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# Cooperative governance as a mechanism to foster collective entrepreneurship

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## Abstract

Research on entrepreneurship has lately moved away from the traditional economic logic towards new alternative paradigms. Entrepreneurship scholars have expanded their agenda focusing more on entrepreneurship as “a social change activity” (Dey & Mason, 2018), with terms such as “community-based entrepreneurship (Hertel et al., 2019; Murphy et al. 2020), “collective entrepreneurship” (Dufays & Huybrechts, 2015), “innovative entrepreneurship” (Bradley et al., 2021), “impact entrepreneurship” (Markman et al. 2019) and “activist entrepreneurship” (Dey & Mason ,2018) becoming increasingly popular.

With the aim to better understand the underlying principles of emerging forms of collective entrepreneurship, this study focuses on cooperatives as an intrinsically collaborative and democratically governed organizational form. As a matter of fact, cooperatives are not only an important part of economic and social development, but also provide employment to 279.4 million people worldwide, almost 10 % of the world’s employed population (Michaud & Audebrand, 2022). More interestingly, they are considered as agents for social change and are expected to play a major role in what is called “The Great Reset”, “a new evolutionary phase of capitalism giving much more space to ethics, sustainability, stakeholder involvement, shared purposes, and common good” (Iliopoulos & Valentinov, 2022; Klein, 2014; Schwab & Mallert, 2020).

More specifically, we explore how cooperative governance acts as a mechanism to foster collective entrepreneurship. Our findings are based upon a corpus of data including interviews with cooperative start-up owners and entrepreneurs, advisors (e.g., national advisory boards, legal/ accounting experts) and educational institutions (schools, universities and thinktanks) in Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Belgium, UK, Italy and Spain. In looking at cooperative governance and management models in various contexts and locations we add more depth to our understanding of the challenges and opportunities of the cooperative model, as well as its interrelations to collective entrepreneurship.

Keywords: (cooperative governance, cooperative management, collective entrepreneurship, cooperative impact)

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