

# Cooperative economy and collaborative consumption in a “dissident” Inuit community : between activism and mundanity

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## Introduction

The Cooperative organization

Cooperative consumption as routinized

Between activism and mundanity

Conclusion

- ▶ Case study: consumption within a specific context (a local Cooperative in an Inuit community)
- ▶ Discussing the nature and extent of political consumerism (Baumann et al., 2015)
- ▶ As well as the collaborative aspect of economy (Botsman 2013)

# The cooperative as an activist economic and political organization

The entanglement of economic and political objectives

- ▶ The Cooperative: today's main economic organization in the community
  - ▶ Monopoly on the local hotel, restaurant, conference center, travel agency, petrol distribution, mechanics, cable telecoms. . .
  - ▶ Owns and runs the biggest of two supermarket (vs. “the Northern”)



# The cooperative as an activist economic and political organization

## The entanglement of economic and political objectives

- ▶ A strong political orientation
  - ▶ Cooperative democratic model
  - ▶ Specific local history of activism
    - ▶ From the 50s' sculptor society,
    - ▶ To the 60s' project for regional government,
    - ▶ To the 70-80s' Dissident movement (ITN),
  - ▶ ... To today's claims:
    - ▶ Promoting autonomous, community-oriented, and authentic development vs. "Qallunaat system" (Martin 2003)
    - ▶ "Toward sustainable self-determination" (Corntassel 2008)

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The entanglement

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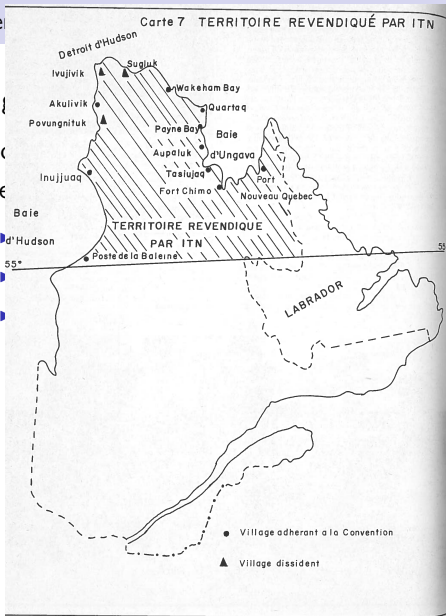
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# The cooperative as an activist economic and political organization

Cooperative's political leverage based on its social and economic success

- ▶ Economic profitability
- ▶ Social participation
- ▶ → Consumers as recruits (Dubuisson-Quellier 2015)

# The routine character of cooperative consumption

## Shopping at the Cooperative: a routine everyday practice

- ▶ Routine in consumption (Wahlen 2011)
- ▶ Familiar and well-known space
  - ▶ which serves as a framework for regular practices
- ▶ Service center
- ▶ One of the scarce “third places” (Oldenburg 1989)
- ▶ Structural social institution at the local level



# The routine character of cooperative consumption

Resulting from strategical promotion and routinization of the Cooperative

- ▶ Ethnic and cultural proximity between the Cooperative and consumers
  - ▶ Organizational display of continuity with “traditional” practices of sharing (Gombay 2010)
  - ▶ ... But cooperation was explicitly *taught*
- ▶ Defense of local community identity (dissidence)
- ▶ Identification between the Cooperative and collaborative community development and Inuit identity
- ▶ → an effective strategy: Cooperative is now seen as “tradition”

# The dangers of routine? Activism at the risk of mundanity

The gap between routine behavior and political motivations

- ▶ *Methodologically: observing ruptures of the norm*
- ▶ Contesting Cooperative's norms
- ▶ Operating economic rationality
- ▶ “Retaliating” against the Cooperative
  - ▶ *Cf. Hervé (2017) on the legitimacy of political institutions among the Inuit*
- ▶ A more general pitfall for collaborative economy?  
(Jacquet 2015)

# Between activism and mundanity

## Socially differentiated meanings of Cooperative consumption

### *[Ideal type 1] The activist cooperator*

- ▶ Supporting the Cooperative through political consumerism
- ▶ Active in the Cooperative governance
- ▶ Knowledgeable about cooperation and dissidence
- ▶ Belonging to activist (familial) network; transmission of high activist and cultural capital ([Baumann et al. 2015](#))
- ▶ Viewing the cooperative as a continuation of sharing economy — which they actively participate in

### *[Ideal type 2] The mundane consumer*

- ▶ Most likely to shop elsewhere, see the Cooperative as a profit-oriented organization, ...
- ▶ Still their primary choice

- ▶ Tensions between activism and routinization/  
mundanity
- ▶ Sketching social differentiation
- ▶ Contained and channelled into political claims and  
community identity-building by a social *institution*
- ▶ The collaborative aspect as a disputed stake

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*Thank you!*

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