at some periods. But right now, I'm on the finance committee and I do mainly deposits. I don't really need to go to committee meetings. We are required to go to General Assemblies. That is a requirement of being a member. But nonetheless, there are some who don't very often. You always know the ones who won't be coming. I don't think I've ever missed a general assembly.

The most difficult committee is the maintenance committee, it seems to require the most involvement and work. That's what forms our board, is the head of each committee.

Not everybody is going to like everybody.

Alanna: In this co-op, we have seven people [on the board]. They each head a committee. Each of us commits to serve on one or two committees every year. All of the members of the co-op serve.

I know a lot of people in the neighbourhood. All of us who are active tend to complain that not everyone is pulling their weight. But if you actually look at it, and I'm thinking of this co-op in particular, everyone has a membership contract. Everyone agrees to be on one committee or

another. I've served on committees here where, it's true, you could say that someone sort of just shows up for the meetings, but they are at least doing that. When people have complained, "Oh, so and so is not doing anything," I say, "You know, some people need to be given a job." Some of us will volunteer, but not everyone is like that. You have to find a way, and that's part of learning in a co-op, is that you can get everyone to participate, but everybody has to be encouraged in a different way. There are co-ops like Dimitri's where in fact every decision taken, which I couldn't handle, is done by the general assembly of that co-op. I find that unwieldy, but that's what they decided to do, and they feel good about that. They feel it's the highest democratic participation. However, we're stuck with the co-op law in Quebec, which says that the board is responsible for everything that's done, every decision taken. There's a point at which, in my mind, the board has to make a decision that's best for the co-op and doesn't necessarily have time to consult the whole membership. But, they do regularly. Like, the thing is, if a board ever oversteps its bounds, and I don't mean its legal bounds, for example, with this co-operative law which we find too board-centric, the general assembly can put restrictions on that. Even if the law says that the co-op board must decide on X, Y and Z, the general assembly can say, "Uh-uh, no, on these items we want you to come back to us each time." But we haven't really had that problem here. I don't remember an incidence where we

felt that the board overstepped its... went ahead and did something without consulting.

When you're in a co-op, and you have so many decisions to make together, and you're living so closely with each other, and you have friendships within the co-op, it's really difficult for a board to do anything that would upset all those people, because you have to live with them day-to-day and you want their support on other issues. Knowing each other so well and working together all the time just means—I'm not saying there aren't disagreements and people get ticked off with each other—there has to be a certain harmony or it just wouldn't work. That peer pressure is important, and if it's done in a constructive way, it works.

Helen: The thing about co-ops, it's very difficult to get people to work. We haven't been very strong in my opinion for my co-op.

5.2.2 Ontario

Vicki: Myself and another director asked a question, "What is CHF doing for us and how much are we spending beyond the 21,000 dollars that we fork out every year?" That's half to CHF-T, half to CHF-C. We started asking questions and all of a sudden, they had a forum about the benefits of being with CHF. They brought out somebody from CHF and all our CHF promoters stood up in line and talked about how good of an organization it was. They really took our challenge very seriously and they were very threatened by it. It was interesting. It's all coming down

to money. The CHF supporters [in my co-op] are maybe a loose group of ten but there's more of a real clique of about four or five. These people are all invested or have been paid by or gotten money from CHF.

Sharon: Let me interject here. Even though you pay membership to CHF, you still have to pay for any training that is offered up.

Whatever you need, they have a bank of people they can refer to co-ops. Like contractors, lawyers. You put two and two together, there's collusion in some way. There's payback.

Vicki: We're a 206-unit building, so the money is always coming in. We're not likely to have any problems. With CHF, they're going, "For only five thousand dollars you can get insurance in case you default on your loan."

Sharon: "Here's an insurance company that we can recommend."

Vicki: Yes, and I'm thinking to myself, we have been paying down this previous loan for 35 years without a hitch. Why would we need insurance?

Sharon: Assets and influence. They donate to campaigns of politicians. They're a lobby group. This is influencing. People need to be educated, and they would prefer to educate co-ops to keep them in the dark. They want them educated their way. They don't want co-ops to be on their own or listening to other people. Because then it undermines the lies that they set in place. It's as simple as that.

The co-operatives operate independently. You never see the co-ops coming together on something. It's all under the auspices of CHF et al. because they don't want that. It's like dissension in the ranks. If this soldier finds out that this soldier's having this experience, "Oh, I am too." And then we tell this soldier, "Oh yeah, I'm having it too." And then all of a sudden, everybody's on the same page. And CHF doesn't want that. The whole thing is a sham, it's a money-making endeavour.

Vicki: Now there are a number of people in the co-op who understand pretty much what we're talking about here. They understand there is something going on. But a lot of them are in subsidized units, so they keep mum. I'll get a lot of verbal support in the hallway. But when it comes to actually sitting there making a vote in the meeting, you'll see the hands go up in favour of CHF because they're afraid...

Sharon: They're being watched.

Vicki: Yeah. They're being watched.

Sharon: The co-op sector, unless the corruption within it is removed, it will only continue to get worse. Or, people smarten within a co-op and step up to the plate and demand. The trouble is, people who are on RGIs are afraid to speak up because they're afraid they'll lose it. What they're doing and apparently what's happening here too, because they don't do anything and they're told, "Well, you're volunteers, you shouldn't have to break your ass by working too much because you're a volunteer." This is CHF, this is what goes on behind the scenes. What they do is

they let the staff take care of everything. Well, the staff are in the back pockets of CHF. What they systematically try to do is pat the boards of directors on the head and say, "There, there. That's OK, we'll handle it." It's a way of getting rid of what was put in place to make a co-op run correctly, just sending them in the corner and then the staff will take care of it all.

[The property manager] was here at that time too. She caused so much harm for anybody that spoke up or questioned really questionable activities that were going on here. And what did CHF do? They constantly supported [her]. She is a sick fuck. Pardon my language. This woman should be in a mental institution or behind bars. I'm serious. She's a sociopath, a psychopath is more what's like it.

Vicki: We have an architect on the board, we have a number of professionals on the board, but they haven't really experienced this aspect from where Sharon and I have seen this. You were wondering where I began to get that feeling of finding things becoming questionable, I think it stems from, in 2010, CHF published a two-part article about a month apart, questioning the value of participation. What is the future of participation? A newsletter. It's quite interesting. It's a very specious article about, you can't expect a member to have the skillset to go and sit in the admin's office and do administrative work. They don't know how to do it. They're assuming that's what the volunteer work is supposed to be all about. They're questioning the whole value of

participation, which is a core value of what co-operative living is about. Everybody participates for the greater good, I would think.

Josh: Were you were encouraged from your entrance into the co-op to serve on a committee?

Peter: Definitely. It was, at that point seen as, and still is in theory, a condition of ownership, of presence, to be participating and it still says that formerly. Although there's no encouragement at all to do that now. There have been various discussions with your father about how can we make it more mandatory and measure it, but it is seen as a condition of ownership essentially, or membership would be more accurate. There would be the occasional, "You know, you really should be on a committee. Which committee would you want it to be?" We had a member involvement committee for that precise purpose at that time to encourage membership, from '86 to probably '95 I would guess. [Since then,] there's been no committees at all, practically speaking. For the last ten of fifteen years. There have occasionally been rumours of finance committee, and occasionally rumours of landscaping committee. Discussions about whether there would be a social committee for this or that activity. But not very much sustaining.

Josh: Has participation always been a problem in Fairlea?

Clarke: It's always been a problem.

Josh: But it's mandatory right? In the by-laws it's written in there?

Clarke: Yes, it is, but it's not enforced. I just said [to the property manager], there's no openness, there's no involvement. Her reaction was, "Well it wasn't work for you before, what are you talking about Clarke?" They're saying that participation isn't working, so let's throw out that baby with the bathwater.

5.3 Reshaping Working-Class Subjectivities: "Landlords as Well as Tenants"

With the primary focus of the Milton-Parc co-ops on participation and democratic values, the capacity for members of these housing co-ops to unite based on the shared interests of the working-class is currently limited but has potential to strengthen. This limitation is due to divisions among the working class along lines such as level of income, source of income, and mental health. This represents a kind of reversal of the concept of "parity of participation." In contrast to philosopher Nancy Fraser's argument that parity of participation must emerge as the outcome of redistribution and recognition, research participants from the Milton-Parc co-ops framed redistribution as a condition of guaranteed participation.

Research participants in both the Milton-Parc and Ontario co-ops identified certain groups of people, in particular those in receipt of social assistance who do not come into co-ops with the same intentionality as someone seeking a co-operative lifestyle, but are simply looking for subsidized rent, as hindrances to the participatory values and democratic functioning of co-ops. This was contradicted through other statements by research participants that non-participation was in fact widespread among all tenants, and co-op housing is simply a way to pay cheap rent by people regardless of source of income. As I argued in Chapter 4, this reversal is related to the use of housing

co-ops by the state as a tool to quell working-class consciousness through co-optation and strategic domestication.

Also touched on is the view some members hold that co-op housing is “above” social housing. This perception mirrors CMHC’s housing continuum, where social housing is a stepping stone to regular non-profit housing, which itself is a stepping stone to market rental on the way to owner-occupancy.

Mental health was referenced as a major source of contention in both the Milton-Parc and Ontario co-ops. However, it should be noted that mental health was used in two completely different ways: problematically as an instrument of division among the working class, and critically as a reflection of class conflict where capitalist individuals exhibit abusive behaviour. The more common and divisive perception was that people who receive government social assistance are difficult to get along with because of mental health problems. This perception presented itself as a very real and dangerous obstacle to developing a united class awareness.

The other reference to mental health was in regard to staff and co-op members in positions of power. In two completely unrelated instances from Milton-Parc co-op and Toronto, research participants referred to an individual from their co-ops in a position of power and authority as a “sociopath” and “psychopath.” I argue this represents a latent or inexplicit class awareness, as it was made clear these individuals sought to profit from the housing co-op and its residents. While the federations were seen as directly profiting from co-ops, the sheer proximity to your home of having a capitalist neighbour or property manager exploit and abuse

you and your neighbours, especially in a “co-operative” setting, leads to the attribution of mental health as explanation for their behaviour.

This reshaping of the working-class subjectivity in housing co-ops is most obvious in Ontario, where members are explicitly not considered tenants, which impacts evictions, and members pay “housing charges,” not rent.

5.3.1 Milton-Parc

Lucia: I can say one thing, and that it is a constant struggle to keep a co-op democratically run. People have to be pushed to be democratic. They have to be pushed to know, if they have a sense of responsibility, that they are landlords as well as tenants, and if they don't do that, they're going to lose control. Then they're going to get bitter. Then there are little fights that start about so and so is angry at so and so. That's a constant danger in a co-op. Then everybody's sorry when it finally falls apart. Or, the co-op is reduced to finding outside commercial help. I think that's too bad.

Committees have to meet; they have to have minutes and they have to distribute the minutes. Every member has to be on a committee. One of the co-ops has people that don't have any background in running an organization, but as individuals, they're good co-op members. They happen to be workmen-type people who can do working-class type jobs in the co-op. They did call on me to come and help them run the place better and I chaired a number of meetings for them and showed them how to chair a meeting. I think I helped them.

They got their act together. It's a small little co-op and they had some people that didn't care. Anyway, I think that was kind of a success story.

Helen: If you are co-managing, you try and keep the rents low because you don't have a private company that's trying to make money out of this. All the money comes out of our rent. We have to pay everything from our rents. Insurance and any kind of maintenance issues that come up. It's through our rents. Now nobody [in our co-op] is on a subsidy because the subsidies have stopped from the government. We have to self-manage through our rents. If we're going to start giving low-income tenants extra subsidy, our rents have to go up.

The board kind of manages the day-to-day problems or issues that come up. Each board member—there's five of us, there's a president, vice-president, who's head of maintenance, treasurer, selection, and secretary—those five people have committees. They get the rest of the members to join in committees and we work through a committee. Let's say I'm now head of selection. As a committee, we take the steps to find and interview prospective members. Then we present our findings to the board. The board makes the final decision of accepting our recommendation. Most of the time they accept. Mostly it has to do with maintenance and financial issues. That's pretty much what most of our work is.

We did at one point hire somebody to go and collect our rent because it was so difficult for members and neighbours to go and extract rent from people. It was just horrible. It was very bad. We did that for a while. We never hired a management team. We're actually thinking about it now, maybe for our maintenance troubles because we have so many troubles with our maintenance, but then we have to add that cost into our expenses, and we'd have to raise our rent a significant amount and people don't want to raise their rent. We're actually pretty good with our rents. We've been slowly bringing them up. It's still pretty low. But some co-ops, their rent is so low because they pretty much do everything themselves, like in-house. They have plumbers, electricians. They have people with hard skills.

We have three different levels [of income]. We can't only have high-income people. We can have a percentage of a little bit higher, but it's not that high, not like \$100,000. What I would say is medium-income. Then we have low-income and then we have welfare. Those three levels, we should have a mixture. The big challenge for us is low-income and welfare recipients. Especially welfare recipients, they don't seem to do well when we screen them. They don't seem to seem to understand really, they just want cheap housing.

Kate: What is the purpose of co-operative housing? What is it? Like if you have a women's shelter, your purpose is to serve women who don't have homes and can't safely live anywhere else. There's a mandate,

there's a purpose. But in co-operative housing, I think for a lot of people, when they hear co-operative housing, they think, "Oh, cheap rent. Sweet." So, what is it? Is it to do everything together? Because if that's the case then we shouldn't have boards. Everybody should be sitting down once a month and talking things out. Things would move really slowly but everybody will be participating and that will be co-operative.

Will:

If the intent of a co-op is to be a community, to help each other out, I think the whole co-op community needs to start talking more about mental health. I think that that could solve a lot of the problems. If there's some kind of policy or some kind of intervention when there's obviously like a megalomaniac and not have policies of penalization, but to protect people against their toxic personalities.

[One member] probably has some kind of psychological disorder like being a sociopath. That's another point I'd like to make about living in co-ops. It seems to attract a lot of people that would probably be better placed in a different form of housing because they're not very co-operative people. It's people in it for themselves, not to really form a community. They're there for the cheap rent and to exercise some kind of control over other people. That's what it seems. She's a major bully and she has her cronies that support her. She's been here so long and she's an expert on the co-op system. She knows how to work it. She's an expert on milking it.

Kate: She has the potential of being a psychopath. Yup.

There's a large number of people who aren't coming here to be co-operative but are coming here to get low rent. Participation is lacking because they don't get it. Like you get a \$400 discount or rebate, because you do \$400 worth of work.

Marie-Claude: It's important to offer affordable housing, decent housing that is affordable. When I say decent, I mean a clean apartment, which doesn't have pests, which is well-maintained at an affordable price. That's just at the level of health, to have an affordable home. It's security, it's all that. That is essential. Comparatively, at the level of involvement, if people don't want to be involved and face housing issues, then the [social housing] option would be more apt to respond to their needs than the co-operative. To live in a co-op, you need smart people. You need intelligent people. You need people who are resourceful. It's us who manage a co-op. It's us. If we don't have the members who are there, we won't succeed at achieving our financial goals, for example. We won't be capable of restoring the buildings. The people who I work here with are smart, and I learn so much from them. I think there are some people who invest their education in working, for example in administration, and there are others who decide to become philosophers, and the salary is really not the same, [like] artists. We still need housing that is secure that brings us well-being. To live in a co-op,

at the minimum, the people need to be capable of involving themselves. It's important to offer decent housing that is affordable.

There a few problems that are occurring at this moment, people who are not involved. There are personal problems. I don't want to psychoanalyze, but I think there are people who should live in a co-operative. Maybe they would be better in social housing.

Marie-Claude: I imagine the co-operatives that don't work that well will concentrate more on their own co-operative, their immediate living situation before going to something more at the level of the neighbourhood. I also have the impression the members who don't involve themselves in their own co-op don't really have a basic interest to get involved in militant actions in their neighbourhood. I think it comes from the member. The problem is finding good members. Member selection is always case by case, but for a co-operative, it's important to find people who already have experience in co-operation or collaboration, who have good human communication skills, relational, who are capable of committing to activities related to the co-operative. It's not necessary, but I think if the person demonstrates motivation, even if she doesn't have experience, at least she'll have the motivation to do that.

5.3.2 Ontario

Ken: City Park Co-op has just under 800 units. When the Social Housing Act came, now when somebody's number comes up on Housing Connections [City of Toronto's social housing waiting list], at City

Park, you have to take that person. We immediately got drug dealers, which were absolutely noticeable. We got a whole bunch of absolute trash. The City forced us to have 50 per cent rent-geared-to-income. When a vacancy came up, Housing Connections would put somebody in.

The problem is there are a bunch of rich people living there [in City Park] who do not get involved at all. I love the Alfa Romeo that's in the basement. There's a number of people who are wealthy. Lawyers, doctors, stuff like that. You never see them at the meetings, period. Then our brain trust is minimal. There's been so many fights in the past. We've had some people who are severely mentally disabled on the board because there was nobody else running. Their priority is karaoke night.

Co-ops will never work. One, if you have a property management company that you're happy with, the Social Housing Act, every two years you have to put it out to tender. We had somebody who was palatable, but we had to put it out to tender after two years. Another issue is consultants and contractors. I don't think any consultant or any contractor worth their salt will come and bid and work at a co-op. All these boards look to this co-op federation, "Oh, they know everything."

Sharon: This is where there's a two-pronged problem. Talking about ageing in place and that sort of thing. The other thing that nobody's addressing is those who have mental health problems and disabilities, they push them

into co-op housing. People who have mental disabilities cause problems for the residents. It creates fear because some of these people are dangerous. They should not be living with the majority of people. They've got to designate places or they've got to have the help. If you're going to put people with mental disabilities into a community, then you need to have some kind of oversight and help when these people break out. We've had this problem a couple of times in here where somebody, he falls off the wagon, he drinks, he's accosted people a couple of times. They dump people without the resources to handle the problems that come up.

You get boards of directors, for the most part, that are uneducated, don't have the skillset or the work experience. They don't understand that the staff works for the co-op.

There was a mess of things that had to be done because of the staff that was making over a quarter of a million dollars a year in salaries. There were three or four [staff here]. That's a lot of money. That's a lot of money for doing nothing.

Vicki: There's an additional cost here for Sharon and for other people. She has lost the social network that she should have here. The people here have frozen her out. The atmosphere in this building was bad. Sharon was treated very badly. And when you're in a co-op, you move into a co-op expecting you're going to find social network and there's going to be an

additional kind of a safety and security because your neighbours know you and care about you.

Claire-Helen: I'm not a capitalist, but I'm not anti-capitalist either. I believe in mixed economies. Within the context of our current macroeconomic and geopolitical system, the reality for me is that, a strictly anti-capitalist approach is not yet feasible. During that transition, I see there being this threshold income level and that threshold income level is where people are able to participate within the capitalist system effectively. Those who are below that threshold income level are unable to participate effectively. They're the ones who really suffer. It's kind of like a poverty line, or a living income line, is what I would define that as. For co-ops, within a land trust you can also have equity co-ops, which does take the capitalist lens on it. For people who are at a threshold income level where their participation within the current capitalist system is reasonable, because they have the income to do so, this facilitated their ability to access equity homes in a way that doesn't allow it to run crazy amuck. Basically you have a ladder: people can enter into a co-op or social housing and once they've been able to accumulate enough wealth to do a down payment on an equity co-op home, they move out of that social housing into their equity home which would be their long term, you know if they wanted to stay there the rest of their lives they could. Whereas the social, not-for-profit housing, is a place for people who do not have that income threshold or who are not going to be able to

achieve that income threshold to stay. It's one of the challenges of our co-op now. We have people who have moved up that ladder and who are making over a hundred thousand dollars a year, and they stay in the co-op because they don't have another housing option. Having some type of equity, or market-based approach, incorporated within the land trust model, like an equitable housing strategy, is important.

Peter: There was a feeling among the members that [the co-op] was a critical thing that we were doing. Many people would have the experience in going from bad landlord to bad landlord. There was a lived experience and understanding that we were a better housing of last resort, and sort of a belief that we were one step above social housing. There was a certain petty-bourgeois pride that we weren't them. Trying to get the co-op to work with City Living or Ottawa Community Housing [social housing next door to Fairlea Park] was very difficult. The co-op would not co-operate. The co-op board didn't want to have anything to do those people. Trying to create solidarity to other members of social housing was harder. Since we didn't have strong connections with other co-ops within the city, and very little solidarity with other social housing folks, it was harder to have a movement, essentially.

Clarke: The movement is probably sick from the... it's become more of a club, I would think. I think it's probably a club that's made up of people that had good intentions in the beginning but then they say that people don't really give a damn. All they basically want is to be left alone and pay a

cheaper rent. And what's the difference between Fairlea Park and a non-profit?

Josh: What is the difference at this point?

Clarke: For this co-op, I can't see any difference.

5.4 Implications of the Self-Management of Capital: Evictions in Housing Co-ops

Evictions in the Milton-Parc co-ops, at least in the seven represented in this research, are extremely rare. Eviction proceedings were generally seen as very unpleasant and undesirable from a social, interpersonal standpoint, although research participants considered the process necessary as a final measure to deal with difficult members in order to maintain a healthy co-op. Evictions, and by extension displacement, are seen as necessary to the management of co-ops.

The eviction process was also considered rather arduous and cumbersome, as co-op tenants in Quebec have access to the provincial rental housing administrative tribunal, the Régie du logement, for issues pertaining to their occupancy (CMHC, n.d.).

The process to evict involves suspending an individual's membership. Once a member is suspended, they must pay the market rent. The difference between market and member rent in the Milton-Parc co-ops used to be quite nominal, and thus a suspension would not have a great impact on the member. However, one of the participants from the Milton-Parc co-ops noted their co-op had explicitly raised the market rent to three times the member rent to facilitate the eviction process. It would now be difficult for any resident who's had their membership suspended to pay the market rent. While rent arrears is the most common reason for pondering evictions in these co-ops, lack of participation was also brought up, providing further evidence on the importance of participation in the

Milton-Parc co-ops. However, it must again be emphasized that evictions are still extremely rare or have never occurred in the Milton-Parc co-ops.

There was a stark contrast between the Milton-Parc co-ops and the Ontario co-ops, where the actual number of evicted residents was unknown by the research participants. All participants had been aware of neighbours who had been targeted with eviction. Two of the participants from my old co-op, Fairlea Park, brought up several neighbours who were currently facing eviction. One participant from Toronto had faced eviction and managed to win.

The use of evictions in the Ontario co-ops was identified as a “compliance tool” to deal with “trouble” members, especially for those on subsidy. Trouble members could be those who are in arrears, who don’t comply with this or that bylaw, who don’t get along with other members, or who are seen as a threat or rabble-rouser by the management. Evictions are used as a way to solve problems among members, as evicting members in Ontario is a relatively straightforward process. This is facilitated by the fact that co-op members are not considered tenants under Ontario law, but rather members of “a social club, where membership is by application and acceptance in accordance with criteria set out in the club's by-laws or regulations” (*McBride v. Comfort Living Housing Co-op Inc.* 1992, quoted in Schlemmer 2009, 50) as well as a 2014 legislative amendment that opened up the Landlord and Tenant Board solely to co-op boards and staff to make the eviction of members more efficient.

Tenants on subsidy are particularly vulnerable to the threat of eviction through a straightforward process: The board or staff can suspend an individual’s membership for allegedly violating a bylaw, which will then force that person to pay the market rent.

Once that person is unable to pay full rent because of their insufficient income, they will go into arrears, at which point the co-op can begin the eviction.

The position that the ease of evictions facilitates their use as a compliance tool is supported when compared to evictions in the Milton-Parc co-ops, where due to the cumbersome nature of the process, solving problems internally between members is the best option. Evictions are not “worth it” because they make “more trouble.”

5.4.1 Milton-Parc

Josh: Are evictions rare in your co-op?

Lucia: Yes, very rare. Very, very rare.

Martin: Evictions? It’s not happened. Are we going to fight to evict somebody who’s old who hasn’t done anything and has been there for years? Or who’s not as old, but still does nothing? We won’t evict them. Where do you stop? I know there are co-ops that evict. They say, “You weren’t a good member so we’re to evict you.” But it becomes heavy.

Jason: In the past we’ve had some real issues. The thing is, it’s quite complicated because not only are you a member of a co-op but Quebec has very strong tenant rights. In the past, we have tried, because of people’s lack of participation, etc. We’ve never been able to get rid of a member. Once we actually went to the Régie du logement.

Alanna: Very rare. We had one situation when the co-op first got started, it could have been within the first five years or whatever, there was a couple who, probably, in light of what happened, should have just not stayed when the whole [Milton-Parc project] got underway. But they

did and they were constantly trying to throw a spanner in the works. At meetings they disagreed with everything. I'm not certain of all the details, but eventually they were asked to leave, and they went. I'm trying to remember if there was anything else. There was a situation where someone hadn't paid the rent for a long time and they were eventually asked to leave. But it never got to a situation where the person arrived home to find their stuff on the sidewalk, that type of thing, not at all. It was always, "Look, this is the situation, we've given you a number of chances." That's what I love about the co-op. People do occasionally fall on hard times and they can have difficulty paying their rent, even with the aid that we were getting. Because it's a co-op, and everyone knows everyone, and you know that this person, it's not their fault, there's a lot of leeway given to people. But when it gets too much and you begin to feel someone's taking advantage, then in that situation the person was told, "Look, we can't do it anymore, you have to go."

Helen: We've done two evictions in all the years. We should have done more. One of them took over ten years, because it was extremely complicated. The big thing with co-ops, you have to follow not only your own bylaws and policies, you have to follow the co-operatives act and if you don't do everything by the book, unfortunately there may be some consequences. Some people have brought us to court. They've hired lawyers. But we have been lucky. We haven't had any real big huge

problems that we've had to deal with. Mostly, there has been actually a handful of people that were problematic. It is extremely rare to kick people out. We have a hard time.

If people are not doing what they're asked to do, there are no consequences. In some extreme cases, we have taken away their membership. First of all, if you're late with the rent and if you don't respond, or if you don't pay the rent and if you don't respond to our requests to meet with you, then eventually you will lose your membership. After you lose your membership, you have to pay full rent, which is on the lease, and if you don't pay your full rent, you go to the board. It's a very long, horrible, complicated process. We've been lucky, we haven't been doing that. Or we did that a couple of times, and it was terrible. Other ways you could lose your membership is you don't do any work. You disturb the peace. You're aggressive with your neighbours. You don't take care of your building. You don't work on committees. We can take steps to remove you as a member. But there's a process. We have to give you a warning. We have to meet with you. We have to give you a chance. If you still don't co-operate, then we go to the next step. We tell you that your membership has been removed temporarily, up to six months. You suspend the member. We don't expel them. Then if you don't comply and start paying the regular rent, then we will take you to the rental board.

Martin: Evictions? It's not happened. Are we going to fight to evict somebody who's old who hasn't done anything and has been there for years? Or who's not as old, but still does nothing? We won't evict them. Where do you stop? I know there are co-ops that evict. They say, "You weren't a good member so we're to evict you." But it becomes heavy. It creates strife. I don't think it's worth it. If the co-op is working well, evicting the member who doesn't work well makes more trouble.

Kate: We're in the process of evicting the person who took us to court last year. We're just in the first step of going through that. We suspended her and she's refusing to pay the rebate [difference in market rent]. We're taking her to the Régie. Besides that? I know that ----- was in a conflict with somebody and had them evicted somehow.

Josh: Are there sometimes evictions?

Marie-Claude: Yes, like the guy I was just talking about. How it works for him, is that we remove his right to be a member. It's voted at the general assembly. We talk about it in front of that person. There are warnings before. We send letters. Three, I think. His rent is always late, for example. That's also an issue. It's mostly that than his participation, but the two of them together.

5.4.2 Ontario

Sharon: You know what happened when I went too far one time in querying? I was told that my legitimate business expenses, constantly used by Revenue Canada and that I've been doing in this co-op for ten years, all

of a sudden, they weren't being allowed. Not allowing my business expenses put me up over into market [rent]. I would have lost my RGI [rent-geared-to-income]. Everything I've done is by the books. Everything. The money that I have in investments is inheritance money, which is allowed. In that is money from a court award for sexual abuse. Instead of spending it, I put it in the nest egg for both my kids—well one now—and myself. I had no help from anybody. My husbands had left, this was it. This was all I had. I had been homeless for 18 months and only four bucks in my pocket. I pulled myself up out of the fucking abyss, and this was the award that I got. A tiny settlement, or inheritance, so I put that into investments. But I outsmarted them and that pissed them off even more because I [previously] outsmarted them with the eviction. All of this stuff shows you what they will do to people who speak up or speak out and ask the kinds of questions that should be asked, that the government is not doing.

Bottom line with co-ops: because the government subsidizes with RGIs, people are made to get this feeling through their boards and staff that they have to go along with CHF because CHF is their saviours. If they see that there's anything wrong and speak out, there's the fear and the very real threat of eviction used as a compliance tool. With Bill 14, where boards and staff can take people to the Landlord and Tenant Board now for eviction, even though resident-members can't take boards or staff to the Landlord and Tenant Board for any number of

corrupt ways of doing business. A) that's not equality before the law, therefore that law needs to be challenged. But B) it's being used as a compliance tool to make people just shut up and step in line. If you don't like what's going on, then even politicians will say this, "Well then, move." And it's not that easy to do and that's a disgusting display of just not bothering doing their job. That's the whole crux right there. What happens is when you have someone like myself—and like I said, I've lobbied for a number of people at Human Rights and other situations—a senior citizen with a disabled daughter, and I'm being threatened with eviction because I'm speaking up about something that is corrupt, and I have no place to go. My own co-op, I've been character slandered and targeted and lied about here. My reputation here has been tainted. There's no place else I can go. It's that isolationism that adds to the sense of you either comply or this is what will happen to you. You will be evicted, you will be targeted, all that sort of thing.

I tried everything I could with the co-op and got nowhere, and this is the problem with the co-op sector, federal or provincial. When you can't get anywhere with your own co-op and it's corrupt, there's no place for resident-members to go. I've said this to [my MP] Adam Vaughan and others. Either make the Landlord and Tenant Appeal Board accommodate resident-members of co-ops if you're going to allow boards and staff to use them to evict. Have some kind of a board that has representation from resident-members from the government.

CHF shouldn't be involved in this because they're not supposed to govern anything. You have to have a cross-section. You have five people, let's say, but from each sector. There's a board that people can go to complain. Another solution is, wherever there's a board member, boards for all these co-ops, there should be an outside, objective, third person or two, actually two would be better, that sit on those boards. Any shenanigans would be stopped right at the get go. Because they would be seen. It's called oversight. What we need to do is to clean out the Agency [for Co-operative Housing]. Social housing and co-operatives are under the same umbrella at the City. It's corrupt as hell. It needs to be cleaned out badly. But the City's not interested in doing any of that. They just want to glad-hand everybody, and CHF is in their back pockets.

Claire-Helen: It's a really big issue. We had the same issue within our co-op where members who have grown up here, but through their circumstances become vulnerable to mental health or other issues, are being pushed out. Within our membership committee there is also a strong move to try to select people who are quality members. That really creates a sense that if you're not the ideal co-op member, but if you have challenges, you're not wanted. This is a really big challenge in terms of the participatory governance. Because emphasis on education around equity is constantly being confronted by boards that take up all of their time around these soft governance issues about this person's dog is

pooping in the yard or whatever, and yeah, those are real concerns but at the same time, if the board were thinking about more the capital structure of the building rather than about pushing out the unwanted people, I think it would be better for everyone. At the same time there is a real experience of people who feel frustrated when they have a neighbour who is not behaving. Finding solutions around that is a really big and immediate concern for me.

Josh: How often did evictions come up?

Peter: They were always a bit of a mystery. We never really knew who was being evicted unless they appealed to the members. Lots of people disappeared in the middle of the night kind of thing. We never had a list of exiting members or members who have been evicted this year or this month or this quarter. I don't think it was seen as an interest of the board or the co-op that we knew those things. Evidently, we didn't clamour to know either, which is interesting in itself. I think, and I don't know that that's accurate, as the dictatorships under the two coordinators latterly took sort of a stronger hold that they would decide that we wanted to get rid of more folks. That unit inspections were made, and so-and-so family trashed this joint and so we need to get rid of those folks. And so, I think of ----- . It was a terrible thing, and we got rid of [them] and it was such a bad thing because we had to spend \$5,000 to fix the place up.

I think latterly, it appeared to me that there were campaigns to get rid of people and families. Certainly, that seemed to be the case with the -----'s in this last instance. Previous boards have not been happy with [them] and this time [the property manager] wanted to do that. I'm aware [the property manager] took a course on hoarding and there are three or four hoarders in the co-op. [The property manager] got it into her mind that she had to get rid of these people and she didn't really attend the hoarding class too much, but anyway she got it into her head to do a purge. She had managed to get rid of some of the people so far. What we're observing in the case with ----- and ----- is that [the co-op] knows that they've been lawyered up and so it's not going to look so good for them in public. They haven't pulled the eviction trigger because it's not going to go well, which means of course the member is in the never-never land of not knowing if they're evicted, not knowing if they're well-behaved enough for the co-op. The board is never accountable, and the property manager isn't accountable before a public body. But it requires efforts that are extraordinary by the member and expensive means because many of them believe that they would go to the Landlord and Tenant Board, and they would be thrown out and the co-op would have to pay for the costs.

I've just discovered how few options there are. You can't go to CHASEO for any help, essentially, CHF isn't there for you, there's no

court outside. There's the tenant-landlord option but that's really been opened up for the convenience of the co-op board.

Clarke: The [property manager] is going to put in surveillance cameras because she wants to catch the people who are feeding the squirrels. Her rationale is the co-op has a squirrel problem and people have already been told many times that they shouldn't feed the squirrels, i.e. if we get rid of those people, and we got to do it, we got to catch them on camera to do it, then we can evict them. Then we won't have the problem anymore.

The way it's setup here is that the local people with no training are setting themselves up as judge and jury. A person's shelter-security is going to be affected by it. Your father said when the Landlord and Tenant Board decided to help out co-ops [through Bill 14] it was a lousy thing. I never asked him why, but I think it was that how you can be evicted, and it's gotten really legalistic. The co-op can say that the person they are going after has disturbed the peace and quiet of the co-op. Now that's fine because we've had drug dealers in here and people have wreaked the place. Big stings, I've seen it. You want some method to get that out. But in here it's being used as a threat to get people that just won't toe the line. Is there any right or justice in this? No. I think --
----- [a long-time board member] has always wanted to be a private investigator. She's served for a couple of months in the police, army corps, as a cadet or something like that. She's said it right out to people

at board meetings. “Oh, I can always get us some protection. I know lots of people on the police force.”

I’m really upset about how [the property manager] handled your parents. She had a little form and she knew your father was going blind, and it was half the size of that [*points at flyer on table*] on her check-off list for signing. Then of course, he turns to your mother and says, I want you to sign this. The problem with [the property manager] is that once she sees that somebody is in opposition to her, it’s no holds barred.

That person’s going to feel her wrath. You got to keep your mouth shut about certain things on the board and stuff like that.

Reflecting on the Comparisons

Although the early Milton-Parc propaganda had been fiery and the battle framed as a class struggle from its inception, direct action tactics were only employed starting in 1971. Interestingly, this was over a year after the MPCC had incorporated. One could think that incorporation might have acted as a form of co-optation, a step taken at legitimization to get a seat at the table with the power brokers or would have domesticated the group and made them more risk adverse by exposing them to potentially higher liability. On the ground, however, it was evidence of the push and pull of their attempt at a multipronged transformative approach. The structural formality would facilitate their plan for resident control and a co-operative neighbourhood, while the militancy would directly challenge the developer’s plans to demolish the neighbourhood.

As noted by participants throughout this chapter, Milton-Parc co-op members must all serve on committees. They have been able to maintain this management style

since the co-ops were founded some 40 years ago. This has ensured that none of the Milton-Parc co-ops have had to hire staff. This is helped by the fact that the seven represented Milton-Parc co-ops are relatively small, with an average of 22 units, compared to an average of 255 units for the five Ontario co-ops represented in this research. The latter number is a little skewed, because City Park co-op in downtown Toronto comprises 772 apartments split among three buildings. However, even without including City Park, the Ontario co-ops average 126 units, 5.7 times higher than the Milton-Parc co-ops.

In the next chapter, the conclusion, I will present the lessons learned from this research and a further analysis of the potential of both the Milton-Parc and Ontario co-ops to advance the interests of the working class.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

“Ensuring that housing retains a use value, rather than a commodity value, is impossible in a capitalist society. The thrust of capitalism is always to accumulate wealth for its own sake and not for its use.”
– Lucia Kowaluk, *On Housing* (1979)

“Self-management of capital can't be the goal. Tenants would be subject to the same market pressures and logic of capital. The goal of working-class organization at the building and district level must be working-class power.” – Cole Webber, Twitter @colefwebber, community legal worker, Parkdale Community Legal Services, Toronto (March 17, 2019)

In this final chapter, I refer to residents of housing co-ops as tenants. This thesis has shown how co-ops are used as a capitalist tactic to reshape tenants into “members” while clearly reproducing the landlord–tenant relationship, which is fundamentally a class relationship.

This chapter is meant to be of direct use to tenants in housing co-ops. It applies mostly to tenants from Ontario but can be useful to tenants from housing co-ops across the country. The lessons learned should be useful to all tenants in co-ops as well as co-op professionals. The ten recommendations are for tenants in co-ops who want to organize to fight against pressures from their co-op, as well as to show that the mandate of sector professionals is in opposition to the interests of co-ops tenants.

6.1 Lessons Learned

The following is a list of ten lessons summarized from this research, derived from conversations with seven research participants from seven different Milton-Parc housing co-ops, four research participants from four different housing co-ops in Toronto, and two

research participants from one Ottawa co-op. This list is also derived from archival documents from the Canadian co-op housing federations as well as academic research on housing co-ops.

I do not claim that these lessons emerge from what might be seen, in a sociological sense, as a representative sample of members of housing co-ops. Nor are they exhaustive; there are surely many lessons to be learned from studying co-op housing in Canada in other ways, with other people, than I have done. Rather, they attempt to highlight frustrations expressed by some working-class tenants of some housing co-ops, which, I would suggest, quite probably reflect the frustrations faced by tenants of other, similar social housing projects.

1. The co-operative housing federations are a lobby and their members are the co-op corporations and other federations, not individual tenants. The lobby is primarily concerned with sustaining the sector and the paid positions it creates. This has created opposing interests between tenants and sector professionals and contributed to a climate of distrust and conflict of interest;
2. From its inception, the co-op housing lobby has framed co-op housing as a consumer issue rather than a working-class struggle over the means of producing their own housing. This has created an identity group of “housing co-op member” separate from the relationship of landlord–tenant;
3. The way in which the state has framed housing co-ops through their use of language, legislation, and legal precedents has also influenced how residents of co-ops see themselves. This has contributed to the perception that co-ops are not a

reproduction of the regular landlord–tenant relationship, but are a “private social club”;

4. Some co-op tenants see their individual role as both landlord and tenant. Some also see no difference between how their co-op operates and how a private non-profit landlord operates. Overall, however, there is a general feeling that co-op “members” are above the regular landlord–tenant relationship and their interests are not related to other tenant and working-class interests;
5. Co-op tenants in Ontario feel strongly that abuse is rampant in housing co-ops and they have nowhere to turn to fight their boards and staff. While co-op tenants do not actually control the means of producing their own housing, they don’t necessarily see that abuse as rooted in exploitation nor do they see their boards and staff as their landlord. This is a result of having been treated differently than regular tenants for a long time by the courts (ruling that housing co-ops are “private clubs”), the state (not opening up the Landlord and Tenant Board to co-op tenants), and the co-op movement itself (language such as “member” and “housing charge”);
6. Direct action tactics used in regular tenant struggles such as rent strikes, sit-ins, occupations, media publicity, squats, phone zaps, and visits to the homes of staff are not used in housing co-ops. Instead, co-op residents who organize independently have focused on lobbying government officials and trying to understand, navigate, and educate others on overly-complicated co-op housing laws and bylaws;

7. Division among co-op tenants along lines such as race, language, receipt of social assistance, and level of education contribute to conflict and antagonism between tenants. This division acts as an impediment to working-class organizing;
8. From their inception, the federations, supported by state housing agencies such as CMHC, have developed housing co-ops according to capitalist principles of economy of scale, economic efficiency, and paid professional management. According to these institutions, the bigger the co-op, the more economically viable it is;
9. Smaller scale co-ops reproduce the typical landlord–tenant relationship to a lesser degree and result in fewer evictions. This is because staff are not required, it is easier to enforce mandatory participation, which acts as an inherent form of neighbourhood organizing. However, this does not mean that size is always inversely proportional to level of participation. For example, the largest of the Milton-Parc co-ops, at 32 units, also has the most rigorous participation scheme;
10. In the smaller co-ops, full participation was consistently seen as the primary objective. While participation is a critical part of organizing in housing co-ops, it can supersede struggles for dignity and trying to survive in capitalist society. It can also divide tenants (lazy vs. hardworking) and actually be grounds for eviction.

6.2 Recommendations

The following is a list of ten recommendations derived from this research. These recommendations have emerged by articulating tenants’ concerns as ultimately a class struggle, as the landlord–tenant relationship is clearly reproduced in contemporary

housing co-ops. Co-ops are not a “post-landlord” housing alternative. They should be considered landlords like any other. These recommendations have also come about by examining archival materials from the co-op housing federations. These have revealed that from the beginning, the interests of the sector have been in opposition to the interests of the tenants who live in co-ops.

1. Residents of housing co-ops should not be considered “members of a private club.” Members should be considered tenants, “membership agreements” should be called leases, and money paid for housing should be considered rent, not a “housing charge”;
2. Co-op tenants should have the same access as other tenants to their provincial rental housing dispute resolution agency;
3. Co-op tenants should view their co-op as a landlord, whether it is self-managed or run by staff. This means viewing the board of directors, no matter who is currently sitting on it, as the landlord which exploits tenants for rent and personal profit;
4. Co-op tenants should mobilize with other tenants at a neighbourhood level and utilize direct action tactics against their landlord (i.e. boards and staff) to fight rent increases, disrepair, neglect, evictions, and harassment. Direct action tactics include rent strikes, sit-ins, occupations, media publicity, squats, phone zaps, and visits to the homes of staff;
5. Co-op tenants should organize using the threat of direct action tactics to advance the interests of the working class rather than lobbying government or trying to understand and navigate the overly-complicated co-op housing legislation;

6. The co-op housing lobby should not develop co-ops. The development of these co-ops is guided by the economy of scale and capitalist evaluative criteria of economic and managerial efficiency. These co-ops have not developed through the struggle of working-class tenants to control the means of producing their own housing;
7. Tenants who are able to seize their housing from their landlord and wish to form housing co-ops should form co-ops no larger than around 40 units;
8. Co-ops larger than around 40 units should be converted to regular non-profit housing. As participation in these co-ops is virtually non-existent, this would act in the interest of unifying working-class tenants by clearly identifying their landlord;
9. Co-op tenants should refuse all division among their neighbours along lines of gender, race, nationality, language, sexual orientation, spiritual-religious affiliation, level of poverty, receipt of social assistance, level of education, and ability;
10. Tenant participation should be considered mandatory, but only insofar as it is viewed as a tool of organizing in the interests of the working class against the capitalist interests of management. This includes participating/organizing for the goal of abolition of rent, the elimination of evictions, and to fight abuse.

6.3 Final Thoughts

“Cities are facing a housing crisis” has become a meaningless truism. While the Canadian state pushes its agenda “to help middle class Canadians,” working-

class tenants face abuse, harassment, disrepair, neglect, and being priced out of their homes through rent increases. The pressures are immense and only getting worse. But tenants are fighting back through direct action. Tenants in the Parkdale neighbourhood of Toronto recently staged two successful rent strikes in less than a year. In 2018, tenants in Hamilton and Ottawa, organized tenants confronted landlords directly to pressure them to drop rent increases, do the repairs, and stop harassment. Tenants are not always successful, but it is obvious their organizing has had a huge impact.

These same pressures weigh on tenants in co-ops. Unfortunately, participatory management schemes, like the restructuring of labour-management relations in the workforce, have stood in the way of united, working-class tenant solidarity.

The Milton-Parc co-ops, at this point, are clearly not decommodified nor anti-capitalist. Evictions still exist, rent is still collected, and construction bosses win renovation contracts. However, considering many of the triplexes and duplexes owned by the co-ops are reclaimed bourgeois housing, they can be likened to a degree to the reclaimed factories in Argentina, where workers have taken control. The potential for the Milton-Parc project to work towards emancipation for the working class is much higher than perhaps any other urban housing project. This is due largely to its foundation as an explicit class struggle and the unique structure of the Communauté Milton-Parc, which has ensured that all six blocks of its downtown land have been effectively removed from the market. But if the Milton-

Parc housing associations continue to act as landlords, they will not be able to free themselves from the petite bourgeoisie path that defines the co-op movement.

If this thesis accomplishes one thing, I hope it's a long overdue, forthright exposé on co-ops. Co-ops have been used as a form of "recognition" of poor people in order to quash class conflict. Once housing co-op residents see themselves as tenants, a whole world of working-class tenant solidarity and direct action opens up.

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Appendix A

General Research Ethics Board Approval



January 23, 2017

Mr. Josh Hawley
Master's Student
Cultural Studies Program
Queen's University
Kingston, ON, K7L 3N6

GREB Ref #: GCUL-063-17; TRAQ # 6020035

Title: "GCUL-063-17 Community-Based Participatory Research on the Current State of Co-operative Housing in Canada"

Dear Mr. Hawley:

The General Research Ethics Board (GREB), by means of a delegated board review, has cleared your proposal entitled "**GCUL-063-17 Community-Based Participatory Research on the Current State of Co-operative Housing in Canada**" for ethical compliance with the Tri-Council Guidelines (TCPS 2 (2014)) and Queen's ethics policies. In accordance with the Tri-Council Guidelines (Article 6.14) and Standard Operating Procedures (405.001), your project has been cleared for one year. You are reminded of your obligation to submit an annual renewal form prior to the annual renewal due date (access this form at <http://www.queensu.ca/traq/signon.html>; click on "Events"; under "Create New Event" click on "General Research Ethics Board Annual Renewal/Closure Form for Cleared Studies"). Please note that when your research project is completed, you need to submit an Annual Renewal/Closure Form in Romeo/traq indicating that the project is 'completed' so that the file can be closed. This should be submitted at the time of completion; there is no need to wait until the annual renewal due date.

You are reminded of your obligation to advise the GREB of any adverse event(s) that occur during this one year period (access this form at <http://www.queensu.ca/traq/signon.html>; click on "Events"; under "Create New Event" click on "General Research Ethics Board Adverse Event Form"). An adverse event includes, but is not limited to, a complaint, a change or unexpected event that alters the level of risk for the researcher or participants or situation that requires a substantial change in approach to a participant(s). You are also advised that all adverse events must be reported to the GREB within 48 hours.

You are also reminded that all changes that might affect human participants must be cleared by the GREB. For example, you must report changes to the level of risk, applicant characteristics, and implementation of new procedures. To submit an amendment form, access the application by at <http://www.queensu.ca/traq/signon.html>; click on "Events"; under "Create New Event" click on "General Research Ethics Board Request for the Amendment of Approved Studies". Once submitted, these changes will automatically be sent to the Ethics Coordinator, Ms. Gail Irving, at the Office of Research Services for further review and clearance by the GREB or GREB Chair.

On behalf of the General Research Ethics Board, I wish you continued success in your research.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "John D. Freeman".

John Freeman, Ph.D.
Chair
General Research Ethics Board

c: Dr. Richard Day, Supervisor
Dr. Dorit Naaman, Chair, Unit REB
Ms. Danielle Gugler, Dept. Admin.